CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

In the preceding chapters we have endeavoured to highlight the doctrine of virtue from the Western and Indian perspectives. In this venture, we have exemplified this notion with reference to ‘analysis’ and ‘application’. By ‘analysis’ we mean the intellectual exposition of the idea of virtue as expounded by Greek and the Christian theologians and the Indian conception by the Hindu thinkers, Buddhists and the Jains. By ‘application’ we mean the adaptation of the virtuous. Qualities by human beings especially the Mizo tribes inhabit the North East Hill region of India. As the researcher belongs to the Mizo community, it is possible to explain and examine the behavioural patterns of the Mizo tribe whether they are in accordance to the traditional ways of behaviour appropriately with the inherited traits or are they resort to the modern styles of thinking and acting.

The present day world is rent by unprecedented wars and restless nature everywhere due to the modern outlook on life. Even though the whole world has become our next door neighbour thanks to the advent of science and technology, everyday people are confronted with social destability, class struggle, religious fundamentalism, racial discrimination, political upheavals, economic inequalities, moral degradations, linguistic fanaticism etc. For, people in all parts of the globe are becoming self-centred with narrow minded attitude soaked with materialistic outlook. This kind of approach paves the way for threatening to peaceful co-existence and
endangering unitary mentality. Lack of moral education and spiritual training along with improper guidance are some of the reasons for the pathetic plight of the people everywhere. It seems that the ideas of virtue, noble qualities, good behaviour etc. are academically surviving rather than sincerely adhered to by a majority of the people. People are baffled in determining the rightness or wrongness of actions since each one is coming out with his or her own standard of morality. The innumerable criteria of moral judgments are devoid of objectivity, consistency and universality.

With the advancement of sciences and technologies and for the people who can utilize the functionality of the so called modernity, it might be secondary, effortless and painless to earn daily necessities. But to those who count and calculate everyday’s basic needs, we can say, for them there are more disturbances of life. Not only the struggles of day to day living and natural hardship but also unknown physical or mental illness, crime, political and economical violence, riot, corruption, smuggling etc became part of the existing world. Because of the increase in various problems, there is increase in the demands of public security, like trained watchman, police, gate keeper, electronics alarm systems, safety device, and even trained watchdog or sniffer to identify drugs and smuggling and the like.

The present modern society is technologically efficient but mentally weak which means that we rest too much trust in others or only in the officially so called trained people and certain devices. We do not sleep soundly in our own house, surrounded by iron bars, alarm systems and we lock ourselves inside with huge bolts, but still we feel insecure and unsafe. With all the best equipments it is supposed to decrease the crime rates, but it seems that the criminals also upgrade tactics of committing crimes accordingly. The criminals do not always win, they have been captured and punished by the law. But we cannot know whether they really renounce from their wrong doing. The
usual quantification of crime involvement among the youth is that they do not get proper guidance during their childhood. But the fact is that, even when we have the best possible advice, instruction and guidance from our parents, elders, teachers, leaders and friends, we listen carefully but we do not obey. The main reasons are that we become too materialistic, too ambitious, greedy, egocentric and easily captivated by outward impression or illusion.

We are not only cheating others but also ourselves, it seems like we are welcoming even the disgraceful or detrimental influences. We are shambling in the changes; we are powerful and at the same time powerless to make the right decisions. Sometimes, failure blooms upon us to bring out ideals and values to guide our responses to the present world situations. Therefore, cleavage among societies has risen, one group will give maximum consideration to one of moral ethical problems and the other group will give it to another and so on without proper regards. Absence of mutual co-operation is dangerous in all kinds of works. There is demoralization of efforts that can be given regarding mutual agreement and co-operation and supporting one another. The practice of groupism has brought benefits as well as dangers by acting for the sake of their own group. For example, if professional groups like educational teachers are ardently teaching students, there will be desirable fruits for humanity, but if they teach only for the sake of obtaining salary, the result would be very dangerous, it can directly and indirectly cause the lost of social unity and more conflict among the society.

