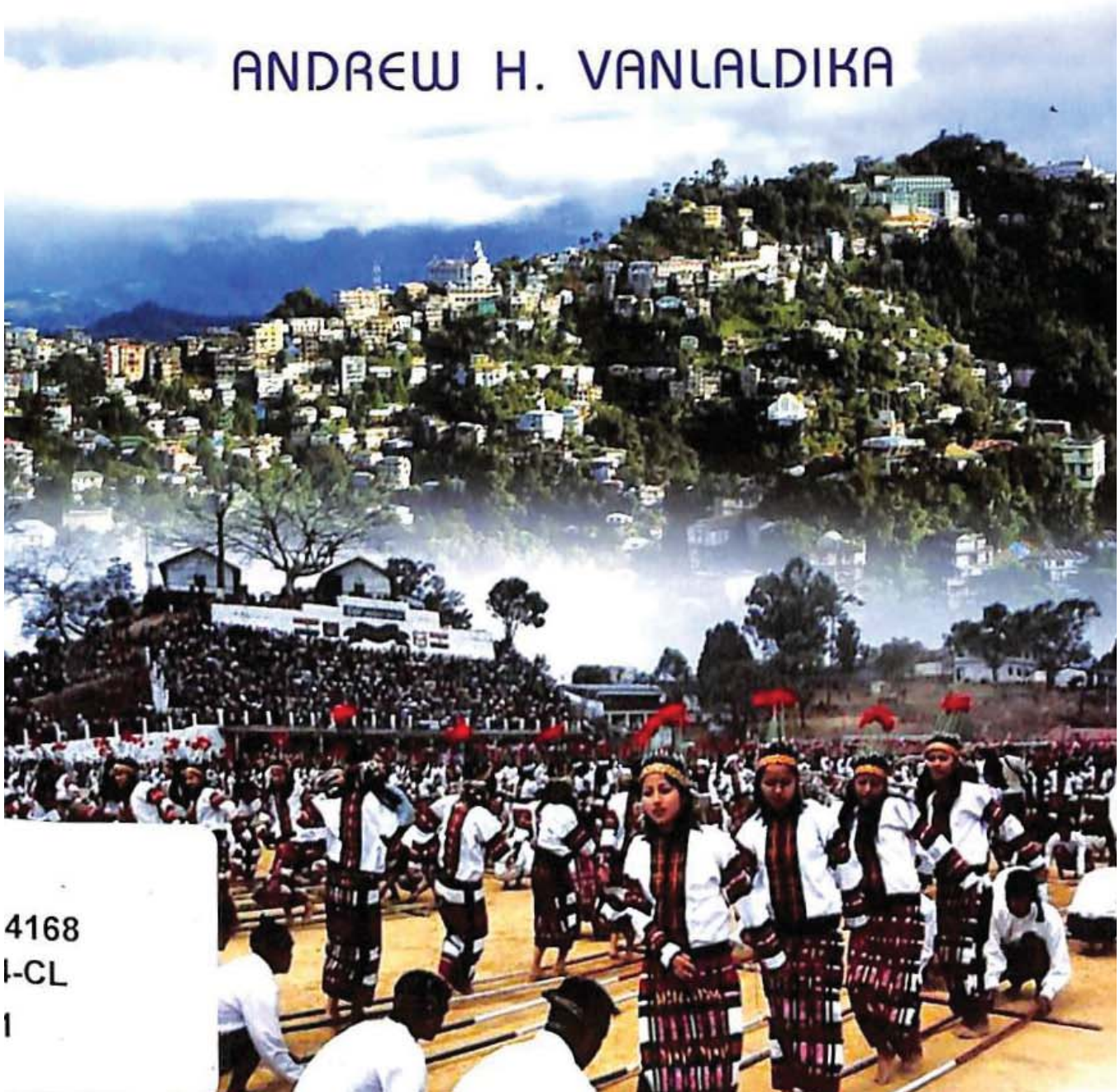


A MITTAL PUBLICATION

# SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN MIZO SOCIETY

ANDREW H. VANLALDIKA



4168

I-CL

1



Social stratification is a development through which groups and social categories in societies are ranked as higher or lower to one another. It is almost present in every society all over the world. Although social stratification is changing due to impact of modernisation, technological innovations, political empowerment etc, it exists mostly in the form of caste. A number of studies of social stratification, ranking systems and class formation among the tribes all over the world have reported absence of social differentiation in tribal societies. It is indeed a fact that there is no caste system among the tribal's including the Mizo tribes in India, yet social stratification exists in the past and in the contemporary Mizo society. In this context, the present book 'Social Stratification in Mizo Society' made an in-depth study of social differences in the context of Mizo society.

₹ 800

## ====The Author=====

**ANDREW H. VANLALDIKA** (b. 1970) completed his graduation with Honours in Sociology from St. Edmunds' College, Shillong in 1989. He obtained his MA, MPhil and PhD degrees in Sociology subject from North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, Meghalaya State. He entered to Mizoram Civil Services (MCS) in 2003 and served under Mizoram Government in various capacities likes Assistant to Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Assistant Controller of Printing & Stationeries (ACPS), Block Development Officer (BDO) and Election Officer (EO) in different places in Mizoram. Presently, he is posted as District Civil Supply Officer (DCSO), Lunglei District, Lunglei to look after public distribution system of foodstuffs and essential commodities. He is also designated as District Consumer Protection Officer (DCPO) and Member Secretary of District Consumer Protection Council. As such other duties and tasks assigned to him is to protect consumer rights to the fullest within Lunglei District. He is efficient and competent to the discharge of his duties and responsibilities with dedication and professional commitment. Besides his professional commitment he is actively involved in social activities particularly for the betterment and welfare of the people in Mizoram.

# SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN MIZO SOCIETY

ANDREW H. VANLALDIKA



**MITTAL PUBLICATIONS**  
NEW DELHI (INDIA)



## PREFACE

---

Social stratification is a notion in which groups and social categories in societies are ranked as higher or lower to one another in terms of their relative position on the scales of prestige, privileges, wealth and power. Specifically, social stratification means a system of ranked statuses by which the members of a society are placed in higher and lower positions. Certain variables such as property, income, wealth, occupation, education and ethnicity determine a basis for social ranking. It is also defined as long-standing inequalities in power, wealth and status between groups within a single society. These groups are typically separated into classes or castes, but may also extend to ethnic separation. Inequalities based on personal qualities like intelligence or kindness does not establish stratification. Placement into a social hierarchy is dependent on an individual's access to valued resources. Stratification is a system where groups are treated differently based on their social characteristics such as societal roles or *social status*. Social stratification is based on four basic principles: (1) Social stratification is a trait of society, not simply a reflection of individual differences; (2) Social stratification carries over from generation to generation; (3) Social stratification is universal but variable; (4) Social stratification involves not just inequality but beliefs as well. In modern Western societies, stratification is broadly organized into three main layers: upper class, middle class, and lower class. Each of these classes can be further subdivided into smaller classes (e.g. occupational). These categories are not particular to state-based societies as distinguished from feudal societies composed of nobility-to-peasant relations. Stratification may also be defined by kinship ties or castes. For Max Weber, social class pertaining broadly to material wealth is distinguished from status class which is based on such variables as honor, prestige and religious affiliation. Talcott Parsons argued that the forces of societal differentiation and the following pattern of



institutionalized individualization would strongly diminish the role of class (as a major stratification factor) as social evolution went along. It is debatable whether the earliest hunter-gatherer groups may be defined as 'stratified', or if such differentials began with agriculture and broad acts of exchange between groups. One of the ongoing issues in determining social stratification arises from the point that status inequalities between individuals are common, so it becomes a quantitative issue to determine how much inequality qualifies as stratification.

