CHAPTER II

RURAL MIZORAM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

It is undoubtedly true that the socio-economic factors play important role at the time of elections. Therefore, proper understanding of the study area is necessary before any conclusion is drawn in the election study. In this chapter, the socio-economic scenario of rural Mizoram which influenced the political behaviour and political participation of the rural people in the elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2003 is the focus of the study.

Socio Economic Factors and Political Participation

The political participation in Mizoram is deeply embedded in socio-economic conditions of the people and its level of development. The political development and political participation move along with economic development which is the part of modernization and operation of a Nation State. The geographical milieu has moulded the socio-cultural scenario of Mizoram, which has indirectly affected the political participation and a sense of involvement in political activities at all levels. The ethnic diversity and the nature of interaction among the tribes and sub-tribes living therein have also influenced the nature of political participation and their perfection.¹

Political participation in Mizoram was meagre earlier due to its socio-economic backwardness. During the pre-Independence period, political participation in Mizoram was conspicuously absent. This was due to the British policy which excluded the Mizos from participation in the national politics. The British policy was intended to keep the people isolated from the mainstream of national life by creating barrier of ‘Inner Line Regulations’ which prohibited free exchange of views between the Hill people and the Plain people. As a result, the growth of political organization, through which an ordinary man can express his views, did not take place. The political organization in this region is a post-war phenomenon. The Act of 1919 enabled the Governor General-in-Council to declare the Lushai Hills as ‘Backward Area’. The Government of India Act 1935 put this district under ‘Excluded Area’ which was excluded from the jurisdiction of popular ministry of Assam. This arrangement adversely affected the early growth of political activities in the Lushai Hills District. The British did it intentionally to isolate the Hill people from the Plain people who were moving with the mainstream of national life.

Political participation in Mizoram (Lushai Hills District) during pre-Independence period was dormant also due to geographical isolation, dispersed distribution and lack of communication infra-structure. But with the dawn of Independence and introduction of the new constitution
in 1950, the road to people’s participation at different levels was opened. The application of universal franchise right was made in the first election of Assam Legislative Assembly in 1952 and Mizos elected three members from the district. Subsequently, the election of the members of the District Council and Regional Council as per the Sixth Schedule was held and the same electorates participated in the election. This enabled the people including the rural people to participate in the election as well as to express their views on all political issues from different platforms. With the creation of Mizoram as a Union Territory in 1972, the political participation of the people was extended. The entire territory in Mizoram was divided into 30 constituencies. The number was further extended to forty after attaining statehood. Out of 40 seats, 38 were reserved for Scheduled tribes and two were opened for general (non-tribal). There was an increase in the number of electorates from the preceding elections. Female voters were more or less equal to their male counter-parts and their political participation was almost equal to their male counter-parts. It was observed that in some of the constituencies, the female voters exceeded male voters. Political participation of females was equal to their male counterparts, but their representation in the decision-making body (Assembly or District Council) was inadequate.\(^2\) This is the case even in

the rural areas of Mizoram. Thus, it is true that the political participation in Mizoram is a post-Independent development.

The political participation in Mizoram including the rural areas was very significant. This shows the state of political awareness and keen desire of the voters in casting their votes. It reflects the true character of democracy. Another striking feature was that there was neither violence nor physical intimidation nor terrorizing of voters during the elections which are rampant in the rest of the country. With the democratization of political institutions since Independence, regional political parties induced the people in Mizoram, even in the rural areas to actively associate themselves with the political institutions. A new political culture on regional scale emerged that gradually transformed the traditional equations and relationship.

Political participation changed the earlier perception of the Mizo people. It widened the mental horizon which was earlier confined to village level activities only. But the impact of participation has also a negative effect. It has promoted the spirit of separatism and regionalism in naked form. Their regional feelings and aspirations have been multiplied which gave birth to regional parties subsequently. Thus, regional political parties sprang up after Independence to articulate the aspirations of the people and the democratic process started penetrating into the society. Such process created political differentiation between the
social groups and political parties. The most single factor facilitating the political participation in Mizoram is the political parties – national or regional.

After the attainment of statehood, the political situation changed. The sixth general election in Mizoram (1989) depicts the growth of ethnic group based participation in the elections. Various ethnic groups/tribes started projecting their demands in different forms. The Hmar People’s Conference, Chakma Jatiya Parishad and Maraland Democratic Front have appeared in the political scene. All these are, no doubt, communal and ethnic/tribe-based groups.

Mizoram is a land of several tribes and sub-tribes/clans. Each tribe occupies a definite portion of territory inside Mizoram. There has been growing resentments among the tribes who are in the minority. It is the common belief among the non-Luseis that they are dominated by the Luseis in socio-economic and political activities of the state. The Luseis occupied the core and central position, while the other tribes like Lakhers (Mara), Pawis (Lai), Chakmas, Hmars etc. were, by circumstances, compelled to occupy peripheral location. In their isolation, their inward-looking values, codes and ethics remained centred around village, tribe or community. Different ethnic groups in Mizoram have lost their ethnic unity and homogeneity. The ethnic tension has surfaced on the political horizon of Mizoram which has led to the identity crisis in the state. Each
ethnic group demanded for autonomous district. This has widened the ethnic rivalry. The internal discussion among the Mizo tribes would weaken the geopolitical stability.

The growth of the regional parties in Mizoram is also attributed to geographical factors (physiography and locational factors) which kept the people isolated from the mainstream of national life. This physiographic element retarded the socio-economic advancement. This resulted into mass frustration which ultimately led to insurgency. This insurgency paved the way for mushroom growth of regional parties in Mizoram (after 1966). These political parties stimulated interest among the people to participate in political activities. The growth of the regional parties in Mizoram is also attributed to geographical factors (physiography and locational factors) which kept the people isolated from the mainstream of national life. This physiographic element retarded the socio-economic advancement in the state.

The physiography has been, to a substantial extent, responsible for the formation of territorial units of different tribes in Mizoram. Geography and History also contributed towards ethnic diversity and separate ethnic entity. The growth of sub-regionalism and separatism in such a geographical situation was a natural corollary.

The economic foundation of Mizoram is weak and deplorable. Mizoram is economically not a viable state. The economic backwardness
is reflected through the poor agro-economy, industrial backwardness, low productivity, poor per capita income and poor communication network. The agro-economic backwardness due to poor soil and rugged topography, and also due to practice of shifting cultivation (jhumming) cannot sustain the people of Mizoram. Not only in the urban (town) areas, but also in the rural areas (villages), rice is imported from outside. Besides, other essential commodities like oil, sugar, etc. are also brought from outside the state. Transport and communication are not good, especially in the rural areas. Industrially too, Mizoram is a very backward state.

Under such economic hardship, the political participation of the Mizo is mostly localized without any interest to look into external matters. Regionalism or sub-nationalism gets priority at every stage. The regional issues and the parochial sentiment have been used as raw materials for the political parties. The economic programmes have been narrow and confined to the region only. The local institutions like District Council or Regional Council function within the regional parameters.

The political participation is easy through the political parties (either national or regional) which stimulate interest among the voters by drawing attention towards local or regional and national issues. Political parties in Mizoram are regional in character with national outlook but they, including the national party, Congress, hardly show their
commitment to bring about awareness of the national programmes/ objectives of socio-economic changes. No election manifestos stressed the need for the progressive measures to bring about the socio-economic transformation in the traditional society of the Mizos. All the parties expressed their intension to safeguard their ethnic identity and bring about the integration of Mizo inhabited areas, and also stressed on the regional grievances/problems. Political participation does not end with the participation in election either as voter or a candidate. Since 1972, political participation by the Mizo people has become interestingly broadbased. The first ministry led by Ch. Chhunga included the representatives of the Luseis, Pawis and Lakhers.

So far as Mizoram especially rural Mizoram is concerned, its economic foundation is weak and deplorable. The agro-economic backwardness due to poor soil and rugged topography resulted in mass poverty and low per capita income. The inadequacy of transport has direct bearing on the mobility of the people, the agriculture and rural development, the transportation of fertilizer, seeds and foodgrains and the exploitation of forest resources. This inadequacy has resulted in social fragmentation and lack of political and economic cohesiveness in Mizoram. During rainy season the state gets cut off from the rest of the country resulting into its socio-economic disruption.

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The narrow perception of the rural people is attributed not only to peripheral location, but also to the poor communication system, to their isolation, remoteness from the market place or towns, the villagers in the remote areas have to walk on foot sometimes for a far distance to reach the nearest market for purchasing common items like salt, etc. The rising frustration and growth of sub-nationalism are therefore not only the result of poverty but also due to inadequate communication network and poor infrastructure. Industrially too, rural Mizoram, and even the state as a whole, is very backward due to poor communication network and scarcity of raw materials, also due to shortage of power and high cost of transportation. The state has no mineral potentiality. As a result, the prospect of heavy industry is not bright. Even a medium or small scale industry is economically non-viable. The cost of production is high. The per capita income is low and the price index is on increase.

