

**STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN MIZORAM: CASE STUDY
OF YOUNG MIZO ASSOCIATION IN AIZAWL DISTRICT**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Preface

Mizoram Civil society works to preserve and uphold the interests of the people. Representing people's interests it challenges the inefficiency of the state in case of its unaccountability. Civil Society have expanded and grown extensively in various parts of the world. It is fundamental to democratic governance and occupies an important place in a liberal democratic state. Only a vibrant and politically aware civil society can mediate and control excessive centralisation of state power. Civil society encompass all kinds of organisations or associations like interest groups, voluntary groups, religious groups, parties, professional associations, social movements, grassroots movements. These groups are called civil societal groups because people with a common interest come together. Civil society occupies the most significant space in society because human being by nature is self-seeking individual. To overcome social conflict, civil society exists to maintain peace and order among people.

Mizoram had strong civil society movements and its presence is crucial to the evolution of Mizo society. Its vibrant role relating to development is also remarkable. Government deliverance of socio-economic and political administration is largely influenced by civil society. They provides a platform of interaction between the citizens and the state in Mizoram. The interests of the people of Mizoram is served and represented through its various functions and performances. Even during the insurgency period, civil society organisations such as the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizoram Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and the church had played a vital role in sustaining the peace process of Mizoram. These organisations act as intermediate institution and negotiate between the Union Government and the people. They simmer down the grievances of Mizo and addressed the issues that were rampant during the insurgency period.

They have largely contributed to the success of peace accord that lasted for many years since the formation of Mizoram statehood. It seemed to be a success in the region as compared to all other peace accords that were signed during the time. This is largely due to the active interference of civil society with the state. Since, civil society is not a body outside state or against the state, instead its presence announces the emergence of modern democratic state like Mizoram. Hence the mainstream civil society groups in Mizoram constitute an essential moment in the process of democratization and integration of the people under common bondage. With the transition of Mizo society towards development and progress, civil society continues to play a significant role in sustaining peace, integrating the people and works for securing the welfare of the society.

The research emphasized the significance of YMA in the context of Mizoram. The YMA as the being the most prominent civil society organisation in Mizoram served as a backbone of the citizens and moulds both the society the state. They watch over the performance of the state and act as a source of resistance when they functions against the interests of the community and at the same time they act as a source of support to the state for the good of the society. It examine how YMA, a non-political, voluntary organisation in Mizoram has emerged as an important constituent of civil society. As a civil society organisation it has played diverse roles and contributed towards the developmental issues and welfare of the people.

Securing peoples interest the YMA challenges the state in times of its failure and can even dictate terms to the state as it took upon the moral task of safeguarding the interest of the Mizos. They hold so much power that there were instance of conflict and tension between the YMA and state. In spite of certain setbacks, they did not go to the extent of causing problem to the state. They only act as a supplement to the state with the hope of making them more accountable and more sensitive to peoples concern. Their proactive role indicates the

existence a good and healthy democratic governance in the state. They played a vital role in sustaining peace process of Mizoram and its vibrant role contribute to state government deliverance of socio-economic and political administration. The research outline and examine the various roles undertaken by YMA and in detailed it studies the nature of relationship that exists between the state and YMA in Aizawl.

Chapter 1: **Introduction and Theories of Civil Society**

Civil society works to preserve and uphold the interests of the people. Representing people's interests it challenges the coerciveness of the state in case of an authoritarian use of power. Civil Society organizations have increased and grown extensively in various parts of the world. It is fundamental to democratic governance and occupies an important place in a liberal democratic state. Only a vibrant and politically aware civil society can mediate and control excessive centralization of state power. Civil society encompasses all kinds of organizations or associations like interest groups, voluntary groups, religious groups, parties, professional associations, social movements, grassroots movements. These groups are called civil society groups because people with a common interest come together. Civil society occupies the most significant space in society because human being by nature is a self-seeking individual. To overcome social conflict, civil society exists to maintain peace and order among the people. People's interest and welfare are served and represented through the various performances and functions of civil society.

After the outbreak of famine in Mizoram known as 'mautam' in 1958, Mizoram has undergone through massive insurgency and the movement of secession from the Indian Union. After a long period of insurgency and uprising against the Indian government which started in 1966, the peace accord was finally signed on 30th June 1986 and ultimately Mizoram became a full-fledged federal state of India in 1987¹. During the insurgency period, civil society organizations such as the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizoram Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and the Church had played a vital role in sustaining the peace process of Mizoram.

These organizations act as intermediate institutions and negotiate between the Union Government and the people. They simmer down the grievances of Mizo and addressed the

¹Mahapatra and Zote. (2008, July-September). Political development in Mizoram: Focus on the post-accord Scenario. *The Indian Journal of political Science*, 69(3), pp. 643-660. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856452>

issues that were rampant during the insurgency period. Civil society has largely contributed to the success of peace accord that lasted for many years since the formation of Mizoram statehood. It seemed to be a success in the region as compared to all other peace accords that were signed during the time. This is largely due to the active interference of civil society with the state. Civil society is not a body outside the state or against the state, instead, its presence announces the emergence of a modern democratic state like Mizoram. Hence the mainstream civil society groups in Mizoram constitute an essential movement in the process of integrating the people under common bondage.

Mizoram had strong civil society organizations and its existence is crucial to the evolution of Mizo society. Its vibrant role relating to development is also remarkable. Mizoram civil societies have largely impacted the state government deliverance of socio-economic and political administration. They provide a platform of interaction between the citizens and the state in Mizoram. It played a vital role and contributed to the development and welfare of the people. Even after the acquirement of statehood, civil society continues to play a significant role in sustaining peace, integrating the people and works for securing the welfare of the society.

Theories of Civil Society

The concept of civil society can be traced back to the ancient period. In the ancient period, civil society mostly indicates on ‘civility’ or ‘civilised society’². The term ‘civil society’ was used as a synonym to ‘good society’. By and large, civil society has been seen as a space that resolves social conflicts by imposing rules that limit citizen from a dispute with one another³. For instance, Socrates advocated that conflicts within society should be settled

²B.V Menon & J.C Jerome. (2017). Civil Society and State: A Historical Review. *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2), pp. 34.

³M Edwards. (2004). *Civil society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

through public argument using ‘dialectic’, a form of rational dialogue to uncover the truth. According to Socrates, public argument through ‘dialectic’ was vital to ‘civility’ in the polis and ‘good life’ of the people⁴.

According to Plato, in ideal state citizens were guided by the common good, practice civic virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice, and perform the occupational role to which they were best suited. It was the duty of the ‘Philosopher King’ to look after the people in the civility⁵. There is no division between the state and society during the ancient period, rather they are of the opinion that the state represented the civil form of society and ‘civility’ represented the requirement of good citizenship⁶. Besides they believed that human beings are inherently rational so that they have the tendencies to shape the society in which they live. Therefore one can say that the ancient political thinkers perceived civil society as synonymous to a good society capable of ensuring peace and harmony among the people.

During the period of enlightenment in the 17th century, many enlightenment thinkers perceived mercantilism as increasing the power of the despotic state, and it did not aim at the welfare of the people. In their view, the only way to avoid this dominance was to make the economic activity as a separate realm. Moreover, the power of the state should be limited so that the economic activity was free from the intervention of the former⁷. Therefore, thinkers of the Enlightenment see civil society as a separate realm that aims at safeguarding individual rights and private property.

⁴B.V Menon&J.C Jerome. (2017). Civil Society and State: A Historical Review. *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2), pp. 34.

⁵ B.V Menon & J.C Jerome. (2017). Civil Society and State: A Historical Review. *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2).

⁶M Edwards. (2004). *Civil society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁷ Burchill. (2001). In B.V Menon&J.C Jerome. (2017). Civil Society and State: A Historical Review. *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2), pp. 39.

The social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke represents the idea of civil society. In 'the state of nature' there was a stateless society where each man seemed to attain their selfish interests and motives without the consideration of 'the others' as in the community. People wished to break away from this primitive stage. Individuals enter into contract or agreement to give up their natural rights and appointed a sovereign to protect and preserve the life and property of citizens. An organised society was brought into existence and according to the contract, people were obliged to respect and obey the state, in exchange for stability and security provided by the state.

Both Hobbes and Locke believed that peaceful coexistence among human beings could be ensured through a social contract. They maintain that civil society seeks to attain peace assuring physical security to citizens through the creation of government. As such the distinctive process of defining the principles and terms of the governance is an attribute of civil society. Civil society encompasses the grounds for political obligation and authority of the government. They considered civil society as a sphere that maintained civil life, the sphere where civic virtues and rights were derived from natural laws. However, they did not place civil society and state as a separate sphere. Rather, they laid down on the coexistence between the state and civil society.

The concept of civil society re-emerged in the 1980s with the collapse of soviet political systems and the rise of the solidarity movement in Poland. Civil society became the fundamental concept that introduced democracy in Europe through means of dissident politics since 1989⁸. The fall of communism and military dictatorship in East- central Europe inspired the people to rebel against this dictatorial regime and shape for themselves a sphere for collective action and interest to curtail state power. In the case of post-colonial third world

⁸Narayanam Jayaram. (ed) (2005). *On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

country, interest in the discourse of civil society rose after gaining their independence from their colonisers. These newly independent third world countries aspire for self-determination through the democratic form of government. This new form of government appears to offer them socio-economic reconstruction, consequently, civil society is seen as an instrument of democracy.

There is no consensus among scholars on the definition and attributes of civil society. However, they seemed to agree that civil society is fundamental to democratic governance. Scholars often give the working definition of what they meant by civil society or either describe the characteristic of the concept of civil society in a particular context as they use it. The theoretical questions and empirical concerns about civil society differ from country to country. In political science, the discourse of civil society is often equated with the state and the dynamics of democracy while in sociology it is associated with the role of Non-governmental organisations or various social movements. Though there have been many various approaches to conceptualising civil society in contemporary times, most theorists and scholars are of the view that the significant institutional constituent of civil society comprises voluntary groups of different kinds. These include community groups, unions, associations, self-help groups, service agencies, religious groups, political parties. Therefore, civil society is a pluralised concept and there is no such thing as 'a' conception of civil society⁹.

The concept of civil society has caught the global community. It holds a domain position towards empowering citizens, grass root participation in governance, sense of political community, transparency on government policy, and preserving individual privacy. Theorist had a different view on the conceptual framework. Most theorists in the third world and Eastern Europe developed the concept of civil society from Lockean perspectives. They regard civil society as a reaction to interventionist state, fostering democracy and

⁹Sudha Mohan. (2010). *Role and Relevance of Civil Society Organisations*.

participation by limiting the role of the state. Theorist from European philosophic tradition like Jeffrey Alexander has another view. They emphasised on the realm of solidarity and look at the collective dimension that sustains ties among all groupings in society¹⁰.

The concept of Civil Society, according to Jayaram intersects the social, economic and political relations of the people. Its existence reconciles public and private interest and to prevent harm against arbitrary governance of the state¹¹. Tocqueville wrote that associations bring an individual from a diverse society together into a common concern. It teaches them civic virtues and political virtues. He holds that civil society limits the state and advocated the effective working of voluntary association to safeguard against the domination of a single interest and curtail the potential tyranny of the state. Thus civil society acts as an independent 'eye of society' or act as a 'watch dog' to arbitrary state power¹².

For many theorists, civil society is an autonomous association that exists outside the state, so retreat of the state from public arena is a necessary condition for strengthening and reinventing democracy. In contrast to this viewpoint, Gurpreet Mahajan stated that there is another viewpoint where the rule of law enforced by the state is a condition for civility within the society¹³. Analysing on the link between civil society and the state she challenges the general notion of locating civil society outside the state that enforced the law. Many theorists have rightly stated that civil society is unable to bring the sense of community or commitment to people's interest required for proper governance if it does not encompass legitimate state.

According to Baron de Montesquieu, civil society seeks to protect individual liberty with trust and reason in government. He treats civil society and government as being in constant

¹⁰Caroyl M Elliot. (2003). *Civil society and Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹¹Neerachandhoke. 'Civil society' in Elliott, C. M. (Ed) (2003). *Civil society and Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹² Tocqueville. (1900). In *ibid*

¹³Gurpreet Mahajan. (1999, May). "Civil Society and its Avatars". *Economic and Political weekly*. 34(20).

interaction and equilibrium with each other. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx portrayed civil society from the economic aspects. Hegel considered civil society as 'regulating the ethical life of the individual, the family and the state'¹⁴. He placed civil society between state and family. Civil society for him indicates contradictory behaviour. As an idea of a public sphere, civil society represents the collective interests of the people. However, at the sphere of capitalism, it is the arena of self-interest which has a conflictual and divisive factor between particular needs and interest. Therefore, the state plays a vital role to maintain stability and civility in society. It does for civil society what it cannot do, thus the state replaces civil society.

If human beings are being guided by self-interested action, they attain liberty to meet their end. This resulted in fragmentation of the society where each person is competing against the other to acquire their own interested goals. Conceiving this idea of social fragmentation, Neera Chandhoke underlined that civil society can be a site of degeneration if individuals are driven at seeking their own interest with the aim of fulfilling their own needs. Civil society allows the liberated individuals to be guided by their will of self-interest¹⁵. Thus in order to get rid of this degeneration, Hegel aims at achieving universality. Therefore, he subordinates civil society to the state.

Karl Marx sees civil society as synonyms to the bourgeoisie and propounds civil society as a source of power of the state and state as the product of civil society. He linked civil society as the 'base' of production force and the state as 'superstructure'. He holds that "civil society represents the interest of the bourgeoisie"¹⁶ and therefore the state also represents the interests of the bourgeoisie. Economic interest holds the domain of the relationship between

¹⁴Neera Chandhoke. 'Civil society' in Elliott, C. M. (ed) (2003). *Civil society and Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. 33.

¹⁵Neera Chandhoke. *A Critique of the notion of civil society as a third sphere*. In R Tandon and R Mohanty. (2003). *Does Civil Society Matter: Governance in contemporary India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

¹⁶M Edwards. (2004). *Civil society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

state and civil society. He portrayed civil society as an expansion of feudal to bourgeoisie society, the objective of the state is to fulfil economic needs which are controlled by bourgeoisie interests. He advocated withering away of the state to realise full human capacity and to reconsider the role of civil society.

For Antonio Gramsci civil society represents the broader interest of the society which has the potential to bring a rationale self-regulation and freedom. With Antonio Gramsci, we have seen a revival of the term, civil society in contemporary times¹⁷. Gramsci did not link civil society with the socio-economic base of the state. Rather, Gramsci identified civil society in the political superstructure. He conceptualised legitimacy in terms of hegemony. Hegemony for him is not only political and economic control but the predominance of one social class over the others, the dominant class is able to impose its way of seeing the world as good and the subordinate class accepts this as natural with their consent, cooperation, and collaboration. This keeps the subordinate class in a constant and unending subordination. Hence by relocating a site of consent through hegemony he thereby theorises the sphere of civil society as a site where state acquires hegemony¹⁸. Civil society functions to reproduce state power in intangible ways and it coexists with the state because of political society control and disciplines the body through the imposition of a penalty as per law but civil society disciplines the mind through various social, cultural and pedagogic institutions¹⁹. So for Gramsci states with civil society are comparatively stronger than a state where civil society does not exist.

¹⁷M Edwards. (2004). Civil society. Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹⁸Neera Chandhoke. A Critique of the notion of civil society as a third sphere. In R Tandon and R Mohanty (2003). *Does Civil Society Matter: Governance in contemporary India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

¹⁹Neera Chandhoke. A Critique of the notion of civil society as a third sphere. In R Tandon and R Mohanty (2003). *Does Civil Society Matter: Governance in contemporary India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

The scope of civil society

Civil society is also known as an intermediate association, as per social groupings they lay in between the primary groups like the family and public institution like the state. This intermediary institution a) offers protection against the coercive power of the state. b) Provides a platform to get multiple voices to be heard, which may be turned into legislation and public law²⁰. A vibrant civil society requires effective state and political order that is liberal and democratic. It fosters democracy and participation by limiting excessive state intervention. Civil society is neither opposed to state nor to society. On the contrary, in an autonomous way it works as a supplementary to both the state and the society. Civil Society works to promote several economic, social, cultural, moral and other responsibilities which fall in the domain of private activities. Although civil society is not a governmental entity yet it works for the purpose of safeguarding the general welfare, rights of the people and overall development of the state. In case of abusive and authoritarian state power, civil Society works to secure the rights of the people by being assertive in its society, polity, and economy. It often instigated the overthrow of the authoritarian regime and replaces it with a democratic system. As such, the role of civil society is manifested in the form of its active interference in the movements for the restoration of democratic regimes. Civil society according to Neerachandhoke is to “guarantee freedom, accessibility, and the rule of law, property rights and free market”²¹. According to Neerachandhoke Civil society performs two valuable functions, a) They provide a platform for expressions of popular opinion through the

²⁰ Satish Saberwal in Narayanam Jayaram. (ed) (2005). On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives. New Delhi: Sage Publications. Pp 112

²¹ Neera Chandhoke. A Critique of the notion of civil society as a third sphere. In Tandon, R. and Mohanty, R. (2003). Does Civil Society Matter: Governance in contemporary India. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

institutionalisation of the right of freedom and b) State power acquires legitimacy through these means²².

Civil society in the context of USA has been animated by worrying about lack of civic engagement and in Eastern Europe, it developed by resistance to the interventionist state. Satish Saberwal identifies civil society as a social space that has four qualities i.e. “1) Decisions and choice based on reason and knowledge. 2) Members of civil society have to relate to each other without any exclusion on a differing religion, language, gender. 3) Free from coercion in the making of choice and decision. 4) The effective membership in civil society provides protection to the members against coercion arising from the primary groups and the state”²³. Along with emphasising on secular and open institution for civil society to flourish, Andre Beteille defined civil society as an intermediating institution that serves as link between individual and each other and negotiate between citizens and the states “a society with the only individual at one end and the nation at the other would not only be difficult to live in but also be difficult to conceive”²⁴. Hence the presence of civil society is a universal feature of all human society. In contemporary times, civil society plays an active role in the drive for the protection of human rights of all the people living in all parts of the globe. Environmental protection movements too got support from members of civil society at the international sphere.

The emergence of new social Movement paves way for civil society as a space of constructing an alternative for world order²⁵. The new left emphasised on the key role of civil

²²Neera Chandhoke. A Critique of the notion of civil society as a third sphere. In Tandon, R. and Mohanty, R. (2003). *Does Civil Society Matter: Governance in contemporary India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

²³Satish Saberwal in Narayanam Jayaram. (ed) (2005). *On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

²⁴ Andre Beteille “*Civil society and the Good Society*” in N Jayaram. (Ed) (2005). *On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

²⁵BV Menon & JC Jerome. (2017). *Civil Society and State: A Historical Review*. *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2), pp. 41

society in protecting people against state coercion and market control. It allows citizens consent in government policy. Even the neoliberals considered civil society as space for the struggle to disrupt authoritarian form of state power²⁶. Therefore, civil society occupies a significant place in the political discourse. With the emergence of globalization, the state roll back while non-governmental actors come forward as important facilitators in the nation building process. Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have proved to be quite effective in reaching out to the vulnerable sections of the society for supporting their educational purpose. Likewise, even Government seek support from NGO's on matters of holistic development, curriculum, and effective teacher's orientation program. Hence civil society conveys to the citizens better living conditions in which education is an important criterion to fulfil the objectives of the civil society. They maintain checks and balances in democracies, they are able to influence the government and hold it accountable. Therefore, free and active civil societies indicate a good democratic system.

Brief Profile of Mizoram

Mizoram is the 23rd state of the Indian union which is divided into eight districts namely Aizawl, Champhai, Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Kolasib, Mamit, Siaha, Serchhip and three autonomous regions, namely Chakma autonomous district, Lai autonomous district, and Mara autonomous district. The inhabitants of Mizoram are commonly known as Mizo. The origin of the Mizos is quite vague due to the lack of recorded history and proper research. The generally accepted notion as per oral tradition is that the Mizos emerged from a rock or cave known as Chhinlung, located on the banks of the river Yalung in China²⁷. They changed settlements several times, they first settled in the Shan State, and then they moved from the Shan State to Chin Hills in Burma. They finally began to move across the river Tiau to India in the Middle

²⁶BV Menon & JC Jerome. (2017). Civil Society and State: A Historical Review. *Tattva Journal of Philosophy*, 9(2).

²⁷ History of Mizoram. (2017, January 23). *The national portal of India*. Retrieved from <http://www.mizoram.nic.in/about/history.html>

of the 16th Century. There were many cases of tribal attacks and Guerrilla warfare that threaten the security of livelihood during the 18th and 19th century.

Mizoram has diverse ethnicity, among the various minority community the largest are the Chakma, Lai, Mara, Hmar, and Bru. “These minority groups have their own ethnic identity, culture, and tradition and speak different languages. While the Chakmas are Buddhists, the non-tribals (5.5%) are mostly Hindus and Muslims”. Influenced by British missionaries around 95 per cent of the people of Mizoram are professing Christianity. The Mizo Christians followed various denominations, the predominant denomination is Presbyterian. The coming of British missionaries in Mizoram not only imparts Christianity but also spread education among the Mizo. Hence a lot of schools and church had been set up since then.

Aizawl

Aizawl is the capital of Mizoram and it lies in the northern part of the state, it is the administrative and commercial centres of the state. Originally Aizawl was an uninhabited place of Thangruma²⁸, with the British expedition in Mizoram, the township in Mizoram grew at Aizawl. The British Government at first built a fort at Aizawl for the purpose of defence and strategy. Later they undertook construction of roads for administrative convenience, in no time Aizawl became the centre hub of British administration in Mizoram. Even after British rule came to an end, the gradual development of Aizawl attracted people to this place to live an urban life and today Aizawl became the centre of administration, education, religion, trade, and commerce which ultimately lead the people to adapt modern culture.

During the period of insurgency, Implementation of regrouping of villages and Air attacks took place in Aizawl city on March 5th, 1966. Several important civil society groups in the

²⁸ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. Pp. 97

state of Mizoram were established in Aizawl. Young Mizo Association being the biggest and oldest civil society organisations was established in Aizawl on 15th June 1935. The headquarters of YMA is situated in Aizawl. Therefore, given this background, this research aims to conduct the study of the socio-political implications of YMA in Aizawl district and its relations with the state with the passage of time.

Demography and Geography

Geographically, it is located in the north-eastern corner of India and share a border with Bangladesh and Myanmar. As per 2011 census record, the population of Mizoram is 1,097,206 out of which 555,339 are males and 541,867 are females with an area of 21,081 square kilometres²⁹. Mizoram population density is fifty two persons per square kilometre. Mizoram has a high level of literacy rate and it is a highly educated state with 91.3 percentage of literacy rate according to 2011 census³⁰.

