CHAPTER IV
CONCEPT OF CONVERSION

The varied usages of the English loan word “conversion” may illustrate what von Bismarck means by confusion of tongues in our times. In English speaking, Western societies the term ‘conversion’ have come to mean many things to different people. We should remember at the outset that conversion per se is no sacred term. It is used as much in secular as in religious literature. Even the advertising and promotional world uses it. To the computer technologists, conversion may mean the change from one code or symbolic system to another; for a psychoanalyst it may mean the process by which repressed ideas or feelings are represented by bodily changes, as a stimulated physical illness; for the mathematician it may mean the change in the unit of expression; for the nuclear physicist it may mean the change of one nuclear fuel into another by the process of capturing neutrons; for the carpenter it may mean the remodeling of a bedroom into a den; for the sociologist it may mean the transformation of social status from one level to another; for a religious it may mean the substitution of one religion to another; for a theologian it may mean the change from one belief system to another. Thus the word conversion simply implies the process whereby change, transmutation, or transformation in condition, state, position, value or
attitude takes place either in the mental, physical, emotional, material, religious or ethical realm of experience.\textsuperscript{138}

In this study the word conversion will be used to describe the spiritual, religious and ethical processes of man’s spiritual transformation in terms of his values, relationships and attitudes to God, himself, and others within the matrix of his own culture and social structure. For it is always within the socio-cultural and religious ethical framework that humans operate and confront change. In this sense, “conversion indicates a change from one set of loyalties to another, involving critical experiences”\textsuperscript{139}. Therefore, conversion is a term for change and implying a drastic alteration of a former state.

The history and phenomenon of religious conversion is complex, varied and has always been an issue of friction in a pluralistic situation, where the process of change affects one’s religion, society and culture. Particular issues are often raised, especially here in India, when it comes to the encounter of Christianity and Hinduism. Where Christianity meets Islam, it is the meeting of one missionary religion with another. Conversion is not welcomed either way as it leads to great hostility and anger. But the nature of conversion is understood as there is a common

\textsuperscript{138} Quoted from Hans Kasdorf in Christian Conversion in context, pg 22.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, pg 23.
language of discourse, related to two understanding of truth, two dominant scriptures and two structured religious organizations. Conversion between the two faiths requires a complete change of life, allegiance to a new community and the breaking of past ties. Decisions taken here cannot be easily reversed. The encounter of Christianity with Hinduism is much more complicated, as it raises central questions about the nature of religion, culture, community and personal identity.

Gandhi welcomed conversion in one sense, as 'self-purification' and 'self-realization'. He wrote – "I am convinced, I know, that God will ask and ask us now, not what we label ourselves, but what we are, i.e. what we do. With him deed is everything, belief without doing is not believing". But he rejected the idea of conversion as the transfer of allegiance from one fold to another involving rivalry or war. He said to the missionaries, "What do you want to convert them (Hindus) for? If your contact with them ennobles them, makes them forget untruth, all evil, and brings them a ray of light, is that not enough? Is that not its own reward? Or must you have a mechanical confusion from him that he is a Christian, We see today a rivalry, a war, going on among different religions and feel that in everyone of the feats we are denying our God

140 Young India, 4-9-24
and being untrue to ourselves”.\textsuperscript{141} The task was to make Muslims better Muslims, Christians better Christians and Hindus better Hindus, and for their mutual enrichment.\textsuperscript{142}

V.A.Devasenapathi in his article wrote in the same vein, claiming that all radii are equidistant from the center\textsuperscript{143}. It is therefore illogical for a Hindu to claim his way superior just because it is the most inclusive. He does allow for cross religious conversion, but only when it is clear, one’s own religion has been tried to the full and has failed and that the new one will deliver better. S. Radhakrishnan similarly stated, “Our aim should not be to make converts, Christians into Buddhists but to rediscover the basic principles of their own religions and live up to them”\textsuperscript{144}. Thus we see that there is hostility to the very idea of inter-religious conversion.