When there are changes in social pattern, some are conscious, diplomatic, perceptive and flexible to new conditions and attempt to reshape, reform, revive or regenerate themselves and some others are still clinging to their old hatred and thinking about taking revenge and even withdraw themselves from social relations. For these reasons, the need for careful decisions and resolutions has been put forth to rise above disagreement and
conflict among the society. Depending on the circumstances, sometimes immediate decision is required without any delay. The approaches of rational decision making are very important, only a person with certain individuality can perform such assessment as it can make the quality of existence better. However, making decision requires full awareness of procedures, and the importance of morality to increase understanding of the prevalent problems.

The procedure includes certain reasonable choices, careful observation, a set of firm principles and this will eventually help in the available option and commitments to be made. This will evaluate not only the conduct of people in general but also the conduct of the instigator. Therefore, the social fluctuation will be the lessons for everyone to become better human beings which results in consistency and meaningful life. Morality like honesty, integrity, goodness, kindness, courage, liberality, justice, temperance, diplomacy, generosity etc should be practiced with authentic intelligence uplifts and encourage by our experiences. Since, ethical problem is concerned with the most basic issues of our life, the rightness and wrongness of human conduct is governed by our actions.

The past experienced contribute a huge amount in the development of morality since social morality, social institution and social development are closely connected. The same experience of the past especially the awful one is likely to happen again because the people who had experienced became old and there come the young ones who does not understand the awful consequences and they are likely to repeat the same mistakes if they are not well informed or mould with all kinds of morality. Hence, to guide the young ones in the right path, teachers, elders, parents, and families play an important role. However, the task of every person throughout their life is an attempt to revive and discover the nature of good life and live up to the best possibility in their personal lives as well as communal relationship.
Though we have a few moral theories to effectively judge the standard of morality, such as utilitarianism, the theory of categorical imperatives and the moral maxims as promulgated by Kant, the theory of natural law, social contract theory etc., still the philosophers of moral theories do not arrive at any consensus. An uncritical acceptance of a moral theory is a pre-requisite for understanding an ethical theory proper, according to the modern temperament. Customary morality, conventional morality, reflective morality etc. are meant for evaluating the feelings, sentiments, emotive acts, deliberate actions etc. However, critical reflection is essentially required to analyze and understand the beliefs and values of a society. It is appropriate to state the art quoted expression of Socrates namely ‘an unexamined life is not worth living.’

Besides the scientific study of anthropocentric approach to life, the moral imperative is how man ought to live so that he can lead a virtuous, good, happy, harmonious and civilized life. To this end the study of moral philosophy enables one to rationally justify all moral claims to lead a perfect life. Perfection in thinking, willing and feeling will determine the nature of virtues through which one moulds his life. Aristotle’s criterion of Nicomachean ethics holds that ‘an action is virtuous if and only if it is done voluntarily with rational deliberation and free choice.’ Indian conception of ‘dharma’ with the undertone of karma yoga reflects the same view that one has to discharge his duty for duty sake not expecting anything in return according to one’s station i.e., the role he occupies in a society. In both the cases ‘perfectness’ in all walks of life leading to joy becomes the motivation of every act. It is the dominating motive of human life so that humanity lives in peace, prosperity and harmony.

The tribal settled in Mizoram region lead a secluded life in the midst of both tradition and modernity. In the process of evolution, people
gradually shifted to modern methods of education, medicine, sport events and other styles of living due to the advent of Christian missionary movements. But still, they preserve the hoary tradition in their pursuit of perfection. The massive stature and scientific development did not destabilize the fabric of the cob-web relation with fellow men of the tribal community since it is born out of instinct and not due to any extraneous conditions. This attitude results in the alleviation of anger, hatred, jealousy, revenge and bloodshed. The solidarity shown among the members of the tribal community of Mizo is due to their training and efficiency in inner freedom based on self-control and self-purification born out of their gregarious instinct. This attitude can be accounted for social interaction and cohesion developed through their faith and practice in virtuous qualities enshrined in their oral tradition. Though we do not have any kind of systematic and scientific study of virtues in a conceptual manner, we could discern their adaptability to the environments and survival in the struggle for existence based on their noble traits exhibited in virtuous behaviour. In the words of Thanmawia, “Act of decency and courtesy, especially to the elder people were considered as form norms of good conduct and as such were valued in the society.”¹

