CHAPTER-IV

MORALITY OF MIZO: A COMPARISON

4.1. ORIGIN OF THE PEOPLE:

The Mizo tribes belong to the Mongoloid racial stock. The original home of many tribes including the Mizo tribe may be considered as Southern China based on their settlement patterns.¹ It is believed that the Mizo moved southward during the construction of the Great Wall of China, and moved eastward through Tibet, settled down for several years in Burma, then moved to the present habitat by about 1700.² The exact time of their reaching of the plains of Burma is not known. However, the resettlement from China to Burma, is believed to have happened with three main waves of population movements.³ Mizo tribes were believed to be included in the first wave of movement and entered Burma along one of the river valleys. The Mizo further migrated towards west and reached Chindwin River in the early centuries of the Christian era.⁴ They arrived from the Chin Hills of Burma to India through Chawnchhim also known as Champhai which is now the border of Myanmar.⁵

The general acceptance about the origin and sources of the people of Mizoram is that they once had settled in some parts of China and migrated westward due to probable reasons like natural calamities, famine, slavery etc. The history of Mizoram actually led to endless arguments. The major limitation in the study of the history of the Mizos is absence of historical records or information in hand-written form. There were no alphabets in early times,
every history were passed on verbally by the elders to the next generation. The Mizo, who migrated from China to westward, settled in Myanmar, Bangladesh, India – Tripura, Manipur and the majority in the now called Mizoram, state of India.

4.2 LOCATION, GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITION:

Mizoram is one of the seven states in northeast of India and southern most part of northeast India. Mizoram lies between Bangladesh in the east and Myanmar in the west. Mizoram is formerly known as Lushai Hills with the advent of the British. The origin of the name Lushai is not known, it is believed to have been used by men of olden days to specify the people with long heads or the wise heads, the word Lu meaning head and sei meaning long. Unlike the Lusei, Mizo is not a name of a particular tribe or a clan, rather it is a generic name by which all the tribes under the Mizo are known in Mizoram. The Lushai Hills later changed to Mizoram as per the Lushai Hills District Act, 1954. After the independence of India, Mizoram attained the status of Union Territory on the 21st of January, 1972. Statehood was granted on the 20th February, 1987 to become the 23rd state of India. According to 2011 Census, the population of Mizoram is 10.97 lakh, comprising 5,55,339 males and 5,41,867 females.

The total geographical area of Mizoram is 21,087 sq. km. Mizoram enjoys a moderate and pleasant climate. Natural calamities such as landslide, earthquake, and wildfire often disturb their everyday life now and then. The early people moved from place to place because of that and they took extreme measures for the selection of new sites. The temperature varies from 9°C to 24°C during winter and 24°C to 32°C during summer. The sub-tropical humid
climate favours luxuriant growth of vegetation and forests. The whole state is composed of several ranges of hills.

4.3 **LIFE OF EARLY MIZO IN GENERAL:**

The economy of *Mizo* society was sustained by their agricultural activities. Agriculture was the mainstay and there was no record of marketing system until the introduction of Indian currency in 1891. Jhum cultivation witnessed a system amongst the youngsters known as *Inlawm* which is more or less like sharing of work to finish the jhum on time. Another contribution towards economic development was hunting. The *Mizos* were fond of hunting and it was done on three main purposes. One was for sacrificial purpose, the second was for religious purposes and the last one was for food purposes. For sacrificial purposes, a sacrifice practice known as *Kawngpui Siam* which can be translated as ‘making a path’ was performed and they asked the nature to shower her blessings for good hunting and prosperous produce for the year. For religious purpose, one has to hunt and kill certain lists of prescribed animals in order to have a luxurious life after death in a place they believed in, known as *Pialral* or Paradise. Elephants and tigers were hunted mainly for their tusk and skin respectively, for them, they were luxurious animals. Other animals and birds were caught for food as well. Fish were also trapped in *Ngawi* or an agent made from special bark known as *Ru*. Hunting and fishing were part and parcel of the economic activities. Domestic animals such as goats, pigs, dogs, chicken, and fowls were kept and used for religious sacrifices. However, domestic animals were not kept for the table, but as a currency and wealth, killings were made on special high days and feast days, but not for trophy hunting like today or modern days.
Raids and wars sometimes brought wealth to the family. The booties were brought home, and the captives were employed by their captors at home. In this way, captives enhanced the labour power in the village.¹² Usually, the wealth of a person was measured in terms of possession of the numbers of Sial or Mithun. Sial was used as a price for the bride in exchange. Next to Sial, salt was an important valuable mean, because it was extremely difficult to obtain salt. They have to set out separately to get salt from far off places and it was also used for payment of the bride. The skill to obtain salt is known as Teng. Barter system prevailed for a very long time, they did not require many articles for their daily activities, and life was simple and complicated in some ways or another. However, their economic life was disrupted with the coming of currency.¹³

The society practiced sharing system of land known as Intawm which was very important in their economic maintenance. If two people share a land (jhum), one of them was considered as the owner and he gives tax known as Fathang to the Chief and takes ten loads of paddy and the rest is equally divided between them.¹⁴ They played as fair as they could in dividing their properties. The land was not just a property, but was considered as sacred and animated by spirits known as Chawn, Tuihuai, Tlanghuai and Sihhuai.¹⁵ Chawn was also known as Chawnnu, it was considered as a female entity that lived near the rivers and streams. Tuihuai inhibited water, Tlanghuai inhibited mountains and Sihhuai inhibited small springs, which was damp and moist all through the years. In the course of selecting land for cultivation, they performed sacrifices and offerings to the above said spirits, so that they would not be disturbed or threatened while having cultivated lands in the area which were their main source of food.

The Mizos were animists and some of their lifestyle was highlighted by Mr. Risley in the Imperial Gazetteer of India (1907-1909) as:
“It conceives a man as passing through life surrounded by a ghostly company of powers, elements, tendencies, mostly impersonal in their character, shapeless phantasms of which no image can be made and no definite idea can be formed. Some of these have causes or influences of their own: one presides over cholera, another over smallpox, another over cattle disease; they believed that some spirit or ghost dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, others, again are associated with rivers, whirlpools, waterfalls, or strange pools hidden in the depths of the hills. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ills which proceed from them, and usually the land of the village provides the means for their propitiation.” ¹⁶

They did not want to be disturbed by these diseases; therefore, in return they showed their respect to those particular places. This is good for the environment to be left alone or undisturbed.

The Mizo had strong belief in their religious sacrifices such as Sakung, Chawng, Dawino Chhui, Hnuaite, Lasi, Chung, Vansen and Hnuaipui. They believed that diseases, distress and death were caused by evil spirits. To stop these from happening, they had to offer animal sacrifices to spirits followed by feast with friends and family.¹⁷

Sakung was the sacrificial ceremony performed by a married man who started to live in a separate house with his wife. Sa or ‘meat’ is the object of worship in the sacrifice of Sakung and kung which literally means ‘stamp’. After it was performed, the married son could start a ritual worship by himself without sharing the religious performances of his father anymore.

Chawng was the first public sacrificial feast of Thangchhuah process. Thangchhuah was the title given to a man who killed certain number
of prescribed animals. He was highly honoured in the society. Chawng encompasses a series of four days of ceremonial activities. The first day was called *In chhe siam ni*, which means a day for renovating the house of the host to let it bear the weight of the crowd of guests invited. The second day was called *Zupui ni* or *Pu zu ni*, which means everybody drinks *zu* or rice beer throughout the day for their enjoyment. This day was the greatest day of Chawng ceremony. *Tlawmngai No* or chalice especially for virtuous men was given to the person with the most selfless and self-sacrificing person. This is considered as the highest award or a token of their selflessness act and sacrifices they had made for the community including killing of wild animals, contributions during war etc. The third day was called *Zu Ţhing in ni* which means the day when the leftover *zu* or rice beer was drank and the remaining food was eaten once again. Accordingly, it was the joyous day of the ceremony, yet the youths do not participate on this day, only elders and the closed relatives of the host brought together food items they had prepared as a response to the ceremonial feast of Chawng in order to continue the great feast.

*Dawino Chhui* was performed when blessings were sought from their clan deity, who was believed to live below the house, above the house, in the sky and below the earth. It encompasses different ceremonies, some of are discussed as follows:

1) **Hnuapui:** It literally means ‘below big’, a sacrifice performed by offering pigs to invoke blessings from underneath of the earth.

2) **Hnuait:** It literally means ‘under little’. Hnuait was believed to dwell around the corner. The object of this ceremony was to ask for its blessings in life.

3) **Lasi Sacrifice:** It was performed to receive blessings from Lasi to become a skilled hunter. Lasi was considered as a female fairy
who possessed the power of skills for hunting. They chanted rhymes to please *Lasi*.

