CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

5.1 The present study is an attempt to investigate and to understand the impact of education on modernity of the Ao community with special reference to women. Ao society has passed through significant social change and transformation over the years which is intriguing. The investigator has in a humble way made an effort to look at few facets of social spectrum which were affected. The transition from a close and conservative traditional way of life to modernity was rather slow and it has taken time. However, the process was relentlessly progressive. It is observed that the change of Ao society from its traditional form to modernity is inextricably associated with the advent of British administration and the American missionaries to this secluded corner of the North East India. Therefore a study of this nature would not be complete without an understanding of the contributing factors. Hence a brief overview of the works of the missionaries has been made and frequently referred to the works of earlier writers. Unfortunately,
secondary sources of data and information was scanty and very few as no scholar has taken up a study on this particular subject. The investigator collected materials and data from primary sources through Questionnaire cum Interview Schedule served to the respondents. It is the observation of the investigator that the beliefs and the traditional customary practices of the people proved to be a fertile soil and provided a congenial milieu for modernity to take roots in Ao community.

In this present work it is observed that in Ao society, education and Christianity cannot be dichotomised easily. They go hand in hand. Aos had no written language so the forefathers preserved and transmitted their established customary laws and cultural practices orally from one generation to another. It is one of the reasons why secondary sources of information are lacking. It was the American missionaries who introduced Roman script in Ao language and taught how to read and write. Besides preaching, Dr. E. W. Clark was engaged in production of Christian literature. Some of his literary works are: Ao Naga Primer No. 1 (1877), Naga Catechism (1878), Gospel of Mathew (1882), Naga Hymn Book (1883), Gospel of John (1884), Life of Joseph (1884), Ao Naga Grammar (1893),
An Ao woman enjoyed almost equal status with her male counterpart. But in certain areas of social life she is inferior to men. She cannot be a member of village council, she cannot perform religious ceremonies, she cannot inherit property, she cannot hold dangerous jobs in the village. Education had gained importance in the society considerably, now her position in the society is considerably increased. An educated woman has shifted her role from home to different fields of social and economic life. However, an Ao woman was not considered as a home maker, housewife and mother of her children. The increase of education is more palpably felt in the family. It is observed that increased literacy rate of Ao women, which is higher than other Naga Index, it attributes to the advancement of Ao in many fields. The term "modernisation" and its interpretation is considered. Modernisation is an elusive and nebulous term which lacks a clear and precise definition. It may mean...
An Ao woman enjoyed almost equal status with her male counterpart. But in certain areas of social life she is equated with children, debarred and discriminated. She cannot be a member in village council, she cannot perform religious rites and ceremonies, no rights for inheritance of family properties. Education had its impact in improving the status of women considerably. Now her position in the society is uplifted at equal footing with man. There is no gender bias and discrimination. An educated woman has shifted her place from home to different new fields of work as bread earner.

However, an Ao woman has not neglected her primary role as a home maker, housewife and mother of her children. The influence of education is more palpably felt in this home front. An educated woman knows how to maintain her home and to bring up children. She is better informed about nutrition, child health care, sanitation, family planning and offers better guidance to the family. It is observed that increased literacy rate of Ao women, which is higher than other Naga tribes, is attributed for the advancement of Aos in many fields.

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definitely bring a change in mental attitude from a rigid form to a rational, flexible and resilient character.

The preceding chapters dealt with the impact of education on Ao community towards modernity with special reference to women. The responses of Ao people from different backgrounds and professions were analysed. They were drawn from Nagaland civil service, journalists, medical and health services, teachers and professors in colleges and university, town planners, theologians, librarians, housewives, retired government servants etc. Some salient findings and observations on analysis of the data obtained from the Questionnaire cum Interview schedule served to them are discussed.

In this concluding chapter a summarization of the observations and a critical evaluation is attempted. Societal change can take place in manifold ways. Discussion on all its varied aspects can be cumbersome and some may even prove to be irrelevant. Therefore, the study concentrated on five areas pertaining to women education, marriage, and divorce, religion, status of women, custom and tradition. Effort was made to see the attitudinal change that has taken place among Ao people on those major areas due to dissemination of education and social change that took place as a consequence.
In traditional Ao society there were neither schools nor written language to impart formal education to the youngsters. However, traditional institutions of learning did exist for both boys and girls. Arju for boys and Tsuki for girls were time tested institutions of learning since time immemorial. These institutions imparted learning required for a citizen and exercised great influence on their social life. In many ways these institutions moulded the boys and girls to become responsible citizens. The word education is derived from Latin word "educare" which means to develop or to draw out. So by the term education we understand growth and development. Adams in his book, "Evolution of Education Theory," says, "Education is a conscious and deliberate process in which one personality acts upon another in order to modify the development of that other by communication and manipulation of knowledge." Going by those statements, it can be inferred that the Aos have developed an efficient learning system in its customary praxis.

5.2 **Women Education in Ao community.**

(a) Before introduction of formal Education.