Parsons never claimed that universal values in and by themselves "satisfied" the functional prerequisites of a society, indeed, the constitution of society was a much more complicated codification of emerging historical factors. The so-called conflict theories, such as Marxism, point to the inaccessibility of resources and lack of social mobility found in stratified societies. Many sociological theorists have criticized the extent to which the working classes are unlikely to advance socio-economically; the wealthy tend to hold political power which they use to exploit the proletariat intergenerational. Theorists such as Ralf Dahrendorf, however, have noted the tendency toward an enlarged middle-class in modern Western societies due to the necessity of an educated workforce in technological and service economies. Various social and political perspectives concerning globalization, such as dependency theory, suggest that these effects are due to the change of workers to the third world. Social stratification exists in almost every society.

In Indian context, caste is prime example of a status group. Class, on the other hand, is based on the principle where groups are ranked on their access to wealth or their relative ability to have a control upon the wealth resources in society. Several studies of social stratification, ranking systems and class formation among the tribes all over the world have reported absence of social differentiation in tribal societies including India. It is indeed, a fact that there is no caste system among the tribal's including the Mizo tribes in India. However, there has been existence of social stratification in the past and present Mizo society. This study will be the first empirical research to enquire on social stratification amongst the Mizos. In other words, the present study is an attempt to study the existence of inequalities and the process of social stratification amongst the Mizos from a systematic sociological perspective.

The Book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is



an introductory part, which includes Land and the People: the study area, location and extent, historical, ethnological, cultural, religion, political and socio-economic background of the Mizo, the second chapter deals with the concept of social stratification: genesis and origin, features, system, dimensions and types, the third chapter deals with theoretical framework of social stratification, the fourth chapter explicates social stratification among the tribals in India, the fifth chapter describes and analyses social inequality in the traditional Mizo society, the sixth chapter highlights the emerging pattern of social stratification amongst the Mizo since the arrival of British and Christian missionaries, and after the attainment of independence right up to the present day, and the last chapter presents summary and conclusion.

The present book "Social Stratification in Mizo Society" is mainly based on my Ph.D thesis. I do hope that this study would be of a great help to future social researchers for providing insight knowledge of the concept of social stratification in general and to furnish relevant study data in respect of Mizo society in particular.

My sincere thanks are due to all comrades and colleagues who have render direct or indirect help to me in completing this book. I have gained considerably from the valuable suggestions given by them while writing this book; indeed I express my heartfelt gratitude to all of them. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to my supervisor and guide Prof. P.M. Chacko, Department of Sociology, NEHU for his persistent encouragement and valuable guidance in the course of my research work. I am also grateful to Dr. Harendra Sinha, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Government J. Buana College, Lunglei, Mizoram, who constantly motivate me to publish this work.

I am deeply obliged to Mr. K.M. Mittal of Mittal Publications, New Delhi for accepting the manuscript and bringing out this volume in a short period and graceful manner.

The entire responsibility of the form in which it has been presented and the perceptions and views articulated are mine and if there are any inadequacies and flaws I alone be responsible.

Constructive criticism and positive suggestions for further improvement will be most welcome.

Lunglei

23rd May, 2013

**ANDREW H. VANLALDIKA**

# CONTENTS

---

---

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Glossary</i>	xiii
<i>Acronyms</i>	xv
1. Introduction: Land and the People	1
2. Concept of Social Stratification	25
3. Theories of Social Stratification	51
4. Social Stratification among Tribals in India	93
5. Social Inequality in Traditional Mizo Society	107
6. Emerging Trends and Changes of Social Inequalities Since the Arrival of the British and Christian Missionaries	153
7. Summary and Conclusions	211
<i>Bibliography</i>	225
<i>Index</i>	239



# GLOSSARY

---

<i>Bawi</i>	Dependants of the Mizo Chief
<i>Bawlpu</i>	Traditional doctor of Mizo society
<i>Chichhiah</i>	Salt due payable to the chief
<i>Fathang</i>	Paddy due payable to the chief
<i>Hnatlang</i>	Rendering services for the community
<i>Jhum</i>	Slash and burn method of cultivation
<i>Khuaichhiah</i>	A honey due payable to the chief
<i>Kohhran Upa</i>	Church Elder
<i>Lakher</i>	A particular clan also known as Maras of Mizoram inhabiting the southern part and having their own dialect.
<i>Lal</i>	A Mizo chief
<i>Mizo Hmeichhe</i>	Mizo Women's Organisation
<i>Insuihkawm Pawl</i>	
<i>Mizo Hnam Dan</i>	Mizo Customary Law
<i>Pasaltha</i>	Brave and upper strata class in traditional Mizo society
<i>Pawis or Pois</i>	A particular clan known also as Lai dwelling in the south and south eastern part of Mizoram having their distinct dialect.
<i>Puithiam</i>	Village Priest
<i>Ram</i>	The chief's land
<i>Ramhual</i>	Privileged villagers who had the first choice of the jhum site thereby paying more paddy dues to the chief

*xiv / Social Stratification in Mizo Society*

<i>Sailos</i>	Ruling clan of the Lushais (tribe).
<i>Sachhiah</i>	A flesh due payable to the chief
<i>Thirdeng</i>	A village blacksmith
<i>Thirdengsa</i>	A flesh due payable to the village blacksmith
<i>Tlangau</i>	A village crier
<i>Tlawmngaihna</i>	The Mizo social and moral code by which every individual discharge his responsibility to the society
<i>Uire</i>	Unfaithfulness
<i>Upas</i>	Chief's Council of Elders
<i>Upa Pawl</i>	Elders Association
<i>Zalen</i>	Privileged villagers who were exempted from paying paddy due to the chief but have to support him in times of need.
<i>Zawlbuk</i>	Bachelor's dormitory



# ACRONYMS

---

ECM	Evangelical Church of Maraland
IKKL	Isua Krista Kohhran Lairam
LPP	Lai People's Party
LSA	Lai Students Union
MADC	Mara Autonomous District Council
MDF	Mara Democratic Front
MCPU	Mizo Common Peoples Union
MPSC	Mizoram Public Service Commission
MSU	Mara Students Union
MU	Mizo Union
NGOs	Non-Government Organisation
UMFO	United Mizo Freedom Organisation
UPC	United Pentecostal Church
YLA	Young Lai Association
YMA	Young Mizo Association

## INTRODUCTION

### Land and the People

---

Mizoram is a mountainous expanse, which became the 23rd state of the Indian Union on 20th February, 1987. It lies in the southern most corner of North-East India. It is bounded on the north by the Cachar district of Assam and the state of Manipur, on the east and south - east by Chin Hills of Myanmar and on the west by the state of Tripura and Bangladesh. Being sandwiched between Myanmar and Bangladesh its location is of strategic significance geographically and politically; and shares a total common international boundary of about 585 kilometres with these two countries. Thus about 75 per cent of its boundaries are bounded by foreign countries.

Mizoram has a total geographical area of 21,081 square kilometres. Its maximum dimensions - north to south is 285 kilometres, and east to west is 115 kilometres.<sup>1</sup> Mizoram state constitutes 0.64 per cent of the total area on India. Mizoram is geographically situated between 21' 56 N - 24' 31 N, latitudes and 92' 16 E - 93' 26 E, longitudes.<sup>2</sup> The tropic of cancer runs through the territory. This imaginary line divides the state in to two almost equal parts.

