CHAPTER-V
Impacts

Since the advent of Christianity along with education, a number of significant changes have taken place, which had an impact on the lives of the hill tribes of Manipur. These include the nature of development itself. Specific interventions through state agencies, which have had its effect on the livelihood, work, cultural practices etc., have undergone change. Religion serves the central and crucial function in society of supporting what has been variously called social integration, social solidarity and social cohesion. Religion is an all-pervading supernatural phenomenon in man’s life. For this reason, perhaps, it has been considered universal. Religion has exercised the most profound influence over man’s thoughts and behaviour from times beyond human recollection. Conversion to Christianity after the coming of the British missionaries has brought about changes in family, marriage, social life of the Vaiphei, their life’s styles, food habits and health seeking behaviour. Among the Vaiphei, religion becomes all the more important for it is inter-woven in their entire social life and shapes most of their entire social behaviour. Thus, we can see the changes in the social behaviour encompassing the culture of the people.

The Christianity and its movement penetrated within the cultural milieu of the hill tribes of Manipur. It was within the culture that the gospel message was preached, adorned, accepted, worshipped and believed. Christianity brought forth far-reaching effects on the Vaiphei society. The Christian missionaries, apart from evangelism introduced western education and modern medicine to the tribal society. These therefore, acted as the forces of social change among the tribal people. The missionary contribution in the field of education, health care and society besides spreading Christianity is highly commendable. In both the fields, pioneering works were taken up by the missionary with the help of government. Thus, the adoption of new religion led to the inculcation of new outlook, new cultural values, and eliminations of their traditional animistic belief and embedded them to a new
concept in their attitude. We briefly analyzed their contributions in education and health standard of the people among the hill tribes of Manipur particularly the Vaiphei.

Joan S. Mbiti does indeed make correct statements that the gospel does not throw out culture; to the contrary, it comes in to our culture, it settled there, it brings its impact on our total life within that culture. How was conversion affected among the Vaiphei? How did the growth of Christianity took place from within and not from without? Would their Christianization have taken place in the same way without education and would the impact of education have been different if it had not been coupled with the proclamation of the new religion? How did these animist people quickly responded to the called to wed the traditional with Christianity? What has Christianity offered them that were different from their traditional religious practices? What were the socio-cultural implications of that decision? Did their turning to Christianity have economic considerations?

There is no ready made answer to any of these complex questions. Some of these questions are beyond the scope of historical analysis. A careful analysis and understanding is therefore, needed about the impact of Christianity on Vaiphei society. The traditional religious practices of the Vaiphei, as also in many other religions, are such an integral part of the culture that to differentiate any aspects of life as exclusively religious becomes difficult. The entire culture was engrossed fully in religious rites and rituals. In other words, their daily life is governed by religious rituals and practices; without which no one would perform any other duties. In spite of this fact, the response to the new religion has been remarkable due to the zeal of the missionaries and the receptivity of the people.

5.1: Receptivity Factors

The response of the people to the new religion-Christianity was generally favourable. Looking back at the religious institutions of the pre-modern society, ‘the pattern is one in which the society relates to the ultimate religious order of the universe’. The material agent
or solution to such problems as natural calamities and epidemics were the immediate performance of religious ceremonies either by the village priest or an expert in the society. From this standpoint, when the term ‘religion’ is used, it implies a close relationship between men and the higher power or supernatural forces that exist beyond the vision of human world. The traditional Vaiphei religion and the Christians have one thing in common, i.e. accepting the spiritual view of life. They do not need to be convinced of the supernatural being and this opens the ways for dialogue. The divinity of ‘Pathiān’ (God) is an object of perpetual worship, although there are, of course, other forms of henotheism (the belief in one God, but without denying the existence of others), and polytheism among the Vaiphei people. The monotheistic worship of ‘Pathiān’ was perhaps the oldest form of worship as per the historical evidence available. With the advent of time, however, the religious condition of the people has turned chaotic. We have witnessed the rise and popularity of polytheism which became the rein of control of the masses. Under these circumstances, excessive ritualism, frequent sacrifices and other burdensome feasts might have led the people to accept the new religion. This shows that ‘Pathiān’ was not only the heart of an ancient Vaiphei religious philosophy, but also the core of the entire Christian theology.

There is another religious conceptual affinity of human soul and life after death. The belief in the world beyond was instrumental in molding the cultural norms and values. As a rule, they recognize two stages of spiritual world. One was ordinary known as ‘Mithi-khua’ (village of the death) and the other was ‘Pialgal’ (Paradise/heaven). Pialgal was meant for those who distinguished themselves during their lifetime in social conduct, in economic wealth by giving a number of prescribes ceremonies and feast of honour, or, in bravery or in hunting skills by killing a number of wild beasts. The prestigious position attainable in the Vaiphei social world were thus, intrinsically and intimately connected with the belief in the life after death; and it was this belief which prescribed the traditional social values on
bravery and wealth. Moreover, even after the full conversion into the new faith, the people used Pialgal to mean the same paradise/heaven. This is one factor which determined the subject in favour of the new religion. The idea of heaven and hell proclaimed by the missionaries did work in their favour which the people digested and became closer to it. Christianity, therefore, did not provoke offensive resistance and appeared as just a modest surprise even from the aggressive Vaiphei people.

