Chapter V

SOCIO-CULTURAL ACCOUNTS OF THE KHAMTIS AND THE SINGPHOS
AND THE GRADUAL IMPACT OF BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

(A) Khamtis:

The Socio-cultural life of the Khamtis displays a deep impact of Buddhist psychology. The Khamtis are mainly the inhabitants of Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh though some of them live in Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh and the nearby areas of Assam. The land is not very high and the people also do not differ much from the people of the plains of Assam. The Khamtis are considered socially and economically the most developed Tribe of Arunachal. Among them are the richest persons of this state. We get an account of 1950 - "Among these villages rice production was three times as much as the people could eat."¹ Because of the close contact with the people of Assam, they, especially the younger generation, can easily understand Assamese and can speak it also for communication with the Assamese. Population is not very thick in the Khamti villages and every family possesses a vast area of land for house-building and also for cultivation. They keep some licensed labourers mostly from outside, who work in their fields. Almost every family has an elephant, sometimes more, used for movement in the jungle and other transporting purposes. The labour class lives near the field
for the conveniences of work and vigilance in the field. They live in small houses. The owner of the land lives in a 'Chang' bungalow within a vast compound. The house-building pattern of the Khamtis is very peculiar. The same pattern is followed in every residential house. There is a big platform made of timber wood upon many pillars, mainly logs, arranging in several rows. The height of the platform is about six feet. The old model of the house is of lengthy size with a long veranda in the front side along the house. In these houses windows are rare and roofs come down almost to the level of the platform. Only in the newly constructed houses, windows and ventilation are seen in the Khamti village, sometimes with a big parlour in the front side with wooden railings of beautiful designs. A long corridor separates the compartments in two different rows. The kitchen is also on the same height attached to the main house but on a separate platform.

The Khamti people are very civilized though not so much influenced by the modern wave of life. We must remember here, "The Khamtis were a small branch of the Shan tribe, yet their influence was far greater than their number."^2 They are intelligent and literary persons and as L.W. Shakespear claims of them "To have been far more civilized than the Assamese."^3 They are also said to be "far more civilized than most of the other Shan tribes in the province."^4
They are very clean in living and wearing, of course, they wear their traditional simple dress. P.R. Gurdon wrote in 1895, "The men's dress is a blue cotton jacket and a sort of kilt of checked cloth or silk, which looks like a plaid. The women's dress is the same, only that they wear a cloth tightly bound round the chest and tied under the arms, instead of a jacket." But this description does not prove with their actual appearance seen today. The Khanty men wear their traditional lungi and shirt made in their own home by the female members of the family. They make the cloths in their own handlooms giving traditional colour and pattern. They use threads of different colours in weaving the same lungi. They like four colours, namely, green, blue, white and orange. The 'Lungi' used by the man, is made up of several stripes of these four colours, while the green is the more prominent colour than the other three. The colour and shape of the clothes used in different occasions are almost the same excepting simple difference of quality of the threads, in case of the clothes used for special or ceremonial purposes. The women also use the traditional dress of uniform colour and shape. They wear a black garment from the waist called 'Mekhela' in Assamese and 'Dakhna' in tribal language. A green piece of cloth in the shape of short 'Riha' is tied over it, with both ends designed beautifully with red threads in the pattern of flowery creepers,
which is crafted in their own looms. On the upper part they wear a loose blouse, generally of white colour, and only when they are out, they use a 'Chadar' just like the Assamese women, over the blouse. The chadar is also of white colour with light coloured designs in both ends which is also embroidered in the handloom. The Khamti women are very simple and usually go on without any ornament or cosmetics, only rarely, the women of rich family are seen using simple ornaments in the ears and rings on the fingers. About the Khamti dress, Dalton says, "The dress of the Khamti is simple and neat; the man commonly wear tight fitting jackets of Cotton cloth, dyed blue, a white muslin turban so twisted as to leave exposed the top-knot into which their long hair is twisted projecting somewhat over the forehead." But today, this account has lost its evidence. Except a few, all male persons take shirts of mill-made cloth and the use of turban is also almost out of scene. Long-hair of the male is also now-a-days another rare sight. But they have deep regard to their traditional dress habit. From the view-point of philosophy we must support Tagore's opinion given in case of Indian dress. "If we remember that a man does not derive his dignity from his clothes but rather leads dignity to them by wearing them, then we shall see that the wearing of Coarse-spun dhoti and chadar is by no means a thing to be ashamed of."
As in dress, so in case of food habit also, they are very simple. They use to take meal two times a day, one in the morning hours and the other in the afternoon or early evening. They have no interest in taking variety dishes at different times of the day. Only on special occasion, or for the reception of guests, they go for some special items, otherwise they are satisfied with most minimum curry and such other things.

