



Education Development in Nagaland

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The book deals with the essential aspects of various levels of education with its context and concerns. It is based on deep research findings and analytical study of education system in Nagaland. The issues enlisted relating to education, provided genuine grounds for serious concerns and priorities to be tackled in order to strengthen quality reforms in education. The book will be found very useful to planners, scholars and students who want to seek integrated and comprehensive information and developments in education in Nagaland.

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1

Naga Culture

1.1 Introduction

The Nagas are tribal people, belonging to Indo-Mongoloid race. They are divided into 16 major tribes and several sub-tribes. Their dialect belongs to the Tibeto-Burman or Sino-Tibetan speech family. The concentration of different tribes in different districts of Nagaland such as Kohima is the home of Angamis, Rengmas, Zeliangs, Kukis and some other minor tribes, Phek is the home of the Chakhesangs and Pochuris, Mokokchung is the home of the Aos, Wokha is the home of the Lothas, Zunheboto is the home of the Semas, Mon is the home of the Konyaks, Tuensang is the home of the Changs, the Sangtams, the Khamniungans, the Yimchangers, the Phoms, the Semas and other some minor tribes and Dimapur is the home of almost all the Naga tribes.

The Naga society is non-class, non-caste with autonomous culture. Each village is composed of different clans and sub-clans. The entire village is divided into *Khels*/sectors. The Naga arts, crafts, music and folklore depicting scenes of wars, head hunting and games of chase testified common values. The general conventions and practices, community singing and dancing, rituals and festivals projects are cultural similarities among the Naga tribes.

The religion of the non-Christian Nagas is generally known as 'Animism'. The animist Nagas worshipped big trees, rocks, rivers, sun, moon, etc. The American Missionaries in 1830s brought a new era in the history of Naga religion. At present more than 90% Naga people have accepted Christianity as their religion and faith. Today the Nagas are quite advanced in their lifestyle and dressing, food habits and education. Every aspect of life in Naga society is rapidly changing with modern developments.

Social and cultural traditions are related to the social institutions of society. Interaction and co-existence between people, integration of traditions, guide and determine the thinking, believing and behaving of the people, which in turn regulate and monitor people's way of life, are in consonance with the approved social norms of human life. Human values are determinants of virtually all kinds of behaviour of social action, attitude and ideology, evaluation, moral judgements and justifications of self to others and attempt to influence others.

Social and cultural traditions are not against the spirit of modernity. Some of the traditions may not be of much relevance today, but many of them, still have considerable significance. Social and cultural traditions provide the purpose, meaning and rationale of life to the people. Unfortunately there has been deterioration in the value system of the people, resulting chaos in the society. Naga society like others is also faced with the disvalues, social evils and diseases. The causal factor behind degenerating value system may be due to loosening of bonds with its age-old ideals and hurriedly and unthinkably becoming modern at the cost of age-old good traditions.

1.2 The Naga Family

A typical Naga family consists of the father, the mother and the children. The father as the husband is the head of the family. A family lives separately from other relations and joint family system does not prevail. However in exceptional cases like the parents of the head of the family or some unmarried aunts or handicapped relative who are dependent may live with

the family. These cases are rare because society brands them as dependents when they are living with other people no matter how close they are.

The modern Naga family is still very much patriarchal and the bonds are still very strong. The father is the head of the family looking after the overall welfare of the family. The mother is regarded as the heart of the family where she looks after the welfare of the whole family with love and care under the supervision of the father. The children live with their parents until they get married and move out of their parent's home. However with modernisation, their role has to some extent changed with many fathers holding office jobs, children all out to study and the mother too away from the home and kitchen to work in various occupation.

1.2.1 The functions of the head of the family

The father being the head of the family looks after all the major decisions. It is also his role to look beyond his family and if needed to see the needs of his parents and siblings. The father has all the authority in the household. He divides his property into his children and whatever he says is the law for his household. It is found that he has to work very hard to keep the economic status of the family at par with others. Not only his family but also his clan and community respect him if he is able to carry out his responsibilities.

The Nagas covet to have a big family and children are considered wealth of the family. A man who has many children is considered a blessed man who has found favour in the sight of the spirit. A child is taught to be independent from his very childhood.

