CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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CHAPTER VII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.0. INTRODUCTION:
The foregoing chapters in this thesis have dealt with intensively and extensively about women in Mizoram. The extent of involvement of women in the political process of Mizoram has been determined by numerous factors. First, the Mizo Customary Law which is basically a testament of Mizo society is predominantly in favour of men than women. Secondly, the socio-economic structure which is infringed on the Christian culture since the arrival of missionaries draws heavily from patriarchal value system. This sense of patriarchy is so deeply infringed in the Mizo psyche that almost all aspects of the political as well as other structures are more male centric than favouring women. Thirdly, despite the influence of Western education and increasing utility of women in the socio-economic and cultural activities, women do not enjoy the same status with their male counterparts. In the following section we will attempt to summarize the seminal features of the Mizo society especially with regard to the role and status of women. We will also provide the summary of findings of the research work done in the following section.

7.1. SUMMARY:
On the surface women in Mizoram seem to enjoy greater freedom than other Indian females but on scrutiny it is not so. There is no change of identity after marriage, women still maintain their surname, no dowry in terms of gold and huge sum of money, no purdah system, no prescribed way of dressing. So many women are unaware of the subjugation of women in Mizo society.
The usage of Mizo Customary Laws, backed by the society and government, is the revelation of strongly inculcated patriarchal values, prevalent right from the ancestral period of the Mizos. According to such Laws, women can inherit only through a ‘will’. Inheritors are to be from the male siblings who reside in the ancestral home, and among them the youngest is given first preference as he is expected to look after the parents till death. Incase he has left the house, he will be succeeded by the next youngest and so on. If at all there aren’t any such persons to do so, the daughter who looks after them will be the inheritor. In Mizo society, since lineage and inheritance are through the males, property belongs to the father and to the mother incase of death of her husband, as long as she looks after their children and grandchildren. Such a woman is considered as a righteous, faithful, respectful and holy, worthy to be praised. Otherwise she will not inherit anything. Sometimes there are instances of the mothers being kicked out from their own homes and because of daughter-in-laws some live more as strangers in their own homes. After death of both parents, incase of court case between brother and sister regarding heirship, the son is sure to win the case as in the Mizo Customary Laws, males are given first preference.

Moreover, under the Mizo Customary Laws, Mizo women suffer prejudice even with regards to divorce. Women, being purchased with a bride price of Rs.420/- – Rs.520/-, can be divorced at husband’s wish with no claims for anything except her own properties brought by her to the husband’s house at the time of marriage, if the husband and the wife are still residing in the husband’s house, as everything belongs to the husband’s father including those earned by both the husband and wife.
In the Mizo Customary law, there is punishment of a woman committing adultery, to the extent of being kicked out of the husband’s house empty handed, no matter how much the woman might have earned while in the husband’s house, with no claims of her own properties including her own children. She has to refund the bride price and can leave the house only with what she is wearing. On the other hand, if the husband commits adultery and if he divorces his wife, she will take out with her one-third of their earnings, except if they still live in a joint family and in such a situation she is entitled to take with her only her belongings.

Christianity has made Mizo marriage more than a civil contract, a solemn religious ceremony requiring a solemn marriage vow between the bride and the groom. Nowadays, Christian parents do not compel their daughters to marry against their will for the sake of material gains. Some people feel that the meager Rs. 20/- security deposit by the groom which has been practised since earlier times is the cause of speedy divorce rate and therefore should be changed to at least one lakh, to prevent the husband divorcing his wife at will. Today, even those who are already grand fathers divorce their wives and it is a very pathetic state for the women to see many old ladies divorced by their husbands. As per the report of the Secretary, Law & Judicial Department, the governor accepted the proposal for Compulsory Registration of Marriage Act, 2007, to be enforced throughout Mizoram from April 1, 2008. This is expected to solve many problems faced by families, including heirship problems.

Mizo society expects women to be fully engaged in household activities including those with career and are overburdened with multiple paid and unpaid works like- looking after children- clothes, studies, food,
medication, etc., husband and his belongings, beautifying and cleaning houses, washing and ironing clothes and utensils, etc. etc. In the sample survey, 61.33% (19.34 males, 41.99% females) admit that Mizo men do not share the responsibilities of looking after children, household duties and earning livelihood. Those who help in the house will be considered henpecked and so wives also would rather bear all the grudges than society calling husbands henpeck.

