CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION
The present thesis titled, “Women in Mizo History: Changing roles, status and participation from 18th Century to 20th Century” analyses the least known subject in the historical writing of the Mizos by unraveling the past experiences and contributions of women in the making of history.

Mizoram is situated on the North Eastern corner of India surrounded by two foreign countries, (Bangladesh and Myanmar) and three states (Tripura, Assam and Manipur) in India. The Mizo society has several distinctive features in the course of its evolution and historical development from the “Indian civilization”. Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills in colonial period (1890-1947). In the Post-colonial period it was given the name Mizo Hills District by an Act of Parliament in 1954. In 1971 Mizo District was upgraded into a Union Territory and renamed as Mizoram subsequently becoming the 27th state of the Indian Union in 1987.

The post-independence studies have incorporated the Mizo society as a section of Indian society. However, the regional specificity of North East India in general and Mizoram in particular had been ignored by the academic community for a long time. Hence, Mizo history continued to suffer from historiographical exclusion in Indian academy. The recent era has witnessed the growing interest in the reconstruction of North East Indian history in response to Indian history in the larger context. Despite the various attempts made by scholars, women and their role in the making of history have been excluded from the historical narratives. The problem is more pertinent in the context of Mizo history, where a deep investigation has been done neither in the empirical nor the theoretical level. Therefore, the present thesis attempts to recover the status of women, their experiences, their roles, contributions and their voices in the changing historical time and space.

1.1 WHY DO WE NEED TO STUDY WOMEN’S HISTORY?

History has been largely defined as “a record of the past experiences of people” or, according to E.H Carr’s idea of constructing the past as “an unending dialogue between the past and the present with a view to understanding the present and the future”.¹ For many scholars this definition of history has dominated and governed their historical writings. However, the course of human history has been changing in its space and time. Within the discourses of many scholars the very notion of what history is, is a subject to controversy.
Historians of all disciplines have attempted to understand its totality. So many efforts have been made by scholars to re-write, re-interpret, re-construct, re-constitute, de-construct and re-invent the earlier historical writing. Recently in order to reclaim totality in history, scholarly work had started to scrutinize the ‘marginality’ in history. The reason for this is “history is, and has always been selective and represents a very narrow account of human past in terms of time, space and numbers”. This was again constructed by the narrow accounts of elites which marginalized the lives and achievements of the majority of people in the political and economic realms. As long as historians (men) held on to this traditional view that only the transmission and exercise of power were worthy of their interest, women were always ignored.

For the scholars in the field of women’s studies, it is difficult to agree with the earlier definition of history “where the concept or idea of “her-story” as distinct from history did not find a place in it”. As a result of the revitalized women’s movement of the 1960’s the catalyst for the study of women’s history began to emerge in the west. Even in India, as a result of the United Nations’ declaration of the year 1975 as the International Women’s Year, some historians also began to pay their interest on women’s past. Several historians began to analyze the past with the aim of revealing the hidden and untold stories of women’s experiences in history. Hitherto both within and outside the academe the most significant development during recent decades has been the rise of women’s history.

A common question when examining the issue of women in history is ‘why do we need to study women’s history?’ The striking fact about the historiography of women is the general neglect of the subject by the historians. As mentioned above women are hidden from history in the same way as the lives of men of the poor are obscured, because of their class. But they are also hidden as a sex, and it takes an especially feminist consciousness to come to terms with the full extent of this. If this is so, what is the main reason behind the invisibility of women in history? The main reason for women to be hidden in available historiography is attributed to the fact that due to the patriarchal domination men held power and women appeared not to have had the power to write themselves in. As a result, all historical traditions have been written and recorded by male writers and have been shaped by male perspectives. Recently Jasmine Saikia wrote, “History is present in all communities. Even powerless and unknown groups have their histories”. More specifically, Gerda Lerner, an American pioneer in the field
of women’s history argues, “women have a history; women are in history”. According to her, all the earlier historical writings described men as actors and active agents in the scene of history, therefore it is important to give back women their history.

If women played crucial roles in the historical event, can they be ignored? This is another general notion when surveying the role of women in historical events. One cannot deny the fact that women also received some attention, but the narrative of the authors of the traditional histories reflected more of the contemporary prejudices about the female rather than the historical evidence of women past. This approach focused mainly on their role and position in the family or on their social status; the identity of women have been constructed for the thousand years as weak, passive, emotional, intuitive and sometimes mysterious, quarrelsome etc.

The only accounts of women which have been recorded in the earlier or traditional approach are mainly the accounts and biographies of ‘notable women’ or women of the elite class. However, such approach was condemned by the western feminists as they believed that the history of notable history does not describe the experiences and history of the mass of women. Also women of different classes have different historical experiences. From this perspective it is assumed that history at it best should be a recounting of how members of a particular society lived and not merely a designation of who was important in that society. Women’s history along with other studies of the powerless groups of the past is based on that assumption.

Another general question when writing women’s past is that only women writers are entitled to write women’s history. Such an assumption could lead to gender bias in history by minimizing the entire purpose of bringing women back into history. To quote Sheila Rowbotham:

“What is of importance therefore is not who is writing history, but the perspective from which it is written and the kind of research that has been done to unravel the developments in the past, and finally the attempts made to present a total history with as little of gender bias as possible”.

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Likewise, the isolation of women from men has little effect in the historical development and in the attempts to discover the significance of sex roles in the society. In the field of women’s history, the contribution and role of women in making history and a result of their interactions with the rest of history are subjects of the study.

In short, women’s history attempts to include women in the historical record in order to adopt new ideas about their historical significance. “The writing of women into history necessarily involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance, to encompass personal, subjective experiences as well as public and political activities of history”.¹³ Such kind of historical reconstruction would focus on the complete history of a society not only by enquiring about the contribution or the subjection of women; but also by endeavoring to understand the significance of both the sexes as well as by observing their contribution towards social changes. Thus, social historians like Joan Wallach Scott writes, “It requires analysis not only of the relationship between the male and female experience in the past, but also the connection between the past history and current historical experience”.¹⁴ Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that study of women’s history “implies not only a new history of women, but also a new history”.¹⁵

1.2. PROBLEMS OF WOMEN’S HISTORY IN NORTHEAST INDIA.

In the context of the Northeast India (comprising seven states of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh) historical writing is far from adequate. Despite the pre-colonial historical traditions of the Ahoms Buranji of Assam, Tripura Rajamala, Manipur Official Chronicles and the collective memory of hill tribals, the colonizers were the first historians who exposed the history of North East India to the outside world. However, comprehensive history of the region on modern historiographical lines began to emerge only in the post-colonial era.