1.2.2 Dress and Ornaments

Dress and ornaments of the Nagas differ from tribe to tribe. Each tribe is unique in its dress code. One of the most common wear among the Nagas is the shawl, worn both by the males and the females. The colour and design differ from tribe to tribe, the design and colour also differ for men and women. For the Tenyimia, Angami, Chakhesang, Rengma and Zeliang,

traditionally the male wear a kilt which is usually black in colour. This black kilt is generally decorated with three and four lines of white cowry shells. On the kilt a cotton belt is tied around the waist. The Ao, Lotha, Konyak, Chang, Khamniungan usually wear a loin cloth, which is a small piece of cloth in front to cover them.

From the olden days Nagas love to wear ornaments. Necklaces made of precious stones, seashell cornelia and glass are generally worn. They love to wear earrings too. Young men like to wear shiny objects such as wild beetle's wings and beautiful feathers of birds. They also wear colourful woollen hoops on their ears. The Tenyimia among the Nagas use coloured leg boots of plaited cans.

The male Naga usually puts on a headgear. The headgear of the Angami is called tsüla, fixed with feathers of hornbill. They also wear armbands of ivory. The spear and daos of a warrior are decorated and complete the dressing of a warrior.

1.2.3 Women's dress

On ordinary working days, the Naga women wear a woven cloth around the waist usually called Mekhela and a very light blouse. During festivals they wear beautiful colourful shawls with patterns which vary from tribe to tribe. They love to adorn themselves with necklaces made from glass, cornelian, shell, seeds and stone. Earrings are a common feature. They wear bracelets on their arms and elbows. Bangles of bran or glass are also worn on their wrist. Shawls and necklaces, bangles and bracelets differ from tribe to tribe.

However the Naga men and women today are very different. They wear modern dresses. Some youngsters are even fond of wearing what had been advertised through fashion television.

1.3 The Naga Village

The Nagas usually consider certain factors for choosing the site of a new village. First, it must have a good position for security measures. Second there must be some river nearby where water channels can be dug for terraced cultivation. Third,

a good supply of drinking water from the vicinity of the selected place is also taken into consideration. For the above reasons they generally establish their habitation on the hilltops, below which rivers flow on either side. There is usually no sanitary arrangements in a village as hilltops settlement solves the problems by natural flow.

The traditional Naga village has its own land comprising of forests, water sources, cultivable land and whatever the village needs. Houses are situated in rows on clusters according to convenience. The present generations have begun to spread out from such clusters and are building modern houses with spacious compounds.

1.4 Festivals

Perhaps with little entertainment in the past, festivals formed a very important part of the Nagas. For every major event in their lives a festival was held. For example, in Khonoma among the Angami Nagas have about eight major festivals.

- 1) **Terhunyi** is a festival which falls in the month of December. This is one of the biggest festivals of the Angamis and the celebration lasts for about ten days. The celebration is meant to show their expressions of joy and thanksgiving for the fruitful crop that they have received.
- 2) **Sekrenyi** is celebrated sometime in February and is celebrated to ensure good health to village community throughout the coming year. It is also celebrated for about ten days. A characteristic feature of this festival is the ritual of purification of males.
- 3) **Ngonyi** is held in the month of April. It marks the completion of sowing seeds in the newly prepared jhum fields. This festival goes for about fourteen days. It is a time to go for hunting and fishing.
- 4) **Thekranyi** falls in May or June. It marks the beginning of paddy transplantation and with their festival the busiest season begins. In this festival the members of age groups are counted and accordingly arrangements

are made by dividing the age group into smaller numbers to work in different fields.

- 5) At the end of the rainy season **Tsünyi** or **Millet** festival is celebrated which marks the completion of millet harvest. It is generally celebrated in the last part of September and it continues for about five to seven days.
- 6) **Liekhwenyi** means field-watching festival. It is usually celebrated for three days in the month of October.
- 7) **Liede** festival marks the opening of harvest which takes place in the month of November. The festival lasts for two days.
- 8) **Tiekede** festival is celebrated in the last part of November as a conclusion to the harvest season. The granaries are full and it is time to enjoy the fruits of one's labour. This festival also marks the completion of the yearly cycle.

