CHAPTER VIII

Summary and Conclusion

Taking note of the Shiipfomaramth youths' experiences, the account in the foregoing chapters show that the problems confronted by them is largely linked to the unprecedented process of social change. In the wake of rapid social change, the problems on social, economic, political and cultural front have immensely increased, which have not left the youth unaffected. Undoubtedly, the findings reveal that to understand the challenge that confronts the youth as well as the approach in solving these problems, it is imperative to take into account the general situation of the Shiipfomaramth society. In this context, the youth are not a category alienated from the whole but an integral part of it, which participate in and experience the issues confronting the society at large. An aspect that may be considered fundamental and integral of the problem that the Shiipfomaramth youth faces is one, which permeates not only the economic but also the political and cultural systems.

It is noteworthy that the relatively static and isolated community, which characterised the Shiipfomaramth, has given way to unprecedented change with its contact to the outside world. The main factors that brought about change among the Shiipfomaramth Nagas were colonial rule, conversion to Christianity and popularization of the western education. Under the influence of these forces, their social, political, economic and religious spheres have changed. It can be argued that there is not a single social segment that has been left unscathed from the impact of these forces.

On the socio-economic plane, the co-operative ethos that underlined their relationship is being gradually replaced by the rise of a new consciousness based on economic power. This development has resulted in the growth of individualism and emergence of economic disparity in the community. In the political sphere, the traditional institution of chieftainship has been humbled and the village councillors (authorities) are made directly responsible to the government. Introduction of the modern political system and electoral politics has given rise to more dissension, dishonesty and malpractice, and replacing the practice of consensus, which they followed not so long ago. Expansion of formal education, stagnancy of economic development, differential attitude and Valley or
Meitei-centric governmental policies has resulted in large numbers of unemployment among the educated youth, which are affecting both the youth in particular and the society as a whole. Besides, the realisation of the awareness in higher studies dawn rather late and only when there was increase in unemployment problems, deepening economic problems and rising structural constraints.

In the wake of socio-economic and educational changes and coming of Christianity, the findings have shown that the growth of a 'new class' interest is no longer in harmony with the traditional communitarian way of life. The present study reveals an increase sense of 'class' consciousness and economic division in contrast to the earlier way of life, which was relatively a classless society. This change led to the emergence of 'the haves' and 'the have-nots' in the society. The Shiipfomaramth society is changing and developing, no doubt, but real beneficiaries are those who could maneuver in the exploitation of economic machinery of the state to serve their selfish interest. The poor sections of the population are still deprived of even essential daily requirements. The state of development and change has mainly benefited, the economically well-off, the socially high-ups and the politically advantageous.

It is revealed that the causes of the problems of the Shiipfomaramth youth invariably stem from social, political, educational and economic reasons. The problems of the youth have been further compounded with poor governance, political instability and differential attitudes of the government towards their grievances. In all cases, the government policy has been to ignore their problems but covertly encourages the use of military forces without adequately addressing the real causes of the problems. It is found that the Shiipfomaramth youth in most cases are neglected and denied of fair treatment in terms of employment and educational facilities.

The findings show that there is a sea change in the socialisation of today's youth when compared to the earlier generations. It reveals that their tradition is under threat due to non-holistic educational system, inadequate blending of similar values found in both the traditions – indigenous and Christian – and misuse of the cultural value of wine (rice beer) in traditional practice. At the same time, the attempt of the West to create universal westernisation by making modernisation and westernisation synonymous has confused
the youth and the society at large. What the Shiipfomaramth society need is modernisation and not westernisation.\(^1\)

In this regard, the hypothesis, ‘the structural constraints and economic backwardness results in the weak conceptual insight and low motivation in studies’, is found to be justified. We have seen that ‘structural constraints’ are crucial factors responsible for weak educational attainment among the Shiipfomaramth youth. There is structural bias in curriculum and syllabus that favour the elite and urban cultures. It is also found that educational curriculum has less coverage on the local (Shiipfomaramth) culture, tradition and way of life to ignite continuity and belongingness. This is a major contributory factor leading to weak conceptual insight. It is unfortunate that in Indian society the tribal are considered less equal; therefore, the tribal students are faced with the composite problems of demoralisation, alienation and unequal treatment. Another factor in constraint in education is due to poor economic condition. Indeed, this alone is proving to be one of the most fatal factors in promotion of education.

Similarly, the hypothesis on ‘low academic attainment is the consequence of unequal facilities and lack of conducive social environment’ is found correct (details presented in Chapter-IV). It is found that the model of assessing efficiency on the basis of ‘equality of output’ instead of ‘equality of opportunity’ has gone against the interest of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Together this revealed the absence of equal opportunities and chances for the deprived and less privileged like the Shiipfomaramth youth. Often, what happens in such a case is the singular focus on tribal background, which has overshadowed other drawbacks such as bad infrastructure, inadequate facilities and poor quality of education, among others.