#### **Physiography**

The whole area consists of ranges of hills running north to south in parallel series, separated from one another by narrow valleys with only a very small portion lying in the plains. The hills are very steep and precipitous whereas the eastern sides are somewhat gentler. The territory, in fact, runs length-wise, length being twice the breadth. The average height of the hills and ranges are about 900 metres,



though here and there are peaks over 1,829 metres in height and the *Phawngpui* (Blue mountain), the highest peak in Mizoram rises to a height of 2,165 metres. Forests of trees and bamboo's cover most of the hills, but scars left by constant jhumming may be seen. Amidst this jungle covered of hills and narrow valleys, there are a few small plains in the state, which are believed to have formed in beds of silted up lakes. There are many rivers in Mizoram however only a few of them are worth mentioning. The rivers at different places created deep gorges, and cut across the striking ridges constituting water gaps. The northern parts of the region is drained by rivers Tlawng, Tuirial and the Tuivawl, all of them flowing northward and eventually enter into Barak river in Cachar district of Assam. The southern regions are drained by rivers Chhimtuipui (Kolodyne) on the east with its tributaries Mat, Tuichawng, Tiau; while Khawthlangtuipui (Karnaphuli) at the mount of which stands Chittagong with its tributaries Tuichawng, Kawrpui, Phairuang, Kau and De constituted or formed the western drainage system. Briefly, the drainage system of Mizoram can be classified as: Chhimtuipui drainage system, Tlawng drainage system, Tiau drainage system, Khawthlangtuipui drainage system, Tuirial drainage system, and Tuivawl drainage system.

Almost all the rivers in Mizoram are fed by monsoon rain only. Accordingly they swell rapidly during the rainy season and recede shortly after the end of the season. Thus in winter and dry season the volume of water in the rivers is very small and many rivers are almost dried up. Most of the rivers are unnavigable and greatly hinder communication and transportation of goods and services and make the construction of roads difficult and costly. Of late, an attempt has been made to harness these rivers for developing Hydro Electrical projects, which is urgently, require for domestic lightning and development of large, medium and small scale and cottage industries as well. There are only few lakes in the state. The three largest lakes are Palak dil, Tam dil and Rung dil. Palak dil situated in the southern part of Mizoram is the biggest lake in the state. Generally, most of the lakes are situated in high altitudes except Tam dil, which is about 100 kilometres from Aizawl, the capital of the state. Lakes in the state have not yet been developed for potent and effective economic purposes.

### **Vegetation : Flora and Fauna**

The sides of the hills are camouflaged with forest of bamboos and jungle. Temperature and rainfall of the state are most suitable for



bamboos, plants and trees. It has an overflowing growth of vegetation. Almost an area of 15,955 square kilometres is enveloped by vegetation, which accounts for about 75 percent of the total area of 21,081 square kilometres of the state. Its tropical location, which provides favourable climatic condition like moderate temperature, sufficient rainfall, and also the nature of soil and elevation facilitate the abundant growth of vegetation. The types of vegetation, which flourish in the state extends from Tropical trees to Sub-Tropical trees. They consist of invaluable species of timber, medicinal herbs, lumber and so on.

Thus the tropical forests of Mizoram thrive and super abound in a great and impressive variety of flora and fauna. The forests are replenished with bamboo grove and wild plantains at the lower altitudes. As the hills ascended higher the forests become dense with canes and creepers, orchids of different shapes colours-pinkish white bouhinia, sparkling clusters of rhododendrons, sun flower and various other wild flowers bestow delightful hues of the greenery of Mizoram.

However, wild animal which used to be numerous in the past are coming very scare and rare now due to various factors. Importance being the devastation and destruction of forest, which is the home of the wild life and indiscriminate killing of wild animals by hunters and trappers. Even various game birds are also becoming scanty. Fishes are also becoming very scare mainly due to using of explosive materials and poisons for fishing purpose. Consequently, wild life, game birds and fishes of almost all kinds and varieties has been sadly depleted and exhausted in the state. Of late effort have been make to check this indiscriminate killing of wild life by different NGOs backed by the state government.

### **Climate**

Generally Mizoram has a pleasant climate throughout the year. This is mainly owing to its tropical location. It is neither very hot in the summer nor very cold in the winter as tropic of cancer runs across the territory in the middle. During winter the temperature varies from 11' C to 21' C and in the summer it varies between 20' C to 29' C. The whole area is under the direct influence of the southwest monsoon. As a result the area receives an adequate volume of rainfall. It rains heavily from May to September and the average rainfall is 245 centimeter per annum. The climate is humid tropical, attributed by long summer with heavy rainfall and short winter. Winter in the state is rain free and is quite charming and pleasant. The skies are



wonderfully blue and in the morning the mist formed between the hills gives an enchanting view of wide stretches of a vast lake of cloud. It has extravagant natural beauty and an endless array of landscape and it is rich in fauna and flora. Almost all types of tropical trees, plants thrive in Mizoram. The hills are amazingly green, and the climate on the hilltop is much better and healthier than in the valleys which are more humid and hot.

Depending on the diversification in temperature and general weather conditions, three different types of seasons are observed in the state, such as (i) the cold or winter season, which starts from November and lasts till February; (ii) the warm season or spring, which begins from March and lasts till first part of May; and merges with rainy season. (iii) The rainy season or summer, which starts from second part of May till late October, it is the longest season in the state and continues for nearly six months.<sup>3</sup>

### **Economy**

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Mizo people. They practiced agriculture for their livelihood since the first settlement of the region, as agriculture is the predominant method of livelihood of the earlier settlers. However, the Mizo way of cultivating land is very primitive and wasteful. They practiced what is known as Jhum Cultivation — a slash and burn method of cultivation. Generally, a proper plot on the slope of the hills was selected; and is cleared off all its vegetation. Land enveloped with bamboo trees were regarded most suitable as bamboo ash contained a good quality of fertilizer. When cutting and felling was completed they were left to dry, and the dry leaves and tree trunks were burnt usually in March or April. Over the ashes of these forests seeds of different varieties such as Rice, Maize, Cucumber, etc., were sown. For the next year cultivation, they again shift to the other sites of the ridges, cutting and felling down the forests and burning and drying them again. In this way, they shift their cultivation sites every year. In some cases it may necessitate shifting of their village sites too. Hence one can say that there are no permanent sites for cultivation and there is no permanent ownership of land. Lalrimawia observed that: "This practice of cultivation ..... made the Lushais a migrating tribe. They shifted from one village site to another at regular intervals".<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, enlightened agricultural approach at presents attempts to do away with the old method of slash and burn shifting cultivation. The state government has taken an awareness campaign among the cultivators of the wasteful and an unscientific method of



shifting cultivation. The permanent system of cultivation is being encouraged and practiced. Consequently, the traditional crude form of jhumming is gradually giving way to modern pattern of production, permanent and terrace cultivation.

Paddy and Maize are the main food crops. They are grown on the elevated slope of the ridges. Mainly the chief constraints in developing and increasing agricultural productions in the state are the lacks of marketing, transport and irrigational facilities. Various schemes are made to grow plantation crops like coffee, tea and rubber. There is major Industry worth mentioning in Mizoram. Handloom and handicraft are the major industrial activities in the state.

### **People**

The word Mizo is a generic term, which literally refers to 'hill-man' or 'highlander'. The Mizos are a myriad and diverse family of tribe intimately binds together by common tradition, culture, custom, belief and practices, language and mode of living. They are a distinct unit culturally, ethnologically and linguistically. They are enthusiastic and committed people inclined on sustaining and safeguarding their customs, values and identity. The Mizo society is composed of various tribes and further these are divided into sub-tribe and clan. Following are the predominant sub-tribe of the Mizos - Lusei, Lai, Ralte, Hmar, Mara and Paite. Again these tribes are sub-divided into clans and sub-clans. The Lusei, Ralte, Hmar and Paite occupy the northern and the middle parts of the region constituting the majority of the population, whereas the Lai and Mara inhabit the southern corner of the territory, and comprising the bulk of the population.