The development of separatist tendency in Mizoram, in course of time, is the result of socio-economic backwardness and the growth of regional imbalance. The socio-economic issues and ethnic rivalry operating inside Mizoram (various ethnic groups like the Lakhers, Pawis, Hmars and Chakmas harping on autonomy) have enhanced the socio-economic and political tension in the state.\(^4\) Political institutions and the quality of political culture of people depend upon the economic viability

\(^4\) S.N. Singh, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.84 & 85.
of the state. Conversely, the economic non-viable state cast gloomy picture upon the growth and functioning of the political system of the people.

Due to economic hardship faced by the people, the political participation is mostly localized without much interest in external matters. Many regional and ethnic-based political parties have come up in the state with demands in various forms. Both the national and regional parties had more or less the same manifestos and programmes, only stressing on the regional grievances/problems and also talking to protect the interests/separate identity of the Mizos. Since the national party – Congress refused to enter the election battle on its national election manifestos, it was quite clear that election manifestos are designed according to local taste and interest. None of the parties made the necessity of structural transformation in the economic system as the basis for electoral appeal. At least, some political parties are committed to bring about agricultural self-sufficiency within a stipulated period of time without indicating that political parties retrieve their programmes from abstract idealism to concrete items of socio-economic change. In order to end the isolation, greater interaction with outsiders, more facilities for engaging in trade and commerce and all round development of the state. It is thus evident that Mizos still have psychological barrier to become one with the rest of the people. For a mature development and growth of
the national economy, a peaceful co-existence and constructive co-operation are the essential ingredients.\textsuperscript{5}

In this chapter, the socio-economic factors which influenced the political behaviour and political participation of the rural people in the elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2003 have come under the study. For the purpose of the study, this chapter is divided into two sections. Section-I deals with rural Mizoram and Section-II deals with the four rural constituencies as follows:

Section-I: (i) Rural Mizoram: Population, Literacy, Ethnic Composition and Occupational Structure; (ii) Mizo Society; (iii) Economy.

Section-II: Socio-Economic Profile of four Rural Constituencies.

**SECTION-I:**

\textbf{i) Rural Mizoram}

\textbf{Population}: Out of the total number of the state population (8,88,573) in 2001, 50.4 per cent (4,41,006) of the total population of the state are in the rural areas of Mizoram (707 villages) and the remaining 49.6 per cent (4,47,567) are living in the urban areas (22 notified towns) as per the 2001 Census.\textsuperscript{6}


\textsuperscript{6}Directorate of Census Operation, Mizoram. Census of India 2001: Primary Census Abstract.
A little more than half of the state population is living in the rural areas. There has been a constant flow of people from rural to urban areas in the state during the last five decades. The people is living in the rural areas (villages) dwindled down over the time but the number of people living in the urban areas (towns) increased in the last 50 years.

The urban-rural relationship in terms of population may be seen in the following Table-2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Towns</th>
<th>% of urban population to total population</th>
<th>No. of villages</th>
<th>% of village population to total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>96.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>94.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>88.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24.67</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>75.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46.20</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>53.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49.60</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>50.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Mizoram is predominantly a tribal state. Scheduled Tribes population in the state forms 94.5 per cent (839,310) of the total population of the state as per the 2001 Census. In the rural areas Scheduled tribes population (430,883) constitutes 51 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribes population in the state. Scheduled tribes population in the urban areas (408,427) forms 49 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribes
This comparative study confirms the fact that the tribal people living in the rural areas are more in number than the tribal people in the urban areas. Out of the Scheduled caste population in the state (272), there are 65 persons in the rural areas. The remaining Scheduled caste population, that is, 207 is in the urban areas. Among the 65 persons belonging to Scheduled Castes in the rural areas, only 3 are females. In the urban areas, out of 207 Scheduled Castes population, 57 persons are females.

As regards the child population in the age group 0-6 yrs, the percentage of child population for the state is 16.2. In the rural areas child population is 56 per cent of the total child population in the state. In the urban areas child population is 44 per cent of the total child population in the state. Child sex ratio is not alarming. In the rural areas there are 965 females for every 1000 males. The urban areas have the sex ratio of 963 females for every 1000 males. Child sex ratio is almost equal in rural and urban areas. The ratio is little higher in rural than in urban areas.

**Literacy:** Literacy rate in the rural areas is 81.2 per cent with 55 per cent of males and 45 per cent of females in 2001 Census while the literacy rate at the state level is 88.8 per cent with 53 per cent of males and 47 per cent of females. In the urban areas, the literacy rate is 96.1 per cent with 52 per cent of males and 48 per cent of females. The literacy rate in the rural areas that is 81.2 per cent is lower than the urban
percentage, but comparing to the national percentage, that is 64.8 it is still very high. Male literacy is higher than the female literacy in the rural and urban areas in 2001.

**Ethnic Composition:** Ethnic group or tribe is, in fact, an important variable which has its own role in determining voting behaviour in nation and state politics in general and local politics in particular. “In most of the less-developed countries” according to Milton J. Esman “ethnic minorities have been mobilized to defend their collective interests and promote their demands for security, status, economic opportunities and political power in competition, civil or violent, with other ethnic communities and in opposition to governmental policies and practices.”

There are tendencies where people of a tribe demographically distributed in cluster (particularly in rural areas) tend to vote for a candidate close to their kin. There are many tribal groups or tribes such as Lusei, Pawi (Lai), Mara (Lakher), Chakma, Bru (Riang), Hmar, Paite, Ralte etc. in rural Mizoram. Luseis occupy mostly the central part of Mizoram, that is, Lunglei, Aizawl and Serchhip districts (Buarpui, Vanva, Sateek, Tlungvel and Lungpho Constituencies). They also have sizeable number in the north-eastern part of the state in Champhai district (Ngopa

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Constituency) and in the central western and the north-western areas in Mamit district (Phuldungsei and Kawrthah Constituencies).

In the southern districts of Mizoram, Saiha and Lawngtlai districts, there is predominance of the Mara (Lakher) tribe (Tupang Constituency) and Pawi (Lai) clan (Lawngtlai Constituency). The Chakmas occupy the south-western part of the state in Lawngtlai district (Chawngte Constituency) and also the central-western part of the state in Mamit district (Phuldungsei Constituency). Hmars and Paihte are mainly in the north-eastern parts of the state (Suangpuilawn and Ratu Constituencies in Aizawl District and Ngopa Constituency in Champhai district). Amidst the Hmars and Paihte in the north-eastern region, the Luseis have also noticeable number. In the north-western part of the state, the Bru (Riangs) have noticeable concentration in Mamit district (Kawrthah Constituency). A small population of the Pangs, Tlanglau and Bawm exists amidst the Pawis and Chakmas, whose numerical strength is negligible in the socio-economic scenario of Mizoram.

**Occupational Structure:** The 2001 Census figure indicates that in the rural areas of Mizoram, the total workers (256,044) form 57.2 per cent of the total rural population (446,567) with 54.23 per cent (138,855) of male workers and 45.76 per cent of female workers (117,189) to the total workers (256,044) in the rural areas. In the urban areas 47.87 per cent (211,115) of the total population (441,006) are workers constituting
59 per cent of male workers and 41 per cent of female workers to total urban workers. The percentage of total workers in the rural areas is higher than that of the total workers in the urban areas, that is, 57.2 per cent of total workers in rural areas against 47.87 per cent workers to the total population in the urban areas.

The work participation rate, that is, 57.20 in the rural areas is comparatively high while the work participation rate in the country is only 52.57 (say 53%) per cent. Both males and females worked almost equally; perhaps this may be one of the causes of high work participation rate in the rural as well as in the state. The percentage of main workers (201,599) to the total workers (256,044) in the rural areas is 78.73, forming 59.82 per cent (say 60%) of males (120,662) and 40 per cent of females (80,937) to the total main workers (201,599) in the rural areas. In the urban areas the total main workers (160,851) form 76.19 per cent of the total workers (211,115) in the urban areas with 65 per cent of male workers and 35 per cent of female workers to the total main workers in the urban areas. High female work participation rate is seen among the main workers in rural and urban areas. As a whole, in the state the total main workers form 77.58 per cent of the total workers with 62.19 per cent of males and 37.8 per cent of females.

