

THE CHANGING ASPECTS OF MIZO WOMEN SINCE 1987

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Abstract : There was an assumption based on the Mizoram Accord 1986, 'The rights and privileges of the minorities in Mizoram as envisaged in the constitution shall continue to be preserved and protected, and their social and economic advancement shall be ensured'. The present paper will focus on the changing roles of Mizo women, especially how women's roles have changed in the areas of economy, politics, religion and law since the declaration of statehood in 1987. The observation reflects the signing of the "Mizoram Accord" or "Memorandum of Settlement" between the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Government of India on 30th June 1986, which was supposed to have triggered the socio-economic and political development for all the people of Mizoram including women. The Indian constitution guaranteed equal rights and equal opportunities to women. On the contrary, the nature of society or state has a decisive impact on the position of women. Obviously, the notions of society and the state are often not gender neutral constructs; rather it is the result of both historical factors and experiences. While the Indian democratic state is committed to the protection of individual rights within the context of citizenship, it is important to note that there are historical, social and cultural factors that have limited women's capacity and chances to exercise their freedom. This paper will try to investigate how far Mizo women are benefited from the promises of the statehood.

Key Words: society, patriarchy, feminist, tribe

I. Introduction

As the 23rd state of the Indian Union, Mizoram is bordered by Tripura and Bangladesh in the west, Myanmar on the east and south and Manipur as well as Assam in the north. According to 2011 census, Mizoram has the population of 1,097,206 of which 541,867 are female. Mizoram was the second least populous state but the second most literate state in the country. In 2011, the female literacy rate in Mizoram was 89.40% against the male literate of 93.71% (2011 census). In 2001 census, Mizo women had won national attention for securing the highest female worker participation in the country. In terms of politics, since Mizoram statehood in 1987, there has been only one female minister in the history of Mizoram Legislative Assembly.

The word 'Mizo' simply means a hill-man and Mizoram is the land of the Mizos. There are a number of ethnic tribes in Mizoram that are linked culturally and linguistically. The word 'Mizo' is a generic term applied to a conglomeration of Chin-Lushai tribes and sub-tribes spread over Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur and the sovereign states of Bangladesh

and Myanmar. The population of Mizoram is dominated by various tribes such as Lushai, Hmar, Mara and Lai. Among the various tribes in Mizoram, the Lushai language speaking 'Mizos' are termed as Lushais or Mizos (Nunthara 1996). 'Lushai' is a name given by the British to the hill people. From the earliest written record of 'The Lushai Kuki clan,' the British official J. Shakespeare in 1850 wrote that the British undertook a number of military raids into the Lushai Hills beginning in 1844 and later Mizoram came to be administered by the British Government. On 6th September 1895, Mizoram was divided into north Mizoram under the Government of Assam and south Mizoram under the Bengal Government. In 1898, these regions were amalgamated as the 'Lushai Hills District' under the administration of Assam. In 1915 the Lushai Hills and other hill districts of Assam were declared as a 'Backward Tract' under the Government of India Act. Following the declaration of Lushai Hills as an 'Excluded area' under the Government of India Act of 1935, the area became more isolated. This was the beginning of a political awakening among the Mizo people. After India gained independence from the British Empire in 1947, the Constituent Assembly appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Assamese political leader Gopinath Bordoloi (Barborah 2006). The committee that included two representatives from Mizoram submitted its recommendation to the government which stated that the tribal people should be free from exploitation and domination and should have full freedom in respect to their tradition, customs, social organization, inheritance and village administration (Pudaite 2010). This safeguard was adopted in the form of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The work of the Bordoloi Committee resulted in the setting up of Lushai Hills District Council in 1952 followed by the upgradation of the status of Union Territory since 1972. The outbreak of 'Bamboo Famine' in 1966 becomes a landmark in the history of Mizoram politics. Because of the failure of the Indian Government to provide famine relief, Mizos felt betrayed (Lalthakima 2008). This resulted in twenty years of insurgency that eventually gave rise to the formation of the State of Mizoram in 1987.

