CHAPTER 6: Changes in the Socio – Cultural Life of the Poumais

6.1. Concept of Social Change

Change is the law of nature and it is universal. There is nothing that does not change. What is today shall never be the same tomorrow. Change like wind, is an incessant and never ending process. With the passing of time, it occurs in every society, primitive or civilized. No society remains completely static; static is the change itself. As mentioned by Bushan Vidya and Sachdeva, “Society is an ever changing phenomenon, growing, decaying, renewing and accommodating itself to changing conditions and suffering vast modifications in the course of time.”

6.2. Meaning of Social Change

Many Sociologists and other social Scientists have given a number of definitions about social change. According to Lundberg and others, “Social change refers to any modification in established pattern of inter human relationship and standards of conduct.” In Encyclopedia Britanica, social change is defined as “the alteration of mechanisms within the social structures, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour or value systems.” To Anderson and Parker, “Social change involves alteration in the structure or functioning of societal forms or processes themselves.” According to Babylon Dictionary “Social change is a general term which refers to: change in the nature, the social institutions, the social behaviour or the social

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relations of a society, community of people, or other social structures.⁵ Social change is also defined as “change that alters cultural or social patterns of a society. This includes patterns of behavior influenced by a system and people in different social positions in relation to: patterns of modus operandi; the patterns that emerge as a result of belief systems; the goals and aspirations.”⁶ For Kingsley Davis, Social change is a part of cultural change and not to be confused as similar with the latter. For him, social change is to mean “only such alterations as occur in social organization that is the structure and functions of society. Social change thus forms only a part of what is essentially a broader category called ‘cultural change’. The latter embrace all changes occurring in any branch of culture, including art, science, technology, philosophy, etc. as well as changes in the forms and rules of social organization.”⁷ Social change has been also conceived as a phenomenon of progress and decay.⁸ It may also be defined as change in any societal pattern which is visible, and affects a large number of people in the community and being sustained. Overall social change also refers to the change or modification and alteration of any aspects of a social organization.

6.3. Nature of Social Change

Change occurs in all the societies and it is a universal phenomenon. It may be social or cultural. However, social or cultural change does not refer to the change in the life of an individual or the life pattern of some individuals. It generally refers to a significant change rather than minor changes within a group. “It is a change which occurs in the life of the entire community…”⁹ Every community or society is composed of a dynamic system of inter-related parts. Therefore, change in one of the parts usually reacts on others. “Social

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⁵ http://dictionary.babylon.com/SOCIAL_CHANGE.
⁷ Kingsley Davis, Human Society, Surjeet Publications, 2000, Delhi, P. 622.
⁹ Vidya Bhushan, and Sachdeva, op. cit., P. 542.
change can evolve from a number of different sources, including changes in the ecosystem (which can cause the loss of natural resources or widespread disease); technological change (optimized by the Industrial Revolution, which created a new social group, the urban proletariat); population growth and other demographic variables and ideological, economic and political movement.  

A. K. Roy wrote, “Change is the law of life, a cliché but not a meaningless one. All human societies have, since the beginning, functioned on two planes, that of the way of life, and that of the way of thought, and throughout, one has influenced the other. A change in one has invariably promoted a change in the other. One concerns the business of living, and the other the thinking behind the organization of community, existence, its system of values, and its relationship with external forces beyond its control. All this had rationality, which was perfectly valid in the view of the society concerned.”

6.4. Factors leading to Social Change

Social Change is a vast and complex subject. It calls for deeper and systematic treatment in order to have better understanding about the various changes and the factors that operate in societies. Changes may take place due to planned or certain unplanned influences or as a natural course. Changes that took place as a result of planned are direct and often noticed whereas changes that occurred due to unplanned or as a natural course are indirect and often unnoticed. The process of changes may be either fast or slow depending upon the force of influence or factor that acted upon the concerned society. Vidya Bhushan and Sachdeva pointed out, “Society exists in a universe of dynamic influences.” The influences may be either direct or indirect. Whatever the

case may be, the influences of different factors take human society to different directions. The direction and rate of change depend on to which direction the concerned factor is acting upon and how strong or weak the influence of the factor is felt by the society.

Many social scientists have pointed out various factors which are responsible for social and cultural change. These include biological, physical, demographic, technological and economic factors. There are also factors related to government planning and legislation, etc. The modern factors that brought changes as pointed out by Vidyarthi and Rai includes Christianity, urbanization and industrialization, tribal and community development schemes, democratic set up of the nation, modernization in education, communication and administration.\(^\text{13}\)

According to Gangmumei Kamei, “Social change may be brought about through several processes, namely, the natural environment, demographic situation, technological innovations, economic development, ideas and ideology (religion, political ideology and social philosophy), war, revolutions and social conflicts, social movements and political process.”\(^\text{14}\)

6.5. Social change among the Poumais

Regarding social change among the Poumais, Christianity, modern education and welfare policies and programmes of the government have been the main factors that have brought major changes in their society. However, before dealing with how these factors have brought about social change among the Poumais, it is necessary to deal with the advent of Christianity, development of modern education and developmental plans and programmes initiated by the government.


6.5.1. Advent of Christianity

The introduction of Christianity among the people of Manipur was credited to Rev. William Pettigrew, an Englishman born in Edinburgh, Scotland who successfully planted the seeds of Christianity in the land of Manipur. Before him, the American Baptist Mission in Burma made an attempt to establish its mission station in Manipur as early as 1836. But the local native government, which had accepted Vaishnavite Hinduism as the principle religion by royal edict in 1705, opposed it.\(^{15}\)

Thereafter no Christian activity was known to be taken up in Manipur until Rev. Willam Pettigrew came to Imphal.\(^{16}\) Rev. Pettigrew was at first a member of Anglican Church and worked as a missionary under the Arthington Aboriginesse Mission. In 1891 he came to Cachar, Assam under the auspices of Arthington Mission and on 6\(^{th}\) January 1894 he landed Imphal. With the permission of A. E. Wood, the then Acting Political Agent of Manipur he began to preach gospel in Imphal. Within six months, however, when the Political Agent Major Maxwell returned from leave, in spite of his friendly relation with Willam Pettigrew, the former asked him to discontinue his works at Imphal lest it should disturb the orthodox Manipuri Hindus.\(^{17}\) However, the Political Agent also suggested that he should work in some other place referring to the hill areas. Pettigrew had no alternative but had to abandon his work in Imphal and accept the suggestion with the hope to resume his work in plain areas later on.

On the contrary, the Arthington Mission that sponsored him was not willing to establish a permanent mission in any particular place and instructed its missionaries to move to new places after every three years. On completion

\(^{15}\) Lal Dena, Christian Missions and Colonialism, (A Study of Missionary Movement in N.E. India with particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947) Vendrame
Missiology Institute, Shillong, 1988, P. 31.


