

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A CASE STUDY OF MIZO HMEICHHE  
INSUIHKHAWM PAWL (MHIP)**

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

**BY**

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation entitled **Women Empowerment: A Case Study of Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP)**, submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, of Mizoram University is my own original work. The dissertation has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree of this or any other university.

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**CERTIFICATE**

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Introduction of the Topic: Meaning, Definitions and Origin of Empowering Women:**

The difference between male and female is always an issue that almost every society has faced. Women are less advantage in society as compared with men. It can be gathered from many historical writings that only few women stand up in the society and only few names are recognized. The views towards women and how their positions are looked upon are different in different societies. The need for empowering women and their less-advantage positions have been recognized since the earliest times. The concept of women empowerment has been defined by many scholars and writers but the way they define is different according to the field in which they have been engaged. There can be no common acceptable definition of women empowerment. Even by taking only the word ‘empowerment’, there can be a number of definitions as empowerment can take place in every field. In simple words, women empowerment can be termed as a process of uplifting the condition of women in social, economic and political spheres.

Sarah Cannata, in defining women empowerment, identifies it as creating an environment where women, all around the world, have equality in every level, socially, economically, politically and so on. In this sense Suzanne Williams also says that women empowerment put simply is enabling women to priorities themselves and their needs to live life on their own terms. This means not letting social norms, rules and other expectations to govern their decision making and ultimately their life. Many people see it as a process which cannot be achieved in a shot span of time.<sup>1</sup> Anil and Yamini viewed empowerment as an

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.the\\_love\\_destination.com/health-and-wellbeing/health-wellbeing/women-empowerment-important](https://www.the_love_destination.com/health-and-wellbeing/health-wellbeing/women-empowerment-important)  
Retrieved on 06/03/2018

active process of enabling women to realize their identity, potentiality and power in all spheres of their lives.<sup>2</sup> In realizing the importance of women, Kofi Annan has mentioned that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.<sup>3</sup> By knowing the importance of equality amongst men and women, Swami Vivekananda has pointed out that men and women are human being and are born to cherish and help one another. He added that ‘the best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women’. In the words of Ram Manohar Lohia, women should be conscious and should be aware to feel and realize that at every step of their life they are builders of their nations and a peaceful world.<sup>4</sup>

Marissa Sandler also defines women empowerment as stronger communities and stronger economies and is about making it possible for women to participate fully in society. She means that the entire population will flourish if all women in the world were empowered. Shivani Gopal also defines women empowerment as equality and giving women the equal freedom to make their own choices and opportunity of choices without judgement. Knowing how gender equality will make a better place in the society and even at working place, Francesca Throne, founder of Australian Women’s Network, says that women empowerment is the marginalization of power in women and especially young girls of today. She says that girl child and women around the world are not the edge of reason, they are the reason itself.<sup>5</sup>

Anil Kumar also defines women empowerment as equal status to women. It can include better opportunities in economic sphere for women, education for women, equal ownership of economic resources with men, awareness of their rights and responsibilities,

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<sup>2</sup>k. Anil, Kumar, K. Yamini Jyothsna, (2016). *Empowerment of Women Through Panchayati Raj*. The Indian Journal of Political Science. Vol. LXXVII, No.4, October-December. P.437

<sup>3</sup><https://www.news.un.org/en/story/2005/02/130132-empowering-women-most-effective-development-tool-annan-says> Retrieved on 06/03/2018

<sup>4</sup>Jaya Raj Lakshmi (2015). ‘*Reinventing Politics in India Through Women Empowerment*’. The Indian Journal of Political Science. Vol. LXXVI, No.4. October –December. Pp. 954-956.

<sup>5</sup>[https://www.the\\_lovedestination.com/health-and-wellbeing/health-wellbeing/women-empowerment-important](https://www.the_lovedestination.com/health-and-wellbeing/health-wellbeing/women-empowerment-important) Retrieved on 06/03/2018

administrative skills, personality development and leadership qualities.<sup>6</sup> As Rajveer Singh has said, women empowerment is giving women all their rights and opportunities to play meaningful part in the society and letting them excel in the fields where only men are ruling.<sup>7</sup>

Gender discrimination is the most talk about issue in every part of the world, it still dominate the discourse in political environment across the globe both in developed and developing countries. Women subordination is fought by many prominent writers and activists and it is being described as feminist movement. The activists and the Feminists have campaigned for women legal rights, rights to integrity and autonomy, protection of women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape and any other forms of discriminations. The first writer that can be seen regarding the offence of women was Christine de Pizan, French writer, who wrote *Epitre au Dieu d'Ámour* which means Epistle to the God of Love.<sup>8</sup> Another writings of Christine regarding women were that *The Book of the City of Ladies*, *The Book of the Three Virtues* and *The Tale of Joan of Arc* which was writtenduring the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>9</sup> After Christine, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, there were other works such as the writing of Mary Wollstonecraft *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* written in 1792 and John Stuart Mill *The Subjection of Women* 1869. The movements for upliftment and empowerment of women are mainly started from the western countries. In the first wave of feminism, the concern was mostly on women suffrage, i.e. voting rights for women, and the second wave deals with women liberation movement and the third wave includes right of women to education, employment and legal inequalities.<sup>10</sup>

In India, since the earliest time, women are used to be worshiped as goddesses and even people pray for the blessings to the sons of the goddesses. Goddesses that people used to

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<sup>6</sup>K AnilKumar, K. Yamini Jyothsna, (2016). P. 437.

<sup>7</sup><https://www.quora.com/What-is-really-women-empowerment>. Retrieved on 05/03/2018

<sup>8</sup>Miriam Schneir, (1994). *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*. Vintage Books. P. xiv.

<sup>9</sup><https://www.amedievalwomensacompanion.com/christine-de-pizan/> Retrieved on 07/03/2018

<sup>10</sup>CharlotteKrolokke, Sorensen Anne Scott, (2005). *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses: From Silence to Performance*. Sage Publications Inc. United States.



worship are: *Parvati- Goddess of Fertility, Kali- Goddess of Time, Saraswati- Goddess of Knowledge, Green Tara- the Female Buddha and Aditi- the Goddess of Limitlessness.*<sup>11</sup>The followers used to bow down before them to ask for their blessings. However, when it comes to the real world and the real society, women are subordinated and their rights and freedoms are neglected. Gender inequalities are still deeply rooted in Indian culture, economics, political and social life. Rousseau's word: *Man Is Born Free but Everywhere He Is in Chain* can be taken as an example of the condition of women of the world in general and India in particular. Women in India deserve to be free in doing things they like and what they want to be, but she is under the strict patriarchal society where all their life are like tied up with chains.

The status of women in India receives lots of questions as women in different parts face lots of problems in their daily life. During the Indus Valley Civilization, the Rig Veda periods, Uttar Vedic Period, Upanishads, Manu and Kautilya periods, and in the following periods, men and women were treated as equal in the society and there was no discrimination. Women enjoyed liberty and equality with men and even in educational sphere women could access the same education with men. However, the situation became different from the medieval periods and the position of women was drastically changed. Female infanticides, Sati, Purdah systems and child marriage were vehemently practised. In modern India, although women attain greater position in the society, a number of women were under subjugation and male domination.<sup>12</sup>

Even before independence, women issues are the central concern of the eminent leaders. The concern for women subordinate position was started as early as 1850. The early

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.amuse-i-d.vice.com/5-indian-goddesses-every-women-should-know-about/> Retrieved on 05/05/2018

<sup>12</sup><https://www.civildserviceinida.com/subject/General-Studies/notes/role-of-women-and-womens-organization.html> Retrieved on 05/05/2018

educated leaders in India started women movement. Prominent leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Malabari Phule, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Dhondo Keshav Karve were most influential men that work for uplifting the condition of Indian women and were later joined by many women.<sup>13</sup> Amrita Pritam, Savitribai Phule, Sarala Devi Chaudharani, Sarojini Naidu and Tarabai Shinde are the prominent women who work for gender equality in their time.<sup>14</sup> The efforts of these men and women led to a number of changes in the condition of women in their time such as they preached for abolition of sati, child marriage, promoting women education and inheritance of property by women, and many other issues.<sup>15</sup>

As women in India are more educated, they started working as a group to mobilise themselves for more effective actions and voices. As early as 1917, Women's India Association (WIA) was formed. In 1925, National Council of Women in India (NCWI) was formed and later in 1927, All India Women's Conference was founded. After India's independence, National Federation of Indian Women was formed in 1954 and the Samjwadi Mahila Sabha was formed in 1959. Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was founded in Ahmedabad in 1972. The late 1970's saw a number of women organizations coming up and All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) which was set up in 1981 is one among them. The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) has branches in 22 States in India. These are the popular women organisations in India. Till now there are more than 100 women organizations all over in India.<sup>16</sup>

In Mizoram, it can be gathered from various records that in the traditional Mizo society, women were never treated as equals with men. Mizo society was a male dominated

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<sup>13</sup>Dwijendra Nath Thakur (2012). *Feminism and Women Movement in India*. Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences. Volume No. 3. Issue No. 4. October- December.

<sup>14</sup><https://www.womensweb.in/2015/09/women-ahead-rime-5-early-feminists-india/> Retrieved on 06/05/2018

<sup>15</sup>Dwijendra Nath Thakur(2012). Op cit.

<sup>16</sup>Tripathi (1999).

society where women was regarded as subordinate being and mostly treated as equal with goods and properties which can be thrown away at any time as a man wishes. Even during the period of chieftainship, women were never engaged and involved in the administration of the village. There was a saying to testify the inferiority of women, like ‘the wisdom of woman does not extend beyond the bank of rivers’, ‘women and old fencing can be replaced any time’, ‘let a women and a dog bark as they like’, ‘women and crab have no religion’, etc. Lalnu Ropuiliani, who becomes the chief or queen of Denlung village, after the death of her husband Vandula, became the first women who excelled in the history of Mizo women. This was an exception because women rarely participate in public life.<sup>17</sup>

With the coming of Christianity in Mizoram, there was a huge transformation in the Mizo society. The introduction of education amongst the Mizo tribes by the Christian missionaries changed the outlook of the Mizo people in many ways. Even when school was opened, girl child was not allowed to enter school by their parent because it was a traditional belief that they could be engaged only in the household activities. With the efforts of the missionaries, the mindset of the people began to change and many girls started entering school. The educated women realized the need to uplift the condition of women and they took appropriate steps to improve their inferior and subordinate positions in the society. So, they began to campaign for upliftment of the inferior status of women in society. Women as a group started to raise their voice. Subsequently, Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (Mizo Women Federation) was established in 1974. Several groups existed in the name of Mizo women before the establishment of Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl(MHIP) and all these groups united together for strengthening their works and formed the MHIP. This organization became the largest Mizo women group and is working so hard in the process of empowering women in every sphere.

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<sup>17</sup>Hausapa (2008). *Status of Mizo Women* - Lal Dena, The Sangai Express. Pp. 1-2.

## 1.2 Review of Literature:

MG Chitkara in his book *Women and Social Transformation* clearly states that women condition in any society is largely influenced by parent's behavioral attitude towards their children and due to lack of education amongst parents. In Indian society, women are regarded as second person who can be bought and sell, and whose life is confined to rigid restrictions of casteism, customs, traditions and religious teachings. This book also mentions that there is discrimination of women and inequality in every sphere like economic, social, political, education, health, nutrition and even legal. As women has been oppressed in all spheres of their life they need to be empowered in all walks of life. Due to education, women are now aware of their conditions and they are now demanding equal status and opportunities in all spheres of life.

*Empowerment of Women and Ecological Development*, edited by A Ranga Reddy contains a number of articles dealing with women empowerment. It states that women empowerment is determined by socio-economic status of women. Rural women are more disadvantage in their life as compare to urban women. It also highlights government efforts for protecting women and their policies during the sixth, seven, eight and ninth plans. It also covers a number of articles provided by the constitution for safeguarding the rights of women in all spheres. Women used to hold equal status with men in the Vedic period but in the present era that status of women has declined. It also mentions that women can be empowered through education, through partnership with men and through legislation. In Seventy-Third and Seventy-Fourth Amendment, seats in legislature has been reserved for women in Panchayati Raj, through which woman can actively participate in political sphere of the country.

*Empowerment of Women Volume- 2* edited by CP Yadav contains seven chapters dealing with women empowerment and development. Regarding technical education, women are now in many fields and there is a substantial progress. Many women are now becoming faculties and workers in technical fields. It also mentions that scientific and technological advancement become important than physical labor and this has made a favorable condition for women in establishing equality with men. Skill development has also been very important to empower women condition. Since they cannot work hard as men they can easily manage in simple work. Many food processing industries in India now employ women. It also deals with women education. Now the government has taken an important step in educating girl child. Free education has been provided for girl child up to class eight. In various states and Union Territories girl child are given free education up to class 12.

*Women in India: A Search for Identity*, edited by Sharada Rath and Navaneeta Rath contains seventeen articles mostly dealing with the status of women in Indian society. Till the end of the first half of the twentieth century Women were considered as inferior to men throughout the world. Sex discrimination was common in both developed and developing countries. In India, since ancient times women enjoy equal status with men. With the coming of freedom movement, freedom fighters have raised their voice for full participation of both men and women. It also covers the constitutions, legislations and governmental programmes for improvement of women. It also mentions that while women possess numerous and important right for their self-protection and self-realization but there is a wide gap between theory and practice. The laws that the Indian constitution has incorporated for the protection of women, has not yet achieved a reasonable success.

In a book *Women in Modern India*, Geraldine Forbes discusses women condition in the nineteenth century under colonial rule to the twentieth century after Independence. This book deals with the reform movement for educating women but guided by men and how



education changes their lives and enables them to take part in public life. Formation of women organizations, women participation in freedom struggle, their role in economy and the development of women's movement since India's Independence has been mentioned in this book. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the focus was on sati, female infanticide, child marriage, purdah, female education and others. With the Independence, many constitutional provisions have been provided for the welfare of women. Many articles have dealt with equality of both male and female. But even at the end of the twentieth century, Indian women still have a long way to go to attain gender justice.

A book *Women Studies in India* is compiled by Anju Vyas and Sunita Sinch. This book has contained a number of information, sources, services and programmes that government implemented and steps that different institutions have taken. It contains a number of statistical sources in terms of birth rate, population, literacy, education, health, mortality, employment regarding gender. It also contains a number of government publications, programmes and schemes which are specially implemented for the empowerment of women. It also highlights different organizations and research centers in which different courses and curriculums have been studied regarding women.

*Empowerment of Rural Women and Landmark Legislation in India*, an article written by Lalneihzovi contains the process of empowerment of women in rural areas through constitutional amendment act, legislation and reservation of seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Most of the people in rural areas are poor and government has taken an important step in formulating policies and development programs to uplift their condition. But people's representation is not equal and there are no equal opportunities for both male and female. As this paper has highlighted, women in rural areas needs to be empowered and developed socially, economically and politically. 33 per cent seats have been reserved for women in

rural governance. There is a long way to go to empower women in social, economic and political spheres.

*Women Empowerment in the Twenty-first century* is a book, edited by Cheema, which contains a number of articles. In this book the main theme is on women empowerment. It deals with the importance of education in the process of women empowerment. Only few women looking at the whole population received education, which shows that there are many women who are not aware of their rights to be empowered. It also deals with the matriarchal system and the role that women played during the Vedic times. At present, Self Help Groups have been created in a number of places for empowering and earning some money for themselves.

A book, *Women in Mizo Society*, edited by Harendra Sinha and B Lalrinchhani is a collection of twelve papers. These papers have cover a wide dimension including gender inequalities, political marginalization, indigenous knowledge of women on forest economy, role of women organization in the welfare of Mizo women. It also deals with the electoral politics of women in Mizoram with regard to state legislative assembly and their role in the sixth schedule area. All these focus on the status of women in the changing Mizo society.

Lalfakzuali in the *Changing Position of Mizo Women*, mentioned the position of women that have been changing from time to time. Mizo society is a patriarchal society, male dominated society therefore all the housework's has been put on women and they were also expected to engage in field works. This book has mentioned a number of disadvantage of women in the society. With the changing time, women now held high positions in society and even in government jobs.

K. Anil Kumar in his article *Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj*, mentioned that at a global level women lived a very hard life as compared to men. Because of

the backwardness and poverty in many places, half of the women population in Asia, Africa and Arab countries are illiterate. In India although a number of provisions have been made for the protection of women against discrimination, women are still at the backward position. Government has been trying to empower women in every sphere. With the passing of the Seventy-Third Amendment Act 1992, women in the rural areas were given a political freedom where 33 per cent of seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions were reserved for women. He also mentioned that educational and political awareness is needed among women in our country so then they will be empowered.

Dwijendra Nath Thakur in his article *Feminism and Women Movement in India* has talked about the different types feminism that existed and the three waves of feminism in different parts of the world. He also mentioned the origin and the development of feminism in India. Feminism in India was divided into two phases, First Phase 1850-1915 and the Second Phase 1915-1947. He also discusses the beginnings of feminist movement in India under the leadership of the prominent leaders and what obstacles that they face in their works like tradition and customs are also dealt. Women condition and status under Hindu Religion and Muslim religion and the divorce and marriage systems in these religions are also mentioned. He also mentions what problems that women face in their works and in their education and how modernization changes the condition of women. He also pointed out a number of Constitutional and legal rights for women in India.

Neelofar Khan in her article *Political Status of Women in Indian Parliament: An Analysis*, mentioned about the provisions given by Indian Constitution which guaranteed fundamental Rights, equal participation of both men and women in political sphere. Since women constitute half of the population, without their participation in the society, in the political process democracy in its true sense will never be successful. Government of India's declaration of Year of Women's Empowerment as 2001 was followed by the passing of

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001. With the passage of time, in 2010 Rajya Sabha passed Women Reservation Bill, that stated that 33 per cent of seats in Indian Parliament and state legislative bodies were to be reserved for women. However, women representation and participation in politics is less than that of men due to social norms and deeply entrenched patriarchal mind-sets. She wanted that not only in reserving seats in the legislation but also the mind-set of the people and the society is needed to change.

Jaya Raj Lakshmi in her *Reinventing Politics in India through Women Empowerment*, discusses that gender discrimination is the main problem in India. A country can never be great or respectable in the absence of equality. Democracy in India can be seen as a system that dominates the powerless, and power is concentrated in the hands of few people. She also mentions that the tribal women in India have no role to play in the political and social sphere. They were elected in the Panchayati Raj Institution due to the mandatory provisions made by the state only. But even within this institution, they rarely raised their voice. It is important that women leaders should be aware of their individual rights. Not only in reform of law but also in the reform of attitudes, traditions and beliefs are needed to overcome the social and political barriers.

In an article, *Participation and Empowerment of Women in Governance with reference to Women Government Officials in Mizoram*, co-written by Biakthanpuii and Lalneihzovi, mentioned that even from the past in Mizo society women were not treated equal with men. Women were regarded as confined to maintain the household works, field works, and looking after the children and others. They were never considered to be involved in the administration of the village. The coming of Christianity and education bring enlightenment and women became aware of their importance on social, political and economic development of the society. The abolition of chieftainship and the creation of District Council gave more space and empowerment process which resulted in women

involvement in the administration. By 2007, there have been four elected women Village Council Presidents. The society now accepts the importance of women and they are now given equal opportunities. Women are at the forefront in earning money especially in economic fields. The importance of women's efforts and role in society, in the administrative spheres and in governance have been realized and recognized. Still there is a long way to go in empowering women.

*Women and Armed Conflict: A Focus on North-East India* is an article written by Sadhna Mishra. In this article, Mishra mentioned how women living in the conflict zone bear the burden of inhumanities and victims of sexual violence and victims of fragmented families. Conflict and armed rebellion is not an amazing thing in North east part of India. Separatist movement, insurgency, inter-community and inter-ethnic conflict are common in these states. The imposition of *Armed Forces (Special Power) Act, 1958* simply known as AFSPA make the security personnel's and the forces enjoy unrestraint power which causes encounter deaths, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, rapes and many other inhuman activities. Mishra added that the laws for protecting women rights, incorporated in the Constitution of India are not adequate enough and these laws became a tool for violation of human rights like AFSPA.

