

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE NAGAS OF ASSAM: A CASE STUDY OF SIVASAGAR DISTRICT

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
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TABLES

Table No	Title	Page No.
1.1	The respondents according to household and sample	
3.1	Village wise Age distribution of the Respondents	
3.2	Sex distribution of the Respondents	
3.3	Village wise Marital Status of the Respondents	
3.4	Distribution of respondents according to tribes	
3.5	Village-wise Religious Affiliation of the respondents	
3.6	Village wise respondents mother tongue	
3.7	Place of Birth of the Respondents	
3.8	Village-wise respondents level of educational	
3.9	Occupation of the respondents: Village-wise	
4.1	Respondents' Opinion towards change in Agriculture, House building and occupation	
4.2	Respondents Attitudes towards Traditional Religious Beliefs and Practices	
4.3	Village wise Nature of Family according to respondents	
4.4	Village-wise attitudes towards Family Planning	
4.5	Tradition and its impact on family	
4.6	Respondents opinion on the status of women	
4.7	Continuity of tradition and present generation	
4.8	Village wise practice of tradition and culture	

4.9	Respondents opinion of life pattern between the hills and Plains living	
4.10	Tradition and its Impact on Contemporary Life patterns and thinking	
5.1	Respondents exposure to Languages	
5.2	Adoption to Local Culture	
5.3	Village wise Assimilation to Local Culture	
5.4	Changes in Traditional Beliefs, Rituals and Practices	
5.5	Nature of Impact on society and culture	
5.6	Change in Socio-cultural & religious life of the respondents	
5.7	Village wise preference of inter-community marriage	
5.8	Village wise Assimilation and Development	

LISTS OF FIGURES

Figure No.	Title	Page No.
Fig. 3.1	Age Groups	
Fig. 3.2	Tribe	
Fig. 3.3	Religious Affiliation	
Fig. 3.4	Mother Tongue	
Fig. 3.5	Occupation	

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NEFA	:	North East Frontier Agency
MGMREGA	:	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employments Guaranty Act
NGO	:	Non-Governmental organization
SHG	:	Self help group
V-I	:	Hahchara Naga Village
V-II	:	Monaiting Naga Village
V-III	:	Namsai Naga Village
V-IV	:	Baregaon Naga Village
V-V	:	Deopani Naga Village
V-VI	:	Siloni Naga Village
C-I	:	Bhadhara Naga Chowk
C-2	:	Gargoan Naga Chowk
C-3	:	Ligiri Phukhuri Naga Chowk
WWW	:	World Wide Web
G P	:	Gaon Panchayat
ONGC	:	Oil & Natural Gas Corporation
BSF	:	Border Security Force
NP	:	Nagaland Police
APBN	:	Assam Police Battalion
T.V	:	Television

GLOSSARY

<i>Adimjati</i>	:	Original community
<i>Adivasi</i>	:	First dwellers
<i>Ahom</i>	:	A Tai branch of Axom
<i>Ainam</i>	:	A kind of song sung by Assamese women
<i>Akkha</i>	:	Pig
<i>Aouling</i>	:	Bihu of the Kanyak Nagas.
<i>Assamese</i>	:	Denotes the language and race of Assam.
<i>Bhowna</i>	:	A theatrical one act play
<i>Bihu</i>	:	A kind of song sung by the Assamese during bihu festival.
<i>Bodo</i>	:	A branch of Kocheries in Assam.
<i>Bor</i>	:	Big
<i>Bornothon</i>	:	A clan of Nocte Tribe
<i>Bura Manuh</i>	:	Old man
<i>Buranji</i>	:	A branch of Assamese literature developed by the Ahoms.
<i>Burman</i>	:	A community of the Kocharies.
<i>Chakmas</i>	:	A Buddhist community living in Arunachal Pradesh.
<i>Chikoo</i>	:	Girl
<i>Ching</i>	:	Village
<i>Chuk</i>	:	A ward, a tiny village.

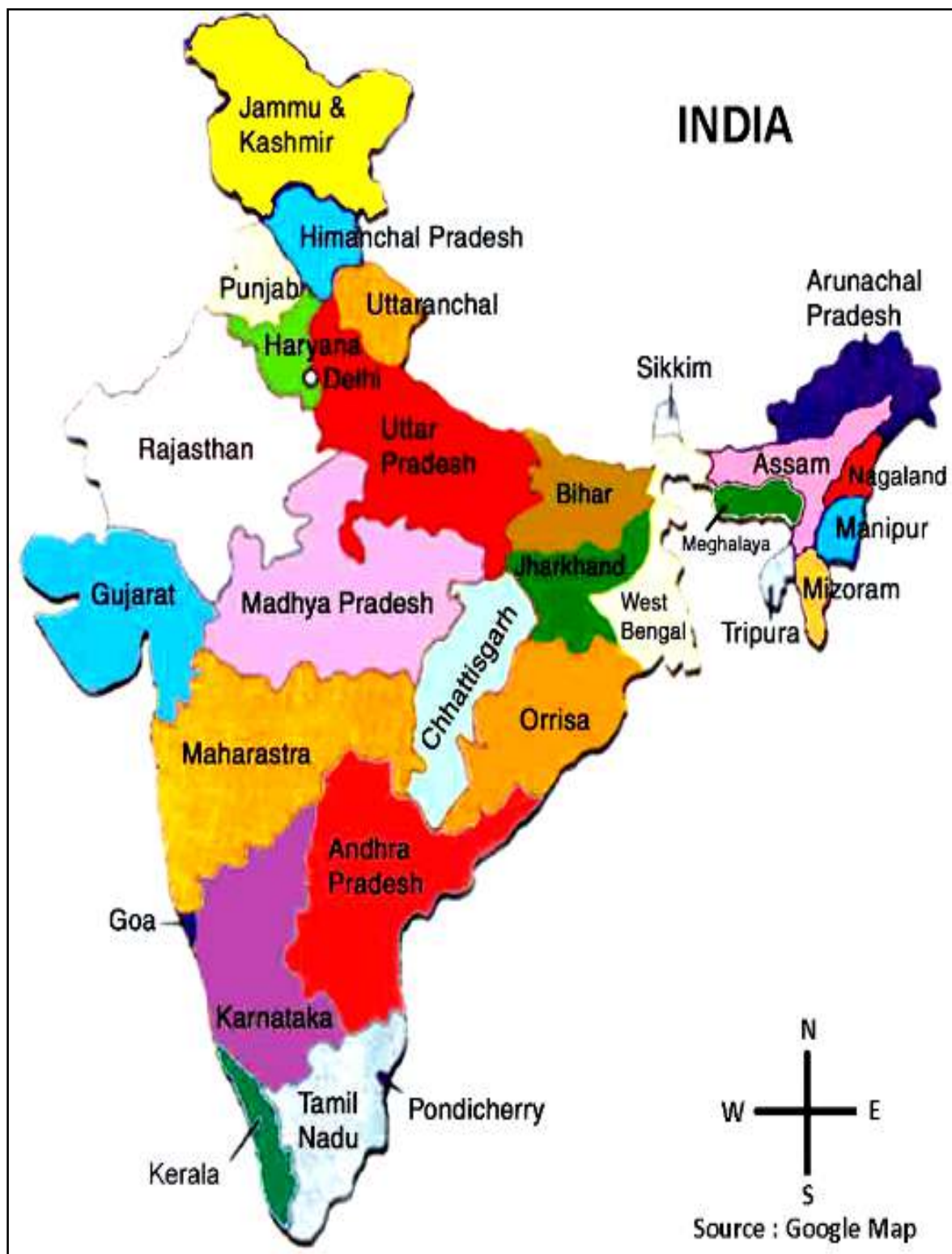
Dangoria	:	Respected
Dao	:	Sickle
Dawoni	:	Crop cutter women.
Deka Sang	:	dormitory of tribal
Deori	:	A branch of the Chutia community
	:	living in Axom
dhoti	:	folk wear lower part of body
Dimasa	:	A hill-living Kochari tribe.
Doke	:	A tribal group living in Arunachal.
Facksow	:	Shirt
Fangyoum	:	Jathi puja of waksing group
Foyem	:	Spear worship of Wankai Loncai
Gahori	:	Pig
gamosa	:	Towel
Gampa	:	Informer of King of Wangham
Gamusa	:	An honorable garment used by the Assamese
Garro	:	A tribal group living in Meghalaya
Garu	:	A tribal group living in Meghalaya
Goan Bura	:	Village headman
Goan	:	Village
Hajong	:	A tribal group living in Axom.
Hal	:	A tree found in Axom
Halami	:	A festival observed on day of taking a new abode of lonkai group

<i>Haluwa</i>	:	Plough man
Hantok	:	A clan of Kanyak Tribe
Harumothou	:	A clan of Nocte Tribe
<i>Hat</i>	:	A periodical market
<i>Hoi</i>	:	Vegetable
<i>Jabunan</i>	:	God of Noctes
Jal-Konwari	:	Water goddesses
<i>Janajati</i>	:	Tribal People
<i>Jathi</i>	:	Spear
<i>Jongban</i>	:	Deity
<i>Juhm</i>	:	Sifting cultivation
<i>Kaata</i>	:	Men
<i>Kachari</i>	:	A tribal group living in Axom.
<i>Kanyak</i>	:	A clan of the Nagas
Kanyaks	:	A tribal group living in Nagaland
<i>Kasikte</i>	:	Nocte dialect
<i>Kati Bihu</i>	:	An Axomia festival observed in the month October
<i>Khamti</i>	:	A Tai Branch of Axom
<i>Khel</i>	:	Clan
<i>Krishna</i>	:	A Hindu God
<i>Kuki</i>	:	A Naga branch
<i>Kukura</i>	:	Cock
kurta	:	shirts

<i>Lakhi Puja</i>	:	A religious Festival
<i>Lakhimi</i>	:	Hindu goddesses
<i>Longsei</i>	:	A dialect spoken by Kanyak Nagas
<i>Looknok</i>	:	A clan of Kanyak Tribe
<i>Lumpa</i>	:	Religious performer of Wangham
<i>Magh Bihu</i>	:	A seasonal festival of the Assamese
<i>Mahu</i>	:	Cow
<i>Manguya</i>	:	Village
<i>Mei</i>	:	Meat
<i>Mekhala</i>	:	Lower garments clad by Axomia Women
<i>Mising</i>	:	A tribal community living in Axom
<i>Mizo</i>	:	A tribal community living in Mizoram
<i>Moiramara</i>	:	Name of a Satra
<i>Morang Ghar</i>	:	Dormitory
<i>Naga</i>	:	A hill tribe of Nagaland
<i>Nagamese</i>	:	A communicative language spoken by Assamese and Nagas
<i>Namghar</i>	:	A religious house of Assamese
<i>Nee</i>	:	Cloth
<i>Neeha</i>	:	Lower garment used by Kanyak women
<i>Neetang</i>	:	Boy
<i>Niam</i>	:	Rule, Practice
<i>Nick</i>	:	Rich
<i>Nocte</i>	:	A clan of Nagas

<i>Nokyabu</i>	:	A festival observed on day of taking a new abode of wakching
<i>Owha</i>	:	Cock
<i>Oyeneye</i>	:	A festival of Kanyak Nagas
<i>Pahari</i>	:	Hill Dwellers
<i>Pamoh</i>	:	A festival of Kanyak Nagas
<i>Panchayat</i>	:	A judicial organization
<i>Pani Khati</i>	:	Low land cultivation
<i>Panidoria</i>	:	A clan of Nocte Tribe
<i>Panmyoo</i>	:	Magha Bihu
<i>Parishad</i>	:	Council
<i>Phom</i>	:	A tribe of Nagaland
<i>Puja</i>	:	A kind of Worship
<i>Pulung</i>	:	A clan of Nocte Tribe
<i>Rabha</i>	:	A branch of Kochari people
<i>Ruwani</i>	:	Planting Women
<i>Sador</i>	:	An Assamese garment used by women
<i>Saraswati Puja</i>	:	Worship of Hindu goddess of wisdom
<i>Satra</i>	:	A religious organization
<i>Satradhikar</i>	:	Head of the Satra
<i>Singhpho</i>	:	A tribal Tai people
<i>Singphi</i>	:	The dialect of the Singhpho
<i>Singphoi</i>	:	A clan of Kanyak Tribe
<i>Sonowal</i>	:	A Kochari community

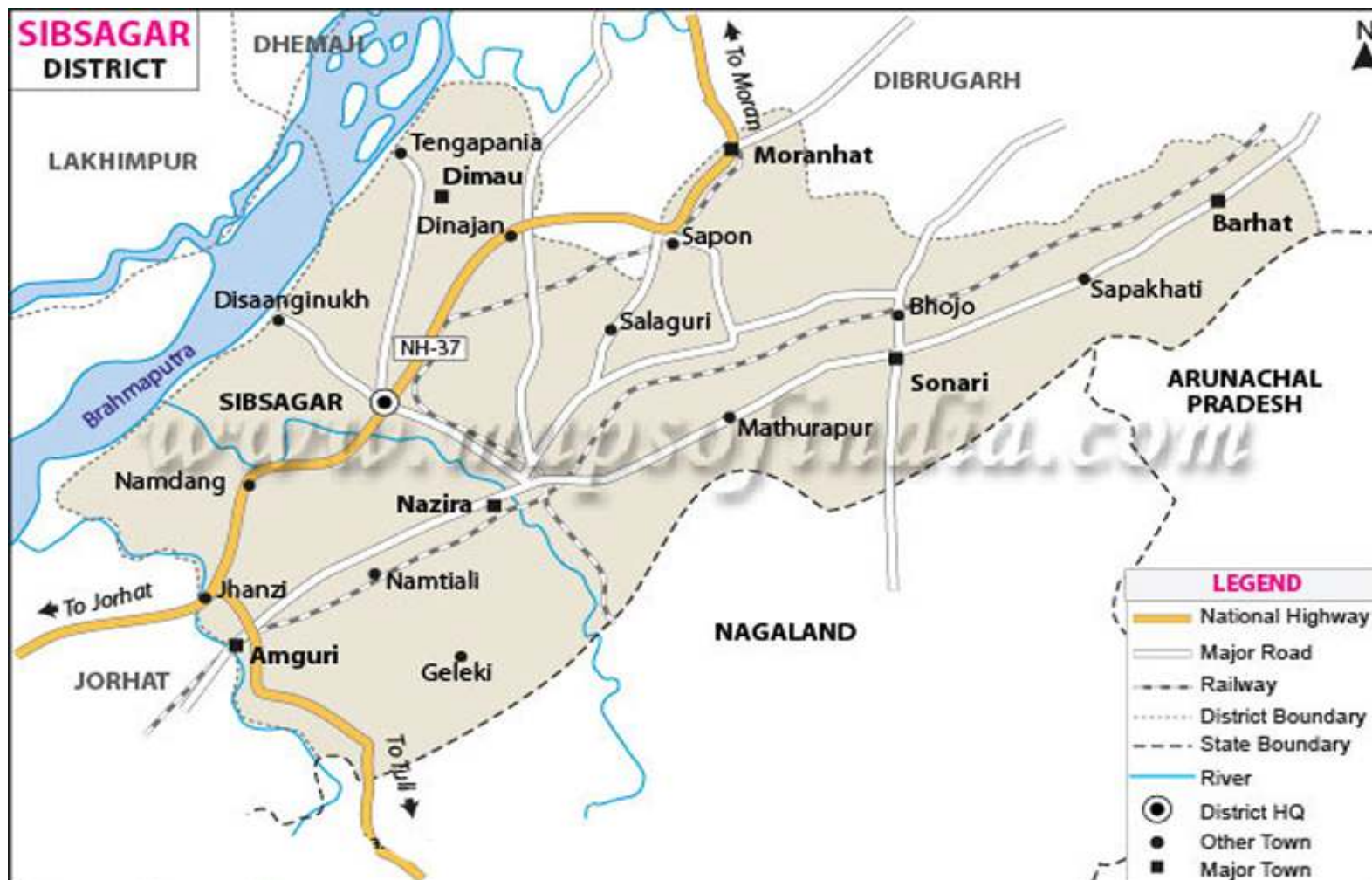
<i>Sri Shankardev</i>	:	A saint in Axom
<i>Suriya</i>	:	An Assamese garment used by males
<i>Tee</i>	:	A clan of Kanyak Tribe
<i>Tesong</i>	:	God
<i>Ting auopaa</i>	:	Old man
<i>Tiwa</i>	:	A tribal people of Axom
<i>Vagabawan</i>	:	God
<i>Vaisnava</i>	:	Worshiper of lord Bishnu
<i>Vamsa</i>	:	Clan
<i>Vanavasi</i>	:	Inhabitant at forest
<i>Vanyajat</i>	:	Caste of forest
<i>Wangam</i>	:	The highest strata of the Wanchos
<i>Wangchas</i>	:	The second strata of the Wanchos
<i>Wangching</i>	:	A dialect of the Kanyak Nagas
<i>Wangchoo</i>	:	The third strata of the Wanchos
<i>Wangham</i>	:	Chief of Wangso Village
<i>Wanpan.</i>	:	The lowest strata of the Wanchos
<i>Wansos</i>	:	A Naga Tribe of Arunachal
<i>Yang</i>	:	Cultivation



MAP OF INDIA



MAP OF NORTH EAST INDIA



MAP OF SIVASAGAR DISTRICT

CONTENTS

Page No.

Acknowledgement

List of tables

List of figures

List of abbreviations

List of glossary

Map

**CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL
FRAMEWORK**

- 1.1 : Statement of the Problem
- 1.2 : Significance of the study
- 1.3 : Review of Literature
- 1.4 : Relevance and scope of the study
- 1.5 : Objectives of the study
- 1.6 : Hypotheses
- 1.7 : Research questions
- 1.8 : Methodology
- 1.9 : Structure of the study

CHAPTER 2 : DISCOURSE ON ASSIMILATION

- 2.1 : Assimilation: Concept and Meaning
- 2.2 : Theories of Assimilation
- 2.3 : Major Issues
- 2.4 : Assimilation and social consequences

CHAPTER 3 : SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

- 3.1 : Age
- 3.2 : Sex
- 3.3 : Marital Status
- 3.4 : Tribes of the respondents
- 3.5 : Religion
- 3.6 : Mother Tongue
- 3.7 : Place of Birth
- 3.8 : Education
- 3.9 : Occupation
- 3.10 : Income

CHAPTER 4 : SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE NAGAS

- 4.1 : The Nomenclature ‘Naga’
- 4.2 : Origin, Migration and Settlement
- 4.3 : Village Structure

- 4.4 : Morung (Dormitory)
- 4.5 : Food Habits
- 4.6 : Agricultural Practices House Building and Occupation
 - 4.6(a) : Rituals and Festivals
 - 4.6(b) : Attitudes towards Religious
- 4.7 : Nature of Family
- 4.8 : Status of Women
- 4.9 : Tradition and its continuity
 - 4.9(a) : Life styles
 - 4.9(b) : Impact of tradition:

***CHAPTER 5* : SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AMONG
THE NAGAS**

- 5.1 : Contact with the Plainsmen:
- 5.2 : In the Field of Agriculture and Economy
- 5.3 : In the field of education
- 5.4 : Religion and Culture
- 5.5 : Socio-Cultural Life
- 5.6 : Assimilation with Local Culture
- 5.7 : Change in Traditional Beliefs, Rituals and Practice
- 5.8 : Mixed society and culture
- 5.9 : Social Change among the Nagas

5.10 : Inter-Community Marriages

5.11 : Assimilation and Development

Annexure

Bibliography

Photos

CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The tribal societies all over India have been passing through different eras of development and transformation. Social transformation is a continuous process of every society. India is a democratic country. The country has diverse recess, Linguistic groups, religious and cultural identities but yet offers unity amongst diversity. The north-eastern part of India is inhabited by majority of tribal people whose history of inhabitation goes back to pre-historical period. These tribal groups of people have maintained their own cultural heritage keeping pace with social transformation in spite of imitating cultures of other people, tribal and non-tribal. However, some of them are seen to have abandoned their culture and embraced other's culture.

The main aim of this research is to understand social transformation among the Nagas living in Assam. For this purpose, the Naga villages located in the Sivasagar district of Assam have been taken as case studies.

In fact, as per Policy of States Reorganization Act, 1956 of the Govt. of India, the North eastern Region of India was made into seven smaller states. Historically, the entire region was known as Greater Assam. At one time modern Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and some areas of Arunachal Pradesh were parts of undivided Assam. Prior to the division, the Greater Assam was the great home of

multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural groups of population. To a great extent, such characteristic of multi-dimensional population structure is still prevalent in the present state of Assam. As a matter of fact, these social characteristics have been glorifying in the formation of Assamese society, culture and civilization since time immemorial.

The foregoing paragraph, among many other contentions, dictates one important theme that needs to be addressed in proper frame of reference. The population structure of Assam since ancient time has been the conglomeration of large number racial and ethnic groups who came here since time beyond the record of history from different geographical directions and have settled here permanently. Not to speak of the recent effect of the State Reorganization Policy, innumerable ethnic and linguistic groups used to come down from the hills and settled in the fertile land of the plains villages of Assam. This study is chiefly concerned with the Nagas who are originally known as Tibeto-Burman linguistic groups of family and presently permanent settlers in the Sivasagar district of Assam. These Naga people living in the midst of Assamese population in Assam have witnessed a noticeable change and transformation in their life and culture.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The topic of present study ‘Social Transformation among the Nagas’ is selected keeping in view of some sociological considerations. The tribal societies of Northeast India both hills and plains, have experienced change and witnessed significant development in recent period. Few tribal communities of the hill areas of

northeast India have witnessed rapid change and development primarily due to external factors such as – western impact, English education or sometimes impact of Christianity, while in the plains areas, changes are due to both external and internal causes.

It is apparent fact that since unknown historical times many hill tribes have migrated to the plains areas or river valleys and used to establish their village settlements with the plains people. Many tribal communities of Assam like – the Deoris, Misinings, Khamptis, Tiwas, Rabhas, and Bodos etc. have their respective historical records as well as legends of migration from the hills to the plains areas of Assam. In due course of time many of them have adapted themselves with the life and culture of the people of the plains valleys and accommodated with the food, shelter, habitations and environment. It is also interesting to note that some of them, who were once animistic by religious belief and practices, have accepted Hinduism and other philosophies of Hindu belief system. Such conversions were possible only because of the great religious ideals of Sri Sri Shankardeva, a great Saint and Hindu religious reformer of 15th & 16th century.

What is important in this context is that a great form of social transformation occurred among some of the tribal communities who have come down from the hills for various reasons, and settled down in the river sides or other plains valleys of Assam.

The Nagas, a hill tribal community who have been living in form of villages in the Sivasagar district of Assam since the period unknown to them, present a social

life and organization and culture, is also not exception. There are some Naga villages within the administrative boundary of the present Sivasagar district of Assam. Their villages are situated amidst the surrounding of Assamese population. From religious point of view, they are presently a mixed collectivities i.e. followers of both Christianity and Hinduism. From linguistics point of view they are significantly adaptive to Assamese language in addition to their own respective dialects and link language 'Nagamese'. Maximum of them are cultivators and possessed their cultivable lands. They have adopted food habits, house patterns, dresses, norms, behaviour and culture with almost similarity to Assamese society and culture. Children of present generation of the Nagas are studying in schools and colleges in Assam in Assamese medium of instruction.

These and many other socio-economic, cultural as well as psychological characteristics visible at large scale among the Nagas of Assam's village present a unique feature of social change and transformation among the Nagas.

The available writings and literature on the Nagas of Nagaland reveal that, the Nagas have been experiencing change, development and modernity due to the impact of Christianity, English education and western impact. The Nagas living with the population of the plains valleys of Assam have witnessed change and transformation quite distinctly in a different manner. They have mixed up with the local culture and environment of the non-Naga population. The villagers learnt local languages in addition to their own dialect and link language 'Nagamese', practiced wet rice culture and various rituals, customs associated with agricultural life and

tradition of Assamese society and got assimilated. All these changes call for historical and cultural contexts which need in-depth sociological inquiry and analysis. Simple analysis may not provide adequate and authentic understanding about the forces and factors that play the roles behind such development. This is because of the fact that social transformation involves a number of quarries and it is multidimensional. Therefore, the present topic “social transformation among the Nagas living in Assam” has been selected for detail and systematic study in sociological perspective.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

As already stated in the proceeding pages that the tribal communities of the northeast region of India have been experiencing changes development and transformation. But the changes are not uniform among all tribes and communities. The changes among some tribes are rapid and for some it is comparatively slow. Hence it is understood that the causes and factor also very from one to another. Studies have underlined both exogenous and endogenous factors that bring about change in the communities.

This study is chiefly concerned with the understanding of the nature and dimension of change and transformation among the Nagas living for generations amidst the surrounding of Assamese society and environment. The Nagas who have been coming in contact with other non-Naga communities’ vis-à-vis Assamese population and society for quite longer period (several generations) have entered into the great process of social mixing, social interaction and assimilation. The

resultant effect of such processes is visible in the form of social transformation and it is definitely a noticeable phenomenon. In this context, Shah suggested that those social scientists who are interested in understanding social transformation in society should raise few questions for inquiry. To underline his suggestions (a) How and in which direction society is transforming? (b) What role culture (including religion) and economy play? (c) Which are the dominant forces that set direction for transformation? (d) Who are that gainers and losers in the process of social transformation? (e) What stresses and strains the process create in society? etc.¹ This study will include all these issues and quarries for investigation with the selected population under study.

Sociological research on assimilation and social change particularly the ethnic groups in northeast India is indeed rare. This study therefore, undertakes the issue of assimilation as determinant process to understand social transformation among the Nagas and to explore the historical, socio-political as well as the environmental factors responsible for such assimilation. Thus, in addition to the exogenous and the endogenous factors for social change, this study will try to examine the interactional factor behind the process of assimilation, because assimilation in sociological sense involved interaction, principles of reciprocity flexibility of social order, attitude formation and merging with each other of various social levels.

¹ Ghanashyam Shah 1997 – '*Social Transformation in India*' (Essays in Honour of Professor I.P. Desai, Vol. I (ed) Ghanashyam Shah, Rawat Publishers, Jaipur. pp. 19-22

Scholars in the field of social sciences are of the opinion that the twentieth century has witnessed unprecedented radical changes and social transformation. Almost at all levels of society of both developed and underdeveloped societies. In social scientific literature the term social transformation is increasingly used to describe societal change and generally aiming of critical stance towards older notions of the idea of development. It has become a tendency that two dimensional impact analysis i.e. global phenomena at one hand and impact on local community on the other hand are taken into consideration while social transformation was taken under the purview of discussion. The most commonly referred global factors are industrialization, global economy and cultural relations, issues of developed and underdeveloped regions, economic disparity, polarization, inequality etc. (Social transformation at the community levels indicates towards analysis of local community as a result of assimilation, historical experiences, changing social institutions, economic and social patterns, political assimilation and culture change.) The present study is primarily concerned to the second, rather than the first. Hence, ethnic assimilation through historical experience, socio-environmental changes and transformation among the peripheral communities will be the prime issues of discussion of this study. This study will further explore scientifically the diverse, multi-layered and multi-cultural population structure of the peripheral areas of the country and to gain knowledge of assimilation and inter-ethnic integration.

The northeast region of India is the home of multiple of ethnic groups and communities who have migrated to this region from various parts of South East Asia

at different periods even beyond the record of history and have settled here permanently. Most of them are Mongoloids in origin. Their settlements have spread in various hills and mountains, river valleys, plain alluvial soils. After a long historical experiences and mixing with diverse non-Mongoloid communities and linguistic groups and in course of time, they produced a social structure and culture of mixed accomplishment. What is important in this context is that there was a silent process of inter-mixing of the communities with each other because of some possible similarities of traits, origin, history and other ethnic characteristics.

The Nagas living amidst Assamese villages and population and their contemporary social life and organization is a unique in terms of social transformation. Thus, this study may contribute sociological knowledge and insight in searching out some hitherto unexplored facts leading to the growth of an integrated and composite society inspite of mixed and heterogeneous population of the region.

1.3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

A systematic review of literature relating to the topic of research enables the researcher to familiarize with different conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches required to the area of research. It also enables the researcher to have clear and better perspectives about their research work through the reading of previously conducted research on the related topic.² An attempt has been made

² Alan Bryman 2009 – Social Research Methods, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, p. 57

therefore, to search out the literature relating to the topic of study and to present a critical review.

