



INDIA'S LABOUR MIGRATIONS: HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES AND PERSPECTIVES SINCE THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

Yamini

Lecturer, Kalindi College

Labor Migration Pattern in Mizoram

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the study on pattern of migration in Mizoram. It tries to give the deeper understanding of socio economic characteristics and assess the push and pull factors of the migration. The traditional view and experiences reveal that the migration is from rural to urban areas- where living conditions of migrants would improve. But still betterment of migrants depends upon where they finally settle and what opportunities being offered to them. Basically migrants move in search for better employment opportunities, improved food and nutrition, higher standard of living and have better access to health and educational facilities.

INTRODUCTION

This paper simply attempts to analyze the patterns of migration and its impact on living conditions of migrants in Mizoram. UN Multi-Lingual Demographic Dictionary states that Migration is nothing else but a change in geographical areas. Masses moving from a geographical area into another and try to adapt that place. It can also be described as the change in residence from the original area to the place of destination. Migration happens because of various reasons but higher the migration would result in higher interregional inequalities.

Generally, the main motive of migration is that migrants can seek better lifestyle so they move towards resource rich area in search of livelihood. Migration is the worldwide phenomenon and acted as a powerful engine of growth. India witnessed several migration trends over the century. Migration occurred in steps –firstly, from rural to nearby towns and secondly, to large cities. Migration is of two types intra-national and international. It can also be explained as External migration (from one country to another) and internal migration (within the country). Migration takes place if the benefit of migration is more than the cost of migration. The cost of migration can be money cost (opportunity cost) and non- money cost (psychic cost). The opportunity cost is the present real income in the origin country that the migrant forgoes if he migrates to some other country. In simple language migration is redistribution of population.

The main concern of this paper is to study Mizoram. To understand the migration pattern of Mizos we have to look at their migration history. Secondly, this paper also tried to compare the different socio- economic factors like population size, literacy rate above 7+ years, and sexratio from 2001 to 2011 in Aizwal city of Mizoram. Then, this paper will try to find out the answers to many questions like what causes urbanization? , what was the impact of migration in Mizoram? , what causes the migration or what factors lead to migration? And why people migrate from one place to other?

HISTORY AND WAVES OF MIGRATION

There are few studies on migration in North East India especially in Mizoram. Mizos was the combination of many tribes which were originated in mystery. The land is mixture of tribes from Chin Hills, Lai, Mara and Chakmas which agglomerated into super tribe called Mizo because of religious, political and cultural revolutions in mid of 20th century. Movement of Mizos group depends on the migration of other tribes in time and space. Under the Government of Assam it became the district called Lushai Hills in 1947 after the independence from British. A name given to a district was Mizoram in 1972 and was declared as Union Territory. Later in 1986, Mizoram became a full-fledged federal state of India. On 20thFebruary Mizoram became the 23rd state of India. And that is how Mizoram originated. Now, Mizoram is a state out of the seven states of Northeast, with Aizawl as its capital city. The name Mizoram was a combination of two words MIZO and RAM. The meaning of these two words, Mizo means the name of the inhabitant and Ram described as Land, which means 'The Land of Mizos'.



Since most of the migration history was based on oral history and archaeological inferences. Nothing can be said accurately. Shinlung or Chhinlungsan which was on the banks of river Yalung in China, possibly from there all mizos entered in. Then they moved to Kabaw valley to Khampat (which was now in Myanmar) after settling down in the Shan state and then in middle of 16th century to Chin Hills.

Kukis were one of the tribe in the Mizos who migrated earliest to India. Rangkhoh, Bete, Langrong, Aimol, Chiru, koiren, Hmar, Cha and kom etc were identified in these groups. The New Kukis pushed away the old Kukis (who were first migrants in Mizoram) to Tripura. They were these second immigrants. New Kukis were identified as Changsen, Thado, Hawki and Shingson e.t.c. migrated and followed the path to Tripura. Then they were shoved back again for creating troubles in British Frontiers by Col. Lister. Old Kukis and New Kukis both were then relocated in North – Cachar Hills of Assam and few other migrated to Manipur. The last Mizo tribe migrated to India was the Lushais. In the beginning of 18th century Lushai group came by driving out the New Kukis.