\(^{17}\) F. S. Downs, Christianity in North East India, A Historical Perspective, ISPCK, Delhi, in Association with CLL, Guwahati, 1983, P. 120.
of three years Rev. Willam Pettigrew was to leave Manipur or be sent back home. He has no alternative so applied for membership to American Baptist Missionary Union. The petition of Rev. Pettigrew was seriously considered and recommended by the Baptist Missionary Conference at Sibsagar in 1895, which was endorsed by the Executive Committee at Boston in 1896 January. Soon he was ordained and sent as a Missionary to take over the work in Manipur.  

6.5.2. Emergence of the Baptist Mission in Manipur

As Rev. Willam Pettigrew discontinued his work at Imphal, he first approached a Thadou Kuki Chief Kamkholun Singson of Senvon village for permission to locate his work there. However, permission was denied to him. Then in the same year he went to Songsong village to work in Mao areas. He met Sani Kapani, a government interpreter and tried to purchase a land for establishment of his work over there. When Sani Kapani consulted the Chiefs of the sixteen Mao villages they not only turned down the request of purchasing land for his religious purpose but also warned him not to remain in their area for any longer.

Finally, he decided to work among the Tangkhuls. In January 1896 Pettigrew established a mission center and a mission school at Ukhrul. However, he was not successful in converting a single soul into Christianity till 1900. In 1901 twelve of thirty students attending his school confessed their faith to Christ and they were baptized. In the following year (1902) the Ukhrul Baptist Church was organized, which was the first ever and the only Baptist church in Manipur till 1916. Pettigrew, though stationed in the hill mission center, did not neglect the evangelistic work in the plain. In 1916, Pettigrew organized the second Baptist Church in Manipur at Keisamthong in

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Imphal town and another third Baptist church was established in the hill Tujangwaichong village, the first Kuki Baptist church. In November 1919, Pettigrew purchased a land for mission station at Kangpokpi, where a Middle English School, an orphanage, a leper asylum and a dispensary were established. In 1923 Sempang Baptist church was established. It was the first among the Zeliangrong people in Manipur. By 1927 Mrs Buni and Ashikho the first Christians among the Maos received the Christian faith and in 1928, the first Baptist Church in Mao Maram areas was established at Punanamai village by Dr. Crozier followed by another church at Pudunamai.\textsuperscript{21}

a) Baptist Mission in the Poumai Area

Compared to others, the emergence of Christianity in the Poumai region was rather late. During the pre-Christianity period the Poumais were living in their own traditional ways of religious life. The message of Christianity was quite foreign thing to them. Christian preachers and missionaries were considered as their enemies who went against their traditional religious life. They usually did not welcome the preaching of any Christian message to them. On the other hand, it is said that during those days the Mao-Maram area was a strategic and sensitive area of administration. Therefore the Darbar of Manipur prohibited missionaries in the region. In 1922, when Ningmayang, a Tangkhul of Ngaimu village came to preach gospel at Purul village of Poumai community, he was charged by the villagers that he was trying to abolish their traditional religion and turned him out with weapons and a fine of Rs. 30/- was imposed by the court under C. Jimsom, the then Political Agent of Manipur. Similarly, a case was also reported to be filed at the court against a person who sung a Christian song at Songsong village.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21} Souvenir, Phuba Thapham Baptist Church, Golden Jubilee, 1994, Pp. 36-37.
The real story of the beginning of Christianity among the Poumais started in the year 1934 when Makrii Lohrii was sent as an Evangelist to Maiba Village of Poumai community by the Punanamai Baptist church, the first of the Mao Baptist Association. However, in spite of his best efforts, his mission could not yield any fruit. Nevertheless, the Punanamai Baptist Church sent him back to Maiba again as a full time Evangelist cum teacher to preach gospel to the villagers and at the same time teach in school. Later, his constant presence among the villagers could win the hearts of some of the villagers who converted into Christianity in 1937. They were late L. Daile, S. Row, D. Rihe, D. Shekho, S. Show, Th. Pani and H. Sonii. They were baptized by Kh. Puni Evangelist. Their conversion marked the establishment of the Maiba Baptist Church, the first in the Poumai area in 1937.23 From that time onwards gospel was spread to Poumai villages followed by the establishment of Khamsom Baptist church in 1940, Ngari Baptist Church in 1942, Chingmai Khunou Baptist Church in 1944, etc.24 Thus, year after year the flame of Christianity continued spreading to different Poumai villages. Today the Baptist faith has taken firm roots among the Poumais and Baptist Churches are established in each and every Poumai village.

Furthermore, with the association of all the Poumai Baptist churches, an apex body known as the Poumai Naga Baptist Association (PNBA) was formed in the year 1978 with Rev. R. L. Tennyson and Mr. R. S. Kahaoshan as Field Director and Field Assistant respectively.25 The main objective of the Association is to provide support and strengthen its member churches on the one hand and to extend its mission to the un-reached on the other. The PNBA has three main branches; they are Poumai Missionary Movement (PMM)

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(which has two department viz., Rural Evangelical Mission and PNBA mission wing). The Youth Wing and the Women Wing.

6.5.3. Origin of the Catholic Mission among the Poumai

During the British rule in India, the then British officials permitted only one Christian denomination to function in Manipur which happened to be the 'American Baptist Church'. As a result Catholic mission could not enter Manipur at that time even though a Catholic Church had already been in existence in Shillong (then under Assam) for almost hundred years. It was just after the coronation of Raja Churachand Singh that Christian missionaries were allowed to enter Manipur. The first Catholic missionary, Fr. Ansgar Koenigsbauer, came to Manipur in the year 1912. On enquiry for permission to open a Mission center at Imphal, the Raja had no objection. However, after eight days in Manipur, Father Koenigsbauer left for Badarpur. It brought the proposed Catholic Mission in Manipur to a halt as the Assam Mission could not follow up any concrete action with the initial steps taken by Fr. Ansgar Koenigsbauer to evangelize Manipur. In 1946, Rev. Fr. A Colussi and O. Marengo from Guwahati came to Manipur. They had a discussion with the Maharaja about the possibilities of Mission work in the state. The Maharaja permitted them to preach gospel among the Hill tribes of Manipur. With the permission they joyfully proceeded towards the Tangkhul area and reached Ukhrul on 8th November, 1946. They were the first Catholic missionaries officially setting their feet on the soil of the Tangkhul area.