Mizoram is a landlocked state situated in the North East India whose southern part shares 722 kilometres long international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, and northern part shares domestic borders with Manipur, Assam, and Tripura. Its area is composed of 21,087 km and this makes Mizoram the fifth smallest state of India. It covers from 21°56'N to 24°31'N, and 92°16'E to 93°26'E. The tropic of cancer runs through the state of Mizoram. It is surrounded by hills, valleys, rivers, lakes, and forests. The highest peak in Mizoram is Phawngpui Tlang also known as the Blue Mountain, it is situated in the South-eastern part of the state and is 7,100 feet high³¹. Mizoram practice Jhum cultivation, which is also known as

²⁹Mizoram: District census handbook. (2011). *Census of India*. Retrieved from http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/1503_PART_B_DCHB_AIZAWL.pdf

³⁰ Mizoram Census. (2011).

³¹. Chitta Ranjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

slashes and burn cultivation. According to the 2015 India state of forest report, Mizoram has the highest forest cover as a percentage of its geographical area of any Indian state³².

Status of Mizo Women

Mizo women hold a significant status in the society. Their position is not any lesser than the Mizo men. However, they do not acquire any rights on property inheritance. Her role is confined in the administration of household life of her family. In a modern Mizo society, the status of women has also under a gone change in certain aspect. Inheritance of properties is decided by the father so the daughter of the family can also inherit her father property according to the wish of her father. However, the ancestral home of the family is usually given to the youngest son. Today, women occupy certain important workforce of the state and in fact, many women are the bread winner of their family.

Culture and festivals of Mizoram

Mizo society is composed of a closed-knit community. There is no stratification of caste or class hierarchical structure. The Mizo community is free from any class or caste consciousness. The people actively participate in the social and religious gatherings without any concerns from the social hierarchy. The traditional and cultural festivals of Mizo society have united them and promoted community closeness. This influences their actions and shapes their attitude. Every festivalis celebrated with music and dance, this symbolised their cheerful nature. The culture of the Mizos is a reflection of their occupation in the past like shifting cultivation. In the traditional life of the Mizos, the songs, festivals or activities conducted by the community were accomplished in accordance with the seasons or Jhum

³² Press Information Bureau. (2015, December, 04). Government of India: *Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change*. Retrieved from <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=132571>

cycles. Various festivals and ceremonies were performed by individuals to signify the various stages of social ladder that they had reached and in order to attain a better life in the next world. Once such festivals are 'Khuangcahawi'³³ which was held in the month of October. The event is followed by a small feast and as such the host is obliged to offer rice beer and meat to the community. These are celebrated with songs and dances.

Another significant event in the traditional life of the Mizo society is the community festivals. These community festivals are known as 'Kut' which means season as they were held at a specific agricultural season. The various 'Kut' celebrated were 'Pawl Kut', 'MimKut' and 'ChapcharKut'³⁴. 'Pawl Kut' is celebrated after they have completed harvesting their agricultural products and this was during the end of the year. Along with celebrating their harvest they also welcomed the coming of new-year. 'MimKut' is performed after the harvest of the first Maize crop. The term 'Mim' itself indicates Maize in the English language. The first harvested maize was reserved for their dead relatives and they made an offering for the deceased soul. 'ChapcharKut' is celebrated during the season of spring as it is a spring festival. It was celebrated before agricultural cultivation and during the burning of their agricultural land. It was a festival that was looked forward to by all the members of the Mizo communities. It was celebrated with traditional dance and song in which all the men, women, elders and children took part in it.

With the transition of Mizo society from traditional to modernity and the advent of Christianity, the cultural and traditional festivals of the Mizos vanished one by one. However, there has been a cultural awakening by the Mizos. In order to revive the festivals and

³³RintluangaPachauu. (2009). *Mizoram: A Study in Comprehensive Geography*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

³⁴RintluangaPachauu. (2009). *Mizoram: A Study in Comprehensive Geography*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

practices of the past, ‘ChapcharKut’ is celebrated every year during March³⁵. The day of ‘Chapcharkut’ is observed as a state holiday.

Dances of Mizoram

Since the Mizos live a close-knit communal life, they have a sociable and vibrant social life. Music is very much a part of their cultural practices and they sing during sorrows and in happiness. As much as they love to sing, they love to dance as well. The cultural dance of Mizos was performed by groups and it was accompanied by musical instruments like drums and gongs.

Cheraw

‘Cheraw’ is the most prominent traditional dance of the Mizos. It is the oldest cultural dance of the Mizos and it is believed to have been practiced since the first century AD. According to historical narratives, ‘Cheraw’ dance was already performed by the Mizos while they established their settlements in Yunan province of China. This settlement was before they migrated to the Chin hills during the thirteenth century and then eventually to the Lushai Hills (Present day Mizoram). ‘Cheraw’ dance was initially performed during the celebration of plentiful harvest by an individual family. The young boys and girls with exceptional dancing skills performed the dance. The boys sat face to face with each other with a long bamboo, they stave the bamboo in accordance to the rhythmic beat of the music. The girls were dressed in colourful traditional attire and dance in and out between the bamboos. Later Cheraw was performed during several celebrations and wedding events. It is the most

³⁵R. L. Thanzawna. (2018, December, 13). ‘*The origin of the ChapcharKut*’. Retrieved from <http://www.mizoram.nic.in/about/oriofchapcharkut.htm>

colourful and popular dance cultural dance of the Mizos. It served as a great enthrallment to all the places it were performed.

Sarlamkai/ Solakia

Sarlamkai or solakia is another fascinating dance of the Mara and Pawi communities. They settled in the Southern part of the state. The Mara and the Pawi belong to larger entity of the Mizo tribes. The dance is widely known as ‘Solakia’ among the Mara community and the Pawi community called them as ‘Sarlamkai’³⁶. In earlier days the Mizos were in a constant war with each other. A ceremony was conducted to celebrate victory on war, it was a ceremony to deride the beheaded soul of the enemy. Any warrior who conquered the enemy and brings out such occasion to be celebrated was highly regarded and honoured by the people. It is during such ceremony that the cultural dance called ‘Sarlamkai’ or ‘Solokia was performed. The boys and girls performed the dance by wearing a colourful attire and stood aside one another in a circle with their leader dressed as a warrior. Their leader uttered boastful slogans while the groups dance in a circle.

Khuallam

Initially ‘Khuallam’ was a dance performed in the ceremony known as ‘Thangchhuah’³⁷. ‘Thangchhuah’ is a ceremony conducted to celebrate the exceptional skill and success of a person in hunting life and in his social life. He was deemed as having a special skill, which was considered as necessary for passing into the abode of dreams after death. Guests were invited from other villages to attend the ceremony. The dancers were wrapped with ‘Puandum’ over their shoulders and they performed the dance by swaying ‘Puandum’ (cloth)

³⁶RintluangaPachauu. (2009). *Mizoram: A Study in Comprehensive Geography*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

³⁷RintluangaPachauu. (2009). *Mizoram: A Study in Comprehensive Geography*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

according to the rhythmic beat of the drums and gongs. Generally, the dance was performed in large numbers, preferably with an equal number of boys and girls.

Chheihlam

Another significant cultural dance of the Mizos called 'Chheihlam' was originated post 1900 along the lines of the song called 'Puma Zai' and the dance called 'Tlanglam'. This dance symbolises the spirit of joy and excitement. It was performed to accompany a song called 'Chheihhla'. People came together and squat in a circle on the floor, spreading their arms and dance or sing according to the beat of the drums. A pair of dancers stood in the middle and recite the songs or dance along with the beat of the music. It was usually performed by the elders of the community at night along with fermented rice beer.

Chai

'Chai' is one of the most popular dances of the Mizos during the olden days. This dance was usually performed during 'Chapcharkut' festivals. The dance was performed by men and women standing alternatively in circles with one another. The women hold the men's waist while the men hold the women's shoulder. The dance was accompanied by Chai song with a rhythmic swaying of the dancers to the left and right. This dance was performed in accordance with the beat of the drums and animals horn. The musician stood in the middle of the circle.

Chawglazawn

This popular folk dance of the Pawi communities was performed to celebrate the trophies that the successful hunter bought home. The dance was also performed during festivals³⁸. 'Chawnglazawn' was performed in large groups by both male and female dancers. The

³⁸RintluangaPachau. (2009). Mizoram: A Study in Comprehensive Geography. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre.

dance was also performed in accordance with the beat of the drums which is of greater tempo as compared to all the other Mizo cultural dance. Colourful shawls were swayed by the dancers to add to the beauty of this dance.

Zantalam

Zangtalam is a popular dance of the Paite communities which was performed by both male and female. While performing the dance the dancers can sing songs and the drummer is the leader of the dance. He directed and guided the dance, the duration of the dance depends on the drummer. This dance is simple and easy so any members of the community can join the dance.

The chief-Traditional Administration

The chief called 'LAL' was the head of administration. Each village was a unit of administration under a chief. The chief appointed the elders known as 'Val Upa'³⁹ to assist him in his day to day administration. The chiefs were deemed as the guardians of the people belonging to their jurisdiction. He would distribute lands for cultivation among his subjects and in return, his subjects would pay tribute to the chief in the form of paddy. The Mizo chiefs were the most important instrument of administration of the people. He enjoyed various privileges over his subjects. Privileges in the form of paddy, portion of trapped animals and various other tributes were given to him⁴⁰. There is dissimilarity among the chief in their dealings with their subjects. While some of them were kind and affectionate towards their subjects some others were despotic and abusive of their authority. They looked down upon their subjects and regard them as a commoner. In such case, discontentment grew on the system of chieftainship. The public regard this despotic attitude of the chief as oppressive. All

³⁹P Lalnithanga. (2006). *Political developments in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Pres

⁴⁰P Lalnithanga. (2006). *Political developments in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press.

matters relating to internal administration were left to the chiefs who followed the traditional pattern of administration.

The British for the first time introduced the system of circle administration in Mizo hills dividing the region into 18 circles. Each of these circles was placed under a Circle Interpreter. “The Circle Interpreters who were educated in the British Mission schools acted as an intermediary channel between the sub-divisional and the chiefs”⁴¹. Hence, the coming into being of the Circle Interpreters backed by the government with monthly salary started the emergence of a new privileged class totally different from the traditional elites⁴².

Famine and Insurgency- The outbreak of famine known as ‘Mautam’ which means flowering of bamboo started in 1958⁴³. There was a shortage of agricultural products and lack of facilities to supply food in the remote villages, this caused a massive economic instability and hardship among the people. “A relief organisation called the ‘Mizo National Frontier Front’ was formed in 1960 under the leadership of Laldenga to provide help to the people dreading by famine”⁴⁴. The villages relied on the MNFF and gave all the credit of supplying food to them. Eventually, they developed a sense of scepticism and pessimistic attitude towards the Assam Government. Later on, Laldenga took it as an opportunity to transform the Mizo National Famine Front into a political party called Mizo National Front omitting the word ‘Famine’. The objective of the party was “the demand for Sovereign Independence for greater Mizoram” which was marked by self-determination and establishment of Independent

⁴¹ Mahapatra & Zote. (2008, July-September). “Political Development in Mizoram: Focus on the Post-Accord Scenario”, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 69(3), pp. 643-660, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856452>

⁴² Mahapatra & Zote. (2008, July-September). “Political Development in Mizoram: Focus on the Post-Accord Scenario”, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 69(3), pp. 643-660, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856452>

⁴³ J.K. Patnaik. (2008). *Mizoram: Dimension and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

⁴⁴ J.K. Patnaik. (2008). *Mizoram: Dimension and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

state that comprises of all Mizo inhabited areas.⁴⁵ Conflict against the central government arose out of anger and discontentment among the people due to the economic hardship that they had to endure because of Assam Government failure to take any effective remedial measures before and during the famine period as well as due to the negligence of the Union Government to provide proper administration and relief to the state.

The agreement among many scholars is that “contrary to popular belief civil wars and ethnic conflict in several parts of the world are not primarily due to ethnic and religious diversity but rather a high level of poverty failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources⁴⁶. As such, the Mizo insurgent movement was largely attributed to deep economic and political developmental failures. On 28th February 1966, the MNF started an open armed revolt against the Indian Government demanding sovereign Independence state for the Mizo⁴⁷. The Indian government immediately started its counter insurgency operation and thus began the longest series of negotiations in the history of the country. The insurgent movement gave rise to intense armed conflict between the MNF and the security forces leading to untold miseries and suffering of people over decades.

After two decades of insurgency, the peace accord technically titled “memorandum of settlement was finally signed between the insurgent leader Laldenga on behalf of MNF and Arjun Singh on behalf of Indian Union, Vice president of Indian National congress on 30th June 1986⁴⁸. Ultimately Mizoram became a full-fledged federal state of union India in 1987.

⁴⁵Neitham Lalremlian. (2001). “Hmar Struggles for Autonomy in Mizoram, India,” retrieved from <http://www.ritimo.org/article889.html>

⁴⁶Elbadwai and Sambanis. (2002, June). Prevalence of civil war. *Journal of conflict resolution*. 46(3). Pp.307-334.

⁴⁷Lal Pudaite. (2005). “Mizoram”, *Institute of Developing Economies*, retrieved at www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Jrp/pdf/133_8.pdf

⁴⁸Sushil Kumar Sharma (2006). “Lessons from Mizoram Insurgency and Peace Accord 1986”, Vivekananda International Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/lessons-from-2006-insurgency-and-peace-accord-1986.pdf>

Post-Insurgency

Mizo society has evolved progressively in its structure and culture after its formation of a statehood. The system of Chieftainship got transformed into a village council system and recently the council was replaced by local self-government. The earlier communal economy in which everything belongs to the community was replaced with the emergence of private property. “The cleavage and tension arising with the emergence of private property do not lead to any social conflict unlike in other parts of the mainland”⁴⁹. The homogeneity of Mizo society which is rooted in its practices and values of community life still sustain in the culture and society of Mizo people, hence serving as its pillar of strength. “The church and Christianity have given them a separate sense of identity”⁵⁰ and it serves as an integrating element for strengthening the society. Although there are other religious communities they constitute only a small percent of the population.

The genesis of politics in Mizoram

With the introduction of Inner line Regulation by the British in 1873 and the Chin Hills Regulation of 1896, the plain people required a special permit to enter and stay in the hill area. In 1895 Lushai Hills (present day Mizoram) was formally declared as part of the British-India. All matters relating to internal administration were left to the chiefs who followed the traditional pattern of administration. Mizoram which was earlier known as Lushai Hills had regular administrative setup only after it was under the administrative control of Assam since 1898. Under the government of India act 1935, it was declared as excluded areas and was administered by crown representatives- the superintendent. Western education and modernisation introduced by the British encouraged them to develop a negative orientation

⁴⁹J.K Patnaik. (ED) (2008). *Mizoram: Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

⁵⁰J.K Patnaik. (ED) (2008). *Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company

towards the traditional political setup of chieftainship. The political awakening of Mizo started in the 1940s as they felt repressed under the institution of chieftainship and autocratic authority of the Chiefs and the superintendent⁵¹. With the emergence of educated elites, the Young Lushai Association emerged. The Young Lushai Association (YLA) was later changed into the Young Mizo Association (YMA), which was formed in 1935. However, YLA does not openly involve itself in politics until the Second World War.

The impact of the Second World War among the Mizo society is that it developed political consciousness among the Mizo's due to their wider contacts with outsiders. Thus, when members of the YLA had a special meeting with the Superintendent of the hills towards the end of 1945, they had voiced that they wanted democracy for Mizoram. The political party called the Mizo union was formed on 26th April 1946. R. Vanlawma was the chief architect of this party. They represented the interests of the villagers. The basic objectives of the party were to do away with the Chieftainship and reunification of all Mizo under one administrative unit and later aspire for autonomy and development within India.

Mizoram acquired the status of district in 1952. Prior to 1952 it was under the district of Assam and was not presented in any legislature, central or provincial. With the formation of the Mizo District Council, the Lushai Hills District came to be known as Mizo District as per the Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act, 1954 of the Indian Parliament⁵². In 1972 Mizoram acquired the status of Union Territory. After the peace accord was signed between the Government and the MNF insurgent group in 1986, it acquired statehood on 20th February 1987. Mizoram was given two seats in the parliament, with one seat each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

⁵¹J.K Patnaik. (Ed) (2008). *Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life*. New Delhi: Concept publishing company.

⁵²Jangkhongam Doungel. "Autonomous District Councils: A study of the implications of the sixth schedule in Mizoram" in J.K Patnaik. (Ed) (2008). *Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life*. New Delhi: Concept publishing company. pp. 207.

With the formation of Mizo District Council in 1952, the Lushai Hills District came to be known as Mizo District as per the Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act, 1954 of the Indian Parliament (Doungel, 209). Minority communities within the Mizo District felt that their rights and autonomy should be protected from the majority community 'Mizo' through the Sixth Schedule. Thus, tribal Union party was formed by the Pawi and Lakher on October 25, 1949, at Lawngtlai (Chalngingluaia 2001: 2-3). The party ultimately succeeded in the formation of Pawi-Lakher regional council (PLRC) on 23rd April 1953 to accomplish the political demand of the Pawi-Lakher region⁵³.

Autonomous District council in Mizoram

Mizoram has three Autonomous District Council namely- Mara Autonomous district council, Lai Autonomous District council, and Chakma Autonomous District council. If one looks into the political history of the formation of Regional Council under the Sixth Schedule, apart from the then Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, there was no other Regional Council formed by the State Government. In other words, the then Mizo District was the only Autonomous District under Assam where Regional Council was constituted to protect other minority communities under the Sixth Schedule. The formation of present day Autonomous Districts in Mizoram was not a sudden formation but it had a long political route since the beginning of Independence⁵⁴

The Mizo District council was deleted from part III of the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution in 1972 with the formation of the Union Territory of Mizoram. According to articles 244(2) and 275(1) of 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution "every autonomous region existing immediately before the prescribed date in the Union territory of Mizoram

⁵³ Joseph Lalfakzuala. (2016, July). "Ethnicity and Autonomy: Unending political process in Mizoram", *Social Change and Development*, 13, pp. 46-54. retrieved from http://www.okd.in/downloads/jr_16_july/article-4.pdf

⁵⁴ Joseph Lalfakzuala. (2016, July). "Ethnicity and Autonomy: Unending political process in Mizoram", *Social Change and Development*, 13, pp. 46-54. retrieved from http://www.okd.in/downloads/jr_16_july/article-4.pdf

shall, on and from that date, be an autonomous district in that Union territory”⁵⁵. In this Schedule, the phrase "prescribed date" meant that the date on which the Legislative Assembly of the Union territory of Mizoram is constituted according to the ‘Government of Union Territories Act, 1963’⁵⁶ provision. Thus, the three regional councils were upgraded to full-fledge Autonomous District council after the dissolution of the Mizo District Council on 29th April 1972. Later the Pawi and the Lakherwere changed into Lai and Mara, thus the present Autonomous Districts are known as, Lai Autonomous District, Mara Autonomous District, and Chakma Autonomous District.

Implications of the sixth schedule in Mizoram

Mizoram which was earlier known as the Lushai Hills had regular administrative setup only after it was under the administrative control of Assam since 1898. Prior to independence, the administration of tribal areas of North-East had always drawn attention “to protect the rights of minorities and tribes of excluded area”⁵⁷. An advisory committee on enquiring into the areas was suggested by the Cabinet mission under Sir Stafford Cripps. Hence, The Bordolai committee was set up by the constituent Assembly on 24th January 1947 to understand the administrative problem and the mind of the Mizo people in their quest of having autonomy. Saprawnga and Khawtinkhuma from the Mizo Union party represented the Mizo.

The committee submitted its report on thoughts about the administration and developments of the area to Vallabhai Patel, Chairman and Advisory Committee on fundamental rights and later forwarded it to the Constituent Assembly on 4th March 1948. The Constituent Assembly considered the matters in 1949 and after much discussion and debates in the Constituent

⁵⁵Ministry of law and justice. Retrieved from [http://lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/Const.Pock%20Pg.Rom8Fsss\(34\).pdf](http://lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/Const.Pock%20Pg.Rom8Fsss(34).pdf)

⁵⁶Ministry of law and justice. Retrieved from [http://lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/Const.Pock%20Pg.Rom8Fsss\(34\).pdf](http://lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/Const.Pock%20Pg.Rom8Fsss(34).pdf)

⁵⁷JangkhongamDoungel. “Autonomous District Councils: A study of the implications of the sixth schedule in Mizoram” in J.K Patnaik. (Ed) (2008). Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life. New Delhi: Concept publishing company. pp. 207.

Assembly certain amendments were made and the sixth schedule finally emerged and find a place in the constitution in Articles 244(2) and 275 (1)⁵⁸. The Sixth schedule of the Constitution of India allows the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram to have an administrative style of their own in conformity with their customs, traditions and practices⁵⁹.

Review of Literature

In this section, an attempt has been made to make a review of some important studies on civil society in India and abroad.

The book “Civil society and Democracy” by Carolyn Elliott explores important issues in the study of political science and Indian politics. Different authors contributed their work on the themes of civil society and democracy. It analyses civil society according to the politics and social conditions of the regions of Europe, Asia, and America. The book offers a combination of analyses by political theorists with empirical studies in comparative politics. It is divided into two sections, the first section is the conceptual framework and the second section contains empirical investigations by theorists. It empirically assessed the relationship of civil society with democracy and governance in India. It not only conceptualized on the literature of civil society but explained the social reality that suggested its possible relationship with democracy. It explores how the concept of civil society developed in the western tradition of political thought and compares India’s experience with those of China, south-east Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. This volume offers a combination of analysis by political theorists with first-hand studies in comparative politics. They analyse the relationship of civil society to pluralism, multicultural society, and liberalism reflecting the

⁵⁸JangkhongamDoungel. “Autonomous District Councils: A study of the implications of the sixth schedule in Mizoram” in J.K Patnaik. (Ed) (2008). Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life. New Delhi: Concept publishing company. pp. 207.

⁵⁹“Mahapatra and Zote. (2008. July-September). Political Development in Mizoram: Focus on the Post-Accord Scenario”. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 69 (3). pp. 643-660, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856452>

modes of civil society and its articulation in the public sphere. Apart from exploring its relations, it also deals with its influence on the market of the global world, social capital, multi-ethnicity, freedom, and democracy to lift and strengthen up democratic civil society in India.