### **Origin**

As they possessed no written historical records the origin of the Mizo is shaded in obscurity, and it is baffling to describe the exact origin of the Mizo accurately. Because of this, every postulation and conclusion drawn regarding the origin of the Mizos may not be specific and definite. Nevertheless, various hypothesis and explication has been put forward by different writers. Prasad observed "The history of the origin and coming of the Mizos to their present habitat is shrouded in mystery. No systematic research has been made so far. There is no authentic record about the history of the Mizo people before the 17th century. From whatever record that is available, it is accepted that Mizos are of Mongoloid stock and are believed to have immigrated into their present habitat, possibly sometime between 1400 and 1700 or 1800 A.D. from the upper Burma. But no scientific study as to



how, when, why and from where the Mizos came to this isolated landlocked hilly terrain called Mizoram, has ever been conducted".<sup>5</sup> To quote Sangkima's words: "A close affinity of the Mizos with the hill tribes of Southern China in language, mode of living and culture leads us to believe that they come from a common place and had common ancestors. It is possible that while the Mizos were in southern China, they came in contact with other hill tribes and as a result there were mutual borrowings of language and culture. It is more likely that like other non-Chinese tribes of Southern China, the Mizos too, moved down to the south due possibly to the pressures of the Chinese. So all evidences go to support that the Mizos had come from the east, and probably Southern China.... Therefore, the Southern part of China.... may be considered as the original home of the Mizos".<sup>6</sup>

According to Zawla's perception the Mizos were settled in the Chin Hills in Myanmar from 1400 to 1700 A.D. and their successive operations of migration started between 1700 to 1740 A.D.<sup>7</sup> Liangkhaia maintains that the first extensive migration of the Mizos began from the Chin-Hills by criss-crossing over ranges of hills bordering south-west Manipur. The different tribes of the Mizos arrived at the present Mizoram in successive groups.<sup>8</sup> Regarding the period of the Mizos migration from the Chin Hills to the present Mizoram, Soppit speculates that the first bands of the Mizos after crossing river Tiau dwelled in Mizoram approximately in the middle of the 16th century.<sup>9</sup>

However, the Mizos claims that traditionally they have originated or come from *Chhinlong*,<sup>10</sup> - a mythical rock which was believed to be located in yanmar, and they moved down to the present habitat— i.e., Mizoram from this Chhinlung. Thus all the Mizo holds that Chhinlung have been their original home and believed that all the clans of the Mizos are emerged from this very Chhinlung. This is supported by the 'traditional songs, in numerical poems and legends' about the story of Chhinlung civilization, handed down from generation to generation. As indicated by one of the songs, the Mizos were most likely pushed out of the Chhinlung cave by more powerful and innumerable people.<sup>11</sup>

Sangkima argues that in the modern scientific age such statement is hard to believe, as fact and it may be absurd to accept that man can come out of a hole. Nevertheless contemporary historical writings and other recent works on the Mizo produced some clues on this claim.... Certain writers believed that they



abandon Chhinlung because of their inability to check and defeat their enemies.<sup>12</sup> Nunthara contents that "All the writers on the subject and the traditional history of the Mizos verbally handed down through several decades agree that the term '*Chhinlung*', whether a place or a persons name, originated from China and that the Mizos and all the related tribes claim to have originated from this. From this account, even though a conjectural one, we can surmise that the original home of the Mizos is to be somewhere in the east".<sup>13</sup>

Generally, all the writers on Mizo history commonly accepted that the Mizo are of Mongoloid stock belonging to the Tibeto — Burmese-speaking groups. In other words, the anthropological manifestation of the Mizo being Mongoloid stock in origin has been supported by almost all the writers of the history of the Mizos. Nevertheless, the process, pattern and date of their migration from the east to the present habitat is not clearly definite due to lack of any written recorded history of their pasts. But it is explicit that their movements are in the direction of southward. Accordingly one may argue that the Mizos are migrated from Myanmar for certain reasons. Pressure and coercion of the stronger tribes, specifically of the Chins tribe and their inability to repulse their enemies. Consequently, this compelled them to lead a nomadic life for several years before they finally came to the present Mizoram. And the pressure of over-population and the declining size and extent of jhuming land under their command could not sustain them any longer. This forced them to move in further westwards to search better area to cultivate and inhabit. Eventually, they came to present Mizoram, Manipur, North Cachar Hills of Assam, Chittagong Hill tracks in Bangladesh and Chin Hills in Myanmar. Hence there are many Mizo who are presently scattered in some states of India and Myanmar and Bangladesh across foreign countries. Even though they are under different political administration, the area Mizo not only in Mizoram state, but also in other places like Tripura, North Cachar Hill, Manipur, Chittagong Hill tracks in Bangladesh and Hills in Myanmar.

### **Social Organisation**

The traditional social unit of the Mizo was the village; around it revolved the lifecycle of the Mizo. Usually in early days, villages were constructed on top of the hill and encircled within strong fortification and there numbers were more or less small. Strong stokes was necessary due to the persistent wars and feuds with other villages. The villages were generally far apart from each other. Each village



was self-determining, self-governing, self-contained and had to be self-sufficient.<sup>14</sup> Within its territory the village would select afresh hill slope every year for cultivation. This would be distributed out between all the families in the village and usually the same hillside would not be cultivated for some years. The neighbouring territory would be exhausted before then and that necessitate the entire village to migrate to another place. This connotes the semi-nomadic life to which the Mizos were acquainted and very well adapted. This independent and self-determining village system generally worked well and guaranteed the limited requisites of its primitive community. This semi-nomadic life on the other hand did not favour a large and complex society, and the construction of large houses. The largest dwellings or buildings in the village were the village chief's house and the bachelor's dormitory called *Zawlbuk* prominently located at the central place; whilst the other houses in the village were built according to convenience and suitability. While observing the social system of traditional Mizo society Nunthara comments that "The traditional social organization of the Mizo centered around the village...the village was almost the social world of the Mizos, sufficient in almost all respects, each village having a particular structural existence different from other villages while at the same time retaining a general uniform cultural pattern that was common throughout the hills.... While the village maintained its physical independence, it did not have any independent social existence of its own".<sup>15</sup>

In a way the most important and significant place of the village was the *Zawlbuk* where all the young bachelors of the village gathered and slept at night. *Zawlbuk* was the training ground and indeed, the crucible wherein the Mizo youth was drilled and shaped into a responsible member of the society. In fact the *Zawlbuk* is the centre of the village life, and is the most effective and productive institution of the traditional Mizo society. The younger generations are under discipline in the same way as in the boarding house in modern public school; the young men use it as a club and a dormitory; travellers can put up in it for the night; and the chief avails it as a meeting place where he can announce his decisions and orders. In fact *Zawlbuk* is used as a meeting place and all-important decisions concerning the village well-being was taken up, and disseminated to all the members of the village. As all the young men are gathered there, they are always available and ready for unexpected emergency or for any kind of urgent work. Discipline is strictly imposed and no interference and opposition from outside is not permitted and hardly tolerated.



