

**WOMEN AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF  
SHIFTING CULTIVATION IN NAGALAND**

**THESIS SUBMISSION TO NAGALAND UNIVERSITY  
IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR  
THE AWARD OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

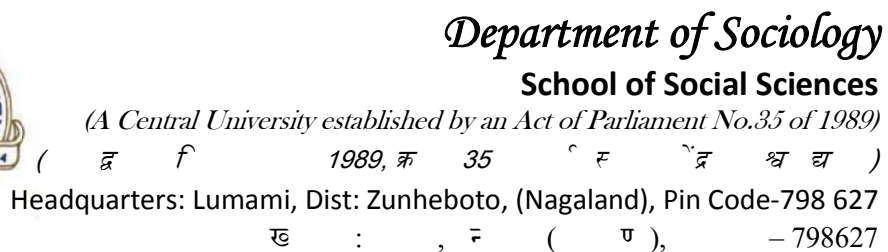
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I, Ms. Alomi Cynthia Shikhu, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University /Institution.

This is being submitted to Nagaland University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology.

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## **ACRONYM**

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against  
Women

CSWI- Committee on the Status of Women in India

DWCW- Department of Women and Child Welfare

FAO- Food And Agriculture

FGD- Focused Group Discussion

IDI- Individual Detailed Interview

IRDP- Integrated Rural Development Plan

NSDP- Nagaland Net State Domestic Product

NTFP- Non- Timber Forest Product

NEN- North- East Network

NABARD- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

NEPED- Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development

OSAGI- Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

OECD- Organisation for Economic Co- operation and Development

PH.D- Doctor of Philosophy

RKVJ- Rashtriya Krishna Vikas Yojana

SHG- Self- Help Group

TEK- Traditional Ecological Knowledge

TRYEM- Training Rural Youth for Self- Employment

ULB- Urban Local Bodies

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

VDB- Village Development Board

WRC- Wet Rice Cultivation

WTRC- Wet Terrace Rice Cultivation

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1.INTRODUCTION

The history of human civilization began with agriculture and this led to the settlement of the people. The early human settlement initiated the molding of relationship, understanding, procreation, family, kinship, and community. The stages in which civilization emerged paved the way for a concrete institution called society. The society stipulated a frame, in which relationship between humans grew, gave a definite role and differentiated the responsibilities. To survive and sustain the family, people began to cultivate and grow foods and depended on land. Since the work could not be done by a single person, the division of work came into existence and thus began the social construction of roles assigning system. Men and women began to understand their ability, constrain and responsibility. And for centuries have been working together, cultivating land and over the years they have clearly assumed their roles. Both male and female have different knowledge and concerns about their land and its use and both have worked towards the sustainability and maintenance of land. With time and changes taking place, their roles have to some extent changed, improved and differentiated. However studies in most developing countries like the South East Asia and Africa have revealed that women played and have been playing a major role in agricultural activities, preserving and managing the resources, contributing to production and providing food security to large populations all over the world.

Women throughout the globe are known for their ability and management of agricultural related activities and their labour ‘plays a key role in the survival of millions of families’.<sup>1</sup> They are known as wild plant gatherers, home gardeners and plant domesticators. Literature on the subject reveals that women no doubt have an intense role in agriculture. For instance, researchers in Thailand revealed that women

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<sup>1</sup> Bullock Susan (1994), *Women and Work*, p-3



usually take the main lead in rescuing different species, from neighboring forests before being cleared. This shows their concern and compassion for preserving and managing the resources. Similarly, in Sierra Leona, women could name 31 uses of trees on fallow land and in the forest, while men named eight different uses indicating the involvement and knowledge of women.<sup>2</sup> Report by the Food and Agriculture Organization on Women Feed the World explains that women makes use of diverse plants than the agricultural scientist. In Nigeria home garden, women planted 18-57 plant species, in Sub-Sahara Africa, women cultivated as many as 120 different plants, in Thailand, researchers' found 230 plant species in home garden and in India women use 150 different species of plants for vegetable, fodder and health care.<sup>3</sup> This and much more shows women possessed vast knowledge on the varieties of plant and species portraying them as a true custodian of nature, forest and land.

Agriculture, the most important source of livelihood for the majority of the world's people has been evolved by women. According to Swaminathan, "Some historians believe that it was women who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fiber and fuel".<sup>4</sup> Women are considered the first farmers. In India, in overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66%. In the Indian Himalayas, a pair of bullock works 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours and a woman 3485 hours in a year on a one-hectare farm, a figure that illustrates women's significant contribution to agricultural production.<sup>5</sup> According to D.D Kosami, agriculture was then the monopoly of women. They understand nature and

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p- 5

<sup>3</sup> Shiva Vandana (2011), *Staying Alive-Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, p-x

<sup>4</sup> Research Foundation Science and Technology (2005), *Impact of WTO on women in agriculture* (National Commission for Women) , p-9

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p-9

have intense relation with the land. Thus, women continue to contribute to the agricultural development and play a pivotal role in contributing to the economic stability of the state. From centuries of practical experiences, women have in-depth knowledge on local crop and its utility.

Most farmers in the world are women, and most girls are future farmers; they learn the skills and knowledge of farming in fields and farm. In the third world countries, women still continue to be active in agricultural activities. Their lives revolve around it and to exclude them would mean less production and development of society. Their experiences and day to day work are required to sustain not only agriculture but livelihood as well. Studies on women in agriculture also indicate that about 70 percent of the agricultural workers, 80 percent of food producers and 10 percent of those who process basic stuff are women and they also undertake 60-90 percent of the rural marketing, thus making up more than two-thirds of the workforce in agricultural production.<sup>6</sup>

Women farmers in the third world countries are predominantly small farmers. Though small farmers, they provide the security and sustenance to a large population. Their livelihood security depends on what grows on farms and how well they manage and care for the resources. Women also make the most significant contribution to food security by producing more than half the world's food and providing more than 80 percent of the food needs of food-insecure household and region. Food security is therefore directly linked to women's producing capacity.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore essential to make clear the position of how women's work produces a productive requirement for the society and to the economy.

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Sabo (2006 ). *Participatory Assessment of the impact of Women in Agriculture Programme of Borno State, Nigeria*, p-52

<sup>7</sup> Shiva Vandana (2010), *Staying Alive: Women Ecology and Survival in India*, p- ix

Diversity is the characteristics of women's work, of their planting and sowing of food crops, and of their pattern of food processing.<sup>8</sup> Women know when to plant, harvest and process their crops and know how much each crop variety to plant each year, how much seeds needs to be saved from the harvest for the next season etc. Besides their agility in agriculture, women also maintain kitchen gardens where wild varieties of vegetables and species are grown and used for family consumption and some sold in the local market as well. Their kitchen garden acts as a laboratory for experimenting new and diverse plants and species. Women's experiences have helped to conserve biodiversity, production of crops and management of forest and land. When women conserve seed, they conserve the nature, when women preserve endangered species, they preserve the future.

However, their activities in an agricultural operation and their knowledge of understanding nature are often underplayed as part of their domestic duties. The marginalization of women and invisibility of their work has led to gender inequality. Their use and management of natural resources, collection of Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP), and selection of medicinal plants and planting of trees are not counted. It is essential to understand their roles and contribution towards the understanding of the environment and their relation to food security and sustainability of resources.

In light of the above, the present study attempts to understand the role of Naga women in agriculture particularly referring to the role played by them in shifting cultivation. Set against their cultural backdrop, the study attempts to study their abilities in managing resources in the fast-changing society. While women essentially contribute to the economy and food security, yet they have less access than men in productive resources and opportunities and their control over the product is minimal. Despite their

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p-x

contribution, women are also absent from policy formulation and in making decisions relating to managing natural resources, conservation, protection and rehabilitation. The present research attempts to identify the dynamics of gender relation within the agricultural setting in Naga society.

## **1.2.CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Zimmerman defines a resource as ‘a response to men’s appraisal and perception of his environment in a want-satisfying capacity, satisfying individuals, groups and social objectives. It involves an appraisal as to whether the environment provides supports or serves the supply of desirable goods or services (food, shelter and comfort)’.<sup>9</sup> According to *F.W. Taylor*, “Management is an art of knowing what to do, when to do and see that it is done in the best and cheapest way”.<sup>10</sup> It is a way of making use of the things that are available without any intention of either damaging or destroying it. Edwards and Tversky (1967) defines Resource Management as the set of technical, economic and managerial practices by which stocks are converted to resources for the purpose of satisfying man’s utilitarian needs and wants under prevailing socio-economic and technological conditions.<sup>11</sup> Resource management is a practice where the resources are used according to men’s needs and wants without having to eliminate the resource rather manage it. It means the practice of managing the resources without the extinction of available resources.

Natural resource on the other hand is the resources obtained naturally and used for men’s purpose in its natural setting. Natural resource is any material from the natural environment that can be used by people for support and sustenance of life with its

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<sup>9</sup> Thakur Baleshwar (2003), *Perspectives in Resource Management in Developing Countries* Vol 7 *Resource Management: Theory and Techniques*, p-50

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.managementstudyguide.com/what\\_is\\_management.htm](http://www.managementstudyguide.com/what_is_management.htm) accessed on 4th July 2015

<sup>11</sup> ThakurBaleshwar (2003), *Perspectives in Resource Management in Developing Countries* Vol 7 *Resource Management: Theory and Techniques*, p-51

ecological value and manifold resources. Natural resource can also be defined as those aspects of man's physical world which have been influencing him since the days of his evolution and on what he depended even in his primitivity to draw support and sustenance.<sup>12</sup> Natural resources are used for the purpose of man's needs while management is the ability or the conscience of man to maintain an equal balance between their needs and the use of resources. Natural Resource Management can thus be defined as "the management of resources such as water, land, forest, food/vegetables. Plants and animals, with a particular focus on how management affects inequality of life for both present and future generations".<sup>13</sup> The management of natural resource is of utmost importance in the areas where large population directly depends on land and forest for their livelihood and sustenance. Hence, management of natural resources is of vital importance in any given society.

'Biodiversity' according to Convention on Biological Diversity(CBD) is the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes they are part of; which includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystem.<sup>14</sup> It is a broad concept which encompasses the whole of the environment. Biodiversity also refers to diverse crop and livestock varieties which provide food, nutrition and resilience to climate change, medicinal plants which provide health care, wild plants which provide foods and resources for plant breeding, and landscapes which provide vital ecosystem services such as water. Biodiversity also provides options for income generation (e.g. health foods, herbal medicines, natural products, seeds, eco-tourism).<sup>15</sup> Biodiversity is

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<sup>12</sup>Jha L.K. (1997), *Natural Resource Management –Mizoram vol.1*, p-2

<sup>13</sup> Kikhi & Kikhi (2008), *The Role of Women in Natural Resource Management: A Thematic Report*, p-3

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p-50

<sup>15</sup> International Institute for Environment and development, *Biodiversity and culture: exploring community protocols, rights and consent* (2012), p- 26

considered as an asset for the rural people especially women as they are completely dependent on the resources for their daily use and needs.

Women in many parts of the world, with their indigenous knowledge learned from centuries of practical experiences, have managed the varieties of resources found in nature. Women know how important it is to maintain the biodiversity. As a manager, women choose and plant the right varieties of species, select the seeds, adopt new and local plants and pluck the herbs and species that have medicinal value. As the primary gatherer of wild plants, women know exactly how much is needed for consumption and how much is required for sale in the market. When women venture into the forest, they know exactly what they require. Not a single resource obtained from the forest is left unused. Every species and plants and products obtained are carefully counted and used accordingly. The local knowledge thus helps women to manage the biodiversity and in turn sustain livelihood for the family. The knowledge of preservation has helped to balance the environment from losing most of its biodiversity.

In most of the third world countries and in tribal areas, biodiversity is often linked with culture. They tend to manage and make use of their diversity following certain indigenous methods. Hence, there is always a close link and interdependence between biodiversity and culture of the tribal people. Cultural and spiritual values are enshrined in sacred bio-resource (e.g. cocoa leaves or special rice varieties used in rituals), ecosystem (e.g. sacred forest and mountains) and ancestral landscapes (e.g. sacred valleys). These values and beliefs help to sustain biodiversity and related traditional knowledge and cultural values.<sup>16</sup> This inter-dependence between biodiversity and culture leads to Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Traditional Ecological Knowledge refers to “a cumulative body of knowledge and belief handed down through generations

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p- 26

by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living being (including Human) with one another and with their environment”.<sup>17</sup> Such relationship with nature has helped the tribal population to manage and preserve their biodiversity and have been able to sustain themselves for centuries. The importance of TEK has bolstered to the sustainability of resources in most part of the tribal world including Nagaland. According to Brundtland Commission sustainability is defined as “The ability to make development sustainable- to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>18</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity realized that in order to achieve sustainability and manage resources, the role of indigenous people and their knowledge was crucial. The TEK of the indigenous people therefore, has built a bridge to maintain sustainability and environmental balance.

Etymologically the term ‘environment’ means surroundings. Environment is a complex of many variables which surrounds man as well as all living organisms. It is also defined as the concept of physical, chemical and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival.<sup>19</sup> Environmental Management, on the other hand, is the process of allocating natural and man-made resources so as to make optimum use of the environment in satisfying not only the present basic human needs but of the coming generation also.<sup>20</sup> Resource management and environment management are often used interchangeably as both involve planning, conservation and preservation of resources.

Around the world, there are at least 1.6 billion women who live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood- more than a quarter of the total world

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<sup>17</sup> Berkers, F(1993), *Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Perspective*, International Programme on Traditional Ecological Knowledge and International Development Centre in Ingles T. Julian Traditional Ecological Knowledge Concepts and Cases, p-3

<sup>18</sup> Katee Robert W et al., (2005), *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, p-10.

<sup>19</sup> Saxena H.M (2010), *Environmental Management*, p-3

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p-10

population. Women farmers produce more than half of all the food that is grown in the world, specifically, up to 80 percent in Africa and 60 percent in Asia.<sup>21</sup> It can be stated without a doubt that women in majority have been working as a farmer and feeding the world. A large population of women depends on agriculture making it the largest employment sector for women. Hence it is worthwhile to understand the labour and work women put in to earn their income and secure their livelihood through agriculture.

The study of women's role and work has been a crucial importance not only in identifying the gender inequalities and gender segregation but also in trying to devise appropriate strategies in equalizing the position of women and men in the productive and reproductive spheres. Production and reproduction are the central features of human society. It is therefore considered imperative to understand the distinction between productive and reproductive roles. Productive role generally refers to the activities carried out to produce goods and services either for sale, exchange or to meet the subsistence needs of the family, reproductive role on the other hand refers to the activities needed to ensure the reproduction of society's labour force. This includes childbearing, rearing and care of family members etc which are done mostly by women.

One of the most pervasive themes of the present feminist movement is the emphasis placed on the role of reproduction as a determinant of women's work, the sexual division of labour and the subordinate/dominant relationships between women and men.<sup>22</sup> The issue here is the severity of women's work, the time spent in/on it and the benefit she receives. In an agricultural setting, the demarcation of women's work is difficult to comprehend. Women's working hours and activities inside the home and outside the home therefore, require deliberate attention. Work is conventionally

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<sup>21</sup> *Women and Agriculture: Growing more than just food* (2009), Women Thrive Worldwide, p-1

<sup>22</sup> Beneria Lourdes and Gita Sen, *Accumulation, Reproduction and "Women's Role in Economic Development": Boserup Revisited*(1981), p- 290



understood as paid work outside the home so women's subsistence and domestic labour at home is unaccounted. It is generally observed that women who are defined as housewives are actually involved in unorganized work, like in the field of agricultural and small-scale market production, in addition to their domestic responsibility and child care.<sup>23</sup> Thus, they contribute significantly to household income through agricultural labour and also through monetary income earned from selling the agricultural products. Domestic tasks such as housework and childcare, carried out by women also contribute income to the household as their work accounts for the nurturing, caring and feeding the family.

The allocation of different roles and task shows the division of labour between the genders. The division of labour is therefore based on societal ideas on what men and women should do and capable of doing and not necessarily according to individual preference or capabilities. Marx believed that there is the division of labour based on hierarchy—skilled and unskilled. Men are categorized as skilled and at the top of the hierarchy whilst women are considered as subsidiary workers and therefore fall under unskilled category and at the bottom of the hierarchy. Since women are unskilled they are paid lower than men. Women according to Marx are also paid lesser because of the assumption that women are dependent on men /husband's wage.

Production is interpreted as an income generating activity or remunerated work while reproductive activity is interpreted as consumption unit or domestic labour. The former is considered to be the domain of men and the latter associated with women. Such issues are complex in relation to women's work and division of labour. From a liberal feminist prospect, each individual has the autonomy to pursue his or her interest and that no individual can be subordinated based on gender. They critique housework, as it

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<sup>23</sup> Paltasingh Tattwamasi and Lakshmi Lingam, '*Production*' and '*Reproduction*' in *Feminism: Ideas, Perspectives and Concepts*(2014), p -46

is unpaid and this makes women dependant on men. The Marxist feminists gave prominence to housework as part of the household feudal mode of production of goods while others emphasized housework as part of the social reproduction of capitalism. And the division of labour in production and reproduction work makes women unequal to men and allows capitalist to exploit women through unpaid work.

According to the view of the radical feminists, patriarchy exists in society and is determined essentially by a male hierarchal order, which enjoys both economic and political power. It is the patriarchal structure and not the class structure, which defines women's position in the power hierarchy. Thus, patriarchal structure is manifested through male force and control which preserves itself through marriage and family.<sup>24</sup> Radical feminists maintain that women's work is part of a separate patriarchal mode of reproduction where men exploit women's reproductive labor. Working towards the understanding of women's oppression and inequality by feminist has resulted in greater work on domestic labour and household production. It has also highlighted the patriarchal structure that controls them.

### **1.3. BRIEF PROFILE OF NAGA SOCIETY**

Nagaland the 16<sup>th</sup> state of India is one of the 'seven sisters' of the North-East with the geographical area of 16,579 Sq.Km i.e., 10.5 percent of the countries geographical area. It has a population of 19, 80,602 i.e., 0.2 percent of the country's population as per 2011 census. According to 2011 census, males constitute 10, 25,707 and female 9, 54,895. Out of the state's geographical area of 16,579 square Km, forest occupies an area of approximately 8629Km<sup>2</sup>, i.e., 52.04 percent. The state government owns approximately 1008.23 Km<sup>2</sup> of the forest area, which is only 11.7 percent of the total geographical area and 6.00 per cent of the total geographical area of the state. Private/community owned

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p -47

approximately 7621.07 Km<sup>2</sup> of the forest area, which is 88.3 percent of the total forest area and 46.00 percent of the total geographical area.<sup>25</sup>

The state is bounded by Assam in the West, Myanmar on the East, Manipur in the South and Arunachal Pradesh and part of Assam on the North. The location of the state is strategically sensitive and politically significant as it shares a long international boundary with Myanmar and can also be easily accessed from the China side. It lies between 25.6' and 27.4' northern latitudes and between 93.20' and 95.15' eastern longitudes.<sup>26</sup>

Nagaland is inhabited by sixteen tribes along with a number of sub-tribes. Ao, Angami, Chang, Chakhesang, Konyak, Khiamniungan, Kachari, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sumi, Sangtam, Yimchunger and Zeliang are the major tribes. Each tribe is distinct and unique in character from the others in terms of customs, language and attire.<sup>27</sup> Nagaland state is one among two biodiversity hotspots under eastern Himalayas, which also comes under the 35 biodiversity hotspot identified globally. The state has 2250 varieties of flowering plants, 22 bamboo, 340 orchids, above 200 butterflies, around 40 herpetofauna, 494 birds and 106 mammals.<sup>28</sup> Nagaland is also home to migratory bird Amur Falcon and the international ornithologist has declared Nagaland as the "Falcon Capital of the World".<sup>29</sup> Nagaland is also referred to as the 'Land of Festivals', is known for its myriad tribes with their rich culture and tradition. Because of its unique geography and its cultural diversity, the state has a special constitutional protection provided under Article 371(A) of the Indian Constitution to safeguard the culture, tradition and ways of life of the Nagas.

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<sup>25</sup> Sebu Soyhunlo (2013), *Geography of Nagaland*, p-56

<sup>26</sup> Department of Planning and Co-ordination, *State Human Development Report 2004*, Government of Nagaland, P- 14

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p-20

<sup>28</sup> *Nagaland one of Eastern Himalayas' two Biodiversity hotspots*, Eastern Mirror, November 21 2015.

<sup>29</sup> *Nagaland turning into "Falcon Capital" for conservation*, The Times of India, 21 October 2014.

In Naga society, all issues related to resource management and ownership of land is adjudicated as per customary law. Customary laws are locally recognized principles, norms and rules, which are orally held and transmitted and are applied by community institutions (e.g. councils of elders) to govern or guide all aspects of life. They include rules and norms to control access to natural resources and ensure sustainable use, and codes of ethics for proper use and transmission of traditional knowledge.<sup>30</sup> Customary rights are acquired by custom and belong to all the inhabitants of a particular place. Indigenous peoples' customary rights often emphasize collective rather than individual rights, and stewardship rather than outright ownership.<sup>31</sup> This right holds together the ethical empathy towards nature, land, environment, river, forest, flora and fauna.

Nagaland is predominately agriculture society where two types of cultivation are practiced by the Naga people. The most common and the oldest form of cultivation is the shifting cultivation which has been a major source of livelihood for most people in Nagaland. Shifting cultivation is a primitive type of cropping pattern where a large plot of land is selected and burned which in some place is called slash and burn process. After the land has been cleared, cultivation begins. After the harvest, the land is kept fallow for 15 to 20 years depending on the availability of land. According to Conklin, 'any continuing agricultural system in which fields are cleared by firing and are cropped discontinuously can be termed as Shifting Cultivation'. Smith describes it as 'Cultivating a plot for a few cropping until it becomes exhausted, then moving a settlement to a new plot to start again'.<sup>32</sup>

Land is the most significant basis of the Nagas as it provides them food, security and identity. Land is weighted to be more as an asset rather than just a plot. It is considered

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<sup>30</sup> International Institute for Environment and development, *Biodiversity and culture: exploring community protocols, rights and consent* (2012), p-27

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p-27

<sup>32</sup> Subba T.B (2012), *North East India- A Handbook of Anthropology*, p- 389

not only as a way of sustaining lives but most importantly it is an identity and provides status. Land defines not only security but also the identity of each clan and village and household. The land provides them an important element in its psychological security, its sense of belonging and its roots.<sup>33</sup> Naga tribal was traditionally an agriculturist besides being a warrior and headhunter in the past. In the contemporary Naga society, Nagas still continue to be an agriculturist and cultivation continues to be the main occupation of the people. Land can be private land, clan land, community land and reserved land. Community land is the land set apart by a tribe for the use of its members without the right to private ownership. Private lands are those which are either purchased or gifted to the family. Reserved forest lands, on the other hand, are those owned by the villagers and maintained by them over generations. Clan lands are those owned by the clan members which cannot be sold or bought and is passed through generations. Land rights, on the other hand, can be understood as a legitimate claim to land and the benefits and products produced on that land. Inheritance, transfer from the state, tenancy arrangements and land purchase are all constructs of land rights.

Majority of the Naga people depend on shifting cultivation and it continues to be the main agricultural practice in Nagaland. This method is regarded as the first step in the transition of humanity from the stage of food gathering and hunting to the stage of food production. According to a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) publication, the method has been traced back to 13,000 BC to 3000BC.<sup>34</sup> The Naga way of life revolves around this system which governs most of their life, culture and traditions. Jhum cultivation as an age-old traditional cropping system is deeply embedded in the custom, dance, belief and folklore of the people. It is a source of social, economic and cultural security to jhum cultivators. Jhum cultivation though often viewed as a cause of

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<sup>33</sup> U. A Shimray (2002) *Equality as Tradition: Women's role in Naga Society*, p-376

<sup>34</sup> Subba T.B (2012), *North East India- A Handbook of Anthropology*, p-388

environmental problem is considered as a diversified livelihood system that ensures not only sustenance but also conserves rich cultural heritage. Traditional knowledge is an important part of cultivation where plots of land are selected based on certain taboos and beliefs. Thus each operation under shifting cultivation is associated with some indigenous beliefs and festivals which define the Naga identity and their culture. Table 1.1 shows the distribution of land use in the state of Nagaland.

**Table 1.1 Area Under Different Land Uses (In Hectares)**

Sl. No	Classification	2013-14
1	Geographical Area	1657900
2	Reporting area for land utilization statistics(i to v)	1651530
i	Forest	862930
ii	Non available for cultivation	95358
	a. Land under Non- agricultural uses	92862
	b. Barren and uncultivated land	2496
iii	Other uncultivated land excluding fallow land(a+b+c)	163167
	a. Permanent pasture and other grazing land	-----
	b. Land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves not included in net area sown	93642
	c. Cultivable waste land	69525
iv	Fallow land(a+b)	149607
	a. Fallow land other than current fallow	99529
	b. Current fallow	50078
v	Net area sown(3-4)	380468
3	Total cropped area(v+4)	499311
4	Area sown more than once	118843
5	Net irrigated area	90970
6	Gross irrigated area	99790

*Source : Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2014, Government of Nagaland*

Women in Nagaland play an integral role in agriculture and hence they are assumed to be active contributor to the economy. However, their contributions are often ignored

and unrecognized leading to inequality and lower status of women. Therefore, a careful examination and research is required to perceive the underlying situation of Naga Women.

#### **1.4.REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Literature provides better insight and understanding towards any research work and forms an important base and authenticates the work. The discovery and rediscovery of literature on Women's contribution in the sphere of work and agriculture have helped to draw ideas in framing the thesis and filling the gaps with better understanding and results. The major books/journals consulted in relation to the present study are presented below:

Chhaya Datar (2011) brings together the cultural, social, political, economic and environmental perspectives of understanding the female world. She speaks of the repletion of nature with women and the close connection between women's status and status of nature in *Ecofeminism Revisited- Introduction to the Discourse*. The portrayal of a female as a deity of nature reflects the importance of her stance towards nature and explains how the impact on environment degrades women's status. Ecofeminist argues that women- nature connection and men's domination over both are the cause of ecological destruction and exploitation of women. Women express more towards sustainability of resources rather than menfolk and therefore resolve that the survival of mankind has depended more on women – the gatherer rather than men- the hunter.

The work of Dr. Priyanka Tomar (2006) in *Indian Women*, connotes negative picture of the status of women in India. Tomar draws on the whole picture of women as a weaker sex and a curse to family and society. The age-old custom of slavery, savagery and barbaric activity created by men made women suffer and though rights and prohibitions have minimized the condition and improved the situation, it still persists and exists which requires attention and change to bring justice to women. The laws and



constitution have made efforts in removing discrimination against women but there is still a wide gap between de jure and de facto realities.

H.C Upadhyay (1991) in the book *Status of Women in India* explains women as the first cultivator, potter and weaver and agriculture as an important activity of women since the beginning of time. It states that women and girls constitute half of world's work hours but the time and value of their services are hardly computed. The various activities performed by women are never recognized. Therefore, one must while calculating work, not exclude the contribution of the female worker.

Bina Agarwal (1989) focuses on the history of rural women with nature and their daily activities that provide and sustains the family in the paper *Rural Women, Poverty and Natural Resource: Sustenance, Sustainability and Struggle for Change*. Rural women are burdened with significant responsibilities. Their ability to fulfill their responsibilities is constrained by limitation to land, declining resources and less power in decision-making. Women are also in a disadvantaged position in labour market and their low wages have led them to live below poverty line. The growing deterioration and privatization of country's common property resource have also made women unable to sustain family needs.

*Impact of WTO on Women in Agriculture* by Research Foundation Science and Technology (2005) describes women as the main worker in agriculture. Most of the farm operations in India are women-centered. Despite their importance to agricultural production, women face severe problems like absence of decision making, no right over landholding system etc. The existence of patriarchy intertwines with the work-related problems of women. Therefore, the power in decision-making can be acquired and exercised only if women have a thorough knowledge of various programmes, plans and access to the basic human development and social policies. At times, even the

suggestions of knowledgeable rural women are ignored or are not taken seriously because traditionally men have been major lawmakers of society. Many policies and decisions also neglect women and undermine their abilities and roles. Government policies should be framed to provide legal support and instill confidence in women. Programmes should be developed exclusively for women; to build leadership skills for managing agricultural community-based development activities.

Raj Mohini Sethi (1991) in *Women in Agriculture* authored by highlights the role of women in agriculture, the socio-economic conditions, their productive role in management of land and contribution to the family, village and community. He cites women as not only a consumer but also a contributor to income.

*Rural women at work* by Punam Kumari (2001) elaborates on the two factors that determine women's status quo i.e. land holding status and caste system in India. In Bihar, women of the higher caste and landholding status are forbidden to work in the field while women in lower categories are pressured to work in agriculture as well as at home. The study further reveals that in rural India the psycho-cultural environment acts as an important factor in minimizing women's potentiality. Even the technological changes have bypassed women by denying them the knowledge and training. Though women play a significant and crucial role in the management of farm, the actual potential of women in the society has been ignored and has prevented them from making a rightful contribution to social progress.

The focus on women in agriculture is an important point in today's world. As such the first Global Conference on Women in Agriculture was held citing that women farmers represent more than a quarter of the world's population, an average of 43 percent of agricultural workforce in developing countries in the book *First Global Conference on Women in Agriculture* by K.D Kokate et.al, (2012). With the pace of globalization and

economic liberalization, commercialization of agriculture, rapid population growth and urbanization, rural-urban migration, pressure on land, water and agrobiodiversity and natural disasters associated with climate change have been unfavorable to women in agriculture. The constraints and opportunities that women face in agriculture today must be clearly understood to improve their lot. Despite many policy reforms both at the macro and micro level, gender issues have not received the attention they desire.

The book *Role and Status of Women in Agricultural Development* authored by Neelma Kunwar (2006) depicts a micro-level analysis of role and status of rural women of Western Uttar Pradesh. Kunwar says Women play a crucial role in various agri-operations like storage of grains, animal husbandry and social forestry. However, they are never a decision maker nor their work is regarded as productive rather their contribution is considered as a duty. The author concludes by stating that the growth and prosperity of India depend on the status and development of its women as they constitute nearly half of its population. The issue of rural women's participation in agriculture the author describes – a multi-faceted area of research.

In *Women Farmers of India*, Krishnaraj and Kanch (2008) focus on women's labour within agriculture, the intensity of women's work and time and the reward obtained by them. The authors question why women are subordinated not only in rural but also in the urban areas. Gender inequalities in terms of property transmission and land use rights have always subjugated women and their role. Gender phenomena are felt in almost all societies so what women need is ultimate autonomy, greater options and improvement in the quality of life. The author's claims that empowerment is not just not about access to decision-making but also having the ability to perceive themselves to occupy that position.

Collections of different articles in *Women and work* by Padmini Swaminathan (2012) show the central theme of not only listing the range of work and activities of women but also interlinks the results and findings clearly showing that in every village women are subordinated and are often the disadvantaged gender. The concepts and methods demonstrate the economic contribution in different fields which understate and underestimate the value of women's work. The author further emphasized the need for more research in order to comprehend women's subordinate position in any society.

Khandelwal and Deo (2013) in *Women in Agriculture- Breaking the Grass Ceiling* argue that one of the most debated contemporary issues in the field of agriculture is the participation of women in agriculture. Their lives are determined by a matrix of social and cultural norms that lead to denial of rights and opportunities thereby preventing them from growing their potentials and power to control the economy. They consider the prevailing social norms and gender inequality as defying women's recognition and ultimately depreciating women's work. Gender inequalities have affected production, promoted food insecurity and have perpetrated domestic violence. The subjugation and seclusion of women are the results of traditional values.

Malabika Das (2014) in *Feminization of Agriculture* states that economic growth always begins with the development of agricultural sector and India being an agricultural sector requires more attention. Because of pauperization and negligence of public sector, male migration has increased. As men folks move from agriculture to non-agricultural sector in search of higher wages, women folk shoulder the responsibility of the family and agricultural activities. Feminization, therefore, requires attention and is important to synchronize policies for the promotion of agriculture and development of women.

*Women –uses, preserves and managers of agrobiodiversity* published by FAO of United States (1999) gives a broad detail of rural women's role as food provider and producer.

Important international policies and legal agreements acknowledge the key role of women around the globe. The report states that although it is recognized internationally, very little has been done in differentiating the roles and the responsibilities of men and women in agrobiological activities. Both men and women have different sets of knowledge and activities in management and improvement of resources, however, women have a major stake in protecting biological diversity. Though women play a major role both at national and local level, the policies do not match with increasing responsibilities for food production and management of resources. Therefore, greater attention is needed to safeguard future generation by addressing gender and agrobiodiversity.

Ronnie Vernooy (2006) made a thorough analysis of Gender in the edited book *Social and Gender Analysis in Natural Resource Management*. The six case study selected (China, Mongolia, Nagaland, Nepal, Sikkim and Vietnam) describes on different roles women portray. Each contributor has a common interest in understanding everyday social differences and inequalities. It reflects on social and gender analysis and allows a comparative analysis and the discovery of numbers of commonalities in all the six case studies. Each investigation has concluded that women's work is undervalued or marginalized and provides evidence of inequalities, the disadvantaged sections of the society and that social and gender analysis is essential and not an option.

Bruce Mitchell in (1997) in *Resources and Environmental Management* writes that in the third world countries women work long hours in the field. As women have great responsibility for securing food, fuel and water, they tend to have a greater concern for the resources however developmental programmes and profit-making enterprises are completely vested in the hands of men. He illustrates how the Chipko movement that broke out in Karnataka during the 1970s created world news and this incident brought

in the picture of women saving trees at the cost of their lives. Thus, women marched in as a preserver of forest and natural resources. Women are more dependent on forest, therefore if they are marginalized, an ecological problem will persist and ultimately destroy the environment and never progress.

The paper *Natural Resource Management and Gender- Reflections from Watershed Programmes in India* reflect on watershed programmes where both gender jointly participate to improve the community and economy by Amita Shah (2000). It explains while traditionally women are seen as the prime responsible person to collect food, fuel and water, a departure from that notion was observed. Study reveals that men tends to share equal responsibilities, women's labour participation has also been almost equal to men and were paid same wages for equal work suggesting that the traditional gender division of labour seems to have changed over time.

Krishna (2001) critically examined women's ability to manage resources despite giving no right over the resources in *Introduction: Towards a 'Genderscope' of community Rights in Natural Resource management*. The socio-cultural perceptions of the physical and biological constraints of women and gendering of task based on socio-cultural factors are some characteristics towards women's inability to move forward. Most censuses, data and survey often undercount women as most domestic chores are not considered as work. Moreover, the flow of work within and outside the household are not easily demarcated. Another argument is that when a task is performed by men, it is always described as hard work and when it is done by women it is simply taken for granted. The invisibility of women's work thus contributes to the marginalization of their interest and ability. The notion of man being the provider is deeply rooted and therefore the role of women in any productive activities is considered as supportive activities rather than contributing to the economy and family. The genderscope in

Natural Resource Management has thus some missing links which require proper examination and further research.