4) **Chung**: It literally means ‘above’, they performed this sacrifice to worship the deities who have power over the sun and the rain.

The *Mizo* believed in the existence of soul and they simply believed that the soul left the body from the tip of the head. They also believed in life after death and the existence of *Mitthi Khua* and *Pialral*. *Mitthi Khua* literally means ‘village of the death.’ The spirit of an ordinary person went to *Mitthi Khua* and the privileged person i.e. *Thangchhuah* went to *Pialral*. Everybody wanted to go to *Pialral* after death. *Pialral* was in other word known as Paradise where the person of *Thangchhuah* was destined to live a luxurious life even after death, he would enjoy plentiful supply of rice that did not require husking, also plenty of meat and *zu* or rice beer. Therefore, obtaining the title *Thangchhuah* was one of their biggest aims in life, the man of *Thangchhuah* was placed in high esteem in the society.

4.4 **THE SOCIAL GATHERING:**

Village life was intertwined with feasts known as *Khuangchawi*, and dances known as *Chheilam, Khuallam, Cheraw, Solakia, Sarlamkai* which indicates the unity, togetherness or brotherhood; life enjoyment could be acquired from simple things. *Khuangchawi* was a public feast given by the Chief and well-off villagers. *Chheilam* was a traditional dance performed at festivals, *Cheraw* was the most distinguished dance, performed with bamboos in their traditional attire at festivals. *Solakia* and *Sarlamkai* were also important dances performed at their rituals. Musical instruments such as *Darkhuang, Khuang, Phenglawng, Rawchhem* etc go with the dances. *Darkhuang* is round
in shape and is metallic, Khuan is a drum, Phenglawng and Rawchhem are musical instruments made from the bamboos.

The Mizo celebrated three types of festivals which were Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut and Pawl Kut. These festivals were mostly for entertainment and celebration of their great achievements especially Chapchar Kut. It was the biggest and joyful festival. Kut means festival. Chapchar literally means the dried plants and trees cut down for cultivation. During the festivals, all the inharmonious or disagreements between individuals were settled; friendship, companionship and fellowship were renewed. The date of the festival was fixed by the Chief. Before the fixed date of the festival, the villagers would go out together for hunting in the jungle and fishing in the river to collect festival meat also known as Kut sa for the community feast in which the whole village would participate and enjoyed the moment. This showed that the whole community had functioned as one big family and where all the villagers rich or poor were alike, interdependent and interlinked. On the day, villagers in their cultural attire would come to Lalmual, the wide open flat space near the Chief’s house. All the activities such as Chai lam (cultural dance), community feast, drinking of zu or rice beer would take place at Lalmual. Chapchar Kut was enjoyed by children, women, men and elders. It was celebrated during spring. They shared eggs and meats with friends and family. It expressed unity along with peaceful co-existence, and also a time to show benevolence and friendliness to one another.

Mim Kut was celebrated usually in the month of August when the corn i.e. Vaimim would be harvested. It was a festival of remembrance and thanksgiving to the dead members of each family, especially to those who died during same the year. It was the festival of Tahna Kut which means ‘festival of weeping.’ This festival was associated with mourning and penance. Cooked food with fresh vegetables and corn would be served on a raised platform for
the dead ones. In the evening, all the villagers would gather in the house who had a recently died relative and they would sing *Khawhar hla* or the mourning songs. This festival signifies that villagers were presented for others in time of sorrows. They understand each other’s lost, showing compassion and sympathy. The whole community acts as the backbone for the bereaved family.

*Pawl Kut* was celebrated in the month of December after harvesting the paddy from the cultivated land. *Pawl* literally means hay and *Kut* means festival, hence the name of the festival is known as *Pawl Kut*. It was a festival celebrated especially for the children. Every family would have meat and enjoy the good hearty meal with fresh rice produced from the cultivated land. If a poor family could not afford to have meat, neighbours would provide the meat. This binds the community into a unified society which share food, energy and commitment.

The celebration of all the festivals promoted unity among the villagers and it was much awaited by all the community. Everyone was given an equal treatment that brings a sense of equality in the society where there was no discrimination between the poor and the rich. These festivals encouraged them to work hard in every spheres of life especially at the *jhum* land. It brought them hope, a sense of belongings to the society, peace and harmony.

4.5 **THANGCHHUHAH:**

The early *Mizo* believed in life after death and the existence of two places known as *Pialral* and *Mitthi Khua*. The former is the place where only *Thangchhuah* person could enter. *Thangchhuah* can be dissected as *Thang* and
Chhuah. Thang means ‘fame’ and chhuah means ‘accomplished’, it can be considered as Thangkim which means ‘all famous.’\textsuperscript{18} The fame in Mizo society could be attained by being Thangchhuahpa. Distinguishing himself by being a successful hunter, and has to perform Ai (ceremony) for each killed animals, or performing a series of feasts which was very difficult to do at times because of the low economic condition. Lorraine highlights that Thangchhuahpa is the title given to a man who distinguishes himself by killing a certain numbers of different animals in the chase, or by giving a certain number of public feasts. The wife of such a man also shares his title and their children were also allowed to wear the Thangchhuah Puan (a specific shawl), the possession of this title is regarded by the Lusei Clan as a passport to Pialral or Paradise.\textsuperscript{19}

In order to attain Thangchhuah, one had to accomplish either one of the two steps known as In lam a Thangchhuah and Ram lam a Thangchhuah. In lam a Thangchhuah means the one who could perform a series of sacrificial public feasts, and Ram lam a Thangchhuah means the one who could hunt and kill the prescribed animals by the society. The prescribed animals include barking deer, sambhur, bear, wild boar, wild mithun and elephant. Apart from these animals, one must slay king cobra, a flying lemur and an eagle to gain greater honour.

Thangchhuah pa was a distinguished person, a man who had earned the title of Thangchhuah and was allowed to wear a cloth of a certain pattern and those who had killed men in war, had special head-dresses known as Chhawndawl and Arkeziak respectively.\textsuperscript{20} Chhawndawl was a special turban with red threads that were dyed with red coloured bark. Arkeziak was made out of white threads, which were plaited with pomp at the end. Commoners were not allowed to wear those kinds of dress.
The achievement of *Thangchhuah* had given a man certain privileges, status, esteem and honours not only in his lifetime but also after his death. The privileges that he could attain are discussed as follows:

1) To open windows on his side walls as per necessary.
2) To construct a dividing wall in his house.
3) To construct *Vanlung* (verandah) in his house.
4) To wear especially distinctive design cloths known as *Thangchhuah puan* (special shawl).
5) To wear a special kind of turban (*Chhawndawl*).
6) Passed or accomplished the step to enter *Pialral* (paradise) after death.

*Thangchhuahpa* became the protector and provider for the village community. The privilege that he could enjoy was not only confined to this life alone but as to a better after life in *Pialral* or Paradise. Such a man was held highly in the society because of his brave actions. The natural geographical conditions of their settlements were between mountainous ranges and terrain forest filled with wild animals which in turn require them to be brave. The main occupation that sustained their living was agricultural and hunting practices. These two practices had shaped up their ideas and thinking cultural view without the interaction of outside civilization. Harvest and hunting encircled their world and those who possessed more produce from the *jhum* were regarded as wealthy men among the villagers. There were times when their crops were destroyed by wild animals. Therefore, it was the responsibility and duty for a man to protect his *jhum* field and survive at the same time from the animals who shared the same forest they had inhabited. Hunting became part of their lives and it was not merely a game or for enjoyment for the *Mizo*. Hence, such successful men who became *Thangchhuah* become a public persona and someone they look up to and pay their respects in the society.
To become *In lama Thangchhuah*, one had to accumulate agricultural produces, plenty of *zu* prepared from rice and many animals for food such as mithun, pigs and rooster were gathered. It could be viewed as a means of disposing agricultural surplus to the welfare of the community by giving a series of public feasts in a prescribed order. The wealthy man with such surplus did not waste their wealth only to satisfy their day to day lives rather, they utilised their resources and possessions for the welfare of the community. Such contributions to the welfare by sharing food with the whole village were maintained by the *Mizo* tribe which in turn brought prosperity, stability, harmony and peace in the society. Sharing of their possession made them reject greed and selfishness. Zairema, who is a prominent *Mizo* writer describes *In lam a Thangchuah* as follows:

“The whole village would spend three or four days in drinking and feasting at his expense in every ceremony. In one of such ceremonies, the man and his wife who performed the feast would be carried on a platform along the streets with their valuable possessions. They would throw out these valuable things to the crowd to scramble for them. One of the most valuable possessions was the gun; even this would be given away. When the ceremony was over, a fairly large portion of his wealth would be gone.”