Another receptivity factor for the new religion is inculcating the use of a major cultural element- Khuang (drum) in praise and worship by the new converts, whose intrinsic value cannot be denied in their society. The Vaiphei are known for their love of traditional fine arts-poetry, music and song. During their pre-Christian eras they used to compose such as war songs, patriotic songs based on their ethnic social life, traditional love songs and romantic poems in their tribal religious tunes accompanied by drums and traditional dancing. The Vaiphei would not sing or dance without the same. The people preferred much to their possessed ‘Khuang’ to the highly sophisticated modern musical instruments. The truth of the matter is that the people have an innate capacity to develop and preserve the rich resources of their musical heritage. With the new found religion the Vaiphei traditional songs and poetries were replaced by new songs of praise and worship for God. For example, there are certain cultural elements involved with celebrations of Christmas and New Year till date i.e., they did not give up their traditional way of serving community feast on such important days. After Church services, they gathered somewhere in a temporarily constructed hall and sing gospel songs in their own traditional tunes for the whole day and night; sometimes it lasted for a week or more. Such collective singing known as ‘Lengkhawm’ are usually accompanied by dances. In fact, any kind of group songs in the church or Lengkhawm are always leaded by the drummer. This characteristic of unity and cooperation in the tribe encouraged the persistence of Christianity in their society.
5.2: Tribal Solidarity and Identity

The new religion opened the door to more advanced community and exposed them not only to the mainland Indian but also to the international community. The process of Christianization has helped to foster a feeling of solidarity and identity among the tribe. It has also helped them to come to terms with the process of modernization and development. While Christianity opens the door to international community, it influenced the tribal of their specific tribal identity. In many cases, this was done by adapting the Christian message to the tribal mentality and cultural needs. In other cases, this was accomplished by giving permanent grammatical and literary forms and structure to their language, by developing the literature, the vocabulary and modes of expression. S.M Dubey says ‘in the Pre-British period most of the tribes were not conscious of their ethno-tribal identities and their world was confined to their family, clan, khel and village’. Christian theology provided the intellectual and emotional understanding for a wider solidarity than the inter-clan, or inter-tribe solidarity. In the process, religious institutions played a major role. Common endeavours and goals like translation of a common Bible or gospel hymn book, inter-Church councils, etc. served as a platform and occasion for inter-tribe interaction and a sense of solidarity. These church activities along with education helped them to judge critically the economic and political aspects of social life. In short, the Vaiphei have acquired a new vision with which to look at their own society and the world at large.

The introduction of Christianity also brought a qualitative change in inter-tribal, and tribal and non-tribal relationship. Traditionally, tribal solidarity was weak as it was confined to a single sub-ethnic group speaking the same dialect. To become Christian meant to enter into a worldwide community and solidarity. The tribal isolationism and inter-tribal hostility gave way to a feeling of true internationalism, sort of political ideologies. The passport of Christianity also made the tribal acceptable to other Christian communities thus, bringing
about a worldwide solidarity in faith, despite internal tensions and divisions arising from theological and historical reasons.

5.3: Transfer to Religious Life

Religion is an important institution and a basic cultural characteristic of a population. It plays an important role in influencing and modifying the cultural traits and social behavior of a society. Before the advent of Christianity, the Vaiphei believed in a variety of gods and spirits. Most of their sacrifices were directed to pacify the evil spirits who were believed to have caused misfortune or any illness to the people. The traditional Vaiphei habitat was occupied by countless hostile spirits inhabiting every natural object who were regarded as stronger than himself. Each spirit had to be appeased by appropriate sacrifices, otherwise disease, misfortune and even death might ensue. All illness was set down to the wrath of certain spirits which had to be appeased by sacrifices, if health was to be restored.

With the coming of Christianity, these fears or phobias that grew out of their traditional animistic belief causing them to perform many ritualistic offerings have diminished. The practice of offering sacrifices in the form of food, meat and others to please the spirits of their dread was given up in due course. Instead, eternal life as outlined in Christian doctrine replaced their assumption pialgal or vangam (heaven) of their old religion. Moreover, the practice of offering a series of costly feast for securing a right place in the life-after death has also come to an end.

5.4: A new World view

Prior to the advent of Christianity, the tribal world view was limited to a clan, village or at the most to a particular area. Christianity has brought a new world view not only by exposing them to the plain Indian but also to the international community. Through the church, exchange of personnel, studies and service abroad have been made possible. Exposure to a new world with its culture, its political philosophies and forms of government,
its educational and social infrastructures, in general, totally different from those of tribal people living in isolated geographical and cultural pockets was bound to alter the world view of the tribal people. And this can be identified and considered as the first major impact of Christianity for better or worse, on the tribal people of Manipur, specially the Vaiphei.

