

**RELIGION AND POLITICS IN MIZORAM:  
ROLE OF THE CHURCH**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “RELIGION AND POLITICS IN MIZORAM: ROLE OF THE CHURCH”, submitted by LETKHOLUN HAOKIP for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, is a research work, done under my supervision and guidance. The thesis, submitted by him has not formed the basis for the award to the scholar for any degree or any other similar title and it has not yet been submitted as a dissertation or thesis in any university. I also certify that the thesis represents objective study and independent work of the scholar.

(PROF. K. V. REDDY)

SUPERVISOR

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June 2019

Letkholun Haokip



# MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

JUNE, 2019

## DECLARATION

I Letkholun Haokip, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Instituted.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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## ABBREVIATION

AMC	Aizawl Municipal Corporation
BCM	Baptist Church of Mizoram
BJP	Bharatya Janata Party
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CADC	Chakma Autonomous District Council
CEO	Chief Electoral Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECI	Election Commission of India
ECM	Evangelical Church of Maraland
EFCI	Evangelical Free Church of India
EPIC	Electronic Privacy Information Center
EVM	Electronic Voting Machines
LADC	Lai Autonomous District Council
LIKBK	Lairam Isua Krista Kohhran
MPC	Mizoram Presbyterian Church
MADC	Mara Autonomous District Council
MBA	Mizoram Baptist Federation
MDA	Mizoram Democratic Alliance
MNF	Mizo National Front
MKHC	Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee
MLPT	Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition
MLPC	Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Control

MPAB	Mizoram Peace Advisory Board
MPCC	Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee
MPF	Mizoram People Forum
MHIP	Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl
MSU	Mizo Students' Union
MUP	Mizoram Upa Pawl
MU	Mizo Union
MZP	Mizo Zirlai Pawl
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NLUP	New Land Use Policy
PC	People's Conference
PRISM	People Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SA	Salvation Army
SDA	Seventh-Day Adventist
SEC	State Election Commission
SEDP	Socio-economic Development Programme
SVEEP	Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation
UPC	United Pentecostal Church
YMA	Young Mizo Association
ZKHC	Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee
ZNP	Zoram Nationalist Party
ZPM	Zoram People's Movement



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Religion and politics are two of the most important dimensions of human life. Religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt and influential forces in human society.<sup>1</sup> It has shaped people's relationships within the society, influencing family, community, economic, and political dimensions. Religious beliefs and communitarian values motivate human actions. Due to the awareness of religious aspects in the socio-political context, the old theories of secularization, which predicted that religions would disappear in continually modernized societies, lost their plausibility. Religion is a reality of Indian politics. It can neither be ignored nor overlooked, nor even eliminated. "But by adopting secularism as the principle of equal respect for and equality of all religions and by cultivating a rational love for religious values, which fortunately happen to be the same in all religions, the harmful and negative role of religion can be replaced by a positive, healthy and unifying role of religion in Indian politics".<sup>2</sup> Obviously religion is not a mere collection of rituals, traditions and ways of worship. Rather it is a set of values which it upholds. Any religious person follows these values along with their rituals and traditions. As Mahatma Gandhi says, "Truth is my God." All religions stand for such supreme values as God, truth, non-violence, morality and respect for all people.

In the last few decades, it has not only been the civil society organizations, but also the religious organizations that have been increasingly participating in the socio-

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<sup>1</sup> Meredith B. Mcguire, *Religion-The Social Context*, Fifth edition (Belmont: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> U.R. Ghai, *Indian Political System-A Study in Indian Government and Politics*, Tenth Edition (Jalandhar: New Academic Publishing Co., 2012), p. 55.

political life of the people. The Christian churches along with other movements began to take part in socio-political development. The Latin American liberation theologies, social commitment and political involvement continued to be part of these progressive movements. The question of the relationship between Church and State, religion and politics, was therefore raised again. This aspect was discussed at the conference hosted jointly by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Philosophical Research Institute of Hanover, Germany in 2007.<sup>3</sup> The theme of the Conference was “The Church and Civil Society – The Role of Christian Churches in the Emerging Countries of Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa.” Such a kind of focus and discussion shows that the relationship between religion and politics involves certain challenges for both civil societies and the Church. The religious groups facilitate improvement in political culture and the forming of a mindset which helps citizens to understand themselves as responsible members of their states. In doing so, the Church has played the role of a facilitator for advancing the socio-political and economic development in the developed countries where Christians form the majority. However, the situation in some parts of the world like Asia, where Christians form small minorities appears to be different.

India being a secular democratic state, the Indian Constitution embodies secularism in letter and spirit, and it is accepted as a principle affirming that there is no religion of the state as such, there is equality of all religions in the eyes of the law and that there is freedom of each religious group to establish and maintain religious and philanthropic institutions, with their own organizational setups. However, there is a prohibition of religious instruction in recognized, and government and government-

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<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Staudacher, “An Introductory Welcome”, in *Church and Civil Society: The Role of Christian Churches in the Emerging Countries of Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa*. Eds. Gerhard Kruip and Helmut Reifeld (Berlin: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2007), pp. 7-10.

aided educational institutions. And the role of the state in religious matters has been kept limited to preventing the violations of public order. The preamble of the Constitution, while defining the scope of ideal of liberty, holds that it includes liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25 to 28) stands enshrined in the Constitution as one of the Fundamental rights of an Indian citizen and as such enjoys a constitutional guarantee.

However, adoption of secularism in the Indian Constitution and its actual practice in social relations demonstrate a wide gap. The state does not prefer any religion and yet maintains its relationship with all religions. Like any other liberal democratic constitution, the Indian Constitution guarantees to the citizens the freedom to form their associations as well as the right to freedom of religion. But this has led to the organization of several political parties on the basis of various religions. For instance, religion-based parties like the Muslim League, Hindu Maha Sabha, Shiv Sena, Akali Dal, also play a crucial role in the Indian elections.<sup>4</sup> The religious affiliation of a party becomes a determinant factor of voting behavior. The political parties try to develop their vote banks among the minority religious groups by appeasement policies that have even influenced the process of government making. Ministers are usually described on the basis of their religion, such as Muslim ministers, Sikh ministers, non-Hindu ministers or Hindu ministers. As such, it appears that religion plays a very important role in Indian politics.

Therefore, in India religious organizations had played an important role in the socio-political life of the people, as was the case with many other ancient nations of the

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<sup>4</sup> U.R. Ghai and K.K. Ghai, *Indian Political System- A Study in Indian Government & Politics* (Jalandhar: New Academic Publishing Co., 2012), p.53.

world. From the pre-historical periods up to the recent times, the religious institutions assumed numerous forms with manifold designations in relation to different groups of people associated with them. Religious ideas, thoughts and practices differ among these groups, and transformations and developments took place in them over the course of time. These changes were very often brought about by the ideas and actions of intellectual thinkers, while religious environment and political institutions also played a major part in the socio-political process.

As India is the land of religious pluralism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity and several other religions have been coexisting and growing side by side in the country. The followers of Hinduism constitute the largest segment of the population. Religious diversity is a feature of the Indian society and it plays an important role in politics. As a pluralistic and multicultural nation, it encompasses in its fold numerous faiths, ideologies, ethnic groups, languages and many others. The unity and diversity in India is unique and it has set an example to several developing and developed countries. The nation's integrity, however, rests on mutual understanding, cooperation, respect and responsibility among these different identities.

Christianity, as one of these religious identities or forces, is very much an integral part of India. Although its overall percentage share of the total population is very low, Christianity has played an active role in nation-building through a wide network of educational institutions like schools, colleges and universities. Besides, it is responsible for providing health services, promotion of indigenous literature, upliftment of women, working for general welfare of the downtrodden and victims of injustices, rural reconstruction and continuous participation in life-building activities.

Its services have been extended to all kinds of people. Many scholars from India and abroad have given due attention to the study of Christianity in India. While much literature has been produced on its presence in the country, there are negligible studies on its role and contribution to socio-political reforms. Lack of in-depth academic research has thus mostly resulted in the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Christianity. There are not sufficient books available on the subject of Indian Christian involvement in society, in the realms of socio-political development. Particularly, the area of Christian involvement in the national freedom movement remained unexplored for a long time.

One often comes across writings and speeches that argued that Christian religion in India originated in the Western, European or colonial context. But the fact is that Christianity existed in India much before the European colonial powers had established their rule in India. The Christians living in the Malabar Coast (present day Kerala) have claimed that it was Saint Thomas who brought Christianity to India in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. That many adhered to this claim was reflected in the words of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, former President of India, who, at the Saint Thomas Day celebration in New Delhi on December 18, 1955, said, “Remember, Saint Thomas came to India when many of the countries of Europe had not yet become Christian, and so those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of Christians of many of the European countries”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Marina Behera, “Christianity in Indian Historical Background”, in *Christianity and National Integration*. Eds. O.L Snaitang and Merostar Rani (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2009), p.58.

Christianity in India had always been present through various historical developments of the country, and in many ways it had remained in the background, pushed to the corner and almost ignored. Thus, the misconception that it was the Europeans who had introduced the religion into the country got propagated. Meanwhile, one of the greatest challenges the Christians faced during the struggle for Independence was the manner in which Christianity was closely identified with the British. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Indian Christians were becoming aware of the fact that their fellow citizens viewed their faith and collective identity had something to do with foreign origin. They also felt the practical difficulty of being proud of their Indian-ness on one hand and the identification of their religion with the colonial ruler on the other. When the Non-Cooperation movement was started in 1920, there were several Indian Christians across the country who took part in it. S.K. Datta (1878-1942), Principal of Foreman Christian College, Lahore, in his address at the All India Conference of Indian Christians held at Lucknow in December, 27-30, 1922, made a reference to some of the Indian Christians who had suffered imprisonment as a result of their political activities<sup>6</sup>. This indicates the active role of Indian Christians in the political process that made up the struggle for freedom.

The Christian youths who were also getting involved in the National Movement were also revealed through the correspondence of missionaries. For instance, N.H. Tubbs, the Principal of the Bishop's College, Calcutta, wrote in a confidential note that "a very significant feature of the last few months has been the deep interest that the Christian students have taken in politics. They have definitely sided with their country. They are no longer a part, and they want to know what their duty is-are they

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<sup>6</sup> D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *Christians and the National Movement: The Memoranda of 1919 and the National Movement with Special Reference to Protestant Christians in Tamil Nadu: 1919-1939* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2009), p. 122.

non-co-operative or not. They are out and out nationalists as a rule”.<sup>7</sup> He further wrote, “The student of today is interested in political and social reconstruction – if he be a Christian of course, on a Christian basis...At the recent All India Christian Students’ Conference at Poona, we had the same phenomena”.<sup>8</sup> There were also other missionaries who expressed a similar opinion. In 1930, the editor of *The Guardian* said, “A number of Christian young men have joined in the civil disobedience movement”.<sup>9</sup> Another British missionary of the time, E.C. Dewick, who was at Saint Paul’s College, Calcutta, had the same thing to say of the Christian youth of the time.<sup>10</sup> All these statements indicate that there were Indian Christians who were active in the politics of the National Movement.

There were Indian Christians who were active members of the Indian National Congress and were devotedly involved during the National Movement. Some of them were Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, S.K. George, George Joseph, J.C Kumarappa and H.C. Mookerjee who were also closely associated with Gandhi. There were other Indian Christians who did not join the Indian National Congress, but nevertheless were nationalists. These included S.K. Datta, V.S. Azariah, K.T. Paul, B.Rallia Ram and Augustine Ralla Ram. S.K. Datta wanted the Indian Christian community to identify themselves with the nationalists. He represented the Protestant Christians at the Second Round Table Conference in London from September 7 to December 11,

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<sup>7</sup> N.H. Tubbs’ Occasional Journal, Private and Confidential dated 23 February 1921, S.P.G. Archives quoted in George Thomas, *Christian Indians and Nationalism 1885-1950: An Interpretation in Historical and Theological Perspectives*. (Wissenschaften: Peter Lang, 1979), p.123.

<sup>8</sup> D. Arthur Jeyakumar, op.cit., p.123.

<sup>9</sup> Notes: “Indian Christian and the Present Situation”, *The Gaurdian*, Vol. VIII, No. 22, May 29, 1930, p. 254. Quoted in George Thomas, *Christian Indians and Nationalism 1885-1950*, p.123.

<sup>10</sup> He wrote, the old tradition of loyalty to the British Raj, and of imitation of the West in dress and social customs have steadily been giving place to a much more nationalistic outlook, and to expressions of national customs and national habits. A growing number of the younger Indian Christians have been gathering courage to raise their voices in criticism of the British Government and have joined with their Hindu friends in the non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience Movement.

1931. He criticized the advocates of separate electorates for Indian Christians and took an uncompromising stand on the question of separate electorates at the Round Table Conference.<sup>11</sup>

If one critically examines the history of Christianity in India, one will find that it never became a hindrance to the socio-political and cultural development of India. Rather, it enlightened the social, cultural and economic status of India through various aspects. The importance of massive public education in the task of nation-building cannot be overstated. In the long established nation-states, public schools serve as agents of political socialization. The work of Christianity was not confined to religious or spiritual areas alone, but also covered the secular fields like, educational, medical, vocational, social and cultural. Further, a number of consultations have been held by the Church leaders in various parts of the country to arouse a sense of political responsibility among the Christian Churches in India. One of the findings of the consultations was that Christians were to be involved in politics, and it was affirmed that Christian participation in the life of the state was a moral duty. Thus, the churches in India had obviously played a constructive role in the socio-political development and the nation building.

#### Northeast Region of India

The Northeast region of India is comprised of eight states viz., Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Sikkim. The region is poorly connected to the mainland of India by a small corridor and surrounded by

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<sup>11</sup> D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *op.cit.*, p. 124.



countries such as Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and China. The traditional tribes in the Northeast are largely of Tibeto-Burma Mongoloid stock and closer ethno-socially to the people of Southeast Asia. They are ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states of India. Further, there is a great ethnic and religious diversity within the region, except that they share similarities in their socio-political and economic spheres. Though cultural and ethnic diversity are not causes for conflict, one of the major problem areas is that the Northeast was territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries in the 1950s. This has given rise to discontentment and the assertions of identity, which have resulted in various forms of conflict in the region.

It was after the country's Independence in 1947 and in the wake of reorganization of international borders with Eastern neighbors like East Pakistan/Bangladesh, Tibet/China, Burma/Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan that the Northeast India emerged as a separate geographical region. The Northeast India is connected rather precariously with the Indian mainland by the narrow (about 21 kilometers-wide) Siliguri Corridor, popularly known as the "chicken neck". The region has been known as one of the world's greatest migratory routes, cutting across such countries like Tibet/China, Nepal, Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, and East Bengal/Pakistan/Bangladesh. As a result, the region has provided a veritable meeting ground of many races and communities throughout history.<sup>12</sup> Despite the otherwise closed international borders, many communities living there continue to maintain greater social, cultural, and economic affinities with the people across these borders than

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<sup>12</sup> Samir Kumar Das, *Conflict and Peace in India's Northeast: The Role of Civil Society* (Washington, D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007), p.6.

with those of mainland India. A significant part of agriculture production, particularly in the hills and terraces, is still characterized by the practice of “jhum” or “swidden” (slash and burn) cultivation, with extremely low productivity. The region is relatively poor and backward in terms of both industry and communications, and most of the states in the region rank poorly on India’s human development index.<sup>13</sup> The indigenous peoples of this region are freely referred to as “tribes” and mostly belong to the Mongoloid stock.

From the beginning of the last century when the British annexation culminated in the establishment of frontiers and frontier outposts, many groups and communities who claimed themselves to be native to the region were alarmed at the rapid influx of outsiders from across the frontiers. These frontiers include international borders and those of their respective states and imagined homelands. This fear of being in a minority or being reduced to one in the near future in what they know as their own homeland has opened up a new era of ethnic politics in the region.<sup>14</sup> As such, the post-Independence era has seen the emergence of a number of militant groups in the region. Thus, the Northeast India has become a theater of the earliest and long-lasting insurgency in the country. According to one estimate, about sixty-five major militant organizations were found operating in the region.<sup>15</sup> Almost all the states except Sikkim are currently affected by some form of insurgent violence in the region.

#### Role of Christianity in the Northeast Region of India

Due to their ignorance and illiteracy, the tribal communities were excluded for a long

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.1.

time from any developmental projects in the region. This exclusion ended with the arrival of the Christian missionaries who introduced formal education to these marginalized communities. The introduction of the new religion (Christianity) transformed tribal traditions, culture and customs. Thus, Christianity became a formidable agent that brought about transformation in the socio-cultural and political life of the people. Through extensive education, Christian institutions aroused consciousness among the tribal people about the oppressive system that was hindering their growth and also fostered in them a desire for freedom, justice and prosperity.

Socio-political consciousness among the tribal communities in the Northeast India was mostly the result of formal education brought in by the Christian missionaries. Much of the credit for all these developments goes to the Christian missionaries who exposed the tribal people to several benefits of formal education. Christianity also played a major role in the emergence and growth of socio-political awareness among the people in the Northeast India. The evangelistic work of different Christian missionaries has brought about a lot of changes in the socio-cultural and political life of the people in Northeast India. Introduction of Christianity, with its emphasis on religious values of love and forgiveness, has positively reduced the inter-tribal feuds and stopped the practice of head-hunting among the tribal people. The Christian missionaries have also brought about economic changes especially by improving agriculture, dairy farming, providing technical education, printing skills, architecture and jurisprudence. Christianity has also contributed towards changing the political process in the Northeast states. Thus, by accepting Christianity the tribal people of

Northeast India have been able to revitalize and modernize their socio-political life to a large extent.

In the Northeast region, Mizoram is one of the highly religious states, where Christians are the majority group. There are Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu minorities living in the state. It is inhabited by the tribal groups of Tibeto-Burmese race. During the period 1750-1850, Mizo (Lushai) migrations led to settlements in the hills. They were known as Lushais, governed under a hereditary chieftainship. The Lushais are the predominant tribal people, besides a few other tribes like Pawi, Lakher, Chakma, Riang among others that inhabited the hills. The Mizos had been living in their present territory when the British took possession of the region in 1891. Since that period until the installation of the District Council in 1952, the Mizos were looked after and managed by the traditional chiefs. Under the rule of their respective chiefs, each village and society strived to become self-reliant, self-governing and independent. The system of rule by the local chiefs was based on the hereditary chieftainship that was the only form of administrative organization in the Lushai Hills till the later part of the twentieth century. After the amalgamation of North and South Lushai Hills in 1898, there were several socio-political developments within the District. From the chief-based administration, the socio-political administration of the Mizo Hills was transformed into a formal democratic order down the years, with politically conscious intellectuals, who undertook initiatives for the establishment of civil society organizations.

Prior to the advent of the British, the Mizos did not have a political organization that encompassed the entire tribe. However, the Mizos had an efficient system of

administration and discipline as a distinct group governed by their traditional laws, customs and organizations. The traditional political system was based on kinship structure that revolved around the concept of chieftainship and that of territorial jurisdiction over which it wielded authority, and the village was the highest political unit. Each village had its own government, and a Chief (Lal) functioned as administrator for the entire village. The socio-political life of the Mizos was dominated by their religious beliefs. The religious functions were performed under the guidance of village chiefs. As such, there was no question about the relationship between religion and political administration in the Mizo society. But when the British occupied the Lushai hills in 1891, the rights of the Chief were arbitrarily extinguished by the British. The power of the Chief was thus reduced and as a result, the Chief who had freely exercised his power previously was made a mere dependent on the British. This change was a landmark development in Mizoram as the Chief was no longer allowed to take an independent action against any of his subjects without prior permission from the British administration. At the same time, the British allowed the people to lodge complaints against the Chief.

Later on, the British administration was followed by the Christian missionaries. The introduction of Christianity by the missionaries brought about constructive changes in the life of Mizo people. One important aspect was that the Christian missionaries replaced the indigenous belief of animism with Christian beliefs. The Christian religion thus enlightened the minds of the local people. There was no formal education before the entry of the Christian missionaries. *Zawlbuk* (bachelor's dormitory) was the only social institution wherein young people were given education. This indigenous system of education was replaced by formal education.

The missionaries also converted the language (dialect) of the native people into writing (script). This was a great and significant change through which the people were able to read and write and this paved the way for socio-political transformation in the region.

#### Advent of Christianity in Mizoram

The entry of the British administration in the region was followed by the arrival of Christian missionaries at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the two Lushai Expeditions in 1871-1872 and 1888-1890 respectively,<sup>16</sup> and especially after the Expedition of 1890, the British extended their rule and jurisdiction over the Lushai Hills.<sup>17</sup> This paved the way for Christian missionaries to enter the area with the objective of popularizing and preaching the Christian faith among the Mizo people. The missionaries, through their valiant efforts gradually convinced the Mizos to accept the Christian faith. These Christian missionaries and their religious missions had a crucial political significance. Until the abolition of chieftainship in 1954, Mizo society was under the control of local chiefs.<sup>18</sup> Especially, during the formative years under the British rule, and in the early periods even after the entry of Christian missionaries, the socio-political and economic conditions and culture of the Mizos as a whole remained largely backward, under-developed and superstitious.

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<sup>16</sup> R.G. Woodthore, "The Lushai Expedition 1871-1871", in *Discovery of North-East India 11 Volumes, Vol. 8. Mizoram*. Ed. S.K. Sharma and Usha Sharma (New Delhi: Mittal Publication, 2005), p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Report on the Lushai Expedition of 1889-90, Intelligence Branch, Q.M. General's Deptt. Simla, 1893. Cited by R N. Singh, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> During the years in which the socio-political affairs of the administration were in the hands of the local chiefs, they used to construct pillars at the center called "Sutpui" inside the house of their chiefs. If anyone who committed a crime, was condemned by the society, and thereby faced the wrath of the public, rushed and reached the chief's house and laid his hands on that pillar, he would be automatically granted asylum by the chief. Nobody could lay their hands upon him, whatever serious crime it may be, and his daughter and the rest of his family, as well as his future offspring would then remain as the personal slaves of the chief throughout their lives.

The churches established by the missionaries opened up educational institutions, hospitals etc. and undertook numerous other social works. Gradually, they transformed the Mizo society according to the pattern of western culture and social organizations, while at the same time retaining their indigenous culture and traditions. As a consequence of their contact with western liberal education, the Mizo people have developed a sensible socio-political outlook, benefiting from the education imparted by the missionaries. Hence, the overall socio-political outlook of the Mizos also shifted away from the earlier influence of myths and superstitions. They realized their social and political conditions, and soon became more conscious about their socio-economic and political survival. Besides, the churches established by the missionaries, based on the principles of Christian faith, goodwill and peace, continued to serve as one of the major peace-brokers in times of crisis and political turmoil later on. The Church has been an important and one of the most active organizations that exerted influence on the socio-political administration of the state. Some of the notable early Christian mission societies that came to Mizoram were:

#### Visit of William Williams

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission was also popularly known as the Welsh Mission. William Williams, one of the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries was working at Shella in the Khasi Hills. He had visited some of the Mizo chiefs in the Sylhet prison, who were arrested and imprisoned by the British troops for attacking the British forts in Aizawl and Changsil. When William Williams came to know about the Mizos from his visit of the Mizo chiefs in prison, he wanted to visit Mizoram and preach the gospel among the Mizo people. But his assignment was to work among the Khasi people. Moreover, the British administration in Mizoram did

not allow any missionaries or visitors to enter into Mizoram because at that time the Mizo chiefs were still very hostile.<sup>19</sup> However, he could obtain a special permission to visit Mizoram and came along with the British troops. William Williams reached Aizawl on March 20, 1891 and left on April 17, 1891.<sup>20</sup>

During his short stay, William Williams observed the way of life of the Mizos, and tried to pick up their language. He distributed Bible pictures and tried with his limited capacity, to communicate the gospel. He had a strong desire to come back to Mizoram to work among the Mizos as a missionary. He wrote a letter to his mission board (Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission), urging them to start work in Mizoram without delay. Some writers stated that although he stayed for a very short period of time, he was the first missionary, who “first sought the name of Jesus” to the Mizos and the first person who brought to light the prospect of founding a new mission field for the Welsh Presbyterian Church.<sup>21</sup> William Williams was very much attracted by the Mizo people and he wrote to the Mission headquarters in Liverpool to take up Mizoram as its mission field. He also offered his services, expressing his strong desire to go there for teaching them the gospel. The Board reacted favorably and after getting the approval of the British officials of Assam, the Lushai Hills was formally adopted as a mission field by the General Assembly of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church in 1892.<sup>22</sup> However, it was reported that Williams died of typhoid within that year, and he was unable to fulfill the resolve he had made in Aizawl to return to serve the Mizo people. “In a letter written on May 24, 1892, John

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<sup>19</sup> *Baptist Church of Mizoram at a Glance* (Aizawl: Serampore Convocation Organizing Committee on behalf of Baptist Church of Mizoram, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1991), pp. 21-22.

<sup>21</sup> Saiathanga, *Mizo Kohran Chanchin (History of Mizo Church)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> print (Aizawl: The Mizo Theological Literature Committee, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture* (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997), pp. 191-192.



Jones, a Khasi missionary stated William Williams had died on April 21, 1892”.<sup>23</sup> After his death, however, the Welsh Mission formally adopted the Mizo hills as part of their mission field in June 1892. But they could not immediately send their missionaries to Mizoram.

#### Arthington Aborigines Mission

The Mizos (then known as Lushais) were a fierce tribe and they had a habit of raiding their neighboring places in Assam before the British government subdued them. In one such raid, they killed one James Winchester, a tea-gardener of *Alexandrapore* and they kidnapped his six year old daughter Mary Winchester, on January 23, 1871. When Robert Arthington, a wealthy person in Leeds and a mission enthusiast came to know about this, he had a great burden to reach the savage people of North East India with the gospel of Jesus Christ. After some time, in 1889, he happened to meet St. John Dalmas, a Baptist Mission Society (BMS) missionary working in Bengal, who told him that the hill tribes of North East India had not yet been reached with the gospel. This deeply touched him and he formed his own missionary society called “Arthington Aborigine Mission” in 1889, with a particular focus on working among the savage people in North East India. In 1890, Arthington sent out three missionaries and one of them was J.H. Lorrain. He sent out two more missionaries in the following years, who were also soon followed by another two missionaries. Among them was F. W. Savidge. After a few years, he sent out six more missionaries. Thus, all together Arthington sent out thirteen missionaries. He appointed St. John Dalmas to be the supervisor over all of them.<sup>24</sup> Two of these

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<sup>23</sup> Meirion Lloyd, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Baptist Church of Mizoram at a Glance*, op.cit., pp 3-4.

missionaries, F.W. Savidge<sup>25</sup> and J.H. Lorrain,<sup>26</sup> became the pioneer missionaries to the Mizo people.

On January 11, 1894, J.H. Lorrain and S.W. Savidge (known as Pu Buanga and Sap Upa by the local Mizo people) entered Mizoram.<sup>27</sup> Lorrain and Savidge stayed on for four years in Mizoram. Their contributions during these four years were significant. They engaged themselves with learning the Mizo language and converted the language into written form, using the Roman script. They were the first who taught the Mizos how to write and read the language. They translated the Bible and completed some portions of the New Testament such as the Gospels of Luke and John, and Acts of the Apostles in the Mizo language.<sup>28</sup> The Mizos had the whole New Testament translated into their language in May 1916. Lorrain and Savidge wrote hymns, a catechism, a simple primer, a grammar, and produced a dictionary of seven thousand words. Lorrain also composed “A Grammar and Dictionary of Lushai Language,” which was published in 1898 by the Government of Assam. They were willing to sacrifice all of their time to remain in the region. They requested the Welsh Mission to accept them as its evangelists, but the Welsh Mission did not accept their request. Therefore, they left Mizoram by the end of 1897.<sup>29</sup> The contributions made by the Arthington Aborigines Mission were remarkable.

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<sup>25</sup> The Pioneer missionaries who first served in Mizoram were not originally Baptists. F.W. Savidge was originally a Wesleyan, but was baptized in 1890 at High Gate Road Baptists Church, North London.

<sup>26</sup> J.H. Lorrain had a Congregational background, but was also baptized at the same Church where Savidge was baptized. After they became members of the Baptist Church, the two came to Mizoram in 1894 and worked for four years as missionaries of Arthington Aborigine Mission.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India Vol. V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Bangalore: The Church History Association of India, 1992), p.188.

<sup>28</sup> W.J.L. Wenger, *Pioneers in the Lushai Mission: Pioneers and Leaders of the Church in India* (Serampore: Church History Association of India, Burma and Ceylon, 1938), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *Church and State Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life 1952-2006* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2013), p.23.

### Welsh Presbyterian Mission

The Arthington missionaries had to move on, leaving the field to other mission societies. The first missionary of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission, David Evan Jones, accompanied by Dr. T.J. Jones and a Khasi Christian who was a teacher in government service, Rai Bhajur and his wife, arrived at Aizawl on August 31, 1897. Lorrain and Savidge met the party between Sairang and Changsil.<sup>30</sup> D.E. Jones received a warm welcome and a lot of help from Lorrain and Savidge, and they received considerable benefit from the four months they remained with him. In the next year, Edwin Rowlands joined them in the missionary work. The Welsh missionary work was mainly divided into four areas, such as education, preaching, medical, and literature. After the Baptist Mission came into contact with the Southern portion of the Lushai Hills in 1903, the Welsh Mission concentrated on the North Lushai Hills. The Welsh Mission contributed much to the social improvement of the Mizo society by providing primary education. The Mission also contributed towards the Mizos' social change and development through medical work.<sup>31</sup>

### Baptist Missionary Society

The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) sent Rev. George Hughes, their missionary working in Chittagong, to enquire about the possibility of working in the southern part of Mizoram. He came to Lunglei, a British administrative center in the southern part of Mizoram in September, 1901.<sup>32</sup> He found that the southern part of Mizoram was highly suitable for the BMS to work, and he urged the BMS to take necessary steps without delay. The BMS immediately made application to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission for the permission to work in the southern part of Mizoram.

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<sup>30</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p.199.

<sup>31</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op.cit., p.24.

<sup>32</sup> J. Meirion Lloyd, op. cit., p.74.

Their application was granted by the General Assembly of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission in 1902. Eventually, the BMS invited Savidge and Lorrain who were working in Arunachal Pradesh under the Assam Pioneer Mission, which they had formed with their friends after Arthington disqualified them from his mission. Savidge and Lorrain came back to Mizoram and they reached Lunglei on March 13, 1903. The Mizo people were happy to have two among them who knew their language and of whom they had already heard.<sup>33</sup> When Savidge and Lorrain came back to the south of Mizoram, there were already 125 Christians in the southern part of Mizoram, who were basically the fruit of the mission work of the Presbyterian missionaries D.E. Jones and Edwin Rowlands, and Sohan Roy, a Khasi Christian who was a government servant.<sup>34</sup> From the time of their arrival, Savidge and Lorrain took care of the mission work in the southern part of Mizoram, while the Presbyterian missionaries concentrated their work in the northern part of Mizoram.

#### Lakher Pioneer Mission

With the establishment of the Welsh Mission in the north centered at Aizawl and the Baptist Mission in the south centered at Serkawn, missionaries assumed responsibility for the whole area then encompassed by the Lushai Hills district. Another important mission work was started in the extreme southern part of Mizoram, which was inhabited by the Mara (called Lakher by others) people. The British did not administer the Mara area directly until a boundary demarcation brought the area within the Lushai Hills district in 1931-34.<sup>35</sup> A few Mara boys studied in the Baptist boarding school at Serkawn and Reginald A. Lorrain, the brother of J.H. Lorrain and his wife decided to undertake the mission work in the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.75.

<sup>34</sup> *Baptist Church of Mizoram at a Glance*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

<sup>35</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., pp. 203-204.

Mara area. Accordingly they founded the Lakher Pioneer Mission in 1905 with the help of some interested friends. After undergoing medical training and a long journey, they arrived at Serkawn in the Mara area on September 26, 1907. J.H. Lorrain and his wife accompanied them for the last leg of the journey and helped them start their mission center at Serkawn. Within five years, Reginald Lorrain reduced the language to writing and produced a dictionary, a hymn book and translated the Gospel of John.<sup>36</sup>

#### Growth of Christianity in Mizoram

Christianity grew at an extraordinary rate in Mizoram, much more rapidly than among any other tribal group in North East India. Despite the sparse population, within fifty years of introduction of the new religion, there were more Christians in Mizoram than in the areas where missionary work had been going on for one hundred years. However, this does not mean that the Mizo people living in Mizoram accepted Christianity as soon as it was introduced. Initially there was fear, and suspicion about the intentions of missionaries. The first decade was mainly a time for preparation. The only person that the two pioneers, Lorrain and Savidge, claimed to have converted during their four years of work in the north, namely Taibunga, died without being baptized, while undergoing treatment in the hospital. The first two converts, Khuma and Khara, were baptized by D.E. Jones on June 25, 1899, but one of them, Khara, soon denounced his faith and went back to his old ways. Thus, the twentieth century began with only one Mizo Christian,<sup>37</sup> which means the rapid growth of Christianity in Mizoram took place only from the twentieth century onwards.

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<sup>36</sup> Reginald A. Lorrain, *Five Years in Unknown Jungles* (London: Lakher Pioneer Mission, 1912), p. 269.

<sup>37</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p. 209.

Today, Christianity has become the main religion in Mizoram, and the Church played its role in shaping the socio-political life of people in the state. Among the major Christian denominational churches in Mizoram, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church (MPC), the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) and the Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM) were founded by the pioneer missionaries. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod was founded by Rev. D.E. Jones of Welsh Presbyterian Church. The Church forms the largest Christian denomination in Mizoram.<sup>38</sup> It is one of the constituent bodies of Presbyterian Church of India, which has its headquarters in Shillong, Meghalaya. The administrative body of the Mizoram Synod has its headquarters at Mission Veng, Aizawl.<sup>39</sup> The Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) that constituted the second largest denomination was founded by BMS missionaries, Rev. J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge in 1894. The BCM is dominating the southern part of Mizoram. The administrative body of BCM has its headquarters at Serkawn, Lunglei District.<sup>40</sup> The Evangelical Church of Maraland forms the largest denomination among the Mara people. The Church was founded by Rev. and Mrs. Reginald Arthur Lorrain, the younger brother of Rev. J.H. Lorrain and his wife. They were the first pioneer missionary to the Mara people in the southernmost part of Mizoram in 1907.<sup>41</sup> Thus, ECM was one of the three Churches founded by the pioneer missionaries in Mizoram, other than the Mizoram Presbyterian Church and Baptist Church of Mizoram.

On the other hand, the Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran (LIKBK) located in the southern corner of Mizoram, bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh also claimed to be

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<sup>38</sup> "Presbyterian Church of India Mizoram Synod," [www.mizoramynod.org](http://www.mizoramynod.org), retrieved on August 17, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> "Christianity in Mizoram," <https://en.wikipedia.org>, retrieved on August 17, 2018.

<sup>40</sup> "Baptist Church of Mizoram," <https://en.wikidepia.org>, retrieved on August 17, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> "Evangelical Church of Maraland," <https://en.wikidepia.org>, retrieved on August 17, 2018.

founded by the pioneer missionaries, namely, F.W. Savidge and J.H. Lorrain.<sup>42</sup> The Lai people, after the gospel was introduced to them, came together and joined the Baptist Church of Mizoram. In 1970, a group of Lai people detached themselves from the Baptist Church of Mizoram and organized their own association called “The Church of Jesus Christ” (Isua Krista Kohhran). Later, another group of Lai people again separated from the Baptist Church of Mizoram in 1982. This group was called “Lairam Baptist Church” (Lairam Baptist Kohhran). In 1999, these two groups merged into a single association called “The Church of Jesus Christ Lairam” (Isua Krista Kohhran Lairam) without bearing the word, Baptist. However, since their origin and practice was Baptist, at the annual Assembly of 2003 at Electric Local Church in Lawngtlai town, the Assembly unanimously resolved to rename the church as “Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church” (Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran).<sup>43</sup> The administrative set up of LIKBK is centralized and has its headquarters at Lawngtlai (one of the revenue districts in Mizoram), the capital of Lai Autonomous District Council.

Other major denominational churches who wield considerable influence in Mizoram are, the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic, the United Pentecostal Church (Mizoram & Northeast India), the Evangelical Free Church of India and the Seventh-Day Adventist. Besides, there are a number of smaller churches and para churches. There are also some other religious groups in Mizoram, which can be termed as minority religious groups. The people of these groups mostly follow the religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. Thus, the Church established by the missionaries has greatly influenced the general conception about social and political

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<sup>42</sup> “Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church,” <http://lairamchristbaptist.org>, retrieved on August 17, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

values of the people as a whole. The Church has been regarded as the foremost factor for the socio-political and economic modernization and development in Mizoram. The social values in the Mizo society are greatly founded upon their Christian faith and principles. The Church plays a vital role in the socio-political dynamics in Mizoram and serves as one of the major facilitators in the socio-political process.

#### Definition of Church

The term “Church” is derived from the Hebrew word *qahal*<sup>44</sup> and the Greek word *ekklesia*<sup>45</sup> meaning “assembly,” “congregation,” “call out.” The words *qahal* and *ekklesia* refer to the assembly of people, assembled for different purposes, religious or secular. But the concept is closely related to divine assembly which can be largely considered as a religious assembly. And the Church may also refer to a building used for public worship. The Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines Church as “an official Christian religious organization”<sup>46</sup> and the Oxford Reference English defines Church as “the body of all Christians.”<sup>47</sup> In fact, the Church popularly refers to a Christian religious organization, like, the Catholic Church, the Church of England, the Southern Baptist Church amongst many others. It is also defined as the universal Church of the whole Christian community. For the purpose of this research, the term “Church” refers to the universal Church and the term “churches” in this study refers to all denominational Churches in Mizoram.

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<sup>44</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, *Dictionary of Old Testament and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing house, nd), p.888.

<sup>45</sup> Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, nd), p.95.

<sup>46</sup> *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 231.

<sup>47</sup> *Oxford Reference English* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 262.



### What is Civil Society?

A civil society is comprised of groups or organizations working in the interest of citizens, but operating outside the governmental and for-profit sectors. Organizations that make up civil society include labor unions, non-profit organizations, churches and other service agencies that provide an important service to society, but generally ask for very little in return.<sup>48</sup> The groups forming the civil society work voluntarily to bring about social and civic changes and provide better services to the people. In other words, a civil society may be a professional group, labor union, religious organization, or some other organization which fights for citizen rights. These organizations may also provide a platform to various sections of society to ensure that people actively participate in democracy.

### Review of Literature

There is no doubt that a number of books and articles have been written on the role of Church in Mizoram politics by various scholars and writers. However, an indepth study of the role of Church in the socio-political dynamics as adopted in this thesis has not been undertaken yet, in the researcher's knowledge. Some of the existing literature is reviewed in the following paragraphs.

John Vanlal Hluna, in his book, "Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram"<sup>49</sup> narrates the political history of Mizoram and the social administration of the Mizo society. It highlights the growth of Church and its involvement in electoral politics. The writer explains how the Church played an important role as a political mediator

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<sup>48</sup> "What is a Civil Society?-Definition & Example." [study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-civil-society-definition-example.html](https://www.study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-civil-society-definition-example.html), retrieved on May 8, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> John Vanlal Hluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Mizo History Association, 1985).

between the Mizo National Front and the Indian government, as the government was trying to bring about political settlement within the framework of the Indian Constitution. The book is informative and helpful for the proposed research to some extent but it does not deal with the socio-political dynamics in the post-statehood period.

H. Lalrinthanga in “Church and State Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life 1952 to 2006”<sup>50</sup> focuses on Mizo socio-political history from a historical perspective. The book highlights the social background of Mizo people and discusses how Christianity in Mizoram which, while dichotomizing “Sacred” and “Secular,” affected the Mizo social practices. The author also studies the transition period (1946-1951) of the development of political consciousness among the Mizos. It further narrates the relationship of the Church and the State under the Mizo district council. The book focuses on the Church and State relationship when the Mizo Hills became a Union Territory and how the Church began to play a significant role in the political life of the state. The book is informative and helpful to great extent but its approach on the role of the Church in politics is different from the present research.

Mankhosat Kipgen’s book on “Christianity and Mizo Culture”<sup>51</sup> does an indepth study not only on Mizo Christianity, but also on Mizo culture. It begins with a persuasive argument for the use of the name “Zo” that represents numerous clans like those living in India, Burma and Bangladesh borders as an anthropological classification of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo people. It proceeds with an in-depth study of the traditional Mizo culture, demonstrating the interrelatedness of political, social and aesthetic dimensions, which combine to create an integrated ethical code called

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<sup>50</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *Church and State Relationship in the Mizo Socio-Political Life 1952 to 2006* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2013).

<sup>51</sup>Mankhosat Kipgen, *Christianity and Mizo Culture* (Aizawl: Mizo Theological Conference, 1997).

“Tlawmngaihna.” The book describes the growth of Christianity in Mizoram. The author rediscovers much about the Mizo traditional values rather than the political process. As such the book will be helpful for relocating the historical background of the Mizo people.

K.M. Zakhuma in “Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A Study with Special Reference to Political Parties in Mizoram,”<sup>52</sup> attempts to report the past events from an academic point of view. The book briefly highlights the social background of the land and the people of Mizoram. It proceeds to study the political and administrative developments of the Mizo people before 1947. The writer also discusses the process of political developments among the Mizos and other hill peoples in the North-East. He further studies the parties and party politics in the state and the Assembly Elections of 1987, which is useful in helping the present work to trace the development of the political process in Mizoram.

R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal in their book on “Political and Economic Development of Mizoram”<sup>53</sup> have divided their work into two parts, the first part includes different research papers that provide a comprehensive account of different dimensions of the government and politics in Mizoram. The book also discusses various political factors involved in the elevation of the Mizo Hills district to the status of Union Territory of Mizoram. It further highlights different trends in Mizo politics in the period (1974-1986), the merger of the Mizo Union party with a national party like the Congress (I), and the emergence of a new political party, the

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<sup>52</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A Study with Special Reference to Political Parties in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Sangkungi, 2001).

<sup>53</sup> R.N. Prasad & A.K. Agarwal, *Political and Economic Development of Mizoram* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1991).

People's Conference (PC) and its coming into power in the state. The book also discusses the election politics in Mizoram and analyzed the Assembly elections of 1987, which identified the trends of Mizo politics during the general and midterm polls to the Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha during the period (1972-1983). It also studies the Mizo National Front and its political activities. The first part of the book covers the village administration in Mizoram and also the general elections to the Mizoram State Assembly in 1989. The second part of the book focuses on the problems and prospects, related to the economic development in the state. There is useful material in this book for the present research, particularly in analyzing the process of electoral politics in the state.

J. Meirion Lloyd's book "History of the Church in Mizoram" (Harvest in the Hills)<sup>54</sup> discusses the earlier primitive life of the Mizo people, and the socio-political changes brought about by the Christian missionaries. The book tells the story mainly about missionaries and their contribution to the growth of Christian Churches from the earliest period up to the time that they were compelled to leave the country. The writer himself was a missionary for several years. The book is helpful for providing the historical background of the study.

In his book, "Mizoram: Past and Present,"<sup>55</sup> H.G. Joshi discusses the historical development of Mizoram, including the social life in the family and village set up of the Mizo people. The book also discusses how the Mizos' primitive religion was transformed by the new religion (Christianity) that brought about dynamic changes in their socio-economic development. It further describes the formation of the Mizo

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<sup>54</sup> J. Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1991).

<sup>55</sup> H.G. Joshi, *Mizoram: Past and Present* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005).

National Front and its political movement, which is important in enhancing the reader's understanding of the political background of the formation of Mizoram state. Though the book is resourceful, it does not discuss the role of the Church in socio-political changes.

T.B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal and Shaji Joseph Puykunnel in their edited book on "Christianity and Change in Northeast India"<sup>56</sup> have brought together twenty four papers on the role of Christianity in bringing about socio-cultural change in Northeast India. Providing conceptual, regional, community and gender perspectives, the book takes stock of cultural change among the tribes of Northeast India, and offers reflections on identity, culture, cultural change and Christianity. The book also discusses the contribution of Christianity towards development of literacy and education in the region, and the interface between customary and formal laws and its impact on tribal culture. The book is informative and resourceful for any study on the role of Christianity in the socio-cultural development of the region.

S.K. Chaube's book "Electoral Politics in North East India"<sup>57</sup> provides a glimpse of Hills Politics in North East India. The book briefly mentions the political developments in Mizoram such as the way the MNF-led insurgency organized activities in the process of their political movement and the process of their becoming one of the regional political parties in the state. The writer acknowledges the participation of Church and other civil society organizations in the electoral politics. However, the book has a limited scope and does not give any details on the political process in Mizoram.

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<sup>56</sup> T.B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal and Shaji Joseph Puykunnel, eds. *Christianity and Change in Northeast India* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> S.K. Chaube, *Electoral Politics in Northeast India* (Madras: Universities Press, 1985).

Shabnum Tejani's book "Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950"<sup>58</sup> discusses how the idea of secularism emerged in India. The author shows that the idea of secularism that emerged in 1950 had its conceptual preconditions in histories of nationalism, communalism, and British colonial discourses. The author also argues that the distinction between religion and caste that has characterized debates on Indian secularism is false. The book is resourceful for research students of various disciplines such as political science, history, as well as sociology.

Ram Puniyani's edited book, "Religion, Power and Violence"<sup>59</sup> is a collection of various articles by different contributors and it discusses how religion and politics had coexisted in the world since ancient times. The contributors mostly focus on the rise of communalism in recent years as the major claimant to power in Indian politics. The articles in this book have been written against the backdrop of the 9/11 attacks on the USA, US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, the worldwide demonization of Islam, and the Mumbai blasts and the Gujarat riots in India, as well as the Hindutva strategy of oppressing the tribals, Dalits, women and other minority groups. The book is a thought-provoking work for researchers in the field of politics, history and religion.

Tina Saji's book "Christian Social Reformers"<sup>60</sup> discusses the history of Reformation with the intention of describing a great religious movement amid its social environment. The writer describes five distinct but inter-related social and religious conditions of the age out of which the great movement came, the Lutheran

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<sup>58</sup> Shabnum Tejani, *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950* (RanikhetCantt: Permanent Black, 2007).

<sup>59</sup> Ram Puniyani, *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).

<sup>60</sup> Tina Saji, *Christian Social Reformers* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2010).

Reformation down to 1555 when it received legal recognition, the reformation in countries beyond Germany which did not submit to the guidance of Luther, the issue of certain portions of the religious life of the Middle Ages in Anabaptism, Socinianism, and Anti-Trinitarianism, and finally, the counter-Reformation. The book also deals with the social and religious context of the age which gave birth to the Reformations which is helpful in understanding the socio-political background of various countries.

O.L. Snaitang and Merostar Rani's edited book, "Christianity and National Integration"<sup>61</sup> is a collection of scholarly papers that were read at a national seminar. The book covers most of the themes related to the origin, growth and development of Christianity in India and most importantly, in relation to its role in nation building and national integration. The book is informative and helps to understand the dynamics of Christianity's presence and role among different sections of the society in the country.

Lalramthanga's book, "Mizoram People's Forum" Annual General Meeting Vawi 6-Na (The 6<sup>th</sup> General Meeting) October 4, 2014<sup>62</sup> is an annual report on the Mizoram People's Forum and its activities. It covers various activities of the MPF on electoral reforms and good governance in Mizoram, such as Village Council elections, Local Council elections and various seminars and consultations conducted by the MPF. It also includes the "election guidelines" for the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections. The book is informative and a helpful resource for the present research.

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<sup>61</sup> O.L Snaitang and Merostar Rani, eds. *Christianity and National Integration* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Lalramthanga, "The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Mizoram People's Forum," October 4, 2012, Vanapa Hall, Aizawl.

Johanna Kristin Birnir and Nil S. Satana's article, "Religion and Coalition",<sup>63</sup> which was published in the journal, *Comparative Political Studies*, examines the effect of a minority constituency, religion on the probability that a religious representative would participate in the governing coalition after the elections. It observes that coalition is important to the minority for policy reasons and the credit for including minority may be equally important for the majority, particularly where minority issues are politically silent. The article also highlights the recent findings in the broader context about religion and politics - that the probability of the minority involvement in political conflict depends on whether or not the minority communities differ from the majority in religious, family or other denominations.

Another work that discusses the different aspects of the socio-political life of the present state of Mizoram is A.P.K. Singh's book, "Political Scenario of Mizoram-Past and Present"<sup>64</sup>. The author covers the political process of Mizoram during 1952-2013. It includes the socio-political background of the land and its people. It also highlights the insurgency movement in Mizoram and role of the Church in bringing about peace and normalcy. It also discusses the trend of Electoral Politics and role of the Church and Civil societies in reforming the political process in the state. This book is informative and resourceful for the purpose of this research.

J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng's book, "The Mizo Uprising: Assam Assembly Debates on the Mizo Movement, 1966-1971"<sup>65</sup> discusses the Mizo National Front

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<sup>63</sup>Johanna Kristin Birnir and Nil S. Satana, "Religion and Coalition", in *CPS Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 46. No.1, January 2014.

<sup>64</sup> A.P.K. Singh, *Political Scenario of Mizoram-Past and Present* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2016).

<sup>65</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, *The Mizo Uprising: Assam Assembly Debates on the Mizo Movement, 1966-1971* (Cambridge: Scholars Publishing, 2012).



Movement under the leadership of Laldenga in the Lushai Hills district of Assam. It also provides important notes on the grievances of the Mizo people during the insurgency period as the writers are of the opinion that the government responded with cruelty upon the MNF movement that even affected the innocent people. The book provides a record of the reasons and responsibilities about the outbreak in Mizo Hills. It also discusses at length the political negotiation between the MNF and the Government of India. The author also highlights the role of Church and civil societies in the process of political development and peace settlement, and thereby provides relevant sources to understand the present context of Mizoram state.

D. Arthur Jeyakumar in his book, "Christians and the National Movement: The Memoranda of 1919 and the National Movement with Special Reference to Protestant Christians in Tamil Nadu: 1919-1939,"<sup>66</sup> deals with the implications of Christian participation in nation building. It discusses the history, contents and purpose of the memoranda. Further, the book investigates the support given to the National Movement by missionaries, non-British and British, in Tamil Nadu. It also discusses the participation of Indian Christians in the National Movement outside Tamil Nadu. The book is informative and provides relevant resources for building awareness of Church participation in politics.

Thus, the above brief survey of existing literature on various aspects of Church and Politics reveals that although there are valuable contributions made by scholars and researchers, there is limited available data for the present work. The existing literature is inadequate to better understand the role of Church in politics in the post-

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<sup>66</sup> D. Arthur Jeyakumar, *Christians and the National Movement* (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2009).

statehood period of Mizoram. The relation of Church and politics in Mizoram is unique in the socio-political dynamics in Mizoram. Besides, the role played by Church in Mizoram politics needs a thorough investigation for this study. Since the existing literature is limited on the particular subject, there is a rationale for the research. While books and articles authored by academics and researchers are insufficient, the study will be based on primary sources, particularly data collected through questionnaires and interviews.

#### Statement of the Problem

Like any of the states in India, religion plays a crucial role in Mizoram politics. The Church is not just a religious institution in the state, it is accepted as a way of life, the center of social activities. The state of Mizoram is marked by a series of distinct socio-religious and political dynamics. The Church has been regarded as the facilitator of socio-political modernization in the state. Constructive role of the Church in the political process is acknowledged by various sections of society. The Church has greatly influenced general perceptions about social and political values in the society as a whole. The Church is also highly regarded as the precursor of various civil society organizations in the state. As such, the Church played a vital role in shaping the socio-cultural lives of the people, as well as their political inclinations. One of the most notable contributions of civil society organizations, particularly the Church was demonstrated during the socio-political turmoil in the Mizo Hills District of Assam. In fact, during the insurgency period, the Church was actively involved in the politics of state with the objective of bringing about peace and normalcy in the District. Another notable contribution of the Church in Mizoram politics is the reformation of the electoral process. With the elevation of Mizoram from Union

Territory status to a state, the role of Church and civil societies became more focused on good governance and electoral reforms in state politics. Constructive role of the Church for cleansing electoral politics is acknowledged by the media and as well as the Election Commission.

Thus, socio-political dynamics in Mizoram is different from other states in the country. The main distinguishing factor is the constructive role played by the Church in the political process. More than any other social organizations in the state, the Church and its networks incorporate pressure groups and influence the political environment. The Church brings together people from different socio-cultural and political backgrounds thus paving the way for ensuring social harmony in the society. In this regard, the Church serves as an agent of social change. Therefore, the political process is distinctive in Mizoram. There are several social political reforms being initiated in the state which had multiple implications on the political process like electoral reform, social reform, administrative reform, educational reforms and socio-economic changes.

#### Scope and Limitation

The research covers the socio-religious and political dimensions of Mizoram. The scope of the study is limited to the role of Church in the socio-religious and political changes in the state. The study includes the theoretical and historical dimensions of the political process. It also covers the role of civil societies, particularly the contribution of Church during the socio-political turmoil in the Mizo Hills District of Assam in bringing about peace and normalcy. The main focus of the research is on the emergence of the Church in the reformation of electoral politics and good

governance in Mizoram. Though the research highlights the overall contribution of the Churches in Mizoram, the study mainly concentrates on the contribution of churches in Mizoram and the role of the Mizoram People Forum on electoral reforms and good governance.

#### Significance of the Study

This study aims to discuss the role of Church in the socio-political changes in Mizoram. The research is significant as it examines on the role of Church in the political process and how far this has brought about positive changes in Mizoram in different spheres of life, so as to establish good governance and stable government in the state. This study is also significant in that it explores some critical viewpoints concerning the role of Church in politics for the purpose of ensuring stability of Church-polity relations in Mizoram.

#### Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the socio-religious and political dynamics in the state of Mizoram
2. To analyze the role of Church in political process
3. To examine the political implications of Church influence
4. To explore the overall contribution of the Church towards the political process

## Hypotheses

On the basis of outlined objectives the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. Mizoram witnessed a series of socio-religious and political changes in the state
2. The Church is instrumental in bringing about certain socio-political reforms
3. The Church-polity engagement has had positive political implications
4. The constructive role of the Church led to reform the political process as well as Governance

## Methodology

The research is undertaken from a socio-political perspective. The influence of the Church in state politics can be understood in the light of the socio-political process in Mizoram. The researcher has used both qualitative and quantitative research methodology to obtain primary data, so as to come to a more thorough understanding of the research area. Interviews of Church and civil society leaders were conducted as part of the qualitative research. In addition, research data was obtained from filled in questionnaires of 151 respondents for the quantitative research. Secondary sources including newspaper reports, organizational reports, books, journal articles etc. have been used as well.

## Collection of Data

The method of data collection includes questionnaire, interviews and collection of published and unpublished materials.

## Questionnaire

As primary sources, questionnaire and interview methods were applied in the data collection. Structured (closed-ended) questions containing twenty five questions on the research topic were constructed. The questionnaire helps to comprehend the role of the Church in socio-political dynamics in Mizoram politics. The question sequence was arranged in such a way as to make the questionnaire effective and to ensure quality to the replies received. The questionnaire was categorized into four sections, such as, the contribution of Church during the insurgency movement, the role of Church in the reformation of electoral politics, the socio-political implication on the role of Church and the overall contribution of the Church towards the political process in Mizoram. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed to the people belonging to different backgrounds in terms of sex, age, education and professions. Out of the two hundred questionnaires distributed, one hundred fifty one filled questionnaires were received by the researcher. The respondents were from various sections of people from all the eight districts of Mizoram. Appendix I (B) provides the detailed information and table analysis of respondents.

**Gender Composition:** The sex composition of the respondents is imbalanced. 60.9% of the respondents were male and 39.1% were female.

**Age Group:** The age groups of questionnaire respondents were categorized into three levels: 25-35, 36-45 and 46 above. 57.6% of the respondents were from the age group of 25-35 years. 25.8% of respondents were in the age group of 36-45 years and 16.6% were 46 years and above.

**Educational Qualification:** The questionnaire was primarily directed to the adults so as to receive reliable answers from educated people on the research subject. Most of the respondents were graduate and above. Only 9.9% of the respondents were under graduates. 67.6% of the respondents were graduates and 19.8% of respondents to the questionnaire were post graduates. There were relatively very few respondents consisting of 2.7% of the total respondents holding doctorate degree in various fields.

**Occupation:** 18.6 % of the questionnaire respondents are government servants who are working in the institutions at College level and various government sectors. 20.6% of the respondents are employees from private sectors, mostly working in the institutions and NGOs. 11.2% of the questionnaire respondents are political party leaders from different political parties and 13.2% are Church workers from various denominational Churches. Over a third (36.4%) belong to other categories like unemployed, students and pensioners.

**Church Denomination:** Questionnaires were also distributed to members of various denominational Churches in Mizoram. 35.1% of the respondents belong to Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. 23.9 % of the respondents were from the Baptist Church of Mizoram. 9.3% respondents belong to the United Pentecostal Church and 7.3% from the Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church. 1.3% to 5.3 % respondents were from Bru Baptist Church, Chakma Baptist Church, Evangelical Church of Maraland, Evangelical Free Church of India, Isua Krista Kohhran, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army and Seventh Day Adventist. 2.6% of the respondents did not specify which Church denomination they belong to. The analysis of data is based on the answers

received from the respondents as it is considered to give a fairly representative picture on the proposed research.

### Interviews

Interviews were conducted with leaders of the following Churches: Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM), Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI), Lairam Isua Krista Kohhran (LIKBK), Mizoram Presbyterian Church (MPC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC), Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA), Salvation Army (SA), and United Pentecostal Church (UPC). All of them hold important posts in their respective Churches. At the same time, interviews were also conducted with leaders of the following political parties such as, Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo National Front (MNF), Zoram People's Movement (ZPM is a banner of six small regional parties), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the People's Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM). An interview was also conducted with leaders of the Mizoram People Forum (MPF), which is the socio-political reform body in the state.

Apart from Church and political leaders, presidents of Central Young Mizoram Association (CYMA), Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and Mizo Students' Union (MSU) were also interviewed, besides some prominent leaders and academicians. Interviews of leaders from various sections of the society were enlightening. Their views and experiences enrich the research to a great extent. Primary sources also include press releases, leaflets, newspaper clippings, Church documents and pamphlets that were related to the proposed research.



Secondary sources for the research include government documents, circulars and political parties' documents, civil society's documents, journal articles, books, research publications and unpublished dissertation and relevant websites.

#### Data Analysis Procedure

Data collected through both the primary and secondary sources were cross-checked and analyzed on both quantitative and qualitative basis. The collected data were organized category-wise and chronologically, and reviewed as often as necessary. Few books and articles deal with the present work in some aspects. Some books which have been accessed are not directly related with the present study, but are helpful in establishing the historical context and to provide adequate information for the proposed research.

#### Structure of the Research

As part of organizing the study on the basis of specific objectives and themes, the study is divided into six chapters.

The first chapter deals with some of the important methodological concerns of the research namely, the introduction, statement of the problem, literature review, objectives of the study, hypotheses, methodology, scope and limitations and, the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter discusses the historical background of socio-religious, political and administrative systems from the traditional chieftainship to the formation of statehood. This chapter provides the relevant scope to understand the present context

of Mizoram state. The chapter also highlights the genesis and development of the socio-political process that helped to locate the problem of study. The primary focus of the study is the role of Church in all these processes that helps in understanding the political process in the post-statehood period.

The third chapter explores socio-political reforms in the context of Church involvement. First part of the chapter highlights the electoral processes in Mizoram and the emergence of Church role in the socio-political reforms of the state. Second part of the chapter discusses the role of Church in the reformation of electoral politics of Mizoram in the post-statehood period. The study mainly focuses on the role of Church spearheaded by the Mizoram People Forum on electoral reforms and good governance in Mizoram that constitute the dynamics in the post-statehood era.

The fourth chapter investigates the role of the Church in the political process that brought about multiple socio-political implications in the state. The chapter also discusses how the Church and civil society organizations coordinated with each other and with the government to make the political process an effective exercise in the state. Finally, it examines certain implications that brought about socio-political reforms in the state.

The fifth chapter explores diverse problems and prospects owing to the role of Church in the state politics. The chapter discusses the relationship between Church and politics, and the engagement of Church associations in politics. The chapter also discusses the importance of keeping a cordial relationship amongst various denominational Churches in a dynamic and dialectical balance, giving full and equal

weight to each other so as to have better cooperation towards politics. The discussions highlight problems and prospects that prevailed in the context of Church and politics in Mizoram. Finally, the chapter analyzes the functioning style of Mizoram People Forum (MPF) which is the social political reform body of Church and civil societies in Mizoram.

The sixth chapter summarizes the findings of the study. It highlights the significance of Church role in the socio-political process of Mizoram and draws a few conclusions from the study.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKDROP

The Mizos had been living in their present territory when the British took possession of the region in 1891.<sup>1</sup> Since that period until the formation of the District Council in 1952, the Mizos had been looked after and managed by the traditional chiefs. Under the rule of their respective chiefs, each village and the society within it strived to become self-reliant, self-governing and independent. Besides, declaration of the area as one of the “Tribal Areas” by the “Government of India Act 1935” and the subsequent declaration of the area as “Excluded Area” in 1936 under the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Order 1936, had rendered the Hill District to a period of isolation and political turmoil.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, any attempt to study the political and administrative affairs in general has been made difficult by the socio-political and economic consequences of the long period of isolation. From a chief-based administration, socio-political administration of the Mizo Hills had been transformed into a formal democratic order down the years, with politically enlightened and conscious intellectuals who had taken some initiatives for the establishment of civil society organizations, such as the Young Lushai Association (YLA), now known as the Young Mizo Association (YMA) in 1935, as well as political parties with the formation of the first Mizo political party, the Mizo Union in 1946.<sup>3</sup> From then on, several political parties and other influential civil society organizations were started, which played an integral part in the political

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<sup>1</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A Study with Special Reference to Political Parties in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Sangkungi, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> R. Zamawia, *Zofate Zinkawngah Zalenamei A Mittur A Ni Lo* (Aizawl: R. Zamawia, 2007), p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, op. cit., p. 2.

process of the state. This chapter discusses the historical background of the socio-religious, political and administrative systems from the period of traditional chieftainship to that of the formation of statehood. In doing so, it provides the relevant background to understand better the present context of Mizoram state. It also highlights the genesis and development of the political process that helped to locate the problem of study. The chapter would also discuss the role of Church in all these processes.

### Demographic Profile

The Mizos were formerly known as Lushais and the land where they lived was known as the Lushai Hills. They are now known as Mizos and the land where they live as Mizoram.<sup>4</sup> The present State of Mizoram was a part of Assam known as the Lushai Hills District. It was one of the districts in Assam in the extreme southern fringe of North East India. In 1954, the name of the Lushai Hills District was changed to the Mizo District Hills by the act of Parliament.<sup>5</sup> The District was elevated to the status of Union Territory – named Mizoram in 1972 and subsequently attained Statehood on February 20, 1987.<sup>6</sup>

Mizoram is a hilly region lying between latitude 21° and 25° North, and longitude 92° and 94° in the East. The tropic of cancer runs through the heart of the land. It occupies an area of 21,087 sq. kms surrounded by the neighboring states on the north by Manipur and northwest by Assam (Cachar district).<sup>7</sup> It is also bordered by the

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<sup>4</sup> V.L. Zaithanga, *From Head-Hunting to Soul-Hunting: An Account of Missionary Outreach of the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram* (Aizawl: The Synod Publication Board, 1981), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> North-Eastern Area (Reorganization) Act, 1971 (27 Amendment), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> *Mizoram District Gazettes* (Aizawl: Directorate of Art & Culture, Education and Human Resources Department, Government of Mizoram, 1929), p.3.

Tripura state, the nation of Bangladesh on the northwest and by Myanmar in the east and south. In short, Mizoram is sandwiched between Assam and Manipur to the north, Myanmar on the east and north, Tripura and Bangladesh in the west.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Mizoram occupies an area of strategic position and significance on the political map of India, particularly in the northeastern region border of India.

Mizoram is a land of rolling hills, valleys, rivers and lakes. As many as 21 major hill ranges or peaks of different heights run through the length and breadth of the state, with plains scattered here and there. The average height of the hills to the west is 1,000 metres (3,281 feet). These hills are at a height up to 1,300 meters on the east. Some areas, however, have higher ranges that went up to a height of over 2,000 meters. PhawnpuiTlang (Phawnpui hill), also known as Blue Mountain, situated in the southeastern part of the State is the highest peak at 2,210 metres.<sup>9</sup> The biggest river in Mizoram is Chhimtuipui, also known as Kaladan. It originates from Chin State in Burma and passes through Saiha and Lawngtlai districts in the southern tip of Mizoram, goes back to Burma's Rakhine State, and finally enters the Bay of Bengal at Akyab, which is a very popular port in Sittwe (Burma). As such, almost the whole area of Mizoram is hill-locked with a very poor communication link with the rest of the country. The National Highway 54, Aizawl to Silchar route has been the only main lifeline of the State. The Highway spans about 180 kilometers. Despite the poor communication route, Mizoram is considered to be one of the most peaceful and developing states in India.

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<sup>8</sup> A.P.K. Singh, *Political Scenario of Mizoram-Past and Present* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2016), p.2.

<sup>9</sup> M.C. Arunkumar, *Maxford Dynamic Series of Tribal Studies, Volume V: The Tribes of Mizoram* (New Delhi: Maxford Books, 2012), pp. 1145-1146.

Though Mizoram is basically for the Mizos and mostly inhabited by Mizos who are in a majority, there are also some other smaller communities living side by side such as Chakma, Mara, Lai, Reang, Gorkha and others. The Chakmas inhabit the extreme southwestern parts of Mizoram bordering Bangladesh. In the South, the Lakhers (now known as Mara) and the Pawis (now known as Lai) are the dominant communities. The Maras and Lais have their own distinct identity and history though they share similar cultures with the Lushais. The Chakmas, the Maras and the Lais were given separate Autonomous District Councils bearing their own community names when Mizoram was elevated to the status of Union Territory in 1972. The Mara Autonomous District Council is under Saiha District while both the Chakma and Lai Autonomous District Councils are under Lawngtlai District.

The Chakmas are considered to be a semi-nomadic tribe. They are found mostly in three different countries like Myanmar (Burma), Bangladesh (Chittagong Hill tracts) and India (Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Tripura). The majority of the population are located in the Chittagong Hill tracts. They are considered as the relatively most recent migrants to Mizoram. The Chakmas have a distinct language and script that is similar to that of the Bengalis. Majority of the people practice Buddhism. However, it was believed that they were Hindus during the early period of settlement in Arakan. As such they worship Buddha and also some Hindu gods and goddesses like Malakshmi (mother of Lakshmi), Gangamana (mother river) and their own traditional deities like Sugolong (the deity of prosperity). Like their religious rites, the social customs of the Chakma people are also a mix of Buddhist, Hindu and their

old social customs.<sup>10</sup> Today, the Chakma people in Mizoram have attained the special status under the provision of Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

The Brus, also referred to as Reangs, are spread across the northeastern states of Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In Mizoram they are largely restricted to the districts of Mamit and Kolasib. The Bru people constitute one of the few minority communities in Mizoram. The majority of the Bru or Reang belongs to the Vaishnav school of Hinduism and claim Kshatriya status. Like any other tribal communities they have also traditionally followed an animistic religion. However, today there are a growing number of Christians among the Bru people of both Mizoram and Tripura. In 1997, a bout of ethnic violence forced thousands of people from the Bru tribe to leave Mizoram. An attempt at repatriation began in 2010 and some people even moved back. The displaced Brus took refuge in a town called Kanchanpur in northern Tripura, on the Mizoram-Tripura border. Currently, they are spread across various refugee camps on the Jampui hills, which separate Tripura from Mizoram and Bangladesh.<sup>11</sup>

Small populations of Gorkha, also known as Nepali are also living in Mizoram but the majority of them are concentrated in Aizawl area. The majority of the community practice Hinduism. Today, the Nepalis are in search of their identity and protection. They are demanding OBC status for those who were staying in Mizoram on or before January 26, 1950 and their descendants. The Mizoram government is to protect the rights and privileges of the minorities under the provision of the Constitution. However, any move to grant the OBC status for the Nepali community has been

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<sup>10</sup>A.P.K. Singh, op. cit., pp.9-10.

<sup>11</sup> “Bru Refugees: After 20 Years of Exile in Tripura.” <https://Scroll.in>India>Refugees>, retrieved on February 21, 2018.



strongly objected by the Mizo Students' Union (MSU), the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and the state's largest and powerful NGO called Young Mizo Association (YMA). On the other hand, the Gorkhas were already categorized as the Other Backward Classes (OBC) under "Nepali" in 1961 when Mizoram was a District Council under the Assam state. Till the attainment of Union Territory status from 1972, Mizoram continued to issue the OBC certificates to the permanent residents of Gorkha people in Mizoram, under the Mizoram category of the backward classes under the Constitution (Schedule Caste) Order 1951. However, the government of Mizoram had stopped issuance of the OBC certificates to the Gorkhas when Mizoram attained statehood in 1987.<sup>12</sup>

Besides the Chakmas, Brus and Gorkhas, other communities from outside the state such as Assamese, Bengalis (both Hindus and Muslims), Biharis, Meeiteis and others are also living together with the Mizos. However, the majority of these communities are employed in various government sectors, or as businessmen, laborers and skilled and unskilled workers. In Mizoram, outsiders mostly the non-tribal are not legally permitted to hold and keep land in their respective names and settle permanently. The Inner Line Permit (ILP) system is still in force in the state. The ILP regulation is being applied to the non-tribal, who is visiting Mizoram. Thus, for the non-tribal people, ILP pass is necessary to enter Mizoram other than the government employees. S.N Singh has observed, the important characteristic of the state of Mizoram can be summed up as: i) It has a predominantly mountainous terrain. ii) It is predominantly consisted of tribal population. iii) Its accessibility is limited to Silchar-Aizawl Highway (NH 54). The communication within the state is also poor.

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<sup>12</sup>A.P.K. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp.11-19.

iv) It has predominantly subsistence agriculture with wide spread jhum cultivation. v) Its socio-economic profile is confined to tribal structure. vi) Its economy is agro-based and household goods churned out in the homes mainly cater to the local needs. vii) The tribal population is predominantly Christian and highly politicized. Significant non-Christian elements in the southwestern part of the state have added to the tendency of a balkanization of the state.<sup>13</sup>

### Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Mizo People

The origin of the Mizos, like those of many tribes in northeast India is shrouded in mystery. There is no authentic record about the Mizos before the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The most reliable and accepted record is that the Mizos were one of the Mongoloid stocks and they are believed to have emigrated into their present habitat, possibly sometime between 1400 and 1700 or 1800 A.D. from upper Burma.<sup>14</sup> But no scientific study is available as to show, when, why and from where the Mizos came to this isolated landlocked hilly terrain called Mizoram.

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 opined that the Mizos were living 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.<sup>15</sup> The Mizos had migrated from Burma probably due to the pressure of the Chins or the stronger clans of Burma and the pressure of over population, passed through the Chindwind valley and the Chin Hills, and finally came to the present Mizoram.

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<sup>13</sup>S N Singh, *Mizoram: Historical, Geographical, Social, Economic, Political and Administrative* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1994), pp. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup> R.N. Prasad, *Government and Politics in Mizoram 1947-1986* (New Delhi: Northern Book Center, 1987), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

On the other hand, it is generally believed as well as historically recorded that the forefathers of the Mizos have had their settlements somewhere in the mountainous areas of the southern part of China. According to Teisi Thou, “Encyclopedia of Mizoram”, the generally accepted view is that the Mizos were part of a great wave of migrations from China, and later on moved out to India, their present habitat. It is possible that the Mizos came from Sinlung or Chhinkungsan located on the banks of the Yalung River in China, first settled in the Shan State and moved to the Kabaw Valley.<sup>16</sup> It is also believed that the Mizos were originally from Mongolia, yet there is no written evidence available to support this claim. Hence no one knows for sure, when and how these people moved towards the west and reached their present habitat.

