Chapter - X

CONCLUSION

Today almost every Vaiphei knows the value of long-lasting unity, peace and stability.
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Genetically, Vaiphei people are of Tibeto-Chinese (Sino-Tibetan) origin, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman race whose ancestors are the Ch’iang (K’iang) tribes. The valley of T’ao, fifty miles south of Lanchou (Lanchow) in the Kansu province, northwest of China and northeast of Tibet has been once the home of Vaiphei and its congeners. Even today, there are still some sixty tribes in China whose racial names and cultures have close affinity with Vaiphei of Indo-Myanmar. For instance, the Lo-lo, Lashi, and Maru tribes who are also Tibeto-Burman race, too, practices ‘Patronymic’ naming-system like the Vaipheis. Another tribe who have cultural affinity with Vaiphei is the Li tribe. This people have the cultural dance called “SHUKITA-LAM (Bamboo-dance)” in Vaiphei dialect. Again, their custom of firing a gun on the event of burying the dead is very much Vaiphei. One striking feature is the clothes of Wa(Va), Akha and Dulong tribes in particular. They are very much like Vaiphei’s traditional clothes, namely. ‘Puandhum’ and ‘Khiang-Kawi-puan’. What is more striking is their diets. The meat of dog, swine, fowl, and rodent are the most favourites of most of the tribals in China. All these evidences authenticated that China is the cradle of Vaiphei and probably their biological ancestor is the Peking Man (See Annexure-I).
Due to the despotic and domineering attitude of the Chinese Emperors, Tibeto-Burmans dispersed and scattered in the southern direction from China from around 1600-1000 B.C. As Vaipheis were among these group, they might also be moving as occasion arose and came to occupy Khawel-Khen (now Kalewa) and Khawel-Jang (now Kalemyo), which are now in the Kale-Kabaw valley of Myanmar probably during the period from the 8th to the early 13th centuries A.D. Due to the penetration of the Shan Kingdom, they are forced to move out farther into the Chin hills by the early 13th century A.D. One point that deserved to mention is that there is no historical records of wars with the Burmese except the Shans, during their settlement in Kabaw valley. They must have had a very cordial relationship with the Burmese between the periods marked above. True, we find many of children games, names of fruits and vegetables, musical instruments, dresses and customs, and vocabularies, which indicated they are of or resembles to those of the Burmese.

Reaching the precipitous Chin Hills, they parted from their kindreds and congeners as the terrain permits only limited group to settle at one particular place. In the early 15th century A.D., they set up Phaiza village from whose pseudonym they framed a distinct identity “Vaiphei”. They lived in this village for many generations from the early 15th to the early 19th centuries A.D. Here, they produced a number of songs, folktales, folkdances, customary laws and such like. Yet their old trait of abandoning old place for a new promising land persists and they continue moving out of the village in small groups to set up several village, yet in better places. The main factor of such movement was increase in population and economical.

With the onset of the 19th century A.D., the Pawi-legion became a constant threat and menace. As a result, Vaipheis move to yet another region now called Manipur-Hills via the Lushai-Hills in India. Yet some section retreated in-and-around proper Tedim (Chin-Hills) and took refuge and shelter in the Chiefdoms of the Sukte clans and the Sijang- Suantak (descendants of their step-ancestress). However, these groups were also compelled to move out of Tedim province due to irresistible circumstance. The destructive hostility between the Empire-builders (British) and the people of Chin-Hills forced them to leave Tedim province by the late 19th century A.D. In this respect, Carey and Tuck wrote: “...there was one called Tuiyan (Tuizang) near the site of our No. 3
stockade, inhabited by the last remnants of the Vaipheis tribe. After their village was destroyed the inhabitants no longer lingered, but migrated north and over our borders, where they joined their tribesmen, who had long before moved north out of the Siyin and Sokte country”. Northward from Chin-Hills, they move into the southeastern hills of Manipur from where they scattered again in the northeastern realm of India. Yet the majority of them are found till today in the hills of Manipur (India). In contrast to their primitive economy, in Manipur, most of them practice “wet-cultivation (settled plain-cultivation)”. In the field of owning “wet-cultivation”, Vaipheis out-numbered the rest of Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi tribes in Manipur, undeniably.