The Mizo are a gregarious lot and form a close-knit homogeneous society. They are simple, humble, straightforward, trustworthy, honest, virtuous, vigorous and gutsy. In the words of Lloyd "the kind of life they traditionally lived had given them self-reliance. They had to fend for themselves, for their own village, and nobody owed them a living. They fostered basic skills and simple virtues. Honesty, courage, self-discipline, mutual help, a readiness to organize and to be organized were all highly appreciated and in fact were largely summed up in the untranslatable word "tlawmngaihna". This virtue was-and-is — highly prized, and has certain elements in common with courtesy and chivalry.<sup>16</sup>

In fact the Mizo code of conduct or ethnics revolve round this *tlawmngaihna* an untranslatable term, meaning on the part of every one to be hospital, kind, unselfish, courteous, zealous, generous, industrious, courageous and helpful to others. To condense the term *tlawmngaihna* refers to all inner good qualities of life. *tlawmngaihna* to a Mizo epitomizes for that compelling moral force which realises expression in self-sacrifice for the service of others. It is the case of their philosophy of life; in war or peace, in dealing with other individuals or in day-to-day public life, it was this spirit of *tlawmngaihna*, which influenced and guided their thoughts and actions. Thus it is explicitly clear that *tlawmngaihna* encompassed and "embraces various types of activities and manifest itself in various forms which may be summed up as 'group over self' wherein self-sacrifice for the needs of others is the spontaneous outcome. A man who practices the precepts of *tlawmngaihna* is highly respected".<sup>17</sup>

In traditional Mizo society some practical principles of self-help and co-operation have been resolved for the fulfilment of social obligations, duties and responsibilities. Construction of village chief's house and Zawlbuk, construction of water points, preparation of paths leading to their jhum cultivation and so on are accomplished through voluntary works called *hnatlang*. Under this *hnatlang* system each and every member of the village are required or expected to contribute labour for the good and welfare of the community as a whole. The same spirit of *hnatlang* interjected with *tlawmngaihna* enjoined the villagers to participate and render all possible helps and assistance whenever there is an occasion of community feast, marriage or death and unexpected emergency in the village.

### **Traditional Religion**

Like many other primitive tribes, the Mizos were animists. According



to their old religious tenets the Mizo believe in one omnipotent, omnipresent and supreme being called *Pathian* who is the creator of the universe and everything, the overlord of man and also a benevolent being. Being a benevolent and good God, he never harms human beings. Accordingly, sacrifices were made to him, not to appease but to invoke blessings, grace and favour from him. They also believe in the presence or existence of other supernatural beings that are thinking of as good spirits. They never cause ill and misfortune, rather they delivers good lucks, successes, fortunes and prosperity's to them. They conjecture that these good spirits either dwelled in heaven or underneath the earth. The good spirits were specified and bestowed different names according to their correlation with human beings. The most prominent among them are *Lasi* a beautiful maidens, who are believe to have complete control over the animals.

Besides these, they also believed in the existence of evil spirits or demons known as *Ramhuai*, who they assumed to inhabit the streams, big trees, hills, cave and big rocks. The *Ramhuai* are considered as bad spirits and was malevolent being in nature. They believed that this evil spirits are *Ramhuai* are responsible for all the misfortunes and ills in this world. These malevolent spirits frequently creates an array of difficulties and dilemmas to man in various ways. Hence, they have to be propitiated in order to escape from their evil influences. According to them without an appropriate rite to placate these evil spirits or *Ramhuai*, there can be no escaped from their evil afflictions.

It was to appease these evil spirits that offerings and sacrifices were often made whenever someone fell ill or was haunted by misfortune. In short, the evil spirits or *Ramhuai* have to be propitiated for good health, good harvest and general well being of the whole community. These offerings and sacrifices were carried out according to a specific type of illness. The village priest known as *Puithiam* was presuming to know which kind of evil spirit was responsible for a certain illness and how to placate him. Certain sacrifices and offerings to be made were laid down and performed by the priest or *Puithiam* according to their traditional rites. Liangkhaia comment thus: "the religion of the Mizo had it origin in the consciousness of their need for deliverance from physical illness and from other misfortunes which they attributed to evil spirits"<sup>18</sup>

The early Mizo believed in the existence of other worlds wherein all the spirits of the dead lived. They postulate that there are two abodes of the dead viz., *Pialrai* and *Mitthikhua*. There is a distinction

between the two. *Pialral*, according to them was much superior place wherein the souls of the privileged men would go there; *Mitthikhua*, on the other hand, was much inferior than *Pialral*, wherein the souls of the unprivileged would go there. They believed that the soul, after death would either proceeds to *Pialral* or *Mitthikhua*. Those who are admitted to the *Pialral* or Paradise are supposed to live in perpetual bliss, and are freely fed with husked and clean rice. They speculate that in *Pialral* all the good and precious things are available in abundance; and those who arrive and attain the realm of the *Pialral* live and enjoy eternal happiness without having to labour any supplementary and unaware of the world they left behind. The *Thangchhuah*<sup>19</sup> people who had hunted and killed a number of specific animals and had given a number of community feasts according to their social custom will go to *Pialral* where they live in luxury, comfort and eternal happiness. Sangkima argue thus, "The most pleasant place for a dead man's soul was called.... *Pialral*. Here there was no need to work. The soul could enjoy anything as it did on earth and obtained food and drink without any labour. Everything was provided here. The soul lived a completely free life; it no longer suffered from hardships and pains. In this abode only *thangchhuah* persons and their families would go with all their glories. They located *Pialral* to be situated beyond lower *Pialral*. They believed that even in *Pialral*, though they did not work, they ate, drank, slept but no longer desired for something, eternal happiness smiled upon them."<sup>20</sup> Those common people who could not performed certain sacrifices like *thangchhuah* will go to *Mitthikhua* (or dead men's village or the hade) which is a much inferior world where life is more troublesome, and difficult than in the world of the living. Everything in *Mitthikhua* was unreal and artificial; it was merely a duplication of what they have in life on this world. In actuality they were condemned to remain here in *Mitthikhua* eternally.

According to traditional Mizo belief, the souls of the dead are supposed to pass through *Rihdil* (lake) which was now located in Myanmar. Nevertheless, the soul once again returns and hence hovers around nearby his home or native village for about two or three months. Therefore, it is customary that, when the bereaved family sits together for their daily meal, to retain one seat vacant or to put aside a certain quantity of cooked rice and curry and place them adjacent the main door of the house for the spirit of the departed family member. After the lapse of three months the bereaved family carries out *thitin* rice which means sending of the dead, to



bid adieu to the spirit of the departed one. Until and unless this was performed, no member of the family can be participated to any kind of functions and ceremonies organised by their fellow villagers. Immediately after the completion of the thitin performance, the spirit of the dead recognising that his family no longer wants him would journey or move weeping towards either Pialral or Mitthikhua. In this way the dead men's soul depart this world for good, and the performance of Mitthi thlaichhiah offered by the bereaved family was no longer required.

In its course of journey, the spirit had to go through different phases. After passing through *Rihdil* it first arrived at a lovely and pleasant place called Hringlang tlang, from where the world of the living can be observed. As he glances back from the top of the hill, with an extreme longing it again weeping and his space slow down. With heavy heart he forwarded further, but he become happy spontaneously when it reached one spot where beautiful flowers blossomed; and he was made to wear behind his ears the 'hawilopar', then the spirit lost all desire to look back and altogether forgot all about the green world he left behind. Finally, he reached the stream known as Lunglohtui. After drinking water from this stream the spirit forgot and frittered away all reminiscence of the past. At once the spirit was filled with a passion to arrive at the *Pialral* or *Mitthikhua*.

However the journeys do not ceased there. The spirit had to encounter one more unavoidable appalling and fearful experience. In one place there live an immortal Pu Pawla and his wife Sainui, on the entrance or the gateway of whose dwelling all tracts to the village of the dead coverage. There remain Pu Pawla and shot at each every spirit as they passed by, except those spirits of certain persons like *Thangchhuah nupa* (couples) and Hlamzuih who are accredited to enter Pialral directly and straightaway. Those spirits whom Pu Pawla shot at with his bow are not entitled to enter Pialral rather they are fated to live in Mitthikhua.

Nevertheless, since the advent of Christianity in Mizoram in 1894 almost all the Mizo embraced the Christian faith zealously; and the traditional religious beliefs analysed above have become more or less obsolete and outmoded now.