In recent times, particularly in India, it is interesting to observe certain so-called religious organizations that want to ostracize and shelve every question related to conversion, so as to make us believe that conversion as a human response does not exist at all, or does not

\textsuperscript{141} Young India, 8-10-25
\textsuperscript{142} 'From conversion to fellowship' the Hindu Christian encounter in Gandhian perspective, Allahabad, St.Paul's publication, 1990, Pushparanjn.
\textsuperscript{143} 'Religious conversion' a Hindu view, in Religion and society, VolXIII, No 4, pp 43-46
\textsuperscript{144} The philosophy of Radhakrishnan, Arthur Schlipp, pp 74.
want to make room for it. There has also been renewed interest in legislating against 'conversion activities'. Therefore, here I shall try to define and study the meaning and concept of conversion and look at how a Christian understanding of conversion may be viewed.

At the outset we may say that conversion to Christianity is both theological and cultic. It may also be sociological. It is theological because conversion is a spiritual experience seeking an adequate theological conceptualization. Cultic, because it is brought about by a sacramental ritual called "baptism"; finally, sociological, in so far as it bestows a sociological identity on the person, by incorporating him into a group of the baptized, or the "church".

In general, the word "conversion" is understood in different ways. To some, it is a change, a shift in religious affiliation.145 Another definition of conversion mentions an idea of transition and proposes a typology of conversion as traditional transition, institutional transition, affiliation, intensification, and apostasy146. In short, it is communal and is expressed symbolically through the performance of rituals.147 Lewis

Rambo lays emphasis on an inner change and radical religious transformation. He defines conversion as a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations. Quoting Nock's definition on conversion, conversion is "the re-orientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right." Therefore, conversion is a deliberate shift, which indicates a sense of frustration and discontent and an attempt to or a quest for a fuller humanity.

The basic meaning of the Latin term convertere is to turn or to change. Hence, to be converted in the spiritual sense means more than rational cognizance of, or mental consent to, the articles of a particular faith, the recitation of a creed, or the adoption of a ritual. It is a "turning away", usually, from an enslaving and, therefore, unwanted, state of affairs, on the past of man, to a deeply satisfying condition of freedom. It is a change of heart, a change from within (metanoia), to a whole set of attitudes and values in life.

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148 Ibid 2.
149 Andrew Wingate, The church and conversion.
There is extensive literature related to the Biblical understanding of conversion, which I shall touch only in a minimal way here. In the Old Testament, we are dealing with ‘conversion’ largely within the people of God. The Hebrew word is ‘shub’, usually used as a verb, ‘to turn’. It is about turning to God or returning to God. With the prophets what is clear is that a fundamental re-orientation is required (Micah 6: 6-8; Joel 2: 12-13). This involves change of attitude to God, and change of behaviour to neighbour. It is primarily a call to the people as a whole, then to the remnant, then to the individual. Newbign puts it as, ‘It is call to concrete obedience here and now. It is not the offer of an inward and private spiritual experience following which one looks around and decides what kind of expression one is to choose.’\footnote{Quoted by Andrew Wingate in The church and conversion, pg 240.} In the New Testament, the main words involved are ‘metanoein’, ‘metanoia’, and ‘epistrophein’. It involves an act of faith, trust and obedience, and of accompanying action.

Therefore, spiritual conversion means to be changed, turned, transformed, renewed, reborn, reconciled and restored; it is a process which affects the total life-way of the convert.

Closely related to the whole conversion concept are terms such as repentance, confession, faith, reconciliation and relationship which
imply deep religious and ethical sensitivities, leading to the resolution and verdict to change one’s lifestyle and world-view; they imply transformation of the old way of life, leading to a new way of life. It may also be understood as the dimension of change away from something old and undesirable or in other words an aspect of change toward something new and desirable.

Andrew Wingate gives a holistic description of conversion as-“a process including a personal decision, taken alone or as part of a group, to center one’s religious life on a new focus, which one believes is more liberating, in every aspect of that word, and closer to truth. This involves a change of identification within oneself and normally to a change of outward affiliation to a new community which will affect one’s life at various levels, ‘body, heart, mind and soul’, and to tangible changes of behavior and religious practice.’151 Therefore as Louis. J. Luzbetak says, “Conversion means a “turning” away from old ways to new ways, a basic reorientation in premises and goals, a whole-hearted acceptance of a new set of values affecting the “convert” as well as his social group, ............every sphere of activity- economic, social, and religious”152. These personal decisions that are involved in “turning” away from a former position to a new way is a change of heart, a change

151 Andrew Wingate, The church and conversion, Delhi: ISPCK, 1997, p 270
152 Quoted by Hans Kasdorf, Christian conversion in context, pg 25.
from within (metanoia), to a whole set of attitudes and values in life. It is a spiritual experience that we often encounter in the life of the individuals in every religion. Such experiences are replete in the life of such religious men as Francis of Assisi and Ramakrishna alike. They are said to awake through this profound religious experience to a new, usually a deep, often a hidden, dimension of human existence. To the Christian, this conversion is associated with an experience of a participation in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection.