5.5: On Education Sphere

Formal education of the Vaiphei in reality and practice as we see today has its beginning since the advent of Christianity with the arrival of Watkin R. Roberts, a Welsh missionary, in 1910. After a few days of in-depth communication with exposure to the Lushai translation of the Scripture portions of the Bible and preaching the Gospel at Senvon and its surrounding villages, Robert returned to his Headquarter in Aizawl and invited three native Bible students namely Savawma, Vanzika and Thangchhingpuia (Taitea) to look after the new Mission field. These three evangelist-teacher reached Senvon village on May 7, 1910 and latter on opened a primary mission school as part of their evangelical activities.

In the early days, teaching at first was in the simplest form mainly confined to reading of the Bible since education was initially imparted with Bible preaching. Since there was no age limit, children and adults sat together and learnt the same subjects. The mission schools, in those days did not necessarily emphasize vocational training. Whatever training they offered was mainly for the development of teachers, clergy and other native workers to work in the missionary effort. As a result, most of the early educated Vaiphei were employed in the mission services as low-paid workers. Thus, it appears that formal education introduced by the missionaries were so designed at religious instruction to serve the need of the missionaries than in giving vocational guidance to develop the Vaiphei.

Since basic education was sufficient to serve the purpose of the missionaries they did not see any need for introducing higher education. Burman observes, “one of the most striking features of the impact of Christianity on the social and political life is the
introduction of modern western education, which in turn has a profound effect on the lifestyle and consumption pattern”.

But till 1941, apart from the numerous primary schools, there were only three middle schools and not a single high-school in all the hill areas inhabited by the tribals. The condition of education was very poor with no school facilities either from the government or from the mission. Though the mission started primary schools, it transferred to any place where the evangelists were transferred by the mission. However, with the increase in Christian population there was a corresponding increase in the number of mission schools. From a very humble beginning, the new Christian educational project gained momentum through the instrumentality of the native pioneer missionaries.

The course of history of the church and its education in Churachandpur district was changed by the arrival of Paul Rostad and his wife Ella Rostad in 1928. Apart from upgrading some of the primary schools to middle schools, they started a bible school in the name of Dinwiddie. As time passed by, new schools of elementary standard were started in other villages as well. Thus, the mission made good progress in educating the people. In the year 1935, the first Middle English School was opened at Pherzawl with H. Daia as its head. In the same year, another Middle English School was started at Rengkai with Siakzalam as its Headmaster. All these contributed a lot in the field of education of the people. It is encouraging to see that after twenty-five years of its ministries, the mission was able to produce a good number of native leaders, who could look after the churches.

A brief review of the historical development of formal education among the Vaiphei in Manipur brings to light that Christian missionaries, inspired by the zeal of spreading the gospel became the most important agency in the spread of education. It is true that Vaiphei education in the pre-independent period mainly confined to the primary level. Nevertheless, it is also true that the missionaries laid the foundation of education among them in Manipur.
Thus, the tempo of educational progress during the post-Independent period would have never been the same but not for the ground-work prepared by the missionaries.

Today, education is highly valued and a rapid increase in literacy is observed. In the words of B.D. Sharma; “It is education more than anything else that shapes the new tribal society… In some tribal areas, education played a big role in molding the natives. A beginning was made by the missionaries as early as the eighteenth century”⁶. According to 2001 Census, district Churachandpur had 74.67 percent literacy rate as against 68.87 percent for Manipur state as a whole. As for the Vaiphei in the district, the four sample study 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. However, it is significant to note that the literacy performance in the Vaiphei dominated areas is considered to be profound; as compared to the progress made in the valley and considering the fact that the Vaiphei areas consisted of totally non-literate population prior to the Christian impact. The difference in literacy rate between the valley and the hills is declining sharply and it is remarkable that some of the hill districts now have a literacy rate comparable or even better than the valley.

5.6: Medical Impact

The Christian missionaries were the pioneers in introducing modern medicine to the hill tribes of Manipur. The missionary involvement in the medical work in the late 19th century and early and early 20th century was undertaken mainly for evangelism. The early missionaries employed it as Christ like ministry of healing men’s body as well as their soul. Moreover, in those day, the value of modern medicines and surgery become more appreciated in America, it was also felt that the best available healing should go out to the mission field, hand in hand to supplement the preaching of the gospel.⁷ Thus the missionary
in the medical work helped in accelerating the breakdown of the traditional worldview and has become one of the major impacts in the social transformation of the hill tribes.

The medical work in the southern hills of Manipur was started by the North East India General Mission with aid from the government. They started five Dispensaries at Churachandpur, Tinsuong, Hanship, Khanpi and Patpuihmun. The mission apart from opening dispensaries sent students to Dibrugrah to study Compounder class. By 1938, there are said to be one local medical person, 4 compounders. In short, the missionaries apart from evangelism established Dispensaries had a great impact on the health care and sanitation of the people. It helped in the breakdown of the traditional belief and accelerated the spread of Christianity in the state. Thus, the missionaries laid the foundation of health care a century ago from those humble beginning emerged the present day hospital.