I would like to mention here that simplicity of life is the direct effect of Buddhism. It is rooted in the idea of transitoriness (anicca). Constant remembrance of impermanence leads to the habit of detachment in the minds of its followers which is otherwise expressed in the simple ways of living. Feeling of detachment is the fundamental effect created by the teaching of the Buddha. As 'Tanha' is the root of suffering, so detachment is the only selected way of life. With the transition of time, accumulated habits become inherent and spontaneous, and this is clearly exhibited in their behaviour, satisfied with the most minimum objects, not hankering after fashion and vanity.

The Khamtis are honest and they are very hospitable by nature. It is an excellent habit of the Khamtis that they receive their guests by a jar of drinking water soon after his arrival. This tradition is the result of their kind hospitable nature and the condition of living in a hilly area
where travelling is a much troublesome job. They bear a
natural urge of charity and kindness. It is evident from the
rest houses seen near the temple in each village. Again
there are many such temporary rest houses here and there in
the paddy fields. The working persons in the field take rest
in those houses. It is a current practice among the Khamtis
that they give one-day's free service in the fields of their
neighbours. The owner of the field would supply their lunch
for that day in the rest house temporarily built in the paddy
field. They are always ready to help the distressed ones. If
some of their neighbours is diseased or distressed and cannot
afford to cultivate in the right season, the villagers would
come together to work in his field, to give him relief and
economic security for the whole year. This is an excellent
example of equalitarian society. This exhibits the deep
sense of co-operation. On special occasions when they
arrange community feast, both male and female jointly prepare
their meal. Such occasions are generally related with reli-
gious ceremonies. On such an occasion, they always invite
the monks, arrange for prayers and give a feast, strictly
vegetarian. Sometimes in such a feast as that of a marriage
ceremony the villagers take meat also, but in this case they
make prayers for the liberation of the slaughtered animal so
that it may get some higher level of re-birth.
Marriage in Khamti society is a long process including several steps. The Khamtis are very cautious in arranging a marital relation. The parents of a marriageable son enquire for a matching girl generally from the side of his maternal uncle. When the girl of their choice is found out, they send 'Kum Fak' (a presentation of rice and sugar) in a tight packet or 'topola' by some messengers. Two persons from the side of the bridegroom take the message and the acceptance of this offer signifies the girl's parent's consent. Then on some auspicious day they will send some relatives to the boy's house for settling the matter. The first thing to be settled is the problem of Hu-Ka or bride-price. It is determined in terms of ziac, which is equal to one hundred and forty rupees. The rich gives up to twenty ziac also, but the minimum rate is at least four ziac. On that day, when the ziac is paid, the date of marriage is also fixed. But they like to fix the day at a considerably later date, because of giving chance to the girl of staying sometime in her parents' home. The date is fixed on some auspicious day given by the calendar. They are very much particular in maintaining the auspicious hour of the day in which the girl will enter her husband's house. The bridegroom need not go to the bride's house on the marriage day. His relatives would come and take her from her parents' house. The monks are invited and they read 'Mangala-sutta' after the general prayer of 'Trisarana'. Then the monks and
the elders give blessings to the married couple. Rice meal is offered to the invitees.

The next auspicious occasion of family life is Kum-Tung-Put in which the five-day old infant is taken out of confinement. It is the custom of their society that the child must be born in its father's house.

