Twitter Thread by Bharadwaj



Bharadwaj
@BharadwajSpeaks



The origins of Mizoram and the conflict in North East India:

Recently, 6 soldiers of Assam police were martyred defending territorial boundaries of Assam from Mizoram encroachers backed by Mizoram police.

This is a thread about Mizoram and the origin of this conflict

[Thread]

To be sure, Assam is not the only state Mizoram is at loggerheads with.

Mizoram also has conflicts with other states on its border.

Last year, Mizoram targeted a village on Tripura border because Hindus of the village planned to construct Shiva temple

https://t.co/58jRgs29O0

For Mizoram, which does not celebrate "International Yoga Day" because Church considers Yoga "anti Christian", building a Hindu temple was too much.

Mizoram Government imposed section 144 because "a Hindu temple would disturb peace and tranquility".

https://t.co/58jRgs29O0

Here is a question:

Mizoram was earlier a district in Assam by name "Mizo hills"

When it started agitation for statehood, its population was 1.96 lakh.

Even today, Mizoram population is 10.91 lakhs.

How could a small district bully the nation to accept its separatist demand?

To attempt an answer, we delve into history. And history is shocking.

This region was ruled by Ahoms & then British.

But there is not a SINGLE mention of "Mizos" or "Mizoram" until 19th & early 20th century.

In-fact, it was officially known as "Lushai Hills" until 1952

Who are the "Mizos"?

Earlier, this region was inhabited by Reangs (Hindu) & Chakmas (Buddhist).There was no trace of any "Mizo"

Who we now refer to as "Mizos" are actually a collection of distinct tribes like Lushai, Kuki, Paite & Hmar.

They all came to India in 18th century

According to their own folklore, the original home of the "Mizo" tribes seems to be a place called Sinlung.

Mizo historians themselves identified this place to be present Silung in South East China.

They established themselves in Chin hills (present day Burma) by 17th century

However, there was no common "Mizo identity" among these tribes and they were warring with each other. Abducting each other and head hunting was the norm.

Infact, the earliest known picture of any Mizo was that of a Lushai woman captured by a Southern tribe called Mara.

When the Mizo tribes first encountered the Hindus of Assam,their feeling was of admiration.

An early Mizo Christian Newspaper warned

"Hindu customs,especially Assamese customs, are something the Mizo really appreciate.

Mizos even say 'If only we were born as Vai(plain Hindus)"

The missionaries sensed the danger of Mizos adopting Hindu culture and immediately sprung into action.

Result was complete conversion of Mizos.
Starting from dress, music, culture ,religion, and custom, everything was discarded

Here is their traditional Pre Christian style

It were the Christian missionaries who first started inculcating "Mizo racial identity".

For example, the Baptist church wrote that "the ethnicities of Lushei,Kuki & Chin can be classified as one race. They are sturdy hill warriors unlike the effeminate Assamese and Bengali"

Soon enough, the traditional Mizo animist temples were converted to Churches

Even at this point, Churches were not built in Christian style. They were still the old thatched huts with the traditional drum hanging out.

Drum had great significance in Pre Christian Mizo religion

By early 20th century, Mizos began shedding their traditional costumes which they themselves referred to as "primitive".

They adopted western style, costume, religion & script.

Bands of Mizos children raised up in Churches began touring all over India to sing Christian choirs

The new Lushai tribe converts formed a "Young Lushai Association" in 1935.

One of the stated aims of the association was to "remove every trace of pre Christian pagan culture among the tribes"

The Christian association stressed for "a common identity of all converted tribes".

Converted tribes began to increasingly use the common, now Christian, identity of "Mizo" as opposed to anything specific to any tribe.

"Young Lushai Association" renamed itself "Young Mizo Association".

Lushai Hills were renamed as "Mizo Hills"

Thus the ethnogenesis of Mizos.

During the time of Independence, A group of Mizos formed "United Mizo Freedom Organisation".

They demanded that this region be merged in Burma as opposed to India.

They claimed that they were ethnically closer to Burmese Chin than Hindus.