Saroj Arora in her article *Women's Access and Ownership of Land-A Case of Mizoram*, written in *Administrative Studies (A National Refereed Annual Journal)*, deals with the ownership of lands. The majority of the land owners are men and only few women have their ownership. In Mizoram, customary laws, land related customary laws were passed in 1980. Under this land law or immovable things or properties were inherited by male side in the family. This customary law does not give anything for women when marriage, divorce, succession or inheritance arises. The Mizo women now realize that these laws are repressive or oppressive in nature and discrimination on gender bases was also rampant. Women



organizations and different NGO's raised their voice against the existing practices. It was only in 2008 that Mizoram Divorce Ordinance was passed under a lot of pressure and it became an act, Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014. To make women politically empowered, The Lushai District (Village Council) Amendment Act, 2015 was introduced.

Lalneihzovi in her article, *Political Empowerment of Women in Mizoram*, mentions that lack of adequate political participation of women in the decision making bodies can be seen clearly everywhere in Mizoram as the society is mainly based on patriarchy. She also mentions how the Autonomous Districts in Mizoram are curved out and the abolishment of chieftainship by an Act of the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs Right) in 1954. The chronological development of political institutions in Mizoram like Mizo District Council to Union Territory, the election of Members of Legislative Assembly under UT, the attainment of statehood and first election under statehood in 1987, the competing parties and how Mizo women participate during these periods are mainly dealt.

*Female Education in Mizoram* written by JV Hluna deals with the coming of Christianity and education of Mizo women. It clearly depicts how women are treated in Mizo society and education was not meant for them. Women are thought to be engaged only in household works and field works even when education was provided by the Christian missionaries. He also discusses how women education develops in Mizoram from six women students in the first proper school to a number of educated women. As the patriarchal society was against women education, the missionaries first taught women student the technique of sewing, knitting, simple medication, sanitation and child care. He also mentions the lady missionaries who work very hard for educating Mizo women and the curriculum that they framed for women education not only reading and writing.

Janet and Vijanti in their article *The Status and Role of Women in Mizo Society*, discuss that although the Mizo's both male and female seems to live together freely without any distinction, no doubt women are not free and they are regarded as inferior and subordinate to men and are discriminate in many spheres of social life. A Mizo woman hardly carries property from her father's house when she was about to get married. At the time of the parent's dead, the property goes to the son. They also deal with the process of courtship and the bride price tended to treat women as a sort of commodity. They also point out the burden that women used to carry when it comes to work. They were expected to work at the field the whole day and the housework were put at the hands of women. They started to work before the sun rise and till the midnight. They hardly engage in the local administration.

The above books and articles mainly deal with the problems that women faced in the society, discrimination that women faced and the need to educate women for their empowerment. If men do not stand for the betterment of women, then the women themselves have to stand up for themselves and raised their voice. Although a number of researches have been done on gender issues, there are only few works on the study of women's organization that always stand for women. A research that has been done on the working of women organization clearly depicts the empowering process of women. If women who are half of the population are not empowered there will be no equality in the country. Women in different parts of India have been tortured and they are mentally suffering. Measures for the improvement of their condition are still needed and the male side should also be made aware that women are also human being and they are a part of their life.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem:**

Modernization, brought by the Christian missionaries with the introduction of education, has changed the condition of women in Mizo society. In fact, modernization

produced many educated women. As a result, many women wanted to enjoy freedom on their own and they challenge the existing patriarchal system that was prevailing in the Mizo society. The biggest women organization in Mizoram the MHIP always stands for women. Since the MHIP is like a mother for all Mizo women, it strongly opposed the inhuman behaviour towards minor girls and adult women like rapes and murder.

MHIP was working so hard to change the mind-set of people of the society which was thought to be led and administered only by men. Most of the time women are compared with goods and properties, which can be changed at any time. So, MHIP wanted to raise the position of women, to make them aware of their bad condition. Since no men have been standing out to raise the bad condition of women, women themselves have raised their voice through this organization. It also works in uplifting the condition of widow, who cannot stand on their feet. The responsibilities and duties of the MHIP are very vast as it touches all women problems which comprise of all the Mizo women who live within and outside Mizoram. It is also working so hard to review the Mizo Customary Law which provides very little right and protection to the Mizo women. In its work on women empowerment, it can be said that the establishment of Women Polytechnic in Mizoram is a great success which has been a result of a strong demand made by the MHIP.

The MHIP main aim is to uplift the condition of women in the society. It works for the empowerment of women in social, economic and political sphere. It gives a helping hand to the poor and downtrodden masses. It is always ready to work in any activities and issues that call for their help. The MHIP becomes a voice for the voiceless, a home for the homeless and mother for the orphans. As a mother is concerned about the health of the child, the MHIP is against drugs and any other abusive substances that can affect the health of the Mizo's. In this way, the MHIP is working with the State Government and other NGO's in banning drugs and any other abusive substances. The MHIP becomes a mother for the destitute women, by

giving them skill trainings, by providing counselling and sometimes even provide money and material support. The MHIP publications and distributions of different pamphlets and booklets for the general awareness on women rights, laws regarding Prevention and Penalties on Rape and Human Trafficking and its seminars and workshops have a great impact on the masses.

#### **1.4 Objectives:**

1. To study the factors responsible for emergence of the MHIP.
2. To examine the role of the MHIP in empowering Mizo women.
3. To analyse the working of the MHIP and State Government in uplifting the condition of women in political sphere.

#### **1.5 Research Questions:**

1. What are the reasons for the emergence of the MHIP?
2. What are the roles that the MHIP played in empowering women?
3. What is the relationship between the State Government and the MHIP in the process of women empowerment in political sphere?

#### **1.6 Methodology:**

The study is both historical and analytical in nature. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are adopted in this research. The collection of data is based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of data collected through questionnaire and interview. Questionnaire has been conducted using Structured Questionnaire and the respondents are given choices in answering the questions. The respondents of the questionnaire are all female and the sample size is 120 respondents. Non-probability

sampling is used and in that Convenience Sampling was employed in conducting questionnaire. As the research is based on convenience sampling, the researcher can cover respondents from 28 localities within Aizawl city and six villages outside Aizawl district. With regard to interview, the researcher employs unstructured interview and stratified random sampling is employed in selecting respondents to be interviewed. The sample size consists of 60 respondents. Out of this 24 respondents are women leaders from four political parties. Three respondents are from *Indian National Congress Mahila* Headquarters and seven respondents are from Congress Mahila Unit-III leaders. Two respondents are from *Bharatia Janata Party Mahila*. Another five respondents are from *Mizo National Women Front* and seven respondents are from *Zoram People's Movement Women Committee* leaders. Out of 60 respondents, three respondents are MHIP General Headquarter Office Bearers and two are Chaltlang South Branch MHIP leaders. One respondent is Chaltlang Local Council Chairman. Another 30 respondents are MHIP members of different branches.

The secondary sources consist of official documents, pamphlets, books, magazines, journals, newspapers, unpublished PhD Thesis and Master of Philosophy Dissertations and internet sources. Materials are collected from different government official websites and a number of pamphlets issued by the MHIP that concerned women issues. A number of books written by Indian authors and foreign writers are used and a number of articles are drawn out from different magazines and journals. Journals like *Administrative Studies (A National Refereed Annual Journal)*, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of North East India Studies*, *Indian Journal of Public Administration* and *Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* are widely used. Internet materials and information are also used. A number of thesis and dissertation are also accessed from Mizoram University Central Library.



## **1.7 Scope:**

The study focuses on the process of women empowerment under the initiatives of the MHIP. It deals with the origin and the function of the said organization. The study highlights some of the important works done by the MHIP since its inception towards women empowerment and their struggle to uplift the condition of women. The study also covers different trainings given by the MHIP and their works in revising the Mizo Customary Laws and it also covers a number of acts passed by the state government because of their efforts and their works for the development of women education in Mizoram. It also highlights the important steps taken by the State Government and the MHIP in empowering women. The study also covers the working of MHIP in electoral politics in Village Council, Municipal Council and State Legislative Assembly. The political system of Mizoram since District Council time to the present are also discussed in detailed.

## **1.8 Chapterization:**

The first chapter includes introduction of the topic, meaning, definitions and origin of empowering women. It also includes review of literature, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, methodology and scope of the study. The second chapter deals with the historical background of the MHIP, aims, objectives and structure of the MHIP. The third chapter deals with the working of MHIP in the process of establishing educational institution for women and its works in providing trainings for women for their economic self-sufficiency. It also covers the role of the MHIP in the revision of the Mizo Customary Law. The fourth chapter deals with the role played by the MHIP in electoral politics like Village Council, Municipal Council and State Legislative Assembly. The last chapter contains summary of findings and concluding remarks.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **PROFILE OF MIZORAM AND ORIGIN OF THE MHIP**

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## CHAPTER II

### PROFILE OF MIZORAM AND ORIGIN OF THE MHIP

Mizoram is not as big as other states in India, however, for thousands of years a number of tribes and sub-tribes live together and working together. Mizoram is a home to around ten lakhs people and its people were migrated from different parts of the world. Although people living in Mizoram have different looks, different languages, different history and cultures, they live together peacefully and cordially. The combination of all these peoples, their unique cultures and life style make Mizoram and its society unique. Mizo society in its tradition, the society is mainly based on chieftainship and it is also a patriarchal society. Each village is guided and administered by the chief. Like today, there also exists social institution which is Zawlbuk. This is a place where the young ones were trained to be the future of the society.

#### **2.1 Profile of Mizoram and Historical Root of Women Status:**

The meaning of Mizoram is 'land of the Mizo's'. Mizoram and its people were not known to the plain people before the British extended its tea garden in Assam. At first they were regarded as savage tribe without knowing their well-planned social structures, traditional administrative system and way of life. The Mizo's who live as a big family in their own villages are bonded by their customs, traditions, practices, language and beliefs. The Mizo's as ethnic group comprise of many tribes and sub-tribes such as Hmar, Lusei, Paite, Ralte, Lai, Mara and others. Lai and Mara were living in southern parts of Mizoram. The Mizo's are thought to have migrated from part of China, move down to Myanmar and stops their migration in now called Mizoram. However, some of the tribe move beyond Mizoram and they settled in Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland. Maybe because of this reason, the Mizo's have the same looks with Chinese and those living in Asian countries.

The Mizo's were believed to be coming from or being a part of Sino-Tibetan to Sino-Tibetan Proper, from Sino-Tibetan Proper to Tibeto-Burman, Tibeto- Burman to Assam-Burmese, and from Assam-Burmese to Mizo. <sup>1</sup>

Mizoram is a part of India and it is situated in Northeast side of India. Mizoram share its boundaries with the states of Manipur, Assam and Tripura. Mizoram is sharing international boundaries with Bangladesh and Myanmar. Mizoram is sharing 75% of its boundaries with Myanmar and Bangladesh.<sup>2</sup> As the Mizo people are divided by international boundaries, many of its people are still living in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The total geographical area of Mizoram is 21087 square kilometers. Its geographical location is between 21° 58' & 24° 35' N Latitude and 92° 15' & 93° 29' E Longitude. Mizoram area in North to South is 277 kilometers and in East West 121 Kilometers. The area of its borders that it shares with Assam is 123 kilometers, with Tripura is 277 kilometers and it also shares its borders with Manipur with a total number of 95 kilometers. The international boundary that it shares with Myanmar is 404 kilometers and it shared with Bangladesh is 318 kilometers. The climate in Mizoram is good and its average temperature was 11°C- 21°C in winter and in summer 20°C-30°C. In winter it is not too cold and in summer it not too hot. Its average rainfall, rate is 250 per annum.<sup>3</sup> Rainfall is heavy in Mizoram and the long monsoon season has usually effect the transportations of many villages. This creates problems in the process of development especially during monsoon season as these villages cannot be reached in few hours. The winter season in Mizoram is starting from the month of November till the month of February. The summer season in Mizoram is starting from the month of March and last till the month of May. The monsoon season or rainy season in Mizoram is starting from June and last till the month of October. The circle or periodical seasons of

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<sup>1</sup> B. Lalthangliana (2016). *Mizo Chanchin (A short account of Mizo History)*. Gilzom Offset. Aizawl. P-18.

<sup>2</sup> Lalsangliani (2009 ). P.60

<sup>3</sup><http://mizoram.nic.in/about/glance.htm> Retrieved on 09/12/2018

Mizoram climate is caused by its vast area of forests that still maintained the temperature and climate of the state.

The oldest records that can be seen regarding the population of the Mizo's is the record of 1890-1894. This record showed that there were 46,285 people living in Mizoram the erstwhile Lushai Hills.<sup>4</sup> As per the census record of 2011, the total population of Mizoram is 10,91,014, which composed of 5,52,339 male and 5,38,675 female. The sex ratio of male and female is 975 female per 1000 male. Mizoram hold the second position in literacy rate in India after Kerala with its literacy rate was 91.85 %. The highest mountain in Mizoram was 'Phawngpui' situated in Lawngtlai District with 2,210/2,065metres. Mizoram is also rich in clean waters as many rivers are flowing in different parts of Mizoram. Its longest river was 'Tlawng' with 185.15 kilometres. Mizoram state animal is of Saza (Serow) and the state bird is Vavu (Hume's Bartailed Pheasant). Mizoram state tree is Herhse.<sup>5</sup> Mizoram has three lakes which are- Palak Dil (largest lake in Mizoram), Rung Dil and Tam Dil. It was belief that the area that vegetation has covered was around 15955 square kilometers.<sup>6</sup> The Mizo's are also self-sufficient in musical instruments and that are carried on from their ancestors are like- Darkhuang (Gong), Tingtang (Guitar), Phenglawng (Flute), Rawchhem (Bagpipes), Bengbung (Dulcimer), Tuium Dar (Zither) and Lemhawi. The popular dances in Mizoram are- Khual lam and Cheraw. Mizoram also have a number of festivals, three of the most practiced are- Mim Kut, Pawl Kut and Chapchar Kut.<sup>7</sup>

Agriculture is the main source of living for the Mizo people. Jhum cultivation which includes cutting of trees and burning them was practiced in Mizoram since earliest times and this is the main source of living. However, a number of forest areas were cleared in every

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<sup>4</sup> B. Lalthangliana (2016). P.161.

<sup>5</sup> <http://mizoram.nic.in/about/glance.htm> Retrieved on 08/12/2018

<sup>6</sup> Lalsangliani (2009). P.62

<sup>7</sup> Lalrinmawia (1995). *Mizoram-History and Cultural Identity (1890-1947)*. Spectrum Publications. Guwahati. Pp. 24-27.

year. Because of the practice of destruction and devastation of a wide range of forest for cultivation, many rare flowers, trees, plants, medicinal plants, wild animals, birds and other living beings are now perished. The shifting cultivation which was practiced from their ancestors' time also affects the soil. Every year they shift their land of cultivation and seek for a land which will be more fertile. Efforts are now being made by the state government and the civil societies to replace the practice of jhum cultivation. The main food crops in Mizoram are maize and rice. In the traditional Mizo society most people have their own paddy fields. Tumeric, spices and tea are also produced and besides eatable items, handloom and handicrafts which constitute important industrial activities nowadays are also widely practiced by the Mizo's.<sup>8</sup>

### **Social Structure in Mizo Society:**

The social structures of the Mizo's are unique. There is a social hierarchy in each society. The Chief administered the village and he has an authority on everything, even in the life of the masses. Each village was self-sufficient and they try to earn their livings without the help of other villages. The responsibilities and roles of the people living in the village are-

1. Lal (Chief):

Each village had its own chief who took care of the society and who had the final words. As the Mizo's are warriors, war always occurred between villages. In this regard, the chief had an important role to play in making a treaty or attacking of those enemies. The chief had an authority on the land where cultivation was to be done in particular year and he distributed a portion of land to the people. The chiefs had the authority with regard to rewarding of the braves and punishment of those who are guilty. The chiefs also can impose fines to the culprit. The chief also received dues from the people like- Fathang (paddy due),

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<sup>8</sup>Lalsangliani (2009). Pp. 64-65.

Sachhiah (meat due), Chichhiah (salt due), Khuaichhiah (honey due) and Sechhiah. Although these dues are collected from the people, the chief worked for the welfare of the people.

2. Khawnbawl Upa( elders/ ministers):

Khawnbawl Upa were appointed by the chief and there was no limit on the number of the Upa, the chief could appoint as many numbers as he wishes. These Upas helped the chief in village administration and in making decisions on any serious matters. They were the eyes and ears of the chief. They spent their knowledge, wisdoms and all their strength for the chief. They could establish their house near chiefs' house. They had an advantage in choosing land when chief divided a portion of land to the people. Like all other people, they have to submit their dues to the Chiefs.

3. Puithiam (priest):

Puithiam in the Mizo society are also known as Bawlpu and Sadawt. They are like pastors in modern days. They play important role in festivals and religious activities. The Chief had its own Sadawt, who perform religious functions for the Chief and is regarded as the greatest amongst all the priests. Bawlpu acted as a doctor, when people were sick they went to consult Bawlpu and he will prescribe some medicines. Bawlpu played an important role in curing diseases in their time, they believe that all illness was caused by bad spirit. So, Bawlpu will conduct spiritual functions by the blood of animals, pets whatever he deemed necessary to drive away the bad spirit.

4. Thirdeng (Blacksmith):

Thirdeng plays an important role in the village. He makes all the materials needed for cultivations, and even household items. There can be more than one Thirdeng in the village depending upon the large and small of the village. Each houses except the Chief used to give one basket of rice to the Thirdeng every year.

5. Tlangau( village crier):

Tlangau played a very important role in the Mizo traditional society and even in today Mizo society. In the traditional Mizo society Tlangau is usually from lower status family. Tlangau make an announcement whenever chiefs have made an order and even the decisions of the meetings of Zawlbuk.

6. Hnamchawm (commoners):

Another category that can be seen in the social structure of the Mizo society was Hnamchawm or Commoner. Hnamchawm works for the chiefs and even fought war for the village. In Mizo traditional society, the society was largely divided in two main groups like- Lal (Chief) and Hnamchawm (commoners). The commoners are the villagers who are not from the chief family lineage.

7. Bawi and Sal (slaves):

There was a slavery system in Mizo traditional society and there were two types of slaves, such as Bawi and Sal. Bawi was a person who surrendered himself to the Chief and Sal were those who were captured during war. Bawi can be freed by paying a huge amount of money at that time or what the chiefs demanded. There exist three types of Bawi and they are-

a) Inpuichhung Bawi- Inpuichhung Bawi were those persons who surrendered to the chiefs because of their poverty and sickness. These Bawi helped the chiefs in his household works and they were usually widows and orphans. The chiefs protected them and provided their needs.

b) Chemsen Bawi- Chemsen Bawi were those persons who took refuge, to escape punishment because of their act of crimes, to the chief. If he could



reach the chiefs house before they capture him, then none could do anything towards him. But he had to remain the chiefs slave till his death.

c) Tukluh Bawi- Tukluh Bawi are those persons who surrender with all their families to the enemies in the war in order to escape being killed and captured by enemies. Tukluh Bawi are living in a separate house unlike other Bawi and by paying Sial (Mithun) to the chief, they can buy their freedom.<sup>9</sup>

### **Zawlbuk (Bachelor Dormitories):**

Zawlbuk is the first social institution that can be seen in Mizo society. Each village has their own Zawlbuk. Zawlbuk is usually constructed at the opposite of the Chiefs house. The functioning in the Zawlbuk was usually guided by Val Upa (elders). These Val Upa's are not appointed nor elected. They occupy their position purely because of their sacrifice and endless workings for the society. All male youths will stay together at the Zawlbuk. Here they learn certain administrative techniques and warfare from their elders, such as administrative system of the village, wrestling which the Mizo's called Inchai and they were taught about the hunting skills. If a person does not obey the words of the Val Upa, he will be punished in Zawlbuk. It can be said that Zawlbuk is the first school for the Mizo's where disciplines are strictly emphasized.