Likewise every tribe has its own festivals which they celebrate with pageantry and feasting with meat and drinks. Every aspect of community life is guided by ceremonies. Though festivals are related to seasons on slogan of agricultural operation, they are woven with spiritual sentiments and the predominant theme of all the festivals is offering of prayer to the supreme one whose name differs from tribe to tribe. Festivals are getting lesser in numbers. However the major ones mentioned above are celebrated with pomp and grandeur to keep the tradition alive. Most of the Nagas now being Christian, the biggest festival celebrated all over Nagaland is Christmas. It is celebrated with great reverence for Christ who came to save mankind. Besides the never growing old Christmas stories, the people wear new clothes and enjoy the Christmas feast. Festivals celebrated by different tribes are as under:

Tribe	Festival
Angami	Sekrenyi
Ao	Moatsu
Chakhesang	Tekrunyi
Rengma	Ngada
Sema	Tuluni
Lotha	Tokhu Emong
Konyak	Aoling Monyu
Phom	Monyu
Zeliang	Meleyingi
Chang	Naknyu Lum
Sangtam	Amongmong
Khiamniungan	Tsokum
Yimchunger	Metemneo

1.5 Art and Culture

In the olden days and even now to a great extent in the remote areas of Nagaland, except the hoe, dao and spear, which are made of metal, all household articles, are manufactured locally by male members in the family. It is compulsory for all the boys to acquire the skill of making baskets of all kinds such as carrying traps, winnowing tray, barn basket, etc. There are no professional basket makers as such but each and every male member has the expertise for his domestic use. The raw materials used in making baskets are canes and bamboo. Again there are some special baskets, which are made especially to keep clothes and other valuable materials. These are large baskets with wide brim, tapering towards the bottom and which is covered with a pointed cover. Another item of interest is the drinking vassals made of Mithun horn. This mug has its own natural attractive colour especially where the black forms the lower half and merges into the transparent yellow at the top. Some mugs are made of large bamboo and are decorated with different designs and its handle made of plaited cane.

The Nagas have wooden plates of various shapes which are made of wood. There are small saucer like plates used for

holding pickles while they eat from the bigger ones. An important item in their kitchen is the fourlegged stool scooped out from a single piece of wood. They also have wooden spoons of different sizes for different purposes.

The Nagas make earthen pots with bare hands, and some women are great experts. This craft however has never been widely practised due to the scarcity of raw material. In this regard the notable producing villages in the Angami area are Viswema and Khuzama.

The art of cloth making is a skill imparted by all Naga mothers to their daughters when they are still five or six years of age. The art of spinning, dyeing and weaving are done exclusively by women and every Naga woman in the traditional society is supposed to weave the required clothes for the family.

Again their love for artistic handicrafts is shown in their way of carving figures of various designs which are displayed in the public gates, morungs, buildings, log drums, tattooing and paintings.

1.6 Marriage

Among the Nagas generally monogamy is the accepted form of marriage. However some tribes especially the Konyaks practice polygamy. When a Naga boy reaches marriageable age and has found a particular girl favourable to him, the usual trend is for him to tell his parents who in turn will send a negotiator who is usually an older lady to negotiate with the girl's family. The girl's family may accept or turn down the proposal. A Naga girl exercises immense freedom in selecting her husband.

1.7 Religion

Before the advent of Christianity the Nagas were animists. The Naga animism owes its origin to both constructive and destructive roles that nature plays in the life of man and his ignorance of the principle in the working of nature. A man feels contented as he sees the rainfall on the young paddy plants, quickening their growth and the sun ripening the yellow crops. But he feels worried and disturbed when he watches the storm

shaking off the grains from their stems or blowing off the thatched roof of his hut. But in the absence of any written scripture or defined dogmas it is difficult to define clearly as to what he exactly believes in. To make things more complicated, though the animistic religion has a common feature yet practices and ceremonies vary from tribe to tribe and from village to village. However, he believes in the existence of a supreme benevolent deity and also many evil spirits. F.A.Gait (1969) says that "a supreme being and a divine power who is the maker of the world is common in Naga religion." According to Thomas M.M. and R.W.Taylor (1965) he has no temple or any particular place of worship but the places of worship and sacrificial offerings are the home, village, road, grave, field or such other open air places as needed.