Population Dynamics

These districts like Kolasaib, Mamit and Serchhip have relatively low concentration of Chins. In Champhai district, there was the highest concentration of Chins. In Mizoram, 63,000 or more were Chins. By at least 13,000, population has showed a sudden increase from when the 2003 evictions called by Young Mizo Association. There were no accurate data given by any individual or any organization. The estimation of district wise population as follows: Aizawl -10,000, Lunglei-8000, Lawngtlai-10,000, Saiha-10,000, Champhai-20,000, and Serchhip-5,000. All These districts were visited by the large number of Chins along with the local population. The total population of Mizoram was 891,058 with an average of 12,600 per district.

Most of the Chins between 1988 and mid 1990's came to Mizoram. Movement of Chins was majorly in Mizoram as compared to other North-Eastern states. Migrants or Chins were preferred to live in those places where they find somewhat close ethnic affinities. For example - Saiha district was preferred by the Maras of Myanmar where majority were Maras of Mizoram. Also Lawngtlai district was preferred by Lais tribe.

It was also noticed that the Chins were the cheapest labor in Mizoram like in domestic work, agricultural work, road construction, roadside vegetable vendors. Petty pan shop, scavengers in forests for leaves, timbers and herbs. Some of them were forced into sex work too. Local Mizoram population had a perception that the Burmese are well off but there were only few Chins who owned small or medium businesses and it was completely wrong perception. Most the Chins were struggling to meet their ends. They were labeled as backward people, uncivilized and anti-social even after their contribution in the labour market and in other services too.

Chins average incomes on per day basis in Mizoram lie in the range of INR 100 to INR 120. Chins were cheated in most the cases, on their wages and were also exploited by contractors as well as sub contractors. Despite of being cheated and exploited on their wages, life in Mizoram is better than in Myanmar. In Myanmar for the same work, the daily wage of the worker was INR 25 per day.

Majority of Chins were wanted to travel Delhi for better opportunities and for higher living standards. But many people could not afford the journey and travelling such a long distance after borrowing huge sum of money was a huge risk for Chins. After the 2003 evictions in Mizoram, many people were forced to live in huge debts in Delhi.

Aizawl City

Earlier it was known as Aijal. In 1890, British had a stronger side in Aijal. Aizawl is the largest city in Mizoram and there were large villages which later transformed into towns. Later, it became the capital of Mizoram. Aizawl situated in the northern part with the population of 228,280 according to 2001 census. In total population males were 50.80% and females were 49.20% (Shown in fig.1)