In traditional Ao society there were neither schools nor written language to impart formal education to the youngsters. For the girls too, learning was started at home from parents, aunts and the elders. For the girls are not supposed to sleep in the house of their parents. They slept in the house of the younger generation. Anyways, learning for boys and girls was imparted by their parents. The education of the boys was more rigorous as compared to girls. The education of girls was more about household work and taking care of younger siblings. The education of boys was more focused on learning about the community, nature and how to contribute to the community. The education of girls was more focused on learning about household work and preparing them for their role as a wife and mother.

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Their culture, customs, practices, ethos and also duties required of a citizen were all learnt from the elders. For the girls too, learning was started at home from parents, aunts and elders of the clan. On attaining puberty, girls are not supposed to sleep in the house of their parents. They slept in the house of an elderly widow from the same clan or phratry. It was called Tsuki—an institution of learning for girls. It was incumbent upon every girl in the village on attaining puberty to sleep in Tsuki till they got married. At Tsuki they freely mixed with girls and boys of their age group, entertained themselves and learnt to work collectively in the fields. There the girls learnt folk songs, dances, folk lore, handicrafts such as weaving, designing, ritual practices. In fact, it was at Tsuki the girl learnt discipline, respect for elders, customary laws and prepared herself in the community which was required of a woman should do. In their society a woman who is adept in weaving or who is a hard worker in the field was regarded in high esteem. Although learning was limited and yet, they followed and practised what they have learnt from their elders religiously and with dedication.
Formal education in Ao community had its beginning when a school was started by the American missionaries in 1878. It was a school for girls, initially with six students on enrolment. Ever since, Ao women have played a major role in the dissemination of education, building of the state and in the process of modernisation. At the beginning the conservative Aos resented girls’ going to school which they thought led to neglect of household chores and work in the fields. At this crucial juncture the church, which was beginning to emerge as a dominant organisation, gave encouragement and moral support to the girls. Thus women education continued to progress and women folk took proactive role in its dissemination. Mary Mead Clark, wife of Dr. E. W. Clark wrote in her book, "A Corner in India, thus, Tongpangkokla and Nungsangla, school girl associates were baptized. Tongpangla became a valuable helper, teaching in our day school, and visiting with me from house to house." Tongpangkokla later went to another village called Yajang in 1888 where she taught in a school as well as took responsibility of pastoral job in the church.
Thus she was the first Ao woman who was a school teacher and woman pastor of a church. Today in Ao society and in Nagaland at large, women have excelled in academic performance and other fields of activities. The literacy rate of Ao women has also shown appreciable decadal growth. Female literacy rate of Mokokchung district in 1991 was 74.88 as compared to 54.76 of Nagaland. In 2001 census it was increased to 82.20 in Mokokchung district whereas, Nagaland female literacy is only 61.92.

As a result of the impact of education, the attitude and world view of Ao parents are undergoing tremendous change. They have realised the importance and value of education at present times, so they have prioritised it for their children. Ao parents are sending their wards to the best schools they can afford. Here there is no discrimination between boy and girl child. They are treated equally. It is evident from the fact that more girls are pursuing higher education away from homes to distant places and even to places outside the state. Parents often prefer to send their children to vocational, technical, and job oriented courses such as medical, engineering, veterinary, agriculture, legal and theological studies.
Parents today are more conscious about their choice of the type of education for their wards. They plan it after discussing all the possibilities in the light of their talents, potentialities and interests of the children. They encourage them to choose particular stream of general and professional education. This is indeed a perceptible change in the outlook and the attitude of the people in Ao community towards choice of career and need oriented education for their children particularly about the education of women.

This trend in changed outlook and development of women education have transformed the social scenario. Earlier women’s place was confined to four walls at home and her world in the field. Now they are venturing into new frontiers of social activities. They are working shoulder to shoulder with the men folk in all spheres of activities – civil services, police, teachers, doctors, engineers, architects, in business and a variety of other fields. Nevertheless, it is admirable that an Ao woman has not neglected her primary role as a home maker and a mother to her children. The great impact of education this study revealed was in this home front. An educated and literate mother is a great asset and yields great dividends to the family and the society.
She is conscious and better informed about child health care, better nutrition, family planning, sanitation, and upbringing of children. So there is a generation of youngsters today who are enjoying better health status and they are better informed about the world around. She is thus instrumental in bringing about a new enlightened generation.

However, it is lamentable and deplorable that people have not understood and differentiated between modernity and westernisation, an alien western culture. Along with formal education, western culture crept into the society and came into conflict with the ethical and moral values of Ao traditional society. Honesty, truthfulness, hard work, discipline, respect to elders and authority, strict adherence to customary laws and cultural practices which were seen in Ao society are gradually vanishing with the emergence of a neo-culture of individualism, materialism, Selfishness, disrespect to authority, indiscipline and decay of moral values. All these unhealthy trends have eroded the strong social fabric that existed in Ao society. This is largely a by-product of a defective educational system and curriculum incompatible to social ethos and one which have neglected to adhere to the higher ethical values and virtues of one's own tradition.
5.3 **Marriage and Divorce in Ao Community.**

(a) **Before introduction of formal Education.**

Family is nuclear, exogamous and patrilineal in Ao society. This traditional form exist even in modern times. The bond of family is very strong which withstood the test of time. When a girl attains puberty she has to sleep in Tsuki, the house of elderly widow belonging to the same clan. She has to undergo tattooing ceremony also. Tattooing of the calf of the leg is called "Jangpangmerem". Before tattooing, her hair is shaved. She is now entitled to live according to the accepted marriage rules. Adultery after marriage invited rigorous punishment called *Kela* and the girl is not permitted to be engaged for marriage. Once the ceremony of tattooing is completed, the woman is considered ready for marriage.