The society is patriarchal and the girls do not get the share of her father's property. The property is divided among the sons and generally the youngest one gets two shares, because the parents like to stay with him taking that he may need their help. The property of a family without having a son is enjoyed by the members of the clan instead of giving it to a married girl who belongs legally to another clan.

This however, does not mean that the girls in Khamti society are neglected or the position of the woman is low. Celibacy is another ideal of Buddhism. This idea naturally leads the women to a respectable position in Khamti society. The family runs with the cooperation of both husband and wife. The husband respects the opinion of his wife. Of course, the female members of the family do more work than the males. But they do it as their duty. In the more developed areas where there is facility of education, there are many educated girls also. Only in the interior places where the monastery is the only educational centre, the girls
have no chance of taking education.

In such places, the boys come to stay with the monks who give them lessons on Pali, Hindi and English. The Khamtis have their own language with written scripts as shown in the Appendix.

So the boys of Khamti society get minimum education to read and write their own language and religious books on prayers written in Pali. In every 'Vihar' or Buddhist temple there, the monks do this duty of educating the boys of the village. As S. Sangma also observes, "Buddhism had done a lot for these people and had given them considerable culture."8

The monks are of different ranks according to the stability of this kind of life. There are many young boys of teen ages who come to stay in the monastery for a short period only. They learn the primary lessons of their religion and some of them continue school education while living there. The boys staying in the monastery as 'samanera' after accepting the first ordination of monkhood are bound to follow the rules of this life. The boys of poor family who are interested in having higher education go to their schools, and colleges in that very dress of yellow robes with very short hair on their heads, because being a 'samanera' they get free education from the State Government also. At Chowkham, about 40 Km away from the border of Assam, where there is the beautiful biggest
temple of the Khamtis, the monastery has also a separate lodge providing shelter for the student monks.

The temple of Chowkham is approximately 80 feet in length and 60 feet in breadth with four spacious verandahs in all sides. Moreover, a big parlour in the front side and two other small temples in the back add to its precious beauty. All these are made of good timber with tin roofs and plastered floors. The pattern of the temple roof is such that it is divided into four equal parts on the four sides merging in gradual height, again, with a small toy house of four roofs at the end. Then again upon the end of the roofs of that house, there is yet another much smaller house-pattern of four roofs. According to Coomaraswamy, the merchant prince Anathapindika built up the first monastery at Savatthi for the Buddha "and naturally the 'Fragrant pavilion' (gandha-kuti) in which he resided there became the archetype of the later Buddhist temples in which he is represented by an icon." The same pattern is given to the temple roofs of all the monasteries, either big or small in the Khamtì villages, which indicates the form of a Burmese monastery. The old temples are made of wooden planks on a high platform in the manner of the traditional Khamtì houses. The Khamtis keep the image of the Lord on a shrine above head level as a sign of honour. Idols of the Buddha in different sizes made of wood is seen in every temple. These examples of woodcrafts make us remember the
architectures of the ancient India created under the patronage of the Buddhist Kings. "Dr. V.A. Smith points out in his 'A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon', that the history of the Indian Art begins with Asoka and the early Indian Art is nearly all Buddhist."10 Again, "... Indian art is relatively simple and limited because it is predominantly a sacred art. ... Its tortuous, symbolic and mystic meaning is above all a reflection of spiritual, even ascetic thought. It is an expression of Buddhist philosophy."11 These exhibit the good decorative sense of their mind. The villagers including the monks like to work on wood making idols of the Buddha in different poises giving different sizes. Such idols are seen in the temple and also on the household shrine. The villagers think it to be of great merit to give such an idol to the temple as an offering. Beautiful artifact is seen on the roofs of the temple also. The Khamti women also contribute to the beauty of the temple by making 'Tangkhon' or religious flags hanging inside and outside the temple. It is an attractive example of their skill in handloom. They articulate different designs with thread and bamboo strips in the looms giving the forms of flowers, creepers, birds, animals, temples etc. "Works of Art are reminders; in other words supports of contemplation."12
Sense of excellence is found in the products of cultivation also. They produce a special kind of rice which is definitely the best quality rice produced in north-east India. But they are reluctant to and disinterested in wealth as a vast area of land lies vacant without any fruitful product. They never bother for more than what is needed for living.