Neera. M. Singh's (2001) work on *Women and Community Forest in Orissa: Rights and Management* say even though women as a group are the single largest users of forest and forest products their involvement in the community-based forest management system is marginal. She goes on to say that when men take the protection responsibilities of the forest they are treated as separate task while women integrate these with their daily chores.

Virginus Xaxa (2004) in *Women and gender in the Study of Tribes in India* identifies the history of tribal's and the studies on tribal women with different ideas and opinion on the status of women. Many identified that tribal societies generally assign a high status to women. However, in terms of economy, workload, health care, political participation has more or less been projected as equal to that of the caste society. The change of agricultural pattern from communal ownership to private ownership has changed the concept of tribal society as an egalitarian one says. Forms of inequalities have also been analyzed with gender inequality as the most pervasive one. Men's control over property and political sphere is such a crucial factor in the struggle to exclude women from ownership of land. The division of labour in tribal society is based more on gender and age rather than on hierarchy and occupation. The taboo on women is strongly observed like touching and using the plough which is seen as a way of denying women a control over the means of production. Because of the transformation and changes taking place, it is rather difficult to generalize on the position of women as a whole. However, they seem to share one point in common ie, the inability to control land and observance of customary law.

*Gender Resources Management- overview* by Carolyn Sachs and Marina Laudazi (2005), explains in detail about the gender role in management of natural resources - their role not only in securing food and livelihood but also for the conservation of sustainable use and management of natural resources.

With the history and religious endorsement of patriarchal values, the social, cultural, economic and political system, Indian society has been patriarchal leading to subordination of women. Rachna Suchinmayee (2008) in *Gender, Human Rights and Environment* writes as male assume the head and decision maker, it leaves little space for women. Despite case and research on the issue, human rights and gender issues still needs to be analyzed more. Human right to an individual has been clearly stated in the constitution however they are often denied such rights. Only when such issues are settled there can be an understanding of nature and environment can be in parallel to the conservation of biodiversity

S. A Rahman (2008) claims women in the developing world as a disadvantaged gender with no control over economy and life itself in *Women's involvement in Agriculture in Northern and Southern Kaduna State Nigeria*. The development strategy should focus on women to bring genuine balance and growth. Further Nitya Rao (2001) in *Enhancing Women's mobility in the Forest Economy: Transport and Gender relation in Santal Parganas, Jharkhand* writes on giving the mobility to women and right over the market system in the state.

The village life revolves around the land as agriculture being the mainstay of the agrarian people. *Women, work and empowerment in rural India- Study in a micro situation in Chhattisgarh* by Kakali Chakrabarty (2011) reveals a diversified occupational pattern which includes wage labour, trading, petty business, bidi rolling, weaving and salaried jobs. Most of the women preferred to work closer to so they are



usually employed as agricultural labour. An interesting aspect is that women themselves never think of going against the norms nor do they think about participating in socio-political organization. They believe that it is men's domain and since they remain busy in household chores and agricultural activities, they have no time to spare for other activities. Another interesting aspect of the rural women is that they are ignorant about liberation and empowerment. In fact, they never compare their own condition with that of men and accept it as natural phenomena.

Patriarchy is the key institution that determines the image of the rural women according to Jaiwanti Dimri (2012) in her writing *Images and Representation of the rural women- A study of the Selected Novels of Indian Women Writers*. Third world feminist have been reinvestigating and formulating various ways about the multiple positions of women in terms of class, race, age, nation etc to identify women's identity which is crucial in understanding the real image of women. The author brings in the many writings and works of feminist literature and others who are keen to uplift the position of women and women studies. It also criticizes the present image of rural women in the backdrop of multi-faceted and multi-dimensional embedded structure of caste and class of the Indian Society.

Subordination of women in South East Asia is common. Women are considered as a helper and not an economic contributor says Sushmita Das (2006) in the article *Changing Agricultural Scenario in North East India* book edited by Bimal. J Deb and B. Datta Ray. Social prejudice and economic condition have always played an important role in determining their work and position.

*Agricultural Development in North-East India* edited by K. Alam (1993) is a compilation of 34 research papers describing the agricultural practices in North –East State, its development as well as its constraints. S.N Chatterjee in *Shifting Cultivation*

*in Tripura- some strategies of Development* explains the topography of the state and how Shifting Cultivation is best-suited farming system that supply not only food but the fallow land can also be used for cultivation of small crops and thus there is all year round supply of food. Shifting he says causes soil erosion and deforestation. Therefore, it is necessary to impose certain restrictions on the practice but total stoppage is not applicable since it has deep roots in the socio-economic life of the people and thus might create societal crises.

Vandana Shiva (2011) captures the invisibility of women's work in her writing *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. According to the author, agriculture has been evolved through women and they will continue to do so in the future. However, there is conceptual inability to define women's work. The technology and global development pose a threat to women's intimate knowledge of agriculture and the role they perform.

L.K. Jha (1997) in the book *Natural Resource Management –Mizoram* vol.1 reflects on the resource bases of Mizoram, shifting cultivation, a status of agriculture and forest resources. The state has been practicing agriculture since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the only known method of cultivation was Shifting Cultivation where all their economic activities were confined. However, in course of time, other forms of cultivation were introduced and new schemes evolved to preserve the natural resources. Under the initiative of various agencies and schemes, the vast resources in the state of Mizoram are now been taken care of. Besides Shifting Cultivation, permanent cultivation and plantation are encouraged which has preserved and managed the natural resources in the region.

Mandal and Minto (2010) in *Women in North East India* writes about women's decision-making and exercising of authority within the household among the tribals of

Arunachal Pradesh. While certain freedom is given to women, the decision relating to major issues are taken by men. The author concludes that the factors such as social, economic, political and cultural that inhabit in society prevent women from being active outside the home.

The book *North-East India- A Hand Book of Anthropology* edited by T.B Subba (2012) is a compilation of 19 research papers which reflect the importance of Shifting Cultivation in North-East India. Jonali Devi (2012) in her study on Angami and Rengma tribes of Nagaland stressed on the division of labor between male and female, where the latter contribute a huge amount of labor in the practice of jhuming. Aier and Changkija(2012) explain, in brief, the importance of indigenous knowledge and skills used in the process of jhuming. For indigenous people, knowledge is something closely associated with cultural system and values- knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society. The indigenous practices of resource management towards jhum cultivation have been described in detail. Every step in shifting cultivation is closely linked to traditional beliefs, festivals and rituals.

While not much research work has been carried out in the region, some literature and research based on Nagaland were reviewed for the purpose of the present study.

In the book *Role of women in Natural Resource Management- A thematic Report* Chozule Kikhi and Kedilezo Kikhi (2011), the authors explain the relation of women with nature and how women are directly dependent on natural resources for their livelihood. In their study of Viswema and Peducha village, the authors made a detailed study on how women manage the resources like land, forest; water etc. The thematic report explains how excessive exploitation of resources would lead to discrimination against women in Nagaland and suggested policy interventions to mitigate gender discrimination and equality.

In Nagaland, the research journal *Building upon Traditional Agriculture in Nagaland* (1999) has taken a keen interest in studying various aspects of Shifting Cultivation in Nagaland. Ellen Konyak (1999) in the article, *Role of Women in Naga Jhum Cultivation* briefly studied the role of Naga women in Jhum cultivation. According to her, women in Nagaland work more hours in the field as compared to men besides their household works. Raj Verman (1999) in *Women's Participation in Forestry* writes about women's close relation with the environment and how their role in managing the forest and agro-forest resources have conserve biodiversity.

*Voices From the Forest* by Malcolm Cairns (2004) is a collection of articles dealing with shifting cultivation and resource (fallow) management. The various articles deals individually with the importance of forest resources and shifting cultivation practiced all over the world. Malcolm Cairns, Supong Keitzar and T.Amenba Yaden (2004), wrote on Jhum cultivation as a practice of the Naga Tribes (Angami Naga) and how they manage the land during fallow years. It presents a picture of the jhum cycle and its contribution to food security. It also examines how resources can be managed and thus stabilizes the land fertility after harvesting.

B.S Chauhan (2001) in *Shifting Cultivation in Perspectives* highlights the fact that Shifting Cultivation practice in North East has continued to survive till date because the practice is simple, socially acceptable, resource efficient, self-sustained and with an economic reach of the people. However, because of population growth and increase in land pressure, the fallow period is shortened and has lead to soil infertility, forest loss, flood, land depreciation etc. The author explains the proper management of natural resources is important globally and is in the greatest interest of mankind as it would ensure man's survival by accomplishing long-term productivity and a better

environment. Therefore, in order to maintain a stable ecology, proper management is required for instance land use planning, tree plantation etc

Agriculture contributes 27 percent to the net State Domestic Product (NSDP) where a large portion of land is under Jhum Cultivation making the state of Nagaland as an agricultural economy. The paper *Jhum Cultivation in Nagaland- A New Approach* by Keitzar (2014) gives a new approach about the uniqueness of Jhum, the main being the ability to cultivate multiple crops which other types of cultivation does not provide. It also portrays the cultural ethos of Naga tribes and the socio-cultural life associated with it. The system has been accused of being ecologically destructive. However, Keitzar explains it is best suited for the tropical forest where most part of Nagaland state is covered.

The land has always been a valuable asset to the Nagas not only in terms of survival but most importantly in terms of identity and value. The traditional agricultural pattern of the Nagas is shifting cultivation which is still continued in many villages. However, because of various development and encouragement from government agencies, there has been a shift from traditional practice to other patterns of farming system says Longkumer and Jamir in *Status of Adivasis/ Indigenous peoples Land Series-6- Nagaland- land Alienation: Dynamics of Colonialism, Security and Development* (2012). It also highlights that Naga society presents a male face where any land is inherited by male members. While both men and women contribute to the agricultural work, women are seen as having a closer relation with the environment. The introduction of Self Help Group has enabled them to access community land giving them full authority to manage however with the changes taking place in cultivation pattern, the authors claim that with the threat of community land, the security of women can also be at threat.

The issue of women and land are interlinked with development says Toshimenla Jamir (2015) in her work *Women, Land and Identity in Naga Society: A Sociological Viewpoint in Challenges of Land Development in Nagaland*. Being basically agricultural society, Naga women contribute substantially towards food production however there remains the hard reality of land ownership and control over the produce. A patriarchal society is characterized by male dominance and land ownership directed towards the male heir. As such, there is marginalization and control over women which acts as a hindrance for Naga women. The exclusion of women in decision-making, the author claims has a fallback on women's position in society. Thus, issue of women and land rights needs to be addressed to bring justice and equity.

Temjensosang (2013) in the book *Self-Governing Institute of Naga's* highlighted the status of women in Ao Community. The work reveals the socio-culture, ritual and economic life of Ao Women by assessing through the line of descent, succession, inheritance and residence. Being a patriarchal community, male dominates the executive, administrative and judicial position. Though women are never treated as slaves, women's status is always overshadowed by their male counterparts and even though changes are seen over the past decades, the traditional form of law still prevails and continuous to play an active role in maintaining and controlling the status of women.

A series of articles in the edited book *Women and Gender- Emerging Voice from North-East* by Temjensosang et.al (2015) describes the various issues dealing with women from the North- East. Each contributor elaborated the work and contribution of women in the fields of agriculture, as a peacemaker, as a homemaker, as an active member of the movement and as an agent of development. The authors also stressed on politics and empowerment of women and suggest priority should be given to women in order to

improve status, position and strengthen their capabilities and capacities for an ideal society.

Shifting Cultivation is a way of life for the Naga people as all social and cultural activities are related to the practices and linked with customs, polity and superstition write U.A Shimray (2004) in the article *Women's Work in Naga Society: Household Work, Work Force Participation and Division of Labour*. Each household is a unit of food production, consumption, distribution and of property ownership. The writer claims that Naga women rise before dawn and start the day's work; they cook for the family and go to the field, came back from the field and cook for the family. Their workload is hardly noticed by their partners. Inequality and division of work are linked to a complex historical process and socio-cultural conditions of society.

Lucy Zehol (1998) describes the status and role of women in Naga Society in *Women in Naga Society*. She presents a picture of male dominance over the social, political and economic sphere and women as timid and fragile that obeys their man and husband and upholds rigid norms and customs. With the changing society and the coming of Christianity and modern education, there has been a great influence and greater participation of women. Although such changes are observed there are still more that is required to understand the complexity of customary law of inheritance and property rights.

The literature *Changing Gender Equation with Special Reference to Nagaland* edited by Kedilezo Kikhi and Narola Dangti Kikhi (2009) pressed on the issue of gender inequality in the midst of globalization, development and political change. The work provides an insight into the practice of gender disparities and how with the changing situation can make progress and establish gender equity in Naga Society.

U.A Shimray (2002) in *Equality as Tradition- Women's role in Naga Society* gives a complete contradictory view on Naga Women. He reflects on Naga people cultural and economic life, land determining their identity and rootedness and sense of security. He throws light on the casteless and classless society market by unity and equality. Though being a patriarchal society, the notion of male child preference had never been assumed an important stand. Though the system of inheritance is passed through the male line, female is also gifted with land. He also claims that the activities of women are neither authorized nor are imposed by the patriarchal community and that Naga women have a high and secure position in the society. With the introduction of education and changing society, women are seen as a social worker fighting crimes and acting as a mediator for peace and justice.

The book *Women and Agriculture in Nagaland- A Gender Study of Sumi Customary Law and Customs* authored by Khala (2012), assumes that women are the first farmers. The work gives a detailed insight on women population carrying out major work in the field and the workload they share in Sumi Community and the use and management of resources and its socio-economic contribution to the family and village. It also presents a holistic picture of women's oppression, wage pattern of agricultural laborers and the system of land holdings. The life of rural people living a traditional way and accepting what the customary law prescribes are the basis. Though changes have been seen, the old rules and norms are still strong in most part of the Sumi community.

The literature shows not much has been explored specifically on women and agriculture in Naga society in sociological context. Although general observation is portrayed, detailed study still needs to be considered. There is a contradictory opinion in terms of women's status and position in Naga society. There is no established work and data on how women work and manage resources and how important resources are to women.



There is also minimal literature on how women manage and maintain balance, bring stability and sustainability to the environment and improve biodiversity. The present research therefore, aimed to clarify the contradiction and fill in the gaps where not much has been examined.

### **1.5.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite considerable efforts to understand women's role and their contribution to agriculture over the past decades, very little academic progress has been made in understanding the fundamental role that women play in agriculture. An understanding of the agricultural activities and management of resources would remain incomplete if the role of women is not analyzed because women are commonly considered the caretaker of resources. Studies have revealed that because of women's responsibilities for securing food, fuel and water, they tend to have a greater interest in preserving and conserving cropland, forests and other natural resources. It is therefore essential to recognize the needs, interests and aspirations of women. Recognizing and valuing women's knowledge and practices related to Jhum cultivation and its management of resources will help us to understand the effective participation and part they play.

In the twenty-first century, women particularly in hill areas, have greater responsibility for agriculture than ever before. One reason is that of men migrating to the urban areas for employment which has increased women workload resulting in increasing responsibility in agricultural activities. Even in Nagaland, one can see the increasing number of women in agriculture, taking charge of the responsibility as a farmer, a mother and a wife while the men go out looking for paid jobs, employment etc. Thus, greater attention is required to understand their contribution and ability to sustain the resources, family and land. It is important to address their ability and the physical labor they invest in maintaining the land, family and security.

The role and responsibilities of women differ from region to region mostly depending on the class, values, norms and laws of the region. Patriarchy and patrilineal society play a major role in determining the status and role of women. In a traditional society like Nagaland where patriarchy stands strong, women's role is governed by cultural values, norms and laws. While most literature portrays women in Nagaland as enjoying a far better position than the women belonging to the caste society in other parts of India, it can also be noticed that their position within the community can be inferred from the fact that they have little say in decision-making process and have no right to inheritance of property though in some contemporary cases, gift in the form of land is given.

Naga women play multifaceted roles as the manager of resource, primary gatherer of forest goods and also a wise user of resources. Naga women contribute a huge amount of labor and time during agricultural season. The study of shifting cultivation has been largely focused on ecological and environmental consequences. Not much has been elaborated on the link between the practice and life of the Naga people and how women's management of resources has helped the diversity, management of resources and maintained the balance of the environment. Women's dependency on the natural resources and forest products also places them in a vulnerable position when the environment changes. Their close connectivity with environment helps to manage the resources. However, the roles and challenges faced by them need proper inquiry as Naga women's role in management of resources has never been academically studied. Therefore, the present proposed research is an endeavor in that direction. Although shifting cultivation has been practiced for centuries, very little studies have been explored in sociological context.

## **1.6.OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The following are the objectives of the study-

- To understand the interrelation of social and cultural life of the Nagas in relation to Jhum cultivation
- To analyze the role of women in agriculture through Jhum Cultivation.
- To analyze the nature of Naga women's participation in management of resources
- To examine the dynamics of gender relation in an agricultural society.

## **1.7.HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

The following were the hypothesis of the study undertaken

- Jhum Cultivation is an extension of the cultural and economic life of the Naga People.
- Naga Women are marginalized in decision-making concerning resource management.
- Women are the backbone of agricultural workforce in Nagaland.

## **1.8.RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

In the study undertaken, an effort was made to analyze the work of Naga women as cultivators, sustainers and managers of resource. Naga women play manifold roles in the society-a farmer, a homemaker and a provider. They have for centuries been playing a vital role in farming and managing resources which has benefitted not only the family but society as a whole. As such, the study on Naga women and resource management through jhum cultivation will help in better understanding of women's role in agriculture, the extent of their participation and their ability to manage the resources. Women's' roles and knowledge are also often overlooked or underestimated in resource management and related policies and programs. This work is expected to provide a holistic picture of women's participation in decision making concerning the resources.

By analyzing the dynamics of gender relation within the ambit of agricultural activities, the present research work seeks to highlight the challenges under the existing patriarchy of Naga society. The findings of the study are expected to be a vital contribution to academic discourses and understanding of the often marginalized role of Naga women in their productive role. The present research work would be a valuable addition to the limited literature on gender related issues in the region.

## **1.9. METHODOLOGY**

A detailed methodology was designed for the research. The different components of methodology comprised of the following –

### **1.9. A. SOURCE OF DATA COLLECTION**

The present study being empirical in nature, major analysis and inference were drawn on the basis of data gathering from the field. The primary data formed the basis on which the conclusion and findings of the study were drawn.

Secondary data were collected from Government Sources, District Offices, Books, Newspapers, Journals and Internet Sources. These documents were consulted to collect data and facts of Nagaland State. It was also found to be helpful in understanding the concept and formulation of ideas for the thesis. It provided insight into the problems as well as the areas that need further detailed research.

### **1.9. B. UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY**

The focus of the proposed study was on Naga women in resource management through the practice of Jhum Cultivation in Nagaland. Hence, in order to obtain an objective result, Jhum cultivators of Nagaland, both male and female farmers constitute the universe of the study. The Jhum cultivators are those who are engaged full-time in the agricultural operation and whose dependence on jhum cultivation is of vital importance.

Jhum cultivation is the ultimate source of their livelihood and a major contribution to the household economy.

### **1.9. C. SAMPLING DESIGN**

In keeping with the nature of the present study, a Multi-Stage Purposive Random Sampling was applied for the selection of an appropriate sample. The first stage was the selection of the district. Nagaland State consists of eleven districts. Out of which, nine district extensively practices Jhum cultivation till date namely Kiphire, Longleng, Mokokchung, Mon, Peren, Phek, Tuensang, Wokha and Zunheboto. Since it is not practically feasible to study the universe in its entirety and keeping in view the consideration of time and resource constraints to cover all the districts practicing shifting cultivation, out of the nine districts mentioned, four districts namely Mokokchung, Tuensang, Wokha and Zunheboto were identified for the present study. The second stage was the selection of the villages from each selected district. As such, three villages from each district were selected. Thus, under Mokokchung district Chungliyimsen, Longkhum and Sungratsü villages were selected. Sangsomong, Tuensang and Tsadang villages under Tuensang district and Bhandari, Longsa and Sanis under Wokha district were selected. Under Zunheboto district Lazami, Lumami and Rotomi villages were selected. The villages selected have been practicing shifting cultivation for many generations and are still traditional in nature. They still adhere to old ways and use old methods and tools for cultivation.

Having narrowed down the districts and villages for the study, next the researcher selected ten percent of the household from each identified village using the simple random method as it would provide better information and the sample to analyze will also be clearer. Thus, a total of 358 households with one respondent each was selected from all twelve villages.

**Fig.1.1: Location Map: Nagaland**

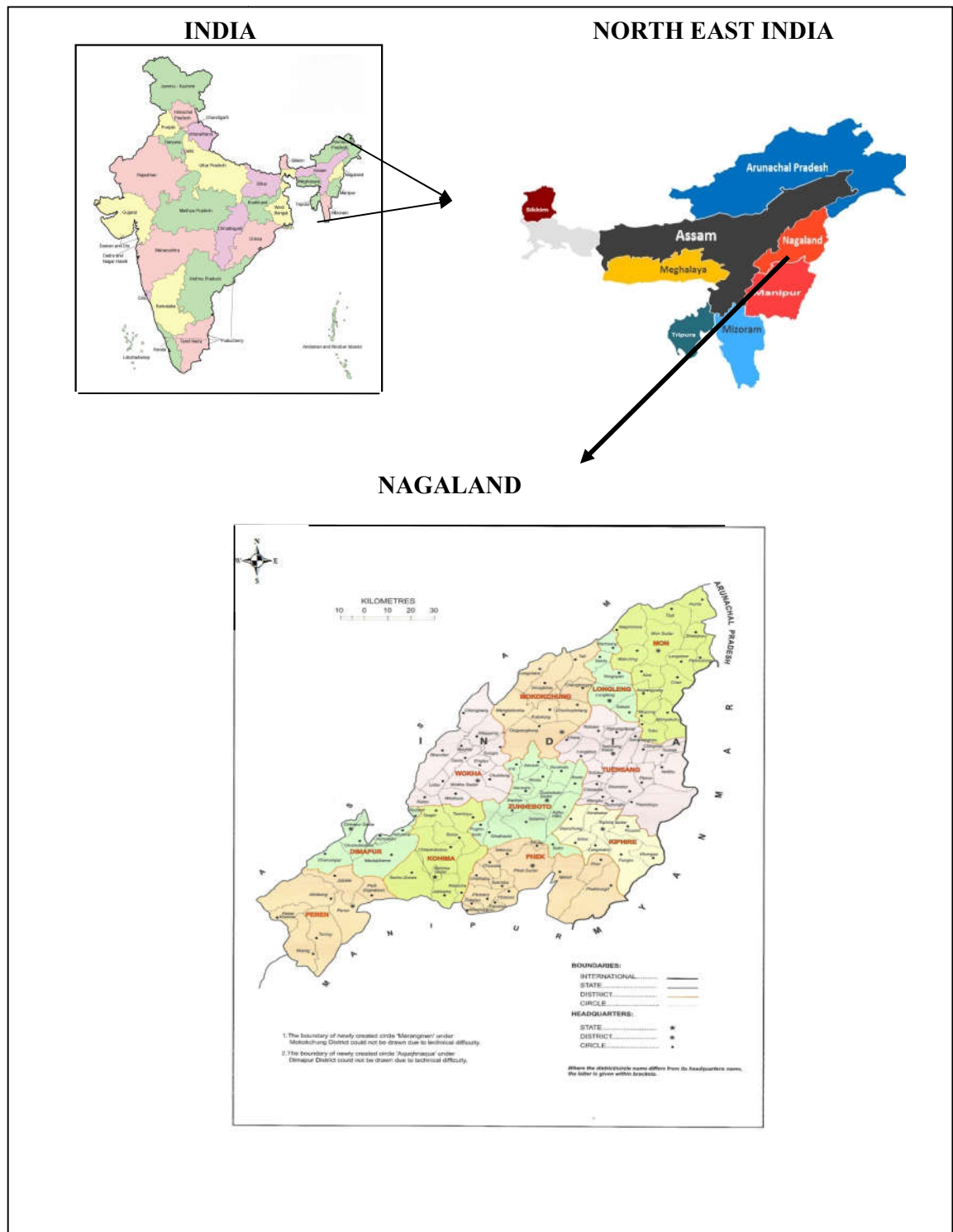
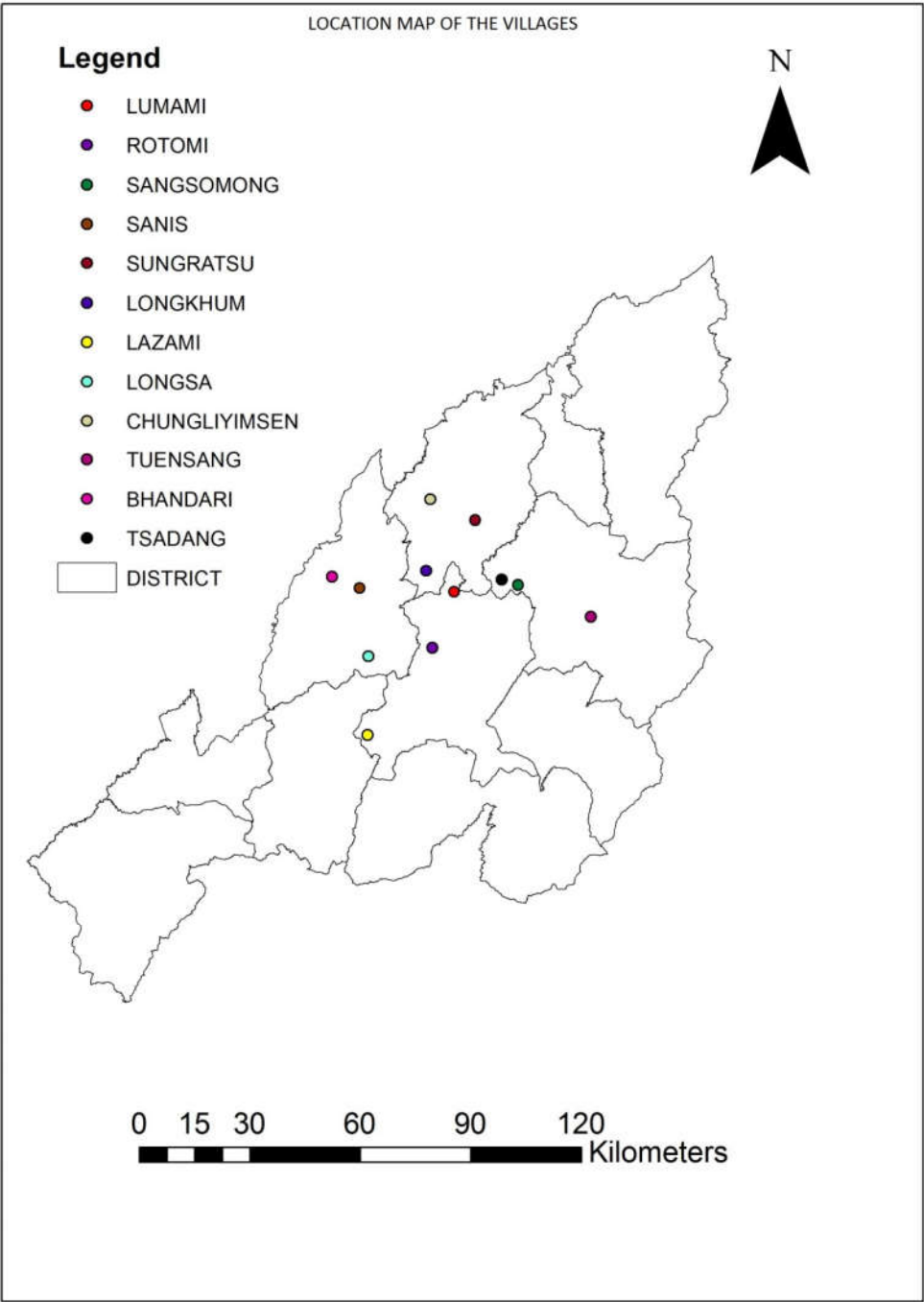


Fig. 1.2. Location Map of the selected Villages



#### **1.9. D. TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The methods of scheduled questionnaire and interview were employed for the collection of data from the field. The questionnaire was divided into three sets. The first set of questionnaire was for the farmers who were practicing shifting cultivation in general, the second set was for single/widowed women engaged in shifting cultivation and the third set of questionnaire was for Village Development Board members, Gaon Bura, Village Chairman, pastors etc. Besides scheduled questionnaire, interviews whenever necessary were also applied. Care was taken that each household selected were engaged in shifting cultivation. Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was also conducted with women farmers being the target. In-depth interviews (IDI) were carried out with elderly person to elicit information on the changes and progression, if any, on the status of women. In each village, village elders, Village Development Board (VDB) members, head of the village, educated persons were also interviewed. In addition to these, widows, widower and single women were also interviewed.

#### **1.9. E. ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The data collected from the field were carefully placed in a master tabular chart. After which the data collected were scrutinized for validity and completeness of the information. The data were interpreted using simple statistical tools like bar and pie chart, mean and percentage.



**CHAPTER II**

**SOCIO- CULTURAL PROFILE OF  
TRADITIONAL NAGA SOCIETY**

## **2.1.INTRODUCTION**

Every society has its own culture which distinguishes them from others. Each human society has a different culture and social practices that define their character and their way of life. In order to understand a society, it is vital to begin with the basic understanding of their culture and their social settings. In Naga Society, social and cultural factors have always played a significant part. Culture covers the entire life of the Nagas and this culture nurtures them to function in social life. The word 'culture' is derived from the Latin word 'Cultus' which means to cultivate, act upon the land, transform it into production. It also involves human action to transform the world and to make the world human. Culture is not an entity in itself but also in relation to the existence of nature, community and society. Bantu Steve Biko defined culture as the society's way to address and answer various problems of life. Thus, culture implies three important tenets: nature, human and the world. Culture differentiates human from animals and it is culture that responds to our needs, desires and dreams.

E. B Tylor, an anthropologist defines culture as a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Culture is an identity as it defines a person by his/her ways of thinking, acting, habits, ways of talking, greeting a person etc. From the definition, it can be stated that the culture of the Nagas covers their entire life- the way of life, their beliefs and customs, customary laws, village set-up, food habits, norms and mores acquired from everyday interaction, day- to -day routine. These learning have been passed on orally for many generations and it still continues to be as important as it was in the earlier days though with little variation and changes to suit the present day. The culture of the Nagas reveals something about the past- their functioning of their lives, their habits, territories and laws that bind them to form a community, their social

structure and their defense system. It identifies the existence of a tribe, the depth of knowledge, the continuity and changes that either directly or indirectly modified as well as strengthened the present culture. The remains of the past open a window about the evolution of Naga cultural history and its ancient life. There are also numerous traits that hold together to form one culture and enables us to discover and rediscover the cultural past life and the development of the present. Thus, culture is considered vital to the continuation of life among the Nagas.

## **2.2.THE NAGA VILLAGE**

According to the census of India, a village is defined as an administrative unit having a parcel of land, well-defined boundaries, cluster of houses or more than one such cluster and bearing a distinctive place name. Thus, a village is an important institution with a definite boundary, population and structure. Village is an important institution of the Nagas. Out of the total population of 19, 78,502, 14, 07,536 live in the rural area and 5, 70,966 lives in the urban areas.<sup>35</sup> This implies that 71.14 percent of the Naga population live in villages and associate their lives with a village.

Every Naga tribe has its own village system and every Naga is a member of a village. They identify themselves with their village and holds great pride to belong to a particular village. Even for those families living outside the village, they either have a home or land in a village indicating their belongingness and roots of their family. Village thus forms the center of any Naga tribe. With the change in time and convenience of living in towns and cities, most Nagas are starting to shift to the town and cities and because of job opportunities, business and education, a large bulk of the population have shifted to urban areas. However, their memberships are always there in the village which shows village as an important institution.

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<sup>35</sup> *Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2014*, Government of Nagaland, p-27

While each village has its own pattern, the general structure of a Naga village consists of a dwelling place, cultivable land, forest cover, paddy house, river and water source and community ground. The village may be located in a high, low and plain area depending upon the topography, availability of resources, defense from enemies and distance to reach the field. In the bygone days, the settlement of the village was usually on hill tops which enabled the inhabitants a panoramic view of their surroundings. This alerted them of threat of attack from enemies. Protection from the enemies and raids was of utmost concern in the olden days. Each village had elaborate defense arrangement. For instance, in Lotha territory under Wokha district, the nearby forests were planted with itching plant. If any invader comes in contact it caused itching over the body. Naga village also had Morung (youth dormitory) build near the gate as a defense fort.

Location of the village determined the security of the village. So the selection of land or formation of a new village was considered important. To each tribe, the selection of a village plot for a new village needed a proper decision. As such, the final decision was the outcome of much logical thinking and careful planning. The establishment of a village happens usually when the population exceeds the capacity of the existing village land. If the land is not sufficient enough for the population, the villagers decide to migrate to a different place. Otherwise, in certain cases, a new village is established due to intra-village feud or disagreement. In any case, according to the oral narratives, leaving old village was an important decision and the process of selecting the site was equally important. Settling in a new place was customary for the village elders along with a priest, to go and examine the site keeping in particular considerations the security and defense.

The mode of selection of sites for establishment of new village differed from tribe to tribe. However, common to all, was a belief in dreams or symbol/signs which guided the people in their search for a new site. Naga tribes regarded dreams to be a way of supernatural elements communicating with them. They believed dreams guided them to make proper decisions relating to social, cultural or spiritual life. Dreams provide them clear vision to make the right decision from minute matters such as performing rituals to greater contention such as death or natural calamities. So for the establishment of a new village, if the dreams of the priest were deemed 'improper', the prospective site was left abandoned and the search for another site continues. But if the dreams were 'proper' or 'good', the prospective sites were selected for the new settlement. After selection of the site, rituals were performed to drive out evil spirits or bad omen and invoke blessing. Such rituals were performed by the priest along with elder members of the village. The rituals performed involved sacrificing of animals like chicken, dog, pig etc. For instance, among the *Rengma Naga* tribe, they selected two or three members and these selected members sacrificed a pig, dog or chicken and performed the ritual. Later, they carried water from the old village and pour it on the new site to invoke blessings.

Smoke signs were also considered significant indicators for making decisions regarding site selection. Fire was burned continuously and if the smoke goes straight up to the sky, the site is selected, but if the smoke spreads everywhere, the site was rejected. According to the *Lotha* tradition, a selected team usually consisting of three or four persons would consult a priestess who will either reject or agree to the selection of site depending on her dreams.<sup>36</sup> The interpretation of dreams thus played an important role in the process of site selection. Sometimes the selections were done by cutting down

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<sup>36</sup> Nshoga. A (2009), *Traditional Naga Village System and its transformation*, p-58

trees with a machete (dao). If the tree is chopped in one stroke it was considered a good sign, if not the site was left abandoned.

