Changing Vaiphei Society: A Geographical Study

(Abstract)

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1. Introduction

Geographers have long been accustomed to study the change of landscape wrought by nature itself and indiscriminate use of nature due to biotic pressure. The placement of tribes in spatial segments may be an outcome of a social history of contact, confrontation and contestation between the ethnically differentiated tribes. Any understanding of social change remains incomplete without a proper conceptualization of its spatial parameters. It is a common place of understanding that the nature, direction and pace of social change are never uniform in its spatial coverage. The organized and socially concretized space provides friction to a uniform spread of social change; thereby making social transformation spatially fragmented response. The geographical distribution of different social categories differentiates the impact of social change as diverse categories have different capacities to respond to the changes affecting them (Chandra, 1991). Thus, the rate of social change may be phenomenal in areas which have experienced large scale agrarian development historically, whereas, the dominantly tribal areas have been only marginally exposed to such changes. The pace and direction of social change would be determined to a great extend by the limits imposed by the nature or human freedom and the capacity of man to overcome such constraints through his own creativity and dynamism. Therefore, change is observed over space i.e. areal or spatial variations. In case of the Vaiphei tribe also, change is seen over two areas; the area of concentration and the area of dispersion over different periods of time.

Social change is essentially a change of social structure like population change and changes in the relationship of the components of the social structure. The position and role of the individual has also change over a period of time. In static society, the status and role of the individual do not undergo noticeable change from generation to generation. A dynamic society is one where basic social changes occur. The process of social change within the tribal societies have consequently operated at a low key, perpetuating the older mode far too long and thus leading to a socio-economic stagnation of a high order. The rigorous environment acted as a constraint and fostered physical and social isolation for
ages. The tribal communities have been by and large brought under the influence of exogenetic forces only marginally (Ansari, 1991).

Any meaningful understanding of social change is not possible without an insight into the very nature of changing human-environment relationship in its correct perspective. Change in the social system and structure inevitably brings about transformation in the very nature of the man-environment relationship. Any change in a society has to take place, at least, initially in close correspondence and co-operation with the natural environment. The pace and direction of social change would be determined to a great extend by the limits imposed by the nature or human freedom and the capacity of man to overcome such constraints through his own creativity and dynamism.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

Among the geographers, the study of social change is relatively recent development. Although some aspects of social change and economic development were done by sociologists and economists earlier but the spatial context was missing. Most of the works are of very general nature and lack in depth study of any particular area. Relevant literatures have been reviewed here to have a better comprehension of the research problem.

The important scholars in the field of social change include Lapiere (1965), Moore (1987), Singh (1986), Kuppuswamy (1990) and Srinivas (1972).

Ahmad (1999), states that the origin of the socio-cultural diversity in India lies in the physico-geographical framework of the sub-continent. Societies have been undergoing wide ranging changes throughout history, although the pace of change has not been uniform in all regions or among all sections of our society. Processes, such as education, urbanization, penetration of market forces, expansion of administration, spread of political institutions, particularly since independence have all induced the society towards change.

Ansari (1991) gives tribal demography of Manipur as a whole. He emphasized right from the in-migration of the tribes into the state, the growth of each tribe, their habitat economy and society. He examines such information as death, birth, actual rate of growth, areal distribution, and classification according to their occupations and also
literacy and about socio-economic conditions of the different tribes. Ansari pointed out that the two most important factors, which effected changes in tribal life, is conversion to Christianity and spread of education. These changes have raised the tribal communities to a higher social pedestal. Apart from these two factors, the Five Year Plans also greatly contributed to the advancement in the socio-economic of the tribes.

Breese (1969) observed that developing countries are experiencing rapid population explosion resulting in large-scale unemployment in the rural country side. This has generated incessant swing of migration from one region to another or from rural to urban and industrial centre in search of job opportunities. Rural-urban migration has special significance for the developing countries, as this constitutes a major component of the process of urbanization taking place in those parts of the world.

Casette (1979) examined the spatial temporal dynamics of out migrations, economic development and population growth in Europe during the war period. The massive movement occurred as Europe went through social and economic changes similar to the ones currently in the less developed countries.

