CHAPTER-IV
Changes in Vaiphei Society

Introduction

The context of this chapter spans from the period when the earliest known outside observers encountered the Vaiphei to the time the Vaiphei started to become Christian and other social institutions began to feel the impact of Christianity. The earliest known outside observers of the tribe who left records were the British expeditionary officers or agents, whose expeditions date roughly in the late the nineteenth century. The documents and notes taken on their survey tours, and during the tenure of their office in Manipur, form the earliest written records available on the people. These sources are valuable in reconstructing the history of the people as they are the only written record about the people who at that time had no written language. So, these documentary notes form the earliest written documents on this people; without which some of the important aspects of traditional culture and custom could have become lost altogether, considering the rapid pace of change subsequent to the inroads of modernity.

Some of the obvious limitations concern the reliability of such documents: these were products of Westerners who had their own preconceived ideas, suppositions and interpretations. Also some of they were products of brief and necessarily superficial observations and were not based upon prolonged research. These early studies could have been with or without national interpreters, but it has to be borne in mind that the people were not yet accustomed to dealing with the kinds of questions the foreigners would have asked. It is also possible that for security reasons they could have provided ‘misinformation’.

One of the values of the early studies was that they made observations about the rapid cultural changes and the disappearance of the tribal cultures and tradition that had already begun to take place as a result of the changes introduce by the British government and the Christian missionaries. Even though people like Hutton and Mills admitted that the
British regime and administration is responsible for the changes that were taking place, they were critical of the way in which missionary activities were contributing to those changes. They believed that in the process of Christianizing the people, the missionaries were deliberately and unnecessarily discarding some traditional practices. They lamented the rapid lose of cultures and traditions in exchange for the western lifestyle that the missionaries were, in their view, propagating. Whether or not this was entirely true, can be disputed in so far as it is evident that while the early converts rejected some elements of the traditional culture which they considered to be explicitly religious, they retain other elements that were not perceived to be in conflict with Christianity.

Before going into the details of the socio-economic changes the Vaiphei people have gone through, it will be interesting to highlight the agents of change. Change is the law of nature; like most things in the world, society also undergoes changes of various types and seldom remains static. Social change is very important to enable people to march with the time and have development. In ‘English Social History’, Trevelyan writes “Social change moves like an underground river, obeying its own laws or those of economic change, rather than following the direction of political happenings that move on the surface of life.” It is a fact that all societies are characterized by both continuity and change. Continuity is maintained by social controls particularly by the methods used in child rearing and education which transmit the accumulated social heritage to the new generation. In every society, there are some conditions that pave a way for social change. Most important are the growth in knowledge and occurrence of social contact and social conflict with other groups.¹

It is an acknowledged fact that since the breakdown of their century-old isolation, there have been remarkable changes in the Vaiphei society. However, no analytical study has been made yet as to how these changes were affected. There were major confluent
factors that affected the changes in the socio-economic conditions of the Vaiphei. The agents of change can be broadly grouped into Cultural contact and Christian Missions.

4.1: Cultural contact

British administrative involvement in the North-eastern states began with the first Indo-Burmese war and the Treaty of Yandaboo that ended it in 1826. The war itself was thought to be due to the instability that existed in the North East at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The then dominant power in the region, who claimed the Ahom throne, enabled the Burmese to occupy not only Assam but neighbouring Cachar and Manipur as well. During this time, the Maharajah of Manipur was an ally of the British government, and remained so till the end of the British rule in India. For the first time, a politically fragmented area was brought under a single government and this brought with it irreversible force of change in the economic, social and cultural field.

After the death of Manipur ruler Bhagyachandra, Manipur entered into the period of destitute due to constant conflicts among his sons for succession. Thus, the Burmese took advantage of the situation and invaded Manipur in 1819, during the reign of king Marjit. The Burmese rule from 1819 to 1826 (seven years) constituted something of a reign of terror which is still remembered as ‘Seven Years Devastation’ (Chahi Taret Khuntakpa). The Burmese army appointed Huidromba Subol as a Meitei king who was later expelled by Herachandra. The British took interest in the affairs of Manipur and assisted in fighting against Burmese. Gambheer Singh, the youngest son of Jai Singh, in 1823, obtained helped from the British and war was declared and the Burmese were defeated and forced to enter into a peace treaty in 1824. Thus, the war came to an end and the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed on 24th February, 1826 between the British and the Burmans. Gambheer Singh was recognized as the Raja of Manipur and ruled with the British till his death in 1834.
The second stage of British participation in the affairs of Manipur came in 1891, which is termed as ‘the last Independent war of Manipur’ or ‘the Anglo-Manipuri war’ or the memorable ‘Khongjom War’. The British government captures political power and subsequently Manipur became Princely state in 1892. After gaining control over Manipur, the British initially declared a policy of religious neutrality. Not only that, the hill tribes “were brought under a common administrative system, but they were separated from the administration of the valley of Manipur inhabited by the Hindu Meiteis”. The administration was only confined to the valley and there was no proper contact between the hill-men and the administration at Imphal due to lack of proper transport and communication. It was only after the Rebellion of 1918 that new rules were framed for the hill areas of Manipur. Thus, for the better administration of the hill areas, it was divided into four sub-divisions with its headquarters at Imphal, Churachandpur, Tamenglong and Ukhrul. In 1919, the Political Agent and the President of Manipur State Durbar were given the control over the hill tribes. Inevitably, this administration had tremendous impact on the people unlike anything they had previously experienced.