The book “On civil society” by N. Jayaram is a collection of 14 papers covering the subject of discourse on Civil Society, State, and Democracy. The contributors of this book offer different perspectives on the discourse of civil society, connoting civil society as against the state or linking it with the state. The various chapters of this book highlighted and elucidated the issues concerning the concept and reality of civil society. Although the origin and development of civil society discourse are rooted in the west, the contributing author of this book consciously strives towards the Indian context with regard to its social, economic and political aspects. It also scrutinizes and laid down the historical experience of India. Tracing it from the historical roots, the content of this book elucidated the discourse of civil society. Dhanagare (civil society, state, and democracy: contextualizing a discourse) and Nayar (civil society, state and democracy: Lessons for India) highlight from the historical perspectives the origin of civil society in social and political theory. Dhanagare provides the classical debate on the subject by making a comparative analysis of the view of Marx, Hegel, and Gramsci. Nayar along with the classical view provides the contractualists approach of Hobbes, Locke, Rosseau on “state of nature” contract among the people to give up their individual rights while seeking a sovereign to fulfil that objective. Hegel used bourgeoisie society as synonyms to civil society and civil/bourgeoisie society left the unity of the family to enter into economic competition for self-interest. The state came into being because civil society itself is not sufficient as it does for civil society what it cannot do. Marx portrayed civil society as an expansion of feudal to bourgeoisie society, the objective of the state is to fulfil economic needs which are controlled by individual interest. He advocated withering

away of the state to realised full human potential. Gramsci portrayed civil society as representing broader community interest which has the potential to bring a rationale self-regulation and freedom

T.C Oommen in his book “Nation, Civil society and social movements” analyses the problems like the relevance of nation state, the role of civil society in good governance and relationship between social movements and social policy. He also contested many of the existing conceptualizations on Indian and Western countries. Three connected themes like the nation, civil society, and social movements are broadly explained in different sections. Each section is having four chapters. The notion of nation and nationality in the twentieth century South Asia is severely analysed in the first section. The second section deals with civil society, market and the state. It emphasized the process of independence of the three in India and how its course is different as compared with the west. It discussed the positive and negative aspect of civil society and it highlights the necessity of civil society for good governance. It also presents civil society from the perspectives of Dalits. The third and fourth sections deal with the implication of religion and language in India and highlight India’s remarkable social movements.

The book *Civil Society and Modern Politics* by Dipali Saha examines and analyse conflict and compromise between civil society and modern politics. This book attempts to understand the relationship between civil society and modern politics by outlining the views of various thinkers. In this book, an attempt has been made to place freedom in modern civil societies beyond struggles of interest, identity, and power. It attempts to mediate the inherent problem such as mediating civil freedom of contract, property and the regulation of exchange in the market with that of political freedom of assembly, expression, suffrage and equality before the law. The assumption laid down with regard to the attempt of mediation is that people value material comfort, individual freedom, economic growth and privacy much more

than their actual value. In this sense reconciling freedom with largely formal and strictly limited forms of political participation and legitimation of statist intervention becomes freedom. Hence this status of civil society becomes extremely ambiguous in liberal theory and practices, as it is not clear if it should be considered synonymous with civil law for the analytical purpose.

Tandon and Mohanty in their book *Do Civil Society Matter: Governance in contemporary India* explored and analyse the civil society initiatives which addressed on the impact and issues of good governance. The book explores the relevance and significance of civil society for good governance. It broadened the conceptualisation of governance to change the prevalent view that governance is solely the responsible for the state. The contributors of this edited book argued that governance is the responsibility of civilised citizens and that people must be given the space to decide what is good for them. This book is divided into two sections and the first part deals with the conceptual framework and the second part deals with five case studies of assertion in the sphere of civil society. It can serve as guidance for research scholars, students of political science and sociology, public and developmental administration, and for governance, broadening ones understanding on the nature of civil society and good governance as it provides insights into the efficiency of collective actions.

Ashutosh Varshney in his essay “Ethnic conflict and Civil Society: India and beyond” provides a link between civil society and ethnic conflict. This essay presents a systematic attempt to connect between the two. The first section clarifies the term ethnicity, ethnic-conflict, and civil society. An ethnic group in the broader sense means religion, linguistic, racial, tribe or caste groups and such conflict based on these relating group identities can be term as ethnic conflict. Civil society refers to that space a) that exist between the family on the one hand and the state on the other, b) provides interconnection between individuals of

family c) is independent of the state. The second section deals with the relevance of civil society in the crisis of ethnic conflict. The third section provides an argument linking ethnic conflict and civil society. The fourth section laid down empirical evidence in support of the arguments made and the final section presents sets of conditions under which the basic argument of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic engagement is unlikely to apply. This paper argues that there is an integral link between the structures of civil life on one hand and the presence or absence of ethnic violence on the other. Civic engagement plays a crucial yet different role in the ethnic conflict. Civic engagement along the lines of Inter-ethnic networks serve as an agent of peace as it built bridges between ethnic diverse communities and lessen tension. Intra-ethnic networks can be a peril to the communities if communities are organized only on the lines of intra-ethnicity. As such connections with other communities to become weak or even non-existent which is likely to cause ethnic conflict. This paper highlights that trust based on inter-ethnic ties and social and civic ties should cut across ethnic groups. In the final section, the author analyses communication network that links different ethnic groups. These networks of communication can be built nationally, internationally and virtually in the era of electronic. Most of all fact remains that most people experience civil or community life locally. These local networks- associational or informal whether they bring in peace or conflict between ethnic communities are the variables that have the potential for explaining the observable pattern of ethnic violence or conflict.

Baviskar in his essay “NGO and civil society in India” explores the relationship between civil society and specific institution and processes including NGOs led farmer’s movement, identity politics, and religion. In the case of India, civil society organised in the shape of religious revivalism, ethnicity, caste. There is a significant presence of NGO in India. According to Baviskar, they may be engaged in a variety of activities: implementing grassroots and sustainable development, promoting human rights and social justice,

protesting against environmental degradation, and many other similar tasks. Some activists resent and reject the term NGO. Instead, they designate themselves as social action groups, political action groups or social movements. The NGO is seen as actors of civil society committed to bringing change and transformation, incorporating transparency and accountability. After mid-1980s, the Indian state openly welcomed and the workings of NGO's in participating in the sphere of development. Baviskar concluded that systematic studies on the workings of NGO will enable us to understand their contributions to the development and social change.

Dhanagare in his essay "civil society, state and democracy: contextualizing a discourse" trace the concept of civil society from the historical roots, the content of this book elucidated the discourse of civil society. This article provides the classical debate on the subject by making a comparative analysis of the view of Marx, Hegel, and Gramsci.

Gurpreet Mahajan in her article "Civil Society and its Avatars" explore another line of thinking. Mahajan stated that there is another viewpoint where the rule of law enforced by the state is a condition for civility within society. Analysing on the correlation of civil society and the state she challenges the general notion of locating civil society outside the state that enforces the law. The paper argues against a detachment of civil society from the state and analyses the 18th, 19th and 20th century political thinking. During the second half of the 20th century, loss of faith in the institution of the state is also seen in third world democratic state like India. Civil society act as an alternative to unresponsive and bureaucratic state as the post-colonial state failed to represent the interest of the weaker sections of society, the voice of the marginalised is under-represented with no space in decision making. Theorist like Rajni Kothari wanted to empower civil society as they offer an alternative to unresponsive state machinery. However, the author regards their loss of faith in the state inclined them to empower civil society and see their move towards state as negative because the distinctive

featured of India like religious, culture and ethnic multiplicity have to be encompassed. The article advocated towards bringing back the state because open and secular institutions cannot function effectively if the state is hostile to it. Civil society flourished with the existence of universal law correlated with the state. Besides state protect civil society from internal disruptions so he viewed civil society as part of the democratic constitutional state. He concluded with the necessity to go back to history and retrieved a right based conception of civility which alone will ensure social equality and non-discrimination along with individual liberty.

HaokipLetkholun in his article “Electoral process in Mizoram: The role of the church in 2013 assembly election” analysed the role of the church in the electoral process of Mizoram. It stated that the church had a deep influence on the successful conduct of free and fair elections in the state. The first part of the article gives a brief historical background of the electoral process in Mizoram. The second part deals with the emergence of church and civil societies in the poll process. The third part deals with the role played by the church in the seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections. The last part highlights the problems and prospects of church and civil society’s engagement on the electoral process.

P.K.B Nayar in his article “civil society, state and democracy: Lessons for India” highlights from the historical perspectives the origin of civil society in social and political theory. P.K.B Nayar along with the classical view provides the contractualists approach of Hobbes, Locke, Rosseau on “state of nature”.

LaldinpuiiRalte in her article “Toward understanding Civil Society” discussed the mediatory role of the Young Mizo Association between the individual and the state. It outlines the various roles undertaken by YMA and highlights the nature of the relationship that exists between YMA and the state. In this article, the author explained that civil society

and the state cannot function effectively without lending support to each other. In the context of Mizoram, both state and YMA coexist with a cordial relationship and work collaboratively and cooperatively on the several social, political and economic issues to provide welfare to the people. This article highlights several cases of the state and YMA where they work collaboratively and gave a detail description of their work in several departments of states such as the Excise and Narcotics department, The Police department, Education, Forest, and Environment. She emphasized that both state and civil society played an important role in fulfilling the objectives. The article shows that there is enough scope for both civil society and the state as discussed above. Both civil society and the state seek to work together and collaborate with each other for the peoples. As both the state and YMA recognises the importance of co-existence, they try to maintain a cordial relationship and work collaboratively and cooperatively on the issues relating to the people's welfare. Though civil society and the state represent two different domains, the relationship between civil society and the state need to be properly analysed and assessed. The paper concluded that the relations between Mizoram civil societies and the state is often marked by a collaborative as well as confrontational relations but it is imperative that both civil society and the state of Mizoram complement each other for efficiency in their functions.

Susan Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph essay on "The Coffee House and the Ashram" scrutinise the associational life composed by Mahatma Gandhi, such as the Ashram, and discuss implication for collective action during the Indian freedom struggle. It presents the significance of the associational life that Gandhi had created. It discussed the debate about civil society and the public sphere in political and social theory. The paper presents the presence of the associational life in the Indian context which is in consonance with the cultural settings. The role that this associational life plays in the transition to democracy is contentiously analysed. European idea of civil society and the public sphere is discussed and

Gandhi's differences are explored, leading to a number of observations on contrast and similarity with the practice and concept of civil society and public sphere as they had evolved in the history, thought and practice of Europe.

Statement of problem

In contemporary times civil society is often seen as an alternative to state when the state fails to cope up with its socio-eco issues and political problems. It has enormously contributed towards people's development and addresses issues and problems that the state had failed to meet. In a coercive and autocratic state, the exertion of pressure by the civil societal movement has received attention, contentious debate, and analysis. There are many available kinds of literature on the normative discourse of civil society in Mizoram. In the last five years with the recent political, social and economic turmoil expressed in the existing life of discontent groups, there are quite a few empirical researches on the mediatory role of YMA.

The YMA being the biggest and oldest civil society organisation in Mizoram. Therefore, it is important to look at the ground realities and critically analysed the vital role of YMA in the context of Mizoram. The ability of civil society organisations to provide a platform of interaction between the state and the society in Mizoram will be examined empirically in the case of Aizawl district. Although various books and articles are available on the civil society and state, there is hardly any literature on the YMA and Aizawl interface. Hence there is some research gap and this research gap can be addressed with the proposed research and it would facilitate a link between civil society and state.

The significance of the study

Open and secular institution constitutes the backbone of civil society. It serves as a link between the individual and each other with the wider sections of society, mediating between citizens and state. Civil society exists in the cultural and traditional norms of the Mizo

society, its vibrancy is seen even in traditional Mizo society. Although the presence of civil society during primordial days is autocratic in nature, the unique feature of the existence of civil society from other discourse is that it is an inherent discourse that had been passed down from primordial days. Membership in the civil society is not only voluntary in nature but it is obligatory in nature as it is a form of identifying to the culture of the Mizo through shared norms and values. This research seeks to analyse the role of the civil society like the YMA which provides a platform for interaction between the state and the society. It aims to explore its vibrant role since the insurgency period and its transition with the surface of modern democratic polity in the district of Aizawl, for instance.

Objectives

- 1) To study the significance of civil society in traditional and modern Mizo societies.
- 2) To study the nature of the relationship that existed between state and civil society in Mizoram.
- 3) To analyse the state and civil society relationship with the passage of time in the Aizawl district.

Hypotheses

- 1) Civil society plays a very significant role in traditional and modern Mizo societies.
- 2) Civil society and the state have a cordial and positive relationship in Mizoram
- 3) State-civil society relationship has contributed to the vibrancy of civil society that had facilitated the state to function better in Aizawl district.

Research Methodology

The study is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. The collection of research data is based on both primary as well as secondary sources. Primary sources consist of data collected through interview and questionnaire. With regard to the questionnaire, the random sampling technique and structured questionnaire are employed. The sample size consists of 40 respondents out of which 5 office bearers of central YMA, 5 college lecturers and 5 school teachers, and 25 ordinary members of YMA were the respondents. The sample size of the questionnaire covers respondents from 19 localities of Aizawl since the research is a case study of YMA in Aizawl district. Based on the total respondents of the questionnaire, 23 respondents were female and the remaining 17 respondents were male. With regard to interview, the researcher employed unstructured technique. Three office bearers of central YMA, two academicians and two members of the political party were interviewed. Secondary sources are also employed for the study and the secondary sources were based on books, official documents, Newspaper, Journals, Essay and seminar papers.

Qualitative research is one which provides insights and understanding of the issue. It is an unstructured, exploratory research method. Qualitative research gives a clear understanding of human behaviour, experience, attitudes, intentions, and motivations, through the method of observation and interpretation, to find out the way people think and feel about the subject matter. It is a form of research in which the research emphasized the views of the participants. Quantitative research is a form of research that depends on the methods of natural sciences, which provides numerical data, figures, and facts. Quantitative research is also known as empirical research as it can be accurately and specifically measured.

Chapterisation

Chapter 1: Introduction and Theories of Civil Society

The first chapter covers the introduction of the topic, meaning, theories and scope of civil society. It laid down the profile of Mizoram and in provides a description on research methodology, research objective, and hypothesis, and statement of the problem, the significance of the study is also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Origin and Significance of YMA in Mizoram

The second chapter consists of the significance of Civil Society in Mizoram and it further studies the origin, significance, organisational structure, objectives, and workings of YMA in traditional and modern Mizo society.

Chapter 3: Relationship between YMA and the State in Aizawl

In the third chapter relationship between the state and YMA is discussed. It studied the socio-economic and cultural role of YMA and it specifically analysed the political role of YMA. It also explored and critically examine the nature of the relationship between the state and YMA in Aizawl district.

Chapter 4: Socio-Political implications of YMA in Aizawl

The fourth chapter studied the socio-political implications of YMA on certain issues like the demand of regional autonomy by the minority tribes of Mizoram. It analyses the vigilant role of YMA on illegal entry, issue of illegal traders and the screening of Inner line Permit in Aizawl. It also studies the role of YMA in sustaining peace.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The final chapter of this research discussed the summary of the research and make concluding remarks on the study of state and civil society, with special reference to YMA in Aizawl.

Chapter 2: **Origin and Significance of YMA in Mizoram**

Civil society in India

Different movements of civil society in India are classified into tribal movement, women and youth movement, slum dwellers, poor peasant movement. These movements serve as a means of empowerment to the citizens. The concern for the extension of democracy to the formerly subordinated group in India led to the emergence of civil society. It emanates from anguish about the issues of inequality and individual rights. The first two decades of post independent India was marked by the activities of voluntary organisations, as most group efforts initiatives were incorporated within the "nation building" process⁶⁰. Civil society occupies a significant space in the process of development. Its significance is manifested from the cause of National movement during British colonial rule to the transition of modern democratic society. The foundation of civil society could further be credited to the legacy of Gandhi as well. Gandhi's active participation in public activity sustained civil society discourse in modern India. Social hierarchy through the practice of the caste system and suppression conducted to the germination of civil society. Civil society organised in the shape of, ethnicity, caste, language, and revivalism of religion is quite prevalent in India.

In India, Civil Society has become more vibrant and active. It has a strong hold in modern Indian polity. The presence and successful working of Indian democratic political system, the

⁶⁰Rajni Kothari. (1989). *Politics and the people: In search of Humane in India*. New York: New Horizon press. pp. 58

promotion of education, the freedom of mass media, and decentralization of governance through the introduction and promotion of grass root level local self-governance, participation of people in democratic governance and accountability of the political leaders have all contributed to civil society to become increasingly active and strong. In India, the Right to Information act has also foster the functions of civil society. Anti-corruption movement by Anna Hazare and the movement for establishing and implementation of a strong Lokpal⁶¹ as the watchdog against corruption have shown the increasing strength and role of civil society in India. However, post-independence India is faced with too many harmful problems such as the issue of unemployment, inequality, violence, corruption, poverty, ethnic conflict and illiteracy. The failures of the state in solving and addressing its social and economic problems undermine the efficiency of civil society organisations. A healthy coexistence of civil societal organisation and the state is essential in a developing country like India.

Civil society in Mizoram

Mizoram has strong civil society movements and its presence is crucial to the evolution of Mizo society. Its vibrant role relating to development is also remarkable. Government deliverance of socio-economic and political administration is largely influenced by civil society. Besides, the introduction of the formal electoral process in Mizoram and the subsequent General Elections that followed since the 1952 District Council elections⁶² marked the significant role of civil society. The civil society organisations in Mizoram act as crucial organisations in restricting political and electoral malpractices.

⁶¹Ashutosh Varshney. (2011, June, 14). State of civil. The Indian express. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/state-of-civil-society/>

⁶²Civil Society, State and the Tribal Society: A case study on Young Mizo Association, Mizoram. (2010, February 16). *Dalit and tribe*. Retrieved from <https://dalitandtribe.wordpress.com/2010/02/16/civil-society-state-and-the-tribal-society-a-case-study-on-young-mizo-association-mizoram/>

Civil society is not necessarily non-political, but it occupies the non-state space of people's life. It lobbies around the state as it uses certain means to pressurize the state to achieve its goals, but it is not part of the state. The most common definition of civil society is that it is the organisational space between the individual on one hand and the state on the other. As such, the organisational space can be occupied by any social organisations some of which can also be used politically. In the context of Mizoram, such organisational space between the state and individual is consolidated in social institutions like the church, YMA, MZP, MPF, MHIP and many more.

These organisations often act as mediatory agencies between the state and the discontent group in times of conflict and turmoil. It provides a platform of interaction between the governments and the people. It interacts with the community to eliminate conflict in society and maintain peace and order. It was the civil society organizations, like YMA, MZP and the church, that strived and struggled to maintain peace in the state, and it efficiently acts as mediatory agencies even during the insurgency period in initiating peace dialogue and negotiations between the Indian Government and the Mizo National Front (MNF) insurgents.

The Enlightenment thinkers believed in the innate goodness of the minds of human. They opposed the coalition between the state and the Church as contradictory of human progress and well-being because the coercive state can limit individual liberty and the Church approved monarchs through consolidation of the theory of divine origin. Both were seen as working against the will of the people. In Mizoram, there is a strong alliance between civil society and the church. In the process of spreading Christianity in Mizo society, the Welsh Missionaries and the Mizo Church leaders realised the need to mobilise the youth to bring them closer to Christian way of life. Hence it laid down that that the members of the association would follow the teachings of Christianity and the association would adhere to the Christian norms of life strictly. YMA functioned as the right hand of Church in Mizoram.

As a matter of fact, YMA news was published by the “Church's monthly Magazine 'Kristian Tlangau' till 1954”⁶³. While the role of the church in a democratic society is a contentious debate, some scholars included the church within the realm of civil society and perceived the church as constituting the associational network of a civic life. As Walzer has stated that “the associational life makes possible to retain civility in a democratic politics”⁶⁴. In a majority Christian population like Mizoram, Christianity is deeply rooted in its tradition, one main objective of YMA is to promote the Mizo way of life in line with Christian values. Mizo traditions have been deeply embedded in Christianity, as stated by Joy Pachuau “Mizos are not Mizos only, but they are to be called as Mizo Kristian or Christian Mizos”⁶⁵. Hence the church acted as a strong basis for YMA and revived Mizo culture to modernistic discourse.

The institution of Zawlbuk as traditional civil society

At the indigenous stage, the Mizos had a community based institution known as ‘Zawlbuk’, which means bachelor dormitory. It was customary for every village to construct and maintain Zawlbuk. The Zawlbuk is said to have existed since time immemorial. Its precise existence is not known but the popular opinion is that it existed after the Mizo’s move towards the west from Burma⁶⁶. The Zawlbuk occupies the most vital position in the traditional life of Mizo society. Being the most prestigious social institution, the Zawlbuk served its purpose of:

a) Providing protection to the people and acted as a centre ground of attaining securities during attacks, raids and guerrilla warfare against invaders or neighbouring villages.

⁶³C Lalropuia. *History of Young Mizo Association, Golden Jubilee (1935- 1985)*. Central Young Mizo Association: Aizawl.

⁶⁴Lalengkima. (2017, December). *Role of civil society in Mizoram*. Mizoram University Journal of Humanities and Social sciences. 3(2). pp. 60-65

⁶⁵Joy L.K Pachuau. (2014). *Being Mizo: Identity and belonging in North East India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁶Chitta Ranjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

b) It stands as a dwelling place for men, young boys, and bachelors of the village. They attained Education and social development through this system⁶⁷.

c) It acts as a body of consultation during socio-economic crises and provides the workforce to the community⁶⁸.

Structure, Composition, and Functions of Zawlbuk

The Zawlbuk was usually located at the centre and the most significant place of a Mizo village. It is humongous in size so that it could accommodate all young boys of the village⁶⁹. It is mostly located at the centre of the village adjacent to the chief's house. Some villages have more than one Zawlbuk. The construction of Zawlbuk is of free labour of all male members of the villages at the authorities and instruction of the village Chief.

The chief of the village was the head and father-figure of the zawlbuk, but in practice, Zawlbuk was administered by the inmates⁷⁰. Zawlbuk members comprise of two class i.e boys before attaining puberty called as thingnawifawmclass and boys who had already attained puberty called as Tlangval class. Each zawlbuk had one Val Upa, some TlangvalUpa and some Thingnawifawmhotu⁷¹ who were in charge of the administrative control of the Zawlbuk. Val Upa was appointed by the chief on the basis of his outstanding performances. He ought to be the most courageous and efficient members of the zawlbuk. He also masters the skills of hunting and raiding.

⁶⁷N Chatterji. (1975). *Zawlbuk as a Social Institution in the Mizo Society*. Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute. pp. 1-35

⁶⁸ChittaRanjan Nag. (1993). *The Mizo society in transition*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. pp.12

⁶⁹ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo polity and political Modernisation*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. pp33

⁷⁰ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

⁷¹ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo polity and political Modernisation*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. pp35

Next to Val Upa was Tlangvalupa, the young bachelor leaders were called Tlangvalupa. They supervised and worked along with the Tlangval in the performances of their daily activities. The Tlangval were assigned with heavy works and social services. They performed heavy work such as digging graves for burying a dead body, hard core labour, construction of Zawlbuk, cutting off trees⁷². Next to TlangvalUpa was Thingnawifawmhotu, they belong to the class of younger boys who hadn't attained puberty. They were the leaders of Thingnawifawm class. They were entrusted with monitoring and maintaining discipline among the Thingnawifawm. Thingnawifawm were duty bound with menial works like running errands, collecting fire woods, doing laundry, and collecting bamboo and stones when graves were dug by Tlangval. Nevertheless, they were trained to provide assistance to the Tlangval engaging in heavy works.