Psychological egoistic hedonism is to be sacrificed for utilitarianism based on ethical hedonism. Preservation and continuation of life depend on the process of socialization wherein the long cherished age old customs, conventions etc. are transmitted from one generation to the other. This method will enhance the fulfillment of human nature. To have thorough knowledge in the moral doctrines and ethical perfection people must have equipped with spiritual training and religious pursuits. Socrates’ contention of ‘know-thyself’ will vouchsafe this temperament. Man’s animal characteristics would be suppressed by the promotion of human qualities of love, kindness, charity etc., which in turn will stimulate or manifest divinity already embedded in human beings. Certainly there would be a transition
from barbarism to civilization if the people cherish human values through religious moorings. In Hinduism, we come across the primordial relationship between the individual soul (jivatma) and the cosmic soul (paramatmā). The simple truth is that one supreme power, the primal energy becomes manifest through innumerable forms to make the potential powers of the universe as latent in actual practice. The Greek notion of ‘Prime Mover’ attributed to the Supreme Power is to be contemplated in this context. The truth remains that the Absolute Power, the Supreme Being pervades the entire creation and God is the source of everything, the animate and inanimate. A true seeker of truth has to enjoy the comforts of life, as a blessing from God and promote the spirit of sharing and renunciation. In the words of Radhakrishnan, “Enjoy all things by renouncing the idea of personal proprietary relationship to them. When the individual is subject to ignorance, he is not conscious of the unity and identity behind the multiplicity and so cannot enter into harmony and oneness with the universe and thus fails to enjoy the world, when however he realizes his true existence which is centred in the Divine, he becomes free from selfish desires and enjoys the world, being in a state of non-attachment.”

It is true that Indian philosophers even from the Vedic period up to the modern era are seriously concerned with the metaphysical issues such as the Ultimate Reality- Brahman, Atman etc. leading to absolutism, monism, monotheism, pluralism, realism, idealism, spiritualism etc. This kind of theoretical explanations, critical evaluations, conflicting arguments, counter elucidations etc. paved the way for enriching their horizon of wisdom as well as substantiating their epistemological standpoints. Their logical skill and epistemological positions reflected in their metaphysical justifications and analytical powers to exemplify the concepts in ontology, cosmology, semantics, syntactic and pragmatic etc. Again their metaphysical and epistemological positions enhanced their deeper vision in the scriptural
injunctions especially with reference to religious dictum that human life is a gift of God.