The control and annexation of the Hill areas of Manipur was gradually done over a period of time in the early twentieth century. Thus, the isolation of the area was gradually diminished and the traditional independent political structures were brought under a comprehensive central administration. So, with the British occupation of the state in 1891 and their subsequent introduction of payment of house tax in cash, the traditional economy of the hill tribes which was so far characterized by isolation and self sufficient in their own way came into a direct contact with the economy of the most advanced people of the time. In fact, this was a decisive break with the past, and the new rulers restructured the traditional economy into colonial lines. F.S. Downs, in his analysis of the situation in the North East
India in general, describes what he called “traumatic change consequent upon British annexation”, as follows:

The subjection of the tribes to an external political authority for the first time in their history;
The introduction of an alien administrative and judicial system and the imposition of entirely new principles of authority and jurisprudence;
The introduction of money economy and consumer goods such as mill cloth and kerosene lanterns which undermined the largely self-sufficient economies of the tribes and created new concepts of wealth;
The development of modern communications including postal system, roads and new forms of transport;
The imposition of laws that seriously affected the traditional institutions.\(^5\)

The introduction of modern modes of transport and communication affected not only the traditional system but also the attitude and thought patterns of the tribal people. As a monetary system replaced the traditional barter economy, development of towns brought new consumer goods, books, clothing materials and modern shops. The introduction of these new administrative structures and material goods had far-reaching political, social economic and cultural implications which are potentially serious threat to the traditional way of life of the tribes. In the traditional Vaiphei society, all of these elements are inter-connected. If one element is affected, the whole system would be affected. All these elements contributed and influenced the changed life style of the people. However, it must be pointed out that there is no evidence of the British rule bringing about direct-rapid economic changes. In fact, they did not raise enough revenue to meet their expenses, so the goal of the administrative machinery was to check inter-tribal wars, headhunting and raiding. By this time, the British realized that the tribals and their way of life could be changed only by the intervention of the Christian missionaries. Though the British administration in Manipur made no effort to introduce the modern education system; the political involvement of the British in the affairs of Manipur, however, paved the way for the Christian missions to extend its missionary activities.
With the advent of the British colonial rule in Manipur, the tribal life of Manipur underwent a process of change. The colonial administration marks the beginning of a new historical period which is the dawn of modernized way of life for the tribals. They began to move away from their traditional way; from ignorance, superstitions and isolation to a brighter and better way of life. In fact, the Britishers restructured the traditional economy into colonial lines, introduced new policies and made efforts to exploit the native natural resources to meet their own imperial interest. Dr. Kamei Gailangam, in his paper ‘Economic Changes in Tribal Areas of Manipur during the Colonial Rule: 1891-1947’, discussed the changes under the colonial economic policy under the following heads:

(i) House tax;
(ii) Trade;
(iii) Agriculture and Forest.

(i) Change in payment of House tax: The traditional way of payment of tax was in kind, where the King received the services of his countrymen through Lallup system. The currency of the state i.e. the metal coin, therefore, did not have an important place in the socio-economic life of the people. With the introduction of the British colonial rule, the system of payment of House tax and land revenue began to be in cash, both in the valley and in the hills respectively. The annual House tax was fixed at the rate of Rs.3/- per house and that of the Land revenue was Rs.5/- per pari (pari is about 1.3 acre). This introduction of House tax and Land revenue in cash revolutionized the whole socio-economic system of the state. Such a heavy taxation, on people who did not practiced money system, was very hard for the tribals. In order to pay the tax, they leave aside their field works and got themselves employed in the construction of roads and bridle paths just to earn 6 annas per day. As reported in Administration Report of Manipur State in 1939-40, as many as 64,942 hill-men were recruited as coolies, in order to pay the tax levied on them. There were many occasions of the imprisonment of the village chiefs or headmen for the failure to pay taxes. The
following table shows the receipts and expenditure of the government for the decade from 1901-1902 to 1908-1909 for a deeper analysis:

Table 4.1: The Incomes and Expenditures of the Colonial Government from 1901-1909

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Income (Rs.)</th>
<th>Total Expenditure including expenditure on the Hills (Rs.)</th>
<th>House tax from Hills (Rs.)</th>
<th>Expenditure on Hill Tribes (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>3,87,862</td>
<td>3,73,192</td>
<td>52,609</td>
<td>4,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-03</td>
<td>3,96,061</td>
<td>4,64,409</td>
<td>63,566</td>
<td>3,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>50,115</td>
<td>36,365</td>
<td>51,294</td>
<td>3,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>3,95,395</td>
<td>3,87,800</td>
<td>45,742</td>
<td>3,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>4,12,989</td>
<td>1,72,908</td>
<td>66,696</td>
<td>3,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>4,21,437</td>
<td>1,25,266</td>
<td>55,569</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-08</td>
<td>4,47,130</td>
<td>4,53,412</td>
<td>67,175</td>
<td>8,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-09</td>
<td>4,79,164</td>
<td>4,72,614</td>
<td>59,933</td>
<td>12,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29,90,153</td>
<td>24,85,966</td>
<td>4,62,584</td>
<td>40,897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Administration Report of the Political Agency, Manipur (Corresponding Years From 1901-02 to 1908-09)

During their long rule in the state, the British Colonial Government had economically exploited the hill tribes and extracted from them several lakhs of rupees in the form of tax mostly to meet their own imperial interest. One can say this; because they spent the least amount of money on the socio-economic development programmes of the hill tribes. The above table clearly shows how the Government has taken care of the Hill areas of the state. Out of the total income of Rs. 3,87,862/- including that of house tax of Rs. 52,609/- for the year 1901-1902, the total amount spent by the Government was Rs.3,73,192/- out of which Rs.4,131/- was the expenditure incurred on the hill tribes during the same year. Throughout the decade, the average percentage of expenditure incurred on the hills was about 1.40 percent only. Thus, during the decade, the colonial authorities had a total income of Rs.29,90,153 /-, out of which Rs. 4,62,584 /- was the house tax from the hill tribes. Out of this income, the expenditure incurred by the government was Rs. 24,85,966/- and the amount spent on the hill tribes was Rs. 40,897/- only i.e. 1.37 percent of the total expenditure of the state.
(ii) Changes in Trade: The hill tribes of Manipur, traditionally, enjoyed a self-sufficient village economy. Their wants were few which were easily met with the produces of their fields and forests. Therefore, though there were interactions among themselves and with the people of the valley, trade did not form indispensible economic activity as much as agriculture for them. It may be noted that trade was done not to earn profit but to meet their basic household and local needs which were done only through barter system. With the imposition of compulsory cash payment of house tax in 1892, the nature of traditional trade of the hill tribes also underwent tremendous changes. Trade in cash had since then, become one of their indispensible economic activities, because without trade, they had hardly any other source of income to pay house tax of Rs.3/- to the colonial government. Thus, they were forced to take up money system of trade as their economic activity. Some of the important items of goods mostly trade were rice, orange, cotton, honey, bee-wax, horns of wild animals especially deer, clothes and agriculture implements.