Girls enjoyed equal freedom with the boys. They mixed freely with her age group of both sexes. The boys belonging to different clan woo girls in Tsuki. Thus Tsuki system was not only for learning but a period for courtship when they came into close relationship with the opposite sex culminating in engagement and marriage.
Marriage system among the Aos was very firmly rooted in the age old tradition and customary practices and norms. It was evolved on an ethical standard upon which the framework of social fabric and structure was built. It is believed by the Aos that marriage law was instituted at Chungliyimti. So marriage is a strong social bond among the Aos and marriage offences were severely punished. Before marriage boys and girls enjoyed freedom and freely mixed among themselves in Tsuki as well as during festivals and in other fields of activities. But as soon as they consummated in marriage they could no longer live as they like. They come under the strict scrutiny of the clan and village authority and they are obligated to live according to the accepted marriage code. Acts of adultery after marriage invited rigorous punishment and fines called Kela met. 10

- In Ao society, marriage is monogamous. Bigamy and polygamy are strictly prohibited.
- It is exogamous which permits marriages between different marriageable clans. Marriage among close relatives and of the same clan is an anathema. They are punished to the
extent of expulsion from the village. Their children are called "Adianuza", that is, child of brother-sister. It is an abhorrent term for the Aos. No hereditary names are given to them. They lose identity, inheritance and social status of any kind.

- There was no dowry system and no purchase of bride.

- Illegitimate children have no place in the society.

- Poverty in the family often led to adultery and divorce.

- Marriages between warring villages are restricted and also with a village where war dispute is not settled.

In Ao traditional society, marriage was considered seriously and unfaithfulness of the spouses in their wedlock was not accepted by the community. However, strangely divorce was very common. It was stated by J. P. Mills thus, "divorce is amazingly common, in fact, it is very rarely that one meets an Ao man or woman of any age who has been married only once. Divorced persons remarry soon, and after one or two experiments most people find a
mate for life." The common cause for divorce was for one reason or another as under.

- Want of issue or children was an important reason for divorce. When a couple has no issue or if there is no son but only daughters, it led to divorce. In Ao custom it is the male son who bears the name of the father and who inherits family property. Father with many sons had a high social standing.

- Poverty in the family often led to divorce. Laziness, excessive indulgence in alcohol, which resulted in poverty, cause disharmony and discord between the spouses and ultimate break up of the family.

- Interference from the in-laws in some cases resulted strained relation between husband and wife causing divorce.

- Act of adultery especially by the wife resulted in divorce. Wife often tolerates isolated acts of adultery by the husband, though there is uproar in the family.
Therefore, the marriage contract now is stronger and divorce is not accepted favourably by the church and the other hand is conducted with God and the congregation of the Church. The union is for life till death part them.

In traditional marriage, divorce rate was very high. The act of adultery committed by wife is not tolerated by the husband and she is easily forced out from the house. 13

(b) After the introduction of formal Education.

Introduction of formal education and Christianity go hand in hand in Ao community. During his long residence in Ao area Dr. E.W. Clark started many activities for social upliftment besides preaching the gospel. Among them he started the institution of marriage in the church. The first Christian marriage took place on 4th April, 1878. 14 Since then, it has become the only accepted norm of marriage in Ao society. There are differences between traditional marriage and Christian marriage. Traditional marriage was an ordinary social contract without binding obligation against dissolution. 15 So in traditional marriage, divorce rate was very high. The Christian marriage on the other hand is conducted with solemnity under oath before God and the congregation of the Church. The union is for life till death part them. Therefore, the marriage contract now is stronger and divorce is not accepted favourably by the church and the

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society unless there is sufficient ground for the divorce. Thus with the introduction of formal education divorce rate and the number of broken homes have been reduced. Parents are now aware of the psychological trauma the children of divorced families undergo. Hence there are more restraints and self-control on both sides. Education has also broken the barriers among different tribes which existed earlier. There is now more contacts and social interaction among the tribes. Thus marriages among different tribes are frequently taking place. This is going to be an important factor in the integration of the nation.

5.4 Religious beliefs and practices among Ao Community.

(a) Before introduction of formal Education.

Traditionally Aos were religious in the sense that he could not conceive of anything around his universe without attaching a sense of supernatural power operating in all the phenomena. Aos were not worshipper of idols. Their religion was called animism, but how far the term really connotes the system is debatable. Religious beliefs form the
society, which determines the ethical, moral values, the ethos and guiding principle of behaviour and actions. All religions have an ordered system of beliefs and their practices. Aos also had a well established and systematised form. It is their concept about god, that greatly influenced the manner in which they conducted themselves in their polity and affairs of every day life. An Ao would be saying there are many gods but ultimately conclude to a point— that there is a god who sees everything we do on the earth.

