

**HISTORY OF THE GORKHA COMMUNITY IN MIZORAM
FROM 19TH – 20TH CENTURIES**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

ZOREMSIAMI PACHUAU

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HISTORY OF THE GORKHA COMMUNITY IN MIZORAM FROM
19th – 20th CENTURIES

BY

Zoremsiami Pachuau

Department of History & Ethnography

Supervisor: Dr. Hmingthanzuali

Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL: MIZORAM
Phone: 0389-2330531/0389-2330410**

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A Central university established by an Act of Parliament
Accredited 'A' Grade by NAAC in 2019

Dr. Hmingthanzuali

Ph:9774011125/8787371038
Email: hmingthanzuali@gmail.com

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**History of the Gorkha Community in Mizoram from 19th-20th Centuries**” submitted by Zoremsiami Pachuau in fulfillment of Doctor of Philosophy in History is an original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for other degree. It is recommended that this thesis be placed before examiners for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dated: 21.03.2022

Place: Aizawl

Supervisor

(Dr. HMINGTHANZUALI)

DECLARATION

I, Zoremsiami Pachuau, hereby declare that the subject matter of the thesis entitled, “History of the Gorkha Community in Mizoram from 19th – 20th Centuries” is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/ Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

Date: 21 March 2022

Place: Aizawl

(ZOREMSIAMI PACHUAU)

Candidate

Department of History & Ethnography
Mizoram University

(PROF. K. ROBIN)

Head

(DR. HMINGTHANZUALI)

Supervisor

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL, MIZORAM**

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(ZOREMSIAMI PACHUAU)
MZU/Ph.D./991 of 22.05.2017
Department of History & Ethnography
Mizoram University

(DR. HMINGTHANZUALI)
Supervisor

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Date: 21.03.2022

(ZOREMSIAMI PACHUAU)

Place: Aizawl

Candidate

Department of History & Ethnography

Mizoram University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

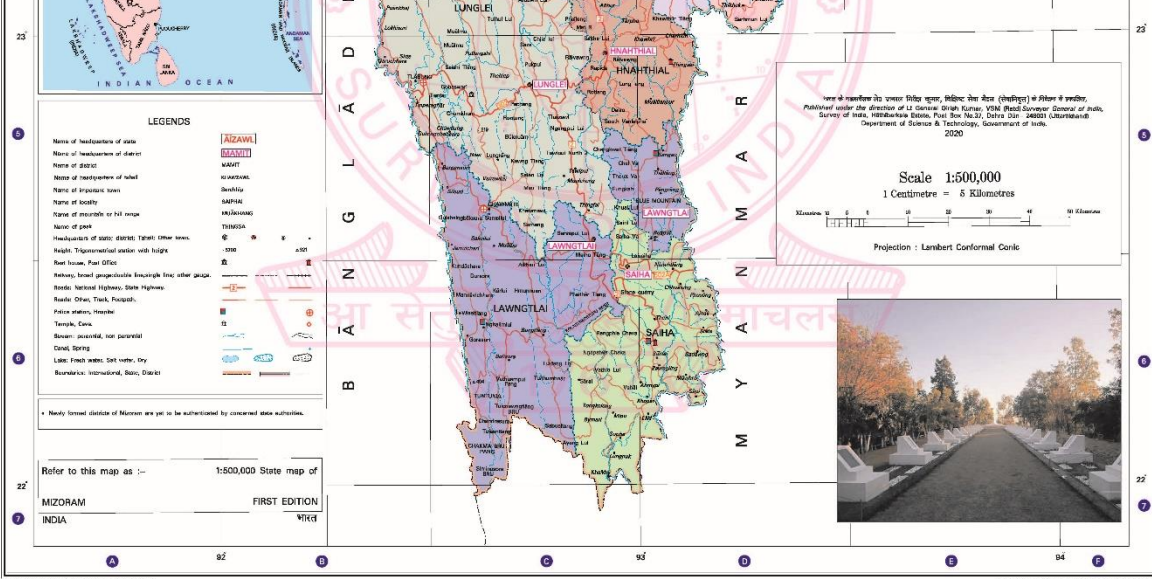
	Page No
Certificate	i
Declaration	ii
Statement on Anti-plagiarism	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	v
Abbreviations	vi
Glossary	vii
Map of Mizoram	viii
Chapter-1: Introduction	1 - 22
Chapter-2: Migration and Settlement	23 - 49
Chapter-3: Socio-Cultural Practices and Institutions	50 - 76
Chapter-4: Education in Mizoram and the Gorkhas	77 - 103
Chapter-5: Gorkhas and <i>Rambuai</i>	104 - 131
Chapter-6: Conclusion	132 - 142
Appendices	143 - 168
Bibliography	169 - 186
Brief Bio-data	ix
Particulars	x

ABBREVIATIONS

1. B.S.F - Border Security Force
2. G.R - Gorkha Regiment
3. M.G.Y.A - Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association
4. M.H.I.P - Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl
5. M.N.A - Mizo National Army
6. M.N.F - Mizo National Front
7. M.N.F.F - Mizo National Famine Front
8. M.N.V - Mizo National Volunteer
9. P.P.V - Protected Progressive Village
10. Y.M.A - Young Mizo Association

GLOSSARY

<i>Awmpui</i> –	servants/ helpers
<i>Ch Battalion</i> –	a body of infantry, the MNAs were divided into battalions, each battalion bearing the names of Mizo legendary brave men such as Vana Pa Battalion, Zampuimanga Battalion, Chawngbawla Battalion etc.
<i>Gopalak</i> –	cow herder
<i>Khukri</i> –	a curved knife, used in combat by the Gorkhas, also serves as a basic utility knife
<i>Lahure</i> –	a person of Lahore, a person who goes to Lahore to get recruited in the army
<i>Mautam</i> –	an ecological phenomenon that occurs every 50 years in Mizoram, where bamboo flowers, usually followed by famine
<i>Mauzadar</i> –	collector of taxes
<i>Prasad</i> -	offering made to gods
<i>Rambuai</i> –	The turbulent/troubled years in Mizoram covering a period of 20 years
<i>Sap</i> –	master of the house
<i>Sipai bel nawt</i> -	a name given to the Mizo boys who earned money for schooling by scrubbing and cleaning the cooking pots of the soldiers
<i>Tin zu</i> –	locally made liquor
<i>Upa</i> –	elder in the chief's council
<i>Vai</i> –	non-Mizo, especially referring to the people from mainland India
<i>Veng</i> -	locality, having specific boundary



Chapter 1: Introduction

The present thesis titled, “History of the Gorkha Community in Mizoram from 19th – 20th Centuries” analyses the past experiences, society and the contributions of the Gorkhas in the making of Mizoram history, the untouched subject in the historical writings of Mizoram.

Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills during the colonial period, starting from 1890 – 1947. It became Mizo Hills District in 1954 when the Hills was elevated to a District status. In 1971, the district was given a Union Territory status and renamed Mizoram. Mizoram attained statehood in 1987. Mizoram has an area of 21,081 Sq. Km. It is situated in the north-eastern corner of India. It shares an international border with Burma and Bangladesh. It also shares borders with the Indian states such as Assam, Manipur and Tripura. ¹ Mizoram lies between 20° 20^l and 24° 27^l N, and 92° 20^l and 93° 29^l E.²

The people inhabiting Mizoram are called Mizo, which is a generic term meaning highlanders. In the colonial period, they were referred as Lushai.³ The Mizo consists of several clans such as Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Ralte, Lai and Mara. There are also Chakmas, Reangs/Brus, Hrangkhawl etc and a sizeable number of Gorkhas living in Mizoram.⁴ Gorkhas were the first non-Mizo permanently settled in Mizoram.

Most of the earlier literatures on the Gorkhas belong to the class of writings by the British administrators, scholars and army officers who served in the army. These literatures can be classified as regimental histories, recruitment handbooks and coffee table books which tells volumes about the manners and customs of the Gorkhas, along with their tales of gallantry.⁵ The colonial writers had the tendency to portray Gorkhas

¹John Vanlalhluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram*, Aizawl, Mizo History Association, 1985, p. 1.

²H.C. Thanhranga, *District Councils in the Mizo Hills*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2007, p. 1.

³Lushai was a name given to the inhabitants by the colonial rulers. When the British arrived in the Hills, the country was dominated by Lusei tribes, and majority of the chiefs were Lusei. The term ‘Lusei’ was pronounced ‘Lushai’ by the British and they named the country Lushai Hills. These names were used for a long time.

⁴P. Lalnithanga, *Emergence of Mizoram*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2010, p. 1.

⁵Nilambar Chhetri, ‘Interrogating Gorkha as Martial Race, Category based on Discrete Identities’, *Journal of Studies in History and Culture*, Vol – 2, Issue – 2, 2016, p.3. Available from: <http://jshc.org>, (accessed 25 August 2019).

as martial race. Brook Northey writes, “Their active physique, their keen sight and hearing, and the fact that they have from their earliest childhood been instructed in all forms of sport, all combine to make Gorkhas almost unrivalled in jungle country and eminently capable as riflemen on the mountain side.”⁶ The bravery of the Gorkhas are always reflected in their writings. In fact, the British needed a strong army which they found in the Gorkhas. Lionel Caplan states,

“In fact, there is no printed work on the Gorkhas which does not refer to their toughness, strength, ferocity, courage and bravery. They perform miraculous feats of daring.”⁷

It seemed that the British needed to create model soldiers out of the Gorkhas which led to the portrayal of Gorkhas as being larger than life. On the other hand, the Gorkhas, by nature were brave and obedient. Taking advantage of their nature, the British made them look indomitable. Hence, the short, broad-chested, flat-faced, snub-nosed men with *Khukri* in their belt, possessing dependable character and endurance were utilized by the British.⁸

In writing their encounter with the Mizo tribe, colonial writers, mostly military personnel also wrote about the bravery and skill of the Gorkha soldiers who had accompanied the British in the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 and Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890. T.H. Lewin, in his book, *A Fly on the Wheel* is all in praise of the Gorkha soldiers whom he addresses as ‘splendid little fellow’ and regards them as *Corp d’elite*, he also appraises them as courageous and stiff-necked.⁹ R.G. Woodthorpe writes about how the Gorkhas felt at home in the thick jungles of Mizoram, whom he called ‘sharp little Gorkhas’.¹⁰ Another writer, A.S. Reid praises the Gorkhas on how, using their *Khukri*, possess a natural aptitude to any kind of

⁶ Brook W. Northey, *The Land of the Gorkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1998, p. 99.

⁷ Lionel Caplan, ‘Bravest of the Brave: Representations of the Gurkha in British Military Writings’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol – 25, No. 3, 1991, p. 583. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 30 August 2017).

⁸ Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur, *The Gurkhas, A History of Recruitment in the British Indian Army*, New Delhi, Nirala Publications, 2000, p. 33.

⁹ T.H. Lewin, *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, 2005, pp. 263 & 299.

¹⁰ R.G. Woodthorpe, *The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872*, Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Limited, 1978, p. 152.

cutting operation from the sharpening of pencil to the felling of a tree.¹¹ L.W. Shakespear also mentions how quickly and easily a rough, but efficient bridge was built by the Gorkha soldiers while the British sappers were calculating away.¹²

From the above, it can be concluded that in the earlier history of Mizoram, written by colonial writers, Gorkhas were regularly referred to in manners of their might, skill, and bravery. The British were able to subjugate Mizoram with the might of their faithful Gorkhas. Thus, it is no wonder that the Gorkhas occupied an important place in the Britishers' hearts.

On the other hand, there is hardly any Mizo writer who mentions Gorkhas in writing the history of Mizoram. It seems that no Mizo writer has ever pondered on the history of Gorkhas or the relationship between the two communities. Lalhruaitluanga Ralte has mentioned the Gorkha soldiers' role in governing Mizoram during the expedition years, he writes that the Gorkha soldiers were brave and fearless.¹³ Moreover, a few writers make references to Gorkha soldiers when writing about the expeditions limiting to the fact that the Gorkha soldiers accompanied the British.

Chhuanliana, in his book, narrates his schooling days in the Boys' School (*Sikulpui*) where almost every day a fight would take place between the Mizo boys and the Gorkha boys studying in the Hindi department. He goes on to say that during this time, the Gorkhas regarded the Mizo as impure. He also says that the Mizo boys enjoyed contacting a Gorkha woman who carry a pail of water knowing fully well that she would have to go back to the spring for another fresh pail of water.¹⁴ T. Sena Ralte Siakeng writes a page about the Gorkhas in his book, mentioning the different castes, and how they started *Tin Zu* (liquor locally made). He also mentions that the Gorkhas were the first non-Mizo who permanently settled in Mizoram.¹⁵

¹¹ A.S. Reid, *Chin – Lushai Land*, Aizawl, Firma KLM Private Limited, 2008, p. 51.

¹² L.W. Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Limited, 1977, p. 69.

¹³ Lalhruaitluanga Ralte, *Thangliana*, Aizawl, Fine Prints, 2013, pp. 165-167, 186-187.

¹⁴ Chhuanliana BVT, *Chawhchawrawi, rawi lehzual*, Aizawl, Gilzom Offset, 2018, pp. 40-41.

¹⁵ T. Sena Ralte Siakeng, *Bengkhuai Sal atangin Zalenna Ramah*, Aizawl, Blue Mountain, 2011, p. 11.

Apart from few references to the Gorkhas as mentioned above, there are hardly any written works on them. Despite living in Mizoram for more than a century, they have remained a silent subject in Mizoram history.

The Gorkha community have been living and settled in Mizoram for more than a century spreading to different parts of Mizoram. They have been present in all the events that made the history of Mizoram, participating and contributing to the history.

Their population in 2011 census was a little more than 7000. Today, the Gorkhas are mostly concentrated in Aizawl and Kolasib districts.

1.1. Who are the Gorkhas?

Gorkhas, also known as Nepalis, refer to people who are originally from the modern country of Nepal, which is a landlocked country, bordered by Tibet in the north, India in the east, south and west. Nepal possesses a variety of races, the principal of these are the Gorkhas, Newars, Bhotiyas, Lepchas etc and the Gorkhas are the dominant race.¹⁶

In 1742, Prithvinarayan Shah, of Indian Rajput origin, became the king of Gorkha, a state about 60 miles west of Kathmandu. He wanted to unify all the Himalayan territories into a single powerful state. He was aware of the expanding power of the British in India and he knew that after the downfall of the Mughal Empire in India, European colonial powers were anxious to gain control over Indian principalities. The Gorkha ruler knew that unless the resource rich Nepal valley came under his rule, it would be practically impossible to consolidate the fragmented states against the British. Prithvinarayan Shah, therefore, concentrated his group of army towards the east. The final victory in the unification of Nepal valley came in 1769.¹⁷ In the initial period, the Gorkha army consisted mainly of the combined forces of Khas, Magars and Gurungs and later included the Rais and Limbus as well.¹⁸

¹⁶ Munshi Shew Shunker Singh & Pandit Sri Gunanand, *History of Nepal*, New Delhi, Abhijeet Publications, 2012, p. 17.

¹⁷ Gokul Sinha, *The Role of Gorkhas in the Making of Modern India*, Delhi, Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh, 2008, p. 8.

¹⁸ Jyoti Thapa Mani, *The Khukri Braves*, New Delhi, Rupa Publications, 2015, p. 49.

In the meanwhile, the British East India Company was expanding its area of interest. They advanced towards north for the purpose of trading with Tibet. However, Nepal stood in the way of building trade routes in the north. In other words, there was clash of interest between East India Company and Nepal. A war followed which lasted for three years (1812-1815). The Gorkhas fought bravely despite inferior weapons. The war ended with the Treaty of Sugauli (1815) by which Nepal lost almost a third of its territory.

The British were greatly impressed by the Gorkhas' bravery in the war. They had every intention of recruiting them in the British army. In fact, recruitment of Gorkhas started even before the treaty was signed. Prior to the Sugauli Treaty of 2nd December, 1815, the Gorkha Recruitment Treaty was signed for the recruitment of the Gorkhas in the British Imperial Army. General David Ochterlony understood the Gorkha soldiers to be brave, honest, faithful, selfless, and hard-working. A treaty, Gorkha Recruitment Treaty (15th May, 1815) was signed between General David Ochterlony and General Amar Singh Thapa which gave rise to the different Gorkha Regiments (G.R).¹⁹

The Gorkhas are generally perceived as martial people. The common perception of Gorkha as a military people was much strengthened as they were recruited in the Gorkha regiment of the British Indian Army following Nepal's defeat in the Anglo Nepal War 1814-16. They fast gained respect as fierce and royal soldiers...²⁰

Captain Hearsay, who fought in the Anglo-Gorkha War was among the first to recommend the enlisting of Gorkhas. He states,

“They are hardy, endure privations, and are very obedient, have not much of the distinction of caste, and are a neutral kind of Hindoo, eating in messes almost

¹⁹ Pradip Sunar, Jeevan Kavar and I.K. Subha, *The Gorkhas of Mizoram, Vol – I*, Aizawl, Mizoram Gorkha Students Union, 2000, p. 4.

²⁰ Cindy L. Perry, *Nepali around the World*, Kathmandu, Ekta Books, 1997, p. 1.

everything they meet with, except beef. Under our government they would make excellent soldiers”.²¹

Brian Hodgson, the Resident of Nepal was also of the opinion that if Gorkhas are enlisted, they would enhance the morale of the existing Indian Army as their physical and moral qualities would be an example for the other sepoys, mostly orthodox high caste men.²²

W. Brook Northey writes that the Gorkhas are extremely independent, having a great confidence in themselves and somehow assertive. He also says that they inculcate warlike qualities of their ancestors that make them to cherish the military spirit in them.²³

The Gorkhas greatly impressed Major Frederick Young in the Anglo-Gorkha war, who mentions that the Gorkhas are generally short, light bodies, well limbed men, who could bear fatigue, full of energy and positive in all their undertakings. They are smart, intelligent, and brave soldiers.²⁴

From the above, it can be understood that the British highly praised the Gorkhas who displayed great courage in the Anglo-Nepal War. The British were the first to portray the Gorkhas as martial race. The image of the Gorkhas as perfect model soldiers was constructed due to the needs of the British for their expansion and strengthening of their empire.²⁵

After the Gorkhas are recruited in the Indian Army, the British trusted them and portrayed them as exemplary soldiers. The Gorkhas, who were brave by nature became faithful followers. In fact, the British had already seen the Gorkhas’ devotion to duty, quality, and honesty in the war with them where the British were forced to

²¹ Quoted in Kamal Raj Singh Rathaur, *The Gurkhas, A History of the Recruitment in the British Indian Army*, New Delhi, Nirala Publications, 2000, p. 33.

²² Purushottam Baskota, *The Gurkha Connection, A History of the Gurkha Recruitment in the British Army*, New Delhi, Nirala Publications, 2014, p. 37.

²³ Northey, *The Land of the Gurkhas*, p. 98.

²⁴ Bob Crew, *Gurkha Warriors*, Mumbai, Magna Graphics, 2014, p. 23.

²⁵ Tejimala Gurung, ‘The Making of Gurkhas as a ‘Martial Race’ in colonial India: Theory and Practice’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 2014*, Vol. 75, 2014, p. 522. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 27 August 2021).

accept the fact that the Gorkhas had fighting spirit in them.²⁶ Taking advantage of their nature, the British utilized the Gorkhas' abilities in their expansion policy. As such, the Gorkhas became the most important instrument in the annexation of the North East India including Mizoram.

1.2. Political history of Mizoram:

In the early period, Mizoram was ruled by different Chiefs who ruled over their own villages. There were often hostilities between the villages which usually led to war between them. The villages were usually built on safe mountain slopes and they were usually small in number though the territory may be huge. The village cultivated a certain area of their territory each year and after they exhausted their territory, the whole village moved to a new place. This was the semi-nomadic life. Each village was sufficient. Power was concentrated in the hands of the Chief and his *Upa* (council of ministers). In each village, the chief was assisted in his administration by his *Upas*. The chief had to maintain law and order in the village. The chief was usually a benevolent ruler, who acted as a father to the villagers.²⁷ In times of economic hardship or threats of any kind from outside, the chief was responsible for his subjects and it was his duty to protect his people. This autonomous system worked very well in the primitive society.²⁸

The autonomous system changed after the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890. With this expedition, Mizoram came under the control of the British and there were changes in the administration system. Permanent posts were set up in Aizawl and Lunglei. The North Lushai Hills was under the Government of Assam while the South Lushai Hills was under the Government of Bengal. The district administration was put in the hands of Political Officers. Capt. H.R. Browne looked after the North Lushai

²⁶ Vijaya Kumar Tiwari, 'The Recruitment of the Gurkhas in the British Army, their Role in British Empire', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 2009-2010*, Vol – 70, p. 802. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 27 August 2021).

²⁷ Lalhmingliani Ralte, 'Administration of the Mizo chiefs in Pre-colonial Period', in Malsawmdawngliana & Rohmingmawii (ed.), *Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Guwahati, Scientific Book Centre, 2013, p. 54.

²⁸ J. Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)*, Aizawl, Synod Publication Board, 1991, p. 3.

Hills District and C.S. Murray looked after the South Lushai Hills District.²⁹ In April 1898, the South Lushai Hills was transferred to the Assam administration and the Lushai Hills District was formed.³⁰ The district was further divided into 18 administrative circles for administrative purpose.³¹ The Chiefs were reduced to a low position and had to recognise the British supremacy. The District administration was vested in the Superintendent, his assistants and the chief of villages.³² Major John Shakespear became the first Superintendent. In each of the administrative circles, a Circle Interpreter was put in charge, who acted as the eyes and ears of the Superintendent. All orders made by the Superintendent in connection with administration of the land were conveyed to the chiefs through the Circle Interpreters.³³ The British ruled over Mizoram for a long time. Lushai Hills was put under the Governor-in- Council according to Government of India Reform Acts, 1919.³⁴

India became independent on 1947 and the Lushai Hills administration had undergone drastic change to meet the desires and aspirations of the people to safeguard their own culture and traditions. At the time of India's independence, Mizoram was a district under Assam Government and one of the excluded areas. It was governed directly by the Governor of Assam through the Superintendent.³⁵ The first District Conference was held on 16th January 1946 under the chairmanship of the Superintendent.³⁶ It was also in this year that the first political party in Mizoram named Mizo Union was born.³⁷ After India's independence, the operation of State Legislature was then extended to Lushai Hills. A District Council with Executive and Legislative

²⁹ Lalnithanga, *Emergence*, p.26.

³⁰ *Mizoram District Gazetteers*, Aizawl, Art & Culture Department, 1989, p. 3.

³¹ Joseph K. Lalfakzuala, 'Land Settlement, Land Privileges and the People's Response in Mizoram' in Malsawmdawngliana & Rohmingmawii (ed.), *Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Guwahati, Scientific Book Centre, 2013, p. 158.

³² J. Zorema, 'Establishment of British Rule in Mizoram: Initiatives and Changes in Administration' in Malsawmdawngliana & Rohmingmawii (ed.), *Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Guwahati, Scientific Book Centre, 2013, p. 148.

³³ P. Lalnithanga, *Political Developments in Mizoram*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2006, p.3.

³⁴ R. Zamawia, *Zofate Zinkawngah Zalenna Mei a Mit Tur a ni lo*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2007, p. 55.

³⁵ Lalnithanga, *Political Developments*, pp. 2-3.

³⁶ Thanhranga, p. 70.

³⁷ Lalnithanga, p. 8.

powers for managing the internal affairs of the tribes, elected by universal adult franchise was set up in 1952. The name, Lushai Hills was changed in 1954. It became Lushai Hills District or Mizo District under an Act called the Lushai Hills District Act, 1954.³⁸

When the Lushai Hills District became one of the districts under the Assam Government, it was to have a District Advisory Council. The District was then administered by the District Council for a long time and political consciousness also started growing among the people of Lushai Hills. The political consciousness finally culminated in the Mizo National Front (MNF) movement of 1966, commonly known as *Rambuai*³⁹ and Mizoram was then declared 'disturbed area' by the Assam Government that lasted for 20 long years. *Rambuai* brought significant changes in the administration of Mizo District in that a separate Commissioner was posted at Silchar exclusively for Mizo and Cachar Districts.⁴⁰ Mizoram faced a dark period where terror, atrocities, bloodshed etc were the order of the day.

In 1972, in the midst of *Rambuai*, Mizoram was elevated to a Union Territory status. The elevation brought significant changes in the administration of Mizoram again. Mizoram was to have a separate Legislative Assembly and Ministry to govern with Lieutenant Governor as the head of administration. With this, the Mizo District Council ceased to exist and the three District Councils of Lai, Mara and Chakma came into existence. Furthermore, three districts were created in Mizoram, namely Aizawl, Lunglei and Chhimtuipui Districts.⁴¹

There were peace talks going on between the MNF and Government of India during these years. Finally on 30th June 1986, Mizoram Peace Accord was signed by the MNF leaders and the Government of India.⁴² Thus, Mizoram Union Territory became a full-fledged State in 1987.

³⁸ *Mizoram District*, pp. 1, 3-4.

³⁹ *Rambuai* is a term used by the Mizo to refer the 20 years of troubled period in Mizoram that began from 1966 – 1986.

⁴⁰ Lalnithanga, *Emergence*, p. 34.

⁴¹ Lalnithanga, p. 28.

⁴² Zoramthanga, *Mizo Hnam Movement History*, Aizawl, Dingdi Press, 2016, p. 196.

In all these historical epochs, the Gorkhas were present since the Chin-Lushai Hills Expedition. They had witnessed all the different historical stages of Mizoram by taking part as a citizen.

1.3. Background of the Gorkha history in Mizoram:

Lt. Col. Thomas Herbert Lewin writes in his book, *A Fly on the Wheel*,

“I had formed a high opinion of the little Ghurkhas, who, under Colonel Macpherson, had done the fighting of the expedition, and I obtained permission to send to Nepal and get emigrants from there to colonise my frontier wastes.”⁴³

The expedition he talked of was the Lushai-Expedition of 1871-72 in Mizoram where Gorkha soldiers displayed great bravery. The Lushai made repeated attacks down from the hills into the neighbouring plains and they were regarded by the colonial rulers as the fiercest and most barbarous of all the hill tribes. The attacks made by the Mizo had to do with the British’s infringement on the Mizo territory. The British planted tea on the Cachar and Sylhet borders, thereby encroaching the Mizo territories which were reserved for hunting grounds.⁴⁴ Gorkhas were first brought into contact with them when the British used Gorkha Regiment to launch retaliatory punitive raids. A particular attack on a tea garden in Cachar, resulting in the death of one British man and a little girl carried off as a captive, caused the massive Lushai Expedition of 1871-72 to be launched as a kind of final solution to put down the attacks. It involved two columns of soldiers – the Chittagong Column, including the 22nd, 42nd and 44th Assam Rifles, which were made up of Gorkhas, Punjabi and Sikhs.⁴⁵ In this expedition, the Gorkhas proved to be unmatched for their fellow soldiers. Woodthorpe writes, “...the active little Goorkhas of the 44th N.I were much more at home than their up-country brethren in arms...”⁴⁶

⁴³ Lewin, *A fly on the Wheel*, p. 299.

⁴⁴ C. Lalthlengliana, ‘Mizo raids and Counter Military Offensive’, in Malsawmdawngliana & Rohmingmawii (ed.), *Mizo Narratives; accounts from Mizoram*, Guwahati, Scientific Book Centre, 2013, p. 92.

⁴⁵ Perry, *Nepali around*, p. 204.

⁴⁶ Woodthorpe, *The Lushai Expedition*, p. 111.

At the conclusion of this expedition, frontier posts were established, and buffer villages were set up occupied by Gorkhas. Lewin writes, “The country where these villages were located had previously been uninhabited, through fear of the marauding Lushais, and my idea had been to establish there good stockade villages of courageous, stiff necked people like the Ghurkhas, who should serve as a buffer between the Mong Raja’s territory and the independent Lushai tribes to the east.”⁴⁷ From this writing, it is clear that Gorkha settlements were established on the borders of Mizoram and in 1873, Lewin himself had gone from Tlabung to visit them to see how the settlement was progressing. However, the British had no intention of staying permanently and thus the settlement did not leave permanent mark.

The official records of the Government clearly show that the Gorkha migrations and settlement in Mizoram began in 1891, after the permanent forts were constructed at Aizawl and Lunglei.⁴⁸ In the year 1889-90, another expedition, Chin – Lushai Expedition was carried out by which the British fully took over the control of Mizoram. With this, permanent forts were established in Aizawl and Lunglei, and the Gorkhas in large number were among the people who occupied the forts. The setting up of a proper governmental system in a hostile country needed man-power in many ways such as dak runners, chowkidars, masons, farmers etc for which the Gorkhas were most suitable. In such way, the Gorkhas migrated and settled in Mizoram out of the necessities of the British government. During the British period the Gorkha population in and around Aizawl town was in majority. Most of the village names were in Gorkhali, but after the formation of Mizoram as a Union Territory, these village names were gradually changed to Mizo names e.g., Survey tilla is now Dinthar, Gairi Gaon is now known as Tuikual ‘D’, Khakria is now Rangvamual, Pathar-khana is now Hunthar Veng, Shrimantilla is now Zotlang...⁴⁹. A number of Gorkha, with commendable services were awarded with big plots of land and few even became chiefs enjoying equal powers and privileges similar to the Mizo chiefs.

⁴⁷ Lewin, p. 299.

⁴⁸ K.L. Pradhan, ‘Settlement of Gorkhas’, in Sangkima (ed.), *Cross – Border Migration MIZORAM*, Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2004, p. 58.

⁴⁹ N.N. Kundu, ‘Gorkha’, in K.S. Singh (ed.), *People of India MIZORAM, Vol-XXXIII*, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 1995, p. 54.

As regards education, for the children of the retired personnel of the Gorkha Regiment and the Assam Rifles, Mission School was started around 1912 near the present Government Boys' School, Aizawl.⁵⁰ In this school, the Gorkha children could receive education in their own mother tongue though the department was called Hindi department. They were able to learn History, Geography, Hygiene and Scriptures in Nepali. Kirpa Lama was the first Gorkha teacher appointed. The School was closed during the war years. When it reopened in 1945, the Hindi department was separated from the Boys' School and a plot of land was allotted for the construction of a school building. Harisingh Pradhan was appointed as the first Headmaster. In 1945 itself, the first ever batch of candidates from the school appeared in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination.⁵¹ Thus, the foundation of Gorkha Schools in Mizoram was laid.

The Gorkhas continued to stay in their adopted land even after the British left. Gorkha *Mauzadar* (collector) was entrusted to look after the Gorkha community and to collect foreigners' taxes. The first *Mauzadar* was Jay Bahadur Sahi of Maubawk. However, the institution of *Mauzadar* was abolished along with the abolition of Mizo chieftainship in 1954. When the institution of Gorkha *Mauzadar* was abolished, a Gorkha Panchayat was established at Aizawl. Rules and regulations were laid down with the "intention to give right of control of their social customs with the Gorkha community as far as possible with the least interference by the Magistrate of the District".⁵² When Village Council institution was introduced in Mizoram in the year 1954, the Gorkhas were represented fairly and Bir Bahadur Limbu even became Village Council President. When Mizoram attained the status of Union Territory, Kapoor Chand Thakuri was nominated as representative of the minorities in the Legislative Assembly.

⁵⁰ Kishan Lal Pradhan, 'The Gorkhas of Mizoram', in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba (ed.), *The Nepalis in North East India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p. 299.

⁵¹ Nirmal K. Pun, 'Gorkha Schools, Khatla. A Chronicle', in Thanseia (ed.), *SIKULPUI Govt. Boys' Middle School Centenary 1907-2007 Souvenir*, Aizawl, the Sikulpui Centenary Celebration Organizing Committee, 2007, p. 184.

⁵² Pradhan, *Cross-Border Migration*, p. 63.

There has always been a cordial relation between the Mizo and the Gorkha communities which continued during the Mizo freedom movement of 1966. The relationship established in the due course of time became so strengthened that many Gorkhas jumped into the fray when Pu Laldenga, the MNF supremo called for war against the Indian Union in a bid to separate Mizoram in 1966.⁵³ They joined the force as drivers, river navigators, shooting instructors and explosive experts. When the MNF declared Quit Mizoram Order in 1982, Gorkhas who have been residing in Mizoram prior to 1966 were exempted.

From the later years of 1970s and in the 1980s, the Gorkhas began to feel discriminated in their adopted land. The reason might have been the large-scale migration of Gorkhas from outside. Since there were no critical criteria laid down to ascertain as to who is a permanent settler and who is a new entrant, the authorities found it safe to brand each and every Gorkha as foreigners.⁵⁴ The Gorkhas began to feel marginalized, insecure, rootless and unwanted. The Mizoram Gorkha Sangh requested the government to recognize the Gorkhas of Mizoram as one of the Mizo tribes which was declined. In 1984, the Sangh once again requested the *inclusion of the Gorkha Community in the Mizoram Official Handbook, Vol.II* (where the recognized Scheduled Tribes and Castes are listed). With this request in mind, the Gorkhas eagerly waited for the *Peace Accord*, believing that a new chapter in Mizoram will bring a new day for them. The 1987 election was a landslide victory for the MNF. However, their ray of hope ended when internal problems led to the dissolution of the MNF government after a short period of 18 months.

The Gorkhas have been residing in Mizoram for more than a century. From the beginning of their establishment in Mizoram, they tried their best to show they belong here. They are courageous people, willing to give their life in battle and in fact, to refer oneself as a 'Gorkha' is rooted in the reputation of 'bravery' that the community had earned. The Gorkhas have been pioneers in animal husbandry and wet rice cultivation in Mizoram. Wherever they establish themselves, they try to prove that they are worthy residents. They have been there in all stages of Mizoram history since 1889, taking

⁵³ Sunar et al., *The Gorkhas of Mizoram*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ Sunar et al., p. 22.

part and contributed in the making of history. In spite of all these, they are unheard in the history of Mizoram. It is indeed high time that a proper study of the Gorkha community in Mizoram is carried out.

1.4. Statement of the problem:

In Mizoram, the Gorkhas started to settle down from 1891 and immediately adapted to the climate, topography, flora and fauna. Since then, they have settled and distributed in different parts Mizoram. In spite of it, no detail study of the Gorkha society has ever been made.

The Gorkhas arrived in Mizoram along with the British. In fact, the Gorkha community have been the largest non – Mizo community that ever settled in Mizoram. Almost all Gorkha could speak Mizo language that bonds the two communities and act as a factor for the Gorkhas to have a feeling that they are a part and parcel of Mizoram. They have been present in Mizoram history since the beginning of their establishment. However, they remained an untouched subject.

The Gorkhas claim that since the beginning of their settlements, they have never become a burden to the Mizo society and that they have proved to be worthy. They also claim that they are pioneers in the field of wet-rice cultivation. In 1966 Mizo freedom movement, many Gorkhas, serving in the army as well as civilians supported the cause and even served prison sentences. Yet, the historiography of freedom movement hardly mentioned their contributions.

For majority of Mizoram Gorkhas, setting foot outside Mizoram mean alienation from a place they call their own. In fact, some of them have never been outside Mizoram. Most Mizo feel that they are foreigners while they regard themselves sons of the soil. Perhaps the Mizo community finds it difficult to embrace them due to the differences in religion. It is important to question how far this factor is responsible for their feeling of insecurity.

In writing Mizoram history, hardly any writer mentions the Gorkhas or the role they played. For a community who has been here for more than a century, it is rather surprising to know so little about them. It is crucial that the Gorkhas be studied,

researched and analysed in order to find out who they are. Thus, this study attempts to uncover the history of Gorkha community in Mizoram.

1.5. Review of Literature:

Writings on Mizoram history started from the colonial period, written by the colonial writers. Prior to this, Mizo had no written language and everything was handed down orally from generation to generation. Mizoram had witnessed different historical epochs since their first settlement though these narratives were only documented since the British period. The early works on Mizo and Mizoram history were done by the colonial administrators and the Christian missionaries, who had viewed the Mizo as 'primitive' and 'savage' as there were no western civilization traits to be seen in the Mizo traditional society.

In Mizoram, different people have been settling down for a number of years. Apart from Mizo, there are also non – Mizo who have been permanently settled. All these people have taken part in the historical events of Mizoram. However, writings on Mizoram history hardly present the non- Mizo and their role.

Writings on the history of Gorkha community in Mizoram are minimal. The first references are seen in the colonial writings, written by military personnel. The colonial writers did mention the Gorkhas in their writings. However, these writers talked of the military Gorkhas only. This can be understood because of the fact that the Gorkhas during this period were mostly soldiers though a number of *Coolies* were also present. In the colonial writings, Gorkhas are portrayed as 'model soldiers', who are defined by their 'bravery'. The British needed the Gorkhas to fight their wars. They had to create a mighty force which could intimidate their enemies that led to the portrayal of the Gorkhas as indomitable and fearless.

History of the Assam Rifles written by L.W. Shakespear clearly shows the role of Gorkha soldiers in the expeditions carried out against the hill tribes of North East India. This work is a detailed, chronological work on the history of Assam Rifles in the North East. The Assam Rifles was previously known as Military Police of Assam. The writer talks about the role played by the Assam Rifles of five battalions in

annexing the different tribes of North East India. Of these five battalions, three battalions were soon changed to 6th Goorkha Rifles, 2/8 Goorkha Rifles and 44th Goorkha Rifles. He also praises the Gorkha soldiers' abilities to adapt in the thick jungles of Mizoram. He says that the Gorkha soldiers were able to build a rough, but efficient bridge while the British sappers were calculating away. A. Mackenzie, in his book *The North-East Frontier of India* writes,

“The Darjeeling hills were known to be a very favourable ground for obtaining Napalese coolies, and Captain Hedayut Ali was deputed there to recruit and organize a corps of hill coolies, which he very successfully did, with Rs. 2 batta when on actual service”.

From this writing, we can conclude that apart from serving in the army as soldiers, the Gorkhas were also recruited as coolies in large number. So, it is clear that a number of Gorkha coolies also accompanied the British. The British writers are all praise for the Gorkha soldiers for their bravery and swiftness in the hostile country. R.G. Woodthorpe also writes in his book, *The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872*,

“Arrived at the halting place, all the troops went to work... In this work, the active little Goorkhas of the 44th N.I were much more at home than their up-country brethren in arms, ...springing into trees like monkeys, lopped off branches, collected bamboos of cantos, with a low raised bamboo floor as a sleeping place, before the others had made up their minds what to do”.

Among the British personnel, Thomas H. Lewin, author of *A Fly on the Wheel* is another writer who loves and praises the Gorkhas. He expresses his admiration towards the Gorkhas whom he addresses ‘*splendid little fellows*’ and ‘*stiff-necked*’ by saying “*It was a remarkable sight at the close of a march to see the speedy and dexterous manner in which the hill men and the Ghurkhas would, in the twinkling of an eye, convert a dusky forest glade into a comfortable village*”. It is clear from this writing that the Gorkhas were swift and handy in the thick, uninhabited forests just like the local hill men. According to Lewin, the first settlement of Gorkhas was set up in the border of Mizoram in 1871, to act as a buffer village between the hill and the plain people. He himself visited the settlement in 1873 to see the progress.

The colonial writers portrayed the Gorkha soldiers as fearless and skilful in the unexplored jungles of Mizoram. They presented them as exemplary soldiers. A.S. Reid writes that the Gorkhas, using their *Khukri*, possess a natural aptitude to any kind of cutting operation from the sharpening of pencil to the felling of a tree.

An expedition, Chin-Lushai Expedition (1889-1890) was carried out by which the British took over the control of Mizoram. Permanent posts were established in Aizawl and Lunglei, and large numbers of Gorkhas occupied these posts. K.L. Pradhan's *Settlement of Gorkhas in Cross-Border Migration MIZORAM*, edited by Sangkima is on the movements and settlements of Gorkhas. He says that the Gorkha movement in Mizoram started in the beginning of the 19th century and attributes the migration to a number of reasons such as shortage of food, lack of employment or urge for military adventure. In this context, A.C. Sinha and Cindy L. Perry give an opinion that the Gorkha migration in the North East India was due to *push* and *pull factors* in their book, *The Nepalese in North East India, A Community in search of Indian Identity* and *Nepali Around the World* respectively. As mentioned, the Gorkhas began to settle in Mizoram after the establishment of Aizawl and Lunglei posts. Gokul Sinha writes in his book *The Role of Gorkhas in the making of Modern India*, "*The government needed man-power – traders, masons, dak-runners, chowkidars, farmers and others – for which they turned to the Gorkhas, fearing that the natives were not yet fully docile*".

Lalhruaitluanga Ralte mentions the Gorkha soldiers in his book, *Thangliana*. He writes that the Gorkha soldiers accompanied the British in the expedition years. He also highlights the bravery of the Gorkha soldiers.

In the *Gorkhas of Mizoram, Vol –I*, the authors – Pradip Sunar, Jeevan Kawar and I.K. Subha make an attempt to make known the Gorkha identity and place in Mizoram. They write that due to their adaptability in any kind of situation, climate and topography, the Gorkhas felt right at home here from the beginning. The Mizo community embraced them and established good rapport. The authors go on saying the good relationship between the two communities have been so good that many Gorkhas joined in the Mizo National movement and fought for the cause along with

their Mizo brothers. Kishan Lal Pradhan also writes about how the Gorkhas proved to be worthy residents by stating the Gorkha contributions in various fields. He writes, “*They were regarded as the pioneers in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry. They also contributed a lot to constructions, town developments, education etc.*”

In regard to Gorkha society and economy, an important work is N.N. Kundu’s *Gorkha in People of India MIZORAM, Vol-XXXIII*, edited by K.S. Singh. Kundu writes a brief account of the Gorkha community in Mizoram, on their caste system, marriage and death rituals, food habits, associations, religion and economy. The Gorkhas practiced caste system in the earlier years of their establishment, mostly among the first generation Gorkhas. Chhuanliana, in his book, *Chawhchawrawi, rawi lehzual*, writes a bit of information on this aspect saying how the Mizo young boys used to taunt the Gorkha women who regarded the Mizo as impure. T. Sena writes a page about the Gorkhas of Mizoram in his book, *Bengkhuaia Sal atangin Zalenna Ramah*. He writes that the Gorkhas are the first non – Mizo who settled permanently in Mizoram. He also highlights the different castes of the Gorkhas.

In regards to education, Nirmal K. Pun writes in *Gorkha School, Khatla A Chronicle in SIKULPUI Centenary Souvenir*, edited by Thanseia, how Mission school was started by the missionaries to provide education for the children, and in this school, Gorkha children could receive education in their own mother tongue. Pradhan also writes about the Gorkha school saying that the Gorkha School started in 1945 and till now, 13 Gorkha schools have been opened.

In 1966, Mizoram entered into the darkest period of her history. The Mizo National Front (MNF) started asserting the independence of Mizoram popularly termed as *Rambuai*. Mizoram was declared a ‘disturbed area’ by the Government. In this movement, the Gorkhas also took part as majority of them supported the cause of the MNF. Several references of the Gorkhas are seen in the MNF narratives though their actual stories are never probed into. Narratives written by MNF activists such as Col. Lalrawnlina’s book *Zoram in Zalenna a Sual Vol I -X*, C. Zama’s *Chengrang a Au Ve*, V.L. Ringa Sailo’s *Chengrang Chawilai Ni Te*, C. Zama’s *Zampuimanga*

Battalion, C. Zama's V Battalion Sulhnu made passing references to the Gorkhas who were involved among the Mizo National Army (MNA) underground.

1.6. Area of Study:

The thesis covered from 19th – 20th Centuries Mizoram. From the establishment of Gorkha settlement in Mizoram border to the attainment of Mizoram statehood in 1987. The study focussed on the social history of the Gorkhas of Mizoram.

The study is based mainly on northern Mizoram, concentrating in Aizawl District and Kolasib District.

1.7. Research Questions:

1. What made the Gorkha migrate to Mizoram and what are the factors that compelled them to settle in Mizoram?
2. What is the socio – cultural practices of the Gorkhas, and what are the roles of their social institutions in keeping the Gorkhas together as a separate entity from the Mizo community?
3. How far the Gorkhas are given formal education in Mizoram? What is the role played by the Christian Mission in the education of the Gorkhas?
4. The role of Gorkhas in the Mizo freedom movement.