### **Political system in Mizo society:**

The institution of chieftainship was practiced from a very long time in Mizoram. Each village was under the administration and rule of the Chief. The chiefs have all the authority in the village and even have a power over life and death of its subjects. The Chief protect its subjects in times of war. When India attained its Independence and the status of Republic, the Mizo social systems also begun to change as there are more interactions with people of

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<sup>9</sup> Malsawmdawngliana, Rohmingmawii (2015). *Mizo Narratives: Accounts from Mizoram*. C. Sasi Kumar. Guwahati. Pp. 33-37.

outside world. Mizoram was given Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council status in 1952 and with this status; the position of the Mizo chiefs was abolished. The name Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council was changed to Mizo District Council in 1954.<sup>10</sup> The institution of Chieftainship that was practiced from very long time come to an end as the chiefs were surrendering their power. Chieftainship was abolished in 1954. The institution of chieftainship was replaced by democratic systems where people elect their own representatives.

Each village that used to be administered by the Chiefs started functioning under Village Council. Village Council election was conducted in 1954 for the first time in the history of Mizoram. In 1966, the independence movement from Indian Union was proclaimed in Mizoram. Many people lost their life in insurgency. Mizoram was declared as ‘Disturbed Area’ and many of the political functions could not continue during this time. As a result, Mizoram attained Union Territory status in 1972. After fifteen years of becoming Union Territory, Mizoram attained the status of statehood. It becomes a state in 20th February, 1987. Mizoram becomes the 23rd state of Indian Union. Although their long fight for Independence was not successful, the Indian Union gives the Mizo’s freedom to do administration on their own.

In Mizoram, there exist three political structures- Village Council, Municipal Corporation and State Legislative Assembly. Village Council system started functioning from 1954 and became the first and oldest political institution that can be seen in the political history of Mizoram. Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) started functioning from 2008 in Aizawl city. Aizawl Municipal Corporation has conducted its first election in 2010. Village Councils within Aizawl are changed to Local Council in 2012 and AMC now consists of 83 Local Councils with twelve Wards. Mizoram State Legislative Assembly after its attainment

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. P. 331.

of statehood was conducted for the first time in 1987. Till now Mizoram has experienced eight elections after it has attained statehood. There are 40 Assembly Constituencies in Mizoram. The state of Mizoram can have one each representatives in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. At present there are eight Districts, namely- Aizawl, Lunglei, Mamit, Serchhip, Kolasib, Lawngtlai, Saiha and Champhai. There also exist 26 Blocks and 23 Sub-Division functioning under these eight Districts. In Mizoram there exist three Autonomous District Councils functioning within two Districts namely Siahla District and Lawngtlai District. They are- Mara Autonomous District Council, Lai Autonomous District Council and Chakma Autonomous District Council.<sup>11</sup>These three Autonomous District Councils have their administration on their own and elect their own executive members to look after their area.

#### **Historical roots of Women status in Mizoram:**

In the traditional Mizo society men and women play different role. Men were engaged in war, hunting and agriculture, while women were engaged in raising children and look after its household chores. Besides this women are also actively engaged in the fields. Their jobs are clearly distributed in the society. But women occupied low status in the society while men occupied high status in the society. Mizo society is patriarchal society. A family was headed by the father and all his children bear the name of his clan. He has an authority over property, over his wife and over his all children.

After their long worked in the fields, women have no time even at night. While all men in the village gathered at Zawlbuk to relax, women continue their works in the night. She has to husk the rice, has to stitch and repair clothes, has to look after her children and has to prepare food for their domestic animals. They rarely have a free time; they never rest as they had to work till mid night and had to wake up before the sunrises. Besides preparing

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<sup>11</sup><http://mizoram.nic.in/about/glance.htm> Retrieved on 08/12/2018

meals for her family women had to fetch water from the spring, had to collect fire-woods from the forest and do the household chores in the morning. After this they went to their fields and work there for the whole day. A husband never helped his wife in her household works and that persons who cares and help his wife were regarded as *Thaibawih* (a guy who fear his wife). But in actual life, as men wants his wife to take care of him, women also needed someone to care her and help her in times of trouble. This is their daily life. Men rarely take the consent of his wife and never consult them with regard to their family administration. Girl children help their mother in their household works while boys were playing.

Although women bear the burden of all works and responsible for looking after her family, she has no authority over the property and all the things that she has earned during their marriage. In case of divorce, men can divorce his wife by saying 'I divorce you'. She has to leave the house in an empty handed. She cannot claim her children and properties. Mizo women can claim only those goods that she had carried from her father's house. But in many cases they were never allowed to take back even those goods that she had carried from her father's house. The bride price (420 rupees) that a man gives to the women family by the time of their marriage was also gives back to the male family in divorce. Even in the inheritance of property, all the properties of the father go to the youngest son. There is no scope for women to inherit their father's property. Even if there is only girl children and no male children, the properties of the father goes to their nearest family member.

Women never take part in village administration. They cannot participate in the village administration and they were never given an opportunity to do the same. Women were lived under the oppression of male in the society. They were given no rights to have a voice with regard to administration. They occupy very low position in the village administration. They have to obey all the words of their husbands and the chief. Even when the new era for

democratic system in the society came to exist, women low position makes no differences. In the political scenario, women were continued to be oppressed. Women engagements in politics never received support from the masses.<sup>12</sup>

When Christian missionaries have landed in Mizoram to preach the words of God, the lifestyle of the Mizo's are very low. They still belief in spirit and many superstitions. The educations provided by the missionaries have brought modernization process in Mizoram in every sphere. When they opened school, girl children are not allowed to enter school as they were thought to engage only on household activities. They thought that education was for men only. Many families refuse to send their girl children to school. But the Christian missionaries taught girl children who enter school about sanitation, simple medication, knitting, sewing and child care. The parents became aware that girl children with skills are more useful for their family and this has encouraged parents to send them to school. The traditional mind set of the Mizo's began to change as people begun to aware of their status and rights. The education has uplifted the conditions of Mizo women in every sphere. Although there are many areas where women status were low, but in most of the cases women condition as a whole has improved. The patriarchal system is still deeply rooted in the minds of the men and there still exist the belief that men should lead the family and society. Because of this, it's hard for Mizo women to stand up in the patriarchal society.

## **2.2 History of the MHIP:**

With the coming of Christianity and the result of education, women began to aware of their inferior status. Many educated women came out and started to raise their voice. The abolition of chieftainship and the changing political system in Mizoram also changed the outlook of the Mizo people in many ways. For uplifting the condition of Mizo women, Mizo

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<sup>12</sup> Lalrinmawia (1995). *Mizoram-History and Cultural Identity (1890-1947)*. Spectrum Publications. Guwahati. Pp. 17-18

HmeichheTangrual Pawl was established on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1946 in Mizo High School, Mission Veng Aizawl. Its first President was Lalthanzami.<sup>13</sup> This women organization worked for the development of Mizo women in different parts of Mizoram. But, when Mizoram experienced insurgency from 1<sup>st</sup> March 1966, the HmeichheTangrual Pawl could not continue its branches in villages and it continued to exist only in Aizawl. HmeichheHmasawn Pawl also existed and in different Community Development Block Hmeichhe Pawl- Mahila Mandal was set up.<sup>14</sup>

When Mizoram got the status of Union Territory(UT) in 1972, like other states and UTs, State Social Welfare Advisory Board(SSWAB) was set up which worked for women and children. Through SSWAB a number of activities were undertaken to promote the welfare of women and children. Women organizations that existed during this time were- Mizo HmeichheTangrual Pawl, Mizo HmeichheHmasawn Pawl, Eastern Indian Women, Women Welfare Organization(Venghlu) and Women Welfare Organization (Republic). The efforts of these groups and the personal contribution of Bonthanga Poonte (L) Social Welfare Officer and Mizoram State Social Welfare Advisory Board Secretary under Mizoram Social Welfare Department resulted with the formation of Mizoram HmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl on 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1974. The first Office Bearers were- Malsawmi (President), Thannguri (Vice President), Saikhumi and Lalrintluangi (Secretary), Sanglianchhungi (Assistant Secretary), Thankimi (Treasurer) and Sangmawii (Finance Secretary). The MHIP started with 10 Executive Committee Members and two office staffs. The name 'Mizoram' itself was believed not to include Mizo women who stayed outside Mizoram. So, on 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1998 the former name Mizoram HmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl was changed to Mizo HmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl to include all Mizo women who stay within and outside of Mizoram. Its motto is 'Mite

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<sup>13</sup><https://www.zalen.co.in/mht-in-kum70-tlin-an-lawm/> Retrieved on 24/06/2018

<sup>14</sup>MHIP Danbu (Constitution) (2016). Mizo HmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl General Headquarters. Aizawl. p. xvii.

Tanpui'(Helping Others). The General Headquarters of MHIP is in Treasury Square, Aizawl.<sup>15</sup>

The first Committee of the MHIP was held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1974 at the District School Education Officer(DSEO) Office. The MHIP General Assembly was conducted after every two years and the first General Assembly was held on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1977 at Aizawl Club, Aizawl. 230 representatives from different branches attended its first General Assembly. This Assembly concluded that the term of the Office Bearers was to be two years and this was followed till today. As the MHIP motto is Mite Tanpui, from 1987 the MHIP collected Relief/Charity Fund whenever Executive Committees are held. These moneys are used for helping the needy who seek the help of the MHIP.<sup>16</sup>

The MHIP is also affiliated to All India Women's Conference(AIWC)<sup>17</sup>. Its logo is 'hmui' (charkha) and it also has a flag which is a picture of 'Puanchei' (Mizo traditional dress)<sup>18</sup>. It also has a law book which was prepared and passed by the MHIP Executive Committee on 3.08.1974. It contains a number of laws and rules to be followed by its members and necessary changes and revision was made to adjust with the situation. It also published a calendar every year since 1980 and it also has a song book that was published in 1995.<sup>19</sup>It has its own magazine 'Runlum' which was published every month and it is registered under Newspaper Registration No. MR N.E. 977/8/1/01-2005.<sup>20</sup>The MHIP has been working for the eradication of commercialization of bride-price, sexual exploitation towards women and inequality between man and women. MHIP founding day 6<sup>th</sup>July is declared as MHIP Day and it is celebrated every year by different Headquarters, Sub-headquarters, Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches from 1978. The state government declared

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<sup>15</sup>B. Sangkhumi (2009). *Mizo HmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl(MHIP) Chanchin (1974-2009)*.Efatha Press. pp 1-3.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-9.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-88.

6<sup>th</sup> July as Restricted Holiday from 1989 and from 1998 it has been declared as Official Holiday.<sup>21</sup>

### **2.3 Aims and Objectives of the MHIP:**

The MHIP since its establishment works for eradication of inhuman behavior that happened amongst women and girl children and it also works for upliftment of Mizo women who are in subordinate position in the society. The followings are the aims and objectives of the MHIP-

- 1) To uplift and empower the status of women for the betterment of the State and Nation and to enable Mizo women to enter into higher grounds of authoritative power.
- 2) Empowering and emancipating women from unfavorable conditions in the family and society and to protect their rights and prestige.
- 3) Developing and nurturing the capabilities of women in various fields of skills development such as- handicrafts and arts, health and medical aids so as to take care of their families and in certain areas of occupation.
- 4) To ensure the physical and psychological/ mental health of each and every children using Pre-Primary schools, Balwadi, crèches etc.
- 5) Building a more favorable space and atmosphere for children so as to enable them to learn the art of crafts, play and interesting books.
- 6) Contribution of women towards a more developmental and successful outcome of activities for the Nation.
- 7) Literating the adult women who are illiterate and seeking paths to further literary education to women who are unable to continue formal/ non-formal adult literacy program and helps them seek jobs.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 93.



- 8) Taking steps for the betterment of Mizoram from all distinct status and religions, caste, class and cultures, having distinct opinions in politics.
- 9) Keep oneself aloof and safe from any types of violence against women.
- 10) Mutual cooperation with the government in their perspective to the forward achievements of their manifestos and targets.
- 11) To defend and strongly protest violence against women.

### **MHIP Testament:**

MHIP wishes its member to be

- 1) God fearing character
- 2) Self- discipline character
- 3) Truth seeking
- 4) A person of decent nature, hardworking and socially active
- 5) Having a patriotic mind
- 6) Avoiding/keeping oneself against indulging and selling of drugs and other abusive substances.
- 7) Self-supporting person
- 8) Keeping oneself away from bad sexual intercourse.
- 9) Having sympathy and empathy towards disabled person.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.4 Structure of the MHIP:**

The MHIP is a non-governmental organization. It has six Office Bearers, such as- President, Vice President, General Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Finance Secretary and a number of executive committee members. The term of Office Bearers is two

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<sup>22</sup>MHIP Danbu (Constitution) (2016). Mizo HmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl General Headquarters. Aizawl. pp. 2-3.

years. The Office Bearers of the General Headquarters for the new term are elected by General Headquarters Office Bearers at the time of elections and Executive Committee members, Ex-Office Bearers of the General Headquarters, Sub-Headquarters Office Bearers, Block Office Bearers, Joint MHIP Office Bearers and Two members that the Branch Executive Committee appointed from each Branch.<sup>23</sup> It is a registered organization under Society Registration Act, 1860 (Act XXI of 1860) on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1977 and its registration number is No.5 of 1977.<sup>24</sup> As report on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 the MHIP has a General Headquarters, Seven Sub-headquarters, 23 Blocks, 21 Joint MHIP and 742 Branches. Its total members are around 2,80,000 Mizo women who stay within and outside Mizoram.<sup>25</sup> The MHIP General Headquarters is located in Aizawl and the other seven sub-headquarters are named after the name of the district. Seven sub-headquarters are- Lunglei sub-headquarters, Lawngtlaisub-headquarters, Siahasub-headquarters, Serchhipsub-headquarters, Champhaisub-headquarters, Kolasibsub-headquarters and Mamit sub-headquarters. These sub-headquarters are further divided into Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches.

To become MHIP member, a person need to be a

- 1) Mizo women who attain the age of 14, who live within and outside Mizoram
- 2) Mizo women who is willing to achieve the aims and objectives of the MHIP
- 3) and, by paying membership fee which is collected every year<sup>26</sup>

### **Formation of the MHIP Bodies:**

Within the MHIP there exist General Headquarters, Sub-Headquarters, Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches. The ways they can be formed are:

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid. pp. 12-13.

<sup>24</sup>B Sangkhumi (2009). Op cit., p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> MHIP Minute, MHIP 21<sup>st</sup> General Assembly 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2017. p. 13.

<sup>26</sup>B Sangkhumi (2009). p. 11.

**General Headquarters:**

General Headquarter will include all Branches of the MHIP within and outside Mizoram. General Headquarters

will be at the capital of Mizoram, i.e., Aizawl. General Headquarter will be the head of all Sub-Headquarters, Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches of the MHIP. The General Headquarters will be run by the following members-

- 1) President
- 2) Vice President
- 3) General Secretary
- 4) Assistant Secretary
- 5) Treasurer
- 6) Finance Secretary

The six Office Bearers shall be granted permission to appoint 50 Committee Members to work with them. The General Headquarters Office Bearers along with the 50 appointed Committee Members shall be called as 'General Headquarters Executive Committee Members'. If the General Headquarters Executive Committee Members decided that there is a need to have an adviser, they can appoint two Senior Advisors and one Patron member. Within Aizawl city, Blocks and Joint MHIP are not allowed to be formed as all Branches are already under the jurisdiction of the General Headquarters.

**Sub- Headquarters:**

In every District (excluding Aizawl District), the MHIP members are allowed to form Sub-Headquarters. Sub- Headquarters will be run by the followings-

- 1) President

- 2) Vice President
- 3) General Secretary
- 4) Assistant Secretary
- 5) Treasurer
- 6) Finance Secretary

The Sub-Headquarters Office Bearers shall be granted permission to appoint 35 Committee Members. The Sub-Headquarters Office Bearers along with the 35 appointed Committee Members shall be called as 'Sub-Headquarters Executive Committee Members'. If the Sub-Headquarters Executive Committee Members decided that there is a need to have an adviser, they can appoint two Senior Advisors and one Patron member.

**Block:**

If the General Headquarters and Sub-Headquarters agree that there is a need to form 'Block', and then they can do so. To form Block MHIP, there should be at least ten Branches under that particular Block. Block level MHIP will be run by the following Office Bearers-

- 1) President
- 2) Vice President
- 3) General Secretary
- 4) Assistant Secretary
- 5) Treasurer
- 6) Finance Secretary

The Sub-Headquarters Office Bearers along with two representatives of each Branch under Block will form Sub-Headquarters Executive Committee. Together they will be called 'Block Executive Committee Members'. If the Block Executive Committee Members

decided that there is a need to have an adviser, they can appoint two Senior Advisors and one Patron member.

**Joint MHIP:**

If the General Headquarters and Sub-Headquarters agree that there is a need to form 'Joint MHIP', and then they can do so. Joint MHIP will consist of three MHIP Branches. Election of the Office Bearers will be held every year before the end of the month of February and the term of Joint MHIP Office Bearers will be two years. Joint MHIP will be run by the following Office Bearers-

- 1) President
- 2) Vice President
- 3) General Secretary
- 4) Assistant Secretary
- 5) Treasurer
- 6) Finance Secretary

The elected six Office Bearers can appoint Committee Members from each Branch under its jurisdictions not less than two members. The Joint MHIP Office Bearers along with at least two representatives of each Branch under Joint MHIP will form Joint MHIP Executive Committee. Together they will be called 'Joint MHIP Executive Committee Members'. If the Joint Executive Committee Members decided that there is a need to have an adviser, they can appoint two Senior Advisors and one Patron member.

**Branch:**

With the approval from General Headquarters/ Sub-Headquarters, in every Village or Local Councils within Mizoram and outside of Mizoram, Branch MHIP can be formed. Depending upon the area, it may be allowed to establish more than one MHIP Branch, with

the approval from General Headquarters/ Sub- Headquarters Executive Committee. Every MHIP Branch shall be under a particular Block MHIP. Joint MHIP will be run by the following Office Bearers-

- 1) President
- 2) Vice President
- 3) General Secretary
- 4) Assistant Secretary
- 5) Treasurer
- 6) Finance Secretary

The elected six Office Bearers can appoint Committee Members. The number of Committee Members to be appointed by the Branch MHIP will be decided by the Branch Office Bearers. Together they will be called 'Branch Executive Committee Members'. If the Branch Executive Committee Members decided that there is a need to have an adviser, they can appoint two Senior Advisors and one Patron member.

**Patron:**

Patron shall be special delegates in General Assembly, Sub-Headquarters Conference/ Block Conference/ Branch General Meeting.

**Senior Advisors:**

Senior Advisors shall be called at committee whenever deemed necessary. They will be special delegates in General Assembly, Sub-Headquarters Conference/ Block Conference/ Branch General Meeting.

**Committees under this organization are:**

- 1) Headquarters Co-Ordination Committee(HCC)

- 2) General Headquarters Executive Committee
- 3) Sub- Headquarters Executive Committee
- 4) Block Executive Committee
- 5) Joint MHIP Executive Committee, and
- 6) Branch Executive Committee

These committees play important role in the strengthening the MHIP and their main functions are:

**1) Headquarters Co-Ordination Committee(HCC):**

Headquarters Co-Ordination Committee(HCC) is the think tank of the MHIP which pursues how to proceed the resolutions passed by the General Assembly. It used to have meeting in the month of May or June every year. HCC can call upon Special Assembly if the need arises. The Headquarters Co-Ordination Committee members are- General Headquarters Office Bearers, General Headquarters Executive Committee members, three representatives from Sub-Headquarters, two representatives from Block MHIP, one representative from Joint MHIP and one representative from each Branch within Aizawl.

**2) General Headquarters Executive Committee:**

The General Headquarters Executive Committee is working for fulfillment of the resolution passed by the General Assembly. It administers the office of the MHIP and its staff. The General Headquarters Executive Committee also has the power to recruit staffs for the MHIP office and it also creates sub-committees within the MHIP for a period of two years. The General Headquarters Executive Meeting is conducted at least once in a month and its term is the same as that of the Office Bearers. At least one-third of the committee members are required to be present to conduct a committee and the quorum is one third of

committee members. If the committee member is absent for four consecutive committees without any reason, her committee membership will be automatically cancelled.