### **Political System**

The Constitution of Chieftainship was an essential constituent of the Mizo political life. In fact it was deeply rooted in the traditional society



of the Mizo, Regarding the origin and genesis of the institution of chieftainship, it is postulated that in the beginning, the privilege to govern over the people was possessed by those persons who enjoyed the power and capability to command a certain group of individuals and to repulse any onslaught by their enemies and foes. Accordingly the institution of chieftainship evolved in the physical prowess intrinsic quality and intellectual calibre of an individual. It is, thus apparent that those persons who had the capability and flair to gather and organise a competent army become a chief.

At the outset the chieftainship among the Mizo was a natural evolution but however in passage of time it became hereditary. Among the Lusei tribe, the right of inheritance was preserved to the youngest son, whereas among the Lai tribe, it is reserved to the eldest son.

Its own independent chief in accordance with the customary laws of their tradition ruled each village. As regards the power, privilege and status of the Mizo chief, he had enjoyed wide and comprehensive powers and considerable amount of privileges in administering and superintending the day-to-day affairs of the village. He was the supreme administrative head whose order was law within the jurisdiction of his territory. In other wards, he was the real centre of authority in the village governance.

The chief's status in the village was certainly that of a benevolent one. All the villagers were considered as his children and were liable to help them in their hard times, advice them in their dilemmas, reward them in their accomplishments, and also punish them when they were convicted because of offending and infringing the established customs and practices. Indeed, he was the guardian and custodian of his subjects, commander and protector in times of raided by the enemy. Moreover, he was the provider of foodstuffs in times of scarcity. His house was a refuge for the poor and the needy.

Theoretically the chief was supreme authority and an overlord in his village. In fact his power and hegemony was unlimited within the jurisdiction of his territory. However, the chief was not an autocrat, and indeed, could not afford to be so, if he aspired to maintain his chiefship as they could depart him and take refuge under another chief, if they perceived him as autocratic and tyrannical. Hence the wise chief was absolutely aware of this constraint and very careful and alert in discharging his powers and functions in the



administration of the village. Therefore, the authority and de facto command and control of the chief considerably rest on the personal trait and quality of the incumbent.

As a mark of respect the village chief was accredited to some special privileges. The villagers are obligated to render certain labours for the chief and to pay him some particular taxes or dues. The villagers free of cost constructed the chief house. However, as a token of appreciation it was customary for the chief to make a feast for the villagers. If the chief undertook a journey, some of the elders have to escort him and carried all his belongings. Whenever, the chief and his elders adjudicated a case of discards, they were to acquire fee known as Salam. As a rule, the party losing the case had to pay Salam, equivalent to Rupees five to the chief and his elders who normally consumed the same on feast.

The village chief was entitled to the following dues from his subjects villagers: Fathang or a paddy tax, equivalent to about three mounds of rice; Sachhiah or flesh tax; and Chichhiah or salt tax. He also had exclusive right over Bee nest within his territory and no one can abstract honey or wax without prior permission of the chief.

### **Village Official**

The chief had a number of officials to aid and advice him in the exercise and discharge of his powers and functions. In fact, he personally appoints all the village officials, and he alone had the sole right to dismiss them according to his whim and fancies. Following are some of the important officials of the village; (i) *Upas* (or Council of elders): They were the highest official and the main administrative adjutant or assistants to the chief in the village. (ii) The *Tlangau* (or Village crier): The main duty of the Tlangau was to proclaim chief's order concerning the welfare of the village. (iii) The *Thirdeng* (or the Village blacksmith): The chief duty of the Thirdeng was to make and repair the tools and implements of the villagers and as a remuneration received a basket of paddy from each house in the village. (iv) The *Puithiam* (or the Village Priest): One of the most prominent officials in the village, the Puithiam performed various sacrifices either to Pathian or Ramhuai in accordance with their traditional rites. There are two kinds of Puithiam viz., Bawlpu, a priest who supervised in times of illness and offered sacrificed to the Ramhuai who was believed to caused such illness; and Sadawt, a priest who presided during festivals like Khuangchawi, Sechhun, and so on. Without Sadawt no religious sacrifice, particularly sacrifice offered to Pathian can be



performed. (v) The *Ramhual* (or Expert Jhum-cultivators): They are the people who gave advice where jhum should be cut each year and are authorized first choice of sites for cultivation. (vi) The *Khawchhiar* (or Village writer): The creation of the British the *Khawchhiar* played an important role in village administration. He acts as link between the chief and government superintendent. His main functions and duties was to keep records, maintain vital statistics, registration village houses, list of all guns and specified people in the village to be called for coolies work. As a reward he was exempted from house tax and coolies work. (vii) The *Zalen*: they were men of dependency and were exempted from remitting fathang tax to the village chief. However, they were bound to help the chief whenever he was shortage of paddy or in times of difficulties. They had the privilege to choice cultivating lands after the Ramhuals.

The village chief, thus with the help and advice of the village officials usually run the village administration in accordance with traditional customs and practices. After the coming of the British, this system of administration was more or less continued as they (British raj) thought it fit and convenient to carry out their administration smoothly in Mizoram.

Since the advent of Britishers in Mizo hills a number of studies are conducted on the Mizos. Nevertheless, an in depth analysis of the studies on the Mizo society reveal that almost all of them are biased towards ethnography of the Mizos. They hardly go beyond the ethnographical details. Most of the studies are devoted to descriptive paradigm rather than explicit analysis and explication of the Mizo society. Moreover, recent research on the Mizo society simply followed the conventional models of earlier writings rather than exploring systematic analysis and expositions of the Mizo society. They hardly go beyond the ethnographical details. Most of the studies are devoted to descriptive paradigm rather than exploring systematic analysis and expositions of the Mizo society. They believe that Mizo society is small and homogeneous and there is no distinction on grounds of sex, kinship, clans, politico-economic, power and prestige. The Mizo emphasise common conscience and group solidarity and do not much give importance to individualism. Hence, Mizo society is characterised by social equality rather than social inequality. However, this postulation of Mizo egalitarianism is a delusion.

The present study 'Social Stratification in Mizo Society' is an attempt to highlight the fact that ranked differentiation or inequality



has been characteristic attributes of the Mizos. In fact, no detailed study has so far been taken up on this subject. It is felt therefore that an enquiry on social stratification will be of crucial significance for the understanding of the past and of the changing nature of the Mizo society. This study will be the first empirical research on social stratification amongst the Mizos. In other words, the present study is an attempt to study the existence of inequalities and the process of social stratification amongst the Mizos from a systematic sociological perspective. It tries to explore, examine, and to analyse the genesis, cause, development, dimensions, impact and changing pattern of social stratification system in order to understand and expound a true nature and depiction of social stratification in Mizo society.

### **Review of Literature**

The subject of social stratification had a long historic background tracing back its genesis to 18th century. It was explicit from their intellectual scribbling that 18th century scholars unequivocally perceived social inequality tantamount to natural inequality. In fact one can trace the study of inequality to Greek philosophers — Plato and Aristotle. Plato visualised a society departmentalised into classes in which an individual's status, role and position was determined by his natural capabilities. Aristotle also presumed that men were by nature unequal and there was a natural ranked-order amongst them. His main concern was inequality in birth, strength, beauty etc., which are definitely the attributes of natural inequality. Other scholars like St. Thomas, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Meiners and Diderot conceptualised inequality typically based on natural inequality rather than social inequality. An in depth study of their intellectual concepts revealed that they were expressing to natural inequality instead of social inequality. Accordingly they postulated that there was a logistics concurrence between natural inequality and social inequality.