1.8. Methodology:

It has been mentioned that literatures on the Gorkhas of Mizoram are minimal. As a result, much of the study has been based on Oral history. Oral history gathered through unstructured personal interviews and archival materials constitute the primary sources.

Documents recovered from the Archives consisted of writings of the colonial period, mostly dealing with the early Gorkha settlers – soldiers and those engaged in different occupational works.

It has been discussed that the Gorkhas are untouched subject in Mizoram history. No comprehensive work has ever been done on them. Consequently, there are

hardly literatures on the Gorkhas. Therefore, in order to reconstruct their history, memories had to be collected from different people. In the words of John Tosh,

“All societies draw on memories that extend further back than the lifetimes of its present-day members. The more remote past is not confined to history books and archives; it is present also in popular consciousness, fed by a variety of commemorative activities and recorded in a variety of media”.⁵⁵

In order to reconstruct the Gorkha history, personal interviews had been carried out. The interviewees belong to second and third generation Gorkha, from different age groups. These Gorkhas are descendants of the Gorkhas, who arrived in Mizoram with the British or who arrived a little later. Each of them is permanent settlers in Mizoram. They are from different professions such as – some are retired government servants, shopkeepers, government servants, religious leaders, homemakers etc. Interviews had also been carried out with Gorkhas who were directly involved in the Mizo National Army. Apart from 23 Gorkhas, 10 Mizo were interviewed who have a great deal of knowledge about the Gorkhas.

The Gorkhas migrated out of Nepal in large number as the British recruited them for their army. They sought employment as their life in Nepal was hard. Recruitment in the army gave them financial stability. The later Gorkhas who arrived in Mizoram were also in search of work who believed that Mizoram would give them better livelihood. As such, the history of Gorkha migration in Mizoram is studied on the basis of push and pull theory of migration.

Secondary sources such as books, articles, and journals, published and unpublished works are also used to substantiate the analysis. Photographs are also used to portray the Gorkhas in Mizoram history.

The study reconstructs and interpret history of the Gorkhas in Mizoram by using descriptive analysis, and social history approaches focussing on the Gorkha

⁵⁵ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 255.

society, their migration, their social practices and how they played a part in the history of Mizoram.

1.9. Chapterization:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the Gorkhas and how they came to be recruited in the British Indian Army. It also highlights a brief history of Mizoram including the political history and the important events. It also deals with a brief history of the Gorkhas of Mizoram. Statement of the problem, Review of literature, area of study, objectives, research questions, methodologies and chapterization are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Migration and Settlement

This second chapter discusses the recruitment of Gorkhas in the British Indian Army, their movement in the North East India, the British contacts with the Mizo – the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 and the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890. It deals with the Gorkha migration and settlement in Mizoram, and their distribution. It also gives a brief account on the *Mauzadar* and its role.

Chapter 3: Socio – Cultural Practices and Institutions

This chapter examines the Gorkhas' socio-cultural practices such as their marriage system, religious practices, death and funerary practices and the caste system. The chapter tries to show the social changes that has taken place among the Gorkhas over the years. It also deals with the reason for their stability and their professions during the colonial period.

The chapter also studies the different social institutions of the Gorkhas in Mizoram, which set them apart from their counterparts in other places.

Chapter 4: Education in Mizoram and the Gorkhas

The fourth chapter discusses the beginning of formal education in Mizoram under the British rule. It traces the beginning of education under the Mission and also

gives a brief history of the Mission School, experimental schools, girls' education and education in South Mizoram.

The Chapter tries to show how the Gorkhas were included in every step. Gorkha education was never neglected since the British time. The Chapter also shows the establishment of Gorkha Schools in Mizoram.

Chapter 5: Gorkhas and *Rambuai*

The Gorkhas played a fair part in Mizo freedom movement. However, their stories have remained untouched. This chapter brings out the voices of the Gorkhas during the *Rambuai* years through eyewitnesses' interviews. The chapter shows the plight, the sufferings, the fears and the reactions of the Gorkhas during *Rambuai*.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The last chapter summarizes the whole thesis and a comprehensive conclusion is drawn.

Chapter 2: Migration and Settlement

2.1. Introduction:

Migration is a part of human experience from the remote past to the present and on into the future.⁵⁶ Even in the stone age, hunters and gatherers and fishers seemed to live in high mobile bands.⁵⁷ Since then, human migration has been taking place all over the world. It can be temporary or long – term, voluntary or forced, crossing the political and geographical boundaries for a certain period or permanently.⁵⁸ Alan Simmons defines migration as “a change in residence, a shift in employment and a shift in social relations.”⁵⁹ The instinct to migrate is present in human nature as there has always been the need to search for food, greener pastures and resources, apart from the desire to explore, conquer and possess.⁶⁰

Ernest Ravenstein is regarded as the pioneer in migration theory, who assumed that migration is closely associated with push-pull factors. He had devised a theory that both push factors such as low wages, unemployment, lack of healthcare and pull factors such as high wages, employment, and better healthcare necessitated people to leave their home.⁶¹ This model explains migration as driven by push factors from the country of origin and pull factors operating from the country of destination.⁶²

Nepal has seen a large-scale migration after the Anglo-Nepal war. Prior to this, there had been only a few instances of migration among the people, mostly among the Newars, who were traders and shopkeepers.⁶³ This chapter looks at the migration to India that started specifically from the recruitment of Gorkhas to the British army from

⁵⁶ Russell King, ‘Theories and Typologies of Migration: An Overview and a Primer’, in Erica Righard (ed.), *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations*, Malmo, Malmo Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare, 2012, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Ember & Ember, *What is Anthropology?*, Delhi, Pearson, 1997, p. 91.

⁵⁸ Barbara Luthi, *Migration and Migration History*, Zentrum fur Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam, p. 1. Available from: <http://docupedia.de/zg/luthi-migration>, (accessed 4 April 2020).

⁵⁹ Quoted in Victor Piche, *Contemporary Migration Theories as Reflected in their Founding Texts*, Population, Vol - 68, No. 1, p. 142. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 13 March 2017).

⁶⁰ King, *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers*, p. 4.

⁶¹ Luthi, *Migration*, p. 12.

⁶² King, p. 13.

⁶³ David L. Gellner, ‘Introduction’ in David L. Gellner & Sondra L. Hausner (ed.), *Global Nepalis – Religion, Culture, and Community in a New and Old Diaspora*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 5.

the push – pull factors. The migration was elevated by the peace treaty of Sugauli signed after the Anglo-Nepal war, which enabled the British to recruit Gorkhas for their army. The recruitment gave the Gorkhas a better livelihood and a sure employment. They realized that serving in the army gave them better opportunities to settle down more comfortably even after retirement, rather than go back to Nepal where they would face hardship. As the number of soldiers increased, the Gorkha settlement increased as well, as these soldiers were soon accompanied by their family. These settlements further attracted others to migrate out of Nepal searching for better economic condition.⁶⁴

Everett Lee's version of this model also incorporated intervening obstacles such as cost of making the journey, cultural barriers, immigration restrictions etc. and personal factors as people will react differently to push and pull factors, according to their economic status and personality.⁶⁵ Lee believes that the decision to migrate is the net result of all the factors and that not all persons who migrate do so on their own decision, such as the wives and the children.⁶⁶

2.2. Recruitment of the Gorkhas:

Before the recruitment of Gorkhas, there had been only a handful of people migrating out of Nepal. The 14th Century saw the first migration from Nepal when trade and commerce were predominantly depended on Nepal Valley- Tibet relationship, where a significant community of Newar traders was established in Lhasa and other outlying areas.⁶⁷ The next large-scale migration came after the Treaty of Sugauli in 1815 when a large number of Gorkhas were recruited in the British Indian Army. Cindy L Perry writes,

“The signing of the Treaty of Sugauli opened up one of the most significant avenues of labour migration Nepal has ever experienced: the recruitment of Nepali

⁶⁴ Hom Nath Gartaula, 'International Migration and Local Development in Nepal', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol-36, No. 1, 2009, p. 45. Available from: himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk, (accessed 10 April 2020).

⁶⁵ King, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Rashid Faridi, 'Migration Theories: Lee's Push Pull Theory'. (Web blog)

⁶⁷ Perry, p. 17.

into the British Indian army. Migration, which had been led by military conquest, was then led onward by the recruitment of Gorkhas into a foreign-army, a form of labour-export".⁶⁸ This kind of migration and settlement have occurred mainly through official sponsorship of the British.⁶⁹ After the recruitment of Gorkhas in the British army, the Lahore Culture soon developed. Able bodied Gorkha migrated to Lahore (present day Pakistan) to join the army who became termed as '*Lahure*'.⁷⁰

The Lahore Culture simply means 'to go to Lahore to get recruited'. It soon became prestigious for a Gorkha to become a *Lahure* (person of Lahore). In fact, a *Lahure* occupied a high social status in the community.⁷¹ Being a *Lahure* provided an escape from poverty, sure employment and opportunity to see other places and they were considered to be the lucky ones, characterized by bravery.⁷² Thus, it can be said that the earliest group of Gorkha migrants migrated due to the need to search for better economic opportunity driven by their poverty in their country of origin.

The other migrants began to migrate out of Nepal in the later part of the 19th century. They followed the 'beaten paths' laid down by the Gorkha soldiers recruited by the British to defend the Eastern frontier and the skilled and unskilled labourers who came to work in plantations, coalmines and oil fields and in the field of dairy farming.⁷³ The early migrants were soon followed by their families and others who followed in search of better livelihood and thus, settlements emerged.

2.3. Movement in the North East:

The arrival of Gorkhas in large scale began with the annexation of the North East by the British. They came primarily in search of a living as soldiers, porters,

⁶⁸ Perry, p. 17.

⁶⁹ Lusome Raman, *International Migration and Ethnicity : The case of Nepalis in Northeast India*, Journal of North East India Studies, Vol – 4(2), 2014, p. 92. Available from: <http://www.jneis.com>, (accessed 25 June, 2018).

⁷⁰ Gartaula, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, p. 44.

⁷¹ Shibaji Gurung, 'British Gorkha Recruitment and Higher Education of Gurung Young Men', *Dhauagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol-5, 2012, p. 144. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj>, (accessed 28 May 2019).

⁷² Weena Pun, 'Lahure Laments', *Himal Southasian*, 23 May 2016. Available from: www.himalmag.com, (accessed 28 May 2019).

⁷³ Lopita Nath, 'Migration, Insecurity and Identity: The Nepali Dairymen in India's Northeast', *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol – 7, No. 2, 2006, p. 130. Available from: Taylor & Francis, (accessed 20 March 2018).

herdsmen and marginal farmers. The establishment and consolidation of British rule facilitated such migration to the region, which was primarily from Nepal and to some extent from Darjeeling and Sikkim.⁷⁴ After the Anglo-Gorkha war, the British started recruiting Gorkhas for soldiers in large number. They were able-bodied, quick, brave and loyal. Being used to mountainous and hilly-rugged terrain, they were swifter than the Indian native soldiers. The British were greatly impressed by their fighting ability and started recruiting them to serve in the army. Lieutenant Colonel A.S. Reid writes,

“I allude to the Gurkhas who constitute a most important element in the Native Army of India, but more on account of their general excellent military qualities and special unrivalled aptitude for hill fighting than on that of their numbers, the present strength amounting to only thirteen battalions and between eleven and twelve thousand rank and file. This small force is, I venture to say, allowed to be among the cream of the Bengal Infantry and unsurpassed for mountain and jungle warfare, as the East India Company found to its cost in the campaign of 1814-15, a struggle which, it is said, was brought to a conclusion favourable to the British interests...”⁷⁵

Thus, The British’s interest in the North East India led to the arrival and further settlement of the Gorkhas in the region.

The first direct contact between the Nepalis and this region appears to have occurred in 1817, where a number of Gorkhas (Cuttack Legion) took part in the Sylhet Operation.⁷⁶ Apart from recruiting them in the army, the Gorkhas were also recruited for porters in large number as movement in the unexplored region meant to carry huge supplies for the soldiers. The Darjeeling Hills were known to be a very favourable ground for obtaining Nepalese coolies, and Captain Hedayut Ali was deputed there to recruit and organize a corps of hill coolies, which he very successfully did...⁷⁷ So,

⁷⁴ Tejimala Gurung, ‘Human Movement and the Colonial State: The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire’ in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba (eds.), *The Nepalis in Northeast India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p. 173.

⁷⁵ Reid, *Chin-Lushai*, pp. 71-72.

⁷⁶ A.C. Sinha, ‘Indian Northeast Frontier and Nepali Immigrant’ in A.C.Sinha and T.B.Subba (eds.), *The Nepalis in Northeast India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p. 42.

⁷⁷ A. Mackenzie, *The North – East Frontier of India*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1995, pp. 312-313.

the soldiers and the porters were the first Gorkhas who set foot in the region. The Cuttack Legion came to be known as the “Assam Light Infantry” after its permanent location in Assam and consisted mainly of Hindustanis and Gorkhas. These Nepali sepoy continued to constitute a floating population following their respective customs, usages and traditions.⁷⁸

The British encouraged the Gorkhas to settle down in the region. In the case of Assam, after the British occupation of Assam, under the patronage of the colonial government, large number of Nepalese migrated to this region in search of life as *Gopalak* and soldiers.⁷⁹ The British recognized early that the Nepalese, as hardy hill cultivators, could constitute an ideal group with which to penetrate and form strategic buffers in the northeast and, even more than this, actually demographically change the composition of the local populations in some northeast hill areas.⁸⁰ The Nepali ex-soldiers were encouraged to settle down in the foothills, forest fringes and in other strategic points on the frontiers. In this way, certain compact pockets of Nepali settlements in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur emerged.⁸¹

Likewise, in Mizoram, the soldiers and the porters settled first and acted as a buffer between the British administrators and the Mizo people. These retired Gorkhas, with their hard work, perseverance and investment of their pensions in agriculture, they have been able to turn out their newly acquired settlements as thriving centers of prosperous peasantry.⁸² In Manipur, cattle farming was extensively carried out by the Nepalis. Many Gorkha soldiers after retirement took to cattle farming which was a profitable and economically viable profession.⁸³

As the British employed the Gorkhas in large number, they played the key-role in the penetration of the North East Hills. Even after retirement, they did not go back

⁷⁸ Monimala Devi, ‘Economic History of Nepali Migration and Settlement in Assam’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol-42, No. 29, 2007, p. 3005. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 20 March 2018).

⁷⁹ Sanjib Kumar Chetry, ‘Nepalis in Assam: A Historical Perspective (1816-1985)’, *Research Journal of Language, Literature and Humanities*, Vol-3(3), 2016, p. 23. Available from: www.isca.in (accessed 7 July 2017).

⁸⁰ Srikant Dutt, ‘Migration and Development: The Nepalese in Northeast’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol-16, No. 24, 1981, p. 1054. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 20 March 2018).

⁸¹ Sinha, *The Nepalis in Northeast India*, p. 45.

⁸² Sinha, p. 45.

⁸³ Gurung, *The Nepalis in Northeast India*, p. 179.

to Nepal and continued to settle in the area. The reason might have been that as they were extremely loyal to the British, the British administrators held them in high regard. The settlement of the ex-servicemen opened the way for more Gorkhas to migrate in the Hills. Herdsmen, cultivators, lumbermen and others began to migrate. The type of work in which the Nepalis are engaged were relatively new to the region...they rarely came into conflict with the local community because of their inexpensive skill locally required by almost everybody.⁸⁴

The Gorkha settlements in different parts of the hill region were facilitated by the needs of the British administrators and the settlement emerged out of the requirement to check the hill tribes and keep them under control. The Gorkhas, thus, mostly found employment in the days of the Company in the local light infantry battalions and the armed police militia.⁸⁵ The British took special care about the welfare of the Gurkha troops whom they valued most and upon whom they depended most to act as a counter poise.⁸⁶

The British also adopted a policy of giving settlement to Gorkha soldiers after their retirement in order to recruit their children in the army.⁸⁷ In this way, they would not have to go to Nepal in order to search for young men to be recruited in the army. Apart from the soldiers and porters, moving in was without difficulty due to the fact that they were highly favoured by the hill administrators. In such way, the Gorkhas began to spread all over the North East. With their hard work, perseverance and investments of their pensions in agriculture, the Gorkhas have been able to turn their newly settlements into a thriving centre.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ A.C. Sinha, 'The Indians of Nepali Origin and Security of Northeast India' in A.C.Sinha and T.B. Subba (eds.), *The Nepalis in Northeast India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p. 369.

⁸⁵ Imdad Hussein, 'Soldiers and Settlers: The Recruitment of Gorkhas' in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba (eds.), *The Nepalis in Northeast India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p. 76.

⁸⁶ Sanjay Rana, *The Gurkhas – Settlement and Society*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication, 2008, p. 39.

⁸⁷ K.K. Muktan, 'Gorkhas' Contribution to External and Internal Security of India' in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba (eds.), *The Nepalis in Northeast India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p. 128.

⁸⁸ Sinha, p. 45.

The British used the Gorkhas to pacify the ‘ever-troubled’ Northeast region, inhabited by different tribes. It is believed that in this frontier, the Gorkhas played a crucial role in the task of unification, consolidation and reconstruction of what is known today as the northeast region. Flanked by Burma and Tibet on the Northeastern boundaries and inhabited by numerous heterogeneous hill tribes...the northeast region was constantly embroiled in internecine feuds and trans-frontier forays.⁸⁹ It was also the British policy to try and take care of its demobbed soldiers who had given years of loyal service. This often took the form of ex-servicemen re-settlement colonies which could serve a dual purpose: to reward ex-soldiers and to play a strategic role...Active British encouragement to Nepalese settlement in the northeast was not always confined to ex-soldiers but also included many other Nepalese peasants.⁹⁰

The expansion of British rule in the North East required strong labourers and the Gorkha were perfect to work in newly cleared forests, roads, construction sites, mines, fields, plantations etc. and the expanding economy accelerated the Gorkha migration in the North East.⁹¹ They arrived to take up cattle-breeding, dairy farming, sugar-cane cultivation and many also found jobs in government offices as peons, guards, chowkidars etc.⁹²

2.4. British contact with Mizoram:

The early contacts between the British and the Mizo (previously Lushais) were on hostile ground. A.S.Reid writes,

“It had been discovered in 1855 that the tea plant was indigenous to Cachar, and soon after gardens, for the cultivation and production of this important article of commerce, began to be opened out in the southern part of the district, with rather a

⁸⁹ Sinha, p. 45.

⁹⁰ Dutt, *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 1053-1054.

⁹¹ Devi, *Economic and Political Weekly*, p. 3006,

⁹² Quoted in Abhijit Dihidar, ‘The Nepalis in Assam: Migration, Identity and Political Mobilization’, *International Research Journal of Interdisciplinary & Multidisciplinary Studies*, Vol- III, Issue – V, (June 2017), p. 110. Available from: <https://www.irjims.com>, (accessed 28 July 2019).

disquieting effect upon the neighbouring tribes, who fancied they saw possible encroachments upon their hereditary hunting grounds”.⁹³

The British had expanded their economic interest in Cachar and Sylhet plains by planting teas in huge areas. The Mizo started attacking these tea-gardens as the tea-plantations intruded their territories, which served as their hunting grounds. On the other hand, the British felt that these areas were within their jurisdiction. Colonel Lister recorded that the inhabitants of the plains to the south were in constant alarm and dread of the tribes...they used to come down and attack the villages in the plains, massacre the inhabitants, take their heads, loot and burn their houses.⁹⁴ These attacks becoming of frequent occurrence necessitated the Sylhet Light Infantry being called on to place detachments at two points in the Hailakandi area for protective purposes. The first expedition across this border on a small scale was made by Captain Blackwood, with parties of the Sylhet Light Infantry and the armed Civil Police at the end of 1844.⁹⁵

In this expedition, a Mizo chief, Lalsuthlaha was captured, was tried and transported for life.⁹⁶ This marked the first punishment given to a Mizo chief by the British.⁹⁷ After the Blackwood expedition, the attacks still continued. A particular attack in 1849 resulted to another expedition and the command entrusted to Colonel Frederick Lister, Political Agent in the Khasi Hills, and Commandant of the Sylhet Light Infantry.⁹⁸ From the year of Lister’s expedition, the frontiers of Sylhet-Cachar were for some years free from disturbances.⁹⁹

However, the Mizo resorted to their old ways again which led to another expedition in 1869. Two columns were formed, one under General Nuthall with a force consisting of the Sylhet Light Infantry, 7th Native Infantry and Cachar Frontier Police. Another column under Major Stevenson with detachments of Frontier Police and the

⁹³ Reid, p. 8.

⁹⁴ Mackenzie, *North-East Frontier*, p. 287.

⁹⁵ Shakespear, *Assam Rifles*, p. 21.

⁹⁶ E.B. Elly, *Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country*, Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Limited, 1978, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Lalhrualtuanga Ralte, *Zoram Vartian*, Aizawl, Fine Prints, 2009, p. 19.

⁹⁸ Woodthorpe, p. 12-13.

⁹⁹ Elly, *Military Report*, p. 3.

7th Native Infantry advanced up the Sonai valley.¹⁰⁰ However, these expeditions were a failure due to bad weather condition and a strong counter from the Mizo. It was then arranged by the British that Mr. Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar District, accompanied by a small force and Major Macdonald would survey Mizoram for defining the southern boundary of Cachar.¹⁰¹ An understanding was reached between some Mizo chiefs and Mr. Edgar regarding the boundaries which was signed by Suakpuilala, a Mizo chief and the British official. After the agreement was signed, Suakpuilala asked for protection against the other Lushai chiefs. However, the British government could not comply with the request as they felt that the chiefs are not the subjects of the British. Angered by the government's reply, Suakpuilala and his allies attacked the Cachar frontiers.¹⁰²

2.4.1. The Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872.

While Mr. Edgar was staying in Mizoram, he received words of intended attacks on Cachar and he immediately sent a messenger to give warning, but, shortly afterwards, he heard that attacks had actually been made in various parts of the district, about the middle of January, 1871.¹⁰³ The attacks were carried out in different places such as Alexandrapur, Anierkhal, Monierkhal and Nudigram. In Alexandrapur, a certain James Winchester was shot down by the attackers and his five-year-old daughter, Mary Winchester was taken captive. Other attacks were also carried out through February to March by the Mizo. These attacks had a far reaching impact on Mizoram and resulted in the first Lushai Expedition by which the British felt the need to carry out an extensive armed expedition in order to prevent the recurrence of the outrages.¹⁰⁴ It was the desire of the Supreme Government to show the Mizo that they are under the British power, to establish permanent friendly relations, to persuade them to receive agents, to make traveling in Mizoram safe, to demonstrate the advantages

¹⁰⁰ Shakespear, p. 59.

¹⁰¹ H.K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes of North East Frontier, Vol-II*, Shillong, North Eastern Hill University, 1998, p. 142.

¹⁰² Lalthlengliana, *Mizo Narratives*, p. 94.

¹⁰³ Woodthorpe, p. 31.

¹⁰⁴ Mackenzie, p. 310.

of trade and commerce, and to prove that they have everything to lose by acting against the British government.¹⁰⁵

It was in such spirit that the expedition of 1871 set out in two columns, one from Chittagong and one from Cachar, the former under the command of General Brownlow, the latter under General Bouchier.¹⁰⁶ The strength of each column of the Expedition was fixed by the Commander-in-Chief at half a battery of Mountain Artillery (with rockets), one company of Sappers and Miners and three regiments of Native Infantry.¹⁰⁷ The left or Cachar Column consisted of 22nd Punjab Native Infantry-500 rank and file; 42nd Assam Native Infantry-500 rank and file; 44th Sylhet Native Infantry-500 rank and file; half Peshawar Mountain Battery, No. 1 Company, Sappers and Miners. The right or Chittagong Column consisted of 27th Punjab Native Infantry-500 rank and file; 2nd Gurkhas-500 rank and file; 4th Gurkhas-500 rank and file; half Peshawar Mountain Battery, No. 3 Company, Sappers and Miners.¹⁰⁸ The mobilization needed large number of coolies. The coolies were of all races, consisting of Punjabis, Mikirs, Cacharis, Hindusthanis, Kukis, Nagas and Nepalese Gurkhas.¹⁰⁹

In this expedition, the Gorkhas proved to be handy and swift in the thick, unexplored jungles. Shakespear mentions that a bridge was needed to build at a certain place. While the Sapper was busy working out a plan, the Gorkhas of 42nd Assam Light Infantry cut down bamboos and trees, thereby completing a rough but efficient bridge. Henceforth, matters of this nature were left to the Gorkhas.¹¹⁰ From preliminary scouting work, to building timber slides over many rocky falls, the Gorkhas were the ones who did the hard work.¹¹¹

The objective of the column operating from Chittagong under General Brownlow was to avenge the murder of Winchester and to effect recovery of the kidnapped daughter.¹¹² In this expedition, T.H. Lewin, the Superintendent of Hill

¹⁰⁵ Reid, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰⁶ A.G. McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, New Delhi, Tribal Research Institute, 2003, p. 48.

¹⁰⁷ Reid, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ Elly, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ P.R. Kyndiah, *Mizo Freedom Fighters*, New Delhi, Sanchar Publishing House, 1994, p. 47.

¹¹⁰ Shakespear, p. 69.

¹¹¹ Kyndiah, *Mizo Freedom*, p. 73.

¹¹² McCall, *Chrysalis*, p. 49.

Tribes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts played a vital part in rescuing Mary Winchester. Lewin had been in Chittagong for quite a long time, had established good rapport with the Mizo chiefs and they trusted him. He acted as Political Officer in subordination to the General commanding the Southern Column, while the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar was to accompany the Northern Column in a similar capacity.¹¹³ Lewin, on seeing the 2nd Gorkha Regiment remarked the Gorkha soldiers as ‘splendid little fellows’,¹¹⁴ and was greatly impressed with their work in the expedition. Lewin was able to conclude an agreement with the Mizo chiefs purely due to his patience and wisdom. After the agreement, Major McDonald and a number of Gorkha soldiers went to Sailam to recover Mary Winchester.¹¹⁵

The Expedition of 1871-72 was fairly successful for the British. The question of the policy to be followed in future with the Mizo chiefs, the Bengal Government contented itself on the close of the expedition with placing a line of strongly-manned posts along the whole southern frontier of Cachar and Sylhet.¹¹⁶ These frontier posts were set up to maintain peace in the hills. The main Frontier Police post was now moved forward to Demagiri¹¹⁷ where under the instruction of Tom Lewin, forests were cleared to set up a proper village. In this regard, Lewin himself writes,

“The country where these villages were located had previously been uninhabited, through fear of the marauding Lushais, and my idea had been to establish there good stockade villages of courageous, stiff-necked people like the Ghurkhas, who should serve as a buffer between the Mong Raja’s territory and the independent Lushai tribes to the east”.¹¹⁸

Lewin was of the opinion that the Gorkhas would be best for pacification of the hill tribes. The bravery shown by the Gorkha soldiers in the expedition left its mark

¹¹³ Lewin, p. 258.

¹¹⁴ Lewin, p. 263.

¹¹⁵ Ralte, *Thangliana*, p. 165.

¹¹⁶ Mackenzie, p. 817.

¹¹⁷ Shakespear, p. 76.

¹¹⁸ Lewin, p. 299.

on him so much that he even obtained permission for Gorkha soldiers to occupy the buffer villages.¹¹⁹ He writes,

“I had formed a high opinion of the little Ghurkhas, who, under Colonel MacPherson, had done the fighting of the expedition, and I obtained permission to send to Nepal and get emigrants from there to colonise my frontier wastes. These Ghurkha colonies were established on the Myani river, a northern affluent of the Karna-Phuli, and early in 1873, I set out from Demagree to visit them, and see how the settlement was progressing”.¹²⁰

It is thus clear that the first ever migration and settlement of the Gorkhas in Mizoram in and around the border of Mizoram was in 1872, right after the expedition was concluded, where the need for buffer villages emerged. Lewin wanted to make Tlabung to be a progressive town. He himself resided in Sirte Tlang, the hill range above Tlabung, which was an outpost. It can also be concluded that since Sirte Tlang was an outpost, soldiers would have resided there making it a settlement.¹²¹

2.4.2. Chin- Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890:

The Mizo stayed relatively quiet and peaceful after the Expedition of 1871-72 for about a decade. From 1882, they started attacking the neighbouring areas again. One particular incident that shook the British government was the murder of Stewart. In 1888, it was thought that the Mizo had quietly settled down and three British officers, Lieutenants Stewart, Baird and Shakespear were deputed to survey the frontier on the south,¹²² they were making a reconnaissance to the south-east of Rangamati, with a view to a new road being opened up, and this part of the frontier, admittedly the weakest, strengthened by the establishment of additional posts.¹²³ The first party, consisting of Stewart, 1st Battalion, Leinster Regiment with 10 men of

¹¹⁹ Ralte, p. 186.

¹²⁰ Lewin, p. 299.

¹²¹ H.B. Thapa, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Bungkawn, Aizawl.

¹²² *Gazeteer*, p. 41.

¹²³ Reid, p. 39.

Chittagong Frontier Police went to work within the British territory, were attacked.¹²⁴ Of these, Lieutenant Stewart, other two Europeans, and one sepoy were killed.¹²⁵

These renewed onslaughts compelled the distant Government to admit that it was no longer possible to continue a policy of appeasement towards a people whose basic standards and values of approach to mutual problems differed so greatly from their own. The frontiers were strengthened pending the organization of a further expedition into South Lushai Hills. Colonel Tregear left Chittagong in command of his force in December, 1888, to avenge the act.¹²⁶ Demagiri was selected as the base centre for action. A column known as Lushai Expeditionary Force commenced to penetrate Mizo country in January 1889. It is worth mentioning that this expedition was prepared in a very thorough manner, as huge a scale as the invasion of 1871-72.¹²⁷ The British decided to put an end to the disturbances once and for all. The Council at Simla now definitely decided on military action, and a column under command of General Tregear was ordered into the south Lushai Hills and began to rendezvous at Rangamati.¹²⁸ Tregear's force included 400 Gorkha soldiers, 450 Bengal Infantry, 200 Madras Pioneers, Sappers and Miners, Signallers, Coolie Corps and elephants.¹²⁹ The main aim of this force was to build a permanent post at a suitable place and to build road to the Chin Hills. Tregear fortified and garrisoned Lunglei with Military Police and an outpost was established at Darzo, named Fort Tregear, further east of Lunglei.¹³⁰

The Chin-Lushai Expedition was an extensive one. The British decided to put the whole Mizoram under their control. It involved two columns coming from the North and the South. Tregear was in command of the column operating from Chittagong which had a total strength of 53 British Officers and 3249 of native rank and file. From the North, Daly advanced with a force 247 Military police and joined hands with Skinner who had been dispatched with a strong body of troops from

¹²⁴ Shakespear, p. 83.

¹²⁵ Elly, p. 16.

¹²⁶ McCall, p. 53.

¹²⁷ Kyndiah, p. 88.

¹²⁸ Shakespear, p. 86.

¹²⁹ Shakespear, p. 86.

¹³⁰ McCall, p. 55.

Southern column.¹³¹ Colonel Skinner's troops consisted of 250 3rd Bengal Infantry, 300 Rifles 2/2nd Gorkhas, 50 Bombay Pioneers, and 100 Chittagong Frontier Police. The task of driving through such a country was not an easy one. Large cuttings had to be made on the hill sides, and temporary bridges to be erected over numerous streams. Such works fell on the Gorkha soldiers who possessed a natural aptitude for this sort of work and being able to turn their '*Khukri*' to any kind of cutting operation from the sharpening of a pencil to the felling of a tree.¹³² In a clash with Mizo chiefs, a certain Mallo Rai of the Surma Valley Military Police was mentioned for gallantry in capturing single handedly two armed Mizo who were firing, while he was without a gun.¹³³

The expedition proved to be a success for the British. In 1890, Captain Shakespear was established in the South Lushai Hills in charge of Lunglei, Darzo and Fort Tregear posts with their lines of communication from Demagiri. Captain Browne was established at Fort Aijal and was later replaced by McCabe.¹³⁴ By now British government was fully convinced that the only effective method of protecting the frontiers was the establishment of fortified posts in the Hills.¹³⁵ The South Lushai Hills area was constituted a district of the Chittagong Division and placed under the charge of Captain J. Shakespear with the title of "Superintendent". At the same time the Chittagong Frontier Police unit was renamed the South Lushai Hills Military Police Battalion.¹³⁶ In North Lushai Hills, the Surma Valley Military Police was renamed North Lushai Military Police Battalion, where a large number of Gorkhas were recruited.¹³⁷ Thus, permanent military posts were set up in Aizawl and Lunglei, with McCabe and Shakespear as Superintendents respectively.

¹³¹ *Gazetteers*, p. 42.

¹³² Reid, p. 51.

¹³³ Shakespear, p. 91.

¹³⁴ McCall, pp. 58-59.

¹³⁵ K.L. Pradhan, p. 59.

¹³⁶ Shakespear, p. 97.

¹³⁷ Shakespear, p. 97.

2.5. Migration of Gorkhas in Mizoram:

The first wave of Gorkhas that arrived in Mizoram were the British Gorkha soldiers. They have settled in Tlabung back in 1971. However, this settlement did not leave any permanent mark in Mizoram. The official records of the government clearly show that the Gorkha migrations and settlement in Mizoram began in 1891, after the permanent posts were constructed at Aizawl and Lunglei.¹³⁸

The earliest occupants of the posts were the Gorkha soldiers. Apart from being a soldier under the British government, they had to follow their superiors wherever they go; they were a group of people who could adapt to new places, be it unexplored jungles. On the other hand, the British needed someone they could trust explicitly, especially when they conquered new areas. In the case of Mizoram, it was inhabited by a group of tribes, who were never exposed to the world, and naturally saw everyone else as the enemy. As such, the British needed to position people whom the tribe could relate to. Since majority of the Gorkha soldiers were Mongolian, they fitted the bill perfectly. One fact is that the British wisely sent in Aryan Gorkhas in their conquered plain areas and Mongoloid race Gorkhas in the hilly areas.¹³⁹

It is clear that the British wanted Gorkhas for soldiers. The main reason why the Gorkhas enrolled in large number was their zeal for military adventure. The Gorkhas, being martial in nature, were appealed by the essence of a soldier. They were adventurous and could face hardship, even in unknown lands. In the Lushai Expeditions, they proved their worth. They were much more at home than their up-country brethren in arms.¹⁴⁰ They were swifter and handy in the thick jungles. This might have been the reason why the British wanted them to settle in their new colonized areas, especially among the hill tribes.

The main reason for their migration was due to economic motive. Majority of Gorkhas could not produce their subsistence in the hilly-rugged terrain of Nepal. They faced hardship in terms of subsistence. Life in the hilly snow-bound terrain of Nepal

¹³⁸ Pradhan, p. 58.

¹³⁹ Nirmal K. Pun, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Khatla, Aizawl.

¹⁴⁰ Woodthorpe, p. 111.

was difficult as cultivable lands were limited which led to minimal produce, and the tools and techniques were basic.¹⁴¹ Due to this factor, the easiest way out was to become a soldier and migrated to somewhere else where they could settle or being a salaried soldier could help the family in terms of subsistence. During the periods of recruitments, the Gorkhas had a common saying of “Going *La-hu-re*” which simply meant going to Lahore to get recruited.¹⁴² This saying connotes just how important it was for a Gorkha to get recruited. The main reason why they wanted to be a soldier was due to their economic needs. In reality, recruitment of Gorkhas served both ends. The British needed a strong and brave army and the Gorkhas needed proper monetary source of income. For an economically backward Gorkha, the British army provided an escape route.¹⁴³ They migrated out of Nepal in search of a better livelihood. It is said that the Gorkhas were promised an attractive pay packet and other facilities, such as, no dearth of milk, abundant food supply and lots of adventurous opportunities “to play battle”.¹⁴⁴

In such way, the Gorkhas migrated out of their original homeland to resettle in a foreign country. Since the British needed them to serve in their frontier, they were taken care of in every possible way, they were favoured and given facilities for their betterment. The Gorkhas were also recruited for coolies in large number. These coolies acted as porters and companions to the soldiers. These coolies also migrated out of Nepal in search of job and better living.

2.6. Settlement of Gorkhas:

The first Gorkha settlers in Mizoram were the British soldiers and the coolies. The earliest settlement was in the south border of Mizoram in 1871-1872. However, this early settlement was not permanent. It might have been a settlement only for a couple of years since there is no indication that there has ever been a Gorkha

¹⁴¹ A.C. Sinha, ‘Prologue’, in A.C. Sinha & T.B. Subba (ed.), *The Nepalis in Northeast India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴² Uday Kumar Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

¹⁴³ Pratap Chhetri, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

¹⁴⁴ Nirmal K. Pun, “Migration and Settlement in Mizoram”, in Pradip Sunar, Jeevan Kavar and I.K. Subba (eds.), *The Gorkhas of Mizoram, Vol – I*, Aizawl, Mizoram Gorkha Students’ Union, 2000, p. 12. In Nepali, a battle is not fought, but *Ladai Khelnu*, meaning played.

settlement. Conceivably, the Gorkhas themselves had no intention of settling down indefinitely in a strange land, despite their ability to adapt to new places, where they faced hostility from the native inhabitants. Moreover, the British had no intention to have permanent posts in the first Lushai Expedition. This is another factor why the permanent settlement did not emerge in the border. Being loyal, the Gorkhas would not have wanted to stay on without the British. It was not possible for them to settle permanently without the British guidance and protection.

However, with the second Lushai Expedition, the situation changed. The expedition was extensive, covering the whole Mizoram and the Gorkhas had the opportunity to see what the unexplored hills had to offer. Permanent posts had been established and it became clear that the British had come to stay. In 1891, peace was restored in most parts of the hills. Expansion and developmental works at Aizawl and Lunglei began.¹⁴⁵ With the intention of the British to remain in the hills, the Gorkhas immediately realized they were also staying. The feeling gave them the chance to see what the hills was about and became conscious of the fact that they could establish themselves in the hills. Pampered as they were by the Britishers, and also their adaptability in any kind of situation, climate and topography, they found the terrains, streams, flora and fauna so akin to their country's that they left behind, they felt at home.¹⁴⁶

It is common knowledge that the British preferred the Mongoloid race Gorkhas for soldiers. This Gorkha race belonged to the hilly part of Nepal, where they practiced slash and burn method of cultivation. In this sense, they were quite similar to the Mizo. They were extremely adventurous and fearless of men and wild animals. They could feel at home even in the unknown jungles.¹⁴⁷ As such, as differ from the first Lushai Expedition, they did not rush back, instead, stayed on in the hills out of the requirement of their superiors. Therefore, it can be assumed that permanent settlement of Gorkhas in Mizoram began from the year 1891.

¹⁴⁵ Pradhan, *The Nepalis in Northeast India*, p. 297.

¹⁴⁶ Pun, *The Gorkhas*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁷ Nirmal K. Pun interview, 2018.

Similar to the Gorkhas, the Mizo were in reality hospitable, carefree, fun loving, friendly and straight forward. These were the main factors that won their hearts and that helped in establishing good rapport which later cemented the bond of friendship between the two communities.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, for the smooth and better functioning of the government machinery and also to meet the basic human needs, the Britishers required man-power like traders, lumberjacks etc. Since the nature of works was new to the natives, the Gorkhas were accordingly employed for these jobs, and thus began their settlement in Mizoram.¹⁴⁹

In a sense, the British might also feel that the tribe could learn from the Gorkhas. Except for the regular soldiers, the coolies must have been engaged in different kinds of works as there were numerous tasks to be done in an expanding town. For better administration purposes, the British started setting up bungalows (halting places) at regular intervals throughout Mizoram. These bungalows were situated at a day's walk and served as a resting place for British officials when they go on tour. In these bungalows, Gorkhas were situated to take care of things needed, acting as chowkidars. These chowkidars must have been engaged from the coolies, who later brought their families. The administrators also set up post offices for better communications, where Gorkhas were also engaged since these kinds of works were unknown to the Mizo.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, hospitals were set up in different places to cater the needs of the administrators and their people where Gorkhas were employed to work as office staffs. At every village where bungalows, post offices and hospitals were set up, it became the settlement for the Gorkhas. It was necessary for the administrators to employ them for their servants as the Mizo were still hostile.

Aizawl was chosen as the site of fortified post on the recommendation of Daly of the Assam Police.¹⁵¹ The process of making Aizawl as a town began under the British. Since the natives were still restless, the Gorkhas had to be employed for any kind of work. The British made use of them as wasteland settlers to inhabit the few

¹⁴⁸ Pun, p. 15.

¹⁴⁹ Pradhan, p. 60.

¹⁵⁰ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

¹⁵¹ J. Shakespear, *The Making of Aizawl*, Aizawl Centenary Souvenir, Aizawl, Souvenir Committee, 1990, p. 14.

Mizo tribes. As Mizoram opened up, more Gorkhas made an entrance in search of work. The soldiers on leave conveyed to their fellow countrymen about the hills and the opportunities it offered. When coming back from leave, they further brought their families and fellow countrymen to work in different areas. Moreover, it was necessary for the British to pamper the Gorkhas and made them settle in order procreate young men for future soldiers. These children soon became recruited in the army thereby generating employment for the Gorkhas as well.¹⁵² The British actually needed them for a number of reasons. One major reason was for security purpose. In fact, the British were complete strangers who forcibly ruled over Lushai Hills and the native did not trust them. Likewise, the administrators knew that the tribe could not be easily subdued. As such, the Gorkhas were greatly needed to form a barrier between these two. And this factor played a crucial part in the settlement of Gorkhas in Mizoram.

Aizawl at the time was sparsely populated, with a few localities. The making of Aizawl as a proper town began with G.H. Loch, Commandant of the Surma Valley Frontier Military Police, who arrived in 1891.¹⁵³ Settlements began to grow. Under Loch, the I Assam Rifles ground was levelled where the soldiers worked for hours as the labour for the parade ground was formed by the sepoy, mostly Gorkhas. Loch made a Gorkha officer stand with a bag of money and paid for each load of dirt thrown away.¹⁵⁴ This is one example of how the Gorkhas were engaged in different kinds of works in the making of Aizawl and in many places all over Mizoram.

In the initial period, the Gorkhas were allowed to stay in the allotted areas only. However, many Mizo chiefs were eager to have them in their villages that they even entreated the Superintendent of Lushai Hills to permit the Gorkhas to reside in their villages.¹⁵⁵ The Superintendent then allowed one or two houses of Gorkha to settle in a Mizo village. The administrators were also of the opinion that the presence of a Gorkha or two families would be of help to the Mizo in regards to the system of cultivation and other means of livelihood.

¹⁵² Pratap Chhetri interview, 2018.

¹⁵³ Ralte, *Zoram*, p. 319.

¹⁵⁴ Shakespear, *Making of Aijal*, p. 16.

¹⁵⁵ Pradhan, p. 297.

In the early period, the Gorkhas' main settlements were in Aizawl, Lunglei, Kolasib, Bualpui, Champhai, Vanlalphai, Tawitaw, Selesih, Neihbawi, Sialsuk and Thenzawl. In Aizawl, the Gorkhas were the first to occupy almost all localities and most of the early localities bore Gorkha name. The early localities that had Gorkha names are Tuikual (Gairi Gaon), Dinthar (Survey Tilla), Vaivakawn (Kansi Bhanjyang), Hunthar (Pathar Khana), Zotlang (Sriman Tilla), Rangvamual (Khagdiya), Lawipu (Bhaisi Goth), Chawlhmun (Labor Ghari), Chhangurkawn (Debithan), Bazar Bungkawn (Bar Bhanjyang) and Dawrpui Vengthar (Gurung Tol).¹⁵⁶The present-day Saron, Dinthar, Tuikual, Zotlang, Rangvamual, Bawngkawn, Khatla etc were all first occupied by the Gorkhas.¹⁵⁷

The government made a firm law that declared non-Mizo must settle in an allotted area only and that the settlers should have permission from the government. In the Superintendent Order No. 11 of 1909 dated 11th August 1909, it was issued that Gorkhas, who settled in Chaltlang village without permission must immediately leave. In this connection, Keshore Rana, the headman of Chaltlang was fined Rs. 20/- for letting some Gorkhas stay without prior permission. The government was extremely careful in maintaining proper ratio in regards to Mizo and Gorkha population. It was also made clear in this order that Gorkha settlers who rely on cultivation must go to either Champhai or Thenzawl¹⁵⁸ where wet-rice cultivation could be practiced. The government stationed a headman in every Gorkha settlement. These headmen were responsible for taking care of the affairs of the Gorkha settlers in each locality. No Gorkha could settle without the government permission. In 1919, the Commandant of the 1st Assam Rifles requested the government to initiate a Gorkha colony where retired Gorkhas could settle under their retired officer. This appeal emerged out of the fact that retired soldiers could not simply return to Nepal since they have lost all connections with their country and all claim to their land after serving many years in a foreign land. The Commandant was also of the opinion that these Gorkhas would inhabit uncultivated areas in the district and as they are naturally industrious race

¹⁵⁶Pun, p. 99.

