



**Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies**  
A Journal of Pachhunga University College  
(A Peer Reviewed Journal)

ISSN: 2456-3757  
Vol. 03, No. 02  
July-Dec., 2018

Journal Website: <https://sjms.mizoram.gov.in>

# Demystifying Secularism in Contemporary State of Mizoram

**Robert Sanglawra Khawbung**

Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, Aizawl

Email: khobung@gmail.com

## *Abstract*

*The paper deals with the core issues relating to secular and its related terms like, secularism and secularization process in Mizoram. It also focuses on the linkages between religion, social and political system from its historical perspective to contemporary Mizo polity. The paper also discussed in detail the impact of religion in close knit Mizo society and how the society perceives and responds the socio-political issues from religious perspectives. In other words, further, the paper also briefly discussed the effective role of Church for over some decades, in interpretation and contextualization the social, political and economic issues from religious perspective and its implication on state politics. Apart from the above stated issues, in midst of changing dynamic and fast secularization process of Mizo society, the paper also discussed the contemporary relations between religion and politics and attempt at reimagining the relationship between religion and political process in Mizoram. Lastly, the paper deals with the difficulties of locating the notion of secularism and its prospective in pervasive religious Mizo society.*

**Keywords:** *secularism, Mizo, church, Christianity, politics*

## **Introduction**

Concept and practice of secularization and secularism is broadly understood as the separation of state from religion, where religious issues are excluded from politics. Since, early sixteenth century seminal thinkers had proposed secularization

as the process of (1) increasing structural differentiation of social spaces resulting in the separation of religion from politics, economy, science, and so forth; (2) the privatization of religion within its own sphere; and (3) the declining social significance of religious belief, commitment and institutions. However, Jose Casanova

argued that, the core of the thesis, namely, the understanding of secularization as a single process of functional differentiation of the various secular institutional spheres of modern societies from religion, remains relatively uncontested (Casanova, 2011, p. 55). In fact, in a contemporary multi-cultural society, various theory of secularism and secularization has emerged and have been critically examined. It is claims that this differentiation of secular from religious sphere does not help to identify different kinds of secular life and the political reasoning on which they are based. He further argues that, if a legitimate de-privatized religion is carried out effectively, the allegedly viable part of secularization thesis as stated by Casanova's elements (1) and (3) would also be undermined (Asad, 2003, pp.181-182), which is very true in case of pervasive multi-religious society.

The Constitution of India provides for a secular State, in which the state ought to be non-partial, equal treatment and non-discriminatory towards various religious issues. In fact, secularism in context of multi-religious state of India has been a one of the most contested issued. In fact, during the Constituent Assembly debate, different versions of secularisms was an issued of debate, the first referred it to no concern theory of secularism, that dictated a clear separation between religion and the state, the second referred to no links theory between the state and religion, to prevent the demeaning of religion and the third referred to the equal respect theory of secularism which respected all the religion alike and granted religious liberty to all (Jha, 2000, p.3177). Although, the Constitution of

Indian made a provision for equality of all religious groups in a legal or political perspective, the existence of multi-religious groups with variety of religious practice and norm, where individual liberal rights are subdued by religious groups, thereby making the concept of secularism more complex and further added another problem in defining a separate boundary between politics and religion in a pervasive religious society. Further, there are various cases in India, where religion related issues, like gender, religious places, and religious texts, caste, have predominated over the political realm. Rather than a declining trend of religion in public realm, religion has become more active in public domain. Thus, Indian secularism, in contrast to Western normative secularism does not advocate a strict separation of religion from politics and cannot be understood in isolation to its various democratic antecedents. In other words, Indian version of secularism can be understood not as an anti-religious or irreligious but rather as a principle where the state promotes an agenda of social reform on the basis of liberal principles. In brief, Indian secularism can be described as a relative secularism where both state and religion interfere within each domain. Therefore, to perceive the secularization of politics in the form of separation of religion from politics is hardly a reality.