The Khamtis are religious minded, and it is seen in their day-to-day behaviour also. Every family keeps a household shrine always on head level at the outside parlour of the house. They always keep their feet in the opposite direction of the shrine. While sitting together with the monks, the laymen always take a lower seat for themselves. The social pattern itself is based on the principles of religion.

The monks are given the highest status in the society. The monk crossing ten years of monastic life is called Sthavira and he who stays in the monastery for more than twenty years as monk is called Mahasthavira. All the monks live in a separate house adjacent to the temple. Some boys without accepting monkhood also stay with them. They are called Kapi or Sang-Kapi in Khamti language. They serve the monks and take lessons from them. Near every temple a rest house, however ordinary it may be, is there and the villagers assemble in that house when they come to the temple on
'uposatha' or holy days. Generally, the elders come to the temple once in a week for prayer. But every male person is in the habit of coming to the temple regularly in the rest hours of the day. In everyday life also the elders say prayer for the good of the family. As Elwin wrote, "Tribal religion is associated with a social ethic that unites the tribe in its discipline and undoubtedly makes for a certain mobility of conduct. The great tribal virtues are discipline, devotion to work, generosity and hospitality, truth, kindness. The Buddhists stress the gentle virtues of mercy and compassion."13

The chiefs are next to the monks in social order. They enjoy a special status and honour in the Khamti society. Though caste system is not rigid except in case of marriage relations, there are class differences in their society, the working class forming the lowest category. But the Khamtis are very particular in their treatment towards the servants also. They keep labours only to work in the field and make licence for every working man and bear responsibility towards the whole family of that person. If somebody dies while working for the owner due to some accident or so, even then it is regarded as a serious offence equal to murder. Of course, such and all other offences are generally settled within the village itself by the intervention of the village chief. I must remember Elwin's observation here, that the Khamtis are
of "Exceptionally co-operative character. Every village works as a whole for agriculture, ceremonial, war and today, for development. They are self-reliant. The country is so hard and the condition of life has been so severe that only the strongest have survived. Even though until recently, they have had little medical assistance and are still often short of food, many of them are splendid specimen of humanity. In the past they did everything for themselves, constructed their inter-village paths, built their bridges, and gave relief to one another in time of need. Some of them have devised ingenious machines worked by water, to husk or grind rice. They have made their own cloths, their own hats and raincoats; they have prepared their own cooking vessels, their own substitutes for crockery; some of them even have their own cosmetics. They have made and administered their own laws."

The teaching of Buddhism helps man to remove selfish interest. The idea of Anatta and Anicca has its psychological impact upon the minds of its followers. This idea again leads to love and kindness to everybody. It teaches the lessons of equanimity. All these thoughts have good moral impact upon their character.

Besides the religious functions of Buddhism, the Khamtis observe two festivals - one like the 'holi' of Northern Indians and the other bon-fire festival as in the Magh Bihu of
the Assamese. The first one is celebrated in the new year, which they observe according to the Lunar Calendar. On this occasion they water the temple-image and also spray water on one another. In the other festival, the village boys make some bon-fire at mid-night and enjoy a collective meal there.

The funeral system of the Khamtis is almost similar to that of the Hindus. The aged and elders are generally cremated, but the junior ones are buried after death. But they differ from the Hindus in that they keep the corpse for some days so that the relatives may get the opportunity of having a last look. Funeral rites are observed after one week of the cremation day. Different things needed for life are given in charity so that the departed one may have peace in the next life. Neighbours and relatives offer great help to the family of the dead. They undertake all the duties of cooking and feeding the members of the bereaved family, receiving the guests and also arranging for the final rites. The villagers are so sympathetic that everynight during that period, they stay in the house of the agrieved family. Some of them play at cards for the whole night. Here I remember the definition of socialism given by Jayaprakash Narayana at a public meeting at Madurai in July 1964, as "Socialism is a way of life based on certain cultural, ethical and spiritual values. It seeks to create a social order founded on
individual freedom, equality of opportunity and fellowship of men."