It is found that although education is seen as a gateway for a better future, this is greatly influenced by the sort of opportunities and knowledge one has accumulated. Correspondingly, the curriculum and syllabus based on the elite and urban cultures, the lack of holistic curriculum and disjuncture to social needs have resulted in less interest to learn. In this way, the people’s everyday experiences and mode of lives have been ignored and ‘cultural colonialism’ has become a reality in education. This has limited

\(^1\) Modernity is understood here as more a question of approach, of thinking and values, instead of a mere speech, dress or lifestyle.
creativity and damaged the ability to act with will. It can be seen as a process of colonising the mind, to the extent that one lost the ability to act objectively and critically. This does not help to develop strong taste and aptitudes towards the subject. The kind of teaching and the objective of education have become the elite and urban cultural discourse. Whatever the Shiipfomaramth youth learnt was altogether a different thing from their conventional experiences. Misrepresentation and negligence of one's cultural tradition in educational system not only give low interest in learning but also alienate and creates cultural discontinuity.

Inequality of opportunities sometimes breeds violence. Young, strong and keen to learn but deprived of such opportunities could push a person into destructive ways. Inequality of opportunity and feeling of being neglected is becoming an object of torment in life. Having an untapped mind and half-educated knowledge can easily lead to revolt and challenge the existing authorities. The agitation and movement does not originate in a vacuum but is, by and large, the outcome of the prevailing socio-political-economic environment and existent exigency. Thus, the exploration shows that the maintaining of the cultural tradition (commonalties and peculiarities) of all-major communities and tribal groups is imperative.

It is therefore, recommended that future education strategy should try to protect and give coverage of all the communities including small tribal groups. Such innovation would not only make the teacher conscious on the syllabus but also can make student conscious. To achieve this, a home-school harmonious environment is essential. Syllabus and curriculum should be in touch with the existential social reality. Healthy incorporation of native knowledge and local wisdom with modern knowledge is the sure road to development. To keep at par with rapid change, periodical evaluation of curriculum in harmony with local socio-cultural aspects deserves urgent attention. Besides, both technical and vocational studies need to be introduced along side of the traditional courses.

In the same manner, the hypothesis on 'lack of initiative to blend the identical social values, which exists in both the indigenous tradition and Christianity has resulted in confusion of values' is by and large affirmed. Christianity has changed the whole worldview of the Shiipfomaramth Nagas. It is seen that Christianity has relieved them
from the perceived social and psychological enslavement to the belief in malevolent spirits. In the process of change and christianisation, however, due to inadequate blending of identical indigenous values with the emerging one (Christianity) has given rise to another circle of confusion in social values for the youth. The Shiipfomaramth Nagas have developed the taste and outlook of the western value system, which is endangering their valuable tradition thereby losing ground of their cultural heritage. In the process, it not only corrodes the socialisation of the youth but also impedes the growth of the society. The process of change and westernisation in the form of christianisation in their society is hollow, which is undermining the native values. This, in turn, has led not only to cultural discontinuity but also to confusion of values among the youth.

Amidst this tide of change, the resonating echo is the need to contextualise the local socio-cultural system at par with socio-religious change (Christianity) for self-actualisation and cultural autonomy within the larger whole. It requires innovation of modalities to inculcate and reconcile the old and new traditions. This finding has to a large extent supported the proposition that ‘the confusion of social values is the outcome of the inability to follow either the indigenous tradition or western (Christianity) value system’.

Further, the proposition that ‘the misuse of cultural value of wine and imitation of modern lifestyle has led to increase fondness of alcohol’ has been justified. The study shows that the changing lifestyle and behaviour of the youth is not commensurate with the Shiipfomaramth socio-cultural and economic development. The fact is that their economic system continues to remain essentially at the subsistence level and agrarian in character. Their economy is still dominated by nature-based occupation. They are educationally backward, inadequate in infrastructure and have lesser jobs opportunities. This shows that one-sided change with no continuity of traditional deterrence and with no modernising of traditional practices produce a contradictory lifestyle.

Consequently, behaviour and lifestyle of the youths have reflected a blind imitation of other’s ways. This has revealed how emulation of modern lifestyle in haste, including drinking alcohol, has caused major social concern. Living without one’s values moored to socio-cultural norm and economic reality has proved to be a major problem. The influenced lifestyle of drinking alcohol as a symbol of modernity does not work at
the empirical level. Neither does it in anyway help regain the value their culture placed on wine.

