CHAPTER - V
SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG THE HMAR

(Since the introduction of christianity, 1910)
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Change is the law of nature, like most things in the world, society also undergoes changes in various types and seldom, remains static in a fast moving universe, Social change becomes necessary to enable to march with the times and register progress. A process of transition from the old order to the new has set in the Hmar society with the number of notable developments. The Hmar society is no longer static; it has change and is changing.

In the following pages, an attempt is made to examine the extent of social change and transformation of the Hmar society to the new situation that had developed with British occupation of Hmar inhabited hills (hitherto unidentified territory) towards the end of the 19th Century A.D. and, after the advent of Christianity in 1910 at Senvawn, Manipur

FAMILY AND KINSHIP:

The rapid change in the Hmar society brought about by the various factors of change has a profound effect on the life of the people. A change feature is observed in the structure and function in respect of family. The existence of age-old primary relationships including bond of love and affection among the members of the family has been distorted or weakened contemporarily as most of the members stay out of home or village for want of studies and employment. The family as a corporate unit of economic production hardly exists as all members are not equally engaged in the same stream of economic pursuits now but are engaged in different fields where all the pursuits may not be necessarily be economic. The chances of working together in the jhum-field has been replaced by the offices and such other gainful entrepreneurs for many. Socialization are done mostly from outside than at home now. The educational and religious function which were normally performed at home
and in the youth dormitory in the traditional past have been mostly transferred to specialized modern educational training institutes, hostels and etc. Recreation is now had in outside clubs, restaurants, party, etc, rather than at home as in the earlier days. Inter-generational gaps between the parents and the children including emerging mal-adjustment between old parents’ culture and new younger generations’ culture further deteriorates the contemporary family structure and its relationships.

In the changed circumstances, the kinship structure stands no exception for perceptible modification. The primary kinship structure, the kinship including co-operation among the kin groups are observed to have been changing to a certain extent owing to dispersal of its members in different fields and places. The displacement of family in various places as a consequences of employment outside and engagement in various economic pursuits proves positive in further weakening of the kinship structure and relationships. This has its psychological effect of diminishing the inter-personal and kin group relationship outside the immediate family circle and kindred group. With the spread of education and modern value system, there has been a growing individual economic interest. The obligatory kinship duties, intimacy and a sense of belonging to oneness as kin group had undergone deterioration in the changing economic situation. In the face of it, bonds of kinship become less close and the compulsions of kinship morality become less binding. Kinship today serves only pure emotional and sentimental bonds.

Marriage

In the traditional Hmar society, the choice of marriage was governed by the cultural norms intrinsically connected with and attached to the agriculture work and bravery. In the days of yore, as soon as the male child is born he was blessed with the skills in war and hunting which fall outside the domestic domain; and a female child was blessed with physical beauty and skill domestic works. In recent years, the traditional value have been modified and a new value scale based on education assumes precedence in marriage. With the process of transformation, education and economic wealth represent the new scale of value and since no individual has a preponderant position over the others in the scale, there is a wide range of choice which cuts across traditional personal status to achievement in the society. Thus, the earlier personal status through individual achievement like expertise in war and hunting or physical beauty and skill in domestic works gradually loss its traditional significance in the choice of spouse where a semi-class structure plays more and more
significant role. Marriages between members of the educated class and economically well-to-do families result in the formation of a proto-type of upper middle class largely represented by the government officials of the upper class rank, while petty businessmen, school teachers, contractors and lower ranks of government officials make up to the lower class. In the face of this, marriage choice in future will show more and more emphasis on class line thus creating class system in a classless society.

Owing to the adoption of Christian faith and belief, the traditional marriage system in the Hmar society has undergone a change to fit the present social system. The primitive form of child marriage (Chongmolak) have totally disappeared. The traditional form of arranged marriage (Sawngpuia Innei) have been replaced by Hmar Christian marriage. The practice of Thlapui Hnuoia Innei’ (marriage not legally) has been modified in the form of ‘Dan Chanve’ meaning marriage by observing some of the marriage legal system. However, the practice of marriage by elopement (Inruk/Tlankawp) is still followed even by the educated girls and boys.

With the coming of Christianity in the Hmar society two different ways of marriage known as ‘Dan a Innei’ (marriage by rule) and all the other forms other than Christian way of marriage or the traditional way known as ‘Danlo a Innei - marriage not by rule). In the Christian marriage both the would be bride and bride-groom must obtain approval of the Church claiming that they are the bonafide member of so and so Church and they have not seen doing anything against the Christian principle and hence there is no objection in giving them approval for conduction the holy marriage in the Church.

In the Christian marriage, administered by an ordained priest, the bride and the bridegroom swear in the name of God that they will remain as husband and wife and never part till death makes them separate. On this occasion, all the special invitees and the entire villagers who come to attend the marriage ceremony bring gifts – either in kind or in cash, greetings and best wishes to the couple. On the other hand, a would be bride and bridegroom are not allowed to perform holy matrimony (Christian marriage) if they are not within the Church guidelines due to indulging in sex relation prior to marriage or for some other reasons. However, their marriage may be regularized through performance of post-marriage rites known as ‘Dan Chanve a Innei’ (marriage by observing some of the Christian marriage system) as a sign of their sub-mission or remission to ethics or principles of the Church,
however, only after expelling the couple from the Church for a specific period of time. In this kind of marriage, the marriage are solemnize in the house of Kohran Upa (Church elder). Mass participation is not observed during the marriage. All the Christian marriage including Dan Chanve marriage, administrated by the priest, are recorded in the Church official record. The priest also offers them special blessing and issues a marriage certificate as witnesses to the marriage.

With the introduction of Christianity and consequently formal education, the traditional ways of marriage could not retain some of its traditional characteristics. Changes were effected to fit the marriage customs in such a way that it had become a mixture of traditional and Christian way of marriage. The new religions, in some way, has little effect upon the basic structure of the traditional nuptial rites, except that the marriage was solemnized in the Church where an ordained priest conducted the oath of allegiance according to Christian practices in place of the traditional Thiempu (priest). The part once played by Zu (liquor) during marriage negotiation and on the weeding day were now replaced by a simple marriage feast and tea-drinking. Even after full conversion into the new faith, however, the services of the Makpa (collectively applied to all the son-in-laws’ of ego’s clan) known as Palai (mediator) in the bride price negotiation are the pre-requisites before anything is done in the Church. Therefore, the traditional norms and social obligations still have some weight in matters relating to marriage ceremony. In this regard, it may be rightly said that no Christian marriage can taken place without following the traditional formalities. However, among the modern Hmar living in urban areas, this custom, in actual practice, is observed only for the sake of formality without much of its true significance.

With the introduction of monetary system, the common standard of bride-price hitherto paid in kind as stated earlier were now paid in cash. Significantly, there is no retaliatory resistance on the part of the people when such changes were introduced. The response was positive perhaps for the two reasons that it was more convenient to pay the bride-price in cash and that the amount was lesser in cash than it previously was when it was paid in kind.

In general, bride-price usually reflected that social status of the contracting parties. It is observed that the higher the social status of the girl’s family the higher the bride-price. However, this great of variations in customary rules and practices in different villages and
between different contracting parties were brought under a uniform system through the introduction of a book called *Hmar Hnam Dan* (Hmar Customary Rules) publish by the Hmar Youth Association (HYA) in the year 1990, the first of its kind, which is applicable to all the Hmar tribe.

The distribution of bride price which was once regarded as one of the important means of strengthening clanship ties within the clan organization assumes less and less importance. This is mainly because of the changing socio-economic situation without a corresponding change in the amount of brideprice. Today, brideprice and its distribution becomes simply a formality to the fulfillment of nuptial rites on traditional line.

Rural urban migration also brings about inter religious and inter community marriage in the Hmar society. There has been a great amount of migration among the rural Hmar people to urban places especially from rural Tipaimukh area to urban places of Churachandpaur and Imphal. In educational institutions, offices and other workplaces, the Hmar people find sample opportunity to meet each other with persons belonging to different communities giving rise to a network of personal, social and economic relationship. As a result, the Hmar society has been witnessing a number of inter-marriage. This has led to greater social mobility and broadmindedness. Marriage are no longer arranged solely by the parents. In inter-mixing, social interaction and living together in the same heterogeneously populated urban areas, change occur fast. Today, choice of spouse among the Hmar does not confined to only tribal endogamy but also with the plain Meiteis and even to the so called groups of non-Manipuris Indians (Vai). “Marriage with people having different custom and speaking different languages would naturally promote true social and national integration”(changing perspective, Sept. 1948:33, Society: Voyage)

**Divorcé:**

The practice of divorce is rare in Hmar society but not non-existence. Even in the days of yore the couple’s agreement accruing from the engagement and during the marriage ceremony or at the time of regularization of the marriage compels them to keep their words inspite of their difference in their conjugal life. The prevailing customs relating to divorce firmly punish the one who is responsible of the divorce. No one can defy customary penalty imposed on the wrong doer. With the coming of Christianity, the religious ethics and principles never permits the couple to break their promises of living together as one till
death which is sworn in the name of God at the time of their marriage. This make the couple to have a firm commitment during their life time. Moreover, according to the Bible’s preaching, “Marriage is to be honoured by all, and husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. God will judge those who are immoral and those who commit adultery” (Hebrew 13:14). Thus marriage becomes a sacred ceremony with deep significance which leads to the decrease in divorce rate in the Hmar society. To quote another Biblical words. “And the two will become one, so they are no longer two, but one. Man must not be separate, then, what God has joined together” (Mark 10: 8-9). Likewise, the Church takes a similar stand; such a stand and discipline from the Holy scripture is a stronghold of both the Churches and the society, and infact influences and controls the morality of the people.

Inspite of all social disapproval and bitter criticism. A complete or permanent separation, though rare, prevails in the Hmar society. The practice of divorce is not the monopoly of the male only but female may also take recourse to it. There is no social discrimination in the matter of remarriage between men and women. It is also observable that levirate, both junior as well as senior, is practiced in the Hmar society.

Inheritance:

Customs relating to succession and inheritance is a significant area in which no major change or modification has occurred till today. In the Hmar society the law of succession and inheritance are very clear-cut and there is hardly any room for dispute even in modern Hmar society.

Child Naming:

In the traditional Hmar society, grand-parents (Pu) of the child has a significant role in child naming. The first born child of the couple should be named by the child’s paternal grandparent. In naming the second child, preference was given to the child’s maternal grandparent. In the days of yore, a name was given to a child with great significant attached to the name usually from their socio-economic achievement of the child’s parent or grand-parents, or even to show their clan ties relationship.

The adoption of Christianity and spread of formal education among the Hmar people have contributed much to the changing role of grand-parents, and to the modification of the Hmar child-naming practices. Today. Things are gradually changing – the traditional pattern of giving name to a child by grand-parent, giving a great significance to their personal
achievement and their clanship ties attached to, are gradually being replaced by English Christian names a prefix.

**Role of Women:**

In the modern setting, Hmar society is no longer considered to be exclusively a traditional or conservatives as it is gradually being exposed to be cross-current and forces of change which have in turn brought with it a radical transformation in the socio-economic, religious and political spheres of life. In the spate of modernization, the comparatively traditional Hmar women are called upon to leap the gap of centuries to modernity in a very short span of time.

The coming of Christianity in Senvawn (Hmunte) in 1910 led to the establishment of the first mission school which exerted much influence on the traditional life of the illiterate Hmar people. Thus, the introduction of formal education laid the foundation of change among the Hmar. Especially to the so called ‘ weaker-sex’. Today, the change that can be observed in the socio-economic religious and political life of the Hmar people may be largely attributed to the spread of modern education. A large number of them are at present recognizing the importance of education and the advantage of literacy which in turn has resulted in the emergence of a number of educational institutions in the Hmar inhabited areas.

As discussed earlier, the position of woman was quite a neglected one in the indigenous Hmar society. However, through the process of modernization, the emancipated Hmar woman of today has paved her way successfully in her search for higher position and a more meaningful role in the society. Inspites of their inherent weaker position, in recent years, the hidden hands of Hmar women can be seen in any deal a Hmar men enters into wielding great influence over men folk.

With modernization, educated elites of Hmar women are trying hard to adjust themselves to the new socio-economic order of the day. In their traditional set up, life was without any competitions and tension. Today, they are exposed to a more complicated and competitive world order. Increasingly, women are becoming the earning members and in some family the main supporter of the family. Generally, traditional Hmar customs bars
women’s participation in performing religious duties. However, in the new dispensation under their new found religion- Christianity, women are participating and playing more and more role even in the religious field and the limitation imposed of them under their old religion have already disappeared. Whenever men form associations or organizations both in the social level or in the religions spheres, women also would invariably form parallel organizations, and their contribution are increasingly felt.

Like most other advanced tribal societies where women are given importance especially in the field of education, the Hmar women, today, are also playing a dominant role and their education too has not remained neglected as before. Infact literacy rate for women has significantly increased in the younger generation with a corresponding increase in the number of women in the higher education sector.

One of the most extraordinary developments among womenfolk in Hmar society is in the realm of higher education and intellectual pursuit. The spread of education among the women has led the Hmar women to enjoy a high status in the society and building in her inner confidence to tackle with problems. The introduction of modern education and subsequently the establishment of Manipur University in 1980 under the Manipur University Act of 1980 accelerated the progress of higher education and the more and more know hows and the knowledge grew with better understanding and perspective showing their outward attitudes towards change. Most of the younger generation today do not like to be confined within the limits of tradition, instead, they want to be more exposed to modern world.

With the rise in women’s’ literacy, educated women are becoming aware of the gender equality brought about by democracy an increasingly rationalized structure of administration and by the widening opportunities for women becoming economically independent. Their attitudes and value are increasingly becoming coloured by the equalitarian ethos. Today, even married Hmar woman with professional degree feel that they are wasting their talent if they sit at home. Moreover, family planning has made the spacing of children possible for women. They do not have too many young children to look after and find that they can continue with the jobs even after child bearing without much strain. The preference of urban families for small family also makes it possible for modern women to take up jobs. Today, there are a number of Hmar women who are gainfully employed in medicine, teaching, engineering, designing, management, air-hostess, police and etc.
Previously, tribal women including Hmar women are looked down by the non-tribals; due to education such a view is gradually dying away as the modern Hmar women marches ahead towards change, progress and modernization.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE HMAR CULTURE:

The Christianity missionization movement which had penetrated all the mainland historical denominations took place within the cultural milieu of the people. It was within the culture that the gospel message was preached, adorned, accepted, worshipped, believed and hoped in. Joan S. Mibiti does indeed make correct statements even though they are partially concerned with the African culture that the gospel does not throw out culture; to the contrary, it comes in to our culture, it settled there, it brings its impact on our total life within that culture. It is within our culture that God loves us and calls us, to repentance; it is also within our culture that God wants us to love, worship and obey Him. God does not want us to be aliens to our culture but only alien to sin (Mibiti, 1979:185).

How did this Christianization took place form within and not from without, or, how these animistic people quickly responded to the call to wed the traditional with Christianity gave rise to a number of complex question. A careful analysis and understanding is therefore, needed about the impact of Christianity on Hmar culture.

The Fundamental Affinity of Religious Concepts:

Looking back at the religious institutions of the pre-modern society, especially those outside the Judeo-Christian orbit. ‘the pattern is one in which the society relates to the ultimate religious order of the universe as microsm to macrosm’ (Smelser 1990:346). In conformance, every thing that occurred under the sun whether natural calamities, endemics, etc. were attributed to the imbalance of proper relationship between microsm and macrosm. Therefore, the material agent or solution to such problems were the immediate performance of religious ceremonies either by the village priest or an expert in the society. From this standpoint, when the term ‘religion’ is used, it implies a close relationship between men and the higher power or supernatural forces that exist beyond the visionof human world. As has been shown in the previous chapter the divinity of ‘Pathien’ (God) is an object of perpetual
worship, although there are, of course, other forms of henotheism (the belief in one God, but without denying the existence of others), polytheism and etc, among the Hmar people.

The monotheistic worship of ‘Pathien’ was perhaps the oldest form of worship as per the historical evidence available. With the advent of time, however, the religious condition of the people has turned topsy-turvy. We have witnessed the rise and popularity of polytheism which became the halter of rein of control of the masses. The present moment of history also finds the eventual rewinding back of ‘Pathien’ as the keynote of the new creed-Christianity. This shows that ‘Pathien’ is not only the heart of an ancient Hmar religious philosophy, but also the crux of the entire Christian theology.

