Chapter VI
Development and Identity Formation

The development of technology, the growth of population and the elaboration of division of labour, it is assumed, would lead to the assimilation of earlier small communities into ever larger, more centralised and rationalised economic and political organisations. According to this line of thinking, modernity would dissolve both tribalism and ethnic communities through the process of nation-building.¹ In the economic/academic world, economists are grappling with models of how social and cultural factors shape human behaviour, and academic anthropologists, having grappled with these questions for a long time, are seeing the need to move beyond critique towards a more ‘facilitatory’ anthropology. ‘Similarly, in the world of policy, culture is increasingly being viewed as a commonplace, malleable fact of life that matters as much as economics or politics to the process of development’.²

The Human Development Report 1993 mentions that ‘people’s participation is becoming the central issue of our time’. ‘People today have an urge- an impatient urge to participate in the events and processes that shape their lives. And that impatience brings many dangers and opportunities. It can dissolve into anarchy, ethnic violence or social disintegration. But if properly nurtured in a responsive national and global framework, it can also become a source of tremendous vitality and innovation for the creation of new and more just societies’. ‘Much of the discussion on the role of culture in development has either seen it as a primordial trap, a mystical haze, or a source of hegemonic power.’ ‘A focus on culture is necessary to confront the difficult questions of What is valued in terms of well-being, Who does the valuing, and Why economic and social factors interact with culture to unequally allocate access to good life’. ‘Cultural processes, however, can also be harnessed for positive

social and economic transformation, through their influence on aspirations, the coordination of collective action, and the ways in which power and agency work within a society.\textsuperscript{3}

In this chapter, I discuss the complex relationship of identity in the context of peace, development, globalisation and culture; and explore the changing nature of the same in Mizoram over time and space. The past 23 years in Zo/Mizo politics forms an interesting socio-economic-political-cultural landscape to be explored. The multifold developments in the post-Peace Accord times have led to several contestations and the creation of a critical space leading towards greater participation of the people in governance. The post-Peace era has made the 23 urban centres\textsuperscript{4} the space where the political has evolved. Aizawl has become the centre of the developments and the peripheral spaces are yet to carve out their own space in this dialogic process. The urban-rural continuum continues to shape the politics of Mizoram post 1986. The city of Aizawl attaining its distinctness, as a space with greater proximity to the power-centre has to be explored anew from various socio-political-economic and historical-cultural specificities. It is with this concern that I reflect upon the urban space; trace the modern and the traditional within the urban; and post-Peace Accord trends in political participation of the Elderly Citizens and the Youths against the silhouette of the project of building an \textit{Ideal Zo Christian State}. The methodology employed for this chapter is a mixed one, using a plethora of available options coupled with in-depth interviews of residents of the city, human rights activists, academicians, writers, journalists and the youths. The chapter relies heavily on local television programmes, music albums, films, cyberspace and such sources.

\textsuperscript{3} The case study of Simon Harragin illustrates ‘how a failure to pay attention to local cultures- in particular to notions of kinship and social structures- reduced the effectiveness of a response to a famine in Sudan. Blindness to the group’s culture accused relief workers to miss the early signs of famine, and to misread as corruption the group’s responses to aid’. For details \textit{Cf}, Chapter 1, ‘Culture and Public Action: Relationality, Equality of Agency, and Development’ in Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton. (Ed.). (2004). \textit{Ibid.}

6.1. Mizoram and its Urban Spaces over the years

To understand development politics in Mizoram, one needs to have a brief recapitulation of the making of Aizawl city. Aizawl represents paradoxes that need to be understood against the silhouette of the history of the making of Aizawl and the introduction of ‘urban spatial politics’ popularly referred to as the ‘Aizawl Syndrome’. The ‘Aizawl model’ of development and town planning has been replicated elsewhere in other urban centres in Mizoram.\footnote{A point to be noted is that Aizawl is being emulated not just at the level of development and planning. It is being emulated even at the cultural level in terms of media consumption—print, audio-visual and life-style. A casual look at the growing number of newspapers in Mizoram suggests that the earlier trend of newspapers only form the capital city will soon be replaced by an equally strong representation from the newer and smaller districts, erstwhile irrelevant spaces. Even at the level of television consumption the emulation effect is strongly visible. For instance the reality show bug that had smitten the Aizawl audience is gradually entering the living rooms of the districts. For details Cf., Sangzuala Hmar. (2006). ‘Eyeballs on ‘Mizo Idol’. The Times of India. Guwahati: 09 December. \textit{Moonlight}. (2009). ‘Maraland Idol 2009 chu Pu. Donny Lahuatsang, BDO chuan ropui takin a hawng to’. Saiha: 6 November; \textit{Moonlight}. (2009). ‘Saiha District Red Ribbon Youth Icon 2009-2010 Top Ten result puan a ni ta’. Saiha: 3 November.}

Another reason being that Aizawl being the capital city has caught the imaginations of the rural belt as being the centre of power, privilege and easy life as compared to the tough life of rural Mizoram.

The underlying complexities and the spectre of tribal village administration continues to haunt the psyche of its dwellers as reflected from the phenomenon of mob-rule and archaic voyeuristic mechanisms employed by the various organisations functioning in and around the city of Aizawl for the purpose of chiselling the vision of an ‘Ideal Zo Christian State’. Post-independence scenario reflects a steady rise of the Zo-Church and replacement of Western Missionaries by local Missionaries (\textit{Kohhran Upa}). With the departure of the foreign missionaries the Church administration came to the hands of the Zo/Mizo Church leaders. They encouraged the revival of the Mizo folk songs, dances and festivals which were sneered by the Western Missionaries. Thus, there has been a series of revivalist movements to reclaim the old customs in the form of re-tribalism; many of the fine aspects of the forgotten Mizo life for instance, the Chapchar Kut, Mimkut, Pawlkut and such festivals have been revived.\footnote{ZOlife. (2006). ‘Kutpui a liam ta’. Aizawl: April.p.3.} ‘The younger generation has been increasingly giving proof of the desire for a
Chapter VI Development and Identity Formation

cultural revival. Folk dances and music are in their initial stages of resurgence. The psychological complex which loomed large mainly among the first generation of educated Mizos is becoming a thing of the past. Younger generations are learning to value and love their pre-literate culture, traditions and customs. At the same time the overwhelming hold of the Church over the Zo hnahthlak through the Nexus of Patriarchy and its agencies makes life thoroughly regimented. There are instances where the church has imposed restrictions on inter-community relationships, using of the internet, listening to ‘heavy metal’ music and an endless list of do’s and don’ts, all geared towards the ‘survival’ of Zo people and tradition.

The young educated youths who have completed their education in other states of India and are back in Mizoram to work in their home state find it extremely difficult to digest the dictates of the church and the moral police especially, when it comes to dress code and watching television programmes and so on.

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7 This cultural revival is thickly laced with a tendency to retain ethnic identities and exhibit the pristine Zo culture and at the same time blend it with a doze of “western” traits. For instance, fashion shows in Mizoram becomes a platform to flaunt distinct ethnic identities and interestingly one can notice a stiff competition among different tribes to exhibit a mural of complex motifs and complex textiles weaved into the apparently western yet “ethnic wear”. Cf., pic., Bangalore Mizo Nula nalte (photograph). ZOlife Report. (2006). ZOlife. Aizawl: April.p.4.

8 For instance, Cf., Music videos:


The city of Aizawl has witnessed the twin processes of rapid urbanisation and concretisation alongside environmental de-landscaping popularly known as the ‘Aizawl Syndrome’. The history of the city also doubles as the history of migrations into the ‘Zo world’. The city of Aizawl in other words became the arena where the migrants, the ‘Others’ and the natives began to contest their vested arenas and chisel out their own spaces of domain. This can be considered to be one of the reasons why the city of Aizawl still bustles with the activities of local women and ‘Vai’ men. In course of the evolution of identity consciousness among the Zo/Mizo tribes in post-independence times names of places have been changed in keeping with the Zo/Mizo nomenclature\textsuperscript{11} (refer to Chapter V).

The process of urbanisation in Mizoram has taken giant leaps and today it is the most urbanised state in India with 49.49 percent\textsuperscript{12} of its total population being urban and living in urban areas according to the 2001 Census. The process of urbanisation in Mizoram has, however, been triggered not so much as a follow up of either industrialisation or the level of economic development. It may be attributed mostly to various socio-political changes. The towns have grown as service centres and with importance as centres of administration. The 23 townships\textsuperscript{13} throughout the state have grown mostly with the gradual political and administrative transformation of the area. Up-gradation of the Lushai Hills District (later converted to Mizo Hills District) into a Union Territory in 1972 and thereafter to a state in 1987 led to the concentration of various offices and service centres, amenities and facilities in and around Aizawl. Rapid Urbanisation thus marked the growth of Aizawl in the post-independence times. Migration to the urban centres in Mizoram is not so much due to the expansion of basic activities but people’s aspirations to be nearer to the seat of power with the aim of taking benefits of state, district and sub-divisional levels of administration. In short, urbanisation in the case of Mizoram has not necessarily resulted in the growth of urban economy as such.