¹⁵⁷ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

¹⁵⁸ Mizoram State Archives, Sl.No. 169, G-13, CB No – 14, p. 76. Major I.A, Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

expert in cultivation, they would also boost the economy.¹⁵⁹ In the same year, H.C. Barnes, Officiating Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hills Districts sent a letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills asking him to form a colony of retired officers and men of the Battalion in a fixed boundary.¹⁶⁰ A settlement must have been made as the archival source reveals a list of pensioners who should join the new Gorkha settlement at Tuipang.¹⁶¹

The Gorkhas started to settle in different parts of Mizoram from the early 1900s with the permission of the government. Even though they were allowed to settle in only surcharged areas, some Mizo chiefs were keen to have them in their village. In the Standing Order No. 31 of 1922, the then Superintendent, W.L. Scott stated that there is no danger in allowing one or two houses of Gorkhas to settle in a Mizo village as he believes their presence will have an educative effect.¹⁶² One important non-Mizo settlement was 45th Mile Dwarband Road. This was located near the present day Thingdawl village. 45th Mile Dwarband Road was the area where settlement was allowed to non-Mizo who by exceptional services or work in the Battalion can claim special consideration for permanent settlement in the Hills. The inhabitants of 45th Mile were under the administration of Vanhnuai Sairo, Chief of Thingdawl village.¹⁶³ This settlement became a vibrant place for the retired Gorkhas and a Panchayat was set up to look after their affairs. Furthermore, retired Gorkha personnel of the Police and Military were allotted considerable portion of lands for dwelling and cultivation purposes. It is interesting to note that some of them were even awarded the privileges and power at par with the native chiefs. In Aizawl, Dhojbir Rai was awarded the

¹⁵⁹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 247, G-16, CB No – 20, p.p. 66-67. Letter from Captain G.B. Davies, Offg. Commandant, 1st Assam Rifles to The Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aijal, dated 10th October 1919.

¹⁶⁰ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 247, G-16, CB No – 20, p. 68. Letter from H.C. Barnes, Offg. Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hills Districts to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, dated 21st October 1919.

¹⁶¹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 247, G-16, CB No – 20, p. 87.

The names included Havildar Durjadhan Thapa, Jarbahadur Khowar, Singbir Gurung, Lal Gurung, Bhageswar Thapa and Bhahadur Man Rai.

¹⁶² Standing Order No. 31 of 1922, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu*, Bu 2-na, February, 1923.

¹⁶³ A.G. McCall, *The Lushai Hills District Cover*, Aizawl, The Tribal Research Institute, 2008, pp. 114-115.

holding of the whole areas of Survey Tilla (present day Dinthar) and Sriman Tai to Sriman Tilla (present day Zotlang).¹⁶⁴

It is clear that in many localities, the Gorkha population was in large number. One particular area allotted solely for the Gorkhas was Khatla. Assam Rifles married lane was established in Khatla under G.H. Loch and the locality was made a station reserve. It was ordered that no one could have a house-pass in Khatla without the permission of the Assam Rifles Commandant. Loch Hospital was also set up for the Assam Rifles families. Shops were opened to cater the everyday needs of the people living in the married lanes. Retired Gorkhas were given permission to open shops. In the early 1900s, out of 17 shops, only one was owned by a Mizo. Until 1940s, Khatla was mostly occupied by Gorkhas.¹⁶⁵

Likewise, Tuikual, Dinthar, Zotlang and Lawipu localities were first occupied by the Gorkhas. The government allotted lands first to them mostly due to the reason that the Gorkhas were good in cattle keeping and cultivation. In the case of Lawipu, two Gorkha families were allotted lands for cattle rearing purpose in 1925. Until 1962, Lawipu was inhabited by Gorkhas only.¹⁶⁶ In Bawngkawn, some 20-30 Gorkha families started settling at the end of the 19th century. After a few years, Mizo also began to settle. At this time, the common language used in Bawngkawn was Gorkha language and all the Mizo could converse in Gorkha.¹⁶⁷

The government made Lal Singh Thapa, who was commonly known as Lalchhinga, a chief in Hriangmual (present day Mission Veng) where he enjoyed all powers at par with the Mizo chiefs. After the Mission set up their headquarter in this area, he was relocated in Tlangnuam in 1905.¹⁶⁸ In his village, there were a number of Mizo families and he had married a Mizo woman. He also worked as Head Interpreter in the government since he was fluent in Mizo. The Mizo also accepted him as he was able to speak the language and he was much favoured by the government. Lal Singh

¹⁶⁴ Pradhan, p. 62.

¹⁶⁵ V. Thanzauva, *Vai Hmeichhe veng Mizo awm hmasate*, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Magazine, Aizawl, Young Mizo Association, Khatla Branch, 1995, p. 67.

¹⁶⁶Manu Chetry, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Lawipu, Aizawl.

¹⁶⁷Purna Prasad, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

¹⁶⁸ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

was the one who welcomed the two missionaries, J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge in Aizawl when they arrived. Lal Singh ruled for quite a long time, he moved westward in 1911 where he continued being a chief. He died in 1926.¹⁶⁹

In Champhai, wet-rice cultivation was introduced by Colonel Shakespear in about 1898.¹⁷⁰ The Gorkha soldiers were the ones who taught the system of wet-rice cultivation to the Mizo. In 1904, Sukrim Bahadur Thapa, a retired mountain battery was engaged as an instructor for wet-rice cultivation.¹⁷¹ In 1907, Singbir Rai was made one of the four chiefs in Champhai. He ruled over a certain locality named Jamadar locality that consisted of 27 houses.¹⁷² Singbir Rai died in 1912 and his son, Sridhan Rai was permitted to succeed the holding.¹⁷³ In the Jamadar locality, as early as 1905, a Siva temple had been set up which shows that the Gorkha population must have been large in number. The Sivalinga in this temple has been brought down and is now placed in Thuampui temple.¹⁷⁴ Tuisenhnar wet-rice cultivation was also placed under Joybahadur who held the post of headman till he died in 1932.¹⁷⁵

Kolasib was also first occupied by the soldiers, mostly Gorkhas. In the beginning of 1890s, there were a few Mizo houses in Bukhmaituak, a few kilometers from Kolasib. These Mizo used to come and worked for the soldiers in order to earn money.¹⁷⁶ Kolasib was occupied by Military Police and a doctor. In 1894, two Mizo families moved in followed by three more after two years. These early Mizo settlers mostly worked for the soldiers.¹⁷⁷ In Kolasib Hmar Veng, there is a Siva temple which was established in 1928. A stone on the front of the temple read – The temple was established by kind permission of the Superintendent of Lushai Hills Village Pass No

¹⁶⁹ Ralte, pp. 312-316.

¹⁷⁰ McCall, *The Lushai Hills*, p. 103.

¹⁷¹ Thangvunga Pachuau, *Champhai Zawl Leilet Chanchin*, Champhai Centenary Souvenir, Champhai, D.K. Press, 1990, p. 79.

¹⁷² C. Chawngbuanga, *Champhai Chanchin*, Champhai Centenary Souvenir, Champhai, D.K. Press, 1990, p. 53.

¹⁷³ McCall, p. 104.

¹⁷⁴ N.L. Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Dawrpui Vengthar, Aizawl.

¹⁷⁵ McCall, p. 111.

¹⁷⁶ B.S. Thapa, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Kolasib.

¹⁷⁷ Lalthansiamia, *Kolasib Khawpui Chanchin*, Aizawl, Lengchawn Press, 2000, p. 8.

71 dated 1.6.1926 Memo No. 1841 of 30.10. 1928. It can be assumed that there was a large number of Gorkhas living in Kolasib in the 1920s.

In the early 1930s, the Superintendent of Aizawl felt that the vicinity of Aizawl became overpopulated since there was shortage of water and firewood supplies, land available for cultivation became less and the grazing ground excessive. The Superintendent himself surveyed the whole Aizawl town and it was decided that Mizo or Gorkhas, who had no particular claim to live in Aizawl area, must leave its vicinity. The orders are based upon the facts elicited during the Superintendent's house-to-house enquiry and account has been taken of the age, length of residence, health and other material circumstances of the persons concerned. In this process of removing families from Aizawl, a number of Mizo and Gorkha families were ordered to leave Aizawl. It was ordered that the Mizo must move to a village over 5 miles from Aizawl, and the Gorkha pensioners must settle in 45 Mile Dwarband Road, and other Gorkhas must leave the district. 741 families were told to move out, out of which, 180 were Gorkha families. Another 64 Gorkha families were allowed to remain during the lifetime of the present occupant, on their decease, the houses will be demolished.¹⁷⁸ As a result of this order, a large number of Gorkhas moved to 45 Mile Dwarband Road and this settlement became a vibrant settlement for the Gorkhas.

The Gorkhas who settled in and out of Aizawl faced no hardship and prejudice from the natives. The administrators also treated them as equal with the Mizo. This is clear from the Standing Order No. 22 of 1921 that issued that any Gorkha settlers, who are not pensioners or government servants, should also work as impressed labours, when necessary, unless they have a bullock-cart.¹⁷⁹ During this period, the Mizo were forced to work as impressed labours for the administrators and it was virtually impossible to escape this work which was extremely burdensome. The order proved that the Gorkhas were also used as coolies even if many Gorkhas, who were

¹⁷⁸ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 421, G-3, CB No – 33, p.p. 72-73. Superintendent's Order.

¹⁷⁹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 397, G-5, CB No – 32, p. 116. Standing Order No. 22 dated 12.1.1921.

pensioners, government servants or bullock-cart owners, were exempted from this burden.

With the independence of India, the British started leaving. The Gorkhas decided to stay in Mizoram even after their administrators left. Long residence in a particular place naturally generate love and affection for that place as well as bear some influence.¹⁸⁰ They preferred to stay on rather than go back to the country that they left years ago. They were very much influenced by the Mizo way of life, their friendly nature and their love for peace. The Gorkhas who migrated and settled decided to make Mizoram their permanent home. By 1950s, there were 36 places where the Gorkhas settled in large numbers in Aizawl district alone. Mizoram at the time was divided into three districts, the largest being Aizawl. The 36 settlements and the number of Gorkhas listed in the Electoral Roll, descendants of who had been living in Mizoram prior to 26th January, 1950 in each settlement were as follows –

Bethlehem Veng – 20	Sakawrtuichhun – 34	Durtlang – 204
Tanhril – 84	Zemabawk – 79	Zuangtui – 10
Thuampui – 206	Chaltlang – 17	Tuirial Airfield – 4
Bawngkawn – 421	Ramhlun – 13	Chitelui Road – 34
Dinthar – 157	Armed Veng – 37	Bungkawn – 65
Lawipu – 15	Maubawk – 131	Hunthar -9
Khatla – 172	Zarkawt – 6	Electric Veng – 18
Saron Veng – 29	Dawrpui – 87	Dawrpui Vengthar – 27
Tuikual – 89	Zotlang – 248	Vaivakawn – 25
Chhing Veng – 44	S. Kolasib – 73	Kolasib Venglai – 30
N. Kolasib – 48	Vairengte – 74	Kanghmun – 9

¹⁸⁰ Pun, p. 17.

In Aizawl district alone, the total number of Gorkhas who were above 21 years of age was 2557. These Gorkhas were direct descendants of those who migrated and settled in Mizoram before 1950.

2.7. Gorkha Mauzadar:

With the passage of time, the appointment of Gorkha Mauzadar at Aizawl became effective for the purpose of exercising some administrative coordination over the Gorkha inhabitants within the surcharge area and for the purpose of collecting foreigners' taxes.¹⁸¹ The schedule of taxes for non – Mizo was House Tax at Rs. 5/- yearly with the addition of personal residence surcharge of Rs. 3/- per adult male if within Aizawl or its surrounds.¹⁸² The Superintendent of Lushai Hills gave an order that the Aizawl Gorkha Mauzadar will collect foreigner taxes from all Gorkhas living within 3 miles limit of Aizawl.¹⁸³ The first Mauzadar was Jay Bahadur Sahi of Maubawk, who was succeeded by Man Bahadur Ale of Maubawk.¹⁸⁴ Whenever cases involving Gorkha customs are tried by chiefs in Aizawl surrounds, the Gorkha Mauzadar must be present for consultation on customs. This affects cases for disposal by chiefs of Aizawl, Tlangnuam, Chaltlang, Luangmual and Thakthing panchayat.¹⁸⁵

The Mauzadar was responsible to the Superintendent for the control of Gorkha residents and the collection of Foreigners Tax levied on them. Collections included Personal Residence Surcharge, House Tax and all Gorkha shopkeepers. The Mauzadar was allowed a commission at 15% of his collection and must provide all stationery required to keep accounts. He must also issue receipts for all taxes collected by him keeping counterfoils, and he should open two Cash Books, one for Personal Residence Surcharge and one House Tax showing all receipts and credits to the Treasury. It was also the duty of a Mauzadar to prepare a list of Gorkhas who are private servants to

¹⁸¹ Pradhan, p. 62.

¹⁸² Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 91, R-3, CB No – 7, p.11. Schedule of Taxes.

¹⁸³ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 91, R-3, CB No – 7, p.14. Order of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills dated 10th September 1932.

¹⁸⁴ Pun, p. 21.

¹⁸⁵ McCall, p. 173.

non-government servants and must submit a list to the Superintendent. He should also open Register showing – Assam Rifles camp followers, Gorkhas employed as private servants, Gorkhas employed under government and other Gorkhas in different localities within the Reserve.¹⁸⁶ The Mauzadar was responsible for the Gorkha population in regards to administration. The need for the appointment of a Mauzadar shows that the Gorkha settlers were large in number and in need of certain administrative agency. The Mauzadar was abolished along with the abolition of Mizo chiefs in 1954.

2.8. Conclusion:

The Gorkhas who arrived with the British in the early phase had to settle out of the requirement of the administrators. However, after their settlement, they found the Hills to be full of opportunities, which could provide and enrich their economic needs that could not be found in their homeland. As a result, more Gorkhas arrived in search of work and livelihood. The early settlers furthermore wanted their descendants to stay in the Hills where they could secure the necessities of life and where they could live a peaceful life.

The Gorkhas, who are completely different from Mizo in culture, customs and traditions decided to settle in a foreign country, so far from their homeland. The main reason for their settlement is their ability to feel at home. They could relate themselves to this land in a way that is difficult to understand because of the fact that Mizo and Gorkhas are two different communities. Yet, they are content to be a part of Mizoram. Even if they were made to settle out of the requirements of the British in the initial stage, but in the long run, it became their own wish to settle permanently. They feel that their community could grow more by imbibing the good practices of the Mizo society.

¹⁸⁶ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 91, R-3, CB No – 7, p.16. Order of the Superintendent, Lushai Hills dated 25th August 1932.

Chapter 3: Socio-Cultural Practices and Institutions

3.1. Introduction:

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, there are hardly any conventional history writings on the Gorkhas of Mizoram. In order to study the socio-cultural practices and institutions, and to see how changes take place, the study has to rely on qualitative interviews with diverse people from the Gorkha community. It can be assumed from the oral interviews that the society and their practices have undergone a number of changes, especially from the late 20th century.

The Gorkha socio-cultural practices and institutions changed due to the needs of the community. The practices have been handed down from generation to generation though there must have been slight changes to meet the needs of the time. The practices of today generation Gorkha has become more or less different from the practices of the first generation Gorkhas¹⁸⁷ especially in terms of marriages and funerary practices, and the caste system.

Many of these changes can be attributed to the influence of Mizo social practices as the Gorkhas have no issue in imbibing the good practices of their Mizo neighbour into their own community. As for their social institutions, the permanent settlement in Mizoram subsequently brought about the establishment of social institutions. Permanent settlement in a foreign country facilitated the need to protect one's own identity, language, religion, customs and traditions. The need to have a social relationship within their own community arose due to the fear of assimilation into the larger society, to protect their own cultural interest and language. The outcome of this feeling was the establishment of social institutions to preserve their identity.

Social Institutions are formed by a group of people having common interest. Jonathan Turner defines,

¹⁸⁷ First generation Gorkhas refer to the first group of Gorkhas who arrived in Mizoram with the British. They were soldiers and coolies, who later brought their families. They preferred to stay on even after the British left Mizoram.

“Social institutions are a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organizing relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life – sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment”.¹⁸⁸

Walter C. Neale defines social institutions as a way of sub-dividing the social and cultural organization of a society into components meaningful to the participants in that society, and hence to observers and to analysts of the society.¹⁸⁹ R.C. Angell discusses social institutions as ‘systems of social relationships’.¹⁹⁰ Leonard Broom and Philip Selznick regard an institution serves “public rather than merely private interests and does so in an accepted, orderly, and enduring way”.¹⁹¹ Social institutions are used to refer to a miscellany of social forms, including conventions, rules, rituals, organizations, and systems of organizations.¹⁹² In the light of these definitions, it may be concluded that social institutions are a system of social relationship, having a solid pattern, meaningful to the members of the society, which could be benefitted by the members.

This chapter studies the Gorkhas of Mizoram through their practices and institutions, how these play a primary role in keeping the Gorkhas together, thereby preserving their identity though they have settled in Mizoram for more than a hundred years. The second and third generation Gorkhas know that unless they stand together under the same umbrella, they are likely to be assimilated as they are a minority group, much lesser than the main group in the state. They further know that unless they make alterations in their age-old social practices and come together under their social institutions, they are likely to be absorbed into the larger society. Another factor is the

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Seumas Miller, ‘Social Institutions’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available from: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, (accessed 2 February 2020).

¹⁸⁹ Walter C. Neale, ‘Evolutionary Economics I: Foundations of Institutional Thought’, *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol – 21, No. 3, 1987, p. 1181. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 16 June 2017).

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Howard B. Kaplan, ‘The Concept of Institution: A Review, Evaluation, and Suggested Research Procedure’, *Social Forces*, Vol – 39, No. 2, 1960, p. 178. Available from: Jstor, (accessed 18 June 2017).

¹⁹¹ Kaplan, *Social Forces*, p. 178.

¹⁹² Miller, *Stanford Encyclopedia*.

influence of the Mizo society. The casteless Mizo society characterized by freedom have great impact on the Gorkhas. Thus, this chapter also highlights the changes that takes place over the years.

3.2. Marriage System

Arranged marriage has always been the most popular form of marriage among the Hindus. As Hindu religion is the dominant religion in Nepal, the marriage system has always followed Hindu marriage. When the Gorkhas arrived in Mizoram, arranged marriage was the common practice based on caste. Jon Kumari Jaishi, aged 76 recalls that during her days, parents arranged marriage according to caste. She was living in Sialsuk where very few Gorkhas were there. So, her parents searched for a groom in Nepal. The young man was from the same caste and serving in the army. Without ever seeing each other, her marriage was thus planned by her parents and carried out.¹⁹³ In the case of Jon Kumari, they went to live in Nepal for a few years until her husband's retirement and then came back to Mizoram where her husband got a job in the government office.

The system of arranged marriage was practiced for a long time. In between, there might have been love marriages which must be very few. The first generation Gorkha men who were unmarried used to go back to Nepal to search for a bride. They brought back their wives after getting married in Nepal. These first generation Gorkhas were usually staunch followers of rigid Nepali practices who expected their descendants to follow suit.¹⁹⁴ Their sons and daughters were expected to marry someone within the same caste. This system of marriage was the most common form of marriage till the 1980s. It must have worked exceedingly well because of the very low rate of divorce in the Gorkha community. When parents arranged for a marriage, their children regarded as their duty to obey and it could be that out of respect to their parents' decision that the marriages were often successful.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Jon Kumari Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Durtlang, Aizawl.

¹⁹⁴ Parvati Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Durtlang, Aizawl.

¹⁹⁵ Radhika Chhetri, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Bawngkawn, Aizawl.

In the Gorkha community, formal ceremony for marriages takes place in the bride's house, though it can also be done in a temple. The ceremony is carried out by a priest.¹⁹⁶ The groom's side go to the bride's house to perform the formal ceremony where the bride's father will officially give her away in a ceremony called *Kanyadaan*.¹⁹⁷ *Kanyadaan* is defined as a ceremony in which the bride's father pours sacred water in his daughter's hands and places her hand in the groom's hands, officially giving away his most precious gift to the groom. It is believed that this ritual not only increases the parents' prestige but also purifies them of sin.¹⁹⁸ To be able to carry out *Kanyadaan* at least once a lifetime is regarded as very prestigious for a father. If there is no father, the uncles will carry out the deed.¹⁹⁹

An interesting fact about the Gorkhas of Mizoram is the absence of dowry system. All interviewees stand on firm ground on the absence. Uday Kumar Jaishi states that there can be small gifts exchanged between the two families. The girl side need not give anything out of compulsion.²⁰⁰ However, exchange of gold rings between the newlyweds and *Tilhari* (a necklace made of green or red beads with gold in the middle) should be given by the groom to the bride as a tradition is compulsory.²⁰¹ If the bride's family is not in the position to purchase the gold ring to be given to the groom, then the groom's side would buy one for her without hesitation. Apart from exchanging rings and gifting *Tilhari*, the girl side can also take marriage paraphernalia such as a set of kitchen utensils.²⁰²

The change in the system of marriage began to be noticeable in the 1980s. The change emerged with the changing times. The youths began to have wider outlook on the world and with the changing time, they began to have more freedom. Apart from this, the youths are getting influenced by their Mizo brethren whose society is casteless and more liberal in outlook.²⁰³ Moreover, the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association has

¹⁹⁶ Purna Prasad, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Thuampui, Aizawl.

¹⁹⁷ N.L. Jaishi interview, 2018,

¹⁹⁸ Leena Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Thuampui, Aizawl.

¹⁹⁹ N.L. Jaishi interview.

²⁰⁰ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview, 2018.

²⁰¹ Leena Jaishi interview, 2020.

²⁰² Binda Chhetri, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Khatla, Aizawl.

²⁰³ N.L. Jaishi interview.

been working hard to do away with anything that are based on the caste system as they saw caste system as being a hindrance to the development of the Gorkhas.²⁰⁴ With the passing of time, parents started to give consent to their children if they want to get married irrespective of caste. Even a Brahmin such as Jaishi could now marry lower castes.²⁰⁵ Slowly, the system of arranged marriage gave way to love marriage, doing away with the rigid culture based on caste system.

3.2.1. Inter-marriage with Mizo:

After the Gorkhas arrived in Mizoram and became settlers, they soon became friends with Mizo. They were very much influenced by the Mizo way of living though they were bounded by their traditions. There were Gorkhas who breached their rigid system and married Mizo. In fact, inter-marriage with Mizo started taking place with the first generation Gorkhas even though the number might have been small, and continued even today. In the case of Jon Kumari Jaishi as mentioned earlier, her parents looked for a husband in Nepal. This type of case might not have been applicable to all. There must have been single living bachelors, who instead of going back to Nepal in search of a bride, opted to look for one in their settlement. Not only male Gorkha, there are also female Gorkha who married Mizo, though the number is far lesser than their male counterpart.

There are quite a number of Gorkha men who have taken up a Mizo name after marriage with Mizo. Even if they themselves had not taken up a Mizo name, they will soon be given one by the Mizo community.²⁰⁶ There are also very few instances where parents out casting their children in case of inter-marriage though it is hardly known now.²⁰⁷ In the case of marriage with a Mizo, the Gorkha soon lose his identity in the Gorkha community perhaps because of the strong influence of the larger community. Another reason could be that the children prefer to stay within the Mizo community and that the Gorkha could not bear to see his children to be known as a non-Mizo.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Roshan Chhetri, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2019, Bawngkawn, Aizawl.

²⁰⁵ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²⁰⁶ Purna Prasad interview, 2020.

²⁰⁷ Binda Chhetri interview, 2018.

²⁰⁸ Purna Prasad interview.

Since the beginning of their settlement, whenever a Gorkha marries a Mizo girl, he gets absorbed in the Mizo society, soon gets a Mizo name and very often converts to Christianity.²⁰⁹ In this connection, Gopal Limbu, aged 64 states that there are a number of members in his extended family who has married a Mizo. He states that inter-marriage does not matter as long as there is love and peace in the family. He further says that while the Gorkha men in his family stay Hindus, their wives and children follow Christian religion and that has never created a problem in the household.²¹⁰

However, it is clear that whenever there is inter-marriage between the two communities, the Gorkha community lost one way or another. If a Gorkha girl marries a Mizo, she is expected to follow her husband's religion, gets subsumed into the larger entity and their children would be Mizo. There is hardly a Gorkha girl who continues to follow the customs and traditions of Gorkha after being married to a Mizo.²¹¹ In the case of a Gorkha male as mentioned earlier, there is very often the tendency to become a Mizo so as to get accepted by the Mizo society and naturally his children would heavily lean towards the larger society.²¹² In certain cases where the father stays Hindu and takes part in the Gorkha community, his wife would remain Mizo and his children would go to the mother's side.²¹³ One interviewee could recall only two instances where a Gorkha male married a Mizo and the family stays within the Gorkha community. He regards that this was possible because the Gorkha men in these cases moved to Kalimpong and Sikkim.²¹⁴

3.3. Death and Funerary Practice:

Death is seen in the Gorkha community as either the way to *Swarg* (heaven) or *Narg* (hell). It is believed that a person goes to heaven or hell according to his deeds in his life time. If a person lived a good life, death is seen as liberation from the hardship of life, if not, it is believed that the person will suffer for eternity.²¹⁵ The

²⁰⁹ Parvati Jaishi interview, 2018.

²¹⁰ Gopal Limbu, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Maubawk, Aizawl.

²¹¹ Purna Prasad interview.

²¹² Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²¹³ N.L. Jaishi interview.

²¹⁴ Purna Prasad interview.

²¹⁵ Radhika Chhetri interview, 2020.

earlier Gorkhas in Mizoram followed rigid Hindu practices in death rituals. These practices became more relaxed from the 1980s, after the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association felt that they need to simplify the rituals due to the changing times. Moreover, they are also under the influence of the Mizo systematic way of dealing with death.²¹⁶ In the Gorkha tradition, a person is either cremated or buried according to caste. The Aryan Gorkhas are always cremated while the Mongoloid race Gorkhas are buried. Among the Gorkhas, Pradhans and Thapas have a choice over cremation or burial.²¹⁷

In the earlier period, when a person died, the body is taken outside as it is believed that a dead body contains diseases. The body is laid on a mat made of hay and placed near a *Tulsi* (holy Basil) plant. A *Tulsi* plant is believed to be possessing healing power and that by placing a body near it, all the diseases could be healed.²¹⁸ The body had to be taken either for cremation or burial as soon as possible. If a body was to spend a night before cremation or burial, people would come over and spent the night playing carrom board and cards, and sometimes even drinking liquor.²¹⁹

After a body is cremated or buried, the whole family had to mourn the dead for 13 days. There would be a main mourner in the family who would stay apart from everyone else. The main mourner would shave his hair, wears white clothes, eats once a day which comprised of cooked rice, boiled vegetables and fruits without salt. He would sleep in a mat made of hay and not allowed to have conversation with anyone besides his immediate family members. He must spend his time reading *Gita* and praying for the departed soul. As for the other family members, they also had to mourn the dead by eating once a day without meat. All the family members must refrain themselves from worldly happiness and all of them must take bath every day.²²⁰

After the 12th day, it is believed that the departed soul has left this world. So, the 13th day is used for purification day for most Gorkhas. Rais and Limbus however

²¹⁶ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²¹⁷ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²¹⁸ Radhika Chhetri interview.

²¹⁹ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²²⁰ Radhika Chhetri interview.

observed purification day on the 5th or 7th day. On the purification day, a priest would perform *puja*, pray for the departed soul and cleanse the family.²²¹ The cleansing day was usually performed with lavish *puja*. Neighbours, friends and well-wishers were called for the ceremony and a banquet would be prepared. This purification ceremony could also become a burden for many families since it involved huge amount of money. Even after the cleansing, the family is not able to eat meat for 45 days. However, one person could perform this task instead of the whole family doing it. After 45 days, a priest would come to perform another *puja* and then only, the whole family could start living as usual.²²²

From the late 1970s, there began among the youths a feeling for the need to simplify the death rituals. As mentioned earlier, it was after the establishment of the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association that changes began to take place. Apart from changes, the system also started incorporating the practices of their Mizo brothers.

When a person dies, the body is no longer kept outside. Instead of taking it to the crematorium or graveyard at the earliest time possible, the Gorkhas have started to incorporate holding awake at night, thereby mourning with the family. The night is no longer used for playing cards and carrom boards, it is now used for mourning the dead, singing songs and used for fellowship. Most often, a priest or community elders would give a talk on religious subject. A person is no longer cremated or buried according to caste, but, according to one's or the family's wishes.²²³ The Gorkhas also put their dead in a coffin, whether to be cremated or buried, which is not practiced by any other Hindu.²²⁴ This is a practice borrowed from the Mizo. Another borrowed practice is the distribution of leaflet about the deceased on the day of the funeral.²²⁵

²²¹ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²²² Radhika Chhetri interview.

²²³ N.L. Jaishi interview.

²²⁴ Pratap Chhetri interview.

²²⁵ Nirmal K. Pun interview. In a Mizo Christian society, when a person dies, the whole community gather to mourn the dead, singing specific songs, to make certain the bereaved family are not alone. The funeral ceremony will be in the hands of the Church and the funeral itself is a Christian process performed by the local pastor, singing hymns and prayers. For the next three nights, the local Young Mizo Association will keep the family company by gathering, to provide comfort. The time is usually used for singing hymns. The distribution of leaflet about the deceased is a recent trend among the Mizo, which was started in the late 1990s.

The process of mourning for the dead remains more or less the same, with only slight changes to make it easier for the bereaved family. The main mourner no longer sleeps on a mat, but on a bed and now he can interact with others. For 13 nights, people would gather to comfort and help the bereaved family where they would sing and discuss religious subjects.²²⁶ The purification ceremony still takes place on the 13th day with minimum *puja*. Since the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association has taken up all the programmes that involves the community, they made a change from expensive cleansing ceremony to a simpler, inexpensive ceremony that could be afforded by everyone without becoming a burden.²²⁷ Another change is doing away with the tradition of giving tea leaves, ghee, fruits, sugar etc to the grieving family. Instead, they now keep a box where people could drop money thereby helping the family financially which has proven to be more useful.²²⁸

3.4. Religious Practices:

In Nepal, two major religions - Hinduism and Buddhism are the dominant religions. Among the Gorkhas in Mizoram, there are Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. Buddhism is mainly followed by Lamas and Tamangs though there can also be followers of Hinduism among them. Hinduism is the dominant religion among the Gorkhas of Mizoram, followed by Rais, Jaishis, Gurungs, Upadhyays, Sharmas, Limbus, Chhetris, Thapas etc. There are also followers of Christianity.

Majority of the Gorkhas in Mizoram are followers of Hinduism. Uday Kumar Jaishi, Chairman of the Central *Mandir* Committee says that among the Gorkhas, Christians are more than Buddhists. Since there is no *Lama* to look after the followers in Mizoram, the Buddhists are merely numerable. He added that because of the absence of *Lama*, a number of Buddhists had converted to either Hinduism or Christianity.²²⁹ So, the religious practices of the Gorkhas of Mizoram being discussed is based on the prepotent religion, Hinduism.

²²⁶ Radhika Chhetri interview.

²²⁷ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²²⁸ Pratap Chhetri interview.

²²⁹ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

Hinduism among the Gorkhas in Mizoram does not drift away from the main Hinduism though there are few practices innovated by the Gorkhas due to the influence of their Mizo Christian brethren. Pratap Chhetri says, “We have lived peacefully with our Christian brothers for ages and we practice a brand of syncretic Hinduism where we have imbibed good practices of our Mizo brothers and their Christian traditions, and that no other Hindu community dare incorporate such changes”.²³⁰

There are 12 Gorkha Hindu temples in Mizoram. The earliest seems to be Sarbojanin Hari *Mandir* in Tlabung which was erected in 1896. Champhai had a temple as early as 1905 which was a Shiva *Mandir*. Apart from the 12 Gorkha *Mandirs*, there are also other Hindu temples owned by the armed forces. The 12 *Mandirs* are under the care of the Gorkha Central *Mandir* Committee, each *Mandir* has its own committee and the temple is looked after by a priest.²³¹ Priestly profession has never been there among the Gorkhas of Mizoram. Perhaps in the earlier period, there might have been among the Assam Rifles who catered to the needs of the Gorkhas outside the cantonment. After the Gorkhas started to have their own temples, priests have to be imported from outside Mizoram such as Assam or Nepal. The priests live on contributions made by the members. The *Mandir* Committee decide on how much each household must contribute depending on the economic condition of the household, starting from Rs. 50/-. Contributions are given monthly. Apart from contributions, priests make livelihood from performing various ceremonies. The monthly contribution for the priest came from the Christian contributory sense of giving a tithe to the church.²³²

One important change among the Gorkha Hindus in Mizoram is the practice of having a Sunday Service. Having a Sunday Service is exclusively the influence of the Mizo Christian church as there are no other Hindus who regularly hold a Sunday Service other than the Gorkhas of Mizoram.²³³ The Sunday Services are meant for various deities. Among the Gorkha communities, those living in Kolasib were the first

²³⁰ Pratap Chhetri interview.

²³¹ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²³² Pratap Chhetri interview.

²³³ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

to hold Sunday Service. They have been practising from 1972,²³⁴ and the others followed later. The Service is held every Sunday morning, though the exact time differs in different temples. In the Service, priests deliver sermons, the congregation sing songs and the time is also used for praying. These Services are used for connecting to the gods and goddesses.²³⁵

According to Pratap Chhetri, there is no harm in imbibing the good things from other religion. Besides, having Sunday Service has helped them in keeping social contact, sharing their joys and sorrows at a common place.²³⁶ The Central *Mandir* Committee devised a standardised prayer book and song book in order to maintain uniformity among the Gorkhas all over Mizoram. In these Sunday meetings, each household supplies packed *prasad* (devotional offering made to a god, later shared among the devotees) by rotation. The *prasad* is made simple so as to be affordable by everyone.²³⁷

Another borrowed practice from the Mizo Christians is the Sunday School for children. The Sunday School was started around 1990 in Bawngkawn, Zemabawk and Thuampui cluster. It was started by Radha Thapa who single handedly conducted Sunday School for a number of years. She was helped by young adults in the later period.²³⁸ Soon after, temples in other places also follow as the Sunday School proved to be the place where children could learn not only religious education but also good manners. The Sunday School is usually held after the normal Service. In these Sunday Schools, community elders teach religious subjects specially designed for the children.²³⁹ The Central *Mandir* Committee also designed a simpler form of *Gita* and a song book for the children which would help them to recognise their religion thereby hoping to help them in becoming a better and religious person.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ BS Thapa interview, 2018.

²³⁵ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²³⁶ Pratap Chhetri interview.

²³⁷ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²³⁸ Pratap Chhetri interview.

²³⁹ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²⁴⁰ N.L. Jaishi interview.

3.4.1. Conversion:

As mentioned before, there are Gorkhas who are followers of Christianity. Nirmal K. Pun says that Gorkha Christians are mostly late comers, who arrived in Mizoram after 1950, mainly comprised of cow herders.²⁴¹ Pratap Chhetri also says that there are hardly any converts among those Gorkhas who have been in Mizoram for a long period.²⁴² Yet there are Christians among the Gorkhas who have stayed in Mizoram for quite a long time, though the number may be small. Semu Chhetri, aged 66 says that his family have been in Mizoram since 1890 and have been Christians since the time of his father. He further says that even though they are Christians, they are still Gorkha and that his religion never barred him from being a part of the Gorkha community. He goes on to say that as a Christian, he has never felt as an outsider from the Gorkha community.²⁴³

Most early settlers who converted were the ones who married Mizo and converted probably for social acceptance of the larger community.²⁴⁴ Even though it is desired that they stay Hindu, the community do not make them feel rejected as long as they want to be a part of Gorkha community.²⁴⁵ However, there are also some instances where the family disown their children when they marry Mizo which ultimately led to conversion in order to get totally accepted in the other community.²⁴⁶

The other group of Gorkha Christians belong to the cow herders. These cow herders arrived from Nepal in the 1950s in Mizoram in search of better economic condition. Nirmal K. Pun says that this group of Gorkhas faced extreme hardship in Nepal and were driven out by utmost poverty. They belong to the poorest of the poor. When they arrived in Mizoram, they soon came to realize that they are more accepted by the Mizo if they convert. They convert easier than the early settlers most probably due to their need to be taken care of. The greater number of these cow herders do not even take part in the Gorkha community, staying distant and more associated with the

²⁴¹ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁴² Pratap Chhetri interview.

²⁴³ Semu Chhetri, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Dintar, Aizawl.

²⁴⁴ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²⁴⁵ Purna Prasad interview.

²⁴⁶ BS Thapa interview.

Mizo community.²⁴⁷ In Mizoram, there are bits of advantages for converts, they are very often lent a plot of land where they can breed and raise cattle. This factor itself pose as a strong point to become a convert.²⁴⁸ Most of these cow herders stay aloof though the early settlers want them to be a part of their fold. The reason for their distance from the community might have something to do with their conversion as they seem to feel that they would not be welcomed by the Hindu Gorkhas.²⁴⁹

3.5. Caste System:

Caste system in Nepal follow the traditional social stratification based on the Hindu system. Being a Hindu, the Gorkhas follow rigid caste system everywhere though the Gorkhas of Mizoram has done away with it and has become a casteless community. The process of becoming casteless has been long, for any changes to occur in the community, there is always the inclination towards the age-old practice to overcome. Likewise, the Gorkhas of Mizoram went through many challenges and confrontations especially from the older generations.

When the Gorkhas first started settling down in Mizoram, caste system was practiced. Nirmal K. Pun says that the Aryan Gorkhas practiced rigid caste system while the Mongoloid race Gorkhas were more relaxed and lenient regarding the caste system.²⁵⁰ BS Thapa recalls that he remembers his grandmother serving tea outside when people from lower caste came visiting and that the visitors would wash their own cups and placed them outside. He also says that his grandmother never allowed Mizo to go inside the kitchen.²⁵¹ This reflects the caste system as practiced by the older generation where lower castes were not welcomed inside the higher caste's house. Parvati Jaishi, aged 85 says that when she was a young girl, living in Sialsuk where very few Gorkhas were there, caste system was not known among them. But she

²⁴⁷ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁴⁸ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

²⁴⁹ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁵⁰ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁵¹ BS Thapa interview.

remembers that when the Assam Rifles came patrolling, they would never enter their house even if her family invited them for tea or such.²⁵²

Not only the lower caste, but it seemed Mizo were also regarded as impure in some places. Nirmal K. Pun recalls that while he was a young boy, everybody had to fetch water from a village spring. If the collected water came in contact with a Mizo, then the water had to be thrown away and another pot of water had to be fetched again.²⁵³ However, this may not be the case throughout Mizoram as Parvati Jaishi talks about how Mizo used to gather in her house in Sialsuk specially to drink her mother's milk tea. She goes on to say that even as a young woman, Mizo young men used to gather in her house to enjoy her company.²⁵⁴

Among the first and second generation Gorkhas, caste system was also reflected in the marriages. The early settlers preferred someone within their own caste, often they even searched as far as Nepal for suitable bride or groom for their children.²⁵⁵ So, the system of arranged marriage was practiced for a long time. The caste system was also reflected in death. Higher castes were always cremated. Another thing was that even when a lower caste wanted to mourn for the dead, he would not enter the house but had to stay outside.²⁵⁶

BS Thapa feels that caste system has been an obstacle for the Gorkha development. Because of the caste system, the Gorkhas could not stand together as a single entity as they were unequal. If one caste is regarded as pure and the other impure, there could never be room for progress as the mindset itself would be a hindrance to the community development.²⁵⁷ The evils of the caste system began to be felt among the Gorkha youths from the 1980s. It was beginning to be seen as a serious impediment to progress. The change started after the establishment of the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association. The youths began to realise that as long as they practice the caste system, there will always be conflict of interests among each caste and there

²⁵² Parvati Jaishi interview.

²⁵³ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁵⁴ Parvati Jaishi interview.

²⁵⁵ Jon Kumari Jaishi interview, 2018.

²⁵⁶ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁵⁷ BS Thapa interview.

can never be brotherhood among the Gorkhas. Moreover, they have lived with the casteless Mizo for so long that the Mizo way of life have impacts on the youths.²⁵⁸

Slowly, changes began to be seen among the Gorkhas. The age-old practice of caste system started giving way to a new system where the community becomes casteless. The caste name such as Jaishi, Thapa, Limbu etc became a surname.²⁵⁹ The changes can also be seen in the marriage system and death rituals. The Gorkhas began to have uniformity thereby creating a single entity of being a Gorkha, irrespective of caste and their own ideology. Today, the Gorkhas of Mizoram became a community, which is freed from caste system, homogenous in nature, practicing a uniformed social system.²⁶⁰

3.6. Professions:

The first group of Gorkhas who arrived in Mizoram were British soldiers and porters. These groups of Gorkhas were working under the Government who must have been paid handsomely. Nirmal K. Pun writes on the recruitment of Gorkhas by the British saying, “The Britishers, on whose land the sun never sets, were never sort of new ideas. They were successful to engage some *Gallawalahs* (middle man) to lure the Gorkha youths with promises of attractive pay packet and other facilities, such as, abundant milk, cooking of food on the horns of goats and lots of adventurous opportunities”.²⁶¹

It is thus clear that the first batch of Gorkhas were financially abled. After the British made permanent posts, it seemed that many coolies who arrived with the British were further used for different kinds of work. Nirmal K. Pun writes in this regard,

“For the expansion work as well as the smooth functioning of the government machinery, and also to meet basic human requirements, the government needed man power like traders, masons, dak-runners, chowkidars, to man the halts (bungalows), farmers to grow vegetables and rear domestic animals for meat and milk. As the

²⁵⁸ Roma Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Dawrpui, Aizawl.

²⁵⁹ Pratap Chhetri interview.

²⁶⁰ Gopal Limbu interview, 2020.

²⁶¹ Pun, p. 12.

natives had not yet docile fully, the government had to look for these elsewhere...and the Gorkhas fitted into the bill perfectly.”²⁶²

Moreover, the British had brought their *Awmpuis* (servants) with them, most of whom were Gorkhas. Gopal Limbu says that his grandfather, Maitaraj Limbu was such *Awmpui* and the British had given him a plot of land in Maubawk where he could stay with his family. He further says that his grandfather would get up before dawn, collected milk from Lawipu and brought it to his *Sap*'s (master) house.²⁶³ Therefore, it can be assumed that many of these *Awmpuis* did not live in their *Sap*'s house after getting married, instead went for work early in the morning. These *Awmpuis* were favoured by their *Sap*, they were always given a land to live after they get married. In Champhai, there is a locality named *Awmpui Veng*, which had its history back to the British period. It seemed that the British allotted a certain locality where the *Awmpui* could stay together. These *Awmpuis* were responsible for taking care of the needs of the *Saps* whenever they stay in the Inspection Bungalows.²⁶⁴ There is also *Awmpui Tuikhur* (natural spring) in Ratu village. It must have been named so because the *Awmpuis* used to fetch water from this spring which was situated near the Inspection Bungalow.²⁶⁵

The Inspection Bungalows were set up throughout Mizoram at regular intervals. These bungalows were situated at a day's walk. They served as a resting place for the British when they go for inspection. In these bungalows, Gorkhas were employed as *Chowkidars* to take care of the building. The British also set up a postal system where a *dak-runner* was employed to convey important messages and letters from one place to another. The *dak-runners* in the early British period were mostly Gorkhas.²⁶⁶ Another important profession which the Gorkhas occupied was cattle herding. Nirmal K. Pun says that in Nepal, people used to keep at least a cow for milk

²⁶² Pun, p. 14.