Since he has not developed religion as such, in one way we may say that he has no proper religion, but on the other hand, he is also very religious in the sense that the supernatural power is constantly felt and feared. There are so many ceremonies to be performed by an individual as well as by the entire community is involved to perform the genna or ceremony. Again when a baby is born ceremonies for that particular event is performed. All these ceremonies are performed in terms of religion and belief. Almost all the misfortunes and natural calamities are ascribed to the influence of evil spirits. To give an example, among the Angami's, sickness is attributed to the work of malignant spirits. To get rid of these evil spirits, appeasement in various forms are offered to them such as releasing in the jungle an unblemished fowl. While selecting an unblemished fowl meticulous care has to be taken in checking its feathers, legs especially the fingers and also head and crest. Sometimes they throw a piece of metal into the direction that the village priest might indicate.

Idolatry in any form is absent. There is a belief in the supreme God who is known as Ukepenuopfü which literally means "she who bore us." The word is feminine gender probably because of the simple logic that only female can give birth to any being.

But with the coming of the American Baptist Missionaries to Naga Hills on 18th December 1872 there is a turning point in the lives of the Nagas. The first group of Nagas were baptised by Rev. Clark. The Baptist Missionaries began the work of converting the animistic Nagas into the Christian religion. The progress of Christianity in the Naga Hills in the 19th century was very slow as the Nagas were very hostile to the missionaries and their religion in the beginning. Those who got converted were persecuted by their clan or village and were expelled from the village and denied many facilities. But slowly the American Missionaries brought the Nagas into the fold of Christianity through conversion and education. Today the Nagas are mostly Christian. Statistics say that Christianity in Nagaland is 95%. With the new generation growing up in Christianity and the spread of Christianity gradually decreased the animistic practices like head-hunting, which is now completely abolished. The Nagas indeed are indebted to the pioneering missionaries for their work in the field of education, medical services and humanitarian works and above all in providing enlightenment. As far as the Christian religion is concerned, every Naga believes today that Christian religion for him is a religion from uncertainty to certainty, from darkness to light, from death to eternal life and damnation to salvation. It is now one hundred years since the Nagas accepted Christianity as their religion and it has exerted tremendous influence on their lives.

1.8 Laws and Customs

Land-Tenure: The accepted form of land holding among the Nagas is that every tribe has a well defined territory. Within that tribal unit each and every village possesses clearly demarcated area. These demarcations between villages are made in such a way that they cannot be disputed. The village territory may be divided into four categories which are described below.

Common Land: In every village there are some plots of land owned and used by the whole community. Trees are generally preserved on such land. Anybody who belongs to that particular village has the right to get them according to his needs. Besides, the raw materials for the construction of public institutions such

as morung and its premises, village gates, bridges and the like are taken from the common land. Thus the common land is the joint property of the village where every citizen as well as the whole community has the right to own and use.

Clan Land: Almost every clan has certain reserved forest land for the construction of houses and also for the purpose of firewood. There are some clans which also own arable land for cultivation. Though every member is given equal right to use it, preference is generally given to those families who have not enough land to support themselves. For deciding such factors the elders of the clan are looked upon as custodians who exercise their power in dividing land to its members for cultivation.

Individual Land: In all villages each individual possesses land which is either inhabited or acquired and he has absolute right over it. He has the right to share the products of the land, to transfer holdings, to alienate or to grant the right to be used by others. Generally the various individual's lands are demarcated either by stone pillars or natural boundaries like streams and rivulets. However in the later case where streams and rivulets are used, because of their inconsistency or changing nature, they often become the bones of contention.

Laws of Succession and Inheritance: The inheritance of property always goes to the male children of the father. In case there is no male issue at the death of the father, the property falls into the hands of the closest relative of the father. In general a father divides his property among his sons during his lifetime. Daughters do not inherit any share of property but in some exceptional cases a rich father may like to give them some land or other properties. The personal belongings of a mother like cash, ornaments, dresses etc. usually go to daughters. If a mother has managed to buy land with her own money, then in that case she has the right to transfer the land to anyone.

1.9 The Institution of the Morung

One of the most important features of the social structure of the Nagas is the institution of the Morungs. Various names

have been given by different writers to this institution such as 'male club', 'man's hall', 'public school', 'bachelor's dormitory' and so on. However different tribes have their own names for their Morungs. The Angamis call it *Thehou* and attached with it *Kichüki*. The Aos call it as *Ariju*, the Semas call it *Apuki*, the Changs call it *Hakuh*, the Chakhesangs call it *Thepumi Chiethichie* and so on. Some Morungs like those of the Angamis and Tangkhul are housed in a person's house whereas Morungs of the Aos and Konyaks are housed in different buildings.