The total marginal workers in the rural areas (54,445) account for 12.16 per cent of the total rural population (447,567) with 33 per cent of
males (18,193) and 67 per cent of females (36,252). The marginal workers in the urban areas (50,264) form 13.3 per cent of the total urban population (441,006) with 39 per cent of males (19,387) and 61 per cent of females (30,877) to the total marginal workers (50,264) in the urban areas in 2001. Among the marginal workers, female work participation rate is higher in rural areas, that is, 67 per cent in rural areas against 61 per cent in urban areas. As a whole, the total marginal workers in the state (104,709) constitute 22.4 per cent of the total workers (467,159) in the state as per the 2001 Census.

The main occupation of the rural people is cultivation. The total cultivators (256,332) in the state constitute 54.9 per cent of the total workers (467,159) in 2001. The total cultivators in the rural areas (207,110) form 80.9 per cent of the total rural workers (256,044) and 44.3 per cent of the total workers in the state. In the urban areas, the total cultivators (49,222) constitute 23.3 per cent of the total urban workers (211,115) and only 10.5 per cent of the total workers in the state. The remaining large majority of the urban workers are engaged in different activities like government services, trade, business, etc.

The total agricultural labourers in the state (26,783) constitute 5.7 per cent of the total workers (467,159) in the state against 26.5 per cent at the national level. The total agricultural labourers in the rural areas (9677) form 3.8 per cent of the total rural workers (256,044) and 2.07 per
cent to the total workers in the state (467,159). In the urban areas the total agricultural labourers (17,106) constitute 8.1 per cent of the total urban workers (211,115) and 3.7 per cent to the total workers in the state (467,159). The percentage of agricultural labourers in the rural areas is less than the percentage of agricultural labourers in the urban areas. The higher percentage of agricultural labourers in the urban areas reflects the presence of a larger number of landless people in the urban areas seeking wage employment. Many of the agricultural labourers are immigrants or migrants. The immigrants from the neighbouring country Myanmar are also seeking wage employment in rural and urban areas.

Household industry workers in the state (7,100) constitute 1.5 per cent of the total workers in the state (467,159) in 2001. In the rural areas the total household industry workers (2652) form 1.03 per cent of the total rural workers (256,044) and 0.56 per cent of the total workers (467,159) in the state. In the urban areas the total household industry workers (4,448) constitute 2.10 per cent of the total urban workers (211,115) and 0.95 per cent of the total workers in the state in 2001. The percentage of household industry workers is lower in the rural areas than in the urban areas, that is, 1.03% of the total rural workers against 2.10% of the total urban workers in the household industry workers.

‘Other Workers’ in the state (176,944) constitute 37.87 per cent of the total workers in the state (467,159). In the rural areas, the ‘Other
Workers’ (36,605) who are not cultivators or agricultural labourers or Household industry workers form 14.29 per cent of the total workers in the rural areas (256,044), and 7.83 per cent of the total workers in the state. In urban areas the ‘Other Workers’ are 140,339 in number. They form 66.47 per cent to the total workers in the urban areas (211,115) and 30.04 per cent of the total workers in the state (467,159). Very few people in the rural areas have not involved in agricultural works, whereas in the urban areas many people have been engaged in various economic activities.

Another group of people called ‘non-workers’ in the state (421,414) forms 47.42 per cent of the total population in the state (888,573). Out of the total non-workers in the state, 46.53 per cent are males (196,101) and 53.46 per cent are females (225,313). As per the Census of India 2001, ‘non-workers’ are those who had not worked at all during the reference period, their main activity during the year cannot be any of the four categories mentioned earlier. In their case, their main activity can be either household duties, students, dependents such as infants or very elderly people not included in the category of worker, pensioners, beggars and others may also be included in this category. In the rural areas, the total non-workers (191,523) constitute 45.44 per cent of the total non-workers in the state with 49 per cent of males (93,871) and 51 per cent of females (97,652) to the total non-workers in the rural
areas (191,523). In the urban areas, the total non-workers (229,891) form 54.55 per cent of the total non-workers in the state (421,414) with 44.46 per cent of males (102,230) and 55.53 per cent of females (127,661) to the total non-workers in the urban areas. It is found that non-workers in the rural areas form lower percentage than in the urban areas, that is, 45.44% in rural areas against 54.55% in urban areas respectively.

ii) Mizo Society

In the pre-colonial era the Mizos lived in a close-knit homogeneous society. They had a stable social system under the aristocratic government of the chief. Colonialism did not introduce any land legislation which acted as the destabilizing force of the social system while the Chiefs retained their power over land and customary rights. A remarkable feature of the society was the existence of a stable economic balance. There was no land-holding system among the Mizos. Practicing shifting cultivation they used to shift their homes also according to convenience.

Even though the economic condition of the Mizos as a whole was poor, yet they led a contented life. One may not be too wrong in assuming that it was the general economic poverty that was responsible for maintaining an equal standard of living and a classless society. The Mizo society, therefore, was a close knit one especially in villages where

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people lived a rather large family life. This is possible because of the homogeneity of their profession which was *jhuming* in which practically all engaged themselves. By and large, people had implicit trust in one another.\textsuperscript{10} Since Mizo Society was a well-knit society with no class distinction and no discrimination on ground of sex, the community life was free from any rank or status consciousness. They participate in all social or religious functions without any consideration of social hierarchy. The festivals had promoted community feeling and helped in influencing the attitude of Mizo people. The community feasts and festivals had widened the boundary of community life.

The tribes living in specific location in Mizoram had not maintained water-tight compartment relation in their mutual socio-economic life. Their mutual social relationship reflected social unity and harmonious ethnic relationship. Their social and religious customs were common with little local variations. Their agro-economic life reflected the common outlook and a high sense of morality. The egalitarian perception had made the Mizo Society classless and casteless.\textsuperscript{11}

A close look at the present society in rural Mizoram reveals that with the introduction of money-economy, the exchange of commodities started in terms of money. Although there is no class distinction among the people on the basis of caste system, the close-knit homogeneous and

\textsuperscript{10}P. Lalnithanga, *Emergence of Mizoram*, Mizoram: Mizoram Publication Board, 2005, pp.11–12.

\textsuperscript{11}S.N. Singh, *op. cit.*, p.60.
classless society is being slowly invaded by money power in the evolving modern society.

Mizos developed a code of conduct called ‘Tlawmngaihna’ under which one is duty bound to help others. In other words, the word ‘Tlawmngaihna’ may be defined as self-sacrificing for others or selfless service to needy persons. It is the obligation to be unselfish and helpful to others. Everyone is required to be courteous and considerate in relation to others and be prepared to help, irrespective of one’s inconvenience, under all circumstances. As such, the Mizos have a deep sense of duty towards others.

Gradually, with the inroad of materialism in the face of economic development and prosperity, the spirit of ‘Tlawmngaihna’ is dying out but a social organization of all Mizoram character, namely, Young Mizo Association (YMA) is making earnest and sincere endeavours to retain and preserve it at all costs. The spirit of ‘Tlawmngaihna’ is still there in Mizo Society, particularly in villages where the society is more closely knit than in towns where due to multifarious nature of professions, the society cannot be as close as in the villages. The YMA Organisation is the embodiment of this spirit and the perpetuation of the same is in its hands.¹²

There are quite a number of Voluntary Social Organisations. The voluntary organizations are organized with the aim to meet the local needs. In the prevailing circumstances of the transitional period of the Mizo society from traditional to modern, voluntary organizations have a greater role to play in the society. The most significant organizations among the various social organizations are Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkham Pawl (MHIP) (Mizo Women Federation) Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP) (Mizoram Senior Citizens’ Association) and Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) (Mizo Students Association). Voluntary Organisations are expected to act diligently in dealing with sensitive subjects like relation between political rivalries. Voluntary services had been the base of social function in the society. This still continues and the voluntary organizations are today more effective than government agencies in dealing with the case of illicit sale of liquor and drugs etc. in their respective local area. However, the voluntary organizations have no legal stand and authority to deal with such offenders. It is, therefore, obvious that voluntary organizations have a great responsibility in developing society by joining hands with governmental agencies which are engaged in socio-economic developmental activities.

Apart from voluntary social organizations, the Church also plays a vital role in the Mizo society. The Church elders and Pastors are not only
responsible to promote the spiritual life of the individual but also the
general welfare of the society. Because they are responsible to protect the
moral aspects of life that are taught in the Churches and they are equally
responsible for the social changes.¹³

iii) Economy

The economic life of the Mizos has always been centred on *jhum* or
shifting cultivation. In pre-British days inter tribal or inter-village feuds
kept the Mizos within the confines of certain area. But they were nomadic
in habit, moving from one village site to another every few years. This
conformed to their shifting agricultural practice.