Das (1985) unfolds the richness of social anthropological data in Manipur and seeks to examine the relationship between the various tribes and the Meiteis, who dominate the scene. By virtue of their dominant position, the Meiteis probably influenced the course of the tribal history in Manipur more than the tribes themselves did. But, however successful they might in exerting political influence, it could not affect the core of tribal cultures. He emphasized on the trends of change among the tribes of Manipur.

Green (1974) in a study of temporal model of migration in Nigeria postulated that the principal population movement took place from more developed areas to less developed areas of an agricultural country possessing vast and virtually uninhabited parts of virgin land.

Harbison and Myers (1963) have identified three methods of human resource development for socio-economic change: (i) by formal education, beginning with primary and ending with university education, (ii) by on-the-job through systematic or informal training programmes in employing institutions, (iii) by self development as individual
seeks to acquire greater knowledge, skills or capacities through preparation on their own initiative by taking formal courses by learning from others in informal contacts.

H. Ian Hogbin (1958) gives a very lucid and illustrative treaty on social change. He explains different aspects of social change indicating in detail the approach to the study of change, voluntary acceptance of change, enforced change and chain reactions and changing institutions. Hogbin (1958), in his descriptive study of the village of Busama, New Guinea, also described the changes brought about by war and the enforced changes on the natives of Busama as soon as the foreign rulers ruled the country. There was change in money economy, in the status and leadership due to the impact of government machinery and changes in the religious beliefs as the natives took to Christianity.

Captain K.A. Khupzathang (2000) unfolds the origin and classification of the Vaiphei into different sub clans in the mid 17th Century A.D. Kaihau Vaiphei (1999) emphasis on the early settlement sites of the tribe in Manipur and their probable route of migration from the east, i.e.Chin Hills in Myanmar. He also highlights the post migration of the tribes within the North-Eastern Region in the early 20th Century. Khaitingen (2001) throw lights on the route of migration of the tribe in the historical past. He also stressed some information about the customs of the tribe.

In ‘Social Change’, Lapiere (1965), described that social change are not in any sense a product of the society per se or a consequence of some universal or unvarying law of social life. It is something different from the changes that take place in individual organism. An organic change invariably takes place in all organisms as an essential law and follows a particular pattern of birth, growth, maturity and death. But social change occurs as a result of social life itself- emanating from the common way of living. There is no inherent invisible principle or law that causes social change.

Mibang (1994), present the fundamental features of the social, economic, religious and cultural life of the Adi Minyong people and the influence of various factors responsible for socio-economic change. He mentioned that social change is brought about to a great extent by changes in economy. The change in the system of cultivations has brought in a world of changes in the socio-economic life of the people. The advancement
of technology is affecting the tribal societies in various directions. One of the most impressive features is the attainment of greater efficiency and speed. Due to advance technology, productivity has greatly increased. This has made the people adjust themselves to the new tempo of life.

Milton S. Sangma (1987) described the works of Christian missionaries in the region that drastically change the socio-economic conditions of the people. When the missionaries open preach in the streets, bazaars, and in the villages timing millions of people failed to bear any fruits, they switched on to other methods such as opening of schools, publication of religious texts and opening of dispensaries and other humanitarian works. He described the history of education, literature, medical care and other humanitarian works as organized and run by the missionaries as adjuncts to their basic objective of evangelization.

According to Moore (1987), social change is unpredictable and yet it involves some elements for predictability. New orders or patterns ripen within the old order and thereby sustains some of its elements. Change is neither a break-point nor a destruction-point. Through the process, the older order gets transformed to new ones, retaining some of its earlier elements in some form or the other. Some other elements of future are predictable because the changes will be the product of deliberate intent and action.

Prothero (1969) in his study of West Africa, observed that economic opportunities in relatively developed areas offer an incentive for migration, but this is possible only when conditions are not favourable in areas of origin for stimulating the people to take up the employment opportunities offered elsewhere. Bartle (1980) examined the patterns of rural-urban migration in Ghana and emphasized the role of socio-economic motivation.

Sanajaoba (1995) gives ethnographic accounts of the Hill tribes of Manipur, who together with the Meiteis constitute the indigenous people of Manipur. In this compilation, various authors have highlighted the social and cultural life of the different tribes of Manipur. One of the authors, by name Doliand Capvung, described the social institution of the Vaiphei tribe in their traditional form. Sen (1992), attempts to provide a brief
description of the state of Manipur, its districts and also brief ethnological accounts of the
different tribes of the state.