Attendance of the inmates would be taken every morning in the Zawlbuk. Then the Val upa would assign daily charges among them. In the evening at about sunset, attendance would be taken again so that the work assigned to the boys could be reviewed. If they were found unsatisfactory by the concerned authorities, they would be penalised with the task of double assignment the next day. Interference of the parents or family members of the inmates, in the administration of Zawlbuk, was strictly forbidden. If the family members of the inmates show any form of grievances or annoyance the kind of punishment laid down by the Zawlbuk administrator, the members of zawlbuk would shake the house of that family as a signed of warning.

Thus, there was a heavy consequence of interfering in the affairs of Zawlbuk administration and upon their maintenance of discipline. The chief was the only exception, as he could interfere in the administration of Zawlbuk⁷³. He has the authority to command, control, and

⁷²ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

⁷³ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

questions upon the affairs of Zawlbuk. Drinking of intoxicating drink like 'Zu' in the Zawlbuk was totally prohibited, except on special occasion like festivals. Theft of any kind and conveying of confidential information of the Zawlbuk to the outsiders by members of Zawlbuk was also dealt with seriously. If they were caught in such restricted act incurring of fines upto Rs.5 may be imposed.

Decline of Zawlbuk

Zawlbuk was the most prominent social institution and occupies a vital position in the indigenous Mizo society. The modern Mizo society is marked with the absence of the long-instilled Zawlbuk. It is, therefore, significant to understand why this long practised institution is non-existent and abolished. The advent of the British missionaries and Christianity in the 19th century⁷⁴ had brought about remarkable evolutionary changes the structure and functions of Mizo society. The forces which contributed to the extinction of the Zawlbuk can be explained as follows:

a) Before the advent of British India, the Mizo regarded the chiefs as the supreme monarch of the village. The Zawlbuk served as the manpower of the chiefs in his daily administration. When the Mizo's came into contact with the British in the 19th century the administration of the Mizo hills came under the control of the British Government. At the initial phase of British annexation of the inhabited areas of Mizo, chieftainship was not fully abolished. However, the chief could not enjoy absolute sovereignty like before. There was a gradual decline in his daily conduct of administrations towards his subject. At the indigenous stage, the chief enjoyed various privileges over his subjects. Some of the chiefs were tyrannical and despotic towards their dealings with their subjects. The people were feeling oppressive under the authoritative rule of the chiefs. Therefore, the movement for the total

⁷⁴ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. Pp. 40

abolition of the institution of chieftainship was initiated by the 'Mizo union', the first political party of present day Mizoram. At the later stage of the British annexation of the Lushai hills, acquisition of the chief's right was driven by Assam Lushai Hills District act of 1954. Hence the institution of chieftainship started declining with the advent of British rule in Mizoram.

b) The decline in the Mizo indigenous social structure as a whole germinated with the advent of the British administration and British Christian missionary. In the past life, Zawlbuk acted as an institution that shapes the moral life of the Youth. Young boys were taught the values of discipline, obedience, selflessness, and concern for others. They were moulded into responsible men. Therefore, Zawlbuk was a substitution of a modern educational institution⁷⁵. With the coming of the British Christian Missionaries, formal education was introduced, along with their task of evangelism. The decline of the chieftainship and the introduction of formal education encouraged the parents to send their male children in schools that were opened and run by the Christian missionaries and the British Government. Gradually, there was a rise in the activities of the missionaries and churches were built in every village. More missionaries came to Mizoram and rise of churches and schools encouraged the people to abolish their age old practice of Zawlbuk system. Thus the introduction of formal education in the 19th century and the continued growth and increase of the Christian church also decline the institution of Zawlbuk.

c) The Mizo had experienced "their first contact with outsiders after they rendered support to British India and volunteer to participate in the First World War. The Mizo volunteers were sent to France and Germany on war services"⁷⁶. Their first contact with outsiders gave them wider perspectives on their indigenous mode of living. Upon their return

⁷⁵ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

⁷⁶ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

to the homeland, the war veterans recounted and narrated their experience to the common people. The narratives appealed to the common Mizo and they started realizing that old practice does not provide them with adequate materialistic requirements and was not beneficial to their material growth and development. Hence, many people started pondering about residing in Zawlbuk during young age. They were ready to do away with the practice of Zawlbuk system and imitate the western way of life. The vitality of Zawlbuk system was threatened with the impact of the 1st world war among the Mizo's.

d) Mizo society has undergone structural and organisational change with the growth of private ownership of property. The indigenous Mizo society practiced chieftainship and Zawlbuk system. The chief was the sole owner of a property like the land used for cultivation. He distributed the land among his subjects but with the advent of British, the system of chieftainship decline and private ownership of property slowly emerge in. The Mizo economy thus undergoes an evolutionary change⁷⁷. Gradually, the Mizo's became independent among themselves for the fulfilment of their material needs and their family. They were no longer dependent on their community for the attainment of their livelihood. As a result, they realized that man's power could best be utilised in the economic field, instead of spending the prime period of their youth in Zawlbuk which they later perceived as unproductive and waste of time. Thus the system of Zawlbuk deteriorated with the change in socio-economic conditions of the society.

e) The gradual growth of cultural association and organisations like the Young Lushai Association which was later changed into the Young Mizo Association has also led to the decline of Zawlbuk. The Young Mizo Association represents the cultural values of Mizo society, the organisation provides cultural activities that had been performed in the past.

⁷⁷J.K. Patnaik. (2008). *Mizoram: Dimension and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company

Thus, the introduction of this organisation had partially contributed to the decline of Zawlbuk.

The above mentioned factors brought about rapid changes to the practice of Zawlbuk system in Mizo society. The decline started with the emergence of British rule and the arrival of western missionaries. The grievances of people towards the despotic attitude of the chiefs towards his subjects and the movement launched by the Mizo union to abolish the practice of chieftainship contribute to the weakening of Zawlbuk system. The acquisition of the chief's rights in 1954 under the Assam Lushai Hills District act tremendously impacted its existence. Therefore these combined factors put an end to the indigenous practice of Zawlbuk system.

Implications of Zawlbuk

The system of Zawlbuk may be exhaustive and stringent but it cannot be denied that it is a very powerful institution. Zawlbuk served as a potential man-power for the chief aiding in the administration of his village kingdom. It also provides overall education, discipline, and defence to the community against enemies and wild animals. It maintained discipline and impart cultural values among the Mizo's. It also instilled a sense of community and living together with harmony at the indigenous stage of Mizo society. Knowledge of the indigenous society was shared to the modern society, hence Zawlbuk can be precisely defined as the embodiment of Mizo culture and values.

Young Mizo Association (YMA)

The changes and the decline in the Zawlbuk system along with the advancement of the British colonial rule and the coming of the Welsh missionary in Mizoram led to the introduction of the "Young Lushai Association" (later renamed as YMA). The YLA was coined after the name of "Young Welsh Association". The term 'Young' in Young Lushai

Association refers to Mizo societies Since the Mizo's were on the path of development⁷⁸. It is said that the Mizo's came to inhabit Mizoram from a place called Chhinlung in the Shan state of China⁷⁹ passing through the routes of Myanmar. The Mizo Intellectuals and the church leaders after much deliberations and discussion agreed that the word Lushai can be subjective discourse whereas the term Mizo is many boarders and inclusive or represents all the tribes belonging to the ethnic clans of Chhinlung residing in various parts of the region. Consequently "Lushai" in Young Lushai Association was changed in to Young Mizo Association) on October 1948⁸⁰. There is no age limitation to be a member of YMA. People from any age group can be enrolled as a member of YMA. YMA was inaugurated on 5th June 1935 at the grand meeting held at Nepali school, Sikulpuikawn, with a lighted candle ceremony. They soon spread their branches in every village of Mizoram and all Mizo who had attained the age of 11 were registered as members of YMA. The advent of Indian independence encouraged new political and ethnic identity revivals among the Mizos. For a democratic administrative system, they understood that a political party was needed. The YLA (Present day YMA) being the only and most endorsed organisations were suggested in 1945 to be the first political party of Mizoram. However, the central committee had objected this request, thus leading to the creation of an entirely new political party, the 'Mizo union'. The YMA is the largest and the most comprehensive non-governmental and non-profit organisation of the Mizos. The three main objectives of the YMA are:

- a) To make productive use of leisure time (Hun awl hman that)
- b) To seek for development and progress of Mizoram (Zofatehmasawnnangaihtuah)
- c) To uphold and revered Christian values (Kristian nun danthangaihsan)

⁷⁸C. Vanlallawma. (1998). *YMA History*. Aizawl: Central YMA and NFI.

⁷⁹ChittaRanjan Nag. (1998). *Mizo Polity and Political Modernization*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

⁸⁰J.C Zomuanthanga "The civil society in Mizoram: A study of the church and YMA" in J.K Patnaik. (2008). *Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil society*. Mizoram: Department of Political science Mizoram University.

After its formation the pioneer leaders were as follows:

- a) President. – Rev L Evans.
- b) Vice President –Katie Hughes (Pi Zaii).
- c) Secretaries – Mr. Pasena and Mr. Vankhuma
- d) Treasurer - Rev.David Eduard.

The Committee Members were – Rev. Chhuahkhama, Mr. Buchhawna, Mr. Sainghinga, Mr. Lalkailuaia, Mr.Thanga, Mr. Hrawva,and Mr. Zalawra.

It was registered on 14 May 1977 with Mizoram Government. The Y.M.A. flag has is composed of three colour, red on the top, white in the centre and black at the bottom. The three different colours signify as under.

- (a) Red – It represents the popularity of YMA
- (b) White – It denotes the Purity of YMA
- (c) Black – It stood for the family in grieve and also symbolized that it is friends of the weaker section.

Source: C. Vanlallawma, YMA History

The organisational structure of YMA is divided into three organised hierarchical structure. The Central YMA (CYMA) stands as the apex body of YMA. The CYMA control and regulates the activities of YMA. The headquarters of central YMA is located at Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl, and the capital of Mizoram. The building comprises of Central YMA office, YMA press, central YMA hall and institution of free enrolment computer. The YMA has five sub headquarters, they are located at Champhai, Serchhip, Mamit, Lunglei,andKolasib.

Next to Central YMA is group YMA. Group YMA is formed by a number of Branches from different villages club together. The genesis of its formation was to establish communication and administration convenience and to strengthen the development of YMA. Next to group YMA is branch YMA, the Branch YMA can be formed in every locality of the village and the city. The branch YMA came last in its structural arrangements but they occupy a vital role as it is through them that aims and objectives of YMA were carried out. Branch YMA can also be formed outside the state of Mizoram where there is a Mizo settlement, on the condition that they shared the same culture. As of 2018, there are eight hundred and seven YMA branches, forty seven YMA groups, five sub headquarters, 404744 male members, and 157255 female members⁸¹. Across the neighbouring North-East state, the YMA also established its branches in the state of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura. These branches function at integrating the Mizos residing outside the state of Mizoram.

The general conference of Central YMA, which is the highest governing body found its beginning in 1941. Since 1978 except for a few breaks, general conference has been held every year⁸². The General Conference of YMA organised by central YMA decides the yearly theme and in accordance with the theme, all the branches of YMA have to carry out their activities for that particular year.

There is various committee under the Central YMA⁸³ in order to enable an efficient working of the organisation, these committees classified are as follows:

- a) Annual theme committee
- b) Sports committee
- c) Literature committee

⁸¹ Profile of Young Mizo Association. (2018).

⁸² Central Young Mizo Association. (2010). *Central Young Mizo Association Profile*. Aizawl. pp.11

⁸³ Central Young Mizo Association. (2010). *Central Young Mizo Association Profile*. Aizawl. pp.7

- d) Project committee
- e) Press committee
- f) Training and youth affairs committee
- g) Building and property committee
- h) Documentation and IT committee
- i) Science and environment committee
- j) Cultural committee
- k) Disaster management committee
- l) Education committee
- m) Finance committee
- n) Health and sanitation committee
- o) Legal committee
- p) Recreation committee
- q) Resource committee

Source: Central Young Mizo Association Profile

Historical Evolution of the Young Mizo Association

Around 1894-1934 Christianity has already spread around in each and every corner of Mizoram. The Mizo's conform to Christian way of living in their social life. During this time the most prominent civil society organisation, Young Lushai Association (present day Young Mizo Association) emerged. The reason for the birth of Young Lushai Association is discussed as follows:

a) Alternative to Zawlbuk- Due to the establishment of church and schools in almost every corner of the village, there was a decline of Zawlbuk. Zawlbuk was officially dismissed

in 1938⁸⁴. The decline of the most efficient institution in the Mizo society that had been imparting social values worried not only the Mizo's but the British government and the Christian missionaries. The Christian missionaries and the educated Mizo's felt that there has to be another alternative to Zawlbuk that could serve their social needs and mould the life of the youth. Hence they urge to establish a new social organisation for the progress of Mizo society was laid down.

b) Cultural awakening- The advent of British rule and Christian missionary imparted significance of education among the Mizos. With the prevalence of education, by 1920s many youths has gone out of the state to pursue higher education. They were enrolled in colleges of Shillong, Guwahati, Kolkatta. Mizo students who studied in these states established Lushai Students Association in 1926. The establishment of such association bonded the Mizo students to identify with their roots and this resonates well with the rest of the Mizo society. Thus it served as a genesis of cultural awakening in Mizoram. Cultural awakening in the field of literature and music stimulated the Mizo society to engage in the welfare of society.

c) Initiatives are undertaken by McCall- Around 1931-1943, the then Governor of Mizoram McCall initiated several programmes and activities to foster social welfare and development. He established the Village Welfare Committee in every village. Through his initiatives, the red-cross society and Cottage Industries board were established. Apart from these, many new associations such as Serkawn Singing Committee, Lungleh Association, Aijal Badminton Association, and Lushai Students Associations emerged. Throughout his stay in Mizoram, he has done remarkable work for Mizo society. He also laid down several

84C. Vanlallawma. (1998). *YMA History*. Aizawl: Central YMA and NFI. Pp. 6

guidelines to be followed in order to be good citizens. This was the stepping stone of establishing a new social organisation.

d) The relationship between church and the Government- The deterioration of the relationship between the church and the Government, insist on the existence of a third party. An organisation that would mediate between the state and the church was required. Both parties, i.e. the church and the government were contradictory with each other. The former disapproved consuming of liquor and the rampage of party lifestyle among the later. The church considered this as profane and contradictory with the Christian ways of life, while the government felt that the church was overstepping their jurisdiction. As such a mediatory organisation that could generate a cordial relationship between the two was essential.

e) Mission workers Conference- On May 29- 2nd June 1935, Mission workers conference on the theme of 'social development' were organized. Various leaders of the church participated in the conference. A total of 200 church leaders from across the villages came together and attended the conference. There were an intensive discussion and debate on the attainment of social harmony and progress in the Mizo society. During this time, Christianity among the Mizo reached its zenith. Their major discussion was on imparting and practicing a good and truthful Christian way of life in their day to day lives. They were interested in establishing a new organisation that deals with all their social concerns to further social welfare and development.

After the mission workers conference on the night of 3rd June 1935⁸⁵, the church leaders and the British meet at the residence of Pi Zaii (Katie Hughes). Although the exact attendees of the meeting were not known, however as per records the founding members were Reverend Lewis Evans and Reverend D.E. Jones, Reverend Chhuahkhama, Katie Hughes, Pasena, D.

⁸⁵ C. Vanlallawma. (1998). *YMA History*. Aizawl: Central YMA and NFI.

Thianga, Muka, L. Kailuia, Vankhuma, Hrangaiia, and Chawngzika⁸⁶. The establishment of a new social organisation called Young Lushai Association was discussed on this night. This particular meeting later culminated in the official establishment of the Young Lushai Association (YLA) on 15 June 1935. As a Christian gathering, the initially proposed name was Young Mizo Christian Association to rhyme with Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), which on scrutiny they realized that it had restrictive and religious fundamentalist connotation⁸⁷. Then reverent David Edward (Zorema pa) came up with Young Lushai association and it was also agreed that the association would then be formally inaugurated on the coming June 15. The structure and objectives of this new association were as follows:

- 1) This new association shall be named as Young Lushai Organisation
- 2) It was established as an alternative to Zawlbuk. The young bachelor shall make use of leisure time and lead a moral and discipline life. He should practice Christian ways of life in its true sense. Various indoor games and outdoor games shall be conducted to improve the health of the members. Debate, Drama, Discussion, reading and public speaking shall be a part of their activities.
- 3) The main objective of Young Lushai Association was to "practice good Christian ways of life" any person interested in leading a good Christian way of life can be a member of this association. The membership fee was 1 anna and the entry fee was 8 annas.
- 4) Any person consuming alcohol shall refrain from assembling conducted by YLA.
- 5) A person living an unethical social life and indulge in violent activities cannot be a member of YLA.
- 6) The association shall be maintained by a committee of five office bearer's i.e President, Vice President, two Secretaries, Treasurer, and seven committee members.

⁸⁶C. Vanlallawma. (1998). *YMA History*. Aizawl: Central YMA and NFI.

⁸⁷ Profile of Young Mizo Association. (2018).

- 7) There shall be the election of committee every year around the month of June. All the members of YLA shall participate in this election.
- 8) The allotted time for reading and playing would be 4 pm to 5:30 pm. On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday the allotted time was extended upto 9:30 pm.
- 9) The debate, discussion, drama etc shall be conducted at least once a week as per the allotted date and time of the committee.

Source: C. Vanlallawma, YMA History

The significance of “Mizo Tlawmngaihna” in traditional and Modern Civil Society

The YMA as being the most prominent and biggest civil society organisation in Mizoram played a various significant role. They have varied influence in the socio-political and economic life of the Mizo's. Its ideology “Tlawmngaihna” backed the role and activities it performed and unites the people under the same spirit of “Tlawmngaihna”. “Tlawmngaihna” is a moral and ethical norm of Mizo society. It has a wide concept and invokes different interpretations. The literal usage of the term implies “an act of charity” or “to help others”. However, it has much wider and deeper connotations. ‘Pluralism’ is embedded and self-interest becomes secondary to the interest of the community⁸⁸. It entails a concern for others and to service to society. “Tlawmngaina” is imbibed within and it encompasses integrity, endurance, courage, sincerity, humility, and kindness.

Traditional Mizo society has three main social institutions- Zawlbuk, Chieftanship, and Agriculture⁸⁹. The socio-economic and political life of the people were guided and regulated by these three social institutions. The moral philosophy and code of conduct ‘Tlawmngaihna’

⁸⁸LaldinpuiiRalte. (2017, July). Towards understanding Civil Society- Government relationship: The Study of Young Mizo Association (YMA) in Mizoram. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 22(7) pp. 24-32. Retrieved from <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2022%20Issue7/Version-17/D2207172432.pdf>

⁸⁹J.C Zomuanthanga. “The civil society in Mizoram: A study of the church and YMA” in J.K Patnaik. (2008). *Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil society*. Mizoram: Department of Political science Mizoram University

acted as a guiding force to preserve the moral and social life of the indigenous Mizo society. The core social value was that an individual becomes subordinate to the interest of the community. The mizo live a communal life, an institution that maintains civility among the residents of the village for the sole purpose of harmony is crucial. The system of Zawlbuk obtained such an institution.

The institution of Zawlbuk, apart from being the residing place of young bachelors, has a profound significance. It is an institution that imparts social values of “Tlawmngaihna” at a primitive stage. It observed and carries forward a strict institutional discipline. The youth were disciplined and shaped into a responsible adult and citizens of society. It played a vital role in providing social-economic security to the people and in aiding administrative strength to the chief. It is through the spirit of “Tlawmngaihna” that Zawlbuk instilled social concern, obedience, communitarian life and progress of the society.

Given this background, civil society exists in the cultural and traditional norms of Mizo society, its vibrancy is seen even in traditional Mizo society. It played a vital role both at the traditional stage and continued to pertain its significance in modern Mizo society. The moral code of conduct “Tlawmngaihna” has been passed down to modern Mizo society. Owing to this fact, the Young Mizo Association as the most prominent and the oldest civil society organisation sustain the same indigenous moral code of conduct “Tlawmngaihna” as its guiding principles.

It is through this spirit of “Tlawmngaihna” that this association served the basic route through which primordial norms and traditional principles are revived. The YMA played a significant role in effecting changes and reforms in the society. Its ideology “Tlawmngaihna” served as the code of conduct which entails the act of voluntarism for the progress and good of the society. It urged its members to practice the act of “Tlawmngaihna” in the dispersal of their

daily activities. In fact, the YMA upholds and preserve the idea of “tlawmngaihna” and they have utmost influence into the socio-political and cultural life of the Mizo’s. Their ideology and activities resonate with the people and they gained trust and mutual cooperation from the people. Henceforth they have a leading role in the various aspect of Mizo society.

Mizo society has undergone a transition from tradition to modernity and in the phase of progress and development. The YMA through their works and activities continue to sustain the spirit of ‘Tlawmngaihna’ even in a modern Mizo society. There is a changing trend in the mode of operation of the organisation in looking at and addressing the issues and problems in Mizo society. The unspoken moral and ethical virtues of Mizo ‘Tlawmngaihna’ is not applicable entirely its traditional mode. Based on the questionnaire, 93 per cent of the respondent agreed that the virtue of ‘Tlawmngaihna’ needs to be adjusted according to the emerging changes and needs of the society⁹⁰. Therefore, the traditional values of Mizo society have to be revived and uphold according to its relevance.

⁹⁰Questionnaire conducted for the research

Chapter 3: Relationship between YMA and the state in Aizawl

As discussed in the first chapter, one is familiar with several theories of civil society. All these theories, however, share one thing in common. They refer to civil society as the sphere of social life that falls outside the state though they do not see it as necessarily free from state interference. Civil Society, therefore, is generally seen as a mediatory site, a site at which most interactions between the state and society take place. “This is the site at which Civil society enters into a relationship with the state”⁹¹ Since its establishment the YMA plays a vibrant role in the sphere of socio-political and economic development. Being the most powerful civil society in Mizoram it acts as a mediatory site between the state concerning certain issues addressing the interest and welfare of the Mizos.

