

# **Cultural World of Women in Angami Naga Society**

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**By**

**VITSOU YANO**

**Supervised by**

**PROF. REKHA PANDE**



**CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD**

**(P.O) CENTRAL UNIVERSITY, GACHIBOWLI**

**HYDERABAD- 500046**

**TELANGANA**

**INDIA**

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I **Vitsou Yano** hereby declare that this thesis entitled “*Cultural World Of Women in Angami Naga Society*” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Professor Rekha Pande** is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in parts or in full to this university or any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby decree that my thesis can be deposited in shodganga/ INFLIBNET.

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Prof. Rekha Pande

Supervisor

Prof. K. Suneetha Rani

Head, Centre for Women's Studies

Prof. Aloka Parasher Sen

Dean, School of Social Sciences

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## **CHAPTER - I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Women's Studies have emerged as one of the most important studies as it has provided its practitioners with a different way of looking at the society and the world. There is a need to look and study women's history and her culture from a different way that is from the women's point of view and from the time of traditional to the modern context. The Naga<sup>1</sup> women's history needs to unfold and bring out from the long sealed history to complete the history of the Nagas. The cultural difference of the Hills differentiates them from the rest of the plains, yet there is a huge gap of cultural differences among the Hills themselves. There is a distinctive cultural world of the Naga women, unlike the plains and even among them. The reconstruction of Naga history is needed as there has been an exclusion of women's history while writing Naga history.

This study aims to raise certain issues and questions concerning Naga women and the cultural world of traditional and modern Naga society<sup>2</sup>. Naga women have been denied presence in the reconstruction of Naga history and have been treated as non-historical-agent in its reconstruction in the twentieth century. In this male centric historical reconstruction and narration, women are merely mentioned as sharing equal status in the Naga society. This study attempts and problematises the place of Naga women in the cultural world of pre-colonial /pre- modern Naga society and the early colonial / modern Naga society. This study aims to focus on Angami women and their participation in education, weaving, religion and food in different periods of Angami Naga history.



Culture is the way of life of the people. It may be defined as the social heritage of the community, whereby the artifacts behavior and customs created by the people in their ongoing activities of life conditions are transmitted from generation to generation. The concept of Culture has different connotations in different centuries. With its emergence in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, it connotes a process of cultivation or improvement in agriculture<sup>3</sup>. The early and mid- nineteenth century came to be referred as a betterment or refinement of individuals through education and to a universal human capacity. But by the twentieth century, “culture” emerged as a concept central to anthropology, which encompasses all human phenomena.

Culture has been defined by many people with different ideas where there have been a lot of debates over it. Raymond Williams defines culture as a whole way of life, as ordinary and more closely linked with everyday life<sup>4</sup>. Ralph Linton in his book *The Cultural Background of Personality* defines culture as, “the total way of life of any society, not simply to those parts of this way which the society regards as higher or more desirable”<sup>5</sup>. He further states that no matter how small or simple the society may be, every society has a culture and every human cultured. Culture also refers to an innumerable aspect of life<sup>6</sup>. It also includes values, beliefs, and rules of conduct, political and religious institutions. Carol and Melvin ember defines that “culture encompasses the learned behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that are characteristic of a particular society or population”<sup>7</sup>. According to Chris Jenks culture is regarded as “the whole way of lives of people”<sup>8</sup>.

Through the different cultural activities in the society, Naga women have been carrying the identity of the Nagas in various walks of life from generation to generation. In any

period, in a given historical society, its arts, skills, habits, and its growth women have different, yet equal contributions as men despite constant subjection of men. Naga women and her cultural world had been veiled throughout history. Women's cultural values, beliefs, and their role in different institution need to be mentioned and reconstruct to have a complete history of the Nagas.

Tribal societies are usually considered to be an equal society where women enjoy equal rights with men. But this preconceived notion of tribal women needs to be erased as the tribal women are no far better than the rest of women in India. Tribal women in Northeast India or the Naga women is seen as having a high status, but looking at the Naga society in practice and through this study one finds that the tribal women have no better status than the rest of women in India. This study takes Angami Naga women as the main agent in history making in the pre colonial and in the transition period.

Mystery and obscurity surrounds the origin and other details of the early lives of the Nagas. These tribes though called 'Nagas' defy a common nomenclature. But basing on their art, material culture, language, tone, etc., many scholars theorized with their different views. Some scholars theorize that the Nagas have some link with Indonesia and Malaysia, belonging to the Tibeto-Burma family. The history of Naga is a fusion of blood and races among the various tribes. The Nagas, thus, are believed to have certain unique custom, unique ways of living and unique ideas which no other tribes exhibit.

Nagas comprise of more than fifteen tribes inhabiting the Naga Hills, in some neighboring region in the North east part of India and even in the neighboring country like Burma (Myanmar). Though held from a same region in the Naga Hills, these tribes

have differences and unique cultural aspects to exhibit and contribute to others and also among themselves.

Among the many tribes of Nagas, the present work focus on the Angami tribe. Basing on the traditional stories the Angami tribe came from Burma via Khezhakenoma village in the southern part of the state and then later migrated to north – westward to the present region i.e. Kohima area<sup>9</sup>. The Angamis are known to themselves as the “*Tenyimia*”<sup>10</sup> and “Angami” by others. The word *Tenyimia* came from the word “*Tenyi*” means “fore-fathers” and “*mia*” means “people”. The Angamis are further divided into four sub-division among themselves, namely the Northern, Southern, Western and ‘*Chakhro*’.

Among the Naga tribes, the Angamis have a rigid patriarchal family system. The father being the head of the family makes all the decisions where the mother has no voice on any issues. The male members of the society enjoy all the privileges and exercise their power over women. Though women work from morning till night, men were considered to work more and harder than women. The patriarchal family system holds a strong grip where women have no say in any issues or right. The contribution of women in Angami society has made a remarkable impact in the society since the traditional time yet, their place is invisible.

The coming of modernity with Christianity has brought a change in the ethos (characteristic spirit of culture) of tribal cultures which automatically led to a change in the lives of the women in particular. The Naga history need to be reconstructed as the historical writings has been an incomplete history because of the exclusion of women’s

history. This study thus placed women in the debate as a main theme where women have been an important figure in the society since the traditional period.

This study not only confines to women in the pre-colonial period but also tries to place women in the transition period, especially focusing on the coming of Christianity and modern education. Women of the Angami tribe are studied separately along with the different cultural aspects from other tribes of the Nagas. This study draws from the feminist tradition of subjecting history writing to critical, analytical project and placing women at the center of history.

#### **Area and period of study:**

Nagas comprise of more than fifteen tribes, thus it would be difficult to do intensive study of every tribe for this research. Though the Nagas are viewed to have a common social, political, economy, religion, etc., inwardly and practically they have different ways of life in every aspect. This study focuses on Angami tribe inhabiting in and around the Kohima district in the northwestward of present Nagaland inhabiting the north east of the state.

Despite the knowledge of the difficulties involved in the historical research of a community during its preliterate period, this research deals with period from pre-Colonial or pre modern to the Colonial or the modern period. The pre-colonial Naga society is basically a preliterate society, thereby the need to depend on oral tradition. Moreover, there is also the problem with the Periodization of the history of the Nagas. Since there is no proper written record for the Nagas until the last century, it is difficult to

have a clear demarcation or a clear cut distinction between one period to the other, and we cannot divide the periods as Indian or western history. The western or Indian Periodization of history as traditional, ancient, medieval and modern does not fit with the Periodization of Naga history.

Until the coming of the outsiders to the Naga Hills, the Nagas have no written record and this period is termed as a pre- literate society. This period can also be termed as pre- colonial or pre modern period. The coming of the foreigners to the Naga Hills in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century has added a different phase in the history of the Nagas. The 19<sup>th</sup> century can be called as a colonial period. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnesses the coming of the British administrators and anthropologies, which marked a turning point in the history of the Nagas. The preliterate society of the Nagas does not tally with the Ancient period of the Indian Periodization, or the colonial period with the medieval period. It is difficult to bring in the Periodization of the Naga History with the Periodization of Indian history due to their differences in civilizations. Therefore Naga history can only be studied and periodized as pre- colonial / pre- modern, colonial / modern and post- colonial period. This research basically deals with women in the pre colonial period and its transition to colonial.

**Objectives:**

- To critically analyze and understand the historical background of the role and status of Angami Naga women.
- Study the contribution and role played by Angami women in different periods with specific reference to food, weaving, religion, and education.

- To understand the role of Angami women and their response to the changing cultural trends due to the coming of the outsiders to this region.
- To understand whether the new trend century benefited the status and role of women.
- Understand Naga women as the “carrier of identity” and cultural values.

### **Methodology:**

The research relies on feminist methodology, ethno historical and historical anthropology. The study is based both on primary and secondary source. The method focuses on the correlation between the primary and secondary sources. For the early women’s history, it depends on the oral tradition and also by taking textual reading on cross cultural counters which complements the case study to some extent. For the study, interviews and interactions were done with some elderly people of the society. Folk songs and Folktales were studied and relied on to understand better about the subject. Archival materials such as the tour diaries and the early work of the Administrators were collected from the museums and libraries. This study makes use of early colonial anthropological monographs and travelers’ accounts and oral traditions of the Nagas to reconstruct the history of the Nagas.

### **Sources:**

The sources for this study include literary source and tradition embedded in the memory in the form of songs and folktales. Since Nagas do not have a written record till the last century, the source had been based mainly on the works of the British administrators, archaeological works, missionaries’ writings, journals, articles, and some of the early

works on the Nagas by some scholars. Like the other tribal societies the Nagas beyond mist of time had preserved and handed down their history, culture and customs from one generation to the next in the form of folktales, songs and genealogies, sometimes calling upon astonishing feats of memory. The study of Naga history in general need to rely on the oral tradition, archaeological sources, archival sources, foreign accounts, existing literature and unutilized and underutilized literature from neighboring regions namely the Ahoms Buranji, Royal Chronicles of Manipur and Tipperah Rajmala.

### **Problem of the study.**

This study tries to problematise the place and identity of women in Naga society. From the traditional times, women in Naga society have been an essential part in history making, but their remarkable work has been denied and excluded in writing the history of the Nagas in this male centric society. The identity of women in Naga society needs to be established. Though women in Naga society have contributed a lot and even more in all the walks of life, their place in society remains the same unrecognized by the society in general. The limitation of this study is that there is a scanty source for the study of women's history.

### **Review of literature:**

Until the coming of the American missionaries and the British administrators, the history of the Nagas has no written records. The history of Nagas has been a neglected area and been sealed to the outside world for a long time. By the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were some works on Nagas but mostly anthropological and

sociological in nature. But these few early works focus on political activity of men and knowingly or unknowingly the activity of women was excluded. Looking at the historical writings of northeast women or for that matter Naga women, one will find hardly any books or work done on women in the pre- colonial period. There is a vast exclusion of women's history while writing the history of the Nagas. This part of the chapter reviews the available works done on women to help in the reconstruction of women's history. Views of various Historians, writers, anthropologies and personalities are studied. Books, journals, documents, articles, Diaries, etc., talking about culture, religion, oral history, and of women's history are reviewed.

The trends of writing on the Northeast region began with the work of Edward Gait, '*A history of Assam*' (1905). Though this book focus on the history of Assam history, it also mentioned about the Naga Hills and also the regions under the Assam in the colonial period. In 1951, S.K. Bhuyan wrote on '*Assam relation with the Britishers*', which ultimately paved the way for many researchers to work in this region.

Some early remarkable works on Nagas were done by J. P. Mills, W. C. Smith, J. H. Hutton. Works done by them are '*The Rengma Nagas*' (1937), '*The Angami Nagas*' (1921), '*The Lotha Nagas*' (1922), '*The Sema Nagas*' (1921), '*The Ao Nagas*' (1926), and '*The Ao-Naga Tribes of Assam*' (1925). Another set of scholars who wrote on Nagas were the anthropologists like, Furer Haimendorf and Verrier Elwin with their books, *The Nagas* (1987), *The Konyak Nagas; an Indian frontier tribe* (1969), *The Naked Nagas* (1939), *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (1969), etc.,



When we looked into some of the early works on Nagas we find the works of Hutton, Haimendorf, Mills, Smith, Verrier Elwin, etc remarkable for ushering the writing of Naga history. Most of their writings were mainly on society and on different tribes of the Nagas, and not wholly on women's issue. But from all these early works of the anthropologist and administrators a detailed study has been done to understand better about the women in the early period of time. For instance like Smith, his work is important as he discusses about the certain roles of women folk. J. P. Mills talks about the Position of women in society, describing the different role of women in domestic life. 'The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century' an edited book and introduction given by Verrier Elwin (1969) had been much help for the study. Various anthropologists, administrators and writers articles were combined in this book, like John Butler, W. Robinson, A.J. Moffats Mills, A Mackenzie, S.E. Peal, R. B Pemberton, Johnston, etc.

The review of the study is divided into three different parts. The first part is the works of the early and the so called foreign writers, Administrators and Anthropologist, such the works of J. H. Hutton, M. M. Clark, Furer Haimendorf, Julian Jacobs, Frederick S Downs, A. J. Moffats, etc. The second part is the work by the Indian writer like Renu Suri. Thirdly the works done by the Naga writers, scholars and missionaries on Nagas like Aphuno Chase Roy, R. R. Shimray, Lucy Zehol, Kedise Pucho, etc.

One of the earliest works of the Angami Nagas was done by J.H. Hutton. J.H. Hutton in *The Angami Nagas* (1921) described about the various areas and spheres in the Angami Society. He not only summarized all previous knowledge of the tribes, but added a great deal to the original research. He mentioned about the domestic life, law and custom,

religion, folklore, language, etc., He also discussed about the cultural activities and religious practices of the Angami Nagas where women took part up to some extent. He gave a general overview of the early Angami Naga society and also mentioned some basic outward condition of women in relation with her surroundings. His main focus of this book was on the whole of the Angami society and not particularly on the women. Hutton agrees that Angami society, from the early period considered women as the lower sex like other Naga tribes. But though Angami women have low status, 'women are very strong folk'<sup>11</sup>. But here he did not mention about the strength of a woman and in which field, but he might be referring about the economic area because this was the only area that women were considered in the society.

While talking about the inheritance and customary law of the Angami Nagas, Hutton mentions that women were barred from inheriting property though a widow or divorcee could purchase and own land. He also talked about the remarriage of women and their important role in the family and also outside the family. He mentioned the position of women, but in some part he ignored women even to acknowledge them in their contribution to the social production and reproduction which remained relegated and marginalized. Though Hutton talks much on the society of the Angami Nagas as a whole he ignore much on the role of women in different areas of the society, but his writings will be referred in this study as these works offer us glimpses of women's position in Naga society.

M. M. Clark's *A Corner in India* (1907), talked about the various cultures and the various Naga tribes. She also discussed at length about the Naga women. During the head hunting

period the head of a woman was equally counted as important as the head of the man's and the long hair of the women were used for decoration. The work of a woman was considered to be the 'real work' as she did all the household works apart from the field works. She also says that the life of a Naga woman was hard.

When we look into '*The Naked Nagas*' (1939) by Furer Haimendorf, we see that the author gives a large account of the social life of the Nagas. He described about the custom of the Nagas, 'feast of Merit' and the different seasons and days about how the Nagas spent and called it. Women or the wife of the host during the feast of merit plays a very important role. Very proudly the host headed the procession with his wife. He also mentions that before a girl gets married she was not allowed to grow her hair long. He also mentions that there was no prostitution among the Nagas though their youth were full of amorous adventures. He talks about marriage in Naga society where women usually end up in a marriage with someone they know from before. The equality between girls and boys were to be counted in early Naga society. But it was not clear as to equality in what? The author failed to look into the male-oriented social institutions and practices.

Another work by J. H. Hutton is '*Diaries of two tours in the unadministered area east of the Naga Hills*' (1995). Hutton talked about his experience from his first tours in early 1923, and a second tour in October 1923 again. Apart from mentioning about how the society was, little was mentioned about women. He described about the hair style of the Naga women saying that only few women had well maintain hair and were dressed up in good form.

Julian Jacobs in his book *The Nagas: society, culture, and the colonial encounter* (1990) portrays Nagas in the colonial period. He tried to explain that the Nagas though are considered to be one group of people having same culture which differentiate them from the plains, yet they have cultural differences among themselves in many ways. He mentions the relationship between the 'hills' (referring to the Nagas) and the plains through marriage alliances and little in terms of political, economy, religious, etc.,. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the coming of the Britishers the history and culture of the Nagas came to be known to the outsiders and the distinctiveness among themselves in social organization and language. Morung an important institution among the Nagas varies from tribe to tribe. He talks about the importance of social organization, he stresses much on men folk and portray a low and the weak status of women in Naga society.

He mentions about the bride price among the Sema tribe during marriages. The feast was seen to be an important part of Naga life. Feast of Merit was never given by rich women, but by rich men to advance in social status. In the ritualistic world of the Nagas all most all the rituals are performed by the male members of the society. Ornaments are an important necessity among the every tribe of the Nagas. Women in some tribes have tattoos which symbolizes their status. This shows that though Nagas have no caste, but there is a different social status among them in the society. He also mentions that the eastern Angami (now the Chakhesang) erect pillar for women. Unmarried women are given more important than the married women. Though males monopolize rituals and political, women also took part in rituals in receiving heads during heat hunting period. Women play an important role there is an emphasis on male- female interdependence and cooperation. In the later part of this book he also mentions that without the cooperation of

women, men cannot achieve the social status. Very less has been mention about women and more of men's work even if he talks about the Nagas and their culture.

A.J Moffats mentioned that Angami women live with men without marriage and then goes to other men to live with. But one could not wholly agree with this as the Angami marriage has a social recognition in the society and it was only after marriage that couples were allowed to live together. J. Butler talks about the beauty of and Angami woman that their beauty does not last long as due to their heavy work, their face becomes wrinkled and they turn into an old woman at a very early stage.

Frederick S Downs (1996) in *The Christian Impact on the Status of Women in northeast India* bring out the historical problems before the coming of Christianity and the impact of Christianity on women. He tries to bring out the various historiographical problems while writing women's history and writing Northeast history. He emphasis largely on women's education and felt that the status of women had been improved to a large extend with the contribution of the Christians. He brings in the idea of the Christian feminist perspective that the evaluation is based on assumptions about what constitute 'low' and 'high' status. He gave a brief overview of the women's movement and missionary societies. Though he tried to study the whole of women's status and her role before and after the coming of Christianity with different perspectives, he focuses his study mainly on one particular region where readers find it difficult to understand properly as the Northeast itself constitute of many tribal having different ways and living standards. He strongly talks about the equality of men and women in the church at first, but he also argued again that the church itself is tightly patriarchal in nature. No doubt Christianity

tries to bring a better status and higher role among women, the church as an institution of Christianity has made a clear cut division. His focus on the Northeast women has narrowed down where he was referring more to one region only. Though there is a lot of other impact on women with the coming of Christianity, he talked only about education and not in the other sphere of women's lives.

*The Angami Nagas* by Renu Suri (2006) studies about the physical anthropology of the Angami Nagas. The author tries to present a comprehensive picture of some aspects of the Angamis, where she also compares the Angamis with the other tribes of the Nagas and other Mongolian people apart from Northeast India. Due to the lack of written record, she also admits that it is difficult to trace the origin of the Angamis. Apart from studying the physical anthropology of the people, she mentions about the village democratic form of structure where they are monogamous and patriarchal. The staple food for the Angamis is Zu, (rice beer) rice, boiled meat and boiled vegetables. While mentioning about the religion, she says that both Hindu and Christianity are present in Angami Naga society<sup>12</sup>. However, Hindu was never present in Angami Naga society<sup>13</sup>. She also mentions about the Morung i.e. 'Bachelors dormitory' where the female members are not allowed to enter Morung under any circumstances.

Aphuno Chase Roy (2004), in *Women in transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the present*, talked about the status and role of Angami Naga women in two different periods of time i.e. pre-modern and modern period. She analyses about Angami Naga women in traditional society, where women play an important role in family and society. The role and the status of a woman in the traditional society mainly in the family and in

societal role changed rapidly with the coming of the modern education and Christianity. The coming of modern education and Christianity gave a new role and new outlook in the society and in the church. She gave a brief overview at the beginning of church in Nagaland and its various churches with different names. The conversion, modernity and the changing status of Angami women in Modern period was strongly given and where all her ideas were focused around the church and family in making a history of Angami Naga Christianity. As far as the title of her book goes, she failed to discuss women in the other sphere of the society except in church and family. Knowing or unknowingly, she did not mention about women in other aspects after the coming of Christianity except girls' education and women in the Church. Her book only described as an evaluation and change in the Angami Naga Society particular in women's life and not with understanding the society from the historian's point of view.

R.R. Shimray (1985) in *Origin and culture of the Nagas* gives an overview of the entire social system of the Nagas along with the origin, culture and traditions. Until the coming of the white missionaries the Nagas were confined to their own closed world and sealed from the rest of the world with self contained social and community life. Each Naga village is a sovereign state and where it is a complete independent unit, be it in political, economy, religious, etc.,. Each village member strictly obeys the law as they all are the makers of the law. All the village administration, village chief, village elders was selected after the rituals, but no female members of the village are allowed to be the chief or head of the village. The Nagas were known to the outsiders as the 'head hunter'. He also mentioned that women do not go on this raid, but women's head is considered to be precious and more valuable, as they are always under the protection of men folk. The

crop seems to grow better after they bring in women's head. Feast of merit and gossip platform were known and common to all the Naga villages. While discussing about the community life of the Nagas, the writer mentioned little about the work of women folk. Agriculture is one of the things that all most all the festivals evolve. During any Naga festivals both boys and girls participate in singing and dancing. Rituals were done by women for opening of granaries after the harvest.

Shimray also mentioned about family and the role of women in Naga society where family is a social entity. The patriarchal family system does not allow women to inherit any ancestral and landed property. Women were engage in weaving, handicraft, growing vegetables, educating their children, rearing animals, etc. Apart from these works she also works in the fields along with the men. A woman is considered to be lucky if her first child is a girl as she can help her with work. During the head hunting period and marriage proposals women act as a mediator or ambassador. He mentions about the marriage system in Naga society where women with good weaving skills are looked for. Not every Naga tribes have the ladies dormitories unlike men. Competition and challenges are a common activity among the Naga youths, mainly for getting good bride. Dress and ornaments of the Nagas are colorful in nature and which is one of the medium of expressing of preserving their cultural identity. All most all the dresses were made by the women of every Naga villages. He also mentioned about the religious beliefs of the Nagas, democratic way of life and their classless society. Though he tries to mention each and every part of the cultural aspect of Nagas, he did fail to place women in many parts of the study where it was necessary. Yet, this book will be referred to understand more of the cultural world of Naga women.



Lucy Zehol (1998) in her edited book *Women in Naga Society*, gave a brief look into the status and role of women in different Naga tribes such as, Angami, Ao, Lotha, Sema, Rengma, Mao, Zeliangrong, Konyak, etc. And for which she felt the need to study the Naga society from the traditional to the modern context. She talked about the educational problem faced by the Naga women in general. Briefly the role of women in social, political, religious, economy, etc., before and after the arrival of American missionaries was discussed. Though there were certain liberties given to women in every tribe, women's status in the Naga society cannot be said to be very high for there were various constraints on their exercise of their rights. In the article on Angami women by Kelhou, she talks about the economic, social matters, religious matters, as in like property rights, occupation and livelihood, marriage and divorce, rituals, etc. Though all the aspect have been mention briefly, she did not mention clearly about the Angami women in the Traditional or the pre- colonial period. She gave a strongly mention about the prohibited thing on women, but very little stress on what women can contribute and what they have contributed to the society. While mentioning about the status and role of women as a daughter, wife, mother and sister, she gave a clear picture in the educational system and in her home. Apart from education and home did was not clear about the other sphere in the society especially before the coming of the Christianity and modern education. Though she talked on the whole of society she did not study into the dept on women's struggles, difficulty and her contribution to the society.

*Role of Naga women in development process* by Kedise Pucho (2006) brings out the analyses of the role and activities of Naga women in the field of education and rural development. He firstly talks about the traditional position of Naga women, where men

are the decision makers in all spheres of life. He discusses the role of women during the time of head hunting where the women folk perform some rituals. In all the family and social affairs women are prohibited from taking part as they are considered to be a bad omen for the whole society<sup>14</sup>. He also mentions about some taboos on women in Naga society. Women in traditional Naga society were not allowed to touch men's spears, dao and shields which are men domains.

Pucho describe about the coming of the American missionaries in Naga society with its impact on women's role. Education along with Christianity pours into the Naga society where it has left tremendous changes in the lives of the women. He also talks about the role of women in the development process of society and their empowerment through education. He also says that the progress of the society can be seen by the progress of the women in society.

### **Chapterization:**

The dissertation consists of seven chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion chapter.

**Chapter I** is the **Introduction**. The first part gives a brief introduction of the whole dissertation. It highlights the main objectives of the study, area of study, problems, methodology, sources, Periodization and the Chapterization for the study. The second part of the chapter is the review of literature. It includes the review of relevant books, journals, articles written by various historians and writers from Europe, India, Northeast

and Nagas, which talks about women and culture, religion, oral tradition, food etc, is reviewed

## **Chapter II - Historical overview of the Angami Nagas.**

In this chapter an overall overview of the Angami Nagas is given briefly dealing with the historical background of the Nagas in general. The later part discusses the women of Angami tribes in the pre colonial period. The Nagas social, political and religious institutions were clearly patriarchal in nature and as such pillars of patriarchal structures by which patriarchal ideology is disseminated and the patriarchal practices are perpetuated. Women, in Nagas society, were confined to position deemed as proper, private, and assigned works deemed as 'women'. The Nagas were to challenge patriarchal values only in the twentieth century with the advent of education and Christianity.

This chapter looks at the brief history of women in different sphere of the society such as: Political, Economy, religious, Social, Cultural history, Status and role of Naga women in general, Identity of women, Angami women's history in general. Naga women, though are present in these important social, political and religious institutions, they are absent in the historical imagination of the Nagas. Folktales and folk songs were studied to understand more about women. Through this folklore, this research will try to understand the place and role of women in Naga society. The study mainly relies on oral sources to contribute in the reconstruction of history.

### **Chapter III – Food culture in Angami Naga society**

This chapter studies the different food culture in Angami Naga society. It brings out the different food taboos on Angami women and their discrimination against men through food habit. The traditional Angami Naga society restricts women or female to have certain food items because of various reasons. There are also some activities which women should not perform. This chapter argues and raises question as to why women have a taboo and restricted to all these things. It also studies the changes after the coming of the Christianity on these issues. The bondage of the Traditional religion and the new religion on women in different sphere relating to these taboos are studied in this chapter.

### **Chapter IV – Weaving in Angami Naga society**

From a very young age every Naga girl learned how to weave. Weaving or '*Therhi*' (in Tenyidie, i.e. the language used by the Angamis) is one of the important things that every girl ought to know. Apart from the other domestic duty women weaves shawls and loin clothes. A Naga woman has been a carrier of Nagas identity through the art of weaving. A Naga women's history needs to be mentioned as she has been the history maker through the art weaving also.

The coming of the Christian Missionaries and modern education had pulled back many young girls from their weaving skills to pursue their new role and career. Weaving as an important tool for the Naga women remained to be a carrier of her identity throughout the period. There are some questions as to whether Naga women are ignoring the trend of weaving with the coming of education. Did the modern education discourage weaving? Is

there any contribution or encouragement by the Christian missionaries towards weaving? What were the responses of the educated women towards learning weaving? This chapter deals the different period in Angami society where weaving has been a very important art and duty of every Angami woman

## **Chapter V – Religious Practices and Women of the Angami Naga Society**

This chapter studies the various activities of women in different periods. It analyzes the response of women in general towards education and Christianity. It also understands the early response of the society on women's conversion and women's education. Various questions are studied like, has education and Christianity brought a change in women's life? What kind of changes? Has both 'role' and 'status' of women in Naga society changed with the coming of the Christianity. Have the changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led the women folk to leave their traditional activity? Is Christianity and education a helping hand to the Naga women in improving their status in the society? Can we agree with the term "Darkness to light" in term of women's position in 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

## **Chapter VI – Education and Angami Naga women**

This chapter studies the different types of education among the Angami Naga society down the periods. It focuses on education in the traditional society and modern time. The Angami Naga society witnesses new waves with the coming of the foreigners. These new waves can be termed as the coming of the Modern education and the coming of Christianity. The coming of education and Christianity had brought much change in the life of the people and especially in women's lives. But there is always a doubt whether

these new waves had really improved the status of women in society or not? There is also a question as to whether women enjoy more liberty and freedom after the coming of the new trend? One needs to understand the positive and the negative sides of the new trend as new things began to cover the old traditional values of the people. In the field of education why women have been left far behind men? Are women given an equal opportunity with men in church? Can we really call these new waves as an upliftment on the women's status?

This chapter gives importance to women in her contact with Christianity and modern education. The status and role of women has been changed with the coming of modern education and Christianity, but one need to clearly understand the role and status of women in Naga society practically whether these new waves have really put the women's community in a better position than before.

## **Chapter VII – Conclusion**

Naga women's history needs to be mentioned in the history. The cultural activities of the women in different sphere have to pull out from the untold and hidden world. This study addresses the issue of gender, which remained unaddressed in the politics of the history of the Nagas and the northeast region. By trying to understand the social history of the pre colonial Naga society, one needs to understand the social organization and social construction of the sexes. This study locates realities of women's subjection to male power and the stifling patriarchy in the pre colonial and colonial Naga society. As Women's studies have attempted to produce theories and concepts that reflect feminist principles, this study aims to follow the same with feminist principles.

## Endnote

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<sup>1</sup> Nagas are a group of communities inhabiting in and around present Nagaland situating in the North- East of India. The word 'Naga' connotes many meanings with many beliefs and assumption by different scholars. John Butler is of the view that the Nagas are known by the plains i.e. Assam as Nagas as they were found Naked. Some other scholars traced the meaning of word 'Naga' which means people, naked, pierced as they have pierced ears, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The period 'modern' here is used with the coming and after entry of the British administrators into the Naga Hills.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Jenks, *Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1993, p.8.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and society*, 1780- 1950, London, Penguin, 1961, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Linton, *The cultural background of personality*, New York, 1945, p.30.

<sup>6</sup> Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, *Anthropology*, New Jersey, Prentice hall, 1985, p. 166.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 166.

<sup>8</sup> Chris Jenks, *Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1993,p.12

<sup>9</sup> *Khezhakenoma* is a village in the southern part of the present state. It is believed that most of the tribes of the Nagas came here and migrated to the different present regions according to tribes.

<sup>10</sup> *Tenyimia* also include some other tribes such as Mao, Rengma, Zeliang, Chakhesang, apart from Angamis.

<sup>11</sup> J. H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1921, p.167.

<sup>12</sup> Renu Suri, *The Angami Nagas*, New Delhi: Mittal publication, 2006, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Before the coming of American Baptist missionaries with Christianity in Angami Naga society, the people follow the traditional religion commonly known as the 'Animism' where they worship the nature and believe in the spirit existence of everything around and surrounds them. Which is totally different and which cannot be term as Hinduism.

<sup>14</sup> Kedise Pucho, *Role of Naga Women in Development Process*, 2006, p. 13.

## **Chapter II**

### **Historical Overview of Angami Nagas**

The history of the Angami Nagas has very limited sources. With the scanty source which is visible only after the coming of the British administrators in the early nineteenth century, the history of the Angami Nagas remained unfold and untold. In order to bring out the historical overview of the Angami Nagas one has to rely on both the written and the oral sources as the written documents and record alone cannot give the historical overview of the Angami Naga tribe. In this chapter, a brief historical overview of the Angami Nagas in political, social, religion, economy, etc., is laid out in order to understand better the culture of Angami society and women. This chapter gives a better historical understanding of the society in general and women in particular, which paves the way for a clearer view for the preceding chapters of the study.

The north-eastern states; Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, are linked with the rest of India by a narrow corridor<sup>1</sup> in eastern Bihar and West Bengal winding its way between Nepal and Bhutan on the north of Bangladesh. Nagaland, India's sixteenth state is a border region in the north-eastern part of the country bounded by Myanmar on the east. It shares its national borders with three India states, Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Assam in the west and Manipur in the south. The identity 'Naga' is a modern political construct where the various tribes which claim or identify as Naga do not inhabit the present day Nagaland alone. They are to be found in parts of present day Manipur, north Cachar and Mikir Hills, Lakhimpur,



Sibsagar and Nowgong of Assam in the northeast of Arunachal Pradesh and in some parts of Burma.

The earliest specific reference 'Nagas' was made by Claudius Ptolemy in 150 A.D in his '*Geographia*' where this area is referred to as 'the realm of the naked'<sup>2</sup>. The place of origin of the various tribes remains an unsolved mystery till today. Basing on their art, material culture, language tone, etc., many scholars theorizes with their different views. Some scholars theorize that the Nagas have some link with Indonesia and Malaysia, belonging to Tibeto-Burma family. Nagas exhibit a racial inter mixer in greater ranges of Himalayas, Burmese, Japanese, Thai, Malaysia, Philippians, Polynesian, Indonesian and Melanesian. The Ahom Buranjis also recorded that by the time the Ahom came to Assam in the thirteenth century the Nagas were already settled in their present homeland. They also mentioned about the resistance to King Sukhapa, the founder of the Ahom kingdom<sup>3</sup>. The history of Naga is a fusion of blood and races among the various tribes. The Nagas, thus, is believed to have certain unique custom, unique ways of living and unique ideas which no other tribes' exhibit<sup>4</sup>.

Today, the Nagas are one of the Mongolian racial groups found in the northeast part of India, inhabiting the hills between upper Assam and Northern Burma i.e. along the patkoi hill both southwest and northeast. The Naga tribes have distinctive tribe names with a number of sub tribe names. Some of the Naga tribes are Angamis, Ao, Lotha, Sema, Phom, Konyak, Rengma, Sangtam, Chang, Khienmyungam, Yimchinger, Zeliangrong and Chakhesang. Some of the sub tribes are like Mao, Thangkhuls, Maram Kuki and Puchuri. Among the Naga tribes, some of the tribes who are known as the *Tenyimia* are

the Angami, Mao, Rengma, Zeliang and Chakhesang. These *Tenyimia* tribes in the pre colonial Naga society use *tenyidie* as their common dialect to communicate among themselves. But the present *tenyidie* is used only by the Angami and some Chakhesang villages only. In this study many *tenyidie* words are used for references. Each tribe lives almost in exclusive area since the traditional times. The reason perhaps lies in the fact that Naga tribes were warring tribes during the pre colonial period, and such exclusive settlements were meant to protect it from other warring tribes.