5.7: House type

Change is also perceptible in the house-type of the Vaiphei. Traditional huts of the Vaiphei were built above the ground on wooden or bamboo posts, the walls and floors were made of split and plaited bamboo, thatched roof, generally one front entrance with one big window-type of opening called ‘namthāk’. The house is separated into two halves, one half as bed room for all the family members and the other half served as common room with kitchen. This traditional housing pattern of the Vaiphei is changing due to the impact of Christianity with education. The house pattern underwent changes and the residential houses are now constructed in different patterns- ‘L’-shape, ‘U’-shape, ‘T’-shape and so on. The houses build, now, have lighted rooms, ventilated with more than two main doors and several windows. Bricks, C.I. sheets, cement, window-glasses and buying and selling of land for house construction are going on progressively. The designs of houses so built are modern with a verandah in the front. The sitting and living rooms are separated from the kitchen.
Vaiphei society in general was practically unacquainted with hygienic ways of living before the introduction of education in 1910. With the introduction of formal education, the educated young man and women became flexible to retain the enduring elements of materials and non-material culture. As such, attention was paid to the prevailing unhygienic conditions of the Vaiphei way of living. Today, houses are provided with sanitary latrines and bathrooms. Use of modern furniture and utensils are becoming part and parcel of the housing equipments.

5.8: On dresses

The introduction of formal education among the Vaiphei people has a far-reaching impact in their mental outlook. In the initial period, the newly converts were the most educated people as Christians were the forerunner in getting western education. As such, the western-educated group took the Westerner as models intended to become pro-western in outlook and attitude. The most discernible are the changes in clothing patterns; use of skirts, sport-shirts, trousers, pants etc, by young men and girls and tailored blouses of varying a leave lengths by young ladies are very common. Before the advent of Christianity, a Vaiphei had only one dress which he worn everyday. With the process of Christianization, a slight development was effecting by getting one more dress in addition to the existing one; commonly known as ‘văñh hăwi’ meaning good dress. Use of ceremonial and traditional dresses especially for men are out of Vaiphei modern fashion; wearing of ‘dīal chèn’ (loin cloth around the waist) by the male is completely discarded. Hairstyles too have changed a great deal. Thus dresses are perhaps an area where fast change is witnessed among the Vaiphei people till date. There is no hesitation on the part of the people to dress themselves on the model of the latest pattern. Coming of cable T.V. has made quite an impact on the Vaiphei youths. Jeans and T-shirts of the latest trend from across the border town of Moreh-Tamu (Indo-Myanmar) have ushered in a fashion trend and dresses, which, especially
among the females have changed unrecognizably. Today, unless enquiries are made it is not possible to identify a Vaiphei women by her dresses especially in the Imphal valley. In recent years, seminars and conference have been conducted that have considered the importance of the preservation and usage of the colourful Vaiphei traditional attires.

5.9: On Management and Health Care

In the pre-Christian period, to heal the sick, the common practice was by offering bloody sacrifices to the evil spirits by the village Thiampu (priest). In fact, the Vaiphei people did not believe that they could be cured of sickness or disease by any means other than sacrifices performed by the Thiampu since disease was closely associated with powers of a spirit or a wizard. The health conditions of the people were miserable and pathetic which is expressed in the statement of a missionary; “Malaria was of course prevalent everywhere. There was also dropsy, internal parasites, hookworm, dysentery, tuberculosis and other dread diseases. Many mothers died at childbirth due to lack of care and superstitious ideas”. In order to overcome the condition of people’s health, the missionaries used to give them medicine and took up the dual function of education and medical care. Tablets and syrups supplied by the missionaries have worked instant miracles among the tribe. It convinced them in a practical way that the new religion was indeed beneficial. The missionaries established clinics and made them improved their mental and physical health.

In the days of yore, the Vaiphei family has one large house in which they would accommodate the entire family and other household articles including their domestic animals such as cow, pigs, hens, dogs, etc. However, the missionaries and the evangelists taught the people about cleanliness in their day-to-day life. Care of sickness, simple hygiene and first-aid are included in their education curriculum. They learnt better ways of life. Today, as for instance, a mother’s chewing food for their babies for mouth-to-mouth feeding is replaced by special cooking for babies and spoon-feeding. The Vaiphei had given up their
age-old traditional practice of curing diseases by observing sacrificial rituals and re inclined to the use of medicines for any sort of disease.

5.10: Political Development

In the traditional political setting, the village chief was the only central figure thus reducing the village into a semi-independent community, maintaining its own internal order and internal administration. Moreover, lack of cultural contact in the beginning rendered the institution of chief-ship and the authority intact till the advent of the British towards the end of the 19th century. The British, following the policy of non-interference, did not interfere much in the internal administration of the villages and the chiefs were largely left to themselves in maintaining their own internal and external affairs without external encroachment. However, in spite of their “indirect rule” policy over the hill territory, a few administration changes were brought about in the traditional setting. The chiefs, thus, continued to enjoy their traditional political and social status and the institution of chiefship remained the guardian of the society. With the British consolidation of the hill authority, the colonial authorities assigned the chiefs the task of collecting hill house tax of Rs. 3/- from each household; where they were getting 3 annas as commission per household. The colonial authorities were bent on using the chiefs to perpetuate their hold over the people. 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. This practice often induced the chiefs to abuse their privileges and treat the
villagers as personal servants. Thus, the chief became a pivotal link in the colonial administration and exploitation of the masses.