As the knowledge base is very limited and it is not more than at a level of mere conjecture, any conclusion reached on the early history of the Mizos is open to argument, because till now it does not have any historical backing.<sup>17</sup> According to Sangkima, the author of “Essays on the History of the Mizos”, the first and foremost limitation in the study of Mizoram is about the absence of historical information. The entire available historical source is only traceable from the post-independence days. Lack of conventional data is a major hindrance to the tracing of early history of the Mizoram. The second limitation is that the Mizos did not form a homogeneous group with any single culture. This also creates an immense problem in the study of their early history. The third limitation is related to the periodization of their history.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Teisi Thou, *Encyclopedia of Mizoram, Volume I* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt., Ltd., 2009), pp. 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Sangkima, *Essay on the Histories of the Mizos* (Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 2004), p.1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

### Generic Name of the Term Mizo

Ethnologically the Mizos, formerly known as Lushais, belong to the Tibeto-Burmese group with complexion less fair than those of the Chinese.<sup>19</sup> The term Lushei/Lusei/Lhoosai is one of the dominant clans of the whole group known as Mizo. The term ‘Duhlian’ is also applied to these families, and the language spoken by them is known as ‘Duhlian Tawng’ (dialect of the Duhlian). The term Mizo is a generic term and stands for all the different tribes or clans who inhabit the entire perimeter of the present Mizoram, and share similar culture and traditions are commonly designated by the term Mizo.<sup>20</sup>

Further, one characteristic of those who are commonly referred to as the Kuki-Chin or the Kuki-Chin-Lushai or the Kuki-Chin-Mizo people is a peculiar sense of importance attached to these names. Whatever be the values of this trait, it had led them into apparently insurmountable problems.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the Nagas in Nagaland and the Khasis in Meghalaya, the Mizos were known in earlier times to the British and others by various names such as “Kuki”, “Chin” and “Lushai”. Mizos were first known as “Kuki” because they were the first batch to have arrived in Mizoram. They were found during the reign of the Tipperah Raja, Chachag who flourished about A.D. 1512.<sup>22</sup> It is speculated that following the Bengalis, the British picked up the word and applied it to all the tribes inhabiting the Lushai Hills and the Chin Hills whose social and cultural affinities were more or less similar. Hutchinson says that in more recent years the term Kuki was applied to the tribes residing in the Lushai Hills

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<sup>19</sup> A.G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, reprint (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Department of Art & Culture, Government of Mizoram, 2003), p.25.

<sup>20</sup> Sangkima, op. cit., p.3.

<sup>21</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p.16.

<sup>22</sup> G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. III Part III Reprint (Delhi: Motilal Banersidas, 1967), p. 1.

and the Chin Hills, which had been annexed to British India. A.P.K. Singh in his book “Political Scenario of Mizoram: Past and Present”, wrote that “the then Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, Mr. Edgar, was the first who first officially used the term ‘Lushai’ instead of ‘Kuki’. Since then the British administrator had adopted the term and called them ‘Lushai’ to refer to the present Mizos”.<sup>23</sup> This reveals that during the British period the present Mizoram was known as Kooki/Kuki Hills and later as Lushai Hills ruled by independent Chiefs.<sup>24</sup> Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear stated, “All the Lushai Kuki clans resemble each other very closely in appearance and the Mongolian type of countenance prevails”.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that the term “Mizo” is a recent phenomenon. In recent times, use of the Mizo name has become popular among the people themselves in order to develop a feeling of separate identity and to represent their political ideology.<sup>26</sup>

### Social Life

Society, in simple terms, is a group of people living together with the purpose of helping one another. The Mizo society, like most tribal societies, is segmented. There are obviously certain fields or forms in which the social life of the Mizo finds expression. Generally speaking, one may say that there were four different cultures in Mizoram. The Mizos, the Pawis (Lai) and the Lakhers (Mara), although all are

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<sup>23</sup> A.P.K. Singh, op. cit., pp.5-6.

<sup>24</sup> In the beginning till 1860, the Britishers used to call the territory as Kuki Hills. Only from 1860 onward, the territory became to be known as Lushai country. Mr. Edgar, the then Deputy Commissioner of Cachar was considered as the first person who used officially the term Lushai instead of Kuki. As such, the records were created pertaining to Kukis till 1860 and under Lushais from 1860 onwards. According to Dr. T.R. Sareen, Director, ICHR, New Delhi, in his paper “Documentary Sources of Mizoram-Materials in the National Archives of India”, records available in the Foreign Department, documentary department materials in the form of proceedings, consultations, copies of letter, dispatched, and copies of letters received from England, prior to 1860 are indexed under the head of Kookis and deal mainly with the question of raids. Later, the present state of Mizoram was known as “Lushai Hills”.

<sup>25</sup> Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, *The Lushai Kuki Clans*, 3<sup>rd</sup> print (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute Department of Art & Culture, 2008), p.1.

<sup>26</sup> Sangkima, op. cit., 15.

from the same ethnic group, have their own particular cultures. The Chakma are different from others in language, religion and culture. The proposed study deals only with the explicit culture of the Mizo society.

In early Mizo society, village life was very simple. They lived a nomadic life, which required selection of new sites for settlements at regular intervals. They took utmost care that the sites should have a good source of water supply. A team slept overnight at the proposed site with a cock but if the cock failed to crow at dawn, it would be taken as unhealthy for human settlement. Having selected the new village it was arranged in such a way that the Chief's house and Zawlbuk would be located first, followed by others. Houses normally did not have windows. Village handicrafts formed a very important part of the social and cultural life of the early Mizo society. The role of the blacksmith in a village was considerably important because he made and repaired the tools of the village people. Therefore, each village paid tribute to its blacksmith.<sup>27</sup>

The Mizos are quick in giving up their old customs and adopting the western mode of life. Many of their present customs are a mix of both the old traditions and the western pattern of life. The boys and girls socialize within society freely. The bachelors would go around courting the maidens. This system of dating is called "nula rim". The groom has to pay bride price to the relatives of the bride. In earlier times, the bride price was paid in the form of *mithuns*, pigs and guns. Now this is being paid in cash. Today divorce is quite common among the Mizos. However, the divorced women are not victimized by any social stigma, as they are free to

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<sup>27</sup>Sangkima, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

remarry.<sup>28</sup> The Church does not recognize the practice of divorce, but it accepts divorce as a matter of fact. According to the Mizo customs, the youngest son inherits all moveable and immoveable properties. The elder sons usually move out of the parents' house after they got married. The youngest son is expected to stay and look after the parents in their old age.

#### Hnatlang (Social Work)

The Mizo social customs are marked by good principles of self-help and cooperation. Under a system called "Hnatlang", the villagers are expected to contribute labor for the welfare of the community. Inter-village paths, community halls, and water points are constructed and maintained by Hnatlang. This has been in practice since time immemorial by villagers for some practical principles of self-help and cooperation for the fulfillment of social obligations and responsibilities. In other words, Hnatlang is a public work or communal labor in which everyone is expected to take part.

#### Tlawmngaihna

The word "Tlawmngaihna" is an unwritten code of etiquette which safeguards Mizo society. It is the spirit of Tlawmngaihna that guides the thoughts and actions of the Mizo people in every sphere of life in dealing with individuals or groups and in the midst of war or peace. The ethical code of Tlawmngaihna or "moral discipline" is one of the most unique characteristics of the Mizo society that bound them together, and each member is expected to contribute his/her good will and the freewill offering to the poor and the needy.<sup>29</sup> And, voluntary services are to be rendered towards the neighbors for the unity and welfare of the society, which is a characteristic of

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<sup>28</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> Sangkima, op. cit., p.70.

Tlawmngaihna. Under this obligatory practice, no one is expected to receive a reward of profit or gain in return for rendering such service.<sup>30</sup>

The British administrator, N.E. Parry (1924-1928), one of the Superintendents of the Lushai Hills stated, “Tlawmngaihna is a word which has no exact equivalent in English. It really represents the Lushai’s code of morals and good form”.<sup>31</sup> Chitta Rajan Nag, the then Professor in Pachhunga University College stated, “Tlawmngaihna, a norm of the Mizo, shows a Mizo in particular and the Mizos are at the service of others even at the cost of their own inconvenience. The norm was in practice in the Mizo society by individuals as well as a corporate body in the early days and still in vogue”.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Tlawmngaihna is a clear and self-evident word representing many qualities and virtues of life in the Mizo society. However, today the virtue of Tlawmngaihna seems to be declining in the Mizo society when compared to the olden days, as the people have become more self-sufficient and individualistic. Further, the concept and practice of Tlawmngaihna seems to be confined only within the Mizo community.

### Zawlbuk

Zawlbuk is a Mizo word for bachelors’ dormitory. It had occupied a high degree of social magnitude in pre-British Mizo society. The Zawlbuk was conceived and established by the chief. As the center of administration and a refuge for criminals, the poor and unwanted, the Zawlbuk served as the educational, cultural and

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<sup>30</sup> Letkholun Haokip, *An Appraisal of the Interaction Between Christianity and Kuki Culture* (Unpublished BD Thesis, AICS, Aizawl, 2008), 10.

<sup>31</sup> N.E. Parry, *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*, reprinted (Assam: Assam Government Press, 1976), p.19.

<sup>32</sup> Chitta Ranjan Nag, *The Mizo Society in Transition* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1993), p.181.



communal center for the village<sup>33</sup>. It was usually constructed in the large open space in the center of the village, close to the chief's house. The Zawlbuk could be easily distinguished from other buildings of the village due to its distinctive shape and large size—it had to be spacious enough to accommodate all the young men and boys of the village. Every village had a Zawlbuk but it was the choice of a village to maintain more than one. In big villages, however, there were more than one. The Chief of the village is recognized as the administrator of the Zawlbuk, but he did not interfere in its day-to-day administration. The leader of the Zawlbuk called “val upa” managed the administration. His acceptance was based on qualities such as industriousness, efficiency, courage and success as a hunter. K. Thanzuava observed the significance of the establishment of Zawlbuk:

Though the security of a village was its primary concern, the Zawlbuk was also concerned for the total welfare of the village community, and thus became the training centre of a village. It was an institution from which they learned technique of war, fighting, wrestling, singing, dancing, oratory, games and sports, handicraft, sex, manner, traditions, customs, etiquette, religion and all the essential things for their lives in their own context.<sup>34</sup>

The explanation shows that Zawlbuk was built for the purpose of village defense but at the same time it also dealt with various social problems and issues of the community.

#### Abolition of the Zawlbuk

Like many other social institutions, the Zawlbuk could not withstand the force of changes that took place after the coming of the British, thus resulting in its

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<sup>33</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p.61

<sup>34</sup> K. Thanzuava, *Theology of Zawlbuk Towards a Tribal Theology: The Mizo Perspectives* (Jorhat: Mizo Theological Conference, 1989), p. 100.

abolition.<sup>35</sup> Some general factors accounted for the abolition of the Zawlbuk in the Mizo society. First, the introduction of the British administration contributed to the abolition of the Zawlbuk. The sole authority over the Zawlbuk in a village was the Chief. However, with the coming of the British the Chief's authority was reduced very much by making him dependent. He could exercise powers only at the behest of the British. This directly affected the discipline in the Zawlbuk administration. The law and order in the Zawlbuk apparently deteriorated. Though its existence was recognized, the people seriously undermined its place in the society. Secondly, the practice of Christianity was a hindrance to the proper functioning of the Zawlbuk. When the Christian missionaries among the Mizos introduced formal education, informal education had to be replaced by formal education. Parents were prepared to send their children to school where the children would gain more. They felt that they could control their children better at home than what the Zawlbuk provide.<sup>36</sup>

Lastly, the people who took part in the war service expedited the movement for abolition. When World War I broke out many Mizo young men were recruited to war service. These people returned with a changed outlook. Representing almost every village, these war servicemen thus made remarkable contribution towards adopting a modern way of living. People thus began to feel that the best way to improve their future life was to break away from their indigenous ways of living<sup>37</sup>. In this way the idea of continuing with the Zawlbuk began dying out in course of time in the minds of the people themselves. Though the physical structure and traditional form of Zawlbuk died long ago with their primal religion, the principle of Zawlbuk was

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<sup>35</sup> Sangkima, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>36</sup> A.G. McCall, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>37</sup> N. Chatterji, *Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1975), p. 30.

transformed in the form of Church and educational institutions among the Mizo people.<sup>38</sup>

### Socio-Religious Festivals

Festivals are external expressions of social behavior, and are an integral part of every society. In the past, people performed rituals to appease deities of the fields, forests, mountains and others. People also sometimes solemnized rituals to promote fertility. Rituals were based on beliefs and the main aim of these was to enlist supernatural protection against evil spirits<sup>39</sup>. Thus, primitive peoples connected death, battle, hunting and agriculture with festivals. Whatever the case may be, festivals form one of the essential ingredients of all cultures. Therefore, every society, whether primitive or civilized, has festivals that are celebrated in one form or the other. Like any other community in the world, the Mizos as a community too have festivals performed in their own system as a part of their cultural expressions. Thus, in Mizo language “festival” is a common term that simply means “Kut”. The Mizo people have mainly three festivals, Mim Kut, Pawl Kut and Chapchar Kut. The origin of each of these festivals is connected with legend, and Mim Kut is considered as the oldest of the three.<sup>40</sup> This paragraph highlights the nature and celebration of these festivals in a very brief manner.

As mentioned above, “Kut” is the Mizo word for festival. Traditional Mizo social gatherings revolve around the agricultural calendar. “Kut” is a common feature of their social life. But it is not so because of its pomposity, merriment and gaiety of the celebration, rather it is so because of its religious aspects. Kut is a festival, primarily

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<sup>38</sup> Letkholun Haokip, *oc. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> Sangkima, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

to remember and offer thanks to the creator God for his abundant blessings. The Mizos have three main “Kut,” namely the Mim Kut, Pawl Kut and Chapchar Kut. “Chapchar Kut”<sup>41</sup> is a festival celebrated during the month of March, after completion of their most arduous task of Jhum operation i.e., jungle clearing (clearing of the remnants of burning). This is a spring festival celebrated with great fervor and gaiety. The Chapchar Kut festival is one of the most important and famous Kuts of the Mizo. The “Mim Kut”<sup>42</sup> festival is usually celebrated during the months of August and September, after the harvest of maize. Mim Kut is celebrated with great fanfare by drinking rice beer, singing, dancing, and feasting. Samples of the year’s harvests are consecrated to the departed souls of the community. According to H. Lalrinthanga, “Mim Kut was a ceremony meant for the dead, therefore, it had certain religious significance apart from social”.<sup>43</sup> And Pawl Kut, the “straw harvest festival,” (“pawl” means straw), is held soon after the harvest was over. It was a sort of harvest thanksgiving. It is celebrated sometime in December or January after the harvest is over.

Hence, Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut and Pawl Kut had become very important cultural traditions in the Mizo society. According to S. N. Singh, “The festivals have promoted community feeling and have helped in influencing the attitude of the Mizo people. Festival is accompanied with dance and music, which is the symbol of their love and fellow feeling. The community feasts and festivals have widened the boundary of community life”.<sup>44</sup> The people keenly looked forward to Kut festivals

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<sup>41</sup> Chapchar Kut is a contemporary of the Pawl Kut. It was set apart for adults. This Kut was held immediately after Jhum cutting was over.

<sup>42</sup> Mim Kut is the oldest Kut. Mim is a kind of plant, the grain of which is taken. So this Kut is called after this Mim.

<sup>43</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> S.N. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

because all sections of the society, whether poor or rich enjoyed themselves on such occasions. There was no distinction between the rich and the poor in the celebration of the festivals. The festivals are at the center of Mizo cultures and traditions.

### Songs and Music

The Mizos are a music-loving people. Their traditional tunes are soft and gentle. During the church service, drums are commonly used known as “khuang”. They are made from wood and animal hide and are often beaten enough to instigate the worshippers as they dance in a circular fashion. Mizos enjoy singing and even without musical instruments, they enthusiastically sing together, clapping hands or by using other rhythmic methods. The early Mizos were close to nature and music is still an essential part of their cultural life.<sup>45</sup> While gospel music remains an integral part of Mizo culture, the western influence is evident from the contemporary music scene as young people experiment with rock, metal, rap, pop and hip-hop types.

### Economic System

The economy of Mizoram is largely dependent on agriculture. The agrarian economy accounts for the livelihood of more than 70% of the state’s populace. The rocky hilly terrains are not conducive for several crops. However, a regular distribution of rainfall for the whole length of the year and the fertile temperate soils has resulted in the springing up of dense forests enveloped in lush foliage. In spite of the rugged terrains, the favorable climatic conditions and the rich soils have led to the undertaking of extensive jhum cultivation in the state. Almost all the areas of Mizoram, excluding reserve forest, river towns and villages including very steep

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

slopes, are used for shifting cultivation. This is the primitive use of land on hill slopes of the mountainous region of Northeast India in which the hill slopes are cleared of grasses, vines and small bushes during the dry season. The felled plants are left to dry for a month or so and burnt thereafter. This system is also known as “slash and burn” system of farming.<sup>46</sup>

Agriculture forms the primary sector in the economy of Mizoram. Thus, all subsidiary small-scale industries are agro-based. Several food processing units are mushrooming all over the state and the government is optimistic that the increase in the production of spices, fruits and vegetables as well as cultivation of cash crops could lead to the growth of food processing industry in the state. Mizoram houses a small repository of minerals. Thus, mining activity also contributes to a small part of the state economy. In fact, the hard tertiary rocks dug up in the majority of the mines in Mizoram have been used as construction materials. A large number of small-scale industries that include exquisite bamboo works as well as handlooms also contribute to the state economy. Another sector of the economy, tourism, contributes largely to the state’s revenue. Besides, the state is trying to exploit the untapped hydroelectric power potential and is also set to explore the medicinal value of various herbs that grow in plentitude in the state’s forests.

Though shifting cultivation forms the backbone of the state economy, the continuing practice of jhuming cultivation has caused several inherent problems. Since the cultivation system destroys valuable forest area that leads to deforestation, the practice is threatening the ecological balance of the region. In fact, for the last

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<sup>46</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

several years, shifting cultivation in the state has been one of the main concerns of the successive state governments of Mizoram for attaining sustainable economy in the state. Therefore, a successive ministry has been seriously considered for jhum control in Mizoram to minimize forest degradation caused by shifting cultivation practices. Apart from implementing centrally sponsored schemes, the state government had also launched various schemes of similar nature during their respective term, especially to encourage the cultivators who comprise a large section of the state population.<sup>47</sup> Hence, agriculture was given the prime place of attention in all the development plans of the state. However, at present the various plans of the successive governments to strengthen its socio-economic dimension are not implemented as propagated. The stability of a nation depends upon the degree of self-sufficiency in surplus production of food materials and industrial raw materials.

### Religious Belief

Religion, as it is understood, is one of the most important and outstanding features of human life. It embraces the whole history of human existence and in all probability religion is virtually as old as humanity itself.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the history of religion is the history of human development. The entire culture – institutions, customs, stories and music - was integrated by the Mizo religious view. This paragraph briefly highlights the religious horizon of the Mizo people before their contact with Christianity. Traditional religion of the Mizos, before the arrival of Christianity was described by most writers as “animism” and some writers went so far as to suggest

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<sup>47</sup> A.P.K Singh, op. cit., p.35

<sup>48</sup> E.O. Jones, *Prehistoric Religion: Historia Religionum (Religion of the Past)* (ed) C. Jouco Bleeker and Geo Widengren, Leiden, 1969, p. 23.

that the Mizos “have no Religion at all”.<sup>49</sup> Though they believed in an essentially benevolent God called “Pathian”, who was the creator of the universe, they also believed in the existence of numerous “huais”. The spirits known as ‘huais’ are of two types, ‘good’ and ‘evil’. These spirits mainly reside in trees, mountains, streams, rocks, and caves. The good “huais” cause good to mankind, sometimes, it was said that the good “huai” acted as Pathian. The evil spirits cause harm to the people. They believe that all types of calamities—failure of growing crops, ill health, disease, death or other misfortunes—were due to the evil spirit.<sup>50</sup> J. Shakespear writes, “Far more important to the average man are the numerous “huai” of demons, who inhabit every stream, mountain, and forest, and to whom every illness and misfortune is attributed. The ‘Puithiam’ (Sorcerer) is supposed to know what demon is causing the trouble and what form of sacrifice will appease him, and a Lushai’s (Mizo’s) whole life is spent in propitiating these spirits”.<sup>51</sup>

Supreme God: The concept of God was not clearly conceptualized among the Mizos at the time when Christianity was introduced to them. There is evidence that the concept was evolving towards that of a High or Supreme God. There was a belief in Pathian (God) who abides in the high heavens. He came to be called Chung Pathian (God above) and Pu Vana (Grandfather in heaven), both indicative of the belief in his exalted position. The prominent aspect of the belief in Pathian was that he was viewed as creator, the supreme God who was essentially benevolent. But he was also one in distant heaven, far removed from and having little to do with the daily affairs of humans. This concept of remoteness was not absolute, however, because there was

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<sup>49</sup> David Kyles, *Lorrain of the Lushais: Roman and Realism in the North-East Frontier of India* (London: Sterling Tract Enterprise, 1944), p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., 115.

<sup>51</sup> Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear, op. cit., p. 61.



also a belief that Pathian was one who sees trouble from above and is both willing and able to uphold justice. It was therefore to him that people turned when in trouble. Thus when frightened, the people would console themselves with words “Pathian a awm angchu” (there is God), while perplexed they would resign themselves to their fate with the expression “Pathian thuthu” (God’s will be done), and when suffering injustice they would say “Pathianin a hriaalawm” (God knows).<sup>52</sup> This consciousness of God’s concern for and involvement in human affairs seems to have increased in the course of time.

Life after Death: While still in the Chin Hills, the Mizos had formed a definite concept of life after death. They believed in the continuance of life beyond the grave, either “Mitthikhua” or “Pialral”. Mitthikhua (the village of the dead) was the abode of the departed souls of the commoners. It was believed to be a shadowy world where everything was on a much lower scale than in the present world. On the other side of Mitthikhua, beyond the Pial river, was located Pialral (the land beyond the Pial river, Paradise). Those who went there would not have work, but would enjoy a plentiful supply of rice that did not require husking, meat and “Zu” (wine). Only the souls of the rich, the skillful and the mighty men could go to Pialral. Such men were called “Thangchhuahs” which might best be translated as “the famous ones,” a title beyond the dreams of most people.<sup>53</sup> In short, the soul after death goes to either Pialral or Mitthikhua according to the nature of deeds the person performed during his/her lifetime.

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<sup>52</sup> Makhosat Kipgen, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

### Administrative System

Before the advent of the British, the Mizos did not have a political organization that encompassed the entire tribe.<sup>54</sup> However, the Mizos had conducted an efficient system of administration and disciplined as a distinct group governed by their traditional laws, customs and organizations. The traditional political system was based on kinship structure that revolved round the concept of chieftainship and that of territorial jurisdiction over which its authority was wielded, and the village was the highest political unit. Each village had its own government, and a chief or Lal functioned as administrator for the entire village.

The British were amazed to find numerous efficiently run village administrative units, entirely independent of each other. Apart from a number of Pawi, Mara and Fanai chiefs who ruled mainly in the southern hills, most chiefs belonged to the Sailo family of the Lusei clan who established themselves as the principal chiefs throughout the northern and central areas of what came to be called Mizoram. The Sailos had gained this position of dominance by eliminating the lesser chiefs long before the advent of British rule. Generally, each village has the following secular officials in its hierarchical order: Lal (the Chief), Upa (Elders), Tlangau (village crier), Thirdeng (village Black smith), and Puithiam (village Priest). The village Chief functions with the help of all these village officials in the village administration. Officials have their own respective responsibilities.

Lal (Chief): The Chief was the supreme authority in the village; no one could refuse the judgment of the Chief. The Chief considered himself as the supreme authority of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

his village and his subjects. The Chief owned the village and its land. The inhabitants of village were his subjects and were implicitly bound by customary laws to obey and execute his commands. The Chiefs were generally wise and shrewd, knowing how to make their people loyal to themselves. Hence, the people were loyal to their Chief.<sup>55</sup>

The Chief also had a great responsibility towards his subjects. As the guardian of the village, he was responsible for defending it from enemies. He was the leader in war as well as the dispenser of justice. His attitude towards his subjects was paternalistic, as they were treated as his children, whom he helped in need, chastising the guilty and rewarding those who achieved something noteworthy. The Chief was respected, admired and loved by his subjects. Very seldom did the subjects disregard his rulings. If they did, they would almost certainly be expelled from the village and their property confiscated. The Chief with his hereditary rights had acquired great power. While the Chief enjoyed various rights, he had great responsibilities for the smooth functioning of village life and the villagers.

Upa (Council of Elders): Even though the Chief theoretically held power, in fact the administration of the village had democratic elements. The Chief was free to appoint the council of elders known as Upa whomever he deemed fit, but usually they were chosen from among the “thanchhuahs” who were reputed public figures and representatives of the different clans found in the village.<sup>56</sup> Thus while the position of the Chief ensured stability to a mobile society, participation of the elders in the decision-making process provided wider representation of the people’s interest. For

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<sup>55</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

instance, if there was a case involving the chief's own relatives he would usually leave it for the elders to decide rather than being involved in the judgment. Thus, by demonstrating fairness in the way they formed their judgments the, Chief and council of elders normally faced no opposition to their decisions. In this way, the council of elders acted as ministers to the Chief and the Chief ruled the village with the help of the council of elders. The role of the council of elders shows that the administration of the village had democratic principles.

Tlangau (Village Crier): Another important person in the village was "Tlangau," the village crier. The "tlangau" proclaimed to the village the chief's order.<sup>57</sup> The role of tlangau was equivalent to the information secretary of modern day administrative structure.

Thirdeng (Village Blacksmith): The village blacksmith was the man who repaired the village's agricultural and artisan tools. As remuneration, the blacksmith would receive a basket of rice from each house in the village after the harvest, as a rule.

Puithiam (Priest): There was a priest in the Mizo village called "Puithiam". The Puithiam offered traditional sacrifices, ceremonies, and rituals to the evil spirits according to their traditional rites. Traditionally, there were two types of Puithiam viz. "Sadawt" and "Bawlpu". They were commonly called Puithiam. Both of them occupied important positions in the village hierarchy and they were the officials in the village administration, next to the Chief's elders called Upa. Sadawt was a village priest and appointed by the Chief. Though the different clans in the village had their

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<sup>57</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p. 60.

own clan-priests who were known as Sadawt, they were not as popular as Lal Sadawt (Chief's Priest). All the other Sadawts employed by each clan were not at all in the limelight. Therefore, Lal Sadawt (chief's priest) can be termed as the "high priest" of Mizos and he was one of the most important functionaries in the village administration under the Chief. He was responsible only with the rituals and ceremonies conducted by the Chief himself.<sup>58</sup> Sadawt had an assistant called Tlahpawi whose position was also important, next to Sadawt in the village. Being an assistant to Sadawt, Tlahpawi enjoyed equal status with that of Sadawt in the village hierarchy. On the other hand, in regard to the sacrificial offering by the common people, the priest engaged was known as Bawlpu. Like the other priests, Bawlpu was also an important official in the village. As his concern was only with the common man's rituals, Bawlpu was considered as having a lower status in the village hierarchy than that of the Sadawt and the Tlahpawi.<sup>59</sup> As his service condition demanded, whenever a person was sick, Bawlpu was called for consultation in connection with the cause of the sickness. Though he was a priest, Bawlpu functioned as a physician or sage. He would feel the pulse of the sick to determine what caused the sickness and the trouble. Like a doctor, he would prescribe what kind of sacrifice the family should observe in order to appease the suffering and the trouble. The family had to obey and follow whatever the Bawlpu said about the sickness.<sup>60</sup>

Ramhual (the expert and adviser on jhum cultivation): The office of "Ramhual" was a coveted one because quite a few could be appointed to it. They were experts in

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<sup>58</sup> Saiaithanga, *Mizo Sakhua (Mizo Religion)* (Aizawl: Maranatha Press, nd), p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> N. Chatterji, *The Mizo Chief and his Administration* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1975), p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> Sangkima, op. cit., p. 109.

agriculture; they were given the privilege, only next to the Chief, of choosing the choicest plots for their own cultivation. Of course, they had to pay a heavier tax called “Fathang” to the Chief than other cultivators. After the Ramhuals, the other village officers selected their plots followed by the commoners, and all of them had to pay their tax to the Chief.<sup>61</sup> In addition to the above-mentioned officials there were other dignitaries called “Zalen,” free citizens who were exempted from paying “Fathang” (tax) to the Chief. They were respected citizens, good friends of the Chief, who helped the Chief whenever he needed to entertain guests.<sup>62</sup>

The above narration of traditional Mizo society shows that there was no distinction between social, religion, politics and economics in the Mizo society. All were interrelated. Hence, the introduction of a new administrative set up and the new religion (Christianity) seemed to have influenced each other in one way or the other to some extent in the state polity. This will be discussed in detail in the following section.

#### Advent of the British Administration

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the British Empire had occupied all the surrounding region of Chittagong and Burma (now Myanmar) but had little or no interest in the tribes and their hilly land. They were merely mentioned in passing as irreclaimable savages. The tribals then lived in small and isolated clusters of chiefdoms, each often raising warfare against another.<sup>63</sup> The earliest reference on record to the Mizos, then known as Kukis, was made in 1777 when one Ramoo Cawn (Rawn Khan), probably

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<sup>61</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p.60.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> “History of Mizoram”, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Mizoram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Mizoram), retrieved on January 8, 2017.

a Chakma chief, rebelled against the authority of a cotton farmer employed by the East India Company. He called a “large group of Kookie men” to his assistance, who were said to “live far in the interior parts of the hills, who have not the use of firearms, and whose bodies go unclothed.”<sup>64</sup> The first recorded encounter between the Mizo and British subjects occurred only in 1824 when enterprising traders from the plains penetrated the hills along the Dhalleswari River to collect bamboo and timber. They were ambushed and killed by the Mizos for refusing to pay them the tribute due to those who passed through the plains. After that the Mizos increased the frequency of their raids outside Mizoram in Chittagong, Tripura, Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur.<sup>65</sup>

From 1884 onwards the numbers of raids were increased on British territory that culminated in what was called “the Great Kuki Invasion of 1960” in which about 15 villages in Tripura were burnt, 188 British subjects were killed, and around 100 persons were carried into captivity.<sup>66</sup> Hence, the British could not tolerate the challenge to their sovereignty involved in this harassment, killing and capture of their subjects. But, since there was no opportunity for economic gain in administering Mizoram, they first sought to control the raiding through the Tripura and Poang Rajas, who were made responsible for border defense. With the appointment of a Superintendent of Hill Tribes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the area under direct British administration was brought closer to Mizoram. The ring of outposts manned by police was set up along the foothills. As T.H. Lewin, the third Hill

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<sup>64</sup> T.H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South-Eastern India*, reprinted (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1978), p.31.

<sup>65</sup> Bertram Carey and H.N. Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the People, Our Dealings with Them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country*, Vol. I, reprinted (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1976), p. 14.

<sup>66</sup> E.B. Elly, *Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country*, reprinted (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1978), p.8.

Superintendent put it: “The primary reason for appointing the Chittagong Hill Tracts Superintendent was the supervision of the independent tribes and the preservation of the peace of the frontier”.<sup>67</sup> He also conducted occasional expeditions beyond the frontier.

The efforts made by T. H. Lewin, who by his sheer courage, insight into the nature of the tribal world, and love and sympathy for the tribal life and culture, won the respect of the tribes to a certain extent. He referred to them as “my hill people”. Consequently he was able to make a treaty of friendship with a powerful southern chief, Rothangpuia (referred to as Rotanpuia by Lewin), who later helped the British. Rothangpuia, however, was not in a position to stop the raids. His friendship with the British, in fact, created ill feeling among the other Chiefs. The Mizos also did not think that any agreement reached with British officers in the south applied to the north. They therefore began their raids again in 1864, and continued on an even greater scale in the following year. By the end of the decade, reports from local officers on the frontier recommended, with increasing frequency, the adoption of a forward policy for dealing with the Mizos of Mizoram.<sup>68</sup>

The government was nevertheless determined to follow its old policy of non-interference and conciliation. In a series of three letters, the government laid down its policy of “non-interference with the Lushai tribes in matters concerning themselves only, of friendly communications between the frontier officers and these tribes; and, finally, a series of posts along some line from Cachar on the north to the frontier of

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<sup>67</sup> T.H. Lewin, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>68</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, *op. cit.*, p. 131.



Aracan in the south".<sup>69</sup> But while Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, was in the hills pursuing the policy of conciliation with apparent success, a series of raids on British subjects took place. These were more systematically organized and determined in character than previous raids had been. The first raid on the Chittagong Hill Tracts in December 1870 was followed in quick succession by nine raids on the Cachar plains within a period of time. Simultaneously there were raids in Sylhet, Tripura and Manipur.<sup>70</sup>

The raid was most severe in 1871 when a series of attacks caused several deaths and wounded people on both sides with extensive damage on the plantations. A number of workers and soldiers were taken prisoners. An incident connected to these raids in Cachar that was to have significant influence upon British policy was the attack upon the garden at Alexandrapore in which the planter, Winchester was killed and his six year old daughter Mary was carried off as captive.<sup>71</sup> Hence, the British government decided to send a strong punitive expeditionary force to Lushai Hills to stop raids by the Lushais.

#### Lushai Expedition (1871-1872)

The frequent raids compelled the government of British India to review its policy. After along deliberation, it decided to send an expedition into the Lushai Hills during the winter season of 1871-72. Plans for the expedition were set off in two columns. The left column advanced from Cachar under the command of General G. Bouchier,

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<sup>69</sup> W.B. Power, "Report of the Part Taken by Political Agent in Survey Operation During the Last Season," No. 61, dated Agurtollah, 26 May 1873, submitted to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Judicial Department, in Foreign and Political Dept. Report 1874 on Eastern Boundary of Hill Tippera, No. 14 (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1980), p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>71</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, reproduced (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2005), pp. 295-328.

Edgar, Deputy Commissioner, Cachar as civil officer. The right column advanced from Chittagong under the command of General C.A. Brownlow, with Captain T.H. Lewin, Superintendent of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, as civil officer. In addition, a contingent of Manipur accompanied by General Nuthall, the Political Agent of Manipur, made a demonstration march across the southern border of Manipur in support of General Bouchier's operations.

The operations of both columns were successful and most of the Mizo chiefs were reduced to submission. Mary Winchester was surrendered, and the fines imposed were paid. At this time the British had no intention of occupying Mizoram. After the expedition the question of frontier defense was reconsidered. Despite the advocacy of a "forward policy" of the "complete military occupation" of the territory by the frontier officers, the existing policy of loose control and conciliation was reaffirmed with the hope that the expedition would have convinced the Mizos of the inadvisability of further raids on British subjects. This policy was successful for about ten years.<sup>72</sup> But the situation did not last. The period of peaceful relations was broken in 1882.

Meanwhile, the third Anglo-Burmese war broke in 1885 and in the following year, the Shan inhabited Kabow valley was captured and occupied by the British troops who had advanced from Manipur. The British took precautionary measures to prevent disturbances, likely to occur in the Lushai Hills. Accordingly, three officers namely, Lt. John F. Stewart, Baird and J. Shakespear were deputed to survey the frontiers in the south. In course of time, Hausata killed Stewart and other two

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<sup>72</sup> W.B. Power, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

soldiers at a place 20 miles from Rangamati.<sup>73</sup> This provoked the British and compelled them to take punitive action against the Lushais. Col. Tregear and Capt. J. Shakespear were in charge of the expedition. The column moved forward and burnt the village of Hausata and a fort at Lunglei was established. But this brought only a temporary peace. Later, a section of the inhabitants reactivated raids in the adjacent plain area. This led to another expedition known as Chin-Lushai expedition of 1889-90, which was operated from Silchar and Chittagong.

#### Chin-Lushai Expedition (1889-1890)

The policy of this expedition was to establish permanent occupation of the territory. The expedition was entrusted with the implementation of the new policy advanced from three directions, involving the governments of Bengal, Assam and Burma. Insofar as this three-pronged expedition was to deal with the whole area of inhabited by the Mizo clans, it came to be referred to as “the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90<sup>74</sup>. The general plan was that the Lushai (Chittagong) Field Force, under the command of Brigadier General V.W. Tregear, should march to Haka via Lunglei, linking up with the southern column of the Chin (Gangaw) Field Force, under the command of Brigadier General W.P.Symons, from Burma via Kan. The latter force was sent from Burma to punish the tribes of the Chin Hills who were constantly creating trouble on their side. A third column from the former Force called the northern column, under the command of Colonel G.J. Skinner, was sent to the north.<sup>75</sup> The well-coordinated Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 was a much larger

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<sup>73</sup> S. N. Singh, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Reid, *History of Frontier Area Bordering on Assam From 1885-1941*, reprinted (Delhi: Eastern Publishing House, 1983), pp. 8-13.

<sup>75</sup> A.S. Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land, Including a Description of the Various Expeditions into the Chin-Lushai Hills and the Final Annexation of the Country with Maps and Illustrations*, reprinted (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1976), pp.185-186.

operation than any previous expedition. The operation began in November 1889 and was successfully concluded five months later in March 1890.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, all the principal tribes of the North and South Lushai Hills were brought under control. The Chin-Lushai expedition became the landmark and a turning point in the history of Lushai Hills. Accordingly, a unit of administration was established under the province of Assam with headquarters at Aizawl. Capt. Brown was appointed political officer of the North Lushai Hills on April 1890. The South Lushai Hills was created as a separate district in 1891 with headquarters at Lunglei under Chittagong division of Bengal and was placed under a political officer. The officers were instructed not to interfere with the Lushais in their internal affairs. But they were asked to keep a watch on their movements and intention from outside so that prompt action could be taken in case of adverse situation.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, the British expedition ended in complete subjugation of the tribes in the Lushai Hills. The chiefs realized that it would be futile to fight against the British force which was superior in all respects. Hence, the chiefs agreed to pay royalty and accepted British domination. Finally, in 1898, the North Lushai Hills and the South Lushai Hills were amalgamated as “Lushai Hills District” and was made a part of Assam.<sup>78</sup> The Chin Hills Regulation Act of 1896 was imposed which put restriction on the movement of outsiders in Mizoram. This marked the beginning of stability in the area.<sup>79</sup> The British occupation of the area brought about significant changes in the socio-political and religious life of the people.

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<sup>76</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p.137.

<sup>77</sup> S. N. Singh, op. cit., pp 37-38.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Reid, *The Lushai Hills*, reprinted (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1978), p.60.

<sup>79</sup> R. N. Singh, op. cit., p.38

### Excluded Area

The Government of India Act, 1935 classified the hill areas of Assam into “Excluded Areas” and “Partially Excluded Areas”. The Excluded Areas did not have any representative in the Assam Legislative Assembly while the Partially Excluded Areas had five representatives. The Excluded Areas consisted of the Lushai Hills, the Naga Hills and the North Cachar Hills. The Partially Excluded Areas consisted of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills and Mikir Hills.<sup>80</sup> The Lushai Hills District was administered by regulations formulated by the Governor of Assam and the area of the District was under his executive functions.

### Inner Line Regulation

After the annexation of Lushai Hills, the British administrators thought it was necessary to protect plainsmen from Mizos and Mizos from plainsmen by certain laws. The Chin Hills Regulation was framed and introduced on August 13, 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. But this Chin Hills Regulation 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 Regulations of 1873 framed by the Lt. Governor of West Bengal and approved by the Governor General in Council. Thus, 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

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<sup>80</sup> The Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order No. 348 Fr dated April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

status of Union Territory of Mizoram on January 21, 1972. The present Government of Mizoram also enforces an Inner Line Regulation very strictly.<sup>81</sup>

Rule of British through the Chiefs: For the British, to administer at minimum expense to themselves was to do so through the existing system of chieftainship. John Shakespear, first superintendent of the amalgamated Lushai Hills District was the architect of its administrative system. The chiefs were made responsible for the maintenance of law and order in their villages, and for the collection of taxes. The British administrators did not interfere in the internal administration of the Chief except in the case of murder and very serious matters. Besides recognizing the rights and influence of the chiefs, the British also took steps to update the village administration by providing education to the eldest sons of the chiefs who were the heirs and would thus be fit to discharge the duties of chiefs.<sup>82</sup>

Circle Administration: A new system of administration known as Circle Administration was introduced in 1901. The whole district was divided into 18 circles—there were 12 circles in Aizawl and 6 circles in Lunglei; Colonel Shakespear inaugurated this.<sup>83</sup> In each of these circles, the superintendent appointed an interpreter called Circle Interpreter through whom all orders were transmitted to the village chiefs, and also to keep necessary records and statistics. The circle interpreter was required to submit regular reports on all events occurring within the circle. The British established schools and hospitals at the administrative headquarters in Aizawl and Lunglei. But the government schools soon ceased

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<sup>81</sup> R.N. Prasad and A. K. Agarwal, *Political and Economic Development of Mizoram* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1991), pp.140-141.

<sup>82</sup> Mangkhoshat Kipgen, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Reid, op. cit., p.61.

functioning and amalgamated with the mission schools. This was done after the first visit of a Chief Commissioner of Assam to Lushai Hills in 1904. The Chief Commissioner in consultation with the superintendent decided to hand over the management of all schools in the district to the missionaries, who were working there. With the rapid spread of schools and Christianity, new centers of power and influence were created in the person of the new role played by teachers and pastors.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the village administration by the chiefs under British rule was no longer as simple as it used to be. The circle interpreters, teachers and pastors were having an influence on the people and contributed towards undermining the authority of the chiefs.

**Abolition of Chieftainship:** The traditional hereditary chieftainship was abolished under the provisions of the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Right) Act, 1954, the rights and privileges of the Mizo chiefs and the Pawi-Lakher chiefs were acquired by the government with effect from April 1, 1956. With the abolition of chieftainship together with its rights and privileges in 1955, the powers of chiefs were transferred to the Village Councils in 1955.<sup>85</sup>

#### District Council

When India attained Independence, it accepted a democratic setup of government to conduct business of administration for its people of different cultural and religious backgrounds. Prior to the birth of the republic, India gave to itself a constitution that shaped the political structures pertaining to the norms and systems of self-rule. It was in accordance with the provision contained in the Sixth schedule of the Constitution

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<sup>84</sup> Mangkhosat Kipgen, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>85</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, *District Councils in the Mizo Hills* (Updated) (Aizawl: Dr. H.C. Thanhranga, MJS (Retd), 2007), p. 28.

that the District Council was created in the Mizo Hills. One of the notable committees that were responsible for the formation of Mizo District Council was the Bordoloi Committee. The Bordoloi Committee recommended that the government of Assam should not exclude or modify the area of Lushai Hills autonomous District Council without its consent.<sup>86</sup> The Bordoloi Sub-Committee was a sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly.

The colonial administration passed a legislative enactment called the Government of India Act 1935, to place the hill areas of Assam into two categories of administrative areas: excluded and partially excluded areas. The Lushai Hills was placed in an Excluded Area under the provision of this Act and the jurisdiction of the Provincial Ministry was not extended to the District. Hence, the Bordoloi Committee considered the setup of the Lushai Hills and all other Hill Areas of Assam. The Bordoloi Committee recommended that there should be an autonomous District Council in the hill areas of Assam. The committee also recommended that there should be a regional Council if there were distinct groups of people therein. The Constituent Assembly of India took up the recommendation for further discussion. It accepted the recommendations and the same was given effect in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. When the Bordoloi Committee visited the Lushai Hills in April 1947, the Committee co-opted two representatives, namely, Ch. Saprawnga and Khawtinkhuma who belonged to the Mizo Union party of the Lushai Hill district.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, *op. cit.*, 135.

<sup>87</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, *op. cit.*, 69-87..



So far as the district councils in Mizoram were concerned, at first there was only one district council in the Lushai Hills.<sup>88</sup> Based on the provisions enshrined in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, the Government of Assam enacted the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of the District Council) Act in 1951. In April 23, 1952 the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council was formed which led to the abolition of Chieftainship in the Mizo society. Consequently, the Lushai Hills District Council (later on the Mizo District Council), and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council came into being in 1952 and 1953 respectively. The Mizo District Council worked for 20 years and was abolished in 1972 (when Mizoram became a Union Territory) along with the Pawi-Lakher regional Council under the Northeastern Regional Areas (Re-organization) Act, 1971. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was divided into three Regional Councils viz. the Pawi Regional Council, the Lakher Regional Council and the Chakma Regional Council. And, each one was upgraded to the District Council level in April 29, 1972 under the same Act.<sup>89</sup>

The main reason behind such change was a combination of different factors like, ethnicity, compact geographical contiguity, fiscal adequacy and community of interest. Over and above these, the political factors were more powerful and dominating, which overshadowed other factors. Hence, the Mizo District Council which has been in existence for 20 years from 1952-1972 came to an end on 28 April, 1972 when it was abolished under the Dissolution of the Mizo District Council (Miscellaneous) Order, 1972 as per paragraph 20A of the Sixth schedule to the Constitution.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> V. Venkata Rao, et al., *A Century of Government and Politics in North – East India*, Volume III- Mizoram (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company (Pvt) LDT, 1987), p. 158.

<sup>89</sup> S. N. Singh, op. cit., p. 145-146.

<sup>90</sup> H.C. Thanhanga, op. cit., p. 42.

## Union Territory

The political development of Mizo Hills District (now Mizoram) was interrupted due to the outbreak of insurgency in 1966 which continued till 1971, when the security forces were able to bring the situation under control. The emergence of Bangladesh also contributed in crippling the hostile activities and compelled the rebel leaders living in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to return to their homeland. In the meantime, the government liberalized the amnesty offer and gave a number of chances to their surrender and to lead a civilized and normal life. A liberal group, among the Mizos and the hostiles, emerged that joined in the quest for peace in the Mizo Hills. The Mizo Union party, which was regional in character, also played an important role in mobilizing the people and molding public opinion in favor of better status of Mizo Hills or statehood within the Indian Constitution.<sup>91</sup> The most powerful initiative for peace, however, came from the Church leaders who were quite enlightened and politically conscious.

As a result of their effort along with other forces of peace and following the implementation of the Northeastern Areas (Re-organization) Act, 1971, the Mizo Hills District was upgraded to the status of a Union Territory on January 21, 1972 with a 33-member Legislative Assembly (30 elected and 3 nominated) and one Lok Sabha seat, as per part 6 of the Act and the Government of the Union Territories (Amendment) Act 1971.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, the Mizo District Council was abolished (paragraph 20 A of Sixth Schedule). Obviously, the three other tribes of the district,

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<sup>91</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>92</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese VSM (Rtd) & R.L. Thanzawna MCS (Rtd), *A History of the Mizos* - Volume II (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT, 1997), p. 140.

namely the Poi (or Pawi), Lakhers and Chakmas reaped the benefit of this reorganization and three District Councils were created.<sup>93</sup>

#### Genesis and Development of the Political Parties

In modern democratic society, the political parties have been acknowledged as wider, as well as, the least expensive platforms to ventilate people's grievances, and a convenient method to articulate the feelings and aspirations of the masses. The genesis and development of political parties in Mizoram are briefly highlighted in the following sections.

The entry into political life was initiated in 1925 when a section of Mizos under Telala (of Ralte community) sought permission to take part in the political process of Assam, but ended in failure. Further, with the implementation of the Government of India Act, 1935, elections were held in Assam in 1937.<sup>94</sup> But there was no representation from the Mizo Hills district in the Assam Assembly, which was resented by a section of educated and politically conscious group of the Mizos. The British did not encourage the Excluded Areas to be involved in the state politics, thus it kept them away from the political waves surging inside the country and thereby it kept the areas as primitive. But, a few educated persons were keeping a close watch on day-to-day political happenings in India. Further, some common people also had voiced their demands for providing political representation in the Provincial Assembly of Assam in 1937, but the demand was suppressed once and for all.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> S. N. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

The British authority did not allow any political organization till 1935.<sup>96</sup> But the surging aspirations of Mizo people induced them to organize a political party that marked the beginning of a new political life in Mizoram. A political party called the Mizo Common People's Union, with the permission of the Superintendent of Lushai Hills was formed on April 9, 1946 so as to voice their people's aspirations and various demands, especially political rights and their administrative status. And, thus the name of the party was later changed to that of the Mizo Union.<sup>97</sup> The genesis and growth of other political parties in the state are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Mizo Union (MU): The oldest regional political party in Mizoram was formed on April 9, 1946, under the leadership of R. Vanlalawma, Lalbuaia and Hrangiaia.<sup>98</sup> The main cause of its emergence was the resentment against the despotic rule of Mizo chiefs. Secondly, it was the British administrator's reluctance to allow the Mizos to participate in the political activities. In the beginning, the party was named as "Mizo Common Peoples Union". But, the Mizo chiefs objected that they were not commoners. Accordingly, Vanlalawma changed the name of the party. In order to honor the sentiments of the chiefs whose help was essential to consolidate the grassroots level base, the name was given as "Mizo Union". But despite this, the chiefs did not join the party.

The Mizo Union (MU) held its first conference on May 25, 1946 at Aizawl to approve the draft of the constitution. This was the first of its kind to conduct a conference as a political party. In this conference, the party passed some important

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p.165.

<sup>97</sup> R. N. Prasad, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

resolutions that demanded for two third representations in the District Conference to be by elected members from among the common people, instead of equal representation to the chiefs and the common people. After long deliberations over the issue of the future status of the Lushai Hills, the meeting resolved to include the Mizos within the province of Assam.<sup>99</sup>

In the Conference, the party also mentioned its desire to bring in all the neighboring territories inhabited by the ethnic Mizo, under the fold of the Mizo District. The party also submitted a memorandum to the Bordoloi sub-committee, demanding the inclusion of areas inhabited by the Mizos in the adjacent areas such as Manipur, Cachar and Tripura, to grant power of autonomous administration in the internal affairs, within the general framework of the province of Assam, and a special provision for the liberal financial assistance from the Central Government. Thus, the Mizo Union became more popular and received the support of commoners. In the first ever election of the Council members, the MU party won all the seats except two in Aizawl town, which were captured by the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO).

United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO): While the Mizo Union fought for the abolition of the chieftainship rule by opting to join the Indian Union, there were people who viewed that the best option for Mizo survival was to join Burma. This led to the formation of a new political party known as the United Mizo Freedom

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<sup>99</sup> The first General Assembly of the Mizo Union held from September 24 to 26 1946 passed the resolution that, "In the event of India attaining a complete Independence and unqualified independence the Mizos are also to be included in it, within the province of Assam. The Mizos are opposed to the retention of their district as an excluded area under Independent India, but wish to be included in the Provincial Legislature with a sufficient number of representatives who will represent them on concurrent subjects with the Provincial Government. Except on these subjects, no Legislation of the Provincial Legislature should apply directly to the hills and they reserve all rights and privileges of their internal administration with a Local Legislative and Executive body".

Organization (UMFO) on July 5, 1947.<sup>100</sup> The dissident Mizo Unionist leader, Lalbiakthanga became its president. The party was backed and supported by the chiefs along with their followers, because they were hostile to the Mizo Union. Since the Mizo Union had decided to remain within India, the UMFO opposed the MU's decision thereafter.

In the meantime, Lalmawia, an army officer (retired) of Burma came to Mizoram and joined this new political party (UMFO). In the beginning, the party's aims were to merge Mizoram with Burma, to retain chieftainship and to resist the growth of the MU in the Mizo politics. Lalmawia also emphasized on the advantages of joining Burma citing the grounds of common customs, culture, dialects, common descent and common economic pattern. However, the Burmese government did not encourage the idea of merging Mizoram with Burma on the ground that the Mizo Union had already opted for the Indian Union.

The Mizo Union became a mass party in the territory mainly because of its pledge to abolish the exploiting institution of the chieftainship and so it retained more popular support than the UMFO. Ultimately, the movement died out. So, the UMFO later on, gave up the idea of joining Burma.<sup>101</sup> In the meantime, the first president Lalbiakthanga joined service in a government department. So in his place, Lalmawia became the second president of the UMFO.

Tribal Union (TU): The third political party, known as the Tribal Union, was formed at Lawngtlai in the far south Lushai Hills in 1950, in order to project the demand of a

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<sup>100</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>101</sup> R. N. Prasad, op. cit., p. 255.

regional council for the Pawi-Lakher region within a framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.<sup>102</sup> Its genesis began in 1947 when Saprawnga, a powerful Mizo leader, paid a visit to the area and encouraged them to demand either a separate regional council or adequate representation in the District Council, which was under the process of formation. The Superintendent of Lushai Hills District also helped in the organization of Pawi-Lakher Tribal Council (PLTC). Thus, the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union was formed in 1948.<sup>103</sup> The main aim of the party was to integrate the Pawi-Lakher tribes into one administrative unit and to obtain a regional council for all the tribes in the region in order to preserve their customs, culture, dialect and ethnic identity.

Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU): The Eastern India Tribal Union was formed by the UMFO and MU Right Wing on October 2, 1957, and its office was opened at the residence of Lalmawia, the President. Office bearers were elected in its assembly on October 3, 1957 at Dawrpui Middle School at Aizawl. The party wanted the carving out of a Hill Area consisting of all hill districts of Assam within the Indian Union. The EITU party in Mizoram continued to exist till the outbreak of the MNF rebellion.<sup>104</sup> The party had its origin in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, besides the Garo Hills at a time when the State Reorganization Commission of Assam was being constituted.

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<sup>102</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>103</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>104</sup> V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga and Niru Hazarika, *A Century of Government and Politics in North-East India, Volume III-Mizoram* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company (Pvt) Ltd), 1987), pp.142-143. For other versions on the EITU party, see RN Prasad, *Government and Politics in Mizoram 1947-1986* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1987), pp. 257-259.

Indian National Congress (INC): The Indian National Congress was formed in the Mizo Hills on April 11, 1961 and an *ad hoc* committee was formed with A. Thanglura as President, Lalsawia as Vice President, Lalthankima as General Secretary and Hrangchhuana as Treasurer. In 1962, a conference of the Congress workers was held in Aizawl that formally constituted the Mizo District Congress Committee (MDCC) and proceeded to elect its office bearers, A. Thanglura as President, Lalthangliana as Vice President, Hrangchhuana Treasurer and Zalawma as General Secretary.<sup>105</sup>

From the very beginning, the Congress party faced some internal problems, besides others. As such, a step was taken to revitalize the party by conducting the organization elections in 1967. Denthuama was elected as the President, Zalawma, General Secretary and Hrangchhuana, Treasurer. This was done in the absence of Thanglura, the incumbent president of Congress. As the Congress party was incurably ailing with internal strife, it performed very poorly in the first elections to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram Union Territory.

Following the upgradation of Mizo district to Union Territory status in 1972, the jurisdiction of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee over the Mizo District Congress Committee came to an end. Since then, the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee came into existence, and the party began to enjoy greater autonomy in their political administration. However, the fight for leadership continued within the party, as before. The Mizo Labour Party and the Mizo Socialist party agreed to merge themselves with the Congress party, and the merger was finalized on October

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<sup>105</sup> V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga and Niru Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 144. Also see, K.M. Zakhuma, *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989-A Study with Special Reference to Political Parties in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Sangkungi, 2001), p. 83-92.



18, 1972. As soon as the new organizational setup was drawn up in 1973, the party elected its new leaders, namely: Lalthanhawla, president; Sakhawliana, vice president; Lalruala, Treasurer; and Lalkunga, General Secretary.<sup>106</sup> These leaders worked more actively than their predecessors, and under their leadership, the party gained much in strength, and Lalthanhawla continues to be very popular as the party president till date.

Mizo National Front (MNF): The Mizo National Front, another political party, was formed on 28 October, 1961 at Aizawl. This party was the Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF), which was initially established in 1960 as a welfare organization to relieve the people in great distress due to famine-induced problems that were created by Mautam (Flowering Bamboo). Subsequently, it was converted into a political party; the MNFF dropped the word “Famine” from its name and became a refined political party with the main objective of creating an independent and sovereign state of Mizoram.<sup>107</sup> The office bearers were: Laldenga, President; Lalnumawia, Vice President; S. Lianzuala, General Secretary; P.B. Rosanga, Asst. Gen. Secretary; Rochhinga, Treasurer; and Lalkhawliana, Finance Secretary.<sup>108</sup> Pursuant to the declaration of Mizoram as a state on 20 February 1987, as per the provisions contained in the Memorandum of Settlement, the MNF party’s constitution was amended and reorganized accordingly. Following the death of Laldenga in 1990, Zoramthanga became party President, Tawnluia, Vice President, and Tlanghmingthanga, Treasurer. In 1998 and 2003 MNF won the state Assembly elections, and Zoramthanga became Chief Minister for 10 years.

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<sup>106</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, op. cit., pp. 84-89.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-93.

<sup>108</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, op. cit., p. 48.

Mara Freedom Party (MFP): The Mara (Lakher) people in the Pawi-Lakher Region established The Mara Freedom Party in April 1963. The office bearers were: President, Vanluaia Hlychho; Vice President, M.Z. Hiphei; General Secretary, Mylai Hlychho; and Treasurer, Leiko. It was the first regional party to be formed in the Lakher region. The main aim of the party was to obtain a separate Lakher District Council for the people in order to safeguard their cultural and racial identity.

Mizo National Union (MNU): The Mizo National Union was formed on December 13, 1971 at Aizawl headed by H.K. Bawihchhuaka as President and R. Dosanga as General Secretary. The objective of the party was to achieve full statehood for Mizoram, along with the creation of greater Mizoram. However, the party could not make any headway since a large majority of the party men was in favor of the Union Territory status. As such, they were not in a position to contest the first Mizoram Assembly elections in April 1972, and decided to merge with the Mizo Labour party in March 1972.<sup>109</sup> The party ceased to exist thereafter.

Socialist Party of India: This party was established on November 3, 1971 and it was nearly shrouded in obscurity had it not contested in the first general elections of the Legislative Assembly on the Union Territory and also for the Lok Sabha. The party was mainly concerned about the under-privileged people of the society. Hence, it could not gain popularity in the state, and finally it had to merge with the Congress in 1972.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Mizo Labour Party (MLP): The Mizo Labour Party was established in March 1972, with the main aim of establishing a socialist society, which was aimed at improving the life of peasants, workers and weaker sections of the society.<sup>111</sup> The party also made its stand clear to oppose the conversion of Mizoram into Union Territory status. Rather, it demanded the creation of a full statehood. The party stressed ethnic unity and implementing socio-economic programs. The party participated in the election of 1972, and secured 13.4 per cent votes in the Mizoram Assembly. The party finally merged into the Indian National Congress.<sup>112</sup>

United Pang People's Party (UPPP): The party was established on January 10, 1974. It was formed by the Pang community who felt that it was necessary to form a political party of their own to express their political rights. In 1975, the party submitted a memorandum to the government of the Union Territory, demanding the creation of an autonomous district council for their areas.<sup>113</sup>

People's Conference (PC): Prior to the People's Conference, and its formation as a political party, the Human Rights Committee was formed on June 1, 1974 in the Mizo Hills headed by Brig. T. Sailo (Retd). The committee subsequently transformed itself into a new political party, called the People's Conference on April 17, 1975. The office bearers were President, Brig. T. Sailo (Retd); Vice President, Rev. Sakhawliana; General Secretary, Zairemthanga; and four secretaries: Thangliana, K.M. Biaksailova, K. Thansiama, and K. Biakchungnunga. Consultants were Dr. Rothuama, J. Kapthianga and Thangridema.<sup>114</sup> The PC party was guided by the six

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<sup>111</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>112</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>114</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, op.cit., p. 51.

basic needs, namely, food, water supply, power, communication, transport system and rural development. The party won the state Assembly elections in 1979, and T. Sailo served as Chief Minister of Mizoram from 1979 to 1984.<sup>115</sup> The Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) party was founded when the concerned Mizo citizens came together to fight for the human rights in Mizoram. Under the leadership of its Founding President, Brigadier T. Sailo, MPC fought for the Mizo people. Currently, the party President is Lalmangaiha Sailo, son of T. Sailo, the former party president.

Mizo Democratic Front (MDF): The party was established in April 1976. The office bearers were, President, Sanglianchhungi; Vice President, Thanhawla; General Secretary, A.V. Pakunga; Secretary, Vanlalhruaia; Finance Secretary, Sangthanga; and Treasurer, Lalchhanchhuaha. The party had twenty-four members on its central working committee.<sup>116</sup> The political objective of the party is same as was in line with other regional parties. And, it demanded a solution for political disturbances that occupied their utmost attention.

Mizoram Janata Party (MJP): For the first time in the history of independent India, Congress lost power in 1977, and Janata Party came into power at the center. This event led to the breakup of Congress party in Mizoram and the breakaway group along with members of other political parties joined hands to form the Mizoram Janata Party in 1977. Its first president was J. Thanghuama. The party contested in the 1978 Assembly elections, and it won two seats by securing 15.35 percent of the total votes polled in Mizoram.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> R. N. Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>116</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>117</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

Mizo Convention (MC): The three political parties such as the P.C. (B), Janata, and the MDF dissolved themselves and formed a new political party called, the Mizo Convention on April 8, 1982. The main issue on which the party capitalized was the support and patronage that it expected from the underground MNF.<sup>118</sup> As soon as the underground MNF came to the political settlement with the Government of India, the party merged itself with the MNF in 1986.

Mizo Peace Forum (MPF): This political party came out of the fierce conflicts among different political parties of Mizoram, and it was incited by the peace talks between the MNF and the Government of India. The MPF was formed by students on December 30, 1982.<sup>119</sup> The party members consisted of young students, mostly those who supported the cause of MNF.

Mizo National Union (MNU): The party came into existence mainly due to the split in the ruling Congress party in 1986. On May 14, 1986 the two parties, the Mizo Union Democratic Socialist party and the Mizoram Congress for Peace were merged to form a new political party called the Mizo National Union. The party contested in the general elections to the Legislative Assembly held in 1987 and 1989.<sup>120</sup> The party merged with the People Conference on July 12, 1989 to form a new political party called the Democratic Party.

Bharatya Janata Party (BJP): The Bharatya Janata Party Mizoram Pradesh was formed on February 3, 1993. The office bearers were President, Vanlalrawna; Vice President, Chawngzika Riang; General Secretary, C. Thanngura; and Secretary,

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<sup>118</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>119</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

Rualpawla. In 1994 the president was P.L. Chhuma and in 1998 Harry H. Vanchhawng, in 1999 Lalramtiana. The party was reconstituted on September 13, 2004 and V.F. Lalzarliana has been the President.<sup>121</sup> Currently, Lalhluna is the state Unit President and Lalchhanhima as Secretary. The party contested 11 seats in Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections 2013, but failed to secure any seat.<sup>122</sup>

Lairam Congress Party (LCP): In 1992, the political party called Lairam Congress Party was born at Lawntlai. The founder President was C. Thanghluna, one of the veteran politicians among the Pawi (Lai) people in the Chhimtuipui District. The Lairam Congress Party had contested the elections to the Pawi District Council, which was held after the formation of its party, and also contested the elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections.<sup>123</sup>

Maraland Democratic Front (MDF): The Maraland Democratic Front was formed in 1997 at Saiha. The office bearers were President, P.P. Thawla; Vice President, H.C. Vanhnuna; and Treasurer, L. Patha.<sup>124</sup> The party is active among the Mara people in the southern part of the state. The party had run the Mara Autonomous District Council (one of the three autonomous districts in Mizoram) together with the Indian National Congress in the previous term. In the state Assembly elections in Mizoram 2003, the MDF put up two candidates in two constituencies. The party president and founder P.P. Thawla was elected from Tuipang constituency. In the 2008 Assembly elections, he was elected in the Palak constituency. The current President of the party is M. Laikaw, one of the founding members of MDF.

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<sup>121</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, op. cit., pp. 52-54.

<sup>122</sup> "BJP to Contest 11 Seats in Mizoram," *The Mizoram Post*, Vol.11 Issued No. 157, 2 November 2013.

<sup>123</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54

Mizoram Congress Party (MCP): A good number of veteran Congress members of Mizoram left the INC and they formed a new political party named as the Mizoram Congress Party (MCP) headed by J. Lalsangzuala on August 17, 2005 at Aizawl. The office bearers were President, J. Lalsangzuala; Vice President, Saikapthianga; Treasurer, R. Thangliana; and General Secretary, Liansuama.<sup>125</sup> The main objectives of the party are, to have a corruption-free society, to safeguard and promote Mizo culture and tradition, social reformation, economic self-sufficiency, empowerment of youth and women, and national integrity and peace.

Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP): The Zoram Nationalist Party was born out of the Mizo National Front (Nationalist) on July 29, 2000 at Aizawl. Its founder President was Lalduhawma, who was the top most leader of the MNF (N). The office bearers were President, Lalduhawma; Vice President, Dr. James Dokhuma; Treasurer, Lianhmingthanga; and six General Secretaries.<sup>126</sup> The party won two seats in the state Assembly in both the 2003 and 2008 elections. The main objective of the party is to establish “Zoram Thar” or “a new Mizoram” for a just and sustainable socio-economic development, and to maintain Christian ethics and principles to ensure good governance in the state.

People’s Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM): PRISM started its functioning as anti-corruption watch-dog since 2006 and it transformed into a political party on November 3, 2017. It contested 14 seats in the eight Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections but forfeited its security deposit.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp. 54-55.

<sup>127</sup> Jangkhongam Doungel, *The Eight Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election of 2018 and Change of Government*, Eastern Panorama, December, 2018. pp. 32-36.

Zoram People's Movement (ZPM): The Zoram People's Movement is a regional political party. It is a political alliance formed by different parties, namely, Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), Mizoram People's Conference (MPC), Zoram Exodus Movement (ZEM), Zoram Reformation Front (ZRF), Zoram Democratic Front (ZDF) and Mizoram Peoples Party (MPP). The elected office bearers are: President, Lalduhawma; Vice President, Dr. Kenneth Chawngliana; Secretary, K Sapdanga and Treasurer, F Rodingliana.<sup>128</sup> ZPM contested 36 out of 40 seats in the eight Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, 2018 and emerged as largest opposition parties by winning 8 seats. The ZPM has been created to create political alternative to the MNF and the INC in Mizoram.

#### Genesis of Separatism Movement in the Lushai Hills

Towards the end of British rule in India, like the princely states, there were many tribal communities on the periphery of the Indian nation. They had the same dilemma as that of the princely states, to integrate and be a part of a single Indian state or to secede from the prospective Indian state and seek their own national destiny independently. As such, various separatist movements in the Northeast India are similar in nature. The Mizos are unique in having an almost entirely political foundation. There was no economic exploitation of the Mizos, no interference with their religious practices, nor any attempt to change their social structure. The origin of the disturbances that characterize the Mizo political struggle can be traced to the moment of Indian Independence and the partition of India. After the partition of India, the gateway of the Lushai Hills via Chittagong was sealed and the Lushai

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<sup>128</sup> "Political parties in Mizoram", <https://en.wikipedia.org> , retrieved on January 10, 2019.



people found themselves separated from their kinsmen in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chin Hills of Burma.

There were various questions at the time of India's Independence that the Mizo people had to answer. What should be the future status of the Lushai Hill and the Mizo people: remain in India, stay under British rule, join Burma, or declare Independence? However, the closer the Indian Independence came, the more polarized the Mizo leaders became over the issue of joining India or becoming independent. On January 25, 1947 a committee was formed by the Constituent Assembly of India to report the Northeast Frontier (Assam) Tribal areas and Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas.<sup>129</sup> Gopinath Bardoloi led the committee. The Mizo Union, the first modern political organization in the Lushai Hills was divided on the question of drafting a memorandum to be submitted to the Bardoloi committee. Two separate memorandums were submitted by two of its factions.

In their memorandum to the committee in April 1947, the "Left Wing" demanded that (i) the Mizos of the neighboring areas in Cachar, Manipur, and other regions should be included in the district of Lushai Hills and the term "Mizo" should be substituted for "Lushai"; (ii) the internal administration of the area should be left to the people within the general framework of Assam Province; and (iii) there should be liberal financial assistance from the central government. Integration would be possible if adequate safeguards were provided to the Mizos. On the other hand, the "Right Wing" recommended that the Mizos are distinct from the Indians in every possible way and hence their position would not be secure if they integrated with

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<sup>129</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese VSM (Rtd) & RL Thanzawna MCS (Rtd), *A History of the Mizos*-Volume II (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt, 1997), p.2.

India. They wanted to have an independent status. Thus, the memorandum of the Right Wing was made the official demand for independence for the first time. However, they were marginalized within the Mizo Union.<sup>130</sup> In July 5, 1947 a new political party, the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) was established with the support of the Mizo chiefs to join Lushai hills to Burma.<sup>131</sup> The UMFO had stood for sovereignty outside the Indian Union, whereas the Mizo Union was in favor of joining India with autonomous status for the Mizo people within the Indian Union.

The Mizo Civil Disobedience Movement of 1948 initiated by the educated youth and the Mizo Union to abolish chieftainship and to have elected Village Council members, and joining the Indian Union was considered to be more appropriate than joining the Chin Hills of Burma.<sup>132</sup> The Mizo chiefs supported the UMFO because of their enmity towards the Mizo Union. Consequently, after a few years the party merged with the East India Tribal Union (EITU) under the leadership of Williamson Sangma. EITU was a political party of the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills for a separate Hill State within the Indian Union.

Moreover, several other factors worked towards flaming the fire of rebellion and intensifying the feelings of dissatisfaction in the hearts of Mizo people when the government of Assam introduced the Official Language Bill in the Assembly to make Assamese the official language of the state. In 1960, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Official Languages Act declaring Assamese as the official language of the state requiring knowledge of the language by candidates applying for

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<sup>130</sup> Samir Kumar Das, *Conflict and Peace in India's Northeast: The Role of Civil Society* (Washington: East-west Center, 2007), p.35.

<sup>131</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese VSM (Rtd) & R.L. Thanzawna MCS (Rtd), op. cit., p.6.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

government jobs.<sup>133</sup> The hill districts including the Mizo Hills were greatly disturbed by the Act. As a consequence, the All Party Hill Leaders Conference, comprising the Hill Congress Committee, the Tribal Union, the Mizo Union and other local parties came into existence in 1960 to forge an effective instrument for negotiating with the Government of India for a separate Hill state<sup>134</sup>. Besides, there were numerous causes, like long-neglected poverty, bad communications, lack of contact of the government with the people, and imbalances in the administration of the region. And the initial negligence of the government of Assam to the distress of Mizo people during the Mautam Famine of 1959-60 could be also considered one of the factors. Mizoram witnesses a cyclic ecological phenomenon every 48-50 years called “Mautam” or bamboo death that causes a severe famine. When this phenomenon hit the hills again in 1958-59, the Mizo District Council requested the Assam state government for an advance preparatory measure. However, the Assam government rejected the request.

On the other hand, there are some writers like S.N. Singh, who stated, “The design of separatism was sown by the Naga leaders like T. Sakhrie, the Secretary of Naga National Council, who paid a visit to the Mizo district in September 1946. He inspired the Mizo people by citing examples that the Naga would fight to the last for independence and secession from India”.<sup>135</sup> However, the Mizo Union leaders were not impressed by his argument. Later, in 1947, the rebel Naga leader A.Z. Phizo and a few Naga leaders visited the Mizo Hills and invited the Mizos to join hands with the Nagas and fight against the Government of India for political independence.