The early written record of the Angami Nagas can be found roughly from the middle of the nineteenth century from the American missionaries and British administrators. Before the coming of these foreigners (American missionaries and British administrators), the Angamis were unknown to the outside world. The traditional society of the Angami Nagas was covered by warfare and raiding. Angami Naga society being a patriarchal society, men exercises full power over women in all walks of life from traditional time. All the decisions no matter what, were taken by men. The husband or father or the eldest male child (if the father is not alive) is the head of the family. In every family men rule over women, women were the one who serves the men folk be it young or old. As mentioned, in the family, the father is the head and he is termed as the ‘bread earner’ of the whole family, but looking at the traditional Naga society, one cannot fully agree with this term as the whole family work together for the living, thus it will be explained and argued in the later chapter.

Angami Naga tribe followed a very strong Patriarchal society where warfare was an important aspect if the traditional Angami culture. Traditionally, the Angami women,

*'Thenumia'* or a woman in decision making was confined to the four walls of the house. Though the status of Angami women by tradition as always placed under men, yet it is believed that in all the domestic matters the Angami women or a wife is an equal partner to her husband. Though it was not sure what equality meant? The Angami women were also characterized as 'strong' by various writers. For example Hutton's wrote about the position of Angami women in the household and elsewhere in the Naga Hills that "women are a very strong folk"<sup>5</sup>. What did he mean by 'strong' is not clear. Perhaps Angami women's ever presence in economic activities compelled Hutton to make that remarked 'strong' in term of physical strength, but this does not denote equality or liberty of women.

Like any other patriarchal society an Angami woman was family oriented. Except the youngest son all the other sons built their own house after marriage. The house of the father was inherited by the youngest son apart from the other shares he gets from his father. The Angamis normally follow a nuclear family rather than a joint family. The married women come to her husband's house with all her personal properties such as clothes, weaving articles, ornament, agricultural tools like "*kedzü*"<sup>6</sup> or spade, "*mekho*"<sup>7</sup> or cane basket, etc. It was the duty of the wife to take care of any guest as the hostess.

Like many Naga tribes, the Angamis have ceremonies for the birth of a child. The *Genna* or taboo associated with women giving birth and other ceremonial rites pertaining to both mother and newborn male or female infants takes about nine days to complete. But the birth ceremony of a boy child was different from a girl child. The birth ceremony was done according to the gender, i.e. if it was a boy then a cock is killed to sacrifice and if it

is a girl then a hen is used. A plant called “*Zhahe*” or “*Tsoheh*”<sup>8</sup> was also used for birth ceremony. It was plucked by the mother herself where she adjures the baby to become strong and hard like the *zhahe* plant. But this *zhahe* was plucked according to the gender again, i.e. different type of *zhahe*. A mother was generally valued in this community, thus a barren woman is not only deprived of complete self-realization, and she was also considered a failure as a woman and as a wife<sup>9</sup>.

Though there were differences in the birth ceremonies among the Angamis, the birth of a girl child as the first offspring in the family was considered favorable. In the Naga society, the eldest child plays a very important role in helping the parents and the mother in particular. Thus, like any other Naga tribes, the Angamis also favors the eldest child to be a girl. Since girls were considered to be more loyal, more obedient and more helpful to their parents in the discharge of their duties. Though the birth of a boy was preferred as the customs and tradition implies that the lineage of a clan and family was through the male line and not through the female line. Yet, practically from the tender age, girls played the role of an adult in the family like, sweeping, cleaning utensils, collecting firewood, carrying water, preparing food etc, and even in looking after her younger brothers and sisters. When a child was not required frequent suckling of mother’s breast milk, the child was kept in charge of the older sisters. Naga girls or for that matter an Angami girl could be found carrying a Basket in her back and baby in the front while climbing steep slopes. Girls from a very tender age were free in mixing with boys as J. Butler says, “there is no laxity in moral, where the chastity of a woman was upheld”<sup>10</sup>.

### ***Keri* (Marriage)**

The Naga society in general and the Angami in particular were governed by rules and ideas of incorporation maintained by patrilineal descent ideology<sup>11</sup>. Marriage or '*Keri*' is an institution which is a defining factor in the lives of the Angami people. Traditionally '*thino*' or 'clan' exogamy was followed. There is no closely related kindred marriage among them. The male line blood relation in Angami society was recognized, unlike the female bloodline which is not recognized but marriage between the nearest cousins from a female bloodline is prohibited. Unless physically deformed or an imbecile, every Naga married. Hardly any man could set up a house on his own without a wife and everyman however poor secures one.

Most of the time women were given the liberty to choose their husband, among the Angami Nagas. But one cannot say every woman has the liberty to choose their husband. Many folktales and folksongs of the Angami Nagas reflect the marriage system in the society and the choice of husband by parents over their daughter's choice. Some of the folktales and folksongs like, "*Lhenu Khokhrieü*"<sup>12</sup> and "*Hie Pieü*"<sup>13</sup> talks about a woman who gets married to another village man in spite of their objection to marry the particular person. The daughter's duty also includes obedient to their parents, thus they marry their parents, choices. The majority of the women folk marries man of their choice but one cannot conclude by saying every woman has the choice to marry the person they love.

Marriage among the Angamis was an important event not only in the lives of the persons who are getting married, but also for the households that are drawn together in matrimonial alliance. A marriage proposal was given by the groom's family that seeks a

bride. A girl having a lover was common in the traditional Angami society (also refer folk stories Appendix No. 11 and 12). Hutton also says that, "...Angamis usually admits that it is common for a girl to have a lover"<sup>14</sup>.

An Angami girl from her childhood was prepared for her marriage. From her very young age, she was taught the informal education with greater attention by her mother and elder sisters. Among the Angami women there was a clear distinction between a married woman and an unmarried woman. An unmarried woman was well taken care by her parents, where they enjoyed the same status. They were also given gifts by her parents to use during their lifetime. Unmarried women were not allowed to grow their hair long till they were engaged or married. Their hair was cut short to indicate that they were unmarried and to show their virginity. The idea behind this practice was that the girl was not expected to look attractive and have sexual relationship with the opposite sex until they attained a marriageable age. Women were expected to maintain 'pure' moral and ethical behavior, but there was no such sanction upon men. In some cases when a girl wanted to keep her hair long and does not want to get married to another man then she goes and marries the *Kharu*<sup>15</sup> (the village gate) as a ritual.

In the traditional Angami society, there were usually two different types of marriage, namely informal and formal marriage. The informal marriage was such that the boy takes the girl to his home without any prior information, but remains taboo or *kenyü*<sup>16</sup> for one day. On the other hand, in the formal marriage, an old woman was employed by the boy's father as to go between with the girl's parents. The old lady plays a very important role in making all the arrangement and there is a mediator between the two parties. It was the old

women who discuss the marriage price with the girl's parents. All the expenses of the marriage are done by the father of the groom. The Angamis usually do not have the bride price, but in some villages the marriage price consists of a spear<sup>17</sup>, pigs, chicken etc. Marriage is usually conducted before the *Sekrenyi*<sup>18</sup> festival. Right after the *Sekrenyi* was over the brothers of the bride called her at their father's house and as a respect presented her gifts. The gifts were in terms of meat, grain, dress, etc. the girl return to her husband's house and with the gift from her brothers gave a feast to her near and dear ones. And in return her near and dear ones who were present at the feast will one day help her in her field work.

The Angamis did not practice polygamy. All the marriage partners were from outside their clan. Divorce was a common feature among the Angamis. And the divorce was mainly due to incompatibility. Divorced women were not looked down in the traditional Angami society as they had the full liberty to remarry again. There were three terms used for divorce, namely '*ta*, *ketsewa* and *kekhawa*'. The term '*ta*' or 'run' implies that the wife ran or went away from her husband's house and she could return again if she was requested to come back. '*Ketsewa*' means 'sent away'. This *ketsewa* connotes a disregard for a woman. '*Kekhawa*' means separated was a divorce with mutual consent of both husband and wife, but this case was rare.

If a woman was divorced because of her infidelity, she had to pay every expense of the marriage back to her husband and she did not get anything from her husband's property whether moveable or immoveable. If both, the husband and the wife were at fault, then the wife gets one third of the property. If the fault lies with the husband, then the wife

gets enough property, excluding the ancestral property. When the divorce was done the female child goes to the mother and the males with the father. A divorce woman can go back to her father's house and remarry again. But this type of marriage was generally simple and no special feast is given<sup>19</sup>. Unfaithful women were rare in the society as John Butler remarks, “.....incontinence on the part of married, however, is rare and an unfaithful wife is or thing almost unheard of but then the penalty is death”<sup>20</sup>.

If an unmarried girl gets pregnant, normally the man was supposed to marry her. But if he refused, he had to take her to his house at least for one complete day and night and accept the paternity and then leave her. If the man denied the paternity, he takes an oath that he was not responsible for that. The denial of the paternity of the child by the men was settled by letting the girl go out of the village gate i.e. *Kharu* to give birth there. This type of illegitimate child was known as “*chanuo*”<sup>21</sup> meaning ‘Road child’. This kind of pregnancy was allowed to give birth outside the village because it was believed that such a birth brings defeat during raids. The Konyak Naga called this type of birth as ‘child born out of house’. Furthermore an Angami girl was always made to go through greater discipline, with more works and more pressure to fulfill her obligation than were male children. The mores of the society made greater demands on womenfolk. Women were subjugated to more than they expected.

An ironic norm of the traditional society was that the man or the husband was applauded for his extra marital or illicit affairs. The “*kishüinei*”<sup>22</sup> or the wrap around cloth used by men was originally decorated with three lines of white cowries which every man wears (See Photo Plate No. 5). A married man who had illicit relation with another woman



either with the sister of the wife or the other women has four lines of white cowries. These four lines of white cowries were worn with pride and male prowess. But if a woman was found infidel to her husband, she was physically punished. The punishment was that her nose could be chopped off, her heels sliced off and her head shaved. Apart from that she was allowed to go empty handed without cloths except an undergarment i.e. “*neikhro*”<sup>23</sup> and where she was socially exposed to shame. She had to silently bear the shame and punishment as deemed fit for her infidelity. Here one needs to ask why the effect or the result of having an extramarital affair differs. The traditional law had different rules for each sex and unequal status for both men and women.

Angami women were taboo or *kenyü* to eat the animals which have nails. This was because there was a fear that the grain in the ‘*chünuo*’ (or big bamboo basket to store rice for the whole year) might go down fast as women usually go and take out grains. Women were also *kenyü* to eat from broken earthen dishes while cooking fearing that their rice would get over soon as women are the one who measured and take out rice to cook. There were lots of taboos which surround women, and it might appear discriminatory for the modern interpreter, but traditional taboos were considered ‘protection’ for women from defilement.

### **Political:**

Polity, forms of government and law among the different tribes of Nagas varies even they are situated in a small and same region. In some tribes like Konyak and Sema, chieftainship prevails unlike the Angami and Chakhesang who has tribal democracy at

the village level. The chieftainship in Konyak is hereditary in nature, but it differs slightly from one village to the other.

Women in the early Naga society do not have that much political right like the men folk. The decision making or any rules, law was taken by the elderly male members of the village. Traditionally, women in the Naga society do not have the right to inherit property. When it comes to economic matters or the inheriting, for instance Angami women enjoyed at least privilege comparing with the other tribes of the Nagas. Women work equally and contribute equally or more than, men in terms of economy. Since agriculture was the main occupation of the people women work equally with men in the field.

The “*Tehuba*” or “*Dahu*”<sup>24</sup> was a place in front of the *Kemevo*’s (priest) house where all the meetings and decisions were taken. In some villages the *Dahu* was usually situated on the higher level in the village where everyone can hear any announcement made by the *Kemevo*. In some Angami Villages, *dahu* is usually situated in higher places where announcements were made by the village priest. In the village meetings and judgment taking women was not allowed to attend or go to *Dahu*. But there was also a saying which goes “...once a decision of a woman was given it cannot be withdrawn or denied”<sup>25</sup>. But this did not mean that all the decisions are considered. Women were not allowed to go up to *Dahu* but they stood below the *Dahu* and hear the decision. *Dahu* was also used as a place of Dancing during Genna<sup>26</sup>.

One of the most important institutions in Naga society is the Morung or *kichüki*, a bachelor’s dormitory. Morung apart from serving as a bachelor’s dormitory functions as

an important political institution. This was where young men were trained for warfare. The place also served as an important place where the decision for raids on another village was carried out. Raids on unfriendly villages and tribes, termed by the missionaries as 'head hunting' became the starting point of historical narration of modern Naga historians.

The rigid patriarchal Angami society, where women were subjected to numerous taboos and *kenyü*, and kept outside social, political and religious institutions could not claim to be 'democratic' or 'village republic' as mentioned by a few. Women in Angami society were given a very low status in the social, political, and religious, institutions. However, as detailed above her role in the economic progress of the Angamis had been enormous. While the Angami men engaged in warfare, the women toiled in the fields, something which they could not own or inherit. Women were merely seen as mothers, sister, daughter, and wives. In economic matters, it is the women who work harder even though their physical strength is considered to be weaker. In religious practices, though Angami women participate in many rituals and *Genna* they are ignored and not considered. Important enough women were denied the chance to make decisions relating to many things either in family or in village level.

### **Economy:**

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Angami Nagas. Apart from cultivation they also engaged themselves in hunting, especially for the men folk. Economy in the traditional period was, according to the size of the field and the amount the family produces in a year and not much in cash. Rice being the staple food of the people, they had a highly

developed agricultural pattern. Unlike the other tribes of the Nagas the Angamis had two types of cultivation namely “*Nhalie*”<sup>27</sup> or Jhum (or slash and burn) cultivation and the “*Tekhu*”<sup>28</sup> or Terrace cultivation. The *Nhalie* cultivation was cultivated especially in slope areas. We could also call this as shifting cultivation as this cultivation was shifted every year. On the other hand, the *tekhu* was cultivated from the same area of land and the work was done mainly during the rainy seasons. Terrace cultivation was also made permanent where water was available almost throughout the year. The rice cultivation was distinguished by the use of irrigated terraces, cultivated year after year. This ultimately increases the work of the women folk and makes it more difficult. The work of women itself sustained the nature of patriarchy in Naga society.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people, whereby land and forest are the major economic resource. Every member of the family gives a hand in the agricultural work. From a very early age, a girl child is taught how to work in household chores and help in field work by her mother or elders when her brothers and boys of the same age were out playing with their friends. An Angami girl from the tender age started helping her mother in all the household works. A mother gets little or no help from her husband and sons when it came to household works but her daughters help her. The position of women in Angami Naga society could be illustrated with a woman coming back from the field with her loaded basket on her back and her baby in the front, accompanied by the men smartly tagging along scot free. Davis rightly commented that the Naga Women in general, ‘...become mere household drudge’<sup>29</sup>.

Women in Naga society can be termed as the backbone of the society. Apart from social and religious roles, Angami Naga women play a very significant economic role within and outside the family where they are termed as the backbone of society. Women carry out major agricultural activities collect fuels and other articles from the jungle, and carry water, look after the children and the domestic animals. The communal properties were controlled by the clan elders and these clans elders were usually males and not females. There are always imbalances in giving privileges and opportunities between men and women, but when it comes to agricultural work there was no difference in sexual lines. Though men were considered to be stronger and more capable than women in the Angami society, when it comes to agriculture it was the women who do almost all the work in the field. As mention before the men folk of the village went on warfare and raiding whereas women were compelled to do all the agricultural works along with their children in the absence of their husbands. Women toil hard, working in the field and in the house as their labor was very much needed in the agricultural and the household work. On the other hand it was a custom and ritual for women to initiate agriculture in Angami Naga society.

Jhum cultivation requires more work than the terrace cultivation. Due to the scarcity of water, people from Northern Angami practice the Jhum cultivation more than the terrace cultivation unlike the southern Angamis. When it comes to cultivation labor it is always the women who get up early to start the work before men. This was observed as a tradition, where women work more hours than men do. The necessary equipments of the field were carried by women and not by men. All the things needed by men, whether it was a spade or *dao*<sup>30</sup> or plate or cup to be used in the field should be carried by the

women folk. All these were carried by women saying that man works harder than women in the field, though in reality women work more hours than men work. Women's condition was pathetic when it comes to agricultural work<sup>31</sup>. After a heavy work in the field once a woman got back home, she started to do all the works in the house such as carrying or filling water and collecting firewood, cook food for the whole family where as men went to "*dahu*"<sup>32</sup> and chat with friends. Thus, women in the Angami society emerge to be the backbone and for the subsistence of the economy. Women in Naga society are also termed as a model of labor where they are mainly valued on that account<sup>33</sup>.

When an Angami girl gets married, she gives a gift i.e. "*mengu*"<sup>34</sup> to her brother or her brother's children. This *mengu* was given according to what her brother wants from her. On the day of her marriage, her male friends from her age group known as "*pele*"<sup>35</sup> or peer group would come and ask "*pelisa*"<sup>36</sup> from her husband. *Pelisa* was asked by the male members of the *pele*, it was a must for the husband to give what they ask for. It could be in terms of kinds or cash. This *pelisa* was then spent for a feast by the *pele* member's exclusively for men. This *pelisa* was given as a gratitude to the male members of the *pele* for helping the girl in the hard work in the field. This feast of *pelisa* was strictly forbidden for girls to join, as there was belief that it might ruin the life of the married girl. The concept of *pelisa* in Angami society tries to bring again the patriarchal nature where men show the power over women. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, women particularly work more than men in agricultural activities, but the system of the traditional society place women as a secondary sex where men take the upper place.

The beginning of the harvest is led and begun by a woman known as “*Liedepfü*”<sup>37</sup> or the first reaper. The *liedepfü* played a very important role, where until she starts the harvest no one could start harvesting. The day of her first ritual was observed by the whole village as Genna or *Kenyi*<sup>38</sup>. On the day she goes to the field with her *mekho*<sup>39</sup> (basket) and she would bring a little of paddies and plant besides the *Kharu*<sup>40</sup>, the village gate. The next day she would return and harvest those paddies and keep it in her *mekho*. She will act as if the *mekho* was heavy and will say, “Our harvest will be fruitful for everyone”<sup>41</sup>. She takes those paddies home and she cooks that rice the whole day as a ritual. Cooking the whole day indicates that their rice would be plentiful for everyone and it would last for a long time, and the ritual ends that day. This ritual was done by the *Liedepfü* for the fruitfulness for the whole village. Thus, after this ritual everyone starts harvesting.

Traditional Angami Naga society witnesses the participation of all the men folk in warfare and hunting. This was the time when women were left all alone to take care of their children. Since Agriculture is the main occupation of the people, women have to do all the household work as well as the fieldwork with or without the help of the children. The men folk were the ‘honor’ and ‘fame’ seekers in the village and when women were left alone to do all the work in the field or home which sustained them for the whole year (see, folksong Appendix No. 3). From the traditional time men seems to have ‘specific work’ in the family, whereas women do not have that and thus they have to do the rest of the work. Still then the term ‘bread winner’ was tag for men in general. Women should be called the ‘bread winner’ because they earn it and they work for the family more than men.

When it comes to the inheriting, Angami women enjoyed a least privilege comparing with the other tribes of the Nagas. Daughters usually inherit nothing. Property included house, agricultural land, animal, furniture, utensils, etc, which all belongs to the male child except some few which could be taken by a female child. A daughter was not entitled to own any ancestral property and for that matter the landed property also. Women did not have as much property as men gets not even half. The Angami women in the traditional society were not given '*siephruo*' (share) it could be only attained by male members of the family<sup>42</sup>. Hutton while describing the nature of Angami Naga society stated that, a man could not leave his real property with his daughter as women were considered lower to men<sup>43</sup>.

There were some cases where the father gave his purchased land to his daughter if he finds his sons were failing or if he did not have a son. But these cases are rare as an Angami man would get married to other women to bear him another son. The bestowing of purchased land to the daughters was rare in the Northern part of the Angamis even though it exists in the Southern part. But an Angami woman could own a property like personal ornaments which always would be inherited by a daughter from her mother. These ornaments could be only given to a girl child and not a son, if the mother did not have a daughter then the ornaments went to her father's heirs.

The inheritance of ancestral property was an important act among the Angamis. From the traditional society all the ancestral property was inherited by the son, but if a man died without a son all his property went to his kinsmen even if he had daughters. The daughters would be ordinarily entitled to no property. If a widow had some property



which she purchased from her own labor and died without any heir than those properties were sold for funeral expenses and the rest revert to her nearest male relations. Thus the daughter except in some villages in the southern part did not inherit property not even the purchased land. Neither the widow, nor the daughter had any claim to landed property except their clothes and ornaments, but they were generally supported by their sons or brothers until death or marriage (Gertrude 1898). As Hutton puts it, “property other than land was not subject to customary restriction except in so far as weapon and ornaments worn by men always go to male heirs”<sup>44</sup>

### **Religion:**

The traditional Naga society not only placed women in the family and assigned her little or no place in the social, political and religious institutions, though women were assigned an enormous role in economic activities. Though there were no set of methods the religion or “*tsana*”<sup>45</sup> were passed on by word of mouth. Angami traditional religion called *tsana* and *nanyü*<sup>46</sup> was characterized by a belief in spirits. Before discussing the role of women in the religious activities in pre-colonial society, some Angami cult would be discussed first. Chief of all or above all creatures was “*Kepenuopfü*”<sup>47</sup>. *Kepenuopfü* was considered to be the creator and supreme of all the living creatures. The word ‘*Kepenuopfü*’ literally means ‘birth spirit’ which was also considered as the ancestress of the entire human race. The Angamis had also the deities as ‘*terhoma*’ mean spirits. But when the missionaries came and translated the word ‘*terhoma*’, they term it as ‘Satan’. The concept and notion of all the *terhoma* turns out to be evil in the minds of the people. But the qualities of some of them were definitely benevolent. *Kepenuopfü* was

considered male being but the term '*pfü*' was a feminine termination, which always carried a feminine sense.

The Angamis believed that *kepenuopfü* dwelt in the sky and when a person died his soul went up to the sky to her. Some of the *terhoma* which the Angamis were aware of were like '*Rutzeh*' the evil one. He was believed to be the giver of sudden death. '*Maweno*' was the Angami goddess of fruitfulness. Physically she was described to be very short with long hair that swept the ground behind her. She kept pebbles and paddy in her bag and when asked for the gift she gives one and never two. These pebbles make the crops, cattle increased. Thus, those who saw *Maweno* are considered to be the lucky one. '*Ayepi*' was a fairy that lived in the house and brought prosperity. She was not seen by many but her tracks sometimes were seen like little human footprints in the paddy store or on the dusty floor.

*Telepfü* was another female Spirit or *Terhoma* and she was a mischievous being. She carried people away, but she did not kill them. She carried the people far away and made them senseless, but allowed other people to find the person again. Other spirit or *Terhoma* like '*Tsükho*' and '*Dzürawü*' were two spirits-husband and wife. Another '*Metsimo*' was a spirit who guards the approach to paradise and '*Tekhu-Rho*' was the god of tigers. *Ruopfü* was considered as the ancestress of all the spirits. Many think that *kepenuopfü* was '*Kechi-Kerho*' was the spirit that inhabits stones. '*Temí*' was a ghost who could not kill man, but threatened and frightened the cowards. The majority of *Terhoma* were unknown by name, unspecified, vague inhabitants of the invisible world. '*Ruopfü*' is also a female spirit which seemed to be the guardian angel. In some cases

*Ruopfii* was seen as man's own soul. Thus seeing the above cult's one would notice that in the Angamis believed there were more female spirits than male. Looking at the worship rituals of the Angamis one found that it was carried out by certain officials of the villages. '*Kemevo*'<sup>48</sup> was the one who did all the important sacrifice. He was usually the descendant of the founder of the village. He directed all the public ceremonies and fixed the days for them and as the office was hereditary<sup>49</sup>. He was also the repository of the genealogical and historical tradition of his village, clan and as the kindred.

A female can never become a *Kemevo*. In some villages the post of the *Kemevo* was hereditary, but in some others it was not it was taken over by the eldest member of the male member in the village. In the hereditary villages the post of the *Kemevo* was taken up by the brother of the deceased *Kemevo* if he dies without a son, the wife or the daughters could never take the post of the highest priest i.e. *Kemevo*. The reason behind the post not to be given to women was that women are considered to be confined inside the house where she had no idea about the village organizing. Thus, when a Genna was announced by the *Kemevo* it was kept very strict by the whole member of the village.

Angami women could not become a priest or *kemevo* but the wife of the *kemevo* played a very vital role in helping her husband. All the family rites and rituals to propitiate the household deities, the ancestral spirits are led by the wife. It was the mother and the Grandmother who instills all the significant details of religious rites and rituals to their children. But all the important sacrifices for the so called Supreme Being were done by men alone, where women hardly even attend those rituals and sacrifices for the village level. Even though women could not become a *Kemevo*, there were some old women who

were believed to be having some power and tell about the future or about a missing person and healed sick people. These women can be termed as '*themumiapfü*' or female shaman also.

'*Sekrenyi*' was the festival of purification and fertility which falls on the second day after the full moon of the month '*keno*' (February) or the month of '*kezi*' (March). The ceremony was done to ensure good health for the whole of the community for the coming year<sup>50</sup>. On the day of Genna all the men folk went to the village well to take a bath and women were restricted from going and fetching water as they were considered to be unclean unlike the men. After all the necessary rituals done by men, women were then allowed to join in for the festival.

Another festival of the Angamis was the '*Tekranyi*' which was marked by singing and dancing. The singing and dancing were only for the unmarried youths, but even married men can participate in it unlike married women who were restricted. This is the festival where women had the liberty to do almost all the *Gennas* with men and also in merry making except that women in the first ritual should fix their eyes to the ground and should not look up. Hutton puts in the reason that women were regarded as a most immodest if they look about during this ritual.

'*Kavate*' was a ritual done exclusively by the women on 5th of *Rüde* (December). This ritual was done for the manifold and plentiful wealth of the family. The *Kavate* ritual was done by women and men were not allowed to join them. Every Angami festival begins with a ritual called '*Kizhie*' which is done by women and not by men. If in a family, there

was no female then a young unmarried girl was called from some other family to do the ritual for that family.

Thus, in a patriarchal Angami society, religion and celebration of religious rites had always been considered as the prerogative of the male priest or the *zievo*. Though there were certain community rites assigned to women as the rite of harvest, like the whole of the village awaited for the first reaper to ritually bring home her first sheaf of paddy before the village could go out and harvest their fields. Likewise ‘faith healers’ and ‘spirit bridges’ were assigned to women as an important role and were respected, but they did not have the same magnitude like the *Zievo* or the Priest only because they are women.

Angami women in the traditional society were considered as an extra object or thing by the society, and adjunct to her husband. Though women made a lot of contribution to the society and their work was worth mentioning, their history was always ignored knowingly or unknowingly. Thus Angami women like many tribes of the Nagas were seen to be given a lot of liberty and freedom to enjoy in many ways, but in practices, they were the one who suffered a lot with all the rigid patriarchal bindings on them. They were denied a place in social, political and religious affairs of the community and thereby treated by historians as absent in the making of Naga history. The role of women in the family and larger community was complementary. In the tribal agricultural culture like Angamis, the role of women and their status were therefore mistakenly thought to be equal with men, but in reality and with careful analyses it yielded a different picture.

Thus, traditional Angami Naga society placed women much lower than men as women are considered as the secondary sex. Since the traditional times the term “*thenumia sü*”

which literally mean “women are” is used in many a times to connote that “they are just women” and are not taken into considerations. Being considered as the secondary in every walk of lives, women are not counted in the political space, social, religion, etc.,. The patriarchal society has placed Angami women in a lower place than male members whether are it young or old. All the opportunities and privileges were given to the male child as they were considered a member and the “name bearer” of the family and clan. As mentioned above, the historical overview of the Angami Nagas shows women have no equal share with men; in fact their cultural world has been a closed chapter. Women since the traditional patriarchal times have been an active agent through their skills and art of different types, and these skills and art will be discussed more in the preceding chapters. In the midst of the rigid patriarchal society women since the traditional times has always been the producer and distributors of food for the family and society. The next chapter deals with women and food in traditional and modern society and how they have been the communicators through the process of food.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Asoso Yonuo, *The Rising Nagas; A Historical and Political study*, New Delhi, Vivek Publishers, 1984, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Claudin Ptolemy, *Geographia*, Vol. 2, 1990 (reprint), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> KR Singh, *The Nagas of Nagaland*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publication, 1998, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> JH Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> *Kedzü* is a spade. This is one of the most important tools used by the Angami tribe. It is used for agricultural activities and cleaning the surrounding around the house.

<sup>7</sup> *Mekho* is a cane basket used for carrying water pot, firewood and other things. *Mekho* plays a very important role and is associated closely with woman. Women use more often the *mekho* than men.

<sup>8</sup> *Zhahe* is a plant which is found only in the forest.

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- <sup>9</sup> Nilika Mehotra, *Angami Naga Women; Some reflection on their status*, in Subhadra Mitra Channa, ed. *Nagaland; A contemporary ethnography*, New Delhi, Cosmo, 1992, p. 153
- <sup>10</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 305
- <sup>11</sup> NK Das, *Kinship Politics and Laws in Naga Society*, Calcutta, Anthropological Survey of India, 1993, p. 6
- <sup>12</sup> *Lhenu khokhrieü* is a song which talks about a woman who is engaged to a person from another village. Though she did not want to get married her parents want her to marry that particular person from another village, thus she did not want to disobey her parents. The detail of the story can be referred in the appendix.
- <sup>13</sup> *Hie Pieü* is another song which was composed upon the story of a Kohima woman called Lhouvitsüü. Her parents thought their daughter should be married to a rich man who will keep her happy thus without any hesitation married her off. She did not want to marry him but obeyed her parents in marrying the man of their choice. For more reference see the appendix.
- <sup>14</sup> JH Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 169.
- <sup>15</sup> *Kharu* is the village gate. A village may have more than two gates also.
- <sup>16</sup> *Kenyü* means taboo. In Angami society *kenyü* is mostly levied on female then men. The world of women is surrounded by taboos in and out of their homes. The bondage of taboos on women folk in every Angami villages does not allow them to do whatever they want to and wherever they wanted to go in the traditional period.
- <sup>17</sup> The presentation of a spear is usually highly regarded among all the Nagas. It is also a tribute to a superior by an inferior
- <sup>18</sup> *Sekrenyi* is the festival of purification.
- <sup>19</sup> Nilika Mehotra, *Angami Naga Women; Some reflection on their status*, In Subhadra Mitra Channa, ed. *Nagaland; A contemporary ethnography*, New Delhi, Cosmo, 1992, p. 150.
- <sup>20</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 304- 305.
- <sup>21</sup> *Chanuo* means road child. ‘*Cha*’ literally means road and ‘*nuo*’ means child.
- <sup>22</sup> *Kishiünei* is a black loin cloth wore by the men folk somewhat like short skirt.
- <sup>23</sup> *Neikhro* literally means undergarment. Traditional women in the Angami society use to wear a thin loin cloths under their *meni* i.e skirt
- <sup>24</sup> *Tehuba* or *dahu* literally means public place. But some of these place cannot be termed as ‘public’ as women do not have easy accessible to these places.
- <sup>25</sup> Interview with the elderly people like Rügüolhoulie and Thinuolhoulie mentioned about this.
- <sup>26</sup> JH Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 188.
- <sup>27</sup> ‘*Nhalie*’ means jungle field as ‘*nha*’ means jungle and ‘*lie*’ means field.
- <sup>28</sup> ‘*Tekhu*’ means terrace or wet cultivation. Usually terrace cultivations in Angami region are like steps.
- <sup>29</sup> JH Hutton. *The Angami Nagas*. London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 67.
- <sup>30</sup> *Dao* can also be called as a big knife. This is use for cutting down the trees.

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<sup>31</sup> Kelhou, *Women in Angami Society*, In Lucy Zehol, ed. *Women in Naga Society*. New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p.56.

<sup>32</sup> *Dahu* is a grave of the priest, usually situated on highest level of village. This *dahu* is restricted for women to sit on it.

<sup>33</sup> Hargovind Joshi, *Nagaland Past and Present*, Delhi, 2001, p. 13

<sup>34</sup> *Mengu* means wish. *Mengu* is given to others if anyone wants to give. But usually it is given to married women or to a person by someone who is about to die.

<sup>35</sup> *Peli* is a group of young people of same age usually found in Angami villages. This is a kind of institution where they work in each other field in rotation basis. It can be also term as a communal work.

<sup>36</sup> *Pelisa* can be term as 'price for the hard work by men for women'

<sup>37</sup> *Liedepfü* is a tenyidie word which means the lady who starts the harvest or reaps the crop.

<sup>38</sup> *Kenyü* means taboo.

<sup>39</sup> *Mekho* is a basket which is commonly used by the Nagas in general and Angamis in particular. *Mekho* is carried behind our back hung from our head. All the necessary items used in field are carried like firewood, paddies, water pot, necessary tools used in fields, etc.

<sup>40</sup> *Kharu* is a gate. Every Angami villages have village gate. *Kharu* plays a very important role in almost all the festivals of the Angami Nagas.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Rüguolhoulie.

<sup>42</sup> Kelhou, *Women in Angami Society*, In Lucy Zehol, ed. *Women in Naga Society*. New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p. 55

<sup>43</sup> JH Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University press, 1969, p. 137

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> *Tsana* means the ways of ancestors.

<sup>46</sup> *Nanyü* means rituals or religion.

<sup>47</sup> *Kepenuopfü* is considered as the creator of entire human race and the Supreme Being.

<sup>48</sup> *Kemevo* is also term as *Zievo*. He is the priest who does all the rituals.

<sup>49</sup> JH Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University press, 1969, p. 187.

<sup>50</sup> Ibi, p. 188



## **Chapter III**

### **Food culture in Angami Naga society.**

The Study of food culture has been a very recent subject in the social sciences. There have been some studies done in the past few decades by the historians, anthropologist, economist and other disciplines on food habits and other issues related to food. But little has been done on the study of food and culture within India's multi- ethnicity. Though food has been a part of every person's life, studies on food has been an excluded area for a very long time. For a better understanding of a better culture of a particular region, this area needs to be studied thoroughly and analyze from a different perspective. This chapter aims to study the relationship between food and women in Angami Naga society. The relationship between the two has been very close since the traditional time yet this is a much neglected area of study. Food in Angami Naga society has been playing a unique role in its own way both in both social and religious ways which have been carried on mostly by the female members of the society.