If for any reason a villager failed to render these services, severe punishment awaited him. In this way, the British laid down the basic foundation of indirect rule to have effective control over the turbulent tribes in the hill areas through the chiefs. Changes in the grass root politics among the Vaiphei is noticed in its leadership structure. Under the influence of formal education introduced by the missionaries with the backing from the colonial administration provided the material basis for the emergence of new leadership in their society. The new ethos brought about by modern education basically transformed itself in negative orientation towards the traditional political set up. In the initial period, the emerging new leaders started mobilizing themselves against traditional leaders specially the chiefs and their councilors who followed the dictates of the colonial rulers.

5.11: Emergence of New Leadership

Traditionally, the village chief (Hausa) and his Khawnbawls (councilors), the Thiampu (priest), the Val-upas (youth-commanders) and experienced elders with gift of gab constituted the leadership structure in the village. But all these are fast changing under the influence of formal education introduced by the missionaries with the backing from the British officials provided the material basis for the emergence of new educated groups giving rise to two set of leadership-church leaders and political leaders. As Vaiphei society transformed itself from a simple-mechanical society to a semi-organic society, the selection of elites are done from a pool of people, not determined at birth, but who have managed to acquire during the course of their education and training certain characteristics.

(a) Church Leaders: In the initial period, the most educated people were the converts as Christians were the forerunners in getting western education. Most of this educated Vaiphei were employed in the mission as workers. What is significant here is that the educated and
trained natives workers began to consider themselves belonging to a higher status group with what M.N Srinivas has describe as the ‘Sanskritization’ of social behaviour, and assumed new leadership, educator, administrator and spiritual leaders, in the leadership structure which posed a challenge to the traditional elites, thereby giving rise to a conscious attempt to dethroned the traditional leaders. In this way, the British rule and the introduction of Western education by the missionaries gradually loosened the traditional holds resulting in a declining tendency of the traditional leaders’ powers and traditionalism in general.

The emergence of church leaders and consequently mobilizing themselves against traditionalism was hindered due to the administration’s desire to preserve chief-ship at all cost as it rendered easy administration, while at the same time the emerging church leaders were all out to eradicate all forms of traditionalism to spread Christianity. Thus, the chiefs were supported by the administration while the missionaries supported the church and the interests of the commoners. The traditional division of the society, although a fluid one and the privileged class a kind of mobile character, thus, gave rise to the conflict situation in which the chiefs and their traditional elites were the worst sufferers.

(b) Modern Political Leaders: The opening of mission schools resulted in the emergence of educated groups whose basic orientation became removed from the traditional holds. With the low level of production in agriculture, standard of education achieved increasingly become the standard of manipulating the new openings brought about by the gradual incorporation of Vaiphei people with larger dominant society. Achieving higher level of education has a status consider as of belonging to a higher status group in the society and they are naturally the potential leaders in the leadership structure. This shows the importance of modern education and, moreover, the ability to communicate in English and Manipuri as political asset. Thus, the new political leaders are those who have had modern education,
working knowledge and better equipped with personal resources such as, the willingness to invest material resources to gain political power.

The present situation demands that one should mobilize all the available resources to gain political office and influence. Unlike leadership in the traditional system, today, it is almost impossible for a man without education to enter the higher stratum of leadership in the political arena. This is mainly due to the new leaders’ responsibility to serve the purpose of being agents of out-group contacts to facilitate the process of modernization. Thus, the winds of political consciousness brought by western education and the modernization process come along the emergence of modern political leaders. Education and acquaintance with modern political processes of the leaders rather than their age and experience are being given more and more importance in the village level also.

5.12: Changes in Economy

Social change is brought about to a great extent by changes in economy among the Vaiphei. In the previous Chapter, some of the highlights of the traditional economy have already been explored. Primitive economy was rigidly traditional in its attitude even four decades ago. About 90% of the total cropped area in the Vaiphei area was under the system of shifting cultivation. Economically, as already pointed out in the previous chapter, majority of the Vaiphei population depend on agriculture for their living. Traditionally, the entire population of the people can be classified as cultivators. Hunting and rearing of animals, etc. are practiced only as secondary occupations. Most of them practice shifting cultivation and only few of them are engaged in settled cultivation and only few of them are engaged in settled cultivation mostly whose settlements are in the plain areas of Churachandpur. The number of households practicing shifting cultivation and partly shifting in the five sub-divisions of the district is much higher than that of the households engaged in
permanent cultivation. This is due to the traditional practice of shifting cultivation coupled with the hilly nature of the terrain.

