CHAPTER V

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR CULTURE CHANGE

Before the arrival of the British in Nagaland, the Angamis lived a simple life. Their way of living including food habits, dresses, house patterns, customs and traditions were strictly observed and maintained as their forefathers. Since the past society practised head-hunting, there used to be a constant fear of losing one's head. Even with regard to their belief system the fear of evil spirits gripped them wherever they went.

In the past the Angamis never had a unified system of administration and their past history had a long story of hostility with one another. Every Angami village has been a republic, having its own popular government, the council of the village even today is represented by every clan in the village. The council is the parliament of the village. Under the village government, every citizen enjoys political stability, social justice, religious freedom. Economically, they were self-sufficient, beggars were unknown. Every family lived in the village on its own land. They paid no land revenue, no property tax, no wine tax and no income tax. The rivers, the forests and the woodlands belonged to the people. The cases of theft, if any, were exceedingly rare, there was no police, no armed forces, no jails, no prison. No family had even been left by their fellowmen to the mercy of circumstances. Such were the conditions of societies where the
Angamis lived till they came in contact with the so called civilized world. Today, we find that the culture of the Angamis particularly their material culture are changing remarkably. The factors responsible for such changes operating among the Angami Nagas are (a) Colonialism, (b) Christianity, (c) Education, and (d) Modernization.

The first British contact with the Nagas was established in 1832 when Francis Jenkins and R. B. Pamberton travelled through the Angami territory in search of a route between Manipur and Assam (A. Mackenzie, 1884: 129). Thus the territories inhabited by the Nagas, which first came into contact with the British were those of the Angami tribe. The Angamis opposed them determinedly and even burnt their own houses to destroy any provision. This was the first time the Angamis met an enemy equal to contend with them, and who were with superior arms. Since then Angamis continued to fight the British and their allies. In 1839, when Mr. Grange came, there was also a force of Manipuris, the Angamis suspected as conspiracy and became hostile. To put down their hostility Mr. Grange burnt down their villages. During November 26, 1840 and January 1841, Lt. Briggs came. This time he made the boundaries between the Angamis and the British, and the division of the Nagas was started before they were even united. It was also decided that a road would be opened to Chùmukedima from the plain, and the Angamis were made to pay tributes in 1844, but they refused to pay. This was followed by Angami raid in the plains. So the first expedition against Khonoma village was led by Captain Eld and Brown. Khonoma village was burnt down. The Khonoma, fearing British invasion, put up a tough resistance in the beginning and fought
with whatever weapons they had. After this Captain Butler came to Mezoma in November 1845, and again from 5th November 1845 – 17th January 1846. There was no hostility that time. As a result, a new market was established at Chûmukedima, and a detachment of Shan Police Militia was stationed there under the charge of Mr. Bhogchund. But in 1845, Bhogchund was killed by the villagers of Mezoma. To avenge his death Lieutenant Vincent came twice once in November 1849 and next in March 1850. In the second visit he captured Mezoma, set up a stockade there. This raid also included Khonoma village, part of which was burnt down and destroyed the strongest fort in the North-East at Khonoma. But they did not easily give up, so the raid continued to the plains. In 1854-1865, the Angamis raided the plains at least 19 times, in which 233 persons were killed, wounded or captured (Asoso Yonuo, 1974: 85). Thus the Angamis were claimed to be under British Rule without their knowledge, the Nagas were divided by boundaries unknown to them. Their freedom was taken away because it was not 'acquired', though it was their birth right. To guard the British interests and to protest their subjects, the Naga Hills district was formed in 1866 with its headquarters at Chûmukedima, ‘... however divide and rule policy was put into operation at the bottom and pushed its (British) political boundary step by step to the hills’ (Asoso, Yonuo, 1974: 9a).