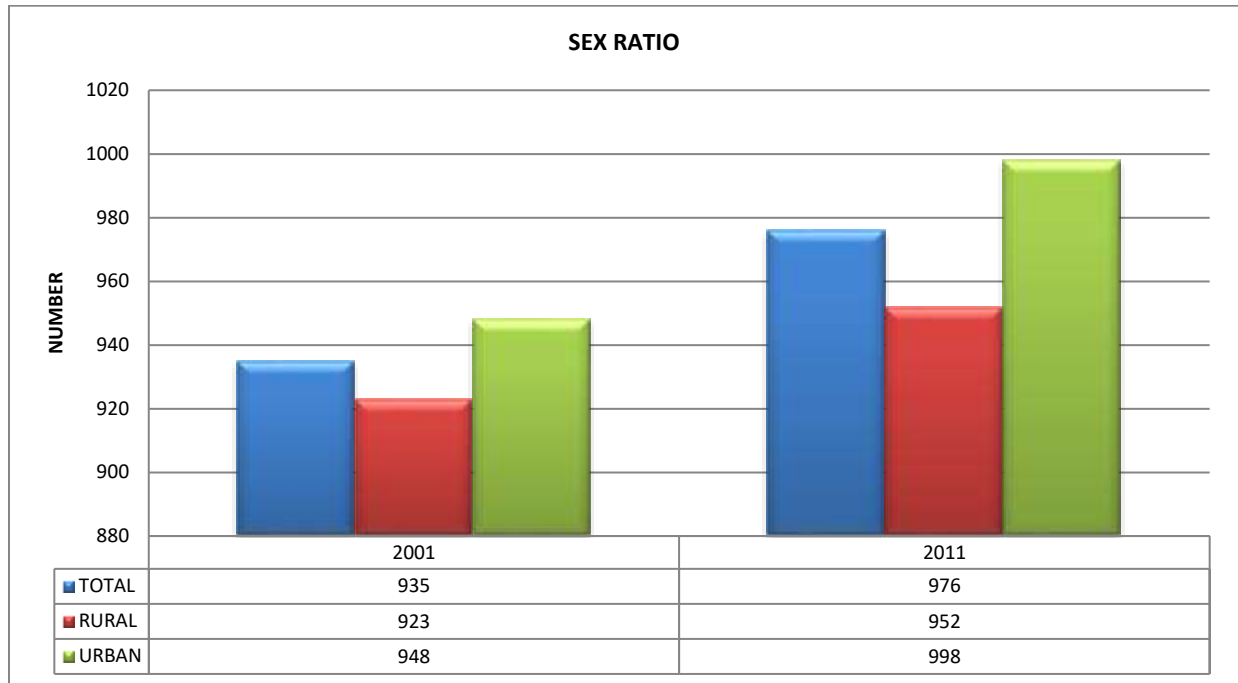


FIG.1 Sources: Census of India 2011

This means there were 976 females per 1000 males which was even greater than the national average data of 940 females per 1000 males. Gradually urbanization has increased in Mizoram especially in Aizawl city having 77.42% to its total population. Aizawl is the largest and most populated town among the 23 towns in the state. And hence, it is the rapidly growing urban centre. Urban Mizo is finding living every second in the capital city.

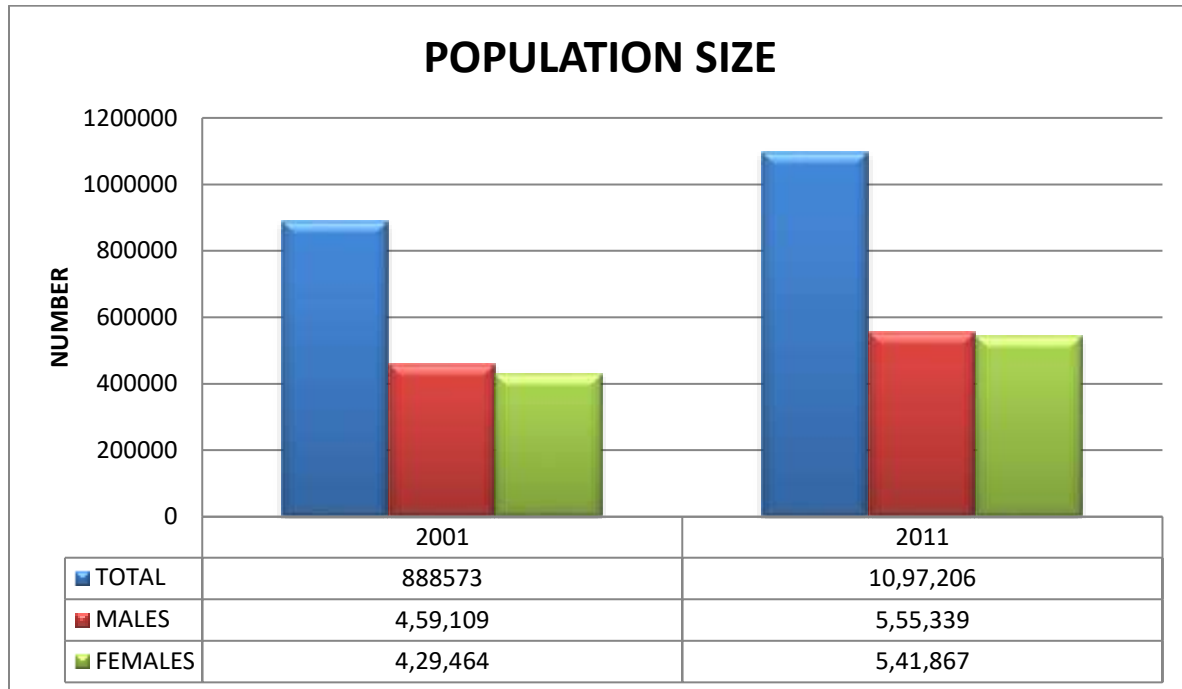
Urbanization in Mizoram

As we have discussed it, Aizawl is the most growing city state in Mizoram. Urbanization as a whole increased at a faster rate than the growth in infrastructure and service sector. Urban population has significantly started increasing since 1951. In 1951 the urban population was only 3.54% which drastically changed to 49.63% in 2001.