Aos worshipped wood, stone and nature because in their own way they believed that these were the revelation of supernatural being in different forms. They believed in the god who created the earth and everything that exist. Him they called “Lichaba”. They believed in another god “Longtisungba”, the lord of heaven and heavenly things. Another god whom they called “Tiar” or “Tiaba” was the god that predestined the destiny and fortune of a man. “Meyutsungba” was the god over the dead. He is believed to be the judge and retributor after death. Besides, the above mentioned gods, there were many minor deities and spirits or
demons some of which they believed were benevolent and other were malevolent in nature. In every sphere of his life and in whatever he does an Ao associated the involvement of the presence or influence of the supernatural being.

It was their belief that unless these gods and spirits are appeased or assuaged they would face calamity and misfortune in their lives. They also attributed all sickness, illness, epidemics, accidents and natural calamities as the displeasures and wrath of gods. With this basic beliefs Aos had to offer blood sacrifice in their worship and ceremonies such as pigs, cocks, eggs and others. They observed these religious ceremonies in all important occasions in their civic and private life. Besides warding off wrath of gods they also invoked divine blessings in their works. Therefore, the religious ceremonies and rites were very numerous. It was very difficult for a poor man to observe all the religious rites required of him. This made them poorer and their lives difficult.

Another remarkable concept of the Aos was their belief of a life after death and retribution received according to his/her deeds while alive on earth. An Ao's god
"Meyutsungba" is the lord over dead, the god of justice and truth, the supreme judge. It is believed that after death, the soul of man goes to the gate of Meyutsungba where every deed, good deeds as well as wrong doing and sins committed by the person in his life time is exposed and revealed and just reward or punishment is meted out to him. If a man happen to be a thief while alive, in the gate of Meyutsungba all the things he had stolen are exposed and the man is put in great shame. Meyutsungba does not know forgiveness, he knows only how to judge right from wrong. He is regarded as a god of righteousness so he demanded justice, purity, honesty, humility and truth. It is because of such a high concept of a righteous god and consequent retribution according to man's deeds that, the Aos in its traditional society, were known for honesty, truthfulness, faithful to his word. All these virtues resulted from a fear of god and retribution, which he would face after death.

Ao society was so entrenched by taboos that every venture was preceded and followed by superstitious observations. To break a taboo was unimaginable since they firmly believed that this would result in calamity or misfortune.
Every religious ceremony, communal or household, was governed by a taboo. There was no priestly class specified to perform religious ceremonies. The oldest man in the village was virtually the high priest and he performed religious rites. Priestly council called "Pati" was comprised of a group of elders drawn from each clan. The oldest man in the clan was the priest for the clan. The father is the household priest often assisted by his wife in performing religious rites. Every village had a sacred place near the village gate called "Amung." Altars and religious platforms were taboo for children and women. Women had no right to perform religious rites in Ao society. 16

(b) After introduction of formal Education.

Introduction of formal education and Christianity took place simultaneously in Ao area. Religion in a traditional society is usually an outcome of man's fear of the unknown. Natural phenomena, which he could not comprehend and which were beyond his limited knowledge, they attributed to the works of supernatural powers. It was also his superstitious belief that to receive protection and blessings
from the gods he had to worship them and appease them with sacrifices. It was education, which enlightened man’s intelligence. It directed man to start rational thinking, and a scientific temper in his approach to nature and to the world around him. Thus development of education has removed many cobwebs of superstitions. In Ao traditional religion, man did not conceive of a loving god who forgave sins and the wrong deeds committed by him. His concept of god was a righteous, just, stern god who dispensed only justice. Love was not found in their vocabulary. Therefore, when Christian missionaries preached about a loving God, depicting fatherhood, who loved and forgave sins of the people if they confessed them, and a God who promised a blissful life after death, many Aos willingly accepted the new religion offered to them. To appease the gods and the spirits, Aos had a long list of religious rites and ceremonies involving animal sacrifices. For a poor family this proved to be very expensive and sometimes beyond his means of income. A poor man became poorer. Christianity did not preach about blood sacrifice stating that sacrifice made by Jesus in the cross was enough for all mankind for all eternity. Moreover, people becoming more enlightened in their
thinking with the dissemination of education, traditional ceremonies of blood sacrifices were stopped. This has eased the poor man’s economic position. In traditional religion women had no place at all. She could not perform any religious rites and ceremonies. It was a taboo for a woman to approach religious altars and platforms of sacrifice. She could not think of becoming a priest in the community. Now woman has gained her status, and she can equally participate in religious matters. She is entitled to preach in the churches and can even be a religious leader. Consequently, there are many women theologians, teachers in theological colleges, pastoring churches, and working as evangelists. In theological education, girls have surpassed boys. The registration of Ao students at Theological colleges in 1985-86, according to Ao Theological Conference registration shows 45% males and 54% females. The Ao Theological Conference had passed a resolution to give equal privileges of ministerial service to women in the churches even to a pastoral post. 17
5.5 Status of women in Ao Society.

(a) Before introduction of formal Education.