The Morung building is usually built by the villagers and it is maintained by its members. In case a new Morung has to be constructed it is done with much ceremony and feasting by the entire khel (village) for whom the Morung will cater. The members of the Morung reside in their own homes, cultivate their own fields and only after the evening meal, members slowly come in for the evening singing, telling and listening to stories, merry making and finally to sleep. The young boys take pride in building their Morung and maintain it well.

According to R.R.Shimray (1985), "Family pride and personal arrogance had no place in the Morung. Rich or poor everybody was equal in the membership of the Morung in particular and the society in general. Not only discipline but various arts ranging from basket making and wood carving to war tactics were also taught. War dances were also taught here along with war tactics."

The institution of the Morung was common to all the Nagas, but its working differs from tribe to tribe. Though it differs from tribe to tribe yet its main general objectives was education in all forms. Boys join the Morung when they become fit for manual work. They are taught and disciplined by the elder members of the Morung. Most of the social activities of the village were revolved around this male dormitory. Boys had to sleep there till they were married.

It was in this Morung that proper habits and manners were taught, proper moulding of the character of the young takes place and where all-round education of the younger ones in social, religious, educational and cultural activities takes place. It has been rightly called as a practical school. Chattopadhyaya

(1978) has rightly stated "It is here that the foundations of each generation are laid, moulded and built up. The growing youth is taught the meaning and significance of traditions, told of the valour and heroic deeds of the earlier generations and that it is in the glory of the past that the seeds of the future have to sprout."

Morung is also an institution for the young boys to learn about their traditions, legends and the heroic deeds of their forefathers. Also they learn to perform the civic duties to their community and society. They are also taught to make baskets of various patterns, indigenous, musical instruments, wooden utensils and the like. They learn the art of using spears, dao's and shields. In this way a boy picks up his culture of do's and dont's from an early age. In this regard Prakash Singh (1977) had said "It was in these dormitories or club houses that the younger generation of the village was reared to manhood in the tradition of that particular tribe."

In this way Morung is a quarter or a place of the young Naga boys, where they come together and practise singing, dancing, elocution and learn all trades. Strict discipline was maintained and it was here that boys were trained to become an administrator, a farmer and a warrior of the village. Every morning each youth would return to his house and help his parents. Indeed, the Morung of the Nagas was a real educational institution.

Restriction in the Morung: Even though there is no class distinction such as in the Naga society. Yet the women do not enjoy the same status as that of their men. It is a taboo for the women to enter into the male dormitory. This is due to the existence of the made-belief that by so doing ill-luck may occur to the males. Misfortune may come in the form of failure in the hunting expedition or suffering casualties in the event of a fight. The Morung is a sanctuary for the man. A culprit would take refuge in the Morung as he would be under security so long as he remains under its roof. He is to be protected until the clan elder reviews his case and settle it. Beating and fighting are not permitted in the Morung.

A similar institution exists for girls. The Ao's called it *Tsuki*, the Angamis *Kichuki*, the Semas *Iliki*, the Chakhesangs *The-nomi Chiethichie*, the Rengmas *Katsen* and so on. The girls sleep together according to their respective age groups in a huge room which is generally attached to a prominent person in the village. After a whole days work, the girls get together at the dormitory right after their evening meal. Here they stay till late at night and do various kinds of handwork. In the Naga society in the earlier days, the responsibilities of the entire household clothing rests upon the girls so they would bring their weaving material, raw cotton, spinning wheel and threads and weave in the dormitories at night. The elder ones will teach the younger ones to learn. The elder ones too will improve upon their mate and try to excel one another in the art of weaving. If the household has enough clothing and that too beautiful well woven, the credit goes to the girls. They are highly looked upon. On the other hand, when a family, specially the males do not have enough clothing and that too of poor quality and not beautifully woven, the girls in that family are looked down upon. The main function of the girls dormitory is in moulding the girls future, building up their character and facilitating selection of partner and finally shaping them to shoulder motherly responsibilities and become an effective citizen.

