

DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN MIZORAM: AN INTERPRETATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present study is about the electronic media in the state Mizoram. Mizoram, a small state situated in the far flung corner of the country with a hilly terrain is no longer left behind in terms of electronic media with the rest of the country and the world at large. It is now equipped with all types of electronic media like Radio, FM Radio, Television, Cable TV and films. Mizoram has witnessed a great progressive progress in the field of electronic media within a short span of time. The study is based on both historical and exploratory research; the data was analyzed from all the available information collected. The information collected was collated, and interpreted to bring out the objective of the study in its best. Electronic media has proved its strength and lots of development and positive changes have taken place. The quality of programmes is rated fairly good in spite of limited facilities in terms of equipments and training facilities and opportunities for exposure for media personnel for professional training. Lack of professionalism and ignorance of various codes of ethics are regarded as the real issues in electronic media. There exists strong belief in the great future of electronic media in Mizoram.

Key Words: *Electronic media, quality of programmes, exposure, professionalism, development, positive changes, code of ethics.*

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, communication moved from static, written forms to dynamic electronic forms. The telegraph, telephone, record player, radio and movies all hit the communication spectrum and transformed how we communicate. Before the advent of writing, communication was primarily oral. Speakers spoke and hearers heard. Moving to electronic media was actually a shift back to the oral communication that humanity started with. The pace and structure of communication shifted as well. Books are, of necessity, linear. They depend on a flow of thought and a logical process. Engaging in understanding books meant that human brains were re-wired to think in linear, logical patterns. But when communication shifted to a dynamic, emotional process that is a part of the

oral communication culture, brains were re-wired again to process information from that perspective.

Moving to electronic media at the beginning of the twentieth century made the communication faster and ubiquitous, but it kept the content firmly in the control of the people who could afford to produce it. The power structures shifted slightly, but only so far as to be able to incorporate the new players in places like Hollywood. There was no dissemination of power, just the accrual to different wealthy people. At the end of the twentieth century, with the invention of the internet, all of that began to change.

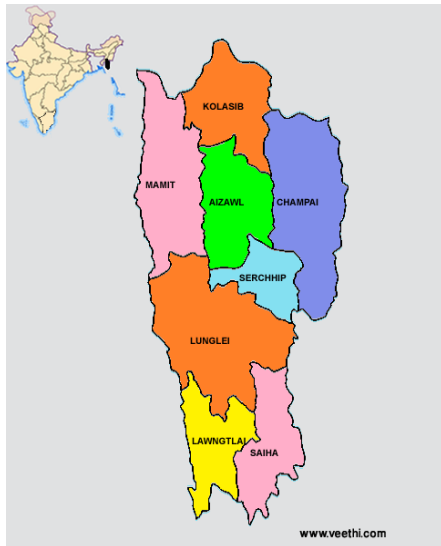
In its literature definition, electronic media has been identified as a pipe-line: a carrier of messages that includes electronic text, voice and even visual channel components. (Griffith & Northcraft, 1994).

Mizoram, a small state situated in the far flung corner of the country with a hilly terrain is no longer left behind in terms of electronic media with the rest of the country and the world at large. It is now equipped with all types of electronic media like Radio, FM Radio, Television, Cable TV and films. Mizoram has witnessed a great progressive progress in the field of electronic media within a short span of time.

Therefore, the study aims at constructing a base timeline of electronic media in Mizoram which shall be the first of its kind for the state. It will further look into the comprehensive and critical account of recent development of electronic media in Mizoram, highlighting the important transitional time of electronic media.

MIZORAM

Mizoram became the 23rd state of Indian Union in February 1987. For over two decades, it has experienced peace and steady progress. Mizoram Peace Accord signed in 1986 has the distinction of being the most enduring and successful Peace Accord in the history of independent India. Perched on the southernmost tip of the north eastern region, Mizoram occupies an area of great strategic importance. It is flanked by Bangladesh on the west and Myanmar on the east of south sharing a total of 722 km international boundary with the two countries. It also shares its borders with three states – Assam, Tripura and Manipur.