**3) Sub- Headquarters Executive Committee:**

The Sub-Headquarters Executive Committee submitted its report to the General Headquarters every year in the month of March. The term of the Sub-Headquarters Executive Committee is for two years. It will look after the properties and accounts of the Sub-Headquarters. One-third of the annual membership fee was to be submitted to the General Headquarters and the Sub-headquarter can use the remaining two-third of the fees. If the committee member is absent for four consecutive committees without any reason, her committee membership will be automatically cancelled.

**4) Block Executive Committee:**

Block Executive Committee also submitted its report to the General Headquarters every year in the month of March. This Block Executive Committee has to submit every year the number of Branches within their block to the General Headquarters. The term of the Block Executive Committee is the same as the Office Bearers of Block i.e. two years. The committee is to be conducted at least after every two months and for this one-fourth of the committee members has to present. It looks after the accounts and properties of the Block. It has to report the number of Branch and the name of the Branch who did not want to join Branch if any to the General Headquarters/Sub-Headquarters every year. If the committee member is absent for four consecutive committees without any reason, her committee membership will be automatically cancelled.

**5) Joint MHIP Executive Committee:**

The Joint MHIP Executive Committee has to submit its report to the General Headquarters every year in the month of March. Its term is the same as that of the Office



Bearers of Joint MHIP. The Executive Committee is to be conducted at least once in a month and for this one-third of the committee members is the quorum for meeting. It looks after the account and properties of the Joint MHIP. If the committee member is absent for four consecutive committees without any reason, her committee membership will be automatically cancelled.

**6) Branch Executive Committee:**

The Branch Executive Committee had to submit its report to the General Headquarters every year in the month of March. They are given the authority and power to set up sub-committee on their own accord if it was necessary for their working within their jurisdiction. Collection of annual membership fee is also in their hands. The term of the Branch Executive Committee is the same as the Branch Office Bearers. It has to work and cooperate with other NGO's that are exists in their respective Branches. The numbers of members in their branch are to be submitted to the General Headquarters every year. The committee was to be conducted at least once in a month and for this one-third of the committee members have to present. It looks after the account and properties of the Branch MHIP. If the committee member is absent for four consecutive committees without any reason, her committee membership will be automatically cancelled.<sup>27</sup>

**Assemblies and Conferences:**

**1) General Assembly:**

The General Assembly is conducted after every one year in the month of April and this is the highest authoritative body within the MHIP. The General Assembly has the power to modify, to change the needed laws and have the power to add and remove what the previous General Assembly has already passed. All the MHIP members can attend the

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<sup>27</sup>MHIP Danbu (Constitution). pp. 27-35.

General Assembly but all members who attend the General Assembly do not have voting rights. Assembly delegates are- General Headquarters Office Bearers and Executive Committee Members, Ex-Office Bearers of the General Headquarters, Sub-Headquarters Office Bearers, Block Office Bearers, Joint MHIP Office Bearers and Two members from each Branch that are appointed by Branch Executive Committee. The General Headquarters Executive Committee will prepare the agenda for General Assembly.

## **2) MHIP Sub-Headquarters Conference:**

The MHIP Sub-Headquarters Conference is the highest decision making body within the MHIP Sub-Headquarters areas. It is conducted after every one year in the month of March when General Assembly was not held. All MHIP members can attend this conference. Conference delegates are- Sub-Headquarters Office Bearers and Executive Committee Members, Ex-Office Bearers of the Sub-Headquarters, Block Office Bearers, Joint MHIP Office Bearers and Six members from each Branch that are appointed by Branch Executive Committee. The decisions of Sub-Headquarters Conference are to be submitted to the General Headquarters. The agenda for Sub-Headquarters Conference will be prepared by Sub-Headquarters Executive Committee.

## **3) MHIP Block Conference:**

Block Conference is held every year in the month of February- March. Block Office Bearers are elected in the interval year of the General Assembly. The decisions of Block Conference are to be submitted to the General Headquarters/Sub-Headquarters. All the MHIP members can attend the conference. The activities of the Block for one year are to be reported by the Secretary in the Block Conference. Conference delegates are- Block Office Bearers, Block Executive Committee Members, all Branch Office Bearers under Block and Joint

MHIP Office Bearers. Block Executive Committee will prepare the agenda for the conference.

**4) Joint MHIP General Body Meeting:**

The Joint level MHIP General Body Meeting is expected to be conducted every year. The General Body meeting is the highest authoritative body with regard to Joint MHIP. All the MHIP members can attend the meeting but not all members who attend the General Body meeting have voting rights. The General Body Meeting Secretary will report the activities of the Joint in the Meeting. The Meeting Secretary will report the decisions of the General Body Meeting to the General Headquarters/Sub-Headquarters/Block MHIP. General Body Meeting delegates are- Joint MHIP Office Bearers, Joint Executive Committee Members, all Branch Office Bearers under Joint and all Branches executive committee members under Joint MHIP.

**5) Branch General Meeting:**

Branch General Meeting is to be conducted once in a year. This meeting is the decision maker for the activities of the Branch.

**6) Special Assembly:**

Special Assembly is conducted when necessary changes are to be made in the constitution of the MHIP.<sup>28</sup> The Special Assembly can be conducted if the General Headquarters Executive Committee proposes for it and if two-third of the Branches of MHIP feels necessary. The agenda for Special Assembly will be prepared by General Headquarters Executive Committee. The decision for any agenda needs the support from three-fourth of the member present in the Assembly. Assembly delegates will be from- General Headquarters Office Bearers, Executive Committee Members and Ex-Office Bearers of General

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-40.

Headquarters, two representatives from Sub-Headquarters, two representatives from Block MHIP, two representatives from Joint MHIP and two members from all Branches appointed by the Branch Executive Committee.

### **Sub-Committees:**

As report in 2017 General Assembly, nine sub-committees for 2015-2017 are set up and these committees are set up for two years by the General Assembly. Sub-Committees under the MHIP are:

#### **1. Hmangaihte Run Sub-Committee:**

Hmangaihte Run (Orphanage Home) is looked after by the MHIP and is situated at Zemabawk, Aizawl and in Hmangaihte Run children who are under 6 years are taken care. Social Welfare Department has given a permission to be an Adoption Agency to the MHIP in 2005 and it has done its registration on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2005<sup>29</sup>(Certificate No. 20of 2005/GOM/SWD). During 2005-2006, 13 children were adopted form Hmangaihte Run and they were given a family.<sup>30</sup> Sixteen childrens were adopted from Hmangaihte Run between the years 2015-2017. From these childrens, six childrens are adopted from outside the state of Mizoram. In average, seven childrens are taken care all time. It's hard to clarify the exact number of children as they come and go. Hmangaihte Run Sub-Committee makes a decision on the admission of children in the Home and takes initiative on the matter of adoption.<sup>31</sup> Source of funding is coming from different areas. Different Branches of the MHIP also used to donate money for looking after Hmangaihte Run. The MHIP has received the amount of Rupees 7,00,719 as donation for Hmangaihte Run between the year 2015-2017.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>MHIP Minute (2017). p. 14.

<sup>30</sup>B Sangkhumi (2009). p. 116.

<sup>31</sup>Op Cit. MHIP Minute (2017). p. 14.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. p.24.

## **2. Crime Against Women Sub-Committee:**

Crime Against Women Sub-Committee has taken the issues of rape, divorce and different act of crimes that happened amongst women. It stands up for those who seek and need help and even hires government advocates to stand in the Court for the victims. It also acts as a family counselor for those who need its help and it is involved in solving many family problems. Due to the efforts of the Crime Against Women Committee, many broken families are reformed.

## **3. Building Sub-Committee:**

Building Sub-Committee takes the initiatives of looking after its building in Bazar area, Office Building in Treasury, Hmangaihte Run Building and the MHIP land in Lungbia area. It takes the initiatives of regenerating the MHIP buildings and it also looks after the buying of necessary materials that their building needed.

## **4. Publicity Sub Committee:**

Publicity Sub-Committee works in publishing whatever news and notification made by the MHIP General Headquarters. This sub-committee is responsible for issuing circular and notification to all branches of the MHIP.

## **5. Fund Raising Sub-Committee:**

Fund Raising Sub-Committee works in raising funds to meet the needs of the organization. As there is no other source of funding, through the initiatives of this Committee, budget to be submitted to the MHIP is made and in this regard different Branches of the MHIP used to submit their budget every year.

## **6. Ruihhlo Do Sub-Committee:**

Ruihhlo Do Sub-Committee is an important committee which deals and fights against the selling of drugs and it helps in reforming drug abusers and addicts to live a normal life by admitting them in de-addiction centre. It also works with other civil societies.

## **7. Kumpulan Sub-Committee:**

Kumpulan Sub-Committee prepares themes for the coming years.<sup>33</sup>It declared 1989-1991 as '*Year against Drugs*' and '*Year of Honesty*' between 1991-1993. '*Year of Obedient*' was declared as theme of the year in the year between 1993-1995 and '*Year Against Slothfulness*' between 1995-1997. During 1997-2011 it declared Women Empowerment as theme of the year and it worked in implementing these themes.<sup>34</sup>The MHIP declared Years of '*Upholding the dignified way of life of the traditional Mizo women*' during 2011-2013.<sup>35</sup>

The year 2013-2015 was declared as Years of '*Greater Struggling For The Higher Involvement And Inclusion Of Women In The Administrative And Authoritative Levels Of The Country*'.<sup>36</sup>It even declared '*Striving Towards the Protection and Betterment of Women and Children*' as its theme of the year during 2017-2019.<sup>37</sup> For this, it hosts a number of law awareness programs and workshops to sensitize the innocent women and girl children's and even published pamphlets which contain a number of laws related to women protection and articles written by different advocates.

## **8. Runlum Editorial Board:**

Runlum is a monthly magazine published by the MHIP. This sub-committee collected news, articles and notice of the General Headquarters to be published. This magazine makes it

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<sup>33</sup>MHIP Minute (2017). p. 15.

<sup>34</sup>B Sangkhumi (2009). pp. 117-121.

<sup>35</sup>MHIP Minute (2011). MHIP 18<sup>th</sup> General Assembly 13<sup>th</sup>&14<sup>th</sup> April. p. 2.

<sup>36</sup>MHIP Minute (2015). MHIP 20<sup>th</sup> General Assembly 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> May. p. 6.

<sup>37</sup>MHIP Kumpulan 2017-2019

very easy to inform its different branches about their news and works. As report on 2015, 4500 copies have been printed every month.<sup>38</sup>

#### **9. Library Sub-Committee:**

Library Sub-Committee looks after the library of the MHIP in its building in Treasury. The MHIP library has a good collection of various types of books, magazines and journals. The MHIP has signed an agreement with National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NEILIT) for conducting free computer class in the MHIP building and it was positively done in 2005. To give space for conducting computer class, the library was shifted to Zemabawk but it was shifted back to the main building in Treasury as it was far from the main office. The library is now activated and it functions properly in the main building at treasury.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>MHIP Minute (2015). Op cit. p. 11.

<sup>39</sup>MHIP Minute (2017). pp. 15-16.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **ROLE AND FUNCTION OF MHIP IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

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#### **3.1 WOMEN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

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## CHAPTER III

### ROLE AND FUNCTION OF MHIP IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Knowing the importance of uplifting the condition of women as crucial for the development of the country, the year 2001 was declared by the Government of India as Year of Women's Empowerment. A policy called National Policy for the Empowerment of Women was also enacted by the Parliament in 2001. This policy aimed at equality of both men and women in decision making and participation in social, political and economic life of the nation. It also aimed at strengthening legal systems to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. It also aims at changing the attitudes of the society and community toward women and encouraging active participation and involvement of both men and women in the social, political and economic sphere. In sort it can be said that National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001 framed by Government of India aimed at bringing about advancement, development and empowerment of women.<sup>1</sup>

In the state of Mizoram after it attained the statehood, one of the biggest women organization that is, the MHIP has taken a number of steps for empowerment of women. Since its inception, the MHIP main theme is Women Empowerment and upliftment of the status of women. It declared Women Empowerment as theme of the year in the consecutive years of 1997-2011. During these periods its main theme was focused on creating awareness on the low status of women in the society. Most of its activities during these period concerned programs to elevate the low status of women. In this regard, the MHIP had conducted workshops, seminars and group discussions in different parts of Mizoram. It can be said that this movement has encouraged and enlightened many of the younger generations and it also gives awareness to the general people about the need to empower women and the

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<sup>1</sup>[http://wcdhry.gov.in/nationalpolicyW\\_F.htm](http://wcdhry.gov.in/nationalpolicyW_F.htm) Retrieved on 09/06/2018

need to uplift the condition of women. The MHIP, in helping the destitute, the downtrodden and the weaker section in Mizo society in the social, economic and cultural life of the community is widely appreciated and it received lots of support from the outsiders.

During these fourteen years, the MHIP worked so hard for the empowerment of Mizo women in different spheres.<sup>2</sup> In 1999, the MHIP has been awarded Durga Bhai Deshmukh Award for its working on women empowerment and upliftment of the condition of the status women.<sup>3</sup> In 2002, the Government of India's National Commission for Women has awarded the MHIP for its outstanding contribution on empowering women.<sup>4</sup> Beside these awards, the MHIP has received National award Nari Shakti Puraskar Award in 2016 under the Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development because of its efficient working on uplifting the condition of women.<sup>5</sup> Knowing the prevalence of inhuman behaviour towards women till today, the MHIP makes a resolution for the Year 2017-2019 as 'Striving Towards the Protection and Betterment of Women and Children'.<sup>6</sup> With regard to this, the MHIP prepared a booklet which contains a number of articles written by different law experts. This booklet was prepared in simple term so as to be understood by everybody. It inserted a number of guidelines how to take actions when incidences have happened and whom to approach to solve the problems.

When Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 was enacted by the Indian Parliament, the MHIP was very pleased and translate this act in Mizo language which was later distributed to its different Sub-Headquarters, Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches. It also requests the State Government to implement this act in the state. After two years in 2007, this Act was passed in Mizoram and six Service Providers are appointed and the MHIP

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<sup>2</sup>Sangkhumi, B (2009). p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 103

<sup>5</sup>MHIP Minute 2017. p. 23.

<sup>6</sup>MHIP Kumpulan 2017-2019. *HmeichhiatelehNaupangteHmasawnnalehHimnaatannasa taka tan lak*. Mizo HmeichheInsuihkhawm Pawl General Headquarters. Aizawl. p. 1.

became one of the Service Providers.<sup>7</sup>A service provider is given the responsibility that they are able to cater various assistant such as escorting the complainant in case of court appeals, providing shelter homes for women if required, and also helps with medical facilities.<sup>8</sup>

The MHIP has conducted a number of campaigns to women from time to time for their legal awareness. When 2007 was declared as 'Year Against Rape' by Social Welfare Department, the MHIP became an active supporter and it vigorously conduct campaign to its members.<sup>9</sup>The MHIP believes that health of the mother and children is crucial for their advancement and it is also helpful for growth of the nation. On 22nd February 2016, the General Headquarters of the MHIP and Health Department under Government of Mizoram jointly organized a programme on 'IMR (Infant Mortality Rate) and MMR (Maternal Mortality Ratio) Awareness Campaign' for all branches of the MHIP in Aizawl. Health status and condition of the mother and child, maternity care plans and others were emphasized on this programme. Besides Aizawl, this programme of awareness was organized in all the districts, namely Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Saiha, Champhai, Mamit, Kolasib and Serchhip.<sup>10</sup>

The different act of crimes and rapes against women are protested many times by the MHIP. Although a number of demonstrations and protests were conducted against inhuman behaviour toward women, most of the rapist went unpunished or freed without any proper sentences. The MHIP regard this as ignorance of people with the existing laws and procedures, and they are blind with the steps to be taken in this regard. The MHIP realizes the need to intensify an awareness campaign on such matters to the public in general and women in particular. Then, a booklet was prepared in 2012 which contained a number of laws selected from Indian Constitution that protected women and this was translated in Mizo

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<sup>7</sup>Sangkhumi, B (2009). p. 129.

<sup>8</sup>Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (2012). Importance of Service Provider. MHIP General Headquarters. Aizawl

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>10</sup>MHIP Minute 2017. p. 20.

language. Booklet named 'Prevention and Penalties on Rape and Human Trafficking' was designed to reach to various Sub-headquarters, Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches.<sup>11</sup> A number of booklets were printed and distributed to its different places of jurisdiction so as to reach to the hands of women who live in the most backward area.

Women Football Tournament was jointly organized by the MHIP and Mizoram Football Association (MFA) in 2018, starting from 22nd May. This tournament was called the MHIP Inter Branch Football Tournament. Many women footballer started their career from this tournament and they moved forward positively. Rupees 1,69,000 was distributed as prize money.<sup>12</sup> Champhai Sub-Headquarter Football team defeated Kolasib Town and became a champion in this tournament.<sup>13</sup> From different teams, 60 women footballers were selected to further play in other tournaments and some players were selected to play for Mizoram Women team. The MHIP General Headquarters organized 'Siktuithiang Kut' one of Mizo traditional dance festival, at Assam Rifle Ground Lammual, Aizawl on 12th September 2018.<sup>14</sup> In this festival, 61 MHIP branches gathered from different parts of Mizoram and participate in the festival. Since most of the members of the MHIP are mother, they are busy in their house works and daily jobs. They rarely have time for outing and doing things which they like. Because of this, the MHIP organize this festival for its members so that they can get relief from their work and enjoy their life for a day.

### **Women Educational Institution**

The only educational institution that can be seen in the history of Mizo society was Zawlbuk (Bachelor dormitories). Each village has its own Zawlbuk and it was constructed at the opposite site of the Chief house. In Zawlbuk, young men received trainings from the

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<sup>11</sup>MHIP General Headquarters (2012). *Prevention and Penalties on Rape and Human Trafficking*. Aizawl.

<sup>12</sup><https://m.facebook.com/mfamizoramfootballassociation/> Retrieved on 26/09/2018

<sup>13</sup><https://www.arunfoot.com/inter-branch-mhip-football-tournament-champhai-are-the-champions/> Retrieved on 26/09/2018

<sup>14</sup>Based on Interview of MHIP President Pi Saipui

elders like wrestling, hunting and village administration. It was a place where the basic value of human life was inculcated amongst the young men. All the administration of the village was in the hands of men as such, training for different techniques were imparted in Zawlbuk. Women were never admitted in the Zawlbuk and never thought to interfere in the administration of the village. Women never have a free time even at the night while men were gathered at Zawlbuk. Women were thought to take care of the field works and the domestic works, to bear children and all their domestic animals. When education was introduced by the Christian missionaries, Mizo parents refused to send their daughter to schools as women were thought to be engaged in their household activities and domestic works. There was a saying that women and the girls were destined to do the household work.<sup>15</sup>

It can be said that Christianity has changed the outlook of the Mizo society. In the past, women were not expected to be enrolled in educational institutions and they were not expected to go to schools. When proper school was opened on 15th February, 1898 in Aizawl by Christian missionary Zosaphluia (D.E. Jones), there were six females out of 56 students.<sup>16</sup> In rural areas Primary School was opened in 1901 but girls attending schools were not encouraged.<sup>17</sup> The literacy rate of women in Mizoram in census of 1901 is 0.14%.<sup>18</sup> This can be said as the beginning of proper education for Mizo women. In the year 1901 out of 180 students there were 20 females. Three temporary girls school were opened in Hriangmual, Thakthing and RahsiVeng during the year 1902-1903. First regular girls school was established in 1904 in Mission Veng, Aizawl with 12 girls. In this school, Mrs. KE

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<sup>15</sup>JV Hluna(2013). *Female Education in Mizoram*. p. 307. Retrieved from [http://www.dspace.nehu.ac.in/bitstream/1/10613/1/Female%20education%20\(J%20V%20Hluna\).pdf](http://www.dspace.nehu.ac.in/bitstream/1/10613/1/Female%20education%20(J%20V%20Hluna).pdf) Retrieved on 06/06/2018

<sup>16</sup>Harendra Sinha, B. Lalrinchhani (2013). *Women in Mizo Society*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p. 36

<sup>17</sup><https://www.mz.ssa.nic.in/scenario.html> Retrieved on 14/05/2018

<sup>18</sup>Malsawmdawngliana, Rohmingmawii (2015). *Mizo Narratives: Accounts from Mizoram*. C. Sasi Kumar. Guwahati. P. 241

Jones, wife of Rev. DE Jones taught girl students sewing, knitting, sanitation, simple medication and child care.<sup>19</sup> Because of resistance from the men side, the Missionaries changed their pattern rather than a pure education. Besides learning how to read and write, girl children were taught cooking, embroidery, spinning, sewing, knitting, child care, needle work, simple hygiene and others.<sup>20</sup> This has changed the condition of women and girl students really benefitted the various skills taught by Mrs. KE. Jones. Girl children who attended school were more useful with education and skills even to the parents. In southern part of Mizoram, girl school was opened for the first time in 1919 at Lunglei. This school was established and looked after by Mrs. Chapman (the Mizo's call her as Pi Zirtiri).<sup>21</sup> Out of 120 respondents, 60% believe that the status of Mizo women is satisfactory and 40% believe that it is not good and there are lots of things to be done. 90% believe that Christianity has uplifted the condition of women and 10% believe that Christianity alone is not the cause of the betterment of the condition of Mizo women. 100% of the respondents think that education is the most essential step towards the upliftment of Mizo women.