Vaiphei (1975) described the historical, social and economic background of the
Vaiphei as well as their traditional religion. He also gives a brief account on the impact of
Christianity upon the social, cultural and religious life of the tribe. Christianity, through
which literacy has been introduced by the missionaries, was the driving force of changing
Vaiphei society.

Vander Camp (1968) observed that unemployment played an important role and
substantial impact on the overall rate of geographical mobility in Canada and particularly
in the spatial pattern of migration to such areas in which migration adds to their
population. Inter regional mobility is closely related to differential provincial incomes and
negatively related to distance, received impressive and empirical support in Canada.

Verma,(1990) present a glimpse into the historical perspective of Indian tribes,
their demography, constitutional provisions relating to their protection and development as
well as problems and challenges of tribal development. He pointed out that the economy
of the tribes is mainly based on agriculture and forests. Due to unauthorized alienation of
tribal land and deprivation of their forest rights, the tribal economy has been seriously
affected. The main causes of their backwardness are exploitation and illiteracy.

Vumson Suantak gives comprehensive analysis of the people mostly known as
Chin-Kuki-Mizo. It analyses how these people migrated from Western China-Myanmar to
different states of the North-East and why they migrated to the rugged hill areas they
occupy now. He also emphasizes on the sub tribes of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo and their
historical backgrounds.

Zelinsky (1971) has studied the migration component of population in a
completely different perspective. He applied the principle of spatial innovations to the
laws of migration in his hypothesis of the transition mobility. Zelinsky’s idea spatial
innovation has also been supported by Lee (1969) who emphasized the need of restrictions
to control the volume and rate of migrations as they tend to increase with time. There is a
definite pattern of empirical regularity in the growth of personal mobility through space-time and these irregularities are associated with the modernization process.

3. Statement of the problem

The process of social change, historically, has not operated at the same pace uniformly over space and their manifestations have been determined to a great extend by the exigencies of geographical considerations. The geographical space as it is organized and translated by human practice provides a friction to the uniform spread of socio-economic change. It is in this context that the problem of social change among the tribal population assumes considerable significance. Historically speaking, the tribal population has suffered diverse degrees of isolation as they are in hilly and geographically negative areas and away from the main foci of human civilization and progress, which experienced unprecedented changes in their society and economy. Difficult environment permitted marginal agricultural development only in a few favoured parts of the valley bottom. The hilly area also witnessed a unique survival of the primitive modes of economies like gathering and shifting cultivation. Under such conditions, the process of change operated at a low key and only marginally integrated with developed economies of the plains. Large agrarian surplus production in the plain areas produced unprecedented changes in the socio-economic sphere leading to social changes of a very high order. Lack of such a surplus generation in the hilly and tribal areas experienced such changes only at a low key.

Before the advent of the colonial power to this region, the tribal communication remained almost segregated. There was little scope for mixing together with other people of the country. As such, in the early days, tribal communities in the hill areas were left alone to lead a life according to their own ways of life, following their own customary laws in all matters of their activities. But the situation changed considerably with the contacts with the colonial economy (Gori, 1984). The British interest in the resource base exposed the tribes to modern developments and process of change. So, the year 1891 forms a significant landmark in the history of the hill tribes of Manipur, for in that year the English, had come to the state and established their political domination. During the next sixty years till 1947, which marks the end of the British colonial rule in India, far-reaching
changes had been introduced into the tribal society transforming them in many ways. Again, with the advent of Christianity in 1910, the tribes of Churachandpur, particularly the Vaiphei, were obliged to break their age-old isolation. The most spectacular achievement of the Christian missionaries was the introduction of western education or spread of literacy and exposing the tribes to a variety of modernizing influences. However, the presence of negative aspects of changes in their society also cannot be denied.