The social fabric in the Mizo society has undergone tremendous change over the years. Before the British moved into the hills, for all practical purposes, the village and the clan formed units of Mizo society. The Mizo code of ethics or Dharma moved round "Tlawmngaihna", an untranslatable term meaning on the part of everyone to be hospitable, kind, unselfish and helpful to others. "Tlawmngaihna" to a Mizo stands for that compelling moral force which finds expression in self-sacrifice for the services of others. The old belief, Pathian is still in use to term God till today. The Mizos have been enchanted to their new-found faith of Christianity with so much dedication and submission that their entire social life and thought process have been altogether transformed and guided by the Christian Church organisations directly or indirectly and their sense of values has also undergone drastic change.

The capital of Mizoram is Aizawl. The Mizoram State Legislative Assembly has 40 seats. Mizoram is now represented at Parliament by two members, one in the Lok Sabha and the other in the Rajya Sabha. Mizoram has witnessed vast constitutional, political and administrative changes during the past years. The traditional chieftainship was abolished and the District and Regional Councils created under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India have a substantial measure of local control. Today, the Lais, Maras and Chakmas have separate autonomous District Councils. The Village Councils are the grassroots of democracy in Mizoram.

HISTORY OF THE MIZOS

On tracing the ethnic background of the Mizos there is confusion over the question of the common nomenclature and origin. This is mainly because that the oral sources are not studied in comparing the relevant information with the prevailing archaeological findings, that are available

in the form of big memorial stones, that reveal about the past. However, the literary sources of the Mizos today belong to the British period, brought by the British officials during their short term rule in Mizoram. Another limitation is that Mizo did not form a homogeneous group with a single culture, as there are different clans within the Mizos, therefore in each practice of the clans there are also several variations. There is a lack of recorded history in the case of Mizo history writing. The literary sources among the Mizo became available only in the later part of the nineteenth century after the advent of the British, when the two missionaries, JH Lorriane and FW Savidge introduced the Roman alphabet for the Mizos and started education in Mac Donald Hill, Aizawl in 1894, which has shouldered the mantle for existence of literature among the Mizo. Tradition has it that once the Mizos were given a book (script) but due to carelessness, the dog carried it away. That was how the script was lost. Therefore, the first sources available are credited to the English.

Till today the history of Mizos remains confused. While majority believe that Mizos are from Mongolian tribe settled in India, there are few who believes that Mizo are the lost tribe of Israel. However, Mizos are accepted as Indian tribe enjoying all the rights under the Indian Constitution. But it is clear that even the main history of the Mizos is not yet built and laid properly, and so there lies a great scope for historians and researchers to work on Mizoram.

IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE MIZOS

The study of the impact of Christianity upon Mizo Society has been undertaken by a numbers of writers, both westerners and the Mizos. The perspective from which such writing is usually done is that of missionary expansion.

Since, it was the foreign missionaries, who made the script for the Mizo and so credits can be given to them for Mizoram achieving second highest literacy percentage in the country. Though the aim of the western missionaries was to spread Christianity and to make the Mizos to believe in Christian faith, at the same time they have influenced the Mizo to western culture and practices. It is seen that Mizos dress like and act like westerners. If we look at the media scenario both in print and electronic it is seen that style and concept are of western and it is believed that Christianity contributes a lot for the development of the media in the state.

PRINT MEDIA IN THE STATE

The emergence of print media in Mizoram is traced back to the late 1890s. The first Mizo dialect Journal '*MizoChanchinLaishuih*' came out in 1897. It was edited by Captain J.Shakespeare IA, the then Assistant Political Officer/Superintendent of the Lushai Hills.