‘Social transformation’ is a term which involves divergent viewpoints as well as multi disciplinary approach. Social transformation is not an abstract topic of social activists. It calls for analyzing social forces in historical and cultural context. There is no unilinear direction for change. Social change is complex and multidimensional in nature. Researchers interested in understanding social transformation have to raise a number of issues and quarries for analytical purpose.³

The concept of social transformation in social sciences also refers to the change of society’s systematic characteristics. This incorporated the change of existing parameters of a societal system, including technological, economic, political and cultural restructuring. More especially it influences productive infrastructure which can bring about new technological changes and new patterns of participation in the process of division of labour. Secondly, new structures of economic organization are developing. This may imply change in ownership rights, nature of investment, mode of production and distribution and also in the manner of supply. Thirdly, political power may change qualitatively. This involves change in the structure and performance of state institutions and other bodies of decision making and control. And finally, value normative system may change which may allow the emergence and stabilization of pluralist institutions.⁴

³ Ghanashyam Shah 1997 – ‘Preface’ in ‘Social Transformation in India, op.cit.

⁴ N. Genov 1999 – Managing Transformation in Eastern Europe, UNESCO, Paris, pp. 127-148

A host of researchers while subscribing views on social transformation tried to pinpoint, that the term social transformation implies the underlying notion of the way to which society and culture change in response to factors like-economic growth, war or political upheaval.⁵ Again, many scholars are of the view that social transformation cannot be understood isolately or locally, it has some wider or global context. In this reference Palanyi's conceptualization of 'Global transformation' is important and cannot be ignored. According to Palanyi, 'Great transformation' occurred in western societies which were brought about by industrialization and modernization of more recent changes linked to decolonization nation-state formation and economic change.⁶ This description emphasizes that social transformation occurred in society primarily due to external forces.

But social change and transformation is not always the outcome of external forces alone. Every theory of social change has at its foundation a set of profound and often implicit convictions which must be made explicit in the analysis of social reality. Another set of equally important ideas to do with the role of the individual and of social structures in the process of social transformation. In this respect, two opposing views can be identified. At one point, a number of ideologies tend to seek social change as a mere outcome of the upgrading of the individual, be it through secular education and training or through religious conversion. Another set of views opposing this approach to social change argues that human being is entirely a

⁵ Stephen Castles 2015 – Studying Social Transformation, *International Political Science Review*, 22, 1, p. 15

⁶ K. Polanyi 1944 – The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of our Time, N.Y. Farrar and Rinehart, pp. 243-252

product of society. No change is then possible unless social structures are changed first.⁷

But social change and transformation is not always the outcome of internal forces alone. External factors are also operative in bringing about social transformation. P.C. Mahalanobis opined – “the transformation of social structure cannot be an entirely internal process. Outside influences have been and will continue to be at work. Colonial rule and economic exploitation of the underdeveloped countries have themselves given rise to reactions promoting the desire for political independence and for improvement in the level of living in the under developed areas.”⁸

In social science literature the term social transformation is increasingly used to describe societal changes and it generally indicates a critical analysis of old notions and values towards finding an idea of development. That is the reason why all notions of western ideas are not considered for imitation. Some scholars consider social transformation studies as a field of research that can lead to positive step for social and political action to protect local and national communities against consequence of global change.

M.S.A. Rao while studying two backward class movements in India observed that social transformation is a mid arrangement between structural changes and organizational changes, the former referring to a change in the totality of

⁷ Farzam Arbab 1987 – The Bahai Faith and Marxism, Ottawa, Bahai Studies Publications, pp. 9-20.

⁸ P.C. Mahalanobis 1963 – The social Transformation for National Development, The Indian Jr. of Statistics. Vol. 25, No.1-2, Nov., pp.49-52

relationship, positions, their arrangement and the values, and the later signifying changes in the norms, activities and personnel from one position to another.⁹ According to Rao, when a capitalist society becomes socialist through revolution and violent change, structural change is identified with complete and total change of social system.

Commenting on the issue of social transformation, N.R. Seth stated that social transformation has its meaning which varies from person's subjective explanation. To quote him – "Social scientists, philosophers, rulers, non-ruling elites and ordinary citizens construct their own images of social reality on the basis of their experience and perceptions. These constructions of reality are judged by an observer in relation to an ideal state of reality or utopia guiding his inquiry. Social transformation is then measured, in varying degrees of objective clarity and accuracy."¹⁰

Victor S.D. Souza stated "social transformation is not just a matter of implementation of any kind of social alter, but a process of bringing about a new social order according to the vision of a just society. In so far as the individual and society are related, it also implies the transformation, which in fact is the ultimate goal."¹¹

⁹ M.S.A. Rao 1987 – Social Movement and Social Transformation: A Study of Two Backward class Movement in India, Monohar Publications, pp.17-27.

¹⁰ N.R. Seth 1997 – 'Children of the Same God : A Spiritual Approach to Social Transformation' in 'Social Transformation in India', Vol. 2 (ed.) Ghanashyam Shah, op.cit. p. 687.

¹¹ Victor, S.D. Souza 1985 – Sociology and Social Transformation in India – The Neglect of the Idea of Fraternity, Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 86, pp. 1-9

Transformation is a continuous and never-ending process. A look on the literature on ethnic immigration, migration and assimilation subscribes some ideas of social change and transformation. The term ethnicity was first used in modern sense by W. Lloyd Warner during the 1940s. By 1980s the term had gained wide currency in social sciences. Ethnicity is generally viewed in terms of shared past, cultural traditions, religion, languages and identity. In a simplified meaning ethnicity connotes the positive feelings of identification with a cultural group or community.¹²

Furthermore, ethnicity refers to both structural (material) and cultural (subjective) features. Structural ethnicity refers to relative location of an ethnic group in relation to all other social groups in society, developing ethnic stratification. In its cultural, socio-psychological and psychological sense, ethnicity refers to a feeling of belongingness to a group. All societies in the modern world contain human sub-systems and these sub-systems are distinct from the rest of the population. For the discussion in the social sciences the fitting generic term for such a fraction of the whole is ethnic group. In contemporary sociological discussion ethnic group or ethnicity has been conceptualized from divergent viewpoints and for that reasons, literature on ethnicity is extensive. Weber¹³ defined ethnic group as a human collectivity based on an assumption of common origin, real or imaginary. The sociologists and the Anthropologists have viewed ethnic relation and its consequences in society in assimilation perspective. Sociologists and cultural Anthropologists have described the process of assimilation and its resultant effect on

¹² A.R. Momin 2009 – Diversity, Ethnicity and Identity in South Asia, Jaipur, Rawat, pp. 221-135

¹³ Max Weber (ed.) 1961 – The Ethnic Group, in Talcott Parsons *Theories of Society*, Vol. 1, The Free Press, pp.123-125

society as 'ethnic meeting' under some concepts as 'assimilation' and 'acculturation' or sometimes which have been used interchangeably.¹⁴

The relevance of ethnicity and ethnic relations in this context bears significant relation in understanding social transformation. Sociologists gave little emphasis on this issue and assimilation has been studied putting attention on the emergence of ethnic stratification, class and class mobility, ethnic conflict etc. Assimilation is a social process which encompasses wide dimension of social network and bases of social interaction. Complete assimilation between ethnic groups would mean that no separate social structure based on racial or ethnic concepts remains.¹⁵

With increasing discussions and development of multi-level approach on ethnic assimilation, the term social transformation has acquired a continued deal. The concept incorporates the change of existing parameters of a societal system including economic, political, cultural and technological restructuring. When assimilation takes place, it encourages interpenetration and fusion in which persons or groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups and by sharing or experiences and history are incorporated with them in a common way of life. In the assimilation process between the Nagas and the Assamese these

¹⁴ Some classical works in this context are – Milton M. Gordon 1964 – *Assimilation in American Life – The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*, Oxford University Press, N.Y. ; Robert Bierstadt 1970 – *The Social Order*, pp-128-143 Tata McGraw Hill, Bombay ; John Rex 1986 – *Race and Ethnicity*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, pp. 198-203

¹⁵ George Eaton Simpson 1968 – *Enclopeadia of Social Sciences*, Vol. 1 Macmillan, Free Press, p. 676

subjective factors of transmitting each other behavior, views and expressions can nevertheless ignored.

Researches in the areas of ethnicity, formation of Nation-State and development suggest some possible baselines to determine plural society. India is a plural state of so many social collectivities. T.K. Oommen¹⁶ believes that social collectivities categorized as insiders/outsidere bases of which are religion, caste, tribe, language and region. The dominant collectivities thus try to establish the idea of cultural mainstream. Oommen argues that India cannot build an authentic nation-state by establishing the dominance of cultural mainstream by reducing the numerous small collectivities of the periphery to the status of marginals. He advocated that India should have a nation-state with multiple cultural centres.

Dube¹⁷ was of the view that society under ethnic strains should be reorganized in terms of multilayered identities with appropriate degree of autonomy to different levels. He further observed that the emergent phenomenon of ethnicity and its problems can be solved through interpenetration and interdependent societal patterns.

Urmila Phadnis¹⁸ in her study in South Asia held the opinion that boundaries of ethnic groups always remain fluid. This fluidity is closely related to the

¹⁶ T.K. Oommen 1986 – Insiders and Outsiders in India : Primordial collectivism and cultural Pluralism in Nation Building, *International Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 1 University College, Cardiff Press, pp. 422-437

¹⁷ S.C. Dube 1990 – Ethnic Identities and Social Transformation, Key Note Address on the Seminar on Ethnic Identities and Social Transformation, Chandigarh, 12 June, 1990

¹⁸ Urmila Phadnis 1990 – Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia, Sage Publishing, New Delhi, pp. 57-69

situational or relational context of the ethnic group. Thus, social adjustment and coordination between ethnic groups are inherent for inter-ethnic solidarity.

The Sociologists and the Anthropologists define the term 'ethnic group' or 'ethnicity' to denote membership of a distinct group of people possessing their own customary way of culture. Again, for them ethnic group is a cultural group whose members either share some features like- a common language, region, religion, race, endogamy, customs and beliefs. For such features "ethnicity as a process of interaction between culture groups operating within common social contexts."¹⁹ It is in other words is the inter relationship between ethnic groups. Such relationship between ethnic groups leads to a process of development. Studies suggest that most ethnic minorities have had cultural and linguistic exchanges with the alien communities and in this process there appear cultural and structural complexes of both the minorities and the majorities.²⁰ Bhat considers few factors for proper assimilation of minority groups and identity formation. According to him establishment of identity in an unknown place generally depends upon time factor, relative openness of the local or regional social system and above all, efforts on the part of new settlers to these directions.²¹

There are good number of scholarly writings in both regional and English languages on the issue of assimilation among various ethnic, linguistic and religious communities of northeast region of India. Such writings while focused on the

¹⁹ A. Cohen 1974 – Urban Ethnicity, Tavistock Publications, London.

²⁰ Jaganath Pathy 1988 – Ethnic Minorities in the Process of Development, Rawat Pub. Jaipur.

²¹ Chandra Sekhar Bhat 1984 – Ethnicity and Mobility, Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi.

composition of Assamese society, culture, social order as well as social integration, invariably take note on the contributions of various ethnic groups and communities towards the formation of composite social structure of Assamese society.²² Those writers belong to various academic and intellectual traditions. Apart from many other contentions that focused on very important issues of sociological interest like – history of origin of the diverse ethnic and linguistic groups of the region, geographical location and mapping, ethnic integration through the adoption of some common customs, rituals, festivals and ceremonies etc. All these narrations suggest the important elements of ethnic identity, nature of integration as well as emerging social order amidst diversity.

An overview of the major studies presented in the literature review enables us to look at some emerging points relevant to the topic under study.

Social transformation is a term of multi-dimensional characters that needs multi-disciplinary approaches. Sociologists in particular and the social scientists and social activists in general identified a number of methodological designs and approaches to understand social transformation. Among all such prevailing approaches, the historical and cultural contexts of social transformation are of special interest. This is because of the reason that the contemporary social structure of northeast region of India, more especially in Assam, is an outcome of long

²² Some of such prominent writings reflecting on these issues are – B.K. Kakoti 1941 – Assamese, Its Formation and Development, Guwahati ; P.C. Choudhury 1959 – History of Civilization of the People of Assam, Gauhati ; Hem Borua 1962 – The Red River and the Blue Hills, Lawyers Book Stall, Gauhati ; R. M. Nath 1978 – Background of Assamese Culture, Gauhati ; N. N. Basu 1962 – Social History of Kamrupa, Vol. I & II, Calcutta ; Lila Gogoi 1986 – Axomor Sanskriti (in Assamese).

historical past, shared tradition and inter-mixture of innumerable castes, tribes, ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious groups and communities.

Researchers interested in studying social transformations in this region have to design and develop a number of quarries in search of objective reality emerged out of social transformation. It is also emphasized that social transformation cannot be understood in terms of local context alone; it circumscribes wide implications referring to the exogenous forces and global context.

Social reality is an image of subjective perception and experience. It implies the meaning that reality is constructed and it varies from subject to subject and from one historical context to another. Some authors further reveal that social transformation is a manifestation and bi-product of synthesis between old notions and values and new impact on social structure, transformation must be measured in terms of objective clarity and accuracy. Here lies the scientific assessment of social research.

Ethnicity, inter-ethnic relations, ethnic assimilation, ethnic meeting etc. are the terms which gain wider discussion among the contemporary social scientists. Ethnic inter-relationship, merging of ethnic groups, lose of smaller identities and search for a mixed, merged, integrated and composite identity and giving rise to a new social order are some of the visible features of the contemporary societies of northeast India. This is a special field of sociological investigation more especially to the sociologists working in the region. This study will proceed in keeping consonance with the above of this study are designed as indicated below.

1.4 RELEVANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY :

While describing about the significance of the study in the preceding pages, we have mentioned the change and transformation among the peripheral communities. Period change takes place in different manners and such various factors are operating differently. These are distinct differences of change and transformation that happens between the centre and the periphery in the same country. But apparent force and factors between the geographical settings are different. Thus areas need to be addressed more seriously by the social scientists engaged in analyzing change, transformation and development.

The peripheral communities in a sense are marginal groups or communities that remain far away from the mainline of development of a nation. Studies reveal that peripheral communities are comparatively less developed since some global factors like – industrialization, industrial economy, and urbanization, big forces of commercialization etc. are less influential in those areas. Post social cohesion and integrity among the people inhabiting in the peripheral areas are consideration to be far effective, as such, history of origin nature of migration, physical linguistic and cultural proximity between groups and communities make an environment for easy accommodation and adaption and to come in contract with each other. History of those communities narrates that those communities have to survive through struggles, war and conflicts, and at the sometime the principle of reciprocity and mutual understanding between them bind them together to give rise a population structure, social organization and social integration. This feature of society needs to be understood with different methodological perspectives.

Hence, this study will have its potential scope to articulate new areas of analysis and to develop concepts to measure social change and transformation.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of the study are as follows;

- a. To understand the traditional social structure of the Nagas of Northeast India.
- b. To examine process of socio-cultural assimilation of the Nagas living in Assam in general and in the district of Sivasagar in particular.
- c. To understand the contemporary life situation and the emergence of social order of the Nagas as a result of impact of assimilation.

1.6 HYPOTHESES :

It is hypothesized that

- a. The Naga tribe has their distinct characteristics with regard to their traits of ethnicity, culture and tradition which are manifested in social life and organization irrespective of their places of settlement.
- b. The Nagas living outside Nagaland and in the midst of non-Naga environment are subject to regular contact, interaction and assimilation with people outside their won.
- c. Traditional social structure of the Nagas undergoes a process of synthesis as a result of assimilation with the non-Nagas and their culture and society.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS :

In the light of the above stated hypotheses, the following research questions may be raised for an in-depth study.

- a. How far the Nagas in Assam as small group are in the process of assimilation with the bigger groups in Assamese society?
- b. What are the various dimensions of assimilation?
- c. How do traditional social institutions of the Nagas are being influenced by such assimilation?
- d. To what extent and in what aspects the Nagas in Assam do accept culture of other groups and institutional norms?
- e. Does the socio-cultural interaction between the Nagas in Assam and their counterparts have strengthened the unity and solidarity in the broader regional context?

1.8 METHODOLOGY :

The present study was based on an empirical, explorative, descriptive as well as analytical and practices. This study tried to draw sociological understanding about the related changing structure of Nagas in the state of Assam. The study comprises of the following methodological framework;

a. Sources of data collection: The study followed various sources in collecting authentic research data. The main sources of data collection were based on primary and secondary data. Primary information was collected from the field through case study, questionnaire and interview schedule. Group discussion and personal observation was also applied to various section of the society such as Village head, religious leaders, NGO's, Students leader and socio-cultural organization involved

in development activities of the district. Secondary information has been collected through various sources such as published and unpublished materials, journals and magazines, seminar paper presentations, websites, and the articles and write-ups published in newspapers related to the problem of study. The researcher also visit different libraries, book stores, NGOs, civil societies, religious leaders and Government Agencies to collect secondary authentic data.

i) Field Observation (*Conversation with the village Head, Church Leaders, aged persons etc.*): The application of Interview Schedule (Appendix-I) was considered first authentic tool for collecting primary data. An Interview Schedule with fifty two questions of both structured and unstructured was prepared. The Interview Schedule was made into several sections as sub-headings keeping in view the different aspects of the problem under study. The major sub-headings of the Schedule were – Social background of the Respondents, Family Religion and Economy, Tradition and Social change, Assimilation of the Nagas etc. The draft Interview Schedule was pre-tested and several modifications were made. The questions were framed in English language, but at the time of interview these were translated into Assamese and Nagamese whenever and wherever applicable. The responses were recorded on the spot and in many occasions several responses of extended interest were recorded In the field diary after the completion of each interview.

ii) Village Schedule: The village schedule (Appendix – II) is consist of a total of 43 question desired to obtain information about each village. This set of questions was applied to the President of Gaon Panchayat, Head of the village, Head of the Namghar (Prayer House of the Hindus) Committee, Village Council members,

Church Leaders, Elder Persons of the village and President of village Development Committee wherever applicable. This Schedule consists of questions seeking information about the general information of village which includes populations and households, literacy, major social institutions, nature of habitants, occupations, nature of settlements of disputes / problems etc. Responses of such queries were found to be dependable were considered to be authentic and reliable.

iii) Case Studies: Case study method was also adopted in this research work. Mostly the village headmen, Church leaders, educated women, voluntary social activists were considered special cases for study. These persons were studied in-depth and attempted to understand the factors and causes responsible behind the social occurrences. The elderly persons in the Naga society under study were prominently considered as cases. Their narrations, histories, experiences etc. are rare and were very fruitfully located in consolidating ideas of village or community organization and development.

b. Sampling Design:

The study design was prepared in such a way to cover the various perspectives of the research problem related to changing structure of Nagas in Assam. The following are the various approaches of sampling to be applied in this study;

i) **Sample selection:** The study was limited to Sivasagar district of upper Assam that covers seven villages exclusively inhabited by 'Naga' people from a traditional period to contemporary one. All these villages are situated in the district of Sivasagar namely; '*Hahchara Naga Goan*', '*Geleky Monaiting Naga Goan*',

‘Ligiripukhuri Naga Goan’, ‘Bhadhara Naga Goan’, ‘Siloni Naga Goan’, ‘Deopani Naga Goan’, ‘and Gargoan Naga Chuk’.

ii) Sample size: The sampling technique adopted in this study was based on purposive random sampling to arrive at final result based on their classified social structure and change. From these seven villages (*Hahchara Naga Goan, Geleky Monaiting Naga Goan, Ligiripukhuri Naga Goan, Bhadhara Naga Goan, Siloni Naga Goan, Deopani Naga Goan, and Gargoan Naga Chuk*) a sample size of 341 households.

Table 1.1

The respondents according to household and sample

Name of the village	Total Households	Sample Taken
Hahchara Naga Gaon	100	All Households
Galeky Monaiting Naga Gaon	82	do
Namsai Naga Gaon	18	do
Baregaon Naga Gaon	28	do
Siloni Naga Gaon	32	do
Deopani Naga Gaon	58	do
Bha-dhara Naga Chuk	10	do
Gargaon Naga Chuk	05	do
Ligiripukhuri Naga Chuk	08	do
Total	341	do

C. Duration of Field work:

The fieldwork and the collection of data for this study have been completed in three different phases. The month of February 2015 was the first phase when the

research collected the preliminary data with regard to the location of the villages, population, households and communication to the villages under study was collected. The second phase was the period of intensive field work from November 2015 to April 2016 when the Interview Schedules with the respondents were applied and collected the data. The third phase of field work was undertaken to complete some left out quarries in the Interview Schedules.

D) Data Analysis:

The procedural aspects of data analysis used in this study comprised of coding, cross-checking and statistical process of classification, tabulation and percentage calculation etc in order to analyses the primary data. Tabulated data are represented through diagrammatically in the form of table, graph and diagram. All these data were transferred to respective chapters systematically.

E. Experiences during Field work

The fieldwork in sociological research is both encouraging and stimulating. At the same time it must be admitted that field work in sociological research is not easy task, because people act, react and counteract differently with the demand and change of situation.

At the initial stage of field visit, the researcher had to encounter difficulties regarding introducing himself with the people and do explain the propose of the study. Since, prior to this research work, no other sociologist or social scientist visited these villages with such academic purpose, therefore it was a bit difficulty to convince the people about such academic work. However, all such preliminary

hurdles were overcome and the people of the Naga villages started extending all sorts of help and cooperation to me during my visit.

The Naga people are very helpful, cordial and receptive to visitors. Their frank and straightforward statement is “the Assamese and the Nagas are very close to each other”. They do not hesitate to express about anything if convinced. For such reasons, the researcher could avoid difficult situation whatsoever, during field work, and as such, the educated youths quite frequently did accompany the researcher in contacting the respondents.

But, one problem must be admitted, that it was difficult to meet the respondents according to the convenient time of the researcher. The Naga people, particularly, the males have their habit of leaving house early morning for their daily work and come back only in the evening. They are not only hard worker, they use to go to their paddy fields, forests and collect foodstuff, firewood etc. and spend the whole day at their work place. The researcher had to visit for several times to meet the people (respondents). Thus, it took quite longer time to complete the entire field work.

Quite interestingly, some educated Nagas and Head of the Village Council took sincere interest with the research work carried out by the researcher and appreciated such attempts.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY:

This thesis has been spread over in seven chapters. These are – Chapter 1: Introduction and Theoretical Framework, Chapter 2: Discourse on Assimilation,

Chapter 3: Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents, Chapter 4: Social Structure of Nagas, Chapter 5: Social Transformation Among the Nagas and Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions.

The *first* chapter Introduction and Theoretical Framework deals with these aspects. The topic of study has been introduced to the field of sociological inquiry with proper and adequate background. Such as followed by complete statement and detail about the problem of study. The Chapter also highlights the significance of study showing its sociological context particularly in the northeast region of India. A detailed review of major works related to the theme of study is presented with its major working guidelines. The objectives of study, research hypothesis and Research questions are also added in this chapter. And this is followed by another component of the chapter i.e. Scope and Relevance of the study. The second part of the chapter deals with the methodological steps followed in the study. Here we have mentioned categorically the various steps such as selection of the topic, Universe of study, selection of respondents, Techniques of Data collection, Tabulation, classification and analysis of Data.

The *second* chapter is Discourse on Assimilation. Here an attempt is made to define the concept of assimilation, theories of assimilation, major issues to be verified etc. At the end of discussion we have made to derive the underlying meaning of assimilation that can be examined in form of social consequences in the Naga society.

In the *third* chapter Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents, a profile of respondents' background is presented. Here we have discussed the variables like- age, sex, marital status, place of birth, identity of tribes, religious identity, education, occupation and income of the respondents.

The *fourth* chapter is Traditional Social Structure of the Nagas. This chapter discusses the major contents in two broad sections. The first sections deals with the discussion of traditional social structure of the Nagas society as narrated in the available writings. The second section examines some field data related to tradition and its continuity in Naga society.

The *fifth* chapter is Social transformation Among the Nagas. This chapter examines the field data dealing chiefly with the nature of social transformation, factors and forces responsible for social transformation and change in Naga society.

The *sixth* and last chapter Summary and Conclusions contains two sections, that is, brief summery of the major findings of the empirical findings and the statements of concluding remarks. On the basis of such findings, the important issues are drawn and examined the relationships between the theoretical postulations and hypotheses with those of findings.

CHAPTER - 2

DISCOURSE ON ASSIMILATION

This chapter is an attempt to discuss the term ‘assimilation’, an important concept in sociological literature. In sociology there are a number of conceptual and theoretical descriptions on the basis of which the social processes are framed and established. Assimilation is one such process in which sociologists devote considerable attentions to describe, to construct and also to reconstruct the process in consonance with the various forms of social structure, social change and dynamics. In this step, we will discuss assimilation, its conceptual parameters, theories, factors induces assimilation and its effect on changing social order. Towards the end of the chapter we will try to consolidate the important ideas of assimilation as to how these are applicable in studying social transformation of the Nagas living in Assam.

2.1 ASSIMILATION: CONCEPT AND MEANING:

Sociologists have forwarded numerous explanations to understand the concept ‘assimilation’. Definitions and sometimes meaning also vary from situation to situation and also from one historical context to another. Literally, the term assimilation refers to “a process of understanding fully an idea or some information so that one is able to use it for oneself. Further, this is a process to become or allow anything to become, a part of a country or community rather than remaining in a separate group. (Oxford Advanced Lerner’s Dictionary). In sociology, ‘assimilation’ means a process by which a group, generally a marginal or migrant group absorbs

through contact into culture of another group. MacIver and Page¹ hold that assimilation is a social process and it has a world wide implication. In its original usage assimilation was interpreted as one –dimensional, one way process by which outsider relinquished their own culture in favour of a dominant society and culture. According to Kinball Young² assimilation is the common sharing and fusion of folkways and mores, or laws and all other features of two or more distinctive cultures by people who have come into direct contact and relations with others. H.G. Duncan³ defines assimilation as a process, for the most part conscious, by which individuals and groups come to have sentiment and attitude similar to those held by other persons or groups in regard to a particular value of a given time.

Thus, social contact is necessarily a beginning step for assimilation. The process of assimilation naturally depends on the nature of contact. That is to say, if the inter-personal contact is primary, assimilation is supposed to occur naturally and if it is secondary, it becomes rapid. For such reasons, assimilation is accepted as a universal process. When people with different ethnic background and culture meet, interact and react the process and resultant outcome of such meeting is called assimilation. For assimilation, it therefore, requires two groups of people of two types of society in which one has to have their life style or tradition distinctly different of the initial stage of meeting. Thus, in sociology, assimilation means the

¹ R.M. MacIver and C.H. Page 1967 – Society : An Introductory Analysis, Macmillan, New Delhi, p. 126

² Kinball Young 1939 – Introductory Sociology, American Book Co. New York, p. 495.

³ H.G. Duncan 1964 – A Study in the Process of Assimilation, *American Socio. Society*, Vol. XXIII, p. 184

process, by which social groups; generally a minority or immigrant group absorbs through contact the culture of another group.

The term 'assimilation' was believed to be originated in Anthropological literature which describes a change in individual or group identity that results from continuous social interaction between members of two groups such that members of one group (often a minority culture group) enter into and become a part of the second group (often a majority culture group). It is therefore, contended that in the process of assimilation minority group loses or sometime disappear and merges into dominant group or culture.

Again, the American sociologists, particularly the race relation analysts and theorist based at Chicago School in the beginning of the last century were of the view that a substantiate structural as well as socio-demographic changes were visible in some cities of the United States as a result of immigrant assimilation. According to them, the interaction and development of social relations between the host society and the immigrants in the American soil was the grounding base for broader race relation. The studies based on such phenomena have forwarded very important conceptualizations with regard to assimilation theorization.

Irrespective of the nature of ethnic characters social contact is necessarily a dimension for an integrated society. The ethnic group of northeast India is considered to be an exception. The earlier forms of contact among the ethnic groups and communities, whether small or large in numbers, majority or minority, were in fact, under the force of compulsion for seeking habitation and settlements as because

they have to change their destinations for various reasons – disclosed or undisclosed. Their history of origin, legends and mythologies transmitted from generation to generation rest on the belief that they had to move from one place to another, one region to another due to internal conflict, natural causes, wars, effects of subjugation or domination and therefore, non-permanency was the way of life. These features, by and large were applicable in all tribes and communities presently living in the northeast region of India. The very nature of social composition and development of social organization of the Naga living in the Assam plains is a phenomenon which needs proper scientific assessment.