In many ways an Ao woman enjoyed almost equal rights and privileges as man. An Ao woman always belonged to a certain age group ranging from three to five years of both sexes. They freely mixed and participated in community festivals, religious ceremonies, dances, folk songs, working together in the fields and in other activities. Her friends from opposite sex visited her at Tsuki, exchanged pleasantries, recreated themselves exchanging folk songs folk lore etc. This was a period of courtship too which ultimately culminated in engagement and marriage. Moreover, an Ao woman has always a clan and agnate heirs behind her to support and protect her in difficult times, illness, construction of her house and in any suit. They will attend and perform funeral rites too at her demise. 18

However, her primary role is at home to serve her husband well and to look after the children. She is also expected to be a hard worker in the fields, cultivation, good at weaving, conversant in folk songs, folk lore, dancing etc.
But being a weaker sex and often equated with children, she was debarred and discriminated in certain areas of social life.

- She cannot act as a priest and perform religious rites and ceremonies even though she may be the oldest in the village. In family religious rites and ceremonies also she can only assist her husband. In Ao culture, it is a taboo for children and women to approach an altar or platform of sacrifice.

- A woman cannot be a member of village council called "Pitu Menden". It is the highest body in a village democratic set up. It has all the legislative, executive and judiciary powers. Thus she has no right in village polity though she can influence her husband indirectly.

- An Ao woman had no right to speak in public to express her opinions and to ventilate her grievances. She had to bear her lot silently and submissively.

- She is not entitled to fame or revered titles as the men folk.
She cannot inherit her father's name after her marriage.

A woman had no co-ownership with sons regarding family properties.

(b) After introduction of formal Education.

The status of women in Ao society improved perceptibly after introduction of formal education. Ao women had accepted her place in the family and in society submissively as practised and handed down from their forebears since time immemorial. So women felt that their main duty in life as a woman was to perform household chores, fetch water and firewood, cook rice for the family, look after her husband and children well, weave clothes for the family members, and work hard in the field. Other civic duties she had relinquished completely to their men folk. This docile mental attitude was so deeply engrained in their psyche that for many years even after introduction of Christianity and education it was difficult for Ao women to be liberated. Mrs. Clark wrote that there was difficulty in persuading women that this religion was for them as well as their
husbands and sons. Their mental attitude and concept that religion and education were for their husbands and sons proved to be a decided hindrance to the extension of Christianity in many villages. Thus the change in the status of women, which did occur, was rather slow and tardy.

With the passage of time, Ao women emerged as chrysalis from the cocoon of customs and traditions, which confined them for years and transformed the present social scenario. Education initiated a new thinking process, from notional to rational thinking, narrow parochialism to a wider horizon in their approach. Women are also exposed to a larger world around them. They have developed better skill due to dissemination of knowledge with a scientific temper. So they are more efficient, confident of themselves and self-reliant. Equality of sexes in employment and in all spheres of human activities and freedom of expression as enshrined in the Constitution of India has enlightened women. They have become more aggressive and adventurous. Now women are more conscious about their fundamental rights, their place in society and also aware about their duties and responsibilities in the family and community.
• An Educated woman is more aware about her place in the family and the society. Her life and conduct is likewise directed accordingly. She is increasingly involved in all affairs of deliberation and decision-making.

• Both boys and girls are treated equally in the family. They are given equal opportunities to pursue education and vocation in life. More and more girls are leaving their homes in pursuit of higher education away from homes and even outside the state.

• Educated women are now entering into almost all the portals of occupation as man folk. Ao women have occupied posts in different fields, which could not be dreamt of for a woman in the past. There are women teachers in schools, colleges and university, holding responsible posts in civil services, police, medical and health services, engineering, agriculture, veterinary science, ministerial staff in different offices, trade and business etc. Thus women folk are progressing and moving shoulder-to-shoulder with men and working express their views, opinions and grievances in the
closely with them in the developmental activities of the society and the state at large.

- Women are not only home-makers but more and more of them have assumed the role of bread earner as well. Since many women are engaged in business, and government service, the economic status of the family is improved. They can afford to lead a higher standard of living, better food habits, dress and fashion, better homes and amenities with the latest gadgets such as refrigerator, LPG gas and cooker, electronic equipments for their entertainment such as T.V., radio, C.D. players, V.C.R., cable network, telephone, internet service etc. They have also better means of transport as many educated families can afford to buy motor vehicles. Scientific inventions of the 20th and 21st centuries are just too many to be enumerated. Newer gadgets are developed for consumers at a very fast rate.

- Educated women can freely appear in public and express their views, opinions and grievances in the
public platforms. They are aware about their role and also their responsibilities to the society and are seeking to maintain their identity. Thus they have formed non-governmental organisations (N.G.O's) such as Watsu Mungdang, Ladies Club and different other church and secular organisations. Through such organisations they are addressing to many issues of social and religious importance.

- The church, especially has given a big impetus in uplifting the status of women. The first women fellowship was started in 1880 at Mulunyimsen. Its first official conference was formed in 1945 and it was named Ao Baptist Tetsur (Women) Mungdang (Association), where 272 delegates attended. The Ao theological Conference had passed a resolution to give equal privileges and ministerial service to women in the church as well as to hold pastoral posts. Women are thus holding various important posts in the churches and Association. Ao Baptist Women Association hold its annual conference where they take up important prevailing social and religious matters for deliberations and appropriate remedial measures.
• Revered titles for women, which was not imaginable for Ao women, are now given to the deserving candidates. Smti Chubalemla was conferred Padmashree award in 1981, Smti Noksangla who hails from Yaongyimsen village and served mission field occupying different posts and capacity was conferred Reverend title. In the North East part of India she is the first woman who received such a revered title.