The purpose of the study is to examine the changing social pattern of Vaiphei society in Manipur, from their earlier times to the present day. The society has developed slowly with the pace of colonial administration and in particular, with the introduction of Christianity in the year 1910. The aspects of change studied here are both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The qualitative change includes changes in the tools and artifacts; modes of socialization, in their language (writing) and in their moral concepts. The quantitative changes are the changes in population, educational and recreational organizations, occupational structure, birth-rate and sex ratio. To crystallize the subject matter of the study the earlier social structure such as family, religious, political, economic and the overall social institutions of the Vaiphei, as it existed during the pre-Christian era, is studied in their village community level. As a matter of fact, the present Vaiphei community is the result of a series of change in the history of the Vaiphei society. The study also examined briefly as to what factors and forces brought about the change among the Vaiphei people in its historical and geographical perspectives. The present study is not intended to give a theoretical analysis of social change on either of the community or its social evolution: rather, it is an attempt to examine the extent of social change visible in the Vaiphei community through the process of development.

4. Objective

In the light of the above discussion, the present study examined the process and the level of social change in the Vaiphei community to the new situation from the old, which had developed slowly with the pace of colonial administration and in particular, with the introduction of Christianity in the year 1910; keeping in mind the following objectives:

1. to trace the origin and the process of migration of the Vaiphei in the past,
2. to reconstruct the traditional structure of Vaiphei community as it existed before the introduction of Christianity and to identify the geographical space of the Vaiphei settlements; and

3. to examine the salient social changes and its impacts in Vaiphei society.

5. Research Issues

1. The geographical setting influences the processes of migration, distribution and the general pattern of change in Vaiphei society.

2. The physical mobility of the Vaiphei community brings it into contact with other communities and leads to change in their socio-economic organization.

3. Literacy not only enlightened the individual, but also brings a definite impact on the existing social and cultural spheres of the community as a whole.

6. Data Base and Methodology

The study is based upon data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data is based on a comprehensive field observations seeking information about occupations, educations, social and cultural aspects; and also discussions with eminent elders and through household survey schedule. Field data is especially collected pertaining to migration, size of family, literacy level, age-group, occupational structure and changes in their society. For intensive study, three villages namely; Kangvai, Pengjang and K.Kawtlian; which are in the area of Concentration of the Vaiphei, and another three villages namely; Leisanbung, Phovaibi and Haukhongching from the area of Dispersion, have been surveyed. This is done in order to have a clearer picture of the changes undergone as a whole and also the present scenario of the socio-economic condition of the Vaiphei tribe in their area of Concentration and 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 sample villages was the extent of their adherence to tradition, socio-economic organization and culture. Another factor was the villages were ethnically homogenous and could be considered as the representative of the Vaiphei villages. The sample villages comprises of 245 households with a total population of 1,267 persons in area of
Concentration and 79 households with a population 451 persons from the area of Dispersion. Two villages in the area of Concentration are close to the highway, one village on the highway; whereas one village in the area of Dispersion is connected by road and two villages are somehow remotely located. The assumption in this choice was that the remote villages would be closer to their tradition than those on or near the road; so that comparison can be made. The following techniques were adopted to collect data:

i) **Village schedule**: general data about the village regarding the geographical location, number of households, duration of dwelling in the village, population and house-pattern.

ii) **Household schedule**: data with reference to size of the family, age-sex composition, occupations, educational status, marital status etc.

iii) **Discussions and interviews** with senior citizens to record statements pertaining to historical accounts, viz. inherited traditions, customs and practices; and the factors which influenced shift from traditional customs and practices.

The secondary data, on the other hand, includes census reports and statistical handbooks, published and unpublished literatures, journals, magazines and newspapers. For the study of the historical background and process of migration, books and seminar papers written in Vaiphei and other regional dialects as well as English by various authors are consulted. Based on this information, a map of their route of migration is prepared. The study area being agriculturally backward, traditional aspects of economic life are more prominent here. Therefore, the following variables are studied for assessing the changing social pattern of the Vaiphei society; occupational structure, distribution, literacy, sex ratio, percentage of main workers, family size, dependency ratio, health standard and infrastructural facilities.

