

**WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN THE LUSHAI HILLS
(MIZORAM) 1904-1947**

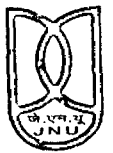
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LALNUNPUII RALTE



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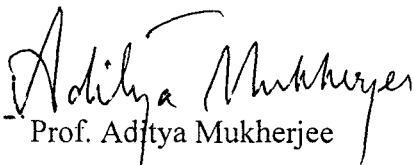


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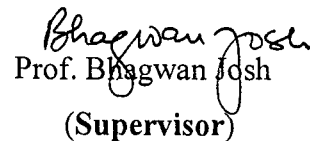
CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled “**Women's Education in the Lushai Hills (Mizoram), 1904 - 1947**” submitted by **LALNUNPUII RALTE** in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other university and is her original work.

We recommend that the Dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Lalnunpuii Ralte

Contents

Acknowledgements

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2: WOMEN AND EDUCATION: THE STORY OF MIZORAM

2.1: Introduction

2.2: The Christian Missions and the Choice of the Lushai Hills

2.3: Rationale for Women's Education: The Social Context

2.4: Perceiving the Mizo Women: Missionary Discourse

2.5: Initial Endeavors on Education: The Experimental Mission Schools

2.6: The Local Response

2.7: Conclusion

CHAPTER 3: PLANNING AND FOUNDING THE GIRLS SCHOOL: WAYS AND MEANS: THE P.C. GIRL'S SCHOOL

3.1: Introduction

3.2: Planning the Girl's School: Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones and Early Efforts

3.3: The Trajectories of Expansion: The School Under Various headmistresses

3.4: Laying Foundations: Mobilizing Resources and Building the School

3.5: Transforming the School: The Students, the Mizo teachers, Welsh Women.

3.6: The Curriculum, Religious, Cultural and other Activities of the School

3.7: Conclusion

CHAPTER 4: EDUCATED WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: THE NETWORK OF ACTIVITIES

4.1: Introduction

4.2: Mizo Bible Women

4.3: "The Handful of Rice Collection": Reflection of Change

4.4: Education and Change through the Local Women's Meetings

4.5: The Christian Home Movement

4.6: "The Ministry of Healing": Durtlang Hospital, Missionary women and Mizo Nurses: Changing Lives

4.7: Conclusion

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

European Missionary enterprise had discernibly exhibited two key motives in their endeavors: a) an emphasis in direct evangelism and b) an emphasis in civilizing activities which were considered quintessential for a more effective evangelism. Studies have shown how this twin concern for evangelism and social change were evidently marked in the Missionary discourse of Asia, Africa and the Middle East.¹ In this discourse, Christianization immediately necessitated the task 'to educate' which also proposed to generate positive and substantial changes in colonized societies.

The present work embarks upon Women's education as a site of change that was effected in the Lushai Hills (Mizoram) as a product of missionary endeavors. Since the task of women's education emanated out of the initiatives of Christian missionaries in the Lushai Hills, the study is necessarily situated within the larger framework of missionary enterprise and the agenda for the emancipatory project of Mizo women. Covering the period from 1904, when the first project to educate girls separately from the male domain was initiated by the wife of the first pioneer missionary, Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones, the study looks at the various trajectories of women's education in various dimensions till 1947.

Despite the existence of ample literature on education in the Lushai Hills, women's education as a central focus of historical enquiry has received minimal attention

¹ Flemming, Lesley, "A New Humanity- American Missionaries' Ideals for Women in North India 1870-1930", in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Stroebe (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism, Complicity and Resistance* (U.S.A., Indiana University Press 1992), p191. In her essay, Leslie Flemming argues that the commitment of the American women Missionaries was couched in a rhetoric that stressed women's low status in the Indian society and urged conversion to Christianity as a means of raising their status. Despite their self perceptions as agents of change, these missionaries are described in the essay as carrying values which were 'culturally superior' to those embodied in a rigid structure of relations between the various Hindu Jatis and between Hindus and members of other religious communities.

in academic discourse concerning the Lushai Hills, the lack of attention thus reflecting as well as generating the need for such an enquiry. By undertaking the topic of women's education, this study seeks to fill the gap in the discourse on education in the Lushai Hills and to produce in a significant way, a substantial contribution to the current historiography where women's education remains marginal.

Focusing particularly on the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries, who played the key role in introducing female education in the Lushai Hills, the purpose of the study is to examine the story of how women's education was initiated and the interplay of various forces that were constituted in the process of changes that came through education. It probes into the question, what were the ideological and cultural premises on which the proposals and steps to undertake women's education in the Lushai Hills rested and what were the responses to it? By picking up the study on the Presbyterian Church Girl's School as a site in which transformation was effected through school education, the study traces the various aspects of the school and what kind of changes resulted out of the interaction between Welsh women missionaries and the Mizo students that were taught in the school? An important aspect of the study is to address how indigenous women participated in the mission to educate and questions how they absorbed themselves in various channels of work after having received education from the Girl's school?

As mentioned earlier, the focus on education in the Lushai Hills tends to neglect women's education as it developed from a rudimentary beginning to a strong agency of change among the people. Much of the works on education, carried out mostly by men, do pay adequate importance on how education was imparted by the Christian missions in the 19th century and the subsequent responses that followed. For one, there are

missionaries' own accounts on their educational endeavors which more often than not, represent stereotypical images of "the natives" and the "hopes of a bright future" which also eventually narrate the success stories of their mission in "heathen lands". This aspect of missionary discourse is examined more elaborately in chapter 2. Though female education was introduced by the missionaries through the pioneering efforts of missionary wives and later by the missionary ladies who arrived to the "mission fields" with the purpose of "serving" the women, their accounts usually represent a one sided motivation towards women's education and thus tend to neglect the larger picture of indigenous people's participation in the process by evincing resistance or enthusiasm.

In *Education and Missionaries in Mizoram*,² J.V. Hluna gives a detailed description on the land and the people of Mizoram, and locates the history of education as it was introduced from its early phase in 1894 when the pioneer missionaries arrived in Mizoram and established the Mission schools till 1947. Arguing that education and Christianity went hand in hand and holding it responsible for the upliftment of the Mizo society, he traces the progress of education in Mizoram in its various stages, making a detail study on the type of schools, number of schools curriculum, enrollment, attendance, salaries, etc., devoting a section of his study to female education. However, his account of female education does not reflect the particular ways in which women responded to education and also the ways in which the school for girls among a plethora of boy's school changed the course of the lives of these pupils in the subsequent years that followed and does not raise the multiple issues concerning the ideological and cultural contexts in which the question of female education revolved.

² Hluna, J.V., *Education and Missionaries in Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi, 1992

“*History and Evolution of Education in Mizoram through the Ages*”³ by Sangkima, provides a similar pattern of study on the history of education. Reflecting on the processes of education in Mizoram at three different levels, education before the British rule, education under the British and Christian missionaries followed by education in Free India, the essay documents the general picture of education as it evolved through the ages with no specific concern on women’s education.

Vanlalchhuanawma, in his *Christianity and the Subaltern culture, Revival Movement as a Cultural Response to Westernization in Mizoram*⁴ provides a critical analysis of education under the influence of Christianity although the issue of female education was not the key point addressed in the book. However, it argues that education introduced by the Christian missionaries was not positively responded by the people because it represented a culturally alien concept to the Mizos, and signified an abrupt break with the old Mizo way of life. In addition, it threatened “to rob boys and girls of their daily chores” and hence unacceptable to most families. This book too, does not give much emphasis towards the study of female education.

For the analysis of Women’s education in the Lushai Hills, the paradigm offered by several studies carried out in regards to the educational activities of missionary women in South Asian countries are useful. Leslie Flemming, in “A New Humanity. American Missionaries’ Ideals for Women in North India, 1870- 1930”⁵ examines the values American women missionaries brought to the mission encounter in Central Uttar Pradesh, founded between 1836 and 1913, the human material with which they saw

³ Sangkima in *Essays on the History of the Mizos*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati: Delhi, 2004

⁴ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity and the Subaltern Culture, Revival Movement as a Cultural Response to Westernization in Mizoram*, ISPCK, 2006

⁵ Nupur Choudhuri and Margaret Stroebe (eds) *Western Women and Imperialism, Complicity and Resistance*, Indiana University Press, Bloomingham and Indianapolis: 1992

themselves working, the new human beings they hoped to create from that encounter, and aspects of Indian culture which they criticized most strongly. On her analysis of the various values that shaped their encounters with Indian women and the way in which Indian women were encouraged to pursue particular institutional directions in their work, she argues that the vision of womanhood articulated by the missionaries to Indian women was strongly oriented towards domestic roles, they fail to offer radically new roles to the women they sought to change. Nevertheless the provision of educational and voluntary activities through education enabled Indian women to assume roles which were otherwise not permissible to their culture.

Gail Minault's study of *Secluded Scholars, Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*⁶ offers significant insight into the ways in which the ideas and actions of Muslim were directed towards (like the Christian Missionaries) creation of the ideal woman who would be qualified wives and mothers to meet the challenges of life in a rapidly changing world, thus reflecting a shared notion of Muslim male reformers and Christian missionaries. This book brought into the forefront the indigenous sources of and motivation for intellectual change and social reform, and shows how the processes of interaction between the colonial and the indigenous factors created change.

Geraldine Forbes, somehow along the same lines with Lesley Flemming, in her work "In Search of the Pure Heathen, Missionary Women in 19th century India" examines female education as pioneered by missionary women, but argues that substantial accomplishments were not achieved. Many of the English ladies, according to

⁶ Minault, Gail, *Secluded Scholars, Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*, OUP, 1998.

her, were too enamoured with Zenana education, with yet affected not many women. It was the contribution of the Indian Christian that made more significant changes. To her, missionary women were “cultural imperialists” by providing an education based entirely on English education.⁷

An attempt to locate women’s education in the Lushai Hills during the selected period of the study needs to be situated within the larger framework of the Missionary project and discourse. Drawing insights from the above works, the study looks at the history of women’s education in the Lushai Hills by using both missionary and indigenous sources. Since most of these sources in the indigenous form are written in the Mizo language, I have undertaken the translation of these works myself for the purpose of this study. The two trajectories of mission evangelical work, namely education and medicine are specifically examined in the context of women’s roles and involvement in these institutions as agents of change.

This study, looks at the dissemination of knowledge, initially through missionary agents and followed later by indigenous people’s own efforts and contribution that was growing out of their conscious needs and concerns towards women’s education. This is examined at three levels. On the first instance, it examines the discursive ideological motives and efforts to impart education to Mizo women, and address the questions, who decided the propaganda to educate and why? How was this agenda perpetuated? And what was the response to it? At this level, it is essentially concerned with the project of creating change through the creation of the ideal Christian woman, the feminine identity and thus the project of creating a difference. This visual discursive forms and moralities

⁷ “In Search of the Pure Heathen”, Forbes, Geraldine in Alice Thorner and Maithreyi Khrishnaraj, *Ideals, Images and Real Lives, Women in literature and History*, Orient Longman: Mumbai, 2000

in these imagined identities were also embedded in the so called Victorian domesticity which was articulated by the missionaries . Emphasis is also given on the various indigenous elements which played a key role in representing a positive perception for female education and how they sought to shape people's perceptions as well in the process of interacting with missionary agents.

At the second level, this study looks at the articulation of set of values to enhance the condition of women and the space that was provided for this to materialize, essentially the Girl's school in which the distinct woman was sought to be formed and moulded for her future roles. How this was achieved is the question addressed at the second level of the present study.

At the third level, the study is concerned with how the school education had transformed the girls and their lives as women now assumed new roles. Their engagements with various activities that gave them public visibility and the transcendence of social boundaries through these activities is examined through the social and voluntary religious works that they participated in. Though it has been argued by Lesley Flemming , Forbes and others that the values upheld in the agenda for change seemingly endorsed or reinforced the prescribed norms on women which were already indigenous to their culture, education did enable these women a certain exposure that took them to engage in a network of activities, particularly itinerant evangelism, medical servicing as nurses, professional works as teachers and new religious roles.

In the organization of the dissertation, the first chapter introduces the study, the sources employed in the study and the various issues and ideas to be developed in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter provides a rationale for women's education by locating the ideological and cultural premises which form the contextual basis on which women's education was perpetuated in missionary discourse, by the analysis of missionary literature and using indigenous source of writings, it seeks to locate the responses towards the educational propaganda for female education which set the stage for the development of an educational institution for Girls.

The third chapter centres around the materializing of the institution for girls by looking at specific Girls' school, the P.C. Girl's School which evolved to be a prestigious institution in spite of its modest beginnings. It addresses how the school became an instrumental agency for change in the social fabric. This chapter also derives the maximum source material for the study by drawing from first hand accounts of the school Record Book, articles of alumni, their reflections of the school as students and as teachers, interviews conducted with the school staff and photographs of the school in its various expansional stages are incorporated.

The fourth chapter will deal with the aspects of professional and voluntary activities that educated women engaged with, spreading education and the message of the gospel, thus becoming agents of change themselves, contributing to the furtherance of the emancipatory project for women through the network of activities that they undertook. By focusing primarily on the Mizo Bible women, and their activities, the Local Women's Meetings, and the participation of educated women in the Presbyterian Hospital, Durtlang as Nurses, along with the missionary nurses and doctors, thus being a part of "the ministry of healing" within the context of the changing milieu will be examined. Several papers prepared by the Church, magazines and souvenirs indigenous by nature

have been used apart from missionary reports and “personal experiences” in their narratives.

CHAPTER 2

Women and Education: The Story of Mizoram

Introduction:

This chapter is concerned with the story of women in the Lushai Hills and the emancipatory project undertaken by Christian Missions. The chapter addresses the educational propaganda that sought to accomplish change and situates women as the central focus in the overall configuration. It first looks at the various Christian missions that acted as 'change agents' by the instrumentality of education and how and why their choice of evangelizing Lushai Hills was made; more significantly, this chapter locates the ideological and cultural premises on which the background for women's education was proposed and materialized. The framework of missionary discourses was produced against the socio-cultural practices in order to provide a rationale for women's education. From looking at the social context in which women were subjected to two binary spheres of the public and the private, and the various ways in which a woman's life was circumscribed, it looks at how Missionaries came "to her rescue" and the various prejudices that centered around the "rescue" through female education. Arguably, the condition of woman was used as marker of social degradation which legitimized the missionary assumption of a superior position in acting as agents of change.

Since the story of women and education in Mizoram is studied within the framework of missionary educational enterprise, this chapter primarily relies on the various missionary reports and narratives which perceived, imagined and finally produced 'knowledge' and 'needs' of the Mizo woman. As for the responses to these

missionary constructions, indigenous sources of writings of both primary and secondary nature have been used in order to document the indigenous responses to the missionary agenda of women's education at various levels.

The Christian Missions:

Christianity in Mizoram was not a phenomena operating independently or in isolation among the other North-eastern states of India. In fact, Mizoram was the last state throughout the North-eastern states of India to be embarked upon by the Christian Missions.⁸ Much of the pioneering work in evangelism was done by the concerted efforts of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission (WCMFM), later known as the Welsh Presbyterian Mission. The earliest known Christian contact with North East India was made in the form of an exploratory tour in Assam by Catholics in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁹ For a while, there was a large Christian community associated with the Mughal garrison at Rangamati, which is presently situated in the Goalpara district of Assam, but left no permanent community in the region.¹⁰

However, it was the Protestants who were the first Christian missions to establish mission enterprise in the Northeast with consistent and uninterrupted operation. The

⁸ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity and the Subaltern Culture, Revival Movement as a Cultural Response to Westernization in Mizoram*, ISPCK, Delhi: 2006, p90. Hereafter cited as Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*.

⁹ In 1626, two Jesuit missionaries named Stephen Cacella and J.Gabral toured the Brahmaputra valley and were said to have been warmly received at the court of the Ahom Raja in Upper Assam. *ibid*, p 90

¹⁰ Frederick S. Downs, *History of Christianity in India, volume V, Part 5, North East India in the Nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. The church History Association of India, Bangalore: 1992. p, 64. Hereafter cited as Downs, *History*

Protestant mission came as an indirect result of the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in London on October 2, 1792. The following year, the Serampore Trio comprising of William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward commenced their work at Serampore, Assam field which was taken over by the American Baptist Mission in 1838.¹¹ The amalgamation of the BMS and the Serampore Mission in 1838 resulted in the closure of the mission station at Cherrapunji in Meghalaya which was also the first centre of Christian missions in the Northeast.

In 1841, the Welsh Presbyterian Mission embarked on mission activities at Cherrapunji, the then British headquarters of the District which the Serampore Mission left in 1838. This marked a significant event for the history of Christianity in Mizoram for it paved the way for the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission Society to begin operation in the area as “mission field” fifty years later.¹² The circumstances that led to the formation of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission Society were rather complex and started its course “under somewhat exceptional and turbulent circumstances” which admittedly “is not altogether pleasing to relate”.¹³

John Hughes Morris, in *The Story of our Foreign Mission accounts (Presbyterian Church of Wales)* attributes “sectarian feelings and theological controversies” as the crucial motivations underlying the desire to “act independently” from the London Missionary Society.¹⁴ The London Missionary Society that came into existence three

¹¹ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p, 90-91

¹² Ibid., p, 92

¹³ John Hughes Morris, *The Story of our Foreign Mission (Presbyterian Church of Wales)*, The synod Publication Board, Aizawl: 1990, p, 13. first Published by Hugh Evans & Sons Ltd. in 1930. hereafter cited as Morris, *Story*

¹⁴ Ibid. p11.

years after the foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society on October 2, 1792, has been undenominational in principle. Several Ministers of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists played a prominent role in the foundation of the London Missionary Society which in turn afforded the Church of Wales their first opportunity to participate in missionary enterprise and financial contributions.¹⁵

The connection between the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and the London Missionary Society lasted till 1840 (a period of forty five years), after which the former ultimately formed its own Missionary Society. During this period, the Society underwent a period of disintegration due to the intensification of theological controversies and sectarian feelings within it.¹⁶ Despite the emergence of the London Missionary Society through various organizationally united denominations, the management was seemingly manipulated by the 'Independents' or the Congregationalists against whom there was now a perpetual suspicion that discriminatory judgements towards the Methodists were exhibited by the Society's Directors in selection of candidates.¹⁷ These factors inexorably accentuated the longstanding aspiration for the formation of a separate Calvinistic Methodist Missionary Society which finally materialized in June 1843.