Once a spiritual conversion takes place, a person is introduced into a new world where his actions reveal that he is no longer the former self. He is now regulated by new values and attitudes. There's a radical change of one's entire lifestyle. This inner change also leads to the change in the outer systems leading to the change in his belief system. He is no longer committed to the former belief system but regulated by the new belief system and the convert becomes a new man. Conversion thus becomes a decision to turn to a new direction, or a turning towards God, as in theistic, religions and this decision is purely one's own. Once converted, life begins afresh for the convert.
Besides this spiritual sense, a Christian may take conversion in a cultic sense\(^{153}\) as well. Speaking historically, the spiritual experience of participation in Christ's death and resurrection is sought to be, on a cultic level, re-enacted in a ritual called "baptism". Baptism is then made into an external and symbolic means of an inward sacramental grace operating in the life of a Christian.

In the early church only the practice of adult baptism was in vogue, as it was considered essential that a cultic participation in the sacramental life of the church, in particular, of the Eucharist, was reserved for the initiated ones. And the initiation was effected by way of baptism, which heralded a "conversion" to a new way of life in Christ. Hence the initiation was painstakingly prepared for by way of instructions into the fuller implications of the Christian way of life. The Christian worship for example, clearly had two parts, the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. The non-initiated were generally "dismissed" at the end of the liturgy of the word, so that only the initiated could carry on the liturgy of the Eucharist. The practice of adult baptism, though largely disappeared today, is still in vogue among certain denominations. The spirit behind the adult baptism, by which both a cultic conversion takes place and a membership in a select group

is obtained, is that the individual is fully conscious of what he is about to accept freely in his life. Neither inducement nor coercion has therefore any place in conversion by baptism. But, with the church historically emerging out of the catacombs, after the edict of Constantine, and Christianity donning the robe of the State religion, infant baptism gained rapid acceptance. The belief is the tacit assumption that the profession of faith here was made by the believing community on behalf of the infant. This made for a magical understanding of conversion by way of baptism. The practices in the believing community were also sought to be sustained by the development of elaborate doctrines, and this radically affected our understanding of cultic baptism and the conversion it brought about\textsuperscript{154}.

Thirdly, the sociological sense is that which is linked with the cultic sense, in as much as the rite of baptism gathers a people into an ecclesial community with a distinctive sociological identity as the “members of the church”. Thus, in practice the church is taken to mean a social group, a community, of the baptized people, who get together for a cultic life within a hierarchically, organized church. Entry and membership into this community is invariably by way of “conversion”, marked by a ritual “washing” and the profession of a creed. While the

former is clearly cultic in nature, the latter is ideological. Both however are integral to the life of the church.

As discussed the concept of conversion has various layers of meanings and we have often been guilty of using it indiscriminately in our public socio-political debates where it has shown a remarkable sensitivity to the many meanings of the term, largely misunderstood in the several Freedom of Religion Bills sought to be introduced in some of the State legislatures. In the public discourse conversion is invariably taken in the sociological sense, which is as, “a change of one’s religion to another, bestowing on the convert an identity of belonging to a new socio-religious group”. At its best, it is brought about by a personal conviction that the new religion leads him to an eminently satisfying existence. At its worst, it is brought about by way of threat, physical or mental, coercion or even a form of inducement, direct or indirect. The problem with the Freedom of Religion Bills is that they not only confuse between the several meanings of conversion, but also the two extreme points on the same line segment of sociological sense itself. It is true that any type of conversion gives a convert an identity, as belonging to a religion itself is at once having an identity in a group. Acquisition of this sociological identity, followed due to the conversion out of conviction is not objected by the judgment of the Apex Court, when it
probes into the Freedom of religion Bills. The objection is against the sociological identity obtained by way of fear, coercion, and inducement, as this is incompatible with the spirit and practice of pluralism. It is captured by the phrase “subject to public order, morality and health and other provisions”.