4.6 **CHIEF OR LAL:**

The early *Mizo* society was simple and nomadic. Their life was filled with searching for something, whether bodily needs or spiritual needs. Sites such as good sources of water supply, inaccessibility and impregnable places were carefully considered while selecting new sites for settlements at
regular intervals.\textsuperscript{23} The village was properly planned in such a way of one row facing towards one another. No house was allowed to be built above the Chief’s house.\textsuperscript{24} This signifies the supremacy, medium of unity and importance of the Chief in his jurisdiction. In each village, functionaries known as \textit{Upa Min} or \textit{Upa} (ministers) were presented to discuss various matters with the Chief. There were mandatory taxes known as \textit{Fathang}, \textit{Sachhiah}, \textit{Chichhiah}, \textit{Khuaichhiah}, \textit{Sechhiah/Sekawt hawn man} were given to the Chief except the latest given by the villagers. \textit{Fathang} was rice tax paid by every family, extra or share given to the Chief as a token of appreciation. It was utilized by the Chief to distribute it to whoever needs it. This shows the helping nature of the tribes in the societal system. \textit{Sachhiah} was due meat given to the Chief, it was a share of animal shot or trapped by anyone in the village. \textit{Chichhiah} was salt tax. One-tenth of the salt was given to the Chief as tax. \textit{Khuaichhiah} was known as honey tax. The honey was considered as the Chief’s property, the gatherers of honey were obliged to bring their collection of the Chief, who would keep his share and return the rest to them. \textit{Sechhiah} or \textit{Sekawt hawn man} was given to the Chief when a villager sold his domesticated \textit{mithun} or buffalo to another village, he had to give a young pig to the Chief as \textit{mithun} was considered valuable property.\textsuperscript{25}

The above practices mainly concerned economic matters have a social and moral implication. As social, they were under one banner expressing sincerity and loyalty to the chief with the good hope that he would protect the territory from the enemies or rival groups. As moral, they express the noble traits of not hoarding the property for selfish utility and personal consumption, but the notion of common sharing develops a fresh connotation of friendship, fraternity, equality, compassion, communion, humility etc.

There existed a substantial form of social formation long before the arrival of the British. Before the arrival of the British, each village
functioned as one unit headed by the Chief. The traditional Mizo society was close-knitted, homogenous, free, peaceful and egalitarian. Communitarian lifestyle was profound in Mizo traditional society. The society was administered by the Chief known as Lal with the help of the Upa Min or Upa. The Chief functioned as the mediator, protector of the village, life and property. The Chief was central to the society. The system of Chieftainship was adopted by the people because unity of guidance and administration was required in their cycle of everyday life. The tribal chieftaincy was democratic in nature, that is to say each clan could elect its representative to be the member of the council of their village. The pattern of administration was also democratic. The democratic nature of administration was essential because the institution of chieftaincy was developed out of the collective needs of group life which was basically characterized by tribal living. The function of the chief was to promote and safeguard the interests and values of the community as per the framework of the tribal communitarian social system. The chief was a benevolent father in a big family who looked after all those who lived in the village as his own children. The chief was looked upon as the provider for the poor, father, leader and adviser to the society. All the functionaries Upa or Ministers were under the direct control of the Chief and the Chief retained certain powers, privileges and judgement.²⁶ Chieftainship was institutionalized and considered as a single source of authority in the society which was very important regarding administration, judicial matters, allotment of agricultural lands to the villagers, maintenance of Zawlbuk (bachelor’s dormitory), approval of religious and festival affairs, settlement of war and diplomatic matters.²⁷

As mentioned in the earlier section, i.e. Thangchhuah was regarded as the highest status, and the most splendid lifetime achievement to which one could aspire in the Mizo society. Even the Chief tried to attain the
Thangchhuah status which means he was determined to use his resources and possessions and power for the welfare of his people and this shows that the well-being of the community was his main concern. The Chief would lose his influence if his actions were against the values and interests of the community. However, the Chiefs were never autocratic in nature, Lewin expressed the Chief’s mode of function as “democracy tempered by despotism.”

The chief was bound to help the villagers who need help, counselling and monitoring in their difficulties, reward them in their achievements and punish them when they were found guilty of misdeeds or infringement on established customs. A fine known as Salam or pig or value amount of money or possession was imposed to anyone found guilty under the Chief’s jurisdiction. In some cases, if a man was found disloyal to the Chief, his property including his house and other valuable properties could be taken away. This shows that the virtue or vice i.e. loyalty or dishonesty was taken seriously in the society. One could not escape the burden of their mischievous action. The wrong doers were not necessarily punished because they might be bad influence for others, but they were allowed to be punished so that others could also learn from the consequences of their actions. The Chief had repository powers and obtained advice from the functionaries. Hence, the Chief was their ruler, protector, advisor and administrator. It was the duty of the villagers to obey him. The Chieftainship was abolished only in the year 1955 which continued with the establishment of village council for local government.
4.7 **VAL UPA OR LEADER OF THE YOUTH:**

The Chief was the *de facto* of Zawlbuk, or commonly known as bachelor’s dormitory, administration and Val Upa was the real administer of Zawlbuk meaning the administration of Zawlbuk was headed by Val Upa. He was appointed by the Chief. This shows the interdependency of the administration, yet the independence between the Chief and Val Upa who was the leader of the young men and it was the sole responsibility of Val Upa to distribute works amongst the youths or boys and also to examine whether they fulfil their duties assigned to them. When Val Upa was appointed by the chief, the following qualities and norms were considered:

1) Industrious person- hard working and well learned.
2) Efficient hunter- skillful, knowing the art of hunting.
3) Best organizer- mainly for distributing works or duties for each member of the society.
4) Good leaders- for guiding the youth and be the role model.
5) All together he was Tlawmngai person- virtuous man.

The occupants of Zawlbuk were selected as one among themselves who was recognized and considered as having the above said qualities. Val Upa was the most powerful and respected person next to the Chief. He was put in high esteem, and well respected. Discipline was strictly enforced by Val Upa and no outside interference was allowed. For example, if one of the occupants of Zawlbuk was ill treated by a girl of his interest or the girl’s parents, the young occupants of Zawlbuk would make a report to the Val Upa, and group of bachelors would go off to the girl’s house at night and frighten them by a system known as Tlangchil. They would dismantle the walls, and sometimes along with the entrance of the house known as Kaiten. Tlangchil could be explained as a way of punishing a man who behaved badly in the
Zawlbuk or was unable to act properly to the other members of Zawlbuk.\textsuperscript{32} Another important code was known as Tlangsawi which was used for punishment of uncivilized persons in the village. Tlangchil and Tlangsawi are the two customs which are very similar. Even the Chief had no say in the matter, so even if the distressed person sought for the help of the Chief, the matter would not be considered by the Chief. The difference between the two is that, Tlangsawi is less drastic than Tlangchil, Sawi refers to swaying the house to and fro until the house was on the verge of falling.\textsuperscript{33} This shows the independency of Zawlbuk as an institution.\textsuperscript{34} The villagers obeyed the voice and words of the Val Upa, and never stood against him. The Chief also passed his comments to Zawlbuk through Val Upa, since the Chief could not directly command the Zawlbuk dwellers.\textsuperscript{35}

4.8 THE SOCIAL INSTITUTION:

Though there was no alphabet or script, or proper institution to teach and to learn, life endurance was established as long as one could remember. A unique system of social institution named Zawlbuk (bachelor’s dormitory) came into existence. Zawlbuk played a very important role in the Mizo Society since it was a primitive society and had no scripts of their own before 1894.\textsuperscript{36} Prior to that, Zawlbuk was functioning as school, where youngsters learnt their skills and characters from their elders or Val Upa. Zawlbuk had a regular system of self administration which is similar to our modern public school.\textsuperscript{37} Zawlbuk was also the place where the art of warfare were learnt from elders.
Zawlbulk cannot be missed out when we talk about Mizo culture and administration. It was defined as “a big house built for young men to sleep together and keep a vigil at night against enemies.” Zawlbulk was found in each village, and built near the Chief’s house. Zawlbulk was the centre of life and the most useful institution. Since the villages were situated in mountainous areas, it was endangered by the attack of wild animals and enemies. The security of the village was the main concern for the Chief and his functionaries. Zawlbulk provided the security measures to the village. According to Challiana, “Zawlbulk is the place where men sleep over at night, men can plan and act together as per necessary in emergency, the high and the low.”

Zawlbulk was where they trained and learnt to have a positive attitude and become a good citizen, courageous, honest and respectful to elders. It stood as a symbol of discipline, organization and recognition of the potentialities of youth. It was a recreation or consultation centre where the young and old shared their thoughts, ideas and customs. It also functioned as a traveller’s inn where any travellers could stay for the night and welcomed by the local people. It was also a place where continuously maintained to ensure the safety of the village. It became a centre for preservation of Mizo culture, tradition and customs, eliminating the class gap, by providing free mixing and equality among the young and the old, the rich and the poor, Zawlbulk was one of the important features of the society.