There are consistent exclusions and dissimilarities to the history of mainland India which have been contested by historians of this region. The post-independent to recent historical discourses mostly revolve around the insurgency and development problem which have been explicitly entered to the agenda of India’s nationalism. This trend has ignored the
diverse natures of society and historians failed to emphasize the overall historical development of North East India in a larger context.

Since a recent decade, there has been a renewing interest in reconstructing comprehensive history of North East India at a popular level. The historiographical trend has been problematized by North East regional historians such as Sajal Nag, Manorama Sharma, David Syemlieh and JB.Bhatacharjee. To them, a historiographical problem lies within the sources, materials and official bias. Thus, most of North East historians failed to escape the colonial influences, religious bias, lack of proper methodology and lack of understanding tribal lore. To Sajal Nag, North East Indian communities are marginalized not only in the developmental process of India but also in the historical writing of India.\(^{16}\) He proposed that in order to develop a true national history, historians should include all aspects of the regional contribution to Indian history.\(^{17}\)

Surprisingly, despite the numerous cry for short coming in North East Indian history, historians have consistently neglected gender aspect in the historical process of North East India. Until very recently, those who have attempted to recover the hidden history of women still comprise of small academic community. Monorama Sharma calls for the need of including feminist agenda in history as she has argued, “If history is the progress and advancement of civilization, then it is absolutely impossible that progress could have been achieved without the equal participation of the women who form about half the society”.\(^{18}\)

Two years before the publication of Sharma’s work, a trained theologian Frederick S Downs focused on several historiographical problems in the context of the Christian impact on the status of women in North East India. On the methodological levels, women historians confronted several problems; most notable is the nature of historical sources. He wrote:

“The sources that have been thus far consulted, and which probably constitute the major types of sources available on the subject, consist in [of] missionary records of various kinds (produced by both men and women), administrative materials (produced exclusively by men), and the writings of social scientists (mainly men but more recently including some women). Only a few of the more recent publications are written from a woman’s perspective, fewer still from tribal perspective and least of all from a tribal woman’s perspective”.\(^{19}\)
Down’s skepticism is due to earlier scholars such as L.B Varma, M.P Jagirdar, N.Chaterjee, P.K Bhattacharya, M.Das Gupta and K. Mishra, who have been in fancy of “women status approach” to the various communities of North east India. This trend has been continued and expanded by anthropologists in the recent period.

Another problem of historical writing in North East India is deeply embedded in the diverse nature of society. The geo-politically condition of plains and hills is inhabited by hundreds of ethnic groups with their own distinctive cultural practices. Various forms of social and religious institutions; brahmanical, tribal patriarchal and matriarchal societies are found in this region. In such societies, historical generalizations on the various experiences of women under one umbrella often end up in miscalculation. Therefore, comparative and regional study is a prerequisite for understanding the various historical experiences of women of North East India.

The introduction of a new historiographical perspective in 1980’s by a group of North Eastern Tribal Christian Feminists is a significant chapter in the writing of women’s history of the region. Earlier writers focused more on changes in the status of women concentrated on society in general, while the theologically trained feminists focused on the Christian Missionary works and Church, on its teaching and administrative structure. Feminist theologians are more inclined to ‘postcolonial approach’ when they raised new issues and challenged the historical writing that often attributed colonialism and Christian Missionaries as the only agent of historical change in tribal hills of North East India. According to them, early scholars tended to ignore social changes during the pre-colonial period.

A feminist theologian Lalrinawmi has contested that “social change” during the colonial and Christian missionary period did not necessarily indicate changes in the position of women; rather it institutionalized “a new form of patriarchy”. Further, she has proposed that the position of women was degraded in the Colonial and Missionary period. Most of the scholars have focused on the processes of social changes only from a narrow aspect or at a superficial level rather than a broader perspective. Such form of writing ignored an in depth study of the unchanging structure of ‘tribal patriarchy’ and its impact on women’s position.
1.3 IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN’S HISTORY IN MIZORAM.

In Mizoram, records of written documents had been found and textualized only from the British intervention in the late nineteenth century. These records are available in the form of military reports, ethnography, travelers’ accounts, letters, diaries, government reports, medical report and Christian missionary reports. Since the late nineteenth century, study on Mizo cultural practices had been initiated by the colonial military officers such as T. H Lewin (1870), C.A Soppitt (1887), R.G Woodthorpe (1873), Pemberton, Major MacDonald, Caption Tanner and Caption Badley (1872–1873), A.Z Mackenzie (1884), A.S Reid (1893), J. Shakespear (1912), N.E Parry (1928), A.G McCall (1949) etc. However, these works were largely confined to semantic studies of language, folktales, geographical and political conditions and rarely touched upon the Mizo history in a larger context.

From the early twentieth century, new trend of writing emerged from the Christian missionaries. Some of the famous ones among them were R.A Lorrain (1912), F.J Raper (1944), J.M Lloyd (1957) etc. These records were mostly concerned with the changes and transformations of earlier customs and practices initiated by the colonial officials and Christian missionaries. In these writings, few records on women are found but only as part of the ‘subjects’ to represent the achievement of their “civilizing mission” in Lushai Hills.

Since the third decade of the twentieth century the works of history writing began to emerge from the educated native male writers. The earliest and most prominent among them were Liangkhaia (1938), Challiana (1949), Vanchhunga (1955) VL Siama (1953) and K. Zawla (1964), Zatluanga (1966) etc. These writings mainly dealt with the socio-economic, religious and political life of the Mizos. The main limitation of the above writers is that their historical writings were mainly recollected from the oral records based on the perspective of ‘Lusei patriarchy’ and also gave importance and exaggerated the British and European Christian Missionary created institutional structure and no gender structure was found in their writings. Until today the researchers and writers of Mizo History mostly rely on the writings of the above writers.

Between 1960’s and 1970 there were some breaks in the growth of historical literature in Mizoram due to the insurgency problem in the region. Since, the 1970’s there have been
increasing numbers of local writers, scholars as well as the non-indigenous scholars until the present decades. Some of the well known writers emerged such as R.Vanlawma (1965), Chaltuakhuma (1981), A. Thanglura (1983), C. Hermana (1999), R. Zamawia (2007) who all had political background in one way or the other. All of them focused on the growth of ethnic consciousness in the mid 1940’s -1950’s and the insurgency problem of 1960’s -1980’s from ethnic political parties’ point of view. In addition, other scholars like JV Hluna (1985) R.N Prasad (1973), G.E Varghese, R.M Agarwal (1974), Nirmal Nibedon (1980), Amit Kumar Nag (1984) also began to pay their interest in the political history of Mizoram in academic discipline. On the one hand the political upheaval of the 1960’s led to the emergence of new perspective among the scholars. Most of the scholars began to give their attention on the Mizo’s identity and nationalism, where women have been portrayed only as victims but no records on their contribution in these political movements.