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<sup>133</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, *The Mizo Uprising-Assam Assembly Debates on the Mizo Movement, 1966-1971* (Cambridge: Scholars Publishing, 2012), p. 6.

<sup>134</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>135</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., p.201.

Phizo even suggested that the Mizo language could become the *lingua franca* of the proposed Independent State of the Nagas and Lushais.<sup>136</sup> There were rumors that Phizo was instrumental in provoking the Mizo political movement for independence. This opinion seems to be shared by R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal. According to them, in 1947, the rebel Naga leader A.Z. Phizo visited the Mizo Hills and aroused hopes among the people for a better life after independence.<sup>137</sup> However, this too was not accepted. Verghese and Thanzawna in their book, “A History of the Mizos”, stated that, “the Mizo Union leaders politely told Phizo that his offer was not acceptable to the Mizo people”.<sup>138</sup>

#### Mautam Famine and Formation of the Mizo National Front (MNF)

The Mizo National Front (MNF) owed its origin to non-political organizations, such as, the Mizo Cultural Society and the Mizo National Famine Front, which were basically formed as the forum for inculcating national feelings among the Mizo people and as welfare organization to relieve the distress of people caused by Mautam Famine respectively. In 1959, the Mizo Hills were devastated by the worst famine in Mizo history as the “Mautam Famine”.<sup>139</sup> According to common belief, periodical bamboo flowering occurs after every 50 years in Mizoram. The cause of the famine was attributed to the flowering of the bamboo, which resulted in a boom in the rat population. After eating bamboo seeds, the rats turned towards crops and infested the huts and houses, leading to the plague in the villages. The havoc created by the rats was terrible and thus very little grain was harvested. It was at this hour of darkness that many welfare organizations tried their best to help starving villagers.

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<sup>136</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese and R.L Thanzawna, op. cit., p.1.

<sup>137</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>138</sup> Brigadier CG Verghese and RL Thanzawna, op. cit., p.2.

<sup>139</sup> Teisi Thou, oc. cit., p. 2.

Since 1955, the situation began to worsen quickly due to the breaking out of famine in the District as well as the influence of some extremists.<sup>140</sup> Earlier in 1955, enlightened young men and women had formed the Mizo Cultural Society. When the food situation in the Mizo District became more critical and some people died of starvation in 1959, the Mizo Cultural Society was converted into a new organization called the “Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF)” in March 1960. The main objective of this organization was to aid the people in obtaining food from the government. The MNFF organized famine relief work with sincerity and devotion in times of people’s distress and was thus able to win the hearts of the people. During the famine of 1959-1960, this Front took the lead in demanding relief and managed to attract the attention of all sections of Mizo society. The MNFF gained considerable popularity as a large number of Mizo youth assisted in transporting rice and other essential commodities to interior villages.<sup>141</sup> Besides, the Front had undertaken several social activities in the villages of the Mizo Hills.

When the famine was over in 1961, the leaders of MNFF considered the feasibility of converting the MNFF into a political party. On October 22, 1961 the Mizo National Famine Front dropped the word “famine” and a new political organization, the Mizo National Front (MNF) was formed with Laldenga as its President, R. Vanlawma as Secretary and A. Rohnuna as Joint Secretary. The MNF convened the first General Assembly during April 2-4, 1962 and elected the office bearers of the party: President, Laldenga; Vice President, J. Manliana; General Secretary, R. Vanlawma;

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<sup>140</sup> RN Prasad and AK Agarwal, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>141</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, op. cit., p.14.

Assistant Secretary, Isaac Zoliana; Finance Secretary, Denhmingthanga; and Treasurer, Rochhinga.<sup>142</sup>

The original aims and objectives of the MNF were:

1. To integrate all the Mizo ethnic groups under one political administration possessing the highest degree of freedom,
2. To upgrade the status and the development of the economic conditions of the Mizo people,
3. To preserve and safeguard Christianity.<sup>143</sup>

The statement of its aims and objectives were propagated with great enthusiasm, and the Front's earlier popularity during the famine had a great advantage to their supporters. Following the organization objectives, the MNF proclaimed that the territorial demarcations made by the British had never been acceptable to the Mizo people as it had separated the people into different political boundaries, worsened by the separation of Burma in 1937.<sup>144</sup> Further, the partition of India in 1947 had separated the Mizo people into different political boundaries both national and international. Besides, the demarcation of the hill states within India too divided the Mizo people. And the devastating effects of the Mautam Famine also led the people to believe that the Assam state and the Union government of India were completely indifferent to their plight. Another point propagated by the MNF was that their Christian faith was being threatened as the Indian officials intentionally used Sunday for their official visit that was usually observed as a sacred day for worship and prayer.

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<sup>142</sup> J. Zahluna, *Notes on Political Science-Government and Politics of Mizoram*, Paper –I (Aizawl: Mapuia Drug Store, 2017), p. 129.

<sup>143</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, *op. cit.*, p.4.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

## Elections to the District Council and MNF

The Mizo District Council election was held on February 5, 1962 and the MNF contested the election but drew a blank.<sup>145</sup> Its candidates were viz. Laldenga, J. Manliana and Vanlawma. In spite of this setback, Laldenga toured around the remote villages of the Mizo Hills District contacting ex-servicemen and dismissed personnel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assam Regiment. He also encouraged the youths in the Mizo Hills to enroll themselves as active members in the party. He kept in touch with students at Shillong whom he often visited in their hostels at Nongrim Hills.<sup>146</sup> With his oratory and charismatic appeal, Laldenga managed to attract the Mizo people to his party. He gave a different meaning and interpretation to the term “Excluded Area” attached to the district during the British period and challenged the right of the Indian Constitution framers to alter the “Excluded Area” status of the Mizo Hills District. He propagated the old theory originally publicized by Maj. McCall and MacDonald that due to their “Excluded Area” status, the Mizos are not part of India and are independent people.<sup>147</sup>

In December 1963, the top leaders of MNF—Laldenga, Lalnumawia, and Sainghaka—went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to obtain support for their cause. When they returned, Laldenga and Lalnunmawia were arrested by the Assam Government on the charge of conspiring with Pakistan against India, but on the request of Laldenga the then Chief Minister of Assam B.P. Chaliha released him. Within a week of Laldenga’s release from prison, a group of 21 Mizo youth crossed over to East Pakistan to undergo an intensive military training and to lift arms and

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<sup>145</sup> J. Zahluna, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>146</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, *op. cit.*, p.15.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

ammunitions.<sup>148</sup> In 1965, Laldenga visited Churachandpur district in the southern part of Manipur and pleaded the case of “Greater Mizoram” among the Kuki people. From the beginning, the ideological basis of the party was the right to have self-determination and it set the objective of attaining sovereign Independence for greater Mizoram as its political goal.

Thus, the MNF intensified its activities and the preparation for Independence movement became imminent. Laldenga formed his own government on May 1965 and named it “Mizoram Sawrkar” (Government of Mizoram). President, Laldenga; Vice President, Lalnunmawia; Home Secretary, S. Lianzuala; Finance Secretary, C. Lalkhawliana; Defense Secretary, R. Zamawia; Foreign Secretary, Lalhmingthanga; Information Secretary, Ngurkunga; Supply Secretary, H. Thangkima; and Parliamentary Secretary, Zothanmawia. There was also a Supreme Court called National Refinement Court. The recruited volunteers were divided into two categories: the combat force called Mizo National Army (MNA) and the Mizo National Volunteers (MNV).<sup>149</sup>

#### Operation Jericho<sup>150</sup> and Declaration of Mizo Hills as Disturbed Area

The Mizo National Front (MNF) declared that Mizoram as a Sovereign and Independent State would take effect on midnight of February 28, 1966. Large-scale disturbances broke out in different places in the District. At midnight of February 28, 1966, the MNF volunteers attacked the Aizawl and Lunglei Treasuries

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<sup>148</sup> J. Zahluna, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.132.

<sup>150</sup> The MNF gave the code name “Operation Jericho” for this operation. They felt that, like Joshua conquered Jericho in the battle of Jericho, they could conquer Aizawl, Lunglei and Champhai towns and the defence of these towns would automatically crumble and the whole district and its administration would fall into the hands of MNF.



simultaneously.<sup>151</sup> They also captured security forces posts in Aizawl, Lunglei, Demagiri, Champhai and Kolasib. They were well-planned and calculated attacks. The insurgents first cut off telephone lines, disrupted road communication and disarmed the state police. The MNF strategy was well-planned. The mainline of communications (Silchar-Aizawl) was disrupted intentionally to stop the reinforcement of army and paramilitary forces at Aizawl and other interior places like Champhai and Demagiri.

Consequently, on March 2, 1966 the government of Assam declared the whole Mizo Hills as “Disturbed Area” under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955<sup>152</sup> and the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act, 1958.<sup>153</sup> On March 6, 1966 the Government of India declared the MNF and its allied agencies as unlawful organizations under Rule 32 of Defense of India Rule, 1962.<sup>154</sup> Thus, the MNF insurgency, counter insurgency measures and pacification went on simultaneously. Indian troops were sent to the Mizo Hills by air and road. The Government entrusted the Army to deal with the situation in Mizoram. Armed police forces were placed under the operational control of the Army for dealing with the disturbances. The Army was made responsible to maintain law and order along with the civil administration.<sup>155</sup> The army moved from Silchar to Aizawl by road and even by helicopters from March 3, onwards. The forces managed to reach on March 5, 1966 after clearing all hurdles on the way.<sup>156</sup> Thus, the security forces started recapturing the post and centers already captured by the MNF. The neighboring countries like

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<sup>151</sup> Hluna, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>152</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>153</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, op. cit., p.10.

<sup>154</sup> J. Zahluna, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>155</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>156</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., p. 210.

Pakistan and China extended their help to the MNF by imparting guerrilla training inside Pakistan and fomenting trouble in India. Their objectives were to disintegrate the unity of India, to support secessionist movement, to put strain on the country's security economy and to keep the Indian army in these areas engaged so that they could get a free hand in other vulnerable parts of India like Kashmir.<sup>157</sup>

### Grouping of Villages

The grouping of villages was planned as a counter-insurgency measure to keep the rebels at bay, to stop their recruitment and cut off the food supply to the guerrillas.

There were four categories of grouping of villages in Mizoram.

- i) Progressive and Protected Villages (PPV)
- ii) New Group Centre (NGC)
- iii) Voluntary Group Centre (VGC)
- iv) Extended Loop Areas (ELA)

Grouping of the villages in Mizoram was done both on compulsory and voluntary basis. However, in case of voluntary grouping, no compensation charge was paid while for the latter, due compensation was paid. The first stage of grouping started on January 4, 1967 under the order of Central Government Liaison Officer for Mizo Hills District in accordance with DIR 1962.<sup>158</sup> The shifting of population and village was done strictly under the supervision of security forces according to a well-laid plan. The people carried their belongings with the help of security forces to the replacement where they were given free materials for house construction and free ration till the next harvest from new cultivation.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>158</sup> Order No. CLD/1/67 dated Silchar, Jan. 2, 1967 and CLD/1/67/1-80 dated Silchar Feb. 27, 1967 under rule of DIR, 1962. Cited by S.N. Singh, op. cit., p. 221.

As a measure of counter-insurgency, the atrocities committed against the Mizo people by the security forces after the political disturbance were innumerable. The security forces acted without restraint, killing, raping, torturing and burning the houses of the Mizo people. When an altercation took place between the security forces and the MNF, the security forces tortured the nearby people and even burnt down many villages.<sup>159</sup> The political disturbance also affected the Christian churches. For instance, the Presbyterian Church Standing Committee meetings held on July 12, 1966; July 7, 1967 and October 1, 1968 received reports about loss of Church properties, loss of Church money, burning of Church buildings and occupation of Church buildings by military personnel.<sup>160</sup> As such, the political disturbances affected every aspect of life of the Mizo people.

#### MNF Tapping for Assistance and Recognition

The MNF emissaries had met counsels of foreign countries like UK, USA, China, Pakistan, France, Burma, Nepal, Japan and Indonesia located at Dacca several times for help. During these meetings the following requests were invariably made.

1. Diplomatic recognition of Mizoram as an independent sovereign state.
2. To issue visas for MNF representatives to go abroad for propagating the MNF cause.
3. To allow foreign press reporters to come to Mizo Hills.
4. To supply arms and ammunition.
5. To give financial aid and food supply.
6. To exert diplomatic pressure on the Government of India for negotiations with the MNF on government-to-government basis. However, none of the

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<sup>159</sup> Thenphunga Sailo, *A Soldier's Story*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Aizawl: The Author, 2006), p.160.

<sup>160</sup> H. Remthanga, *Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod Thurel LakKhawm* Vol. II (1951-1970), (Aizawl: Synod Literature and Publication Board, 1988), pp. 263, 268, 270.

countries recognized Mizoram as an independent country, except for Pakistan and China which helped the MNF with small arms ammunitions, explosives, medicines, clothing and equipment, radio-sets and some financial aid. And giving training to select Mizo National Army in sabotage work and guerilla warfare.<sup>161</sup>

MNF meeting with the Kuki National Assembly: The MNF leaders had a meeting with the Kuki National Assembly at Kangpokpi in Sadar Hills of Manipur. The meeting adopted a number of resolutions in support of MNF movement.<sup>162</sup>

Kukis in the MNF movement: The MNF leadership felt the need to widen its area of operation, as they were virtually immobile in Mizoram. In 1965, when Laldenga visited Churachandpur district in the southern part of Manipur and pleaded the case of “Greater Mizoram” among the Chin-Kuki- Mizo ethnic groups. Many of these groups sympathized with the plight of the Mizos and would provide food, shelter and sanctuary to the fugitive MNA volunteers. Many even joined the MNA, among them the Thadou-Kukis joined in the largest number. Earlier in 1960, when the Mizos faced starvation, the Kuki National Assembly, the political organization of the Kukis in Manipur had collected Rs. 3800/- from the Kukis of Manipur and Nagaland and

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<sup>161</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, op.cit., p. 30.

<sup>162</sup> Some of the resolutions: 1. To negotiate with MNF for arms and ammunition with a view to form a Kuki State comprising Sadar Hills, Tengenoupal and Churachandpur areas of Manipur. 2. The non-Naga tribes in the area who refuse to be known as Kuki should be charged Rs. 15 per month per house. 3. Young Baitees or Baite volunteers should be enlisted in the KNA as volunteers. 4. Each village to provide two girls to work with KNA or in default pay a fine of Rs. 40 per village. 5 No young Kuki to serve under the Government of India. 6. All young Kukis who can handle firearms should be enrolled in the KNA Army. 7. Outwardly, Kukis should be known as Mizos, in order to succeed in their objective of securing arms and ammunition for about 1000 Kukis from the MNF. After that, they may again call themselves as Kukis. MNF had included Churachandpur Division, Sadar Hills, parts of Tamenglong, Jiribam and Tengenoupal Division of Manipur in their north area, as part of “Greater Mizoram”. The intention of the Kukis to carve out a Kuki state was to curb the ambitions of Laldenga and his followers.

sent it to the Mizo National Famine Front as famine relief.<sup>163</sup> The MNF had four main reasons to hide away in Manipur firstly, influence and recruit fresh volunteers. Secondly, it was to spread its area of influence and thus somehow disperse the Indian army and thirdly, to open a route to China. Fourth, to find a new source of tax and find sanctuary in case the situation in Mizo Hills becomes too hot as it was post-operation Jericho.<sup>164</sup>

Manipur has a sizeable population of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes. It was here that Laldenga raised hundreds of volunteers. The bulk of the volunteers were from the Kuki groups, of which Demkhosieh Gangte rose to prominence and recognition later. He was described as “one of the most battle seasoned captains in the Eastern Hills” by some journalists and writers who covered the Mizo National Movement closely. In 1960, he had become the president of the Kuki National Assembly. The first time he met Laldenga was when he led a delegation of KNA leaders to Aizawl to settle differences with the Hmar community. The Hmars and the Singsits were in conflict due to alleged mistreatment of the Hmars at the hands of their Singsit chiefs.<sup>165</sup> There is no record of the exact date when Demkhosieh joined the MNF but scholars like Dr. TT Haokip, who met him in person and spoke to him said that Demkhosieh joined the oath taking at Chaltlang-Aizawl in 1960, where new recruits swore in the name of the blood of their forefathers for the Mizo cause.<sup>166</sup>

In 1968, Demkhosieh was sent along with four men of the MNF who hailed from Falam in the Arakan hills of Myanmar to explore for a new Headquarters there in

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<sup>163</sup> SeikholenThomsong, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

case the Indian Army invades East Pakistan. This farsightedness of the MNF proved useful when in 1971 the Indian army actually marched into Dacca. Later, Demkhosieh would lead a contingent consisting of about 27 Kukis and 20 Mizos to China. Of the 27 Kukis, most were stalwarts of the society who later played crucial roles in the politics of Manipur.<sup>167</sup> One of them was Late Lalkhohen Thangneo, who later became the President of Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the political apex body of the Kukis in Manipur.

### The March to China

In November 1972, the first batch of MNF to successfully reach China started out under the leadership of Demkhosieh Gangte. The MNF numbered 47 including volunteers from Manipur. Demkhosieh himself was a Kuki volunteer from southwest district of Churachandpur. The party did not have maps but only one compass with them.<sup>168</sup> They set out from Mizoram and reached Manipur where the Kuki people provided them food and shelter and hid them from the Indian Army operations. Then they went to Moreh and proceeded to the Arakan hills in Burma, then to Yunan China. The MNF entered China in December 28, 1973 and stayed there for a few months.<sup>169</sup> In the march to China they were given shelter, food and protection by many of the Kuki villages in Burma.

The China contingent had been away almost three years from Mizoram and by then many reversals had taken place. Some moderate leaders were also assassinated and given a death warrant. There were rumors that a death warrant for Demkhosieh had

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<sup>167</sup> Seikholen Thomsong, *op. cit.*, p.13.

<sup>168</sup> "Mizoram: Contours of Non Military Intervention" by Vijendra Singh Jafa, IAS, ex-Chief Secretary of Assam, cited by Seikholen Thomsong, p. 11.

<sup>169</sup> Seikholen Thomsong, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

also been issued around this time. However, it was not known whether an order to that effect i.e. to kill Demkhosieh was actually passed by Laldenga. Like Laldenga himself, Demkhosieh was an ex-soldier, trained and disciplined in the same Indian army and a professional soldier's loyalty can never be in doubt, at least to Laldenga.<sup>170</sup> The Kukis of Manipur and the others were greatly hurt by such a development. Thus Demkhosieh wrote a letter to Chhunga, the newly elected Chief Minister of the Union Territory of Mizoram and suggested peace talks with the Government of India.

Demkhosieh surrendered to the Indian Army in Imphal, Manipur along with 27 persons consisting mostly of Kukis. The reason is still the issue of debate till today. Later, after Mizoram attained statehood, certain Kuki leaders queried the MNF leadership why the Kukis had been ignored, and some Mizo leaders allegedly replied, "Whatever rewards that were for the Kukis has been wasted by Demkhosieh by surrendering to the Indian government". This logic however is weak and holds little justification. If the Kukis have forfeited their inheritance because of the surrender of Demkhosieh, then how do the MNF explain the tens and hundreds of Mizo people who surrendered even before Demkhosieh did? Was Demkhosieh the only MNA who surrendered? The question remains.

MNF Senator Lalkhohen Thangneo: According to Prof. Lal Dena, Manipur University, "Born of a blue blood of chieftainship lineage, late Lalkhohen Thangneo was a born politician. Right from his student days, he was passionately obsessed with idea of Kuki nationalism and had been striving heart and soul for the unification of

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

Kukis who had been scattered throughout North East India, Myanmar and Bangladesh by the British colonial policy of Divide and Rule”.<sup>171</sup> To implement his political ideology, Lalkhohen initiated and even hosted the national meeting of the Kukis at his village Longphailum on October 20, 1959. As a consequence of the successful meeting, the Kuki National Volunteer (KNV) was formed. The KNV acted as the defense wing of the Kuki National Assembly (KNA). The first KNA General Assembly was held at Thingkangphai, Churachandpur in Manipur from January 19 to 22, 1960 on a large scale.<sup>172</sup> The Assembly resolved to make a strong demand to the Government of India for immediate establishment of Kuki State. Delegates of the General Assembly unanimously elected Lalkhohen as the General of the Kuki National Volunteers. Thus, KNA, the KNV’s political body submitted a memorandum to the Central Government of India on March 24, 1960 demanding equality of rights, as other nationalities enjoy autonomy within the Indian Republic, the Kukis should govern themselves in their own land autonomously.<sup>173</sup>

#### Kawnpui Convention

Lalkhohen went to the Mizo Hills to settle the issue of Hmars and met the Mizo political leaders. Their rendezvous turned to certain amicable solutions for the MNF freedom movement. When he returned to Manipur, he delivered the news to the KNA. As such, KNA resolved to help and join the MNF in its freedom movement. Accordingly, at the Kawnpui Convention, which was held on January 15, 16 and 18, 1965, Lalkhohen was appointed as the Senator to lead the MNF in Manipur or what

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<sup>171</sup> T.K. Khongsai, *The Kukis Unforgettable Patriot- Profile of Lalkhohen* (Kangpokpi: T.K Khongsai, 2014), pp. 41-44.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> Ibid



was popularly known as the Rungbung Area.<sup>174</sup> For Lalkhohen, the Kawnpui Convention became another phase in his political adventure. Being gifted with a diplomatic and sagacious personality he soon wielded much influence even in the internal administration of the erstwhile MNF.

In order to enable the Kukis to govern themselves, and with a view to unite Kuki people, Lalkhohen set out with his henchmen (KNV) to join the MNF movement. Not only a Senator in the Rungbung Area, he was also a signatory of the Mizo National Front Declaration of Independence. Being one among the hardcore spearheads of the MNF he made the Lunglei Accord of 1966 with the MNF, according to which, the Mizos and the Kukis constitute one nation. Paokhosei Kipgen, Ex-MNF cadre verbalized, “Lalkhohen was well respected by the MNF leaders due to his astonishing political ideology”.<sup>175</sup>

The Arrest of Senator Lalkhohen: It was one rainy night in November 1969 when Lalkhohen took shelter in a hut at Haijang, Sadar Hills, Manipur. The next day a friend came in a jeep to transport Lalkhohen to Imphal. Unfortunately the Central Reserved Police Force (CRPF) at Koirengei, Imphal, arrested him and later handed him over to the martial headquarters at Lamphel, Imphal. He was imprisoned as a political prisoner for more than two years. There he endured all the suffering on his rank (MNF Senator) to the point of daily electric shock for a month at Lamphel Army Headquarters, Manipur. Lalkhohen stuck to the MNF Declaration of Independence till his last breath on October 8, 1994.<sup>176</sup> According to Lalkhohen, the signing of Mizo Peace Accord on June 30, 1986 was a political blunder and in fact, a

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>176</sup> T.K. Khongsai, op. cit., p. 60.

political suicide committed by the MNF chief Laldenga. Lalkhohen was of the view that Mizoram would exist as one of the states of the Indian Union, even without resorting to armed revolution.

During the MNF movement the Kuki people were hurt, killed, maimed for life due to counter-insurgency encounters between the MNF and security forces. However, despite many brave men and women of the Kukis who underwent deprivation, hardship and emotional torture for Mizoram, almost none of them were given even a mention anywhere. Recently, C. Zama, Corporal, Mizo National Army wrote a book, "Joshua Battalion" (2016) in which he highlighted the contributions of Manipur Zo tribes in the MNF Freedom movement. According to Zama, "the Zo tribes in Manipur were very supportive to the cause of MNF movement, amongst all the Kuki people supported the most".<sup>177</sup>

#### Operation Crusade

Having persuaded a sizeable chunk of the tribes to join them in the movement, the MNF started its operations in the hill districts of Manipur. The first was named as Operation Crusade. This in fact consisted of the political and emotional parleys that Laldenga had with the elders of different tribes in Manipur. The MNF soon launched military operations, first in the Tamenglong district of Manipur where a detachment of Indian army were ambushed, and arms and weapons seized. The backlash was furious and the civilian Kukis suffered from the counter insurgency operations conducted in their areas. In fact elders of the Kuki society narrate, till today, how the Kukis had allegedly undergone various hardships in the course of sheltering and

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<sup>177</sup> C. Zama, *Joshua Battalion* (Aizawl: C. Zama, 2016), p.6.

hiding the MNF from the Indian army.<sup>178</sup> Many young men were allegedly arrested and tortured. Many are said to be either physically or emotionally crippled till today. The fact was that Kuki men lost their lives and some were crippled physically and mentally. Women were raped because they were helping the MNF by hiding and giving protection through various means. Thus, the MNF movement severely affected even the areas dominated by the Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups in Manipur. The degree of their suffering during the MNF movement was no less than that of their kinsmen in Mizoram.

#### Role of Church in the Emergence of a Democratic Mizoram

Soon after the outbreak of insurgency in the Mizo district, the Church and other civil society organizations felt that they had a role to play in preventing any further deterioration of the situation, and creating good-will and mutual understanding between the MNF and the general public, and also between the security forces and the Mizo people. Thus, the Church and other civil society organizations were compelled to be involved in political matters to bring back normalcy in the district. The Church became the forerunner to ensure peace in lieu of the political disturbance in 1966. The Mizoram Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church of Mizoram initiated peace talks between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front. The Baptist Church of Mizoram sent a letter to the Government of India to inform them of their initiative for peace in March 1966. At the same time, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church also raised their voice against political disturbances by issuing a declaration condemning violence and killing.<sup>179</sup> The MNF leaders strongly opposed the messages of the Church particularly the pamphlets made by the Presbyterian

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<sup>178</sup> Seikholen Thomsong, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>179</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

Church of Mizoram and the Baptist Church of Mizoram and warned them to amend the pamphlet. However, the Church did not find anything to be amended in the declarations.

#### Aizawl Citizens' Committee

In response to the political disturbances, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, under the initiative of the Synod Standing Committee called an Emergency Meeting on March 12, 1966, which resolved to form the Aizawl Citizens' Committee.<sup>180</sup> The immediate response to the outbreak was to bury the dead bodies, to give relief to those victim families, and to move people to safety. Lalngurauva, Chairman and Pual Zakhuma Hauhnar, Secretary of "Aizawl Citizens' Committee" issued a letter to political party leaders, Heads of Government offices, Commandants of Assam Rifles, Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister of Assam reporting about the objectives of the "Citizens' Committee" that was formed by the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.<sup>181</sup> The meeting had resolved certain objectives for the restoration of peace in Aizawl and Mizoram in general.<sup>182</sup> At that difficult time, the Aizawl Citizens' Committee was the only institution in North Mizoram initiating peace and normalcy, and distributing relief to the victims of political turmoil. The Committee was also against a military assumption that all the Mizo people were under the influence of the insurgency movement. The Committee strongly claimed that "there

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p.113.

<sup>181</sup> C.G.Vergheese and R.L. Thanzawna, *A History of the Mizos*, Volume II (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1997), p. 84.

<sup>182</sup> Some of the main objectives of the Citizens' Committee were: 1. Speedy restoration of peace both in the Aizawl town and Mizoram in general. For this, cooperation of MNF leaders and Government authorities was sought. 2. Many law and order cases including theft of chicken, and rapes of women were reported. The Committee took up the matter with high-ranking army officers who gave all possible help and assistance. 3. The Committee made an appeal to the people of Aizawl and various churches for relief and collected a contribution of Rs. 5000, besides clothes and rice for distribution amongst the needy. 4. Besides, the Citizens' Committee rendered assistance to individuals in tracing their relatives, tracing those in prisons and recorded cases of loss of money and properties.

are yet many Mizo who are loyal and who hate bloodshed".<sup>183</sup> The Committee also requested the Chief Minister to give special protection to the persons who are wanted by the MNF leaders. The Aizawl Citizens' Committee worked day and night in the midst of much danger so as to restore peace and normalcy.

#### Lunglei Citizens' Committee

Lunglei, the headquarters of the Baptist Church of Mizoram, was the second largest town in Mizoram. Lunglei town was also captured on midnight of February 28, 1966 by the MNF. The SDO Y. R. Pillai was also taken captive by the MNF. The Lunglei treasury was also attacked and the safe boxes containing about Rupees Eighteen Lakhs were carried away.<sup>184</sup> Hence, having the same objective with the Aizawl Citizens Committee, the Lunglei Citizens' Committee/Lunglei Town Committee was formed on March 21, 1966 under the initiative of the Baptist Church of Mizoram.<sup>185</sup> The Committee appointed Rev. H.S. Luaia as Chairman and Rev. C.L. Hminga as Secretary. Due to some reasons, the first meeting of the Lunglei Citizens' Committee was held only on September 4, 1966. From its inception the Lunglei Citizens' Committee faced a problem, as the Government did not allow government servants to take part in the Committee. But the Committee served its purpose at different levels apart from distributing relief to the victims of political turmoil. The Church sent two of its leaders, viz. Rev. C.L. Hminga and Rev. H.S. Luaia to Aizawl on March 10, 1966 for peace mission. However, after they learned that the Indian Army would attack the Lunglei town Rev. H.S. Luaia went back and arrived at Lunglei on March 11, 1966 and requested the MNF leaders not to attack the Indian Army for the

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<sup>183</sup> Lalngura Ralte, Chairman and Paul Zakhuma, Secretary Aizawl Citizens' Committee letter to the Chief Minister of Assam, B.P. Chaliha, dated, the 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1966.

<sup>184</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>185</sup> V. Lalzawnga, *Mizoram Baptist Kohran Chanchin Pawimawh Lawrkhawm* (Collections of Important Events in the Baptist Church of Mizoram), (Serkawn: Literature Committee, 1990), p. 293.

sake of the civilian people.<sup>186</sup> Consequently, the MNF withdrew from Lunglei town. Thus, with the initiative of the Church leaders, Lunglei town was safe from damage by the security forces. In view of the social, economic and moral urgency of peace and normalcy the Lunglei Citizens' Committee again conducted a meeting on September 4, 1968 in which the participants felt it necessary that the Committee should continue to exist, and in order to work effectively the Committee should be reformed.<sup>187</sup>

#### Formation of the Christian Peace Mission

Though the situation in Aizawl and Lunglei were calmed somewhat by the work of Citizens' Committees, killing, attacking, looting and burning houses were continuing in the villages. The Church felt that they had a role to play to stop the deteriorating situation in Mizoram by bringing goodwill and understanding between the MNF and the general public and at the same time between the security forces and the Mizo people. As such, with the initiative of Church, particularly the Synod Standing Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, the "Christian Peace Committee" was formed on July 14, 1966 in Aizawl.<sup>188</sup> Apart from the Presbyterian Church leaders, Rev. C.L. Hminga (Baptist Church) and Rev. Lalngurauva also attended the meeting. The Christian Peace Committee was "neither to discuss nor to point out about politics with the MNF, but try to find out the means for peace talks with the Indian Government".<sup>189</sup> The main objectives of the Christian Peace Mission were:

- a) To restore peace and normalcy in Mizo District.

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<sup>186</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., P. 115.

<sup>187</sup> Lunglei Citizens' Committee, September 4, 1968, Resolution No. 4.

<sup>188</sup> Remthanga, Synod Thurel Vol. II, 256, Special Standing Committee No. 3 of 31 August, 1966.

<sup>189</sup> Zairema, "Rambuai a Kohhran Banphar" (The Church and the Political Disturbance) in *Remna Lamtluang Documentary Souvenir* (Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee, 2006), p. 63.

- b) To appeal to both the MNF and the Indian Army to refrain from armed fighting.
- c) To request both the MNF and the Indian Army to have a peaceful settlement of all their misunderstandings.
- d) To appeal to both the MNF and the Indian Army to renounce violent activities.<sup>190</sup>

The meeting resolved to make a joint declaration with the Baptist Church to form a Christian Peace committee. The meeting appointed the following persons for Christian Peace Committee members from the Presbyterian Church viz., Synod Moderator, Synod Senior Secretary, Synod Junior Secretary and Rev. Lalngurauva. The Committee also requested the Baptist Church of Mizoram to appoint three members. As such, the Baptist church of Mizoram appointed the following persons viz., Rev. H.S. Luaia, Rev. C.L. Hminga and Rev. K.T. Chungnunga.<sup>191</sup> Thus, the Churches in the North and South stood with one accord and formed the Christian Peace Committee with a view to bring peace and normalcy in the Mizo district. The Christian Peace Committee authorized Rev. Lalngurauva and Rev. Zairema of the Presbyterian Church and Rev. H. S. Luaia of the Baptist Church of Mizoram to be the Peace delegation members.<sup>192</sup>

#### Contribution of the Christian Peace Mission

The Christian Peace Committee through its Peace Delegation members met both the MNF and Central Government representatives several times to explore ways and

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<sup>190</sup> J. Zahluna, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>191</sup> C.L. Hminga, "Mizoram Buai Ka Hriatvedan" in *Remna Ni 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Souvenir* (Lunglei: MNF Sub Headquarters, 2006), 17.

<sup>192</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, op. cit., p. 320.

means for the restoration of normalcy. Right after its appointment of Peace Delegation members by the Peace Mission Committee, Rev. Zairema wrote a letter to MNF President, Laldenga in September 6, 1966 asking him to welcome a delegation as part of the Church initiative to restore peace.<sup>193</sup>

As a result, the Church leaders received a positive response after two months from Laldenga. The first formal talk between the Peace Delegation members and the MNF leaders took place on November 3, 1966 at Sabual. The Peace delegations were represented by: Rev. Zirema, Rev. H.S. Luaia and Rev. Lalngurauva. On the other hand, the MNF were represented by Laldenga, President, Lalnundawta, Adviser, R. Zamawia, Defense Minister, Thangzuala, Chief of Army staff, Biakvela, General and P.B. Rosanga, Chief Commissioner of MNF. The meeting had a hot discussion regarding the political disturbances and its effects.<sup>194</sup> With a view to meet the Assam

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<sup>193</sup> We are as anxious as you and your government to restore peace in the country. I, therefore, have every hope that you will welcome to meet the representatives of our churches at your convenience and cooperate with them in exploring ways and means for speedy restoration of normalcy. I shall, therefore, greatly appreciate your view of this proposed personal meeting...If you agree to such meeting, we shall let you know the names of the Church representatives. May I also request you to make a tentative appointment regarding the time and place of meeting... Zairem, "Rambuai a Kohhran Banphar", (the Church and the Political Disturbance) in Remna Lamtluang Documentary Souvenir (Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee, 2006),

<sup>194</sup> Some important points discussed during the meeting of between MNF leaders and Peace Delegation members were: 1. The Peace Delegation members expressed their strong disapproval of the violence started by the MNF as being contrary to Christ's teaching as well as the Church. Laldenga, President MNF replied that the MNF was also against any form of violence and they had explored every peaceful means to raise their political ideas. They have resorted to violence as a form of self-defense for their personal liberties. Laldenga strongly blamed Chaliha, the Assam Chief Minister for violence. 2. The Peace Delegation members expressed their displeasure at the ban of the Church circular by MNF before reaching to the churches. The MNF President also accepted the Peace Delegation members' feelings. The MNF President asserted that while condemning MNF violence, the Church should also have the courage to condemn the Government of India for "indiscriminate bombing of Aizawl town and other villages, women raped by the military, robbery by the military". 3. The Peace Delegation members expressed displeasure at the threatening letters issued by the MNF to the leaders of the Mizo Union and District Council members. Laldenga assured the Peace Delegation members that he would withdraw them. 4. The Peace Delegation members asked Laldenga whether in order to solve the problems; he could consider the question of autonomy within the Indian Constitution. Laldenga replied that he was not for it. But Laldenga wanted to talk to the Government of India as government to government.



Government, the Peace Delegation members left for Shillong on January 5, 1967. On the way they stayed for about 12 days in Silchar. During their stay in Silchar they met Cariappa, the Commissioner for Mizoram and they proceeded to Shillong. After meeting the Chief Secretary of Assam, they learnt that the Assam government was in no mood to have an unconditional talk with the MNF. As such, the Peace Delegation cancelled their plan to meet the Central Government in Delhi.

#### Second Meeting of MNF and Peace Delegation members

The Peace Delegation and the MNF leaders had another meeting at Khawrihnim, south of Riek on April 11, 1967. The main discussion in that meeting was about the threatening letters to kill the leaders of the Mizo Union and other political issues. The MNF leaders told the Peace Delegation members that the letter was issued as the Mizo Union leaders did not want to resign from their posts. The Peace Delegation members replicated their disapproval of violence and killing. After prolonged discussions the following views of the MNF emerged:

- a) MNF leaders indicated that they would agree with the proposal of an autonomous status for Mizoram within the Indian Union.
- b) Mizo District Council stands as a great block and obstacle in the way of obtaining political support and diplomatic recognition by the foreign powers and hence, it should be abolished.
- c) Mizo Union Party had forfeited the confidence of the Mizo people and no longer represents the Mizos.
- d) MNF leaders are willing to meet the leaders of the Mizo Union Party, to discuss the matters.

- e) MNF leaders are agreeable to peace negotiations with the Government of India, provided the members of the MNF party are recognized as “Freedom Fighters” and not treated as “Rebels”.
- f) Issue of “cease fire” would depend upon the terms offered by the Government of India to the MNF.
- g) Government of India should appoint a negotiating body, to discuss matters with the MNF.<sup>195</sup>

The meeting discussed the detail about the possibility of starting direct talks between the MNF leaders and the Government of India. Sainghaka, the Home minister of MNF told the Church leaders that the basis of talks should be on the original stand taken by the MNF, and that there should be no pre-conditions attached.<sup>196</sup> However, this was contrary to the thought of the Government. The opinion of the Government was that no talks should be held with the MNF at any official level. They should not be given any status until and unless the MNF leadership surrendered unconditionally.

#### Meeting with the Central Government

The Peace Delegation members left Aizawl on April 18, 1967 to meet the leaders of the Central Government. While the Church leaders were trying to expedite the peace negotiations, an Army patrol reportedly apprehended Sainghaka on May 1, 1967.<sup>197</sup> Meanwhile, other MNF leaders like Sakhawliana and Lalnundawta were also arrested on May 3, 1967 and one Zailiana was reported to be killed. After such incidents, the MNF leaders began to suspect the Church leaders. The MNF restricted the Church leaders from leaving Shillong. However, the Peace Delegation members

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<sup>195</sup> C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, *op. cit.*, p.89.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p.89.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

left Shillong on May 3, 1967 and reached Delhi on May 8, 1967. The Church leaders met some of the Government leaders like: L.P. Singh, Home Secretary, and Dain Ering, Deputy Minister.

The Peace Delegation also met the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. Gandhi told the Church leaders that political disturbances would not bring any development. She advised them to meet her personal secretary, accordingly they met the Secretary and had a good discussion and also submitted a representation to the Prime Minister. Further, the Church leaders met the Home Minister, Y.B. Chavan at his residence. After they met the Home Minister, the Peace Delegation also met the Indian National Congress President, N. Kamaraj and Tarlok Singh, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Government of India.<sup>198</sup> However, the meetings with the Indian Government by the Peace Delegation members concluded with no progress. But the Christian Peace Committee with its Delegation members did not give up their hope in peace efforts and restoration of normalcy in the District.

#### Church Leaders Letter to Laldenga

On May 18, 1967, the Peace Delegation members wrote a candid letter to Laldenga, President of the MNF. The letter explained that the Government of India would not enter into negotiations with them, until and unless they first lay down their weapons.<sup>199</sup> Rev. Zairema's letter to Laldenga described the difficulties faced by the Church leaders.<sup>200</sup> On February 24, 1969, the MNF and Peace Delegation had

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<sup>198</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>200</sup> "It is unfortunate that most of the friends we met (earlier) had been arrested or killed by Indian Security Forces soon after the meeting. Some of your boys had been alleging openly that we have betrayed these unfortunate friends. In Government circles there seems to be a general feeling also that we are your agents sent to the Government of India as peace feelers! We believe it would be good if

another meeting. Lalkhawliana, Finance Minister of MNF, called the meeting. This was the third round of meeting between MNF and the Peace Delegation members. The Church leaders expressed India's firm stand on the issue as explained by the Home Minister in their meeting at Delhi. After a long deliberation, the Church leaders managed to obtain a written statement from the MNF leader Lalkhawliana. A key passage of the statement was: "Knowing fully well the stand of the Indian Government from the Church leaders, I am prepared to work and do my utmost to help create conditions that would lead to a peaceful solution to the present situation provided, of course, that the Government of India is prepared to respond to my appeal".<sup>201</sup> The Peace Delegation members appreciated the statement made by the MNF leader, Lalkhawliana.

After their meeting with the MNF leaders, the Peace Delegation members went to Silchar and submitted a detailed report to B.C. Cariappa, the then Commissioner of Mizo Hills District. However, Chaliha, the Chief Minister of Assam was disappointed with the report as all these were done without the notice of the Assam Government. Thus, the authorities arrested Rev. Zairema and put him in jail for 11 days. They also transferred the Commissioner of Mizo Hills District, B.C. Cariappa.<sup>202</sup> On June 12, 1969 at Dholai Forest Bungalow, Silchar, another important meeting was held between the MNF leaders and the Church leaders in the

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we can meet again. However, let it be quite clear that if you make the arrangement, all responsibilities shall be yours and if it is we who make the arrangement, the responsibility shall be ours...we have already expressed our views on violence. The church can never approve the violent movement you have started. We are most anxious that the suffering of innocent people and children be put to a stop and for anything we can do towards this end, our service is yours to command."

<sup>201</sup> Nibedon, Dagger Brigade, p. 143. Cited by H. Lalrinthanga, *Church and State*, p. 123.

<sup>202</sup> Zairem, "Rambuai a Kohhran Bangphar," (The Church and the Political Disturbance) in *Remna Lamtluang Documentary Souvenir* (Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee, 2006), p.69.

presence of Thomas from the Special Investigation Bureau.<sup>203</sup> The Church leaders again explained the stand of the Government of India as they did before. The meeting again ended with not much progress. On June 15, 1969 after the meeting, the Assam Police nabbed Vanlalngaia, the MNF War Council Secretary near Karimganj, Silchar and Rev. Zairema was again put in jail for one night.<sup>204</sup> After the arrest of MNF leader Vanlalngaia, the Peace Delegation members were making no headway in the peace talks unless the MNF leaders were prepared to come back and talk within the Constitution of India. Rev. Zirema observed that the MNF's confidence in the Peace Delegation members would be battered because of the arrest of Vanlalngaia. The Assam Government too, was viewing the Church leaders with unexpected suspicion. Further, Rev. Lalsawma, one of the Peace Committee leaders recalled that the Assam Government was the obstacle for peace talk. He said that "the MNF did not make any problems for Peace Missions, instead the MNF regarded the Church as its parent".<sup>205</sup> Thus, the first attempt of the Church through Christian Peace Mission for restoration of peace was ended without much progress. Many attempts at conciliation had been made between the MNF and the Government through peace talks. There were times when the Church was in a difficult position, as both the Government and the MNF distrusted the Church leaders. The Church leaders rendered service at the risk of their lives, even imprisonment. In spite of such difficulties, the Church maintained neutrality in their peace mission. The Peace Committee did not give up and continued their peace efforts.

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<sup>203</sup> R. Zamawia, "Remna Ni leh a Tobul" in *Remna Lamluang Documentary Souvenir* (Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee, 2016), p. 42.

<sup>204</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p.125.

### Mizoram Peace Advisory Board (MPAB)

To work for the restoration of peace and normalcy, the Christian Peace Committee was enlarged with the formation of the Mizoram Peace Advisory Board (MPAB) on October 4, 1974 at Aizawl.<sup>206</sup> The MPAB consisted of politicians, Church leaders and eminent citizens. Its objectives were to bring the MNF and Indian government to the negotiation table. After a number of preliminary discussions were held, Laldenga, the MNF President and S.L. Khurana, the Union Home Secretary, carried out official peace talks to resolve the protracted political strife in Mizoram that ultimately led to the signing of the “Press Statement” on February 18, 1976. According to the Press Statement, the MNF acknowledged Mizoram as an integral part of India and agreed to solve the Mizo political problems within the framework of the Indian Constitution and also abjure violence and to hand over arms and ammunitions to the Central Government. In return the Government of India agreed to suspend operations by the security forces. The Government also agreed to give facilities to the MNF to hold a meeting in Calcutta in March 1976.<sup>207</sup> As such, a National Emergency Convention of the MNF was held at Calcutta from March 24 to April 1, 1976. The Calcutta Convention worked out the modality for peace talks. Since the Convention had publicly decided to have a settlement within the framework of the Constitution of India, Laldenga, Rualchina and Biakvela were selected to represent the MNF for conducting peace talks with the Government of India.<sup>208</sup>

### Peace Accord—July Agreement of 1976

As a consequence of the Calcutta Convention, an agreement was signed by S.L. Khurana, the Union Home Secretary on behalf of the Government of India and

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<sup>206</sup> J. Zahluna, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>208</sup> C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, op. cit., pp. 169-170.

Laldenga, the MNF President on behalf of the MNF on July 1, 1976, which was popularly known as the “July Agreement”.<sup>209</sup> The agreement acknowledged that Mizoram is an integral part of India and that the Mizo political problems will be within the framework of the Constitution of India.<sup>210</sup> However, the July Agreement could not be translated into practice in spite of the efforts made by both parties. The hardliners in the MNF at their capital headquarters were not happy with the “Peace Accord” as it did not contain anything that required action by the Government of India. The “Peace Accord” however, sent a wave of jubilation throughout Mizoram. People were longing for peace and had at last found fulfillment of their long cherished desire. The government of Mizoram, responding to the feeling of the people declared July 7, 1976 as “Thanks giving Day” and prayers were offered in the churches throughout Mizoram for lasting peace. Ch. Chhunga, the then Chief Minister of Mizoram paid tribute to the wisdom and maturity of those who signed this “Peace Agreement”.<sup>211</sup>

Further, the MNF could not keep their end of the bargain and committed violations of the ‘Peace Accord Agreement’ in many forms. Therefore, the security forces resumed counter insurgency operations. The government called off negotiations in October 1977 and on July 8, 1979 the MNF was once again declared unlawful and Laldenga, the MNF President was taken into police custody at New Delhi.<sup>212</sup> Despite

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>210</sup> The Peace Accord contained the following terms and conditions: a) The MNF delegation acknowledged that Mizoram is an integral part of India and agreed to solve the Mizo political problems within the framework of the Constitution of India. b) In order to bring about a climate of understanding and an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in Mizoram at the earliest, the MNF agreed to abjure violence and suspend all its activities. In furtherance of the above objectives, the MNF agreed to collect all their arms and ammunitions within one month in a mutually agreed camp. c) The Government of India also decided to suspend all their security operations. d) It was agreed to continue the talks further.

<sup>211</sup> C.G.Vergheese and R.L. Thanzawna, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>212</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, op. cit., p. 323.

strict security measures, the MNF-instigated violence became more severe and frequent. On June 1, 1979 the MNF issued Quit Mizoram Order to all non-Mizos to leave Mizoram latest by July 1, 1979.<sup>213</sup> The following day, 4 people were shot dead when the MNF overran the BRTF camp at Thianzawl followed by an ambush on the Aizawl-Silchar road. The Administrative Centre at Bungzung on the Burma border was burnt down and two army jawans on patrol duty were killed on the same day. There were several reports of occurrences of ugly incidents. As a result, the talks were called off since March 1978. After the MNF stepped up their hostile activities all over the territory, the Central Government viewed the fresh spurt of violence and killing seriously. So the MNF and its allied organizations were declared unlawful.

#### Peace Talks - Second Phase

With the return of the Indian National Congress party to power at the center in the 1980 polls, the Mizoram Pradesh Congress leaders along with other political parties requested the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi to resume peace talks with the MNF. The talks were resumed. The Central Government withdrew all the pending cases and charges against Laldenga on June 30, 1980. But the talks between the Central Government and the MNF failed because of sharp differences on some of the demands made by the MNF. These included the provision of a state Constitution with safeguards similar to that of Jammu and Kashmir and constitution of Greater Mizoram including Mizo-inhabited areas submitted by the MNF. The Central Government, however, agreed to elevate the Union Territory status to the Statehood of Mizoram with certain constitutional safeguards. Further, the Government of India made it clear to the MNF that issue, which were possible without their repercussion

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p.321.



on the other groups would be met in the course of discussion. Despite the peace efforts, the talks broke off once again. The MNF and its armed wing were once again banned on January 20, 1982. The MNF President Laldenga left Delhi for London in April 1982.<sup>214</sup> Thus, the peace for which the Mizo people had been longing for, for a long time, became a casualty in the atmosphere of revived violence, killings and indiscriminate harassment. Even the appeal for peace and harmony made by the Church fell on deaf ears. The hostile operations by the MNF insurgents and the counter operations by the security forces continued again.

#### Formation of Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (ZKHC)

Though the joint Peace Committee of the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church in the initial period of the political disturbances made many efforts, there was not much progress in the peace talks since the later part of 1969.<sup>215</sup> The Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (ZKHC), a conglomerate of various denominational churches in Mizoram was formed in 1982 at the request of Admiral S.N. Kohli (1981-1983), the then Lieutenant Governor of Mizoram, with the purpose of raising its voice to bring peace in Mizoram.<sup>216</sup> The Lt. Governor (at the time when Mizoram had a Union Territory status) convened the Church leaders to the Raj Bhavan to discuss the possibility of bringing peace between the Indian Government and the MNF insurgents. The Governor made a request to the Church leaders to go to Arakan, Bangladesh and appeal to the MNF leaders to put down arms for peace. Further, the circumstances compelled the Church leaders in the peace process.

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<sup>214</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>215</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p.154.

<sup>216</sup> P.L. Lianzuala, "Remnaleh Muana atana Kohhran Hmalakna" in *Remna Lamtluang Documentary Souvenir* (Aizawl: 20<sup>th</sup> Remna Ni Committee, MPCC, 2006), p. 79.

Thus, on June 15, 1982 various Church leaders within Aizawl namely, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist, had their first meeting at Synod Hall, Aizawl to pursue their efforts for the restoration of peace and normalcy in Mizoram.<sup>217</sup> The meeting had passed three resolutions: Firstly, the meeting resolved to request all churches for special prayer. The meeting fixed the dates for prayer on June 20, 1982 and July 17, 1982 respectively. Secondly, the Committee fixed July 30, 1982 for the second meeting of the Church leaders. Thirdly, to publish a leaflet to the public in which the following were written: (a) to ask the Government and the MNF to have talks for peace and the people to seek peace, (b) Since life is created and given by God, it is precious that no one should kill or shed blood of one's fellow human beings and (c) that all the armed armies should deal with the general public responsibly.<sup>218</sup>

The second Church leaders meeting was held on July 30, 1982 which was attended by about 24 Church leaders from Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church of Mizoram, United Pentecostal Church, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Isua Krista Kohhran, Aizawl, Assembly of God, and Independent Church of Maraland. The meeting resolved to convene another meeting on August 13, 1982 to discuss in greater detail the political turmoil in Mizoram. It also resolved that each Church should send three representatives, apart from its Chairman and Secretary.<sup>219</sup> The meeting appointed Rev. Thangpuiliana, the incumbent of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod to be the Chairman, and Rev. V.L. Rawna of Seventh Day Adventist

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<sup>217</sup> *History of MKHC Chanchin 1982-2012* (History of MKHC), (Aizawl: Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee, 2012), p.2.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

as Secretary. The meeting made it clear that they form the committee only for the purpose of peace and harmony in the state.<sup>220</sup> The third meeting of the Church leaders was held on August 13, 1982 at Mission Veng Presbyterian Church, Vestry, Aizawl.<sup>221</sup> This meeting became more strategic than the previous meetings.<sup>222</sup> Having set its own agenda with a proper Committee, the ZKHC took all possible attempts for bringing peace in the state and became the peace emissary between the Indian Government and the MNF.

#### Efforts of ZKHC in Brokering Peace

The ZKHC with its primary aim to find ways to bring about peace wanted to meet the leaders of MNF and important officials of the Government of India by the end of August 1982. They had a hard time in contacting the leaders of MNF as reaching them was not an easy task but ultimately they managed to get in touch with them. The ZKHC Peace Delegation members planned to visit the MNF capital headquarters. Before their departure, the delegates met the Lt. Governor, the Chief Minister, the IGP and other Ministers, and sought permission for the trip from the Government. However, due to the intensive operations conducted by the army at that

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<sup>220</sup> *Presbyterian Review* Vol. XX April-September, 2012, No.64 (Aizawl: F. Lalsangliana on behalf of Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod, 2012), p.23

<sup>221</sup> Twenty-five leaders from the following churches attended the meeting: Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Mizoram Baptist Church, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Isua Krista Kohhran, Aizawl, Assembly of God and Pawiram Baptist Church.

<sup>222</sup> The meeting resolved the following resolutions: 1. That all the respective denominational churches should make an appeal to both the Central Government and the MNF to have a talk for peace. 2. That the name of the committee should be called "Zoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (ZKHC)" (Zoram Churches' Leaders Committee) 3. The meeting also selected the following persons for the Executive Committee members in addition to the Chairman and Secretary: Rev. P.L. Lianzuala (Baptist Church of Mizoram); Rev. Ellic Hnehzova (United Pentecostal Church); Rev. Lalsawma (Mizoram Presbyterian Church); Mr. V.L. Bela (Roman Catholic); Major Saidawla (Salvation Army) and Rev. Dr. C.L. Hminga (Baptist Church of Mizoram). 4. To organize prayer for peaceful settlement on every first Saturday of a month. 5. That each Church denomination should send three members each to represent their churches to ZKHC. 6. That each Church would give donation for all the expenses of the ZKHC. The Executive Committee held on August 14, 1982 at Major Saidawla's Quarters, Aizawl appointed the Peace Delegation members as follows: Rev. V.L. Rawna, Rev. P.L. Lianzuala and Rev. Lalsawma.

time, they were not able to proceed beyond the borders of Tripura and Bangladesh. And so, they sent a letter to the capital headquarters through other means in August-September, 1982<sup>223</sup> informing the MNF leaders about the proposed steps that the ZKHC was planning to take for the peace dialogue. The ZKHC appealed to the MNF to refrain from any violence during the peace initiatives of the Church leaders. The MNF felt that the initiatives and appeals made by the ZKHC were important and managed to ensure the prevalence of a calm and amicable atmosphere.

ZKHC Delegation to Delhi: The ZKHC sent Rev. Lalsawma and Rev. Dr. P. L. Lianzuala to Delhi on behalf of the ZKHC to meet the Prime Minister. Despite a week's stay, October 3-11, 1982, they were unable to meet the Prime Minister. However, they met P.C. Sethi, the Home Minister, P.P. Nayyar, Special Secretary for Northeast India in the Home Ministry and other important leaders, and apprised them of the yearnings of the Church leaders to bring about lasting peace and requested the authorities to give them permission to talk to the MNF leaders. They also submitted their appeals in writing to the Prime Minister.<sup>224</sup>

ZKHC Delegation to London to Meet Laldenga: On November 22, 1982, the ZKHC Executive Committee meeting appointed Rev. V.L. Rawna, Secretary, ZKHC to meet Laldenga, the MNF president in London. Accordingly, Rev. V.L. Rawna and Laldenga met on March 1, 1983 at Venables House, Surrey, UK.<sup>225</sup> Later, in April, 1984 the Mizoram Presbyterian Church sent a Gospel Team to Wales. Rev. Lalsawma and Elder Chalhuna led the team. The Gospel Team along with their

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<sup>223</sup> *The Church Role in the Mizoram Peace Accord*, mizothuziak.blogspot.com, retrieved on November 30, 2017.

<sup>224</sup> *History of MKHC Chanchin* (1982-2012), op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

leaders met Laldenga on June 25, 1984. They informed Laldenga of their mission and communicated to him the appeal of churches in Mizoram.<sup>226</sup> The Church leaders had no proposal for the political agreements upon which a settlement could be founded. It was left to the Indian Government and the MNF to discuss the terms of agreement. The two Church leaders stressed the crucial need for Mizoram to return to peace and normalcy. Laldenga expressed his readiness to be counseled by these Church leaders. He also assured them of his willingness to reopen discussion with the Indian Government if the latter would agree. The tangible result of the meeting was that Laldenga came back to India for peace talks on October 29, 1984.<sup>227</sup>

Second ZKHC Delegation to Delhi: On April 1983, the ZKHC sent Rev. Lalsawma and Rev. Dr. P.L. Lianzuala for the second time to meet the Prime Minister and to inform of their talk with the MNF President Laldenga. However, they could not meet the Prime Minister for the second time too. The Church leaders met Rajkumar Vaspayee, the Congress Secretary and other important dignitaries. The Church leaders considered it very unfortunate that the Prime Minister could not spare time to discuss the political situation in Mizoram.<sup>228</sup> In the same month, on April 28, 1983 Zail Singh, the President of India visited Aizawl. Representatives of churches in Mizoram submitted a presentation on the theme “Peace Move for Mizoram”.<sup>229</sup>

Joint Memorandum: As follow up program of the Executive Committee meeting held on May 17, 1983, the ZKHC on May 31, invited all political parties for their approval of the Church effort for the restoration of peace and normalcy in the

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<sup>226</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwang, *op. cit.*, p.326.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *History of MKHC Chanchin* (1982-2012), *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

state.<sup>230</sup> The political party leaders accepted and signed the joint memorandum drafted by the Church leaders to be submitted to the Prime Minister. The political parties from the Mizo Union (MU), the People Conference (PC), the Mizo Convention (MC) and the Mizoram Congress sent their representatives.<sup>231</sup> The memorandum was submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the ZKHC in which they pleaded with the Central Government to have fresh talks with the MNF. The Church leaders also called on the Lt. Governor of Mizoram several times and discussed ways of resuming peace talks, requesting him to exert pressure on the Central Government for fresh negotiations with the MNF. However, this indirect approach through the Lt. Governor could not make progress as desired. The second all political meeting was called on March 29, 1984, which passed a resolution to postpone the upcoming Assembly Elections hoping to put more pressure on the Central Government for the peace process.<sup>232</sup> In April 1984, when the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi visited Mizoram, she underlined the need to have peace and normalcy in order to promote development. However, she did not mention anything about the resumption of peace talks. Taking the advantage of her visit to Mizoram, the ZKHC met her and submitted another memorandum requesting for resumption of peace talks with the MNF. Although the all-Party meeting convened by the ZKHC had resolved to postpone the 1984 Assembly Election in Mizoram to hasten the

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>231</sup> The content of the memorandum was, as given below: "On this thirty first day of May, of the year Nineteen hundred and eighty three, we, the undersigned, representing all political parties in Mizoram, do hereby declare our united stand in urging the Government of India and the Mizo National Front to enter into fresh negotiations and dialogue in order to arrive at a peaceful settlement of political deadlock in Mizoram. We affirm that all sections of people living in the Union Territory are in full accord with this plea, and we further declare our unanimous assurance of readiness to render any possible help towards creating a conducive atmosphere for peace talks to resume." The memorandum was signed by C. Pahlira, President, MU; C. Biakchungnung President, PC; J. Thanghuama, for President MC and Vaivenga for President, INC.

<sup>232</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, op. cit., p.325.

peace process, the Assembly Elections were held as scheduled and the Mizoram Pradesh Congress won the election.

The ZKHC leaders called on the new government several times and discussed the matter of resumption of peace talks. Lalthanhawla, the Chief Minister of Union Territory of Mizoram, on September 5, 1984 told the Press at Aizawl that the MNF and the Central Government were expected to resume peace talks within a month or two. However, the unfortunate assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 distracted the prospects of peace talk.<sup>233</sup> When her son Rajiv Gandhi became the next Prime Minister, the Mizo people had a high expectation that he would follow the path that had been initiated by his late mother.

Meeting with the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Laldenga: The ZKHC Executive meeting held on March 28, 1985 resolved to send a delegation to Delhi to meet the new Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the MNF President Laldenga. The delegation consisted of the following members: Rev. Lalsawma (Presbyterian), Rev. Dr. P.L. Lianzuala (Baptist), Rev. R. Lalrinsanga (Pentecostal Church), V.L. Bela (Roman Catholic), Maj. Sawichhunga and Maj. Thangsanga (Salvation Army). The Church leaders met Laldenga and had a meaningful discussion. On April 12, 1985 the Church leaders met the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and urged him to apply himself more earnestly to the task.<sup>234</sup> The urgency of restoring peace and normalcy in Mizoram was underlined.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> *History of MKHC Chanchin* (1982-2012), op. cit., p. 31.

### Final Peace Talks and the Memorandum of Settlement

In the fourth General Election to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 1984, the Congress (I) secured a majority and formed a ministry headed by Lalthanhawla as Chief Minister. The Congress Government was committed to bring peace and harmony in Mizoram. The Congress leaders requested the Central Government to resume peace talks with the MNF. As such, Laldenga was called back from London to Delhi to resume peace talks on October 29, 1984.<sup>235</sup> The peace talks were resumed between the Central Government and the MNF on December 17, 1984.<sup>236</sup> On June 25, 1985, Rajiv Gandhi asked the Chief Minister Lalthanhawla to be present with his entire cabinet. A political arrangement was signed by Arjun Singh, the Congress (I) Vice President and Laldenga in the presence of the Congress President and the Chief Minister and his colleagues.<sup>237</sup> That was the first time Rajiv Gandhi met Laldenga since R.D Pradhan took over the negotiations. R.D Pradhan stated that he himself wanted to complete the task before laying down his office on June 30, 1986.<sup>238</sup> Operations by the MNF insurgents and the security forces remained suspended in order to facilitate a peaceful settlement. The MNF leaders had a series of discussions with Central Government officials and finally with the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Meanwhile, Lalthanhawla, the Chief Minister of Mizoram had publicly declared that he was prepared to sacrifice his position as Chief Minister for the sake of peace. All these made the talks much easier.

Consequently, the historic “Memorandum of Settlement on Mizoram” was signed on June 30, 1986 by the Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan, Government of India and

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<sup>235</sup> Lalngurauva, *Mizoram Buai leh Kohhran* (Political Disturbance and the Church in Mizoram) (Aizawl: Lalngurauva, 2008), p. 183.

<sup>236</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>237</sup> R.D. Pradhan, *Beyond Expectations*, (Pune: Vishwakarma Publications, 2016), p. 491.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493.



Laldenga, on behalf of the MNF and Lalkhama, Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram.<sup>239</sup> The memorandum of settlement incorporated some of the important issues. The MNF agreed to end all underground activities, bring out all underground MNF personnel with their arms to civil life and abjure violence within the stipulated time frame. The MNF agreed to delete its objectives of “Independence and secession of Mizoram from the Union of India” from its constitution to ensure its working within the constitutional framework of India. The Government of India on the other hand agreed to get the underground MNF personnel coming overground resettled and rehabilitated. The Government of India agreed to confer Statehood on the Union Territory of Mizoram with certain safeguards to satisfy the desires and aspirations of the Mizo people. After the memorandum of settlement was signed, the Government of India and the MNF took steps to implement the historic Peace Accord peacefully.

On August 4, 1986, the Union Home Minister, Buta Singh introduced the 53<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Bill, 1986 in the Lok Sabha. On August 5, the Lok Sabha passed the Bill and the same Bill was passed by the Raja Sabha on August 7, 1986. The Bill received the assent of the President of India on August 14, 1986. The 53<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act, 1986 conferred a full-fledged Statehood to Mizoram, and thus Mizoram became the 23<sup>rd</sup> State of the Indian Union. The new Act further laid down that a single chamber of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly shall consist of not less than 40 members. In the wake of the Act, the 20-year old ban on the MNF imposed under the Defense of India Rules, 1962 was lifted and the MNF and its allied organizations began to function as lawful political organizations.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>240</sup> J. Zahluna, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

According to the political agreement between the Central Government and the MNF chief, Laldenga, the Interim Congress (I) and MNF coalition government comprising nine ministers of Cabinet ranks (5 Congress and 4 MNF) headed by Laldenga as the Chief Minister and Lalthanhawla as the Deputy Chief Minister was to be formed. The Congress Legislature Party in its meeting, resolved to accept Laldenga as the leader of the INC-MNF coalition in the Legislative Assembly. Consequently, Lal Thanhawla resigned his Chief Minister post to facilitate the formation of the coalition government to ensure permanent peace in the state. The Congress (I) - MNF coalition government headed by Laldenga as the Chief Minister and Lal Thanhawla as the Deputy Chief Minister was sworn in on August 21, 1986.<sup>241</sup> Hence, after a long twenty years of political disturbance, peace and normalcy was restored in Mizoram. The formalization of the statehood of Mizoram was complete on February 20, 1987.<sup>242</sup> The Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi inaugurated the new state of Mizoram as the 23<sup>rd</sup> State of the Indian Union. The Peace Accord was the outcome of the joint efforts made by the Church, MNF and the Government of India to bring peace and normalcy in Mizoram.

The efforts made by the political parties, civil societies, and eminent citizens particularly the effort made by the Church were significant. The Church played a very positive and crucial role in bringing peace and normalcy in Mizoram. The Mizoram Church Leaders Committee through its Peace Delegation members played a very positive and crucial role in bringing back peace and normalcy in the state. The Church was the first to condemn violence and was a leading instrument in the process of political settlement. As such, the role of the Church during the political

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<sup>241</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>242</sup> Teisi Thou, *op. cit.*, p. 3-4.

turmoil in Mizoram cannot be underestimated. As soon as Doordarshan English News telecast the signing of Mizoram Peace Accord in its bulletin at 9:40 p.m. on June 30, 1986, the Church bells started ringing. Thanksgiving prayers began in the churches at midnight that continued till the next morning. After the Peace Accord was signed, the Church even sent letters of congratulation to the Prime Minister and Laldenga, the MNF President. On July 3, 1986, the government of Mizoram organized an official celebration of Peace Accord in which Rev. Lalsawma, Chairman of ZKHC was invited to deliver a speech.<sup>243</sup> Thanksgiving meetings were held in every local church on July 11, 1986.<sup>244</sup> The church leaders even conducted a meeting with the MNF returnees at their temporary peace camp known as “Remna Run” and presented them each a Holy Bible and Christian Hymn books. Thus, the long-standing conflict in Mizoram was ended. Today, Mizoram has become one of the most peaceful states in India.

To sum up, Christianity has been regarded as the foremost factor for the socio-political and economic modernization of the Mizo people. The social values of modern Mizo society were founded upon Christian principles that were imparted by the missionaries. The Church could be regarded to a great extent as the precursor of the establishment of various civil society organizations in Mizoram. Therefore, there was a reason which compelled the civil society organizations to involve themselves in political matters. As had been mentioned, since the Lushai Hills was declared as an Excluded Area in 1936, there was no political party to take up the political-related matters. Hence, it was up to the existing civil societies at that time to take up this

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<sup>243</sup> Zonunmawia, “MNF Insurgency and Role Played by ZKHC for Peace Process in Mizoram” in *Autonomy Movements and Politics of Religionism in Northeast India*, eds. Jagdish K. Patnaih, Jangkhongam Doungel and Ayangbam Shyamkishor (Meerut: Balaji Publications, 2018), p.256.

<sup>244</sup> Lalngurauva, op. cit., p. 185.

responsibility. The most notable contribution and involvement of the civil societies, particularly the Church was to be seen when the socio-political environment of the Mizo Hills District was turning and pointing towards a period of prolonged insurgency for about 20 years.

It was during the insurgency period that the Church started its active involvement in the politics of the state with the objective of bringing peace and normalcy. Over three-fourths (78.1%) of the respondents to the questionnaire given by the researcher agreed that the Church was instrumental in bringing about peace and normalcy during the political turmoil of Mizoram. Nevertheless, the valiant and brave efforts of the Church leaders during the period of insurgency to bring about peace in the state could be considered as one of the important reasons that brought the Government of India and the Mizo National Front to the negotiating table several times, and ultimately to the signing of the Peace Accord in 1986. Further, the Church established by missionaries opened up educational institutions, hospitals and undertook numerous other social works that gradually transformed the Mizo society. Zawlbuk (bachelor's dormitory), the indigenous system of education was replaced by formal education, the native language (dialect) was reduced to writing (script), and the system of traditional administration i.e. "administration by the chief" was replaced by a democratic system of administration. Thus, Mizoram witnessed a series of socio-religious and political changes as assumed in the first hypothesis of this study.

## CHAPTER III

### CHURCH AND SOCIO-POLITICAL REFORMS: POST-STATEHOOD

After about twenty years of political disturbances, the historic Peace Accord was signed between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front on June 30, 1986. The political settlement between the Government of India and the MNF was a landmark in the political history of Mizoram and marked the beginning of a new political era. The previous chapter discussed the socio-political history of Mizoram and the contribution of the Church during the socio-political turmoil in bringing about peace and normalcy. Following the elevation from Union Territory status to the full-fledged statehood of Mizoram, the role of Church became more focused on electoral reforms and good governance that constitute the dynamics in the post-statehood era. The Church has made another notable contribution in the reformation of electoral processes in Mizoram politics. The first part of the present chapter highlights the electoral processes. The second part of the chapter discusses the role of Church in the reformation of electoral politics of Mizoram in the post-statehood period. Finally, the chapter deals with the role of Church in good governance and administrative reforms.

#### Electoral Process

Elections in a Parliamentary democracy are political means through which the political opinions and awareness level of the masses are molded and promoted. Election involves people in politics or public affairs through participation and mobilization as it provides political linkages, resolves conflicts and it also brings about peaceful and orderly change of authority or leaders through the elections. The

political parties, as per the rules of representative democracy have to also accept the election results.<sup>1</sup> As such, an election is a formal decision-making process by which an electorate chooses an individual to hold public office. It is through elections that offices are filled in the Legislature and sometimes in the Executive branch of a country, as well as in regional and local governments. The process is also practiced in many private organizations.

### Elections in India

India has become a model for many emerging democracies around the world. Free and fair elections are the hallmark of a well-functioning democracy. Elections in India are conducted by an independent and constitutional body known as the Election Commission of India (ECI). The strength of democratic systems depends on the fairness of elections. Hence, the role of the EC becomes very important in order to ensure clean, free and fair elections. However, the present elections in India are not held in ideal conditions because of the enormous amount of money and muscle power that are involved. Almost every election in India today is carried out with different kinds of malpractices.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the confidence of citizens in the electoral process and the manner of conducting elections in the country has declined. Thus, there is a widespread feeling that the electoral system and various processes of the law associated with it should be revised so as to have free and fair elections. Some of the major problems of the Indian electoral system are: money power, muscle power, casteism, communalism, poll violence, criminalization of politics and heavy election expenditure. As such, there has been a growing concern over the years

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<sup>1</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, *Political and Economic Development in Mizoram* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1991), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> H.S. Lalbiakengi, "NGO in Electoral Reforms of Mizoram: A Challenge," *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, Volume 3 Issue, August 8, 2014.

in India about several aspects of the electoral system. The Election Commission has made changes in several areas to respond to some of the concerns. There have also been a number of committees which have examined the major issues pertaining to the electoral system and which have made a number of recommendations. However, there remain some serious issues that might need legislative action to bring about the required changes.