All the towns in Mizoram had shown remarkable growth in different years like Aizawl in 1951, two towns in 1971, six in 1981 and twenty three in 2001. Mizoram has achieved the tag of most urbanized state in the country as 16 rural constituents according to 1981 census acquired the status of towns according to 1991 census. Despite of having number of rural tribes in Mizoram, now the economy has fastest trend towards urbanization.

Census 2011 reveals that the total population of the state is 10,91,014. 5,61,977 of total population are living in urban areas which is approximate 51.51% (shown in fig.2). The decadal growth rate of urban population is 27.43% from 2001-2011. Census also indicate that the urban population to the total population of India is 31.16 which increased by 3.35% from 2001. What are the factors that lead to increase in urban population? One of the major reasons of migration from rural to urban areas was in search of livelihood, availability of resources and access to better health and education. Expansion of urban population was also because of higher birth rate as compared to death rate in urban areas which lead to expansion of new towns. Then, gradually infrastructure improved like building roads because of high infrastructure investment in Aizawl district. Some factors which responsible for the growth of urban population in Mizoram.

FIG. 2



SOURCE: Census of India 2011

Literacy rate above the age of 7 years played an important role in development of Mizoram state. Literacy rate in Mizoram has significantly increased as compared to national literacy rate.

According to census 2011 literacy rate in Mizoram is 91.33% while total national literacy rate is 76.04%.

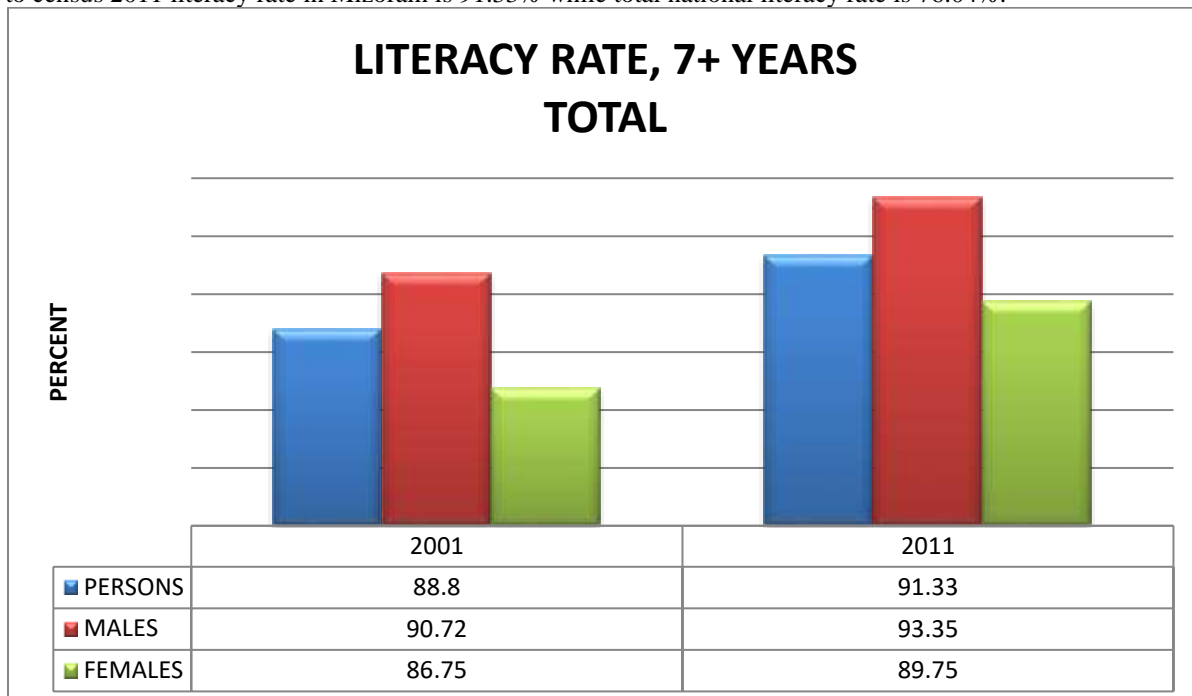


FIG.3 Source: Census of India 2011



Above graph clearly shows the expansion of education. It is really good to see that female literacy rate has increased. The total percentage of literacy rate has changed from 88.80% in 2001 to 91.33% in 2011.