During these periods, apart from the political history, several scholars also began to make sustained and systematic studies in social, cultural and religious changes during the post colonial period. The notable scholarly studies among them were the works of notable theologians such as, C.L Hminga (1987) and Mangkhosat Kipgen (1996) etc, regional historians like Sangkima (1992, 2005), J.V Hluna (1985), B. Lalthangliana (2001, 2004, 2006) etc. In the studies of the above scholars though women were not the main theme of their writing, the scholars had briefly demonstrated on how much the status of women had been improved since the introduction of Christianity. They concentrated more on description and documentation rather than locating the problem of gender relations in Mizo society. Following the tradition of Colonial and Missionaries’ perspectives, these scholars also looked at the status of women to glorify the work of colonial officials and Christian missionaries and ignored the contributions of women in the larger cultural process of Mizo society.

Since the last two decades, a study on the impact of Christianity on the Mizo women became one of the focuses of the emerging feminist theologians such as, R.L Hnuni, T. Vanlalaltani, P.S Lalthmungthangi and Lalnghakthuami. Despite their determining focus on the contemporary issue of gender hierarchical order in the church, their writings mainly trapped within the reproduction of the Missionary thoughts. They failed to give an in depth estimation on the intersection between the Europeans and the natives. More importantly the Mizo women’s perspectives have been left out in their writings.
Like in the west and mainstream India, the year 1975 opened a new chapter for the Mizo women. In this year the Tribal Research Institute in Mizoram for the first time introduced women as one of their research subjects when they published a booklet titled, ‘*Position and Status of Mizo women in the earlier Mizo Society*’, prepared by N. Chatterjee, a senior research officer in the Tribal Research Institute of Mizoram. After more than a decade the Tribal Research Institute published another booklet titled, ‘*Mizo Women Today*’ in 1991. However, like earlier literary works on Mizoram, the authors relied only on the colonial records and missionaries’ reports and collected information without proper analysis on gender and systematic research. Apart from these two works, no work has been done on women’s studies under the Tribal Research Institute.

Until today, there are no histories of women in Mizoram. Majority of the literatures concerning history of the Mizos are typically narrow and are generally devoid of interpretation where the concept of ‘gender’ or ‘woman’ as a category in historical analysis do not find a place in it. In these writings women are either dismissed or portrayed as secondary in the society that demeaned their agency in history. Gerda Lerner expressed her view on western historical writing in her book, ‘*The Creation of Patriarchy*’. Her ideas would be applicable to the context of the existing Mizo history which would imply that history of the Mizo is ‘*Pre-history*’ 24 for the Mizo women.

1.4 HISTORICAL TRANSITIONS AND THE PROBLEM OF PERIODIZATION IN MIZORAM.

Periodization is one of the most elusive tasks of historical writing. World history, developed in European academic experience is based on ancient, medieval, and modern history. This categories, derived from European experience have been applied gauchely at best to the histories of China, India, Africa, the Islamic world, or the Western hemisphere—quite apart from the increasingly recognized fact that they do not even apply very well to European history. 25 In India, history has been divided into Hindu, Muslim and the British period as James Mill formulated in his work ‘*The History of British India*’ in the early 19th century. These preconceptions have governed routine history focusing on chronology and the narrative of dynasties. Indian historians, by and large have continued to follow this routine. Romila Thapar stated that borrowed from European historical periodization most of the historians have
accepted the colonial periodization and changed the nomenclature to ancient, medieval and modern and thought to be more secular, although the markers remained the same. Thus, there was no effective change in periodization.²⁶

The problem is more complex in the regional context particularly in the North East India. The histories of various ethnic groups are diversely intricate from the mainland India. Nevertheless, in the context of Mizoram the problems of periodization still remain unquestioned among the historians. Following the categories of mainstream Indian periodization is a problem in this region for it does not implicate socio-cultural realities. In addition, there exists historical overlapping between the periods. As history is an unfolding story of change and emergence, a historian has to locate and examine the transitions which lead to change in historical processes. However changes occurred at different points of time in different situations as there are not linear and equivalent changes all over the sub-continent. Romilla Thapar then suggested that it is possible to see a particular form which dominated and provided a context to the others.²⁷ As far as it can be traced, in the context of Mizo history political transition is central to the study of historical process.

Given the occurrence of new political structure from the late nineteenth century, most of the writers have seen ‘Colonialism’ as the harbinger of historical transition in Mizoram. Thus, periodization in the form of ‘historical colonialism’ has proved tenacious in Mizo history. Accordingly, most of the Mizo history writers have categorized the historical period into three phases- Pre Colonial period as a synonym to traditional period, Colonial period as synonym to the transitional period that was the period after the consolidation of the Colonial supremacy in Lushai hills until the British left the country in the middle of the twentieth century. The period after the British left the region is commonly periodized as the Post Colonial period or Post-Independence period.

One important question concerning ‘colonial transitional society’ is ‘transition to what context?’ If we look at the transition regarding social, cultural and religious system, more initiatives had been taken by the Christian missionaries rather than the Colonial administrators. Hence, for many writers, Christianity did not seem to represent the essence of Colonialism as the missionaries and colonial administrators entered the region with different missions. For some writers, especially theologians, Christianity therefore, served as the indicator of social
transitions and followed historical periodization in terms of Christian era by categorizing the period into Pre-Christian and Christian era.

Colonialism therefore, itself is a problem in the context of Mizoram particularly when we compare with the perception of liberal Marxist historians such as Bipan Chandra and A. R Desai who studied colonial transition of the mainstream Indian history in terms of world capitalist economy apart from its political dominational aspect. Economic interest was not the main reason of the colonial intervention in the context of Mizoram, but colonial state was introduced as part of colonial system, which later resulted to the outbreak of political upheavals in the middle of the twentieth century.

As part of colonization, the strategy the British followed in the region was to allow the missionaries to build their medical, religious and educational institutions and used them as agencies of integrating the hill tribals with the west. In this context, F.S Downs also says, ‘The main agent of change was the Government itself. The Christian missions and the small Christian communities that soon grew up as a result of their work did not have sufficient resources to initiate major changes. But they were able to play an important accumulative role’.

Overall a great deal of social transition occurred during this period as various Mizo practices of religion, gender norms, popular culture, social status and even basic concepts of identity began to face new challenges. The post independence era brought another important chapter in the history of the Mizos. The transfer of power from the colonial to Independent government had several impacts in the Mizo hills. Identity crisis and formation of ethnic political parties was developed rapidly. The name Lushai Hills was changed to Mizo district in 1954. The colonial institution of tribal chieftainship was abolished in 1955.