1) **Structure:**

Zawlbulk was a big house meant to accommodate all the young men in the village. It was constructed without doors. It was square in shape while ordinary houses were rectangle in shape. It was earlier known as Zalbulk. Zal means ‘lay down, sleep’, buk
means ‘shed, shelter, resort or other than proper house’. Dokhuma believed that Zawlbuk was built prior to everyone else houses. The villagers felt responsible for the building of Zawlbuk and contributed their time and energy on it. They had the sense of ownership of Zawlbuk. The community labour work known as Zawlbuk Sak Hnatlang or Construction of Zawlbuk was called by the Chief in the month of March, Zawlbuk was built solely by community labour work. When Hnatlang or community work was called by the Chief, the entire community was willing to take the responsibility to participate. According to Selletthanga, Hnatlang was called on a principle of Apa chhuakin which means all the adult men would step forward and work together with the aim of completing the work in a day or so, so that Pahmei or widower could continue chores at home. Zawlbuk Hnatlang or construction of Zawlbuk was the most participations mass in which all males above eleven years of age took part. Dokhuma highlights that not only men participate in Zawlbuk Hnatlang, women also participated in the construction of Zawlbuk. Being in the Mizo society means participating in the construction of society and an institution owned by each village and built by the villagers based on community labour work known as Hnatlang.

The Zawlbuk had a veranda at the entrance, and a wall of about three to five feet tall was raised. A big log that was sufficient to cover the entire breath was collected from the forest and placed on the raised wall after peeling its bark. This log was known as Bawhbel which was considered as a show of magnificence. The open space between Bawhbel and the wall was used for stacking of firewood. The level of the floor was lowered down two feet just
inside the *Bawhbel* for defence in times of external aggression. At the end of the *Zawlbuk*, there was an elevated platform known as *Dawhvan* or *Bahzar*. This place was used for sleeping place. There was a small exit at the backyard known as *Awkpaka*. A fire place was made at the centre, made of clay. The floor of *Zawlbuk* was made as strong as possible from bamboo and therefore, it was made in a woven pattern design known as *Chhuatpuiphah*. The woven pattern was also made for the walls but in different patterns known as *Bawhtah*.⁴⁸

2) **Functions of Zawlbuk:**

Every boy in the village who had not reached puberty was required to provide bundles of wood called *Thingnawi* for fire at night.⁴⁹ According to Zatluanga, the boys who had attained eleven years of age should supply fire woods to *Zawlbuk*.⁵⁰ Failing the duty means they had to perform extra activity which is a kind of disciplinary measure known as *Vawitir*. If someone was suspected to miss his duty, all the boys were called and inspection known as *Inzawt chhuak* or Questioning Hour was held.⁵¹ Every boy was asked whether they accordingly performed their duties. The disciplinary action was considered as a shameful punishment for the boys. Even their parents had no say regarding the disciplinary action and considered it as a severe case for mending disobedient boys. So, in order to avoid such disciplinary action, each one would bring firewood to the *Zawlbuk* with the knowledge of one witness, such boys were known as *Thingnawifawm* or firewood collectors.
Another important duty of the boys was to fetch drinking water for the night, but those who fetch the water were free of supplying firewood. The duty was done in rotation among the boys. These groups were rewarded at the time of special occasion like their biggest festivals or feast held in a village.⁵²

If a boy was brave enough to kill or cut the tail of a Tiger, then he was allowed to miss *Thingnawi fawm*. This was the way of teaching the young boys to become brave and earn honour in the society. Hence, *Zawlbuq* was the school of mending, discipline, bravery, and of the art of hunting or providing food where the boys and younger men were moulded.

3) **Recreational Centre:**

*Zawlbuq* had many functions to the society. It was a recreational centre for the boys and the young men. It was where the boys learnt how to wrestle and other games from their elders. Wrestling was compulsory for all the *Zawlbuq* dwellers and smaller boys were made to start the wrestling competition among them.⁵³ Competition was encouraged between the dwellers where the champion, the industrious and the best hunter among them was rewarded. *Zawlbuq* also functioned as a club of the young men where they might take counsel with one another for undertaking any joint enterprise.⁵⁴ Physical activities or exercises were considered really important for mental health and strength.
4) **Source of social development:**

   *Zawlbuk* was a source of social development and *Mizo* culture would not have manifested without the essence of *Zawlbuk*.⁵⁵ *Zawlbuk* was also the village information centre, education centre and a hub for night life.⁵⁶ *Zawlbuk* was used as boy’s dormitory where all the young men of the village gathered at the end of a hard day’s work and shared their daily news, activities and events with others. All the young men and elders were under the strict code of discipline of *Zawlbuk*. All the dwellers had stayed available for times of necessity and emergency, such as attack of enemies or wild animals. The lives of the bachelors were directed according to the practices and conventions that existed by the authority of the Chief of the village. Even the elderly (*Upa*) would sit by the *Zawlbuk* fire and sometimes told story about his life’s experiences and unfold the story or qualities of *Pasalha* (brave men) as educational tips to younger generation. The elders paved the way for determining the behaviours and morals of the younger ones, which in the long run would pave the way for shaping the virtuous life of such persons.

5) **Shelter for Travelers:**

   *Zawlbuk* was known for travellers’ inn as there was no proper transportation like these days, it was difficult to reach their destination in a day. Therefore, the travellers spent their night at *Zawlbuk*, hence *Zawlbuk* was a shelter for the travellers who ran
passed through one village to another. Those travellers shared the news they gathered from different villages, Zawlbuk was a pool of news and events for villagers that also made them aware of their strategic defence and welfare of the village. Zawlbuk was indeed a training institution for young men in the realms of dancing, oratory, handicrafts, and technique of war and about the teachings of myths, their history and all other things essential for their lives. It gave a new zeal for the protection of the village and held to maintain peace and harmony in the community. It had lost its significance at present because of the changing world situations.⁵⁷

Parry, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills from 1924 to 1928 wrote that in the absence of Zawlbuk, the young men were scattered all over the villages, and it was difficult to hold of them for these emergencies, not only the time it takes to find them but because when they were not under Zawlbuk discipline, they were reluctant when called upon to help. In the presence of Zawlbuk, the people were better disciplined, more industrious and better hunters than in villages where there are none.⁵⁸ Chatterji even highlights that the absence of Zawlbuk in any village would cause serious inconveniences in its organization. He summed up Zawlbuk as the place where in the Mizo youth and the marginal man was shaped into the responsible adult member of the society.⁵⁹ It is expressed in the same view as follows:

“These are the excellent institutions and a distinctive feature of every tribal village. In these clubs young boys have to serve and obey older boys, besides being associated with agricultural, social and almost all other activities of the village community instilled into the youths,
respect for and obedience to elders, a spirit of service to the community.”

The emerging new culture brought by the British administration and Christianity put Zawlbuk to an end. The new education system introduced by the British had lessened hunting and stopped inter-village war. Peace prevailed in the society and the boys stopped staying in Zawlbuk, its activities and significance declined, eventually. However, Parry and McCall, the then Superintendents of Mizoram made an effort to revive the institution of Zawlbuk, that had taken place in the year 1938. In spite of their sincere effort, the institution of Zawlbuk had naturally come to an end, it could not be continued or functioned as before. The spirit of Zawlbuk remains in the Mizo society as the glory of the past.

4.9 MEANING OF FAMILY IN MIZO SOCIETY:

Just like most of every other society, the Mizo society was also patriarchal in nature, father was the head of the family and his responsibility was to put food on the table through the slash and burn system known as jhum cultivation which was not an easy task, it requires skills, hard work and dedication. Distribution of land was done by the Chief, land was highly valued and appreciated because they clearly knew that it was the earth that provide their basic needs. Another important socio-cultural life was the family system. The family was sighted as a part of sub-system of the larger social systems. Each member of the family contributed for the good of the community. One of the most striking features was found in a community based on the work known as Hnatlang. The nature of Hnatlang can be called social work or community
service. The practice of Hnatlang coupled with Tlawmngaihna responded directly to crisis and emergencies in the village. The natures of Hnatlang were endless, for example:

1) It could be construction of house for widows.
2) Delivering messages (zualko) to different or neighboring villages.
3) Carrying a dead body (miruang zawn)
4) Construction of water supply or wells (tuikhur hiah) and so on.

As the Mizo society was patriarchal in nature, the head of the family or father kept the sanctity of a house intact. All properties were dealt through males and the head of the family, usually the father, considered with high respect administered his family. He exercised his powers in close proximity with justice. No outside members could interfere in to the family administration. No one was allowed to intrude the authority of the father by other members of the family.