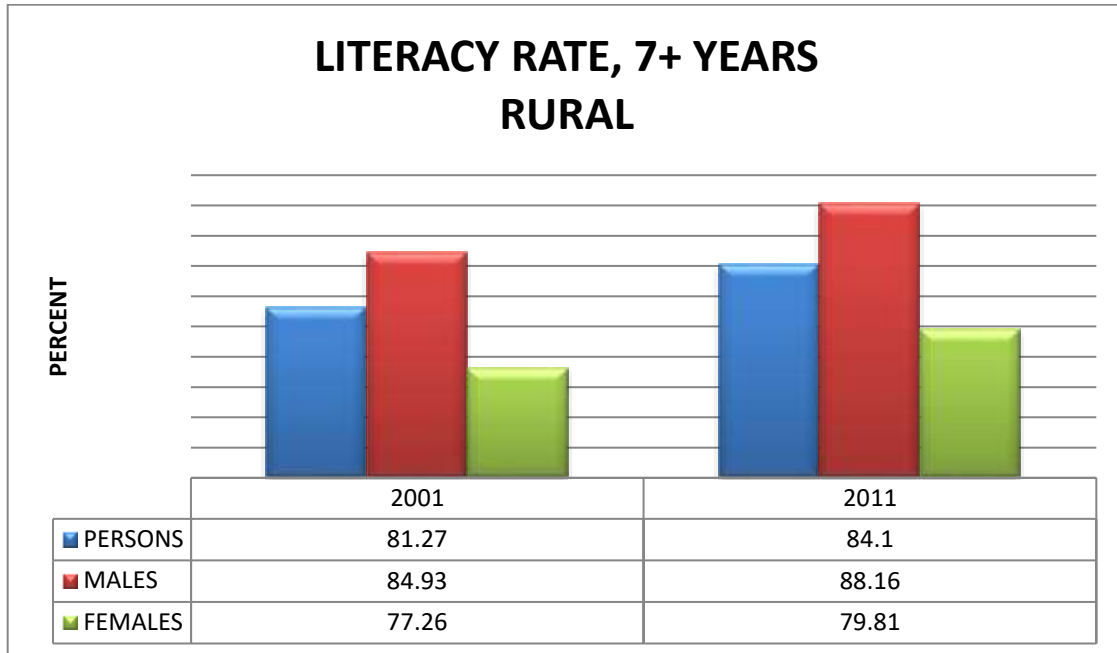


FIG.4 Source: Census of India 2011

Literacy rate in 2011 has also increased but the change in rural female literacy rate was less than the change in rural male literacy rate. Rural female literacy rate has changed approximately by 2.58% from 2001 to 2011 whereas rural male literacy rate has changed approximately by 3.23% from 2001 to 2011.