Another crisis, a devastating famine occurred between 1958 and 1960. This was soon followed by insurgency movement in Mizo Hills which had outrageous impact on the Mizo society, particularly on women. Despite the unsolved problem of the concept of ‘colonialism,’ the present thesis followed periodization in the form of historical colonialism and tries to locate women in the process of socio-political transition from chiefdoms to colonial state, traditional religion to Christianity under the colonial rule and from colonial state to independent state.
Given that the periods which historians have commonly regarded as turning points for all historical developments are not necessarily the same for men as for women, problems of periodization and transition become more plentiful in the writing of women’s history. This problem was questioned by a socialist feminist, Joan Kelly-Gadol when she challenges how periodization in conventional world history fails to imply the experiences of women in history in her paper, "Did women have a Renaissance?" 

Recently, this assumption on periodization was confirmed by American historians such as Linda Kaber and a feminist historian Gerda Lerner. In her paper ‘Placing Women in History’ Gerda Lerner argues, “All the conceptual models of history hitherto developed have only limited usefulness for women’s history, since all are based on the silent assumptions of a patriarchal ordering of values”. So she has suggested a new method for the study of different stages in ‘transitional history’. This includes the study of women’s status and roles, women’s culture and consciousness, women’s effort to attain autonomy and emancipation etc, which was followed by a synthesis: a history of dialectic, the tensions between male and female culture that would be based on the comparative study of men and women in given periods. According to Lerner, only after a series of such detailed studies one may define the new universal history.

Thus, the major concern for studying women in the different stages of historical transitions in Mizo society is tracing changes in the roles and status of women. In the context of colonial India, Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid argue, “Both tradition and modernity have been carriers of patriarchies….and are eminently patriarchal construct…change has continued to occur; we need to see how women and womanhood are inserted into and affected by social change, and how change is made to appear as continuity”.

As the present study focuses on the historical transitions from the 18th Century to 20th Century, the question must be: Was women’s status always the same? What was women’s status when compared to men in the historical process? How far did the historical transition affect their life? What roles did the Mizo women play in the development of the society? Lastly, to disclose women’s effort to access ‘public’ sphere, their autonomy and to recover their unheard voices in the historical process was the main intention of the present study.
1.5 THESIS APPROACH.

From the light of the above discussions, the study of women’s lives in Mizo history requires new historical approach and methodology both at empirical and theoretical levels. By using “gender” and “women” as the central of analysis the present thesis suggests: the use of alternative sources, rereading of conventional sources and recovering women’s agency through non conventional sources. Thus, the present study focuses on a number of historical topics by ‘restoring the voices of marginal groups’, which have been left out in the master historical narratives.35

One way of restoring the marginal/subaltern voices is to practice alternative reading of history through the ‘oral tradition (folklores, legends, myths, proverbs and songs etc) and oral history’ (personal experiences, narratives, family stories, memoirs etc).36 The use of oral tradition and oral history is accompanied by the anxieties ‘about the contamination of both archival history and disciplinary empiricism’, as it is well characterized in Jacques Derrida’s work on “archive fever”.37 The Indian subaltern studies series initiated by Ranajit Guha and others have proved beyond doubt that the “Subalterns” have no archives and that “orality” is their only power.38 Italian historian, A Portelli has pointed out that the value of oral history is in the “construction of suppressed memories” of non-hegemonic groups.39

The increasing acceptance of non-conventional sources (autobiography, folklore, oral tradition, oral history, personal narratives and memoirs) among the feminist historians in the last two decades have pointed out that things were changed for the better. They incorporated the use of oral histories in their subject, so those groups who were marginalized in conventional history can be given a voice and problematize the narratives in historical context. After all, feminist theory is grounded on women’s lives and aimed at analyzing the role and meaning of gender in those lives and in society, women’s personal narratives are essential primary documents for feminist research.40

By using non-conventional sources such as oral testimony, autobiography, photographs, diaries, and memoirs from the western feminists’ approach the Indian feminist scholars like Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Urvashi Butalia, Malavika Karlekar and Geraldine Forbes41 have attempted to recover the experiences of Indian women. Unfortunately the “fiercely empirical
historians” who assess the fallacies of memory as the pitfall of oral history have resented such kind of historical recollection. However, it is also accepted that conventional sources suffer from similar problems. Antoinette Burtons brought out new questions in this context: “what is history, who writes history and for whose consumption?” According to Burton, modern South Asian history, dependent as it is on the colonial archive, is additionally biased by Anglo-Americanism. Collected predominantly by white middleclass men for the production of knowledge in imperial administration, such archives reflect power relations between the ruler and the ruled and consequently have little to offer us in capturing the life experiences of South Asian women.

Contrary to such perspective Helene Cixous asserts that as subject for history woman however occur simultaneously in several archival documents. To support this theory Betty Joseph argues, “Women are everywhere in colonial archive, albeit in a fragmented and dispersed way”. Thus, there is a need of change in handling the sources. In this context re-reading and contextualizing the representation of women in conventional archives exemplify the conditions that made it possible for the women to appear in the official record. When she discusses the problem of reading colonial archives for the feminist historical subject in her essay on the Rani of Sirmur, Gayatri Spivak demonstrates the “consolidation” of colonial power, which prevented the Rani to assert agency. However, her study gave Rani a status of performing resistance against patriarchal power. In the context of the pre colonial and colonial period, rereading of colonial and missionary archive is therefore necessary.

To reconstruct the pre-colonial oral based Mizo society, the historians are still dependent upon the colonial and missionary sources, who utilized knowledge and information on the Mizos’ past mostly from the native male informants. Further this approach is supported by the transcription of oral information to reveal women’s agency that are made to remain silent in mainstream accounts. For instance, with a view to recover their agency deciphering of the women’s voices in oral tradition (songs, folk tales, myths and legends), which are available in colonial ethnographies and available transcribed text of oral information. Rereading of oral tradition particularly proverbs that conspicuously contained a lot about the women’s issue also reinterprets the status of pre-colonial Mizo women. Such form of approach not merely chronicles the past; it also exposes the buried historical contents in order to enlarge the historical text.
Although it has been regarded redundant by some feminist writers, the traditional women’s history approach of ‘adding women’⁴⁵ or “compensatory history”⁴⁶ and “celebratory history” cannot be fully ignored in Mizo history where the writing of women’s history is still in an embryonic stage. Within this approach, comparison between conventional and alternative sources locates and reinterprets the misrepresentation of those notable women in archival records. In the context of colonial and post colonial period, this approach not only discovers the omitted lives and experiences of women; it recovers the voices and consciousness of women and adds it to history. This approach would enable us to understand that “women shared a sexual identity and whatever they did adds substance to their history”.⁴⁷ After all it is argued, “In woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women, as well as national and world history”.⁴⁸

Majority of Mizo historical writings in post colonial period dealt with the ethnic movements, when/where women were/are portrayed only as victims. As in the words of Gerda Lerner, treating women as mere victims of oppression merely places them in a male defined conceptual framework that reflected male’s experiences not the female. Thus to challenge the dominated “victimizing narratives” it is pertinent to raise several questions. Did women give response to the patriarchal power beyond their victimization in the political and ethnic movement? Was women’s definition of ethnic nationalism similar to men’s? What were the conditions that made it possible for them to emerge in the movement? Where were the hidden women volunteers and ‘victims’ of the political movement?