It may not be wrong to assume daily newspapers as a by-product of growing consciousness about journalism in the early 1990s'. In the early period of newspaper boom, all the daily newspapers were 'both side' foolscap or newsletter size format. A standardized daily newspaper layout and format is of recent trend in Mizoram. At present, '*Vanglaini*' which began publication in 1978 is the biggest daily newspaper in terms of copies circulated. The presence and well-organized functioning of Mizoram Journalist Association (MJA) may be attributed to the progress of print journalism in Mizoram. As of today, more than 200 full time journalists are covering events and incidences taking place in Mizoram and outside. There are approximately 100 Mizo dialect daily newspapers published within the state. '*Newslink*', '*Mizoram Post*' and '*Highlander*' are the three prominent English dailies published in the state. Apart from daily Newspapers, a good number of weekly and monthly magazines are being published and circulated in Mizoram. Besides Mizo dialect newspapers and journals, a sub-tribe '*Hmar*', '*Lai*', '*Mara*' and others have their own dialect newspapers and periodicals either as an organ of churches or non-governmental organizations /society/community. Moreover, many government departments and state wide organizations also publish journals targeting their own community or the public as a whole such as '*Hriselna*' (an organ of Directorate of Health Services), '*Thu lehHla*' (a mouthpiece of the Mizo Academy of Letters) are among such category.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN THE STATE

The media industry in Mizoram is very well established and stronger comparing to other north-eastern states. Every part of the media functions well and provides adequate information and entertainment to the audiences. The media industry in Mizoram keeps growing day by day. As per the population of the states in India there are no states other than Mizoram where media industry is stronger and well established (Vanneihtluanga, 2013).

Mizoram is equipped with government owned media Doordarshan Kendra known as Aizawl station and All India Radio Aizawl station which is also having FM station known as "FM Zoawi". The cable operators in the State act as a production house as well, they give out their own channels and programmes apart from star channels. Before there were three main cable operators in the capital Aizawl, and after the first cable operator Skylinks was shut down in 2007, now 2 main cable operator LPS and Zonet serve as the main supplier not only for the capital Aizawl but also for other districts. Their programmes are sent through video CDs and today direct cable wire and satellite connection is as well available.

Apart from Doordarshan and AIR kendras in Aizawl, 29 cable operators have been functioning in urban and semi urban areas. The "Skylinks" was offering Star TV programmes to limited subscribers since 1991. The LPS and ZOZAM started their own production centers in

1992 and 1994 respectively. Among all the states, Mizoram was the leading state with 96.8% cable viewers. The local channels in Mizoram provide their viewers with adequate information and entertainment. The local operators like Zonet and LPS broadcast different types of entertainment for 24 hours. They give out the news at 7:00 in the evening, there is no fixed duration for the news, and it depends on the number of news stories. Sometimes the news took more than 1 hour and sometimes even less than half minute. Besides the 7 O'Clock news, both the cable LPS and ZONET broadcast news in the morning at 7. The morning news is not brief, but gives out information on weather forecast, VIP schedule, important program of the day and others. The news in LPS is called "Chibai Mizoram" which means "Welcome Mizoram" and in Zonet "Zonet Zing Daifim" which means "morning dew drops". Doordarshan Aizawl station broadcasts news headline at 5pm in the evening for 5 minutes and at 6:30 pm, the main news for 15 minutes.

Mizoram with a population of 1,091,014 as per census data 2011 has the second highest literacy rate in India, which comes to 91.58%. It is believed that media both in print and electronic contributed for its growth. Since media provide entertainment and information to its audiences it creates an enthusiasm in a person to become literate to understand wells.

According to the census data 2011 the number of radio listenership in Mizoram is 74,113 (33.5%). In terms of coverage, radio has the most extensive coverage in the whole state. The programmes mainly concentrated on education, health, agriculture and family planning. Radio is tuned in for mostly for news and current affairs programmes.