In the hills of Manipur, they are the most advance (civilized) tribes especially among the Zo people. They are the first pioneers of Christianity and Western education particularly in the southern-hills of Manipur. In the field of technology, arts and culture, and politics they are ahead of their congeners. No sooner their ethnic name echoed in the hill and valleys of Indo-Myanmar, they dashed themselves out of their superiority complex to prove right the saying. “Pride goes before destruction”. The period from 1967 to 1999 A.D. was an irresistible dark moment for the Vaipheis. They were totally deprived from socio-political integrity and strength until the dawn of 21st Century A.D.

Vaipheis had been moving from one place to another in the past. But from the 20th century onwards, they began to renounce their nomadic nature, which was a retarding factor for all aspect of life. For better or worse, they were virtually swept off their feet by the Western culture. With its rich oral tradition of song and energetic dances, the entire culture of Vaipheis shrivelled and died in one mighty sweep. With this the motley-hues and gaiety departed from Vaiphei life. True, the Western missionaries in their zeal to reform the primitive or barbaric Vaipheis declared all accompanying feast, drinks, songs and dances to be evil as well. Cultural change was far-reaching and overwhelming. Influx of Western culture was extremely torrential that it wears and tears away the indigenous culture of the Vaipheis.
Undoubtedly, Western spirit swiftly transformed the personal and public life of the people. Strictly speaking there was a great leap towards modernisation or say, Westernisation. The simple and uncluttered life-style of Vaiphei was unmindfully exchanged for a complicated and sophisticated one. Restive and listless youths began to show for the first time in their history. Respect for elders began to wither away. Lack of discipline and aimlessness flutter the society. Snobbish elites emerge in the midst of revolution, and brought class-consciousness among the innocent Vaipheis. Family-ties began to lost its value to the annoyance of the saintly hearts. The elites and westernised youths became disdainful upon their lowly relatives, and the humble culture of their ancestors. On the one hand, the baptized Christians busied themselves in frequenting the Holy-Script and Church. They were mindless of the deteriorating social condition except mimicking the white-men. Until the last minute of the 20th century A.D., this so-called Christians were indulging in appropriating church-members among themselves. Obviously, most of them embraced this religion brought by the West due to abjectness. True, financial aid from the West allured them more than the divine commands. Persons who are not competent in their education take up Evangelism in the hope of sponsorships from the West and monthly salaries, with no determination to repair the dilapidating moral of their dear ones. Some of them waste their days in reading the Bible instead of honestly sweating and dirtying their limbs for the family. Church organisations became the fortress of lazy-mean fugitives. Accusations of immorality or corruption occasioned the Church organisations. In the strict sense of Christianity, they are not like Christians in many aspects.

To stir and boost the perversity of the religious influence, the western or modern education was a glove for Christianity. The so-called “Educated” procured and implant in the social structure an anti-integrity (or-unity) ideologies such as selfishness, self-esteem, discriminations, disregard for their culture, etc. Dignity of labour became unfathomably scarce. Unemployed youngmen and the silver-tongued politicians became parasites to the family and the community. Lost in their dreams to build a castle or even an empire, they failed to propagate honesty, and dignity of labor which are the foundation
of socio-political and economic development. They opted to survive by means of drawing easy-money. As for the so-called officers, they are inflicted with chronic-disease called ‘false sense of pride’. To them, it is beneath their dignity even to be seen on the streets like common pedestrians. They hate to be in-touch even with their close relative if they happened to be economically low, but would welcome those who are holding high-status or economically-sound with open-arms and honeyed-words. Frankly, they ride their life with the spur of class-consciousness. They would hop in and out of their elegant four-wheelers, and it is not unusual for officers’ wives to send their chauffeurs to buy just a kilo of vegetable or meat; and their office-peon to treat as if they are domestic servants. Truly, they are living-effigies of Maha-Rajas and Maha-Ranis of the ancient days.