It was during the year 1877 that a thorough topographical examination of all the hills inhabited by the Nagas was made and Kohima was worked out to be the most suitable centre from the point of view of a British outpost. And they thought of controlling the Angamis on a more permanent basis. In November 1879, Damant occupied
Kohima to be as the new headquarter. The last and final resistance of the Nagas to the British resulted in the last battle of Khonoma on November 22, 1879. The British considered this as the severest fighting ever known on the hills. The British gathered their men and equipment and organized 3000 soldiers, cannon and the best weapons to capture a village of 500 houses. As the British fought with their superior weapons the villagers evacuated and fled to the jungles. The Khonoma people were deprived of their homes and fields. In the following year 1880 peace was made between the chiefs of Khonoma and the British representatives at Mezoma. They were punished by having to pay fines in grains, cash and unpaid labour. Also they were forced to pay a revenue of one maund of rice and one rupee per house in a year, and to provide labour for government works. Later the revenue was made Rs. 2/- without rice.

The British rule in the Naga Hills was a period of silence, except the two world wars. During their early rule the British divided the Naga Hills district into two divisions, Kohima and Mokokchung, and Tuensang division was converted into third district. Accordingly, along with the extension of active administration to the district, the British introduced a number of measures but it had not affected the life of the Angamis (Khonoma in particular). Colonial administration could be carried out only with proper communication. So they started building roads, linking all important outlying areas with the administration headquarters to strengthen their foothold. This, the construction of strategic link roads closely followed the extension of political and administrative control. In 1885, an important system of communication
was carried out by constructing a bridle path through Khonoma to Henuina outpost, and from the latter across the Cheluni river to Se:nculur and Gunjong. These hill paths were constructed with impressed labour for which the workers were paid the minimal wage of five annas and four paise per head per day. Due to road construction the Khonoma was able to link itself with the other surrounding neighbours.

The impact of colonial rule was felt in every sphere of Khonoma life that initiated a series of changes. Inter-village raiding and head-hunting was prohibited in the administered area. The administration sought to work through indigenous people, in which may be seen the combination of the two policies of no-intervention and administration in compromise of indirect rule. This policy functioned through two mechanisms: at the village level; Gaonburas (village elders/headmen) were appointed from among the various clans of the village as per the traditional customs, who worked as mediators between the village and the British rulers. The Gaonburas or G.Bs, as they were more popularly known, were incorporated into the village council that continued to function in as much as in the traditional system. The British continued their hold over the independent village through the Gaonburas who were given power to arbitrate any local disputes on behalf of the British. They were given a red shawl as a symbol of their position.

At the district level, Dobashis (interpreters) were appointed and attached to the district officers courts. The Dobashis assisted the British officers by interpreting the customary laws in arbitrating the disputes and issues brought to them. They wielded much governmental powers and proved to be the pillars of the British administration. They were
given arbitrary powers to act on behalf of the British officer, through whom they could extend their powers and authority even to the unadministered area to some extent.

British colonial administration followed both a policy of suppression and attraction. They did not lose sight of the welfare aspects of their rule. To win over the people, not only coercive means were used but equally humanitarian services were sought to be provided. With the formation of the hill district, a civil surgeon was placed in charge of the public health of the district. The initial reaction of the Angamis was that of reluctance to come to the dispensary because of reliance on and faith in their indigenous medicine. But gradually more patients were treated.

Initially, the Britishers were the one who inculcated the spirit of modern education in the minds of the Angamis. It was used as an instrument of pacification as well as civilization. The objective of introducing modern education in Naga Hills area was to train them for the service of colonial administration (Piketo Sema, 1992: 44). With this purpose the administration encouraged the establishment of schools in Naga Hills. Although the administration was keen in opening schools, initially they did not directly shoulder the responsibility.

It should be noted that in the interest of smooth administration, government took coercive measures for the suppression of certain evil social customs; it also modified some of them. However, with a view to maintain cultural status quo, the administration also took adequate measures to preserve the unique culture of the Khonoma. In keeping
with the policy, they were not permitted to have a Roman hair cut, hair bopping for the girls and the use of short pants. They were not allowed to come to the schools putting on half pants and petticoats. What the authority desired was that they should put on only their traditional dresses. One of the important measures taken by colonial administration was the protection of the Angamis from the influence of Hinduism. The gradual extension of British control over them, the propagation of the Gospel by the American missionaries and the introduction of inner line regulation together effectively checked Hindu influence on them.