The other dimension of assimilation process, as noted in the proceeding pages is that it is to certain extent, an one-dimensional one. By this one way process the outsiders relinquished their own culture in favour of the dominant society. Later on, the trend of analysis was a bit different. The scholars in those period explained ‘assimilation’ as a process of complete change of identity and behavior in form of ‘melting pot’ idea.

Assimilation as concept was vigorously analysed in the literature dealing with ethnicity, ethnic group formation and development of ethnic nationalism in the west. Paul Brass⁴ is of the view that assimilation is a process which embraces quite larger elements of socio-cultural dimensions of social group life. This includes selection of particular dialects, religious practices, styles of dress or symbols of the local group are imitated by the alien group or community. It means that the

⁴. Paul Brass, 1991 *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and comparison*, New Delhi, Sage Publication, pp.129-135

influences of local group on other immigrants or outsiders are quite stronger factors on the process of assimilation. In few other context 'assimilation is known as the process of integration or incorporation by which the characteristics of immigrant members or groups and host societies come to resemblance with one another.' This process has both economic and socio-cultural implications and it continues through generations.

Researches in the areas of assimilation and its aftereffects in bringing transformation in society are nevertheless dependent on some classical definitions available in sociological literature. Young and Mack⁵ defined assimilation as the process of fusion or blending of two previously distinct groups into one. Fusion is a process or result of joining two or more things together to form one. Bogardus⁶ in his more socio-psychological approach interpreted assimilation as the united attitude formation of people which ultimately developed into one group. Some other psychologists were also of the view that through this process individuals or groups comes to share similar sentiments, attitudes and ideas to arrive at common goals. For Ogburn and Nimkoff⁷ assimilation is the process whereby individuals or groups once dissimilar become similar and identified in their interest and outlook.

Assimilation is a process in which persons of diverse ethnic and racial background come to interact with each other. Whenever people of different racial and cultural origins live together, some process of unification between groups of

⁵ Young and Mack 1939 – Introductory Sociology, op.cit, p. 69

⁶ E.S. Bogardus 1954 – Sociology, The Macmillan Co. New York, pp. 216-230

⁷ William F. Ogburn and M.F. Nimkoff 1953 – A Hand Book of Sociology, Routeledge and Kegan Paul, London, pp. 79-91

local and subordinate status takes place. The groups of subordinate status comprised of those people who constitute numerical minority. Keeping in view the different ideas and meanings, sociologists and cultural anthropologists described the process and results of 'ethnic meetings' under the term 'assimilation', 'acculturation' etc.

It becomes obvious from the above noted explanations that there are varied opinions or ideas of the concept of assimilation among the social scientists. To analyse assimilation, it is therefore necessary to specify the population that are compared and the elements of their culture or society that are flexible in nature.

2.2 THEORIES OF ASSIMILATION:

As indicated earlier there are a number of conceptual schemes and theoretical postulation with regard to assimilation, as because there is wide ranging discussion centering on assimilation as a process of social transformation. The development of such discussion has virtually enriched the body of literature in the contemporary sociological, socio-psychological as well as socio-environmental concern. Since assimilation is a universal process and it's after effect indicators are usefully applied in understanding social transformation, the researchers have also suggested some possible methodologies predicting universal applicability or acceptance.

One of the classical baselines of assimilation research was the study of ethnicity, immigration and ethnic stratification. Researchers have tried to focus the idea of assimilation rate for post 1965 immigrants in the United States and articulated experience of the immigrants who entered United States between 1880 and 1920. Since then there was a series of research publications on ethnicity, race

relations, and immigrant research and nationality formation. It cannot be denied that the research on ethnicity has provided some very valuable contributions towards understanding social structure, change and dynamics of plural societies.

One of such classic examples is that of Thomas and Znaniecki's study⁸ of Polish Peasant in Europe and America. The Chicago School of sociology is another pioneering example which took initiatives on the immigrant study in the cities of the United States. The forerunners of Chicago School – Park, Burgess and Mackenzie⁹ in the first quarter of the last century heralded a new epoch on immigrant study, race relations and assimilation which prior to that no other sociologists and anthropologists have attempted to do. One important contribution of the Chicago sociologists is the introduction of the theory of collective behavior.

Explaining the nature of interaction and the process of adjustment among various ethnic groups and communities, long back, Duncan¹⁰ developed some thought centering on the theory of assimilation. He explained the concept of assimilation in terms of generation levels. Making details, Duncan elaborated that while ethnic group come in contact with other local host group, at the first level some sections of its members adopt only the economic and social customs and try to intermix and gradually, intermarry. At the second level of generation parental culture is preserved at home and family environment but acquired the host culture of schools and workplace. This state gradually gives birth a dual culture and mixed set

⁸ W.I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki – The Polish Peasants in Europe and America (1880- 1910), pp. 27-39

⁹ R.E. Park (ed) 1924 – The City, University of Chicago Press, pp.10-16

¹⁰ H.G. Duncan 1933 – Immigration and Assimilation, Oxford University Press, pp. 23-47

of values. At the third level, the assimilated generation is under pressure from the host society.

Sociologists had focused three main areas on the intermarriage issue, these are – causal factors, patterns of incidence and mate selection and consequences of intermarriage for couples and their children. Historically stated, intermarriage has been considered an indicator of assimilation.¹¹

The issue of intermarriage and ethnic assimilation has been interpreted by different writers differently stating that it is both an index and method assimilation, but Lowry Nelson called it the ‘final test of assimilation’.¹² In a study on the nature contact and social relation among various ethnic groups, Robert M. Jiobu stated intermarriage is a ‘litmus test of assimilation’¹³ while for Charles Hirschman, intermarriage is the ‘final outcome of assimilation’.¹⁴

Research on immigrant assimilation and its effect on host societies and culture has been a continuing tradition among the social scientists more particularly among the American sociologists Gordon’s theory in their context may be regarded as milestone research contribution. Through his book ‘Assimilation in American

¹¹ Julius Drachsler 1921 – Intermarriages in New York City, New York, Columbia University Press, pp.102-125

¹² Lowry Nelson 1943 – Intermarriage Among Nationality Groups in a Rural Area of Minnesota, *American Jr. of Sociology*, Vol. 48, pp. 585-592.

¹³ Robert M. Jiobu 1988 – Ethnicity and Assimilation, State University of New York Press, Albany, pp. 32-47

¹⁴ Charles Hirschman 1983 – American’s Melting Pot. Reconsidered, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 9, pp. 397-423

Life, Gordon¹⁵ described ethnic assimilation and social change and focused that assimilation mainly takes place along with change of generational stages. According to him the first generation or foreign born were less assimilated and less exposed to American life than their American born children (second generation) and the grand children (third generation) were more like the American mainstream than their parents. Gordon actually interpreted ethnic assimilation into seven long variable processes. To him, if complete assimilation is to occur, any individual or group or ethnic community has to pass through certain stages of socialization such as – acculturation or behavioural assimilation, structural assimilation, amalgamation, identificational assimilation, attitude receptional assimilation, behaviour receptional assimilation and civic assimilation.¹⁶

The first process refers to the adoption by newcomers of the language, dress and other daily customs of the host society. At the second step i.e. structural assimilation involves the large scale entrance of minorities into the cliques, clubs and institutions of the host society in a way that is personal, intimate, emotionally affective and engaging the whole personality. The follow up process of structural assimilation is ‘amalgamation’ or frequent intermarriages (or marital assimilation). In this process there appears a development of a sense of people hood based solely on the host society, the disappearance of prejudice attitudes and of discriminatory

¹⁵ Milton M. Gordon 1964 – *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*, New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 54-65

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 85-89

behaviour towards the minority, and the absence of civic conflict in which the competing interests of the majority and the minority groups becomes an issue.

Assimilation is a process of fusion and interpenetration. American sociologist Robert Park presented a deterministic social evolutionist view while dealing with the issue of immigrant incorporation. According to him, assimilation is the end process of race relation cycle and to use his phrases these are “contact, competition, accommodation and eventual assimilation.” When any migrant group comes in contact with other groups, particularly in urban setting, several social processes of both positive and negative dimensions take place. These are in the form of, at initial stage of competition and towards accommodation. This may gradually replace by human cooperation and interpersonal intimacy and finally may move towards assimilation. The time frame in which immigrant groups assimilate into dominant society is however, is not clear, but the process towards assimilation is “apparently progressive and irreversible”.¹⁷

The socio-psychological perspectives also contribute some significant ideas to formulate assimilation process. Taft explained assimilation and produced a framework cross-classifying four major aspects of social contact. These are according to Taft - motivation, conation, perceived achievement and actual achievement. Taft then identified five facets of assimilation.¹⁸ These are – (a) cultural knowledge and skills i.e. firstly, language and role performance skills and

¹⁷ Robert E. Park – Race and Culture, The Free Press USA, 1926 ; Social Assimilation, Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, N.Y. Macmillan ; Human Migration and the Marginal Man, AJS, 1928, 33(6) pp. 881-893.

¹⁸ R. Taft – From Stranger to Citizen, London 1990, Chandigarh edition, pp.18-22

secondly, knowledge of culture of new groups, (b) aspect of social interaction which signalizes social acceptance and interpersonal contacts between the alien and the host group, (c) membership identity – this refers to the formal membership of the group or a sub-group, (d) integration into new group i.e. acceptance of the alien member to some status level of the group, and lastly, (e) conformity to group norms i.e. adoption of norms (cognitive) such as – values, role performance etc., performance of roles and conformity to norms.

Richardson¹⁹ advanced another psychological model of assimilation process. According to him assimilation of immigrants takes place in a sequential order asserting that an immigrant must rise above the level of dissatisfaction before he can identify himself with the host population i.e. develops a feeling that he is like and has a desire to be more like member of the host society, and that this identification must occur before he acculturates, that is, acquires a behaviour patterns and belief of the host society. There are few interesting conceptualizations with regard to assimilation process. Assimilation has been viewed as dynamic reversible process which passes through four stages such as – stabilization, deinstitutionalization, reinstitutionalization and destabilization.²⁰ Similarly, Yogesh Atal²¹ proposes a concept called “Sandwich culture” which is defined as a bi product or sub-culture arise out of mixture between parental culture and host culture. Elaborating further on

¹⁹ Quoted in Charles Price – The Study of Assimilation, in Jackson J.A. (ed) ‘Migration’, University Press, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 27-19

²⁰ K.N. Sharma – A Framework for social Integration of East Indians in Trinidad, XIth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Canada, 1983 ; The “Indian Question” in the Caribbean Sociology”, Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1989, pp. 52-65

²¹ Yogesh Atal – Outsiders as Insiders : The Phenomenon of Sandwich Culture, Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1989, pp. 37-51

the composition of “Sandwich culture”, Atal explained that there are few sets of factors which either facilitate or hinder to the growth of Sandwich culture. The first set of factors, he calls a) Aperture opening i.e. efforts made by the outsiders to become insiders through some possible skills such as – intermarriage, adoption of names / use of language of host society, adoption of food habit, religious conversion etc. On the other hand, the incoming groups maintain some insulatory mechanism to conserve their identity and keep distance from the host culture. According to Prof. Atal, the possible such mechanisms are – (a) retention of mother tongue and use of the native scripts, (b) concentration of the residences to promote greater interaction among members of the ingroup, (c) provisions for separate educational facilities either by opening schools for children or sending children to the parent country for schooling, (d) practice of endogamy, (e) formation of voluntary organizations, (f) continuation of certain food habits and taboos, (g) keeping apertures open to the parent culture such as – frequent visits, Affinal relations, exposure to books, media, films, music etc.

Social relations and closeness between ethnic communities is also viewed under the context of assimilation – retention continuum.²² There may be high degree of assimilation at one time and retention at another. Some ethnic groups get easily assimilated while others take longer time to adopt host culture. Scholars are of the view that the problem of assimilation – retention continuum is time – frame perspective and sometimes it assumes transnational dimension also. The

²² K.L. Sharma – The Assimilation – Retention Continuum and Ethnic Relations : A Case of Overseas Indians, *The Eastern Anthropologists*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1988, pp. 18-40

phenomenon of retention – continuum depends upon a number of factors like – demographic, cultural (regional, religious difference, linguistic etc), economic, political and sometimes racial complexion and characteristics.

The foregoing discussion has paved the way to assertion some important aspects and to consolidate ideas on assimilation. The discussion presents varied dimensions of assimilation. As it is evident that there are seeming differences between the characters of immigrant communities and the host societies, it is apparent that not all the features of assimilation as highlighted in the foregoing pages can be applied in case of all immigrant communities and host societies. As such, the measuring indices of assimilation depend upon the nature and characteristics of both the groups. For the purpose of present investigation we specify the specific issues and themes. A careful and systematic exploration of these issues are considered to be imperative for propose of understanding assimilation process among the Nagas in Assam.

2.3 MAJOR ISSUES:

The term ‘assimilation’ has been the important subject for discussion in most of the social science research endeavors particularly in the areas like – ethnic and race relations, immigration and multi-ethnic social structure, ethnicity and ethnic interaction, nature and composition of plural society etc. And the scholars have developed various parameters, dimensions of the process and identified the resultant effect of the process. What is significantly important is that the process of assimilation has been analysed with varying perspective differing from one socio-

demographic context to another (western society vs. eastern society) and from one historical setting to another. Similarly, the identical factors of assimilation were also discussed in accordance with the differential world situations i.e. west and east. It becomes therefore a matter of concern for the researchers dealing with the subject like assimilation and social transformation in the ethnically plural societies of northeast region of India.

It is stated in the earlier chapter (chapter I) that the societies of northeast India is an outcome of mixed history and origins of various ethnic groups and communities which paved the way to emerge a social structure characterized by integrity amidst diversity and composite instead of aloofness in social standing. Such realities have been commonly agreed by the scholars in the various fields of social sciences, social historians, linguists and litterateurs and even by the casual visitors to the region and outsiders.²³

The theoretical discussion on assimilation presented in the foregoing pages obviously helps us to highlight some major issues relating to the process which need to analyse in the empirical situation. Many researches on ethnic immigrants and their nature of adjustment in new society had focused the issue of migration as prime cause for a number of socio-economic problems like settlement and adjustment, socio-political conflict and host of other problems that beset national and

²³ Scholarly works are available on these issues prominent among those are – S.K. Chatterjee 1956 – ‘The Name Assam – Ahom’, Jr. of Asiatic Society, Calcutta, Vol. XXII ; E.A. Gait 1967 – History of Assam, Thacker Spink & Co. Ltd., Calcutta; Hem Borua 1962 – The Re Rived and the Blue Hill, Bina Library, Gauhati, 1086 ; S. Raj Kumar 1980 – *Itihakhe Huwara Sakhata Basor* (History of Assam During Ahom Rule 1228-1826 A.D.) in Assamese, Barua Printing House, Jorhat.

international social orders even in the contemporary world. Naturally, migration whether caused by socio-economic condition, civil wars, natural disasters or historical causes, is the important factor which effect population growth, population change and dynamics, adjustment and environmental changes accompanied by multiple consequences in both origin and host society and culture.

Assimilation has been viewed as gradual process of social transformation. In this context, research studies have forwarded divergent views. It is argued that it is not entirely an individual process, rather a community or group process. This implies that for assimilation to take place two distinct groups or communities of distinct culture and tradition come in contact and establish their social relationship. Researches also point out that this is possible over a period of several generations and of each generation level features of assimilation develops. The present research strategy aims at arriving objective and acceptable assessment of these issues in the case of Nagas assimilation.

The minority ethnic groups or communities with their distinct language and culture, religious beliefs and practices, behaviour, etiquette and mannerism when come in contact and establish habitations with bigger ethnic communities (host society) for long span of life, tend to develop series of characteristics. Gradually, bases of social interaction and interpersonal relationship between the outsiders and insiders are extended. As historical processes advanced, relationship become durable on the line of similarities in socio-cultural life. This phenomenon is one important facet of social life and organization of the ethnic groups inhabiting in the region of

northeast India since long past. Scholars argued this fact stating that the ethnic groups inspite of their differences in tradition and origin, periodicity of migration may have had historical relations with other neighbouring countries.²⁴

Researches in the contemporary social sciences especially in the fields of immigrant and ethnic interrelations, social transformation in a composite society etc. agreed to the point that social interaction between the alien and the host society, if accompanied by similarities of social features tend to give rise to an endless social consequences. One significant consequence is undoubtedly the formation of heterogeneous social structure. Heterogeneity may be due to increasing size of population causing scarcity of resources, socio-political conflict etc. However, all these issues may not be subject for empirical verification, as these are outside the purview of present research. The factors in operation in the composition of societies of northeast India are partially different and sometimes unique in character. And so, it is necessary to analyse these issues in separate methodological perspective and in tune with socio-historical background. And therefore history of migration of the various ethnic groups and communities of this region gets priority.

The society of northeast India is characterized by cultural diversity. Diversity means a range of many people or things that are very different from each other irrespective of religious and cultural differences, yet in India there is 'unity in diversity'. The dormant ethos of Indian constitution has played a role in promoting

²⁴ B.K. Roy Burman 1984 – Issues in the Northeast : An Appraisal, in 'Northeast Region : Problems and Prospects of Development, (ed.) B.L. Abbi, Centre For Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, pp. 174-180 ; B.M. Das 1987 – The Peoples of Assam, Gian Publishing House, Delhi.

the value of multiculturalism, which brings the people of diverse region, culture and religious background together. Such themes have been attracting attentions of the demographers, socio-historians, anthropologists, linguists and of late, very vigorously of the sociologists.

All such disciplinary perspectives have their own implications towards understanding social organization and contemporarily of changes. Hence, these approaches are considered not only sociologically important, but also relevant in better understanding of the societies of northeast. Therefore, some factors and forces responsible for strengthening unity amidst diversity in societies of northeast and which were remained unaddressed will be considered for analytical scrutiny and assessment through this research.

Another important aspect of assimilation is that social assimilation brings about social integration or incorporation by which the differences of the members of the host and the immigrant groups come to resemblance with each other. Integration thus takes many forms such as – becoming members in voluntary associations, clubs, clique groups, peer groups etc. The gradual disappearance of prejudice attitudes and discriminatory behaviour towards each other, absence of civic conflicts are some of such issues worthy of investigation in the process of assimilation study.

Assimilation usually involves a gradual change and takes place in varying degrees. Each group of immigrants contributes some of its own acquired cultural traits to its new society i.e. the host society. This is possible through contact and

communication because the transfer of customs is not simply a one-way process, it is based on the principle of reciprocity and policy of exchange.²⁵

Over and above, sociological literature put emphasis on group or community assimilation rather than skills and motivations of individuals' personal motif, immediate gratifications with friends and relatives. This narrates the cultural aspects of assimilation which has a greater role to play or transforming society or mixed origins. For most historians and social scientists assimilation is an emergent tangential property of social processes all on an aggregate level, rather than something that happens consciously or unconsciously of the level of individual persons. It means that assimilation is largely unintended and often invisible. Assimilation assumes that a relatively tenuous culture gets to be united to mighty culture and it is possible through contact with each stage of accommodation.

2.4 ASSIMILATION AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES:

At this stage we will try to outline some of the consequences of assimilation as reflected in the studies conducted so far. The term assimilation is often used with regard to immigrants and ethnic groups who have migrated and have settled in a new land. In the subsequent stages new customs and attitudes are acquired through contact and communication. The transfer of customs is not simply a one-way process. Each migrant group contributes some of its own cultural traits to its new society and in return accepts from the society where they settle and adjust. This is

²⁵ www.culturalassimilation.com/; Wikipedia.com; ed, 08-12-2016, 7-30am.

reciprocal. However, it is the nature and extent of intermixing and interaction that determines the assimilation impact.

Social demographers were of the opinion that migration brings about both positive and negative consequences on the society and culture. Such expressions were mainly observed when discussion on immigrants and their process of adjustment in new society are taken into consideration. Contemporary scholars believe that migration and assimilation usually, a two-way process in which both population i.e. host and the assimilated groups undergo change and transformation. In many cases, it is also a multi-stage process in which immigrant groups come to resemblance with one another and later becomes less distinctive.

In social science research the positive and negative consequences of migrant are discussed under quantitative and qualitative perspectives. In the context of northeast region of India, particularly when talked about Naga's assimilation with the wider society and culture with the people of the plains valley of Assam, this process has been occasionally discussed as physical and social transaction. This had led to the level of cultural diffusion and an element for enhancing social integration.

The migrants are a new set of population with distinct tradition, culture and identity and their point of destination is different. Therefore, the consequences on socio-economic, situational and environmental structure on the area of destination as a result of migration may have both quantitative and qualitative impact. These are the issues as well as the consequences of assimilation brought about by migration. The intensity of impact depends upon a number of factors such as level of proximity

with the area of destination in terms of ethnic character, religion, linguistic flexibility of the migrants and the host population, culture, social behavior, economic pursuit as well as the political environment of the region where migration takes place.²⁶

²⁶ J.K. Gogoi and H. Goswami 2004 – Migration and its Consequences for Assam with Special Reference to the Illegal Immigration from Bangladesh, paper presented in the International Seminar titled “Towards Cross-Border Cooperation Between South and South East Asia, OKD Institute, Guwahati.

CHAPTER - 3

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

In this part, an attempt has been made to collect detail information about social organization of the Naga villages in Assam through the study of some selected socio-economic dimensions of social life of the respondents. The study of socio-economic parameters is of immense importance in any kind of social science research since it facilitates an understanding about basic foundation, tradition, cultural and living conditions of people and helps to study the personality and formation of behavior patterns of individuals. Therefore, the importance of studying socio-economic background of respondents plays a significant role in determining attitudes, nature of opinions, behaviour and many other patterns of socio-psychological dimensions of persons in society as well as the changing circumstances.

According to Karl Mannheim,¹ the opinions, statements, propositions and system of ideas of individuals are taken at their face value, but they are interpreted in the light of overall situation of one who expresses them. He was also of the view that the rationality for studying socio-economic dimensions of the respondents in any social science research is very important. It enables us to understand clearly about the diverse factors affecting the value orientation of the respondents. Therefore, the study of social background is considered as prerequisite for any sociological investigation. In this regard, we have considered two broad sets of indicators which help to identify the positions of individuals in a society. The one of

¹ Karl Mannheim, 1938: *Ideology and Utopia*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, pp.12-30

such indicators is to be called ascriptive oriented variables which are by and large fixed and immobile. These indicators are related with the individuals' birth and other primordial aspects. Some of such indicators are age, sex, marital status, nature of family, place of birth, religion, and many other ascriptive criteria by individuals from birth. The other sets of indicators are labeled as individuals' achieved variables. These are related with the persons' own merit achievement capacity according to individuals' own capacity, efforts and talents. Such indicators are usually the economic position, educational and occupational attainment and other achieved criteria in life. So, it can be established that respondents' social background is an indicator to determine his place in the society, position he maintains and status acquired in the hierarchical arrangement in the social system.

This study is centered around three hundred and forty one respondents viz-a-viz Naga families from six villages and three chuks located in the border line areas in Assam-Nagaland border. One respondent from each household, usually the head of the household, was interviewed as respondent. With the help of Interview Schedule of both structured and unstructured, the respondents were asked information about certain dimensions of socio-economic life. These are – respondents' age, sex, marital status, tribe, religion, language or dialect, place of birth, education, occupation etc. The information supplied by the respondents to such questions are considered important indicators to understand their social background of the respondents on the basis of which other aspects of social structure and opinion towards change could be studied.

3.1 AGE :

Age is one important socio-economic indicator which determines not only the position of man in the social system, but is regarded as crucial demographic

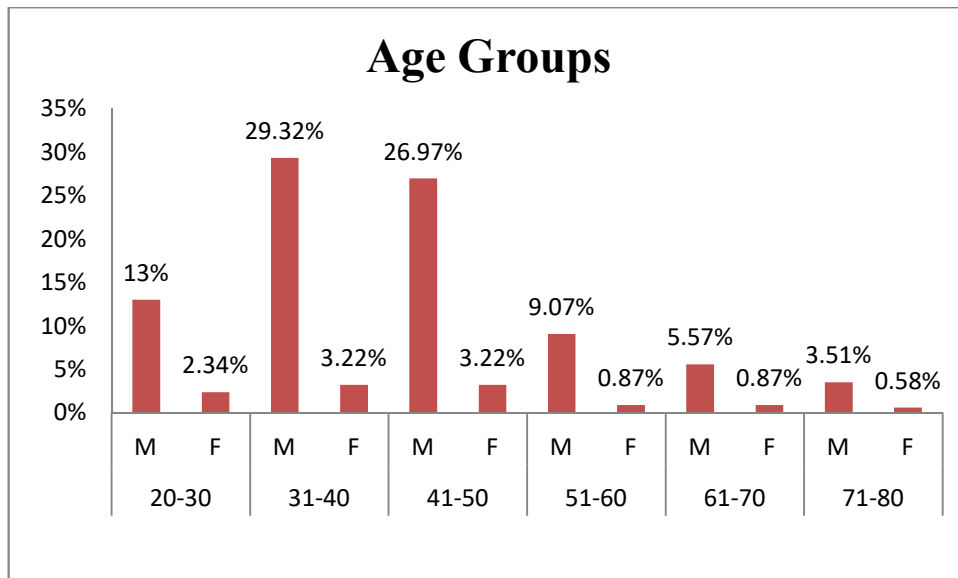
variable. Age determines physical and mental maturity as well as experiences in man's life. Man's thinking, nature of belief patterns, achievement, growth of idea, interest and opinion, working capacity, aspirations, inspiration, knowledge etc. go on changing along with the growth of age from childhood to old age. It also determines the marital status and social position of a person in society. We took into consideration of age factor of the respondents to study few important above mentioned aspects particularly in the context of change in the Naga society.

Table 3.1
Village wise Age distribution of the Respondents

Village/ Chuk	Age Groups (in years)												Total
	Up to 30		31-40		41-50		51-60		61-70		71 & Above		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
V:1	18 18%	04 4%	34 34%	02 2%	20 20%	04 4%	08 8%		03 3%	02 2%	04 4%	01 1%	100 100%
V:2	06 6.81%	02 2.2%	27 30.68%	09 10.22%	21 23.86%	05 5.68%	05 5.68%	02 2.27%	03 3.40%				80 100%
V:3	03 16.66%		05 27.77%		07 38.88%		02 11.11%		01 5.55%				18 100%
V:4	05 17.85%		07 25%		14 50%		02 7.14%						28 100%
V:5	08 13.79%		17 29.31%		15 25.86%		10 17.24%		05 8.63%		03 5.17%		58 100%
V:6			05 15.15%		09 27.27%	01 3%	07 21.21%	01 3%	05 15.15%		04 12.12%	01 3%	33 100%
C:1	05 50%	02 20%			01 10%				01 10%	01 10%			10 100%
C:2	01 16.66%		01 16.66%		02 33.33%	01 16.66%			01 10.66%				06 100%
C:3			04 50%		03 37.50%						01 12.5%		08 100%
Grand Total	46 13.48%	08 2.34%	100 29.32%	11 3.22%	92 26.97%	11 3.22%	34 9.97%	03 0.87%	19 5.57%	03 0.87%	12 3.51%	02 .58%	341 100%

Note: *V :1*=Hahchara Naga Gaon, *V:2* = Monaiting Naga Gaon, *V:3*=Namsai Naga Gaon, *V:4*=Baregaon Naga Gaon, *V:5*=Deopani Naga Gaon, *V:6*=Siloni Naga Gaon, *C:1*=Bhadhara Naga Chuk, *C:2*=Gargaon Naga Chuk and *C:3*=Ligiri Phukhuri Naga Chuk.

Figure 3.1



In terms of age distributions, our respondents are classified into six age categories where minimum age is 27 years ears and the maximum age is 81years. Most of the respondents are found below the level of 50 years. There are larger concentration of respondents in two age groups i.e. 32.54% within 31 to 40 years and 30.19% in 41 to 50 years of ages. On the other hand, there are 12 male respondents and 2 female respondents in the age group of 71 years and above.