Table 5.1: Percentage of Households engaged in Cultivation in Churachandpur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Division</th>
<th>Shifting</th>
<th>Partly Shifting</th>
<th>Permanent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanlon</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henglep</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipaimukh</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singat</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61.04</td>
<td>13.52</td>
<td>9.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the society became more stable with settled agriculture as the mode of production, the more educated people started advising and suggesting the local farmers by way of demonstration that there existed yet one more method of growing crops on fixed plots - fruit plantation to supplement their income. The land abounds in a rich flora of indigenous fruits growing with so much ease without very much human aid as in the Henglep and Tipaimukh sub-divisions. It already enjoys an importance of its own from the horticulture standpoint. The qualities of fruits such as orange, lemon, papaya, banana, etc. grown in this area are very high even without proper care. The area is gifted with diverse agro-climatic conditions due to different elevation zones ranging from a few hundred to over a thousand feet above sea level. Because of this wide range of conditions, there is an immense scope for growing a number of varieties of horticulture crops.

Banana is also another important commercial fruit of the people, but its cultivation is still in a primitive stage. As there is no attempt to identify and classify the varieties correctly there has been much confusion in their proper identification, in spite of its commercial value, no one has taken up extensive plantation of bananas uptill now. The area is very rich in both wild and cultivated varieties. Miscellaneous fruits like jackfruit, papaya, lemon,
guava, etc. are also cultivated successfully. Cultivation of pineapple have been introduced which are thriving well and will shortly come into bearing stage. Regarding sugarcane, cotton, maize and yam, the yield per hectare is not very encouraging as compared to the agriculturally advanced areas of the states perhaps due to the under utilization of resources - natural and human.

With the spread of modern education a new economic class has emerged. The educated jhumias are absorbed in government employment and thus engaged in non-agricultural activities. Most of these households owned a paddy field but most of them have given it out for renting to landless agriculturists. Thus, most of the educated jhumias left their traditional agricultural and allied occupations and moved to urban and industrial areas for while collar jobs in public and private enterprises and business which help them making progress on the economic front also.

Moreover, the village households are stratified on the basis of the ownership of land, inequality in economic condition of the household tends to grow overtime. The poor jhumias are often required to borrow either in cash or kind or both. The well-to-do farmers, therefore, becomes money lenders and earn interest as an income. Since available land in the village especially in Churachandpur and its surrounding plain areas which can be used for wet cultivation is very limited it opens up the door for leasing out land on rent by the land owners. On the other hand, the landless jhumias are becoming poorer and poorer as they are often to borrow for survival and to sell their labour to the other class to earn wage and even to pay rent on leased in land from the farmer. Therefore, it appears that a considerable degree of socio-economic differentiation has grown among the Vaiphei society. However, class-consciousness still seems to be absent in the Vaiphei society and the relations between the landlords and the labourers is non-hostile because they belong to the same community and are sometimes related to one another through blood ties.
Vaiphei economy during the absolute regime of the politics of village chieftainships was not remarkable. It was simply to meet the bare necessities of the people's daily needs. However, the British colonization and the consequent modernization resulted in the emergence of cash economy and set in motion the process of modernization. Jhuming continues to be the main occupation of the Vaiphei people particularly in the interior villages, but it gradually lost its traditional importance as a means of basic subsistence, source of wealth and prestigious position in the society. In spite of the emotional and sentimental attachment to the village land, people become less attached to agricultural work due to the dwindling yields of jhumming and look for non-agricultural jobs and commercial openings offered by the various programs of developmental planning under the state government, thus leading to rural-urban migration. The hitherto undifferentiated traditional society of the Vaiphei was however, transformed into occupationally differentiated society since only a section of the population benefited from the process of change while the masses still cling to their traditional occupation.

No doubt, desire for change and material progress results in the breakdown of traditional boundaries and familiarity with new socio-economic system. With the spread of educational opportunities, more and more young people are entering into the field of job market, leaving their ancestral villages. Today, a significant number of Vaiphei have started residing in all the major urban centres exposing themselves to the experiences of wage employment and to the urban commercial practices and institutions. They exhibit the characteristics of participant culture.

Transitional Landscape: Land and land-based activities acted as the economic base of the traditional society of the Vaiphei, till the time land resources could meet the subsistence of the increasing number of households with traditional technology. In the absence of any centralized political authority, the inherent tendency towards fission is sought to be
counterbalanced by rules of exogamy and the unavoidable interest in land. But beyond the optimum point of land-population relation and in the event of any conflict in interests, forces of fission lend themselves to the dispersal of settlements. The economic base of the idealized social balance was also not well arrayed at the household level. Each of the households was essentially an autonomous economic unit that pursued an individual policy of production primarily with own labour resources and occasionally with mutual labour exchange. Division of labour and production relations were confined to the household and hardly moved beyond the domestic circle to bind others in interdependent relations till the rise of market and monetary relations among them. Integrative role in traditional relationship called as tawmngaına is, not only maintained properly, but also the driving force of their economy till the traditional mode of production could provide them their culturally set subsistence.