Concept and practice of secularism also varies from one society to another. Particularly, in a Christian dominated state of Mizoram, concept and practice of secularism is unique and cannot be understood from a Western perspective of secularization and secularism. Therefore, to

have a comprehensive concept on the relationship between religion and politics, the socio- culture, development of Christianity, pattern of secularization process and political developments constituted an important factor towards understanding; development and implication of secularism in contemporary Mizo society and politics.

### **British Colonial Policy towards Lushai Hills**

Concept such as secular, secularism and secularization were unknown to the traditional Mizo society. Prior to the advent of British colonial masters and Christian missionaries, albeit the traditional Mizo society acknowledged the existence of Super being called God, most of the traditional life of the Mizo society revolved around the belief in spiritual world, myths and superstitions greatly affected the traditional Mizo social and religious beliefs, which consequently had a great influence on their day to day socio-economic life. The traditional Mizo socio-political life revolved around the institution of Chieftainship. The Lushai Chief was practically the leader of both secular and religious realms. In other words, the Chief constituted as both a Caesar and Pope (Charavarti as cited in Hluna, 2013, p.149). Thus, the traditional Mizo society was characterized by absence of modern established socio-political institution, and norm that bifurcated the secular and religious realm, that is, during the period under the rule of the tribal chiefs. Therefore, in context of traditional Mizo society, no doubt, there was hardly any difference between socio-economic and

religious aspects, that is, the secular and non-secular realm.

Thereafter, with the exposure of Mizos to the British colonialism, Christianity and later with the incorporation of Mizoram within the Constitution of India, a secular space began to develop. The colonial policy towards the Mizo tribe, the nature of relationship between colonial administrators and Christian missionaries, the early secularization process based on Christian centric and the special Constitutional provision towards the Mizos, left a deep implication upon the nature, development and structure of relationship between the religion and politics in contemporary Mizo society.

The development of State-church relationship is a long process of historical development. Lal Dena observes, "In the nineteenth century Christian missions and colonialism seemed to follow upon each other in Africa and Asia. It is for that reason that in the eyes of many African and Asian peoples, colonialism was seen to assume both the role of a politician and a priest and Christian missions appeared to be a part and expression of western colonial expression. Some of them even go to the extent of characterizing missions as merely the hunting dog of western imperialism. However, Dena (2014), also observes that the relationship between the Cross and the Flag was not as smooth as is usually assumed. While the Church had really some pious interests, the colonial interest was motivated by commercial interests. Therefore, the inter-connection between them was more in the nature of highly

temporal process which was solely determined by the principle of expediency. Therefore, any generalization of the relation of a particular mission with a particular colonial government would be risky. However, in context of India and in particular to Mizo tribe, the failure of British colonial master to establish a uniform secular policy in a pervasive religious society had become a hindrance for the development of substantive secularism in post-colonial state.

After the revolt of 1857, -as part of the official government policy of the British in India - the Colonial administration of Lushai Hills- made it clear to the pioneer missionaries that they were not supposed to ask for help from the Government. However, British administrators were convinced that the civilizing influence of the missionaries would help to advance the British colonial interest directly or indirectly. Some of the British administrators in the Lushai Hills were very sympathetic with the missionaries. Mission schools in Lushai Hills were given free hand to include religious instruction in both mission schools and government funded schools. Apart from entrusting education in hand of missionaries, the government also gave financial grants for this purpose.

With the exception of the *Bawi* controversy<sup>1</sup> between Dr Peter Frazer and the Superintendent Cole and the misunderstanding that had developed between the Welsh Mission and Superintendent McCall over the High Revival excesses,<sup>2</sup> relationship between the Christian missionaries and the British

administrators were on the whole very cordial (Hminga, 1987, p.284). Moreover, at certain point of event, the British Colonial policy towards to Northeast India, became clear when viewed alongside the intention of Inner Line Regulation of 1873, that controlled the entrance of certain missionaries and this policy worked in favour of certain missionaries (Downs, 1994, p.21). Lalrinkima Ralte argued that the restriction of other missions, with the exception of the Presbyterian and Baptist paved a way for the dominant tendency of these two denominations (Ralte, 2014, p.126). Thus, colonial policy of nepotism among certain mission had a tremendous impact upon the growth and development of certain denominations. As a result, the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) and Presbyterian Church of India (PCI) have respectively dominated the Southern and Northern part of Mizoram.