*Tawmngaina* or the sense of selfless-service for another individual, individuals, or for the society in times of weal and woe is shrinking into a moribund state. Comparatively speaking, this sense is not as strong among the Vaipheis today as it was in the past. Once, it used to be the essence of their culture, and had great influence in their social structure. It was, in fact, the pride of Vaipheis. Now, it becomes unattended and unnerved. Under the spell of western culture, they forgot to nurture and retained it. Losing *Tawmngaina* means to lost the unique radiation and splendour of the indigenous culture. So, the immediate need of the hour is, selfless-patriotic citizens, to rejuvenate and to rekindle *Tawmngaina* for better tomorrow. If not, the individual and the societal life will certainly go to rack and ruin, without *Tawmngaina*.

Towards the early second half of the 20th century government legislation on the one hand and western influence on the other brought about a complete revolution in Vaiphei society. Billows of malicious groupism and ostrich-belief began spinning a yarn resulting in conflicts and chaotic atmosphere by the end of the 60s of 20th century. Squabbling and riots became common features of Church organisations, and of the political life. Jealousy, shortsightedness, and greed for power and money eat up their hearts. A game of musical-
chair was often played in the courts of religion and politics causing a serious setback to unity. To be straightforward, the Western-culture and the Democratic-government was nothing but merely a Pandora's box, as they were unskilled in handling it. With the introduction of the Western culture and the Democratic form of government, the traditional ‘Suutpi (Pillar)’ of ‘Kipumkhatna (Integrity)’ was razed to the ground unthinkingly. Subsequently, the feeling of oneness was torn apart to crippled their socio-political and religious status.

If sectarianism had not crept in among the Vaipheis, the chances of progress in all aspect of life could have been far reaching, perhaps, far ahead of their congeners who are above them today. For further development and progress, the suggestion therefore is that Vaipheis could have been stoutly united under one religious denomination (Church Organisation) and the main objective of the Church be reformation of the society. Though the clock of history cannot be revert much of their lost rich-culture can be salvaged. For this task, educated people should be encourage, to give serious thought and accumulate the remnants of the past as much as they could. In fact, educated people with a literary bent of mind could render invaluable service to their own people by recording Vaiphei literature which has so far had an oral tradition. In this way the lost ‘feeling of oneness’ would slowly and gradually be restored in its original and yet vigorous structure. Besides, Church leaders and politicians must leap gingerly and carefully remembering that they are the models for the society. The integrity of the community completely relied on them. True, poor leadership has been the root cause of disunity and retardation for Vaiphei community.

Not all the transformation or revolutions, however, have been for the worse. There are many and varied merits of being Westernised on the one hand and being under a democratic government on the other. After becoming Christian, Vaipheis were for the first-time emancipated from the bondage of ‘Zek-leh-Buak’, and from all sorts of expensive pow-wows. They remain steadfast Christians and would remain for many more centuries to come. Missionary zest and zeal is also found among them. Though economically unsound
in average, they raise funds to send out preachers to various places in Indo-Myanmar to propagate the Gospel. For instance, Evangelical Organisation Church (EOC), which has been the most active Church organisation among the Vaipheis of Indo-Myanmar, has made a remarkable missionary works in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, etc. in India and the Kabaw-Valley (Myanmar). It has passed a duration of ninety-five years that Vaipheis become Christians and it is now evident that Christianity would continue to be a Xanthic-flower among them. Yet, the oppressive and monopolistic calibre of the inefficient clergies, and differences of sect and quarrels persisted to retrograde far reaching progress. Nevertheless, with diplomatic efforts of perspicacious and catholic-minded proctors from all circle, five outstanding church organisations were united in the year 2001 A.D. under the denomination of Mizoram Presbyterian Synod. These united churches scooped more than sixty percent of Vaiphei population in Indo-Myanmar approximately. This epoch yielded an optimistic notion among the people that someday they would all share one umbrella, with no umbrage, no monopoly, no egotism, and no more sectarianism. In candour say, patriotic intellectuals and elites are sanguine of employing one denomination for the congregated churches in a short while. Lest another mettle of divisive-miasma crept in again.