The *Angami Naga Tribe* and *Chakhesang Naga Tribe* usually selected the site where there is availability of sufficient water and feasible for terrace cultivation. Among the *Sumi Naga*, the village site is selected by making a huge fire and examining the direction of the smoke and accordingly tabbed the site which is similar to that of the *Rengma Naga*. Sometimes, they would dig a hole on the site and fill it with mud. After a week or so if the pit sinks the site were rejected but if it remained the same, then the site is selected.<sup>37</sup> In this way, there were commonalities as well as differences among the various tribes. However these days the villages are usually set up based on practical considerations such as availability of water, plants, trees, forest and road connectivity.

Most Naga villages are demarcated with erected boulders along the border; they maintained inter-village boundary and a gate was build at the entrance and the end of each village indicating the beginning and the end of the village boundary. Erection of gates and use of boulders symbolized their area. The well-defined boundaries protected them from foray of land and inter disputes, maintained peace with neighboring village and indicated the vast land resource of that village. From the beginning of selection of land, it can be observed how important a village is to the Naga people. Village still continues to occupy a central place in Naga society. Despite the various changes such as the introduction of education, change in life style and food habits, the villages remain to be an integral part of Naga society and in order to understand the Naga people, it is essential to understand the Naga village system.

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, p-58

Nomenclature is another important feature of the Naga village where the naming of the village was considered imperative. Each village has its history and therefore appropriate naming of the village holds pre-eminent significance. It was believed that improper name would result in misfortune and natural calamities would occur, diseases and plague would kill the population. To label a name was considered to be imperative as it signified what the village would be. Usually, the village names were either named after the founder of the village, name of mountain or river, rocks, incidents, flora and fauna etc. For instance, Sumi villages are named after its founder; the Lotha village after peculiar incidents; and the Ao village after a peculiar site or ancient settlement place; the Sangtam village after the founder name and characteristics of the place etc. There are commonalities while naming the village such as the procedure of rituals and offering of sacrifices to the spirits. Each village has its own ways. The naming of the village also symbolizes the cultural traditions of the Naga people and their identity.

Thus, village provided a significant image of Naga people's life and their culture, tradition and belief system. It holds symbolic importance and Naga people identified themselves with their village. Each traditional Naga village has its own history which shows how village began and still remains to be the most integral part of Naga society even today.

### **2.3 TRADITIONAL SOCIAL INSTITUTION OF NAGA SOCIETY**

Social institution is the regular patterns of behavior. It is a set of organized norms, practices and rules which is regular and continuous. It is a well-established pattern of behavior that is acceptable as a fundamental part of a culture. A social institution is established in order to meet the basic requirements of the people living in a society and

often work in a collective setting.<sup>38</sup> There are different types of social institution that provides the basic need of the people such as family, educational institution, religious institution etc. The traditional social institution of Naga society can be examined under the following headings:

### **2.3. A. THE NAGA FAMILY**

Family is an important social institution and a basic primary group in any given society. The institution of family is the most basic social unit of the Naga society. It is organized around the norms of patriarchy and patriliney. The family provides food and security as well as an identity to an individual. Familial ties are strong and parents are highly respected by their children and the decisions made by them are always considered final. Patriarchy describes the structuring of society on the basis of family units, in which fathers have primary rights to control the units and they are entrusted with the responsibility for the welfare of the unit.<sup>39</sup> Naga society is a patriarchal society where men wield ultimate authority. They are considered to be the bread earner and the decision maker and holds utmost power at home as well as outside the home. Though women may counsel men informally, the final decisions are always made by the husband or the father. In the absence of the father, the responsibility falls on the eldest son.

Naga society follows patrilineal descent where the descent is traced through the male line. Both male and female follow their father's kin group. According to the Naga customs, a son can inherit all the non-moveable properties like house, forest and land while movable properties can be given to women like clothes, ornaments; livestock etc. A son inherits his father's entire property after the demise of his father while a daughter

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<sup>38</sup> [http://www.tcrsb.ca/ycmhs/webpage/sm/Important%20Documents/Sociology%2012/Unit%204%20-%20Social%20Organization%20\(Groups\)/4.3%20social%20institutions.pdf](http://www.tcrsb.ca/ycmhs/webpage/sm/Important%20Documents/Sociology%2012/Unit%204%20-%20Social%20Organization%20(Groups)/4.3%20social%20institutions.pdf) accessed on 29/09/17

<sup>39</sup> Gupta M.S (2012), *Women Empowerment and Global Development*, p- 106



does not enjoy such privilege. As soon as she marries, she leaves her parental home and loses the privilege of using her father's property. In some cases, gift in the form of land is given to the daughter but such properties are reverted to either brother or uncle after her death. Even the land purchased by women from her earning is inherited by her son. In case of the decease of the husband, the widow can continue to live in the house and use the land during her lifetime. However, if she remarries, she forfeits her right to the land and house, and it reverts back to her husband's family. The land is accorded to the son or in the absence of a son, the land goes to the husband's brother/relatives.

Monogamy is the universal form of family structure among the Nagas. Polygamy is found to have practiced among the *Angs* of Konyak tribes. The *Angs* could marry more than one wife as it was considered prestigious and having more wives meant having more children. Marriage is considered as the foundation of Naga social structure. Marriage is considered important and socially valued. The Naga people practice neo-local type of family where the newlyweds leave their parental home and start a separate family. Naga society being patriarchal, the father has full custody of the child in case of a divorce. In the event of an infant during divorce, the child is allowed to remain with the mother till it is weaned. After which, the father takes custody of the child. In case of the death of husband, the mother takes full responsibility of the children/child but if she remarries, the child either comes under the custody of her husband/husband's parents or sometimes under mutual consent, the child is raised by the mother provided the child's surname remains the same.

Naga's follows clan exogamy whereby marriage within the clans is prohibited. It is considered a taboo and violation of such act are severely punished according to the customary law. Practice of endogamy is therefore never encouraged nor practiced among the Naga tribes.

### 2.3.B. KINSHIP AND CLAN SYSTEM

Naga society is structured and defined by a complex kinship matrix system based on an ancestral social institution.<sup>40</sup> Kinship can be understood as a bond that binds people together, related through blood (consanguineous kin) or marriage (affinal kin). Kinship represents one of the basic of social function in Naga society as it influences almost all social activities- social, economic, political and religious. Naga society follows agnatic line where they emphasized on line of descent through the male heir. The social structure in the kinship system is based on the patrilineal lines. Kinship teaches the people how to respect the authority, elders and older people.

Kinship terminology is another important feature of Naga Society. Every tribe in Naga society has certain kinship terminology. Individuals are not called by their given names but kinship terms are used to address the person. For instance, elder person or older person is never called with their given names for it is considered extremely disrespectful to call the elders by their name. Kinship terminology such as *Apu* and *Aza* (father and mother in Sumi dialect), *Oko* and *Amo* (Parental uncle and aunty in Ao dialect), *Ema* and *Efa* (Brother and Sister in Sangtam Dialect), *Ami* and *Azuo* (Maternal uncle and aunty) *Atsolo* and *Atsokhyongo* (Niece and Nephew in Lotha Dialect) are used to address them. Usage of such terminology is considered proper and respectful. Obedience to parents and elders assumed paramount importance in Naga society. Hence, Kinship system besides organizing the society prepares the people to behave, respect and learn. It exemplifies the importance of extended family among the Nagas. In the absence of written records, youngsters are taught the kinship names orally and the knowledge is passed on to subsequent generations.

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<sup>40</sup> Nienu V (2015), *Naga Cultural Milieu -An Adaptation to mountain ecosystem*, p- 103

A very important kinship group of the Naga people is the clan. A Clan can be termed as “a unilateral kin group based on either matrilineal or patrilineal”. The members of a clan believe they are descended from a common ancestor through the culturally accepted line of descent (matrilineal or patrilineal).<sup>41</sup> All Nagas have a clan name after their personal name as a suffix that distinguishes an individual from the other clan groups. In a village, there are as many as six to seven clans each having their own lineages. Depending on the size of the population for instance, in large villages, there are as many as six to seven clans, while in the small villages there could be just two to three clans. Clans usually comprise of several lineages. Clan bonds are rigid and exercise extensively in a village as it is considered a prime importance. Patrilineal clan system is followed among the Nagas. They trace themselves through the male line. That is one reason why male child is given importance as it provides a means to continue their clan identity. Each clan deputes member to the village council as clan representative. The clan head is usually the eldest surviving male clan who hold a great responsibility in maintaining norms and rules. He is a man who is well versed with clan history and should be capable to shoulder the responsibility given to him. During the agricultural practices, clan lands are distributed depending on the decision taken by the clan elders. Such land is collective holdings and cannot be bought or sold individually, it can only be used.

The system of clan exogamy is practiced. No individual is allowed to marry someone from his/her own clan as it is considered a taboo and forbidden. Marriage within the same clan is considered a major offence as members consider themselves related by blood. A person who trespasses the rule and marries someone within his/her clan is excommunicated from the village as it is considered an act of incest. At times even the child borne out of such union is condemned by the clan members. Every clan has

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<sup>41</sup> Ovung Athungo (2012), *Social Stratification in Naga Society*, p- 73

certain norms, laws and rules to regulate the behavior of its clan members. Thus, all social institutions like marriage, polity and landed property has a direct relation with the clan system. It holds a very important role and creates a sense of we- feeling among the villagers. The clan is a source of identity for the Nagas and respected well in the community.

### **2.3. C. MORUNG SYSTEM**

*Morung* was an important primary institution and was an essential part of Naga life. The Morung was the center of social and cultural life wherein the young were imparted education and acculturation. It was a place where the young were taught the art of warfare, code of conduct and traditional values. It was an institution represented by a hall build usually near the village gate. The structure was occupied by young people where various training and learning activities were imparted. It was known by different local names amongst the various tribes such as *Kichuki* (Angami), *Apuki* (Sema), *Ban* (Konyak), *Chumpo* (Lotha), *Arju* (Ao), *Renshe* (Rengma), *Pang* (Phom) and *Singtang* (Sangtam) etc. The Morung was usually built with high-pitched roofs and decorated with carved woods, sculptures of animals and skull trophies of heads taken in battle. The construction of Morung was done by men folk alone. It was considered a taboo for the womenfolk to come near the construction site. After the construction of the Morung, various rituals and sacrifices were performed signifying the beginning of new phase for young men. The rituals and sacrifices further signified the cleansing of the Morung from evil spirit. The Morungs were usually located near the village gate and alarm log - drum was placed which was used as a warning to the villager in times of raid and attack from the enemies. The beating of log- drums was also used during celebrations and festivals. A group of young men amounting to fifteen or twenty would gather around the log and beat the drum with wooden baton generating sounds and sing their traditional songs.



Plate2.1 Log- Drum in Chungtia Village, Mokokchung District

In some Morungs, life-size hornbills, head structure of bison were carved to symbolize the status of the Morung. Heads of tiger and skull of humans were carved from large woods depicting the prowess of bravery in war.

The young men were taught to defend and guard the village, go to war, learn to live a disciplined life, construct houses and work in the field. They were trained to become leaders and eventually work in village administration and village council. Thus, they were trained in social and political sphere. In the earlier days, there was no formal educational or training institution as such the *Morung* functioned as an institution wherein the youths were taught and trained under the supervision of elders. The junior group was entrusted the task of running errands in obedience to their seniors, the intermediate groups have the important function of helping the distressed people in the village. The senior group had the overall control of the members of the Morung.<sup>42</sup> They were taught and trained in the arts of war and subjected to various ordeals to test their

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<sup>42</sup> Colonial Education and Impact, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/chapter25205.pdf>, accessed on 23.09.2017, p-114

bravery, leadership and combative skills. Besides the training, the Morung was considered as a center where traditional folklore and tales, dances, myths and legends, family values etc were taught.

Besides, the dormitory for boys, there was also a dormitory for young unmarried girls known in various dialects as *Tsüki* (Ao), *Illiki* (Sema), *Releiki* (Zeliang) etc. Similar to the *Morung* of the young boys, the girls on reaching puberty would go and live in the dormitory till they reach the age of marriage. They were usually under the care of an elderly woman. While young boys were taught warfare, defense and tactics, young girls were given training in washing, cooking, cleaning, taking care of children and the old, collecting firewood and water, weaving etc. In a nutshell, they were taught all that was required to be a good mother and a wife eventually. Young girls were trained to stay and work in the kitchen and prepare themselves for womanhood.

The Morungs were also an important institution of socialization and recreation. After the day's hard work, young boys and girls would gather around the fire sing love songs, joke and interact with one another. It was also a time for dating and young boys would choose their life partner depending on their likeness. The girls were not allowed to enter the boy's dormitory therefore only the boys visited the girl's dormitory and interacted with them.

With the advent of Christian missionaries into the Naga Hills and gradual conversion of the people to Christianity, along with the establishment of educational institutions, the *Morung* was not encouraged and slowly it began to disappear. As J.P Mills writes about the fall of Morung:-

*“Decaying Morung” means decaying a village, and well-used, well-kept “Morung” a vigorous community. It is the “Morung” that the old men tell of the great deeds of the past, and the coming generation is taught to carry on the old traditions in the future.*

*When the past is no longer glorified in and the future seems dark and uncertain, the  
“Morungs” fall into decay.*<sup>43</sup>

The disintegration of *Morung* changed the whole practice and cultural activities of the past. It is no longer practiced or followed in the present day. While traditional socio-cultural activities are still kept alive, most of the practices have been perished in course of time. But in the past, the institution played a major part in molding the young to live as a proper man and woman, to defend their village and to survive by working and earning their daily food. It was the core of the village structure. Now it only remains as a relic and displayed during festivals and traditional celebration.

#### **2.4. VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION**

The structure and functioning of the village administration are very important to keep harmony and maintain rules and norms fitting to all the member of the village. In order to maintain a fair and clear functioning of the village life, there are various administrative functions executed by selected who hold the responsibility to maintain peace and represent the village whenever necessary. The village as an institution promotes political, economic and religious continuation and the growth to maintain status quo in the village.

According to *J.P Mills*, the real political unit for the Naga tribe is the village government that governs and administers the entire people of the village.<sup>44</sup> Each village was described as independent having their own administration that settled disputes, maintained economy, polity and society. Verrier Elwin said, ‘*Naga society presented a varied pattern of near- dictatorship and extreme democracy. There was a system of hereditary chieftainship among the Semas and Changs. The Konyaks had very powerful*

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Nshoga .A (2009), *Traditional Naga Village System and its transformation*, p-82

<sup>44</sup> Devi Jonali, *Traditional Village Government and village Council in Nagaland*, p- 261

*chief or Angs, who were regarded as sacred and whose word was law. The Ao's had bodies of elders who represented the main family groups in the village and the Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas, and others are democratic.*<sup>45</sup>

#### **2.4.A. Forms of Polity among the Naga People**

Traditional Naga village was characterized by a distinct political system. There were two types of polity namely Republican form of government found to have been practiced among Angamis, Aos, Phoms, Lothas, Chakhesangs, Changs, Sangtams etc and the monarchical form of government among the Semas and Konyaks. In the republican form of government, there was no designated head except a nominal head who took charge of the responsibilities. The nominal head had no authority or power and was selected based on their bravery in war, skills of judgment and leadership quality. Although the selection is based on hereditary system, if the head's son could not prove his capabilities and strength, it was passed on to the person who procures such capabilities.

Monarchical form of government was in vogue among the Semas and Konyaks. They practiced chieftainship based on hereditary system. The eldest son of the chief becomes the ultimate heir but in certain occasion where the son is found incapable or the chief dies without heir, then the power goes to his brothers. The chief known as 'Ang' in Konyak and 'Akukau' in Sumi exercised both secular and religious functions. According to the Sumi custom and tradition, the founders of the village become the chief of the village, whose office is hereditary where the chief enjoys absolute rights and the decisions made by him are final and binding for all villagers. However, the chief is not an autocrat as he is advised and consulted by his councilors. It is not the same

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in *State Human Development Report 2004*, p- 38



among the Konyaks. The *Ang* follows autocratic system whose words are considered as law. The Konyak follow the hereditary system where the eldest son of the first wife becomes the next *Ang*. An *Ang* also had the privilege to marry as many wives as he liked but the eldest wife and her sons were given greater prestige and advantage.

#### **2.4. B. Power and Function of the Chief and Head**

Depending upon the different forms of government found to practice among the Nagas, there are certain variation and similarities on the powers and functions. For instance, among the Angami and Chakhesang, Zeliang and Rengma Naga who follow the republican system, the nominal head has no absolute power though he is given the responsibility. The head known as *Kemovo* (Angami) controls the secular affairs such as presiding over the meeting, and adjudication of customary law. He along with his villagers decides on functioning and development of the village. Being the nominal head, he did not have the power to command the work. It was done by the warrior leader qualified based on the numbers of headhunted and the number of wars fought. *Kemovo* also presided over the religious affairs such as observation of gennas, festivals and other religious ceremonies. As a nominal head, he has no power to order his men for war nor does he have the power to make them work in his field. However, he is respected and regarded as he is looked upon as a wise and just man.

The tribes such as Sumis and Konyaks practice monarchy. In the Sema Tribe, the chief is the ruler and founder of the village. In case of the Konyaks, the *Ang* is the supreme head of the community and has the political power to rule the people. His power is highly autocratic<sup>46</sup> and his succession was based on the principle of primogeniture. The village land belongs to the chief. He performs both secular and religious affairs. In religious affairs, he is committed to performing certain religious ceremonies, festivals

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<sup>46</sup> Shikhu Inato Yekhetto (2007), *A Rediscovery and Rebuilding of Naga Cultural Values*, p-17

and other ritual activities. In agricultural activities, the chief land was first to clean, plant and harvest. He has the absolute power over his villagers. Even in secular affairs, he represents his village in all diplomatic relation with the neighboring villages, maintain security and takes charge of any unseen/misfortune of the people. Among the Semas, the chief constantly consulted with his council know as *Kichimi* for any major decision pertaining to the village affairs and decides to act accordingly. The Ang had absolute power and had the power to punish or pardon the wrongdoer. He appoints his spokesmen and all his councilors in the village assembly. Being the custodian of the law, he presides over the meeting and gives his final decision which is always regarded as final and binding. With the changing society, there have been certain changes in the functions and powers of the head or chief or Ang. With the introduction of Village Council Act of 1970, there has been certain modification and alteration in the traditional administrative functions. However, the old practices still exist in certain rural villages with little variation.

#### **2.4. C. Transition in the Governance of the State**

The system of Village Council emerged in 1978 as a statutory body under the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act 1978. The Act brought the power and functions of traditional village administration of different Naga tribes under one umbrella. The Village Council is given uniform powers and duties to all the recognized villages. The Nagaland Village Council Act 2009 was passed by the Nagaland State Government to amend the Nagaland Village Council Act 1978. The act was amended to give legal status and recognition to Naga Tribal Councils. The traditional system of governance and its structural organization is not ignored in that; indeed the introduction of the village council is just a standardized way of the traditional system of governing institution. Further, the introduction of the village council does not in any way affect the

system and practices of the customary laws and usages.<sup>47</sup> The composition, tenure and method of constitution of the Village Council perform their duties as per the traditional customary practices and usages of the tribes concern.

The Village Council is the apex political organization. There is no fixed number of representation so size varies from village to village. There is also no specific qualification to represent the council. In the earlier days, the tenure was not fixed and the members enjoyed the office for a long period of time. However with the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978 the tenure was fixed for five years. The members are chosen by the villagers in accordance with customary law. Hereditary Village Chiefs and Angs are now the ex- officio members. But the process of selection to the village council varies from tribe to tribe as well as from village to village. For instance, according to the custom of Ao, the member of the *Putu menden* or Village Council is invariably selected from the clan of Longkhum, Jamir and Pongen.<sup>48</sup> The members of Khamniungan Village Assembly were invariably selected from the clan of Longshen, Sheev, Thai, Lamthai, Iamya or Lam. The sumi '*Aphu Ahoho*' or Village Council is formed from the member of the village.

The selected members of the village council are the ones who are well versed in the customary laws, usages and procedures of the tribes, respected by his clans, a wealthy man as in the case of Lotha tribe. He is also a capable, responsible, a good orator and outspoken person. The members are respected by the villagers and the decision made by them is considered final and binding.

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<sup>47</sup> Temjensosang (2013), *Self-Governing Institutes of Nagas*, p-40

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, p-40

The village council is the overall authority for the administration of the village. The village council performs judicial, legislative and administrative function. The chief or head along with the village council performs both the secular and religious affairs. They are considered as the policymakers. The village council decides dispute that occurs within the village between two persons or two parties and public disputes that involves the whole village. The decision made by the council is considered as final and if a person or party fails to abide by the decision, necessary action is taken against the defaulter. The council also takes responsibility for the maintenance of village roads and footpath, drinking water, construction of bridges, clearing of jungles surrounding the village. Another function of the council is fixing the date for village festivals associated with cultivation. An individual is not allowed to operate on his own land for cultivation unless the village council gives consent for that purpose. Thus the village executive body makes all important decision for the welfare of the villagers.

In the *judiciary* function, the chief and his councilors are the custodians of customary law. They act as the Supreme Court in the village and deals with cases like the land disputes, homicide, adultery, rape, theft, incest, dowry, divorce, marriage, breach of customary law etc. All the disputes and problems are studied by them and the justice is given accordingly. Any breach of laws, customs and norms are severely penalized according to customary law.

Another important function of the Village Council is the *administration*. They are responsible for the development and maintenance of public property like bridge, roads, wells, footpath etc. Maintenance of community grounds, hall, granaries and grave-yards are also another important administrative responsibility. Inter-village relationship is an important administrative task and the ability to bring peace and security to the village is of utmost importance. The head along with his councilors thus helps to keep peace and

order in the village. Thus, the Naga Village has been functioning for ages under the umbrella of Village Council.

The traditional village government and the new form of government namely Village council show that while traditional government system has been changed, they still function under the customary law. It honors the law and has retained its tradition. In the past, the chief/Ang and head represented the village government at present the Village Council represent the Village government. The transition of the governing system in Nagaland has proved to maintain democracy by adhering to the past and promotion of the future.

#### **2.5.D. Village Development Board**

The Village Development Board is a statutory body that functions under the primary village authority known as Village Council. Under the Village Council Act, a Village Development Board (VDB) was to be constituted in each village as a statutory body. The VDB was formed in 1980 under Clause 12 of Section 12 of the said Act and is known as the Village Development Model Rule 1980.<sup>49</sup> Under the rule, all permanent residents of a village were members of the VDB. The management of the VDB is entrusted with a Management Committee who is chosen by the Village Council. 25 percent of the seat is reserved for women. The Deputy Commissioner acts as the ex-officio chairman to the VDBs. The activities of the VDBs have proved to emerge as an important institution and a cornerstone for decentralization at the grass root level. The VDBs are involved in all spheres of developmental activities which include maintaining infrastructures, water supply, roads, allocation of funds, selection of beneficiaries and schemes etc. They have helped various governmental agencies in carrying out

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<sup>49</sup> Jamir Dr. Toshimenla & Ms. Imlimenla Longkumar, *Women and Rural Development A study of Women VDB in Nagaland*, p-22

developmental works in the village and the grant –in –aid and subsidies from the government have assisted in improving the quality of village life.

## **2.5. NAGA RELIGION AND BELIEF SYSTEM**

Religion is one of the basic institutions which have always played an integral role in Naga society in the past as well as today. Religious belief administers one's perception of life and the surroundings. It is a belief of something that is beyond human control. James Frazer in his famous book *The Golden Bough* illustrates that there is no complex subject as religion in this world and to provide a satisfactory definition of religion is quite impossible. He defines religion as “a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to control the course of nature or human life”.<sup>50</sup> Frazer draws upon ancient folklores, mythology and religion and points out the complexity of primitive belief of the people. He illustrates that there is a supreme being greater than humans who have the ability to control the nature and human lives.

There are numerous opinions regarding the belief system of the Nagas or the Naga religion. According to Gazetteer of India, “Naga religion is described by sociologists to be animistic which lay emphasis on the existence of the deified manifestations of nature and propitiation of spirits both benevolent and malevolent.”<sup>51</sup> However, A.Wati Longchar affirms that Naga religion is not animistic rather is a community religion whereby there is involvement of the whole community. Religious ethos is contained in people's heart and oral history and not in idol worship. Therefore assumption of Nagas as an animistic is misleading. The traditional Naga religion thus can be understood as a belief in Supreme Being rather than being remarked as animism. E.B. Tylor wrote, animism is the attribution of a soul or spirit to living things and inanimate objects. In full-blown animism, nothing is really inanimate; everything is alive in spirit, alive or

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<sup>50</sup> Imchan Panger (1993), *Ancient Ao Naga Religion and Culture*, p- 5

<sup>51</sup> Sarthak Sengupta (2012), *Tribes of North- East India*, p-223

not.<sup>52</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski in his study of religion claims that the religion of the tribal should not be described as savage. In his experience with Trobriand Islanders displayed tribal's as having greater knowledge and pragmatic experiences than any civilized nation.

Early Naga religion can thus be defined as the doctrine and theory of the spirit and soul, the belief in the existence of spiritual beings and the forces of the universe which need to be in proportion lest wrath befalls on them. Though earlier religion and beliefs of the Naga had no written scripts yet their idea of God and spirit were well expressed in their traditional songs, myths, folktales, names and everyday life routine. They believed every living and non-living being has a soul.

Naga folklore and myth encompass superstition, supernaturalism, and lycanthropism. Frazer considered magic as an art and never a science. He believed that there are laws in nature that is ruled by one or more deities in the natural world. Magic used by the Nagas were concerned with recovery from sickness and anything relating to nature. For instance, when a person is sick, he/she is often consulted by the witch for recovery. *Magic* rites are occasionally practiced by the villagers as in the case of proceedings of rain and there is the observance of *genna* which also contains certain elements of magic.

Naga people were superstitious in nature. Superstition is a belief in supernatural, leading to good or bad luck. For instance, if a cat crosses their path while going to the field or hunting, it is considered a bad omen and they return home and postpone their activity; if a hawk soars over the village, it is believed someone in the village is going to die; calling out the name of a person in the forest is not permitted for fear that the evil spirit may name it to his children and the man will die; the killing of a dog immediately after the death of a person is to let the soul of the dog accompany the man to the land of

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<sup>52</sup> Kath Kenilo (2005), *Traditional Religious system of the Rengma Nagas*, p- 25

dead. They strongly believed in the good and bad spirits or benevolent and malevolent spirits. Earthquake, flood or diseases were considered to be the act of evil spirits. So the villagers would shout and beat the drum to drive away the sins and disease of the villagers.

The Naga people extensively observed genna and taboo. Routine social and religious life of the Naga people was interpreted with taboo and genna whether at a family or community level. One genna is referred to as prohibition when the residents of the village are forbidden to work, and such gennas are observed on the occasions of festivals, agricultural operations and occurrence of natural calamities, while the second type of genna is referred to the individuals, family and clan.<sup>53</sup> *Genna* means prayer. It is a community worship of god. The most important genna observed by the Nagas was in relation to agriculture. Agricultural genna was practiced by all Naga tribes intensely and any breach of genna was considered a bad omen. It was necessary to observe genna during shifting cultivation from the beginning of selection of plot till the harvest. When agricultural operation starts, genna is observed by the village folks to mark the selection of new jhum land. For instance, among the Sumi community, each person on the first day of clearing the plot of land carried an egg to the field which is placed on a split stick. The field house is build around the area where the egg was placed. The Nagas also observed genna during the birth of a child and death of a family member. Some genna were observed to promote good hunting and fishing.

The word ‘taboo’ comes from the Polynesian dialect simply mean ‘prohibition’. The word was first introduced by Captain Cook in 1777. According to Henry Presler, taboo or taboos are those ‘caution established to guard against supernaturally dangerous things

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<sup>53</sup> Nshoga A (2009), *Traditional Naga Village System and its transformation*, p- 213



like plants, animals or person especially those who possess mana'.<sup>54</sup> Observing *Taboo* was a social and religious custom practiced by prohibiting or restricting a particular practice, place or thing. Taboos were strictly followed by the Naga people as they believed a breach of certain taboo might lead to serious damage. Nagas observed taboo depending upon the situation and reasons. Some taboos are observed by an individual or clan or the whole village. Taboo is an established fact of belief which controls the entire social action of the community. To breach the taboo would bring natural calamities and the entire crop will be destroyed with hail stone or pest or insects.

Some established taboo among the Naga people are such as, it is taboo for a man to kill a monkey or gibbon when his wife is pregnant or to hunt during the mourning period. When the village folks observed taboo no one is allowed to venture out but remain inside the village. Taboos were also observed in consideration of animals and agriculture. Since land and nature were very important for their survival, the Nagas followed a series of taboo for bountiful harvest and breeding of healthy livestock. It was important to observe taboo to please the Supreme Being and by doing so the people believed that they will be blessed with good health, rich harvest and good weather. Besides the prayer and observation of taboo and genna in relation to agriculture, incest between close blood relations was considered a taboo and severe punishment were given to those who breached such taboo.

Elements of Totemism could also be found amongst the Naga people. Totem means symbol and totemism means an integral phenomenon which is everywhere and is essentially alike. A symbol can be animate or inanimate. It can be an object or an animal. The Nagas believed that they emerged from animal, birds, insects, stone and trees. Among the Chakhesang, a clan known as *Merisunuomi* is believed to be

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<sup>54</sup> Longchar A Wati (1995), *The Traditional Tribal Worldview and Modernity*, p-54

descendent of a mushroom; among the Ao Naga; Ozukum clan is said to be born out of a bird and Kichu from sparrow among the Rengma tribe; the Tepinyu clan is believed to have emerged from the tiger, etc.

The Naga people attach great significance to the phenomena of dreams and soul. They believed that while the body sleeps the soul performs duty in the other world. The prediction and interpretation of dreams are given preeminence. Dreams are interpreted in different ways among the Nagas. Some common interpretation of dreams is, if a person dreams that he is sowing paddy in the field, disease or sickness befalls on the family; to dream of dry pond represented famine in the near future; to dream of snake means an attack of evil spirit; to climb mountains or trees were interpreted as achieving something great in life, etc. The Nagas believed in the existence of a soul. They believed in a separate world wherein after the death of a person, the soul leaves the physical body and goes on a journey to a different land. So, when a person dies, it was common practice to kill a dog to accompany the soul on his journey; a spear and machete are kept near the grave for protection and even food and clothes are placed near the grave. The Angami and Chakhesang Nagas believed that the dead soul will go up in the sky and become a star but the unrighteous man's soul would pass through seven stages of life and ultimately the soul will be transformed into an insect and end their cycle of life.

For the Nagas, myths are not merely a story told but a reality lived. It is a reality believed to have once happened in the past and which continues to influence the present. Myth has been described by Malinowski, not as an attractive fiction of stories but a reality that justifies the existence of the past life and the belief of the present community. Likewise, myths for Nagas are considered not only as a tale rather as a primordial faith with moral wisdom.

The phenomenon of Lycanthropy is another aspect of the Naga belief system. Lycanthropy is the mythical transformation of a person into an animal. It was believed that a man's soul is transferred to the body of a tiger or a leopard. The soul usually enters into the leopard or tiger during sleep and return to the human body during the daylight. Among the Sema Naga, it was believed that a lycanthropic man would leave his body but his soul goes searching for an animal. Usually the man's soul return in one day but sometimes it takes several days to return. During that period, he becomes lethargic. The possession of the soul makes him feel severe pain and swelling in the knees and elbow. When the leopard is hunted, the human body starts to feel restless. If the leopard is wounded his body also gets wounded or if the leopard is killed, the human body dies. Such beliefs are also followed by many other tribes in Nagaland.

The religion of the Nagas is found to be similar to other tribal groups around the world where communities believed in the Supreme Being for fear or for their intimate connection to nature. This belief dates back to the Paleolithic age and is considered as one of the oldest religion. Their strong belief and practices govern all aspects of culture, tradition and life of the Naga people. They believed that there is an unseen divine power that controls their lives and to upset the unseen will only bring misfortune to the family or the whole village through unnatural deaths, diseases, famines, plagues, natural calamities etc. The Nagas did not worship idols or embodiment of ideas in material form but in the form of wounds and healing. The Nagas believed that every object resides with a spirit and these spirits are malevolent in characteristics, which deserves to be propitiated to obviate from their wrath. Luck stones are believed to bring good fortune and keeping in the morung or in the house affects the prosperity of the village or the person to which they belong.

Such were the beliefs observed by the Naga people in the olden days. For them, religion and belief system encompassed the social and cultural life of the community. Strict routines were maintained and followed by every individual. Magic, superstition, myths, genna etc were essential elements of the religious practices of the Naga population.

The advent and proselytization of Christian missionaries completely transformed the traditional life of the Naga people. In *Journal of world history* 1997, historian Richard Eaton opined that the most massive movement of Christianity was among the Nagas in all of Asia.<sup>55</sup> Traditional Naga culture changed, religious beliefs were abandoned, and the converts were restricted from drinking, sleeping in the Morung, singing and dancing. They were also instructed not to play the log-drum. Their religious practices, social organizations, community life etc had a new beginning. Hutton in 'The Angami Naga' (1969) wrote:

*"Old beliefs and customs are dying; the old traditions are being forgotten, the number of Christians or quasi- Christians, is steadily increasing and the spirit of change is invading and pervading every aspects of Village Life".<sup>56</sup>*

Introduction of education made a drastic change among the Nagas. The Nagas were taught to read and write. They were taught hygiene and clean life. Headhunting was replaced by the gospel; modern medicine replaced the system of magic, superstition was replaced by education etc. The entire social, cultural and religious system of the Nagas was replaced. Despite such change, a positive impact is the promotion and preservation of the old value system. The Naga society still upholds the old customs and traditions. Though the traditional beliefs and practices are not followed strictly, yet the Nagas still respect their social and cultural practices. It is still encouraged and promoted though majority of the Naga people are Christians today.

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<sup>55</sup> <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/179236>

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Nshoga A (2009), *Traditional Naga Village System and its transformation*, p-303

## **2.6. TRADITIONAL ECONOMY AND FARMING SYSTEM**

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Traditional Naga economy. It was characterized by Terrace and Shifting or Jhum Cultivation. Besides cultivation of paddy and variety of crops, their economy also included hunting, fishing, domestication of animal etc. The system of wage labourers, landless labourers, zamindar, landlord etc were conspicuously absent in Naga Society. Every individual lived a self-sufficient life. The forest gave the people everything they needed to survive except for salt and iron. Thus, in the olden days, barter system emerged as a dominant practice in the economy. With no organized market system in the Naga hills, they had to travel to the neighboring plains of Assam to exchange their goods for salt. Later with the local production of salt, the Naga people began to barter with the plains. The Lotha, Ao, Phom and the Konyak tribes who lived near the border had more advantage as they could barter with the plain men. Traditionally, such economic activities were dominated by males as it often required traveling for long distance and there was little safety for women. Later on, conch shells and iron pieces began to be used as currency for exchange of goods. Contact with the western world, therefore, brought far-reaching changes in the system of economic exchange.

Agriculture being the primary source of sustenance for the people, the Nagas continues to maintain a close relationship with their land. The people work on their land to produce sufficient food grain for their own consumption and also save some in case of famine and other natural calamities. Forest products are also extensively used as resources provide materials for building houses, raw material for their handicraft besides vegetables and fruits to supplement their diet.