(iii) Agriculture and Forests: As mentioned earlier, the tribals were traditionally self-sufficient in economic spheres. Forest was their treasure house from which almost everything was extracted. Right from collecting their daily needs to the collection of raw materials for constructing their houses were all from the forest. Apart from this, some sources of their economy includes hunting, fishing, collecting honey and trapping animals. The hill forests are abounding in varieties of trees, plants, animals and natural resources. The tribes since time immemorial had been enjoying the ownership right over the land and forests and exploited the resources to meet their house-hold needs. But with the British occupation of the region in 1891, the right was taken over from them and the virgin forests had been opened up for commercial exploitation. The important forest resources which were commercially exploited by the colonial government includes timber, bamboo, cane, fire-wood, sun-grass, pan-leaves, honey and bee-wax, elephant tusks, deer horns, etc.
In the agriculture sector, the colonial government did not introduce any remarkable changes in the hills of Manipur. Therefore, the traditional agricultural land ownership system also remained unchanged. In fact, the hill tribes did face a lot of socio-economic crisis since the colonial rule. For example, the construction of roads and prohibition of roadside cultivation within 30 feet of the roads affected the hill people, because; compensation was not given to them for the permanent loss of their lands in the construction of the roads through their fields and forests. This resulted in the shortage of land for the people living along the road thereby making the duration of the rotation of shifting their Jhum fields shorter. Eventually, the land became less fertile and unproductive as the duration of the rotation of Jhum fields became shorter.

4.2: Christian Missions

The arrival of the missionaries and the advent of Christian missions in Manipur was only at the fag end of the Nineteenth century in the North districts and beginning of Twentieth century in the Southern district i.e. Churachandpur district. Prior to this, the tribal areas of Manipur, which is about 90 percent of the total geographical area of Manipur, was a neglected region. The people live in their pristine traditional life, unaffected by the wind of change. Therefore, the history of the Christian movement can only be understood as an integral part of a larger process of political, social, economic, cultural and religious change among the tribal people. The response to Christian missionaries contributed to the beginning of socio-economic change in the tribal areas of Manipur.

The role of Christian Missions in social change cannot be denied as they were the one introducing modern education apart from the new faith. More than any other elements like the British administration and political force, education and Christianity played a more effective role in transforming the tribal society. Thus, it is necessary to assess the advent and growth of Christianity and Christian Missions. Through the introduction of modern
education, through its schools, indigenous leadership and ideology, the new religion created a new inclusive tribal identity. While the Welsh Mission contributed the most due to the fact that it was the first mission to work among the Southern Hill tribes of Manipur, particularly the Vaiphei; those that came later, including the Roman Catholic and others small missions; all contributed to this end. Many areas of social life such as educational and health services, social welfare, literary activity, even agriculture and economic endeavours had been affected by Christianity. Hence, Christianity was the main agent of change as it was a means whereby people could accommodate themselves. As Downs put it:

The history of Christian movement in the North East India can only be understood as an integral part of a larger process of change - political, social, economic, cultural and religious change.  

Very few missionaries made systematic studies of the culture and tradition of the people they have to evangelize. They came out of the 19th century evangelicalism, which was strongly oriented towards bringing about conditions favourable to the establishment of the kingdom of God through socio-economic changes. They were, therefore, more interested in changing society than in preserving it. In North-East India, they were thus more interested in what type people should become than what they have been, more geared towards change rather than looking for elements of continuity with the past. Their aim was to gain converts who would become agents of social change. This change-oriented evangelism was most evident in their educational activities. Christianity and education become inseparable. Though Christianity is not per se modernity, the process of modernization was begun by Christianity with education as its main vehicle.

In course of time, the attraction of the Christianity for those who came to have dominant influence on the tribe has to be related to the trauma created in the minds of the people by the loss of their traditional autonomy to the British-India rulers. There was a loss of the economic self sufficiency when a monetary system replaced the traditional barter
system. Again, the identity of the people which was based on isolation and control of their own affairs was adversely affected. Modern communications also undermined the traditional autonomy. The whole process not only brought in Non-tribals, but often placed them in dominant position, either politically or economically. There was no alternative but to accommodate themselves to the new order. When the traditional culture could not explain or deal with the new order, people sought the alternative way of preserving their essential identity in the face of irresistible change, which Christianity provided.

4.2.1: Arrival of Missionaries in Manipur

On the 6th of February, 1894, the first Christian missionary by the name- William Pettigrew of American Baptist landed in the soil of Manipur. As the valley people were mainly fanatic Hindus, his mission work in Imphal could only last six months, after which he was not allowed by the Manipur Raja to continue. However, he had no strong objection to allowing the missionary to work in the hill-districts where people were savaged, wild and practiced head-hunting. Pettigrew first went to Southern hills (Churachandpur district), but was not allowed to start his mission there as well. It was after this that he went to the Northern hills and made Ukhrul as his centre in 1895.

In 1909, another missionary name Mr. Watkin Roberts of the Welsh Presbyterian organized the ‘Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission’ for mission work in the Southern Hills of Manipur. In March, 1910, Watkin Roberts set out towards Churachandpur taking with him two Vaiphei young men Thangkai and Lungpau, who were at Aizawl for education, as his janitors. On March 17, 1910, the two young men accepted Christ and became the first converts among the Chin-Kuki tribes of Manipur in general and the Vaiphei tribe in particular. This was the beginning of the exploration of the land-lock Southern hills of Manipur and the advent of the gospel to the people. Senvon village in Churachandpur South
became the first headquarters and gradually schools were set up. In the year 1930, the headquarters was shifted to Churachandpur which eventually became the permanent one.