Food production, processing and distribution have always been a primary responsibility of women in all societies. Vitality of living things is possessed by food of all times. Socially and culturally, food has been a very important part of human existence. In all the society, the different human stages of living give credit to food, for there is a close relationship between evolution and food. From hunting gathering societies to settled cultivation, to the horticulture and villages formation, and to modern cities, food has been a dynamic component in changing all spheres of living beings. Food is one of the

important things where people from different place or both men and women can express their cultural differences in the way they eat.

Carole M. Counihan stated that, apart from all the other authority that a woman has, the power of a woman is derived from the power of food<sup>1</sup>. Coercion and influence, according to her are the two forces of power where coercion is attained through control of might and influence which cannot be denied. Anthropologists viewed that food is used to developed social relationship of exchange and alliance between the various individuals and by a larger unit of the system. Marcel Muss (1925) view that, the reciprocal of gift exchange in terms of food often binds the members of a society together in relations of mutual participation and unity. Mary Douglas (1966) understands how food and eating system reflects distinctions of social categories. She also viewed that food can be understood as a part of material culture rather than a natural object in that like pottery, it is the product of individual labor and reflects a cultural conception and designs<sup>2</sup>. Anna Meigs viewed food as an instrument that helps in the creation of social alliance, as a political tool in the deliberate construction of social solidarity<sup>3</sup>.

As the reproducers and nurturance of society, women are involved in preparing the food for the whole family. They influence people and the whole society through their manipulation of the symbolic language of food. These influences of food satisfy the most basic human needs of all times. Food takes a symbolic significance of language and a channel of communication which connects and creates obligations and exerts influence<sup>4</sup>. Women built up the relationship between persons through food, and are the linchpin between the source of food, food preparation and the end consumer.

India has been greatly influenced by the outsiders since the early period in every aspect of life. Food in India in particular had been influenced by the coming of the different cuisine style such as Greek, Arabs and Chinese travelers till AD 1200. The coming of European by fourteenth century as visitors sees India as a land where sowing and reaping was continuous. It was also seen as a land of aromatic spices, especially in the southern part of India.

Traditionally, the discourse of food in Indian was mostly related and associated with social and religious rituals unlike china where it is mainly associated with health and nutrition<sup>5</sup>. S.L Doshi viewed that the Study of food is a “bio cultural issue”<sup>6</sup>. He classified food into cold and hot food. The food that people take in different societies and in different regions are determined by social, economic, political and cultural process on what, how, where and how much people eat.

Most of the Indian food ethos is believed to be influenced by the Aryans practices and beliefs where food is considered not only for bodily sustenance but of a cosmic moral cycle<sup>7</sup>. Ashis Nandy pointed out that most of the foods today in India are ‘borrowed heavily, unashamedly and openly’ from other countries around the world. He also viewed that in general principle in the world of food, the Indian genius has in the management of chaos, celebration of diversity and other orthogenetic transformation of the exogenous<sup>8</sup>. The traditional Indian society witnesses a lot of healing traditional food and spices which have been a very important component in the lives of the people. The traditional Indian society also witnesses the role of food in different occasions and places like, eating rituals and ceremonies in a strict way, special food for festivals and temples.

Furthermore the Indian food is divided into cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits, spices, milk products, animal meat, and alcoholic beverages. Since the traditional Indian society, food has been an item which categorizes the people into their own caste especially in Hindu society. For instance, according to the traditional Hindu system the “lower castes could receive cooked food or water from a Brahmin, but higher castes would on no account receive food from the lower ones”<sup>9</sup>. The reason for this is because the lower castes are considered to be the polluted people where the Brahmins do not want to be polluted. Food in India has a diverse way and culture due to different regions and states. Depending on the region and different states of India, each group and each region have their own food habits, food norms, food values, and food history, etc, which determine their attitude towards food.

The Naga culinary world fits in perfectly into Levi Strauss’s theory of culinary triangle. He argued about the culinary triangle on raw, cooked and decayed where men do not think about food in terms of energy, but that one of the major civilizations of a society is the art of cooking the food. The cuisine of Nagas from the traditional society comprises of raw, cooked and fermented. The Angami tribe and most of the tribes in the Naga society eat raw food, cooked food and fermented food (decayed food according to Levi Strauss).

This chapter looks at the way in which food and women are connected with each other in every generation. Some of the questions which arise in this chapter are like, how women have been carrying or passing the traditional food from one generation to the other? How

women have been communicating with the rest of society through food? And did the changing food culture affect the lives of women and their social relations?

The food ways of the Nagas in traditional society is determined by the food ideology. In general, the ideology of food in terms of taboos, beliefs, habits, customs, etc, in Naga society has been determining the different attitudes towards communities among the people. Angami Naga society has many social aspects of food for consumption. Food consumption patterns in Angami Naga society are one social aspect which is a means of cultural identity. The Angami Nagas are all identified as the non- vegetarian, but the traditional society witness the identity of rich and poor through their food consumption of rice and meat. The casteless society witness the difference of wealth and depending on that the pattern of consumption differs where food is seen as a sign of wealth. Food categories and separates the people in the society into different class. Food in Angami society is also related to religious and ceremonial function. Food acts as one of the most important aspect for religious ceremonies and festivals. Without a variety of food, the festivals and ceremonies remain incomplete.

The traditional Naga women confine themselves to food gathering duties in the village. The power of food that Naga women have influenced the community to a great extent has identified with the food they offer. As women control over the nurturance of the whole family, they are the one who administers an important part of the family budget. In Naga society, giving food to neighbors, visitors, friends, and families was not an uncommon act from the traditional times. Giving and exchanging of food is considered as a bond between two or more different groups or people. Rejection of food was considered as

rejection of social mores. Barter system between different varieties of food was also seen in traditional period.

A Naga woman is born into the world that defines her as the constituent of feminine in the family, a nurturance and with the quality of unselfish concern for others. Naga women's identity is based not on the satisfaction of their own needs and desire, but of altruism and sacrifice for their family and men folk of the society. In spite of the unselfish nature of a woman in Naga society, taboos surround them in all spheres of their life till death. From religious taboos to the social taboos, a girl from her childhood follows all the rules and taboos made by men. Of all the taboos, food taboo in Angami Naga society was followed strictly in the traditional period. Mary Douglas understands ritual prohibitions as protecting established categories<sup>10</sup>, but one need to carefully think and understand about this statement in Naga society.

### **Traditional food;**

Food among the traditional Naga society can be broadly divided into wild fruits, cereals, vegetables, animal meat, rice beer, etc. Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods are consumed by the Angami Nagas from traditional time. Food is also taken with or without medicinal purposes. The traditional Angami Naga society witness the consumption of millet and maize more than rice as rice was a rich man's food<sup>11</sup>. People had to work and earn rice from rich families or they exchange of crops takes place very often in villages. Through the barter system of different food among the people, the relationship among them strengthens in many ways. Food habits and consumption show the status and wealth of the people. The economic status of the people is seen from the food they consume for

everyday life. The wealth of a person in the traditional Angami village is recognized from the amount of rice and food he owns. A wealthy person in a particular village has a higher status and regard from the other people and he/ she has the control over them in some or the other way.

Since the traditional period, Angami women have been a part and parcel in the whole aspect of life and especially with the social aspect of food. The later part of the traditional Angami society witness rice as the staple food<sup>12</sup>. People try to cultivate more of rice and less of other crops. Rice was taken twice or thrice a day. The traditional society and even the modern society rely on rice as the main staple food along with some other curries made of vegetables or meat. There are different types of rice in Angami society. Rice can be cultivated from *nhalie* or jhum<sup>13</sup> cultivation and also from *tekhu* or terrace<sup>14</sup> cultivation. Traditional Angami villages witness the families practicing both the cultivation, depending on their economic status<sup>15</sup> and number of the working person of the family. Both men and women work equally in the field for the cultivation of rice and other crops. The economy determines the family to own the different pattern of rice cultivation as more men labor is needed.

Barter system was common in traditional period. There are crops which are favorable in some specific region, thus the barter system was in practice before the money value came into being in Naga society. Almost all the food crops were cultivated by themselves. The difference between the rich and poor was seen from the traditional time. Mostly people who are poor cultivate other cash crops and mostly rich people cultivate rice. Thus, there was an exchange of different crops among them. All the families are non vegetarian and

one will find hardly any pure vegetarian in the whole of Angami village. As mentioned above rice is taken twice or thrice a day by the people, whether staying in the village or in the field. People working in the field consume more and better food comparing with people staying back in the village.

The communication through food acts as a very strong bonding among the people knowing and unknowingly. Giving food of any type to each other was a common act. Giving was highly appreciated by all without much expectation. The relationship between neighbors can be in better by giving food to each other as love and for tasting others recipe. This untold communication of food built a bridge between two people or two families. Giving and offering of food to friends and foes bring together people from different place. This type of strong bonding was not uncommon among the Angami Nagas.

The working system of *pele*<sup>16</sup> or the peer group was prevalent and an important component in traditional Naga society. The members of the *Pele* usually enjoy working together and also enjoy having the good food being served to them. When we say good food here, we are referring to non-vegetarian food along with the traditional drink *Zu* the rice beer. The *pele* gets short breaks and lunch break with all the good and heavy lunch as it was necessary for them to use a lot more man power. Breaks and lunch consist of Rice beer *Zu* i.e. the traditional beer, rice, meat, green vegetable curries, boiled vegetable items, etc. Here good food is given by the host to let the members working in the field work well with full energy. It is the women in the family who prepares and serves the group.



The feasting of the *pele* or the peer group at night was considered to be one of the most important and merry making through food and drinks. The night party over food and drinks was hosted by the person whom they have worked for during the day. The night feasting was considered to be a good platform where they know each other better and enjoy the food. All the arrangement of the food and drinks are served by the women of the family and not by men. Any women folk take up serving as their duty even if it's not their home. Women are hired to cook food for the *pele* if there are no women in a family. In the traditional period, before lunch break, rice beer *Zu* is served to the group instead of tea which is the practice today. *Zu* was not considered liquor until the coming of Christianity, but as a healthy drink consumed by all.

#### ***Zu* the traditional rice beer;**

The traditional Angami Naga society witness the free flow of *Zu* i.e. rice beer, which was considered as a daily drink and a ritual of the people (see Photo Plate No. 7,8, 9,& 10). Drinking *Zu* was not wholly associated with the religious belief of the people. But *Zu* is used in all the religious ceremonies and festivals of the Angami Nagas, which later on was perceived by many people that it was associated with the traditional religious belief. The rice beer was made with different varieties of rice which is very healthy for every member of the society. Offering and accepting of the drink to friends and families was considered to be a bond of friendship and relationship between the people. Rejection of *Zu* from others was seen as a rejection of friendship.

*Zu* in Angami Naga society take one of the important places among the food items in the traditional society. *Zu* are of different types but all are made from rice. The different

categories of *Zu* also classify and determine the status of people in the village as poorer families could not afford to produce rice in abundance at the traditional time. Some of the common *Zu* among the Angami are *Zutho*, *Thutshe*, *Zupfulho*, *Khe*, *Zuraho*, *Rohi*, etc. All these *Zu* can be made from different types of rice but mostly sticky rice is used. The process of making *Zu* undergoes different steps of brewing and using different rice and containers for different taste.

Mary Douglas is of the view that drinks act as markers of personal identity and boundaries of inclusion and exclusion<sup>17</sup>. A wealthy man in traditional Angami society, provide *Zu* to all the village members during the time of feast of merit. Through the giving of *Zu* to the people in the village the wealthy men identify himself from the rest of the village fellow men.

Serving of *Zu* and meat for lunch was very important for a cultivator on the day a person hires people or the *Peli* to work in his field. The preparation of the rice beer was usually done by the women folk. A woman is praised by the people by the way she makes *Zu* and serves the people. The identity of a woman earned through food gives her popularity among the village and community. Here through her cooking and making *Zu*, food speaks for her on her behalf about her work as a woman. The power of food through the influence, power as termed by Counihan is very much relevant in women's lives when it comes to food and cooking skills.

One should keep in mind that women in Angami society are the one who prepare the traditional rice beer *Zu* for the whole family. The traditional Naga society does not consider drinking of *Zu* as sin until the coming of the new faith i.e. Christianity. *Zu* is

prepared from rice, which is very healthy which nourishes both players<sup>18</sup> and working people. Women take the responsibility of serving the *Zu* to the male members of the house or the visitors. A guest is served *Zu* by the mother or the girl of the family to show their symbolic behavior in terms of welcoming their guests.

The social structure in Angami society was also seen through drinking *Zu* in traditional period. Lisa Anne Gurr also states that drinks occur and indicate groups in a society<sup>19</sup>. In Angami society before the coming of foreigners, apart from *Zu* and drinking water, no other foreign drink was used. Within a social system of a village state, *Zu* occurs within the social groups such as sexes, classes, guest, outsiders, etc.

Unlike many societies, the traditional women have the liberty to drink the rice beer *Zu* with or without their husbands. *Zu* was not considered to be an alcoholic drink, but as a normal daily drink which strengthens one's body. It was considered a respectable drink where the drink is served to the elderly male members meetings in *dahu*<sup>20</sup> i.e. the sitting place. Serving drinks to people was a daily duty of a woman of the community except in some few cases of ceremonial time.

*Zu* was used in all the occasions in traditional society, be it in fields, homes, festivals, rituals, ceremonies, etc. *Zu* were used as ceremonial rituals in different forms. Women get ready to welcome the men folk after their victory from head hunting with the *Zu* they prepare for the occasion of celebration. As a ritual, *Zu* was poured on the head of men's head by women chanting some words of victory against their enemies during head hunting period. For example, Hutton also mentions in his work about this ritual, the woman will lower her voice and say "let the enemies be lazy and sleepy, kill them and let

me do this again”<sup>21</sup>. It was believed that this chanting and pouring of Zu on the hunters head by the woman makes the enemy weak and drunk.

Many people<sup>22</sup> perceived that *Thutshe Zu* can act as a medicinal purpose. This *thutshe* is recommended for patients who had operations, a person with low blood pressure, gastric, kidney problems, etc. it is believed that *zu* can be a healing drink to many people since the traditional times even and after the coming of western medicine in Naga society.

### **Ceremonial and Festival food;**

In all the festivals of the Angamis, along with celebration, food was considered an important part. The Festivals of Angami tribe are closely associated with meat and through food, people make merry and enjoy the festivals. Food is used as a part of a sacrificial item to their supernatural beings they believe and worship.

All the social activity of the Nagas and Angami in particular is covered by the ritual beliefs and practices. Ritual foods among the Angami community try to offer the possibility of understanding the world and changing it. By offering the food the people ask for fertility blessings and a better life. The activity of the Naga society starts with the rituals and sacrifice as first<sup>23</sup>.

First harvested crops are usually used for rituals and ceremonies. Cock sacrifice is an important ritual made by the traditional Angami society. There are some ritual foods which are to be followed strictly by the villagers. For instance, a separate ritual curry is cooked specially for the woman during childbirth, which was not supposed to be shared by anyone. The other instances were, a healthy hen is cooked specially for the women to

consume alone<sup>24</sup>. Returning men folk from warfare and head hunting were served food cooked by their wives and womenfolk of the village.

Food rituals are followed when a person dies. When a person died an amount of food and *Zu* is kept on top of the grave as a ritual. They believe that the dead person should not go hungry to the dead land and that they should take the food and *zu* and fill their stomach on their way. Along with the food, some necessary and basic things such as *dao* (big knife), *pfe* (shawl), *mekho* (the traditional basket), etc are kept. Food is considered necessary for a person after death also. It was a belief of the people that it strengthens the dead person even in the land of death. Ritual food in Naga society takes a very important form, where it acts as a direct way of encountering God through food and drinks.

It was a custom and ritual for women to initiate agriculture in Angami Naga society. So here, there is a link and a relationship created between human and the supernatural being by women. The beginning of the harvest was led or started by a woman known as “*Liedepfü*”<sup>25</sup> or the first reaper. The *liedepfü* played a very important role, where until she starts the harvest no one could start harvesting. The day of her first ritual was observed by the whole village as Genna or *Kenyü*<sup>26</sup>. On the day she goes into the field with her *mekho*<sup>27</sup> and she would bring a little of paddies and plant besides the *Kharu*<sup>28</sup>, the village gate. The next day she would return and harvest those paddies and keep it in her *mekho*. She will act as if the *mekho* was heavy and will say, “Our harvest will be fruitful for everyone”. She takes those paddies home and she cooks that rice the whole day as a ritual. Cooking the whole day indicates that their rice would be plentiful for everyone and it would last for a long time, and the ritual ends that day. This ritual was done by the

*Liedepfü* for the fruitfulness for the whole village. Thus, after these rituals everyone starts harvesting.

### **Feast of merit;**

Feast among the Nagas was an important part of life which makes a symbolic statement about their power<sup>29</sup>. Feast of merit or “*thesha*” in Angami Naga society can be given only by a wealthy man in a village. The person who gives the feast of merit is known as “*zhariimia*”. To gain fame and honor a wealthy man has to organize a feast for the whole of the village people that they acknowledge his wealth and he gets a title. It was to enhance the prestige of the feast giver and for social rank. Feast consists of food and drinks which will be served to the people to satisfy themselves to the fullest. Food will consist of different varieties of non-vegetarian and also vegetarian items. It was through food that the man identifies himself eligible to get the title of a wealthy one in the village. The Identity of a wealthy man can be seen through his distribution of food and drinks. The symbolic behavior of food here plays a very important role.

Feast of merit here exchanges the material wealth with the social rank in society. The material wealth such as cattle, rice, drinks, etc, is given in order to get a rank in society. This exchange of wealth in terms of food plays a very important role in the lives of a person and for which women's help is needed. Apart from social rank in the society, feast of merit also connotes the ritual status of the giver. It allows a man to advance in social status. It also permits the person to wear a special shawl after the feast of merit is given.

The amount of food and drinks serves to the villagers on the day of feasting by the host determines his identity. The wife of the host tries her best to cook the best and serves the people with the *zu* she makes. By throwing a feast a person can gain the title of a wealthy man and get recognized in the village. Food here brings identity to both the husband and the wife. But when we looked into the work distributions of the feast, women are the one who works more than men in every activity. The making of *zu* for the feast of merit or the preparation of food items are all prepared by women and hardly by men. The traditional society witnesses the rigid patriarchal nature in this form of culture. A widow can never throw the feast of merit as the ritual requires the presence of both husband and wife. Giving the feast determines their rank and status after death. They can be identified from the way their grave is built. The feast is given up to four times according to their clan. The grave of the *zharimia* i.e. the feast giver and his wife has a special big stone or “*tsehou*” on their grave which signifies their deeds and higher social rank. The grave of the feast giver is built like a round table known as “*phfehou*” instead of rectangular style.

Feast of merit is basically a feast thrown out to the people in return of praise and honor of the host i.e. the head of the family. There is an exclusion of praise of the women folk in this feast even if they are the one who work for all the success of the feast. Foods which are prepared mostly by women bring honor and respect for the host who gain the title of wealthy men in the village and gets other privileges. The culture of feast of merit in traditional Angami Naga society plays a very important role through food as its agent to identify a person’s rank in a society before and after death.

**Marriage food;**

Marriage between two people is celebrated with feasting and merry making. Feasting being one of the most important components of marriage, the use of meat was emphasized a lot by both the families. The traditional Angami family, marriage is taken care of by the groom in terms of monetary needs. All the expenses were looked after by the groom and his family. The number of cattle he killed for the feast was counted and accordingly people understand whether he had earned enough to marry a girl or not. Food serves to the people is considered the most important in a marriage in Angami society. Food here connects the relationship between the couples and the people who attend the marriage.

**Unity or friendly feast:**

“*Kezekevi he*” or “Friendly or unity Feast” is another important feast among the Angamis. This feast can be given by a single person or community or village as a whole. Usually when there is disunity between two people, groups, villages, etc, the feast is given to have a reconciliation or as a sign of unity. This friendly feast is given till date, as a sign of unity between two persons or between villages. The friendly feast will consist of varieties of meat and vegetables according to the economic status of the giver. Here food plays a bond of relationship between peoples and between communities. People perceived that food builds relationships between humans and also with God.

After many decades and generations, there are some villages that have “unity feast”<sup>30</sup> between villages and clans. Food plays a very important role in bringing together two people or more.



### **Food taboo for women;**

Fredrick Simons argues that belief system and their attendant rituals are the casual factors behind food taboos<sup>31</sup>. Food taboos among the Angami Nagas seem to be one of the major obstacles and deprivation for women when it comes to enjoyment and festivity in society. Though most of the foods are consumed by the men folk of the society, there are also some foods which are avoided by the men folk. But unlike men, women face more restrictions and taboos in the intake of food. Non vegetarian food in the society holds a very important place when it comes to food culture; as meat is considered to be the food for good health and strength. Non vegetarian food is served during the time of marriage and festivals as people consider taboo to serve vegetarian food to friends and loved ones. Women in Naga society do not oppose taboos of food because of the sex- gender hierarchy embedded in Naga culture.

Partake of the Food which are tabooed to women are considered to be a polluting and threaten to the men and the society, whereas on the other hand, those tabooed foods which are seen as polluted can be eaten by men. These food taboos can be seen as a power and enhance the male perception of their difference from the superiority to female. The rituals and food taboos create divisions of labor and economic niches. We can say that Women are shackled by the accepted food praxis in Naga society.

A woman in Angami society seems to be surrounded by taboos in all their walks of life in the traditional times. Food taboos are believed to be levied on people with a reason and purpose. Most of the food taboos are levied upon women and the community makes sure

that it is strictly followed. The fear of supernatural calamities, economic disasters, and unusual dangers were blamed for keeping the taboos well.

For instance, women in Angami society were taboo to eat animals which have nails. Because women are the one who cook the food for the whole family, they are the one who takes the rice from the grain basket i.e. *chiünuo*<sup>32</sup> and clean it to cook. It was a belief that, since women collect rice from the grain basket, they should not eat animals which have nails. If they take those meats, which are taboo for them, the grains will finish off so fast or go down easily because the animals which have nails are believed to dig things easier than the rest of the animals which does not have nails. Broken earthen pots and utensils are taboo for women to use as women take out rice to clean and cook for the whole family. Cooking and eating from broken utensils leads to poverty of wealth in terms of rice. Women in Angami Naga society are not allowed to partake those meats of the animals killed by wild beasts whereas men can eat without any restrictions. Almost all the taboos of food on women were related with the economy of the family in terms of food. The women folk are indirectly blamed for the quantity of food the family has.

It is argued that all these “taboos” levied on women as a “protection for women from defilement”<sup>33</sup>. Women in society are considered to stay at home and do all the household chores; this was also the reason why they were not allowed to eat some of the animals which roam around freely. The concept of “women stay inside and work” relates itself to the food habit a woman takes. Women are not allowed and taboo to eat the food prepared on the separate hearth for the *Sekrenyi* rituals. It is taboo for the women folk to even touch those foods, as the food is cooked specially for the rituals of the festivals which is

to be performed by the male members alone. Women are considered to be unclean and a weaker sex thus the food touch by them cannot be used for ceremonial purposes. These food taboos increase the barriers of separation between men and women and not just a “protection from defilement” as mentioned above. There is no such food taboo for men in Angami society. But there are some foods which are prepared especially for women during childbirth and marriage. But these foods are not taboo for men.

The identity of Angami women in traditional society witnesses the allocation of society into individuality and gender by the function of food. Sidney W Mintz and Christine M Du Bois also try to understand how the food functions in social allocation in terms of race, class, individuality and gender. Food also identifies a woman of a community from the other through the ethnic cuisine she cooked, which associates her with the geographically and historically defines her community<sup>34</sup>.

### **Impact of Christianity;**

With the coming of Christian missionaries and the conversion to Christianity, women in Angami Naga society witness the changes in their lives. The doctrine of Christianity somehow led them to challenge the traditional men's dominance over their inherent division of labor and traditional laws. Christianity and education, open up their minds of the women folk to come out to study and earn along with men and not just be a reproducer and nurturance of the family. There was a drastic change in social and economic position which focuses on making a difference in their relationship with food which results in identity conflicts.

Coming of Christianity had marked a huge impact in Naga society. The food culture and food habits which were taken and practice in traditional period were challenged by different Christian ideology like any other traditional and cultural ways. Christianity in its own ways has related food and women in a unique form. There are some drastic changes brought by Christianity in Angami Naga society. Firstly, taboos which were levied upon women in traditional society were not considered as an important habit of a Christian women's life. People, especially women after converting to Christianity started to ignore the taboos of food on them and eat whatever they feel like taking. Secondly, drinking the traditional rice beer *Zu* was prohibited by the Christian missionaries. Thirdly, the feast of merit which was given by the wealthy man of the village was discouraged.

Due to unresolved contradictions between public and domestic roles, women suffered a strong and debilitating identity conflict<sup>35</sup>. The conversion to Christianity has made people to fast and stay from food from their body and pray. Fasting and prayer began an important duty of a Christian life to come closer and talk to God. Here a related behavior of Christian life is food behavior. Nagas who were converted to Christianity were asked to fast and pray for their betterment of everything in society. The ritual and sacrificing nature of the traditional society disappear with the new system. Use of ritual food eventually was discouraged and stopped. Usage of food was replaced by prayer and fasting. But the behavioral character of food in a Christian life still connects the person with God through the taking of the Holy Communion. In both the different period, food directly or indirectly connects people with God. As Caroline Walker Bynum also view, the behavior of a Christian was food related behavior<sup>36</sup>. Though there was a different

indication of food with periods, food act as a relation between human and the creator. In both the period, food was considered as an important element and item to build a relationship with heavenly being.

Christianity tried to eradicate the taboos from the lives of the people, but it laid down another type of taboo with its own Christian ideology which does not free the people from being bound by taboo. The traditional food taboo on women and also other food taboos were compromised, but again, it brought in another type of taboo on drinks like the Traditional rice beer i.e. Zu.

The Christian missionaries taught people to leave all the habits and culture of a non-Christian life after their conversion to Christianity. The use of *zu* i.e. traditional rice beer was not encouraged by the missionaries. The traditional drink Zu was considered liquor/ alcohol which leads a man to his drunken state and ultimately leads him far from God. There was a time when many elderly people could not be converted to Christianity as they were not able to control themselves from drinking *Zu* thus, followed the rituals and ceremonies of the olden times.

The very idea of “sin” in drinking *zu* came along with the conversion. Haimendorf also mentioned that,

*“Drinkers of rice beer, the missionaries teach, will burn in hell fire forever, and the Naga, dazzled by the prestige of the white man not knowing that since the oldest time wine and beer have been drunk throughout Christendom, eschews his cherished national drink”<sup>37</sup>.*

*Zu* the traditional drink is still considered as a health drink. But it is discouraged to let the youngsters take it as a habit. Like the traditional period, *Zu* is still used by the young wrestlers as it is good for their health and strength. Though Christianity taught the people to avoid using *Zu*, there are some people who use it for health reasons apart from some who use it just for enjoyment. The society witnesses the entry of foreign alcohol with the coming of outsiders.

Feast of merit was considered a proud character which seems to be inappropriate for a Christian. According to the new religion, feast of merit should not be practiced to gain fame and honor in the village or society but should trust in the Lord and pray. The practice of this feast was an act of showing off the wealth to other fellow men, thus in Christianity showing off our wealth was considered a sin. Celebration together with food was organized by the church during Christmas and Easter Sunday and not during other traditional ceremonial dates of the traditional religion. Though the Feast of Merit was completely stopped among the Christians, feast in other occasion were thrown to friends and families as a sharing of blessing when a child is born or on some other happy occasions.

After the coming of Christianity, one of the well known dish and very important meat items which emerge among the Angami society is *Modi*. *Modi* is known for the taste and uniqueness among the different curries of the Nagas. Among the entire food items of the Angamis, *Modi* is one of the most prestigious meat curries of all. *Modi* is cooked in a very special way. Not every one of the community can cook it, as there are some people who really knows how to cook *Modi*. This food item can be made with big pieces of

either pig or cow meat. It is usually cooked by men as it was considered that lot of strength is needed to stir the curry. Strength between the sexes here can relate directly to the eating behavior of both men and women. As the different eating behaviors associated with the different sexes parallel their cultural definition, men are still supposed to be big, powerful, free and dominant, whereas women are to be small, dainty, constrained and submissive<sup>38</sup>.

“*Mhakevi kechü*” is a term in *Tenyidie* dialect which means “doing good deeds”. This is a term is commonly found in most of the churches among the Angami Naga society after their conversion to Christianity. According to this, Christians are encouraged to give things to the others in terms of cash and kinds in the name of the Lord. This deed is usually in terms of giving a feast during some occasions which they give to get the blessing. Most of the wealthy Christians give a feast in churches or in some occasions because of different reasons. Some may give feast because they had succeeded in their work or in their income, some out of happiness in terms of having baby in their family; some gives because they are told by the servant of God for prosperity, etc. These types of giving feast in the Christian era or after the coming of Christianity has very similar character with the “Feast of Merit” which was practice during the traditional period which is considered as something showing off and boastful. Though feast has been given in different names and in different occasions, the relationship that food holds between different people together and groups shows the strength that food itself has in different periods.

### **Changes in food taboos;**

Education and Christianity open up the mindset of the people in all the sphere of living. The change of taboos on women is seen in families and society slowly but could not eradicate fully the food taboos till today. With the teaching of the missionaries and education, educated men and women started to ignore the taboos levied on women in traditional period. With the increasing educated men and women, the society witness many changes in all the spheres. Though there are a lot of things which have been given up and abandoned in the modern period, yet there are also many things which still could not be erased from the minds of the people.

*“Cü kenyü ü kecüko cü bei morei vi” means “it is not very necessary to eat the taboo food”* a common response of some elderly Christian people to the young people when ask about the food taboos on women. Though Christianity with education has lead people to come out of the so called “cover world”, still the shadow of the taboo prevails in some occasions. The ritualistic world of the Angami Naga seems to be controlled by beliefs which Jacob rightly says “ritual beliefs seek to explain the world, but also allows to control over it”<sup>39</sup>.

With the Christian law and ideologies, the concern of the people is not with the food itself, but rather with the behavior towards it. The prohibition of the traditional rice beer *Zu* and the food taboos on women and children in a Christian lives diverts oneself from constructing the behavior of oneself but some other force. Counihan states that eating is a behavior which constructs a self.



Levis Strauss's "culinary triangle" talks about the three different kinds of food and the Angami Society fit itself perfectly into the theory with its food items both in traditional and modern food habit. The traditional and Christian Angami society consumption of food in term of different style of preparation remains the same except some recent extra food items from other places. Raw food, cooked food and rotten food (fermented food) is consumed by the people of both the period. There was no restriction on either of the raw, rotten or cooked food, even after the coming of Christianity. The ways and style of preparation remain the same, though there have been some restriction lifted and some levied on some items of food.

The barter system among the Angami Naga society which was a common practice from the traditional times continues till date. Food has been an exchange product between different section and types of people. With the coming of Christianity and the missionaries, women were encouraged to not only have a barter system among them, but also sell their crops and food item to other people. The late nineteenth century witnesses the emergence of women from different villages to towns to sell varieties of food item in the market. Selling of food item in the market or going house to house selling was not an uncommon job for a woman in a family to help with the family economy. Almost every family has a woman taking out their food items and crops from the fields and selling to help the family. The present Angami society witnesses the distributions of food in different ways among the people and this is done by women. Many uneducated women from villages bring their products from their field and sell to help in the economy of the family. They can be termed as the mediator of food between different people in the society.

Understanding food and eating is a statement of understanding about identity and the boundaries of self. There are many scholars and writers who states that a major component of female identity is from predominant role of women in feeding and food. We can thus say that women get identified with the power of food. Naga Women controls and distribute the source of human vitality through food. Women from traditional period had been processing all the food products as a nurturance to the family. Women from marginalized to the rich family with supervisory and management role have attachment with food processor and the cooks.

Though education had made many Angami Naga women independent and empowered, food is very much alive with the vital essence of its producers and prepares, where it plays a very important role in the intellectual construction of the self of every Angami Naga women. Angami Naga women thus help in cultural understanding of the basic categories of the Nagas Cultural world through food. By the different eating system and classification of food as discussed above, food can relate to the larger system of social classification in Naga society better. Women through the preparation of food and their work in nurturance, economic, social, etc., have also relates the people with mystical ones. The establishment of communality is enhanced, the recognition of being distinctive, through food and eating system of the society.

The coming of Christianity has brought so many changes which have shaped a new society, but the culture of traditional Naga food seems to continue with some added food items. It is through food that the cultural differences of men and women can be expressed and seen by the food they eat and taboos. The intake of different food habits and ways are

influence of different class of people in the same society. The analysis of food habits and food ways need to be studied in depth for a better understanding of socio- cultural aspects of women in society. Women have been an important part in bringing the changes and continuity of food ideology and food habits. Women have been a carrier of social-cultural identity through their enormous work in the process and preparation of food.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Carol M Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body; Gender, Meaning and Power*, New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Douglas, *Food in social order*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1884, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, ed, *Food and Culture; A Reader*, New York, Routledge, 1997, p.103.

<sup>4</sup> Carol M Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body; Gender, Meaning and Power*, New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The changing popular culture of Indian food; Preliminary notes*, New Delhi, South Asian Research, Sage Publication, vol. 24, 2004, p.9

<sup>6</sup> S.L.Doshi, *Anthropology of Food and Nutrition*, New Delhi, Rawat Publication, 1995, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> K.T.Achaya, *Indian Food ; A historical companion*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 61

<sup>8</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The changing popular culture of Indian food; Preliminary notes*, New Delhi, South Asian Research, Sage Publication, vol. 24, 2004, p. 12

<sup>9</sup> K.T.Achaya, *Indian Food ; A historical companion*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Mary, Douglas, *Food in social order*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1884.

<sup>11</sup> According to the elderly people as told during the interaction and personal interview.

<sup>12</sup> Rice was brought into Naga Hills from Assam.