There is a tendency among some scholars to perceive civil society and the state as a binary opposite to make it clearer. “It is often viewed as oppositional ‘versus’ rather than the conjunctive ‘and’, in such case the state is perceived as an antagonist”⁹². The collapse of the Soviet Union is one reason for the taxonomy of state versus civil society and the rise of citizens against the tyranny of the communist state⁹³. Past experience shows that suppressive

⁹¹NeeraChandhoke. (1995). *State and Civil Society: Explorations in political theory*. New Delhi, Sage. Pp. 5.

⁹²NarayanamJayaram. (Ed) (2005). *On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications

⁹³NarayanamJayaram. (Ed) (2005). *On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

state leads to mobilization of the citizen against the state. In India, the prevalent failure of governance in nation building can be regarded as to why civil society is seen as an alternative to the state by some scholars⁹⁴.

However, scholars stressed the significance of bringing back the state. The state has been rolled back and perceived civil society and the state as complementary to each other. As such Mizoram, civil society group like YMA could not separate itself or display indifference towards the activities of state, which the state has either failed to address or does not achieve a much efficient result in addressing the matter. Therefore, in almost all the activities carried out by the YMA, it has a larger impact on the state in terms of its administration or governance. Both are not limited to each other but they are deeply intertwined so it is not necessary to polarize the two as state versus YMA.

The presence of the state is essential for policy intervention, in a participatory democratic form of government like the state of Mizoram. As stated by Stafford Lindberg⁹⁵ “society cannot be seen as a monolithic entity standing in a unilateral relationship to an undivided society.” Therefore the YMA and state are complementary to each other. It has been working collaboratively with the state to secure public welfare. They recognized the importance of co-existence, they try to maintain a cordial relationship and work collaboratively and cooperatively on several issues concerned to people’s interest. Though civil society and the state represent two different spheres, the relationship between YMA and the state need to be properly analyzed and assessed. The YMA and the state cannot function efficiently without mutual support from each other.

A modern democratic state is the expression of popular opinion through electoral forms of political participation. Hence the state is subjected to accountability and the will of the

⁹⁴ Kothari. (1998). in Narayanam Jayaram. (Ed) (2005). *On Civil Society: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications

⁹⁵ Narayanam Jayaram. (Ed) (2005). *On civil society: Issues and perspectives*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

people. A society that has a vibrant civil society deal the state failure with negotiation, democratic struggles, and the bargaining process. As such concerning the people's welfare the YMA have made various appeal and recommendation to the state. With the support of the people, it employs effective means it can get to pressurize the state to achieve its goals, in times of state failure. As such, the YMA often acts as pressure groups. However, the YMA does not identify themselves as a pressure group but in case of disagreement with certain government policies and programmes, they often act as a pressure group urging for an effective response from the state. In an interview, R. Lalngheta Vice president of Central YMA (2018)⁹⁶ stated that "the distinction between the pressure groups and YMA is that unlike the pressure group we don't agitate on the interest of our organisation but rather we negotiate with the state government only on social concern and issues". As such the YMA strive to sustain a clear distinction between them and the pressure groups. The means that they resort to pressurise the state government in case of state inefficiency often lead the organisation to go beyond their initial intention.

There are various instances in which the government is not sufficient to carry out their responsibilities. Therefore on many issues, the YMA is called to assist the work of the Government as complete trust and support is given to them by the general Mizo population. Their influence is at a peak when the state is unable to perform many of its functions. As stated by Joy Pachuau, "in a closed knit-society like Mizoram there is a tendency for people to believe that they needed each other for a society to function well especially in the context of a weak state"⁹⁷. Hence, the Mizo's perceived the YMA as an alternative to the state in bringing people together as it gave them a platform to foray their interest.

The political role of YMA

⁹⁶ Interview conducted for the purpose of research

⁹⁷ "A government that never needs to be elected: The Young Mizo Association is a silent power centre." (2018, December, 15). Scroll in. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/bulletins/185/giving-underground-music-a-literal-meaning>

The founding members of YMA were the Welsh Missionaries, the Mizo Church leaders and the early educated Mizo. They laid down that the members of the YMA would follow the teachings of Christianity and the association would reflect Christian values and principles. Therefore, in the initial stage of its formation YMA isolate itself from politics. However, the modern Mizo society witnesses the transitional role of the YMA from its social entity to its political role. Owing to this fact, it this does not mean that the YMA is a political organisation but rather it occupies the non-state space of the people. Its relationship with the state is deeply intertwined.

The political role of YMA can be traced back from the early period after its formation. On the eve of the insurgency, due to the prevailing circumstances, the YMA acquired political character. Many members of the YMA could not refrain from isolating themselves from some the political movement for independence that took place during that time. The movements of great political importance occurred when the Kulikawn Branch YMA passed a resolution on the right of self-determination for the Lushai's in April 1943⁹⁸. However, the central committee of the YMA did not acknowledge this resolution. The committee stated that YMA should be distinguished from the political entity as it is not a political body.

The association initially focused on religious, social and cultural aspects of Mizo society. Many members within it felt the need to involve itself in the premise of politics as the Mizo society was undergoing a transition from tradition to modernity with developmental process. Thus the formation of Mizo union on 9th April 1946⁹⁹, the first political party in Mizoram can be attributed to YMA since many members of YMA were the early educated Mizos. The political consciousness which they derived from their participation in the first and Second World War, urged them to form a political organisation. Hence, the educated elites felt the

⁹⁸ Civil Society, State and the Tribal Society: A case study on Young Mizo Association, Mizoram. (2010, February 16). *Dalit and tribe*. Retrieved from <https://dalitandtribe.wordpress.com/2010/02/16/civil-society-state-and-the-tribal-society-a-case-study-on-young-mizo-association-mizoram/>

⁹⁹J.V Hluna. (1985). *Church and political upheaval in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press. pp- 64-65

need to constitute a Mizo political organisation which ultimately led to the foundation of the Mizo union.

Membership in the YMA can also be a stepping stone for entry into politics. Many active members of YMA later assume the political role and this implicates their membership to YMA as a ladder of political participation. They developed political consciousness as it provides them an excellent political training ground. In an interview, one of the present office bearers of central YMA stated that “the association interacts with the state on matters of social issue that concern the political life of the people, through this interaction one can gain political experience”. In the upcoming 2018 Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections which were scheduled to be held on 28th November, five former office bearer of Central YMA (the apex body of YMA) was candidates of different political parties¹⁰⁰. The same trends were seen even in the past, the elected members of 1972¹⁰¹ Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections include five YMA former office bearer as well. However, R. Lalngheta emphasized that the YMA is a non-political body and it has no political ties with any political party. He agreed that in the past some former members might have run for political office while being an office bearer of the Central YMA but recently they have become more cautious in their conduct. They did not approve any of their members to involve themselves in state politics while holding office under the banner of the Central YMA. They did this so that they could check the governance of the state effectively.

The YMA influence in the political life of the people of Mizoram was most recently visible on 6th November 2018, when thousands of people launched a protest. The sole reason for the dispute was the question of voting rights for several thousand Bru refugees who fled ethnic violence in Mizoram and settled in camps in neighbouring Tripura. The Joint NGO

¹⁰⁰Vanglaini 01.11.18

¹⁰¹V.L Chaka Hmar. (2014). *Role of Young Mizo Association in Mizoram*. MPhil Dissertation.

coordination demanded that the Brus who failed to return should be allowed permanent residence in Tripura and that their name is removed from the electoral register. They have also opposed the direction of electoral revision by the Election Commission of India (ECI) and special arrangements made for the Bru refugees to cast their vote, stating that it should only take place in Mizoram.

Following their demand, on 6th July 2018 the Mizoram civil societies in various part of the state held a demonstration under the banner of Joint NGO coordination movement, they echoed in one voice the call for Justice and removal of Chief Electoral Officer of the state due to his unwarranted act of reporting principal secretary of Mizoram to the Election Commission of India under the premise of barring him at conducting a free, fair and peaceful election to the upcoming state assembly election which was to be held on 28 November 2018. The Joint NGO coordination also condemned the ECI for failing to uphold the agreement signed between the concerned parties. The following day the election commission of India responded immediately and sanctioned the transfer of Chief Electoral Officer. Meanwhile, civil societies in Kolasib under the initiatives taken by Joint NGO coordination committee launched protests demanding the rejection of appeal made by the Bru's for the inclusion of their names in electoral roll revision. The church leaders immediately intervened and simmer down the tension.

On paper, the demonstration was led by a coalition of several Mizoram NGO'S, but it was the Central Young Mizo Association that took the leading role¹⁰². Observers outside the state may have been in awe to the power of the protests, which compelled even the Election Commission to respond to their demand. But it may be hard to fathom the extraordinary influence of the Young Mizo Association for observers outside the community. The YMA

¹⁰²"A government that never needs to be elected: The Young Mizo Association is a silent power centre." (2018, December, 15). Scroll in. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/bulletins/185/giving-underground-music-a-literal-meaning>

weight over the state's social and political life. It is a voluntary group and describes itself as a non-political organization. However, membership in the YMA is obligatory in nature as it is a form of identifying one-self with the common culture, custom, and tradition of Mizo society. There is a silent agreement that any political party that goes against the appeal and request of YMA does not gain much support of the Mizo's in general and this may disrupt their future political career.

In the field of electoral process, the YMA also plays a vital role in ensuring a free, fair, peaceful and transparent election. Every year before conducting state elections, the YMA issues pamphlets and make certain recommendations on the moral code of conduct to be followed during elections period. They watch out any electoral malpractice and made an appeal to political parties, candidates and voters for clean, free and fair elections. The YMA takes a proactive role by creating awareness in the minds of the Mizo's and sensitizing the voters about the ethics of free and fair elections. They make citizens aware about their sole responsibility in exercising their universal adult franchise as guaranteed by the Indian constitution. This imparts in them a sense of responsibility and to a large extent it impacted upon the voters turn out on the day of elections held in the state.

As given above, the political role played by the YMA portrayed the non-party political role as it involved itself with political activism and political negotiations in case of failure of the state. They act as a guardian of Mizo society and collaborate with the state government on several issues and developmental aspects. They are the voice of the Mizo and watch out the conduct of political leaders. On matters of state failure to meet its goals, they pressurise the state through means of demonstration, press release or through dialogue and negotiation with the state government. As stated by RajniKothari, non-party political processes provide

sources of regeneration in the Indian democracy¹⁰³, therefore the role of the YMA can be understood and be looked upon from this viewpoints.

Socio-economic role of YMA

As they have stated in their objectives, the YMA function for the cause of Mizo society. They have various socio-economic and cultural role, which shall be discussed as follows:

Since its establishment YLA which was later renamed as YMA has done remarkable work for the progress of society. Through the initiatives taken by the YMA, a group of people in a community comes together to help the needy, construct roads in times of blockade of the road and provide relief in times of disaster. During the first few years of its formation, they organised debate, group discussion and drama at least once a week, to enhance the art of public speaking and to broaden the outlook of the Mizo's. This has also helped in developing citizen's skills to work with one another to solve their common problems through debates and discussion as it gave them space to openly express their views.

They also engaged in the task of creating civic hygiene and public sanitation¹⁰⁴. The task of creating civic hygiene and cleanliness could be challenging. During the early days of their formation, the YMA through their various activities taught the people the importance of keeping their utensils, surroundings, and houses clean. Through the monthly journal "Kristian Tlangau", it tries to create awareness by publishing articles on civic awareness, where it wrote down details of hygiene and cleanliness. In order to promote cleanliness and hygiene among the Mizos, their first annual theme in 1983 was declared as "the year for sanitation

¹⁰³ Civil Society, State and the Tribal Society: A case study on Young Mizo Association, Mizoram. (2010, February 16). *Dalit and tribe*. Retrieved from <https://dalitandtribe.wordpress.com/2010/02/16/civil-society-state-and-the-tribal-society-a-case-study-on-young-mizo-association-mizoram/>

¹⁰⁴J.C Zomuanthanga. "The civil society in Mizoram: A study of the church and YMA" in J.K Patnaik. (2008). *Peace and Development in Mizoram: Role of the State and Civil society*. Mizoram: Department of Political science Mizoram University.

and cleanliness”¹⁰⁵. The effort made by the YMA volunteers led to improvement towards cleanliness and hygiene, which can be visibly noticed today. They constructed public toilets and create awareness to the public on cleanliness and hygiene. They improve the standard of living of the people by successfully undertaking these activities.

As stated in their ideology, the YMA provide service to others during the occurrence of death and natural calamities in the community. They provide famine relief during the outbreak of famine known as ‘mautam’ in 1959. Mizoram has long been a victim of Bamboo Flowering, After every fifty years, the land falls to the cruel attack of bamboo flowering and due to this Mizoram suffers from the problem of food shortage. Since this calamity is predictable to a great extent YMA organised awareness campaigns and seminars to make people aware of this occurrence.

In line with their objectives, YMA took the responsibility of constructing houses for the homeless. They provide a shoulder to the poor and the needy. In case of death of any person in a village. Members of YMA stay awake throughout the night to console the family in grieve. Throughout the night by they sang songs of lamentations. YMA takes up the initiative role such as preparation of tea, the arrangement of the house and benches. It is the customary duty of YMA to take charge of the funeral processions by carrying their tomb to the graveyard and digging the burial ground of the deceased person regardless of their social status.

In case of an emergency in a community the YMA members help the people, they carried out rescue efforts during natural disasters and calamities like a landslide, floods, wild fire¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁵LaldinpuiiRalte. (2017, July, 17) “Towards Understanding Civil Society–Government Relationship: the Study of Young Mizo Association (YMA) in Mizoram”. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 22 (7), PP. 24-32

¹⁰⁶One of India oldest Social groups includes everyone and Keeps Mizoram united”. (2016, December, 16). Retrieved at <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/one-of-india-s-oldest-social-groups-includes-everyone-and-keeps-mizoram-united-266352.html>

They provide help without any expectation for rewards as they considered it as their duty. They Recovered drowned bodies, prevent wild fires and they also spread awareness on the matter. In terms of literacy and promotion of education, the YMA spread awareness on the importance of education. The state literacy rate is 91.33% as per 2011 census¹⁰⁷ and the contribution made by the YMA cannot be ignored.

The YMA strive towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency. They had promoted local products and collaborated with a certain educational institution to enable the youth to stand on their own feet and provide employment opportunities. In 1938¹⁰⁸, an attempt was also made to promote the Mizo tobacco instead of imported cigarettes. The campaign was so effective that during that year, no imported cigarettes were available in Aizawl. One of the conferences YMA has passed a resolution on self-reliance of the Mizos and expressed that all Mizos should master the art of cotton spinning, and should wear only the clothes woven by Mizos themselves. At present, the Central YMA has also organised programmes, such as free computer classes for all at their headquarters located in Aizawl. The YMA in their quest of helping the youth to stand on their own feet and to generate a source of income, they organised free cement mason training courses. The courses were organised in collaboration with the state labour and employment department.

The cultural role of YMA

The YMA strive to sustain the culture and identity of the Mizos. Through their various activities and work they retain and promote the Mizos tradition and culture. They have done a tremendous work in upholding the cultural song, dance, attire, music, and festivals of the Mizos. They safeguarded the language and literature of the Mizos. They took up the task of

¹⁰⁷“Census of Mizoram.” (2011). <https://www.census2011.co.in/questions/29/state-literacy/literacy-rate-of-mizoram-census-2011.html>

¹⁰⁸Ladinpuui Ralte. (2017, July, 17) “Towards Understanding Civil Society–Government Relationship: the Study of Young Mizo Association (YMA) in Mizoram”. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 22 (7), PP. 24-32

popularising the traditional and ethnic attire of the Mizos¹⁰⁹. Mizo society is composed of a rich cultural and traditional heritage. This heritage is comprehensive and it is passed down in the form of cultural dance, music, songs, festivals, and cultural attire. With the passage of time, Mizo society has undergone a transition from tradition to modernity.

These cultural festivals, dance, and costume have declined in modern Mizo society. The YMA through its various functions seeks to bring back the cultural heritage of Mizo society. Their efforts and role could be seen in terms of certain activities like inter-branch cultural dance competition organised by them. The branches of the YMA also organised a competition on Mizo poetry and folk song in their respective branches. The most popular festivals of Mizo society which is known as 'ChapcharKut' is celebrated every year during the month of March. The YMA took the leading role in the celebration of the festivals. During 'Chapcharkut' mostly all the YMA branches took part in a cultural dance competition and wore the various traditional Mizo costume. The YMA also took a leading role in promoting Mizo traditional attire. As this costume faces decline with the passage of time, the YMA has encouraged all the Mizo women to wear Mizo 'Puan' on any social gatherings and events such as a wedding, festivals, and funerals.

The YMA has also strongly emphasised on the need for safeguarding the Mizo language and Literature. After the UNESCO declared Mizo language as one of the endangered languages¹¹⁰ of India, there is a strong need for safeguarding and promoting Mizo language and literature. The YMA in the initial stage of its formation organised a competition on the composition of the patriotic Mizo song. Till today they have worked contentiously on safeguarding the literature and language of Mizos. Every year they organised seminars and workshop on the protection and promotion of the language and literature of Mizos. They had worked

¹⁰⁹Central Young Mizo Association. (2017). YMA profile.

¹¹⁰Ladinpuii Ralte. (2017, July, 17) "Towards Understanding Civil Society–Government Relationship: the Study of Young Mizo Association (YMA) in Mizoram". *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 22 (7), PP. 24-32

collaboratively with several educational institutions like the department of Language in Mizoram University and Pachhunga University College.

The relationship between YMA and the State

In almost all the activities carried out by the YMA, we see that the state also directly or indirectly plays a vital role and work collaboratively with the YMA. There are many areas where both the state and YMA interact and work together till today. Some of the major activities and working of YMA in collaboration with the state department in the areas of Education, prevention of Drug and alcohol, and Environmental protection and preservation.

- i) **Excise and Narcotics Department:** In the field of prevention of Drugs and alcohol, YMA has also contributed significantly to control alcohol. Along with Mizoram excise and narcotics department, the YMA undertook the responsibility of fighting against the hazard of alcoholism and Drugs in Mizoram. Though the YMA has always been opposed to intoxicants since its inception it only set up formal anti-narcotics team only in 2005. Hence, it formally constituted a special operation team, Supply Reduction Services (SRS) and Central Anti- Drug Squad (CADS) for combating illegal Drug trading and Alcohol in Mizoram. Since then it has complemented the work Mizoram Excise and Narcotics Department. However, both the operation teams formed by Central YMA have earned social criticism as they often take the legal matters in their hands and go beyond the law. In an interview the Central YMA Executive committee member and secretary of Supply Reduction Services (SRS), John kima stated that “the YMA has become more cautious to avoid violating the rights of a person”. He further stated that “in their effort to prevent drug and alcohol there may be some case of violation on the

rights of human in the past but as of now the top leaders and office bearer of the Central YMA make sure that our members do not violate the law”¹¹¹.

Its influence in the prevention of alcohol has impacted upon the state government to enact and pass a bill in the prohibition of alcohol. Through their initiatives, Mizoram government passed the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP), Bill. The bill was enforced in 1997 but even after the enactment of the MLTP Act, there were still many individuals and families engaged in the consumption and selling of liquor. The Act does not terminate the problems of alcoholism. Many drunkards were still found on the streets and the percentage of death among the youth due to the consumption of alcohol still remains high. In 2014 Mizoram government lifted the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition (MLTP) act and instead it introduced Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Control (MLPC) act¹¹². The YMA and the church vehemently opposed this act and condemned the state government for lifting total prohibition act as it can increase the dangers of alcohol consumption among the Mizo's. Even after the introduction of this act, Sale of alcohol is still prohibited in all localities by YMA. However, as law implies, YMA eventually changed their strategies and focused more on combating illegal trading of Drugs and therefore it is working severely towards supply reduction service.

Since Mizoram shares a 502.19km border with Myanmar, there is a free movement of the drug along the Indo-Myanmar border which resulted in an increased illegal drug trafficking. The YMA in an effort to tackle drug trafficking make a pact with Myanmar-based NGO, Upper Chindwin Youth Network to work together in combating drug trafficking. They signed a pact to curb cross-border drug trafficking. The two NGO's signed a memorandum of understanding in 2018. As per the pact, both the organisations

¹¹¹ Interview conducted for the purpose of research

¹¹² “Life after Mizoram government passes MLTP act”. Retrieved from <https://milaap.org/stories/mlpc>

agreed to share information on logistics and the person involved in drug trafficking. The agreement also contains that they would be vigilant on illegal traders and extend support whenever necessary. The Memorandum of understanding was signed on behalf of both the organisations by YMA president Vanlalruata and Upper Chindwin Youth Network president KyawThet Win.

So far the YMA has done tremendous work in curbing alcoholism and drug abuse. With their endless effort, they remain vigilant and brings awareness among the people on the dangers of alcohol and drugs abuse. They also provide free counselling to drug abusers. The National Government recognized their tremendous performance of Drug and alcohol prevention. Henceforth the Central YMA has received National Awards for Outstanding Services in the field of prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drug) Abuses in 2013. The award was given to them by the social justice and empowerment ministry of the government of India. The state government fosters the active role of SRS through their extension of financial support. In an interview, John Kima secretary of SRS and chief executive committee member of Central YMA (2018)¹¹³ stated that “the state Government has been supportive and sanctioned us sufficient funds for the operation. Apart from this, they had provided us with a vehicle for patrolling.”

- ii) **Education Department:** In the field of education, YMA has done a remarkable role in the promotion of education in Mizoram. During the first few years of their establishment, they organized Drama, debates, discussion, and extempore speech on varied topics at least once a week to shape and broaden the outlook of the Mizos. This also enhances the art of public speaking and be more vocal about social concern. According to Vanlallawma, “The outcome of the debates and discussions was felt by the people, who directly or indirectly were affected in

¹¹³Interview conducted for the purpose of research

shaping the personality of the individual Mizo's and also in bringing about the development of Mizoram as a nation". With the initiation and active participation of YMA, the present Government Higher Secondary School in Aizawl was established in 1944. The YMA and the Department of Education have worked collaboratively in the areas of promoting education.