After independence, the Government of India has given importance to the development of these areas under Arunachal Pradesh. Many villages are now connected with convenient bus communications. Boats and motor-boats are always ready to help people in crossing Burhi Dihing river which separates Arunachal from Assam. Regular transport communication also is available from the towns of the north-east part of Assam, such as Tinsukia, Margherita, Doom Dooma etc. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh has built school buildings with hostel facilities. Some of the Buddhist monasteries are also reconstructed during this period. Here I should mention Dr. B.S. Guha, "There are innumerable instances of the borrowing of cultural traits by people of different countries, such as articles of food, use of metals, domesticated animals, methods of agriculture, spread of the alphabet. So long as the borrowing has been natural and in harmony with the cultural setting and the psychological make-up of the people, it has been entirely beneficial and even added to the richness of their culture." 15

The modern development has not been able to distort the traditional culture of the Khamtis even today. They are said to be "the finest class of men in that part of the
country, distinguished by their superior stature, fairness and comeliness.\textsuperscript{16}

(B) Singphos:

S. Sangma wrote about the Singphos in 1950, "The Singphos corresponded to the Kachins of Burma, and the Kachins are said to be the most intelligent and to have the best physique of all the tribes of North Burma."\textsuperscript{17} But they live in comparatively more interior places than the Khamat. They do not like the vanity of modern life. They are also used to live on the bank of some river. There are five different regions in Arunachal on different river bank inhabited mainly by the Singphos. These areas are Dhumsa, Payang, Teyang, Annaw and Namphuk. The life style of the Singphos is more rigid and it is indicated by their appearance. An old description of the Singphos given by E.T. Dalton, as possessing 'fine athletic figures, standing over ordinary standard of height' is hard to be proved today. One can hardly single out a Singpho person from other inhabitants of the area by his or her appearance only.

Their main difference with the Khamt is that the latter tribe is more developed by having a written script of their own language. Here we must remember Gandhiji, who had
given much stress on giving education in one's own mother tongue. This helps in the literacy of mass people. It has definite influence upon the mode of living. Interdependence of education and culture is stated nicely by Dr. S.S. Mathur, "Not only that culture provides the data for education but it also provides shape to education. Education is a part of the cultural pattern. Its nature is determined by the culture in which it is organized. In fact, its very existence is determined by the culture of the people."  

The dress pattern used by the Singphos does not differ much from that of the Khamtis. They use the same styled lungi with a slight difference of colour. These people seem to prefer black and blue colours. The lungi (male dress) is made of different colours by synthesising the threads in the form of stripes of which the black ones are prominent. They used to wear a traditional jacket of cotton, which is seen even today, used by the older persons of the interior villages. But the young generation uses shirts of readymade cloth. The ladies wear "dakhna" or "mekhela" of black colour with broad stripes of blue or violet colour all over it. Their middle garment is a small 'riha' just like the one used by the Khamti women, while the upper garment consists of the same loose blouse of the Khamtis. But they also seem to prefer blue or violet colours.
The house-building pattern is also almost the same with the Khantis. Most of the houses are made of wood, bamboo and palm-leaves on a high platform. The tin-roofed houses of the rich or the chiefs are also built on a height. They also keep a verandah with balcony, but the balcony is seen in one end of the house. The kitchen and the store-houses are also on high platforms. They keep the store house at a considerable distance from the main house, even near the village temple or on the river bank. This may be a caution against fire but it also proves the honesty of the villagers which removes the fear of theft or robbery.

These things remind us of some other religious teaching of Buddhism - the vows of panca-sila which is a part of their daily prayer. The vow of not-taking 'adinyadana' has its psychological effect upon the followers of it and this by nature helps to prevent theft and robbery.