The main influx of the Bible God is a continuation of the Old Testament. His belief and terminology were taken from the Judaic dogma in toto. The Israelites addressed God as ‘Yuveah’ or Abba – the Father. A close examination of the scripture evidence leads to this conclusion that there were certain observable historical link between the Bible God and the Hmar ‘Pathien’. Most of the Hmar writers commonly agreed that the first man was called ‘Manmasi’ which has reference to the Manassih of the twelve tribes of Israel. As seen in the pattern of fowl offering, a Hmar priest wrung off the head and burnt it on the altar; the blood being drained out at the side of the altar (Leviticus 1:15). The present day offering pattern known as Thlaithar lawm or Ra Hmasa’ (an offering of the first reap fruits/vegetables) has the same pattern as describe in the Bible – ‘You shall not offer to the Lord what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut’ nor shall you make any offering of them in your land (Leviticus 22:24).

There is another conceptual affinity of human soul and life after death. The belief in the world beyond was instrumental in moulding the cultural norms and values. As a rule, they recognize two stages of spiritual world (raupuikhuo). One was ordinary known as ‘Mithi khuo” (village of the death) and the other was ‘Pielral’ (Paradise/heaven). Pielral was meant for those who distinguished themselves during their lifetime in economic wealth by giving a number of prescribes ceremonies and feast of honour, or, in bravery or in hunting skills by killing a number of wild beasts. The prestigious position attainable in the Hmar social world were thus, intrinsically and intimately connected with the belief in the life after death; and it was this belief which prescribed the traditional social values on bravery and wealth. Moreover, even after their full conversion into the new faith, the people used Pielral.
to mean the same paradise/heaven or vanram of the Biblical view. The indigenous Christian song still sung by the people corroborates the subtle sweetness of the pleasant pielral.

**Pielral ka ngai ka lal lengna lung ngai um nawna ram mawi chu.**

In English:

I’m longing for Pielral where my lord is  
A beautiful place where there is no more pain and sorrow.

It is crystal clear that the Hmar had brought about the glory of God (Pathien) through the elements of their religiosity and culture. They did not, therefore, hide way their cultural heritage from the gospel. Instead, they have laid down before the gospel, and used if for the gospel. This was the glory of the Gospel which has been woven in the length and breadth of the Hmar culture(Zarzolien, 1987:289).

One of the most moving and appealing features of the Christian growth within the Hmar culture was the praising and worshipping of God through their traditional songs and dances which were denounced by the missionaries as symbols of pagan revelry connected to the old religion. However, Eugene A.Nida (1954:192) had clearly pointed out that ‘….one must not underestimate the music potential of primitive people or fail to appreciate their distinctive contribution’.

The Hmar are know for their love of traditional fine arts – poetry, music and song. During their pre-Christian eras they used to composed such as war songs, patriotic songs based on their heathen social life, traditional love songs and romantic poems with traditional dancing accompanied by their tribal religious tunes. The songs and dances were performed by drinking Zu (liquor). With the new found religion the Hmar traditional song and poetry were replaced by new songs bearing the new gospels, thus giving a fully Christian meaning. Infact, such ecstatic songs and dancing were a part of the ancient Hmar religious culture, now displayed in modified form.

The beating of ‘Khuong’ (drum) in Church services and other congregations is another cultural orientation. The Hmar people would sing or dance without the same. The
people preferred much to their possessed ‘Khuong’ to the highly sophisticated modern musical instruments. The truth of the matter is that the people have an innate capacity to develop and preserve the rich resources of their musical heritage. As we cannot deny the intrinsic value of ‘Khuong’ as a major part of Hmar cultural element Roulneikhum Pakhoungte (1983:68) has rightly stated that the use of “…..drums to accompany Christians songs in the churches should not be regarded as something backward and primitive if that is their cultural practice”. Melvin L. Hodges (1973:118)seems to be right as he writes:

“It is futile to try to force them into our pattern. We only discourage them. Rather the missionary is the one who needs to educate himself and change his ways so that he follows a pattern natural to the nationals. We should not make the pattern of the work so foreign that it requires a foreign education to carry it on”.

In the matter of ecstatic dancing, the Hmar people followed their traditional dances such as Sikpui Lam, Hrang Lam, Tlang Lam, etc. With paganism they regarded their ecstatic folk dancing as religious. As a matter of fact the elites circle are taking the lead to revive their old cultural dances, etc. Since traditional culture is a valuable legacy on which the present Christianity had rested, we should not drop it just a mere property of Egypt but make the best use of it, and make it more meaningful than ever (Lal Dena, 1984:1)

Another striking feature is the celebration of Christmas and New Year by the Hmar people. There are certain cultural parallels in regard with celebration of these auspicious days. The people did not give up their traditional way of serving community feast on such important days. After Church services, they gathered somewhere in a temporarily constructed hall and sing gospel songs in their own traditional tunes for the whole day and night; sometimes it lasted for a week or more. Such collective singing known as ‘Lengkhawm’ are usually accompanied by dances.

Thus, it may be said that for the Hmar people, the new found religion is not only a transitional stage of development, it also gives them the prominent place in which they project their cultural life, history and experiences. It was in this context that it is said ‘the Western influence upon Hmar culture is only a skin deep’ (Lal Dena in ‘Thuro’, 1984:9)

The coming of Christianity have brought great changes in the traditional Hmar tribal society. The new religion which was preached and carried on the wings of culture had its
own impact, values and prejudices. Once the Hmar people responded to the new found religion, certain changes were effected in the different spheres on the life of the people.

**Expanded World View:**

Every area of Hmar life has been influenced by the new found religion. Before the advent of Christianity in the Hmar area (Hmar Biel), the Hmar tribal world-view was limited to a clan, village or at the most to a particular area or areas, Christianity has brought a new world view to the people not only by exposing them to the Indian nation but also to the international community. Exposure to a new world with its economic systems and structures, its political philosophies and forms of government, its educational and social infrastructures in general, totally different from those of the Hmar living in isolated geographical and cultural pockets was bound to alter the 'world – view’ of the Hmar people.

The passport of Christianity made the Christian acceptable to other Christian communities in various parts of the world. Through Christian missionaries, the tribal life, culture, and tribal churches came into direct contact with the international community, thus, bringing about a worldwide solidarity in faith, despite internal tensions and divisions arising from theological and historical reasons.

**Tribal Solidarity and Identity :**

While the new religion opened the door to the international community, it influenced the Hmar tribal in the opposite direction by giving them their specific Hmar identity or preserving it. In many cases this was done by adopting the Christian message to the Hmar mentality and cultural needs. In other cases this was accomplished by giving permanent grammatical and literary forms and structures to Hmar language by developing the literature, the vocabulary and modes of expression in addition to providing schools, ecclesiastical organizations and faith, besides retaining their clan nomenclature and kinship obligation.

Through the process of Christianization of the Hmar people, tribe solidarity was set in motion. Christian theology provided the intellectual and emotional understanding for a wider solidarity than the inter-clan, or inter-tribe solidarity. In the process religious institutions played a major role; they brought together on the same platform a number of different sub-
tribes within the Hmar tribe for new and common goals. The religious institutions and
hostels were responsible for creating and developing a general tribe solidarity. Common
endeavours and goals like translation of a common Bible or gospel hymn book for different
church denomination, common evangelizing efforts, common structures for church hierarchy
and leadership, inter-Church councils, etc. served as a platform and occasion for inter-tribe
interaction and a scenes of solidarity.

**Introduction of Written Script :**

Before the advent of Christianity in the Hmar area there prevailed total illiteracy in
the Hmar society. Not only that, the Hmar had no written language of their own. The
missionaries in their pioneering days among the tribals, simultaneously with preaching,
concentrated their philanthropic works in enlightening the masses by introducing formal
education. To educate the masses they started the task from the bottom-most rung of
education - the reduction of Hmar language into writing. It was the two pioneer
missionaries Rev.F.W. Savidge and Rev. J.H. Lorrain who, on their arrival in the then Lushai
Hills in January 1894, found the local people communicating each other only in oral forms of
language till then. As a result, they devoted themselves in learning the local language for
four years and became masters of the language. In 1898, the two missionaries reduced the
local language into writing and introduced grammar of the language (Lorraine, 1940,
preface). While reducing the local language into writing, Rev. Savidge and Rev. Lorrain first
introduced alphabets in simple Roman scripts using diacritical marks in some alphabets.
They thus, introduced the following alphabets to construct vocabularies :

A, A, AW, AW, B, CH, D, E, E, F,
G, H, I, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, R,
S, T, T, U, V, Z.

In order to quench people’s thirst for knowledge, the first beginner book entitled
‘Hmar Bu Bul’ was prepared and published by Rev. Edwin B. Rowland in 1919 and the
following year of 1920, Rev. F.J. Sandy wrote St. Mark language which was published by the
British Foreign Bible Society from Calcutta. Subsequently, several other books in Hmar
language such as ‘Bu Hmasa’ for beginners by Dr. Thanglung and H.L. Sela, the ‘Pherzawl
Readers’ by H. Thanglor, etc. were published for the young learners. The first English-Hmar Dictionary by Dr. Thanglung was published in the year 1950.

Thus, the indigenous oral practices of Hmar language and literature got its written form in the hands of Christian missionaries which ultimately paved the way for further progress in the Hmar society.

Transfer to Religious Life:

In the days of yore, the Hmar were animistic and believed in a variety of gods and spirits. To appease, most of their sacrifices were directed towards the evil spirits who were believed to have caused misfortune or any illness to the people.

With the coming of Christianity, this morbid fears or phobia that grew out of their ignorance and animistic belief causing them to perform many ritualistic offerings have totally disappeared. The practice of offering food, meat and others to propitiate the spirits of their dread was totally given up ever since the new religion taught that human spirits do not roam the earth. The belief that the spirit of animal (offering to the spirit of the dead) accompany the dead on the way to pielral (paradise/heaven) is no more. Instead, eternal life as outlined in Christian doctrine replaced their assumption pielral or vanram of their old religion. Moreover, the practice of offering a series of costly feast like Khuongchawi feast for securing a right place in the life-after death has also come to an end.

Before the advent of Christianity the Hmar people does not observe ‘Sunday’ in any special manner. Their everyday life was occupied with work except in the case of certain community festivals or due to death of a person as such. With the arrival off the gospel, the church was organized and converts Christians started observing ‘Sunday’ by attending Church services. The Holy scriptures are selected and preached through ‘Sunday-school’ which is considered a must for the young and old. Today, even in the rural areas, if the villagers spent week-days and nights in the agricultural field they never failed to return home on Saturday for Sunday ‘Worship-Service’. This has improved a lot the socio-religious awareness.
The coming of Christianity thus turned the whole religious belief of their pre-Christian life upside down. The sacrificing act and element in the ancient Hmar religious was replaced by the self-sacrificing act of Jesus in the place of man and indeed, according to the Hmar converts, this is their greatest relief that the new religion has offered to them.

**Prohibition of Zu (Liquor):**

Before the advent of Christianity in the Hmar areas Zu was considered as one of the unavoidable items in all the important feast, festivals and ceremonies such as inthawina (sacrificial offering), inneina (marriage ceremony), mithi ralna (condolence offering), khuongchawi (feast of honour), sesun (sacrifice of a mithun), lei chawi (a fine/penalty), and etc… Moreover serving Zu to the village chief and his council of elders was a must while dealing with all cases between the aggrieved villagers.

With the coming of Christianity, the missionaries simultaneously with their evangelical task took step for social reformation in the Hmar society by prohibiting consumption of Zu as a common drink since Zu drinking “…..was very closely linked with the animistic sacrifices and other tribal customs which belonged to their old pagan life and atmosphere of such revelry was un-congenial to Christian spiritual growth” (Thanzawna, 1997:327). The steps taken by the missionaries and the churches, thus, resulted in the gradual reduction of Zu consumption and total cessation of Zu as a common drink on all occasion. The Hmar people found “Thingpui’ (tea) as substitution to Zu and today, offering tea to the guest and visitors has become the social habit of the Hmar people.

With the gradual decline in the consumption of Zu as a common drink which sucked the agricultural surplus products in Zu brewing, a considerable amount of rice and corn consumed every year in Zu brewing has now turned into regular food for the family, thus improving the economic condition of the society.

**Festival and Dance:**

Christianity have a far-reaching influence on Hmar traditional festivals and dances. Christianity came among the Hmar people in Manipur since 1910 through the missionaries. Within a few years many Hmar embraced the new religion. As a result, there occurred
misunderstanding between the converts Christians and the traditionalists at certain level. The traditional lovers blamed the missionaries for undermining culture and rejecting old values. In contrast, the missionaries and the newly converts felt that most of the cultural festivities and dances of the heathen Hmar were profusely connected with old religious practices and the drinking of Zu were unbecoming of Christian’s living. The newly converted Christians were therefore forbidden to participate and indulge in them as such activities would hold them and pull them back to their old pagan ways.

The various festivals and dances that were performed in the days of yore were for specific occasion. With almost cent percent Hmar population being converted to Christianity, these specific occasion are no longer observed in the Hmar society as they did in their early period. In fact, the traditional dances today have become items in the cultural functions and some such occasions only. Thus slowly and gradually, the importance of the Hmar customary festivals and other social gatherings and amusement losses their importance and fallen in complete disuse.

Today, Christmas festivals, although of recent origin in Hmar society, has gained paramount position over the traditional festivals in performance and observance. Apart from celebration of the above they also observe and celebrates New-Year day, Palm Sunday, Good-Friday, Easter Sunday, Pentecost day and etc. by singing their indigenous Christian hymns with community feast.

With the increase in modern education among the Hmar population with their new expanded world-view there is an increasing opinion that the Hmar cultural heritage should be revived in a refined way and go along with Christianity without compromising with the doctrine of the new faith. Today, even the enlightened Church leaders saw no harm in singing traditional songs and observing the traditional cultural festivals and dances if there are not pagan revelry and obeisance to anything connected to the old religion. In fact, there is no harm to cultural activities and performances if it was merely done with the spirit of demonstration and not actual indulgence or adherence to the old religion since co-existence and adjustment bring development either in form or in bringing toto or partial change due to assimilation and adaptation of different factors according to time demand.
On Education Sphere:

As mentioned earlier, formal education of the Hmar in reality and practice as we see today has its beginning since the advent of Christianity with the arrival of Watkin R. Roberts, a Welsh missionary, in 1910 in response to an invitation from Kamkholun, Chief of Senvon—the biggest Hmar village in South Manipur. After a few days of indept communication with exposure to the Lushai translation of the Scripture portions of the Bible and preaching the Gospel at Senvon and its surrounding villages, Robert returned to his Headquarter in Aizawl and invited three native Bible students namely Savawma, Vanzika and Thangchhinpuia (Taitea) to look after the new mission. These three evangelist-teachers reached Senvon village on May 7, 1910 and opened a primary mission school as part of their evangelical activities.

In the early days, teaching at first was in the simplest form mainly confined to reading (of Bible) and understanding of writing since education was initially imparted with Bible preaching. Since there was no age limit children and adults sat together and learnt the same subjects (Pudaite, 1963:80). The mission schools, in those days did not necessarily emphasize vocational training. Whatever training they offered were mainly for the development of catechists, clergy and other native workers to work in the missionary effort. As a result, most of the early educated Hmar were employed in the mission services as low-paid workers. Thus, it appears that early education introduced by the missionaries were so designed at religious instruction to serve the need of the missionaries rather than in giving vocational guidance or preparation for better living to the Hmar.

Since basic education was sufficient to serve the purpose of the missionaries they did not see any need for introducing higher education. For instance, William Pettigrew, the first missionary ever landed in the soil of Manipur and, the man at the helm of tribal education was not convinced that it was necessary for the tribals ‘to have anything higher than a middle English-School grade’. Moreover, he opines that “the great majority will, for many years to come, be content with an education that will enable them to read and write in their vernacular”. Probably due to this attitude of the missionaries, tribal education in the pre-independence period was mostly limited to the primary level. Till 1941, apart from the numerous primary schools, there were only three middle schools and not a single high-school in all the hill areas inhabited by the tribals.
However, with the increase in Christian population there was a corresponding increase in the number of mission schools. From a very humble beginning, the new Christian educational project gained momentum through the instrumentality of the native pioneer missionaries. Soon the people were awake and realized the intrinsic value of modern education. In order to quench people’s thirst for knowledge, the first beginner book entitled ‘Hmar Bu-Bul’ was prepared and published by Rev. Edwin B. Rowland in 1919; the following year of 1920, Rev. F.J. Sandy wrote St. Mark in Hmar language which was published by the British Foreign Bible Society from Kolkatta.

