Introduction

Society and its fortune has been a matter of deep concern to all right thinking individuals. It emanates from their concern for the future of society, a concern, which inevitably brings the study of youth, on whom the future holds, to the centrestage. The dynamic nature of youth, the importance of symbols and attributes, and the relations of these virtues and symbols attached to culture and community, it is natural that scholars dealing with youth have considerably increased.

The magnitude and intensity of problems confronting the youth is increasing ever since the dawn of modern civilisation. The youth are at a transition point not only from childhood to adulthood but the social conditions have also created further problems in their life. Paradoxically, along with avenues and opportunities, problems and confusion have confronted the present youth more than at any time in history.

Today, the Shiipfomaramth youth are at the crossroad not encountered by the older generation. The indigenous traditional values and lessons are crumbling and traces of these are looked upon with cynicism and skepticism. This confusion is the accumulated effect of social change, which the society has experienced since the nineteenth century. Coupled with this, other problems common to youth are also emerging in the Shiipfomaramth society. This includes problem of drinking alcohol, lack of educational facilities and occupational opportunities. Above all, the protracted violence, political instability and ethnic tensions have effected the youth most.

Tribal youth including the Shiipfomaramth are coming out of their shells, realising the importance of obtaining modern education, becoming conscious of their career and job, keenly participating in their community/society assertion to maintain their identity, control over land and resources, and so on and so forth. They are becoming conscious that, if they are to play their role, they have to get formal education, involve in politics, participate in decision-making and get economic security. However, amidst this shifting of life pattern from near isolation to modernity, the avenues and opportunities are far from their reach.

Education is widely regarded as the gateway to development and progress. However, despite the fast increasing knowledge, the educational system has failed to
keep pace with the needs and aspirations of the people: the colonial system of education introduced for its own interest remains more or less the same. Consequently, the present educational system does not produce a self-reliant and secure educated youth. To add to their woes, the marginalised and tribal students like the Shiipfomaramth youth are faced with double problems. The non-holistic syllabus has resulted in alienation from their indigenous tradition as well as caused less interest in education. In addition, lack of adequate educational facilities, inferior quality of education, general backwardness and poor economic condition perpetuated the problems in education.

Problem of drinking is one of the major sources of family disharmony and tensions. The mental agony and health problems, directly or indirectly related to drinking alcohol are numerous. Alcoholism, with its far-reaching negative consequences, is becoming a real threat to the present Shiipfomaramth youth. Many young lives have been spoiled and their career ruined due to excessive use of alcohol. Amidst this grave situation, the prevailing social environment is less helpful for many youth to abstain from alcohol. Many individuals in their society are indecisive to combat alcoholism in the name of defending individual ‘freedom’, preservation of tradition or material gain, which has led to increase the problem. There is also the wave of imitating ‘others’ way of life by associating drinking alcohol as a symbol of modern lifestyle.

Change cannot be opted at the cost of one’s identity and tradition. It would be wrong to consider everything what is past and indigenous as primitive and uncivilised. There are many lessons and values in the indigenous practices of the Nagas including the Shiipfomaramth, which can surely provide rich ingredient to the success of socio-religious change. In order to make the coming of westernisation in the form of christianisation fruitful, blending of indigenous and Christian principles is imperative. The thesis shows the intricacies of the above social problems, taking the experiences and behaviours of the youth as a source and context of sociological explanation.