For embracing the Christian faith, there has been a great deal of progressive changes in their domestic life. They discontinue nomadism and they also learn the importance of hygienic environment. Undeniably there was great leap in their living standard. Their conversion into Christian faith must be accounted for their rapid progress and educational advancement. The desire for education becomes very great. Parents, however poor, make it a point to educate their children. Today many Vaiphei students are reading at schools and colleges all over India and even in the United States, England, Australia, Korea, and in various other countries of different continents. Now, there are about a handful of officers, theologians, prominent political leaders and outstanding bright students. One who deserve special mention is Miss Nemneikim Vaiphei, M.Th (USA) 1988 & M.Th. (London, England) 1994, from Kangpokpi (Manipur) was conferred ‘Pastor-ship’ in 1999.
She is said to be the first lady-pastor among the contiguous tribes of Indo-Myanmar. And the first genius-electrician who made mini-electricity among the Vaiphei tribe is Neihau Suantak of S.Kawtlian (Churachandpur, Manipur) in 1956. Fortunately, the numbers of talented and brilliant students are increasing with the passage of time.

Hordes of Vaiphei move into town and cities where there are satisfactory educational facilities. Parents are competing among themselves in giving education to their wards. “Their children are brilliant” is a common expression considered quite sufficient to explain the future prospect of toiling parents. Every Vaiphei is now imbued with the concept that success in life comes with education. If two parents meet, their main subject of discussion will be about their schooling or college going children. No other topics would salivate them more than the education and future career of their learning issues. They mind not to incur heavy-debts for the sake of educating their children and even doing the lowliest works.

From primeval days, being glued with a democratic-polity unlike their congener, the average Vaiphei is quick to learn and grasp the ramifications of government and its administrative machinery. In fact, they are second to none to have taken active part under the democratic roof of India, with the formation of Manipur State Council in 1948. Mr.Damzakhai was one among the first elected members of this Council. However, he gave up political career with the lapse of 1949 to pursue further education. Subsequently, Mr.Paoneikhai appeared in the political scene in 1962, as one among the two elected representative from the Southern-Hill of Manipur in the “The Territorial Council of Manipur”. He was the brightest star in the political history of the Vaipheis of Indo-Myanmar during the second half of the 20th century. With the reformation of the territorial council into a Legislative Assembly in 1963, he was sworn in as Deputy Minister. Hence, he became the first Deputy Minister among Vaipheis and their congener of Manipur, and for the Vaipheis of Indo-Myanmar in particular. Again, with the reformation of Manipur Hill District Council in 1973, he became the first elected member among the Vaipheis. Also he was the first to
be nominated by Manipur government as the Chairman of Churachandpur District Council in 1976. Besides, he was a member of Churachandpur District Council consecutively from 1973 to 1983. Candidly speaking, none among the Vaipheis of Indo-Myanmar has yet surpassed his socio-political developmental feats till this hour. Comparatively speaking in its strict sense Mr. Paoneikhai deserved the title ‘Father (or Pioneer) of Modern Politics’ among the Vaipheis of Indo-Myanmar. Truly, it would be illegitimate to omit his name even in the political history of the consanguine tribes of Manipur.