On 6th March, 1956, Fr. Ravalico and Fr. Bianchi landed up at Imphal to settle down permanently. After a few months, some Mao students from Punanamai approached Fr. Bianchi and invited him to visit their village. They

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also asked him to open a school there and expressed their desire to embrace Catholic faith. By the end of November, 1956, Fr. Bianchi arrived at Punanamai. Quoting the event, Fr. Bianchi wrote: ‘As I entered the village I was taken to the top of a hillock over looking the valley to the East, and as the devil tempted Jesus by taking him to the top of a high mountain and showed him the whole world, I was tempted a bit like Jesus with the words “you see, if you look around, you can understand that Punanamai is the center of the Mao area. If the Catholics will settle here, they will rule over all the other villages…”’. The view was grand and the temptation too strong to resist.29 Soon small Catholic communities were formed in Makhan, Kaibi, Chakumai, Chowainamai, Mao Pungdung, etc. From the Mao area the flame of Catholic faith spread to the Poumai areas. Fr. Ravalico was the first missionary in the Poumai area and Fr. Bianchi deserved praise for his great administration. It was his apostolic zeal and untiring work that made it possible for the church to take a firm root among the Maos, Marams and the Poumais.30 “It was a difficult birth... the first courageous elders who proclaimed themselves Catholic had a hard life, but they did not give up. The Holy Spirit gave them courage. The fire they were carrying in their hearts was bound to light up other good people”.31

With the tireless efforts of the enthusiastic missionaries, today the Catholic population has been increased many fold. According to a report of 2005-2006 there are altogether 33 Catholic churches and three Parishes in the Poumai area. Some of the first established churches among them are All St. Church, Saranamai, 1958; St. Anthony Church, Laii, 1960; Sacred Heart Church, New Laii, 1960; Holy Cross Church, Thingba Khunou, 1961; St. John Bosco Church, Oinam, 1962; St. Joseph Church, Upper Koide, 1962; Holy Cross Church, Phaibung Khullen, 1962; St. Peter Church, Phuba Khuman,

29 Fr. Bianchi, in Souvenir, Silver Jubilee, St Mary’s Parish 1956-1981, Mao, Manipur, Pp. 77-78.
1962; Christ the King Church, Liyai Khullen, 1962; St. Thomas Church, Liyai Chilao, 1962, etc. The three Parishes are St. Dominic Savio Parish, Tungjoy, 1981; Holy Rosary Parish, Purul, 1988 and Holy Cross Parish, Phaibung Khullen, 1995.  

6.5.4. Difficulties faced in planting the seeds of Christianity

The beginning of Christianity among the Pouncils was marked with the stories of hardships, chaos and difficulties. The missionaries who first brought the gospel to the Pouncil areas were considered anti-traditional religion of the people who tried to abolish their religion. In many places, missionaries were not allowed to preach gospel and chased them away with weapons. To point out a few instances, Mr. Ningmayang of Ngaimu village of Tangkhul came to Purul to herald the message of gospel in 1923, but the villagers chased him out with weapons thinking that he is trying to abolish their traditional religion.

At Thingba Khullen, Shri Reichumhao of Somdol village who first brought the gospel message to the villagers was mocked as if he was mad. The villagers said that there is no religion that forbids eating and drinking. Some spread rumours that he himself used to feed on children's souls. Consequently, children were forbidden to come near to him and he was also not allowed to hold in the village. Similarly, in many other villages also the missionaries were not welcomed. They were mocked, vilified, cursed and often threatened away. The new converts into Christianity also faced various forms of intolerable persecution.

In many cases, the properties of the new converts were confiscated, they were fined and excommunicated, forbidden to cultivate the common village land and use the village water ponds like outcastes. “Believers were thrown out from the village and compelled to settle at the village’s outskirts. There were

32 Directory 2005-2006, Published by Pouncil Naga Catholic Church.
33 Souvenir, Hiimai Dnamai Baptist Church, Golden Jubilee publication (1947-1997), P. 30.
34 Souvenir, Chaonmai Baptist Church, Golden Jubilee, 2000 A.D., P. 3.
times when fathers dragged their daughters out from the church buildings while worshipping God and mercilessly beaten them up black and blue, torn their hymn books into pieces and shaved their hairs. Many of the converted village Chiefs were brought to village court and harassed in many ways. Those were the days when people made mockery against the Christian way of life. They sarcastically taunted; climbing the stiff road of heaven with dry lips is a tiresome journey.

In spite of such opposition, the missionaries skillfully attacked the traditional religious kingdom of the people with no weapon to harm but with rolls of colourful pictures of Jesus and planted the seeds of gospel among them with the Bible in their hands. Not letting the hardships of prosecution overwhelm them, the new converts boldly hold up their faith in Christianity and slowly but steadily, the faith took its roots into the hearts of the people. Such were the stories of the past and the beginning of the socio-religious changes of the people. Since then, the flame of Christian faith slowly spread to different directions and today it has engulfed the whole population of the Poumai community leaving only a handful of elderly people aside. This coming of Christianity marked the beginning of a new life transforming their society. There is no aspect of social, cultural, religious, economic or political life of the people which is not touched by Christianity. In fact, Christianity has brought changes of far reaching effect that has swept the traditional belief system of the people.

6.6. Christianity and Education

The coming of Christianity in the hills was accompanied by spreading of education there. Missionaries used schools as their platforms and education as their tool to introduce and implant Christian faith among the people. Panger Imchen in his *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture* (1993) wrote Christianity

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36 Souvenir, a History of the Oinam Hill Baptist Church, Silver Jubilee, 2000, A.D., P.4.
and education as going hand in hand. Without schools, establishing churches would have been almost a failure in Ao country. In School, the people were taught to read and write to enable them to read the Bible and hymnals. Schools are the best approach road to mission and church growth.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, T. Luikham wrote, "His (Pettigrew's) chief objective in given education to the tribesmen was to propagate Christianity.\textsuperscript{38} Pettigrew strongly believed that education could illuminate the individual mind, which in turn would arouse conviction in the truth of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{39} The missionary started schools which provided free education and the students of these schools became the first converts.\textsuperscript{40} Among the Poumai, though no foreign missionary came into contact with them, M. Lohrii who was the first Christian missionary to come to the Poumai people was sent by the Punamaw Baptist Association to Maiba village to preach gospel and at the same time teach in school as a full time teacher as imparting education among them could help them to have better understanding about Christianity and would arouse their interest in the Gospel.\textsuperscript{41}

One of the remarkable impacts of education has been that of their adoption of Roman script as they did not have their own. This was followed by the emergence of Christian literatures in their dialect though written in Roman scripts. The Bible and hymnals were translated. This helped the people to speed up their learning of reading and writing. Today, the people who never attended school could comfortably read the Bible that is translated into their dialect and sing the hymns from their hymnals without facing any problem. As Jeyaseelam, in his 'Impact of the Missionary Movement in Manipur' (1996), pointed out "Every church goer carries with pride a hymn book and the Holy

\textsuperscript{39} Vijay Kumar, William Careys Missionary methods and their Relevance to the Indian Church, (unpublished M. Th. Thesis, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Seoul, 1980, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{40} Gangumuel Kamei, op. cit., P. 44.
\textsuperscript{41} Souvenir, Poumai Naga Baptist Association, Silver Jubilee (1978-2003), 2003, P. 69.
Bible and they are used extensively at church services. A person who does not carry them is regarded either an illiterate or not very much interested in religion. This situation had forced even the people who never attended school to learn how to read and write.\textsuperscript{42}

No doubt, education has been the most important tool for the missionaries through which they could effectively evangelize the people into Christianity. In the process Christianity became a very effective catalyst that has helped the spreading and acceleration of education in the tribal areas.