As time rolled by, new schools of elementary standard were started in other villages as well. Thus, the mission made good progress in educating the people. In the year 1935, the first Middle English School was opened at Pherzawl with H. Daia as its head. In the same year, another Middle English School was started at Rengkai with Siakzalam and S.Rala as its Headmaster and Second Master respectively. To develop and to look after the welfare of the students, the Hmar Students’ Association was founded in 1939 under the leadership of L. Tawna, Dr. Thanglung, V.L., Phuta, H. L. Daka, Thangloui, Seilchunghnung, Lurzatawng, Saikang and Thangleinkim. Today, the Hmar Students’ Association is becoming one of the fast growing students’ organization having branches all over India with its headquarter in Churachandpur (Rengkai Road), Manipur.

With the increase in literacy rate within a very short period of their history of education, the Hmar Literature Society (H.L.S.) was started under the initiative of Dr. Thanglung on 25th September 1943. For its proper functioning Dr. Thanglung donated a sum of Rupees One Thousands to the Society which started functioning under his Chairmanship. Dr. Thanglung is entitled to great credit for his work to the development and progress of literature among the Hmar that he was posthumously given ‘Appreciation Certificate’ with the title “Father of Hmar Literature and Founder of Hmar Students’ Association” on 5th October 1980 (Ruonglevaisuo,2002:17)

From the year 1941, the first journal in Hmar language under the caption “Hmasawnsa” was published. In 1952, the Hmar Students’ association circulated its maiden
journal-organ known as ‘Inchuklai Nun’ under the editorship of Ngura and Lalnghatta; ‘Si-Khawvar’ was also published in the same year.

As the number of students’ enrollment in the school increased another middle English school was opened at Sielmat in 1957 with V.L Ringa as its Headmaster. Again at the same village, Sielmat Christian High School was established in 1959 with H. Thanglora, the first graduate in the whole of Manipur South-West as its Principal. With the increase in students’ population, the number of school also increased rapidly and as many as 68 schools were on the Mission’s list in the year 1964.

After India’s independence, the Government of India began to take keen interest in the affairs of the Scheduled Tribes of which the Hmar are one of it. Various schemes were planned and implemented for the educational development of the tribals. The state of Manipur after its integration with the Union of India in 1949 also undertook a number of schemes and measures for the educational development of the tribals. As a result, education received an impetus and the post-independence period till date witnessed a spurt in the number of students, teachers and educational institutions among the tribals.

A brief review of the historical development of formal education among the Hmar in Manipur brings to light that Christian missionaries, inspired by the zeal of spreading the gospel became the most important agency in the spread of education among the Hmar in Manipur. It is true that Hmar education in the pre-independent period mainly confined to the primary level. Nevertheless, it is also true that the missionaries laid the foundation of education among the Hmar tribe in Manipur. Thus, the tempo of educational progress during the post-Independent period would have never been the same but not for the ground-work prepared by the missionaries, Today, the government of Manipur recognised Hmar language to be used as medium of teaching upto the middle school level and as MIL, upto graduate level from 2004.

Today, education is highly valued and a rapid increase in literacy is observed. In the words of B.D. Sharma,(1984:24) “ it is education more than anything else that shapes the new tribal society…..In some tribal areas, particularly in the North-East education played a big role in moulding the natives. A beginning was made by the missionaries as early as the eighteenth century”
Better Management of Health Care

In the pre-Christian period, to heal the sick, the common practice was by offering bloody sacrifices to the evil spirits by the village Thiempu (priest). In fact, the Hmar people did not believe that they could be cured of sickness or disease by any means other than sacrifices performed by the Thiempu since disease was closely associated with powers of a spirit or a wizard.

The health conditions of the people were miserable and pathetic which can best be expressed in the statement of a missionary; “Malaria was of course prevalent everywhere. There was also dropsy, internal parasites, hookworm, dysentery, tuberculosis and other dread diseases. Parents had large families but more than 50% of the children died before reaching adolescence. Many mothers died at childbirth due to lack of care and superstitious ideas”. In order to overcome the horrible condition of people’s health the missionaries used to give them medicine and took up the dual function of education and medical care. They established hospitals and madder them improved their mental and physical health. The ‘Seilmat Christian Hospital and Research Centre’’s established in 1964 at Churachandpur is the healing ministry of Partnership Mission Society (PMS) under the founder and Chairman of Dr.Rochunga Pudaite. It is a 25 bedded hospital equipped with modern facilities providing tender-loving-care to the sick and the suffering. Christian-Dispensary was also established at Wangoo by the Evangelical Assembly Church (EAC)

In the days of yore, the Hmar family has one large house in which they would accommodate the entire family and other household articles including their domestic animals such as cow, pigs, hens, dogs, etc. However, after converting to Christianity, the missionaries and the evangelists taught the Hmar people about cleanliness in their day-to-day life. Care of sickness, simple hygiene and first-aid are included in their education curriculum. They learnt better ways of life. Today, as for instance, a mother’s chewing food for their babies and unhygienic mouth-to-mouth feeding is replaced by special cooking for babies and spoon-feeding.
To provide basic health care and education especially to the tribal people, a few prominent citizens of the area with the initiative of the indigenous Independent Church of India (I.C.I.) have formed a society registered under the Manipur Societies Registration Act, 1989 under the name ‘Moulvaiphei Rural Health and Research Centre’ which came into existence in the year 1990. Under this Society, a school of nursing called ‘Bethesda School of Nursing’ was started in July 1995 to train the tribal and general young ladies in ‘General Nursing’ and ‘Mid-Wifery Course’. Also, there is a condensed course for missionaries. Since its inception, the Society has succeeded in creating mass awareness of the evils of drug abuse and running health care centers providing health-check, maternity and child care, health education, etc.

Today, the Hmar had given up their age-old traditional practice of curing diseases by observing sacrificial rituals and are inclined to the use of medicines for any sort of disease. However, inspite of modern medicines and physicians, in some Hmar remote areas, the traditional method of curing diseases, be it goitre of stomach pain, fever or cancer, by branding with a hot iron to the patient is still practiced.

With the coming of colonial mission, the village Thiempu who conducted sacrifices for curing the sick soon realized the use of modern medicines for curing diseases which eventually led to their disappearance from their traditional role which is a welcome development of christianization and modernization.

**Inter-Denominational Tension and Conflict**

Under this background what we find is that a gulf has been created between the converts of different groups of Christianity. It has further led to an inter-religious and denominational tensions and conflicts as seen during the great split between Watkin R. Roberts and H.H. Coleman. It lasted from December 1928 till June, 1930 and brought about a big cleavage which could not be settled even by litigation alone until it was settled with the division of the Churches into two groups – Mr. Coleman retaining the old North-East Indian General Mission (NEIGM) and Mr. Roberts starting anew mission under the caption of Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission (IBPM). As no other mission other than NEIGM was allowed to operate in Manipur by the government Order on the plea of Mr. Coleman, all the followers of
Mr. Roberts, in Manipur, called themselves the ‘INDEPENDENT CHURCH’ – on April 4, 1930 – probably the first independent indigenous church ever founded in India.

While the growth and development of the new mission (Independent Church) was steadily progressing, something interrupted the speedy growth which later had an adverse affect on the people. From April 4, 1930, Mr. Roberts began to look after ‘Independent Church’ in Manipur and the IBPM outside Manipur. However, since 1956 the two worked together as twin having same headquarter. On the suggestion of Mr. Rochunga Pudaite who since then took charge of the IBPM, the Executive Committee of the IBPM and the delegates of the Independent Church had a joint meeting at Sielmat in the month of July, 1961 and unanimously resolved to merge with each other to be called henceforward ‘Independent Church of India’. Unfortunately, infact, from the beginning there was internal struggles for leadership within the Mission in 1968. Thus, two groups emerged within the Church claiming to be the right faction to inherit the land and properties owned by the IBPM and by the ICI. Court cases were filled by one group against the other. Large amount of money meant for the Church and missionary work were consumed in court and legal fees. After four years of internal fighting, the matter was ultimately settled out of court on 13th February (Sunday), 1972 at Sielmat between ICI led by Rev. Darsanglien and his party (C.C. Rema-Director, H.K. Khawlkung-Education Director, Hrangtawnlien-Finance Director) and, on the one part ICI led by Rev. Rochunga Pudaite and his party (Challienkung Hrangul-Home Director, Dartinhmang-Finance Director, Ramlien Pudaite-Publication, Lalliensang-Education Director). According to the agreement between the two, Rev. Darsanglien and his party retained the ‘Independent Church of India’ as their name, and, the other group led by Rev. Rochunga Pudaite were known as ‘Independent Church of India (R)’ and later changed the name into ‘Evangelical Free Church of India’ (See Appendix-II).

In the year 1979, there was a split within the Evangelical Assembly Church, which led to the formation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church among the Hmar. Again, in the year 1983 Rev. Singlienkung founded the Church of Foursquare where most of the new members were from the Assembly of God (A.G) Mission. Another church known as the Wesleyan Methodist Church of East India was founded by Dr. Lalkhawlien Pulumte among the Hmar in 1987. This Methodist Church is mainly a breakaway group of the Evangelical Free Church of India (EFCI) (Sinate 2001: 499).
From the above background, it is clear that a closer analysis and evaluation of the Church growth among the Hmar shows that there is a shadow of split and disunity which encompasses the entire course of her history. The struggle for leadership broke out and conflicts arising from theological and personality also played their part which get amply reflection in their mutual attitudes. Despite their professed brotherhood and forgiveness, there is sharp rivalries often leading to tension and schism between them. Lal Dena has rightly remarked that ‘equality before God was proclaimed, but rank in this world was a different matter (Lal Dena, 1978:92) The researcher have tried to understand the expect of solidarity, common identity formation and modernization of the Hmar tradition through Christianity, even though the cumulative positive impact has been trace rather than looking at Christianity as a destabilising force.

**DEVELOPMENT IN THE POLITICO-JURIAL INSTITUTION AND EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS:**

Having thus seen some of the highlights of the Hmar traditional political structure in the previous Chapter, in this Chapter a study will be made on the emergence of new mobilizing forces on the political front and the consequent development of the so-called modern politics among the Hmar. In the traditional political setting, the village chief was the only central figure thus reducing the village into a semi-independent community, maintaining its own internal order and internal administration. Moreover, lack of cultural contact in the beginning with the outgroup to give rise to structural and ideological modifications rendered the institution of chiefship and the authority intact till the advent of the British towards the end of the 19th century.

The British, following the policy of non-interference, did not interfere much in the internal administration of the villages and the chiefs were largely left to themselves in maintaining their own internal and external affairs without external encroachment, at least, to a large extent. However, inspite of their “indirect rule” policy over the hill territory, a few administration changes were brought about in the traditional setting. The British realized that it would be possible to run the hill territories without much expenses if the Chiefs rule was maintained. Moreover, the traditional tribal chiefs undoubtedly enjoyed considerable powers and privileges within their territories. They, therefore, preferred to rule the hill people through the institution of Chieftainship. The British consolidation over the hill territory,
therefore, did not immediately resulted in direct structural modification in the internal affairs of the tribal society in the initial period. The chiefs, thus, continued to enjoy their traditional political and social status and the institution of chiefship remained the guardian of the society.

With the British consolidation of the hill authority, the colonial authorities assigned the Chief the task of collecting hill house tax of Rs. 3/- from each household (the Chief got 3 annas as commission per household). The colonial authorities were bent on using the Chiefs to perpetuate their hold over the people and had little worry about the support of the people. This practice induced the Hmar Chiefs too to abuse their privileges and treat the villagers as personal servants. Thus, the Chief became a pivotal link in the colonial administration and exploitation of the masses gave rise to anti-chief notion in the minds of the deprived section of the population.

The anti-chief notion of the people was further intensified by the modification of the forced labour law known as ‘pothang’ which had been abolished in the valley consequent upon the first women’s agitation of 1904. The ‘pothang’ system was of two kinds –
(a) Pothang Bekari, under which the commoners were compel to carry goods or luggages or to make bridges, roads and build new bungalows without payment for the government officials touring in the hill areas. In short, the people were under obligation to serve the touring officials without any payment.
(b) Pothang Senkhai, under which each household in the hill areas was to provide expenses on feeding the touring officials like buying chicken or eggs etc.

If for any reason a villager failed to render these services, severe punishment awaited him. In this way, the British laid down the basic foundation of indirect rule to have effective control over the turbulent tribes in the hill areas through the Chiefs who ‘completely lost sight of their obligations to the society for the privileges they received’. The introduction of the hill house tax and the pothang system thus brought about tremendous changes in the structure of tribal administration and set in motion a process of political transition at the grassroots level.
Changes in the grassroot politics among the Hmar is noticed in its leadership structure. Under the influence of formal education introduced by the missionaries with the backing from the colonial administration which provided the material basis for the emergence of new leadership in the Hmar society. The new ethos brought about by modern education basically transformed itself in negative orientation towards the traditional political set up. In the initial period the emerging new leaders started mobilizing themselves against traditional leaders specially the Chiefs and their Councilors who followed the dictates of the colonial rulers.

Emergence of New Leadership:

Traditionally, the village Lal (Chief) and his Khawnbawls (councilors), the Thiempu (priest), the Val Upas (youth-commanders) and experienced elders with gift of the gab constituted the leadership structure in the village. But all these are fast changing under the influence of formal education introduced by the missionaries with the backing from the British officials which provided the material basis for the emergence of new educated groups giving rise to two set of leadership - church leaders and political leaders. As Hmar society transformed itself from a simple, mechanical society, to a semi-organic society, the selection of elites, more or less, follows the general mobile pattern postulated by Henry Selby (1969,4) in which elites are selected from a pool of people, not determined at birth, but who have managed to acquire during the course of their education and training certain characteristics.

Church Leaders:

The introduction of formal education by the missionaries among the Hmar had a profound impact in their traditional setting. In the early days, teaching at first was in the simplest form, mainly confined to reading and understanding of writing since education was initially imparted with Bible reading.

Nevertheless, it may be remembered that education was never the chief objective of the missionaries. Their main objective was, rather, to train native workers and operate through them, In fact, education had been only a part of their evangelical activities. The missionaries felt that most of the culture and traditions of the early Hmar society were profusely connected with old religious practices. As such, there was a tendency among the
new converts to think that anything that was ‘Western’ was ‘good and civilized’. This sudden change in their mental outlook from the old ways of life to the new has resulted in a decline in the qualitative Hmar way of life and has produced an uncertainty of future for many.

The crux of misunderstanding by the Western-educated rests upon a mistaken assumption that anything Western is higher and the accepted norm and that anything Hmar is uncultured, thus, becoming pro-Western in their outlook and attitude. Without critical analysis they interpreted the missionary work as ‘civilized mission’ which brought them into ‘light’. Such has threatened family norms, social ethics and culture-religious meanings in the name of modernization.

In the initial period, the new converts were the most educated people as Christians were the forerunners in getting western education. Most of this educated Hmar were employed in the mission as workers. What is significant here is that the educated and trained natives workers began to consider themselves belonging to a higher status group with what M.N Srinivas has describe as the ‘Sanskritization’ of social behaviour, and assumed new leadership, educator, administrator, spiritual leaders, etc. in the leadership structure which posed a challenge to the traditional elites, thereby giving rise to a conscious attempt to dethroned the traditional leaders. In this way, the British rule and the introduction of Western education by the missionaries gradually loosened the traditional holds resulting in a declining tendency of the traditional leaders powers and traditionalism in general.

The new ethos brought about by Western education and the modernization process basically transformed itself in negative orientation towards the traditional socio-political set up. In the first few years the emergence of church leaders and consequently mobilizing themselves against traditionalism was hindered due to the administration’s desire to preserve chiefship at all cost as it rendered easy administration, while at the same time the emerging church leaders were all out to eradicate all forms of traditionalism to spread Christianity. Thus, the Chiefs were supported by the administration while the missionaries supported the church and the interests of the commoners. The traditional division of the society, although a fluid one and the privileged class a kind of mobile character, thus, gave rise to the conflict situation in which the Chiefs and their traditional elites were the worst sufferers. The traditional elites who were reluctant to send their children to mission school could not cope the onslaught of modernization, and they were slowly and gradually pushed out of their
traditional status until their traditional powers were crushed and chiefship was abolished with the introduction of Manipur Hill Village Authority Act, 1956.

Today, church leaders are given high honour and respect not only in the church circle but across Hmar society-almost one hundred percent of whom are Christians. Indeed, the Hmar church leaders today are a force to be reckoned with, even in the field of Indian missions and abroad.