Agriculture was the main occupation and the people spent most of their time working at the cultivated land known as Lo Neih. Only children and elders were left at home during day time, the Mizo worked very hard for their living and hardly had a time for family gathering. Mealtime was the best time for family’s sharing. Father would give advice and discipline his children as best as he could, he would give lecture about good behaviour, the importance of obedience or respect to elders, the do’s and don’ts. It is the first institution and the father is the first teacher a child could get. He would mostly deliver teachings during mealtime. Important issues regarding family matters would be discussed across the table. If there were any disabled or handicapped members in the family, they would show compassion with proper guidance and special care, all the family members would make sure all the basic needs were
provided. There is a Mizo saying, “anybody can meet such misfortunes such as physical or mental disabilities even in one’s latter life” since possibilities of becoming disabled have no ending in life. Each family member had a deep sense of duty towards other members of their family. In spite of the various responsibilities and duties, each member of the family maintains activities by doing their duties and distributing responsibilities amongst them, each person agree with the life scheduled in their social structure. As a result, the man could not exercise his autocratic dominance over woman. Therefore, it appears that there existed equality and respects for each other in the family members.

Division of labour amongst the family members was assigned based on their sexes. The male performed major works at agricultural land (jhum) and the domestic works were in the hands of females. The responsibility of male and female at agricultural land (jhum) and domestic had parallel value. However, even the female also rendered help in clearing the agricultural land for cultivation of rice and other vegetables. The main duty of a father was to acquire the required agricultural tools such as Sum, Suk, dish made by wood, building the house, clearing the forest for field and building of a thlam or ‘shed’. There was equal and proper division of labour between males and females right from childhood. The family functioned as an independent unit, which was confirmed by individual responsibilities, every member of the family was responsible for production of commodities to suffice their needs. Hence, it could be said that family was an economical unit and co-operative unit, which provided labour production and consumption of the commodities.

Theoretically, father was considered as head of the family and autocratic in the family administration. The decisions regarding domestic chores were solely in the hands of the wife. Lewin, the British officer even
highlights in his book entitled, ‘Wild Races of South-Eastern India’ as follows:-

“Women are generally held in consideration among the Lhoosai (Mizo); their advice is taken and they have much influence. When the father of the family had died, then, the wife or the mother becomes the head of the family”  

Family was the centre of vocational education since there was no formal education except the education from Zawlbuk. Children learnt their moral values from the teachings of elders of the family. It was also the centre for religious training; children were taught religious values by the parents. Family was a place of rest and safety. It was considered as a sanctuary where every member got comfort and love which are the basic human needs. It was also a centre of learning discipline such as addressing parents or elders by their names was considered disrespect. Younger ones learnt to obey elders, following rules under any circumstances at home.

4.10 CONCEPT OF MORALITY:

The history and background of the people vary from one another, it is not about how the story was told, and the most important point is how they had maintained and cultivated the way of life and how they taught the children to become effective, useful man, complete men, and the dedication of their lives to their fellowmen and society. The practice of serving, sharing and loving for others was strongly maintained in the society from long ago, even before their settlement in Mizoram.
In the early Mizo society, ethical aspects were emphasized, the teachings of the younger generation from the older generation were given impetus importance. Some of the ethical aspects are discussed as follows:

1) The commitment of deliberate massacre was strictly considered as crime. The whole family as well as the society disgraced the murderer, and they also believed that the assassin could not go to Pialral (paradise) after death.

2) Adultery was also strictly considered a crime. They believed that anyone who committed adultery would be eaten by the tiger.

3) Stealing or theft was a crime. A thief would never receive blessings from nature, no one wanted to marry a thief’s offspring. They believed that it could run in the descendants and tried to avoid those who have any history of stealing someone’s property.

4) The Mizo society considered disobedience to parents as an offense. If a person disobeyed his parents, they believed that he would not receive blessings in any form.

5) Killing of animals mercilessly was considered a crime. Those who killed the animals mercilessly would fall upon their children. Their soul would not be able reach Mitthi Khua or the village of the dead.
6) Handicapped and blind were treated with kindness. It was taught that who look down upon the handicapped would bring curse upon their children sooner or later. The fate of the handicapped would fall upon the children of those who mistreated the handicapped and the blind.

7) Those who got married without the permission of the parents would not receive blessings. They believed that they would not live together a very happy life even after marriage.

8) Those who act selfishly would end or die soon according to their teachings.

9) There is a famous teaching *Mai leng an um ngai lo*, which literally means ‘do not chase the fruits of pumpkins’. The essence of the teaching quote is not to be greedy. If the pumpkins in their agricultural land happened to get fruiting in their neighbor’s agricultural land, they should not go and claim the pumpkins as their possession.

10) Another famous teaching is *Lampui changkhatah mi an be chhe ngai lo* which literally means be nice to everyone you meet on the road. This teaching tries to instill etiquette and manners to everyone.

The *Mizo* culture was bound with the moral code of ethics which is known as *Tlawmngaihna* or as simply translated as *virtue*. This code of ethics was sturdily kindled by the family, the society itself, and the institution where the young boys learnt courage or bravery, honesty, kindness,
liberty, hostility and so on in order to become a complete human being. Thus, if a person calls himself ‘human being’, he must pursue all the characters that are mentioned above. One must be ready to sacrifice oneself for another fellow human being, like Mahatma Gandhi said, “Even Unto Death.”

The life of the *Mizo* in the society had undergone tremendous change because of natural calamities or man-made, in the sense that the arrival of British and the Christian missionaries initiated the introduction of the alphabet and education system, along with western technology which way was too advance for the early *Mizo* people. However, the *Mizo* code of ethics called *Tlawmngaihna* or as simply translated as ‘virtue’ was already practiced, alive or shone and strongly maintained, and those who are *Tlawmngai* or ‘virtuous’ are highly respected and honoured in the society. *Tlawmngaihna* to *Mizo* stands for the compelling moral force which yields for self-sacrifice for the service of others. And sometimes it is described as *untranslatable* because it cannot have a single explanation.

It is a *Mizo* tradition to be hospitable and kind to strangers or guests from other villages to the maximum, they should not speak ill to strangers and should not talk ill about others and must be ready to share their possessions. Dokhuma explains *Tlawmngaihna* as, “I’ll starve and you have plenty, you get rich and I’ll go poor, let other live and I’ll die.”

The virtue of *Mizo* is likely identical with *Niśkamakarma* of Hindu philosophy based on the teaching of *Bhagvada Gita* and with the ancient Western concept of ‘chivalry’. This implies independence, self-sufficiency, prudence, liberality and so on. The institution called *Zawlbuk* was essentially helpful to shape the values of life and provided a strong ground to sustain the social structure on the community based organization.
4.11 TLAWMNGAIHNA:

*Tlawmngaihna* is the most important structural and functional element and it has always been the integral component of *Mizo* Society. *Tlawmngaihna* is deeply rooted in the *Mizo* society. It enters into every realm of *Mizo* social life. *Tlawmngaihna* is the guiding principle and social code of conduct which postulate every young and old to show voluntarily good and beneficial deeds in dealings with individuals and the society without expecting anything in return. *Tlawmngaihna* is a selfless service in which every individual is expected to render his or her service in day to day living. *Tlawmngaihna* is a word which has no exact equivalent in English. However, Lorrain attempts to explain *Tlawmngaihna* as follows:

1) To be self-sacrificing, unselfish, self denying, persevering, stoical, stout-hearted, plucky, brave, firm, independent, loath to lose one’s good reputation, prestige, too proud or self respecting to give in etc.

2) To persevere, to endure patiently, to make light of personal injuries, to dislike making a fuss about anything

3) To put one’s own inclination on one side and do things which one would rather not do, with the object either of keeping up one’s prestige or of helping or pleasing another or of not disappointing another etc.

4) To do whatever the occasion demands no matter how distasteful or inconvenient it may be to oneself or to one’s own inclinations

5) To refuse to give in or be conquered and
6) Not to refuse a request, to do a thing because one does not like to refuse or because one wishes to please others.  

Zawla, an eminent Mizo writer defines *Tlawmngaihna* as, “it is to deny and sacrifice oneself to help individuals and society in times of troubles, hardships without expecting honour in return and act without one’s own profit.” *Tlawmngaihna* also means to do works without expecting rewards or wages or forcible demand and urge. *Tlawmngaihna* leads one to be brave, delighted, selfless, patient and kind. A true citizen of the Mizo tribe gives importance to satisfaction and comfort of others. He fulfils the ideal life of a community. The practice of *tlawmngaihna* enables one to live for the community, it makes the readiness of one to sacrifice his life for others. *Tlawmngaihna* is not a law as per tradition, however, honour cannot be earned without the fundamental nature of *tlawmngaihna*. A man without *tlawmngaihna* has bad reputation in the society and honour can be earned through extra-ordinary services which in return will earn praise and respect in the society. On the contrary, *tlawmngai* or virtuous person does not look for honour and praise from the society. McCall highlights the essence of *Tlawmngaihna* as follows:

“Crops of the sick would be tended by the strong; the chief’s lands would be weeded as a mark of support, help would be given to rebuild houses accidentally burn down, warriors would volunteer when their help was needed hunters would strive to be energetic in the chase, and in general the good citizen was he who was foremost in meeting calls that were really necessary for the good of the whole village.”