\textsuperscript{12} Census of India 2001, Final Population Totals, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{13} Cf., Footnote No. 4, page.244.
The city of Aizawl has experienced the overwhelming impact of the ‘Insurgency/Counter-Insurgency’ tactics and has reduced it to the cluttered, cramped urban settlement as we see today. The insurgency in fact changed the ways Zo people lived their lives. For instance, whereas traditionally evenings were meant for socialising for the young (powntou) and the old (bouts of Zu (rice beer) and dances); ‘evening curfews’ became a part of the lived-in-reality of the people of the region in the troubled times so much so that even today shops close down their shutters by 4:30 pm in the evening.

The post-independence state-building process in Mizoram invokes the spirit of ‘Lal Isua Khrista’ (Lord Jesus Christ) for building an ‘Ideal Zo Christian State’. This ‘Zo state-building’ programme aims at freeing or liberating physically as well as mentally the Zo hnathlak, from the ‘Others’. The desire to create an Ideal Zo Christian State has been strongly portrayed and at times has led to the voyeuristic intervention of the church and its agencies in both the private and public arena. The Zo/Mizo identity is going through an intense introspection. The nostalgia for a romanticised past, crowded by visions of a once brave and honourable people, who practiced the code of ‘tlawmgaihna’ in letter and spirit, is strongly nurtured, alongside the notion of a progressive and enlightened Christian society. The conformity demanded by the Nexus of Patriarchy often results in a clash of interest between ‘archaic traditionalism/Christian ethics’ and ‘the culture of individualism/globalised society’. Resultantly, the line between the public and the private domain becomes fused, and the Nexus of Patriarchy becomes overwhelmingly hegemonic. Zama observes, that:

Even an apparently minor issue of selecting a name for oneself or one’s offspring has become a contentious issue in some quarters. The addition of a “westernised” name causes the so-called guardians of Mizo culture to raise their hackles and they start questioning the cultural roots and identity of the individual concerned, and this, it may be noted, is within a community that is blatantly influenced by Western culture in dress, mannerism, music and ideas.  

14 For instance, closure of business and other such activities on a Sunday has been the ‘mantra’ for the Zo/Mizo people’s aspirations of creating an Ideal Zo Christian State.

Though overtly ‘urban’, the city of Aizawl reflects the reminiscences of the bygone days of inter-tribal warfare and village administration. Unlike the other states of India, the ‘Panchayati Raj Institution’ (PRI) was not introduced in Mizoram; instead, the Village Council (VC) was adopted in both rural and urban areas of Mizoram for local self government since 1972. There has been a growing demand and pressure on the various political agencies to muster support for a Municipal system of administration or the ‘Panchayati Raj Institution’ (PRI) in place of the ‘Village Council’. The nascent mobilisation of voices for a more developed form of urban administrative mechanism reflects the evolving trends in urban spatial politics.

The advent of the ‘Globalised Media’ (cable TV) in the mid 90s brought about systematic changes in television viewership in Mizoram, especially in the capital city of Aizawl. For instance, the Zo/Mizo, who earlier abhorred watching or liking Hindi movies, and preferred watching Bangladesh TV ‘with its abundant doze of American sitcoms’ in the late 1980s over Doordarshan; now post-2000 loathe missing an episode of the Hindi serials such as ‘Kyonki Saas bhi Kabhie Bahu Thi’, ‘Kasauti Zindagi Kay’ of the Star Plus channel, conveniently dubbed in the Mizo language by the local channels. The popularity of such Hindi (‘Vai’) Channels can be grasped from the recent Peace Fest 2006 held on 20th April 2006 which decided to celebrate two decades of peace in the State by inviting actor Manoj Bohra, the popular ‘Prem’ of ‘Kasauti Zindagi Kay’. Alarmed by such developments the agencies of the Nexus of Patriarchy most prominently the students’ body, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) objected that ‘Prem’ and the ‘serial itself was a threat to Mizo culture and an unhealthy distraction for the student population’.16 Similarly the popularity of Hindi songs and films over the years has alarmed the vanguards of Zo/Mizo culture.

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16 Margaret Ch. Zama. (2006). *Op. cit.* Interestingly while the cast from the Star Plus serial was considered a threat to Zo culture, Channel V’s VJ Kim (Komila Jagtiani) who attended the Chapchar Kut 2006 in Mizoram while hosting Star One’s Exotica (Travelling Programme) was welcomed with no qualms. Cover Special. (2006). ‘Komila Jagtani- Kim J’. *ZOlife. Aizawl:* April,p.23. Presumably Kim’s Canadian background (Miss India/Canada (’99-2000)), superficial western get up and accent might have toned down the threat perception of the MZP.
The church is omnipresent in Mizoram, its activities providing the crux of social life. But, while collectivism gives people a sense of social security and an umbrella in times of distress, it also fosters attitudes of conformity. An area of concern in the city of Aizawl is that uniformity or ‘mono culture’ which prevents any intellectual debate. The state has a high literacy level but the education system is flawed and merely exam-oriented and no environment of questioning, pupils show no inclination towards reading, resulting in empty libraries.\(^\text{17}\) Culture becomes a useful weapon in the search for the new dynamics of acquiring and sustaining political power and status. In Zo/Mizo context, the dictates of the *Nexus of the Patriarchy* regarding the dress code, behaviour, disapproval of marriage outside the community, expressions of concern and fear over assimilation and hybrid-identities and so on, have further sustained the politics of panoptics and challenged the same. In most cases women become the ‘last frontiers of nationalism’, especially when the patriarchy declares ‘that “Our” Women need to be protected from “Others”’; the onus of ‘Mothering and Birthing a Nation’ falls on their shoulders.

The latest report about ‘Crime against women in Mizoram’ conducted by the Aizawl based Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), sponsored by National Women’s Commission, revealed that teachers and fathers were involved in most of the crimes against women in the state.\(^\text{18}\) The report states that instead of lodging complaints and reporting the incidents to the authority, women are compelled to make compromises or conciliations on the Christian principle of ‘forgive and forget’ which is the main obstacle to reveal the exact statistics of

\(^{17}\) Most academicians whom I interviewed during my field visits felt that the high rate of literacy in the state does not correspond with intellectual stimulation.

\(^{18}\) The report highlighted the general condition of women in the Zo/Mizo society and the psychological violence that takes place most often in homes and school settings by the male members of the family and teachers. Mizoram records the second highest crime rate against women in the North-East and on an average; the police registers a case every three days. The most common form of violence against adolescent girls and unmarried women ranged from being pushed or shoved or pulled by the hair to that of the use of weapons or a threat to do so. The research also revealed that eve teasing was a big problem faced by adolescents and unmarried women in the state. 75.81 percent of adolescents in the research had experienced eve teasing while 42.63 percent of unmarried women experienced it. According to police records, the crime rate against women had steadily increased between the years 2001 and 2003. While cases registered in this respect were 114 in 2001, this rose to 136 in 2002 and to 219 in 2003.
atrocities on women in Mizoram. The superficial imposition of the archaic rules based on Christian ethics on the people for fighting social evils, results in the blatant violation of Human Rights. Karl Popper’s arguments that any attempt to plan or regulate society would result in the reduction of human freedom, stands true for the Zo/Mizo society. The strategies of selective targeting, ‘scapegoat mechanisms’ that are employed to camouflage the loopholes and failures of the various attitudes projected for building the Ideal Zo Christian state, stand as evidences of reduction of ‘human freedom’.

Another area of concern reflecting the silence or mono-culture is on the issue of ‘Total Liquor Prohibition’. Despite the state being declared a ‘Dry State’, the State Excise Department Records (1997-2005) shows a constant rise in illegal liquor trade and drug trafficking in Mizoram. The tussle between tradition and Christianity is best reflected on issues related to ‘pagan rituals’ such as ‘drinking and worldly pleasures’. Christianity brought about strong Western influence on dress and music; and also began to exert its influence on cultural norms. It disapproved of what it termed ‘pagan customs’ of drinking rice beer and traditional music and dancing. These features of tribal life almost disappeared and it was only after statehood that efforts were made to revive them. Proselytisation triumphantly transplanted the ‘head-hunters’ to ‘soul-hunters’ to the point where religion and culture are now entangled and undistinguishable. The arena of culture serves as a battle ground for debates on prohibition with two camps clearly demarcated; those favouring the cause and those against prohibition. Hardly surprising then that the Zo/Mizo are just as furiously perplexed over the question of their identity as they are aggressively proud of it.

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20 The supporters of Total Prohibition also cite the economic advantages for the state. For details Cf., Mizoram Express. (2009). ‘Mizoram reaps Rs. 186 lakh revenue from liquor related fine’. Aizawl: 27 December.

Chapter VI

Professor Thangchungnunga and also Vanramchhuangi call Mizoram’s present culture as culture of ‘imitation’ (‘enton ‘ti hmuh’). For instance, in the case of music, traditional instruments have been replaced by the guitar, and gospel singing. Likewise, traditional dances that have been revived by the efforts of the Art and Culture Department are in danger of becoming mere concert displays instead of a symbolic expression of tribal life. On similar lines, the community celebration of the spring festival, ‘Chapchar Kut’, once associated with the agricultural rite of jhum-cutting, is now more a state exhibition staged in the capital Aizawl.22

The Zawlbuk, or bachelors’ dormitory which enforced community discipline and delegated responsibility was replaced by the ‘Young Mizo Association’ (YMA). The YMA though a strong community structure providing emotional support to its members, its approach to issues concerning the community is often conservative and at times it infringes on individual liberties. Many of my correspondents who preferred not to be named revealed that ‘there is extreme fear of the YMA especially among the vulnerable sections like single women, unwed mothers, and youths who had their education outside Mizoram’. These groups become victims of selective targeting leashed out by the Nexus of Patriarchy because of their outspoken attitude as well as non-conformity.