The fact that many missionaries were honoured by the Government for their good work indicated that most of the British administrators did appreciate the good work of the selfless missionaries and recommended them for honours (Hminga, 1987, p. 284). Indeed, the overall Colonial government officials had friendly attitude towards Christian missions, there was no doubt that such friendly relations between the officials and the missionaries were important because each partner got tangible benefits out of it (Dena, 1998, p.117) Thus, in contrast to other part of India, the colonial administrators gave due patronage to the Christian missionaries. Therefore, it can be argued that the cordial relationship and support between the colonial administrators

and early Christian missionaries in Lushai hills clearly indicated that the secular policy of the Colonial government had been ineffective among the fringe Mizo tribe.

Apart from cordial relationship between the colonial administration and Christian missions, the incorporation of Mizoram under Union of India, had a tremendous impact upon the structure of the state. Various Articles in Indian Constitution in one hand made a provision for religious liberty of thought, belief, expression and propagation, on the other extreme it also empowered the state to change, regulate and extend assistance to certain religion and religious practices. Moreover, the liberty public official and top political dignitaries to publicly participate in religious festivals, visit religious place and pay their obeisance to religious leaders has clearly indicated that religion and politics have become more inter-locked than ever. (Kaeshyap, 1993, p.53). The Constitution (Fifty-third Amendment) Act enacted in 1986, inserted a new provision in the Constitution, Art. 371-G. The Amendment provides that notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of the following matters— (a) religious or social practices of the Mizos; (b) Mizo customary law and procedure; (c) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law; and (d) ownership and transfer of land shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the State Legislative Assembly so decides by passing a resolution (Jain, 2003, p. 2417). Particularly, in context of Mizoram, the special provision made by this Constitutional Amendment to

administer their local affair according to their own socio-religious practices, customary law and procedure in post-independence India has a tremendous impact in sustaining the Mizos socio-religious culture and deterred the development of substantive secularism in the Mizo society.

### **Church and Contemporary Politics in Mizoram**

Despite, rapid transformation of Mizo society and politics. Church in Mizoram, apart from being a significant factor in transformation and acculturation of Mizo's society, also plays a significant role in political culture of the State. In a Christian dominated state of Mizoram, the understanding of secularism portrays a completely different picture. Church in Mizoram can be described and categorised to some extent, as a "A civil society which stands as an institution, that acts as a non-state space, sphere of autonomous, empowerment of citizens, trust building associational life rather than subordinate to the state" (Rudolf, 2000, p.1763). In fact, Church in Mizoram is not an abstract institution but a community of persons. It can be described as a socio-political centre (a place where people of a community meet in organised capacities for common interest) that express the social, political, economic and cultural concern of the Mizo society. Therefore, there is a strong sense of solidarity among the Mizo Church members.

In midst of deteriorating Mizo social values, particularly with regard to increasing intensity of party politics, nepotism, corruption, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, and increasing gap of inequality among the Mizo

society. A range of questions has emerged as to, should Church withdraw itself from politics by saying politics is dirty and the church leaders should not be a part of it in reforming the socio-political system. In other words, various speculation and articulation has emerged as to what extent can Church be a part in bringing socio-political reform and change in contemporary Mizo society.

Therefore, Church in Mizoram have become more active in addressing socio-political issues, problem and challenges of the contemporary society. Various contemporary church leaders considered it as an inevitable to take part in fast changing socio-political environment. In order to reform the socio-political system of the Mizos, various arguments have emerged in public realm, which raise questions on the relevance and accountability of Church towards imparting socio-political ethics, good governance and inclusive development in dynamic Mizo polity and society. Further, some argued to the extent that Church leaders have a significant role in politics and felt that it is necessary for spiritual person to bring wisdom and righteousness in every aspect of society (Zova, 2018). Thus, in this juncture, on the basis of Biblical sanction and interpretation, Church in Mizoram has considered itself, as it is its obligation and responsibility to reform the socio-political system from a religious perspective.