Along with emerging crisis of shifting cultivation, there has also been a gradual rise of a unifying political order from the days of British power to the present day. Expanding administration, communication, money, market, western education, religion and other exogenous factors started producing their impact on the people. Both the endogenous and exogenous factors providing for push and pull forces of occupational changes has helped the people in organizing an economic order appropriate to their technical capacity, and in affecting such a change, their innovative and motivational faculties have been able not only to diversify the uses of land but also to go beyond for a shift towards non agricultural occupation hitherto unknown to the traditional society. There has, thus, been a conspicuous change in the number of occupations as well as in the variety of occupational combination that a household can now pursue for its livelihood. Each of the households has, thus, developed different economic interests for its survival and economic stability by diversifying the risks and uncertainties that are inherent in a period of transition.
In this phase of economic dynamic, the predominant course of household activities, exchange, earning, expenditure, saving has got to be involved in the use of money and markets with the indigenous non monetary sector trailing behind. Since the change is not generally sudden in an evolutionary scale, traditional practices linger on and are used by the people with suitable modifications. Mutual exchange of labour has been partially replaced by monetary use of wage-paid-labour one or by contract service. Whenever feasible, social obligations are met by monetary payments along with or in place of traditional sacrifices or presentations. Villagers have made a blend of both traditional and non-traditional means of social living in a situation of transition. Forms of exchange have changed from barter to money and credit, and the types of such transactions covered not only production and consumption, but also traditional cultural practices. Monetary exchanges have no longer been localized as were in the earlier, but extent as a regular course beyond the village and involved not only people of different clans but also those outside the ethnic group.

5.13: Land Holding System

Ownership of land in Vaiphei village in Manipur is claimed by the Chief of the village. He, in consultation with his council of ministers (Khawnbawl) selected land for jhuming by each family at the beginning of each season. No other part of the village land other than the agreed ranges or stretches of land should be cleared for the year’s cultivation by any family. The Chief and his council of ministers had the privilege of selecting a tract of land within the agreed ranges. Next to them came a few individuals - the chief's favorites selected by him like the village black-smith, who had the second choice in jhum-land. The rest of the ranges were then publicly opened for the year's jhum cultivation by lot.

The cultivator had to pay a part of the paddy (usually 3-5 kerosene tins) to the Chief every year and the front-leg of any animal killed in the jungle. This was actually a sort of rent in kind and was called Busun. Cash rent was accepted when the cultivator did not have
sufficient quantity of paddy to spare. The forest inside the village belonged to the Chief. The village possessed fixed boundaries within which the Chief exercised absolute power. No individual could transfer the land which was under his possession, though the Chief could do so. The chief could even chase out a wayward villager, who defied or disobeyed him. The hill-people were left undisturbed to follow their own customary land-system by the Rajas of Manipur since the earliest time. In the absence of land ownership rights by the individual, particularly in the hilly interior villages, landowner cannot receive necessary financial aids or loans from various financial institutions for the improvement of land and raise the production. Under such circumstances, mortgage of land in favour of the lending agency cannot be legally created. Therefore, it is necessary to surveyed farms like orange, sugarcane, tea etc. and prepared land records so that the owner may be able to receive necessary financial aids or loans from various financial institutions such as Government, banks, co-operatives societies, etc. in order to improve the farms and its production.

5.14: Transport and Communication

The forms of communication among the people in the pre-technological days were through sign, fire-signal, gongs, and drums. Owing partly to the spread of modern education and partly to the convenient terrain of the topography, the people had became expert in transmitting message by signals: long, short light or sound signals. This preceded the advent of telecommunications. Roy Burman and Thukral (1970) have tried to provide a picture of the dynamic process of interaction among the various tribes and non-tribals as:

A change is taking place in the perspective of the larger setting for social interactions. It is significant to note that for most of the tribes of this region the etymological meaning of their name is ‘man’. It appears that in their traditional world view they divided the mankind into two groups- one consisting of themselves only and other consisting of the rest of humanity. With the expansion of communication........ the frame of reference to these communities for social interaction is rapidly undergoing change. For various purposes they perceive their reference groups differently depending on their stage of cultural development. 8
These happenings are the result of communication and interaction among the people—both tribes and non-tribes. For these interactions, people must have the communication facilities which ultimately help in accepting new or the so called modern ideas. Scientific and technological advancement have brought about changes in attitudes, beliefs, and even traditions. For instance, the introduction of radio set out common standard of speech and thus brings about uniformity in speech among the various clans within the society cutting across state boundaries. Thus, the tremendous stride made in the field of media communication is another important factor of social change especially among the rural population. The publication and circulation of newspapers and magazines in Vaiphei language which are now being circulated in considerable quantity are example of the impact of change in their society.