²⁶³ Gopal Limbu interview.

²⁶⁴ David L. Renthlei, as told by his grandfather Lalchungnunga who is 87 years old, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Vengthlang, Champhai.

²⁶⁵ Sakhawliana, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Melkawn, Ratu.

²⁶⁶ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

and manure.²⁶⁷ So, it seems that cattle herding was not new to the Gorkhas. Manu Chetry says,

“My grandfather was a soldier who arrived with the British. After his retirement, he was given land in Tanhril to take up cattle herding and later moved to Lawipu to take up the same work.”²⁶⁸ The name, ‘Lawipu’ itself comes from the word *Lawi* meaning buffalo and *pu* meaning herder. So, it can be assumed that the locality was where the cattle herders lived. The main cattle herded were buffaloes, cows and goats. The Gorkhas must have supplied milk and meat to the British.

The British also set up hospitals in many places. In these hospitals, Gorkhas were also employed as Chowkidars, peons and cooks. Parvati Jaishi recalls that her father arrived in Mizoram way back in 1918 and worked as a cook in Sialsuk Hospital.²⁶⁹ Another important profession of the early Gorkhas were farming of crops and wet-rice cultivation. In an official record recovered from the Mizoram State Archives, there is a list of 25 Gorkhas living in Sairang area, who were given garden pass with recommended area for their garden. These gardens were utilised for growing fruits and varieties of crops.²⁷⁰ As already stated in the previous chapter, wet-rice cultivation in Mizoram was first started in Champhai by a retired Gorkha soldier named Sukrim Bahadur Thapa.²⁷¹ The Superintendent of Lushai Hills also made an order in 1909 that all Gorkha who rely on cultivation must either go to Champhai or Thenzawl²⁷² where wet-rice cultivation could be practiced.

In the colonial period, the Gorkhas were also used as shopkeepers. It seems that Khatla lane was first used for different kinds of shops as this place was owned by the Government and it was where the Assam Rifles Married Lane was set up. The wives and children of the Assam Rifles were allotted a place to stay in Khatla area and shops were opened to cater their needs. Moreover, Loch Hospital was also set up in

²⁶⁷ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁶⁸ Manu Chetry interview, 2018.

²⁶⁹ Parvati Jaishi interview.

²⁷⁰ Mizoram State Archives, Sl.No. 466, G-8, CB No – 36, p.p.53-55,63, *letter sent to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills dated 6.3.1919.*

²⁷¹ Pachuau, *Champhai Centenary*, p. 79.

²⁷² Mizoram State Archives, Sl.No 169, G-13, CB No – 14, p.76. *Superintendent's Order No. 11 of 1909 dated Aijal the 11th August, 1909.*

Khatla for the wives and children which was looked after by the Assam Rifles' doctor. The Gorkhas who owned a shop during the British period were Pirtiman, Birbahadur, Jito Lama, Guman Singh Pradhan and Rangalal Kami. There are few Gorkha descendants who still keep a shop in Khatla even today.²⁷³ Gorkhas were also used for odd and sundry jobs such as bullock-cart drivers, lumberjacks, water supplier, woodman etc. The reason why different works were occupied by the Gorkhas in the colonial period had to do with the Mizo still rebellious towards the British and the fact that the Gorkhas were compliant to the British and they were also willing to do any work in order to earn their livelihood.²⁷⁴

Moreover, apart from working in different fields under the British government, the Gorkhas also practiced jhumming cultivation like the Mizo wherever they settled. Jon Kumari Jaishi recalls how her family used to have jhum where they grew rice and different vegetables and maize. She says that though her father was a cook in Sialsuk Hospital, the other members of the family worked in the jhums just like any other Mizo.²⁷⁵ It can be assumed that even if the head of the family worked under the government, the additional members of the family maintained jhum for sustenance.

In the later period, few educated Gorkhas became teachers and government servants in government schools and offices. From 1950, new group of Gorkhas arrived in Mizoram. Many of these new Gorkhas went to live in villages where they became lumberjacks and married Mizo. These Gorkhas had been totally assimilated into the Mizo society. Another group became cattle-herders who herded cows. This group of people became the first group of Gorkhas who distributed milk among the Mizo every morning and it has been due to them that many Mizo regarded Gorkhas as milkmen. Perhaps a group of Gorkhas who continued to follow their forefather's steps in profession are the shopkeepers in Khatla area. There has always been Gorkha shops in Khatla vicinity.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ V. Thanzauva, *Vai Hmeichhe Venga Mizo Awm Hmasate*, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Magazine, Young Mizo Association, Khatla Branch, 1995, pp. 68-69.

²⁷⁴ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

²⁷⁵ Jon Kumari interview.

²⁷⁶ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

3.7. Gorkha Sangh:

The earliest institution formed by the Gorkhas was the Gorkha Sangh. It is registered under Society Registration No. SR-9 of 1981. Previously, there were two Gorkha associations namely Nepali Sangh and Gorkha Association. Since the members of these two were more or less the same, it was resolved to combine the two associations that resulted in the formation of the Gorkha Sangh.²⁷⁷ Though the exact date of its inception is not clear, it worked for the over-all welfare and socio-political problems of Gorkhas in Mizoram.²⁷⁸ In a correspondence between the Deputy Commissioner and P.L. Adhikari dated Aizawl 6th August 1953, it can be reasoned that the Sangh was established in the early 1950s. The Deputy Commissioner's letter to P.L. Adhikari dated 26th October 1953 showed a permission to form the Sangh and that after formation, the name of the office bearers and a copy of the constitution should be submitted to the District Commissioner.²⁷⁹

The first elected President was Samsher Singh Gurung. The Sangh's area of operation has been Mizoram. The membership of this society is open to any person and all the members constitute the general body. The main aims and objectives of the Sangh are to work for the welfare and development of the Gorkhas, to propagate unity, teaching human values for uplifting the culture and traditions of the Gorkhas.²⁸⁰ It also fights for the Gorkha political and social rights. The Sangh is probably the most important association which stands for the Gorkha community that unifies each and every Gorkha.²⁸¹ The Gorkha Sangh became dormant during the *Rambuai* years. In an interview with HB Thapa, the present President of the Gorkha Sangh, he states that whatever the Gorkhas has achieved as a community, can be attributed to the hard work of the Sangh. He further states that the Sangh has always taken steps in the establishment of Gorkha Schools in Mizoram and has been taking care of the compilation of the Gorkha census in Mizoram.²⁸²

²⁷⁷ H.B. Thapa, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, Bungkawn, Aizawl, 2020.

²⁷⁸ Pradhan, *The Nepalis in Northeast India*, p. 300.

²⁷⁹ No. G.O. 32/53/6 dated Aizawl, the 26th October 1953, (Recovered from Rajkumar Kawar).

²⁸⁰ The Constitution of Gorkha Sangh, a booklet.

²⁸¹ H.B Thapa interview, 2020.

²⁸² H.B Thapa interview.

3.8. Mizoram Gorkha Nari Samaj:

The Mizoram Gorkha Nari Samaj was formed by Gorkha women in 1954 under the leadership of Phulmati Lama.²⁸³ The other members of the first governing body were Asha Maya Rai, Narmaya Limbu, Parvati Chhetri and Savitri Limbu. In 1958, the Government gave them a plot of land in Tuikual, Aizawl where Nari Samaj Hall was constructed.²⁸⁴ The Nari Samaj headquarter is located in Aizawl, with branches all over Mizoram. The organization has been working for the welfare of Gorkha women and to fight social evils.²⁸⁵

Any adult female Gorkha living within the territorial jurisdiction of Mizoram can become a member of the Nari Samaj by giving the necessary membership fee of Rs. 5/- per month. The association's aim and objective are to inculcate unity, goodwill and friendship among the members and to improve the welfare of the Gorkha womenfolk by encouraging literacy and education and to lay emphasis on improvement of hand-skills.²⁸⁶ The Nari Samaj has also been working closely with the Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP) and the MHIP Day, 6th July is also observed as the Nari Samaj Day every year. The Nari Samaj also publishes a magazine named *Gahara*.

The Samaj faced few internal problems from 1958 and by 1966, it became dormant as many Gorkha fled Mizoram due to *Rambuai*. By 1984, the Nari Samaj was revived with the help of the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association and the Hall was once again used for various purposes where women were taught knitting, weaving and cooking.²⁸⁷ The Samaj also played an important role in protecting women's rights especially in the case of domestic disputes among the members. The Samaj also frequently organized games and sports for amusement purposes.²⁸⁸

²⁸³ Sunar, et al., p. 35.

²⁸⁴ Purna Prasad, 'Mizoram Gorkha Nari Samaj le sathi varsha tekya', *Saparivar (Nepali)*, Vol-7, Issue-7, October 2013, p. 48.

²⁸⁵ Nirmal K Pun interview.

²⁸⁶ The Constitutions of the Mizoram Gorkha Women Association, a booklet.

²⁸⁷ Prasad, *Saparivar*, p. 48.

²⁸⁸ Binda Chhetri interview.

By 1996, the Nari Samaj became inactive again and the Samaj Hall became neglected. Because of this negligence, the Government cancelled the land pass and handed over to the Tuikual Young Mizo Association. It was a huge loss for the Gorkha women. The Gorkha women had to fight again for four years to have another plot of land in their name. In 2000, the government finally granted them a land pass near the present Khatla Nepali School where a new hall has been constructed.²⁸⁹

3.9. Gorkha Panchayat:

From the record found in the Mizoram State Archives, it can be concluded that the Gorkha Panchayat must have started in the early period with the I Assam Rifles to look after the disputes between the Gorkha soldiers within the army. With the passage of time, as more Gorkhas settled outside the army cantonment, it became allowed that a Gorkha Panchayat could also be held for outsiders whenever necessary by giving official intimation to the Superintendent's Office, and that two senior officers of the Battalion would preside over it.²⁹⁰ The Superintendent, A.G. McCall also ordered that any case or correspondence will be addressed to the Commandant, I Assam Rifles for favour.²⁹¹ It can be concluded that any dispute between the Gorkhas, whether inside or outside the Army cantonment, the issue should be acknowledged by the Commandant of the I Assam Rifles.

In a Memorandum issued by the Commandant, it was written that writers had to be engaged in the Panchayat to translate the statement and judgment in English. To compensate the writers, the opposing parties would have to deposit Rs. 3/- per case and the loser would forfeit the deposit which will be given to the writers.²⁹² Whenever there was a case involving the Gorkha customs, the Gorkha Mauzadar should be present in the Panchayat for consultation on customs.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Prasad, p. 48.

²⁹⁰ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 456, G – 8, C.B. No – 35, p. 50. Captain Jarman, Esq., Assistant Superintendent, Lushai Hills, 1933.

²⁹¹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 456, G – 8, C.B. No – 35, p. 43. Superintendent's Order, 1933.

²⁹² Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No. 456, G – 8, C.B. No – 35, p. 39. Major Commandant, I Assam Rifles to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, 1933.

²⁹³ McCall, p. 173.

After the abolition of Mauzadar in 1953, the Gorkha Panchayat became more indispensable to the Gorkhas. Cases were made triable only on receipt from the Superintendent of Lushai Hills and such cases usually required Gorkha social customs.²⁹⁴ The rules and regulations of the Gorkha Panchayat was laid down with the intention to give right of control of their social customs as far as possible with the least interference by the Magistrate of the District.²⁹⁵ The Commandant could call the following gentlemen as the President – Lochman Chhetri, Joy Bahadur, Randhoj Rana, Mota Rai and Hanjit Rai.²⁹⁶

A separate Gorkha Panchayat was also set up in Mile 45 Dwarband Road where the Panchayat consisted of the Headman as President, assisted by two members, appointed by the Superintendent. The Mile 45 Panchayat's jurisdiction extended to civil disputes concerning custom between the Gorkhas.²⁹⁷ The Panchayat levied a fee of Rs. 5/- from both parties. After a period of appeal is over, Rs. 1/- was given to the writer, the fee of the successful party would be refunded, and the rest would be kept by the Panchayat. The Panchayat also had the power to waive off the fee in case of a really destitute party. Any party discontented with the Panchayat could also make a move to the Commandant for reconsideration.²⁹⁸

In course of time, the Gorkha Panchayat slowly lost its importance as the Gorkhas could easily take up their disputes to the Village Council Courts or the District Courts. The Panchayat usually dealt with the customary laws and since the laws could not be properly applied to the Gorkhas of Mizoram, it slowly stopped functioning. Harisingh Pradhan was the last President and with his death, the Gorkha Panchayat became dormant.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ McCall, p. 178.

²⁹⁵ Pradhan, p. 63.

²⁹⁶ McCall, pp. 178-179.

²⁹⁷ McCall, p. 180.

²⁹⁸ McCall, p. 179.

²⁹⁹ Nirmal K. Pun interview. The customary laws of Gorkhas are derived from Nepal. Since the social structure has become different from the rigid social structure of Nepal, the laws could not be applied among the Gorkhas of Mizoram.

3.10. Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association:

The Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association (MGYA) has been the most important and most influential organization among the Gorkhas. The MGYA play a vital role in bringing the Gorkha youths together and the other organizations into its fold.³⁰⁰ Before the initiation of the MGYA, the Gorkhas could become member of the Young Mizo Association (YMA) in their own locality. Apart from being a member of the YMA, few Gorkhas had their own association confined to their own locality such as TARUNDAL in Bawngkawn, Gorkha Youth Association in Kolasib and Gorkha Associations in Zotlang and Dinthar.

In 18th August 1976, a group of young Gorkhas from Khatla gathered together and decided to establish an organization on the pattern of Young Mizo Association, which could hold all the Gorkha youths under its umbrella. In the beginning, it started as an ad-hoc body and the first President was K.L. Pradhan. The MGYA for a year was limited to Khatla area as Khatla had a large number of Gorkha residents. In the next year, under the Chairmanship of Dasharath Sahi, a meeting was organized at the residence of Binu Kumar Thapa in which 21 members were present and discussed at length on the necessity to have a state-level youth association. As a result, an official body was formed under the Presidentship of Buddhiraja and the first General Secretary was K.R. Ghimire. The ad-hoc body formed at Khatla became one of the branches of the MGYA. A sub-headquarter was established at Kolasib and 16 branches across the state at Khatla, Maubawk, Dinthar, Zotlang, Tanhril, Rangvamual, Bawngkawn, Thuampui, Durtlang, Bara Bazar, Vairengte, Kolasib, Bualpui, Lunglei, Saiha and Lawipu.³⁰¹

The main motto of the MGYA is Selfless-Service and All-round Development. Any Gorkha who is above 14 years of age can become its member by giving membership fee. The MGYA has been working for the preservation and promotion of Nepali language, culture and values by giving guidance to the youths,³⁰² it also tries to do away with old-age practices by imbibing the good practices of the Mizo community.

³⁰⁰ Pradhan, p. 300.

³⁰¹ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

³⁰² Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

It changes many things in the community and religious practices for the betterment of the Gorkha society. For example, the Gorkhas now started to hold a wake when a person dies, and instead of playing cards and carom boards, these nights are now used for reading *Gita* and singing hymns.³⁰³

For the Gorkhas, the MGYA plays a vital role in religious education, community practices and education thereby trying to impart all-round development for the Gorkhas. The Central MGYA in Aizawl has been publishing a newsletter called *NIGALO* since 2nd April, 1986. It has also been organizing inter-branches games and sports to bring together Gorkha youths at least once a year. 18th August is observed as Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association Day every year and every branch of MGYA donates blood in the hospitals as part of the celebration programme.³⁰⁴

The MGYA often holds social meetings for Gorkha youths to preserve their language, customs, religion and traditions. It is solely due to the influence of MGYA that the Gorkha youths have now started wearing traditional *Dora-Surwal*, Nepali *Topi*, and *Dhaka Saree* in social gatherings and religious programmes. Since the Gorkhas have been living in Mizoram for a long time, there are many Gorkha youths who cannot speak or write Nepali. For these youths, the MGYA gives special language classes in many places.³⁰⁵

When the MGYA celebrated its Silver Jubilee, delegates were invited from different parts of India. Many delegates came from Darjeeling, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Manipur, Jharkhand etc. This meeting became the ground for the establishment of Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh for the whole India. This can be regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the MGYA.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Purna Prasad, *Kehi Yaadgar Chhanharu*, *Collection of Articles*, Aizawl, Technosys Offset, 2020, p. 76.

³⁰⁴ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

³⁰⁵ Prasad, *Kehi Yaadgar Chhanharu*, p. 78.

³⁰⁶ Prasad, p. 81.

3.11. Gorkha stability and conclusion:

The Gorkhas have been living in Mizoram for more than a century. Despite living among the Mizo for a very long time, it is amazing how much they are strongly attached to their culture. Though there are a number of Gorkhas who have been assimilated into Mizo society, yet the majority of Gorkhas stay deep rooted in their traditional practices only with slight changes that comes with changing times. They do not stray from their religion, they retain their language, traditions and customs. However, they have also acquired new practices on the way from their Mizo brethren over these years without losing their identity. The Gorkhas feel that they have a lot of responsibility to preserve their identity and the first step is to safeguard their language. There are new generations who can speak Nepali but cannot read or write. They feel that they must take measures among the new generations by teaching and showing them their responsibility of keeping their identity.

Binda Chhetri recollects how her grandfather urged them to use Nepali language inside the house. She says, “My grandfather used to say that language is the key to protect one’s own identity. So, we must never speak any other language inside our house. You may act like Mizo and speak Mizo fluently outside, but you must be a Gorkha, speaking Nepali inside the house”. She also adds that as long as they speak Nepali and remain a Hindu, then, they will never lose their identity.³⁰⁷

BS Thapa attributes their stability to their respect for elders. According to him, Gorkhas are taught to respect and obey their elders. Most Gorkha will not defy their parents and elders unless absolutely necessary. Children are instructed to value their culture and traditions. He also says that to survive as a Gorkha, it is necessary to marry someone within the Gorkha community so that their children would be able to remain a Gorkha.³⁰⁸

N.L. Jaishi says that it is due to the hard work of associations such as the Gorkha Youth Association, Gorkha Sangh and Nari Samaj that they could still hold on to their language, customs and traditions. These associations play an important role in

³⁰⁷ Binda Chhetri interview.

³⁰⁸ BS Thapa interview.

teaching the Gorkhas the significance of keeping their identity so as not to cease to exist as a Gorkha. He further adds that speaking their language also help them in keeping to their roots. He also believes that Gorkhas should send their children to Gorkha Schools, to have knowledge of their literature, language and history so that generations to come will not go astray from their roots.³⁰⁹

Nirmal K. Pun says that the main factors for their stability are their honesty and loyalty. According to him, Gorkhas are expected to be loyal and honest. These virtues are firmly embedded in every Gorkha's thoughts and behaviour. A Gorkha knows he has to be dependable and truthful. He also says that a Gorkha may not speak fluent Nepali, but he will never cease to be true to his origin. He may marry Mizo, he may convert, but he will always be a Gorkha at heart.³¹⁰ On the other hand, Purna Prasad says that the Gorkhas live in fear of assimilation because they are a minority in the state. This is why they have to keep their culture and traditions alive so that new generations will not forget who they are. He continues to say that there are a number of Gorkhas who have been assimilated. Unless they protect and preserve their traditions and cultures, there are chances that they will all be absorbed into the larger society. So, he regards the fear of assimilation as the factor for their stability.³¹¹

Uday Kumar Jaishi feels that to protect their identity, children have to be taught to believe in themselves that they are able enough. He says, "The Gorkhas are of good reputation all over the world especially in terms of bravery and in order to keep up our reputation, we do not need anyone else. Majority of us are stable because of our belief that we are good enough".³¹²

Pratap Chhetri says that their stability is due to the difference between Gorkhas and Mizo. According to him, Gorkhas and Mizo are two completely different entities, having different culture, traditions, language and religion unlike most states where there are lots of similarities. Even though there are some who have been absorbed into

³⁰⁹ N.L. Jaishi interview.

³¹⁰ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

³¹¹ Purna Prasad interview.

³¹² Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

Mizo society, yet for the majority, their differences help the Gorkhas in keeping their identity.³¹³

Over the years of their settlement, the Gorkhas have acquired lots of practices from their Mizo brethren without completely losing their traditional practices. They have modified their age – old practices to meet the needs of the changing society thereby becoming a unique community, quite different from those Gorkha communities elsewhere.

Their associations help them in becoming closer as a community and help them to maintain their culture, language and identity.

³¹³ Pratap Chhetri interview.

Chapter 4: Education in Mizoram and the Gorkhas

4.1. Introduction:

Prior to the colonial period, there was no written form of the Mizo language as it was the western missionaries who reduced Mizo language to a written form. In Mizoram, the colonial government initiated education by opening a government school for the children of the soldiers, where education was imparted either in Bengali or Hindi and it was almost impossible for Mizo to attend the school. The actual education for the masses started with the arrival of the Christian missionaries. Thus, the western missionaries were the fore runner of education in Mizoram.

The Christian missionaries set up schools for the Mizo soon after they arrived, where teaching was done in the vernacular language. Education became an effective tool for preaching the Gospel. The chiefs of different villages demanded opening of school in their village, and wherever a school was set up, a Sunday School would follow where preaching and sermon could be done.³¹⁴ In regard to the aims of the missionaries, John V. Hluna writes,

“To them, the Gospel alone could restore the ruined tribal society. In order to properly communicate the Gospel, they felt the necessity that preaching must be followed by their understanding of the Bible. Hence arose the absolute necessity of giving education to the Mizos. In this way, in Mizoram, education became the handmaid of religion”³¹⁵

When the British started to settle permanently in Mizoram, they soon opened Government Schools for the Sepoys’ children but not for the Mizo. In fact, their initial policy was to interfere as little as possible in the internal affairs and they followed a cautious policy in dealing with the tribe.³¹⁶ Perhaps this is why they were hesitant to

³¹⁴ B. Lalzarliana, ‘Governor, Missionaries and Education in Mizoram, A Contextual Analysis’, *Contemporary Social Scientist*, Vol. X-1, Summer 2018, p. 9.

³¹⁵ John V. Hluna, *Role of missionaries in Mizoram Education*. Available from: <http://dspace.nehu.in> , (accessed 28 January 2022).

³¹⁶ K. Robin, ‘Traditional Institutions, Administration of Justice and Impact of Colonialism’ in Malsawmdawngliana et al., *Mizo Narratives, Accounts from Mizoram*, Guwahati, Scientific Book Centre, 2013, p. 175.

open formal educational institution for the Mizo. Moreover, the Mizo had no written language and it must also have been difficult for the British to decide by which language the Mizo should be taught. It was the first two Christian Missionaries who devised a written language for the Mizo and who started schools for them.

Right from the start of their establishment, the British, however, did not neglect education for the Gorkha children. In fact, the Gorkhas received schooling before the Mizo. This chapter studies the beginning of formal education in Mizoram and how the Gorkhas were included in every step. The chapter also traces the establishment of Gorkha Schools and their developments.

4.2. Government Schools:

The first formal school in Mizoram was opened in Aizawl in the year 1893 for the children of the soldiers.³¹⁷ In an extract from Letter No. 277 dated the 17th July 1896, from A. Porteous, it is written that a school for sepoy's children had been working in Aizawl since November 1893 and the School Master was a Military Police Havildar who was given Rs. 5/- per month in addition to his regular pay. The average number of children who attended this School was 15 and Hindi was the medium of instruction. This School was not available for Mizo children.³¹⁸ The Government Schools were also opened in Lunglei and Tlabung in 1894 which were maintained with the contributions made by the Military Police and fund from Chittagong Hill Tracts, Primary Education Fund.³¹⁹

Porteous, the then Political Officer proposed to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to sanction a grant for the establishment of one school for Mizo children.³²⁰ Porteous wrote that in this school, the language taught will be Bengali and besides Mizo children, the children of Kachari Sepoys will also attend this

³¹⁷ C. Lianzuala, *Mizoram School Hmasate (1894-1952)*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2005, p. 25.

³¹⁸ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 5, Edn – 4, CB No – 1, p.81. *From A. Porteous, Esq., I.C.S., Offg. Political Officer, North Lushai Hills to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.*

³¹⁹ Lianzuala, *Mizoram School*, p. 25.

³²⁰ J.V. Hluna, *Education and Missionaries in Mizoram*, Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 1992, p.57.

school.³²¹ He also suggested that the teacher of the school should have knowledge of Mizo and that he should qualify within 18 months in the language and until he passed the examination of qualification, he would be given a salary of Rs. 30/- and to be increased to Rs. 40/- after qualifying Mizo language examination.³²²

The proposal was thus approved by the Government and subsequently a Government School for Mizo children was opened in 21st August, 1897 where the School Master was Kalijoy Kavyatirtha.³²³ Kalijoy strongly suggested that Bengali should be the medium of instruction. He based his suggestion on the fact that since science, philosophy and other subjects are available in Bengali, the students will have the opportunity to study to improve and also would enable them to read newspapers which would further help them in wider outlook.³²⁴ In his first report to the Political Officer, Kalijoy reported that 68 students had learnt how to read and write, 7 students learnt addition and subtraction, and out of these 7 students, 3 were able to do multiplication.³²⁵

Major Shakespear, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills framed the rules for management of Aizawl School in 1899. He worked out a framework by which the School would be under the management of a committee comprised of three members, one nominated by Commandant of the Military Police, one from clerical establishment and the other one – the Superintendent. It was also issued that Mizo children who were under the ranks of Sub-Inspector would get free education.³²⁶ In regard to the Government School at Tlabung, the Chief Commissioner of Assam also sanctioned the Superintendent's proposal to keep up the School, which was under the Educational Authorities of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and authorized to pay the School Master Rs.

³²¹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 5, Edn – 4, CB No – 1, p.81. *From A. Porteous, Esq., I.C.S., Offg. Political Officer, North Lushai Hills to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.*

³²² Hluna, *Education and Missionaries*, p. 57.

³²³ Lianzuala, p. 25.

³²⁴ Hluna, p. 58.

³²⁵ Lianzuala, p. 25.

³²⁶ Hluna, p. 58.

20/- per month and the pay should be increased to Rs. 30/- after passing in the Mizo language.³²⁷

Shakespear was also very impressed at the development of the Mizo students at Lunglei Government School. He wrote in his inspection note that he is pleased to see the progress made especially with the Mizo. Since the School Master did not have knowledge of Mizo language, the Superintendent deputed an interpreter from Aizawl to teach how to read and write. As a result of which the School Master had made great progress with the language. The Superintendent also wrote in his inspection note that there were 5 Hindus and 18 Mizo students with an average attendance of 12.³²⁸

The Government also set up a Government School in Khawngbawk in the year 1901 where the School Master was Nobin Chandra Barua. By 1904, the schools in Aizawl, Lunglei and Khawngbawk were handed over to the Mission though the Government set up Bengali Schools in Aizawl and Lunglei for Bengali children.³²⁹ The Bengali School continued for a long time, where Bengali children and Gorkha girls received formal education.

4.3. Arrival of the Christian Mission:

In order to study the beginning of formal education in Mizo language and its progress in Mizoram, it is necessary to start from the coming of the Christian missionaries in Mizoram. The establishment of a proper government opened up Mizoram and the Christian missionaries arrived soon after. Formal education in vernacular language began with the Christian missionaries.

The first Christian missionary who set foot in Mizoram was William Williams of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission, who was working in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.³³⁰ He arrived in 1891 but had to go back. The next missionaries were

³²⁷ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 5, Edn – 4, CB No – 1, p.25. *The Officiating Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills dated 19th January, 1899.*

³²⁸ Hluna, p. 59.

³²⁹ Lianzuala, p. 26.

³³⁰ Hluna, p. 40.

J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge of the Arthington Aborigines Mission. Prior to these two missionaries, Mizo had no written language.³³¹

Before coming to Mizoram, the two missionaries – Lorrain and Savidge stayed in Silchar because at that time, Mizoram was still an unsettled place and the Government officials feared for these missionaries.³³² Staying in Silchar turned out to be convenient for the missionaries for it gave them opportunities to meet Mizo who came to the market and in this way, they were able to pick up Mizo language and learned Mizo ways.³³³ The two missionaries lived on the border of Silchar so as to be able to contact those Mizo who came to the market. While they were in Silchar, they got hold of a book written by T.H. Lewin called *The Progressive Colloquial Exercise in Lushai Dialect* which proved to be helpful in the study of Mizo language.³³⁴ Lorrain and Savidge worked on alphabets suitable for Mizo language while they were waiting for permission to enter Mizoram in 1893 and they seemed to be testing the alphabets to see how suitable it was.³³⁵ Their stay in Silchar was a blessing for them as they were able to speak Mizo when they reached Aizawl.³³⁶

Lorrain and Savidge reached Aizawl on the 16th January 1894. These two missionaries felt that devising Mizo alphabet and to open school were the most important works. It was clear to them that the people of Mizoram needed a written language and a school where they could learn in their own language.³³⁷ Thus, Mizo alphabet was devised by Lorrain and Savidge using Roman lettering and based on the Hunterian system.³³⁸

4.4. The early stage of education under the Mission:

The two missionaries arrived in Mizoram at the exact right time because it was during this period that the Government intended to introduce Bengali as the medium

³³¹ Lloyd, *History of the Church*, p. 29.

³³² Ralte, p. 188.

³³³ Lloyd, p. 26.

³³⁴ Ralte, pp. 187-188.

³³⁵ Lloyd, p. 263,

³³⁶ Ralte, p. 189.

³³⁷ Lianzuala, pp. 9-10.

³³⁸ Lloyd, p. 29.

of instruction for the Mizo. These two missionaries, in fact gave the Mizo the supreme gift of a written language as the use of Bengali would have meant the dying out of Mizo language.³³⁹

Lorrain and Savidge initially settled in present day Dawrpui Middle School when they arrived in Aizawl and they shifted to present day McDonald Hill which was situated between two Mizo villages, that is Thangphunga's *Veng* and Lalchhinga's *Veng* which proved to be beneficial for them as they were able to contact the nearby Mizo people.³⁴⁰ In the course of perfecting the Mizo language, they received help from M. Suaka and Thangphunga,³⁴¹ who became their first students and were the Chiefs of Durtlang and Chaltlang respectively.³⁴² The first vernacular school started in 1st April 1894 on the verandah of their residence.³⁴³ On the next day, the school was shifted to a roughly built bamboo hut, situated in the present day Government Mizo Higher Secondary School field.³⁴⁴

As mentioned earlier, the first students were M. Suaka and Thangphunga. Lalchhinga (Lal Singh Thapa) also studied in the first school for a while. It is also said that M. Suaka and Thangphunga had studied in the Bengali School before, but, shifted to the Mission School later.³⁴⁵ The school was opened from 9:00 AM till 11:00 AM.³⁴⁶ This school became the first Mission School where the medium of instruction was in vernacular language. The first students were followed by Khamliana and Lalchhinga (Lal Singh Thapa) who were Chiefs of Lungleng and Tlangnuam respectively.³⁴⁷ Khamliana was the first Mizo who could read and write and therefore, regarded as the first educated Mizo.³⁴⁸ In this first school, teaching was mostly done by Savidge.³⁴⁹

³³⁹ Hluna, p. 52.

³⁴⁰ Ralte, p. 204.

³⁴¹ Ralte, p. 205.

³⁴² Hluna, p. 52.

³⁴³ Lianzuala, p. 10.

³⁴⁴ V. L. Nghaka, *Mizoram Zirna Chanchin*, Aizawl, Gilzom Offset, 2018, p. 16.

³⁴⁵ Ralte, p. 250.

³⁴⁶ Ralte, p. 216.

³⁴⁷ Nghaka, *Mizoram Zirna*, p. 16.

³⁴⁸ Hluna, p. 52.

³⁴⁹ Lianzuala, p. 10.

Thus, the first Mission School was opened in 1894 by J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge. Savidge was a school master before coming to Mizoram and he soon built a school building close to Thangphunga's village. The floor was made of clay, the building was provided with a skirting but without walls on three sides. In this school, they taught a few unwilling children whom they tried to attract by giving them sweets.³⁵⁰ The school ran successfully for some time, but they had to close as they were leaving Mizoram.³⁵¹ They stayed in Mizoram for almost four years, from January 1894 – December 1897. These four years proved to be fruitful years during which they did significant works which became a solid foundation for years to come.³⁵² Within these four years of their staying, they wrote a *Grammar and Dictionary* that contained seven thousand words which was published by the Government in 1898 which later became the foundation of all educational works in Mizoram.³⁵³

4.5. The Welsh Mission School:

Mizoram field was taken over by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission and the first missionary that arrived was D.E. Jones, who arrived in August, 1897. D.E. Jones soon took up education from the earlier missionaries. On 15th February 1898, he opened a school on the verandah of his house.³⁵⁴ Though there were only few students in the beginning, they gradually increased above 30, and they were mainly boys. The pupils mostly came from the villages, they carried with them rice to last for some time and they stayed in the small hostel built by Major Shakespear, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills.³⁵⁵ These children from the villages studied in the school as long as their rice lasted and then went back to their villages. While on school, they acquired the skill of reading and writing which they again taught to their friends on reaching their villages.³⁵⁶ Moreover, Major Shakespear provided free lodging and

³⁵⁰ Lloyd, pp. 30-31.

³⁵¹ Hluna, p. 53.

³⁵² Lloyd, p. 28.

³⁵³ C.L. Hminga, *The Life and Witness of the Churches in Mizoram*, Serkawn, The Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, 1987, p. 50.

³⁵⁴ Lloyd, p. 42.

³⁵⁵ Hluna, p. 53.

³⁵⁶ Lianzuala, p. 13.

food for three months to every chief who wanted to study and the Government and the Mission also supported the Mizo children by issuing free rations.³⁵⁷

On the last days on 1898, another missionary, Edwin Rowlands arrived in Mizoram.³⁵⁸ Rowlands was an experienced teacher and soon these two missionaries took up the work of education among the Mizo.³⁵⁹ In 1900, a large building was set up that served as a church cum school where Rai Bhajur, who came with D.E. Jones took most of the day school classes.³⁶⁰ The Mission School at Aizawl was opened from mid-January and regular classes were held for about nine months in a year.³⁶¹ The number of pupils in the school could not be constant as there were pupils who dropped out every now and then. By 1901, the number of students enrolled reached 150 in number.³⁶² Every year, there was an increase in students and it became difficult for the missionaries to provide food and shelter. So, many youngsters became self-supporting. In order to earn their livelihood and pay for their schooling, many Mizo boys became *Sipai bel nawt* in the army cantonment.³⁶³ In this regard, J. Meirion Lloyd writes that –

“There were other ways and a number of Mizo lads had their own methods of coping with the problem of schooling. A detachment of the Assam Rifles were always in need of some unskilled labour in the kitchens and canteens. Mizo boys from outlying villages could earn their meagre keep in this way. So, they became what were called ‘*Bel nawt* boys’, namely those who scrubbed and cleaned the cooking pots, and did a lot of other things, no doubt, to support themselves in school. A number of future leaders of the Mizo church, men who rose to positions of considerable importance and responsibility, ‘worked their way’ through school in this manner”.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁷ Hluna, p. 66.

³⁵⁸ Lloyd, pp. 43-44,

³⁵⁹ Lianzuala, p. 13.

³⁶⁰ Lloyd, p. 42.

³⁶¹ Hluna, p. 54.

³⁶² Lianzuala, pp. 14-15.

³⁶³ Hluna, p. 53.

³⁶⁴ Lloyd, p. 63.

These soldiers were mainly Gorkha soldiers who seemed to have treated the Mizo boys fairly since a large number of Mizo worked their way through their education this way.

4.5.1. Experimental Schools:

D.E. Jones and Edwin Rowlands wanted the Mizo pupils who were taught by them to run schools on their own in their villages. By 1901, the learned Mizo were sent out to teach others in the villages purely on voluntary basis. Thanga, Chawnga and Tawka were the first teachers in these experimental schools.³⁶⁵ Thanga was placed at Khawrihnm, Chawnga at Phulpui and Tawka at Chhingchhip for a period of three months. In these villages, school buildings were constructed by the villagers and contributed tinfu of rice for the teacher.³⁶⁶ The school began to be divided into two classes – Lower Primary Section and Upper Primary Section.³⁶⁷ In 1902, two more experimental schools were opened, taught by unpaid Mizo who had learnt reading and writing. Edwin Rowlands also opened a school in Lalhrima's village and boys of the regular Mission School also started night schools purely on voluntary basis in Aizawl. Moreover, Hauchhunga also opened a night school in his village, Muallungthu. Eventhough the attendance in these experimental schools were not so high, yet they were able to produce literate Mizo boys and girls and also adults in many places.³⁶⁸

4.5.2. Girls Education:

Since the establishment of Mission Schools, girls also attended though much fewer in number than the boys. In D.E. Jones' first school, only 6 girl pupils were there out of 56 pupils in 1899.³⁶⁹ During this period, it was difficult for girls to attend school regularly mainly due to the mindset that there was no use to educate a girl child.³⁷⁰ In

³⁶⁵ Lianzuala, p. 15.

³⁶⁶ Hluna, p. 54.

³⁶⁷ Lianzuala, p. 15.

³⁶⁸ Hluna, p. 55.

³⁶⁹ Hluna, p. 53.

³⁷⁰ Lalhmuaka, *Zoram Zirna lam Chhinchhiahna*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute, 1981, p. 5.

1900, there were 8-9 girls studying in the Mission School. There were also a number of times when the girls were taught by Rai Bhajur's wife in her home.³⁷¹

J. Meirion Lloyd writes that there were two brave girls who came from the south, nearly a hundred miles away to attend the school in the first few years of its existence.³⁷² These two girls seemed to be Nui and Saii who were hard working and had made great progress.³⁷³ In 1903, the first Lower Primary Exam was held. From the Mission School, 13 out of 13 students passed and from the Government School, 6 out of 14 students passed. Nui and Saii did very well in the examination and they even won the government scholarship.³⁷⁴ In the same year, experimental schools for girls were opened in Mission Veng, Thakthing and Venghluai where Nui, Saii and Pawngi became the teachers on voluntary basis.³⁷⁵

4.5.3. Education in South Mizoram:

As mentioned earlier, the Government opened Government Schools in Lunglei and Tlabung, and later in Khawngbawk. The schools in Lunglei and Tlabung were meant for the children of the military personnel, where the teachers were Bengalis. There had been some Mizo children learning in Lunglei School as well.³⁷⁶ By 1901, the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) wanted to take over South Mizoram and George Hughes was sent to Lunglei in 1901 to inspect the area for evangelization. The BMS then invited J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge to work in South Mizoram, and they were happy to accept the invitation.³⁷⁷ They arrived in March, 1903 and soon settled in Serkawn. When Savidge and Lorrain returned to Mizoram, the Welsh Mission transferred the southern portion to their care and these two missionaries followed the same pattern of evangelism as in the north.³⁷⁸ They regarded opening school as the first important step and they opened the first Mission School in July, 1903 in Serkawn. They also asked Lunglei SDO to transfer some children who were studying in the

³⁷¹ Lianzuala, p. 14.

³⁷² Lloyd, p. 64.

³⁷³ Lianzuala, p. 6.

³⁷⁴ Lianzuala, pp. 21-22.

³⁷⁵ Hluna, pp. 54-55.

³⁷⁶ Lalhmuaka, *Zoram Zirna*, p. 3.

³⁷⁷ Lianzuala, pp. 63-64.

³⁷⁸ Hluna, p. 78.

Government School. When it was agreed, the first Mission School was opened. The first students were – Challiana, Chuautera, Vinga, Chhingkhupa, Makthanga, Savawma and Hlianga.³⁷⁹ The children who wanted to study grew rapidly and non-availability of teachers became the issue. However, it was soon resolved when several boys got themselves qualified to teach elementary school.³⁸⁰

The two missionaries also opened boarding house for the students. There were 12 children in 1904 who were studying under the care of the missionaries. By 1904, 4 schools were opened in the villages followed by more schools in the next year.³⁸¹ From the beginning, girls also attended the school regularly. In 1909, there were as many as 10 girls studying in the Mission School. The first Lower Primary Examination in South Mizoram was held in 1904 where there were 20 candidates.³⁸²

4.6. Opening of Regular Schools and Handover of Education to the Mission:

The experimental schools proved to be a success in the villages. By 1903, when the missionaries saw the fruits of these schools, they decided to establish regular schools in place of temporary schools.³⁸³ For this purpose, Edwin Rowlands chose Khandaih village³⁸⁴ where Hrangsaipuia was appointed as teacher and 8 more schools were opened in different parts of Mizoram in the same year.³⁸⁵ The other schools were opened in Khawrihnim, Phulpui, Zuktual, Lungtan, Biate, Khawreng, Hmunpui and Maite.³⁸⁶

As there was an increase in the opening of regular schools, the number of pupils also increased considerably. Out of these nine schools, five schools received a sum of Rs. 5/- per month from the Government for the management of the school.³⁸⁷ In the southern Mizoram, as stated earlier, the Baptist Mission also opened a Mission School

³⁷⁹ Lianzuala, p. 65.

³⁸⁰ Hluna, p. 78.

³⁸¹ Lianzuala, pp. 65-66.

³⁸² Lalhmuaka, pp. 5-6.

³⁸³ Hluna, p. 55.

³⁸⁴ Lloyd, p. 66.

³⁸⁵ Lianzuala, p. 23.

³⁸⁶ Hluna, p. 55.

³⁸⁷ Lianzuala, p. 24.

in 1903.³⁸⁸ In the meanwhile, the Mission School in Aizawl continued to flourish and early in 1904, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Bamfylde Fuller paid a visit to Mizoram which resulted in the handover of Mizoram education to the Mission.³⁸⁹

Sir Bamfylde Fuller visited the Government School and Mission School in Aizawl and he was much impressed by the Mission School.³⁹⁰ He came to the conclusion that in regard to education in Mizoram, the best policy would be placing education in the hands of the Mission, which has proven successful in the Khasi Hills. He also concluded that the schools for teaching the children of the sepoy in the Military Police in Hindi should remain Government institution.³⁹¹ He decided that the Government School should be closed and its grant of Rs. 50/- a month should be transferred to the Mission School and that the latter school would also have government recognition.³⁹²

The Commissioner's proposal to hand over education to the Mission was taken up by Major Shakespear, the Superintendent and in consultation with the Mission, the Government School and its teaching staff were transferred to the Mission from 1st April, 1904. However, the school for the children of the sepoy were to continue as before.³⁹³ Major Shakespear, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills wrote to the Director of Public Instruction, Assam that the missionaries both in Aizawl and Lunglei were willing to take charge of education on the lines proposed by the Chief Commissioner. However, as these two Missions are independent, it will be necessary to appoint two Honorary Inspector of Schools as the Baptist Mission will not take over schools which are liable to be inspected by a member of another Mission and on the other hand, it would also be impossible for the Welsh Mission to take over schools in Lunglei Sub-division. The Superintendent also wrote that Lower Primary Scholarships which were only tenable in Aizawl should be tenable in Lunglei as well. Five new village schools

³⁸⁸ Lalmuaka, p. 3.

³⁸⁹ Lloyd, p. 67.

³⁹⁰ Lianzuala, p. 26.

³⁹¹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 3, Edn – 3, CB No – 1, p. 14. No. 61 P.I – 2005 G., dated Shillong, the 1st March 1904. The Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam letter to The Director of Public Instruction, Assam.

³⁹² Lloyd, p. 67.

³⁹³ Hluna, pp. 77-78.

should also be opened annually up to a maximum of 20 and that each school will be given a grant of Rs. 60/-. Out of these five new schools, three shall be in Aizawl and two in Lunglei.³⁹⁴ The Chief Commissioner also allotted Rs. 2030/- in aid to the Aizawl Mission School and Rs. 1140/- to the Lunglei Mission School.³⁹⁵ The money was used for the construction of school buildings. In Aizawl, Welsh Mission Boys' Primary School was constructed and in Lunglei, the Baptist Mission constructed a school in Serkawn.³⁹⁶

The process of handing over education to the Mission was completed in 1905-1906 when all the Government Schools were handed over to the Welsh Mission and Baptist Mission in Aizawl and Lunglei respectively. As per the Superintendent's suggestion, Edwin Rowlands became the Honorary Inspector of Schools in Aizawl sub-division and F.W. Savidge became the Honorary Inspector of Schools in Lunglei sub-division.³⁹⁷

With the amalgamation of Government Schools and Mission School, the Welsh Mission Boys' Primary School called *Sikulsen* started in Sikulpuikawn, Aizawl. A new building was constructed and half the expenditure for it was borne by the Government. This new school was started in 1905.³⁹⁸ In the next year 1906, the Superintendent gave permission to the Mission to open a Middle School. It became the first Middle School in Mizoram and it was called Boys' Middle English School (*Sikulpui*).³⁹⁹ Boys' Middle English School became co-educational institution from 1957 and there were 22 girls enrolled in this year.⁴⁰⁰ The Welsh Mission Boys' School remained under the care of the Mission for 50 years.