In Mizoram, there are abundant literatures on MNF movement/independent movement written by both native and non-native writers as the academic discourse during the insurgency period and the following era mostly revolved around contestation of power between ethnic state and larger nation state. The theme of the study has been expanded in a recent decade, but women’s experiences and consciousness in the movement are largely neglected. Currently, there is no primary historical work on women’s role in the MNF Movement. Archives and libraries contain little information relating to the experience of women in the MNF Movement and few other sources (political parties/NGO/Research Centre/individual library) portrayed them as individuals in their own right. Women, it may be argued, are ‘twice hidden’ from traditional to contemporary Mizo history.
Thus, women’s lives and experiences need to be captured through the use of individual oral testimonies/personal narratives to construct Mizo social history. Due to the recurring representation of “consolidation” for patriarchal power, the voices of women either as actors or as “victims” could not be heard in conventional archives. From the perspective of Urvashi Butalia on the study of Partition of India in 1947 Mizo women were focused simultaneously as agents and victims of the ethnic movement in the post independent scenario. In the meantime, their voices were recovered through the critical examination between alternative sources (personal memoirs and narratives, oral testimonies, autobiographies etc) and government accounts.

From the above approaches, the present study interprets the past in a way that women are not only visibilised but that their roles are more fully understood as actors and agents in Mizo history.49 While tracing their changing status during the periods of transition the present study explored women’s agency through the aspects of consciousness, perspective, aspiration, worldview, assertion and resistance. Drawn from the definition of Padma Anagol who suggests the use of this conception for the study of colonial India, women’s agency was uncovered from the individual and collective will and assertion of women to act in conscious forms of resistance against certain kinds of oppression.50 Thus retrieving women’s agency in history has also meant recovering strong, outspoken, powerful women who could then form part of the struggle in changing social and political condition”.51

1.6 TERMS AND CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS.

Several terms and conceptual terminologies used in this study need clarification: Though many of the terms are used as synonyms with the concepts of current academic discourses, some of the terms are used purposefully in the Mizo context.

The term ‘Lusei Patriarchy’ is repeatedly used throughout this thesis. ‘Lusei Patriarchy’ is largely used in the pre-colonial context and it denotes the male defined Lusei cultural system with a customary law and social norms under the patronage of Sailo chiefdoms.

Regarding the periodization century paradigm is followed rather than year based chronology. Although 18th Century to first half of the 19th Century indicates the indigenous
society without the interference of the external powers, the term pre-colonial is also used to identify the period before the invention of the British. As such the last decade of 19th Century to the middle of the 20th century indicate the colonial and missionary period, whereas the term post colonial identifies the period after the Indian independence of 1947 up till the year 1986.

The concept of agency is of course complex and has been debated and defined variously. In the present study, it is used to define the existence of women’s conscious awareness (i.e. perspective, aspiration, and worldview) of socio-political condition and of being subordinate to patriarchy accompanied by assertion and resistance. In some senses, it is used as a synonym of women’s contributing knowledge and labour that effectively brought the social and political life. Agency is not a homogenous analytical category. Women of different social classes (both individually and collectively) had different experiences. So this thesis proposes that a collection of such diverse women’s experiences and their perspective formed “agency”.

1.7 REVIEW OF LITERATURES.

As indicated before, the earliest works about the Mizos were taken almost exclusively by the outsiders mainly, the colonial officials whose writing on the Mizos did not directly concern the lives of women. Besides the oral traditions, the present thesis uses a variety of colonials’ and missionaries’ accounts in writing the history of pre-colonial and colonial scenario. The earliest account on the lives of women in Mizo family was represented by a Deputy Commissioner of a Chittagong Hill Tracts, T. H Lewin in his book *Wild Races of South Eastern India* in 1870 who observed the Mizo women as occupying a privileged position in the family. Ever since the British colonized the hills, few accounts on the degrading lives of women had been illustrated by the colonial officers.

In contrast to Lewin’s observation, J. Shakespear in 1903 demonstrated the timid lives of Mizo women in the traditional society in his book ‘*The Lusei-Kuki Clans’*. Amongst the colonial works, N.E. Parry’s, ‘*A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies’* (1928) was one of the detailed accounts which shed light on the lives of Mizo women. This book documented account of the earlier Lusei customs and traditions, which included the issues of divorce, marriage customs, sexual offences and the law of inheritance.
A.G. McCall, the Superintendent of the Lushai hills from 1931 to 1943 gave a detailed account of the history of the Lusei clan by tracing their origin in his book, ‘The Lushai Chrysalis’. Though women were not the main focus of this book, A.G. McCall provided some information on women’s lives during the colonial period by saying that “the Lushai (Lusei) has little sense of any great chivalry towards women”. By pointing at the gender division of labour he also gave a good account of daily life of women in which he describes women as industrious and hard labours in jhumming. He also focused on the political history from 18th century till the mid of 20th century in which he gave good account of the history of village wars and the Mizo’s encounters with the British. Despite his concern about the position of women his discussions of wars and village administrations neglected women’s role and activities.

A Presbyterian missionary JM Lloyd, who served in Mizoram from 1944-1964, made extensive studies of the early history of the Mizo church in his books “High on the hills” and ‘The History of the Church in Mizoram; Harvest in the hills’, which give some information for the present study. On the basis of his studies, JM Lloyd described the status of women that were strictly circumscribed and stated that the emancipation of women came surely but slowly through Christian influence. The same perspective is followed by C.L Hminga a native Baptist Church’s theologian. In his book, ‘The life and witnesses of the churches in Mizoram’, Hminga concluded the impacts and achievements of Christianity in the Lushai hills with the improving position of women.

For a detailed description on the lives of women in Mizo society during the colonial and missionary period, the writings of women missionaries, mostly in the form of autobiography have provided valuable information. The most notable works are E.M Chapman and M. Clark’s ‘Mizo Miracle’ and Gwen Rees Roberts’s ‘Memories of Mizoram: Reflections and Recollections’. E.M Chapman and M. Clark dealt with the Baptist Missions’ activities in the Southern part of Mizoram whereas Gwen Rees Roberts work mostly concerned with the Welsh women’s missionary works in the Northern Mizoram. In their books, both these missionaries focused on women’s education as the main conduit for the emancipation of Mizo women. To reveal the successful work on women’s education, Chapman and Clark highlighted the stories of few educated women and their contribution for their missions in improving the condition of Mizo women.
For a more detailed account on the report of women’s work on medicine, Welsh Presbyterian Missionaries May Bounds and Gladys M Evans’ ‘Medical Missions in Mizoram: Personal Experiences’ and Imogen Roberts’ unpublished book, ‘Mawii’s Story in 1950’ also provided some information. From their personal experiences, the women missionaries highlighted the contributing efforts of the native (Mizo) women for the success of medicinal missions in Lushai hills. Yet, being served as Christian Missionaries, these missionaries also emphasized the Christian missionaries’ work particularly female education as the main factor for the women’s emancipation in Mizoram.