Perhaps equally, if not, more important progress was made in the fields of education and economic development. The old barter system began to be displaced by currency for trade.

From the evidence of the practical measures taken by the British, it is clear that the colonial policy in Angami areas was guided by the zeal to preserve traditional culture rather than to promote change in it. The modification of certain custom was made in the interest of colonial administration and not as a part of the policy of change.

The British administrators found that the Nagas who were deeply religious in their animistic faith could become good Christians as much as they had been brave fighters, once they were converted. So it was Captain Johnstone (later Maj. General Sir James Johnstone) who actively encouraged bringing missionaries to Naga Hills without much further delay. The British military expedition in this area and missionary activities commenced almost simultaneously. In 1832, the first military expedition to Naga Hills was undertaken and the first band
of missionaries made their appearance in the area in 1836 (Sanyu, 1996: 115).

The first group of American Baptist Missionaries made their appearance in the Naga Hills in 1830s but their main mission work was only in 1881. And in the year 1897 Christianity came to Khonoma village. In the beginning the attitude towards the Gospel was very hostile. Those who got converted to Christianity were persecuted or excommunicated by their brethren from their clan or village. Therefore, conversion was initially very slow. And possibly, the presence of certain British civil servants who did not get along with the missionaries impeded the process of conversion to some extent. In addition, the Angamis (Khonoma) were proud of their culture and religion and resistant to change. But the march of time waits for none and the activities of the missionaries were not merely confined to conversion. K. Terhüja has rightly pointed out when she said:

If one responsible dynamic factor were to be singled out for an overall change in the life of the Nagas, it would undoubtedly be the introduction of Christianity among them. (K. Terhüja, 1972: 294).

Christianity was for that matter a more organized and reasonable religion and it carried in its work other social activities and benefits as well. It was due to the process of this 'Christianization' that the traditional and vague animistic beliefs gradually started eroding away from the society. When the concept of one God was taught to the Angamis, who believed in a number of spirits and had accompanying set of elaborate rituals, they responded to the simplicity and logicity of
the new religion. The so called glory that the Angamis derived by hunting the heads of their fellow men was replaced by a cause for the service of humanity.

Before Christianity came to the Angami villages, they did not have the sense of being a tribe. When the church was established, and the first association was held, for the first time the Angamis came together as a tribe. The association provides the structure for tribal unity, they have become a people through Christianity. Christianity also brought rich religious literature.

Acceptance of the new religion demanded total abandonment of the 'old' way. A way of life, which had sustained and nurtured generations after generations, suddenly became 'taboo'. Thus, the traditional form of belief and worship, observance of the various festivals and rituals, chanting of traditional songs which contained not only religious elements but also much of the literature and history of the people became 'taboo'. Food and dress code too had to undergo changes according to the 'new' ways. What remains today is the legacy of those who remained faithful to their memory and managed to transmit to the younger generation. However, in spite of the loss of this aspect of the tradition, the principles of self governance and customs were so intricately woven into the social fabric that even today, the people of the village are governed by them. The actual educational activities were started by the Christian missionaries but not without impediments from the forces within. They opened up the facilities for educating the Angamis and stressed medical care, but the Anglo-Naga
struggle which lasted for half a century did not permit the Baptist missionaries to register appreciable progress until the twentieth century.

C. D. King was the first missionary to the Angamis and started a school which was followed up by his successor, although with great difficulties in the beginning of 1887 the small primary school he started became extinct. It was revived by Rev. Rivenburg in 1889. It continued up to 1895 with the same forty six students on the roll. The mission school at Kohima was started by the mission in 1924 and was run by the mission with grant-in-aid from the government. Khonoma people availed their education opportunities from the time it first came to Nagaland once they came to know the value of education. They knew no geographical or communication hurdles. Khonoma people had to carry their food stock along with other necessities for the schooling in Kohima.