There is marginalization of women in the Mizo society. Females are given membership in Executive Committees, but are seldom given the status of Office Bearers in social organizations like YMA (Young Mizo Association, which is the biggest non government organization in Mizoram), VDP (Village Defence Party), Students Organizations, Youth Departments of different Churches, etc. This is true especially at the Headquarters and Sub- headquarters, though there maybe rare instances in the Units where females hold the post of Financial Secretary or Treasurer, but never the post of the President. Women are considered incapable of heading such organizations due to patriarchal dominations right from earlier times. Women also accept such inferior positions and do not expect to head them. It is understood that such superior positions are males’ and not females’.

Mizo women are very much marginalized in the religious field as well. In North East India including Mizoram, in the churches, decision-making and administration are still dominated by men, be it Baptist, Presbyterian, or Catholic. Women are deprived of many privileges and responsibilities in the churches and this is due to the patriarchal system we have inherited from our own traditions as well as from the western culture. Though the missionaries, both men and women, did much to improve the conditions
of women in the hills of North East India, they brought with them the patriarchy of the nineteenth and early twentieth century western societies and churches. While the women missionaries worked among the local women, the churches established were entirely under the control of the men missionaries-and, in due course, local men leaders. They did not bring the ideology of the Women’s Movement with them. In the structure of the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches, which are biggest two denominations in Mizoram, right from the highest level, the Synod/Assembly, on down to the level of the local church women have been excluded- except in their own Women’s Fellowship. It excludes and ignores women who represent (or more than half in many churches) its members in all matters in which important decisions are made concerning its life. Women members are simply subject to the decisions of male members. Many women and men study theology in Mizoram. After finishing their studies, when the churches invite applications for workers as Pastors, the women are disqualified straight away, no matter what her qualification maybe, or even if they had done much better than the men, just by virtue of her being a woman, she is rejected. Qualified and competent women theologians are given posts which can be performed by untrained people. Moreover, they do not enjoy the same pay scale as ordained ministers. For the Baptist ordained ministers, their tenure is up to the age of 65 while for the theologically trained women, it is only up to 60. Mizo women are denied ordination and also in most churches even the use of pulpits which are made with money contributed by them. The Presbyterian Pro Pastors cannot be ordained if their wives occupy government job. Moreover, they do not ordain women not only as Pastors but also as elders. The Baptists can ordain women, only as elders but this is also a very rare case. The Baptist Pastors’ wives, who are not even the employees of the Baptist Church of Mizoram, have to leave their hard
earned jobs by 2015. Right to work given by the Indian Constitution is denied to them. In the case of Baptist female missionaries, when they get married, in many cases, they are forced to give up their job even if their post was a substantive post and even if they had worked earnestly for many years. Though women contribute a lot for the works of the Churches in Mizoram, they function under the subjugation of male egoism and their usefulness is overlooked when it comes to their ordination. The missionaries raised the status of women, but reinforced patriarchy.

A Mizo woman is the workforce of the family, which is willingly and contentedly performed by her. But the unpaid services rendered by her throughout the day often go unnoticed. The main bazaar (New market) in Aizawl town looks like a women’s market as in other markets of Mizoram. There are Mizo women, more in numbers than men going to Delhi, Kolkatta, Mumbai, Madras, Kathmandu and Thailand for business. Moreover within Mizoram itself, there are more females working and earning in offices, bazaars, tea stalls, hotels and other business places. In the sample survey, 80.42% (37.03% males, 43.39% females) agree that economy is dominated by women in Mizoram, while 19.58% (10.58% males, 9% females) do not agree. But the father is the head of the household and the shop is usually registered in his name, like almost all the houses. Family property and bank account will also be in the father’s name. Moreover, women are also discriminated with regards to distribution of wages. For daily work which consists of around 7 hours of field work from 9:00 A.M - 4:00 P.M women are paid in urban areas, Rs.150/- and for similar 7 hours daily work period men are paid Rs.200/- (in rural, Rs. 120/- and Rs. 150/-.). Under all these circumstances, women seem to be happy to be under the dominance of males.
Though various attempts have been made by women’s organizations to raise the status of women, it has failed to do so, particularly in the field of politics, as we see minimal participation of Mizo women in the administration of the state right from pre-Christianity era. From what we have portrayed, it is clear that patriarchy is the cause of women’s subordinate position in the society, although to some extent Christian education contributed to the raising of the status of Mizo women.