At the same time the prevailing social environment is not helping the youth to desist from alcohol. There is a failure in the role of society and the family to curb the growing menace of alcohol. This finding has supported the proposition that ‘easy availability of alcohol and abundance of non-committed individuals to combat its menace has resulted in increased problem of drinking’. However, lack of discipline and irresponsibility behaviour is also a contributing factor in the rise of alcoholism. Apart from strong negative role from indecisive persons to control the growing menace of alcohol individual lack of self-control has perpetuated the problems.

What is noteworthy is that social change in the Shiipfomaramth society occurred with less continuity. There is less amalgamation of tradition and change in their socio-cultural stride whether in educational system or in political life. There are many agents rather than one, which bring about social change and also affect the youth social growth. Therefore, what we find is that social change in the Shiipfomaramth society mainly occurred within the processes of westernisation, which were structured in the educational, religious and political systems.

The findings have also described the fundamental traditional institution and the social cultural life of the Shiipfomaramth Nagas. It is found that their traditional mode of life is predominantly communitarian and holistic in outlook. At the same time, the various factors of social change have been broadly analysed, which brought about a sea change in their society. We notice that the exogenous forces of social change alone cannot provide a new lease of life and a sense of sufficiency. It is, therefore, recommended that those identical values of an existing traditional value need to be incorporated within the emerging new social order in order to avoid further confusion of value. Incidentally, the values of the new social order can fuse happily within the existing traditional virtues.

Any change in the social structure comes about when people experience change in the cultural value system. Therefore, it is essential to understand the problem of change in value system in order to measure the validity of traditional values in a fast changing society like the Shiipfomaramth. In this regard, we found that there is more similarity of
values between the indigenous and emerging traditions (Christianity). While studying the Shiipfomaramth Nagas’ traditional mode of life, it shows the predominant values in their earlier practices as well as the level of change in these values.

Though changes have occurred in social structure of the Shiipfomaramth society, it is relatively at a low scale. It would be unfair to note that their earlier social structure has entirely crumbled. Though the various social institutions are going through change and adjustment, the basic social structure has remained largely undisturbed. Relatively, the clan and village solidarity is maintained. The institutions of family and kinship have remained the same and continue to play a vital role in the society. Structurally, the Shiipfomaramth society has retained most of its earlier features. The institution of chieftainship and village council continue to function though it is not as strong as before. Likewise, the rule of inheritance and succession, institutions of marriage, kinship, rule of descent and the like remain unchanged.

It would be a hasty generalisation to say that change has resulted in complete replacement or transformation of the old mode of life. Christianity has reinforced their philosophy of life and death, albeit in a simple way that there is agony for non-believers. For average villagers and common people their economic life and mode of cultivation is largely undisturbed. In the same way, even though the emergence of ‘class’ consciousness is not in consonance with the traditional communitarian way of life; this does not simply mean the sudden and total breakaway from the old mode of life.

It is ironical that the youth continues to be marginalised from the decision making process. Be it social, economic or political spheres, they do not constitute the centre of attention in any major policies as they lie at the periphery of government interests. The youth are by and large relegated to a status of impotency as they are compelled to accept the arbitrary decisions taken for them by others. As a result, there are no adequate and viable policies to tackle the problems confronting the youth. More interestingly, to an average Indian, the stereotype of a tribe-adivasi is that s/he is a primitive, backward, uncivilised and lives in the forests and hills. To add to their woes, there is strong wave of attempting to impose ‘other’ cultures and histories while they are yet to be satisfactorily and gratifyingly given an equal space in the Indian society.
The problems relating to education, outdated and irrelevant syllabus, mounting rate of unemployment among the educated youth, increase of alcohol and drug abuse leading to HIV and AIDS cannot be separated from inadequate policies on youth. Instead of revamping the educational system in the light of fast increasing modern knowledge and incorporation of local cultures, every political party is trying to fish out their own cake for their selfish ends. By politising the educational system, they have ignored the reality that the worst brunt is faced by the youth. Worst of all, the marginalised tribal students are facing double problems - the non-holistic syllabus has resulted in alienation from their own tradition and causing loss of attachment to educational system.

To sum up, there is an urgent need to reconstruct the strategy of tribal studies and the youth in particular. Sociologists and Anthropologists need to incorporate to the study of the tribal world with the practical and realistic perspective and not merely on theoretical approach. The tribal world should not be considered as mere laboratories for anthropological and sociological research/test but should reflect and sensitise the issues confronting them. The grievances and resentments exhibited in the youth’s action and behaviour need to be studied from the socio-cultural, historical and political rather than preconceived economic, national and ‘security’ perspective. Their demands and aspirations need to be considered if and when necessary.