6.7. Spreading of Modern Education

The introduction of modern education in Manipur was credited to the officials of the British political Agency in Manipur. It was in the beginning of 19\textsuperscript{th} century that the seed of modern education was first sown by Captain Gordon when he organized a Primary Education Center in Manipur. Due to untimely death of Captain Gordon, the seed could not germinate. In 1872, Major General W. F. Nuthall, the then Political Agent opened a school at Imphal. But the school did not function properly due to want of local cooperation or encouragement. The people of the land did not appreciate the establishment of English school and had no love for English education. As a result, the parents did not send their children to that school.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1885 a Middle English School was opened by the then Political Agent, Sir James Johnstone with the permission of Maharaja Sir Chandra Kirti Singh, K.C.S.I., who was a great patron of learning.\textsuperscript{44} The school was named after him as Johnstone Middle English School and the same has developed now into a Higher Secondary School in Imphal.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} L. Jeyaseelam, op. cit., P. 172.
\textsuperscript{44} The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XVII, New Delhi, 1908, P. 195.
\textsuperscript{45} M. Shanti Devi, Development of Education in Manipur, Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 2001, P. 18.
In the year 1892-93 a Lower Primary School was established at Sekmai and subsequent efforts were made by the then Government to open more schools in the valley and at Mao Thana on the Naga Hills frontier. Gradually Primary Schools were established at different places in Manipur. A table of some of the first established Schools and the year of their establishment is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johnstone Middle English School</td>
<td>1885-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekmai L. P. School</td>
<td>1892-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao Thana L. P. School</td>
<td>1893-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pettigrew L. P. School</td>
<td>1894-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tera L. P. School</td>
<td>1894-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thangmeiband L. P. School</td>
<td>1895-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moirang L. P. School</td>
<td>1895-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul L. P. School</td>
<td>1896-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regiment, 4th Assam Rifles L. P. School</td>
<td>1897-98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal L. P. School</td>
<td>1897-98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ningthoukhong L. P. School</td>
<td>1898-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanga L. P. School</td>
<td>1898-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moirangkhom L. P. School (Girls)</td>
<td>1899-1900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mao Thana School was the first ever school in the Mao and the Pumai areas. However, the attendance of children was very poor and the parents had withdrawn many of the enrolled students from the school. This led to the non-availability of students and consequently the school at Mao Thana was closed down in 1932.

48 Jamini Devi, op. cit., P. 143.
6.7.1. Spreading of Modern Education in the Poumai Areas

The development of modern education through the establishment of formal educational schools was started by the missionary pioneers who came to preach good news of gospel among the Poumais. As stated earlier, in the year 1934 M. Lohrii, the first evangelist of the Punanamai Baptist Church and the first of the Mao Baptist Association, came to Maiba to preach gospel and teach in school as a full time worker. While working in Maiba, he frequently visited Phuba village. In 1943 he brought a team of missionaries led by Rev. E.E. Brock to Phuba and in 1946 a school was established in the village.49 Another mission School was established at Purul in 1948.50 Slowly, the number of both mission and other private as well as government schools had been adding year after year. Today, the number of government as well as private schools in the Senapati District crosses over two hundred. As per the source available from the Zonal Education officer, Senapati, the number of different categories of schools in Purul, Paomata and Mao-Maram (Tadubi) Blocks are given in the next page:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Grade of the Schools</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Higher Secondary School, under Autonomous body (Govt.)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recognized Higher Secondary Schools (Unaided)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Government High Schools</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>High Schools under Autonomous body (Government)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Private High Schools (Aided)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Recognized High Schools</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Government Junior High Schools</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Private Junior High Schools (Aided)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Private Junior High Schools (Unaided)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Government Primary High Schools (under Education Department (S))</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Primary Schools (Aided)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Recognised Primary Schools (unaided)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>UJB Schools (under District Council, Senapati Dist.)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Primary Schools (under District Council, Senapati Dist.)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total number of Schools</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Altogether there are 211 schools in the Senapati District of which 117 schools are either run by the Poumais or situated in the Poumai inhabited areas. Moreover, the district has three colleges, viz., Hill College, Tadubi (Government), DonBosco College, Maram (Government recognized) and Mount Everest College, Taphao (Government recognized). They are the highest educational institutions so far instituted in the district. Of these the Mount Everest College, Taphao is in the Poumai area.

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51 Zonal Education Officer, List of Schools in Senapati District, 2007.
6.8. Development Plans and Programmes initiated by the Government

Prior to India’s Independence the Tribals were isolated from outside world. During those days they enjoyed freedom life of their own. It was in the beginning of the 19th century the British rulers came into contact with them. The foremost policies that were adopted by the British rulers towards the tribals were to isolate them from the general mass and separate the tribal areas from the purview of the normal administration. Because, the British imperialists had realized the potentiality of the Indian tribes as explosive force in any national movement. The policy of isolation was largely effected by their deliberate efforts not to develop communication in the tribal areas which, as a result, remained cut off from the rest of the population. A few roads that were constructed were for security purposes and to enable contractors to exploit the forest produce. The most burning example that can be cited in this respect is of the North-eastern Himalayan tribes. They had no communication with the rest of India and consequently a sense of separatism has developed in them. In 1939, Verrier Elwin advocated for the “establishment of a sort of National Park” of the tribals and advised that their contact with the outside world should be reduced to the minimum. In his ‘Loss of the Nerve’ (1941) this idea of isolation was once again supported by him to a great extent. Later, Elwin realized and recommended that “considering the past experience and the strong temptation to take advantage of the Tribal Simplicity and weakness it is essential to provide statutory safeguards for the protection of the land”.

With the dawn of independence, the nation was conscious of the need to assimilate the tribal people with the rest of the population. It visualized a policy of progressive assimilation of the tribals in the national mainstream. In order to promote the integration of the tribal people with the rest of their Indian

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55 Elwin Verrier, A New Deal for Tribal India, (First Pub. in 1957), New Delhi, 1963, Pp. 15-16.
population a number of special safeguards and developmental provisions have been envisaged in the constitution of independent India. In continuation of this policy, an Order of the President of India in 1950 specified certain tribal communities as Scheduled Tribes. In fact, an attempt to list the tribal communities as primitive tribes was made during the census of 1931. After the Independence, the Scheduled Tribes list has been revised from time to time as per the need arose with the latest amendment Act passed in 2002 in which the Poumai Naga was included in the Scheduled Tribe list of India.