The boys from the Morungs visit the girls dormitory where they sing their folk songs. These folk songs are love songs, these folk songs also depict the heroic deeds of their warriors, their historical background, about their community, about their tribe, and they also sing songs of different seasons of cultivation. Every activity of their lives is accompanied by their folk songs which we find is a kind of instruction, a kind of education. Thus music plays an important role in their lives.

Besides the folk songs, story telling in the Morungs and the girls dormitories forms a very important part of their activity at night. Here the elders tell them stories about their religion, their customs and traditions, their historical past, their failures and achievements, their friends and enemies. According to Dr. Tuisem Shishak (1990) these folktales and oral historical traditions of the Morungs and girls dormitories have been the best and most

effective means of transmitting events of the past to the present. Thus we find that education was very much a part of their lives even prior to the advent of the Westerners.

The girls dormitory of the Ao's is usually attached to a widow's house who serve as their matrons. Apart from their parents, the young girls learn their religion, folklore, social life and various taboos through the existence of this dormitory. Every Naga girl in the past was a member of a dormitory till she leaves her parents home after she gets married.

In the present stage of the Nagas, Morung does not hold the same position as in the past. One important reason is the influence of Christianity which has brought about a new concept of belief from that of their traditional belief. To quote Chattopadhyaya (1978) argument "It was inevitable that the Morung should incur the condemnation of the Baptist mission which put a band on it as heathen institution without trying to understand its social implications."

Dr.V.V.Rao (1976) correctly renders two reasons for the decline of the Morung in the Naga Hills. Firstly, head hunting was banned and secondly, hostilities amongst tribes have come to a stop. He goes to the extent of saying that Morung has almost ceased in Naga Hills. However to say that Morung is almost extinct is perhaps beyond the mark as Morung to some extent are still very much in use. Of course one cannot deny the fact that Morung has been affected greatly by the changing circumstances. Which have been transforming the life of the Nagas tremendously; but it does not mean that the Morung has ceased with the changing times. Even today when visiting a Naga village like Khonoma one would easily notice that Morung still holds a very important position in the society. V.K.Anand (1969) has rightly observed the Morung when he described it as "the club, the public school, the military training centre, the hostel for the boys and a meeting place of the village elders." Morung members were very united in their social life. If a member could not complete the cultivation or harvest in time or face other difficulties, in sickness or death, the other members come to his aid. Shimray has rightly said that "there was then sharing

of sorrows at the time of sorrow and sharing of joy at the time of joy.”

1.10 Status of Woman in the Naga Society

The Naga woman has a unique position in the society. A Naga family being patriarchal, the father is the head of the family, yet the mother has always played a very important role in the family. In fact she gives a greater contribution to the family, specially running the household and bringing up the children.

Horam (1977) stated “the mother plays the main role in running the households. Indeed the position of woman in the Naga society is far from being inferior. The majority of domestic affairs are in her hands. All her life a woman enjoys a considerable freedom. She participates freely in singing and dancing during festivals and entertains guests. She is never made to feel that she belongs to the weaker sex. Most marriages are love marriages. The young choose their partner and then marriage negotiations are conducted through an elderly lady. A girl is free to choose her life partner and rarely is any pressure brought upon her in this matter. The wife is consulted by her husband in all domestic and family affairs. She helps him in making decisions, performs domestic duties and shares household responsibilities with him.”

In the ancient times when head hunting was practised among the Nagas, women were given a very important role to play in saving lives. In those days when there was fighting or war between two or more villages, it was very rare for a neutral village to act as a mediator between the warring villages. In such situations women played the role of mediators. So these women had to go and stop the fight. Among the Chakhesang these women were called *demi*. These women were called *pukhareila* by the Tangkhuls. Their role as peace makers was so important that it was taboo to kill or harm such women in the midst of fighting. Sema women too go together with men in the tribal feuds when the situation demanded their company. Then there are also examples where the Naga women in the past took the leading role in social and political movements like Rani Gaidiliu of the Zeliangs.

Though limited she has her role in the religious matters. It is she who performs the sacred rituals. For example some of the important rituals performed by an Angami woman are:

1. Kizhie - Dedication of a new house.
2. Mekhru Zhie - Remembrance of the death.
3. Tsiakrü - The starting of the field work.
4. Liede - The starting of the harvest.
5. Ki Kenyü - Sanctification of the harvest.