• Politics and village polity was considered by Ao women as the domain for their men folk. The change brought by education and modernity is that more women are actively participating in village and the state politics as members in different political parties. Thus women have arisen to political consciousness as well.

5.6 Customs and Traditions in Ao Community.

(a) Before introduction of formal education.

It is said, "Customs and traditions are group-accelerated techniques of control that have become well established, that they are taken for granted and that are passed
Head Hunting. It was this primitive practice that dubbed the Aos as savage headhunters. Traditions says that the Aos learnt warfare and head hunting from ants. According to Ao legend, one day a bird dropped a berry from a tree, and a lizard and a red ant fought for it. A man who was watching saw the ant kill the lizard and cut off its head. That was how man have learnt to take heads. Whatever be the legend and its relevance, this horrible custom of headhunting played a very significant role in their social life. It is rather difficult to attribute any valid reason for the Aos to continue with such a disgusting custom. It is believed among the Aos that their customary laws and practices were evolved while they were at Chungliyimti. It was their firm belief that to break any one of them would lead to disorganisation of their society. It was their adherence to customs and traditions that reflected their way of life, their strength and also their protection. Some of the customs and traditions upheld by the Aos before introduction of formal education are enumerated for purpose of comparison.
about this customs and what made them so crazy after human heads. Revenge could be a ground for warfare but it cannot explain why Aos took heads of innocent men, women and children. The motive behind head hunting appears to be social in nature.25 A man's social position, respect, fame and honour depended upon his prowess in war and how many heads he has taken. A man who has not taken head received social opprobrium. He is called boy or woman and for such a man it was difficult to get a maiden for wife. Those who bring heads are highly regarded and praised. Especially women folk composed songs in their honour. They are also made eligible to wear certain dress and ornaments, insignia proclaiming their bravery. It was rather ironical that during this period of time women and children were the most vulnerable group to head hunters because they were unarmed. Yet it was their women folk who encouraged this practice. They composed songs and sang praises for the braves who brought heads and scorned and laughed at those who could not. Moreover, it was not only at a personal level but even the status of village was rated according to the number of head they have brought to the village.
Feast of Merit. In traditional Ao social life, Feast of Merit held a very prominent place. This is a feast hosted by an individual for the entire community as a declaration of being rich in the community. This feast had also religious connotation. It was the ambition of every Ao to be able to host the Feast of Merit because thereby, he earned for himself honour in this life and in life after. Besides his own, it brought honour for his clan and the village and obtained favour of the spirits and prosperity of great and rich men of the past. He also wins coveted right of wearing certain clothes and ornaments. His sons and daughters are entitled to wear dress befitting the merits of riches of their parents. Feast of merit also conferred on the man decorating his house in a particular way, and the skulls of the sacrificed animal hangs in the outer room which is believed to bring prosperity to him and to his heirs. Feast of Merit consists of a series of ceremonies, each more important than the last. Each feast is followed by design of carving in his house. Essentially the sacrificial animal is the methun. At first one mithun is killed but from the second time any number may be killed according to his ability.
- **Tattooing.** Tattooing had been a custom which was handed down from generation to generation. It was of utmost importance for a girl to be tattooed otherwise she would be in disgrace and could not expect to marry well. So every girl was obligated by their custom to be tattooed which she bore bravely to be accepted in the society. Tattooing was an accepted social custom, but it was a painful process attended with loss of much blood. Puncturing was done with crude implements without aseptic precaution so infection was very common. Often it led to dreadful sores and gangrene.

- **Dress and Ornaments.** In traditional Ao society there was prescribed dress code for each clan. Pattern and design of cloth varied from village to village. However, there were specific pattern of shawl and dress and ornaments for warriors and rich men who had hosted Feast of Merit. As there were definite pattern for each phratry, the dress indicated their respective clan and social standing. It was a serious offence for any one to break this dress code. The dress of Ao man was simple and uniform throughout the tribe.
regarding food. Especially, some food were restricted for certain phratries, women and children. An Ao woman after having tattooed could not eat egg, frogs, crabs and certain kind of fish and meat. Cow's milk was not popularly used because it was believed that if they drink milk the calf would die and also make a man a weakling. Alcohol in the form of local brew was very commonly used especially during festivals. Chewing and smoking of tobacco was also prevalent.

- Food habits. The staple food for the Aos was rice which is still today. Food habits was very simple. However, there were many taboos and restrictions regarding food. Especially, some food were restricted for certain phratries, women and children. An Ao woman after having tattooed could not eat egg, frogs, crabs and certain kind of fish and meat. Cow's milk was not popularly used because it was believed that if they drink milk the calf would die and also make a man a weakling. Alcohol in the form of local brew was very commonly used especially during festivals. Chewing and smoking of tobacco was also prevalent.