### Electoral Reforms

The issue of electoral reforms has been taken up by various governmental committees in the recent past, including but not limited to:

- i) Goswami Committee on Electoral Reforms (1990)
- ii) Vohra Committee Report (1993)
- iii) Indrajit Gupta Committee on State Funding of Elections (1998)
- iv) Law Commission Report on Reform of the Electoral Laws (1999)
- v) National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2001)
- vi) The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008)<sup>3</sup>

There has also been a great deal of substantive work on the topic of Electoral Reforms undertaken by various civil society groups, which have contributed significantly to the public discourse on the subject. The “Background Paper on Electoral Reforms” prepared by the Core Committee on Electoral Reforms was uploaded on the website of the Law Ministry. It has done so with the hope that more stakeholders would be able to provide inputs either online or by post to the Ministry

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<sup>3</sup> *Background Paper on Electoral Reforms* (Prepared by the Core-Committee on Electoral Reforms) Legislative Department, Ministry of Law and Justice Government of India, Co-sponsored by the Election Commission of India, 2010, p. 4.

of Law and Justice, Government of India. Obviously, civil society groups, journalists, and other observers of the process have been playing an important role in identifying a number of the weaknesses of the existing system.<sup>4</sup>

#### Electoral Process in Mizoram

Mizoram had experienced the electoral process at different levels since 1948 such as, Lushai Hills Advisory Council, District Council, Regional Council, Village Council, Municipal Council, Legislative Assembly, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. However, it was from the first District Council elections held in 1952 that the Mizo people were actively involved in electoral politics.<sup>5</sup> The electoral processes from the District Council era to post-statehood era are briefly highlighted below:

#### General Elections to the District Council Era

The first Mizo District Council elections were held on January 4, 1952. There were 37 candidates contesting in the elections, out of which 18 candidates were from the Mizo Union (MU), 16 from the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO), two from the Tribal Union (TU) and one Independent candidate. The election was contested among three political parties namely, the MU, the UMFO, and the TU in the Pawi-Lakher region. The MU won all the seats except one, which was won by the UMFO. Regarding the nominated six seats, one went to the MU, two to the government officials and two seats to the chiefs' Council and one seat to the minority group.<sup>6</sup> The election manifesto of the MU party was on abolishing the chieftainship

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> H.C. Thanhranga, *District Councils in the Mizo Hills* (Updated) (Aizawl: H.C. Thanhranga, 2007), p.102.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



institution and the Chief's Council. That was a controversial issue during the elections, and it was supported by the common people.

The second general elections to the Mizo District Council were held on January 25, 1957. This time, the number of elected seats was increased from 18 to 22, and the number of nominated seats was reduced from 6 to 2, but the total number of seats remained the same. In this election, four political parties viz., the MU, the UMFO, the MU (Right wing) and the TU contested for the 22 seats. On the whole, there were 47 candidates in the poll fray. The UMFO captured 7 seats. The TU, two and the MU, 13 but the TU backed the MU and as such the 15 seats were captured by the MU.<sup>7</sup> In this election, the MU did not get the public support it had enjoyed in the previous District Council elections held in 1952, but it managed to retain political power. Abolition of the chieftainship in 1954 was the main factor that helped the party to win the elections.

The third Mizo District Council general elections were held on February 5, 1962. During this election, apart from the four parties that contested the elections of 1957, a new party came into existence, the Mizo National Front (MNF). And, the Congress party for the first time in the Mizo Hills contested in this election. Thus, the election was contested by five political parties. Besides five Independent candidates, there were altogether 62 candidates in the poll fray. The Mizo Union party won 18 seats and defeated the EITU (UMFO was merged with EITU) and of the successful MU candidates there were only two candidates of the EITU who returned and a few Independent candidates.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Congress and the MNF were badly defeated in

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp.103-104.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.104.

this election. The election atmosphere was changed due to the entry of two new political parties namely, Congress and the MNF. These parties began to outshine the MU party, and the trend continued thereafter.

The fourth elections to the Council were supposed to be held in 1967, but due to some disturbances which broke out in the district in 1966, it was not held. As such, the fourth general elections were held on April 23, 1970, in which the MU and the Congress contested. The Congress captured 10 seats, whereas the MU captured 9 seats and the Independents 3 seats. There were two nominated seats. Thus, the INC formed the government for the first time in the political history of Mizo District Council.<sup>9</sup> However, before the completion of fourth term of the Council, the Mizo District was dissolved and ceased to exist when the Mizo District became a Union territory of Mizoram in April 1972 and as such no more elections were held thereafter for the District Council. This election marked the beginning of decline of the Mizo Union as an active political party. The main factor that helped the Congress to come to power was due to its emphasis on de-grouping of those grouping centers owing to the political turmoil in the district. The party also focused on the importance to restore peace and harmony in the state.

#### General Elections to the Union Territory Era

The Union Territory of Mizoram was inaugurated on January 21, 1972 and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was trifurcated into three Regional Councils, namely, Pawi Regional Council (PRC), Lakher Regional Council (LRC) and Chakma Regional Council (CRC) on April 2, 1972.<sup>10</sup> And the three Regional

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> P. Lalnithanga, *Emergence of Mizoram* (Aizawl: P. Lalnithanga, 2005), p. 34.

Councils were subsequently upgraded to the status of full-fledged Autonomous District Councils on April 29, 1972.<sup>11</sup> Later, the Lakher Autonomous District Council and the Pawi Autonomous District Council were changed into the Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) and the Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) respectively by an act of the Parliament in 1989. Mizoram witnessed the first Union Territory General elections to the Legislative Assembly on April 18, 1972.

#### The First Union Territory Assembly Elections

The first General Assembly elections to the Union Territory of Mizoram were held on April 18, 1972, three months after Mizoram became a Union Territory (UT) on January 21, 1972.<sup>12</sup> Altogether, 125 candidates had contested for the 30 seats. The Indian National Congress (INC) and the Socialist Party, both recognized parties, contested 29 and 18 seats respectively. Two unrecognized parties, Mizo Union (MU) and Mizo Labour Party (MLP) contested 25 and 27 seats respectively. While 56 Independent candidates were there in the poll fray. The Mizo Union won 21 of the 30 seats and formed the first Union Territory government that was headed by Ch. Chhunga on May 3, 1972.<sup>13</sup> There were three Cabinet Ministers and two Deputy Ministers in his ministry.

Response of citizens in the first General Assembly elections was quite positive, with a good turnout of voters. The average percentage of voter turnout was 72.55 and the

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<sup>11</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., pp.145-146.

<sup>12</sup> Mangjangam Touthang, *Mizoram Election Scenario*, Press Information Bureau, Aizawl, November 28, 2008, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

average percentage of voter turnout in all constituencies was over 55 percent.<sup>14</sup> However, there was a new political development in Mizoram politics as the Mizo Union merged with the INC on January 24, 1974 which was readily approved by the Congress High Command. After the merger, the Council of Ministers was expanded from 5 to 7 with the induction of one Cabinet Minister and one Deputy Minister. From that time, the Congress and MNF became the two main political parties in the state till today. It was from these Assembly elections that the involvement of the Church in the electoral process was noticed. The Church had made an appeal to the political parties, candidates and voters for ensuring free and fair elections. As such, this had become a regular practice of the Church since then.

The second General Assembly Elections for the Union Territory was held in May 1978. The political parties in the fray were the INC, Janata party, People's Conference, Mizo Union and the Mizo Democratic Front. The People's Conference (PC) won 22 seats out of the total 30 seats, while the Independent candidates and the Mizoram Congress Committee (MCC) shared four seats each. The PC Government with Brigadier Thenphunga Sailo as the second Chief Minister of Mizoram was formed. The PC party, however, suffered a major split in October 1978 when 8 PC MLAs withdrew their support to the Chief Minister. They decided to form an alternative government replacing the PC rule.<sup>15</sup> The PC party was split into PC (A) and PC (B). Subsequently, after a period of five months, Mizoram was placed under the President's Rule on November 10, 1978 and then fresh elections were held on April 24 and 27, 1979.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "General Election to the Seventh Mizoram Assembly," 2013 (Aizawl: Directorate of Election, Government of Mizoram, 2014), p.72.

<sup>15</sup><http://elections.in/assembly-constituencies/1978-election-result.html>, retrieved on July 14, 2014.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

The third Union Territory General Elections for the Mizoram Assembly were held on April 24 and 27, 1979, and there were 6 political parties in the electoral fray, namely, INC, Janata Party, PC (A), PC (B), Mizo Union and Mizo Democratic Party. The PC (A) led by Brigadier T. Sailo won 18 seats, INC won 5, Janata Party won two seats and PC (B) managed to get only 4 seats and one seat was won by an Independent candidate. Brigadier T. Sailo was sworn in again for the second time as the third Chief Minister of Mizoram and he lasted the full term of five years.<sup>17</sup>

The fourth and the last General Assembly Elections of the Union Territory elections were held on April 25, 1984. A total of 138 candidates had contested in the fourth General elections. There were six political parties in the poll fray, namely, Indian National Congress (INC), Mizoram People's Conference (MPC), Mizo Convention (MC), Mizo Democratic Front (MDF), Mizo Peace Forum (MPF) and Mizo Union (MU). The Indian National Congress (INC) won 20 seats, while the People's Conference secured 8 seats i, the Mizo Convention won one seat and the remaining seats were secured by Independent candidates. However, as a result of the signing of the Peace Accord between the Government of India and Mizo National Front (MNF) on June 30, 1986, the fourth term Union Territory Legislative Assembly could not complete its term. Lalthanhawla who was sworn in as Chief Minister on May 4, 1984 tendered his resignation.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Laldenga was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Mizoram and Lalthanhawla as Deputy Chief Minister and they formed MNF-INC coalition government till the time of conducting the first State Legislative Assembly Election of Mizoram in February, 1987. One of the main factors why the Congress won the elections was that the party had promised to restore peace and normalcy by

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Brigadier C.G. Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna, *A History of the Mizos. Vol. 2* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1977), p. 266.

bringing underground MNF and the Union Government to settle the long political turmoil in the state. Thus, the fourth Assembly election was very important in the political history of Mizoram.

Another noteworthy incident in these elections was that, the leaders of the Mizo Union, Mizo Convention and Mizo Peace Forum were for the election boycott. Thus, the Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (the Zoram Church Leaders Committee) observed that the atmosphere in the poll process was an unhealthy one. As such, the ZKHC invited leaders of all political parties in Mizoram on March 29, 1984 at Synod Conference Room to discuss the forth-coming Assembly elections. The ZKHC appealed to the political parties, to conduct free and fair elections. It also requested all the political parties and their candidates not to defame their opponents, not to buy votes and not to appease voters through election feasts.<sup>19</sup>

#### General Election to the Post-Statehood Era

With a view to elevating the Union Territory status of Mizoram to statehood, the Union Government of India introduced the Mizoram statehood bill 1986, with special safeguards and provisions of forty elected seats (38 reserved for scheduled tribes and 2 unreserved) in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. Thus the 53<sup>rd</sup> Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1986 in the Parliament was passed by an absolute majority of votes. The President of India assented to the Mizoram statehood bill, 1986 on August 14, 1986.<sup>20</sup> On February 20, 1987, Mizoram was inaugurated as the 23<sup>rd</sup> state of the Indian Union. As such, the first general election to the Mizoram state

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<sup>19</sup> ZKHC Election Communiqué in April, 1984.

<sup>20</sup> Jangkhongam Dounjel, *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram* (Guwahati-Delhi: Spectrum Publication, 2010), p. 27.

Assembly was held on February 16, 1987.<sup>21</sup> As of the Assembly elections on November 25, 2013 Mizoram had experienced seven state Legislative Assembly elections in the post-statehood period. Elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in the post statehood period are given as below:

The first General Elections to the Mizoram State Assembly were held on February 16, 1987. There were four political parties contesting in the elections, namely, the Indian National Congress, the People's Conference, the Mizo National Front and the Mizo National Union. There were also some Independent candidates contesting in the elections. There were 145 candidates, out of which the Congress set up all 40 candidates, including one woman candidate. The MNF had fielded 37 candidates including one woman. One of them (Laldenga) filed his nomination paper in two constituencies. The Mizo National Union (MNU) nominated 21 candidates including a woman. Rochhunga Ralte, who left the Congress and joined the MNU filed his nomination papers in two constituencies. Besides, 11 Independent candidates filed their nominations. While four parties and independents were involved in the election fray, the main contest was to be witnessed between the Congress and the MNF.<sup>22</sup> The MNF for the first time entered the Assembly polls of 1987, after Mizoram attained statehood.

The first MNF Government with Laldenga as the Chief Minister was formed with 6 Cabinet Ministers and 5 Ministers of state.<sup>23</sup> Despite enjoying a comfortable majority in the Assembly, dissident activities cropped up within the MNF party. As

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<sup>21</sup> J.V. Hluna and Rini Tochwawng, op. cit., p. 326.

<sup>22</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, op. cit., pp. 75-78.

<sup>23</sup> Laldenga was elected from two constituencies. He submitted resignation from Sateek Assembly constituency in which By-election was held on April 26, 1987 and Thankima from MNF was elected.

such, 8 MNF legislators led by Chawngzuala caused a split in the legislature party and formed the Mizo National Front (Democratic) or MNF (D). The MNF (D) withdrew its support to the government of Laldenga, and staked its claim to form a coalition government with the INC on August 31, 1988. In the midst of an ongoing political crisis, Hiteswar Saikia, the Governor of Mizoram having closely observed the political development in the state, recommended dissolution of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly.<sup>24</sup> After Mizoram was kept under the President's Rule, mid-term polls to the State Legislative Assembly were held on January 21, 1989.<sup>25</sup>

The second General Elections to the Legislative Assembly were held on January 21, 1989. The counting of votes was held on January 23, 1989. There were seven political parties in the fray, the Congress (I), the People's Conference, the Mizo National Front (recognized), the Mizo National Union, the Chakma Jati Parishad, Hmar People Conference and the Mizo National Front (D), (unrecognized) and some Independent candidates. Of the total 162 candidates, the Congress put up 34 candidates for 40 seats. While the MNF (Laldenga) put up 40 candidates, including one woman, the People's Conference had fielded 38 candidates including three women. There were some other parties that had also contested in the elections. The Mizo National Union nominated 36 candidates. The Mizo National Front (Democrats), an ally of the Congress set up 6 candidates. The Chakma Jati Parishad set up one candidate. The Hmar People Conference had 3 candidates.<sup>26</sup> Besides, 4 Independent candidates also filed their nominations.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Jangkhongam DOUNGEL, op. cit.,p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, op. cit.,pp. 146-147.

<sup>27</sup>Of the total 232 nominations for 40 seats which were filed, 68 candidates withdrew their candidature. Of the total 232 nomination papers, 2 nomination papers were rejected. Finally, a total of 162 candidates contested in the Assembly elections.



The Congress secured 23 seats, the MNF (D) two seats, the MNF 14 seats and the People's Conference one seat. The main feature of this election was that the Congress with its poll ally, the MNF (D) captured political power from the Mizo National Front led by Laldenga. A new Congress ministry was sworn in with Lalthanhawla as the Chief Minister on January 24, 1989, and the Government lasted its full five year term.<sup>28</sup> The second General Elections to the Legislative Assembly poll witnessed the growth of clan-based political parties in elections. For instance, the Hmar People's Convention and the Chakma Jati Parishad contested the elections and started projecting their demands in various forms. This marked the entry of community-based or clan-based politics in the state. The second General Elections also witnessed the first successful coalition politics in Mizoram.

The third General Elections that were scheduled to be held in 1994, were preponed owing to the Gospel Centenary Celebration (Hundred years of Christianity in Mizoram). As such, the elections were held on November 30, 1993. A significant political development took place in this period, as the PC was merged with the Janata Dal, but it could not reach any understanding with the party high command at the centre. As such, it transformed itself into the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD), as a regional political party, and agreed to have electoral understanding with the INC. The INC, MNF and MJD were the main contenders for political power in this election. The result was that, INC won 16 seats, MNF won 14 seats and MJD won 8 seats. Subsequently, a coalition government known as the United Legislature Party (ULP) was formed by the INC and MJD with Lalthanhawla as Chief Minister and Lalhmingthanga as Deputy Chief Minister.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> R.N. Prasad and A.K. Agarwal, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>29</sup> Jangkhongam Doungel, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Other than the Chief Minister, the ministry comprised of 10 INC Ministers and 5 MJD Ministers. But the rift started in the ULP Government within the first five months. Lalthanhawla then instructed all his ministers to tender their resignation, which was accordingly followed by the ministers. However, he accepted the resignation of only two MJD Ministers, namely, Lalhmingthanga and H. Thangkima. Subsequently, he inducted Hrangthanga Colney and F. Lawmkima from the MJD in place of the dropped Ministers. That way, a tactical game was shrewdly played by Lalthanhawla to create a rift in the MJD. On the other hand, 5 MNF legislators led by Lalruata after having split the MNF, joined the INC.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the INC could now form the government on its own through the game of manipulation and political defections. Indeed, the third government of Lal Thanhawla completed its full five year term, despite the political crisis, as the ministry was reshuffled three times during his tenure.

The fourth General Elections to the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly were held on November 25, 1998. In this election various political parties declared their candidates. These include, national parties like the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), the INC (Indian National Congress), the JD (Janata Dal), the SAP (Samata Party), state parties like the LS (Lok Shakti), the MNF (Mizo National Front), the RJD (Rashtriya Janata Dal); registered (unrecognized) parties like the MDF (Maraland Democratic Front), the MNF (N) Mizo National Front (Nationalist), the MPC (Mizoram People's Conference), besides some Independent candidates. The MNF-MPC combine captured 32 seats (MNF 21, MPC 12), the INC 6 seats and Independent one seat. Lalthanhawla was also defeated even from his traditional Serchhip constituency by a

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

lesser known engineer-turned politician, Thangzuala who was an MNF candidate. Zoramthanga was sworn in as the Chief Minister on December 3, 1998.<sup>31</sup>

Lalhmingthanga, the working president of the MPC became the Deputy Chief Minister. The coalition ministry came to an end on December 9, 1999. With the exit of the MPC MLAs, the strength of the MNF became 22 with one Independent supporter. The MNF government however lasted its full five year term.<sup>32</sup> The elections witnessed a total of 221 candidates, out of which 10 candidates were women.<sup>33</sup> The emergence of coalition politics in Mizoram since the second State Legislative Assembly elections in 1989 witnessed and experienced inter-party and intra-party conflicts in the state politics. However, a few coalition regimes were formed, usually not on the basis of shared ideology, principles, policies and programs, but with the sole intention of having a share in the government.

#### Fifth Mizoram General Assembly Elections and Its Consequence

The fifth Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections were held on November 20, 2003. Along with the states like Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, Mizoram went to the poll on the same day. In this election, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were used for the first time in the state. In this election, unlike in the last Assembly elections, filling up of the nomination forms by the contesting candidates became more complicated than ever before. With the announcement of election date, the political scenario in the State became heated up. Before the poll, as usual the State faced heightened and varied problems one after another ranging from

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.elections.in/mizoram/assembly-constituencies/1998-election-result.html>, retrieved on September 7, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Lalremruata Kiangte, *Mizo Year Book 2014* (Aizawl: Lalremruata Kiangte, 2014), pp. 325-328.

corruption, allegations of gunrunning rumors, State-wide removal of foreigners (Myanmars of Mizo-ethnic origin), problems over the inclusion of Bru/Reang and including immigrant foreigners like Chakmas in the State's electoral rolls.<sup>34</sup>

#### Performance of Political Parties

Political parties that joined in the poll fray were national parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Indian National Congress (INC), the Communist Party of India (CPI); state parties like the Mizo National Front (MNF), the Mizoram People's Conference (MPC), the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP); other parties like the Janata Dal (United) (JD) (U); and registered (unrecognized) parties like the Ephraim Union (EU), the Hmar People's Convention (HPC) and the Maraland Democratic Front (MDF). When the 2003 election results were declared, the MNF won 21 seats, INC won 12 seats, MPC won 3 seats, ZNP won 2 seats, MDF and HPC one each respectively. Zoramthanga of the MNF party was sworn in as the Chief Minister for the second time on December 4, 2003.<sup>35</sup> The total contestants in the 2003 elections were 192, out of which 7 were women. The MNF Government with Zoramthanga as Chief Minister was formed with 7 Cabinet Ministers and 6 Ministers of State. But, the ministry was downsized after the enactment of the Constitutional Ninety First Amendment Act by the Indian Parliament. The second Zoramthanga government also lasted its full five year term and he became the first Chief Minister of Mizoram who completed two consecutive terms in office.<sup>36</sup> This election brought an end to the dominance of coalition politics in the state for the time being.

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<sup>34</sup> A.P.K. Singh, op. cit., p.155.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.elections.in/mizoram/assembly-constituencies/2003-election-result.html>, retrieved on September 7, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> P. Lalnithanga, *Mizoram Politics Inlumleh Chhoh Dan* (Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press, 2008), pp. 118-218.

### Poll Violence and Malpractices

Mizoram had experienced peaceful conduct of electoral process from the first Union Territory Assembly elections to the fourth Assembly elections in the post statehood period (1972-1988). Mizoram has been able to attain the tradition of holding a peaceful poll process in the elections. During the successive Assembly elections in Mizoram, electoral malpractices like booth capturing, threats and intimidations, poll violence in any form have never occurred in the political history of Mizoram, except for some incidents of violence during MNF disturbances. However, this long tradition of conducting elections under a peaceful atmosphere free from violence was marred during the Fifth Mizoram Legislative Assembly election, 2003. The Fifth Assembly elections marked the turning point for power rivalry in the State politics in which the use of violence became a part of the electoral process in trying to capture power. A.P.K. Singh, stated, “The power struggle by political parties/ candidates to retain power was also on the rise”<sup>37</sup>. The incidents like numerous allegations of the use of insurgent groups, use of money power and muscle power were reported during these elections. This jeopardized the peaceful status as well as the past tradition of holding free and fair elections in the State.

The Church and civil society organizations were involved indirectly in the electoral process by issuing the “election guidelines” since the Mizoram Union Territory elections, 1972. The Church had appealed to political parties, candidates and voters for ensuring clean, free and fair elections that has become a regular feature with the Church since then. As such, due to the constructive guidance and indirect involvement of the Church and civil society organizations, conduct of elections was

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<sup>37</sup> A.P.K. Singh, op. cit., p.193.

peaceful in the state. However, more active and all-out efforts to involve themselves in the electoral process came after the 2003 Assembly Elections, which obviously came in the form of the Mizoram People Forum.

#### Emergence of the Mizoram People Forum (MPF)

Elections in India have become more critical with the gradual disappearance of single party dominance, both at the center and states. The 4<sup>th</sup> General Elections held in 1967 marked one of the most important events in the history of Indian electoral politics in the post Independent period. It was the ending of the era of Congress Party's domineering rule at the Centre and as well as in most of the states.<sup>38</sup> Gradually it has become difficult for a single political party to hold power consistently for a long period of time. As a result, political parties tend to strive towards negotiation and agreement with their political counterparts (other political parties), thereby forming coalition governments. In their quest for power, political parties and candidates often indulged in electoral malpractices and illegal means such as money power, muscle power, booth capturing and false promises to win the elections. Although the Indian Constitution (Article 324) provided establishment of an independent Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections, it is virtually not possible for the Election Commission to deal with each and every issue concerning electoral malpractices in a large country like India. Therefore, corruption and electoral malpractices still characterize Indian politics. This is becoming a great stumbling block towards the realization of good governance through clean, free and fair elections in India.<sup>39</sup> These unhealthy trends of elections like the use of money

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<sup>38</sup> D.C. Gupta, *Indian Government and Politics* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, Pvt., Ltd, 2004), pp. 492-493.

<sup>39</sup> Zarzosanga, *Civil Society and Elections in Mizoram* (Delhi: Straight Forward Publishers (P) Ltd, 2017), p. 57.

and muscle power were gradually witnessed in Mizoram since the Union Territory General Assembly elections. The incidents like numerous allegations of the use of insurgent groups, use of money power and muscle power became an open-secret in the Fifth Mizoram state Legislative Assembly elections, 2003.

In view of the emergence of such untoward incidents which erupted in the fifth Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, 2003, certain steps have been taken up under the initiative of the Synod Social Front in various levels. The Church and civil societies in Mizoram, particularly the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram Synod through the Synod Social Front carried out a serious study on the electoral process of Mizoram to reform the electoral politics of the state. The Synod Meeting (vide Synod 2004 Gen. 11 & Gen. 58) resolved to rectify and reform Mizoram state politics. Following these resolutions (SEC 201:13, 206:45), the Synod Executive Committee held talks with leaders of various denominational churches in Mizoram.<sup>40</sup> The Mizoram Synod Executive Committee had deeply deliberated upon the matter and it further proceeded with consulting other denominational churches, civil societies, the Former Legislators Association of Mizoram (FLAM), besides some prominent citizens in the state.

Subsequently, a meeting of various denominational churches and civil societies was convened on July 5, 2005.<sup>41</sup> The meeting accordingly resolved to initiate necessary steps for the implementation of electoral reforms in the society as well as for cleansing Mizoram politics. After the joint meeting was conducted, another joint meeting was held again on September 1, 2005 and it was resolved to establish a non-

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<sup>40</sup>“Constitution of the Mizoram People Forum”, (Aizawl: Mizoram People Forum, 2014), p.1.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

political social reform body that would spearhead the electoral reforms in the state. Consequently, after a series of consultations, the newly formed civil society, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) was unanimously accepted in the meeting. Hence, a Working Committee was appointed to prepare the rules and regulations of the forum. With the adoption and acceptance of the rules and regulations prepared by the Working Committee, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) was formally established on June 21, 2006.<sup>42</sup> The Church-sponsored MPF is a socio-political reform body which was established with the sole intention of reforming and cleansing Mizoram politics. It was established not to encounter the government but to constructively help the government in enforcing workable administrative systems in the state.

#### Constituent Members of the MPF

The Mizoram People Forum is a non-governmental and non-political organization. It is registered under the Mizoram Societies Registration Act, 2005.<sup>43</sup> The members of MPF are drawn from various denominational churches and civil society organizations. Presently the following organizations are constituent members of MPF: Presbyterian Church of India (PCI) Mizoram Synod, Evangelical Church of Maraland (ECM), Roman Catholic Church of Mizoram, Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI), Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran (LIKBK), Wesleyan Methodist Church and Independent Church of India (ICI). The affiliated members from the civil societies and voluntary associations are: Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP), Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuikhawm Pawl (MHIP), Mara Thutlya Py (MTP), Young Lai Association (YLA) and Young Chakma Association (YCA).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>43</sup>The MPF is also registered under the Mizoram Societies Registration Act, 2005 (Act No. 13 of 2005) as a registered body.

<sup>44</sup> Inthlan Thianglim leh Rorelna Dik (Aizawl: Mizoram People Forum, 2008), pp. 67-68.



The Mizoram People Forum stressed on reforming the society in general and the electoral system in particular, through the Christian ethics and biblical teaching. The MPF was formed by representatives of various denominational churches and civil societies. However, some major churches like, Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), Salvation Army, United Pentecostal Church and Seventh Day Adventist are not constituent members of the MPF. Absence of these major church organizations has rendered a sense of incompleteness to the MPF to a great extent.

#### Aims and Objectives

The Preamble of the Constitution of MPF did not permit anyone having political party affiliation to be included within the organization. MPF is an organization which is established not for the purpose of candidature in elections or taking part in active politics, nor is it an organization for attacking or retaliating against the government. The MPF is established with the sole purpose of good governance, peace and harmony in the state for the progressive, just and sustainable socio-economic development and freedom of the people. This is hoped to be achieved by changing the value system and perception of the people and electoral reforms. The thematic focal areas of the organization are electoral reforms, political education, good governance, advocacy and awareness.<sup>45</sup>

The main aims and objectives of the MPF are as follows:

- a) To work towards establishing democratic government through free and fair election as per the Indian Constitution, Election Rules and Code of Conduct.

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<sup>45</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, "Church and Election-The Role of Mizoram People Forum" in Mizoram People Forum Chanchin (2006-2016) (Aizawl: Mizoram People Forum, 2016), p. 171.

- b) To reform the electoral process and do away with the corruption and malpractices in the electoral system in the state.
- c) To put in place a transparent, accountable and responsible government.
- d) To educate the people on the governance issue and make them to be responsible citizens.
- e) To guide and advice the government on developmental issues.
- f) To conduct social audits for social reforms.
- g) To counter any form of violence, use of arms and terrorism.<sup>46</sup>

#### Organizational Structure of the MPF

The organizational structure and hierarchical order of the MPF is set up in the following layers, namely, Headquarters, District Forums, Constituency Forum (i.e. MLA constituency) and Local Forums. The Headquarters is located at Aizawl and it is also known as the Central Forum. All constituent members of the MPF are accommodated in the office bearer posts as well as the Governing Board membership. The District Forums are there in all the Revenue Districts and Autonomous District Councils. And, the District Forum also has its Office Bearers and Executive Committee members.<sup>47</sup> At present, there are no District Forums in Aizawl and Lunglei Districts.<sup>48</sup> The vision and mission of the Mizoram People

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<sup>46</sup> *Constitution of the Mizoram People Forum* (Aizawl: Mizoram People Forum General Headquarters, 2018), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Mizoram People Forum*, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

<sup>48</sup> The reason being, Aizawl can be effectively mobilized by the Central Forum. Whereas, the District Forum cannot be established in Lunglei District because the largest church association of the District, the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) is not a constituent member of the MPF. Constituency Forum is supposed to be established in each MLA constituency so as to effectively enforce the MPF guidelines during elections. Local Forum is a grassroots MPF unit, which is supposed to be established in every village and locality all over Mizoram. Local Forums are established in all the Village Council jurisdictional areas as well as Local Council jurisdictional areas. However, in big villages and large Local Council areas, more than one Local Forum can also be established. The Central Forum also collaborates with the Election Department of the state, State Election Commission and also with other allied departments of the state Government.

Forum is about establishment of good governance, peace and harmony in the state for the progressive, just and sustainable socio-economic development and freedom of the people. This is to be achieved by changing the value system and perceptions of the people through ensuring proper electoral reforms.

#### Role of MPF in the Electoral Reforms

The first and foremost task of the MPF was to invite the major stakeholders in the state politics, the representatives of all political parties. The initial consultation with political parties was held on September 25, 2006 at Synod Committee Room.<sup>49</sup> The Executive Committee of MPF had a consultation with leaders of different political parties concerning electoral reforms in the state. The meeting discussed issues pertaining to elections. The meeting incorporated suggestions and opinions shared by different political parties that became the “Election Guidelines” to be followed at the time of elections.

The initiative of electoral reform in the state by the MPF was appreciated and welcomed by political parties, civil societies, citizens of Mizoram and even the state government and Election Commission. Since its establishment, various awareness programs for socio-political reforms such as seminar, consultation and trainers’ training have often been conducted in different places of Mizoram by the MPF. The MPF consulted leaders of various political parties on the eve of elections and concluded acceptable agreements with them for conducting clean, free and fair elections. It is generally accepted that elections at different levels in Mizoram, such as - Member of Parliament, Member of Legislative Assembly, Autonomous District

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<sup>49</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, op. cit., p. 172.

Council, Municipal Council, Local Council and Village Council were conducted peacefully due to the efforts of the MPF. The role and contributions of MPF in various elections for electoral reform in Mizoram shall be highlighted as follows:

#### Tlungvel Assembly Constituency By-Election, 2006

The first activities of the MPF for initiating electoral reforms could be traced back from Tlungvel Assembly Constituency by election which was held on October 30, 2006. This by election happened to be the initial testing ground of the MPF. As a newly formed organization, the MPF did not have enough time to establish its Local Forum in different parts of Mizoram. However, the leaders of MPF Headquarters had travelled to various villages within Tlungvel constituency to form Local Forums. With the earnest effort of local leaders, the MPF Local Forum was formed in every village of Tlungvel constituency within a short period of time.<sup>50</sup> The MPF leaders had conducted meeting with the political parties such as, MNF, INC, MPC, ZNP and MCP on September 25, 2006.<sup>51</sup> The MPF also conducted meeting with the candidates of Tlungvel constituency on October 13, 2006 and concluded with 12-points agreements for conducting free and fair election as included in the appendix-II. To ensure free and fair by-election, it is jointly agreed that all candidates should stick to and abide by the poll guidelines released by the MPF.<sup>52</sup> The MPF also appealed to the political parties and contesting candidates and voters to follow and observe the points of agreements. The MPF had successfully organized joint platforms for the candidates in different villages of the constituency. The report or

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<sup>50</sup> Jangkhongam Dounge & Joseph C. Lalremruata, "The Role of Mizoram People Forum (MPF) for Electoral Reform in Mizoram" in *Socio-Economic Development and Governance in North Eastern Region of India*, Jagadish K. Patnaik eds., (Aizawl: Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, 2014), pp. 87-88.

<sup>51</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin (2006-2016)* (Aizawl: Mizoram People Forum, 2016), p. 52.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

complaint concerning house-to-house campaign, organizing feast, buying vote by money had not been found. Thus, with the efforts of the MPF as well as a strong support given by the public and political parties, the Tlungvel Assembly Constituency by election was conducted peacefully.

#### Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections, 2008

The Sixth Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections were held on December 2, 2008. Intimidations, threats, vote-buying and false promises made by contesting political parties and candidates, as well as involvement of underground armed groups have been the main issues in the elections. The Church-sponsored MPF for the first time stepped in to oversee the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections for free, fair and clean elections. Of course, the MPF since its inception in June 2006, has been monitoring the developments and actively working for about two years ahead of the 2008 Assembly elections. For a peaceful poll process, the MPF leaders had met leaders such as Mizoram Governor, Chief Minister, Political Party Presidents and even some underground armed groups. The Memorandum of Understanding between political parties and the MPF was distributed to the Chief Election Commissioner, Election Special Observer, Governor, Chief Minister and all political party presidents.<sup>53</sup>

#### Thawhhona Thuthlung (Memorandum of Understanding)

After its establishment the MPF initiated an all Political Parties Meeting on September 25, 2006 at Synod Committee Room, Aizawl.<sup>54</sup> In the meeting, both the MPF leaders and political party leaders discussed electoral reform and good

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 34

governance in the State. The meeting expressed their views about election expenditures and related matters concerning elections. After a deep discussion, the meeting reached an agreement to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. In other words, an Article of Agreement between Political Parties and Mizoram People Forum was reached. The Memorandum of Understanding became the principle and basis of the MPF activities, as well as “Election Guidelines” in every election in the state since then. To ensure free and fair elections in the sixth Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, the MPF General Headquarters and leaders of different political parties had another Joint Meeting on April 30, 2008 at I&PR Conference Hall, Aizawl.<sup>55</sup> The Joint Meeting finally completed the final draft of the “Election Guidelines”. Some of the contents of the agreements are: political parties should make an election manifesto which they could implement, every political party should try to enforce free and fair elections, no political party should drop the voters to their polling stations by means of arranging vehicle transportation and restricting the house to house campaign. Details of the memorandum are included in appendix-III.

#### MPF Meeting with the NSCN-IM

As a consequence of the 2003 Assembly elections, the MPF leaders had also requested the armed groups to refrain from Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections. The MPF leaders met the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) leaders at Kolkata in 2008. The MPF requested NSCN-IM to refrain from involving in Mizoram elections, as well as to issue directive guidelines to its friendly insurgent groups to not meddle in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections. The meeting between the MPF and the NSCN-IM was held on September 12, 2008 at Kolkata.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

The MPF was represented by Senior Vice President Rev. Zosangliana Colney and Secretary Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente while V.S. Atem, General and Emissary to the collective leadership and other two leaders represented the NSCN-IM. The MPF requested the insurgent groups in and around Mizoram not to interfere in the Mizoram electoral politics.<sup>56</sup> As such both the groups discussed the matter and signed a three-point agreement.<sup>57</sup>

#### Sending Reminder to Political Parties

To ensure the Poll Agreement that has been signed between the MPF and political parties is adhered to, for creating suitable atmosphere for holding free and fair elections, the MPF sent a reminder to all the political parties. This was decided at the Board Meeting of the MPF on October 23, 2008. The Board Meeting of the MPF resolved that:

1. A report on violation of the MPF election guidelines (mutually agreed by MPF and political parties) will be looked into and investigated.
2. Any party/candidates as may violate the agreed election guidelines will be requested to stop undermining the guidelines, and

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<sup>56</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, *Mizoram People Forum- MPF Chanchin* (2006-2014) Unedited Version (Aizawl: L.B. Associate, 2016), p.152.

<sup>57</sup> The points of the joint statement are: 1. "The MPF is genuinely interested in the peace-process in Nagalim and expressed serious concern about the fratricidal struggle amongst the people of Nagalim and the problems and hardships caused to the people of Nagalim due to the internecine clashes. The MPF commits itself to do its best for the cause of the Naga people and if the situation so demanded, will try its best to bring about unity and harmony amongst the Naga people for lasting peace and amicable settlement of Naga Problem". 2. "Mizoram is facing General Assembly election at the end of the current year. In order to conduct a free and fair election, it is desired that there should be no interference from outside the State or by any underground groups operating in the north east region or the neighboring areas. The National Socialist Council of Nagalim on its part, assured the meeting and agreed to instruct all such underground groups operating in the vicinity of Mizoram, not to interfere during election period and not to resort to violence of any kind in connection with the General Election (in Mizoram)". 3. "The meeting has decided to continue working for the common cause of the people of Nagalim and Mizoram in future"

3. In case repeated requests yield no positive response, MPF will either publicize the matter or even lodge a complaint with the ECI.<sup>58</sup>

#### Performance of Political Parties

The Indian National Congress (INC) led by Lalthanhawla won against the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF). The total candidates in 2008 elections were 206 (male 197 and female 9). The INC- 40, MNF -39, MPC -16, ZNP -17, BJP- 9, NCP- 6, JDU -2, LJD -38, Lok Bharati- 5, besides, 33 Independent candidates. The Congress captured 32 seats of the 40 member state Assembly, whereas the ruling MNF managed to win only 4 seats, and the third force, MPC and ZNP managed to get only 4 seats. Lalthanhawla was sworn in as the sixth Chief Minister of the state. No one before him has ever been elected as the Chief Minister for four times in the state.<sup>59</sup> In this election, the New Land Use Policy (NLUP) card had indeed helped the INC to capture 32 seats. The NLUP is a direct cash transfer scheme that was aimed at village farmers to develop self-sufficiency in agriculture. After a gap of ten years, the INC Government led by Lalthanhawla was formed with 9 Cabinet Ministers and two Ministers of State. Moreover, the Chief Minister also inducted 7 Parliamentary Secretaries to assist the Cabinet Ministers. The ministry lasted its full term and the NLUP became the main public policy agenda of the government.

#### Performance of MPF in the Poll Processes

The MPF had requested all political parties of Mizoram to abide by the Memorandum of Understanding signed as per the election model code of conduct between the political parties and MPF. The MPF had set up its District level,

<sup>58</sup> A.P.K. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 543-544.

<sup>59</sup> Lalremruata Kiangte, *op. cit.*, pp. 332-333.



Constituency-level and Local level Forums throughout Mizoram. The state had altogether eight revenue districts. They are Aizawl, Champhai, Kolasib, Lawngtlai, Lunglei, Mamit, Saiha and Serchhip. There are three District Councils in the two revenue districts of Lawngtlai and Saiha. The MPF district level Forums have been set up in each of the revenue districts except in Aizawl and Lunglei districts. The MPF District level forums were also set up in the two District Councils, namely, the Chakma Autonomous District Council and Mara Autonomous District Council. The reason for not setting up the MPF District Forum in Aizawl was that the MPF Central Forum could effectively organize and mobilize. However, in the case of Lunglei district, the largest Church association of the district, namely, Baptist Church of Mizoram is not a constituent member of the MPF.

During the poll process, the MPF did not allow political parties and candidates to organize meetings as per the Joint Agreement between political parties and the MPF. As such, the MPF organized and conducted the Joint Platforms for political parties/candidates under the leadership of MPF in several areas/Assembly segments throughout the state. The common platforms were moderated by the MPF representatives. The candidates were asked to speak within a given time and answered questions from the audience. The MPF also conducted seminars for political education in several places. The MPF leaders participated in talk shows, interviews for political parties and candidates concerning elections organized by selected media persons and local cable TV network operators like- ZONET, LPS and others. The MPF volunteers in their respective areas took initiatives for free and fair elections. The Local forums also ensured strict vigil on election process in their respective areas to refrain from dirty politics in elections. On polling day, for the first

time, the MPF erected common “Pandals” for all political parties in each of the polling stations. The Forum restricted political parties to set up their own election booths on polling day. The MPF volunteers even helped those voters without the EPIC to find their serial numbers and names in the Voters List. The MPF strictly enforced and monitored those guidelines signed by the MPF and political parties. Besides, the churches and civil society groups formulated the “election guidelines” for political parties, candidates and voters to ensure free and fair elections. Thus, the Sixth Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election held on December 2, 2008 was conducted peacefully due to the great efforts of the MPF.

#### South Tuipui Assembly Constituency By-Election, 2009

Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister had been elected from two constituencies namely, Serchhip and South Tuipui. He, however, vacated the South Tuipui constituency. Hence, the by-election was held on April 16, 2009. There were two candidates contesting for the lone seat. They were John Siamkunga of INC and K. Lalsanga, an Independent candidate. The INC candidate John Siamkunga defeated K. Lalsanga in the by-election. The MPF Forums were not established yet in most of the polling stations and villages in the South Tuipui Constituency. Therefore, the MPF general headquarters with the help of YMA conducted public meetings and awareness campaigns in various localities and villages of the South Tuipui constituency. The public meetings conducted by the MPF were live telecast in the local cable TV. As such, the by election of the South Tuipui was successfully completed on April 16, 2009.

### Chalfilh Assembly Constituency By-Election, 2013

The Chalfilh Assembly Constituency by election was held on February 23, 2013. It was necessitated by the untimely demise of the sitting MLA and parliamentary Secretary Chawngtinthanga on September 16, 2012 . He was elected from this constituency on the INC ticket in the sixth Assembly election held in 2008.<sup>60</sup> There are about seven candidates from different political parties, including one Independent candidate in the poll fray, namely the INC, BJP, LJSP, MNF, MPC, and ZNP.

The MPF was again involved in the by election of the Chalfilh Assembly constituency and successfully organized awareness campaigns in different villages. However, the integrity of the MPF was questioned in the Chalfilh Assembly Constituency by election. The Joint Students' Union of the said constituency questioned the MPF for not inviting Independent candidates in the joint platform program organized by the MPF at Khawruhlian. The MPF leaders had clarified that only the recognized political parties who have headquarters or office at Aizawl will participate in the joint platform program organized by the MPF as per the agreement between political parties and MPF. Hence, the MPF alone could not change the agreement without the consent of the political parties.<sup>61</sup> However, the Students' Union boycotted the joint platform program and they requested the public not to participate in the joint platform. But the joint platform was successfully held and all the invited candidates could also participate and deliver speeches. The MPF had performed its duties as in the previous elections, however, the integrity of MPF was questioned in the Chalhfilh Assembly constituency by election.

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<sup>60</sup> A.P.K. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

<sup>61</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), *op. cit.*, pp.46-47.

### Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections

Before discussing the role of Church and civil societies, the poll processes in 2013 will be first highlighted briefly. The Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly election was held on November 25, 2013. The political parties in the fray were national political parties viz., the Indian National Congress (INC), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). While the regional political parties (recognized) were the Mizo National Front (MNF), the Mizoram Peoples Conference (MPC) and the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), the regional political parties (Registered Unrecognized Parties) were the Ephraim Union (EU), the Mara Democratic Front (MDF), the Jai Maha Bharat Party (JMBP), the Zoramthar Duhtute (ZTD),<sup>62</sup> besides which some Independent candidates were also there in the poll fray. As usual, political parties are very crucial in any elections, more so in the 2013 Assembly elections in the state. The political parties having entered into different electoral alliances, tried to emerge stronger in the poll contest. Obviously, the political parties were engaged in mutual bickering so as to score some political points over their rivals in the elections. As such, “The Seventh Assembly Elections in Mizoram was a landmark in the history of Mizoram General elections as it was the battle between the devotees of Mizo nationalism and the leaders who want the Indianisation of Mizo nation”,<sup>63</sup> said the Opposition party alliance called the Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA), which comprised of regional political parties such as, the Mizo National Front (MNF), Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) and Mara Democratic Front (MDF).

Emphasizing the need for propagation of Mizo nationalism as the urgent need of the

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<sup>62</sup> *General Election to the Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2013, Statistical Report* (Aizawl: Directorate of Election, Government of Mizoram), p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> *The Sangai Express and Newmai News Network* dated 17 November, 2013.

time to safeguard and protect the integrity of Mizoram and continuity of Mizos as a nation, the MDA said it must win the upcoming Assembly elections for the protection and survival of “Zo nation” adding that the upcoming election was to be an important and memorable event. The MNF-MPC-MDF alliance was based on the realization of the survival of Zo people, which was felt much among the churches, NGOs and employees in Mizoram. As such, the triple alliance became more successful than the MNF-MPC alliance of 1998, where it won 32 seats out of the existing 40 seats, as the Almighty God also heard the woes and cry of the people of Mizoram, according to the statement by MNF. The MDA alleged that the Congress party and Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) had made a secret alliance between them by jointly castigating the unity of MDA, and that they did not expose it outwardly. Meanwhile, reacting to the allegation, ZNP said that they did not confederate with the Congress party for the forthcoming polls, adding the accusation made by leaders of MDA alliance that, ZNP aligned with the Congress, was unfounded and was a false accusation.<sup>64</sup> Another noteworthy development in the 2013 Assembly Elections was that the Congress faced strong anti-incumbency factors in the states of Rajasthan, Delhi, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh in north India, and retaining Mizoram was therefore, a matter of greater importance for the party, where the Congress government, headed by Lalthanhawla was also trying to retain power. In 2008, the Congress swept the polls with an overwhelming majority, riding on the back of an anti-incumbency wave. And, it also alleged rampant corruption in the MNF-led government and thus they promised the revival of the New Land Use Policy (NLUP), a direct cash transfer scheme that was aimed at village farmers to develop self-sufficiency in agriculture.

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<sup>64</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 11, Issue No. 172, November 17, 2013.

### District and Constituency-wise Party Candidates

As the poll preparations were in full swing, various political parties had announced their candidature. All the political parties in the state were in a jubilant mood and enthusiastic to face the celebration day after the announcement of their candidates for all the 40 Assembly seats. The Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) President Lalthanhawla and Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) President Lalduhawma contested in two constituencies each. Lalthanhawla was contesting from his home town Serchhip constituency and Hrangturzo constituency, and similarly the ZNP President Lalduhawma contested from the Kolasib constituency and the Aizawl West-I constituency. The District and Constituency-wise list of the political party candidates is given as follow:

Table No. 1: District and Constituency-wise Party Candidates

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>ACs</b>	<b>INC</b>	<b>MNF</b>	<b>MPC</b>	<b>ZNP</b>	<b>BJP</b>	<b>IND.&amp; OTHERS</b>
MAMIT	3	3	3	0	3	3	2
KOLASIB	3	3	2	1	3	2	0
AIZAWL	14	14	10	4	14	6	0
CHAMPHAI	5	5	4	1	5	3	1
SERCHHIP	3	3	2	1	3	0	3
LUNGLEI	7	7	6	1	7	2	1
LAWNGTLAI	3	3	3	0	2	1	0
SAIHA	2	2	1	0	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: 2013 Election Analysis: Mizo Year Book 2014<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup>Lalremruat Khiangte, op. cit., p.182.

The main contest for the 40 seat Legislative Assembly in 2013 was between the incumbent Indian National Congress (INC), and the Mizo National Front-led Mizoram Democratic Alliance. The MNF, MPC and MDF had forged an electoral alliance under the banner of Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA). Under the MDA Alliance, the MNF contested 31 seats, MPC contested 8 seats and the MDF contested one seat. The INC fielded candidates in all the 40 seats. ZNP contested 38 seats, BJP fielded 17 seats, NCP contested two seats, one seat by Jai Maha Bharat Party and 4 Independent candidates. The INC canvassed votes on the NLUP card, whereas the MNF campaign slogan was economic development as well as the issue of the application of *Tilak* in Lalthanhawla's forehead during the Durga Puja festival at Kolkatta, meanwhile the ZNP also made many tall promises in the elections.<sup>66</sup>

#### Major Electoral Issues during the Poll Process

Almost all the political parties had discussed several public policies as part of the debates during the pre-election campaigns. Thus, these became the main election issues in the state. While the NLUP had achieved some measure of success, there were some allegations of corruption. However, in an effort to dilute any advantage that the Congress might have reaped from the NLUP, the three regional parties had announced their intention to replicate the success of NLUP should they come to power and promised to add on to it. The main opposition party, the MNF had announced what it called a Socio-Economic Development Program (SEDP), which aims to make Mizoram an economically self-sufficient state in agriculture and power generation.<sup>67</sup> The ZNP had some reservations about the idea of cash transfer

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<sup>66</sup>Jangkhongam Dounge, op. cit.,p. 9.

<sup>67</sup>The party president and former Chief Minister Zoramthanga added that the SEDP incorporated certain points from the "Six Basic Needs", the 30 year old policy of Brig. T. Sailo's party MPC, which remained unfulfilled. The MPC, now headed by Brig. T. Sailo's son and retired civil servant

schemes, yet it had also echoed similar support policies in the form of an Immediate Economic Package (IEP) and the Urban Poor Package (UPP), both aimed at providing market access to the poor in the rural areas and helping the urban poor to gain meaningful employment through technical education.

As a matter of fact, like several other states in mainstream India, Mizoram too witnessed emerging trends in the context of socio-economic and political processes. For instance, at one level, the politics of packages and economic development has been noticed in the recent polls. Despite religious appeals that significantly influenced the electorate, the ruling Congress had benefited in the elections on account of its flagship scheme of the New Land Use Policy (NLUP) that was promised in the wake of 2008 elections, which later on got financed by the Union Government. As such, in spite of opposition criticism of its biased implementation, the scheme seems to have given a crucial advantage to the ruling party in this election.<sup>68</sup> Further, all the political parties had made tall electoral promises aimed at harnessing the youth in the state. The development of sports, infrastructure, educational reforms and the use of information technology in governance featured prominently in their election manifestoes. Despite the rise in unemployment, including a large number of unemployed graduates, political parties had not articulated any clear plans on how they would create jobs. The regional parties had

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Lalmangaiha Sailo, had reiterated its commitment to work towards the fulfillment of the “Six Basic Needs” program and would ensure self-sufficiency in the generation of power. In addition, the MPC had added a “Social Security” scheme in its manifesto, which would help small farmers carry their products to the market, provide support prices to the farmers and also ensured adequate nutrition cover for families having young children.

<sup>68</sup>K.V. Reddy, “Political Process in Northeast India: A Case Study of Mizoram”, in *Socio-Economic Development and Governance in North Eastern Region of India*, Eds. Jagadish K. Patnaik, Jangkhongam Doungel and Ayangbam Shyamkishor (Aizawl: Department of Political Science Mizoram, 2014),p.141.



also espoused the strong Mizo-nationalist ideologies and promised to safeguard their cultural practices and keep immigration in check.

#### Performance of Political Parties

Since the Mizo National Front (MNF) have had an electoral alliance with the Mizoram People Conference (MPC) and Mara Democratic Front (MDF), it was expected to perform better than the last elections. However, the MNF and its electoral allies did not secure the support of masses. During the poll process, the party had raised non-political issues and slogans so as to score some political points against the ruling party, but it was in vain. Besides, the performance of the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) that claimed to have offered a new alternative to both the ruling and opposition parties through its electoral performance, was dismal in this election. As such, the ZNP lost both the seats that it had won in the last Assembly. Further, despite its campaigning on “anti-incumbency” of the ruling Congress, the opposition parties did not cash in on this in this election. As such, the electoral alliance of MNF, MPC and MDF called the Mizoram Democratic Alliance (MDA) lost the election badly, in both vote-share and seat-share. The ZNP also drew a blank in the elections.<sup>69</sup> As a consequence, the ruling MPCC got absolute majority (34/40) in the Assembly. The total number of electors in 2013 elections was 6, 90,860 and the total valid of votes polled was 5, 73,417.<sup>70</sup>

The INC returned to power with three-fourths majority by capturing 34 out of 40 Assembly seats. The MNF could win just five seats and MPC got a single seat.

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *General Election to the Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2013 Statistical Report* (Aizawl: Directorate of Election, Government of Mizoram, 2014), p.70.

Parties, such as the ZNP, MDF, NCP and BJP could not win even a single seat. It is also an interesting feature to note that the Zoram Thar Duhtute (ZTD), which was a new political party formed by intellectual circles fielded one candidate, namely, Lalsailova, a retired I.A.S officer from Lunglei South constituency. But, he lost his security deposit by obtaining just 208 votes.<sup>71</sup>

Prominent losers in this election were Zoramthanga, the former Chief Minister, President of the MNF, Lalduhawma, President of the ZNP, Lalmangaiha Sailo, President of the MPC, P.P. Thawla, the lone MDF legislator in the last two terms, Liansailova, Finance Minister and S. Hiato, Industry Minister of INC Government in the previous term. The INC Government headed by Lalthanhawla as Chief Minister was formed along with 7 Cabinet Ministers and 4 Ministers of State, and there were also 7 Parliamentary Secretaries.<sup>72</sup> In comparison with other states in India, the Mizoram Assembly election was remarkable in achieving peaceful elections.

#### Role of Church in the Seventh Assembly Elections

As had been mentioned earlier, the Church has played an important role in Mizoram politics. Particularly during the electoral process, apart from the ECI Model Code of Conduct, the Church and other civil societies also set “election guidelines” for political parties and voters to ensure free and fair elections. Demonstrating their role in the electoral process in the seventh Assembly elections, this time, the Church had even asked the Election Commission to change the date for polling and counting that

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<sup>71</sup>Jangkhongam Doungel, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>72</sup>Despite the fact that women outnumbered men in the count of eligible voters, as per the latest electoral roll prepared by ECI, only 6 women had represented the womenfolk in this election. Of the 1126 polling stations, 94 were declared as being in the sensitive zone. A voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) system was used for the first time in the state in 10 constituencies in Aizawl District. Of the 40 Assembly constituencies all were reserved for Scheduled Tribe (ST) nominees except Lunglei South which was meant for general candidates.

were already scheduled. A joint meeting was summoned on October 17, 2013 by the Election Department, wherein various political parties, Churches and CSOs such as Mizoram Synod, United Pentecostal Church, Mizoram People Forum, and Young Mizo Association participated in the meeting to deliberate over the issue of election schedule declared by the Election Commission of India. In its notification, the EC declared that the date for voting of State Assembly elections was to be held on December 4, 2013 and the date of counting to be December 8, 2013. Earlier, a petition of memorandum was also submitted to ECI to change the date of voting and counting by the Church-related organizations, such as, Mizoram Synod, Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC), Mizoram People Forum (MPF), United Pentecostal Church (UPC) and other CSOs, as it clashed with the Synod Conference which was to be held on December 3 to 8, 2013.<sup>73</sup> Further, the CSOs rejected the date of vote counting as December 8 fell on Sunday which is religiously important, and a restricted day for a Christian dominated state like Mizoram. As such, both the dates were sought to be changed.

Meanwhile, the major political parties in Mizoram such as the Congress, MNF, MPC, ZNP and BJP supported the Church appeal to re-schedule the date of polling as well as that of counting of votes.<sup>74</sup> Lalhlianzuala Sailo, General Secretary, MPCC stated, “All political parties never chose to disregard what the Church said”.<sup>75</sup> This opinion seemed to be shared by both the MNF and ZNP as well.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, the Election Commission of India changed the dates of polling and counting of votes,

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<sup>73</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 11 Issue, October 17, 2013.

<sup>74</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol 11 Issue 143, October 19, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> In an interview with Lalhlianzuala Sailo, MPCC General Secretary at Mizoram Pradesh Congress Office, Aizawl on September 25, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> In an interview with Tawnluaia, Senior Vice President, MNF, at MNF Headquarters, Aizawl on September 25, 2014 and J.V. Pahlira, Secretary ZNP, at ZNP Headquarters, Aizawl on September 25, 2014.

setting the new dates for polling on November 25 and vote counting on December 9 respectively, in compliance with the appeal of the churches, civil bodies and CSOs from the State.<sup>77</sup>

#### Memorandum of Understanding

For the Seventh Assembly elections in 2013, there were at least three meetings held between the MPF and the representative of political parties for signing the Joint Memorandum of Understanding to work together in the election.<sup>78</sup> The final Agreement was signed at the third meeting on August 22, 2012. The MPF had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with major political parties of Mizoram, namely, Mizo National Front (MNF), Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) and the MOU comprises of 27 agreements as included in the appendix-IV. Some of the contents of the agreements are: political parties should make an election manifesto which they could implement, every political party should try to enforce free and fair elections and restrict house to house campaign, besides which other earlier guidelines of the MPF are valid as usual. The candidates were prohibited to distribute materials like, silpaulins, jerseys, footballs, mobile handsets, or government subsidy schemes. A fixed number of banners, flags and posters were to be used by the political parties. If any political party violates any one of the 27 points, the MPF would declare that party "invalid" in the election. Besides, churches and civil society organizations circulated "election guidelines" among political parties, candidates and electorate, for clean, free and fair elections in the state. Some of these guidelines are highlighted as follows:

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<sup>77</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, Vol. 11 Issue 149, October 25, 2013.

<sup>78</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin (2006-2016)*, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

### Presbyterian Church of Mizoram Synod

The Presbyterian Mizoram Synod gave certain declarations and notifications on this occasion of general elections. As the citizens of the state had obliged to those declarations, the Mizoram Synod expressed gratitude to the people. The Synod requested all the people to take a serious note of their declarations. It was the desire of the Church that their pamphlets were to be read out in different local congregations so as to educate one another in their respective families and in any possible way to communicate to the people.<sup>79</sup> Some of the main contents of appeal included: the candidate should be a person who has good reputation, reliable and mature, hardworking and honest, free from unfair and corrupt means and practices, free from immoral behavior and faithful and loyal to one's own faith, denomination.<sup>80</sup>

### Baptist Church of Mizoram

The Baptist Church of Mizoram asked the law-abiding citizens, political parties and candidates to abide by their "election guidelines. Declaration of the Baptist Church of Mizoram included: All the proper citizens of India must faithfully cast their votes. Voters should not demand any benefits with selfish motives from political parties

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<sup>79</sup>“Inthlan Chungchanga Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran Thuchah, 2013” (vide SEC 249:39) by Rev. Lalrinawma, Secretary and Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau, Moderator, Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran Synod, Aziawl.

<sup>80</sup>The Church had also appealed to the political parties and candidates, to avoid deceiving the people with erratic information, not to have misunderstanding and quarrel, not issue threats, fairly declare one's manifesto, show piety and godliness in characters and speeches, show Mizo ethical values, not to make false promises, discourage any clan-based politics and regionalism in the wave of political development and avoid employing terrorist groups and violent means. Further, the Church requested all the voters to cast their votes, as it is the right and duty of every citizen of the country. But, the advice that they are not to be party-biased in an extreme sense, avoid politicians who bribe the voters for vote, avoid taking advantage of the situation by taking some assets from a store to be repaid by the candidates later were also included in the appeal. And, as the Mizoram People Forum was established for ensuring a fair and just election, thus all the citizens are requested to give their full cooperation to the MPF.

and candidates.<sup>81</sup> As such, the candidates should not be disturbed by voters demanding free meal, as that would incur high expenditure for the candidates in the election.<sup>82</sup>

#### United Pentecostal Church (NEI)

The General Administrative Committee of the United Pentecostal Church, Northeast India (UPC-NEI) declared the election guidelines to the citizens and different political parties. They also requested the church members and concerned political parties to abide by their statement in the name of God.<sup>83</sup> The UPC (NEI) stated that the election could affect the life of an individual and the church, and the Church therefore requested those persons involved in politics to be careful.<sup>84</sup>

#### Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC)

The MKHC is an ecumenical body of various denominational churches in Mizoram, whose membership consists of: Presbyterian Church, Baptist, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Lairam Isua

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<sup>81</sup> “BCM-in Inthlan Thuchah an Tichhuak: Vote Thlak Vek Turin Mipuite an Ngen,” *Vanglaini*, (Local Daily News paper in Mizo), October 15, 2013.

<sup>82</sup>The Church had appealed to the political parties that, they should first promote the interest of the state rather than the interest of their respective parties. And, they should formulate only such election manifesto, policy and program which they would actually carried out. Thus, they should educate the people to establish a democratic government in the state. As such, political party must choose candidates who are blameless, who can faithfully and efficiently serve the people in the state. The Church also requested the candidates to avoid endorsing region/constituency based interests and gifts in particular constituencies. For, candidates are the icons/models of the society, as such candidates should set an exemplary life in all walks of life.

<sup>83</sup> “UPC (NEI)- in Inthlan Thuhah a Tichhuak: Vote Thlak Vek Turin Mipuite an Ngen,” *Vanglaini* (Local Daily News paper in Mizo), October 13&14 , 2013.

<sup>84</sup>The Church had also resolved that no political matter be discussed in any of the Church services and Church related gatherings. The UPC (NEI) opined that casting one’s vote was the duty and responsibility of every responsible citizen. As such, it requested all voters to use their sober judgment in casting their votes. Further, the Church pointed out that, any person who indulged in alcohol consumption and unlawful sexual activity, corrupt and selfish practices are not fit enough to participate in the process of politics and governance. As such, any person who has had those qualities should not be voted if they had contested the elections. And, the UPC (NEI) Church had conducted prayer service in all the local churches so as to have a free and fair election and to have good candidates for good governance in the State.

Baptist Kohhran, Evangelical Church of Maraland, Congregational Church of India (Maraland), Methodist, Evangelical Free Church of India, Evangelical Baptist Convention and Zomi Baptist Church.<sup>85</sup> The organization had made a declaration on “election guidelines” for the 2013 General Assembly Elections. Some of the content declarations include: a candidate should be a person with good reputation who is God-fearing, one who is free from intoxicants, free from immorality (unlawful sex) and loyal to one’s denominational church and party. The Church leaders had also appealed to the political parties and voters to enable citizens to freely exercise their franchise, and not to employ any form of violent means. Further, political parties and candidates were requested not to make any promises that were not realistic. As such, voters should not make any candidate make promises for the interest of one locality, party, clan-based, region based issues.

The Mizoram Church leaders also wished that the newly elected leaders would occupy the office for a full term. It is expected from them that they should respect the people who voted for them and God who elevated them to the position of a leader. They should also know that they were to represent not only their party alone, but the whole Mizo community. They are expected to give equal treatment to all the denominational churches and cooperate with the leaders of different denominational churches.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> “MKHC-in Inthlan Thuchah a Tichhuak,” *Vanglaini*, (Local Daily News paper), October 18, 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Further, the Church leaders had stated that any political party that comes into power is expected to continue the policy that had been initiated by the former government even though they belong to a different political party. As such, the people were also expected to accept any newly elected leaders as God-given leaders for the state. Hence, the people have to cooperate with them, rather than engaging in backbiting and criticism. Even the elected leaders are also expected to be loyal and honest rather than switching over from one denomination to another. It is the desire and prayer of the different churches that any government once it is formed should be stable, stated the MKHC appeal.

### Mizoram Baptist Federation (MBF)

The MBF is consisting of various Baptist churches in Mizoram and churches which follow the Baptist principles, strive together for a common bond, ecumenical ties and common mission established on April 13, 2012. For the first time in the history of electoral politics, the MBF issued “election guidelines.”<sup>87</sup> The “election guidelines” issued by the MBF included: No political topic or issue should be discussed in the Church. A candidate should be one who truly loves the state, hardworking and one with visionary leadership. Distribution of certain goods and filling of someone’s bank account should be avoided. Unnecessary criticism of one’s opponents’ personal life should be avoided by political parties and candidates.<sup>88</sup>

The main ideas behind formulating the “election guidelines” by the Church were to ensure free and fair elections as well as to enable the law-abiding citizens to exercise their franchise freely and without the influence of money and muscle power. Therefore, the appeal was made to the political parties to put up honest, upright and blameless persons with integrity as their party candidates. And, the watch-dog electioneering activities of the Church were based upon the guidelines of the Model Code of Conduct, issued by the Election Commission of India. Besides, there were several churches and other civil society organizations that issued “election communiqué” in the recent Assembly elections. Questionnaires were distributed to

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<sup>87</sup> Rev. H. Liangaia & Rev. Dr. L.H. Lalpekhlua, “Mizoram Baptist Federation 2013 MLA Election Thuchah,” *Baptist Today: BCM Weekly News*, November 24, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> The MBF had also appealed to the political parties to plan their election Manifesto and political policy by keeping the interests of the whole Mizo society in mind. To enable the voters to cast their votes freely, no violent means should be used during the electoral process. As such, all the political activity should be ethically sound for Christian candidates and a Christian state. The MBF also urged the voters to cast their votes in accordance with the declaration made by Church, various civil society organizations and the Election Commission of India. No one should accept any personal gain and materials from the contesting candidates. Further, community feasts and other social gatherings that could disturb the electoral process and give financial burden to the family of the candidates should be avoided.



different people to find out how far the “Election Guidelines” issued by the Church during elections helped in the conduct of free and fair polls. It is generally accepted that the election guidelines issued by Church have had a positive influence. Details of the respondents’ opinion are given as follow:

Table No. 2: Election Guidelines issued by the Church Help

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	To a great extent	34	22.5
2	To some extent	87	57.6
3	Can’t say	30	19.9
	Total	151	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The above table shows that nearly one-fourth (22.5%) of the respondents agreed that the election guidelines issued by Church for the conduct of clean, free and fair elections influenced the people to a great extent. Over half (57.6%) of the respondents agreed that it had influenced to some extent and 19.9% of the respondents were unable to express their opinion. The analysis of the questionnaire shows that it was generally accepted that the election guidelines issued by Church has had a positive influence on the conduct of free and fair poll in the elections.

#### Joint Platform

The MPF and political parties had also agreed in their meeting held on 28 September 2013 that all the MLA candidates for the 2013 Assembly Elections should participate

in the MPF joint platforms in their respective constituencies. In pursuance of the MOU signed with the political parties, the MPF had organized a joint platform for political parties at Ignite Studio, Aizawl in which leaders of different political parties, viz., Zoramthanga, President MNF, Lal Thanhawla, President MPCC, Lalduhawma, President ZNP, H. Lalhluna, President BJP Mizoram Unit, B.T. Nghinglova, President Trinamol Congress Mizoram, Vanlalhlana, Vice President MPC delivered their campaign speeches for 30 minutes each. The joint platform was moderated by Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau, President MPF<sup>89</sup>. The MOU signed between the MPF and political parties was strictly enforced during the elections, for the conduct of free and fair elections in the state. The political parties also cooperated well with the Church and civil societies. The MPCC President extended its support to the Church and other civil societies in their tireless efforts towards having free and fair elections in the state. He further said, “It deserve respect and prestige for one to be elected without the use of money power”.<sup>90</sup>

### Election Campaign

The election campaign in India, as elsewhere in other democracies of the world, is the period when political parties put forward their manifestoes and arguments through which they hope to garner votes for their candidates and parties. However, during the campaign period, the political parties and contesting candidates are expected to abide by a model code of conduct evolved by the EC when parties organize a series of public meetings, processions, postering, through which their policies and programs are widely disseminated among the people.<sup>91</sup> Besides, an

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<sup>89</sup> “MPF-in Joint Platform a Buatsaih” *Vanlaini* (Local daily News paper in Mizo), October 11, 2013.

<sup>90</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, Vol. 11 Issue 160, November 5, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, Joydeep Baruah and Ratna Bhuyan, *Election Politics in Assam* (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2006), pp. 220-221.

election campaign provides to all the parties and candidates an opportunity for educating the people on public issues, policies and programs. D.N. Pathak stated, “Campaign constitutes a vital phase of the electoral process. It arouses voter’s curiosity, identifies issues of debate, spreads information, mobilizes voters into the system, helps their politicization, facilitates voter’s choice and performs an educative function. Its major aims are to strengthen loyal voters, win as many as undecided voters as possible and convert or demoralize rival party supporters, campaigns also produced a greater degree of politicization and involvement ultimately leading to political participation”.<sup>92</sup> As usual this has been the practice of parties and their candidates in any election in the country.

In India, the period between the last date for withdrawal of candidatures and the day of the poll (a minimum period of twenty days) is devoted by the parties and candidates to the process of electioneering in the form of public meetings, processions, posters and demonstrations. The basic purpose of the election campaign is to galvanize and educate the electors. Formally, the election campaign generally starts with the announcement of election schedule. However, informally election canvassing starts long before the election schedule is announced and continues till the last moment of polling.

However, the process of canvassing varies from context to context. The amount of campaign expenses involved would also vary from context to context. Also, the means employed in the process of canvassing can vary from context to context, with various methods and techniques coming into play in the poll campaign. These

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<sup>92</sup> A.P.K. Singh, *op. cit.*, p.152.

include a door-to-door campaign, a person-to-person or telephone campaign, telegram campaign, newspaper, television, meetings, and rallies among others. During the election campaign period, the ruling party usually defends its performance and the opposition party accuses the ruling party on its non-performance.

The process of formal election campaign to the Seventh Legislative Assembly in Mizoram began with the announcement and issuance of election notifications by the Election Commission of India. Both national and regional parties along with a few Independent candidates were in the electoral battle. As usual, when the schedule of elections was declared in the state, the EC announced the model code of conduct for the candidates and their parties so as to ensure free and fair poll. Reviewing the preparatory measures that had been taken so far for the electoral process, the EC Awareness Observer conducted a meeting with Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) at the Office Chamber of Aizawl District Officer. The meeting looked into the issue of whether there had been any “paid news” item that was issued by any political party or its candidates as a means of election campaign. The EC Awareness Observer called for caution against any speech or writing that might incite or disturb the peaceful atmosphere in the elections during campaigns.<sup>93</sup>

As such, to ensure a free and fair electoral process, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) had organized joint platforms during the course of election campaigns. All the candidates of a particular Assembly segment debated on poll issues, development works and other matters. These election debates were conducted in a fixed place

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<sup>93</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily Newspaper), October 29, 2013.

moderated by an MPF member. The people assembled at these debates asked questions to the candidates belonging to various political parties and Independents. The MPF platform at the state, district and local levels kept a close watch over the prevailing electoral situations.<sup>94</sup> The MPF also asked supporters of candidates not to use caps, T-shirts, badges and stickers bearing party symbols, and party flags during the course of the election campaign. The number of flags, banners and posters that a candidate used were restricted, based on the number of local council members or village council members in each locality or village. Three banners, 30 flags and 20 posters for an area that had more than seven local/village councils; three banners, 30 flags and 15 posters for an area having more than five but less than seven local/village councils; and three banners, 10 flags and 10 posters for an area having less than three village/local councils. And no election banner should be larger than 18x4 feet.<sup>95</sup>

Meanwhile, another NGO that worked in the state, the Mizoram corruption watchdog, the People's Right to Information and development Implementing Society of Mizoram (PRISM) also declared that it had put a temporary halt to its "Anti Corruption" campaign and started an exclusive study of the background of different candidates in different aspects and exposed the same before the public. In case of any faulty or wrong information in the nomination paper (self-declared affidavit) filed for the assembly elections, the PRISM group decided to take stern measures against the unlawful candidates to bring right awareness over the case. The Church had also asked the voters to shun poll prophets. The Presbyterian Church of India, Mizoram Synod in its poll message, urged the voters to reject the so-called prophecies and

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<sup>94</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News paper), Vol 11 Issue 179, November 24, 2013.

<sup>95</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News paper), Vol 11 Issue 140, October 16, 2013.

predictions about which party would win the Assembly Elections in the state. The Synod stated that such self-proclaimed prophets did not believe in God. Thus, in a poll bound activity during the seventh Assembly elections, the Church, along with civil society organizations and the Election Commission had all worked in tandem to make the electoral process a free and fair process.

