

## Chapter IX

### Concluding Review

The British administration of Mizoram which began in 1890 paved the way for entry of missionaries into Mizoram. Under the British administration the missionaries began evangelical work among the Mizo from 1894 without fear of attack. They also started schools for the general education of children in addition to their social and literary works.

Before the advent of missionaries the Mizo had no written language. But they maintained the tradition of symbolic expression of their culture through some pictures curved out on the piece of stone. The idea of modern written form of language was totally unknown to them. After the law and order had been established the pioneer missionaries, J.H.Lorrain and F.W. Savidge ventured into Mizoram. At that time the different sub-tribes of Mizoram had their own dialects but the majority of the people spoke Duhlian dialect which is now called 'Mizo lawng' (Mizo language). The pioneer missionaries, therefore, learned the most wide spread dialect, started evangelical work and set an alphabet in order to put the language into written form. They first opened a school to teach the natives reading and writing. They prepared lessons from the contents of the Bible and also wrote a Grammar and Dictionary of the Mizo

language. They handed over their work to the Welsh Mission which commenced work in Mizoram in 1898.

The two pioneer missionaries resumed their work in the south Mizoram under the Baptist Missionary Society in 1903. Thus the two missions namely Welsh Mission and Baptist Mission were at work in Mizoram. The missionaries of these two missions ran schools for educating the people and undertook the work of translating the Bible into Mizo with a view to propagating and popularising the basic teaching of christianity. They established churches and spread the idea of common congregational prayer for which they prepared hymns of Western tunes in the Mizo language. In course of time the Bible and the hymns in Mizo had been revised by them in order to keep the spirit of the Mizo language. In addition to the Bible and the hymn book they also wrote or translated other religious books and prepared school text books. The Sunday School lessons received their special attention. The commentaries on the books of the Bible written by the Mizo Pastors or church leaders during 1920<sup>s</sup> were edited and revised by the missionaries. Thus the literary trend set forth by the missionaries since 1894 onwards became the foundation of the Mizo language and literature of the future.

The educational and religious books particularly the Bible and the hymn book contributed a large number of words

to the stock of Mizo Vocabulary. The Bible translation necessitated to use many foreign words. Many of the Mizo words have also been used with more than one sense and meaning in the translation. Besides, many words of the hymn are metaphors and similes which were not in use before the introduction of christianity. Thus the literary works of the missionaries greatly helped the Mizo language and literature to flourish. The missionaries were instrumental in standardising the Mizo language by making a unified process of assimilation of a large number of dialects of the different sub-tribes of the land. The Mizo printed books and writings had become so popular among them that many people belonging to different sub-tribes forgot their own dialects after a few years and the Mizo language became the lingua franca of all the Mizo.

The main aim of the missionaries was to convert the Mizo to christianity. They also acted with the objective of changing the traditional mode of life of the Mizo. It is true that the missionaries were successful in their religious policy because the Mizo had completely changed their religion which further changed their social life, mode of thinking, outlook on life and other traditional mode of life. Under the christianity they gradually began to adopt and follow the christian way of life. The christian teachings removed their fear of evil spirits. They gave up sacrifices to the demons and other

amusements or enjoyments connected with drinking of rice-beer. Instead of their heathen songs they sang the christian hymns. They attended the church service and observed sunday. They began to believe in God for salvation.

Christianity greatly improved the moral life of the people and broadened their knowledge and outlook. From the early years monthly papers "Kristian Tlangau" and "Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu" had been published and circulated in every village. These papers had educative value and created habit of reading.

The establishment of Primary Schools in the rural areas paved the way for social uplift. It is to be stated that the school teachers were church leaders or evangelists wherever they served. The people made it a point to learn to read and write in the day schools as well as in the sunday schools. The number of literate persons thus increased considerably. The removal of illiteracy was possible because of the spread of schools and churches. It may be said that christianity and education spread in Mizoram simultanously.

The missionaries also wrote Mizo Grammar on the model of the English Grammar. Recently the natives began to write their own Grammar. Yet a good Mizo Grammar covering all the grammatical topics has not been written till date. At pre-

sent only a few of the educated Mizo are interested in their own grammar.

The commentaries on the books of the Bible and other religious books including church history of the world which may be collectively called 'christian literature' were prepared mostly by the missionaries in collaboration with the Mizo Pastors and church leaders. It appears that most of the educated Mizo were generally not interested in writing of books. As most of them entered to the government services they do not feel the need of doing literary works. It is a pity that they have not realised that they are the most responsible citizens for development of their own literature. It is universal truth that the developed countries develop their own literature.

Nevertheless, it is to be noted that a few of the educated Mizo are now beginning to take keen interest in the literature and they are aware of the importance and responsibility of developing their own language and literature. It is expected that with the progress of the society the posterity will get themselves engaged in the pursuit of the study of their language and literature for their future amelioration and uplift.