

sect. In contrast, women's differences were overshadowed by their biological characteristics and the subordinate roles they were destined to play.<sup>93</sup>

Even though women were not given a fair share in the recorded history, historians have called this 'History and claimed Universality' for it.<sup>94</sup> So, all theories about human beings, our society and culture and behaviour have been man-made. Observations and interpretations in each discipline reflect perspective which means that their narratives and interpretations are not as true for women as they are for men. They do not correspond with women's understandings. What women have done and topics that were intertwined with women's lives – household and agricultural technology; religious ceremonies; family relationships and their reproduction were ignored and overlooked. The earlier historians were not concerned with how activities like migration, change of places and economy might have affected women's lives and how they adapted to the changes. It is now understood how technological, economic and political changes which affected men had quite a different impact on women. For instance when capitalism emerged men had to work outside as wage earners of the capitalist owners. On the other hand women began to be more confined to the household. Technological inventions might make things easier for the men who work outside the house but it could make the women more subservient to male domination. This could be because women often lacked access to education of science and technology and rural women especially were bypassed by industrial modernisation.<sup>95</sup> This resulted in substitution of male workers for female workers and women were assigned the manual work. The impact that changes in the

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<sup>93</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (New Delhi, 1998) p.1

<sup>94</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The ... of Patriarchy*, *op.cit.*, p.4

<sup>95</sup> S.C.Jain, *Women and Technology* (Jaipur, 1985) pp,2-4

society had on women was ignored by the historians. Family's religious ceremonies also affected women as they were the ones who had to overlook all the preparations to be made for offerings and sacrifices and for feeding other people. There were some writers who have put a separate chapter 'on' women or 'of' women<sup>96</sup> and they regard it as a justice done to women. Hence, studies of family, religion, society and village structure have traditionally been carried out without any regard for gender and gender relations. There has been no critical consideration of what this has meant for women's lives, and what sacrifices women had to make to maintain these relations. History for a very long time has been largely studied without inquiry into how life conditions have differentially changed for persons according to gender. As a result, there are very few sources to know about women in the past and also to know the whole history of humankind. Hence some feminist and other writers began to work on women studies. In the west, there have been three general approaches to women's studies, they are additive history, genderized history and contributory history.<sup>97</sup> Additive history is history written after a re-examination of the sources to discover the contributions and role of women. Genderized history draws on a feminist perspective to rethink historiography and make gender difference a key to the analysis of social relations. Contributory history privileges women agency while recognizing how patriarchy impedes women's action. In the present study, additive history approach would be used, as Mizoram is an area where sources on gender are scarce and one has to rely on the existing sources and hence a re-interpretation of the existing sources is needed to study gender history.

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<sup>96</sup> R.Indira & Deepak Kumar Behera (ed) *Gender and Society In India*, Vol I. (New Delhi, 1999)

<sup>97</sup> Geraldine Forbes, *op.cit.*, p.2

Gender studies became more popular as it is important and fruitful to identify gender systems as it helps us to know the place or the position of the sexes in a society. It also demonstrates the essentiality of gender analysis to the field, rather than keeping it away from the mainstream in a women's history category. It would also enable us to have a holistic approach to history. But it is important to realize that the different cultures or societies cannot be generalized as gender relations can be different in different societies. It can also vary in different phases of time. However the values and the principles of patriarchy are the same all over the world.

Thus, patriarchy which seems to be the norm in almost all societies greatly affected and influenced the psychology of both men and women for a very long time. However, women slowly began to realize how it affects their lives and so wanted to break free from its clutches. Feminist consciousness began to develop as they were aware that as a woman they have suffered wrongs and were subordinated. They also realised that their subordination was not natural but was socially determined.<sup>98</sup> In the early phase, this development took the form of isolated thoughts by individual women. Later on other women also became conscious and formed organizations. They started several movements and this gained prominence in the 1960's. Female authors began to write about how women were marginalized. Alice Clark in her *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*<sup>99</sup> wrote about the nature of women's productive activity and about the effect of capitalism on the economic position of women. Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Rights of Women*<sup>100</sup> wrote how women should try to decide their own fate and not to depend on men. She

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<sup>98</sup> Margaret Mead, *op. cit.*, p.16

<sup>99</sup> Alice Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, (London, 1968)

<sup>100</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *op. cit.*, (London, 1992)

also demanded a share in enforcing their rights. Mary Beard in her book *Women as a Force in History*<sup>101</sup> studied the lives of women from ancient times to Second World War to show that women were members of a subordinated sex throughout history. She also tried to show that women always participated in historic events and they were a force in history. Other female writers were among the pioneer writers since they have also realized that due to the influence of patriarchy, they have always been hidden in history. So, they began the work of writing on women and opened up the “other half of history which would be inclusive, not exclusive, universal, not particular”.<sup>102</sup> The importance of gender studies or the studying of a society from gender perspective came to be realised as this would produce a totally different view on any subject.

To get a total view of history, gender historians collected sources which seem to be important for their work. They have searched for “data which may have been collected but was ignored, and for new and more powerful research techniques to utilize the fragmentary data that are available”.<sup>103</sup> They have used a lot of oral tradition like folktales, folksongs and proverbs or sayings. These oral traditions are quite important as they often reflect about the social conditions of the time. Women were also interviewed to know their experiences of the past. Gender historians also used symbols and metaphors as Gerda Lerner has done. The social norms, the rules and laws were also used for knowing gender relations. They have also used secondary sources and official papers. Moreover these gender historians have made

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<sup>101</sup> Mary Beard, *Women as Force in History* (New York, 1962)

<sup>102</sup> Judith P.Zinsser, *op.cit.*, p,27

<sup>103</sup> J.Krishnamurthy (ed), *Women in Colonial India*, (New Delhi, 1989) p,viii

use of diaries, journals and letters kept by women. These are then all interpreted or re-interpreted from the perspective of the woman.