3.2 SEX :

The identity of sex of a persons determines his or her position not only within family and society, it also carries some attributes to society to which he or she belongs. Sex refers to the demographic as well as biological categories and manifestation of femaleness and maleness. An individual's sex is a highly visible physiological fact. The sex factor directly affects the family behavior because it is important to the attainment of biological maturity. The attainment of maturity varies by socio-environmental conditions and it signifies the starting point of gender fecundity. It appears at birth and remains fixed for life. Individuals are born as either

males or females and remain so for life². This sex difference is taken as one of the bases of social background of the respondents. Here, the sex differences among the respondents have been studied to understand the nature of varying responses towards social issues and problems, attainment of education and occupation as well as the process of interaction in society.

This study represents respondents of both males and families. In the absence of male members as head of the household, the oldest females were taken as respondents. The table below gives the information.

Table 3.2
Sex distribution of the Respondents

Name of the village/Chuk	Male	Female	Total
V-1	87 75%	13 25%	100 100%
V-2	62 77.5%	18 22.5%	80 100%
V-3	18 100%		18 100%
V-4	28 100%		28 100%
V-5	58 100%		58 100%
V-6	29 78.78%	04 12.12%	33 100%
C-1	08 80%	02 20%	10 100%
C-2	05 83.33%	01 16.66%	06 100%
C-3	08 100%		08 100%
Grand Total	303 88.85%	38 11.15%	341 100%

² Allen D. Ross 1961: The Hindu Family in Urban Setting, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.171

As evidenced from the table 3.2 above, there are large majority of male respondents (87.39%) against 12.60% females. Out of the total six villages and three chowks, two villages i.e. V-3 and V-4 are represented by male respondents and one chowk i.e. Ligoripukhuri Naga chowk is represented by male respondents as head of the households. We found sizeable female respondents in the villages V1, V2 and V6. The households which are represented by female respondents have been caused either by the expiry of the husband or non-availability of adult male members in the family.

Traditionally, Naga society is patriarchal in nature and the males are holding superior position and decision makers in the family.

3.3 MARITAL STATUS:

Marriage is a universal social institution. It plays an important role in human society. Marriage regulates a specific social relationship sanctioned by society between two individuals of opposite sex which is based on certain rights and obligations. It is established form of social relationship to regulate and control the sexual behavior of individuals. It is an acquired characteristic. Through marriage, an individual attains status in society which is called marital status. The marital status thus, for an individual may be categorized as married, unmarried, widow, widower, divorced etc. The position of marital status of the respondents of present study is shown in table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3
Village wise Marital Status of the Respondents

Villages/chowk	Marital Status				Total
	<i>Unmarried</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Widows</i>	<i>Widower</i>	
V:1	01 <i>1%</i>	82 <i>82%</i>	12 <i>12%</i>	05 <i>5%</i>	100 <i>100%</i>
V:2		75 <i>93.75%</i>	03 <i>3.75%</i>	02 <i>2.58%</i>	80 <i>100%</i>
V:3		16 <i>88.88%</i>		02 <i>11.11%</i>	18 <i>100%</i>
V:4	01 <i>3.71%</i>	27 <i>96.42%</i>			28 <i>100%</i>
V:5		50 <i>86.20%</i>	05 <i>8.62%</i>	03 <i>5.17%</i>	58 <i>100%</i>
V:6		28 <i>84.84%</i>	03 <i>9%</i>	02 <i>6%</i>	33 <i>100%</i>
C:1		09 <i>90%</i>		01 <i>10%</i>	10 <i>100%</i>
C:2	01 <i>16.66%</i>	04 <i>66.66%</i>	01 <i>16%</i>		06 <i>100%</i>
C:3		07 <i>87.50%</i>	01 <i>12.50%</i>		08 <i>100%</i>
Grand Total	03 <i>0.87%</i>	298 <i>87.39%</i>	25 <i>7.33%</i>	15 <i>4.39%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>

It is found that almost majority of the respondents in all study village are married (82% in V-1, 93.75% in V-2, 88.88% in V-3, 96.42% in V-4, 86.20% in V-5, 84.84% in V-6, 90% in C-1, 66.66% in C-2 and 87.50% in C-3). A total of 7.33% of the respondents are widows, but there are no widows in V3, V4 and in C-1. There are also 4.39% widower respondents in the present study.

3.4 TRIBES:

Indian society has been characterized by its diversity from many angles. Such diversities are mainly rest on by caste and tribe, language, religious affiliations, regional affiliations, ethnicity and innumerable features of traditionalism. Since the

evolution of Indian society, caste and tribal identities have been viewed both as institutions as well as ideology. Institutionally, these social identities provided a framework for arranging, organizing and mobilizing social groups in terms of their status and position in social hierarchies and economic framework.

The Assamese social structure has been composed of the interaction between the *Kiratas* (the term used in the Sanskrit text to indicate the original inhabitants of this area), Ariyan (People representing Vedic way of life), Dravidians, Austrics, Indo-Burmese, Indo-Tai and Indo-Tibetan Tribals and linguistics groups. This is not only a feature of Assamese social structure alone, almost all scholars of literature, language, historians and social scientists agreed that India's northeast is the meeting ground of people of diverse origin, history, culture, tradition and social organizations.

The above illustration represents the features of social structure of undivided Assam. Later, the scholars and narrators have agreed that such features have left its elements towards social composition of society even after the creation of smaller states in the region.

The tribal people basically live in the hills, forest areas and naturally isolated regions commonly known by different names and so, it is still popularly known throughout the country. Some of such popular names are *Vanyajati* (caste of forests), *Vanavasi* (inhabitants of forests), *Pahari* hill dwellers, *Adimjati* (original communities), *Adivasi* (first dwellers), *Janajati* (folk people) etc³.

The tribes of Assam are broadly categorized into two divisions according to their habitation patterns – the plain tribes and the hill tribes. The plains tribes are

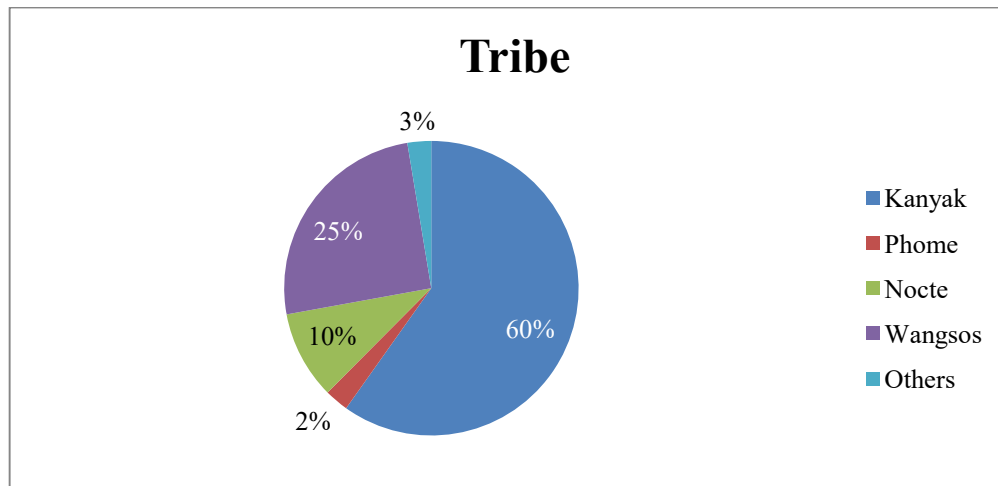
³ B.M. Das, 1972: Ethnic Heritage of the tribes of North East India, in Sibsagar college Silver Jubilee vol., Sibsagar, Assam, pp. 87-89.

living in both sides of the Brahmaputra valley or in the broader plains areas of Assam. They are chiefly the Bodos, Misings, Rabhas, Tiwas, Deoris, Sonowal Kacharis, Burmans, Dimasas, and Khamtis etc. Garos, Hajongs, Singhphos, Dimasas, Khamtis etc. The Tribals living in the Hill areas of Assam are – Karbis, Khasis, Chakmas, Kukis, Mizo, Nagas, Lakhers, etc. It is interesting to note that there are several Hill tribes living in some plains district of Assam since long time or beyond the recorded period of history. This study is mainly concerned with four tribal communities originated from Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh and settled in six villages and three *Chuks* in the Sivasagar district of Assam. The table 3.4 below elaborates details about them.

Table 3.4
Distribution of respondents according to tribes wise

Village/Chowk	Tribe					Total
	<i>Konyak</i>	<i>Phom</i>	<i>Nocte</i>	<i>Wangsos</i>	<i>Others</i>	
V:1	100 100%					100 100%
V:2	70 87.50%	09 11.25%			01 1.25%	80 100%
V:3	18 100%					18 100%
V:4				28 100%		28 100%
V:5				58 100%		58 100%
V:6			33 100%			33 100%
C:1	10 100%					10 100%
C:2	06 100%					06 100%
C:3					08 100%	08 100%
Grand Total	204 59.82%	09 2.63%	33 9.67%	86 25.21%	09 2.63%	341 100%

Figure 3.2



The table 3.4 gives a presentation about the Naga tribes living in the selected six villages and three Chowks in the Sivasagar district of Assam. This is the universe of the present study.

This study covers four major Naga tribes living in the vicinity of Assam – Nagaland adjoining areas but within the state of Assam. As shown in the table, first of all, we found all the villages inhabited by Naga tribes are located amidst the villages exclusively inhabited by Assamese population except some few non-Assamese families belong to outside of northeast region of India.

This study covers four major Naga tribes they are the Kanyaks, the Phoms, the Noctes and the Wangsos and few other tribal families like Doke etc. Almost all the Kanyak families are concentrating in three villages – Hahchara, Monaiting and Namsai Naga villages and two Chowks i.e. Bhadhara and Gargaon Naga Chowks. The Kanyak Nagas constitute an important segment of Naga population in the

northeastern part of Nagaland. Mon district of present Nagaland is usually the home district of the Kanyak Nagas.

The Kanyaks inhabit in the entire northeastern part of Nagaland state. This part is surrounded by the plains of Sivasagar district of Assam in the West, Myanmar in the East, Tirap Frontiers of Arunachal Pradesh in the North and the Tuensang district of Nagaland in the South. In terms of distribution of population, they are spread over many states in the northeast India like – Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and even beyond the Indo-Myanmar border. It is reported that the Kanyaks living outside Nagaland put together stands larger than the total number of Kanyaks living in their home state Nagaland⁴.

The other important tribal group of this study is the Phom tribes. The Phoms are residing in the Monaiting Naga Gaon. The Phom Nagas have developed intimate relationship with the Ao Nagas. The Phom Nagas constitute 2.63% of the studied samples. The Phoms were originally a sub-tribe of the Kanyak and got their identity as ‘Phoms’ in 1942 during British period. Their present home district is Longleng district of Nagaland which was carved out of Tuensang district in early 2004. (ibid, p. 74).

The Noctes and the Wangsos are the original inhabitants of the Tirap Frontier Division of NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). They represent our present samples of study from three villages. The Siloni Naga Gaon located a village at a distance of 3 km away from Titilagarh of Borhat. Borhat is a famous place during

⁴ A. Lanu Ao and A. Ovung, 2012, Nagaland the Land of Festivals, Heritage Publishing House, Dimapur, p. 58

Ahom rule and a place for important commercial activities for the Nagas and the Assamese for which the place was known as Borhat. In Assamese language ‘Bor’ means great and ‘hat’ means market at Borhat bordering Arunachal Pradesh has 33 Nocte families (9.67% of the total sample). On the other hand, the Baregaon Naga village and the Deopani Naga village were seen inhabited by the Wangsos (25.21% of the total sample).

The Wangsos tribal people live in the western part of Triap District in Arunachal Pradesh. They are akin to the Nagas.⁵ In Wangso society every village has a Chief or Headman who plays the role of a king. He is known as “Wangham”. The administration authority of the village rests in him. He gives the decisions of all the activities of the village. He is assisted in his works by two junior officers known as Gampa and Lumpa appointed by him. The duty of Gampa is to make arrangement for the worship of the dead person, while of the Lumpa is to circulate the decisions of the Gaon Parishad or the village Chief among the villagers.

Thus, class-division and exogamy is quite apparent in the Wangso Society. Through the Wanham carry out the responsibility of all works of the village he can not work in despotic manner. He is to abide by the decisions of the Gaon Parishad. The Gaon Parishad meets when the village confronts any sort of problem. The presence of the Wangham, the Gampa and the Lumpa and the aged persons in the meeting of the Gaon Parishad is a must. The headship or Wangham of the village is hereditary. A son of a Wangham can become the next Wangham. In case the present

⁵ Dole, Durgeshwer: Uttorpub Bharator Samajattik Adhyan, Koustov Prakashan, Dibrugarh, p. 89

Wangham happens to be without issue the post is filled up from amongst his brothers or nephews.

The Wangso society is divided into four clans (Vamsa), namely Wangam, Wangchas, Wangchoo and Wanpan. Amongst them the Wangam are considered to be the most highborn. They enjoy all the rights and privilege of the society. The next class in the hierarchy is the Wangchas. Those descended from the matrimonial relation between the Wangam husband and Wanpan wife are known as Wanchas. Likewise, the Wanchoo are the descendents of the blood admixer of the Wanpan and the Wanham. Thus, class-division and exogamy is quit apparent in the Wangsos society. The social status of the class in descending order is as follows:

First or highest- Wangam : Wangam husband and wife

Second or medium- Wangchas: Wangam husband and Wanpan wife

Third or medium- Wangchoo: Wangam wife and wanpan husband

Forth or lowest- Wanpan: Wanpan husband and wife

In the class-divided society of the Wangsos, through the classes enjoy discriminative right and privileges they can all participate in the Gaon Parishad and give their opinions. Generally, the public decisions are adopted according to unanimous opinions in the Gaon Parishad. In the event of controversial matters the Wangam gives the final decision and his decision is accepted by all. Since the British rule the Wangha has been the head of the Wangso society. He is undoubtedly powerful in the society.⁶

⁶ Ibid, p. 90

Long back, the British social anthropologist Verrier Elwin noted that the Nocte areas of erstwhile NEFA were very much connected with the plains valleys of Assam and they have adopted some elementary forms of Vaishnavism.⁷ The “others” categorized in the table 3.4 above comprised of families who, as reported, were the native of Arunachal Pradesh and their tribal identity has been termed as ‘Doke’ tribe. They have been residing in the Ligoripukhuri area near present Naira town from several generations ago and many of them have married Naga girls during their first or second generations and gradually started marrying Assamese girls in their present generation. The subsequent chapters will detail about these issues broadly.

On the basis of the above findings, it can be stated that the villages under study, in total, represent tribes of multi-ethnic characters who inherited traditional form of their generations and have developed diversity in the present settlements in Assam.

3.5 RELIGION:

Religion is not only a social institution, it is universal phenomenon. For such reason, religion has been defined variously by different scholars, intellectuals, scientists as well as fundamentalists of various levels all over human globe. One most universally acceptable fact is that religion binds together people, solidifies unity and integrity in society and sometime, acts as powerful force of social conflict and disharmony.

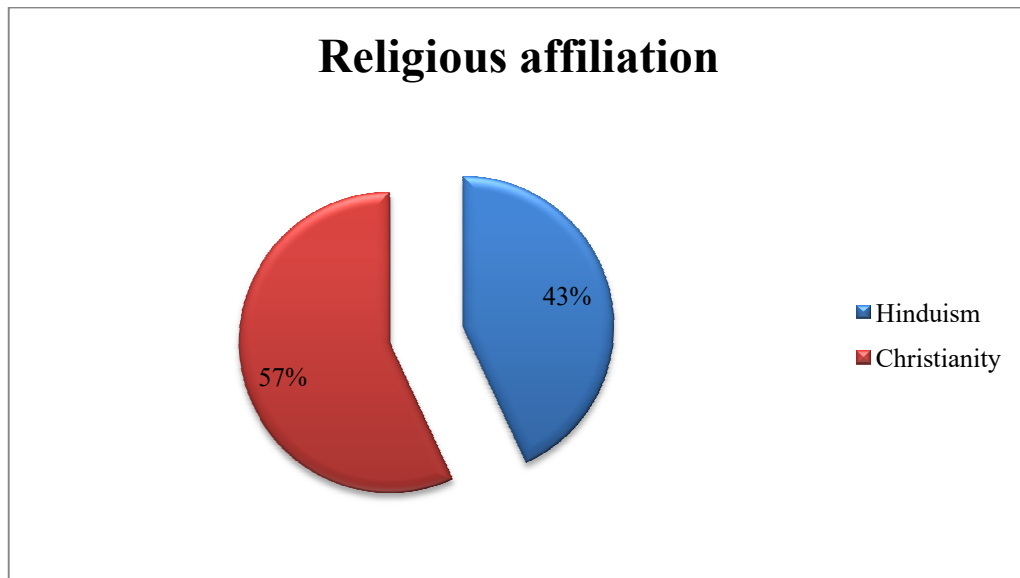
⁷ Verrier Elwin 1964: A philosophy for NEFA, Shillong, p. 25.

This study chiefly aims of understanding the bases which are supposed to act as social agents that may possibly lead to the great process of assimilation between the Nagas and the people of Assam in the environment of Assamese social structure. Detail description to such issues will follow in the next subsequent chapters. In this context, we simply present the various religious affiliations of our respondents as shown in the table 3.5 below –

Table 3.5
Village-wise Religious Affiliation of the respondents

Village/Chuk	Religious Affiliation			Total
	<i>Hinduism</i>	<i>Christianity</i>	<i>Buddhism</i>	
V:1	98 98% 66.67%	02 2% 1.03%	Nil	100 100%
V:2		80 100% 41.23%	Nil	80 100%
V:3		18 100% 24.74%	Nil	18 100%
V:4		28 100% 14.43%	Nil	28 100%
V:5		58 100%	Nil	58 100%
V:6	33 100%		Nil	33 100%
C:1	10 100%		Nil	10 100%
C:2	06 100%		Nil	06 100%
C:3		08 100%	Nil	8 100%
Grand total	147 100% 43.11%	194 100% 56.89%	Nil	341 100% 100%

Figure 3.3



The empirical data collected from the field of study show that a section of the Nagas living in the villages of Assam (in Sivasagar district) have adopted Hindu religion. Accordingly, the followers of Hinduism are 98% in Hahchara Naga village and 100% in Siloni Naga village, Bhadhara Naga Chowk and Gargaon Naga Chowk. The affiliation to Hinduism by the Nagas in these areas (the Kanyaks and the Noctes) and the resultant effect on assimilation with Assamese society will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters. The Naga families residing in other villages i.e. Monaiting, Namsai, Baregaon and Deopani villages are the followers of Christianity.

Traditionally, the Nagas are said to be animistic which lays emphasis on the existence of manifestation of spirits of both benevolent and malevolent⁸. Causes of troubles and torments which befall the family and the inhabitations are attributed to

⁸ H.M Bareh 1970: Gazetters of Nagaland Kohima District, Government Nagaland Press.

the action of the evil spirits. They hold the view that commitments, omissions and occasional failures to appease them are the reasons for incurring the spirits displeasure. By divination they trace such sufferings, ailments and ill luck to the influence of the evil spirit and the spirits having been traced, appeasement to them follows.

The original religious belief of the Noctes centers around their god *Jauban* also called *jongban* or *tesong*. They have their deity and the Noctes impose confusion over the characteristics of the deities. According to their belief, the deity has two aspects – good and evil. He (deity) may confer prosperity and happiness or may cause misfortune and misery according to his whims.

3.6 MOTHER TONGUE:

Mother tongue (linguistic affiliation) is an identity of a person in society and indeed it is a prescription to an individual with regards to his origin, settlement and geographical belongingness. At the same time it is the media of transmitting emotion, feelings, sentiment as well as interpersonal relationship and reaction. The socio-cultural patterns of any ethnic group and its manifestation in the broader context of society can also be understood if the knowledge of mother tongue or language of the people is known. Northeast India from linguistic point of view is a miniature India where hundreds of ethnic, linguistic and regional groups are living since time immemorial. Each and every ethnic group has their own dialect/language and sub-dialects. Mother tongue or dialect can be defined as a set of symbol, by which people can share, communicate as well as interact with others. It is a quick,

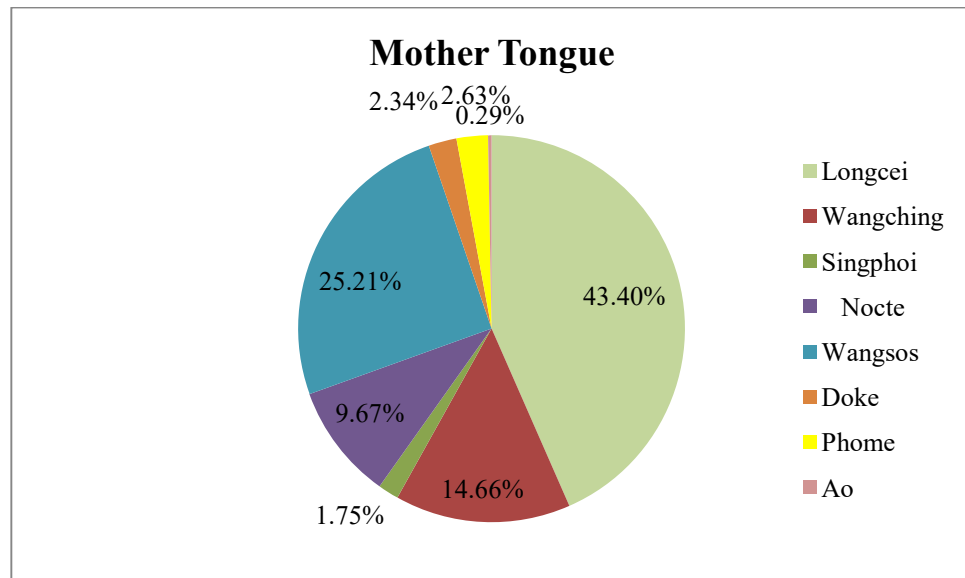
precise, efficient and flexible means of communication. Language or dialect is a traditionally transmitted way of communication among people and it is also a representative and exceptional possession of human beings.

This present field of study is basically interesting as because the Naga people are linguistically much heterogeneous. The following table gives detail information about the linguistic heterogeneity of the Nagas living in Assamese surrounding.

Table 3.6
Village wise respondents mother tongue

Village/ Chuk	Mother Tongue							
	<i>Konyak</i>			<i>Nocte</i>	<i>Wangsos</i>	<i>Doke</i>	<i>Phom</i>	<i>Ao</i>
	<i>Longcei</i>	<i>Wangching</i>	<i>Singphoi</i>					
V:1	71 71%	25 25%	04 4%					
V:2	56 70%	14 17.50%					69 11.25%	01 1.25%
V:3	12 66.66%	06 33.33%						
V:4					28 100%			
V:5					58 100%			
V:6				33 100%				
C:1	06 60%	04 40%						
C:2	03 50%	01 16.66%	02 33.33%					
C:3						08 100%		
Grand Total	148 43.40%	50 14.66%	06 1.75%	33 9.67%	86 25.21%	08 2.34%	09 2.63%	01 .29%

Figure 3.4



The field survey reveals that there are all total eight linguistics groups among the Nagas in the studied villages. Each linguistic group is distinctly identified as a separate group within themselves as because the dialect or language of one group is different from others. Among the Kanyak there are three linguistics divisions – Longsei, Wangching and Singphoi and represent 43.40%, 14.66% and 1.75 respectively. That is to note here is that the Kanyak speak different dialects in different villages which means each Kanyaks village is linguistically different from other Kanyak village. This is one form of internal differentiation within the Kanyak tribe. But this an age-old feature not only among the Kanyaks, one can find evidence of such differentiation among few other tribe of the Nagas.

The Phoms are a small community among the Nagas. They have also linguistics divisions among themselves. The Phoms speak different dialects. Every four to five villages speak a particular dialect which is not easily understood by the

others. For example – *Monguya, Sakshi, Yachem* and *Niam* villagers in Nagaland speak different dialects, though they are neighbours. They have adopted a language spoken by ten villages to be their common language and it has now accepted as their common language and understood by all of them.⁹

Similarly, the Noctes and the Wangsos who constitute an important ethnic segment of Arunachal tribes now can speak Assamese language fluently. The Noctes and the Wangsos linguistically, belong to the great Sino – Tibetan linguistic families of the world. The Wangsos speak Wangso dialect but have no written language and as such no literature, but of late, they are using Roman scripts. The Wangso dialect can be broadly seen into two local divisions – lower Wangso and upper Wangso dialect areas. The Noctes speak their own dialect known as *Kasikte*. Presently, both the Noctes and the Wangsos can speak, read and write Assamese language fluently.

3.7 PLACE OF BIRTH:

Place of birth has been considered as important criterion in this study, since it reveals some essential aspects of person's identity, origin and even socialization process, growth of personality and many features of man's relation to his society and environment. This study is primarily concerned with social transformation among the Nagas living in Assamese surroundings and so, the information about the place of birth or origin of the respondents has been taken as determinant factor for understanding traditional social structure, forms of social interaction, nature of migration and settlement patterns leading to subsequent development.

⁹ A. Lanu Ao and Ovung 2012- op. cit. p., 25

Table 3.7
Place of Birth of the Respondents

Villages	Place of Birth		Total
	Within the Village	Outside the Village	
V:1	95 95%	05 5%	100 100%
V:2	76 95%	04 5%	80 100%
V:3	17 94.44%	01 5.55%	18 100%
V:4	27 96.42%	01 3.57%	28 100%
V:5	57 98.27%	01 1.72%	58 100%
V:6	33 100%		33 100%
C:1	01 10%	09 90%	10 100%
C:2		06 100%	06 100%
C:3	08 100%		08 100%
Grand Total	319 93.54%	27 7.91%	341 100%

Most of the respondents (93.54%) who are in category of below 50 years old were form in their present villages in Assam.

It is except 7.91% respondents, all others were born and brought up in their present village. This consolidates an idea that the Naga inhabited villages in Sivasagar district of Assam were established in several generations ago. The respondents who ‘place of birth’ were reported ‘outside the village’ constitute

7.91%. Some of them were born in Nagaland and some came as new migrants and settled here with their kins and relatives.

3.8 EDUCATION:

Research in various fields of social sciences have indicated that education is not only a factor for man's position and status in society, it is also considered as determinant levels of socio-political awareness in the contemporary life situation. Education however, is considered important factor for attaining identity of persons in society, because persons of higher education are able to enjoy higher occupational rank and status in society. educational qualifications of the respondents are shown in table 3.8

Table – 3.8
Village-wise respondents level of educational

Village/ Chuk	Educational Level					Total
	<i>Illiterate</i>	<i>Below HSLC</i>	<i>HSLC Passed</i>	<i>Higher Sec. Passed</i>	<i>Graduations</i>	
V:1	15 <i>15%</i>	56 <i>56%</i>	17 <i>17%</i>	09 <i>9%</i>	03 <i>3%</i>	100 <i>100%</i>
V:2	10 <i>12.50%</i>	59 <i>73.75%</i>	09 <i>11.25%</i>	01 <i>1.25%</i>	01 <i>1.25%</i>	80 <i>100%</i>
V:3	01 <i>5.55%</i>	12 <i>66.66%</i>	04 <i>22.22%</i>	01 <i>5.55%</i>		18 <i>100%</i>
V:4	03 <i>10.71%</i>	20 <i>71.42%</i>	05 <i>17.85%</i>			58 <i>100%</i>
V:5	03 <i>12%</i>	20 <i>75.86%</i>	05 <i>8.62%</i>	02 <i>3.44%</i>		58 <i>100%</i>
V:6	14 <i>42.42%</i>	14 <i>42.42%</i>	03 <i>9%</i>	01 <i>3%</i>	01 <i>3%</i>	33 <i>100%</i>
C:1	03 <i>30%</i>	04 <i>40%</i>	03 <i>30%</i>			10 <i>100%</i>
C:2		03 <i>50%</i>		02 <i>33.33%</i>	01 <i>16.66%</i>	06 <i>100%</i>
C:3		03 <i>37.50%</i>	02 <i>25%</i>	01 <i>12.50%</i>	02 <i>25%</i>	08
Grand Total	43 <i>12.60%</i>	225 <i>62.98%</i>	48 <i>14%</i>	17 <i>4.98%</i>	08 <i>2.34%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>

It is seen that educationally most of the respondents are in the level of school education i.e. below HSLC (56% in Hahchara, 73.75% in Monaiting, 66.66% in Namsai, 71.42% in Baregaon, 75.86% in Deopani, 42.42% in Siloni, 40% in Bhadhara, 50% Gargaon Naga Chowk and 37.50% in Ligoripukhuri Naga Chowk). It constitutes 62.98% of the total respondents. While substantial number of respondents in few villages have their educational qualification up to the level of matriculation (17% in Hahchara, 22.22% in Namsai, and 17.85% in Baregaon village). There are 2.34% respondents i.e. 8 out of the total are graduation degree holders.