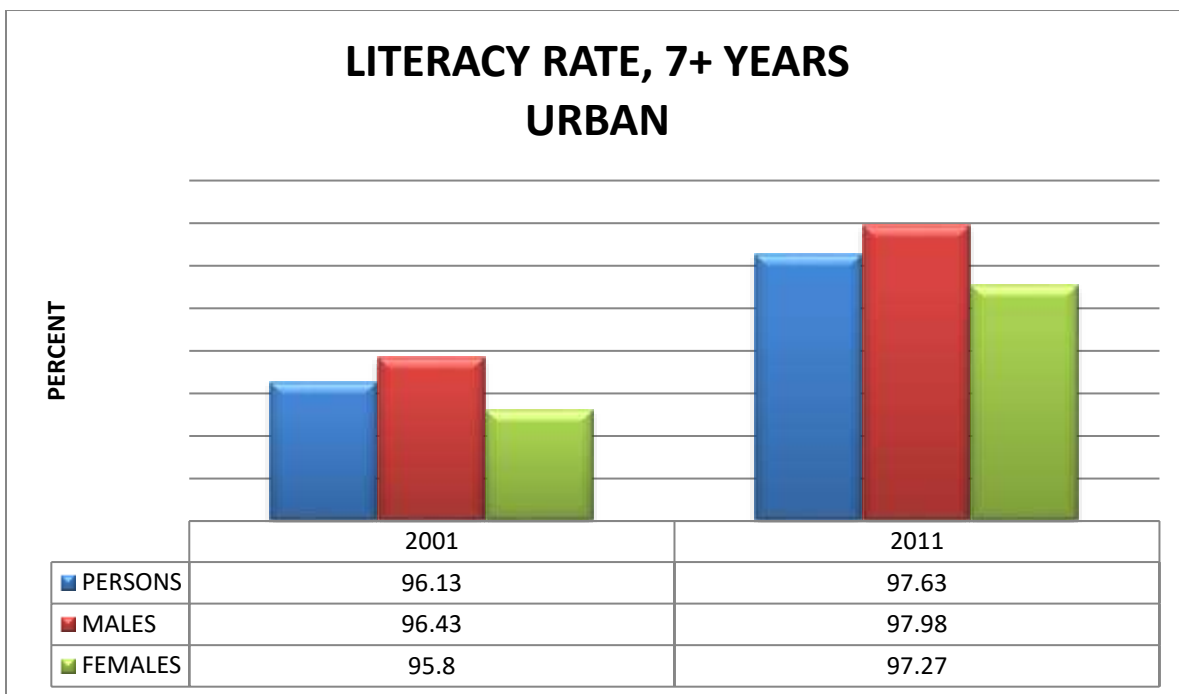


FIG.5 Source: Census of India 2011



Urban literacy rates has improved drastically, there is a negligible change in urban male and urban female in 2011. From 2001 to 2011 female literacy rate change significantly and a little more than the change in male literacy rate. Education has always been the cause of migration after Nutritional Health.

Impact of Migration

Livelihood and living conditions were the two main causes of migration. And on the basis of that impact of migration can be analyzed. Primary and secondary occupations were taken as indicators of livelihood and annual income of the households taken as indicators of living condition.

In case of occupational structure, before migration about one-third of the population were engaged in primary sector (agriculture) and government sector which changed tremendously after migration. People were engaged in more government sector and the highest proportion was mainly from labors and artisans. More two-third of population was not engaged in secondary population but most of them were practicing agriculture before migration. After Migration these figures changed significantly in secondary occupation. And a considerable part of population has started holding small businesses.

The indicator of living condition which is annual income of household, is classified into 4 categories such as (a) below Rs. 25,000, (b) Rs. 25,000-Rs. 50,000, (c) Rs. 50,000-Rs. 75,000 and (d) Rs. 75,000 and above to understand the economic condition of the migrants before and after migration. Before migration, about half of the migrants were in the category of below Rs. 25,000 and after migration majority of migrants were categorized in income group Rs. 25,000-Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 75,000 & above. This study reveals that the migration has improved the living conditions of migrants to a certain extent. But still this improvement was not enough and it was also not the case in entire Mizoram. There was a disparity in improvement between central and fringe areas. The incomes were considerably higher in central areas like capital city Aizawl as compared to local areas or fringe areas. Therefore, central areas improved significantly while the improvement in the household income of the migrants was not significant in fringe areas. Living condition can also be study from the housing conditions of migrants. Most of migrants were living in rented house which doesn't mean that people who had their own house were in better condition as compared to people in rented houses. And most importantly people in central area were living in rented houses while in fringe areas people had their own house. Migrants in Central areas are in a stable and a better economic condition. Condition of migrants had improved to a certain extent. Migrants living conditions as well as livelihood improved. They have better employment opportunities, earned more money, improved their food and nutrition, assets, sanitation, standard of living and have better access to health and education.

What were the main problems in fringe areas which created so much disparity between the fringe and central area? According to migrants isolation from the community and adjusting with different community was the biggest issue in fringe area. In fringe area land was bountiful while in centre area the case was different. Problems that were similar in both the areas were lack of regular employment and access to local resources in Mizoram.

Historically, Mizoram was famous for **Jhum Cultivation** (slash and burn). Mizo people practiced slash and burn for 100 of years. Majority of Mizoram population was depended on this and earn their livelihood. In 20th century British Government has restricted the use of forest areas and gave the control to chiefs of Mizo over forest resources. Later on, Mizo people lost control over the communal land because of land use policy and governmental development policy. In post colonial India, Jhum Cultivation was abolished and replaced with the more liberal economic models which were more profitable according to Britishers. In addition, Jhum Cultivation was always considered as extravagant and unscientific in colonial period. The entire Northeast region considered as Indo-Burma diversity hotspot and ranked 6th among the 25 hotspots in the world. Majority of the population believed that the Northeast was considered as the large emitter of carbon dioxide. Jhum Cultivation was abolished by the Government in order to protect the global environment. This decision affected the large part of the population, they didn't have work to do and did not have stable livelihood.