<sup>13</sup> Jhum cultivation is also known as burn and slashes cultivation. It is practice mostly by the northern and western Angamis as this type of cultivation need less of water unlike the terrace cultivation. Unlike the terrace cultivation, jhum cultivation needs more labor work. James C Scott in his book '*The Art of Not Being Governed; An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*' also explains about the cultivation pattern about the regions who practices slash and burn cultivation. One of his findings in his book was the so called jhum cultivation among the upland Southeast Asian countries.

<sup>14</sup> Terrace cultivation is practice mostly by the southern Angamis as they have more abundance of water unlike the northern Angamis.

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<sup>15</sup> Here economic status we are referring to some families who can effort to cultivate more than one field as they have to hire and manage to cultivate both jhum and terrace fields.

<sup>16</sup> *Peli* is a name given to a group of peoples working together in the field. This group can be formed is a group or according to convenience of the people who wanted to work together. Traditional Angami society witnesses the importance of *pel*i according to age group. They peer group take turns to work in the field of every members of the *pel*i. *Peli* is one of the most important age group in a village in terms of work and bonding.

<sup>17</sup> Mary, Douglas, *Constructive drinking; Perspective on drinking from anthropology*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1887, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> By players here we meant those who play *kene* or wrestling to show their masculinity. Women are not allowed to play *kene* or the Naga wrestling.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Douglas, *Constructive drinking; Perspective on drinking from anthropology*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1887, p. 220

<sup>20</sup> *Dahu* is built in front of the house of the village elder or in the higher place in the village where everyone can hear the announcement being shouted by the clan elder.

<sup>21</sup> J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 239.

<sup>22</sup> Almost all the respondents who say that *zu* is taken as medicinal purpose were those women who made and sell *Zu*. They told that people will come and buy *zu* from them for people who have problems especially who had surgical operations even if they are Christians.

<sup>23</sup> Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas; Society, Culture and Colonial encounter*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1990, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup> This custom is practice till today by many Angami families.

<sup>25</sup> *Liedepfü* is a *tenyidie* word which means the lady who starts the harvest or reaps the crop.

<sup>26</sup> *Kenyü* means taboo.

<sup>27</sup> *Mekho* is a basket which is commonly used by the Nagas in general and Angamis in particular. *Mekho* is carried behind our back hung from our head. All the necessary items used in field are carried like firewood, paddies, water pot, necessary tools used in fields, etc.

<sup>28</sup> *Kharu* is a gate. Every Angami villages have village gate. *Kharu* plays a very important role in almost all the festivals of the Angami Nagas.

<sup>29</sup> Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas; Society, Culture and Colonial encounter*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1990, p. 80

<sup>30</sup> “Unity feast” can be conducted between two or more people or groups. One of the recent such feast was between two northern Angami villages, Dihoma village and Gariphema village. This feast was conducted two years back where all the villagers from both the villages were invited. This feast was organized to show that both have forgiven each other from whatever things have happen some generations back then. Here is such a case; food plays a very important role in uniting people and as a communicating between the two groups. Food plays a crucial role determining both the parties with the hope of love between them.

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- <sup>31</sup> Frederick Simmons, *Eat not this flesh; Food avoidances from prehistory to the present*, second edition, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1994, p. 98.
- <sup>32</sup> *Chũnuo* is a huge bamboo basket which is weaved and kept for storing grains. They store all their harvest grains and keep in the *chũnuo*. All the families in the villages own at least one or two. The wealthy family owns more than one or two to store their grains.
- <sup>33</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima, 2004, p. 35
- <sup>34</sup> Sidney W Mintz and Christine M Du Bois, *The Anthropology of Food and Eating*, Annual review anthropology, 2002, p. 109.
- <sup>35</sup> Carol M Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body; Gender, Meaning and Power*, New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 44.
- <sup>36</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum. "Fast, Feast and Flesh, the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women". in Carole Counihan and Penny van Estrik (Ed.), *Food and Culture, A Reader*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 139
- <sup>37</sup> Haimendorf C Furer. *Return to the Naked Nagas: An Anthropologist's view of Nagaland 1936- 1970*. Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt, Ltd, 1976, p. 53.
- <sup>38</sup> Carole M Counihan, *Food rules in United States; Individualism, Control and Hierarchy*, Anthropological Quarterly, vol. 65, no. 2, 1992, p. 62
- <sup>39</sup> Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas; Society, Culture and Colonial encounter*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1990, p. 86

## **Chapter – IV**

### **Weaving in Angami Naga society**

The discourse of weaving in Angami Naga society clearly demarcates the line between men and women. Weaving is indeed a symbol of gender. Though women have the monopoly in weaving, patriarchy leaves women in a subsidiary role where many of the shawls woven by women themselves are taboo for women to wear. This chapter brings out the relationship of women and weaving in two different periods with the discourse of weaving and its identity as a social composition.

Handloom weaving in the Naga society witnesses the exclusion of men in its discourse. The discourse of weaving has usually been a women's craft in many cultures and times. From the traditional time till today, weaving is a popular handicraft and art for Naga women. Women from a high status to the lowest know how to weave both for the family and for commercial purposes. As a marginalize member of Naga society, through the art and skilled weaving, women have been remarkably carrying the identity, in spite of many people and most writers failing to notice and recognize the distinctive nature of their work. Many failed to recognize the work of women in the art of weaving as praxis. Naga women have been a carrier of identity through the ages, which remain unnoticed till today. The traditional Naga society witness all women folk actively involved in weaving clothes apart from doing all the household chores.

From the time of Homeric society the queens, princess and goddesses know how to weave. Like many tribal societies, weaving has been a very important art in Naga society.

Credits go to women in general for the weaving activities and skills of weaving different style and forms. Angami Naga women have been a carrier of identity and a contributor to economy through the art of weaving. The Industrial Revolution began, in large part, as mechanization of the production happened, especially in textiles, and so changes in weaving and cloth-making production meant immense changes in women's lives and helped give rise to the movements for women's rights.

When we look into the different parts of the world we find that weaving has been a very important and most essential activity of the society as well as on the economy. Looking at the time of ancient Egypt, weaving linen and spinning thread were important activities of the household economy. Weaving is a women's craft and it is another instant of the simplicity of Homeric society that goddesses, queens, princes, were all skilled weavers<sup>1</sup>. Way back in 2700 BC, China credits Si-ling-chi, wife of the prince Hoang-ti, with the discovery of the usefulness of silkworm thread and the methods of weaving silk thread and of raising silkworms, which became one of the most essential commodity in China and also rest of the world.

Vietnamese history also gives credit to several women with the introduction of silkworm breeding and weaving and even has a legend crediting a Vietnamese princess with the discovery of the use of silkworm. In Persia too, Women and children under women's guidance, were central to the production of this practical and artistic creation, crucial to the economy as well as the arts in early and modern Iran. Carpet weaving and, earlier, carpet tying have often been the province of women in Turkish and Anatolian culture. Navaho or Navajo Indians in the Southwest of the United States tell how Spider Woman

taught women the skills of loom weaving. Navajo rugs are still popular for their beauty and practicality. Boycott of British goods, including inexpensive manufactured cloth, meant that more women went back to home production of cloth by the revolutionary era America. Spinning wheels were a symbol of independence and freedom.

By the 18th and 19th century, the invention of the power loom helped speed the Industrial Revolution in Europe and America. Women, especially young unmarried women, soon began leaving home to work in the new textile production factories using this technology. But by the 20th century, women have reclaimed weaving as an art. In the Bauhaus movement, women were virtually relegated to the loom, however, as sexual stereotyping shaped assumptions about “women's art”. Though “women's work” and women's role in the economy has been defined differently through the ages, there's truth to the slogan, “every woman is a working woman”. An older saying, “men work from sun to sun, women's work is never done” expresses the reality that for almost all women through history, they have worked in the home at domestic chores and sometimes in the public work world, too.

In Indian industrialization handloom weaving occupies a very important place. Except some part of India, weaving is done by both men and women and not an exclusive women's job. Traces of weaving and textiles in Indian are found in the Indus valley civilization, where they used homespun for weaving. Trade link with the outside world was a witness in the ancient times due to Indian rich textiles. Several references from the text show that spinning of yarn was mainly the occupation of Indian widows. There is also evidence of ancient texts which shows not only the production and technology of



textile but also of trade in cloth. Weaving has been primarily an artisan based activity and a non-agricultural based activity in India.

Cotton is woven all over India since the early period with its own distinctive character. The traditional weaving industry in the mainland India, which is commonly generalized most of the time for the whole of Indian society, cannot be agreed upon, as weaving pattern and style in Indian society itself has their differences. Unlike the rest of the states in India, some states in north eastern part of India used back strap loin loom whereas others used frame looms. From time immemorial weaving has been an important home and a cottage industry of the people. Many regions of mainland India do not have any restriction for men to weave unlike some societies in north-eastern part of India. Women in northeastern regions take up weaving as a part of domestic chores which has helped the economy of the family and society as well. The traditional Indian society witnesses the pattern of weaving by men and spinning by women in the cottage industry.

According to the Handloom Census of India 2009-2010, nearly 27.83 lakh handloom households are engaged in weaving and other allied activities and out of which 87% are rural and 13% from urban<sup>2</sup>. Majority of the handloom working households are weaver households which means at least one member of every such household is engaged in weaving activities. In Northeast India 90% of handloom workers household are weavers. It also pointed out that in Northeast nearly 28% of the handloom workers are in domestic production<sup>3</sup>. More than 30 lakhs of workers are employed in the handloom sector, which is one of the largest economic activities after agriculture<sup>4</sup>.

The traditional handloom was overtaken by the power loom with its modern techniques in most of the regions of India but the traditional weaving in Naga society still continues with its own style of weaving. Women in Naga society still weave for the whole of the society and their family unlike many societies where the men folk weave and the women do the spinning as mentioned above. Modernization and westernization has a lot of impact in Naga society, yet it did not change the institution of traditional weaving and women's work in it. The economy that a woman earns from weaving is a standalone contribution from weaving.

There is no clear date as to when the wool came into the Naga society. The traditional people made their own wool out of cotton plantation and do weaving. In the later period in the late nineteenth century with the entry of the foreigners, slowly different foreign items and things began to pour in. It was believed that the grandfather of A.Z.Phizo<sup>5</sup> was one of the first travelers among the Nagas and he brought wool into the Angami Naga villages for weaving and selling<sup>6</sup>. Women's history as a discipline makes the assumption that it is not only in being major figures in public events that women having been part of history. Even when women have been relegated primarily to the private sphere, their influence there and the way women lived their lives were important topics to study.

### **Women and handloom weaving in traditional society:**

The Angami Naga women had the traditional ways of making and producing different kind of clothes differing from other tribes of the Nagas. As mentioned before, there is no evidence that men were indulged in cotton or loom weaving. But men were engaged in basket weaving with cane and bamboo. Basket weaving among the Angami Naga Men

was not an uncommon work for men folk in the society. These baskets weaving are woven with bamboo or cane and not of cotton and loom. Weaving baskets with bamboo or cane was not restricted to men alone, but anyone can weave basket even women folk can weave. Nagas are independent weavers from the very beginning.

Handloom weaving before the coming of the Christian missionaries was a “pure traditional handloom”<sup>7</sup> weaving. Among the different tribes of Nagas, handloom weaving is of different designs and styles. Some of the woven cloths were embellished with beads, cowrie shells and goats’ hair to denote the wealth and status of the weaver. Though there are different types of weaving, handloom weaving is studied leaving the other weavings among the Angami Nagas (also seen in Photo Plate No. 1 and Plate No. 2). This chapter brings out the works art of women in handloom weaving in the society and understands how they have been carrying the identity of the society in general. It will also try to find out and study the work of women in weaving where the different cloths indicate different status of a person in a society. It argues and put women at the center of the argument.

Handloom weaving in its discourse has played a pivotal role in the patriarchal Angami society. Clothes and food being the main wants of human in every society, weaving has been an important part of every Naga member. Kathryn S March rightly pointed out that weaving is a symbol of gender. Weaving separates the role of both male and female and also transpires between the sexes as each defines the other<sup>8</sup>. In Angami Naga society, weaving can be called as a symbol of female gender where it brings out the differences about the male member of the society. This symbolic marks a very important identity

which Angami Naga women carry from generation down the line. This symbol can be seen in terms of looks and in term of work.

Weaving among the Naga tribes have different design, colors, and style from each other. They weave their clothes indicating their own beliefs and traditional ways of lifestyle. The Naga weaving design also contains the image of living and non-living things. Women use the loin-loom for traditional shawl-weaving while the narrow fly shuttle is used to weave other fabrics. Women in the Naga society perform spinning, like dyeing and weaving, and every Naga woman is supposed to weave the clothes of her family. Versatile artisans can refer to the Naga women's as they leave an impression of ethnicity on most of their objects of everyday use. Decorations were even made to their deadly weapons is evident from their *daos*<sup>9</sup> and spears. Their bamboo drinking pots are embossed beautifully with various cultural motifs. The female members of Naga society take the credit for making the dress materials for everyday use produced on the primitive looms are a visual delight.

The Angamis use different tools for weaving were such as “*Dzüba, Dzübo, dzükri, dzüpa, dzünyi, dzübe, dzüpow, dzüli, dzürie, dzürüsi, khuthu dzükrie, khuthu sicha, chiepfü*”<sup>10</sup>, etc.,. All these weaving tools were mostly made from Bamboo and some with wood. Sometimes these tools are made by men. The different colors were taken from color of the tree leaves, flowers, cover, roots, etc. which undergo several stages. The color of the cotton is dye into different colors to weave different clothes. Khrieü Sekhose in her book “*Seweda*” gives a very clear and unique ways how the traditional Angami women dye the cotton into different colors.

The major colors of weaving for the Angamis are Red, Black, Green, White, Yellow, etc. some of the trees and plants from which they extract the colors are like *Phrie seitho*, *Tepfisülei*, *Lohesei*, *Keronha*, etc. The plants are then mixed in the cotton in different process for making the color on the cotton. For example:

1. *Phrie seitho*- The cover/ the skin of the tree is broken into pieces and grained which turns into red color. This red color is then put into the cloth which is to be woven and it is kept for 2 to 3 days, which later is mixed with a black mud taken by the side of a lake. Ultimately the cotton will turn into black in color.
2. *Tepfisülei*- The flower of this tree was collected and mixed with the white cotton, which will turn into red in color.
3. *Lohesei*- The roots of this tree is collected and is mixed with the cotton, which turns into yellow color.
4. *Keronha* or *Nhanyü kepejo*- This is a creeper plant and this is grained to get a green color for the cotton.

Weaving or '*Therhi*' is one of the important things that every Angami girl ought to know. Apart from the domestic duties, women weave shawls and loin clothes on the loom. A girl from her childhood is nurtured to learn how to weave as a part of her daily duty. Unlike the other parts of India, Nagas do not let the men folk weave cloths. It is believed, that if men weave clothes and follow this effeminate craft, they would lose their virility. Weaving is exclusively a women's monopoly in Naga society. Thus a girl child from her childhood learns and practices how to weave while the boys of her age go out to play

with his friends. Apart from learning the weaving skill, she also has to do all the household chores and help her mother.

A girl child from her early age learns how to weave cloths. She starts learning by making belts<sup>11</sup> for her grandparents and other older people. Every girl child starts weaving by making belts and belt size cloths to practice and learn. A teenage girl starts to weave cloths for themselves and for their family. These entire practices are assisted by their mothers, sisters and grandmothers. The practices of spinning and weaving in the traditional period witness all the female members of the family involve in weaving one or the other cloth. By the time they reach 15 or 16 years of age they started to weave the shawls without or with designs according to their capability.

The traditional society witnesses the high weaving skill among women and the competition between them before marriage. She weaves the clothes for her family members and also weaves before her marriage to give it to her husband later. Before her marriage, she should weave a number of shawls, for her would be husband and his family male members as a sign of capability and respect for male members of the family. Whenever there is a search for a good and capable wife in a village, girls who had very good weaving skills were appreciated and looked for.

In villages the brides were given respect by the weaving skills she has. Her skill in weaving determines to a great extent her popularity amongst eligible bachelors. In public places and occasions, weaved clothes holds a very important place in a person's image. Handloom weaving in traditional Naga society witnesses the competitive spirit among the

women folk of the society. But the modern Naga society witnesses the commercialization of weaving rather than a competition.

### **Identification of rank, age and weaving:**

The traditional Naga society witnesses the identification of rank through different weaving style. Though there was no caste system as such, people wore their dresses according to their economic status and one cannot say that one can wear whatever they want. The color, style, design, etc. matters. Though the village is a liberal in many ways, yet again a lot of restrictions and taboos surround the lives of the people. For instant among the Angami Nagas, a man wears four lines of cowries in his kilt (like wrap around) only if he has more than one or two wives. It was taboo for some common men who wear four lines of cowries in his kilt if he has only one wife. The traditional period in Angami Naga society witness men having more than one wife, that is, it was not an uncommon for any men have more than one wife<sup>12</sup>. Though there was a unique kilt for those who marry more than one wife, there is no particular wrap around/ *checha*<sup>13</sup> for women who marry more than one man. The question of not having a different wrap around/ *checha* for women does not arise here in a traditional patriarchal society.

Traditional Angami Naga society witnesses the different designs and colors than the present weaving designs. There are some *Pfhe* (shawls) and *Meni/ Checha* (mekhela / wrap around. Also see photo plate no. 1) which are used during the traditional period. So many weaving styles and design stopped due to different reasons. Some of the shawls and wrap around are still used today even after a lot of modernization. During the traditional times, weaving and using of weave clothes signify the hierarchy in the society in terms of

agricultural wealth. Every member of the society has their own shawls to use depending on their capabilities. But there are also some particular shawls which were made a particular person or section of people.

It can be differentiated by gender, wealth, age, spinsters, widower, orphans, leaders, warriors, etc. The symbol of cloth and weaving plays a very important role here. All these shawls and wrap around are made by women alone. There are also some clothes which were made exclusively for men and not for women even if they are the one who weaved day and night without sleeping. It has always been the work of the women folk which symbolizes the gender differentiation among the society. As mentioned before, the Angami Nagas do not have the caste system yet; there was a clear gap between the people in villages in terms of economy. Weaving clearly shows the hierarchical system in a society where, there are clothes which can be worn only by the rich class or only by people who can achieve certain positions in the village or community. The old aged people are given some particular woven clothes to wear which young people cannot wear even if they want to. But there are also some clothes which are common which everyone can wear.

The clothes are worn accordingly by their age and status such as being a girl, a boy, unmarried women, unmarried men, married men, married women, old men or women, etc. Anyone can be identified by the clothes he or she wears. Every tribe wears a different pattern of design, style, color, etc, to identify himself from the other person or other tribe according to age. This weaving skill of Naga women has made a remarkable difference between age, tribes and men of different rank in the Naga society. The identity that a man



carries with him through his dress comes from women who weave for the whole of the family and society in general.

Age determined the colors, designs and differences in wearing the weave shawls and wrap around / *mekhala/ Checha* by the people of every Angami Naga community. According to age, the Angamis wear different and varieties of weave clothes accordingly for different occasions. We can broadly divide people into five different groups by the different ways of clothes they used in the traditional society.

*Boys and girls:* The beginners or the first group of the people is below 15 years of age. In Angami Naga society, there are different clothes worn by both boys and girls. *Phizhoni*<sup>14</sup> or *nikhro*<sup>15</sup> or skirt and a *phfemhu*<sup>16</sup> as a shawl were worn by a girl as her first clothes (shown in Plate No. 4 and Plate No. 6). A boy wears a white kilt or short wrap around like a skirt. The kilt is usually white in color. These are the first clothes which are worn by the any child once he or she starts wearing clothes in Angami Naga society. *Chürupfhe* is known as a sacred shawl which is considered as a respected shawl among the shawls in society. Only rich man's daughter can own this shawl. A man who has given the feast of merit can only give this shawl to his daughter. When a girl reaches a certain age, she starts using a wrap- around called as *neikhronei*. Once she starts using this cloth she is considered as a woman and not a little girl anymore. This *neikhronei* is used under the *meni/* wraparound of a woman.

*Spinsters:* *Teipiepfhe* is known as a woman's shawl. It's a taboo to carry a baby boy and use this shawl as this is exclusively for women. Though old women also used this shawl, mostly it's worn by the spinsters. *Peüpfhe* is called as a shawl for the unmarried women.

The unmarried people have different designs and colors from the children's shawls and kilt. A teenage girl or an unmarried woman wears a top which is white in color called as 'bache'<sup>17</sup>. Along with the white tops, they also use a shawl known as 'phfemhu' and wear a kilt or *checha* known as "lora mhhüsü"<sup>18</sup>. The teenage boys and unmarried men started to wear a black color kilt. *Nuokhriepfhe* is worn only by the rich brothers whose sisters can afford to weave this kind of shawls.

*Married women:* *Tsuoüruopfhe* is a rich women's cloth and not an ordinary cloth for every woman. The married people wear a different pattern from other groups. Married women wear a black top called as "bache keti"<sup>19</sup> and a shawl known as *phfemhu*. When a woman gets married, she has the liberty to wear any color of *Checha* unlike the other two groups mentioned earlier.

*Married men:* Rich people usually have a number of woven clothes yet there are some clothes which are considered as higher as and better than others. *Rhiedi* shawl is exclusively worn by the richest men folk and not by anyone else. Women are not allowed to wear this shawl. *Dozo* shawl is worn by married men alone who can afford it. A man can earn this shawl by working in a rich man's house and earn this shawl in term of kind as his reward. *Rourü* shawl is called a rich man's shawls where everyone looked up to this shawl. Only rich men and their sons wore this shawl. *Lalapfhe* is another rich man's shawl. This shawl is worn by the rich men, and his sons signify that they are equally good to do and respect for each other. *Pfethopfheü* is also shawl of wealth. *Ketsukehiepfhe* is a shawl for those rich men who had achieved a certain status, such as the feast of merit. *Pfheva* shawl is worn by married men also who can afford it. Married men on the other

hand wear some special weave clothes unlike the others. The married men use a kilt known as “*keshüni*”<sup>20</sup> with a special belt having three designs on the back. Once a man gets married, he can use a shawl known as ‘*phfe she*’ which is a shawl of respect in society. This *phfeshe*<sup>21</sup> consist of two shawls namely, *lohe*<sup>22</sup> and *lora mhusü*.

*Old people:* The elderly group of the people in the society usually avoids wearing bright colors. They used shawls and *checha* without much designs. Elderly men wear shawl which is known as ‘*theva phfe*’, which is white in color with black stripped. Elderly women wear black and faded pink color *checha* known as “*keca ni*”<sup>23</sup>. Elderly women usually avoid red and blue color *checha* as these colors are considered as colors of young people. Normally the shawls for older people are of dark colors and not bright colors. *Pfheva* is a shawl worn by old aged people who can afford it and those who have self-sufficient food daily. Poor old aged men usually don’t owe this shawl even though they want to. *Lorü*, *Mekhrüpfhe* and *Rhievi* shawls are worn exclusively by people both old men and women. *Pfhemhou*, *Lohe* and *Loramhoushü* are worn by both men and women. These shawls have different design according to their gender. *Lohe* are of different colors depending on gender.

*Pfhelhipfhe* is a shawl which is worn by poor people in villages. Old shawls are brought together and stitch for a new shawl for poor people who cannot afford a new shawl.

*Widow:* *Loshü* shawl is a female shawl used by widows and old women alone. Young girls and young mothers are taboo to use the shawl. Men are taboo to use this shawl. *Lopapfhe* is made especially for those men who are a widower. This shawl signifies widower status in society.

*Orphan: Samerünuopfhe* is a shawl exclusively for the orphans. This is given to the orphans to brighten their lives, make them happy in their orphanage days. Women with similar weaving skill in village sit together and weave this shawl for the orphans to brighten them from being felt as an outcast in society.

There are some clothes which indicate the sad occasion and symbolizes that the person is wearing it is sad. Some of the shawls used on such an occasion are like, firstly *Siaziepfhe* which is worn on the day of the funerals of their loved ones by wealthy men and women in society. Not every man can afford this shawl. This shawl is taboo to be worn on any other occasions except on funeral day. Secondly the *Movapfhe* can be called as a funeral shawl or shawl to be given to the person who died. This is made especially for funerals which rich and wealthy men prepare and keep for themselves. The people mourn and put the shawl on the person who passes away. Thirdly, *Gakhropfhe* which is made out of a plant called *gakhro*. This shawl is used on sad occasions. Mostly poor people who cannot afford wool to weave shawls weave this shawl.

Women and men have separate clothing since the traditional times. There was always a clear demarcation of using the shawls in Angami Naga society. If women made or used the shawls alike men's style, there will be shouting and scolding from the elderly women<sup>24</sup>. There has been always a term "*thepfumia sü thepfumia zo*" means "men are men" especially in these contexts. The rigid patriarchal society puts men in a place where women can never be an equal level with them in any field.

The society in the traditional setup can be understood in different ways. In terms of attires of the people in a particular village, they can be distinguished clearly between different

classes of people based on their economic status. A person can achieve a particular status and earn a respectable shawl by his act of bravery in head hunting. The number of heads taken in the headhunting war determines a person's status in the society and village. A special shawl with unique is worn by those brave people to show that they have chopped so many heads and are the protector of the village. The shawl indicates the status of the person which everyone in the village and people from other village will look up to him as the hero. Though a rich man wants to wear the shawl of a hero who has chopped many heads of the enemy he cannot do that as he is not entitled to wear even if he is rich and can afford.

Another identification of a person who wears a unique yet special shawl for his deed is the person who gives Feast of Merit. A person wears a special shawl after he throws the party known as the feast of merit. This type of party is given by those people who are rich in their agricultural crops and wanted to share with the people in order to get certain status. Once the feast is given to the villagers, the status is given to the man and then on he wears the shawl to indicate his generosity and wealth among the people. This special shawl can be earned only those who give the feast and identify himself from the rest of the villagers.

### **Taboo and weaving:**

Taboo is one thing which has been permanently associated with the traditional people of the Angami Nagas. In every aspect in the lives, the people are bound by taboos which bound more in women's lives unlike in men's lives. From morning till night, being a girl till she becomes an old woman, as a woman, etc, taboos surrounding them seems to be

uncountable in Angami Naga society. Apart from all other taboos, taboos upon women while weaving can be seen in Angami Naga society, though it's the monopoly of women's work. The patriarchal taboo in Angami Naga society did not leave women alone, even in her work in weaving. In the patriarchal society, it was the men who make laws and not women, thus these taboos were laid down by men folk upon women.

Weaving is very much associated with both women and men but there are certain things which Angami men stay away from it. The cloths weaved by the women folk are worn by men to identify them from the rest of other people. But in the process of making the clothes there is a taboo to even touch the articles used for weaving and men cannot touch them. Considering women to be the weaker sex in the society, the so called 'women's things' or weaving articles as a symbol of female should not touch by the men folk, as there was a fear that men might become weak especially in their legs and body as a whole. A woman or a girl was not supposed to walk over the lying man or over his leg as she weaves clothes and do 'women's work'.

Warfare or the so called 'head hunting' being one of the most important activities in men's lives, there is a taboo to weave clothes and even the women are taboo to weave clothes on some of these particular days of hunting period. It is believed that by touching those weaving articles or tools, men gets weak to go after their enemies and even find it difficult to go for hunting. Women being considered as a weak being than men, all the 'women's work or thing' are restricted to men. The Angami men are not even allowed to walk over the weaving articles, and even if they do so they have to go backward are

rewind their walk over. This walk over is belief to weaken their knee and legs while competing with other men folks.

Though weaving has been an important activity and a very necessary thing in women's lives, sometimes weaving is banned in some particular occasions and festivals. Since weaving is a monopoly for women and tag it into 'women's work', no women is allowed to weave on some particular days like during 'wrestling day' when the men folk are having the wrestling meet to compete their strength. Weaving is strictly taboo on wrestling day as there is a fear and belief that the players might get injuries or weak leg if women weave clothes on that very day. All the women folk in the village makes sure that they don't weave clothes on the wrestling day to avoid any unwanted injury upon the players. Used of weaved clothes are not banned on these days, but making of it was not allowed because of the reason that it's 'women's work' and it may bring harm or bad luck to the men folk. The traditional Angami societies witness the traditional clothes worn by all the people on the wrestling day with respect. It is a taboo to weave on festivals, especially on the first day. Weaving symbolizes a person's rank and status, yet this very art is taboo on some particular days because it is the work of women.

Taboos surround the lives of every Angami Naga woman in one or the other. Apart from other taboos of the society, women who weave for the whole society and family are tabooed to weave cloths on some particular days as mentioned above. These restrictions and taboos levied on women are directly coming from the patriarchal system of the society. Women are hardworking weaver and a dedicated woman to their families and society, but these 'women's art and women's work' push them aside for the superiority of

the male members of the society. The cloths weaved by women has help men to identify themselves in society and friends but these work process and the person in work has been denied freedom to work anytime. The oppression of women by men in all sphere of the society seems to be seen since time immemorial.

### **Weaving after the coming of Christianity:**

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the coming of the foreigners into the Naga Hills the society underwent a drastic transformation. Gradually, the society witness changes with the so called “new wave”<sup>25</sup>. Naga society witness the entry of the British administrators and the American missionaries in a very changing manner in social, political, economic, religion, culture, etc. The coming of the American missionaries with the new faith in the Naga society has all the more brought light on one hand and confusion on the other. Modern education and Christianity have brought enormous changes in the lives of the people and especially the women in particular; the art of weaving went down as there was more encouragement on education. But that does not mean that women completely ignore weaving, but instead weaving continued to be an important agent and carrier of identity of the Nagas through their weaving skill.

By the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Angami women witness significant changes as girls started attending schools introduced by the American missionaries. Education was introduced and used as their effective vehicle for spreading Christianity. With the coming of Christianity, the society again witnesses the role played by patriarchy, in relation to both traditional and the patriarchal assumption of American missionaries<sup>26</sup>. Girls were encouraged to attend school by the missionaries, but the early period witness only few



girls attending classes. Apart from educating them on how to read and write they were even encouraged, to weave, embroidered, teach them manners, gardening, etc.

Women continue to weave after the coming of Christianity, but the number decrease compared with the weaving women before the coming of Christianity. The handloom weaving increased in towns rather than villages, as the weavers moved towards a larger space for marketing and also because of their children's education. Each tribe continued to use distinguishing colors and motifs that are often based on tribal folklore. Earlier, natural dyes extracted from barks, roots and plants were used for dyeing cotton yarn and woven fabrics. With the entry of the foreigners, they brought in new things and also gave the idea of exchanging commodity with other neighboring regions. The traditional style of extracting of colors and cotton yarn slowly faded and people started buying and exchanging commodity for wool and cotton thread from neighboring regions and places of Assam.

The colonial period saw the entry of new wool and cotton from Assam in women's lives for weaving. But that does not mean that the traditional style of extracting of cotton thread stopped completely, it continued in the villages. The new wools gave a better idea of the women folk to create a better and a new design for the family and society. They continued their weaving art along with the coming of education. Education was one of the main priorities of the Christian missionaries in the transformation of the Naga society.

The coming of American missionaries had not only converted the Nagas in religion, but also in their work. The wives of the missionaries help in teaching the women folk in

Naga Hills to learn new things and taught them new method for weaving and sewing. As quoted in the missionary report,

*“....conduct special meeting for women, visit from house to house, teach sewing, singing...care for widows orphans and outcastes, send out bible women or look after sick and the destitute...often go out with their husband on tours”<sup>27</sup>.*

Young girls continue to play around and learn weaving like the pre-colonial times, but slowly weaving among the young girls, especially in towns declined. Though weaving among the young girls in this period slow down, that does not mean that they have totally left the weaving art. Women in villages and even women in towns continue to weave for the family and even for commercial purposes. Commercialization of their weaving product began to flourish within the society which indeed helps the women to maintain her family economy better. With their income from weaving the women folk were able to help the family financially; women started contributing to the family income in term of money.

Weaving was encouraged by the missionaries from the very beginning of their entry. They even brought other tribes women to teach Angami women to use loom, “... a Tangkhul woman to teach weaving on a broad loom, for which a loom was bought from Imphal”<sup>28</sup>. But these privileges were limited to a few living in and near Kohima. Angami women in villages could not make use of this opportunity given to them. Among the Angami women also there were difference in all levels as women in and around Kohima area were benefitted more than women living in the villages under Kohima district.

With the introduction of girls' hostel in Kohima by the missionaries, girls in the hostel were taught not only the western and the formal education but also they were taught sewing and weaving. They were taught new skills of handicrafts in weaving. Aphuno in her work mentioned that,

*“.. they not only learned to read and write but they learned new skills in handicrafts and were trained in practical need- based activities that enhanced their skills further. Some of these have been alluded to already. Perhaps the best illustration is the improved weaving and other skills such as sewing and knitting. Weaving was improved from the traditional ways. Such learning skills were passed on”<sup>29</sup>.*

With the new modern technology, it made the weaving for women more easily come up with new design and styles. Though new technology began to cover the traditional weaving style, women in Naga society continue to make use of these and weave the traditional shawls and clothes which began more valuable with the coming of modern technology. Though many girls continue for their higher education, they have the basic idea of weaving. Apart from doing all the household chores, women weave to contribute to the family comfort. The product goes far and wide today, and from the design and skill people identifies the product, and through that the Nagas in general gain identity which Naga women in general did it.

The contemporary saw the emerging tradition handloom weaving center in the capital and some other districts. These weaving centers give opportunity to unemployed women and also promote the weaving skills of Naga women. These centers export the traditional

weaving out of state and also out of the country. The open of few weaving industries in different districts has helped in the economic status of the state and family in particular. It opens up a gate for women to weave and sell their products which help with the family income as well as help the state in exporting the traditional shawls to other parts of the world.

The traditional weaving art of the Nagas, which is exclusively a monopoly activity of women continue to hold a very high prestige not only among the Nagas but to the outsiders also. The traditional style age-old practice of shawl weaving has been traditionally handed over from generation to generation and the usage of shawls is literally there from the ‘cradle to the grave’. Shawl weaving has been one of the native textile customs of the Nagas for generations now.