The findings also reveal that sizeable number of respondents i.e. 43 (12.60%) are illiterate and they are mostly belonged to the older generation of both males and female.

The overall educational scenario of the Naga villages under study is definitely better than the average literacy rates of the villages in Assam. We took some case histories of the heads of the Naga Village Councils and the Church leaders. They stated that the children of young generations do hard work in all stages of their educational life. It is to mention that out of six children of the Head of the village Council of Baregaon three are post-graduate degree holders, two are graduates and the other child is going to appear in plus two examinations.

An individual literacy rate of the villages under study is satisfactory. It is 90% in Hahchara and Namsai Naga villages, 80% in Baregaon and Deopani villages, 100% in Bhadhara and Ligiri phukhuri chowks and 97% in Monaiting Naga village (reported by village Headman quoting 2011 census figure) All villages are well connected with educational institution of both primary and middle schools.

It is to note that both the boys and girls of almost all families are enrolled in educational institutions either in schools and colleges. They are studying in the medium of Assamese languages in the educational institution in the local districts or nearby other districts.

3.9 OCCUPATION:

Like education, occupation is another important indicator of man's socio-economic position in society. It is the occupation which indicates person's nature of involvement, engagement and earning processes. It also signalizes the motivation, outlook, basic behavior, cultural attachment and normative patterns of individuals and thereby maintains social status in society. In sociological researches therefore, study of occupational structure facilitates to search for further details of certain issues like- state of social hierarchy, social stratification as well as mobility. Studies also suggest that occupation determines to a great extent of one's mode of living, patterns of consumption and behavior of persons in society.

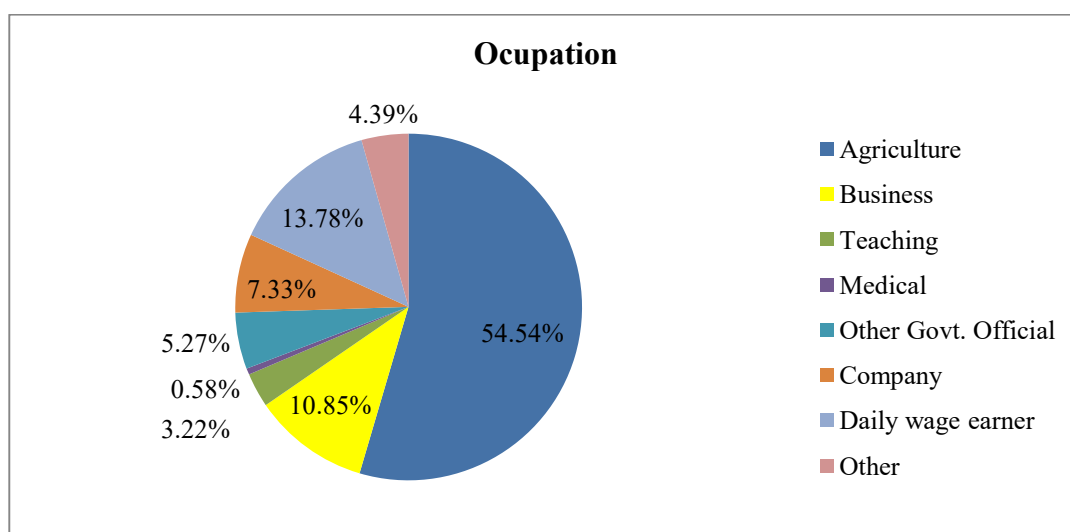
It is an obvious fact that rural economy is undergoing transformation as a result of urban impact or industrial influence. From this point it can be considered that social transformation is a universal process. The Naga villages under study are also no exception. From location point of view these villages are not far away from some big industrial establishments of Assam like Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and its headquarters at Nazira and Fertilizer Corporation of India (BVFC) at Namrup. Therefore, the Nagas living amidst agricultural surroundings and frequent contact with urban and industrial environment possibly linked to a variety of occupational pursuits and caring source. This is more so among the younger

educated section of the Nagas The following table 3.9 gives a detail presentation of occupations presently practiced by respondents.

Table 3.9
Occupation of the respondents: Village-wise

Villages/ Chuk	Occupation								Total
	<i>Cultivation</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Teaching</i>	<i>Medical</i>	<i>Govt. Official</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Daily wage earner</i>	<i>Any other</i>	
V:1	46 46%	15 15%	05 5%	01 1%	07 7%	11 11%	10 10%	05 5%	100 100%
V:2	39 48.75%	06 7.50%	04 5%		02 2.50%	09 11.25%	15 18.75%	05 6.25%	80 100%
V:3	12 66.66%	03 16.66%					03 16.66%		18 100%
V:4	16 35%	04 22.22%					08 44.44%		28 100%
V:5	44 75.86%	05 8.62%	01 1.72%			03 5.17%	02 3.44%	03 3.17%	58 100%
V:6	22 66.66%	01 3.03%			01 3.03%	02 6.06%	05 15.15%	02 6.06%	33 100%
C:1	07 70%	01 10%					02 20%		10 100%
C:2		01 16.66%	01 16.66%	01 16.66%	02 33.33%		01 16.66%		06 100%
C:3		01 12.5%			06 75%		01 12.5%		08 100%
Grand Total	186 54.54%	37 10.85%	11 3.22%	02 .58%	18 5.27%	25 7.33%	47 13.78%	15 4.39%	341 100%

Figure 3.5



The information about occupation of the respondents reveals a wide variety of earning sources pursued by the family members of the Naga villages. Cultivation is the primary occupation for more than half of the respondents (54.54%) followed by business (10.85%) and company services (7.33%). In additions to regular rice cultivation, the Naga families practice variety of case crops and earn a comfortable amounts or earning and livelihood.

It is important to note that some sorts of business activities are becoming popular among some families. Business and other commercial activities are pursued by 10.85% respondents. Starting from small grocery shops to the cultivation of tea-nursery and small tea gardens, several Naga families are engaged in business activities as primary source of earning. Contract works at the nearby industrial establishment and urban centers, supply of materials like stones, forest based goods are also popular and rising business activities among some Naga youths. Several Naga families are economically well-off and self development by running some business activities like poultry and piggery farms, vegetable gardens etc. They sell their vegetable products in local weekly markets and provide services to the industrial areas on regular basis. Thus, Naga families may be called economically self sufficient and dependent. They are in one sense good producers and hard workers.

Tea cultivation as both primary and secondary occupation among some Naga young educated is good examples of Siloni Naga families.

There are 5.27% respondents who are working in several government departments. The industrial establishments like – ONGC, Oil India ltd, Indian Railways, BSF, Indian Army, APBN, Assam police, public works department of the govt. of Assam have provided some opportunities for employments to the educated Nagas living in Assam villages.

One catchy point in this context is important to mention that all total 47 respondents (3.78%) are found to be wage labourers. They use to work daily in nearby Assamese households or in urban areas and earn their livelihood. Besides personal family expenditure, these families have to maintain children's education.

Income (Table 3.10):

Income is one important component of man's life. It determines many other associated conditions in determining social and behavioural aspects. Income level can be assessed in terms of man's occupation of both primary and secondary.

Economy background of a person, on many occasions determines status and class position of an individual or group that is necessarily a required criterion for stratification system in society. However, it is the economic criteria which not only fulfill the basic needs of man's life, it also effectively works in maintaining social life standard and mode of living.

The other side of income can be understood in terms of behavioural aspect. Individual's behavior, attitude, opinion etc. are also significantly shaped by his economic position in society. It accordingly governs his/her actions in society. There are a large number of studies dealing with the issue of social stratification, class and

social mobility where the criteria of income, wealth possession and holding of property are considered as major factor. Thus, social action, behavior and formation of opinion towards social issues and problems are also examined taking income as major variable.

The issue of income level's of the respondents under study tells us about the general economic condition of the villages. The overall scenario of income of the Naga people, as informed by the respondents, is of lower half of the total families are solely dependent on cultivation. There are many families who do not possess cultivable lands and have to maintain family's livelihood through daily labour (Table 3.9).

We have stated earlier that the Nagas are by nature hard workers and so, traditionally they are self-independent. This is one character of the Nagas inherited ethnically. Nshoga stated "the most remarkable feature of the Naga village economy was the existence of self-sufficient and self-governing village based on meritocracy. Traditional Naga village function as little world of their own, having nothing to do with the outside world."¹⁰ With the help of field data, an analysis on income position of the respondents is presented in the pages to follow. The table 3.10 below is an indication about the income levels of respondents.

¹⁰ A. Nshoga – Traditional Naga, Village system and its Transformation, Anshah Publication House, Delh, 2009, p. 223.

Table. 3.10

Income of the Respondents – Village –wise

Village/Chowk	Income Size (in Rupees)											Total
	Upto 5000	5,001 to 10,000	10,001 to 15,000	15,001 to 20,000	20,001 to 25,000	2,5001 to 30,000	30,001 to 35,000	35,001 to 40,000	40,001 to 50,000	50,001 to 55,000	55,000 and Above	
V-1	32 32%	22 22%	7 7%	6 6%	4 4%	14 14%	3 3%	2 2%	2 2%		8 8%	100 100%
V-2	52 65%	11 13%	3 3.75%	1 1.25%	3 3.75%	6 7.5%	1 1.25%	2 2.5%			1 1.25%	80 100%
V-3	7 38.8%	2 11%	1 5.5%	4 22%		1 11%	1 11%			1 11%	1 11%	18.100%
V-4	19 67.8%	8 28.5%				1 3.5%						28 100%
V-5	41 70.6%	16 27.5%	1 1.7%									58 100%
V-6	6 18%	10 30%	6 18%	4 12%	1 3%	5 15%					1 3%	33 100%
C-1	6 60%	4 40%										10 100%
C-2	2 33%	2 33%				1 16%					1 16%	6 100%
C-3	1 12%	1 12%		2 24%	1 12%	1 12%	1 12%		1 12%			8 100%
Grand Total	166 48.6%	76 22%	18 5.7%	17 4.9%	09 2.63%	29 8%	06 1.7%	04 1.17%	03 0.87%	01 0.29%	12 3.51%	341 100%

On the basis of income the respondents have been categorized into eleven groupings where the lowest monthly income is Rs. 2000/- and the highest is Rs. 1.50 lakh above. Accordingly, the numbers of respondents in each of the eleven categories are uneven.

The table indicates that there are highest number of respondents (48.6%) in the lowest income group i.e. upto rupees 5000/- in a month. The next highest number of respondents are in the income group of Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10,000/-. The third group comprised of 29 respondents in total whose monthly income ranges from Rs. 25001/- to Rs. 30,000/-. In all the other income groups, the number of respondents is small, that is 5.7% in the group of Rs. 10,001/- to Rs. 15,000/-, 4.9% in the group of Rs. 15,001/- to Rs. 20,000/- and so on.

The income scenario of the respondents village-wise is again different. If we observe the field data, we find that it is in the village 5 (Deopani village) where largest number of families (70.6%) have their monthly income Rs. 5,000/-. Again, it is the Baregaon village with maximum number of families (67.8%) having monthly income of Rs. 5,000/-. Accordingly, the concentration of larger number of respondents in each village under study, was found in the lowest income range (Rs. 5,000/- monthly).

The field data regarding monthly income of the respondents indicate another observable trend. This shows, if we compare the position village-wise, it is only in three villages i.e. Hahchara, Monaiting and Namsai, where we find some households whose monthly income ranges between Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 40,000/-. There are 29

respondents in Hahchara, 13 in Monaiting and 6 in Namsai village who come within this category of monthly income.

There are a total of 12 respondents whose monthly income is above Rs. 50,000/-. They constitute 3.51% out of the total household under study. The officials in ONGC, medical doctors, College, Professors, Government pensioners, community king, Tea cultivators and few other contractors and suppliers are the persons included in this group. From income point of view, this group of families occupies a position of rich category of people in the Naga villages.

Thus, on the basis of the income data, we can conclude that majority of the Naga families have their monthly income of Rs. 20,000/- (i.e. 70.6% if we combine together the first two categories number of respondents (3.51%) have their monthly income between the range of Rs. 50,000 and above.

CHAPTER - 4

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE NAGAS

While dealing with the discussion of social background of the respondents (Chapter III), we touched upon some issues like – place of birth, tribal identity, language spoken by the respondents etc. These issues reveal the background identity of the respondents as expressed at the time of field data collection. *i.e.* the contemporary position of the Nagas. Here, in this chapter an attempt will be made in detail to understand the Naga communities since the days of their migration to this part of northeast India and subsequent stages of change. However, the aim of the chapter is basically two folds. Firstly, it is our attempt to study in detailed the traditional social structure of the Nagas and secondly to examine far the traits of tradition inherited by the Nagas through generations have their manifestation in the contemporary life and culture. These two were the part of basic premises of the study made at the beginning in the forms of objective and hypothesis respectively (chapter I). To fulfill this purpose, we will discuss the origin and history, settlement and habitation, myth, legend and tradition, culture, nature of inheritance etc. and thereby to understand the traditional social structure of the Nagas.

Tradition refers to a system of belief, customs or way of doing everything that has existed for a long time among a particular group of people or a combination of a set of beliefs and customs followed by several generations. Literally, these include religious or cultural norms inherited by a group of people over generations. Sociologists explained and adopted various levels of interpretation while discussed

tradition and so, adopted multiple perspectives to comprehend the knowledge of tradition.¹ For the sociologists these are uniform in character throughout human societies. Social structure attains some qualities by way of doing things by its people and transforms gradually in the process of social change.

This chapter therefore opens a discussion to understand traditional social structure of the Nagas – a group of ethnic communities migrated to the northeast region of India and inhabited in the region since long historical past. For a systematic presentation, the chapter is divided into two sections – firstly, a comprehensive description about the Nagas- their origin, migration and settlements, way of life and culture, social organization etc. The second section is concerned with empirical findings on few selected areas of Naga society under study.

While dealing with the significance of the present study we stated that the northeastern region of India is a home of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural groups of people, and developed a society of multi-tradition in nature. At the sametime, this region is a land of many contrasts. The ethnographers, historians, anthropologists and of late sociologists have explained the fact of characteristically endowed with physical environment of the region to detail out the tradition of the people living in this region.

The Brahmaputra river valley of Assam is fertile, being periodically inundated by the monsoon rains and replenished with silt carried by torrential water draining from Tibetan highlands. Climatically, the valley is hot and humid and the

¹ Yogendra Singh – Modernization of Indian Tradition – A Systematic study of Social Change, Rawat, Publications, Delhi, 1988, p.13

Brahmaputra valley is naturally endowed and excellent for rice cultivation and tropical agriculture. This background has an indication that this region becomes a place for attraction for the migrants as well as for the invaders since long time. The racial and ethnic history of the population of the region reveals descriptions of foot prints, stories and numerous other illustrations.

Besides, the valley has witnessed some long eventful history of wars between kingdoms, succession of kingdoms and the kingdoms have been confined over the low lying plains of the Brahmaputra river. But the region was also historically witnessed by invasions and counter-invasions by rulers, small or big or sometimes invaders from the hills, from the plains and sometimes by the neighbouring countries. Thus, historically the region has witnessed many ups and down, conquer and subjugation, domination and mitigation etc. What is fascinating of the region is that inspite of repeated wars and conflict between the smaller and bigger kingdoms, there prevailed a sense of tolerance and amity among all sections of population. Further, history also tells us that the smaller or newly immigrant communities were easily brought under the control of the mighty empires and provided them shelter, land, livelihood and occupational facilities.

In this approach, now we will try to present a detail account about the Nagas – a group of tribes who constitutes an important section of population in four states of northeast India- Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

Nagaland is the home state of the Nagas. Besides, they are spread over five districts in Assam, three districts in Arunachal Pradesh and in five districts Manipur.

There are Naga tribes in the neighbouring country Myanmar also. The Naga territory in Myanmar is marked by Kobo valley in the South bordering to the Chin state, Kachul on the north and Burma in the east. In Burma (Myanmar) there are 36 districts inhabited by Naga tribes with a number of sub-tribes.² In Myanmar, some of the Naga tribes are – Anal, Kanyak, Lamkang, Leinong, Makury, Moyon, Nokho (Khianmniungm), Para, Samra etc. In Manipur, they are known as Kharam, Maram, Mao, Maring, Tangkhul, Chothe, Lamkang, Monsang, Moyon etc. The Tsangsa, Wangsos, Nocte and some other Naga tribes are the inhabitants of three districts of Arunachal Pradesh bordering Assam, Nagaland and Myanmar. In Assam the Naga tribes are – Rongmi, Rengma, Sema (Suni), Tangsa and Zeme and they are mostly settled in the hill districts. The present universe of study i.e. Sivasagar district of Assam has sheltered the Kanyaks, Noctes, Wangsos and the Phoms. Presently, they are the inhabitants of six villages and three villages corner called Chowks. The villages are Hahchara, Monaiting, Namsai, Baregaon, Siloni and Deopani and the village chowks are popularly known as Bhadhara Naga Chowk, Gargaon Naga Chowk and Ligoripukhuri Naga Chowk. The villages are located in varying distances from the district head quarters of Sivasagar and some villages are situated at the border area of Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

4.1 THE NOMENCLATURE ‘NAGA’:

The term ‘Naga’ refers to the ethnic tribal people who live in the tri-junction of India, China and Myanmar. Geographically, the Naga territories are being

² A Lanunungang and A. Ovung – Nagaland; The Land of Festivals, Heritage Pub. House, Dimapur 2012, p. 7

surrounded by the Burmese on the East, Chins and Manipuris on the South, Assamese on the West and Kachins and Chinese on the north.

‘Naga’ is a generic term and seems to be of recent origin. At the sametime, the term ‘Naga’ is also highly disputed among the scholars because of its diverged etymological origin. The reference of the word ‘Naga’ was first appeared in the writings of a Greek writer Ptolemy who during his visit to India about 150 AD heard that the Hindu people used to refer to a Mongoloid race as Nagalok (which means ‘naked’)³ W.C. Smith quoting Peak maintained that the true form of the word is not Naga, but ‘noga’, ‘nog’, ‘nok’ means people.⁴ According to Verrier Elwin, a British scholar who visited extensively in the northeastern states during early 50’s stated –

“The derivation of the word ‘Naga’ is obscure. It has been explained as ‘hillman’, from the Sanskrit Naga as mountain. It has been linked to the Kochari naga, a young man or warrior.”

Elwin was of the view that the word ‘Naga’ traces from the word nok or people which lies in the meaning in a few Tibeto-Burman language. It is common throughout India for tribesman to call themselves by words meaning ‘man’, an attractive habit which suggests that they look on themselves simply as people.⁵ The Naga leader and scholar A.Z. Phizo had its different forms of interpretation about the origin of the word Naga. According to him the word Naga is based on its

³ M. Alenchiba Ao – A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland, Kohima, Naga Institute of Culture, 1970 Temjensosang Self Governing Institutions of the Nagas, Akansha Publication House, Delhi, 2013

⁴ Verrier Elwin – Nagaland, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1961, p. 4

⁵ W.C. Smith – The Ao Naga Tribes of Assam, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1980, p. 3

features, that the Burmese word Naka is the origin of the word. In Burmese, Na means 'ear', 'ka' means pierced. The Nagas also follow the same practice piercing of ears.⁶ With little variations Hokishe Sema interpreted that the nomenclature Naga is given to the tribes of Nagaland by the outsiders and he added that, the name Naga is given to those people even before they migrated from Burma.⁷ John Butler believed that the people who lived in the plains used to call the people living in the hills as Nagas. Butler had forwarded his opinion that the people living in the Naga Hills originally had no generic term 'Naga' applicable to the whole.⁸

M. Horam, another Naga scholar and social activist was of the view that the term 'Naga' was used by the plains people in reference to the hill people who identified themselves by clan, village and language grouping In later years the term was appropriated by the Nagas partly as a means to build a sense of identity across tribal and linguistic divisions. As a result, in response to these explanations for the term Naga, some Nagas of present day have seized upon the speculations of some scholars that the word may be related to other words with a more favorable meanings – such as, 'nag' in Hindustani meaning 'mountain' nok in some eastern Naga dialects meaning people or naga in Kochari meaning 'warrior' or 'man'.⁹

Thus, the origin of the word 'Naga' has been the subject of mixed interpretations lending some scopes for common agreement or sometimes debate

⁶ A.Z. Phizo – The Naga Case, in Ancient Ao Naga – Religion and Culture, New Delhi, pp. 23-34

⁷ Hokishi Sema –Emergence of Nagaland – Socio-Economic and Political Transformation in the Future, Vikash Publishing House, 1985, pp. 38-42

⁸ Maj John Bulter – Travels in Assam, Manas Publications, Delhi, 1988, pp.11-18

⁹ M. Horam – The Naga Polity, B-R Publication, Delhi, 1975, pp. 231-235

among contemporary scholars. It can also be established the idea that all such variations of description about conceptualizing the term Naga indicate some bases of myths, oral tradition, history and migration of the communities, since there is no written evidences of the Nagas with regard to their origin, migration, settlement etc.

To the outside world, the Nagas are widely known as head hunters. Traditionally, among them headhunting was considered as favorite sport and also an act of bravery. Though it is a barbaric action in nature, but the Nagas thought that it performs the basic aspiration for their tradition and culture.¹⁰ For the Nagas, it is a social practice that is performed to gain respect, power and honor in society. It is also an achievement that determines the status of a man in society since this is the act of the warrior. It is also believed that bringing enemy's head to the village is a sign of good luck and prosperity and it has a religious symbol too.

The head hunting act is originated as a result of lot of beliefs and mystical thinking of the Nagas. Some believe that it is sign of status in society, some others again believe on the increases of property and well being of the village if enemy's head is brought to his village. But among them in the traditional days there was a universal belief that head brings fertility and well being of the people and society of the Nagas.

The practice of head hunting is now abandoned particularly, after the arrival of the British administration, western English education and host of missionary reform activities.

¹⁰ A Nshoga : Traditional Naga Village System and its Transformation, Akansha Publishing House, Delhi, 2009, p. 157

Religion, Ritual and Beliefs

Naga religion is said to be animistic, which lays emphasis on the existence and manifestation of spirits, both benevolent and malevolent.¹¹ Causes of troubles and torments which may befall the family and the inhabitants are attributed to the action of the evil spirits. They hold the idea that commitments, omissions and occasional failure to appease them are the reason for incurring the spirits displeasure. By divination they trace such sufferings, ailments and ill-luck to the influence of the evil spirits, and the spirits having been traced, appeasement to them follows.

The entire religious life of the Nagas revolves around worshipping of spirits of both benevolent and malevolent. The anthropologists, ethnologists and sociologists as well as the Christian missionaries branded the tribal religion as “animistic” that is, the belief in the existence of spirits and supernatural power rest in both animate and inanimate objects like – mountains, rivers, stones, trees, caves and many other natural objects. The Nagas therefore, believed that appeasement is necessary to pacify the malignant spirits to escape from the harmful activities those may be the creation of those spirits.

The Nagas are a group of tribes and divided on the basis of a number of language/dialects they speak and so it is very much feasible that there are differences in customs, myths, rituals and festivals, day-to-day culture and social structure. These differences are visible from one village to another. The traditional Naga

¹¹ Hamlet Bareh (ed.) : Nagaland District Gazetteers, Calcutta, Shree Saraswati Press Ltd., 1970, pp. 78-89

culture therefore, depicts the fundamental beliefs and assumption of their religion. Gordon P. Means observed “the variety of their customs, myths and social institutions can be understood as alternative idiosyncratic responses to their environment, but in essential harmony with their religiously defined world view.”¹²

4.2 ORIGIN, MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT:

The foregoing account relating to the nomenclature of the term ‘Naga’ subscribes diverse opinion with regard to the origin, population and history of the Naga communities. However, at this stage it is our objective to present a detail description of the Nagas, particularly with reference to their tradition, social structure and dynamics of change. To fulfill this objective we take three aspects of the Naga communities – origin, migration and present settlement of the Nagas for concrete understanding of traditional social structure.

The history of how the Naga tribes came to occupy their present position had, of course, passed into the dim obscurity of vague tradition. Many ethnologists had studied the tribes of the Nagas since ancient time. The pioneers were the British rulers and administrators who ventured courageously to travel the hill areas and to meet the hill tribes and found out information about the people for the first time. Some of the pioneer ethnologists were Dalton, Sir James John Stone, J.H. Hutton, J.P. Mills, Woodthorpe, H.H. Godwin Austin, Mackenzie, Damant, Verrier Elwin etc. It was observed by the scholars of both outside and inside that the Nagas are unique in character and probably this has attracted the scholars with their own

¹² Gordon P. Means: Tribal Transformation – The Early History of the Naga Hills, (ed.) Achila Imlong Erdican, op.cit. pp. 26-32

perspective for description. In the subsequent period the scholars have adopted various approaches to study the ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics to look into the clues concerning origin, history, periods of migration and distribution of the Naga ethnic groups.

The Nagas speak a great variety of languages and dialects which itself suggests a diverse origins. J.H. Hutton wrote “all sorts or origins of the Nagas have been connected with the practice of Head hunting of Malay and the races of the Southern Seas on the one hand and traced back to China on the other.”¹³ He also stated that the terrace rice cultivation system of the Angami is similar to those of the tribes of Philippines. But Hutton had not precisely stated about the original home of the Nagas.

Another missionary and a sociologist W.C. Smith¹⁴ traced the origin of the Nagas and opined that they moved southward through Brahmaputra valley. He further stated that it is the southward movement which brought the Nagas down the Brahmaputra valley when they were forced into the vastness of mountains and became the ancestors of Nagas and other wild tribes. One of the Indian authorities of the Nagas, Murot Ramunny writes – ‘the original home of the Nagas, before they reached the areas they occupy presently is rather difficult to ascertain. Various scholars have tried to connect these tribes with the head hunter of Malay, the races of the Southern seas, while some others trace them back even to China.’¹⁵ Juhan Jacobs was of the view that the Nagas were the inhabitants of sub-Himalayan region.

¹³ J.H. Hutton – The Angami Nagas, Oxford University Press, 1921, pp. 23-47

¹⁴ W.C. Smith – The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam , op. cit, pp. 87-80

¹⁵ Ramunny Murot – The World of Nagas, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 32-38

The presence of the Nagas in the northeast region was possibly known some 2000 years ago. From this point of view the Nagas were described as Mongoloid race since the Nagas possess some characteristics of Mongoloid origin. The Mongoloid population was said to have spread over China, Amazonia, South-East Asia and Northeast India thousands of years ago.¹⁶

The Naga scholar M. Horam also ventured to detect. The origin of the Nagas to the Southern Seas, Observing the similarities of customs, tradition and culture to those of the tribes of southern seas, Horan writes – “there can be little doubt that at one time the Nagas must have wandered about before they found this permanent abode ; from their myths and legends one can gather the idea that there is dim with the natives of Borneo island in that the two have a common traditional way of head hunting, and relationship with the Indonesians, as both used the loin the weaving clothes. The embroidery on the Naga clothes resembled the kind done on Indonesian clothes.”¹⁷

Another Naga Scholar R.R. Shimray wrote – “The Nagas and other tribals of northeast India followed the southward movement toward Indo-China. The ancestors of the Nagas had lived at seacoast in the remote past. The theory regarding Naga’s living in the seacoast is further supported by the very fact that the last take off in their migration was from Thangant in Burma.”¹⁸

Thus, with regard to origin and migration of the Nagas, the history is shrouded in mystery. This is due to the absence of recorded history, archeological

¹⁶ Juhan Jacobs – The Naga Hills – Hills People of N.E. India, London, Themes and Hudson Ltd., 1990, p.10

¹⁷ M. Horam : Naga Polity, B.R. Publications, New Delhi, Delhi, p. 28

¹⁸ R.R Shimray : Origin and Culture of Nagas, New Delhi, Samsok Pub., 1985, pp. 40-48

evidences and chronicles. For such reasons, it is one great difficult job to narrate and learn about the past history of the Nagas. It is the myths, legends, folktales and oral tradition that passed from generation to generation which to some extent still prevalent are only the sources of knowing the people, about the population and their past. Some of the old and aged people are informative and can narrate from their memory acquired from their forefathers about some events of migration and about their clan, tribe and village.