A number of studies suggest that the transition brought about a decline in the status of women. In the context of Mizoram, there are evidences where women's status deteriorated particularly in the field of female participation in formal sectors after the attainment of statehood. These studies assume that in pre-state societies there is little difference between the status of men and the status of women. Before the colonial intervention during the chieftain period, all the villagers irrespective of gender participated in a traditional agriculture and there were number of women who succeeded their deceased husband as chieftains. With the emergence of the state it has been theorised that women's work becomes private and family-centred rather than social and kin-centred. After the Lushai hills obtained the status of a district council under the State of Assam in 1952, the implementation of Government sectors largely marginalised women in the formal sectors and they were relegated to a subordinate position in the areas of economy,

politics, religion and law. At the same time, some scholars hypothesized that in hunter-gatherer societies men have sole responsibility for hunting and fighting, while women are involved in child-rearing, cooking and gathering. In these situations, men control the means of violence against outside enemies and can use this control to dominate the women (Martin 1990). Marxist feminists accept that both the subordination of women and the division of classes developed historically with the development of private property (Ray 2011). With the emergence of private property, women's house hold work sank into insignificance in comparison with men's productive labour (Engels 1948).

The paper focuses on women's rights in Mizoram which mainly depends upon secondary sources of information. Keeping in view the oral tradition and the works of literature concerning Mizo women, the study will attempt to highlight the impact of colonialism and Christianity in the changing roles and responsibilities of Mizo women. The Indian Census and statistical data recorded by the Mizoram Economic and Statistics Department were utilized to examine the existing gender gap in the areas of worker participation rate. The record of the Mizoram Presbyterian church has served to identify the subordinate position of women in the church despite their significant contribution.

II. Women and Work

Work participation has been proclaimed as an important indicator to understand the socio-economic development of every society (Md 2011). There is an assumption that women's economic participation is fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling women to have control over and exert their influence in their societies. As Leavitt (1971) says, the most important clue to women's status depends upon her degree of participation in economic life and her control over property and the product she produces. The transformation of agriculture based societies to non-agriculture one along with the change from rural to urban societies gave birth to the formation of work and non-work in the society (Kirby and Kidd 2000). In the contemporary Mizo society the component of work is mostly concerned with work outside the home for financial benefit apart from the domestic responsibilities of household work.

The attainment of Statehood in Mizoram witnessed considerable improvement in the field of education, growth of service industry and increased demand for handicrafts. This resulted in increasing the number of women working outside their home. This is evident from the comparison of the participation of female workforce which was 37.72 % before Mizoram obtained Statehood in 1981 and 43.52% after the attainment of Statehood in 1991. If we examine the rate of women's work participation in Mizoram, we find Mizoram has high participation rate of the female workers which is 47.54% against the participation of the male worker which is 57.2% according to 2001 census (Singhal 2003). When we examine these figures more closely, the female employment rate in the government sector is found to be only 23.6% in 2005 census (Lalneihszovi 2009). Moreover, 60% of the total workers in Mizoram are engaged in agriculture and allied sectors which means women are

engaged in low-earning jobs. Another survey report conducted in 2006 recorded that the female labour force in Mizoram was 43.9% against the male which was 53.8%. While the female worker participation rate in urban areas reached 45.8%, the rural areas have much less female worker participation rate which is only 39.3%. The survey revealed that among the total number of female workers, only 29.2% are engaged in the organised sector and 70.7% are engaged in the unorganised sector (Lalhriatpuii 2010).

To understand where and why women are employed, one has to study the growth pattern of the economy that has prevented women from employment in the mainstream economic channels (Roy 2012). There are observation regarding the existence of great transformation of the traditional economy based on a community of persons known to one another and engaged in mutual support, into a modern economy based on business where people competed with one another (Phelps 2006). For every nation, industrialization has been considered as one of the most important devices to develop the country economically. Prior to statehood in 1987, Mizoram inherited a very weak industrial base and the whole area was notified as 'No industrial Area' because there was no scope for both large and small industry (Laskar 2010). Among the existing small scale and cottage industries, the handloom and handicraft are dominant.