During the time that the chiefs ruled, *jhum* land was distributed
every year from the land under their control to the subjects. The actual
area of control of a chief would be determined by his strength and
relation with the neighbouring chiefs. After the abolition of chieftainship,
the allocation of *jhum* land is done by the Village Council. After selection
of suitable areas allotment of plots to individual families is done by
ballots.

Mizoram is predominantly a rural economy. Cultivation is the most
important use of land in the state. Agriculture is the main occupation of
the people of Mizoram. As per the 2001 Census, 60.6 per cent of the total
workers of the state depend on agriculture. The people have been

practicing the traditional system of agriculture, namely, *jhum* or shifting cultivation with communal ownership of land. The crops grown in the *jhum* are mixed. The principal crop is paddy and others are maize, cucumber, beans, ginger, mustard, sesamum, cotton etc.

*Jhumming* is still a predominant form of agriculture claiming the largest share of land surface and employment in the rural areas. The predominance of *jhum* (shifting cultivation) implies that land is still freely accessible. Access to *jhum* land is still through membership in the village community or through acceptance of the residence of a person or family in the village. Due to communal ownership of land, a large majority of workers in the rural areas, 84 per cent of the total rural workers are still engaged in agriculture as per the 2001 Census. Agriculture still plays an important role in the social and economic life of the Mizos in the interior villages. *Jhumming* continues to be the main occupation in the rural areas, but it gradually lost its traditional importance as a means of basic subsistence, source of wealth and prestigious position. In the present context, *jhum* cultivation also lost its importance as the locus of village solidarity and as a source of village harmony.

With the dwindling yields of *jhumming*, people in the rural areas become less attached to *jhumming* and look for commercial openings offered by the various programmes of developmental planning under the Mizoram government. With the new opportunities offered by the process
of change in various lines, the hitherto undifferentiated traditional Mizo society was transformed into occupation ally differentiated society. Only a small section of the people benefited from the process of change while the masses remain largely in sordid condition.\footnote{Nunthara, C., Mizoram: Society and Polity, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1996, p. 117.} The evil effects of \textit{jhumming} by way of soil erosion, low yield, reduced soil fertility and degradation of forest cover are well known.

Besides this, there are some reasons for the dwindling yields of \textit{jhum} land. Traditionally, the Chief had the right over the village land. With the help of his elders the Chief was able to maintain and preserve the village land. After the abolition of Chiefs in the early 1950s, there was a transfer of proprietary rights over the village land from the Chief to the village council with little power to preserve the village land. This change resulted in the liberal destruction of forest with the subsequent shortened \textit{jhum} cycle. Increase in the number of village population also gradually affect the duration of \textit{jhum} cycle. Thus, gradual decline in agricultural yields was seen in the villages, even before the outbreak of the MNF insurgency in 1966. Though the villagers suffered from gradual decline in agricultural yields, yet they produced sufficient rice for their consumption. The villagers were able to solve their economic problem without forging outside relation.
Another reason for the dwindling yields of jhum land may be the outbreak of the insurgency in 1966 and the consequent introduction of grouping of villages and the forced evacuation of villages. Because of the forced evacuation of villages, the villagers/peasants could no longer reach their jhum lands to work. In later years, the available land was soon exhausted by the grouping villagers and the already short cycle of jhumming was further shortened. This had reduced agricultural yields tremendously. As a result, the villagers had to depend on supplies of food-grains from outside Mizoram.

Realizing the low economic returns of jhumming, the villagers were, thus, more and more willing to shift to other occupation. ‘They were, thus, compelled to migrate to town to avoid starvation and to find wage employment for the much needed purchase of food. The migration of the rural families to the towns was accompanied by the rise in the demand for rural products. As a result, the village economy has become more and more outside-oriented. As time went by, more and more families practice commercialized agriculture and find their condition increasingly dependent on the market. In periods of crisis, the only solution to their problems was to sell labour and from that point their market participation may be solely in the form of wage labour.’  

Thus, transformation of the undifferentiated traditional society of Mizo into

occupationally differentiated society was strengthened by the introduction of grouping of villages consequent upon the 1966 MNF uprising.

Though the people involved in cultivation known as shifting cultivation or *jhumming* dwindled over the time, the majority of the total workers in the rural areas, that is, 84 per cent are depending on agriculture as per the 2001 Census. This shows that the economic engagement of the rural people is agro-based as large percentage of rural population is involved in agricultural work. Land is the basic resource for economic activities in rural Mizoram. As per the census of India 1991 and 2001, the proportion of cultivators has come down and the proportion of agricultural labourers has increased during 1991-2001. This further shows that village economy has become less and less inside-oriented and more and more outside-oriented. Due to the historical and geographical factors, hilly terrain and physiographic condition of the region and absence of development in other sectors, such as agro-based industries and other allied manufacturing and tertiary sector, *jhum* cultivation continued to be the main occupation of the rural people.

**Rural Development:** After independence, the agricultural sector started to receive increased attention. Agricultural development took a new turn with the creation of Community Development Blocks in the Mizo District on the 1st April 1953. Before the Mizo District attained the status of union territory on 21st January 1972, there were nine Community Blocks.
Development Blocks in the District. Due to large scale disturbances which started in 1966, the entire developmental programme, such as agriculture and allied activities, including cooperation and community development suffered serious setback in Mizoram. ‘About 20,000 families were uprooted and regrouped into new village clusters (Grouping Centres) for security reasons. As a result, the cultivators and common man had to depend on supplies of food-grains from outside Mizoram.\textsuperscript{16}

From the attainment of union territory status in 1972, Mizoram has got a higher degree of administrative autonomy as well as financial power. The Directorate of Rural Development was established in 1972 with a special focus on alleviation of rural poverty. All the Community Development Blocks were redesignated as Rural Development Blocks and started to function under this. Since then, many schemes have been brought out to develop agricultural sector and the rural area. All these schemes have been undertaken by the government departments.

**New Land Use Policy (NLUP):** In order to eradicate the traditional practice of shifting cultivation, the Congress government in the state had with effect from the year 1990-91, launched a major initiative under the label of New Land Use Policy (NLUP). The objectives of NLUP were to put an end to the practice of shifting cultivation, to induce jhumia families to take up alternative occupations under either agricultural, industrial or

animal husbandry sectors, to take up wet rice cultivation in all the potential flat lands in order to promote self sufficiency in food production, to augment the afforestation drive and to provide marketing out let for products obtained from the NLUP programme. Under NLUP, to rehabilitate *jhumias*, alternate occupations were sought to be provided in three principal sectors, namely (i) agriculture and allied activities, (ii) animal husbandry, and (iii) cottage industry. Each beneficiary family was allowed to choose one trade from out of the above sectors. Each family was given a plot of land measuring two hectares each. Each beneficiary was sanctioned an amount of Rs. 30,000/-. This assistance was released in instalments over a period of three years. The beneficiaries were required to sign an undertaking before receiving any assistance.

It has been seen that even after spending a huge amount of money under NLUP during a decade, the impact of the scheme had been poor considering the success rate. Reasons for the poor impact of NLUP seemed to be inefficient formulation, monitoring and reporting on the scheme along with inadequate financial assistance or delay in the distribution of instalments to the beneficiaries and the absence of land rights of individuals on permanent basis. There was also too much political interference at the time of selection of beneficiaries. Because, this was seen by the political leaders as an opportunity to further their own narrow party-ends. In many cases, the really deserving families were
not selected while people who never deserved the support were given just because they were near to power. Thus, the factor of affiliation with the ruling party had an important role in securing assistance under the scheme.

Though the reclamation of waste-land for Wet Rice Cultivation (WRC) was one of the important objectives of NLUP most of the beneficiaries under the NLUP could not pursue the WRC schemes due to the presence of only a few flatlands for WRC in the areas. As such, people were not encouraged to take up schemes concerned with food-grains production while one of the main aims of NLUP was to achieve self-sufficiency in food-grain production. To provide alternative source of income to the beneficiaries, who were practicing jhumming, was also another objective of NLUP. However, it was felt that the trade-related grants under the schemes were of an inadequate size. It has been noticed that most of the NLUP beneficiaries in the rural areas are still practicing shifting cultivation. The beneficiaries always diverted the assistance or fund they received from the government for certain schemes to other purposes for which they were not given. Many of them built their houses and some other beneficiaries bought other things.

**Integrated Agricultural Development Project, also known as MIP:**
This project is rather known as MIP (Mizoram Intodelhna Programme) in Mizo language which means Mizoram Self Sufficiency Programme. The
MNF government had introduced a new development scheme, MIP, from the year 2002-2003 for the upliftment of the living condition and self-sufficiency of the rural poor. This project also provides for the conservation of the soil and preservation of the environments. This programme was revised by the government in 2006. According to the Revised Guidelines, the main objectives of the programme were to propagate against shifting cultivation, to encourage settled and permanent farming through commercialization of agriculture, horticulture, etc. to facilitate farm productivity; to programme for a cluster-based crop production; to ensure that market is assured for each of the project-based activity on selected crop, etc.