Since early period of political development, the missionaries at large were always cautious when it came to politics, However, prominent leaders of the Presbyterian and the Baptist Church began

to play active role in the early history of political development. For instance, the first Mizo political party, the Mizo Union was formed in mid 1940s and was supported by majority of local pastors (Hminga, 1987, p. 243). It witnessed the entry of church leaders in high post. Some ecclesiastical figures such as the first Mizo ordained Pastor, Chhuahkhama of the Presbyterian Church, the founder of Salvation Army in Mizoram, Brigadier Kawlkhuma, and pastor Challiana of Baptist Church were among the early prominent members of Mizo Union. Albeit, the Churches themselves were never officially involved, but at individual level prominent church members do participate in political process. The involvement of such ecclesiastical figures was not questioned, given the fact that the evolution of the party as well as new political ideas took place within the Christian milieu. Further, the early Christian leaders themselves seemed to understand that they have a role to play in the State politics as a part of their ministerial responsibility to emancipate the people (Khawbung, 2000).

Church in Mizoram had organised various types of religious based education, as to introduce religious ethics in politics and to impart political education within Mizo society and politics. During 1992-98, the Synod constituted a Synod social forum called Synod Social Front and organised various seminars on political education in various places. Various Biblical topics, ranging from Nehamia to Nazareth Manifesto,<sup>3</sup> Government belongs to God and the concept of the Kingdom of God that refers, the prevail of God realm and authority over humankind sphere, were

taught as to inculcate religious orientated principles in politics and bring political reform in a changing socio-political culture.

In an attempt to cleanse the crept of corruption and malpractices during state elections, the Church had taken some steps in past. In 2006, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF), an association formed by the conglomeration of major civil society groups in Mizoram, which was formed under the initiatives of Presbyterian Church Synod has now become the administrative arm of the Church in its effort to bring free, clean and fair administration in Mizoram (Pachau, 2014). In fact, with the establishment of the MPF, the Church has now widened its secular principles and objectives. On 12 October 2018, the MPF organised a State Level Joint platform for various political parties to express their party manifestoes and policy (State Level Joint platform, (a local television programme) organized by MPF, on 12 October, 2018) Thereby, this type of joint platform rendered not only to impart political education, awareness and debate on various socio-political issues but also facilitated a healthy vibrant democracy, good governance, and sustainable socio-political development. Such initiatives have made planning and implementation of policies more participative.

Recently, a number of religious persons such as pastors, elders and evangelist have emerged in political field and expressed their thought on deterioration of socio-political system. Based on various Biblical texts, they argued that since the time of Old Testament, the Lord has been

concerned with the unjust ruling or governance. Therefore, based on Bible texts, “Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power and the glory and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord and thou art exalted as head above all,” (The Holy Bible, King James version, 1 Chronicle 29:11) has become a popular slogan in justifying the entry religious person in the contemporary state politics.

The recent development clearly mandated the Mizo National Front, a party with its slogan for ‘God and the country’, (*Pathian leh kan Ram a tan*) has tremendous impact upon the general population of the state. Generally, it could be also be observed that the Mizo Church electoral campaign or mobilisation through various awareness programme such as “*Ram chu Lalpa ta ani*” (Land belongs to God). The awareness programme focuses more upon the responsibility of people in the coming election clearly indicated the Mizo Church were against Mizoram Congress policy, particular towards State government standpoint on sale of liquor. Apart from this, various political awareness message, such as not to sale their vote on account of money (cash for vote), excessive demand on political leader, false promise made by candidate, intense party politics, and corruption were discouraged by Church. Moreover, the people were also requested to pray to God prior of selection of candidate and not to merely considered election as secular aspect but also as divine intervention in reforming the political milieu (Lianzuala, 2018). Further, on December 2, 2017, Synod Revival Committee also organised mass

public prayers in various place of Mizoram. Rev. Lalzuithanga, Synod Moderator, says that sin has deeply penetrated upon society and politics. Therefore, in order to govern in accordance to God desires and willingness the above noted sins have to be wiped out from society and politics (Vanglaini, 2017). Such type of articulation on religious appeal and sentiment has dominated contemporary Mizo society and politics.