As regards the period of migration and settlement of the Nagas in the Sivasagar district there is no available recorded writings. The Nagas do not know when they came down to the plains areas and established their villages. It was sometimes, when some communist leaders of Sivasagar provided land property to ten Konyak Naga families and allowed them to settle in a small area, presently known as Bhadhara Naga Chowk. Later on then the communist leaders generously allotted few plots of cultivable lands to each of the Naga family who were virtually landless and shelterless.¹⁹

The stories relating to the migration of the Nagas to this area, though unrecorded, yet fascinating. The Satradhikar (Head of a Vaisnavite Monastery) of the Mairamora Satra located in the Hahchara Mouza of Sivasagar at the beginning made disciples to eight Naga persons and converted them to the Hindu religious fold, and allowed them to settle near the famous historical tank 'Phulseng'. As time passed and as the Naga population increased, the Nagas gradually started occupying

¹⁹ Interview with Tulan Gohain, Historian, aged 78 years, a writer, dated Feb. 24, 2015

some forest areas near the bank of the river Dikhow. Since then this forest area is presently known as Naga Habi (Forest of the Nagas). Lateron, they were shifted to an area near the Mairamora Satra and now the total households of the Nagas in this area (Hahchara Village) has increased to hundred. Presently, each Naga family of Hahchara village has their permanent land Patta of their own.

The Wangsos have migrated to this area (present settlement is Baregaon village) after the Britishers advent to Assam. As story goes, the Wangsos frequently came down to the plains areas for the purpose of shopping at Sapekhati and Borhat took some temporary shelter in the jungle areas for days together. Gradually, they started constructing houses and developed small location of habitation (Chowk) which was lateron developed in form of village.²⁰ Similarly, the Nagas of Deopani villages (Wangso Nagas) have established their village adjacent to other Nagas ethnic groups at Sivasagar district.

As old saying goes, the Nocte Nagas presently residing at Siloni village also have a separate story of migration. The Noctes, an Indo-Mongoloid Branch of population, initially lived in the Tupi village at the foothills of great Patkai Hills. Then they moved towards Paniduwari village of Tirap district of present Arunachal Pradesh. Lateron, because of constant inter tribe feuds and conflicts, the king of Paniduwari along with his 200 subjects came down to the plains areas of Assam. They then settled down at Panichaki village near Borpatra Tea Garden at Borhat.²¹

²⁰ Interview with Sri Tahba Atsaham, President of the village Council, Baregaon, dated 21 March, 2015

²¹ Interview with Shri Nandeswar Naga, a Nocte village elder, dated 26 March, 2015

The Britishers while opening Tea Garden in this area planned to re-establish the Nocte Nagas near the bank of the river Disang gave them 84 bighas of land for habitation. A section of them has crossed the Disang River and began to settle down at Namrup. Presently, their inhabited village is known as Rangagara Paniduwari village near Namrup town in the district of Dibrugarh. The Siloni Naga village near the Disang River is presently a registered village under the government of Assam. There are a total of 32 Nocte Naga families with population about 160 (as reported by the village Head).

The above illustration to a considerable extent makes a point to understand some interesting contents with regard to the origin, history and migration associated with the Nagas. It can be ascertained that traditionally, the formation and composition of the Naga society has been the admixture of different race at the places of origin. This might have the possibility to divide them into a numbers of tribes, sib-tribes and clan. Such internal divisions are still visible among them. The dialect/ language spoken by one clan, tribe and people of one village is not understood by the members of other clan, tribe or village. Yet, they share some topicalities of its constituting segments producing commonalities to their existence. This is possibly one important factor which makes the history of origin of the Nagas that is shrouded with mystery.

Thus, the researchers more especially the social scientists are inclined to study two dimension of Naga social structure. Firstly, the separateness with regarded to language/dialects, food habits, dress patterns and habitation, customs, village

administration, tradition etc. secondly, the shared elements of common traits on the basis of which Nagas in the contemporary period asserts ideas like- identity formation, unity and ethnic solidarity.

4.3 VILLAGE STRUCTURE:

The Naga civilization is basically village civilization. The Naga villages are usually situated on the hill tops or on the edge of huge rocks as to ensure the safety and security and also for good climate. The village set up is based on family, clan and khel. A clan is comprised of several families and it is a kind of social unit as well as identity. This feature is almost common among all the tribes of northeast India. Each village is independent and managed by its members without any influence from outside. Thus, sometimes village is the first identity for the Nagas.

Each member of the village is responsible for the welfare and security of the village. In the village, every individual is equally privileged and has every right to raise voice for the village. It is a Naga tradition that nobody is looked down upon or discriminated on the basis of family, clan and Khel. The poor and needy are looked after by the fellow beings. Thus, within the village the differentiation among them does not exist. This is the unique feature that the Nagas maintain the sense of equality among all families living in one village which on the other hand as stated earlier foster solidarity and identity.

The Nagas follow their customary laws strictly. Such laws are upheld in settling disputes between clans and whenever required penalties are imposed on the

guilty individuals. Not only that, laws of property and inheritance are interpreted and enforced on the basis of customary laws and oral tradition.

4.4 MORUNG (DORMITORY :

Morung is a youth dormitory usually known as bachelors' home. Scholars are of the view that the word '*Morung*' is derived from Ahom language i.e. Tai origin. For the Nagas, it refers to "Naga traditional institute which is responsible for indigenous Naga education." The *Morung* house is constructed usually at the middle of the village. The *Morung* is a large building with separate dormitories for both boys and girls. The building is decorated with several items such as human images, skulls and bones of dead animals etc. Boys and girls at puberty leave for the *Morung* and the *Morung* is considered in imparting education concerning all spheres of life and they leave the *Morung* when they get married. The *Morung* members used to carry out all important functions of the village like meetings regarding safety and security of the village, settlement of disputes, arrangement of festivals etc.

There is a commander in the *Morung* house who is appointed to train up the younger generation. Sometimes the *Morung* acts as courts for settling the crimes committed by the villagers. Several activities such as – political, social, religious and economic affairs are dealt with and taught in the institution at young age of its members and are trained in such a way that they will be responsible for the future of the village. Traditionally, the institution of the *Morung* is the most important for the development of culture, personality as well as the continuity of civilization of the Nagas. Among some tribes there was a separate *Morung*, for each *Khel*. Among

others all the village *Khels* jointly shared a common *Morung*. The *Morung* is usually an enormous building with a high pitch roof and elaborated by decoration with carvings and decorative skills and heads of animals.

4.5 FOOD HABITS:

The Tribals of the hill areas of northeast India have followed some specific patterns of food habits which can be separated observed with some distinctiveness and distinguished from their immediate neighbours of plains people. The Naga are non-vegetarian and they live on both vegetables and meat. Rice and Phet (traditional rice beer) are primary food and the Nagas consume many types of vegetables and meat that are uncommon or sometimes not familiar for many other outside people. Traditionally, the Nagas consumed almost all types of animals and birds and no animal seems inedible for the Nagas. The traditional delicacies are mixed with bamboo shoot dish, dry meat, and hot king chili etc. Pork, chicken, fish, beef and wild animal's meat are popular among them. *Mithun* is another special item for the Nagas.

4.6 AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES HOUSE BUILDING AND OCCUPATION:

Traditional agricultural practices of the Nagas are largely characterized by Jhum or shifting cultivation. It is a primitive method of agricultural operation among the Nagas. People used some rudimentary implements like dao, hoe, axe, sichle, knife and a organized cultivation practiced by the Nagas since time immemorial. The Nagas are basically hill dwellers and so, their house patterns are raised houses usually in the slopes of hills and mountains. Terrace or settle cultivation is also

practiced by some section of the Nagas, particularly the Angamis and the Chakesangs. This is a bit advanced method of cultivation practiced in the high elevation of hills, in comparison to Jhum or shifting cultivation.

Since agriculture being the primary occupation to maintain all the economic activities of the family, the pursue of other occupations is very much limited for the Nagas. But there are extensive economic activities performed by both Naga men and women in the plains valley. The activities are mainly agriculture-related and the materials are sourced out from forests. The Naga women are by nature industrious and hardworking. They never sit idle or instead they do one thing or the other. In addition to the farming activities, they do weaving and spinning, pottery making, basket making, dyeing of clothes, prepare rice bear and maintain kitchen garden, looking after children and rearing of domesticated animals.

These three areas of social life-agriculture, house building and occupation constitute important aspects of socio-economic life and change of the Naga people. These areas of activities are undergoing changes tremendously as a result of long years of habitation with non-Naga environment and mixed culture. The Nagas women were found to be happy and encouraging in the process of pursuing lot of economic activities opened to them as a result of wet rice cultivation.

The table 4.1 below gives detail information about the contemporary changes taking place in these areas of social life.

Table: 4.1
Respondents' Opinion towards change in Agriculture, House building and occupation

Villages	Change in Agricultural Practice		Change in House Pattern & Life Style		Change In occupational pursuit	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
V:1 <i>N=100</i>	86 86%	14 14%	92 92%	08 8%	90 90%	10 10%
V:2 <i>N=80</i>	74 92.5%	06 7.5%	78 97.5%	02 2.5%	76 95%	04 5%
V:3 <i>N=18</i>	14 77.77%	04 22.22%	14 77.77%	04 22.22%	14 77.77%	04 22.22%
V:4 <i>N=28</i>	24 85.71%	04 14.28%	25 89.28%	03 10.71%	26 92.85%	02 7.14%
V:5 <i>N=58</i>	50 86.20%	08 13.79%	52 89.65%	06 10.34%	45 77.58%	13 22.14%
V:6 <i>N=33</i>	28 84.84%	05 15.15%	29 87.87%	04 12.12%	30 90.90%	03 9.09%
C:1 <i>N=10</i>	09 90%	01 10%	10 100%		09 90%	01 10%
C:2 <i>N=06</i>	06 100%		06 100%		05 90%	01 10%
C:3 <i>N=08</i>	06 75%	02 25%	08 100%		07 87.5%	01 12.5%
Grand Total	297 87.09%	44 12.90%	314 92.08%	27 7.91%	302 88.56%	39 11.43%

As already stated, the traditional Naga used to practice a type of cultivation called Jhum or shifting cultivation. Living in the plains areas of Assam indeed brought a change in the life patterns of the Naga peasants. The Hindu Nagas in Hahchara and Siloni Naga villages follow all the agriculture related festivals and rituals almost similar to the manner of Assamese peasants. Like the Assamese

peasants, they offer prayers and perform rituals for good harvest and for the wellbeing of the domesticated.

The field data further reveal that house building patterns as well as life style in the Naga villages are in the process of significant changes. This is as such, majority of respondents from all villages were in favour of such opinion (92% from Hahchara, 97.5% from Monaiting, 77.77% from Namsai, 89.28% from Baregaon, 89.65% from Deopani and 87.87% from Siloni Naga village). Almost all the Nagas in these villages have constructed their houses similar to that of houses of other peasants in the plains of Assam. Many of them have developed 'Assam type houses', granaries, cow sheds with similar designs and provisions of the houses in both inside and outside. In some villages there is no 'Dormitory' house, instead they perform all sorts of traditional norms and disciplines for the younger generation from the house of the village King.

Another significant development one can notice in the area of economic structure of the Naga villages. This is linked with the growing increase of occupational avenues in the plains areas of Assam valley. In the early days or in the traditional Naga villages in the hills occupational opportunities were very much limited as because agriculture in the form of Jhum cultivation was only potential source for livelihood. Living in the plain is different and sometimes opposite if we observe the life patterns and social organization between hills and plains. The plains areas have its own environmental, ecological, economic and occupational characters which exhibit noticeable differences were seemed to be adjusted and accommodated

themselves with the process of settled village economy. Increased network of transport and communication, growth of town and urban impact, industrialization and host of associated institutions, extended avenues for occupations and earnings and several other such features are the immediate characteristics of plains living. These features are, by and large, not seen in the tradition-found Naga villages in the hills areas.

The Nagas who have been maintain a simple life for generations opined that living in plains areas are quite competitive as well as challenging, yet interesting. Most of them expressed opinion that they come in contact with people of varied socio-economic background, merits, ability competition and efficiency which made them to settle with complex social environment. As they opined – “hard work and competition in a complex population structure in plains areas has become a part of life.” Thus, for majority of the respondents from all studied villages believe that opportunities for work and day-to-day earnings are not limited which the Nagas confronted in the hill areas. Such attitudes were reflected when the respondents put forwarded their opinion to a query relating to increased occupational opportunities (90% from Hahchara village, 95% from Monaiting, 77.77% from Namsai, 92.85% from Baregaon, 77.58% from Deopani and 90.90% from Siloni Naga village).

The aspects and dimensions of traditions have been elaborately discussed covering several vital areas of social life and organization, village structure and economy, marriage, rituals and practices etc. The field data have been analysed and examined in detail. The view and expressions of the respondents were studied. At

the end, it can be summarized that the traditional social structure of the Nagas is in a state of fluctuations, as such, there are visibility of changes in few important areas of life of the Nagas. The important issues and finding emerged out in the discussion of the chapter will however, be presented in the last chapter in form of summary and conclusions.

4.6(a) Rituals and Festivals:

Like many other states in India, Nagaland is also a land of festivals. Naga festivals are primarily associated with agricultural life cycle, beliefs of all kinds of occasions, observing taboos, on the eve and after completion of hunting, to pray and offer to the Almighty, for good harvest etc.

Traditionally, the Nagas celebrate festivals and rituals throughout the year on various occasions. The festivals are different from one village to another and from one tribe to another. Every festival is an occasion of joy and happiness. Songs and dance, feasts, guest reception, games and sports and lot of merrymakings are associated with the festivals. Colorful traditional dresses are displayed on such occasions. The dress patterns and ornaments used by the Nagas at the time of such occasions markedly different from one tribe to another. A.L. Ao and Athungo Ovung stated that “Naga festivals are greatly characterized by cleansing and dedication, prayer and ritualism, dancing, singing, merry making, display of traditional games, meat eating and drinking, where men and women, where men and women and young and old participate in community festivals.”²² Naga festivals are

²² A.L. Ao and A. Ovung: Nagaland – The Land of Festivals, op.cit. p. VII

thrilling in nature and very interesting to watch specially for a person who comes from outside. The festivals are associated with variety of occasions like – beginning of new harvest, offering pray to God for good harvest, thanks giving to God for good harvest etc.. Not only that the festivals are performed with the offerings of animals like – pigs, cows, Mithun etc. Again, the offerings and pray vary from tribe to tribe.

In addition to such community festivals, the Nagas celebrate a large number of festivals at individual family level and at the time of marriage, birth and death, on the occasion of new born baby etc. During the negotiation period of marriage, there are systems of offering pigs, cows, mithuns etc. between the bride and the groom's families, certainly these are marked by heavy burdens and expenditure on the part of families. Even then, the Nagas have been maintaining all these rituals and rules to appease the gods and goddesses spirits, divine power and to abide by the traditions those are inherited from their forefathers.

4.6 (b) Attitudes towards Religious:

While discussing the traditional religion of the Nagas, it was stated that the Nagas are animistic by religion. They worship and offer pray to the deities and spirits for the wellbeing and protection of the village and their family. At the celebration they use to sing the devotional songs, but the songs are unwritten. These are orally transmitted from generation to generation and the younger generations have to learn all those through the institution of Morong house or from elders.

Like several other Tribals of northeast India the Naga people living in Assam and non-Naga environment are now in a state of transition. Their attitudes towards

traditional religious beliefs, practices and rituals, as well as ceremonies and festivals are loosing its importance as it was in their forefathers' generations. Here are some empirical data with regard to such attitudes. The table 5.6 below presents some information.

Table 4.2

Respondents Attitudes towards Traditional Religious Beliefs and Practices

Villages	Attitudes		Total
	<i>Yes , it effect develop</i>	<i>No, it does not</i>	
V:1	74 74%	26 26%	100 100%
V:2	25 31.25%	55 68.75%	80 100%
V:3	06 33.33%	12 66.66%	18 100%
V:4	06 21.42%	22 78.57%	28 100%
V:5	16 27.58%	42 72.41%	58 100%
V:6	26 78.78%	07 21.21%	33 100%
C:1	03 30%	07 70%	10 100%
C:2	02 33.33%	04 66.66%	06 100%
C:3	01 12.5%	07 87.5%	08 100%
Grand Total	159 46.42%	182 53.37%	341 100%

It is seen that for majority of the respondents. (53.37%) there is no harm in keeping faith in traditional belief and practices of religion, while the rest (46.42%) are opposed to such views. To their opinion traditional rituals and ceremonies are

time consuming and expensive. The young boys and girls sometimes cannot attend and take part in those festivals since they have to attend schools or college. Besides, many of them do not find extra time to go to the Morung and for this parents have to pay the fine or penalty.

These are some examples from field situation of the Naga villages with regard to the contemporary belief systems of the Nagas towards their traditional forms of animistic religion. But still then, majority of the respondents from several villages opined that involvement and deep attachment to traditional religious beliefs and practices do not effect their daily life and development process (68.75% from Monaiting village, 66.66% from Namsai, 78.57% from Baregaon, and 72.41% from Deopani Naga village). For them, rituals and prayers are obligation to all members and it constitutes an important part in the day-in-day economic activities and socio-cultural life of the Nagas. They possess land for cultivation individually and have to engage in the process of production. People believe that this is a complete change in life and different from the people living in hill areas. The practice of cultivation is individualistic here in the plains areas of Assam, whereas it is collective or community cultivation in the hills. Thus, individualism prevails among the Nagas living in Assam.

As regards change in agriculture, the field data indicate further detail. Respondents for all studied villages informed that the pattern of agriculture is changing. This is 86% from Hahchara village, 92.5% from Monaiting, 77.77% from Namsai, 85.71% from Baregaon, 86.20% from Deopani and 84.84% from Siloni Naga village. The residents in majority of all other Chowks also expressed their opinion about change in agriculture.

The change in the practice of agriculture involves using of tools, use of modern system of manure, use of tractors, use of ploughs etc. Hence, domestication of bullocks for the purpose of cultivation has been considered not only essential but also an integrative part in socio-economic life of the Naga families. It is equally significant to observed that after adopting plough culture in the process of production, the Nagas have started accepting most of the rituals and occasional ceremonies relating to agricultural activity practiced by the non-Nagas peasants.

4.7 NATURE OF FAMILY:

It has been hypothesized by most of the sociological studies conducted in India that industrial development and urbanization would tend to change the basic structure of family to a particular type more suited to its functions in a given society. At the sometime, it has been emphasized that family structure tends to take its shape and size smaller even the agricultural societies. Many Indians even in rural settings prefer to live in isolated conjugal families and that many more young couple desire to do so. Side by side emergence of urbanized economy and growth of individualism facilitate young men and women develop tendency to live independently. Thus, the emergence of nuclear families in the contemporary modern society becomes the norms of the day.

Like many other tribal societies of northeast India, the Nagas have a patriarchal family structure. In this type of family, the males are characteristically superior in all affairs of family matters. Women are debarred from all sorts of power, authority and decision making processes. In this context, taking part in politics by women is restricted and the women suffer from multiple barriers which bar them from active and positive political involvement.

The Naga society is basically agriculturists. Both men and women take active parts in agricultural activities and that way the women are co-workers in all forms of agricultural activities. Similarly, there are some areas of economic activities where women take active part in running of the economic sides of family.

The Naga women are by nature industrious and hard workers. In fact, they work not less than their male counterpart. Traditionally, they have been engaging in various occupations of both agricultural and domestic which includes weaving and spinning, pottery making, dying of clothes, preparing rice beer and maintaining kitchen garden, rearing of domestic animals collections of fire woods etc. etc.

The division of labour among the males and females within family in Naga society is minimal. As such women do most of the economic activities from morning till evening accept the hard labour like cutting of jungles, hunting etc.

The institutions of marriage and family among the Nagas occupy prominent place in the history and transmutation of Naga society. In the past love marriage was hardly found but arranged marriage was common for the Nagas. Arranged marriage does not go against the will of the bride and bridegroom. Marriage is marked by associated ceremonies and celebration including some rituals. Practice of dowry is also common among the Nagas but the bridegroom has to give to his in laws. In most of the Naga tribes, the bride loses her clan title when she is married and she has to adopt husband's title. Divorce is undesired and found rarely Widows are also privileged for remarriage without any bound as sanctioned by customs.

Monogamy is widely accepted practices among the Nagas. Some Naga scholars observe – “The family is the smallest unit of a clan and so, it is a social institution- a nucleus from which emerged the strength of the village polity. The

strength of a social life begins with the family and each family is a basic unit.” Contrarily, it is also said that a fast moving economy cannot develop within a society whose hardened social barriers force its children to follow his parents occupation and forefather’ practice.

A gradually transforming society like the Naga villages in the plains areas of Assam, though families are dependent on agriculture and other allied activities depict a different picture with regard to family structure. The following data table 4.1 illustrates in detail.

Table: 4.3
Village wise Nature of Family according to respondents

Villages	Nature of Family		Total
	<i>Joint Family</i>	<i>Nuclear Family</i>	
V: 1	26 26%	74 74%	100 100%
V:2	14 17.5%	66 82.5%	80 100%
V:3	01 5.55%	17 94.45%	18 100%
V:4	02 7.14%	26 92.85%	28 100%
V:5	07 12.06%	51 87.93%	58 100%
V:6	06 18.18%	27 81.82%	33 100%
C:1	01 10%	09 90%	10 100%
C:2	01 16.67%	05 83.33%	06 100%
C:3		08 100%	08 100%
Grand Total	58 17.01%	283 82.99%	341 100%

It is seen that out of the total 341 families majority of the respondents (82.99%) are from nuclear family and 17.01% are from traditional joint family set up. In Indian society the distortion of joint family and its continued existence has been an important feature of traditional Indian social system.

But the emergence of nuclear family is also looked as phenomenon. Even in the tribal setting whose economy is namely agricultural the prevalence of nuclear family is noticeable.

Mainly this study reveals that maximum numbers of respondents are from nuclear families. This is observed in all villages under study (Hahchara 74%, Monaiting 82.5%, Namsai 94.45%, Baregaon 92.85%, Deopani 87.93% and Siloni Naga village 81.82%). Other 3 Naga Chowk are also not exception. This phenomena increase of nuclear family system in an agricultural setting attracts some attention naturally.

Many sociological researches quite often emphasize that the institution of joint family constitutes an important aspect of traditional Indian social structure. Such studies provided the views that the existence of joint family in a tradition bound society like India essentially solidifies the basic structure of traditional India. But the critiques of joint family have argued differently in the light of their new findings. According to them the importance of joint family system is gradually declining and pointed out various causes behind. Among these included discord over property, rights, conflicts due to financial indigence, disorder arising out of children of various kins. If a person has more children than others (in a joint family) then it becomes really difficult to allocable expenditures proportionately.²³

²³ P.K. Bose – Re-constituting Private Life : The Making of the Modern family in Bengal, in ‘Social Transformation in India, Vol. 2 (ed) Ghanshyam Shah, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 1997, pp. 501-531.

The causes behind the gradual decline of joint family, however, cannot be altogether applied in case of present universe of study. As such the Naga society is essentially structured with different set of social, ethical consideration for family welfare most of which are inherited traditionally.

The increased family member in nuclear family among the Nagas is also noticeable. According of the views of the respondents, the parents of the family do maintains a social obligation to accommodate their sons immediately after marriage, thereby allowing them to live liberally and with independent holding.

Among the Kanyak, their traditional family system is the order of single or nuclear family, but in the border land of Myanmar, studies show that there is a prevalence of joint family also. The joint structure of family according he them has been an aged –old practice.

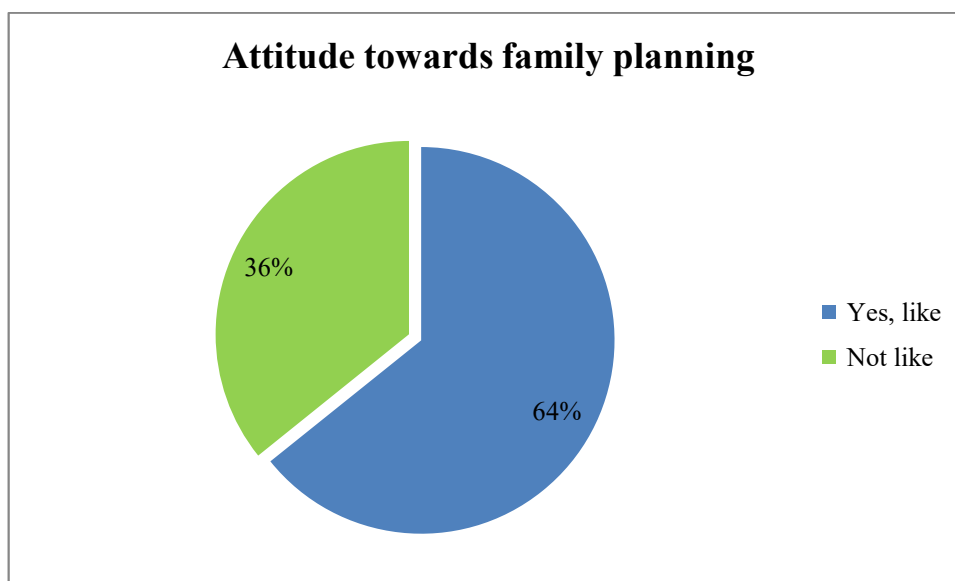
4.7(a) Attitudes towards Family Planning:

Studies about practice and opinion on family planning among the tribes of northeast India are rarely available. Such quarries were felt necessary considering the issue of social status of Naga women. The opinions towards family planning were found to be, to some extent favorable among the young educated Nagas. For many of the aged persons the prevailing opinion towards family planning is negative as because they don't consider over populated either in the family or community or village. The following table 4.3 gives some idea in this regard.

Table:4.4
Village-wise attitudes towards Family Planning

Village	Attitude		Total
	<i>Favorable</i>	<i>Unfavorable</i>	
V:1	76 76%	24 24%	100 100%
V:2	08 10%	72 90%	80 100%
V:3	12 66.67%	6 33.33%	18 100%
V:4	12 42.85%	16 57.14%	28 100%
V:5	30 90.90%	03 9.09%	33 100%
V:6	43 74.13%	15 25.86%	58 100%
C:1	7 70%	3 30%	10 100%
C:2	06 100%	-	06 100%
C:3	5 62.5%	3 37.5%	08 100%
Grand Total	199 58.36%	142 41.64%	341 100%

Figure 4.1



It is seen that large number of respondents are in favour of family planning policy to be adopted at any level of society. But at the same time some are of the view that the families which possessed land property in a large scale and resources should not suffer from the lack of sufficient manpower in the family. Some respondents are frank enough to state that a large number of family members are necessary to perform agricultural activities. Further, the Nagas believe that there should not be birth control, as because to their belief a child is a gift of god. However, majority of the respondents (58.36%) were in favour of family planning idea. Village-wise it is 76% in Hahchara, 66.67% in Namsai, and 74.13% in Siloni Naga Gaon. This is a significant trend of indicating consciousness among the Nagas amidst the world- wide population explosion and its resultant outcome of unemployment poverty.

4.7(b) Impact on Family:

Irrespective of the level of development, the institution of family plays an important role in strengthening social integrity, cohesion and unity. In Naga society, family being the most fundamental institution and building network of relationship between clan and kinship, it has a very important role in maintaining interpersonal activities and kinship network at the village level.

Among the Nagas, the kinship ties are wide extending network not only to all the members of the family, but also to the other relatives and members of the same clan.

The family and its functions of Naga society run by all possible traditional ethos and norms. Further, the key institutional structures of society of the Naga tribe and its relative importance varied from tribe to tribe.²⁴ But it is to be underlined that the Naga society being agricultural society, all characteristics of traditional social basic rules, functions and norms are strictly followed by the members. The elders are always respected by the younger. In the traditional rural society the illiterate youngsters had to go to the experienced elders to learn and to get information he needed about agriculture, village discipline and social norms.