Women have been a carrier of identity through the art of weaving skill and her enormous work. With their monopoly art of weaving the Naga women’s have been an identity carrier for the whole of society from traditional period. The identity that every individual carries with themselves to be identified by others was given by women and their work. With the change of time and civilization taking its own ways, weaving in Angami Naga society has undergone many changes yet, women’s work in weaving remains remarkable which need to be remembered and mentioned. Their cultural activities throughout the different periods have been challenged by different foreign encounters yet Angami women remain strong as the “identity carriers” of the society through weaving.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> AJB Wace. "Weaving or Embroidery?". *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 52, 1984, p. 51-55

<sup>2</sup> *Third national Handloom census of weavers and allied workers 2010*. New Delhi, P. 26

<sup>3</sup> *Third national Handloom census of weavers and allied workers 2010*. New Delhi, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Utter Pradesh developmental report*. Vol. 2, p. 85

<sup>5</sup> A. Z. Phizo (1903- 1990) was a Naga leader. He is considered by many Nagas as the "Father of the Nagas" for his remarkable work on inclination of seeking succession from India after the World War II.

<sup>6</sup> K. Sekhose, *Seweda*, Calcutta, Hooghly Printing Co. Ltd, 2000 (reprint), p. 9

<sup>7</sup> Pure Traditional weaving here refers to that period when the cotton and thread were spin from their own products and not brought in from neighboring states and regions.

<sup>8</sup> Kathryn S March. *Weaving, Writing and Gender*. Man new series, vol. 8, Royal anthropologist institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1983, p. 729.

<sup>9</sup> A big knife.

<sup>10</sup> These are some of the basic tools required to weave cloths. There are also some other tools apart from these tools which are required while making more designs. Also see plate no 1.

<sup>11</sup> Weaved belt is use by almost every women and old people as their wrap around, kilt and shorts need to be supported while working. Most of the girls are given the left over wool and thread by their mothers to weave belt and learn from those so called 'starters'.

<sup>12</sup> A man can divorce his wife and remarry again, like wise a widow or a divorced woman can also remarry to any man she prefers to marry. There is no definite rule about the number of time a person should marry.

<sup>13</sup> *Checha* is a term use in *Tenydie* for the warp around used by women folk.

<sup>14</sup> *Phizhoni* is a skirt or warp around type worn by the little girls. This skirt is a combination of white, black and red color.

<sup>15</sup> *Nikhro* literally means undergarment. Among the Angami villages, the termination of this skirt is called differently according to villages from villages.

<sup>16</sup> *Phfemhu* is a shawl which is a combination of white, black and red color with different designs in different parts of the shawl and at the end of one end.

<sup>17</sup> *Bache* is usually two pieces of cloths which they use as tops to cover their upper part of their body. These two pieces of cloths are bind separately near a person's neck (both side) holding their arms from opposite direction.

<sup>18</sup> *Loramushii* is a combination of white, black, red. White is the main background of the shawl. Small box type designs with any color can put in different parts of the body of the shawls.

<sup>19</sup> *Bache keti* means black tops used by women.

<sup>20</sup> *Keshiini* is the kilt worn by the men folk in Angami society.

<sup>21</sup> *Phfeshe* is a respectable shawl. This consists of two shawls *Lohe* and *Loramushii*.

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<sup>22</sup> *Lohe* is a shawl which has a three combination of colors. Black is the main and background of the shawl, with red and green highlight in two small rows each and with a design as one end of the shawl.

<sup>23</sup> *Kecani* is a wraparound where black is the main background color with a combination of faded pink and green strips.

<sup>24</sup> Sekhose. K says in her book, “*.u pfedzie kou chü pedi pie thepfumia pfhedzie kou nu shüshü si dzie tuo ngu sie sü.. thenu sümia üse thepfumia mhorhupfü chü moluo shie üdi- ketsapfümiako u nei mo khusie- u rhie, u lapie mhapuo chütaya*”, which means, if a shawl is made like men’s shawl and is worn by women then elderly women shout at those women as an insult to men folk.

<sup>25</sup> ‘New wave’ is used here because the Naga society during this time was hit by completely different phenomena which completely transform the society in different ways.

<sup>26</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy. *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the present*. Kohima, 2014, p. 80.

<sup>27</sup> Assam Baptist Missionary Conference Report, 1913, p. 21, as reprint in Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the present*. Kohima, 2014, p. 99.

<sup>28</sup> Assam Baptist Missionary Conference Report, 1913, p. 41, as reprint in Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the present*. Kohima, 2014, p. 101.

<sup>29</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the present*. Kohima, 2014, p. 102

## **Chapter - V**

### **Religious Practices and Women of the Angami Naga Society**

Until very recently the question of religion and women did not come up while studying about women. Mostly the question of economy, society and polity was raised for so many years. Many feminist and scholars have been working on social issues and economic status of women, but the relationship between women and religion has not been questioned until very recently, and this needs to be addressed at this juncture. Women's religious identity needs to be questioned and understood, as this area has been an ignored topic for a long time. A person's gender cannot determine the position in religious or worship place and this issue need to be addressed. This chapter looks at Angami Naga women and their participation and their relationship with the traditional religion and Christianity.

Religion plays a very important role in the lives of the people in every society in the world. The beliefs, values, and behaviors of the people in the society are shared among people who are both found in religion and culture. Anthropologist defines religion as a system of beliefs in supernatural forces with symbols and rituals that make life meaningful. Religion has a very high impact on the culture of society all over the world. E.B Tylor and James Frazer define 'primitive religion' as essentially being the belief in spiritual beings. They are among the first researchers who tried to define and theorize the nature of religion. They characterized primitive religion as a belief in magic and unseen force or power and that religion is a systematized animism and that religion involves much more<sup>1</sup>.

Emile Durkheim argued that religion depends on social institutions and is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things<sup>2</sup>, which has a social function and more going on. According to Marx, religion is one of those social institutions which are dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society<sup>3</sup>. He is of the view that religions primary function is to maintain, reproduce and legitimate class inequalities. And that religion serves to reflect ruling class interests and ideas. Religion depends on social institutions and all social institutions is dependent on economics. By the twentieth century Mircea Eliade came to be known for his research on primitive religion. Religion according to Eliade (1959) had two fundamental concepts: *the sacred and the profane*. He says religion is primarily about belief in the supernatural which are sacred<sup>4</sup>.

On the other hand, the feminist theorized religion as an instrument of domination by men. Religion has not treated men and women as equal, but has put women in marginal position. Karen Armstrong a great writer's view that religion has not been good to women, yet again women has not been subordinate within religion as there are also many mother goddesses<sup>5</sup>. Simone de Beauvoir argued that like the upper class oppressed the lower class so is religion oppressing the females,<sup>6</sup> thus, religion creates a false consciousness among women about preaching of equality.

To understand the traditional religion of Angami Nagas one need to understand the primitive culture of the people and know more about "animism"<sup>7</sup>. Animism according to Tylor is the core of all religion where it is ontology in which objects and non-human-being poses soul, life- source and qualities of personhood<sup>8</sup>. Animism generally is a doctrine and belief where all objects and universes have a soul.



## **Angami women and Animism**

The religious identities of the Angami Naga women seem to hold no place in Angami society, though women were always a part and parcel of the religious activities throughout. This identity that the women folk carries from generation down the line has been very remarkable in the religious history of the Angami Nagas. From the religious participation of household to the public rituals women has always been an important part of the ritualistic world. Some of the early European scholars try to construct the history of the Nagas in general through some interpretation of the locals which has led many people and onlookers to wonder and question the real history of the Nagas. Not much has been addressed on women's history and women's issues, thus the necessity arises for the researchers to bring out the question of women and their identity which has been playing an important role yet ignored while writing the history of the Nagas.

Nagas did not have a particular name for their primitive religion, even though they were religious people. Many scholars hold that the original religion that the Nagas believe was nothing but 'animism', but there are also some writers and scholars who do not agree<sup>9</sup>. 'Animism' in Naga society has been a controversial debate among many scholars who writes about the religious history of the Nagas. But the religion of the Nagas was in the form of Animism who believed in the existence of souls and spirits of matters. Nagas lived closely to nature and sense its mysterious powers and believed in the existence of a single Supreme God, benevolent spirits and malevolent spirits. Besides the supreme God, Nagas also believed in the existence of ancestral spirits, village deities, household deities, etc. The deities were worshipped with reverence and offered sacrifice with food and

drink. The religion of the Nagas was also centered largely on fertility cults. The religious practices and ways of the Nagas had a very great impact in their everyday lives from the traditional times.

Like the other tribes of the Nagas, Angami tribe is a religious tribe. The religion they follow in the traditional period is called “*Tsana*”<sup>10</sup>. Though there were no set of methods, the religion or ‘*tsana*’ were passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. Angami traditional religion called *tsana* and *nanyü*<sup>11</sup> was characterized by a belief in spirits. From the traditional Angami society, all the activities of the people revolve around the religious beliefs of the people. The beliefs of the Supreme Being and other spirits of all things were a common belief of the people. Taboos of different kind surround the lives of the Angami Nagas in all their aspects of lives but more women in particular. The traditional religion of the Angami Nagas controls the women folk under certain taboos to be kept which were considered as a protection for women and not on gender. Taboo in Angami traditional religion plays a very important role in the lives of the people and was kept sacred.

There are countless spirits the Angami believed in their ancestors’ religion. Like many other religions, ‘*tsana*’ also has a lot of female spirits and deities. One will find that in Angami *tsana* religion, there are more of female deities than that of male deities. As mentioned above the view of Karen Armstrong on women and religion one will notice that though there are a number of female spirits and deities in *tsana*, *tsana* itself restricts and oppresses women in almost all the movement of their lives. In this *tsana* the contradiction will be seen as there are so many female deities and their important role in

the belief system of the people, yet on the other side of practice the exclusion, oppression and the taboos levied upon women will be clearly visible in society.

### **Deities and spirits:**

Before discussing the role of women in the religious activities in traditional society, some Angami spirits and deities will be discussed first. The Angamis believe in the existence of a Supreme Being the spirit god who creates everything. Chief of all or above all creatures was '*Kepenuopfü*'. *Kepenuopfü* was considered to be the creator and supreme of all the living creatures. The word '*Kepenuopfü*' literally means 'birth spirit' which was also considered as the ancestress of the entire human race. *Kepenuopfü* was considered male being but the term '*pfü*' is a feminine termination, which always carried a feminine sense. The Angamis believed that *kepenuopfü* dwelt in the sky and when a person died his soul went up to the sky to her. It was believed that the creator do not interfere with the activity of the creation. Many think that *kepenuopfü* was '*Kechi-Kerho*' was the spirit that inhabits stones.

'*Terhuo*'<sup>12</sup> or 'deity' is a common term used for all the supernatural being in Angami society. *Terhuo* are so many of them with different types and names with different works. There are good and bad *terhuo*. They are termed and called as one name '*terhuo*' though they have their own names. But when the missionaries came and translated the word '*terhuo*', they term it as 'Satan'. The concept and notion of all the *terhuo* turns out to be evil in the minds of the people. Literally, 'satan' means '*terhuokesuo*'. The qualities of some of them were definitely benevolent.

Some of the *terhuo* which the Angamis were aware of were like ‘*Rutzeh*’ the evil one. He was believed to be the giver of sudden death. ‘*Maweno*’ was the Angami deity of fruitfulness. Physically she was described to be very short with long hair that swept the ground behind her. She kept pebbles and paddy in her bag and when asked for the gift she gives one and never two. These pebbles make the crops and cattle increased. Thus, those who saw *Maweno* are considered to be the lucky one as they harvest a lot more than they expect. ‘*Ayepi*’ was a fairy that lived in the house and brought prosperity. She was not seen by many but her tracks sometimes were seen like little human footprints in the paddy store or on the dusty floor.

*Telepfü* was another female Spirit or *Terhuo* and she was believed to be a mischievous being. She carried people away, but she does not kill them. She carried the people far away and made them senseless, but allowed other people to find the person again. Other *terhuo* are like ‘*Tsükho*’ and ‘*Dzürawü*’ who were two spirits-husband and wife. ‘*Metsimo*’ was a spirit who guards the approach to paradise and ‘*Tekhu-Rhuo*’ was the god of tigers. *Ruopfü* was considered as the ancestress of all the spirits. ‘*Tem*i’ was a ghost who could not kill human, but threatened and frightened the cowards. The majority of *Terhuo* were unknown by name, unspecified, vague inhabitants of the invisible world. *Ruopfü* is also a female spirit which seemed to be the guardian angel. In some cases *Ruopfü* was seen as man’s own soul. Thus seeing the above deities, one would notice that the Angamis believed deities and spirits were more female spirits than male.

Looking at the worship rituals of the Angamis one found that it was carried out by certain priest of the villages. ‘*Kemevo*’<sup>13</sup> or ‘*Zievo*’<sup>14</sup> the priest was the one who did all the

important sacrifice. He was usually the descendant of the founder of the village. He directed all the public ceremonies and fixed the days of them and as the office was hereditary<sup>15</sup>. He was also the repository of the genealogical and historical tradition of his village, clan and as the kindred. A female could never become a *Kemevo* in Angami society. In some villages the post of the *Kemevo* was hereditary, but in some others it was not and it was taken over by the eldest male member in the village. In the hereditary villages the post of the *Kemevo* was taken up by the brother of the deceased *Kemevo* if he dies without a son, the wife or the daughters could never take the post of the highest priest i.e. *Kemevo*. The reason behind the post not being given to women was that women are considered to be confined inside the house and they had no idea about the organization of the village. Thus, when a *kenyü*<sup>16</sup> or Genna was announced by the *Kemevo* it was kept very strict by the whole member of the village<sup>17</sup>.

Genna in Angami society was followed very strictly in the traditional times. Genna means forbidden, prohibition or taboo; it can be of one or more days. The custom of Genna plays a very important role in the religious life of the people. In any Angami village if a Genna is announced for a particular day, no one is allowed to go to field or work in any way, be it men or women, young or old. One will find more of taboo and prohibition on women than on men, which will be discussed later. Genna is generally observed and imposed mainly on the aspect like dress, food, work, etc<sup>18</sup>.

Though Angami women could not become a priest or *kemevo*, the wife of the *kemevo* played a very vital role in helping her husband. All the family rites and rituals to propitiate the household deities, the ancestral spirits are led by the wife. It was the mother

and the Grandmother who instills all the significant details of religious rites and rituals to their children<sup>19</sup>. But all the important sacrifices for the so called Supreme Being were done by men alone, where women hardly even attend those rituals and sacrifices for the village level.

Though women could not become a *Kemevo*, there were some old women who were believed to be having some power and tell about the future or about a missing person and healed sick people. These women can be termed as '*themumiapfii*' or female shaman also. Female shaman in Angami society seems to play a vital role in the traditional period. *Themumiapfii* in any Angami village are approached by every individual seeking answers of their doubts about any suspected spirit issues. They are well respected in the villages and some were even known to other neighboring villages also. Some are even believed to communicate with the other world.

### **Festivals:**

Religion has been closely associated with the festivals in the traditional times. Festival among the Nagas in general plays a very important role in the religious lives of the people. Among the many festivals of the Angami tribe, '*Sekrenyi*'<sup>20</sup> is one of the most important festivals among the people. It is the festival of purification and fertility which falls on the second day after the full moon of the month '*keno*' (February) or the month of '*kezi*' (March). The ceremony was done to ensure good health for the whole of the community for the coming year<sup>21</sup>. On the day of Genna all the men folk go to the village well or pond to take a bath whereas, women were restricted from going and fetching water as they were considered to be unclean unlike the men. After all the necessary

rituals done by men, women were then allowed to join in for the festival. *Sekrenyi* the most important festival of the Angamis excludes the female members of the society in almost all the rituals and gives importance to the male members of the society.

Another festival of the Angamis is the '*Tekranyi*' which was marked by singing and dancing. The singing and dancing were only for the unmarried youths, but even married men can participate in it unlike married women who were restricted. This is the festival where women had the liberty to do almost all the Gennas with men and also in merry making except that women in the first ritual should fix their eyes to the ground and should not look up. Hutton puts in the reason that women were regarded as a most immodest if they look about during this ritual.

'*Kavate*' is a ritual done exclusively by the women on 5th of *Rüde* (December). This ritual was done for the manifold and plentiful wealth of the family. The *Kavate* ritual was done by women and men were not allowed to join them. Every Angami festival begins with a ritual called '*kizhie*' which is done by women and not by men. If in a family, there was no female then a young unmarried girl was called from some other family to do the ritual for that family.

The most important social and political unit among the Nagas was the village. In traditional times, most of the villages of the Naga tribes remained in the hill summit. The Angami villages still remain at the hill summit, and with the growing population, the people started coming down towards and beyond the "*Kharu*"<sup>22</sup> or the village gate. The *Kharu* still remained as a man's work as women were not allowed to participate in '*Kharusü*' or '*Chiesü*', i.e. pulling of the *Kharu*. The pulling of *kharu* still remains a very

important even in the religious lives of the people as they keep sacred in this ceremonial act. Women are not allowed to participate in pulling but women participate in carrying food and water for those people who are pulling the *Kharu*.

Head hunting, warfare and raiding in the traditional Angami society was a common activity which is closely related to their religion. After the head hunting is over, the head of the enemies was carried to the village singing and chanting in the praises and glory of their god<sup>23</sup>. The practice of headhunting was a ritual warfare for the Nagas in the traditional times. The religious ways of the people taboo the head hunters to kill their own clan members even from another village. Bringing the head of a woman or a child was highly regarded as they stay well protected in the village. Special rituals were done after the return of the warriors, but women were not allowed to go and meet their husbands on the very first day.

The traditional period witness a diverse life with the modern period. From the social to the political to the religious life of the people, the ways and habits have been a unique culture. The religious ceremony of traditional marriage in bringing the bride at night to the groom's place was followed very strictly. Women had the liberty to choose their own husband, but there were also some cases where arrangements were done for some marriages. Divorce was not an uncommon thing in the traditional society as their religion does not lie out any restriction on that issue. Divorced women have no objection to remarry again. The divorced men or women are not looked down or different from other people of the society. In the name of their religion and rituals women have to be ready after the return of their husbands from head hunting raids. For all the occasions and



festivals *Zu* or the rice beer was used as a health drink and sometimes for religious purpose also. Religion has in one or the other way bind the people where all their aspects of lives revolve around their religious life.

Thus, the role of Angami women in religious activities was no less significant from Angami men not only in the household ritual and worship, but also in the public festivals but women were absent in the pre-colonial Naga history. Women in early Naga society, though took part in religious practices; the rituals in the public arena were conducted by men and not by women. However, all the household rituals and some ancestral rituals were done by women in the early Naga society. In the traditional society women, whether, wife, daughter, sister or mother was made to feel inferior to man. The traditional period made the women feel inferior where women were confined to the household and food gathering duties within the confines of the village state.

### **Coming of Christianity.**

Many Naga historians and writers today consider the conversion of Nagas to Christianity as a blessing, as an important historical development which brought them out from “darkness to light”. On the other hand, in reconstructing the historical past, the Naga historians and other Naga writers took pride in the “democratic political institutions”<sup>24</sup> and ‘village republics’ of the period which they categorized as “darkness”. These historians could not escape this contradiction in their projects. Instead of looking at history as merely a transition from “darkness to light” one need to locate the historical realities from a different perspective. One need to take women’s perspective and tries to

understand this historical phase by placing Naga women, particularly Angami women, at the heart of the debate.

There had been remarkable changes with the adaptation of the modern society. There were some confluence factors that affected the role and the status of women. The coming of the British and their annexation with the new system of administration, civil and military firstly change and affect the people. Then the coming of Christianity brought tremendous changes along with education as its vehicle. All these factors affect the lives of women in one way or the other. One should also understand that the coming of foreigners was like a coin with two sides.

Two historical events in the nineteenth century, which forever changed the Naga history were invasion of the British in the Naga inhabited territories (from 1853 to 1876), and the coming of Christianity. The later event was more significant for the Naga society as a whole and women in particular for it forever changed the historico- political conditions of the Nagas. The two events were watershed events for the Nagas. For Naga writers like Horam, these two events threatened Naga culture but humanized them. As stated, “.....*the danger that ever threatened Nagas cultural identity was the introduction of Christianity by the American Baptist Missionaries*”<sup>25</sup>. Though the cultural identity and the traditional custom had been affected yet it had a wider humanizing influence, a new gospel of love and tenderness, together with new benefits which ultimately improved the lifestyles and conditions of women.

There was no doubt that the coming of Christianity in the Naga Hills brought tremendous changes to the lives of the people. For the first time Dr. Edward Winter Clark (E.W.

Clark) in 1869 arrived among the Ao Naga tribes. Dr. E.W. Clark in December 1871 began to visit the Hill region of the Ao people, to the abode of the 'Head Hunters'. It was by this time that Christianity began to spread among the people. Under the supervision of Rev. Clark Dewitt King (C. D. King) who arrived in 1878, a mission station was started in Kohima the country of the Angami tribe.

The effort of many American missionaries with the new faith 'Christianity' to the Naga Hills was a turning point for the tradition and the culture of the Naga people. There had been major changes in all the fields, be it social, political, economy, religion, etc, the western culture has up to some extent conquered and influenced everything that was in and around the region. Not only did the living condition of the society change, but also the lives of the women in particular changed completely. Initially the works of the missionaries were opposed by the Nagas. The teachings of the Christian doctrine were seen as threats to the traditional indigenous forms of worships and rituals. The first converts were not even allowed to live inside the village boundary.

In January 1832 the Angami Naga country was visited by European when Captains Francis Jenkins and R.B Pemberton with a party of 100 soldiers and 800 coolies or porters (to carry their baggage and provision) marched from Muneepore (Manipur) to Assam through the Angami territories<sup>26</sup>. Their main objective was to search for a route between Manipur and Assam. The Angamis were the first Naga tribe who came into contact with the British. As a result of this contact the Angami areas were the first to be annexed by the British. The coming of the American missionaries into the Angami country brought about changes in the Angami society and also in the role of women.

Mrs. Mary Meat Clark (M. M. Clark) wife of the first missionary to the Naga Hills, Dr. E. W. Clark was the first to check and work for the welfare of the women in particular. In 1878 she started the first school in a village called Molungyimsen<sup>27</sup> and evening classes for the women were conducted<sup>28</sup>. Under the leadership of Mrs. Clark women began to participate in many Christian activities. The evening meetings in the village did not fully meet the needs of the women, thus meetings were held exclusively for women. Among the several institutions championed by Mrs. Clark, Schools, and women's fellowship were noteworthy and these act as primary agents of social change. Besides religious teachings, one of the important emphases was on the proper understanding of women.

The coming of Christianity and the work of Mrs. Clark for women was a turning point in the lives of the people. She encouraged women to serve their husbands and children and to maintain their family properly, thus in return served the church and the society. By the late nineteenth century there came up a lady pastor in Ao society which helped rising in the status of women. The very idea of status began to be debated that society should not consider women mere object bound by some traditional social barriers.

The spread of Christianity brought about numerous problems and disorder in the Naga society. The various tribes were prevented from raiding another tribe or village, worship of spirits and superstitious beliefs. Most of the missionaries were considered as a government spy by the villagers. However, very soon the missionaries were able to have trained converts among the Ao, Chang, Phom, Angami, Lotha etc., and there were responses of women converts as well.

With the coming of the missionaries and the conversion to Christianity, people started to go to church and pray, but they continued to believe in animism in one or the other way. The conversion brought disunity among the people in the village, as the old orders of social life and the culture began to be interrupted by the new faith. The earlier, converts were at first pushed out of the village, in which women had to suffer more than men. They were branded as rejected people when they were driven out of the village<sup>29</sup>. But in some villages the converts were not dislocated from the society, but were forced to follow the socio-religious rites and observance of the village. The so called spiritual awakening at this period of time was purely depended upon individual decision. Though it brought in the religious changes at first, it gradually affected all the cultural aspects of the people.

Until 1920's there was not much changes in the lives of women. But by this time after few girls got education, changes began to be visible in Angami area. This was also the time when girls' hostels were set up and girls started getting education and converting to Christianity. The missionaries find schools to be a main gateway to reach out to the people and convert them. Christianity has been identified as Education in Angami Area<sup>30</sup>. The main concern of the missionaries was to let people learn how to read and write, which will help them in the evangelization of their religion.

With the few women<sup>31</sup> who got primary education and converted to Christianity in the early period were sent back to their respective villages and other villages to help out as primary teachers. Those people who were converted at the early part along with the missionaries help out in evangelizing in different villages and area starting with teaching

the people to read and write. They also taught the people to take a better personal health and hygiene<sup>32</sup>. Almost all the early women who got education began to help as Sunday school teacher along with the other Christians.

Naga women in general had been benefited by the coming of Christianity. Education was introduced for both boys and girls as an agent and source of Christianity. The concept of 'women stays inside' began to crack up as women started coming out of their home to participate and study. Clark encouraged the learning of English for women. Evening literary class was introduced where women could come and learnt after their work was done in fields or homes. Dr. Clark discouraged slavery and set the slaves' free from their masters by paying ransom both in cash and kind<sup>33</sup>. The setting free of slaves gave the women slaves a better position in the society and to exercise their own will power.

In 1947 the women's society for the Angamis was officially inaugurated<sup>34</sup>. Along with others one of the first Angami women who got education and help out in the kindergarten and as a bible teacher around 1925 in Kohima was Dzüvinuo<sup>35</sup>. Educated women got new roles in church and in the society because of their qualification. Women started to participate in churches, lead the devotional service, forming women's choir, etc.

However, the conversion to Christianity, led women to another phase of powerlessness in the religio-cultural society. Conversion among the Nagas, and Angamis in particular was totally an individual decision. But there were certain cases that women were compelled to convert to Christianity because of the male members of their family were also asked to do so. There were also women who had to take permission from their brothers or father in order to convert to Christianity. Since decision making was made by male members of

the society, in all the matters women seeks men's approval. Women had no say in this and very rarely took the decision of converting to Christianity.

Conversion to Christianity can be seen in both village and towns. Due to conversion there were certain institutions which were very relevant in the traditional period and now began to lose their significance, such as the feast of merit, midwifery, shamanistic practices, morung, warfare, etc,. There was also a discouragement of ethnic life style clothes and traditions to adopt alien culture. Morung disappeared with the colonial period and young people began to live in their own house. Though Angami women do not have a morung to live in men did have, after its disappearance, there seems to have more brotherly and sisterly relationship in the family.

There have been changes in the status of Angami women over the past one hundred years. There has been ignorance on the part of the people questioning the status of pre-modern status of Angami women. One needs to see the changes that have taken place in the status of women after the coming of Christianity. Angami women from traditional society apparently exercised some authority in matters relating to marriage, divorce and family affairs and this were now lost.

### **Impact of Christianity:**

The Angami family remains a patriarchal system and unchanged even after the conversion to Christianity. The father remains the head of the family and he owns all property. Every decision is taken by the male head, though the consent of the wife was sought for. After the coming of Christianity the family as a whole began to have a

broader view about everything. Though the status of the wife was lower than the husband she continued with her household duties, but she began to play more visible roles by participating in other societal activities. A wife in colonial period gets more privilege compared to her role in the pre-colonial period.

With the coming of the Christian missionaries and Christianity, the behavioral and social conducts of the Angami Naga people were controlled in one or the other way. In every aspect of life in socially, politically, religiously, the conduct of the people in general who were converted were controlled immensely by the ideology of Christianity. The marriage system began to change with the coming of Christianity among the Angamis. Unlike the traditional period, Christianity strictly imposed monogamous marriage to the Christians. Marriage rituals and ceremonies which earlier lasted for many days slowly faded with just one day marriage rituals. Bringing the bride to the groom place at night also vanished with start of Christian marriage. The strict '*thino*' or the clan exogamy began to fade and marriage within the clan starts to take place<sup>36</sup>.

Like the traditional period, even after conversion to Christianity, the Angami girls were given the liberty to choose the husband. Some of the customs such as, a bride taking her weaving articles and ornaments were encouraged even after converting to Christianity. Unlike the traditional society, the system of easy divorce among the Angamis became harder, i.e. earlier divorce was among the simplest of rites<sup>37</sup>. The new faith led people to have just one husband or one wife. With the conversion among the Angamis the number of divorce became less. Among these lesser divorce cases it was still easy to get it and where remarriage continued without much difficulty.



A W Davis rightly pointed out that among the Angamis divorce were given to women mainly on grounds that women were infidel, incompatible of temper and failure to bear children<sup>38</sup>. After the conversion, thus marriage and divorce was not flexible like the traditional society. Women began to feel more confident to raise their voice against the oppression by society in general and men in particular.

The naming rituals and ceremonies slowly disappeared and replaced by Christian way of praying for the child. The ceremony now shifted from the home to the church. The growth of literacy rate, the scenario of the modern society took a turn where the attitude of the society in relation to women broadened a great deal. Being a patriarchal society, the custom and tradition rules imply that the lineage of a clan and family is through male and not female line<sup>39</sup>.

A male child continues to be an important figure, though freedom and liberty were given to a large extent to the Angami women. The women did not inherit landed property and hence this remained same as in the early period. There were some moveable properties which could be inherited by women after marriage, but Angami women could never inherit the ancestral land or clan land. However to some extent it became possible for few Angami women to inherit immovable property like land, but through the consent of the parents and the wishes of the brothers.

Unlike the traditional society, with the beginning of the colonial period, the wife or the woman had the right to take care of the properties after the death of their husband till her son became capable to take care of the properties. All the ancestral properties were inherited or taken by the eldest male child of the family or the brother of the deceased if

he did not have a son. The concept of 'equality of male and female' emerges with the coming of Christianity. But practically, in one or the other way, women are put into lower position and as a secondary gender. The concept of equality led many Angami parents try to give equal 'share' or '*shiephruo*' to each child whether male or female. Though the sharing of property is done there was always an unequal sharing in terms of property between male and female. The society still considers women inferior.

Another aspect of conversion was that, the Nagas abandoned warfare and raids on each other. Till the late nineteenth century some parts of eastern Naga Hills continue with the practice of warfare with other villages. The end of raids and warfare meant that women could live without fear of being taken as hostage and slaves. The lives of the women began to be more settled.

One of the most important things that the Angamis gave up with the coming of Christianity was the '*Zu*'<sup>40</sup> i.e. the traditional drink. The traditional Angami society witnesses the competition among women in making *zu*. *Zu* was used very frequently and is offered to visitors and guest as a sign of welcoming them. To prepare and make *zu* was not a difficult task for any women in villages. It was merely a mixture of sticky rice or special rice, which is very healthy for an individual. Giving up *zu* was a precondition of the conversion<sup>41</sup>. The missionaries taught people to give up drinking '*zu*' as it was considered as an offense before God. This was also the time when there was a gap and a difference between the '*zu* drinkers' and 'non drinkers'. The newly converted Christians started to avoid the gathering where *zu* is served. As Mrs. Clark as stated, "*.. when called to work where the rice beer was served, these (Christians) withdrew from the crowd and*

*ate their midday meal by themselves*”<sup>42</sup>. There was a clear distinction between the Christians and the non Christians.

*Zu* was normally prepared by womenfolk and with their conversion they began to quit making it. Almost all the rituals and sacrifices of the traditional religion, *zu* was used as one of the main item. With the increase of converts there were more disputes arising out of rituals and Feasting. This disputes grew up mostly in times of J P Mills, ICS, the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills. He was much opposed by breaking Naga custom<sup>43</sup>. On the other hand the missionaries introduced tea to the Nagas. The total prohibition of drinking *zu* was not a success as with these prohibitions the society also witnesses the entry of the foreign drinks by the British administrators and the soldiers in the Naga Hills.

The burial system of the Angamis began to change its rituals and Genna. Putting the ‘mekho’ or cane basket, weaving articles and other women’s necessary articles on woman’s grave began to disappear. The putting of food on the grave was stopped by the Christians. Earlier who died of miscarriage or childbirth was not given proper ceremony or no ceremony, but the Christians began to do a funeral service for such kind of deaths. With the coming of Christianity, proper funeral was given to all those who have already taken baptism and have their name in the church.

Be it individual, household, clan or village as a whole genna was followed very strict before the coming of Christianity. When a genna was announced, it was the women who needed to be more careful about it as they worked more than man i.e. they moved about more, whereas genna which means “people were observing a holiday” to all works.

The *sekhrenyi* festival continues even after the conversion of the people. The missionaries ask them to discontinue the traditional practices with their ritualistic festivals, but people continue to follow up to some extent. Women were not allowed to fetch water on the day of *sekre* i.e. the first day of ritual, though they were Christians. Christian women even maintain the genna during *sekhrenyi* as a sign of respect to their customs and practices. There were even Christian women who participate in song and dances during festivals in spite of missionaries stopping them from doing it.

A new platform came up which place women to stand up in the church pulpit and glorify God in any form. The conversion to Christianity has placed church as a main institution where Angamis and Nagas as a whole revolts around it. The Church as an institution gives a common platform to both men and women. The permit which was not given to a widow to participate in ancestral worship was now wiped of where women even widows can stand and participate in church. Women in traditional period were confined to household rituals and ceremonies, but Christianity has opened a new sphere where they can participate with their counterparts.

The Church played an important role in relation to women's welfare and vice versa. Some church had women's departments, where the women looked after the welfare of women. But there were some churches where a man was put as the secretary for women welfare. Women were allowed to do all that she can do in the church ministry. The role of the church and its contribution towards development of self-awareness among women and the upliftment of their status was immense<sup>44</sup>. But patriarchy held firmly even in

church, where women could not achieve equality with men as they were barred from the ordained ministry i.e. from the priestly function.

Education made many wife and mothers earners and to a social standing and giving them financial independence. From the traditional Naga society women worked equally in the field as a man. In this new period the mother did not necessarily confine herself to the household drudgery, but was free to engage in other social and economic matters based on her competencies and abilities<sup>45</sup>. There was a greater sense of responsibility and more participation in the society after converting into Christianity.

The economic participation of women also increased. Women participation in agriculture continued as their main occupation. The *liedepfü* or the first reaper continued to be followed before every harvest. In some Christian family starts the harvest with a prayer and the harvest is led by the women. With new ideas women apart from agriculture works, started selling agricultural products and handicrafts. The idea of agriculture became broadened with new technique and ways in terrace cultivation among the Angamis. This gave women new opportunities, self respect and independence. Women started selling agricultural products and other products which have been encouraged by the missionaries. The Angami women usually got more involved in business than men. Her economic contribution was thus equal and sometimes more than her counterpart.

Converting to Christianity and education is very closely connected with the economy and its implications. In spite of the opposition to “girls’ education” we find that those few women<sup>46</sup> who got education started helping out in the family in its economy. They were primary teachers, office workers, or assisting in missionary work. This was the point of

time when the so called “new work culture” came up<sup>47</sup>. This ‘new work culture’ led women to get education and get jobs and earn for their family. This was also the period when one finds educated women concentrating more on getting education and less in the traditional work which was later encouraged by the missionaries to keep up along with the traditional work such as weaving and knitting. Early converted Christian women were sent to different village to minister about the gospel and were paid in cash as we see in a report,

*“... some young Angami Women have shown remarkable consecration in going to completely non Christian villages, spending several months in the village teaching children during the day and women in the evening and receiving only Rs. 20/- monthly for this life of loneliness”<sup>48</sup>.*

Though the wage was very low to manage their families, educated women gave their time and life for the other women who were not converted.