The Zoram Democratic Front, (consisted of majority of retired pastors) a part of Tangrual Pawl (a grand alliance also known as Zoram People’s Movement) argued that despite the upgradation of present State, since thirty years back, inclusive development and people based government has been hardly actualized. Nepotism on the basis of political parties and party politics has dominated the politics. Therefore, in these circumstances, various church leaders took up the task of reforming the political system of the State. Consequently, a number of religious leaders has entered the political field and actively participated in politics, with an objective to reform the State politics on the basis Christian principles. They further argued that even if their party came into power, they would not hold any important position or portfolio, but regard as their religious duty and responsibility to guide the political realm accordingly to Biblical principles (Darchungnunga & Kapenga, 2017) In a similar tone, Mr. Vanlalnema, a Presbyterian Church elder and an ex-principal of Government Hnahthial College, further argued that some people say that church leader should not interfere with politics. On the contrary, he argued that

there is nothing wrong in the involvement of church leaders in politics.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, with these recent developments in Mizoram, one could observe that there is a tendency to reform the political system according to religious interpretation (thy Kingdom come on earth) and impart religious ethics within a secular realm.

Based on author’s recent data collection from a field survey, Mizos’ understanding of relationship between religion and politics can be illustrated as provided in the table given below:<sup>5</sup>

Questions	View of Respondents (in percentage)
Q. 1 What is your perception on religion?	94.05 % of the respondents considered religion is relevant, 2.47 % irrelevant, 1.98 % Illusion and 1.5 % Cannot say
Q. 2 Is religion significant in your life?	33.1 % of the respondents considered significant, 63.8 % very significant, 0% Not significant and 3.1 % cannot say
Q. 3 What is your understanding of secularism?	11.88 % viewed secularism as a strict separation between Church and State, 1.98 % Exclusion of religion from public realm, 28.21 % Not so strict separation (relative separation) 49.50 % Equality of all religions and 8.43 % have No idea
Q. 4 Is there a separation of religion and state in Mizoram?	31.18% of the respondents said yes, 22.27 % No, 42.57% agreed that there is a separation to some extent, and 3.98 % Cannot say
Q. 5 Do you agree that the Mizoram	19.80% of the respondents agreed,

state is neutral towards various denomination?	34.65 % disagreed, 28.71% to some extent and 15.34% cannot say
Q. 6 Have you faced discrimination on the grounds of religion?	15.84 of the respondents said Yes, 67.82% No, 14.35% said to some extent and 1.99% cannot say
Q. 7 What is your view on present state-church relationship in Mizoram?	42.07 % argued there is cordial relationship, 18.31% Un-friendly, 9.90% No relationship and 29. 72% cannot say
Q. 8 Apart from normal religious teaching, what are the major issues address by the churches in Mizoram?	70.79% of the respondents said on social issues, 13.36% on political issue, 11.88% on economic, 2.97% None of these and 8.41% cannot say
Q. 9 Do you agree that religious ethic do play an important role in socialization of society?	42.07 % of the respondents agreed, 7.92 % disagreed, 15.34% to some extent and 2.49 % cannot say
Q. 10 Do you agree that church/religion have an influence in state politics?	45.54 % of the respondents agreed, 13.36 % disagreed, 33.66 % to some extent and 7.42 % cannot say
Q. 11 Do you agree that Church related activities do contribute in the social development of the society?	71.28 % of the respondents agreed, 2.97 % disagreed, 22.77 % to some extent and 2.97 % cannot say
Q. 12 Besides regular preaching what are the major roles undertaken-by church towards social development?	58.13 % of respondent argued on health related services, and 39.60 on Education and the remaining 2.27 on imparting skill development.
Q. 13 Do you agree that church's structural arrangement promote democratic and inclusive participation of common church members?	75.24 % of the respondents agreed, 2.97 disagreed, 17.82% Partially agreed and 3.90% Cannot say
Q. 14 Do you agree that Christianity has	74.25 % of the respondents agreed,