Mizo society, being patriarchal, right from the beginning, contributes to the reigning of very few female chiefs. Moreover, these chiefs were mostly successors of their death husbands and were stand-bys, until their sons were old enough to occupy the throne. When representatives of chiefs were elected at the chiefs Conference in 1940, no female chief was seen. When representatives consisting of 20 chiefs and 20 commoners were elected in the first and second District Conferences held in 1946 and 1947 respectively, no women were elected in both. Among the 5 persons appointed by the District Conference, to speak to the Advisory Sub-Committee, only one woman, Ms. Lalziki was included. When the District Conference appointed a Sub-Committee to look to the rules for administration of Mizoram, only one woman, Ms. Zami (the then Women’s Union President) was selected among the 9 persons. Only two women, Ms. Remthangi of Lunglei and Ms. Lalsangpuii of Aizawl were elected when District Advisory Council, consisting of 35 members (11 chiefs and 24 commoners), was formed. The above facts clearly indicate marginalization of women in the field of politics right from the time of chieftainship till the inception of District Advisory Council.

The 1st and 2nd elections to the Lushai Hills District Council allotted one nominated seat each to women, Ms. Lalziki and Ms. Hmingliani (Mrs. R.
Thanhlira). The 3rd and 4th elections denied the elected and nominated posts to women. Women never held the elected post in the Lushai Hills District Council. In fact, there were only two women and both had close connection to male politicians.

Mizo women remained absentee in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th elections to the Assam Assembly and Lok Sabha. Only males once again played parts in the 1st to 4th elections of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.

In the three District Councils in Mizoram, the presence of women is almost invisible from the time of their establishment till today. In the Lai Autonomous District Council, the 1st till 4th elections experienced absence of women in the elected and nominated seats. The 5th election marked the beginning of women’s participation, with one, Ms. Zapari, occupying the nominated seat, till the 6th. In 7th election, Ms. H. Remhnuni replaced her. Ms. Rinchhungi got the nominated seat in the 8th election. So far only three women have entered the Lai Autonomous District Council. In all the elections, women never held the elected post and also the posts of CEM, EM, Chairman and Deputy Chairman, which clearly depicts that women are marginalized politically. There have never been women candidates for MDC and that women became MDC only through nomination, there have been fights for candidates among men and women generally do not think that they will get candidature. Moreover, they are not interested in politics while all men are interested. Public do not have confidence in women and look at them in somewhat different eyes and also criticize women who go out for political reasons. Socially constructed roles of both men and women prevent the womenfolk to enter politics in Lairam.
In the Mara Autonomous District Council, one woman, Ms. Ngony, got the elected post in the 1st election. But the 2nd till the 5th witnessed absence of women in the elected and nominated posts. The 6th election had Ms. J. Maki and the 7th, Ms. Lalbiaktluangi in the nominated seats, with Ms. Lalbiaktluangi holding the post of a Deputy Chairman. In the 8th election, Ms. Ngothlua got the nominated seat. In the 9th election, Ms. N. Naphie, the elected member held the post of Deputy Chairman during MNF reign and later became an EM when she joined Congress. Ms. A. Dawzu got the nominated seat. Women had never held the posts of CEM and Chairman in the Mara Autonomous District Council. In Maraland, it is very difficult for women to enter politics as their duties are more in the household. The public in general do not approve women to enter politics and look down upon them. Non-participation of women in politics is due to lack of interest on the part of males for their participation, not allowing them to get out of the house and also women feel inferior and therefore hesitate to mix with others. The public’s perspective of women candidates has improved but is still low. So far, only 6 women have entered the politics of Mara Autonomous District Council, and all of them had close connections to male political leaders before they entered politics. Among the 6 persons, only one held the elected post and the rest occupied the nominated seats. So we can clearly say that the structural sin of patriarchy dominates the political scenario of the Maraland.