With the coming of Christianity women also had gained a representative to the village body. But it was of little significance as there was number of more male than female. When it comes to political participation of the Angami women, they did not take part in any of the decision making or participate in the village level even in the early colonial period. They were absent from the political domain in the village. In an Angami village, the clan elder exercises his authority within the village. There was also a distinction between public and domestic sphere in decision making. The authority of women in the household has repercussion outside it<sup>49</sup>. The village male elder’s make the rule. Women were excluded from the decision making body.

Women could not become a '*Rünakhrü*' or clan elder or Gaonbura even though women were given a lot of opportunities. Despite the traditional customs, taboos, and restrictions Angami women came forward to play important role in the society as their views and opinions came to be highly regarded in decision making matters. Though women's decision did not directly affect the political decision taking body, when it comes to the domestic realm to affect the women, women voiced their opinion and manipulated in decision making.

Traditional beliefs and practices continued to afflict Angami women even after considerable modernization of Naga society. Even in the new religion and the new social formation, Angami women, whether it was in the social, economic, religious or political sphere have been denied roles equal to male members of the society. The freedom they got became much more pronounced in the later years, but even in the initial years women found themselves departing from their traditional roles.

As mentioned before, with Christianity and education emerging hand in hand, Angami Women's Society was formed in 1947. The society was formed with the aim to let the women converted to Christianity preach the gospel. The very idea of 'giving' in the name of God was taught and awareness was spread through this society. This women society also aims at not only spreading the Word and raising funds in Angami area but also in other neighboring areas<sup>50</sup>.

Christianity as mention before was like a coin with two different sides. One the one side, it Christianized the people and led them to so many remarkable things. It opens up a gate for all the Angamis in general and women in particular to see the world and express

themselves freely with fewer restrictions. On the other side Christianity has led the people to stop the practice of their culture which their ancestors have been doing for centuries and in the process they lost their identity.

According to some feminist as mentioned before, religion in its own way was oppression of women in one or the other way in the patriarchal system. Christianity as a religion tries to bring equality to both men and women, yet again with its patriarchal nature has oppressed women. Christianity has brought in numerous changes among the Angami women, but the women were considered the second member where the head of the church itself was led by men and not by women. Religion in the form of Christianity came as an instrument to dominate women by men. Women in church and family were placed in marginal positions which again contradict with the teachings and principles of the Bible.

Thus, women began to participate more on religious ceremonies, i.e. in church activities. Since there was not much ritual and sacrifice women continued to take part in festivals even though they were Christians. But converting to Christianity did not make Angami woman forget her role in the family as wife, daughter, sister and mother, indeed she felt more responsible and self-confident to manage a family. The church offered them a sense of belonging and created space for them to participate and contribute. But men's decision and policies continue which not only to affect the women's work, but also the general work of the church. There was also a new sense of freedom from fear of traditional practice that had confined them within cultural norms related to purity and impurity, right and wrong, food taboos, etc.



The coming of Christianity into the Angami society changes a lot of culture which have been followed by the people since the traditional time. The social phenomenon has been shaken by the religion which ultimately touches the culture of the people knowingly and unknowingly. These changes in the culture of the society have been a part and parcel of everyday women's lives.

Thus, one can agree that Christianity has brought along a tremendous change in Women's life in Angami Naga society which has indeed helped them to come up to a higher level. But on the other hand, one also sees that Christianity, which preaches 'equality' placed women lower in status than men. Religion with Christianity as its vehicle came as an instrument to dominate women with its principles.

Christianity and modern education did bring about numerous changes in the conditions of Angami women. However, it failed to break the age old traditional patriarchal character of Angami society. It was an oppressed form of an institution which women are left in the marginal position in the society and in the church. It failed to replace the nature of traditional man-women relationship dependence. The church did not really change the structure of the society. The role played by patriarchy in relation to both the traditional patriarchal assumption of the missionaries did not allow women to attain full equality with men in church, where the church itself acted as an agent of patriarchy. Yet women were still dependent on man for their well being. Christianity still taught the women to be faithful, dutiful wife, good mothers and obedient daughters.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> E.B Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, New York, Harper and Row, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The elementary form of religious life*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1915

<sup>3</sup> Marx as quoted in David McLellan, *Marxism and Religion*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1987

<sup>4</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the profane: The nature of Religion*, Willard Trask (Trans), New York, Harcourt, Brace and world.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, New York, Ballantine Books, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The second Sex*, Constance Borne and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (Trans), London, Vintage Books, 2009, p. 674

<sup>7</sup> The word Animism is derived from a Latin word 'animus' which means 'soul' or 'life'. Animism is a belief where all natural physical entities such as animals, plants, inanimate objects, or phenomenon possess a spiritual essence. Before the coming of civilization and proper religion animism is the term used for indigenous and primitive people around the world. The primitive people belief in the existence of soul in both living and non-living such as animals, rocks, plants, rivers, mountains and all other natural environment etc, which together is term to be known as Animism by the ninetieth century by Tylor. Also see Segal, Robert. *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*. 2004

<sup>8</sup> E.B Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, New York, Harper and Row, 1958

<sup>9</sup> Bendanganshi, *Glimpses of Naga History*, Mokokchung, 1993, p. 33. He argued that the traditional religion of the Nagas as like that of the Jewish's and Christianity.

<sup>10</sup> *Tsana* in Tenyidie (Tenyidie is the dialect of the Angami tribe) means 'ancestors rituals and ways'.

<sup>11</sup> *Nanyü* can mean ritual and also religion

<sup>12</sup> *Terhuo* means deity in tenyidie. In some Tenyidie dictionary one will find that *terhuo* is translated as spirit which turns out to be slightly inappropriate. Spirit means *ruopfü* in tenyidie. Also see *MKS Dieda*. Kohima. Ura Academy. 2000. p.433

<sup>13</sup> *Kemevo* is the head person who performs all the rituals and led the whole village for all the religious purposes. In some of the Angami villages they are also known as *Zhievo* i.e. priest

<sup>14</sup> *Zievo* is also known as the 'priest' or the head of the village in the olden times in some Angami villages. All the Angami villages speak the same language i.e. Tenyidie but there are some variation in tones and some differences in them. Not even two nearest villages have the same tone of dialect, yet they can understand each other without any difficulty.

<sup>15</sup> JH Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 187

<sup>16</sup> *Kenyü* means taboo. No one is allowed to work or do anything on this day of taboo.

<sup>17</sup> KR. Singh, *The Nagas of Nagaland*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publication, 1987, p. 33

<sup>18</sup> Joseph S Thong, *Head Hunters Culture; Historic Culture of Nagas*, Tseminyu, 1997, p. 25

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- <sup>19</sup> Ajailiu Neumai, "Role of Non-Governmental Organization in the empowerment of the Naga Women", *Occasional Paper Series- 4*, research support by UGC-SAP, Hyderabad, University of Hyderabad, April 2003, p. 1-34.
- <sup>20</sup> The tenyidie dictionary elaborates the meaning of *sekrenyi* as a time where all the male members kill a cock for rituals and sacrifice it for purification of their health. See *MKS Deida*, Kohima, p. 405.
- <sup>21</sup> J H Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 197.
- <sup>22</sup> *Kharu* is a village gate. *Kharu* is found in very Angami villages. It is a one piece of wood curved into different images of both men and animals. *Kharu* is the entrance gate of every village which stands significant and like a huge door.
- <sup>23</sup> Joseph s Thong, *Head Hunters Culture; Historic Culture of Nagas*. Tseminyu, 1997, p. 10.
- <sup>24</sup> Bendangyapang Ao, *A history of Christianity in Nagaland, Social Changes 1872- 1972*, Bangalore, Shalom Ministry Publication, 2004,p. 43
- <sup>25</sup> M Horam, *Nagas old ways and New trends*, New Delhi, Cosmo Publication, 1988, p. 85.
- <sup>26</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the nineteenth Century*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 114.
- <sup>27</sup> A village under mokokchung district in Nagaland.
- <sup>28</sup> Bendangyapang Ao, *A history of Christianity in Nagaland, Social Change 1872- 1972*, Bangalore, Shalom ministry Publication, 2004, p. 87
- <sup>29</sup> V K Nuh, *Nagaland Church and Politic*, Kohima, Vision Press, 1986,p. 94.
- <sup>30</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*, Kohima, ACLS offset press, 2004, p. 82.
- <sup>31</sup> These few women are given detailed in the next chapter.
- <sup>32</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*, Kohima, ACLS offset press, 2004, p. 113.
- <sup>33</sup> Bendangangshi, *Glimpses of Naga History*, Mokokchung, 1993,p. 22.
- <sup>34</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*, Kohima, ACLS offset press, 2004, p. 113.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 114.
- <sup>36</sup> Nilika Mehotra, *Angami Naga Women; Some reflection on their status*, In Subhadra Mitra Channa,ed. *Nagaland; A contemporary ethnography*. New Delhi, Cosmo, 1992, p. 49.
- <sup>37</sup> Verrier Elwin,*The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 305.
- <sup>38</sup> The Deputy commissioner of Naga Hills, *Tour dairy of A.W. Davis, ISC, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills*1892, Kohima, 1892
- <sup>39</sup> Ajailiu Neumai, "Role of Non-Governmental Organization in the empowerment of the Naga Women", *Occasional Paper Series – 4*, research supported by UGC-SAP, published by the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, April 2003, p 1-34,.
- <sup>40</sup> *Zu* is a rice beer which the people of Angami Nagas made and drink every day. Except the poor people in the village, every family prepares *zu* and keeps for every day drink or for some occasions.

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- <sup>41</sup> KR Singh, *The Nagas of Nagaland*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publication, 1987, p. 34.
- <sup>42</sup> MM Clark, *A corner in India*, Philadelphia, American Baptist Publication Society, 1907, p.139.
- <sup>43</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 510.
- <sup>44</sup> Lucy Zehol, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p. 100
- <sup>45</sup> Kelhou, *Women in Angami Society*, In Lucy Zehol, ed. *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998,p. 59
- <sup>46</sup> Details of these women in the next chapter on Education.
- <sup>47</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*, Kohima, ACLS offset press, 2004, p. 120.
- <sup>48</sup> Report by H. Houston, *Assam Baptist missionary Conference Report* now Council of Baptist Churches in Assam Report (1950- 1951), p. ii, reprint in Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*, Kohima, ACLS offset press, 2004, p. 125.
- <sup>49</sup> Nilika Mehotra, *Angami Naga Women; Some reflection on their status*, In Subhadra Mitra Channa,ed. *Nagaland; A contemporary ethnography*, New Delhi, Cosmo, 1992, p. 65.
- <sup>50</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*, Kohima, ACLS offset press, 2004, p.129.

## **Chapter- VI**

### **Education and Angami Naga women**

This chapter discusses the nature of education among the Angami Naga women. The interrelationship between culture, education and women is studied in this chapter. The society witnesses both the formal and informal education. Both the educational system needs to be discussed and analyzed to understand better about the society and its people from traditional time and the so called modern society. This chapter also looks at the way in which education has functioned in different forms and system in two completely different period of Naga society. The causes and the effect of western education and its impact on Angami Naga women is studied to understand better the culture of women and their changing roles. The cultural world of women in Angami Naga society underwent a great change with the coming of formal education.

By informal education here we meant a learning process outside a school setting. It can be other educational system such as home schooling, self-teaching, learning from environment around us, etc., whereas by formal education, we meant the proper school system where the students are taught by trained teachers in a classroom. For this study, the traditional period and its learning system are referred as informal and the proper schooling after the introduction of western educational system is the formal education.

The first part of the chapter deals with the informal education followed by the formal education among women in Angami Naga society. Both the informal and formal education among the Angami Nagas has shaped the society in its own ways and time. The

formal education among the Naga society has enormous impact on culture and the lives of people and women in particular. But the informal education's impact on the society also cannot be ignored seeing the impact of the formal education. The second part, deal with the coming of western education which has changed the society into a different civilization which has affected the culture and the people in general. Education as a tool used by the missionaries has shaped the society and their traditional culture of the people in a very different culture. This interrelationship of culture, education, women effecting each other in different period seems to be one of the contribution to the civilization process of the making the present Naga society.

The culture and the traditions of the people were shaken by the coming of the new faith. This 'new faith' among the people has levied many restrictions on the one hand and freedom on the other in the lives of the people. Here when we say 'restrictions' we are referring to the traditional restrictions and taboos on people and especially to women in particular, which is discussed in the later part of the chapter. The different theories of education and its link with women and culture is argued and the Angami Naga society and education is put together to fit into some of these theories in the later part of the chapter.

The meaning of education has always been a contested field and an area for people and scholars exists between ideologies and groups. But one can simply define education as a form of learning through teaching, training, research, etc. It can be a teaching and training from one person to another person or from one generation to the other. The utilitarian view that education gives the best for the society, but how do we know which education

is the best for all as the education system differs from place to place. We need to look at both past and present in order to define what education really is and put them together and bring out the common characteristics. To understand the objective of education from different places and time it is necessary to study the true meaning of education and not merely taking the definitions of various thinkers and writers. Looking back the histories of different civilizations and places, education has varied characters where it trained people of regions, empires, countries in its own ways.

Historically, for instances education in Rome and Greece for that matter trained their people to be a subordinate blindly and become a creature of the society, but the later period tries to make of the individual an autonomous personality<sup>1</sup>. Some educate the people to become men of defense and action in the country. But at a certain point of time educational system has an irresistible influence on individual and that is what Durkheim tried to argue with the definition of education. According to Durkheim;

*“Education is the influence exercised by adult generation on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states that are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined”<sup>2</sup>.*

He viewed that the adult influence and teach the young in education, but one cannot agree totally with his view as education can be learnt from both the party. This process of learning cannot be seen as hereditary because the educational system between people of different caste, religion, race, gender etc. needs a specialization at one point of time. It is

the education that holds all the factors together with solidarity in all these diversities of the mind as Durkheim put it<sup>3</sup>. But one needs to think how you decide ideal within the cultural diversification.

Education serves both political and economic purposes. According to Fox (1956), among so many thinkers, Emile Durkheim view that education and its role help in the socialization of the society. Among the three theories of educations such as functional, conflict and symbolic interaction theory, Durkheim highly propagated the functionalist theory. The functionalist theory views education as a social benefit and opportunity and based strongly on schooling of a child while will help in making a better society with a positive aspect. Among the functionalist thinkers, Durkheim and Parson are the ones who believe in shared experience and that a student learns the hidden curriculum from the school set up which in return bring a positive impact on society in the later life of an individual. Functionalist believed education as a component which will bring and have a cultural change. They also view “*education is seen alongside other social institutions as working to create and maintain a stable society*”<sup>4</sup>.

Among so many criticisms upon the functionalist theory, Marxist criticizes the functionalist for focusing only on positive and ignoring the negative aspects. Marxist like Bowles and Gintis in their work on *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradiction of economic life*, criticize the functionalist theory that education in school does not bring unity but divide the students and brings hierarchy between the rich and the poor<sup>5</sup>. Pierre Bourdieu a French sociologist also critique that with the arena of education, there is no equal treatment given to students from rich families and students



from poor family<sup>6</sup>. Bourdieu strongly argued that the “cultural capital”<sup>7</sup> in school works in favor of the upper class.

Feminist on the other hand criticize the functionalist theory that education divides the society. They believed that education in itself is patriarchal and gives privileged to male members and ignore the female members in the society. The feminist argued that education promotes the term “bread winner” which pulls back women into household activities. Women often prioritize family over education which eventually results in learning. Educational systems are all male oriented which gives more attention to male students over female students. Though the functionalist believed that education brings and gives a sense of solidarity, the Marxist and the feminist criticize that education divide and create unequal in social class and promote patriarchy.

The conflict theory of education on the other hand, unlike the functional theory view education as a means of creating a power structure and a workforce for capitalism. In other word they view “*education as preparing people for a place in society*”<sup>8</sup>. They believed that education pulls down the lower section of the people in society and keep them as the obedient workers. Educational and school system according to them teaches the people from lower class to accept their lower status in society. Bowles and Gintis also believe that the hidden curriculum produces a passive and obedient work force which accepts authority with any questions. Marxist as a conflict theorist sees education “*as reinforcing a class system*”<sup>9</sup>.

According to the symbolic interaction theory, education is observed as a direct happening in the classroom with their main focus on social interaction. George Herbert Mead came

up with “*symbolic interaction*”<sup>10</sup> and that people are a social product and social construct. Society is a social construct and that result arises with the interaction with other people. This theory believed that better relationship, communication and intercultural awareness are possible only through interaction among cultures and social groups. He also sees human beings interact through symbols, which define the world and the social actors, where culture specifies the roles.

Among the different waves of feminism, the radical feminist raised the educational consciousness for women in challenging and rethinking the educational practices. Some of the questions that we have raised in this chapter, are how education affects the culture of the society? How informal education is overruled by formal education? Is there an equal opportunity of formal education for every person in the society? How the concept of culture, education and women are affecting each other in different period of Angami Naga society? In this chapter we bring out the society of two different periods with and without the formal education of the time. Education among the Angami Naga society acted as a two sided coin with different sign argued in this chapter.

Before the coming of the British in India, there was the indigenous education that was dominated by Brahmins and the upper class of the Indian society. Girls were given education in the privacy of the homes and this education focused on the theology and household requirements. Education for girls and modern education were slowly emerging by early nineteenth century. Girls from upper caste families didn't encourage much to get the education though there were few girls who get education. Women learnt from their family household activities. Until the last century with the coming of the missionaries,

there was no formal education given to girls. The idea of educating the women and empowering them was not in the framework. After three decades of men's education being introduced, some responsibilities were taken by the government for girls' education<sup>11</sup>.

### **Informal/ indigenous education:**

The traditional Naga society witnesses the informal education in different ways. Among some informal education, one of the most important institutions or informal school, which Nagas look up is the 'Morung or *Kichüki*'<sup>12</sup> i.e. a dormitory system for both boys and girls. And from this institution young boys and girls learn the basic things necessary for living. In every Naga village young people live together in morung before they get married. Among the Naga society also the system of morung differs from tribe to tribe. Morung is home for young people to learn different skills, art, activities to defend themselves and their village. It is the home where they can learn the handicrafts and bamboo weaving taught by the old people of the village. The morung is also a home for young people mainly to learn the skill and art to defend their people and village from the attack of the enemies. The protection program for the women folk and children was given much importance during the head hunting period. Merry making and rituals were also performed in morung. In some villages there can be more than one morung. Some Naga villages have morungs according to the number of their clan.

Unlike many Naga tribes the Angami Nagas do not have a Morung for girls. But some tribes and villages have separate morungs for girls where they were taught how to weave, manage household chores, serves the male members, etc. This is a place and a platform

where there is interaction between the mates and learning process continues through living under the same roof. A better understanding or an example of symbolic interaction theory can be seen here. Discrimination between rich and poor was not seen here, there was no difference in treating the young people except those who are brave and brings more head of the enemies were respected more.

Among the Angami Naga society unlike the boys there were no such morung or dormitory for girls and the basics of learning for girls were taught to them by their mothers or by their grandmothers. The Angami Naga society witnesses a taboo on women to enter the morung of the men folk. This taboo was followed very strictly against the women folk. Being considered the weaker sex in the society, it leads and pushes them aside with many taboos revolting around them. Since there was no morung for Angami girls like other tribes of the Nagas, girls of 5 to 6 members gathered in one house to weave clothes and learn the necessary things. These few girls go to each other's house to learn and practice their weaving and handicraft works together assisted by the mother of the house. Mothers and grandmothers play a very important role in imparting knowledge to the female members of the family in almost all the learning process before and after the coming of formal education.

These informal educations before the coming of Christianity had helped girls to learn much about work. Unlike the boys in the family, working and learning for girls starts at a very early age. They help their mother in household works and assisted the male members of the family. They were taught by their mothers and grandmothers how to weave clothes and run the household apart from fieldwork. As mention in the previous

chapter, the monopoly of weaving by women as an identity was maintained strictly in the village as a whole. The informal education of the female members of the family and society was carried down the generation from mothers to their daughters till date.

Informal education among the Nagas not only meant those handicrafts, weavings, household chores, agricultural works, etc. but they were also taught the good manners and respects for elders and male members of the society. Mothers were responsible for the behaviors of their daughters and for which they were looked up or down by the society. The culture of imparting the ways of learning by a mother is very important for every woman in the society. The common notion and concept of “she is like her mother”, “her mother teaches her that?” etc., was always carried along with any girl in the society. It may be a positive or negative impact which a mother always has an influence on her daughters.

The role of a mother and the grandmother plays a very important part in molding up the life of a girl child. From the time of giving birth till the daughter gets married and also after marriage the mother and the grandmother were the best teacher of all time. The elder female members of the society are responsible for teaching the young female members the songs and traditional practices. Girls in groups go to a particular house where old women stay and learn how to sing the traditional songs, learn the rituals, stories, etc. which has been a common practice among the Angami Nagas. From one generation to the next generation the house of the old ladies has been a place of learning, a place of passing the knowledge from one person to the other. These few places where

the old ladies live has been a very significant platform for the girls to learn and live in the patriarchal society.

The traditional Naga society place the “*dahu*”<sup>13</sup> as one of the most important place for meeting of the elders in every village and “*khel*”<sup>14</sup>. *Dahu* is a place where all the important meetings are held and a place where young people learn traditional activities from the elders. But girls are not allowed to go up to *dahu* when there are meetings going on. Boys go and sit with the village elders and old people and learn rituals, songs, stories, but girls are not allowed to sit like the boys. *Dahu* has been a learning place where the memories of the past have been passed down to the younger generation. Apart from morung that the boys get the opportunity to learn things, they can easily go to *dahu* unlike the girls.

Since the traditional time, selectivity in every field has been seen in Angami Naga society. From traditional period girls were not given equal education opportunity with the boys of their same age or to their brothers. There has been a hierarchy among them in acquiring education from their elders. The taboos have been the rope which binds them to do whatever they want to. As the feminist critics the functional theory, in traditional or informal education also there is a division among the people by informal education. The different informal education divides the boys and girls in getting education which is clearly seen in the traditional Angami Naga society.

Morung started to lose its importance with the coming of Christian missionaries and with the increase of conversion. There are debates leading to the decline of morung in Naga society, but none directly has given an accurate reason for its decline. In one or the other

the missionaries and converted Christian families are blamed for the decline of morung. Many Christians believe that the morung as an institution has so many “unchristian conduct”<sup>15</sup>. The converted Christians stop giving attention to the morungs and started going more often to church and schools.

### **Formal / Western education:**

The introduction of education in the northeast India, particularly in Naga society by the American missionaries has made a tremendous change and has been a turning point in the society. With the banner of equality, the entry of Christianity and education tried to bring both the sexes into an equal level, but the patriarchal nature of Christianity in itself puts women in a second place or in lower level. The traditional Naga society witnesses the system of traditional education in a very different form, unlike the so called modern education or western education. The educational system in Naga Hills came with the coming of Christianity after a century after the development of girls’ education in mainland India.

The introduction and spread of Christianity among the Nagas under the American Baptist missionaries with education as its main vehicle had numerous impact on the society. The main aim of the Christian missionaries was to convert the people to Christianity from the traditional religion and for which they introduced western education for the people to make them able to read the Bible. Whatever may be the reason for the introduction of education in the Naga Hills, education has marked a new epoch in the history of the Nagas.

The very idea of improving women's status through imparting education to women in Naga society came in late. Education was meant both men and women equally, but the patriarchal set up took its stand firmly from the beginning. Like the feminist has critics the functionalist theory, education was given important to male members. Being a patriarchal society every Naga family or, an Angami family gives first preference to the male child, even if the female child is more eligible to study. The discrimination between the sexes does not come as a surprise as the society is patriarchal. The impact of education on Nagas had both positive and negative aspects. On one hand, it helped people to come out of their comfort zone and know more of the world and on the other it ignored many aspects of their traditional and cultural identities.

Christianity and education were synonymous whereby even if Christian converts did not receive formal education, becoming Christian itself made them literate to some extent<sup>16</sup>. One of the main ideas of the missionaries was to spread the Christian doctrines after educating the people. Since the primary purpose of schools was to teach Nagas to read the Bible and Hymnal, girls were encouraged by the missionaries to attend schools.

Many Angamis eventually converted to Christianity after the establishment of educational institutions. Gradually parents, after conversion, sent their children to mission schools, but preference was given to boys. In every aspect of life, an Angami girl or a Naga girl always stepped aside to let the brothers take the opportunity. Parents were willing to send their sons far off from Kohima whereas daughters were not allowed to get even higher education. There was a notion and concept that it is a waste to educate a girl child as they would be married off to someone's home. Girls from the villages had to



carry by foot the necessary things for their brothers to the places where they were studying in another village or to Kohima. The very patriarchal nature of Angami society shaped the mind of the people in such a way that boys can only help their parents in the long run. This is the period where the parents were even willing to sell their lands and belonging to support their son's education without even a thought about their daughters' education. In spite of such hurdles in the society and families, there were some few girls who got education and became an inspiration to other girls. The mission school in Kohima encouraged many people to send their children to schools.

Traditional beliefs and early marriages also might have been other barriers which prevented girls from going to school. The notion that women were not competent enough to participate in the intellectual activities, however, changed gradually with advancement in other sphere of life<sup>17</sup>. Higher education among boys was common, but girls had to be content with the primary education provided by the missionaries within the locality. Education was seen as a means of making girls go wayward and unhomely for many elderly people<sup>18</sup>. Formal education was seen as some alien element which was considered inappropriate for girls. The very nature of what girls should be when they grow up was challenged by the formal education.

The attitude of the parents on education was a negative response for both girls and boys in the early period. But later on boys were given the privilege and first opportunity to attend schools, but girls were not encouraged at all. Parents were reluctant to send their children to schools as the help in the agricultural activities will be less. Parents felt that sending a girl child to school will be a waste of time and a waste for their family income.

For many decades girls were not allowed to attend school, but instead help parents in field and to maintain the household activities while brothers were already in schools in and outside the state. When the first primary school was established in Kohima, admission was denied to girls from another state as there was no hostel for girls<sup>19</sup>.

The early education in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Angami Naga society does not mark an increased interest in education. The American missionaries emphasis more on education as a means of change in society. In 1886, a school was started by the British administration in Samaguting (now Chumukedima) as they have their military outpost in Samaguting<sup>20</sup>. By 1876 and 1877, a school in Chumukedima was attended only by the officials' children as the Angamis then was apathetic to any system of education<sup>21</sup>. By 1876, Rev. E W Clarke started a primary school which paved the way for educational activities among the Nagas by the Christian missionaries. By 1884, under the effort of C.D King the first school was open in Kohima. Till 1886, C.D King's work among the Angamis was innumerable as he helped in bringing in Angamis to learn the Roman alphabet and taught them how to read and write. After C.D King, Revenburg a theologian and a medical specialist took over the charge.

The early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the entry of few girls in formal primary schools along with boys. After 1910 one mission training center was opened at Kohima. A high school was upgraded from mission to Middle English School was the only high school institution in the Kohima Sardar Sub- Division before independence which became government managed schooled afterwards. It was recognized as high school institution around 1939- 1940. The gazetteers also reports that in 1911-12 out of 22 schools, 12

belong to the mission while in 1913- 1914, 14 schools were manage by mission against 13 which were government.<sup>22</sup>

Higher education for girls was encouraged by the arrival of Joseph E Tanquist and his wife Mabel Tanquist in 1913. The Angami people were firmly attached to their traditional customs and practices. Under the mission of Mabel Tanquist<sup>23</sup> the hostel for girls was a great asset for the ministry. This was a milestone in the spread of education among the Naga women. After 1923 hostel got recognition with Mabel Tanquist as supervisor of the hostel and in 1927 there were 12 girls in the girls' hostel under the her charge<sup>24</sup>. With the introduction of the girls hostel which started to run in regular basis and the students were even paid rupees four as a stipend.

The pioneering missionaries C.D King and his wife Anna Sweet started the first school in Kohima<sup>25</sup>. By 1920s girl's hostel was established in Kohima for primary school girls. Many families in Kohima sent their children to schools and outside to get education, but this did not include the girls as they were not allowed to go outside their hometown. The need of girls in household work and field work was more than boys.

The coming of missionary couples, G.W. Supplee and his wife, Ruth Supplee in 1922 brought more momentum to women's education in Angami Naga society<sup>26</sup>. They started the higher education in Naga and Manipur hills during this period. But it was discouraging to the missionaries in Angami region for conversion until the 1930s and 1940s as many girls did not come forward. . Since agriculture was the main occupation of the people, there was a deduction of the work force when the children started going to school. Thus the parents wanted their children to help them in fields instead of getting

education and attend schools, “.. *the parents ask that their children be paid for attending schools*”<sup>27</sup> . By the early 1940’s the only existing school was in Kohima which was open to all the tribes of the Nagas to come together and study under one administration. According to one of the first students in the school I. Lanu.Toy, there was “*no consciousness of tribal boundaries and spirit of oneness*”<sup>28</sup> .

The education for girls was not encouraging much in the early twentieth century. Very few girls got education and few of them were going out of the state for higher education. The Assam Baptist Missionary reports two women’s name studying outside in 1940 and the other in 1922<sup>29</sup> . One of the first Angami women to matriculate was believed to be Sokhrieno Sakhrie. Another woman who studied outside the state for nursing and midwifery was Zenuo Shuya<sup>30</sup> . The Christian missionaries sponsored student to get education, especially theological studies and help in the ministry. Due to failure of keeping reports not much about the education could be traced on girls’ educations.

Some of the first educated Angami women were Rüsokhrienuo Lunglang, Dr. Khrielieü Kire, Neichülieü Haralu, Rano Shaiza, Rev. Beilieü Shüya and Khrielenuo Terhüja.<sup>31</sup> From some of the records and reports of the early education of Angami women, here are some details of the few girls who got education and are briefly highlighted below.

*Dr. Khrielieü Kire:* She was the daughter of Zetsovi Kire. She was born in 1918. She did her primary schooling and passed class 6 in 1935, from the mission school Kohima. In 1936, she went to Welsh mission school shilling for high school and in 1941 she passed matriculation. During 1942- 47 she did her Licenseship in Medicine and Surgery (LMS) in Women Christian Medical College, Ludhiana Punjab. Till 1952, she was working in

civil hospital Guwahati and Shillong. She was the first Naga women medical graduate. In 1963 she was posted as the Lady medical officer in Civil Hospital Kohima and she work here for fifteen years. She was promoted as the director till she retires in 1979.<sup>32</sup> Under her supervision the Red Cross Society of India was founded in Nagaland.

*Janikhoü Savino:* She was the daughter of Dr. Sevilie Iralu. She started going to school at the age of 11. She was brought to Kohima (now the capital of the state) by her uncle A. Z. Phizo to get education<sup>33</sup>. She was among the first batch to appear matriculation in Government High School Kohima. Before their batch the school was up to class 6 but with the help of the parents of the students and Supplee it was extended to class 10.

*Khrienguü Kire:* Her early schooling was done in mission school, which was founded by the missionaries in Mission compound Kohima and the rest in Government High School Kohima. She passed her matriculation in 1951 and stated that '*Khrieleno Terhüja and I were the only Angami Girls to achieve that feat*'<sup>34</sup>. Unlike many other girls, she was from a well to do family got a better opportunity to go out and get a higher education. Between 1951 and 1953 she went to Calcutta's Scottish Church College to do I. A (which is now equivalent to Class 11 and 12). In one of the report found, she personally talks about her study and experience outside the state and also the mode of travel during those days. She says

*"In those days we used to fly on a British ration plane called Dakota and it was boarded from Guwahati. We return in train from Calcutta to Maniharigarh and from there we could catch a steamer. The ride lasted one*

*and a half hours, then catch another train till Brahmaputra, board a steamer again to cross the Brahmaputra river, the a train till Dimapur”<sup>35</sup>*

She also mentioned about girls participating in the hockey team. She says that when she was around 6 or 7 years *“a girl’s hockey team was led by Late Dino and Late Sokhrieno who played regularly on weekdays at the mission compound”<sup>36</sup>*.

*Rüsokhrienuo*: Rüsokhrienuo was the daughter of Rev. Kekhulhou. She was born on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1918 in Khonoma village. She did her primary education in mission school Kohima and later went to shilling to study High School in Presbyterian Girls High School. In 1939 she passed her B.A in Cotton College Calcutta.<sup>37</sup> She was first to passed B.A among the Naga Women. After her graduation she taught in Government High School Kohima for fourteen years. After 14 years of service as a teacher in Government High School Kohima, she has to leave her job because she has to take care of her family as her husband’s job (government official) was considered more important than hers. Apart from her service in teaching, she also wrote the book *“A Ra Kezevi”* part 2. Though she was educated, she knew all the works that an Angami woman needs to know.

*Khrieü Sekhose*: Khrieü was from Kohima village and she started her schooling at the age of 5. Coming from an Angami society with strong traditional parents who have a strong sense of custom and traditions, she had a shaven head till class 3 *“as a sign of purity and virginity”<sup>38</sup>*. Apart from other subjects, they were also taught Assamese in class 4 and 5. Social work was a mass for all the students and they were even taught how to do gardening. *“Gardening- potatoes, maize and beans were also part of the kamjari”<sup>39</sup>*. *Kamjari* is the word used by the Assamese for social work. From her early years she

learnt piano from Ruth Supplee, wife of George W. Supplee and became the first *kewhimiapfü*<sup>40</sup> to learn piano.

*Neilakuoï Peseyie*: She was from Khonoma village. She was one of the first members of the first Naga Choir which was formed in 1954. As a member of the choir, she got the opportunity to travel outside the state in places like Calcutta, Delhi, Lucknow and Allahabad. It was an overwhelming experience for the choir as the exposure was the first of its kind for Nagas in this field<sup>41</sup>.

