CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION
The Mizos, formerly known as the Lushais belong to the Mongoloid stock of Kuki-Chin group. They claim their origin from Chhinlung which literally means ‘closed stone’. The Mizos believed that their forefathers came out of this stone. However, the exact location of Chhinlung has not been ascertained to any degree of certainty as their traditional home. But all traditions and folklore suggest that they originally came form the southern part of China more particularly the region of Szechwan, Yunnan and Kweichow provinces. From Southern China, they moved southward and entered Burma but did not remain long at any place till they reached the Kabaw valley where they lived for a long period. They then, further moved towards the south till they reached the Chin Hills after which they entered Mizoram. After entering Mizoram, they still continued to practice jhuming as their main livelihood and chieftainship as their system of administration and practiced it for a very long period.

In a patrilineal society like that of the Mizos, family is constituted through the institution of marriage. Polygamy is said to have existed among the Mizos. The father exercised all powers in the family and the mother had no say in the family unit. Women were not allowed to inherit property. Marriage was a civil contract and was normally arranged by the parents. Parents exercised utmost care and solemnity in the selection of the life partner of their children. They looked into the past history of the family and after enquiring into it, marriage was solemnised if no blemish was found. In some cases, before marriage took place, courting was practiced by the lads. After a young man convinced the girl, he would send two mediators called Palai to the girl’s house to know the willingness of the girl and to consider a reasonable bride price. As bride price
existed, the kind of bride price was fixed in terms of Mithun. However, the father of the girl can accept anything as an equivalent of Mithun as price for his daughter.

After the marriage price was negotiated, the marriage date was fixed. On the day of the marriage, the bride’s father will kill an animal which was divided between the groom’s family and a grand feast was prepared for the public or only for special invitees. At night, the bride was escorted to the groom’s house by Lawichal, who was the guardian and protector of the bride. When the bride reached the grooms’ house, the village priest solemnised the wedding by joining the hair of the couple and pronounced certain chants and killed a fowl which signified that the couple were really married.

In the pre-British Mizo society, the chief was the head of the village. In theory, he enjoyed absolute power. He was assisted in his day-to-day administration by a number of officials like the Upas, the Ramhual, the Zalen, the Tlangau, the Puithiam, the Thirdeng and the Khawchhia. Unlike the common peoples who paid tax in paddy to the chief, these officials did not pay tax to the chief except the Ramhuals. Besides, paddy tax known as Fathang, the chief also received other taxes like Sachhiah, Chichhiah, Khuaichhia, Sechhiah and Thachhiah from his subjects.

The economy of the early Mizo society is by and large agricultural. Agriculture was the backbone of their economy. Besides this, fishing, hunting, rearing of domestic animals, cottage and small-scale industries and raids formed a part of their economy. In fact, the primitive Mizo economy was geared to meet the demands of the basic needs of day-to-day life. The economy of the Mizo is dominated by subsistence agricultural of shifting cultivation in the hill slopes and settled cultivation in the limited river valleys.
The presence of Zawlbuk institution among the Mizos in the early period was significant in shaping and moulding their society. It was the crucible where the young people learned many things which shaped them into responsible adult members of the society.

The existence of Bawis system among the primitive Mizos was a distinct feature of their society. Bawis were those individuals who depended upon a chief for any reason. But Bawis were different from Sal (slavery). Most of the Bawis became Bawi with their own will but Sals were persons captured in raids, wars, etc. and are the personal property of their captors. Every household could keep as many Sal as it could collect but Bawis are kept only by the chiefs. However, one common thing between the two systems was that both the Bawis and Sals could redeem themselves by paying a big ransom.

The Mizo code of ethics moved round Tlawnngaiha, one of the most value-traits of the early Mizos. The word has no exact equivalent in English and is an untranslatable term, meaning; on the part of a man to be hospitable, kind, unselfish, courageous and helpful to others. Tlawnngaiha to a Mizo stands for that compelling moral force which finds expression in self sacrifice for service of others. It is the core of their philosophy of life. It was this Tlawnngaiha which makes people always ready to serve others on any needed occasion.