The constitution of India envisaged a number of provisions to safeguard the tribal people. Among those mention can be made of the Fundamental Rights provided by the Constitution prohibiting discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Art. 15), equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (Art. 16), prohibition of traffic in human beings and force labour (Art. 23), protection of interests of minorities (Art. 29) and the Directive Principles of State Policy, (Art. 38) to secure a just social order and promote welfare of the people. Though these provisions are general in nature they incorporate in themselves the tribal people. The Article 46 of the Constitution is directly related to tribal population. It provides them safeguards and offers promotion of their interests in respect of education and economy. Other provisions like the appointment of Ministers to look after the interest of tribal exclusively (Art. 164), special administration of Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas (Art. 244), grants from the Union to certain states (Art. 275), reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the House of the people (Art. 330) and in the Legislative Assemblies of States (Art. 332), reservation of seats and special representation (Art. 334), special claims to services and posts (Art. 335), provision for special officers for the tribals (Art. 338), control of the center over the administration of Scheduled Areas and the welfare of Scheduled Tribes (Art. 339), special provision with respect to certain states including the tribal states like Nagaland (Art. 371), Mizoram (Art. 371G), Hill
areas of Manipur (Art. 371C), etc.\textsuperscript{56} have also been provided. All these provisions have contributed tremendously to the protection and promotion of the interests of the tribal people.

To translate those provisions into reality the Government of India has constituted vast administrative machineries. The President of India appointed Director General for Backward classes at national level with special duties of investigating into all matters related to safeguards given to the tribal people. Assist. Regional Directors have also been appointed to handle funds and all the tribal welfare activities. An independent Tribal Welfare Ministry is created in some tribal concentrated areas along with bodies like the Tribes' Advisory Council and the Tribal Research Institute to advice the Ministry and help in framing the policies and programmes for tribal welfare. A Deputy Director for Backward classes posted in the states by the Center facilitates liaison between the national and state levels. Besides, under the Art. 338 of the Constitution a Special Commissioner for SC and ST and a number of Committees and Commissions have also been appointed from time to time to assess and make necessary recommendations for the welfare works of the tribes.\textsuperscript{57} With these a plethora of welfare and development schemes and programmes have been taken up by the central and state governments to alleviate poverty, generate income and employment, improve living standard, etc. of the tribes. All these efforts definitely helped the poor tribes including the Pournais to mitigate the various problems faced by them and have tremendously improved their socio-economic and educational standard. Undoubtedly, it has broken the stagnation and accelerated the pace of transformation.

With the introduction of modern democratic system of governance in the hills, particularly the Village Authority system, the traditional village Elders Council system has been completely disintegrated. The modern electoral politics at district and state as well as national levels have great effect on the

traditional political system of the Poumais. "The traditional self governing institutions, a living facet of tribal life, have now no role in administration, development progress, etc. and they get no benefits of new ideas and are isolated". L. P. Vidyarthi and B. K. Rai wrote, with various constitutional safeguards for the Scheduled Tribes and the general democratic upsurge the tribal areas are getting politically energized. A new type of western educated, urban bred and secularized type of tribal leaders is fast replacing the age-old charismatic, rural-bred and tradition-oriented leadership. These modern leaders of various levels and types are spearheading the socio-economic and political change, and they have been greatly instrumental in accelerating the pace of transformation in the tribal areas.

6.9. Changes that have taken place

The Poumai society has gone through various changes in their socio-cultural and political life due to numerous factors like that of Christianity, modern education, contact with the outside world, democratic experiments, etc. The changes that have taken place in their society are being discussed in the following paras.

6.9.1. Changes in the Religious life

Prior to Christianity, the Poumais were very ignorant, not knowing the existence of any other religion than their traditional one. During those days, their lives were full of superstition, fears and uncertainties, around which their regular practice of performing rites and rituals, making offerings and sacrifices, observing gennas and taboos, reading omens and divinations revolved. Their world was full of spirits as they believed. Therefore, in times of trouble and sickness they not only worshipped the Supreme Being but also tried to appease and propitiate the deities and spirits with offerings and sacrifices in order to get

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58 Nadeem Hasnain, op. cit., P. 389.
59 L.P. Vidyarthi, and Rai, B.K., op. cit., P. 462.
rid of the problems and sicknesses. These practices were however condemned by the missionaries as superstitious, sinful, impracticable and primitive.

With the embrace of the new faith in Christ their traditional belief in the existence of 'death land' where the souls of human beings were believed to be living after death is over shadowed by the Christian concept of eternal hell and Heaven. According to Christian belief, hell is the place full of unbearable sufferings, miseries and wickedness, believed to be the home of devils, wicked people and sinners after death whereas Heaven is the home of God where the righteous and good people will have a life filled with great joy, happiness, and peace. Therefore, the fear of hell and the desire to have another joyful and peaceful life in Heaven after death greatly influenced them to forget their traditional religious belief system and embrace the new philosophy of Christian life.

6.9.2. Changes in Discipline and Moral life

Education and Christianity have been playing a very important role in molding and shaping the life of children. In the beginning of the introduction of modern education, the behaviour of students was very unusual. Some sat quietly, some laid on benches, some read, some wrestled, some sang their traditional folk songs, some came late and some went home when they wanted. Therefore, it was very hard to deal with those undisciplined tribal students. According to R.S. Dowang, the teachers of those days could not control the students and he termed it as the cause of failure of the government schools to give the light of education to the people in those days. However, remarkable progress could be made with the establishment of mission schools. He further said that the youths in the schools were once as stupid as donkey and as naughty as monkey; they could be thrashed down with the iron hand of the missionaries and eventually made them well disciplined, wise and most

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60 R.R. Lolly, The Baptist Church of Manipur, Published by Mrs. Lolly, Khathingba, R. 1985, Pp. 31-32.
obedient youths of the time.\textsuperscript{61} The teaching of moral lessons in Christian Church and moral science or lessons on education in values as part of curriculum particularly in mission schools kindled the young minds with good conduct, honesty, truthfulness and made them morally dignified, loving and caring towards others.

Earlier, there was strict prohibition by the conservative Poumai parents to send their daughters to schools.\textsuperscript{62} However, the fast spreading of modern education in the hill areas, the wider contact with the civilized people and the luxurious and easy life of the government officers and other salaried people prompted the parents to realize the importance of modern education. Consequently, the conservative parents, despite facing numerous financial difficulties, managed to send their children regardless of sex to schools with a hope of better future of their children's life. Today the young Poumai boys and girls are found in different metro-cities to pursue their higher degrees of education.