In the Chakma District Council, there was absence of women till the 6th election in which Ms. Snehadini Talukdar and Ms. Arati Chakma for the first time in its history got the elected and nominated posts respectively. Ms. Arati Chakma was given the Deputy Chairman post. In the 7th election, one woman, Ms. Champa Chakma was allotted a nominated seat. Ms. Arati Chakma was elected in the 8th election and became an
EM. No woman ever held the posts of CEM and Chairmanship. So far only only 3 women managed to enter the politics of Chakma Autonomous District Council. Two of them had close connections with male political leaders. Chakma women do not contest as they are satisfied with just being housewives. Here too patriarchy dominates the live of the Chakmas living in Mizoram. There is a need, therefore, for women to come forward and play their part in the District Council affairs of Mizoram.

In the first general election to the Village Council in 1954, only 2 women were elected; in the 2\text{nd} and 3\text{rd} (1957 and 1960), no women were elected; in the 4\text{th} and 5\text{th} (1963 and 1975), 1 woman each was elected; in the 6\text{th} (1982), 2 women got elected and in the 7\text{th} (bye election, 1983), no woman represented; in the 8\text{th} election (1984), 5 women; in the 9\text{th} (1987), 4 women; in the 10\text{th} (1988), 3 women; in the 11\text{th} (1990), 18 women, 17 from Aizawl district and only 1 from Lunglei district; in the 12\text{th} (1994), 23 women, 18 from Aizawl district and only 5 from Lunglei district; in the 13\text{th} (1997), 15 women from Aizawl district only; in the 14\text{th} (1999), 20 women, 16 from Aizawl district and only 4 from Lunglei district; in the 15\text{th} (2002), 54 women, 42 from Aizawl district, 2 from Mamit district, only 1 each from Kolasib and Champhai districts, 8 from Lunglei district and none from Serchhip district; in the 16\text{th} (2006), 34 women, 25 from Aizawl district, 1 each from Serchhip, Kolasib and Mamit districts, 6 from Lunglei and none from Champhai; and in the 17\text{th} (2009), 31 women got elected, 22 from Aizawl district, 1 each from Serchhip, Kolasib and Mamit districts, 6 from Lunglei district and none from Champhai district. Even in the bye-election of 2007, only males were elected. Though there is an increasing participation of women in the village administration of the state, compared to men, they are hardly visible and they hardly hold any important posts. Even the elected ones
are mostly from Aizawl district, seconded by Lunglei while in the remaining districts, they are almost invisible. So we can rightly say that in the rural areas of Mizoram, women do not enter the realm of politics. Political marginalization of women in the village level of administration has always been prevailing in Mizoram. Men do not pave the way for women’s participation in the village administration of the State. Moreover, general masses consider women as inferior to men and do not expect them to get votes. Women also have inferiority complex and think of themselves as incapable of running the administration. Besides this, people think that politics is for men alone and not for women. In the Mizos way of life, women look after the household and if they have to constantly go out, their husbands will not tolerate. They are too busy at home to go out. Right from the olden days men and women are not considered equal. But men can do as they like in the Mizo society. We can rightly say that patriarchal values prevalent in Mizoram right from earlier times is responsible for the presence of lesser women in the village administration as well. If Panchayati Raj Institution replaces the existing Village Councils, it is expected that more women will participate in the village level of administration. More women will also participate if Municipal Act is applied in Mizoram.

From 1972 till 2003 Legislative Assembly Elections, we hardly have women representatives in both the elected and nominated posts. In the Union Territory 1st Mizoram Legislative Assembly (1972), 4 women contested as independent and were not allotted seats by any political party but unfortunately all of them lost their seats but 1 woman, Ms. Saptawni got the nominated seat; in 2nd (1978) Ms. L. Thanmawii got the elected seat; in the 3rd (1979) political parties MU, PC and MDF gave a ticket to 1 woman each but only one, Ms. L. Thanmawii of PC got elected and Ms.
K. Thansiami of PC got the nominated seat; and in the 4th (1984), Ms. K. Thansiami was elected and Ms. Rokungi of Congress got the nominated seat. From the 1st State Mizoram Legislative Assembly till the 5th (1987, 1989, 1993, 1998 and 2003), only one woman, Ms. Lalhlimpuii got the elected post in 1987 and was inducted as a Minister of State, after that no woman represented the MLA post till today. So far Mizoram has never had any women Chief Ministers, Speakers and Members of Parliament.