The monastery is the only educational institution in the interior villages. As they have no scripts of their own language, they use the Roman scripts in writing. The boys get minimum education of reading and writing in the monastery itself, and so the girls are deprived of it. But in the developed areas where there is the facility of government schools, the girls also take education as well. Today, a Singpho-lady is elected to the seat of State Legislative Assembly
even. The general Singpho women are expert in their handloom and other household activities. But if we do not accept the definition of education as the ability to read and write, they must not be called uneducated, because "To Russell - the aim of education is to bring about the individual development of the child in such a way that he becomes a worthy member of the human society." 19

The marriage system of the Singphos is almost similar to that of the Khamtis. They also follow the custom of engaging the bride with the agreement of giving some price for her. The first occasion of sending messengers with some specific offer to the parents of the girl is called by them as Cumba-zeon. Then on an auspicious day the bride's relatives would come with a return presentation which is called Czirapla. On that occasion the marriage date numnum-srudla is fixed and the amount of bride price is also settled. But their system of bride price or 'gadhan' is something different from the Khamtis. In addition to the ziac or cash-money the bridegroom is to supply yangforoam, buffalo and a gun or gun-price to the bride's parents and a pearl garland or Kecci for the bride herself. Yangforoam is a long coat, not in use now and for the gun a minimum sum is paid in extra now-a-days. Cow or buffalo is given even today. But though they observe this traditional system of marriage, the
Singphos do not neglect the women. The marriage date is fixed generally after one or two years of engagement, because they think that only the objects of market should be disposed of as soon as the payment is made, but as the girl has her own mind, she must be given sufficient time to stay with her parents. I must mention here an account of Singphos' marriage given by Macregor (1887) that, "A youth should marry his cousin, his mother's niece, if possible. Should a cousin not be available, the maternal uncle should arrange for a girl of his jat; if one is not available, the uncle goes to another family and says, "If you give me a girl for my nephew, I will pay you back in kind when one of your family requires a bride." The father of the youth then gives a feast and presents to the girl's family."20

This description of the role played by the maternal uncle in a marital relation indicates also the position of the mother in the family. It is she who is the determining factor of the future generations of the family. This account also shows the distinction of the Singpho, also the Khamti, society from the traditional Hindu society where by rule the marital relation is prohibited with the mother's relatives.

The Singpho society is classified in many tribes and sub-tribes. Of these tribes, the Lapac, Mirip, Tisan, Latang, Moran etc. are dominant even now. It is their social custom
to use the name of the tribe as title with their first names. They have another peculiarity in naming the persons. They use different terms with their names to signify the serial order of birth in the family for both the boys and the girls separately.

The Singphos are also honest, simple and hard working. They claim to be a warrior class and before accepting Buddhism they liked hunting and fishing. They worshipped different spirits with animal sacrifice. Even now they believe in spirits, though not proceeding further to worship them. Spirits may be either good mu-nat or bad ga-nat. Sin-lap, Imboom, Matac, Moo Inshet etc. are good spirits helping men in different fields of life. But evil spirits such as Morang, Ning-shet, La-moom, Pac etc. were also worshipped so that they remained pleased and did not harm the people. By becoming Buddhists they have given up this habit of spirit worship but the belief is still persisting in their minds. They observe a great festival called the Spang-Yung Masau Pay in remembrance of their forefathers who were devoted to these spirits. This is not a religious festival. They observe it as a community festival to express their traditional beliefs and ideas. The Singpho people from different villages assemble in the festival ground which is selected on rotation basis for consecutive two years in one village. Cultural ceremonies and community feasts are arranged by the villagers. The functions continue
from four to five days. The festival unites the Singphos of different areas and gives them a chance to be united with the people of other communities also. Persons of all communities from the neighbouring areas attend the festival and enjoy it.