¹⁵ Ibid., p 7

¹⁶ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p 94

¹⁷ The feelings in favour of separation heightened when Thomas Jones' application to work in India was rejected, and whose fellow Calvinistic Methodist predecessors were also rejected on the sole ground suspected to be that they were Methodists. The Society of the North Wales Association then hastily sent Thomas Jones to the Khasi Hills in November 1840. He arrived at Cherrapunji on June 22, 1841 marking the foundation of the Welsh Missionary enterprise in the Northeast India. The North and South Wales Associations formally instituted the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign mission by a unanimous decision in June 1843. Ibid. pp 92-94.

The choice of the Lushai Hills as a mission station for the Welsh Presbyterian Mission owed its origin to one of the Welsh pioneer missionaries, Rev. William Williams. Serving at Shella in the neighboring Khasi Hills, the Reverend visited the Lushai Hills in 1891 whose report on 'the state of the people' urged the Welsh Mission to undertake evangelization of the Lushai Hills.¹⁸ His "strong desire" to go and preach the Gospel "on seeing the sad condition of the people" could not materialize due to his unexpected death.¹⁹ The following year, in 1892, the General assembly of the Welsh Mission formally adopted the Lushai territory as part of their mission field to begin missionary operations as soon as it was found practicable.

During the time when the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission Society was making preparations to enter the Lushai Hills as an extension of their mission enterprise, similar venture was undertaken by J.H. Lorrain of the Indian Aborigines Mission, also known as the Arthington Mission. The Mission was run by Robert Arthington, a millionaire businessman in Leeds, who was "a sternly evangelical person, eager to send the Gospel to those who had never heard it and who had his own original ideas as to how this was to be done".²⁰ Notwithstanding the shared intentions of both the Missions to 'adopt' the Lushai Hills, the plans and decisions were unknown to either of the two Christian Missions.²¹ The primary purpose of the Arthington Mission was to

¹⁸ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1894 in *Reports of the Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales on Mizoram, 1894-1957*, compiled by K. Thanzauva, , Aizawl: The Synod Literature and Publication Boards, 1997., hereafter cited as *The Report of the Lushai Hills*

¹⁹ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1896, p 1

²⁰ Lloyd, *History of the Church in Mizoram (Harvest in the Hills)*, The Synod Publication Board, Aizawl: 1991, p 25, hereafter cited as Lloyd, *History*

²¹ Morris, *The Story*, p 80

evangelize the people in and around Assam who had never heard of the Gospel. To begin their operations, three of the Mission's pioneer missionaries set out for India in 1890.²²

J.H. Lorrain, pioneer of the Arthington Mission in Lushai Hills was 21 years was when he reached India on January 21, 1891. Later he went to Agartola of Tripura but his application for permission to work among the tribes was rejected. When F.W. Savidge under the same Christian Mission arrived at Bengal on November 1891, the two men, whom D.E. Jones designated as "men of cultivated tastes...very methodical in their habits...very scrupulously neat in their clothing and particular in their care of food and their use of leisure time"²³ set out in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and made several failed attempts to secure permission for entry to Tripura by the Maharaja.²⁴

Similar attempts for entry to Lushai Hills followed which was denied initially due to the Lushai rebellion which resulted in an attack of some of the officers of the Government of India. Accordingly, orders were issued by the Chief Commissioner prohibiting Europeans from entering the country.²⁵ Therefore, they had to wait for some time till the pacification of the country.

Consequently Lorrain and Savidge proceeded to Silchar (Assam) in 1892 where they met Dr. T.J. Jones of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission, the missionary in Silchar. The two men assisted in the evangelical works carried out by T.J. Jones in the local bazaar during 1893 resulting in frequent contacts with the Mizos who came to the Local Bazaar. This provided them the opportunity to pick up the language and learning their ways of

²² Lalsangkima Pachuau, *Robert Arthington a Leh A Ramthar Rawngbawlina Chanchin*, the Synod Publication Board, Aizawl: 1994. pp 26-27.

²³ Lloyd, *History*, p 28

²⁴ Lloyd, *History*, p 25

²⁵ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1894.

life. Within 12 months, permission for entry to the Lushai Hills was granted to them by A.W. Davies, Political Officer of the North Lushai Hills²⁶. The permit was granted on the condition that they would not interfere with the administration.²⁷

Lorrain and Savidge, known to the Mizos as Pu Buanga and Sap Upa, arrived at Sairang on January 11, 1894, to begin operations among “the bloodthirsty” race as their article reads:

*But as little was known of this bloodthirsty race, we resolved if possible to visit them and ascertain what possibilities there might be in them. If men of such courage had their energies directed to another channel, we thought they might become an infinite blessing to their fellowmen.*²⁸

Their stay in the Hills was however, only for a brief period of four years since Robert Arthington, founder of the private missionary society, as described by Frederick Downs “the wealthy and eccentric Englishman...devoted to the evangelization of primitive peoples”, laid down the observance of the peculiar rule that agents of the Society “should proclaim the Gospel and then move on to other fields, leaving the business of Church organization to others”.²⁹ The two missionaries, by the rule, had to move to other sphere of action. Thus, four years after the Arthington Mission entered the Lushai Hills, the Welsh Mission took over the area as their “Mission field” to continue

²⁶ Lloyd, *History*, pp 25-26.

²⁷ Vanlalchhuanawma, *History*, p 99

²⁸ “Among the Headhunters of Lushai”. *The Wide World Magazine*, 1V. 20 (November 1899), p 375.

quoted in Kipgen, Mangkhosat, *Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and the Zo Culture in Mizoram*. Mizo Theological Conference, Aizawl: 1997, p 193. Hereafter cited as Kipgen, *Christianity*.

²⁹ Downs, *History*, p 83

the pioneering efforts of Lorrain and Savidge. The long four years wait was due to the missionary concert which was observed by all evangelical societies, preventing them from entering "the field while they were in possession".³⁰

Permanent work of evangelization began with the arrival of the first Welsh Presbyterian missionary, D.E. Jones in September 1897. He was accompanied by a Khasi, Rai Bhajur who quit his job as Sub-Inspector of Schools in the Khasi Hills to give assistance to D.E. Jones and remained till the arrival of the second Welsh missionary Edwin Rowlands at the end of the following year.³¹ Thus began their mission of evangelizing, educating and laying foundations for alternative roles to women through educational propaganda.

Rationale for Women's Education: the Social Context

*Without any ambiguity, Lushai has been, and still is, a country for men
before it is one for women and children.*³²

Flesh of the crab is no meat; word of the woman is no word.

Wisdom of the women does not reach beyond the village water point.

Worn out fencing and a woman can be replaced.

A woman, a dog, a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be

Women have no religion... (Early Mizo anecdotes and "proverbs")³³

³⁰ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1896. p 2

³¹ Downs, *History* p 84

³² Mc Call, A.G., *Lushai Chrysalis*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Government of Mizoram, first print 1949, Reprint: 1997, p 26. Hereafter cited as Mc Call, *Lushai*

³³ *Mizo Women Today*, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1991, p 7

A study of Mizo history concerning women's position and roles in the indigenous culture reveals two contradictory features regarding the role and status of women. This first contradiction is marked by the tradition of women occupying a significant place in the family and social life. The second contradiction is the perpetuating disempowering story of women in a strongly patriarchal structure.

In regards to her place in the family, the birth of a female child to a Mizo family was welcomed and treated with equal joy as the birth of the male child.³⁴ Considerations of gaining support through her marriage provided one reason for the celebratory attitude towards the female child. A more important reason was the essentially ascribed domestic roles for the females in the household which she performed right from childhood.

The pre-literate Mizo society had the predominance of the institution of the 'Zawlbuk', the bachelor's quarters, regarded as the most important social institution in every Mizo Village and was exclusively for male occupants. Serving as the educational, cultural and communal center in each village³⁵, its inmates consisted of the senior married men, the young men unmarried men and boys below puberty stage- the firewood collectors. N.E. Parry observed that the training and life in Zawlbuk was "an excellent discipline"³⁶, which also acted as a recreational centre, a remand home, a school of culture and learning as well as a durbar hall. Folklores were *narrated* to the young boys of Zawlbuk serving as the preserver of the most significant oral traditions, where social morals were perpetuated and traditional values upheld.³⁷

³⁴ Dr. Mrs. Chatterji, N., *Status of Women in the Earlier Mizo Society*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl: 1975, p 2, Hereafter cited as Mrs. Chatterji, *Status*

³⁵ Kipgen, *Christianity*, p 61

³⁶ Parry, N.E. *The Lakhers*, 1932, reprinted, Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, 1976.p 27

³⁷ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p 55

The exclusivity of the Zawlbuk as strictly for males, simultaneously dictated endless domestic duties to women. Barred from any participation in the administration, Zawlbuk and other social institutions, as also in the 'religious' domain where she had no role to play³⁸, women were accorded engagements in numerous household chores signifying the important position a woman held in the family as a girl, as a mother and a wife. From her early childhood, the female child in a Mizo family engaged herself in household activities. While the male child moved into the 'Zawlbuk discipline' early in his life, the responsibility of cooking, fetching water and firewood, baby sitting etc was embraced by the young girl. In comparison with the girl, the male child, by custom and convention, was exempted from performing any domestic duty.³⁹

By the time the girl reached adulthood, she began working in the jhums in the company of her parents, thus increasing her responsibilities. At the completion of working in the fields, domestic chores awaited her return. The customary practice of cotton work was observed by both married and unmarried women. Engaging in their daily work of committing to the needs of the family, a woman was always occupied with pounding and winnowing rice for the day, washing clothes, weeding in the fields, gathering cotton, spinning and weaving clothes for all the family members and entertaining children and visitors.⁴⁰ Apart from these, the prevalent practice of *inleng* or 'courting' consumed her time, by the practice of which boys visited the girl's place, to

³⁸ In the old "animistic religion" of the early Mizos where sacrifices were offered to the 'all-pervasive demons and spirits', the function of the priests (Bawlpu) and the exorcist (Sadawt) was an exclusively male affair.

³⁹ *Mizo Women Today*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl:1991, p 8

⁴⁰ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p 47

spend time amusing themselves.⁴¹ This required them to receive and entertain the young men with courtesy and manners throughout their stay. Conforming to the early Mizo “proverb” that held “word of a woman is no word”⁴², girls did not have the choice of *inleng* nor were they to display any dislike for the men who came to her house.

All this while, Shakespear in *The Lushei Kuki Clans* remarks that “the menfolk were said to enjoy themselves lying in the sun and smoking, and the younger ones courting the pretty clothmakers”.⁴³ Notwithstanding the routine chores performed by the woman at home and in the fields, the cycle of chores continued even on the way to return home after toiling in the jhums where majority of the work in weeding and harvesting was assigned to her. On her way back from the fields, she was also encumbered with the responsibility of collecting and carrying back firewood and food for the domesticated animals owned by most families. Due to all the laborious work, the regular practice of weaving was considered almost relaxing and “as a holiday from the strenuous works” even though she was conventionally required to work on her spinning wheel till late in the night.⁴⁴

Despite her extremely important role and position in the family, there was not an element of security in her position. Her membership in the family could be terminated any time if the husband decided on the utterance of “ka ma che”, which implied that the

⁴¹ Sangkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati:2002, p 90S

⁴² *Mizo Women Today*, TRI, p 7 hereafter cited as Sangkima, *Essays*

⁴³ Shakespear, John, *The Lushei Kuki Clans: Part 1*, Aizawl: Thangruma Printing Press for Tribal Research Institute, 1975.p 17

⁴⁴ *Mizo Women Today*, TRI, p 8.



husband divorced her and had to leave her home.⁴⁵ In addition to the domestic functions, the woman also had to cultivate a capacity to smoke *Tuibur*, a nicotine substance which was used like chewing tobacco in the early Mizo society. *Tuibur* was smoked by a special pipe in which the smoke passes through water which became impregnated with nicotine. Failure to supply enough of this water (*Tuibur*) to her parents in law may also result in her divorce.

In case of commitment of 'immoral behaviors' between young men and women, the male partner was said to earn honor in the world of spirits and the female partner was doomed to perdition. In instances of disloyalty in marriage, the woman was considered to deserve public contempt and her skirt would be hung like a flag on a treetop at the most frequented entrance of her village. She was also considered the most likely prey of fierce animals such as tiger and leopard. The woman was subjected to humiliation while the male partner on the other hand, earned honor for his success as a seducer.⁴⁶ The wife also remained shy for the few initial months of her marriage, (possibly intensified due to the overwhelming influence of her in laws and the power exercised by them), she usually abstained from eating a full meal and would sneak back home in a suitable moment to her parents for leftover meals!⁴⁷

Evidently, there was a definite division of work between men and women, as Mc Call observes, "There is a distinct division of Labour as between man and his womenfolk, and habits are subordinate to the seasonal needs of cultivation".⁴⁸ Grace Lewis also notes

⁴⁵ Sangkima, " Position and Status of Women in Traditional Mizo Society" *Essays*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati:2004, p 91

⁴⁶ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, pp 45-46

⁴⁷ *Mizo Women Today*, TRI p 8

⁴⁸ Mc Call, *Lushai*, p 167

the unequal division of labor and writes, "...hunting, fighting, building and basket weaving were the only kinds of works men engaged in...women do the harder share of work".⁴⁹ Further, what was considered 'women's work' was not touched by men "even in jest"⁵⁰ due to the fear of being labeled "*thaibawih*" or "henpecked" because it projected a negative image of the man and called for mockery and ridicule from his male acquaintances.

In matters related to marriage, which was a regulated contract between the married couple and their families, the parents of the girl exercised considerable power and authority in the final decision and choice of the partner; and her market price depended on her beauty and industry.⁵¹ After having undergone the necessary courtship by the young couple they may develop an intimacy that would result into a matrimonial relationship. This courting of young girls by young men assumed the well established social custom of '*nula rim*' (courting) in the Mizo society.⁵² A negotiator, known as "*Palai*" was sent by the boy's family to arrange the terms and conditions for the marriage, including the bride price. In the pre-Christian Mizo society, the bride price was paid in *Sial* or Mithun. After marriage, the husband enjoyed the right to "throw out" his wife if he pleased. The woman could also free herself of marriage by returning the bride

⁴⁹ Grace R. Lewis, *The Lushai Hills: The story of the Lushai pioneer Mission*, The Baptist Missionary Society, 19 Furnival Street E.C., 1907, p 27, quoted in Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p 47

⁵⁰ *Mizo Women Today*, TRI, pp7-8

⁵¹ Rev. Zairema, *God's Miracle in Mizoram (A glimpse of Christian Work Among Headhunters)*, Published by the Synod Press and Bookroom, Aizawl:1978, hereafter Zairema, *Miracle*

⁵² Chatterji, *Status*:, p 6

price. Commitment of adultery by a woman gave the husband the right to kill the wife's lover.⁵³

Early Mizo society permitted a large measure of free mixing between boys and girls and exhibited no stern reservation against pre marital sexual relationship. However, a girl who remained 'undefiled' till her marriage in spite of the large measure of laxity was held in high esteem and more sought after than others. However, the society has stringent measures against any form of adultery on the part of a married woman. The direct result of such social mores was that sexual aberration such as sodomy and prostitution were uncommon to the society. Hence any case of an individual's indulgence was severely reprimanded for, under the existing social control.⁵⁴

The Law of inheritance in early Mizo society was an area where one finds blatant discrimination of women in a strongly patriarchal set up. According to Kipgen, "a woman could inherit only in cases where there were no male relations"⁵⁵, in this male dominated society where inheritance went through the male line from father to son, the practice denied any share of property to a daughter. The youngest son of the family, the inheritor of the father's property and the ancestral home was assigned to look after the parents at old age. In case of disability or the event of death, the responsibility befell on the second youngest son. However, in the case of a Lusei chief and the Paite tribes, the eldest son was the rightful inheritor of the father's property. A chief who possessed more than one village distributed chieftainship of the villages to all his sons, the main ancestral village remained with the eldest son. A chief who had no son was succeeded by the nearest male

⁵³ Ibid, pp 1-2

⁵⁴ Ibid, p 24

⁵⁵ Kipgen, *Christianity*, p 82.

kin, from the male side of the family. The son of a sister could not claim inheritance to chieftainship because a Mizo mother had no right to property.⁵⁶

The overall configuration reflects that there were indeed apparent contradictions where 'traditional' views on women were concerned. While the woman was the central figure in the domestic domain, there lives were firmly circumscribed. Though the prominent and significant role of the woman in the private sphere has been emphasized, in the public sphere, the general attitude on women and the social customary practices pertaining to women were oppressive. The exercise of superiority of males and domination over females, the unquestioned submission of women to domestic tyranny, the invariable perception of the female as a sexual object and an agency for a man's biological reproduction and the control of her sexuality, situated the woman to a secondary and subordinated status in the social fabric, which was featured by distinctions of roles in the public and private space, the more pervasive attitude being the discriminatory and the oppressive. This very attitude and practice were picked up both by the British officials as well as Christian missionaries, as an avenue for expansion of the expansion of educational propaganda, reconceptualising 'the woman' and generating the need of 'civilizing agents' as well as enabling them to create a space not only to appropriate but also legitimize their ideologies and activities.

Perceiving the Mizo Women: Missionary Discourse

The Lieutenant Colonel G.H. Loch, a British official, wrote to the missionary R.A. Lorrain after a visit to his centre at Serkawr in 1911,

⁵⁶ *Mizo Women Today*, TRI, p 3.

*If we are really to improve the home surroundings of these Hill tribes, we must educate the women and work through them. Women may not have, in these Hills, the same influence amongst the community or in family life that they possess in more civilized countries, but I am confident that the more we civilize and raise the status of women, the better the condition of the people will be, both from a material moral point of view.*⁵⁷

The above letter suggests that the status and position of Mizo women, to the gaze of the outsider, the supposedly more 'civilized' British official, did not seem satisfactory. Missionary discourses echoed similar rhetoric of the need to 'civilize', in which education was one of the most important trajectories to achieving the much desired transformation. Missionary operations were carried out in three major branches, Evangelistic, Educational and Medical. The Educational and the Medical, as stated by Morris, had their ultimate aim in the furtherance of the evangelistic work.⁵⁸

The first Welsh Presbyterian missionary to Lushai Hills, the Rev. D.E. Jones, emphatically stated the urgency to evangelize the Lushais in his report encoding,

Wherever we go, the more we hear of the customs, habits and lives of the people, the more we are convinced of their need of the Savior. Deeper is the shadow of this country's sin than the dark hue of the surrounding mountain under an approaching storm...we wait the coming of the Great Light of the world, who shall pour forth his Eternal Light upon these peoples who sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death [and bring] life to those who are perishing for want of the truth"⁵⁹. Nevertheless, he was not dismissive about undertaking evangelical work among these people whose paradoxical characteristics were considered interesting, and whom he reportedly characterized as people who were "steeped in drink,

⁵⁷ Lorrain, R.A., *Five Years in Unknown Jungles: For God and Empire* 1912. Reprint. Guwahati, 1988. p262, Downs, *History*, p 159.