Maybe these roles of women made Haimendorf write that "Many women in more civilised parts of India may well envy the women of the Naga Hills, their high status and their free and happy life and if you measure the cultural level of the people by the social position and personal freedom of its women you will think twice before looking down on the Nagas as savages."

However if we look at the other side of the coin the position of women in the traditional society does not look as bright as what Horam and Haimendorf had stated.

Property Rights: Even though certain practices may slightly vary from tribe to tribe, yet in the traditional Naga society, women in general have no rights to ancestral property such as land, houses etc. If a man has no sons and he dies, the property goes to his nearest male relative. In spite of the changes in the society this system still remains, although there may be some exceptional cases.

In social matters women were found to be in position inferior to men. Important decisions were made without women and they were often not allowed to such meetings. In some cases we find that males going for hunting or for war are prohibited to sleep with their wives as it was believed that it will bring bad omen.

A man having extramarital affair was approved or honoured whereas a women was given the opposite treatment, for example,

the Angami in the past could keep many mistresses. The more he has the higher was his status. On the other hand if a married women committed adultery or she was found to be unfaithful to her husband then she was given severe physical punishment and not only that, but was also usually driven away from her husband's house.

For the continuation of the family life the society has always preferred boys to girls. The boys were always the privileged ones in the family and the society. There are many instances when wives are divorced because they could not give birth to a boy.

It is also noticed that in the past when education first started in the Naga Hills many girls have to forego their studies in order that their brothers might have the privilege to go to school. In rural areas as well as in some urban areas this trend still persists.

Together with their mother the young girls learn to do all the domestic chores and learn to serve the males in the home. They learn to weave, cook, work in the fields, chop firewood, feed the animals, etc. While still very tender, the practical education is good for them no doubt but the bias can be felt when boys go scot-free from all these chores at home.

Today Naga women lead a very different life from the traditional projection. Today Naga woman is enjoying a better status than in the past. Some of the reasons responsible for the improvement of her status are:

- The advent of Christianity and western education, the Christian faith that all are children of God and thus equal.
- With the change of times, there has been a shift from agriculture to non-agricultural occupation. Now women venture out to take up non-agricultural occupations like retail trade and weaving. This has given them a sense of independence.
- A large number of women have salaried jobs and have taken up various modern occupations.

Taking advantage of the changing situation women are doing very well. Today we find among the Naga women IAS officers, engineers, lawyers, academicians and so on who have excelled in their respective fields.

Christianity had played an important role in improving the status of women. The Christian principle of advocating equality has today placed women on equal footing with men. Today women themselves have established many organisations of their own. Most of these organisations started as Christian organisations. The biggest of these is the Naga Baptist Women Association which was founded in the early fifties and attached to this are the various tribal women associations. Under the church there are specific women departments which look after the welfare of women.

We see some examples of how women organisations are working for the betterment of women as well as for the society. The Ao Baptist Women Association, one of their main objectives is to improve the social and economic condition of women. This association has opened up a training centre of knitting, tailoring, weaving, etc. at Impur for women.

Another example is the Angami Catholic Women Association which runs a charity school where the underprivileged children are accommodated.

The Naga Mothers Association is trying hard to do away with social evils. They usually hold seminars on drug abuse, alcohol and setting up rehabilitation centres like Mount Gilead Home etc. They fight for women rights.

There are also women organisations even in the village level like Kohima village ladies organisation called Kewhimia Zhavipfuko Krotho. The main aim of this organisation is to popularise the traditional costumes, vernacular language and songs. It also serves as a platform for the educated ladies to explore their talents and skills.

Even in politics we find the Naga women becoming more and more politically aware. Their participation in the Assembly

election, formation of women wing in political parties and their voluntary involvement in political activities clearly indicate their contributions in politics.

Today women are found taking active part in policy matters, planning, etc. In this regard, mention may be made of the Village Development Board (VDB) where women wing is actively participating in the development of the village.

With all these advancements made in the modern society still there is a long way for Naga women to be called equal with their men. The influence of the patriarchal system is so strong that there is still inhibition on the part of the woman to come out fully from her shell. Though the treatment may not be as crude or barbaric as was in the traditional society still we find women being sidelined and neglected.

There is still a long way for Naga women to achieve Gandhi's dream for women. "Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacity. She has the right to participate in every minute detail in the activities of man and she has equal right of freedom and liberty with him."

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