There are many factors which contributed to the industrial backwardness of Mizoram. Firstly, the hilly and rugged topography did not allow construction of good roads that resulted in poor communication network facilities. Secondly, there has been a certain issue regarding setting up of industry by the outsider due to inappropriate restriction to safeguard the social, cultural and ethnic identity. However, investment from outside was allowed in medium and large scale industries in joint and assisted sectors only (Mizoram Bamboo Development Agency 2010). While liberalization of industry played a significant role in women's economic advancement, poor infrastructure and no availability of good yarn in Mizoram is an obstacle to the success of implementation (Goswami 2009). Moreover, there are restrictions on labour movement due to inner line regulations (Sachdeva 2008). There is no investment climate due to law and order situation and attitude towards outsiders. This resulted in 80% of farmer still dependent on jhum cultivation which has resulted in the continuation of Mizo women to remain concentrated in poorly paid jobs. Increase in urban population led many to women to give up jhum cultivation (Prasad & Rinawma 2014) and concentrate themselves in a low paid job as there are no industries and other economic activities to generate employment opportunities. A considerable increase in urban population has been mentioned by highlighting the percentage of urban population of 1981 as 24.6% while 1991 census witnessed the percentage of urban population as 46.2 % (Laskar 2010). Planning Commission Report (2012) revealed that during 2009-2010 the percentage of people below poverty line (BPL) in Mizoram increased by 21.1 % from what was 15.4% during 2004-2005. It was estimated that around 2.1 lakh people in Mizoram are estimated to be below poverty line.

Here, it is important to identify if labour market gives women a chance to exploit their potential (Tito, Daniela & Christopher 2005). It can be argued that the impact of modern economy on Mizo women has resulted in the exclusion of an increasing number of women from active participation in the productive process (Towards Equality Report 1974). Thus, we can see that the increase in work participation of women in Mizoram has been in the service sector. While women dominate in shops, markets, and other service-related jobs, the number of women remained very low in the Government service (DNA News 2010). Women are moulded into women workers by patriarchal forces which control, regulate, and direct how, where, and how much a woman should work. This means, even if women are working, the conditions of their work remain in the hands of the patriarchal authorities (Banerjee 2011). We can recognise that patriarchal control sets women aside from the official mainstream and confines them mainly in low-paid jobs. In this context, some feminist scholars have raised some important issues, like, at what point in human history the sexual division of labour emerged, how unequal relation between men and women have been historically generated ? It has been documented that at some points most of the time in history, both men and women themselves treated the work done by women are less important than the work done by male. At some point the nature of work was basically categorised on the basis of sex which had different implications in the social, cultural and historical context of the society.

However, studies reveal that the impact of British colonial administrators among the tribal people resulted in strengthening male dominance. The administration taught men advanced agricultural techniques whereas women were farmers (Hartmann 1976), thereby limiting women's access to new skill, technology, etc. This resulted in a considerable number of women to continue their participation for no return and no recognition. Ultimately the emergence of public and private spheres placed women in private and men in public, of which private is more devalued than public.

III. Women and Church

Before the arrival of Welsh missionaries into the Lushai hills in 1894, the British colonial officials discovered the Mizo tribe for their savagery and head-hunting raid (Bonk 2010). The first entry of British into the Mizo hill was recorded in 27 January 1871 when the tribal raider killed a tea garden manager, Dr. James and abducted his five-year-old daughter Mary Winchester (Mizo name Zoluti). Following this incidence, the British Government sent its troops to rescue Zoluti; as a result the British colonial administration was introduced into the Mizo hill. This incidence paved way for the introduction of Christian missionaries at the beginning of 1894. This led Mizoram to have the most solidly Christian population in the country (Zari 1994). The popularity of the Christian religion in Mizoram can be best understood from the statistical records that revealed 83.81 % Christian population in Mizoram since 1981 census.

If we examine the nature of missionary education to early Mizo women, it can be argued that the Welsh missionary activities introduced education among the Mizos in 1895. The focus was on the education of the men and women were groomed to be the wives of the educated husbands. Female education was mostly concentrated towards their nurturing roles like sewing, knitting, cooking, spinning and child care so as to perform more efficiently their domestic role (Patnaik and Lalthakima 2008). Female admission in theological education was restricted till 1977 while the first male pastor Mr. Vanchhunga got ordination much earlier in the year 1911. Moreover, the employment of Bible women was opened only during 1915-1966 and the church authority ended the employment of Bible women without considering their remarkable efforts to undergo difficulties and hardship in achieving their goal of missionary work in the earlier times.

The reason advanced for this was the nature of missionary education for girls which typically involved a combination of domestic skills and religious instructions (Scheyvens 2003), while several men in the early missionary period received formal education to become preachers or pastors. It is obvious that the emerging qualified male pastors and evangelists convinced the church authority about the need to replace Bible women with qualified pastors and evangelists in the new church. So it can be said that the missionaries tried to reproduce European style within the Mizo society thus creating sex segregation in the society by largely limiting Bible women's access to mobility as preachers and evangelists. They were left to perform their customary practice as well as assisting their husbands in the new church.