⁵⁸ Morris, *Story*, p101

⁵⁹ Report of the Lushai Hills 1898-99. the Rev D.E. Jones

*superstition, ignorance and carnality. [But they on the other hand] are an interesting people to work among: primitive, intelligent, lively and demonstrative, and the work among them is naturally hopeful.*⁶⁰

The subsequent unfolding of missionary narratives and reports largely reflect on a similar or a tacitly shared predominant White perception of colonized societies as ‘dark cultures’ that necessitated the agenda and justification of the civilizing mission. Naturally, Christian missionaries sought to gift the ‘primitives, living in a state of ignorance’ the ‘light of the Gospel’⁶¹ by engaging themselves with various evangelical and educational propaganda that would ameliorate the condition of women. In order to create the distinct Christian identity among the women, education essentially became the primary site for the propagation of missionary ideologies. It provided the space to create the ‘new Christian woman’ who would make ‘better wives and better mothers’⁶². In this trajectory of progress, which would bring freedom from the deplorable conditions of superstitions and the repeatedly emphasized ‘lowly’ position of women in their accounts, the Lushai woman is “the drudge and the burden carrier...kept ignorant and degraded”⁶³ under the

⁶⁰ The Report of the Lushai Hills 1899-1900, Fort Aijal. Missionary the Rev. David Evan Jones.

⁶¹ The missionary Llyod, J.M., in *History of the Church in Mizoram*, Aizawl:1991, remarks on the transformation of ‘the simple and primitive society’ (p52) of the people through the Church endeavors in transmitting the Gospel.

⁶² In a letter to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills by Mrs K.E.Jones dated May 4, 1916, she explicitly stated that her aim was to ‘educate them in such a manner which would make them intelligent and enlightened wives and mothers’. Under this propaganda, the three R’s were secondary to ‘practical education’ which emphasized on an education that served the needs of the local communities. Quoted in Hluna J.V., *Education And Missionaries in Mizoram*. Spectrum Publications Guwahati: Delhi: 1992 p157. hereafter, Hluna, *Education*

⁶³ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1916-17, the Rev.F.J.Sandy, *ibid*, p 61 expresses that people have no ardent desire for their daughters to be educated since (they)are a long way from recognizing in practical life the dignity that belongs to every human soul

social custom, missionary reports increasingly stated that “one of the great needs of the country is the need for better educated women”⁶⁴.

With the firm conviction that Christianity would usher the much desired transformation and that “Christians were far superior to the heathen”⁶⁵, Christian missionaries urged upon themselves to live “so much above the natives” in all things, setting a goal before them which “they should strive to reach, and a model which they might follow”⁶⁶. It was believed that this emulation would yield beneficent results following the concerted efforts of the Mission in Lushai hills. In this rhetoric, missionary education legitimated, expedited and sustained the evangelical endeavors in the Lushai Hills.

The evident use of the conditions of Mizo women as markers of social degradation by the missionaries is seen in missionary discourses which abound with “the sight of degradation”⁶⁷ that struck them. Perceiving themselves to be “senders of light” and thus agents of change to the mission field where “*there are souls to rescue, there are souls to save*”⁶⁸, stories of successes of the Mission pervaded their reports. Relating to the spread of education in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, by the Welsh Missionaries who “revolutionized the district”,⁶⁹ encouragement was drawn from the mission’s success and sentiments evoked to work with commitment and increased zeal among the other

⁶⁴ The Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1924-25. 1 South Eastern Division. Missionaries: The Rev and Mrs. David Evan Jones *ibid* p69.

⁶⁵ The Report of the Lushai Hills 1906-07. The Rev. D.E. Jones *ibid* p35

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1899-1900. A report sent to the Home Board by the Rev. D.E. Jones.

⁶⁸ Lloyd, *History*, p 349.

⁶⁹ Assam Census Report, 1911

“heathen” society which was in need of the “light” to emerge from the “darkness of heathenism”.

Christian missionaries in the Lushai Hills also acknowledged that “women have always been regarded as inferior, and some of the strong fastnesses of superstition and ignorance in Lushai have to do with the place of woman in the life of the people”.⁷⁰ Providing women’s education also fitted well with the evangelical zeal of building churches and spreading Gospel. In 1940, Rev. Samuel Davies reported that “the education of its women will form an important chapter in the history of education in Lushai. Education is the utmost important if we are to build up a strong church, and it also opens a way for the Gospel”.⁷¹ The service of education to the ‘natives’ therefore, not only ensured their progress but also essentially served the purpose of the Mission to “safeguard its own existence”.⁷²

The social customs and cultural practices were discussed in missionary narratives with strongly disapproving moral overtones to evoke the sentiments of the Christian “duty” to ameliorate the conditions of the Mizo woman. Thus, missionary writings were replete with the stereotypical images of the heathen woman’s ‘ignorance’, ‘dirt’, and ‘needs’ who were waiting to receive the Gospel as an agency of progress and change. To accomplish this task, education and medicine formed the two key trajectories that became central to missionary operations in emancipating the Mizo woman.

⁷⁰The Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1937-38, the Rev. David Edwards. P 146.

⁷¹ The Report of the Lushai Hills , 1939-1940, the Rev. Samuel Davies. P 161.

⁷² The Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1935-36, the Rev. David Edwards, p 133.

Initial Endeavors on Education: The Experimental Schools

The history of school education began through the efforts initiated by the Christian missions. The Church, as argued by Animesh Ray, acted as a 'modernizing instrument' since it laid ground for the spread of education. This subsequently influenced 'the course of operations of social custom and changed people's orientation'⁷³. As soon as the two pioneer Christian missionaries, Rev.J.H.Lorrain and F.W.Savidge under the Arthington Aborigines Mission arrived to the Lushai Hills in 1894, they initiated the mission of imparting education to the people. A small hut of 12ft.square was erected where Savidge taught "a few rather unwilling children"⁷⁴.

Subsequently, alphabets in the form of the roman script for the people was prepared in the beginning of 1895. The two pioneer missionaries, devoted much time in learning language, writing small books in Mizo and to the translation of parts of the New Testament, namely the gospels of Luke, John and the Acts of the Apostles⁷⁵. This was later printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Lorain and Savidge 'devised an alphabet using Roman lettering based on the Hunterian system which was later modified'⁷⁶. Under the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills Col.J.Shakespear, "a man who held the firm conviction that there was much good that the Gospel could do which no Government could"⁷⁷ a small hut was erected near fort Aijal for the school hostel which accommodated only few learners mainly the chiefs and the sons of chiefs⁷⁸.

⁷³ .Ray, Animesh: *Mizoram: Dynamics of Social Change* (Calcutta: Pearl Publishers, 1982) p56.

⁷⁴ Lloyd, p31

⁷⁵ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1897, p 2

⁷⁶ Lloyd, *ibid*

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p 43.

The first printed book produced in the Mizo language was a Childs primer published by the Assam govt. in 1895. A Lushai English dictionary comprising of several thousands words was composed by Lorain and a grammar for the language, presumably by Savidge was published. This was later printed by the Assam government Press⁷⁹. The translation of Hymns from Welsh and English to the Lushai language was simultaneously undertaken. After their stay for 18 months, the Arthington Mission issued authorization to hand over the field to the Welsh Mission. Eventually under the Calvinistic Methodist Mission, Rev.D.E.Jones in 1897, succeeded the two pioneer missionaries and started school afresh in 1898 with the assistance of Rai Bhajur, a khasi. He was accompanied by Rev.Edwin Rolands who was deputed to look after education in the Lushai hills the next year. On 15 Feb 1898, D.E.Jones opened a school although quite rudimentary in form. The school was a building with poles of solid trees, walls of bamboo and a thatch of leaves⁸⁰ though with very irregular attendance of the pupils⁸¹.

The school opened by 'men of cultivated tastes'⁸² served as 'an all purpose building'. It was used for Sunday school and day's school. DE Jones and Edwin Rowlands in their 1899-1900 reports stated that 'the school went on regularly at Aijal for about 9 out of 12 months. Education being the most important arm of evangelical mission, a prominent place was given to Biblical teaching in the school, but other branches of elementary education were not neglected.'⁸³ The boys were taught to read and write

⁷⁸ *Mizo Women Today*: Tribal Research Institute, Department of Art and Culture,(Aizawl:1991)p20

⁷⁹ Kipgen, *Christianity*: p196

⁸⁰ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1898-99, p 3

⁸¹ *Mizo Women Today*, p20

⁸² Llyod,ibid., p28

⁸³ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1898-99, the Rev. D.E. Jones

Lushai, arithmetic, geography, English in addition to scripture lessons in these initial stages⁸⁴. Missionary writings reflect the early struggles of attracting students and persuading them to attend the schools. The rise and fall in the attendance of pupils featured recurrently in their reports. "There has been a material increase in numbers this year in the day school. By December 1903, there were 77 on the register...at the end of 1904, there were 135 names..."⁸⁵

By 1901-02, the school was divided into elementary and advanced school, held in the mornings and afternoons respectively. Subjects such as arithmetic, English, teachings of the Acts of the Apostles etc featured the second stage of the school. Attendance of girls was encouraging at times but showed no sign of regularity. However, two girls, Nui and Saii were the only girls who appeared most regularly and made distinct progress in their education, even sympathizing with the religious teachings imparted in the schools.⁸⁶ However, missionaries rationalized that patience was needed for the "desolate land" to become like "the Garden of Eden" and that "the future is bright with promise".⁸⁷

By 1903, over 40 girls registered their names in the Mission school, but ceased attending to a great extent. The missionary Edwin Rowlands accounted the absence to the attitude of the parents who were "generally being indifferent"⁸⁸ towards female education. In 1898, three Government schools were already in existence; one was located in Aizawl, and the other two at Lunglei. By 1903, five more schools were started in villages which were gradually incorporated in the municipality of Aizawl- Maubawk, Naga Village,

⁸⁴The Report of the Lushai Hills 1889-1900, p6.

⁸⁵ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1904-05, p21

⁸⁶ The Reports of the Lushai Hills 1901-1902, p14.

⁸⁷ The Reports of the Lushai Hills, 1903, -05, pp19-25.

⁸⁸ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1902-03, p 17

Hriangmual, Thakthing and Chaprassis village (Rahsi Veng). The first batch of students who attended the Mission's school now became important instruments of disseminating knowledge to others by serving as teachers in these experimental schools. The first two were placed in the charge of two senior boys of the first Mission school, whereas the last three were placed in the charge of three senior school girls, namely, Nuii, Saii and Pawngi.⁸⁹

As early as 1898, experimental schools had been conducted in numerous villages. The positive impression created by the local people's willingness to support their own schools led the Welsh Mission to run schools on nine selected villages by 1903. The following year was a significant year for the history of the Mission schools. The Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Bamfylde Fuller, on his visit to the Lushai Hills was "much pleased" with the appearance of the Mission School, and "did not see the need, under the circumstance, of a separate Government school". In consultation with Major Shakespear, he ordered amalgamation of the Government schools with the Mission schools and placed the whole management of education in the area under the hands of the Mission. A sum of Rs. 2400 was also granted to erect a new school in Aizawl.⁹⁰

During their four years stay in the Lushai Hills, Lorrain and Savidge started the Sunday school as necessitated by the evangelizing mission. They printed the catechism upon the substance of the Bible and used it in the Sunday school⁹¹. Among the small Christian community, Sunday schools served as a place where adults 'were encouraged to form one of the classes into a literacy class, so that all who attended could read the

⁸⁹ The Report of the Lushai Hills 1904-05, p 22

⁹⁰ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1904-05, p22

⁹¹ Kipgen, *Christianity*, 195-196

Scriptures for themselves'. This, it was argued, would give 'an additional impetus to elementary literacy' and it was a method which was used with great success in the 19th century Wales⁹². The method was replicated by the Mission in the Lushai Hills. This is also clear indicator that the missionaries were satisfied so long as people were literate enough to read the Scriptures. Imparting higher education did not figure prominently in the scheme of evangelism and education. Primary education remained the emphasis for years, mainly 'to overcome illiteracy' and to give 'enlightenment through good books', Lloyd further remarks that "the Bible was conspicuously the Book of books" which provided them a 'window to the world'. Thus, Christian literature was regarded as an essential factor which would bring enlightenment to the people. The years ending in 1905 therefore, 'sowed the seeds of a transformed nation' which resulted in the Lushais' transformation as 'from being a very simple and primitive society, they have being catapulted abruptly into the maelstrom of the 20th century⁹³ which also reflects a rhetoric of missionary "success" in "primitive" and "heathen" society. In effect, it was only in 1944 that the first High school in the Lushai Hills was established in Aizawl. Since its inception, education in general and female education in particular, made a significant progress.

The Local Response

The response to Missionary propoganda of education by the indigenous society contrasted that of the Government as it was the Government which first responded positively to missionary articulations of education as a social need of the Mizos. The

⁹² Llyod,*History*.,p122

⁹³ *ibid*,p177

Government agents, as seen earlier, extended help to the Mission schools through various grants, funds, construction of a hostel, granting pieces of lands for erecting a new school site etc. The relation of the Mission and the Government is described by Morris thus:

*It is pleasing to record also that from the commencement of our work on these Hills, the most cordial relationship has existed between our missionaries and the Government officers. In the early years, Major Shakespear and Colonel Loch were especially helpful. A Printing Press, presented to the Mission by Colonel Loch, has proved of invaluable help to the work.*⁹⁴

In consequence, the Government's liberal cooperation to the Mission led the latter to seek patronage of Government officials for their work. While education did effect social change, "their overall impact contributed at the best, to the reinforcement of the existing colonial structure".⁹⁵

The student's irregularity to school and lack of interest that evoked great concern to the missionaries for many years owed its reasons to cultural factors. Vanlalchhuanawma argues that the new school meant an abrupt break from the old way of life, a transition from the traditional to an alien system.⁹⁶ The school therefore, stood as a threat to venture into the unknown, since the school was also representation of a culturally alien system when it was introduced in the Lushai Hills. For the boys, it threatened to "rob them from their daily chores, adventure and fun"⁹⁷.

Girls on the other hand, were in perpetual engagements with domestic chores right from childhood. This was one of the main factors that explained the reluctance of the parents to send their daughters to school. The service that she rendered at home was

⁹⁴ Morris, *Story*, p 81

⁹⁵ Laldena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism, 1894-1947*, Shillong: Vendrame Institute, 1998, p 118.

⁹⁶ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*. P 132

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p 133

more preferable than sending girls to school with no assurance of material benefits, keeping in mind that paid job was not a common phenomenon in the first years of introducing the school. Thus the conservatism of the parents was also determined by the economic condition.⁹⁸

This stand is justifiable on consideration of the limited employment girls could avail themselves of. The post of a teacher and training for nurse being the only conceivable employment for girls was beyond hope for the larger majority. Under the circumstances, persuading the parents to send the female child to school was the primary task needed to be addressed. Missionaries often blame their attitude due to their failure in grasping “the value of women’s education, and do not see the point of sending their daughters to school”.⁹⁹ Those parents who sent their daughters to school were looked with suspicion and “feared that some send their girls to school simply in order that they may fetch a higher marriage price”.¹⁰⁰

The option to keep girls away from mission schools was also largely determined by the social stigma attached to female education. The notion that “educated girls use their writing skills only to write love letters to boys” was strongly conformed to. Even as missionaries itinerate in various villages, the attempt to persuade the parents to send their daughters to school was responded with the question, “who would work if the girls were sent to schools?”¹⁰¹ They might part with their sons to get them educated, but not with the daughters. On being asked by the missionaries, the frequent reply was, “we can’t send

⁹⁸ Mizo Women Today, TRI, p 21

⁹⁹ The Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1922-25, Miss Kitty Lewis, p 72

¹⁰⁰ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1928-29, Miss Morfydd Davies, p 90.

¹⁰¹ Chapman and Clarke, *Mizo Miracles*, Christian Literate Service, Madras, pp 13-14

our girls to school, she is too useful at home. Take my boy!”¹⁰² Just two years after the first Girl’s school was started by Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones, the missionary D.E. Jones reported of intense persecutions of Christians by the “heathen community” which had kept the Christians in fear for many months. *“Many were driven from their houses and out of their villages. ... Public meetings were prohibited, and children were forbidden to go to school.”*¹⁰³

The social discrimination against women created a problem with regard to women’s education which the Rev. Sandy emphasized:

*Special efforts have been directed towards increasing the attendance of girls at the village schools, and it is gratifying to observe that their number has increased from 46 to 95. The people of Lushai have no ardent desire for their daughters to be educated. Here, a woman is the drudge and the burden carrier. Our Christians are in a long way from recognizing in practical life the dignity that belongs to every human soul. And in consequence there is a strong desire to keep the girls ignorant and degraded.”*¹⁰⁴

Despite missionary endeavors, girls in the school were prejudiced and condemned to be socially spoilt because they had to abstain from household chores and were accused of moral degradation because they adopted Western dress. Some even had song composition in the matter that goes, “it is disgraceful to go to a school in a short skirt, they hold printed books, they are unnatural wanton, wanton.”¹⁰⁵

In spite of the various set backs, the efforts to implement and provide educational facilities to the people who “(Lushai) needs food, teaching, healing from us, even more than preaching. We need education very badly. The physical conditions of life make it

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1906-07, p 34.