When it comes to seventies and eighties, there are a number of educated women. The MHIP realized the need to establish higher educational institution for women and pleaded to the State Government. The establishment of Govt. Zirtiri Women's College in 1989 was greatly accepted by the MHIP. However, news spreaded in 1999 that the State Government tried to put an end to the institution. The MHIP strongly opposed and sent letters to the State Government and the MHIP leaders met government officials several times to continue the institution. Due to its efforts, the institution continues but the name was changed to Govt. Zirtiri Residential Science College in 2000.

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<sup>19</sup>J.V. Hluna, p. 305.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. p. 307.

<sup>21</sup>Irene Colbert, (2010). *Women and Politics in Mizoram anin depth Study*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Mizoram University. Mizoram. p. 130.

As part of educational development for women, the MHIP demanded an institution for women, where they can learn handicrafts to earn money and support their family. The MHIP then pleaded for the establishment of Women Polytechnic in Mizoram. The MHIP has been working so hard in the process of the establishment of this institution. In 1998, due to the efforts taken up by the MHIP and B. Sangkhumi, the then Joint Director of Higher and Technical Education, who later on became the President of MHIP (2005-07, 2007-09, 2011-13), Women Polytechnic was established in Mizoram under World Bank Project. She also became the first Principal in Women Polytechnic. The MHIP was really glad on the establishment of this institution and it issued a Press Release to show their gratitude on different newspapers. Courses offered by this institution are- Diploma in Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering, Modern Office Practice, Garment Technology and Beauty Culture and Cosmetology. Women hostels are also established by the MHIP in different parts of Mizoram. In these hostels, many girls who try to pursue higher studies outside of their village are admitted and working women are also admitted.<sup>22</sup>

### **Trainings for Economic Self-sufficiency**

The MHIP clearly recognize that economic self-sufficiency is important for the empowerment of Mizo women. It clearly mentions in its aims and objectives how vital it is for women. Because of this MHIP has taken a number of steps for the economic self-sufficiency of Mizo women. Out of 120 respondents, 100% support the different trainings given by the MHIP to women as constructive steps for improving the status of women. The MHIP is working with different government departments and other voluntary organizations. The MHIP works with Mizoram State Social Welfare Advisory Board, and it has taken up a number of programmes like- Crèche Centers, Balwadicenters, Family Counselling Centers, AnganwadiCenters, Condensed course of education, Piggery Units, Working Women

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<sup>22</sup>B. Sangkhumi, (2009). p. 46.

Hostels, Awareness Generation Projects and different vocational training courses.<sup>23</sup> In these centres, the MHIP make its own regular fields visits. It looks after the workings of its branches to the most interior and remote part of the state. In its working the MHIP receives full support from the people.

Since the MHIP is working solely for women, different trainings have been conducted through this organization. In 2005, under Planning and Implementation Department the MHIP sent ten Mizo women to undergo a Toy Making Training in Kolkata. Beside this, twelve other women were sent in other states to have a short term course training on beautician, hair and skin care, Television repair, electronics and dress making.<sup>24</sup>The MHIP has taken Women Empowerment Awareness Campaign in different parts of Mizoram for a number of years. While carrying out this campaign the MHIP has conducted a number of training. In 2005-2007, under the sponsorship of the Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) and Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) MHIP has conducted a Pickle and Jam making trainings in different MHIP headquarters, Sub-headquarters, Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches. Many MHIP members make use of these trainings and later use for earning money. In 2006, MHIP headquarters host a cloth sew training. In this Usha International Ltd. has given training to women by using their sewing machines. This training was attended by MHIP members from different branches within Aizawl.

The Central Government and the State Government have also worked on empowerment of women and different steps have been taken up in this regard. Some of the programmes of the Central Government, taken up by the State Government are carried on by the MHIP through the State Government. Under District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) starting from April 1999, seven Self-Help Group (SHG) were created in Champhai

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<sup>23</sup>Harendra Sinha, B Lalrinchani. p. 77.

<sup>24</sup>Op cit. p. 133



and Aizawl District.<sup>25</sup> In this SHG rural women were formed into groups and their working on their respective fields were looked after by the DRDA. This has encouraged many women to support themselves economically and socially. The Mizoram State Rural Livelihood Mission (MzRLM) has taken up the programme and from 2016 Sales of Articles of Rural Artisans Society (SARAS) Fair was conducted in different Districts of Mizoram. In 2017, SARAS fair was conducted at Aizawl and Kolasib from 5-15th December. In this Fair the product of women in different parts of Mizoram were sold and exposed. Through this SHG a number of women earned their livelihood and it can be said that this program has received a fruitful result. As report in 2016, there are 1244 groups which cover 10,242 families in different parts of Mizoram.<sup>26</sup> Many MHIP members make use of the SHG for earning their livelihood. As a part of women empowerment, Doordarshan Kendra and All India Radio used to telecast and broadcast program on women issues, their legal rights and a number of discussions on gender issues were conducted.<sup>27</sup>

As a part of its Women Empowerment Awareness Campaign, the MHIP is working with Mizoram State AIDS Control Society (MSACS) and conducted different courses like tailoring/Embroidery Training, hair dressing/beauty culture training and flower making training. For tailoring/embroidery training that is for six months, the MHIP selected 17 women from its branches. Another 20 women were selected to have training on Hair Dressing/Beauty Culture for six to ten months. Flower Making Training was also given to fifty women.<sup>28</sup>The MHIP and National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) on 2015. Since then free computer class has been opened in MHIP building. Course on Computer Concept for three

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<sup>25</sup>Lalthansangi (2004). Gender Profiles Mizoram. Retrieved from <https://www.ncw.nic.in/frmpubreport.aspx> A situational Analysis of Women and Girls in Mizoram.pdf. Retrieved on 18/09/2018

<sup>26</sup>[www.vanglaini.org/tualchhung/64278](http://www.vanglaini.org/tualchhung/64278) Retrieved on 15/09/2018

<sup>27</sup>Lalthansangi. p. 64.

<sup>28</sup>B Sangkhumi (2009). pp. 133-134

months and Multimedia Course six months' trainings are offered.<sup>29</sup> Many youths have finished their training courses. Women were given preferences for admission in this course and depending upon the vacancy of the seats, men are also admitted.

### **Revision of Mizo Customary Law**

A Customary Law can be referred to as customs, practices or laws of the local communities or the indigenous people, which plays an important role in the day to day life of people of the community. Most of the tribal communities in India have no written law, but their village administrations were guided by this customary law. In India, especially the Northeast region like Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, tribals living in these areas are governed by their customary law. Mizoram is the first state to have written customary laws. Although these laws are not strictly taken up, but it is in their way of life and in their heart, they have a deep root and they try to follow as much as they can.

Even during the rule of the British, the Indian leaders seek the right for divorce, marriage and inheritance of property. Indian social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other prominent leaders worked for the protection and safeguard of Indian women as a part of their social reform programme, which resulted in the enactment of a number of laws for Indian women like Regulation No.III of 1805, Sati System Act 1829, Hindu Widow Re-Marriage Act 1856, The Indian Succession Act 1865, The Indian Divorce Act 1869, The Civil Marriage Act 1872, The Special Marriage Act 1872, The Married Women's Property Act 1874, The Hindu Law of Inheritance (Removal of Disabilities) Act 1928 and Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929.

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<sup>29</sup>MHIP Minute 2017. p. 17.

Women's movement that took place in 1930's concerned with the demand for the right to divorce, marriage, control and inheritance of property. During these period acts like The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act 1937, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act 1937 and The Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act 1939 were passed.<sup>30</sup> The All India Women's Conference that was established in 1927 also worked for legal reform on these matters. They have published a number of pamphlets and articles and formed committee on legal status that works for concerning these issues.<sup>31</sup> They demanded for the reform of the Hindu Law because women were extremely exploited in different ways. Because of their non-stop works, various Hindu Laws were reformed in 1950's like Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act and Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act. Many prominent leaders during these times also seek for the reform of Muslim Personal Law. Many women organizations worked for reforming their laws in their respective areas.

The Mizo people were governed in their social traditions, customs and practices since the earliest times by unwritten law but which was as clear as a written law. The marriage processes were carried on from their ancestors like there was a bride price and the bride carried goods from her father house to the bridegroom house. In case of divorce women could not claim anything which she earned when she lived together with her husband except the properties which she carried from her father's house at the time of their marriage. The inheritance of property when the father died also goes to the male side of the family. Most of the tribes, except Paite and some other tribes, the property of the father go to the youngest son if not it will go to the male side or the nearest kin. In Paite community, the eldest son inherits the property. So, there is no inheritance of property for women.

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<sup>30</sup>Sangkhumi, B (2015). *Mizo Hmeichhiate Tana Malsawmna (Mizo Khawtlang Nun Siamthatna Hnukpui). The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 leh The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Amendment Act, 2014*. MHIP General Headquarters. p.6.

<sup>31</sup>V Sawmveli (2012). *Law, Religion and Gender: A study of Women's Rights in Mizoram*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of Hyderabad. Hyderabad. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/105677> Retrieved on 28/08/2018P. 23.

One of the reasons for the establishment of the MHIP is to uplift the condition of women in Mizo society by demanding the revision of Mizo Hnam Dan (Mizo Customary Law) which provides very little rights for women. Out of 120 respondents, 80% know that there is Mizo Customary Law and 20% did not know that there is a Customary Law that deals with marriage and its consequences. From those respondents who know about Mizo Customary Law (80% i.e. 95 respondents out of 120 respondents), 64% think that this customary Law is satisfactory and 36% think that there are lots of things that are needed to be revised for women. Out of 120 respondents, 78% think that it is not right that most of the Mizo women are not inheritors of their parents' property and even their husbands' property when they are dead. The Mizo Customary Law is compiled in 1927 by the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District, N.E. Perry by deriving sources from 56 Mizo Chiefs. NE Parry's book A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies was published in 1927. It was published as a book called Mizo Dan (Mizo Law) in 1928. According to this law, men controlled everything including the domain of marriage, women cannot claim maintenance after divorce and they do not have property rights and women have no legal rights. The customary law, prepared by Perry was revised in 1957 and renamed it as Mizo Hnam Dan (Mizo Customary Law).<sup>32</sup>

When Mizoram gained the District Council status in 1952, the District Council took the task of reforming the Mizo Customary Law and formed Sub-Committee on Mizo Customary Board headed by Mr. Hrangia who was Executive member in charge of Village Council in Mizo District Council. They called a number of sitting on which each of the Council member give their thoughts and ideas on Customary Laws. Since Mara and Lai has a separate administrative unit under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India known as the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC), they decided that this Law will

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<sup>32</sup>Sinha, Harendra, Lalrinchhani, B. p. 2.

not be applicable in the PLRC areas. The revision was completed in 1957; however there was no change with regard to the status of women concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance. The only change that can be seen was in Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1956. In this Act, with regard to inheritance of property, women can get property only if they are included in the will.<sup>33</sup> Anyway, this can be regarded as some improvement in the status of women. The works of Hmingliani the then District Council member and HmeichheTangrual Pawl was very remarkable in the enactment of this act. Because of their works women in their time can inherit property if they are included in the will.<sup>34</sup>

When Mizo Customary Law Committee was set up in 1980 by the Union Territory government to revise and make necessary changes, the MHIP was very pleased with the proposal. It can be said that one of the vision of the founding of the MHIP was to uplift the condition of women in Mizo society by taking efforts for the revision of Mizo Hnam Dan (Mizo Customary Law) which provide very little rights for women. The MHIP Headquarters Executive Committee on 09.05.1981 agreed to submit some suggestions to the government for the revision of the Laws. Since the members of the MHIP were not included in the Committee, the MHIP seek for the inclusion of at least five members to have a voice for women but this request was rejected. The MHIP Headquarters Committee was very disappointed on that and met the then Chief Minister to make an effort for the inclusion of the MHIP member. It was only in 1986 that the then MHIP President Lalrintluangi was included as Committee member.

In 1991, the Mizo Customary Law Draft, prepared by the Committee was studied by the MHIP branches and it strongly opposed and even asked its branches not to follow and accept the draft. The MHIP Headquarters Executive Committee in 1996 has a deep study on

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<sup>33</sup>Sawmveli, V. (2012). pp. 98-99.

<sup>34</sup>Sangkhumi, B (2015). P. 5.

women position in the Draft and pointed out the area on which they wanted to change and this was submitted to the Customary Law Committee Chairman. Its suggestions include three important issues-

1) Increase of Sawnman (illegitimate child price). When a woman is pregnant with an illegitimate child, the male side used to give them only forty rupees. With regard to this the MHIP plead for the increased of the price to five thousand.

2) In case of sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and woman, the blame was going to woman and what a man done was considered as no harm. A widower can re-marry easily while a widow had to go through different processes. In this regard the MHIP plead for the same in case of re-marriage.

3) Inheritance rights for widow property.

The MHIP recognizes that state intervention for the protection of women rights is necessary and submitted an application to the Secretary to the Government of Mizoram, Law and Judicial Department on 27th June 1997 to apply- the Christian Marriage Bill, 1994, The Christian Adoption and Maintenance Bill, 1994 and The Indian Succession (Amendment) Bill, 1994 in Mizoram as well. However, this proposal was rejected by the Government.

Since the President of the MHIP was the only women amongst the member of the Committee, the MHIP seek for the inclusion of women at least 30 percent or 40 percent. When the draft was almost finished the MHIP President, General Secretary and Senior Adviser were included in the Screening Committee. In spite of women participation, most of the members were men. Since the traditional system and the patriarchal system that has roots in the Mizo's hearts are so strong, the voice of women in the Committee is meaningless. After 25 years, the Committee submitted its final draft to the Cabinet which is effective from 4th April, 2005. Although a number of laws have been changed, laws related to bride price,

price of illegitimate child, inheritance of property by women and condition of women when divorced have not changed much.<sup>35</sup>

As advised by the law experts, the MHIP realized that Customary Laws cannot be revised whenever the need arises and it was not applicable unless the Legislative Assembly passes it. Although some changes were made it was only a customs and practices and one should follow or not should follow if they want to. The MHIP also realizes that these Customary Laws were never passed in Assembly. Because of this, the MHIP was very dissatisfied and think for another way. The MHIP knows clearly that since there is no hope on the Customary Laws, it seeks the power of the state and knows that there is none who can uplift women other than the State Government and submitted a number of demands. The MHIP conducted Workshop on 16th December 2005. This workshop was attended by representatives of the MHIP Sub-headquarters and Joint MHIP, representatives of all MHIP branches within Aizawl, representatives of all political party women wings and representatives of women leaders from all Churches and ex-Presidents of MHIP, Young Mizo Association, Mizo Zirlai Pawl, Mizoram Upa Pawl and others. In this workshop Draft Bills- The Mizo Christian Marriage Bill 2006, The Mizo Divorce Bill 2006 and The Mizo Inheritance and Succession Bill 2006, prepared by law experts were discussed and studied. Review meeting was held on 24th March 2006 at Synod Conference Centre, Aizawl. In this review meeting the Mizo Divorce Bill 2006, the Mizo Inheritance and Succession Bill 2005 and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 were studied. As agreed by the workshop attendees the Final Draft Bill was submitted to the Law Department under the state government on 1st June 2006.

An per direction of the Supreme Court ‘The Compulsory Marriage Registration Act 2007’ was to be adopted by all the State Legislative Assemblies, as such the MHIP demanded

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<sup>35</sup>Sangkhumi, B (2009). pp. 42-44.

for passage of the bill: The Mizo Christian Marriage Bill 2006 was rejected from the agenda of the Assembly and only The Mizo Divorce Bill 2006 was included.<sup>36</sup> Another demand made by the MHIP since 1999- Indian Christian Marriage Act,1872 was strongly opposed from the Church authorities and this hope was dashed to the ground.<sup>37</sup> The MHIP and other NGO's works produced many positive results in 2008. As such the Mizo Divorce Ordinance 2008 was passed in October 2008 by the State Legislative Assembly. Under this Ordinance woman can submit a petition for divorce and this was the only positive step that can be passed for women.<sup>38</sup> The MHIP continue to fight for this Ordinance to become an Act and the Mizo Inheritance and Succession Bill 2006 was submitted again with this to Law Department. A new Ministry formed on 2009 has established Mizoram State Law Commission and this Commission took the task of revising and reforming these ordinances and bills. The MHIP was very pleased towards the Commission. After a long fight by the MHIP, the successive step regarding the marriage, divorce and inheritance of property was passed by the state government in 12th Nov, 2014.<sup>39</sup> The ex-President B. Sangkhumi said that it was a dream come true that the long fight of the organization has come to a real one. The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014 allows the divorce women to inherit property and it also protect women from being divorced by their husbands at their will.

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<sup>36</sup>B Sangkhumi (2015). P. 10.

<sup>37</sup>B Sangkhumi,(2009). pp. 126-128

<sup>38</sup>V Sawmveli. p. 110.

<sup>39</sup>MHIP Minute (2015). p. 3.



## **CHAPTER- IV**

### **MHIP AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS**

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## CHAPTER- IV

### MHIP AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

The government of India tries to promote and protect women in every sphere. With the independence of the country and adoption of the written constitution, a number of provisions have been enshrined in the constitution of India and implemented in India with regard to women. A number of articles are also inserted in the constitution in favour of women. Within the fundamental rights, directive principles of state policies and fundamental duties, Articles like- 15(1)(3)- no discrimination on grounds of sex and special provision for women, 16- equality of opportunity, 39(a)(d)- right to an adequate means of livelihood and equal pay for equal works, 39A- equal justice and free legal aid, 51A (e)- dignity of women and article 42- maternity relief are provided for women.<sup>1</sup>

In political sphere, Articles 325 and 326 guarantees political equality to all men and women in terms of right to vote in election and no person shall be denied for inclusion in electoral roll.<sup>2</sup> Beside this, the Constitution Seventy Third Amendment Acts, 1992 and Constitution Seventy Fourth Amendment Acts, 1992 reserve seats for women in the elections of local bodies and municipalities. Election regarding Local Bodies and Municipalities were inserted in Article 243 D (3) and not less than one-third of seats in Panchayats are reserved for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women, Article 243D (4) provides that not less than one-third of the total offices of the Chairpersons of Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women,<sup>3</sup> Article 243 T (3) provides that not less than one-third of seats in Municipalities

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<sup>1</sup>Neelofar. Khan (2015). *Political Status of Women in Indian Parliament*. The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. LXXVI, No.4, October-December. 2015. p. 966.