However, before the "European patriarchal" changed Mizo society, it is important to note that Mizo society has always been a patriarchal society where most of the important positions were being occupied by the men. Dr. HL Malsawma, a retired Director in the Mizoram Education Department states that, there is hardly any society in which women had lower status than Mizo society. The 'traditional' Mizo society did not consider women as important as men which is evident from a popular saying, "Hmeichhia leh chakai in sakhua an nei lo" or "Hmeichhe thu thu ni suh, chakai sa sa ni suh" which means "Women and crabs have no religion", or "flesh of the crab is no meat; words of women are no words". These lines indicate how the women are subjugated in Mizo society. Among the Lushai tribes of Mizoram, there are sayings, "A woman, a dog and a walnut tree, the more you beat them, the better they may be"; "Unthreatened wife and unthreatened grass of the fields are both unbearable" (Tribal Research Institute 1991). This probably indicates that among the Lushai clans violent dominance are prevalent where the husband is given complete authority to beat his wife whenever he finds fault, or just to exercise his supremacy over his wife. (Malsawma 2002 and Tribal Research Institute 1991).

While religion has been regarded as deeply reforming the socio-cultural practice (Sudhir & Lalrinkimi 2001), this is not happening with the Mizos as it encourages the

superiority of men over the women. Ultimately low wage kept women dependent on men. Researches revealed that the decline in the status of women and at the same time patriarchy was perceived by many writers as defining women as a part of nature which has to be controlled and dominated by men (Mies 1986). Christianity came to the Mizo people along with British colonialism. This resulted in neglecting and disregarding the role of women in traditional culture and religious life (Ralte 1993). What Christianity seems to have maintained among the Mizos were structures similar to and supportive of oppressive patriarchal European structures that were used as a tool for dominating women. So, it can be observed that under the church supremacy men secured consent of the very women they oppress and the patriarchal institution in the church itself justifies women's subordination which convinces women with a sense of inferiority to men. These assumptions reflect the present situation of women in the church. Let me highlight the actual conditions of Mizo women in the Presbyterian Church since the introduction of a 'handful of rice' project in 1913 (Mission Veng Souvenir 1998), Presbyterian Church Women Fellowship contribution to the church reached Rs 86,837,566/- during 2010-2011 (Mizoram Synod Report 2012). Apart from this, it is worth noticing that among the total numbers of 990 sponsored missionaries in 2012, the number of female missionaries contributed to 472 among the 518 male missionaries, who were working in different fields (Chuaungo 2012). It is also noted that while there are 450 male ordained Pastors and 4,633 ordained elders, no single woman is a Pastor or church elder among the hundred of qualified female theologians, while Mizo women are almost all Christians and regular church goers. Women are being excluded and are denied from ordination as Pastors and Elders by the church authority. Even after one hundred years – celebrated as the Gospel Centenary – there has been no improvement in women's position in the church.

IV. Women and Customary Law

There has been an increasing concern in the studies of tribal women which has long been portrayed as enjoying a better status than their counterpart in the mainland India due to the absence of dowry (Xaxa 2004 & Lalsiemsang 2013). But one needs to think about the social organizations and institutions that are still discriminatory particularly with regard to the customary laws (Roy Burman 2012). In the context of Mizoram, British official NE Parry (1924-1928) created 'A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies' which was published in the year 1927. This is now accepted as Mizo Customary Law. This book which is called "Mizo dan (Mizo customary rules)" shaped an uniform system of regulation governing customary rules and bride price in 1927 (Nunthara 2004). However, these customary rules are not applicable to the other tribes living in Mizoram. The original customary rules compiled by NE Parry were carried out till 1960. Later the Mizoram Government published Mizoram Gazette, Extra Ordinary, Vol-XXXIV in 2005 which was more or less the same as the original. Although the Indian independence in 1947 and the implementation of Lushai Hills District council in