Some conversions to Christianity are by way of inducements of better economic status, an easy access to education, Medicare, employment and marriage. Therefore, the motive that impels a conversion on the part of a convert makes a difference between a conversion in the spiritual sense and conversion in the sociological sense. It is this conversion in the sociological sense that is called proselytisation. It may be defined for change from one religion to another for motives other than spiritual. It was these kinds of conversions, effected by way of inducements that Gandhi was unhappy with. Gandhi expressed his conviction that the living truth of a religion is more important than religion itself. By the living truth he meant the personal and inward experience of a religion in one’s life. Hence advocating the principle of adherence to the religion that one is born in, he did not find any need to change the outward label; an inward change is possible in every religion.
On the other hand we have the genuine spiritual conversions where a person embraces a different religion out of his personal conviction that the new faith is for the betterment of his spiritual growth, there could be no objection against it nor the Apex Court object to it. It is the non-spiritual conversions that are invariably fraught with a socio-political, often narrowly communal and partisan, agenda, inconsonant with pluralism, egalitarianism and secularism of the country.

Therefore it is important that we rightly understand what we mean by spiritual conversion. Spiritual conversion is that type of conversion where one experiences the “sacred” or “God” of a religion, as the ground of one’s reality. In such conversions there’s a radical re-orientation of one’s life in terms of values, belief systems, activity, affectivity, - in short the whole life with its world view. This can be distinguished from all other types of conversions, including “religious” conversions in the narrow sense. Because religious conversions is merely a change of one’s religion to another for the sake of merely acquiring a sociological identity and so they are all superficial conversions. Such superficial conversions may also be stained with some psychological factors, as one may be deeply and personally attached to the doctrinal and cultic life of a religion other than one’s own and so may be converted for his psychological fulfillment. But even such a fulfillment does not give rise
into a spiritual conversion. But, however, the psychological, religious and spiritual conversions can all co-exist in the same person.

Our uniqueness as human beings does not consist merely in possessing a rational nature, but in constantly and consciously exercising it in order to arrive at intelligent decisions and ensuing actions. This gives a humane face to whatever we are and whatever we do. Indeed, it is characteristic of our nature that we are able to meaningfully modify our responses taking into account the things and events in and around our lives. It is not a one-time action, but an all-encompassing and ever-continuous phenomenon covering every moment and dimension of human life, pointing to the dynamism that is integral to our nature.

Although all of us commit ourselves to certain foundational (and, hence, firm and unchanging) decisions at certain moments in life, the ensuing commitment to them does not mean that our life should be a stagnated one. Instead, being loyal to such vital decisions, without exempting ourselves from exercising our humane faculties, demands us to involve in a becoming process; in fact, requires a constant and continuous conversion process that would make us worthy of ourselves as human beings. For, being endowed with intelligence and rationality, it demands that we are open to new opportunities and prospects, making
the avenues open for the blossoming of our humanity and human faculties to their optimum. In short, we are never (and we cannot be) frozen in time. Human responses, therefore, shall not be fixed for all times, but they must be ever vibrant and active, at least, as far as our intelligent human nature is concerned. Any attempt to reduce all our responses to a single pattern or final formula in content or style, ascribing it absolute, or necessary and universal validity, becomes all the more unbecoming of our basic human constitution. This is equally pertinent whether the case in point is that of an individual or a group.

The perspectives we cherish, the standpoints we adopt, or the convictions we hold dear with regard to any dimension of our life, whether it be individual or societal, emotional or intellectual, profane or religious, must be subjected to an intelligent scrutiny and transformation, necessitating a constructive conversion essential. Such a conversion in order to be positively constructive shall not result from any external force, or even an outside suggestion only, but an affirmative internal decision consciously arrived at by a personally accepted novel or “ground breaking” standpoint or conviction.\textsuperscript{155} In many cases, a positive change in the internal dynamics may require, naturally, a corresponding change in their exterior aspects, too, although a mere

\textsuperscript{155} Saju Chackalackal, religious conversion in Journal of dharma, Jan-Mar 2003, Vol XXVIII, No.1, Pg 1-5.
acceptance of the latter cannot in any way substitute or vouchsafe the former.