#### Hrangturzo Assembly Constituency By-Election, 2014

The by election in Hrangturzo Constituency was held on April 11, 2014. In the seventh Assembly elections, the Chief Minister Lalthanhawla was elected from two constituencies, namely, Serchhip and Hrangturzo. However, he vacated the Hrangturzo constituency. The by-election election was held along with the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections. Earlier the by-election was scheduled on April 9, 2014 but it was postponed due to the total bandh in the state called by the NGOs protesting against the casting of votes by Bru refugees in their relief camps in Tripura for the Lok Sabha polls. Therefore, the by-election date was rescheduled to April 11, 2014. There were only two candidates for the lone Hrangturzo seat, namely, H. Lalduhoma an Independent candidate supported by United Democratic Front and Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu, President of Mizoram Pradesh Youth Congress. During the by-poll, MHIP the apex body of Mizo Women's association came out with open support of the INC nominee. It issued a public statement asking all women in the constituency to discard party affiliations and vote for Vanlalawmpuii, the INC candidate. The MHIP has been campaigning in the state for women's due representation in the

Legislative Assembly of Mizoram<sup>96</sup>. Consequently, Vanlalawmpuii Chawnthu, the INC candidate defeated the United Democratic Front candidate, Lalduhoma.

As usual the MPF Headquarters' leaders conveyed a meeting on March 20, 2014 at Khawlailung concerning the by-election in Hrangturzo constituency. The meeting resolved that as the MPF local forum at Hrangturzo constituency was effective enough to conduct the by-election, the local forum shall be entrusted with all the necessary responsibility to carry out the by election.<sup>97</sup> The MPF local forum successfully conducted a Joint Platform for political parties/candidates so as to have a free and fair election. The by election was completed peacefully under the watchful eye of the MPF local forum.

#### Eighth Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections

The Eighth Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections were held on November 28, 2018. Only 15 candidates out of the over 200 in the fray for the Mizoram Assembly elections were women, even though the state has more female voters as compared to male.<sup>98</sup> The ruling Indian National Congress (INC) fielded all the 40 seats. The Congress tried to create an electoral record to form its third consecutive government with the slogan of New Economic Development Program (NEDP). Rahul Gandhi, President of the INC and some of the AICC leaders also campaigned in the state. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which made its strong base for the first time in Mizoram has fielded 39 seats. The BJP campaigned on the issue of Congress Mukh North East and good governance. Top ranking BJP leaders visited the state from time

<sup>96</sup> A.P.K. Singh, op. cit., pp. 410-511.

<sup>97</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>98</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 16 Issue 169, dated November 18, 2018.

to time, even Amit Shah, BJP National President and Prime Minister Narendra Modi also campaigned in the state.<sup>99</sup> The BJP was confident of opening its account in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly with the entry of Dr. B.D. Chakma, former Congress Minister and Hipher, Speaker of Legislative Assembly in the Congress government. Apart from INC and BJP, the National Congress Party (NCP) also contested 6 seats from the national political parties. The main opposition party in the state, Mizo National Front (MNF) fielded all the 40 Assembly constituencies. The MNF tried to regain power by campaigning with its Socio-Economic Development Policy (SEDP). The MNF promised that it would introduce total prohibition of liquor in the state, if they come to power. The joining of MNF party by two former Cabinet Ministers and high ranking Congress leaders, namely, R. Lalzirliana and Lalrinliana also made the MNF more confident of forming the government. The interesting thing was that, although MNF was part of the NDA Alliance at the Centre and part of North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) in the Northeast, the MNF distanced itself from the BJP and NEDA during the election campaign in the Eighth Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections. The reason was that many people in Mizoram regarded BJP as a fundamentalist Hindu-based political party.

The National People Party (NPP), a political party based from Meghalaya contested 10 seats. The NPP campaigned on the issue of preservation and maintenance of tribal identity. Conrad Sangma, Chief Minister of Meghalaya and some of the party leaders also campaigned in different parts of Mizoram. The NPP became more confident with the joining of its party by Hmingdailova, former Parliamentary Secretary of the Congress government. Although two recognized regional parties of Mizoram,

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<sup>99</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 16 Issue 173, dated November 21, 2018.



namely, Mizoram People Conference (MPC) and the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) did not put candidates, they fought the elections with other regional parties from the platform of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM). ZPM has been formed by six different political parties - the ZNP, MPC, Zoram Exodus Movement (ZEM), Zoram Reformation Front (ZRF), Zoram Democratic Front (ZDF) and Mizoram Peoples Party (MPP). Altogether, ZPM has fielded 34 seats. However, all the alliance partners of the ZPM except MPC and ZNP are unrecognized political parties. The ZPM campaigned on the issue of change, socio-economic development and good governance. The Peoples Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM) and Zoramthar Party were unrecognized newly emerging parties. PRISM started its functioning as an anti-corruption watch-dog since 2006 and it transformed itself into a political party from November 2017. Thus, the PRISM vigorously campaigned on the issue of corruption and it contested 14 seats. The Zoramthar Party was formed by Rev. Zaichhawna Hlondo, former pastor of Mizoram Presbyterian Church and it contested 24 seats. There were six independent candidates in the fray.<sup>100</sup> As usual, the Church-sponsored Mizoram People Forum (MPF) election watch-dog spearheaded the poll process and activities for conducting free and fair elections by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with political parties as included in the appendix-V.

The election process was disturbed for a few days due to the issue of Bru voters in Tripura transit camps. There was a tough stance between the NGO Coordination Committee and the Election Commission of India regarding the Bru voters to cast their votes in Tripura transit camps. The NGO Coordination Committee did not

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<sup>100</sup> Jangkhongam Doungel, "The Eighth Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election of 2018 and Change of Government", *Eastern Panorama*, January 2018.

oppose the listing of bonafide citizens of Mizoram in the electoral roll but it opposed the listing of illegal voters. The NGO Coordination Committee also fiercely resisted conduct of poll in the transit camps in Tripura and it insisted that arrangement should be made to enable Bru voters to cast their votes inside Mizoram state but not outside Mizoram. Due to this tough stance, the Election Commission of India (ECI) representatives and the NGO Coordination Committee signed an agreement in 2013 that, the Brus refugees in transit camps in Tripura might be allowed to cast their votes in the transit camps for the time being, that this was applicable for Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections in 2013. However, necessary arrangement should be made so as to enable them to cast their votes inside Mizoram from the next election. It was with such an understanding that Bru voters in transit camps in Tripura were allowed to cast their votes in the Seventh Mizoram Assembly elections of 2013.

However, the conduct of free and fair election without heavy security forces in Mizoram and the agreement signed between the ECI and the NGO Coordination Committee in 2013 with regard to Bru voters in Tripura transit camps did not seem to be understood in the true sense of the term by S.B. Shashank, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Mizoram. The order for deployment of heavy para-military forces and central forces for election in a peaceful state which has no poll-related violence by the CEO was questioned by the state government and the NGO Coordination Committee. Further, the NGO Coordination Committee questioned him about the justification of opening polling booths in transit camps in Tripura without taking into account the agreement which was signed between the ECI and the NGO Coordination Committee in 2013. As a result, the NGO Coordination Committee

with thousands of people staged a mass protest and picketed in front of the Election office demanding the removal of the CEO. The peaceful demonstration, which was considered to be the greatest in Mizoram's history witnessing the involvement of people from all walks of life, came days after state Principal Secretary for Home, Lalnunmawia Chuaungo was removed and barred from his work by the Election Commission following allegation leveled by Shashank that Lalnunmawia Chuaungo had directly interfered in the election process and security arrangement for the upcoming Assembly polls which are likely to have adverse effects on the conduct of free and fair elections in the state.<sup>101</sup> As such, Shashank had departed for Delhi on being summoned by EC. The EC delegation also held meetings with leaders of Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute (MKHC), a conglomerate of major churches in the state in view of the ensuing Assembly polls.<sup>102</sup> But normalcy returned with the removal of S.B. Shashank and with the appointment of Ashish Kundra as the new Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). The civil society organizations which arose in revolt against the mishandling of a sensitive issue by Shashank could be fruitfully utilized by the new CEO. The CEO convened a meeting with leaders of representatives of major civil society organizations and student bodies on November 16, 2018 in view of the upcoming Assembly polls.<sup>103</sup> As a matter of fact, polling was conducted peacefully without any untoward incidents like previous elections and the apprehension and fears of the former CEO were proven wrong as the election was conducted peacefully.

There were four voters who crossed 100 years of age among the voters on the polling day. Arrangement was also made for the Bru voters of the transit camps in

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<sup>101</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 16 Issue 159, dated November 7, 2018.

<sup>102</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 16 Issue 162, dated November 10, 2018.

<sup>103</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 16 Issue 169, dated November 17, 2018.

Tripura and they were transported by buses and cast their votes at Kanhmun village inside Mizoram, near the Tripura border.<sup>104</sup> The YMA and other civil societies made the necessary arrangement for the Bru voters from transit camps of Tripura and they were also provided lunch. Thus, polling was completed peacefully with no incidents of violence or intimidation of voters in the election. However, problem in the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) delayed the poll process at Ajasora Polling Station in Tuichawng Constituency, as such voting was continued till 12 midnight of November 28, 2018 but many people could not cast their votes. As such, re-poll was conducted on December 4, 2018 and it was ended successfully. The MPF appealed to all political parties to stick and respect the Memorandum of Understanding signed between political parties and the watchdog and guidelines framed by the latter to ensure free and fair elections.<sup>105</sup> Thus, due to the efforts and effective supervision of the conduct of the election by the Church-sponsored MPF and its constituent members such as YMA, MHIP and MUP, polling in the Eighth Mizoram Legislative Assembly election was completed peacefully.

#### Performance of Political Parties

Counting of the votes was held on December 11, 2018 in the capital city, Aizawl and in all the District Headquarters. For the first time in the electoral history of Mizoram, a third party, i.e. the ZPM emerged as the second dominant party in the State Legislative Assembly election. The MNF party won 26 out of 40 seats contested. The ZPM occupied the second place by winning 8 seats, where the Chief Ministerial candidate, Lalduhawma won from the two constituencies he contested. Lalduhawma

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<sup>104</sup> “Bru Voters Cast Votes amid Tight Security in Mizoram Border”, *The Mizoram Post*, Vol 16, Issue 181 dated November 29, 2018.

<sup>105</sup> “Mizoram Poll Watchdog Appeals to Political Parties to Stick to Guidelines,” *The Mizoram Post*, Vol. 16, Issue 155, dated November 3, 2018.

defeated the incumbent Chief Minister and Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) President, Lalthanhawla from Serchhip constituency by a margin of 410 votes. The ruling INC could get only 5 seats and BJP opened its account by winning a solitary seat. The NPP and NCP could not win even a single seat and no seats were won by the independent candidates also. All candidates of PRISM and Zoramthar forfeited their security deposit. The MNF President, Zoramthanga won from Aizawl East I Constituency by defeating his nearest rival K. Sapdanga of the ZPM candidate by a margin of 2504 and he is thus able to return to the State Assembly after a gap of ten years, that also as Chief Minister. It should also be noted that two Congress leaders, namely, R. Lalzirliana, Home Minister under Lalthanhawla led Government and Lalrinliana Sailo, Health Minister in the previous term of Lalthanhawla led Government, won the election from their respective constituencies of Tawi and Chalfilh. R. Lalzirliana was inducted as Cabinet Minister, whereas, Lalrinliana Sailo was elected as Speaker without contest.<sup>106</sup> Some reasons cited for the defeat of the Congress party in the elections were , denial of party ticket to 11 sitting MLAs, MLPC Act, anti-incumbency, attempt for family and dynastic rule, infighting within the party and bad roads across the state.

The percentage of vote share by the MNF was 38.44 and it secured 26 seats, the percentage of vote share by the INC was 30.85 but it secured only 5 seats, whereas, the ZPM which got only 22.91 secured 8 seats.<sup>107</sup> The humiliating result for the INC was that the incumbent Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla was defeated from both the constituencies, namely, Champhai South constituency and his traditional Serchhip constituency. From the MNF, two stalwarts who were MLAs in the Seventh

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<sup>106</sup> Jangkhongam Doungel, op. cit.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

Legislative Assembly, namely, Vanlalzawma, former Lok Sabha MP and K. Sangthuama, former minister were defeated from Aizawl West III and Aizawl West I constituencies respectively. Whereas, from ZPM, Lalhmangaiha Sailo who was the President of MPC was in the third place in Aizawl West II Constituency and Rev. Dr. K. Thanzauva, retired pastor and prominent church leader were also in the third place in Lunglei South Constituency.

Thus, the new government led by Zoramthanga was sworn in on December 15, 2018 in the Raj Bhavan. The program began with Bible reading and prayer by Rev. Lalhmangaiha, Moderator of Mizoram Presbyterian Church and Chairman of the Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC). The proceeding was chaired by Arvind Ray, Chief Secretary of Mizoram and Ministers were inducted with oath of affirmation by the Governor of Mizoram, Kummanam Rajasekhkharan. First to be sworn in was the Chief Minister, Zoramthanga, followed by other ministers. Leprosy Choir presented Halleluiahs Chorus with melodious voice and the program concluded with National Anthem by a band party of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Mizoram Armed Police.<sup>108</sup> It was for the first time in Mizoram state that swearing in of the government, where all the Ministers including the Chief Minister took oath of affirmation in the Mizo language and Christian rituals were entertained.

#### Lok Sabha Elections

There was no separate Parliamentary seat allotted for Mizoram until 1972 as it was one of the districts of Assam. However, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha elections began when Mizoram attained Union Territory status in 1972. After the Mizo Hill District

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<sup>108</sup> *The Mizoram Post*, (Local Daily News Paper) Vol. 16, Issue 198 dated December 16, 2018.

was elevated to a Union Territory of Mizoram in 1972, one Parliamentary constituency was created under the North Eastern Areas Act 1971 (81 of 1971).<sup>109</sup> For the purpose of election of a member to the Lok Sabha, the whole of Mizoram was formed as one Parliamentary constituency. Hence, the Union Territory was allotted one seat in Lok Sabha and one seat in Rajya Sabha to represent Mizoram in the Union Parliament. For Mizoram, the Fifth Lok Sabha election held in 1972 was the first parliamentary election held in the Union Territory.

Mizoram's first MP was Sangliana of the Mizo Union who represented this constituency in the Fifth Lok Sabha when Mizoram became a Union Territory on January 21, 1972. In the following election in 1977, an Independent candidate namely, R. Rothuama was elected and went on to be re-elected in 1980. Lalduhoma of the INC was elected in 1984. After Mizoram became a full-fledged state on February 20, 1987, C. Silvera of the INC was elected in the 1989 Lok Sabha election. He went on to win the seat in the next two consecutive elections, thus he served in the Lok Sabha from 1989-1998 as its MP. In the 1998 Lok Sabha election, the Independent candidate, namely, H. Lallungmuana was elected by a margin of only 41 votes. In the following two terms from 1999-2009, Vanlalawma was elected consecutively, first as an Independent candidate and then MNF candidate. From 2009 till the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, C.L. Ruala was elected consecutively.<sup>110</sup> One of the most successful political parties in the Lok Sabha elections in Mizoram could be the INC by having won 6 times out of the 12 elections.

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<sup>109</sup> A.P.K. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp 574-575

<sup>110</sup> Mizoram(Lok Sabha constituency) <https://en.wikipedia>, retrieved on September 17, 2018.

The first activity of the MPF for initiating the conduct of free and fair polls to the Mizoram Lok Sabha elections can be traced to the Fifteenth Lok Sabha election held on April 16, 2009. The Lok Sabha election was conducted hardly three months after the Sixth Mizoram Legislative Assembly election, 2008. The Assembly election was successfully conducted by the MPF with one of the most free, fair and peaceful elections in the State. According to A.P.K. Singh, “It was held when the election tempo of the Sixth State Assembly polls in 2008 in which the Church-sponsored MPF played crucial role in maintaining violence-free election dies down”.<sup>111</sup> For the fifteenth Lok Sabha election, the MPF Board of Executive Committee initiated its activities by launching intensive campaigns starting from Headquarters down to Local Forums in different parts of Mizoram. The MPF Headquarters had arranged a joint platform at Central Hall, Venghlui, Aizawl on April 13, 2009 for all political parties/candidates.<sup>112</sup> There were four candidates in the poll fray, namely, C.L. Ruala of Indian National Congress (INC), Dr. H. Lallungmuana of Mizo National Front (MNF), Lalawmpuia Chhangte of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Rualpawla of Israel National Front (INF), and all the four candidates delivered their campaign speech at the joint platform. The main contest was between INC and MNF candidates. Congress candidate C.L. Ruala was elected in the fifteenth Lok Sabha election. The peaceful conduct of the fifteenth Lok Sabha election was a result of the great efforts made by the MPF in effectively supervising the conduct of the election.

#### 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Elections

On April 11, 2014 along with some other states in India, Mizoram also went to the polls for electing members to the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. There were three candidates in the

<sup>111</sup> A.P.K. Singh, op. cit., pp 574-588.

<sup>112</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), op. cit., p.40.



poll fray. The Congress re-nominated C.L. Ruala, the sitting MP of the Lok Sabha, as the party's official candidate. The United Democratic Front (UDF) of seven opposition political parties supported the Independent candidate Robert Romawia Royte, a well-known person in Mizoram. This time, the newly surging political party Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also fielded its candidate. The AAP nominee was an IAS retired officer, M. Lalmanzuala. The outcome of the election was that Congress candidate, sitting MLA C.L. Ruala retained the seat.

One of the main issues in this election was the unsettled Bru refugee problem in the state. The powerful NGOs in the State like YMA, MUP, MHIP and students' apex body MZP, in a joint meeting held on January 28, 2014 in Aizawl, urged the Mizoram government to take initiatives to take back all the Bru refugees from Tripura relief camps and to finish the repatriation task before the end of February, 2014. The meeting resolved that the names of those Brus who do not want to come back before the end of February 2014 should be deleted from the Mizoram electoral rolls. Despite strong pressure from the joint NGOs, the Election Commission allowed the Brus to cast their votes through postal ballots in their transit camps in Tripura under the supervision of Tripura government for the Mizoram Lok Sabha poll. Voting in the Bru refugee camps continued for three days from April 11-13, 2014.<sup>113</sup> Protesting against the casting of votes by Bru refugees, the state NGOs like CYMA, MUP, MHIP and MZP called a "three-day-total-bandh" in the state. However, the bandh was called off from the second day on April 8 following the Agreement reached between the CYMA and Election Commission. The agreement was that the bonafide Bru citizens of Mizoram in Tripura refugee camps will be taken back to

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<sup>113</sup> A.P.K. Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 589.

Mizoram within three months. And for those (Bru refugees) who do not want to return to Mizoram, their names will be deleted from the state's electoral rolls. After the Agreement, the polling for the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election was rescheduled to April 11, 2014. Earlier, the poll date was fixed for April 9, 2014.

In the midst of all these problems, the MPF once again monitored the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election successfully. The MPF had a joint meeting with all political party candidates on April 4, 2014 at Synod Conference Centre, Aizawl. All the candidates were given 15 minutes each for their speech and certain questions to be answered. The MPF leaders were divided into three groups to supervise and visit different polling stations in Aizawl city.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election was successfully completed with no incidents of violence. The efforts of the MPF for ensuring a clean, free and fair election was acknowledged and appreciated.

#### Aizawl Municipal Council

Before the state Legislature passed the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 , all the towns including Aizawl city were being administered as Village Councils. Under the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007, the state government established the Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) that started functioning from July 1, 2008 from its office at Thuampui Veng, Aizawl.<sup>115</sup> The government of Mizoram has provided for a three tier system of urban administration in Aizawl, comprising of the Municipal body, composed of elected councilors, Ward Committee headed by the concerned councilor and the Local Councils comprising the elected representative of the people for each

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<sup>114</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>115</sup> J. Zahluna, op. cit., p.150.

locality. The apex of the AMC organization structure is the Board of Councilors consisting of the 19 elected members and 12 members appointed by the Governor. The Board of Councilors headed by the Chairman, is similar to the State Legislative Assembly. It is the highest decision making body of the AMC. The appointed members shall take part in the AMC meetings but shall have no voting rights<sup>116</sup>. A noteworthy thing is that, out of the 19 Wards in the AMC, six have been reserved for women as per the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA).<sup>117</sup> This can be seen as a positive step towards empowerment of women in Mizoram.

There is an Executive Council of the AMC consisting of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, both elected by the Councilors, besides three members of the Executive Council, known as Executive Councilors, to be appointed by the Chairman. The Chairman is the Executive head of the AMC. The Executive Council exercises all the executive powers of the AMC. There is also a Ward Committee in every Ward. The Ward Committee consists of a Chairman, who is an elected Councilor from that Ward, and two members each from the Local Councils within the Ward. Besides this, the Ward Committee Chairman shall appoint three others from amongst prominent citizens of the Ward, one of which shall be a woman. The term of the Ward Committee is five years. There shall be a Local Council in each locality. The term of the Local Council is of three years. It may be noted that since November 24, 2010, all the Village Councils in Aizawl have begun functioning as Local Councils. There are currently 83 Local Councils in Aizawl city.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> "Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC)," <https://amcmizoram.com>, retrieved on June 11, 2018.

<sup>117</sup> "Achieve -Aizawl gets Its First Municipal Council," <http://www.easternpanoram.in>, retrieved on June 11, 2018.

<sup>118</sup> "Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC)," *op. cit.*,

The first election to the Aizawl Municipal Council was held on November 3, 2010. The outcome of the election was that the Indian National Congress (INC) and its ally the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) managed to get 10 Wards while the remaining 9 Wards went to the Mizo National Front (MNF) and its ally the Mizoram Peoples' Conference (MPC). The swearing in ceremony of the newly elected Councilors of the AMC was held on November 16, 2010 at the session Hall of the AMC located at Thuampui. C.T. Zokhuma (INC), from Ward 15 of the AMC was elected as the first Chairman and Zanzollian (ZNP) from Ward 7 was elected as Vice Chairman. The three Councilors, namely, Lalzirliana (INC), Hmingthanzami (ZNP) and F. Lalhuthangi (INC) were nominated as Executive Council members.<sup>119</sup>

The MPF, for the first time in the Aizawl Municipal Council election geared up itself for the first election of the AMC. As the election was to be held within Aizawl, the MPF General Headquarters directly supervised the election process by mobilizing 80 MPF Local Forums which were actively functioning within the Aizawl Municipal Council. The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the MPF and political parties was strictly enforced by the MPF and the polling was completed peacefully. There were no incidents that stood in the way of free and fair polls during the AMC elections. On November 18, 2010 as announced earlier, the State Election Commission (SEC) organized "Presentation of Best Electoral Practices Award" program at Chanmari, YMA Hall. The MPF was invited to participate in the program and Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, General Secretary of the MPF represented the MPF

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<sup>119</sup> "Achieve -Aizawl gets Its First Municipal Council," <http://www.easternpanoram.in>, retrieved on June 11, 2018.

Headquarters. The MPF was also given a “Certificate of Appreciation” for its contribution towards electoral reform.<sup>120</sup>

#### Problems of Forming Government

The AMC suffered its first trouble in 2014, when the notice for the first motion for the removal of the Chairman was discussed on July 22, 2014. A new coalition authority comprising the three regional parties - MNF, MPC and ZNP was formed on July 29, 2014. The following members- Zarzoliana (ZNP), Chairman, Lalrinenga Sailo (MNF), Vice Chairman and C. Lalsawivunga (MPC), Lalmalsawmi (MNF) and W. Chhuanawma (ZNP) as Executive Council. However, there were some councilors who were not satisfied with the manner in which the Executive Councilors were elected. As such, a new situation emerged when two councilors from ZNP deserted the party and formed a new political party called the “Mizoram Nationalist Party” (MNP). On the other hand, one of the MPC councilors left the party and formed a new political party called Mizoram People’s Conference Democratic (MPC ‘D’), thus preparing fertile ground for the formation of a new coalition authority. Consequently, seven councilors moved a no-confidence motion against the Chairman on February 5, 2015. A special one-day session was convened and discussion took place on February 10, 2015. Following a no-confidence motion which resulted in the fall of the ministry, the Chairman submitted his resignation. Thus, a new coalition ministry, consisting of four political parties was formed again.<sup>121</sup> The first term proved to be a period of fragmentation and instability in which the political parties united or deviated frequently with the primary aim of attaining or retaining power.

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<sup>120</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>121</sup> J. Zahluna, op. cit., p.156.

### Aizawl Municipal Corporation

As the population of Aizawl city has been increasing at a fast pace, the Mizoram Municipalities Act was amended in 2015. The Aizawl Municipal Council was upgraded to a corporation known as “Aizawl Municipal Corporation.” As such, the names of Chairman, Vice Chairman and C.E.O had been designated as Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Municipal Commissioner respectively. There was no change in the number of Wards as well as number of Wards reserved for women.

The second general elections to the Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC), newly named as Aizawl Municipal Corporation was conducted on November 26, 2015. This election was unique as none of the Independent candidates filed nomination. For the second election, there were a total of 1, 92, 365 electorates out of which 90137 were male while 102228 were female. There were altogether 54281 households under AMC. Altogether 211 polling stations were set up for the second AMC poll.<sup>122</sup> A total of five political parties contested the elections. The political parties in the poll fray were- the ruling INC, BJP, MNF, MPC and ZNP. There were two pre-poll Alliance groups - the ruling INC party formed an electoral alliance with the MPC in which the INC contested 14 seats, and left 5 seats to the MPC. The ZNP and BJP also formed an alliance called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in which the ZNP contested 12 seats and the BJP 4 seats. The MNF fought the election alone and contested all the 19 seats.

The result of the election was that, the MNF won 11 seats. The INC-MPC alliance won 8 seats, in which the INC got 7 seats while the MPC managed to save its face by

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<sup>122</sup> Arambam Prafullo Kumar Singh, *Urban Local Government in Mizoram* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 2018), p. 99.

winning one seat. The NDA's performance was quite dismal as it could not win any single seat. On December 10, 2015 the MNF Corporation headed by P.C. Lalhmingthanga as Mayor and Lalringliana as Deputy Mayor was sworn in respectively.<sup>123</sup> As usual the MPF strictly enforced the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the MPF and political parties. The Aizawl Municipal Corporation election was conducted peacefully on November 26, 2015 due to the painstaking efforts of MPF Headquarters and its Local Forums which were actively functioning within the AMC. According to L. Tochhong, the State Election Commissioner, "There had been regular meetings in the Commission's office where representatives of all political parties, Mizoram People Forum (MPF) and other stake-holders were present. The Model Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission had been strictly enforced and violations thereof were promptly dealt with".<sup>124</sup> The SEC acknowledged the MPF and all officials involved in the process of election for extending unstinted support and cooperation during the run-up and after.

#### Autonomous District Council

Based on the provisions enshrined in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, the Government of Assam enacted the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of the District Council) Act in 1951. Consequently, the Lushai Hills District Council (later on the Mizo District Council), and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) came into being in 1952 and 1953 respectively.<sup>125</sup> With the upgradation of the Lushai Hills as Union Territory of Mizoram, the Mizo District Council was abolished in 1972. However, as the Pawi, the Lakher and Chakma were not in favor of the abolition of

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<sup>123</sup> J. Zahluna, op. cit., p. 157-158.

<sup>124</sup> *General Election to Aizawl Municipal Corporation, 2015-Compendium* (Aizawl: State Election Commission, Mizoram, 2015)

<sup>125</sup> S.N. Singh, op. cit., p.145.

the Regional Council, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was trifurcated into three Regional Councils, namely, the Pawi Regional Council (PRC), the Lakher Regional Council (LRC) and the Chakma Regional Council (CRC) on April 2, 1972 and the three Regional Councils were subsequently upgraded to the status of full-fledged Autonomous District Councils on April 29, 1972. Later, the Pawi Autonomous District Council (PADC) was changed into the Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) and the Laker Autonomous District Council (LADC) was changed into Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC).<sup>126</sup> As a matter of fact, PLRC was the root from which, the present three Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram, viz. the LADC, MADC and the CADC were created.

#### Mara Autonomous District Council Elections, 2007

The Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) is one of the three Autonomous District Councils within Mizoram state. Primarily, it is an autonomous administrative division meant for the Mara people living in the state. It is situated in the southern tip of Mizoram bordering Myanmar. The government has jurisdiction over land administration, administration of justice and limited legislative powers, and a few other local powers.<sup>127</sup> The latest election of MADC was held in May 2017, in which the Indian National Congress (INC) gained a majority by securing 17 seats out of total 25. A new government by INC was formed thereafter. The current Chief Executive Member is N. Zakhai from Amobyuh Constituency and Chairman H. Sahlo from Meisavaih Contituency.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> <https://madc.mizoram.gov.in> , retrieved on June 12, 2018.



The first activity for initiating the conduct of free and fair election by the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) to the MADC election can be traced back to the general election of the MADC held on May 3, 2007. In view of the upcoming election, the MPF Headquarters met the Governor of Mizoram and requested him to suspend all the contract and developmental works after the issue of election notification.<sup>128</sup> Consequently, the then Governor of Mizoram M.M. Lakhera had issued a notification for the prohibition of contract and development works and other ongoing governmental works until the completion of the electoral processes. The District Forum of MPF was established on January 23, 2007 at Saiha so as to gear up the Forum for supervising the election activities in poll process for the conduct of free and fair election. With establishment of the MPF District Forum, the MPF Local Forums were established in various villages within the MADC. The constituent of member of the MPF Evangelical Church of Maraland had contributed a lot in the poll processes for the of conduct free and fair election.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed under the initiative of the MPF District Forum with different political parties, such as, Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo National Front (MNF), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Maraland Democratic Front (MDF). Thus, the MPF had enforced the election guidelines as per the agreements between MPF and political parties. According to the agreement, practices such as door to door campaign, concerts, road shows, excessive use of PA system, organizing feasts, separate public rallies, the war of posters and flags were strictly prohibited. The MPF leaders had visited the office of the political parties. The MPF leaders also visited various local churches of the ECM, which is the largest

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<sup>128</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), op. cit., p.37.

church in the district. With the effort of MPF, the MADC election was completed peacefully and a new sign of change was witnessed for the first time in the MADC general elections.<sup>129</sup>

After its full term of five years, the MADC faced another general election on May 3, 2012. During this election the INC, the then ruling party of the state as well as in the MADC and the largest opposition and regional party MNF, and its alliance MDF were engaged in a political tug of war for political power. Like the previous election of MADC in 2007, the MPF had strictly monitored and supervised the election for the conduct of free and fair election as per the MOU signed between political parties and MPF. As the political atmosphere was tense and critical, the MPF leaders from Headquarters under the leadership of H. Lalramthang the then General Secretary of the MPF Headquarters stayed there at Saiha for effective monitoring of the election. Hence, in spite of all the difficulties in the poll process, the valuable role of the MPF enabled the conduct of election in a peaceful manner.

The latest and 11<sup>th</sup> general election to MADC was held on May 4, 2017.<sup>130</sup> The INC had contested in all 25 seats, MNF in 12 seats and its ally, MDF in 13 seats. The ruling INC won 17 seats in the election to the 25 member Mara Autonomous District Council. The opposition MNF and the Mara Democratic Front (MDF) alliance bagged seven seats, MNF five and MDF two respectively. Besides, only one Independent among 14 Independent candidates who were in the poll fray was

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<sup>129</sup> Jangkhongam Dounyel & Joseph C. Lalremruata, *op. cit.*, p.88.

<sup>130</sup> <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in> , retrieved on June 23, 2018.

successful. The BJP which had fielded candidates in six seats failed to get a single seat.<sup>131</sup>

#### Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) Elections

The Chakma Autonomous District Council is an autonomous council for ethnic Chakma people, formed under the sixth schedule to the Constitution of India on April 29, 1972.<sup>132</sup> The Council exercises legislative, executive and judiciary powers over allotted departments within the territory of CADC. With an area of 686.25 square kilometers, CADC shares international boundaries with Bangladesh and Myanmar.<sup>133</sup> The Headquarters is at Kamalanagar headed by the Chief Executive Member (CEM) and Executive Member (Ems). The Council has a total of 24 members, out of which 20 are elected members and the other 4 were nominated members.

The CADC so far witnessed 10 (ten) General Elections. The first election was held on December 26, 1972. The latest election to the CADC was held on April 20, 2018. The first activity for initiating conduct of free and fair election by the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) to the CADC election could be traced back to the general election of the CADC held on March 5, 2008. The MPF District Forum was established with the support and cooperation of the Young Chakma Association (YCA). However, the MPF could not sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the political parties but that did not prevent the MPF from working for conduct of free and fair elections. On February 17, 2008 the MPF had convened a meeting

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<sup>131</sup> “Congress Wins 17 Seats in 25 member MADC” <https://www.business-standard.com>, retrieved on June 12, 2018.

<sup>132</sup> “Chakma Autonomous District Council” <https://cadc.gov.in>, retrieved on June 12, 2018.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

with all the candidates of CADC at YCA Hall, Chawngte. The MPF also organized a public meeting for all political parties at Art and Culture Hall, Chawngte on February 18, 2008.<sup>134</sup> Like any other state elections, the MPF had strictly prohibited door to door campaigns, excessive use of PA system, concerts, road shows, flags, poster wars and lavish feast. Political parties and candidates responded positively to the initiative taken by the MPF. Thus, general election to the CADC was completed under a peaceful atmosphere. After its full term of five years, the CADC had faced another general election on April 17, 2013. The MPF had organized a joint platform at the CADC Rest House Conference Hall, Chawngte on January 22, 2013. However, it was felt that atmosphere of the poll process was extremely competitive and tense, and not so conducive for a joint platform. Consequently, no joint platform was organized thereafter by the MPF in 2013 CADC elections. However, the MPF was actively involved in monitoring the election for the conduct of free and fair election.

The latest and the 10<sup>th</sup> General election to the Chakma Autonomous District Council was held on April 20, 2018. In an interesting political development, the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) joined hands to rule the CADC. The INC bagged six seats while the BJP won five seats in the election to the 20-member CADC. The Mizo National Front (MNF) won eight seats, while election to one seat was stayed by the High Court. State Sports Minister and INC leader Zodintluanga said the post poll alliance was forged after local leaders of both the parties reached an agreement. He further said, this would not have any bearing in Delhi or in the coming election to the state Assembly. Thus, the two parties in opposition at the national and state levels formed a joint legislature party which

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<sup>134</sup>*Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), op. cit., p. 38.

elected Santi Jiban Chakma of the BJP as its leader and Buddha Lila Chakma of the Congress as deputy leader.<sup>135</sup> The MPF re-established Chakma District Council MPF Forum on February 6, 2018 which had been previously banned since the last few years. Hence, the MPF Local Forum had actively monitored the 10<sup>th</sup> CADC general elections for the conduct of free and fair poll and election was conducted peacefully under the watchful eye of the MPF. The State Election Commission acknowledged the contribution of the MPF in this election and sent a letter of Appreciation.<sup>136</sup>

#### Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC)

The LADC is an Autonomous District Council for ethnic Lai people earlier known as Pawi, located in south eastern Mizoram bordering Myanmar and Bangladesh. The LADC has its headquarters at Lawntlai, which is the District Headquarters of Lawngtlai district. The LADC has a total strength of 27 members, out of which 23 are directly elected by the people and 4 members are nominated by the Governor. The power and functions of the Council are mainly three viz., Legislative, Executive and Judiciary.<sup>137</sup>

The MPF's first activity for initiating conduct of free and fair election in the LADC election could be traced back to the general election of the LADC held on November 18, 2010. The MPF District Forum was established on June 9, 2009 at Lawngtlai. The establishment of the MPF District Forum was subsequently followed by the establishment of Local Forums in various villages and localities throughout the Lawngtlai district except in four villages. With the initiative of the MPF District

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<sup>135</sup> "Congress, BJP Join Hands to Rule Chakma Autonomous District Council in Mizoram" [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), retrieved on June 12, 2018.

<sup>136</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> MPF General Headquarters Annual General Meeting, Vanapa Hall, Aizawl, August 17, 2017, p. 6.

<sup>137</sup> "Lai Autonomous District Council," <https://en.wikipedia.org>, retrieved on June 12, 2018.

Forum, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the MPF and political parties. The MPF headquarters leaders along with the District Forum launched campaigned campaign for the conduct of free and fair election by preaching in the local churches and as well as visiting various Local Forums.<sup>138</sup> The painstaking efforts of the MPF brought in new changes for the first time in the LADC election and polling was completed peacefully.

After its full term of five years, the LADC faced another general election on November 26, 2015.<sup>139</sup> There were 74 candidates in the poll fray. The INC and MNF fielded 25 candidates each. The BJP fielded 11 candidates, the Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) two and the ZNP one. There were 10 Independent candidates. The INC managed to get 16 out of 25 seats, the MNF managed to win eight seats while one seat went to the Independent. The BJP-ZNP alliance failed to get even a single seat despite all efforts to win the hearts of people before the elections. For the conduct of a free, fair and peaceful election the MPF leaders were delegated to monitor the LADC election<sup>140</sup>. Thus, the polling was completed peacefully.

#### Young Mizo Association

The largest CSO in Mizoram, Young Mizo Association (YMA) is a nongovernmental organization of the Mizo people. It was established on June 15, 1935, originally as the Young Lushai Association (YLA), which was later replaced with "Young Mizo Association" on October 7, 1947. It was initiated by the Welsh

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<sup>138</sup> Jangkhongam Dounge & Joseph C. Lalremruata, op. cit., p.90.

<sup>139</sup> "Mizoram Civic, Lai Council Polls in Nov," *Telegraph India*. <https://www.telegraphindia.com>, retrieved on June 26, 2018.

<sup>140</sup> *Mizoram People Forum*, General Headquarters, 10<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting at Synod Conference Centre on 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2016, p. 5.

Christian missionaries and early Mizo Christians who understood the need of cultural conservation of the Mizo tribe, who were under pressure of cultural and social modernizations.<sup>141</sup> The Association is administered by a Central Committee (Central YMA), headquartered at Aizawl, under which there are sub-headquarters and branches, which covers the whole of Mizoram state. The YMA also extended its branches in Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura states of India and Sajek branch in Bangladesh. On the 84<sup>th</sup> YMA Day in June 15, 2018, the CYMA President reported that according to the “2017 YMA General Conference Report”, currently YMA has 805 branches, 47 groups, 5 sub-headquarters and 4,04,722 members (2,47,467 male and 1,57,255 female)<sup>142</sup>. The YMA has three important mottos.<sup>143</sup>

Amongst the programs and activities of YMA, since its inception, helping the poor and the needy, taking all needful responsibility during death occurrence in the community are the most important among them. When death occurs in one particular family, YMA members would make all arrangement in the house so as to accommodate the relatives and friends. They would normally spend a minimum of three days and nights consoling the bereaved family. Digging of the grave and burying of the body are done by members of YMA on a voluntary basis. Most of the YMA branches have utensils, PA system, benches and other necessary tools and equipment to be used in times of death, wedding and festivals. The YMA also been

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<sup>141</sup> The association was registered as SR No. 4 of 1977 under Indian Societies Registration Act (XXI of 1860) on May 14, 1977 to the Government of India.

<sup>142</sup> YMA Day taka Lawma a Ni, *Vanglaini* (Mizo Daily News since 1978) Vol XXXIII No.140, Aizawl, Saturday June 16, 2018, p. 1.

<sup>143</sup> These are: 1. Good use of leisure time, 2. Reverence for a good Christian life, and 3. Striving towards a holistic development of the Mizo society. There were generally ten commitments, among others that YMA imposed on its members. 1. Self-discipline and righteousness, 2. Good management of family, 3. Justice and truthfulness, 4. Tolerance, 5. Politeness, 6. Chivalry and usefulness, 7. Social commitment, 8. Respect for Religion, 9. Preservation of culture, and 10. Abstinence from liquor and drugs.

publishing a monthly magazine, *YMA Chanchinbu*, in Mizo since October 1973 which has a circulation of 10,000 copies. It also has a quarterly YMA News published in English.<sup>144</sup> For the various activities and achievement, YMA has been conferred awards both by the government of Mizoram and government of India.

#### Role of YMA in the Electoral Politics

Besides the Church bodies, the social organizations also play a very influential role in Mizoram. Amongst them, the prominent ones are, the YMA, MHIP, MUP, and even students' bodies like the MZP and MSU do play some role during election time by way of issuing election messages to the political parties, contesting candidates as well as for the voters. However, the only organization other than the Church which covers the whole of Mizoram since its inception in socio-political reformation activities has been the YMA. The YMA has been widening its activities almost on all fronts on socio-political reformation in the state. It was in 1987, when the second General Assembly elections were held that the Central YMA issued the first election appeal for free and fair poll. The YMA intensified its involvement in the 1989 General Assembly election by taking control at the ground level-by setting up a Common Information Centre and also preparing tea, which is a common feature among the Mizo people, for the general public as well as the officials. It was in 1993 that the first state level Co-ordination Committee on election was formed under the Chairmanship of the YMA, which includes all the political parties<sup>145</sup>. In the subsequent elections the association involved itself deeper and further played a pro-

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<sup>144</sup> "Young Mizo Association," <http://mizoram.nic.in>, retrieved on July 23, 2018.

<sup>145</sup> J. Lalsailova, "Church & Election II: The Role of Young Mizo Association" in *Mizoram People Forum-MPF Chanchin (2006-2014)* ed., Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente (Aizawl: L.B. Associates, 2016), p.257.



active role in the electoral process.<sup>146</sup> Now the YMA has become a constituent member of election-related committees formed to monitor the smooth and peaceful elections in the state. During the elections, the YMA though it is a social organization, played a unique role in the poll processes. According to A.P.K. Singh, “the organization identifies the foreigners particularly the Chakmas in the south of the State, the Burmese migrants of Mizo origin and the Brus otherwise called as Tuikuks to the local Mizos, before they were included in the State’s Electoral Rolls”.<sup>147</sup> As the years went by, YMA continued its activities in the election processes and took active part in the formation of the Mizoram People Forum, in close consultation with the Church leaders. In order to have a free, fair and peaceful election that could be an “ideal” in the other parts of India, the YMA used to issue “Election Message” for political parties, contesting candidates and voters.

During the 2003 Assembly elections, certain members of militant outfits, had allegedly meddled in the election in certain assembly constituencies in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the state. And as a constituent member of the MPF, the YMA also worked in line with the MPF to ensure that no insurgent groups from outside Mizoram played their cards in the election. The YMA also determined not to see such unhealthy election-related incidents repeated in the state elections. For instance- as a consequence of the 2003 assembly election, the Central Coordination Committee of the YMA following its meeting on September 11, 2008 for the sixth Mizoram General Assembly election 2008 stated that “as Mizoram is preparing for the polls, underground militants who are taking shelter in Mizoram are hereby

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<sup>146</sup> Letkholun Haokip, *Electoral Process in Mizoram: A Study on the Role of Church in the Seventh Assembly Elections* (Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, 2014), p.70.

<sup>147</sup> A.P.K. Singh, op. cit., p. 554.

informed to leave the State to enable us to have a free, fair and clean election”.<sup>148</sup>

The YMA message was very clear that the underground outfits taking shelter in Mizoram were asked to leave.

Further, the YMA also urged the Mizoram government to deal with these militants who are freely operating in the state and to suppress any attempts to disturb peace and harmony in the state. It also warned political parties and candidates in Mizoram not to maintain nexus with insurgent groups in the election as it is against democracy. They also met political party leaders to ensure a fair and peaceful election. A team of YMA leaders’ delegation even met and held talks with the leaders of the underground HPC (D), a Hmar based armed camp in Manipur and the Zomi Revolutionary Army at their respective base-camps in Churachandpur, Manipur.<sup>149</sup> These talks were held following the joint decision made by the YMA and political parties. The YMA leadership requested the two insurgent groups not to maintain any nexus with the political parties in Mizoram during election time. They also appealed to the two militant groups to abstain from involvement and interference in the Mizoram elections. They pleaded for the maintenance of peace during the poll processes in Mizoram. Both the leadership of the HPC (D) and the ZRA leaders responded positively with assurance that they would not meddle in the Mizoram elections. Earlier, the two groups both HPC (D) and ZRA including NSCN (IM) had given their assurance not to interfere in the Mizoram election to MPF leaders. As the largest social organization in Mizoram, the YMA derives its strength from the support of the people. Activities and efforts of the YMA at the time of election earned great respect. Even a small gesture like placing a bench for the voters

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p. 556.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., pp. 558-559.

standing in a long queue has a great ripple effect at the Centre. The Election Observer for Mizoram election reported these small deeds to the Election Commission.

#### Role of Church in Good Governance

Good governance is an indeterminate term used in international development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). The term governance can apply to corporate, international, national, local governance or to the interactions between other sectors of society.<sup>150</sup> Good governance is an approach to government that is committed to creating a system founded on justice and peace that protects individual's human rights and civil liberties.<sup>151</sup> The Mizoram People Forum has significantly contributed in ensuring a free, fair and peaceful poll at every level of election starting from the Village Council up to the Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha. Besides electoral reform in the state politics, the MPF has widened its activities upon the issue of good governance, social reform and political education. The MPF, a social political reform body of the Church, focuses its attention on monitoring the government in a transparent and accountable manner. The MPF issues directions and constructive guidelines to the state government from time to time so as to enable the government to work in the right direction.

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<sup>150</sup> "Good Governance," <https://en.wikipedia.org>, retrieved on June 28, 2018.

<sup>151</sup> According to the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democracy, promoting transparency and capacity in public administration. To implement this, the UN follows eight principles, such as, Participation, Rule of law, Transparency, Responsiveness, Consensus Oriented, Equity and Inclusiveness, Effectiveness and Efficiency, and Accountability.

### Seminars and Consultations

One of the main activities taken up by the MPF for good governance in the state administration is conducting seminars and consultation. The MPF has been organizing seminars and consultations on good governance, social reform, administrative reform and political education at different levels throughout the state.<sup>152</sup> The main objective for conducting seminars and consultation is giving awareness to the people.<sup>153</sup> The participants of the seminars have affirmed that the seminars for good governance organized by the MPF in different places of the state were beneficial for inculcating awareness among the citizens.

### Meeting with Government Leaders

Another activity undertaken by the MPF towards good governance is meeting with the government leaders and submission of memorandums. In the post-poll period, the MPF leaders had met the ruling political party leaders to pursue their election manifestos and promises. In 2008, just after the Indian National Congress government led by Lalthanhawla was installed, the MPF met and reminded the top ranking leaders of the government to effectively pursued their election promises and manifestos. In the same way, the District Forum of the MPF leaders had a consultative session with the newly formed INC Government led by C. Ngunlianchunga in the Lai Autonomous District Council to effectively pursue its

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<sup>152</sup> “Mizoram People Forum Chanchin (2006-2016),” op. cit., pp. 80-85.

<sup>153</sup> For instance, a “Consultation on Good Governance” was conducted on June 27, 2009 at Ignite Studio, Khatla-Aizawl, in which different resource persons were invited on the given topic. On August 27, 2009 State Level Youth Consultation on “Mizoram Needs Good Government” (Mizoram Mamawh-Sorkar Tha) was held at YMA Hall, Chanmari- Aizawl. The consultation was attended by various sections of people, such as, political parties, students and teachers from both college and University, NGOs and youth leaders. District level seminars for good governance were held in different districts of Mizoram, such as, March 13, 2010 Champhai District Level Seminar, March 19, 2010 Serchhip District Level Seminar, March 26, 2010 Kolasib District Level Seminar, April 10, 2010 Trainers’ Training for Lai autonomous District Council, May 29, 2010 Mamit District Level Seminar, August 27, 2010 Aizawl City Local Forum Leaders, June 18, 2011 Mara District Level Trainers’ Training, June 17-20, 2013 District level Seminar Saiha and Lawngtlai.

election manifesto. In order to have good governance in the state, General Headquarters of the MPF met various leaders of the government from time to time.

<sup>154</sup> The MPF played a role of mediator between the government and the people, sometimes even between political parties.<sup>155</sup>

In the year 2011, there was an undesirable debate between the MNF and the INC on the issue of surrender of the MNF- Whether the MNF insurgents were really fighting for sovereignty or not? The debate seemed to be developing in an unhealthy manner as there was a regular hot exchange of words in print and electronic media between the MNF and the INC. As a result, the MPF leaders met Zoramthanga, the MNF President at his residence and Lalthanhawla, the MPCC President at his office chamber on October 24, 2011 and November 3, 2011 respectively.<sup>156</sup> The MPF requested both parties to refrain from such unparliamentary and ironical words so as to avoid unhealthy political development. Both of them responded positively to the MPF leaders' request and expressed their dislike for continuation of such debate.<sup>157</sup>

As such, the MPF has managed to act as the neutral and reliable mediator in times of crisis in the state politics. Further, even though the MPF does not directly interfere in the socio-political affairs of the state politics, it closely watches the functions of the government. The MPF issues notes of advice, request and appeal in the form of memorandums. The memorandums submitted by the MPF have been greatly

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<sup>154</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin* (2006-2016), op. cit., pp.124-130.

<sup>155</sup> Some of them are highlighted as follows, namely, Governor Lt. Gen. (Retd) M.M. Lakhera on May 15, and August 21, 2008, Chief Minister Lalthanhawla on June 5, 2009, July 13, 2010, June 16, and November 3, 2011, Dr. Franklin Laltinkhuma, DC, Aizawl on February 14, 2012, Chief Electoral Officer-K. Riachho on September 13, 2012, Mizoram State Election Commissioner-C. Ropianga on October 4, 2010.

<sup>156</sup> *Mizoram People Forum, 6<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Report*, Vanapa Hall, Aizawl, October 4, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> Jangkhongam Dounge & Joseph C. Lalremruata, op. cit., p.92.

respected by the political parties. This is mainly because of the consensus agreement between the MPF and political parties in forming election guidelines.

Apart from the MPF, the leaders of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram also used to meet the elected MLAs from time to time. For instance, on February 25, 2015 the Synod Executive Committee members had a meeting with the newly elected MLAs, of which 31 out of 40 were present.<sup>158</sup> The Church leaders congratulated the newly elected members of the State Assembly. The Church leaders also expressed the expectation of the Church on the new Government with following points: i) that the Church expects the Government to bring justice to all, to give priority for sufficient supply of Power and Electricity, economic self-sufficiency, health, education, preservation and responsible use of the forest produce, and construction of better transport communication in and throughout the state. ii) to continue the enactment of MTLP (Mizoram Total Liquor Prohibition Act), iii) to protect the rights of the Mizo people who are living near the border with Assam State, and iv) to make more commitment in attempting the eradication of corruption.<sup>159</sup> The elected members were presented the Holy Bible, Calendar and mementos.

#### Role of Church in Administrative Reforms

An administrative reform is a conscious, well considered change that is carried out in a public sector organization or system for the purpose of improving its structure, operation or the quality of its workforce. According to Caiden (1968), “Reform is based on the simple idea that man should not wait for changes to take place naturally

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<sup>158</sup> *Presbyterian Review Vol. XXIII January – April 2014* (Aizawl: Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod, 2014), p. 19.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

but should seek to speed, by artificial means, improvements in the world order”.<sup>160</sup> Whatever the definition refers to, each of its components acquires special meaning in the public sector, where the dimensions targeted for improvement are more complex than those encountered in the non-government sectors. While all organizations seek to do better at achieving their objectives (effectiveness) and boosting their productivity (efficiency), the public sector should also concern themselves with the political dimensions of administrative life. Thus, beyond economic dimensions, public administration reform can target objectives concerning improvements to public life, such as eliminating patronage, nepotism and corruption, increasing representativeness, fostering the participation of citizens and groups, and enhancing accountability and transparency.<sup>161</sup>

For the conduct of accountability and transparency in the administration, the Church-sponsored MPF Governing Board meeting held on February 9, 2010 discussed the need for Administrative Reforms in the state. After a thorough discussion the meeting formed “the MPF Study Team” on Administrative Reforms to have an in-depth study of the ongoing government programs and its functions.<sup>162</sup> Accordingly, the MPF Study Team conducted a surveillance study on various development programs of the government. After doing a thorough study on the system and functions of the government, the team came up with certain suggestions to be forwarded to government leaders. Some of the Action Plan suggested for Administrative Reforms by the MPF Study Team include: Rationalization of Departments and right sizing of government employees. Mizoram being a small

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<sup>160</sup> James Iain Gow, “Administrative Reform,” [www.dictionnaire.enap.ca](http://www.dictionnaire.enap.ca), retrieved on July 26, 2018.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> The following persons, namely, Raltawna IAS (Rtd), Vice President, Lalchungnunga Vice President, Rin Sanga IAS (Rtd) Adviser, Lalramthanga General Secretary and Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, Secretary were appointed for the MPF Study Team on Administrative Reforms.

state, the task and functions of various departments should be well defined and there is a need to see whether some of the departments can be amalgamated; Employees' motivation - to motivate the employees in their respective responsibilities the government may arrange incentives for those who are working hard and efficient in their task; Manual of Office Procedure, the nature of work procedure, division of work and required facilities should be provided accordingly; and work culture, discipline, punctuality, sincerity and integrity should be maintained as per the Mizoram ARC Report 1998.<sup>163</sup> The MPF Study Team also reported that the Mizoram government appeared to have more holidays than any other states in India. In 2010, Mizoram Government has 21 days of holiday and 14 days for restricted holiday. And there were 104 days of Saturday and Sunday. Thus, altogether this totals 139 days, moreover in a year there are 3 / 4 days of bandh/strike due to certain problems. According to this calculation there are about 140 non-working days and 225 working days in a year. The study team suggested that the government should reduce public holidays so as to become a developed state, because development requires hard work.<sup>164</sup>

To ensure good governance and administrative reform, the MPF also supervises and oversees the government programs, such as New Land Use Policy (NLUP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Rural Development Funds and other development programs of the government. The MPF Study Team on administrative reform submitted their suggestions and findings to Chief Minister Lalthanhawla on June 16, 2011.<sup>165</sup> The MPF also conducted a media

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., pp.113-114.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Mizoram People Forum, 6<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, op. cit., p. 8.



conference at Aizawl Press Club on June 28, 2011 to promote public awareness about the MGNREGS.<sup>166</sup> The MPF Headquarters leaders participated in the NLUP Apex Board Meeting, convened by the state government at Tourist Lodge, Aizawl on May 19, 2010 which was telecast live by the local Cable operators. The MPF leaders from time to time also met the Chief Minister and other Ministers and appraised them about the ongoing policies of government.<sup>167</sup>

#### MPF Media Cell

The MPF also created a Media Cell Forum so as to give awareness about its programs and functions to the people. The Media Cell focuses its activities on awareness campaign through Music video, Video clip, Doordarshan, Local channel, cartoon and radio. Besides, the MPF Media Cell has created Facebook, Instagram and WhastApp group accounts in district and constituency wise. The Media Cell Forum was created with the sole purpose of communicating with the people through electronic media.<sup>168</sup>

For the above mentioned contributions, yeomen service of the MPF is recognized within and outside Mizoram for its role in the electoral reform as well as for good governance. Even the Election Commission of India has appreciated the role of the MPF and it has also received words of appreciations from civil societies and governmental agencies outside Mizoram. Seventy percent of respondents to the questionnaire affirmed that MPF had contributed positively in the reformation of

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<sup>166</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>167</sup> Jankhongam Dounge, "New Social Movement in Mizoram for Electoral Reform-A Case Study of the MPF," Paper presented in "International Seminar on New Social Movements in the Era of Globalization," University of Allahabad, February 22-23, 2013.

<sup>168</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> MPF General Headquarters, Annual General Meeting, Vanapa Hall, Aizawl. August 17, 2017. p. 11.

electoral politics. A relatively very low proportion of the respondents (7.3%) did not think MPF had a positive contribution and nearly quarters (22.5%) of the respondents were uncertain whether the role of MPF on electoral reform has a positive or negative impact. Analysis of the questionnaire shows that most of the respondents appreciated the role of MPF in electoral reforms.<sup>169</sup> The Election Commission also invited the MPF on various panel discussions convened by the ECI. The State Election Commission also consulted the MPF with respect to conduct of various local level elections from time to time. To observe and learn about the constructive role of the MPF for electoral reform and good governance, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) invited the MPF leaders to conduct a consultation on April 25- 26, 2011.<sup>170</sup> Following that, the NBCC sent a “Working Committee on Clean Election” team consisting of four members to Aizawl on September 5-6, 2011 to study the role and activities of the MPF in Mizoram politics.<sup>171</sup> Despite its constructive contributions in the electoral politics and good governance of the state, there might be certain critical points that need further discussion with regard to the role of the MPF. But it is generally accepted that the MPF played a positive role towards ensuring electoral reforms and good governance in Mizoram politics.

#### Church and Liquor Prohibition Act

Before discussing the response of Church to the Liquor Prohibition Act, the study would briefly highlight the historical background on the implementation of the MLPC Act in Mizoram. Liquor finds its place in the Indian Constitution in Seventh

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<sup>169</sup> Further, the MPF was also invited to the All India Radio Live Phone Program (8:00-9:00 pm) Aizawl on January 24, 2012, Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente Secretary represented the Forum. An MPF representative also delivered a speech on the National Voters Day at Vanapa Hall, Aizawl on January 25, 2012.

<sup>170</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, *op. cit.*, p.129.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.133-134.

Schedule (Article 246) and Article 47 (Directive Principles of State Policy). “Alcohol for human consumption” is a subject matter of states. The states have the power to make laws and charge duties on alcoholic liquors for human consumption. Thus, each state has its own laws, bylaws and rules towards alcohol. Due to this, legal age of drinking, taxes on liquor and procedure of doing liquor business differ from state to state.<sup>172</sup> Article 47 under Directive Principles directs the states to take measures to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health. This Article directs that the states shall endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health. Most liquor ban policies are justified on the basis of this Article.<sup>173</sup>

#### History of Liquor Ban in India

Bombay was the first state that imposed liquor ban in 1948. The Bombay Prohibition Act, 1949 was implemented in areas belonging to current Gujarat and Maharashtra states. When Gujarat was created in 1960, it enforced its law in the light of old law. Liquor ban was imposed in Bihar during the time of Karpoori Thakur as the Chief Minister in 1977-78. In 1996, the Bansi Lal government in Haryana had imposed liquor ban. In Manipur the R.K. Ranbir Singh government in 1991 had enforced total prohibition. But in 2002, the Okram Ibobi Singh government had partially lifted this ban vide Manipur Liquor Prohibition (Amendment) Bill. In Mizoram, a ban on liquor was imposed vide Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> “Liquor in Constitution,” <https://www.gktoday.in>, retrieved on July 20, 2018.

<sup>173</sup> *The Constitution of India* (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of law and Justice, 2007), p. 23.

<sup>174</sup> “Liquor in Constitution,” <https://www.gktoday.in>, op. cit.

### The Mizoram Excise Act, 1973

In 1972, Mizoram was elevated to the Union Territory status and had its own Legislative Assembly. The fourth session of the first Mizoram Union Territory Legislative Assembly headed by the Mizo Union-Congress government held on August 25, 1973 introduced “the Mizoram Excise Bill 1973” and passed the same on October 10, 1973. Consequently, the Lieutenant Governor assented to the Mizoram Excise Bill on April 12, 1974 that became the Mizoram Excise Act, 1973 on May 22, 1974.<sup>175</sup> The Act was to control the import, export, manufacture, sale and possession of alcoholic liquor and intoxicating drugs. It also provides the imposition of punishment on people who violate the rules within the Union Territory of Mizoram.<sup>176</sup> Having learnt the evil effects of alcohol in the Mizo society, people have strongly condemned manufacture and selling of liquors since then. Further, in the fourteenth session of the third Mizoram Union Territory Legislative Assembly, “The Mizoram Excise Rules, 1983” was discussed on November 15, 1984. The government, taking together “the Mizoram Excise Act, 1973” and “the Mizoram Excise Rules, 1983” issued a license for selling of foreign liquor.<sup>177</sup>

The Church and civil societies in Mizoram strongly opposed the free sale of liquor and put a strong pressure on the government for its total prohibition. According to H. Lalrinthanga, “the Baptist Church of Mizoram took steps for prohibition during the District Council period, before the Mizoram Presbyterian Church’s effort on Total Prohibition”.<sup>178</sup> He, further, expressed that the Mizoram Presbyterian Church followed the Baptist on Prohibition. But since the Presbyterian Church, the biggest

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<sup>175</sup> *30 years of Mizoram Legislative Assembly* (Aizawl: Assembly Secretariat, n.d.), p. 4.

<sup>176</sup> *Mizoram Excise Law*, Department of Excise, Aizawl, Government of Mizoram.

<sup>177</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p.203.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

denomination in Mizoram, took the step, the voices of Baptist and other denominations were hardly known.<sup>179</sup> The Mizoram Presbyterian Church was very much concerned with selling and drinking of liquor in Mizoram. Since 1976, the Church took serious steps for a Total Prohibition Act through meetings with the government leaders, submitting memorandums as well as printed media. The Baptist Church of Mizoram Assembly meeting in 1917, 1939, 1944, 1954 and 1972 discussed the issue of alcohol consumption and selling in Mizoram and opposed it.<sup>180</sup> Other voluntary organizations like, YMA, MHIP, MUP and different student organizations strongly supported the Church's efforts for total prohibition.

#### The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP) Act 1995

The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Bill was introduced in the Winter Session of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 1995 with the strong support from the Church and voluntary organizations of the state. Consequently "The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995" was passed by the Assembly on December 14, 1995. As such, P.R. Kyndiah, the then Governor of Mizoram gave his consent to the Bill on January 31, 1996. The MLTP Act was implemented on February 20, 1997 in the whole of Mizoram state.<sup>181</sup> The Act was not applicable to the three Autonomous District Councils (ADC), namely the Chakma ADC, Mara ADC and Lai ADC as constituted under the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India. The implementation of the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995 repealed the provisions of the Mizoram Excise Act, 1973, thereafter.

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>180</sup> "Assembly Thurel Pawimawh Lawrkhawm" (Collection of Important Assembly Resolutions) (Serkawn: The Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1982)

<sup>181</sup> *Mizoram Excise Law* (Aizawl: Department of Excise, Government of Mizoram, 2003), n.p.

### The Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control (MLPC) Act, 2014

After implementation of the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995 for about 17 years, on July 10, 2014 the Mizoram Legislative Assembly passed the controversial Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control Bill moved by R. Lalzirliana, Excise & Narcotics Minister, Government of Mizoram. Consequently, the Governor assented to the MLPC Act, 2014 and has been enforced on January 15, 2015. This Act may be called the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act, 2014.<sup>182</sup> The Act prohibits and controls the production, manufacture, possession, transport, import, purchase, sale and consumption of intoxicating liquor and provides for the imposition of excise duty thereon in the state of Mizoram and for matters connected therewith. The Act extends to the whole state of Mizoram, except the three Autonomous District Councils: Chakma ADC, Mara ADC and Lai ADC under the Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India.<sup>183</sup> Passage of the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Act, 2014 meant the repeal of the provisions of Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP) Act 1995, thereafter.

### Analysis on Controversial Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Act

Historically, alcohol (different varieties of rice beer) has been very much a part of Mizo culture. Before the advent of Christianity, housewives used to brew rice-beer with the biggest beer-pots available and made sure that there would be no shortage of rice beer (Zu) when the hunters returned from their hunt. However, with the coming of Christianity to Mizoram in 1894, the missionaries through their good work converted most of the Mizos to Christianity within a few years. Many of the missionaries found that the habit of getting drunk and festivities did not go in line

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<sup>182</sup> *The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act, 2014*. <https://police.mizoram.gov.in>, retrieved on July 20, 2018.

<sup>183</sup> *The Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control (MLPC) Act, 2014, The Mizoram Gazette*, p.3.

with the new Christian tradition, hence they forbade the drinking of alcohol and required the new converts to leave behind all their pagan and animistic practices to lead a more pious life.

Along with Christian teachings, the missionaries taught the Mizo people how to read and write and educated them. The coming of Christianity abolished their social evil practices such as the practice of slavery, animal sacrifice, raiding villages and the tradition of proving one's bravery by beheading somebody from a rival clan. The missionaries also did away with the traditional practice of alcohol consumption in the Mizo society, terming it a sin. Thus, Christianity in Mizoram remains as the major legacy of the missionaries to this day and consumption of alcohol continues to be considered unethical. It was the influence of the Church that resulted in the Congress government passing the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP) Bill in 1995. But, despite the vehement opposition from the Church and civil societies in the Christian dominated state, the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act, 2014 was passed by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2014. Introducing the MLTP Bill, R. Lalzirliana stated, the number of people admitted to hospital because of alcohol consumption has considerably increased the drug abuse among the youth. As the prohibition only increased the sale of spurious liquor, as such there is the need to lift the prohibition so that people who cannot do without drinks can find good quality at cheaper prices.<sup>184</sup>

After Congress returned to power in the 2008 state Assembly elections, a study group headed by former IAS officer H. Raltawna was formed in 2011 to assess the

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<sup>184</sup> "Life after Mizoram Passes the MLPC Act 2014," <https://milaap.org>, retrieved on July 20, 2018.

efficacy and worth of the MLTP Act. The study group submitted its findings to the government of Mizoram in 2012, reporting that the Act had failed the people of the state, and making clear that the high demand for alcohol was the primary reason for the government's inability to enforce prohibition effectively. The MLTP Act was also found to have had a negative impact on public health. According to the records of the Aizawl Civil Hospital, between 1995 and 2005, a significant increase in the number of cases of liver disease were witnessed, due primarily to the consumption of low-grade, illicit moonshine.<sup>185</sup> Despite these findings, the Church and civil society have been strident in their appeals to the government to retain the existing Act unamended. In response to the MLPC Act that was passed on July 10, 2014, the very next day Synod moderator Rev. Lalhmuchhuaka led a mass prayer in Aizawl, and embarked on a poster campaign throughout the state.<sup>186</sup>

Apart from the MLTP Act 1995 study group that was formed in 2008, another study group was also constituted by the Mizoram government to study and evaluate the MLPC Act, 2014. The MLPC study group was headed by its convener Dominic Lalhmangaiha who handed over the report to Excise and Narcotics Minister, R. Lalzirliana. The group is a branch of a review and evaluation committee of the MLPC Act constituted by the Mizoram government in July 2016 to review and evaluate the impact of the liquor law on Mizo society. The study covered a wide range of aspects from how it has impact on society and its usefulness. It studied whether those who drink find benefits from liquor consumption and whether it causes domestic violence. It also includes effect of liquor on daily laborers, liquor-related violence and deaths, health cost besides revenue received by implementation

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<sup>185</sup> "The Fall of Kohhran Sawrkar in Mizoram" <http://m.himalmag.com>, retrieved on July 20, 2018.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.



of the Act. Apart from these, the study also includes impact of liquor on commercial sex workers and their customers. According to R. Lalzirliana, “the number of liquor-related deaths has significantly declined after the implementation of the Act.” He said, “The government has no plan to abolish it”.<sup>187</sup>

The above discussion shows that the churches in Mizoram are very much concerned with the selling and drinking of liquor. On the other hand, the government has its reasons for reintroducing the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act, 2014. After the MLPC Act, 2014 came into force, different views and observations arose with the reason for the implementation both from the government and the people. Some of the main reasons include: legalizing the sale of liquor would bring in ample income in terms of revenue which in turn may increase the government revenue; poor quality of liquor would be reduced by legalizing the sale of liquor in the state knowing that there are people who cannot stop drinking etc. This opinion was partially shared by R.B. Lalmalsawma, President of MSU, who expressed that the implementation of MLPC reduced the low quality of alcohol in the state and reduced the sale of alcohol at high prices in black markets.<sup>188</sup> However, he opined that the consumption of alcohol may become too easy for the common people and that could increase alcohol consumers including young boys and girls. R. Lalngheta, Vice President, YMA stated, “the MLPC Act is not a problem but Mizo people are not mature enough to handle their freedom and lack of law enforcement upon MLPC Act by government is the problem”.<sup>189</sup> Like the other churches and civil society

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<sup>187</sup> “Report on Anti-Liquor Act,” *Telegraph India*, <https://www.telegraphindia.com>, retrieved on July 20, 2018.

<sup>188</sup> In an interview with R.B. Lalmalsawma, President, MSU at MSU General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 13, 2018.

<sup>189</sup> In an interview with R. Lalngheta, Vice President, CYMA at CYMA General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 13, 2018.

organizations in Mizoram, the Salvation Army has also opposed the MLPC Act, 2014. But, if government passed the Act, revenue of the MLPC should be given to victims' families of alcoholics. K. Lalrinpuia, Salvation Army Official said, "I have been joining blood donation team as youth leader, the need of White Blood Cell (WBC) is increasing which is usually given to alcoholic victims".<sup>190</sup> He also expressed that as per the information from social media, death rate due to alcoholism has increased after the enforcement of the MLPC Act, 2014. However, death rates due to alcohol effects as reported by local newspapers are different. According to Excise & Narcotics minister, R. Lalzirliana, the death rates due to alcohol effects increased after introducing of MLTP Act, 1995, and death rates declined after the introducing of the MLPC Act, 2014. Whereas the death rates due to alcohol increased, according to the Church reports. For instance, according to the Mizoram Synod Social Front, the records in four hospitals in Aizawl such as Aizawl Civil Hospital, New Life Hospital, Aizawl Hospital & Research Centre and Synod Hospital show that death rate rapidly increased from 2014 after the implementation of MLPC.<sup>191</sup>

Since the coming of Christianity, the Church has always been at the forefront of the opposition to the sale and drinking of liquor. This has been the stand of the Church till today. The Church has taken various approaches to repeal the MLPC Act, 2014: meeting government leaders, organizing awareness programs on the effects of alcohol, teaching and preaching in the Church and submitting memorandum to the government. The Baptist Church of Mizoram Assembly in 2017 submitted a

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<sup>190</sup> In an interview with K. Lalrinpuia, Salvation Army official at Salvation Army Headquarters, Aizawl on September 11, 2018.

<sup>191</sup> *Zuin Mizote Min Nghawng Dan Zirchiana* (Aizawl: Mizoram Synod Social Front, 2017), pp. 2-3.

memorandum to the government to repeal the MLPC Act.<sup>192</sup> The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram Synod, the largest denominational church in Mizoram along with other churches in Mizoram had strongly opposed the MLPC Act, 2014. On February 25, 2015, the Synod Executive Committee members had a meeting with the newly elected Members of the State Assembly. Including the Assembly Speaker, Hiphei and the Chief Minister Lalthanhawla, 31 MLAs out of 40 were present. The Church leaders expressed the expectation of the Church on the new government with certain proposals, and one of them was to continue the enactment of Mizoram Total Liquor Prohibition Act (MTLP Act).<sup>193</sup>

The Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (Mizoram Church Leaders Committee) has pressurized the government to introduce the “Mizoram Total Liquor Prohibition Act”.<sup>194</sup> Prohibition of legalization of alcohol in the state has been supported by prominent NGOs in Mizoram, like the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP), Mizo women Organization (MHIP) on the grounds that there was increase of domestic violence, crime, accidents and poverty with liquor consumption. The position of the current government as reported in the September 8, 2018 *Vanlaini* local daily newspaper, is indicated by Chief Minister Lalthanhawla’s statement that the government was carefully investigating whether to continue the MLPC Act 2014. The Chief Minister further said that the report of MLPC study Committee has found not much negative impact and the absence of report and statistics during the implementation of the MLTP Act was another problem.

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<sup>192</sup> *Baptist Church of Mizoram, Assembly* Chanmari, 8-12 March, 2017.

<sup>193</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, Vol. XXIII January-April 2014 No.69 (Aizawl: Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod, 2014), p. 19.