1952 brought about the abolition of chief in 1953, these new rules largely altered the local administration (Nunthara 1996). The authority of the village chiefs and their power relations were subsumed and the patterns of bride price were also manipulated with the introduction of money. We might say that the implementation of common bride price as Rs 420 breaks the barrier of clan division, as it is a landmark for the departure of clan variation in the society but it failed to modify the old existing practice of bride price that remained Rs 420 for more than three decades. Lalnithanga (2005) confirmed that the practice of bride price devalued women's position and status in the society as it presupposes that she can be sold and purchased like worthless assets. There are differences of opinion and parallel views, one which see bride-price as a sign of recognition of women's value and their labour power while others see it as commoditization of women. For instance, Eva Margaret admitted the fact that paying a bride price in order to marry signifies that women were seen as assets and not as liabilities in tribal societies. In spite of the efforts made by the Mizo Women Organisation on the issues of reviewing the existing systems of bride price, nothing can be done due to divergent views on the societies even among the women saying, 'who would like to buy me, if the existing bride price increases to larger amount and bride price should rather be counted as a token of culture and tradition, not in the amount'. At the same time, some were critical of the rate of bride price and they blame the price of brides which makes the marriage ties broken up easily leading to a high number of broken families in the society (Chhakchhuak 2009).

If we study the involvement of customary law in the changing process, it can be seen that the lives of the Mizo women were badly deteriorated because of the fact that customary law operated particularly in the questions of 'bride price' and 'inheritance rights'. There is no denying the fact that there are number of articles in Indian constitution reserving women's legal right and political right. However, the 53rd amendment of 1986 recognized Mizoram through Article 371G, which means '*No act of the Union Parliament concerning the religious or social practices, procedures, administration of justice involving their customary law applies to them unless the state legislative assemblies agree to it*'. Such a decision resulted in strengthening customary law as the most distinctive feature of Mizo society thereby giving Mizo men a free hand for exploitation (Fernandez and Bharali 2008). As the 'Indian Christian Marriage Act' is not applicable in the state, the customary law reduces Mizo women to a purchasable commodity with the bride price of Rs 420. Under Mizo Customary Law Section 135 & 136, no serious punishment is imposed upon rape criminals which means that the hundreds of women raped every year do not receive justice. The victims could seek justice through the Indian Penal Code but few rape victims are aware that they could do this (Liana 2005). Regarding domestic violence against women, no specific punishment has been imposed on perpetrators and as a result, a number of women suffer up to the point of death every year. Many researchers believed that the society refrains from interfering when it comes to family

matters (Patnaik and Lalthakima 2008). To understand this, one must have some idea of whether interference of society is an option. But we might say that cultural and social factors are interlinked with the development and propagation of violent behaviour. For this some researchers believe that men are taught stereotypical gender roles involving domination and control detail while women are taught to be submissive, dependent, and to respect authority (Saravanan 2000).

We might say that changes brought by the Mizoram statehood are more likely a change for convenience rather than the progress of women's status. For instance, the law of inheritance which can be considered to be reflective of modern democracy in the new-found economic independence of women does not have a positive impact on women (Chakraborty 2008). Since the implementation of customary law, there is no scope for women's property rights. Furthermore, married women have a degrading status in her new family as the laws states that '*If a man has no sons, his property is inherited by the next kin on the male side*'. So it is obvious that theoretically a wife is purchased without having any rights in the family of her in-laws.

The Mizo Women's Organisation (*Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl*) which was constituted in 1974 declared 'Women's Year' during 1997-2001. During this period, the movement organised seminars, workshops and created awareness in the entire region with the major issues of the need to review the customary law for the development of the status of Mizo women. Since then the movement came up with the ideas of improving women's status and subsequently made a recommendation to the Government highlighting the need to reconsider the unbearable condition of Mizo women who were threatened with death by the laws imposed upon them. In spite of their considerable efforts, there has been no positive movement for the emancipation of Mizo women till date. But there has been an increasing concern among a number of researchers that pointed out the need to modify the existing customary law to improve women's position (Roy Burman 2012) and securing women's equal rights has been recognised in national and international law. On the other hand there has been a serious problem among the communities and families that gave importance to customary law (Nadia 2003). Greater efforts need to be taken in order to inculcate in women awareness of their rights and how they can fight against traditional laws and practice.