³⁹⁴ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 3, Edn – 9, CB No – 1, p. 43. No. 167 G., dated Aizawl the 7th May 1904. Major J. Shakespear, C.I.E., D.S.O., I.A., Superintendent, Lushai Hills letter to the Director of Public Instruction, Assam.

³⁹⁵ Lianzuala, p. 26.

³⁹⁶ Lalthanliana, 'Sikulpui, a Tobul leh a Than zel dan' in Thanseia (ed.), *SIKULPUI Govt. Boys' Middle School Centenary 1907-2007 Souvenir*, Aizawl, The Sikulpui Centenary Celebration Organizing Committee, 2007, pp. 46-47.

³⁹⁷ Hluna, pp. 78-79.

³⁹⁸ Lianzuala, p. 27.

³⁹⁹ C. Chhuanvawra, 'Sikulpui Chanchin Tlangpui' in Thanseia (ed.), *SIKULPUI Govt. Boys' Middle School Centenary 1907-2007 Souvenir*, Aizawl, The Sikulpui Centenary Celebration Organizing Committee, 2007, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁰ Chhuanvawra, *SIKULPUI Souvenir*, p. 5.

4.7. Gorkha Education:

From the start of formal education in Mizoram, the Gorkhas were never neglected in education. In fact, the first formal school established by the Government was exclusively for the children of the soldiers. During those times, majority of the soldiers were Gorkhas though there were Bengalis as well. The medium of instruction was also in Hindi which proved that there were a number of Gorkha children who studied in Government Schools who could not speak Bengali. Hindi must have been chosen with a purpose that Hindi served as a common ground for Gorkha children and Bengali children. So, the children of the early Gorkha settlers must have attended the Government Schools in Aizawl, Lunglei and Tlabung. After the missionaries set up Mission School, there might have been a handful of Gorkha children who attended the Mission School as well.

When the Government School was started, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Assam Rifles made a stern order that the children of the soldiers should be enrolled in the School.⁴⁰¹ This shows that the Government wanted the Gorkha children to be educated, perhaps to serve as a ground for further recruitment in the army. Apart from the Government School in Aizawl, the 1st Assam Rifles set up a Kindergarten School, also called Military or Battalion School in their premises where basic education was imparted. This Military School served for the purpose of teaching line children the elements of education before passing them on to a local Government School for proper education.⁴⁰² The children of the military personnel attended this school where they could probably learn in their own language. After they finished Kindergarten, the boys continued either in the Government School or the Mission School and the girls continued in Bengali School which was maintained by the Government.⁴⁰³

For the Gorkha boys, Mission School was where they could receive quality education and the missionaries had no discrimination against them. In fact, the Gorkha children were much favoured regarding their schooling. A separate department was set

⁴⁰¹ Nirmal K. Pun, *SIKULPUI Souvenir*, p. 178.

⁴⁰² Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G-1, CB No – 66, p. 12. No. 507/IV – 15/7 – A. The Commandant of 1st Assam Rifles letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills.

⁴⁰³ Purna Prasad interview.

up exclusively for the Gorkha students though the department was called Hindi Department. In this department, education was imparted in Nepali for the benefit of Gorkha children.⁴⁰⁴ The Hindi Department was meant for the education of the children of the Surma Valley Police Battalion as well as children of the ex-servicemen.⁴⁰⁵ The Hindi Department was situated in a separate building, owned by the Mission. The boys had to go back and forth between the *Sikulsen* and the Department as Mathematics and English were taught in the main building, together with Mizo students. Other subjects were taught in the Department.⁴⁰⁶

In the 1906 Lower Primary Examination, three students – Johar S. Thapa, Krishna Chandra and Babu Lal Thapa passed Class I. And from Class II, D. Bahadur Rai and Puran Singh passed the examination. The examination syllabi included English, Dictation, Mathematics, Geography and *Zirtir bu*.⁴⁰⁷ As for the teachers, it is difficult to ascertain who taught the different subjects in the early period. As mentioned before, Mathematics and English were taught in *Sikulsen*, along with the Mizo students. Perhaps for other subjects, some literate Military Police personnel continued to render their services.⁴⁰⁸ Another record found in *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu* shows a list of Gorkha students in the year 1914. The list included – Nain Singh Chetry, Dhanbhadur Limboo, Chhatraman Thapa, Kalu Gurung, Lachman Chetry, Nohal Singh Chetry and Dhirrughu Lal Chetry.⁴⁰⁹

In 1919, F.J. Sandy, the Honorary Inspector of Schools wrote a letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills requesting a scholarship for Kirpa Lama, a Gorkha boy and a Mizo boy to enable them to study in Jumna High School, Allahabad in order to make them qualified teachers for the Gorkha children. F. J. Sandy wrote,

“I beg to say that Kirpa Lama is an intelligent boy and that he takes an interest in his school work. I shall be glad if he and a Lushai boy can be given a

⁴⁰⁴ Pun, p. 180.

⁴⁰⁵ Pun, p. 178.

⁴⁰⁶ Purna Prasad interview.

⁴⁰⁷ *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu*, Lekha VI, April 1906, dated 23rd February, 1906. Report given by D.E. Jones.

⁴⁰⁸ Pun, p. 179.

⁴⁰⁹ *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Lehkhabu*, Bu 1-na, January, 1914.

Government Scholarship for 2 years to enable them to study at the Jumna High School, Allahabad, with a view to their being employed as teachers on their return to Aijal. There is at present no qualified teacher available for the Hindi Department and I should therefore be very glad to ensure having a teacher for the Gurkha boys of the district whose fathers are in Lushai for Government purposes, by sending two boys to be prepared at the Jumna High School.

I think that Rs. 12/- a month should be sufficient to cover the expense of board and tuition for each boy".⁴¹⁰

In this regard, G.B. Davies, the Officiating Commandant of the 1st Lushai Hills Battalion, Assam Rifles, after consultation with F.J. Sandy, also strongly recommended to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills for the granting of scholarships to the two boys.⁴¹¹ The Superintendent then wrote to the Acting Director of Public Instruction, Assam, in respect to the scholarships, making clear that if two scholarships cannot be granted, the Gorkha boy would be the preferred student, by making him as his first nominee. The Acting Director, F.W. Sudmersen then granted a scholarship of Rs. 12/- a month which went to Kirpa Lama, a Gorkha boy who was to finish his training in Allahabad within two years.⁴¹² Thus, Kirpa Lama became the first ever Gorkha teacher appointed in the Hindi Department of the Mission School in Aizawl.⁴¹³

By 1922, apart from Kirpa Lama, there were other Gorkha teachers such as Manbahadur Ale, Kam Singh Lama and Jai Bahadur Sahi. Manbahadur Ale later became the Mauzadar.⁴¹⁴ There were about 40 children studying in the Hindi Department in the 1920s. These were mostly children of the soldiers and ex-servicemen. There were 7 classes in the Department, starting from Class I – VII. The Mission appointed Zalawra to be in charge of the Department, who taught Scriptures

⁴¹⁰ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 27, Edn – 5, CB No – 2, p. 32. F.J. Sandy, Honorary Inspector of School letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, dated 4th September 1919.

⁴¹¹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 27, Edn – 5, CB No – 2, p. 41. Captain G.B. Davies, Offg. Commandant, 1st Lushai Hills Battalion, Assam Rifles letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, dated 16th September, 1919.

⁴¹² Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 27, Edn – 5, CB No – 2, p. 49. Letter from the Hon'ble Mr. F.W. Sudmersen, B.A., Acting Director of Public Instruction, Assam to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, dated 24th December, 1919, Shillong.

⁴¹³ Pun, p. 179.

⁴¹⁴ Pun, p. 179.

and Hymns to the students.⁴¹⁵ Jai Bahadur Sahi stated that Zalawra, the Headmaster was paid Rs. 28/- while he was paid Rs. 17/-. Classes I-III are Primary and the above are Middle English. Classes IV-VI paid school fees. For Class IV – 50 Paise, Class V and VI – Rs. 2/- per year. A game fee of 8 Annas per boy was also collected. He also wrote that Gorkha boys continued their schooling in the Mission School after their basic schooling in Battalion School. Those who finished Middle English from the Mission School generally joined the Battalion as writers or soldiers either in Mizoram or elsewhere.⁴¹⁶

The students in the Hindi Department learnt History, Geography, Hygiene and Bible in Nepali besides Nepali literature and they used books written by Rev. Ganga Prasad Pradhan and Parasmani Pradhan, published by Macmillan Company, Calcutta.⁴¹⁷ The 1936 curriculum for Hindi Department found in the Mizoram State Archives shows the different subjects taught. In Class A & B, the lessons consisted of Nepali Primer, English and Alphabet. In Class I and II, English, Arithmetic, Vernacular and Roman figures were taught. In Class III, English, Arithmetic, Scripture, Vernacular, Geography, Hygiene and Nepali Grammar were the syllabus. From Class IV onwards, the subjects included English, Arithmetic, Scripture, Vernacular, History, Geography, Geometry and Grammar. The syllabi were made in consultation with the teachers of the Hindi Department.⁴¹⁸

The Commandant of the 1st Assam Rifles expressed in regards to the general policy of education for the Gorkhas that Hindi should be the medium of instruction in the early stage, that vernacular should be written in Roman characters and English should be encouraged as it is useful in the army as well as other avenues that are open for the Gorkhas.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Leikhabu*, Bu 2 – na, February, 1929.

⁴¹⁶ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G-1, CB No – 66, p. 26. The Superintendent of Lushai Hills report regarding Mission School Nepali. In some records, it is written that Classes start from Class A&B – Class VI.

⁴¹⁷ Pun, p. 180.

⁴¹⁸ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G-1, CB No – 66, p. 21. Record found signed by Zalawra and Jai Bahadur Sahi, dated 11th May, 1936.

⁴¹⁹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G – 1, CB No – 66, p. 13. Letter from the Commandant of 1st Assam Rifles to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills dated 13th June 1936. No. 507/ IV – 15/ 7 – A.

By 1936, the question of Gorkha children being schooled in the Mission School arose. The question was brought up by the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Silchar, who had a leaning towards the Government taking over the Gorkha education. The Superintendent then addressed the Welsh Mission and Commandant of 1st Assam Rifles in this regard. David Edwards, the then Honorary Inspector of Schools contemplated that a good Military Primary School might be better for the Gorkha children given that the boys are the products of the army. In his letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, he pointed out that it would be even more effective if the Military Primary School could be situated within the Assam Rifles' compound.⁴²⁰

In this regard, A.G. McCall, the Superintendent then wrote to the Commandant of the 1st Assam Rifles stating that the education of the Gorkha children might be better with the Battalion. He expressed his opinion by pointing out that the majority of Gorkha boys are the product of the Battalion and on finishing school, they seek employment in the Battalion as there are no local channel for absorption of educated Gorkhas except the Battalion. The Superintendent also expressed his fears that the Gorkhas studying in the Mission School may become less suitable for their main calling and that the Military School would be more suitable for them so as to have more control over them.⁴²¹

The Commandant, 1st Assam Rifles answered the Superintendent's letter by arguing that it would be impossible for the Battalion to take up the education of Gorkha children that consists of more than 100 as the Battalion lacked buildings, money, time, staff and experience. The Battalion only maintained a Kindergarten School for the purpose of teaching Gorkha children the basics before passing them on to a local school for proper education. Moreover, the Gorkhas in Mizoram should be accorded the full rights of domiciled community as regards to education and employment as they are paying taxes where necessary and should not be at any disadvantage especially in regards to education, and that the children should have every right to admission in

⁴²⁰ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G – 1, CB No – 66, p. 20. David Edwards, the Honorary Inspector of Schools letter to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, dated 2nd June 1936.

⁴²¹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G – 1, CB No – 66, pp. 27-28. Letter from A.G. McCall, Esq., I.C.S., Superintendent of Lushai Hills to the Commandant, Assam Rifles, No. Misc. 37 Ed/ XII – 15 dated 10th June 1936.

any school. The Commandant also stated that they are in favour of the present system and that the Gorkha boys studied in the Mission School are not less suited for the army. On the contrary, they could even become army officers. The Commandant further expressed his feelings that if there is a decision to establish a separate Gorkha School, he would like it to be under the Mission management as the Mission only could provide quality education and an independent Gorkha School would deteriorate.⁴²²

In view of the correspondences, David Edwards, in his letter to the Superintendent dated 3rd July 1936, stated that in view of the opinions expressed by the Commandant on behalf of the Gorkha community, he felt that the only recourse was to continue in the same line and that the Mission itself was willing to manage the Hindi Department. However, adequate grant-in-aid should be given by the Government which would also give the Gorkhas a sense of being justified in their claims for education in the Mission School as the Gorkhas' education is a Government's liability.⁴²³ The Superintendent finally sent a letter to the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division, who had the inclination to move for Government taking over the Gorkha education. He made the following points considering the views of the Commandant and David Edwards –

1. That the Gorkha community is in favour of the present arrangement of studying under the Mission.
2. The community in discussion have nothing against the Mission School and that those who study under the Mission are not less suitable for the army.
3. The education of the Gorkhas should be looked after by the Government and a grant-in-aid should be given.
4. Hindi should be the medium of instruction, and English should be encouraged.
5. Financial assistance should be granted to the Mission to maintain the Hindi Department.

⁴²² Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G – 1, CB No – 66, pp. 12-13. Letter from the Commandant of 1st Assam Rifles to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills dated 13th June 1936. No. 507/IV – 15/7 – A.

⁴²³ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G – 1, CB No – 66, p. 5. Letter from David Edwards, B.A., Honorary Inspector of Schools to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills dated 3rd July, 1936.

The Superintendent further added that he supported the present system which had worked very well and do not favour changes unless absolutely necessary.⁴²⁴ As a result of these discussions and correspondences, the Gorkha children continued to learn and study in the Mission School.

4.8. Gorkha Schools:

The Welsh Mission Boys' School was closed for a brief period during the II World War. The School was used as a headquarter for the British Army Brigade.⁴²⁵ It was closed for a couple of years and reopened in 1945.⁴²⁶ Before it was reopened in 1945, the Mission decided that it would be best for the Hindi Department to be managed by the Gorkha community themselves.⁴²⁷ Moreover, India was on the verge of becoming independent and it was more or less comprehensible that the British, including the missionaries would soon leave India. This is another reason why the Mission wanted the Hindi Department to stand on its own. On November 1944, Zalawra went to visit Harisingh Pradhan, a resident of Khatla, who had passed Class VI in 1940, to inform him that Basil Edward Jones, the Honorary Inspector of Schools wished to meet him regarding the Hindi Department. Harisingh Pradhan complied the next day. B.E. Jones told him that the Mission has decided to hand over the Hindi Department to the Gorkha community, though it would remain a part of Mission Boys' School until the Gorkhas felt that they could run it on their own. B.E. Jones also promised him a separate plot of land for the school building and a monthly grant of Rs. 65/-, of which Rs. 30/- for the Headmaster, Rs. 20/- for the Second Master and Rs. 15/- as contingency grant. Harisingh Pradhan accepted,⁴²⁸ and along with Man Bahadur Ale and Ram Prasad Upadhyay, he became the founding member of the Gorkha School in Mizoram.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁴ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 816, G – 1, CB No – 66, pp. 1-2. Letter from A.G. McCall, Esq., I.C.S., Superintendent of Lushai Hills to the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Division, Silchar, No. Misc/ XII – 13 57 Ed., dated 27th July, 1936.

⁴²⁵ C. Chhuanvawra, p. 10.

⁴²⁶ Saizahawla, 'Sikulpui leh Keimah' in Thanseia (ed.), *SIKULPUI Govt. Boys' Middle School Centenary 1907-2007 Souvenir*, Aizawl, The Sikulpui Centenary Celebration Committee, 2007, p. 33.

⁴²⁷ Purna Prasad interview.

⁴²⁸ Pun, pp. 180-181.

⁴²⁹ Purna Prasad interview.

Harisingh Pradhan was allowed to use Teachers' Training School building, situated at the Hindi Department premises to conduct classes for Gorkha children. Classes thus started from January 1945 and he became the first Headmaster. Thus, the foundation of Gorkha Schools in Mizoram was laid at the present site in 1945.⁴³⁰

The first Gorkha School was soon turned into a co-educational institution.⁴³¹ In 1945 itself, the first ever batch of candidates from the School appeared in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination⁴³² In 1946, Dal Bahadur Lamgade was appointed as teacher.⁴³³ So, Harisingh Pradhan was known as Headmaster and D.B. Lamgade as Second Master.⁴³⁴ Middle Section was also opened in the same year. In the next year 1947, the first batch of candidates to the Middle School Leaving Certificate Examination appeared in the examination, and the candidates known were – Mohan Bhardwaj, C.S. Pradhan, Ganesh Pradhan, Baburam Chhettri and Bakhan Singh Lama. Among them, Mohan Bhardwaj secured I Division, C.S. Pradhan and Ganesh Pradhan secured II Division.⁴³⁵

One interesting fact is that the School was run by two teachers – Harisingh Pradhan and D.B. Lamgade till 1952.⁴³⁶ Nirmal K. Pun also writes that these two teachers taught subjects like Mother Tongue, History, Geography and Hygiene and the students still had to go to the Mission Boys' School for Mathematics and English subjects. It was only after 1952 that more teachers were appointed with the fees collected from the students.⁴³⁷

The Welsh Mission was greatly impressed by the School. They saw that the Gorkhas were capable of running the school efficiently. The Mission thus advised the Gorkha community to look for a suitable plot where they would be able to construct a school building of their own. B. E. Jones helped the Gorkha community to secure a plot of land in Khatla, Aijal (presently Aizawl) which was granted by the

⁴³⁰ Pun, p. 181.

⁴³¹ Purna Prasad interview.

⁴³² Pun, p. 184.

⁴³³ Purna Prasad interview.

⁴³⁴ Pun, p. 184.

⁴³⁵ Pun, p. 184.

⁴³⁶ Purna Prasad interview.

⁴³⁷ Pun, p. 184.

Superintendent.⁴³⁸ A fund raising committee was formed under the Mission. In this connection, the Gorkha Mauzadar made an appeal in 1950, on behalf of Gorkhas of Lushai Hills in which he requested eminent citizens of Aizawl for a meeting regarding Gorkha School. The appeal read –

“There is only one Nepali School in the whole Lushai Hills. The building of the School belongs to the Welsh Mission. The Welsh missionaries have been so kind as to run the school and arrange the place for many years. Now as they themselves require the school building, they informed us to vacate the house as soon as possible. A new site for the Nepali School is already given by the Superintendent. These things happen so suddenly and we are not prepared at all to start building the school at once. We are in great want of money to build the house. We earnestly beg you to be kind as to call at this meeting and, in the meeting, we request you to discuss the matter as how to raise a fund for the same. We do hope that you will not mind spending your valuable time for us for which act of kindness we shall ever remain grateful to you.”

It was signed by the Gorkha Mauzadar on behalf of Nepalese Pupils, North Lushai Hills. And the citizens requested to attend the meeting to be held at the Middle English School were –

Rev. B.E. Jones	F.B. Murray	Mrs. N.I. Hazarika
Mrs. Limbu	M. Wiscott	P.C. Chakravarty
Lalmawia	Thanhlira	Major Samsheer Gurung
Bhomraj Seth	Chhotelal Seth	Major Nain Singh Chetty
Pachhunga	Debisingh M.C.	Sub. Uzir Singh Thapa
Thanga	Ransingh Chetty	Bhur Lama
Zalawra	Harisingh Pradhan	Lalbahadur Lama

⁴³⁸ Pun, p. 181.

Mrs. Halliday

Premlal Adhikari

Dalbahadur Lohar⁴³⁹

Accordingly, a meeting was thus held in 13th October, 1950 in the Mission School Hall, attended by 12 persons. Mrs. N.I. Hazarika presided over the meeting and Premlal Adhikari acted as the Secretary. In this meeting, resolutions were made. The first was to request the 1st Assam Rifles to help in raising funds by organizing charity shows and sending appeals to the detachments. The second resolution was to send an appeal to the civilians of Aizawl town. They also resolved to have variety shows in and around Aizawl town and the fourth resolution was to send an appeal to all the Nepali communities in Assam Province through the Nepali Association of Shillong and the Gorkha Regiments. Site selecting committee was also formed in this meeting in which N.I. Hazarika, M. Wiscott, Nain Singh Chetry, Lalmawia and Man Bahadur Ale were the members. School building committee was also formed where N.I. Hazarika was the President, Nain Singh Chetry as the Vice President, Mrs. Limbu and P.L. Adhikari as Joint Secretaries, Man Bahadur Ale as Financial Secretary with 17 Executive members. The members included – M. Wiscott, Lalmawia, B.E. Jones, F.B. Murray, Ransingh Chetry, Bhure Lama, Uzir Singh Thapa, Samsheer Gurung, Mrs. Halliday, Pachhunga, Chhotelal Seth, Bhomraj Seth, Thanhkira, Thanga, Sainghinga, P.C. Bhattacharjee and H. Daa. Two more meetings were held in 15th October and 5th November, 1950. The Committee searched for a more suitable plot other than where the Superintendent had allotted. They found three possible sites in Chaltlang, Zarkawt and in the tea gardens of McDonald Hill.⁴⁴⁰

However, these three plots could not be secured. The Committee then approached B.E. Jones, who again helped the Gorkhas in securing another plot of land where the United Pentecostal Church stands today in Tuikhuahtlang. Very soon, the job of levelling the ground began.⁴⁴¹ Since the work had to be done manually, the

⁴³⁹ Mizoram State Archives, Sl. No – 892, G – 5, CB No – 73, p. 19. Gorkha Mauzadar appeal regarding Gorkha School in Aizawl dated 11th October, 1950.

⁴⁴⁰ *Committee Proceeding Record of 1950*, copy recovered from Purna Prasad Private Collection, 2018.

⁴⁴¹ Pun, p. 182.

Gorkha residents in and around Aizawl had to do the work of levelling the ground. After so many days of digging, they were tired and worn out.⁴⁴²

Moreover, the work did not bear much result as it was difficult to level the ground by hands only. On seeing them, B.E. Jones was full of sympathy. The Mission thus decided to hand over the plot of land where the Gorkha School was presently running, with a condition that they would take all the building materials, even the masonry cubic stones. The building was then dismantled and re-erected using the materials at the site between the Synod Conference Centre and P.C. Girls School.⁴⁴³ So, once more, the Welsh Mission came to the rescue by gifting their property to the Gorkha community. The new school was to be constructed in the same plot of land where the Hindi Department stood before.

So, a suitable and readymade site became available for the Gorkhas, and construction of school building started. The Gorkhas in and around Aizawl came forward with every possible assistance – in cash and in kind. The donation ranged from Rs. 1/- - Rs. 50/-. Nain Singh Chetry, Uzir Singh Thapa and Harisingh Pradhan donated Rs. 50/- each. The Management Committee, the teachers and students organized charity shows around Aizawl. The amount thus raised was as much as Rs. 5000/-. A Mizo carpenter was engaged for the construction work. The new school building was opened in 1952 by Rev. Basil Edward Jones, the Honorary Inspector of Schools. The first signboard read Nepali-Hindi-English School.⁴⁴⁴ Both Primary and Middle Schools were elevated to deficit grant-in-aid status in 1968 and became provincialized in 1972.⁴⁴⁵

After the foundation of Gorkha primary and Middle Schools in Khatla, Aizawl, there followed establishments of Gorkha Schools in other parts of Mizoram. In many places, Gorkha children had to attend Mizo Schools wherever they settled where education was imparted in Mizo language. The establishments of Gorkha Schools made it easier for the Gorkha children to learn. Since then, 15 Gorkha Schools have

⁴⁴² Purna Prasad interview.

⁴⁴³ Pun, p. 182.

⁴⁴⁴ Purna Prasad interview.

⁴⁴⁵ Pun, p. 184.

been established throughout Mizoram. They are – 10 Primary Schools, 3 Middle Schools and 2 High Schools. All these Gorkha Schools were started by the Gorkha community for the sole purpose of educating the Gorkha children using their own language.⁴⁴⁶

The second Primary School was established in Bawngkawn in the year 1952 where Girilal Pradhan was the first teacher and he was paid Rs. 35/-. Sridal Rai, Dila Ram Jaishi, Ghana Shya Damai, Prem Lal Joshi, Chatraman Rana and Lal Bahadur Thapa (the Mukhia of Bawngkawn) played vital roles in the establishment. In 1954, Zotlang Gorkha Primary School was set up by Motilal Thapa (Mukhia of Zotlang) and Sandhoj Limbu where Dhan Bahadur Thapa became the first teacher. Rangvamual Nepali Primary School was established in 1957 and Krishna Singh Lama was the first teacher. The first Primary School outside Aizawl was established in Bualpui in the year 1958. Prithsingh Rai was an important figure in the opening of Bualpui School. However, the School was closed from 1966 and opened again in 1982. The first teacher was Dhan Bahadur Chhetri. Another school was opened in 1962 in Dinthar where Santaram Jaishi, Babudhan Gurung and Dalim Rai were the first teachers. The second Primary School outside Aizawl was opened in Kolasib in 1972. Indradhoj Thapa, B.B. Thapa, M.B. Thapa, Prithsingh Rai and Annapurna Laxmichhane played important roles in the opening of the school. Shyam Bahadur Chhetri was the first teacher. Another school was opened in Tanhril in 1977 where Dal Bahadur Chhetri and Buddhiram Jaishi were the important figures. And in 1979, under the leadership of Dasarath Sahi, Anand Ashram for children was opened in Thuampui. This Ashram was converted to a Primary School in 1984. In Durtlang, a Primary School was opened in 1983 where Tara Prasad Tiwari, Lakshmi Jaishi and Tikaram Sharma were the first teachers and Indra Bahadur Gharti was the first Headmaster. Apart from these schools, there were also Primary Schools in Sihphir and Neihbawi. In Sihphir School, the first teacher was Bhimsingh Thapa. These two schools defunct after 1966 *Rambuai* as the Gorkhas settled in these villages had moved to other places.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ Purna Prasad interview.

⁴⁴⁷ Purna Prasad, *The History of Nepali School*, Prakash Viveshank, Aizawl, Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association, 2005, pp. 20-21.

Middle Schools were also opened up to cater the needs of those children who finished Primary Schools. Students who passed out Primary Schools usually faced problems regarding the continuity of their education. They had to go to either Mizo medium schools or English medium schools where they faced language problem. This resulted in either dropping out from school or faring badly in the high school.⁴⁴⁸ So, the first Gorkha Middle School was opened in Khatla in 1946. For a very long time, this school served as the only Gorkha Middle School. In 1985, Gorkha communities in Bawngkawn, Thuampui and Durtlang cluster came together to open a Middle School in Bawngkawn. Dhantale Thapa donated a large sum of money for the construction of the school building and the school came to be known as Binu-Bhakku Govt. Nepali Middle School, named after his children. In 1994, another Middle School was started in Kolasib to cater the needs of the children. The money for the school building was again donated by Dhantale Thapa and the school came to be called D.S. Gorkha Middle School after Dhantale and his wife, Sumitra.⁴⁴⁹

A high school was needed for the Gorkha children where they could opt their own language in the Modern Indian Language paper. So, the community decided to open a high school especially for Aizawl area. Thus, in 1990, a High School for the Gorkha children was opened in Khatla where Nirmal Kumar Pun became the first Headmaster. And in 2002, Tej Singh Gorkha High School was established in Bawngkawn to meet the demands of those children living in Durtlang, Thuampui, Zemabawk and Bawngkawn area.⁴⁵⁰

All these Gorkha Schools followed the Mizoram School Education curriculum. In the earlier period, text books written in Mizo language were translated into Nepali so that the children could learn in their own language. These schools could be established solely due to the excellent communal co-operation of the Gorkha

⁴⁴⁸ Nirmal K. Pun, 'A brief Account of Nepali Schools in Kolasib' in R.P. Poudel (ed.), *Government D.S. Gorkha Middle School Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1994-2019*, Aizawl, Technosys Offset, 2019, p. 46.

⁴⁴⁹ Prasad, *The History*, p. 22.

⁴⁵⁰ Prasad, p. 22.

community. The Gorkha Schools are where the children could learn in their language which help them in preserving their identity and culture.⁴⁵¹

4.9. Conclusion:

It can be concluded that the Missions, both Welsh Mission and Baptist Mission played a vital role in the education of Mizoram since they were the ones who started education in vernacular language. Prior to the coming of the Mission, education for the masses seemed to be neglected by the Government. The negligence might also have to do with the no-interference policy of the Government. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the missionaries received assistance and support from the Government officials especially in regards to education.

Concerning education, the Gorkhas were never neglected by both the Government and the Mission. It was due to the Mission that they were able to have their own institution. For the Gorkhas, having their own school served as a milestone in their history in Mizoram. The schools help them to preserve their language. By preserving their language, they further have integrity in being a Gorkha. In these schools, Gorkha children are taught their cultural history, their traditions and their religion. So, the schools play an important role in protecting their Gorkha identity.

⁴⁵¹ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

Chapter 5: Gorkhas and *Rambuai*

5.1. *Rambuai* Literatures and the Gorkhas:

Rambuai, the darkest period in Mizoram history engulfed all the people living in Mizoram. The period has produced many writings and has provided us with rich literatures. *Rambuai* has contributed varieties of narratives from different angles. In these narratives, we only find few references to the Gorkhas. However, every so often it seems that the narrators are often confused between the civilian Gorkhas from Mizoram and the Gorkha soldiers that arrived later as reinforcements. It must also be considered that there were also few Mizoram Gorkhas serving in the 1st Assam Rifles as well as some Gorkhas from outside Mizoram.

The bulk of the Gorkha soldiers mentioned in these narratives belonged to the Gorkha Rifles or Assam Rifles who arrived afterwards. No clear distinctions were made between Gorkhas from in and outside Mizoram. For instance, R. Zamawia, in his book states that when the people living in Aizawl fled for safety, the Gorkhas started looting the deserted houses.⁴⁵² When reading this statement, one may conclude that since the Gorkhas were in great number in Aizawl, they must have been the raiders. In reality, the looters must have been the soldiers in the 1st Assam Rifles as the civilian Gorkhas must have fled for safety as well. Another instance is seen in the book, *Rambuai lai leh Kei*, where one narrator writes that he was accused of being an active Mizo National Front (MNF) member, so was arrested by the army. While he was being taken to Aizawl, he was often beaten mercilessly by a Gorkha.⁴⁵³

In these narratives, we see several references on the brutalities of the Gorkha soldiers. As mentioned earlier, these Gorkhas belonged to the reinforcements. So, a clear line has to be drawn between the two kinds of Gorkhas which almost every narrator failed to do so. As a result, it becomes easy for the readers to generalize all Gorkhas as non-supporter of the MNF while in fact, many Gorkhas had stories to tell.

⁴⁵² R. Zamawia, *Zofate Zinkawngah*, p. 351.

⁴⁵³ H. Rohmingliana, 'Mizoram Buai – Ka tawn hriatte' in *Rambuai lai leh Kei*, Aizawl, MUP General Headquarters, 2010, p. 96.

There were some Gorkhas who went underground along with the Mizo youths. Some narratives mention few Gorkhas who went underground without actually describing their story. Moreover, the Gorkha underground were either given or adopted a Mizo name, and it becomes difficult to recognize even if they are mentioned in the narratives. Still, it is known that a number of them joined the MNF underground and went as far as Arakan. As a matter of fact, the wave of the MNF movement did not differentiate the Gorkhas from the Mizo as it transcended over the whole Mizoram. The Gorkhas, having felt that they too belonged to Mizoram, were also very much under the influence of the MNF movement.

This chapter brings out the voices of the Gorkhas during the *Rambuai* period, their story, their trauma, and how the *Rambuai* affected them as well as the stories of those who went underground and imprisoned due to the MNF movement. The main focus is on the civilian Gorkhas, though Mizoram Gorkhas serving in the armed forces will also be mentioned occasionally. Moreover, the chapter also highlights the overall relation between Mizo and Gorkha communities, based on oral interviews to acquire certain knowledge about the two communities, who had been living together for a long time.

5.2. Background of Mizo National Front:

In 1959, Mizoram faced a famine *Mautam*, an ecological phenomenon that occurs every 50 years where bamboos flower that attracted rodents. In such occurrence, the rats' population increases in great number and attack paddy fields, destroy the crops, and causes famine as the staple foods are destroyed.⁴⁵⁴ During this period, 90% of Mizoram population depended on jhum cultivation and it was devastating for the people to see their crops being destroyed by countless rats.⁴⁵⁵ Mizoram was one of the districts of Assam at this time and when facing a famine, Mizo were not content with the Government's relief programme as they faced starvation and deaths occurred in many places.⁴⁵⁶ In fact, in the beginning, the Assam Government merely sent one Entomologist to verify the situation, who reported, after

⁴⁵⁴ Lalrawnliana, *Freedom Struggle in Mizoram*, Aizawl, JP Offset, 2014, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁵ C. Zama, *Zoram a Tap*, Aizawl, Zorin Compugraphics, 2008, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁶ Lalrawnliana, *Zoram a Tap*, Aizawl, RM Press, 1995, p. 2.

a night in Aizawl, that there were no rats in sight.⁴⁵⁷ In the beginning of 1960, an organization named Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) was formed to combat the famine with R. Dengthuama as the President and Laldenga as the Secretary.⁴⁵⁸ Due to the hard works of the MNFF, famine was mitigated to a great extent. The famine antagonized the Mizo people who felt that the Government of India did not deal with their situation effectively and they began to see the MNFF as their saviour.

At the end of 1961, the famine was almost over, and it was no longer felt necessary to continue the MNFF, so, they decided to turn it into a political party. On 22nd October 1961, a political party – Mizo National Front (MNF) was formed in Laldenga's house.⁴⁵⁹ Laldenga became the first Chairman of the MNF. The newly formed MNF party's aim was Self-determination. Their intention was to preserve and safeguard Christianity amidst the domination of Hindu nation.⁴⁶⁰ The main objectives of the MNF were –

1. Complete freedom for the whole Mizoram and re-organization of all ethnic groups forming the Mizo nation.
2. Complete safeguard of Christianity.
3. Progress and uplift of the Mizo nation.⁴⁶¹

Gradually, the MNF was soon gaining ground and attracted the Mizo youths. These youths slowly got indoctrinated in anti-government and anti-*vai* (a name given to the plain people of India) feelings.⁴⁶² Moreover, it must also be kept in mind that *vai* culture had begun to take roots among the Mizo, especially among young women who started wearing *vai* dresses such as saree as the *vai* movies became popular, which hurt the sentiments of the Mizo as most Mizo felt that they do not belong in the mainstream India. They wanted to preserve the Mizo culture.⁴⁶³ In this regard, R. Zamawia also writes that in big towns such as Aizawl, Lunglei and other big villages, *vai* influence

⁴⁵⁷ Ch. Saprawnga, *Ka Zin Kawng*, Aizawl, L.R. Multimedia, 2007, p. 127.

⁴⁵⁸ Zamawia, p. 162.

⁴⁵⁹ Lalrawnliana, *Freedom Struggle*, p. 3.

⁴⁶⁰ J.V. Hluna, *Church and Political*, p. 88.

⁴⁶¹ Lalrawnliana, p. 22.

⁴⁶² Hluna, p. 88. *Vai* is a term used for plain people in India.

⁴⁶³ Zoramthanga, *Mizo Hnam*, p. 15.

began to take place without the Mizo realizing they were being invaded. This cultural invasion was not to be taken lightly as it could lead to the complete loss of cultural identity.⁴⁶⁴

5.3. Beginning of *Rambuai*:

The MNF objectives spread like a wild fire and soon covered the whole Mizoram. Rallies were organized where the leaders questioned the political leaders of the District Council and the Assam Government. It also influenced Mizo students studying outside and became almost shameful for a youth not to enrol as a MNF volunteer.⁴⁶⁵ The party general headquarters was Aizawl and Units were opened in different parts of Mizoram.⁴⁶⁶ Memorandums were submitted to the Government.

By the end of the year 1964, there were more than ten thousand volunteers. Since the memorandums submitted by the MNF leaders bore no fruit, they were getting ready to take up arms.⁴⁶⁷ The party leaders got in touch with the agents of East Pakistan and the Naga hostiles secretly and some of the leaders went to East Pakistan to draw up plans for an insurrection.⁴⁶⁸ Thus, at the end of 1964, 22 people went to East Pakistan for military training with R. Zamawia as their leader. This group of MNF came to be known as the 'First batch'.⁴⁶⁹ The first batch came back with a number of arms and ammunitions. In the next year 1965, another batch went to East Pakistan and procured the same. These weapons were carefully hidden by the volunteers.

By 1965, the MNF volunteers were preparing in full swing and the movement kept on spreading. Fortunately for the MNF, the 2nd Assam Regiment was disbanded during this period and numerous Mizo who served in this Regiment joined the

⁴⁶⁴ Zamawia, pp. 171-172.

⁴⁶⁵ Lalrawnliana, p. 29.

⁴⁶⁶ Zamawia, p. 175.

⁴⁶⁷ Lalrawnliana, p. 48.

⁴⁶⁸ Hmingthanzuali, 'Memories, Trauma and Resistance: Mizo Women's Narratives on *Rambuai*' in Lalhlimpuii Pachuau & Rosie Vanlalruati Ralte (ed.), *Revisiting Rambuai*, Guwahati, LBS Publications, 2019, p. 167.

⁴⁶⁹ Lalchamlia, 'Hei le, March ni – 1' in Zosangliana (ed.), *Mizoram Independence Puan Kum 50 - na*, Aizawl, MNF General Headquarters, 2016, p. 31.

volunteers. Their expertise was then used for training the youths. The volunteers practiced drills everywhere using firewood as rifles.⁴⁷⁰

In the meanwhile, the Assam Government was also paying close attention to the Mizoram political scenario and decided to send in 18th Assam Rifles Battalion to keep order. Laldenga requested the Assam Chief Minister to call back the army but in vain. The MNF leaders became worried that the leaders might be arrested. Thus, a high-level meeting was held in 26th February, 1966 where it was decided to declare complete independence from India.⁴⁷¹ The declaration was made on 28th February 1966, at 12:00 PM (known as Zero Hour) and Mizoram was proclaimed an independent country from 1st March 1966.⁴⁷²

The Government then declared Mizoram district as ‘disturbed area’ under the Assam Disturbed Area Act 1955.⁴⁷³ Armed Force Special Power Act 1958 was also enforced in the district.⁴⁷⁴ After this declaration, *Rambuai* began in Mizoram. Bloodshed, fear, terror, atrocities, death etc. became the order of the day. The Government of India wanted to wipe out the MNF completely by adapting three measures –

Atrocities – to be carried out to all the people living in Mizoram, not only to the Mizo National Army (MNA).

Famine – by controlling all vehicle movements that carries food supplies and

Grouping of villages – by grouping villages into one big village, called Protected Progressive Village (PPV), thereby controlling the people’s movement.⁴⁷⁵ The PPV scheme was introduced in 1967 mainly in order to restrict and check the MNA movement or any hostile activities.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁰ Lalrawnliana, p. 49.

⁴⁷¹ Zama, *Zoram*, p. 19.

⁴⁷² Zamawia, p. 273.

⁴⁷³ Hmingthanzuali, *Revisiting*, p. 167.

⁴⁷⁴ Zama, p. 29.

⁴⁷⁵ Saprawnga, *Ka Zin*, p. 154.

⁴⁷⁶ O. Rosanga, ‘Revisiting Mizo National Front and its Effect’ in Lalhimpuii Pachuau & Rosie Vanlalruati Ralte (ed.), *Revisiting Rambuai*, Guwahati, LBS Publications, 2019, p. 56.

5.4. Being a Gorkha in Mizoram:

Since the beginning of the Gorkha settlement, the relation between the two communities has always been cordial. There has never been a situation that create hostility between the two communities. Based on oral interviews, this sub-heading reveals what the Gorkhas feel about living among the Mizo and also how the Mizo sees them.

After staying together for more than a century, there arose a certain sense of brotherhood. It seems that Mizo accepted Gorkhas from the beginning compared to other non – Mizo. Nirmal K. Pun has a theory that Mizo did not accept Bengalis as they were too different. But, when they came in close contact with the Gorkhas, who were mostly Mongoloid race and who had the same mindset, they were able to identify with them and that created a friendship that lasts even today.⁴⁷⁷

Pratap Chhetri says that language played an important role in the friendly relation between the two communities. Since majority of the Gorkhas could speak Mizo fluently, it became easier for both sides to form a bond by being able to speak same language. Food also played an important factor. The Gorkhas could eat whatever the Mizo eat except for beef, and this factor also created a certain sense of acceptance. Moreover, when the Gorkha reached Mizoram, they came in contact with another group of people, who were honest and fearless. The Gorkhas felt a connection to them.⁴⁷⁸

Zothansanga says that the Gorkhas has never created troubles in Khatla. Since the Gorkhas were the earlier inhabitants, the Mizo who later settled were respectful towards them. In the earlier days, children from both the community could converse in both languages. The Gorkhas never felt as an outsider, they always took part in all

⁴⁷⁷ Nirmal K. Pun interview, 2018.

⁴⁷⁸ Pratap Chhetri interview, 2018.

the community works, and they were always included in the Christmas and New Year celebrations. In Khatla, Gorkhas are never considered as *vai*.⁴⁷⁹

Chhuanliana, a resident of Bethlehem says that while he was a young boy, he was constantly getting into fight with the Gorkha boys living in the lane. However, he considers the Gorkhas as good and honest people. He feels that since they have nowhere else to go, they contently settled in Mizoram. He also says that the Mizo learnt to consume milk from the Gorkhas.⁴⁸⁰

Zonunsanga Khiangte says that the Mizoram Crime Record hardly show any Gorkha name which means the Gorkhas are peace loving and humble people. He does not consider them as *vai* and he feels sorry for them as he believes they are on the verge of total assimilation.⁴⁸¹

T. Sena Ralte Siakeng believes that the British used the Gorkhas to teach the Mizo different kinds of works. He says that in the earlier period, he was friends with Gorkha children. Though there was nothing between the children, the elders in the Gorkha family regarded the Mizo as impure. He also says that the Gorkhas are brave people, who could settle anywhere, who maintained their tradition and culture even if they live far from their homeland.⁴⁸²

Nirmal K. Pun says that since the Gorkhas are not trouble makers, Mizo has no curiosity about them. They merely regard the Gorkhas as good neighbours and do not give them much attention. In fact, the Gorkhas have to be patient and humble since they have nowhere else to be except in Mizoram.⁴⁸³

When asked about what he thinks of living in Mizoram, Uday Kumar Jaishi says that living in Mizoram is like attending an Open University where the Gorkhas

⁴⁷⁹ Zothansanga interview, 2021. Zothansanga is the youngest son of Chawnga. Chawnga was the 1st Assam Rifles tailor who was given a land in Khatla by the Commandant. He was the first Mizo to own a land in Khatla.

⁴⁸⁰ Chhuanliana BVT, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Bethlehem Vengthlang, Aizawl. Chhuanliana is 92 years of age, belonging to the older generation of Aizawl.

⁴⁸¹ Zonunsanga Khiangte interview, 2021. Zonunsanga Khiangte is a resident of Chanmari, Aizawl, who is presently the President of the Mizoram Journalist Association.

⁴⁸² T. Sena Ralte Siakeng, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Dinthar, Aizawl. T. Sena Ralte Siakeng is 93 years old, one of the most senior citizens in Aizawl.