*Neichülieü Haralu*: She was the eldest daughter of Dr. Haralu. She studied in Mission School Kohima till class 6 and studied in the Welsh Mission Girls School, Shillong where she passed her matriculation. She passed B.A from Calcutta University in 1948 and after that moved to America for M.A Social Science and passed in 1953<sup>42</sup>. She was one of the first to study in abroad among the Nagas. She came back to India and served in the External Affairs Ministry for four years. She also worked in places like Belgium, Italy, USA, Srilanka, etc. She served as an Indian ambassador to Panama and also looked after Costa Rica and Nicaragua. One of the unique identities that she always carried was her dressing style. She always wore the traditional shawl and wrap around i.e. “*Lohe Chiecha* and *Loramhoushü*”<sup>43</sup> wherever she goes.

*Rano Shaiza*: Rano was born on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1928. Her grandmother named her Ravoleü<sup>44</sup> but she was better known as Rano. When she was six years old, she was sent to Mission School Kohima to study till class 6. She passed her 7 and 8 class from Welsh Mission Girls High School and Ridgeway Mission Girls High School Shillong. She then came back to Government High School Kohima for Class 9 and Class 10. After her I.Sc

class (equivalent to class 12) she was selected as the Headmistress in Middle English School, Phek. In 1954 she left her job for further studies. Apart from teaching, she was also interested in politics and later joins for elections. In 1973 she was the president of the Democratic Front and in 1974 she contested and won the general election and in 1977 she was elected as the MP of the UDF.<sup>45</sup>

*Rev. Beilieü Shüya:* She was born 15<sup>th</sup> August 1928. Like many educated women she also attended the mission school and government High School Kohima for her schooling. She also attended the Cotton College Gauhati and passed her B.A from Scottish Church College Calcutta. She got her B.ed degree from Utkal University regional College and later did her M.th from Los Angeles University. After her education she taught in some schools and later founded the National school Kohima in 1964. She worked in different parts of Nagaland as a missionary and also outside Nagaland. She also wrote a number of books and songs in Tenyidie. Some of the song books written in Tenyidie are as follows:

1. *“Niepuu Ketshe Tsalida* (In Praise of the Lord)
2. *Ketho mu Kevi Tsalida* (The Truth and Good)
3. *Hossana Kevi Tsalida* (Hosanna Good)
4. *Kenei Bavü*”<sup>46</sup> (The Happy bell)

Some of the books written by Rev. Beilieü Shüya are:

1. *“Ketho mu kevi* (The Truth and Good)
2. *Ketholeshü siedze* (The Bible history)
3. *Ketholeshü diedze da* (The Bible story book)



4. *Teisonhie theja* (Everyday Blessing)
5. *Ketho mu kevi die* (The truth and good words)
6. *Angami mu English* (Angami and English).<sup>47</sup>

*Khrieleno Terhüja*: Born on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1933, Khrieleno Terhüja became one of the first theologian graduates among the Nagas<sup>48</sup>. After her studies she started teaching in schools and colleges by 1960's. In 1964, she went to Bangalore to study BD and got the degree in 1966. She also served as the deaconess of her church in Dimapur. She was also a member of the Naga Mothers Association in 1984 and in 1985 she became the president of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council.

George W. Supplee founded a musical band for the children which were in the form of an entertainment. There was a high school brass band under George W Supplee, and in this band there were some few girls in it. They were Neichülieü Haralu on Saxophone, Lhusileü Kevichüsa on Flute, Nitomeü Kevichüsa on French horn and Sokhrieno on Bass Violin<sup>49</sup>.

With the coming of Christianity and education Angami women, unlike the traditional family moved outside, away from the hearth to get involved in more social activities. With the growth of literacy, attitudes towards women in the Angami society broadened a great deal. Education became the helping hand for the women. Girls began to come out and get education with their brothers, though the male children were still given more freedom to study. Women started to go out of their village to help the mission, as H. Houston has stated;

*“.. some young Angami women have shown remarkable consecration in going to completely non Christian villages spreading several months in village teaching children during the day and women in the evening and receiving only Rs20/- monthly for this life of loneliness”<sup>50</sup>.*

The establishment of the girls' hostel at Kohima was a fruitful one as it laid the foundation of educational work for women. By this time hostels began to come up and Angami girls began to have more opportunities. In these hostels students were taught how to read and write apart from learning cooking, eating habits, mealtime manners and managing kitchen. The American Missionaries by the later period started placing working women at a higher level. In the early stage of education among the Angami Nagas, girls were allowed just to read up to class six or just enough to write letters or sing from the hymnal books<sup>51</sup>.

The Angami women in the later period were even encouraged by the missionaries to keep the traditional craft of weaving along with education. Apart from weaving, knitting and sewing was also taught to the Angami girls. In traditional society every Angami woman needs to take along with her woven shawls and cloths when she gets married, but looking beyond, women who are going for higher education did not progress or elevate with their weaving. Unmarried women in Angami Naga society began to keep their hair long<sup>52</sup>, which is seen among the few educated girls.

Education slowly began to have an important place in the Angami society. Even in the midst of resistance from the society, Angami women continued to go for higher education. Education was also seen as a means of empowerment, employment and

income. There was a notable transformation in the lives of women as well as in the society. As a result the Angami women tried to become an equal counterpart in their academic and professional pursuit along with men. Their ideas broadened and their outlook and attitude towards marriage, family, occupation, decision making changed. From housewives or “working machine”<sup>53</sup> they began to work along with men in offices and other fields. Women began to feel more confident to raise their voice against the oppression by society in general and men in particular.

Role of women in churches and schools was visible after some women got education. They participated in churches along with men and started teaching in lower primary schools. But here one should be clear that even though women were given a place in church, they were not given the equal opportunity with men. The role of the church and its contribution towards development of self-awareness among women and upliftment of their status was immense<sup>54</sup>. But still, patriarchy held firmly even in church, where women could not achieve equality with men as they were barred from the ordained ministry i.e. from the priestly function. The patriarchal nature of the church itself treats women as subordinate to men though it preaches equality. No matter what the hierarchy of the institution was, women were tremendously affected by the coming of Christianity and modern education.

Though the status of the wife was lower than her husband, she continued with her household duties at the same time she began to play more visible roles by participating in other societal activities. In all walks of life, women began to participate and work better than men. The cultural aspect of their lives underwent rapid changes. The way of living

changed: dressing, cooking, working, etc. changed with their new faith. With the coming of education and Christianity the lives of women became freer as there was less restriction on any day of the year, unlike the restriction on women during the festival like *sekhrenyi*<sup>55</sup>. Some of the taboos which were levied on women were not followed as women started to have a broad outlook.

The marriage system began to change as people no more believed in superstitions. Marriage became strictly monogamous among the Nagas as a whole. Rituals and ceremonies of marriages which earlier lasted for many days slowly faded with just one day marriage ritual. Taking the bride to the groom place at night also vanished with the introduction of the Christian marriage system. The strict '*thino*'<sup>56</sup> or the clan exogamy began to fade and intermarriages within the clans began to take place. After the conversion, marriage and divorce was not flexible like the traditional society. The wife or the woman acquired the right to take care of the property after the death of her husband till her son was capable to take care of it.

Another aspect of conversion and education was that the Nagas abandoned warfare and raids on each other<sup>57</sup>. The end of raids and warfare meant that women could live without fear of being taken as hostages and slaves. Their lives became more settled. With increased education and literacy among the Nagas proper funeral rites were now observed for women who died of miscarriages and during childbirth. Though Angami women do not have a morung, men do have, but after the disappearance of morung brotherly and sisterly affection grew. The permit which was not given to a widow to participate in

ancestral worship, but with the coming of Christianity, widows can stand and participate in church.

In villages women's work in agriculture remains the same, though their life style has been affected by educated friends. The importance of a woman as a *liedepfü*<sup>58</sup> or the first reaper began to be ignored where people would first pray and start reaping. This was one of the important positions where every man waited for a woman to start the harvest. Traditional beliefs and practices continued to affect Angami women even after considerable modernization of Naga society. The freedom they got became much more pronounced in the later years where women found themselves departing from their traditional roles<sup>59</sup>. Weaving has been a part and parcel of women's world in Naga society. With the coming of education, many girls started to ignore weaving clothes as they were asked to focus on their studies and become someone in society. The identity which women have been carrying from one generation to the other through the means of weaving seems to have sealed by education.

Education had indeed brought tremendous change in the economic conditions of women; though the property right was not wholly given to a girl child, there were cases where women were allowed to inherit land<sup>60</sup>. Educated women started getting jobs and work like men; they brought income for the family whereby they can be termed as 'bread earner'. Education made many wives and mothers earners or salaried woman, boosting the social standing of Naga women in the society. The new period led the mother where she did not necessarily confine herself to the household drudgery, but was free to engage in other social and economic matters based on her competencies and abilities<sup>61</sup>. There

was a greater sense of responsibility and more participation in the society after converting to Christianity and getting education.

With the coming of Christianity women also gained position as a representative of the village body. Though women's decision did not directly affect the decision making body, she voiced her opinion and dominated the decision making in the domestic realm. With the new western system of education there had been a far reaching impact on the attitude of the society. The impact on women was unprecedented. Education offered them a hitherto unknown world of interaction and participation where they recognized themselves as having the potential and in fact the responsibility to act as contributing members of the society in a new way<sup>62</sup>.

Though education and Christianity brought lots of changes in the lives of the Nagas and women in particular, there are various drawbacks in it. The traditional and cultural practices of the Nagas seem to have a heavy foreign influence. These ideologies have helped a lot in the civilization process, but buried the cultural identity of the people of the Nagas. The traditional attires and dresses were ignored after the coming of Christianity. The folk songs and dances, the colorful festivals of the different tribes with their natural different colors began to be ignored and stopped directly or indirectly. The weaving art which every woman knew before seemed to have vanished into darkness. The warfare disappears eventually and thus more emphasis is on education, job, religion, etc.

Though only a few people got education, yet many things changed. The traditional society gave women some liberty which was no more given to them; instead they had to give up so many things to obey the new faith. For instance, the liberty of a woman in pre-

colonial Naga society to choose a husband decreased. Some of the custom such as, a bride taking her weaving articles and ornaments were encouraged ornaments were encouraged but given lesser importance than the traditional times. The culture of naming rituals and ceremonies slowly disappeared and replaced by Christian way of praying for the child. The burial system of the Angamis began to change its rituals and Genna<sup>63</sup>. In traditional times when a genna was announced, it was the women who needed to be more careful about it as they worked more than man i.e. they moved about more. But in the later period, respect for elders began to fade even if the Christian doctrines taught them to obey and respect the elders. The *Sekhrenyi* festival began to lose its importance. Moral guidance and learning place of morung seems to have disappeared with the moral values of people. The ritual of household deities and ancestral deities which was led by women is no longer observed where men lead all the prayers most of the time.

Education on the one hand gave an opportunity to the people to learn and come out from their village gate and learn things, but on the other hand it restricts them from their traditional practices. The early missionaries restrict the converted Christians to leave their traditional practices and attires in the initial period. The missionaries preach that the attires and cultural practices used by the people must not be used as they used all those attires in performing the traditional beliefs and rituals. Many converted villagers threw away their traditional dresses and ornaments after converting to Christianity. Many older people today recollects the time when the missionaries first came and ask them to leave the use of their traditional ornaments and dresses during rituals and festivals. Without a second thought people just believed and many ornaments were thrown away and people switched over to the western clothes. It is only recently that theologian, scholars and

some other educated people started to encourage the importance of one's own tradition and cultural identity.

But converting to Christianity and getting education did not make Angami woman forget her role in the family as wife, daughter, sister and mother. Indeed, education made her more responsible and self-confident to run a family. Church offered them a sense of belonging and created space for them to participate and contribute. But men's decision and policies continued which not only affected the women's work, but also the general work of the church. There was also a new sense of freedom from fear of traditional practice that had confined them within cultural norms related to purity and impurity, right and wrong, food taboos, etc.

Christianity and modern education, thus brought about numerous changes in the conditions of Angami women. However, it failed to break the age-old traditional patriarchal character of the Angami society. It failed to replace the nature of traditional men-women relationship of dependence. The church and education did not really change the structure of the society. The role played by patriarchy in relation to both the traditional patriarchal assumption of the missionaries did not allow women to attain full equality with men in church, as the church itself acted as an agent of patriarchy. Women were still dependent on men as Christianity taught women to be faithful, dutiful wife, good mothers and obedient daughters.

Before the coming of the western education to the Angami Naga society, informal education was playing a very important role. Grandmothers, mothers and elderly women had been the main teachers to the young people in every Angami Naga society. In the



traditional times, without the formal education, girls were taught all the necessary things needed through informal education. The idea of status and prestige was through bravery, wealth and beauty which eventually change with the coming of western education. The coming of formal education brought enormous change in the society and particularly in the lives of women. The later period witness new roles of women in many fields where women started to participate and work in different sectors as earners. The coming of education has brought in many changes among the Angami Naga society, but it did not improve the status of women in society. With the increase of educated women in Angami Naga society, the roles of uneducated women began to improve but it did not change their status. The coming of western education has changed the cultural set up in many ways, yet with these changes, women also have been retaining their stand in upholding their cultural identity of the society. While comfortably forgetting that it had its own margins and fringes, denying history and agency. Women have always been a part in building and helping in the civilization process both before and after the coming of western education.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Sherwood D Fox, *Emily Durkhiem; Education and Sociology*, London, Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1956, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Steve Bartlett, Diana Burton, Nick Peim, ed, *Introduction to education Studies*, London, Paul Chapman Publishing, 2001, p. 4

<sup>5</sup> S Bowles and H Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradiction of economic life*, London, Routledge abd kegan Pal, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London, Sage Publication, 1977,

<sup>7</sup> Cultural capital is first articulated by Pierre Bourdieu which is a sociologist concept. It refers to the general cultural background, knowledge, skills, etc. that's passed from one generation to the next

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generation, in other term it is non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means.

<sup>8</sup> Steve Barlett, Diana Burton, Nick Peim, *Introduction to Education Studies*, London, Paul Chapman Publishing, 2001, p.8

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 8

<sup>10</sup> Steve Barlett, Diana Burton, Nick Peim, *Introduction to Education Studies*, London, Paul Chapman Publishing, 2001, p. 172

<sup>11</sup> A R Kamat, *Women's Education And Social Change In India*, Social Scientist, Vol. 5, No. 1: 3-27,1976, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Morung is an institution where all the young unmarried men boys and girls comes and stay together at night. This is a place where they learn the basic ways of living with each other. The Angami Nagas have a Morung or 'Kichüki' for boys but women does not have Morung unlike the other tribes of the Nagas.

<sup>13</sup> *Dahu* is a place where all the important meetings are held. It is also called as *tehuba* which means meeting place. There can be more than one *dahu* or *tehuba* in a village. There is a slightly different meaning between these two. *Dahu* can be a *tehuba* but a *tehuba* cannot be called a *dahu*. All the important rituals are done in *Dahu*.

<sup>14</sup> *Khel* is a group of people. They form a *khel* according to their kinship.

<sup>15</sup> Tezenlo thong, *Progress and its impact on the Nagas*, England, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014, P. 97

<sup>16</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima, 1998, p. 80

<sup>17</sup> Lucy Zehol, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 28

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> Murkot Ramuny, *The world of Nagas*, Delhi, Northern Book Centre, 1988, p. 15.

<sup>21</sup> *Gazetteer of India, Nagaland Kohima district*, Calcutta, 1970, p. 190

<sup>22</sup> *Gazetteer of India, Nagaland Kohima district*, Calcutta, 1970

<sup>23</sup> Mabel Tanquist was the wife of Joseph E Tanquist. They were missionaries who assist Reverenbung.

<sup>24</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima, 1998, p. 93- 100.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 81

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

<sup>27</sup> C D King, *Letter from C D King*, Baptist Missionary Magazine 59/11, November 1879, p. 390 (reprint) Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima , 1998, p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> *Heralding hope, Kohima 125*, Kohima, 2004, p. 88

<sup>29</sup> Assam Baptist Missionary Conference Report (ABMCR), *Digest of Field Report; thirty seventh session*, January 4- 9, Kohima, 1940, p. 33

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- <sup>30</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima, 1998, p. 96
- <sup>31</sup> Kiezotuo Zhale, , *Tenyidie Mhasi Kerieko*, Kohima, 2010, p.2
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 45.
- <sup>33</sup> *Heralding Hope: Kohima 125*, Kohima, 2004, p. 91
- <sup>34</sup> *Heralding Hope; Kohima 125*, Kohima, 2004, p.91
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid p.91
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid p. 94
- <sup>37</sup> Kiezotuo Zhale, *Tenyimia Mhasi Kerieko*, Kohima, 2010, p. 44.
- <sup>38</sup> *Heralding Hope; Kohima 125*, Kohima, 2004, p. 94
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid p.94
- <sup>40</sup> *Kewhimiapfü* means women from Kohima village or the women from Kohima.
- <sup>41</sup> *Heralding Hope; Kohima 125*, Kohima, 2004, p. 98
- <sup>42</sup> Kiezotuo Zhale, *Tenyimia Mhasi Kerieko*, Kohima, 2010, p. 46.
- <sup>43</sup> *Lohe chiecha* is the traditional Wrap around Skirt which women wear in Angami Naga society. *Loramhoushü* is another traditional shawl that women wear and it is the combination of white, black, red and green. More details on shawls, wrap around skirts and traditional clothes are discussed in chapter IV.
- <sup>44</sup> The Angamis' have meaning behind every name being given. *Ra* means 'village', *vole* means 'go there' and 'ü' indicate for a female name. Her Father was posted outside Kohima in Phek district where she was born thus in order to let her return to her native village, her grandmother name her '*Ravoleü*' so that she will always have yearn to go back to their village.
- <sup>45</sup> Kiezotuo Zhale, *Tenyimia Mhasi Kerieko*, Kohima, 2010, p. 47
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid p. 49
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid p.49
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid p. 52
- <sup>49</sup> .. *Haralding hope; Kohima 125*, 2004
- <sup>50</sup> Report by H. Houston, *Assam Baptist missionary Conference Report*, 1950- 1951, p. ii, quoted in Aphuno Chase Roy, 1998, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima, p. 125
- <sup>51</sup> Lucy Zehol, ed, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p.38
- <sup>52</sup> The traditional Angami Naga society forbids the unmarried women to keep their hair long due to some reasons. They have to shave their head which signify them as unmarried and pure. Another reason behind shaving their head before was that, other married men will not be attracted by their beauty.
- <sup>53</sup> Lucy Zehol, ed, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p. 56.
- <sup>54</sup> Lucy Zehol, ed, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p. 100
- <sup>55</sup> *Sekhrenyi* is the festival of the Angami and the Chakhesang tribe. This festival is the harvesting festival which is celebrated in the month of January and February.

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<sup>56</sup> 'Thino' means clan in tenyidie. Tenyidie is the common language of *tenyimia* community of the Nagas. The Angamis usually divide themselves in clans.

<sup>57</sup> These warfare and raids is commonly known as 'head hunting'.

<sup>58</sup> *Liedepfü* is a Tenyidie word which means first reaper lady. The traditional Angami Naga society gives the authority to a woman to start the harvest. Until the first woman starts the harvest no one can start harvesting in the village.

<sup>59</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima, 1998, p. 120.

<sup>60</sup> 'Inherit land' here does not refer to ancestral land. It can be a landed property but the land which was bought by parents with their own savings.

<sup>61</sup> Lucy Zehol, ed, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p. 59.

<sup>62</sup> Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition; Angami Naga women from 1878 to the present*, Kohima, 1998, p. 118

<sup>63</sup> Genna or '*kenyü*' (in tenyidie language use by the *tenyimia* community of the Nagas) which literally means taboo. It is the taboo which no one is supposed to do anything against it. It can be a holiday which every member of the village needs to maintain.

## Chapter – VII

### Conclusion

Since Nagas are tribal people, many academicians have the notion that Naga society is an equal society, hence this society treats Naga women with respect and equal dignity which is natural and given. To them traditional Naga society was one of democratic republic akin to Athenian republics. None chose to ask: how equal were women in Naga society. For most it remains unnecessary and therefore unexamined issue. This study addresses the issues of gender, which remained unaddressed in the politics of the history of the Nagas. By trying to understand the cultural and social history of the traditional Naga society, one needs to understand the social organization and social construction of the sexes. This study locates realities of women's subjection to male power and the stifling patriarchy in the traditional and colonial Naga society.

This study *'The cultural World of Woman in Angami Naga Society'* focuses on Angami Naga Women and their cultural world in Traditional and the changing society with the coming of Christianity. It looks at the way in which women had been carrying the identity and playing a vital role through food, weaving, religion and education in two periods of time. From the hunting, gathering society to the settled cultivation to all the changing society, food has been a dynamic component. Weaving has always been women's art and work of Angami Naga society. The question of religious identity of women in Angami Naga society has been an ignored topic until the coming of Christianity with education.

The selectivity of writing history among the Nagas was challenged with the feminist perspective. The interrelationship of women and culture throughout history has been an excluded area for decades together. This study tried to locate Naga women, particularly Angami women, as agents of history or as history makers in the context of Naga history. The central argument of this study is that Naga history enterprise had been characterized by silences and selectivity: its silences on the women as agents of history and selective representation of events which denied women that agency. This study brings out how culture has affected women's lives and how women have been an integral part of it.

The objectives of the study critically analyze and understand the historical background of the role and status of Angami Naga women. It discussed the contribution and role played by Angami women in different periods with specific reference to education, weaving and food. There was a drastic change of Cultural trends with the coming of the outsiders and foreigners. The study also argues the outcome of the new trend in the status and role of women. It also critically analyzes and discusses Angami women as the carrier of identity and cultural values.

Most of the writings are written looking at historical realities from the nationalistic enterprise, whereas looking at it from the margin could offer a more comprehensive image of multiple realities and the nature and forms of power involved in the construction of history. Naga history had been an enterprise in the hands of ethno-nationalist who aspire to narrate it in opposition to the 'mainstream' Indian history. The basis of this separate ethno- national history has been the claimed to marginality and charge of homogenous tendencies and denial of its own history by the mainstream historians.

The Naga history is often presented in straight line narration. Beginning with the culture of warfare between tribes, raids against hostile villages and clans, in which the male members of the community took pride and the women honored the heroic deeds of warriors. This pre-colonial Naga society was presented as one of 'democratic' and republic like, where young adult members participated in decision making. And then with the invasion of the British, the brave Naga warriors resisted with bravery the colonizing tendencies of the British till they were conquered or subdued through conversion to Christianity and the spread of modern education.

The study begins with the historical background of the Naga society in general and the Angami Tribe in particular. Naga Women in traditional period have been playing a major role in social, religious and economic activities. Like the rest of the Nagas tribes, the Angami are also the warring tribes of the Nagas, but they are unknown to the outsiders till the early nineteenth century. The Angami Naga tribe follows the patriarchal family system with the father or the eldest male member as the head of the family. Women have always been treated secondary in the family and men as the first sex and the "bread winner". Starting from the birth ceremony to death women was treated differently.

Economically, women are considered "strong and equal partner" with their husbands, but in practice there is a wide difference in the work. The presence of women in economic activities and their equal or more work in agriculture is seen as their being "Strong" but this does not denote equality or liberty for women. Both terrace and jhum cultivation are practiced in Angami society. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people from the traditional times, men and women, young and old had to work in agricultural activities. It

was a custom and ritual for women to initiate agriculture in Angami Naga society as “*Liedepfü*” or the first reaper. The *Liedepfü* played a very important role, where until she starts the harvest no one could start harvesting. This ritual was done by the *Liedepfü* for bringing luck, prosperity and a rich harvest for the whole village

The study pointed out that men were “fame seekers”, as during traditional period men were after “fame and honor” thus head hunting and warfare has been their common game for which left women and children to complete all the agricultural work for the whole family. With the coming of the foreigners in the nineteenth century and the introduction of “coolie system”, women or the wife had to work and complete the agricultural work in time. The men folk had to carry the things of the administrator which took more time and left more work burden for the mother of the family. One should also keep in mind that the coolies were not paid, but were forced to carry the things transferring from one to the other place. In some cases the coolies were given tobacco for smoking<sup>1</sup>.

It was also found that, unmarried women were not allowed to grow their hair long till they were engaged or married. Their hair was cut short to indicate that they were unmarried and to show their virginity. The idea behind this practice was that the girl was not expected to look attractive and have sexual relationship with the opposite sex until they attained a marriageable age. The Angami tribe has two types of marriage, formal and informal marriage. The proper proposal of marriage from the man’s family is the formal marriage and marrying a woman after the woman gets pregnant or without any proper proposal is the informal marriage. Divorce was not an uncommon thing and it was not hard to remarry after being divorced. Divorces are of three type namely, “*ta*” the woman



ran away from husband home, “*ketsewa*” sent away by the husband or the family members, and “*kekawa*” means separation with the consent of both the husband and wife. Of all these three types of divorce, “*kekawa*” was considered to be something better than the other two for women. The society perceived the first two divorces as a woman’s fault, whereas the third type divorce is perceived as “incompetency” between husband and wife.

The traditional Angami Naga society witnesses a free mingling of man and woman. A man having a lover was not an uncommon thing in Angami Naga society. Most of the writing on Angami Naga society has the notions that women have the liberty to choose their husband, but one should also relook at the folklores also. Most of the folk tales and folk songs talk about women who marry men not of their choice but their parents’ choice. Daughters were considered more obedient than the sons in the family, thus in order to obey their parents, daughters usually get married to a person of their parents’ choice. The daughter’s duty also includes obedience to their parents and thus they marry according to their parents’ choices. Majority of the women folk marry men of their choice but one cannot conclude by saying every woman has the choice to marry the person they love.

Taboos play a very important role in the lives of the people, especially with women. In every aspect of the lives, taboos bind and control the lives of the women more than men. Women were controlled by the food taboos, religious taboos, weaving taboos, social taboos, etc. Until the coming of Christianity taboos surround the lives of every Angami Naga folk. Women were never allowed to disobey these taboos as they will be blamed if they do not follow the rules and taboos.

The study argues the interrelationship between woman and food. Food identifies a woman of a community from the other through the ethnic cuisine she cooked, which associate her with the geographically and historically defined community. Food has been the reason behind every success and evolution of human existence. Women in Angami Naga society have been playing an important role in cultivating, preparation and distribution of food. The culture of preparation and distribution of food is mostly carried out by the female member of the society. Angami Nagas also like other society rely on the power of food for the cultural differences that it has. Carole M. Counihan rightly stated that, apart from all the other authority that a woman has, the power of a woman is derived from the power of food. Food in India has a diverse ways and culture due to different regions and states.

It was pointed that Nagas have different types of food differing from tribe to tribe. Food among the Angami tribe can be categorized and put into Levis Strauss's culinary triangle as raw, cooked and decayed food. From traditional times to the present, the Angami tribe eats raw food products, cooked food and fermented or decayed food. All these preparation of food is done by women. The interrelationship between women and food in Angami Society has been a long link since traditional times. The Angami tribe being religious people brings in their religion in direct link with food also.

Naga women's identity is based not on the satisfaction of their own needs and desire, but of altruism and sacrifice for their family and men folk of the society. Preparation and gathering of food have been the work of women for the family, whereas the taboos have been a constant follower of women. Unlike male members of the society, food taboos

have more to do with women and children since the traditional times. Women were not allowed to eat the animals which have nails because they are always the one to take rice from the rice basket. They believed that if they eat animals with nails their rice will be taken and eaten up sooner than expected. Considered as the weaker sex in the society, women were not allowed to touch the ceremonial food during rituals. These food taboos increase the barriers of separation between men and women and not just a “protection from defilement”.

It can also be noted that food barter is controlled by the women folk in every Angami Village. Barter system was common in traditional societies where food barter in Angami society was a common activity which also distinguishes the people of different economic status. The food barter system was seen between rich and poor in terms of exchanging the other vegetables with rice. Rice was considered as a rich man's food at some point of time. Food as a communication between two people, villages or parties has been playing a very important role in civilization process. Giving food in any type to each other was a common act. This untold communication of food built a bridge between two people or two families. Giving and offering of food to friends and foes bring together people from different place. This type of strong bonding was not uncommon among the Angami Nagas. This culture of food barter system has been a common thing among the women in Angami society since the traditional times.

The traditional period saw a wide used and consumption of *zu* the traditional rice beer. Everywhere, *zu* was used as a sign of friendship and connection between people of different economic status. The notion of “sin” as a term by missionaries did not occur

until the coming of the Christian missionaries with the Christian ideology. Women are the one in charge of making and preparing *zu* for the family and friends. The mother or the daughter serves the drinks to the rest of the family or the guest. It was widely used for socially and also for religious purpose. In all the religious activities *zu* was used as an important item of food to offer and please the unseen creator. *Zu* in traditional period act as a tool for personal identity where for an instant a rich man gives *zu* to the whole village during the times of feast of merit.

Food culture was affected by the coming of Christianity. Christianity with its ideology has eradicated and imposed many rules on the society and also in food intake. Many food taboos or almost all the taboos are considered old ways in traditional religion. After the conversion to Christianity, people were taught not to give importance to the food taboos imposed on them since traditional times. *Zu* the traditional health drink was termed as “alcoholic drink” which every converted Christian is forbidden to give up the drink. The thought of *zu* was seen as “alcoholic” never occurred in the traditional period as the people used it as a health drink instead of water. The culture of offering food on occasions like “welcoming the head hunters with food and offering food before the festival starts” was replaced by prayers. The culture of feast of merit which was celebrated with all the villagers by a rich man to show his wealth and get a higher status discontinued with the coming of Christianity.

The study examines the handloom weaving culture of the society in association with women. Handloom weaving has always been a monopoly of women’s work. The discourse of weaving has been one of the most important craft which women had been

doing and in carrying the identity from one generation to the other. Weaving or '*Therhi*' was one of the important things that every girl ought to know. A girl from her childhood is nurtured to learn how to weave clothes as a part of her daily duty. It is believed, that if men weave clothes and follow this effeminate craft, they would lose their virility. The traditional society witnesses the high weaving skill among women and the competition between them before marriage as a sign of capability and respect for male members of the family.

Weaving culture from the traditional times has been used in term of gift with different indications. Sometimes traditional weaved shawl was gifted to others not out of happiness, but also during funerals. Women are the one who gives identification to men among the men folk. With no caste system in Naga society, the hierarchies of society, according to the economic status people were pushed to different economic level. Traditional Naga society witnesses the identification of rank through different weaving style where people wore their dresses according to their economic status and not everyone can wear any type of weaving style. People can be identified by the clothes he or she wears. The identity that a man carries with him through his dress comes from women who weave for the whole of the family and society in general.

Taboos have always been a part of women's lives in every activity. Weaving taboos can be pointed out even in the traditional period where weaving though very much associated with both women and men yet there are certain things which Angami men stay away from it. The clothes weaved by the women folk are worn by men to identify them from the rest of other people. But in the process of making the cloths men have taboo to even

touch the articles used for weaving. Considering women to be the weaker sex in the society, the so called “women’s things” or weaving articles should not be touched by the menfolk, as there was a fear that men might become weak especially in their legs and body as a whole. As mentioned before, it is believed that by touching those weaving articles or tools, men gets weak to go after their enemies and even find it difficult to go for hunting. The Angami men are not even allowed to walk over the weaving articles, and even if they do so they have to go backward and rewind their walk. This walk over was believed to weaken their knee and legs while competing with other men folks. It was a taboo for women to weave during some particular day of festivals, ‘wrestling day’ when the men folk is having the wrestling meet to compete their strength. Use of weaved clothes were not banned on these days. But the making of it was not allowed because of the reason that it’s “women’s work” and it may bring harm or bad luck to the men folk.

Christianity has widely affected the women and their weaving art. The introduction of the educational system with the coming of Christianity opens the gateway for girls to read and learn. Girls along with boys started attending schools which for a period of time give less time for weaving. The Christian missionaries’ encourage girls to weave and knit clothes. Girls continue to weave clothes for their family, but the average went down as they do not have enough time to weave cloths as they attend school, help families in agricultural work when they get time and help their mothers in household chores. This was the time when the cultural discourse undergoes a change among the Angami Naga society with lesser weavers compared to the traditional times. This cultural change highly affected women in particular as the weaving art seems to take a little break with the coming and the introduction of western education. Though education and Christianity

came with an aim to civilize the society with its own ideology, women on the other hand continue to weave for the family and the society. More colors, more design and technique came to be used with the coming of the foreigners. Weavers moved to towns in search of a better education institution of their children, which makes it easier to get more and better wool and silk.

The chapter on Religion shows how Christianity and education had brought an instrumental change among the Angamis and especially in the changing role of Angami women. The status and role of women in particular had improved, yet, due to the continuing influence of the traditional patriarchy of the society and patriarchal assumption of the missionaries, women could never attain full equality with men even in church. Women although enjoyed considerable freedom, had to face restriction due to male centric social custom which had hampered the emancipation for a long time. With the conversion of Christianity and education, it initiated the process of upward mobility and gave many new roles, but equality with men was not one of them. Though the role of the women increases, their status remains the same as in the pre-colonial period.

One can agree that the Angami Nagas in the traditional period were religious people. The traditional religion of the Angami society believed in the existence of soul in everything. They believed that the unseen creator is the head of all spirits. They do not have a particular name of their religion but as “*tsana*” which literally means “way of ancestors”. Nagas lived closely to nature and sense its mysterious powers and believed in the existence of a single supreme God, benevolent spirits and malevolent spirits. Nagas also believed in the existence of ancestral spirits, Village deities, household deities, etc. where

the deities were worshipped with reverence and offered sacrifice with food and drink. The religion of the Nagas was also centered largely on fertility cults and where the religious practices and ways of the Nagas had a very great impact in their everyday lives from the traditional times.

The Angamis believed that *kepenuopfü* the creator, dwelt in the sky and when a person died, his soul go up to the sky to her. “*Terhuo*” or “deity” was a common term used for all the supernatural being in Angami society. *Terhuo* are so many of them with different types and names, different works, good and bad, etc. They are term and called as one name “*terhuo*” though they have their own names. Some of the *terhuo* which the Angamis were aware of were like “*Rutzeh*” the evil one, “*Maweno*” the Angami deity of fruitfulness, “*Ayepi*” a fairy that lived in house and brought prosperity, *Telepfü* was another female Spirit or *Terhuo* and she was believed to be a mischievous being, “*Tsükho*” and “*Dzürawü*” were two spirits-husband and wife, “*Metsimo*” was a spirit who guards the approach to paradise, “*Tekhu-Rhuo*” was the god of tigers, *Ruopfü* was considered as the ancestress of all the spirits, “*Temí*” was a ghost who could not kill human but threatened and frightened the cowards. Thus seeing the above deities, one would notice that the Angamis believed deities and spirits were more female spirits than male. But when the missionaries came and translated the word “*terhuo*”, they term it as “Satan”. The concept and notion of all the *terhuo* turns out to be evil in the minds of the people. Literally, “satan” means “*terhuokesuo*”.