Indian Philosophy rationalizes the doctrines of reality for their adaptation in actual life for which they depend on the infallible statements. But how far the statements of the scriptures are reliable and non-contradictory and convincing? To quote Prof. Suryanarayana Sastri, “...the authority claimed for scriptures is not absolute except in realms where other means of knowledge do not apply. It is specifically declared again and again that scriptural texts are futile in matters otherwise known or obtained. Where they contradict experience, the texts cannot be true as they stand; if they are really Scriptural, they must be so interpreted as to remove the contradiction. A hundred texts cannot prove that fire is cold or water hot; the authority of scripture cannot make us subscribe to such propositions nor can we be made to believe that what is the result of action is itself anything but finite, for the effect must be of the same nature as the cause. In such matters, the dictates of reason based on experience must prevail. If a separate means of knowledge is demanded in the case of the quest of the real, that is for sufficient reason. If philosophy is really an attempt to obtain a view of the whole, it ought to embrace the whole; our perceptive powers are limited to the here and now of experience, and reasoning proceeds only with the help of characteristic marks and examples from the world of perception. The whole cannot be an object of perception, nor can anyone mark be said to be more characteristic if it than any other; and being unique, there can be no example thereof, where with one may reason. That which develops into the world of perception and reason cannot itself be the object of these means of knowledge. It requires to be intuited; it has been so intuited in the past and the result is the knowledge contained in Scriptures. Though operating in and on that body of knowledge, Reason cannot of itself create it.”
The above passage cited is an eye opener for the student of philosophy as to how to rely upon and depend on the truth contents of the Scriptural texts and how to interpret them without distracting the original purport of the messages. Thus the conception of human values, an envisioned and envisaged by Manu in the names Puruśārthas, Aśrama, Varṇa dharmas etc. are to construed and understood contextually. Even though those conceptual frame works may not be verbation applicable or acceptable in the modern scientific approach to human life, none can deny or doubt the spirit of classifying the social structure and the prescription of rights and duties of man in accordance to their station, status and stages. “In accordance with the four stages of life thus outlined by the divine sage Manu, the life becomes enjoyable, creative, productive, calm, and peaceful at every step. ‘The four-fold plain of life still prevails in Hindu families’, says Dr. S.Radakrishnan, “Every state is necessary and so far as it is necessary, it is good. The blossom does not deny the leaf and the leaf does not deny the stalk nor does the stalk deny the root. The general rule is that we should pass from stage to stage gradually.” The theoretical explanations of the conception of virtues both by the Western and thinkers are comparable to the Mizo culture in postulating, promoting and preserving the long-cherished excellent human qualities such as obedience, respect of elders, natural justice, respecting womenfolk, good manners, discipline etc. which have natural origin and continued despite several ordeals, threats and dangers, “The tribe is an autonomous group of people which acknowledge no higher authority than its own, speaking a common language, observing uniform rules of social organization, and working for common purposes, such as trade, agriculture, or defense etc. The tribe considers itself as descended from one common ancestor. The basis of tribal union is blood kinship. It is divided into clans; it is often headed by a chief; it claims a territory which is not very precisely defined. It has a uniform culture and a way of life. One can say that tribe is a
group of people generally constituting homogenous unit, speaking a common language, claiming a common ancestry, living in a particular geographical area, and having a social structure based on kinship.”

The views started above generally are equally applicable to the Mizo tribe. The tribals have no systematic writings on philosophical issues such as epistemology, metaphysics, religion etc. but none can prevent them from asking questions on life and on reality as a whole; they have reflected upon varieties of human experiences such as births and death, sin and blessing; sickness and happiness; they have also investigated for the meaning and wisdom of life and truth itself. The answers to these queries have been made their cultural expressions like myths and stories, signs and symbols, songs and dances rites and rituals, seasonal festivals, customs and cultural practices, belief systems and religious practices. As belonging to monotheistic tradition, the Mizo tribe treated their personal God as the source of everything, the ultimate reality, a living person, who takes care of them as the head of the family. Even though they offer sacrifices, seldom do they contemplate on Him to establish as inseparable union or rapport. Lalrinawma observed that, “They believed in the existence of a being higher than man. They did not know the name of that being. They understood Pathian (God) to be actively involved in human affairs of justice, war, peace. Their sense of His immanence was so real that Liangkhaia aptly compares (sa) khua (guardian) to Christian Immanuel. When a time came, some of them believed that their ancestors should have worshipped that Being.”

Strictly speaking the moral virtues which are significantly understood are characterized as having different social orders. Even though we have an array of virtues they are to be subjected to a synthetical rule and be comprised under one single head. It is to be construed that all virtues are various aspects of one central virtue. This can be shown from an inventory of
the virtues. “This problem of the centralization of virtues has been tackled throughout the History of Ethics. In Pythagoras, harmony was the highest moral principle. In Plato wisdom, courage and temperance, all went synthesized in the Supreme virtue of justice. In Aristotle, measure or the mean became the central principle, of whom all other virtues became specifications. In St. Paul and Christianity in generally, and later in St. Augustine, faith, hope and charity, and of all these charity became the fundamental virtue. Charity means love in Greek. And so the love of God and humanity was the principle at which Paul and Augustine aimed. After that when we come to Spinoza, we find the Intellectual Love of God as the central virtue. In Bentham, we have benevolence; in Sidgwick; we have equity; in Mahatma Gandhi we have truth and non-violence. So all these great writers and thinkers make it their business to centralize all virtues in one single principle of their choice.”