V. Women and Politics

The first Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held in 1987. Since then Mrs. Lalhlipuii from MNF Party became the only minister elected among the Mizo women till today. There was an assumption that the consequence of emergent women leadership at the political level will bring about social change (Mishra 2006). But in the context of Mizoram no political party entertained women candidate; as a result no women candidate won the general election so far. Some of the researchers observed that the result of insurgency and counter-insurgency strategies (Ray 1982; Barborah 2006) were

the gross violation of human rights of ordinary citizen especially women which badly retarded political participation of Mizo women (Chakraborty 2008). Other studies also indicated that MNF movement (1966-1986) in the Mizo hills was not only a masculine construction that ignored women's agency in history, but also one that brought about the downfall of women's participation in the present politics (Sangkima 1992). If we study closely the impact of insurgency, there is no doubt that the '*Declaration of Armed Forces Special Power Act 1958*' in the area brought devastation to the people. In the situation of armed conflict women witnessed a high degree of exploitation and their hardship multiplied a hundredfold for survival against the insurgency. There is no doubt that the generation that lived through 1957-1986 experienced all kinds of torture and hardship, due to different tactics adopted by the centre to fight against the MNF movement. Many villages were burnt down and they are forced to localise in a particular village so as to make it easier for the army to combat the movement. In Mizoram, the grouping of villages resulted in moving 80% of rural population and 60% of the total population. 109 villages were grouped in 18 group centres in Vairengte, Aizawl and Lunglei (Lalthakima 2008). The properties which could not be carried at the time of moving were burnt down by the security forces. In such state of forced regrouping and displacement, women's life encountered different issues like loss of family property, houses, domesticated animals, precious woven clothes, local environment (Gill 2005). Some researchers identified a double burden for nurturing and bread earning in women. The situation set off the undesirable structural transformation in the society (Machanda 2004). All these were instrumental for women's sense of inferiority.

Much emphasis was given with respect to lack of participation of women in politics. The question of why women with the second highest literacy rate and the highest work participation rate are not involved in politics has been raised (Aleaz 2005). Mizo women enjoyed voting right since the implementation of Autonomous District Council in 1952. The last election for the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly in 2013 recorded registered voters where female outnumbered the male voters. However, only three women have been elected to the state Assembly in the 42 years and only one woman holds the ministerial position since Mizoram became a Union territory in 1972 and then a state in 1987. On the other hand, it has to be noted that the effectiveness of women's participation depends upon the actual pattern of power and cultural norms of the environment. Moreover, the prevailing traditional proverb that said 'The wisdom of women does not reach beyond the bank of the river' set the term of division between public and private that signifies women's inferior status. At the same time, restriction on the mobility of women towards the public life enhances the gender division, as public for man's world and private for women's world. So it is apparent that Mizo women's participation in the political process is largely hampered by the oppressive patriarchal cultural, and historical factors thereby resulting in their minimal participation (Baseline Report 2004) in such a way that the

under-representation of women reinforces their exploitation (Subramanian 2011). The nature of Mizo women's political participation, challenges the conventional gender roles and relations, where women are voters and men are leaders. While liberal feminist theory declared education and voting rights will bring women in politics, it has not happened in Mizoram. The only state in the country where women outnumbered male voters and had attained the highest literacy rate cannot break the tentacles of traditional patriarchy to enter the decision making channel (Aleaz 2005).

There was an assumption that the women's political participation is important to strengthen democratic traditions and struggle against oppression (Baseline Report 2004). But one needs to consider the nature of the society or the state that has a decisive impact on the effectiveness of women's political participation (Subramanian 2011). One cannot blame the history of insurgency alone for lack of political participation by the women. Most importantly Mizo women need to be more conscious about the promises of the constitution and the statehood. However, there is still a large gap between the constitutional guarantees and the actual representation of Mizo women in politics.

VI. Conclusion

From the above observations, we can see that the increasing participation of women in the workforce does not include government job in the service sector. This signifies that majority of working women remain concentrated in low paid jobs. Moreover, they have a subordinate role in the church. Many women suffered from lack of awareness of their rights. Thus, the general observation is that Mizo women lag behind men in access to resources and power. They are benefited less from the promises of the Indian constitution and from Mizoram statehood. The reasons usually advanced for these differences are tradition, colonialism, the role of the Christian church, and the extent to which women have been socialized to accept their position. Radical feminist theorists stated that modern society and its constructs (law, religion, politics etc.) are the products of male dominating society and therefore, have a patriarchal character (Millett 1968). Therefore, it can be said that the economic and political empowerment of women with a view to impart knowledge and awareness of their rights is an urgent need for the overall development of Mizo women. Most importantly, to understand the present position of Mizo women in different areas one needs to study the roots of the oppression in the society. There is a great need to impart knowledge to both men and women who are in need of liberation from patriarchy and the cultural, legal and political practices that flow from patriarchy to subjugate the women of the society (Buker 2008).

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