Apart from the colonials’ and missionaries’ works, there are growing numbers of literatures that focused on the British administration; however there are few works that focus on women. Amongst these are Suhash Chatterjee’s books ‘Mizo Chief and chiefdoms’ and Mizo Under the British Rule have provided few aspects for the study of the role women in pre-colonial political administration and their roles as political agents in the colonial political scenario. Though Mizo Chief and Chiefdoms mainly dealt with the traditional Mizo village life under the chief, the author gave biographies of Mizo chiefs in the last chapter of his book that also included some female chieftainess. However, the main lacuna of these books is that the author mainly depends on the British documents and fully ignores the indigenous oral sources. Due to this, the author has committed a number of mistakes with regards to the name of these chief/chieftainesses, which made the book unreliable in some instances.

To understand the position of Mizo women in pre-colonial society N Chatterjee has briefly studied family life, marriage customs and social customs in her work ‘Position and Status of Mizo women in the earlier Mizo Society’ in 1975. In her attempt to understand the position of Mizo women in traditional or Pre-colonial society she has merely followed N.E Parry’s ‘A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies’ without giving proper analysis on the history of Mizo society. Without re-examining the colonial accounts she has drawn a conclusion by saying “…the status of women in their society was in no way inferior to that of man and she suffered none of those derogatory and discriminatory treatments as may be found in some of the more advance societies”.

However, by comparing the position of women in a Hindu society to that of tribal women cannot be accurate as they were in completely different worlds in terms of materialisms and ideology. The absence of the Sati or dowry systems does not imply that the position of
women in Mizo pre-colonial society was better than those of caste Hindu women. Her study on the Mizo women informed us that the position of Mizo women needs reconsideration and reconstruction in its own context.

After more than a decade the Tribal Research Institute published another booklet titled, ‘Mizo Women Today’ that deals with the position of Mizo women since the traditional period to the modern times. For the present research the book has provided a brief report on the position of women as well as their contribution as active participants in the social, religious and economic realms by identifying education with Christianity as the main reason for the improving status of women.

The growing consciousness amongst the feminist theologians in a recent period resulted to the emergent publications on the studies of Mizo women. Zomuani’s and Lalrinawmi Ralte’s recent works have presented information on the role of women in the Church for the fifth chapter. Mostly based on the missionaries’ accounts, Zomuani has given a detailed account on the roles of Mizo women for the growth of Presbyterian Church from 1904-2004 in her book ‘Kum Za Chhung a Kohhran Hmeichhe Chanchin’.

While acknowledging female education that enabled the native women to contribute for the Church she has credited the women missionaries as liberating force for Mizo women. On the other hand in her book titled ‘Bible Women te Nghilhlohan’ Lalrinawmi Ralte has provided a detailed biographical accounts on the Bible women from 1913-1962 to recover the hidden agency of the Mizo women. The book has discovered the 22 women, who served as important agents not only for the growth of the Church, but also for the medicinal works of the missions in the villages for the wellbeing of the society.

Another feminist theologian T Vanlaltlani has focused on a detailed account on the movement of Mizo women from private sphere to public sphere in her book ‘Mizo Hmeichhiate Kawngzawh’. To reveal women’s efforts to access public sphere she has given detailed information of the development of Women’s groups in the church and other Mizo Women’s Non Governmental Organizations. The book is divided into three parts- Women’s position during the Pre-Modern period, Church Women’s groups in different denominations and Women’s Organizations. Her study reveals that though women gave lots of contributions
in the society, the structure of patriarchy still dominates the society which made women in an inferior position.

‘Emergent Women; Mizo Women’s Perspective’ is one of the most recent books, which deals with the Mizo women. In this book, the author Bonita Aleaz has illustrated the perception of Mizo women about their emergent situation in the process of social transformation. Through the traditions, patriarchy, education and religion, she studied how women tried to access ‘public sphere’. In order to reveal their real problems in this emergent situation; she unravels the voices of women’s organizations and feminist theologians which are completely different from the problems faced by the mainland Indian women. To express the slow progress of these organizations she compares their efforts with the Indian women by saying ‘The women were very conscious of their difference in the nature of their demands from those expressed by the women of the plains…yet, on the other hand, the slow and tortuous route taken by the women of the plains to establish their independent spheres of action seemed to be making its way in the hills as way’. Her study reveals that though women began to enter public spaces, still their position is very limited in the customary laws and women’s ordination. Pointing at the religion she argues that male hierarchy in the church is the main reason for the slow progress of women as it is the same hierarchy that controls both the religious and socio-political sectors.

To draw women out of obscurity and repair the historical construction to some extent, Lalsangzuali Sailo made an effort in the form of biographical writings in her books ‘Sakhming Chullo’ and ‘Tlawm Ve Lo Lalu Ropuiliani’. The former is a collection of some biographies on women poetesses and their songs composed since the earliest times to the present days. The later has focused on an individual character of a woman chieftainess Ropuiliani who bravely resisted against and refused to surrender to the British. Though the author has mainly dealt with biographies of notable or worthy woman, it exposed the previously unknown excellence and capability of women to enter the space of village administrations during the Pre-colonial period.

To supplement these, an edited volume on the ‘Role of Ropuiliani in the Freedom Struggle’, a collection of nine empirical essays on a woman chieftainess Ropuiliani has a valuable contribution for the study of the history of Mizo women’s resistance against colonial military powers. In their attempt of emphasizing the “oppressive” and “repressive” nature of the British colonialism, almost all the authors however failed to reconstruct history of
resistance from a feminist’s perspective. Due to the strong dependence on colonial accounts, their construction is strongly influenced by the colonial prejudice that merely defined women as passive and subsidiary inferiors.

Unfortunately there is no particular book that focused on Mizo women and ethnic nationalism in the post colonial period despite the fact that the post colonial political scenario witnessed the movement of women from the “private” to “public” sphere. There are very few works on women’s experiences in Northeast India with regard to various forms of unrest, conflict and violence. Preeti Gill’s recent work on ‘Troubled Zones: Women’s Voices from North-East India’, Rita Manchanda’s ‘Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency’ and Ava darshan Shrestha and Rita Thapa’s edited works on ‘The impact of Armed Conflict on Women in South Asia’ are based on interviews and first person’s accounts. They also turned their attention to women as active agents, both in the violence of conflict and in movements for peace. In such a scenario of mainstream representation, the real subaltern voices remained silent. The patriarchal values however are reinforced and democratic spaces for women are diminished. Surprisingly, there is no mention of Mizo women in these books.