In order to achieve the goals of attaining 100 per cent literacy rate and spread education in the state, the government introduced 'SarvaShikshaAbhiyan' (SSA)¹¹⁴ to promote education and also it introduced 'Eradication of Residual Illiteracy' (ERIP) to eliminate illiteracy in the state. The YMA and the state collaboratively with the introduction of this two program in order to carry forward the operation effectively¹¹⁵. The YMA has opened and is running a number of Adult Education Centres in various parts of Mizoram. Currently, they ran more than 250¹¹⁶ Public Libraries all over Mizoram. Every year YMA organise public gatherings and awarded the top rank holders of HSLC and HSSLC examination. The purpose of such recognition was to further encourage the youth to excel in academic and attain quality education. The YMA holds several seminars and workshops in order to spread awareness on the importance of education. They also emphasised on education in order to decrease the drop-out rates of students. Although the YMA and the state education department work together after the implementation of SSA, the education system in some of the rural government aided schools still lacks behind in infrastructure, faculty requirement and access of quality education. In an interview, R. Lalngheta vice President of Central YMA (2018)¹¹⁷ stated that "in areas of education we only work with the state through SSA and this does not reach our

¹¹⁴ "SarvaShikshaAbhiyan: District Elementary Education Plan Aizawl District". Mizoram: SSA District Elementary Education Committee. Retrieved from

<http://14.139.60.153/bitstream/123456789/6407/1/SSA%20District%20Elementary%20Education%20Plan%20Aizawl%20district.pdf>

¹¹⁵ *ibid*

¹¹⁶ "Young Mizo Association (YMA)". Retrieved from <http://mizoram.nic.in/more/yma.htm>

¹¹⁷ Interview conducted for the purpose of research.

expectation of promoting quality education.”¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the YMA role and effort in spreading and upliftment of education cannot be undermined. Their role is quite visible in the fact that they could be credited with bringing the literacy rate of Mizoram to over 96%¹¹⁹, the second highest in the country after Kerala.

- iii) **Forest and Environment:** In areas of protecting the environment, YMA and the state organised afforestation programme. After the introduction of Green Mizoram project which has been supported by the YMA since 1974. Tree plantation is taken up by the YMA branches during the month of June every year since then. Due to their efficient role and the activities that they undertook in areas of environmental protection and preservation, in 1986 the YMA has received Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Awards. As they continue to promote their role in environmental protection in 1993 they received another award, the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar from Environment and Forests Ministry, Government of India. According to an official report, the tree plantation undertaken by the YMA branches and state government after the introduction of green Mizoram project has reached approximately around 36,58,174¹²⁰ trees in 2016.

The above discussion shows that the YMA and the state have a cordial relationship. At times their relationship can also be both conflictual and confrontational in which they hold the certain form of demonstrations, marches, and rallies to obtain their goals. However, it does not go beyond the extent of acting as a stumbling block for the government to execute and perform their duty. They only act as a supplement to the state with the hope of making them more accountable and more sensitive to the people concerned. Henceforth, the YMA as a

¹¹⁸ Interview conducted for the purpose of research.

¹¹⁹ “Young Mizo Association (YMA)”. Retrieved from <http://mizoram.nic.in/more/yma.htm>

¹²⁰ Vanglaini (2017, June, 10).

non-governmental organisation has a good rapport with the state as it seeks to foster peace and harmony in Mizoram.

The tension between the YMA and the State

Most organisations confine themselves within the development of their organisations and their activities are mostly limited to their specific aims and objectives. On the other hand, the YMA established and functions solely for the interest of 'others' this implies to the interest of the larger realm of Mizo society. In line with the reason for their formation the YMA has been responding to the needs of society and many often they perform tasks which are well beyond their specific objectives. Many times their activities overlap with the state government and bring tension to the state. The YMA though a non-governmental organisation often takes the law into their own hand and punished the people who broke the law. There were cases where they have practiced corporal punishment, fines and other forms of penalty.

Based on the questionnaire conducted for the study, 30 per cent of the respondents admitted to the fact that there were times when it intervened in matters which legitimately belong to the state thus causing tensions in the relationship between the state and YMA in Mizoram¹²¹. There were times when they were seen as an obstacle to administration. In their quest of articulating the discontentment of the people civil society if not guarded can act as an authoritative political bodies to the extent of making the state Government as unnecessary. This can lead to mere obstruction, confrontation, opposition and influencing the policy and working of the state. As such the legitimacy of the governmental functions and actions can be at stake.

¹²¹ Based on Questionnaire

The YMA being a social entity of the Mizo people, due to unfavourable circumstances often function in some ways which go against the policies of the state. Because of the moral support is given to them by the people, the YMA feels that if the state cannot functions properly to execute its duty in the interest of the Mizo's, the YMA is then compelled to work against the government for the welfare of the people of Mizoram.

The YMA expanding functions and power has made it look almost similar to that of a parallel government. No party wants to challenge the YMA because they are the most powerful civil society organisation in Mizoram. They are even more influential than the church because there are many church denominations. This difference in denominations often interrupt their cohesion whereas YMA represents all sections of the Mizos, thus the Mizos confide in them a sense of authority.

The support and affection that the YMA gets from the people have given them power and influence. Many times people were seen approaching the YMA in case of injustice, grievances and unsolved issue. The state officials with their casual and unresponsive attitude repel the people from approaching them. The YMA taking advantage of this unfavourable circumstances put pressure on the state, thus winning the confidence and trust of the people.

An official statement will never be an issue by the YMA to the people of Mizoram on which party to cast a vote for but there is a silent consensus on what they are against. Hence, reluctance to go against the YMA was recently visible in August 2017, when BD Chakma, the only Chakma minister in the incumbent Congress-led government was allegedly forced to resign due to pressure put forth by the Central Young Mizo Association¹²². Due to ongoing ethnic issues, the YMA had passed a resolution in 2016 to request all the political parties not to nominate any Chakma candidates in the upcoming 2018 elections.

¹²²“Congress Minister BD Chakma resigns after allegations of anti-government activities”. (2017, August). *Times now*. <https://www.time8.in/congress-minister-bd-chakma-resigns-after-allegations-of-anti-government-activities/>

Following their resolution, recently the YMA requested all the party not to nominate any candidate in Chakma area in the upcoming state elections¹²³. All the political parties hesitate to go against this request made by the YMA, however, it was only after the BJP nominated a former Congress minister, a Chakma, as its candidate from the Tuichang constituency that the ruling Congress and the Mizo National Front followed the same trends.

There were few cases in the past where the YMA display authoritative behaviour in their campaign against drug and Liquor. Towards achieving their end, some members of the YMA has adopted violence means to put a check on drug peddlers and people involved in the production and consumption of alcohol. The violence means adopted by some of the YMA members even cause some people to lose their valuable lives¹²⁴. This creates such unfortunate scenarios as even the elected government turned out to be a silent spectator to different incidents of such nature which violates basic human rights in the state. Under Section 52 of the Indian Narcotics Act¹²⁵, officials are supposed to destroy narcotic and illegal drugs that they seize after presenting them in court. But often, the YMA drugs and Liquor operation team SRS do not reach the government storeroom for such illegal products.

The YMA regularly destroys seized goods without informing the excise department, the state's main agency for combating narcotics use. Seized Drugs and Liquor that are not officially recorded were burned. Such activities sometimes took place in the full presence of the Government officials. It even happened in the presence of the incumbent Chief Minister in May 2011 and April 2013¹²⁶. This increased to politically supported vigilantism since the

¹²³Vanglaini

¹²⁴J.K Patnaik. (Ed) (2008). *Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: Social, Economic and Political life*. New Delhi: concept publishing company.

¹²⁵ In Mizoram, the line between ancient code of selfless service and vigilante justice wears thin. (2018, November, 28) Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/716835/in-mizoram-the-line-between-ancient-code-of-selfless-service-and-vigilante-justice-wears-thin>

¹²⁶In Mizoram, the line between ancient code of selfless service and vigilante justice wears thin. (2018, November, 28) Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/716835/in-mizoram-the-line-between-ancient-code-of-selfless-service-and-vigilante-justice-wears-thin>

denial of legitimate functions to the state tends to disrupt the relationship between civil society and the state and interrupt the distinction between them as it has happened in the case of YMA and the state in Mizoram.

Following the above discussion, it is vital that the state and the YMA display respect to each other boundary. The State can encourage whenever sensible and effective initiatives are taken by YMA and at the same time the significant existence of the YMA in Mizo society should not bar the state from performing its functions. The YMA need to make sure that they don't go against the law and act as a blockage for the government in the execution of their duty. At the same time, the State needs to maintain its linkage with YMA through certain aspects.

The interests of the people of Mizoram will be best served if the State and the YMA continue to maintain their relationship and work together. It is interesting to note that the YMA with its expanding role seems to have lost its original objectives. This put them in a junction as they took up many functions which its original objectives did not plan it to take up. The original objectives of the YMA were concerning the religious and social life of the people. However, the task and functions it performs today are nevertheless irrelevant to its objectives. The purpose of its formation was to strengthen Mizo society in all aspects, the political role it performs is in the realm of social concern and issues. Therefore, the YMA is indeed a political space, a site of critique and challenge because a critical and political civil society is necessary to a well-functioning democracy.

Chapter 4: **Socio-Political implications of YMA in Aizawl**

The prerequisites of any organisation to gain support as well as popularity is to have a good rapport with the community. As for the YMA, the organisation has attained massive support from the Mizo's since its inception. They sustained the fact that for the people of Mizoram, they are the main actors at protecting and safeguarding the culture and identity of the Mizo. To shun away with the membership of YMA is to cast away link and connection with the Mizo community as they will be detested from the community. On events such as funeral rites or celebrations, members of the community often hesitate to attend the events if one does not associate oneself with the YMA. The YMA holds such power and significance in the communitarian life of the Mizo's. To illustrate their expanding and influencing role, their socio-political implications in certain aspects may be analysed as follows-

Vigilant role of YMA on illegal entry and Inner line Permit

In Mizoram, the inner line permit (ILP) is an official travel permit currently enforced by the government of India. The permit allows the Indian citizen to travel into a protected area for a limited period. It is mandatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state. The rationale behind the compulsion of possessing this document is to regulate movement to the protected areas of North-East India.

Over the past years, the increased in the number of non-Mizos residing in the states implies the failure of the state at effective enactment of the regulations. The YMA launched a protest demanding the effective reinforcement of the inner line regulations¹²⁷. The non- Mizos residing in the state without Inner Line Permit (ILP) have been detained. To preserve the cultures and traditions of Mizo society YMA took stringent measures from outside

¹²⁷Manipur, Mizo groups want Inner Line Permit reintroduced. (2013, May. 17). Retrieved from <https://in.news.yahoo.com/manipur-mizo-groups-want-inner-line-permit-reintroduced-124454309.html>

encroachment. The YMA felt obliged to preserve the indigenous Mizo society against exploitation by non-indigenous Mizo, thus they checked the ILP at a regular duration.

Those who were caught without ILP or invalid ILP were presented to the local authorities and on the order of the authorities, they were deported out of the state. Initially, the non-Mizo applying for ILP per day was around 30-40. After such an operation was undertaken by the YMA the figures have increased to 100 applicants per day. Following the operation, the Central YMA issued an order to the Branch YMA that in every locality all the YMA branches shall check on ILP. Following the order, around 550¹²⁸ were caught in 2017.

YMA against illegal traders

In the past there were several cases of quit Mizoram notices issued by the YMA to non-mizo residing in Mizoram. In August 2011¹²⁹ the YMA issued a quit Mizoram notice to non-Mizo traders in Mizoram. They made a notification to all the non-Mizo illegal traders to leave the state before the allotted time given to them. In an interview, Former Central YMA President Lalbiakzuala mentioned that there was a section of non-Mizo traders involved in illegal and harmful trades. He further stated that the YMA took up the responsibility of taking actions against these illegal traders only because the state failed to take up actions against them.

On 15 April 2013, the YMA again issued a quit Mizoram notice to Chin migrants settling on the outskirts of Aizawl. They sanctioned the notice against those households who were engaged in brewing liquor, which is illegal in Mizoram¹³⁰. The YMA as an NGO seemed to overstep its boundaries as they took the law into their own hand. These notices served as instruments

¹²⁸Zonet. (2017, August, 26). Retrieved from <http://www.zonet.in/central-yma-bultuma-ilp-endik-runpui-neih-vangin-diltu-pung-nasa/>

¹²⁹William Singh. (2014, June, 21). Quit Mizoram Notices: Fear of the Other. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 49(25). Retrieved from <https://www.epw.in/journal/2014/25/reports-states-web-exclusives/quit-mizoram-notices.html>

¹³⁰William Singh. (2014, June, 21). Quit Mizoram Notices: Fear of the Other. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 49(25). Retrieved from <https://www.epw.in/journal/2014/25/reports-states-web-exclusives/quit-mizoram-notices.html>

of intimidation and were unconstitutional. It is the official task of the state government to take action and issued order within the realms of Indian constitution. However, the YMA asserted that they took actions as the state government failed to take actions. In this case, the government of Mizoram has failed for two reasons. Firstly, it has failed to stand against YMA on issuing quit Mizoram notices. Secondly, it has failed to combat and execute law to restrict illegal activities taking place in Mizoram. Due to their failure and inadequacy YMA were engaged in the task of taking action against illegal trade practice by non-Mizo.

YMA against the creation of ‘Autonomous District Council’

The present struggle for autonomy by the minority communities in Mizoram has now become the main problem of internal politics. The movement of greater autonomy and ethnic space has become the central theme of internal politics of the state of Mizoram and it pertains to the core issues of indigenous and son of the soil movement. The YMA along with other civil society groups in Mizoram plays the central role on the issue of autonomy relating to ethnic tensions in Mizoram. They played an active role since the initial phases of ethnic tension to the present internal issues of ‘autonomy’ pertaining to the state of Mizoram. Over the years they have contributed immensely in the process of integrating the people. The persistence of attaining autonomy by the Hmar and the Bru communities to create an Autonomous District Councils was strongly opposed by YMA at large as pursuing autonomy based on ethnic lines can lead to distortion and further alienate the minority community from the majority tribe. This is against the very spirit of Mizo unity and the exact stand points of the YMA which is to unite the various ethnic communities.

The state of Mizoram is comprised of a homogenous ethnic Mizo community but there is also a presence of small heterogeneous ethnicity inhabiting the region. Among such various minority communities, the largest are the Chakma, Lai, Mara, Hmar, and Bru. “These minority

groups have their own ethnic identity, culture, and tradition and speak different languages”¹³¹. The Lai, Mara and Chakma communities had succeeded in establishing the Autonomous Districts. The demand of the Bru for an autonomy and the movement of the Hmar People’s Convention (later HPCD) for Autonomous District in the past along with the pressure put forth by the Chakma for more ‘ethnic space’ marked the internal turmoil of the state. These minority communities in Mizoram took their own course in their demand for autonomy and even greater autonomy like union territory to protect their distinct identity.

The term autonomy means self-government or self-rule for the deliverance of efficient socio-cultural and economic requirements¹³². There is a collective movement of securing certain autonomy by minority ethnic tribal of Mizoram in an effort to tackle their problems and solution within the Indian constitutional framework. In Mizoram the assertion for an ‘autonomous space’ emanates from three main reasons: the first being the issue of ethnicity. The basic objective of the minority community is to assert their own distinct cultural identity and language. They fear the loss of their own identity due to inclusion within the larger main fold of the majority Mizo identity. The second reason is discontentment from the way the state Government delivered their administration and governance. The ethnic minorities in Mizoram felt neglected and lacked equality with the larger domain of the Mizo society. The policy makers often indulge in corruption and deviated funds for their socio-economic development. The third reason is that the benefits of the sixth schedule and the presence of three Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram seem to have encouraged other ethnic minority communities like the Hmar and the Bru to demand an autonomous region within the

¹³¹Parotish Chakma. (2009). “Mizoram: Minority Report”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(23) pp. 20-21, Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40279079>

¹³²Lalsiamhnuna. (2011). *Political Problems of Mizoram: A study of ethnic politics with special reference to Hmar’s people Movement*.

state of Mizoram¹³³. The Sixth schedule of the Constitution of India allows the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram to have an administrative style of their own in conformity with their customs, traditions and practices¹³⁴.

Ethnic tribal minorities like Lai, Mara, and Chakma succeeded in establishing institutional autonomy in the southern parts of the state of Mizoram. But, the struggle for greater autonomy has been continued till today. Not only that, the other ethnic communities like the Hmar and the Bru were determined at achieving autonomous district to attain a certain degree of autonomy. The autonomy movement in Mizoram can be traced back from the pre-insurgency period to the post peace accord scenario. It has two dimensions; one is a movement of secession from the Indian Government with the objective of achieving “Greater Mizoram”. The other is the assertion of autonomy by ethnic tribal minorities like Bru, Hmar, and Chakma. As a consequence of these processes, the movement of attaining a sovereign independent state of ‘Greater Mizoram’ has been partially realized by securing Statehood. However, the quest for autonomy by smaller ethnic tribes within the state of Mizoram is a recurring phenomenon that existed since the attainment of statehood.

In both cases, civil society played a remarkable role in addressing the matter of the tension. In the former case, mainstream civil society groups like YMA, MZP and the church were the key stakeholders that paved a way for arriving at a consensus with the Indian government consolidated in the form of signing of a peace treaty in 1986¹³⁵. However in the case of the later, the struggle for autonomy is rooted in the social, cultural and political realities and this

¹³³ Sen. (1992). in Joseph Lalfakzuala. (2016, July). “Ethnicity and Autonomy: Unending political process in Mizoram”, *Social Change and Development*. Vol. 13, pp. 46-54 Retrieved from http://www.okd.in/downloads/jr_16_july/article-4.pdf

¹³⁴ Lalfakzuala, K. J. (July, 2016). “Ethnicity and Autonomy: Unending political process in Mizoram”, *Social Change and Development*, Vol. 13 pp. 46-54. Retrieved from http://www.okd.in/downloads/jr_16_july/article-4.pdf

¹³⁵ Sushil Sharma. (2006). “Lessons from Mizoram Insurgency and Peace Accord 1986”, *Vivekananda International Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/lessons-from-2006-insurgency-and-peace-accord-1986.pdf>

discourse on ethnicity is a complex issue for the state, the policy makers and YMA and other civil society groups in Mizoram. Let us try to examine the major areas of tension concerning the assertion of autonomous space by ethnic minorities and the role undertaken by YMA in addressing these issues.

Bru Community

The Bru's are one of the most backward communities in the state of Mizoram that largely depends on Jhum/shifting cultivation to sustain a livelihood. They are not a part of the larger Mizo identity and have thus formed one of the minority communities in the state. The history of their origin is quite vague. It is largely believed by many historians that Bru's migrated from a part of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and settled in parts of Mizo hills mainly Mamit district, Tripura and Assam¹³⁶. The Bru's follow Hindu religion and they are one of the twenty one schedule tribe of the Indian state of Tripura. The Bru's are scattered across the north-eastern states but they are predominantly found in Tripura. Within Mizoram, they settled down mostly in the northern part of the state like Mamit and Kolasib. The dispute between the Bru's and the majority Mizo community is marked by years of traditional rivalry.¹³⁷ The Mizo considered them foreigners while they claim that there are indigenous tribes inhabiting Mizoram¹³⁸. The basic aims and objectives of the Bru's are to protect their rights and dignity. They seek the protection of their identity against assimilation from the majority Mizo tribes. They also seek protection of their religious identity, which they claim to be "Hinduism" from the alleged imposition of Christianity from the majority Mizo tribe.

¹³⁶ "Bru Tribe of India". Retrieved from <http://bratribesofindia.weebly.com/-history.html>

¹³⁷ "The Bru Issue: The tribe, Repatriation, IDPs or Refugees". *Fantastic Fundas* Retrieved from <http://www.fantasticfundas.com/2015/06/the-bru-issue-tribe-repatriation-idps.html>

¹³⁸ S.B Chakma and S Gogoi. (03, November, 2018). "The Bru–Mizo Conflict in Mizoram" *Economic and Political Weekly*. 53(44)

In 1995 YMA and MZP made a demand that the Bru's should be struck off from the voter rolls¹³⁹ based on the claim that they are not indigenous to the state. This intensifies the already tense situation between the dominant Mizo community and the minority Bru's. An armed outfit called The Bru National Union was formed (BNU) in 1994 and The Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) which was formed in 1996 passed a resolution in 1997¹⁴⁰ demanding separate Autonomous district council within Mizoram along with the lines of Chakma Autonomous District Council and sixth schedule of the Indian constitution. These demands were severely rejected by the state Government, the YMA, MZP and the majority Mizo community. An armed movement began and they were engaged in several violent clashes and guerrilla attacks with the Mizo. Nearly 50,000 Bru's had to flee from Mamit district in Mizoram to neighbouring Tripura and set up a refugee's camp. The reasons for this Exodus from Mizoram was due to the murder of a Mizo forest guard on 29th October 1997 in the Dampa Tiger reserve, which was attributed to the underground Bru National Liberation Front. This incident triggered violent ethnic clashes between Mizo's and Reang also known as Bru¹⁴¹ tribesmen in the Mamit sub-division of Mizoram State.¹⁴²

YMA along with the other civil society groups in Mizoram strongly rejected the autonomous aspirations of the Bru's as they perceive it as a threat to integration. They took a stance that "Mizoram is the only land the Mizo's have and it could not be lost to foreigners or other communities"¹⁴³. In an instance of conflict between the Bru's and the Mizo's, the YMA played a crucial role in initiating a strategy that would reduce the tension to bring in peace in

¹³⁹V Eyben. (2018, October, 10). "Bru Refugees in Tripura Set To Starve Before Repatriation". *News Click*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclick.in/bru-refugees-tripura-set-starve-repatriation>

¹⁴⁰Roluahpuia. (2018, April, 28). "The Bru Conundrum in North East India". *Economic and Political weekly*, 3(17).

¹⁴¹The correct nomenclature for this ethnic group is actually Bru although the name Reang was accidentally incorporated by the Indian government during a census count. Ibid

¹⁴²"Bru National Liberation Front". *South Asian Terrorism Portal*. Retrieved from http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/mizoram/terrorist_outfits/BNLF.htm

¹⁴³Bhattacharya. (2012) in Lalengkima. (2017, December). Role of civil society in Mizoram. *Mizoram University Journal of Humanities and Social sciences*. 3(2). pp. 64

the region. They fear that such conflict based on the line of ethnicity would worsen the already tense situation. As a result of their active intervention on resolving the dispute between the Mizos and the Bru's, the state Government is engaging with a series of talks with the outfits since September 2001¹⁴⁴.

On 30 April 2002, the Bru National Liberation Front declared that the outfit is ready to negotiate for a regional council, instead of an Autonomous District Council for which they had fought for so long¹⁴⁵. The Bru militants and the state government had several rounds of talks and negotiations to come to a consensus. During these rounds of talk, the Bru militants dropped all political demands including the creation of Autonomous district Council, thus paving the way to the resolution of such longstanding conflict. After thirteen rounds of talk, a memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Government of Mizoram and the BNLFF. Finally, on 26 April 2005, the 12th round of talks took place in which a memorandum of settlement was signed between the government of Mizoram and the Bru National Liberation Front¹⁴⁶. Thus, the eight year old insurgency of the BNLFF militant group was ended after years of violence and tension.

At present, the main problem is regarding the issue of repatriating Bru refugees¹⁴⁷ living in the camp of Tripura. The exodus of a large number of the Bru's to neighbouring states of Tripura and Assam pose a severe challenge to YMA and the state Government as the refugees wanted to return to their home. An attempt at repatriation began in 2010 and some people even moved back. YMA and almost all civil society made a joint statement stating that

¹⁴⁴Lalengkima. (2017, December). Role of civil society in Mizoram. Mizoram University Journal of Humanities and Social sciences. 3(2).