Nevertheless, the first sociological explication of the origin of social inequality was advanced by J.J. Rousseau. He argued that the concepts of both natural inequality and social inequality were distinct and espoused that social inequality justified and legitimised natural distinctions amongst the individuals in society. To him inequality was not natural but socially defined. He predicated that the genesis of social inequality lied in the growth and development of private property. It was the excrescence of individual property ownership, which engendered the accumulation of private wealth

that finally gave rise to the emergence of class differentiation in the society. He maintained that natural inequality merely rendered a logistics basis to the constitution of and endurances to social inequality. Rousseau conjectured that naturally based inequalities between individuals were trivial and comparatively insignificant whilst socially devised inequalities furnished the vital basis for systems of social stratification in society.

This thesis of Rousseau was so compelling that it was accepted and supported by a large number of social thinkers belonging to 18th and 19th centuries and remained unchallenged for a long time. Scholars like James Millers in *The Origin and Ranks* (1771), A. Ferguson in *History of Civil Society* (1783), L. Von Stein in *Origin of Social Differences* (1851), Karl Marx in *Theory of Class Formation* (1870) and Friedrich Engels in *Marriage, Family, Private Property and State* (1882) partly or fully endorsed to the perspective of Rousseau.

Nineteenth century social thinkers specifically Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Max Weber (1864-1920) assumed that the study of inequality was essentially the study of class. Nonetheless both of them hypothesised two distinct theoretical paradigms to expound social inequality in society. Marx argued that inequality amongst the individuals in the society did not rest upon biological premise. Rather social inequality was created and justified by society itself. He advocated that economic base generated social inequality and the formation of class system in the society. To him social inequality was identical to economic inequality. Accordingly the study of class was synonymous to the study of social inequality. Marx's perception was generally regarded as monodimensional approach to social stratification.

Though Weber acquiesces with Marx's ideas on the crucial significance of the economic facets of stratification nonetheless he expostulated that class was not the only means of social stratification. He added two other dimensions – status and party as a means of social inequality. Thus he evinced that class, status and party were the three ideal forms of social stratification existent in every society. For him these three forms are distinct analytical categories. Accordingly Weber's view was considered as multidimensional approach to the study of social stratification.

The central ideas of both Marx and Weber on the concepts of class, status and party have had a far-reaching and significant impact on the contemporary study, analysis and insight of social stratification.



Twentieth century scholars like Andre Beteille, Ralph Dahrendorf and Victor Turner maintained that though social stratification, social inequality and class are interconnected nonetheless the concepts are inherently different as per their applicability to societies are concerned. Andre Beteille considered that social stratification was a particular form of social inequality. Ralph Dahrendorf advocated that social inequality emanated from power distinctions amongst the people. Both of them assumed that the study of social stratification was a specific branch of sociological spheres pertained to the study of a given form of social inequality.

The protagonists of conflict approach to the study of social stratification such as Karl Marx, Ralph Dahrendorf, G.E. Lenski and C. Wright Mills postulated that social inequality emerged in the society due to the monopolistic control over the means of production, goods and services by minority class in the society. However their way of interpretations was not uniform. To Marx *economic inequality* was the crux of social stratification whereas Dahrendorf, Mills and Lenski perceived power inequality as the core basis of social inequality.

The proponents of functional approach of social stratification like Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore and W. Lloyd Warner advocated that social stratification stems out of the requisite of the society rather than the needs of an individuals. They considered social stratification as a functional necessity of the society. Parsons (1902-1979) viewed social stratification as ineluctable and functional for any society. To him stratification system was a generalised facet of the structure of society and thus was governed or directed by its value system. He asserted that social stratification system was just, fair, rational, ethical, ideal and legitimate since they are basically an expression of shared values. On the other hand Davis and Moore considered system of stratification as a mechanism through which different positions are allocated by the society.

The literature of system of stratification had been greatly influenced or affected by Marxian, Weberian and Functional approaches. In fact almost all of the contemporary studies on system of stratification heavily relied upon any of these three approaches in understanding the empirical reality of social inequality.

At the outset, almost all the Indian sociologists and social anthropologists are deeply influenced by Marxian, Weberian and Functional approaches to the study of stratification system. The



earlier studies on stratification system in India society are invariably on the lines of either this three approaches. Literature on social stratification indicated that the structural-functional theory predominated in the 1950s, Structuralism and Marxism in the 1960s, nevertheless in the 1970s both Marxist and Non-Marxist had been accepted historical perspective as their studies of stratification system.

Yogendra Singh in his book *Sociology of Social Stratification in India-II* (1981) divulged the sociology of knowledge framework for studying social stratification in India. He noted four theoretical methods which concerned study of stratification system in Indian society, (i) structural- functional, (ii) structuralist, (iii) structural-historical, and (iv) historical materialist or Marxist. Most of the early studies on caste stratification viz., H.H. Risley's *Tribes and Castes of Bengal Ethnographic Glossary* (1891), G.S. Ghurye's *Caste and Race in India* (1932), J.H. Hutton's *Caste in India: Its nature, function and origin* (1961) etc., are relied on structural- functional approach. The work of Louis Dumont *Homo-Hierarchicus* (1970) was the classic explication of structuralist perspective on social structure. He considered caste as an institution of social stratification. F.G. Bailey in his book *Closed Social Stratification in India* (1963) regarded caste as a system of closed organic stratification. The Marxian orientation was espoused by a large number of scholars like D.P. Mukherji in his book *Diversities* (1958), A.R. Desai in his *Social background of Indian Nationalism* (1959), V.I. Pavlov in his *The Indian Capitalist Class* (1964), Charles Bettelheim in his *India Independent* (1968), Kathleen Gough in her article "Modes of Production in Southern India" (1980), Gail Omvedt in *Land, Caste and Politics in India* (ed) (1982) and R.P. Dutta in his *India Today* (1986). In his book *The Agrarian Prospects* (1981) Daniel Thorner applied the historical-dialectical approach to the study of class stratification. He furnished a threefold classification of rural populace – Malik (landlord), Kisan (peasant) and Mazdoor (agriculture workers)

Andre Beteille had applied Weber's Trinitarian model of social stratification in his book *Caste, Class and power* (1966). He stated that the hierarchies of caste, class and power overlap to some extent, yet also cut across. P.C. Aggarwal's *Caste, Religion and Power* (1971) and Anil Bhatt's *Caste, Class and Politics* (1975) are also considered as adopting Weberian paradigm of social stratification.



Structural-functional-Positivistic approach has been applied by Victor S. D'Souza to the study of system of stratification in his works *Social structure of planned City, Chandigarh* (1968) and "Caste and Class: A reinterpretation" (1967). In Rajni Kothari's *Politics in India* (1970) rudimentary references of structural functionalism was existent.

Structural-historical approach had been taken up by M.S.A. Roa in his book *Social movements and Transformation* (1979), P.N. Mukherji's "Social movement and social change: Towards a conceptual clarification and theoretical framework" (1977), K.L. Sharma's "Caste and class in India: some conceptual problems" (1982) and Satish Saberwal's "Sociologists and inequality in India: The historical context" (1979). This approach underlined the factor of time and the effects, which the economic, political and ideological forces had upon caste and class.

K.L. Sharma in his work *The changing Rural Stratification System* (1974) classified the studies on system of stratification in India into two distinct orders: (i) the studies on caste stratification and, (ii) the multidimensional studies. The first studies converged on caste as the exclusive institution of social ranking. This studies was taken up by Max Weber, A.L. Kroeber, Gunnar Myrdal, J.H. Hutton, A.M. Hocart, Louis Dumont, G.S. Ghurye, E.R. Leach, F.G. Bailey, MacKim Marriot, M.N. Srinivas and S.C. Dube. The second studies did not regarded caste as an all-inclusive basis of social stratification. Its emphasised that style of life, education, occupation and economic position are computed for determining a person's rank in his community or caste. Andre Beteille's analysis of Caste, Class and Power (1966), Anil Bhatt's study of Caste, Class and Politics (1975) and P.C. Aggarwal critique of Caste, Religion and Power (1971) endorsed the multidimensional facets of social stratification.