For many years, stories about the Mizo freedom movement had been gender biased towards males and no one had given thought to the contributions women had made for the MNF’s cause. Recently in their attempt to reconstruct the history “from below” ethnic writers began to recover the lost voices and hidden roles of marginalized section of the society, mostly in the form of novel and biographical writings. Amongst these works, C. Zama’s “Zoram a Tap” has included a few narratives on the roles and voices of women. The limitation of this work however is that the author has failed to recover the real agency of women for his main interest has been limited on the question of victimization.

The first writing on ethnic insurgency movement by the women is “Zawlkhawpui Sen Mei Chan Ni” (The Day the City of Aizawl Went up in Flames). The article was first published in 1980 in the ‘MZP Chanchinchu’ (Magazine of Mizo Students’ Union). Recently J.V Hluna the then editor of the magazine has included the same in his book “Zawlkhawpui Sen Mei Channi” (which is after the title of this article). In this article the author Laltanpuii has recollected her experiences of the day i.e. 5th March of 1966, when the Indian government fought Aizawl, the capital of Mizo hill district with powerful fighters. From her traumatic
reminisces Laltanpuii has clearly portrayed how the innocent civilians suffered the oppressive instruments of the nation state. Amongst these were also innocent women and young girls. Furthermore through a story of her friend Kimteii who died on that day Laltanpuii recovered conscious patriotic zeal and voices of Mizo women for the Mizo nation.

Given that the conventional archives and ethnic writings on the post colonial independence movement seldom include women and their voices, “Hnehna chu Lalpa Ta a ni” an unpublished autobiography of B. Vanlalzari gives a valuable source for the present study on ethnic insurgency movement. From her prison diaries Vanlalzari has narrated her five years experiences as a political prisoner in prisons between 1975 and 1980. In her work, she has also identified the name of other women who were confined in jails due to the insurgency problems and given detail information on the mainstream patriarchal attitude and oppressive nature of the Indian army officers towards the ethnic women in prison. Beside the author has also repeatedly mentioned how she resisted against the repressive nature of the Indian armies against her nation. Through her writing, she has expressed her patriotic and nationalist feelings as a Mizo and also voiced her desire and aspiration for Mizo nationhood.

Apart from the above mentioned books, there are also few books that provided sources for the study of women’s history in Mizoram. However their account of women, are overwhelmingly descriptions of lifestyle rather than the analysis of women’s position in a historical context. This is mainly due to lack of theoretical approaches as a result of which no serious consideration was given to the study of women.

1.8 SOURCES.

Historical sources on women studies in Mizoram are fragmented. They are neither properly collected nor devotedly organized. The present thesis therefore depends on the following sources:

**Colonial accounts (1890-1947):** (Documented exclusively by men) consisted of administrative reports, travelers’ accounts, letters, diaries etc. Various administrative reports were published during the colonial period. *(Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India, Linguistic Survey of India, Vol-III etc).*
During the post-independence era, various documents were accumulated and stored in State Archive under the guidance of Department of Art and Culture, Government of Mizoram. The materials in the Mizoram state archive are divided into several categories and have been indexed, though did not arranged chronologically and alphabetically. But these records are mostly in the form of general information on administrative report, census report, health report, education report on Mizoram. Very few of them reflected the women’s lives in particular.

A large number of documents are also found in Assam Archive and Bengal Archive Kolkata. Some of these documents were collected and re-published in recent decade by individuals and Tribal Research Institute, Government of Mizoram. (These include C.Chawngkunga; *Important Document of Mizoram*, published by Art And Culture Department, Mizoram, Aizawl, 1998; Report of the Administration of North East India (1921-22) Mittal Publication, 1984; *The Lushais 1878-1889*, TRI (1978)).

One of the most important sources of women history is newspaper such as *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* (1901-1940’s), which was published during the colonial time. This newspaper contained valuable information on writings on Mizo women by the Colonial Government, Christian missionaries and earlier Mizo writers.

**Missionaries’ Reports (1894-1966):** The Welsh Presbyterian Missionary society and London Baptist Mission Society were the first missionaries in Mizoram. Since literature played a leading role in the mission works, enormous materials were produced by missionaries and native writers. The most important sources are extracted from the records of Presbyterian Church of Mizoram and Baptist Church of Mizoram. These records are found in Synod archive, Aizawl and Baptist Archive, Serkawn, Lunglei District. Other important documents had been accumulated by theologians, which are found in the libraries of Aizawl Theological College (Presbyterian) and Academy of Integrated Christian Studies (Baptist). Records found in London and Wales were collected by theologians and re-published in recent years. Many important documents are still left uncovered.

For the purpose of women missionaries’ work on Mizo women, the accounts of women missionaries, which are in the form of autobiographies such as Baptist missionaries E.M Chapman and Clarks’s ‘*God’s Miracle in Mizoram*’ and Presbyterian missionaries May
Bounds and Gwladys M Evans’s ‘Medical Mission in Mizoram: Personal Experiences’ and Gwen Rees Roberts’s ‘Memories of Mizoram’ give us some information. Besides these, a collection of women missionaries’ reports titled, ‘Set On A Hill Light on The Lushai Hills After Forty Years Report of Women’s Work’ published by Baptist Church of Mizoram also provided a valuable source for the study of missionaries works for the development of women in South Lushai hills.

Other important sources contained newspapers/magazines introduced by Christian Missionaries such as Kristian Tlangau, started by Presbyterian Church in 1911. This newspaper acted as a platform among the early educated people where a number of women issues were raised and discussed.

**Women’s Organizational Records:** There was one women’s organization i.e. Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl in Mizoram during the period under study. Some of their important documents are available in their respective General headquarters in Aizawl and sub-headquarters in different districts. The personal papers of women activists also constitute an essential category of historical sources.

**Church Records:** The contemporary churches’ documents after India’s Independence also give important sources for the present study. These include Presbytery reports, Baptist Assembly reports and the reports of Women’s wing (Central Kohhran Hmeichhe Committee (CKHC), Mizoram Baptist Kohhran Hmeichhe Pawl (BKHP)) such as minutes, newsletters, pamphlets and souvenirs etc, which contain valuable information for the present research.

**Government of Mizoram Records:** These records include reports prepared by various government bodies of Mizoram since the birth of Mizo Hill District Council. Besides, *Statistical Handbook Mizoram* published annually by Directorate of Economics & Statistics and *Mizoram District Gazetteers*, published by the Director of Art & Culture (1989) provide extensive information on Mizoram.