Three types of cultivation are practiced in Nagaland – Shifting Cultivation, Wet Rice Cultivation (WRC) and Wet Terrace Rice Cultivation (WTRC) which is considered to be the source of livelihood for the people living in a village. Almost all Naga tribe

practice shifting cultivation except the Angami and Chakhesang tribe they practice WTRC in the district of Kohima and Phek and WRC is found to be practiced in some parts of the state like Dimapur, Jalukie, Tizit and Baghty.

Shifting cultivation is an ancient form of cultivation where the land is cleared and burned before the sowing. Shifting cultivation is known by different names such as *Swidden* Cultivation which has a Scandinavian root, *chena* by the Vedda, the *dahi* and *koman* cultivation of the Bhuiya of Orissa, the *podu* of the Khond of Jeypore, the *beora* of the Pahari Korwa of Jashpur, the *taungya* of the Burma Hill tribes, *bewar* of the Biaga<sup>57</sup> and as *Jhum* Cultivation in the North- East. The word *Jhum* is derived from the Chinese origin *chao*, *chuh* or *zuh* meaning high hill or high land and the people who practice it are called *jhumia*.<sup>58</sup> The basic characteristics of this cultivation method is to cultivate the land for two year and when the fertility of the soil decline, the land is kept fallow for fifteen to twenty years to regenerate the fertility of the soil.



Plate 2.2. A scene of shifting cultivation in Zapumi Village, Zunheboto Distirct

A characteristic of shifting cultivation is that, in addition to paddy, the farmers cultivate other cash crops like maize, cucumber, tomato, chilly, squash, beans, yam etc which are

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<sup>57</sup> Guha Ramachandra (1994), *Social Ecology*, p- 249

<sup>58</sup> Subba T.B(2012), *North- East India- A Handbook of Anthropology*, p-393

used for self consumption and also for sale in case of surplus. Such multiple cropping is economically viable as the surplus sold in the market after meeting the consumption requirements of the farmer augment the pecuniary requirement of the farmers.

Terrace cultivation is another mode of agricultural practices. Terrace cultivation is a modified system of cultivation of age-old shifting cultivation. Among the Nagas, Angami and Chakhesang tribes practice the terrace cultivation. The usual method of this cultivation is to level the hill slop into a flat terrace, widen the field to the level of five to ten feet, or even more if the ground level is enough to bring to a certain level. The digging of the terrace is quite laborious, which requires lot of human efforts, but once the terrace is made it becomes permanent and settled.<sup>59</sup> Water is the main components for terrace cultivation so a reservoir is dug in one of the terraces. The reservoir is dug three to four feet below the ground to reserve the water. Thus, they save the water to keep the crop healthy and regular supply of water helps to maintain the crop. The process of sowing is different from shifting cultivation. The seeds are transplanted from the nursery bed and sown in the plot selected. Cow-dung is used as manure in this form of farming. Employing practically no technology apart from simple hoe and machete, farmers put in hours of manual labor. WRC is constructed with bunds to divide the plot in numbers of small sections. Such type of cultivation requires abundant water supply. The plots divided are filled with water to keep the crops partially submerged in the water.

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<sup>59</sup> Nshoga A(2009), *Traditional Naga Village System and its transformation*, p-236



Plate 2.3. Terrace Cultivation in Jotsoma Village, Kohima District

Besides agriculture, the Nagas are also skillful craftsmen. Most of the crafts are made manually by the villagers using whatever natural resource is available especially bamboo and wood. Such handicrafts are of much value within as well as outside the state of Nagaland. Traditionally, women are engaged in weaving traditional shawls and mekhalas<sup>60</sup> which also adds to their economy. Basket making and other handicrafts are made by themselves and also sold in the market which adds to their economy. The handmade goods are extensively used by the Nagas. Thus, the Nagas are hardworking people and they work with their hands to earn their living. In the twenty-first century with the influence of the western world, the way of dressing has changed and the use of industry made goods have become cheaper to purchase. This has led to dying of traditional knowledge of weaving and making varieties of things such as baskets, seats and cups.

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<sup>60</sup> Mekhala is traditional wrap around worn by Naga Women. known by different names in different dialects such as *Amini*(Sumi), *Sürum*(Lotha), *Chiecha*(Angami)





Plate 2.4 Weaving traditional Mekhala



Plate 2.5 Basket Making in Tuensang Village

Naga people have survived for centuries through agriculture and their day to day association with forest produce. Each and every raw material found in nature are carefully used by the people to meet their daily requirements. Centuries have passed but the dependency on agriculture still remains to be an integral part of Naga social and economic life.

The following chapter will provide a more detailed account of agricultural activities of Naga people. It will also highlight the engagement of both men and women in shifting cultivation practice and the gender division of work in relation to the cultivation process.

**CHAPTER III**

**ROLE OF NAGA WOMEN IN JHUM**

**CULTIVATION**

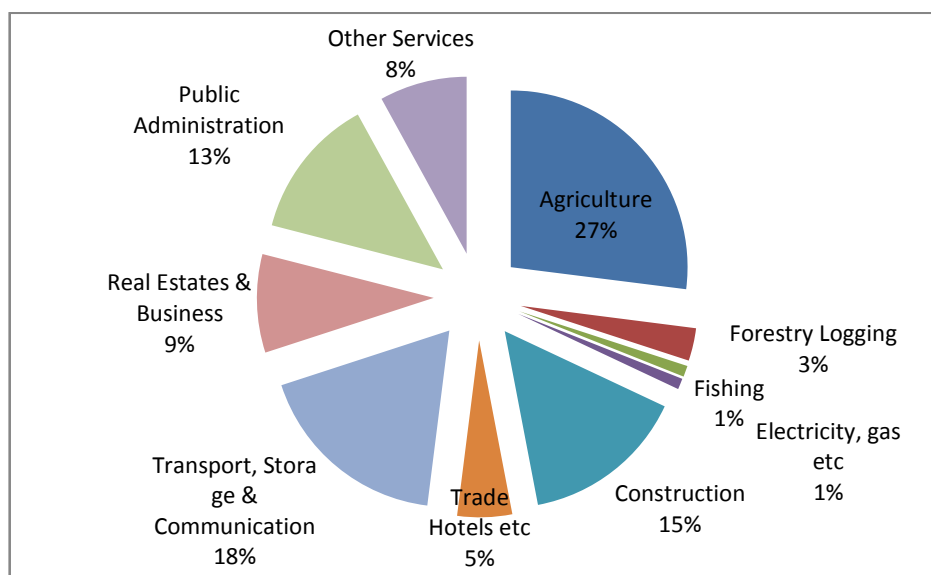
### 3.1 . Introduction

Agriculture is the largest enterprise in Nagaland where both men and women are engaged in diverse activities throughout the year. A glance at the demographic feature of the state covers the fact that agriculture is an important source of income for a large number of population in Nagaland. Out of a total population of 19, 80,602, only 28.97 percent resides in the urban areas, while the remaining 71.03 percent of the Naga populace still lives in the rural areas. While the Urban dwellers are engaged in diverse occupation such as government service, business etc, rural people predominantly depend on agricultural farming for sustenance till date. There are 11 districts in Nagaland, 114 sub-divisions, 26 towns and 1428 villages. In these 1428 villages, the primary occupation is agriculture and allied activities. According to the latest census, 68 percent of the population are engaged in agriculture<sup>61</sup> most of whom live in villages. Their dependence on agriculture, therefore, cannot be overstated. The economic contribution to the Nagaland Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) is mostly obtained from agriculture. Fig 3.1 indicates the distribution of various economic activities that contribute to the economy of the state. Majority of the population are engaged in agricultural activities with 27 percent, while the transportation, storage and communication stand second with 18 percent contribution to the NSDP. The least was fishing and electricity with one percentage contributing to the economy in Nagaland. Table 3.1 apparently indicates agriculture as the main contribution to the NSDP.

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<sup>61</sup> *Nagaland Action Plan On Climate Change* (2012), SAPCC, p-15

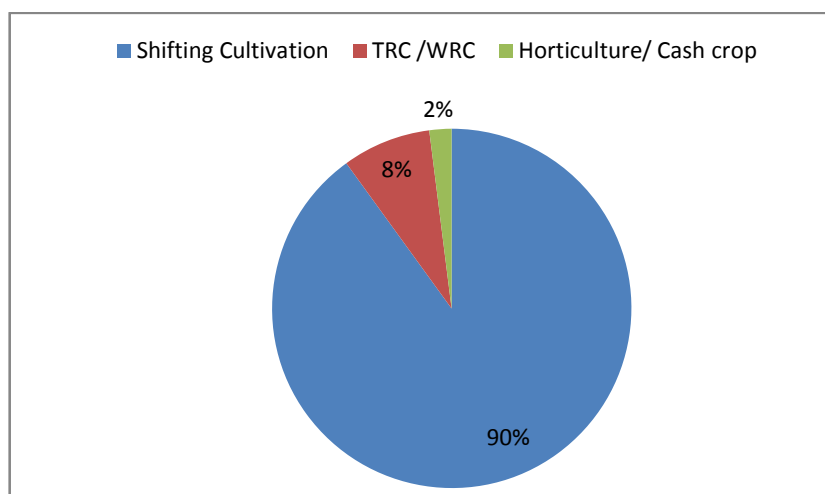
**Fig 3.1. Nagaland (NSDP) by Economic Activity**



*Source: State Human Development Report 2004*

Nagaland can thus be considered an agricultural society with agriculture being the largest sector of economic occupation. While other source of activities contributes to the economy, it is mostly agriculture that provides the major share. In the agricultural activities, there are two types of cultivation practiced in the state-Shifting cultivation and Terrace cultivation. The majority of the population is seen heavily engaged in shifting cultivation as is indicated by figure 3.2 which shows the area under different types of agriculture in Nagaland.

**Fig 3.2. Area Under various type of Agriculture in Nagaland.**



*Source: State Human Development Report 2004*

According to State Human Development Report 2004, 90 percent of land in Nagaland is under Shifting Cultivation, 8 percent is under Wet Terrace Cultivation (WTC) and Terrace Rice Cultivation (TRC) and only 2 percent of the land is under Horticulture and cash crop. From the data, it can be observed that majority of the populace is heavily engaged in shifting cultivation while other types of cultivation are practiced in small pockets in the state.

Shifting cultivation is considered as the most popular type of cultivation practiced all over the world. Shifting cultivation is practiced in the Amazon, Madagascar, Ivory Coast, New Guinea, Korea, Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Northern Myanmar, Thailand, Sumatra, Borneo, Indonesia, Philippines and India. In India, it is a dominant method of production in the hilly regions of the state of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Tripura.<sup>62</sup> It is a form of agricultural practice practiced over millions of years and its antiquity can be traced back to 13,000 BC to 3000 BC.

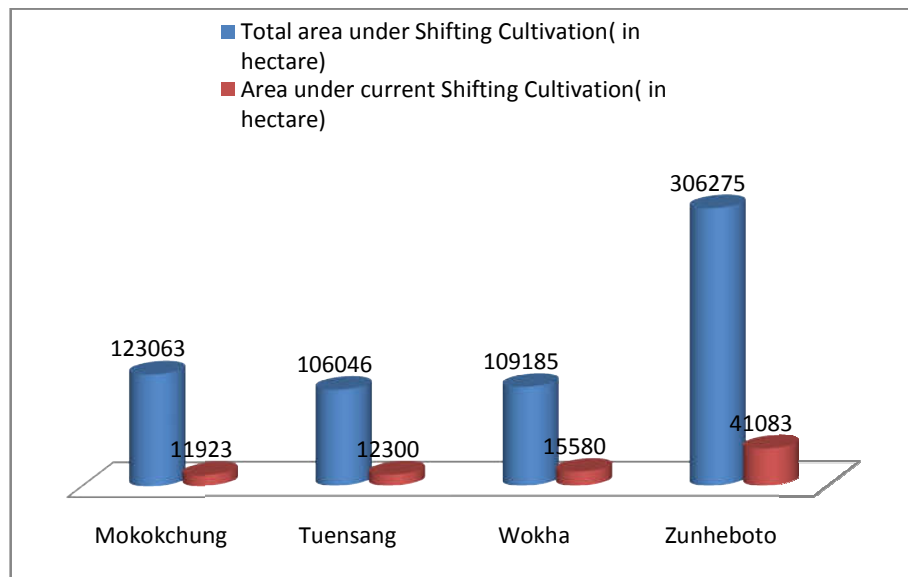
Of late, there has also been an increase in horticulture and cash crop cultivation which has added more to the economy of the state. Horticulture and cash crop are commercial oriented type of farming which is now receiving great attention. However, jhum practice continues to be the major agricultural activity. The importance of Jhum practices stems from the fact that it is considered not only as an agricultural operation and sustaining livelihood but most importantly, it is considered as a way of life and is intricately interwoven with the social, cultural and economic life of the Naga people. Festivals, dances, folklores and folktales are all associated with the practice and hence accounts for its widespread prevalence across the state till date.

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p- 389

For the present study, as stated earlier, the district of Mokokchung, Wokha, Tuensang and Zunheboto were selected on account of the fact that in the selected districts large area of land is under shifting cultivation. Fig 3.3 below shows the land use pattern of shifting cultivation of the four selected districts.

**Fig 3.3. Area under Shifting Cultivation of the selected districts**



Source: Census of India 2011

### 3.2. Women and Work

According to the Population Census (2001) ‘work’ is defined as “*any productive activity for which remuneration is paid and is “market-oriented”* and ‘worker’ is a person who is engaged in ‘work’.<sup>63</sup> Anyone who participates in any economically productive activity for any length of time during the reference period is defined as workers. Normally, production for self-consumption is not treated as economic activity. The definition above covers only those workers whose works are ‘productive’ and are money oriented i.e, it includes only the paid workers and does not cover the other works which are considered extensions of domestic work or duty. The above definition of work and worker seems narrow because they exclude housework and other unpaid work

<sup>63</sup> Krishnaraj Maithreyi and Aruna Kanchi (2011) *Women Farmers of India*, p- 67

which is overwhelmingly performed by women. As Naga women are extensively engaged in both domestic and agricultural work, the application of the conventional definition of work become conceptually problematic.

**Table 3.1 Sex wise Distribution of workers in Nagaland**

Male/Female	Total Workers	Percentage to Total Workers			
		Cultivators	Agricultural labourers	Household Industry	Other Workers
Male	547357	47.40	5.82	1.73	45.05
Female	426765	65.20	7.29	3.13	24.38
Total	974122	55.20	6.46	2.34	35.99

*Source: Computed from Statistical Profile on Women Labour 2012-2013. Labour Bureau, Government of Nagaland*

Table 3.1 shows a very high proportion of men and women cultivators in Nagaland. Of these, females constitute the majority with 65.20 percent to 47.40 percent male cultivators. Comparatively, the percentage of agricultural labour is quite low at just 5.82 percent male and 7.29 percent female as agricultural labour. A mere 1.73 percent males and 3.13 percent females are found engaged in the category of household industry and 45.05 percent males and 24.38 percent females are listed under other workers. The profile gives a clear picture of higher involvement of women workers as compared to men given that the population of men is more than that of women. For the purpose of the present study, cultivator refers to the selection of population who owned land privately or collectively (such as clan land) and cultivates for self-consumption. Agricultural labourers are those persons who are hired to work on another person's land for a wage.

**Table 3.2. District- wise Classification of Labour (in percentage)**

District/State/	Category	cultivators	Agricultural Labors	Household Industry	Other Workers
India					
Mokokchung	Person	48.9	9.2	3.8	38.2
	Male	43.1	9.3	2.3	45.2
	Female	56.6	8.9	5.7	28.8
Wokha	Person	60.5	8.2	2.5	28.7
	Male	52.9	7.8	2.0	28.7
	Female	69.4	8.7	3.1	18.8
Zunheboto	Person	56.3	15.0	2.5	26.1
	Male	50.6	13.2	2.0	34.2
	Female	62.4	17.0	3.1	17.5
Tuensang	Person	76.6	4.0	1.1	18.3
	Male	69.6	3.9	1.0	25.5
	Female	84.9	4.1	1.3	9.8
Nagaland	Person	55.2	6.5	2.3	36.0
	Male	47.4	5.8	1.7	45.0
	Female	65.2	7.3	3.1	24.4
India	Person	24.6	30.0	3.8	41.6
	Male	24.9	24.9	2.9	47.2
	Female	24.0	41.1	5.7	29.2

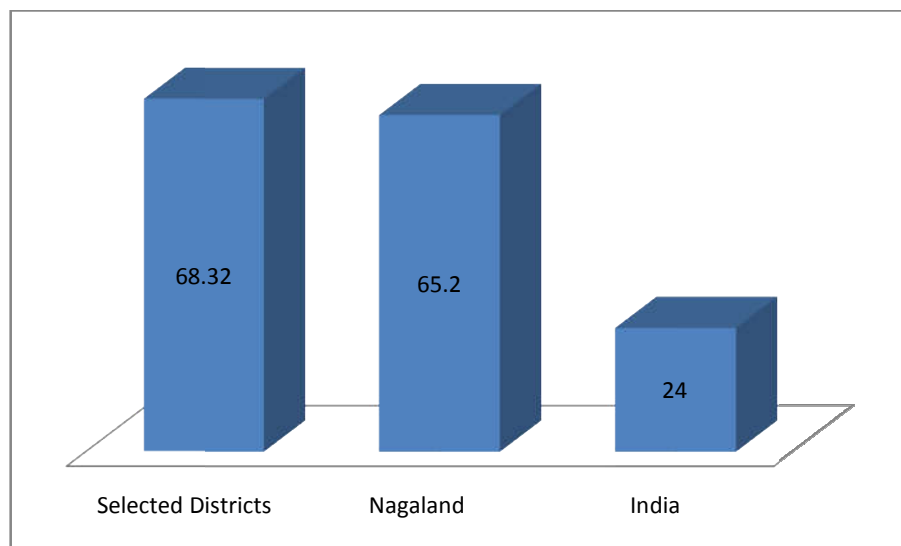
*Source: Computed from Census of India & Primary Census Abstract, Nagaland, 2011*



Table 3.2 presented below presents the distribution of labour force in India, Nagaland and the selected districts. Out of the four districts under study, Tuensang District with 76.6 percent has the largest number of cultivator population wherein 69 percent males and 84.9 percent female are found to be engaged as cultivators. Zunheboto District has the largest agricultural labour force with 15.0 percent. Out of the four selected districts, Mokokchung District has the largest labour force engaged in household industries with 3.8 percent wherein males constitute 2.3 percent and females constitute 5.7 percent. Again, of the four districts, Mokokchung has the largest number of workers engaged in different allied activities at 45.2 percent. The table clearly shows that majority of the female population are engaged as cultivators.

Table 3.1 and table 3.2 show the high percentage of women as cultivators which accounts for 65.20 percent. The figure below indicates the high percentage of the female cultivator of the selected district, Nagaland and India. The comparison shows almost equal percentage of the women cultivators in the selected districts under study with that of Nagaland state.

**Fig 3.4. Comparison of Table 3.1 and Table 3.2**



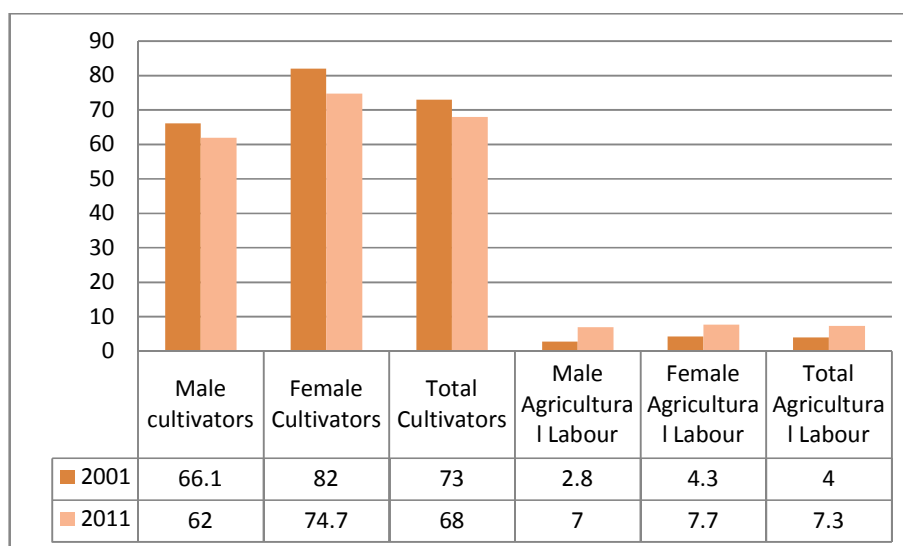
**Table 3.3. Percentage of Female Workers to total Female Population**

Percentage of Female Population				
	Total Worker	Main Workers	Marginal Workers	Other Workers
<b>Total</b>	44.7	70.1	39.9	24.4
<b>Rural</b>	52.3	70.5	27.5	14.9
<b>Urban</b>	25.9	67.8	32.2	72.5

Source: *Computed from Statistical Profile on Women Labour 2012-2013, Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour & Employment.*

The table shows a variation in the nature of work between rural and urban women. As indicated in the above table, 70.5 percent of rural women are engaged as main workers in contrast to the urban female population with 72.5 percent of whom are categorized as ‘other workers’. According to the Statistical Profile on Women Labour 2012-2013, Nagaland ranks second with 44.7 percent of female participation rate.

**Fig 3.5. Rural Workforce in Agricultural Sector in Nagaland**



Source: *Computed from Nagaland Mokokchung District Human Development Report 2013*

Data indicates a decadal decline of five percent of total cultivators on Nagaland state. Both census consistently points to the higher number of female cultivators against total male cultivators at an average of 28.6 percent. A significant decadal increase of 3.3 percent in the agricultural labour force of the rural population from 2001 to 2011 is seen in the table above. This applies to both males and females. This trend of increase agricultural labour force cannot necessarily be taken as loss of agricultural land, but rather a reflection of the monetization of the economy and subsequent increase in consumption which can be met only through wage income.

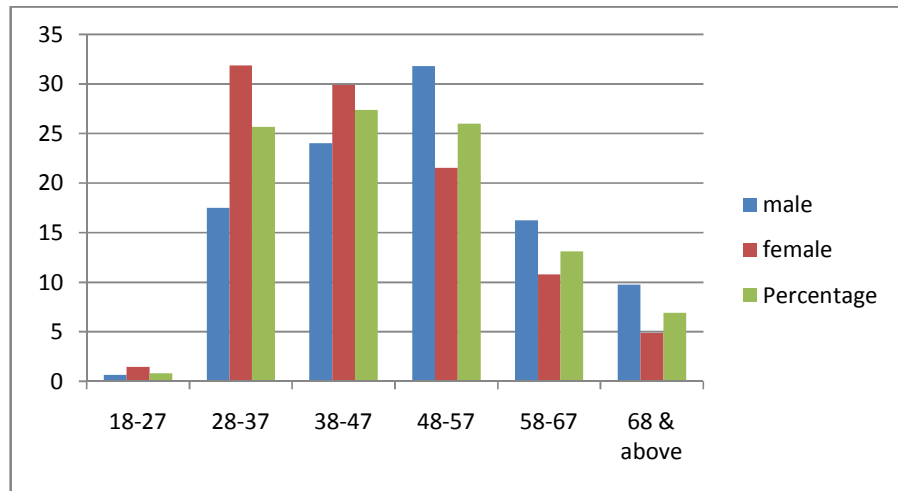
### **3.3.General Profile of the Respondents**

In order to understand the work pattern and women in agriculture in Nagaland, it is important to first gain the knowledge about the demographic factor and various characteristics such as age, marital status, education, income and so on. The general profile of the respondents also explains the target respondents.

#### **3.3.A. Age and Marital Status**

Age and marital status of the respondents are important variables in determining the decision-making, maturity of work, experiences, work participation, domestic duties and responsibilities of women in Naga society. Classification of age and marital status of the respondents are presented in the chart below:

**Fig 3.6. Classification of the respondents by age**



A total of 358 respondents were selected for the study. There were 154 males and 204 females respondents. As stated in the earlier chapter, the respondents were all farmers practicing shifting cultivation and depending on it for its livelihood. 0.8 percent of respondents were in the age group between 18-27 years, 25.69 percent between the age group of 28-37 years, while 27.37 percent of respondents were in the age group between 39-47 years. The age group between 48-57 years constituted 25.97 percent of respondents, 13.12 percent of respondents in the age group between 58-67 years and 6.93 percent in the age group of 68 years and above. The highest number of respondents fell between the age group of 48-57 years.

Out of the total respondents, 85.75 percent were married, 13 percent were unmarried and 1.11 percent was either widowed or divorced. Nuclear family system is the preferred norm in Naga society. From the figure, it is evident that all the respondents without exception belonged to nuclear families.

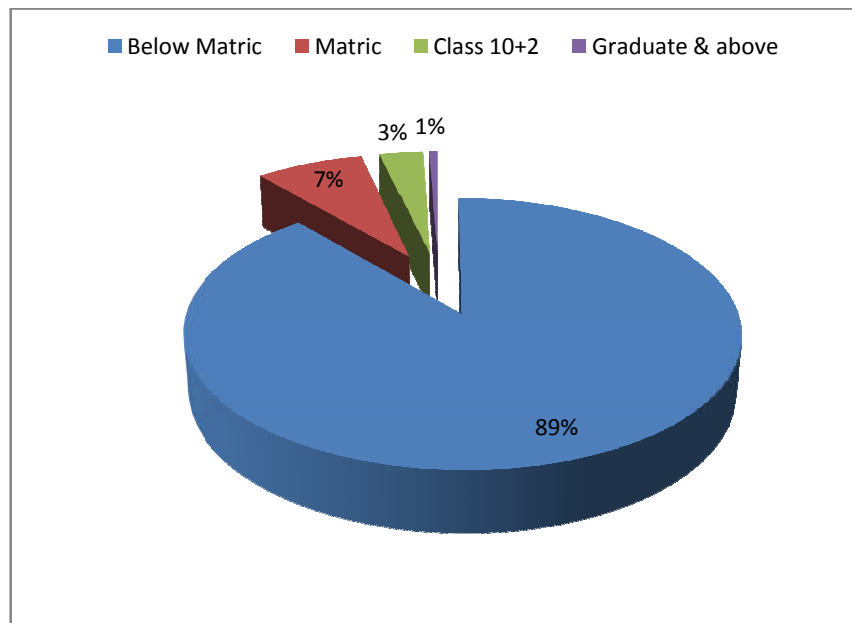
### **3.3. B. Educational level of the Respondents**

Literacy is one of the major attributes, which determines the character of social well-being of the people and their position in the society. Moreover, the issue of educational

development is basic and fundamental to human life that it differentiates levels result in disparities among people and places. According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate of the state is 79.6 percent. Out of the total literacy rate, male literates accounts for 82.75 percent and 76.11 percent accounts for female literates which shows literate gap of 6.64 percentage in Nagaland. The literacy rate in rural area is 75.3 percent while for the urban area, it is 89.6 percent. The educational qualifications of respondents were classified into four categories for the purpose of analysis. It was categorized as 'below matriculate', 'matriculate', 'class 10+2', and 'graduate and above'. Though all the respondents selected were farmers and cultivators who depended on land and agriculture for their sustenance, educational qualification was considered a significant variable to understand the dynamics especially of decision-making.

The fig 3.5 below indicates that 88.82 percent were under matriculation, 7.54 percent of the respondents were matriculate, 3.07 percent were class 10+2, and only 0.55 percent is graduates. As is clearly reflected, the educational level of majority of the respondents was quite low. In general, most educated people in the state prefer to seek employment in sectors other than agriculture. Therefore, the relatively lower level of educational qualification of the respondents is not totally unexpected.

**Fig 3.7. Educational profile of respondents**



### **3.3. C. Family composition**

Family is an important institution in Naga Society. It is considered as the basic unit of production and reproduction, consumption and procreation. The American anthropologist defines family as a “Social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction.”<sup>64</sup> According to MacIver family is a group defined by a sex relationship, sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children. Burgess and Locke define family as a group of people united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption; consisting of a single household, interacting and inter-communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister creating a common culture. Family according to M.F. Nimkoff is a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without children, or of a man or a woman

<sup>64</sup> [http://euromentor.ucdc.ro/2012/vol3n22012/en/12\\_the-social-functions-of-the-family.pdf](http://euromentor.ucdc.ro/2012/vol3n22012/en/12_the-social-functions-of-the-family.pdf) accessed on 24.09.2017

alone, with children.<sup>65</sup> Thus, family assumes an important part of the Naga people where they are tied by blood, marriage and the association of husband, wife and their children. Table 3.4 indicates the size of the selected households.

**Table 3.4. Size of the selected households**

Family size	Total percentage of households
2-4 members	45.53
5-7 members	40.50
8-10 members	13.96
Total	100

For the present study, a household with 2-4 members was considered as a small household, a household with 5-7 represented a medium size household and finally, a household with 8-10 members was considered as a large household. Table 3.4 above indicates a preponderance of small household. 45.53 percent of the households comprised of just two to four members while 40.50 percent of the household comprised of five to seven members and only 13.96 percent of the households comprise of eight to ten members.

The present study found that the size of the households did not necessarily reflect the number of family members engaged in shifting cultivation. For instance, the total

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/speech/family-meaning-characteristics-function-and-types/34966/> accessed on 24.09.2017.

number of family members maybe eight but hardly two to four family members were engaged in cultivation activities. Some reasons were because most of the children are either pursuing education or have ventured out of the village looking for a better job and other opportunities. Most of the youths and younger generation prefer to be involved in other work instead of agriculture. As working in the field requires labour and hard work, the youth prefers for other jobs that requires less manual labour. Thus, there is a large difference between the actual numbers of family members to the number of family members engaged in shifting cultivation. It also indicates that no matter the number of family members they still engage in shifting cultivation. Generally, if the household members are large, a larger plot of land is cultivated and if the family members are less, they cultivated a smaller plot of land.

### **3.4.Women and household activities**

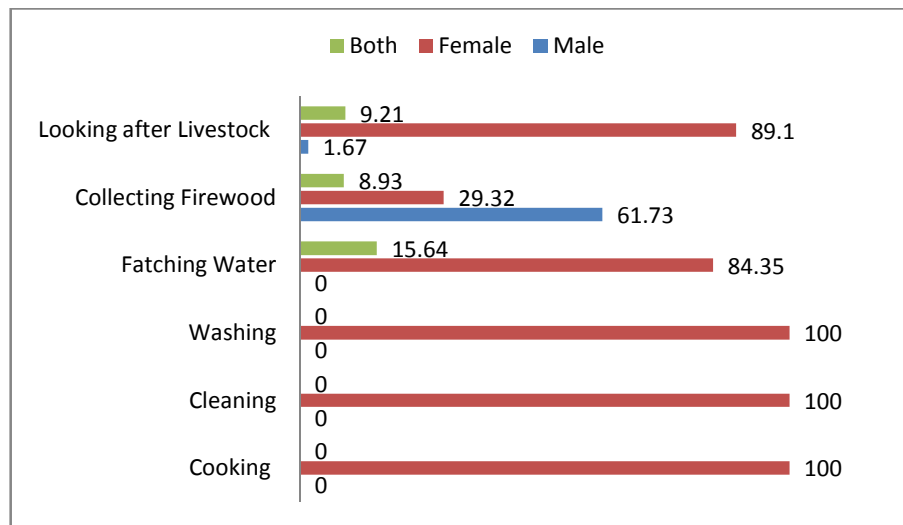
In Naga Society, taking care of the house is considered women's primary responsibility. Since early childhood, girls are socialized in such a way that their primary duty is to help the mother in daily household chores. In Naga society, roles are clearly differentiated where women are associated with the domestic arena and men assume the public face of the family. In the present study, the two terms 'family' and 'household' is used interchangeably. A household in Naga society is seen not merely as a dwelling place or sharing of common heath but also as a unit of production, sharing of responsibilities and reproduction. Family in Naga society is a training institution where from a young age, the members are taught the attitudes and behavior, roles and responsibilities associated with their gender. In Naga society, the process of learning starts from childhood. Girls are taught cleaning, cooking and washing on the other hand boys are taught to be tough, strong and adventurous and even aggressive. As they grow and start their own family, men and women are expected to follow what they were taught. The private and public gender dichotomy is quite rigid.



Naga women start their work at the crack of dawn and continue till late at night. Their daily chores commence with the making fire and preparing lunch for the whole family as the concept of breakfast is missing in rural areas and an early lunch is a general practice, besides taking care of children and feeding the domestic livestock. Their typical daily chores include all domestic activities like cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water, maintenance of the house, collecting firewood, collecting fodder for the animals and so on. It is a fact that, almost as a rule, domestic activities are usually done by the females in every household. Besides the mother, the daughters who have come of age are also involved in carrying out the household chores. In Naga society, one would not come across any female who is free or excluded from the household responsibility. The notion of masculinity and femininity are observed very seriously in Naga society. Socially ascribed roles of men and women are rigorously followed. Males performing domestic chores such as cleaning, washing etc do not receive social approval in Naga society but rather gets ridiculed.

To ascertain the exact nature of work distribution by gender the respondents in the study were queried on this question. Figure 3.7 below provides an account of the distribution of domestic work that is conventionally assigned to men and women in Naga society.

**Fig 3.8. Distribution of household chores by Gender**



Above figure clearly, gives an insight into the typical work distribution of a Naga household. Out of the total respondents, cent percent opined that cooking is the sole responsibility of the mother or the females in the house. Cooking is a prime job in all household work. Most Naga women wake up at the crack of dawn and the first thing they do is start the fire and put the pot on the fire place. Thus, begins the cooking for the whole family and along with cooking their meal, women also prepares fodders for the domestic animal. Unlike in the towns and cities where LPG gas cylinders are conveniently used for cooking, rural dwellers still extensively depend on wood fuel for cooking purposes. Most kitchens in the village have no proper ventilation or chimneys, and so the cooking chores on a wood stove can at times become very uncomfortable in the smoke-filled kitchens. Rice is the staple food of the Nagas and it is generally eaten twice a day. After cooking is done, the mother serves the food for the entire family. Eating is followed by cleaning of the utensils and sweeping the floor. These activities are considered to be strictly a female's job. Cent percent of the s also said that cleaning and washing are women's duty and since it is considered part of their work, they do it unquestionably day in and day out.

While 84.35 percent of the respondents opined that fetching of water is normally the work of a female while a mere 15.64 percent of the respondent was of the opinion that both the male and female work together or take turns to store water in the house. Most households in the selected villages do not have a proper pipeline at home so they sometimes use common village taps and reserved tanks which have been installed under various rural development schemes and also under the initiatives of Village Council. But normally, women do fetch water not only for household consumption, washing and cleaning the house but also to feed and clean the domestic animals.

The only household chores predominantly done by men in Naga society appear to be collecting firewood. 61.73 percent of the respondents responded that men usually collected firewood while 29.32 percent of the respondents responded as women collecting firewood. Only 8.93 percent respondents in the study attribute collecting firewood as the joint responsibility of both males and females.