<sup>2</sup>Universal's (2007). *The Constitution of India*. Universal Law Publishing Co.Pvt.Ltd. New Delhi. p. 131.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 88

are reserved for scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women, and Article 243 T (4) provides that Offices of Chairperson in Municipalities shall be reserved for women.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.1.Village Council**

Mizo traditional political institution was centred around the institution of chieftainship. The whole political process was dominated by male in the society. The chief had a team of elders who helped him in the administration of the village. There is no scope for Mizo women to participate in the administration of the village. Therefore, women rarely involved in the administration of the village. With the abolition of chieftainship, the political function of the chief was in the hands of Village Councils and each village is governed by this Village Council. The democratic system of village administration was under the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act,1953. Village Council is the oldest administration that can be seen in Mizoram Political system. The first ever institution of Village Council was officially inaugurated by Mr Hrangaiia, Executive Member in charge of Village Councils in Mizo District Council, on 29<sup>th</sup>July 1954 at Baktawng Village, Aizawl District. After this, the chieftainship was abolished and many chiefs surrendered their power. The power of 255 Chiefs ended in administrative jurisdiction of the Mizo District Council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1995 and 50 Chiefs' Rights were put to an end in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council from 15<sup>th</sup>April 1956.<sup>5</sup>

The first Village Council election was held in 1954 for the first time and this could be remembered as the beginning of democracy at grassroots in Mizoram. In this year an election was conducted in 338 Villages. Kairumi and Thliahthangpuii from Sawleng Village, Aizawl were the first elected women as Village Council Members. The election of 1957 and 1960 saw no women VC members. The election of 1963 saw one woman, Kapchhingi. In this

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p.94.

<sup>5</sup>Sakhawliana (2013). *Urban local self-government a study of its implications for Mizoram*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Mizoram University. Mizoram. p. 112.

election, election was conducted in 422 Village Councils. The 1975 election result saw only one woman named Zathuami as Village Council member. The election of 1982 saw two women as Village Council members- Thangliani and Zathuami. From 412 Villages, six women were elected in 1984 election. In the election of 1987, from 468 Village Council only four women won and became members of Village Council. In 1990 election, 18 women got elected. In 1994 election, 23 women became Village Council members. In the election of 1997, the number of women decreased to 15 Village Council members. In 1999 election, 20 women got elected.

Even with the coming of new era for democratic system of politics, separate seats were not reserved for women. In an election of Village Council in 2002, election was held in 532 villages and from this only 54 women were elected as Village Council members. General election of Village Council was held in 2006 in different parts of Mizoram; out of 2036 seats only 33 seats were won by women. In 2009 election out of 2071 seats women got 31 seats.<sup>6</sup>

In 2012, Village Council election was held in 508 villages. Out of 508 villages, 15 villages were declared as uncontested. Out of 2055 elected members, 23 women got elected. In this election, 88 women contested and only 23 were elected.<sup>7</sup> From this year, Local Council election was conducted in Aizawl city. The first ever election of Local Council in Aizawl was held on 23rd February, 2012. An election was held in 82 Local Councils with 522 seats. 96 women contested in this election and out of this, 28 women were elected.<sup>8</sup> So, in that year, 51 women could become a decision making body member in rural and urban local bodies. In 2015, Village Council and Local Council election were held on 30th April.

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<sup>6</sup>Irene Colbert (2010). *Women and Politics in Mizoram An In depth Study*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Mizoram University. Mizoram. pp. 201-203.

<sup>7</sup>State Election Commission (2012). *Compendium of 18th General Election to Village Councils, 2012*. State Election Commission. Mizoram. P. 289.

<sup>8</sup>State Election Commission (2012). *Compendium of 1st General Election to Local Councils, 2012*. State Election Commission. Mizoram. P.305.

In that year, an election was conducted in 536 villages<sup>9</sup> and 83 localities.<sup>10</sup> Women won 694 seats.<sup>11</sup> The MHIP requested all these women VC members to work for village development with all their strength and to give assistance to the needy women.

Right from the start, the MHIP has taken steps for the inclusion of more women in the political sphere. Knowing the importance of women involvement in political system, it even included in its aims and objectives that women need to be empowered to enter into higher grounds of authoritative power. So whenever election is about to be held, it always raised its voice by requesting different political parties to give seats to women. Women were not given any seats in the elections and only few women got elected. In the twenty first century, more women stand up in the political process of the village administration. Although women began to participate, their involvement does not make much impact up till now. The MHIP Headquarters pleaded for many times to arrange seats for women in time of elections. As there was an increase of women VC member, the MHIP felt much fortunate to have more women members in Village Council and also aware its members that these few women who stand up in each and every level of authority are the faces and models of the Mizo women as a whole and the MHIP wanted its members to put their maximum support for these women VC members.

The MHIP pleaded to the State Government many times to implement the Panchayati Raj system in Mizoram. The Constitution Seventy Third Amendment Act enacted by the Parliament in 1992 has a reservation scheme for women. One third of the seats were reserved for women and because of this the MHIP seek for the reservation of seats for women in the village level elections. In its General Assembly resolutions of 1999 and 2001 also, it

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<sup>9</sup>State Election Commission (2015). Voter Turn-out & Results of The General Election to Village Councils held on 30th April 2015. State Election Commission. Mizoram. P. 128.

<sup>10</sup>State Election Commission (2015). Compendium of General Election to Local Councils, 2015. State Election Commission. Mizoram. P. 111

<sup>11</sup>MHIP Minute (2015). P. 4.

included its demands on the reservation of seats for women. The MHIP submitted a number of memorandums to the State Government. It even makes a number of press releases to vote for women candidate in the village level elections. In 2012 during the time of B. Sangkhumi the then President of the MHIP, the Secretary Panchayati Raj Ministry, Government of India visited Mizoram. This secretary told the Mizoram State Election Commissioner that by making some changes in the Village Council Law, Panchayati Raj System should be adopted so that reservation of seats for women can be implemented. By taking the chance of this, the MHIP President B Sangkhumi also talked to the Secretary and the MHIP pursued the matter.<sup>12</sup> The MHIP has taken a number of steps to convince the State Government to make necessary revision in The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2006 so that there can be reservation of seats for women. To initiate the process, the MHIP had meeting with all the civil societies in Mizoram. The MHIP seek the support of these civil societies to pressurize the State Government to implement this. However, some big organizations did not support them and the MHIP has to go alone in this matter. It was clear that whenever women issues are raised men usually never support it and they cannot get rid of their patriarchal mind set. The MHIP did not want to stop and continue to fight as it is a mother for all Mizo women. A number of memoranda are also submitted and even asked the State Government to include it in their Assembly agenda. The MHIP receives lots of resistance from outside. Because of its non-stop workings, the State Government finally passed The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Amendment Bill, 2014.<sup>13</sup>

The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Amendment Bill, 2014 has paved the way for women engagement in village administration. As per amendment of section 3, clauses i, ii, iii, iv- one seat will be reserved for women in village council having three seats to five seats. Two seats will be reserved for women in a council having seven seats and three seats

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<sup>12</sup> B Sangkhumi(2015). Pp. 15-16.

<sup>13</sup> Based on Interview- Pi B Sangkhumi, (MHIP President 2005-07, 2007-2009, 2011-13)

will be reserved for women in the village council having nine seats.<sup>14</sup> From 120 respondents, 90% are aware that there is reservation of seats for women in Village Council and 10% are not aware of the reservation for women. The works of the MHIP resulted in the increasing number of women VC members. As compared to 2012 where only 51 women could make it to VC and LC members, in 2015, 694 women could become a member of VC/LC members with the implementation of the Lushai Hill District (Village Council) Amendment Bill, 2014.

The MHIP takes this as a great success since more women will be able to engage in administrative system of the Village and Local Councils. Without expecting any benefits or rewards, the MHIP puts lots of efforts and supports to the administration of villages and localities. Since the MHIP has its branch in most of the villages of Mizoram, it has a deep impact on the administration of the village. The Village Council used to appoint member of the MHIP to represent its organization in its different sub-committees and seek its advice. In rural areas, the MHIP Branch President or other Office Bearers are appointed as member of Village Forest Defence Committee (VDFC), Selection Committee of Below Poverty Line (BPL)/Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families, Village Level Clean Mizoram Committee, Village Level Fire Prevention Committee, Village Water and Sanitation Committee, Village Education Committee, Village Level Health Committee, Village Level Disaster Management Committee, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and other village level sub-committees. At the Block level the President of MHIP in all the villages are members of the Block Development Committee.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Number of women member in Village Council/ Local Council Elections 1954-2015:**

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<sup>14</sup><https://lad.mizoram.gov.in/page/the-lushai-hills-district-village-councils-act-1953.html> Retrieved on 22/07/2018

<sup>15</sup> Lalsangliani (2009). *Grassroots Democracy: A Study of the Village Council System in Mizoram*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Mizoram University. Aizawl. p. 161.

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Women</b>
1954	2
1957	Nil
1960	Nil
1963	1
1975	1
1982	2
1987	4
1990	18
1994	23
1997	15
1999	20
2002	54
2006	33
2009	31
2012	51 VC&LC
2015	694 VC&LC

#### **4.2.Municipal Corporation**

When Village Council was set up in Mizoram, even the capital Aizawl city and its different localities were also governed by Village Council. Each locality was administered by the said Village Council. Thus, all localities within Aizawl city had Village Council before the establishment of Local Council to replace Village Council. Then, all the Village Councils in Aizawl began to function as Local Councils with effect from 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010. Now, there is a Local Council in each locality in Aizawl. A locality having less than 1500 voters



can have five members and a locality with more than 1500 voters can have seven members.<sup>16</sup> The term of the Local Council is three years. There are currently 83 Local Councils in Aizawl city.<sup>17</sup> The Constitution Seventy Fourth Amendment Act, 1992 has provided for the establishment of Municipalities (Urban local Government) and 33% of seats were reserved for women in the municipality. However, Mizoram government never give any effort to implement the same in the state. Since the Constitution Seventy Fourth Amendment was enacted in 1992, the MHIP gave strong pressure to the State Government to implement the same. The MHIP pleaded continuously to the state government many times to enforce this system in Mizoram as there is a reservation of seats for women. The MHIP believes that the representation of women in the decision making will surely uplift the condition of women and the problems faced by women will be solved.

The Constitution Seventy Fourth Amendment, Part IXA (Article 243P to 243ZG) of the Constitution of India deals with Urban Local Self Government. Urban local bodies have three tier structures-

- i. Nagar Panchayat: for a smaller towns/ an area in transition from a Rural Area to an Urban Area;
- ii. Municipal Council: for a smaller Urban Area where population is below ten lakhs; and
- iii. Municipal Corporation: for a larger Urban Area where population is more than ten lakhs.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>LHChuanawma (2011). *Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC)* Retrieved from <https://www.trcollege.edu.in/study-material/27-political-science/77-aizawl-municipal-council-1> Retrieved on 27/07/2018

<sup>17</sup><https://www.amcmizoram.com/orders-notifications/list-of-local-council-members-2016>. Retrieved on 11/08/2018

<sup>18</sup>Mahendra. P Singh., V.N. Shukla's (2010). *CONSTITUTION OF INDIA*, Eleventh Edition (2010), Publishers: EBC Publishing (P) Ltd., 34-A, Lalbagh, Lucknow-226001, p. 704.

All the seats in a Municipality will be filled through direct election from constituencies, through adult suffrage; one person will be elected to represent different areas or the combination of more than three localities. Municipal Area is demarcated into different Territorial Constituencies, known as 'Wards'. Elected members shall be called Councillor. Apart from this, the State Government may appoint (i) Persons having special knowledge or experience in Municipal Administration; (ii) Member of the Parliament's (MP) (Lok Sabha) and Member of the State Legislative Assembly's (iii) Member of the State Legislative Council's and MP's (Rajya Sabha) registered as electors from the concerned Municipal Area; and (iv) the Chairpersons of the Committees. However, all these appointed members have no right to vote in the meetings of the Municipality.<sup>19</sup> Urban Local Self-Government is under the State list and the State Assembly can legislate for the constitution of Municipal Government. The powers, functions, and responsibilities of the Municipalities are- Urban planning including Town planning; Regulation of land-use and construction of buildings; Planning for economic and social development; Roads and bridges; Water supply for domestic, industrial, and commercial purposes; Public health, sanitation, conservancy, and solid waste management; Fire services; Urban forestry, protection of the environment, and promotion of ecological aspects; Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped, and mentally retarded; Slum improvement, and upgradation; Urban poverty alleviation; Provision of Urban amenities, and facilities such as parks, gardens, playgrounds; Promotion of cultural, educational, and aesthetic aspects; Burials and burial grounds; cremations, cremation grounds, and electric crematoriums; Cattle pounds; prevention of cruelty to animals; Vital statistics including registration of births, and deaths; Public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops, and public conveniences;

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 705.

and Regulation of slaughter houses, and tanneries.<sup>20</sup> Besides these, the State Government transfers eight subjects to the AMC on the matters of urban poverty alleviation, slum improvement and upgradation, solid waste management, parks and gardens, cattle ponds and animal controls, burials and burial grounds, street lighting including parking lots and public conveniences, slaughter house and markets.<sup>21</sup>

The 1991 Census of India has identified 22 Notified Towns in Mizoram. However, these towns were not given special treatment by the state before 1997. By adopting 1991 Census as base year, on 4th August 1997, the State Government declared Aizawl, Lunglei, Saiha and other areas having 30,000 and above population as Urban Areas. In 1998, five new Districts were created, namely- Champhai, Kolasib, Serchhip, Mamit, and Lawngtlai Districts. On 24th September 2000, Rural Development Department Government of Mizoram notified all the new District Headquarters as Urban Areas. Beside these District Headquarters, there are 14 Notified Towns in Mizoram. After this notification, different rural development programmes are not allowed to be implemented in these Urban Areas.<sup>22</sup>

The origin of Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) can be traced back to 2005, when Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) was launched by Dr Manmohan Singh, the then Prime Minister of India. JNNURM envisaged development of infrastructures of the urban areas and improving the health status of the people, improving poor service delivery systems and poor governance in 63 selected cities including Aizawl. Aizawl is the only urban area selected by the Mission in Mizoram. The JNNURM made it compulsory to all state governments who received funds for city infrastructural developments to carry out reforms such as starting Municipalities and holding elections for local bodies. The State Government takes necessary steps and a new Department of Urban Development

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<sup>20</sup>VH Khuma (1999). *Political History of Mizoram*. 3J Publication. Aizawl. pp. 107-108.

<sup>21</sup>LH Chhuanawma. (2011).

<sup>22</sup>Sakhawliana (2013). Pp. 116-117.

&Poverty Alleviation (UD & PA) was created on 24th August 2006. Some of the function of this department is related to JNNURM and allied matters, Urban Infrastructure Development Schemes (UIDS), Urban Local Bodies, Aizawl Development Authority (ADA), Solid Waste Management and Sanitation, etc.

After a long process, Mizoram State Legislative Assembly enacted the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007. The Act came into effect from 20th April, 2007.<sup>23</sup> The Government of Mizoram and the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007 and this Agreement was followed by the preparation of City Development Plan (CDP) by Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS), a public sector undertaking under Government of India. Rules related to the municipality and urban local governance are - 1) *the Mizoram Municipalities (Election of Councillors) Rules, 2007*; 2) *The Mizoram Municipalities (Procedures & Conduct of Business) Rules, 2007*; 3) *the Mizoram Municipalities (Delimitation of Wards) Rules, 2007* and; 4) *The Mizoram Municipalities (Ward Committees & Local Committee) Rules, 2008* etc.<sup>24</sup>

The Aizawl Municipal Council started functioning with effect from 1st July, 2008 and it happened to be the first municipal body in Mizoram. Aizawl Municipal Council Office was inaugurated by the then Minister Shri H. Vanlalauva at Central Young Mizo Association (YMA) Building, Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl. This new office was administered by the Chief Executive Officer, one Secretary and other office staff. AMC later moved its office to Thuampui, Aizawl and its office was headed by Chief Executive Officer.<sup>25</sup> At the initial stage, the AMC bore the name of Municipal Council and was later changed into Municipal Corporation. The head of the office bears the name of 'Commissioner'. Mizoram State

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<sup>23</sup>LH Chhuanawma.(2011).

<sup>24</sup>Sakhawliana (2013). Op cit. p. 118.

<sup>25</sup>LH Chhuanawma. (2011).

Election Commission (SEC) was constituted on 3rd October 2008. This Commission was created for superintendence, direction, control of the preparation of electoral rolls and for the conduct of election of various local bodies in Mizoram. For the first time the commission conducted an election of Village Council in 2009 in various parts of Mizoram. The first municipal council election was conducted in 2010 and it was a heated election. Nineteen Municipal Wards were created out of 83 local councils and the State Election Commission has selected Ward No. II, IV, VI, XI, XII, and XVII as reserved seats for women and women reservation wards are to be rotated in every election. Out of 120 respondents, 81% are aware that there is reservation of seats for women and 19% are not aware that there is reservation of seats for women. Ward No. IX was declared as '*General Ward*'. In this ward, everybody is allowed to contest and it was open for all including the plain people. 18 wards out of 19 wards are reserved for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste and from these 18 wards; six wards are reserved for women.<sup>26</sup> The first actual transfer of power by the State Government to the AMC was the management of Ch.Chhunga Bus Terminal at Thuampui and Ch.Saprawnga Truck Terminal at Rangvamaul, Aizawl on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2009.

The first election was held in November 2010 to fill up seats in 19 Wards. Indian National Congress (INC) and Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) alliance formed coalition government in the Council. In these election six seats i.e. 33% of seats, were reserved for women and the six women who were elected in the election are- Lalmalsawmi, Zamanthangi, Hmingthanzami, Lalchhuanmawii, Laldinsangi and F Lalhuthangi.<sup>27</sup> The MHIP was very glad because many women were elected and they represented Mizo women in the urban local government. They heartily congratulated these women councillors because their long demand was successful and the MHIP awarded felicitation certificate to all these women Councillors. As the State Government is empowered to appoint members in municipal body, on

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<sup>26</sup>Sakhawliana (2013). p. 119.

<sup>27</sup><https://amcmizoram.com/page/list-of-councillors> Retrieved on 11/08/2018

12<sup>th</sup> November 2010 besides the elected members, it appointed 12 persons as members of the Board of Councilors. The Board of Councilors are: CL Ruala, MP (Lok Sabha); from Indian National Congress Party- R Romawia, H. Liansailova, Lal Thanzara, R Lalrinawma, Lalsawta, R Selthuama, Col ZS Zuala, KS Thanga; from ZNP- Lalduhawma, K Liantlinga and Brig T Sailo, from MPC.<sup>28</sup> This appointment was done as per the provision of the Constitution Seventy Fourth Amendment Act, 1992. CT. Zakhuma was sworn in as the first Chairman of AMC and Zarzoliana was sworn in as Vice Chairman. Three Executive Members were also appointed on the recommendation of the elected Chairman, they are- Lalzirliana, F. Lalhuthangi and Hmingthanzami.<sup>29</sup>

In the election of 2015, from nineteen wards, namely- Ward I, VII, IX, XIII, XV, and XVIII were reserved for women. Women councillors elected in these wards were- R. Zomuanpuii INC, K. Lalhmingliani INC, B. Lalawmpuii MNF, Zonunsangi INC, Zodingpuii INC and M. Zohmingthangi INC. The MHIP congratulate these women councillors and handed to them Tawlhlohpuan (mizo traditional cloth) to show their gratitude in their success.<sup>30</sup> In this election, PC Lalhmingliana was sworn in as the first Mayor of the Aizawl Municipal Corporation and Lalringliana as the Deputy Mayor.<sup>31</sup> The Board of Councillors include all the elected councilors and 12 other members who are elected representatives of Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly constituencies within Aizawl. Appointed board members are: CL Ruala (MP Lok Sabha), R Romawia, Lal Thanzara, R Lalrinawma, Lalsawta, R. Vanlalvena, Lt. Col. Zosangzuala, KS Thanga, Lalthanliana, K Sangthuama, Lalruatkima and Vanlalzawma

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<sup>28</sup> Chhuanawma. LH (2011).