But with the introduction and continuous development of education occupational opportunities and scopes for social mobility and achievement among some sections of new generation, a visible sign in the sphere of social change cannot be altogether denied. There appears a tendency to challenge the ability, experience and knowledge of the elders.²⁵ This is how the families of traditional stronghold is somewhat seems to be declining. Under such circumstances we have intended to set a question to the respondents how traditional norms, values and strength of the Naga families are undergoing transformation. The table 5.4 presented below depicts some ideas.

²⁴ Gordon P. Means : Tribal Transformation, op.cit., p. 12

²⁵ Z.V. Freepaathing: Social Change among the Tankhul Nagas 1896 – 1989, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Manipur University, 1993, pp. 250-251.

Table: 4.5
Tradition and its impact on family

Villages	Impact of Tradition on Family		Total
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
V:1	86 <i>86%</i>	14 <i>14%</i>	100 <i>100%</i>
V:2	31 <i>38.75%</i>	49 <i>61.25%</i>	80 <i>100%</i>
V:3	07 <i>38.88%</i>	11 <i>61.11%</i>	18 <i>100%</i>
V:4	04 <i>14.28%</i>	24 <i>85.71%</i>	28 <i>100%</i>
V:5	12 <i>20.68%</i>	46 <i>79.31%</i>	58 <i>100%</i>
V:6	18 <i>54.54%</i>	15 <i>45.45%</i>	33 <i>100%</i>
C:1	07 <i>70%</i>	03 <i>30%</i>	10 <i>100%</i>
C:2	04 <i>66.66%</i>	02 <i>33.33%</i>	06 <i>100%</i>
C:3	01 <i>12.5%</i>	07 <i>87.5%</i>	08 <i>100%</i>
Grand Total	170 <i>49.85%</i>	171 <i>50.14%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>

It is seen that 50.14% respondents opined that there is no significant impact of tradition on the family. This means that the Naga families in the contemporary environment are moving towards a direction which is less influenced by tradition.

Children after completing their education are interested in searching job opportunities and avenues for earning. Sometimes they are seem to be less dependent on parents' income or sidelined from forefathers' occupations. They believe that there is a continuous influence of urban surroundings and development

of industries in the plains, and so, they are inclined to such activities rather than agriculture as their forefathers.

The field data also reveal that less impact of tradition has been experienced by larger number of families in five villages and in one Chowk i.e. 61.25% from Monaiting, 61.11% from Namsai, 85.71% from Baregaon, 79.31% from Deopani, 45.45% from Siloni Naga Gaon and 87.5% from Ligoripukhuri Naga Chowk. The opinion of major section of population of those villages rest on the fact that people have abandoned some of the old practices and traditional animistic beliefs and faiths after they have accepted Christianity.

On the other hand 49.85% respondents expressed opinion that the stronghold of tradition is very much prevailed and obey those traditional rules in their daily life patterns.

4.8 STATUS OF WOMEN:

Status denotes the position of an individual in social system and it encompasses in itself the notion of rights and obligations in terms of power, authority and grading. Conceptually status is a relative term since its assessment varies from one social system to another in a remarkable way. In traditional society, social status of an individual is determined on the basis of few selected criteria which are usually marked ascribed, that is unchanging attributes of individuals since it is ascertained by birth, age, sex and many other socially assigned attributes. In this context traditional Indian society is no exception.

Women of all ages and situation have played their role in the social-cultural, ritual and economic life of people of any given society. The Naga society is also no

exception. In the pursuit of economic activities all hard works demanding physical labour are generally assigned to males whereas continuous and patient making jobs or works are shared by women.

As already stated, the Naga society follows the patriarchal system social order. The status of women therefore may be assessed in terms of their descent or family line, inheritance, succession and residence after marriage.²⁶ The daughter's identity partly merges with the family or clan of her husband. For all practical purposes, women do not get any share as inherited from her father's line.

With regard to status and roles of women in Naga society, a lot has been described about the work and activities of women in the confinement of family, village and cultural activities. Women and children are under the guidance of husband and parents. Since the Naga society is basically male dominations women are less privileged comparing to men. Though women are allowed to mingle with the men it is the men only who are meant for all major decision making and control. Women do not represent for property ownership and it goes through sons or male members of the family. Women participate in the social affairs not exactly as leaders of the family or society. The parents feel more joyful when a baby boy is born to them. C.V.F. Heimendorf observed – “many women in more civilized parts of India or Burnia may well envy the women of Naga Hills, their high status and their free life and happy life, and if you measure the cultural level of a people by the social position and personal tradition of its women, you will think twice before looking down on the Nagas as “savages”.

²⁶ Temjensosang – Self Governing Institutions of Nagas, Akansha Pub. House, Delhi, 2013, p. 69

Elder women are responsible to train up the younger ones. Children are considered as blessing or good fortune for the family. They are nurtured well at home until they attain their puberty and when they reach puberty, they are to mingle in the social affairs through the platform of the “Morung” (youth dormitory).

Keeping in view the background described above we put some queries to our respondents to understand the opinion about status of women in their society. The table 4.6 below provides such necessary information.

Table: 4.6
Respondents opinion on the status of women

Villages	Status of women			total
	<i>Superior</i>	<i>Inferior</i>	<i>Equal</i>	
V:1	00	45 45%	55 55%	100 100%
V:2	00	31 38.75%	49 61.25%	80 100%
V:3	00	06 33.33%	12 66.66%	18 100%
V:4	00	08 28.57%	20 71.42%	28 100%
V:5	00	25 43.10%	33 56.89%	58 100%
V:6	00	08 75.75%	25 25.24%	33 100%
C:1	00	04 40%	06 60%	10 100%
C:2	00	01 16.66%	05 83.33%	06 100%
C:3	00	02 25%	06 75%	08 100%
Grand total		130 38.12%	211 61.87%	341 100%

It was decided to study the responses with three alternative choices namely - “superior”, “inferior”, “equal” etc. It was found that the reply of such queries sometime of beyond the purview of the alternative answers that put to them. Many respondents expressed and opined that except two three function in Naga society like decision making, political participation and leadership, all other major activities are being performed and looked after by women in society. To them, such activities are work in agricultural fields, domestication of animals, rearing and taking care of children, collecting forewords, etc.

They opine that the Naga women contribute maximum towards the growth of their family. They added that the amount of economic contributions by women is no less inferior to many other activities done by the male counterparts. Therefore, as the responses go, women’s status was considered equal to men in four villages (Monaiting 61.25%, Namsai 66.66%, Baregaon 71.42% and Deopani 56.89%. No respondents opined superior status for women in their society.

4.9 TRADITION AND ITS CONTINUITY:

The Nagas living in the plains areas of Assam are accommodating themselves with the bigger Assamese society and environment and this has been reflected in the various sets of depiction of life style and adjustment. However, there are differences of opinion among the respondents. Some sections believe that considerable flexibilities were visible while maintain relationship with the broader non-Naga society. this is more pronounced among the younger generation.

It is to state that it is difficult to find the authentic history of the Nagas with regard to the migration and arrival to the region of India. It is because of the absence written records. The Naga myths, legends, folklores and traditions are to a considerable extent still prevalent and strong among them. Therefore the present generation now is in a state of confusion, though the elder members of the Nagas are equipped with some memories. After long years of changes in the social, political, economic and environmental spheres, the inherited traditions based on oral history might have lost some of its relevance. It was therefore, developed a query to ascertain whether and how tradition is still continuing among the younger generations. We could collect some information which are presented in the table 4.7 below.

Table: 4.7
Continuity of tradition and present generation

Villages	Continuity of Tradition		Total
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
V:1	69 69%	31 31%	100 100%
V:2	34 42.5%	46 57.5%	80 100%
V:3	05 27.77%	13 72.22%	18 100%
V:4	13 46.42%	15 52.57%	28 100%
V:5	19 32.75%	39 67.24%	58 100%
V:6	23 69.69%	10 17.24%	33 100%
C:1	08 80%	02 20%	10 100%
C:2	04 66.66%	02 33.33%	06 100%
C:3	01 12.5%	07 87.5%	08 100%
Grand Total	176 51.61%	165 48.38%	341 100%

If the trend of the data is observed, it is found that there appears mixed responses. And such responses vary from one village to another and sometimes one set of respondents to another. Majority of the respondents from Hahchara village and Siloni Naga village, who are by religion Hindus opined that attachment to traditional norms, customs and even behaviour are still quite effective among the present generation (Hahchara 69% and Siloni Naga village 69.69%). While in Namsai and Deopani villages, it is told that tradition has less impact (Namsai 72.22% and Deopani 67.24%). An insight analysis in this context is required. The younger generations of the Nagas are significantly influenced by modern education and developed competitive skills, efficiency and merit. They believe that attachment to old system of beliefs and tradition has lesser impact on their achievement and therefore, to their opinion, tradition has little impact on their merit and capability.

Respondents were of the opinion that after the adoption of Christian religion people have abandoned their old animistic beliefs and faiths to a significant level, while those who have accepted Hinduism, have maintained and preserved all forms of beliefs and practices of their traditional life. By and large, the younger generations sometimes keep themselves at certain distances from their daily life activities which they believe to be waste of time, money and energy. Some observations and scholars from among the Nagas analysed the changing trend of Nagas festivals. Each tribe has its series of festivals traditionally and culturally observed in a year. Though several of these festivals are not meticulously observed, yet each tribe continues hold the major festivals in the name of preserving the

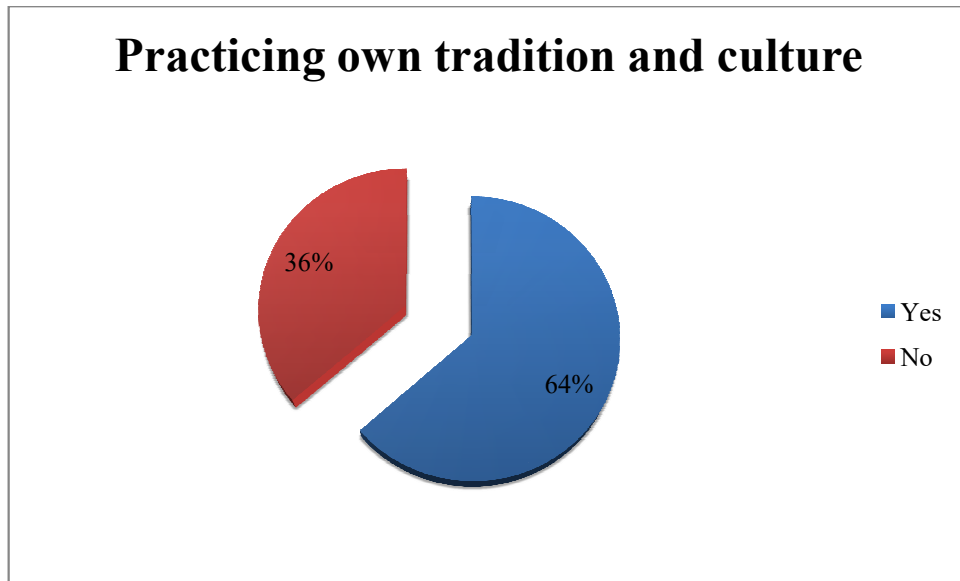
culture and its identity. However, some festivals demand huge expenditure and these are considered lavish in a poor state like Nagaland. The Nagas are over eating people and always indulge in wasteful spending with no sense of saving.²⁷

Since time immemorial, the Naga societies were independent in nature. This is because of their total attachment to nature and natural forces that determined and shaped their life and culture. However, the expressions of the Nagas in this context may be noted with significance. The data table 5.1 below is an illustration.

Table:4.8
Village wise practice of tradition and culture

Villages	Practicing own tradition and culture		Total
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
V:1	98 98%	02 2%	100 100%
V:2	27 33.75%	53 66.25%	80 100%
V:3	12 66.66%	06 33.33%	18 100%
V:4	08 28.57%	20 71.42%	28 100%
V:5	38 65.51%	20 34.48%	58 100%
V:6	26 78.78%	07 21.21%	33 100%
C:1	08 80%	02 20%	10 100%
C:2	05 83.33%	01 16.66%	06 100%
C:3	02 25%	06 75%	08 100%
Grand Total	216 63.34%	125 36.35%	341 100%

²⁷ Z. Lone- Naga Festivals: A Pride or Burden, in 'eastern Mirror' published from Dimapur, Friday, Nov-14, 2014, p. 7



By ‘culture’ we mean few important elements of social life such as – art, belief, rituals and practices, ceremonies and festivals, dresses, dietary habits, behavior and mannerism of the people under study. All the nine villages, small a big, have exposed differently in respect to the continuity adherence and change in culture which are expressed, exposed and exhibited in the life patterns of the Nagas.

A query was raised to the respondents about whether traditional system of life pattern is still continuing among the Nagas.

It is seen that traditional way of life and culture are spontaneously and popularly followed by majority of the respondents i.e. 63.34%, while 36.35% respondents have opposed such ideas and insisted that the norms and rules of earlier days are of no use in their present life patterns. But this is not the ultimate remark. There are differences of opinion and this is visible from one village to another and from one tribe to another. Majority of the respondents of Monaiting and Baregaon

villages have opposed the notion that they are less attached to their old beliefs and practices in their daily life pattern (Monaiting 66.25% and Baregaon 71.42%). To their opinion, acceptance of Christianity negates the idea of any animistic forms of religious beliefs and practices.

On the contrary, we find majority of respondents from four villages have forwarded favorable opinion towards their inherited culture and tradition (Hahchara 98%, Namsai 66.66%, Deopani 65.51% and Siloni Naga Gaon 78.78%). This indicates that traditional practices among the Nagas are not totally abandoned, but still prevailed among many of them. This is evidenced from the fact that some traditional rituals and festivals like Aoileng, Oyeneyi, 'Jathi' (Phoyum) etc. are still celebrated by the community people with full prayers, offerings and enjoyment and people are very much attached to these festivals and rituals.

But it is also to be stated that few festivals and pujas of Assamese tradition are popularly celebrated by the Naga people in their villages.

4.9(a) Life styles:

The persistence of tradition to a certain extent is reflected when opinion of the people on the present life style is compared with their forefathers' generation. Life style includes house patterns, dresses and ornaments, dietary habits, mode of daily travel, children's education and occupation etc. queries were made on such issues and the respondents were asked to put forward their opinion. This gives us scopes to compare the present life patterns with their earlier life as hill dwellers, on the one hand and provides some clues to understand continuity of the tradition on

the other hand the field data presented in the table below is an illustration of life patterns of the Nagas between the hills and the plains. The table 4.9 below gives some indications.

Table4.9
Respondents opinion of life pattern between the hills and Plains living

Villages	Opinion			
	<i>There is difference</i>	<i>Particularly difference</i>	<i>No difference</i>	Total
V:1	51 <i>51%</i>	11 <i>11%</i>	38 <i>38%</i>	100 <i>100%</i>
V:2	22 <i>27.50%</i>	15 <i>18.95%</i>	43 <i>53.95%</i>	80 <i>100%</i>
V:3	09 <i>50.00%</i>	05 <i>27.78%</i>	04 <i>22.22%</i>	18 <i>100%</i>
V:4	11 <i>39.28%</i>	08 <i>28.57%</i>	09 <i>32.14%</i>	28 <i>100%</i>
V:5	36 <i>62.07%</i>	12 <i>20.69%</i>	10 <i>17.24%</i>	58 <i>100%</i>
V:6	16 <i>48.48%</i>	07 <i>21.21%</i>	10 <i>30.30%</i>	33 <i>100%</i>
C:1	07 <i>70.00%</i>	03 <i>30.00%</i>	-	10 <i>100%</i>
C:2	05 <i>83.33%</i>	01 <i>16.67%</i>	-	06 <i>100%</i>
C:3	06 <i>75.00%</i>	02 <i>25%</i>	-	08 <i>100%</i>
Grand Total	163 <i>47.80%</i>	64 <i>18.77%</i>	114 <i>33.43%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>

The respondents were asked to answer the queries in three alternative choices such as ‘there is difference’; there is ‘partial difference’ and ‘no difference’. It is interesting to note that the responses are varied and also interesting equally.

As a whole larger number of respondents were of the view that a significant difference in life style is visible among the Nagas living in the plains villages (47.50%), while 18.77% expressed ‘partial difference’ and 33.43% denied any such visible differences. This indicates that some features of life inherited from tradition are still prevailed among the Nagas even after long years of living in plains.

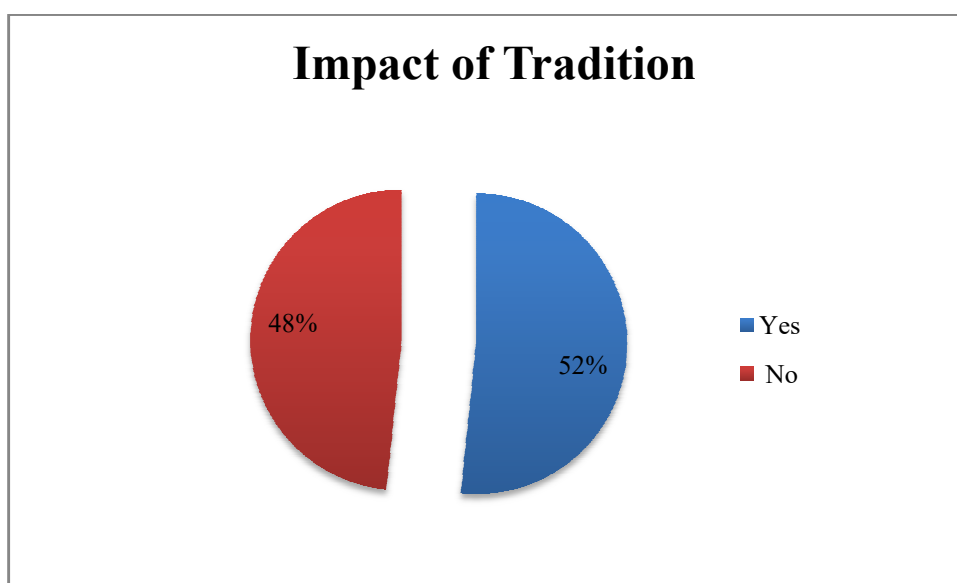
It is to be stated that the Nagas in the Assam villages have accommodated largely with native environment, society and culture. Most of the women and girls wear traditional Assamese dresses like – Mekhela, (lower garments), Chadar (upper garments) in their daily life, and these are popularly used by them irrespective of age and marital positions. Similarly, the Nagas have adopted and accepted housing patterns and constructed their houses perfectly to the Assamese style that is Assam type houses. In the field of cultivation, they have become habituated with wet rice cultivation, used plough and cattles and all forms of tools and techniques for agricultural purposes similarly to the agricultural practices and processes adopted by the Assamese peasants in the plains.

4.9(b) Impact of tradition:

Joseph Gusfield when developed the theory of ‘tradition-modern model of social change’ analysed the critical role of tradition in the context of societal development. Gusfield’s notion was centering on not for the idea of displacement of

tradition altogether, but to test the context of so-called ‘tradition’ towards understanding societal change.²⁸ Similar to the notion of Gusfield, it is also our emphasis here to look at the prevailing impact of tradition in shaping ideas and thinking of the Nagas in contemporary life style.

A question was designed and developed relating to the adverse impact of tradition if any, in the Naga society. The relevance of such queries rest on the fact that societies of transitional order like the Naga society may have manifested a lot of features of mixed characters. The analysis of some empirical facts as depicted in the table 5.5 below helps us to derive the idea of tradition and its impact on Naga society.



²⁸ Joseph R. Gusfield : Traditional and Modernity : Misplaced Polarities in the study of Social Change, American Jr. of Sociology, Vol. 72, No. 4, January 1967, pp. 351-362

Table 4.10**Tradition and its Impact on Contemporary Life patterns and thinking**

Villages	Adverse impact of Traditional Belief and Practice		Total
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	
V:1	25 25%	75 100%	100 100%
V:2	46 57.5%	34 42.5%	80 100%
V:3	08 44.44%	10 55.55%	18 100%
V:4	18 64.28%	10 35.71%	28 100%
V:5	45 77.58%	13 22.41%	58 100%
V:6	23 69.69%	10 30.30%	33 100%
C:1	02 20%	08 80%	10 100%
C:2	02 33.33%	04 66.66%	06 100%
C:3	03 37.5%	05 62.5%	08 100%
Grand Total	172 50.43%	169 49.56%	341 100%

The data in the above table presents some important findings. One can understand the transitional mind-set and opinion of the Naga people that the traditional beliefs, sentiments and rituals which they have inherited generation after generations, have some adverse impact on the life and thinking of present situation. Most of the respondents opined that the traditional way of thinking and acting are gradually considered having less importance and those are considered to be the impediments for development (57.5% Monaiting village, 64.28% from Baregaon, 77.58% from Deopani, and 69.69% from Siloni Naga village).

A closer observation on such issues and after repeated queries, it has been studied that it is mostly the economic sphere of life of the people that the Nagas have experienced hardship to meet the expenses towards rituals and festivals. We have already mentioned the economic position of the people of all the Naga villages that almost large majority of respondents are in low income bracket, that is Rs, 10,000/- income in a month. On the other hand, they are of the view that the rituals and festivals are quite expensive and sometimes beyond the capacity of the families whose source of income is limited. Thus, tradition sometimes exerts pressure in the sphere of economic activities of the Naga people.

The young generation and college going students also were seem to be dissatisfied for not having enough time to take part in the rituals and festivals organized by their families and villages because of their routine engagement in educational institutions. Almost half of the respondents (49.56%) were of the view that the traditional rituals, festivals and ceremonies have no adverse impact on their life and culture at the contemporary period. On the other hand, thus believe that the celebration of those occasions bring wellbeing and prosperity to the individual family and village.

CHAPTER - 5

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE NAGAS

Contemporary society, irrespective of the levels of development, is surely a rapidly changing society. Such changes have been observed in a variety of directions. In a developing country like India, one can notice such changes occurring in society at various historical periods producing diverse consequences. One of the catching points in this context is that the forces and factors those are considered to be responsible were identified in a numerous ways which vary from one geographical region to another and from one socio-historical setting to another. This is very much applicable in a society like India, because Indian society in general and the society of northeastern region in particular has witnessed such events and historical sequences since ancient period. Historians, social analysts and scholars who have taken interest in characterizing northeastern region and its society were seen to agree to conceptualize that it is a land of contrasts.

This chapter is an endeavour to view the nature and dimension of social transformation among the Nagas who have inhabited in the plains valley of Assam since time immemorial.

C.R. Nag while conceptualizing social transformation among the Mizos of Mizoram has summed up in three vocabularies – ‘introduction’, abolition’ and ‘modification’. Explaining these three concepts in detail Nag explained that the British occupation followed by the introduction of Christianity in the Lushai Hills

has brought social change in Mizo society in many ways. As a result of it, some indigenous social practices and customs have been abolished, some were modified and some new phenomena were introduced which collectively led to social changes in Mizo society. This transformation may be called by the expression 'social transformation.'¹ Similar parameters of change in the traditional Naga society may be applicable for explanation.

While looking the scenario of social transformation, it was an endeavour to put on few aspects of Naga social life and society particularly after they had come in contact with the society and environment of the plains areas of Assam valley. For this purpose we propose the present the discussion in two major sections. The first section devotes entirely on understanding social transformation as appeared in few broad areas of social and economic life, and secondly, the empirical data collected from the respondents will be analysed. The whole process of analysis of the quantitative data will be presented with qualitative interpretations.

5.1 Contacts with the Plainsmen:

The Sivasagar district of Assam is a union ground for various groups of people of both tribals and non-tribals. Thus, the district is fascinating from the point of population composition. Since pre-historic times various ethnic groups and communities specially the Austriacs, the Mongoloids and the Aryans migrated to this part of northeast India and contributed to the growth of a land of heterogeneous population structure. Presently, in addition to the Hindus 88.16% and Muslims

¹ C.R. Nag : The Mizo Society in Transition, Vikash Publishing House, 1993, p. 133.

8.15% (as per 2011 Census), there are a number of ethnic groups and other communities who are the followers of Buddhism, Christianity as well as animistic faiths. The major communities living in the district are the Ahoms, the Brahmins, the Koches, the Kalitas, the Chutiyas, Tea-tribes (Adivasi) and a number of plains tribes like Sonowal Kacharis, Mishings (Miris), Deoris etc. There are a few villages of Buddhist population and they are the Khamayangs and Turungs. Moreover, there are numerically small population of Tiwa (Lalung), Kanyaks, Manipuries, Noctes Wangsos and few other tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, with 11,50,253 total population of the district (as per 2011 Census) the district is an example of mixed, composite and heterogeneous population structure in upper Assam.

The present study is concerned with the Nagas residing in the district of Sivasagar, Assam. The Nagas donot know exactly when they came down to the plains area and settled down establishing permanent villages, nor have their written authentic history. However, the older generations have preserved some tradition, myths, legends and folklores and can narrate something about their arrival which they have inherited from their forefathers. It is also equally correct that since these are based on complete mythologies and oral tradition, it is rather difficult to prove its authenticity.

However, as per sayings and narrations which have been preserved and transmitted through oral traditions, the Kanyaks and the Nocte Nagas were the first Nagas inhabitants in this area. The Morung house which was constructed at the Hahchara village was marked the establishment year 1775 A.D. and that is an

indication about the first arrival of the Kanyak Nagas to this area. Similar is the case with the Wangsos of the present Baregaon village whose arrival has been reported during 18th century. The Wangsos and the Noctes came from the Tirap district of present Arunachal Pradesh and the Kanyak Nagas came from the Mon district of Nagaland. Lateron, because of many unknown reasons, the Naga groups, being the temporary settlers, had to move from one area to another and the Wangsos took their settlements in another locality, that is Deopani village probably during 1810 A.D. followed by the Noctes in Siloni village during the year 1826.

The Kanyak Nagas, whose homeland is the Mon district of present Nagaland, started their settlement and lateron established their villages in Hahchara and Monaiting areas and in the other small localities presently known as Bhadhara Naga Chowk and Gargaon Naga Chowk during 1973 to 1997.

The above information recorded and preserved by the village Headmen and the Church Leaders, though unauthentic (as because these are orally preserved generation-wise) yet provide some useful clues for further inquiry. It has already been stated earlier that the region of India's northeast was a meeting ground for various racial, ethnic, linguistic and territorial groups and communities since unrecorded period of history. These migrants used to settle in various placed of hills and mountains, and river valleys. Gradually, they have established their own locations, territories and settlements according to their suitwills, safety, security and convenience.

The Nagas are one of such ancient migrants. Their arrival is not recent, but a long historical past. One fundamental fact in this context is worthy to mention. Since the Nagas have settled in the plains areas of Assam over several generations, their association and contact with the non-Naga people may have tremendous influence in all fronts of their life. In the subsequent pages we will try to highlight these in detail.

5.2 IN THE FIELD OF AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMY:

Traditionally, the Nagas practiced some specific cultivation called Jhum cultivation where the entire population of the village had to work collectively. This practice is still popular among the Nagas in the hill areas. Not only the Nagas, most of hill tribes of northeastern region of India like – The Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya, the Mizos of Mizoram, tribes living in Arunachal Pradesh are still practicing the methods of Jhum cultivation and maintain the economic life. That way, they are self-dependent and self reliant without the contract with the outside world.

Such practice of cultivation however has been substantially reduced after the advent of British administration. The Nagas inhabiting in the plains areas are seen to be less motivated to those of Jhum practices which they followed traditionally. They were being compelled to leave much practice as because there are no big forest and jungles in the plains valley and secondly, these are some administrative restrictions for hunting wild animals and birds and the forest resources must be protected for environmental safety.

The village life of the Nagas in Assam is also marked by many forms of new adjustment relating to wet rice cultivation. They possessed cultivable and homestead lands of their own. They practiced various seasonal crops – Kharif, rabi crops in their own land. The produce now-a-days is not for family consumption alone, but for commercial purposes also. Meanwhile markets and many small local trade centers were developed almost in all villages or in the roadside connecting to the villages. The Naga women take quite active part in selling their products like – vegetables, wooden and bamboo made materials, clothes of artistic traditional design etc. People can purchase number of commodities made available by the Naga women in the weekly haat (market) in the vicinity of the Naga village or in the nearby urban centers.