Rearing livestock for domestic consumption is an important component for any household in the villages. Rearing livestock is important as it provides meat, milk and eggs which supplement the nutrition of the household. In addition to the dietary supplement, during celebrations, sickness or during sudden death in the household, the domestication of livestock like pig, cow and chicken comes to use because instead of buying from the market, as the same may be used according to the situation saving a huge amount of money to the affected family. While rearing and domestication of animals are very important, however, to take good care of them is also a time-consuming and difficult job. Women in most households assume the responsibility of taking care, feeding and cooking fodders for the livestock. 89.10 percent of the respondents opined that taking care and looking after the livestock was the responsibility of women, while 9.21 percent responded that both men and women took

care of the livestock. Only a mere 1.67 percent of the respondents responded that male undertook the responsibility of caring and feeding of the livestock.

Besides the regular household chores in a traditional Naga family, marketing for food and other items are also carried out mostly by the females. It is evident that the chore divided between males and females in Naga household involves both labour and time. In addition, women are engaged extensively in agriculture activities. So much so that sometimes it becomes difficult to complete the entire work in a day especially during the peak seasons of sowing and harvesting. Though the data in the above chart indicates the ceaseless nature of household chores carried out by the Naga women daily, yet, in general, household activities are not considered as 'productive' activity.

### **3.5. Role of Women in Shifting Cultivation**

The primary purpose of agriculture and being engaged in agricultural activities is to provide the essentials of life. Land is considered valuable as it is through land that agriculturist sustain their life. A farmer's life depends on land and what they cultivate on that land helps them to survive.

In the agricultural activities, both men and women do play an active part. They are each assigned different tasks, roles, and responsibilities though sometimes overlapping of agricultural activities may prevail. The range of women's task in agricultural activities is often overloaded. Women, in general, make essential contribution to the agricultural and rural economy in many developing countries and Nagaland is no exceptional. There might be slight variation from region to region or even within the region. However, the division of work between men and women are in most case similar.

Shifting cultivation involves a series of steps from cleaning of the field to harvesting. It starts from selection and clearing of land to sowing and harvesting and to post-harvesting. The present study reveals that the working pattern of women under shifting cultivation presents certain similarities in the selected villages. The division of work

between men and women is almost similar in all twelve villages under study. The significant role played by women in the system of jhum farming can be best understood by examining the various steps involved in the process of cultivation. The series of activities of jhum cultivation and work done by women are given below:

### **3.5. A. Selection and Distribution of Jhum Plot**

Before the beginning of the agricultural cycle, selection of the plot is done. Among most Nagas, Village Council administers the selection and distribution of the plot for a particular year. The chairman along with its members decides on the areas to be cultivated for the current year where normally each clan of the village has a share. Thus, the selection of the area for farming is normally not done individually but decided by the village council. As stated in chapter 2 on the distribution of land in Nagaland where most lands fall under clan land, community land and the least falls under an individual or private land. The clan land is decided and distributed by each clan elders. A village can constitute as many as six to ten clans. Each clan in the same village owns their respective clan land. The elders then decide and distribute to individual families of their own clan. In this way, no family is left without a land. The clan lands are thus an important asset and are used wisely. Every household receives a plot of land every year. Such lands are not owned by them individually but they are given the permission to use it. The payment for the use of land can be in terms of minimal 'tax' or bargain with a bag of rice harvested from the land cultivated. The amount is used for the development of their community and the goods received are used during festivals and celebration.

In Lumami village under Zunheboto district, it was observed that a day is usually selected by the council for all the villagers to work on the chief's land. As the chief owns most of the land in the village, he along with the council decides on which plot of land should be selected for shifting cultivation for that particular year and how the land

should be distributed. The distributed plot of land is used by the villagers and in return, the villagers worked in the chief's land. There is still the barter system in Lumami villages. For the use of land is never done in cash but in kind. For instance, the villagers would give the best portion of what is harvested from the owners land to the owner as a sign of gratitude and respect to the owner. After the selection and distribution of land, the villagers start to prepare for the next activity of cleaning and clearing the plot.

### **3.5. B. Slashing and Clearing of the jhum plot**

After the selection and distribution of land, the villager usually males, demarcate the plot of land for cultivation. A day is selected for the whole village to start clearing the roads and slash the grasses, bushes and shrubs. In this operation, both males and females participate. While men's involvement in shifting cultivation begins from the selection of land, activities of women commence from slashing and clearing.

The process starts from the month of December till early January. The work starts from the road till the selected plot of land is reached. The cutting of trees and shrubs is an important operation where both partners work together. Trees are cut from the stumps and are not uprooted which helps in regeneration of young forest faster. The felled trees also serve to the management of the economy of the community wherein, the trees are cut into manageable lengths and surplus sold as firewood after meeting their domestic requirements.



Plate 3.1. Cutting of trees from the stumps in Tuensang Village



Plate 3.2 Women carrying firewood from the field in Lumami Village

An interval of ten to fifteen days is allowed for the cut weeds, shrubs and tree leaves and twigs to dry. The drying of leaves, shrubs, weeds etc helps to make the fire easier.

In the process of clearing and cutting, women are involved in cooking and making tea for the community or for their family. In most villages, the males set the fire on the plot selected and the fire is controlled by females so that the fire does not go beyond the demarcated areas. It takes 3-4 hours to calm the fire and both males and females together keep vigil till the fire dies down completely in order to avoid wild fire. In burning of the jungle, the fire residues serve as organic manure for the healthy growth of paddy and vegetables to be cultivated. Contrary to the popular perception that shifting cultivation lead to pollution, deforestation and destruction of the forest, it was observed in the selected villages that it proved to have a positive impact on the soil and the forest. The trees are cut to the stump which helps in quick rejuvenation of jungle and the burning of the jungle provides manure that helps in rich harvest and also recoups the fertility of the soil. Villagers take utmost care in cutting down of trees and clearing the forest for the cultivation.

All villagers work together in slashing and clearing the roads which indicate the bond of co-operation and community feeling amongst the villager. Working together and co-operating in community work is one of the features of village life. There is a sense of homogeneity among the people.



Plate 3.3. Burning of Jhum land in Sangsamong Village



### **3.5. C. Leveling of the plot**

After the cutting, clearing and burning process is complete, leveling of the field follows. In most of the villages, it was observed that women played a predominant role in the leveling operation of the field. Using just simple tools of spade and rack, women would level the area in such a way that it becomes easier to sow the seeds. During the leveling process, the unwanted bushes and shrubs are cleaned. An important task in this operation is to ensure that the ashes are distributed evenly over the field so that the top soil has adequate and proper fertilizer for the growth of crops. It is often a difficult task as it consumes much time and energy to carry out this activity. During the operation, the farmers prefer to sleep in the field house as it saves time and energy because the distance from home to the field is often distant.



Plate 3.4. Leveling of plot for sowing in Zaphumi Village

### **3.5. D. Bunding**

Bunding is a process by which large and long logs and bamboos are used to hold the soil from erosion. The farmers prepare the land by making bunds along the contours.

Bunds are usually made of bamboos and trunk of trees and sometimes paste of mud is used. The sole purpose of bunding is to avoid soil erosion and run off of water from the field. In some selected villages, bunding as such were not used, instead, crops like maize (*Menti* in Ao dialect), cucumber (*Lishakthi* in Lotha dialect) and tapioca (*Achuchu* in Sumi dialect) etc were grown in between the paddy so as to prevent soil erosion. Bunding operation is done by both males and females as it requires strength and it cannot be done by a single person. The bunding process itself takes over a week if the plot of land is large.



Plate 3.5. Bunding of Jhum land in Lazami Village

### **3.5. E. Construction of Farm House**

Alongside the bunding activity, construction of a rudimentary farm house is a must. The farm house which is usually a small hut is made using locally available resources like bamboo, wood, thatch etc though sometimes CGI sheets roofing is also used. Apart from using it for shelter from the elements of nature, it is used as a kitchen too for cooking food for the farmers. Here women are seen as doing both the productive and

reproductive work. Besides, constructing the house, they also cook food which shows that their domestic chore goes beyond time and space. Furthermore, given the usually long distance from the village to the fields many farmers prefer to sleep in the farm house in order to save time and energy, particularly during the peak farming season.



Plate 3.6. A farm house in a Jhum field in Tsadang Village

### **3.5. F. Selection of seeds**

One of the most important aspects of farming is seed selection. Selection of seeds is generally performed by women. It may be noted that in Naga Society, the task of seed preservation falls on the females generally. The best quality seeds are preserved based on traditional knowledge. It is therefore not surprising that seed selection is also performed by women. There are different types of paddy and rural women have great traditional knowledge of the quality of paddies, like which rice is better for household consumption, which paddy can be stored for a longer period and also which paddy has more economic value. They also carefully selected those seeds which are less eaten by rodents or ants, which rice is soft and have aroma etc. Selections of seeds are selected not only for paddy but for other additional crops as well. In shifting cultivation, mixed



cropping is practiced where a variety of food crops are grown such as cereals, spices, oil seeds, pulses, vegetables etc. In fact, the present study found that as many as 15 to 20 different types of crops are concomitantly grown. It is said that women can tell a good seed by simply touching and smelling it.



Plate 3.7. Preservation of seeds above the fire place in Rotomi Village

### **3.5.G. Sowing of seed**

The selection of seeds is followed by its sowing. It is a labour intensive task since the task is done manually without the use of machinery or animal. The seeds are collected in a sling bag tied around the waist. With the help of spade, the person digs a hole in the ground and sows the seed systematically till they reach the end of the plot. While men do the digging and sowing of seeds, women follow the men and cover the hole with soil using a rack or spade. Thus, one finds harmonious division of work in the task. During this operation, women would sing songs that energize as well as encourage both men and women to carry on with their work. In most villages under study, it was observed

that this is one of the most important operation where both men and women equally take part.



Plate 3.8. Men sowing the seeds & Women covering the seeds with soil in Sumi Setsü Village, Zunheboto District

Most Naga tribes have a festival connecting the sowing of the seeds. The main reason for such festival was to pray for healthy germination of seeds that will result in bounty harvest. The festivals associated with agriculture are not only practiced among the Nagas, but other tribes in the north east of India also observe festivals associated with the sowing of seeds. For instance, in Arunachal Pradesh, the tribal people observe *Solung* festival for prosperity and harvest. The festival centers on invoking blessing for healthy germination of seeds for bountiful harvest. The main festivals of the Naga tribes associated with shifting cultivation are given in the table below:

**Table 3.5 Major Festivals of Nagaland**

<b>Sl.No</b>	<b>Naga Tribes</b>	<b>Name of the Major Festivals</b>
1	Angami	Sekrenyi
2	Ao	Moatsü
3	Chakhesang	Suhkruhnye
4	Chang	Noknyu Lum
5	Kachari	Bishu
6	Khamniungan	Toskum
7	Konyak	Aoleang Monyu
8	Kuki	Mimkut
9	Lotha	Tokhü Emong
10	Phom	Monyu
11	Pochury	Yemshe
12	Rengma	Ngada
13	Rongmei	Chakaan Gaan Ngai
14	Sangtam	Among Mong
15	Sumi	Tuluni
16	Yimchunger	Metumiu
17	Zeliang	Chaga Gadi

### **3.5. H. Cutting of weeds**

Growth of weeds is an unwanted intrusion in the jhum process, which necessitates regular weeding. Most weeding is carried out by women. This operation requires day to day clearing from sowing of seeds till the time of harvest. Sickle and hoe are used during the process. This requires visiting the field every day to check on the proper growth of crops and check that the weeds do not overtake and destroy the crops. Though this chore requires less physical strength yet it is back breaking job as it requires hours and hours of bending and working.

### **3.5. I. Harvesting and Thrashing**

The entire field operations culminate in the reaping of ripened grains. Division of work on the basis of gender is observed during this process. There are variations among the district selected for the study. In Zunheboto district, reaping was the job of menfolk while the gathering of grains is done mostly by women. During the operation, men use sickle to cut the string of paddy. While the men do the cutting, women thrash the paddy in the basket. They would hold the bundle of grains and thrash it in a basket made of bamboo called *Amuto* (Sumi Dialect). After collecting the grains in the basket, women carry it to the hut. While in Wokha and Mokokchung District, there was no such division. So reaping and gathering of the grains are performed by both males and females. However, these days, the work is done according to convenience and the number of males and females involved in it. The process of harvesting and thrashing is a venture of both men and women.





Plate 3.9. Harvesting of paddy in Lumami Village



Plate 3.10. Thrashing the grains in bamboo basket (*Amuto*) in Lumami village

Cleaning and winnowing follow which is done primarily by women folk again. After separating the empty chaff from the heavy grain, the grains are again stored in the basket. Most of the tribes in Nagaland celebrate the harvest festival. The thanks giving festival such as *Tokhu Emong* in Lotha and *Ahuna* in Sumi are post-harvest celebration.



In the bygone days, it was celebrated with offering to the spirits and it lasted for over a week to ten days. However, in contemporary times, the celebratory gap has scaled down to just one to three days depending on the tribe. And instead of offering to the spirits, prayer for thanksgiving is performed.



Plate 3.11. Separating the empty chaff from the heavy grain

After threshing the paddy in the basket, women carry the basket on their heads and place it near the farm house on a mat. They fill the basket with paddy and hold it high enough while another winnow the paddy. In this way, they separated the empty chaff from the paddy. After which the paddy is stored in the farm house.

### **3.5.J. Storing and husking**

After cutting and gathering of grain, the harvested paddy needs to be stored properly. This job is done by men with the help of womenfolk. Men would carry the paddy on their head and take it to the farm house where it is stored for few days. Thereafter, both men and women would traditionally carry the baskets of grain on their head and carry

till their home. Today, however, transfer of paddy from farm to village gets done with transporting vehicles.



Plate 3.12. Storing Paddy in the farm house

For converting the paddy to edible rice, husking is done. In the olden days, it was done manually by pouring the grain in a big mortar (*tsumo*) made from wood. This activity was solely done by women alone. However, today most villages have rice mills to do the husking.

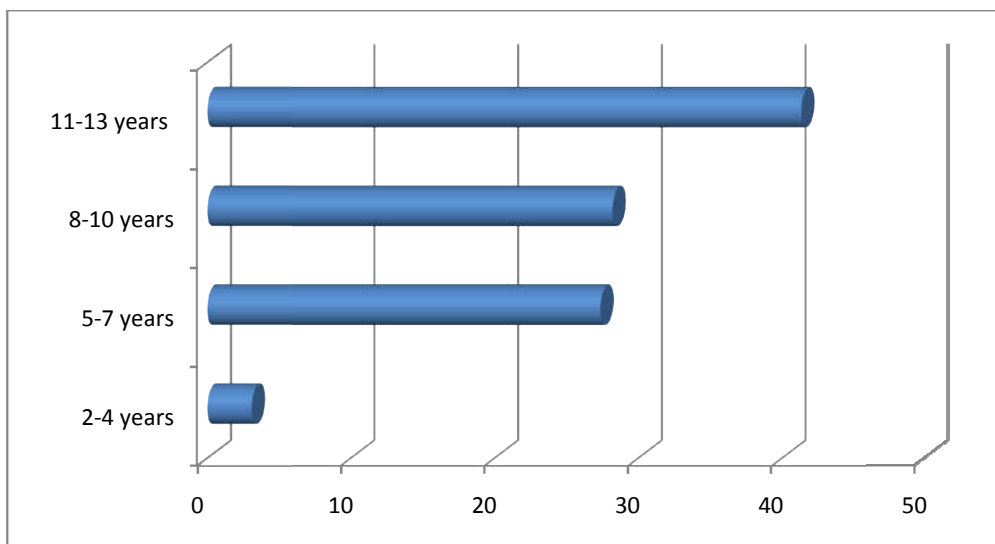


Plate 5.13 Mortar made from wood used during old days in Lazami village

### 3.5.K. Land Fallow

Normally, the same plot of land is used only for two seasons. However, the yield in the second year is considered to be of inferior quality. Therefore, that plot is abandoned and kept fallow for a number of years.

**Fig 3.9. Land fallow**



The fig 3.7 above depicts the years the land is kept fallow. 3.07 percent of respondents responded that land fallow period was for 2-4 years while 27.37 percent respondents said the land is kept fallow for 5-7 year. 28.21 percent respondents responded for 8-10

years period and 41.43 percent responded as keeping the land fallow for 11-13 years. The selected villages for the study reveal that majority of the villages kept the land fallow for a longer period. The abandoned land is left for natural regeneration. After the rejuvenation of the natural resources, the land is ready to be used. From the present study, it was found that the average of land fallow was 9.3 years.

The series of activities performed during shifting cultivation is important. Each and every step helps to produce rich harvest at the end. Both men and women performed their traditionally assigned tasks. The division of work between them has been carrying on for generations. During the earlier days, the distribution of work was strictly followed. Even the slightest change was considered as a bad omen. However, these days it has become flexible and the activities are done according to convenience.

**Table 3.6. Steps involved in shifting cultivation by Gender**

Steps involved	District wise												Total percentage		
	Mokokchung			Wokha			Tuensang			Zunheboto					
	M %	F %	B %	M %	F %	B %	M %	F %	B %	M %	F %	B %	M %	F %	B %
Selection of Jhum site	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-
Distribution of Jhum plot	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-
Demarcation of individual land	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-
Slashing	42.86	-	57.14	6.76	-	93.24	-	12.28	87.72	-	62	38	9.78	21.23	68.99
Burning	60	-	40	27.03	6.76	66.22	63.16	-	36.84	10	-	85	41.62	1.40	67.04
Cutting down of trees	100	-	-	56.76	-	43.24	100	-	-	91	-	9	88.55	-	11.45
Leveling the field	-	100	-	-	93.24	6.76	-	-	100	-	100	-	-	66.76	33.24
Bunding	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100
Construction of field hut	71.43	-	28.57	33.78	-	66.22	72.81	-	27.19	67	-	33	62.85	-	37.15
Crop selection	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-
Sowing of seeds	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100
Cutting of weeds	-	100	-	-	97.30	2.70	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	99.44	0.56
Harvesting	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	100
Threshing	-	-	100	-	79.73	20.27	-	-	100	-	100	-	-	44.41	55.59
Carrying the paddy to the field house	-	-	100	-	-	100	24.56	-	75.44	44	-	56	20.11	-	79.89
Transporting to home	-	-	100	32.43	-	67.57	24.56	-	75.44	44	-	56	26.82	-	73.18
Storing	-	-	100	-	63.51	36.49	-	-	100	7	-	93	1.96	13.13	84.92

**M = Male, F = Female, B = Both**

The following table 3.6 presents the steps involved in shifting cultivation. Out of the total respondents, cent percent respondent as men being the sole participant in the selection of jhum site, distribution and demarcation of jhum plot. In each district, it shows similar pattern of men being the main decision maker relating to the use and distribution of land. Slashing and burning of the jhum field were jointly done by men and women. 88.54 percent of the respondents said it was men who took the charge of cutting down of trees while 11. 45 percent respondent as both men and women work together. The operation relating to leveling of the field shows that 66.75 percent of work is done by women while 33. 24 percent is done by both men and women while it was 100 percent involvement of men and women relating to bunding. 62.84 percent of the respondents responded as men playing the lead role in the construction of the field hut while 37.15 percent responded that both males and females worked together during the construction of the field house. An important division which is one of the most important operations in shifting cultivation is the selection of seeds which is solely in the hands of Naga women. The table shows 100 percent of respondents responded that women took the responsibility of selection of seeds. Sowing of seeds is a task associated with both men and women, while responsibility for cutting and clearing of weed was taken up mostly by women with 99.44 percent. Harvesting and threshing of grains were done together and carrying of paddy, transporting the paddy to home and storing is also carried out jointly by both men and women.

Thus, the gender division of work between genders during the shifting cultivation operation shows measurable work of women. The involvement of women in agriculture is an important factor in understanding their position and status in the society and also within the household. Their involvement also shows their contribution to the economy.

The following chapter will deal with the multiple ways in which women, through their agricultural activities manage the resource in Naga society.

**CHAPTER IV**

**WOMEN AND RESOURCE**

**MANAGEMENT**



#### 4.1. Introduction

Women in tribal societies, besides their multiple roles as homemakers, wives, mothers and farmers are also effective managers of resources. Rural Naga society is no exception. Resources can be soil, water, forest, trees, plants etc found in abundance which is used by humans to satisfy their needs including food and other materials for construction. Resource is defined as wealth, natural products, goods, or natural means available in a country or a community.<sup>66</sup> It is any elements found in the environment that are in a natural state, which is not created by the people and that is used for survival. Resource management, on the other hand, can be understood in simple terms as the usage of resources by humans for their needs and wants without damaging the resources. Resource management is the skillful control of resources which ensure that they are used economically and with forethought. It includes those activities which are designed to govern the use of land, forests, the atmosphere, water and mineral resources in a given environment, taking into account environmental constraints, social, economic and political implications, technological inventions, national policy and possible future use.<sup>67</sup> In the process of using the resources, rural people especially women make it a point to manage efficiently.

In the shifting cultivation process, besides growing of paddy, mixed cropping is another important activity whereby most women take the responsibility of planning, planting and managing the crops. Thereof, such multiple cropping help women to integrate different food varieties in their diet which promote food nutrition to the family. Natural resources for farmers in Nagaland are an asset to their livelihood.

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<sup>66</sup> Tiani Anne Marie (2001), *The place of Rural Women in the Management of Forest Resources* in Colfer Carol J Pierce and Yvonne People *Managing Forests –The Link between Human Well- Being and Sustainability*, p- 75

<sup>67</sup> Mark Matsa and Matsa Winniefridah (2010), *Resource Management and the Rural Landscape in Africa*, p-154

Crops that are cultivated in the field and the resources found adjacent to the land are of great imperative to most rural households. Needs and requirements of the households are rendered by the resources found naturally in the forest as well.

Natural resources are any material from the natural environment that can be used by people for support and sustenance of life with its ecological value and manifold uses. And natural resource management means the management of resources such as water, land, forest, food/vegetable, plants and animals, with particular focus on how management affects the quality of life for both present and future generations.<sup>68</sup>

Women's management of resources is noteworthy in the state of Nagaland. Even a seemingly insignificant natural resource is well managed by women. There is no such thing as a waste as all products are used in one way or the other. For instance, after the harvesting of paddy, the straws are used for making mats and for burning purpose; the husk is used as fodder for the animals etc. Naturally found resource for Naga women is wealth, food and life. It provides the basic requirements needed on a daily basis. Living in close proximity to the forest and depending on agriculture for thousands of years has created an intrinsic relationship between women and nature.

As an agricultural society, vast population in Nagaland depends on natural resources for subsistence. Being a biodiversity hotspot, Nagaland has rich varieties of natural resources such as bamboo that are used for household consumption, for construction of houses, basket making etc. Different varieties of wild mushrooms, wild leaves and fruits, honey comb, varieties of edible insects etc adds to family nutrition besides being marketed to augment family income.

Subsistence means the resources that are necessary for survival- food, water and shelter while subsistence agriculture is the self-sufficient farming system where farmers grow

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<sup>68</sup> Kikhi Chozule and Kedilezo Kikhi (2011) *The Role of Women in Natural Resource Management*, p-3

enough food to feed the family requirements. According to World Bank (2002), more than 1.6 billion people depend to varying degrees on forest for their livelihood. Out of this 60 million people are almost wholly dependent on forest and 350 million people live within or adjacent to dense forest for subsistence and income. In developing countries 1.2 billion people rely on agro forestry to sustain forestry to sustain agricultural productivity to generate income.<sup>69</sup>

There are various definitions on subsistence economy and farming, Barnett definition gives a clear idea. According to him, subsistence farming means “farming and associated activities which together form a livelihood strategy where the main output is consumed directly, where there are if any purchased inputs and where only minor proportion of output is marketed”.<sup>70</sup>

Shifting cultivation despite numerous debates on the negative impact on environment has proved to be one of the most suitable and durable agricultural practice in the state as it provides not only food security but because of its mixed cropping, it has helped farmers to sustain their lives. The crops such as beans, gourds, chilly, tomato, eggplant, cherry tomato etc which are the daily diet of the Nagas are grown in plenty. In addition to meeting their daily diet, the crops are sold in the local market that adds to their economy.

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid*, p- 4

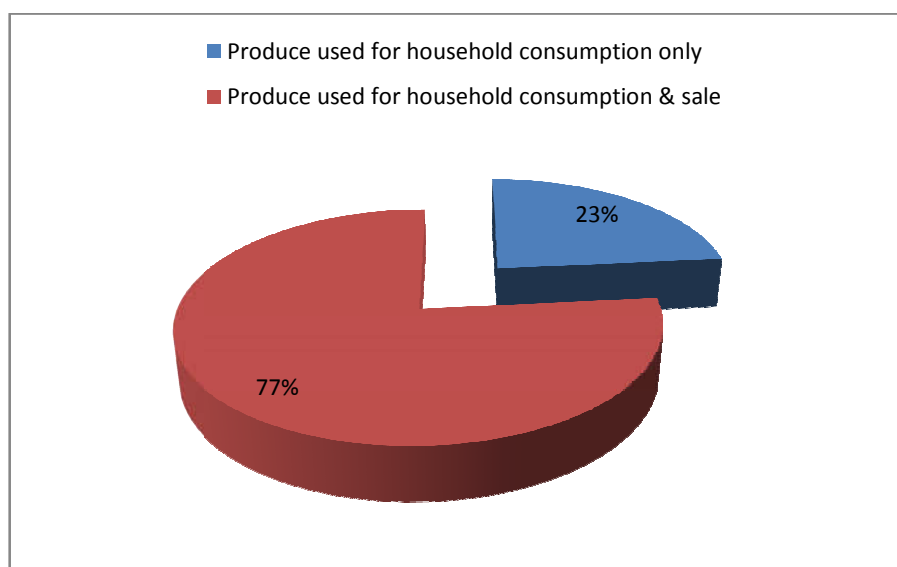
<sup>70</sup> John F. Morton (2007), *The Impact of Climate Change on Smallholder and Subsistence Agriculture*, p- 19681.



Plate 4.1. Mix cropping in jhum field, Ungma Village

The present study reveals that most of the farmers in the selected villages beside the fulfillment of daily requirements, the surplus are sold in the local market. Products such as different varieties of leaves, wild mushrooms, bamboo shoots, edible insects, honey bee and honey comb which are cultivated or gathered from the forests are sold in the local market. Fig 4.1 below shows the number of households who collect, gather and cultivate crops and sell those products. 23 percent of respondents responded as using the produce from shifting cultivation land and forest products only for consumption. However, majority i.e. 77 percent of the respondents said they depended on shifting cultivation and forest produce for consumption as well as for sale of the products in the market.

**Fig 4.1. Resource usage among respondents**



Surplus of the products that are sold in the local market is purchased primarily by the urban dwellers. It is clear therefore that majority of the farmers in Nagaland depend on the forest products and crops cultivated not only for the household consumption but also for monetary security.

**Fig 4.2 Marketing of Surplus**

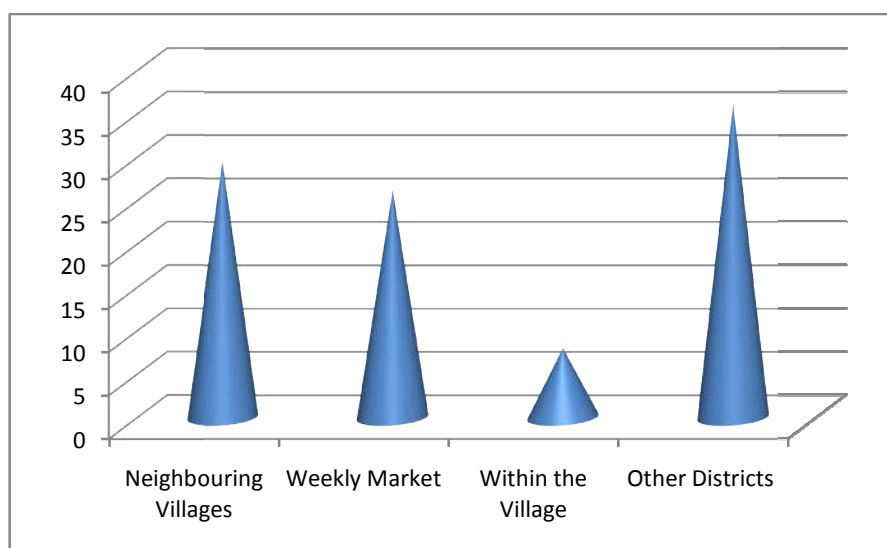


Fig 4.2 shows 36.13 percent of respondents marketed the products to other districts mainly Kohima the capital city and Dimapur, which is the commercial hub of the state.

Being urban areas, the two cities are populated with government employees, businessmen, employees in private institutions and other commercial enterprises. Therefore they largely depend on the supply of local food products from the rural areas. 29.56 percent of the respondents answered that they sold in the neighboring villages while 26.27 percent sold the products at the weekly market which is common in many districts. For example, in Mokokchung town, the ‘watsü Mungdang’ which is the apex Women’s Organization of the Ao Women, organizes a weekly bazaar every Wednesday, which provides an opportunity for rural women, not only from within the district, but even from neighboring districts like Longleng, Wokha, Zunheboto and Tuensang to market their agricultural products and other locally produced items. In this bazaar, without exception, all the vendors are women. In Tuensang town, farmers from the neighboring villages such as Tuensang village and Tsadang village sold their products such as cultivated vegetables and forest produce on weekly Tuesday market. A minimal percentage of 8.2 percent of the respondents responded that they sell their produce within the village itself.



Plate 4.2 Wednesday market in Mokokchung town

#### 4.2. Women's relation with Forest

Forest is an essential part of lives of millions of people. In India, the dependency on forest is estimated to be 350-400 million persons. It includes edibles leaves, wild fruits, roots, plant that has medicinal values, firewood, and wood for construction, fodders etc. The livelihood of the people is sustained through the resources collected and utilized by them. A study on Non -Timber Forest Product (NTFP) use in North East India shows that the tribal communities use 343 NTFPs for diverse purposes like medicinal (163 species), edible fruits (75 species) and vegetables (65 species).<sup>71</sup>

Forest is also essential part of the lives of Naga people whereby it defines the base of their social, cultural and economic life. Naga tribes consider forest as sacred and respect nature. Folksong and folktale of the Nagas remind how Naga people's life revolves around nature and forest. It symbolizes their relations with the forest. Naga people believe that forests are guarded by spirits and it is their obligation to respect, use and preserve it. The relation between the Nagas and nature are a complex whole. This is clearly exemplified through folktale/legends/ songs which are passed on orally to the people. Naga ways of understanding reality and the world is always guided by their traditional norms. They hold together the past and the present, the spiritual and secular together.

The sacred and profane are two central principles of their beliefs system that are linked together. The sacred embodies gods, spirit and belief that have sacred character while the profane has the capacity to contaminate the sacred. In order to make the profane sacred, sacrifice and rituals are followed. By performing such sacrifice and rituals, the profane becomes sacred again. The principle of sacred and profane provides with a

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<sup>71</sup> Prasad Nayak Bhibhu et. al ,*Livelihood of local communities and forest degradation in India: issues for REDD*. The energy and resource institute, p- 5

model of such as good and evil, clean and dirty. The belief in the complexity of the sacred and profane still continues in the socio-cultural life of the Nagas. For instance, among the Ao Naga of Longkhum village, it was believed that certain sacred stones had the ability to move at will. The sacred stones would wander about in the fields and bless the paddy. Legend has it that a long time ago, there was a man who constructed his house adjacent to a sacred stone. One day the man accidentally hit his toe on the stone. The man was in a rage and decided to move it. However, despite several attempts, he failed to do so. That night, he had a dream where the sacred stone came and told him *“how dare you uproot me from my place”* and threatened to kill him if he tried to move the stone. The man woke up terrified from his sleep and destroyed his home. Thereafter, he made some sacrifices and promised the sacred stone that he would never bother it again. That purported stone still exists today in Longkhum village and the people believe that it continues to produce baby stones. The villagers believed that any attempt to move or disturb the sacred stone will result in heavy rainfall and storm in the village. That is the reason why even today, the villagers believe that the stone has life in it. The complexities of such stories reveal how forest and its resources are interlinked to the cultural belief of the people and play a significant role in their interface with their natural environment.

Natural resource found in the forest is used to satisfy the needs and requirements of human. For villagers of the state, forest is a complex whole. Soil, trees, bushes and shrubs, plants etc are essential elements that help the Naga people to survive. Forest contributes to all aspects of life of the Nagas as it provides food, fuel, medicine, and materials for construction etc. For men, forest is seen as a place to hunt, fish and collect timbers for construction and commercial purposes. Women’s interest lies in collecting and gathering food for the family. Their concepts are small as their priority lies greatly



in feeding the family and collecting fodder for domestic animals. In India alone, it is estimated that over 50 million people are dependent on NTFPs for their subsistence and cash income.<sup>72</sup>

The importance of forest products has been recognized widely in many countries where majority is maintained by women. Research in North East Tanzania shows the consumption of leafy vegetables collected by women has improved children health. In Mexico and Bolivia the use of forest products has helped reduce poverty.<sup>73</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, rural Naga women depend on forest produce which adds to the economy and also for the nutrition of the family. In addition, they also search and collect materials for weaving, basket making and dyeing. Naga women often have substantial knowledge on the identification of nutritious food for the family household and those products that can be converted into cash.

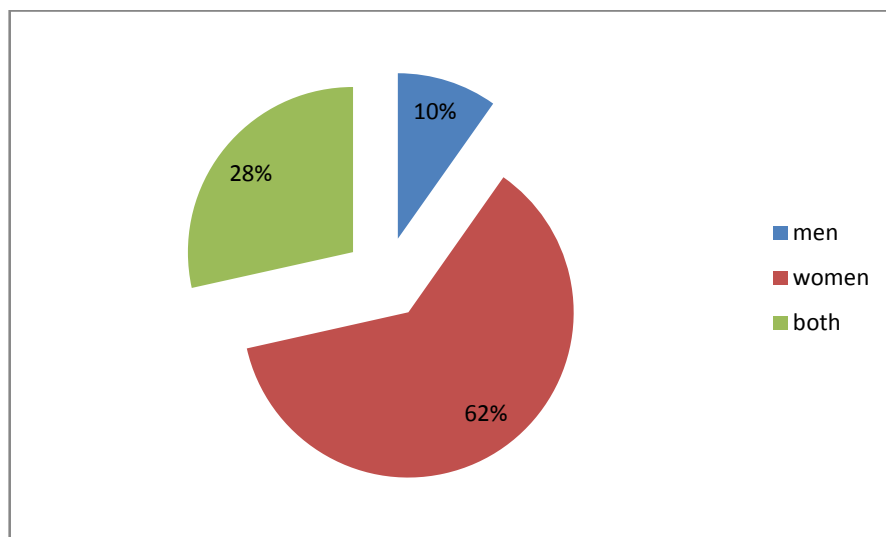
Their concern to preserve and conserve the forest resources are of utmost importance to them. Though they forge extensively from the forest, they make it a point not to disturb or harm it. Ensuring the stability of the environment and forest is greatly followed by women. In the process of forging and gathering, women collect only what they require or how much they need and leave the rest of the vegetation to regenerate for the next harvest. While carrying on the task, they clear the weeds which help to conserve the resources and rejuvenate the plants. Such activities conserve not only the resource but also ensure continued food security to the family. As they devote more time than men in collecting forest produce there is always a closer relation between women and forest. The forest is thus a valuable asset to Naga women.