Materials for reconstructing early Vaiphei history and their migration are extremely difficult to obtain due to lack of written records. As such, the task of reconstruction of their history and migration has been done mostly relying on informal interview with senior citizens having profound knowledge of early Vaiphei history i.e. oral tradition. To analyze the distributional pattern of the Vaiphei population, various census
handbooks are used. Apart from these, information is based on observations, experiences, church sources and visits to the area of Concentration and area of Dispersion of the Vaiphei settlements. In order to understand present distributions, maps are prepared by using suitable cartographic methods whenever it is found necessary and applicable. To develop an understanding of the factors responsible for the change, i.e. how far the role of the British and Christian missionaries has influenced the Vaiphei by spreading the gospel along with education have been examined and analysed. The present social status of the tribe is analyzed by graphical representation of their occupational structures and literacy levels of the study villages. Attempt is also made to understand and compare the living conditions of the people based on family size and occupational structures. Their area of Concentration and Dispersion areas are identified by using quantitative techniques. The area of Concentration is the area where the percentage of the Vaiphei population is most substantial while the areas of Dispersion are those areas where there is a sizeable population of the Vaiphei.

7. Chapters: The thesis comprises the following six chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction: The introductory chapter attempts to conceptualize the needs and relevance of the present study such as statement of the problem, objectives, selection of the study area, hypothesis, data-base and methodology adopted in the study.

Chapter II: Physical Setting of the study area: The second chapter offered a general description of the physical setting of the study area. The physiographic, climate, drainages, soil types of the state are discussed in order to understand the role of the physical conditions of the study area on the people. Attempt is also made to analyze the social and demographic composition of the study area.

Chapter III: Origin, Migration and Traditional Society: This chapter highlighted the traditional institutions of the Vaiphei society of Manipur viz. the society, marriage, village, dormitory, dress, customs, and status of women etc. side by side with their economy; so as to understand the changes they have gone through. It also elucidates their myth of origin, the dispersal from their original place and the process of migration in the past, based on different views, to understand their historical and cultural background. It also deals with
the present pattern of distribution of the Vaiphei, and in the process, their area of Concentration and area of Dispersion of their settlement are identified.

Chapter IV: Change in Vaiphei Society: This chapter analyzed the changes in social economy of the Vaiphei tribe on various social dynamics of human life; as it existed on the eve of British occupation the hill areas of Manipur towards the end of the 19th century A.D, and in particular, before the advent of Christianity in 1910 to the present. Attempt is also made to highlight the factors that led to the socio-economic changes in their society.

Chapter V: Impact: This chapter assessed the impact of the major factors of change in their society through the ages i.e. Christianity with education, in terms of literacy and health standards of the tribe. Attempt is also made to explain the responses to this change to their traditional social order.

Chapter VI: The Sample Villages of Study: This chapter deals with the six sample villages (three villages from the area of Concentration and the other three villages from the area of Dispersion), in terms of their family size, house type, occupational structure, dependency ratio, age and sex composition, sex-ratio, and literacy level.

Chapter VII: Summary, Findings and Conclusion: This chapter is the summary of all the five chapters and conclusion of the thesis.

8. Summary and Findings

Origin, Migration, past Vaiphei Society and their Distribution:

1) Due to the location and the physical setting of the region which is characterized by rugged terrain, steep slopes and deep river valleys, the Vaiphei lived in isolation from the outside world. The geographical settings of their settlement area have given rise to socio-cultural, economic and political isolation from outside influence for years. The spatial distribution of the Vaiphei was characterized by settling in few defensible hill-tops, which is by and large unsuitable for settled agriculture.

2) The physical setting of the region had an impact upon the migration and settlement pattern of the Vaiphei in the state. The physical environment of the region allowed only particular type of economic development and they perhaps found that it was suitable for
their way of life. So, they opted for hilly and forested tracts of the region that offered them scope to practice jhumming which was the only way they knew to produce food grains. Another reason is due to the fact that these areas of the region were less settled as compared to the valley regions. Being settled in the negative region, it was not possible for them to modify the environment according to their needs, but to adjust to the natural physical environment.

3) Two different views on the origin of the word ‘Vaiphei’ have been set up:
   
   (i) The first view is based on the ‘Khaw-Vaiphei Theory’. It is believed that the name ‘Vaiphei’ is derived from the name of the village ‘Khaw-Vaiphei’; ‘Khāw’ means village; ‘Vāi’ means breadth and ‘Phei’ means plain: which means the village was at length and breadth and vast. The people who lived in that village for a pretty long enough time and moved out last of all came to be identified as the Vaiphei people.