¹⁴⁵Civil Society, State and the Tribal Society: A case study on Young Mizo Association, Mizoram. (2010, February 16). *Dalit and tribe*. Retrieved from <https://dalitandtribe.wordpress.com/2010/02/16/civil-society-state-and-the-tribal-society-a-case-study-on-young-mizo-association-mizoram/>

¹⁴⁶Civil Society, State and the Tribal Society: A case study on Young Mizo Association, Mizoram. (2010, February 16). *Dalit and tribe*. Retrieved from <https://dalitandtribe.wordpress.com/2010/02/16/civil-society-state-and-the-tribal-society-a-case-study-on-young-mizo-association-mizoram/>

¹⁴⁷ There was violent ethnic clash between the Mizo and Bru in 1996 which resulted in the exodus of a large number of Bru's to neighbouring state. In J.K Patnaik. (Ed) (2008). *Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life*. New Delhi: Concept publishing company.

“Refugees should not be taken back unless and until Bru’s shun violence”¹⁴⁸. As a consequent of this, the Mizoram government’s made a precondition for repatriation that the BNLF lay down their arms in addressing their demands. When the state Government tried to repatriate the Bru refugees in Tripura, YMA strongly opposed the actions of the state Government on the ground that the numbers of voters list as recorded in 1995¹⁴⁹ lost its authenticity. Identifying the exact number of displaced Bru hindered resolution of the Bru problem. YMA stated that the numbers of Bru community fleeing from Mizoram in 1997 was not that big. In response, the state Government requested the NGO’s like YMA and MZP to verify whether all refugees were bona fide residents of Mizoram¹⁵⁰. The Mizoram BruDisplaced People Forum claimed that this will result in the exclusion of a large number of families in the process. The 2005 bye-elections of Mizoram which was held on 10th December marks one of the foremost setbacks of YMA. They physically prevented the Bru’s from exercising their constitutional rights¹⁵¹, as such only 1733 out of 2406 voters in kawrthah and 971 out of the total 1240 voters in phuldungsei constituencies could cast their vote. Such is the power and influence of YMA in the context of Mizoram.

After several rounds of upholding a dialogue and the pressure exerted by YMA to resolve the issue of reparation, an agreement was signed by Government of India, Governments of Mizoram and Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) on 3rd July 2018 for repatriation of the Bru refugees. Following an agreement of this four corner meeting as many as 32,876 people belonging to 5,407 families were to be repatriated till 30th September. The agreement was signed by the union home Minister Rajnath Singh, Mizoram Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla and Tripura Chief Minister Deb. However, after the

¹⁴⁸ The sentinel. (2009). in Lalengkima. (2017, December). Role of civil society in Mizoram. Mizoram University Journal of Humanities and Social sciences. 3(2).

¹⁴⁹ J.K Patnaik. (Ed) (2008). *Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life*. New Delhi: Concept publishing company. Pp.82

¹⁵⁰ “Bru stage sit-in demonstration”. (2007). *The Mizoram Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.themizorampost.net/>

¹⁵¹ “Despite in bru IDP camps in India”. (February 27, 2006)

agreement, a section of the refugees demand the withdrawal from the agreement. The result is that out of 5,407 refugee families, only 40 have been repatriated¹⁵². The reason was that the repatriation agreement would not fulfil their demands for Autonomous District Council within Mizoram. Another reason was that they were discontent with the insufficiency of the rehabilitation package and allocation of financial assistance for rehabilitation by the Government.

YMA played a major role in the Bru's aspiration for regional autonomy within the state. Since the beginning of their demand the YMA and the state has firmly opposed granting them autonomy and their relationship seemed efficient in this matter however their interface is also unproductive at several issues due to the accommodative reluctance of the Mizo's, since the bigger problem lies in the increasing perception of Bru's as foreigners by the larger section of the Mizo's in Mizoram. As for the issue of repatriation of the refugees back to Mizoram, YMA has facilitated several rounds of talks with the Government delegates at both centre and state level. They managed to arrive at an agreed time period of 3rd July till 30th September this year. YMA and Mizoram Government at large should sustain efficient engagement to work out on the issue of accommodation and coexistence.

Chakma community

The Chakma's were recent immigrants from the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh¹⁵³. Majority of Chakma's followed Buddhism as their religion. The Chakma's were victims of development induced displacement due to the construction of Kaptai reservoir in Chittagong Hill Tract¹⁵⁴. This led to a wave of large scale migration in 1961. The insurgency in Hill

¹⁵² "Bru Refugees in Tripura Set To Starve Before Repatriation". *News Click*. Retrieved from <https://www.newslick.in/bru-refugees-tripura-set-starve-repatriation>

¹⁵³ Lianchhinga. (2004). In Pachuau, L. Joy. (2014). *Being Mizo*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵⁴ "The tragedy of the Chittagong Hill Tract in Bangladesh". Retrieved from <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=4497285&fileId=4497292>

Tract led by hill people movement of Bangladesh¹⁵⁵ is also another reason for their exodus to a neighbouring region. The Chakma's in Mizoram are the second largest population after the Mizo tribe inhabiting Mizoram¹⁵⁶. They resided in the south-western part of Mizoram mostly in Lawngtlai, Lunglei and Mamit District. The Chakma's in Mizoram enjoy the special status of inclusion in the sixth schedule of the constitution. They also have an autonomous district council way back in 1972 before the achievement of statehood, however, their presence is perceived as a potential threat to the culture and demography of Mizoram¹⁵⁷. It is believed that they migrated from the west of Bengal to the East of Mizoram and Practice Buddhism. They are identified as the non-indigenous group inhabiting the land of the Mizo's.

The political aspirations of the Chakma in Mizoram often arouse anger for the Mizo in the past too. The demand for the upgrading of the current Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) to the status of the unionterritory or inclusion of all Chakma inhabited areas into CADC heightened tension between the two communities. Such demands inadvertently awakened the Mizo community. The Mizos considered their entry to the state as illegal and perceive their increasing presence as a threat to their culture and religion. Unlike the two major ethnic tribes of Mizoram i.e. Bru and Hmar, the Chakmas already attained Autonomous District Council way back in 1972. Right now the issue is regarding their demand of Union Territory under the Union Government and the pressure exerted by the YMA for the abolition of Chakma Autonomous District Council.

The background of the formation of Chakma Autonomous District can be traced from a historical perspective. In 1954, the central and Assam governments granted regional council to the Lakher and the Pawi in the name of Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. A large number of

¹⁵⁵Pachau, L. Joy. (2014). *Being Mizo. Identity and belonging in North East India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵⁶“Chakma in Mizoram”. Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/voiceofjummaland/chakma-mizoram>

¹⁵⁷J.K Patnaik.(Ed) (2008). *Mizoram Dimension and Perspectives: social, economic and political life*. New Delhi: Concept publishing company.

Chakma's also fell into the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council geographic boundary. Thus, in 1972, the PLRC was divided into three regional councils and upgraded to district councils for Maras, Lais, and Chakmas. Under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution, the Chakma Autonomous District Council was formed on 29th April 1972. The entire community of Chakma Autonomous District Council belongs to schedule tribe. The total population of Chakma Autonomous District Council is 43,528¹⁵⁸ as per 2011 census out of which 70% of it is dependent on agriculture. However, the popular opinion of the Mizo's is that the formation of a Chakma Autonomous District in 1972 is unconstitutionally constituted without any consultation or approval given to the Mizo's. Representing this interest, YMA strongly demanded Mizoram Government to scrapped Chakma Autonomous District Council. In the 54th General conference of YMA at Champhai, which was held from 19th -21st October 1999, a resolution to abolish Chakma Autonomous District Council was adopted¹⁵⁹.

The claim of the Mizo to being the only indigenous community, and that the Chakma community belong to a non-indigenous status, is refuted by various Chakma organisations. These pertain to the standoff between the indigenous inhabitants and the immigrants while both sides give their version of the truth. While the claim of the Mizo's to being the only indigenous group of Mizoram is based on their claims to being the original inhabitants (natives) of Mizoram; the Chakma position their indigenous claim on the basis of their Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and reiterated that they have established their settlement since time immemorial.

As the debate over the original settlers goes on between the two ethnicities, it revived the abolition of regional autonomy which the YMA has aspired to attain since decades ago. The resolution seeking abolition of the CADC was passed at the 71st YMA general conference

¹⁵⁸ "The Chakmas In Mizoram Are Struggling To Secure Their Rights And Identity". *Youth Ki Awaaz*.

Retrieved from <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2018/10/chakma-autonomous-district-council-mizoram/>

¹⁵⁹JangkhongamDoungel in J.K Patnaik. (2014). *Role of State and Civil Society in Mizoram*. Mizoram: Mizoram University. Pp 191.

held at Zotlang village in Champhai district in October 2017. Following their demand YMA organised a protest in different parts of the state asserting their demands of scrapping down of Chakma Autonomous District Council 10th October 2018¹⁶⁰. The protest was also conducted in district headquarters of YMA and in important towns of the state. Thousands of people assembled and bestowed their support to YMA.

Addressing the protest rally at Aizawl, Central YMA president, Vanlalruata alleged that “CADC was unconstitutionally constituted by the Centre in 1972 when the Mizos were educationally and economically backward”. He said that the Central government and other agencies should not “enslave” the Mizo people. He also said that the CADC was first made a regional council after which it was upgraded to autonomous district council within 28 days “without” the consent of the Mizo people. After YMA conducted an in-depth study of the formation of CADC they alleged that it was constituted illegally. On their quest to scrap Chakma Autonomous District Council YMA also submitted a letter to Mizoram Governor, Kummanam Rajasekharan insisting on immediate abolition of Chakma council¹⁶¹. YMA and Mizoram Government at large should sustain efficient engagement to work out on the issue of accommodation and coexistence.

Hmar Community

The Hmar's are generally considered to be part of the larger Mizo ethnic group. Hmar's were one of the early settlers of the Mizo Hills-the present state of Mizoram. During the Insurgency movements of the MNF, the Hmar's supported the movement and integrated themselves with the larger fold of the Mizo society. However, after the attainment of statehood by Mizoram, they found themselves marginalised and struggle to maintain their

¹⁶⁰Vanglaini 11. Oct. 2018

¹⁶¹ The hill times. (November, 09). Retrieved from <https://www.thehillstimes.in/regional/mizo-youths-demand-abolition-of-chakma-autonomous-district-council/>

language, culture and seek Autonomous district council under the sixth schedule¹⁶². The demand and struggle for Autonomy by the Hmar's was marked by conflict and disputes between the Hmar, the States Government, and the Majority Mizo community.

The Mizo union was formed in 1946 to resist against the system of Chieftainship. After the formation of the Mizo Hills District (MHD) council in 1954, the Mizo Union also demanded the unification of all Mizo inhabited areas into a single administrative unit. However, the demand for integration remained unfulfilled¹⁶³. The attainment of statehood in 1986 failed to acquire its objectives of creating "Greater Mizoram" and excluded the Hmar's inhabited areas within its state. Although the Hmar living outside the Mizo Hills District took an active part in the Mizo union movement and the insurgent movement of integration neither of this movement failed to address the interest and hopes of the Hmar's.

With this backdrop, the Hmar started forming a various political organisation to represent the interest of all the Hmar's living in the areas of Lushai Hills (present day Mizoram), parts of Manipur and Assam. Thus in 1958 Hmar National Union (HNU) was formed and demanded the integration of all the above Hmar- Inhabited areas into a single administrative unit. The call for autonomy started with the formation of the Hmar People Convention in 1986 (HPC). The Hmar's demanded a separate Hmar homeland in the northern part of Mizoram. They demanded separate autonomous district council and in a memorandum submitted to the prime minister in 1987, they stated that the Hmar's were "subjected to all sorts of social, cultural and political discrimination and economic exploitation at the hands of the more advanced communities"¹⁶⁴, and longed to be kept equal with other ethnic groups in Mizoram like the

¹⁶²LalremlienNeitham. (2001). "Hmar Struggles for Autonomy in Mizoram, India," retrieved from <http://www.ritimo.org/article889.html>

¹⁶³LalremlienNeitham. (2001). "Hmar Struggles for Autonomy in Mizoram, India," retrieved from <http://www.ritimo.org/article889.html>

¹⁶⁴Roluahpuia. (2015, August, 01). "Political Turmoil in Mizoram". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 50 (31). Retrieved from <http://www.epw.in.iproxy.inflibnet.ac.in:2048/journal/2015/31/reports-states-web-exclusives/political-turmoil-mizoram.html>

Pawis, the Lakher's and the Chakma's as these minority ethnic group has separate autonomous district council within the state.

The HPC after a year of its formation launched an armed struggle to achieve their political goals. The area called as "Demand Area" comprised villages which the HPC claimed to be Hmar majority villages. After five years of struggle and conflict, dialogue for a solution was undertaken between the HPC and the Mizoram government. A memorandum of settlement was finally signed in Aizawl on 27th July 1994¹⁶⁵ between the Mizoram Government and the representatives of HPC¹⁶⁶. The features of the agreement were the plan to set up Sinlung Hill Development Council (SHDC) and to take certain measures to include Hmar inhabited areas and another non-scheduled area of Mizoram within the sixth schedule. Eventually, SHDH was set up but the granting of the sixth schedule was not realised. Angry with the way in which government was fulfilling its promises, the Hmar People Convention-Democracy (HPC-D)¹⁶⁷ took to arms again and parted ways from the HPC. It demanded the government to fulfil the agreement signed in 1994 by granting separate autonomous councils under the sixth schedule. The HPC-D since then has been associated with most acts of violence.

It is important to note that this political tension also reveals the question of an identity crisis within the state. The minority Hmar tribe fear ethnic assimilation in terms of "mizoisation", they perceived it as a threat to their own existence and identity. Hence they asserted their identity through resistance. The Mizoram government and HPC(D) have been engaged in official talks since August 2016 to solve the conflict. In a major development, The Mizoram

¹⁶⁵ "Mizoram Government, rebel outfit agree on terms of peace pact". (2018, March, 08). Hindustan Times. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/mizoram-govt-rebel-outfit-agree-on-terms-of-peace-pact/story-PcNqDxUE4jIC1inWfhGaVL.html>

¹⁶⁶ "Mizoram Government, rebel outfit agree on terms of peace pact". (2018, March, 08). Hindustan Times. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/mizoram-govt-rebel-outfit-agree-on-terms-of-peace-pact/story-PcNqDxUE4jIC1inWfhGaVL.html>

¹⁶⁷ Hmar Peoples Convention- Democracy HPC-D is an offshoot of the Hmar Peoples Convention HPC, which came into existence in, as a political party spearheading a movement for self-government in the north and northeast of Mizoram. "Hmar People's Convention- Democracy; Incidents and Statements involving HPC-D: 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 1998-2012". (2017). *South Asian Terrorism Portal*, February 09, retrieved from http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/mizoram/terrorist_outfits/HPC_D.htm

government and Hmar People's Convention (Democratic) on 2nd April 2018¹⁶⁸, signed somewhat called historic peace accord and ended the over two decades insurgency. The memorandum of understanding was signed by Mizoram Chief Secretary Arvind Ray on behalf of the state government and H. Zosangbera on behalf of the HPC-D.

For over a decades the HPC-D militant with some of its violent act rigorously pressurise the state Government to grant them regional autonomy, however, the Mizoram government rejected their demand because it could not afford to constitute any more autonomous district council for any tribe in the state. YMA actively intervene in this matter and stated that political autonomy on the line of ethnicity threatens Mizo integration. The standpoint of YMA and a section of Mizo's is that acquiring Autonomous council based on the ethnic line should be discouraged. They considered it as a first step towards ethnic disintegration. With regard to the struggle and demand for (ADC) by the HPC-D the state decision to declare the Hmar inhabited areas as "disturbed areas" was strongly opposed by civil society bodies like YMA, People's right to information and development implementing society of Mizoram (PRISM), MZP as it feared that it will only worsen the tension and stimulates disparity among the Mizo tribes which is against the spirit of Mizo unity.

From the above discussion, it is to be noted that the resistance by the larger section of Mizo to accommodate these tribes in the larger sphere of Mizo society is fuelled by the strong "sons of the soil" sentiment of the Mizo's. The inclination of the Mizo towards dominating other ethnic and religious minorities like Bru, Hmar, and Chakma has created a potentially violent situation. As such, the minority tribes in their assertion of cultural identity and political recognition demanded "autonomous" space. However, Pursuing autonomy on the basis of the ethnic line can also lead to distortion, than understanding. It is quite evident that simply granting Autonomous Council does not offer the 'best' solution for ethnic minorities

¹⁶⁸Vanglaini. (2018, April, 03).

within the State of Mizoram. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the role of YMA when it comes to the issue of autonomy.

Since the post-modern world is looted with self-determination and multi-ethnic global order. The global society has evolved towards recognition of a multicultural, multi-ethnic, pluralistic global system. The search for identity is a positive aspect of modernity. Governance of heterogonous societies requires the active participation of civil society and the development of negotiation and tolerance. Although a state like Mizoram comprised only small heterogeneous ethnicity the engagement of YMA is relevant in attributing to peaceful co-existence of divergent ethnic tribals within the state. It is necessary to propagate that each community needs the other for their survival and integration is a must for development. Development should also touch each and every corner of the state to fulfil the socio-economic and political aspiration of all the tribes. The Mizo's may share cultural differences with the Brus, Chakmas, and Hmar but there is always a possibility for coexistence and accommodation. Therefore, the policy makers, representatives from both sides and powerful civil society like YMA should continue to engage in seeking the best solution that benefited the whole society. The state should take the lead in this course of engagement for arriving at a solution and ensuring lasting peace in the region. A space conceded by the powerful civil society like YMA can do a lot of good for all concerned.

YMA in sustaining peace

Mizoram is considered to be one of the most peaceful states in North-East after the signing of the peace accord in 1986 between the Indian government and the Mizo National Front (MNF). The YMA through its initiation plays a significant role in the peace process of Mizoram. In their effort to tackle the dispute, YMA and various civil societies in Mizoram were determined to bring the Union Government and MNF leaders to the negotiation table.

As a part of their effort to bring peace in the region YMA in collaboration with leaders of different Churches, social organisations, political parties, MZP, and the Human Rights Committee of Brig. Thenphunga Sailo formed a Peace advisory committee on 4th October 1974¹⁶⁹. Its objectives were to create a platform for peace negotiations and resolved to work for peace and security in Mizoram and urged upon both the security forces and the MNF insurgents to shun violence.

Post insurgent state of Mizoram witnessed peace and harmony in the region. At present, the state remains relatively peaceful as compared to other parts of north-east. “The MNF’s quick adaption to the requirements of democratic politics, the determination showed by a highly knowledgeable and educated public, the church, the governments of different parties, civil society and YMA, in particular, were the contributing factors that make Mizoram peaceful states for thirty decades”¹⁷⁰. There has been sustained political stability after the MNF gave up its armed struggle. YMA continued to play its leading role as the main agent of peace and harmony in the region.

¹⁶⁹C Vanlallawma. (1998). *YMA History*. Aizawl: Central YMA and NFI. Pp.76

¹⁷⁰Sushil Sharma. (2006). “Lessons from Mizoram Insurgency and Peace Accord 1986”, *Vivekananda International Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/lessons-from-2006-insurgency-and-peace-accord-1986.pdf>

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The present study emphasized the significance of YMA in the context of Mizoram. The social structure and homogeneity of the people of Mizoram made the YMA an indispensable part of the Mizo society. Its strength lies in the support and confidence displayed by the Mizos at large. The people find it as projecting their interest and voicing their demands. The YMA served as a backbone of the citizens and moulds both the society the state. They watch over the performance of the state and act as a source of resistance when they function against the interest of the community and at the same time they act as a source of support to the state for the good of the society.

The YMA strengthens social integration and social relations. Their responsibility is concerning the development and welfare of Mizoram. Since the Mizos live a communitarian life, the community influenced all individual lives and unite them together through shared norms and values. Therefore, the YMA constitute a public space in which the values and interest that were formed within the society are well represented and made effective. The traditional values of the Mizos have always been that of being considerate towards others and selfless dedication of oneself for the good of others.

A traditional institution like the Zawlbuk uphold the values of Mizo society until the formation of YMA. The YMA motto is to uphold Mizo “Tlawmngaihana”, through this values the YMA bonded the Mizos and they are deeply rooted even at the traditional Mizo society. With the transition of Mizo society towards progress and development, there was a decline in the values of Mizo society. The emerging trends of modern liberal society promote individualism as such the moral values of Mizo Tlawmngaihna which endorse pluralism is on the edge of decline.

Efforts were made by YMA to revive the values of Mizo “Tlawmngaihna” in the society. It stressed that every member should be a good and useful citizen by contributing to society in whatever ways they can. It strongly urged its members to preserve the customs and traditions of Mizo society. The YMA through its motto, functions, and various welfare activities uphold the values of Mizo society “Tlawmngaihna” till today. All the respondents of the questionnaire unanimously laid down that “the YMA uphold the values of “Mizo Tlawmngaihna” through their various functions and moral code of conduct.

The YMA stands for the welfare of Mizo society and therefore they are deemed as “Guardian of Mizo society” as agreed by all the respondents of the interview. The organisation since its inception has been engaged in several welfare activities. If there is anyone in the community who cannot construct his or her house, through the initiatives taken by YMA a group of people in a community comes together to help the needy. There are several occasions when the YMA took the responsibility of road construction in times of road blockade. Their productive efforts to help the famine dreaded state during the occurrence of famine is also remarkable. The organisation also continues providing relief in times of disaster.

The YMA strive towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency by promoting the local product. They also encourage the youth to be innovative. The drive for cleanliness and hygiene lead the organisation to construction public Latrines and Urinals in almost all the towns and villages of Mizoram. They immensely campaign against the evils of drugs and alcohol. They organised Sports, Social and Cultural activities to encourage community participation and connection. They set up several developmental and training centre. For instance, the Central YMA set up ‘Zawlbuk’ at Thingsulthliah for the Mizoram Youth. They open and run adult education centres in several parts of the states. The YMA promoted and revived the customs, culture, and tradition of Mizo. They safeguarded the language, literature, festivals and Mizo traditional dance.

Civil society organizations have a vital role to play in monitoring the conduct of state government. They involve citizens in acting collectively to make demands to the state or to express in the public sphere their interests, preferences, and ideas or to check the authority of the state and make it accountable. In order to stimulate vibrant and aware citizens, the YMA has promoted political participation through the various ways it undertakes in educating people about their rights and obligations as citizens and encouraging them to listen to election campaigns and vote in elections.