High transportation costs make it difficult for agricultural produce to be sent down to other markets. ‘There is an urgent need to re-link Mizoram with ports in Myanmar through waterways and highways’, advocating the ‘Look East’ policy, Thangchungnunga says ‘we also need to explore our prospects in floriculture and horticulture’; ‘market linkages have to be thought out very carefully before the local farmer is urged to make the switch to cash crops.’23 An instance of the lack of planning in terms of long term agricultural policies is the


252
Chapter VI  
Development and Identity Formation  

In the case of Ginger Plantations and associated scandals.\(^24\) Under the previous Congress government, farmers were persuaded to grow large quantities of ginger. Unfortunately, with no easy access to markets outside Mizoram and with only one cold storage facility in the entire state and ‘no-consensus over prices’, large quantities of the ginger were simply dumped by angry farmers and left to rot.\(^25\) Mizoram needs to sort out the issue of market linkages with the right kind of technical and infrastructural expertise before venturing into such schemes.

Along side these multifold concerns is the hybridization of the code of ‘tlawmgaihna’ in urban spaces. The concept of *tlawmgaihna* which pre-dates Christianity is today found in its hybridized form. ‘*Tlawmgaihna*’ today has been reduced to community service such as ‘*Hnaatlang*’ (community service), ‘*Thlan lai*’ (grave digging) organised by the Y.M.A or K.T.P.\(^26\) The essence of the code being systematically erased overtime, it today is being used as a weapon for projecting conformity to the dictates of the *Ideal Zo Christian State-building programme*. Non-participation in such public display of ‘*tlawmgaihna*’ is countered by social mockery and in severe cases by ostracisation. However, the dynamics of Zo/Mizo economics and justice being ‘based on the psychology of compensation rather than on social-justice’\(^27\): makes every act in the Mizo society is compensatable in economic terms i.e. fine is the only remedy for any sort of crime/mis-conduct. Non-participation in the public exhibition of *tlawmgaihna* can be remedied by paying a fine of rupees forty. The code of ‘*tlawmgaihna*’ also doubles as a weapon to control the spatial domain of the ‘outsiders’ mostly the ‘*Vai*’.

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For instance, a common scene while travelling in a bus in Aizawl is that of the bus conductor selectively targets a ‘Vai’ to leave a seat and stand up for ‘Zo/Mizo lady’ while rudely commenting ‘Vai an ‘tlawmgai lo lutuk’ (Indians are not ‘tlawmgai’). Such an act can signal multiple interpretations—first, ‘tlawmgaihna’ in the globalised context is ‘no more internal in manifestation’; it is imposed from above and also ‘quantified’. Second, the outsiders are expected to carry on the legacy of the ‘tlawmgaihna’ while the ‘insiders’ can sit back. Third, the agencies enforcing the code of ‘tlawmgaihna’ are zestfully performing the code by making others perform the code of ‘tlawmgaihna’ publicly.

‘Death’ and tlawmgaihna sentiments that were really strong in the traditional life are undergoing a visible change especially in urban centres. For instance, even though people especially the youths do participate in ‘Mitthi ralna’ (condolence), ‘khohar tleivar’ (night vigil at the bereaved family’s house) and such other ceremonies associated with ‘Death’. These practices associated with tlawmgaihna are no longer done individually or privately rather the whole emotion is given a public twist i.e. the YMA and other community based bodies help the bereaved families in times of crisis in an exhibitionist mode.28 Infact, Vanramchhuangi, critically comments that ‘Death’ has been merchandised and has become an attractive, yet ‘ugly business’ in the Zo/Mizo society.29

The politics of the Ideal Zo Christian State has been challenged by intra/inter-state travels, the internet, the IT Revolution, the Call Centre boom and such other inevitable developments associated with being or becoming ‘modern’. The ‘changes and borrowings’ in a globalised situation corresponds to market demands and as such ‘even traditional dance-forms and indigenous handloom designs have not escaped its purview. For instance, the ‘Cheraw’ or bamboo-dance has mutated through the years to introduce more intricate steps. Likewise the traditional ‘puanchei’ and ‘kawrchei’ (traditional handloom wrap around) has witnessed changes in patterns, for the purpose of appearing more attractive and ‘ethnic’, than other tribal groups in the region. Similarly the Zo/Mizo has undergone tremendous changes

even at the level of culinary inclinations. For instance, a community that hardly used 'Masala' (Indian spices) or 'Sarsao tel' (Mustard Oil) as late as the 80s can be seen consuming these items in their everyday diet along with their traditional 'Sawhchiar' (Rice, meat, vegetable mixed porridge), 'Buchiar' (Rice porridge), 'Bai' (boiled vegetables) and 'Sa rep' (smoked meat).

Few like Zaliana, question the role of the local media especially in changed times when Mizoram needs to channel its potential towards peace and development. ‘Media both print and visual have always been there but the level had been low. Hmar Arsi was initiated sometimes in the 1960 and the Kristian Tlangau in 1911. The Government Press had been there but as such it has catered only to the intelligentsia. From late 1980s to early 90s visual media has increased manifold and to an extent has been destructive to Zo/Mizo culture for instance, LPS and Zonet (local cable TV channels) started ‘Mizo Idol’, ‘Youth Icon’ (reality shows on the lines of ‘The American Idol’) and other Zo/Mizo channels quickly followed the trend of reality shows’. Zaliana critically laments:

A Mizo girl cracked the tough All India competitive examination; similarly ten Mizo students from the state won the all India merit scholarship. However, these never get highlighted through media; the youths are being swayed over to singing and dancing. Media is spoiling our youths and we are diverting from education and achievements to entertainment and seven minutes of fame and easy money.30

Media is run or controlled by people of inferior or no quality and they are not at all enterprising and innovative, they never act in constructive manner, they project only rapes, Zu Zuar and such other items clubbed under ‘Breaking News’. They (Media) aim commercialisation and never allow constructive criticism.31


Chapter VI
Development and Identity Formation

TABLE 6.1
Opinion of the 200 Mizo respondents on relevant issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>‘No’</th>
<th>‘Yes’</th>
<th>‘Partially’</th>
<th>‘No Idea’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The MNF movement was able to bring about a positive change in government (Indian), its attitude and public policies</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The MNF movement and the call for a ‘Greater Zoram’ contributed to the sense of unity among the tribes cutting across clannish identities and differences</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Are the Political Parties serious about the Zomi Movement/Greater Zoram Movement?</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Culture and history of the people and the region has shaped the Zomi movement</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ethnic tribal and religious affiliations have influenced Politics in Mizoram</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is the Congress true to its promise of building an Ideal Zo Christian State?</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is the Mizo Peace Accord a successful road-map to peace in the North-East?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Are the developments in the state is in-keeping with the goal of building an Ideal Zo Christian state in Mizoram?</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Should Zomi replace Mizo to correct the phonetic error?</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is the institution of Village Council an effective mechanism for administration in contemporary times?</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own Survey

# Table 6.1 reflects the opinions of 200 respondents randomly selected on certain very significant issues. The opinions have ranged from ‘No Idea’, partial agreement to total acceptance and total denial. Opinion on peace and the MNF movement are the largest in number, as questions 1 and 7 indicates, 90 out of 200 have given affirmative responses to these questions. Whereas question 2 quite expectedly indicates inconclusive responses, 45 ‘Partially’, 45 ‘Yes’, 60 disagree totally and 50 ‘No Idea’. Similarly, the seriousness of political parties about the Zomi movement shows the same inconclusive response. Opinions are equally divided among those agreeing (60) and those disagreeing (60), 35 feel that parties are partially serious whereas 45 did not wish to express an opinion.
TABLE 6.2
Opinion of the 200 Mizo respondents on role of Youth Organisations and the Church in post-peace Mizoram

( in numbers)

Assess the role of the Youth Organisations like the MZP, YMA etc in Mizo/Zo society today

- 'Over Active'
- 'Partial'
- 'Positive'
- 'Negative'

Assess the role of the Church in post-peace Mizoram

Source: Own Survey

# Table 6.2, I have used 4 categories to assess the opinions of my 200 respondents to two very significant questions on the role of youth organisations such as MZP and so on, as well as the role of the Church in Mizo society. The opinions could be ranged from the pejorative/supportive “Over Active” to totally negating the functioning of the organisation/institution. 115 people categorised the youth organisations as “Over Active”. However 65 had a positive opinion on these organisations. So it may be deduced that not all the above stated respondents were totally favourable towards these organisations. 20 felt, they were ‘Partially effective’.

The second question relates to the role of the Church in post-peace Mizoram. Here I find once again the innocuous “Over Active” (80), followed by a clear 95 ascertaining the positive role of the Church and finally only 15 negating its impact on society totally. Mizoram continues to be influenced by strong communitarian ties, and the influence of the Church is almost complete.