   (ii) Another view is the ‘Liankhama Village Incident Theory’ (1850-1875). The Suantak people who lived together with other groups in the village had failed to take revenge on a hatred Pawi killer, due to the implications of their custom. They felt no more desirable to live in that village side by side with their enemy. They migrated from that village en masse; which is expressed in Duhlian(Lusei) dialect as “an vai-in an phei tawh” meaning they all left in body or exodus. People started calling them ‘Vaipheiho’, meaning Vaiphei people; and thence, wherever these people lived, they came to be known as Vaiphei.

4) Every Vaiphei understands and accepts that ‘Khul’ is his ancient home from where their ancestor originated. The Khul tradition is substantiated by their folksongs or songs of brave called Ḣānḷā. The sequential order of their migration from Khul is ‘Khaw-Sinlung’, Kale valley, Chindwin valley, Chin Hills and Mizoram-Manipur. This is due to the inter-tribal feuds, in search of a better land for cultivation, the need for shelter and peaceful settlement. Further, they had to face famine (māutām) at a regular interval of 50 years and consequently they had to change their place of habitation. Apart from these, nomadism was prevalent and this migratory spirit scattered them.
5) The past Vaiphei society was close-knit, simple and homogenous. They have their traditional institution called as Sawm, (Bachelors’ dormitory) in which they have been imparting oral instructions and training to their youths for shouldering social responsibilities when they turned into adulthood. It is a symbol of solidarity and collective effort; its members defends the village from enemies, perform works in a collective nature during natural calamity such as death, famine, fire, or works which require community services through the philosophy of Tawmngaı́na- that is, self-sacrifice, selfless devotion, respect for the elders and bravery. Sawm, in fact, acted as a social institution and served as a training centre which in turn exercises the greatest influence in establishing the social norms and customs.

6) The early Vaiphei village state was economically self-sufficient because their needs were less and most of the needs of the villagers were produced in the village itself. Agriculture i.e. jhumming played the most important role in the economy of the Vaiphei, subordinated by handicraft, weaving, pottery and trade. The food habit of the Vaiphei was simple and cooked rice is their staple food. Rice beer called ‘Zu’ was the most specialized and the chief beverage of the Vaiphei. It was very common and used in every occasion. No important functions or ceremonies can be done without Zu.

7) The choice of marriage was governed by the cultural norms intrinsically connected with and attached to the agriculture work and bravery. There are, generally, four types of marriages in Vaiphei society, namely (a) Chawngmo, (Pre arrangement from both side) (b) Sainapua,(Elopement) (c) Thepthak,(Convinced) and (d) Kigaisak (Impregnation kind of marriage). Apart from these types of marriage, the Vaiphei also have a system of marriage by servitude called ‘Kawnglaw’.

8) The Vaiphei are found in all the districts of the state. Their main concentration is in Churachandpur district, where 61.75 percent of them live. A large chunk of Vaiphei people inhabits Manipur North district, i.e. Sadar Hills area of Senapati district that accounts for about 19.22 percent; followed by Chandel i.e. 12.32 percent of their total population. Churachandpur district has been identified as the area of Concentration of the Vaiphei; whereas Manipur North i.e. Sadar Hills area of Senapati district, Tamenglong...
district, Ukhrul district and Chandel district are identified as the areas of Dispersion as these together constitute about 33.80 percent of the Vaiphei population in Manipur.

9) In their area of Concentration, more than 100 villages that are Vaiphei dominated or wholly their villages can be identified. However, most of these villages are very small in terms of their population. Only one village of the Vaiphei settlement has a population more than 1,000 persons and three villages with a population between 501-1,000 persons. About 47.09 percent of their total population lives in villages that have a population less than 500 persons. This indicates the lack of the Vaiphei to concentrate in large groups.

**Changes in Vaiphei Society:**

10) In Vaiphei society, most of the houses are constructed with their limited knowledge in accordance with their tastes; generally one front entrance with one big window-type of opening called ‘namthāk’. The house pattern underwent changes as the residential houses are now constructed in different patterns- ‘L’-shape, ‘U’-shape, ‘T’-shape and so on. About 74.8 percent of houses in the sample villages are constructed according to what is known as Assam type houses, followed by semi-permanent accounting for 20.7 percent. Concrete building recorded only 4.7 percent of the total houses.