Inspite of the massive efforts of the state government to accelerate the socio-economic development of the state especially the rural areas where jhum cultivation is the main occupation of the people, the success has been minimal. Even after sanctioning more than Rs. 140 crores under the programme, not much tangible results had been received as in the case of NLUP. Most of the beneficiaries under the MIP programme still continue with the old technique of slash-and-burn to produce foodgrain in their jhum land. Thus, any scheme, whether NLUP or MIP, projected by the Mizoram Government for the purpose of attaining self-sufficiency in food and for the socio-economic development of the people especially
who practiced shifting cultivation could not have much impact on the working system of the people in the rural areas.

Besides the already mentioned reasons for the poor impact of NLUP, there are other reasons put forward by some for the poor performance of NLUP in Mizoram. Some of the reasons seem to be same even in the case of MIP. Some of them are as follows:

There was no strong political will to implement the scheme. The scheme in many instances has appeared as mere populist measure to catch vote for the party. As such, no well prepared scheme or plan was made, that is, effective follow up programmes were lacking. No sincere effort was done by the beneficiaries to implement the Scheme.\(^\text{17}\) There is an apparent lack of coordination between the government officials, the voluntary organizations and the Village Councils. Successful implementation of the programme requires a close relationship between these agencies. The bureaucracy had been given overwhelming powers that override local Village Councils. It is difficult for the shifting cultivators to trust on administration that is yet to prove its credibility.

The poor impact of NLUP scheme can be seen from the study of the economic condition and engagement of the people in the rural areas. As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, though there has been a decline in the percentage of cultivators, a large majority of the

\(^{17}\)Lianzela, *op.cit*, pp.148-149.
total rural workers, that is, 80.9 per cent are still cultivators in 2001 Census and these cultivators mostly practice shifting cultivation (jhumming).

Likewise, a close look at the present situation in the rural areas also reveals the poor impact of MIP programme. Majority workers in the villages are jhum cultivators. The result is that due to the decline in output from jhumming, they cannot produce sufficient foodgrains for their consumption. As such, the villagers have to depend on supplies of foodgrains from outside the state. Because of the decline in output from jhum cultivation, the village economy has become more and more outside-oriented. People are also always compelled to migrate to town to find wage employment for the purchase of food. Some villages are on the road-side and within easy reach of markets in the towns. They practice commercialized agriculture and sell their agricultural products in the markets. But many villages cannot have market facilities. Besides the NLUP and MIP schemes, many rural development schemes have been brought out and undertaken by the government departments.

**Rural Development Schemes:** Rural development basically aims at the upliftment of socio-economic condition of rural community. The main objectives of rural development schemes are to bring about self employment through income generating activities, to provide wage employment to rural people, and also to create permanent assets for
strengthening the rural economy. These schemes/programmes are meant for poverty alleviation, reduction of unemployment and to give additional employment to the people living in the rural areas.

All rural development schemes and other poverty programmes are implemented through the network of 26 Rural Development Blocks and District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) in every district. Different programmes/schemes for development of rural areas have undergone a series of change during the past years. The centrally-sponsored rural development programmes which have been in operation till 2008-2009 in Mizoram are as follows:\(^{18}\)

i) National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes (NREGS)

ii) Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY).

iii) Swarajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).

iv) Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP).

v) Border Area Development Programme (BADP).

**Village Council:** At the village level, there are Village Councils in the state. Village Councils form the bottom rung of the territorial administration in the state. Village Development Committees have been established at the Village level and these are headed by the Village Council President. In many cases, Village Development Committees are

mainly concerned with the task of identifying the beneficiaries of some rural development Programmes/Schemes only. The common complaint about the governmental activities in the village is that the Village Council is not being given its due place in selection of beneficiaries for many schemes. Though the selection of the beneficiaries is done through the Village Council for some schemes, it is not the same case with other schemes. Villagers do remember instances of selection for some schemes done on explicit recommendations from political leaders.

Rural development programmes appeared to command a low priority in the profile of the Village Council activities. Hence, the Village Councils should be strengthened in powers and functions so as to be able to provide a broad-based support to the rural development related activities. They need to be developed into a responsible and responsive institution. The villagers’ perception of the governmental development programmes is hardly encouraging. There is a growing tendency to look upon the government as a reservoir of money and development schemes as cash relief. Money is always spent for consumption purposes rather than for creation of long term assets. It is, therefore, necessary to improve the volume and quality of local level participation which is crucial for the realization of the programme objectives. For this purpose, there should be more training facilities both for programme bureaucracy and beneficiaries. This will help to develop their skills, aptitude, confidence
and morale. Besides, a strong political will and commitment to serve rural poor is necessary in order to enhance the level of beneficiary participation.

SECTION-II

Socio–Economic Profile of four Assembly Constituencies in Rural Areas of Mizoram

In this section, the focus of the analysis would be on the socio-economic structure in the rural areas of the four assembly constituencies in Mizoram.

The four constituencies could be said to be representative of the rural areas of Mizoram (rural Mizoram) in terms of their geographical setting. Tuipang constituency is situated in the southern most corner of Mizoram. Buarpui constituency happens to fall in the south western part of the state. Suangpuilawn constituency falls in the north eastern part of the state and Sateek constituency is situated in the northern part of the state.

For the study, the four assembly constituencies in the rural areas were selected following the methodology of random sampling in order to prevent careless or deliberate choice on the part of the researcher. The study has been undertaken mainly on the basis of surveys of individual voters or case study of election politics with a view to reveal the socio-
economic factors influencing voting behaviour in the electorate. Interviews were conducted on the basis of questionnaires, that is, the study was made using questionnaire surveys at maximum and on the basis of the 2003 assembly elections. Besides the use of questionnaires, participant observation method is also used for the study.

An attempt is made to study the socio-economic dynamics of rural Mizoram (the four rural constituencies) on the basis of the study of the socio-economic background of the voters. It has been assumed that the background characteristics of an individual play a role in shaping his attitudes, perceptions and decisions.\textsuperscript{19}

Socio-economic variables are crucial in all studies of voting behaviour.\textsuperscript{20} Although a number of variables may be included for describing the socio-economic background of a group of individuals, only some have been selected for the purpose of delimiting the scope of enquiry and highlighting some of the characteristics which are considered relevant for a study of this kind. The socio-economic variables selected here are (1) Age, (2) Sex, (3) Ethnic group or Social composition, (4) Education, (5) Occupation and (6) Income. These are used as key variables which are usually treated as determinants of political attitudes.


and behaviour or voting choice in particular and overall electoral politics in general.\textsuperscript{21}

**Age:** A broad division of age-groups into three categories, viz. young, middle and old reveals that the respondents were not equally represented in the three categories. Analysing the data by age as given in the table-2.2, it may be said that the people belonging to the middle age-group are the highest in number (54\%) followed by old (25.5\%) and then the young (19.75\%). Thus the minimum representation is of the young people, who are below 25 years. The age of three respondents could not be ascertained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>In per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Young (Below 25 yrs.)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>19.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Middle (25 – 49 yrs.)</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Old (Above 50 yrs.)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. DK/NA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: DK = Don’t know, NA = Not answer.

*Source:* A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.

Table 2.3
Constituency-wise Distribution of the Sample according to Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sateek</th>
<th>Suangpuilawn</th>
<th>Buarpui</th>
<th>Tuipang</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young (Below 25 yrs.)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>79 (19.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (25-49 yrs.)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>216 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old (Above 50 yrs.)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>102 (25.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 (0.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td><strong>400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.

From a constituency-wise table also, the largest number of respondents belongs to the second category of middle age-group of 25-49 forming more than 50% of the total sample in all the constituencies except in Buarpui constituency where it is 49%. The old age-group is the second largest group in each of the constituencies as well as the young age – group being the third rank in all the constituencies.

**Sex:** Data with regard to the sex composition of the sample of the study is presented in Table 2.4. It may be seen from this Table that the sample has a substantial number of female respondents, namely 41.75 female per cent against 58.25 per cent males. Constituency-wise, the female sample is largest in Tuipang constituency as female respondents are 47 per cent as compared with 53 per cent male population. Suangpuilawn constituency has 43 per cent female respondents, followed by Buarpui constituency with 42 per cent female respondents. The
minimum percentage of female respondents is in Sateek constituency where the female respondents are 35 per cent. It is found that there is no constituency in which females out number males.