Mizoram is known as the model state for conducting peaceful elections since its attainment of statehood. The YMA plays a remarkable role in ensuring that the elections are conducted without violence or unethical conduct. The YMA has played the main role in coordinating all the political parties of Mizoram to maintain a free and fair election. They also requested them to lower the election expenditures in the State Assembly and parliament elections. They work in harmony with the Election Commission of India in ensuring that elections are free, fair, transparent and peaceful.

The peaceful conduct of elections in Mizoram is most recently visible in the state Assembly elections held on 28th November. Although there were conflicts between the ECI and the YMA regarding the screening of Bru electoral list, the ECI, and the Joint NGO coordination committee managed to exchange dialogue and agreement. The YMA upheld the agreement by going out of their way by welcoming and helping the Bru refugees in exercising their universal franchise. This gesture of the YMA showed the compromising attitude of YMA in engaging for the good and welfare of the society even if their objective is realized only partially.

The YMA watch how state officials use their powers and raise public concern about any abuse of power. They played an important role in curbing electoral and political malpractices.

They also watch over government policies and programmes. In fact, the state government works with YMA in the selection of beneficiary for various governmental schemes within the approved guidelines. They also check and monitor the implementation of several policies by the government. In fact, they greatly contributed to the efforts of bringing good governance to the state. The leaders of YMA should continue to sustain and generate their members towards the drive for good governance and socio-economic development of Mizoram. This can attribute to YMA as being the means for achieving the goals of good governance and development.

Civil society through its various activities can help to identify and train new types of leaders who have dealt with important public issues and can be recruited to run for political office at all levels as they can mould competent political leaders. Experience from other countries shows that civil society is an important arena from which to recruit and train future leaders. In the context of YMA in Mizoram, it can also be identified as a ladder of political participation because it can provide an excellent training ground for future political leaders.

However, the YMA should make sure that its executive members or office bearers do not make any affiliation to any political party while they still occupied the office. In the past, there were some members of central YMA who run for political office while being a member of Central YMA. The YMA as an organisation may establish relations to political parties and the state, but they must retain their independence and avoid seeking political power for themselves. Since the basic role of civil society is to limit and control the power of the state.

In recent times, the process of selection of YMA has witnessed some trends of selfish tendencies. Some of its members campaigned indirectly for the post of leadership. This recent trend is a deviation from the norms and values of Mizo society and YMA in particular. The endorsement of selfless character in the traditional Mizo society and the objective of YMA

which is selflessness is disdain with such selfish tendencies of some members in their quest for leadership. Thus there is a need for the organisation to revisit the social values of Mizo society and the foundation on which YMA is formed.

It is to be noted that the YMA can even dictate terms to the state in a way that it took upon the moral task of safeguarding the interest of the Mizos when the state failed to fulfil its duty. There were instances of conflict and tension between the YMA and state. Such a situation occurs when the state feels that the YMA interferes beyond its boundary, while the YMA feels the state is not effective enough in responding to the needs of the people and people's welfare.

Since the strength of the YMA lies in the support of the people, their influence plays out in various ways and often gave them the authority to function as a parallel government. They hold so much power in Mizoram that it might be able to control the state. The role of YMA is now critically commented upon and observed. This is also typical in a transitory society, as people become more aware of their rights and gradually asserted their rights in society.

In this backdrop, the performance of YMA in the fight against illegal Drug trafficking and Liquor prohibition has caused widespread controversy. The action and stringent measures they undertook against people caught in such an illegal act cause the violation of human rights. In the past, the death of some people who were allegedly involved in intoxicant drugs poses a challenge to the functions of YMA. Such an act is a violation of the law and individual rights as guaranteed by the Indian constitution. The issuance of 'Quit Mizoram notices' to Chin migrants from Myanmar and non-tribal businessmen engaged in illegal trade questions the purview of the YMA.

Because of the expanding role and influence of the YMA, it is unfortunate to learn that even the government turned out to be a silent spectator when such incident of human rights

violation took place. It is necessary that the YMA recognise that this kind of functions should be performed by police personnel under the state government. At the same time, the state should adopt a firm stance against the tactics of intimidation displayed by some members of YMA. The state government should not hesitate to take stringent actions against the atrocities of human rights violations committed by the offenders. They should also be the centre forces in protecting and guaranteeing the rights to its citizens.

The YMA considered itself to be the competent authority or often takes the law into its own hand. Often times they perform a search from house to house. Such activities were conducted with mere suspicion and without prior approval from the competent authorities. Further, some members had even adopted violent means against the person caught in illegal affairs. It is imperative that the YMA members functions and conduct their affairs within the legal framework. The organisation can revise, adjust and restructure its strategy. They may instruct their members to abide by the new values so that their existence is in consonant with the legal framework and that it does not encroach upon the rights of the individual.

When it comes to the issue of minority communities, the existing relationship between the state and YMA is inefficient due to indigenous issue and the demand of abolition of Chakma Autonomous District Council. Political parties are blaming each other on who's responsible for the alleged illegal entry and enormous population growth of Chakmas within Mizoram. The state's minority communities like the Bru and Chakma regard YMA with scepticism and considered them as ethnocentricity. In fact, YMA and the section of Mizo's are inclined at expelling them from Mizoram as they consider them as illegal immigrants.

The YMA can make sure that their effort at realising the interest of the Mizo tribe does not exceed the premise of the legal framework. Since YMA played a significant role in the process of integrating the people of Mizoram, the proposal for the abolition of Chakma

Autonomous District Council can increase to cleavage and worsen the existing tension between the majority Mizo and the minority communities. Such an attitude is prone to paving a way for alienation and secession which is seen in the aspiration of union territory by Chakma and regional autonomy by Bru.

In a democratic state, it is imperative that civil society groups respect the law, the rights of individuals, and the rights of other groups to express their interests and opinions. The word 'civil' signifies tolerance and the accommodation of pluralism and diversity. Hence, a powerful civil society like the YMA can take appropriate steps at addressing this kind of issue. Democratic accountability lies in the expansion of civil society.

In order to maintain democratic polity, the state should be minimal and put under active control of civil society. This does not mean that civil society should always have to be against the state. Because the YMA is independent of the state, it doesn't mean that it must always criticize and oppose the state. The YMA is a check, a monitor, but also a significant partner of the state. They intervene in the state policies whenever they felt that the policies undertaken by state government goes beyond the interest of the people or it could stand as a treat to the Mizos.

The YMA work in response to the needs of the society. In the execution of its functions, its members work cooperatively without any hindrance or complaints. They took it as their personal responsibility without any demand for rewards. Members do not hesitate to aid, donate or contribute whatever they have for the success and completion of the task of the organisation.

It can be said that in those areas where their objectives meet, the YMA works in cooperation with the state but in areas of conflict, there were cases when they resorted to means which are

not appropriate at achieving their goals. However their compromising attitude compliments and supplements the state. Thus, they contribute to good governance.

In spite of certain setbacks, the proactive role of YMA indicates the existence of a good and healthy democratic governance in the state. However, they should also be constantly aware of their limits and objectives. They should always make a clear boundary between them and the government, authority, and rule of law. Both the YMA and the state are fundamentally supplementary to each other. They make the state at all levels more accountable, responsive, inclusive, and effective. A vibrant civil society like YMA has the power to help citizens to respect the state and promotes their positive engagement with it. Thus, the YMA empowered the people of Mizoram and guided the state government to be more accountable, transparent, and responsive to the public. They are the most vibrant civil society in Mizoram that constitutes a significant yet non-political space in the governance, functions, and actions of the state.

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Questionnaire

Name-

Locality-

Age-

Sex-

Current status at Branch/Section YMA- Member/Committee member/ Office bearer etc.

Q1. Are you an active Member of YMA

- a) Yes b) No

Q2. Do you think YMA works for the upliftment of Mizo society and Culture?

- a) Yes b) No c) No opinion

Q3. Do you think YMA has revived Mizo virtue 'Tlawmngaihna' in Mizo society through their various functions and activities?

- a) Yes b) No c) No Opinion

Q4. Is it necessary that 'Tlawmngaihna' has to be adjusted according to its relevance in the society?

- a) Yes b) No c) No opinion

Q5. Do you think that the YMA constitute a significant place in the social, religious and political life of Mizo society?

- a) Yes b) No c) No Opinion

Q6. Do you think the relationship between the YMA and the state is adequate and beneficial for Mizo society?

- a) Yes b) No c) No opinion

Q7. Do you think that the YMA has facilitated the state to function efficiently?

- a) Yes b)No c) No Opinion

Q8. Do you think the YMA act as a watch dog in case of sates failure?

- a) Yes b) No c) No Opinion

Q9. Do you think the YMA transgress its boundaries or goes beyond their limit in times of state failure?

- a) Yes b) No c) No Opinion

Q10. Are you aware that central YMA has formed special operation team 'Supply reduction services' (SRS) and 'central anti-drug squad' (CADC) to combat illegal drug and prohibit alchohol?

- a) yes b) No

Q11. Do you agree that the SRS and CADC has often violated the rights of an individual in their effort of combating drug and alcohol?

- a) Yes b) No c) No Opinion

Q12. Do you think the YMA functions like a pressure group?

- a) Yes b) NO c) No opinion

Q13. Do you think that the current performance of YMA is efficient?

- a) Yes b) No c) No Opinion

Q14. Do you the YMA act as a 'guardian' of Mizo society?

- a) Yes b) No c) No Opinion

Introduction

Civil society works to preserve and uphold the interests of the people. Representing people's interests it challenges the coerciveness of the state in case of an authoritarian use of power. Civil Society have expanded and grown extensively in various parts of the world. It is fundamental to democratic governance and occupies an important place in a liberal democratic state. Only a vibrant and politically aware civil society can mediate and control excessive centralisation of state power. Civil society encompass all kinds of organisations or associations like interest groups, voluntary groups, religious groups, parties, professional associations, social movements, grassroots movements. These groups are called civil societal groups because people with a common interest come together. Civil society occupies the most significant space in society because human being by nature is self-seeking individual. To overcome social conflict, civil society exists to maintain peace and order among people.

Mizoram had strong civil society movements and its presence is crucial to the evolution of Mizo society. Its vibrant role relating to development is also remarkable. Government deliverance of socio-economic and political administration is largely influenced by civil society. They provides a platform of interaction between the citizens and the state in Mizoram. The interests of the people of Mizoram is served and represented through its various functions and performances. Even during the insurgency period, civil society organisations such as the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizoram Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and the church had played a vital role in sustaining the peace process of Mizoram. These organisations act as intermediate institution and negotiate between the Union Government and the people. They simmer down the grievances of Mizo and addressed the issues that were rampant during the insurgency period.

They have largely contributed to the success of peace accord that lasted for many years since the formation of Mizoram statehood. It seemed to be a success in the region as compared to all other peace accords that were signed during the time. This is largely due to the active interference of civil society with the state. Since, civil society is not a body outside state or against the state, instead its presence announces the emergence of modern democratic state like Mizoram. Hence the mainstream civil society groups in Mizoram constitute an essential moment in the process of democratization and integration of the people under common bondage. With the transition of Mizo society towards development and progress, civil society continues to play a significant role in sustaining peace, integrating the people and works for securing the welfare of the society.

The research emphasized the significance of YMA in the context of Mizoram. The YMA as the being the most prominent civil society organisation in Mizoram served as a backbone of the citizens and moulds both the society the state. They watch over the performance of the state and act as a source of resistance when they functions against the interests of the community and at the same time they act as a source of support to the state for the good of the society. It examine how YMA, a non-political, voluntary organisation in Mizoram has emerged as an important constituent of civil society. As a civil society organisation it has played diverse roles and contributed towards the developmental issues and welfare of the people.

Securing peoples interest the YMA challenges the state in times of its failure and can even dictate terms to the state as it took upon the moral task of safeguarding the interest of the Mizos. They hold so much power that there were instance of conflict and tension between the YMA and state. In spite of certain setbacks, they did not go to the extent of causing problem to the state. They only act as a supplement to the state with the hope of making them more accountable and more sensitive to peoples concern. Their proactive role indicates the

existence a good and healthy democratic governance in the state. They played a vital role in sustaining peace process of Mizoram and its vibrant role contribute to state government deliverance of socio-economic and political administration. The research outline and examine the various roles undertaken by YMA and in detailed it studies the nature of relationship that exists between the state and YMA in Aizawl.

Review of Literature

The book “Civil society and Democracy” by Carolyn Elliott explores important issues in the study of political science and Indian politics. It analyses civil society according to the politics and social conditions of the regions of Europe, Asia and America. The book offers a combination of analyses by political theorists with empirical studies in comparative politics. It is divided into two sections, the first section is the conceptual framework and the second section contains empirical investigations by theorists. It empirically assessed the relationship of civil society with democracy and governance in India. It not only conceptualized on the literature of civil society but explained social reality that suggested its possible relationship with democracy. It explores how the concept of civil society developed in the western tradition of political thought and compares India’s experience with those of China, south-east Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. This volume offers a combination of analysis by political

The book “On civil society” by Jayaram is a collection of 14 papers covering the theme of discourse on Civil Society, State and Democracy. The contributors of this book offer different perspectives on the discourse of civil society, connoting civil society as against the state or intertwining it with the state. The various chapters of this book highlighted and elucidated the issues concerning the concept and reality of civil society. Although the origin and development of civil society discourse is rooted in the west, the contributing author of

this book consciously strives towards the Indian context with regard to its social, economic and political aspects. It also scrutinizes and laid down the historical experience of India.

T.C Oommen in his book “Nation, Civil society and social movements” analyses the problems like the relevance of nation state, the role of civil society in good governance and relationship between social movements and social policy. He also contested many of the existing conceptualizations on Indian and western countries. Three interrelated themes like nation, civil society and social movements are broadly explained in different sections. Each section is having four chapters. The notion of nation and nationality in the twentieth century south Asia is severely analysed in the first section. The second section deals with civil society, market and the state. It emphasized the process of independence of the three in India and how its course is different as compared with the west.

The book Civil Society and Modern Politics by Dipali Saha examines and analyse conflict and compromise between civil society and modern politics. This book attempts to understand the relationship between civil society and modern politics by outlining the views of various thinkers. In this book an attempt has been made to place freedom in modern civil societies beyond struggles of interest, identity and power. It attempts to mediate the inherent problem such as mediating civil freedom of contract, property and the regulation of exchange in the market with that of political freedom of assembly, expression, suffrage and equality before law.

Tandon and Mohanty in their book Does Civil Society Matter: Governance in contemporary India explored and analyse the civil society initiatives which addressed on the impact and issues of good governance. The book explores the relevance and significance of civil society for good governance. It broadened the conceptualisation of governance to change the prevalent view that governance is solely the responsible of the state. The contributors of this

edited books argued that governance is the responsibility of civilised citizens and that people must be given the space to decide what is good for them. This book is divided into two sections and the first part deals with the conceptual framework and the second part deals with five case studies of assertion in the sphere of civil society.

Ashutosh Varshney in his essay “Ethnic conflict and Civil Society: India and beyond” provides a link between civil society and ethnic conflict. This essay presents a systematic attempt to connect between the two. The first section clarifies the term ethnicity, ethnic-conflict and civil society. The second section deals with the relevance of civil society in the crisis of ethnic conflict. The third section provides an argument linking ethnic conflict and civil society. The fourth section laid down empirical evidence in support of the arguments made and the final section presents sets of conditions under which the basic argument of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic engagement is unlikely to apply. This paper argues that there is an integral link between the structures of civil life on one hand and the presence or absence of ethnic violence on the other.

Baviskar in his essay “NGO and civil society in India” explores the relationship between civil society and specific institution and processes including NGO’s farmer’s movement, identity politics and religion. In the case of India, civil society organised in the shape of religious revivalism, ethnicity, caste. There is a significant presence of NGO in India. According to Baviskar, they may be engaged in a variety of activities: implementing grassroots/sustainable development, promoting human rights and social justice, protesting against environmental degradation, and many other similar tasks. Some activists resent and reject the term NGO. Instead, they designate themselves as social action groups, political action groups or social movements.

Dhanagare in his essay “civil society, state and democracy: contextualizing a discourse” trace the concept of civil society from the historical roots, the content of this book elucidated the discourse of civil society. This article provides the classical debate on the subject by making a comparative analysis of the view of Marx, Hegel, and Gramsci.

Gurpreet Mahajan in her article “Civil Society and its Avatars” explore another line of thinking. Mahajan stated that there is another viewpoint where the rule of law enforce by the state is a condition for civility within the society. Analysing on the correlation of civil society and the state he challenges the general notion of locating civil society outside the state that enforce law. The paper argues against detachment of civil society from the state and analyse the 18th 19th and 20th century political thinking. During second half of the 20th century, loss of faith in institution of state is also seen in third world democratic state like India. Civil society act as an alternative to unresponsive and bureaucratic state as post-colonial state failed to represent the interest of the weaker sections of society, voice of the marginalised is under-represented with no space in decision making.

Haokip Letkholun in his article “Electoral process in Mizoram: The role of church in 2013 assembly election” analysed the role of the church in the electoral process of Mizoram. It stated that the church had a deep influence for the successful conduct of free and fair elections in the state. The first part of the article gives a brief historical background of the electoral process in Mizoram. The second part deals with the emergence of church and civil societies in the poll process. The third part deals with the role played by the church in the seventh Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections. The last part highlights the problems and prospects of church and civil society’s engagement on electoral process.

P.K.B Nayar in his article “civil society, state and democracy: Lessons for India” highlights from the historical perspectives the origin of civil society in social and political theory. P.K.B

Nayar along with the classical view provides the contractualists approach of Hobbes, Locke, Rosseau on “state of nature”.

Laldinpuii Ralte in her article “Toward understanding Civil Society” discussed the mediatory role of Young Mizo Association between the individual and the state. It outlines the various roles undertaken by YMA and highlights the nature of relationship that exists between YMA and the state. In this article the author explained that civil society and the state cannot function effectively without lending support to each other. In the context of Mizoram, both state and YMA coexist with a cordial relationship and work collaboratively and cooperatively on the several social, political and economic issues to provide welfare to the people.

“The Coffee House and the Ashram” by Susan Rudolph and Lloyd Rudolph examine the associational life created by Mahatma Gandhi, such as the Ashram, and discuss implication for collective action during the Indian freedom struggle. It presents the significance of the associational life that Gandhi had created. It discussed on the debate about civil society and the public sphere in political and social theory. The paper presents the presence of the associational life in the Indian context which is in consonance with the cultural settings. The role that these associational life plays in the transition to democracy is contentiously analyse.

Statement of problem

In contemporary times civil society is often seen as an alternative to state when the state failed to cope up with its socio-eco issues and political problems. It has enormously contributed towards people’s development, and addresses issues and problems that the state had failed to meet. In a coercive and autocratic state, exertion of pressure by the civil societal movement has received attention, contentious debate and analysis. There are many available literatures on the normative discourse of civil society in Mizoram. In the last five years with

the recent political, social and economic turmoil expressed in the existing life of discontent groups, there are quite a few empirical researches on the mediatory role of YMA.

The YMA is the biggest and oldest civil society organisation in Mizoram. Therefore, it is important to look at the ground realities and critically analysed the vital role of YMA in the context of Mizoram. The ability of civil society organisations to provide a platform of interaction between the state and the society in Mizoram will be examined empirically in the case of Aizawl district. Although various books and articles are available on civil society and state, there is hardly any literature on the YMA and Aizawl interface. Hence there is some research gap and this research gap can be addressed with the proposed research and it would facilitate a link between civil society and state.

Significance of the study

Open and secular institution constitutes the backbone of civil society. It serves as a link between individual and each other with the wider sections of society, mediating between citizens and state. Civil society exists in the cultural and traditional norms of the Mizo society, its vibrancy is seen even in traditional Mizo society. Although the presence of civil society during primordial days is autocratic in nature, the unique feature of the existence of civil society from other discourse is that it is an inherent discourse that had been passed down from primordial days. Membership in civil society is not only voluntary in nature but it is obligatory in nature as it is a form of identifying to the culture of the Mizo through shared norms and values. This research seeks to analyse the role of the civil society like the YMA which provides platform for interaction between the state and the society. It aims to explore its vibrant role since insurgency period and its transition with the surface of modern democratic polity in the district of Aizawl for instance.

Objectives

- 1) To study the significance of civil society in traditional and modern Mizo societies.
- 2) To study the nature of relationship that existed between state and civil society in Mizoram.
- 3) To analyse the state and civil society relationship with passage of time in the Aizawl district.

Hypotheses

- 1) Civil society plays a very significant role in traditional and modern Mizo societies.
- 2) Civil society and the state have a cordial and positive relationship in Mizoram
- 3) State-civil society relationship has contributed to the vibrancy of civil society that had facilitated the state to function better in Aizawl district.

Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on survey method. The research is analytical as well as descriptive, based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative research is one which provides insights and understanding of the issue. It is an unstructured, exploratory research methods. Qualitative research gives a clear understanding of human behaviour, experience, attitudes, intentions, and motivations, through the method of observation and interpretation, to find out the way people think and feel about the subject matter. It is a form of research in which the research emphasized on the views of the participants. Quantitative research is a form of research that depends on the methods of natural sciences, which

provides numerical data, figures and facts. It aims at establishing cause and effect relationship between two variables. The research is also known as empirical research as it can be accurately and specifically measured.

The research data is collected from primary as well as secondary sources. Primary sources consist of data collected through unstructured interview and structured questionnaire. With regard to questionnaire and interview, the sample size consist of 40 respondents out of which members of YMA, local leaders, leaders of Central YMA, and academicians were the respondents. Secondary sources is based on books, academic reports, official documents, Journals, Newspaper articles, Essay and seminar papers.

Chapterisation

Chapter 1: Introduction and Theories of Civil Society

The first chapter covers introduction of the topic, meaning, theories and scope of civil society. Profile of Mizoram, research methodology, research objective and hypothesis, statement of problem and significance of the study is also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Origin and Significance of YMA in Mizoram

The second chapter consists of the significance of Civil Society in Mizoram and it further study the origin, significance, organisational structure, objectives and workings of YMA in traditional and modern Mizo society.

Chapter3: Relationship between YMA and the State in Aizawl

In the third chapter relationship between the state and YMA is discussed. It studied the socio-economic and cultural role of YMA and it specifically analysed the political role of YMA. It also explored and critically examine on the nature of relationship between the state and YMA in Aizawl district.

Chapter 4: Socio-Political implications of YMA in Aizawl

The fourth chapter studied the socio-political implications of YMA on certain issues like demand of regional autonomy by the minority tribes of Mizoram. It analyse the vigilant role of YMA on illegal entry, issue of illegal traders and the screening of Inner line Permit in Aizawl. It also studies the role of YMA in sustaining peace.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The final chapter of the research discussed the summary of the study on YMA and the state in Aizawl. It make concluding remarks on the study of state and civil society with special reference to YMA in Aizawl.