⁴⁸³ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

have learnt so much.⁴⁸⁴ Nirmal K. Pun also says that the distinct social system practiced by the Mizoram Gorkhas are borrowed, by incorporating the good practices of Mizo society and that if the Mizoram Gorkhas are disparate from other Gorkha communities, it is all due to the Mizo systems.⁴⁸⁵

Pratap Chhetri furthermore says that the Gorkhas in Mizoram are coping between two societies. The Mizo society is more open and unorthodox while the Gorkha society is more conservative. In between, they are able to learn the positives and negatives of each society thereby creating a better community. He feels that the Gorkhas are fortunate to live in Mizoram where they could alter the rigid, conservative Gorkha Hindu system to accommodate the changing needs of the society.⁴⁸⁶

There are Gorkhas who feel that relations between the two communities became antagonized from the 1980s. In this connection, Indra Sahi says that she did not feel any different living among the Mizo. She feels that the so-called estranged situation emerged due to the conventional outlook of a certain group of Gorkhas whose intention is to create communal feelings among the Gorkhas.⁴⁸⁷

In this connection, Pratap Chhetri says that the Gorkhas had better relation with the earlier generation Mizo. With newer generation, distances can be felt in some places perhaps because the Gorkhas are began to be seen as *vai* and that they do not belong in Mizoram. He further adds that even the 3rd and 4th generation Gorkha feel that Mizoram is their home and have no other place to go.⁴⁸⁸

M.K. Jaishi feels that the Mizoram Gorkha may not survive as a community after fifty years. He gives his reason as since their establishment, they have been greatly influenced by the friendly and uninhibited nature of the Mizo and they soon became much more liberal than their counterparts in other places. Many Gorkha have

⁴⁸⁴ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

⁴⁸⁵ Nirmal K. Pun interview.

⁴⁸⁶ Pratap Chhetri interview.

⁴⁸⁷ Indra Sahi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Bawngkawn, Aizawl.

⁴⁸⁸ Pratap Chhetri interview.

been assimilated by way of inter-marriage and conversion. Moreover, the Gorkha population is not growing.⁴⁸⁹

From the above statements, it can be concluded that since the beginning of their settlement, the Gorkhas have never been seen as *vai* by the Mizo and on the other hand, the Gorkhas themselves also feel that they are not *vai*. Even when the Mizo sentiment was at the most vulnerable in the 1960s, the Gorkhas were accepted as their brothers. As such, they regard themselves as an insider as well and even when *Rambuai* broke out, they felt that it was their duty to take part as an insider.

5.5. Narratives on the Gorkhas during *Rambuai*:

On the outset of *Rambuai*, the MNF Vice President, Lalnunmawia made an appeal to the Gorkhas to stand and fight with the Mizo. The appeal was translated to Nepali by his friend, Kalu Singh. The translated work was then distributed among the Gorkhas. The appeal had a positive impact and many Gorkhas sided with the MNF.⁴⁹⁰

In an interview, C. Zama, a Corporal in Mizo National Army says that the Gorkhas were never a hindrance to the MNF movement during the *Rambuai* years. He further adds that though there might have been some Gorkhas who did not mentally support the cause of the MNF, however, no Gorkha ever showed a negative attitude towards the movement.⁴⁹¹

R. Zamawia, Defence Minister in the Mizoram Provisional Government, also says that comparing to Mizo, Gorkhas were much fewer in number and that if there ever was a Gorkha who openly acted against the MNF, the Mizo National Volunteers (MNV) would have definitely known.⁴⁹²

Tamlal Lohar says that before the MNF movement, most Gorkhas were supporters of the Mizo Union Party. However, the MNF ideology was influential, and it attracted the Gorkha youths which led to the Gorkhas becoming supporters of the

⁴⁸⁹ M.K. Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Dawrpui, Aizawl.

⁴⁹⁰ Lalrawnliana, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl.

⁴⁹¹ C. Zama, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Chawnpui, Aizawl.

⁴⁹² R. Zamawia, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Tuivamit, Aizawl.

MNF.⁴⁹³ Captain Lalthlana Sailo, an MNF returnee also says that as far as he remembers, he did not come across any Gorkha who acted against the MNF movement. He also did not believe that the Gorkhas would have stayed back in Aizawl just to plunder when Aizawl was bombed by the Indian fighters, on the grounds that the situation was unsafe for the Gorkhas as well.⁴⁹⁴

When *Rambuai* broke out and reinforcements arrived, the Gorkhas were perplexed. The *vai* soldiers regarded them as Mizo and on the other hand, since they could speak Hindi, the Gorkhas were scared that the MNF might consider them differently. They felt that they were caught between a rock and a hard place. Apart from this, they were also scared for their life just like everybody else.⁴⁹⁵ As a result, quite a number of Gorkhas fled to Assam and Burma as refugees. Many of these refugees came back to Mizoram and only few families did not come back.⁴⁹⁶

In an interview, Zothansanga says that almost all Gorkha families living in Khatla fled to safety except those who were living in the Assam Rifles Married Lane. Gorkha population in Khatla was high at that time as almost all the shops were owned by them. All of them came back except for one family.⁴⁹⁷ In Khatla, the residents had already left their houses when the bombing started. There was no one to put out the fire and all the houses, including all the shops were burned to the ground.⁴⁹⁸ Zonunsanga Khiangte, President of the Mizoram Journalist Association feels that during *Rambuai*, the Gorkhas were cautious and they all seemed to support the MNF movement.⁴⁹⁹

5.6. The early phase of *Rambuai* for the Gorkhas:

The operations against the government started from 1st March 1966 in different parts of Mizoram. These operations were named Operation Jericho. In Aizawl, the Mizo National Army (MNA) started their movement against the government by firing

⁴⁹³ Tamlal Lohar, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Chhing Veng, Aizawl.

⁴⁹⁴ Lalthlana Sailo, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Bungkawn, Aizawl.

⁴⁹⁵ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

⁴⁹⁶ M.K. Jaishi interview, 2021.

⁴⁹⁷ Zothansanga interview, 2021.

⁴⁹⁸ C. Hermana, *Zoram Buai Lai Khan*, Aizawl, Synod Press, 2015, p. 82.

⁴⁹⁹ Zonunsanga Khiangte interview, 2021.

the 1st Assam Rifles on 3rd March 1966. On 5th March, the Indian Air Force Jet Fighters arrived and started bombing Aizawl, trying to wipe out the bivouacs occupied by the MNAs. As a result, the people of Aizawl started fleeing for their lives, including the Gorkhas.

The bombing of Aizawl can be said the most vivid memory of the people living in Aizawl. On the said morning, four aircrafts, identified as Toofani and Hunter flew over Aizawl for surveillance. After surveillance, the aircrafts opened fire at Tuikhuatlang, where Laldenga resided. Then they opened fire over almost all locations in Aizawl leaving them burning.⁵⁰⁰ There was confusion and disorder, the people started running for their lives. There was chaos as the people started running in all directions. Some people positioned themselves by laying on the ground, even pregnant women. By the evening, every family felt they had to seek a safe place and tried to leave Aizawl as soon as possible.⁵⁰¹ The day Aizawl faced aerial bombardment, the Gorkhas were not left out in the fire. They had to run for their lives and seek shelter where they would be safe. How did the beginning of *Rambuai* and bombing of Aizawl affected the Gorkhas?

In an oral interview, some Gorkhas recollect their memories of the beginning of *Rambuai*.

Nirmal K. Pun recalls that his family ran to Tuikual along with other families. On reaching Tuikual, his family moved into a big house with some other 10 families of Gorkha. It was the night when the MNA started firing the Assam Rifles. They were terrified and could not sleep. On the next day, they all moved out again to Rangvamuall where they were met by J. Manliana, the first Vice President of the MNF, who assured them that no harm would come to them. J. Manliana could speak Nepali and he also promised them that the MNF would look after them. The day Aizawl was bombed,

⁵⁰⁰ Lalrinmawii Tochwang, 'Fire on the Mountain – Run Run Run' in Lalhlimpuii Pachuau & Rosie Vanlalruati Ralte (ed.), *Revisiting Rambuai*, Guwahati, LBS Publications, 2019, p.81.

⁵⁰¹ R. Saptawna, 'Rambuai lai leh Kei' in *Rambuai lai leh Kei*, Aizawl, MUP General Headquarters, 2010, p.172.

they were terrified of what would follow. They feared for their relatives who were still in Aizawl.⁵⁰²

In an oral interview, Uday Kumar Jaishi says that his family were living in Bawngkawn when the insurrection broke out. They fled to the nearby forest but soon moved back to their house. They did not face any hardship from the MNA. However, they started having problems after the reinforcements arrived. Since they could speak Hindi, the *vai* soldiers naturally thought that they would help them in capturing the MNAs. However, they could not betray the MNAs, so they left Mizoram and stayed in Silchar for two months.⁵⁰³

Manu Chetry says, “We were staying in Lawipu when the shooting started. At this time, there were four houses in Lawipu, three were owned by Gorkhas and there was only one Mizo family. When the Air Force arrived and started bombing, we could hear the loud noises and we felt helpless. The Mizo family then hid in the forest, and we decided to stay on. During *Rambuai* period, we did not have any troubles both from the MNA or the Indian Army. We felt that it would be wise to stay as neutral as we could be, in order to survive. So, when the MNA needed something, we provided the best we could. Likewise, when the Army were patrolling the areas, we provided drinking water or milk to them, and we tried to stay ignorant about the political condition, and remained silent. I believe our staying ignorant was the key to our survival”.⁵⁰⁴

Tamlal Lohar says that since his father was away at that time, his mother moved the family to Assam Rifles Married Lane in Khatla. They remained in the Lane for quite some time for their safety. He recalled watching the Fighters circling Aizawl town and when Khatla was struck, he heard helpless screams and the sound of flames in Khatla area. Fortunately, the Married Lane remained safe. He also said that the army that arrived as reinforcement were full of anger, who were prepared to do everything

⁵⁰² Nirmal K. Pun interview.

⁵⁰³ Uday Kumar Jaishi interview.

⁵⁰⁴ Manu Chetry interview.

to subdue the people of Mizoram. In this situation, all the people living in Mizoram faced the same rage.⁵⁰⁵

Gopal Limbu remembers that at the night of the first shooting between the MNA and the Assam Rifles, those who were living in Maubawk, both Mizo and Gorkha gathered together in the biggest house – the smithy. They all left Maubawk early in the morning to search for a better hiding place. His family and others stayed in a cave for three days. After three days, the Indian Army notified that each family should go back to their own houses, carrying a white flag. Thus, they went back to Maubawk. He adds that his house was almost collapsed due to the firing. So, they went to their relative's house and stayed until a new house was built. When some Gorkhas left Mizoram, his parents did not want to go with them as they felt they belonged in Mizoram. He also says that they did not face any trouble from the MNA, on the contrary, they felt a bond with them and supported their cause.⁵⁰⁶

In many places, the Mizo people, especially the village leaders, were the ones to tell the Gorkhas to stay on as they regarded them as their own. Such is the case of N.L. Jaishi and his family, who wanted to leave Mizoram for fear of being killed in the midst of *Rambuai*. However, they were assured by Tanhril local people that no harm would come to them.⁵⁰⁷

M.K. Jaishi, another Tanhril local, says in an oral interview that in the beginning, the MNA seized his father, A.P. Jaishi, just for the reason that he owned a hunter boot. The MNA believed that the hunter boot was given by the Indian soldiers perhaps in exchange for some secrets. He was taken to the deep part of the forest where another group of MNA were stationing. Fortunately for him, there were MNAs from Tanhril who knew him well. They vouched for him and was released the next day. However, this incident made them move to Aizawl where they started a grocery store in Dawrpui. The grocery store became a blessing to many as there was shortage of food, and the Army controlled all the movements. Since they could speak Hindi, they

⁵⁰⁵ Tamlal Lohar interview, 2021.

⁵⁰⁶ Gopal Limbu interview.

⁵⁰⁷ N.L. Jaishi interview.

were able to get essential goods from Silchar without much difficulty.⁵⁰⁸ As a matter of fact, when people started moving back to Aizawl from their hiding places, Gorkhas such as Chetan Kumar Chhetri, Binu Kumar Thapa, K.B. Sarki, A.P. Jaishi and Kapoor Chand Thakuri were the first to open shops to cater the needs of the people.⁵⁰⁹

H.B. Thapa says that when the movement started, they fled to Tuikual and stayed there for a few days. He remembers when Aizawl was bombarded, they were scared and wanted to hide in the jungle. He says that they were more scared of the Indian Army than the MNA as they regarded Mizo as their brothers.⁵¹⁰

Purna Prasad, a resident of Thuampui says that when *Rambuai* started, they were living in Bawngkawn. Bawngkawn at that time was highly populated by Gorkhas. When the shooting started, many families fled to the nearby forest and hid for 5 days. Since there was shortage of food, they ate once a day. When the reinforcement arrived, they were told to come out of the forest with a white flag. Purna Prasad adds that when they reached their house, they found that it was occupied by the Army, so they lived with their relatives. The residents were quite fortunate in a sense that the reinforcements that stationed in Bawngkawn were the Gorkha Rifles. He also says that as far as he remembers, none of the Gorkha in Bawngkawn faced hardship from the MNA.⁵¹¹

Sialsuk village was burned by the Indian Army on 15th June 1966. The people moved out of the village the night before under heavy rainfall. Parvati Jaishi recalls that her family left Sialsuk and went to Aizawl by foot where they took shelter in Maubawk. They were scared of the Army as well as the MNA, they were scared for their lives. They dared not show any of their feelings due to the fear that it might cost their life.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ M.K. Jaishi interview.

⁵⁰⁹ Tamlal Lohar interview.

⁵¹⁰ H.B. Thapa interview, 2018.

⁵¹¹ Purna Prasad interview.

⁵¹² Parvati Jaishi interview.

Semu Chhetri recollects his fears when the movement started. He says,

“We were living in Thenzawl at that time and my father was working in a Veterinary Office. I was 16 years at that time and did not truly understand the situation. We were scared of the Indian Army as well as the MNA. My father felt that it would be wise to stay neutral in order to survive. So, we did not dare show any feeling”.⁵¹³

5.7. History from Below - Stories of four Gorkhas:

As mentioned earlier, *Rambuai* has provided us with literatures. Majority of the earlier works on *Rambuai* were written by the MNF elites, who portrayed the might and success of the MNF leaders in various ways. These earlier writings have been dominated by the narratives of the MNF.

But, this kind of writing fails to acknowledge the contributions made by the people separately from the elites.⁵¹⁴ From the recent decades, emerging scholars started writing narratives on the unknown stories of the people, where different spaces of *Rambuai* are explored, revealing the hidden stories of the common MNAs and the people.⁵¹⁵

The Gorkhas were also included among the common people who suffered as much as the Mizo during *Rambuai*. Nevertheless, their stories have never been brought out. They have been almost entirely forgotten in writing the history of *Rambuai*. John Tosh writes that history from below concentrates on the unorganized and the marginal who have been least visible in the historical record.⁵¹⁶ The Gorkhas have remained invisible and unheard, their fears and sufferings have never been told.

Under this heading, the stories of 4 Gorkhas will be told into to get a viewpoint on how the MNF movement affected the Gorkhas.

⁵¹³ Semu Chhetri interview, 2018.

⁵¹⁴ Ranajit Guha, ‘On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India’ in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I – Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 3.

⁵¹⁵ For example – C. Zama’s books such as *Zoram a Tap*, *Chengrang a Au ve*, *Jail Run Thim*, etc.

⁵¹⁶ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 57.

5.7.1. Kalu Singh:

It has been mentioned before that the MNF appeal to the Gorkhas was translated to Nepali by Kalu Singh. Kalu Singh was a Vernacular (Hindi) teacher in Government Mizo High School at that time. He was friends with Laldenga and Lalnunmawia. The MNF decided to make an appeal to the Gorkhas of Mizoram to support the cause of the MNF and stand with them. Lalnunmawia then requested Kalu Singh to translate the appeal and he was also promised a Captain rank after Mizoram got her independence. After the translation was finished, it was distributed among the Gorkhas. The Government regarded this action as a breach to the Government's policy and issued a warrant that read to '*shoot on sight*'.

He was arrested on April 1966. Fortunately for him, the officer in charge was a Gorkha acquaintance who pleaded for him to be imprisoned. So, he was put behind bars in Aizawl where he was assaulted by the soldiers. He was later transferred to Masimpur Jail in Silchar. He kept on pleading to the Government and he was released after 18 months. However, he was forbidden to enter Mizoram. The prohibition was lifted in 1977 only. He entered Mizoram only to find he had lost everything. He lost his job, his house and his wife. He requested the Government many times to reinstate him to his previous position as a teacher since he felt that he was wrongly imprisoned. Finally, the Government reinstated him as a teacher. Kalu Singh felt that he had lost too much to the cause of the MNF.⁵¹⁷

5.7.2. Man Bahadur Karki (Zokailiana):

Man Bahadur Karki (Mizo name – Zokailiana) was one of the first Gorkhas who had accepted and followed the MNF ideology. He was a resident of Thenzawl village. He owned more than 40 horses which were used for carrying goods from Sairang to Thenzawl, Lunglei and Tlabung. While supplying goods, he covertly acted as a runner for the MNF since 1961. He then joined the MNF underground in 1966.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁷ Tamlal Lohar interview. Tamlal Lohar is the son in law of Kalu Singh, who had looked after him after he came back to Mizoram.

⁵¹⁸ Vanlaldawta, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Folkland, Aizawl. Vanlaldawta is the youngest son of Man Bahadur Karki.

He was the Medical In-charge of the Z Battalion.⁵¹⁹ He also took part in about 47 MNA operations and encounters.⁵²⁰ He visited his family once during the ceasefire of 1976 and left again after one week. He was captured in 1979 and put behind bars in the district jail for 46 days. He rejoined the underground as soon as he was released from prison and stayed till 1986 peace accord.⁵²¹

V.L. Ringa Sailo writes in his book that Zokailiana, despite being an active member of the MNF for a long time, was not promoted to higher rank in spite of his hard work. So, he promoted himself to a Sergeant at some point. The Commanding Officer of Z Battalion, Halleluia apologized to him and blamed himself, saying that he had failed to notice Zokailiana's works and confirmed his new rank.⁵²² Vanlaldawta feels that his father did not get his due promotion most probably due to his being a Gorkha as those who joined after him received promotion faster than him.⁵²³

5.7.3. Captain James Lalhmingliana Adhikari:

James Lalhmingliana Adhikari was 23 years old studying in Shillong when the MNF movement started. During this period, the MNF ideology had influenced students in Shillong tremendously. James and his nine Mizo friends were also greatly influenced and his rented house became the headquarters to discuss their plans to join the MNA. When *Rambuai* started, James and his friends could not go to Mizoram as every movement was controlled by the Army. Therefore, they decided to go to East Pakistan in order to become a freedom fighter for Mizoram. On 11th April, 1966, James and his friends met in Malki, where another Mizo friend joined them. They requested their Khasi friends to take them to the East Pakistan border. On the border, they met a group of Pakistan soldiers who then took them to one of their headquarters.

After five days, they were told to go back to India since they dared not keep them without proper authorization. So, they were asked to go to the nearest India border military post where they could report themselves. On their way to the India

⁵¹⁹ V.L. Ringa Sailo, *Chengrang Chawi Lai Ni Te*, Aizawl, LV Art, 2008, p. 155.

⁵²⁰ Sunar et al., p. 39.

⁵²¹ Vanlaldawta interview, 2021.

⁵²² Sailo, *Chengrang*, pp. 187-188.

⁵²³ Vanlaldawta interview.

border, James decided that they should split up and try to reach Sylhlet from where they could go to Mizoram to join the MNA. James and one of his friends, then went on towards Sylhlet, overcoming many difficulties, finally reached Rangamati. The two friends stayed in Rangamati for five days before boarding a bus to enter Mizoram. In the bus, they met Rev. Sakhawliana who was on his way to meet Laldenga in Chittagong. So, they went back to Chittagong and met Laldenga. They left for Mizoram the next day.

Rengtlang was the underground headquarters at that time. On reaching, James finally joined the MNA formally. He was given a Captain rank. He took part in many operations and stayed underground for 7 years. He proved to be useful since he could speak multiple languages. In 1973, he developed an eye problem that needed to be treated. So, he left their headquarters and reported to Rashtriya Rifles in Pharva. He was then escorted to Lawngtlai and then to Pukpui. From Pukpui, he was taken to Aizawl and was kept in a makeshift prison in Tuirial for a month. Fortunately, he was not assaulted while in prison. He was then shifted to Aizawl Jail where he was confined for another two weeks. Even after he was released, he had to appear in the court every week for three years. He felt that unless he formally surrenders to the Government, he would not be able to have peace. He says that his submission was due to the fact that he wanted to live normally, without getting being suspected and being checked by the Government all the time. He further adds that he had supported and fought for his beloved Mizoram.⁵²⁴

5.7.4. Ramfangzauva:

Ramfangzauva changed his Gorkha name to a Mizo name when he joined the MNF, which had become his official name. He was a resident of Chungtlang village where there were no other Gorkha family. He was around 16 years of age when the MNF movement started. His family was greatly influenced by the MNF ideals and supported the movement.

⁵²⁴ James Lalhmingliana Adhikari, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Khatla, Aizawl.

Since his family could speak Hindi, the patrolling armies would make their house a halting place. During this time, the MNAs had to be given food and other things in secret, whomever caught supplying goods to the MNA were beaten mercilessly and very often killed. Ramfangzauva was able to get pass the Army guards without getting suspected as the Army trusted his family. He later joined the underground MNA as a private in Z Battalion and took part in a number of operations. He proved to be useful since he could speak different languages.⁵²⁵ Mostly he operated in the tactical headquarters under Col. Lalrawnliana. In 1984, the tactical headquarters was assigned for a bank job since there was shortage of money. They went to Sairang Bank where the *vai* manager was killed and the bank money was looted. In this operation, Ramfangzauva took an active part.⁵²⁶ When the peace accord was signed, he was among the selected to escort the remains of the deceased MNA. He came overground in 1986. He says that he fully supported the MNF movement and he feels that he had done his best to serve Mizoram.⁵²⁷

5.8. Underground and Overground Gorkhas during *Rambuai*:

Apart from the four Gorkhas mentioned above, there were other Gorkhas who had supported and helped the MNA during the *Rambuai* years. As stated earlier, most Gorkhas seemed to support the movement, perhaps on the ground that they had no choice. They were living in Mizoram and when their Mizo brothers started a movement, they were naturally compelled to support them.

There were Gorkhas who had joined the underground and who assisted the MNA overground. Though they may be few, nonetheless their actions can be viewed as the stance of the Gorkhas during the troubled times. These Gorkhas are being discussed under this sub-heading.

The declaration of independence was followed by operations against the Government which were termed as Operation Jericho. The MNA's main objective was to take over the Army headquarters in different parts of Mizoram. In Operation Jericho

⁵²⁵ Ramfangzauva, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Kawnpui, Mizoram.

⁵²⁶ Lalrawnliana, *Zoram in Zalenna a Sual, Vol – 10*, Aizawl, RD Print Tech, 2002, p. 301.

⁵²⁷ Ramfangzauva interview, 2021.

– Lunglei, the 18th Battalion Assam Rifles’ Subedar, Akal Singh Gurung played an important part in the victory of the MNA. The MNA started firing on 1st March 1966 at 1:00 AM and the army fired back. The shooting continued for four days and despite the MNA’s better position, the army did not surrender. On 5th March, Akal Singh Gurung declared a ceasefire among the Indian Army.⁵²⁸ In reality, the armies were told not to surrender from the headquarters. However, Akal Singh Gurung’s action changed the course. Along with the Wing Commander, he surrendered to the MNA and the MNA won the Lunglei operation.⁵²⁹

In Operation Jericho – Tlabung, Akal Singh Gurung accompanied the MNA where the 1st Battalion Assam Rifles, 5th Battalion BSF and Police Station were situated. Akal Singh Gurung tried to persuade the armed forces to surrender since Lunglei had also been taken. While they were discussing, two Jet Fighters arrived and fired at the MNAs which led to the confrontation between the two sides.⁵³⁰

Akal Singh Gurung was later handed over to the Army and he was court martialled. He was accused of being pro-MNF and was discharged from his service.⁵³¹

In Champhai, 11th Gorkha Rifles were stationed soon after the troubles began. The people of Champhai suffered a great deal in the hands of the officers of the Gorkha Rifles. Innocent people were assaulted physically and sexually. Atrocities, acts of cruelties were often committed.⁵³² There were soldiers among the Gorkha Rifles who felt compassion for the Mizo prisoners as there was no end to the merciless violence.⁵³³ On 5th January 1968, the prison night guard, Bal Bahadur Limbu absconded the army headquarters with 7 Mizo young men and took with him guns and ammunitions.⁵³⁴ He joined the MNA to fight with the freedom fighters and was placed in the L Battalion. He was a brave man who took part in many operations.⁵³⁵

⁵²⁸ Zamawia, pp. 326-327.

⁵²⁹ C. Zama interview, 2021.

⁵³⁰ Zamawia, p. 333.

⁵³¹ C. Zama interview.

⁵³² Zama, p. 417.

⁵³³ Thanseia, ‘Rambuai lai leh Kei’ in *Rambuai Lai leh Kei*, Aizawl, MUP General Headquarters, 2010, p. 318.

⁵³⁴ C. Zama interview.

⁵³⁵ Zama, p. 417.

Bal Bahadur Limbu was given a Mizo name, Zohmangaiha which was later changed to Rualkhuma. He was originally a soldier from Nepal who could not even speak Mizo. However, after seeing the atrocities committed by his superiors, he felt that he had to desert the army which he was serving.⁵³⁶ He was caught in 1974. He was put in prison for three years. After he was released, he settled down and married a Mizo woman. He remained a staunch supporter of the MNF till his death.⁵³⁷

Another Gorkha underground was Robin, whose surname is not known. Robin was a resident of Babutlang, Aizawl.⁵³⁸ In 1967, the MNA decided to have operations within Manipur and the operation was called Operation Crusader. Soldiers for the operation were selected from V Battalion, Ch Battalion and L Battalion.⁵³⁹ Robin was among the selected from V Battalion to go to Manipur. While the crusaders were operating in Manipur, he fell ill. Therefore, he was left in Chawngmun village to recover.⁵⁴⁰ When his friends came back to Chawngmun, the people told them that Robin was captured by the patrolling Indian Army and took him away. He simply vanished and it is assumed that the Army killed him and disposed his body in the thick jungle.⁵⁴¹

K. Lalsawmvela writes that Vaimuana was another Gorkha who joined the MNA. He deserted the Assam Rifles to join the MNA. He worked as a cook in the Mizo National Army Headquarters in Arakan. He could not speak Mizo fluently and because of that, he was often ridiculed. This caused him to feel that he did not get due respect from others especially his juniors and even asked his Commanding Officer, Halleluia whether they would kill him if he tries to run away. However, he stayed underground till 1986.⁵⁴²

In a personal interview, C. Zama mentions few other Gorkhas who had joined the underground. However, he had no recollection of their Gorkha names as the

⁵³⁶ C. Zama interview.

⁵³⁷ Lalthlana Sailo interview, 2021.

⁵³⁸ C. Zama interview.

⁵³⁹ Lalrawnliana, *Zoram in Zailana a Sual, Vol – 5*, Aizawl, RM Press, 1998, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁴⁰ C. Zama interview.

⁵⁴¹ C. Zama, *Chengrang A Au Ve*, Aizawl, Mizoram Government Press, 2008, p. 95.

⁵⁴² K. Lalsawmvela, *World Bank Kawng leh Keimah*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2011, p. 357.

Gorkha tended to change their name to Mizo when they joined the MNA. The names of the underground Gorkhas whom he recollected are as follows –

1. Zothanmawia, Babutlang, Aizawl. He was killed by a rogue elephant.
2. Zokaia, Babutlang, Aizawl.
3. Sapzuithanga, Venghloi, Aizawl. He died in Silchar Jail in 1968.
4. Tlangliana, Venghloi, Aizawl.
5. Zobela, address not known. Served in V Battalion.
6. Chitto, Thenzawl. Served in Z Battalion.
7. Premba Thapa, Luangmual, Aizawl. He was imprisoned in Baroda Jail.⁵⁴³

On a humorous side, in 1967 Christmas, the Z Battalion had a singing competition as part of the Christmas celebration programme. In this competition, Chitto sang *Jana Gana Mana* and he was given zero mark by the judges.⁵⁴⁴ On the other hand, it also shows that some Gorkhas might have joined the MNF without actually grasping the cause of the movement.

Whenever a land is in trouble, movement overground and underground are always intertwined. The Gorkhas claimed that numerous Gorkhas helped the MNA overground as well. However, it has become difficult to ascertain who had taken part in the movement as their assertion has become difficult to prove. In truth, the literatures did not show how the Gorkhas took part in the movement overground and the Mizo MNA leaders seemed to pay less attention to the Gorkhas, which is clearly reflected in their writings on *Rambuai*. However, through interviews, it can be concluded that there were indeed few Gorkhas who had assisted the MNA overground.

There is no doubt that the Gorkhas had assisted the MNA overground though their number may be few. Lalthlana Sailo says that he was friends with Chetan Kumar Chhetri and Binu Kumar Thapa whose fathers were serving in the army. He says that when the MNF started the movement, these two instantly joined the MNF. Since they

⁵⁴³ C. Zama interview.

⁵⁴⁴ C. Zama, *Zampuimanga Battalion*, Aizawl, J.P. Offset, 2014, p. 87.

could not take part in the MNA movement underground, they assisted them where they could.⁵⁴⁵

According to Tamlal Lohar, Chetan Kumar Chhetri moved around weapons using his vehicle and transferred them to a rendezvous. He says that he once accompanied Chetan Kumar to Sateek village where an arsenal was dropped off at a certain place.⁵⁴⁶

M.K. Jaishi recalls how his uncle, Prem Lal Jaishi (Mizo name – Hminga) used to drive a vehicle which was used for supplying weapons to the MNA. Prem Lal Jaishi was living in Sialsuk when *Rambuai* started. He supported the MNF movement since its inception. He made many trips to supply the MNA with arms and ammunitions through Marpara side.⁵⁴⁷

Another person was Binu Kumar Thapa, who owned a vehicle. His vehicle was utilized by the MNA many times to carry arms. He also assisted the MNA by contributing money and his house was always opened to any MNA who needed sanctuary.⁵⁴⁸

5.9. Atrocities and reactions:

When the movement started, it did not affect only Mizo, but also the Gorkhas throughout Mizoram. The Gorkhas must have mixed feelings about the movement. While there were Gorkhas who had supported the MNF since its inception, some Gorkhas might have viewed the movement with askance. Nevertheless, the movement swept all the people of Mizoram in the same wave.

Lalrawnliana writes in his book that Neihbawi village was burned in 6th March 1966 by the Indian Army. He also says that they captured the Gorkhas and tortured them.⁵⁴⁹ Neihbawi was hugely populated by the Gorkhas during this time. They learnt that the Armies were coming and almost all of them hid in the nearby forest. The Army

⁵⁴⁵ Lalthlana Sailo interview.

⁵⁴⁶ Tamlal Lohar interview.

⁵⁴⁷ M.K. Jaishi interview, 2021.

⁵⁴⁸ Sunar, et al., p. 93.

⁵⁴⁹ Lalrawnliana, *Zoram Zolenna a Sual Vol-IV*, Aizawl, RD Print Tech, 1997, p. 27.

found only Raila, and ordered him to bring back the others.⁵⁵⁰ The men were made to lie down in the road and told that they would run over them with the vehicle unless they divulge the MNA whereabouts. The Army also assembled the young Gorkha girls to be taken away. However, two older Gorkha women came forward undauntingly with a *khukri* in hand and declared that they would fight them to death if they touch the girls.⁵⁵¹ The situation was getting tense with the army starting to assault the men. The Army Captain ordered to start the vehicle. Just before the vehicle moved out, a Gorkha Officer Major arrived on the scene and intervened. The Major saved the Neihbawi Gorkhas from being murdered mercilessly.⁵⁵²

Rev. Zairema also writes that in Aizawl, women, both Mizo and non – Mizo were also molested. It seems that the ‘non – Mizo’ here included the Gorkha community.⁵⁵³ Tamlal Lohar also says that the Gorkha women were not safe from atrocities. In Tuikual, one Gorkha young girl was sexually assaulted by the Indian Army.⁵⁵⁴

It seemed that the Indian Armies were shocked to find out the Gorkhas, who could speak Hindi and by religion, a Hindu could support the MNF movement. Vanlaldawta says,

“The soldiers found it hard to believe my father joined the MNA underground. They were appalled to hear my father was an active member and they were anxious to find him. Many times, my mother, Saili was summoned to find my father. They would keep her in a bunker for a night and in the morning, they would order her to go find her husband. My mother would venture out in the forest and would come back alone. Then, the cycle started again. The irony was that the Officer in charge was our distant relative, who knew my father well. My mother did not speak of sexual molestation, but not speaking about it does not mean it did not happen”.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ C. Zama, *‘V’ Battalion Sulhnu*, Aizawl, JP Offset, 2012, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁵¹ Pratap Chhetri interview.

⁵⁵² C. Zama, *‘V’ Battalion*, p. 19.

⁵⁵³ Zairema, *Random Notes*, Aizawl, Zorun Community, 2009, cited in C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau, *Rambuai Literature*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2014, p. 426.

⁵⁵⁴ Tamlal Lohar interview.

⁵⁵⁵ Vanlaldawta interview.

There were also some Gorkha who stood firmly with the MNA. On 28th February 1966 midnight, the MNF Volunteers declared independence in Kolasib. T. Lalhnema narrates this event in *Ram Buai lai leh Kei, Vol – II*. He says,

“I was in charge of the Kolasib Hospital at this time. On 28th February midnight, I was awakened by MNF Volunteers who told me that Mizoram has become independent. The Volunteers apprehended non – Mizo Government servants where a Gorkha Officer in Charge of the Police Station (Thana OC) was included. On 5th March, the reinforcement started arriving and very soon, taken over Kolasib. They arrested many people including the Volunteers who had captured the Thana OC. The Thana OC was then asked to identify the Volunteers. He replied he do not know any Volunteer and remained silent. The Army Captain was infuriated by his answer. The Captain then asked another non – Mizo to point out the volunteers who in turn pointed out whomever he wanted.”⁵⁵⁶

R. Zamawia writes in his book how his family was saved by a young Gorkha soldier of the 1st Assam Rifles. In July 1968, he and his wife and their baby were besieged near Tualpui village for 24 days without proper food. The army were searching for them in earnest. Two soldiers found them in their hideaway. Fortunately for the family, one soldier was Boson, a person they knew well who begged his companion to spare them and promised him that he would pay him a month’s salary as a gratitude. Thus, the family was saved.⁵⁵⁷

There were Mizoram Gorkhas who were serving in the Army especially in the 1st Assam Rifles. The first casualty among them was L.B. Pokhrel, a Jamadar in the 1st Assam Rifles, who was accidentally shot to death in Zarkawt. Pokhrel was a resident of Khatla who was known by the MNA and they felt sorry for killing him.⁵⁵⁸ B. Remmawia writes that this incident happened on 2nd March where the patrolling Army was ambushed by the MNA.⁵⁵⁹ There was also another instance where in a combat

⁵⁵⁶ T. Lalhnema, ‘Buai Laia Kolasib Hospital leh Kei’ in C. Chhuanvawra (ed.), *Rambuui Lai leh Kei, Bu Hnihna*, Aizawl, MUP General Headquarters, 2014, p. 280.

⁵⁵⁷ Zamawia, pp. 589-590.

⁵⁵⁸ Tamlal Lohar interview.

⁵⁵⁹ B. Remmawia, ‘Hnam Sipaite Chanchin leh Inkahna Thenkhat Te’ in Zosangliana (ed.), *Mizoram Independence Puan Kum 50 -na*, Aizawl, MNF General Headquarters, 2016, p. 95.

between the 1st Assam Rifles and the V Battalion, Babudona, a Jamadar in the 1st Assam Rifles was killed. Babudona was a resident of Aizawl who had many Mizo friends. The MNAs felt remorse that he was shot to death in the battle for they had known him as a good person.⁵⁶⁰

There might have been instances where the Gorkhas played a negative role for the MNAs despite their claim today that they all supported the movement. In 1978, Sergeant Kapkima and Corporal Zorama of the MNA were incarcerated in Nalbari Jail, Assam where a group of Assamese students were also imprisoned. In the same jail, a Gorkha named Sukhea from Rangvamual was also behind bars, though the reason is not known now. The two MNAs planned to escape from jail with the help of the students. They planned to make their move on 7th July midnight. Sukhea came to learn their plan to escape and since he was not included, he informed the prison authorities of the plan thus hampering their escape plan.⁵⁶¹

There must have been other instances where the Gorkhas proved detrimental to the movement during the troubled years. Even though the Gorkhas say that there was no pointer/ informant among the Gorkhas, there was an instance where the MNA killed a Mizo woman who married a Gorkha. Chuauhluni, a resident of Zotlang, Lunglei was murdered by the MNA for the reason that her husband, a Gorkha was ‘too friendly’ with the Indian Army. However, it is strange that the wife was killed instead of the husband.⁵⁶² The real reason for killing her will never be known but it can be assumed in two ways – that she was killed because she married a non – Mizo or that her husband was an informer who secretly worked for the Indian Army. Apart from this case, the MNF returnees also said that they had no knowledge of any Gorkha informer.

⁵⁶⁰ Zochhumpui Pa, *Mizo Army (V Battalion Vanglai 1966-67)*, Aizawl, Gilzom Offset, 2017, p. 57.

⁵⁶¹ C. Zama, *Jail Run Thim*, Aizawl, JP Offset, 2013, p. 373.

⁵⁶² C. Lalawmpuia Vanchiau, *Rambuai Literature*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2014, p. 491.

M.K. Jaishi states that in the beginning, most of the MNF viewed the Gorkhas with suspicion as they were non – Mizo. However, their opinion changed when they showed their support to the movement.⁵⁶³

It has been discussed about the bombing of Aizawl. The people living in Aizawl fled and the town has become a ghost town. In the aftermath, the Church felt that it had to take some sort of action, even just to give some peace of mind to the people who had come back to Aizawl. On 12th March 1966, Synod Standing Committee (Emergent Committee) was held where it was decided to form Aizawl Citizens' Committee. In this committee, Siena Chhetri was one of the members.⁵⁶⁴

On 1st May, 1982, Quit Mizoram Order was issued from Arakan Headquarters, signed by Zoramthanga, Vice President of the MNF.⁵⁶⁵ According to this Order, all non – Mizo, including government officials were advised to leave Mizoram by 21st June 1982. However, the Order came with a relaxation. The Gorkhas who settled and born prior to 1966, Christian workers and people from Mongoloid race were not included.⁵⁶⁶ The Gorkhas were the only non – Mizo who were excluded as a community.

5.10. Conclusion:

Prior to 1966, it seems that majority of the Gorkhas did not pay much attention to the MNF movement owing to the fact that the MNF were keeping their actual intention a secret. Though an appeal was made to the Gorkhas, the declaration of independence must have caught many of them by surprise. Nevertheless, the Gorkhas stood by the movement and supported their Mizo brethren in every way possible. Though there might have been one or two Gorkhas who proved to be a problem, yet majority did back up the movement. A remarkable fact is that all the Mizo interviewed in this matter could not point out any Gorkha who acted as an informer for the Army.

⁵⁶³ M.K. Jaishi interview.

⁵⁶⁴ Zamawia, p. 352-353.

⁵⁶⁵ Zoramthanga, p. 189.

⁵⁶⁶ N. William Singh, 'Quit Mizoram Notices', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol – 49, Issue No. 25, 2014, ISSN (Online) 2349-8846. Available from: *Economic&Political Weekly*, (accessed 21 April 2021).

The Gorkhas are never treated unjustly by Mizo. Since the beginning of their establishment, they have been accepted. In fact, there has never been a non – Mizo community who receives social acceptance other than the Gorkhas. Though completely different in traditions, customs and religion, the two communities have been living peacefully without any discrimination.

Chapter 6: Conclusion.

The thesis studies the history of Gorkhas from Nineteenth to Twentieth centuries in Mizoram. It concentrates on the social history of the Gorkhas starting from the first time they set foot in Mizoram up to the attainment of statehood in 1987. The Gorkhas have never been the focus as an important agent of Mizoram history. This might have been because of the Mizo ethnicity assertion in writing Mizoram history and that they have no interest in giving attention to the Gorkhas, who have never been a trouble for them. The thesis tries to place the Gorkhas in the framework of Mizoram history by using oral history, archival sources and secondary literatures. It also explores the Gorkhas' hidden stories and experiences in Mizoram.

Due to the fact that there are hardly literatures on the history of Gorkhas in Mizoram, the study relies heavily on oral interviews. Oral history is an important tool in preserving history and culture, customs, traditions and beliefs. Through oral history interviews, common men and women, indigenous people or members of cultural minorities can inscribe their experiences and give their own interpretations of history.⁵⁶⁷ Ordinary people can be brought in the writings of history through oral interviews.

However, since oral history is based on memories, it can be distorted in such a way that the story teller can be confused especially in regards to the specific times, dates and places. On the other hand, it also serves as an important primary source as the story tellers are often an eye witness to the account. Jan Vansina writes,

“Oral traditions have a part to play in the reconstruction of the past. The importance of this part varies according to place and time. It is a part similar to that played by written sources because both are messages from the past to the present, and messages are key elements in historical reconstruction...wherever oral traditions are extant they remain an indispensable source for reconstruction”.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁷ Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 'Introduction' in *The Oral History Reader*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. ix.

⁵⁶⁸ Quoted in Indira Gandhi National Open University Guidebook, New Delhi, PGDBP, 2005, p. 38.

Documents recovered from the Mizoram State Archives contributed a great deal to the study. However, most of these records are fragmented and there is difficulty in pursuing the fading written words. Still, they act as an instrument in filling the gap and accounted for the reconstruction of the Gorkha history.

As the Gorkhas of Mizoram has never been studied comprehensively before, there is lack of literatures. However, the few literatures also act as contributing factors for the reconstruction of Gorkha history.

The thesis finds that the history of Gorkhas in Mizoram started with the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872, carried out by the British in order to put an end to the attacks on the plains by the Mizo chiefs. The Mizo felt that their hunting grounds were encroached by the British's expansion of tea gardens, that led to the raids of these places. The British, on the other hand, felt that the tea gardens were inside their territory. This clash of interest led to small scale expeditions. The Mizo, who felt that the British had no right to encroach their lands kept on protecting their lands, which finally culminated to a large-scale expedition in Mizoram popularly known as Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872.

In this Expedition, the Gorkhas inevitably appear as foot soldiers of the British, along with other Indian soldiers. The Gorkha soldiers were in majority. Why did the British want the Gorkha soldiers to accompany them while they had a huge number of Indian soldiers at their disposal? Firstly, majority of the Gorkha soldiers belong to Mongoloid race like the Mizo. Secondly, the Gorkhas were brave, swift and handy in unexplored jungles. The British knew that they were going to face a brave tribe who could be troublesome for them. Wisely, they chose the Gorkhas. Apart from being handy and swift in the jungle, the British must have hoped that the Mizo would be able to identify themselves with the Gorkhas since their physical appearance are similar.

The Gorkha soldiers who took part in this Expedition were praised by the British. R.G. Woodthorpe says, "The active little Goorkhas were much more at home than their up-country brethren in arms".⁵⁶⁹ The statement clearly shows how the

⁵⁶⁹ Woodthorpe, p. 111.

Gorkhas felt at home in the unexplored jungles of Mizoram. At the conclusion of this Expedition, frontier posts were set up under T.H. Lewin. Lewin also set up settlements which were inhabited by the Gorkhas, for he felt that the Gorkhas would be perfect to act as a buffer between the Mizo and the plain people. These settlements were on the borders of Mizoram. Moreover, Lewin settled in Sirte Tlang, which was an outpost, where the Gorkha soldiers also settled.

The settlements at Mizoram border and Sirte Tlang could be regarded as the first settlements of the Gorkhas. However, these settlements were not permanent as the British had no intention of staying permanently in Mizoram. The permanent settlement of the Gorkhas in Mizoram started with the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890. The Chin-Lushai Expedition was an extensive one, covering the whole Mizoram. The British planned to take control over Mizoram. Like the previous Expedition, majority of the soldiers that accompanied the British were the Gorkhas.