Adult literacy campaign was started by the church in 1945, and by the women society in 1959. The British government took over the village schools leaving the missionaries in charge of the training schools which were to supply village schools with masters. Nevertheless, Christian missionaries still continued to establish school with the grants-in-aid they received from the government. It was in 1890 when Rivenburg took the initiative to organize a school as a middle English school and run till 1932 when the present Government High School had its beginning. At the same time the British Government gave Nagas permission to read and learn in their own dialects. Rivenburg had written the first Angami primary reader, a maths primer, a book on health and a few translation from the Holy Bible. A High school in
Kohima upgraded from the mission M. E. School was the only highest school institution in the Kohima Sadar Sub-Division before independence which became government managed school afterward. It was recognized as High School Institution about 1939-1940.

Apart from the High School the missionaries encouraged higher education. Khosa and Sevilie from Khonoma village were sent to Dibrugarh to study medicine in 1913 and 1914 respectively. Likewise, Hucha Savino became the first Angami veterinary doctor in 1917. The advancement of medical education also certainly increased the life span and decreased the mortality rate. In such remote areas the Angamis were naturally prone to many kinds of natural diseases which could not be cured in those days. The dependence on herbs and other indigenous types of remedies was not always reliable in early times. The growth of educational institutions increased the mobility of the Angamis and brought them into constant touch not only with non-Nagas but also with some European during the first world war. This exposure created an impact on their minds especially in relation to their awareness of their own emerging identity. (V. Sanyü, 1996: 123). After acquiring a good education a number of Khonoma people entered the civil services in the British India Government. Mr. A. Kevichusa from Khonoma village became the first Naga graduate. Entering various professions not only provided an impetus to shift to the new religious outlook and impressed the need of education for all but also gave them employment opportunities to supplement their resources from agriculture. This exposure to the outside world broadened their outlook and they carried
new ideas of developing their cultivation, various arts and crafts and exploitation of the forest resources.

The introduction of colonial education, however, disrupted the traditional system of learning and redirected them to the new pattern of modern education. Undoubtedly, with the increasing acceptance of colonial education, traditional system was gradually relegated. Thus modern education has substantial influence on the social-cultural life of the Angamis. The Angami Naga education which the British rulers largely entrusted to the American Baptist Mission had a revolutionizing impact on the Khonoma village. It affected their religion, demeanor, customs and habits. With the progressive dissemination of modern education, the outlook of the people which formerly remained narrow significantly developed and along with it, appreciation of modern education also received further momentum. The development of broader and healthier outlook of the people enabled them to accept the new trends of change in their society. As a consequence of the growth of modern education, the people witnessed gradual tendency of social cohesion the characteristic of which was conspicuously lacking among them in pre-colonial period.

Moreover, the living standard of the people changed notably as a result of the effect of modern education. It played the role of renaissance in the Khonoma society for it came to them with Christianity as bread and butter, consequently, most educated Nagas were also converted. As a matter of fact though there were initial persecution and opposition there was no notable events where this class of people opposed or renounced Christianity or questioned its belief on
the other hand, it was they who readily accepted it and were largely responsible for the local conversion, for they acted as pastors, school teachers and local evangelists.

Education opened up the mind of the Khonoma people into a new world, new ideas and change. This provided a common language for communications and enhances the sense of unity. Education redeems the people from a world of ignorance into a world of knowledge. When the world was changing fast, Christianity through its educational work and the moral teaching, prepares and trains the leaders of the society, to lead the people to face the changing situation. Christianity also leads in the education of the women giving them opportunity. Again education is not only increasingly reaching out in revolutionary pace to embrace the entire life span of the individual and the whole Angami Naga society but also holds the key to a large number of their living problems. Even the most illiterate and poor in the village are beginning to send their boys and girls to schools and colleges because they wish them to be well educated persons. Generally, they know that the educated children will get better opportunity for government jobs and in other avenues, improving their standards of living etc. Those students who leave their village or state to study in college all over India, are once again confronted by western and pseudo-western trends in terms of western clothes, mannerism, food, liquor, and luxuries of yesteryears are now considered necessities. A massive adult education programme was launched in 1978 in an effort to educate the illiterate adult population in the age group of fifteen to thirty five years within a period of five years. This programme has helped the villagers to a great extent
at least how to read and write. To encourage young people to take up higher studies, the government provides assistance to the deserving students in the forms of scholarships and grants. The first post graduate course in the state, M.A. in Education was introduced in Kohima in September 1978 under the North-Eastern Hill University. And later on many new disciplines were introduced. At present the Nagaland Government has set up its own University (Nagaland University).