<sup>29</sup> Sakhawliana (2013). Op cit. p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> MHIP Minute 2017. p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> [https://wap.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/p-c-lalhmingthanga-sworn-in-as-first-mayor-of-amc-115121000954\\_1.htm](https://wap.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/p-c-lalhmingthanga-sworn-in-as-first-mayor-of-amc-115121000954_1.htm) Retrieved on 18/05/2018

### List of Women Councillors:

2010 AMC Election	2015 AMC Election
Lalmalsawmi	R.Zomuanpuii
Zamanthangi	K.Lalhmingliani
Hmingthanzami	B.Lalawmpuii
Lalchhuanawmi	Zonunsangi
Laldinsangi	Zodingpuii
F.Lalhuthangi	M. Zohmingthangi

### 4.3.State Legislative Assembly

The first ever democratic election in Mizoram was conducted way back in 1948 in the Lushai Hills Advisory Council election. The District Advisory Council election was held on 15th April 1948 which resulted in the election of two women. Two seats were reserved for women in this election. From reserved seats in Aizawl and Lunglei, Lalsangpuii and Remthangi were elected. These two women became the first ever elected women in the history of Mizoram politics. In the election of 1952, there were 18 constituencies and 6 seats were reserved for nominated members.<sup>32</sup>Lalziki was the only woman nominated as its member. In the election of 1957, there were 24 seats with 2 seats reserved for nominated members and Hmingliani was the nominated member. 1962 election saw no women Council member. During the regime of the Mizo District Council, only Lalziki and Hmingliani were seen in the political field. Independence of Mizoram was declared by the Mizo National Front (MNF) on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1966. Because of this, fourth election of District Council was postponed as Mizoram was declared as a 'Disturbed Area'. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1970, the fourth election was

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<sup>32</sup>H Laldinmawia (2005). *Voting behaviour in mizoram 1972 -1987*. Unpublished Master of Philosophy Dissertation. North-Eastern Hill University. Shillong. p. 50.

held.<sup>33</sup> However, this term did not last long as Mizoram got Union Territory status in the middle of the term.

The attainment of Union Territory status by Mizoram in 1972 witnessed an increase involvement of women in elections. In the election of 1972, four women candidates namely- Rengluti, K. Sanglianchhungi, Zathangi and Dengchhungi appeared in the electoral scene, but all these women lost in the election. This signified that women should be aware of their political rights. Although no women were elected in the election, Saptawni was nominated from the nominated seats and she became the first ever woman Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Mizoram. The second Union Territory Legislative election was held on 17<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1978 and L. Thanmawii from Peoples' Conference (PC) Party was elected.<sup>34</sup> However, the ministry was disturbed as the ruling party the PC party was split into two. Out of 30 seats PC Party got 22 seats in this election and eight members of PC Party had withdrawn their support from the ministry. Because of this, the second Legislative Assembly was dissolved and President's Rule was declared in Mizoram on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1978. The third general election of Mizoram Union Territory Legislative Assembly election was held on 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1979<sup>35</sup> and there were only two women out of 165 candidates. Out of two women candidate L. Thanmawii was re-elected and she became the first women who got elected twice in the political history of Mizoram. In this election, K Thansiami was given a nominated seat by Peoples Conference Party. In 1984 election, out of 138 candidates' only one woman contested and K. Thansiami who contested from Aizawl West Constituency won the election. In the same year, the winning Congress Party nominated Rokungi as Legislative

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid. p. 51.

<sup>34</sup>Harendra, Sinha, B Lalrinchhani. pp. 89-90.

<sup>35</sup>Laldinmawia, H (2005). p. 52.



member. K Thansiami and Rokungiwere the last women legislators during Union Territoryera.<sup>36</sup>

It can be seen that the patriarchal mindset amongst the Mizo's still have its deep root even after Mizoram attained its statehood. The attainment of statehood abolished reservation of seats in the Legislative Assembly and Assembly and only two women could make it to member of Legislative Assembly after Statehood. In 1987 election, out of 146 candidates' only one woman, Lalhlimpuii got elected from MNF party and she was inducted as Minister of State. She became the first Minister amongst the Mizo women. Due to defection in the party, the ministry did not last long. In 1989 election, although four women contested, all of them lost seats to men. In 1993, three women contestants were there but none could succeed to win. 1998 election saw the highest women participation as contestant in the history of Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election because ten women contested in this election but all of them lost in this election. The number of women candidates was seven in 2003 and nine women in 2008 elections but all of them lost. In the seventh general election of the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly in 2013, there were six women candidates, namely- Ramfangzauvi BJP, Lalmalsawmi MNF, C Lalnunziri BJP, Tlangthanmawii INC, Zoramchhani BJP and B Sangkhumi IND. Tlangthanmawii from INC secure the highest votes amongst them. She secures 5925 votes (34.23% of valid votes) but she was defeated. Thus, all these women candidates again lost in the election. There was a by-election in 2014 in Hrangturzo constituency and in this election INC did not give a seat to Tlangthanmawii who contested in INC ticket in the normal general election but to Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu.<sup>37</sup> Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu from INC won in this election from

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<sup>36</sup>Harendra Sinha, B Lalrinchhani. Op cit pp. 90-91.

<sup>37</sup><https://eci.nic.in/> Retrieved on 30/08/2018

Hrangturzo Constituency. Thus, Mizoram has woman MLA again after a gap of 27 years.<sup>38</sup> Vanlalawmpuii became MLA and she was inducted as Minister of State in the Ministry.

During 31 years, from the attainment of statehood, only two women could make it to the Assembly House. It clearly portrays the patriarchal mindset and system of the Mizo society. There was no reservation of seats for women in the State Legislative Assembly and even without that Mizo women still fight for their position in the political system of Mizoram. Political parties in Mizoram rarely give seat to women. Even in their propaganda and their system of selecting candidate for election, there is no reservation of seats for women. The biggest national political party in Mizoram, the Indian National Congress also does not have a proper system of reservation of seats. In this regard, BJP is praiseworthy, although they never get much votes in times of elections, their party system of 30% of seats reserved for women is carried on. The last election also saw three women candidate from BJP while other three parties have only one women candidate. Only ten women can become a member of Council and Assembly between the years of 1948-2014. This clearly shows that there is no much representation of women in the highest decision making body of Mizoram. Seventy years of elections in Mizoram clearly depict that people put no trust on women to participate in the decision making. The Mizo's heart still accepted that decision making was in the hands of man like during the Chief administration. In 2018 Assembly election, Indian National Congress has put one woman as a candidate, the regional party Mizo National Front does not give seats to women, Zoram People's Movement has put two women candidate, Zoram Thar has put five women, National Congress Party put one women and BJP continue its

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<sup>38</sup>Lalneihzovi. *Political empowerment of Women in Mizoram*. Indian Journal of Public Administration. Vol. LX. No. 3 July- September 2014. p. 656.

reservation system and six seats are given to women.<sup>39</sup>In this election, no women were elected.

Since no proper reservation of seats has been given to women in MLAs and MPs election, the MHIP has submitted a number of memoranda to reserve seats for women. The MHIP all the time works for the inclusion of more women in the decision making body. It organises for a number of workshops and conference in collaboration with different political party women wings. As a member of the Mizoram Peoples Forum (MPF), the MHIP also raised its voice through this group in times of elections. It always asks political parties to allot women candidate at the time of elections. It even makes awareness to its different branches to vote for women candidate if women contest in their areas. On 9th March 2010, Women's Reservation Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha which incorporate that 33 percent of seats in Indian Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies are to be reserved for women. However, the Bill becomes lapse because Lok Sabha has not yet legislated.<sup>40</sup>

**Participation of Women in District Council- Legislative Assembly elections during 1948-2014:**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Nominate/elect</b>
1948	Lalsangpuii, Remthangi	Elect
1952	Lalziki	Nominate
1957	Hmingliani	Nominate
1962	Nil	Nil
1970	Nil	Nil
1972	Saptawni	Nominate
1978	L. Thanmawii	Elect
1979	L. Thanmawii	Elect
	K. Thansiami	Nominate

<sup>39</sup>Vanglaini. Sunday-Monday November 11&12,2018. Vol- XXXIII No. 267. P.1.

<sup>40</sup>Neelofar khan. p. 966.

1984	K. Thansiami Rokungi	Elect Nominate
1987	Lalhlimpuii	Elect
1989	Nil	Nil
1993	Nil	Nil
1998	Nil	Nil
2003	Nil	Nil
2008	Nil	Nil
2014	VanlalawmpuiiChawngthu	Elect
2018	Nil	Nil

From the above table, it is clear that women participation in the decision making level is very low. During the year 1948-2014, only ten women could reach the decision making level. During District Advisory Council era, only two women were elected and District Council rule saw another two women. UT regime saw four women and only one was elected, the other three were nominated by the ruling party. The attainment of statehood by Mizoram from 1987 election to 2014 saw only two women. This clearly shows that although women used to contest in elections, the patriarchal mindset which accepts the superiority of man was still deeply rooted in the minds of the Mizo's. The society which used to uphold the chief's administration from the earlier times and the family ruled by the male is still the same. The biggest women organization in Mizoram works in making awareness of their members to vote for women candidates but it does not receive fruitful result. Women who are half of the population also did not vote for their same gender when it comes to voting. There was a belief in the superiority of man.

Out of 120 respondents, 78% already experience elections and 22% have not yet cast their vote due to different reasons. 98% agree with the contesting of election by women and 2% think that women should not be engaged in contesting in the time of elections. 90% of the

respondents wanted to cast their vote for women candidate and 10% have no idea on casting their votes towards women. From 120 respondents, 95% think that politics is not only for men but women should also play an active role in it, 5% believe that politics is for men alone, 91% of the respondents' respect, admire and appreciate women politicians and 9% did not think so. Again 70% think that women should be engaged more and more in politics, 13% did not want women engagement in politics and 17% does not have any idea. 65% think that the reason for less women participation in politics is due to higher esteem concept of men over women and 35% did not agree with it. 51% think that the reason for less women participation in political sphere was the thought of politics as the job of men, 37% think that it was because of the mother's responsibilities, 10% think that it was because of the fear of criticisms and 2% think that because of not interesting in politics. Out of 120 respondents, 62% think that women position in political sphere of Mizoram is not good enough and 38% think that the Mizo women position in politics is good enough. 88% believed that the works of the MHIP has uplifted the condition of women in Mizo society and 12% did not think that the MHIP has uplift Mizo women.

As Mizo society is based on patriarchal system, there is little scope for women in political systems. In times of elections also women voters turn out so little as compared to man. Women constitute half of the population, but their participation even as a voter is very little. Not only in Mizoram, but also in different parts of India that women play very little role in political institutions and their participation in politics have been decreasing. Concerning these issues, the Election Commission of India (ECI) makes an order to arrange polling stations that are to be wholly maintained by women. From 2018, as per an order made by the ECI, in different states that have their State Legislative Assembly elections started to construct polling stations that are wholly maintained by women called 'Pink Polling Station'. The reason behind the idea of Pink Polling Station is to encourage women voters to take part

in elections. This is a great step in the patriarchal society like India. The cultures of different states in India are also patriarchal society. So, it was believed that the station that was maintained by women will attract more women to cast their votes and will feel comfortable to cast their votes.

In the recent Assembly election of Mizoram, the ECI establishes 40 Pink Polling Stations in 40 Assembly Constituencies. These polling stations are decorated in pink colour; tables were covered in pink cloth and are decorated with pink balloons. All the staffs in the polling stations are women. One presiding officer, three polling officials and security personnel are attached in these pink polling stations.<sup>41</sup> These polling stations are given a name 'Dingdi'. Dingdi is a beautiful flower, which is used by the Mizo poets to represent or depict beautiful women.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup><https://www.sentinelassam.com/news/mizoram-elections-goes-pink-with-40-all-women-polling-stations/amp/>  
Retrieved on 10/12/2018

<sup>42</sup>[www.moneycontrol.com/news/politics/to-woo-women-voters-mizoram-sets-up-40-pink-polling-booths-one-for-each-constituency-3227061.html](http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/politics/to-woo-women-voters-mizoram-sets-up-40-pink-polling-booths-one-for-each-constituency-3227061.html) Retrieved on 10/12/2018

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **CONTENT**

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**5.1.SUMMARY**

**5.2.CONCLUSION**

**5.3.SUGGESTIONS**

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Women are weak and soft in physical appearance and they are more emotional in comparison to men. However, everybody needs the loves of mothers and their care keep each and everybody going. Every society needs women for society continuity and to bear children who will rule and administer the society in their future. It is an unjust that women who hold a very important key for the survival of the society are mistreat and act towards women disgracefully. This was the true picture of Indian society. Women in India are facing sexual abuse, torture, they were forced to shut their mouth, many girl children were force to get married in a very young age and sati system that was practiced from an ancient time also exists secretly till today. Throwing of acids on women's face and burning them are also practiced in some places. There are also many rape cases which are not yet solved. The dowry system that was prevailing in Indian society is also a burning topic till today. Every state in India has experience such inhuman behaviour towards women in one way or the other.

#### **5.1. Summary:**

Mizoram is one of the Northeast states in India. It became the 23<sup>rd</sup> state in India when it attained statehood from Indian Union in 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987. Mizoram has its unique history. Its people were migrated from different parts of the world and have their own unique cultures. It is claimed that most of the people were migrated from a part of China region. The Mizo's as an ethnic groups, comprised of many tribes and sub-tribes such as Lusei, Hmar, Paite, Ralte and others who were living in northern parts of Mizoram, Lai and Mara who were living in southern parts of Mizoram. Mizoram shared its boundaries with the states Manipur, Assam and Tripura. It also shared international boundaries with Bangladesh and



Myanmar. Mizoram climate is good enough; it is neither too hot in the summer nor too cold in the winter. Agriculture is the main source of living here in Mizoram. Jhum cultivation which was also slash and burn cultivation and shifting cultivation through which the area for cultivation is changed every year is practiced from their ancestor's time. The reason for the practice of shifting cultivation is because of search for more fertile land. The main food crops in Mizoram are rice and maize. Besides these, turmeric, spices and tea are also produced.

The Mizo traditional society also witnessed social hierarchy, where people are largely divided based on their occupations and social status. At the top there is a chief. Each village, in the traditional Mizo society, has its own chief. The chief rules the village and all authority was in his hands. He has an authority over the life and death of his subjects. The chief also receives dues from his people. Beside the chief, there are Khawnbawl Upa, who are the Council of Ministers. Khawnbawl Upa helped the chief in his administrations and they also act as an advisor. They were the eyes and ears of the chief. They are more advantageous than the commoners in regard to choosing of land for cultivation. There are also Priests which the Mizo's called Puithiam. Puithiam are of two kinds- Bawlpu and Sadawt. Bawlpu in modern days are like pastors and Sadawt in modern days are like doctors. They played an important role in the society. As the Mizo's source of living is agriculture, there also exist Blacksmiths which the Mizo's called Thirdeng. Thirdeng makes all the materials needed for cultivation and also makes household items. As they are important to the people, every house used to give to Thirdeng a basket of rice every year.

One of the important jobs of Tlangau, a village crier, is to make an announcement whenever the chief has made an order and the decision of the meetings of Zawlbuk. They played a very important role in the Mizo society as they are the ears of the people. There are Hnamchawm, who are commoners. The Hnamchawm are the people who are not from the

family lineage of the chief. Slavery system is also practised in the traditional Mizo society. There are two types of slaves- Bawi and Sal. Bawi are those persons who surrendered to the chief and Sal are those persons who were captured during war. There are three types of Bawi, Inpuichhung Bawi, who surrendered to the chief because of their poverty and sickness, Chemsen Bawi, were those person who took refuge to escape punishment because of their act of crimes and there are also Tukluh Bawi who surrender to the enemies in order to escape being killed and captured.

The social institution in Mizo traditional society Zawlbuk played an important role in transmitting the cultures and its history to the young. This is a place where the young ones received trainings from the elders. The treatment received by man and woman is different in Mizo traditional society. Women occupy a very low position in the society. They had to worked for the whole day and to the mid night. She had to wake up very early to fetch water from the spring and had to husk the rice. Besides looking after her family, all their domestic animals are in her hands. She cannot skip the field work also. Despite taking the whole responsibilities in family, women were looked down in the society. Men can easily divorce women and can be driven out of their house if they did no please their husbands. The father was the head of the family and he had an authority over property and the children even bear the name of their father's clan.

The coming of Christianity has marked the beginning of modernization process in Mizoram and in its social life. The traditional beliefs and social evils are thrown away by the light of Christianity. The low position of women before the coming of Christianity has begun to change within a short span of time. The educated women started to raise their voice and subsequently Mizo HmeichheTangrual Pawl was set up in 1946. This was the first civil society that bears the name of the Mizo women and its works for the Mizo women is no doubt a remarkable one. The insurgency in the state restricted the movement of the Mizo

Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl, as such it could not work properly. As its branches in villages could not function smoothly, it began to concentrate only in Aizawl. After the law and order problem was a bit better during Union Territory era, though insurgency still existed the Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl was set up on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1974. The founding day 6<sup>th</sup> July was celebrated every year as MHIP Day in different parts of Mizoram. Knowing the importance of this organization the State Government declared the MHIP Day as an Official Holiday from 1998.

The MHIP works for eradication of inhuman behaviour towards minor girls and women. It works for uplifting and empowering the status of women in Mizo society. Its aims and objectives includes- to empower women to enter the authoritative power of the state, protecting the rights of women by emancipating any unfavourable status of women in the family, train Mizo women to have some skills in handicrafts and arts, health and medical aids, to ensure the health conditions of children, mutual co-operations with government and defend and protests against violence towards women. The MHIP has a General Headquarters, Sub-headquarters, Blocks, Joint MHIP and Branches. Its members include Mizo women, who stay within and outside Mizoram. Its sub-headquarters were named after each of the seven districts in Mizoram- Lunglei, Lawngtlai, Siaha, Serchhip, Champhai, Mamit and Kolasib. The office of the MHIP General Headquarters is located in Treasury Square, Aizawl. It has a number of committees in different levels and sub-committees. These committees are the pillars of the MHIP. It used to hold assemblies and conferences every year and some are held after every one year.

The Government of India also knows the importance of empowerment of women and it has taken a number of steps for the upliftment of the conditions of women. It even passed a National Policy for Empowerment of Women in 2001. This policy aimed at the elimination of all forms of discriminations. This policy has encouraged the workings of women

organizations in India. The MHIP in Mizoram also works for the empowerment of Mizo women. It has declared Women empowerment as its theme for number of years. Its awareness campaigns in different parts of Mizoram have encouraged the people to work for women empowerment. It has received lots of support from the masses. As a part of its empowerment campaigns and awareness, the MHIP has distributed pamphlets, booklet and other necessary articles to its members. In its working with the State Government, with the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act, the State Government selected the MHIP as Service Provider. It involves whenever social injustice takes place upon women and the MHIP takes seriously of the rape incidences that happened towards women. As women are busy in their daily life, in their household activities and in their working place, the MHIP has organised a Siktuthiang Kut. The MHIP members enjoy the whole day in dancing and singing at AR Ground Aizawl.

The educational institution that can be seen in the traditional Mizo society was Zawlbuk. Although reading and writing were not part of their education, the life skills and behaviour, warrior skills and village administration were taught. Women were not allowed to be admitted in the Zawlbuk. Women were thought to be engaged in fields in household activities only. The education brought by the Christian missionaries changed the outlook of the Mizo people as it opened scope for women to attend schools. At first they were hesitated to send their daughter to school. However, as proper school was opened in 1898, women started to enter school and the years later also saw the establishment of girl's school in Aizawl and other areas. Besides reading and writing, girl students were taught knitting, cooking, embroidery, spinning, sewing, child care, needle work, simple hygiene and many other useful skills. This has encouraged and popularised more girl's education amongst the Mizo's. The women Christian missionaries were praised worthy on their contribution in literature and educating the Mizo women and which started the process of uplifting the condition of women. The educational institutions that were established in rural areas were

also utilized by the village people and it liberate the Mizo's from their fear, from their mad social practices and the outlook of the Mizo's are changed all over Mizoram. In the era of seventies and eighties, almost all villages had their own schools and it produced a number of educated men and women. As there is no higher educational institution especially for women, the MHIP has pleaded to the State Government many times to establish educational institution for women. After a number of talks and files have been put up, their relentless efforts have resulted in the establishment of Women Polytechnic in 1998 at Durtlang, Aizawl. Technical education and training which was thought to be studied by men only was also opened in this polytechnic. Starting with six female students in 1898, the education of women has increased day by day and today in most of the educational institution in Mizoram, girl child enrolment is very high.