The initial stage of the Christian Missions in the tribal areas of Manipur was not only difficult but also not without a high risk from the missionaries; which was infested with wild animals and hostile tribesmen. Moreover, the people were suspicious of the white man on the scene, as they thought the missionaries were there to subdue them. Many a times, the missionaries were humiliated and mocking at as R.R. Shimray describes:

The missionaries were humiliated and they were laugh at because they had blue eyes and hairy bodies like animals contrasting to the smooth bodies of the tribals. When they tried to photograph them, they spread the news that their souls would be taken inside their camera box, if they were photographed. Hence, they took to their heels. The white missionaries had to live just like one of them in order to win over the hearts of the turbulent tribes. Only when they realized the real intention of the missionaries, they accepted their presence and later their gospel.⁹
From then on there was no looking back. From Senvon village, Christianity continued to spread steadily not only in its surrounding villages, but also as far as Khawpuibung, near Saikot; where a school was opened at the request of the local people. Spread of Christianity along with education dispelled prejudice from the tribal society. Primary schools were started in more accessible villages, which, however, was not widespread in the initial stages. The incentive was not only getting education, but also some form of employment and income. Any attempt to study education of the people and its impact on the society cannot be done apart from the spread and role of Christianity. In fact, Christianity, at least for the Vaiphei, has become identified with education, at least to the literacy level, at the beginning. Evidently, at a later stage, there was an increased desire for education among the people. Though the motive for such interest was not explicitly stated, it became clear to the missionaries that the tribals’ interest in education was not in order to become better Christian, rather the great interest in it was the aspiration to uplift their socio-economic condition. In other words, their interest in education was the will to get government job with good income. It may be stated, in retrospect, that today the things that had happened were incredibly true. If any religion could play a vital role in changing the life-style of a society, it is Christianity and its missions that have affected this miraculous socio-economic change among the Vaiphei in Manipur. It is Christianity that broke their age-old isolation from other civilization.

Table 4.2: Population Distribution of Manipur by Religion in 1881

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>1,30,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammadans</td>
<td>4,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill tribes (Indigenous religion)</td>
<td>85,228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dun EW Gazetteer of Manipur, Reprint 1992 p.14
The above table shows the population distribution of the whole of Manipur by religion in the year 1881, where merely seven Christians could be identified, in comparison to the other groups. The whole tribal populations at that time were predominantly practicing indigenous religion. It was only after the commencement of the missionaries after 1894 in the North and 1910 in the South that the tribal population started converting to Christianity. Within a span of a century, several Christian denominations have established their churches in the hill areas among the tribes and the record shows a steady increase in the number of Christians in the state.

4.2.2: Growth of Christian Population

The number of Christian converts had grown from 12 in 1902 to more than 68,394 in 1951 and it increased to 1,52,043 in 1961 and to 2, 79,243 in 1971 and to 4,21,702 in 1981. Table-4.3 clearly reveals the fact that the proportion of Christian population in the state increased phenomenally after 1951. The increase in the proportion of Christian population was not so much at the cost of Hindus who populated the valley, but really at the cost of the animist tribal people shown in the table as belonging to “other religion and persuasion”. The proportion of animist population declined from a high of 34.80 per cent in 1931 to less than one per cent in 1991 while proportion of Christian population increased from a low of 2.33 per cent to a high of 34.11 per cent during the same period. It is evident that the period between 1951 and 1971 witnessed the largest increase in the proportion of Christian population with a corresponding decrease in animist faith. It is clear that the religious transformation was confined to the tribal segment of the population living in the hills while the other groups living in the plains in close proximity hardly experienced any such change. The Christian population as a percentage of tribal population however varies from tribe to tribe. The pattern of decadal growth of Christian population in whole of Manipur is highlighted in the following table.
Table 4.3: Decadal growth of Christian Population in Manipur, 1901-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>11.84</td>
<td>19.49</td>
<td>26.03</td>
<td>29.68</td>
<td>34.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Handbook of Manipur, 2002

The spread of Christianity in the initial stage was rather slow. Contrary to popular belief the hill tribes accepted Christian faith not so much during the British period, but after India achieved Independence. In fact, the period after 1951 has witnessed a phenomenal increase in the proportion of Christian population largely due to conversion of the tribal animists. At present, the Christian population was more than 35 percent of the total population of Manipur. Conversion and activities of missionaries had by far one of the most significant impacts on the Hill tribes. Its aim was not only to convert the people to Christianity, but also to pacify and civilise the people. While the British realised the importance of propagating Christianity among the hill tribes, its introduction was seen as a necessity for enlightenment and uplift-ment. Looking at the educational level of the state as a whole, by that time, E.W.Dun puts it as:

> The Manipuris prefers remaining ignorant. So illiterate are they, that some of the highest officials can neither read nor write, are not a whit ashamed for their want of knowledge.\(^{10}\)

Such was the condition of education in Manipur that the question of education among the hill tribes does not arise. As mentioned earlier, the Christian Missionaries were the one introducing education among the tribals. Therefore, it is natural that Christianity was identified with education among the tribal people. The method adopted by the missionary for spreading of the new faith was through education and health care. The spread of Christianity was through the converted students who have attended those schools run by the missionaries. The mission work especially through education proved to be the base for the future expansion of the mission work. The introduction of medical facilities too helped in
discarding their old traditional belief and practices, thus encouraging the people to accept the new faith.

4.3: Education

The one and foremost agent of social change in every society is education. Education is the most important social infrastructure for the upliftment of the quality of life of the people in a society or the state. So, education has great significance in every society. In fact, education is supposed to be the inner eye of human being. It is only through education that human beings can penetrate beyond the appearance and every phenomenon. In pluralistic societies like India, it is only education that can synthesize and crystallize value-based social justice. It plays a significant role in the economic and social growth of both individual status and also prestige. Level of education and its growth has a direct impact on development, standard of living and is characterized by the broad outlook and modern ideas. Above all, education is the primary instrument for the improvement of quality of life. As B.D. Sharma writes, it is education more than anything else that shapes the new tribal society:

> Education is moulding the entire human society in a new frame. In some tribal areas, particularly in the North-East, education plays a big role in moulding the natives. The beginning was made by the missionaries as early as the nineteenth century.\(^{11}\)

As no human society exists and grows without education of some kind, the tribals too had their own traditional way of education even before the art of reading and writing was known. Moral laws, tribal etiquette, idealisms, behavioural patterns, jungle-lores etc. were taught through myths and folktales. Practical knowledge about the types of food, the place of their occurrence and the means of preparing were learnt from elders and parents. But this jungle-lore education was incomplete and much less practical to be the instrument of cultural, social and economic progress.