**Modern Political Leaders :**

The opening of mission schools resulted in the emergence of educated groups whose basic orientation became removed from the traditional holds. With the low level of production in agriculture, standard of education achieved increasingly become the standard of manipulating the new openings brought about by the gradual incorporation of Hmar people with larger dominant society. Achieving higher level of education has a status of deriving characteristics in that people consider the incumbent as of belonging to a higher status group in the society and they are naturally the potential leaders in the leadership structure. The general level of education among the leaders shows that most of them have education upto graduation level. This shows the importance of modern education and, moreover, the ability to communicate in English and other non-Hmar languages especially Manipuri (Meitei Lon) as political asset. Thus, the new political leaders are those who have had some experiences in modern education or working knowledges in English and Manipuri and who are better equipped with personal resources – the willingness to invest material resources to gain political power. The present situation demands that one should mobilize all the available resources to gain political office and influence. Unlike leadership in the traditional system, today, it is almost impossible for a man without education to enter the higher echelon of leadership in the political arena. This is mainly due to the new leaders responsibility to served the purpose of being agents of outgroup contacts to facilitate the process of modernization.

With India gaining independence from the British colonial domination, the enlightened educated group began to question the right and privileges of the traditional leaders who were dubbed as ‘lackeys of colonial government’ (Lal Dena,1978:93). Meanwhile, a new political party known as ‘Mizo Union’, the first of its kind ever formed in
the then Lushai Hills came into being on 9th April, 1964 which have a far reaching impact upon Hmar politics in the adjoining areas of Manipur and Assam. Membership in the party was opened to all the Mizos including the related tribes in the neighbourhood. The constitution of the party had specifically stated that membership is opened to the Lushais, Hmars, Darlawngs, Zos……within and outside Mizoram, North-Cachar and Cachar districts of Assam, Tripura and the Chittagong hill tracts.

Within a very short span, the Mizo Union gathered momentum and support came from all corners except the traditional elites because the Mizo Union stood for the abolition of chiefship and the eradication of traditional inequality. The anti-chief movement even took the form of mob violence causing physical harm to the chiefs and their followers. The Hmar people of Manipur also joined the Mizo Union with the objective of merging the Hmar inhabited areas of south-west Manipur with the proposed Lushai Hills Autonomous District, apart from their anti-chief movement. However, while the Mizo Union movement was going on in Manipur, the Union leaders in the then Lushai Hills accepted the autonomous hill district plan of the Government of India without the inclusion of Hmar inhabited areas contiguous to the Lushai hills district.

The non-inclusion of the Hmar inhabited areas of Manipur (and Assam) in the proposed Lushai Hills Autonomous District had a far reaching impact in the socio-political life of the Hmar people. They withdrew themselves from their association with the Mizo Union which ultimately gave rise to the creation of ‘Hmar National Union’ stressing cultural and ethnic variation as political tool. In this way, the process of modernization and the resultant wider contacts fails to absorb the Hmar of Manipur and Assam in the Mizo stream and any attempt at integrating them with the Mizo group has met with distrust and strong negation. The commoners were thus, engulfed with the new ethos of ethnic based political consciousness. The Hmar National Union (HNU), with emphasis on preservation of ethnic identity and group solidarity drew support from all the anti-Mizo Union elements soon after its inception in 1958, and since then it holds the key to Hmar politics cutting across state boundaries.

Thus, the winds of political consciousness brought by western education and the modernization process dawned the emergence of modern political leaders. Education and
acquaintance with modern political processes of the leaders rather than their age and experience are being given more and more importance in the village level also.

Mizo Union and the Hmar:

The Hmar has a close affinity with the Mizons (Lushais) and also developed a 'brotherhood' feeling with them. It should be remembered that political development among the Hmar in Manipur is incomplete without mentioning the genesis of Mizo union in the then Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) and its subsequent political development which is a vital factor to be reckoned in the light of Hmar unrest these days. As already mentioned earlier, the Hmar people inhabit the north and north-eastern parts of Mizoram whose agnates are also living in the contiguous areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Manipur. Being part of the larger Mizo groups, the Hmar were seen attracted by the 'Mizo Union' and its movement which was formed on 9th April, 1946 in which Pachhunga was elected as its first President. The Union thus became the lone political party ever form in the then Lushai Hills. The leaders of the Mizo Union led the people to believe that any form of democracy is better than the old set up under Chiefship. Traditionally, the Mizons were subject to the authority of the chiefs. The later enjoyed various privileges such as the allotment of land to the people for cultivation and the exaction of taxes. Some of the Chiefs abused their powers and there was considerable resentment against them. The coming into being of circle interpreters backed by the government with monthly salary dawned the emergence of a new privileged class totally different from the traditional elites. Thus, the birth of a new political party was welcomed by the people of Lushai hills and many people joined it with a great enthusiasm.

Prior to the formation of Mizo Union in the then Lushai hills, the Hmar of Manipur formed a voluntary association known as 'The Hmar Association' in 1935 to preserve their cultural practices and identity. When the Mizo Union party gave its birth in the Lushai hills, the Hmar Association expected a lot of things from it and decided to worked in collaboration with it. Later, the Mizo Union party extended its branch in Manipur especially among the Hmar tribe. The Hmar areas of Manipur subsequently formed a separate division of the Mizo Union on 11th October, 1947 and had elected Dr. Thanglung as its first divisional President. It was through this newly formed Mizo Union that people were mobilized for the movement for having the sole objective of emerging the Hmar inhabited areas of south-west Manipur with the contiguous hill areas of Assam to form a Mizo hill district. However, it was only
after India got independence that the Mizo Union movement gained momentum. The people became conscious that as long as they remained divided, they would remain weak and would continue to be exploited.

Thus, this new political vision, a vision of Greater Mizoram, kindled the imagination and suppressed hopes of the Hmar people and soon the movement spread rapidly in the nook and corner of the Hmar inhabited areas in Manipur. As this mass movement was launched both against the Maharaja and his vassal tribal chiefs solely by the Hmar people who had boycotted the first Manipur general election in 1948, it has come to be known as the "Hmar People's Boycott Movement".

To the people, the Maharaja and the tribal Chiefs represented a symbol of oppression and the mass movement was the outcome of the clash of interests between the Maharaja and the tribal chiefs on the one hand and the people on the other. The people wanted to evolve a free democratic society and shake off all kinds of feudal and colonial servitudes that the former tried to preserve at any cost.

The Hmar people's boycott movement against the state government of Manipur started from 1946-49 under the name of newly formed political party 'Mizo Union'. The first general election in Manipur was boycotted through non-violence and there was no any untoward incident. However, the village Chiefs and their authority members did not join the agitation because, by joining them they would forfeit their chiefship and privileges. Instead, the village Chiefs represented the Maharaja or Manipur in the administration of the village and acted as the watchful dog on the side of the government. On the other hand, the state government tried to put down the peaceful agitation by sending the state's armed forces to the Hmar dominated hill areas stationing them at Thanlon, the sub-divisional headquarter of Manipur South - District.

**Volunteers and their Activities:**

In the meantime, the boycott movement under Mizo Union gained momentum in every villages and the people from all walks of life’s joined the movement enthusiastically for the demand of the Mizo Autonomous District. In order to mobilize the people, the Union set up a voluntary corps in each village - one for male section commanded by the area commander Khuma (Ex-Jamadar of Assam Regiment) and another for women's section.
Both sexes between 15-50 years were to enlist their names in the volunteers' list. The volunteers were instructed that when a trumpet call is given by the unit commander they would assemble in a certain place. In this way, both men and women sections were organized and functional side by side to perform their duties assigned to them. The boycotted movement reached its highest zenith when the Union boycotted the first general election of Manipur held in November 1948. The Union also boycotted the hill-house tax realized by the State Government in the hill areas. Moreover, the movement was also against the various privileges enjoyed by the Chiefs. Some of the chiefs abused their powers, and there were considerable resentment against them. Thus, the Union also demanded the abolition of taxes such as Busung (paddy tax) and Sadar (meat tax) payable to the Chiefs. It was on this ground that the chiefs did not joined the Mizo Union Party and its movement. Instead, the chiefs formed the so-called 'Chiefs' Association' in order to preserve their rights and privileges by giving full support to the Maharaja of Manipur. As such, the chiefs became an instrument for the suppression of the boycott movement launched by the Mizo Union. In this way, the target of the volunteers directly felt upon the village chiefs and their village authority members because of their anti-boycott movement. They were excommunicated from the society and punished them for their rigid stand against the movement. One of such serious actions of the volunteers was the dismantle of houses belonging to village authority members and burning of their granaries. There was a time when the spirit of the movement swept over the entire population of the Hmar area.

In the early part of 1949, sensing the gravity of the movement, the then Chief Minister of Manipur Priya Brata Singh accompanied by Maj. R. Kathing, Minister for Hill Affairs, and the Commandant of the 4th Assam Rifles paid an official visit to Tipaimukh area. In his public addressed to the Hmar people at Parbung, P.B. Singh reiterated that while the Hmar people had all his sympathy, he was not prepared to take any measure which were likely to effect the territorial integrity of Manipur. Instead, P.B Singh did his best to save the integrity of Manipur by suggesting the formation of the Hmar Regional Council, which, however, eventually divided the Hmar people into two conflicting groups. One section wanted to accept the plan whereas the other group, perhaps the more dominant group, rejected the plan on the ground that it would effect their relations with their kindred brethrens in the erstwhile Lushai hills.
The visit of Chief Minister to the Hmar area had further widened the gap between the Unionists and the loyalists which was already existed before. The loyalists, particularly the chiefs and the authority members welcomed the Chief Ministers and get moral encouragement from him. Oh the other hand, the Unionist received a major setback and decided to reject the Chief Minister's offer of Hmar Regional Council in his public meeting. In the words of Lal Dena (1974-'75:79), "It can be said with the advantage of hind sight that the leadership of the movement really lacked political far-sightedness in rejecting the offer, the Hmar people paid too heavy price and the movement ultimately ended achieving almost nothing".

In the meantime, while the Mizo Union movement was going in Manipur, the Union leaders in the Lushai hills accepted the Autonomous Hill District plan of the Government of India. This was with an exclusion of the Hmar inhabited areas outside the Lushai hills and therefore, the Lushai hills alone was given Autonomous Hill District. It was through this political demand that the Hmar people joined hands with the Mizos so that the Hmar inhabited areas contiguous to the Lushai hills district should be amalgamated. With the acceptance of autonomous region for the Lushai Hills District by the Union leaders excluding the Hmar inhabited areas in Manipur, the boycott movement launched by the Hmar people felt let down from the hands of their kindred brethren which utlimately led to the division of the Hmar inhabited areas of the North-east under different administrative units.

**Disintegration of the Mizo Union and Formation of New Political Party among the Hmar:**

The unsuccessful attempt for the inclusion of the Hmar inhabited areas with the Mizo Hills Autonomous District had done bad enough for the Hmar people. As already stated, they felt let down by their kindred brethren in their political movement. Subsequently, the Hmar politics took a different turn which gave birth to their ethnic identity consciousness. They now feel ashamed to be called themselves as Mizo tribes and started to dislike the Lushai (Duhlian) language which had been hitherto used as a common lingua-franca. Their political wishes and hopes were shattered. This resulted in the formation of seperated political organizations. In the year 1948, the 'Hmar Mongolian Federation' was formed under the leadership of Mr. Laltudai Hmar. The main objectives of the party was to maintain their unity and preservation of the Hmar customs and cultures. However, majority of the Hmar population still embraced the Mizo Union Party to fight for their political demand.
Immediately after the failure of the Hmar boycott movement (under Mizo Union) in Manipur, the first Hmar Inkhawmpui (conference) was convened at Pherzawl in Manipur (July 1-3) in 1954. The conference decided to form Hmar ethnic political organisation and accordingly formed the Hmar National Congress (H.N.C) - Rochunga Pudaite (Chairman), J. Lungawi (President), Thienga Nampui (Secretary), Lalring (Asst. Secy) and Saia (Treasurer).

In pursuance of the meeting resolution, a memorandum was submitted to the State's Reorganization Commission in the same year in which was demanded the creation of Hmar Hills District, covering Hmar concentrated areas of Manipur, Lushai Hills, Cachar and North-Cachar Hills of Assam. However, even after the formation of ethnic based political party, some section of the Hmar people still clung to the Mizo Union which was not liked by the Hmar intellectuals. As a result, they thought it necessary to have a single political organization for the whole Hmar tribe and accordingly the second Hmar Inkhawmpui (December 5-6, 1958) known as the 'Parbung Convention' came out with the formation of the Hmar National Union' by merging all the existing political organizations of the Hmar. H.K Khawl kung and Selkai Hrangchal were elected to the post of President and General Secretary respectively. However, H.K Khawl kung declined the post and Selkai Hrangchal thus became the first President of the new political party and Vanlalbawi as the General Secretary. The Hmar National Congress continued to carried on the demand for the creation of Hmar Autonomous Hill District and submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India which comprised the Hmar inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and the Lushai Hills, and later included areas inhabited by the Hmar tribes in Tripura within the proposed district.

It may be said that the non-inclusion of the Hmar areas outside the Lushai Hills Autonomous District led to the division of the Hmar inhabited areas under a different administrative units which have been a drawback till today for the progress and development of the Hmar people. When the Hmar joined the Mizo Union movement, they hoped that they might do better with their kindred brothers for the maintenance of their identity and culture. Otherwise, the Hmar people could perhaps have their regional council much earlier than the Mizos having their Lushai Hills District, had they not rejected the offer made by P.B Singh when he addressed an open air meeting at Parbung during his tour to the Hmar areas (Pudaite, 1949: 238).
Although the Hmar people played a vital role in early political activities under Mizo Union they were left out in the proposed Lushai Hills Autonomous District which thus, had a far reaching effect so far as their political life were concerned. They withdrew themselves from their association with the Mizo Union party which led to the formation of a community based political party known as the Hmar National Union in order to constitute themselves as a distinct ethnic group and maintain their own identity. As mentioned earlier, the main objectives of the Hmar National Union was to carve out the proposed Hmar Autonomous Hills District comprising of all the Hmar areas of the present Mizoram, Manipur, Cachar and Tripura. Today, the Hmar tribe is a recognised Scheduled Tribe in the states of Assam, Manipur, Mehalaya and Mizoram. As a result, the controversies and categorization of the Hmar tribe under Mizo (any Lushai) and even the uses of Lushai (Duhlian) language become disregarded which has been hitherto used as a common lingua franca. Bible was translated into Hmar language and many devotional hymns and songs were composed in Hmar dialect. The Hmar educated and elite groups started opening Hmar vernacular schools in different places. The Hmar Students' Association which was founded in 1939 looks after the students' welfare.

Again, the Hmar Literature Society was started in 1949 for the better development and progresses of literature among the Hmar people. Prior to this the Hmar were restricted from using their mother tongue in their worship services and even discouraged to compose their own songs in their dialect especially devotional hymns. The Lushai (Duhlian) language was used both as official and non-official in their day-to-day communication.

With the introduction of the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council, the non-Lushai speaking people were regarded as non Mizo (non-Lushai). This language issue was seriously viewed by other kindred tribes of Mizo. They now began to claim themselves as a separate nationality and preferred to be called so separately. Had the Mizo territorial integrity (which was once demanded) been achieved there would not be any questions of separate Hmar tribe and Hmar language just as the Ralte clans have been completely assimilated (Pudaite, 1994:240). Perhaps, one of the reasons for the exclusion of Hmar concentrated areas contiguous to Lushai Hills was that demographic composition of the Lushai Hills (Mizoram) is such that the Mizo are scared in reality to include the Hmar predominating areas contiguous to Lushai Hills within one political territory least it upset the entire ethnic balance. The emergence of Hmar People's Convention (HPC) which demand an
autonomous region comprising the Hmar dominated areas in Mizoram should also be looked from this perspective.

**Hmar Autonomy Movement:**

With the passage of time the political situation changed in the erstwhile Lushai Hills District. The Hmar people having wide contact with the educated people of the plains played vital role in the early political activities of the state. Their contribution in the formation of the Mizo Union, the first political party and its wide base at grass- root level cannot be overlooked. In the Mizo Union Council meeting of 1946, H.K Bawi chhuaka, a Hmar became secretary. Moreover, Chalchhuang a (first C.M. of Mizoram) and Pachhunga played a crucial role in articulating various demands of their people,( Choube, 1973:161) organising public meetings and giving a shape to the Mizo Union. They were the destiny makers of Mizoram before Independence. The minority tribes, in general, were fighting along with the dominant tribe for the cause of tribal welfare and development. Immediately after Independence, a number of Hmar leaders could found at the helm of political parties like Mizo Union and Congress. In the word of Goswami, "It has been pointed out by many that the administrative staff of the Mizo District Council was predominated by Hmar people"(Goswami in J.B. Bhattacharjee, 1989:200)

With the implementation of the North-east Area (Re-organisation) Act, 1971 which raised the status of Mizoram as Union Territory, the political situation changed. Three District Councils viz, the Lakher District Council, The Pawi District Council and the Chakma District Council were created. The Hmar people, as a result, felt let down and some sort of 'psychological depression' grilled them. Subsequently, inter-tribal feeling and subdued rivalry gave birth to clan based politics which is responsible for fermenting political tension in Mizoram thus having a far - reaching impact in the Hmar contiguous villages of Manipur, and Assam. It created schism in the well-knit Mizo society in the North-east as a whole.