The specific character of this festival is that on this occasion, the Singphos make a tomb of nine wooden planks covered by dyed pieces of cloth. The planks are arranged in such a manner that their upper ends are joined together in an entangling fashion. They use it as a symbol of unity and love. The Singphos believe that the nine planks symbolises nine spirits and the five colours are used for the five Singpho-inhabited areas, viz., Annaw, Dhumsa, Payang, Teyang and Namphuk. They call the tomb as Manau Sadung. Their flag is made of three colours, green, blue and red, with two white daos crossing in the middle from one end to the other. Blue, red and green symbolize jungle, energy and prosperity accordingly, and the daos are the symbol of their active and warrior nature.

Another specific function of the Singphos is the making of 'Kalpataru'. Like all Buddhists they think it greatly meritorious to donate something to the temple or to the monks. The villagers give the monks their necessaries of cloth, food, medicine and shelter. These are called 'Catus-pratyaya' in Pali and Pice-le-pa in their own language. Like
the Khamtis they also make Tangkhon and donate this on some auspicious occasions. It is their belief that the cool wave of the Tangkhon may cool the beings revolving in the world circuit or 'bhavacakra'. They also give much importance on the donation of 'aṣṭaparīṣkāra' to the 'bhikkhu' or monk. These are eight essential objects including - needle, thread, blade, bowl, 'cīvaraantarvāsa', 'kaṭībandhāni', 'pānicapāni' and a 'dāṇḍa', i.e., stick. A collection of all these objects is generally kept in the village temple. The villagers buy it by giving some price and again donate it for the sake of attaining some merit. As the value of the aṣṭaparīṣkāra they give fried rice (which is called ākhai in Assamese) and flowers along with other things. But the Singphos like to make donation in the form of a Kalpataru. They make it with colourful decorations and place the objects on it and then carry it to the temple. It is a combination of beauty and charity at a time.

The Singphos follow their own calendar. Their religious festivals are all similar to those of the Khamtis. They are trying to follow the rules of Theravada wholeheartedly. But it seems that they accepted this religion comparatively at a later period. So influence of Samanism is still evident upon them. The English officers found them addicted to alcohol. But most of them have given up this habit by the influence of Buddhism. Only the elders are
habituated in taking tea. The Singphos have their own traditional process of preparing tea from green tea leaves. They would keep the green leaves above the fire stove and when dried, they would keep these within a bamboo pipe very tightly packed. After sometime this would be ready to be used in preparing tea. The Singphos claim that the English officers found the taste of tea first in a Singpho house and that is the starting point of the growth of so many tea-gardens in north-east India.

They have restricted the habit of hunting and fishing also. Though they like to take meat, they never proceed to kill lives. Even the act of keeping poultry is not encouraged as it may initiate violation of the vow of non-violence. They even do not like to take milk out from the cows, for fear of violating the rule given by 'Pañca-śīla', as it is a forceful taking.

The villagers live mainly on agriculture. They get rice and vegetables from their own lands and their food-habit is limited within what is available there. The labour payment is also made by rice and other products of the fields.

The Singphos, like the Khamtis, like flowers. It seems that flower is of great value for the Buddhists. In every Singpho house, as in that of a Khamtı, flower is seen in the flower-vase before the idol on the shrine in the parlour.
of the house. In the temple also the flower vase is always filled with fresh flowers. They use flower in the cremation ground also. These are scattered on the dead body and on the ground also signifying separation of the deceased from the relatives. "The Buddhists believe that those who constantly offer flowers and burn incense before the holy image of Buddha, are enabled to purify their thoughts." 21

Buddhism is the religion of dynamic existence. The layman would try individual liberation and the monks would lead the society towards the goal. Existence has no meaning without action. This action is the welfare of the society. So religious ideas of Buddhism have effected the socio-cultural relations of the Khamtis and the Singphos. They are merciful. They are kind to all beings. They love their fellow members and respect the monks who will guide to liberation. These qualities are seen both in the Khamti and the Singpho society.

Like all good Buddhists they believe that "Those who devote themselves to this work, receive invisible rewards and those who advise others to perform it, are doing good to themselves as well as to others." 22
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14. Ibid., p. 27

15. B.S. Guha, Quoted in the *Philosophy for Arunachal*, op.cit., p. 46


22. Ibid.