In the Bhagavad Gita, we come across the view that God devotion is regarded as the Supreme virtue and generally virtues constitute knowledge similar to the view of Socrates who has declared that virtue alone constitutes knowledge and knowledge is power. Hence the logical conclusion is that virtues naturally generate power-physical, mental and spiritual-in man. In the Hindu tradition, as developed in the Gita, it is stated that all virtues are the specifications of devotion. Devotion to God or Bhakti is the central thread of virtues according to the Gita. Compassion, equanimity, purity, harmlessness, self-control, non-attachment, fearlessness, sacrifice, peace, valour, lordliness, service etc. are the virtues which have the link with Bhakti i.e. all of these are the expressions of the central principle of God-devotion.

As far as the philosophy of the Mizo tribe is concerned the strong sense of belonging and solidarity which is the internal dynamic of that community which has lead to the communal tribal feeling and equality. This
attitude binds the members of this community into a closely-knit community. Community feeling leads to the formulations of behaviour patterns and ordering of life unto preservation and inculcation of the value of community feeling (bond), and equality for the preservation of tribal codes of living. To fulfil this major purpose, several institutions emerged to enhance the process of socialization through structure of the tribe, bachelor’s dormitory, marriage, kinship, totem etc. The *Mizo* tribes believe in one God, venerate ancestors, placate spirits, have priests to offer worship and medicine men especially in far off villages to treat the ill-ridden people. As their main profession is agriculture, they promote barter system, subsistence economy and no market economy. From the political standpoint, the *Mizo* practice village council (*panchayat*) system and village confederation. The celebrate socio-cultural and seasonal feasts and festivals continuously including birth, marriage and death through their social, religious, economic and political institutions to foster togetherness and unity.

A question may be raised here as to why Western conception of virtues has been developed in this thesis when *Mizoram* as a state is in Indian sub-continent and the tribals are very well Indians. The reply would be simply that the tribals of *Mizoram* embraced Christianity and the medieval Western Philosophers were fundamentally Christian missionaries who have introduced theistic temperaments into the academic oriented Greek ethics. Faith and divinity were the basic virtues besides the cardinal virtues described by the Greek thinkers. All these virtues have universal appeal as we have in the Indian classification of virtues. *“The study of Western system has been of great service to us in helping to disentangle metaphysical issues from those which are religious or ritualistic. Our revelations degenerated from their high character, when they started to wrangle among themselves as to the absolute superiority of Śiva or Viṣṇu. A fresh stimulus for the development of Indian thought was and continues to be needed. This will*
come effectively from Western Philosophy, particularly Western Psychology.” As the hallmarks of dharma, we have steadfastness, forbearance, self-restraint, non-stealing, purity of mind and body, control over the sense-organs, illumined intellect, knowledge of the self, truthfulness, and absence of anger. The above features of dharma are, though formulated by Manu, an Indian thinker, applicable to the entire human race for a life of perfection irrespective of Indian or Western. Again Manusmriti (10.63) holds that non-violence, truthfulness, non-avarice, purity of thoughts, words and deeds and self-control are the Dharma of mankind.

The classification of the Society has its origination in the innate nature (Swabhava) of the individual. Swa means the indwelling-self and Bhava means the thoughts. Hence Swabhava literally means ‘the conditioned self’. Every person is guided and motivated by this own personal thoughts and desired and finds their fulfilment in the specific field of action as impelled by his inborn nature. Due to his personal choice, all his psychological make-up expresses itself in physical make-up. Sri Krishna tells in the Bhagavad Gita that each and every individual is very special and it is the responsibility of a person to explore his or her unique potential and try to enhance it. The society should also provide the opportunity and means for the full expression of one’s intrinsic nature the Swabhava which eventually becomes one’s own Swadharma. Everywhere, people follow the law of their own instinctive behaviour and assign themselves the work accordingly. It is indeed so true that the four fold system in society becomes created by itself-by the people, of the people, and for the people. Each and every individual is the creator of the role he has chosen for himself to play in his lifetime. A similar type of concept has been described by General Heard in his book Man the Master. He writes, “It seems that there have always been present in human community four types or Strata consciousness.
Even though the four groups have been established on account of their innate inclinations and occupations, the non-flexibility of each group in accommodating the people with innate talents into their group resulted in the so-called caste menace in India threatening the very fabrics of the social system. The problems caused by ‘untouchability’ have to be construed and settled through legal measures. In the complex social settings such caste system still prevails as closed groups, but in the tribal settlements still people practice one caste. “Their strong sense of community and equality makes the tribals and their life community-centred; the good of the community is above the good of the individual. Thus, individual interests, efforts, talents are to be at the service of the community. Individual freedom is for the good of the community. Community decision takes over individual decision. There is no place for competition in any area of life; all must come up together. Any tendency to individualism will be checked by the community. While tribal philosophy of community and equality is very good, it can have many negative consequences, like no initiative of individuals, no progress, jealousy, herd mentality, no independent thinking etc.” ¹¹ Still the people were trained to live with solidarity as one group and one clan.