As per a questionnaire survey of sample voters in 2003 assembly elections in Mizoram, sex ratio of the sample rural voters is 716. The sex ratio of the rural voters is lower than the sex ratio in the state. In the state there are 933 females for every 1000 males as per the 2001 Census. If only Scheduled tribes population is considered, the sex ratio is 984 at the state level in 2001. This shows that the percentage of females among the rural voters is lower than the percentage of females among the population of the state. Though the women voters had the numerical strength yet they could not return even a single woman candidate to the Assembly in 2003 elections. The sex balance of the voters in rural areas has been more unfavourable in 2003 assembly elections than in the state in 2001 Census. Sex ratio of the sample voters may be seen in table-2.4.

Table 2.4
Sex Ratio of the Sample in Four Constituencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of A/C</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sateek</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Suangpuilawn</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Buarpui</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tuipang</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>233 (58.25%)</td>
<td>167 (41.75%)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: AC = Assembly Constituency)

Source: A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.
There have been many tribe oriented political parties such as the Mizo Union, mainly a party of the Mizos, the Mara Freedom Party which has now become the Mara Democratic Front (MDF), entirely a party of the Lakhers and the Chin National Front, a party of the Pawis. Tribe-based electoral behaviour has been witnessed among the people of Mizoram. In 1989 the Chakma Jati Parishad and Hmar People Conference, for the first time entered the assembly elections. They started projecting their demands in various forms.

The ethnic composition (or tribe composition) of the rural sample may be seen in the following Table-2.5. The table shows the strength of each ethnic group or clan in the rural sample constituencies in Mizoram Legislative Assembly elections, 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic groups/clans</th>
<th>Sateek A/C</th>
<th>Suangpuiawn A/C</th>
<th>Buarpui A/C</th>
<th>Tuipang A/C</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lusei</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>200 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawi (Lai)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakher (Mara)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90 (22.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakma</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bru (Riang)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmar</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>52 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paihte</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30 (7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13 (3.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 (0.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.

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Analysing the above table 2.5, it is found that 50% of respondents belong to Lusei tribes which is certainly a high percentage. Next to Lusei comes the Lakher (Mara) tribe (22.5%). Below them in numerical strength stood the Hmar tribe (13%), the Paihte tribe (7.5%) and the Pawi (Lai) tribe (3%). Only 3.25 per cent of the voters are in the category ‘Others’ while the ethnic groups/tribes of only three sample voters could not be ascertained. From the analysis of the data it can be concluded that voters belonging to Lusei tribe (Luseis) are larger in number in the sample because the rural sample (rural areas covered under the constituencies) includes the two constituencies – Sateek and Buarpui constituencies. The areas of these two constituencies are mostly inhabited by Luseis, that is, 76 per cent in Sateek constituency and 91 per cent in Buarpui constituency.

The sample does not cover Chakmas and Bru (Riang) inhabited areas. As such, Chakmas and Bru are not seen in the rural sample.

Pawis (Lai) are very few in number forming only 3 per cent of the sample voters which is due to the fact that Pawi inhabiting areas are not under the study. The inclusion of the two Lusei inhabited constituencies and exclusion of Chakma and Bru inhabited constituency (area) cannot be avoided as random sampling method was applied for the purpose of the present study. Though there is a preponderance of Lusei tribe in the sample, other major tribes like Hmar and Lakher (Mara) form a sizeable
number in the sample. Besides, Paihte tribe has also appeared in the sample, but smaller in number than Hmar and Lakher. Hmar tribe forms a largest number of the sample voters in Suangpuilawn constituency. Hmars are 34 per cent of the sample voters in the constituency, Luseis are 33 per cent and Paihte 28 per cent.

It is significant to note that there is a distribution of voters mainly between the three major tribes in Suangpuilawn Constituency. Like in other three assembly constituencies, 4 polling stations are selected from Suangpuilawn constituency for the purpose of study, that is, Lamherh, Daido, Phullen and Suangpuilawn polling stations.

Out of 25 sample voters in Lamherh polling station, there are 23 voters belonging to Hmar tribe. In Daido polling station, 24 sample voters are from Paihte tribe. Phullen polling station has 23 voters who are from Lusei tribe. Only in Suangpuilawn polling station, there are two groups of voters who form almost equal number. Out of 25 sample voters, 9 voters are from Lusei tribe and 10 voters belong to Hmar tribe. Lakhers (Mara) are 90 per cent in the sample from Tuipang assembly constituency while 8 per cent are Pawis (Lai). There is no single Lusei voter in the sample from Tuipang constituency.

It can be pointed out that people of the same tribe or ethnic group settle in certain distinct area with certain common culture and certain common practice in the rural areas of Mizoram. For example, Hmars
form majority in Suangpuilawn constituency. Lakhers (Mara) form a large majority in Tuipang Constituency.

Thus, ethnic group or tribe is an important factor which influences the nature of participation and perception of the voters in the rural areas of Mizoram. For example, from Tuipang assembly constituency a candidate from an ethnic/tribe-based political party, that is, Mara Democratic Front party was elected in 2003 assembly elections. Likewise, a candidate from Suangpuilawn Constituency supported by a tribe-based political party, HPC (Hmar People’s Conference) party was declared elected in the Mizoram Legislative assembly elections, 2003.

**Education:** Literacy and level of education are basic indicators of the level of development achieved by a society. Literacy forms an important input in overall development of individuals enabling them to comprehend their social, political and cultural environment better and respond to it appropriately. Higher levels of education and literacy lead to a greater awareness and also contributes in improvement of economic and social condition.

The respondents have a variance of literacy status. The table 2.5 shows the educational status of the sample voters. It reveals that the literacy rate is high among the sample voters, as 94.5 per cent of them are literate. This is higher than the overall Mizoram state literacy rate which
is 88.8 per cent. The distribution of sample voters by educational status may be seen in table-2.6 below.

Table 2.6
Distribution of the Sample by Educational Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below primary</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary but below Middle</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle but below Matriculate</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculate but below Graduate</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate and Above</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.*

Out of the total sample, the single largest group, that is 37.5 per cent of voters comprises of those who had achieved middle education. The next largest group forms 25.2 per cent of the total sample. This group had finished primary education. Those who can read and write but having not completed primary education form the third largest group, that is, 19.5 per cent of the sample voters. 9.5 per cent of them had matriculate education. Only 2.8 per cent of the sample voters had finished graduation and a very few achieved beyond graduation. The percentage of those who did not have any sort of education was 5.5. It can be pointed out that though the literacy rate among the rural voters is high (94.5%) but the level of education of the voters is not high. The largest group of sample voters is only below matriculation.
Analysing the constituency-wise distribution of the sample in the table below, it is interesting to note that Tuipang constituency has the highest percentage of illiterates (9 per cent) and also the highest percentage of graduates and above (4 per cent). As a whole, a large majority of the rural sample voters (82.2 per cent of the total sample from the three categories of the level of education) are below matriculation. Only 12.3 per cent of the sample voters had passed matriculation. However, the literacy rate 94.5 per cent in the sample is very high comparing to literacy rate in the state level, that is, 88.8 per cent and 64.8 per cent in the country as per the 2001 Census.

Table 2.7
Constituency-wise Distribution of the Sample by Educational Status
(in per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Sateek</th>
<th>Suangpuilawn</th>
<th>Buarpuilawn</th>
<th>Tuipang</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Primary</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>78 (19.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary but below Middle</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>101 (25.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle but below Matriculation</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>150 (37.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculation but below Graduation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38 (9.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation and above</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.

Occupation: Occupation represents the economic activities of the people. The table-2.8 below presents the data with regards to the occupational pattern of the rural sample. From the analysis of the data
it can be noted that out of the total sample (400 voters), there are 345 workers in the sample, that is, 86.25 per cent of workers to the total sample. Among the workers, cultivators are largest in number. Cultivators form 70.72 per cent of the total workers in the sample voters and 61 per cent of the total sample voters. The percentage of cultivators to the total workers in the rural sample, as per the questionnaire survey of voters in 2003 assembly election is 70.72. The percentage of the same category in the rural areas of Mizoram as per the Census of India, 2001 is 80.9. The analysis of the data reveals that the main occupation of the rural voters is cultivation. There is a decrease in the percentage of rural cultivators from 2001 to 2003.

Again, while the cultivators in the sample form 70.72 per cent to the total workers in the sample, cultivators in the state level constitute 54.9 per cent of the total workers in the state as per the 2001 Census. The highest percentage of cultivators is seen in the rural areas of Mizoram. Though there is a decrease in the percentage of rural cultivators in the sample, it is evident that agriculture is still the main occupation of large majority of the rural voters or people.