One of the main themes of the MHIP is economic self-sufficiency for women. The MHIP clearly knows that women with skills were more useful, so it even included in its aims and objectives. The MHIP tries to develop the capabilities of women in various fields of skills. It used to organise a number of training programmes for women, so that they can use their skills for making money. In its working in giving trainings and helping the needy, it carries its works with the saying- help the needy to help themselves. It conducted trainings like toy making training, beautician, hair and skin care, Television repair, electronics and dress making. Besides these, pickle and jam making, cloth sew training, flower making training, embroidery training, hair dressing and many other skills have been trained by women under the initiatives of the MHIP. From 2015, the MHIP in working with National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT), opened free computer classes in the MHIP building. This was accessible to all women and if there was a vacant seat, men are also admitted.

The traditional Mizo society was governed by an unwritten law. This can be seen in other parts of India especially in the tribal communities. All the styles in administration and practices of the society were inherited from the forefathers. These laws have played important role in the day to day life of the communities. Marriage, divorce and inheritance of property is an issue in all society. Even during the British period, the prominent leaders and nationalists have sought for the rights of women in these areas. Educated women demanded for the right like marriage, divorce and inheritance of property and it has resulted in the passing of a number of laws that protect women. Like the problems of mainland Indian women during the British period, the Mizo women in the traditional society had no right of inheritance of property and even in case of divorce; women could not claim any property which she earned during marriage except the goods that she carried from her father house at the time of marriage. Mizo Customary Law was compiled by NE Parry in 1927. According to this law, man controlled everything including the domain of marriage and women have no rights regarding claims of maintenance in divorce and inheritance of property.

During the District Council era, the initiatives of the Customary Law Board and Parry's Customary law were revised and published in 1957. However, women had no right to inherit property under Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act, 1956. The only positive change was that women can inherit property if they are included in the will. As a need arises for revision of the law according to the situation, the State Government took the task of reforming the law in 1980. The MHIP was very glad and it has submitted some suggestions to the State Government regarding the law. On that matter the MHIP requests the state government to include women member in the Mizo Customary Law Committee. The MHIP President was included in the Committee after six years of its endless efforts. After a deep study on the Law Draft, in 1991, the MHIP submitted some recommendations to the Committee. Only one women voice was meaningless. When the preparation of law was

almost finished two other MHIP leaders were included in the Committee. However, its long fight did not achieve much. The Mizo Customary Law which was revised was completed in 2005.

These laws were just a practice, customs and a guideline; a person cannot be punished or imprisoned if he is not following. Because of that, the MHIP realised that these laws were never be passed in the Legislative Assembly. It seeks for another way. The MHIP conducted a number of workshops and seminars by studying different laws which will be applicable to the Mizo society. After studying, the MHIP submitted - *The Mizo Christian Marriage Bill 2006*, *The Mizo Divorce Bill 2006* and *The Mizo Inheritance and Succession Bill 2006* to the Law Department. The MHIP never try to stop their works for the Mizo women. It worked day and night for the better position of the Mizo women. Its long fight has resulted with the passing of The Mizo Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance of Property Act 2014. This act allows the divorce women to inherit property and it also protects women from being divorced by their husbands at their will.

Political right for women is an important issue all around the world. The sixteen and seventeen century also saw the movements in western countries seeking for suffrage rights for women. Women were never thought to interfere in political sphere and women at that time never had a voting right. A suffrage movement was carried on in a number of countries and this has paved the way of voting rights for many women in different countries. In India before Independence, under the British rule, women never had voting right in different elections. When India attained Independence, it tried to promote women in every sphere. It gives women political rights, the right to vote, the right to contest elections, inclusion of both men and women in electoral roll, and under the Constitution Seventy Third and Seventy Fourth Amendment, in Panchayati Raj Institution and Urban Local Bodies, one-third of seat

were reserved for women. This is a great step as women can freely engage in politics at the lower level with a reservation of seats.

Mizo traditional society was administered by the Chief. Each village has its own Chiefs with definite territories. The Chief has a team of elders (ministers) who helped him in administration. Mizo women were never engaged in the administration of the village, they were thought to take care of family and other household activities. However, as modernization process has begun, chieftainship system in Mizoram was abolished in 1954. Each village that used to be governed by the Chiefs was taken up by the Village Council under the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953. The first election was conducted in 1954 in 338 villages. Although there was no seats reserved for women, women in different parts of Mizoram started engaging in politics. In this election two women were elected as Village Council member. Except 1957 and 1960 elections, all other elections saw elected women member. Since its establishment, the MHIP has been taking efforts for more women participation in elections. Whenever election is conducted, it always makes requests to political parties to allot seats for women. It even makes a number of press releases to vote for women candidate in elections.

As far as the reservation of seats for women was concerned, the MHIP pleaded to the State Government to implement Panchayati Raj institution in Mizoram. It has made a number of resolutions and memoranda that was submitted to the State Government. With the efforts of the MHIP President and Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India was briefed about the necessity of reservation of seats for women in Village Council system of Mizoram. By taking advantage of this opportunity, the MHIP seeks the cooperation of other NGO's to pressurise the State Government to implement an amendment bill which should incorporate reservation of seats for women. The MHIP doesnot receive much support from other NGO's instead it received lots of resistance. The demands and pressures of the MHIP



consequently resulted in the passing of The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Amendment Bill, 2014. This Bill has provided reservation of seats for women in Village Council and Local Council elections. Under this bill, one seat will be reserved for women in Village Council having three seats to five seats, two seats will be reserved for women in a Village Council having seven seats and three seats will be reserved for women in the Village Council having nine seats. The MHIP take this as a greatforward for women because more women will be able to participate in the administration of local bodies. The result of the passing of the Bill was seen in 2015 Village Council and Local Council elections as 694 women were elected as Village Council and Local Council Members. Some women also held the position of President. Without expecting any benefits or rewards, the MHIP used to put lots of efforts, pressures and support to the village administration. The MHIP was very glad that there are now more women in the administration of the villages and localities and even ask its members to put their maximum efforts for these women members.

Village Council system also administered Aizawl city, the capital of Mizoram before the introduction of Local Council. As such, it was commented by academicians at that time, that Aizawl city was a cluster of villages. The reason being, there were Village Councils in all localities in Aizawl city at that time. The Village Council within Aizawl city were changed into Local Council with effect from 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2010. A locality having less than 1500 voters can have five members and a locality with more than 1500 voters can have seven members. The reservation system was continued even in Local Council. Right from 1992 when the Constitution Seventy Fourth Amendment was enacted, the MHIP pleaded to the state government to implement the same as 33% of seats were reserved for women. However, it was only in 2007 that municipal system was adopted. At first it was named as Aizawl Municipal Council and was later changed to Aizawl Municipal Corporation. There are 83 Local Councils at present and these are divided into nineteen municipal wards. From these

nineteen wards, six wards are selected and are reserved for women and these wards are to be rotated in every election. The first election of AMC was conducted in 2010, six women councillors were elected and this was a successive step in the history of urban local bodies. The election of 2015 also saw another six women councillor. The MHIP was very glad and to show their gratitude and it handed 'Tawlhlohpuan' to all those elected women councillors.

The political administration of Mizoram since 1948 and from the first election of District Advisory Council, Mizo women started to involve themselves. However, their appearances in time of election do not make much sense as women candidate always lost in elections. Even in 1972 elections, all four women candidate lost the election. Saptawni was nominated as Legislative Assembly Member and she became the first women MLA in the history of Mizoram. During the time of District Council era and the Union Territory era, there were elected and nominated seats. Because of the nominated seats, some women could become a member of the decision making bodies. Since there is no reservation of seats for women, nominated seats provided a scope for women to participate in the decision making bodies during that time. During 1948 to 1984 elections, four women- Lalsangpuii, Remthangi, L Thanmawii (elected twice) and K Thansiami were elected members and five women- Lalziki, Hmingliani, Saptawni, K Thansiami and Rokungi were nominated members. Had the nominated seats not been created, these women would not be able to be involved in the decision making bodies. These 36 years saw eight women legislators who were actively engaged in the political process. There was a hope for more women engagement with the attainment of statehood in Mizoram. However, these 31 years of statehood era saw only two women member of Legislative Assembly. In 1987 election, Lalhlimpuii from MNF party got elected. She was inducted as a Minister of State and she became the first Mizo women Minister. This was a great step towards women empowerment in the political history of Mizoram.

The political system of Mizoram has seen women participation in the lower level of administration especially in village administration even before seats were reserved for women. Women participation has increased manifold in this aspect. With the coming of urban local bodies also, women are actively participating in the decision making bodies. In compare to this, the participation of women in higher level of decision making body is very less. Women are rarely given seats in times of Legislative Assembly elections. Even when they were given seats, they were never given winnable seats. It may be because of this, Mizoram has seen no other women Minister or MLA except Lalhlimpuii. The patriarchal mind set of the Mizo society is still deeply rooted even in the mind of the new generation. There was a thought in the mind of the people that administration of the society or the state was in the hand of men only. The largest women participation as a contestant in the history of Mizoram was seen in the 1998 assembly election where ten women contested. It can be said that this was a success of the MHIP voice, which always asked political parties to allot seats for women. Although these entire ten women candidate were not elected, this was remarkable in the political history of Mizoram. Eight women contested in 2003 election and all these women did not win and 2008 election saw nine women candidate and these are also not elected. 2013 Assembly election saw six women candidate and all these women were not elected. Since 1989 to till 2013 elections saw no women MLA. There was a by-election in 2014 in Hrangturzo constituency, and in this election luckily, Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu was elected. After 25 years, of women absence in Assembly House, Mizoram has seen a strong woman. She was inducted as Minister of State in the Ministry. There was a limited scope for women politicians in Mizoram. It can clearly be seen that after Mizoram has attained statehood in 1987, only two women can become MLA and Minister. One of those two women who became minister, Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu is from renowned political family and the daughter of prominent Congress leader and former Cabinet Minister. The biggest

women organisation in Mizoram, the MHIP continue to consult different political party leaders to allot seats for women. The MHIP searches for a way to reserve seats for women in times of elections of MLA's and MP's. It even submitted a number of memorandums to the state government. They continue to work for reservation of seats for women in political sphere.

## **5.2. Conclusion:**

The Mizo society has come across a number of changes such as formation of village, family administration, chief administration, Zawlbuk life for the young ones, abolition of chieftainship, District Council system, Union Territory status, insurgency movement and Statehood. Although the Mizo society has a good administration in the society, the coming of Christianity has paved the way for modernization process in the society. The education has transformed the society as it produces a number of educated men and women. Women who are treated as comparable with goods were more value and are more useful with their skills and education provided by the Christian missionaries. They started to realise the inferior positions of women in Mizo society from the light of education. This makes the early educated women to fight back the lowly life of the Mizo women. This is the benefits of education as it gave the early educated women the courage to work in the process of women empowerment. The zeal for uplifting the low status of women cannot be erased from the mind of the educated women. This led to the establishment of a number of women organizations. The MHIP, the biggest women organization in Mizoram, has been working in all spheres that are concerned with women. Its worked in preventing the rights of women; protect the women and children from sexual abuse and discriminations; and was against rape and inhuman behaviour towards girls and adult women. Its different committees and sub-committees have checked social issues and problems that are faced by women. It tries to change the mind-set of the community, outlook of the Mizo's men towards women as

they were treated as inferior. Its awareness campaigns on the empowerment of women have received lots of support.

The MHIP also provides skills trainings to women, so then they can earn their livings. Training is an important part of the MHIP programme. As women are more physically weak than man, the MHIP has provided some skill trainings, through which they can earn their daily needs. Its aims for a sole women educational institution resulted in the establishment of Women Polytechnic. The MHIP since its inception, worked for reforming the customary laws and it works in this field is praise worthy. Because of the efforts of the MHIP many working women can now inherit property if they are included in the will. Another important area in which the MHIP has been engaged is in political field. It tries to make women more useful and more responsible towards administration of the society. Since its establishment, it has conducted a number of press conferences and meetings with different political parties. It even asked different parties to allot seats for women in times of elections and even seek the co-operations of other NGO's in this field. The MHIP works are benefitted by a number of women especially living in rural areas. They can participate freely with a reservation of seats in Village Council elections. Even when Local Councils are formed more women can participate as there is reservation scheme under it. The MHIP is always ready to co-operate the State Government in every works which concern women. Its awareness campaigns and its works are not meaningless, as a number of women can stand on their feet because of them. Therefore, the MHIP becomes a mother for all Mizo women, a home for the destitute women, a parent for orphans, a widow friend, and a helper for the needy who never leave behind anybody who seek their help.

### 5.3. Suggestions:

1. The MHIP has been working so hard for all Mizo women. Its works have been resulted in a number of ways. Women condition from the past has also witnessed a number of changes. While MHIP has been working on day and night in thinking for a more space for women in the society, the Mizo women did not gave them enough support. There are many who criticise this organisation. However, instead of criticising it, a suggestions and requests can make it work better. Thus, its importance for Mizo women should be recognised by everybody.
2. When women concerns are raised by the MHIP, many educated women who are thought to give their all in all, refuse to give their support. So, a moral reform is needed amongst the educated women who knew the knowhow.
3. It is also important that, women strength and their ability needs to be recognised. Not only women are useful in home but can become active citizens. A support from family, society and community can raise them to higher positions. There are many women who lead the local bodies in Mizoram. So, it is important that people should put their trust and their endless support can change women position.
4. Due to the implementation of The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Amendment Bill 2004, more women can participate in Village Council and Local Council elections. But when it comes to Assembly elections, political parties put no trust on women and rarely give seats to women. So, more seats should be put for women in times of election to uplift women condition in political sphere. More space should be given towards women by political parties by reserving 30% or 33% of seats at the time of elections in their party candidature list.
5. Since there are many Mizo women who are not aware of the reservation scheme, women should be made aware of the reservation of seats for women in the Village

Councils and Municipal Council. They should be encouraged to participate more in these institutions.

6. As they have done in the regime of the District Council, a nominated seat must be created for proficient citizens at the time of new ministry formed. In this way there can be a scope for eminent women.
7. Gender concern studies must be inserted not only at the university level, but also at the lower school level. In the minds of the young ones, gender equality should be imparted that none is superior or inferior.

## **APPENDICES**

**Pages 109-113**

1. LIST OF INTERVIEWS
2. QUESTIONNAIRE



## **LIST OF INTERVIEWS:**

1. Rosiami- General Secretary Congress Mahila Headquarters.
2. PC Lalsangzuali- Vice President, Ramthar Congress Mahila Unit
3. Lalthazovi- General Secretary, Congress Mahila Headquarters
4. Lalnunziri- President Mahila Chaltlang Congress Unit-III
5. Lalrammawii - Vice President, Mahila Chaltlang Congress Unit-III
6. RK Lalmuanpuii- Assistant Secretary, Mahila Chaltlang Congress Unit-III
7. K Thangliani - Senior Adviser, Mahila Chaltlang Congress Unit-III
8. Lalhmingthai - Treasurer Mahila Chaltlang Congress Unit-III
9. Vanlalchhuani - Secretary Mahila Chaltlang Congress Unit-III
10. Lalnunthari- Executive Committee Member, Mahila Chaltlang Congress Unit-III
11. F Vanlalzawmi- Aizawl District Mahila President, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
12. Zothangpuii - Member, BJP
13. K Lalrengpuii - President Mizo National Women Front (MNWF)
14. K Lalnunheli - General Secretary, MNWF
15. R Lalmuankimi- Vice President MNWF
16. K Lalchhuanawmi- General Secretary MNWF
17. Lalmangaihzuali- General Secretary MNWF
18. C Sangzuali - Chairman, Zoram Peoples Movement (ZPM) Women Committee
19. Zoliani- Vice Chairman, ZPM Women Committee
20. Zartzokimi - Treasurer, ZPM Women Committee
21. PC Sangthangi- Secretary, ZPM Women Committee
22. F Laldangveli - Secretary, ZPM Women Committee
23. Ngursailovi - ZPM Executive Committee Member
24. RK Zuali - ZPM Executive Committee Member

25. Saipuii -President MHIP General Headquarters
26. Thanpuii -Vice President MHIP General Headquarters
27. Lalengkimi -Assistant Secretary MHIP General Headquarters
28. Zosiamliani - Treasurer, MHIP Chaltlang South Branch
29. Thangpuii - Committee Member MHIP Chaltlang South Branch
30. C Biakveli - Chaltlang Local Council Chairman
31. Lalmuanpuii - DawrpuiVengthar
32. LalenkawliHrahsel - RamtharVeng
33. Lalremsiami - ChawnpuiVeng
34. Rosy Hlimnapari - Mission Veng
35. K Lalthlamuani - Chaltlang Lily Veng
36. V. Laltlanthangi – BawngkawnVeng
37. Vanzairempuii- KananVeng
38. Zoremsangi - Ramhlun Vengchung
39. Mary Zothlamuani - Laipuitlang
40. Lalhmingthangi - Zotlang
41. Lalrinpuii - Chanmari West
42. PC Lalnunfeli - Chanmari
43. K. Lalhruaikimi - Edenthar
44. Hmingthanzauvi - Zarkawt
45. Loretta Lalruatpuii - ChhingaVeng
46. ZoiChawhte - Tuikual North
47. Laldingngeti - Hunthar
48. Lalhriattiri - Dawrpui
49. Sylvie HmingiFanai - Venghlui

50. DintluangiPachau - Thuampui
51. Ramdinsangi - Ramhlun North
52. LoisyLalmuanpuii - Khatla
53. Lily Malsawmi - Chawlhmun
54. Malsawmkimi - Venghnuai
55. Vanlalchhanhimi - Dinthar
56. C Lalremruati - BungkawnVengthar
57. Teresa Darthankimi - Vaivakawn
58. Lalramhluni - Tuithiang
59. Lalfakawmi - RamhlunVengthar
60. Lalnunpuii - Armed Veng

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Name :

Locality/ Village :

Age :

Married/unmarried :

1. Do you think the status of Mizo women is secured and satisfactory?

Yes No

2. Do you consider Christianity has upgraded the status of women?

I do I Don't Consider

3. Are you aware that there is an existing Mizo Customary Law for the protection and upliftment of women?

Yes No

4. Do you find that the Mizo Customary Law is satisfactory for the Mizo women? (for respondents giving 'Yes' in question No.3)

Yes No

5. Majority of the Mizo women are not heirship of the family property; do you find this as a fair statement?

I do I do not Consider

6. Regarding the various role of a women- taking care of children and family, doing household chores and in terms of occupational issues, do you think men are helpful assistance to them?

I Do I Do Not

7. Do you regard education as the most vital/essential step towards the upliftment of women?

Yes No

8. How do you find the various vocational trainings provided under the implementation of the MHIP towards occupational solution?

Good Not Good

9. Have you ever cast your vote?

Yes No

10. Do you agree that the election ticket allotted to women is a necessary step?  
 Yes                      No
11. If so a woman is a candidate, would you cast a vote for her?  
 I would                      I would not                      No Idea
12. Do you think politics is mainly subjected for man?  
 Yes                      No
13. How much esteem do you give to women who are involved in politics?  
 To great extend                      To some extend
14. Do you think women should come forward/involve more and more in political field?  
 Yes                      No
15. The reason for less involvement of Mizo women in political ground may be due to the higher esteem concept of men over women. Do you agree with this?  
 I agree                      I do not agree
16. What are the possible reasons for minimum involvement of Mizo women in politics?
- Due to opposition against them
  - Financial inconvenience
  - Regarding politics as a specific issue
  - Less interest in politics
  - Due to a bar of mother role in the family
17. Do you think that the position of Mizo women in the political system is good enough?  
 Yes                      No
18. Are you aware of allocation of seats for women in the Village Council Election?  
 Yes                      No
19. Are you aware of allocation of seats for women in the Municipal Corporation Election?  
 Yes                      No
20. Do you think that the MHIP has uplift and empower the status of Mizo women?  
 Yes                      No

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