The advocates of conversion must however keep in mind the observations made by N.K.Devaraja\textsuperscript{156} in connexion with inter-religious understanding. It is difficult to reconcile the philosophy of one religion-one world with the vision of unity in diversity.

"Unity in diversity" is an idea, which has been persistent in a tradition like India where there is a plurality of religious beliefs and religio-philosophical doctrines. Hinduism believes that the goal of religious life as postulated by various religions was one and the same. Though the adherents are from diverse traditions and cultures India successfully tried to hold together people from diverse creeds and mode of worship. Due to the liberal outlook of ancient Indians, it was possible for them to accommodate even the atheistic creeds such as the Samkhya-Yoga philosophy.

Due to the confusion over conversion, Devaraja points out, certain political parties try to confuse between the sacred and the secular dividing the nation into groups. Therefore it is necessary to redefine the

\textsuperscript{156} N.K.Devaraja, Philosophy, religion and culture, pg 155-160.
sphere of religion so that it prevents its interference with social, political and economic progress. “If religion is to survive in modern society, it will have not only to renounce the claim to order the social, economic and political life of man, but also to relax its rigid posture in regard to moral conventions inimical to man’s happy existence here on earth”\(^{157}\).

He draws a distinction between two types of religious persons. On one hand we have the masses of uneducated people accepting traditional beliefs without questioning and on the other we have the section of the intelligentsia who questions the things around him. People in all traditions accept truths discovered by sciences and this is true even of different scriptures. However, scriptures all over the world claim to embody eternal and complete truth. Therefore, “we cannot but be inclined to accept the claims and the teachings of different religions with proper reservations”.\(^{158}\) In this context, N.K. Devaraja is of the view that-“Just as a modern literary writer, a poet or novelist, who seeks to excel in his art, tries to learn from great writers of all languages and cultures with which he is acquainted, similarly a person desirous of understanding and practicing religion should try to learn from the scriptures and traditions of all great religions. It is a mere accident that

\(^{157}\) N.K.Devaraja, Philosophy, religion and culture, pg 158.
\(^{158}\) Ibid, pg 159.
one person is born in a Christian family and another in a Muslim or Hindu family. The accident of birth in one community or another should not be permitted to condition and shape one's attitude towards life and its cultural values. As in science and literature so in the spheres of moral and religious faith. I should learn to look upon myself as heir to all the great traditions of the world, being free to learn from the lives and teachings of the saints and prophets of all the religions. Having developed this attitude towards sages and philosophers, saints and prophets produced by different countries and traditions, I should feel free to exercise my discrimination in accepting the beliefs and ideals that both appeal to my intellect and suit my temperament. While believing in God in a general way, I may accept the conception of God that appears to me to be most reasonable; I should also feel free to frame my own conception of the Deity, which may amount to a synthesis of the teachings of different religions. There is no reason why I should be intolerant towards those who come to cherish conceptions of God or human destiny different from my own. Of course, I should also be permitted to argue in defense of my views on a particular matter and to propagate those views. However, votaries of different religious views or world-views may still agree with regard to the centrality of certain religious values and ideals, e.g., absence of greed and pride and egotism, and the desirability of rendering service to the destitute, the sick and the
disabled. No two religious persons or groups, I believe, ever quarreled over the right to be more truthful, more humble, self-sacrificing, upright and just than their rivals. Men and women, who desire to be truly religious, would do well to try to practice these virtues, rather than break each other’s heads for opinions and beliefs whose truth may forever remain uncertain and debatable.\(^{159}\) Besides this, one also has to accept the different teachings of the different religions as being complementary to one another.

Against this backdrop, it is interesting to take note of the stress few organized Christian religious groups in Mizoram, place on the need of conversion as an ever-continuous phenomenon, which must accompany any genuinely motivated neophyte or full-fledged religious person.