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<sup>72</sup>.Zingkhai G Hormila, (1993), Forest produces as a source of Livelihood among Naga women, p-39.

<sup>73</sup> *Forest, Food Security and Gender: Linkage, Disparities and priorities for action*(2013), FAO, p-3

**Fig 4.3. Collection of forest resources by Gender**



The fig 4.3 shows that 62 percent of the respondents responded that women are the main collectors of forest resources such as mushroom, honey and honey comb, medicinal plants and herbs, fruits and berries, eatable leaves etc. While 28 percent opined that both men and women are responsible for the collection of the resources. This clearly indicates that Naga women in rural areas maintained close affinity with forest and forest products which have a direct bearing on the conservation of biodiversity.

#### **4.3. Women, Biodiversity and environmental ethics**

Biodiversity is defined as the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems.<sup>74</sup> Nagaland is considered to be one among the 12 mega biodiversity centers of the world and one of the eighteenth recognized Hotspot of the world. The state is described to be rich in biodiversity – its richness of flora and fauna which has been

<sup>74</sup> Gaston J Kevin and John I Spicer (2004), *Biodiversity an Introduction*, p-4

preserved and used for centuries. The practice of shifting cultivation to a great extent has been a major factor in preserving the biodiversity of Nagaland. Shifting cultivation helps to grow varieties of crop alongside the major crop of the people which is paddy. For instance, after the first year of cultivation in a jhum plot, the second year is used only for cultivation of crops such as maize, soya, sesame, job's tears, tapioca etc. In this way, the fertility of the soil is maintained and the rejuvenation of the jungle becomes desirable.

As majority of the population depend on natural resources, maintenances and preservation of resources becomes important. Moreover, the spiritual and religious connotations associated with the forests created an affinity between nature and human thereby indirectly aiding in the conservation of the biodiversity for centuries.

The Naga people believed in the adverse cosmic causes of natural phenomena like drought, landslide, earthquake, famine etc which are thought to be brought on by anthropogenic actions. They, therefore, believed in living harmoniously with nature. Activities relating to sacrifices, ceremonies and rituals emphasized the close relation with the nature. For instance, in Longsa village under Wokha district, the people still believed that certain areas of the forest are taboo. If a tree is cut down or a fruit is plucked from it, it is believed that sickness or death may befall that person. If the defaulter is a pregnant woman, the baby would be born as deformed. Such areas are therefore never ventured into and by default, become a reserved forest. Or in Lazami village under Zunheboto district, an area called *Ayeghi Kixi* (cursed land) exists. The land is believed to be the dwelling place of malevolent spirit and any activity on the land was considered to bring bad omen to the family. As such, the land is kept unused and any person who interferes meets a fatal death. Such and many more religious beliefs have in some way helped in preserving and managing forest and its biodiversity. In

other words, indigenous belief system has played a significant role in biodiversity conservation.

Nature provides food to the people living in the village. Forest, rivers, streams, plants of medicinal values, fruits, etc provides them with all the essential requirements such that Naga people feel obliged to preserve and maintain biodiversity through strong environmental ethics. Environmental ethics is a principle that regards the way human, animals and natural environment interact. It is the principle of morality of doing what is right and wrong. Environmental ethics tries to find out the difference between human action and wild world. It identifies the moral obligation human have over nature and environment.

Nagaland is a state blessed with rich biodiversity and natural resources. For centuries Naga people have benefitted from the environment and its surroundings. For the Naga people, environment is not just what it benefits; it is also culturally and spiritually connected. Earth is treated as a mother, the sky as father. This concept of the duality of nature, which is at the center of the Nagas worldview, is fundamental to how Nagas treat nature.<sup>75</sup> It is held sacred by them. Their conviction about the physical environment makes them understand that there are forces that cannot be controlled by humans. And in order to bring balance to the environment rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices were performed. They believe that nature is greater and such thoughts and actions define their close relation with nature and environment. It was important to be in balance and live in harmony with the environment lest drought, famine, landslide and other natural calamities occur. For instance, among the Konyak tribes, when the forest is cleared and burnt for shifting cultivation, the Lord of Forest called *Kanshi* becomes offended because their action alters the balance of nature. So, sacrificial rituals are

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<sup>75</sup> Nienu V(2015) *Naga Cultural Milieu An Adaptation to Mountain Ecosystem*, p-37

performed to avoid consequences. Such related folktales describe the concept of nature and the intimate connection of the way of life of the Naga people.

Their contact with nature is so close that some villages are even named after certain rivers, stones or groves. For instance, *Aizüto* village under Zunheboto District is named after “a mountain Spring”, *Longkhum* village under Mokokchung District stands for “village of many stones” and *chuchuyimlang* is named after thin bamboo. This shows that the people of Nagaland have been maintaining such connectivity since time immemorial.

There is manifold connection of Naga women with nature. Essential ecofeminist often makes use of an analogy between earth and female body. Vandana Shiva makes an explicit link between female and nature and argues that women are an integral part of nature. She claims that women are closer to nature because nature is seen as feminine in the Hindu tradition whilst cultural eco-feminist identifies a powerful and positive link with nature through female reproductive functions. So, although both men and women in Nagaland use various products found in the forest, women are seen as more connected. The present study clearly shows distinct roles of men and women in the agricultural activities as well as in the use of natural resources. While the socially constructed role has been a factor whereby the division of labour is strictly followed, it is visible that such division has given women a greater knowledge and understanding towards nature and its resources. Women’s focus on sustainability of livelihood has thus been a major factor in the preservation of biodiversity.

When one discusses about natural resource management and forest protection, women are in the forefront protecting and preserving the resources. Naga women with their skills and knowledge have handled the land, rivers, flora and fauna. They have their own system and ways to sustain the resources which for them is the most important

basis of survival. Women's daily task and activities guide them to protect and conserve the biodiversity. This partnership between women and diversity has kept the world fed through history, at the present time, and will continue to feed the world in the future.<sup>76</sup>

As the primary gatherers and collectors of natural forest products, they are also more exposed to environmental problems. Ecofeminist argues that the current global environmental crisis is a predictable outcome of patriarchal culture.<sup>77</sup> Women and nature are exploited by the patriarchal force. To bring about the stability of the environment is therefore important to establish a gender equitable society.

In many parts of the world, the issues relating to environmental destruction have been a current debate. Human activities have affected the planet earth leading to global warming, pollution, climate change and degradation of forest. In developing state like Nagaland, there has been change in the climate over the decade which has disturbed the farmer. One farmer in the present study opined that the change in environment has made it impossible to predict the weather. The rainfall pattern has changed and the temperature has increased leading to decrease in paddy. Another villager said there has been a decrease in wild fruit and plant varieties causing a serious threat to their livelihood. The environmental change has also posed serious threat to womenfolk as most of them depend on resources found in the forest. Women work in the field and their reliance on natural resources for their daily use is at risk.

Social Eco-Feminists argues that as both women and nature have been subjected by a society dominated by men, women are in a better position than men to understand nature and its subordination by patriarchal force. Women's caring roles helps them to be able to share with nature the feeling of being dominated.

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<sup>76</sup> Shiva Vandana (2011)*Staying Alive- Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, p-xii

<sup>77</sup> Mukherjee Ranjeeta (1997), *Eco-feminism: Role of Women in Environmental Governance and Management*, p-3

With the changing environment, women's dependency on their environment is gradually being threatened. Men also play a crucial role however they face fewer constraints than women. Men are more likely to have access to productive resources such as land and extension services however women are more likely to fall short of access to land and other stocks. It will destroy their food security and their close proximity to the environment. Naga people still consider environment as a guiding principle for their daily activities. To destroy and bring an imbalance to the environment will break the chain of relation they have with the environment for millennia and will raise the danger of their very survival.

#### **4.4. Women and seed**

Seed is the most important part of any cultivation process. A good seed provides a good harvest. The role played by Naga women in preserving the seeds for the future is noteworthy. Every farmer hopes for rich harvest every year and for obtaining a rich harvest it requires a good seed. The primary process of storing the seeds is to save it for the next season. Sometimes, the seeds stored are used for more than one season. These seeds are carefully selected by women based on their traditional knowledge. The process of seed preservation and selection is a complex process wherein women have to keep in mind many minute details lest they face a poor harvest. Traditionally, the paddy seeds are selected right after the harvest. Before selecting the seeds, women usually study the weight of the stalk by lifting a bunch of grain and if the stalk of grains is heavy, it was considered to be a healthy seed that could be used for the next season. The seeds are then separated from the grains that would be used for consumption. The selected seeds are sundried and are later stored in a bamboo basket and kept in the granary. While storing the grain, careful precaution is taken from pests and rodents. Seed selection and preservation process require complex steps which are almost

exclusively carried out by women in Naga society. The active role in selecting and preserving the seeds helps them to store for the future. The traditional techniques of seed preservation are depicted pictorially below



Plate 4.3. Drying of seeds under the sun



Plate 4.4. Drying of seed near the fireplace



Plate 4.5. Seed preservation method in hollow dried gourd



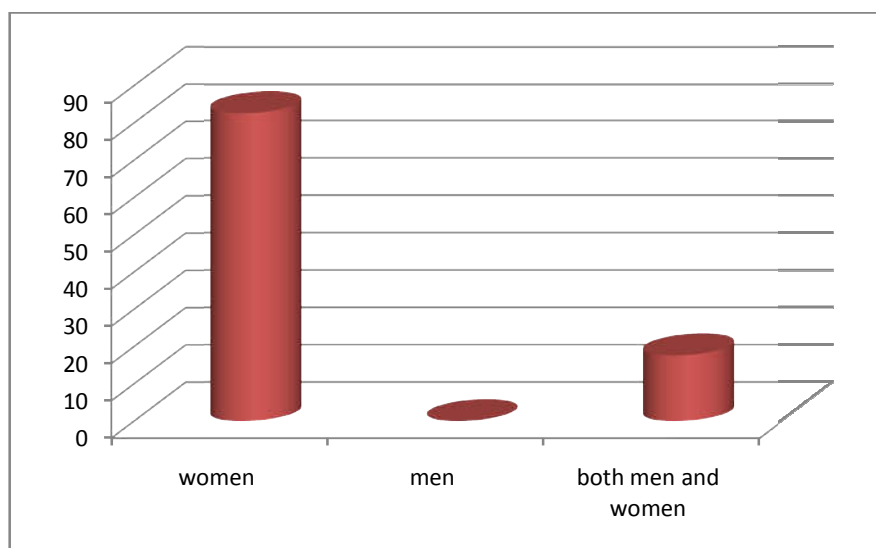
Plate 4.6. Seeds drying above the fire place

Besides the paddy seeds, seeds of other crops such as beans, gourd, and pumpkin chilies etc are selected and preserved by women. Different seeds require a different



step for preservation. For instance, ripped pumpkin, gourds, beans, eggplant, cucumber etc are selected and the seeds are cleaned with water. After the cleaning process, the seeds are sun dried for two to three days depending on the weather. Once, the seeds loose its moisture, the seeds are kept air tight in an earthen pot or a traditional gourd bottle and are kept above the fire place to keep away from rodents, ants and other insects. The fruit seeds are left to ripen completely and later dried in the sun which follows the same process of storing it near the fire place. Maize, job's tear, millet and colocasia etc are also hung near the fire place. It is important to select the healthy crops. The seeds selected from diseased or unhealthy plants would only result in a bad harvest. It is, therefore, crucial to choose the right and healthy seed. This important role is performed largely by women. The knowledge that is transmitted orally from generation to generation has made them experts in this process. The role of Naga women thus grants food security and perseveration of the biodiversity by preserving the seeds for the future.

**Fig 4.4. Seed Selection and Preservation by Gender**



According to the present study as shown in fig 4.3 above, it was found that 82.4 percent of women were the primary decision-makers in selection and preservation of seeds.

None of the respondents in the study responded that men carried out the task of seed selection. While 17.59 percent of the respondents responded that both men and women took the initiative of selecting and preserving seeds for the next season. The intimate role played by women in the selection of seeds is guided by strong environmental ethic and the traditional knowledge of the Naga women.

#### **4.5. Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Management of Resources**

In the narrative of Naga people's relation with the environment and their cultivation, Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) practices assume a significant role. Shifting cultivation has, on one hand, provided their daily needs and on the other hand the practice is related to the social, cultural and spiritual life of the people. In the practice of cultivation, one important element is the traditional ecological knowledge which has been handed over to the present generation by their forefathers. It has sustained the Naga people for millennia before the intrusion of scientific knowledge and in the process, the people have developed a symbiotic relationship with their ecology.

For the Nagas TEK contains symbolic meanings, cosmology, reciprocity and obligations. It is linked to the spiritual world-the sacred web of life, to ecosystem, to the environment and to all humanity. It is stored in people's memories and is expressed in stories, songs, folklore, cultural values, beliefs, rituals etc. It is shared and communicated orally from generation to generation. This wisdom is based on the realization that man and nature are in partnership with one another.

Women in Naga society are seen as significant agents and nurturers of TEK. Besides their socially nurturing role, they are expected to be managers of the household which includes agricultural activities besides foraging and gathering from the bounty of nature. As such, women's understanding of biodiversity tends to be broad containing many

unseen insights into local species and ecosystem gained from centuries of practical experience. From working in the field to the collection of fire woods to identifying the varieties of plants, they transmit TEK through daily practice and constant contact with nature and environment.<sup>78</sup>

As stated earlier, after the harvest, women play a pivotal role in selecting the best seeds which will be used for the next season. The knowledge of choosing the right stalk of paddy and the right amount of seeds comes through traditional knowledge which they learned orally from their parents. In the same way, the process of preserving and storing which has helped women to sustain their livelihood is also taught to them orally. Studies elsewhere have shown that women are the true custodian of seeds and such knowledge of selecting and preserving has made them an expert and have kept the traditional knowledge alive. For instance, in countries like Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Vietnam, Indonesia and India, most women are responsible for selection and storage of seeds.<sup>79</sup> In the Himalayan mountain communities, 80-90 percent of seed requirements are met through traditional seed management and exchange system.<sup>80</sup>

Another important role of Naga women within the gamut of TEK is the practice of seeds-exchange within the community and sometimes outside the community. For instance, in 2014 women from Chizami village under Phek district of Nagaland exchanged millet seeds with Khasi women in Meghalaya during North East Network (NEN) Biodiversity Festival. In 2017, the Khasi women had managed to distribute the millets grown out of Nagaland's seeds to five villages in the East Khasi Hills.<sup>81</sup> Such exchange would certainly help to increase the biodiversity in the region as a result of

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<sup>78</sup> Shikhu Alomi Cynthia & Dr. Toshimenla Jamir (2016), *Women and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Nagaland: Issues of Sustainability*, p-51

<sup>79</sup> *Gender and Biodiversity* IUCN p- 1

<sup>80</sup> Tara Devi Dhakal, *Women's Role in Biodiversity Management in the Himalayas*. ICIMOD p-2

<sup>81</sup> *Indigenous People are the 'gene banks' of the World* (2017), The Morung Express, p-1

which is expected to enhance the security through the increased variety of species in a new environment.

75 percent of the world's biodiversity today is located on indigenous people's land- preservation of this knowledge makes indigenous people the 'gene banks' of the world.<sup>82</sup> The exchange of seed through the years has created a social bond with other villages and sharing of seeds has enriched as well as preserved many species. The exchange of seed has been decreasing over the years but in some villages, such practices are still followed. For instance, in Longsa and Lazami village, exchange of seeds within the village is a common practice. This process has helped introduce even varieties unknown to them. Concomitantly, the recipients of their seeds also add new varieties to their locale and nutrition which has helped in nurturing the family besides enhancing their biodiversity.

Naga women have also been maintaining various herbs and medicinal plants. For the treatment of common ailments, rather than depending on modern allopathic medicine, many Naga women prefer to make use of natural herbs which is readily available in their environment. Though common medicinal herbs are known to many people, certain section of Naga people are thought to possess the gift of healing through herbs. The knowledge according to such people is inherited gift which would again be passed on to the next generation. The Nagas believed that knowledge of traditional healing/herbs is hereditary, often being transmitted from parents to a particular child in the family. This traditional knowledge of making herbs and medicines has been found among many women. Such women are able to diagnose illness and identify the appropriate medicinal plants to treat a particular illness. Though the role and practice of traditional healing

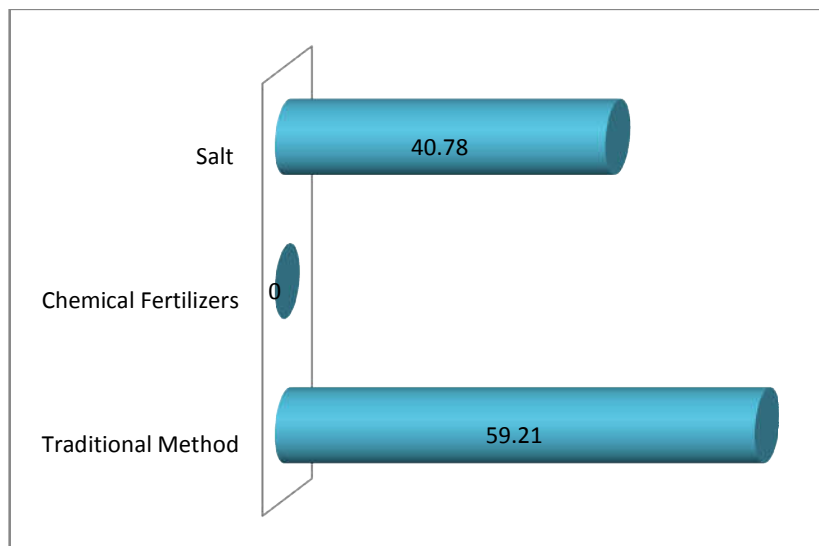
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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid* p-1

have declined over time, yet there are still few people that continue to practice the use of traditional knowledge in treating people in the villages.

Through their TEK, women play a major role in natural resource management in Nagaland. For instance, in collecting mushrooms, Naga women collect only what is required and leave the rest by surrounding the mushroom with dried leaves and twigs to give more nutrients and encourage better natural growth. They extract from nature what is required and conserve the rest for future use. This process has helped them consume as well as preserve the resources. The differentiation between poisonous and non-poisonous mushroom by women is another example of TEK. If the mushrooms are surrounded by ants or insects, it is an indication that the mushroom is eatable but if the ants and insects avoid the area where the mushroom is grown, it is a sign that it is poisonous.

**Fig 4.5. Method of managing the weeds**



In the process of shifting cultivation, for managing the weeds people make use of the traditional method. Cultivators prefer to manually pick the weeds with the help of hoe and sickles. 59.21 percent of the respondents responded that they preferred to work

manually though it is a back breaking and time-consuming task. 40.78 percent of the respondents used salt to kill the weeds, while the use of chemical fertilizers was nil. The respondents claimed that the use of chemicals kills not only the weeds but also other small insects and plants which are helpful for the fertility of the soil. The traditional way of managing the weeds has started to interest outsiders partly due to recognition that such knowledge can contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and sustenance of resources.

Women's understanding and the use of TEK is crucial as they play a significant role in the use and management of resources. This traditional practice has not only managed the environment but has also helped to continue to keep alive those values and traditions that sustained our ancestors. As such, women maybe, in fact, considered the real experts on preservation and continuation of TEK in the community. Naga women continue to take the responsibility to sustain the future as well.

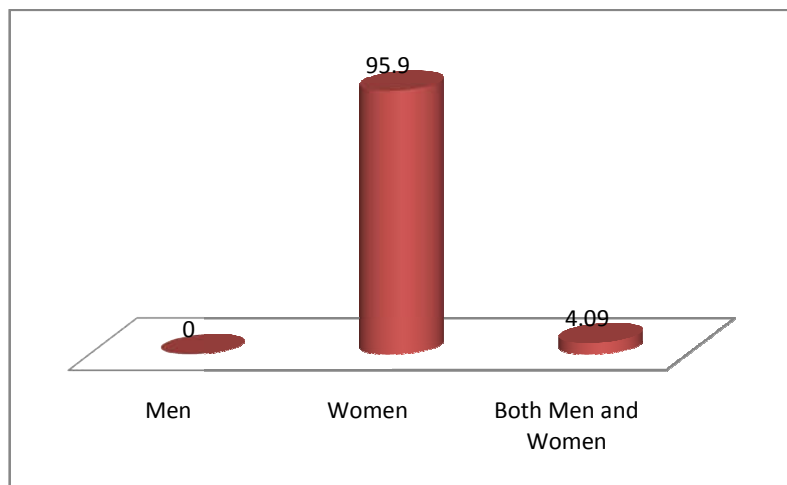
#### **4.6. Women and Kitchen Garden**

In most Naga households, the sight of a kitchen garden is not uncommon. Kitchen garden in Nagaland is a small plot cultivated usually in the backyard of the house which is easily accessible and easy to manage. For many Nagas, it is considered as a recreational space, nursery bed and an experimental plot. Regardless of the districts studied, majority of the household in the villages had a kitchen garden. The sizes may vary but it is considered important to maintain a kitchen garden. Due to the close and easy proximity to the gardens, most women visited it at least once a day to check for pests and to water it on time. Different varieties of vegetables like tomato, chilly, yam, beans, gourd etc are extensively planted in the garden. Since the kitchen garden is meant for family consumption only, therefore, just a manageable quantity of each vegetable is

grown each season. As most of the villages are situated in fair distance from the main markets, the basic essential requirements are obtained from such gardens.

As in most agricultural activities, kitchen garden too is primarily the responsibility of women in Naga society. They are sometimes times helped by men to put up fences and to protect the crop from animals like dogs and chicken but the full-time management is done by women alone.

**Fig 4.6. Management of Kitchen Garden**



Out of the total 358 respondents, 342 respondents responded that they maintained kitchen gardens. Out of these, 95.9 percent of the respondents said that it was women who looked after and managed the kitchen garden alone, while 4.09 percent of respondents said both men and women worked together in the kitchen garden. The figure above indicates that women take more responsibility for managing the kitchen garden.

In addition, the present study found that women used the garden as a laboratory for experimenting with a new variety of seeds. Naga women would plant new variety of seeds and see if it suited the environment and soil. They also assessed whether it would provide nutrition to the household. After the trial with the new seeds, they usually

decide which variety would best suit the family and soil. Kitchen garden helped women not only in household use but it also helps to exchange knowledge with their friends and neighbors regarding the usefulness of the varieties and the benefits of planting. In addition, exchange of seeds also takes place through kitchen gardening which helps to conserve and increase seed varieties in the village which is considered as an essential activity for preserving seeds.

Besides the above, kitchen garden also have an educational role. Naga women used it to pass on agricultural knowledge to the younger generation. A kitchen garden can be considered as an informal school for young girls where they are taught the basics of farming and cultivating. This fact has been borne out by earlier studies as well. For instance, among the Maya in highland Guatemala, *“women educate children through the chores of the garden. They teach how to use farm tools, which plants to thrive, and how to manage crops, especially through weeding and harvesting”*.<sup>83</sup> Among the Naga women and girls too, it was found to be the case. Young girls are taught the usefulness of kitchen garden. It is one essential requirement for women to know how to cultivate and maintain kitchen garden. Those women who do not know the art of cultivating were looked down upon.

Kitchen garden may seem just as an extension of domestic chore to the casual observer but closer analysis reveals how it is another facet of the efficient management of resources where the smallest plot of land adjacent to homesteads is utilized for providing familial needs.

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<sup>83</sup> Howard Patricia (2003), *The Major Importance of ‘Minor’ Resources: Women and plant biodiversity*, p- 8

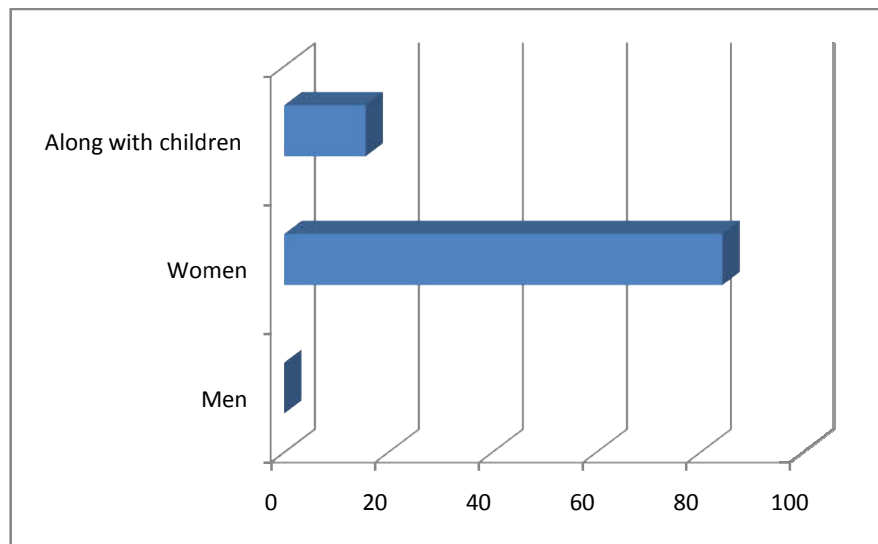


#### **4.7. Women and Rural Economy**

As previously discussed, many people in the village generate income by selling NTFP and the surplus of different varieties of crops grown in Jhum land. Besides this, they are also engaged in basket making and weaving activities of traditional attires such as *mekhalas* which ensure economic security. It is found that Naga women play a pivotal role in the rural economy. The NTFP, agricultural products, crafts etc are sold in the market which caters to the urban population. In the villages under study, it was found that most of the collection and selling of such products are mainly the work of women. Though generally activities of hunting and fishing are done by men, responsibility for selling the produce rests with the womenfolk. For example, a man goes to the forest for hunting, if he notices a fruit or leaves, he would leave it untouched and later when he returns home, he would tell his wife where to find it. Later, his wife would go and collect it as it is considered to be women's job. This illustrates the role assigned to women and the responsibility to gather and forge for resource in the forest.

Women's active participation in the rural economy can be seen through the fact that, the marketing of agricultural products, whether from jhum cultivation or NTFP are predominately carried out by them. This is reflected in the figure given below:

**Fig 4.7. Marketing of Agricultural and NTFP by Gender**



Out of the total respondents, it was found that 77 percent of them used the agricultural products for both domestic consumption as well as for sale. Out of this, Fig 4.7 shows 84.3 percent of the marketing are done by women. Pointing to the integrative productive and reproductive role of Naga women, 15.69 percent of the female respondents undertook the marketing task carrying their small children. The present study found that no male respondents were involved in the marketing chore which indicates their negligible contribution in this area of economic activity.

The table below shows the varieties of fruits, plants and other items which are collected by women. The forest products are part of their diet. It provides nutrition, protein and vitamin. The healthy diet gives health security and food security to the family. Besides the above mentioned items, wild animals such as monitor Lizard, Asian Brown tortoise, porcupine, hoolock gibbon, wild boar, sambar and muntjac add to their diet and also sold in the market. The wild animals are hunted by them while women take the initiative to sell in the market.

**Table 4.1. Forest products collected and marketed by Naga Women**

Sl.No	Items	Name of resources
1	Vegetables and leaves	Bhangara, Common Plantain, Fern, Garden Mint, Hidden Ginger, Impatien, Long Coriander, Mushroom, Nepal Prickly Ash, Pennywort, Spinach, Stink Grass, Tree Tomato, Toothache Tree, Wild mushroom etc
2	Fruits	Barberry, Banana, Box- Myrtle, Bullock heart, Bael fruit, Chest Nut, Drooping Fig, Grape Fruit, Himalayan raspberry, Himalayan Wild cherry, Indian Gooseberry, Jalpai, Lemon, Mulberry, Nutgall, Tamarind, Thatch Palm, Wild pear, Wild mango, Wild apple etc
3	Others	Bamboo Shoots, Birds, Cotton Tree, Dried Thatch Palm leaves used as brooms, Edible insects, Frog, Fish, Honey, Nepal Prickly Ash seeds, Snail, Wild Animal Meat, etc



Plate 4.7. Women vendors in Longkhim town



Plate 4.8. Selling wild edible leaves collected from forest in Changki village



Plate 4.9. Women vendors selling varieties of crops in Rotomi Village

With regard to the marketing, there was some few exception where the villages did not market the product in large volume. This was the case in Bhandari and Sanis village under Wokha district, it was found that only a small amount of forest products and cultivated food items are sold in the market and most of it was used for family consumption. One probable reason for this is that the habitats in the areas are often disturbed by wild elephants. The wild elephants destroy substantial quantities of their crops each year resulting in a scanty harvest. As a result, most women find it difficult to even cultivate enough for sustaining the family leaving very little scope for surplus to sell.

Along with the above mentioned NTFP, the study found around 20 to 30 varieties of seasonal vegetables are planted and cared by women alongside concomitantly in jhum fields. This allows the women farmers to sell the local vegetables throughout the year. It can be pointed out that all products cultivated by them are organic using only natural fertilizers such as animal dung and vermin thus making it highly popular and much in demand. Chemical fertilizers or pesticides are unknown to them. Table 4.2 shows the different varieties of vegetables, leaves, fruits and cereal and oil seed cultivated alongside paddy in shifting cultivation.

**Table 4.2. Crops cultivated and marketed by Women**

Sl.No	Resources	Name of resources
1	Vegetables and Leaves	Banana, Beans ( Different varieties), Bhat Karela, Chilly, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Coriander, Colocasia, Colocasia Leaves, Cucumber, Egg- Plant, Fern, Gourds (different varieties), Goa beans, Lady's Finger, Leek, Mushroom(cultured), Mustard Leaves, Pumpkin, Peas, Passion Fruit Leaves, Sweet Potato, Squash, Stink Grass, Thatch Palm, Tomato, Tapioca, Velvet Beans etc
2	Fruits	Apple, Apricot, Gooseberry, Himalayan cherry, Jackfruit, Litchi, Lemon(different varieties), Mango, Orange, Pineapple, Plum, Peach, Peanut, Passion Fruit, Thatch palm, Toothache Fruit, Tamarind etc
3	Cereal Oil Seed and others	Black Mustard, Edible Insects, Fox-Tail, Ginger, Garlic, Ginseng, Honey, Indian Mustard, Job's Tear, Maize, Pigeon Pea, Rice, Soya Bean, Sticky Rice, Sesame, Spring Onion etc

Most of the villages under the initiative of various schemes like *Rashtriya Krishna Vikas Yojana*( RKVJ) programme by Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Scheme, initiation by VDB etc have constructed marketing sheds at appropriate village locations, highways etc which tremendously benefits the rural vendors. This has proved to be favorable to women as they can easily access and sell the products in the local market not far from their village. In addition to selling the food items, women also buy

other items needed for their households. This shows that while women work for the productive economy, they are engaged in reproductive work as well. The role of women, therefore, cannot be specified in time and space.

In many cases, the agricultural products are sent to family members living outside the village which is a common courtesy found among the Nagas. Also, the sharing of surplus fruits and vegetables with kin or neighbors forms an important part of Naga social life. Such sharing of products from one's own kitchen fosters community closeness and social solidarity in general.

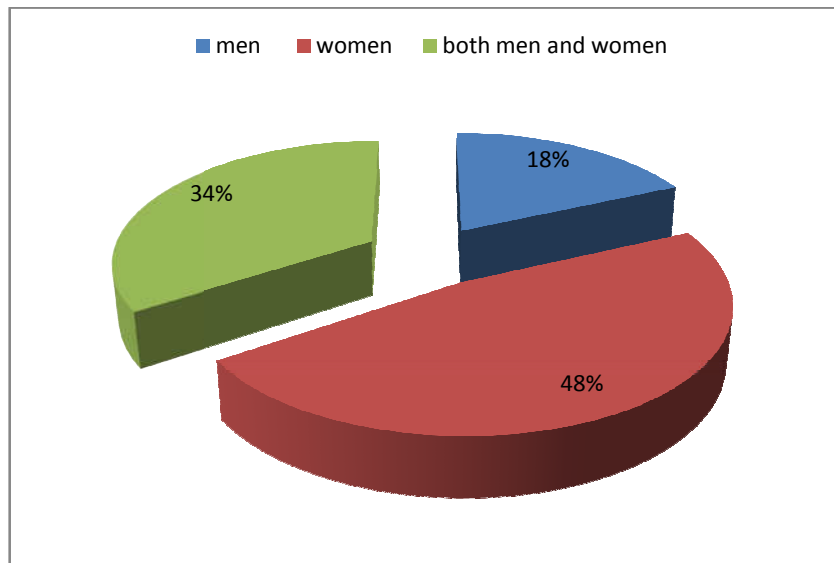
The present study highlights the fact that while all the agricultural related activities of women were directed towards sustenance of livelihood and survival, the same was not strictly true of menfolk. For instance, activity such as hunting was engaged in, not necessarily only for survival, but also a leisure activity. This can be gauged from the fact that when asked about the usefulness of the forest product, men usually responded that they go hunting for enjoyment as well for the bush meat as it fetches a good price in the black market. Sale of bush meat continues despite the fact that it is an unlawful activity. According to the wild life protection Act 1972, it is illegal to hunt for specific endangered species regardless of location and all species is to be protected by the people. Even though hunting and killing of birds and animals are banned especially during the breeding season in the villages, local communities living in the vicinity of forests continue to hunt them for varied reasons like leisure activity, for food, for sale or even perceived medicinal value. It is believed the meat of some animals and birds have medicinal values. For instance, the meat of hoopoo bird is thought to cure asthma; monitor lizards are considered to give strength and longevity to humans; frogs are thought to cure wound quickly and snails are thought to give better eyesight. While the

veracity of such beliefs is yet to be scientifically proven, yet, animals and birds are much sought after and are therefore sold at high prices.

An activity such as fishing is also another important activity where both men and women can participate. While some family uses it for only consumption purpose, many households in the village directly or indirectly sell the surplus after meeting domestic requirements.

With regard to the question of control over the money generated through the sale of agricultural products, the present study points to the fact that most women vendors had liberty over the earned income. This is indicated in figure 4.6 which reflects the gender wise distribution of control over income.