¹⁰⁴ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1916-17, the Rev. F.J. Sandy. P 61

¹⁰⁵ Vanlalchuanawma, *Christianity*, p 134

easy for the old animism to live vigorously. So we have to set about making a comprehensive programme of education.”¹⁰⁶

Through the efforts of the missionaries and the Mizo Christians, change in people’s perception of education was slowly evolving. By 1937, education became one of the accepted values of Lushai life.¹⁰⁷ These periods also witnessed marked increase in conversion to Christianity. However, to the missionaries, majority of these converts “who had just emerged from heathenism” still stood “in need of continual care and guidance, schools, teachers and evangelists, to conform and establish them in faith”.¹⁰⁸

To these tasks were Mizo men, the first generation of educated Christians who were instrumental in articulating the social needs and issues concerning women. Many of these men condemned parental opposition against female education and encouraged schooling for girls.¹⁰⁹ These voices also expressed deep concern on the misconception of the people that “educated women would become disrespectful and immoral”¹¹⁰, and made attempts to create awareness among the people who “remained ignorant of the values of learning”¹¹¹. Many of these writings reflect the changing perceptions of men once they were educated and advocated for similar change among others, especially in regards to the position of women. These men also repeatedly criticized the way in which men

¹⁰⁶ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1934-35, the Rev. David Edwards, p 122

¹⁰⁷ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1936-37, the Rev. David Edwards, p 137.

¹⁰⁸ The Statistics for 1937, Reports of WCMFMS, p 143

¹⁰⁹ The writings of these men are found in the monthly newsletter called “Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu,” (Mizo and Vai newspaper) circulated monthly from November 1902 till 1941, and constitute a valuable source of information on the history of Mizos around this time. From its beginning till 1911, it was under the charge of Colonel J. Shakespear and A.R. Giles, handed over to Pu Makthanga from 1911 to 1936 and from then till 1941, Pu Lalkailuia Sailo and Pu Sainghinga served as editors of the newsletter. All the monthly copies have been preserved and accessible in the Synod Archives, Mission Veng, Aizawl.

¹¹⁰ Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu, September 1906. Chautera, Serkawn Skul wrote that people were still not appreciative of the privilege of education given to the Mizos and urged upon them to utilize the opportunity.

¹¹¹ Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu, December 1909.

gained “honour” and defamed girls on the destruction of her chastity and labeled as a successful seducer.¹¹² Addressing the domestic drudgery which befell women and yet still enduring abusive languages and sometimes physical, the general pervasive fear of being a “henpecked” and the related mockery “look at the man performing a woman’s job, his days of wearing a skirt are approaching!” the solution offered for men and women alike was education.¹¹³ Most of these men agreed on the view that “educating one woman is to educate the whole family”¹¹⁴ and by 1933, significant progress had been made to break away from these notions and the prevalence of the suspicion that education would generate “evil” in a woman or that “it cultivates laziness”¹¹⁵ in a girl.

From the ongoing discussion, one may say that for the early part of missionary agenda of imparting education, the Mission Schools became objects of scrutiny and suspicion among the Mizos. Some of the more brilliant scholars who became school teachers were labeled as agents of an alien culture since, as observed by Saiaithanga, “they were all unordained Pastors...and became Church-planters and guardians”¹¹⁶. Soon the maintenance of learning at the primary level dissatisfied the more brilliant students who were discontented with the Missions for conducting the first Middle English Examinations only in 1909. The Government offices which were beginning to proliferate in Aizawl had on their staff Bengalis from the Plains because of their Higher Learning. Hence by 1907, six young men who had not passed the M.E.level ventured to Shillong in order to continue studies at the High School level. In spite of the wide spread protest against the stagnation of the educational level, no High school was opened till 1944. The

¹¹² Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu November 1911

¹¹³ Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu, November 1913

¹¹⁴ Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu, March, 1925

¹¹⁵ Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu, January, 1933.

¹¹⁶ Saiaithanga, quoted in Vanlalchuanawma, *Christianity*, p 134

missionary Lloyd holds the Government responsible for ignoring the case to upgrade the level of education despite interests evinced by some missionaries. However, it was feared by the missionaries that exposure to higher studies which required pupils to get transferred at Shillong might hamper the self supporting nature of the Mizos.¹¹⁷

Conclusion : The dissatisfaction exercised around this time by educated men in Lushai Hills reflect the way in which female education lagged behind in comparison with the competitive nature of boy's education. It was still a common matter for most girls to remain confined within the four walls of their domestic life. Right from the time the first Christian missions arrived to the Lushai Hills, the need for women's education had been emphasized. Preparations were made and cordial relations with the Government were achieved. By the time the first Girl's school was started in 1904 by the wife of the pioneer missionary, Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones, "the seeds" for a "transformed nation" were already sown. The people by then had the printed alphabet due to the endeavors of the early Christian missionaries. A few scattered primary schools were established. For the already literate, there were few books available, the three books of the New Testament Luke, John and Acts being the most popular. Hymn compositions were available in the vernacular. And there were already few distinguished women who attended the experimental Mission Schools with signs of progress and achievements despite the prejudices that surrounded female education.

The message of Christianity and education had taken women into the otherwise unpermeable spaces. From the domestic confinement of her home to the public world which the school symbolized, Mizo girls began to gain new knowledge and new roles. The steps to ameliorate the condition of women, socially and morally also indicated a

¹¹⁷ Vanlalchhuanawma, *Christianity*, p 134-135.

concern to uplift the society as a whole in the discourse of progress and civilization. As seen in this chapter, the social practices in the Lushai Hills, the “degenerated” position of the women, particularly in relation to marriage and sexuality, provided the space for the missionary construction of a discourse where women became an ideological category on which the missionary project and vision of “saving the heathen women” through education was articulated. The initial endeavors on education in the Lushai Hills tell the story of struggles to accept the existence of the new institution, which was an even harder struggle for girls due to stigmatization attached towards female education. However, through the efforts of the Christian missionaries and the first batch of Mizo educated Christians, the situation underwent a gradual process of improvement.

The process in which this materialized for the girls is examined in the next chapter by picking up the Presbyterian Church Girl’s School as a site of change, and an important agency of transformation for the girls who studied there.

CHAPTER 3

Planning and Founding the Girl's School: Ways and Means:

The P.C.Girl's School

“The schools have been centers of light in dark places, and would be well if we could double their number. Although we had some disappointments we had much to encourage us”¹¹⁸

Introduction:

The first chapter locates how the images and perceptions on Lushai women evoked emancipatory impulse of the Christian missionaries resulting in the exigency of women's education for change. Dissemination of knowledge through Western Education that began in the 19th century was not without its struggles, as the first chapter had reflected. Female education in particular, which came under the agenda of missionary wives, and subsequently under missionary ladies and sections of the educated men and women among the community, had to battle through a series of resistance and negotiations to evoke change. This chapter looks at the history of the Presbyterian Church Girl's School as a site in which this change was to be affected. It is predominantly concerned with the ways in which the School challenged the popular notions and social attitudes that prejudiced educated females and discouraged female education. The expansion and transformation of the school from its modest beginnings to an institution which later developed to be the only exclusive Girl's School, in terms of increase in enrollments, teachers, infrastructure, building, etc reflects the changing perceptions of the

¹¹⁸The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1910-11, The Rev. D.E. Jones, *Reports*, ibid, p43-45

people towards female education and changing times. In this respect, the P.C. Girl's School is significantly an instrument of transformation, thus the answer to the repeated plea for change in the condition of Mizo women that pervaded missionary discourse.

This chapter yields the maximum source materials for the study of female education and in particular, the P.C. Girl's School. Apart from missionary literature and reports, the P.C. Girl's School's Record books, reflections of the school's alumni, some of them as retired teachers of the school after completing their education and some of them who still serve as regular teachers in the school presently, have been accessed, which enable one to draw information from these first hand accounts. Arguably, the Mission school for girls became the primary avenue for change, one in which the new Christian woman could be created. It became a site where the missionary ideologies could be produced, reproduced and incorporated. Many of the girls who received education from the Mission school were eventually absorbed into mission works as teachers, nurses, Bible women etc.

Planning the Girl's School: Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones and Early Efforts

As stated earlier, missionary women pioneered the cause of female education in the Lushai Hills. Mrs. Catherine Ellen Jones, the wife of the pioneer missionary D.E. Jones, started the first efforts in educational activities for girls. Born on September 10, 1868 in Llaulantffraid of Wales, Katherine Ellen Williams hailed from a well to do Christian family. Deeply influenced by their Christian background and the Christian missions, both the sisters later served as missionaries in India. Before she began her Mission in the Lushai Hills, Katherine Ellen had worked in the Zenana Mission in Sylhet (now in

Bangladesh) during 1894-1903¹¹⁹. Due to the untimely death of her father when she was at the age of 8 and the subsequent demise of her mother a year later in 1878, she and her sister Bessie Williams were brought up in the Orphan Foundation, Howell's school, Den Bigh. Apart from her experiences in the Zenanas, she had considerable experiences as a trained teacher. Before her service in the "mission fields", Katherine Ellen Williams underwent her training in London and studied medicine in Scotland¹²⁰.

Katherine Williams married the first pioneer missionary of the Welsh Mission, D.E. Jones towards the end of 1803 in the Scottish Church, Calcutta¹²¹ and marked the beginning of her work among the Lushai women. Her letters in relation to women of the Lushai Hills exhibited 'her keen desire to serve them', where she was also warmly received on her arrival by about seventy school children from Aizawl and a large number of folk from the surrounding villages.¹²²

When Mrs. Katherine Jones began her mission work in 1904 among the Lushai women, there were already a very few women who had received education from the earlier missionary endeavors. In the previous years, two girls, Nui and Saii were already reported on their regular attendance in school and "made distinct progress", whom the missionaries expected would become teachers of literacy and further become capable helpers in the mission work.¹²³ The two girls passed among the highest in the first Lower

¹¹⁹ Centenary Souvenir 1904-2004, Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran Hmeichhe Centenary, Aizawl:2004, p1

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ P.C.Laltlani, *Kohhran Hmeichhe Chanchin*, (Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran Aizawl:2003, p10

¹²² Llyod, p81

¹²³ The report of the Lushai Hills 1901-02, the Rev. D.E. Jones, p 14.

Primary examination held on June 25, 1903 and secured Government Scholarship.¹²⁴
Two other girls, Pawngi and Ziki were also known for their 'remarkably well' performances.¹²⁵

In 1904, the initial endeavor to assemble the twelve girls who had previously studied in the Mission school with boys was begun by Mrs. Katherine Jones, marking the beginning of the school for girls. She was assisted by two Bengali teachers- Lily and Sebi, and a Khasi teacher Sidni. Four years later, two girls from the school, Saii and Saizawni, successfully passed the first Lower Primary Examination. A medal was presented to Saii by the Lieutenant Governor which inscribed "Saii, The Best Student of the Year" in 1908. Saii also became the first Mizo teacher in the Girl's school.¹²⁶

From her seven years work at the Zenanas at Sylhet to her educational endeavors among the Mizo women, Katherine Jones' commitment to women's education reflected her predominant concern towards creating Christian women who would make "intelligent and enlightened wives and mothers".¹²⁷ It was with the goal to create such women that she started the first Girl's school with 12 female pupils in 1904. With the primary purpose of creating a Christian environment, where girls were trained in domestic arts necessary for their future roles as wives and mothers, programs for moral teachings as

¹²⁴ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1903-04 Missionaries the Rev D.E. Jones and the Rev. Edwin Rowlands. P 19

¹²⁵ Ziki's family became members of the chief's household after being reduced to poverty while Pawngi became 'the property' of the chief when her father fled to the chief for protection. Ziki was released on payment of 40 Rupees out of a fund in hand through Mr. Ellis, J.P. and Pawngi was released freely as the Government did not recognize the circumstances under which the chief claimed her. The Report of the Lushai Hills 1902-03, p 17.

¹²⁶ P.C. Girl's School, Record Book. P 2

¹²⁷ Stated in her letter to the superintendent of the Lushai Hills dated May 4, 1916. Hluna,, *Education*, 157

well as practical were incorporated in the curriculum. Apart from the subjects included in the primary course, Mrs. Katherine Jones proposed a curriculum on which skills like needle work, sewing by hand and machine, cooking, care of infants, hygiene, and cleanliness were given prominence.¹²⁸ Needle work was said to be most appreciated and women from distant villages attended the Girl's school to learn the skill.

The Superintendent Mr. Hezlett extended support to 'the beneficial curriculum' to whom education which would make the girls 'unfit for the domestic duties or give a distaste for such duties must be avoided at all costs'. The shared object for female education was to 'enable girls to perform their domestic duties more efficiently, with greater comfort to their families and to themselves', simultaneously proving them a 'broader outlook' in order that they live a 'happier' and more 'useful' lives¹²⁹. With exceptions of few girls who were likely to take up teaching, needlework or medical profession, the objective clearly was not to direct them for paid jobs, but to train them to become efficient homemakers.

He further advocated 'practical lessons' as against learning to read and write (the three R's), which was 'secondary' to the needs of girls. By 'practical', what was implied would be cooking, sewing, hygiene and sanitation, and the most elementary kind of literacy education. 'Practical' lessons suited to the conventional female roles, to the needs of the communities. In a sequel to these sets of agenda decided for the girls by the Colonial and Missionary agents, the Government bought a loom for the utilization of girls.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Aizawl Record Office, No.203, G.Education1916, quoted in Hluna, *ibid.*

As a further step, two girls were awarded scholarships to study in the Kalimpong Industrial School where they were to learn embroidery and weaving respectively.¹³⁰

A significant event in the history of the Mission's educational endeavors in the Hills was the visit by the Chief Commissioner of Assam on February 1904. Pleased by the appearance of the Mission School and expressing preference of the Mission run school over Government school, the Chief Commissioner, together with the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, unanimously decided to amalgamate the Mission School and the government school. Hence the management of education and opening of schools on the Hills were placed in the hands of the Welsh Mission. In connection with the amalgamation of the schools, it was intended to enlarge the Mission school; a new and larger building to cost some Rs. 2,400 was erected on another mission site. The Government supplied about half the cost and the rest by the Mission.¹³¹

In 1912, Mrs. Jones appealed for a lady teacher to the Welsh Mission District Committee at Shillong for taking charge of girl's education. Due to the disapproval of the Government towards growth of female education, aid came only in 1916 when the government granted 'the permission for entry of lady missionaries' into the Hills. Three years later in 1922, Miss A. Catherine Mostyn Lewis came to Aizawl and took the charge of the Mission Girls' School. Significantly, this permission was secured largely due to the cooperation of the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills 1913-1917, Mr. Hezlett who was appreciative of female education and the efforts of Mrs. Jones. Accordingly the Inspector of Schools, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Mr.F.B.Wilkins wrote a letter to the D.P.I. Assam in 1915 to permit sending of a female missionary by the Welsh Mission to

¹³⁰ Letter from the Superintendent of Lushai Hills to the Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, Silchar, 12 May, 1916.

¹³¹ Reports of the Lushai Hills 1904-05, the Rev. Edwin Rowlands. Pp 23-23.

encourage the task of female education in the Lushai Hills¹³². Till the arrival of a woman missionary to teach the girls, missionary wives such as Mrs. Margaret Sandy and Mrs. Gwen Mendus gave valuable help in the Girl's school.

The Trajectories of Expansion: The School under Various Headmistresses

Miss Kitty Lewis, a young graduate trained teacher, the daughter of a British Cabinet Minister, arrived at Aizawl in November 1922. She was a woman of varied experience both in France and in Britain. Her main task was the care of the Mission school for girls in Aizawl for which she displayed keen enthusiasm. The assigned mission for Kitty Lewis was taken over from Mrs. Jones. At her own expenses, Miss Kitty Lewis built two long thatched huts which could accommodate around 50 children mostly from the nearby villages, whose support was rendered by her own funding.¹³³ By this time, five local teachers were appointed in the school. Miss Lewis introduced two divisions-Lower Primary and Middle English in her school. Significantly, she bore majority of the expenses incurred from all her educational propaganda.

She shifted the existing Girl's school to a better hill side at Aizawl, and later selected the new site on which the present prestigious Mission Girl's School (now known as the P.C. Girl's school) is situated. The leveling and digging of the ground on the new site was also paid from her own fund. In addition, she also established one Lower Primary school in Aizawl, Kulikawn.¹³⁴ The impetus given to female education and towards the development of the Girl's school resulted in a rapid transformation of the female

¹³² Hluna, J.V., *Education* p155

¹³³ P.C. Girl's School Record Book, p 4

¹³⁴ Laltlani, P.C., *Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran Hmeichhe Chanchin*, (Aizawl:2003)p110-111

educational scenario. Sharing the view of the preceding missionaries that “one of the great needs of the country is the need for better educated women”¹³⁵ where only one girl went to day schools for every seven boys, Miss Kitty Lewis expressed disappointment that “the people in the villages have not as yet realized the value of women’s education, and do not see the point of sending their daughters to school” and hence “walked in faith”¹³⁶ so that the Mission grants and gifts from home would suffice the support of pupils who came from villages.

Like her predecessor-women missionaries, Miss Lewis also engaged herself in a cluster of activities aside from running the Girl’s school. She convened meetings, supported orphans and took responsibility of their cleanliness. Cooking, Sewing, Stitching, cleanliness and many other works considered ‘useful’ for the Lushai women were given due importance in her mission career, for example, bathing and weighing babies of Christian and non Christian women, as mentioned in her letters of 1931-32.¹³⁷

In compliance with missionary vision of making education “practical and to keep it spiritual”¹³⁸, a great deal of attention was given to sewing and weaving in the Girl’s school. However, “it is the spiritual side” wrote Miss Lewis, “that the school has developed most strongly”, attributing it largely to the spirit of fellowship among the teachers, and of loyalty to the school and to Christ. She further added that “the teachers, especially the older ones, are true Christians and generally anxious to do their best for the good of the school

¹³⁵ the Report of the Lushai Hills, 1924-25, the Rev. and Mrs. D.E. Jones, p69

¹³⁶ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1924-25, Miss Kitty Lewis p72.

¹³⁷ Reports,p106.

¹³⁸ The Report of the Lushai Hills 1924-25. The Rev. E.L. Mendus, p 71. The missionary E. L. Mendus’ attitude towards secular education is clearly marked when he writes “the effects of purely secular education in India is Unrest... the practical side of education proposed by the mission should counter act the mentioned evil tendency...”

and the community”¹³⁹ Notwithstanding the modest beginnings and numerous challenges in terms of paucity of academic materials, teachers, inadequate funding and building infrastructure, and prejudices against female education, the Welsh Mission Girl’s school grew. From 100 students registered in 1924, the enrollment increased to about 200 students by 1925-26.¹⁴⁰

The most rapid transformative years in the life of the Girl’s School occurred during the periods between 1924-1943, under the initiative and fervor of Miss Katie Hughes, popularly known to the Mizos as Pi Zaii who arrived at Aizawl in 1924. The name attributed to her for the keenness she displayed in singing, as translated by her, relates to “the granny who sings”. Miss Katie Hughes was the daughter of a Pastor in Tal-y-sarn, Wales, and had considerable experiences as a school teacher as well as a Sunday school teacher, and had also formed her own choir before her arrival in Aizawl.¹⁴¹ Her assistance and contributions towards the growth and consolidation of the school remained valued in the history of the school.