*Tlawmngaihna* is not merely doing one’s duty or performing the requirements, but it is basically doing anything beyond one’s own duty because
of love towards others. It paves the way for the welfare of others. Thus, *tlawmngaihna* includes endurance, patience, the capacity to work hard, bravery and readiness to suffer. *Tlawmngaihna* is a kind of practice at the individual level as well as in groups. When a man was in sickness, the volunteers would clear his land for cultivation and weed out all the unwanted plants. It is ethical code and a person with *Tlawmngaihna* is courteous, ready and sincere in his daily duties. It encompasses every spheres of *Mizo* life. It is a scale that measures what is right and wrong, leads to justice and following the truth. Paying equal attentions to all members of the society, including greedy people, dishonest and lazy ones, which means there were no boundaries, are the duties of virtuous man. *Tlawmngaihna* is the guiding principle in performing one’s duty, the institution of *Zawlbuk* plays a vital role in enhancing the spirit of *Tlawmngaihna* especially among the youth.

The practice of *Tlawmngaihna* is explained with examples as follows:-

i) *Tlawmngaihna* is the foundation and backbone of *Mizo* cultural practices, it determines and influences the manners and their conduct of enterprise. The practice of *Hnatlang* together with *Tlawmngaihna* plays a very important part in *Mizo* society. Lorrain in his dictionary explains *Hnatlang* as:

“Public work or communal labour in which everyone is expected to take part; to do public work, to do communal labour, something used of work slovenly or carelessly done.”

It is also defined as “working together as a group for a particular task.” *Hnatlang* encompasses welfare of the socio-cultural life of the *Mizo* by rendering services to personal and social problems in case of emergencies and crisis such as landslides, outbreak of fire, drainage making and so on. One of the most striking features of
Hnatlang is the building of Zawlbuk. As already mentioned, Zawlbuk was the largest building in the village, and everyone felt responsible to take part in the construction of Zawlbuk. Person of no interest in taking part of such Hnatlang was considered as the man without Tlawmngaihna.

ii) Construction of Widow’s house known as Hmeithai Insak had been done with the sense of Tlawmngaihna. Mizo being a patriarchal society, men took full responsibility to gather the housing materials from the jungle. During the construction of widow’s house, men and women take part in it, feeling that it was the mandatory help they could offer to others.

iii) Helping the others in times of sickness is the custom of Mizo. If a sick person far away from village has to be carried into other local doctors, he is carried by his own villagers to the next village on makeshift stretcher and thence by the inhabitants of another village to the next and so on till their destination. The villagers who carry the sick man out of Tlawmngaihna refuse to handover to another villager, but the other party will insist on carrying it right up to the village.

iv) With the practice of Tlawmngaihna, Mizo will never refuse showing hospitality to travelers, even if they are strangers to them. Having travelers visiting their humble house is considered as a blessing. The food and lodging are free even though the host has not much food in the house. People travelling together help each other, if anyone among the travelers fell ill and falls behind, the others will wait and offer help.
v) In the earlier days, messengers from one village to another village carry information to families, friends and relatives. The messengers, usually young men step out voluntarily for delivering messages from one village to another village. The messengers were known as Zualko. Mizo villages were located miles apart, when death occurred in the village, Zualko would never hesitate to travel a distant village to deliver the news, even it took more than days to travel, whether heavy rain or fear of wild animals attack. The news of the death was delivered to as serious illness to the concerned family. Zualko Kal was organized when there was a tragic accident, Val Upa and elders would go to deliver the news, minimizing the facts so that the concerned family would not be too upset.

vi) In the earlier days, Mizos were nomadic in nature, they had no permanent place to stay. Proper graveyard were not known, rather they buried their relatives near the house. The grave was dug by all young men of the village, relatives and friends of the mourned family. This was known as Thlan Laih or Digging a Grave. The mourned family need not pay anything for the service rendered; it was performed based on the code of Tlawmngaihna. The practice of digging grave united the society in this way. Parry highlights that a hunting expedition offered many opportunities for the exhibition of Tlawmngaihna. Among the hunters, a person with Tlawmngaihna would diligently build the shelter for the night and collect firewood for all the hunters. If two hunters met the animals together, Tlawmngai or virtuous man will withdraw his gun and let his fellow hunter to shoot first. If a man was bitten or hurt by wild animals, his companions must stay and
looked after him till help arrived, all the hunters must not continue
the chase and must not leave him alone in the wild forest.⁷

vii) When a person died in a distant village, the dead body was carried
by young men to his hometown. This is known as Miruang Zawn or
Carrying a dead body. As soon as the villagers heard the news of the
death, coffin was prepared with wood stretcher to hold up the coffin,
the young men had carried the dead body despite the uncomfortable
road, steep hills and the risk of their lives in the forest. Even the
smell of the dead body could not stop or bother them, they held great
responsibilities for the dead body to reach the mourned family.

Tlawmngaihna is the greatest core of Mizo values. The act of
Tlawmngaihna has been cherished and respected by the Mizos. Even in such a
deserted civilization, the Mizo society had traits of nobility, bravery and
hospitality which are also found in the most civilized society like Western and
Indian society. Thus, from the foregoing elucidations, we can easily perceive
the truth about the tribal community. A mixture of traditional education,
enriched material culture, well organized society etc. had been implementing
and propagating with a fellow feeling, co-operation and harmony. These noble
traits were associated with freedom and proper training under the supervision
and guidance of seniors and elderly citizens. Though the codes of conduct were
in the form of unwritten laws, they were sincerely followed, seriously adhered
to and systematically practised. Therefore, the Mizo society had virtuous
principles to lead a perfect life with sensible economic comforts.
4.11.1 HUAISENNA OR BRAVERY:

Bravery was one of the values most cherished by *Mizo* culture. It was aspired by the chief and elders of the society. It was one of the components of *Tlawmngaihna*. As *Mizo* tribe settled in terrain and mountainous regions, they had to fight and protect the village against external aggressions such as attack of wild animals or neighbouring villagers. Bravery was highly valued by the whole community, bravery was earned mostly by facing and not fleeing from wild animals and neighbouring attacks. War between villages were mainly due to land dispute, as land was considered as high value, they clearly recognized that land had provided the main sustenance, and caused a stiff competition between the two neighbouring villages. This enabled the reason for their appreciation of bravery.

The *Mizo* celebrated chivalry and courage, highly demanded by the lifestyle and the nature of their communities. When a baby boy was born, the parents and elders wished him to be protector, to be brave and courageous and would say, “*Mi huaisen, Sa kap thei*” which means a “brave man, good hunter.” Then, they would place the handle of a *Dao*, a chopper used for wood-cutting and used as a weapon in the baby’s right hand. This was their wish and regarded as a kind of blessing for the new born. Normally this value is expected in male members of the family. A baby boy was expected to become brave, and a baby girl was expected to become beautiful, courteous and industrious.

While they were under the fear of enemies and wild animals, it was difficult to have an economic prosperity. So parents of the family encouraged all the boys to be brave and they were raised by the code of chivalry which encircled their hunting and agricultural production. Brave men were called *Pasaltha*, who played an important and significant role in the inter-village
warfare as well as hunting wild animals. Lorrain defines Pasaltha as “a person who is brave and manly; a hero; a famous or notable warrior or hunter.” The three prerequisites of a Pasaltha are bravery, thoughtfulness and selflessness. He was the backbone of the weaker section of the people like widows and elderly parents as he stood for their causes and concerns. He was looked up by the society as he was the protector of the vulnerable from external harm. He was admired by the whole community because of his unmatchable selfless services for the safety of the community. He sometimes functioned as Val Upa or leader of the youth. During warfare, Pasaltha was a great warrior who sacrificed his strength, skills and even his life in defending the community and the land. Without the presence of Pasaltha, the village was not safe from the invasion of their neighbouring hostile villages and attack of wild animals. Those villages with a number of Pasaltha generally won the war.