A clearly perceptible unrest among the Hmar community due to growing frustration has surfaced and a seperatist tendency has developed with the formation of an outfit called the Hmar People's Convention (HPC) on 18th December, 1986 at Sakawrdai in Mizoram. The Hmar Volunteer Cell (HVC) active under the political banner of the HPC took to armed
movement after their initial demand for a separate district council for the Hmar people in Mizoram under the Sixth Scheduled to the Constitution had been turned down by successive Government of Mizoram. The HPC eventually upgraded their demand for a full-fledged state comprising parts of Mizoram, North Cachar Hills district of Assam and parts of Churachandpur district of Manipur. The HPC claims that the Hmar people, historically and culturally are different from the Mizos. Even their language is not the same. The HPC demand for statehood was voiced in a memorandum sent to the then Prime Minister P.V Narasimha Rao. In a press release later, the HPC asked its followers to emulate the example of the Mizo National Front which fought unitedly for freedom for a long 20 years and then succeeded.

The HPC does not accept the formulation of the Mizo leaders that the Hmar people have been absorbed into the larger Mizo family and are a part of it. They oppose such assimilation on the ground that both linguistically and culturally they are different from the Mizos. In Mizoram as in Manipur, Assam or other hill states of the North-east every tribes has its own language and sub language. This, and geographical isolation have come on the path of the integration of the tribal communities as an integrated one. The main crux of problem among the Hmar lies in the concentration of power in the dominant tribe which has become the eyeshore of other minorities in the states of Manipur and Assam in general and Mizoram in particular.

The HPC has been encouraged by Thanglienkhum, a Hmar elder close to former Chief Minister (L) Laldenga to launched armed struggle to strike against the Mizoram Government for autonomous district council. He directed to make full preparation for action throughout the Hmar dominated areas. Meanwhile, the Hmar National Union (HNU) of around 20,000 Hmar population well spread in the Barak valley and North Cachar held a meeting on June 28, 1989 under the president ship of T.L. Buhril which was attended by the representative of Cachar, North Cachar, Karimganj and Manipur who expressed their support to HPC in their struggle. Thanzam, the HPC President reiterated further that the organization is spread heading a movement for creation of a Hmar Autonomous District comprising the area of northern Mizoram, adjoining area of Manipur (Churachandpur) and Assam (southern belt of Cachar) having a population of 80,000 only. (see map).
It is the common belief in the Hmar community that the fruit of participatory democracy is tested by other communities and they are virtually deprived of the opportunities. They have practically no voice in the decision-making process of the state. This has enhanced the anxiety which has indirectly inflamed the Hmar unrest in the present days.

Fig. 3
The economic backwardness of the Hmar areas in the three states of Manipur, Mizoram and Assam, with acute unemployment and consequent frustration among the youths have engineered such ethnic movement which was lying dormant in the recent past. To many Hmar, the government of the three states as mentioned above are paying step-motherly treatment in developing Hmar areas. The numbers of schools and colleges or other centres of production including cottage industry is negligible which creates great hardship in fetching ordinary articles of daily use.

The geo-political aspect of the Hmar unrest is much more significant whose far reaching consequences may threaten the ethnic solidarity of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of tribes. Its long term impact on the body politics of Manipur, Mizoram and Assam in particular and the North-east in general for tells significant points which are linked up with the security and stability of the region.

The Hmar area of Churachandpur District of Manipur is comparatively advanced economically and educationally which has a great 'demonstrative effect' on the people of other contiguous Hmar areas of Cachar (Assam) and Mizoram where they constitutes a sizeable population: this is a vital sociological phenomenon, which reflects the Hmar perception. These people lying in different administrative units want to come closer to establish their ethnic identify on a strong and stable footing under a common political unit.

It may be said that the exclusion of Hmar community of Manipur and Assam in the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council had a far-reaching and lasting effect on the Hmar political life. Since then the Hmar people began to think for forming a separate political party in order to maintain their own identity and culture. Ultimately, the Mizo Union movement among the Hmar in Manipur soon died down. Instead, the Hmar people established their own ethnic based political party.
CHANGES IN THE HMAR ECONOMY:

Social change is brought about to a great extent by changes in economy among the Hmar. In the previous Chapter, some of the highlights of Hmar traditional economy have already been explored. Primitive economy was rigidly traditional in its attitude even four decades ago. About 90% of the total cropped area in the Hmar biel (Hmar area) was under the system of shifting cultivation,

In early days, there was no money in transaction in the Hmar tribal economy. It was only after the British annexation of the hills that money was introduced, which gave the first dynamic impulse to the stagnant Hmar economy of the past. In the transfrontier and inter-tribal commerce the 'price' of a commodity determined on the basis of its supply and demand was quoted in terms of other commodities. Mithuns, pigs, hens, beads and other articles were used as medium of exchange. However, after the money economy, the old patterns of barter has been replaced, they have now been revalued in terms of money.

Economically, as already pointed out in the previous chapter, majority of the Hmar population depend on agriculture for their living. Traditionally, the entire population of the Hmar can be classified as cultivators,. Hunting and rearing of animals, etc. are practiced only as a secondary occupations. Most of the Hmar practice shifting cultivation and only few of them are engaged in settled cultivation mostly whose settlements are in the plain areas of Churachandpur. It may be mentioned that though the Hmar spread out in all the districts and neighbouring areas, their main concentration is in the two sub-division of Parbung (Tipaimukh) and Churachandpur. They constitute around 93% and 12% in Tipaimukh and Churachandpur respectively. Thus, the Hmar populace can be broadly grouped into two categories according to their economic organization and habitation - the one who inhabits the interior hills (Tipaimukh area) and, the other group inhabiting the partially plain Churachandpur sub-division.
### (Table No. 4)

**JHUM: Sex-wise Work Distribution Among the Hmar Tribe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusively Man's Work</th>
<th>Exclusively Women's Work</th>
<th>Works done by both men and women jointly &amp; separately</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jhum cutting &amp; clearing</td>
<td>1. Jhum field work.</td>
<td>1. Sowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Setting fire to jungle &amp; adopting fire protective measures.</td>
<td>2. Husking rice</td>
<td>2. Weeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. House construction</td>
<td>5. Pottery</td>
<td>5. Threshing paddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Carding cotton</td>
<td></td>
<td>9. Transporting jhum products to village, home/barn from field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Weaving cloth.</td>
<td></td>
<td>10. Transporting products to market for exchange &amp; sale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Spinning yarn</td>
<td></td>
<td>11. Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Marketing of minor agricultural products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the Tipaimukh sub division, shifting cultivation is practically the only mode of cultivation. Probably due to the nature of topography, terrace cultivation is not popular in this area. Land is owned by the community and no one can claim full ownership of land. It belongs to him as long as he uses the land and ceases to be his when he moves or abandons the land. The practice of cultivation which is both inefficient and wasteful to the national economy has not been improved much in comparison with other hill areas of the state.

Today, things are gradually changing - the traditional pattern of shifting cultivation is gradually being replaced by settled cultivation without decrying the practice of a shifting cultivation. The importance of education in bringing about qualitative improvement of the human being and thereby to bring about economic development is gradually gaining ground among the modern Hmar people. To better their economic condition, the cultivation of cash crops such as ginger, chilli, etc. is being increasingly popular.

As the Hmar society became more stable with settled agriculture as the mode of production, the more educated people started advising and suggesting the local farmers by way of demonstration that there existed yet one more method of growing crops on fixed plots - fruit plantation to supplement their income. The land abounds in a rich flora of indigenous fruits growing with so much ease without very much human aid as in the Tipaimukh area. It already enjoys an importance of its own from the horticulture standpoint. The quality of fruits such as orange, lemon, papaya, banana, etc. grown in this area are very high even under conditions of general neglect. The area is gifted with diverse agro-climatic conditions due to different elevation zones ranging from a few hundred to over a thousand feet above sea level. Because of this wide range of conditions, there is an immense scope for growing a number of varieties of horticulture crops.

Orange is an important commercial fruit in the region. It is taking its roots particularly along the bank of Tuiruong (Barak river). Though the area has a very favourable climatic conditions for its plantations, very little attention in the early days had been paid for its extensive plantation. The method of plantation which is vague and primitive and the growers rarely using proper spacing, manuring, intercultural, etc. the plantation once planted are left at the mercy of nature for years together without any rejuvenation. However, the production is high. It is only recently that the area for orange plantation is on the increase.
and that too at a considerably fast rate, particularly in and around Vangai range. Earlier, the Hmar people of Tipaimukh sub-division had trade relations with the Cacharis, Bengalis, etc. and the main items of exchanges were cotton, chili and later on orange popularly known as 'Sylhet orange' and pineapple which were exported in large quantities mainly through the Ruonglevaisuo river.

Banana is also another important commercial fruit of the people, but its cultivation is still in a primitive stage. As there is no attempt to identify and classify the varieties correctly there has been much confusion in their proper identification. Inspite of its commercial value, no one has taken up extensive plantation of bananas up till now. The area is very rich in both wild and cultivated varieties. Miscellaneous fruits like jackfruit, papaya, lemon, guava, etc. are also cultivated successfully. Cultivation of pineapple have been introduced which are thriving well and will shortly come into bearing stage.

Development of horticulture perhaps may be the most feasible project to boom agricultural production in the Tipaimukh sub-division which will have to be encouraged in order to improve the standard of living of the Hmar people in the area as well as to infuse in them the idea of permanent settlement.

Regarding sugarcane, cotton, maize and yam, the yield per hectare is not very encouraging as compared to the agriculturally advanced areas of the states perhaps due to the under utilization of resources - natural and human.

Tea cultivation is not new to the Hmar people. Several tea bushes (rather tree) are found in the nearby villages. Though these are not maintained under proper regime of pruning and plucking, country (local) tea produced from these bushes has excellent flavour and taste. It is reported to have adequate ingredients of caffeine, tea tannins and the aromatic elements essential for any good tea. Many areas of Tipaimukh sub-division are capable of producing Darjeeling / Nilgiri type of classic orthodox or C.T.C. tea. As a result, the State Government should encourage the people to take on to settle made of agro-industrial living, and thus wean them away from unecological 'jhum' practice and usher an era of eco-development.
Pisciculture is gaining popularity among the rural people of Tipaimukh region. With the incentives from the Government in the form if subsidies for purchasing fingerlings and fish-foods, the farmers adopted domestic fish ponds as an additional sources of income. There is an increasing demand from the farmers for more assistance and extension of fishery activities. Damdiei fishing ponds are an example of it. The fishery activities which have been extended to the remote villages despite communication bottle-neck and manpower constrains is also encouraged by Church organizations through their developmental scheme. The State's Fisheries Department is also running training course at Inland Fisheries Training Centre at Lamphelpat, Imphal since 1973 to impart fisheries technologies to the interested educated unemployed youths for self-employment.

With the spread of modern education a new economic class has emerged. The educated jhumias are absorbed in government employment and thus engaged in non-agricultural activities. Most of these households owned a paddy field but most of them have given it out for renting to landless agriculturists. Thus, most of the educated jhumias left their traditional agricultural and allied occupations and moved to urban and industrial areas for white collar jobs in public and private enterprises and business which help them making progress on the economic front also.

With modernization, inter village differences in economic opportunities are also becoming prominent since the development of infrastructure has not been uniform over all the villages. Moreover once the village households are stratified on the basis of the ownership of land, inequality in economic condition of the household tends to grow overtime. The poor jhumias are often required to borrow either in cash or kind or in both. The well-to-do farmers, therefore, becomes money lenders and earn interest as an income. Since available land in the village specially in Churachandpur and its surrounding plain areas which can be used for wet cultivation is very limited it opens up the door for leasing out land on rent by the land owners. Thus, the process of peasantization in Hmar villages has been leading to the emergence of a land owning class of families which earn income as peasant farmers besides earning profits when they hire labour, earn interest when they give loans to fellow villagers and rent when they lease out land. On the other hand, the landless jhumias are becoming poorer and poorer as they are often to borrow for survival and to sell their labour to the other class to earn wage and even to pay rent on leased in land from the farmer.
From the above discussion, it appears that a considerable degree of socio-economic differentiation has grown among the Hmar society in Manipur in general and in particular in the Churachandpur sub-division. However, class-consciousness seems to be absent among the Hmar society and the relations between the landlords and the labourers is non-antagonistic because they belong to the same community and are sometimes related to one another through blood ties and etc. 'The newness of a privileged class which may wield much power, but has little authority, which may have a lot of economic influence, but enjoys little political acceptance' (Peter Ekeh 1975:93) is prevalent among the Hmar people.

The Hmar people living in Imphal and those living in Churachandpur and its surrounding areas, due to their close proximity to urban centre with modern infrastructure are in general economically better off than their kinsmen in the Tipaimukh sub-division partly due to inadequate infrastructural facilities like power, transport and the availability of skilled and semi-skilled manpower. Therefore, the provision of adequate infrastructure for accelerated pace of economic development of the region is a crucial factor. Substantial improvement has been made in providing infrastructural facilities in the region during the last three decades. Even then, much is left to be done in future. Yet, it cannot be denied that revolutionary changes in economy has gradually changed the outlook of the Hmar people in their social and cultural behaviour.

Hmar economy during the absolute regime of the politics of village chieftainships was not remarkable. It was simply to meet the bare necessities of the people's daily needs. However, the British colonization and the consequent modernization resulted in the emergence of cash economy and set in motion the process of modernization. Jhuming continues to be the main occupation of the Hmar people particularly in the interior villages, but it gradually lost its traditional importance as a means of basic subsistence, source of wealth and prestigious position in the society. In the present context, jhum cultivation also lost its importance as the locus of village solidarity. Inspite of the emotional and sentimental attachment to the village land, people become less attached to agricultural work due to the dwindling yields of jhumming and look for non-agricultural jobs and commercial openings offered by the various programmes of developmental planning under the state government, thus leading to rural-urban migration. The hitherto undifferentiated traditional society of the Hmar was however, transformed into occupationally differentiated society since only a
section of the population benefited from the process of change while the masses still cling to their traditional occupation.

Vanrammoi (1992) shows a broad picture of the types of economic activities of the Hmar people during 1961-81 (see Table 5). It is found that the occupational classification pattern of the Hmar more or less reflects the general pattern for the total tribal population of Manipur where there is a major concentration in the agricultural sector with only a small proportion of workers distributed in the other categories.

Table No. 5  Industrial Classification or Hmar Tribe, Manipur (1961-1981)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industrial Classification</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>86.10</td>
<td>83.72</td>
<td>84.98</td>
<td>78.48</td>
<td>90.35</td>
<td>84.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing, Hunting, Plantation,</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining &amp; Quarrying</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacture &amp; servicing (a)</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>14.64</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Storage &amp; Communication</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total main workers</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3484)</td>
<td>(3091)</td>
<td>(6575)</td>
<td>(7052)</td>
<td>(5093)</td>
<td>(12145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of main workers</td>
<td>44.63</td>
<td>40.89</td>
<td>42.79</td>
<td>47.39</td>
<td>35.52</td>
<td>41.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7806)</td>
<td>(7555)</td>
<td>(15365)</td>
<td>(14880)</td>
<td>(14330)</td>
<td>(29216)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nevertheless, certain specific trends are also being observed among the Hmar community. For instance, while the percentage of workers in agriculture had decreased from 92.32 percent in 1961 to 88.35 percent in 1981 for the total tribal population, it had surprisingly increased from 85.42 percent to 85.94 percent for the Hmar during the same period. An examination of data for men and women workers reveals that the increase in agricultural sector is mainly because of the substantial increase in women cultivators. The percentage of men in agriculture had, in fact decreased from 86.00 percent to 78.48 percent. This is quite interesting as the proportion of agricultural workers had been declining in general.

It is remarkable to note that significant increase in agricultural labourers is witnessed during 1961-1981 (from 0.44 percent to 2.48 percent) probably due to rural urban migration from Tipaimukh hill area to the plain area of Churachandpur and the capital Imphal. It may be noted that as agricultural land is very limited and expensive in this area, people from rural areas often adopt an economic life of casual workers or labourers and work in agricultural jobs on a casual basis.