been a factor for integration of Mizo society?	2.97 disagreed, 16.38% Partially agreed and 5.90% Cannot say
Q. 15 Do you agree that the existence of various denomination is responsible for disintegration of society	23.26 % of the respondents agreed, 26.73 disagreed, 40.09 % Partially agreed and 9.90% Cannot say
Q. 16 Do you agree that there is a peaceful relationship among various religion/denomination in the state	35.19 % of the respondents agreed, 15.84 disagreed, 37.12% Partially agreed and 11.9% Cannot say
Q. 17 In midst of fast secularization of Mizo society, do you agree that church is decreasing/increasing it domain	60.89 % of the respondents said it declined, 11.88 % said increased, 14.85 % argued that Neither declined nor increased and 12.38 % Cannot say
Q. 18 What factor holds responsible in your decision-making process	44.05% of the respondents holds Church/religion, 10.39% on Society, 1.48% on NGOs, 18.31 % holds all the above factors, 3.46% None of these and 21.28 % Cannot say
Q. 19 Has your church received any assistance or aid (cash or kind) from state government or department?	5.94 % of the respondents said Yes, 55.44 % said No 16.35 % said to some extent and 22.27 % Cannot say
Q. 20 Are you in favour of State-Church separation	29.20 % of the respondents are in favored, 38.11 % are not in favor, 16.69 % Partially favored and 16.69 % Cannot say
Q. 21 Is there any discriminatory treatment between rich and poor in your church	13.36 % of the respondents said Yes, 45.54 said No 30.21 % said to some extent and 10.89 % Cannot say
Q. 22 Do you agree that Church-related activities can be an instrumental in demising social inequality of the	45.54 % of the respondents agreed, 14.35 % disagreed, 28.23 % Partially agreed and 11.88 % Cannot say

society?	
Q. 23 Do you agree that Church-State cooperation in various developmental aspects could be an effective mechanism for inclusive and sustainable development of the society?	58.41 % of the respondents agreed, 9.40 % disagreed, 22.27 % Partially agreed and 9.92 % Cannot say
Q. 24 Do you discuss politics related to religion within family or friends circle?	39.10 % of the respondents said Yes, 15.34 % said No, 39.10 % said Sometime, Frequently and 6.5% Cannot say
Q. 25 Do you agree that state administration should be run or carried out according to God's willingness?	56.93 % agreed, 11.88 % disagreed, 13.36 % don't understood and 17.83 % Cannot say
Q. 26 Should church play any role in future socio-political and economic system of society?	40.09 % of the respondents said Yes, 1.48 % said No and 42.07 % Cannot say

### **Rethinking Secularism in Mizo Politics and Society**

Despite the fact that modernization has swept across contemporary Mizo society and the political system is formally based on secular principles. Secularization and secularism as an ideology of separation of Church and State can hardly be located in Mizo society and politics. The secularization process which was initially based on Christian principle has brought a pattern of secularization with an intention to draw the boundary between the secular and religious realm from the Christian perspective. In other words, the secularisation of society was limited and confined with a Biblical trend of interpretation and separation of the

temporal and sacred realm rather than based on rational perspective.

In midst of rapid secularization of Mizo society and polity, albeit, Mizoram follows the non-establishment norm. An-depth analysis of contemporary state, society and religion clearly manifests that the interlinked between religion and politics has not receded. Therefore, normative concept and practice of secularism has hardly any implication in contemporary Mizo society and polity. In fact, in a Christian dominated state of Mizoram, religion plays dominant roles in matters concerning socio-political issue of the state. Therefore, the relationship between politics and religion cannot be understood, if religion is detached from politics.

Thereby, the very core theory of secularization process can a contested from the theory and practice of secularization process in Mizo society. In contrast to normative secularization theory, albeit one finds a relative secular differentiation at institutional level, it is hardly accompanied either by a process of religious decline and confinement of religion to private sphere. In short, it can be observed that rapid secularization (read as modernization) of society, is also followed by increasing intensity of religious activities in the society. Therefore, secularism in Mizo society can be best perceived as William N Singh who described it as “reversed secularism”, where churches promise to correct and guide the political culture of the state, a trend that challenges the universal understanding of secularism. While the church is closely aligned with the state, the concept of

separation of state and religion is practised differently. In Mizo context, reverse secularism dictates political idioms and social affairs in Mizoram (Singh, 2012, p. 24) Therefore, if the standard indices for a satisfactory secularism is the delinking of religion from state, society, public policy and politics then obviously, it is doubtful that a contemporary pervasive Mizo religious society can achieve it.