The impact of Christian missionaries’ efforts on the overall educational development can be observed, if one looks at the literacy scene in the different Hill Districts of the state.
Education, which is the art of reading and writing, was introduced in the tribal areas of Manipur by the Christian missionaries. The pioneering effort to develop the tribals had started with the introduction of education and health services as part of their missionary activities in the interior part of the hill areas of the state. For years the government left the responsibility of educating the people to the missionaries; however a change in the policy soon became apparent. In the early twentieth century, the state government established schools to provide a healthy competition and provide opportunity to those sections of population who were unwilling to send their children to missionary sponsored schools for fear of conversion. Three English Medium schools were established by missionaries in Imphal but as the activities of Pettigrew caused resentment among the Meitei Hindus, he was instructed to go to the hill areas. In 1896, Pettigrew moved to Ukhrul and setup the first mission school serving as the first inspector of schools having been appointed by the Government. However, in Churachandpur district, the first primary school was started in 1912 in Senvon. Due to numerous problems, education could not spread fast and it took many decades to produce a 1 percent literacy population among the tribals in general and the Vaiphei in particular.

### Table 4.4: Progress of Literacy in Manipur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total % of Literacy</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>5,77,635</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>20.77</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7,80,037</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>45.12</td>
<td>15.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>10,72,753</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>46.40</td>
<td>19.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>14,20,953</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>53.29</td>
<td>29.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18,37,149</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>71.63</td>
<td>47.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>23,88,634</td>
<td>68.87</td>
<td>77.87</td>
<td>59.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India; 2001

There has been a great deal of accomplishment in the field of education in Manipur since 1950. Prior to Independence, the overall literate population of the state was very low particularly that of the tribals, and it picked up momentum only after Independence. The
total number of literates was 65,895 persons in 1951, including that of the Valley. The literacy rate of the state has gone up from 11.4 percent in 1951 to 68.87 percent in 2001. As shown in the table above, there has been a steady increase in the literacy rates for both male and female. The rate of male literacy is as high as 77.87 percent while the female literacy rate records 59.70 percent in 2001.

Table 4.5: Literacy among Major STs of Manipur, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Scheduled Tribe</th>
<th>Percentage of Literate</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td></td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hmar</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paite</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Any Mizo</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tangkhul</td>
<td></td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kabui</td>
<td></td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vaiphei</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Thadou</td>
<td></td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Social progress is indicated by the level of intellectual development among the people. Educational backwardness is the main factor of social degradation. Its relevance is more so in a district like Churachandpur which is socio-economically backward. The number of literates in the district are 1,48,829, accounting for 74.67 Percent of the total population in 2001. Schools and colleges are the main institution for imparting education in the district.

According to 2001 Census, district Churachandpur had 74.67 percent effective literacy rate as against 68.87 percent for Manipur state as a whole. Like most part of the state, the progress of literacy in the region was slow prior to independence. It was only after independence that the increase in the number of literacy has gained such a momentum i.e. 11.40 percent in 1951 to 68.87 percent in 2001. The literacy rate in Churachandpur was 35.40 percent in 1961 and it reached as high as 74.67 percent in 2001 after four decades.
Table 4.6: Literacy in Churachandpur district (1961-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>% of literate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>62,418</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>98,114</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1,34,776</td>
<td>44.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1,76,184</td>
<td>58.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,28,707</td>
<td>74.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Handbook of Manipur, 2002.

As for the Vaiphei in the district, separate data cannot be obtained. However, the four sample villages of the Vaiphei shows as high as 88.8 percent literacy for female and 94.2 percent for male. Although the literacy rate is absolutely high in these sample villages as against the state and the district, yet in terms of persons having professional educational level in different fields, they still presents a dismaying picture. On the other hand, the growth of literacy is not uniform in all the Vaiphei villages or in all the sub-divisions of the district.

Table 4.7: Sex Ratio of Churachandpur District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>1048</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above agents of change are the main factors responsible for the socio-economic change of the hill tribes in general and the Vaiphei people in particular. A process of transition from the old order to the new order has set in the Vaiphei society with the number of notable developments. The Vaiphei society is no longer static; it has changed and is changing. An attempt is made to examine the extent of social change of the Vaiphei society to the new situation that had developed since the British involvement in Manipur towards the end of the 19th Century A.D. and after the advent of Christianity in 1910.

4.4: Changes
(a) Family

The change in the Vaiphei society brought about by the various factors of change has a profound effect on the life of the people. A change feature is observed in the structure and function in a family. The existence of age-old primary relationships including bond of love and affections among the members of the family has been distorted or weakened contemporarily as most of the members stay out of home or village for want of studies and employment. The family as a corporate unit of economic production hardly exists as all members are not equally engaged in the same stream of economic pursuits but are engaged in different fields, where all the pursuits may not be necessarily be economic. The practice of working together in the jhum-field has been replaced by the offices, school and such other gainful entrepreneurs. Socialization is done mostly from outside than at home now. The
educational and religious functions which were normally performed at home and in the youth dormitory have been mostly transferred to educational training institutes, hostels and schools. Inter-generational gaps between the parents and the children including emerging mal-adjustment between old parents’ culture and new younger generations’ culture further deteriorates the contemporary family structure and its relationships.

(b) Status and Role of Women

Before analyzing the status and role of women in the Vaiphei society, it will be imperative to get acquainted with the term ‘status’. The term status stands for position and role a person hold and perform in a society. It signifies the sum total of the various culturally ascribed roles one has to play the rights and duties inherent in a social position. Besides the ascribed status in a society, there is also an emergence of achieved status, which results from one’s personal achievement in life. The concept of status, here, is used to indicate the ordering of the individuals in terms of attributes such as occupation, income, level of education, perception of one’s status within the home and the community, restrictions imposed on one’s activities, decision making roles in a family and community and so on.