The Mizo society is a well-knit society. There was no caste or class system and all the people had equal status. They all participated in all social and religious functions without any distinctions. The festivals which they celebrated have promoted community feeling and have helped in influencing of attitude of the Mizo people. Every festival
they celebrated is accompanied with dance and music which is the symbol of their fellowship.

In the social life of the early Mizos, Zu played a unique role. There was no social and religious ceremony performed without serving Zu. However, in spite of its common use in the community life of the Mizos, it rarely brought an ugly repercussions inside or outside the family.

The Mizos believed in the existence of several gods whom they believed had inhabited big stones, big trees, caves, etc. They, therefore, offered animal sacrifices to these gods to avert their anger who were believed to be the cause of their illness. The Mizos also believed in the existence of one Supreme Being whom they called Pathian. As he was a good God, no sacrifices were offered to him to obtain peace or redemption. They also believed in the existence of two abodes of life after death i.e. Mitthikhua and Pialral. Mitthikhua was a dead men’s village where life will be troublesome and difficult and everything being worse than in this world whereas Pialral was a paradise where food and drink are to be obtained without labour. Thus, the main tenet of the religious belief of the early Mizos was the attainment of the eternal joy in Pialral.

The Mizos were warlike people and carried out head hunting. It was because of this old practice, they came into contact with the British which consequently led to the British sending many military expeditions into their land. It finally led to the British occupation of the Hills in 1890.

The British occupation of Mizoram led to the coming of the Christian Missions in the Hills. The first Christian Missionary to enter Mizoram was Rev. William Williams of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission who had been working in
the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. During his short stay at Aizawl for about a month, he preached the gospel among the Mizos through a Khasi interpreter. He was convinced that Mizoram was a prospective field for Missionary activities and persuaded his Mission to adopt Mizoram as a Mission field. However, his untimely death shattered all hopes of starting a new Mission field among the Mizos. But his work among the Mizos did not go in vain and his Mission decided to adopt the Lushai Hills as a Mission field as and when found practicable. Three years later in 1894, two pioneer Missionaries, J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge arrived at Aizawl under the Arthington Aborigines Mission. Both of them work hard to preach the gospel among the Mizos and learnt the local language too. During their stay, they did a good job in reducing the Mizo language into writing by using the Roman script, translated the gospel according to John, Luke and the Books of Acts and also wrote the book entitled “A Grammar and Dictionary of Lushai Language”.

In August, 1897, Rev. D.E. Jones arrived at Aizawl, sent by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists Foreign Mission. He was joined by Rev. Edwin Rowlands, a gifted musician and an experienced teacher. Both of them worked among the Mizos, established the Welsh Mission headquarters at Aizawl. Both J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge arrived at Lunglei in 1903 to work under the Baptist Mission. They selected Serkawn as their headquarters to spread the gospel among the Mizos in the South. In the far South, R.A. Lorrain worked as a Missionary among the Mara and established the Lakher Pioneer Mission in 1905. Thus, Mizoram was divided into three parts for speedy evangelical works—one in the north with its headquarters at Aizawl, the second one in the south with Serkawn as their headquarters and the last in the far south with
headquarters at Serkawr. Besides these, there are many other Christian denominations set up by different leaders.

The British occupation of Mizoram together with the coming of the Christian Missions greatly changed the social and religious life of the people. It had brought about social reformation in the Mizo society in the form of introduction, abolition and modifications of some existing social Phenomena. Of all the new introduction, the introduction of education among the Mizos with the coming of the Christian Missionaries and the British occupation of the Hills was remarkable. The Mizos had their own script using the simple Roman scripts through the effort of the pioneer Missionaries, J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge. In the later years, they also have Primary, Middle and High schools where they started learning. Thus, within a period of 50 years form 1901 to 1951, the percentage of literates have risen from 2.496 to 36.23 which was a phenomenal increase. Besides formal education, use of medicines, tea drinking in place of Zu, Christian festivals like Christmas and others in places of other indigenous festivals, use of western dress, Welfare organizations, new eating habits and new pattern of building houses were introduced among the Mizos.