The Expedition was successful and with it, the British were able to subjugate the Mizo. They decided to establish permanent posts in Aizawl and Lunglei, with Mc Cabe and Capt. J. Shakespear as Superintendents respectively. The early occupants of these posts were mostly Gorkha soldiers. The research concludes 1891 as the beginning of the permanent settlement of the Gorkhas in Mizoram as the Gorkha soldiers who assisted the British in the Expedition stayed back. This marked the first generation Gorkhas who settled in Mizoram.

What was the motive of the British administrators regarding the Gorkhas? The thesis finding is that the British wanted to establish a barrier between them and the 'fierce tribe' who were not yet docile. They wisely chose the fearless yet good – natured Gorkhas to act as a buffer. Since most Gorkha soldiers belong to Mongoloid race, the Mizo soon developed a sense of attachment to them. Moreover, the British knew that they were going to stay in Mizoram for a long time. As such, they wanted the Gorkhas to settle with their families in order to create recruitment ground for future soldiers. The Gorkha permanence would certainly provide the British with future soldiers without having to go to Nepal to recruit a new group of soldiers.

Apart from the soldiers, there were Gorkha coolies who arrived with the British. These coolies later served as an important component as the British needed manpower to work around in the newly established forts. Aizawl and Lunglei were made the headquarters and very soon, the process of building towns began. In this process, Gorkha coolies were employed for different kinds of works.

As Mizoram opened up, more Gorkhas arrived, migrating from Nepal. Soldiers on leave brought back their families and others who were in search of work. In fact, it was a blessing for the Gorkhas to migrate to Mizoram where they were pampered by the British, and where they could have economic prosperity instead of living in poverty in Nepal. Retired Gorkha soldiers were also given lands where they could take up cultivation or animal husbandry thereby creating certain pockets where Gorkha settlements could grow. And for them, it became more realistic to stay on instead of going back to Nepal where they could face poverty.

The Gorkhas started settling in different parts of Mizoram. In the early period, they were mainly concentrated in Aizawl, Lunglei, Thenzawl, Sialsuk, Kolasib, Bualpui, Champhai, Vanlaiphai, Tawitaw, Selesih and Neihbawi. Aizawl was sparsely populated with a few localities. In the beginning of their settlement, the Gorkhas were made to settle in allotted areas only. However, the administrators decided to let them stay in different localities and the Gorkhas complied. Moreover, the Gorkhas were not hesitant to settle in any part of Mizoram as long as they could take up either animal husbandry or cultivation. As a result, most of the early localities in Aizawl bore Gorkha names as many localities were first occupied by the Gorkhas.

Some Gorkhas were even awarded the privileges and power at par with the Mizo chiefs. Lal Singh Thapa (Lalchhinga) was perhaps the most prominent. He was the chief of Hriangmual. The Mission wanted to set up their headquarters in his village. So, the Mission purchased Hriangmual from Lalchhinga for a hundred rupee. And this place was later named Mission Veng. Lalchhinga moved to Tlangnuam where he continued to be a chief.

The British administrators seemed to favour the Gorkhas over Mizo in some cases, which is not surprising on the grounds that the Gorkhas were extremely loyal

who would keep on following their *Sahib* (Master) while the Mizo were forcibly ruled over, and it was clear that the Mizo would still feel hostility towards the British. Many Gorkhas were even exempted from impressed labour while Mizo were not exempted. The British even appointed a *Mauzadar* to look after the Gorkhas as their traditions and customary laws are very different from the Mizo. The *Mauzadar* was also made responsible for collecting taxes and administration of the Gorkhas.

Apart from the Gorkhas, the soldiers of the British also consisted of other Indians such as Bengali, Punjabi etc. However, these Indians were not made to settle permanently like the Gorkhas. The thesis concludes that this must have been due to the fact that the British were certain that since these Indians and Mizo have nothing in common, the Mizo could never be cordial with them. The British must have also assumed that the Gorkhas and Mizo could develop a relationship. The assumption became concrete as very soon, a friendship developed between the two communities. The thesis finds that the Gorkhas were accepted by the Mizo since the beginning of their settlement. This was due to the fact that the Gorkhas are adaptable, friendly in nature and honest like the Mizo. Moreover, they soon learnt to speak Mizo language which was an important factor in building relationship. The Gorkhas became so deep rooted in Mizoram that even after the British left after India's independence, they decided to stay. It has also become impossible for them to go back to Nepal where all their relations have been severed after a long absence. Therefore, settling down in Mizoram seemed a more sensible choice where they own lands and where they are accepted.

After staying with the Mizo for a long time, the Gorkha community slowly imbibed the social practices of the Mizo society. They have become influenced by the Mizo way of life, characterised by freedom and brotherhood. The two communities have a very different social systems, while one is conservative and based on caste system while the other is open and liberal. The Gorkhas are inspired by their Mizo brethren and changes began to take place. These changes are reflected in the Gorkha community in such a way that the community have become very different from their counterparts in other places. Marriage system, death and funerary practices, religious practices and the caste system have undergone a lot of changes. Even in religious

practices, they dare to incorporate the Mizo Christian practices by observing Sunday as a sacred day for all the deities. They conduct Sunday services and a Sunday School for the children which are exclusively borrowed from the Mizo Christian practices.

The Gorkhas of Mizoram are no longer bound by the rigid customary laws of Nepal that helps create a distinct community by fusing the Gorkhas way of life and the Mizo way of life, blending the good practices from both communities. These changes made the Mizoram Gorkha community distinctive from the other Gorkha communities.

Despite the changes, the Gorkhas of Mizoram do not lose their identity in terms of language, religion and cultural practices. They still keep the important elements of their identity. For this, their social institutions play the most important factor in keeping their identity intact. These social institutions emerged out of the influence of the Mizo system. They are inspired by the systematic social institutions of Mizo which binds the tribe together in uniformity.

Social institutions such as the Gorkha Sangh, Nari Samaj and the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association play a principal role in bringing the Gorkhas together under a common umbrella regardless of castes. These institutions work for the Gorkha welfare, hold the Gorkhas together and act as the main factor for maintaining their identity by creating a common platform, where they could stand together as a single entity, without being divided by caste. In Mizoram, caste system has been abandoned by the Gorkhas. In fact, their caste has become a surname. They have become one community, that encompasses all the Gorkhas living in Mizoram. Together, they fight to preserve their language, religion and culture. Though they have no issue in embracing the good practices from their Mizo brethren, they are also fearful that they might get absorbed in to the larger society unless they collectively work together. As such, the social institutions have become the agents in keeping the Gorkhas together. The thesis also observes that there are two groups of Gorkhas – the first group belong to the older generation who arrived with the British, and the other group belong to those who came after 1950s. The early group of Gorkhas are the ones who have no trouble in imbibing the practices of the Mizo in their practices though they are steadfast

in their religion. They believe that in order to survive as a Gorkha in Mizoram, they need to incorporate the good practices of their Mizo brothers without losing their identity. The later Gorkhas, however, have no qualms in converting though they find it difficult to absorb Mizo practices. It can be assumed that they convert mainly to gain favour from the Mizo. In fact, the early group insist that even though they make every effort to make them feel included, the other group simply stay distant and unresponsive.

It has been stated that the Gorkhas were immensely favoured by the British administrators. This is also reflected in formal education. Gorkhas' education had never been neglected since their settlement. In fact, they started formal education before the Mizo.

Soon after they established themselves, the British soon opened a formal school for the sepoys' children in Aizawl, where education was imparted in Hindi. This school was not available for Mizo children. The Government Schools were also opened in Lunglei and Tlabung. The thesis concludes that the main reason for the non – availability of education for the Mizo children was due to the absence of written language. Mizo had no written language when the British settled. It was only after the arrival of the Christian Missionaries that Mizo language was put in written words. The first missionaries reached Aizawl in January, 1894 and had started their first school by April where the medium of instruction was in Mizo language.

For the Gorkha children, education was available as the administrators gave importance to it. As mentioned earlier, the first Government Schools were started for the children of the soldiers. Majority of the soldiers were Gorkhas though there were Bengalis as well. So, it is clear that Hindi was made the medium of instruction as it could serve as a common language for both Gorkhas and Bengalis. When the Government Schools started, the Commandant of the 1st Assam Rifles also issued a stern order that all Gorkha children should enrol. Why did the Government give so much importance to the Gorkha education? It can be assumed that the administrators wanted the Gorkhas to be educated, so as to make them more suitable for the army.

The British seemed to want to create Mizoram as a recruitment ground for future soldiers which would be a sensible thing other than go to Nepal for recruitments.

The 1st Assam Rifles had a Kindergarten School where basic education was taught. Apart from this, the Government Schools were where the Gorkhas could continue their studies. In 1898, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission started a Mission School in Aizawl, and in 1903, the Baptist Missionary Society also started a Mission School in Lunglei. In 1904, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Bamfylde Fuller paid a visit to Mizoram which resulted in the handover of Government Schools to the Missions. The process of handing over the schools were completed by 1905-1906.

The Mission School in Aizawl played a very important role in Gorkha education. Like the administrators, the Christian Missionaries also wanted the Gorkhas to be educated. In fact, they did their best to make it easy for the Gorkha children to learn. In the Mission School, Hindi Department was set up where the Gorkha boys could learn in their own language. The Department was given a separate building. In reality, the Mission School was where the Gorkha children could receive quality education. For the girls, the Government maintained a Bengali School where they could continue their studies. The Hindi Department was properly looked after by the Mission. Even when the question of Gorkha being schooled in the Mission School arose in the 1930s, the Commandant of the 1st Assam Rifles was adamant with the fact that the Mission School was the best place to learn for the Gorkha children.

With the passing of time, the Mission wanted the Gorkhas to have their own school which would be looked after by their community. In 1945, Basil Edward Jones, the then Honorary Inspector of Schools handed over the Hindi Department to Harisingh Pradhan, the first Headmaster. The first Gorkha Primary School was then started in 1945, Middle section was opened in the same year. It was to remain a part of the Mission until the community could run it on their own. The school was immediately turned into a Co – educational institution. The Mission soon found that the community could run the school on their own and advised them to secure a plot of land where they could build their own building. With the help of B.E. Jones, Gorkha

community secured plots of lands. However, these acquired plots proved to be unsuitable which finally led to the Mission land being gifted to the community where the Hindi Department stood.

The community needed money to construct the school building. Consequently, a fund – raising committee was formed under the guidance of the Mission. An appeal was made to the citizen of Aizawl, Nepali communities in Assam province, Nepali Associations of Shillong and to the Gorkha Regiments. Donations poured in, and the construction works began. The school building was finished in 1952 and it was opened by B.E. Jones. The first Gorkha School was soon followed by the establishment of other Gorkha Schools in different parts of Mizoram. Since then, 10 Primary Schools, 3 Middle Schools and 2 High Schools have been established. All the Gorkha Schools followed Mizoram School Education curriculum. All the schools have been set up due to the collective work of the Gorkha community. The schools have made it easier for the Gorkha children to study as many Gorkha children had to attend Mizo school wherever they settled. Now, they are able to study in their own language, and the schools help in preserving their language. The schools have become where Gorkha children are taught their roots, their history and their religion. They are taught to respect their culture and traditions, it is where the children learn their history, dances, festivals and religion apart from the regular studies. The schools are also an important agent in keeping the Gorkhas together thereby helping them to maintain their identity.

The Gorkhas also feel that they are also a part of Mizoram and its history. They have been present in all historical events since their settlement. They have witnessed a lot of changes that Mizoram had gone through and with it, they have also changed in many ways, as they feel that they belong to Mizoram. Even when Mizoram entered her darkest period in 1966, the Gorkhas did not run away. Instead, they fought with their Mizo brothers. Unfortunately, the role of Gorkhas in Mizoram *Rambuai* had remained an untouched history.

In the MNF movement for independence, the Gorkhas were the only non-Mizo community who joined the movement. The MNF leader, Laldenga made an appeal to the Gorkhas, asking them to support the movement. This shows that there has always

been close relationship between the two communities and that the MNF held the view that the Gorkhas would also willingly fight alongside the MNF. The Gorkhas, as expected, were ready to take side with the MNF. As a result, there were Gorkhas who joined the MNA and went as far as Arakan and there were also Gorkhas who helped the MNA overground. In fact, there was no indication of any Gorkha being hostile to the MNF movement.

However, as mentioned earlier, the Gorkhas in *Rambuai* has remained a silent subject. There are certain references to some Gorkhas in *Rambuai* narratives, yet their stories are untouched. Moreover, the only references found were few Gorkha, who joined the MNA. The memories of the civilian Gorkhas, who had suffered and endured the *Rambuai* years have never been brought out, have never been asked and studied. As a matter of fact, the Gorkha populace had suffered as much as the Mizo and had lived through the wrath and anger of the Indian Armies. The Indian Armies who arrived to subdue the movement must have been completely baffled to see a group of people, who speaks Hindi and by religion, a Hindu could support the Mizo movement. Like the case of a certain Man Bahadur Karki. The soldiers found it hard to believe that a pure Gorkha would leave his family and join the MNA. They were extremely anxious to find him. In the process, his wife was tortured many times.

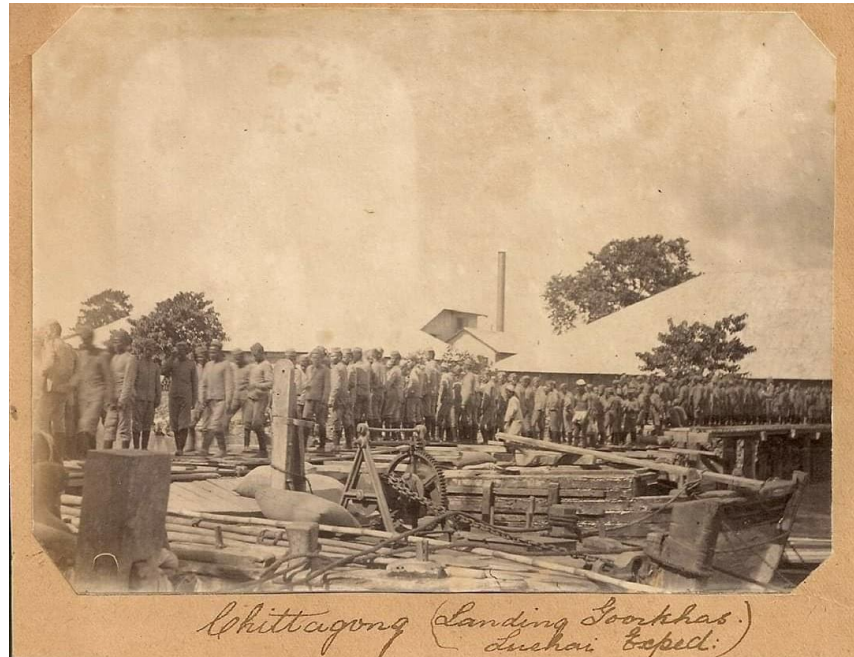
The Gorkha population felt they were caught between a rock and a hard place. Their condition was no better or worse than the Mizo's. In reality, all the people living in Mizoram were caught under the same wave, no one was safer than the other where terror, bloodshed and trepidation were the order of the day. People feared for their lives, and tried their best to survive. Atrocities and sexual molestations were commonly carried out. In all these situations, the Gorkhas suffered as much as their Mizo brethren. However, the Gorkhas' memories have never been brought out in the *Rambuai* narratives. The thesis concludes that the Gorkhas involvement in *Rambuai* was due to their sense of belonging in Mizoram.

Since their settlement, the Gorkhas have never been a problem for the Mizo and their relationship have always been on good term. Perhaps this is the exact reason why the Mizo have never been intrigued by them and no attention is given to them.

They have remained a quiet, good neighbours. It also seems that the Mizo accepted them as by nature, they are humble and honest. Moreover, they adapt very well into the Mizo society without losing their roots.

The older generation Gorkha feel that the younger generation are slowly losing their identity. They attribute this to the fact that they have been heavily influenced by the Mizo way of living, characterised by a more open - liberal outlook and also to the changing world. They also feel that the third and fourth generation Gorkhas might face discrimination unless new generation Mizo have knowledge of their history and contribution to Mizoram. Their fear of assimilation by the larger society, their identity crisis and their political endeavours are another research topic which can be studied in a broad theme.

APPENDIX- A



Lushai Expedition 1871-72 (Gorkha Troops advancing from Chittagong) Courtesy of Gurkha Antiques



Chin-Lushai Expedition 1889-90

Gorkhas clearing a passage through bamboo jungle. Courtesy of Gurkha Antiques and The Illustrated London News



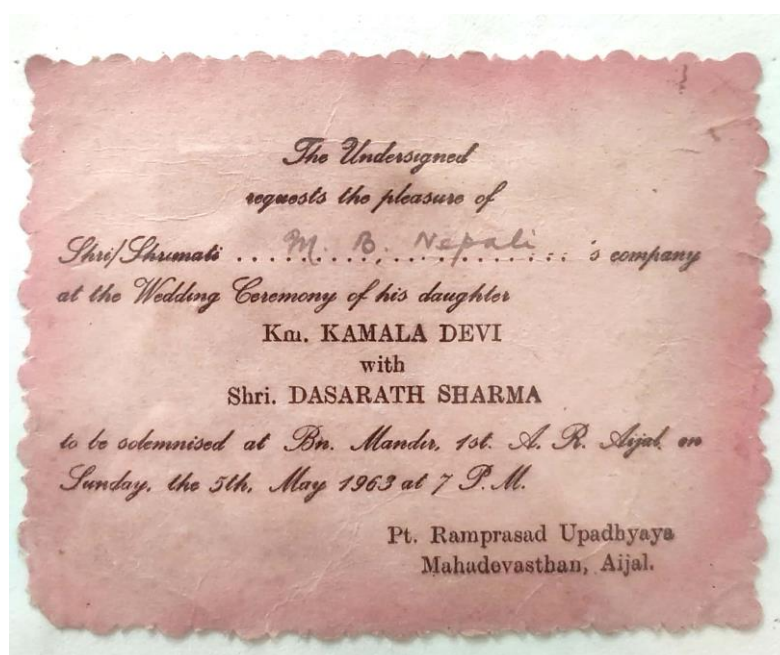
Gorkha School 1952 Courtesy of Indra Sahi



Gorkha School 1956 Courtesy of Indra Sahi



Gorkha Family, 1966 Courtesy of Gopal Limbu



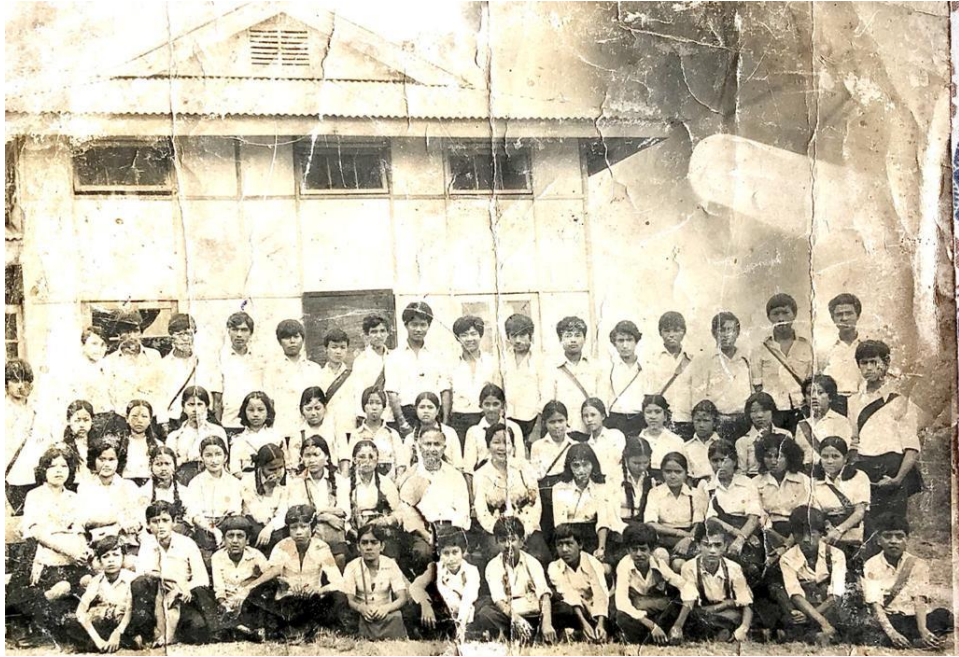
Courtesy of Indra Sahi



Ramprasad Upadhyaya presenting a speech on Independence Day 1947 during the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru. Courtesy of Indra Sahi



Natural Spring in Champhai used by Gorkha Soldiers as early as 1905



Gorkha Students with Kalu Singh 1978 Govt. HS.
Courtesy of Rupa Lohar



Kalu Singh and family.
Courtesy of Rupa Lohar



Sarbojanin Hari Mandir in Tlabung erected in 1896, the first Gorkha Mandir in Mizoram.
Courtesy of Ludy Lalthangliani



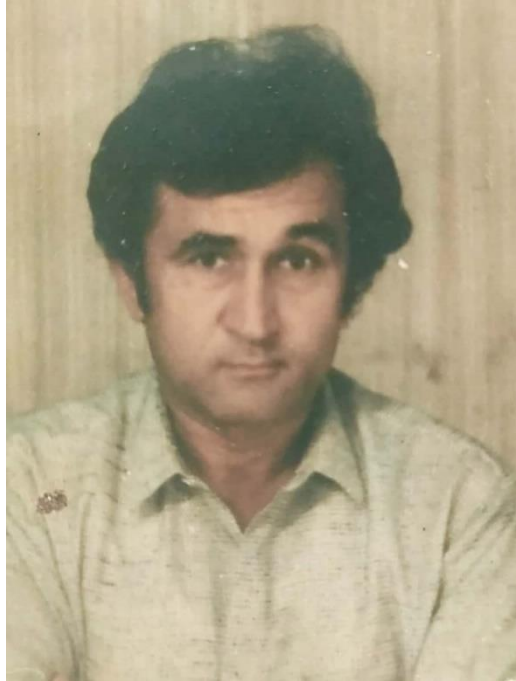
Harisingh Pradhan, the first Headmaster of Nepali School.
Courtesy of Raju Pradhan



Subedar Akal Singh Gurung, 18th Battalion Assam Rifles who was accused of being pro-MNF.
Courtesy of MK Jaishi



Binu Kumar Thapa, an MNF supporter whose vehicle was utilized by the MNAs.
Courtesy of MK Jaishi.



Chetan Kumar Chhetri, an MNF supporter whose vehicle was utilized by the MNAs.
Courtesy of MK Jaishi.



Cpt. James Lalhminglana Adhikari who was imprisoned for
nearly two months in Aizawl Jail.
Courtesy of James Lalhminglana Adhikari



Man Bahadur Karki (Zokailiana/Maila) Medical Incharge of Z Battalion who took part in about 47 MNA operations and encounters.
Courtesy of Vanlaldawta



Ramfangzauva, who operated in the Tactical Headquarters of the MNF.
Courtesy of Ramfangzauva



A newly wed Gorkha couple wearing traditional wedding dress.
Courtesy of Rashika Chhetri



Gorkha girls wearing traditional dress.
Courtesy of Rashika Chhetri



A Gorkha girl wearing a Mizo *Puan*.
Courtesy of Rashika Chhetri.



A Gorkha woman wearing Mizo traditional dress *Kawrchei* & *Puanchei*, Courtesy of Rupa Lohar

APPENDIX – B (DOCUMENTS)

MISSIO VENG RAM RS 100/- MAN

Welsh Mission Report-ah chuan heti hian an ziaak a.

"Tlangnuam lei, Lal Singh Sunuar chuan, Mission Veng mual. Chailui(chu chu tuna Vailui hi)hnar kin atanga luipui(chu chu tuna Sakhi-sih kan tih bawk hi) nen an infinna thlengin Welsh Mission hnenah Rs-100/-(cheng za)in a hralh a, in hmua leh huan atan a lei a ni" tiin an record hlui takah hmuh a ni.

Lei ni 17.2.1911
Record ni 20.2.1911
Witness - D.E.Jones tih a ni.

An record ziaak an ngaihsak tawh lem loh phok hlui tak hmua, laa chhinchhiahtu : C.Rokhuma(chutih laia S.I.S.), Mission Vengthlang, 1949.

[Handwritten signature]
1.8.2009

Copy of sales deed of Mission Veng from Lal Singh (Lalchhinga) to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission. Courtesy of Chhuanliana

Harini Jaisini widow of Late Banteu Jaisi dak runner of Meinbawi.

As you have a number of small children without any near relations to help you and you with your children are living on the charity of your neighbours you are exempted from payment of House tax till your elder children can help you.

Dated Aijal,
The 25th January 1938.

W. J. Jaisi
Asst. Superintendent,
Lushai Hills.

Tax exemption letter for widow Harini Jaisini. Courtesy of MK Jaisi.

GOVERNMENT OF MIZORAM: REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

APPENDIX 'A'

TRIBAL TRADE LICENSE NO. 128 OF 1973.

M/Pu Amika Prasad Jaishi of Danhril chu

a hnuai sawi ang hian a sundawn' phalsak a ni:-

1. Sundawna Hmin : Within Mizoram
2. Sundawna Bungrua : Misc goods
3. He License hi kum khat chung a mung a, kum tin renew tur a ni.
4. Kum tin March thla ral hmain chhiah a pe tur a ni.
5. He License hi mi dang hnea hralh emaw, rochuntir emaw, hmantir reng reng phal a ni lo.
6. He License neitu hian Sawrkar phalna lo chuan hnam dang (Non-Tribal) -a chhawr phal a ni lo.
7. He License neitu hian Sawrkar phal loh thil reng reng a tuar tur a ni lo.
8. A chung a Dante bawhchhetu chu a License cancel sak a ni ang.

*Plus supervised
T.T. No. 403/1970
R. L. Thuma
Asst. Settlement Officer
Govt. of Mizoram*

He License hi Sawrkar-in tul a tih angin a tidanglamin a a paih thei.

A chung a Dante khi ka hria a, ka pawn e.

R. L. Thuma 23/5/73
Asst. Settlement Officer
Govt. of Mizoram.
Issuing Officer

Signature of License Holder.

Memo No. REV. 11/T/73/11001 Dated AIZAWL, the 23.5. 1973.

RENEWAL :

Date of Renewal	Period of Year renewal	Initial of Renewing Officer with date	
1. 4. 74	up to 31-3-1975	<i>R. L. Thuma</i> Asst. Settlement Officer, AIZAWL.	<i>Paid No. 11-60-112/22 for 112/22 dt. 1.11.74.</i>

LRZ/28872. *****

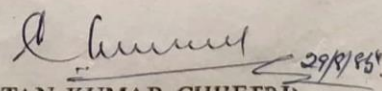
Trade License given to Amika Prasad Jaishi 1973. Courtesy of MK Jaishi

IN LIEU OF TELEGRAM FORM

FROM : PRESIDENT MIZORAM GORKHA SANGH
AIZAWL MIZORAM
TO : SHRI LALDENGA PRESIDENT MIZO NATIONAL FRONT
CAMP NEW DELHI
CARE OF MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA NEW DELHI

For Kind Personal Attention Of Shri
Laldenga President Mizo National
Front AAA Mizoram Gorkha Sangh
Is Grateful To You For Giving Them
Audience While You Were In Aizawl
AAA Kindly Pursue Our Requests Made
To You At Aizawl And Bring
Us Eagerly Awaited Special
Facilities And Safeguards To The Permanent Gorkha
Settlers Of Mizoram As Requested
Earlier To You

Memo No. MGS/MR-2/85, Dated Aizawl the 28 August 1985
Post Copy in Confirmation to Shri Laldenga, President Mizo
National Front Camp New Delhi.


(CHETAN KUMAR CHHETRI)
President
Mizoram Gorkha Sangh
Mizoram.

Courtesy of Roma Jaishi

APPENDIX – C

**LETTER TO THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF
BENGAL FROM SECRETARY TO THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF
ASSAM**

No. 4566 P, dated Shillong, the 30th September, 1892.

From – F.C. Daukes. Esq., Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam

To – The Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal

With reference to the correspondence ending with your telegram dated 22nd August, 1892, and in continuation of my telegram No. 5565 P, dated 29th November, 1892, containing proposals for the dispatch of a column of 300 Military Police from Fort Aijal to co-operate with a column from Lungleh with a view of punishing certain Lushai villages which were transferred to this Administration at the end of January, 1892, and which took part in the recent rising, I am directed to enclose a copy of a telegram No. 1760 E, dated 27th September, 1892, from the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, and a note recorded by Mr. McCabe regarding the proposed dispatch of the column of 300 Military police to meet a column from Lungleh at South Lalrhima.

APPENDIX – D

SUMMARY OF EVENTS IN SOUTH LUSHAI HILLS DISTRICT, 1896

No. 323L, dated Chittagong, the 14th April 1896

Memo by – F.H.B. Skrine, Esq., Offg. Commr. of the Chittagong Division

Submitted to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal

Summary of events in the South Lushai Hills District for the week ending 7th April, 1896.

3rd April, 1896 – Subadar-Major Bikaram Gurung is seriously ill with gastritis: he was delirious all through the night, but is better to-day. A sepoy, Budhiman Gurung, is also very dangerously ill with remittent fever.

4th April, 1896 – One of the sepoys, Gambir Singh Gurung, shot a very fine leopard: he was out after pig in the jungle, and came on the brute sleeping on the rocks in the bed of nalla: he crept up and shot it through the neck.

R.H. Sneyd Hutchison

No. 8 G, dated Lungleh, the 7th April 1896.

APPENDIX – E

GOVERNMENT ORDER, 1909

Order No. 11 of 1909 dated Aijal the 11th August, 1909.

The following Nepalis who have settled here without permission in Chaltlang village will leave the district before the 15th instant. Head Constables Sairang and Kolasib should be informed accordingly and the Sub-Inspector should report when the men have left the district.

Nain Singh Thapa

Shiblal Rai

Thaneswar Gharti

Bahadur Bhaun

Akananda Upadhya

Keshore Rana the headman of Chaltlang is fined Rs. 20/- for not reporting the arrival of these persons and is dismissed from the post of headman.

In addition to the obligation of the Headman to report new arrivals each house holder must at once report to the Police the arrival of any foreigners and if he fails to do so his Pass will be cancelled and he will be required to leave the district. No jhuming by foreigners in tree forest will in future be allowed. Existing settlers who rely on cultivation for their livelihood must either go to Champhai or Tenzawl.

Major I.A., Superintendent

Lushai Hills.

APPENDIX – F

**LETTER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT OF LUSHAI HILLS FROM
OFFICIATING COMMANDANT, 1ST ASSAM RIFLES**

From - Captain G.B. Davies, 49th Prs.
Offg. Commandant. Ist (Lushai Hills) Battalion, Assam Rifles.

To - The Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aijal.

Dated Aijal, the 10th October, 1919

Sir,

With reference to our recent conversations regarding the settlement of pensioned and discharged Indian Officers, NCOs and Sepoys of this Battalion in Lushai Hills, on uninhabited tracts, I have the honour to bring the following points to your notice for representation to Government.

The Government present policy of assisting or attempting to assist the Nepal Durbar to secure the return to their own country of such discharged men by prohibiting or restricting their settlement in a suitable climate, being entirely negative in character is practically ineffective. I do not think I should be far wrong in stating that 90% of the long servicemen retired on pension or discharged do not return to Nepal. This excludes the special case of the large number of young soldiers who have been invalided out of the service during the war and who are provided with a passage to their homes. I refer to the long service soldier who takes his discharge or who retires on pension after 30 years service. Such men do not return to Nepal for simple reason that they cannot afford to pay their fare and their families fare there and until Government grants such men and their families free passage back to their homes the policy besides being valueless to Nepal inflicts a great hardship on old men with probably large families who have lost after 30 years, all connection with their country and all claim to their land... These men are disciplined hard working and intensely loyal and deserve something better than being hunted out of the district. The result is that they appear to wander about Assam away from their own kind and too often become degenerate "wasters". Where as if they were permitted to settle in these hills which have been their home for upwards of 50 years in purely Gurkha village under the chieftainship of retired Indian Officers with their moral and religious welfare cared for would become most useful subject. One of the conditions of their permission to settle would be that all sons when of military age, would be sent up to Battalion headquarter for enlistment. I believe that the number of recruits obtained in this way would exceed the number of men who under present circumstances return to Nepal and that an actual saving in man hood would accrue to that country. This field for recruitment would also cause a saving to Government.

The last point I would bring forward is the urgent questions of rations and foodstuffs generally in this hills. There are large tracts of the district uncultivated and there appears to be no attempt on the part of the Lushais either to improve their methods or to cultivate beyond their own immediate requirements. Again the new decreasing population combined with the excessively indolent and improvident characteristics of the Lushai race suggests that it would not only be a great advantage to Government but to the Lushais themselves, in years of scarcity to have these uninhabited tracts settled by a naturally industrious race who are experts in cultivation in the hills.

Much of the trouble in the past involve in the settlement of Gurkhas has been due to their settling in Lushai villages, but I believe this would entirely cease if the men were settled in villages under their retired Indian Officers in definitely restricted tracts.

I would therefore request that suitable tracts be set apart for the settlement of men of good character who also have a family to support, and that indiscriminate settling in Lushai villages be prohibited.

Captain Offg. Cammandant. 1st (Lushai Hills) Battalion, Assam Rifles

Copy to the Deputy Inspector General

Assam Rifles for information.

APPENDIX – G

SUPERINTENDENT'S ORDER, 1932

It has long been recognized that the area in the vicinity of Aijal is overpopulated and that the demand on the water supply, the firewood reserve, and the land availability for cultivation and grazing is excessive. It has therefore been decided with the approval of Government (D.O. Pol. No. 1162-3897 A.P from the Chief Secretary to the Commissioner) that steps should be taken to reduce the number of residents in the town, and that after due enquiry all persons, whether Lushais or Gurkhas, who have no particular claim to live in vicinity of Aijal, should be removed.

2. A house-to-house enquiry has been made by the Superintendent himself in the following areas:-

Bara Bazar	-	42	Police Veng	-	6
Chhing Veng	-	36	Chaltlang	-	129
Maubawk	-	32	Katla Line Bazar	-	16
Tlangnuam	-	61	Kulikawn	-	70
Mission Compound	-	81	Thakthing	-	150
Nokor Veng	-	32	Survey Tilla	-	22
Chandmari Veng	-	15	Vaivakawn &	-	24
Sriman Tilla	-	25	Patharkhana		
Total	-	741			

The orders which follow are based upon the facts elicited during the enquiry and due account has been taken of the age, length of residence, health, and other material circumstances of the persons concerned.

3. The village of Chaltlang is 2 miles from Aijal. Tlangnuam and Maubawk are about the same distance. These are really rural areas. No increase in the number of houses is permitted without the sanction of the Superintendent. With the exception of some of the Gurkhali settlers at Maubawk who live in the immediate vicinity of the Assam Rifles married lines, the residents in these villages may be allowed to remain.

4. In the other areas mentioned (with the exception of Burrabazar) the following persons must move.

Police Veng	-	1	Chhing Veng	-	17
Kulikawn	-	29	Mission Compound	-	13
Thakthing	-	51	Nokor Veng	-	3

Maubawk	-	11		
Maitraj Limbu			Narsing Thapa	Jangbir Gurung
Robilal Sunnar			Dhojbir Limbu	Narbir Rai
Dhanbir Limbu			Karnesing Rai	Chandraber Thapa
Sukumaya Raini			Dhanmaia Kamini	
Katla Line Bazaar	-	10		
Gumansingh Bhaju			Lochman Jaisi	Singbir Kami
Jite Lama			Ranbir Kami	Nazadikram Halway
Jagot Ram Damai			Tulbahadur Kami	Aiman Lohar
Survey Tilla	-	12		
Ranhabur Limbu			Monbir Thapa	Nihangma Limbuni
Manrup Limbu			Antasing Thapa	Jagatbahadur Limbu
Dhanbir Sunnar Thapa)			Singbir Lama	Sunmaili (w/o Sohabir
Bhimraj Gurung			Bhude Thapa	Purnamaia Sarkini
Chandmari Veng II	-	11		
Sukdhoj Limbu			Jagat Bahadur Limbu	
Vaivakawn & Patharkhanna	-	9		
Dhanman Thapa			Harkabir Lama	Birbahadur Gurung
Dhanraj Rai			Ramlal Rai	Lolitbahadur Chettri
Harkabir Limbu Thapa			Singbir Limbu	Wife of late Bensingh

Sriman Tilla	-	13	
Mahananda Limbu		Partiman Rai	Chabilal Ale Thapa
Kajiman Rai		Lalbahadur Limbu	Narsing Gurung
Sundhi Limbu Limbu		Sirinath Limbu	Wife of late Dhanraj
Ratanbir Ale		Randhoj Limbu	Maitabahadur Limbu
Ragbahadur Thapa			
Total	-	180	

5. The following will be allowed to remain during the lifetime of the present occupant or his widow. On their decease the houses will be demolished.

Maubawk	-	Krishna Maya Rani	Moti Raini
Katla Line	-	Kola Ram	Nobinchandra Ghosh
Survey Tilla	-	Palsing Rai	Bhinraman Rai
		Aitabir Thapa	Matbahadur Limbu
		Cochman Rai	Sukbar Gurung
Chanmari Veng	-	Singbir Gurung	
Vaivakawn &	-	Purnabir Thapa	Jangbir Chettri
Patharkhana		Kesor Gurung	Kandhimaia Raini
		Laknuma Limbuni	Dolbahadur Gurung
Sriman Tilla	-	Swedhe Limbu	Boliman Limbu
		Gopal Chettri	Maya Thapani
Total	-	64	

8. (1) Lushais ordered to move must move to a village over 5 miles from Aijal on or before 1st January 1932.

(2) Gurkhali pensioner will be allowed to settle in the district at 45th Mile Dwarband Road.

(3) Gurkhalis other than pensioners must leave the district on or before 1st march 1932.

Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

APPENDIX – H

SUPERINTENDENT OF LUSHAI HILLS LETTER TO THE COMMISSIONER, SURMA VALLEY & HILL DIVISION, SILCHAR

No. Misc./XII-13 57 Ed.

From- A.G. McCall, Esq., I.C.S, Superintendent, Lushai Hills

To- The Commissioner, Surma valley & Hill Division, Silchar

Dated Aijal, the 27th July 1936.

Sir, With Compliments,

1. While on your recent visit to Aijal you were inclined to move for Government taking over the Gurkha School.
2. I have addressed the Commandant and the Honorary Inspector of Schools. The Commandant is very pressing indeed that the method of management of the Gurkha School should continue as at present and makes the following points:
 -
 - 1) Community is in favour of present arrangement whereby kindergarten children can proceed to Middle English School.
 - 2) No criticism against the Mission School and it has not been found that entrants to this school are rendered any less benefit for soldiering.
 - 3) The education of these boys is a government liability and a grant in aid should be made if the Mission cannot find finance.
 - 4) Any school in dependent of the Mission control would deteriorate rapidly.
 - 5) Hindi should be the medium of instruction in the early stages, Nepali being entirely ignored.
 - 6) The writing of the Vernacular should continue in Roman as this is the Army policy.
 - 7) English should be strongly encouraged.
 - 8) Scholarship for higher education is valueless unless the boy is such a type as to be fit for King's Commission or similar status.
3. The Honorary Inspector of Schools makes the following points: -
 - 1) In view of Commandant's definite line, the only course open is to continue as at present.
 - 2) But if this is done, he presses for finance as otherwise funds intended for the education of those coming under Mission control will be spent on entirely different project.
4. I am inclined to support the continuance of the present system which has worked very well, and I do not favour changes unless and until a strong case has been made out for the need for change. Proposals have been put in for financing a progressive education system in these hills and if this materializes the need to grant a Special allowance for expenditure of this school might arise. At present in view of the very small grant in aid made by Government if we go for earmarking the sum required to finance this school out of this grant it would

be tactless, in my opinion, putting it at the least. If the progressive proposals fall to the ground I consider we should have to move to obtain a special earmarked grant in aid for this school only.

5. The running costs of the school are about Rs. 600 a year with practically no receipt.

Sd/- A.G. McCall, 21.7.36, Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

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77 years. One of the MNF volunteers who held a Captain rank. He was detained in Tuirial jail for a month. After the was released, he had to appear in the court every week for three years.

BVT, Chhuanliana, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Bethlehem, Aizawl.

92 years. One of the most prominent citizens of Aizawl. His family has been residing in Aizawl since the 1900s.

Chhetri, Binda, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Khatla, Aizawl.
76 years. The ex-President of the Gorkha Nari Samaj. Her grandfather worked as a water carrier for the British during the early years.

Chhetri, Pratap, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

Works as a Mizoram Information Service officer under the Government of Mizoram. He is also a writer whose interest is the Labour Corps during the world wars. He is a learned scholar who has published a number of works.

Chhetri, Radhika, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Bawngkawn, Aizawl.

A home maker and a prominent member of the Nari Samaj. Her grandfather was the earliest Gorkha settler in Tawitaw (Serkhan) village.

Chhetri, Roshan, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2019, Bawngkawn, Aizawl.

56 years. An active member of the Gorkha community, a government servant by profession. His father contended for Mizoram Legislative Assembly.

Chhetri, Semu, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Dinthar, Aizawl. 66 years. A shopkeeper by profession. His grandfather had been the earliest convert among the early Gorkhas. His grandfather arrived in Mizoram as early as 1890.

Chetry, Manu, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Lawipu, Aizawl. 67 years. His grandfather arrived with the British. His family was the first settler in Lawipu, a locality which was given to the Gorkhas by the British solely for the purpose of cattle breeding.

Jaishi, Jon Kumari, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Durtlang, Aizawl.

74 years. A senior citizen.

Jaishi, Leena, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Thuampui, Aizawl. A young woman, known for her interest in the history of Gorkhas. A teacher by profession.

Jaishi, M.K, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Dawrpui, Aizawl. A prominent person in the Gorkha community. His grandfather arrived with the British. His father was one of the first people who opened a shop to cater the needs of the people after *Rambuai* broke out.

Jaishi, N.L, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Dawrpui Vengthar, Aizawl.

One of the leaders of the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association. A government servant by profession, and whose grandfather was a coolie under the British.

Jaishi, Parvati, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Durtlang, Aizawl. 85 years. A senior citizen who was given a Mizo name, Parkungi. She was born in Sialsuk.

Jaishi, Roma, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Dawrpui, Aizawl.

One of the office bearers of the Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association. He is an active member of the Gorkha community whose grandfather was one of the earliest Gorkha settlers in Tanhril village.

Jaishi, Uday Kumar, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

Retired government servant. Presently, he is the Chairman of the Central Gorkha Mandir Committee, a prominent person in the Gorkha community.

Khiangte, Zonunsanga, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Chanmari, Aizawl.

He is the present President of the Mizoram Journalist Association. He is from Champhai where Gorkha settled in large number in the early 1900s.

Lalrawnliana, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl.

76 years. Author of *Zoram in Zolenna a Sual, Vol I – 10*. One of the most important figures during *Rambuai*. He also authored *Freedom Struggle in Mizoram*.

Limbu, Gopal, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Maubawk, Aizawl.

64 years. His grandfather was a servant of a British officer who followed his master to the Hills. He was given a land in Maubawk by the British.

Lohar, Tamlal, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Chhinga Veng, Aizawl.

68 years. An important figure among the Gorkha community. A retired government servant. His father-in-law was Kalu Singh.

Prasad, Purna, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

67 years. A historian and a writer. He has published a number of his writings in different magazines. His grandfather was the earliest settler of Bawngkawn.

Pun, Nirmal K, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Khatla, Aizawl. The first Headmaster of Nepali High School. A historian and a writer. He has written a number of articles.

Ramfangzauva, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Bangla Veng, Kawnpui.

One of the MNF returnee who had joined the MNF at a very young age. He worked in the tactical headquarters of the MNF.

Renthlei, David L, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Vengthlang, Champhai.

A young man from Champhai who has deep knowledge of Champhai history.

Sahi, Indra, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Bawngkawn, Aizawl.

A young woman, a social activist. Her grandfather Ramprasad Upadhyaya was the first Pundit in the Assam Rifles.