Modern education has also changed the mindset of the people by enriching their knowledge, broadening their thoughts, views and outlooks. It has liberated the people from their primitive village world to the modern civilized world. N. Venuh wrote: "It is the schools and the introduction of English language, which became the heritage of a revolution that slowly but inexorably unfolded in Nagaland. This new language became the channel through which followed in an increased awareness of the vast world of men and ideas outside."

6.9.3. Changes in Language

Another quite remarkable change in the Poumai Society is the change in their language. The advent of modern education, along with the wider contact

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., P. 27.
of the people outside, have helped the people to become familiar with alien words and languages which later resulted to frequent use of certain words by the speakers and consequently by the community as a whole. Th. Raoping Tao lamented that after the advent of modern education and Christianity a number of their old and sweet vocabularies are disused and forgotten. Instead, many foreign words are being used by today’s younger generation. Their beautiful and meaningful names given by their parents are no longer preferred by them. They rather prefer to name themselves with English or Biblical names.64 While talking in their own dialect also, use of foreign words, mostly English, has become a fashion today. In certain cases, however, foreign words are being used to give out their desire expression. On the other hand, in their mother tongue itself, many new terms and words are also found coined and being used by the younger generation to meet the need of the time and demand. But then, perhaps, this is the way with languages. As Malhotra, O.P., wrote: “Language being always in developing process is not static but dynamic, flexible and adaptable. Its use increases proportionately to the needs of a community. It has to accept various vocabulary items and uses from different languages to keep itself alive”.65

6.9.4. Changes in Feasts and Festivals

The colourful feasts and festivals of the Poumais which once they used to lavishly celebrate with full of glee were discouraged by the Christian missionaries and they were replaced by the Christian festivals like, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and other Fellowships and Conferences organized from time to time. M. Horam wrote: “They (missionaries) condemned the Naga religion, attacked their culture, stopped even though, their cultural activities such as singing, dancing and festivals which, did not have any direct link with

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64 Interview with Th. Raoping Tao, 19/07/2006.
religion and did not have religious flavor, but attributed such acts as the "wrath of God", after which act, by the zeal of their converts, many Naga ceremonial costumes were destroyed, festivals, local mild rice beer drinking were banned and abandoned; traditional songs and dances were replaced by alien songs and dances; religious rites were forbidden and replaced by Christian faith.  

Similarly, the colourful traditional dresses, ornaments and their hard earned coveted dress and ornamental titles of feasts of merit, of war and other achievements have lost their importance in the modern society. Today, they have become the staff or souvenir to display only on rare and special occasions.

6.9.5. Changes in Marriage

The traditional practice of the Poumai marriage arranged by the parents without the consent of their children, the forcible marriage of their children against their will and to strangers often led to in-adjustable differences between the married couples which finally resulted in divorces. Now, the traditional marriage system is no more recognized and strictly forbidden in the Christian society. Leaving behind their traditional ways, today selections of bride and groom as well as engagement are done with the consent of their children. With the full witness of church members wedding ceremony is administered in church and the marriage couple swears in the name of God to keep and uphold their marital relation and fidelity until death in spite of any kind of misfortune they may face in the course of their life. Thus, Christian marriage leaves no space for divorce.

6.9.6. Changes in disposal of Death bodies

Another important and remarkable effect of Christianity is the change in death and burial system of the Poumais. The traditional practice of corpse burying in front of the house, the ban on carrying the dead bodies of unnatural

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deaths inside the village, their burial outside the village gate without proper funeral ceremony, the pulling out of the dying mother in labour alive through the back door of the house and her un-ceremonial burial, etc. have become things of the past. Today, proper common burial grounds or grave yards (cemetery) are maintained in every Poumai village. Unlike the traditional system, there is no more strict classification of natural and unnatural death or restriction of any corpse carrying inside the village. Every death is properly taken care of and buried with proper funeral service. Tombs of every young and old are maintained and gravestones with heart touching epitaphs are commonly raised.

6.9.7. Changes in Dormitory life

With the advent of modern education and Christianity the institution of traditional dormitory system has lost its importance. Once it was a very important social and educational institution where young boys and girls were trained to be the befitting men and women in the society. R.S. Dowang wrote that Christianity had indeed struck a severe blow on the Poumai culture. The greatest blow was that the abandonment of dormitory system. Dormitory was the Poumai indigenous institution where the young Poumais learn their folklores, folk songs, folk tales, etc. But today the old traditional institution (dormitory) has become defunct and abandoned.67 M. Horam pointed out two reasons that led to the withering away of the dormitory system of the Nagas. According to him, dormitory system was disapproved by the Christian missionaries on the ground that it was a place of vice. On the other hand, modernization and its consequent drastic changes in habits and taste affected dormitory system. In fact, dormitory system had been abandoned as it was considered impractical to divert early hours in the dormitory. Also for the

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school and college going boys and girls, living in a dormitory with rigid rules
and taboos was neither possible nor practicable. 68

6.9.8. Changes in War and Head hunting

There was also a time when killing and chopping of enemy’s head were
not considered as sins. 69 The people who brought enemy’s heads were
honoured with religious ceremonies and warrior titles. Winning of physical
relation with a woman also made men entitled for wearing certain special
costume during festive occasions. Basing on the above belief and practices, the
young and healthy people competed to pose their bravery; dared chopping
human’s head and committed sexual relation with women. On the contrary,
with the advent of Christianity and modern education, this wild culture and
proudness of its heroism were condemned. They have been termed as sinful,
inhuman activities and they were miraculously melted down by the power of
the new faith in Christ and education.

6.9.9. Changes in Economic life

The traditional economy of the Pousmaiwas subsistence in nature. Their
livelihood mainly depended on agricultural products and agriculture was their
main occupation. Apart from agriculture, pottery, handloom and handicraft
were practiced as seasonal occupations. Rearing of domestic animals (cows,
buffaloes, pigs, dogs and chickens) was widely practiced though not in large
numbers. Fishing and hunting were also practiced as their leisure occupations.
During those days money was not known to them. So, within the framework of
their traditional occupations a man who possessed a good number of paddy
fields, wood land, large number of cattle and paddy barns was considered a rich
man. It was only after the Second World War that the popular use of money

68  M. Horam, op. cit., P. 66.
69  R.S. Dowang, op. cit., P. 34.
was known in the world of the Poumais. Until then the practice of barter system was there among them.\textsuperscript{70}

With the coming of Christianity and modern education or in other words the dawn of modernization, the traditional occupations and economic scenario of the Poumais have been transformed to a great extent. Their world has been opened up to a new world of civilization. The importance of money as a medium of exchange has been greatly felt. Henceforth, the economic life of the Poumais has turned its head towards money making than food producing.