In the modern setting, Vaiphei society is no longer considered to be exclusively a traditional or conservatives as it is gradually being exposed to forces of change which have in turn brought with it a radical transformation in the socio-economic, religious and political spheres of life. The status and position of women have considerably increased with the advent of Christianity. The coming of Christianity in 1910 led to the establishment of mission schools which exerted much influence on the traditional life of the illiterate Vaiphei people. Thus, the introduction of formal education laid the foundation of change among the Vaiphei, especially to the so called ‘weaker-sex’. Today, the change that can be observed in the socio-economic, religious and political life of the Vaiphei people may be largely attributed to the spread of modern education through Christian missionaries. As discussed
earlier, the class of woman was quite a neglected one in the indigenous Vaiphei society. However, through the process of social change, the emancipated Vaiphei woman of today has paved her way successfully in her search for higher position and a more meaningful role in the society. Inspite of their inherent weaker position, in recent years, the hidden hands of Vaiphei women can be seen in any field and have great influence over men folk.

In their traditional set up, life was without any competitions and tension. The customs barred the participation of women in performing religious duties. However, under their new found religion- Christianity, women are participating and playing more and more role even in the religious field and the limitation imposed of them has diminished. One of the most important developments among women folk in Vaiphei society is in the realm of higher education and intellectual pursuit. The spread of education among the women has led them to shed off their traditional status, which gives them inner confidence in tackling problems. The introduction of modern education offered them a hitherto unknown world of interaction and participation where they recognized themselves as having the potential and in fact, the responsibility to act as contributory members of society. The church offered them a sense of belonging and created space for them to participate and to a certain extent, make decision and policies that were not only to affect the women’s work but also the church. The new religion gave them a sense of freedom from traditional practices that had confined them within cultural norms related to dos and don’ts, rights and wrongs and food taboos.

Educated women began to assume the roles equal with men in both the church and public life. Nevertheless, discrimination of gender continued though it was subtle and on the ground that man had traditionally always exercised authority. Nevertheless, women displaying talents and creative forms of expression were respected and encouraged. With the rise in their literacy level, educated women are becoming aware of their importance in family and society. Their attitudes and value are increasingly becoming higher by the
equalitarian ethos. Today, even married woman with professional degree felt that they are wasting their talent if they sit at home. Moreover, family planning has made the spacing of children possible, which helps women to continue with their jobs even after child bearing. The preference of urban families for small family also makes it possible for modern women to take up jobs. Today, there are a number of Vaiphei women who are gainfully employed in different fields such as medicine, teaching, designing, air-hostess, police etc.

The factors responsible for the change in the status of women in Vaiphei society are numerous and varied. One of the chief factors responsible for the change in women’s outlook is Christian philosophy, whose doctrines and teachings of equality of men and women have influenced them. They began to take part in different social activities. And this change thought enlarged their ideas culminating in the formation of Women’s Association which acted as agency to offer anything that the transformed women may need.

The modern educational system has also been one of the factors that changed the position of women. Education acted as both a transformer as well as a transmitter. It transformed women’s personality. It elevated their position in the family as well as in the society that they no longer regard men as superior but equal. The impact of expanding education to the younger generations has gradually percolated and affected their elders in substituting their narrow attitudes, superstitions and localism to broader outlook and scientific approach to problems. The change in the economic position of women also brought further change in their status in the society. Now there are women who control and own financial interests, running shops, tea stalls or engaged themselves in contract works. The old traditional outlook has been diminishing. This also has brought profound changes in the marriage pattern of the Vaiphei; where the women can have a partner of their own choice. The educated women are in favour of the concept of economic independents as such, they thought it better to earn themselves. Their perception and value system has been
changed. The traditional work culture and dresses are on the verge of extinctions in many Vaiphei villages. Instead of the traditionally ascertained family career, they choose to enhance the family income which in turn enhanced the living standard of the family. Male ideas about the position of women in society have also been changed to a great extent. Menfolks began to recognize the new role of women in society. Armed with economic and political rights, Vaiphei women is now on its march towards equality and freedom.

(c) Marriage

In the traditional Vaiphei society, the choice of marriage was governed by the cultural norms intrinsically connected with and attached to the agriculture work and bravery. In those days, as soon as the male child is born, he was blessed with the skills in war and hunting which fall outside the domestic domain; and a female child was blessed with physical beauty and skill in domestic works. It was generally arranged after protracted negotiations in which the consent of the boy and the girl were taken into account. The criterion of selecting a good wife was seen from many angles like the knowledge and abilities of traditional work culture like cooking, weaving, brewing rice beer and other aspects like generosity, chastity and good outer appearance. The girls once married, became the possession of the husband and as such she takes up all the responsibilities of the house. In recent years, the traditional value have been modified, a new value scale based on education assumes precedence in marriage. Thus, the earlier personal status through individual achievement like expertise in war and hunting or physical beauty and skill in domestic works gradually loss its traditional significance in the choice of spouse where a semi-class structure plays more and more significant role. Marriages between members of the educated class and economically well-to-do families are prevailing and common in their society. In the face of this, marriage choice in future will show more and more emphasis on class line thus creating class system in a classless society.
Though certain taboos are still maintained in principle, marriage in the Vaiphei society has definitely undergone changes. A very important change in marriage system of the Vaiphei in the post-Christianity is abolition of Kawnglaw-marriage i.e. a type of marriage in which a boy served a girl’s family for her hand in marriage. This type of marriage lost its significance and the Vaiphei have completely stopped such practice. They do not wish to marry under the name ‘Kawnglaw’ anymore. This type of marriage, being completely wiped out of the traditions of the Vaiphei, is not known, even by name, by the present generation. With the advent of Christianity and education, the usual practice of marriage arrangements by parents is gradually disappearing and the girls’ and boys’ consents are becoming deciding factors. Cross-cousin marriage (Mother’s-Brother’s daughter); which was very obligatory, also gradually diminished. Marriages, forced by their parents in order to have a family relation or marriage against the wish of the girl’s parents are dying away. In place of all these, love marriage within the tribe or even outside becomes common, but not as a rule. However, the practice of marriage by elopement is still followed even by the educated girls and boys. The arranged marriage system through negotiations in Vaiphei society is gradually losing its importance among the educated generations. Now love marriage is commonly practiced. Still the greater impact is the choosing of partners among same level of education or at least from the educated group of people. A highly educated boy or girl hardly goes back to rural areas and marries illiterate one. Earlier, simplicity, loyalty and work experience were the criterion of choosing a good bride which is taken over by level of education and economic condition. This tendency of the Vaiphei people has further motivated and encouraged the girls to go for higher education for better security in future.