Particularly, in a Christian dominated State of Mizoram, the understanding of secularism does not refer to separation of state from religion. In other words, Secularism is neither understood as a temporal realm nor as a realm where religion should be outside the secular realm. In other words, the understanding of secularism does not imply a rigid separation between religion and politics in sphere of socio-political aspects. In brief, a state may be a secular (legally), but at the level of society, Mizo society are far from being secular or neutral. For instances, in a small State of Mizoram, churches being a largest organised pressure group, a guardian of Mizo ethic and as well as a largest organised institution with its member being both a member of the church and state. B. Lalsankima comments that in state like Mizoram, where almost hundred percent of the population is a Christian, secularism hardly implies exclusion of religion from state and society. He further argued that churches in Mizoram should render advice to state government on various matter.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the concept of secularization and secularism understood as separation of secular and public sphere has been ambiguous.

In a religious society like the Mizos, rather than seeking a separation of church and state, secularism can also be understood from its wider perspective rather than within its limited notion of separation of Church-state, privatization or exclusion of religion from public realm. Acknowledging the role of Churches in various aspect of social development over decades, church and state could establish a wide area of common objective and interest that could not only relieve its other burdens in socio-economic development, but also more effectively resolve various social, economic and political crisis of the state.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, considering the significant role of church in the socio-political life of the Mizo, a cordial relationship between church and state have a better prospective to effectively promotes welfare and inclusive development of Mizo's society. Thus, de-privatization of religion does not imply anti-secularism as long it is subjected to democratic deliberation and promotes democratic values and norms, such as individual rights, socio-political ethic, social harmony, social justice and inclusive development of the whole society

To sum up, the cordial church-state relationship or engaging religious ethic in politics, is compatible and consistent with secular democratic politics, as long religious values are translated into shared public language and are fairly public justified publicly. Further, in midst of deteriorating socio-political milieu, the churches in Mizoram must cope with the present context and construct a relevant philosophical and methodological approach to address the

problem and challenge of the present realities.

### Notes

1. Generally, bawi controversy arose between the local British officials and the missionaries (particularly Dr. Peter Frazer) over the nature of their different perception of bawi system practiced in Mizo society. The local officials contended that the bawis were simply paupers or criminal who took refuge in a chief's house and lived as members and not slaves of the chief's family. On the contrary, the missionaries strongly contended that the bawi system was not different from those slaves in other societies and demand its abolition, for detailed please refer to Dena Article, Dr. Peter Fraser (1864-1919), A missionary from Caernarfon, North-Wales to Northeast India at, <http://proflaldena.blogspot.com/2014/10/dr-peter-fraser-1864-1919-liberator.html?m=1>, retrieved on 20 February, 2019.
2. A controversy between Superintendent McCall and E. L. Mendus, (executive officer on behalf of church in matter pertaining to government), arose on account of Superintendent accusation that high revival excesses committed was resulted due to the teaching of Christian missionaries and pleaded an explanation from Mendus on this matter, for further reference, see., Kipgen, Mankhosat. 1996 Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram, Mizo Theological

Conference, Aizawl at Assam Printing Work (P), LTD, Assam. Pp. 294-295.

3. The sermon of Christ in Luke (4:16-20) has been considered as Nazareth Manifesto and most of the Mizo theologians interpreted the relevance of this gospel contemporary Mizo socio-political milieu and also considered it as a canon for good governance, for further reference, see., the Holy Bible, KJV.
4. Excerpt from an interview with Vanlalhnema, on 12, February 2018, at Hnahthial.
5. Based on field survey data collected through questionnaires among (90 females and 112 Males of all age group) across by Robert Sanglora Khawbung, 2018.
6. Excerpt from an interview with B Lalsankima, Associate Professor of Govt. Hnahthial College, on 12, February 2018, at Hnahthial.
7. For instance, there are various secular aspects, where state and church have a wide scope to work together and implement various programme or project for the welfare of the society. Such as in, poverty alleviation, skill development and demising HIV/AIDs.