Katie Hughes was kept in charge of the Girl’s school after Miss Kitty Lewis was called home to attend to her father’s health in July 1925. In spite of the initial problem in verbal communication with the teachers, whom she pointed out, “required a great deal of training”, she emphatically reported on the “spirit of friendship and comradeship in the school... the children address the teachers as ‘my big sister’. It is just like one large

¹³⁹ The Report of the Lushai Hills 1924-25, Miss Kitty Lewis, p 72.

¹⁴⁰ P.C. Girl’s School, Record Book. P 5.

¹⁴¹ P.C. Girl’s School, Record Book, p 6

family”¹⁴²In addition, she wrote to the people back at home that an hour was spent every morning teaching Scripture on which the pupils were found to be very responsive.¹⁴³

Through the combined efforts of Miss Lewis and Miss Hughes in 1924, the lowest class was transformed into a Kindergarten. This resulted in a positive response as the attendance was doubled to 60 girls the next year. The school also incorporated weaving as part of the curriculum in 1924. School jhum was also prepared where the girls were made to cultivate rice, vegetables and fruits. An experimental community work was also conducted under the two missionaries for women interested in literate education and other handwork.¹⁴⁴

Miss Katie Hughes also introduced the ‘story-telling method’ to accelerate children’s reading skills¹⁴⁵. The method proved highly beneficial and is still practiced at the school now known as the P.C. Girl’s School. The Story Method of Teaching introduced in 1928 and proved ‘outstandingly successful’ which enabled children to read simple stories within a period of just six months, whereas it had previously required longer periods to learn to read. The method worked under the principle that the children first learnt the story through repeated hearing, and later acting it; after which they proceeded to the sentences, then single words and lastly single letters. Since the method involved constant play, it was not monotonous for the children who ‘learn to read almost unconsciously’. Dramatization, Drawing, singing, Games, the use of ‘Flash Cards’ and other apparatus made reading time ‘a joy for the children’.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Reports of the Lushai Hills, 1925-26, Miss Katie Hughes, p 76.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Reports of Miss Kitty Lewis, 1924-25, p 72

¹⁴⁵ Memories of Mizoram, Gwen Rees Roberts, 2001

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p 94

Miss Katie Hughes, after taking charge of the School in 1925 realized the requirement of training for the teachers; she undertook measures to improve the teaching skills of the teachers who displayed equal eagerness. In 1927, members of the staff were sent for training along with the male teachers training in the Mission Veng Chapel Vestry.¹⁴⁷ In the same year, three girls who appeared Middle English school examination and all nine of the girls who sat for Lower Primary examination successfully cleared the exams.¹⁴⁸

Miss Catherine Morfudd Davies joined Miss Hughes in 1927 in the Girl's school. She reported that they "endeavor to give the students as practical an education as possible, and teach them above all, that Christianity is life...and we hope that by our work in the school, we are making it for many of them to accept Jesus Christ, and yield themselves to Him and His service".¹⁴⁹

Music came to form an important part of the curriculum stressing on religious hymns and the teaching of sol-fa notations. The teachers also strove hard to inculcate such principles under her direction. Miss Hughes now took up all women's work- teacher's training, evangelistic and theological trainings and schools, which generated a wide progress in the Mission activities. By 1929, attendance of girls increased. "Through the kindness of her friends", Miss Morfudd was able to accommodate more girls from the villages in the hostel.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ P.C. Girl's School Record Book, p7.

¹⁴⁸ Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1926-27, Miss Katie Hughes., p 82

¹⁴⁹ Report of the North Lushai Hills, 1927-28, Miss Davies, p86

¹⁵⁰ The Report of the Lushai Hills, 1928-29, p 86

Laying Foundations: Mobilizing Resources and Building Foundations for the School

The first building for the Girl's school, known as the Welsh Mission girl's school initially, was constructed with the aid provided by G.H. Loch, the building conveniently served as a school cum chapel. Apart from the Mission Funding, an extensive aid was received from Major Loch, the Commandant of the Lushai Hills Military Police, enabling the construction of a hostel which could accommodate 20 boarders. Support was also rendered by Col. Cole, the Superintendent who financed six boarders.¹⁵¹

As the number of girls' attendance was few in the initial days, the school was housed in various Mission buildings. However, as the school grew from its small beginnings of only a handful of girls, the need for improved facilities, academic materials and equipments emerged increasingly. The Government played a key role in filling much of these demands. The project to construct the school building which stood within the lady missionaries' compound began in 1939. The main building was completed in 1940, and an added wing in 1941. In this connection, the visit of the Director of Public Instructions, Mr. Small, in 1939 was significant for the Welsh Mission Girl's School. Showcasing the work of the school was an important lobbying strategy for missionary women to appeal for Government grants. The girls launched enormous preparation for the occasion of this visit. Apart from the display of the girls' handwork such as knitted, stitched and woven items, performance of the Mizo traditional dance called the Cheraw, also known as 'the Bamboo dance', and the well practiced songs were highly appreciated

¹⁵¹ Hluna J.V., *ibid*, p154

which he found 'excellent'.¹⁵² Singing hymns tunefully and recitals of Bible Verses were activities of the girls which gave the school a sense of pride and satisfaction.

A brief visit was also made by the then Assam Governor Sir Robert Reid and his wife in the middle of February the previous year, which was greatly anticipated "both by the natives and the missionaries..." since "owing to the distance and the difficulty of travel, the Lushai territory is not frequently favored with visits from the high officials"¹⁵³ At the time of Lady Reid's visit, the school did not have a single building that could house all the students. The girls were divided in three separate buildings. Class A and B occupied the small building near the old teacher's training hostel; Class 1, 11 and 111 were clubbed together in the *Sikul Te*, 'the Small School'; class 1V, V and V1 in the Girl's school building which was situated near the Mission Press. Sir Robert Reid donated a huge sum of money which was utilized for the construction of the new school building.¹⁵⁴

The building consisted of 5 main classrooms, a small office and a large room intended for an Assembly Hall. The total expenditure amounted to Rs 22,000; the Mission provided 8000 of this sum and the rest was provided by the Government.¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the exposure of Miss Katie Hughes' voluntary works for the Red Cross through several items in the form of knitting, sewing etc, and her works concerning women's education, child care etc, earned her the Kaisar-i- Hind medal on the

¹⁵² Vanrumi, "Hmeichhe Sikul (P.C. Girl's School ka luh ve dan leh Zirtirtu ka tan ve hun chung)", dated 22.07. 1995, P.C. Girl's School Record Book.

¹⁵³ Reports of the Lushai Hills 1938, p 150

¹⁵⁴ Thangi, ex teacher, "Hmeichhe Sikul Chanchin, P.C. Girl's School Record Book, p 50

¹⁵⁵ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 88

recommendation of the Director of Public Instructions.¹⁵⁶ Using this opportune moment to discuss the various material requirements of the school and the impediment due to lack of financial resources, Miss Katie Hughes called the attention of the Government officials. This resulted in funds granted to the school by the Government. A foundation for the construction of the school building was laid by the senior missionary Samuel Davies, the architect of the new school building.¹⁵⁷

A simultaneous development along with the construction of the school building was the increasing number of pupils. Already in 1937, the gradual rise of the student's enrollment posed a problem in terms of accommodation. The building that housed class A- class 11, known as the *Sikul Te* could no longer accommodate the increasing number of students resulting in several makeshifts. In 1937, they had shifted to the empty house near the Printing Press, previously used as the Evangelical and Teacher's training spot, then to an abandoned mud-floored house. Unable to withstand the havoc caused by rain and flood, the classes were shifted again to the Mission weaving shed till 1940 when the newly constructed school building was completed and occupied by the Middle Section of the School. The classrooms left by these students were finally occupied by the Primary section after the series of makeshifts.¹⁵⁸

By 1948, the pre-existing classrooms could not accommodate the rising number of students, which resulted in the conversion of the office and the Assembly Hall as

¹⁵⁶ Thangi, op.cit.

¹⁵⁷ Vanrumi op.cit

¹⁵⁸ Liani, Rtd Teacher, "Sikula ka Thawh Hun Chhung Leh Ka Chanchin Tlem", P.C. Girl's School Record Book, pp 55-56.

classrooms. This 'unsatisfactory arrangement' still did not suffice, for which the Handwork room as well as the hostel sitting room were converted as classrooms.¹⁵⁹

Part of the congestion was formed by the Kindergarten boys of the Boys' School, who occupied some classrooms of the Girl's School during the inter-war periods, 1942-44. Their own school being taken over by the military, the boys returned to their school in 1945. However, the Kindergarten boys were left to remain in the Girl's school as it was decided that they were better taught by women teachers. In January 1949, Class A students of the Boys' School were sent back to their School and kept under the charge of the Girl's School teacher, Liani, thus releasing some of the classrooms from congestion. In spite of this, overcrowding still existed in almost all the classrooms, the School having over 300 students in 1948.¹⁶⁰ The remaining boys of Class A continued to stay in the Girl's School till 1956.¹⁶¹

With the steady growth and expansion of the school, there arose numerous other problems. By 1949, the school facility and infrastructure had to be upgraded. Another problem that called for attention and constant supervision was the damages inflicted by the White Ants. This was coupled with the necessity for water tank. The only water tank with a capacity of 5484 gallons was the sole source of supply for a) washing and cooking purposes for about 30 boarders, b) water for the school latrines, c) drinking water for day scholars and d) general school purposes. This water had to be strictly rationed and allowed only about 30 gallons a day for all purposes. The scarcity of water and lack of storage tanks during the rainy season generated a great inconvenience for the

¹⁵⁹ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 88

¹⁶⁰ The Report of the North Lushai Hills 1948-49, The Girl's School, Aijal, Miss Gwen Rees Roberts, p 200

¹⁶¹ Liani, "Hmeichhe Sikul Ka Hmuh Leh Hriat Ve Chin", P.C. Girl's School Record, p 54.

girls who were required to carry water from a spring a mile or more away in the jungle. Miss Gwen Rees Roberts, the headmistress by this time sadly reports that ‘during the rainy season, thousands of gallons of water flow down from the school roof, to be lost to them forever, for the mere lack of another tank into which they could run’. In dire need of grants, an appeal was sent to the Foreign Mission Committee to meet the needs of the situation mentioned above.¹⁶²

Over a period of time, the school building did not only centre around school activities but catered to the needs of the church which utilized it for various meetings after school. It became an important venue for holding concerts and plays, and towards the 1940s as venue of parents –teacher meetings. The Mission Veng Sunday School children in particular, made significant use of it for holding their Sunday schools every Sunday morning thus strengthening its close bonds with the church.¹⁶³ In this way, the school building itself stood for academic as well as religious purpose.

Hostels:

The hostel that ran for over twenty years, beginning in 1925 provided a home for twenty girls whose homes were in distant villages. The hostel was also an important site for the transmission of missionary ideology and way of life. When the hostel was in desperate need of renovating, Miss Gwen Rees reminded the Mission that “it was only the hostels through which they could have any direct Christian influence over the girls”¹⁶⁴,

¹⁶² Ibid, p 89.

¹⁶³ Gwen Rees, *Memories*, p56

¹⁶⁴ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 89

particularly around 1949 when the Government was likely to take over the whole educational system.

The Main Hostel building consisted of two rooms, the bigger one being 20feet by 30feet and the smaller one being 19feet by 16feet. Food was cooked and eaten in the main cookhouse. A corner of the building formed a combined scullery and bath place. By 1949 a memorandum for the School was prepared as a document to present to the Foreign Mission Committee in Liverpool to substantiate the request for grants. The headmistress asked for repair and extension of the school and hostel in which she stated the urgent need for repair of the hostel building, sleeping quarters for the High School Girls which “had no real cookhouse, only a bamboo shelter which threatened to collapse any day and was ‘most unsatisfactory’ with no study or sitting room”¹⁶⁵ Regarding latrines, Pit Latrine was the type of latrine which had proved reasonably satisfactory in the past. The only problem with it by then was that the site had to be moved every 18 months or so. With bigger gardens in the adjoining houses of the Hostel compound and increasing newly constructed houses each year, finding room for the latrine became difficult when it was necessary to move it.

One among the Middle English teachers functioned as the hostel Guardian, who received her rice as remuneration for her work. Girls managed their own cooking, cleaning, the Collection of wood and carrying water. Each girl brought her own rice from home and they purchased their own vegetables. The grant received from the Mission was used to buy rice for the hostel guardian, kerosene oil for lighting the hostel, replacement of lantern, cooking vessel which they had progressed from a stage where it was necessary

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, p 96

to provide rice etc for a girl to enable her stay in the hostel. Nevertheless, Miss Gwen Rees Roberts envisioned that in years to come, “they would be even more independent” and need “no help other than the opportunity of being able to enter the hostel” but as for the immediate need, an estimate of Rs 3900 was requested to improve the hostel facility.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, she suggested enlargement of the hostel, providing proper quarters for High school Girls, more beds, cupboards etc.

In matters relating to health and sickness of the girls, Miss Roberts blamed the poor condition of the sleeping quarters and the absence of a sickroom where girls suffering from cold, fever etc could be placed apart. She proposed that the difficulty could be overcome by making the necessary extensions. Girls who needed medical attention were sent up to the weekly clinic in Aijal run by the Durtlang Hospital Staff.¹⁶⁷

Transforming the School: The Mizo teachers, the Welsh teacher and the Students

Under the management of Miss Katie Hughes, strict observance of discipline by the teachers and the students was maintained. Punctuality was a virtue strongly advocated to the teachers for the students to emulate. No teacher was permitted to arrive late for the daily morning devotions, religiously held between 8.30 am to 9.30 am. Recitation of Bible verses, Bible study, short lectures, singing and learning new hymns and new English sentences figured importantly in the daily routine devotions. Post morning devotions, the classes commenced at 9.30 and ended by 3.00 pm with a lunch break at 12

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, pp 96-100

¹⁶⁷ These are taken from Memorandum of the school written in 1949 by Gwen Rees Roberts

noon.¹⁶⁸ The girls were also taught a few selected Bible Verses by heart which they recite in the Mission Veng Church Service every Wednesday night.¹⁶⁹ This Bible recital at church service by the girls is still in practice till today.

For a considerable amount of time, the Mission Girl's School followed the policy that a teacher must resign after her second child was born.¹⁷⁰ This largely reflects the adherence to the belief that a woman's duty was to prioritize on her family, being a good wife and a good mother which the founders of the school greatly emphasized on. Thangi, a Mizo retired teacher and an ex student of the school, reminisced on her days in the school as a student, saying "for a long time, we were not taught Geometry in the school because our teachers valued practical education such as sewing, knitting, weaving, etc as more essential for a girl than imparting the knowledge of geometry"¹⁷¹ These 'practical works' were the subjects on which girls gave their Middle scholarship examination in substitution for Geometry taught to boys. Seeing the triumphant results of the female candidates in these exams, boys were often found to utter disdainfully that 'girls scored better marks because sewing, etc is really easy...'¹⁷²

Despite the rule enforced on married teachers with children to leave the school, the school did not always conform to the policy in some exceptional cases. Women such as Pi Varhlunchhungi, more popularly known as Nuteii, who taught in the school

¹⁶⁸ Vanrumi, 22-07-1995. P.C. Girl's School Record.

¹⁶⁹ P.C. Girl's School Record, p 10.

¹⁷⁰ It was only later that this rule was rescinded. There is no mention of the exact year in the school record, although it might be fair to speculate that it probably went out of practice after the school was passed from the Welsh Mission to the Mizoram Synod, around the 1960's as the retired teachers around this period often mentioned having children and yet servicing till retirement.

¹⁷¹ Thangi, ex-teacher "Hmeichhe Sikul Chanchin Thenkhatte". P. C. Girl's School Record Book. p 48.

¹⁷² Ibid, p 49

immediately after matriculation continued to teach till 1934 even after the birth of her second child due to the declining supply of qualified teachers at the time when demand was increasing. Similarly, Liani, taught in the school from 1935-1944 and was exempted from resignation even after the birth of her children.¹⁷³

The school also discouraged the policy of hiring chowkidars or peons. Cleanliness of the school and its surroundings was solely undertaken by the students. This was considered a way of training the girls and an important way in which self maintenance and self reliance could be inculcated to the girls so that they learn to be responsible persons. Cleanliness of the school and its compound was entrusted to the students who were all grouped separately to take alternate turns in cleaning work after their classes.¹⁷⁴ The girls were divided in groups of four houses, each named after the names of four famous Mizo women, namely, Pi Pawngi, Pi Hmuaki, Pi Hawilopari, Pi Vurvari. However, these Houses were later renamed after the Missionary women who served as Headmistress in the school: Pi Zomawii, Pi Zopari, Pi Zaii, and Pi Teii.¹⁷⁵

Since most of the teachers were not trained, a great deal of help and supervision had to be rendered to them in the first year or two. The aim of the Education Management Committee was to have all matriculate teachers in time. The other problem for the Girl's School, besides the training of teachers was lack of finance for salaries. The war also greatly impacted the salary of the teachers. The shortage of funds from the Mission Board in England led to a reduction in the salary of the teacher. Around 1935, when Liani and Thangi

¹⁷³ P.C. Girl's School Record Book, p 7, p 48.

¹⁷⁴ Liani, Rtd Teacher, "Sikul ah ka thawh hun chung leh ka chanchin tlem", ibid, p 58.

¹⁷⁵ This information was provided to me by the present Headmistress of the P.C. Girl's School, Pi Ropuii when I visited the School in June 2006.

joined the school as teachers, each was paid a salary of Rupees 8 per month, which at the time was considered a high amount received by trained teachers in comparison with the Rupees 5 monthly salary by untrained teachers. With an increase of Re 1 per year, the highest salary was Rupees 18. The pay of Liani and Thangi was also reduced around this time to Rupees 10. However, by 1942, the situation improved and they began to receive Rupees 12.