Sadly, as the saying “The worst comes when the least expected” turbulence of the worst kind hit and fizzle out the socio-political machinery of the Vaipheis at the time of the Manipur Legislative Assembly election held in 1967. Subsequently, their scintillating unity and strength was snuffed out. And as for the Vaiphei National Organisation (V.N.O.), it was scrapped into bits to dwindle. Resuscitation was a far cry. Admittedly the infighting which eventually surged from conflict of interest among the V.N.O. members was the flashpoint. True, this ‘Think tank’ of their socio-political order as an effect was crippled for some time between 1967 and 1971. Exceedingly, it was the darkest period to never forget. Yet to remembered and counted in the text of their socio-political history. Simultaneously to add the worst, the shrewdly deliberated demarcation of the Manipur Legislative Assembly’s Constituencies outfoxed and dissected them into handicapped minorities depriving them from sending representative(s) in the Legislative-house of Manipur since 1967 till the lapsed of the 20th century. Obviously, this has been the other twin factor of their political setback. How much effort they exerted, to no avail. Fitting the maxim “Out of the frying pan into the fire”, the segmentation in the Manipur Legislative Electoral roll turned into a cursed barrier of fire for the Vaipheis who are now out of the frying pan of dissension. As such, a strong and unified socio-political order became far from hope. Slowly, and gradually the feeling of oneness was withering. Nevertheless at this juncture, the aurora of the 21st century brought them a new political chapter.
With the sweats of enthusiastic young-patriots, two representatives are now chaired in the Legislative Assembly house of Manipur. This time, the socio-political environment is quite different from the past decades. The sense of oneness and political awareness among the Vaipheis has sprouted and spread from the educated circle to the semi-educated and down to the illiterate mass. Over thirty years of dejection under chaotic waves has made uniformity in all walks of life dear to the simplest and fatuous villager in the remotest corner of the rugged yet beautiful hill ridges of Indo-Myanmar. Those long years of frustration and breathless trek has made them, in fact, wiser and voracious to realised unity. Admittedly they are now aware of the importance of integrity, and also the ills of division among themselves. Today almost every Vaiphei knows the value of long-lasting unity and peace and craved for it. Despite being dissected into helpless minorities in each constituency of the Manipur Legislative’s Electoral roll, they now dreamt of building a socio-political castle. All and sundry are now resuscitated. Their suffering physical as well as psychological during the second half of the 20th century has made them to recall the saying “Unity is strength”.

It is heartening to note that the growing political consciousness can retard if not handled carefully for it is still delicate. Certainly along with the process of integration will not doubt be disrupted by some short-sighted and self-centred politicians, or even by some voracious patriotic youths in their zeal and haste. In fact, in this early hour of the 21st century, Vaipheis are just showing up in the political scene again. Socially and politically, they are still in an adjustment period. So, they need to be prudent enough in funambulating the socio-political cable towards unity. One step mistake would crash them to the ground to break up again like that of thirty years ago. Unreservedly speaking, Vaiphei is confronting a thorny socio-political problem today that for him all else is of secondary importance. He wants unity, peace, and stability. Indeed, he also badly needed social and economic development which can only be achieved through political efforts.

Whatsoever be the case, despite the absence of political power, all aspects of Vaiphei life today strangely present a totally different picture from that of thirty years ago. Yet, complete transformation would normally take a much longer time. History is witness to the
fact that delicate periods of transition if forced or hurried often lead to the deterioration of the group involved in the change. It is imperative to have patience for the reformists to undergo the process of attaining a complete transformation. Thoughtful ideas and plans which best suited the sentiment of the people must be chalked out. As it is out of the rocks and bricks of a broken building or monument, a new building is created and built, so is the Vaiphei socio-political structure. Rebuilding of the crumbling or broken socio-political monument, however, is not an easy task. It involves tolerance, progressive polity, amicability, and proportionate combination among the builders. In the reconstructonal process, effective but good means alone will be the most powerful binding force to bring about a well-knit integrity which is inseparable from and is the foundation of socio-political development. The good means will act as the integrating force, a force that can only bring enduring peace, harmony and unity.