The Peace Accord transported the ‘Dream of Zo Reunification’ to some infinite future and the nostalgia of an imagined ‘Zomi’ continued to haunt the public memory time and
again. Rajiv Gandhi assured that the centre will undertake all possible efforts to promote peace and development in Mizoram. But he ruled out the idea of a ‘Greater Mizoram’: a proposal that was previously rejected by the chief ministers of the north-eastern region.\textsuperscript{32} The logical outcome of such nostalgia was the eruption in virtual blogs, virtual spaces calling for such Zo-reunification. Most of which operate from the peripheral areas adjoining present day Mizoram. Virtual communities are places where people meet, and they also are tools; the place-like aspects and tool-like aspects only partially overlap. Cyberspace much like the market through ‘gossip/chatting’ makes the connecting link between people. Through these gossips/chatting and group interaction the raw material of the ‘Zomi’, Zo \textit{hnahthlak} gets proliferated in the virtual space towards ‘a community in building’. ‘Virtual communities’ require an act of imagination, ‘and what must be imagined is the idea of the community itself’ and in this way Anderson’s line of thinking can be stretched to the understanding of cyberspace. Through these virtual communities the ‘wished’ appearance manifests itself as the ‘virtual identity’.\textsuperscript{33}

\textit{Zo} Identity continues to be a political site on the web, due to the conflicting desires of the people pressing their politicised virtual bodies in the new politics of virtual space. How fast consideration for ethnic national survival will supplant petty tribalism from the Zo mind remains to be seen. There lies the fate and destiny of the Zo people. The mushrooming of ‘Zo cyberspace’, such as: zogamonline.com, pu-zo.com, zoforum.co.nv, zomi.org. and others reflect the mood of the Zo consciousness in contemporary times. Zomi International Network (ZoNet) which was established in the year 2000 has ‘embraced the power of ‘IT’ (Information Technology) to bring individuals and local organisations together in innovative and productive ways.’ The ZoNet claims:

\begin{quote}
“We are progressive Zomi who came together because we share common interests and values. We came together to build political will among the
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{33} Katerina Diamandaki says that the desire for community on the net is paradoxical, as the physical body and location is superficially ‘left behind’ in order to pursue specific coordinates within information-based communities that also have political implications for the formation of offline politics. For details \textit{Cf.}, Katerina Diamandaki. (2003). “Virtual ethnicity and digital diasporas: Identity construction in cyberspace”. \textit{Global Media Journal}. 15 November 2003.Spring.
Zomi for unity, freedom and democracy - to create open society, cooperation and trust that will guide us in our movement."

The ZoNet like the many other virtual spaces aims at bridging ideological differences and geographical distances and plays vital roles in formation of effective local communities around the world.

Public Opinion in Mizoram appeared to have worked itself up to a considerable pitch. The post-Peace Accord internal and external ethnic resurgence in Mizoram seem to reflect the difficulty that a nation faces once the public has been made to imagine rightly or wrongly that a particular territory forms a part of the rightful homeland (Desh) or ('Ram' in Duhlian) (for details refer to Chapter II). The debates over the generic identity pitted against the phonetic identity have taken to the levels of cyberspace. What makes the birthing of a virtual identity or cyberspace really interesting is that it has created a virtual world for the bonding of the 'Zomi' or the Zo hnahthlak. Another interesting point in this birthing of a cyberspace is that most of these blogs and cyberspaces have been maintained from those areas that are beyond the present state of Mizoram, mostly from Manipur and Myanmar (Burma). Through my interactions with the Zo/Mizo youths, I was informed that most bloggers and visitors to these sites were educated employed, semi-employed as well as un-employed youngsters.34 The 'Zo cyber politics' reflects the renewed interest played by youngsters in the politics of inclusion and exclusion in a new era. An era where people in Mizoram have largely realised the impossibility of the dream of reunification of the Zo hnahthlak of Manipur, Burma, Tripura, and Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT); especially in keeping with the terms and conditions of the Peace Accord. The Peace and the multifold development ushering fast pace changes in Mizoram via ‘money-bags politics’ seems to have contented and satisfied the middle class. A large section of the Zo/Mizo population in Mizoram have also realised the futility of changing names from Mizo to Zomi (refer to Chapter III).

34 This further substantiates Foucault’s argument that ‘knowledge is power’. It is the voices of the few who are privileged to use these tools that are mapping the structures that will make up the World Wide Web for the Zo hnahthlak. This power of self-representation on the Internet is reserved not only for those who can afford computers, but also for those who can afford the time and education to make this tool workable for them. Access to the virtual space comes with a hidden power-play of wealth.
One of the most useful ways to evaluate the prospects of the Internet to function as the public sphere, given its inherent limitations comes from Mark Poster in 'Cyber-democracy: The Internet and the Public Sphere.' Poster argues that if the print media and the values of enlightenment helped create a 'modern' society and an individual who was rational, autonomous and stable, then new technologies facilitated the birth of a post-modern society and created an individual whose identity was fractured, unstable and fragmented. Poster who looks upon the Internet as a public/social space also contends that it has the capacity to democratise subjects because its' users are not subject to the limitations of gender, race or even face to face communication. Thinking on the above lines, Poster contends that communication on the Internet need not be limited to that of a single public and can encompass previously excluded groups while also accommodating multiple spheres of discussion. While Poster acknowledges that the Internet cannot eliminate all the inequalities and power-relationships present in existing forms of communication, he still argues that the Internet can perform the duties of the public sphere without “actually being one”. Poster’s model of the relationship between the Internet and the public sphere is insightful to understand how new technologies like blogs shape human behaviour and constitute new identities.

In other words, the Internet can and does provide a medium for disparate people to form social networks (based on common interest) and communicate meaningfully with each other. Furthermore, the Internet can also foster critical reasoning, self-reflection and argumentative debate among users who do not know each other. Thus, the Internet now offers wide scope for a connection that is not only immediate but also personal, social and political which in turn provides tremendous potential for the empowerment of society.

Added to this tug of war between the generic identity and phonetic identity is the emergent Indian consciousness or Indian Identity which makes the double helix of identity a more complex one. Today the state of Mizoram is trying to re-mould its identity with the


36 Mark Poster. Ibid, pp.224.
larger nation within the framework of the Indian constitution. The Zomi movement being exclusivist is being constantly challenged by the legally accepted generic identity 'Mizo'. The embattledness of both the phonetic and generic identity continues to be a fact of the 'political landscape' of Mizoram. However, a strong support for the unification of the Zo hnahthlak comes from sub-tribes in the peripheral areas. The conflicting territorial claims in the North-East and dilemmas of having to accept the state territory; is best bargained by calling to change the name of the territorial space in tune with the 'Imagined National territory' (Zopui/Zoram): changing the name becomes a special or compulsory programme to satisfy the national ego of the 'Diaspora'. The overall impact of all these complex processes on the unification of the 'Zomi' Zo hnahthlak is that the Zomi consciousness has been retained in its mummified form at the level of cyberspace and has taken an emergent form of a virtual identity.

6.3. Identity and Culture Politics: Changing dimensions in Mizoram

Identities in Mizoram are mostly constructed around ethno-nationalisms. Therefore, centralises difference as the most important marker thereby recognising cultural difference of which an identity is a producer as well as a product. The politics of difference holds well so far as there is no trespassing of boundaries, but it becomes problematic and takes on a skewed imagery once the exclusivity of the boundary is blurred by democratic processes. It thus gestures towards an internal contradiction that while excluding the other it seeks to be recognised by it. Therefore, difference is not self-generative but always another contributed marker. The contemporary critical-theoretical debate surrounding identity politics has been productive in that it is flexible and extendable, as new political claims get appended or hybridized with the existing relationship between identity and environment; and identity and development. All these different claims are directed for consolidating the community’s bargaining power. Politically these new claims seem to be fine as of culture is an ensemble of


261
beliefs and practices that are subjected to a "pervasive technology of control". Culture becomes the embattled site of home, authenticity, and self-defined identity. There is a keen desire to be part of the borderless globalised continuum, paradoxically a keen desire to keep cultural identities as sacred or pristine remains.

Hybridization of identities is an interesting phenomenon in Zo/Mizo politics. Identities have undergone tremendous evolution and have been hybridized with or without the ethno-politics of exclusivity. Within the generic representation of the Mizo and other identities, it is important to note the internal heterogeneity within the generic as problematic as the conflict between ethno-nationalism and the nation state. Moving from identity politics to culture, we need to ask how one formulates oneself culturally; especially, when 'culture', enriches itself through mutations in time and space.

The globalised media and the visual effects of Indian cinema has encapsulated a section of the urban citizenry so much so that the anti-India/anti-Hindi attitude has diluted to a large extent and become more welcoming. For instance, popular Hindi programmes like CID (Sony Entertainment Television); and also latest Hindi movies along side Korean movies are dubbed in Mizo and televised for popular consumption. The process of external borrowings continues at a doubled pace and inspite of the efforts of the Zo cultural nationalists to build an exclusive Ideal Zo Christian State with a distinct culture and politics or way of life. Globalisation co-notates diverse interpretations from divergent perspectives; determined by the time and space factor. Beyond the 'Economic' and the 'Political' moorings, globalisation has cultural callings, in particular, to marginalised communities and their identities. Globalisation has been associated with bringing about large-scale commodification into the pristine territories of the tribal zones in the North-East, systematically erasing 'their cultures' and bringing about 'external' or 'cosmetic'

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developments. The globalised scenario depicts a space where the local and the global overlap, reflecting a matrix of interwoven-ness.