**Oral History:** Interviews of the women activists in the political movements and churches and students of Mission Girls’ Schools contribute important source of data for this research, which included background information of respondents and their personal experiences.
Oral Traditions: These include songs, myths, legends, proverbs and folk tales of the region, which provide valuable source for the history of the Mizos. These oral traditions are carried on from one generation to another. While few of them are documented by the colonizers, many of them are literally recorded in recent period.

Additional Sources: Additional sources consist of books, articles and essays on Mizoram, unpublished seminar papers, theological works on women, theoretical readings of gender and women etc. Numerous minor collections of local books and copies of documents are scattered throughout Mizoram in Private Libraries and NGO libraries.

1.9. CHAPTERIZATION.

The present study is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter I: Scrutinized in the first chapter is the women’s historiography and importance of women’s history in the Northeastern part of India and the need for the reconstruction of Mizo history from the women’s perspectives are highlighted. The aims of the study, approaches, sources and methodologies, problems of periodization and review of literature that threw some light on the history of Mizo women are also included in this chapter.

Chapter II: Divided into three phases, the second chapter seeks to trace the historical background of the present study for a better understanding of the roles and status of women in the changing historical space and time. It critically examines social transitions from the traditional religion to Christianity and political transition from Chiefdoms to Colonial states and then the political transition from Mizo District Council to the formation of Statehood.

In the first phase of the chapter genealogy, political administrations, village planning, tribal wars, social life, religious practices, social customs and manners etc of the Mizos from their migration from Burma till the British administration are highlighted. The second phase deals with the historical transitions brought about by the British Government and the Christian missionaries. The socio-political changes brought about by the two new factors under the colonial state are critically examined up till the middle of the twentieth century. Since the
British left the country the Lushai hills entered a new phase of political transition, the last phase of the chapter therefore demonstrated on the birth of ethnic political parties, ethnic nationalism and insurgency movement until the formation of statehood during the late period of the twentieth century.

**Chapter III:** The third chapter maps the social and cultural space of the Pre-colonial period in which the women were located. From oral tradition such as proverbs, songs and folk tales it critically analyzes women’s life under the ‘Lusei Patriarchy’. In order to challenge the available historical writings, it also seeks to represent the important roles women played in the social and cultural tradition of the pre-colonial period and their voices of resistance against the ‘Lusei patriarchy’ as well.

**Chapter IV:** The fourth chapter locates the women’s agency during the colonial encounter of Lushai hills by rereading and recovering the hidden story of women in colonial text. The early history of the Mizos was mainly in the form of colonial military expansion in the hills. During the course of struggle between the Mizo chiefs and colonizers substantial amount of knowledge on Mizo history was generated. Several women emerged in colonial text as important agents, however recent historiography of colonial expansion failed to see women as important historical agents in the struggle against colonialism in Lushai hills.

**Chapter V:** The fifth chapter discusses the changing position and status of women in the society during this transitional period from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century (i.e. up till the period before the missionaries left the region due to the ethnic nationalist movement in 1960’s). The chapter begins with the reformist ideas established by the colonizers and the Christian missionaries and focuses on the questions of women’s position raised by native male intelligentsias. Situating education as the main indicator of social change, it demonstrates how female education changed the lives of women and enabled them to take part in public sphere.

By re-examining the colonials’ and missionaries’ accounts, the chapter critically studies the contributions of the colonizers and the missionaries for the liberation of women from the bondage of “savage” customs. In order to challenge the ideas, which only situated women as subjects of social change and to place them in the position of important agents for social change; it rereads the women missionaries’ reports and native women’s accounts of their lives.
Chapter VI: The transition from colonialism to post colonial state is an important part of Mizo history. The period witnessed rapid transition from ‘tribalism’ to ‘ethnic-nationalism, which went hand in hand with political and identity crisis. The growth of ethnic-politics in post colonial state had a significant impact on the position of women. The first women’s organization was formed with the aim of women’s participation in ethnic politics to address the issue of women’s life in Mizo customary law.

The participation of women in social and political reform movement also marked a significant shift from private to public sphere. However, this was short lived as a result of the formation of new ethnic political party (Mizo National Front) in 1965. The war between Mizo National Front and the Indian nation state had intense impact on Mizo women. Women’s active participation of any form in politics experienced severe deterioration and the erasure of the role of women began in Mizo history. Hence, the sixth chapter traced the development of ethnic nationalist movement and its impact on Mizo women. The main objective is to recover the lost voices of women and their agency in the historical process of insurgency war in Mizo hills.

Chapter VII: The last chapter is the Conclusion where the thesis is summarized and broad conclusions are drawn from the other chapters.
Endnotes and References.

5 Gerda Lerner (1976a), op.cit., Ibid.
7 Kirit K. Shah, op.cit., p. 5.
11 Ibid. p. 369.
12 Sheila Rowbotham, op.cit., p. 55.
16 For further details please see Sajal Nag, *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Separatism in North east India*. Sajal Nag; *India and North east India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 1998.

24 Gerda Lerner, *The Creation Of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, 1986. p. 226. Gerda Lerner said that Men and women have entered historical process under different conditions and have passed through it at different rates of speed. If recording, defining, and interpreting the past marks man’s entry into history, this occurred for males in the third millennium B.C. It occurred for women (and only some of them) with a few notable exceptions in the nineteenth century. Until then, all history was for women pre-history.


30 Gerda Lerner (1976 (b)), op.cit., p. 362.


32 Gerda Lerner (1976(b)), op.cit., Ibid.

33 Ibid. p. 365.


36 Some of the influential historical works on oral history are Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A study in Historical Methodology*, Chicago, Aldine, 1965. John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral composition: History and Methodolog*, Indiana University Press, 1988. Oral history is a systematic collection of living people’s testimony about their own experiences. Oral history can be defined at many levels including historiographical, epistemological and methodological perspectives. The most common one is the methodological perspective, which is understood as a source of history that needs to be handled with extreme care as oral history is different from written sources of history. Oral historians attempt to verify their findings, analyze them and place them in an accurate historical context. Oral
historians are also concerned with storage of their findings for use by later scholars. In oral history, an interviewee recalls an event for an interviewer who records the recollections and creates a historical record.

38 Ranajit Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies 1: Writings on South Asian History and Studies*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1982.
45 Sandra Harding(ed), ‘Is there a Feminist Method?’ *Feminism and Methodology*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986. p. 4. According to Sandra Harding there were three kinds of women who appeared as obvious candidates for this process: Women social scientists, Women who contributed to the public social life and women who had been victims of the most egregious forms of male dominance.
46 “Compensatory histories” are those which add women in a mechanical fashion to male histories.