When their demands of separate nationhood were ignored,

Mizo separatists formed a terr0rist organization named Mizo National Front (MNF) in 1966

Their aim was to "kick India out of Mizoram through violent means if necessary".

They began kiIling Assamese, Hindus & Army Men

MNF then received funding and training from Pakistan's ISI. Many of Mizo youth escaped to East Pakistan(Bangladesh) to receive military training.

The Present CM of Mizoram, @ZoramthangaCM was a member of this terr0rist group MNF.

He himself confessed it in a media conversation

When India defeated Pakistan in 1971, Mizo CM was hiding in Pakistan along with his comrades.

He was involved with an MNF unit named "Joshua".

It was named after the Biblical commander Joshua who defeated, kiIled Pagan Canaanites and ended their Pagan kingdom in Israel.

Here, as Mizoram CM himself confesses in his interview, he was in Islamabad until 1975 as part of ISI training to MNF.

When Indian army conquered Dhaka, he managed to escape narrowly.

He calls it "James Bond type escape"

https://t.co/Aqlp5tmGpl

During the Mizoram insurgency, Hindus were targeted.

Violence was unleashed on Hindus and 34,000 Hindu Reang(Bru) were kicked out of Mizoram.

They are still living in refugee tents of Tripura

https://t.co/EniJL8GAE6

The Hindus Reangs were original inhabitants before Mizo migration.

However, they were ruthlessly targeted.

"Quit Mizoram" notices with deadlines were posted in Reang villages.

“Mizoram is for Mizos only” said Pu Laldenga. He later became Mizoram CM

https://t.co/aRm0VZegef

This thread will be continued...

Mizo insurgency lasted for 2 decades.

The MNF finally gave up militancy when they signed Mizoram peace Accord in 1986.

In return,

1)India gave statehood to Mizoram

2) Special category status to Mizoram

3)Revoked all criminal cases on MNF members and lifted ban on MNF

In addition, Mizoram was given special privilege. No Act of Indian Parliament would be legalised in Mizoram unless the state government approves it.

Then the MNF gave up militancy and became part of Indian democracy

Also, Mizoram is accorded special and disproportionate share of Budget. These were the doles given out to MNF and they agreed to sign Mizo accord.

Caveat: Everything written in this thread is sourced from Government Archives, Newspapers, Books and Public interviews. (+)

Caveat: This thread is a historical examination of the roots of Mizoram dispute. it does not intend to hurt anybody's feelings. Mizos are as much Indian citizens as anyone else. Personally, all I want is peace, tranquility & progress in Mizoram. I condemn racism against Mizos

Also, The Present Mizoram CM, @ZoramthangaCM, might have been a member of insurgent groups in the past as claimed by himself. But MNF had given up militancy and adopted democracy. Today, he is constitutionally elected CM of Mizoram. Nothing in this thread intends to slander him

@ZoramthangaCM From Indian POV, all criminal cases against MNF were dropped when they signed Mizoram accord. All those past activities stand legally dismissed. Nothing in this thread intends to imply anything against integrity of Mizoram CM that would in anyway be construed as slander or libel

@ZoramthangaCM Again, nothing in this thread intends to disturb peace and tranquility of the region. In-fact, I end this thread with an appeal to all parties to observe peace and restraint.

PS-That I have to issue so many caveats attests to the sad state of affairs in India

@ZoramthangaCM I sourced this entire thread from Government archives, books etc.

There was no intention to hurt sentiments of any religion or community. I apologise if sentiments of Mizos are inadvertently hurt.

There was no personal opinion. I stated facts. I welcome any factual corrections

Sources used:

Statistical Hand Book, Mizoram by Department of Economics & Statistics, Government of Mizoram, 2008. Page 16.

Encyclopaedia of North-East India: Mizoram
edited by Hamlet Bareh, page 294.

"The Camera as Witness"
By Joy L. K. Pachuau, Willem van Schendel, page 27.

Nowhere in this thread have I spoken a word against Mizos. I am an admirer of Mizo culture, costume, dress and music.

I only spoke about how colonial British missionaries sowed dissensions in society.

It is very unfortunate that my thread is deliberately misconstrued as hate