What is meant here by the term “socio-political development” is an all-round development that concerned with uniformity, good and cordial relationship, unified church organisations, congenial ideologies, growing economic condition, positive communal-feeling, virtuosity, absent of class-consciousness, and also changes as pointed out by Leonard Binder thus: “change of identity from religious to ethnic and from parochial to societal, and change in political participation from elite to mass and from family to group”. However, the changes must be in the direction of “integration” a strong and productive integration. As said, undoubtedly it has been parochialism, class-consciousness, and clannishness, which are responsible in crumbling the traditional monument of oneness. However, Vaipheis are now marshalling with much zeal towards socio-political development. Yet it is also feared that such mass awakening and participation in restoring the broken monument might be one-sided, just to elect and have an M.L.A., M.P., etc. and nothing more. Such achievement in its true sense is not acceptable as development or matured integration. It is merely the “ray of hope” towards mature or ripen integration and not the development itself. In other words, this “ray of hope” however if not brilliant (or bright) enough can sabotage the development process by bringing confusion among the
mass, resulting in disintegration, chaotic atmosphere, and even an oligarchic socio-political
system. On the other hand, if it happens to be bright enough, no doubt, it can become the
most contributive force to bring about socio-political development.

To achieve socio-political development, social unification is the first and of
paramount importance, for Vaiphei people. Next, inquisitive and progressive operation by
the unified mass, to check and ward-off anti-development activities that comes from any
direction. The social organisations, church organisations, the elites, and the common men
are collectively responsible for the realisation of social-unification, which shall bring a
lasting “integration”. A “social-unification” which is not chimerical but something deeper
than that. It must be “emotional” unity, which does away with class barriers, parochial
barriers, or clannishness, or self-interest. A ‘unification’, not merely the unification of the
people but unification of the mind and the heart. Only then a lasting integration, or more
accurately, “mature-integration” can be achieved. It is, therefore, felt that a real and
satisfactory socio-political development can be achieved, for Vaipheis, only if the pioneers
or vanguards are people known for their honesty and integrity. And above all, self-less,
patriotic and influential personality.
Believed to be the ancestor of all Oriental people.

Valiant Hero of Vaiphei-Suantak peoples in their war against the British (1887 - 1889) in the Chin Hills (Myanmar) and thereafter who alone went underground and rebelled against the same for another six years.

The first two pioneers of Christianity not only among their people 'Vaiphei' but throughout the Southern Hills of Manipur (India)

The first Vaiphei elected member of the Manipur Territorial Council (1948).

The First Vaiphei Deputy Minister in the Manipur Legislative Assembly (1962-1967).
KEY:

A. Vaiphei Girls in their traditional attires.

B. Vaiphei Cultural Troupe performing a recently created poussette (non traditional) titled "Sang Sang, Bawk Bawk" during Zo-Fest, 2004 Aizawl (Mizoram). It seems, today, Vaiphei saplings are either unmindful of the value of their primitive cultural dances or feeling disgrace to preserve them?

C. Enthusiast and selfless Vaiphei delegates and troupe who saved and brightened the face of Vaiphei peoples at the cultural meet/fest of all the collateral tribes (Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi) called 'Zo-Fest 2004' organised by Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Mizoram.
CONCEPTUAL SKETCHING & ROUGH DATING OF
THE BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION OF THE COLLATERAL TRIBES
(i.e. Vaipheis and their kindred tribes)

ABOUT 5 MILLION TO
2.5 MILLION YEARS AGO.

BETWEEN 500,000
AND 200,000 B.C.

FROM AROUND
50,000 TO 6000 B.C.

5000 B.C. TO
1900 A.D.
Whom Vaiphei people gave the name "SapTangval" meaning "English gentleman", the 'Pioneer Missionary' among the contiguous tribes in the rugged yet beautiful southern-hills of Manipur. With his arrival, there was great transformation in the socio-religious life of Vaipheis. Indeed, it was with his sole efforts that Vaipheis were unravelled from the primitive powwow life and had become Christianised.

Photo credit: Rochunga Pudaite's *The Education of the Hmar People*, p-8