**Fig 4.8. Gender- wise control over income**

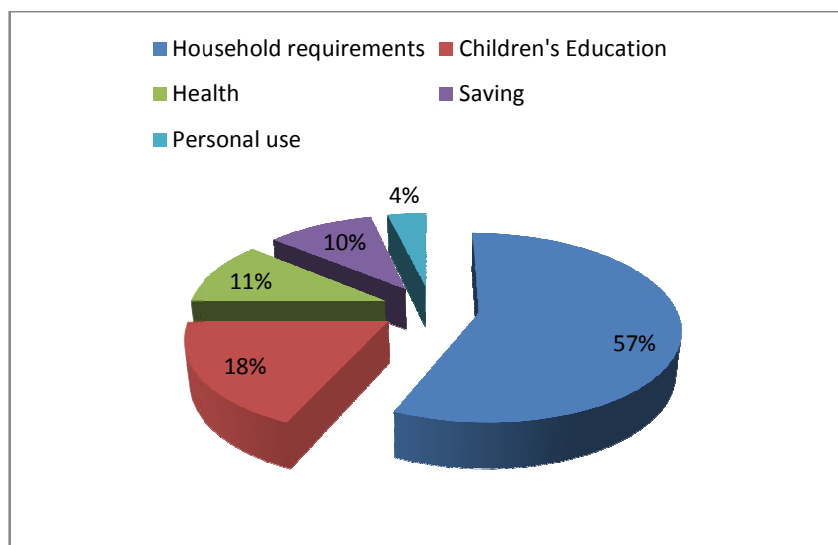


The present study reveals the fact that women have relative autonomy over the money earned through the sale of forest and agricultural products. On the question of management of the income, 48 percent responded that women managed the money earned. Joint control over income was found to be the case of 34 percent of the respondents. While only a small percentage of respondents at 18 percent replied that



men managed the income generated from the agricultural product. The mode of usage of income generated from the sale of NTFP and agricultural products are shown in the figure below

**Fig 4.9. Use of income generated from marketing**



As reflected in figure 4.9, the income generated from selling surplus products is used for various purposes. The ranking of use of income on the basis of priority indicates larger number of income invested on household requirements with 57 percent. Household requirements include furniture, repairing of house, buying utensils etc while children's education ranked second where a greater amount of the economy was invested with 18 percent. 11 percent of the respondents ranked health as third place and saving as the fourth with 10 percent of the income generated from the sale of the product was used. The least was for personal use with 4 percent.

#### **4.8. Women and Self Help Groups**

Besides, the active participation of women in managing the rural economy through their agricultural activities and reliance on forest resources, they also constitute prime components in rural development through Self Help Groups. SHGs are usually small

groups consisting of fifteen to twenty people working together to improve their economic life. The Self Help Group has been defined by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development in 1992 as a group of about fifteen to twenty members from a homogeneous class, who come together for addressing their common problems.<sup>84</sup> The group is a voluntary association of poor people who work together to improve their economy, to learn more from the group, learn to cooperate and learn leadership skills. SHGs provide a common platform to address their issues and problem and receive mutual help. SHGs were initiated in 1991 with the emphasis on the development of entrepreneurship among the poor. It is often considered as a group of farmers coming together to achieve specific objectives, which will lead to better livelihood condition through higher income. As a result, the number of SHGs financed banks in the country has grown annually ten times and the annual loan disbursal by about thirty-seven times over the last decades. A study by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) revealed that the SHGs has turned out to be a channel for social mobilization, women empowerment and a new business with quality clients and significantly increased well-being.<sup>85</sup> It is funded by Central and State government in the ratio 75: 25.<sup>86</sup> The objective of giving financial freedom and helping men and women improve their quality of life has been successful in the selected villages under study as well. In 2011, there are 9866 SHGs in the state, with the saving of Rs 36.3 million. Women comprise about one-third of the total SHGs. Only about 40% of the total SHGs had access bank credits.<sup>87</sup> With the help of Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development (NEPED) projects, the Village Development

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<sup>84</sup> Yepthomi Kavika k and V. Nirmala (2014), *Self- Help Groups: A Strategy for Poverty Alleviation in Rural Nagaland*, p- 24

<sup>85</sup> *ibid* p- 24

<sup>86</sup> Jamir Toshimenla & Imlimenla Longkumar, *Women and Rural Development A Study of Women VDB in Nagaland*, p-49

<sup>87</sup> Yepthomi Kavika k and V. Nirmala (June 2014), *Self- Help Groups: A Strategy for Poverty Alleviation in Rural Nagaland*, India, p- 24

Board (VDB) has provided access to credits with the objective of improving the rural livelihood.

The present study found that the numbers of SHGs vary from village to village. There could be as many as twenty-five groups in a single village. For instance, in Longsa village under Wokha district, there was 25 SHGs. One reason for the presence of such big members stems from the huge population of the village with 1147 households. It was found that the groups pre-dominantly consisted of women members only and there was not a single male SHGs in the villages studied.

Being dependent on agriculture and its natural resources, the activities of most groups were centered on agricultural activities. As the women in the villages were more familiar with the agricultural activities, most groups were found to be engaged in agricultural activities. Some of the economic activities undertaken by SHGs are shown in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3 Major activities of Women Self- Help Groups**

District	Villages	Food item	Other items
Mokokchung	Chungliyemsen	Ginger, Tomato, Colocasia, Anishi(Ao), Cabbage, Spring Onion, Squash, cucumber,	Weaving, Pickle making, wage labour, selling of flowers, baking
	Longkhum		
	Sungratsii		
Tuensang	Sangsomong	Ginger, Colocasia, Mustard leaves, spring onion,	Weaving, Piggery, wage labour
	Tsadang		
	Tuensang		
Wokha	Bhandari	Ginger, Colocasia, and Squash	Weaving, Pickle making, basket making, selling of flower, wage labour.
	Longsa		
	Sanis		

Zunheboto	Lumami	Ginger, Tomato, Colocasia, peanuts, Soya bean (Axone), Mustard leaves, spring onion.	Weaving, Pickle making, Baking, making necklace.
	Lazami		
	Rotomi		

As is reflected in the above table, the activities of the group in the village under study are mostly related to traditional agricultural activities. Despite certain constraints like transportation problem, delay in loans, high rate of interest, market distribution etc, most of the SHGs have emerged to be successful.



Plate 4.10. SHG member engaged in weaving in Rotomi Village



Plate 4.11. Making traditional bead in necklace in Rotomi Village

Though SHGs have horizontal structures devoid of hierarchy, for efficient functioning, the groups usually have a leader in each group. The choice of economic activities engaged in was arrived in through mutual consent of all members. If there is any dispute or conflict regarding the activities, it was the group leader who has the final say. This has helped women to make proper collective decision and also build confidence in their decision making abilities. The SHGs inculcate strength among women and cooperation among themselves.

In many cases, in the selected villages it was learned that at the initial periods, husbands were reluctant to let their wives be involved. After learning the positive impact and the additional income, their perception began to change. SHGs are emerging as a major driver in self-economy. Being involved in SHGs has had positive impact on women members by improving their creative skills, better economic situation, self-confidence, better education for children and capacity building. By contributing to family income, the women have more involvement in the decision-making. SHGs occupy a pivotal role in the economic development of the society and help in economic empowerment of women members. The rural women have risen to the level of self-management. It has become a powerful tool in bringing women together and working towards the upliftment of their social and economic life.

# **CHAPTER V**

## **DYNAMICS OF GENDER RELATION**

## 5.1. Introduction

Gender constitutes one of the basic dimensions of all social organization. It refers to socially constructed and historically variable relationships, cultural meanings and identities through which biological sex differences become socially significant.<sup>88</sup> Sex, on the other hand, is a biological characteristic that distinguishes males from females. The concept of gender includes the roles and expectations assigned to both male and female in a given society. George Peter Murdock sees gender as biological differences in that men have more physical strength and women have less as they bear children. Anna Oakley refers to 'sex' as the biological difference between male and female: the visible differences in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. 'Gender' however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine'.<sup>89</sup> Oakley disagrees with Murdock and explains that it is a myth that women are biologically incapable of doing work that requires strength.

According to liberal feminists, gender differences cannot be based on biological differences. Women do not differ from men as rational agents and that exclusion from educational and economic opportunities have prevented them from realizing their own potential for creativity in all spheres of human life.<sup>90</sup> It is a social construct built in a patriarchal society that reveals women's subordination. Cultural feminism, on the other hand, views men and women as essentially different in personality and nature as well as biology. They draw their attention to the fact that cross-culturally, women's physiology and social roles define their potential in every aspect of their life. Both assume the role

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<sup>88</sup> Barbara Laslett, Johanna Brenner (1989), *Gender and Social Reproduction; Historical Perspectives*, p-382

<sup>89</sup> Delphy Christine (1993), *Rethinking Sex and Gender*, p-2

<sup>90</sup> Merchant Carolyn (2005), *Radical Ecology The Search For a Livable World*, p-200

assigned to them such that men are the bread-winners and women the home-makers. This difference in the roles has created a gap leading to women having a secondary position in the family.

Marxist and socialist feminist have criticized that woman's oppression and exploitation starts from the family. If she works at home she is considered as a dependent, if she works outside the home, she is still expected to fulfill her domestic duties besides her office work. Gender inequality thus begins from family. OSAGI (Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women) defines the concept of 'Gender' as, the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relation between women and those of men.<sup>91</sup> Feminists have stressed about gender inequality being build in work place, family, politics, religion and culture. Such inequality spawns gender stratification where there is bias in access to power, property and prestige. Gender relations are also characterized by unequal power. The norms and laws assigned different responsibilities and privileges in favor of men alone. Gender differences and inequality is found to be present in almost all societies. There are inequality and differences in terms of land use, access to land and resources and participation in the political arena and economic decision as well.

Engels in his work "Origin of Family, Private Property and the State" traces the direct link between private properties, class formation and subordination of women. He linked the transformation of women from equal, productive members of society to dependent wives to the shift from community ownership and production for use to private ownership under the control of men and production for sale. Sacks opined that theoretically, domestic labour can be performed by anyone, but ideologically it is seen

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<sup>91</sup> Jamir Toshimenla (2012), *Women and Politics in Nagaland Challenges and Imperatives*, p-3



as part of women's role, thus mediating and restricting her choice of and control over paid labor, as well as her participation in the public realms of decision making. A change in production relations that socially values men's work, but domesticates women's often with support from the state legal system and ideology as in the case of land being recorded in the name of men, influences the relation of power and authority between men and women.<sup>92</sup> Gender as a social construct thus brings in social stratification, dominance and power of one over the other.

## **5.2. Women under Naga Customary Law**

Customary law is a set of customs and practices accepted by the indigenous people. Customary law forms an intrinsic part of the tribal's social, political and economic way of life. It is an established system of law that have evolved over time and continues to be a part of the present. It is an unwritten knowledge passed on for generations which has evolved to be the identity and part of Nagas culture and tradition. Customary law can be thus understood as 'An established system of immemorial rules which evolve from the way of life and natural wants of the people, the general context of which was a common knowledge, coupled with precedents applying to special cases, which were retained in the memories of the chief and his counselors, their sons, or their son's son, until forgotten, or until they became part of the immemorial rules. The operation of customary laws acts as a powerful tool to define the roles of men and women and dictate acceptable standards of behavior.'<sup>93</sup> Article 371 A of the Indian constitution safeguards the customary law and its practices that encloses the following "371A (1) notwithstanding anything in this constitution-

No Act of Parliament in respect of,

i) Religious or social practices of the Nagas

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<sup>92</sup> Rao Nitya (2008), *Good Women do not Inherit Land*, pp 20-21

<sup>93</sup> Laisiemsang Ruth(2013), *Gender Relations and the web of Tradition in Northeast India*, p-77

- ii) Naga Customary Law and procedures,
- iii) Administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law,
- iv) Ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides”.<sup>94</sup>

This holds that cultural matters pertaining to Naga people and Naga society comes under the customary laws which are protected and safeguarded by the constitution. The constitution gives the right to adhere to their customary in their civil, social and cultural life. It is the most distinctive feature of the Naga people.

Naga society adheres to the customary law since time immemorial. The written and unwritten customary law and practices have kept the old traditions and culture alive. As the law governs all aspects of a person’s life that includes marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody, property rights, economy, control over resources etc, women are always at detriment end.

Naga women are debarred from inheritance and property right. Land is an important asset because the land not only guarantees the security for survival but it is also an identity for those people occupying the territories. Land constitutes the most important immovable asset to the Nagas.<sup>95</sup> Ownership being patrilineal, women are often at disadvantage. The final decision on the use, purchase or sale of land is decided by males, females do not have the authority or ownership over the land. In rural areas where population depends on land for survival, the issue of land ownership is most critical. As decision on the use and access to resources is limited to Naga women, it

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<sup>94</sup> Ramunny M (2017), *Our Constitution and Naga Customary Law*, Eastern Mirror Nagaland, April 11

<sup>95</sup> *Enquiry into the states of Women in Nagaland* (2016), NEN, p- 109

often leads to food insecurity and less decision making ability. As women have no right over land, control over resources also favors men rather than women. Community land is completely vested in the hand of clans which are represented by male members so the ultimate decision over the land is conferred to men. Men owned land by virtue of their lineage where as women used agricultural land by means of their relationship to individual males such as husband, father, brother by the virtue of gender identity as a wife, sister or widow.<sup>96</sup> In most cases where women are gifted lands from their paternal family, the lands are reverted back after her death. So in true sense, the gifted land does not completely belong to women. The study on Sema Naga by Hutton clearly shows how the laws were intact even during the early eighteen century where land was not given to women by inheritance or gifted, and in case of a women purchasing land with her money, it passes to her male heirs, sons if she has then, or, if, not her brothers or her father's male relations.<sup>97</sup> This indicates the prevalence of strong customary law in Nagaland. In the modern times, the Village Council acts as the main interpreters of laws of the land. Land being a matter of identity and ancestral pride gives full advantage to the male heir. Women are barred from intervening in such issues of land or property, which directly reflects on women being denied the right.<sup>98</sup>

In case of marriage, a Naga woman leaves her parental house and lives with her husband. She is allowed to live in the house and cultivate land but she cannot own it. In other words, the land cannot be transferred in his wife's name. House ownership right is given to male decent she is considered as the guardian of the house. Following the patrilineal nature, their children follow the descent of the father's lineage. During a divorce, she loses her right over her child as the law always favors the man.

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<sup>96</sup> Khala Katoli (2012), *Women and Agriculture in Nagaland A gender Study of Sumi Customary Law and Custom*, p- 50

<sup>97</sup> Hutton J.H(2007), *The Sema Naga*, p- 156

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p-122

Women are hardly represented in the political arena. Although the literacy rate of women in Nagaland is high (76.1 percent 2011 census), they are poorly represented in the formal decision making process both at the local and state level which includes village, regional and national level. Women's political participation is becoming a central issue in present time against the unfolding realities of oppression and subjugation tacitly sanctioned by customary norms and values.<sup>99</sup> Exclusion of women in the political arena for years and their struggle to be at par with men in Nagaland indicates their status in the society. Women need to be represented in the political field in order to provide them platform to improve their involvement in decision- making. By giving them a platform they will have a greater chance of improving their lives and status. The plans and policies can also be directed towards favoring women. In order to facilitate women's participation, the Government of Nagaland passed the Nagaland Municipal Act of 2006 by providing 33 percent reservation for women in Urban Local Bodies (ULB). However, this act was vehemently opposed by several tribal organizations on the ground that the Act challenges the Customary Laws and social fabric of the Nagas.<sup>100</sup> The struggle for representation in the municipal bodies of Nagaland is thus a classic example of denying women the right to participate in governance.

According to the Naga custom, women are not allowed to be involved in any public decision making bodies such as the tribal hohos and Village Council. The norms and customs are still practiced determining the strong patriarchal force in the state. The exclusion of women in the decision making process clearly indicates gender inequality and subjection of women in the state.

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<sup>99</sup> Jamir Toshimenla (2012) *Women and Politics in Nagaland Challenges and Imperatives*, p-9

<sup>100</sup> *Enquiry into the states of Women in Nagaland* (2016), NEN, p- 123

### 5.3. Women and land

Globally, land is a key element in the identities of indigenous people. Land is more than material resource. It takes multiple meanings such as their culture, language, social and community norms and their identity. Land for the Nagas is divided into two domains – as a material resource and as a cultural entity. Land as a material resource means it can be converted or used for their material needs such as cultivation, plantation, forging and harvesting. In some cases, it can also be converted into cash by selling the land. Cultural entity means the culture, community, identity and status associated with land.

The issue of land rights for women emerged in development discourses during the UN women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980 when they realized that women owned only one percent of the world's land while constituting 50 percent of the world's population. Therefore, the exclusion of women from the ownership of land has remained on the global agenda especially after the UN Women's Decade from 1975-1985. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW), 1979, included a specific clause on the equal treatment of women in agrarian reforms and similar rights for both spouses in the ownership, management and disposition of property. However, the convention could not reach its aim as the Development Report 2000-2001 stated that 'In most developing countries titles to land are normally vested in men. Since the great majority of the world's poor people live in agrarian settings, this is a fundamental source of vulnerability for poor women... so women face disadvantage not only in land ownership, but in gaining access to the resources and information that would improve yields.'<sup>101</sup>

Land in Naga society is considered important not only in terms of economy and livelihood security, it is most importantly an identity and the root of one's clan and

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<sup>101</sup> Rao Nitya (2008), *Good Women do not Inherit Land*, p-22

lineage. For a Naga, land determines the status and prestige of a person or family or clan. It is considered a pride to own land. Therefore, to hold a land is of paramount importance to a Naga. Generally, land in Nagaland is categorized into three- Community land, Clan land and Individual land. Community village land comprises the graveyard, village community platform, roads, church, monuments, reserved forest and residential sites.<sup>102</sup> The village council takes the responsibility of taking care of the community land. Social work and keeping the community clean are fully the responsibility of the whole village. The community lands are used freely by the villages. In some case like cutting down of trees for construction of houses and hunting in a deep forest the villagers takes the permission of the council. However, among the Sumi Naga, though the land is considered as community land, the real owner is the *Gaon Bura*. He gifts the land to the villagers but in most cases, permission is required from the owner and the council as well. He acts as the custodian of the land. In Naga society, Clan lands are owned by a clan group in which the oldest male member of the clan acts as the head. He along with his clan decides on the distribution of land for shifting cultivation and for other purpose. Such lands cannot be sold or bought as it is considered more important than anything else in the world. It shows their strength, unity, wealth and status in the village. It signifies their lineage and membership in the village. Individual lands are those lands which are owned by a family or owned by an individual. The head along with the family members decides on the use of the land. Such land can be sold or bought.

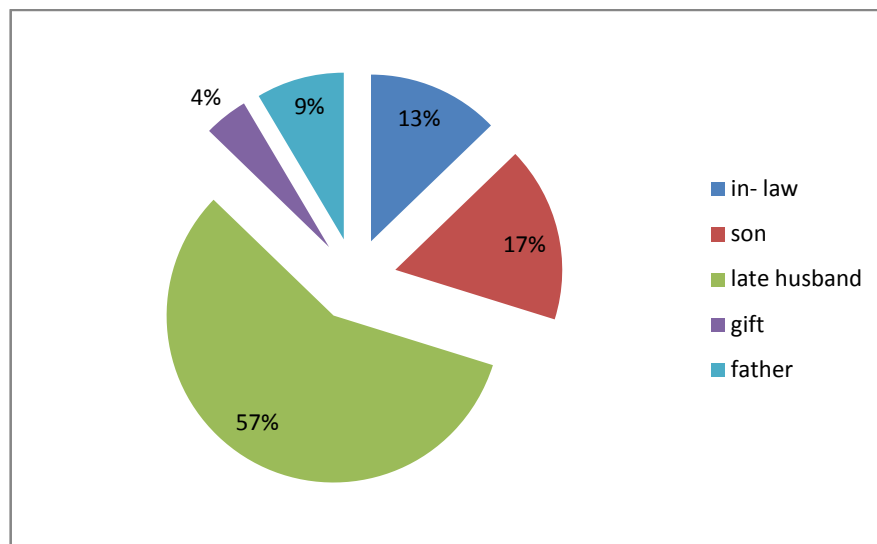
Whether it is a clan land, community land or individual land, it is always controlled by the male members. This in itself reflects patriarchal norms that exist in Naga society. There are exceptional cases like among the Angami tribes. The Angami tribes practice

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<sup>102</sup> Jamir Toshimenla (2015) *Women, Land and Identity in Naga Society: A Sociological Viewpoint in Takatemjen, challenges of Land Development in Nagaland*, p- 109

patrilineal system whereby ownership rights in common property are restricted to male alone. So under normal condition, a son inherits ancestral property, while a daughter does not. But a daughter can inherit acquired property (including land and house). However, if a man does not have a male issue, the daughter/s can inherit even ancestral property. In such a case, the patrilineal system requires that a symbolic transfer of a small piece of land and some household articles be made to immediate male kin of the man who has no male issue.<sup>103</sup> This is one tribe that gives the right to women to own land however, among the other tribes, restriction over land ownership and access to land are completely in the hands of male members. This fact is borne out by the data provided below. The pie chart below shows the status of land ownership of unmarried and widowed women in the four districts under study.

**Fig 5.1. Status of Land ownership among unmarried and widowed respondents**



Out of the total 358 respondents, there were 47 unmarried and widowed women respondents and the question of land ownership was posed only to these section of respondents inorder to provide a clear picture of land utilization by women. 57.44

<sup>103</sup> Christina Kekhrieseno(2015), *Implications of Customary Law on Angami Naga Women in Temjensosang et,al Women and Gender Emerging Voices from North- East India*, p- 69

percent of the women responded that after the death of their husband, they were allowed to use her late husband's land on the condition that the land should be reverted back to her husband's family if and when she decides to remarry. In some cases where a male child is there and still pursuing education, the land was to be given to the son after he reaches certain age. While 17.02 percent responded that they cultivate in their son's land. While the widow may live in her deceased husband's house, the land which she cultivated now belonged to her married son. 12.72 percent of the respondents had only daughters, but no son. In such cases, while they were allowed to cultivate the land in any way they pleased yet the land she cultivated do not belong to her but to her in-laws. She along with her daughters lived in her late husband's house and cultivates the land. But should she remarry or die, the land was to be taken back by her husband's family. In such case, the fate of the daughters will depend on the decision made by her husband's family. Most single female respondents lived with their parents and help them in the field and household chores. But for those who preferred to live alone, they use their father's land to cultivate and a small plot of land maybe provided to her by her parents. 8.51 percent of the respondents explain the preference to live alone and work in the field. Permission is taken to use such land. While 4.25 percent responded that they received land as a gift from their father or brother. But in case of her demise, the land was to be taken back by her paternal family. The previous chart shows that no woman in the true sense owns any land. They are merely given permission to use the land during their lifetime but are not the real owners.

Due to the dispossessed status of Naga women, there is always a sense of insecurity for women whether she lives in her husband's village or her own village. The deprivation of land rights to women and the distribution of land have often deprived women the potential to grow. Suppression of women in terms of land rights has caused social



inequality and this denial has been deleterious, an impediment to their ability to progress.

The marginalization of women from ownership of land has caused a disparity between men and women creating greater gender gap and inequality. Men and women work together during agricultural operation, but when the question regarding the control over resources and decision making is a concern, it is men who makes the final decision. Even though women play a pivotal role in the management of resources, they assume secondary position. Their lack of control over resources and access to land is one of the major impediments for their social and economic empowerment.

Since land is considered to be male property in Naga society, to argue against such practice is considered not only a breach of law but is condemned by society. It is a critical economic asset for rural livelihood and is intrinsically tied to culture, heritage, identity and community. Land ownership symbolises true citizenship and lineage of their ancestry. Despite much debate and policies put forward, women still continue to be marginalized in Naga society. The deep-rooted customs and rules under the law have created a wall for women to move forward towards equality and equity.

Women's inability to own land has been a serious issue disrupting further development and empowerment. Since women in Naga society do not own land, they do not have right in family decision making nor do they have full access to resources. As land provides the livelihood subsistence for rural women, it is vital to gain free access to use the land as they desire without limiting their rights. Giving women the right to ownership would also enhance their economy and increase their bargaining power to make decisions on the use of land. The lack of land rights to women indicates that they are victims of discrimination since land is considered the most fundamental resource to women's living conditions, economic empowerment and to some extent, their struggle

for equity within a patriarchal society.<sup>104</sup> Inequality parades marginalization and discrimination against women's rights. Just as land is considered important to the male member, it is no less for women. With the impact of education, modernization, technological invention and globalization, women are seen at par with men in many fields of achievement. However, there are insecurity and dismay when it comes to ownership of land.

Various international, national and local women organisation like Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), All India Women's Conference, Women's India Association, National Council of Women in India, Committee on the Status of women in India (CSWI), National Perspective Plan for Women by the Department of Women and Child Welfare (DWCW), 73th Constitutional Amendment of 1992, Women Reservation, Women Empowerment Year (200-2001), State Commission for Women in Nagaland, Training Rural Youth for Self- Employment (TRYCEM), Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP) etc are emerging with the aim of providing equality in property, political empowerment and economic upliftment for women shows positive promise for the future. However, still more need to be achieved.

#### **5.4. Division of Labour by gender**

Structural–functionalist theory is based on the notion that men and women perform separate roles because this division is useful to society. Talcott Parsons argues that the family is a social system with two major needs: getting its work done and staying in emotional order. Parson believed men are 'naturally' more 'instrumental', or 'oriented' towards getting work done, and women are 'naturally' more 'expressive' or 'oriented

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<sup>104</sup> Jamir Toshimenla (2015) *Women, Land and Identity in Naga Society: A Sociological Viewpoint in Takatemjen, challenges of Land Development in Nagaland*, p- 112

towards taking care of the family's social-emotional needs.<sup>105</sup> Anthropologist like Tiger, Fox and George Peter Murdock assumed biological differences between men and women on the basis of sexual division of labour. Murdock explains that the sexual division of labour is universal and the tasks of male-female are divided on the basis of their functional roles.<sup>106</sup> Ann Oakley, however, dismissed the argument by saying that there are no exclusively female roles and that biological characteristics do not bar women from a particular job.

In cross-culture studies Oakley found that in some society there was no distinction of works between men and women. They worked depending on who wants to do what work and not based on gender. Like Oakley, Ernestine Friedl supports a cultural explanation noting the great variation in gender roles between societies. For example, she observes that in some societies, activities such as weaving, pottery making and tailoring are thought to be naturally men task, in other's women. Friedrich Engels believed women in hunting and gathering societies were generally more socially equal to men than are women in industrialized societies. With the development and land being owned, men became monogamous to assure their children's inherit their property in the future.<sup>107</sup> This forced women into a subservient role, requiring them to be faithful to one husband and dependent upon his ability to fend for the family. Morris in his work suggested that sexual division of labour developed when people began to hunt for food. Men traveled for hunting while women nursed the babies. In this way, men began to assume that their work is outside the home and women inside the home. Margaret Mead's study shows that both men and women tend to children and are responsible for providing foods. So the division of work was not divided among women and men and

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<sup>105</sup> Kikhi Kedilezo and Narola Dangti Kikhi (), *Changing Gender –Equation: Compared Cross- Culturally in* Kedilezo and Narola Dangti Kikhi *Changing Gender Equation with Special Reference to Nagaland*, p- 5

<sup>106</sup> [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/14986/9/09\\_chapter%201.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/14986/9/09_chapter%201.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p-7

whose role needs to do what. The division emerged when social construction and socialization gained prominence.

Divisions of labour here in the study imply the task divided between men and women by gender in the agricultural process as well as domestic work. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the division of labour during shifting cultivation process indicates clear gender demarcation between men and women's work. Besides the regular day to day agricultural activities, Naga women are also engaged in collecting resources found in the forest and in the nearby jhum land. Women are seen as playing a vital role in household chores, feeding and caring for families. They assist their husbands in cash crop production. Women take the major responsibility to care for the sick, infants and elderly persons in the family. It is a well-established fact that the patriarchal norms have shaped gender role in most societies of the world. The assigned gender roles in Naga society see the women in the rural areas of Nagaland bearing multiple responsibilities. In performing their roles as a homemaker and a farmer, women are burden with extra workload and the multiple roles undertaken often cause health issues. The unequal division of labor between men and women results in time constraint leaving little scope for women to undertake more public roles such as participation in polity. Fig 5.2 shows the time Naga women spent in household chores and agricultural activities.

**Fig 5.2. Time spent by Women in household chores and agricultural activities**

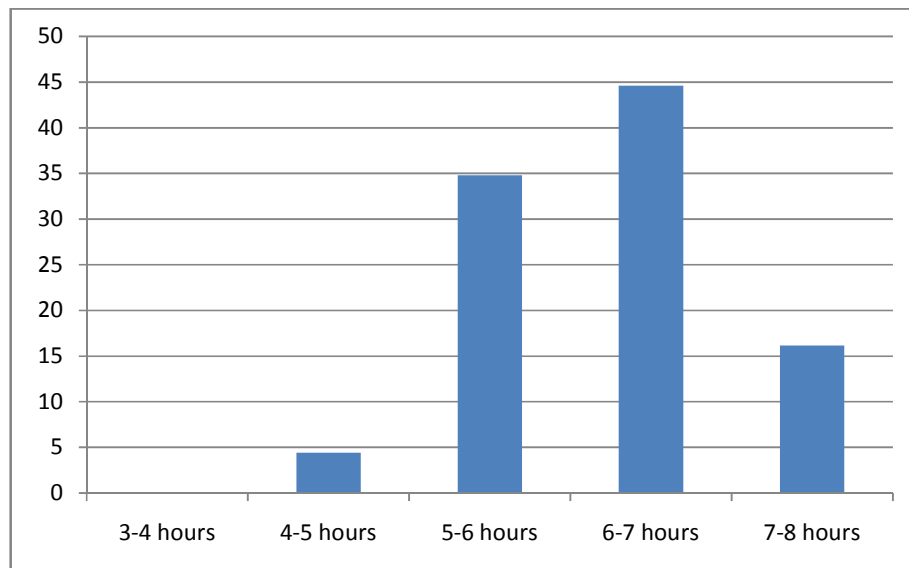


Fig 5.2 clearly indicates the time spent by women in household chores and in agricultural activities. For this question, only the 204 female respondents in the study were taken into consideration. 44.6 percent of the female respondents spend work six to seven hours in household chores and agricultural activities. 34.8 percent of respondents put in five to six hours of work in a day while 16.17 percent of respondents said they work for seven to eight hours in a day largely owing to a big number of family sizes. 4.41 percent of the respondents were found to work for four to five hours in a day. No female respondents were found for three to four hours work in a day which suggests the substantial amount of time that Naga women put in towards household and related chores. It points to the fact that a bulk of women in the village works six to seven hours putting in long hours of work in a day. The household duties and activities performed by women everyday throw up some significant insight into their social dynamics. Should a women fall ill, it is not husband or male members of the family that takes over the chores. Rather a female relative or a friend comes and does work for her and in return, she does the same when her relatives/friends are ill.

Thus, it is visible the sexual division of work between men and women in Naga society. Whilst, the work division may differ from society to society and culture to culture, from the present study it can be said that in Naga society there is a strict division of work whether it is household work or agricultural work.

### **5.5. Gender Wage Gap**

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2014) defines the ‘Gender Wage Gap’ as the difference between male and female earnings expressed as a percentage of male earning.<sup>108</sup> Gender wage gap is noticed in almost all human societies. Female agricultural labors all over the world experience certain discrimination with regard to the wage earned with reference to male workers. Most notably, they receive a lower wage than men for the same work. No country has fully been able to close the gender gap. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2014, Iceland ranks number one in terms of the closed gender gap that includes economy, education, health care and political participation while Yemen was ranked the least. India ranked 114 in terms of the gender gap. In India the average women labor wage for agricultural work is 30 percent lower than men.

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<sup>108</sup> Taniguchi Kiyoshi & Alika Tuwo (2014), *New Evidence on the Gender Wage Gap in Indonesia*, p-4

**Table 5.1. Gender Wage Gap in agricultural activities**

District	Village	Male wage (Rs)	Female wage(Rs)	Wage Gap
Mokokchung	Chungliyemsen	200	130	70
	Longkhum	250	200	50
	Sungratsii	200	150	50
Tuensang	Sangsomong	200	150	50
	Tsadang	200	150	50
	Tuensang	150	150	00
Wokha	Bhandari	150	150	00
	Longsa	200	180	20
	Sanis	200	180	20
Zunheboto	Lumami	300	300	00
	Lazami	200	150	50
	Rotomi	200	120	80
Average Wage		204.17	167.5	36.67

Gender difference is seen in terms of labor wage in Nagaland where women are paid less for the same work. Many women are unpaid workers who work as family labour, barter or exchange labor besides the daily chores at home. In the selected village, labour

wage is decided by the village council. They decide depending upon the type of work – agricultural labour; cutting down of trees for firewood, labour for the stone crusher, clearing the plantation area etc. The decision made by the village council is followed by the whole village. It can be pointed out here that Village Council in Nagaland comprises only of male members.

The table above shows the daily wages received differentially by males and females for the agricultural work done in the field. The wages are not permanent and subject to change with time. As the market price increases, the wages of the labour also increases. However, the increase in the wage or the change in the wages still continue to show the gender gap. The table 5.3 displays lower wages paid to women even though the work load and the allocation of time are the same. Overall, the average gender wage gap is 36.67 percent. So in spite of putting in many hours in the field, women are still marginalized which limits their economic capabilities to contribute to the household economy.

## **5.6. Emerging Trends in Farming**

The changing cropping pattern from traditional farming to cash crop and plantation is increasing at an alarming rate in almost all districts of Nagaland. The conversion of shifting plot to commercial plantation of trees such as rubber tree and orchards such as mango groves, guava, litchi, orange etc shows the emerging trend from subsistence farming to market-oriented farming. Substantial areas of lands are being converted into commercial crops and most clan lands are becoming more privatized. Here, privatization means the transfer of community land to private land. The clan lands are now leased out to individuals for private use which leads to shrinkage of common property resources. From the present study, it was found that most households are starting to invest in cash crops and various plantations. Although shifting cultivation is



still practiced, it is now confined to smaller areas while leaving the bigger plots of land for cash crop and different types of plantations. This can be gauged from the figure below.