The people in the villages (rural areas) practice a system of cultivation known as *jhumming* in areas around the villages. There is no fixed area for cultivation as the sites are shifted year after year. People

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24 Ibid. Also Census of India, Primary Abstract, op.cit.
25 Ibid.
clean the jungle in the slopes with axes, daos and hoes and burn the cuttings. The main food crops in Mizoram are paddy, maize, yam, sweet potato, vegetables, gingers, cucumber, water-melon, chilly and til, etc. The next largest group in the sample is of those who are non-workers. They are students, very elderly people or mere house-wives. These non-workers group forms 13 per cent of the total sample as per the data collected from the sample survey of individual voters.

The total non-workers in the state, as per the 2001 Census, form 47.42 per cent of the total population in the state. This comparative study reveals that work participation rate is higher in the rural areas than in the state as only 13 per cent are non-workers in the rural sample which is against 47.42 per cent in the state. Males and females work almost equally in rural areas of Mizoram. The high participation rate of females is mainly because of widespread prevalence of slash and burn technique of cultivation. The females play an important role in jhum cultivation and they participate in farming activities right from sowing of seeds to harvesting stage of the crop and also in marketing of farm produce.

The third group in the sample consists of labourers and artisans. This group forms 10.25 per cent of the total sample. The next group of people who declared themselves as in service forms 6.25 per cent. Another 4.75 per cent of the sample voters are in the category of ‘Others’. The other group of voters or respondents who are engaged in business
forms 4 per cent of the total sample voters. Three respondents do not reveal their occupation or do not answer the question. This group constitutes 0.75 per cent of the total sample voters. The constituency-wise occupational pattern of sample may be seen in the following table-2.8.

Table 2.8  
Constituency-wise Occupational Pattern of the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Sateek A/C</th>
<th>Suangpuilawn A/C</th>
<th>Buarpui A/C</th>
<th>Tuipang A/C</th>
<th>Total (in per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed or non-workers/housewives</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>244 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers &amp; Artisans</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41 (10.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25 (6.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19 (4.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (0.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.*

The above table-2.8 constituency-wise analysis indicates that among the four rural sample constituencies, Suangpuilawn has the highest percentage of cultivators, that is, 68 per cent. Buarpui constituency has the second highest percentage of cultivators that is 64. Tuipang constituency has 57 per cent of the same category while Sateek constituency has the lowest percentage of cultivators, that is, 55. This shows that cultivators form majority in every constituency. It can be mentioned that as a whole, majority of the sample voters, that is, 61 per cent of the total sample depend on agriculture for their livelihood. They practice a system of cultivation known as shifting cultivation or
It is significant to note that though literacy rate is very high in the sample, that is, 94 per cent, 82.2 per cent of the total sample is below matriculate as mentioned earlier. Therefore, very few people only 6.25 per cent of the total sample voters are in service. A large majority of the total sample are engaged in cultivation.

After cultivators, labourers and artisans form the second highest percentage of workers in the sample. Sateek constituency has 14 per cent of labourers and artisans. Suangpuilawn constituency has 11 per cent of the same category while Buarpui constituency has 9 per cent. The lowest percentage is seen in Tuipang constituency, that is, 7. As a whole, the percentage of labourers and artisans in the four constituencies (total sample) is 41.

The third group of workers forms another category that is, those who are involved in business. This category forms 5 per cent each in Sateek and Suangpuilawn constituencies. Likewise, Buarpui and Tuipang constituencies have 3 per cent of voters who are doing business respectively. The percentage of this category is, as a whole, only 4 in the total sample (from the four constituencies).

As regards to the people or voters who are in service, the highest percentage is seen in Tuipang constituency, that is, 10. Sateek constituency has 8 per cent of such voters, while Suangpuilawn constituency has 5 per cent and Buarpui constituency only 2 per cent. The
total sample voters who are in service in the rural areas constitute only 6.25 per cent.

Other workers who are not cultivators, labourers or artisans, not engaged in business or service, also form a very low percentage, that is, 4.75 per cent. This group forms the highest percentage in Buarpui constituency, that is, 10. Then, Sateek constituency has 8 per cent of such ‘other workers’ whereas Tuipang constituency has only 1 per cent of such category.

There is another group of voters or people in the sample who are not workers. They are unemployed or non-workers or housewives. They form the second largest group in the sample (that is, in the four rural constituencies). Among the rural constituencies, Tuipang has the highest percentage of non-workers, that is, 22. Suangpuilawn has the second largest number of such group forming 11 per cent. Sateek has 10 per cent of non-workers and Buarpui has 9 per cent of the same category.

**Monthly Income:** On the basis of rural economic survey, the lowest income group of the sample voters who earn Rs. 1000 or less per month forms the largest number of voters which is 35.25 per cent of the total sample. The second largest group of the total sample voters, that is, 12.75 per cent is found to have an income of Rs. 1001 – 2000 per month. The third group of rural voters in the sample, that is, 10.25 earns per cent Rs. 2001-3000 per month. The fourth group of voters, that is, 9.75 per
cent has an income of Rs. 3001-4000 per month. The next group of the rural voters in the sample again forms 9.75 per cent of the total sample. This group had an income of Rs. 4000-5000 per month. The last group is in the highest income group. This group forms 13.5 per cent of the total sample voters and has an income of Rs. 5001 and above per month.

Of the total sample, 8.75 per cent of the sample voters do not at all reveal their monthly income. The reason may be that they find it difficult to answer the question without really an estimate of their income in kind. From the analysis of the data collected on the basis of sample survey, it can be stated that the rural voters or people in Mizoram are, by and large, economically backward with meagre incomes. The figures pertaining to the monthly income of the rural sample voters are given in the following table-2.9.

Table 2.9
Constituency-wise Income Pattern of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income group</th>
<th>Sateek</th>
<th>Suangpuilawn</th>
<th>Buarpui</th>
<th>Tuirpang</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 1000 or less</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>141 (35.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 1001-2000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51 (12.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 2001-3000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41 (10.25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 3001-4000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39 (9.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 4001-5000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39 (9.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 5001 and above</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54 (13.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35 (8.75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A Questionnaire-Survey of Sample Voters in 2003 Assembly Elections, Mizoram.

Among the four constituencies, Tuipang has the largest number of sample voters who are in the lowest income group (Rs. 1000 or less).
This group of voters forms 45 per cent of the total sample. Buarpui constituency has the second largest group of voters who are in such category, that is, 44 per cent. Suangpuilawn constituency has 43 per cent of such voter while Sateek constituency has only 9 per cent. Regarding the second category of income group (Rs. 1001-2000); again Tuipang constituency has the highest percentage of rural sample voters that is 19 per cent of the total sample. This is followed by Buarpui constituency with 15 per cent, Sateek constituency with 9 per cent and Suangpuilawn constituency with 8 per cent of the total sample. In the third category of income group (Rs. 2001-3000) Sateek constituency has the highest percentage of rural sample voter, that is, 17 per cent. Next to Sateek, Suangpuilawn constituency has 10 per cent of rural sample voters under the third category of sample income group. Then, 9 per cent of such rural voters are there in Buarpui constituency. The lowest percentage of such group, that is, 5 per cent of the rural voters is seen in Tuipang constituency.

With regards to the fourth category of income group (Rs. 3001-4000); Sateek constituency has the largest number of sample voters in the total sample with 22 per cent. Such kind of voters forms 7 per cent of the total sample in Tuipang constituency, and 5 per cent each in Suangpuilawn and Buarpui constituencies. Under the fifth category of income group (Rs. 4001-5000), the highest percentage of the total rural
sample voters, that is 24, is seen in Tuipang constituency again as in the case of the third and fourth categories. Buarpui constituency has 7 per cent of the total sample voters under such category while Tuipang constituency has 5 per cent of such voters and Suangpuilawn constituency has 3 per cent.

As regards to the higher income group (Rs. 5001 and above), Suangpuilawn constituency has the largest number of higher income group which forms 17 per cent of the total sample voters. Tuipang constituency has 16 per cent of such group. Sateek constituency has 11 per cent of total sample voters and Buarpui constituency has 10 per cent under the category of higher income group. Compared to other constituencies, Sateek constituency is more economically advanced than others as the majority of voters in Sateek are between the third to sixth categories of income group. Sateek Constituency which is within the easy reach of Aizawl town has better market facilities than the other three Constituencies which have geographical disadvantage and far away from the towns.

Analysis and Observations

From the above factual presentation, the following points are again highlighted for proper understanding of the manner in which socio-economic factors could influence voting behaviour.
Rural Mizoram: In Mizoram, only a little more than half of the total population in the state is living in the rural areas due to a constant flow of people from rural areas to urban areas as highlighted in table-2.1. People living in the rural areas are mostly tribals. 99 per cent of rural people are scheduled tribes. Child population in the rural areas is larger than that of the urban areas. Child sex ratio is little higher than in urban areas.