They could not 'afford to give salaries' which could 'in any way compare with those of clerks in Government Departments, nor with those of Government teachers'.¹⁷⁶ With the passage of time, the salary of the staff also increased gradually. From a salary of Rupees 3 per month in 1928, the teachers were paid Rupees 8 per month by 1935¹⁷⁷

The salary for a matriculate woman teacher in the Girls' school started with Rs22 per month, which increased by one rupee per year up to Rs25. In addition they received a Dearness allowance of Rs20 a month. Comparatively, Salary, Dearness allowance and ration compensation allowance for a girl of the same qualification but employed in a Government department was about the double of the School's salary. Even though the Headmistress Miss Gwen Roberts expressed rather sadly that "with rice at a premium, and with the desire of the younger generation for better clothes, better houses, and more books to read, it is no wonder that government service is so attractive to them"¹⁷⁸, none of the Mizo teachers expressed regrets in joining the school staff.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 91

¹⁷⁷ Liani, Rtd Teacher, "Hmeichhe Sikul Ka Hmuh Leh Hriat Ve Chin", P.C. Girl's School Record, p 50, p 52. Pi Mari, Pi Vailuti, Pi Mitinchungi, Pi Nuteii, and Pi Suakthuami received Rupees 3 salary per month.

¹⁷⁸ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 91

¹⁷⁹ This is based on my readings of the reflections of the retired teachers of the schools as they write in the School Record.

The World War 11 also impacted on the salary of the teachers. The shortage of funds from the Mission Board in England led to a reduction in the teacher's salaries. Around 1935, when Liani and Thangi joined the School staff, each was paid a salary of Rupees 8, the amount allotted to trained teachers. This was considered a high amount in the days when the untrained teachers were paid Rupees 5 comparatively. With an increase in Re 1 per year, the maximum pay received was Rupees 18. The salaries of Liani and Thangi, were reduced to Rs.10 owing to shortages of Mission funds during the war. The situation slightly improved by August 1942 and they received an increase of Rs.12.¹⁸⁰

As a school where moral and religious education were pervasive, "Christian value were kept in the forefront of the life of the school", such being the case, it required a staff devoted and adhering to the school principles. The headmistress of the school Gwen Rees Roberts (1945-1965) felt "fortunate to have a staff of committed Christians, who were faithful members in the local church, several of them being Sunday school teachers, leaders in Women's works, Youth work or in helping with the children's meeting held on Sunday afternoons in the Boy's school for many years".¹⁸¹

The List of Teachers over the years:

1905: Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones, Lily, Sebi, Sidni

1907: Nui, Saitawni, Saizawni

1914: Saii, Nui, Zawni

1917: Kaichhungi

¹⁸⁰ Liani, *op.cit*, p 52

¹⁸¹ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 67

1924: Thangveli, Chawngthuami, Lalnemi, Zawmi, Kami

1927-1934: Headmistress Katie Hughes (Pi Zaii), Varhlunchhungi, Suakthuami, Thangveli, Mitinchhungi, Vailuti, Zaithangi, Ziki, Mari, Lalnemi, Chalmawii, Thangvungi

1935-1944: Chuauthangpuii, Liani, Rochhungi, Chawngbuangi, Vanrumi, Dengziki, Varziki, Zolawmi, Nuhliri, Biaksiami

1945-1965: Headmistress Gwen Rees Roberts (Pi Teii), Rohliri, Chawngpari, Saphmingthangi, Lalchhuangi, Lalchhingpuii, Runthachhingi, Saptawni, Thangpuii, Sapbawii, chuauliani, Vanhmingthangi, Tlangmawii, Zikpuii.

Except for the three teachers Lily, Sebi and Sidni employed by Mrs. Katherine Jones in 1905, all the teachers that followed are Mizo women, most of them joining the school staff as alumni of the school.¹⁸² Most of these teachers reflect their deep sense of attachments to the school in their writings, recalling fond sentiments of their days in the school as young girls and finally as teachers, most of them echoed the same view that the school “has been the most instrumental force in shaping and moulding”¹⁸³ their lives since it housed them for all the best part of their lives.

The Curriculum, Religious, Cultural and other Activities of the School

Three departments work as one school, the classes being named A and B in the Kindergarten; 1, 11, and 111 in the Primary and 1V, V and V1 in the Middle English

¹⁸² P.C. Girl's School , Record Book.

¹⁸³ Vanrumi, in particular, “never forgets the school” and still possess excitement and curiosity with the stories of successes and accomplishments of “her school”.

section. In all of these sections, the curriculum pervaded the Christian content of scripture and useful subjects that would make them efficient homemakers were emphasized.

Subjects taught in the Kindergarten include the three R's, singing, drawing, recitation, games, nature study, scripture, story telling, clay modeling and health teaching. In the Primary Department, Vernacular, English, Arithmetic, Geography of Lushai and Assam, Scripture, Hygiene, Nature study, Drawing, Music, Physical Training, Sewing and Knitting were taught. The Middle English Department had Vernacular, English, Arithmetic, Geography, History of India, Scripture, Hygiene, Music, Drawing and Painting, Physical training, Sewing, Knitting and Weaving, together with Domestic Science in class 6.; Religious instruction including the main teaching of the old and new Testaments, music including Tonic solfa and Old Notation; Domestic Science included simple cookery, laundry and home nursing, art, and gardening.¹⁸⁴

Miss Roberts opined that 'the general conception of *education* in Lushai, if not in the whole of India, is book learning'. Hence, she argued that an attempt was made to give the girls 'something a good deal wider than that, through teaching the more cultural subjects as well as the purely academic ones'. Acknowledging the complaints voiced out intermittently from the general public against teaching the girls to weave or do Domestic Science rather than Geometry she responded adamantly saying "if we stick to our ideal we shall be doing more for the future women and mothers of Lushai than we could in any other way".¹⁸⁵

The practical work/ handwork actually proved beneficial for the community outside the School, particularly for the soldiers of the war. The girls knitted garments for

¹⁸⁴ Reports of the Lushai Hills, 1951-52, by Gwen Rees Roberts, B.Sc, p 212.

¹⁸⁵ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 92

charity to the Red Cross and satisfactorily expressed that in doing so, they were in great service of the Government. Girls reading in Class 1V knitted mufflers, Class V woolen caps and Class VI girls knitted big pullovers for soldiers serving in the war.¹⁸⁶

Miss Roberts also reports to the Foreign Mission Committee on the academic competition between girls and boys both at the Primary and Middle English Examinations. On the whole, girls had not shown themselves of 'inferior stuff'. Mentioning that girls had outshone the boys from time to time, she records that many were able to 'outstrip the boys even at the High school and College stages'. With these results in mind, she therefore argues that the emphasis on the wider cultural aspects of education exercised by the school, despite some protests, had no adverse effects on the academic attainments of girls.¹⁸⁷

As the school expanded in terms of building and enrollment, there was also an improvement in the Teaching Apparatus:

Maps and Pictures: A reasonably adequate supply of wall maps for the teaching of Geography, History and Scripture was possessed by the school. In addition, a large collection of pictures of geographical and general interests were also collected over a period of time, which were all meticulously numbered and filed. The school also possessed 'few really good framed pictures' and on the whole, relied on the ones they made from magazine covers and old Christmas cards.

¹⁸⁶ Sapbawii, Assistant Headmistress, "Hmeichhe Sikul (P.C. Girl's School Ka Luh Dan Leh Zirtirtu a Ka Thawh Dan ChanChin Tlangpui)", dated 8th August, 1996. P. C. Girls School Record.

¹⁸⁷ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 92

Flannel Board: In conjunction with the Sunday school, the school had a collection of pictures for use with the Flannel Board. These cover almost every story in the Old and New Testaments, and were used regularly by the teachers in the Scripture lessons.

Sand Trays: Each class had a small sand tray, used by the Kindergarten students for illustrating their stories. The older girls used them for map making, building and model villages etc.

Library: One small cupboard sufficed to contain all the library books, both fiction and reference.

School Furniture: There were no individual nor dual desks. All the furniture were long ones which accommodated around 3 to 6 children. The desks and benches were unvarnished and locally made. Each classroom comprised of a blackboard, teacher's desk and cupboard.¹⁸⁸

Parent-teachers Meetings: Towards the end of 1944, several extra curricular activities and school traditions were established. An important aspect of these activities was convening the Parents-teachers meetings. These meetings that soon became an important annual function of the school as *Parents' Day* were beneficial for the school since it created an opportunity not only to meet the parents of the students but also a time when any issue or new scheme of the school could be addressed and asked for parental support. One important agenda brought out of these meeting was the issue of school uniforms.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, p 93.

Around 1937-38, the girls had a kind of uniform that was worn on important occasions and not on a daily basis. It was the traditional “*kawrchei*” with a light blue skirt. On such occasions, even teachers wore a white shirt with the traditional Mizo “*puanchei*”. A proper school uniform was introduced around 1950-51, by which time no students and no teacher wore shoes yet. For the Middle section, their uniform consisted of a dark green skirt with three horizontal white stripes, a white blouse and a jacket in the same material as that of the skirt. The primary girls had straps over their shoulders to keep the skirt up and the A and B classes a piece of cloth joining the two straps as well. All the cloth was hand woven. And every household had “a primitive loom” used at the time.¹⁸⁹

Apart from these, the Parents’ Day was also made an occasion for prize distribution among students in various competitions. Prizes were awarded to students who secured the first position in each class, secured cent percent attendance, to the student who performed the best in scripture. Ability to memorize the longest Bible verse among the student also earned award to a student. Inter-house competitions were held and the girls competed on maintenance of cleanliness of the school compound and flower arrangements, the best House received the award. For a while, character award was also included but was later discontinued.¹⁹⁰

Several cultural items are shown on Parents Day and was also an occasion where Drama, Physical Training, Art and Handworks of the girls were exhibited in front of the parents. The Ribbon Dance taught by the Mizo teacher Pi Lalchhingpuii was

¹⁸⁹ Thangi, ex-teacher, “Hmeichhe Sikul Chanchin Thenkhatte”, Record Book, P.C. Girls School pp 49-50, and Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p74

¹⁹⁰ Record Book, P.C. Girl’s School, p44

performed on several occasions and had even won the girls many prizes. Apart from this, the popular cultural dance, the Cheraw was performed.¹⁹¹

Teaching Methods under “Pi Teii”, Gwen Rees Roberts 1945-1965

Music: Children from the Kindergarten upwards were introduced to the Tonic sol-fa Notation with the aid of graded books. The Middle section would appear the examinations of the Curwen College of Music, London. At the time of writing the memorandum, the school possessed no musical instrument, but two of the teachers took Piano lessons under Miss Hughes’ tuition.

Domestic Science: Working at the time when the Education Department of the Government of Assam stresses on the teaching of Domestic Science, Miss Roberts found the only way to teach the subject at the moment was in the lady missionaries’ bungalow. This, she argues, gave the girls some ideas of cleanliness and order, ‘but far from suitable, being too Western’.

.The Project Method: This method was applied on the Middle section with considerable success. The principle here is practical learning, or as the author puts it, ‘learning by doing’. The projects that Miss Roberts mentioned, conducted time to time were: Cotton Project, Health project, Garden Project, together with the ones on the Printing Press, the Aijal Bazaar etc. Encouragements were given to the girls and given choices for their projects, mutual exchange of ideas created an interest in the project and the determination to materialize it.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

The utility of the Project Method is strongly emphasized by Miss Roberts. Providing an example of the Cotton Project, where the girls decided to make doormats for sale, she argues that in working out this Project, 'they touch on almost every subject in the Syllabus'.

Physical Training and Games: Being situated in the Hills, the absence of a flat land for a play field is usually a general hindrance. A hilltop was flattened for the use of Boy's and Girl's school. It was not always feasible to reach the field for every occasion since it was located at about 15 to 20 minutes distance from the school. Physical training was therefore taught in the open space in front of the school, although the space was inadequate to arrange games. Equipment was momentarily negligible, which they hoped to collect gradually.¹⁹²

The Girl Guide Movement:

One of the important functions of the school was 'to keep before the eyes of the girls the ideals of Christian service'.¹⁹³ This had been done in part through the Girl Guide and the Bluebird Movement. The girls would assemble after school for voluntary meetings of these organizations. Rendering services to the community figured an important part of the activities of these movements, for example, cleaning the chapel, carrying wood and water for the old and the sick. These movements also enabled them the opportunity to organize concerts for charities, which in turn sharpened their skills in

¹⁹² Information gathered from the School Record Book and memorandum of the school written by Gwen Rees Roberts.

¹⁹³ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 98

Music, drama, stage performances etc. Camping too, has had an important role in these movements and the outdoor activities of Guiding, tracking and cooking outdoors were handled easily and came “naturally” for the Mizo Girls.¹⁹⁴

The Girl Guide Company was formed in 1925 with an enrollment of 18 girls. On the consideration of a uniform for the Girl Guides, it was decided to adopt the Lushai dress.¹⁹⁵ The Mizo “kawrchei” was worn as a blouse and wrapped the traditional “puan” around the waist, according to one’s own preference. Following the Girl’s school, the Girl Guide Company was also started at the Saitual village under the initiative of Biakliana, a male teacher. The Blue Bird movement (now called Bulbuls) was simultaneously formed but was discontinued within a matter of two to three years. In the early years of its founding, there was no association of the School’s Girl Guides and Bluebirds with schools of similar movements elsewhere in India.¹⁹⁶

In 1941, the Girl Guides paid registration fee and registered to the Assam Girl Guide Movement. Badges were distributed; the movement gained momentum and continued thence. Over time, it was placed under the Department of Sports and Youth Services by the Government.¹⁹⁷ During the visit of the State Organizer Miss S. Swer from the Girl Guides Headquarters in Shillong in 1941, she enrolled four girl leaders each from the Girl Guides and the Blue Birds. Five of these girls were sent to attend the Guiders Training Camp in Shillong; Dengziki, Thangvungi and Thangi from the Girl Guides and,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p 84, p 98.

¹⁹⁵ Reports of the Lushai hills, 1926-27, Miss Katie Hughes. Pp 82-83.

¹⁹⁶ P.C. Girl’s School, Record Book, p 32

¹⁹⁷ Thangi, ex-captain, dated 17.08.1994, P.C. Girl’s School Record Book.

Chawngbuangi and Rokhumi from the Blue Birds. By 1947, subsequent camps followed in Silchar, Neihbawi, Durtlang etc where the girls participated with active enthusiasm.¹⁹⁸

Gradually, the Girl Guides grew in terms of organization and strength. By 1945, the Girl Guides wore navy blue skirts and white blouses with a light blue triangular scarf on their shoulders. Bulbuls wore light blue frocks with white collar cuffs and belts. Weekly meetings were convened out of doors after schools every Friday and the girls worked for their badges; Knitters, Needlewomen's, Ambulance and Toymakers being one of the favorites.¹⁹⁹ Lectures on demonstrations of first aid, the 'country-boat rides' down the journey to Silchar, meetings with the Bengali Guides, games, singsongs and campfires were educational, exciting and interesting experiences for the Guides. To evoke interests among the parents, the Girl Guides at times invited them to attend 'special meetings' such as enrollment days, and received support and appreciation by some mothers who had actually been Guides themselves.²⁰⁰

The Blue Birds, later known as Bulbuls, comprised of the students at the Primary level. With the same purpose as the Girl guides and more or less similar activities, the Blue Bird leader was called as the 'wise bird' and the 'wise bird pin' was awarded to the best flock.

¹⁹⁸ P. C. Girl's school, Record Book, p 32

¹⁹⁹ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 84

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp 84-85

FEMALE LITERACY IN MIZORAM²⁰¹

Year	Literate Persons	Female Literacy	Percentage.
1901	295	14	0.14
1911	472	34	0.34
1921	743	106	1.06
1931	1,267	278	2.78
1941	2,312	844	8.44
1951	3,651	1947	19.47
1961	5,124	4034	40.34

Conclusion:

This chapter tells a story of how the interaction between missionary agents and indigenous women created change. Here, the P.C. Girl's School is an avenue of change where ideas were transmitted and incorporated. Education in this school encompassed academics, extra curricular activities and the teachings of values to shape the moral character. In a sense, one can say that the concept of education itself was embedded with the concept of the religious and the moral. The stress on a sense of moral and social responsibility was perpetuated through various activities in the school. Many of the girls who were educated in the Girl's school returned as teachers of the new

²⁰¹ *Mizo Women Today*, Tribal Research Institute Directorate of Art and Culture, Mizoram, Aizawl: 1991, p22.

generation of girls, especially the first few batches of the students like Pawngi, Nuii, Saii etc. As the school progressed and grew, so also was the women who now engaged themselves with various activities. The social and religious dimension of the activities that these women undertook is the focus of attention in the next chapter.