Western missionaries and Mizo scholars have often commented on the change of traditional Mizo religion to Christianity as-

“\[\text{The ancient Mizos lived with demons and fairies,}\]

\[\text{Living throughout the days with fear of enemies,}\]

\(^{159}\) N.K. Devaraja, Philosophy, religion and culture, pg 159-160.
Superstitious worship of hills and spirits,
But all that darkness was now gone"¹⁶₀

To quote another-

"The way of life is changing,
A new belief replaced the old one;
Now the abode of God is not monument,
But the heavenly sweet home where God lives"¹⁶¹

Acceptance of Christianity led to the various modifications, replacements or annihilation of certain concepts central to Mizo religion. An in-depth study by some Mizo scholars of both the religions show that the change that took place in religion was not a change of two completely diverse faiths, but what we may call a translation and a transformation at the conceptual level. Various concepts such as the concept of the Creator God, concept of life after death i.e. the existence of mitthi khua and pialral for the spirit of the dead and various other concepts that were already present in the previous religion were translated and strengthened by Christianity.

The Christian idea of God is mainly a legacy from the religious quest of two people; the Hebrews and the Greeks. The meeting of the two lines of tradition mingled in the religious consciousness of the early Christian Church and the full Christian idea of God was born out of this union, as we know it today. Traditional Mizo religion, on the other hand, had no written scriptures; it was a religion, orally passed on from one generation to the other with the idea of God ‘Pathian’ considered as the Supreme.

After the inception of Christianity, certain terms referring to Pathian were retained and some discarded.

‘Pathian’ is a term, which has retained its identity with all its meaning and significance, even after the embracement of Christianity. The story behind it during its translation is as follows. In the mid 1890’s when foreign missionaries started translation of the Bible Khamliana assisted them and two other new Christian converts name Suaka and Thanphunga who could not come to an agreement over the superiority of Pathian over Khuavang. According to Suaka, Pathian was superior to Khuavang where as Thanphunga ranked him higher than Pathian. Due to this Lorraine (the then missionary) replaced Pathian

162 K. Vanlaltlani, Concept of the Mizo high God, pg 117-118
with Jehovah for translation of God\textsuperscript{163} and thus the first Mizo version of the Bible had ‘Jehovah’ for ‘God’.\textsuperscript{164}

The problem lay with the various terms used to describe Pathian.

“All tribal perhaps have the conception of ‘Supreme God’ but their ideas are confusing when placed along with monotheism. There are several words with which ‘God’ can be translated. Not knowing which word should be most suitable the translator first used ‘Jihova’ the personal name of the Hebrew God. After sometime they changed the word to denote the being who had the least activities in the daily affairs of man, but to whom final appeal was addressed in extreme distress.”\textsuperscript{165}

As time passed by, ‘Pathian’ gained more weightage than Khuavang and by 1913 the term ‘Pathian’ was used for “God” and khuavang slowly lost its significance. In 1919, the Mizo New Testament was printed where “Pathian” was used for “God”\textsuperscript{166} in all the Christians scriptural writings. It was therefore the use of the first Bible translations that led to the use of Pathian as God, which is being used till the present

\begin{footnotes}
\item[163] Lalhuuka, Zoram, pg 31.
\item[164] K. Vanlaltlani, Concept of Mizo high God, pg 118
\item[165] Zairema, “Bible translation in NE India” in “A trainer of leader” Vol 2, Jan-May, pg 19.
\item[166] K. Vanlaltlani, Concept of Mizo high God, pg 119
\end{footnotes}
day. Lorraine thus defines Pathian as giver, and Preserver of life\textsuperscript{167}. The meaning of Pathian as the ‘holy father’ and its anthromorphic presentation as a male character still remain unchanged.

\textit{Chung Pathian or Chunga Pathian} are again terms which are still being used today to refer to Pathian. God as the term indicates means ‘Pathian above’ therefore Mizo Christians to this day still use the term to address God in prayer with the thought of God being above all things, showing his omnipotence and omniscience. From this term came into existence terms like ‘Chungnung ber’, Highest; ‘Pathian Chungnungbera’ meaning God in the highest realm. Khuanu can be compared to the Christian ‘Emmanuel’ meaning ‘God with us’.

With Christianity using Pathian for God, khuavang slowly lost its significance and weightage. Khuavang was overshadowed by Pathian. All the benevolent roles and functions of khuavang as protector guardian and controller of man’s fate now turned to Pathian. However though the term khuavang has lost its weightage and significance today, it is still uttered sometimes in phrases to describe certain circumstances.

\textsuperscript{167} Lorrain, dictionary, pg 352
The terms *sa* and *khua* have been replaced by the word *Pathian* – God of the clan, village and human beings as a whole. The narrow understanding of *sa* and *khua* as a God paved way for a broader understanding of the Christian *Pathian*. It created a base for a better and deeper concept of *Pathian* God in Christianity.

