CHAPTER - VIII

TANGKHULS SOCIAL VALUE

Social value is an abstract, generalized principle of behaviour to which the members of a group feel a strong, emotional toned positive commitment and which provides standard of judging specific acts and goals.1 Values are accepted not merely as overt statements to which each group member assent, but as the individual commitment of each member, who has internalised them in the process of socialization. Social structures, as well as social interaction and behaviour are all based upon social values. Any change in social structure or social institution takes place when there is change in social value. So it is necessary to understand the problem of social values in Tangkhul context to understand the problem of social change among the Tangkhuls.

In Tangkhul society as with all societies the world over, values provide essential organising principle for the integration of individual and group goals. Because of the strong emotional feeling attaches to

values and because they serve as standards for judging concrete rules, goals and actions, they are often regarded as absolute, although the formation and apprehension of values in the normal process of social interaction. Since value guide choices of objects and behaviour, the study of values involves the study of attitudes, behaviour, interaction and social structure.

The traditional Tangkhul activities and sum total experience they underwent were crystallized into simple and eminently practicable virtues of the Tangkhuls. These virtues were true virtues which provided them with a life force. According to R.R. Shimray "this life force was activated through the seven centres of spiritual energy centres called 'the seven nobility'. The Seven Nobilities are: (1) Simplicity, (2) Honesty and Truthfulness, (3) Straight-forwardness, (4) Helpfulness, (5) Regard for others, (6) Fearlessness, and (7) Adventurism.

Simplicity in the context of Tangkhul traditional life does not mean poverty or indicate want. Life was simple and the idea of luxuries of life was not found

3. Ibid.
among them. They were self-sufficient and have enough leisure in the form of festivals. Simplicity is a romantic idea of contentment, peace and happiness.

Tangkhuls believed in action which is the characteristic of hillmen. Mills in great appreciation of the Nagas, once said: "Nagas never lie".\(^4\) If a Tangkhul cannot keep his words, he will lose his honour and loss of honour is worse than death because no one will value his words henceforth. Honesty and truthfulness was a matter of honour for them. It is imbibed in the inner cores of every Tangkhul. Tangkhuls have retained by and large this old traditional value till today. In Tangkhul society one is bound to speak the truth boldly and must have the guts to face the situation at all cost. Straightforwardness is a bold and direct attack on the cowards who like the chameleons change their colours in every situation.\(^5\) If sufficient care is not taken straightforwardness is often fraught with danger.

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According to Tangkhul maxim, man is not only a social animal but also by nature a helping animal. In their society, the needy gets immediate attention and in this, no criteria of any kind of friendship, or reward play a role, let alone the human barrier based upon creed, clan and colour. Even today, a sick person is carried from village to village. Hutton says that one of the first characteristics that strikes a visitor to the Nagas is his hospitality.\(^6\) In Tangkhul Nagas tradition, the first person 'I', is always conditioned by 'others'. What other will think or say about his action is in every thinking Tangkhuls.

The valour and fearlessness always state well with the Tangkhul Nagas warrior. When there was danger to his village and an imminent attack by the enemy, a Tangkhul staked and scorned his life for the sake of his villagers. They are brave people who exhibit exemplary courage in times of grave emergencies. The little Tangkhul girl goes to the mountain all by herself to bring firewood and boys go to the thick forest to hunt the wild bear. The exploration of the mountain vastness of their forefathers and discovering their present homeland,

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\(^6\) Hutton, Angami Nagas, 1921, p. 23.
which was accomplished at the dawn of history of mankind with risks beyond comparison. Head-hunting was an adventurous sport which gave them vigour and meaning to their lives.

HARMONY

Tangkhul society values harmony among the various groups living in the village. The political aspects and social life in Tangkhul village was permeated by hierarchy. Within the family, in the neighbourhood and in the long, there is the authoritative behaviour from time immemorial. The wife should obey the husband, the child should obey their parents, the citizen in the village should obey the chief man. In Tangkhul tradition, a man's personality is to a large extent subordinate to his community. From this point of view, in Tangkhul society the role is more important than the individual.

In the family, for instance, the aim of all the members is to live in harmony. The efforts of each family is to present a semblance or harmony to the community. Efforts are always made to move to a consensus in order to avoid conflict within the clan or community. The village authorities right from time immemorial have settled various problems peacefully. The
village citizens were brought up to put before the elders their grievances and they had to abide by the decision of the elders. The members of the group will go any length in order to avoid conflict. Attempt at consensus is a unique of the leadership of the Tangkhul Long till today. 7

FAMILISM

One of the unique features of Tangkhul society is the strong hold of kinship and kin obligation. Every Tangkhul expects that his relatives should help him and the prosperous man in the family or clan feels guilty if he does not give a helping hand to his family. The kinship ties are very wide extending not only to all the members of the family but also to the other relatives and members of the same clan. The old, handicapped, the physically weak, the ailing are all looked after by the members of the family.