Middle School Girls in the first school building constructed in 1939



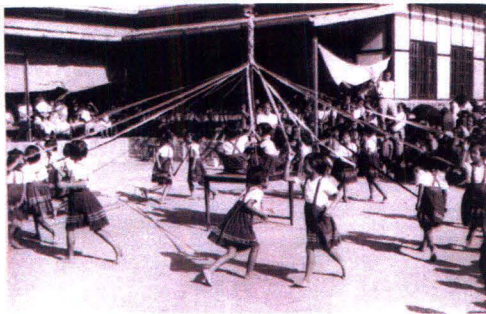
The Blue Flock Girls



Early women who attended the Girl's School



Miss Katie Hughes with her pupils(1924-1944)



The Ribbon dance taught by the school teacher Pi Lalchhingpuii



Mizo women attending schools with their babies strapped on their backs



Handwork class in the old building



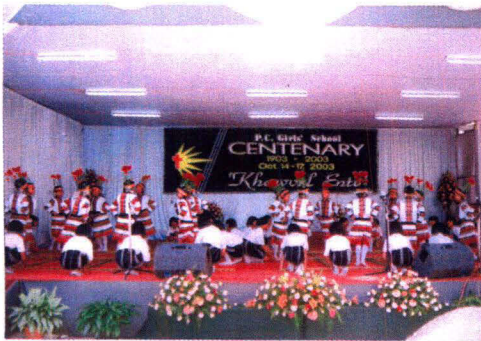
The site of the school before its construction



Teacher's Training School, 1948



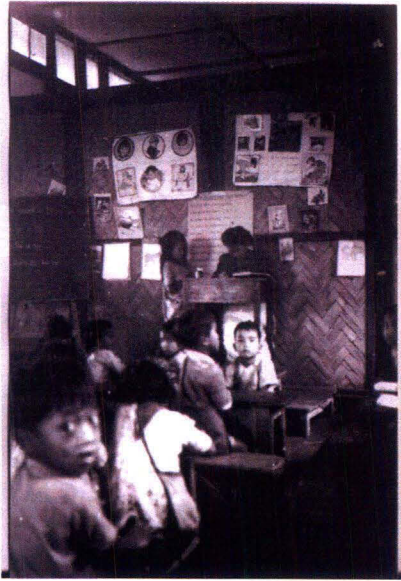
Girls singing outdoors with the Welsh Headmistress



Centenary celebration of the P.C. Girl's School, performing "the Cheraw"



Girls wearing the Mizo traditional dress, "kawrchei"



Classes of boys school and girls school merged during the inter-war years



The Pioneer missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. D.E. Jones



The Lower Primary section in the old school building



The School Staff in 2000



The Girl Guides participating in the Independence Day parade



The School Staff, 2003



The Blue Flocks' meeting after class



The Ribbon dance as the school tradition



Handwork teacher Nu Saii with the girl's works



The Durtlang Hospital Staff



Pi Teii, Pi Zopari, Pi Saptawni, Pi Ropuii, headmistresses of the School



Social Work performed by the women and the girls



Girls weaving in the new building



Physical Training



The handwork class in the old school



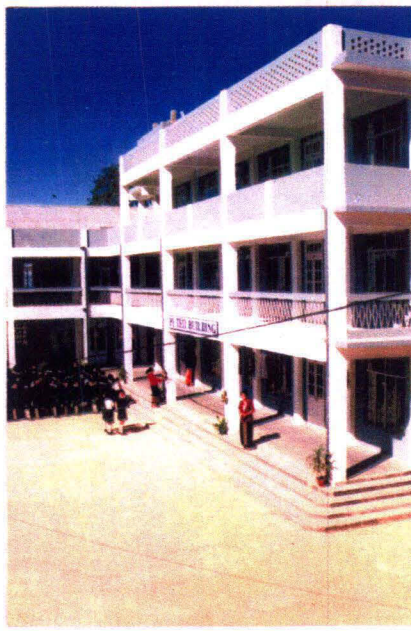
Weaving in the old school building



The new school building constructed,
Pi Teii Building



The old school constructed by Samuel
Davies, Architect missionary



CHAPTER 4

Educated Women As Agents of Change: The Network of Activities

This chapter is concerned with how the school education had transformed the girls and their lives as women now assumed new roles. Their engagements with various activities that gave them public visibility and the transcendence of social boundaries through these activities is examined through the social and voluntary religious works that they participated in. It will deal with the aspects of professional and voluntary activities that educated women engaged with, spreading education and the message of the gospel, thus becoming agents of change themselves, contributing to the furtherance of the emancipatory project for women through the network of activities that they undertook. By focusing primarily on the Mizo Bible women, and their activities, the Local Women's Meetings, and the participation of educated women in the Presbyterian Hospital, Durtlang as Nurses, along with the missionary nurses and doctors, thus being a part of "the ministry of healing" within the context of the changing milieu will be examined. Several papers prepared by the Church, magazines and souvenirs indigenous by nature have been used apart from missionary reports and "personal experiences" in their narratives.

Mizo Bible Women :

The Welsh missionary women pioneered the cause of women's education in the Lushai Hills. Right from the arrival of the first woman missionary in the Lushai hills, Mrs. Katherine Ellen Williams Jones, the task of educating women figured as the central role of the women missionaries. A significant contribution of Mrs. Katherine Jones was

providing a major part of training to the **Bible women** among the local women, a task which was assigned initially to Mrs. Jones and later to the other women missionaries by the Assembly Committee²⁰². Bible women were appointed and employed by the Synod, then known as The Assembly, during the period 1915-1923 with the last Bible woman to pension in 1963.²⁰³ In the insipient stage of conversion to Christianity where the social ethos was marked by contestation and persecution of the newly baptized Christian women and men, (from members of the local community who remained obstinate and intransigent towards conversion), Bible women played a crucial role in the development and concretization of the Christian spirit. Thus, the concept of Bible women emerged out of the agenda for a more expeditious evangelism and the efficacious perpetuation of the Christian faith.²⁰⁴

The task of these Bible women was multi-dimensional. As itinerant evangelists, they were required to travel periodically in various assigned villages and districts to preach the Gospel. Their work, apart from the religious domain encompassed many social activities for a more progressive society, for example, emphases on hygiene, cleanliness, childcare, midwifery etc., amidst a society whose 'filthiness' and lack of awareness in terms of health and sanitation had been a central element in the preexisting social fabric, succinctly and unanimously encoded in both foreign and indigenous accounts.

In the letter of Mrs. Sandy dated March, 1919, she is quoted expressing her dissatisfaction with the 'meager training' given to the Bible women and was most

²⁰² Zomuani, *Kum 100* 1904-2004, p33

²⁰³ Centenary Souvenir, '*Bible Women Chanchin*', C. Biakchhingi, p6.

²⁰⁴ Zomuani, p154

anxious for them 'to learn the elements of midwifery and laws of sanitation'. To materialize this, she secured the permission of the Civil Surgeon in the Government-run Civil Hospital, Aizawl. Eventually, two Bible women were allowed to study under the Government midwife, Pawngi²⁰⁵. Mrs. Sandy also visualized that the training so begun under Pawngi would result in a definite scheme by which they 'hope in future years the country would be greatly helped, the infant death rate lower and the great pain and suffering among the poor Lushai women relieved'; that these Bible women would be 'progressively trained in batches of four, under the sub-assistant Surgeon's supervision', and that they would be stationed in six large key villages widely separate areas. In addition, they would receive religious instruction from Mrs. Sandy in their evangelism classes for 'their primary work would be religious and spiritual'²⁰⁶.

In 1922, an Evangelist class was formed where the Bible women and evangelists were trained under the guidance of Pastor Liangkhaia, Pastor Chhuahkhama and Pu Pasena. After the completion of the training, Bible women were assigned specific districts where they made periodic visits, aiding the pastoral work. Their work also entailed forming the Local Women's Meetings and Conferences, popularizing the concept of the handful of rice collection, preaching, practicing midwifery, creating knowledge and awareness on health and hygiene, childcare etc, to improvise the 'unhealthy' conditions of living, activities which featured significantly in their mission.²⁰⁷

"The Handful of Rice Collection": Reflection of change

²⁰⁵ Llyod, p185

²⁰⁶ Letter dated March, 1919, *ibid*

²⁰⁷ Zomuani, Kum 100, pp32-33.

Similar to the 'handful of rice collection', the concept of Bible women also originated in a place called Mission Veng, the Mission station in Aizawl. These two concepts are closely interwoven as a network of Christian activity. Notably, the purpose for this mode of collection introduced in the Lushai Hills by Mrs. Katherine Ellen Jones was to help as a means of fundraising for the construction of the proposed Mission Veng Chapel in 1911.²⁰⁸ The chapel construction was finally completed in 1913 and inaugurated in April 17 the same year.²⁰⁹ Significantly, the practice of the handful of rice collection continued after the chapel construction, and constitutes an integral part of the mechanism through which the Women's Meetings of the church throughout the state function till the present day.

Apparently, Mrs. Jones familiarized herself with this mode of collection through the neighboring Khasi-Jaintia churches where the sum generated from the rice collection was devoted to the cause of pioneering Christian elementary schools in non-Christian areas.²¹⁰ The Garo Churches to the west of the Khasi Hills seemingly practiced this mode of collection much earlier than the neighboring Hills. In a society where rice consumption is central to the daily meals (twice a day sometimes even thrice) the mothers in a Christian household store aside a handful of rice in a separate container each time before cooking. The rice accumulated through such a collection generally amounted to about 2kilos a month which would then be presented to the Church, deriving a substantial sum after sale.

²⁰⁸ Llyod, p145

²⁰⁹ Lungphun 100, Mission Veng Kohhran (1898-1998) p36

²¹⁰ Llyod, p146

To popularize and appropriate the idea, every church was directed to appoint a rice collection secretary from the women members and became an important item in their agenda. This collection described by Llyod as a 'convenient and realistic mode of collection'²¹¹ eventually widened over time in terms of scope and the profit generated from the collection. Crucially, as people internalized the idea, it served another ecclesiastical purpose. As an exemplary activity of the devoted Christian, it functions as marker of the distinctive character of the Christian woman.

In 1913 after the completion of the chapel construction, the rice collection became the financial source through which the appointed bible women were funded. In the early days the monthly salary of the bible women ranged from Rs. 3 to Rs.7²¹². The 1916 Presbytery Assembly placed the first bible woman, Chhingteii, in Aizawl who was to receive a salary of Rs.7 per month²¹³. The October 1916 Assembly also appointed Bualthluaii to a village called Sialsuk, a few distance from Aizawl. She was to receive Rs.3 monthly and "might be rendered external help from people willing to extend voluntary help" (Presbytery October 1916, No.18).²¹⁴. Thus the salary payment varied according to the field in which these bible women operated. Notably there was an increase in the salary from Rs.6-Rs.7 in the 1919 Assembly. In 1920 it was decided that those working in Aizawl would be paid Rs.10 and those in villages Rs.8 (Presbytery October 1920, No.12).

²¹¹ Ibid, pp145-146

²¹² Centenary souvenir p6

²¹³ Synod Thurel Lakkhawm vol1 1910-1980 p116

²¹⁴ Ibid p117

Over time, the Synod realized that the money generated from the rice collection did not suffice for the payment of salaries with the increase in the employment in bible women. Thus the Synod took up the financial responsibility and entrusted the task of boosting the collection through a certain propaganda agent and organizer under an agenda brought up by Pu C.Z.Huala, Headmaster of the middle school in Saitual at a committee²¹⁵. Subsequently in 1946 Ms Gwen Rees Roberts was assigned such task who explicated the purpose of rice collection as ‘a piece of Christian service that everyone could do’²¹⁶, propagating the idea to women through various campaigns in the villages, towns, districts and Presbytery levels.

The enthusiasm, with which the local people responded to such an agenda, as an examination into the sources reveal, was one of discrepancy. The interchange of letters in this regard is interesting. In a reply to the letter of Ms. Gwen Rees Roberts’ campaign for rice collection, a man of some village was quoted urging her to discontinue writing, “now we have had enough of your letters, just stop sending anymore, we don’t want anymore”. Receiving it with amusement, a counter reply was sent by Miss. Roberts “thank you for your letter and I hope you won’t mind but I shall be sending a letter to your church again at the end of the year”.²¹⁷

Local Response: As mentioned earlier the missionaries and the bible women popularized the agenda of rice collection, the idea of converting rice into money, which was later associated with matter of spirituality on the argument that “prayer and giving

²¹⁵ Gwen Rees Robert, *Memories*, p157

²¹⁶ Ibid p158

²¹⁷ Ibid

went together”²¹⁸. This is a rhetoric which according to Miss. Roberts’ reflection “had really taken hold of women’s imagination... [And] the response was excellent once the idea had gained momentum”²¹⁹. The label on the box of rice collection had a suitable bible verse with a certain message “reminding people who lived in the house to give the collection and also giving them the opportunity to share their faith with a stranger who was not yet a Christian”. Thus a simple label “served more than one purpose”²²⁰.

However, when one turns to the perception of the indigenous people, the story of the people’s response was not often ‘excellent’, running contradictory to the missionary gaze and conceptions of the success in Mission works. Non Christians aside, local members of the church themselves repudiated the idea of labeling ‘God’s message’ in the containers of rice collection. They recalled the early days when these labels were discarded and sometimes burnt. Some considered it unsavory and associated it with the “hypocritical Pharisees”.²²¹ Some of the people speaking in tongues through the ecstatic revivalist phenomenon that swept the Lushai hills, would compose songs sardonically and sing in the streets, resonating the remarks like “your rice collection is rotting” or demeaning questions such as “is your God hungry up in heaven?” or “is your Jesus starving”, or “who will consume your abundant Sunday rice collection?”²²²

In the socio-religious dimension of their work and all that it encompassed, the indigenous sources of writings disclose how bible women suffered intermittent setbacks

²¹⁸ Ibid p160

²¹⁹ Ibid p161

²²⁰ Ibid p159

²²¹ Zomuani *Kum 100* p73

²²² Zomuani, *Kum 100* p74

and prejudices. However, the arduous task and the hardships did not deter them in their mission. As required of itinerant evangelists, these women traveled extensively and encountered many expressions of disapproval to 'a woman's word', which was not surprising given the traditional notion that believes in the so called 'anecdotes or proverbs' as 'flesh of the crab is no meat, word of the woman is no word'²²³ Some of the women were stoned while some were slandered derogatorily²²⁴. Skeptical of the bible women's motives, many people strongly adhered to the misconception that bible women chose their professions due to laziness and an attempt to escape domestic work or winning favors and appreciation from the Zosap (white missionaries) or to derive their own personal benefits from the Zosap²²⁵.

Many of the bible women appealed to local sensibilities more for their medical knowledge and services, in terms of dispensing medical facilities and healing the sick, rather than their primary zeal of enhancing spirituality against the material, for the extension of "God's kingdom"²²⁶. Tirhkoh Kawli, in an interview, recollected an unpleasant incident when she was considered 'immodest' for lacking 'any sense of shame' due to her visit to the bachelors dormitory, preaching. Apparently "being *just* a woman" and preaching the gospel of God was considered an act of 'shamelessness' for which she was disdained and relentlessly reprimanded by the chief. Authorized by the chief, the bachelors flung cow dung at this bible woman during her visit to Biate and

²²³ *Mizo Women Today*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl:1991, p7

²²⁴ Ibid p161

²²⁵ Malsawmi, p117

²²⁶ Ibid, pp17-18

Khawbung villages.²²⁷ Her reverence of the gospel enabled her to transcend the enormous persecutions in a male discourse which evidently held that it was disgraceful and uncanny for a woman to step out of her home to pursue evangelism.

Table showing the total amount of money generated from the handful of rice collection²²⁸

Year	Amount
1914	80.0.0
1915	211.0.0
1916	-----
1917	250.0.0
1918	611.5.9
1919	890.0.0
1920	1,088.0.0
1930	-----
1940	1,015.0.0
1950	8,290.0.0
1960	40,211.67
1970	1,42,933.74
1980	8,50,000.75
1990	50,82,965.82
2000	3,08,21,884.00
2004	4,64,50,217.00

²²⁷ Zomuani, p166

²²⁸ These figures are taken from the works of Zomuani, p76-78 and *Synod Bu*, The Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Synod, Aizawl:2004, p499

The Local Women's Meetings:

When Mrs. Katherine Jones started her work among the women in the Lushai Hills, she opened a school for the girls, with a small beginning of twelve students, and the subsequent development that followed later had been explored in the previous section on the evolution of the Girl's School as the Presbyterian Church Girl's School. A significant step taken for the women and mothers who could not attend the school for girls was taken by Mrs. Katherine Jones. She organized the local women's meetings which at the present day has functioned and widened in terms of membership and activities. These meetings were mainly religious by nature and the Bible women were employed to convene such meetings in the distant villages while on their tours.

These local meetings were held once a week, some of them on weekdays and others on a week night. Right from the early days these local meetings performed a series of practical works involving fund raising to help in the growth and expansion of the Church.. Many of the Churches had improved facilities from the collection of money and the services provided by these Local Women's Meetings.

By 1946, it was decided that women in individual local Churches within one District decided that it would be a good idea to convene District Women's Conferences once a year. In these conferences, devotional services were held where representative from every district gave reports of the kind of meetings that they held and the services that they rendered towards helping the Church. Significant among their contribution was 'the handful of rice collection' for which great emphasis was laid.

As membership in these meetings increased, a bigger conference on Presbytery level was decided to be held as well. By 1960, a yearly conference comprising of women throughout North Mizoram was started, with different venue each year. This was a big undertaking as it required hundreds of women to come together in a village furthering the need for bigger Churches.²²⁹

Creating a New space: The Christian Home Movement

In her *Memories of Mizoram*, Miss Gwen Rees Roberts, the lady missionary to the Lushai Hills, recollected that, “in talking of the Christian home, we were not only talking of holding family prayers, but many other things came under this heading”²³⁰ In its multifaceted dimensions, primarily essential was to create and fashion a Christian environment to shape the families’ religious perceptions and run programs that would render moral and spiritual training to individuals members of the family. ‘The Christian Home’ therefore became an important site for perpetuation of missionary propaganda wherein women of each household figured a significant role. As a regular activity in the Welsh Christian homes, the practice was followed in the wider area of Assam, under the Assam Christian Council which later became the North East Christian Council, where it was known as the Christian Home Movement.²³¹

This part of women’s work required the initiative of women of the church to help Christian families in holding a short service at their respective homes. Christian families

²²⁹ Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, pp 166-175, Zomuani, *Kum 100*

²³⁰ Miss Gwen Rees Roberts, *Memories*, p 164.

²³¹ *Ibid*, p162

were encouraged to hold such services at least once before meal with a great deal of seriousness. Members of the Women's meetings would visit Christian homes, and campaigned for the Christian Home propaganda. These women of the church, thinking in terms of the Christian home, when on house-visits, would emphasize on the possession of a Bible and a hymn book in each families, which was considered the prerequisite in a Christian home.

Such kind of programs also entailed "prayer for their children; how to bring children up in the Christian faith, how to convey the gospel to them; hygiene and cleanliness and teaching the women something about nutrition and the place of the woman in the family". Gradually the scope widened from its earlier religious parameters. 'The Christian Home Week' was periodically observed where every house would be busy with 'cleaning activity' in and around the house.²³² Conferences were held where people were invited to address the subjects of hygiene, first aid and other related subjects that would benefit them in their physical life, apart from the spiritual. The work has been continuously conducted by women of the main Central Committee of the Women's Movement by organizing seminars dealing with subjects that pertain to living the Christian life.²³³

²³² *ibid*, p165

²³³ *ibid*, pp164-165.