6.4. Politics of Centre-led-dole-development in Mizoram

Mizoram has earned the enviable reputation of being the oft-repeated ‘model state’ in insurgency ridden North-East India. Development or ‘Changkangna’ has been geared in leaps and bounds through ‘money-bags’ politics in the now most peaceful state in the North-East. A state almost obsessed with external and fast pace development Mizoram serves as an interesting phenomenon in analysing the various hues of development, its benefits and challenges. The politics of ‘Development’ in the region being highly charged has been time and again bulwarked against the silhouette of ethno-politics and geared toward the demands for greater autonomy and loosening of the federal structure and creation of dole dependent federalism.

Development projects which had been halted by the insurgency of the 60s were revived after the elevation of Mizoram to a Union Territory in 1972. One of the obvious factors which compelled the government to gear development at a fast pace was the relocation of 80 percent of the population by way of re-grouping of villages to facilitate counter-insurgency operations. However, the economic development which took place in the post-1972 period reflected the desire of the Government of India to resolve the insurgency through distributive and structural changes, rather than purely military intervention which had hitherto underlined the government policy. It is interesting to note that from the 5th Five Year Plan (1974-79) onwards; the three North-Eastern States of Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh became the highest recipients of per capita public expenditure on development in the country. In fact, the development funds available to these States were four to five hundred percent more than those available to other States of the Union. The tables (6.3 and 6.4) show the phenomenal growth in government expenditure on development over the years.
TABLE 6.3
Total Revenue and Own Tax revenue as percentage of Gross State Domestic Product in 2006-07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Revenue Receipts</th>
<th>Tax Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagaland</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


# Table 6.3 shows Mizoram having the least collection so far as tax revenues are concerned among the north-eastern states. Tax revenues are made up of taxes such as income tax, corporate tax, excise, customs and other duties that the government levies. But its total revenues receipts are third highest in number, indicating it has a large non-tax revenue base.

The Centre had thus gone all-out to reduce the economic imbalances between the more developed parts of the country, and the hill tribal areas of the North-East. This decidedly took the wind out of the secessionists’ main grievance and propaganda. But internally, within these States, all was not well with the way this windfall of money was utilised. With a burgeoning bureaucracy, public employment in 1985 stood at 20,000 in Mizoram, with a population of less than half a million people. With ‘easy money got in the form of relief, subsidies and loans,’ Mizoram suddenly became one of the best markets for electronic and other consumer goods in the country. This was, however, expected to be nothing more than a temporary bonanza, which created conditions for peace but kept the economy stagnant. Consumerism and a mad rush for commodities and luxuries resulted in the birth of commodity fetishism among the Zo/Mizo people.

The politician-bureaucrat-contractor nexus continues to control the Zo economy and the development process. The experience of ‘money bag politics’ has contributed to the growth of a ‘paid holiday’ attitude among the politician-bureaucrat-contractor nexus. It made integration with India an overwhelming vested interest for the most vocal and influential segment of society. An IAS officer could build a house with a large government loan at low rate of interest, and then rent it out to a government department at the rate fixed by a colleague. A fifty percent advance could be given to a supplier “just having a semblance of access to the articles intended to be supplied” or to a contractor for constructing a building that would take five years to build. ‘Fake subsidies in thousands of rupees for minor irrigation, contour terracing and plantations’ were distributed rampantly. However, measures such as the reimbursement of three-fourths of the expenditure and the cost of air travel for anybody going 2000 miles to the Christian Medical College Hospital in Vellore in south India for treatment, brought about tremendous social good, individual happiness, and goodwill for India.41

The process of development had been slow in the North East Region (NER) for many reasons.42 The whole of the North-East has been categorised as an industrially backward zone. Recognising the special requirements of the region and the need for significant levels of government investment, the North-Eastern States have been categorised as Special Category States and Central Plan assistance to these States is provided liberally.43 It currently gets 90 percent of its plan assistance as grants and the remaining 10 per cent as loans. Special Category States receive preferential treatment in the distribution of normal central assistance from state plans.44


42 National Committee on the Development of Backward Areas commissioned by Planning Commission in 1981 has identified three types of fundamental backwardness in the region viz. areas of tribal concentration, hill areas and chronically flood affected areas.


44 The ‘Gadgil Mukherjee formula’ does not apply in the determination of the distribution between non Special Category States and Special Category States. Had the Gadgil formula applied on Special
## TABLE 6.4
Central Assistance as Percentage of GSDP during the Tenth Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Special Category State</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>10.44</td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>9.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Non-Special Category States</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>All-India</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 6.4 shows the Central Assistance as percentage of GSDP during the Tenth Plan in the North-East and compares the same at the all-India frame from 2002 to 2007. The table shows a substantial increase in Central Assistance in case of the North-East; and a gradual decline in case of all-India.

A statement indicating total Central assistance as a percentage of GSDP in the NE States, Special Category States and Non-Special Category States has been given in Table 6.4 (above). The Central Government has also been announcing special packages for socio-economic development and priority funding for both Central Plan and State Plan in the North East Region from time to time.\(^{45}\) The major investments have been in transport and communication followed by water and power sector.

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\(^{45}\) In 2001 the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) was set up with an aim to coordinate and give impetus to the Centre’s development efforts pertaining to socio-economic development of the region. The NLCPR (Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources) set up in 1997-98 and operationalised in 1998-99 initially handled by the Planning Commission was transferred to the DoNER (Government of India. (2008). *Eleventh Five Year Plan 2007-2012: Inclusive Growth*, Vol.-I. New Delhi: Planning Commission/Oxford University Press. p. 152).
Table 6.5 shows that the State government is the largest employer followed by the Central Government followed by the Autonomous District Councils. The males overshadow the females in terms of employment in Government Sector. Banking and Insurance are coming up as the possible avenues for employment.

Table 6.5 (above) shows that the Government continues to be the largest employer till date. Private enterprise being almost absent has compelled the people to look to the Government to provide employment. There is a stiff competition to get these salaried positions.
government jobs and being at the centre of power-politics that is at the urban spaces of Aizawl became the required criterion for achieving success. In other words, people aspire to be nearer to the seat of power with the aim of taking benefits of state, district and sub-divisional levels of administration. So urbanisation has not necessarily resulted in the growth of urban economy as such. Nepotism and institutionalised corruption thus are bred by the economy which is heavily dependent on money-bag economics.

The present state of development in Mizoram is largely an outcome of the Centre’s plan to make Mizoram a model of development. It is clearly the failure of successive ministries after the Accord that is to blame for the current dismal state of affairs in Mizoram. One is not concerned here with assigning blames on the various ministries for their evident failure to take advantage of the ‘generosity’ of the central government. The Development projects in the post-peace era have been highly ‘Aizawl-Centric’ or ‘North-Centric’. The southern regions have continued to face the traditional stereotypes. The recent interest that the region has gained through the ‘Look East Policy’ has pumped in more flow of finances and development projects. The state has realised the dilemmas of having kept the southern regions as ethnic enclaves. The following section intends to have a quick glance at such projects aimed at development and in special focus on the World Bank Road Project connecting the capital Aizawl with Lunglei and beyond; and which intends to open the region to the world economy at large. In this section I attempt to establish that, in the absence of a competent agency to generate development and critique the same over time and space; peace *per se* ‘does not’ or ‘cannot’ produce any meaningful or sustainable development. Therefore, there is an urgent need to question and reassess the Centre-led-dole-development in Mizoram over the years.

**Case 1 World Bank Road Project connecting North & South Divide in Mizoram**

The World Bank Road Project connecting more than 40 villages with Aizawl, (the capital) was approved by the World Bank on 14th March 2002 and was estimated to cost 70 million US dollars. The International Development Association (IDA) provided a credit of 60 million US dollars and the Government of Mizoram, as the implementing agency, would meet the counterpart funding of 10 million US dollars by borrowing it from the Government.
Chapter VI
Development and Identity Formation

of India. Till date, around 48 million US dollars have already been disbursed for the project. The World Bank visions that the project will improve road capacity, quality and safety through rehabilitation and maintenance. The World Bank also stated that “the project aims to expand or rehabilitate over 500 kilometres of the state’s core road network which is around half of the state’s total core network. So far, around 210 km maintenance roads have been completed and opened to traffic, reducing travel time of about 50 percent. In addition, 42 percent of the core road network has been improved to good condition and maintenance backlog has decreased to 800 km from 1,000 km.” The target date (of all financial activities related to the project) of the World Bank Project was kept as 31st December 2007. During the inauguration of the Road project, the then Chief Minister Zoramthanga of the MNF led government promised that ‘the World Bank will be replacing the old run down road with a new road that will be smooth and sleek as a snake.’