The small apron or the abbreviated kilts are of the same shape and size only, the pattern of the cloth differed. If we compare to the dress an Ao man wears now, the dress of their forefathers were very scanty and almost naked except for the loin cloth. Both Ao man and woman loved ornaments. But they were not very many because their contacts with the outside world was very limited.

and allowed to rot away. The corpse laid by the bamboo platform.
The influence of education, the British rule and the teaching of Christianity exerted a significant impact on traditional Ao society and brought about changes in their customary and traditional praxis. The customs and traditions handed down from one generation to another were thus subjected to extraneous forces which brought about social change and transformation.

(b) After Introduction of Formal Education.

The influence of education, the British rule and the teaching of Christianity exerted a significant impact on traditional Ao society and brought about changes in their customary and traditional praxis. The customs and traditions handed down from one generation to another were thus subjected to extraneous forces which brought about social change and transformation.
Among those changes, many were inherently bad and obnoxious while at the same time, some noble practices were abandoned.

- **Head hunting.** Head hunting was a practice which made the Aos to be called savages. Head hunting was against the tenets of Christianity and the British Government also imposed stringent strictures and rules against this savage practice. The people now enlightened in their thinking stopped the evil practice. Once the Aos were filled with fear and could not move about beyond the precincts of their village for fear of losing head. It was a great relief to the people that they could move about freely and mix with others.

- **Feast of Merit.** It was an ambition of every Ao to hold Feast of Merit if he could only afford because this gave high social rating for him and also his posterity. An unmarried person cannot host the Feast of Merit. In this feast women folk played a very important role. Christian missionaries taught that the ceremonies associated with the feast were pagan worship in nature and therefore prohibited Christians to participate in it. The British
Government also prohibited the Feast of Merit as it involved cruelty to animal and incurred heavy expenditure by the host affecting adversely the economy of the village. This practice is now abandoned and rich person instead host Christmas feast to the community.

- **Tattooing.** Practice of tattooing was so deeply entrenched in Ao society that a woman had no social standing without tattoo marks on her body. Therefore, whether one likes it or not, it was incumbent upon every Ao woman to be tattooed. It was a crude procedure so the woman was subjected to great pains and woes during the process. Complications due to bleeding and infection of punctured wounds were not uncommon. As the people became more enlightened due to the influence of education, they came to realize the futility of this horrendous practice. In its annual conference held at Molungyimsen from 12th to 14th March, 1897, the Ao Baptist Arogo Mungdang adopted a resolution for its abolition. Thus it was no longer practised among the Christian community. However, it continued for sometime among the non-Christians which ultimately came to an end. Modern Ao women now use different cosmetics to beautify themselves instead of tattoos.
Dress and Ornaments. There were prescribed code for dress and ornaments for both men and women in Ao society. A phratry could be differentiated by the designs and patterns of their dress. No Aos could think of breaking this code. There was also specific dress designs for warriors and those who had taken heads and also for those who gave Feast of Merit to the community. Thus their dress and the ornaments they wore indicated their social status and regalia. Dissemination of education and Christian teaching have removed much of social differentiation. Especially the concept of democracy which advocated equality of all mankind before the law have been instrumental in this respect. Now a new paradigm of social stratification has evolved. It is based on one’s academic performance and achievements in life. With modernity Ao women have excelled in weaving better clothes, better designs with imported weaving materials. They also adopt western lifestyle in dress and ornaments such as jewelleries of gold, silver, and precious stones.
Food habits. Food habits and lifestyle of the people have undergone changes. There were many restrictions on food for women, which would have produced deleterious effects on the health of the mother and child. With dissemination of education women have understood the basic requirement of nutrients for themselves and their children. So besides their staple food, they have added many items of food in their diet to promote their health. They have learnt the importance of fruits, vegetable and vegetarian diet. Alcohol in the form of local brew was used in plenty in the past. It is not socially accepted now. Use of alcohol is considered as a social evil and is combated vehemently by many Women Organisations.

Disposal of dead bodies. The custom of disposal of the dead was peculiar among the Aos. The dead body was kept at home over fire and a series of rituals were performed for few days. Later the corpse was taken to the grave yard, placed on a platform by the village path and allowed to rot away. It was an offensive and unhealthy practice. With the advent of Christianity this crude form was replaced by decent Christian burial. Dr. E.W. Clark conducted the first Christian burial at Molungyimsen in 1897.
5.7 **CONCLUSION.**

(a) The impact of education on the socio-cultural and economic life of Ao people has been quite significant. The transformation from savage, blood thirsty headhunters to civilisation and modernity are indeed commendable. Hundred percent (100%) of the respondents expressed that there has been considerable change in Ao society. Resilient and flexible character of Ao people helped them to imbibe and assimilate another culture without much resistance. The acculturation that has taken place in Ao society is largely attributed to spread of education. The way to modernize is to spread education and to produce educated and skilled citizen and a competent intelligentsia. The primary aim of education is no longer confined to imparting knowledge alone but an awakening of curiosity, creativity, and development of proper interest, attitude, values and skills. The agency that has brought social change among Ao people was largely the commitment and tireless effort of the missionaries. It is to be understood that prior to the advent of missionaries, Aos had no written language.