4.11.2 COURTESY:

Acts of decency and courtesy were the other norms of good conduct which were highly valued in Mizo society. Showing respect and admiration to elders in various ways, in every sphere of life was one among the many acts of decency which children or youngsters were required to learn and practiced. It was a social obligation for Mizo to show politeness, decency and courtesy to everyone especially to elders.
4.11.3 **DILIGENCE, HARD WORK AND HONESTY:**

*Mizos* were industrious in their mode of life. Hard work and honesty were the two values which have been highly regarded in *Mizo* society. It is an obligation for everyman to produce and earn his livelihood by being industrious and hard working. These were some of the characteristics for choosing and courting a life partner—husband and wife. Hard working life had been central in the *Mizo* traditional way of living where everyone was involved in *jhum* cultivation. The crops were often destroyed by birds, some animals, wildfire and so on, not only plucking weeds and watering but also protecting from such damages, they had to work very hard.

Honesty was another value which *Mizos* highly regarded. Thief, robbery and forgery were not common in traditional *Mizo* society. In the early days, people never locked doors when they were away from home or gone to agriculture field. They would put firewood against the door to show that no one was inside. It was a safe society regarding violation of honesty and no one even tried to sneak in while the owner was away. Everyone despised thieves and robbers, they were not likely being chosen for life partners. So everyone was trying their best to be honest and faithful in their respective lives and responsibilities that kept the traditional *Mizo* society peaceful and harmonious. However, in today’s world these values are waning, because of modernity and globalization.

4.12 **ROLE OF ZU OR RICE BEER IN MIZO SOCIETY:**

*Zu* or rice beer was an intoxicating drink made from rice. It was a common practice for the *Mizo* to drink *zu* to quench their thirst after a long
hard day, and especially during festivals or events such as marriage, funerals etc. Drinking zu was accepted and it was a part of their life. Although, McCall highlights, “it was never a daily item of diet for the ordinary home, it having been rather the mark of some real festival”. The Chief and his elders would drink on every day basis, they would sit around at the Chief’s house and discussing various local issues. However, they did not drink in excess, they consumed only to heat up the conversation. Shakespeare highlights, “Intoxicating drinks he takes when he has full leisure to enjoy them and in company with a party of friends.”

The drinking place was called Zu Hmun, where they had freedom and enjoyed the common habit of consuming tobacco and Tuibur or narcotic juice. After a successful hunting, the occasion known as Sa Lu Ai, a celebration of animal’s head had taken place, at this time consuming alcohol along with singing and dancing was a common a practice to celebrate their bravery and freedom. Other ceremonies like Mi Lu Ai or celebration of human head, Buh Ai or celebration of harvest had similar features. However, females did not participate in drinking in such ceremonies except on Chapchar Kut, the biggest festival, it was considered as lack of morality if such occurred. It was a Mizo tradition that men consume zu on such occasions.

At the time of a grand ceremony known as Khuangchawi, the Mizo created a fair hunting skills competition among the youth, which was a part of training in times of emergencies and dangers in the village. A person with such proficient quality was highly respected by all community members. At the time of Khuangchawi, they were given the honour by the chief by offering Nopui, a kind of chalice, made from horn of mithun full of rice beer. Who received Nopui had already achieved one of many wishes in a person’s life time.
4.13 **COMPARISON BETWEEN MIZO MORAL CODES AND OTHERS:**

The followings are the comparison between *Mizo* society and Indian tradition, and between *Mizo* society and Western tradition.

4.13.1 **INDIAN:**

Mizoram as a state now is situated in the North Eastern Province of India. However, it is a mountainous region and fully inhabited by the people of the tribal community. In earlier times, the ancient and medieval civilizations, literary works, philosophical outlook, cultural activities; socio-political events did not reach them. Only on the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the local inhabitants came to know about the outer world and attempted to change their habits, customs, conventions and reflections on moral and social issues. In spite of the change we could notice the prevalence of traditional traits along with the so called modernity. This attitude of the *Mizo* tribe makes the social anthropologists and moral philosophers wonder struck and think seriously about their commitments to their own ancestral behaviour patterns and their sincere efforts in retaining them without being totally swallowed by the recent trends being promoted by scientific discoveries and technological devices.

As we have already mentioned, the *Mizos* did not have scholarly written treatises on moral philosophy. All that we have now is the oral transmission of their well-cherished cultural elements, social practices and political administration which have been put into effective practice.
1) **THE FOLLOWING ARE THE SIMILARITIES:**

i) **Sharing of possession:**

The virtue of *artha* is considered as a lower value in the Indian conception of human values. Only through earnest means of *dharma*, wealth is to be acquired which is essential to enlarge one’s livelihood to desist from ill health so that people can move onward in their journey to spirituality. Unnecessary hoarding and illegal storing of commodities and wealthy resources is a sin leading to the crime, punishable by penal codes. More than the required wealth has been distributed to the have not’s through charities.

The *Mizos* too do follow the same practice, but without knowing the legal or moral implications involved in it. They simply share their excessive possessions of every variety for others through common sharing system. They do not show much interest in saving for the future.

ii) **Social Institutions:**

In the Indian context, family is the primary institution where in face-to-face relation persists and people develop intimate report with blood relations as well as biological siblings. As social institutions, we have educational institutions where language, discipline, cultural heritage, patriotism besides general knowledge etc. are taught. Next, we have religious institutions where the modes of religious practices, belief systems, practical experience of
the varṇa and aśrama systems force glorified growth to the society leased on status and profession.

The tribe usually is referred to territorially defined and politically independent unit of a tribal society without culturally and ethnically distinct tribal society. Among the social institution we come across no formal educational systems till recently, but still they patronize the structure of the tribe, bachelor’s dormitory known as Zawlbuak similar to that of aśrama in the Hindu faith, meant for the formation of youth federation, marriage, kinship and totem. As the major ambit of the tribes in Mizo territory is to preserve and inculcate the value of communal feeling and quality among the members, they have no other equipments to educate their children in a methodical ways. The family system of the Mizo tribes is also worth mentioning. They followed both systems of clan exogamy and tribal endogamy. Marriages are arranged through inter-mediaries. The price of the bride is paid in terms of grains, clothes, and cattle especially the mithun. The tribes rarely allow divorce and encourage widow marriage. After the birth of a child, an initiation ceremony is held to bring the child into the main stream of ‘community’ and through rice-oracle name giving ceremony is held and grand children receive the name of their grandparents or places as they reflect their images and qualities. Also the expired ancestors are venerated with due respect by the family members.

iii) **Discharging of Duties:**

In the Indian tradition, duties are carefully prescribed for all the people belonging to the four sections of the society- the
intellectuals, warriors, traders and labourers. The Hindu scriptures also insist on *Karma* yoga, i.e., duty for duty sake, not expecting anything in return. The conception of *Niśkarmakarma Yoga* is highly remarkable in the sense that a duty bond citizen has to leave the fruits to God instead of aspiring the same through unfair means.

In the *Mizo* society, all the duties of the people are prescribed by the elders and they are executed under their direct supervision. Actually manual labour is encouraged for the fitness of the body and for mental satisfaction. As agriculture is their primary assignment they work along with nature and depend on forest for fruits, firewood and other needs. Their life and work centre around nature in their rhythm of life, work and celebrations and sometimes express in a song as follows:-

*Today, we decide to set out for a work in the farm,*
*We gather in the village yard*
*As our walk towards our field progresses,*
*We reach a resting spot, from where*
*There is a clear view of the magnificent*
*Paddy field, the birds our farm hut.*
*As walk toward the paddy field progresses further, we reach a river bank, where everyone enjoys the fresh cool and soothing water, though I long to spend the whole day here relaxing and have a dip, but there’s a call from the paddy field.*
*So the entire group head towards the call with hoe in our hands*
Even as the birds in the trees with their chirps entertain us while we progress in the woods, we have to march towards the call.

iv) **Obedience to Elders, Parents and Teachers:**

In the Indian culture, the youth is sufficiently trained and perfectly brought up to respect the senior citizens, parents and teachers. The order of respect is stated thus: Mother, Father, Teacher and Divine. The mother identifies the father, the father points out a genuine teacher and in turn the teacher shows the Divine Power. The elders are those who preserve the cultural heritage of the society and promote social norms, the parents train them efficiently to learn and to live as a virtuous person and the teachers serve as the guides in directing the disciples in righteous paths.