In 2000, Cochin-based Bagheeratha Engineering Ltd. was given the contract to build the road and it began its work from April 2002. Due to rampant corruption and negligence of the work the road conditions worsened; Bagheeratha Engineering Ltd. was decontracted in 2005. The authorities took time to select new contractors for the project. In November 2005, the Government announced the names of three companies, Valicha, Tantia and Raitani to resume the project. However, the companies did not begin their work even by March 2006. The indifference of the Government angered and disappointed the villagers. The Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) took up the issue and began a protest and demanded accountability and prompt action and blocked the road on 30th March 2006. The state police picketed the protesters and five MZP leaders were arrested and jailed. Following which on 31st March 2006, MZP had a meeting with the Government officials, and the five arrested leaders were released and the Government promised to resume the road construction work by April 2006 and completed the project by June 2008.

On 22nd May 2007, the World Bank granted additional funding stating that, “the additional funding is due to higher costs of works and construction materials, beyond the

46 The financial terms and conditions for the financial credit is 35 years of maturity, including 10 years grace period. The World Bank’s credit to the Government of India is at 0.5 percent interest and the Government of India’s credit to the Government of Mizoram is at 12 percent interest.
control of the State Government". Concerned, over the slow pace of work and escalating costs, student and youth groups such as the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Young Mizo Association (YMA) branches and other groups from the affected villages appealed to the project director PWD (SE) K Sawmvela and also submitted petitions to the Chief Minister and other authorities to take prompt action. The local MLA pacified the MZP and requested them not to take up any action and promised to discuss the matter with the Chief Minister.

The Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project had forewarned that cutting the slope in the hillsides would increase the instability and result in landslides. The increase in landslides speaks of the inefficiency in handling of the project work carried out by the World Bank and Government selected contractors. The effectiveness of both the implementing agency and the funder of the project and their commitment for the welfare of the affected communities have been questioned. The displaced people have been compensated for their loss of cultivable and residential areas at the rate of Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 per square feet. However, the compensation given was for the width of the proposed road and some of the villagers have even submitted their original land holding certificates to the "Government". Many affected by the project fear that the Government will not live up to its promise and that the "authorities" might simply stop the project. The Government of Mizoram has mentioned that if it does not get the additional funding, it will not be able to afford to self-finance it, and therefore, will not be able to complete the project. The Government of Mizoram reasoned that increased costs in upgrading contracts, fuel costs, and construction costs as being the basis for the need to seek additional funding. The project if taken seriously could brighten India’s transnational trade policy in the North-East which has been 'closed' so far. Trade gateways through these new roads could mean further development of India’s trade with South East Asia and China and vice versa. Other areas of concern being that the current local economy in Mizoram, which is dependent mostly on the Central Government, will not be able to compete against it.

The Activist role that the MZP has taken on this particular project has opened the Pandora’s Box of debates and counter-debates on such mega development projects as well as a renewed interest in the failure of mini development projects. For instance, the Bairabi
Thermal Power Plant with a capacity to produce 22MW of electricity, which was set up at a cost of Rs. 105 Crores, today it lies idle, not for want of fuel, but because the estimated unit cost is too high to be introduced to public consumers. Around Rs. 9 Crores of compensation has recently been awarded for land and properties to be affected by a 12MW Hydel Project at Tuirial, making it almost certain that this mini project will also become cost-ineffective. The post-Accord governments have not been able to produce even one cost-effective infrastructure project so far.

India has been witnessing a very poor growth in human development and the trend in the North-East reflects the same. ‘The region has no doubt witnessed improvements in the last decade of the twentieth century but still suffers from the dilemma of ‘metropole-periphery’. The Indian economy, in spite of pursuing the policy of liberalisation and globalisation since late eighties has not been able to achieve much on account of human development and welfare. The Rural-urban disparity, gender disparity and uneven human development across the States in the region is quite significant.

The literature on development economics has identified ‘real economic growth’ and ‘growth of per-capita income’ as two major indicators for ascertaining the pattern of economic development in different regions. However, in the last few decades, the narrowness of this concept has frequently been challenged. It has been argued that development must encompass the parameters like increase in life expectancy, access to sanitation, clean drinking water, improvement in health services, reduction of infant mortality, and increase in literacy rate of women, adults and women empowerment and so on. Till date, the development policy followed in the North-East has failed to create an economy which is self sustaining and self regenerating in nature. The ‘private sector’ has not grown and as a result all the states in the region have failed to create an economy outside agriculture; and added to this economic dilemma is the fact that most of these states still depend on primitive agricultural methods. The fruit of Government led development has failed to encompass the majority of the people of this region. R N Prasad and A K Aggarwal, in their book, *Modernisation of the Mizo Society*, point out how the Indian government’s soft policy of reconciliation led tribal communities in the northeast to believe that the entire task of looking
after their welfare devolved solely on the Union government. They lost their spirit of self-reliance. The 'no tax' policy saw the emergence of the Mizo capitalist, and the income-multiplier process has caused widening income differences with adverse effects on the social, political and economic life of the people.

The unsystematic approach to infrastructural development and rampant institutionalised corruption has resulted in the distortion of the whole development process. 'Agriculture', the mainstay of the state's economy, has remained stagnant. The bulk of essential items need to be imported. 'Private sector' yet to take off and the government service becomes the main stable source of employment, leading to surplus staffing of the government. There is a widening 'income gap' between urban and rural dwellers and likewise the rate of growth of 'educated' 'unemployed' is on the rise. The following table (6.6) showing the official live register from the Employment Exchange cited in the Statistical Handbook of Mizoram, 2008 substantiates the employment scenario in Aizawl District and other districts in Mizoram.
**Chapter VI Development and Identity Formation**

**Source:** Statistical Handbook of Mizoram 2008.

### TABLE 6.6 Employment Statistics on District Employment Exchange As On September 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>AIZAWL</th>
<th>CHAMPHAI</th>
<th>LUNGEI</th>
<th>SAIHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LIVE REGISTER</td>
<td>LIVE REGISTER</td>
<td>LIVE REGISTER</td>
<td>LIVE REGISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>MALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Class VI to IX</td>
<td>11422</td>
<td>3719</td>
<td>15141</td>
<td>3016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Matriculate/HSLC</td>
<td>4060</td>
<td>2456</td>
<td>6516</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PUC/HSSLC</td>
<td>3442</td>
<td>2408</td>
<td>5850</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>GRADUATE</td>
<td>2870</td>
<td>2399</td>
<td>5269</td>
<td>274</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>POST GRADUATE</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>661</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>1285</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Science</td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>(iii) Commerce</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>(v) Hindi (Matric &amp; above)</td>
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<td>516</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Driver</td>
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<td>276</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Conductor</td>
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<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Technical Trade</td>
<td>1241</td>
<td>1433</td>
<td>2674</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Physically Handicapped</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Non-Mizo</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.6 indicates that Aizawl District is the most literate and has technical human resource while Champhai and Saiha present the bottom end of the spectrum. The smaller districts being more backward and having substantial lower literacy and employment opportunities naturally become the centres of disgruntledness. All indicating the substantiation of the claim that illiteracy and lack of employment opportunities feeds secessionist overtones.

The Health Care system presents a sorry picture with in-patients in the main Civil Hospital (Aizawl) requiring having their laboratory tests at private laboratories and having to pay for syringes and bandages. Due to corruption, inferior equipments are bought which lead to decline in the state run health care system.47 ‘Doctor chuak thar hi kan bawm uar’ (there is a trend to seek newly appointed doctors who have very little experience) and the Health care system fails to deliver. State corruption has increased over the years. ‘The corrupt elites/persons actively dedicate themselves in the church based organisations and present an external face of Tlawmgaihna. In other words, the church gives them refuge. Everything is controlled by the Church especially the rich Synod.’ For instance, if a Drug Zuar (Drug peddler) actively participates in the business of the Church, he/she is kept out of the vigilance of the agencies. All kind of corruption is on the rise says Vanramchhuangi:

‘Biak in ropui’, ‘kohran chuan pawisa chia a du’, ‘tholawm’, Missionary thon chua competition a ni ringot (corruption has been institutionalized through the Church. The Church has enormous property acquired through donations. It only wants money and every Church is in a rat race to sponsor & send missionaries elsewhere) ... ‘Government of Synod’, the extravagant houses of the churches in Mizoram can be compared to the papacy.48

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47 Prof. F. Lalremsiama (Department of History, Johnson’s College). Personal Interview. Khatlia, Aizawl: 26th January 2008; Pu Lallianchhunga (Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, Chaltlang Campus). Personal Interview. Aizawl: 19th January 2008; Professor Lalrinthanga (Department of Public Administration, Mizoram University, Chaltlang Campus). Personal Interview. Aizawl: 19th January 2008.