So far only 5 women have entered the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram. Women are not winning elections because they are looked down upon. Moreover, males do not want to give more seats to women and even if they do, they do not usually give winnable seats. Women also didn’t vote because of the same gender in spite of the fact that different women organizations had requested women to do so prior to the election. Women are also still unaware that women if voted will be working for their own benefit. There is still need for a lot of awareness campaigns. We can say that the Mizoram Legislative Assembly is a patriarchal Assembly, because for more than twenty years, it has been run by men alone.

**CONCLUSION:**

Although there have existed a number of political parties in Mizoram, yet, women have not been given leadership roles in these parties, except when in 1976, the People’s Conference Party resolved to change its name to Mizo Democratic Front and elected a lady, Ms. Sanglianchhungi (ex-MNF) to be its President. She is the first woman to head any party in Mizoram. Moreover, almost all the women who were involved in the decision making bodies had good political background with their husbands and relatives actively participating in the politics of Mizoram.
There are various reasons behind lack of women’s political participation. Patriarchy, which has always existed in varying degrees in the social, economic, family and political lives of the Mizo, right from the early times, is the main reason. The social relations of Mizo society define the particular activity a Mizo woman engages in at a given moment. Mizo women’s subservient roles are the result of socially constructed gender roles. The apathy of Mizo women towards politics is rooted in the Mizo social system, which is patriarchal. Because of the life-long practice of patriarchy in Mizoram, women themselves do not have confidence in women to look after the administration of the state and they too think that politics is for men. Also, it is often difficult for women in politics because of their active role as home makers. Under all these patriarchal dominations, women have no time for politics. They are too overburdened for it. A Mizo woman is expected to be passive and enduring which is admired by all. In fact, women activists are looked at in somewhat different eye, even by females. Many women are scared of character assassination and criticisms if they are involved in politics. Moreover, political parties in Mizoram are all controlled and run by male politicians who also want to stand for elections. Many males are scared of making winnable seats unwinnable if they allot seat to women. Many chauvinistic men do not like to be ruled by women. Because of the long prevailing patriarchy in Mizoram, women seem to be contented being under the subjugation of males except when unethical and heinous crimes are committed against them, remembering the pathetic patriarchal structure of the world including Mizoram.
SUGGESTIONS:
In view of the gender disparity in Mizo society that emanates from the socio-cultural structure, it is pertinent to delineate some suggestions to rectify the problems. These suggestions are not exhaustive though, they are indicative of the need to reform the Mizo society to address the issue of gender equality and women empowerment as well.

1. Customary Laws should be revised with regard to inheritance of property, divorce laws and other loopholes. Females should be allowed to inherit even without a ‘will.’ Bride prize should be increased. Security deposit of Rs. 20/- by the bridegroom should be increased to Rs. one lakh at the minimum. Prize of an illegitimate child should be increased from Rs. 40/- to at least one lakh.

2. Churches should not hesitate to give ordination to deserving women as Pastors and elders, keeping in mind the trends with other parts of the world. More women should be allowed to participate in the important decision making bodies of the Church. Right to work should be allowed to the wives of the Pastors.

3. NGOs should work harder to install more women in the decision making bodies of Mizoram. Females should be given chances to head important social organizations like YMA, MZP, MUP, etc.

4. Quality education should be imparted to minimize gender gaps. Gender related studies should be included in the syllabus of Mizoram at the Under Graduate and Post Graduate level.
5. Political parties should give more rooms for women politically. More female candidates should be put up by them and also give more winnable seats to them.

6. Panchayati Raj Institution, according to 73rd Amendment, should replace Village Councils in Mizoram, in order to encourage women to participate more in the village level of administration.

7. Reservation of seats should be introduced, so that more women will be inducted into the ministry to run the administration of the state. Educated females should be encouraged to take part in the politics of Mizoram. This should be the duty of the existing political parties to invite such persons.

8. Awareness generation programs should be organized, to equip the Mizo females of their rights and duties as citizens of India.