The same trend prevails in the Mizo society too. Man’s moral responsibilities and his social obligations are well defined and determined at the prime youth stage. The elders, parents and the teachers become the perennially resourceful persons to enable the present youth to become worthwhile future citizens.

v) **Condemnation of Greediness:**

Both in the Indian settings and the Mizo tribe, certain acts are promoted and certain acts prohibited, based on moral and immoral outlook of actions. As greediness prompts to several evil
temperaments and illegal deeds, all the socio-political organizations resort to immense technicalities to curtail this menace. ‘Greed’ is to be shunned at the primary level and the Indian moral thinkers enunciate this negative virtue through parables to implant the morale of life. As the Mizo people distribute their wealth and grains for the community, there is no possibility or less possibility for the tribes to practice greediness. Similarly, non-telling falsehood, refraining from theft are treated as the basic virtues both in the Indian conception of values and the practice of values by the Mizo tribe. As severe punishment has been imposed for indulging in robbery, the people are afraid of the tortures and hence refrain from stealing and telling lies. Telling the truth and respecting other’s property have been treated as positive virtues.

vi) **Selfless Service:**

In India, world view or universal outlook is a primary outlook of life. Hence people treated other’s happiness and sorrows as their own and to redress the grievances of fellowmen, service and sacrifice are promoted. The nature of sympathy and empathy are responsible for lending a helping hand to not merely to neighbours, but a helping hand to not merely to neighbours, but even to the unknown people. Selfless service is a mode of divine service since the entire human race has been treated as the children of God, and service to humanity is treated as Service to God.

One may not be certain whether the masses of the Mizo settlement have resorted to selfless service based on the above enlightenment, but because of their intimate relationship with the
entire community, service becomes an obligation to annihilate the affliction of the people and ascertain perfect happiness. Kyndiah explains that, “The core element of which constitutes the base and thrust of the society lays in the observance of tlwmngaithna an ancient code of ethic and conduct in which even today the Mizos of the present generation are ardent believers.”

vii) **Punishment of the Criminals:**

Every society must be careful in dealing with the offenders since they violate the established norms and shake the very fabric of the cob-web relation among the citizens. At the mental level, a moral blemish is considered as a sin and at the socio-political realm, it is a crime. As the dictum goes that ‘sinners are to be pardoned and criminals are to be punished’, the governing laws have prescribed minimum and maximum punishment for the evil mongers. In the well developed countries, several theories of punishment are in vogue to deter crime, to reform the criminals etc. In the tribal regions, the administers have their own system of dealing with the negative deviants who indulge in criminal deeds. With a view to prevent others from committing the same crime punishment are given on the culprits. Shakespeare observes that, “…disobedience to the order will meet the punishment as severe as the capsicum is hot.”

viii) **Attention towards Youth:**

In the Indian system of human life, a stage has been devoted which is the formative period of learning all virtues and
refraining from all worthless values. This stage is known as the *Brahmacarya* stage wherein the young person will keep his mind free from obstacles and oscillations so that divine wisdom is filled in.

In the *Mizo* sect, the youth are well brought up under the direct supervisions of parents, teachers and elders. They are given training in martial arts so that when necessity arises, they will protect their territory from external threats and dangers from wild animals. Chatterji observes that, “…the *Mizo youth, the marginal man was shaped into the responsible adult member of the society.*”

2) **THE FOLLOWINGS ARE THE DISSIMILARITIES:**

i) **From the point of view of Environment:**

In the *Mizo* custom, after harvest, they will slash the remaining growth of plants and even burn them so that the land would be prepared again for tilting, ploughing and sowing. Even today, this method is practiced by them in the name of *Jhuming*.

In the Indian mentality, while burning or slashing the field, worms, insects and other living organism would be severely affected through wounding and deaths. *Jainism* especially makes emphatic appeal not to slash or burn, the field as no harm should be inflicted upon any smallest living organism.
ii) **From the point of view of non-violence:**

In the *Mizo* communal living, hunting had been considered as a major profession for livelihood. Also hunting became a sign and symptom of bravery. The seniors instructed the hunters to select the animals and killed them since they were the means to attain the highest achievement while living, the prescribed animals were as deer, bear, boar, *mithun*, elephant, king cobra etc.

In the Indian context, Jainism, Buddhism, Yoga, Gandhism are the major schools of thoughts which prohibit violence inflicted upon any living beings through thought, words and deeds. Any man of virtue must refrain from harming others and promote the virtue of non-violence. Violence in any form – individualist or social or national-is to be condemned.

iii) **Possession of Wealth:**

According to *Mizo* early conception, possession of wealth was one of the key factors to become a liberated person. A pauper who suffered for want of sufficient wealth can seldom move towards liberation. Such was their belief and wealth mainly included land, agricultural surplus, jewels, ornaments, domestic utensils. Hence due to the system of exchange of commodities, they tried to possess all the said items to show their power of wealth and in turn to attain salvation.
But in the Indian conception of virtues, *artha* or possessing wealth more than the requirement is one evil practice and it is a lower value. Hence *aparigraha* or non-possession is treated as an alternative positive virtue which means non-possession and distribution of excessive wealth to the poor and needy.

iv) **Consumption of Intoxicating Drinks:**

In Indian tradition, alcoholism is a totally prohibited phenomenon, both morally and legally. The consumption of intoxicating drinks causes physical ailments, mental disturbances, spiritual hindrances etc. The aspirants of truth and the adherents of virtue totally refrain from consuming them since they will obstruct the pathway of perfection.

But in the *Mizo* community especially the early community, there prevailed a tradition of offering rice beer to celebrate joyous special occasions to honour the brave men, skillful hunters, virtuous persons during the celebration of bigger festivals.

v) **Class Division:**

As the population of the *Mizo* tribe was very less they could lead a life of one single and simple family and hence their society was free from class struggle. Though on their society, out of necessity for day-to-day administration, they had Chief, leader
of the youth, chief functionaries to execute the command of the Chief and common people, still they lived as one unit society having one common goal.

In Indian tradition, we came across the social stratification in the name and forms of varṇa and aśramadharmas. When classes had aroused between them or among the internal classes, feuds, fighting, disharmony etc. prevailed endangering the peaceful co-existence.

4.13.2 WESTERN:

In Western moral theories which involve critical reflection upon beliefs and values, reason plays a vital role in favour or against the theory. Rational scrutiny enables a moral theory in the West to examine the basic principles of life which serve as the best technique either to modify or abandon such theories by the subsequent thinkers. This methodology serves as the criterion to determine whether or not one’s claims and beliefs are rationally justified. As every moral theory has its own strength and weakness, it is imperative to estimate the viability such theory to be evaluated impartially. However, it cannot be doubted or denied the significant contribution made by any moral theory to enable people to lead a good, happy, civilized and harmonious life. Some are approved while some are rejected based on their pragmatic value. In this sense, the theories and subsequently influenced by the Christian philosopher withstand the test of time and are having universal appeal.

Any type of moral act has been testified by reason whether it is meant for promoting human virtues as promulgated by Plato and exemplified
by Aristotle. Even the Christian theologians have included faith, hope, and charity to God as additional virtues to suit to the devotional inspirations of the devotees based on the psychological principle ‘affection’. The moral standards, norms, criteria etc depend on moral rules which are common to all societies despite cultural variations. Certain moral values are common to all societies such as justice, temperance, truth, punishing of the wicked etc.

The *Mizo* people gradually made a transition from their traditional moral and cultural modes of behavior as they had no set of well established philosophical doctrines whatsoever. In the absence of a well defined moral standard other than the traditional techniques of estimating the value of action, their practice of Christian faith necessitated to analyze and judge their fresh behavior with a new yardstick for which the views of Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine and other medieval philosophers are of immense help. In fact, the Christian theology assumed the validity of the Greek doctrines of virtues like temperance, justice, prudence etc. and added a few more virtues like faith, hope and charity which forms the psychological tool to have an inclination to practice virtues. Hence, the *Mizo* people have been fortunate to be judged by the Western measures regarding their social, cultural and religious activities.

Under these explanations, every virtue or excellence has to render the thing good in itself and also work excellently. The attention paid to the youth in catering their moral needs, to make future citizens to preserve virtues, to encourage the strong men who can reveal bravery to protect the national sovereignty and territorial integrity, to foster sportive activities through flaming the competitive spirit and to keep the virtuous characteristic features in high esteem etc. are some of the similar functions estimated by moral standards in all the cultural setting. As the virtues are modes of choice and stand for the states of character, they can seldom be classified under passions or faculties.
ENDNOTES:

13. Ibid., p.63.
26. Ibid., p.31.
27. Ibid., p.32.
28. Ibid., p.33.
33. Parry, N.E., op.cit., p.17.
34. Ibid., p.17.
37. Ibid., p.11.
39. Ibid., p.8.
44. Lorrain, J.H., op.cit., p.46.
57. Ibid., p.307.
64. Chatterji, N., op.cit., p.2.
66. Dokhuma, J., op.cit., p.64.
70. McCall, A.G., op.cit., p.98.
73. Lorrain, J.H op.cit., p.171.
74. Kipgen, M., op.cit., p.66.
75. Challiana, op.cit., p.11.
76. Parry, N.E., op.cit., p.20.
82. Shakespeare, J., op.cit., p.46.
83. Chatterji, N., op.cit., p.3.