With regard to the abolition of indigenous social institutions, mention may be made of Bawi system, Zawlbuk, Nomadic Habit, Zu drinking and head hunting practices.

Bawi system, which was like a refuge for the poor and the needy people. Where they found shelter and protection with food and warmth from the chief appeared to be in the same class as slavery to persons alien to the Mizo society something akin to feudalism. Before the coming of Dr. Peter Fraser, a Missionary physician, no attack on
the system was made by the local people. But it was vehemently attacked by Fraser, which led to the Bawi controversy which in the long run led to the abolition of the system.

Zawlbuk which was once the most important institution in shaping and moulding the Mizo society had to go with the coming of Christianity in the Hills. The demand for its abolition came from the Mizos themselves. The British Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, Parry tried to revive the Zawlbuk system and gave order to rebuilt the Zawlbuk but the Mizos themselves openly challenged its existence. Thus, in 1938, McCall, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills revoked the order of Parry to rebuild the Zawlbuk and it completely fell into disuse, and was relegated to insignificance and people began to abandoned it.

The Mizos, once a nomad group gave up their nomadic habit as a result of the British occupation of their land together with the introduction of Christianity. The British, after occupying the Hills, took up the establishment law and order and stopped brutal raids. The introduction of Christianity helped in the growth of church in every village which made the Mizos to abandon their nomadic habit.

Zu drinking, which was a common drink among the indigenous Mizos was given up due to the introduction of Christianity. The Missionaries condemned Zu drinking and as a result, it was given up by the Christians and was also abolished as a common drink among the people.

The occupation of the Hills by the British also led to the abolition of head-hunting practices. The British, in order to punish the head-hunters sent many
expeditions in the hills which finally led to the occupation of the Hills and thus stopped the age-old custom practiced by the Mizos.

Modifications were also made in many of the social phenomena like marriage, status of women and many social practices after the British occupation and the coming of the Christian Missions. In the Christian marriage, the marriage was solemnised at the altar of the Christian Church by Pastors or Elders. There was also changes in the dress used by both the bride and the groom. The status of women were also greatly changed after the introduction of Christianity together with the spread of education among the Mizo women. They no longer remained as mere house wives but worked in the offices at the higher levels. The pre-Christian customs connected with birth and death were greatly changed after the introduction of Christianity among the people.

One remarkable result of the introduction of Christianity in the Hills was the large scale conversion of the people to Christianity. The people gave up their indigenous religious beliefs that bad spirits or demon known to them as Huai inhabited caves, trees, stones, etc. They also gave up many of their religious rites and rituals namely bloody sacrifices, feasts for attaining Thangchhuah title and indigenous religious performances. Instead, they worshipped Jesus Christ and went to the Churches. Because of the revivals that had taken place in Mizoram, many of the Mizos were converted to Christianity. The percentage of Christians had risen from 0.05 to 86.6 within 60 years from 1901 to 1961 which reveals the Mizos quick acceptance of Christian doctrines.

Thus, the advent of the British, followed by Christianity in the Hills had significant impact on the socio-cultural life of the Mizo people. Their mode of life was
changed and their social structure was completely transformed. The Christians had spread education among the Mizos, gave them lessons of love, sympathy and a sense of life values. Christianity taught the people the value of peace, tolerance, co-existence and universal brotherhood. Superstitious faith in spirits was abandoned. It paved the way for modernity in Mizoram. As a result, the life style, the way of thinking and doing were radically metamorphosed. In fact, Christianity had widened their mental horizon and made them adoptable to western culture and opened the world to them.