In fact, the Poumais compared to their size of population have vast land for both terrace and jhum cultivation. Even then, one can hardly produce surplus food. This was because of their methods of cultivation were crude. On the other, their cultivation of terrace fields mostly depended on monsoon. If monsoon failed their cultivation failed. Therefore, the farmers of today have turned their interest in the works of making quick money than practicing their unproductive traditional occupations.\textsuperscript{71} Many of the Poumais have shifted towards horticulture and started growing cash crops such as cabbage, potato, tomato, ginger, turmeric, passion fruits, etc. for commercial purpose. So also, many of the Poumais have migrated to different towns and cities more for economic reason and easier life than any other reason.

The wide spread of modern education along with the wide contact of outside people enabled even the uneducated tribal to speak Manipuri, Hindi and some even English. Having the knowledge of different languages helps them to run small business like grocery, meat shops, pan shops, PCOs, hotels, etc. in towns and cities. O.P. Malhotra pointed out that the educated boys and girls do not like to adopt their traditional occupations. They rather think it below their dignity to take up a job that requires manual labour. Many educated young boys and girls have adopted different modern professions and have become

\textsuperscript{70} Interview with Sopha Longmi, 20/08/2005.
\textsuperscript{71} R.S. Dowang, op. cit., P. 29.
teachers, drivers, compounders, policemen and others. Similarly, education facilitates the Poumai educated people to take up different jobs of different positions and responsibilities in various government departments, as well as non-governmental organizations, hospitals, colleges, schools, NGOs, and other national and multinational companies in different metro-cities.

Another remarkable change in the economic life of the Poumai is the emergence of a number of women Self Help Groups (SHGs) headed by educated as well as semi-educated women members to generate income in corporate ways. These Self Help Groups undertake various productive activities. They seek and avail grants and loans from Government as well as private funding agencies and invest in different types of farming, weaving, running business such as groceries, pan shops, PCOs, etc. A part of their money is also utilized in lending to the needy people with interest. Thus Poumai women play a very important role in raising the economic conditions of the people. It may also be mentioned that as the Poumais got free from the superstitious traditional beliefs and practices, they have abandoned their exorbitant expenses on feasts of merit, sacrificial rites for sick, deaths and other occasions. Instead they have diverted their energy and resources to productive and constructive utilization.

Undoubtedly, among the many, the economic conditions as well as the living standard of some of the Poumais have been tremendously transformed from subsistence to surplus income and simple to luxurious life. Today, many of the well to do Poumais own pucca buildings, vehicles, etc. Therefore, Saxena, Alka made a comparison between the well to do tribals with the non-tribals, “The living standard of the educated and employed is fairly good and is in no way inferior to that of the non-tribals”. However, this comparison could not go beyond a handful of tribals as though a lot of changes have been taken

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place in the life of tribals. Economically they are still miles far behind the others.

6.9.10. Changes in Health and Hygiene

Gone were the days when the ways of living and life standard of the Poumai forefathers were very low. They were so ignorant that they knew nothing about the importance of hygienic life. Their lives passed through dirt and they hardly bothered about their health. Their houses and village atmosphere were very dirty. Domestic animals like cows, buffaloes, pigs, dogs and chickens were kept in the same house in which they lived or in the adjacent shed to their house. Urinal shed was usually attached to living room. Bathing and washing of cloths were not so much taken care of and were meant for only special occasions. Washing utensils and cleaning house by sweeping with brooms were believed to bring poverty to the family. Under such psychosis the people were in the grip of various diseases including epidemics that caused high rate of mortality. In addition to this, their medical knowledge was nil. Sicknesses were believed to have been caused by evil spirits. Therefore, rites, offerings and sacrifices were frequently performed to appease the evil spirits and restore the health of the patient.

Today, with the enrichment of knowledge through education and teachings of missionaries, all their living standards, beliefs and practices have been transformed in progressive lines. Jeyaseelam wrote: “With education and painstaking instruction by the missionaries and health workers, people learnt to understand the beginning of any illness and how one could be restored to health”.74 The improvement of knowledge about health and modern medicines along with the availability of health facilities such as pharmacies, health centers, nurses and doctors in rural areas, etc. have significantly reduced the

74 L. Jeyaseelam, op. cit., P. 177.
rate of mortality among them and their health conditions have been tremendously improved.

6.9.11. Changes in Cultural life

Those were the days the Pounais lived in a quite different world of their village life. Secluded from the entire outside world they enjoyed whatever life standard they adopted. However, Christianity and education have opened every aspect of their social and individual life to external influences. Their lives have been changed from a primitive to a civilized one. Their traditional practices of rites, rituals, offerings and sacrifices have also been replaced by prayer and fasting. They have also been led from fear, superstitions and uncertainties to faith and hope; from war and head hunting to loving and caring; from indigenous costumes to western suits; etc. All these changes have both negative as well as positive effects in the life of the people. Reflecting on the negative effects, Horam lamented: “Today many Christian villages do not even remember their traditional stories and do not know the songs and dances… This loss of their culture is irreparable. Another damage is in the areas of weaving, art and craft. The new converts think that anything that is local is bad though there are no religious taboos. With the changes of his belief, he has changed his taste, out look and habits”. 75

At present, the educated and converted tribals consider themselves superior to the uneducated and pagans. They are proud of speaking alien language rather than their mother tongue. They feel themselves dignified wearing western dresses and following western ways of life. Their thoughts, mannerism and mode of life are not what it used to be earlier. Their traditional costumes, songs, music and dances have become obsolete to the young and educated boys and girls. All their past cultures from music and dances to feasts and festivals, ornaments and hair style to dresses and house structures, games

75 M. Horam, North East India – A Profile, New Delhi, Cosmo Publications, 1990, P. 207.
and sports to head hunting and war have been wiped out by the wave of modern forces. Therefore, M. Horam further wrote: "The old beliefs and the fantastic legendary heroic stories now have become only small talks of the villagers; the younger school boys and girls have now learned the sophisticated mode of modern life, mannerism and knowledge which are alien to their culture."\(^76\)

As the younger generation who were once secluded in the village world climb up the ladder of higher educational degrees, they were exposed to the wide civilized world. Their minds are invaded by many new and different cultures, ways of life, new ideas and thoughts. As a result they have broken away from their old ways for the new and modern ways of life and culture.