11) The bachelors’ house (dormitory) called Sawm which has been the most important institution not only changed but practically disappeared. 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.

12) It was the first two Christians from 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. In 1911, they introduced alphabets to construct vocabularies by using 24 alphabets of Roman scripts. Using these alphabets, Bible Quiz and gospel song books were published in 1913. St. John portion of the Bible was published in 1917, which makes them the first tribe to have Bible published in their
own dialect among the tribes of Manipur South. The first beginner book entitled ‘Simpatbu’ was prepared by Evan. Manghen in 1921.

13) With the advent of Christianity, festival and dances gradually lost its significance and popularity. 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 served; which consumed a large portion of all the earnings of the people. So, a considerable amount of rice has now turned into regular food for the family. Quarrels and fighting as consequences of drinking Zu did diminished and the family began to have a better relationship and peaceful atmosphere.

14) The number of years the villagers live in their respective villages is categorized as 0-10 years, 11-20 years, 21-30 years and those people who live in that particular village for more than 30 years are categorized as living permanently. It is observed that 67.38 percent of the households in the sampled villages lived more than 30 years in those villages. Those who settled in the village for 21-30 years recorded 8.6 percent and 11-20 years and 0-10 years accounts for 17.56 percent and 6.45 percent respectively.

15) Male and female population in every age group is evenly distributed in all the six sample villages. Young population in the sample villages is only 25.20 per cent of the total population whereas the average young population of the state, as a whole is about 35.20 per cent in the 2001 census. These villages have a high proportion of workers which is characterized by low dependency ratio. The proportion of the working population accounts for 67.27 per cent of the total population as against 58 per cent for the state. The sample villages, thus, has a desirable percentage of working age group. However, the degree of diversification of their work is very low, as agriculture is their main occupation.

16) The concept of joint family life appears to be non-existent in the Vaiphei community from time immemorial. It is, therefore, observed that 98.2 per cent of the sample villages live in nuclear family which is the usual norm for the Vaiphei. The average size of the family is calculated as 5.47 persons. Small families, which comprises of 1-3 members
accounts for 9.32 per cent. Medium size family (4-6 members) is found to be 59.86 per cent and big size family with 7 and above members, which accounts for 30.82 per cent of the total households from the sample villages.

17) Cultivation of crops is the dominant economic activity and there is not much diversification of occupation in the Vaiphei society. In the area of Concentration, the proportion of cultivators to the total working population accounts for 54.90 per cent followed by the daily wage earners that constitute 17.40 per cent. The proportion of persons who are in government services are about 13.68 per cent where as private service holders accounts for 9.49 per cent. About 4.56 per cent of the working population has been grouped in business occupation category. This category includes small variety shop owners including pan-shop owners, NGO workers and small traders.

18) It is observed that the dependency ratio of the study villages in the area of Concentration is found to be 45.63 percent. However, the dependency ratio for the area of Dispersion i.e. 70.2 percent; is comparably higher than that of the area of Concentration. The young dependency ratio and that of the old dependency ratio of the study villages in the area of Concentration are calculated as 33.91 percent and 11.72 percent respectively. The study villages in the area of Dispersion show a very high degree dependency ratio for the young and very low for the old, being 64.15 percent and 6.04 percent respectively. However, it should be bear in mind that children below 15 years contribute their share in agricultural pursuit.

19) The total literate person in the sample villages at the time of enumeration constitute 93.6 per cent of the total population, excluding the age-group 0-5. On further classification of the literates into various categories shows a clearer picture of the level of their educational attainment. Primary level of education is recorded to be 40.71 per cent. High school category forms 35.38 per cent of their total population. The number of persons in higher education i.e. 10+2 level constitutes 12.89 per cent. In the category of University education i.e. graduate and above accounts for 4.62 per cent only. So, it is observed that the literacy level of the Vaiphei in the area of Concentration is desirable even though higher education and professional level of education still needs an improvement. The
study villages in the area of Dispersion have a much lower literacy rate than in the area of Concentration. The total literate person in the three sample villages at the time of enumeration accounts for 72.78 per cent against 93.6 percent in the area of Concentration. Out of the total literates, primary level of education is the highest and accounts for 43.89 percent. Matriculation and university level of education together constitutes only 6.11 percent of the total population.