According to Lalrammawia Ngente (1994) in his book "Khawvel nghawr nghingtu Television" he mentioned that television reached Mizoram in the year 1980. Soon after its entry into the state it started to increase very fast. After six years in 1986 (ie on 22.8.1986) it is recorded that in the capital city Aizawl there were 1078 (One thousands seventy eight) television sets and in June 1991 it has increase to 4114 (Four thousands one hundred and fourteen).

The latest survey shows that the number of television owners in Mizoram is 121,725 (55.1%). Television is viewed by 92.8% of the population surveyed thereby making it the most popular mass medium among all other media. Access to TV channels was largely through cable connection (69.4%) followed by the Direct to Home (DTH) service (15.3%). A large number of people in Mizoram i.e. 84.5% are exposed to at least one or more media.

Following are some few points from the summary and important findings of the study:

RADIO

1. All India Radio Aizawl station is situated at Tuikhuahtlang locality which is in the main mid area of the capital city Aizawl. Program was officially broadcast from July 31, 1966, which is successfully continued till today.
2. It is recorded by the station that 76.31% of the population is covered.
3. The regional news unit at All India Radio, Aizawl station started functioning in 1975 with one post each of assistant news editor, correspondent and news reader cum translator sanctioned for the unit. It started with a daily Mizo news bulletin of 5 minutes duration. The duration extended to 10 minutes from January 1977 and continues till today.
4. Apart from printed news, radio is the pioneer medium to broadcast news. People have trust in radio news.
5. FM Zoawi is the first FM radio of Mizoram. All India Radio Aizawl officially started its FM channel to be officially called FM Zoawi on September 15, 2007. It is broadcast at 100.7 MHz.

The study reveals that among the electronic media, radio is no more the first choice of the audience.

Table -1: Listening to radio: Response of surveyed respondents

N-110

YES	65.5 %
NO	34.6 %

Table-2: Time spent on listening to radio

N=72

Up to one hour everyday	9.8%
More than 1 hour everyday	Nil
Occasionally	90.3%

Table - 1 reveals that 34.6% of the respondents do not listen to radio at all and only 65.5% listen to it. From Table no- 2 we can see that even though audience listen to radio, not much time is spend on listening to it. 90.3 % listen to it occasionally only and only 9.8% listen to it every day whereas listening to radio for more than one hour everyday remains to be zero.

TELEVISION

1. Though there is no written record to refer or to base, it is believed that television reached Mizoram in 1980.
2. Till 1990, viewers in Mizoram could watch only Doordarshan programmes broadcast from New Delhi and also Bangladesh channels.
3. In 1995, Doordarshan Kendra Aizawl was officially inaugurated.
4. The Regional News Unit (RNU) Doordarshan Kendra, started functioning with the launch of a 15-minute 'Events of the day' on May 10, 2000. The programme is telecast every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

CABEL TELEVISION

1. It is important to note that Direct to Home (DTH) system does not find a place in Mizoram because of cable television.
2. Cable television apart from prominent satellite channels provides its local program and attracts more viewers.
3. In the latest state census, it is seen that there are only 16.3% of is DTH connections exist in Mizoram.
4. The arrival of cable television has increased the number of television sets.
5. The first ever cable television was started on September 5, 2000 by Skylinks, a private owned company.
6. The second cable television network started in 1993 officially and started its distribution in 1994.
7. This cable television network was started by a business family in Aizawl, Laldailova Pachuau and Sons, officially called LPS Vision.
8. The third cable television called Zonet cable network was established in August 2004.
9. Zonet became a private limited company in 2011. It is the only licensed Mizo satellite TV channel that provides viewers with a wholesome 24- hour entertainment.

Today in Mizoram the study shows that television is the first choice of the audience among the electronic media.