The improvement of roads in Vaiphei area is a recent phenomenon. The villages of the present study have been getting the opportunity of road transportation: two villages with black-top facility and the other two with kùcchà road. With the construction of roads and development of transportation, the villagers have the opportunity to develop contact with the outside world, thereby changing their attitudes, economy and culture. At the very outset, the roads break the isolation of the tribal people. They have moved from the stage of oral communication, signs and symbols to modern written communication. The primitive system of communication and transportation were replaced by jeeps, buses, post and eventually by telephones. Availability of books, newspapers, radios and telephones help in the expansion of communication system of the Vaiphei. Now-a-days, newspaper and telephones are used as means of mass communication. Villagers are now gradually losing their sentimental attachment of their land and villages; rural-urban migration takes place in large numbers in quest of a better life which has also meant the possibility of vertical mobility of a Vaiphei who could never thought of it in the pre-technological days. However, the result of contact
with the outside world has not always been positive. It had many negative impacts on the traditional setting of the tribal society. In this context, Elwin (1964) may be quoted, who writes from the logical point of view on Arunachal tribes, as follows:

Roads, of course, can be a curse as well as a blessing to the tribal people. In some places, they have been the means of corruption and exploitation. They have brought new diseases, moral decline and cultural decadence. They have made it easy for the money-lenders, the rapacious merchants, the liquor venders, the lawyer’s tent to penetrate deep into the hills and forests. They can bring money in, but they can also take money out. They have helped to destroy the handloom industry by the import of cheap bazaar cloth; they have brought vulgar and inferior goods to the very doors of the people.

These are the negative effects of the impact of modern communication in tribal areas and Vaiphei are no exception to this impact. These are all happening due to the improvement of roads and transportation. As a result of breaking their isolation, the Vaiphei people became part of the regional and national communication network; and gradually, deformation of the superstructure society of the people began. The crux of misunderstanding by the Western-education rests upon a mistaken assumption that anything Western is higher and the accepted norm and that anything tribal is uncultured, thus, becoming pro-Western in their outlook and attitude. Without critical analysis they interpreted the missionary work as ‘civilized mission’ which brought them into ‘light’. Such has threatened family norms, social ethics and culture-religious meanings in the name of modernization.

The impact brought about by modern education, however, has not proved to be an unmixed blessing in Vaiphei society. Their outlook, attitude and personality as a whole, no doubt has been improved considerably at the same time the very traditional social fabrics has been threatened. The tribal ethics of simplicity and solidarity along with tawmngaina- a community service before self- has been eroded. The age old customs and traditions have been tampered in the name of modernization and development. As a result, certain unwanted
things, like disrespect for the aged and elders, negligence of duty towards the community, and so on has increased among the younger generations. These evil affects of social change are but inevitable and universal. It is, therefore, necessary for the educated and conscious section of the society to preserve the traditional heritage by modifications, as per the need of the time thereby minimize the damage on the social and moral values in the society.

The introduction of formal education by the missionaries among the Vaiphei had a profound impact in their traditional setting. In the early days, teaching at first was in the simplest form, mainly confined to reading and understanding of writing since education was initially imparted with Bible reading. Nevertheless, it may be remembered that education was never the chief objective of the missionaries. Their main objective was, rather, to train native workers and operate through them. In fact, education had been only a part of their evangelical activities. The missionaries felt that most of the culture and traditions of the early Vaiphei society were profusely connected with old religious practices. As such, there was a tendency among the new converts to think that anything that was ‘Western’ was ‘good and civilized’. This sudden change in their mental outlook from the old ways of life to the new has resulted in a decline in the qualitative Vaiphei way of life and has produced an uncertainty of future for many.
Notes and References:

1 Vaiphei, Th.L. Advent of Christian Mission and its Impact on the Hill-Tribes in Manipur. p-144
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
9 Elwin, Verrier (1964) A Philosophy for NEFA, pp 74-75.
CHAPTER-VI
THE SAMPLE VILLAGES OF STUDY

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to discuss the salient features of the villages under study. Attempts have also been made to examine the core social and economic institutions of the Vaiphei life in Manipur. The region-wise distribution of the Vaiphei tribe in Manipur can be mainly grouped into six pockets, excluding the capital Imphal and main towns; such as Kailam-chung, Kailam-nuai, Lamka-chung, Lamka-nuai, Sugnu-kual and Ngun-gal. Both Kailam-chung and Kailam-nuai are in the North-western part of Churachandpur district, divided by a mountain range called Kailam. Lamka-chung includes those villages in the Southern part of Churachandpur whereas Lamka-nuai is the area in the Northern part of Churachandpur. Sugnu-kual is in both the Eastern part of Churachandpur district and South-Western part of Chandel district; and Ngun-gal refers to those Vaiphei settlements in the Northern districts of Manipur, mainly Sadar Hills area.

Looking at the settlement pattern of the Vaiphei, one can say that their villages are situated either near the bank of a river or in remote areas which lack regular contact and communication with other people. Only some of their villages are having regular communication system and transportation. In order to get a clear picture of their changing society, six villages have been selected for a case study; three villages in their area of concentration and another three villages in their area of dispersion. The selection of the villages has not been made at random; certain factors have been taken into account before the study was taken up. The main criterion for the choice of the study village was the extent of their adherence to tradition, socio-economic organization and culture. Another factor was the villages were ethnically homogenous. Road and connectivity with the district headquarters is also taken into account while selecting the study villages. Therefore, one of the study villages is on the Highway, two villages are close to the highway and the