<sup>194</sup> “Mizoram Church Leaders Committee Celebrates the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *Presbyterian Review* Vol. XX, April-September, 2012 No. 64 (Aizawl: F. Lalsangliana on behalf of Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod, 2012), pp.22-25.

Lalthanhawla further stated, the government will carefully investigate and consider whether to withdraw the MLPC Act or to strengthen law enforcement.<sup>195</sup>

On the other hand, as shown on social media, more than 500 police men and 5,000 civilians have died after the opening of liquor shops since 2015. On March 2017, the state with a population of 1.1 million had 71,158 liquor card holders. A card holder is entitled to six 750ml bottles of Indian-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) and 10 bottles each of wine and beer a month from 51 operational outlets. A card costs Rs. 300 and can be renewed annually for Rs. 100. Visitors to Mizoram are allowed to buy liquor from licensed outlets after showing their inner-line permit, an entry document valid for a week but extendable. Officials in the state's excise department said more than 60 people hold vendor license.<sup>196</sup> Zoramthanga, Former Chief Minister and MNF President said, "God fearing party was and will always be against any policy or act that encourages liquor consumption."<sup>197</sup> According to R. Tlanghmingthanga, Vice President MNF, "MNF does not subscribe to MLPC Act, 2014, once the MNF comes to form the government, the MLPC Act will be repealed and MLTP Act will be reintroduced".<sup>198</sup> The same opinion was also expressed by Dr. Kennet Chawngliana, Vice President, ZNP-ZPM.<sup>199</sup> R. Liantluanga, General Secretary, MPCC was of the

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<sup>195</sup> "MLPC Act Hman Zel a ni Dawn Em Tih Sorkarin a Ngaihtuah Mek," *Vanglaini* Vol-XXXIII No. 212, September 8, 2018.

<sup>196</sup> "Liquor Brewing as a Political in Mizoram," <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/liquor-brewing-as-a-poli>, retrieved on September 20, 2018.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> In an interview with R. Tlanghmingthanga, Vice President, MNF at MNF General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 11, 2018.

<sup>199</sup> In an interview with Dr. Kennet Chawngliana, Vice President ZNP & Senior Vice President ZPM at ZNP General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 11, 2018.

opinion that as of now MLPC Act, 2014 may not be as expected due to the limitation of law enforcement, but in the long run, it will be very helpful.<sup>200</sup>

Apart from political parties, Church and civil society organization leaders were also interviewed by the researcher. Rev. Chhiarpuia, District Secretary, UPC-NEI expressed that after the implementation of MLPC Act, the social morality of youth people has become worse. He further said that the death rate due to alcoholism seems to have increased.<sup>201</sup> The same opinion was shared by Father James, Roman Catholic and Rev. Lalrothluonga Darngawn, Regional Secretary of EFCI.<sup>202</sup> On the other hand, R. Biakthangsanga, President, Seventh Day Adventist said that neither MLTP nor MLPC were successful as the people consume alcohol any way.<sup>203</sup> According to this opinion, whether the governments have passed MLTP or MLPC, alcohol consumers will not stop their drinking habits. The interviews indicate that opinions about the implementation MLPC Act are varied and controversial. Apart from conducting interviews of Church leaders, civil society organizations and political leaders concerning the MLPC, the researcher also distributed questionnaires. The details of respondent opinions to the questionnaire about the MLPC are given below:

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<sup>200</sup> In an interview with R. Liantluanga, General Secretary, MPCC at MPCC General Headquarters, Aizawl on August 4, 2018.

<sup>201</sup> In an interview with Rev. Chhiarpuia, District Secretary, UPC-NEI at UPC-NEI District Headquarters, Aizawl on August 29, 2018.

<sup>202</sup> In an interview with Father James at Bishop's House, Ramthar Veng, Aizawl on September 18, 2018 and Rev. Lalrothluonga Darngawn, Regional Secretary, EFCI at EFCI Regional Headquarters, Aizawl on September 4, 2018.

<sup>203</sup> In an interview with R. Biakthangsanga, President, Seventh Day Adventist at his residence Seventh Day Tlang, Vaivakawn, Aizawl on August 4, 2018.

Table No. 3: Opinion about the MLPC Act, 2014

Sl. No.	Opinion	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	33	21.9
2	Disagree	84	55.6
3	Can't say	34	22.5
	Total	151	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The above table shows that 21.9% of the respondents find the implementation of MLPC useful. However, the majority (55.6%) of the respondents did not agree, and close to a quarter (22.5%) of respondents are unable to indicate whether they consider the implementation of MLPC as useful or not. Analysis of the questionnaire shows that majority of the respondents did not accept the implementation of MLPC. It may be assumed that these people felt that drinking liquor causes domestic violence and increases social immorality in the society. The MLTP Act was also found to be having a negative impact on public health. Thus, interview results and questionnaire respondents' opinion about the MLPC Act indicate that so far, there is no general consensus on this matter. However, with the formation of the new government, MNF Chief Zoramthanga had promised before the November 28 poll and after the result declaration, that he would lift the MLPC Act and re-impose total prohibition. The earlier Zoramthanga government had imposed the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995. Excise department sources said the revenue earned by the government from the liquor trade, since prohibition was lifted in 2015 was Rs. 60.60 crores in 2015-16, Rs. 72.26 crores in 2016-17 and Rs. 65.26 crores in 2017-18. It would be difficult to mop up this kind of revenue in a tiny hill state, with a

population of just over 11 lakh, dependent heavily on central funding for development.<sup>204</sup> Besides drop in revenue, the few against prohibition say the proposed ban will see a return of liquor from Myanmar and other neighboring states being sold illegally in the state as before. Sale of spurious liquor will also increase. Liberal liquor policy was seen as a reason for the Congress poll debacle. It did not pay heed to the call of civil society groups and Church to ban liquor because of rise in alcohol-related deaths. Zoramthanga claims that about 6,000 have died after prohibition was lifted. Vanlalruata, President of Central Young Mizo Association, stated, “Let’s wait and watch. No government has collapsed when prohibition was in force”.<sup>205</sup> Further, one of the senior pastors, namely Rev. F. Lalrinnunga said, “Loss of revenue is less than loss of human lives and suffering”.<sup>206</sup> Thus, the Church and civil society stood firm. Keeping its poll promise, the new MNF Government led by Zoramthanga decided to ban liquor shops run by government agencies with immediate effect in the first cabinet meeting. The state government also announced a dry day from December 21, 2018 to January 14, 2019 in a first step to impose total prohibition, four years after the MLPC Act was introduced and enforced by the previous government. Chief Minister, Zoramthanga said, “privately run liquor shops would be closed down after a new legislation is passed”.<sup>207</sup> Subsequently, the Mizoram assembly held on March 20, 2019 unanimously passed a Bill to implement total prohibition, a legislation promised by the MNF government when it came to power. Excise and Narcotics minister Dr. K. Beichhua introduced “The Mizoram

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<sup>204</sup> “Mizoram Liquor Ban to Cost State Rs. 70 crore”, *The Mizoram Post*, Vol. 16 Issue 198 dated December 16, 2018.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> “Mizoram’s New Govt Shuts a Liquor Shops Run by its Agencies,” *The Telegraph*, <https://www.telegraphindia.com> , retrieved on January 3, 2018.

Liquor (Prohibition) Bill, 2019”.<sup>208</sup> Cutting across party lines, all the legislators supported the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Bill, 2019. The previous Congress government led by Lalthanhawla ended 18 years of total prohibition in the state by replacing the Mizoram Liquor (Total Prohibition) Act, 1995 with the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act, 2014, which against the wishes of Church and other civil society organizations in the state. Thus, the new government led by Zoramthanga has passed “The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019”, to prohibit manufacture, import, sale and consumption of liquor for general health of the public and enforcement of law and order. The ruling MNF had promised during the assembly election in November 2018 that if voted to power, it would ensure total prohibition in the state. The proposed act will extend to the whole state of Mizoram except three autonomous district councils namely, Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC), Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) and Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC).

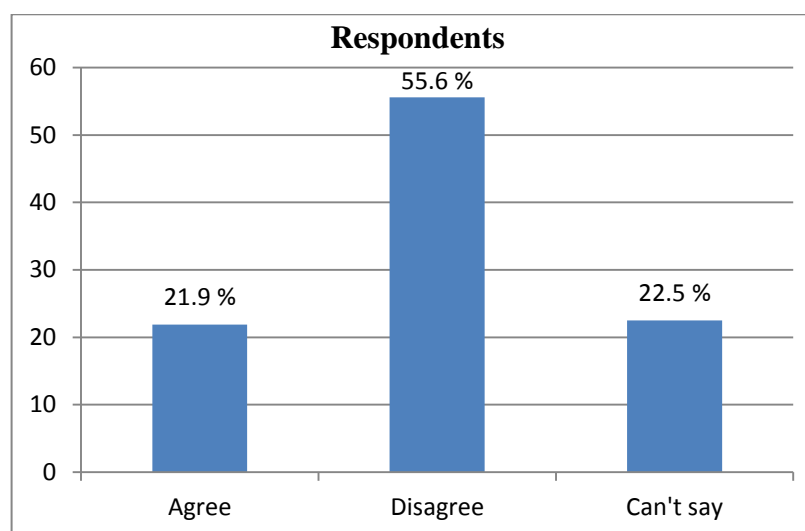


Figure No.1: Opinion about the MLPC Act, 2014

<sup>208</sup> “Mizoram assembly passes prohibition bil”, *The Mizoram Post* (Local Daily News Paper) Vol.16 Issue 285, dated March 21, 2019.



To sum up, the Church has been instrumental in shaping and nurturing the social political reforms in Mizoram. The contribution and the role of Church in the reformation of electoral politics in Mizoram is noteworthy. The Church issued its election guidelines since the first General Assembly elections to the then Union Territory of Mizoram were held in 1972. The Church continued to play its role to reform electoral process in the state. And, gradually the electoral reforms initiated by the Church were endorsed by other civil society organizations in the state, that eventually led to the formation of Mizoram People Forum in 2006. The constructive role of the MPF in the electoral process has been appreciated by various sections in the society. Election guidelines issued by the MPF were as per the Memorandum of Understanding between the MPF and the political parties. It has been noted that the MPF and other civil society groups established by the Church for cleansing electoral politics and political activities were taken up in the form of requests and appeals.

The constructive role of the Church in the electoral process was acknowledged by the media and even the Election Commission. The Church and civil society groups may have their limitations and shortcomings, but they contributed a lot in the electoral process of Mizoram elections. And, the electoral reform spearheaded by the MPF was under-appreciated both within and outside Mizoram. The MPF had established good cooperation and coordination with different political parties, media, government leaders and the citizens for conducting free and fair election in Mizoram. It is evident that election at different levels namely, MP, MLAs, Autonomous District Council, Municipal Council, Local Council and Village Council could be smoothly conducted due to the painstaking efforts of MPF. Hence, the Church played an instrumental role in ensuring socio-political reforms in Mizoram politics as

assumed in the second hypothesis of this study. Thus, the MPF still functions as one of the most important organizations for ensuring electoral reform in the state. Besides electoral reforms, the MPF widened its activities to bring about good governance and administrative reforms in the state. As such, the role of Church and civil society on socio-political reform is under appreciated. The importance of Church and civil society support for ensuring electoral reforms and good governance is such that on a long-term basis, it will strengthen the democratic political system in the state.

## CHAPTER IV

## ROLE OF CHURCH IN POLITICS: MAJOR IMPLICATIONS

The impact of social political changes can be evaluated fully only when they are placed within the perspective of interrelationships of social institutions. The total society is conceptualized as a social system in which the basic social institutions of the family, Church, political and economic organizations are related and interrelated with each other to constitute a characteristic pattern.<sup>1</sup> Thus, any change taking place in one or more of these social institutions will bring about a change in the pattern and, consequently, in the totality of the social structure. These in turn, effect a change in power relationships and the overall relationships with persons, organizations, administrations, politics and social institutions. This phenomenon can be seen in Mizoram where the processes of social and political development have been effectively incorporated with the role of civil society organizations. The Church and civil society have grown significantly as agencies for social and political change in the state. In Mizoram, the Church is considered to be older than the government. The State was formed in 1987 after the Church facilitated the peace process. The previous chapters have discussed the contribution of the Church during the period of insurgency movement and the role of Church in electoral reforms and good governance in the post-statehood period. This chapter deals with the multiple implications of the role of Church in the socio-political development in Mizoram such as education, social health and electoral reforms. It also discusses how the Church and civil society organizations coordinated with each other and with the

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley H. Smith, *A Case Study on Socio-Political Change*, <http://www.jstor.org>, retrieved on August 20, 2018.

government to make the political process an effective exercise in the state. Further, the chapter highlights certain implications on the role of Church in electoral processes.

### Socio-Political Impact Owing to the Role of Church

The Church has brought about tremendous changes in various walks of life in the Mizo society. The establishment of the Church opened up educational institutions, hospitals and it also undertook numerous other social works. Gradually, this succeeded in transforming the erstwhile Mizo society which was ignorant, backward and uncivilized into a better one on the patterns of Western culture and social organizations. As a consequence of their contact with Western Liberal Education and the outside civilization, the bulk of the Mizo people found themselves at the threshold of the modern era around the time of India's Independence.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the socio-political outlook of the Mizos had shifted away from the influence of myths and superstitions as they started realizing their social and political conditions, and thereby became more conscious about their socio-economic and political survival. Besides, the Church has been regarded, to a great extent, as the forerunner of establishment of various civil society organizations in Mizoram. It was the Christian missionaries and the early Mizo Pastors, along with a few educated people, who established the Young Lushai Association, thereafter known as the Young Mizo Association (YMA), one of the most influential NGOs in the state. The Church has played a tremendous role in shaping the socio-cultural life, as well as political inclinations of the Mizo people.

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<sup>2</sup> K.M. Zakhuma, *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946-1989: A Study with Special Reference to Political Parties in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Mizoram Publication Board, 2001), p. 1.

The elevation of Mizoram from District Council to a Union Territory status had both positive and negative impacts on the Mizo people. There is no doubt that the status of the Union Territory brought in lots of development in the socio-political and economic life. On the other hand, effect of the fast enlarging money economy has given rise to the vested interests and the distinction between the rich and the poor. The development of the economy brought in corruption, moral degradation, and individualism which were rarely seen in the Mizo society before the elevation to Union Territory.<sup>3</sup> Although developmental activities moved at a fast pace in order to regain lost ground during the political disturbance, a strong yearning for peace grew among the Mizo people.

For the restoration of peace and normalcy in the state, the Church and other civil society organizations coordinated with each other and with the government to make political process an effective exercise in the state. As a result, leaders of different churches and social organizations like, the Young Mizo Association, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl, political parties and the Human Rights Committee of Brig. T. Sailo had a meeting and formed, “Mizo Peace Advisory Body” with the initiative of the then Chief Minister, Ch. Chhunga on November 12, 1974.<sup>4</sup> Further, as mentioned earlier, on May 31, 1983 the Church leaders invited all political parties for their approval of the Church effort for the restoration of peace and normalcy in the state. The political party leaders had accepted and signed the joint memorandum drafted by the Church leaders to be submitted to the Prime Minister. In these ways, the Church and civil society organizations coordinated with each other and with the government. As such, by the mid-1980s, intensive peace overtures were made by the Church leaders,

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<sup>3</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p.177.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, “Political Vision for Mizoram” in *Mizoram People Forum- MPF Chanchin (2006-2014)*. by Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente (Aizawl: L.B. Associates, 2016), p. 269.

between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front that brought the two parties to the negotiation table. Thus, the long twenty years of political disturbances came to an end with peace and normalcy in the state. The Church served as one of the major peace-brokers in times of crisis and political turmoil during the insurgency period.

Table No. 4: Church brought about peace during insurgency movement

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	118	78.1
2	Disagree	15	10.0
3	Uncertain	18	11.9
	Total	151	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents to the questionnaire felt that the Church was instrumental in bringing about peace and normalcy in the state. They indicated that Church had served one of the major peace-brokers during the insurgency period. Only 10% of the respondents did not agree and 11.9% of the respondents were uncertain. Analysis of the responses indicates that most of the people accept that Church played a significant role in bringing peace and normalcy in Mizoram. Thus, it is evident that the role of Church in politics brought about dynamic changes and multiple implications in the socio-political and economic life in Mizoram. Even today, the Church is very effective in exerting psychological influence on the people and in the socio-political administration of the state politics.

## Impact of Church Role on Education

Imparting right knowledge through formal education has been one of the most important components of the ministry of Church since its inception. The Church has played a central role in the field of education and its contribution in the educational sector was one of the major implications for the socio-political development of Mizoram. Until recently, the Church has been looking after the people's education and healthcare. In fact, all the primary school education under the banner of "Mission Schools" in the Mizoram state (which then was Mizo District under the state of Assam) had been in the hands of Church. Education imparted through Mission Schools used to have a great impact on the moral and ethical lives of the people in general and of the children in particular.<sup>5</sup> The whole primary school system was under the supervision of the Church from 1904 to the formation of the Mizo District Council in 1952. In 1903, Sir Bamfield Fuller, the then Governor of Assam came to visit and inspect the schools run by the government and the Church. He was impressed by the work of Mission school education. He then handed over all educational institutions to the Mission. From then onwards, all educational institutions in the south came under the Baptist Mission and in the north they were brought under the Welsh Mission, and the government extended some financial support to them.<sup>6</sup> However, the total annual contribution of the government towards education until 1942 was Rupees 5, 5000 only. From 1944, government began to increase its contribution and to open fully maintained Primary and Middle schools in the villages.<sup>7</sup> But from 1951, the Lushai Hills was separated and was to have its own District Council which will conduct its own government and education from 1952

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<sup>5</sup> "Education Mission of the Church", *Presbyterian Review*, Vol. XXVII No. April-June 2017, [www.mizoram-synod.org](http://www.mizoram-synod.org), retrieved on August 20, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> J. Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram* (Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1991), p. 320.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 323.

onwards. For about fifty years, the Church had been completely responsible for education as the government had handed over the full responsibility. This meant that the Church had to write and translate textbooks, provide syllabuses, equip the schools with teachers and books.<sup>8</sup> It was during those fifty years that significant changes were brought about in the Mizo society.<sup>9</sup> In 1952, when the Education Department was taken over by the government, almost all the schools were taken over except for a few which the Church was unwilling to hand over to the government. Gradually, almost all the schools under the Church were handed over to the government which greatly reduced the involvement of the Church in education. Rev. Dr. Lalnghakliana stated, “Since then, the Church felt that this change has resulted in the loss of the Church’s moral and ethical influence upon the people to a great extent. Then the need was felt for the Church to run schools of her own once again to impart the right knowledge and to regain her influence upon the lives of people”.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, today the churches in Mizoram have established a number of educational institutions from high school level to college level. Particularly, the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), along with the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Church, has made very significant contributions. At present, the Baptist Church of Mizoram looks after one College, one Higher Secondary School and English Medium School, eight High schools, eight Middle schools and 31 Primary Schools in the Mission fields.<sup>11</sup> The notable contribution of the BCM in the field of education can be seen

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “History of Education Department,” <https://www.mizobaptist.org/education-department>, retrieved on September 9, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *BCM Compendium, In Honour of BMS Mission in Mizoram 1903-2003* (Serkawn: The Baptist Church of Mizoram, 2003), p.110.



from the alumni of the Baptist Higher Secondary School (BHSS) located at Serkawn-Lunglei. Three out of five Chief Ministers of Mizoram, namely, Ch. Chhunga, Brig. T. Sailo and Laldenga were the products of this mission school. Prominent citizens like Major R.K. Hranga, the first commissioned officer among the Mizos, Ch. Saprawnga, the distinguished political leader, the pioneer Administrators in Civil services like C.L. Rema and P. Rohmingthanga, outstanding politicians like Dr. Silvera, the first and only Cabinet Minister in the Central Government among the Mizos hailed from this Mission school.<sup>12</sup> The spirit of this Mission School is maintained and kept alive at BHSS and it continues to produce many outstanding personalities throughout the state. It is said that students educated in this school are known for their moral integrity, intellectual competency and leadership qualities. With enrolment of around 1400 students from Nursery to Class XII, divided into two sections and both the sections under the care of one Vice Principal respectively- the Junior Section (Nursery to Class VII) and Senior Section (Class VIII to XII), it is one of the biggest schools in Mizoram. One of the Principals in BHSS has boldly remarked, “As long as there is BHSS, Mizo society has hopes to go on in pursuance of its dreams”.<sup>13</sup>

Another notable contribution made by the BCM in education was by establishing the Higher and Technical Institute Mizoram (HATIM), which is the first Christian College in Mizoram. The institution was established in 2007. It is affiliated to the Mizoram University. The BCM has a vision to grow and develop the institute to be a deemed university in which world-class education is provided to the people of impoverished North East India region and to respond to the challenges faced by the

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<sup>12</sup> “Baptist Higher Secondary School,” <https://www.mizobaptist.org> , retrieved on September 9, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

people of Mizoram.<sup>14</sup> The academic program of the institution is to provide higher level education in which Technical, Science, Management, Commerce & Finance and Arts for Under Graduate and Post-Graduate courses will be offered. Presently, there are four different tertiary degree courses on offer including: Bachelor of Computer Applications (BCA), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com), Bachelor of Arts in English (BA) and Bachelor of Social Work (BSW).<sup>15</sup>

The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, which is the largest Church in Mizoram, operates many schools from primary level to secondary level. According to the *Presbyterian Review* (April-June), in 2017 there were 136 Presbyterian English Schools with 28,188 students, 1,469 teachers and 112 non-teaching staff. It is expected that there will be substantial increase and development of Church-run schools in the near future.<sup>16</sup> The Church has also proposed to have a Christian College in the near future. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church of Mizoram has contributed a lot towards education. The Roman Catholic Church is considered to be the biggest provider of education in the world. So it is also in Mizoram, the Church works to promote education, peace, social justice and social health. According to 2017 statistics, there were 48 kindergarten and primary schools, 47 Middle schools, 30 High Schools, 8 Higher Secondary Schools and one College under the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>17</sup> Besides these, the Church runs dispensaries, technical schools, charity homes, social work centers, printing presses and hostels.<sup>18</sup> Another popular institution at degree level is Helen Lowry College of Arts & Commerce, Aizawl, run

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<sup>14</sup> “The Higher and Technical Institute, Mizoram,” <https://www.mizobaptist.org/hatim-5> , retrieved on September 9, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *Presbyterian Review*, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> In an Interview with Father James, Secretary to Bishop at Bishop’s House Ramthar Veng, Aizawl on September 18, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> “Mizoram Catholic Church,” <http://www.onlytravelguide.com/mizoram/spiritual/catholic-church.php> , retrieved on September 9, 2018.

by the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA). The institution was established on January 17, 1950 and it was gradually upgraded. In 1980, the Education Department of Mizoram recognized the school as a full-fledged high school (up to Class X). On June 26, 2000, Director of School Education, Government of Mizoram, allowed the school to function as a higher secondary school for Arts stream. Helen Lowry Higher Secondary School was further upgraded to Helen Lowry College of Arts & Commerce in 2017. It was inaugurated as a college on August 23, 2017 by Lalthanhawla, the Chief Minister of Mizoram.<sup>19</sup>

### Educational Reform

As the literacy percentage and number of institutions was increasing, the quality of education has slowly degraded in Mizoram. There may be different causes for the degradation of quality of education in Mizoram such as political appointment of teachers, lack of disciplined life, poor curriculum, exam oriented teaching and learning. It was generally accepted that the quality of education in Mizoram got devalued by different forces. Thus, the Church being acutely aware of the decline of quality of education in Mizoram has tried to find ways and means to solve the problem since 1992. As such, the Church has undertaken the task of promoting education by visiting schools and other learning institutions and meeting the concerned officials in this regard. The Church also distributed leaflets and pamphlets and has made appeals to the local churches to organize their own education development programs at the grass root level. Several seminars and consultations have also been conducted to find ways and means of developing education in Mizoram and their findings have been submitted as recommendations and proposals

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<sup>19</sup> "Helen Lowry College of Arts & Commerce," <https://en.wikipedia.org> , retrieved on September 9, 2018.

to the government of Mizoram.<sup>20</sup> In this regard, the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram's Synod Social Front has contributed much in reforming Mizoram's educational system.

#### Appeal to the People

The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram, under the banner of Synod Social Front Committee, issued an appeal to the people, such as parents, pastors and local churches in 1995: at least one parent was requested to sit with children at night; parents were requested to pay attention to their children's education; and parents were requested to make children to feel free at home, collect good books for children to read and guide them, and pray for children to study their lesson with the right knowledge of God. The Synod Social Front Committee appealed to pastors under the Mizoram Presbyterian Church to preach about the need for educational reform in their pastorate local churches so as to make people aware about the importance of education. The sermons should include the responsibilities of the students, teachers, parents as well as church and society. The Committee also made an appeal to the local churches, to appreciate and acknowledge those students who did well in their studies, to exempt high school students from social activities and social obligations as far as possible, to preach educational sermons in church service, to pray for students and teachers, and to organize church service for students at least once in a year.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> "Education Development," <https://www.mizoramynod.org/social-front/> , retrieved on August 8, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-246.

### Meeting with Government Leaders

On June 28 and July 13, 2006 the Synod Social Front (Education Cell) Committee had meetings with the Chief Minister and State Education Minister respectively. The Committee submitted a list of suggestions to the Chief Minister including the creation of a Commission on educational reforms in Mizoram. The Committee also had a series of discussions with the State Education Minister about the following issues: to stop the practice of teachers employing others from part of their salaries, to make a more balanced distribution of teachers in schools, to allow admittance of children below 6 years to school, to give priority to candidates from the localities of schools for appointment of teachers and conducting efficient inspection of schools. The Education Cell Committee also had a joint meeting with Principals of various colleges and leaders of students' Union at the Synod Committee Room on August 4, 2006. The following concerns were discussed such as, to increase working days at college level, to build up better work culture and to explore the means for improvement of quality education.<sup>22</sup>

### Impact of Church Role on Social Health

Medical ministry was one of the most remarkable contributions made by the Church in Mizoram. Christian hospital Serkawn, a hospital-cum-nursing school operated by the Baptist Church of Mizoram was the first hospital and nursing school in Mizoram. The hospital began operation in 1919, and was formally established in 1923 at Serkawn, Lunglei. It has a registered capacity of 100 beds.<sup>23</sup> Initially, the hospital was meant for women and children with a capacity of 30 beds. There was hardly any

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 246-247.

<sup>23</sup> "Christian Hospital Serkawn," <https://en.wikipedia.org> , retrieved on September 9, 2018.

other healthcare center in and around Lunglei or for that matter in the whole of Southern Mizoram.<sup>24</sup>

The hospital and its administration were the responsibilities of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) missionary nurses who ably looked after the basic healthcare of the community.<sup>25</sup> In 1957, the BMS deputed Dr. H.G. Stockley (Dr. Zomuana) and his wife, who also had experience in health-care, as the first resident doctor serving the community at Serkawn. The Nursing school was started in 1952, with a course in Auxiliary Nurse Mid-Wifery (ANM), under the tutorship of Miss E.M. Maltby (Pi Zohnuni), who was then the nursing superintendent. The ANM School is now upgraded to train students in General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), approved by the Indian Nursing Council (INC), New Delhi and it is also recognized by the Mizoram Nursing Council (MNC).<sup>26</sup> The institute is affiliated to the Indian Nursing Council and it is situated in Lunglei district. Today, the institute is one of the popular and renowned nursing institutes in Mizoram. It provides the best possible diploma education in the field of nursing using highly experienced and skilled teachers and by adopting latest teaching techniques and basic facilities and amenities.<sup>27</sup> In 1964, Dr. C. Silvera became the first Mizo doctor and first Medical Superintendent of the

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<sup>24</sup> The hospital had a humble beginning with the arrival of Miss E.O. Dicks (Pi Dawki), a missionary nurse from the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) London. The building was ready for occupancy on February 10, 1923. The center turned out to be a busy center. Patients came from far-flung interior, roads with mule-tracks only and some patients were brought in bamboo-stretchers by volunteers. In the intervening years, doctors and nurses from the nearest BMS Hospital at Chandraghona, Bangladesh (formerly East Bengal before the partition) came to cater the needs for surgical treatment as well as gynecology and obstetrics. In those days, temporary hutments were made near the hospital as the patients and their families attended the clinic as long as the services of the doctors and nurses were available to them.

<sup>25</sup> Dr. Lallawma, "Glimpse of Medical Work at Christian Hospital Serkawn" in *BCM Compendium, In Honor of BMS Mission in Mizoram 1903-2003* (Serkawn: The Baptist Church of Mizoram, 2003), p.113.

<sup>26</sup> "Christian Hospital Serkawn," op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> "School of Nursing Christian Hospital Serkawn, Lunglei (Mizoram)," <http://entrance-exam.net/school-of-nursing-hospital-serkawn>, retrieved on September 9, 2018.

hospital.<sup>28</sup> Presently, the hospital has four main departments with medical, surgical, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology. It also runs a daily clinic in the nearby town, as well as occasional health outreach to distant villages or health camps in schools. The nursing school is attached to the hospital with approximately 70 students. The hospital also helps it run a local orphanage of about 20-30 students.

The Presbyterian hospital, Durtlang became the second hospital to be established after Christian Hospital Serkawn. It is a general hospital and nursing school in Aizawl. The hospital is widely known among the Mizo people as “Durtlang Hospital”. It is managed and governed by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod. The hospital was established in 1928 by the Calvinistic Methodist Church (now the Presbyterian Church of Wales) as a nursing institute. Today, the hospital has become the largest non-governmental hospital in Mizoram with a registered capacity of 300 beds.<sup>29</sup> Initially, the hospital was run by Fred J. Sandy, a Welsh missionary, with a small building.<sup>30</sup> From its humble beginning with one doctor, one nurse and six beds in 1928, it had progressed to 23 doctors, 12 of whom are specialists, 114 nursing staff and 300 beds when the hospital celebrated its 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008.<sup>31</sup> Presently, the hospital is equipped with well-furnished major operation theatre, gynecological operation theatre, eye operation theatre, medical, surgical, pediatrics, orthopedic, eye, ENT and gynecology wards and two complexes of private wards

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<sup>28</sup> “Christian Hospital Serkawn,” op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> “Presbyterian Hospital, Durtlang,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian\\_Hospital\\_Durtlang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian_Hospital_Durtlang), retrieved on September 9, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> With the admission of the first patient on March 6, 1928 the hospital was formally inaugurated and was named as the “Welsh Mission Hospital”. In the year 1944, the nursing course was approved by the Indian Nursing Council (INC), becoming the first recognized nursing school in Mizoram. The Nursing School has progressed steadily and produces good quality nurses. However, the political climate in the country began to forebode uncertainty for the missionaries. With the Independence of India, Welsh mission works came to a halt. As such, the Welsh mission handed over the ownership and management of the hospital to Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod on February 28, 1958, and the name officially became “Presbyterian Hospital”.

<sup>31</sup> “Synod Hospital,” <https://www.mizoramsynod.org/synod-hospital>, retrieved on September 5, 2018.

with deluxe rooms in the new cabin complex. The hospital is also equipped with modern equipments like USG machine, ECG machine, X-ray machine, CT Scan, fetal monitor and endoscopy equipments. Departments such as medicine, ENT, gynecology, surgery, eye and orthopedics are looked after by a specialist doctor<sup>32</sup>. Besides, the hospital has extension centers in Aizawl city such as Dr. Fraser's Clinic for out-door patients, Grace Inn which is a drop-in centre for persons with substance abuse problems, and out-door patient clinic at Millennium Centre. It also has adjoining special care centers like Grace Ward for drug abuse victims and Grace Home for AIDS patients.<sup>33</sup>

Besides, there are hospitals run by the Church that significantly contribute to the public in their respective areas. The Lairam Christian Medical Centre at Lawngtlai, which was initiated by the Women's Fellowship of the Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church was inaugurated on September 19, 2001. The hospital has a good working partnership with the Mizoram State Aids Control Society (MSAC), the National Rural Health Mission and the Presbyterian Hospital, Durtlang. The hospital also initiated the Community Health Service Program that includes giving vaccines to children, and antenatal clinic and training on family welfare.<sup>34</sup> The hospital is equipped with medical facilities like Ultrasound, X-ray, E.C.G., Endoscope and Diathermia set. In the southern tip of Mizoram bordering Myanmar, the Evangelical Church of Maraland runs a hospital named, Maraland Gospel Centenary Hospital at Siaha town. Siaha is also known as Saiha, the headquarters of Mara Autonomous

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<sup>32</sup> "Presbyterian Hospital," op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> "Synod Hospital," op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> "Lairam Christian Medical Center," <http://lairamchristbaptist.org/medical-department-lairam-christain->, retrieved on September 9, 2018.



District Council.<sup>35</sup> Another famous hospital run by the Church is “Aizawl Adventist Hospital” located on the slopes of Nisarih Tlang (which means Seventh-day Hill) close to Vaivakawn in Aizawl. The hospital is managed and governed by the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA). The building construction for the Aizawl Adventist Hospital began in August 1986. However, the hospital was formally inaugurated on February 27, 1996.<sup>36</sup> Presently the hospital is under the leadership of Dr. Eileen Lalrinpui, who is a gynecologist and obstetrician.

### Impact of Church Role on Political Education<sup>37</sup>

Politics governs our life in society and affects many aspects of our life. It regulates what we can say, read, watch, tells us when and how to pay taxes and administers everything from driving privileges to business activity. In other words, politics presides over us literally from birth until death.<sup>38</sup> Political education can be one of the most effective methods for the Church to participate in the state politics. The Church should educate her members to define political ideas, public values, moral vision and the demands of common good through political education. Religious groups and Church can contribute a lot to help improve political culture and to form and shape mindsets which in turn help citizens to understand themselves as responsible and participating members of their states.<sup>39</sup> The Church members should learn that they cannot neglect specific modern democratic values in their actions

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<sup>35</sup> “Maraland Gospel Centenary Hospital,” <http://maralandtoday.blogspot.com>, retrieved on September 9, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> “Aizawl Adventist Hospital,” <https://en.wikipedia.org>, retrieved on September 9, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Political education is an academic discipline, and the study of politics in education has two main roots. The first root is based on theories from political science while the second root is grounded in organizational theory. Political science attempts to explain how societies and social organizations use power to establish regulations and allocate resources. Organizational theory uses scientific theories of management to develop deeper understanding regarding the function of organizations.

<sup>38</sup> Titus Pacho, “Necessity of Political Education”, St. Augustine University of Tanzania Educational Foundations, <https://www.researchgate.net>, retrieved on August 7, 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Gerhard Kruip and Helmut Reifeld, eds. *Church and Civil Society* (Berlin: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2007), p.14.

within society. However, more concrete information as to how this could be achieved depends on various conditions which differ from region to region.

In Mizoram, political education is the key method through which the Church addresses political issues in the state.<sup>40</sup> In fact, it is an urgent task for the Church to give political education to the Church members. Through political education, the Church and civil society emphasize the formation of the state government through elections and participation of people through political parties. Hence, the churches in Mizoram, particularly the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, had started giving political education to their members since 1990.<sup>41</sup> The Synod Social Front organized seminars and consultations on political education several times in different places. Resourceful papers on political education were presented and discussed in the seminars. For instance, in 2002, the Synod Social Front organized 14 seminars in rural areas and 81 seminar programs in Aizawl. The Synod Social Front Committee also launched a series of political education seminars in the churches within Aizawl City on July 20, 2003 and August 17, 2003 respectively.<sup>42</sup> Besides, the Church and civil society organizations in Mizoram spearheaded by the MPF had conducted seminars and consultations on political education since its inception in 2006. In fact, involvement of the Church in the political education of Mizoram began as early as in 1952, when the Church guided the people on how to elect responsible leaders. The first visible engagement of the Church and civil society groups on political education took place in the year 1972, when election was held for the first time in the newly formed Union Territory of Mizoram. According to Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, “The more active and

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<sup>40</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op. cit.*, p.262.

<sup>41</sup> The Church gives political education by means of seminars, campaigns, publication of books and pamphlets.

<sup>42</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

all-out effort of the Church in the electoral process and political education came after 2003 Assembly General Elections, which manifested itself in the form of Mizoram People Forum”.<sup>43</sup> As mentioned, the MPF had organized a state-wide campaign giving political education to the people through seminars, consultations and printed media.<sup>44</sup>

These consultations and seminars aimed at educating the masses on the ethical and basic meaning of the term “politics” –what it encompasses, how it should function, what political rights they have as citizens of the country. Emphasis was also laid on the demerits and dangers of party politics, the need to elect candidates on the basis of personality rather than party affiliations, one’s duty to exercise one’s franchise, the obligation of every citizen towards the state. To a great extent the campaigns have been successful and it has greatly influenced the political attitude of the people of Mizoram in general and the minds of politicians in particular. The motive of doing

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<sup>43</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, “Church and Election I: The Role of Mizoram People Forum” *in Mizoram People Forum MPF Chanchin* (2006-2014) Unedited Version by Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente (Aizawl: L.B. Associates, 2016), p.248.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, from January 11, 2018 to July 28, 2018 alone the MPF had organized seminars on Political Education in various districts of Mizoram. The date and place are as follows: January 11, 2018 at Church Hall, Kanan Aizawl; January 13, 2018 at Church Hall, Lengpui; January 26, 2018 at YMA Hall, Tuikual; January 27, 2018 at Community Hall, West Phaileng; February 19, 2018 at Church Hall, Chhingchhip; February 20, 2018 at Church Hall, Dawrpui; February 24, 2018 at Church Hall, Hlimen & Church Hall, Bungkawn; March 3, 2018 at Church Hall, Kanghmun; March 10, 2018 at Church Hall, Keifang; March 17, 2018 at Church Hall, Khawzawl Dinthar; March 22, 2018 at Church Hall, Phullen; March 24, 2018 at Church Hall, Ramhlun; March 27, 2018 at Church Hall, Kawngpui Venglai; April 12, 2018 at Church Hall, Lungdai; April 14, 2018 at Church Hall, Khawlailung; April 28, 2018 at Zemabawk; May 14, 2018 at Church Hall, N. Hlimen; May 15, 2018 at Church Hall, Vairengte & Church Hall Bilkhawthlir; May 16, 2018 at Community Hall, Khawbung; May 19, 2018 at Church Hall at Mission Veng; May 24, 2018 at Church Hall, W. Phaileng Kana; May 25, 2018 at Church Hall, Phuldungsei Phulbial & Lallen Pastor Quarters; May 26, 2018 at Church Hall, Ratu; June 2, 2018 at Church Hall, Luangmual; June 7, 2018 at Church Hall, Zamuang; June 8, 2018 at Church Hall, Hriphaw; June 24, 2018 at Church Hall, Farm Veng Lunglei; July 20, 2018 at Church Hall, Kawrtethawveng; July 21, 2018 at Church Hall, Zawlnuam; July 28, 2018 at Church Hall, Bawngkawn and Church Hall, Hmuifang<sup>44</sup>. The MPF also organized Political Education Campaign on the following dates and places as given below: January 27-28, 2018 at West Phaileng Pastorate; March 17-18, 2018 at Khawzawl; April 28, 2018 at Zemabawk church; May 26-28, 2018 at Ratu, Darlawn, Darlawn Venghlun and Sakawrdar Pastorate; June 6, 2018 at Luangmual church; June 8-10, 2018 at Zamuang Pastorate; June 24-25, 2018 at Lunglei Chanmari Pastorate; July 21-22, 2018 at Kanhmun Pastorate and Zawlnuam Pastorate.

this is to inculcate in the people the right concept of politics and encourage them to refrain from dirty party politics.<sup>45</sup>

#### Impact of Church Role on Electoral Politics

Religion plays a crucial role in the Indian elections. Right from the process of political socialization and leadership recruitment to the making and implementation of authoritative values, with the exception of judicial decisions, the religious factor constitutes an important aspect in Indian politics. It is operative in all spheres of electoral politics—the selection of candidates for contesting elections, the allocation of constituencies to various political party candidates, the election campaigns organized by almost all political parties and even the independent candidates, exercise of the franchise, the formation of ministries, and the process of policy-making.<sup>46</sup> In Indian politics, religious interest/pressure groups, like the Arya Samaj, Jamaat-e-Islami, Sikh Intellectual Forum, Sikh Students Federation, Hindu Suraksha Samiti, Various religious Mathas, Anti-Cow Slaughter Movement and Brahmin Sabhas, all act as interest/pressure groups and play a key role in the Indian political system. These groups use political parties for securing their interests and, in turn the political parties use them for strengthening their support bases. Some of these interest groups act as forces of religious fundamentalism and seriously strain the secular forces. They have put grave pressure on such vital matters as national integration. The Muslim interest groups are demanding the reconstruction of the Babri Masjid, while some Hindu interest groups are committed to build the Ram Janam Bhumi Temple in Ayodhya. Thus, the issue of Ram Janam Bhumi versus Babri Masjid has

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<sup>45</sup> “Political Education,” <https://www.mizoramynod.org/social-front>, retrieved on August 16, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> U.R. Ghai, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

been a controversial issue in Indian politics. It has been a source of strain on the Indian decision-makers.<sup>47</sup>

Unlike religious/interest groups in other parts of India, the religious bodies in Mizoram, particularly the Church have rendered selfless service without expecting any economic returns and political benefits in any form. Hence, the role of the Church in the electoral politics of Mizoram spearheaded by the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) is a unique movement for electoral reforms and good governance, which is hardly noticed in other parts of India. The reason being, most of the religious/interest groups movement in other parts of India are directed towards a particular class or section of the people but the Church and civil society movement in Mizoram is not directed towards any class or section, rather it is against the corrupted social and political system. Therefore, the movement for political reforms by the Church and civil society organizations in Mizoram is unique and noteworthy in many aspects.

The Church, civil society organizations and Election Commission share a common goal for free and fair elections. The Church had issued certain guidelines and urged the political parties to put up honest candidates, to refrain from buying votes, not to make unrealistic promises and other illegal means. They had also appealed to the political parties for conducting a peaceful election campaign. At the same time, the Church had requested the people to exercise their franchise without fear or favor, and urged them not to sell their votes. The “election guidelines” issued by the MPF were as per the Memorandum of Understanding between the MPF and the political parties.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

And the MPF and other civil society groups established by the Church for cleansing electoral politics and political activities were taken up in the form of requests and appeals. The implications of Church role on the electoral process in terms of influencing a range of electoral activities, such as, election campaign, election expenditure, voting behavior and voter participation will be discussed in the following sections.

### Election Campaign

The Pacific Justice Institute had published a booklet, “The Church and Politics”,<sup>48</sup> on what Church workers (ministers) and churches (Church members) can do to affect public policy with Christian principles. According to them, churches are absolutely allowed to provide political forums for candidates, so long as all candidates running are invited to attend. A forum held for the purpose of educating and informing the electorates, which provides fair and impartial treatment of candidates, and which does not promote or advance one candidate over another, would not constitute participation or intervention in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. A forum for candidates should not be operated in a manner that would show bias or preference for or against a particular candidate. Questions to forum participants need to be prepared and presented by a non partisan, independent panel of knowledgeable persons composed of representatives of the media, educational organizations, community leaders, and other interested persons. Each candidate would be allowed an equal opportunity to present his or her views on each of the issues discussed. The Church should select a moderator for each forum

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<sup>48</sup> “The Church and Politics” (Sacramento: Pacific justice Institute), [www.pacificjustice.org](http://www.pacificjustice.org), retrieved on August 7, 2018, p. 6.

whose sole function can be limited to assuring that the general ground rules are followed.<sup>49</sup>

With regard to the election campaign, the churches in Mizoram spearheaded by the MPF contributed to a great extent in the electoral politics of Mizoram. The Church has both a duty and right to seek attention towards the moral and religious dimensions of public issues. The Church can encourage the citizens to get involved in election campaigns and discussions on public policy issues, so as to ensure peace and harmony through electoral reforms. At the same time, it has tried to clarify what activities and efforts are appropriate for the Church members and citizens so as to be involved in electoral reforms. Unlike in other states of India, the election campaigns in Mizoram are mostly organized on joint platforms that were coordinated by the MPF, in which all the candidates in a particular Assembly segment debated over the poll issues, developmental works and other matters. These poll debates were conducted at a fixed place and were moderated by the MPF members. The people assembled at these debate centers had straightway asked pertinent questions to the candidates belonging to various political parties, besides some independent candidates.

The political parties are supportive of the MPF and its electoral initiatives. For instance, the MNF senior leader, Biakthansanga told the PTI, “We try our best to make total use of these joint platforms to single out poor development work and corruption of the present Congress regime and to expose the present state

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

government in these platforms”.<sup>50</sup> Subsequently the campaign head of Mizoram Pradesh Congress, David M. Thangliana, also told the PTI, “We use these platforms as a medium to reach out to the people seeking answers. Apart from door to door campaign, this is the best way to spread the party message and the government’s achievement and the policies it would like to pursue after coming into power”.<sup>51</sup> Lalhlianzuala Sailo, Secretary, MPCC stated, “All political parties never chose to disregard what the Church said”.<sup>52</sup> The electors also felt that it helped them to ask the contesting candidates a lot of questions on their electoral promises.

The political parties, the Church and civil society organizations cooperated well in the course of the poll processes. The political parties were supportive of the Church initiated electoral activities. As such, the poll process has been conducted peacefully. According to the Mizoram Police Chief, Amulya Patnaik, “During the campaigning, not a single untoward incident was reported from anywhere in the state, the violence-free campaign might be due to the strict observance and guidelines of the MPF”.<sup>53</sup> The MPF platform at state, district and local levels kept a close surveillance over the situations, any kind of unlawful activity and against any attempt to instigate violence. The MPF had banned the door-to-door campaigns by the candidates and their supporters in the last ten days before the polls so as to prevent voters from being influenced in any manner.

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<sup>50</sup> “Presbyterian Church Keeps an Eye on Polls in Mizoram,” PTI, Aizawl, November 17, 2013. [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com) , retrieved on October 16, 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> In an Interview with Lalhlianzuala Sailo, MPCC General Secretary at Mizoram Pradesh Congress Office, Aizawl by the Scholar on September 25, 2014.

<sup>53</sup> [zeenews.india.com/...elections.../Mizoram,\(timesofindia.indiatimes.com/...elections\)](http://zeenews.india.com/...elections.../Mizoram,(timesofindia.indiatimes.com/...elections)), retrieved on October, 2014.



As prohibited in the “election guidelines” issued by the Church, the supporters of candidates did not use caps, T shirts, badges and stickers bearing the party symbols and party flags etc. during the course of election campaigns. The number of flags, banners and posters that a candidate could use in the elections were based on the number of local council members or village council members in each locality or village. The candidates were strictly prohibited from arranging transportation of their supporters, distributing materials to voters or throwing community feasts in the elections. Apart from all these “don’ts”, the political parties in Mizoram have had a new set of “don’ts” imposed on them by the MPF in the 2013 Assembly elections.

The MPF was involved even in ensuring certain changes in the election manifestoes, to refrain the political parties from making tall promises. No political party was permitted to promise what seems to be impossible to achieve. That the political parties or candidates were expected to promise only what they would be able to fulfill, was one of the significant points of a 27-point Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by the MPF as well as the political parties in the 2013 Mizoram Assembly elections. For instance, the MOU signed between MPF and political parties on Policy implementation states that “Only realistic and do-able policies and programmes must be included in the party manifesto. More than the personal and individual life of the candidates, election campaigning should revolve around the party policy and programme. Campaigning by the use of false propaganda, unproven truth and scandalous issues must be avoided”.<sup>54</sup> The Church initiatives had evoked positive response from the public and political parties. The

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<sup>54</sup> “Articles of Agreement between Political Parties and Mizoram People Forum,” <http://www.miracleofdemocracy.org>, retrieved on October 16, 2014.

election watchdog, MPF, had set certain “dos and don’ts” for all the political parties, so that these were complied with quite effectively in the state for conducting the peaceful election campaigns.

As a result, the election guidelines observed by the political parties and the contesting candidates to a great extent toned down the election campaign tempo in the State. As such, there was a lot that changed in the campaigning methods of candidates and their political parties. It was not only the candidates, but even their workers and supporters were not able to canvass openly. In brief, the usual practice of use of posters, banners, public meetings, lavish feast, musical band, road shows, door-to-door campaigns, separate public rallies and meetings, excessive use of public address system and excessive public meetings organized by the political parties was reduced to a great extent due to the influence of the Church in the poll processes.

#### Election Expenditure

Charges of corruption in elections are an all India affair. The bribing of voters is an open secret. In fact, increasing excessive, illegal and illegitimate expenditure in the elections is the root cause of rising levels of corruption. Election expenses are needed invariably, be they legal or illegal, which come from cash donations or otherwise. Mainly, the expenditure is shown in the course of setting up of election offices, posters, banners, gifts, provision of petrol and diesel for campaigners, daily paid party workers, poll-managements, transportations, poll-related feasts, public meetings and processions. Aware of these many ways, the Church played a crucial

role in controlling excessive expenditure in the Mizoram elections.<sup>55</sup> For instance, the MPF and political parties had arrived at a joint agreement on election expenditure. A close look at some of the following points gives the impression that the Church was determined to check the poll expenditure in the state so that no political party or candidate would indulge in huge and wasteful election expenditures. Election expenditure should be kept to the minimum. The MPF functionaries had refused to accept money or donations from the political parties and the candidates.

Usually certain activities which are corrupt practices and offences under the election law can crop up during the house-to-house-campaign. Therefore, the house-to-house visits by candidates and their supporters were prohibited during the period of 10 days, prior to the polling day so as to allow the voters to have a period of calm and caution to decide their options. Influencing voters through money or other incentives or inducements must be avoided. The general public, organizations and individuals were requested not to ask or expect any favor from the candidates. Similarly, candidates and political parties were also requested to refrain from announcing any financial grants, distribution of inducement articles like silpaulin, jersey, football, mobile handsets, NLUP money, or any other monetary promise thereof. Community feasting, picnic and processions are expected to escalate the election expenditure unnecessarily. Thus, they could be avoided. Further, banners, flags and posters also

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<sup>55</sup> “Analysis of Election Expenses of MLAs from the Mizoram, 2013 Assembly Elections,” CEO website: <http://ceomizoram.nic.in/CandidatesExpenditure/2013> & [www.adrindia.or](http://www.adrindia.or), [www.myneta.info](http://www.myneta.info), retrieved on October 16, 2014.

escalate the election expenditure. Therefore, the maximum number of banners, flags and posters were restricted within each locality.<sup>56</sup>

As a result, the state of Mizoram witnessed a nationally-acclaimed low-profile and largely inexpensive experience in the elections. Throughout the electoral process, the Church and civil societies had kept a watchful eye on the political parties to make sure that none of the candidates step out of the guidelines it had laid down. The Church also observed that the voters had a bigger responsibility to have ensured clean, fair and inexpensive elections. Thus, it appealed to the organizations and individuals that they should not expect any benefits in the form of money or materials from the contesting candidates or their political parties. On the other hand, organizations of joint platforms during the election campaigns for candidates of political parties instead of the traditional independent campaigns in the public domain were instrumental in reducing election expenditure to a large extent. The MPF even restricted and prescribed the topics for candidates in their public speeches or in such electoral platforms. As a result of such efforts of the Church, the election expenditure had considerably come down. According to Rev. James Chuaukailiana, “Due to the Church’s intervention, election expenditure were less, the Church have always tried to influence electoral process but the influence and impact of Church is felt more effective after the establishment of MPF”.<sup>57</sup> Similar opinion was shared by some respondents in an interview. Christopher Lun, stated, “MPF has played a

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<sup>56</sup> For instance, VC/LC with a maximum of seven members-upto 3 banners, 30 flags and 20 posters; VC/LC with a maximum of five members-upto 3 banners, 20 flags and 15 posters; VC/LC with a maximum of three members-upto 3 banners, 10 flags and 10 posters. The maximum size of a banner shall be 18x4 and that of the poster shall be 4x3. Caps, badges and stickers with political symbols may not be used as the election materials. MPF functionaries requested the political parties to remove excessive banners, flags and posters.

<sup>57</sup> In an Interview with Rev. James Chuaukailiana, a Baptist pastor, at AICS, Aizawl on 22 September, 2014, and H. Lalrinsanga, United Pentecostal Church (NEI), Aizawl and Major Lalmuanpuia, Salvation Army, Aizawl by the Scholar on 19 September, 2014.

significant role in the electoral reform of Mizoram, with the involvement of MPF, election expenditures of candidates decreased to a large scale with no unnecessary expenditure”.<sup>58</sup> Hence, expenditure in the elections was remarkably reduced, due to the constructive role of the Church. For instance, the following were supposed to be the fixed election expenses of the MLA candidates from the Mizoram Assembly elections in 2013. According to Section 78 of the Representative of People Act, 1951, every contesting candidate has to lodge a true copy of his/her election expenses within 30 days from the date of declaration of result of election, with the District Election Officer in all States and Union Territories. Election Expenses’ limit for the Mizoram Assembly elections, 2013 was set at 8 Lakh Rupees. Accordingly, the Mizoram Election Watch (MEW) and the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) had analyzed the election expenditure affidavits of 39 out of the 40 newly elected MLAs in the Mizoram Assembly Elections. The election expenditure included the details of expenses on public meetings and processions, campaigning through electronic and print media, expenditure on account of engaging campaign workers, besides the expenses on the vehicles used and purchase of campaign materials.<sup>59</sup> Candidates have constantly claimed that the election expenditure limit set was very low. However, based on the election expense declarations of the 39 elected MLAs of Mizoram to the ECI, 16 MLAs (41%) had declared their election expenditure as less than the 50% of the expenditure limit i.e. Rs. 8 Lakh. Based on the election expenditure declaration of 39 out of the 40 elected MLAs of Mizoram to

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<sup>58</sup> In an interview with Christopher Lun, Secretary, Good Will Foundation at his residence Chanmari, Aizawl on August 26, 2018.

<sup>59</sup> “Analysis of Election Expenses of MLAs from the Mizoram, 2013 Assembly Elections,” op.cit.

the ECI, the average amount of money spent by them in the elections was only about Rs. 4.39 Lakhs, which is 55% of the total expenditure limit i.e. 8 Lakhs.<sup>60</sup>

#### Party-wise Average Expenditure

As usual, political leaders nowadays would show less than what they had spent in the elections. Yet, the Mizoram politicians as well as contesting candidates had spent lesser amounts in their recent elections than their counterparts in other states in India. Certainly, this is a very positive trend that could be emulated elsewhere in the country. The Church and civil society groups in Mizoram contributed tremendously in this regard. The party-wise average election expenses incurred show that their average spending of all the ruling party members (33 MLAs of INC) was declared as Rs. 4.19 Lakhs (52% of the expense limit). Whereas, for the MNF's five MLAs, the expenditure was Rs. 5.70 Lakhs (71% of the expense limit) and for one MLA of the MPC, it was Rs. 4.45 Lakhs (56% of expense limit)<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> The following highlights the election expenditures of Mizoram Assembly elections in 2013. The records were taken from the press release on analysis of election expenses of MLAs in Mizoram Assembly elections 2013 Party-wise Average Election Expenses: The Party-wise average election expenses show that the average spending of 33 MLAs of INC was Rs. 4.19 Lakhs (52% of the expenditure limit), for MNFs 5 MLAs, it was Rs. 5.70 Lakhs (71% of the expenditure limit) and for one MLA of the MPC, it was Rs. 4.45 Lakhs (56% of the expenditure limit). Election expenditure of Chief Minister: Lalthanhawla had declared the election expenditure of Rs. 4.45 Lakhs (58% of expenditure limit) and Rs. 3.50 Lakhs (52% of the expenditure limit), from Hrangturzo and Serchhip constituencies respectively. Election expenditure of Ministers: The average expenditure declared by 11 Ministers including the Chief Minister was Rs.3,81,147. Eight out of 11 Ministers have declared election expenditures of less than 4 Lakhs, i.e. 50% of the expenditure limit. Lalthanzara has been declared as the one who incurred highest election expenditure of Rs. 4.52 Lakhs (57% of expenditure limit) among ministers while Lalsawta had declared the lowest election expenditure of Rs. 3.18 Lakhs (40% of expenditure limit that he spent on that occasion). Expenditure on public meeting and processions: Out of the 39 MLAs' accounts that were analyzed, 23 (59%) have declared that they had not spent any amount on public meetings and processions. Expenditure on Campaigning through electronic/print media: About 26 MLAs (67%) have declared that they had not spent any amount on campaigning through electronic/print media. Expenditure on Campaign Workers: About 11 MLAs (28) have declared that they had not spent any amount on campaign workers. Expenditure on Election Vehicles: About 3 MLAs have declared that they spent less than Rs. 20,000 on use of vehicles. Expenditure on Campaign Materials and Erection of gates, arches, banners etc.: All the 39 MLAs analyzed have declared that they had incurred some expenditure on campaign materials and erection of gates, arches and banners.

<sup>61</sup> "Analysis of Election Expenses of MLAs from the Mizoram, 2013 Assembly Elections," op. cit.

Notable changes have been witnessed due to the efforts of the MPF; that election expenditures had considerably come down, elections have become more peaceful, free and fair. This opinion seems to be shared by citizens and political parties as well. Details of the party-wise average election expenses that were declared by the MLAs after the Mizoram Assembly elections, 2013 are given below:

Table No. 5: Average Expenditures Declared by MLAs (party-wise)

Sl.No.	Party	No of MLA	Average Limit	Average Exp.	Average Limit
1	INC	33	8,00,000	4,19,575	52.4%
2	MNF	5	8,00,000	5,70,308	71.3%
3	MPC	1	8,00,000	4,45,968	55.7%
Total		39	8,00,000	4,39,576	55%

Source: Election Expenses of MLAs 2013 Mizoram Assembly Elections.<sup>62</sup>

### Voting Behavior

Voting behavior is generally considered as a form of political behavior. The voter's behavior can be explained during the process of electioneering and also when certain decisions were made about questions of public policy either by policy makers or by the electorates. There were also certain other factors that would influence the voting behavior such as, gender, race, tribe, ethnicity, culture or religion. Making emotional appeals in the political campaigns so as to enlist support for a candidate or a party is

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

a widely recognized practice and a common element of any campaign strategy. However, in the national elections, people usually exercise their votes based on their political beliefs. Whereas, in local and regional elections, voters differ as they seem to be more concern about voting as per local interests.<sup>63</sup> The voters were also notably influenced by factors such as the family relations, community and religious leadership, civil society groups. To some extent, these factors appear to be true in the electoral process in Mizoram elections as well.

Before studying the voting behavior in Mizoram politics, there is a need for highlighting the emerging trends in the electoral behavior in India. The process of election campaigns in India has been influenced by the dynamics of caste and community in the electoral politics. Meanwhile, a theoretical framework of election studies in the developed countries, like the United States, has also inspired an upward trend in election studies in India. Party identification, poll issues, political candidates, electoral campaigns, socio-economic status of voters, and other internal dynamics have been recognized as very important for studying the voting behavior.

But, there are certain peculiar elements that are characteristic of Indian society, such as caste and community, which became crucial in the electoral studies. Most of the studies which examined the confidence level of people in the election system or efficacy as citizens, showed that people had faith in the election system. Socio-economic factors like gender, caste, religion, education, and income are important in raising political awareness, exposure to political propaganda, sense of personal effectiveness in politics, and their party preferences. Further, caste, religion, and to a lesser degree, economic status, are also important variables for explaining party

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<sup>63</sup> "Voting Behavior" <http://en.wikipedia>, retrieved on October 17, 2014.



preferences. The most important issues for the electorate are those that related to the daily lives of people like rising prices and unemployment.<sup>64</sup> Similar opinions were shared by many other political analysts in the country. These are thus, some of the undercurrents affecting the party preferences of voters.

However, voting behavior in the hill districts of Manipur, as well as in some Northeast states are influenced by factors such as chieftainship, tribe base and insurgency. For instance, in the hill areas of Manipur, particularly among the Kukis, the institution of chieftainship has virtually been misused by the present day centrally-sponsored schemes.<sup>65</sup> Another powerful and common voting factor was the insurgency, which became an undeniable fact. According to an old maxim, the development of human civilization since ancient times was shaped and propelled by the brains of scholars and scientists.<sup>66</sup> Contrary to this, in the hill areas of Manipur the educated and eligible leaders were overshadowed by the activists of insurgency. Influences of insurgents in the elections were open secret, and laymen and statesmen had no choice but to follow their diktats. The selection of candidates was not necessarily because of their educational qualifications and personalities but on account of their financial contributions toward the organization.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> K.M. Sajad Ibrahim, "Emerging Trends in the Studies of Electoral Behaviour in India," <http://creative.sulekha.com>, retrieved on October 10, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, the voters used to buy a plot of land somewhere so that they could resemble a few families and make a village to siphon off funds in the name of development. During the elections, the voters of that village were calculated in terms of money payable in lump sum to the chiefs by the contesting candidates in the form of donation for celebration/function, community hall construction, chief guest donations, and secret deals being made with the chiefs on the election eve. Further, tribe-based concepts were practiced during elections. Besides, some of the minority groups among the tribes/clan were marginalized and suppressed by the numerically larger groups. The election manifestoes and party affiliations have had very little to do with hill people in terms of choosing candidates.

<sup>66</sup> Ceety Khongsai, "Voting Behaviour in the Hills" *The Sangai Express*, Manipur. The article was posted on February 27, 2012. <http://e-pao.net>, retrieved on October 17, 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

In Mizoram, there is no such caste system or any system prevalent on the same lines as it does in other parts of the country among the Hindus. So, the caste system has no influence on the electoral behavior of the Mizo voters.<sup>68</sup> And, there was no such extremist threat on insurgency factors as in other parts of the states in India. S.K. Chaube observed that the election in Mizoram was primarily issue-oriented, in other words the means of fighting elections in a politically conscious area are issues or performance record.<sup>69</sup>

But, somehow in the recent elections there was a report that there were political parties and candidates who worked together with an insurgency group that disturbed the voting behavior in the process. As a consequence, different civil society organizations requested the people of Mizoram to oppose any political parties or candidates that had connections with such insurgent groups. For instance, during the seventh Assembly elections, the six NGOs, such as the Central YMA, MUP, MHIP, MZP and MSU made a public circulation and passed a common resolution against any political party that worked together with any insurgent groups and requested the people not to cast their votes in favor of such parties or candidates.<sup>70</sup> It was also reported in the local daily newspapers that some insurgent groups shot one B. Zahunga of Khawlian that injured him. The Church and civil society organizations earnestly appealed to the people not to cast their votes for any candidate who worked in collaboration with the insurgents.<sup>71</sup> They asked the Mizoram government to be

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<sup>68</sup> R.N. Prasad & A.K. Agarwal, op.cit., 155.

<sup>69</sup> S.K. Chaube, *Electoral Politics in Northeast India* (Madras: Universities Press, 1985), p.199.

<sup>70</sup> "NGO parukin hel thawkpui party hnawl turin Mizo mipuite an ngen", *Vanglaini*, Local daily news paper, 23 November, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> The six NGOs had also resolved that any violent acts, threat and unjust practices should not be done in the state of Mizoram. Further, to comply with the report the government of Mizoram had sent C. Zorammuana, DIG (NR) and Lalbiakthanga Khiangte 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. MAP and one CID addl. SP to the eastern part of the state. As there was also a report that some voters had been threatened, the CIDs

sincere in maintaining law and order so as to have free and fair elections in the state. The central YMA declared that it opposed any clan-based politics and region-based sentiments as it could be detrimental for peaceful and democratic proceedings in the region. This showed that the 2013 Assembly elections in Mizoram were not completely free from all malpractices. But, the Church and civil society organizations confronted any untoward electioneering activities in the course of the poll process and controlled the situation, to ensure free and fair elections in the state.

Further, some sort of communal/clan loyalty, and that of denominational churches became operative in the elections, though the Mizo community predominantly belongs to Christianity. Further, wealth and status had also influenced the electoral behavior of voters after the emergence of the market economy in the state. This had helped the rise of a rich neo-middle class in the society such as, rich contractors, businessmen, bureaucrats and educated elites. But, in spite of these factors, the Church and civil society organizations through their “election guidelines” and “appeals”, ensured that the poll process so far was one of the most peaceful elections in India. Perhaps, the electoral process has had a sense of divine edict to a great extent as was observed by some respondents in an interview.<sup>72</sup> The main idea behind formulating the “Election Guidelines” are to have free and fair elections and to enable the law abiding citizens to exercise their franchise without fear of favor and to prove that elections in India are not about money and muscles alone.

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were sent to two villages, called Saipum and Saiphai to observe the situation. Meanwhile, the central YMA condemned the insurgents who fired their gun at one B. Zahunga.

<sup>72</sup> In interviews with Rev. Joe Laldinpuia, BCM, Pastor Kolasib District, October 10, 2014; Ramdinpuui, Bru Baptist Church, September, 18 2014; Pastor, Rupentu Chakma, Chakma Autonomous District Council, September, 17, 2014 and J. V. Pahlira, Secretary, Zoram Nationalist Party, Aizawl, September, 25 2014.

The Church-sponsored MPF had appealed to all the political parties to put up upright, honest and reliable candidates and to stick to the election model code of conduct. As such, the lavish feast, the musical band, road shows, door-to-door campaigns, separate public rallies and meetings, excessive use of flag and posters were almost avoided. Distribution of the party leaflets, candidate's bio-data and joint platforms were undertaken by the MPF. A number of flags and posters/banners in each locality were jointly decided by the representatives of all political parties in the presence of MPF leaders. Thus, it was generally accepted that in spite of all other factors, the role of Church positively influenced voting behavior.

Table No. 6: Church positively influenced voting behavior

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	92	60.9
2	Disagree	16	10.6
3	Can't say	43	28.5
	Total	151	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Over two thirds (69.9%) of respondents to the questionnaire felt that the Church has positively influenced voters during the process of electioneering. Only 10.6% of the respondents did not agree and 28.5% of respondents to the questionnaire could not decide. The questionnaire analysis shows that despite all other factors such as family, gender, race, tribe, ethnicity and community which influenced decisions during the process of elections, the influence of the Church was felt the most.

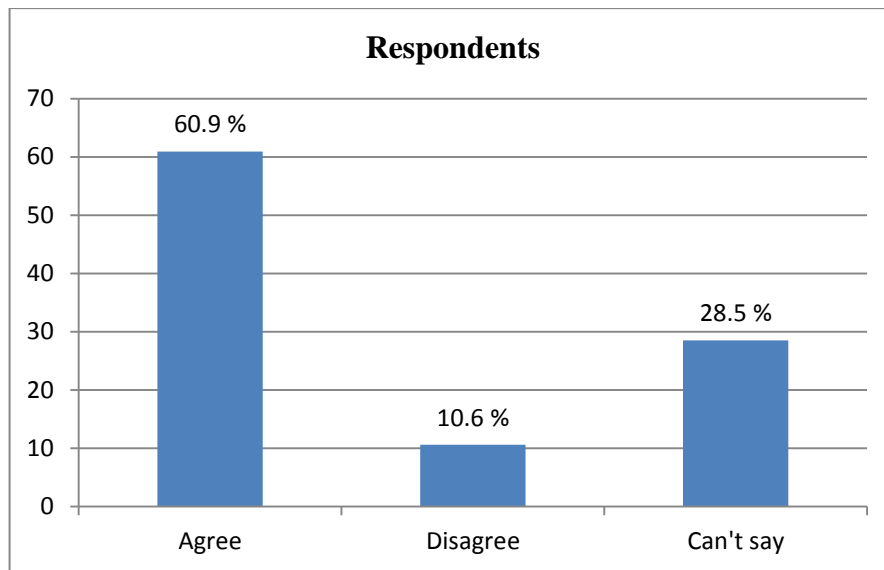


Figure No. 2: Church positively influenced voting behavior

The MPF organized a common platform in each locality of the constituency which was regularly telecast on the local cable television channels. Rev. Dr. H. Vanlalauva, the former President of MPF stated, “The objective of the forum is to ensure that the elections did not vitiate the peaceful atmosphere in the state and that the polling is free and fair.” Of course, there was a possibility of disturbance from outside the state during the elections. Thus, to ensure that the armed groups did not interfere in the elections, the MPF representatives met the leaders of various militant groups, even in the neighboring states, and requested them to stay away from the election process in the state. As a result, the role of Church in bringing about electoral reforms in terms of changing voting behavior was very positive. Thus, the Election Commissioner of India invited the representatives of the civil society organizations for the National Consultation on voters’ participation, wherein a number of activities and the role played in the Mizoram elections was appreciated.<sup>73</sup> In fact, the drive for clean and

<sup>73</sup> Besides the ECI, some other reputed organizations like, the Transparency International, the Gandhi Peace Foundation, the Jindal Foundation had also come forward to recognize the works undertaken by the Mizoram People Forum.

clear electoral process in the state also got a boost when Mizoram became the first state in the country to have completed the issuing of photo identity cards to the voters. Another first success in the election history was that the Election Commission had opened its doors to the civil society organizations in its poll review meeting preparedness as well.

### Voters Participation

Voters are the central actors in the democratic poll process. The Church and civil society organizations being citizens of the state should be allowed to educate members of the congregation by speaking about the importance of legislation/initiatives and ballot propositions and offering facts and materials, as long as the information is educational and is not designed to support a particular party or candidate.<sup>74</sup> Voters' participation in the democratic electoral process is integral to the successful running of any democracy and forms the very basis of true democracy. Thus, voter participation has become an integral part of the election process. In India, the imperative of enhanced voters' participation in elections is no more a matter of debate, but a serious assignment. In recent decades, however, the world has seen a decline in voters' participation in elections, which would inevitably point to a democracy deficit. In India, the constitutional mandate of the EC for Superintendence Direction and Control of elections contains the in-built high responsibility. In order to have every eligible voter on the electoral roll as well as to get everyone on the electoral roll to voluntarily vote, the EC plays a crucial role.

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<sup>74</sup> "The Church and Politics," [www.pacificjustice.org](http://www.pacificjustice.org), retrieved on February 14, 2018.

However, a large number of voters not turning out at polling booths for the elections and a large number of eligible citizens, still missing from the electoral roll does not fetch credit to the great Indian democracy. Decades of electoral experience in India have shown that even greater awareness did not necessarily get converted into greater voter participation. As such, questions can be raised as to how the EC can improve or enhance voter participation. There are a lot of gaps between what the voters should know and what they actually know, in some important matters like voter-registration, EPIC or identity proofs, polling station locations, use of EVMs, timings of the poll, “do’s and don’ts” with regard to the Model Code of Conduct, use of money/muscle or other electoral inducements by some candidates or their associates to influence the vulnerable sections of electorate. These electoral concerns need to be addressed by the election managers with a sense of urgency, lest the voter participation would not be encouraging.

Viewed in this backdrop, voter education is not only correct but is the most appropriate way to improve voter participation in the electoral process. Realizing these problems, several countries in fact have included voter education as part of their constitutional mandate. In India, these were implicit in the overall mandate of EC. In the year 2010, the EC observed its Diamond Jubilee, focused on the theme of “Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy”.<sup>75</sup> Realizing that it needed to tread the last mile, major issues like incomplete electoral rolls, urban apathy, gender gap and youth indifference were to be tackled. Hence, voter participation has to be based on voluntary inclination (motivation) of the individual voters, and this has to be encouraged. For this to happen, voter education holds the main key, backed up by

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<sup>75</sup> “Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)”, *Compendium of Instructions*, February 2014 (New Delhi: Election Commission of India), p 1.

higher levels of poll facilitation. The Commission thus decided to bring the voter education to the center stage of election management and pay it the necessary attention and resources.