Yet another interesting point highlighted in the above table is the drastic decline of household industries among the Hmar people. As mentioned above, household industries are the traditional domain of women among the tribal communities of Manipur. During 1961, as many as 14.65 percent of Hmar women workers were engaged in household industries. However, in 1981 only 3.69 percent were in this sector - probably due to growth in women's literacy and acceptance of their active participation in the socio-economic activities of the society.

After agriculture, the largest concentration of Hmar workers is in the 'other services' as against 6.34 percent in 1961. This category mainly includes non-manual jobs which, in general, have a higher socio-economic status than the traditional agriculture occupation. Therefore, the increase in this sector can be taken as a positive indicator of economic growth and progress.

No doubt, desire for change and material progress results in the breakdown of traditional boundaries and familiarity with new socio-economic system and ways of life. With the spread of educational opportunities, more and more young people are entering into
the field of job market, leaving their ancestral villages. Today, a significant number of Hmar have started residing in all the major urban centres exposing themselves to the experiences of wage employment and to the urban commercial practices and institutions. They exhibit the characteristics of participant culture. Even in the Tipaimukh sub-division, isolated bits of modernity have started creeping into the daily lives of the Hmar people.

**Land Holding System:**

Before the advent of the British ownership of land in a tribal village in Manipur was claimed by the Chief of the village. He, in consultation with his council of ministers (Khawnbawl) selected land for jhuming by each family at the beginning of each season. No other part of the village land other than the agreed ranges or stretches of land should be cleared for the years cultivation by any family. The Chief and his council of ministers had the privilege of selecting a tract of land within the agreed ranges. Next to them came a few individuals - the chief's favorites selected by him like the village Thirsu (black - smith) who had the second choice in jhum-land. The rest of the ranges was then publicly opened for the year's jhum cultivation by lot.

The cultivator had to pay a part of the paddy (usually 5 kerosene tins) to the Chief every year and the front -leg of any animal killed in the jungle. This was actually a sort of rent in kind and was called Busung - Sadar (paddy - meat tax) in Hmar language. Cash rent was accepted when the cultivator did not have sufficient quantity of paddy to spare. The forest inside the village belonged to the Chief. The village possessed fixed boundaries within which the Chief exercised absolute power. No individual could transfer the land which was under his possession, though the Chief could do so. In olden days, the chief could even turn out a recalcitrant villager, who defied or disobeyed him.

The Raja of Manipur, from the earliest times, claimed absolute ownership of all lands within his territory. The Raja of Manipur developed his own system of land administration, but did not impose the system on the hill-people who occupied 90% of the territory under his rule. The hill-people were left undisturbed to follow their own customary land-system.

At the same time, however, a large number of cultivators held valley-lands directly from the Raja after reclaiming jungly waste lands and by paying land – revenue in kind. The
Raja maintain some sort of a rough and ready record – of – rights on the bases of which he used to collect land revenue in crops.

After Independence, on the structure left by the Raja’s administration was superimposed the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation 1998. Under this regulation, the system of annual patta, periodic patta and revenue-free (Kharposh) patta was introduced. Lands were surveyed, maps were made. Chithas written up and Jambandis prepared. The old structure of the Raja’s time was somehow forced into the new pattern. The state of affairs continued till 1960, when the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act 1960 popularly know as the M.L.R & L.R. Act, was passed.

To the hill-areas, the M.L.R & L.R. Act, 1960* does not apply, But the “hill-area” under the said Act has a special meaning. The hill-areas do not necessarily coincide with the total areas of the hill-districts, and a small part of a plain district actually constitute hill-areas. There are 5 hill-districts and they contain 19558 villages, out of which 1454 are hill-areas, satisfying the provisions of section 2 (j) of the M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960. In addition to these 1454 villages, another 24 villages which are included in the Jiribam - Division of Imphal District have also been declared to be hill-areas in term of the provisions of section 2 (J) of the said Act. Thus the total number of villages which can be legally considered as hill-areas in Manipur is 1478 villages. They constitute about 70% of the total number of villages in the State.

In these 70% of villages, the land system is not governed by the provisions of the M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960, but by perennial and evolving customs.

Government of Manipur appears to be aware of the peculiar situation created by the extension of M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960 to the hill-area, without first abolishing the rights of the Chiefs. In a meeting of the Deputy Commissioner dated 23.5’83, in which, besides the Revenue Secretary and the Deputy Commissioners, the Chief Minister and the Revenue Minister were also present, the hill-Deputy Commissioner expressed the view that, due to non-extension of the M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960 to the hill-areas of Manipur, they were unable to take up further survey work in those areas since there was resistance, specially from the village chiefs. Some of the Deputy Commissioners, however, pointed out that since the Manipur Hill Areas (Acquisition of Chief’s Rights) Act, 1967 was not yet implemented in
Manipur, the provisions of the M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960 could not be extended. It is thus clear that without first abolishing the Chiefs right, the mere extension of the M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960 does not bring the actual cultivators into direct contact with the Government, and it would not be regular for the Government to realize premium and issue allotment as it has been done in some tribal village like Saikul for instance.

In the course of field studies in Churachandpur it was found that most of the villagers expressed their dissatisfaction that they were required to pay hill-house-tax in addition to land-revenue. It may be pointed out that house-tax is prevalent in all States of the North Eastern region, but is always confined to Jhum lands only. It is an assessment in lieu of land-revenue. In jhumland assessment of land-revenue is not practicable, as the cultivation shifts from plot to plot every year. Hence, house-tax is assessed on every separate household. There seems to be thus not satisfactory reason for collecting house-tax in addition to the land-revenue, although technically speaking, anyone who resides in a “hill-area” is liable to pay hill house-tax. Though these villages are situated inside hill-districts they are not-hill-areas but plain areas adjacent to the Manipur Valley. Like all lands in village of the plain districts, they have assessed to land-revenue, but while the cultivators in the villages of the plain districts are required to pay house-tax, the inhabitants of these villages are obliged to pay both house-tax and land-revenue. Nor did these persons practice jhum cultivation in the nearby hilly-areas.

With the introduction of the M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960 in 1962 to the villages in and around Churachandpur along with 88 other villages of all the hill-districts which lie in plain areas, peculiar problems began to emerge. All occupants, even those whose families had come at the time of establishment of the village were regarded as possessors of vacant Government land. Under section 15 of the M.L.R & L.R. Act 1960, they came to be, in the eye of law, trespassers or encroachers and were advised to apply under section 14 for allotment of land they had possessed for generation without any hitch. Some did and many did not. Those who did get allotment but only after they had paid premium under rule 11 of the Allotment Rules, at the rate of 20 time the annual net income in case of cultivated lands, and 30 times the annual land-revenue in case of other lands. Besides, the allotment holders had to pay land-revenue every year which they had not done before. But the matter did not end there. As already pointed out that they had to continue to pay the house-tax which they had previously paid in lieu of land-revenue. These hill-tribes pointed out that the people of
the valley did not pay house-tax in addition to land-revenue and asked why were the hill-tribes made to pay both taxes for the same piece of land. Was not this tantamount to double-taxation and discrimination?

Thus, at present, we found two picture regarding the nature of land holding among the Hmar – the first one is land holding system in the Tipaimukh sub-division where jhum cultivation is practiced, and the second is land holding system in the Churachandpur sub-division where wet cultivation is practiced.

In the Tipaimukh sub-division, there is no land where individual owns. The whole village land is owned by the village community. The villagers’ common land are under the direct control of the Chief and the Village Authority which represents the whole village community. Jhumland are divided into as many plots as there are jhum cultivators and the size of the land holding meant for cultivation is again determined on the basis of the size of the land holding depending on the members of the household which can manage in a year.

The transfer of propriety rights over the village land from the Chiefs, to the people results in far reaching consequences. Traditionally, the Chief had the right over the village land; and with the help of his councilors they were able to impose strict rules and regulations in the maintenance and preservation of the village land which safeguarded against fire and wanton destruction of the jungles and forests. As the Chief were vested with traditional authority, they exerted power over the people which help them in preserving the village land. The Village Authority with the chief as the ex-officio chairman, now, act as the custodian of the village and jhum land. But, in many instances, they do not have traditional sanctions or social sanctions. The villagers expect them to pursue the welfare programmes of the village but are not ready to accord an honour or prestige to them in the society. Moreover, the politico legal right and power of the Village Authority is so meagre that it has, practically, no power to inflict penalty beyond the customary fine of ‘sekhat’ or rupees two hundred. This and the declining attitudes of the Authority members to considered the village land their personal responsibility result in liberal destruction of forest thereby reducing forest into barren land unsuitable for cultivation. Although the M.L.R & L.R.Act 1960 has by section 119 provided against arbitrary ejection of tenant, ejection to take place rather easily, as the period for the tenancy is often very short, or more often kept vague by the landlords. In he sample villages of Thenmuol, Saikot and Khawmai, it was found that the period of tenancy
is fixed by agreement between the landlord and tenant wish may vary from one year to five years.

Rent in filed produce is the general rule. Cash rent is not prevalent. Rent varies from place to place and also depends upon the size of holding and nature of fertility of the plough land. The average rent at the time of this field study (2001-02) varies from 12 pots per pari. The rent is fixed in terms of a number of ‘Sangphai’ (measuring basket of paddy) for a ‘sangam’ or ‘pots’ for a ‘pari’, not in terms of percentage of yield.

\[
\begin{align*}
1 \text{ Pot} &= 2 \text{ Sangphai} \\
1 \text{ Sangphai} &= 21.5 \text{ m kg. Or 1 Pot} = 43.3 \text{ kg.}
\end{align*}
\]

The law (S.112 of M.L.R & L.R. Act, 1960) restricts the rent to a maximum of \(\frac{1}{4}\) and \(\frac{1}{3}\) of the proceed. The rent of 12 pots per pari approximate this quantity and appears to be within the legal limit although slightly higher in some cases but not unreasonably higher.

Although the individual landowner, with the exception of those in the Tipaimukh subdivision, has got unrestricted right of transfer with the registered documents, there is a restriction for being a Scheduled Tribe, for a Scheduled Tribe, landowner cannot sell or otherwise transfer his land to any other non-tribal. A Hmar landowner, being a Scheduled Tribe, if intends to transfer his land to a non-tribal, permission of the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner, before giving such permission, is required first to secure to consent of the District Council within whose jurisdiction the land is situated (vide Sec.158 of the M.L.R & L.R.Act 1960).

From the above discussion, it is clear that a very large portion of the hill areas in the region has not been cadastrally surveyed. Therefore, there is no record of rights over land. People rely on customs handed down from generation to generation. The uncertainties of the laws and the land rights exercises by the tribesmen inhibit development and welfare activities in the region. This system was quite satisfactory till the advent of the British towards the middle of the last century when the tribals live alone without any sort of intrusion of interference by the outsiders from the plains. They had plenty of land when heir population was very small and needs were limited. But things have now changed vastly
with the dawn of independence and other developmental activities. It was, therefore, rightly suggested by the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission of 1960-61 that the work of preparing the records of rights for the tribes should be completed as early as possible which is still a far cry of Manipur. Since most of the people are illiterates and ignorant of the complication of various enactment, the approach to this work should be human rather than legalistic and take full note of tribal customs and traditions.

In the absence of land ownership rights by the individual, particularly in the hilly interior villages, landowner cannot receive necessary financial aids or loans from various financial institutions for the improvement of land and raise the production, etc. Under such circumstances, mortgage of land in favour of the lending agency cannot be legally created, and land is normally the security for the loans advanced. Maintenance of land records is also necessitated for the smooth functioning of the administration and is a good source of revenue. If the land records are not properly maintained neither the state nor the District Council can help the poor farmer. As such, where farms like orange, sugarcane, tea garden, etc are practiced in fixed plots may, with the consent of the village authorities, be mapped and surveyed and land-records prepared recognizing permanent, heritable and restricted transferable rights, so that the owner may be bale to receive necessary financial aids or loans from various financial institution such as Government, banks, co-operatives societies, etc, for the improvement of land and raise the production, etc.

**The Abolition of Zawlbuk :**

As discussed in Chapter IV, the ‘Bachelors’ Quarters’ called Zawlbuk has been the most important institution which served as socializing agent in the traditional Hman community life. But the systems has been abolished from the present day Hmar community. One of the most important factors that paved the way for the extinction of Zawlbuk was the introduction of formal education among the Hmar.

The introduction of formal education as stated among the Hmar exerted much influence on the traditional life of the people and, as such, it acted as a real hindrance to the proper functioning of Zawlbuk. Most of the parents would now prefer to send their children to formal schools since they realized that they would gain more in sending their children to schools. With the decline in traditional powers of the Chiefs and his Councillors, the
importance of Zawlbuk institution also waned because of the chiefs and their councilors had to exercises their powers only at the behest of the colonial authorities. During the colonial rule (1891-1947). The traditional leaders’ authorities and powers were greatly undermined. It was therefore, certain that since the chief were made more figureheads, the discipline in Zawlbuk administration was apparently deteriorated resulting in its slow decay. With the introduction of formal education and the process of modernization, the Hmar people began to feel that Zawlbuk was only a hindrance to their pursuit of progress. Thus, slowly and slowly, the Zawlbuk institution fell into complete disuse and relegated to insignificances and people began to abandon it, and in course to time it became an institution of the past.

The disappearance of Zawlbuk institution forms a landmark in the annals of Hmar history. With the abolition of Zawlbuk where menfolk assemble regularly, they could now give more attention to their domestic affairs which were earlier shouldered by the womenfolk. As such, the disappearance of Zawlbuk brought about much relief to the womenfolk since responsibility of the family was now shared jointly by men and women, and as a result brought the husband and the wife closer than before which in turn sowed the seed of better atmosphere and understanding in the family.

The spread of formal education effected a confrontation with the system of Zawlbuk because this old system was the primary center of learning for all young men in the village. As such, Zawlbuk was considered a threat to formal education. Thus, the abolition of the old system of Zawlbuk led to the emergence of ‘Hmar Students’ Association (HSA) in 1939, to develop and to look after the welfare of the students’ community which is a landmark in the history of Hmar socio-cultural transformation.

All these socio-cultural change are the outcome of formal education and the new educated people. No doubt the process of modernization also put the flame ablaze by adding its direct effects on the people as a whole. Contact with urban agencies and the winds of change proved disastrous for the Zawlbuk institution. The decline of Zawlbuk institution is a study in melancholy, because the Zawlbuk principle and the Hmar tribal philosophy of life ‘TLAWMGNAINA’ which exerts a very strong influence upon the Hmar life slowly faded away among the so called Hmar modern life.
H. THE ABOLITION OF BAWI (SLAVE) SYSTEM:

The abolition of slavery known as ‘Bawi’ was an astounding historical achievement. As already discussed in Chapter IV, there were several kinds of bawi, viz, *Inpui bawi, Chemsen bawi, Tuklut bawi* and *Sal*.

The question of bawi became controversial when Dr. Peter Frazer, M.D. (Edin) came to the erstwhile Lusahi Hills in 1908 and reminded the District authorities that the bawi systems as practiced in the Lushai hills was no better than the slavery which had been abolished by the Slavery Abolition Act, 1888 by the British Government. He strongly argued that the bawis were treated in the same nature with those of the slaves under the British Empire and, moreover, it was hereditary. He was led to believe that the bawis were oppressed and they were deprived of liberty which belonged, of right to every British subject. The administration, on the other hand, refused to recognised that there was an institution of bawi which needed abolition. The fact was that a number of individuals and families were indeed bonded. They could seek freedom only by paying Rs.40/- to the ruling Chief failing that their children’s children would continue to be bonded. If one could have a belief that there was no bawi, it was only because the system was in a mitigated form due to characteristic lack of servility among the Hmar people and the peculiar kindness shown to them, by their masters.

However, the problem did not remain silent for long, the crack was soon widened when Frazer personally collected evidences to prove that the bawis were ill-treated. He then requested the District authorities to direct that an enquiry should be made with the object of proclaiming all the bawis free and if necessary, providing compensation for the Chiefs. At the same time, the district authorities as well as the missionaries were aware of the danger involved in the interference in an indigenous social institution. They felt that the intervention would do more harm than good to the Chiefs and they did not want to alienate the Chiefs from the administration either. These factors prevented the authorities from doing anything to abolish the bawi system for they know that the chiefs were instrumental in effectively running and administering the hill territory. The authorities, therefore, adopted a policy of silence in regard to bawi. Indeed, the administration, and, at later stage, even some of the
missionaries made subtle efforts to hinder the spread of education beyond the primary level in this area. To them, good administration could exists on the basis of static social order.