Besides the above changes in the terms of *Pathian*, certain conceptual transformation also took place in relation to *Pathian*.

Holiness was already an attribute of *Pathian* in the indigenous religion. In the newly religion, the concept of His holiness came to be further broadened explicitly.

The God of the new religion i.e. Christianity is a God actively involved amongst his creation. The book of Exodus describes dramatically God's presence among the Israelites in the form of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, when they were fleeing from the mighty Egyptians 168. He revealed himself as an immanent God who is present and active, or in other words, as, Emmanuel, meaning "God with us" 169. He’s a God who always remains among his people as saviour and helper.

Anthromorphisms in the Bible in describing God is a reflection of this

168 Exodus 13:21, Holy Bible
169 Isaia 7:14, Ibid
relationship that Israel experienced. Hence it could be said that what the Bible presents is not the “unmoved mover” of Aristotle, but the “most moved mover”.

In the New Testament the immanence of God reaches its climax. God sends his only Son, Jesus to be Immanuel, “God with us”. After his ascension to heaven, the Holy Spirit makes His permanent abode among us to be “God with us”.

So also the Mizos did understand God as immanent, called Him “Khuanu” or “Pu Vana” and offered Him sacrifices. He was also understood as the God of their tribe that is one who takes special interest in their welfare.

Of course traditionally, Pathian had no physical appearance. Though he was believed to be present everywhere there was no seat specially assigned to him, and there was no artistic representation in painting or sculpture, which would show Pathian’s transcendence. Pathian remains distant in the sense that he does not speak to men and the lack of the possibility of a very intimate communion with him can in one sense be interpreted as showing his transcendence.
In Christianity, a clear distinction is made between God and not God -i.e.-between the creator and the created. In fact Christianity rejects the possibility of identifying God and a created object, therefore idolatry is not encouraged and accepted. Although God is present always and everywhere, he cannot be trapped, manipulated or reduced to human dimensions. He remains beyond the grasp of man thus showing his transcendence. This Christian concept of Pathian’s transcendence has strengthened the traditional view of the transcendence of Pathian.

Then again the traditional understanding of the omnipotence of Pathian was related to nature-such as thunder-believed to be the manifestation of Pu Vana, a heavenly deity. His omnipotence was also understood in terms of being more powerful than the other numerous good and evil spirits believed to reside everywhere. In the Christian understanding, Pathian’s omnipotence was attributed to no other deity but Pathian alone.

The traditional understanding of the omnipresence of Pathian is the same as in Christianity. Pathian was believed to reside in every corner of the earth as seen in the chants. In the same way, Pathian of Christianity is one present everywhere at one and the same time
Therefore; traditional Mizos had no difficulty in understanding this attribute of the Christian Pathian.

The Christian elite find the following similarities between the two conceptions-

1). A monotheistic belief in a creator God who is a good and provident father.
2). Belief in an immanent God whose transcendence is not lost.
3). Faith in God who mediates salvation either in ‘pialral’ (traditional heaven) or ‘Vanram’ (Christian heaven).

Also similar accounts are found, between the two such as- the flood of Noah’s which can be compared to the flood of Ngaitei’s story, great darkness at the time of creation of Christ’s’ crucifixion to the thimzing of Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi, resurrection in the implication of Thlanrawkpa’s name, virgin birth in the story of Palova (fatherless child), the disguised King in the story of Lersia and Liandova etc.\(^\text{170}\)

One of the main difference but between them is the concept of the personal Saviour Jesus Christ, which is at the heart of the Christian

\(^\text{170}\) Dr. Vanlalchhuanawma., Revival movement in Mizoram
concept of salvation, Whereas in the traditional, salvation is the result of the good deeds and accomplishment of the required processes of Thangchhuah.

This led Rosiama probably to conclude "Mizo sakhua is, therefore, Christianity"\(^\text{171}\). The only hindrance according to him for the traditional Mizos was the ignorance of the exact identity of God until Christianity revealed His attributes to them.

\(^{171}\) C.Rosiama, 'Mizo sakhua' in B.Lalthangliana (ed), Hranghluite sulhnu, Aizawl.