Another main reason for the phenomena of people's migration to other places is due to people's quest for education. Today many students pursue both technical and non-technical. This has resulted in the increase even in the literacy rate and a great many people have gone away from the village to different parts of the cities in India as well, seeking for good education and white collar jobs. These people who get jobs outside the village are hardly willing to come back.

After independence, it became obligatory on the part of the government to integrate all the peripheral and minority groups into the national mainstream through socio-economic and political developments. Article 46 of the Constitution provides the Directive Principle of State policy, which says: The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from all social injustice and all forms of exploitations. Such constitutional safeguards provided to the scheduled tribes along with other backward groups include constitutional protection of their rights, political safeguards, educational and economic interests. Such provisions have tremendously raised the
status of the state machinery as a major resource pool for development of the Angami area.

With the formation of the Nagaland state (1963), the government made conscious efforts to set up the development process with the purpose of integrating the Nagas into the national mainstream. Through development, modernization came about in the Angami Naga society. Consequently, huge financial assistance was given to the state government from the centre which had a tremendous impact on the socio-economic landscape of the Naga society, that set into motion the process of social transformation. The level of modern economic development of a community had been gauged by the extent of urbanization which are closely related to the level of education and literacy. No doubt the rise in the literacy rate according to 2001 Census is 74.28%, indicating socio-educational development to a certain degree. A new phase of development in Nagaland commenced on two levels – the government level and the private or individual level. A lot of these resources got concentrated at Kohima, which is the state capital. However, this new phase of development had grave repercussion on the Angami society.

Today, transport, communication and other construction activities are carried out. The state PWD has also begun road constructions within the state roads which lead to all villages, so at present even the remote villages have been linked by roads. Today, the Nagaland State Transport operates passenger bus services on all important routes. These bus services have brought tremendous benefit to the people. The Angamis even run private buses between different
destinations. Due to transport and communication facilities at present the Angami Nagas can easily carry all the essential goods like food grains, salt, cement, medicine and machinery to the village. Even the village which is situated on high ridges, can be reached by jeep on steep winding roads.

The agriculture department have intensified various programmes like irrigation, land reclamation, plant protection, supply of improved quality seeds and fertilizers and training in order to give maximum benefit to the farmers. Khonoma being popular for terraced cultivation since time immemorial, has been benefited much by all these schemes and developmental programmes. These measures have resulted in a substantial increase in the production of food.

Many kinds of fruit, especially excellent pineapple, plum, mandarine-oranges, lemon, passion fruit, guavas and bananas are cultivated by the villagers both for their own consumption and marketing purposes. Later they even started selling all those of fruits in the daily markets.

The government has also taken up far reaching measures to recognize the department of animal husbandry and veterinary. The existing livestock farms like piggery and poultry have been strengthened. Even the Angamis, Khonoma in particular, have set up their own farms which have benefited them for their own consumption and trading.
Another remarkable progress has been achieved in terms of electrifying the villages. At the time, when Nagaland attained statehood, only three towns had electricity provided by generators. Nowadays hundred of kilometres high tension electric transmission lines can be seen spanning over the Naga Hills, one of the most difficult terrains of the world. Electricity is now reaching out not only to the interior town but even to far off villages.

After Nagaland attained its statehood, there has been a great expansion of medical services and public health facilities. In every Angami villages and even in Khonoma at least there is a health centre. Since Nagaland has no medical colleges, boys and girls are being sent to different medical colleges in the country with adequate stipends.

The impact of these developments around Kohima capital indirectly benefited Khonoma people. Because Kohima being the capital received more than its due for developmental activities. This enabled the people of Khonoma to settle down in Kohima which became a paradise where contractors and concessions were easily awarded by politicians. Slowly all the facilities such as electricity, water supply, dispensaries, schools, animal husbandry and the like have come up in the village easing the life of the people in general.