The sociology of social stratification in India coalesced with the study of tribal social stratification. Important works on tribal social stratification are K.L. Sharma's "A Trend on Social Stratification and Class Formation Among Tribes in Middle India" (1992), *Social Stratification and Mobility* (1997) and *The Changing Rural stratification system* (1974), P.K. Bose's "Stratification Among Tribals of Gujarat" (1981) and *Classes and Class Relations Among Tribes of Bengal* (1985), N.K. Bose's *Tribal Life in India* (1971), Surrajit Sinha's "Transformation of Tribal Society in Modern India" (1973), R.K. Prasad's "Some Aspects of Stratification and Interaction among



the Parahiya of Palamau" (1975), Ghanshyam Shah's "Tribal Identity or Class Differentiation: A Case Study of Chaudhri Tribe" and Economic Differentiations and Tribal Identity (1984) and "Stratification Among the Schedules in the Bharuch and Panch Mahais Districts of Gujarat" (1986), R.K. Bhadra and S.R. Mondal (ed)'s Stratification, Hierarchy and Ethnicity in North – East India (1991), S.L. Doshi's "Ethnicity and Class among the Bhils of Rajasthan (1992), Adityendra Roa's Tribal social stratification and S.L. Sharma's Ethnicity and Stratification Among Tribals in Urban Setting (1996).

Since the advent of Britishers in Mizo hills a number of studies are conducted on the Mizo. At the outset the studies are carried out by English writers who came to Mizo hills as an administrators; conspicuous amongst them are L.T. Lewin's *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India* (1884) and *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers Therein* (1896), C.S. Soppitt's *A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier District* (1887), A.S. Reid's *Chin-Lushai Land* (1893), J. Shakespear's *The Lushai Kuki Clans, Part I & II* (1912), N.E. Parry's *A monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* (1927) and *The Lakhers* (1932) and A.G McCall's *Lushai Chrysalis* (1949). Amongst the Indian studies J.D. Baveja's *The Land Where the Bamboo Flowers* (1970), Chitta Ranjan Nag's *Impact of Christianity on the life of the Mizos* (1974), V. Venkata Roa's "The Sociology of Mizo Politics" (1978) and Suhas Chattopadhyaya's *The English and the Lushais* (1969) are taken into account. Significance writing amongst the Mizo themselves are Rev. Liangkhaia's *History of Lushais* (1945), Zatlunga's *Mizo Chanchin* (1966), R. Thanhlira's "Mizo Tribes of Assam" (1969) L.B. Thangas *The Mizos* (1978), Rev. Zairema's *God's Miracle in Mizoram* (1978), R. Vanlawma's *Ka Ram Leh Kei (My Country and I)* (1972) Pastor Challiana's *Pipu Nun* (1978) and K. Zawla's *Pipute Leh An Thlahte Chanchin* (1981).

### **Aims and Objective of the Study**

The main aims and objectives of the present investigation are to trace, explore and delineate the traditional system of social stratification among the Mizo in the past, to expound and systematically analyse the changes and emerging trends of social stratification among the Mizo, particularly after they came in contact with the British and Christian Missionaries.

### **Methodology**

Since the objective is to describe and analyse the traditional system



and changing patterns of social stratification amongst the Mizo, I take the whole area of the state of Mizoram as the universe of my study.

The present study is mainly based on purposive sampling technique. With the help of an interview schedule fieldwork has been carried out in both urban and rural areas. The fieldwork is based mainly on the data collected both from primary and secondary sources. Most of the primary data were collected through an interview schedule and by means of questionnaire method administered personally by me, which have been supplemented by case studies, informal interview and by way of participant observation. Needless to say, through informal interview I have gathered invaluable information, and this greatly contributed to the reliability of my research enquiry. Secondary sources are mainly drawn from Government records, District and State statistical reports, Census reports, published materials, unpublished documents, books, Journals, various articles and other relevant sources.

### **Organization of the Study**

The frame of the thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is an introductory part, which includes Land and the people: the study area, location and extent, historical, ethnological, cultural, religion, political and socio-economic background of the Mizo, the second chapter deals with the concept of social stratification: genesis and origin, features, system, dimensions and types, the third chapter deals with theoretical framework of social stratification, the fourth chapter explicates social stratification among the tribals in India, the fifth chapter describes and analyses social inequality in the traditional Mizo society, the sixth chapter highlights the emerging pattern of social stratification amongst the Mizo since the arrival of British and Christian missionaries, and after the attainment of independence right up to the present day, and the last chapter presents summary and conclusion.

### **NOTES**

1. *Mizoram at a glance*, Aizawl, Mizoram: Directorate of economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram, 1997, p. 1.
2. Pachuau, Rintluanga: *Geography of Mizoram*, Aizawl: R.T. Enterprise, 1994, p. 23.
3. Pachuau, Rintluanga: *Ibid.*, pp. 43-5
4. Lalrimawia: *Mizoram - History and Cultural Identity (1890 - 1947)* Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1995, p. 3.

5. Prasad, R.N, *Government and Politics in Mizoram*, New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1987, p. 3.
6. Sangkima, *Mizos: Society and Social Change*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1992, p. 14.
7. Zawla, K., *Mizo Pipute leh an Thlahte Chanchin*, Aizawl: Gosen Press, 1989, p. 17.
8. Liangkhaia, Rev, *Mizo Chanchin*, Aizawl: Mizo Academy of Letters, 1938, pp. 7-8.
9. Soppit, C.A., *A Short Account of the Kuki - Lushei tribes* (reprint), Aizawl: Firma-KLM Private Limited, 1976. p. vii.
10. *Chhinlung* is conventionally speculating to be a name of a cave or mythical rock, from which the ancestors of the Mizo tribes originated. The word *Chhinlung* is derived from the combination of two words - *Chhin*, which means cover and *lung*, which refers to Rock or stone. Accordingly the word *Chhinlung* connotes 'Covering stone' Different expositions have been given about the legend of *Chhinlung*. Some writers believed that the term *Chhinlung* might have stands for the name of Chinese King Chien Lung, at the times of whose ascendancy the forefather of the Mizo departed towards the present habitat. Regarding the location of *Chhinlung* it is postulated that *Chhinlung* is situated within the region of Szechwan in China, lying between Longitude degrees of 101 - 03 and Latitude degree of 31. Lying on the bank of river Yalung, on the western side and the eastern side of the Yantze Kiang river, it had a large, broad, wide and extensive plains and a large number of hills dabbling the plains here and there.
11. Lalrimawia, *Op. cit.*, p. 12.
12. Sangkima, *Op. cit.*, pp. 11-2.
13. Nunthara, C., *Mizoram : Society and Policy*, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1996, p. 39.
14. Lloyd, Meirion, J., *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)*, Aizawl: Synod Publication Board, 1991, p. 3.
15. Nunthara, C., *Op. cit.*, p. 64.
16. Lloyd, Meirion, J., *Op. cit.*, p. 4.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Liangkhaia, Rev, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.
19. *Thangchhuah* is a title given to those persons who has performed a number of prescribed ceremonies and series of feasts or those persons who had hunted and killed a specified number of wild animals according to traditional customs and practices. The former is known as *inlama-thangchhuah* and the later, *ramlama thangchhuah*. They are honoured persons and occupied high status and considerable privileges in the society. They are entitled



to a certain pattern of striped cloths, to open a window in the side of their houses a self at the end of their beds, and a beam on their veranda. They are distinguished from other villagers as they are entitled to enter the *Pialral* (or Paradise) straight away.

20. Sangkima, *Op. cit.*, p. 54.