With the coming of Christianity in the Vaiphei society, marriage known as ‘Dan-thiangtho-a-Kicheng’ (holy matrimony) came into being. In this Christian marriage, both the would be bride and bride-groom must obtain approval of the Church claiming that they are
the bonafide member of the Church and they have not done anything against the Christian principle and hence there is no objection in giving them approval for conduction the holy marriage in the Church. It is administered by an ordained priest where the bride and the bride-groom swear in the name of God that they will remain as husband and wife and never part till death makes them separate. This kind of marriage replaced traditionally most desirable marriage called Chawngmo, and become he most preferred marriage now.

There is also another kind of marriage after they become Christian called ‘Pindan-a-Kicheng’, which is regularized through performance of post marriage rites. In the truest of the sense, this marriage is elopement; which is not approved by the church. After their elopement, the couple is expelled from the Church for a specific period of time; which barred them from participating in any kind of activities in the church. After the expulsion time is over, the couple seeks permission from the Church to acknowledge and be marriage in Christian’s way; as a sign of their submission to the ethics of the Church. This kind of marriage is usually solemnized in the house of the Church Elder, administered by a priest or the Elder himself. By performing this kind of marriage, the out-casted couple is welcome back in the Church and become a full member again.

The traditional ways of marriage also could not retain some of its traditional characteristics in such a way that it had become a mixture of traditional Christian way of marriage. The new religions, in some way, has little effect upon the basic structure of the traditional nuptial rites, except that the marriage was solemnized in the Church where an ordained priest conducted the oath of allegiance according to Christian practices in place of the traditional priest. The part once played by Zu (liquor) during marriage negotiation and on the weeding day was now replaced by a simple marriage feast or tea and snacks. Therefore, the traditional norms and social obligations still have some weight in matters relating to marriage ceremony. In this regard, it may be rightly said that no Christian marriage can
taken place without following the traditional formalities. However, among the modern Vaiphei, this custom, in actual practice, is observed only for the sake of formality without much of its true significance.

In general, bride-price usually reflected that social status of the contracting parties. It is observed that the higher the social status of the girl’s family the higher the bride-price. However, this great variation in customary rules and practices in different villages and between different contracting parties were brought under a uniform system by the Vaiphei People’s Council (VPC), which is applicable to all the Vaiphei tribe. Moreover, the distribution of bride price among specific relatives which was once regarded as one of the important means of strengthening clanship ties within the clan organization assumes less and less importance. This is mainly because of the changing socio-economic situation without a corresponding change in the amount of bride-price. Today, bride-price and its distribution becomes simply a formality to the fulfillment and spatial rites on traditional line.

(d) Divorce

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, divorce or separation takes place in only few cases and is a rare phenomenon in Vaiphei society. In the terms and conditions of their marriage contract, they vowed ‘till death do us apart’, and do not mention about divorce. Marriage is considered a sacred bond of union sanctioned by God. Divorce is usually resorted to maintain high ideals of morality, as reflected in their practice and thinking. However, it is permissible and a marriage may be dissolved either by the husband or the wife due to some compelling reasons common to both. Such reasons may be incurable diseases, lunacy, desertion, cruelty, negligence of duties, repeated unfaithfulness, or adultery. The village council or the clan elders however, examined the cases intensively before divorce is actually granted. But divorce only becomes imminent if either of the couple led a life of immorality and corruption. Most of the divorces in Vaiphei society are
reasonably acceptable, in a sense that most of it are because of barrenness, infidelity and incompatibility in conjugal relationship. In case of a divorce, the bride is free from the marriage bond and she is allowed to go back to her parents’ house. In certain cases, the divorced wife is allowed to take over the guardianship of a female child. There is hardly any case where a woman divorces her husband without his consent. A divorced woman can remarry; Vaiphei society does not impose restriction on it unless social norms are violated.

A divorced woman can take the youngest female child in her possession but cannot keep a male child. Even when she is allowed to keep an infant male child, under certain circumstances, she cannot give her own title and have to return him when grown up. A widow is allowed to possess the properties of her husband but cannot inherit it. She can use it in her lifetime if she is not remarried, but she has no right to dispose or transfer any of the landed properties. In case a widow remarries outside the family, her right to claim or possess the properties of her husband automatically stands cancelled.

(e) Dormitory

The bachelors’ house (dormitory) called Sāwm has been the most important institution which served as socializing agent in the traditional Vaiphei community life. The prohibition of head-hunting, with the ushering-in of Christianity in the villages, has led to the erosion of this important social and cultural institution of the Vaiphei. Church activities in the form of youth fellowship meetings have came up and the activities of the youths also changed. The other important factor for the extinction of Sāwm was the introduction of formal education along with youth activities in the church. The changes also came into existence because the pre-Christianity days of social life came in conflict with Christian principles on matters of the amount of freedom given to the youths in the name of Sāwm. The Christian parents became concern about the laxity of the morals of their boys who roam freely in the nights wooing girls. With the establishment of schools in their villages, the parents found their
home a better place of studies and to discipline their boys. Church leaders and school teachers began to dislike the idea of Sawm. So, it acted as a real hindrance to the proper functioning of dormitory. Most of the parents would now prefer to send their children to formal schools since they realized that they would gain more in sending their children to schools. They began to feel that Sawm was only a waste of time and hindrance to their pursuit for development. Thus, slowly and surely, the Sawm institution relegated to insignificance and people began to abandon it. With the disappearance of Sawm institution where men folk assemble regularly, they could now give more attention to more productive activities such as education and domestic affairs. As such, it brought about much relief to the women folk as well as parents since responsibility of the family is now shared jointly by men and women. This, in turn, sowed the seed of better atmosphere and understanding in the family. However, in the present day, it is seen that the same trend of Sawm idea of diligence and grace is being handed down to their society in the form of Young Vaiphei Association (YVA). This is a social welfare association, to render help to the society in times of needs like severe sicknesses, deaths, accidents and any kind of calamities.