**Fig. 5.3. Household engaged in commercial farming besides shifting cultivation**

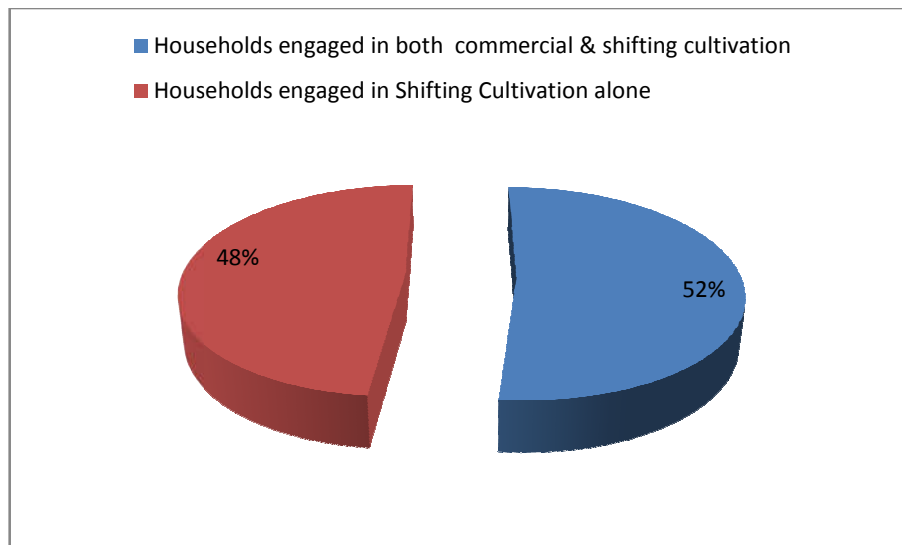


Fig 5.3 reflects the fact that a substantial percentage of households at 52 percent are engaged in other forms of commercial farming in addition to shifting cultivation. While only 48 percent of the households were found to be engaged solely in shifting cultivation. This phenomenon reflects the increasing monetization of the rural economy in Naga society. As the market demand for food items increase, it would further lead to an increase in commercialization of resources. Such phenomenon can lead to further privatization of land. Privation may lead to productivity increase in the short term but it also frequently increases poverty because poor people who previously had access to common property resources will no longer access to such. Although circumstance differs in different districts, there is sticking convergence of interest in questions of local resource management. In rural Nagaland, people without individual private land

can farm on clan or community land for their sustenance. Community lands are those lands which are set apart for the use of community without any rights by an individual. In community land, villagers have the right to forage for resources, hunt as well as cultivate. But with the increase in privatization of community and clan land in the hands of few moneyed people, common and poor farmers' right over such land decreases. And when there is a decrease of such land, women are the most to undergo hardship.

In many of the villages under study, it was found that the area of rice cultivation under shifting cultivation has decreased over the last one decade. Though the practice is still followed by villagers, it was observed most households are starting to decrease their jhum plot. The main reason is the increasing interest in plantation of varieties of fruits, commercial trees and crops. For instance, in Sungratsü village under Mokokchung District, it was found that majority of the household is engaged in production of colocasia. Colocasia crop is used to make *Anüshi*<sup>109</sup> which is a popular dish among the Ao tribes. It is sold for rupees 300 or more per kilo. It is sold in the local market as well as in other states. A large bulk of *Anüshi* is sold every year earning up to 60-80 thousand in one season. The alternative livelihood security through the sale of *Anüshi* is increasing each year. Therefore, instead of cultivating paddy in a large plot, the villagers are now starting to cultivate in smaller plot and focusing more on the cultivation of colocasia. So when there is an alternative and perceived better means to earn hard cash, it is self-explanatory that interest on such items will increase. It will not be long when the cultivators will abandon the practice and choose a better alternative means of earning a livelihood.

Similarly, in Longkhum village, many households engaged in shifting cultivation are concomitantly engaged in cash crop farming. Majority of the respondents were found to

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<sup>109</sup> *Anüshi* is a colocassia paste which is made by grinding the leaves.

be engaged in cabbage and tomato farming. An individual farmer can earn around 80,000 to 1lakh in one season from such crops. The income generated from it has improved their living standards. Small plots of land are selected for shifting cultivation leaving the bigger plot for cash crop.

Another reason for a decrease in Jhum plot is since most young people are living outside the village pursuing studies and finding other avenues for livelihood, only the parents are left behind in most cases to tend to the field. This trend has also resulted in a decrease of the jhum plots in the villages under study.

Rural lives and livelihood depend on natural resource found in the forest. The resources have for millennia contributed to the food security of the rural people. Forest products and other stocks found naturally like fuel wood, fruits and fibers, building materials, medicine and herbs etc are used mostly by women to meet their ends. The increasing monoculture and profit-oriented mindset can be a disadvantage to women in Naga rural society. As more lands become more privatized, to forage products from the forest are becoming extremely difficult. As Naga women are the primary collectors and cultivator of natural resources, the decline in traditional farming has led to fewer resources that were found earlier on land and its adjacent forest. The increasing interest for commercial plantation has increased the employment opportunities for a large number of populations in the village. However, while most men venture out as laborers, women are left behind to tend to crops and care for the family. Thus the increasing responsibilities have escalated the workload of Naga women.

Since modern variety of seeds have higher average yields and fetches a better price, farmers are inclined to plant introduced varieties. With the introduction of new seeds, there is the danger of increase of foreign weeds and diseases. This will in turn damage the soil and further alienate communities from their means of production. Another

disadvantage to the introduction of modern and hybrid seeds is the slow disappearance of women's knowledge of seed selection and preservation. As women hold the primary responsibility for the preservation of seeds, their major role can be at risk along with the disappearance of their TEK. Their association with nature is so intrinsic that they know which trees can give shade, bear fruit and what type of plant can be grown under such trees. Whilst both men and women use the resources extensively found in the forest, it can be observed that women tend to collect those resources that are of use for the household consumption. Introduction of new varieties of seeds not only threatened the TEK of women but also poses the danger of the decline in biodiversity of the state.

Land relation in Naga society is based on customs and tradition according to which, it is men who make the final decision on how and when to use the land and its resources. As land is directly linked to women's interest in the natural resource, it hinders their ability to use the product according to their capacity and needs. It is said that land is so important that in the olden times, women had no right to even plant a tree because allowing them to plant trees could in some way give them the right over the land on which the trees are planted. Women could collect branches and twigs of a tree but they do not have the right to cut down the tree. This practice displays the rigidity of patriarchy and patrilineal practice in the society. Bargaining with patriarchy is a far cry for womenfolk in Nagaland. To shift and display a new look requires full support from the male counterpart. It is important to explore how village leaders perceive the issue as they are considered the custodians of customary law. The final decision made by them throws light on the view of the whole community. If there is interest in bringing equality and a paradigm shift in Naga society, equality of free access to land and complete freedom to control over the resources is a prerequisite.

Gender relation between men and women affects the quality of their involvement in managing resources. Women need be given full right to make use of the resources without harming or endangering the plants and animals. Social barriers and gender bias customary against women have been a major setback for the growth of their potential and greater contribution to the society. Women need to be educated to challenge the traditional gender system. Most women in Nagaland are aware of the changes required to improve their status but women themselves do not want to cause trouble by challenging such a tradition.

# **CHAPTER VI**

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Family until recently has been considered as the basic form of household organization and wage labour the most important source of family subsistence. Under these conditions, the great bulk of domestic work consists of the production of use value through the combination of commodities brought in the market and domestic labor time.<sup>110</sup> Such products contribute to the reproduction and help in the proper functioning of the economic system. However, analysis of agricultural society like the Naga society reveals that it does not really fit neatly into the above categorization because of the lack of clear division of what constitutes productive and reproductive works. For instance, the gathering of NTFPs, firewood, growing vegetables or even cooking, etc., contributes to the economy of society. Despite a clear definition of sexual division of labor, men and women's work are integrated in time and space. The separation between productive and reproductive activities is often artificial, symbolized, perhaps, by a woman carrying a baby on her back while working in the fields<sup>111</sup> or a woman vegetable vendor carrying out her business whilst holding a small baby in her arms. The work of the Economist Ester Boserup marked a landmark in understanding the position of women in developing economies and the way in which women's position was being interpreted. She was the first to point out that economic growth in the developing world did not benefit women and men equally. Boserup's work '*Women's role in Economic Development*' was a watershed in development literature where she recognized that women were not merely passive in the development process but also an active participant in production and reproduction which was necessary for poverty reduction and economic growth. The exact nature of women's work varies from society to society. Feminist writings point out that the works of women are often underestimated be it in complex capitalist society or in a simple agricultural society.

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<sup>110</sup> Beneria Lourdes and Gita Sen (1981), *Accumulation, Reproduction and "Women's Role in Economic Development"*: Boserup Revisited, p- 292

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid* p-292

Eco-feminists such as Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies have through their work unfolded the linkage between nature and women. They believe that there is a deep connection between earth and women and hence the term ‘Mother Nature’ or ‘Mother Earth’.<sup>112</sup> Cultural eco-feminism identifies a powerful and positive line between women and nature by explaining the special affinity with nature through their reproductive rights. Whilst Bina Agarwal has seriously raised broader issues about the management of gender relations in connection with environmental management strategies and stressed the role of customs, laws and social structures in determining women’s relationship to their environment.<sup>113</sup> This intimate relationship between women and nature has helped women to understand its surroundings. The process in which nature and women work together has created a special bond making women the true custodian of biodiversity. Naga women are aware of the fact that if nature is disturbed and destroyed, their daily requirements are at risk. Therefore, they make it a point to conserve and preserve the biodiversity leading to conservation of environment and its natural resources. Women are also considered to be more environmentally sensitive than men because of their traditional caring and nurturing role. This connection has placed women in a better place than men as advocates of nature. It is suggested that life giving quality between women and nature makes both equally vulnerable to male domination. Therefore, any negative change in nature is bound to have a negative impact on women as well.

Set against such theoretical foundation, the present work had sought to analyze the nature of women’s participation in agriculture and contribution to the rural economy by delving into the role of Naga women in Jhum cultivation and in management of the natural resources. Agriculture being the mainstay of Naga society, a major portion of

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<sup>112</sup> Mikkelsen Caecilie (2005), *Indigenous People, Gender and Natural Resource Management*, p-153

<sup>113</sup> Pandit Ram Chandra (2016), *A Gender Perspective on Environmental Movements, Concern and perception* in Dhanaraju Vulli and Kh. Narendra Singh *Contesting Gender History, Politics and Identity*, p-84



the population depends on it for their livelihood. The present study highlights the significant involvement of both men and women in agricultural activities of the society. However, a comparison between the engagement of males and females in agriculture as per existing statistics points to the fact that on an average, the number of female cultivators as against total female working population was 28.6 percent more than the male cultivators against the total male working population (table 3.4). This belies the general understanding that agricultural and other productive activity is often termed as a men's domain and house or domestic work as women's job. From the social definition of women as housewives follow the definition of men as the breadwinners, the separation between the private sphere of the house and the public sphere, the sphere of production and reproduction and the subordination of the latter under the former.<sup>114</sup> When one talks about the private and public sphere, it can be understood that the division of labor is assumed to be based on gender lines with men working outside the home and women work at home. However, the present study clearly brings to light that rigid distinction between productive and reproductive work is neither possible nor feasible when one examines the gender integrated roles in agricultural activities and the management of resources in the Naga society.

Though considered by many as economically inefficient and ecologically harmful form of cultivation by environmentalists, shifting cultivation continues to be widely practiced in many parts of the districts with up to 90 percent of cultivable land under this form of cultivation (Figure 3.2). The community still holds deep sentiments towards various socio-cultural activities associated with shifting cultivation. A systematic study of the nature of participation of men and women in the intricate steps involved in the Jhum cultivation points to the integral role played by women in the process of agricultural

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<sup>114</sup> Mies Maria (2012) *Dynamics of Sexual Division of Labour and Capital Accumulation* in Padmini Swaminathan *Women and Work*, p- 59

production in the state (Table 3.6). Right from the process of site selection to the harvesting and storage of the paddy, the study has found the clear-cut division of labor by gender as well as harmonious blending of gender roles. While the tasks of site/plot selection and distribution for the current jhum cycle is exclusively the domain of males in line with the patriarchal nature of Naga society wherein ownership of all immovable property rests with the menfolk, thereafter, all other aspects of jhum cultivation sees the full involvement of both males and females. The distribution of jhum plot is normally followed by what is known as ‘slashing’ which basically refers to the clearing of unwanted vegetation from the selected plot. At this juncture of the process, the present study shows that in most villages of Nagaland, this task involved both men and women according to 68.99 percent of the respondents. Slashing is followed by burning wherein both men and women work in tandem as pointed out by 67.04 percent of respondents.

Cutting trees is somewhat predominantly reserved for men as it involves much physical strength. The present study found that 88.55 percent of cutting trees was done by men. On the other hand, leveling of the plots which follows the cutting of trees is normally regarded as a female task with 66.76 percent of it performed by women folks on average. Any jhum field requires a field hut for protection from the elements of nature, so also for cooking purpose. This task of construction is carried out generally by males in Naga society. One area of activity where both men and women are equally engaged is in the process of creating bunds in the jhum fields for the purpose of checking soil erosion. Thereafter, one of the most crucial steps in the jhum process, i.e., the selection of seeds and crop follows, which is exclusively reserved for womenfolk in Naga society with cent percent of the Respondents affirming this fact. After the seed selection is finalized by the women, the sowing of seeds take place wherein, without exception, it sees the full participation of both men and women equally. Once the seeds start

growing, it is a constant battle to keep the weeds in check so that the fledgling paddies are not suffocated. This backbreaking task of weeding is carried out predominantly by women, according to 99.44 percent respondents. At the time of harvest, both men and women are equally involved again. Threshing of paddy after harvest is one activity which is never done exclusively by men; either it is done by women as is seen in 44.41 of cases or it involves both men and women as indicated by 55.59 of respondents. Therefore jhum farming sees the extensive involvement of women at all stages. It is pertinent to point out here that the domestic role of women is extended to the productive arena wherein most of the cooking in the fields during the farming process is carried out by women.

In addition to their integral role in the cultivation of rice which is their staple diet, in the process of shifting cultivation, Naga women also cultivate different varieties of vegetables and cereals in the jhum fields at strategic locations throughout the year. All jhum cultivators manage multi-crops in the adjacent land alongside paddy. The additional vegetable crops cultivated serve to supplement their diet and are used primarily for household consumption. Often any surplus accruing out of these crops are sold in the local market to augment the family income. In the selected villages under study, it was learned that the farmers grew at least 30 or more varieties of crops alongside the paddy (Table 4.2). While jhum cultivation in itself is subsistence type of farming, it was basically from the sale proceeds of such surplus agricultural products that most farmers met their pecuniary requirements.

Not only do the women market the products from their fields, but they are also found to extensively forage, collect and market the NTFPs accrued from forests in the village vicinity. Beside their agility in the agricultural workforce, Naga women are active participants in management of various resources found in nature. The present study

shows that women visited the forests regularly to forage and gather the wild edible fruits, vegetables and other faunal species. Out of the total respondents, a majority of the female respondents at 62 percent were found to be engaged in this activity. There are at least 55 NTFPs collected by the rural women from nature's bounty (Table 4.1) for their sustenance. The nutritional status of rural Naga households remained secured in large part due to the significant role played by women in making use of the natural resources.

The study found that most of the respondents at 77 percent used the agricultural produce from their jhum fields and the forest products not only for domestic use but with a duality of purpose, i.e., for both household consumption as well as for sale. The marketing of such surplus products in Naga society is found to be the exclusive domain of women (Figure 4.7) with 84.3 percent of all marketing carried out solely by women while 15.69 percent of female respondents undertook the marketing task carrying their young children. This provides a classic illustration of the interweaving of the productive and reproductive role of Naga women. The present study clearly indicates that Naga men do not participate in the marketing of agricultural products.

For the Naga people, forests are considered as the second most important natural resource after water. Thus, the forest provides the people with food, fuel, medicine and other raw materials for different purposes. So much so that when women, as the primary gatherers from the forests forage there, they do not go about randomly or wantonly. Rather, the forest and its resources are treated with utmost respect and care is taken to ensure that they pick only what is essential for their needs and the rest are left to regenerate. They are particularly careful not to uproot any plant unnecessarily. While foraging, they would not defecate or pass urine in any water bodies but maintain a good distance from it to answer nature's call.

The traditional engagement of the Naga women in particular and the people in general with their forests and environment exhibits high environmental ethics partly due to their dependence on its resources and also importantly because they own a sense of spiritual connectedness with their ecosystem. The natural elements around them such as a forest or mountain is believed to have a spirit of their own which needs to be treated with respect lest their wrath falls on the people. Till date, there are certain parts of the forest which are taboo for people such as that found in Longsa village under Wokha district.

Due to their reliance on the resources of the forests, women are found to exhibit a deep sense of responsibility towards nurturing and preserving the biodiversity in their locale. No doubt both men and women have acquired traditional knowledge from living in close proximity with nature for generations. The division of work along the gender lines has shaped their knowledge system where men and women have varying forms of expertise in administering and protecting biological diversity. Women's daily activities, experiences and knowledge have made them a major stakeholder in protecting biological diversity. The diverse knowledge which they have has proved to be a factor in preserving the varieties of flora and fauna. As the gatherer, gardener, domesticator and seed custodian, they developed an intimate connection with nature.

A significant role played by Naga women in using the resources and actively contributing to the conservation of their biodiversity is to be found in their seed preservation role. Women are the primary seed selectors as well as preservers in all the districts of the state. Cutting across districts and irrespective of tribe or village, cent percent of respondents affirmed this fact. Whether it is preservation of paddy seeds, vegetables, pulses or fruits, they undertook the responsibility in all seriousness based on their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) which had been handed down orally through the ages. It is a difficult task as it requires several steps to preserve and the

method of preservation also differs depending upon the type and varieties of seeds. With the right knowledge about the seasons, quality, suitability of environment, and based on the requirements of the household, women had been playing this role for millennia in Naga society.

However, with the merger of hybrid seeds and the upsurge of cash crop, there is declining practice in seed preservation. The hybridization of seed was an invasion into the seed itself. In many parts of the world, the increasing use of hybrid seeds has caused an alarming factor in reducing the quality of seeds. As Kloppen Burghas stated, it broke the unity of seed as food grain and as a means of production. In doing so, it opened up the space for capital accumulation that private industry needed in order to control plant breeding and commercial seed production.<sup>115</sup> The most affected of such uncontrolled occurrence would be rural women who are dependent on seeds for their food security.

Seed conservation is also weakening and in danger of becoming lost in the future. As most young generation prefers to venture out for different jobs and their indifference towards working in the field, they are losing the knowledge of traditional seed preservation. It is found that in most villages under study, older women have preserved the traditional knowledge but there is a huge gap among the younger generation as their interest in learning is diminishing. It is therefore difficult to assume that such knowledge would continue to exist in the future.

Another threat towards traditional seed preservation is the new patent law, Seed Act 2004 and Genetic Use Restriction Technology (GURT) which in many parts of India are causing a serious menace by denying women's traditional role in seed saving. According to the Seed Act, it is compulsory to register the varieties of seeds and an unlicensed variety of seeds is considered as illegal. The Patent Act in the US, Scotland,

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<sup>115</sup> Shiva Vandana , *The Seed and the Earth Biotechnology and the Colonization of Regeneration*, p- 157

Germany, UK and the European Union has prevented farmers from exchanging uncertified seeds. With globalization and commercialization on the rise in Nagaland, it will in the future pose a serious threat to the traditional knowledge of preservation and conservation of seed. This will severely set women in a disadvantaged position as their generational role as seed protector will disappear.

It is pertinent to add that not only preservation of seeds, but the female cultivators also exchanged different varieties of seeds at the intra-village, inter-village and inter-state level as well which has lead to the enhancement of biodiversity in different locales through the years.

In addition to the agricultural and the foraging activities of Naga women, they also extensively practice kitchen gardening, with almost every household maintaining a small garden in their backyards. These provide additional fresh vegetables and herbs throughout the year to the households. The kitchen gardens are predominantly the responsibility of women in Naga society though in some cases both husband and wife may manage it together. Data from the present study shows that 96 percent of the respondents practiced kitchen gardening out of which 96 percent was maintained exclusively by women. Besides domestic consumption, surplus products were often shared with neighbors and relatives which boosted affinity and social solidarity in society. The kitchen gardens also served an educational function of teaching young girls the art of agricultural activity from a young age. Also, many women used it as an experimental laboratory to test out a new variety of seeds to check its suitability to the local environment. Any surplus accruing out of the kitchen garden, after fulfilling domestic and social uses may be sold in the market.

Another important activity that points towards Naga women's contribution to the economy of the state and to household income in the present study is through their

participation in self-help groups (SHGs). The involvement in and contribution to productive agricultural activities by Naga women is not confined only to the household level but is extended to the public domain through their involvement in Self Help Groups (SHGs) which are found in all villages. These homogeneous groups have successfully carried out different small projects (Table 4.3) which have emerged as an effective instrument to promote entrepreneurship. Some village such as Longsa had as many as 25 SHGs which were all comprised of women members. An examination of the activities undertaken by the SHGs in the villages under study brings out the fact that most of them are engaged in agricultural and allied activities. This could be due to their familiarity with this sphere of activity but it also underlines their limited knowledge about other activities pointing to the need for skill development and capacity building of rural women in general. Some of the activities undertaken by the SHGs in the study were such as cultivating cash crops like ginger, tomatoes, cucumber, etc., for sale. Other than these activities, they also took up weaving, piggery, making traditional necklaces, etc. to generate income for the group.

As per the accounts of the female respondents, many husbands were initially reluctant to the idea of their wives getting involved in the SHGs, but with the realization of the positive impact through participation in the groups especially in the form of additional income, acceptance dawned. Besides the financial benefits, additionally, the confidence of the women in their decision making abilities developed which is significant in light of their gender role in society wherein traditionally males dominated in the arena of decision making whether in public or in the private sphere. As they are now contributing to the economy, their opinions are taken more seriously with regard to child care and other family decisions. The emergence and rapid multiplication of SHGs in Nagaland are becoming a phenomenon in the development scenario. Their



accessibility to loans and engagement in micro-enterprises has facilitated greater freedom and has empowered them to work not only within their confined village but in a larger arena.

The question over control and management of the proceeds earned from the sale of agricultural and other NTFPs products, as also the income from their activities in the SHGs assumes great significance in light of the pivotal role played by the rural women in marketing. The present study reveals that women had relative autonomy over the money earned through the sale of forest and agricultural products (Figure 4.8). A substantial number of respondents at 48 percent responded that it was women themselves who managed the income. Joint management of the income was also indicated by 34 percent of respondents where men and women together decided on the mode of its usage and only 18 percent of respondents pointed to males as being in charge of the money. So when one considers the fact that female cultivators constitute 62.20 percent of the total female working population in the state, along with the findings from the present study which shows that women cultivators assume primary responsibility in the production and marketing of agricultural products, it can be concluded that the hypothesis concerning women as the backbone of agricultural workforce remains validated.

At the same time, their management of natural resources and participation in the SHGs and contribution thereof to the rural economy indicates that women play a predominant role in the rural economy. The significant role played by women in the rural economy has to be viewed against the larger picture of their reproductive role in the domestic sphere. It is pertinent to point out that whilst both men and women involve themselves in productive labor, it is generally the women in Naga society that is held responsible for reproductive labor. Division of labor by gender often rests on the notion of

‘appropriate’ gender roles which are determined by the cultural norms of a given society. It differentiates men and women’s work by prescribing and proscribing what men and women should and should not do. Hence, household task and public tasks are allocated on the basis of gender attitude and values learned through socialization. In production relation, gender relations take the form of the appropriation of women’s household work. In labor market, it takes the form of discrimination in wages, inadequate access to resources, lack and control over land etc.

In the context of the study, some of the domestic chores considered were such as cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of livestock, fetching water, collecting firewood, etc. It was found that on an average, women performed 83.79 percent of all household chores (Figure 3.7). This finding is supplemented by the fact that majority of the women respondents spent between six to seven hours a day on domestic work and agricultural work (Figure 5.3). Additional responsibility such as caring for infants, care of the sick and elderly, often described as a family obligation, falls on the women too.

These responsibilities can be subsumed under reproductive labor as they are performed within the private arena and are considered to have use value rather than exchange value. Such tasks are outside the remunerated realm and so often go unnoticed and unaccounted for. The undervaluation of women’s reproductive labor has led to an undervaluation of women’s work in general which often accounts for gender gaps in many areas of public life, more specifically reflected in gender wage differentials as is also found in the present research work.

Female agricultural laborers in many parts of the world experience discrimination with regard to the wages earned. Such gender wage difference indicates the status and position of women in Naga society. Gender wage differences are a central feature of gender inequality both in its economic aspects and in the social construction of gender

identity. Socialist feminism assumes that if patriarchy exists as a system of social structure and practice, gender will play an important role in determining the work division between the genders. The question of the role of wage rates is important because it gives an indication of how far Naga women are equal and how far gender have been playing an important part in identifying the position of women in Naga society. Though women in Naga society played such an integral role in the agricultural process, they still faced gender discrimination when it came to labor wage. In all the villages studies, it was found that women were paid less for the same nature of work, though the rate varied from village to village and between districts. However, on an average, women in Nagaland earned 36.67 percent less than their male counterparts in daily wages for the same work performed (Table 5.1). This is a strong indicator of gender inequity in the economic and social arena of Naga society. And it also reflects the patriarchal forces at play in the larger societal level.

Naga society displays some classic characteristics of patriarchy such as the denial of inheritance rights to female offsprings and most notably, the debarring of women from traditional seats of political power such as the village council and the *Naga Hoho*. Ownership of land rights is also vested wholly with the males in society. For the Naga people land is more than just material wealth; it symbolizes their identity and rootedness to their culture; it determines the status of an individual, family or clan. Therefore, the control and management of land always rest with the men folks. This situation poses a paradox when one regards it vis-à-vis the immense contribution and integral role that women played in the production process and the securement of livelihood for the household and the rural economy in particular. Since no Naga woman can claim a right to the land they toil upon, it implies that they do not own any land asset in the true sense of the term; they are either toiling on their husband's or father's land.

An examination of the status of land ownership among the single (unmarried or widowed) female respondents in the present study brings to bear the dispossessed status of Naga women as far as the right to land was concerned. All the widowed respondents were found to be toiling on their late husband's land for sustenance with the understanding that upon her death, it would be taken back by her deceased husband's lineage; the unmarried women were tilling their fathers' clan land; widows with adult sons were found to be using their sons' land for cultivation. All these points to the fact that the female respondents in question had only users' right, but no proprietary right over the land they toiled on. Therefore, they did not possess the right to manage, control or develop the land at will – in a nutshell, they did not have any decision making right over the land.

The marginalization of women from land ownership and political institutions has gender-wide ramifications in Naga society. Customary laws and the socio-cultural system have often projected women as secondary citizens. Though men and women work in tandem in all agricultural operations, when it comes to controlling over resources and decision making matters, it is men who take the ultimate decisions. Though women are the primary foragers of forest resources, they have no control over the management of the forests. Should the men folk of the village decide to privatize the forest, or turn it into a reserved forest; the women will have no say at all. Thus their perceived autonomy over access to forest resources and agricultural production process is always precarious without real security in the absence of decision making power. One may conclude thereof that Naga women have mere access to resources without ownership rights through their relationship with a male member of society. Therefore, though women had access to the use of resources since they did not have proprietary

rights, they are marginalized in decision making concerning resource management which validates our second hypothesis.

With the emerging trend in farming where there is a shift from subsistence farming to cash crop or commercial farming, the relative autonomy experienced by rural women within the jhum cultivation and dependence on NTFPs is at risk. The study found that the area of cultivated jhum land has decreased substantially over the years. Rice being the staple diet of the Naga people have helped sustain the practice of jhum cultivation; yet, the yields being at subsistence level only, people are turning to commercial farming to better their economic situation in the face of increasing monetization of the economy and rise in consumerism culture. This trend is clearly indicated through the present study wherein 52 percent of the households were found engage simultaneously in both commercial and jhum farming. With larger section of the rural population gradually taking up cash crops, there is the eminent danger of fragmentation of clan or community land in the villages. This will indeed pose a threat to the easy access enjoyed by Naga women presently over clan and community forest resources because once land is privatized, it will be out of their bounds. The conversion of clan land into individual commercial farms has shrunk the common property resources which tend to adversely affect women who are directly dependent on natural resources. So also, cash cropping involves monoculture, which implies that the diverse biodiversity that is characteristic of Nagaland will be lost. The relative autonomy enjoyed by women over the management of NTFPs and income generated from such could be adversely affected which will impact on their overall position in society as well.

Decline in traditional agricultural practice and access to natural resources will have far-reaching consequences with regard to the tremendous traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) currently borne by the rural women of the state. Once their constant contact with

nature's bounty and the practices associated therein loses its vigor, their knowledge about wild edible fruits and vegetables, preservation of seeds, etc will gradually wither away, in the absence of documented knowledge since all traditional knowledge had been passed down orally through the generations. With the changing environment and emerging climate dilemma, women are seen as invisible environmental activists who by their daily role have maintained ecological stability and sustainability of the resources. The tremendous increase in the quantity and complexity of human's demand has resulted in a serious ecological hazard. The main actors often the women are the most affected population as they are more connected with nature and they depend chiefly on natural resources found in the forest and land. While the environmental knowledge of women is increasingly being recognized in the past decade, their knowledge is at risk as it might be lost before fully understanding it.

A significant feature of the agricultural practice of the Naga people pertains to the association of the agricultural cycles with different major festivals of the people. Though the advent of Christianity in Naga society through the proselytization of American missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had brought a halt to the indigenous religious systems of the people, yet one sees the continuation of many traditional beliefs and practices till date. Whereas in the olden days, the agricultural cycles were preceded by taboos and live sacrifices, today, they are replaced by prayers for good harvests. All the Naga tribes still observe major festivals to coincide with the harvest time, sowing time, thanksgiving after harvests, etc., which are followed propitiously particularly in the villages (Table 3.5). The many festivals of the Nagas revolving around shifting cultivation and the community work involved show the social solidarity and oneness of the cultural life of the Naga people even at the present age rendering it inadmissible to dissociate the practice of jhum cultivation with the cultural life of the people. This

validates the hypothesis that jhum cultivation is an extension of the cultural and economic life of the people.

Based on the findings from the present research work, some suggestions are herein presented below:

The present study has highlighted women's pivotal contribution to the economy, livelihood sustenance and agricultural workforce. It is very clear that Naga women are major stakeholders in cultivation and natural resource management; yet, by virtue of their gender, they remained marginalized in decision making institutions at all levels. The Nagaland Biological Diversity Rules, 2011 have not deviated from this conventional gender attitude wherein decisions regarding the usage and conservation of the state's agro-biodiversity have been limited to the state officials and Village Council members of the local communities. This has to be seen in light of the fact that only males can be members of village councils in Naga society. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) points out that women directly bear the cost of poor participation in community institutions designed for natural resource management. Women's participation in community organizations that manage natural resources not only is an equity issue but also affects efficiency and effectiveness. The IFAD Poverty Report of 2001 notes that women are often excluded from community organizations or committees that manage natural resources such as water or forests, even when the projects are intended to benefit women. The exclusion of women may marginalize women from such valuable physical assets such as irrigation water or forest products; and human assets, such as training, credit or other benefits earmarked only for the group or organization members.

Therefore, keeping in purview the integral role played by women in the agricultural production process and conservation of biodiversity through their reproductive role, a

review of the Nagaland Biological Diversity Rules is necessitated to make it more gender-balanced so that both men and women are equally central to all policy making. The principle of Gender Budgeting needs to be applied in all policy decisions of the state.

As discussed in the preceding sections, Naga women play a predominant role in the rural economy of the state. Hence, it is imperative that building upon this role, capacity building training should be imparted to the women particularly in the field of financial literacy. Since most of the women have autonomy over the agricultural and NTFPs proceeds, such training will enable them to invest their income knowledgeably and better their economic position in society. Also, with the inevitable decline in the subsistence agricultural activities in the coming years or decades, capacity building of rural women may be directed towards entrepreneurship since they already exhibited a propensity towards this profession through the marketing of agro-forestry products, albeit on an unorganized scale.

Related to this aspect, the matter of discrimination in daily wages of women needs to be seriously taken cognizance of. The Indian Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 which aims at providing equal remuneration to men and women workers and prevent discrimination, particularly against women on the ground of gender need to be implemented in letter and spirit. Section 4 of the said Act specifies that equal remuneration should be made for the same work or work of similar nature, irrespective of gender.

In Naga society, the growing conflict between need and greed, the money culture and the extraction of natural resources beyond its capacity is starting to build unfavorable environmental dilemma. Bringing in the wisdom of women into decision making with their vast TEK can play a pivotal ameliorative role. The knowledge of Naga Women in conserving and preserving the flora and fauna is learned orally for generations.



Therefore, it is important that women's TEK need to be urgently studied and documented before it disappears with the passing away of the older generations. It was also observed from the present study that the younger generation has little or no knowledge regarding the usefulness of TEK.

Women's daily task and activities guide them to protect and conserve the biodiversity. This partnership between women and diversity has kept the world fed through history, at the present time, and will continue to feed the world in the future.<sup>116</sup> Being closer to nature, women have greater chance to contribute in balancing the environmental issues. Naga Women are not owners of the land or resources but their manifold contributions in conserving and preserving the environment can result in saving the various natural calamities. As they have tremendous indigenous knowledge relating to nature, it is suggested that academic focus on women and their environmental ethics will lead to positive insights in tackling the present environmental issues, not only locally but globally as well.

Access to land is a central issue because it is a crucial asset for food production, livelihood security and as an identity marker in a traditional society like the Naga society. Equitable access and right to land can result in alleviating women's poverty and exclusion from major decision making in relation to land. In Nagaland, access to and control over land resources is governed by customary laws. Considered against the modern human principles of gender equity, aspects of the customary law which discriminates against women need to be seriously debated and made relevant as per modern ethos.

Achieving gender equality and women empowerment is one of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 of the United Nations. The goal emphasizes to undertake

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<sup>116</sup> Shiva Vandana (2011)*Staying Alive*, p-xii

reforms to give women equal access to and control over productive resources. Hence, the State Government through its relevant agencies should prioritize the challenges of Naga women through innovative strategies by considering their vulnerability and closeness to nature. In this regard, as seeds form the most important element in the sustainable agricultural productivity, more emphasis should be given to local and organic seed breeding instead of drawing greater attention towards marketed seed or hybrid seeds. By focusing on the objective and goals, it would provide an unprecedented opportunity to refocus women's role in seed production and management. Hence, developing well-trained, self-reliant, self-motivated and visionary women seed producers can contribute to reduce the quality seed scarcity and ensure food security for the future of humanity.

A trend of privatization of community land in the form of a shift to commercial farming has been highlighted through the present study. Given the high dependence of rural women on common property resources, it is imperative that studies on the impact of commercialization of agriculture on Naga women be undertaken to understand the nature of impact as well as to suggest mitigating policy measures before extensive damages occur.

Naga women make specific contributions to agro-forestry value chains. These are important for their incomes, and in turn for the well-being and food security of their households. However, women's roles in value chains tend to be poorly supported by policy-makers and extension services. The perpetual lack of gender-disaggregated data hampers the development of policy interventions to address the issue. Hence, it is imperative that gender disaggregated statistics in agriculture be generated through research. This will allow the differential and specialized role of women in agro-forestry in the state be given priority by policy maker. In order to achieve this, the state

government can provide different capacity development services to improve the skills of state statisticians, researchers, planners and policy makers to collect, tabulate, analyze and use gender disaggregated data. These measures, if implemented properly, will capture gender differentials in rural poverty, access to and control of productive resources and economic opportunities, as well as nutrition and food security issues.

Finally, the conceptual obstacles to gender equity in Naga society stem from the failure to acknowledge that women are central not only to agricultural production but to the rural economy as well. Due to this failure, women are perceived to be unproductive dependent actors in society who need not be considered directly in development planning process. However, it has to be acknowledged that women are central to the processes of social change and therefore, they need to be at the center of any policy decisions of the state. This requires a multi-pronged approach of gender sensitization through proper education and creating gender awareness along with an earnest effort by all conscientious citizens to end the marginalization of women in political seats of decision making.

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