Gender historians try to see history from a female perspective through the various sources used by them. The way in which a particular incident affected men and women could be different. The sources which they have used could be written by a male writer but in this case they try to relate what it could mean for a woman. Thus the way in which the sources are used is quite different from the normal historian's view. Mary Beard studied medieval history through the history of law, literary evidence, education and organisation of the guilds. Sheila Rowbotham in her work *Hidden from History* studied about the various political movements and how periods of change have affected women. She studied the developments from a feminist perspective which before was studied from a men's point of view. She knew that she had to see from a different light as things could be quite different for the one who experienced it than to just observe it. In the *Creation of Patriarchy* Gerda Lerner tried to trace, 'by means of historical evidence, the development of the leading ideas, symbols, and metaphors by which patriarchal gender relations were incorporated into Western civilization.'<sup>104</sup> As she studied she also tried to re-interpret the meanings from a women's perspective. Some of the sources which she used were the works of men, but she reinterpreted them so as to know the actual gender relations. These gender historians had used different approaches to study gender and see women's role in history. Mary Beard had used the approach of contributory gender study while Sheila Rowbotham had used genderized approach

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<sup>104</sup> Gerda Lerner, *op.cit.*, p.10

and Gerda Lerner used additive approach. All these approaches may be different but they reflect women's contribution to the society, the role they played for the development of history and gender relations.

From the discussion above on the various trends of feminism and their impact on gender history, it is possible to conclude that Socialist feminist thought appears to be the best conceptual framework that one can adopt to have an adequate understanding of the subordination of women and women's relation to men and nature. As mentioned earlier, Marxists primarily recognized differences of class and stressed similarities between women and men of the same class. On the other hand, Radical feminism recognized only differences of age and sex and viewed that the experiences of all women were the same. However Socialist feminism sees that an "individual's life experience is shaped by her sex and gender...class, race and nationality."<sup>105</sup> Socialist feminist also view human nature as defined in part by biological characteristics which are subject to change through its conscious and cooperative productive activity. So, the difference between women and men are not pre-social givens, but are socially constructed and is therefore liable to change. By using Socialist feminist thought it would be possible therefore to have an adequate understanding of the real position of women and gender relations from the standpoint of women. The use of the Additive approach to gender history within the socialist feminist thought would thus provide a model within which gender relation in societies could be analysed. It is therefore proposed to use this framework of analysis to understand gender relations and patriarchy in the history of the Mizo.

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<sup>105</sup> Alison M.Jagger, *op.cit.*, p,134

Thus the study would be a re-evaluation of the various sources from a women's perspective and would try to find out the exact contributions and role of women in the society.

Our discussion above also shows that history writing is still done very much under the domination of patriarchal values. There is insufficient study of gender for many of the societies. The Mizo society is no exception to this. Mizoram, which is situated in the North East India is inhabited by the Mizo. They are said to have migrated from China to Burma and to present Mizoram. The society is strictly patriarchal. One example to show the male attitude towards women can be known from the sayings like 'Women and crabs have no religion', 'Women and old fence can be easily replaced', 'Women's word is no word just as a crab meat is not a meat'.<sup>106</sup> Women did the maximum work at home and in their jhum. They worked in the jhum along with their husband and all the domestic works were entirely their responsibility. Though women worked a lot for themselves and their families, they could not inherit the family's property except on a very limited account. It is this patriarchal system of society that the present study is to be worked on. There are some works on the history of the Mizo by B.Lalthangliana<sup>107</sup>, Liangkhaia<sup>108</sup>, K.Zawla<sup>109</sup> and Dr. Vumson<sup>110</sup>. British administrators A.G.McCall,<sup>111</sup> J.Shakespeare,<sup>112</sup> Alexander Mackenzie<sup>113</sup> and A.S.Reid<sup>114</sup> who all have worked in

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<sup>106</sup> B.Lalrinchani, "Christianity and Women in Mizoram: A Study of the Impact of Christianity on Women in Lunglei District", Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, NEHU, 1998

<sup>107</sup> B.Lalthangliana, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 2001)

<sup>108</sup> Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1976)

<sup>109</sup> K.Zawla, *Mizo Pipute leh An Thlahte Chanchin* (Aizawl, 1976)

<sup>110</sup> Dr. Vumson, *Zo History* (Aizawl, 1986).

<sup>111</sup> A.G.McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis* (Aizawl, reprint, 1977)

<sup>112</sup> J.Shakespeare, *The Lushei-Kuki Clans*, (Aizawl, reprint, 1988)

<sup>113</sup> Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India* (Delhi, reprint, 1979)

<sup>114</sup> A.S.Reid, *Chin Lushai Land*, (Aizawl, reprint, 1976)

Mizoram have also written about the Mizo. Their works are quite useful to know about the history of the Mizo. However the method used by them is still based on traditional history. They have not given importance to women or to study the gender relations among the Mizo. Some of them have written something about women but that is not sufficient to know exactly how the different phases in migration or the developments which have taken place in Mizoram have effected the gender relations. This study is therefore necessary to see the gender relations among the people as previous studies have always been done by men and according to their perspective. As they migrated from place to place, the change of places, economy, geographical situations and other outside forces such as British administration, education and Christianity would have affected women but how it affected them is not studied as yet. In this framework, the various situations which have affected gender relations would be examined. Moreover, there are still Lai and other tribes of Mizo in Burma (Myanmar) who have not migrated to Mizoram. It is believed that the Mizo had migrated to the present state of Mizoram from Burma (Myanmar) but to assess the changes that took place in the society due to migration, it would be essential to know the socio-economic condition of the people prior to their migration.