(f) Prohibition of Zu (Liquor)

In the traditional Vaiphei society, Zu was considered as one of the unavoidable items which was consumed, if not daily, in all the important feast, festivals and ceremonies such as Kithawina (sacrificial offering), Kichenna (marriage ceremony), Gualvakna (feast of honour), etc. Moreover, serving Zu to the village chief and his council of elders was a must while dealing with all cases between the aggrieved villagers. No social custom or family relationship formalities could be performed without Zu whether it be at home or at any place of social gathering. It is a necessary part of its life that it became a culture and firmly planted in the society. Therefore, nothing can be more difficult to do away the drinking habits of the Vaiphei than any other elements in their society. With the coming of Christianity, the
missionaries simultaneously with their evangelical task took step for social reformation in the Vaiphei society by prohibiting consumption of Zu as it was very closely linked with the animistic sacrifices and other tribal customs which belonged to their old pagan life and atmosphere of such festivities was un-congenial to Christian principle and spiritual growth. The steps taken by the missionaries and the churches, thus, resulted in the gradual reduction of Zu consumption and total cessation of Zu as a common drink on all occasions. They cultivated the habit of having ‘thingpi’ (tea) as substitution to Zu and today, offering tea to a guest and visitors has become the social practice of the Vaiphei people.

With the gradual decline in the consumption of Zu as a common drink which engrossed the agricultural surplus products in Zu brewing, a considerable amount of rice has now turned into regular food for the family, thus improving the economic condition of the society. Quarrels and fighting as consequences of drinking Zu did go away and the family began to have a better relationship and peaceful atmosphere in their home. Even though Zu becomes popularized again in modern days and they have largely reverted to consuming it, the Christian Vaiphei society did not endorse to drinking Zu as a normal life-style.

(g) Festivals and Dances

In pre-Christianity days, festivals and dances were a very important part of life for the Vaiphei. In the initial stage of embracing the new religion, festival and dances gradually lost its significance and popularity among the new converts. As a result, there occurred misunderstanding between the traditionalists and the converts Christians at a certain point of time. The former blamed the missionaries and Church leaders for undermining culture and rejecting old values. In contrast, the missionaries and the newly converts felt that most of the cultural festivities and dances were profusely connected with old religious practices and the drinking of Zu, which were inappropriate of Christian’s way of life. The converted Christians were, therefore, forbidden to participate in such activities, not only because of its
unethical approach for Christians but also to prevent themselves from the temptation of falling back to their old ways. In due course, Christmas and New Year celebrations with community feast, although of recent origin, have gained dominant position over the traditional festivals in celebration and observance. The first Christmas Celebration was done in Bualtang and Maite village in the year 1912. The gradual declined and disappearance of festivals and animal sacrifices promoted to the economic growth of the Vaiphei. The reason was that these festivals lasted for several days with Zu and meats abundantly, which consumed a large portion of all the earnings of the people. This could also be one of the reasons why the missionaries discarded the celebrations of their festivals. Conversion to Christianity meant the renouncing of traditional religious rites. They even refused to take part in traditional dances, since they felt it was linked to traditional religious rituals.

(h) Introduction of Written Script

Before the advent of Christianity, there prevailed total illiteracy in the Vaiphei society. Not only that, they had no written language of their own. The missionaries in their pioneering days among the tribals, simultaneously with preaching, concentrated their philanthropic works in enlightening the masses by introducing formal education. It was the first two Christians of Churachandpur District, Mr. Thangkai and Mr. Lungpau, with the help of the pioneer missionary W.R. Roberts, who initiated to alleviate Vaiphei language into written form. Thus, in 1911, they introduced the following alphabets to construct vocabularies by using 24 alphabets of Roman scripts, which is still used by the Vaiphei:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>AW</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>CH</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>NG</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>J</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>P</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The same year, Thangkai and Lungpau, with the help of Watkin Roberts started translating St. John. By that time, Roberts was well equipped with Lushai (Mizo) language. So, he narrates it in Lushai and the two young men translated again in Vaiphei. In 1913, some Bible Quiz with answers entitled ‘Thu ki sang’ and gospel song book called Labu-vawm (Black cover songbook) were published. Another gospel song book, which they called Labu-san (Red cover songbook), was published the following year. Another early Vaiphei convert by the name Manghen, was able to read and write in Vaiphei by that time. So, in 1916, Thangkai and Manghen along with Roberts went to Bible Society of India and Ceylon in Asansol, Calcutta, for proof reading and to publish. It was finished in 1917, which became the first book published in Vaiphei.

Therefore, the Vaiphei were the first to have St. John published in their own dialect among the Kuki-Chin-Mizo tribes of Manipur.

As time rolled by, there was a definite increase in people’s thirst for knowledge, if not at least to write and understand what are written. In order to improve the situation, the first beginner book entitled ‘Simpatbu’ was prepared by Evan. Manghen in 1921. This was the one and only legal instrument for the Vaiphei to learn how to read and write their dialect. Hence, there was a definite improvement in the number of literates among the Vaiphei.

After a gap of twenty-six years, ‘Simpatbu’ was revised and improved by Mr. Thualzakap in 1947. It was used and taught in Mission schools for young learners as vernacular. With a view to improve the standard of the book for school children, Rev. Khupkhawthang revised and enlarged the contents in 1960. The reprinted version of this book is still used in Mission schools in Vaiphei area. Subsequently, several other books in Vaiphei language were published for the young learners. Thus, the indigenous oral practices of Vaiphei language got its written form in the hands of Christian missionaries which ultimately paved the way for further progress in the Vaiphei society.
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