In the meantime, majority of the ruling Chiefs did not support the move made by Frazer, Lt Col. H.W.G Cole, the District Magistrate was perturbed fearing that the chief would not take lightly because under the suggestion by Dr. Frazer, the Chief were to be suddenly deprived of their domestic servants and part of the price of the marriage of the daughter of the bawis. The situation thus deteriorate and the matter was placed before the Assam Government which ensured a long process of discussion. Frazer, who is the opinion of the Government exceeded the purpose of his being there, was also called on either to leave the Hills or sign an agreement which Frazer flatly refused to accept this approach by the Superintendent Lushai Hills, which the Government was compelled to order his withdrawal from the Hills, which ultimately led to his expulsion from the country in 1912.

However, even after Frazer’s departure the matter does not come to a close; the bawi became a matter of great concern both to the Government of Assam and India. Accordingly, the Government of Assam proposed a change for the future status of bawis as follows:-

(i) A date should be fixed after which the bawi contract could not be entered into.
(ii) The Government would pay the customary ransom of Rs.40/- if the bawi was freed.
(iii) Government should recover ransom from persons in whose behalf the same was paid.
(iv) Persons so redeemed and released be at liberty to leave the chief’s house or to remain there as they wished.
(v) Let the Chiefs know that they would be liable to bring to the court when need arose. (Larinmawia,1982)

In 1927, the Government of Assam replaced the word ‘bawi’ by a new term ‘sunghai’ or umpui meaning relatives or inmates. The term ‘bawi’ was thus no longer allowed to be used.

It may be said that Frazer left the Lushai Hills with a heavy heart after being defeated in his attempt for the abolition of bawi with a strong determination of filing the case against what had happened in the Hills. He submitted a petition to his regents to discuss the question of bawi in the British Parliament in which the Parliament finally passed the matter in favour of the abolition of bawi in the Lushai Hills in 1927.
The disappearance of bawi system among the Hmar people was also due to the gradual growth of public consciousness brought about by sincere efforts of the missionaries to fulfill the ethical demands of Christian faith on the one hand and the abolition of chieftainship on the other. Moreover, when the Chief accepted the new religion, there was difficulty in rooting out the notorious bawi system among the people. In the words of Watkin R. Roberts (the pioneer missionary among the Hmar people) “the village chiefs who embraced the Lord set their slaves free on their return to their respective village. Even many families enslaves by others were freed free in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the Government of India and the Parliament at London declared slavery and its redemption price illegal, slavery pained and saddened some of us very much, but now I think there is no more slavery. I think Lalbawichhuaka was also born by this time”.

On 12th March, 1985, one of a great public figure passed away. “He was a man who used to choose to act according to his principle: a dignified man in dress, manner and in conversation. A public man, but too urbane to be a plotitician. Always calm and composed, yet he never bothered to be agreeable at the cost of principles. At times self-opinionated to the point of being stubborn. His name was Hmar Khawbung Bawichhuaka, meaning, he of the Khawbung family of Hmar clan Slave Emancipated”(Lalkhama, I.A.S. on Bawi Controversy, Mizoram News Megazine Issue No. 3, p.21A). It may be noted that Dohnuna, father of H.K. Bawichhuaka happened to be the first Christian among the Hmar (as well as among the Mizos) who could free himself by paying Rs 40/- to the chief which is not a small amount at that time. He became an important activists in the bawi liberation movement. He was one of the delegate who went to Shillong to submit a memorandum to the Lt. Governor of Bengal and Assam for the abolition of the bawi system in the early 1910s in which a son was born to him and later named his son as “Lalbawichhuaka”, a name that encapsulated time and tide.

Thus, the abolition of bawi system is a historical achievement where freed bawis have attain a number of good position in the society. In the history of bawis’ emancipation among the Hmar people, we cannot but forget the names of Dohnuna in our minds and his son Hmar Khawbung Bawichhuaka will always be remembered.
Abolishi0n of Inter_Tribal War and Head Hunting:

Traditionally, the Hmar people belonged to nomadic tribes, victims of primitive ‘knock-out’ internecine wars, moving from place to place in search of fertile lands. Surprise attacks on enemy’s village was frequent. There were also frequent feuds amongst the Hmar clans which would result in a full scale tribal war. This age-old practice became detestable with the arrival of the British administration. When the British were engaged in their work of consolidation of the British in India by fighting petty wars with the local rajas, the Hmar were left untouched so long as they did not create real problems. However, the frequent raids and plunder of the Cachar district in the plains by the different tribes-people brought them into conflict with the British. (Pakhuongte,1983:24)

On 23rd January, 1971, a Haulawng chief named Bengkhuaia raided Alexandrapore tea-garden in Cachar, killing and capturing many people including Mr. Winchester, planter who was on a visit from a neighbouring estate, and his daughter Mary, a little girl of six was carried off as captive. The incident finally led to a ‘Military Expedition of 1871-1872 ‘ to punish those Chiefs responsible for the Alexandrapore incident, to bring back Mary Winchester who was being kept by Bengkhuaia as his daughter’….. and to suppress head-hunting as well as establish law and order in the land’. (Zaithanga, 1981:10). As has been mentioned in Chapter IV, head-hunting among the Hmar thus need physical force to suppress the practice. The people now realized that killing of a person was punishable even by execution. Besides, the Christian missionaries with the backing from colonial authorities, side by side, by way of preaching and teaching had brought about a psychic change among the Hmar that killing of human being was an act against God, the creator of all living and non-living things in the world. In this way the missionaries indirectly inculcated the idea to the people that need-hunting and waging war against one another is a sin against God (Lal Dena, 1974-1975:79) has stated that Christianity was effective and a blessing to the Hmars because it did away with many of their cruel customs like head-hunting and inculcated into their way of life Christian concepts and standards of behaviour.

Thus the combined efforts of Christian missionaries and the British-India Government ultimately wiped out their century-old custom, while the British-India Government had been struggling hard to bring in law and order situation in the hills among
the tribesmen, the Christian missionaries concerned themselves with the inward transformation of the people. We can therefore, said that both of their noble endeavours are equally rewarding and highly appreciated.

**Some Other importance of Changes :**

As already discussed in the previous Chapter the forms of communication among the Hmar people in the pre-technological days were through sign, fire-signal, gongs, and drums. Owing partly to the spread of modern education and partly to the convenient terrain of the topography. Hmar people had became expert in transmuting message by signals from moving torch-light known as ‘Morse-code’ in which letters were represented by communications of long and short light or sound signals. This preceded the advent of telecommunications.

It has said that thanks to ‘bush-wire’. The news of Queen Victoria’s death reached many part in southern Africa hours before the cable from London reached the administrations in African colonies. Similarly in the 1940’s and 1950’s it was possible by Hmar well-versed in the Morse-cadre to convey information faster than could be done telegraphically. During the Hmar Boycott Movement of 1946-1949 under the Mizo Union. Morse-code form of communication played a crucial role in transmitting messages and in mobilizing the people. In order to mobilize the people, the Mizo Union leaders set up a voluntary corps in each village. One of the voluntary corps was the Morse Visual Corps by which one village sent urgent and important messages to other villages at night. Each person who were selected for this section has to undergo some sort of training organized by the party. Even women volunteers were not spared from such kind of training. In connection with the Morse-Code, operation during the boycott movement, Songdamkung and Tana of Mizo Union, Parbung Unit were arrested and jailed in 1949 (Lienzathang,1993:87)

Scientific and technological advancement have brought about many changes in attitudes, beliefs, and even traditions. For instance, the introduction of ‘Radio’ set out common standard of speech and thus brings about uniformity in speech among the various clans within the Hmar society cutting across state boundaries. Today, the Imphal Centre and the Aizawl Centre of All India Radio broadcast programmes in Hmar dialect which is the most popular sources of recreation; majority of the Hmar population, both literates and illiterates are well conversant with everyday events through radio-broadcast. Thus, the tremendous strides made in the field of media of communication is another important factors
of social change especially among the rural Hmar population. The publication and circulation of newspapers, magazines and journals in Hmar language has gone up greatly and these are now being circulated in considerable quantity even among the rural people.

Like any other society in India, the advancement of technology is affecting the Hmar society in various directions. One of the most impressive features is the attainment of greater efficiency and speed with the construction of Churachandpur-Tipaimukh road by Border Roads Task Force under the Fifth Five year Plan (1974-79). The construction of this road has greatly helped the economic development of the area and has opened up better opportunities for the people of Tipaimukh (Parbung) sub-division in the South District for the upliftment of their economic conditions through better transport and communication facilities with the other parts of the State. Again, under the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85), the Jiri-Tipaimukh road under the NEC project was started. The length of this road is 99 kms. The opening up of this road has greatly helped the villagers who depended on Tuiruong rive so far in their transportation. This is the only road in this area for transport and communications of the village inhabiting the Barak valley and the adjoining areas where the Hmar constitute a sizeable population.

With the advancement of communication which is essential for the success of infrastructure development. Development of human resources and productive has greatly increased. This has made the people adjust themselves to the new tempo of life. Villagers are now gradually losing their sentimental attachment of their land and villages; rural urban migration takes place in large numbers in quest of a better life which has also meant the possibility of vertical mobility of a Hmar who could ever thought of it in the pre-technological days.

The traditional housing pattern of the Hmar is changing due to modernization. The Hmar people living in and around Churachandpur and Imphal are going for modern housing and non-traditional mode of living. The house pattern underwent changes as compared to their traditional patterns with no ventilation, which was stuffy with dark room without separate kitchen, dining room and hardly for bedroom. The presence of fowls in the verandah and the pigs and cows under the floor gives the house an unwholesome smell. With the process of modernization, houses build have lighted rooms, ventilated with more
than two main doors and several windows. Bricks, C.I.sheets, cement, window-glasses and buying and selling of land for house construction are going on progressively. The trend is towards building houses of wooden on, cement concrete pillars on basement with corrugated sheets roofing. The design of houses so built are modern with a verandah in the front. The sitting and living rooms are separated from the kitchen.

Hmar society in general were practically unacquainted with hygienic ways of living before the introduction of education in 1910. With the introduction of modern education, the educated young man and women became flexible to retain the enduring elements of materials and non- material culture and to eliminate that which becomes old. As such, attention was paid to the prevailing unhygienic conditions of the Hmar way of living. Today, houses are provided with attached sanitary latrines and bathrooms. In between the drawing room and living room there is a dinning room where breakfast, lunch and dinner are served. Use of modern furniture and utensils are becoming part and parcel of the housing equipments. However, majority of the Hmar population in the Tipaimukh sub-division are still adhering to their traditional pattern of housing system and mode of living due to economic backwardness and financial strain.

The introduction of formal education among the Hmar people have a far-reaching impact in their mental outlook. In the initial period, the newly converts were the most educated people as Christians were the forerunner in getting western education. As such, the western-educated group took the Westerner as models intended to become pro-western in outlook and attitude. The most discernible are the changes in clothing patterns; use of skirts, sport-shirts, trousers, pants etc, by young men and girls and tailored blouses of varying a sleave lengths by young ladies are very common. Before the advent of Christianity a Hmar had only one dress which he wore everyday. With the process of christianization, a slight development was effecting by getting one more dress in addition to the existing one; commonly known as ‘chawlzi zaku’ meaning shirt worn only on Sunday. Use of ceremonial and traditional dresses especially for men are out of Hmar modern fashion; wearing of ‘Hren-Pereng’ (loin cloth around the waist) by the male is completely discarded. Hairstyle too have changed a great deal. Thus dresses are perhaps an area where fast change is witnessed among the Hmar people.
In the early period, due to economic backwardness, sudden change could not take place especially during the colonial rule. However, in the present society, there is no hesitation on the part of the people to dress themselves on the model of the latest pattern. Coming of cable T.V. and music video has made quite an impact on the Hmar youths. Jeans and T-shirts of the latest trend from across the border town of Moreh-Tamu (Indo-Burma) has ushered in a fashion trend and dresses, which, specially among the females have changed unrecognizably. Today, unless enquiries are made it is not possible to identify a Hmar women by her dresses specially in the Imphal valley.

In recent years, seminars and conference have been conducted that have considered the importance of the preservation and usage of the colourful Hmar traditional attires. The people, specially the new generation need more education in this respect. Unless this is not done a total destruction of Hmar traditional dresses and costumes is inevitable and the Hmar will lose all sense of traditional identity.

SUMMARY:

In recent times, more and more attention has been given by the social scientists to the problems of social change. In the field of sociology, a large number of studies have been devoted to social change. It is now universally accepted that social structures are not that stable or closely integrated as to defy change for all time to come. The contemporary process of social change is basically different from the traditional form (up to the early phase of the British rule in India). Most changes have now ceased to be segmental; they have become organic. This is so as the structural autonomy of the sub-system is now slowly breaking down with the erosion of the traditional structural insularity. This take place following various institutional changes in society which effect all other systems and activate most of its segments of participation in a wider nation scene.

Till the advent of British administration in the hitherto undefined Hmar inhabited hill towards the end of the 19th century A.D., and in particular, the introduction of Christianity in they year 1910, the socio-cultural life of the Hmar were relatively unaffected, away from the hustle and din of the modern world civilization. Moreover, the geographical limitation resulted in the prolonged secluded life of this simple and honest people. However, the expansion of colonial rule which was immediately followed by the spread of Christianity and formal education brought about structural changes in a traditional Hmar society. Moreover,
the Government of India, after independence came out with positive programme and human approach to help this isolate tribal community from a remote part of the country come up to the level of the comparatively more developed areas. The very framing of the Constitution was guided by the noble ideas of social equality and social justice. Scientific and technological development, urbanization on a vast scale, the development of rapid modes of transport and communication, the Government emphasis on special provision for the tribals in education, job reservation and etc.; all these developments have necessitated a transformation of the Hmar tribal community from the old to the new modern life.

With their contact with the outside world, a new set of values are merging for the society in which the old order is yielding, making rooms for a new. Their way of life, a hundred years ago, had no variation, even for generations until they came into contact with the outside power and for that matter, the British. In recent years there have been tremendous changes and many features of Hmar life have practically disappeared. These social and cultural changes are clearly noticeable in their attitude to life and the world. There are clear from their present day socio-economic life, religious persuasions of belief, dress and family life, to mention only a few of the host of other things.

For centuries, the Hmar people have lived in a constant state of inter-tribal and inter-village way; they have had a long history or crisis and anxiety. When a Hmar killed the enemy, he would chop off the head and carry it home in his bag as a trophy(Pakhuongte 1983:15). Women and children could not go hither and thither without an escort and the mists of fear hung heavily above the workers in the agricultural fields. However, under the colonial rule coupled with the spread of Christianity, the traditional practice of inter-tribal and inter-village war and the ghastly act of head-hunting were completely eliminated from the Hmar tribe. Under the colonial administration, whenever the offenders were captured they were severely punished after sending to exile or executed. The Hmar people began to learnt that killing of a person was punishable even by execution. However, it was Christianity that played the most effective role in the gradual and final extinction of the practice of inculcating the idea to the people that head-hunting and other forms of bloody feuds were a sin against God. The rapid spread of Christianity with the backing from colonial authorities thus led to the disappearance of head-hunting the ghastly type of social evil which had profoundly influenced the subsequent history of the people.
Another important development that followed the British rule was the gradual weakening of the position and the powers of the traditional leaders under the chiefs. The traditional leaders, specially the Chiefs and their Counsellors were effectively used against their own people for holding and administering the hill territory as they collaborated with the colonial authorities in exploiting their subjects by depriving them of the fruits of their labours and production through various means such as the infamous ‘Busung-Sadar’ tax, Pothang system, etc.,. In the meantime, a movement against the Chief under the Mizo Union gained momentum in every village which the people from all walks of life joined the movement enthusiastically. The anti-chiefs’ movement even led to the burning of houses and granaries belonging to the chiefs and their authority members. The moral basis of leadership was thus more or less destroyed and the leaders tended to lose sight of their obligations to the society for the privileges they received from the colonial rulers. Moreover, the emergence of new education groups giving rise to a new set of leaders were all out to eradicate all forms of traditionalism. Thus, the traditional leaders were slowly and gradually pushed out of their traditional status until their traditional powers were crushed and chiefship was legally abolished with the introduction of Manipur Village Authority Act of 1956. Moreover, the introduction of democratic decentralization and adult franchise, have in most cases broken down the traditional local self-government and have altered the pattern of authority.

Although legally dethroned, the institution of chiefships which took deep roots in the society are still accepted as legitimate in the eyes of a large section of the people, and in fact, they continued to function as ex-officio Chairman in the council of Village Authority interpreting and administering traditional laws and customs. Hence, complete abolition of chiefships is not possible because of its value as a symbol of established authority and its ritual function as judge in such matters like local dispute over land, marriage, divorce, etc. Side by side with apparent change in the administrative structure, we have also another interesting point about the Hmar society that continuity is very closely interwoven with change and we find an interesting systematic inter-action of traditional chief and modern administration in the Hmar Village administration till today.