To improve the voter participation from among all sections of the electorate, awareness levels have to be enhanced, especially the newly enrolled youth, the uneducated, residents of inaccessible and remote areas, socially and economically weaker and deprived sections of the society. The EC's decision to adopt a sustained and systematic voter education and electoral participation strategy so as to increase people's participation in the electoral process got reflected in a range of policy initiatives, programs and activities, by now, providing the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP). These were planned on the basis of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) interventions in the Jharkhand Assembly elections of the 2009.<sup>76</sup> Subsequently, this was carried forward in the form of SVEEP in other elections.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the EC had envisaged a systematic strategic and scientific process in understanding the voter participation and engagement dynamics so as to facilitate the processes of increased and informed participation in the elections. The EC had focused on a large segments or sections of the electorate that were not covered by formal educational system or those who had developed an apathetic attitude or those who were physically cut-off from the mainstream due to various reasons. It was planned that such segments or sections of

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Since the introduction of the program (SVEEP), elections to the State Assemblies of 23 States have taken place till December 2013, they were Jharkhand-2009; Bihar-2010; Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, Puducherry-2011; Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh-2012; Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Karnataka, Delhi, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan-2013.



the society would be reached through the civil society organizations and also with the help of special agencies of volunteers.

With regard to voter education and electoral participation, the Church and civil society organizations of Mizoram played a significant role in the state. The Church and civil society spearheaded by the Mizoram people Forum even used to attend National Voter's Day and delivered speeches. For instance, on January 25, 2012, the Church-sponsored MPF leaders such as Lalramthanga, Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente and David Lalthlamuana attended the National Voter's Day at Vanapa Hall, Aizawl.<sup>78</sup> The program was organized by Directorate of Election Government of Mizoram. Dr. Ngente who spoke on behalf the MPF expressed that, National Voter's Day is observed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, with an objective to increase enrolment of voters, especially of the newly eligible ones. In the year 2011 when National Voter's Day was launched, the slogan was "Proud to be a voter-ready to vote", and a special campaign to reach out to the newly eligible voters paid rich dividend. As a result of these efforts, 51.65 lakhs of youth have enrolled. He further says, special campaign for this year is on women's registration, but far as Mizoram is concerned, the special campaign may not really be necessary because women's registration and enrolment is very good and upto the mark. However, women's participation on the field of governance in Panchayat and state assembly has a long way to go and there is lots of room for improvement.<sup>79</sup> Besides, these governmental programs the Church and civil

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<sup>78</sup> "Mizoram People Forum, 6<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting," Vanapa Hall, Aizawl, October 14, 2012. p.9.

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente also presented a paper on "National Consultation on Voter's Participation" organized by Election Commission of India on March 4, 2011 in Delhi. The MPF Headquarters leaders were invited by the Chief Electoral Officer for Electoral Revision on September 13, 2012. The MPF was also invited for "Campaign for Maximization of Enrolment of Electors" organized by Directorate of Election, Government of Mizoram. The MPF had delivered a speech on "Launching of SVEEP Campaign for Maximization of Enrolment of Electors" program on September 9, 2012 at I&PR Auditorium, Aizawl.

society spearheaded by MPF had organized seminars and consultations on political education in different places throughout Mizoram. The Church, civil societies and Election Commission, all have worked together for promoting voter education and encouraging electoral participation so as to increase people's involvement in the electoral process. The Church and civil society groups have urged all the eligible citizens to cast their votes as it is their constitutional right and as well as their duty as citizens. The Church had also advised the people not to be biased in any extreme sense, not to vote for selfish and corrupt candidates, but to avoid taking any such offers from the candidates, repeating casting votes or on other's behalf that undermine the poll process. The MPF had conducted seminars and consultations at different levels, concerning voter education. As a consequence, Mizoram experienced a very peaceful electoral process, as the voter participation had been increased comparatively.

The large scale participation of the voters shows that the people in the state were cautious of casting their franchise. And the elector's votes were cast not only in favor of a particular party but also for peace, stability, progress and electoral reform in the state. Though the Church did not have any legal binding or authority to enforce the people, its demands and expectations that were made in the form of appeals and requests during the electoral process had certainly influenced the voters. The fact that the Church and its activities had largely influenced the voter participation in the elections was acknowledged in the state. Comparisons of data relating to general elections of Mizoram Legislative Assembly held so far from post-statehood period, 1987-2013, are as given below:

Table No. 7: Comparison of Data on Voter Participation, 1987 to 2013

Year	1987	1989	1993	1998	2003	2008	2013
Men	163043	168638	201984	223252	264726	302489	340527
Women	158514	165256	190685	222104	267736	309129	350333
Total	321557	333894	402669	445356	532462	611618	690860
Votes Polled	233556	271339	324323	339902	418482	503665	576259
Percentage	72.63	81.26	80.67	76.32	78.59	82.35	83.41

Source: General Election to the 7<sup>th</sup> Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Statistical Report<sup>80</sup>

The given table shows that voter participation in Mizoram state Assembly elections increased comparatively, due to the role of the Church. The increase of voter participation in the polls shows that the citizens had become more aware and cautious about their franchise. Further, the distinctiveness of and credibility of voter participation in Mizoram Assembly elections was to a certain extent due to the role of Church that prevented muscle power, money power and other malpractices from dominating the election process.<sup>81</sup> And, the main factor behind this was attributed to the active role of the Church through various civil society organizations in the poll process.

<sup>80</sup> *General Election to the Seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2013, Statistical Report* (Aizawl: Directorate of Election, Government of Mizoram, 2014), p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> For instance, the votes polled percentage may be higher in some other parts of India, but it could be because of muscle power and money power. The researcher observed these malpractices in the recent Manipur Assembly elections. The researcher also observed the Mizoram Assembly elections 2013 but did not find any such malpractices.

## Peaceful Elections

Like any of the states in India, elections in Mizoram witnessed a keen and tough contest. But, the polling was conducted peacefully as no untoward incident during the polls was reported in the recent elections. Undeniably, this was considered to be a significant success that occurred due to the role of Church in the electoral process during the elections. The CEO of the Mizoram state, Ashwani Kumar, expressed gratitude that the churches and NGOs in the state made their concerted efforts in ensuring fair and peaceful elections. No major problem was witnessed that could perturb the election process across the state. And, it was successfully completed in a peaceful atmosphere, which was really appreciable, as was observed by the Chief Electoral officer.<sup>82</sup> He also thanked all the people of Mizoram, the churches and the voluntary organizations for all the steps that were taken in ensuring free and fair elections in the state. The role of the Church was considered very positive, as was assumed in the third hypothesis of this study. And then, its role was crucial in the smooth and fair conduct of elections in the state. But it has to be noted whether or not this trend would be sustained in the future elections so as to maintain a peaceful electoral process in the state, as was observed by some political parties.<sup>83</sup>

With the support and cooperation from Church and civil society organizations, the MPF worked with firmness and good sense to encourage cooperation and compliance, not only from the political parties and general public, but also from the insurgent groups. The flamboyant shows of money power and muscle power that was

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<sup>82</sup> “CEO Lauds People of Mizoram for Fair and Peaceful MLA Election,” *The Mizoram Post*, Vol 11 Issue 182 dated 27 November, 2013.

<sup>83</sup> According to J.V. Pahlira, Secretary, ZNP, the political parties respect the voice of the Church, but the Church did not reach political parties’ expectation, he further stated, this trend might continue but as of now it is difficult to say. Interviewed by the scholar at ZNP Gen. Hqrs, Aizawl, 25 September, 2014. Similar opinion seemed to be shared by Tawnluia, Senior Vice President, MNF, stating that “the Church influences some, but not all”. Interviewed by the scholar, at MNF Gen. Hqrs, Aizawl, 25 September, 2014.

witnessed in the earlier elections gradually disappeared after the establishment of the MPF. Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente stated, “This is not about religion, neither was it about politics. It was about the rights of the people in a democracy and the need to give priority”.<sup>84</sup> To lessen the burden of voters standing in long queues, the Young Mizo Association, one of the constituent members of MPF even arranged benches at the polling booths for voters to sit down and relax while waiting for their turn to cast their votes. The MPF volunteers even served tea to the voters in many places.

The people exercised their franchise under the watchful eyes of the Church spearheaded by the Mizoram People Forum. During the general elections of 2008 and 2013, to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, there was no report of any untoward incident from any part of the state and it was considered to be the most peaceful polling in the history of Mizoram. There can be no doubt that other states in India can look upon the elections in Mizoram as a model. Taking cognizance of the role of the Mizoram People Forum in bringing about reforms in the election, the ECI invited the representatives of MPF for a national Consultation on Voter’s Participation, wherein a number of activities and the roles played in the elections in Mizoram, since its inception in 2006, were noted and accepted for further deliberation.<sup>85</sup> Besides, the ECI, reputed organizations such as Transparency International, Gandhi Peace Foundation of India, Jindal Foundation have also come forward to recognize the contributions of the MPF in the reformation of electoral politics in Mizoram.

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<sup>84</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, *op. cit.*, p.254.

<sup>85</sup> Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, “Church and Election: The Role of Mizoram People Forum,” Paper presented at the Consultation on Election organized by Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC), May 25-26, 2011.

To sum up, the impact of Church and various civil society organizations in the political development of Mizoram is phenomenal. Involvement of civil society in the socio-political and economic spheres within the state enhances participatory governance and enhances people's faith in various institutions and democracy of the state. They act as a crucial link between public and government machineries, and a politically conscious and socially active civil society is the foundation of a democratic polity. The contributions of the Church in the field of education and social health were tremendously significant. Impact of the Church on the electoral process in Mizoram lay basically, not in the nature and extent of its various activities, but on the status and respect accorded to it by the people; respect for the institution of the church translated into respect for its activities in the minds of common people that often yielded positive results.

The Church-sponsored MPF acted on the basis of the "Election Guidelines" jointly agreed by the MPF and political parties which greatly reduced to a certain extent the activities such as buying votes, public feasts, house to house campaign, providing transportation, hiring singers and other entertainers, an overwhelming use of party flags, posters and banners by fixing the size and numbers of banners and posters. These greatly helped and contributed in doing away with many of the usual electoral malpractices and misconduct that often characterized the past elections. The impact of Church and various civil society organizations in the political development of Mizoram is phenomenal. Besides electoral reform in the state politics, the Church has widened its activities to include the issue of good governance, administrative reform and political education. The Church-sponsored MPF has been organizing seminars and consultations on good governance, social reform, administrative reform

and political education at different levels throughout the state. The participants of the seminars had felt the seminars organized by the MPF in different places of the state were beneficial for inculcating awareness among the citizens. The Church acts as a crucial link between public and government machineries. Thus, Church-polity engagement has had certain political implications as assumed in the third hypothesis. Besides, the Church-polity relation in the state is also being strengthened.

## CHAPTER V

### CHURCH AND POLITICS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

In Mizoram, Church and politics have depended on, and influenced each other more than ever before. Their relations were mutual and multifaceted, mutual because Church and politics have evolved over the years, taking material and symbolic support from each other. Historically, it is true that the weight of Church influenced the socio-political arrangement in Mizoram. In the same measure, any change in the political order, leading to political reforms will certainly alter the impact of religion on politics, providing new pressures, problems, and models so as to initiate proper actions. This chapter will discuss the relationship between Church and politics, and the engagement of Church associations in politics. The chapter also discusses the importance of keeping cordial relationship amongst various denominational churches in a dynamic and dialectical balance, giving full and equal weight to each other so as to have better cooperation towards politics. The discussions highlight problems and prospects that prevail in the context of Church and politics in Mizoram. Finally, the chapter analyzes the functioning style of Mizoram People Forum (MPF) which is the social political reform body of Church and civil society in Mizoram.

#### Model Relationship of Religion and Politics

Religion and politics are two of the most essential dimensions of human life. Religion is the expression of one's longing for ultimate meaning in life and striving towards transcendent identity. It is concerned with the ultimate values of human person and society and the realization of deepest human aspirations. Politics is the way of organizing secular life in order to achieve the common good and thereby the



conditions needed for realizing human values in society.<sup>1</sup> George V. Lobo, an Indian theologian describes the relationship between religion and politics as, “The belief that the two can be kept completely separate is an illusion. As expressions of the two most vital dimensions of human life, the vertical and the horizontal, they are bound to be closely interlinked even at times the link is less apparent”.<sup>2</sup> Apparently, the relationship between state and religion, particularly between state and Church has been a matter of great concern. The issue remains confusing and contentious for many Christians, as issues of political activism, religious freedom, and civil disobedience confront those seeking to understand this crucial relationship.<sup>3</sup> And the separation of Church and state is a philosophical and jurisprudential concept of defining political distance in the relationship between religious organization and the nation state. Conceptually, the term refers to the creation of a secular state (with or without legally explicit Church-state separation) and to disestablishment, the changing of an existing, formal relationship between the Church and the state.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the philosophy of separation of the Church from the civil state parallels the philosophies of secularism.

However, the relationship between state and Church may differ from country to country, in other words context to context. For instance, the medieval period were marked by struggles of power between emperors and kings with popes. In other word a struggle between Church and State.<sup>5</sup> It was only with the Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that any progress made toward religious freedom. Later on, Pope

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<sup>1</sup> George V. Lobo, S. J. *Church and Social Justice* (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1993), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> “What is the Relationship between Church and State?” <https://www.ligonier.org> , retrieved on August 22, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> “Separation of Church and State,” <https://en.wikipedia.org>, retrieved on August 22, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> “Church and State”, <https://www.britannica.com>, retrieved on June 14, 2019.

Leo XIII, late in the 19th century, summed it up this way: “The Almighty has appointed the charge of the human race between two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, the one being set over divine, the other over human things.” He also said: “Church and State are like soul and body and both must be united in order to live and function rightly.”<sup>6</sup> The phrase “separation of Church and State” is not found in the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence. In fact, it is not found in any of the nation’s founding documents. Related to government, the phrase first appeared in a letter written by Thomas Jefferson<sup>7</sup> to the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut. Jefferson had a great concern to separate the Anglican Church from the government in his home state of Virginia so that all other denominations could practice their faith without government penalty. He had contributed to ending the government-run religion in his state, so when he became president of the United States, the Baptist Churches and those from other denominations strongly supported Jefferson because he had fought for their freedom of religion, for their right to be free from state control in matters of faith.<sup>8</sup> In 1802, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. In that letter, referencing the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, Jefferson writes, “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions. I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus

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<sup>6</sup> “Uneasy Relationship Between Church and State”, <https://www.ucg.org>, retrieved on June 14, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Jefferson was the third President of the United States. His letter to the Danbury Baptists association is often quoted in debates regarding the separation of church and state.

<sup>8</sup> “How to Respond to ‘Separation of Church and State’”, <https://wallbuilders.com/respond-separation-church-state/>, retrieved on September 17, 2018.

building a wall of separation between Church and State”.<sup>9</sup> According to this letter, Jefferson was describing to the Baptists that the United States Bill of Rights prevents the establishment of a national Church, and in so doing they did not have to fear government interference in their rights to expressions of religious conscience. The Bill of Rights, adopted in 1791 as ten amendments to the Constitution of the United States was one of the earliest political expressions of religious freedom. Others were the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which was also authored by Jefferson and adopted by Virginia in 1786, and followed by the French Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen in 1789.<sup>10</sup> From the 1970s, a number of countries set up explicit barriers between Church and state. Of course, the degree of actual separation between government and religious institutions varies widely.<sup>11</sup> Different approaches often appear in the constitutions.

India being a secular country, there are no special provisions favoring specific religions in its constitution. The preamble of the Indian Constitution defines the scope of ideal of liberty, holds that it includes liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Right to Freedom of Religion (Arts 25 to 28) stands enshrined in the Constitution as one of the Fundamental Rights of an Indian citizen and as such enjoys a constitutional guarantee.<sup>12</sup> The Constitution of India embodies secularism in letter and spirit, and it is accepted as a principle affirming that there is no religion of the state as such, and that there is equality of all religions in the eyes of the law, freedom of religion for all the citizens, no discrimination on the basis of religion,

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<sup>9</sup> “Thomas Jefferson’s Letter to the Danbury Baptists”, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>, retrieved on August 22, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> “Separation of Church and State,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/separation\\_of\\_church\\_and\\_state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/separation_of_church_and_state) , retrieved on August 22, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> P.M. Bakshi, *The Constitution of India* (LexisNexis: Universal Law Publishing, 2016), p. 87.

freedom of the individual to accept and follow voluntarily any religion or faith or creed, freedom of each religious group to establish and maintain religious and philanthropic institutions, with their own organizational setups and prohibition of religious instruction in recognized, government and government-aided educational institutions.<sup>13</sup> However, the adoption of secularism in the Constitution and its actual practice in social relations demonstrate a wide gap. The state does not prefer any religion and yet maintains its relationship with all religions.<sup>14</sup> Right from the process of political socialization and leadership recruitment to the making and implementation of authoritative values, with the fortunate exception of judicial decisions, the religious factor plays an important role in Indian politics. Politicians are sometimes even accused of playing vote bank politics, i.e. of giving political support to issues for the sole purpose of gaining votes from members of particular community, including religious communities.

In Mizoram, both Church and State are considered to be two essential agencies through which both the spiritual and physical requirements of the people are pursued and met. Taking the concept and practice of secularism into account, a cordial working relationship could be established between the Church and the state without violating the constitution and law of the land. The effectiveness of good governance in political system will depend heavily upon the cordial relationship as well as cooperation between the Church and the State. Thus, citizens should also be aware of the respective responsibilities of the Church and state and atmosphere should be created in such a way that they work together with a cohesive spirit for proper governance in the political system. As most of the modern political systems are

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<sup>13</sup> U.R. Ghai, *op. cit.*, p.53.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

democratic systems, peoples' involvement in the political system is required now more than it was in the past. If the political authority and administrators alone are held responsible for governance without cooperation and support from the public and civil society, good governance will never be introduced and seen in the political system.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, imparting political awareness to the public in the right perspective is required so as to inculcate political awareness to the public, and civil society can play a great role in this regard. People's participation in political discussions has to be encouraged. Civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, people's organizations, trade unions, chambers of commerce, professional associations and even secular minded religious organizations should be encouraged, too. This will prove as a vital platform for practicing democratic procedures and civil behavior in the public domain.

Politics has to be seen as an exchange of relations among a range of public, private and voluntary organizations.<sup>16</sup> The Church has a tremendous role to play in the political process. Political systems can be reformed and effective governance can be enforced with the participation of all citizens, civil society and other agencies within the state. Seeing the importance of their role, the Church in particular and other civil society groups in general have played a significant role in the socio-political reformation of Mizoram that has brought about multiple implications. The popular civil society organizations in Mizoram are, Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP), Mizo

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<sup>15</sup> Jangkhongam Dounghel, *A Critique of Political System and Governance in Mizoram*, Paper, presented in Inter-College/University Faculty Seminar on "Political Vision of Mizoram", at Information & Public Relation Conference Hall, Aizawl. Organized by Aizawl Theological College on March 8, 2013, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Moses P. Manohar, *A New Political Paradigm for India-A Christian Perspective* (New Delhi & Chicago: Promilla & Co., Publishers in association with Bibliophile South Asia, 2009), p.253.

Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and Mizo Students Union (MSU). The Church along with other civil society organizations works together for electoral reforms and good governance in the state. In other words, the Church, civil society organizations and Election Commission all work in tandem to make the election process a truly democratic exercise.

### Church and Political Responsibility

It is generally understood that religion should not dominate politics nor should politics dominate religion. At the same time, the two cannot be kept apart, but should aim to achieve a harmony for the sake of people and society. A religious group can contribute to improve political culture and to form mentalities which will help citizens to understand themselves as responsible and participating members of their states. According to Gerhard Kruij, “The Christian idea of humanity does not offer a fixed status, rather it functions as a crucial challenge to constantly uphold social justice irrespective of physical or intellectual ability, creed, skin colour, origin or race”.<sup>17</sup> This is considered not only with respect to social issues, but also to societal order, the constitutional state, democracy as well as fundamental rights and freedom. In a state like Mizoram, politics depends on civil society and its participants and largely depend on the voice of the Church and its active involvement. The Church does not promote only Christian values in an abstract way, but also fights against corruption, against poverty, against social injustice and political implausibility. Since many of today’s problems cannot be solved at the regional or national level alone, the Church has another great advantage to promote social justice globally as most of the Church organizations are globally interconnected. Consciousness about the

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<sup>17</sup> Gerhard Kruij and Helmut Reifeld eds., *Church and Civil Society: The Role of Christian Churches in the Emerging Countries of Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa* (Berlin: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2007), p. 8.

utility of global networking has to be created and capacities for global intercultural understanding have to be promoted. The Church should promote the importance of religious factors and the role of Christian churches in development issues and to develop perspectives for more effective political action in favor of the citizens irrespective of races. George V. Lobo, S.J. (1923-1993) has given a good description of religion and political responsibility. He expresses that religion can play the role of transformation by inspiration and service or of division by contributing to communal conflicts. Christians must diligently seek the former goal. Of course, in some contexts, discussing the relationship between Church and State may be of little or no relevance. It would be better to speak of the relationship between religion and the State. The Church, as the sacrament of unity of mankind, must give the lead in achieving a proper harmony between religion and politics. The Church must renounce any tendency to interfere in the rightful autonomy of the secular and political spheres. Trying to get any special place or favor from the state would only be counterproductive in the long run.<sup>18</sup> According to George V. Lobo, religion and politics are interdependent and cannot be kept apart.

The Church should encourage its members to contribute to the achievement of a social order in which citizens will live in justice, peace, love and harmony. Today, the practices of secularism and secularization in modern democratic polity have been debated across the globe. The question of the relationship between Church and State, religion and politics, has moved to the forefront again. In Mizoram, it is generally accepted that the Church's mission is religious, not political, economic or social. At the same time the religious mission is not limited to the Church but includes socio-

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<sup>18</sup> George V. Lobo, S.J. *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.

political development of the people. In fact, the Church has been regarded as the chief reason for social and political development of the Mizo society. The churches in Mizoram have played a vital role in every aspect of political life as a whole in the state. Contribution of the Church in bringing about peace and normalcy in the state during the movement for statehood was a significant achievement in the political history of Mizoram. The Church continued to play its role of working for the socio-political development in the state. With the elevation of Mizoram Union Territory to full-fledged statehood, the focus of Church shifted more towards good governance and electoral reforms in state politics.

#### Church Engagement in Politics

Participation of Indian Christians in national politics during the non-co-operation movement was already highlighted in the first chapter. Even in the post-Independence period, a number of consultations have been held by the Church leaders in various parts of the country to imbue a sense of political responsibility among the Christians since 1950s. One of the main findings of the consultations was that the Christians need to be involved in politics in order to fulfill their responsibilities for the emancipation and progress of all sections of people suffering from social disabilities. Further, the consultations affirmed that the Christian participation in the life of state is a moral duty and a national obligation.<sup>19</sup> In Mizoram, the Church did not restrict its members to participate in politics during the formation of political parties. However, later on the Church reconsidered this stance and the divisive impact of political affiliations and the practice of corruption by political leaders, resulted in the Church restricting its workers' involvement in

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<sup>19</sup> M.M. Thomas, *Christian Participation in Nation-Building* (Bangalore: The National Christian Council of India and the CISRC, 1960), p. 49.



politics.<sup>20</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, stated “From this time onwards, people felt that a good Christian should not get involved in politics”.<sup>21</sup> This ideology of Church abstaining from politics is still in the minds of people. Even today, there are a number of churches such as Baptist Church of Mizoram, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army and Seventh-Day Adventist in Mizoram subscribing to the principle of separation of “Church and State”. . Hence, they did not join the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) which is the socio-political reform body of the state. R. Biakthansanga, President, Seventh-Day Adventist stated, “Adventist Church strictly follows the principle of separation of Church and state.” He further says, Seventh-Day Adventist is an international Church and unless the General Headquarters changes the Church constitution, it will be difficult to get involved in the state politics”.<sup>22</sup> The same opinion was shared by Rev. Chhiarpuaia, District Secretary United Pentecostal Church (Northeast India)<sup>23</sup> and K. Lalrinpuia, Salvation Army official, Territorial Youth and Public Relations Secretary.<sup>24</sup> The Baptist Church of Mizoram Assembly held in 2006 discussed the matter about whether to join the MPF or not. The matter was entrusted to the Administrative Committee to make a careful study; consequently, the committee proposed, as a church, not to join the MPF. As such, the Assembly Executive Committee which met on August 16-17, 2006 resolved not to involve the BCM in the MPF for some time.<sup>25</sup> They regarded that the uniqueness of Baptist Church from other denomination is the doctrine of “separation of Church and State.” These groups however allowed the Church members to

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<sup>20</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> In an interview with R. Biakthansanga, President Seventh-Day Adventist at his Residence, Seventh day Tlang, Aizawl on August 4, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> In an interview with Rev. Chhiarpuaia, District Secretary UPC-NEI District Headquarters, Aizawl on August 28, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> In an interview with K. Lalrinpuia, Salvation Army official at Salvation Army Headquarters, Aizawl on September 11, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> “Baptist Church of Mizoram Assembly Executive Committee Meeting,” August 16-17, 2006.

participate in politics in their individual capacity but not as a Church with the view that the state should not interfere in the Church matters and vice versa. Here it may be appropriate to quote the statement of P.D. Devanandan, one of the most popular Indian theologians, who says, “The Church, as the Church should not identify itself with any political party or program, but individual Christians should be free to take a stand”.<sup>26</sup>

The churches of Mizoram in general and the Presbyterian Church in particular have frequently discussed the engagement of Church in politics and how to classify the standpoint of the Church. The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram entrusted the matter to Synod Social Front (SSF).<sup>27</sup> Henceforth, the matter was dealt by the Synod Social Front. Ngursailova Sailo, General Secretary & Spokesperson of PRISM stated that the Church as a religious body should maintain neutrality in politics. He further appreciated the contribution of the Church in giving political education to the masses and spearheading the campaign for free and fair elections in the state.<sup>28</sup> Similar opinion was also expressed by Gary Haokip, spokesperson of BJP Mizoram Pradesh. While appreciating the role played by the Church for clean and fair elections through its social wing MPF, Haokip opined that Church should not allow its pastors or elders to speak about politics inside the Church which can mislead the people.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1989 Synod meeting, a number of proposals were put forward in relation to Church and politics such as, classification of the involvement of Church elders in

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<sup>26</sup> P.D. Devanandan, *Christian Issues in Southern Asia* (New York: Friendship Press, 1963), p. 120.

<sup>27</sup> Synod Social Front is the social wing of the Presbyterian Church of India, Mizoram Synod.

<sup>28</sup> In an interview with Ngursailova Sailo, General Secretary & Spokesperson, PRISM at his residence AICS, Tanhril on November 16, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Telephonic interview with Dr. Gary Haokip, Spokesperson, BJP Mizoram Pradesh on November 17, 2018.

politics and classification of the involvement of ordained leaders in politics. The Synod meeting discussed the proposals altogether and it was resolved that “since the matter was the ongoing work of the Synod Social Front, our discussion is enough”.<sup>30</sup> However, since the Synod meeting resolution did not satisfy the people, the proposal to make a guideline for the involvement of Church elders and leaders was put forward in the 1990 Synod meeting. At the meeting, it was observed that the political situation and the state administration have had a great impact on the life of people, and since the situation was going from bad to worse, the Church felt the need of sensitizing the people about the need of the right political system. Even many Church elders had got deeply involved in party politics, and have therefore often lost the trust of their congregations. Some malpractices were reported during the time of elections, thus nullifying ethical Christian principles.<sup>31</sup> After a long discussion, the Synod meeting resolved that “since the Synod Social Front has undertaken measures on the matter by publishing books and intends to organize seminars, the meeting did not find it necessary to make a guideline for the involvement of Church elders in politics”.<sup>32</sup> In the meantime, the involvement of some retired pastors in election campaigns were noticed in the 1998 state General Assembly elections. Consequently, the proposal to classify the involvement of retired pastors in politics was discussed in the 1998 Synod meeting. After a lengthy discussion, the Synod meeting resolved not to undertake any further deliberation on the issue.<sup>33</sup> Thereafter, the matter was fully taken over by the Synod Social Front Committee as entrusted by the Synod.

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<sup>30</sup> Synod meeting Resolution Gen.No 11-13 of 1989,

<sup>31</sup> R. Chhuanliana, Synod Social Front, p. 173.

<sup>32</sup> H. Lalringthanga, op. cit., p. 261.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

The Presbyterian Church of Mizoram through its Synod Social Front Committee continues imparting political education to the people. One of the important guidelines for the framework is “to guide the Church members on socio-political-economic life to follow Christian principles”.<sup>34</sup> The Synod Social Front imparted awareness to the masses about politics through political education. The Church adopted different means for ensuring political reforms in the state by conducting seminars, consultations and awareness campaigns and other activities.<sup>35</sup> Through political education, the Church emphasized the importance of clean administration in the state government through free and fair elections. The Church imparted political education to the voters so that they could participate in the government, through elections. The Synod Social Front effectively contributed towards the electoral reforms through seminars, campaigns, publication of books and pamphlets. The political education campaigns were aimed at educating the voters on ethical meaning of the term “politics”, what it encompasses, how it should function, what political rights they have as citizens of the state. The campaigns also emphasized the demerits and dangers of party politics, the need to elect candidates on the basis of personality rather than the party candidates. Further, the campaigns to cleanse the electoral system through political education have been continuing in the state. Hence, the political education campaigns have constructively contributed and have influenced the people to a certain extent. It is even acknowledged by political parties as well as different sections of people in the state.

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<sup>34</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op. cit.*, 262.

<sup>35</sup> In an interview with Lalrosanga Colney, Synod Social Front, at Synod Office, Aizawl, on September 25, 2015.

### Coordination among Churches towards Political Involvement

In Mizoram, apart from other civil society organizations, there are two main organizations established by the Church bodies owing to the state politics, namely, Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (ZKHC) later renamed as Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (MKHC) and the Mizoram People Forum (MPF). The MKHC was established under the name Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (Zoram Church Leaders Committee) during the political movements which started from 1966. After a decade of political turmoil peace talks were initiated from 1976 but due to differences of opinions between the Mizo National Front and the Indian Government, the peace talks concluded negatively and worsened the situation. It was in this atmosphere that a conglomerate of various denominational churches in Mizoram was formed in 1982 at the request of Admiral S.N. Kohli, the then Lieutenant Governor of Mizoram, with the purpose of raising its voice to bring peace in Mizoram. Hence, the ZKHC took all possible attempts towards bringing peace in the state, and it became the peace emissary between the Indian Government and the MNF. In short, due to the untiring initiatives taken by the Church leaders, a historic “Memorandum of Settlement on Mizoram” was signed on June 30, 1986 between the Indian Government and the MNF. After the Peace Accord, the MKHC continues to exist as an ecumenical body of various denominational churches in Mizoram. The MKHC continues to carry out its mission of eradicating immoral living due to abuse of drugs and alcoholic products, and to educate people about participating in the right kind of social and political movements.

Another notable organization, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) was formed with the initiative of various denominational churches and prominent NGOs of Mizoram

in 2006. The main objectives of the MPF are electoral reforms, political education, good governance, advocacy and awareness. Since its inception, the MPF has constructively contributed towards good governance and electoral reforms in the state politics. In particular, its contribution towards electoral reforms is significant. The yeomen service of MPF is now recognized within and outside Mizoram for its role in the state electoral reforms. Even the Election Commission of India had officially appreciated the role of Church and its social wing, MPF.

However, in spite of all its contributions in the state politics, there are certain problems and challenges regarding Church participation in the MPF. Particularly, the conflicting perspectives on the relationship between Church and State held by various denominational churches have been the main obstacle for some churches to join the MPF. This has led to an imbalanced representation and participation of churches in the MPF. As Rev. Dr. R. Lalbiakmawia, General Secretary of the MPF pointed out, “the imbalanced participation of Churches in the MPF is a result of disunity among the Churches in Mizoram”.<sup>36</sup> The question, if imbalanced participation of the churches in MPF can affect relationship among churches regarding their involvement in Mizoram politics was posed by the researcher in the questionnaire. Nearly half (46.4%) of the respondents indicated that the imbalanced participation affects Church-polity relations in Mizoram. One third (33.1%) of the respondents were not certain while 20.5% of the respondents indicated that this imbalance has no impact. An analysis of the responses shows that there is no consensus among the various denominational churches in Mizoram regarding the role of MPF in the state politics. Thus, there is a need to consider whether creating

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<sup>36</sup> In an interview with Rev. Dr. R. Lalbiakmawia, General Secretary, MPF at MPF General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 19, 2018.

electoral reform pressure groups outside the religious (Church) body can be encouraged in Mizoram so as to include all likeminded associations and civil society groups in the state. R.B. Lalmalsawma, President, Mizo Students' Union is of the opinion that, to ensure more inclusive and equal participation in the electoral reforms of Mizoram state politics, the Joint NGOs Coordination Committee of Mizoram can take up the matter.<sup>37</sup>

However, it is doubtful whether the political parties and voters will respect and cooperate with the Joint NGOs Coordination Committee even if they form an electoral reform pressure group. The political parties and candidates respect the voice of MPF by virtue of it being a Church body. Respondents were asked if they think creating an electoral reform pressure group outside religious (Church) association can be formed in Mizoram. Over one third (38.4%) of the respondents responded positively and agreed that an electoral reform pressure group outside religious activities should be encouraged. Nearly a quarter (21.8%) of the respondents did not agree as they believed that without the involvement of the Church, implementing electoral reforms will not be effective. More than one third (39.8%) of the respondents were uncertain whether forming an electoral pressure group outside the Church will work or not. Analysis of the responses indicates general agreement that there is no better organization other than the Church to reform the state politics. Thus, the role of Church in socio-political reformation of Mizoram is still important and valid for the people in the state. Yet, there is the need for greater achievement and more inclusive participation of the churches in the electoral reforms of Mizoram politics. Participation of the churches in electoral reform in Mizoram needs to be

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<sup>37</sup> In an interview with R.B. Lalmalsawma, President, Mizo Students' Union at MSU General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 13, 2018.

reconsidered for ensuring the stability of Church-polity relations, as the participation of churches is not balanced within the MPF. There is a need to find ways to bring more churches and other civil society organizations to join the MPF.

Furthermore, even if all denominational churches cannot come together under the banner of MPF due to their doctrinal differences, the Church and other civil society organizations in Mizoram can issue a common “election guidelines” which can then be adopted elsewhere in the country. The Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee (MKHC) which is the ecumenical body of all denominational churches in Mizoram can formulate “election guidelines” on behalf of the various churches. The same “election guidelines” issued by the MKHC can be adopted and utilized by various denominational churches of the state. Respondents were asked whether it would be possible for Church and other civil society organizations to issue a common “election guidelines”, particularly among the various denominational churches in Mizoram. The opinions of the respondents about having a common “election guidelines” are as given below:

Table No. 8. Having uniformity in issuing election guidelines

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	85	56.3
2	No	25	16.5
3	Can't say	41	27.2
	Total	151	100

(Source: Primary Data)



The above table shows that over half (56.3%) of the respondents welcomed the prospect of uniformity in issuing “election guidelines” for political parties, candidates and voters by churches and civil societies. Only a relatively low minority (16.5%) of the respondents expressed disagreement while over a quarter (27.2%) of the respondents were unable to express their opinion. Analysis of the responses shows that the majority of the respondents were interested in having consensus and forming a united front for clean, free and fair elections in the state. It is clear indication that the majority of the people in Mizoram want Church and civil society, particularly churches to have uniformity in issuing “election guidelines”. By doing so, this model of electoral reform can be encouraged and emulated in other states as well. Besides, this will ensure the stability of Church-polity relations in the state.

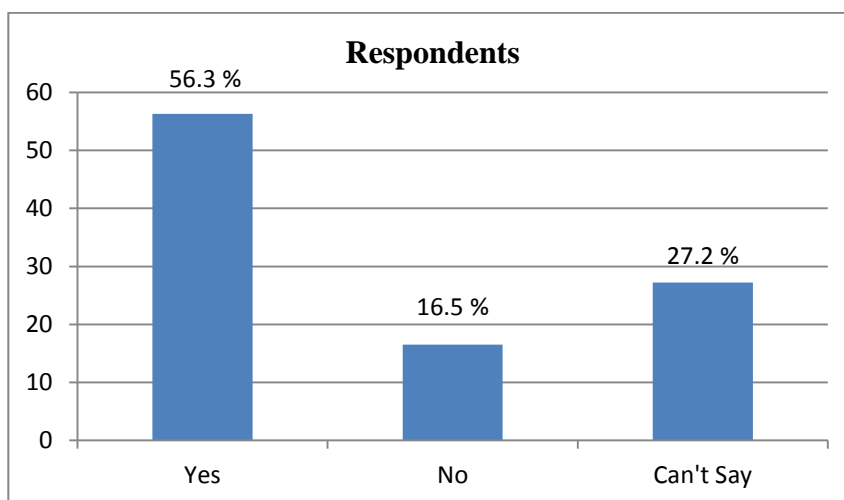


Figure No. 3: Having uniformity in issuing election guidelines

#### Endorsement of Political Party by Church Leaders

Opinion on the active involvement of Church leaders such as ordained ministers and retired pastors in politics is varied. The Pacific Justice Institute (PJI), one of the

study centers on religious freedom and civil liberties, has profoundly recommended the involvement of pastors in politics. According to this center, “Although ministers cannot publicly endorse candidates on behalf of the churches they work for, they can do so in their capacity as private individuals. Ministers do not lose their protected right to free speech simply because they are an employee of a church as long as the political endorsement is not made at official church functions, it is not prohibited. To this extent, for purposes of identification, a pastor may even identify himself or herself as a member of the clergy in a public endorsement so long as they make it clear that the endorsement is not that of the Church for which they work”.<sup>38</sup> Further, they also accepted that pastor’s name and the name of the Church he or she represents can be used in a political advertisement as long as the advertisement is paid for by the candidate or party on the basis that it is only the view of the minister and not the official position of the Church. However, it is not acceptable for a pastor to state in church, even with the disclaimer that it is only their personal opinion, that he or she endorses a particular candidate or political party. Moreover, it is restricted if a clergy member puts his or her personal endorsement of a candidate on the church letterhead, church bulletin and other church literature. On the other hand, pastors are allowed to publicly endorse a particular candidate or party as long as it is not a church function. Further, the pastors are permitted to speak at community gatherings and political meetings as long as they make it clear that it is only their personal endorsement and not the endorsement of the church. And, the pastors should make it very clear when participating in any political committees and events that they are acting as an individual, in their own right, and not as a representative of a particular church.

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<sup>38</sup> “The Church and Politics”, [www.pacifijustice.org](http://www.pacifijustice.org) , retrieved on August 7, 2018.

In Mizoram, the Church did not restrain its leaders from participating in political activities during the initial period. Some of the church leaders even became political party leaders. For instance, when the People's Conference was formed under the leadership of Brig. T. Sailo, one of their leaders, Rev. Sakhawliana was appointed as its Vice President.<sup>39</sup> However, the participation of church leaders in political activities gradually became a subject of public debate as some of them appeared to be extremists in their involvement. As a result, in 1949, the Church issued a restriction for its workers to get involved in politics, and since then Church leaders have been unable to actively participate in the state politics.<sup>40</sup> But a new political development was seen in the history of electoral politics in Mizoram when Church leaders and retired pastors became active political party leaders and contested the elections in 2018. For instance, Rev. Dr. K. Thanzauva, prominent Church leader and former General Secretary and President of the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) joined Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) which is a newly formed political party in Mizoram. He contested from Lunglei South constituency. However, the involvement of retired pastors and church leaders in politics has raised many questions –Whether it should be the right political movement for bringing in reforms or it is unnecessary involvement of pastors and church leaders in politics. According to L. Ramdinliana Renthlei, President, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), “There is no problem of joining an active political party by Church leaders and retired pastors, if the person is accountable and has a political conviction for transformation of the society”.<sup>41</sup> Similar opinion was expressed by Rev. Dr. R. Lalbiakmawi, General Secretary of the MPF, “If the person says that he received a called from God to get involved in

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<sup>39</sup> H.C. Thanhanga, op. cit. p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, op. cit., p. 294.

<sup>41</sup> In an interview with L. Ramdinlian Renthlei, President MZP at Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 18, 2018.

politics to reform society then we should accept, for not many pastors will join political parties”.<sup>42</sup> Christopher Lun, Secretary, Good Will Foundation said, “After retirement from active service from the Church, if any ordained minister is willing to join any political party, there should be no objection. They can also contribute better than normal politicians”.<sup>43</sup> Rev. Lalrotluonga Darngawn, Regional Secretary, Evangelical Free Church of India was of the opinion that some ordained ministers have joined active politics probably due to challenges that have arisen in the society on account of political leaders’ failure to carry out their responsibility . However, he also observed that active participation in politics may not be necessary, and that the minister can still play an active role in reforming the political system through existing civil society organizations like the MPF.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, there are people who are totally opposed to the involvement of church leaders in active politics. Rev. Chhiarpuia, District Secretary, United Pentecostal Church Northeast India, strongly opposed the joining of political parties by church leaders. He opined, “The United Pentecostal Church never allowed and will not allow any ordained minister to join political parties”<sup>45</sup>. Similar opinion was shared by Father James Zodinliana, Roman Catholic Church, who stated, “It is not encourage for ordained ministers to join political parties and active government service because once the person is ordained to minister to the church members, it is

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<sup>42</sup> In an interview with Rev. Dr. R. Lalbiakmawia, MPF General Secretary at Mizoram People Forum, General Headquarters Office, Aizawl On July 24, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> In an interview with Christofer Lun, Secretary, Good Will Mission Foundation at his residence Chanmari, Aizawl on August 28, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> In an interview with Rev. Lalrotluonga Darngawn, Regional Secretary at Evangelical Free Church of India Regional Headquarters , Aizawl on September 4, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> In an interview with Rev. Chhiarpuia, District Secretary at UPC-NEI District Headquarters , Aizawl on August 28, 2018.

for lifelong service”.<sup>46</sup> Apart from the matter of whether to accept the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors in the active politics, there are also different opinions about the issues. K. Lalrinpuia, a Salvation Army official expressed that retired persons either from the church or government sector should not be encouraged to join active politics. He further stated that if they are interested, they should resign from their active service before retirement and join politics.<sup>47</sup> The same opinion was shared by NGO leaders like R. Lalngheta, Vice President, Central Young Mizo Association<sup>48</sup> and R.B. Lalmalsawma, President, Mizo Students’ Union. R.B. Lalmalsawma observed that the joining of political parties by ordained ministers could mislead the common people.<sup>49</sup> While appreciating the joining of political party by church leaders, R. Tlanghmingthanga, Vice President & Ex. minister MNF was doubtful whether they would do better politics. He opined that an ordained minister joining active politics is good because politics is service to God and service to humankind. According to him, it is important to consider the reason behind church leaders joining politics. If their only motive is for development, there will be people better than them who have more knowledge about economic growth and development.<sup>50</sup> In the interviews conducted by the study finds that there are many opinions on the joining of active political party by ordained ministers. In addition to the interviews of Church and civil society leaders, the researcher posed the question on the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors in the questionnaire as well. The details of responses by questionnaire respondents about

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<sup>46</sup> In an interview with Father James Zodinliana, Roman Catholic at Bishop’s House, Ramthar Veng, Aizawl on September 9, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> In an interview with K. Lalrinpuia, Salvation Army Official, Territorial Youth and Public Relation Secretary at Salvation Army Headquarters, Aizawl on September 11, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> In an interview with R. Lalngheta, Vice President, Central Young Mizo Association at CYMA office, Aizawl on September 13, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> In an interview with R.B. Lalmalsawma, President, Mizo Students’ Union General Headquarters, at MSU General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 13, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> In an interview with R. Tlanghminthanga, Vice President, MNF at Mizo National Front, General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 11, 2018.

the political involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors are as given in the following table:

Table No. 9: Involvement of ordained ministers in politics

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	76	50.4
2	Disagree	41	27.1
3	Can't say	34	22.5
	Total	151	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The above table shows that half (50.4%) of the respondents agreed that the joining of active political parties by ordained ministers and retired pastors is good. Over a quarter (27.1%) of the respondents did not agree while 22.5% of the respondents could not specify whether the involvement of ordained ministers in politics is good or bad. The analysis of the responses shows that majority of the respondents are in favor of the participation of church and ordained ministers in politics. It may be assumed that these people felt the need of church involvement in politics with the hope that the interference of Church leaders in politics will bring justice to the society. However, in the light of interviews of political leaders, church and civil society leaders regarding the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors in politics, it is clear that opinion is varied. Thus, it may be concluded that there is no clear consensus yet on the involvement of ordained leaders in politics.

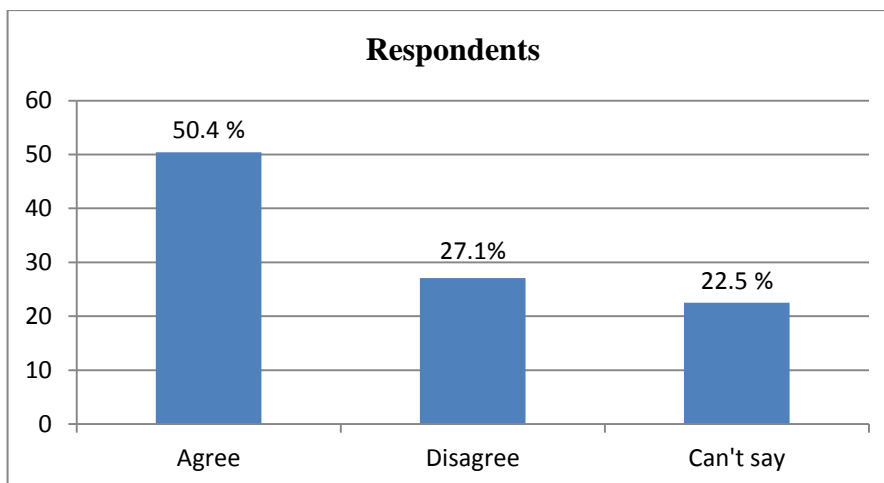


Figure No. 4: Involvement of ordained ministers in politics

#### Problems and Prospects of Church Role in Electoral Politics

There is no doubt that religion plays a crucial role in the Indian elections. The influence of religion is evident in almost all spheres of electoral politics such as, selection of candidates for contesting elections, the allocation of constituencies to various political party candidates, the election campaigns organized by political parties, the exercise of franchise, the formation of ministries, and in the process of policy making. In various places, religion is the main factor influencing voting behavior. In certain cases, religious places are misused as dens of political leaders, that even influence the process of government making. Ministers and elected members are described as Sikh ministers, Muslim ministers, Hindu ministers and non-Hindu ministers. In Christian majority areas, where various denominational churches co-exist, ministers are often described as the Presbyterian ministers or the Baptist ministers. However, though these are not official description, they do indicate the influence of religion on politics. Studies on voting behavior in India often bring out the fact that religion is an important determinant of people's choice of candidates

in elections. The political parties, both those which are based on a particular religion and those which are secular do not hesitate to canvass for their candidates in the name of religion. For instance, “The Kerala Communists have always used the religious factor to gain majority in the state legislature”.<sup>51</sup> Studies and observations such as these clearly indicate that religion is a reality of Indian politics. Therefore, it cannot be ignored, overlooked, nor even eliminated. But by adopting secularism as a principle of equal respect for and equality of all religions, and by cultivating a rational love for religious values, which is more or less the same in all religions, the harmful and negative role of religion can be replaced by a positive, healthy and unifying role of religion in Indian politics.

The importance of religion in electoral politics is not a new feature in Mizoram politics, with religion playing a visible role from as early as the first Union Territory elections in 1972. Since then, the Church has acted as a watchdog to ensure the smooth and fair conduct of elections. The Church has played a constructive role in the electoral process and good governance in the state. The Church along with likeminded civil society organizations joined together in a popular alliance, and generated a strong voice in the poll process. This involvement ranged from debating the issue internally, drawing up and implementing the model code of conduct to guard against unlawful practices in the elections, the root cause of corruption in politics. Today, churches both in the developed and the developing world are well-placed to make a high-profile stand against corruption. The appropriate starting point of Church action would be preaching, and discussion on the issues, in the social congregations. A key role for the Church could be in the form of monitoring the

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<sup>51</sup> U.R. Ghai, *op. cit.*, p.55.



government's implementation of public policies. Transparency and access to information are the main prerequisites for such a public program. Donor governments could insist on such transparency access as part of the aid packages. This would lead not only to effective use of aid money, but also to empowering of the local people and strengthening of democracy. Similarly, a key issue for the Church and civil society in developed countries like the UK, as well as in the EU, is about the tightening anti-corruption legislations.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the role of the Church is to ensure the victory of democratic projects in the long run. All that the Church has to do is to provide various actors with the values, space and inspiration to battle for strengthening democracy.

Further, when one talks about the role of Church in combating electoral reforms, one mainly looks at it more as a battle for free and fair elections. In a state like Mizoram, there is no doubt that the Church could create effective pressure for ensuring policy reforms in the electoral process.<sup>53</sup> The task of administrative accountability and procedural simplification could be achieved if vigilant and active civil society organizations undertake the responsibility of interacting with the government organizations and political parties. The Church could engage constructively to get needed support for ensuring the necessary reforms. The Church could play a significant role in the electoral process by using various methods and resources available. For instance, today, people's participation in elections and taking part in governance is acknowledged as a basic human right in every region of the world. "Universally, the right to take part in government is proclaimed and guaranteed by

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<sup>52</sup> Sanjay Kumar Jha, "Impact of Political on Democracy and Economic Development in India: Some Issues and Reflections". *The Indian Journal of Political Science* Vol. LXXIV. No. 1. January to March 2013, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> Alaknanda Shringare, "Corruption: The Need for Civil Society Engagement", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. LXXIV. No. 3, July-September, 2013, p. 466.

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and is recognized in many other treaties and declarations”.<sup>54</sup>

The United Nations Human Rights Charter has set up some standards regarding elections in general. The basic standards are certain international standards on elections that involve three central rights such as, the right to take part in government, the right to vote and to be elected, and the right to equal access to public service. As such, the Church along with other CSOs can apply all its resources to reform the electoral system in the state. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has stated that the will of people would be the basis of any authority of the government. The relevant charter paragraph reads as in the Article 21 of the Universal Declaration, “Everyone has the right to take part in government of his/her country, directly or through chosen representatives. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in the country. The will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government, this be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures”.<sup>55</sup> The United Nations Human Rights charter also emphasizes non-discrimination; that the enjoyment of the rights listed shall be without distinction of any kind such as, race, color, sex, language, property, birth or other status. It also provides for equal enjoyment by women of these rights, and outlaws discrimination on the basis of race. Further, voters can also bring the cases of malpractices in the elections to the notice of the concerned authority so as to act effectively on such cases. Through its functions, the Church and other civil society groups can pressurize the authority for ensuring a polity that reform and improves

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<sup>54</sup> *Centre for Human Rights, Human Rights and Elections: A Handbook on the Legal, Technical and Human Rights Aspects of Elections*, New York and Geneva, 1994, p.13.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

governance, in addition to explicitly monitoring the state in the electoral process. Like elsewhere in the mainstream Indian polity, in Mizoram as well, there is need for initiating concerted and meaningful action towards the process of political modernization.

The theory of Church influence on election politics of India can be traced back to the twentieth century, when the theology of social gospel movement had awakened various churches and Christians to come out to participate in public life. The movement addressed different issues like political democracy, economic injustice, war and peace, racial equality. The movement also believed that the task of the Church is to prepare Christians to participate responsibly in the political structure as citizens, political leaders, bureaucrats and party workers. The concept of social action is understood as the corporate involvement of the Church in shaping and reforming politics and social structure.<sup>56</sup> This theology of social reform movement influenced various church leaders in different parts of the world. Consequently, the Church had begun to raise her voice for socio-political reform. Sebastain Karotemprel stated, “In a number of states, Christians are holding the reign of government and in control of political parties. One would expect Christian administrations to have a heart of social justice, honesty in administration, social responsibility and accountability to the public. On the contrary, several Christian politicians and administrators have amassed huge amounts of wealth”.<sup>57</sup> This holds true in the case of Mizoram as well. With the growth of economy, money power has

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<sup>56</sup> Martin H. Scharlemann, *The Church's Social Responsibilities* (London: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), p. 47.

<sup>57</sup> Sebastian Karotemprel, “Harmony and National Integration through Culture and Development”, in *Christian Contribution to Nation Building: A Third Millennium Enquiry*, ed. Selvester Ponnunathan (Cochin: Documentary Committee of CBC-KCBC National Celebration of the Jubilee of St. Thomas and St. Xavier, 2004), p. 60.

influenced the voters and elections have become more and more expensive affairs in the state. Politics has become so commercialized and the entire political activity has become so twisted that the funds meant for the people are being showered on party workers. In the absence of proper development efforts for progress, poverty and unemployment has increased in the rural areas, whereas a few privileged in the urban areas are the recipients of most of the benefits. This has resulted in discontentment and loss of faith in the government. Political parties blame each other on the issue of practicing corruption. Thus, the Church, unable to disregard and dismiss all the evil effects of corruption, has come out to raise awareness level among the people.

#### Electoral Reforms

In a democracy, the will of the people prevails and elections are accepted as an important political process of bringing about change in government. The undemocratic electoral system can distort the people's will and destroy their faith and commitment to democracy. At the same time, no electoral system by itself can ensure the effective working of democracy or full observance of its norms if the society is infested with hatred, jealousy, narrow-mindedness, ignorance, and lack of disciplined life. In this regard, an educational program for building up the personality and character of the Church can play a constructive role, whereas in regard to the development of a workable and realistic electoral system, it is the responsibility of such institutions as the Assembly, political parties, the leadership, besides the political elite of the society. And of course, the Church and other civil society bodies at large have to work out implementable solutions on the basis of popular consensus. It is necessary to take some concrete steps for ensuring that democracy in India is provided with a rich soil and suitable atmosphere for its healthy growth. In spite of

its traditional social structure, India had accepted the system of parliamentary democracy with the hope that social, economic and political transformation could be brought about in a peaceful manner. Besides her one billion plus population and unity in diversity, the greatness of India lies in a strong democracy and a stable electoral system. While India had established formal democracy, there have been operational problems in the working of democracy and, also in the making of its popular will effective in a country marked by a varied social structure, and rich diversity. The entire problem of electoral reforms can be viewed through the perspective of the socio-economic structure of Indian society, its political system, and the political climate. Absence of political freedom for the electorate, influence of the caste system, community and money power, and the lack of integrity and discipline in the political parties and their leaders are some principal factors that have hampered the process of electoral reforms. In this context, the Church and other civil society organizations have the responsibility to engage constructively to get the needed political and social support for ensuring the necessary reforms in the electoral system. The task of administrative accountability and procedural simplification can be achieved if vigilant and active civil society organizations take up the responsibility of interacting with the government organizations as well as political parties.

In Mizoram, it is widely noticed that the contribution of Church in electoral reforms has been remarkable. The more pro-active role of the Church in electoral reforms was noticed after the establishment of Mizoram People Forum (MPF) in 2006. From its inception, the Church sponsored Mizoram People Forum (MPF) tried to tackle political corruption and malpractices, bribery, threats and enticement with money

which were rampant in the elections, and to educate the voters. Beginning from 2006, the MPF along with political parties and other civil society organizations discussed ways and means for clean, free and fair elections, to incur less expenditure in the election, stop the practice of buying votes, use of muscle power and others.<sup>58</sup> Various suggestions and measures were incorporated. The Executive Committee of the MPF took up the matter seriously, and refined and filtered all the suggestions that were given. Consequently, the “election guidelines” were followed by the political parties and their candidates in the state thereafter, with a few modifications and additions from time to time. The Church significantly contributed in reforming the electoral process in Mizoram. The electoral reforms initiative by the Church in the state politics is noteworthy. The MPF had performed great tasks by effectively supervising and surveying elections at different levels, starting from the Village Council to that of election of Member of Parliament. The MPF played a pro-active role in ensuring electoral reforms and good governance in Mizoram, through educating people by organizing seminars, workshops, consultations and talks, whereby the voter awareness was raised significantly.<sup>59</sup> The MPF programs have imparted ethical values and political integrity to the people of Mizoram. Further, the MPF consulted various political parties on the eve of elections and concluded an acceptable agreement with them for conducting peaceful elections. The Church leaders and political parties coordinated with mutual respect for electoral reforms in the state, through the activities undertaken by the MPF. The awareness campaigns and seminars were conducted at different levels such as, State, District and Constituency levels, as well as the local level.<sup>60</sup> The MPF works with firmness and

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<sup>58</sup> *The Presbyterian Review* XII, 44, July-September, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> *Mizoram People Forum Work Plan for 2013 MLA Election*, Aizawl.

<sup>60</sup> For instance, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Mizoram Assembly elections, the MPF had conducted awareness campaigns and seminars in the following places, East Tuipui Constituency on July 2, 2013, Tuivawl

good sense through eliciting proper cooperation and compliance from the political parties, candidates and voters, so that neither money, muscle power nor political electoral violence can hinder the free exercise of people's franchise in the elections. Thus, the roles played by the MPF towards electoral reforms in the state elections were generally appreciated. The details of respondents' opinion about the role of MPF in electoral reforms are as given below:

Table No. 10: Opinion about the role of MPF in electoral reforms

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Positive	106	70.2
2	Negative	11	7.3
3	Can't say	34	22.5
	Total	151	100

(Source: Primary Data)

The given table shows that the majority (70.2%) of the respondents agreed that the role of MPF on electoral reforms in state elections has a positive impact. Only a relatively few (7.3 %) respondents did not support the role of MPF while nearly a quarter (22.5%) were uncertain whether MPF has a positive or negative impact. Analysis of the responses shows that most of the people accept the constructive role of MPF in the state elections.

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Constituency on July 17, 2013, Kolasib District on July 24, 2013, Tawi Constituency on July 24, 2013, Saitual Town on July 27-28, 2013, Lungpho Area on August 3-4, 2013, Champhai District on August 14, 2013, Tuichang Area on August 15, 2013, Hachhek Constituency on August 27, 2013, Mamit District on August 28, 2013, Serchhip District on September 4, 2013, Tuikum Constituency on September 5, 2013, Lengteng Constituency on September 19, 2013 and Chalfilh Constituency on September 18, 2013.

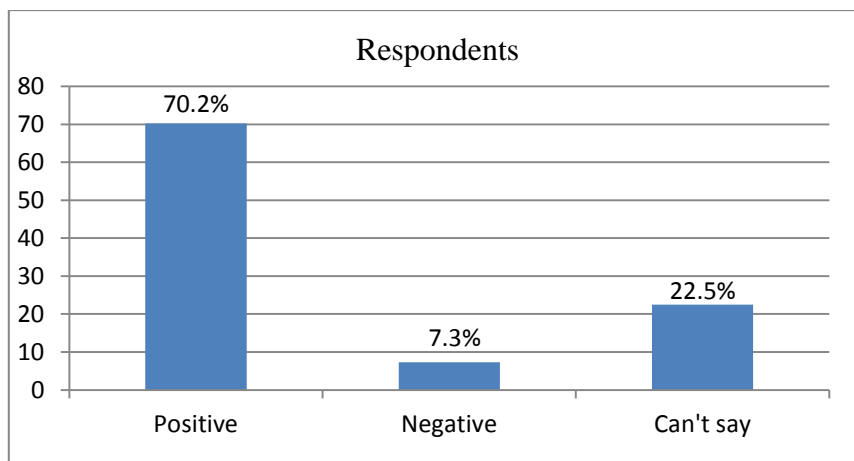


Figure No. 5: Opinion about the role of MPF in electoral reforms

The organization of joint platform during the election campaigns for candidates of political parties instead of the traditional independent campaigns in the public domain was responsible for reducing election expenditures to a large extent. The MPF even restricted and prescribed the election issues of the candidates for their public speeches in such platforms. As a result of such efforts of the Church, the election expenses were considerably reduced, and elections had become more peaceful, free and fair. According to Father James Zodinliana, “The political party candidates respect Church sponsored MPF role on electoral reforms that reduced election expenditure to a great extent”.<sup>61</sup> The Church has always tried to influence the electoral process but the influence and impact of Church-polity coordination was felt mostly after the establishment of MPF. This opinion was shared by eminent citizens and political parties in the state as well. For instance, Lahlhiansual Sailo, General Secretary, MPCC and Upa Lalremthanga, former General Secretary of MPF shared the similar opinion that “The Church had been advocating such a relationship

<sup>61</sup> In an interview with Father James Zodinliana, Secretary to Bishop at Bishop’s House Ramthar Veng, Aizawl on September 18, 2018.



for years” and as such elections were conducted in a peaceful atmosphere.<sup>62</sup> Sailo further stated, “This Church-polity relationship will set a new trend in the electoral process”. And, the fact that the Church and its activities had largely influenced the electoral process in the elections was acknowledged within and outside the state. Though the Church did not have any legal binding or authority to enforce its viewpoints on the people, its demands and expectations that were made in the form of appeals and requests during the electoral process influenced the voters.

Further, despite the Church’s constructive contribution in electoral politics, there are certain critical points that need further discussion with regard to the role of Church in the electoral process. That the Church had played a big role in influencing electoral politics through public participation is not a new phenomenon. The MPF undertook strong measures for free and fair elections with the help of its district and local forums. As such, the role of MPF during the time of elections was recognized by the state government and even the Election Commission. However, the imbalanced participation of churches in MPF has posed a big question on how long and to what extent the MPF can influence the people of Mizoram as some major churches have not joined the MPF. This shows that the decision of all denominational churches in the state with regard to the role of MPF in electoral politics was not a unanimous decision. Further, this has affected the relationship of churches in Mizoram.

Close to half (46.4%) of the respondents to the questionnaire agreed that imbalanced participation of the churches in MPF has affected Church relationship among various denominations. However, 20.5% of respondents cannot believe that unequal

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<sup>62</sup> In an interview with Lalhlianzuala Sailo, General Secretary, MPCC on September 25, 2014, and a telephone interview with Upa Lalremthanga, General Secretary, MPF, General Hqrs, Aizawl, on December 16, 2014.

participation of the churches in MPF would affect Church-polity relations while one third (33.1%) respondents were uncertain about it. Analysis of the responses shows that majority of the people believed that the unequal participation of churches in the MPF has affected unity of the churches in Mizoram. In addition, it emerges that there was no consensus among various denominational churches on the extent to which the Church should involve in the electoral politics. Moreover, there are also some critical areas that were pointed out by some Church leaders about the organizational structure of the MPF. Father James Zodinliana, mentioned that some churches will not join the MPF until and unless the MPF changes its structure, because the present set up of MPF is dominated by the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.<sup>63</sup> In the same manner, Rev. Chhiarpuaia also expressed that the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram assimilated smaller churches who are constituent members of the MPF.<sup>64</sup> Rev. Dr. Rodingliana, Executive Secretary of the Baptist Church of Mizoram stated, “If the MPF goes with this trend, it is dangerous, because the Presbyterian Church dominates too much”.<sup>65</sup> Another church leader, agreeing with R. Biakthansanga, President of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church expressed that “The role of MPF has certain positive impact on Mizoram politics. However, to involve in politics is not our calling as a Church, there can be free and fair election without MPF, free and fair election was there even before the existence of MPF”.<sup>66</sup>

The opinion expressed by church leaders indicates that they were not ready to join the MPF which is the socio-political reform forum of the state. Thus, in the light of

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<sup>63</sup> In an interview with Father James Zodinliana, Roman Catholic at Bishop’s House Ramthar Veng, Aizawl on September 18, 2018.

<sup>64</sup> In an interview with Rev. Chhiarpuaia, District Secretary, United Pentecostal Church Northeast India at UPC-NEI Headquarters, Aizawl on August 29, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> In an interview with Rev. Dr. Rodingliana, former Executive Secretary, Baptist Church of Mizoram at Baptist House, Aizawl on 19 September, 2014.

<sup>66</sup> In an interview with R. Biakthansanga, President Seventh-Day Adventist at his residence, Seventh Day Tlang, Vaivakawn, Aizawl on August 4, 2018.

questionnaire analysis and interview results of this research, the problems and challenges towards electoral reforms faced by the Church sponsored MPF can be put in two categories. Firstly, the different perspectives on the relationship between the Church and State held by various ecclesiastical denominations pose a serious obstacle for unity among the churches. Secondly, the present structure of MPF needs to be reconsidered as other denominational churches perceive the MPF as a Presbyterian Church of Mizoram Synod dominated organization. Despite its constructive contribution in the electoral politics of the state, the MPF has to resolve these challenges to ensure the stability of its organization. By doing so, the MPF can function as a legitimate public forum to address inclusive socio-political issues of the society.

#### Post-Poll Activities of the Church

The Church-sponsored MPF had tremendously contributed in ensuring free and fair electoral process at every level of elections starting from the Village Council up to the Member of Parliament (MP) Lok Sabha election. Having achieved the desired election surveillance tasks to a great extent, the MPF turned its attention to good governance, social reform and political education as well. As such, the MPF has stressed its interest to monitor the working of government in a transparent and accountable manner. The MPF issued directions and constructive guidelines to the state government from time to time so as to enable the government to work in the right direction. The MPF had consultative sessions with the leaders and urged the government to implement its manifestos. The MPF had acted as a neutral umpire in many instances during the course of verbal and political conflicts among different

political parties in the state.<sup>67</sup> The MPF had also widened its political horizon so as to contribute more in the administrative work of the government. The MPF supervised and monitored the steps, taken up by the government in certain public policies like New Land Use Policy (NLUP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), besides such activities as monitoring Rural Development funds, Municipality funds and other developmental programs of the government. The MPF had also organized the District Level Seminars in different places for promoting good governance. The MPF also met the state Chief Minister and other Ministers and appraised them about certain ongoing policies of the government. As a result, the yeomen service of the MPF is now recognized within and outside Mizoram for its role in the electoral reforms as well as for good governance. Even the EC had appreciated the role of the Church and its social wing, MPF. The MPF also organized special consultations and seminars on good governance as follow up policy of its principles.

The main focus of the consultations includes:

- a) The importance of public reverence for a fair and just candidate.
- b) To work for decentralization of power.
- c) To establish a government that is comprehensive in development, planning and administration.
- d) To promote public involvement and participation in politics.
- e) To work out a well-planned goal for development through proper policy.
- f) To start campaign for good governance among the member churches<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Jangkhongam Dounyel, op. cit., 11.

<sup>68</sup> Zarzosanga, *Civil Society and Elections in Mizoram* (Delhi: Straight Forward Publishers (P) Ltd, 2017), p. 75.

The MPF has been organizing seminars on various issues and concerns such as political education, by conducting trainers' training programs, a training program mainly intended for the leaders and members of Local and Constituency Forum members and volunteers. Further, various consultation programs are also conducted on the topics of good governance, administrative reforms and voters' participation. Another important activity of the Church in the post-poll period is the frequent submission of memorandums to the government authorities. The memorandums are submitted in the form of appeals and requests for public interests issues such as elections, governance, maintenance of peace and security in the state. The requests and appeals made by the Church were greatly respected by the political parties and government authorities. According to Lalhlianzuala Sailo, Secretary of the MPCC, "All political parties never chose to disregard what the Church said".<sup>69</sup> This will be mainly due to the common consensus that was reached between political parties and the Church sponsored MPF during the formulation of "Election Guidelines" and the support and popularity that the MPF received from the general public. The MPF appealed to political leaders, government leaders and people in the state to work towards the realization of good governance. Further, the MPF representatives were also invited to various panel discussions, convened by the Election Commission. They were also consulted by the State Election Commission with respect to the role of conducting various local level elections from time to time. To observe and learn about the constructive role of the MPF for electoral reform and good governance, the MPF leaders were also invited as resource persons.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the MPF has been

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<sup>69</sup> In an Interview with Lalhlianzuala Sailo, MPCC General Secretary at Mizoram Pradesh Congress Office, Aizawl on September 25, 2014.

<sup>70</sup> For instance, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) invited the MPF leaders to conduct consultation Workshop, and Dr. Lalbiakmawia Ngente, Rev. Dr. Lalbiakmawia and J. Lalsailova visited Kohima on 25 -26 April 2011 and conducted consultative Workshop as requested. Following

spearheading Church-polity coordination by emphasizing electoral reform and good governance in the state.

#### Church against Political Party-Unit System

Another important attempt made by the Church was to abolish political party unit system in Mizoram. The political parties set up local units as these are useful instruments for the parties, particularly during the time of elections. It has strengthened their political parties and facilitated easy access to necessary information in the poll process. However, the Church felt that this unit system had a negative impact on the voters. Political party-unit system led to the rise of party feelings which again had divisive effects in the family and in the local social life. As such, it causes division among the voters. Further, with the unit system the political parties and their candidates were more concerned about party politics and party members rather than implementing their election manifestos. And, the unit leaders expect immediate benefit from the elected leaders of their political party, which has resulted in corrupt practices and misuse of government fund. As a consequence, the Mizoram Presbyterian Church had deliberated on the matter of negative impact on party unit system in the state. And, the matter was entrusted to the Synod Social Front Committee, as such the Synod Social front organized consultations and seminars with the representatives of different pastorate, political party leaders and NGO leaders at various places.<sup>71</sup> However, the effort of the Church to abolish political party unit system in the state still has a long way to go.

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that, a four member team of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) visited Aizawl on 5 -6 September, 2011 and they studied in detail about the role and activities of the MPF.

<sup>71</sup> H. Lalrinthanga, *op. cit.*, 265.

### Analysis on Functioning Style of the Church sponsored-MPF

The MPF is a non-political, social reform body which was established with the sole intention of reforming and cleansing Mizoram politics.<sup>72</sup> The MPF was established not to counteract the government but to constructively help the government in enforcing a workable administrative system. The major focus areas of the MPF are electoral reforms, political education and governance. The MPF strongly opposes nepotism, favoritism, criminalization of politics and corruption in administration. As requisite measures to achieve its focus areas, the MPF undertakes activities such as organizing seminars, awareness campaigns and consultation with political parties for holding peaceful elections. The political parties are expected to put up honest, upright and blameless persons with integrity as party candidates. The watch-dog electioneering activities of the MPF are based only upon the guidelines of Model Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission of India. Thus, it has become an established fact that the constructive and indirect involvement of churches and civil societies has significantly contributed to the conduct of peaceful elections in the state. The MPF was considered as the genuine election watch-dog in Mizoram by the people. As a result, the elections in Mizoram such as the Lok Sabha elections, Mizoram Legislative Assembly General Elections, Aizawl Municipal Council elections, Autonomous District Council elections, Aizawl Local Council elections and Village Council elections were accomplished in a peaceful environment with the massive help of the MPF. During the electoral process, the political parties, candidates and voters exercised their franchise under the watchful eyes of the MPF.

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<sup>72</sup> Jangkhongam DOUNGEL, *New Social Movement in Mizoram for Election Reform- A Case Study of the Mizoram People Forum*, Paper, presented in "International Seminar on New Social Movement in the Era of Globalization," Rajiv Gandhi Chair in Contemporary Studies, University of Allahabad, on February 22-23, 2013, p. 4.

However, various activities of the MPF in the reformation of electoral politics of the state have drawn great appreciation as well as criticisms from all sections of people. Critics have pointed out or questioned the general opinion of the role and success of MPF. R. Tlanghmingthanga, Ex. Minister and Vice President of the MNF said, “The role of MPF in electoral politics is good but it is not necessary because they cannot perform as expected. Moreover, the Church has wasted a huge amount of money and energy”<sup>73</sup>. He further observed that even the MPF volunteers have their own favorite political parties. This, according to him, indicates that the MPF members are also not free from favoritism. There were also people who criticize the MPF activities on the ground that it undermines the principles of democracy. Some critics have also questioned the role of MPF by mentioning that election is one of the biggest events in a democratic country, but the electioneering mood of Mizoram has been curbed after the establishment of MPF. These allegations are valid in some ways as the MPF had issued many dos and don'ts to political parties, candidates and voters. Also, although it has been observed that the malpractices and election expenditures may have decreased to some extent, the MPF could not prevent such activities which are secretly done beyond the watchful eyes of the MPF volunteers.