There continues a decline in per capita success rate of young graduates in the national level competitions for jobs owing to ‘lack of quality education’. The ‘Angry Young man syndrome’ seems to loom large at the society. Thus, threats and pressures have become the most effective means of extracting group interests and concessions from the government. The *Nexus of Patriarchy* have become unduly influential not only in the discourse of policy issues but also of routine administrative matters. One can cite numerous instances, of the mushrooming social tensions and anxieties arising from the perception of the common people that the authorities, present or past, have not taken development seriously. The under-development of the region and the under-use of the potential resources of the region have often been cited as evoking a sense of being neglected and treated as step-children and not belonging to the northern tribes group by the southern tribes and other peripheral groups. Scholars have also argued that these feelings act as psychological variables on the whole process of identity-building in Mizoram. Underneath the *Veil of Peace* and external development, Mizoram is fraught with problems which require immediate attention. Therefore, within the realm of development economics, there is a need to search for a right combination of community, market and state for promoting economic growth and to allow the trickle down effect of growth to reach the grass root level. Failing which, ‘Peace’ may become unbearable, that is, if the common people in Mizoram ever again decide to have a violent revolt from sheer frustrations, this time it may not be against the Centre. Most likely, it will be against the misrule of their Government and its agencies and the vested interest groups in the state.\(^{49}\)

### 6.5. Identity in the context of Spaces: Urban and Rural

The variations in terms of degrees to access to information and resource allocations have had a direct repercussion on political participation in Mizoram. Evidently, the Retired

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Government officials due to the very nature of their functioning and positions are more active as political citizens and have often taken an activist citizenry role in post-Peace Accord Mizoram. The mobilization directed by such activist citizenry is always encapsulated in terms of group demands or memorandums, most often channelled through the prior formation of an association supporting the same. Contemporary group politics in Mizoram is a reminiscent of the Commoner’s Movement wherein the commoners had mustered their voices in unison to break the hold of the traditional Chieftainship. Group politics in Mizoram in this sense is an expression of political development in Mizoram. The mushrooming of groups such as PRISM (People’s Right to Information and Development Implementing Society of Mizoram), advocates of Municipal politics in place of Village Councils and YMM (Youth Movement for Mizoram) suggests the activist role that elderly citizens and youths have taken upon themselves. The activist/vigilantes role taken by the Youths in Mizoram pre-dates the ‘Rang De Basanti’ (RDB, 2006) syndrome in urban spaces in mainland India. Interestingly, in Mizoram these political developments in urban spaces which earlier had little echoes in the rural spaces are being reverberating even in the rural spaces further reaffirming the need to look at rural and urban as a continuum.

The activist citizenry reflects the voice that had been so far been unheard or muted. ‘Voice’ is the capacity of individuals, communities and civil society to influence the government’s decisions on issues that affect their lives. It also refers to a wide range of measures such as complaints, organised protests, lobbying and participation in decision-making and product delivery. This voice is often political in nature and content; in other words it takes the form of activist citizenry. The quest for inclusion of these ‘voices’, remains

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50 Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, dir. Rang De Basanti (2006). India: ROMP/UTV Motion Pictures. Mehra’s Amir Khan starrer created much stir among the youths and called in for ‘youth power’. Rang De Basanti or RDB not only induced the public into organizing candle-light vigilantism throughout the public spaces in urban India and public protests on various issues of public interest but also motivated the youth to participate in politics. RDB churned much debate at various levels for its portrayal of nationalism and citizenship especially amongst the young audiences. The desire to bring about a change or make a difference in society manifested itself in an exhibitionist mode of actively participating in street protests and lobby on various public interests. This youth activism not just helped revitalize citizenship and expand the scope and direction of public sphere in India but also demonstrated the grip that Bollywood has over the masses in India.

the core theme of the process of decentralisation since the early 90s. Issues of effective people's participation, accountability and responsiveness of the state, and citizens as stakeholders of development still plague our visions for social transformation. New strategies, innovative programmes and advocacy with the governments continue to be the under-lying theme to achieve greater people's participation and true democracy.

A survey on the 'Behavioural study of political attitude and opinion in Mizoram: A post-poll study during the Lok Sabha election' funded by the University Grant Commission under the National Election Study 2009 was conducted in 20 of the 40 Assembly constituencies. The study revealed several interesting aspects of Mizo politics in terms of voting behaviour 'while a lot of voters had expressed their loss of hope in politicians and political parties, a good majority of rural people still remained loyal to the political parties'. Another significant finding was that 'many people in the rural areas were living in extreme poverty and were eagerly looking forward to a good government to liberate them. A number of cultivators said they had had enough of the primitive shifting cultivation, but had no other options due to lack of agricultural policies by the government'. The urban dwellers were economically better off than their rural counterparts seem to show lesser interest to politics.

An important factor that the above study seems to brush aside is the fact that the year 2006-2009 falls under the cyclic Mautam famine. The corruption and mishandling by disbursing agencies of the Central funds meant to aid the rural victims, has created much disgruntledness and rural unrest. Naturally the rural mass has decided to take on its onus the responsibility to teach the previous MNF Government a lesson in good governance. The gradual yet substantive increase in population, literacy and unemployment at the rural level

52 Aizawl, May 5, 2009: Rural people in Mizoram are more interested in politics than their urban counterparts, according to a survey. <http://www.newkerala.com/nkfullnews-1-32810.html> (accessed on 2 July 2009).


can also be seen as a contributory factor for the revived rural political consciousness which had done on slumber post MNF movement.

6.6. Post-Peace Accord Emergent Trends in Political Participation

6.6.1. Activism of the Elderly Citizens

The retired government officials are voicing their concern on the existing Village Council system of administration in Mizoram. The activist citizenry has been largely unable to come to consensus on the kind of administrative system to replace the Village Councils in urban spaces. The Village Council has been considered ineffective or not suitable for urban administration in Mizoram. The war of words between the supporters of the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) and the Municipal system for the administration of Aizawl has protracted over the years. Municipal councils at urban headquarters and PRI for the rural areas is the mid-way suggestion that emerged to check the stalemate.

Many in Mizoram feel that adopting the PRI for the rural set up that will help a uniform kind of administration all over India and help integrate Mizoram administratively with the rest of India. The reluctance to either the PRI or the Municipal system has been critiqued as the ‘lack of political vision’. ‘PRI is the best for local self government but our political leaders have a lack of vision as they do not love Mizoram. Politicians oppose it because the money which will come through the central scheme will be kept out of the purview of the monopolising effect by political leaders. Politicians will not just be able to filter money into vested interests and also because the exercise of power will be diluted as a result of the PRI.’ The ‘Village Councils lack the grassroots healing, they hardly touch people. The PRI will initiate participatory democracy which could not be achieved by the Village Councils. The PRI is for places which are developing and more advanced unlike the Village Councils which are for backward regions where politics has not yet matured. ‘The Village Councils is for the less developed’. The PRI and the Municipal system are more ‘Changkangna’ (progressive/developed) and for matured citizens.’ The success of PRI in other parts of India can be seen as an example for why it should be adopted in Mizoram in
rural settings. The lack of will of the political leaders in Mizoram is the main stumbling block for achieving real people’s democracy. The most recent achievement of the activism of this variety has been the passing of the Municipal Act, 2007 in Mizoram and creation of an urban administration for Aizawl city. Through this a distinct line has been wedged to differentiate between the ‘urban’ and the ‘rural’ administration in Mizoram.

6.6.2. Activism of the Youth through PRISM, YMM, MYC

Youth Activism in Mizoram over the years, just like the rest of the North-East, has been strong with deep political inclinations. The MZP is the most prominent first generation face of the ‘Youth Power’ and ever since its inception in the 70s it has carved a space for itself in Zo/Mizo politics and had enjoyed the slice of power and resource allocations in Mizoram (refer to Chapters III & V). The direct involvement of the students in the peace process in the late 70s gave them ‘a wild card entry’ into the political space which, till then was reserved for the elders (Upa) and the members of the Church (Kohhran Upa). The activities of the MZP have been branded as “over activism” and many are not comfortable

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56 Sub-national, regional feelings will continue to be there. The stereotypes of ‘Chhim bial mi’ (southerners), ‘hmar bial mi’ (northerners) continue to exist reaffirmed in everyday politics in Mizoram.


with these institutions. Many of our respondents considered the MZP, and its rival group the Mizo Students Union (MSU) as the bud of corruption in society. They take collections from Vai suppliers, contractors all in the name of fund raising and misuse the money that is, they use it for private purpose. And even though both these bodies claim to be representing students they hardly seem to do so. ‘They focus on every thing other than education and students rights. The MZP and other students body has diverted from its traditional role to act as a students interest group in Mizo society encouraging educational development adding to the quality of performance of the youths. Students’ welfare is lost in the mist. They should ask for students’ welfare, but they have totally lost their goal. The MZP over the years has become a hub of unemployed boys and girls who want easy source of money and popularity and easy entry into politics.’

The next prominent first generation face of the youth is the YMA (Young Mizo Association) which has been projected as the young force from the 40s onwards. However, the YMA and its different bodies are not considered to be the real youth force because its membership is open to all Mizos from above the age of 15 and many members are not youths by definition; and also because it is controlled by the Church (Kohhran) through ‘remote control’ as one of our respondents puts it. The YMA and its activities have come to strong scrutiny over the years. Zaliana for instance, criticised the CYMA which to him ‘imitates the English FA cup during the month of May’.

The month of May is traditionally important for the Mizos because its harvesting season... and what we see is that youths or the YMA members from across the state are competing for cups sponsored by ONGC etc. It’s a waste of human resource which in the rural settings

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61 Dr. Lalthanthuami, Deputy Manager, MAMCO. Personal Interview. Aizawl: 18th, 19th & 21st January 2008.