Among the Mizo, there is tribal awakening and revivalism due to the awareness enthused by the media both technology and printing. Sociopolitical, religio-cultural, economic movements and revival of tribal feasts and festivals, rites of passage, value system are progressively culminate in the world view. Through this thesis, the following suggestions are made to revamp and rejuvenate the Mizo culture:
1) They are to be liberated from the bondage of their cultural oppression and given them a ‘new world view’.

2) Attempts are to be made to wipe out their fear complex on evil spirits which hinders their all round progress.

3) A proper balance must be made between the community and individual. For individual’s life should not be at the costs of the community.

4) There should be no room for competition which hampers equality and there must be balance between equality and competition through scientific reflection etc.

5) The superstitions belief system is to be replaced by reason.

6) The tribal system of government must be based on wider political spectrums emerging in the world.

7) They are to be trained to face the challenges of pluralism in today’s society.

8) Besides agriculture, they are to be taught about the economic situations through taking up new assignments.

9) They must be given orientation to think and act independently.

10) Finally, they are to be mentally liberated so that they will search for new meaning, new direction, new values, new identity based on reason, and not simply on superstitions and cultural practices.

From the Bible – *Psalm* 34: 14, we find – *Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it*. In *Psalm* 37:3, we again see the words - *Trust in the Lord and do good*. These verses are one of the most popular verses always quoted by preachers of the present *Mizo* Christian society. The quotes come along with many sayings of the *Mizo* tradition and culture. But like any other societies of developing countries or sections of societies, the *Mizo* society has to improve its view on morality and values. The moral value of the *Mizo*
society is always hampered by today’s so called ‘materialism.’ On the pretext of development and modernity, the Christian Mizo individual always find it hard to turn from evil to do good. While there are many good doers in the Mizo Christian society, one cannot applause the whole lot as perfect to the words of God. But the Church and the Young Mizo Association (YMA), a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) set up by the past Christian missionaries, play the most vital role in the upliftment of the moralities, the Mizo society, which, by cultural and traditional values, goes very well with the Christian teachings, taking maximum responsibilities in eliminating and minimizing social problem. It has three mottos, they are- good use or proper utilization of free time, reverence for a good Christian life, striving towards a holistic development of the Mizo society. The aims and other objectives of moral reformation are as follows:

Everyone should aim to be self disciplined, good manager of the family, just and truthful, tolerant, polite, chivalrous and useful, socially active, respecting religion, preservative of culture, abstain from liquor and drugs. Some traditional voluntary work are still practiced and taken up by the people such as building houses for widows, recovering drowned body, prevention of wildfire, conservation of forest and wildlife, promoting sports etc. There are certain occasions that government is not sufficient to carry out responsibilities and wide ranges of trust is given to YMA, it is one of the backbones of Mizo society. Along the changes in the society, problem comes from every corner. Some of the causes are basically from inappropriate family administration or management, absence of responsible head of family, inadequate teaching or learning about morality, unemployment among the youth, addiction of alcohol and drugs, too much of leisure.

Change does not mean single sided change but simultaneous personal and social changes towards positive development. Social changes correspond to changes in personal values, beliefs and actions and placing
humans as well as the environment as the central value and concern. Most organizations confine themselves within the development of their own organizations, and their activities are mostly limited to their specific aims and objectives. On the other hand, the purpose of our every action should be diligent selfless service and moving forward in pursue of morality.
ENDNOTES:

8. Ibid., pp.188-189.
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