### References

- Asad, Talal. (2003). *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, USA.
- Casanova, Jose. (2011). 'The Secular, Secularizations and Secularisms', in

- Calhoun Craig, Juergensmeyer Mark and VanAntwerpen Jonathan, eds. (2011). *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Charavarti, Mahadev. (2013). 'Christianity and Lushais of Tripura: A Peep at the History.' in *History and Ethnic Identity Formation in North-East India*, edited by Hluna, J. V, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. LTD, New Delhi.
- Darchungnunga, Rev. & Kapenga, Rev. Dr. 'Tunlai Politics- a Pastor Pension-te Inpuanna' (Testimony of Retired Pastors in Contemporary Politics) *Vanglaini News- Paper*, Aizawl, 3 & 4 December, 2017.
- Dena, Lal. (1998). *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Christian Missionaries Movement in Northeast India: With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills (1894-1947)*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong.
- Dena, Lal. (2018). "The Cross and the Flag," at, <https://proflaldena.blogspot.in/2014/10/the-cross-and-flag.html>, retrieved on 8 June 2018.
- Dena, Lal. *Dr. Peter Fraser (1864-1919)*, A missionary from Caernarfon, North-Wales to Northeast India at, <http://proflaldena.blogspot.com/2014/10/dr-peter-fraser-1864-1919-liberator.html?m=1>, retrieved on 20 February, 2019.
- Downs, Frederick S. (1994). *Essay on Christianity in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi.
- Field survey data collected through questionnaires among (90 females and 112 Males of all age group) across by Robert Sanglora Khawbung, 2018.
- Hminga, C L. (1987). *The Life and Witness of Churches in Mizoram*, Serkawn Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram.
- Interview with B Lalsankima, Associate Professor of Govt. Hnahthial College, on 12, February 2018, at Hnahthial.
- Interview with Vanlalnema, on 12, February 2018, at Hnahthial.
- Jain, M P. (2003). *Indian Constitutional Law*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Wadhwa, Nagpur.
- Jha, Shefali. (2002). 'Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946-1950' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 30 (Jul. 27 - Aug. 2).
- Keashyap, Subhash, (1993). *Delinking Religion and Politics*, Vinod Publishers Pvt, Ltd, Delhi.
- Khawbung, Robert Sanglora. (2000). 'Church and Social Development in a Tribal State of Northeast India; A Case Study of Mizoram', an unpublished Dissertation submitted in Centre of Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, (JNU).
- Kipgen, Mankhosat. (1996). *Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture*

*in Mizoram*, Published by Mizo Theological Conference, Mizoram, Aizawl.

Lianzuala, C, Rev. (2018). Pathian Ram leh Politics (God's Kingdom and politics) *Vanglaini* Newspaper, 6 March.

Pachua, Zara, "Role of Church in the process of Peace and Development in Mizoram," at, <http://zarapachua.blogspot.in/2014/02/role-of-church-in-process-of-peace-and.html>, retrieved on February 12, 2014

Ralte, Lalrinkima. (2014). 'The Politics of Church-State Relationship in Mizoram' in *Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 10, Issue III & IV, Winter & Autumn.

Rudolf, Susan Hoerber. (2000). 'Civil Society as a Realm of Freedom' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 May.

Singh, William N. (2012). 'Politics of Divine Edict and Reverse Secularism' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol, XVII, No 52. December.

*The Holy Bible* (King James Version)

*Vanglaini* Newspaper, Aizawl, 3 & 4 December 2017.

Zonet Zawlbuk, State Level Joint platform, (a local television programme) organized by MPF, on 12 October, 2018

Zova, C J. (2018). 'Mizoram Development Ladder' (church and politics), *Vanglaini*, 24 Feb.