A controversy which could strengthen the stand point of critics took place in the Chalfilh Constituency by-election held on February 23, 2013. In this by-election, the MPF excluded independent candidates in the Joint Platform that was organized by MPF. “The Chalfilh Constituency Joint Students’ Union questioned the MPF on why the independent candidates were not invited in the Joint platform”<sup>74</sup>. Further, a

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<sup>73</sup> In an interview with R. Tlanghmingthanga, Vice President MNF at MNF General Headquarters, Aizawl on September 11, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Jangkhongam Doungel and Joseph C. Lalremruata, “The Role of Mizoram People Forum for Electoral Reform in Mizoram”, Eds., Jagadish K. Patnaik, Jangkhongam Doungel and Ayangbam



similar incident took place in Phuaibuang village, where one independent candidate was omitted from the Joint Platform organized by the MPF during the 2008 election. However, the MPF leaders had clarified that the joint platform programs organized by the MPF were as per the agreement with political parties. The MPF justified that they (MPF) alone could not change the agreement which was signed with different political parties. But the critics opined that it was not up to the MPF which has no legal sanction to include or omit the candidates who have been approved by the Election Commission of India. The memorandum is nothing but an agreement of cooperation by the political parties with the Mizoram People Forum. The stipulation of very limited time to the candidates for delivering their election speech and prescribing the topic for debate in the joint platform organized by the MPF can be critiqued as well. It was also observed that the MPF could not bring about political and administrative reform to achieve sustainable economic development apart from being merely active during elections. It has been opined that there can be free and fair election without MPF, as there have been free and fair elections before the existence of MPF.

Another area of criticism is whether one should be able to appreciate if other religious bodies other than the Church had come forward to work towards electoral reforms in Mizoram. In a secular country, one should be aware and be able to appreciate if someone (whether religious or non-religious) plays a constructive role in the electoral reforms in other parts of the states as well. Any group whether they are Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Church, Islamic bodies, deserves to be respected and appreciated for their positive

contribution. One might pose the question, is it alright for a religious body to get involved in political affairs, covertly and overtly in a secular country like India? Of course, there would be a potential connection between the Church and its involvement in politics, in some particular states like Mizoram. There is nothing illegal or immoral about a religious body getting involved in politics, even if one intends to be secular. There is no legal statement which says that religious people or institutes should be out of politics. Religious body drives the morale of the people, and people drive the morale of the religious body. They may be supporting some particular parties or candidates but they do not have the right to stop political parties or candidates from contesting elections.

Nevertheless, the MPF still functions as one of the most important organizations for ensuring electoral reforms in the state. The MPF had played a vital role in the state elections. All political parties also cooperated well with the “Working Guidelines” and public speeches on common platforms organized by the MPF. The MPF played a pro-active role in ensuring electoral reform and good governance in Mizoram, educating people through organizing seminars, workshops, consultation and talks, and also propagating awareness in the form of printed media. As a matter of fact, it is an undeniable fact that even the serious critics of the MPF have lauded its contribution because the Church-sponsored MPF has rendered selfless service without expecting any economic returns and political benefits in any form.

To sum up, the fact that the Church played a pro-active role in the state politics is not a new or recent phenomenon for the Mizos and the state of Mizoram as a whole. The Church in general and the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram in particular had been

involved in implementing political reforms at different points of time in the history of the state. The role of Church in the state politics is generally appreciated by all sections of people including political parties. Church and politics share a mutual relationship as it has been evolving over the years. Due to the constructive contributions made by the Church towards electoral politics and good governance through free and fair elections, peace and harmony has been possible in the state. Further, the importance of Church and civil society support for ensuring electoral reforms and good governance for the long-term in a democratic political system is strengthened in the state as assumed in the fourth hypothesis of this study.

However, there is also a need for all the churches in Mizoram to come out of their denominational barriers, if they are to play a more positive role in the state polity. The main reason that some churches did not join the MPF seemed to be because of the divergent conceptions among different churches on the relationship between Church and State. This has resulted in disunity among the different denominational churches in Mizoram. It is suggested that this point of conflict could be reconsidered for ensuring the stability of Church-polity relations in the state; this can be done by creating pressure groups outside the religious realm where all sections of the society could join together without any barriers, or by finding ways of bringing in those churches and other civil society organizations who are not yet members, to join the MPF. In doing so, the focal areas of the Church-sponsored MPF, such as electoral reforms, political education, good governance, advocacy and political awareness, would perhaps bring about long term stable Church-polity relations, and in turn peace and harmony would prevail in the state.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In Mizoram, the Church is not just a religious institution but it is accepted as a way of life, the center of social activities. Like the other states in India, religion plays a crucial role in Mizoram politics. The Church has been regarded as the facilitator of socio-political modernization in the state. Constructive role of the Church in the political process is acknowledged by various sections of society. The Church has greatly influenced general perceptions about social and political values in the society as a whole. The Church is also highly regarded as the precursor of various civil society organizations in the state. As such, the Church has played a vital role in shaping the socio-cultural lives of the people, as well as their political inclinations. The contribution of civil society organizations, particularly the Church was demonstrated during the socio-political turmoil in the Mizo Hills District of Assam. With the objective of bringing about peace and normalcy the Church had played a significant role during the insurgency movement.

Another notable contribution of the Church in Mizoram politics is in the reformation of electoral process and good governance. Thus, socio-political dynamics in Mizoram is different from other states in the country. Due to the constructive role it has played, the Church involvement in the political process appears distinctive. More than any other social organizations in the state, the Church and its networks incorporate pressure groups and influence the political environment. This chapter

summarizes the main findings of the research and draws a few conclusions from the study of the role of Church in politics.

In the early Mizo traditional society, socio-religious and political life was inter-related and complemented each other. The religious functions were performed under the guidance of village chiefs. As such, there was no question on the relationship between religion and political administration in the Mizo society. Prior to the advent of the British, the Mizos did not have a political organization that encompassed the entire tribe. However, the Mizos had an efficient system of administration and discipline as a distinct group governed by their traditional laws and customs. The traditional political system was based on kinship structure that revolved around the concept of chieftainship and that of territorial jurisdiction over which its authority was wielded, and the village was the highest political unit. Each village had its own government, and a Chief (Lal) functioned as administrator for the entire village. The socio-political life of the Mizos was dominated by their religious beliefs. But when the British occupied the Lushai hills in 1891, the rights of the Chief were arbitrarily extinguished by the British.

Later on, the British administration was followed by the Christian missionaries. The introduction of Christianity by the missionaries brought about constructive changes in the life of the Mizo people. One important aspect was that the Christian mission replaced the indigenous belief of animism with the Christian belief. The Christian religion thus enlightened the minds of the Mizo people. There was no formal education before the entry of the Christian mission. Zawlbuk (bachelor's dormitory) was the only social institution wherein young people were given education. This

indigenous system of education was replaced by formal education. The missionaries also converted the language (dialect) of the native people into writing (script). This was a great and significant change through which the people were able to read and write and this paved the way for socio-political transformation in Mizo society. The missionaries, through their valiant efforts gradually convinced the Mizos to accept the Christian faith. These Christian missionaries and their religious missions had a crucial political significance too.

The Church established by missionaries had opened educational institutions, hospitals and undertook numerous other social works. Gradually, they transformed the Mizo society on the pattern of western culture and social organizations, while at the same time retaining their indigenous culture and traditions. As a consequence of their contacts with western liberal education, the Mizo people had developed a sensible socio-political outlook, benefiting from the education imparted by the missionaries. Hence, the overall socio-political outlook of the Mizos had also shifted away from their earlier influence of myths and superstitions. They realized their social and political conditions, and became more conscious about their socio-economic and political survival. The Church has been an important and one of the most active organizations that exerted psychological influence on the socio-political administration of the state.

#### Education

There was a good cooperation between Church and State in the field of education. The contribution of Church in the field of education was one of the major implications for the socio-political development of Mizoram. In fact, all the primary

school education under the banner of “Mission Schools” in the state (which then was Mizo District under the Assam State) had been in the hands of Church. Education imparted through Mission Schools had a great impact on the moral and ethical lives of the people in general and of the children in particular. The whole primary school system was under the oversight of the Church from 1904 till the formation of Mizo District Council in 1952. It was in 1951 that the separation took place; the Lushai Hills had its own District Council, it began to conduct its own government and education from 1952 onwards. For about fifty years, the Church had been entirely responsible for education as the government had handed over the full responsibilities. It was during those fifty years that significant changes were brought about in Mizo society. However, the handing over of school education to the government had both advantages and disadvantages for the educational system in Mizoram. There was no doubt that a lot of progress had been made in the field of education after the Council took over the responsibility of school education. On the other hand, the quality of education had slowly degraded in Mizoram due to various reasons such as, political appointment of teachers, lack of disciplined life, poor curriculum, exam oriented teaching and learning. The Church felt that this change was a result of the loss of the Church’s moral and ethical influence upon the people to a great extent. As a result, the churches in Mizoram once again re-established a number of schools from the high school level to college level. Particularly, the Baptist Church of Mizoram along with the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Church made a significant contribution towards education.



## Public Health

Apart from Education, another remarkable contribution made by the Church in Mizoram was in medical ministry. The Christian hospital at Serkawn, a hospital-cum-nursing school operated by the Baptist Church of Mizoram was the first hospital and nursing school in Mizoram. Initially, the hospital was meant for women and children with a capacity of 30 beds. There was hardly any other healthcare center in and around Lunglei or for that matter in the whole of Southern Mizoram. Today, the hospital has a registered capacity of 100 beds and the nursing school is attached to the hospital with approximately 70 students. Further, the Presbyterian hospital, Durtlang, the second hospital after Christian Hospital in Serkawn was established in 1928. From its humble beginning with one doctor, one Nurse and six beds, today the hospital has become the largest non-governmental hospital in Mizoram with a registered capacity of 300 beds. Besides, there are hospitals run by the Church that significantly contribute to the public in their respective areas. The Lairam Christian Medical Centre at Lawngtlai, was initiated by the Women's Fellowship of the Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church. In the southern tip of Mizoram bordering Myanmar, the Evangelical Church of Maraland runs a hospital named Maraland Gospel Centenary Hospital at Siaha town. Another famous hospital run by the Church is "Aizawl Adventist Hospital" located on the slopes of Nisarih Tlang (Seventh-day Hill) in Vaivakawn, Aizawl. The hospital is managed and governed by the Seventh-day Adventists (SDA).

## Political Process

The Mizos were living in their present territory when the British took possession of the region in 1891. From that period until the installation of the District Council in

1952, the Mizo people were governed by their traditional chiefs. Under the rule of these chiefs, each village strived to become self-reliant, self-governing and independent. The declaration of the region as one of the “Tribal Areas” by the 1935 Act of the Government of India, and its subsequent declaration of the area as an “Excluded Area” under the “Excluded and Partially Excluded” Areas Order of 1936, destined the Hill District to a long period of isolation and political turmoil. The administration of the local chiefs was based on hereditary chieftainship, which became the only form of administrative organization in the Lushai Hills till the later part of the twentieth century. However, in the course of time, the system of traditional administration i.e. “administration by the chief” was replaced by a democratic system of administration with initiatives taken and great efforts given by the politically enlightened and socially conscious intellectuals in Mizo society.

The political development of Mizo Hills District (now Mizoram) was interrupted due to insurgency in 1966 which continued till 1971, when the security forces were able to bring the situation under control. The Mizo National Front (MNF) declared Mizoram a sovereign and independent state to take effect on midnight of February 28, 1966. Large-scale disturbances broke out in different places in the district. In the meantime, the government liberalized the amnesty offer and gave a number of opportunities to the insurgents for their surrender and return to lead a civilized and normal life. A liberal group, among the Mizos and the hostiles, emerged that joined in the quest for peace in the Mizo Hills. The Mizo Union party, which was regional in character, also played an important role in mobilizing the people and moulding public opinion in favor of better status of Mizo Hills or statehood within the Indian

Constitution. The most powerful initiative for peace, however, came from the Church leaders who were quite enlightened and politically conscious.

Soon after the outbreak in the Mizo district, the Church and other civil society organizations felt that they had a role to play in preventing any further deterioration of the situation, and creating good-will and mutual understanding between the MNF and the general public, and also between the security forces and the Mizo people. The Church became the forerunner to ensure peace in lieu of the political disturbance in 1966. The Zoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (ZKHC), a conglomerate of various denominational churches in Mizoram found ways to bring about peace and met leaders of the MNF and important officials of the Government of India. The ZKHC took all possible attempts in bringing peace in the state and became the peace emissary between the Indian Government and the MNF. Consequently, the historic “Memorandum of Settlement on Mizoram” was signed on June 30, 1986. The efforts made by the political parties, civil society, and eminent citizens particularly the efforts made by the Church were significant. Nevertheless, the valiant and brave effort of the Church leaders during the period of insurgency to bring about peace in the state could be considered as one of the important reasons that brought the Government of India and the MNF to the negotiating table several times, and ultimately to the signing of the Peace Accord.

#### Electoral Process

Mizoram had experienced the electoral process at different levels since 1948, such as the elections for Lushai Hills Advisory Council, District Council, Regional Council, Village Council, Municipal Council, Legislative Assembly, Lok Sabha and Rajya

Sabha. However, it was from the first District Council elections held in 1952 that the Mizo people became actively involved in electoral politics. The District Council elections were held four times, and before the completion of the fourth term of the Council, the Mizo District was dissolved and ceased to exist when the Mizo District became a Union Territory (UT) of Mizoram on January 21, 1972. Mizoram experienced four general elections during the Union Territory status period. As a result of the signing of the Peace Accord between the Government of India and Mizo National Front (MNF) on June 30, 1986, the fourth term Union Territory Legislative Assembly could not complete its term. Lalthanhawla who was sworn in as Chief Minister on May 4, 1984 tendered his resignation. Thus, Laldenga was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Mizoram and Lalthanhawla as Deputy Chief Minister and they formed the MNF-INC coalition government till the time of conducting the first state Legislative Assembly Election of Mizoram in February 1987.

With a view to elevating Mizoram from Union Territory status to statehood, the Union government of India introduced the Mizoram statehood bill 1986, with special safeguards and provisions of forty elected seats (38 reserved for scheduled tribes and 2 unreserved) in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, and thus the 53rd Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1986 in the Parliament was passed by an absolute majority of votes. The President of India assented to the Mizoram statehood bill, 1986 on August 14, 1986. On February 20, 1987, Mizoram was inaugurated as the 23rd state of the Indian Union. As such, the first general elections to the Mizoram state Assembly was held on February 16, 1987. As of the latest Assembly elections on November 28, 2018, Mizoram had experienced eight state Legislative Assembly elections so far.

Mizoram had experienced a peaceful conduct of the electoral process since the first Union Territory Assembly elections to the fourth Assembly elections of the post statehood period (1972-1988). Mizoram has been able to attain the tradition of holding a peaceful poll process in the elections. During the successive Assembly elections, electoral malpractices like booth capturing, threats and intimidations, poll violence in any form have never occurred in the political history of Mizoram, except for some incidents of violence during MNF disturbances. However, this long tradition of conducting elections under a peaceful atmosphere free from violence was marred during the Fifth Mizoram Legislative Assembly election in 2003. The Fifth Mizoram Assembly elections marked the turning point for power rivalry in the state politics in which the use of violence became a part of the electoral process in the struggle to capture power. Furthermore, there was also an increase in struggle for power among political parties and candidates as well as increasing attempts to retain power. The incidents like numerous allegations of the use of insurgent groups, use of money power and muscle power were reported during the fifth Assembly elections. Such incidents jeopardized the peaceful status record as well as the tradition of holding free and fair elections in the state.

#### Electoral Reforms

The Church and civil society organizations were involved indirectly in the electoral process by issuing the “election guidelines” since Mizoram Union Territory elections, 1972. The Church had appealed to political parties, candidates and voters for ensuring clean, free and fair elections that became a regular feature with the Church since then. As such, due to the constructive guidance and indirect involvement of the Church and civil society organizations, conduct of elections was

peaceful in the state. However, in view of the emergence of such untoward incidents which erupted in the fifth Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections in 2003, certain steps have been taken up. After a series of consultations, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) was formed with the sole intention of reforming and cleansing Mizoram politics. It was established not to encounter the government but to constructively help the government in enforcing workable administrative systems in the state. The MPF was formed by representatives of various denominational churches and civil society organizations in the state. However, some major churches such as, the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM), Salvation Army, United Pentecostal Church and Seventh Day Adventist are not constituent members of the MPF. Absence of these major Church organizations has rendered a sense of incompleteness towards the MPF to a great extent.

The initiative of electoral reform in the state by the MPF was appreciated and welcomed by political parties, civil society groups, citizens of Mizoram and even the state government and Election Commission. Since its establishment, various awareness programs for socio-political reforms like, seminars, consultations and trainers' training have often been conducted in different places of Mizoram by the MPF. It is generally accepted that elections at different levels in Mizoram such as, Member of Parliament, Member of Legislative Assembly, Autonomous District Council, Municipal Council, Local Council and Village Council have become more peaceful after the establishment of MPF.

As has been mentioned earlier, unlike religious groups in other parts of India, the religious bodies in Mizoram, particularly the Church rendered selfless service

without expecting any economic returns and political benefits in any form. Hence, the role of the Church in the electoral politics of Mizoram spearheaded by the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) is a unique movement for electoral reforms and good governance, which is hardly found in other parts of India. The reason being, most of the religious/interest groups movement in other parts of India are directed towards a particular class or section of the people but the Church and civil society movement in Mizoram is not directed towards any class or section, but rather it is against the corrupt social and political system. Therefore, the movement for political reforms by the Church and civil society organizations in Mizoram is unique and noteworthy in many aspects.

#### Good Governance

The Church has significantly contributed in ensuring a free, fair and peaceful poll at every level of election starting from the Village Council up to the Member of Parliament. Besides, apart from electoral reform in the state politics, the Church has widened its activities to include the issue of good governance, social reform and political education. The Church-sponsored MPF focuses its attention towards monitoring the government in a transparent and accountable manner. The MPF issued directions and constructive guidelines to the state government from time to time so as to enable the government to work in the right direction. One of the main activities of MPF for good governance in the state administration is conducting seminars and consultations. The MPF has been organizing seminars and consultations on good governance, social reform, administrative reform and political education at different levels throughout the state. The main objective for conducting seminars and consultations is giving awareness to the people. The participants of the

seminars had expressed that the seminars for good governance organized by the MPF in different places of the state were beneficial for inculcating awareness among the citizens. Another activity of the MPF for good governance is meeting with the government leaders and submission of memorandums. In the post-poll period, the MPF leaders had met the ruling political party leaders to pursue their election manifestos and promises. The MPF has also played the role of mediator between the government and the people, sometimes even between political parties.

#### Administrative Reforms

For ensuring accountability and transparency in the administration, the Church-sponsored MPF Governing Board had discussed the need for Administrative Reforms in the state. After a thorough discussion, the meeting formed “the MPF Study Team” on Administrative Reforms to conduct an in-depth study of the ongoing government programs and its functions. Accordingly, the MPF Study Team had done a surveillance study on various development programs of the government. After doing a thorough study on the system and functions of the government, the team had come up with certain suggestions to be forwarded to government leaders. Some features of the Action Plan suggested for administrative reforms by the MPF Study Team are: Rationalization of Departments and right sizing of government employees. Mizoram being a small state, the task and function of various departments should be well defined and there is a need to see whether some of the departments can be amalgamated. To motivate the employees in their respective responsibilities, the government may arrange incentives for those who are hard-working and efficient in their task. Manual of Office Procedure, the nature of work procedure, division of work and required facilities should be provided accordingly. Work culture,



discipline, punctuality, sincerity and integrity should be maintained as per the Mizoram ARC Report, 1998. The MPF Study Team also reported that the Mizoram government seemed to have more holidays than any other states in India. The study team suggested that the government should reduce public holidays so as to become a more developed state, because development requires hard work.

The MPF also supervises and oversees the government programs, such as New Land Use Policy (NLUP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Rural Development Funds and other development programs of the government. The MPF Study Team on administrative reform submitted their suggestions and findings to the Chief Minister. The MPF also conducted media conferences from time to time to generate public awareness about the MGNREGS. The MPF leaders also participated in the NLUP Apex Board Meeting, convened by the state government which was telecast live by the local cable operators. The MPF leaders also met the Chief Minister and other Ministers occasionally to appraise them about the on-going policies of the government.

#### Church Leaders and Political Participation

In Mizoram, the Church did not restrain its leaders from participating in the political activities during the initial period. However, the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors in politics began to gradually raise questions about whether this would be the right political reform movement or it would be an unnecessary involvement. Interviews were conducted with political party leaders, Church leaders and civil society leaders concerning the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors. Opinions regarding the joining of political party and active

involvement by ordained ministers and retired pastors are varied. The responses indicate that only half of the respondents accept the participation of Church leaders and ordained ministers in politics. Thus, it is reflective of the prevalent situation that there is no general consensus yet concerning the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors in politics.

### Liquor Prohibition

From the very beginning, with the coming of Christianity, the Church has always opposed the selling and drinking of liquor. This has been the stand of the Church till today. The Church has taken various approaches to repeal the MLPC Act, 2014 by meeting government leaders, organizing awareness programs on the effects of alcohol, teaching and preaching in the Church and submitting Memorandum to the government. The Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (Mizoram Church Leaders Committee) put pressure on the government to introduce the “Mizoram Total Liquor Prohibition Act”. Prohibition of legalization of alcohol in the state has been supported by prominent civil society groups in the state on the grounds that there has been increase of domestic violence, crime, accidents and poverty due to liquor consumption.

The Congress government led by Lalthanhawla stated that the government will consider carefully whether to withdraw the MLPC Act or to strengthen law enforcement. On the other hand, Zoramthanga, MNF President expressed that a God fearing party will always be against any policy or act that encourages liquor consumption. The Zoram People Movement (ZPM) a banner of regional political parties also expressed that they did not subscribe to the MLPC Act, 2014. Over half

of the respondents to the researcher's questionnaire expressed opposition to the implementation of the MLPC Act.

Zoramthanga, President of the MNF had promised before the November 28, 2018 poll and after the declaration of poll results that he would lift the MLPC Act and re-impose total prohibition. Keeping its poll promise, the new MNF Government led by Zoramthanga thus decided to ban liquor shops run by government agencies with immediate effect in the first cabinet meeting. The state government also announced dry day from December 21, 2018 to January 14, 2019 in a first step to impose total prohibition, four years after the MLPC Act was introduced and enforced by the previous government. Eventually, the Mizoram assembly held on March 20, 2019 unanimously passed a Bill to implement total prohibition. Excise and Narcotics minister Dr. K. Beichhua introduced "The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Bill, 2019". Cutting across party lines, all the legislators supported the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Bill, 2019.

### Major Findings

- Introduction of Christianity brought constructive changes in the life of the Mizo people. The Church established by missionaries opened educational institutions, hospitals and undertook numerous other social works that gradually transformed the Mizo society. Zawlbuk (bachelor's dormitory), the indigenous system of education was replaced by formal education, the native language (dialect) was reduced to writing (script), and the system of traditional administration i.e. "administration by the chief" was replaced by a democratic system of administration. Thus, Mizoram witnessed a series of

socio-religious and political changes as assumed in the first hypothesis of this study.

- A high majority respondents to the questionnaire agreed that the valiant and brave effort of the Church leaders during the period of insurgency to bring about peace in the state could be considered as one of the important reasons that brought the Government of India and the Mizo National Front to the negotiating table several times, and ultimately to the signing of the Peace Accord. The electoral reform spearheaded by the MPF is under appreciated as it reduced election expenditure to a great extent and worked for the conduct of peaceful elections starting from the Village Council up to the Member of Parliament. Hence, as per the second hypothesis of this study on the role of Church in bringing about certain socio-political reforms, it is evident from the field findings that the Church played an influential role in ensuring socio-political reforms in state politics.
- The impact of Church and various civil society organizations in the political development of Mizoram is phenomenal. The Church acts as a crucial link between public and government machineries. Besides electoral reform in the state politics, the Church has widened its activities to include the issue of good governance, administrative reform and political education. The Church-sponsored MPF has been organizing seminars and consultations on good governance, social reform, administrative reform and political education at different levels throughout the state. The participants of the seminars had felt the seminars organized by the MPF in different places of the state were

beneficial for inculcating awareness among the citizens. Thus, the Church-polity engagement has had positive political implications as assumed in the third hypothesis.

- The role of Church in the state politics is appreciated by all sections of people including political parties. The relations between Church and politics are mutual as it had evolved over the years. Due to the constructive contributions made by the Church towards electoral politics and good governance through free and fair elections, peace and harmony has been possible in the state. Further, the importance of Church and civil-society support for ensuring electoral reforms and good governance led to reform the political process as well as governance as assumed in the fourth hypothesis of this study.
- Another important attempt made by the Church was to abolish political party unit system in Mizoram. However, the effort of the Church to abolish political party unit system in the state still has a long way to go.
- General consensus concerning the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors in politics has not been reached yet.

#### Critical Remarks

Besides several positive responses on the role of Church, there are few critical views observed. The Church, other than its active electoral involvement, has not been able to bring about political and administrative reform to achieve sustainable economic development. There were also people who criticize the MPF activities on the ground that it undermines the principles of democracy. Some critics have also questioned the

role of MPF by pointing out that though election is one of the biggest events in a democratic country, the electioneering mood of Mizoram has been curbed after the establishment of MPF. These allegations have some validity as the MPF had issued many dos and don'ts to political parties, candidates and voters. It is also observed that the malpractices and election expenditures may have decreased to some extent, but there were clandestine malpractices that were beyond the reach of the watchful eyes of the MPF volunteers. In addition, there remains the unanswered question of whether other religious bodies other than the Church would have been accorded similar appreciation and respect if they had come forward to work towards electoral reforms in Mizoram.

Further, the imbalanced participation of churches in MPF has posed a question on how long and to what extent the MPF would influence the people of Mizoram as some major churches have not yet joined the MPF. Thus, in the light of questionnaire analysis and interview results of the study, the problems and challenges towards electoral reforms faced by the Church sponsored MPF can be put into two categories. Firstly, the conception of different ideas on the relationship of Church and State by various ecclesiastical denominations remains a serious obstacle to unity among the churches. Secondly, the present structure of MPF needs to be reconsidered as other denominational churches perceive it to be a Presbyterian Church of Mizoram Synod dominated organization. Thus, despite its constructive contribution in the electoral politics of the state, these are few challenges that the MPF should incorporate for the stability of its organization. By doing so, the MPF can function as legitimate public forum to address all the inclusive socio-political issues of the society.

To sum up, despite some minor criticism, the study finds that there is public acknowledgement and appreciation on the role of Church in Mizoram politics. Unlike religious groups in other parts of India, the religious bodies in Mizoram, particularly the Church worked selfless service without expecting any economic returns and political benefits in any form. Hence, the role Church in the electoral politics of Mizoram is a unique movement for electoral reforms and good governance, which is hardly noticed in other parts of India. The reason being, most of the religious/interest Groups movement in other parts of India are directed towards a particular class or section of the people but the Church and civil societies movement in Mizoram is not directed towards any class or section, rather it is against the corrupted social and political system. Therefore, the movement for political reforms by the Church and civil society organizations in Mizoram is unique and noteworthy in many aspects. It also emerges from the field research that there is general agreement among the people that there is no better organization other than the Church to reform the state politics.

Nevertheless, one can note that any realistic approach to electoral reform of the present electoral systems in India will go a long way to move us towards perfection. As such, it is generally accepted that the Church has played a positive role towards in the state politics. It is also evident that the role of Church in socio-political reformation is commendable and critically essential for the people of Mizoram. The overall discussion and analysis of the role of the Church in Mizoram politics shows that there is a cordial relation between the Church and state. The findings of the study also show that the role of Church and its positive influence in the state politics is a crucial one. There are several social political reforms being initiated in the state

which have had multiple implications on the political process like electoral reform, social reform, administrative reform, educational reform and socio-economic changes. The fact that religion has shaped people's relationships within the society, influencing family, community, economic and political dimensions is thus confirmed in this study.



## APPENDIX 1 (A)

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Respected Sir/Madam,

I am pursuing Ph. D in Political Science under Mizoram University. My research topic is “Religion and Politics in Mizoram: Role of the Church” under the supervision of Prof. K.V. Reddy. I am distributing questionnaires to different people such as- Political party leaders, Church leaders, Civil society leaders, Academicians, Senior citizens etc. You may skip if there is any question that is uncomfortable to answer for you. The findings shall be used as data collections for my research work. I, therefore, request you to kindly spare sometime to answer the following questions. Your active cooperation will greatly help me to make this study successful.

**Respondent’s Profile:**

Gender: (i) Male ( ) (ii) Female ( )

Age Group: (i) 25-35 ( ) (ii) 36-45 ( ) (iii) 46 & above ( )

Educational Qualification: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

1. To what extent you are interested in politics?

a) To a great extent, b) To some extent c) Not interest at all

2. How often you have cast your vote in the elections?

a) Regularly, b) Occasionally c) Never

3. The socio-political awareness in Mizoram is the due to the coming of Christianity.

a) Agree, b) Disagree, c) Uncertain

4. The Church was instrumental in bringing about peace and normalcy during the political turmoil in Mizoram.

a) Agree, b) Disagree, c) Uncertain

5. Do you see any differences on the role of Church before and after Mizoram achieved statehood?

a) Yes, b) No, c) Uncertain

If yes, what are the differences?

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6. Who is actively working for socio-political reforms in your area?

a) State Government, b) Political Parties, c) Church & Civil societies

7. The Church is instrumental in bringing about socio-political reforms in Mizoram.

a) Agree, b) Disagree, c) Uncertain

8. To what extent the role of Church influences in the electoral politics of Mizoram?

a) To a great extent, b) to some extent, c) Can't say

9. How far the Election guidelines issued by the Church during elections help for the conduct of free and fair elections?

a) To a great extent, b) To some extent, c) Can't say

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. What is your opinion about the role of Mizoram People Forum (MPF) in the electoral reforms?

a) Positive, b) Negative, c) Can't say

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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11. What is your opinion about the Government decision to pass the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Control (MLPC) Act 2014?

a) Useful b) Useless d) Can't say

12. What has been the social morality of the Mizo people after enforcing the MLPC Act?

a) As it was c) Changed d) Can't say

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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13. The Role of Church in the electoral politics of Mizoram influences the people positively.

a) Agree b) Disagree c) Can't say

14. How far the role of MPF in the electoral reforms of Mizoram has contributed for free and fair elections?

- a) To a great extent,                      b) To some extent,                      c) Not at all

Substantiate: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

15. Are you satisfied with role of MPF in the Mizoram state politics?

- a) Fully,                                      b) Partially,                                      c) Not at all

16. According to your opinion what is the foremost area that the people of Mizoram needs to reform?

- a) Electoral reforms                      b) Education reform                      c) Religious reform

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

17. What is your observation on Church-Polity relationship in Mizoram politics?

- a) Healthy                                      b) Normal                                      c) Negative

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

18. Is it possible for the Church and other civil societies in Mizoram to have uniformity in issuing election guidelines?

- a) Yes,                                      b) No                                      c) Can't say

Give Suggestion: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you think creating electoral reform initiated by pressure group other than religious (Church) association can be formed in Mizoram?

- a) Yes,                                      b) No.                                      c) Uncertain

Give Suggestion: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

20. The participation of Churches in MPF is not balanced. Do you think this will affect Church-polity relations in Mizoram?

- a) Yes,                                      b) No,                                      c) Uncertain

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX-I (B)

## TABLE ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Table No. 1: Age Group of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
1	25-35	87	57.6
2	36-45	39	25.8
4	46 and above	25	16.6
	Total	151	100

Table No. 2: Gender Group of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	92	60.9
2	Female	59	39.1
	Total	151	100

Table No. 3: Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Level of Qualification	Respondents	Percentage
1	0-HSSLC	15	9.9
2	Graduate	102	67.6
3	Post Graduate	30	19.8
4	Ph.D/D.Th	4	2.7
	Total	151	100

Table No. 4: Occupation of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Occupation	Respondents	Percentage
1	Unemployed	11	7.3
2	Student	32	21.2
3	Private Sector	31	20.6
4	Government Sector	28	18.6
5	Political Party Worker	17	11.2
6	Church Worker	20	13.2
7	Pensioner	8	5.3
8	N.A.	4	2.6
	Total	151	100

Table No. 5: Church Denomination-wise

Sl. No.	Name of Church	Respondents	Percentage
1	Baptist Church of Mizoram	36	23.9
2	Bru Baptist Church	2	1.3
3	Chakma Baptist Church	2	1.3
4	Evangelical Church of Maraland	8	5.3
5	Evangelical Free Church of India	3	2.0
6	Isua Krista Kohhran	4	2.6
7	Lairam Jesus Christ Baptist Church	11	7.3
8	Presbyterian Church of Mizoram	53	35.1
9	Roman Catholic	2	1.3
10	United Pentecostal Church	14	9.3
11	Salvation Army	7	4.7
12	Seventh Day Adventist	5	3.3
13	Not specify	4	2.6
	Total	151	100

Table No. 6: District-wise

Sl. No.	Name of District	Respondents	Percentage
1	Aizawl	49	32.5
2	Champhai	10	6.6
3	Kolasib	11	7.3
4	Mamit	14	9.3
5	Lawngtlai	18	11.9
6	Lunglei	26	17.2
7	Saiha	12	7.9
8	Serchhip	11	7.3
	Total	151	100

Table No. 7: Level of Interest in Politics

Sl. No.	To what extent you are interested in politics?	Respondents	Percentage
1	To a great extent	32	21.2
2	To some extent	56	37.1
3	Not interest at all	60	39.8
4	N.A.	3	1.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 8: Participation in the Elections

Sl. No.	How often you have cast your vote in the elections?	Respondents	Percentage
1	Regularly	116	76.9
2	Occasionally	30	19.9
3	Never	2	1.3
4	N.A.	3	1.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 9: The socio-political awareness in Mizoram is due to the coming of Christianity

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	93	61.6
2	Disagree	31	20.5
3	Uncertain	27	17.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 10: The Church was instrumental in bringing about peace and normalcy during the political turmoil in Mizoram.

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	118	78.1
2	Disagree	15	10.0
3	Uncertain	18	11.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 11: Do you see any difference on the role of the Church before and after Mizoram achieved statehood?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	96	63.6
2	No	25	16.5
3	Uncertain	30	19.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 12: Who is actively working for socio-political reforms in your area?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	State Government	22	14.6
2	Political Parties	26	17.2
3	Church & Civil Societies	103	68.2
	Total		100

Table No. 13: The Church is instrumental in bringing about socio-political reforms in Mizoram.

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	114	75.5
2	Disagree	11	7.3
3	Uncertain	26	17.2
	Total	151	100

Table No. 14: To what extent the role of Church influences in the electoral politics of Mizoram?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	To a great extent	34	22.5
2	To some extent	82	54.3
3	Can't say	35	23.2
	Total	151	100

Table No. 15: How far the Election guidelines issued by the Church during elections help for the conduct of clean, free and fair polls?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	To a great extent	34	22.5
2	To some extent	87	57.6
3	Can't say	30	19.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 16: What is your opinion about the role of Mizoram People Forum (MPF) in electoral reforms?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Positive	106	70.2
2	Negative	11	7.3
3	Can't say	34	22.5
	Total	151	100

Table No. 17: What is your opinion about the Government's decision to pass the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Control (MLPC) Act 2014?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	33	21.9
2	Disagree	84	55.6
3	Can't say	34	22.5
	Total	151	100



Table No. 18: What has been the social morality of the Mizo people after enforcing the MLPC Act?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	As it was	35	23.2
2	Changed	74	49.0
3	Can't say	42	27.8
	Total	151	100

Table No. 19: The Role of Church in the electoral politics of Mizoram influences the people positively.

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	78	51.6
2	Disagree	30	19.9
3	Can't say	43	28.5
	Total	151	100

Table No. 20: How far the role of MPF in the electoral reforms of Mizoram has contributed for free and fair elections?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	To a great extent	37	24.5
2	To some extent	98	64.9
3	Not at all	16	10.6
	Total	151	100

Table No. 21: Are you satisfied with role of MPF in the Mizoram state politics?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Fully	26	17.2
2	Partially	98	64.9
3	Not at all	27	17.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 22: According to your opinion what is the foremost area that the people of Mizoram needs to reform?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Electoral reform	32	21.2
2	Education reform	59	39.0
3	Religious reform	60	39.8
	Total	151	100

Table No. 23: What is your observation on Church-Polity relationship in Mizoram politics?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Healthy	26	17.2
2	Normal	98	64.9
3	Negative	27	17.9
	Total	151	100

Table No. 24: Is it possible for the Church and other civil societies in Mizoram to have uniformity in issuing election guidelines?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	85	56.3
2	No	25	16.5
3	Can't say	41	27.2
	Total	151	100

Table No. 25: Do you think creating electoral reform forum initiated by pressure group other than religious (Church) association can be formed in Mizoram?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	58	38.4
2	No	33	21.8
3	Uncertain	60	39.8
	Total	151	100

Table No. 26: The participation of Churches in MPF is not balanced. Do you think this will affect Church-polity relations in Mizoram?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	70	46.4
2	No	31	20.5
3	Uncertain	50	33.1
	Total	151	100

Table No. 27: Do you hope that all the churches in Mizoram can join the MPF in future?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	47	31.2
2	No	52	34.4
3	Uncertain	52	34.4
	Total	151	100

Table No. 28: What is your overall assessment on the role of Church in Mizoram politics?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Positive	84	55.6
2	Negative	19	12.6
3	Uncertain	48	31.8
	Total	151	100

Table No. 29: The Church positively influenced voting behaviour in Mizoram elections.

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	92	60.9
2	Disagree	16	10.6
3	Can't say	43	28.5
	Total	151	100

Table No. 30: What is your opinion upon the joining of political parties by ordained minister and retired pastor?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	76	50.4
2	Disagree	41	27.1
3	Can't say	34	22.5
	Total	151	100

Table No. 31: What is your opinion upon the joining of Government active service by ordained minister and retired pastor?

Sl. No.	Response	Respondents	Percentage
1	Agree	68	45.0
2	Disagree	46	30.5
3	Can't say	37	24.5
	Total	151	100

APPENDIX-III  
ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES AND MIZORAM PEOPLE FORUM  
(Memorandum of Understanding)  
The Sixth Mizoram General Assembly Election, 2008

1. Election Expenditure

i) Every political party or candidate should not indulge in huge and wasteful election expenditures but work for minimizing. Election expenditures should be kept to the minimum.

ii) The MPF banned house to house campaign as it can breed activities of 'corrupt practices and offences under the election law and it also increases election expenditures as huge amount of money involves during canvassing. However, if the people want to see their candidates or the candidates also want to meet their voters/people to say something, it should be done with knowledge of the local MPF forum. The MPF may make necessary arrangement on behalf of the candidates. Further, public/roadside rallies and processions shall be prohibited.

iii) Buying and selling of votes, or influencing voters through money or other incentives means shall is prohibited.

iv) Organizing community feasts and picnic party shall be avoided. However, the prohibition for organizing feast does not include dinners arranged for inviting guest or a small circle of Block or Unit level political leaders/workers. It also banned poster, banner and flag wars as it involves and increases election expenditures unnecessarily.

- v) To ensure free and fair elections, the general public, organizations and individuals are requested not to ask or expect any favour from political parties and contesting candidates. At the same time, political parties and candidates are also requested to refrain from announcing any financial grants or promises thereof.
- vi) Setting up of temporary Campaign or Election offices of political parties should be avoided as it increases election expenditures.

## 2. Free, Fair Election and Security Matters

- i) Use of force, threats, intimidations, violence and undue influence to the voters to secure their votes in favour of a particular candidate/political party is to be avoided.
- ii) To strongly oppose and desist securing the support of underground armed groups and use of arms/gun power shall be prevented at all cost.
- iii) To take up all necessary actions for security and peaceful elections, especially along the border and sensitive areas.

## 3. Policy Implementation and Candidature

- i) Only realistic and practicable policies and programmes that can be implemented should be formulated in the party manifestoes.
- ii) Personal and individual life of the candidates should not be used as a poll issue. Election campaign should revolve around the party policies and programmes.
- iii) For candidature political parties are expected to put forward those who are upright, God fearing, clean and honest persons as their candidates. It also

asked the political parties not nominate candidates who are corrupt or indulged in immoral activities.

iv) Campaigning through false propaganda, unproven truth and scandalous issues which have no concrete evidence shall be avoided.

#### 4. Joint Electioneering Efforts

i) As and when possible, joint election campaign platform will be organized for candidates under the aegis of the MPF.

ii) Even if an individual political party wants to hold a separate public meeting of their own it should be held under the guidance of the MPF.

iii) Distribution of party manifestoes, policies and programmes and any other leaflets may be undertaken by the MPF or in a joint effort with the party workers.

5. Besides, the above mentioned points of poll guidelines, the MPF Local Forum and political party leaders, without deviating the 'Joint Agreement' the MPF local forum and political parties may draft, adopt and include other viable and feasible course of actions to be taken within their localities as the need arise.

APPENDIX-II  
FIRST ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES AND MIZORAM PEOPLE FORUM  
(Memorandum of Understanding)  
By-Election in Tlungvel Assembly Constituency, 2006

1. Not to conduct house-to-house campaign.
2. Distributing money or other articles, making or accepting bribes, spending in helping people by way of labour/work like carrying paddy head loads from the jhums, spending money on health care for the voters like visiting and helping the sick people by giving money or other bribes, public feasting in return for votes, which make unnecessary expenditures in election is not allowed.
3. The voters, different organizations and Churches should not make demand or ask for money from the candidates.
4. Making undue charges, allegations/accusations, defamation/hate speeches, or personal attack of the candidates is not allowed. It asked to avoid acrimonious attacks on rival candidates at all cost.
5. No individual political party should organize separate public rally/meetings except 'common platform' arranged by the MPF. On polling day, the MPF will arrange a common tea stall and serve tea to the voters uniformly. Checking electoral rolls and issuing voters slip to the voters to cast votes shall not be done by individual party but by the MPF along with the representatives of political parties.
6. The use of any threats, inflammatory remarks and actions that can spark violence of any sort during campaigning is not allowed.

7. Individual political parties or candidates should not organize or offer election feasting to woo voters.
8. To minimise election expenditure of candidates, excessive posters and banners campaigning is not allowed except those posters/banners displayed in the party's election office or at the residence of party men.
9. Pulling down and tearing off or destroying posters/banners of other political parties is not allowed. Party men should be educated to refrain themselves from doing so.
10. Transportation or ferrying of voters to the polling station using vehicles and other means in favour of a particular candidate is not allowed unless the voters come on their own will to cast their votes. The voters who would like to exercise their right to franchise will come and cast their votes.
11. Paid campaigners from Aizawl who will work for a particular candidate for money should not be allowed to station in the constituency or sit at or near the polling booth to buy votes.
12. If the need for distribution of party manifestoes arises, all political parties should deposit their party manifestoes to the MPF Local Forum. Then the Local Forum will distribute the party manifestoes.



APPENDIX-IV  
ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES AND MIZORAM PEOPLE FORUM  
(Memorandum of Understanding)  
The Seventh Mizoram General Assembly Election, 2013

The joint efforts of the political parties and the Mizoram People Forum in implementing the 'Articles of Agreement' for holding a clean, free and fair election in various elections within Mizoram such as – Mizoram Legislative Assembly General Election 2008, MP Election 2009, Village Council Elections 2009 & 2012, Aizawl Local Council Election 2012, Aizawl Municipal Election 2010 and Autonomous District Council Elections, have been a great success. The conduct of elections in Mizoram have become a role model for other states of the country, which is the result of the united effort of all the people concerned in the electoral process and the people of Mizoram. In view of the seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election 2013, buoyant by the past achievements and successes, and the desire to uphold the great election model, Political Parties of Mizoram and the Mizoram People Forum have come together and inked this 'Articles of Agreement' for the Mizoram Legislative Assembly General Election 2013.

1. General Conduct

- i) For holding a clean, free and fair election every precautions and measures should be taken.
- ii) All the rightful citizens of the country enrolled in the electoral roll must cast their votes.

iii) The conveyance and travelling expenditures of electoral voters, who are stationed on places other than the constituency where they have enrolled, shall not be borne by others such as political parties, candidates or their workers.

## 2. Election Expenditure

i) No party or candidate shall indulge in huge and wasteful election expenditures. Election expenditures should be kept to the minimum. MPF functionaries shall not accept money or donations from the political parties and the candidates.

ii) Activities which are 'corrupt practices' and offences under the election law can crop up during the house to house campaign. Therefore, house to house visits by candidates and their supporters is prohibited during the period of 10 days prior to the election day.

iii) Influencing voters through money or other incentives and inducements must be avoided. General public, organizations and individuals are requested not to ask or expect any favour from the candidates. Similarly, candidates and Political Parties are also requested to refrain from announcing any financial grants, distribution of inducement articles like silpouline, jersey, football, mobile handset, NLUP etc., or promises thereof.

iv) Feasting, picnic and procession escalate the election expenditure unnecessarily, they must be avoided.

v) Banner, flag and poster unnecessarily escalate the election expenditure; therefore the maximum number of banners, flags and posters is restricted within each locality as follows:

- VC/LC with a maximum of seven members:  
Upto 3 banners, 30 flags and 20 posters.
- VC/LC with a maximum of five members:  
Upto 3 banners, 20 flags and 15 posters.
- VC/LC with a maximum of three members:  
Upto 3 banners, 10 flags and 10 posters.
- The maximum size of banner shall be 18'x4' and that of the poster shall be 4'x3'.
- Caps, badges and stickers with political party symbols may not be used as election materials.
- MPF functionaries shall request the political parties to remove excessive banners, flags and posters, if any, if the case arises.

### 3. Free and Fair Election, and Security Issues

- i) Use of force, intimidation and undue influence to the voters to secure their votes must be avoided.
- ii) Securing the support of underground armed groups and use of arms shall be prevented at all cost.
- iii) Take all necessary actions to security and peaceful election, especially along the border and sensitive areas.

### 4. Policy Implementation

- i) Only realistic and do-able policies and programmes must be included in the Party manifesto.

ii) More than the personal and individual life of the candidates, election campaigning should revolve around the Party policy and programme. Campaigning by use of false propaganda, unproven truth and scandalous issues must be avoided.

## 5. Candidates

While making the nomination, the political parties are requested to consider the following qualities in their prospective candidates:

- i) Stable and upright person
- ii) Honest and hardworking
- iii) Person with great integrity
- iv) Free from the influence of alcoholic and other drugs
- v) Abstain from unlawful sex
- vi) Having great respect for law of the land
- vii) Dedicated to the welfare of the society and fellow human being
- viii) Committed to one's faith and religion

## 6. Joint Electioneering Effort

i) As and when possible, joint election campaign platform will be organized for various candidates, under the guidance of MPF Constituency Forum. These programmes may be widely publicized in the local TV and media; other than these, joint election campaign platform must be avoided.

ii) All public meetings, even those organized by individual party, may be held under the guidance of MPF. In the absence of MPF, individual political parties may make suitable arrangement.

iii) No tea or eatables shall be served on the Polling day. Giving out of election numbers or slips shall be undertaken by the MPF duty or in a joint effort with the party workers.

## 7. Conclusion

i) MPF District Forum, Constituency Forum and Local Forum shall neither make additional agreement nor deviate from this 'Articles of Agreement'.

ii) If any political parties or candidates default or goes against the spirit of this 'Articles of Agreement' and if there is solid proof or documentary evidence to prove the same, it shall be widely publicise within the MLA Constituency where it has been committed.

iii) This 'Articles of Agreement' shall be widely publicised and circulated by the Mizoram People Forum and Political Parties.

Signed by the presidents of political parties and the MPF leaders

Sd/-

(LAL THANHAWLA) President, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee

Sd/-

(ZORAMTHANGA) President, Mizo National Front Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(LALDUHOMA), President, Zoram Nationalist Party Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(LALHMANGAIHA SAILO), President, Mizoram Peoples' Conference Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(LALHLUNA) President, Bharatya Janata Party, Mizoram Unit

Sd/-

(REV. THANGZAUVA), President, Mizoram People Forum Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(UPA LALRAMTHANGA), General Secretary, Mizoram People Forum Gen. Hqrs.

APPENDIX-V  
ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES AND MIZORAM PEOPLE FORUM  
(Memorandum of Understanding)  
The Eighth Mizoram General Assembly Election, 2018

The Mizoram People Forum (MPF) since its establishment on June 21, 2006 has been involved in a number of elections within the state, namely, State Legislative Assembly elections of 2008 and 2013, Lok Sabha elections of 2009 and 2014, Village Council elections of 2009, 2012 and 2015, Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) elections of 2010 and 2015, Local Councils elections of 2012 and 2015 within Aizawl city and various District Councils elections including Village Councils within the ADC area. The effort given by different Political Parties and the Mizoram People Forum has led to good results and constructive development towards free and fair elections in the state. As a result, elections in Mizoram have become fair and it is appreciated even by the Election Commission of India. The activities of the MPF towards electoral reform have been recognized within and outside of Mizoram state.

As usual, in view of the eight Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections 2018, the MPF signed Memorandum of Understanding with different political parties of the state for ensuring free and fair election. The Memorandum of Understanding has been framed in line with the guidelines of the Model Code of Conduct by Election Commission of India. It has been signed by President and General Secretary of the MPF and Presidents of the political parties of Mizoram.

## 1. General Conduct

- i) All citizens are expected to contribute their utmost potential for conducting free and fair election in Mizoram.
- ii) Every citizen shall cast his/her valuable vote in elections.
- iii) No one will arrange vehicles to pick up voters from their respective towns and villages and will not provide vehicles to transport and drop voters to the voting booth on polling day as it is not allowed by the Election Model Code of Conduct.

## 2. Election Expenditure

As the Election Commission of India fixed expenditure of each MLA candidate at a maximum ceiling of Rs. 20,00,000 (Rupees twenty lakhs) only, the MPF stresses to ensure the fulfillment of this strict guideline so as to prevent spending of expenditure over the limit fixed by the E.C.I. Every law abiding citizens is requested to help the MPF for fulfillment of the guideline.

- i) The MPF does not allow voters to ask or receive cash/money from the candidates and political parties.
- ii) If candidates want to conduct house to house campaign, it may be done under the guidance of the MPF Local Forum leaders.
- iii) Certain practices and activities which are restricted Election Model Code of Conduct after declaration of election date, such as, distribution of various goods and essential commodities like, Silpauline, Jersey, Football, Mobile handset and distribution of development funds by the government are strictly prohibited. Further, providing vehicles to farmers

for transporting paddy from fields to home during election process is also strictly prohibited.

- iv) Public feast and picnic are prohibited as they are expensive.
- v) Taking things from shops and other places for payment of the candidates are not permitted.
- vi) Banner, flag and poster unnecessarily escalate the election expenditure; therefore the maximum number of banners, flags and posters is restricted within each locality as follows:
- vii) Banner, flag and poster unnecessarily escalate the election expenditure; therefore the maximum number of banners, flags and posters is restricted within each locality as follows:
  - 5 Banner, 50 Flags, and up to 30 Poster for Village Council (VC) and Local Council (LC) having seven members.
  - 4 Banner, 40 Flag and up to 30 Poster for VC/LC having five members.
  - 3 Banners, 30 Flags and up to 20 Poster for VC/LC having three members.
  - Banner shall not be bigger than 4x8 feet. Poster shall not be bigger than 3x4 feet.
  - For two wheelers 1 flag, not bigger than 1 x 2 feet. For three wheelers and four wheelers 1 flag, not bigger than 2 x 3 feet. Flag which is taller than 3 feet is not allowed.

*Note: If party leaders from Central/other States come for election campaign, flag and banner shall not be posted in places other than the place of meeting.*



### 3. Election Campaign

- i) As per the standing rules and regulations of the government, persons who are not yet having vote shall not be involved in election matters.
- ii) If so advice by the parties, the Election Information Centre can be opened in the locality but loud speaker should not be used.
- iii) Organizing procession after announcement of the polling date shall be prohibited.
- iv) Hiring paid public entertainers shall be prohibited.
- v) As misuse of social media spreads fake information and moreover it is illegal. The person is punishable by the law. Thus, if anyone is found involved in publishing such wrong information, accurate action shall be taken. Further, it shall be publicized and reported to the Election Commission or CID-Cyber Crime branch.
- vi) Drugs and alcoholic are restricted by the Election Commission of India during the poll processes. Hence, alcohol abusers and other substance abusers are not allowed to go near by the Election Information Centre and Polling Area.
- vii) All possible efforts shall be made to enable voters to cast their vote freely.

### 4. Free and Fair Elections and Security Matters

- i) Except security duty, no person is allowed to carry any types of fire arms and ammunitions within the polling station area.
- ii) Securing the support of underground armed groups and use of arms shall be prevented at all cost. Everyone shall bravely resist it.

- iii) Adequate security shall be provided in the border and sensitive area and necessary steps shall be taken to avoid any loophole.
- iv) As casting vote is done through secret ballot, no one shall carry mobile phone inside the Pooling Booth as per the standing Law/Rule.

#### 5. Policy Implementation

- i) Only realistic and do-able policies and programmes must be included in the Party manifesto.
- ii) More than the personal and individual life of the candidates, election campaigning should revolve around the Party policy and programme. Campaigning by use of false propaganda, unproven truth and scandalous issues must be avoided.

#### 6. Candidates

While making the nomination, the political parties are requested to consider the following qualities in their prospective candidates:

- i) Stable and upright person
- ii) Honest and hard working
- iii) Person with great integrity
- iv) Free from the influence of alcoholic and other drugs
- v) Abstain from unlawful sex
- vi) Having great respect for law of the land
- vii) Dedicated to the welfare of the society and fellow human being.
- viii) Committed to one's faith and religion

## 7. Joint Electioneering Effort

- i) After the announcement for polling date, no joint platform shall be organized. If deemed necessary, the MPF may arrange a state level joint platform. Otherwise, no party is encouraged to attend any other joint platform other than MPF organized joint platform.
- ii) If any political party wishes to conduct a public meeting it shall be conducted under the guidance of the MPF. At the same time, if delegates from outside the state come for the election campaign the public meeting shall be conducted under the guidance of the MPF.
- iii) No tea or eatables shall be served for the public on polling day. Giving out of election numbers or slips shall be undertaken by the MPF duty or in a joint effort with the party workers.

## 8. Conclusion

- i) MPF District Forum, Constituency Forum and Local Forum shall neither make additional agreement nor deviate from this 'Articles of Agreement'.
- ii) If any political parties or candidates default or goes against the spirit of this 'Articles of Agreement' and if there is solid proof or documentary evidence to prove the same, it shall be widely publicize within the MLA Constituency where it has been committed.
- iii) This 'Articles of Agreement' shall be widely publicized and circulated by the Mizoram People Forum and Political Parties.
- iv) The 'Article of Agreement' signed between the MPF and political parties shall be also abiding with the independent candidates so as to ensure free and fair elections.

Signed by the political party presidents and the MPF leaders

Sd/-

(LAL THANHAWLA) President, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee

Sd/-

(ZORAMTHANGA) President, Mizo National Front Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(LALDUHOMA), President, Zoram Nationalist Party Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(LALHMANGAIHA SAILO), President, Mizoram Peoples' Conference Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(J.V. LALHLUNA) President, Bharatya Janata Party, Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(LALLIANSAWTA), Chairman, Zoram People's Movement, Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(VANLALRUATA), Chairman, PRISM, Gen. Hqrs.

Sd/-

(REV. F. LALRINNUNGA), President, Mizoram People Forum, Gen. Hqrs

Sd/-

(REV. DR. R. LALBIAKMAWIA), Secretary, Mizoram People Forum, Gen. Hqrs.

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DEPARTMENT : POLITICAL SCIENCE

TITILE OF THESIS : RELIGION AND POLITICS IN MIZORAM:  
ROLE OF THE CHURCH

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APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

BOS : OCTOBER 13, 2015

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2. Letkholun Haokip, "Conflict and Peace in North East India: The Role of the Church and Civil Societies in the Emergence of a Democratic Mizoram". A UGC sponsored National Seminar on 'Governance & Civil Society in N.E. India'. Organized by Department of Political Science and Public Administration Govt. J. Buana College, Lunglei, Mizoram, July 20-21, 2017.

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1. Letkholun Haokip, "Electoral Process in Mizoram: The Role of Church in 2013 Assembly Election", in Contemporary Social Scientist (A National Refereed Journal) Vol:VIII-1, Summer 2016, ISSN No:2230-956X, pp. 66-75.
2. Letkholun Haokip, "Insurgency in Northeast India: Role of the Church in the Emergence of a Democratic Mizoram", in Contemporary Social Scientist (A National Referred Journal), Vol:X-II, Winter 2018, ISSN No: 2230-956X, pp. 55-60.





## GLOSSARY

Fathang	Tax
Hnatlang	Social work
Kut	Festival
Lal	Chief
Lal Sadawt	Chief's priest
Mautam	Famine
Mithikhua	Village of dead
Pathian	God
Puithiam	Priest
Ramhual	Expert and adviser on jhum cultivation
Thangchhuah	Most prestigious honour
Thirdeng	Village black smith
Tlahpawi	Assistant to chief's priest
Tlangau	Village crier
Tlawmngaihna	Ethical code of conduct
Zawlbuk	Bachelors' dormitory

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## **RELIGION AND POLITICS IN MIZORAM: ROLE OF THE CHURCH**

Religion and politics are two of the most important dimensions of human life. Religion, one of the most powerful, deeply felt and influential forces of human society,<sup>1</sup> has shaped people's relationships within the society and influences family, community, economic, and political dimensions. Religion is a reality of Indian politics. Like the other states in India, religion plays a crucial role in Mizoram politics. Mizoram is one of the highly religious states, where Christians are the majority. Church and politics in Mizoram have depended on, and influenced each other. Their relationship has been mutual and multifaceted because Church and politics have evolved together over the years, taking material and symbolic support from each other.

The main focus of the research is on the emergence of the Church in the reformation of electoral politics and good governance in Mizoram. The primary objectives of the study are: to study the socio-religious and political dynamics in the state of Mizoram; to analyse the role of Church in the political process; to examine the political implications of Church influence; and to explore the overall contribution of the Church towards the political process. The research concentrates specifically on the contribution of churches in Mizoram politics and the role of the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) in electoral reforms and good governance. The researcher has conducted this study based on primary data from 151 questionnaires and interviews of leaders from various denominational churches, civil society organisations and political parties in the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion-The Social Context*, Fifth edition (Belmont: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002), p.1.

Christian missionaries, who arrived soon after the British administration came to the Lushai Hills, brought about constructive changes in the life of the Mizo people. They replaced animism with Christian beliefs, introduced formal education, and reduced the Mizo language to the written form. The introduction of a written script and formal educational system paved the way for socio-political transformation in the region. The Church, established by missionaries, opened up educational institutions, hospitals and undertook numerous other social works. The Mizos, through their formal education, soon realized their social and political conditions, and became more conscious about their socio-economic and political survival. As such, the Church played and continues to play a vital role in shaping the socio-cultural lives of the people, as well as their political inclinations.

The socio-political dynamics in Mizoram is different from that of other states in the country. The main distinguishing factor is the constructive role played by the Church in the political process. The Church through the Zoram Kohhran Hruaitu Committee, a conglomerate of various denominational churches, played the crucial role of peace emissary between the Indian Government and the Mizo National Front, which resulted in the signing of the historic “Memorandum of Settlement on Mizoram” in 1986. The constructive role of the Church in the political process is acknowledged by various sections of society, as is confirmed by the research findings. Though the Church and civil society organizations were involved indirectly in the electoral process since the Union Territory elections in 1972, they began to be more actively involved after the formation of the Mizoram People Forum (MPF). The MPF, a socio-political reform body, was formed with the sole intention of reforming and cleansing Mizoram politics. Besides electoral reform in the state politics, the Church,

through the MPF, has widened the scope of its activities to cover good governance, social reform and political education.

The study first looks at the historical background of socio-religious, political and administrative systems, from traditional chieftainship to the formation of statehood. It then explores socio-political reforms in the context of Church involvement by highlighting the electoral processes in Mizoram and the emergence of Church role in the socio-political reforms of the state. The study then analyses the role of Church spearheaded by the MPF on electoral reforms and good governance that constitute the dynamics in the post-statehood era. It looks at how the Church and civil society organizations coordinated with each other and the government to make the political process an effective exercise in the state. Next, it explores diverse problems and prospects owing to the role of Church in the state politics. It highlights the importance of maintaining a cordial relationship amongst various denominational churches in a dynamic and dialectical balance, so as to have better cooperation towards state politics. The discussions also highlight the prevalent problems and prospects in the context of Church and politics in Mizoram.

In Mizoram, the Church is considered to be older than the government. The state was formed in 1987 after the Church facilitated the peace process. Majority of the questionnaire respondents and the interviewees agreed that the involvement of Church leaders during the period of insurgency to bring about peace in the state is an important factor behind the signing of the Peace Accord by the Government of India and the Mizo National Front.

The Church and various civil society organizations act as a crucial link between public and government machineries. The Church has significantly contributed in ensuring a free, fair and peaceful poll in every level of elections starting from the Village Council up to the Member of Parliament. The Church-sponsored MPF acted on the basis of the “Election Guidelines” jointly agreed by the MPF and political parties. The findings of the study confirm that the Church played an influential role in ensuring socio-political reforms in state politics and doing away with many of the usual electoral malpractices and misconduct that often characterized past elections such as, buying votes, public feasts, house to house campaign, overwhelming use of party flags, etc.

Further, the findings also established that Church and civil society support in electoral reforms and good governance is crucial for a stable and enduring democratic political system. The MPF has been organizing seminars, awareness campaigns and consultations on good governance, social reform, administrative reform and political education at different levels throughout the state. The political education campaigns were aimed at educating the voters on ethical meaning of the term “politics”, what it encompasses, how it should function, what political rights they have as citizens of the state. The campaigns also emphasized the demerits and dangers of party politics, the need to elect candidates on the basis of personality rather than the party candidates. In the post-poll period, the MPF leaders met the ruling political party leaders to pursue their election manifestos and promises, as a part of the MPF’s commitment to ensuring good governance and administrative reforms. The MPF supervised and monitored the steps, taken up by the government in certain public policies like New Land Use Policy, Mahatma Gandhi National

Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, besides such activities as monitoring rural development funds, municipality funds and other developmental programs of the government.

The Church has, since its establishment, always opposed the selling and drinking of liquor and has undertaken various approaches to repeal the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control (MLPC) Act, 2014 by meeting government leaders, organizing awareness programs on the effects of alcohol, teaching and preaching in the Church and submitting memorandums to the government. The Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (Mizoram Church Leaders Committee) had put pressure on the government to introduce the “Mizoram Total Liquor Prohibition Act”. As such, due to the valiant efforts given by the Church, the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control (MLPC) Act, 2014 was replaced with the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019 by the new MNF government under the leadership of Chief Minister Zoramthanga.

Another important attempt made by the Church was to abolish political party unit system in Mizoram. The Church felt that this unit system has a negative impact on the voters as political party-unit system has resulted in the rise of party feelings which again had divisive effects in the family and in the local social life. Apart from causing division among voters, the unit system has resulted in political parties and their candidates becoming more concerned about party politics and party members rather than implementing their election manifestos. And, the unit leaders expect immediate benefit from the elected leaders of their political party, which has resulted in corrupt practices and misuse of government fund. The Presbyterian Church of

Mizoram Synod Social front organized consultations and seminars with the representatives of different pastorate, political party leaders and NGO leaders at various places. However, it is found, on the basis of the data from the field, that the effort of the Church to abolish political party unit system in the state still has a long way to go.

There was no initial restriction on the active involvement of Church leaders, in the state politics. But, this has come to be a subject of public debate as there have been cases of excessive involvement of Church leaders. The field interviews of leaders brought out a variety of responses ranging from approval of involvement if Church leaders join for the sole purpose of socio-political transformation, to that of discouraging such involvement because they are committed lifelong to the work of the Church. The responses of the questionnaire respondents have also indicated a similar lack of consensus on the direct political involvement of Church leaders. Thus, the study finds that general consensus concerning the involvement of ordained ministers and retired pastors in politics could not be reached so far, and thereby highlights the prevailing lack of public agreement about the extent of Church involvement in politics.

There are some major churches which have not yet joined the MPF as even today, churches such as Baptist Church of Mizoram, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army and Seventh-Day Adventist continue to subscribe to the principle of separation of "Church and State." The imbalanced participation of churches in MPF has posed a big question on how long and to what extent the MPF would influence the people of Mizoram. The study finds that there are two main categories of problems and

challenges facing the MPF. Firstly, the conception of different ideas on the relationship of Church and State by various ecclesiastical denominations remains a serious obstacle to unity among the churches. Secondly, the present structure of MPF needs to be reconsidered as other denominational churches perceive it to be a Presbyterian Church of Mizoram Synod dominated organization. It emerges from the field study that there are a section of the people who felt that MPF involvement has been a waste of Church time and resources, and also that the MPF has displayed favoritism as well. It is therefore evident that despite its constructive contribution thus far, the MPF needs to resolve these challenges to ensure the stability of its organization. By doing so, the MPF can function as a legitimate public forum to address all the inclusive socio-political issues of the society.

It has also been observed that the Church, other than its active electoral involvement, has been unable to bring about major political and administrative reforms to achieve sustainable economic development. There have been people who criticize the MPF activities on the ground that it undermines the principles of democracy. Some critics have questioned the role of MPF by mentioning that election is one of the biggest events in a democratic country, but the electioneering mood of Mizoram has been curbed after the establishment of MPF. These allegations have certain validity as the MPF have issued many dos and don'ts to political parties, candidates and voters. And critics have also pointed to the limited success of the MPF's curbing of clandestine election expenditure and malpractices that escaped the vigilant eyes of the volunteers.

The study finds that there is public acknowledgement and appreciation of the constructive role of the MPF in the state elections despite some criticism of the level and nature of the MPF's contribution. It also emerges from the field research that there is general agreement among the people that there is no better organization other than the Church to reform the state politics. Thus, it is clear that the role of Church in socio-political reformation is still important and valid for the people in the state.

Although the findings affirm that the role of Church in the state politics is generally appreciated and acknowledged by all the people, it is also observed that there is a pressing need for all the churches in Mizoram to come out of their denominational barriers, if they are to play a more positive role in the state polity. It is suggested that this point of conflict could be reconsidered for ensuring the stability of Church-polity relations in the state; this can be done by creating electoral pressure groups outside the religious realm where all sections of the society could join together without any barriers, or by finding ways of bringing in those churches and other civil society organizations who are not yet members, to join the MPF. Equal representation and involvement of all churches in the MPF would perhaps bring about long term stable Church-polity relations, and in turn, enduring peace and harmony would prevail in the state.

The overall discussion and analysis of the role of the Church in Mizoram politics shows that there is a cordial relation between the Church and state. The findings of the study also show that the role of Church and its positive influence in the state politics is a crucial one. There are several social political reforms being initiated in the state which have had multiple implications on the political process like electoral



reform, social reform, administrative reform, educational reform and socio-economic changes. The fact that religion has shaped people's relationships within the society, influencing family, community, economic and political dimensions is thus confirmed in this study.

### Structure of the Research

As part of organizing the study on the basis of specific objectives and themes, the study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with some of the important methodological concern of the research that includes, the introduction, statement of the problem, literature review, objectives of the study, hypotheses, methodology, scope and limitations and, the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter discusses the historical background of socio-religious, political and administrative systems from the traditional chieftainship to the formation of statehood. This chapter provides the relevant scope to understand the present context of Mizoram state. The chapter also highlights the genesis and development of the socio-political process that helped to locate the problem of study. The primary focus of the study is the role of Church in all these processes that helps in understanding the political process in the post-statehood period.

The third chapter explores socio-political reforms in the context of Church involvement. First part of the chapter highlights the electoral processes in Mizoram and the emergence of Church role in the socio-political reforms of the state. Second part of the chapter discusses the role of Church in the reformation of electoral politics of Mizoram in the post-statehood period. The study mainly focuses on the

role of Church spearheaded by the Mizoram People Forum on electoral reforms and good governance in Mizoram that constitute the dynamics in the post-statehood era.

The fourth chapter investigates the role of the Church in the political process that brought about multiple socio-political implications in the state. The chapter also discusses how the Church and civil society organizations coordinated with each other and the government to make the political process an effective exercise in the state. Finally, it examines certain implications that brought about socio-political reforms in the state.

The fifth chapter explores diverse problems and prospects owing to the role of Church in the state politics. The chapter discusses the relationship between Church and politics, and the engagement of Church associations into politics. The chapter also discusses the importance of keeping a cordial relationship amongst various denominational Churches in a dynamic and dialectical balance, giving full and equal weight to each other so as to have better cooperation towards politics. The discussions highlight problems and prospects that prevailed in the context of Church and politics in Mizoram. Finally, the chapter analyses the functioning style of Mizoram People Forum (MPF) which is the social political reform body of Church and civil societies in Mizoram.

The sixth chapter summarises the findings of the study. It highlights the significance of Church role in the socio-political process of Mizoram and draws a few conclusions from the study.

## Major Findings

- Introduction of Christianity brought constructive changes in the life of the Mizo people. The Church established by missionaries opened educational institutions, hospitals and undertook numerous other social works that gradually transformed the Mizo society. Zawlbuk (bachelor's dormitory), the indigenous system of education was replaced by formal education, the native language (dialect) was reduced to writing (script), and the system of traditional administration i.e. "administration by the chief" was replaced by a democratic system of administration. Thus, Mizoram witnessed a series of socio-religious and political changes as assumed in the first hypothesis of this study.
- A high majority respondents to the questionnaire agreed that the valiant and brave effort of the Church leaders during the period of insurgency to bring about peace in the state could be considered as one of the important reasons that brought the Government of India and the Mizo National Front to the negotiating table several times, and ultimately to the signing of the Peace Accord. The electoral reform spearheaded by the MPF is under appreciated as it reduced election expenditure to a great extent and worked for the conduct of peaceful elections starting from the Village Council up to the Member of Parliament. Hence, as per the second hypothesis of this study on the role of Church in bringing about certain socio-political reforms, it is evident from the field findings that the Church played an influential role in ensuring socio-political reforms in state politics.

- The impact of Church and various civil society organizations in the political development of Mizoram is phenomenal. The Church acts as a crucial link between public and government machineries. Besides electoral reform in the state politics, the Church has widened its activities to include the issue of good governance, administrative reform and political education. The Church-sponsored MPF has been organizing seminars and consultations on good governance, social reform, administrative reform and political education at different levels throughout the state. The participants of the seminars had felt the seminars organized by the MPF in different places of the state were beneficial for inculcating awareness among the citizens. Thus, the Church-polity engagement has had positive political implications as assumed in the third hypothesis.
  - The role of Church in the state politics is appreciated by all sections of people including political parties. The relations between Church and politics are mutual as it had evolved over the years. Due to the constructive contributions made by the Church towards electoral politics and good governance through free and fair elections, peace and harmony has been possible in the state. Further, the importance of Church and civil-society support for ensuring electoral reforms and good governance led to reform the political process as well as governance as assumed in the fourth hypothesis of this study.
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