Indeed, an incredible amount of traditional valuable treasures of the people have been abandoned and washed away by the wave of Christianity and modern education. J. A. Jacobs, blamed this to the Evangelical Baptist Churches saying "...it was a deliberate intention of the Evangelical Baptist Churches to attack Central Naga institutions and beliefs which deemed incompatible with the view of Christianity".\(^77\)

In spite of the tremendous changes that adversely affected the life of the hill people, the changes also opened a new good horizon and brought the light of new life to the people in many ways. It is inevitable that, when a new philosophy of life is introduced to a foreign culture, there would be both negative as well as positive effect and changes. Luikham, T. wrote: "The hill people, ignorant as they were, hardly believed that the new religion would work miracle among them. It has brought civilization to those head hunting people who enthralled themselves with blood feuds between village and village... We should feel proud that we have come from that stage to the present civilized state. The dark is gone and are now in contact with the outside

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world.” K.P. Guite also wrote, “Had not Christianity been introduced in the hill areas of Manipur, the conditions of the tribals would be very much otherwise and would be all the more an uphill and colossal task for their development. But, now owing to the impact of Christianity on their life, many of them being enlightened to the unfailing teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the vehement forces of teachings found in their Bible, the tribals have been virtually transformed traditionally, culturally, socially, educationally, economically and religiously.” Undoubtedly, Christianity and modern education have brought the message of a richer life, wider outlook and companionship, a new sense of life and dignity to the people.

6.10. Problems arises due to social change

Social problem is referred to any undesirable situation or condition that affects the well being of a large number of people or a community as a whole. Lundberg and others defined: “A social problem is any deviant behaviour in a disapproved direction of such a degree that it exceeds the tolerance limit of the community”. Social problem causes dissatisfaction, suffering, and misery and hinder development. It arises in every society and no society always remains harmonious. When one problem is solved a new problem arises or the solved resulted to another problem.

With the passing of time, the Pounai society has gone through various transformations that have caused a number of social problems. Earlier, population growth was never a problem. The families who have more number of children were considered blessed ones. Because, they cultivated more land and became rich within a short span of years and easily perform prestigious feasts of merit and built horn houses. Similarly, there was no problem of

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79 K.P. Guite, Impact of Christianity on the Life of the Tribals of Manipur (A case Study of Thangal and Saihom villages), presented to Directorate for the Development of Tribal and Backward classes, Govt. of Manipur, Imphal, 1986, P. 1.
80 Lundberg and Others, op. cit., P. 349.
unemployment as they all followed agricultural occupation. With the down of modernization and introduction of monetary system, their occupation has been shifted from agricultural occupation to money making that led to chronic unemployment problem among the younger generation. The rapid growth of population has also become a threat today. Traditionally, the use of rice wine was part and parcel of their life. Every household brew wine at home for their use and no sale or purchase was practiced. However, with the advent of Christianity, brewing and using of wine were banned by the Christian missionaries. At present brewing wine is done for business purpose by few people. Consequently, problems arose among those who consumed and spent their hard earned income on wine, which further reflected to the community as a whole.

One of the most serious social problems the people are facing today is the emergence of the modern elites who enjoy the monopoly of wealth, political power and administration. There are signs of concentration of wealth and economic power in a few hands. Nepotism and corruption are on the rise and are all pervasive. To quote Horam, "Today, Nagas are divided sharply into two groups – the uneducated and the semi-educated on the one hand and the educated and the rich class on the other."\(^{81}\) The disparity between the two groups keeps on widening with the poor becoming poorer and the rich becoming richer. Various welfare and developmental schemes mainly meant for the poor and needy are diverted by a few and they hardly reach the targeted people. While there may be mutual assistance and cooperation among the elites, the poor and downtrodden are not being extended any helping hand. The rich and privileged people often imposed their voice, ignoring the voice of the greater bulk of poor people. Another acute problem is corruption. It is rampant, not leaving the Poumai society. It has taken its roots even in the village administration. The true, humble and the honest leaders have no place in the

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\(^{81}\) M. Horam, op. cit., P. 94.
modern society. For a cup of tea the poor tend to praise and follow the
Nouveau riche not knowing who he really is.

The development of road connectivity to the hilly terrains has led to the
devastation of the rich forest resources of the region. It has opened up the doors
to the rich and influential few who discriminately felled the centuries old trees
without having a pang of conscience and have shifted them away only to mount
their treasures. On the other hand, as the population multiplied the jhum
cultivation spread beyond the hills clearing the thick forest that once covered
the region. As a result, R. Thithi feared that after some decades the younger
generation would see no good quality tree any more and that they may have to
use paotbing (a tree of low quality) and plantain plants in building their houses.

The numbers of wild games, big or small have also tremendously
dwindled down in the region. The melodious music of chirping birds is no
more heard and the natural beauty of the region has lost its exotica year after
year. All these lost can never be replaced by this modernized world. There is
fear of soil erosion, fast changing climatic conditions and extinction of many
valuable plants as well as animal species in the region.

Further, there are signs of increasing problems of religious and moral
degradation, drug abuse, social disorganization, etc. With the advancement of
civilization and modernization, the value of religious and moral life has been
fast degrading. The advancement of science, the lust for the worldly materials
and temporal pleasure has led the younger generation to ignore the eternal laws
of God. 82 No doubt, once Christianity was adopted as the better religion than
the traditional religion of the people. However, today many of the Christians
are confronted with various undesirable activities and permissive life style,
which destroy the very descent and good moral character of Christianity. To
cope up with the fast changing situation many of them have deviated from the
Christian ethos. N. Venuh wrote: “Unfortunately, today, in some village

82 R. Vathii Tao, The Downfall of Today’s Christian Youth, in Souvenir, Oinam Hill Baptist
Church, Golden Jubilee publication, 2000, P. 28.
communities, instead of showing Christian forgiveness, grace and respect for their own roots, there is a tendency among the majority Christian members to try to impose their wills on the entire community".83

6.11. Conclusion:

Changes are inevitable. It occurs without ceasing and will continue to be there whether one likes it or not. No individual or society can escape from change because it is a natural phenomenon. It occurs not only to human beings but to all the living beings as well as to non-living things. Where there is no change, there is no life or in other words, there is no change because nothing exists there. The birth of man, growing up and becoming old are nothing but the process of change. Every society passes through various favourable as well as unfavorable changes because of numerous factors. Change brings new things and development so also destruction and decay. Without change development is impossible and without development life will be meaningless. A change which is considered good for a person or a society may not be suitable for another person or society. The changes that have been brought by Christianity, modern education, modern democratization processes and various development policies and programs initiated by the government have had some negative effects harmful to the Poumai community. But then, in spite of these negative effects that have diminished the importance of traditional things and values, people have tremendously benefited from the changes that have been brought by the above mentioned factors. It is these changes that have transformed their primitive world to a modern one. Time passes, change comes and everything moves from one stage to another with time and change, to be replaced by new ones. Therefore, it is important to note that while changes have to be accepted as a fact of human existence, one has to adjust with the changing world and situation in such a manner so that neither the past nor the

83 N. Venuh, op. cit., P. 132.
present be totally neglected, and the best of past is assimilated to the best which the new changes have brought. The past is the identity and the present is the fuel that ignites and pushes one forward.