The abolition of slavery (Bawi) was a welcome development of colonial rule. The question of bawi became controversial when Dr. Peter Frazer reminded the district authorities that the bawi system as practiced in the erstwhile Lushai hill was no better than the slavery which had been abolished by the Slavery Abolition Act, 1833 by the British
Government. The British Parliament then discussed the problem and finally passed the matter in favour of the abolition of bawiship in 1927. The disappearance of bawi among the Hmar people was also due to the gradual growth of public consciousness brought by the sincere efforts of the missionaries to carry out ethical demands of Christian faith on the one hand and the gradual weakening of Chieftainships on the other.

The changed attitudes of the people due to the introduction of formal education brought about the end of youth dormitory known as ‘ZAWLBUK’, the most important institution which served as socializing agent in the traditional Hmar society. The spread of formal education effected a confrontation with the system of Zawlbuk because this old system was primary center of learning for all young men in the village. Thus, the Zawlbuk fell a victim to modern civilization because of the shifting of the center of activities from Zawlbuk to modern schools and association of various organizations such as the Hmar Students’ Association, and etc. It may be admitted that the Hmar tribal philosophy of life ‘TLAWMNGAINA’ which exerts a very strong influenced upon the earlier Hmar life slowly faded away among the so called Hmar modern life.

In the course of contact and intermixing with the agencies of change, the Hmar people gradually realized that some existing indigenous social practices were antagonistic to modern civilized way of living, and therefore, they slowly began to give up those ill practices of the indigenous Hmar people.

The Hmar were animists in their indigenous period. Their animistic faith and belief made them extremely superstitious with bloody sacrifices with a costly feast for the benefit of life after death.

With the advent of Christianity, the morbid fears or phobia that grew out of their ignorance and animistic belief causing them to perform many ritualistic offerings have gradually disappeared. The practices of offering food and other to propitiate the spirit of the death and the costly feast for securing a right place in their life-after-death were totally given up. Instead, eternal life as outlined in the Christianity doctrine replaced their assumption of paradise (Pielral/Vanram) of their old religion. Moreover, with conversion, the Church was organized which led to the gradual disappearance of the traditional village priests and also,
led to the observation of various Christian events such as Christmas, Palm-Sunday, Good-Friday, Eastern-Sunday, etc.

The introduction of formal education by Christian missionaries, inspired by the zeal of spreading the gospel became the most important agency is spreading education to the people in the pre-Independent period. The Hmar oral tradition got enriched by written expression with the introduction of Roman scripts by the missionaries. Christianity has also brought a new world-view to the people whose tribal world-view was limited to a clan, village or at the most to a particular area. The missionaries with their evangelical task also took steps for social reformation by prohibiting consumption of liquor (Zu) as a common drink since liquor consumption was very closely likened with the animistic sacrifices and other Hmar social life in the days of yore. With the prohibition of Zu as a common drink which also sucked the agricultural surplus products such as rice, corn, etc, in Zu brewing, a considerable amount of rice and corn has now turned into regular food for the family, thus improving the economic growth of the community. Today the Hmar people found Thingpui (tea) as a substitution to Zu, and offering Thingpui to the guest and visitors has become the social habit of the Hmar people.

Besides changes occurring in the Hmar social system by way of abolition of the indigenous practices, there are also changes through modification in the form of abolitions, additions and replacements in some of the existing social phenomena.

Owing to the Hmars’ adoption of Christianity, its faith and belief, the Hmar marriage system has gone a change in such a way that it had become a mixture of traditional and Christian method. In the days of yore, Hmar marriage was perfumed with a series of rites and ceremonies and offerings of sacrifices to both evil and the good spirits by the village priest (Thiempu). Today, after conversion to Christianity, a Hmar marriage is conducted in the Church by its elders like the Reverend Pastors, etc, and marriage tie is treated as a permanent, intrinsic bond between a man and a women which never dissolves according to the Bible code of conduct. The part once played by liquor during negotiation and on the wedding day has been abolished and is now replaced by a simple marriage-feast. Wedding dresses is also Western regalia although the bride, in some cases wear traditional shawls (Puon). Presents and gifts are now an addition to the institution of Hmar Christian marriage. However, the role of mediators (Palais) in the bride-price negotiations since time
immemorial are the pre-requisites before anything is done in the Church. Although the process of modernization has penetrated deep into the social system of Hmar life, the forces of modernization could not totally win over the age-old system of the society; and as a result, the Hmar people of Manipur have also retained even today many important elements of their past life. Thus, it may be said that no Christian-marriage can take place without following the traditional formalities even today.

In the pre-Christian period, the Hmar people did not believed that they could be cured of sickness or diseases by any means other than sacrifices performed by the village priest since it was their belief that sickness or diseases was closely associated with powers of a spirit or a wizard. In order to overcome the horrible condition of people’s health the Christian missionaries used to give them medicines and took up the dual function of education and medical care. They established hospitals and made them improve their mental and physical health. Care of sickness, simple hygiene and ‘First-Aid’ are included in their education curriculum. Thus, due to the initiative taken by the missionaries in the field of health care couple with modern medicines, today, the Hmar have given up their age-old traditional practice of curing diseases by observing sacrificical rituals and are inclined to the use of modern medicines for any sort of diseases. However, in some Hmar remote areas of Tipaimukh region, perhaps due to non-availability of modern medicines and physicians couple with their ignorance, the traditional method of curing diseases, be it goiter or stomach ache, fever or cancer, by branding with a hot iron to the patient is still practices.

Christianity has a far reaching impact on Hmar culture and tradition. Within a few years of Christianization many Hmar people embraced the new religion. As a result, there occurred misunderstandings between the converts Christian and the ancient traditionalist at certain levels. The traditional lovers blamed the missionaries for undermining culture and rejecting old values. In contrast the missionaries and the new converts felt that most of the cultural traditions of the early Hmar were profusely connected with old religious practices and pagan revelry. As a result, the newly converts Christians were strongly discouraged to participate and indulge in any cultural festival as they thought such activities would hold them and pull them back to their old pagan ways. It should be admitted that the missionaries had some weakness. They thought every ancient culture was devilish with no exception. This was due to their inability to study the meaning and value system behind Hmar cultural behaviour.
It should be bear in mind that even the weakest of our culture expression and elements can be used of God to bring glory to Him (John S Mbiti, 1979:185). According to John S. Mbiti, evangelism has two dimensions; the human effort, and the divine superintendence. On the human level, evangelism must be related to the culture of the people concerned. Therefore, no cultural elements should be left out if it can be used in evangelism and for the nurture of the people of God. The Church should not pose as a spiritual police of people’s cultural life, since the church itself is made up of sinful man, women and children, and its own history is not without fault (John S Mbiti, 1979:190). In fact, there is no harm in cultural activities if they are merely done with the spirit of demonstration and not actual indulgence or adherence to the old religion since co-existence and adjustment bring development either in form or in bringing toto or partial change due to assimilation and adaptation in different factors according to the demands of time. Thus, in the words of Ruolneikhum Pakhuongte (1983:67) “Christianity does not have to destroy unnecessarily of people’s cultural and traditions experience among the Hmar people shows that Christianity grow faster if it flows along the cultural pattern and traditions of the people”. However, the writer is of the view that cultural revival does not mean the revival of the old traditions in its entirely. Adopting cultures for the benefit and all round development of the society and rejecting those which are no more relevant is only rational. We need to be realistic while reviving traditional culture. Today, one cannot imagine going about his or her work in the office with traditional attires and costume. Times have changed and the Hmar society cannot remain isolate. However, this does not mean that we go about imitating others’ culture without knowing its imports and values. No society minds in borrowing the good way of life from others’ culture. Hence, Christian missionaries in the early days need not be accused of being a cultural imperialist. The researcher is of the opinion that it is not necessary to cling to one’s traditional culture unless they are beneficial to the society. It is now significant that the Hmar are changing fast towards a better society. The last few years have witnessed a revival of Hmar culture. Various traditional festivals and dances which the early Christian leaders thought to be against Christian ethics are no longer considered to be so; they are in fact beginning to feel that there is less conflict between yesterday and today than they had once feared. Culturally today, they are observed to have attained certain degree of refinement, be it in their traditional festivals and dances, food habits, dress, thoughts, outlooks including their material life are all modern oriented.
Social change is also brought about to a great extent by changes in economy of the Hmar people. Hmar economy during the pre-British rule was not remarkable. Shifting cultivation was practically the only mode of cultivation, simply to meet the bare necessities of the people’s daily needs. The British colonization and consequent modernization resulted in the emergence of cash economy and set in motion the process of modernization. Jhuming continues to be the main occupation of the Hmar people, particularly in the Tipaimukh area, but it gradually lost its traditional importance as a means of basic subsistence, source of wealth and prestigious position in the society. In the present context jhum cultivation also lost its important as the locus of village solidarity. There are other difficulty faced by the local farmers in the form of poor communication and marketing facilities, in and outside the State. Earlier, the Hmar people in the Tipaimukh area marketed agricultural and horticultural products such as ginger, chilli, cotton, orange and pineapple in Barak Valley in Assam and Churachandpur in Manipur with a little success. However, in the present circumstances, it is seen that the prices realized for agricultural and horticultural products of the small producers do not even cover the cost of production due to lack of good communication system and adequate marketing facilities.

It is a fact that during the flash season of harvest, the process of agricultural and horticultural products in the market drop to such low levels, that very often the producers cannot even meet their transportation costs. This problems is all the more accentuated in the Tipaimukh sub-division owing to the combined operation of the difficulties of transportation and the difficulties experienced from the absence of marketing facilities. The need of the hour, therefore, is the development of infrastructure to provide marketing facilities to the farmers.

The ultimate aim of the society is economic development with social justice. Without economic development, poverty cannot be reduced; and without adequate investment in social sectors particularly with respect to the backward areas in the country and the backward sections of the population, real economic development cannot take place. Economic growth is possible, only when there are fundamental changes in the social structure as well as in the personality of people involved. The social structure should be flexible, giving scope for social mobility and for increase in the size of the middle class; there must also be alternations in the personality structure to enable an individual to use the opportunity provided by the flexible of the social structure; the individual must be rational, time conscious, future
oriented, he must have strong motivation to make full use of his ability and the opportunity; he must have a sense of responsibility and commitment to work; he must utilise his leisure to improve his education and training. It is only when there is a change in the social structure and the personality of the people that there can be real economic growth. Each individual will be able to contribute to the economic growth to the full extent that he is capable of, by his ability, aptitude and training (Kuppuswamy 1972:420).

As a matter of fact, the Government of India has been pouring crores of rupees to improve the overall socio-economic condition of the tribals in particular, but the winds of change that blows across the Hmar inhabitant areas had failed to change the life pattern of the people, to the extent it should have done and the aim of bringing about revolutionary changes in their socio-economic life has remained unfulfilled. However, one cannot reasonably blame the Government for all the mess. Most of the benefits from the Government do not reach the people for whom these are intended due to the fact that their simplicity and sincerity makes them prone to being cheated by the officials, who take pride in making money at the cost of their poor and helpless people. As such, the need of the hour is a change of heart and a sense of responsibility of our officials and leaders towards the people.

In the political sphere, the politics of Chieftainship and village administration existed in the truest sense in the Hmar society until the advent of the British rule. With the introduction of colonial rule, a few administrative changes were brought in the traditional socio-political life. The traditional leader were used by the British as their agents of administering the hill territory and thereby integrating the traditional ruling elites into the colonial system by giving them some local administrative responsibilities in the village courts. The introduction of Pothang system (Pothang Bekari and Pothang Senkai), imposition of the Hill House tax and the Busung-Sadar tax payable to the chiefs, all these led to the emergence of a new mobilizing force against the chief and his council members.

It was at this time that the spirit of the ‘Mizo Union’ (the first political party formed in the erstwhile Lushai hills – 9th April, 1946) movement swept over the entire population of the Hmar area within and outside Manipur, for, the Mizo Union stood for abolition of Chiefships and the eradication of traditional inequality, apart from the demand for Lushai hills autonomous districts. Since the Hmar people has a close affinity with the Lushai (Mizos) and also developed a ‘brotherhood’ feeling with them, the Hmar were seen attracted
by the Mizo Union and finally formed a separate division of the Union in Manipur on the 11th of October, 1947. Moreover. The Hmar people of Manipur also joined the Mizo Union with objective of emerging the Hmar inhabited areas of south-west Manipur with the proposed Lushai Hills Autonomous District.

While the Mizo Union movement was going on in full swing in Manipur among the Hmar, unfortunately, the Mizo Union leaders in the Lushai hills accepted the Autonomous Hill District plan of the Government of India without the inclusion of Hmar inhabited areas contiguous to the Lushai hills districts. This had a far reaching impact in the socio-political life of the Hmar in Manipur which gradually gave rise to the emergence of ethnic and identity consciousness on the political front and the consequent development of the so called modern politics among the Hmar people.

The Hmar people withdrew themselves from their association with the Mizo Union which ultimately led to the formation of Hmar National Union (HNU), stressing cultural and ethnic variation as political tool. The commoners were thus, engulfed with the new ethos of ethnic based political consciousness. The Hmar National Union, with emphasis on preservation of ethnic identity and group solidarity drew support from all corners soon after its inception in 1958, giving birth to Hmar nationalism and their political movements, and since then it holds the key to Hmar politics cutting across state boundaries. However, it may be said that today, immature new-leaders from village level to state level are looking upon everything from political angle, and though it is admitted, political issues unless healthy are, in fact, detrimental to the growth of healthy society.

It is true that the reformers relieved the people of many ills and evils, but their new ways and rules unconsciously sometime acted as disintegration forces. The rapid change in the Hmar society brought about by the various factors has a profound effect on the socio-cultural life of the people. The indigenous customs and practices are too fast disappearing from the society without any replacement set in. People are trying hard to adjust themselves to the new order of the day where social obligations and norms are hardly observed. The process of modernization has exposed them to a more complicated and competitive world order thus bringing about social instability. The norms of the traditional Hmar society are being shattered every day by the onslaught of modernization and the so called modern leaders of the society are not in a position to put forward suitable alternatives. Various
traditional customs and practices are given up in the name of Christianity and modern education, while Christian values and education have not yet succeeded in shaping the core of value or principle, thus bringing about social imbalances. Due to this, differences of opinion have arisen among the Hmar Christians bringing harms to the good image of the church. Division among the Hmar is an inevitable outcome. As a result, there are around fourteen (14) different local Christian religious divisions among the Hmar community. The difference among the various religious groups are ‘not only in minor details but in the core of the matter’ (Zarzolien, 1987:323) Walter Chantry (1980:16) has shown us how far modern changes are serious enough to grieve the spirit and yield empty nets. He has said that they are dangerous enough to misguide souls for eternity.

In the changed circumstance, the primary kinship structure, the kinship relationships including cooperation among the kin groups and clan ties are observed to have been changing to a certain extent owing to dispersal of this members in different fields and places because of increasing interaction with the larger society. There were other factors, namely inter-tribal feuds or inter-village feuds and shifting cultivations, which combined with clan ties to bring about a greater degree of integration in the traditional social system. The weakening of clan ties, disappearance of inter-tribal warfare, a considerable reduction in the value of shifting cultivation and increasing economic ties with outside agencies, all these have contributed to the appearance of a different trend’ the tribes is now loosely attached to kinship grouping.

Today, a man may easily transfer his loyalty from his own mother’s brother or father’s sister to a distant clansman, since personal ties built up by common residence or mutual services and gifts count far more than strict genealogical relationship. Irregular marriage signify that choice now shapes individual behaviour and conditions its activities. Kinship today serves only pure emotional and sentimental bonds.

In the Hmar traditional socio-economic life, the status of women was quite a neglected one. The introduction of formal education and subsequently the establishment of higher educational institutions have strengthened their socio-economic pursuit with better understanding and showing their outward attitudes towards change. Today educated women are becoming aware of the equality as an increasingly rationalized structure of administration and by educational institutions have strengthened their socio-economic pursuits with better
the widening opportunities for women becoming economically independent. Their attitudes and values are thus, increasingly becoming coloured by the equalitarian ethos.

Thus, changes began to bite deeply into many areas of Hmar life. In some sectors it occurred dramatically, in others very slowly, still other remained unchanged. In fact, recognition of the significance and diversity of the interactive relationship of the forces of stability and change in the tribal Hmar society has become very important today. Both continuity and change exists. There is also either modernization of indigenous culture or indigenization of modernity in Hmar society. Infact, the process of synthesis between traditions and modernity is underway.