Women in Angami Naga society can never become “kemevo” or the priest, but the wife of the priest played a very vital role in helping her husband. All the family rites and



rituals to propitiate the household deities, the ancestral spirits are led by the wife. The “*themumiapfü*” or female shaman in Angami society seems to play a vital role in the traditional period where they are sought by every individual seeking answers of their doubts about any suspected spirit issues. They are well respected in the villages and some were even known to other neighboring villages also. Some are even believed to communicate with the other world.

In traditional religion, there were more taboos for women and children as compared to the men folk. Women had a taboo to fetch or carry water from the well on the main *Sekrenyi* festival as they are considered impure as it is a festival of purification. It was a taboo for women and they were not allowed in pulling the *Kharu* or the village gate, but can participate in carrying the food for the men folk. ‘*Kavate*’ was a ritual done exclusively by the women for the manifold and plentiful wealth of the family. The *Kavate* ritual was done by women and men were not allowed to join them. Every Angami festival begins with a ritual called ‘*kizhie*’ which is done by women and not by men. If in a family, there was no female then a young unmarried girl was called from some other family to do the ritual for that family.

Head hunting was a ritual warfare for the Nagas in the traditional times, but it was a taboo for the head hunters to kill their own clan members even from another village. Bringing the head of a woman or a child was highly regarded as they stay well protected in the village. Special rituals were done after the return of the warriors, but women were not allowed to go and meet their husbands on the very first day. Women in early Naga society though took part in religious practices; the rituals in the public arena were

conducted by men and not by women. However, all the household rituals and some ancestral rituals were done by women in the early Naga society.

The coming of Christianity in the nineteenth century amongst the Angami society brought a lot of drastic change in every woman's life. Conversion to Christianity had an enormous impact on society with positive benefit in general. Conversion was not based on gender selectivity, but of free will. Women were allowed to participate in church activities and preach in the pulpit. But Christianity in its own patriarchal system did not let women be the pastor of the church until very recently where there were some women who became pastor along with other male pastors.

There was a cultural change with the coming of Christianity where the social phenomenon has been shaken by the religion which ultimately touches the culture of the people knowingly and unknowingly. These changes in the culture of the society have been a part and parcel of everyday women's lives where Christianity still taught the women to be faithful, dutiful wife, good mothers and obedient daughters.

It could be noted that education among the Angami Naga society witnesses the two kinds of educations namely formal and informal education. Before the coming of the formal or the western education, the Nagas had the informal education where the knowledge was passed down without any formal school setting. *Kichüki* (Morung) as an institution plays a very important role in the lives of the young people of the Nagas. But unlike the other tribe the Angami tribe does not have *kichüki* for girls. Girls learn all the necessary things from their mothers. The main custodians of the oral traditions passed down were the

mothers and grandmothers. Girls gather in group and goes to the old woman's house to learn the weaving skills and other necessary activities for lives.

Western education brought in a new chapter in the culture of the Angami Naga society in general and women in particular. With the coming of Christianity and education, the informal education was overruled by the formal education, giving a proper and better education for the people. The cultural society brought a new phase where people began to look with a new perspective to read and learn and know the outer world beyond their 'Angami Country'.

The introduction of primary school and high school in Kohima encouraged few Angami parents to send their daughters to schools to read and write. Few women like Khrielieü Kire, Janikhoü Savino, Khrienguü Kire, Dino, Rüsokhrienuo, Khrieü Sekhose, Neichülieü Iralu, Neilakuoü Peseyie, Zenuo Shüya, Khrieleno Terhüja, Rano Shaiza, etc. were the ones who got education during the early days. The early educated women started to compose songs and started writing down the traditional folktales which were orally passed down to them by their grandmothers and mothers. They were even encouraged to learn music and join the musical band.

Missionaries encouraged weaving, knitting and sewing for the Angami girls. In traditional society every Angami woman needs to take along with her woven shawls and clothes when she gets married, but looking beyond, women who are going for higher education did not progress or elevate with their weaving. Getting involves and taking part in society began to increase with the coming of education.

With the growth of literacy, attitudes towards women in the Angami society broadened a great deal. Education provided the helping hand for women. Girls began to come out and get education with their brothers, though the male children were still given more freedom to study. Few women who got education started to work in offices and contribute in the financial status of the family. Another set of women in Angami society continues to work in the agricultural sector as they did not get the privilege to get education due to poverty and being a 'girl'.

The phase of the Angami Naga society can be clearly divided into two sections before and after the coming of the foreigners with Christianity and education. The culture of the whole society was shaken by the coming of the new wave with the entry of foreigners. The cultural discourse underwent a massive change with education as its main vehicle which affected every section of the people in the society. The society started to change with the new attitude of the Christianized ideology opposing the traditional culture of the people which was followed for many generations. Almost all the traditional activities and ways were challenged by Christianity in one or the other. Changes in the society have both positive and negative aspects where every individual experience one or the other.

Christianity brought a new faith to the people with education which has brought women to a broader and wider space where they can come out of their four walls and work with the other people. Education has equipped them to earn, travel, speak, and teach for the family and society. Educated women have not only benefited their families' but also the uneducated women in the village in term of teaching them in different ways and method. Angami women still weave for the family and for business for family economy.

Uneducated women in the village continue to work in the agricultural sector for their families. The religious taboos levied upon women in traditional period no longer binds educated women but have not completely disappeared in case of elderly women.

This study not only questioned the silences and selectivity of the male perspective history of the Nagas, but also tries to bring out the marginality in the reconstruction of Naga history. No enterprise of history, including the Naga history was innocent. Each history had its own silences, selective amnesia and selective representation and its own marginality. Naga history was silent on the contribution of women in the formation of Naga identity and silent about its oppressive patriarchal structures of power.

Angami women have been an active historical agent since the traditional times. However, their history and presence is always denied without bringing out their stories and their work and there is a bias in writing the history of the Nagas. From the traditional period before the coming of the British administrators and the American missionaries, Angami women have been carrying the identity of the society in different field. Women have been keeping alive the cultural tradition of the society as a whole and need to be acknowledged while writing the history of the people. Women and culture have been mutually influencing each other in both the periods. In the cultural discourse in Angami Naga society, women have been actively carrying the culture of the society and keeping the identity in term of weaving, agriculture, food, etc. hence this work attempts to write the history and contribution of women to show that women were an active agent of history and have contributed immensely to the making of Naga history, culture and identity.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with a respondent called Thinuolhoulie. He viewed that the intake of tobacco and smoking increase to a large number among the villagers because of the foreigners. He says “my elder brother carried the things of the Japanese soldiers to some other village and returned with a lot of tobacco, which he distributed to a lot of his villagers which became addicted to it. We did not know then that tobacco kills”.

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## *Appendix 1*

### **Translation of few Sayings:**

1. *Thenoumia nuo penuo, thepfunia mi penuo.*

Women give birth to a child, men give birth to fire.

2. *Thepfu do sero-e thenie. Thenumia do thenie.*

Men's idea has thirty seven ideas, women have seven ideas.

3. *Thenumia thepfumia phi rükhrei suo.*

Women should not walk over men's leg.

## *Appendix 2*

The Names of the people interviewed:

1. *Thinuolhoulie Lhoungu.*  
82 years old,  
Dihoma Village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2013.
2. *Rüguolhoulie Zhale.*  
74 years old,  
Dihoma Village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in December 2012, February 2014.
3. *Thevobo Yano.*  
78 years old,  
Dihoma Village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.
4. *Mengakhra Kesitsu.*  
63 years old,  
Dihoma village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.
5. *D.Suokhrie.*  
58 years old,  
Kohima village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in February 2014.
6. *Pfusolie Pienyii.*  
63 years,

Nerhema Village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.

7. *Neikhalie Tsükrü*

68 years  
Dihoma Village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.

8. *Vituonuo Pienyü*

67 years  
Kohima village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.

9. *Vivolhoulie Tsükrü*

65 years  
Dihoma village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.

10. *Sevilie Dzüvichü*

80 years  
Kohima village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.

11. *Rüvokieü Theünuo*

70 years  
Kohima village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.

12. *Lt. Rävoseü Dzüvichü*

Kohima village, Kohima District, Nagaland.  
Interviewed in January 2012.

## ***Folksongs:***

### ***Appendix 3***

#### ***Mehouviü***

*Mehouviü ze ketsu metsei,  
Lu Kideizou Moriüsa kinu,  
Khutie pie cü u hiezu pie khrie.  
Tuo üyie mu mha kevi nhie ru,  
Mehouviü Moriüsa unie,  
Keri modi sokenuo die chü  
Tuo ü zo di lhou' rüluo tele.<sup>1</sup>*

**Translation:** The above folk song is a story about a young man and a young woman who are engaged and tragedy happens before they could marry. This folk song is a story about one handsome man and one beautiful woman. Their story was told by everyone in and outside their village for the groom chopped the head of his bride for 'fame and honor'.

Moriüsa is a handsome man from Kedima village of southern part of Angami. He is a handsome young man who is a warrior and a skill head hunter. Everyone in his village knows him for his skill and he is known to other neighboring village also. It was time for him to get married so his parents and relative start searching a bride for him. They could not get a match for him in their village so their search went beyond their village. From another village, they met Mehouviü who agrees to marry her. On the day of their marriage Moriüsa woke up and decided to go for head hunting thinking he will welcome his bride with his skill and maybe with enemy's head. Thus he started his venture in the

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<sup>1</sup> This song is also compiled by Shürhozelie in 'üca – 53', p. 26

morning, but could not get any head after a long search. After a long day of hunting he could not find anyone so he came to one village where he came across one beautiful woman sitting. He saw this beautiful woman and likes her beauty, but since he did not get any head that day and he does not want to take her head. But as he wanted to show his pride and welcome his wife with a head, he killed her and took her head. He brought the head to his village and called his friends and loved ones and celebrating and waiting for his bride to come. The bride in traditional times comes at night to their husband's house. Morüsa waited for his bride to come, but she did not come, thus he thought his bride must have cheated him. Later they ask why his bride did not come and they were told that she was killed on her marriage day by a headhunter. Morüsa realized that he himself had killed his bride on their marriage day.



## Appendix 4

### *Gareiphezou:*

*Gareiphezou Terhüso üpfu,  
Charüünuo pfhünuora kevo;  
Apfu pelhou anie Pukahie,  
Pedo hu ro kethutiecai;  
No we pedo a awe thukhonuo.  
Japfüphiki n kewheko ze,  
Terhuo nei chü zouü gei keza;  
A whuorü mu kuolie suo dinu  
Petsurü mu perie tsüiyie ho.<sup>2</sup>*

**Traslation:** This folk song is a story of a woman from the Gariphema village from northern part of Angami, who was taken captive by the head hunters to Khonoma village. This song is believed to be composed by her as a captive. She as captive talks about the people and compares both the village strength. She says that Gariphema village is a weak as a calf whereas Khonoma village is a bull which is strong.

Gariphema is a village in the northern Angami country that is also known for having good headhunters. Terhüso is a skilled head hunter from Gariphema village. He has a sister known as Charüü who is known for her beauty and she knows how to talk well. The Khonoma village of western part along with the southern villages attacked the Gariphema village Charüü who was then weaving was taken as a captive. Her brother who was a skilled warrior could not rescue his sister even if he was known for his skills because the enemies out number them. Charüü was brought to Khonoma village and was forced to compose and sing for them or else they will chop her head off. It is believed that this song was composed at this time.

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<sup>2</sup> Compiled in Shürhozelie in 'üca – 53', p. 29

## Appendix 5

### *Khrüzie puo ü*

*Khrüzie puo ü teiso üdinu,*

*Hie neiunuo thu kesou ze kho;*

*Pejüwa di la'rü hie zhü gei,*

*Melou thekre phica hie zhü tsie,*

*Hie va chü ü hie puonuo kipu.<sup>3</sup>*

**Traslation:** This folk song is about a story about a young girl and her lover. Every morning before dawn she would wake up early and go and wake her lover up and they will go to the field and carry the leftover grain. But one morning as they were going to field as usual, her lover was killed and his head was taken by the headhunters. She came home and cried for her lover, which woke her father up. Her father asks the reason, but out of shame she did not tell him the truth as told him that she has some stomach pain.

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<sup>3</sup> Compiled in Shürhozelie in 'üca – 53', p. 35

## Appendix 6

### *Lhenu khokhrieü*

*Razoutsheü nie tsiepfumianie,*

*Mho di pemo nie we lhou sierü*

*Kemere tshe chü kekrelie di?*

*Nie we ha pfü sie vo hu hieü,*

*Huo kha u tsü huo u liezuo cha;*

*Pie tuo thienyü lhenu khrokhrieü,*

*Kechüunuo rüli zha kese,*

*Keba ki we khalie mo dinu;*

*Hie kho chiüpfü sie kepa nhienü,*

*Kha tha derei hie we la moluo.*

**Translation:** This song is about a woman who was known for her good behavior. This woman was engaged to a man from another village. Hearing her engagement the woman folk of their village wonder and pity why her parents would give her away to another village. They wonder what her parents dream about her marriage. They praise her for her beauty and goodness and ask her to give and leave some of her goodness behind for her villagers. She did not want to marry to other villages, but as she could not find a match in her village her parents got her engaged to that village. In this song she also says she could not break her engagement as she could not find a match in her village and also disobey her parents.

## Appendix 7

### *Hie Pieü*

*Pfuchazou-o tuo kevi riina.*  
*Mia sei mia tsie mia ca-o viüwhü,*  
*Ba üyie mu hie pieü penyhü,*  
*Mia razou shü mia liezuo cha tsu;*  
*Tsokemo nu jüta ü purü.*  
*Hie züü ze phezoucha lie cie,*  
*Pekra khrie di se nu pie keyie,*  
*Vorüluo die Lhouvitsüü no,*  
*Thapfü rükhru Dzüvala mere,*  
*Zo lerüluo mia- mhie- möüno.<sup>4</sup>*

**Translation:** This folk song is about a woman called Lhovitsüü from Kohima village. This song is composed by her parents after her death. Her parents talks about their loved for their daughter as a child when they do not want her to cry and loved her a lot.

Lhouvitsüü married a man from Puchama village, but died due to illness soon after her marriage. When the proposal came for her for marriage, they praised the young groom as a rich man and about the Puchama village with good people and place. Soon after her marriage, she fell sick and died before she could learn and know more about the village and people she died. The news of her death came to reach her parents, which remind them about her as a child. Her parents thought she would be happy after her marriage and dream of meeting her in fields someday but their dreams were shattered.

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<sup>4</sup>Compiled in Shürhozelie in 'üca – 53',p. 34

## Appendix 8

### *Shüsie A Neiü*

*Hie shüpie pa lu hiera geinu,  
Hie neiüpfü tsu kele vaphi,  
Hie neiüpfü mia tsuva sie nu,  
Ketei teikhru zuluopfü meke  
Vaphi keyou lu zhüdi pecie;  
Zoshü metha sojürü puo gei.  
Hie zhü chüpfü hie ngounie bipie  
Mepfü keruo rüpie huorie ke;  
Mia dora rei nie dzie shü these,  
N we haü n ru ha sa rie;  
Zotatuo le shüsie a neiü.<sup>5</sup>*

**Translation:** This is a song talks about a young man who mourns for his admirer. This song describes this young man who one morning took his traditional beer *zu* and sits outside his house and watch his admirer goes to her field. She was caring the traditional beer behind her in her bamboo basket and with black shawl around her. He watches her till she walk behind the trees. That very day the head hunters came and killed many people including this admirer. As soon as he heard about the news he rushes to the spot, taking his spear and shield. He screams out his anger taking the hand of his admirer who was beheaded there. The head hunters take both men and women's head.

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<sup>5</sup> Compiled in Shürhozelie in 'üca – 53' p. 43

## Appendix 9

### *U Kelhou*

#### *-Dino*

*U kelhoue kemethou puo mo*

*U kelhoue kethotho puo zo.*

*U kelhoue u mho gei zo mo.*

*U kelhoue kesoutho puo zo.*

*U kelhoue theyu riübei mo,*

*U kelhoue keretho puo zo.*

*U kelhoue kemichie jü mo.*

*U kelhoue kesia tie nu tha.*

*U kelhoue teiso chülieya,*

*U kelhoue teizei chülieya.*

*U kelhoue u thou chülieya,*

*U kelhoue u thou rhuo rhuowaya.*

**Translation:** This song was composed by Dino one of the first educated woman among the Angami Nagas. In this song the composer brings out the different meaning of life. The composer started by saying that life should be taken seriously and a precious one. One should not just live life like a dream, but with serious thinking and understanding. Life is also not just to have fun and for enjoyment, but one need to think and take life seriously. There are lots of dangers everyday in our lives if one does not look out. It depends on oneself to make our life beautiful and prosper or make it sad.

## **Appendix 10**

### ***Nhichu Zha***

*Kesou kezei lu nhatsara nu,  
Meyiepounuo pou kebayo tuoi;  
Nhicuki we mha va keziekruo,  
Vi moü rei u kesuoyo rei;  
Se rüinou di mha we mehou mo.*

*Nou tsopfhü mo ütsaliko chü,  
Mha va pele thenou va pemvü;  
U ketuora tei kesokezie,  
Mha medo mo mia keyu tie kre  
Kesuo le mo mo zo u tei dzü.*

*Khunhie puo mu khunhie puo kemhie,  
Kesa dojü kevi cha kese  
U dzü we zie vokezhü nu we,  
Mhiphra kevi nhicu zha pevo;  
Wateluo mu le rüinou molie.*

**Translation:** This song is also composed by Dino. This song talk about the childhood days. The composer talks how one misses the childhood days and compare life as a flower. There are no worries in the mind of a child's mind. Childhood just went by like a blink of an eye.

***Folkstories:***

***Appendix 11***

**Rütsolhouü:**

This is a story about a girl called Rütsolhouü. After her parents' death, her uncle sold her to another village. Before her parents death she was loved and taken care by them. She was taken to the plains and around Manipur. Later she came to Meriema village. She became a fine woman and also good in weaving shawls. After many years she met one person from her village and he requested her to come back to their village. She asks about her uncle and she sent a shawl for him. She sent the shawl not because she missed or loved her uncle but to insult her uncle for selling her away. She also told him to tell her uncle that the shawl was made not out of love but out of misery. Shawls are not gifted not only for respect, loved, but also for other purpose also.



## ***Appendix 12***

### **Rheizetuoü:**

This is a folktale about a young woman called as Rheizetuoü and her lover. They are from Khonoma village. During the Thekranyi festival she along with her lover went out to forest to collect jungle leave. Friends of their same age and other people were enjoying the festive season with songs and feasting, but they went to the forest alone. All the way they were talking about their love for each other and sharing everything they have in mind until they reach the dense forest very far from their village. They started plucking the leaves and keep on talking about all the things they wanted to share until late. They started to return to their village as it was becoming dark. When they are reaching the Puliebadze Mountain, suddenly a tiger came and killed Rheizetuoü. Since the woman was killed by a tiger her lover did not want to return to the village. Since she went out to the forest with her lover and did not return the villagers thought she might have got injured on her way and that's why did not return. Later they learn that she was killed by a tiger. After a long time her bones were brought back to the nearby village and buried near the roadside. Rhezetuoü later became a butterfly and comes to her home to visit her parents. The traditional people believed in the rebirth of people.

## Photos



Plate No. 1: An Angami woman weaving



Plate No. 2: Different activities of weaving



Plate No. 3: Shawls



Plate No. 4: Young Angami girls in traditional dress





Plate No. 5: Traditional dress for boys and elderly men



Plate No. 6: Different Angami traditional costumes.



Plate No. 7: *Zu* the traditional drink



Plate No. 8: Men folk enjoying *Zu* / rice beer





Plate No.9 & 10: Celebrations of festivals with songs, food, drinks etc.







Plate No. 11 & 12: Traditional games “*tholi*”.



**Ph.D Synopsis**

**CULTURAL WORLD OF WOMEN IN ANGAMI NAGA SOCIETY**

A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad for the award of a degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Centre for Women's Studies

By

**VITSOU YANO**

Thesis supervisor

**Prof. Rekha Pande**



**CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD**

**HYDERABAD- 500046, INDIA**

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## **CULTURAL WORLD OF WOMEN IN ANGAMI NAGA SOCIETY**

Women's Studies have emerged as one of the most important studies as it has provided its practitioners with a different way of looking at the society and the world. There is a need to look and study women's history and her culture from a different way that is from the women's point of view and from the time of traditional to the modern context. The Naga<sup>1</sup> women's history needs to unfold and bring out from the long sealed history to complete the history of the Nagas. The cultural difference of the Hills differentiates them from the rest of the plains, yet there is a huge gap of cultural differences among the Hills themselves. This study aims to raise certain issues and questions concerning Naga women and the cultural world of traditional and modern Naga society<sup>2</sup>.

Naga women have been denied presence in the reconstruction of Naga history and have been treated as non-historical-agent in its reconstruction in the twentieth century. In this male centric historical reconstruction and narration, women are merely mentioned as sharing equal status in the Naga society. This study attempts and problematises the place of Naga women in the cultural world of pre-colonial /pre- modern Naga society and the early colonial / modern Naga society. This study aims to focus on Angami women and their participation in education, weaving, religion and food in different periods of Angami Naga history.

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<sup>1</sup> Nagas are a group of communities inhabiting in and around present Nagaland situating in the North- East of India. The word 'Naga' connotes many meanings with many beliefs and assumption by different scholars. John Butler is of the view that the Nagas are known by the plains i.e. Assam as Nagas as they were found Naked. Some other scholars traced the meaning of word 'Naga' which means people, naked, pierced as they have pierced ears, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The period 'modern' here is used with the coming and after entry of the foreigners into the Naga Hills.

Culture is the way of life of the people. It may be defined as the social heritage of the community, whereby the artifacts behavior and customs created by the people in their ongoing activities of life conditions are transmitted from generation to generation. Raymond Williams defines culture as a whole way of life, as ordinary and more closely linked with everyday life<sup>3</sup>. Ralph Linton in his book *The Cultural Background of Personality* defines culture as, “the total way of life of any society, not simply to those parts of this way which the society regards as higher or more desirable”<sup>4</sup>. Carol and Melvin ember defines that “culture encompasses the learned behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that are characteristic of a particular society or population”<sup>5</sup>. According to Chris Jenks culture is regarded as “the whole way of lives of people”<sup>6</sup>.

Tribal societies are usually considered to be an equal society where women enjoy equal rights with men. But this preconceived notion of tribal women need to be erased as the tribal women are no far better than the rest of women in India. Tribal women in Northeast India or the Naga women is seen as having a high status, but looking at the Naga society in practice and through this study one finds that the tribal women have no better status than the rest of women in India. This study takes Angami Naga women as the main agent in history making in the pre colonial and in the transition period.

Among the many tribes of Nagas, the present work focus on the Angami tribe who are known to themselves as the “Tenyimia”<sup>7</sup> and “Angami” by others. The word Tenyimia

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and society*, 1780- 1950, London, Penguin, 1961, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph Linton, *The cultural background of personality*, New York, 1945, p.30.

<sup>5</sup> Carol R. Ember and Melvin Ember, *Anthropology*, New Jersey, Prentice hall, 1985, p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Jenks, *Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1993,p.12

<sup>7</sup> *Tenyimia* also include some other tribes such as Mao, Rengma, Zeliang, Chakhesang, apart from Angamis.

came from the word “*Tenyi*” means “fore- fathers” and “*mia*” means “people”. The Angamis are further divided into four sub- division among themselves, namely the Northern, Southern, Western and ‘*Chakhro*’. Among the Naga tribes, the Angamis have a rigid patriarchal family system. The father being the head of the family makes all the decisions where the mother has no voice on any issues.

The coming of modernity with Christianity has caused a change in the ethos (characteristic spirit of culture) of tribal cultures which automatically led to a change in the lives of the women in particular. This study not only confines to women in the pre-colonial period but also tries to place women in the transition period, especially focusing on the coming of Christianity and modern education. Women of the Angami tribe will be studied separately along with the different cultural aspects from other tribes of the Nagas. This study draws from the feminist tradition of subjecting history writing to critical, analytical project and placing women at the center of history.

#### **Area and period of study:**

Nagas comprise of more than fifteen tribes, thus it would be difficult to do intensive study of every tribe for this research. Though the Nagas are viewed to have a common social, political, economy, religion, etc., inwardly and practically they have different ways of life in every aspect of lives. This study focuses on Angami tribe inhabiting in and around the Kohima district in the northwestward of Nagaland inhabiting the north east of the state.

Despite the knowledge of the difficulties involved in the historical research of a community during its preliterate period, this research will deal with period from pre-Colonial or pre modern to the Colonial or the modern period. It is difficult to bring in the Periodization of the Naga History with the Periodization of Indian history due to their differences in civilizations. Therefore Naga history can only be studied and periodized as pre- colonial / pre- modern, colonial / modern and post- colonial period. This research basically deals with women in the pre colonial period and its transition to colonial.

**Objectives:**

- To critically analyze and understand the historical background of the role and status of Naga women.
- Study the contribution and role played by Angami women in different periods with specific reference to food, weaving, religion, and education.
- To understand the role of Angami women and their response to the changing cultural trends due to the coming of the outsiders to this region.
- To understand whether the new trend century benefited the status and role of women.
- Understand Naga women as the “carrier of identity” and cultural values.

**Methodology:**

The research relies on feminist methodology, ethno historical and historical anthropology. The study is based both on primary and secondary source. The method focuses on the correlation between the primary and secondary sources. For the early

women's history, it depends on the oral tradition and also by taking textual reading on cross cultural counters which complements the case study to some extent. This study makes use of early colonial anthropological monographs and travelers' accounts and oral traditions of the Nagas to reconstruct the history of the Nagas.

### **Sources:**

The sources for this study include literary source and tradition embedded in the memory in the form of songs and folktales. Since Nagas do not have a written record till the last century, the source had been based mainly on the works of the British administrators, archaeological works, missionaries' writings, journals, articles, and some of the early works on the Nagas by some scholars. The study of Naga history in general need to rely on the oral tradition, archaeological sources, archival sources, foreign accounts, existing literature and unutilized and underutilized literature from neighboring regions namely the Ahoms Buranji, Royal Chronicles of Manipur and Tipperah Rajmala.

The review of the literature the study is divided into three different parts. The first part is the works of the early and the so called foreign writers, Administrators and Anthropologist, such the works of J. H. Hutton, M. M. Clark, Furer Haimendorf, Julian Jacobs, Frederick S Downs, A. J. Moffats, etc. The second part is the work by the Indian writer like Renu Suri. Thirdly the works done by the Naga writers, scholars and missionaries on Nagas like Aphuno Chase Roy, R. R. Shimray, Lucy Zehol, Kedise Pucho, etc.

**Chapterization:** The dissertation consists of seven chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion chapter. **Chapter I** is the *Introduction*. **Chapter II** - *Historical overview of the Angami Nagas*. **Chapter III** – *Food culture in Angami Naga society*. **Chapter IV** – *Weaving in Angami Naga society*. **Chapter V** – *Religious Practices and women of Angami Naga society*. **Chapter VI** – *Education and Angami Naga women*. **Chapter VII** – *Conclusion*.

The Angami Naga tribe follows the patriarchal family system with the father or the eldest male member as the head of the family. Women have always been treated secondary in the family and men as the first sex and the “bread winner”. Starting from the birth ceremony to death women was treated differently. Economically, women are considered “strong and equal partner” with their husbands, but in practice there is a wide difference in the work. The presence of women in economic activities and their equal or more work in agriculture is seen as their being “Strong” but this does not denote equality or liberty for women. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people from the traditional times, men and women, young and old had to work in agricultural activities. The study pointed out that men were “fame seekers”, as during traditional period men were after “fame and honor” thus head hunting and warfare has been their common game for which left women and children to complete all the agricultural work for the whole family.

Angami unmarried women were not allowed to grow their hair long till they were engaged or married. Their hair was cut short to indicate that they were unmarried and to show their virginity. The Angami tribe has two types of marriage, formal and informal marriage. The proper proposal of marriage from the man’s family is the formal marriage

and marrying a woman after the woman gets pregnant or without any proper proposal is the informal marriage. Divorce was not an uncommon thing and it was not hard to remarry after being divorced. Most of the writing on Angami Naga society has the notions that women have the liberty to choose their husband, but one should also relook at the folklores also. Many of the folk tales and folk songs talk about women who marry men not of their choice but their parents' choice. Daughters were considered more obedient than the sons in the family, thus in order to obey their parents, daughters usually get married to a person of their parents' choice.

Taboos play a very important role in the lives of the people, especially on women. In every aspect of the lives, taboos bind and control the live of the women more than men. Women were controlled by the food taboos, religious taboos, weaving taboos, social taboos, etc. Until the coming of Christianity taboos surround the lives of every Angami Naga folk. Women were never allowed to disobey these taboos as they will be blamed if they do not follow the rules and taboos.

The study argues the interrelationship between woman and food. Food identifies a woman of a community from the other through the ethnic cuisine she cooked, which associate her with the geographically and historically defined community. Food has been the reason behind every success and evolution of human existence. Women in Angami Naga society have been playing an important role in cultivating, preparation and distribution of food.

Food among the Angami tribe can be categorized and put into Levis Strauss's culinary triangle as raw, cooked and decayed food. From traditional times to the present, the

Angami tribe eats raw food products, cooked food and fermented or decayed food. The Angami tribe being religious people brings in their religion in direct link with food also. Unlike male members of the society, food taboos have more to do with women and children since the traditional times. These food taboos increase the barriers of separation between men and women and not just a “protection from defilement”. Barter system was common in traditional societies where food barter in Angami society was a common activity which also distinguishes the people of different economic status. The traditional period saw a wide used and consumption of *zu* the traditional rice beer. Everywhere, *zu* was used as a sign of friendship and connection between people of different economic status. Women are the one in charge of making and preparing *zu* for the family and friends. *Zu* in traditional period act as a tool for personal identity where for an instant a rich man gives *zu* to the whole village during the times of feast of merit.

Food culture was affected by the coming of Christianity. Christianity with its ideology has eradicated and imposed many rules on the society and also in food intake. *Zu* the traditional health drink was termed as “alcoholic drink” which every converted Christian is forbidden to give up the drink. The culture of feast of merit which was celebrated with all the villagers by a rich man to show his wealth and get a higher status discontinued with the coming of Christianity.

Handloom weaving has always been a monopoly of women’s work. The discourse of weaving has been one of the most important craft which women had been doing and in carrying the identity from one generation to the other. Weaving culture from the traditional times has been used in term of gift with different indications. The identity that



a man carries with him through his dress comes from women who weave for the whole of the family and society in general. Weaving taboos can be pointed out even in the traditional period where weaving though very much associated with both women and men, yet there are certain things which Angami men stay away from it. Considering women to be the weaker sex in the society, the so called “women’s things” or weaving articles should not be touched by the menfolk, as there was a fear that men might become weak, especially in their legs and body as a whole.

The introduction of the educational system with the coming of Christianity open the gateway for girls to read and learn. Girls continue to weave clothes for their family, but the average went down as they do not have enough time to weave cloths as they attend school, help families in agricultural work when they get time and help their mothers in household chores. This cultural change highly affected women in particular as the weaving art seems to take a little break with the coming and the introduction of western education.

Nagas lived closely to nature and sense its mysterious powers and believed in the existence of a single supreme God, benevolent spirits and malevolent spirits. Nagas also believed in the existence of ancestral spirits, Village deities, household deities, etc. where the deities were worshipped with reverence and offered sacrifice with food and drink. The Angamis believed that *kepenuopfü* the creator, who dwelt in the sky and when a person died, his soul go up to the sky to her. In traditional religion, there were more taboos for women and children as compared to the men folk. Women had a taboo to fetch or carry water from the well on the main *Sekrenyi* festival as they are considered impure

as it is a festival of purification. Women in early Naga society, though took part in religious practices; the rituals in the public arena were conducted by men and not by women. However, all the household rituals and some ancestral rituals were done by women in the early Naga society.

Conversion to Christianity had an enormous impact on society with positive benefit in general. Women were allowed to participate in church activities and preach in the pulpit. But Christianity in its own patriarchal system did not let women be the pastor of the church until very recently where there were some women who became pastor along with other male pastors. These changes in the culture of the society have been a part and parcel of everyday women's lives where Christianity still taught the women to be faithful, dutiful wife, good mothers and obedient daughters.

Before the coming of the formal or the western education, the Nagas had the informal education where the knowledge was passed down without any formal school setting. *Kichüki* (Morung) as an institution plays a very important role in the lives of the young people of the Nagas. But unlike the other tribe the Angami tribe does not have *kichüki* for girls. Girls learn all the necessary things from their mothers. The main custodians of the oral traditions passed down were the mothers and grandmothers. Girls gather in group and goes to the old woman's house to learn the weaving skills and other necessary activities for lives.

Western education brought in a new chapter in the culture of the Angami Naga society in general and women in particular. The introduction of primary school and high school in Kohima encouraged few Angami parents to send their daughters to schools to read and

write. Few women who got education started to work in offices and contribute in the financial status of the family. Another set of women in Angami society continues to work in the agricultural sector as they did not get the privilege to get education due to poverty and being a 'girl'.

The phase of the Angami Naga society can be clearly divided into two sections before and after the coming of the foreigners with Christianity and education. The culture of the whole society was shaken by the coming of the new wave with the entry of foreigners. The cultural discourse underwent a massive change with education as its main vehicle which affected every section of the people in the society. The society started to change with the new attitude of the Christianized ideology opposing the traditional culture of the people which was followed for many generations.

This study not only questioned the silences and selectivity of the male perspective history of the Nagas, but also tries to bring out the marginality in the reconstruction of Naga history. Angami women have been an active historical agent since the traditional times. However, their history and presence is always denied without bringing out their stories and their work and there is a bias in writing the history of the Nagas. Women and culture have been mutually influencing each other in both the periods. In the cultural discourse in Angami Naga society, women have been actively carrying the culture of the society and keeping the identity in term of weaving, agriculture, food, etc. hence this work attempts to write the history and contribution of women to show that women were an active agent of history and have contributed immensely to the making of Naga history, culture and identity.

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