Causes of Migration

Migration was caused due to following reasons:

1. **Geographical and Economic Factors**

In history geographical and economic factors were responsible for the movement of people. People usually migrate to productive areas from unproductive ones. This means that the size of population depends on the productivity of the land. Similarly, the Mizo populations were also in search of Jhum land and favorable climate where they can cultivate easily. The Mizos were living the nomadic life and they were continuously migrating like nomads for fertile land that can be cultivated. The climatic conditions were also the responsible factor for staying long in that region. The availability of food and clean water



were also the important reason for settling in that economy. Soon, the population has increased and migrated I search for the cultivating land, climatic conditions, and availability of food. Mizos started living according to the different tribes, sub tribes on the basis of clans. Hence, this period was characterized by the clannish assertion.

In 1283 A.D: In two groups Mizos were abandoned. One group reached Seithel Mual and the other group on the hill range of Letha or Tang Tlang.

In 1706-1730: Due to wars with Sokets, Pawls and Tang Tlang (Lakhers) were carrying guns and cannons Mizos (Lushais) migrated to the west. Then Lushai were forced to move to Tripura and Cachar district.

In 1765 A.D: Lallula and Sailo crossed the river Tyao in fear of Pawis of Falam. New village called Zopui established by Lallula.

In 1780 A.D: Large number of Mizos migrated across the rivers Tyao and Tuipui from areas of west

2. Socio-Cultural Factors:

In this period Mizos lived clan wise and according to the division of tribes, sub-tribes and clans. Hence, this period was also characterized by the clannish assertion. The social system that was prevalent in which the clans and sub clans showed their loyalty towards their respective chiefs. The chief was the head of the village and enjoys all power. Nobody could challenge his decision. They control the clans and the other clans.

All the villages were a separate political entity and governed by their respective chiefs. The social isolation occurred in various groups. This isolation marked the development of social values as well as cultural ethics. Most of the clans had developed the district identity and mostly these names were given on the names of their respected chiefs. The languages and the dialects also developed in isolation. The new culture and ethics had emerged for the different clans and they want preserve and cherish for all time to come.

3. Political Factors

The different groups or different clans were politically independent under the political system which was present at that time. Chief was the head of the village or head of the people. Similarly, no one can challenge his decision. Each village acts as a different political entity which was ruled by their respective chiefs. They enjoyed all political independence based on the different clans and tribes. Chief can control their clans and the land which belong to their community. They created the political platform and create the separate identity for them. The distinct cultures of tribes and had to preserve at all cost.

CONCLUSION

Migrants in Mizoram represented as the poor sections of the society and lead their lives in harsh conditions. Life for migrants was not easy, they have to adjust within the different communities and face many problems. Migration occurred only because of the difference in the development of rural-urban region. Therefore, to seek better education facilities and access to better health facilities, job opportunities and basic civic amenities. Basically, in order to achieve higher living standards migration happens. Many policies or agreements in Mizoram attracted the migrants like New Land Use Policy (NLUP) which was introduced by the government of Mizoram in 1984-85. The objective of this policy was to end the practice of Jhum Cultivation and provide the farmers an alternative a stable land based activities. Then in 1986, the Mizoram accord was an official agreement between the Mizo National Front and Government to end violence and insurgency in Mizoram. It was the most successful and only Peace agreement in Indian after Independence. An organization Mizo National Front was led by Laldenga to fight for Independence. This movement was started because of the conditions faced by Mizoram during the famine called Mautam in late 1950s.

All these policies and agreements led increase in the total population 1,091,014 according to census 2011. Mizoram has seen different waves of migration. Mizoram was the third least densely populated state in the country, after Arunachal Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Island, because of continuous in and out migration. Population is increasing by 0.26 million every year. Urbanization was also the factor of migration and the population living in urban areas was about 52% which was higher than the average. It is the fifth smallest state of India which covers an area of approximately 21,081 square kilometers and an area covered with forests is about 91% of the total area. The state has shown significant improvement in literacy rate, sex ratio, population and in health conditions. Mizoram is growing in trade with Myanmar and Bangladesh.



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