Table No-3: Viewing of television: Response of surveyed respondents

N-110

YES	100 %
NO	nil

Table No-4: Time spend in television viewing

N-110

Time spend in television viewing	
Up to 1 hour everyday	8.2 %
More than 1 hour everyday	91.9 %
Occasionally	nil

Table No- 5: TV channel of audience preference

N-110

TV channel of audience preference	
STAR	100%
NDTV	72.8%
CNN-IBN	77.3%
Headlines today	36.4%
LPS	86.4%
ZONET	90.9%
Doordarshan	72.7%
Korean Channels	59%

Table no- 3 shows that 100 % are interested in television and so watched television programmes. From table no- 4 we can see that respondents spent much time watching television. 91.9% watched television more than 1 hour everyday and only 8.2 % watched up to 1 hour only whereas watching television occasionally remains to be zero.

Table no- 5 reveals that STAR channels which includes movies, sports and others are the most watched channels where the local channels remains to be second like ZONET cable television gets 90.9 % and LPS cable television is 86.4%. Korean channels like their music and films channels are also being watched scoring 59%.

IMPORTANT POINTS

1. Mizoram has one common dialect called Mizo dialect. This becomes an advantage point for the media to progress. Also it becomes easier in producing more local programs.
2. English being the second language of the state, English channels becomes the most watched other than the local programs.
3. Hindi the national language is not understood by the majority, therefore Hindi channel are not at all watched. But serials and films dubbed in local language is quite popular.

PROFESSIONALISM

Lack of professionalism is an important issue. Most electronic media journalism does not have any training, except the trial and error method. With the establishment of the Department of Mass Communication at Mizoram University and also a branch of Indian Institute of Mass Communication on the university campus, professional training is available. Workshops and internships should be available for professional training. Professional organizations should involve in such programmes. Fellowships and scholarships should be made available for sending media professionals both inside and outside India. The state government, in association with the union government can institute scholarships and fellowships for upgradation of skills and professional standards.

Then, the need for a professional association of electronic media personnel is to be explored. The association can affiliate itself with Broadcasters association of India. The Move will help exposure to a wider world and improve professional standards. We cannot forget the social responsibilities of broadcast media. In a small state like Mizoram, the electronic media plays a vital role in education, socialisation and integration, which was stressed by the MacBride Commission report. Social responsibility is a two way traffic and it involves both the media and the audience. Then there are issues like drugs and HIV haunting the Mizo society. These social issues should be solved by continuous education of the youth.

Since the Mizo society is exceedingly communitarian and well knit, it is not impossible to carry on sustained campaigns against the social evil. The uniqueness of communitarian journalism in the North – Eastern states is that it is participatory. However, in the case of electronic media, the participation peaks as regards entertainment programmes. The need for participation and produce contents of social awareness is more than essential for the present day mizo society. The emphasis on informal education and to create awareness for self- reliance for sustainable development must be its priority. The agrarian face of Mizoram should be converted into an advantage to showcase the Mizo culture and society, to the outside world. Devoid of corporate competition, the state can encourage prosumerism in the field of media communication. The communitarian format of contents can be effectively adopted to suit the demands of eth society. The Verghese working group suggested that the Indian electronic media should highlight local cultures and diversity of the country. Perhaps, the electronic media of Mizoram is carrying on this function admirably. The North eastern part of India is rich in cultural diversity and the great cultural heritage of the land can be preserved and promoted with the help of electronic media. Japan can be a role model in this regard as it has preserved its culture devotedly, but westernized in public sphere for its own economic advantage.

Table No-6: Electronic media in Mizoram has got professional touch

N-110

Electronic media in Mizoram has got professional touch	
Agree	3.7 %
Not agree	96.3 %

Table no-6 shows that 96.3 % do not agree that electronic media in Mizoram do not have professional touch at all whereas only 3.7% thinks that it has got professional touch.

CONCLUSION

Electronic media has proved its strength and lots of development and positive changes have taken place. The quality of programmes is rated fairly good in spite of limited facilities in terms of equipments and training facilities and opportunities for exposure for media personnel for professional training. Lack of professionalism and ignorance of various codes of ethics are regarded as the real issues in electronic media. There exists strong belief in the great future of electronic media in Mizoram.