Sailo, Lalhlana, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Bungkawn, Aizawl.

81 years. MNF returnee. Author of *Vangvat Kai lai Ni te*.

Sakhawliana, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Melkawn, Ratu.

A school teacher from Ratu village.

Siakeng, T Sena Ralte, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Dinthar, Aizawl.

93 years. He used to live in Thenzawl where the Gorkhas settled in large number. Author of *Bengkhuai Sal atangin Zalenna Ramah*.

Thapa, B.S, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Electric Veng, Kolasib.

A retired college Principal, a historian and a social activist. He has presented a paper on the Gorkhas of Mizoram.

Thapa, Hari, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Bungkawn, Aizawl.

A retired government servant. He is presently the President of the Gorkha Sangh. His father was a Military Police who came with the British.

Vanlaldawta, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Folkland, Aizawl.

He is the youngest son of Man Bahadur Karki (*Zokailiana*).

Zamawia, R, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Tuivamit, Aizawl.

84 years. A Secretary, Ministry of Defence during the Provincial Government of Mizoram. Author of *Zofate zinkawngah Zalenna mei a mit tur a ni lo*.

Zama, C, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Chawnpui, Aizawl. MNF returnee. Author of *Chengrang a au ve* and others. He has a vast knowledge of the Gorkhas who joined the MNF movement.

Zothansanga, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Khatla, Aizawl. The youngest son of Chawnga. Chawnga was the first Mizo who was given a land in Khatla by the Commandant of the Assam Rifles. The first Mizo to settle in Khatla.

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL: MIZORAM
Phone: 0389-2330531/ 0389-2330410

BRIEF BIO-DATA

Name : Zoremsiami Pachuau
Address : H-34, Khatla South, Aizawl – 796001
Date of Birth : 7 July 1976
Email : zorempc@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Master of Arts (History), Department of History, North Eastern Hills University, 2002.

Bachelor of Arts (Honours in History), Government Aizawl College, 1997.

Pre-University, Government Aizawl College, 1994.

High School Leaving Certificate, St. Paul's High School, 1991.

PUBLISHING HISTORY

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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL: MIZORAM
Phone: 0389-2330531/ 0389-2330410**

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

Name of the Candidate	:	Zoremsiami Pachuau
Degree	:	Doctor of Philosophy
Department	:	History & Ethnography
Title of Thesis	:	History of the Gorkha Community in Mizoram from 19 th – 20 th Centuries
Date of Admission	:	22.07.2016
Approval of Research Proposal		
1. Departmental Research Committee	:	28.04.2017
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(PROF. K. ROBIN)

Head

HISTORY OF THE GORKHA COMMUNITY IN MIZORAM FROM
19th – 20th CENTURIES

BY

Zoremsiami Pachuau

Department of History & Ethnography

Supervisor: Dr. Hmingthanzuali

Submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in History of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

I. Introduction:

Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills during the colonial period, starting from 1890 – 1947. It became Mizo Hills District in 1954 when the Hills was elevated to a District status. In 1971, the district was given a Union Territory status and renamed Mizoram. Mizoram attained statehood in 1987. Mizoram has an area of 21,081 Sq. Km. It is situated in the north-eastern corner of India. It shares an international border with Burma and Bangladesh. It also shares borders with the Indian states such as Assam, Manipur and Tripura. ¹ Mizoram lies between 20° 20¹ and 24° 27¹ N, and 92° 20¹ and 93° 29¹ E.²

The people inhabiting Mizoram are called Mizo, which is a generic term meaning highlanders. In the colonial period, they were referred as Lushai.³ The Mizo consists of several clans such as Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Ralte, Lai and Mara. There are also Chakmas, Reangs/ Brus, Hrangkhawl etc and a sizeable number of Gorkhas living in Mizoram.⁴ Gorkhas were the first non-Mizo permanently settled in Mizoram.

Most of the earlier literatures on the Gorkhas belong to the class of writings by the British administrators, scholars and army officers who served in the army. These literatures can be classified as regimental histories, recruitment handbooks and coffee table books which tells volumes about the manners and customs of the Gorkhas, along with their tales of gallantry.⁵ The colonial writers had the tendency to portray Gorkhas as martial race. Brook Northey writes, “Their active physique, their keen sight and hearing, and the fact that they have from their earliest childhood been instructed in all forms of sport, all combine to make Gorkhas almost unrivalled in

¹ John Vanlalhluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram*, Aizawl, Mizo History Association, 1985, p.1.

² H.C. Thanhranga, *District Councils in the Mizo Hills*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2007, p.1.

³ Lushai was a name given to the inhabitants by the colonial rulers. When the British arrived in the Hills, the country was dominated by Lusei tribes, and majority of the chiefs were Lusei. The term ‘Lusei’ was pronounced ‘Lushai’ by the British and they named the country Lushai Hills. These names were used for a long time.

⁴ P. Lalnithanga, *Emergence of Mizoram*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2010, p.1.

⁵ Nilambar Chhetri, ‘Interrogating Gorkha as Martial Race, Category based on Discrete Identities’, *Journal of Studies in History and Culture*, Vol – 2, Issue – 2, 2016, p.3. <http://jshc.org> (accessed 25.8.2019).

jungle country and eminently capable as riflemen on the mountain side.”⁶ The bravery of the Gorkhas are always reflected in their writings.

Who are the Gorkhas?

Gorkhas, also known as Nepalis, refer to people who are originally from the modern country of Nepal, which is a landlocked country, bordered by Tibet in the north, India in the east, south and west. The term Gorkha is synonymous with Nepali. In 1742, Prithvinarayan Shah, of Indian Rajput origin, became the king of Gorkha, a state about 60 miles west of Kathmandu. He wanted to unify all the Himalayan territories into a single powerful state. He was aware of the expanding power of the British in India and he knew that after the downfall of the Mughal Empire in India, European colonial powers were anxious to gain control over Indian principalities. The Gorkha ruler knew that unless the resource rich Nepal valley came under his rule, it would be practically impossible to consolidate the fragmented states against the British. Prithvinarayan Shah, therefore, concentrated his troops towards the east. The final victory in the unification of Nepal valley came in 1769.⁷ In the initial period, the Gorkha army consisted mainly of the combined forces of Khas, Magars and Gurungs and later included the Rais and Limbus as well. The brave army of Prithvinarayan Shah was known as Gurkha regardless of caste and tribe, and the ruling dynasty was also often referred as House of Gorkha.

In the meanwhile, the British East India Company was expanding its area of interest. They advanced towards north for the purpose of trading with Tibet. However, Nepal stood in the way of building trade routes in the north. In other words, there was clash of interest between East India Company and Nepal. A war followed which lasted for three years (1812-1815). The Gorkhas fought bravely in spite of inferior weapons. The war ended with the Treaty of Sugauli (1815) by which Nepal lost almost a third of its territory.

⁶ Brook W. Northey, *The Land of the Gorkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal*, New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1998, p.99.

⁷ Gokul Sinha, *The Role of Gorkhas in the Making of Modern India*, Delhi, Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh, 2008, p.8.

The British were greatly impressed by the Gorkhas' bravery in the war. They had every intention of recruiting them in the British army. In fact, recruitment of Gorkhas started even before the treaty was signed. Prior to the Sugauli Treaty of 2nd December, 1815, the Gorkha Recruitment Treaty was signed for the recruitment of the Gorkhas in the British Imperial Army. General David Ochterlony understood the Gorkha soldiers to be brave, honest, faithful, selfless and hard-working. A treaty, Gorkha Recruitment Treaty (15th May, 1815) was signed between General David Ochterlony and General Amar Singh Thapa which gave rise to the different Gorkha Regiments (G.R).⁸

The Gorkhas are generally perceived as martial people. The common perception of Gorkha as a military people was further strengthened as they were recruited in the Gorkha regiment of the British Indian Army following Nepal's defeat in the Anglo Nepal War 1814-16. They soon gained respect as fierce and loyal soldiers.⁹ The East India Company soon raised three Gorkha battalions on 24th April, 1815 –

- 1) The 1st Gorkha Rifles was raised at Sabathu (Simla)
- 2) 2nd Gorkha Rifles was raised at Nahan
- 3) 3rd Gorkha Rifles was raised at Almora

Apart from recruiting Gorkhas in the army, they were also recruited as coolies. The Darjeeling hills were known to be a very favourable ground for obtaining Nepalese coolies.¹⁰ The British also started bringing them to work in their tea gardens, shops and to provide different kinds of labour. So, the Gorkha population increased. In the North East, the Gorkha influx began with the formation of Assam Light Infantry in Cuttack (1817) where a large number of Gorkhas were recruited. The British granted land and other amenities to them so that even after their retirement, they would settle down in the region. The Gorkhas cultivated lands, tended cows for milk supply, cleared forests for agriculture and road making,

⁸ Pradip Sunar, Jeevan Kavar and I.K. Subha, *The Gorkhas of Mizoram, Vol – I*, Aizawl, Mizoram Gorkha Students Union, 2000, p.4.

⁹ Cindy L. Perry, *Nepali around the World*, Kathmandu, Ekta Books, 1997, p.1.

¹⁰ A. Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1995, p. 312.

established towns and bazaars... The British did everything to lure the Gorkhas to new and pioneering areas of development in the North East. In this way, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya were populated by the Gorkhas and played important part in the development of the region.

Lt. Col. Thomas Herbert Lewin wrote in his book *A Fly on the Wheel*, “I had formed a high opinion of the little Ghurkhas, who, under Colonel Macpherson, had done the fighting of the expedition, and I obtained permission to send to Nepal and get emigrants from there to colonise my frontier wastes.”¹¹ The expedition he talked of was the Lushai-Expedition of 1871-72 in Mizoram where Gorkha soldiers displayed great bravery. Prior to the expedition, the British had encroached the hunting grounds of the Mizo by extending the tea gardens. As a result, the Mizo made repeated raids down from the hills into the neighbouring plains¹². Gorkhas were first brought into contact with them when the British used Gorkha Regiment to launch retaliatory punitive raids. An attack on a tea garden in Cachar, resulting in the death of one British man and a little girl carried off as a captive, caused the massive Lushai Expedition of 1871-72 to be launched as a kind of final solution to put down the raids. It involved two columns of soldiers – the Chittagong Column, including the 22nd, 42nd and 44th Assam Rifles, which were made up of Gorkhas, Punjabi and Sikhs.¹³ In this expedition, the Gorkhas proved to be unmatched for their fellow soldiers. Woodthorpe wrote, “...the active little Goorkhas of the 44th N.I were much more at home than their up-country brethren in arms...”¹⁴

At the conclusion of this expedition, frontier posts were established, and buffer villages were set up occupied by Gorkhas. Lewin wrote, “The country where these villages were located had previously been uninhabited, through fear of the marauding Lushais, and my idea had been to establish there good stockade villages of courageous, stiff necked people like the Ghurkhas, who should serve as a buffer

¹¹ Thomas H. Lewin, *A fly on the Wheel or How I helped to Govern India*, Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1977, p.299.

¹² Dr. C. Lalthlengliana, ‘Mizo raids and Counter Military Offensive’, in Malsawmdawngliana & Rohmingmawii (ed.), *Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram*, Guwahati, Scientific Book Centre, 2013, p.92.

¹³ Perry, *Nepali*, p.204.

¹⁴ R.G. Woodthorpe, *The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872*, Calcutta, Firma KLM Private Ltd., Reprinted 1978, p. 111.

between the Mong Raja's territory and the independent Lushai tribes to the east."¹⁵ From this writing, it is clear that Gorkha settlements were established on the borders of Mizoram and in 1873, Lewin himself had gone from Tlabung to visit them to see how the settlement was progressing.

However, the British did not stay after this expedition. The official records of the Government show that the Gorkha migrations and settlement in Mizoram began in 1891, after the permanent posts were constructed at Aizawl and Lunglei.¹⁶ In the year 1889-90, another expedition, Chin – Lushai Expedition was carried out by which the British fully took over the control of Mizoram. With this, permanent posts were established in Aizawl and Lunglei, and the Gorkhas in large number were among the people who occupied the posts. The setting up of a proper governmental system in a hostile country needed man-power in many ways such as dak-runners, chowkidars, masons, farmers etc for which the Gorkhas were most suitable. In such way, the Gorkhas migrated and settled in Mizoram out of the necessities of the British government. During the British period the Gorkha population in and around Aizawl town was in majority. Most of the village names were in Gorkhali, but after formation of Mizoram as a union territory, these village names were gradually changed to Mizo names e.g. Survey tilla is now Dinthar, Gairi Gaon is now known as Tuikual 'D', Khakria is now Rangvamual, Pathar-khana is now Hunthar Veng, Shrimantilla is now Zotlang...¹⁷. A number of Gorkhas, with commendable services were awarded with big plots of land and few even became chiefs enjoying equal powers and privileges similar to the Mizo chiefs.

As regards education of the children of retired personnel of the Gorkha Regiment and the Assam Rifles, Mission School was started around 1912 near the present Government Boys' School, Aizawl.¹⁸ In this school, the Gorkha children could receive education in their own mother tongue though the department was

¹⁵ Lewin, *A fly on the Wheel*, p.299.

¹⁶ K.L. Pradhan, 'Settlement of Gorkhas', in Sangkima (ed.), *Cross – Border Migration MIZORAM*, Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2004, p. 58.

¹⁷ N.N. Kundu, 'Gorkha', in K.S. Singh (ed.), *People of India MIZORAM, Vol-XXXIII*, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 1995, p.54.

¹⁸ Kishan Lal Pradhan, 'The Gorkhas of Mizoram', in A.C. Sinha and T.B. Subba (ed.), *The Nepalis in North East India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p.299.

called Hindi department. They were able to learn History, Geography, Hygiene and Scriptures in Nepali. Kirpa Lama was the first Gorkha teacher appointed. The School was closed during the war years. When it reopened in 1945, the Hindi department was separated from the Boys' School and a plot of land was allotted for the construction of a school building. H.S. Pradhan was appointed as the first Headmaster. In 1945 itself, the first ever batch of candidates from the school appeared in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination.¹⁹ Thus, the foundation of Gorkha Schools in Mizoram was laid.

The Gorkhas continued to stay in their adopted land even after the British left. Gorkha *Mauzadar* (collector) was entrusted to look after the Gorkha community and to collect foreigners' taxes. The first *Mauzadar* was Jay Bahadur Sahi of Maubawk. However, the institution of *Mauzadar* was abolished along with the abolition of Mizo chieftainship in 1954. When the institution of Gorkha *Mauzadar* was abolished a Gorkha Panchayat was established at Aizawl. Rules and regulations were laid down with the "intention to give right of control of their social customs with the Gorkha community as far as possible with the least interference by the Magistrate of the District".²⁰ When Village Council institution was introduced in Mizoram in the year 1954, the Gorkhas were represented fairly. When Mizoram attained the status of Union Territory, Kapoor Chand Thakuri was nominated as representative of the minorities in the Legislative Assembly.

There has always been a cordial relation between the Mizo and the Gorkha communities which continued during the Mizo freedom movement of 1966. The relationship established in the due course of time became so strengthened that many Gorkhas jumped into the fray when Pu Laldenga, the MNF supremo called for war against the Indian Union in a bid to separate Mizoram in 1966.²¹ They joined the force as drivers, river navigators, shooting instructors and explosive experts. When

¹⁹ Nirmal K. Pun, 'Gorkha Schools, Khatla. A Chronicle', in Thanseia (ed.), *SIKULPUI Govt. Boys' Middle School Centenary 1907-2007 Souvenir*, Aizawl, the Sikulpui Centenary Celebration Organizing Committee, 2007, p.184.

²⁰ Pradhan, *Cross-Border*, p.63.

²¹ Sunar et al., *The Gorkhas*, p.16.

the MNF declared Quit Mizoram Order in 1982, Gorkhas who have been residing in Mizoram prior to 1966 were exempted.

From the later years of 1970s and in the 1980s, the Gorkhas began to feel discriminated in their adopted land. The reason might have been the large-scale migration of Gorkhas from outside. Since there were no critical criteria laid down to ascertain as to who is a permanent settler and who is a new entrant, the authorities found it safe to brand each and every Gorkha as foreigners.²² The Gorkhas began to feel marginalized, insecure, rootless and unwanted. The Mizoram Gorkha Sangh requested the government to recognize the Gorkhas of Mizoram as one of the Mizo tribes which was declined. In 1984, the Sangh once again requested the *inclusion of the Gorkha Community in the Mizoram Official Handbook, Vol.II* (where the recognized Scheduled Tribes and Castes are listed). With this request in mind, the Gorkhas eagerly waited for the *Peace Accord*, believing that a new chapter in Mizoram will bring a new day for them. The 1987 election was a landslide victory for the MNF. However, their ray of hope ended when internal problems led to the dissolution of the MNF government after a short period of 18 months.

The Gorkhas have been residing in Mizoram for more than a century. From the beginning of their establishment in Mizoram, they tried their best to show they belong here. They are courageous people, willing to give their life in battle and in fact, to refer oneself as a 'Gorkha' is rooted in the reputation of bravery that the community had earned. The Gorkhas have been pioneers in animal husbandry and wet rice cultivation in Mizoram. Wherever they establish themselves, they try to prove that they are worthy residents. They have been there in all stages of Mizoram history since 1871, taking part and contributed in the making of history. In spite of all these, they are unheard in Mizoram history. It is indeed high time that a proper study of the Gorkha community in Mizoram is carried out.

II. Review of Literature:

Writings on Mizoram history started from the colonial period, written by the colonial writers. Prior to this, Mizo had no written language and everything was

²² Sunar, et al., p.22.

handed down orally from generation to generation. Mizoram had witnessed different historical epochs since their first settlement though these narratives were only documented since the British period. The early works on Mizo and Mizoram history were done by the colonial administrators and the Christian missionaries, who had viewed the Mizo as 'primitive' and 'savage' as there were no western civilization traits to be seen in the Mizo traditional society.

In Mizoram, different people have been settling down for a number of years. Apart from Mizo, there are also non – Mizo who have been permanently settled. All these people have taken part in the historical events of Mizoram. However, writings on Mizoram history hardly present the non- Mizo and their role.

Writings on the history of Gorkha community in Mizoram are minimal. The first references were seen in the colonial writings, written by military personnel. The colonial writers did mention the Gorkhas in their writings. However, these writers talked of the military Gorkhas only. This can be understood because of the fact that the Gorkhas during this period were mostly soldiers though a number of *Coolies* were also present. In the colonial writings, Gorkhas are portrayed as 'model soldiers', who are defined by their 'bravery'. The British needed the Gorkhas to fight their wars. They had to create a mighty force which could intimidate their enemies that led to the portrayal of the Gorkhas as indomitable and fearless.

History of the Assam Rifles written by L.W. Shakespear clearly show the role of Gorkha soldiers in the expeditions carried out against the hill tribes of North East India. This work is a detailed, chronological work on the history of Assam Rifles in the North East. The Assam Rifles was previously known as Military Police of Assam. The writer talks about the role played by the Assam Rifles of five battalions in annexing the different wild tribes of North East India. Of these five battalions, three battalions were soon changed to 6th Goorkha Rifles, 2/8 Goorkha Rifles and 44th Goorkha Rifles. He also praises the Gorkha soldiers' abilities to adapt in the thick jungles of Mizoram. He says that the Gorkha soldiers were able to build a rough, but efficient bridge while the British sappers were calculating away. A. Mackenzie, in his book *The North-East Frontier of India* writes,

“The Darjeeling hills were known to be a very favourable ground for obtaining Nepaulese coolies, and Captain Hedayut Ali was deputed there to recruit and organize a corps of hill coolies, which he very successfully did, with Rs. 2 batta when on actual service”.

From this writing, we can conclude that apart from serving in the army as soldiers, the Gorkhas were also recruited as coolies in large number. So, it is clear that a number of Gorkha coolies also accompanied the British. The British writers are all praise for the Gorkha soldiers for their bravery and swiftness in the hostile country. R.G. Woodthorpe also writes in his book, *The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872*,

“Arrived at the halting place, all the troops went to work... In this work, the active little Goorkhas of the 44th N.I were much more at home than their up-country brethren in arms, ...springing into trees like monkeys, lopped off branches, collected bamboos of cantos, with a low raised bamboo floor as a sleeping place, before the others had made up their minds what to do”.

Among the British personnel, Thomas H. Lewin, author of *A Fly on the Wheel* is another writer who loved and praised the Gorkhas. He expresses his admiration towards the Gorkhas whom he addressed ‘*splendid little fellows*’ and ‘*stiff-necked*’ by saying “*It was a remarkable sight at the close of a march to see the speedy and dexterous manner in which the hill men and the Ghurkhas would, in the twinkling of an eye, convert a dusky forest glade into a comfortable village*”. It is clear from this writing that the Gorkhas were swift and handy in the thick, uninhabited forests just like the local hill men. According to Lewin, the first settlement of Gorkhas was set up in the border of Mizoram in 1871, to act as a buffer village between the hill and the plain people. He himself visited the settlement in 1873 to see the progress.

The colonial writers portrayed the Gorkha soldiers as fearless and skilful in the unexplored jungles of Mizoram. They presented them as exemplary soldiers. A.S. Reid writes that the Gorkhas, using their *Khukri*, possess a natural aptitude to any kind of cutting operation from the sharpening of pencil to the felling of a tree.

An expedition, Chin-Lushai Expedition (1889-1890) was carried out by which the British took over the control of Mizoram. Permanent posts were established in Aizawl and Lunglei, and large numbers of Gorkhas occupied these posts. K.L. Pradhan's *Settlement of Gorkhas in Cross-Border Migration MIZORAM*, edited by Sangkima is on the movements and settlements of Gorkhas. He says that the Gorkha movement in Mizoram started in the beginning of the 19th century and attributes the migration to a number of reasons such as shortage of food, lack of employment or urge for military adventure. In this context, A.C. Sinha and Cindy L. Perry give an opinion that the Gorkha migration in the North East India was due to *push and pull factors* in their book, *The Nepalese in North East India, A Community in search of Indian Identity* and *Nepali Around the World* respectively. As mentioned, the Gorkhas began to settle in Mizoram after the establishment of Aizawl and Lunglei forts. Gokul Sinha writes in his book *The Role of Gorkhas in the making of Modern India*, "*The government needed man-power – traders, masons, dak-runners, chowkidars, farmers and others – for which they turned to the Gorkhas, fearing that the natives were not yet fully docile*".

Lalhruaitluanga Ralte mentions the Gorkha soldiers in his book, *Thangliana*. He writes that the Gorkha soldiers accompanied the British in the expedition years. He also highlights the bravery of the Gorkha soldiers.

In the *Gorkhas of Mizoram, Vol –I*, the authors – Pradip Sunar, Jeevan Kavar and I.K. Subha make an attempt to make known the Gorkha identity and place in Mizoram. They write that due to their adaptability in any kind of situation, climate and topography, the Gorkhas felt right at home here from the beginning. The Mizo community embraced them and established good rapport. The authors go on saying the good relationship between the two communities have been so good that many Gorkhas joined in the Mizo National movement and fought for the cause along with their Mizo brothers. Kishan Lal Pradhan writes about how the Gorkhas proved to be worthy residents by stating the Gorkha contributions in various fields. He writes, "*They were regarded as the pioneers in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry. They also contributed a lot to constructions, town developments, education etc.*"

In regard to Gorkha society and economy, an important work is N.N. Kundu's *Gorkha in People of India MIZORAM, Vol-XXXIII*, edited by K.S. Singh. Kundu writes a brief account of the Gorkha community in Mizoram, on their caste system, marriage and death rituals, food habits, associations, religion and economy. The Gorkhas practiced caste system in the earlier years of their establishment, mostly among the first generation Gorkhas. Chhuanliana, in his book, *Chawhchawrawi, rawi lehzual*, writes a bit of information on this aspect saying how the Mizo young boys used to taunt the Gorkha women who regarded the Mizo as impure. T. Sena writes a page about the Gorkhas of Mizoram in his book, *Bengkhuaia Sal atangin Zalenna Ramah*. He writes that the Gorkhas are the first non – Mizo who settled permanently in Mizoram. He also highlights the different castes of the Gorkhas.

In regards to education, Nirmal K. Pun also writes in *Gorkha School, Khatla A Chronicle* in *SIKULPUI Centenary Souvenir*, edited by Thanseia, how Mission school was started by the missionaries to provide education for the children, and in this school, Gorkha children could receive education in their own mother tongue. Pradhan also writes about the Gorkha school saying that the Gorkha School started in 1945 and till now, 13 Gorkha schools have been opened.

In 1966, Mizoram entered into the darkest period of her history. The Mizo National Front (MNF) started asserting the independence of Mizoram popularly termed as *Rambuai*²³. Mizoram was declared a 'disturbed area' by the Government. In this movement, the Gorkhas also took part as majority of them supported the cause of the MNF. Several references of the Gorkhas are seen in the MNF narratives though their actual stories were never probed into. Narratives written by MNF activists such as Col. Lalrawnlina's book *Zoram in Zalenna a Sual Vol I -X*, C. Zama's *Chengrang a Au Ve*, V.L. Ringa Sailo's *Chengrang Chawilai Ni Te*, C. Zama's *Zampuimanga Battalion*, C. Zama's *V Battalion Sulhnu* made passing references to the Gorkhas who were involved among the Mizo National Army (MNA) underground.

²³ *Rambuai*- the troubled period of 20 years, MNF movement.

III. Statement of the problem:

In Mizoram, the Gorkhas started to settle down from 1891 and immediately adapted to the climate, topography, flora and fauna. Since then, they have settled and distributed in different parts Mizoram. In spite of it, no detail study of the Gorkha society has ever been made.

The Gorkhas arrived in Mizoram along with the British. In fact, the Gorkha community have been the largest non – Mizo community that ever settled in Mizoram. Almost all Gorkha could speak Mizo language that bonds the two communities and act as a factor for the Gorkhas to have a feeling that they are a part and parcel of Mizoram. They have been present in Mizoram history since the beginning of their establishment during the colonial period. However, they remained untouched subject.

The Gorkhas claim that since the beginnings of their settlements, they have never become a burden to the Mizo society and that they have proved to be worthy. They also claim that they were pioneers in the field of wet-rice cultivation. In 1966 Mizo freedom movement, many Gorkhas, serving in the army as well as civilians supported the cause and even served prison sentences. Yet, the historiography of freedom movement hardly mentioned their contributions.

For majority of Mizoram Gorkhas, setting foot outside Mizoram mean alienation from a place they call their own. In fact, some of them have never been outside Mizoram. Most Mizo feel that they are foreigners while they regard themselves sons of the soil. Perhaps the Mizo community finds it difficult to embrace them due to the differences in religion. It is important to question how far this factor is responsible for their feeling of insecurity.

In writing Mizoram history, hardly any writer mentions the Gorkhas or the role they played. For a community who has been here for more than a century, it is rather surprising to know so little about them. It is crucial that Gorkhas be studied, researched and analysed in order to find out who they are. Thus, this study will attempt to uncover the history of Gorkha community in Mizoram.

IV. Area of Study:

The thesis covered from 19th – 20th Centuries Mizoram. From the establishment of Gorkha settlement in Mizoram border to the attainment of Mizoram statehood in 1987. The study focussed on the social history of the Gorkhas of Mizoram.

The study is based mainly on northern Mizoram, concentrating in Aizawl District and Kolasib District.

V. Objectives:

1. To study the Gorkha migration and settlement in Mizoram.
2. To understand the Gorkha socio-cultural practices and institutions and how far the Mizo society have impacted them.
3. To examine the formal education of the Gorkhas in Mizoram
4. To bring out the voices and stories of the Gorkhas during *Rambuai*.

VI. Methodology:

It has been mentioned that literatures on the Gorkhas of Mizoram are minimal. As a result, much of the study has been based on Oral history. Oral history gathered through unstructured personal interviews and archival materials constitute the primary sources.

Documents recovered from the Archives consisted of writings of the colonial period, mostly dealing with the early Gorkha settlers – soldiers and those engaged in different occupational works.

It has been discussed that the Gorkhas are untouched subject in Mizoram history. No comprehensive work has ever been done on them. Consequently, there are hardly literatures on the Gorkhas. Therefore, in order to reconstruct their history, memories had to be collected from different people. In the words of John Tosh,

“All societies draw on memories that extend further back than the lifetimes of its present-day members. The more remote past is not confined to history books and archives; it is present also in popular consciousness, fed by a variety of commemorative activities and recorded in a variety of media”.²⁴

In order to reconstruct the Gorkha history, personal interviews had been carried out. The interviewees belong to the second and third generation Gorkha, from different age groups. These Gorkhas are descendants of the Gorkhas, who arrived in Mizoram with the British or who arrived a little later. Each of them is permanent settlers in Mizoram. They are from different professions such as – some are retired government servants, shopkeepers, government servants, religious leaders, homemakers etc. Interviews had also been carried out with Gorkhas who were directly involved in the Mizo National Army. Apart from Gorkhas, 12 Mizo were interviewed who have a great deal of knowledge about the Gorkhas.

The Gorkhas migrated out of Nepal in large number as the British recruited them for their army. They sought employment as their life in Nepal was hard. Recruitment in the army gave them financial stability. The later Gorkhas who arrived in Mizoram were also in search of work who thought that Mizoram would give them better livelihood. As such, the history of Gorkhas in Mizoram is studied on the basis of push and pull theory of migration.

Secondary sources such as books, articles, and journals, published and unpublished works are also used to substantiate the analysis. Photographs are also used to situate the Gorkhas in Mizoram history.

The study reconstructs and interpret history of the Gorkhas in Mizoram by using descriptive analysis, and social history approaches focussing on the Gorkha society, their migration, their social practices and how they played a part in the history of Mizoram.

²⁴ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History*, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 255.

VII. Chapterization:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the Gorkhas and how they came to be recruited in the British Indian Army. It also highlights a brief history of Mizoram including the political history and the important events. It also deals with a brief history of the Gorkhas of Mizoram. Statement of the problem, Review of literature, area of study, objectives, research questions, methodologies and chapterization are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Migration and Settlement

Before the recruitment of the Gorkhas, there was only a handful of people migrating out of Nepal who were mostly traders, and the large-scale migration was the result of the Treaty of Sugauli of 1815.²⁵ The British recruitment of the Gorkhas led to a large number of young Gorkha men leaving Nepal in order to become a soldier. The other migrants began to migrate in the later part of the 19th century following the ‘beaten path’ laid by the Gorkha soldiers. They came to work in plantations, coalmines and oil fields and in the field of dairy farming.²⁶ The Gorkhas were also recruited for coolies under the British. The arrival of Gorkhas in the North East began with the annexation of North East by the British. The Gorkhas were used as soldiers, porters, herdsmen and marginal farmers.²⁷

In the case of Mizoram, the British arrived with the Gorkha soldiers in the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72. In this expedition, from preliminary scouting work, to building timber slides over many rocky falls, the Gorkhas were the ones who did the hard work.²⁸ The British were impressed by the bravery of the Gorkha soldiers and T.H. Lewin even remarked them as ‘splendid little fellows.’²⁹ Lewin even set up a

²⁵ Perry, p.17.

²⁶ Lopita Nath, *Migration, Insecurity and Identity: The Nepali Dairymen in India’s Northeast*, Asian Ethnicity, Vol-7, No.2, 2006, p.130, <https://doi.org/10> (accessed 20 March 2018)

²⁷ Tejjimala Gurung, ‘Human Movement and the Colonial State: The Nepalis of Northeast India under the British Empire’ in A.C.Sinha and T.B.Subba (eds.), *The Nepalis in Northeast India, A Community in search of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 2003, p.173.

²⁸ P.R. Kyndiah, *Mizo Freedom Fighters*, New Delhi, Sanchar Publishing House, 1994, p. 73.

²⁹ Lewin, p. 263.

village in the border to be occupied by the Gorkha soldiers to act as a buffer between the Mizo and the plain people.³⁰ This can be regarded as the first settlement of the Gorkhas in Mizoram border. However, the British did not intend to stay after this expedition, so, the first settlements did not leave permanent marks.

The British set up permanent posts after the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90. The Gorkhas again showed their bravery in this expedition. The two earliest posts were constructed in Aizawl and Lunglei, which were occupied by the Gorkha soldiers. Since the British forcibly taken over Mizoram, they needed the trustworthy Gorkhas to pacify the Mizo.³¹ The Gorkhas, on the other hand, searched for better livelihood and a proper monetary income. For an economically backward Gorkha, the British army provided an escape route.³²

The Gorkhas had no trouble in adapting to the new region. The British needed manpower for the smooth functioning of the government machinery. Since the nature of works were new to the natives, the Gorkhas were employed for all kinds of work which led to the beginning of their settlement in Mizoram.³³ Hospitals, bungalows, post offices etc were set up where the Gorkhas were employed. As Mizoram opened up, more Gorkhas arrived in search of work. The soldiers on leave brought their families and their fellow countrymen to work in different areas.³⁴ In this way, the Gorkhas were engaged in different kinds of work and became settled in many parts of Mizoram.

With the passing of time, a Gorkha *Mauzadar* was appointed to exercise administrative control over Gorkha inhabitants and to collect taxes. The first *Mauzadar* was Jay Bahadur Sahi.³⁵ The institution of *Mauzadar* was abolished along with the abolition of Mizo chiefs in 1954.

³⁰ Lewin, p. 299.

³¹ Nirmal K. Pun, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Khatla, Aizawl.

³² Pratap Chhetri, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

³³ Pradhan, p.60.

³⁴ Pratap Chhetri interview, 2018.

³⁵ Nirmal K. Pun, "Migration and Settlement in Mizoram", in Pradip Sunar, Jeevan Kavar and I.K. Subba (eds.), *The Gorkhas of Mizoram, Vol – I*, Aizawl, Mizoram Gorkha Students' Union, 2000, p. 21.

Chapter 3: Socio – Cultural Practices and Institutions

This chapter studies the Gorkhas of Mizoram through their practices and institutions, and how far the Mizo society have influenced them. In the beginning of their settlement, the Gorkhas followed the customs and practices of Nepal. However, with the passage of time, they became influenced by the practices of the Mizo community which led to the changes in their practices.

The Gorkhas practiced arranged marriage system for a long time, preferring to marry someone from their own caste. However, the change in the system began to be noticeable from the 1980s. With the changing times, the youths began to have more freedom and they were influenced by the liberal outlook of the Mizo society.³⁶ Slowly, the system of arranged marriage gave way to love marriage. In the case of inter-marriage with a Mizo, the Gorkha community lost in a sense that the Gorkha always get subsumed into the larger entity.³⁷

In the times of death, the Gorkhas have imbibed the Mizo practices thereby simplifying the death rituals that they had followed for years. They have incorporated the practice of holding a wake at night thereby mourning with the bereaved family. A person is either cremated or buried according to one's or the family's wishes.³⁸ They also put their dead in a coffin, whether to be cremated or buried.³⁹

In the case of religious practices, one important change among the Gorkha Hindus in Mizoram is the practice of having a Sunday Service,⁴⁰ where the priests deliver sermons, the congregation sing songs and the time is also used for praying.⁴¹ This practice have been the influence of the Mizo Christians. Another borrowed practice is the Sunday School for children where community elders teach the children religious subjects.⁴²

³⁶ N.L. Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Dawrpui Vengthar, Aizawl.

³⁷ Purna Prasad, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2020, Thuampui, Aizawl.

³⁸ N.L. Jaishi interview, 2018.

³⁹ Pratap Chhetri interview.

⁴⁰ Nirmal K. Pun interview, 2018.

⁴¹ Uday Kumar Jaishi, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

⁴² Uday Kumar Jaishi interview, 2018.

Caste system was practiced when the Gorkhas began to settle in Mizoram and it went on for a long time. In fact, the Mizo were also regarded as impure in some places. However, after living with the casteless Mizo society for a long time, changes took place. The caste name such as Jaishi, Thapa etc. became a surname. Today, the Gorkhas of Mizoram have become a casteless community.⁴³

The Gorkhas have developed social institutions in the form of associations which unite the Gorkhas. Associations such as the Gorkha Sangh, Mizoram Gorkha Nari Samaj, Gorkha Panchayat and Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association. In order to maintain their identity, religion and customs, these associations play a vital role. Though they have no problem in incorporating the good practices of their Mizo brothers and have no qualms in modifying their age-old practices to meet the needs of the changing society, they still retain their identity, religion, language and customs.

Chapter 4: Education in Mizoram and the Gorkhas

The fourth chapter discusses the beginning of formal education in Mizoram under the British rule. It traces the beginning of education under the Mission and also gives a brief history of the Mission School, experimental schools, girls' education and education in South Mizoram.

When the British started to settle in Mizoram, they opened a school for the children of the soldiers in 1893 where education was imparted in Hindi. A school for the Mizo children was also opened in 1897.⁴⁴ It was only after the arrival of the Christian missionaries that Mizo had a written language. In fact, the education for the masses started with the Christian mission.

Since the beginning, the British government and the mission did not neglect education for the Gorkha children. In 1904, the Chief Commissioner of Assam

⁴³ Pratap Chhetri interview.

⁴⁴ Rev. C. Lianzuala, *Mizoram School Hmasate (1894-1952)*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 2005, p.25.

decided to hand over all education in Mizoram to the mission.⁴⁵ As a result, the Government schools were handed over to the Welsh Mission and Baptist Mission in the north and south Mizoram respectively. In Aizawl, the Mission set up Boys' School in 1905.⁴⁶ In this school, a separate department called the Hindi Department was set up for the Gorkha boys where medium of instruction was Nepali.⁴⁷ By 1945, the mission decided to let the Gorkhas look after the department by their own. The department was given to the Gorkha community where the first Gorkha School was set up with Harisingh Pradhan as the first Headmaster.⁴⁸ Gorkha Schools began to be established in many parts of Mizoram. Today, there are 10 Primary Schools, 3 Middle Schools and 2 High Schools. It is worth mentioning that all these schools were started by the Gorkha community for the sole purpose of educating the Gorkha children.⁴⁹ These schools help the Gorkha children in learning their cultural history, their traditions and their religion.

Chapter 5: Gorkhas and *Rambuai*

The Gorkhas played a fair part in Mizo freedom movement. However, their stories have remained untouched. This brings out the voices of the Gorkhas during the *Rambuai* years.

Rambuai has engulfed all the people living in Mizoram. The Gorkhas, along with the Mizo, also suffered. Though *Rambuai* has given us rich literatures, however, the Gorkha stories have remained silent. The Gorkhas joined the movement because they felt that it was their duty to do so, they were influenced by the MNF ideals, they felt that as an insider, it was their duty to fight for Mizoram. In fact, the Gorkhas were the only non-Mizo who joined and supported the MNF. So, many Gorkha young men left their home and family to join the MNF underground. The Gorkhas also lent a helping hand overground. Moreover, the Gorkha community suffered as

⁴⁵ J. Meirion Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram, Harvest in the Hills*, Aizawl, Synod Publication Board, 1991, p. 67.

⁴⁶ Lianzuala, *Mizoram School*, p.27.

⁴⁷ Pun, *SIKULPUI Souvenir*, p.180.

⁴⁸ Pun, p.181.

⁴⁹ Purna Prasad, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2018, Thuampui, Aizawl.

much as the Mizo during this time. C. Zama, a Corporal in the Mizo National Army said that no Gorkha ever showed a negative attitude towards the movement.⁵⁰

In spite of all these, the Gorkhas in Mizoram *Rambuai* have remained an untouched subject. This chapter brings out their voices, their fears and sufferings which have been silent for a long time. Eyewitnesses were interviewed and Gorkha undergrounds told their stories.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The last chapter summarizes the whole thesis and a comprehensive conclusion is drawn.

VIII. Findings of the research work:

The thesis studies the history of Gorkhas from 19th – 20th centuries in Mizoram, concentrating on the social history. It explores the Gorkhas' stories and experiences in Mizoram.

The thesis tries to place the Gorkhas in the framework of Mizoram history by using oral history, archival sources and secondary literatures. The study relies heavily on oral history as there are hardly literatures on the Gorkhas of Mizoram.

The thesis finds that the history of Gorkhas in Mizoram started with the Lushai Expedition of 1871-1872 where they appeared as foot soldiers along with other Indian soldiers. The Gorkha soldiers were in majority. In this expedition, the British were greatly impressed by the Gorkha soldiers. At the end of this expedition, T.H. Lewin even set up settlements to be inhabited by the Gorkhas as he felt that they would be best to act as a buffer between the Mizo and the plain people.

The permanent settlement of the Gorkhas, however, started with the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 where the British started to take control over Mizoram. They established permanent forts in Aizawl and Lunglei in which the earliest occupants were the Gorkha soldiers. The thesis finds that the British wanted the Gorkhas to act as a buffer between them and the Mizo, they needed someone to

⁵⁰ C. Zama, interviewed by Zoremsiami Pachuau, 2021, Chawnpui, Aizawl.

pacify the Mizo whom they forcibly ruled over. As such, the Gorkhas fitted the bill perfectly and as the British had hoped, the Gorkhas and the Mizo have lived together in peace ever since.

Apart from the soldiers, there were also Gorkha coolies who arrived with the British. They served as an important component as the British needed manpower to work around in the newly conquered area. Aizawl and Lunglei were soon made headquarters and the process of building towns began. So, the Gorkhas were employed for various kinds of work.

After their settlement, the soldiers on leave brought back their families and fellow countrymen to search for work. The Gorkhas were a pampered subjects of the British and it became an advantage to migrate where the British settled as they could have economic prosperity instead of living in poverty in Nepal. Retired soldiers were given lands where they could start animal husbandry or cultivation and they were not hesitant to settle anywhere as long as they could take up these works. As a result, most of the early localities in Aizawl bore Gorkha names.

The British set up hospitals, bungalows and post offices throughout Mizoram. In these places, the Gorkhas were the first to work as office staffs. These places became the settlements of Gorkhas. Some Gorkhas were even awarded the privileges and power at par with the Mizo chiefs, perhaps the most prominent was Lal Singh Thapa (Lalchhinga) who was made the Chief of Hriangmual (present day Mission Veng). After the Welsh Mission purchased Hriangmual from him, he was relocated to Tlangnuam where he continued to be a chief.

Right from the beginning of their settlement, there has always been cordial relations between the Mizo and the Gorkhas. The Gorkhas became so deep rooted in Mizoram that even after the British left, they decided to stay. Over the years, the Gorkha community slowly imbibed the good practices of the Mizo society. Marriage system, death and funerary practices, religious practices and the caste system have undergone a lot of changes by borrowing the Mizo Christian practices. By fusing the good practices from both communities, they create a community which is quite

different from their counterparts in other places. However, they do not lose their identity in terms of language, religion and cultural practices.

It has been stated that the British immensely favoured the Gorkhas. This fact is also reflected in formal education. Soon after their establishment, the British opened school for the children of the soldiers and the Commandant of the 1st Assam Rifles issued a stern order that all children should be enrolled. The British gave importance to Gorkha education perhaps on the ground that they would be more suitable for the army and that by educating the Gorkha children, they could create recruitment ground in Mizoram.

Like the government, the Christian Mission did not neglect the Gorkha education. In fact, the Mission School in Aizawl played an important role in Gorkha education. In the Mission School, a separate Hindi department was created to accommodate the Gorkha children where education was imparted in Nepali. The Mission later handed over the department to the Gorkha community thereby helping them to establish the first ever Gorkha School in Mizoram.

The Gorkhas have been present in the history of Mizoram since colonial period. Even when Mizoram entered her darkest period of *Rambuai* that lasted for 20 years, the Gorkhas did not run away. Instead, they fought with their Mizo brothers underground and overground. Unfortunately, the role of Gorkhas in *Rambuai* has remained a silent topic.

The last chapter brings out the involvement of Gorkhas during *Rambuai*. The thesis finds that the Gorkhas had a sense of belonging, they regarded themselves as an insider and that is the reason why they supported the MNF movement. During *Rambuai*, the Gorkhas were the only non-Mizo community who joined the movement. In fact, there was no indication of any Gorkha being hostile to the MNF movement. The Gorkhas suffered as much as the Mizo during this period. It is true that quite a number of them left Mizoram at the outbreak of *Rambuai*, but, majority of them returned. This shows that the Gorkhas from Nepal and the Mizo, having different religion, language, practices, traditions and customs are able to live

peacefully side by side for more than a century as there has always been an understanding and acceptance between the two communities.