Literacy rate in the rural areas of Mizoram is high. It is 81.2 per cent, but it is lower than the urban percentage which is 96.1 per cent. Male literacy is higher than the female literacy.

Rural Mizoram as in the case of Mizoram state is composed of various tribes, prominent among them being Lusei, Pawi (Lai), Mara (Lakher), Chakma, Hmar, Paihte, Ralte, etc. Luseis occupied the core and central position, while other tribes were, by circumstances, compelled to occupy peripheral location. These tribes living in specific location in the state have not maintained water-tight compartment relation in their mutual socio-economic life. Their social and religious customs are common with little variations. However, the Chakmas maintain distinct social customs due to difference in religious practices. Religion of Mizos is Christianity, they all are Christians.

Occupational structure represents economic activities of the people. The census of India has categorized the main workers into four groups –
cultivators, agricultural labourers, workers in household industry and other workers. The work participation rate in the rural areas is comparatively higher than the work participation rate in the urban areas or in the country as a whole. Both males and females worked almost equally. Agriculture is the main occupation of the rural people. As per the 2001 census, more than 85 per cent of the total rural workers are engaged in agricultural and its allied activities. Workers in household activities and other business other than agricultural activities form only a small percentage, that is, 1.03 per cent and 14.29 per cent. Non-workers in the rural areas form a lower percentage than in the rural areas than in the urban areas.

**Mizo Society:** In the pre-British days the Mizo society was a well-knit society. This was possible because all were engaged in shifting cultivation (*jhumbo*). There was no class distinction in the society. As already stated, Mizos developed a code of conduct called ‘Tlawmngaihna’ under which one is duty bound to help others, that is, they promoted a spirit of selfless service to the needy persons. The spirit of Tlawmngaihna is still there in Mizo society, particularly in the rural areas (villages) where the society is more closely knit than in towns due to the engagement of a large majority of people in the same work (*jhumbo*).
**Economy:** The economic life of the Mizos has always been centred on *jhum* or shifting cultivation. It is, in fact, true to say that the Mizo people who lived within Mizoram were self-sufficient in their way of life in the pre-colonial period. *Jhumming* is still a predominant form of agriculture. Due to the historical and geographical factors and absence of development in other sectors, such as agro-based industries and other allied activities, *jhum* cultivation continues to be the main occupation of the rural people. But rural people are not self-sufficient and they are economically backward. After the attainment of Union Territory and then statehood in Mizoram, various Rural Development Programmes/Schemes have been implemented by the Government to achieve self-sufficiency in food production and for the upliftment of the economic condition of the rural poor.

**Four Rural Constituencies:** It is undoubtedly true that the socio-economic factors play important role at the time of elections. It is believed that the four rural constituencies could be the representative of rural Mizoram. The main socio-economic variables for the study are age structure, sex composition, social composition or ethnic groups, education, occupation and family income.

Age structure is one of the most important variables to understand the social structure of the study area. As mentioned in Table 2.2, the middle age-group of 25-49 years is the largest group. 54 per cent of the
rural voters/respondents are in this age-group. The variation among the four rural constituencies was not significant. The middle age-group forms the highest percentage of voters in all the four rural constituencies as seen in Table-2.3.

Generally, the middle age-group is considered to be the main working force. Therefore, the study reveals that economically the most productive group – the middle aged group forms more than 50 per cent of the rural voters. This further indicates that there is quite a large working force in rural Mizoram to feed the rural people. It is quite significant that the voters’ participation is highly controlled by the age-structure in the study area. Due to the presence of the largest percentage of middle aged-voters, people’s participation in the four rural constituencies is very high. This is the case even in the whole of rural Mizoram.

With regards to sex ratio of the sample rural voters, the male voters outnumber the female voters, that is, there are 716 female voters for every 1000 males as seen in Table 2.4. Though female voters had the numerical strength, they could not return even a single woman candidate to the Assembly in 2003 assembly election.

Different ethnic groups or tribes are seen in the four rural constituencies. It is seen that there is ethnic diversity as seen in Table-2.5. People of one ethnic group or tribe concentrate in a particular geographical areas in the rural areas. Though there are various groups or
tribes, majority of them are belonging to Lusei tribe. Each of the ethnic
groups has the tendency to vote for their own ethnic group or tribe in the
four rural constituencies and this tendency is same in the whole area of
rural Mizoram. Thus, ethnic group or tribe is important factors which
influence the nature of participation and perception of the voters in rural
Mizoram.

It is found that the literacy rate is high among the rural
voters/respondents in the four rural constituencies. As seen in Table 2.6,
higher literacy percentage is exhibited from the study of four rural
constituencies. Majority of the rural people (94.5%) are literate. But their
educational attainment is not high as seen in Table 2.7. Only 9.5 per cent
of the four rural voters are above Matriculate or HSLC while not even 3
per cent (2.8%) passed graduate. As in the case of four rural
constituencies, even in the whole rural Mizoram, the educational
attainment of the people in general is not high though the literacy rate is
high among the people.

The study also reveals that the main occupation of the people is
cultivation, that is, *jhumming* in each of the four rural constituencies. As
seen in Table 2.8, majority of the rural voters, that is, 61 per cent of the
sample voters are shifting cultivators. This 61 per cent of the rural voters
forms 70.72 per cent of the total workers in the study area. Besides, there
are some agricultural labourers (about 10 per cent of rural voters) as seen
in category 3 (three) of Table 2.8. Thus, it is clear that a great majority of the rural voters/people (about 71 per cent) depend on agriculture which is mostly *jhumming*. Not only in each of the four selected rural constituencies, but also in rural Mizoram as a whole, majority of the people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. It can be noted that though literacy rate is very high among the rural people, a large majority of them are engaged in cultivation.

The work participation rate is high in the four rural constituencies. Only 13 per cent are non-workers in the rural areas of the four selected constituencies as seen in Table 2.8. At the state level, the total non-workers form 47.42 per cent as per the 2001 census. It is thus clear that work participation rate is much higher in the rural areas of Mizoram than in the state as a whole, that is, 13 per cent against 47.42 per cent. This non-workers group is of dependents and non-earners including housewives, students and old people.

The monthly income of voters/people in the four rural constituencies is very low. Due to practice of *jhum*/shifting cultivation and other reasons, the rural people cannot have high income. The backwardness in the rural economy is the result of relative stagnation in the field of agricultural production. The rural economy is dominated by agriculture. 71 per cent of the voters/people in the four rural constituencies depend on agriculture for their livelihood which is mostly
As seen in Table 2.9, six income groups are seen in the four rural constituencies. Among these, the lowest income group of the people/voters who earn Rs. 1000 or less per month forms the largest number of voters which is 35.25 per cent of the total voters. The highest income group of voters whose income are Rs. 5000 and above per month, form only 13.5 per cent of the total sample voters. This shows clearly that the rural voters/people in the four rural constituencies are economically backward with meagre incomes. On examining the income groupings of the respondents Constituency-wise, it is found that only in one Constituency, that is, Sateek Constituency income level is marginally higher as compared to others.

The rural areas in the four assembly constituencies are found to have been dominated by the Middle Age Group in terms of the variable of age and by the males in terms of the variable of sex. Out of four constituencies, two constituencies, that is Sateek and Buarpui Constituencies are found to have been numerically dominated by the Lusei tribe in terms of the ethnic group/tribe. The other two Constituencies, that is, Tuipang and Suangpuilawn are found to have been dominated by Mara (Lakher) and Hmar tribes respectively. This shows the presence of various ethnic groups in the rural areas. People of one ethnic group/tribe concentrate in a particular geographical area. Though there are various groups or tribes, majority of them belong to Lusei tribe.
Locational advantages are with the Luseis, while the peripheral location in case of the Hmars, Mara (Lakhers) and Paihte hindered/obstructed their progress. The areas of the four rural constituencies are found to have been dominated by the Middle Educated Group (who passed Middle but below Matriculate) in terms of the variable of education, by the cultivators group in terms of the variable of occupation, and by the Low Income Group in terms of the variable of income. The four rural constituencies are also found to have been dominated by the people who are mostly workers as only 13 per cent are non-workers, depending on others. However, the predominance of the variables of ethnic group, occupation and income is greatly noticeable in the socio-economic composition of the four rural constituencies.

Thus, on examining the socio-economic background of the voters in terms of some important variables, in the rural areas of Mizoram, the political behaviour and political participation in the elections are found to have been significantly influenced by the factor of ethnic affiliation and literacy.