9. Results and Conclusion

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 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 most important contribution made by the Christian Missions was the introduction of alphabet for the Vaiphei, thereby reducing their language into written form. These had laid the foundation of modern education system among the Vaiphei.

Conversion and activities of missionaries had by far one of the most significant impacts on the Hill tribes in general and the Vaiphei in particular. Its aim was not only to convert the people to Christianity, but also to pacify and change the people. As for the Vaiphei, the conversion to Christianity started right from 1910 when Thangkai and Lungpau were converted on the 17th March, 1910. They became the first Christians in Churachandpur district. By 1951, the Vaiphei were about 67 percent and by 1991 they become cent per cent Christians.
The belief in the world beyond or life after death was instrumental in moulding the cultural norms and values. This is one factor which determined the people 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.

Another receptivity factor for the new religion was inculcation of the use of a major cultural element—Khuång (drum) in praise and worship by the new converts, whose intrinsic value cannot be denied in their society. During their pre-Christian eras, they used to compose such as war songs, patriotic songs and romantic poems accompanied by drums and traditional dancing. As a matter of fact, any kind of group songs in the church or Lengkhawm are always leaded by the drummer.

The time factor also was another important factor of receptivity. Christianity was introduced to them at a time when no other religion was preached to them.

However, there are certain drawbacks on the work of the Christian missionaries initiated a century ago. They suggested that their way of life was better and superior; and labeled the tribal customs such as dances, songs, folklores etc. as pagan and sinful. Hence, the people were forced to feel inferior and ignorant. Parental control over their children has diminished; the high morality among the youths and justice in spite of their illiteracy degraded over the years. Many became victims of allurements of the world. The community centred-life, the joys of sharing has been relegated to the back bench.

It is also desirable to mention that this study has its obvious shortcomings and its own limitations mainly due to paucity of materials and vastness of the area under investigation or study. The changes as a result of cultural contact with the British and the Christian missionaries along with education that have been indicated in this study may not be all the reasons responsible for the changing Vaiphei society. Further studies could be taken up in this respect to ascertain the factors and magnitude of this changing society.

So far as the development of the entire Vaiphei community is concerned, the villagers opined the importance of giving more stress on education. During the time of survey in the field, most of the villagers told that cultural contact and communication are more or less social processes which will come automatically in their social life, through
time. But the advent of Christianity, according to them, is the most important factor for the changes in their society, because along with it comes education. All the Vaiphei are now Christian and majority of the respondents in the sample villages preferred education as the foremost criterion for development of their society. They agreed that after having proper education they can eradicate social evils from their society. Almost all the respondents do not want their children to follow the traditional occupation of their society. Instead they want their children to have a quality education in cities and towns; which, they believed, will develop not only their society but also will lift the economic condition of their family.

Broadly speaking, Christianity did bring about substantial change in the life and in the society of the Vaiphei tribe. The history of the Christian mission also reveals that it was the educational drive of the missionaries that largely changed and transformed the outlook of the tribe and broadened their world views. The introduction of primary education at several villages created a sense of thirst for more knowledge. Using this educational institution as means of spreading the Christian religion, the missionaries were successful in planting churches wherever schools were established. Apart from educational institutions, medical care began to take shape in the form of dispensaries, resulting into consciousness of health care and sanitation.

It is to be noted in conclusion that the process of change in Vaiphei society, as observed in the field, cannot be strictly regarded as development in the truest sense of the term. However, the agents of change like cultural contact and advent of Christianity, gradually changed the attitude of the Vaiphei in all aspects of life including economy, health care, sanitation, education etc. which are regarded as the development of the tribe. The reason is that this change in attitude in their changing society will ultimately lead to the socio-economic development of their society. It is hoped that this study will provide basic materials for a future in-depth study towards Vaiphei society in Manipur. Nevertheless, there is enough scope for improvement upon the present work and this requires further research and detail field study covering every nook and corner of the Vaiphei settlements in the state.