(b) **CONCLUSION.**

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However, it is upheld that it defies clear definition. Modernisation is a comprehensive concept and it is aimed at capturing, describing and evaluating profound qualitative and quantitative changes in society. Modernisation is a concept and it defies clear definition. However, it is upheld that modernisation is application of knowledge and education and the advances made in science and technology to the solution of human problems and needs. It is the disposition of mental attitude of the people for change. It is the flexible and resilient attitude for change which has relevance to the present time. The probability is that what is 'modern now may not be so in distant future. Therefore, essentially modernisation is an attitudinal change. In this respect Ao people have demonstrated significant
resilience of character. On analysis of the data obtained from the respondents it is found that 68% of male and female population have shown attitudinal change; 69.75% in females and 66% in males. Attitudinal change was sought in following areas: socio-religion, marriage, position of woman, and education. The finding indicated female dominance. It is thus construed that attitudinal change had been maximum among female population in Ao community.

By nature the Aos were very religious in the sense that they could not conceive of any natural phenomena nor any occurrences around him without ascribing a deity operating on it. Their notional religious concept and superstitious beliefs imprisoned them. They have attributed all sicknesses, calamities and accidents to the displeasure and wrath of gods. Therefore to assuage the gods and to invoke their blessings they performed many religious rites and ceremonies. They often used sacrificial animals in these ceremonies. They were so many that for a poor man it was beyond their means. Many of the superstitious beliefs were crude. If a man falls from a tree and dies, it was a curse from god and a taboo. The whole family had to abandon their
(d) Structure of a traditional society is close, simple, homogeneous and static. It is inflexible and rigid which is dominated by customs and traditions. Nevertheless, it provided a strong social fabric that bound them together. Aos believed that their customary laws and practices were framed at Chungliyimti, their place of origin. Aos strictly adhered to their customs and traditions because to break of any of them would invite severe punishment. However, many of their practices were primitive and savage. For instance, head hunting was regarded in high esteem. Trophy of human heads brought laurels. Inter-village feuds and internecine fighting were frequent which made any citizen insecure. It was not safe to move freely away from their own village. Another was tattooing for women. Women had to bear it bravely to be accepted in the society though it inflicted much pain and suffering. The dress code, food habits, lifestyle

(e) Women enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom in

house, and build a new one. If a woman dies during pregnancy and childbirth it was a taboo too. Education has enlightened the minds of the people to rational thinking and thereby liberated them from the shackles of superstitious beliefs and practices.
had many restrictions. Education along with Christian teachings liberated the people and given them opportunity to taste the fruits of civilisation and modernity.

(e) Women enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom in Ao society. But they could not participate in village polity and lead religious ceremonies. They were also discriminated in inheritance and other areas of social life. They were often rated as children. Introduction of education has exerted a profound influence in the status and the role of women. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents expressed that there have been positive impact of education on modernisation of Ao women. In attitudinal change also women have shown a higher percentage 69.75% as compared to 66% among men. This attitudinal change implies a scientific and rational world view and inculcates a universalistic secular perspective. Ninety percent (90%) respondents reported that women are allowed to work outside their home. Thus women have become not only home makers but also bread earners. Another ninety percent (90%) of the
respondents indicated that before introduction of education there were very little or no opportunity for employment of women. Now the economic condition of the people has considerably improved. Hundred percent (100%) of the respondents favoured co-education which is indicative that there is no gender differentiation. A modern woman is more enlightened, and informed about health and nutrition, child care and upbringing, career guidance for children, home management, family planning and she is more conscious about the affairs of state governance. Today woman has progressed from that of a "preserver of culture" to an active participant in the affairs of society.

(f) Education has brought about many positive changes in human society. However, a critical evaluation is required to assess its strengths, limitations and shortcomings. There is also a feeling that changes that are taking place so fast among the people signal danger. There is danger of deserting one set of cultural and religious values by jumping too fast into an alien western culture without critical thinking and
appreciation. This sudden transition may threaten family norms, social ethics and culture, in the name of modernisation.

- Traditional society is a cohesive social group. Customs and traditions provide strong social bonding. Modern society is loose, individualistic and materialistic. Very often vested interest over rules group interest.

- Work culture was the hallmark of a traditional society. With the development of science and technology and affluence, work culture is neglected. Corruption at all levels of activity, easy money are making in-roads in modern society.

- High moral and ethical values epitomized the traditional culture. Modern society has deviated from its traditional norm and has become amoral and unethical in its dealings with other fellow men.

- Adoption of an alien western culture has proved to be detrimental in many ways. Changed lifestyle in dress,
food habits, entertainments, and mannerism etc., have
inculcated many social evils into society such as alcohol
and drug abuse, spread of HIV/AIDS which cannot be
ignored.

- Ultimately, the education system becomes a subject of
debate. Thirty percent (30%) of respondents expressed that
present education system is not satisfactory. It is the
expressed opinion that while cultural change is
inevitable, social change should have moorings on
one's culture and ethos. System of education that is
going to generate and emanates social change and
transformation should have a basis which appreciates
high moral and ethical values and one that is
adaptable to one's rich tradition and culture.
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You are therefore requested to give appropriate responses to the following questions. There are some questions of Yes/No type which you may put a tick mark either to Yes or No with which you agree. There are some open-ended questions where you can freely express your views, opinions and give factual information.

Your kind cooperation is highly solicited.

Yours sincerely,

( RONGSENNUNGLA )
Investigator.