Even today, one can see the relatives from other villages visiting the house of a kin and staying there as long as he want. The family ties are very strong among the Tangkhul Christian also. We can see the

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strength of kinship ties at the time of celebration of marriage, festivals and feasts when all the relatives are invited. In modern times, a man in office looks upon it as his duty to help his relatives to get into office. This is not looked upon as nepotism. This is viewed as correct behaviour and not a manifestation of partiality. It arose out of the sense of duty to help the other members of the family. This shows a strong sense of belonging to kin group and clan or family.

RESPECT OF ELDERS

One of the main concept of which underlines the Tangkhul Nagas attitude to life and daily conduct is that of the respect of the elders. Respect of elders is a characteristic value of all the traditional agriculture societies. In such a society almost all knowledge was derived through informal communication and personal experience. As a result, the older people were looked upon as the repositories of knowledge. The respect of elders is the root factor and genesis of ancestor worship in traditional Tangkhul society. In the traditional rural society the illiterate youngster had to go to the experienced elders to get information he needed about agriculture and social norms.
But with the introduction of new sources of knowledge like books, newspapers and radio, the greater knowledge and ability of elders can not be remain unchallenged. With education, the youngsters now finds that he can get the information he needs from books, periodicals and other sources. So he does not seek advice of the elder and the latter feels neglected. This is the main reason why there is today the general feeling that the youngster lack respect for the elders.

**CHRISTIAN VALUE OF MAN**

Christian considers himself the noblest work of God who he shall be united and his self thus becomes grant luminous. Christian values men so highly, because they believed that man is made in the image of a personal God. Thus man's freedom, his self consciousness, his sense of values, his creativity, his heroism, his conscience; they derive from the personal God who is the source of their being. Similarly, their conceptions of truth, beauty, goodness and purpose derive from the God who enshrines them all. That is what makes man valuable; he is God's creation.

Though christianity is a highly personal thing, yet it has a social aspect and social role to play. The
primary requirement of society is the common possession of social values which individuals controls the actions of self and others and through which society is perpetuated. These social values emanate from religious faith.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The Indian constitution laid a special emphasis on social equality on the one hand and social justice on the other. Social justice relates more to the informal to the formal or legal justice. It relates to the institution, conventions and moral rules. Social justice consists in the apportionment of goods of jobs and privileges, of rewards and punishments in accordance with the moral standards and principles. Justice have been enshrined in many rules of the society. Right through the centuries justice was condigned to the enforcement of law and order. It was during the British rules that the concept of liberty was included in justice. In the post independence of India, equality was added. Now, justice requires the promotion of not only liberty and equality but also security, freedom from want, fear and frustration.
Right through the centuries, social justice has been a social value among the Tangkhul Nagas. Accepting this principles and even the enactment which render any infringement of these laws punishable, does emotionally ensure that these new values have been assimilated into their culture.

RATIONAL OUTLOOK

Another very important social value which could be identified during the middle 20th century is a rational outlook of life. The enlightened citizen realised that so long as superstition pervaded every aspect of life there could not be any progress. Superstition dominated among the Tangkhul animists. Further there is superstition among the Tangkhul christian groups. So through platform and press, strenous attempt is being made on the one hand, to purify christianity and on the other, to reduce if not eliminate the influence of superstition in the daily life of the people. And still on its process among the Tangkhuls.

NAGA NATIONALISM

The most dominant value among the Tangkhuls or Nagas society is the national outlook, national
integration or Naga independence. With the establishment of Naga National Council in 1946, nationalism became a dominant value for the Nagas. This is a new phenomenon among the Tangkhuls and other Naga tribes. In the preceding centuries the aim of the people was to maintain a strong village state. There was never an idea of establishing a Naga state. Thus, national outlook became prominent only in the middle of twentieth century and gripped the whole Nagas territories in its fight for independence or Naga integration. The Naga national leaders strove very hard to bring about a Naga national outlook among the various Naga tribes, linguistic groups, regional groups and villages. To a large extent Naga national leaders were able to instill among the people such a national outlook because of the tremendous campaign that they launched.

In connection with the Naga national movement, R. Suisa, a well known Naga politician writes thus:

"Neighbour's land for us to get in mind have we none,
Nor 'gainst neighbours any will ill have got none,
Nor have we stood in the way of any nation
O, no malice only strive we for what we want.

Free life is what we want. ³

The political ambition of the Tangkhul Nagas as with other Naga tribes, is equal to what the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore writes in his poem 'Where The Mind Is Without Fear And The Head Is Held High'.

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