65 Dr. Lalthanthuami. Personal Interview. Ibid.
could mean a potential agricultural helping hand. YMA should not encourage such tactics'. Zaliana feels that the ‘Mizo culture has been redefining itself and so is the YMA. It has changed overtime from its traditional functions of ‘tlawmgaihna and community service on the lines of Christian ethics’ to that of ‘organising tournaments and voyeuristic programs.  

Zaliana says:

The ‘YMA can voluntarily extend its support to Block Development Projects and centrally funded projects such as the IAY and bring about accountability and transparency. However such innovations are hardly done. Instead the YMA organises shows and tournaments. The Central Governments initiatives to build houses for poor in his village in Champhai were supported by public contribution in kind and not in cash. The result was that IAY projects are superior in quality so much so that even the Central body which came to inspect the project was taken by surprise at the quality of work done in a small budget.

While KTP, TKP (Baptist) are better and work in tune with Christian ethics. The main problem is that every Mizo is a member of these entire organisations at different level. For instance, a Mizo boy student is a member of the MZP as a student; and at the same time he may also be a member of KTP (Presbyterian), and but a compulsory member of YMA.

Lalthanthuami says:

Youth activism in Mizoram has increased and they are involving themselves into arenas where they are not supposed to enter. They are taken too seriously by Governments and parties so much so that now they intervene in issues such as who should or which groups should be

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67 Ibid.

given the power to vote, ration cards, boundary etc. and likewise they also try to take advantage of party disputes.69

The CYMA is overactive and it is playing the role of a parallel Government. Their overwhelming presence has led many to feel that Mizoram has a parallel Government: 'The Government of YMA, The Government of MZP'. Parties and the political leaders out of fear of losing their vote-bank succumb to their pressures.

To cleanse the existing first generation forms of 'Youth Activism' newer forms of platform for Youth mobilisation has been floated such as PRISM (People's Right to Information and Development Implementing Society of Mizoram) and YMM (Youth Movement of Mizoram). The People's Right to Information and Development Implementing Society of Mizoram (PRISM, 2006) was formed on 1st August, 2006. PRISM has been registered under Mizoram Societies Registration Act, 2005 and its motto is “Let Facts be Disclosed”. PRISM for instance, has been actively scrutinising the activities of the government by invoking the provisions of the RTI Act and acting as a 'legal eagle'. The YMM was formed on 20th February, 2008 with the objectives of integrating the youths for the establishment of good and reliable government; preparing the youths for constructive thinking; establish a just government; to work together so that governmental machinery is held by honest and God-fearing persons. The YMM has been advocating the need for a restructuring of the old political order and its replacement by a totally new and energetic political party based on 'youth power'.

The Mizoram Youth Commission (MYC) was established in 200870 under the Mizoram Youth Commission Act 2008.71 The office of the MYC aims to function as a semi-

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70 The office of the Mizoram Youth Commission (MYC) came into being on October 13, 2008 and the office is housed in the Secretariat Annex-I, Treasury Square, Aizawl.

71 As per Mizoram Youth Commission Act 2008, District Youth Centre should be established in all District headquarters. The other activities are:
   a) Training Centre are those centres imparting training for self-employment. i.e. Driving School, Tailoring Centre, Shoe - Repair, TV Repair etc.;
autonomous body under the Secretary appointed by Government of Mizoram. Divided into two sections namely Administrative and Promotional, the MYC aims to enhance youth activities in Mizoram. Further, MYC also takes the onus to co-ordinate various Government Departments and implement state sponsored schemes for the welfare of Mizoram youths. The MYC is charged with the responsibility of promotion, exploration and enhancement of youth activities and welfare. Its terms of reference being so vast and comprehensive, it may suffice to say that the MYC has a role to play in all aspects of life that have either direct or indirect impact on the youth. The Mizoram Youth Commission through the Mizoram Youth Development Agency (MYDA), a registered body under the Mizoram Societies Registration Act, 2005 serves as the executing Agency of the Projects and schemes availed from the Centre and State governments and from such other funding agencies.

6.6.3. Activism of the Church through MPF

The role of the Church especially the ‘Presbyterian Church (Synod)’ in ‘Zo/Mizo Politics’ has been highly contested and debated. In order to unmask its earlier image of an

b) To include Bharat Dharshan for Youth groups for exposure visits;

c) For preparation of Detailed Project Reports, MYC may hire Consultancy Firms as it may deemed fit;

d) Other charges may also mean contingency;

e) Revolving fund means liquid assets reserved for soft-loan for overseas employment generation.


The Agency will prepare, submit and implement various C.S.S under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Tribal Affairs, DONER, NEC etc.


‘Ivory Tower’, the Church in Mizoram is undergoing a ‘make-over’ all geared towards ‘healing’ the strained relations between the people and the Church and the State. One of the attempts towards this healing comes in the form of MPF (Mizoram People Forum) which calls for a drive to establish clean politics. However, though overtly political, the MPF claims to be non-political:

*Mizoram Politics siam that nan MPF (Mizoram People Forum) din ruahmanna pawm a ni.*74 (MPF has been formed with the mission to bring order to the politics in Mizoram).

*Mizoram People Forum (MPF) a Piang Ta (MPF hi politics khel tura ding a ni lo va, mahse politics dik lo siam tha tur chuan theih angina a thawk ang).*75 (MPF has not been formed to actively participate in electoral politics but with the intension or mission to cleanse it and bring to an end the chaotic Zo/Mizo politics).

The MPF takes on the onus of a ‘conscience’ (political conscience) for the masses. The interest of the Church to sharpen its voice in the realms of politics seem loud and clear from the message conveyed by the Synod Executive Committee 213th:

*Politics, economics leh Vantlang nun chungchangah Kohhranin ‘aw’ neih tul an ti.*76 (It is necessary for the Church to have its say in politics, economics and social arena of Zo/Mizo life).

The initiative of the Church for clean politics and transparent accountable governance is clearly portrayed through its messages conveyed to the common man through *Synod Newsletter, Kristian Tlangau* and other such publications of the Church. The Church highlights and promotes the activities of the MPF time and again. For instance, the Synod Newsletter, May 2007 carries the following information in its cover page:

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Mizoram Politics siam tha iurin MPF-in Hna a Thawk, Zau Zawk Hma Lak Zel A Tum. District pargha-a MPF District Forum din a ni tawh. A dangah pawh din tum a ni. Aizawl Khawpuiah leh Aizawl District Chhungah Local Forum din chhoh zel a ni dawn.\textsuperscript{77} (The MPF is working efficiently and expanding its wings in every nook and corner of Mizoram. It has branches now in 5 districts and others will be established soon in the remaining districts. Aizawl city and Aizawl district will have local forum of the MPF).

Through the MPFs cry for clean politics the Church is also trying to cleanse its earlier tarred image of being corrupt and ‘hand-in-glove’ with the ‘Politician-bureaucracy-contractor nexus’. The medium of print (here, \textit{Synod Newsletter}) is used to publicly put facts across the table to the public as evident from the yearly disclosure of finances and assets of the Synod/Kohhran.\textsuperscript{78} At the same time the medium of print is explored to powerfully portray the ‘Social Service’ initiatives of the Church\textsuperscript{79} and cement the foundations of the Church as a ‘non-vested stakeholder’ (the nearest equivalent would be the Hindi word ‘Sutradhar’) in Mizo/Zo society.\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Post-Peace Accord socio-political developments include the germination of second generation activism institutions challenging the hegemony of the Nexus of Patriarchy and leading towards the rise of a vigilant civil society. The formation of the People’s Right to


Information and Development Implementing Society of Mizoram (PRISM) and Youth Movement of Mizoram (YMM) and Mizoram People Forum (MPF) in that sense is a move towards the birthing of an emergent vigilant/responsible civil society.

These nascent movements signal the emergent second generation in the civil society to critically scrutinise the prevalence of corruption, maladministration, nepotism in Mizoram. The mushrooming of groups such as PRISM, YMM, MYC and MPF suggests the activist role that the educated citizens and youths have taken upon themselves. For instance, the ‘ram in thleng’ (exchange of property) popular in Zo/Mizo political circles has been brought to accounts through organisational efforts.81

However, these political developments are trends distinctly from the urban spaces and channelled by the educated. The rural spaces have their own specificities and have faint echoes in these political developments. Also, there is a catch to this understanding of the birthing of a next generation civil society that is, the members of this new civil society are also member of the erstwhile corrupted first generation civil society like the YMA, KTP, or MZP. In short, the challenge to the older civil society comes from within that is, ‘through criticism and self criticism’.82

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81 The Government in order to remain in the good books of the Church handed over a Referral Hospital built on the land donated by the villagers at Falkawn village. The villagers challenged the government and demanded compensation for the ‘lost’ land through their association named ‘Referral Hospital Atana Inhmun Chan Association’ (an association of people who have lost their land for the referral hospital). ‘The Villagers felt that if the hospital is run by private company or a church it would become less beneficial to the people’. Staff Reporter. (2007). ‘Falkawn landowners demand compensation’. Newslink. Aizawl: 7 November.

82 Viewed through the six indicators of Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), these activities of PRISM, YMM and MPF can be seen as a move towards good governance/good government. This understanding in no way suggests that the older forms of civil society activism were a total deviation from the concept of good governance/good government or “institutional quality”. It merely suggests that the definition and measure of governance or institutional quality, is to be seen as a continuum or process, which changes with time and space.