“The Ministry of Healing”: Durtlang Hospital: Missionary women and Mizo

Nurses

Another significant evangelical agency of the Christian mission is medical work. Rev. D.E. Jones, the first Welsh Missionary to Lushai Hills, realized the need for a doctor when he learnt how sickness and diseases were attributed to the evil spirits by the people and attended on the sick to the best of his ability. He was therefore accompanied by Dr. Peter Fraser, B.Sc, M.D. and his wife on his return from furlough in 1908.²³⁴ On his arrival, Dr.Fraser started a clinic above the Mission Veng church and also made home visits to patients who were unable to attend the clinic. During the first twelve months of his stay, 23,919 patients were given treatment besides some hundreds of patients treated while on his journey across the country.²³⁵ This was also considered an excellent opportunity for “sowing the seed” day by day, which also generated the need for a dispensary wherein the medical work and meetings among the patients and their friends could be more “satisfactorily arranged”.²³⁶

A new dispensary was opened in 1910, and the medical mission increasingly proved to be an important site of evangelical agency. Dr. Fraser in his Report of the Lushai Hills 1919-11 recorded about 24,000 cases of treatments, among which patients of great distance of 90 miles away were included. An addition of 3000 copies of the word of the cross booklet was distributed which was followed by over 100 names of persons

²³⁴ R. Chawngthangvunga Chief Tech. Pathology, *History of Durtlang Hospital-1 (1928-1958)*, in Synod Hospital, Durtlang Diamond Jubilee 1928-1988 Published by the Souvenir Committee, Printed at Adland Publicity Pvt. Lmt. Calcutta-17

²³⁵ The Report of the Lushai hills 1909-10, The Rev. Dr. Fraser Ibid, p41

²³⁶ *ibid.*

desirous of becoming Christians were received during the year.²³⁷ Eventually the new dispensary, which was described as “a pretty building of corrugated iron and lime plastered walls” containing four rooms and two bathrooms, was completed by November of 1910.²³⁸ As the new dispensary progressed, Dr. Fraser waged a tough opposition against the practice of slavery and against those chiefs who kept slaves. Ultimately he set forty slaves free by paying their price out of his own money and was therefore forced to leave Lushai Hills in 1912 resulting in the closure of the dispensary. Seven years after the closure of the dispensary, Compounder Mr. D. Thianga who had been serving the Government for 10 years was requested to restore the work left by Dr. Fraser. He, therefore, resigned from his post in the government and restarted the dispensary.²³⁹

In the year 1923, Laipuitlang, picked up as the best site for the headquarters of the North east Presbytery with Rev. Sandy in charge was objected by the chief Pu Thangphunga.²⁴⁰ On hearing this, the chief of Durtlang, M.Suaka, a good Christian and “friend of the missionaries” and who founded the Durtlang village for the Christian refugees came to aid. He generously offered a vast plot of land called Derhkentlang for the Mission Headquarters. The offer was enthusiastically accepted by the church. Rev

²³⁷ *ibid*, p45

²³⁸ *ibid*.

²³⁹ Synod Hospital, Durtlang Diamond Jubilee souvenir, *ibid* p134. He was requested by the Rev. F.J. Sandy and Pastor Chhuahkhama on this matter. The forced return of Dr. Fraser also “greatly grieved” the Rev. E.L. Mendus, the then missionary in charge of education, especially since it was the time when people began to realize that sickness was not caused by evil spirits and the medical mission was serving a great evangelical mission. Consequently, the need for a hospital increasingly dawned on him.

²⁴⁰ The administration of the church in North Mizoram in 1923 was divided into three Presbyteries, viz West Presbytery with its headquarters at Mission Veng, South West Presbytery with its headquarters at Dawrpui and Northeast Presbytery. *ibid*, p134

Mendus, the chief and the Elders went up the hill where they encircled the place and dedicated the area in prayer for the mission headquarters.²⁴¹

Dr. John Williams, L.M.P. who was christened Pu Daka by the local people, arrived in Mizoram on 22nd February 1928 and stationed at Durtlang. The old Theological School building was then utilized as a hospital with the assistance of only two trained staff, namely Compounder D. Thianga and the staff nurse Tlawmkungi. Conveniently, beds were procured from the old hostel and the first patient to the hospital was admitted on 6th March 1928. The hospital at Durtlang was therefore inaugurated and named “the Welsh Mission Hospital. In the same year, the school of nursing was introduced by Dr. Williams so as to enhance the nursing services. The first student was a 16 year old local girl named Khuangi who served in the hospital till 1936.²⁴² Meanwhile in 1929, a missionary Engineer named Rev. Lewis Evans and his wife arrived at Durtlang to undertake construction of a new hospital building which had been long envisaged by the Rev. F.J.Sandy.²⁴³

The Nursing School: Miss Winifred Margaret, the first missionary nurse at Durtlang arrived on 7th January 1929 and was christened Pi Hmangaihi by the people. She was assisted by a Mizo lady Miss Daihzingi after completion of her nursing course from the Robert’s Hospital, Shillong in 1930. Since Nurse Tlawmkungi left the service

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

²⁴² *ibid*, p135

²⁴³ *ibid*, p 135

soon after the arrival of the first missionary nurse, Miss Daihzingi served as the lone qualified nurse till she left in 1934.²⁴⁴

The second missionary nurse Miss Eirlys Williams, a tall lady and hence called Pi Sangi by the people arrived in 1933. She taught for seven years in the school of nursing and supervised the nursing services in the hospital. She recollected that the mizo girls who trained for nurses were generally quite young, about 16 years of age who “did their work very well and were anxious to learn”.²⁴⁵ In 1936, her new colleague Miss Gladys Evans , called Pi Hruaii by the local people, arrived at Durtlang Hospital and took keen interest in public health particularly on the numerous people living in the interior villages, unable to avail themselves of medical services in the hospital. Arranging “healing services” within these people’s reach was therefore a commitment which she was to dedicate herself to in the forthcoming years.²⁴⁶

Miss Gwladys M. Evans, a pioneer missionary in the field of health education in the interiors of Mizoram, soon after her arrival in the Mizo District in 1936, was astounded with the “plight of thousands of people living in this area...” with medical care and facilities accessed only by very limited few among the inhabitants.²⁴⁷ The first task considered indispensable was a training school for Mizo girls to become nurses and midwives, among whom some had to be taught to write, although reading was allegedly

²⁴⁴ *ibid*, p135.

²⁴⁵ Mrs. Eirlys Ellis “A short Record of Durtlang Hospital” Diamond Jubilee souvenir, *ibid.*, p169

²⁴⁶ R.Chawngthangvunga, “History of Durtlang Hospital” Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, *ibid* p 136.

²⁴⁷ May Bounds and Gwladys M.Evans, *Medical Mission in Mizoram, “Personal Experiences”*, The Synod Publication Board, Aizawl: 1987. p116.

not a problem. With this objective in view, preparations of lectures and translation into the Mizo language began under the missionary Gwladys M. Evans in her “very badly pronounced Mizo language”.²⁴⁸

Following the departures of Dr. John Williams and Sister E. Williams at the end of 1936 and 1938 respectively, Gwladys Evans was accompanied by Doctor Gwyneth Roberts. Based on the syllabus for nurses in Britain, these two missionaries prepared lectures in various nursing, medical and surgical subjects in order to provide medical aid and nursing care to the people who were deprived of such amenities. After a certain period of time, these typed syllabuses were revised, cyclo-styled and loose leaf text books were made. However, it was only in the later years that the whole syllabuses for Mizo nurses were completed in the Mizo language.²⁴⁹

The arrival of the lady missionary doctor Gwyneth Parul Roberts in November 1937 was significant event for the Durtlang Hospital and the people²⁵⁰. She was, unlike her predecessors, a graduate in science and in medicine, (B.Sc., M.B., B.Ch) and was called Pi Puii by the Mizos. The predominant concern of Dr. Roberts was the improvement and provision of better facilities in the school of nursing. As seen earlier, this shared zeal of Dr. Roberts and Miss Evans resulted in the firm establishment of a formal Nursing Course of four years duration following the pattern of Nursing syllabus in

²⁴⁸ Ibid. Gwladys M. Evans. P117.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 117-118.

²⁵⁰ Doctor Gwyneth Parul Roberts served in Mizoram for 23 years (1938-1961)

Great Britain .Significantly by the time of the establishment of the Assam Nursing and Midwifery Council in 1944, Durtlang Nursing School was among the first to be recognized.²⁵¹

The Nursing Education gradually evolved into a more intensive program. A three month Preliminary Training school period was started for new students in the school. On completion of the Preliminary training, there were weeks of Block Teaching for specific subjects where students engaged with practical with no Ward Work duties. The training was consistently directed towards efficient patient care, skilled care on the wards, at the Clinics, in the Operating Theatre and in the Maternity and Labour Wards. The need of constant support and courage for the Young Mizo Nurses and Midwives was grave in a situation where there was no doctor to attend the patients, in addition to the enormous responsibilities in cases of accidents and emergencies that could arise in Midwifery.²⁵²

A similar concern was exhibited towards ‘village outreach’, and health care programs to the people living in the interior villages featured significantly in the medical mission. The two medical missionaries alternately took turns in visiting the outlying villages, occasionally extending their stay even up to three months at a stretch to render clinical services and opening dispensaries.²⁵³ Visibly, the Hospital underwent significant

²⁵¹ R.Chawngthangvunga, *ibid.* p 136. This school was also the only Nursing school in Mizoram till 1981.

²⁵² Miss May Bounds, “Nursing education and Services in Durtlang Hospital”, *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir*, *ibid.*, p 165

²⁵³ Mizoram Presbyterian Kohhran Hmeichhia, *Kohhran Hmeichhe Ni Vawi 9 na*, Presbyterian Kohhran Hmeichhia, Central Committee, Aizawl. Paper organized on behalf of the 9th Women’s Meetings and Conferences Day on November 25, 2005, p9 (translation mine)

and rapid growth since the tenure of Dr. Gwyneth Roberts. Many new ventures were undertaken through her foresight and endeavors, assistance and encouragement, such as the school of nursing, Rural Dispensaries, Mobile Clinic, Well Baby Clinic, TB Treatment, Immunization Program and the opening of Clinic in and around Aizawl.²⁵⁴

Over time, the services of these two lady missionaries gained immense popularity and fame. Dr. Roberts, in particular was widely known as a legendary for being a talented surgeon. Much talked about in the villages regarding her ability to perform successful surgery was the way she could “longitudinally divide a patient and join the body back to life in all normalcies”²⁵⁵ On this conviction, she encountered one woman with goiter during her village tour who apparently requested Doctor Gwyneth Roberts to operate her on the roadside. The woman further explained the dearth of time to get operated in the hospital since she was unable to leave her children at home, and that she would get a bed rest once she return home if such a necessity arose!²⁵⁶

In the absence of adequate facilities and appropriate medicines, the challenges were at times overwhelming. Treatment of the most dreaded disease, tuberculosis at the time when no definite cure had been discovered, was one such case. The old theological school building which was converted to a hospital was eventually used as a TB Ward. For a long time those patients who were declared clinically cured were required to go 180 kilometers to Silchar for cure confirmation by chest X Rays. This dire and acute need for

²⁵⁴ R.Chawngthangvunga, *ibid*, p139

²⁵⁵ *ibid*, p4.

²⁵⁶ R.Chawngthangvunga, *ibid*.

improved facility was gradually relieved through fundraising and in 1952, the conference of a few Pastorates of the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram constructed the Labour Ward.²⁵⁷ In 1955, after Dr. Roberts' return from Wales, a new double storey isolation ward was constructed for Tuberculosis patients. The joint effort of the women of the church in Wales and Mizoram, an X ray machine was purchased and commissioned on 28th February 1958 which facilitated the quick diagnosis of diseases and better treatment.²⁵⁸

As seen above, church women of Wales and Mizoram displayed great enthusiasm and support in the development of the Hospital and dispensaries, constituting an important part of the agencies through which aid was rendered. Apart from prayer service for the hospital, its staff, the patients and their family members, the offertory collection in the Church Assembly were directed towards the purchase of essential hospital equipments. Among these articles were X -ray machines, E.C.G. Machine, construction of children's ward, Labour Ward, Kitchen, Washing room, Lecture room, Nurses' hostel and its furniture, etc.²⁵⁹

Contributions were also made in the form of kinds such as Cotton Wool, brooms, pillows, beddings, children's wear etc. Gradually, the Pastorate conferences of the church women began to give donations in the name of the Pastorates.²⁶⁰ Contributions were also

²⁵⁷ Mrs. L.Malsawmi "Synod Hospital and the Church Women" Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, *ibid.* p163.

²⁵⁸ R.Chawngthangvinga, Synod Hospital Durtlang, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir p137

²⁵⁹ Miss Gwen Rees Roberts, "Synod hospital and Welsh Women" *ibid.*, p 161

²⁶⁰ Mrs. L.Malsawmi, *ibid.*, p 163.

made by way of handicraft. Knitting of blankets for supply in the hospital was done for many years. These blankets knitted out of colorful wools were distributed to each bed along with knitted shawls, meant particularly for patients suffering from tuberculosis.²⁶¹

The fourth missionary nurse to Durtlang, Miss Annie Dorothy Harries arrived in the year 1939. She was named Pi Harhi by the Mizos for her energetic and hardworking character and exhibited keen dedication in teaching and administration of the nursing services. However, her service in Durtlang came to an abrupt end and left for England in 1941 due to domestic pressure at home. Her work was continued by the new Sister Imogen P. Roberts who replaced Pi Harhi for a short term, who also returned to England after a year. A significant break from the short tenures of the missionary nurses came with the arrival of Miss May Bounds in 1954 who was known to the Mizos as Pi Muani, for people “found solace” in her.²⁶²

Miss May Bounds was said to have “led a life full of love and compassion... who loved and cared for the poor and often paid on behalf of the poor and the needy” who could not afford to pay for themselves.²⁶³ It also became possible for Miss Evans to prepare village out-reach service and establishing village dispensaries which at the time was “a tremendous need”²⁶⁴ with Miss May Bounds stationed at the Hospital. Miss Evans was eventually in charge of the village Health Centres and chanelized her time towards

²⁶¹ Miss Gwen Rees Roberts, “Synod Hospital and Welsh Women”, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, *ibid*, p161.

²⁶² R.Chawngthangvunga, *ibid*, p137

²⁶³ *ibid*.

²⁶⁴ Miss May Bounds, “Nursing Education and Services in Durtlang Hospital”, Diamond Jubilee souvenir, *ibid*, p 165

planning and executing the work.²⁶⁵ Subsequently, one Health Centre was inaugurated at Sawleng village on October 29, 1955 with the money contributed by the Vale of Conway Presbytery, followed by the establishments of Dispensaries in Pukzing, Chhawrtui and Sihfa.²⁶⁶ The Centre at Pukzing was opened on April 4, 1956 by the Mizoram Presbyterian Church in memory of the founder of the hospital Dr. John Williams. The remaining two dispensaries- Sihfa centre opened on August 4, 1956 and the centre at Chhawrtui opened on May 29, 1958 were financed by the Presbyterian Church of Wales.²⁶⁷

Miss May Bounds' commitment to the services of these rural health Centres entailed taking extensive journeys through unbeaten tracts to reach and cater to the needs of the interior villages. Apart from her medical services, she also actively involved herself in all church related activities and programs throughout her service among the Mizos for 27 years. Miss May Bound's service ended when she was unable to return from her furlough in 1963 for reasons of failing health.²⁶⁸

In the wake of uncertainties ushered by the political climate of the country, the Welsh Missionaries pre-empted the end of their services in Mizoram. Therefore, ownership and management of the Hospital, including the land, building and all its assets were handed to the synod of the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram by the Welsh Mission

²⁶⁵R.Chawngthangvunga, *ibid* p137-138.

²⁶⁶ Miss Gwen Rees Roberts "Synod Hospital and Welsh Women" *ibid*, p161

²⁶⁷ R.Chawngthangvunga, *ibid*, p 138.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

on February 28 1958. Since then, the erstwhile “Welsh Mission Hospital” was renamed the Presbyterian Synod Hospital, Durtlang.²⁶⁹

Amidst numerous difficulties surrounding the rapid growth of the hospital, with scanty resources and immense requirement of hospital equipments, the Hospital service emerged successfully. As stated in the letter to Dr. Ringluaia, Medical Superintendent of the synod Hospital by the missionaries Rev. and Mrs. J.M. Lloyd, “*the hospital obtained recognition as a training school, it won fame, acquired status, healed the sick in war and peace, produced capable and caring nurses...The Synod hospital has produced nurses for Civil hospitals, clinics and dispensaries...The purpose of the Hospital has remained constant –to heal the sick in the name of Jesus...*”²⁷⁰

Conclusion:

Through the avenues of change thus explored, this chapter has located the various ways in which education of females had changed the course of lives for the girls who got education and the people that they serve. Given the enormity of the tasks, the Bible women in particular, evinced strength and commitment to their work, in spite of the various forms of problems that they encountered. Their determination surpassing much of the skepticism that surrounded their works. Towards the later part of her life, Pawngi, in particular, earned acceptance and appreciation by most members of the community for her dedication to the cause of the people as a midwife. As for the women of the church, the works that they initiated had widened over time and performed with increasing zeal, evolving stronger and aiding the church in which they form a significant arm. The entry

²⁶⁹ *ibid*, p 139.

²⁷⁰ Missionary Letter of rev. and Mrs. J.M. Lloyd, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir, p131

into “the ministry of healing” by the Mizo nurses was another important achievement, ministry was no longer confined to the missionaries, but as women participated as nurses, healing and evangelizing became a joint effort of both the missionaries and the Mizo nurses, signaling as a significant milestone for the people.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The ideological and cultural premises of the Mission's proposals and steps to undertake Women's uplift in the Lushai Hills under scrutiny enabled one to discern that the cultural agenda provided the Missionaries the backdrop for the exigency of Women's education. This resulted in the emancipatory impulse of the Christians Missions in Missionary discourse. Evidently the condition of Women was used as a marker of the social degradation of 'the natives', whose lives were beset with 'evil practices' particularly in matters relating to marriage and sexuality. It also underlied the presupposition that in contrast to the degenerated practices of the 'heathens' is the morally superior agent for change, embodied by the Christians Missionaries.

In this scheme of change, the 'woman' becomes the ideological category on which the Missionary project of 'bringing light to darkness' among the people was articulated. The task fell into the hands of the Mission and it became their 'duty to save' as a civilizing Mission. Women, subjected to male governance in a Patriarchal setup and the degraded position created the space for condemnation of the society and the appropriation and legitimating of Missionary ideologies. The perceived character of the 'native others' as an object of reform, therefore, determine the ideological discursivities around women enabling them to extend the evangelical concerns.

However, the Christian missions were not the sole contributors towards emancipatory efforts on women. As seen in the preceeding chapters, the encounter and interactions of the Christian missions and the indigenous people created the change that was brought about through the agency of education. The Girl's School, in all its terms

and conditions, allowed the perpetuation of transmission of knowledge and ideas, which was incorporated and appropriated to the goal of creating the distinct Christian identity, training girls to become teachers of literacy, and shaping perceptions to direct them for active participation in religious affairs, upholding the values instilled to them through the School. Thus, the school for girls provided a significant amount of change for these girls and women, who engaged with various network of activities, voluntary and religious, which also transcended the otherwise confinement that featured their lives.

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