The use of ploughs, tools and technique required for the purpose of wet rice cultivation is widely seen among the Nagas cultivators. These are almost similar to the methods used by the peasants of Assamese villages. The Nagas follow the rituals, ceremonies and festivals relating to the agricultural activities which the Assamese peasants practice throughout the year. They domesticate and rear bullocks for the purpose of ploughing agricultural land. Of course, now-a-days due to help from the government the use of tractors in cultivation has also become popular among the rich section of the Nagas. Our survey reveals that, there are 8 tractors and bullocks and the practice ploughs are used by a total of 116 families.

As regards land possession, the Naga families are of varying levels of property holding. There are few landless families but they have been rehabilitated by

the rich persons who possessed sufficient land property (both cultivable and forest areas) or good financial footings. Our survey also reveals that there are 19 families who have possessed mere 1 kotha of land and they are virtually the poor families. There are maximum number of families whose land property is within the range of 2 to 10 kothas, 5 families with more than 20 bighas and 1 family with nearly 92 bighas of land property.

It has been stated earlier that there is an indication of diversification of occupation among the Nagas (Table 4.1). The Nagas of the six villages under study though basically pursue agriculture as prime source of livelihood they are not confined alone to single economic activity, rather they are engaged in wider occupational activities. People began to engage themselves in trade and commerce and the circulation of money has become the only transaction of their economic activities. With the increase of money economy, the occupation of the people has changed. This has been induced by other factors like frequent contact with large population in host society, expansion of education, merit and competition, urban impact, industrial and market forces etc. A substantial number of Naga people of younger age have become business-minded and developed tea cultivation. There is a gradual increase of the numbers of government officials, company service holders, contract and supply workers, petty businessmen and a host of young educated Naga who pursue variety of world-based activities and earn money.

The above illustration indicates two important facts of social life of the Nagas. Firstly, the existing system of agricultural as well as economic systems in the

Naga society is transforming and secondly, there develops a new pattern of participation in the process of production, division of labour and specialization. For many of them agricultural activities are performed in a refined and sophisticated way where production they felt higher and enjoy the agricultural activities. To them, it is much higher than those they enjoyed in the traditional mode of cultivation in Jhum cultivation.

5.3 IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION:

In the context of hill areas of northeast it is an acceptable fact that because of the contact with the British administration and the Missionaries, there is a change in educational life of the Naga tribes. The impact of British rule was comparatively less felt by the plains tribal people; as such the British administration was more confined to the hill areas. On the otherhand, the Nagas who have come in contact with the people of Assam since ancient times, simultaneously accommodated themselves with the system of education prevailed in the state. The history and chronicles prepared during the Ahom rules (1228 A.D. to 1826 A.D.) mentioned that there were all possible social and economic relations between the people of the hill areas and the plainsmen. Among the tribals of the hill areas, probably the Nagas established some durable relationship with the then Ahom rulers. Such feelings inherited by them are still remembered with rich tradition of pride and glory.

The overall scenario of education of the Naga villages under study is somewhat satisfactory. Quoting census references and data, the Village Headmen and the Church Leaders stated that the literacy rate of Hahchara village is about

90%, while it is 97% in Monaiting, 89% in Namsai, 80% in Baregaon and 80% Deopani village. But the old generations of the womenfolk are still lagging behind in education.

There are primary schools connecting to all villages. The enrolment of students in those educational institutions is quite high. From the interaction with the teachers and students as well as guardians it was found that the Naga parents take all interest in sending their children to schools and colleges. The medium of instruction is Assamese, and it is to note that the Naga parents have no difficulty in sending their children to schools as the schools are mixed enrolled where there are larger non-Naga students. But was reported that at the beginning there were several impediments to send their children for schooling because of economic hardship and social milieu. Poverty has kept many students away from the classrooms. This forced many Naga students to work in the paddy fields, to help their parents and sometimes to work as servants in others' house. But even the illiterate parents did not bother to send their children to schools though children were sent to work in the neighbouring towns and to earn money to meet family's economic hardships. For such reasons, the Naga people at the initial stage were seen at low level of literacy.

In the contemporary situation most of the Naga families became well-to-do and raised their economic status and style of life. They have possessed good amount of land property, extended economic opportunity and raised family status. It is however, important to mention that some parents of better economic standing used

to send their children for higher education outside their village, many of them are pursuing technical and professional education.

There are some significant changes among the young educated generation of the Nagas. Assamese language is commonly used by them in their daily life. Children talk in Assamese, interact with teachers in Assamese and gossip and make friendship and clique groups with Assamese boys and girls. Among them there are some speakers and orators whose medium of deliberation of speeches is Assamese. It can be noted that a good number of Naga boys and girls used to publish their writings like – articles, poems etc. in school or college magazines or in the occasional publications by some associations and other organizations. It was also found that children of few families have started forgetting their mother tongue/dialect rather they are becoming affluent in local Assamese language.

5.4 RELIGION AND CULTURE:

It is an established fact that the traditional Naga culture was rooted in the fundamental beliefs and assumption of their religion. It is also equally relevant to state that there is prevalence of variety of customs, myths, legendary institutions and these are considered to be idiosyncratic responses to their environment which maintains an essential harmony with their religiously defined world view.

As history changes and with the influence of modern culture and civilization, a lot of impact of novel ideas and expression in the tradition bound Naga society is also an equally underlying fact. At the same time there are some evidences to suggest that most Nagas were moderately pragmatic in matters of religious rites and

practices while retaining a common fundamental world view and ethos of the core of ideas of their religion.²

Over generations, the religious life and culture of the Nagas living in the plains region of Assam and after coming in contact with diverse groups and communities have been undergoing a significant modification and alteration. After intensive investigation and frequent contact and personal visit to the Naga villages, the researcher had witnessed a variety of changing scenario of the people. This is especially true in case in the performance of rituals, ceremonies and festivals at various occasions in their daily life cycle. Some sections of the Nagas (Kanyaks and Noctes) have adopted Hinduism at the beginning of their habitation at Hahchara and Siloni Nocte villages. But lateron, the Wangso and some part of Kanyak have converted to Christianity. But lager parts of the Kanyak Nagas are still practicing Hinduism.

Hinduism has been popularly accepted by the Kanyak Nagas. They reside in two villages (Hahchara and Siloni Naga villages and two small village corners (Chowks) namely – Bhadhara Naga Chowk and Gargaon Naga Chowk and they constitute a total of 43.11% Hindu Nagas. Among them, the Hindu festivals, rituals and classical dance and music of Hindu practices become popular.

5.5 SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE:

The social and cultural aspects of the life of individual or community, jointly may be termed as socio-cultural is an expression of total life patterns, values and

² Gordon P. Means – Tribal Transformation – The Early History of the Nagas, op.cit., p. 26

norms, ethics, culture, morality and many other acquired traits throughout his existence in society. Further, there are some basic elements necessary for the continuance of individuals' existence such as economy, sources of livelihood, food and shelter and, safety and security. Social structure that may attains its permanent character, but as time passes, the basic characters are also subject to either modification or alternation or transformation. This is possible when culture of a society is changing.

The Nagas are one ancient group of ethnic community who's social and cultural dimensions embrace a wide and multiple characters. Nagas are unique in the sense of ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity, cultural diversity and complex internal differentiation even through they are tagged by one common term 'Nagas'. Such complexities give rise too a more complicated socio-cultural manifestation. Over the generations, these characteristics sometimes get diffused, remain stagnant or modified. We will bring out these issues under empirical scrutiny with the data, facts and observation collected from the respondents.

The Nagas living in plains areas of Assam have undergone a fascinating change and transformation almost in all major spheres in their life. It is perhaps the socio-cultural aspect of their life patterns which shows a noticeable transformation over the last few decades. The present generations of the Nagas have accommodated themselves with the people and environment of Assam, the visibility of which, as they admit, is quite different from their forefathers.

Most of the Naga families, more particularly the aged ones agree that this change has become possible as a result of long years of contact and interaction with the people of non-Naga communities. We have stated earlier that the Nagas have not only settled in a new land as new comers, at the sometime they gradually started attaining new customs, attitudes and expressions from the host population.

II

At this stage we will examine the field data acquired through a number of questions opened to the respondents and from personal field observation. The questions have touched some specific issues relating to the various nature of transformation in socio-cultural life of the Nagas. The empirical findings and the relevant issues are discussed in the page to follow.

Exposure to Languages:

Language is an effective means of communication and interaction between individuals. The ability to speak other languages outside of his own is a symptom of wide connectivity and network and it gives scope for interaction. This also makes possible for reciprocal relationship between members of complex linguistic groups. Keeping in view such assumption we asked our respondents about their exposure to language and the findings are presented in the table 6.1 below.

Table 5.1
Respondents exposure to Languages

Languages	Exposure		
	<i>Can speak</i>	<i>Can read</i>	<i>Can write</i>
Own Language	341 100%	120 35.19%	90 26.39%
Assamese	341 100%	297 87.09%	297 87.09%
Hindi	196 57.47%	21 6.15%	21 6.15%
English	91 26.68%	89 26.09%	78 22.87%
Bengali	02 0.58%	02 0.58%	-

The finding presented in the table is an indication whether the Nagas are confined group or extended group in the sense of exposure to languages. In addition to their own dialect, language, they can speak Assamese language (100%). Besides, 57.47% can speak Hindi, 26.68% can speak English and 0.58% can speak Bengali language.

The Nagas in Assam show differential aptitudes in reading and writing of their own dialect. Only 35.19% can read while lesser number of them (26.39%) has the ability to write their own language. On the otherhand majority of them have acquired command over Assamese language i.e. 87.09% can read and write Assamese language in the Naga society in Sivasagar district. The ability to speak read and write Assamese language is the result of few factors. Firstly, the contact with the people other than their own particularly, the Assamese.

The Naga settlement in Sivasagar district is surrounded by a large number of villages of Assamese population and this environment has a long time impact on the Nagas. Secondly, a substantial number of Nagas of old ages have not possessed the reading and writing proficiencies of their own dialect and so, the continuity of oral tradition was the only means of attachment to them. And thirdly, the children studying at schools and colleges in Assamese medium of instruction and they are well conversant with Assamese language. Besides, the younger generations are in constant touch and interaction with Assamese friends, peer groups and play groups.

In this context, it is worthy to state that there are a number of students and youth who have completed education with better command and proficiency in Assamese language. Many of them are good writer of linguistic assimilation of the Nagas with population of mixed and composite structure.

Hindi has also gained popularity among good number of respondents (57.41%). The government officials, supply workers and contractors, businessmen and local traders are the persons who are exposed to Hindi language. Many college going students both males and females can read and write Hindi and Hindi has attained its popularity among them.

English is another language that gained popularity and prominence among a good number of the Nagas. They comprised the irrespective of ages, male and females government officials and simple house wives who possessed the activity to speak, read and write English. The researcher had the come across to meet and talk with several housewives who have the command over English language. Similarly, most of the village elder, village Headman, Morang leaders, owners of tea plantation, businessman are found to be well exposed to English language.

Thus, the nature of social interaction and its extended network of relationship between the Nagas and the non-Nagas can be very fruitfully illustrated through the exposure of language.

5.6 ASSIMILATION WITH LOCAL CULTURE:

It is in fact not an easy task to trace the Naga traditional culture, but some features, nature and elements and also about its continuity and trends can be understood which has been outlined in the foregoing chapter. But about the wide arena of cultural development and change, some Naga scholars were of the view that acculturation has not been noticed in the Naga culture, instead the continuity and change is apparently visible.³ Such observation is correct in certain respects. At the same time it would also not be wrong to say that the Naga culture is undergoing transformation with the change of time and environment, and so the Nagas have acquired the qualities of openness and flexibility.

Migration from the hills to the plains and consequent eventful settlement in form of village can be recognized as great episode in the ethnic history of the Nagas. The process of migration in search of food, shelter, livelihood as well as safety and security can be recorded under two important parameters. The very migratory character associated with the habit of adjustment and accommodation to new settlements is one dimension of social change in their social life. Another noticeable aspect is the ability for reciprocal relationship between them and the host population.

³ M. Horam- Problems of understanding in Northeast India, in "Northeast Region: Problems and Prospects of Development" (ed), B.L Abbi, Culture for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh, 1984, pp.190-194

Owing to the above mentioned factors, the Nagas were, since ancient time, bound to lose their static nature of life patterns and the give and take relationship become the important ethnic character for them. Because, they have to adjust themselves with the environment wherever they would go and settle. As a result, it is not only the lose of traditional culture but a possibility for the emergence of a new social order as a result of assimilation with new population is an underlying fact. However, an in-depth inquiry concerning to above assumptions and the related field information are presented below in two data tables.

Table 5.2
Adoption to Local Culture

Villages	Nature of Adoption			Total
	<i>Completely</i>	<i>Partially</i>	<i>No Adoption</i>	
V:1	26 26%	69 69%	05 5%	100 100%
V:2	18 22.5%	59 73.75%	03 3.75%	80 100%
V:3	03 16.66%	13 73.22%	02 11.11%	18 100%
V:4	03 10.71%	25 89.28%		28 100%
V:5	05 8.62%	48 82.75%	05 8.62%	58 100%
V:6	21 63.63%	9 27.27%	03 9.09%	33 100%
C:1	02 20%	08 80%	-	10 100%
C:2	04 66.66%	02 33.33%	-	06 100%
C:3	07 87.5%	01 12.5%	-	08 100%
Grand Total	89 26.09%	234 68.62%	18 5.27%	341 100%

The data obtained from the respondents show a varying opinion with regard to the adoption of local culture. As a whole, three categories of responses were visible with regard to the acceptance of local culture. But at the sametime it cannot be denied that opinions were overlapping to the fact that there was neither complete acceptance nor total rejection. Majority of the respondents (68.62%) put the record that the Nagas have accepted all forms of habit, mannerism, behavior in addition to their prime activities like agriculture from the local neighbouring population. According to the opinion of few respondents the Nagas are virtually dependent to the larger environmental situation that has been shaped and generated by Assamese society and culture. Some of the traditional forms of worship rituals and practices have abandoned because of the changing context. But it is also to be noted that the Nagas are still adhered to their traditional.

On the other hand, for 26.69% respondents, the Nagas of Assam have accepted all forms of agricultural peasants, including the seasonal ritual activities and agricultural tools, techniques, method and processes of cultivation and used by the Assamese peasants, including the seasonal ritual activities and ceremonies relating to cultivation. They have abandoned some traditional practices like – hunting, jhum cultivation, killing of wild bird sand animals which they practice as a part of traditional customs. Instead, they for most of the daily life time keep themselves busy in maintain household activities and to earn money. They have followed and developed the habit to domesticate animals and birds, rear them almost similarly to the practices done by neighbouring non-Naga people.

In this context it is important to mention some significant cultural practices those have been popularly accepted and cultivated by the Nagas from the neighbouring Assamese families. The married Kanyak Naga women now-a-days use Assamese *Mekhela*, (lower garments) and *Chadar* (upper garments) in their daily habits of dress patterns. Similarly, the Nocte Nagas who were the disciples of *Bareghar Satra* (a Hindu Vaisnavite religious institution) regularly offer prayers of the Namghar (a Vaisnavite place of worship) in accordance with Vaisnavite rules.

Kaniupaku is one major religious festival of the Nocte Nagas. It is agriculture- based festival. The Noctes observe these festivals for four days simultaneously with the Assamese *Bihu* (spring festival of the Assamese people observed at the beginning of the Assamese calendar month *Baisakh* (middle of April) festival.

The three Assamese *Bihu* festivals are popularly celebrated by the Noctes. They celebrate these occasions with great mix of traditions – Noctes and the Assamese. In their own dialect they term *Bohag Bihu* as *Paku*, *Magh Bihu* as *Magh Paku* and the *Kati Bihu* as *Mel Paku*. On such occasion they used to sacrifice animals in the name of their ancestors and offer home-made liquor “Khan” (traditionally prepared rice bear). The offering of rice-bear and sacrifice of animals is considered essential along with prayers and worship. They pray and offer those items to *Aaithan Dangoria*, *Jal-Konwari* and in the name of *Lakhimi* separately (all these are names of Hindu god and goddesses).

The Nocte Nagas, after they accepted Hinduism practiced all forms of rituals, ceremonies and festivals virtually according to Assamese calendar year with equal gaiety and joy with the Assamese.

Another significant aspect of cultural assimilation among the Noctes is the naming of the children. This can be more observed among the members of the contemporary generation of the community. They prefer Assamese style for naming their children with surnames from own community or clan. Further, many forms of rituals to the new born baby are done according to Hindu traditional practices.

In the sphere of religious life also the Nagas in Assam have witnessed some changes, and they are virtually not isolated from the impact of other religion.

Table 5.3
Village wise Assimilation to Local Culture

Village-wise	With local culture		With other Religion	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
V-1	78 78%	22 22%	94 94%	06 6%
V-2	69 86.25%	11 13.75%	15 18.75%	65 81.25%
V-3	16 88.88%	02 11.11%	-	18 100%
V-4	21 75%	07 25%	02 7.14%	26 92.85%
V-5	49 84.48%	09 15.51%	06 10.34%	52 89.65%
V-6	30 93.93%	03 9.09%	33 100%	-
C-1	10 100%	-	10 100%	-
C-2	06 100%	-	06 100%	-
C-3	07 87.5%	01 12.5%	-	08 100%
Grand Total	286 83.87%	55 16.12%	166 48.68%	175 51.31%

As the data indicate, there are two distinct categories of respondents. A large majority of them stated that there are higher levels of cultural assimilation with the people of local surrounding villages (78% Hahchara, 86.25% from Monaiting, 88.88% from Namsai, 75% from Baregaon, 84.48% from Deopani, and 93.93% from Siloni Naga village). The respondents categorically stated about the different areas of cultural intermixing with the non-Naga people. The Nagas have adopted many ritual and ceremonial practices borrowed from Assamese peasants particularly in agricultural practices.

These are some specific seasonal festivals among the Assamese communities which they celebrate throughout the Assamese calendar years. The festivals are mainly agriculture related. The three major festivals are the *Kati Bihu* (the last day of the month of *Aswin* which is celebrated by the cultivators as a day of first appearance of the branches of paddy), *Magh Bihu* (a festival of joy celebration after the collection of paddy from the field at the last day of the month of *Pusha* and the *Bohag Bihu* (spring festival in the month of April). The celebration of these festivals is now-a-days, popular among the Nagas of Assam.

Cultivation is the primary source of livelihood among the Nagas. The practice of wet rice cultivation, by the Nagas in the plains has largely motivated them to follow the rituals and other ceremonial activities associated with cultivation. This may be noted as primary step in the process of assimilation with the non-Nagas communities. To a considerable extent, this brings the Nagas to close proximities with other dwellers at their surroundings.

It was stated earlier than there are some noticeable impact on social life and culture of the Nagas from the people of the neighbouring villages. The younger

generation is more influenced than the older one. Such influence is reflected on the changing habits of dress pattern, food habits, manners etiquette and behaviour.

On the other hand, there is difference between the Nagas and the non-Nagas in the sphere of religious life. There are 48.68% respondents opine that, there is religious assimilation with other groups. They constitute the two tribal groups recently converted to Hinduism from their earlier religion. But for 51.31%, there is no impact on their religious life from other communities.

5.7 CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL BELIEFS, RITUALS AND PRACTICE:

It was stated earlier that there is a considerable impact on the traditional belief patterns, ritualistic behavior and nature of practices of the Nagas living in the midst of non-Naga population in Assam. Some differences of opinion were found when asked about whether there is change in traditional belief patterns, ritualistic behaviour and habits are changing. The table 6.4 provides some empirical findings to such queries.

Table 5.4
Changes in Traditional Beliefs, Rituals and Practices

Villages/ Chowk	Changes Traditional Beliefs, Rituals and Practices				
	<i>Total</i>	<i>There is change</i>		<i>No Change</i>	
		<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
V:1	100	67	67	33	33
V:2	80	68	85	12	15
V:3	18	12	66.66	06	33.33
V:4	28	26	92.85	02	7.14
V:5	58	57	98.28	01	1.72
V:6	33	29	87.87	04	12.12
C:1	10	07	70	03	30
C:2	6	04	66.66	02	33.33
C:3	8	07	87.5	01	12.5
Grand Total	341	277	81.23	64	18.76

As per the indication of the data, majority of the respondents (81.23%) were of the view that the Naga tribes have experienced changes in certain spheres of their religious life. Comparatively, it is only the lesser number of respondents (18.76%) who put forwarded opposite opinion.

Traditionally, Naga religion is said to be complex structure since it was a combination of number of belief systems, rituals, ideas and ceremonial practices. Every Naga tribe believes that there is an unseen divine power behind the creation of the universe and destiny of mankind and therefore, they had varying conception of belief in gods and spirits. Further, they believe in both benevolent and malevolent characters of the divine power those are exercised on human beings. The life cycle of the Nagas thus revolves around an uncountable number of rituals, ceremonies, festivals and taboos. Taboo occupies a central figure in the religious life of the Nagas. It is a set of belief which controls the entire religious affairs and social life of the people. Taboo simply implies practically anything forbidden on the day of observation, common to all Nagas. Taboo may be observed by the individuals, the clan or entire village men.

Thus, it is obvious that the traditional socio-cultural and religious life patterns of the Nagas is essentially a product of conception and mythologies that have been rooted in the conceived notions of their origin.

Each tribe of the Nagas has their own mythological foundation about their origin and so, they think, act and behave accordingly. Those are reflected in the different forms and nature of prayer, periodicity of celebration and kind of offerings.

Among the Nagas of the plains valley of Assam many of such traditional forms of beliefs and worships have gradually disappeared. Some of the strong social practices such as – hunting and food gathering, killing of wild animals and birds, destruction of forests and jungles and community – oriented activities like jhum cultivation etc. were either not allowed by the local authorities or the Nagas have abandoned those practices.

Instead, the Nagas have gradually acquired the habit of personal of individual life patterns accompanied by higher motif for earning, possession and controlling land property, developing the sense of individualism, separateness and differences between families etc. Some features became prominent at the same time. Differences on the basis of individual income of the families, economic opportunities, rise in education, developing the habits of competition among the youngsters etc. have been the urge of contemporary life of the Nagas. These are indeed, the symptoms of modern and urban life and the Nagas have acquired these characteristics inspite of their strong attachment to traditionalism.

There are some factors which can be possibly observed in case of the Naga's socio-economic and socio-cultural life situation which might have kept them away from the stronghold of tradition. The youths who are involved in occupational and trade and business activities have little spare time to attend those communities. Similarly, the students are not able to be the part of those activities and gatherings organized of the village Morung horse, for which their parents have to pay the fines or the penalties.

5.8 MIXED SOCIETY AND CULTURE:

The history of Naga villages in Assam, authentically remained untraced. As such recorded history of migration of the Nagas to the plains of Assam is rare except some scattered chronicles prepared during the rule of the Ahoms. Who ruled for about 600 years. During the last few years, some writings in the form of socio-historical description appeared in both regional and English languages. They emphasized some aspects where Naga society has been undergoing noticeable transformation. The impact of wider non-Naga societies on the socio-cultural life of the Nagas is therefore cannot be denied. We opened a query to study as to how the Naga inhabitants of Assam are under the impact of non-Naga society and culture.

Table 5.5
Nature of Impact on society and culture

Village	Nature of Impact			Total
	<i>Total Impact</i>	<i>Partial Impact</i>	<i>No Impact</i>	
V :1	58 58%	30 30%	12 12%	100 100%
V :2	52 65%	17 21.25%	11 13.75%	80 100%
V:3	12 66.67%	04 22.22%	02 11.11%	18 100%
V:4	16 57.14%	05 17.86%	07 25.00%	28 100%
V:5	19 57.57%	05 15.16%	09 27.27%	33 100%
V:6	43 74.14%	09 15.51%	06 10.35%	58 100%
C:1	100 100%	-	-	10 100%
C:2	06 100%	-	-	06 100%
C:3	06 75.00%	01 12.12%	01 12.13%	08 100%
Grand Total	222 65.10%	71 20.82%	48 14.08%	341 100%

From methodological point of view it is not easy to categorise the opinion on the issues of impact in certain distinct levels such as- 'total impact,' 'partial impact' and 'no impact'. However, for the purpose of analysis we could examine the responses after proper verification in the light of observation and close interaction with the respondents and the field situation, and try to derive some knowledge of assimilation as far as possible.

A careful look on the socio-cultural life of the Nagas as well as the surrounding other communities is rather a matter of attraction. A total of 20.82% respondents noted that the Nagas have come into contact with other society with considerable impact. It reveals that the Naga villages in Assam are not alien or separate entity. In some situation or among some Naga tribes intercommunity mix-up, interaction and interdependence definitely is notably strong. Reference can be made in the case of the Kanyaks and the Noctes. In almost all spheres of life they are found to be similar with Assamese people and the village life. They gossip and meet together, eat and drink together and follow every set of possible activities from the Assamese people. In matters of dresses and food habits, house patterns, reception to guests etc. these sections of the Naga tribes have merged and become similar to other non-Naga groups.

On the other hand, it is 65.10% respondents who opined that the Nagas are substantially influenced by the culture of the people of Assam. They used to discuss every personal matters and problems with other neighbours and families and try to settle many financial and domestic problems with the help of people outside their own communities frankly spoke at the time of difficulty and hardship that way, they developed close intimacy and relations with other communities reducing the difference between them.

5.9 SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG THE NAGAS:

No society remains static. The pre-British Naga society had existed for centuries without any forms of scientific development and they lived on primitive agriculture with self-sufficient economy and independence. They lived at low level of economic development and remained virtually aloof and isolated from outside. With change of time, they came into contact with British administration and thereby developed new areas of cultural contact with the people outside their own tribal world.

With increased contact, interaction and assimilation with the people of permanent village structure in the plains they have achieved some changes in their way of life. With such background and hypothetical assumption we wanted to study the extent of change in some *selected parameters of socio-cultural and economic life of the respondents*. The table 6.6 below gives it in detail.

Table 5.6
Change in Socio-cultural & religious life of the respondents

Items	Opinion				
	<i>Rapid Change</i>	<i>Considerable Change</i>	<i>Little Change</i>	<i>No Change</i>	<i>Total</i>
Tools & Techniques	00	201 <i>58.95%</i>	97 <i>28.44%</i>	43 <i>12.61%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>
Food Habits	00	196 <i>57.48%</i>	31 <i>9.09%</i>	114 <i>33.43%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>
Dress & Ornaments	00	216 <i>63.34%</i>	85 <i>24.93%</i>	50 <i>14.66%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>
Religious Practices	00	176 <i>51.61%</i>	37 <i>10.85%</i>	128 <i>37.54%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>
Mode of Travel	00	117 <i>34.31%</i>	79 <i>23.17%</i>	145 <i>42.52%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>
Expenditure Patterns	00	212 <i>62.17%</i>	33 <i>9.68%</i>	96 <i>28.15%</i>	341 <i>100%</i>

In the foregoing pages, we took into account the forms and nature of change occurring in the sphere of religious and socio-cultural life. Some specific areas of socio-economic life such as food habit, dress patterns, tools and techniques in the process of production and expenditure habit are of special interest.

Majority of the respondents (58.95%) were of the opinion that there are changes in the methods of production particularly in the field of agriculture. They have undergone the culture of wet rice cultivation with cattle ploughs, tractors, manures which they did not experience in primitive mode of their cultivation. Thus, a total of 58.95% respondents stated that the Naga cultivators have adopted themselves with the use of all tools, techniques and methods of agriculture needed for wet rice cultivation. Not only that similar to the Assamese peasants they have learnt the art of seed processing, ploughing, and harvesting the paddy and storage. These practices have been followed by them from the period when they settled in form of village life in the plains of Assam. The new mode of agricultural practices according to their opinion has brought about changing other spheres of life. 57.48% respondents stated that there is a considerable change in the food habits of the Nagas. Unlike the hill dwellers, many Naga families have agreed that there is substantial reduction in the habits like consuming liquor, beef, pork, wild animal and birds. Instead they have now accommodated themselves with lot of vegetarian dishes. They cultivate and produce a lot of vegetables in their own homesteads not only for consumption, but to sell the products in local markets and earn money. Thus, the traditional practice of hunting for food stuff from forest and the destruction forest resources have significantly stopped.

In matters of dress and ornaments one can witness notable change among the Nagas. The Kanyaks and the Noctes who are Hinduised, now have adjusted with daily life style, dresses and culture of Assamese people. Many elders have used dhoti (lower garments of the males) and Gamusa (towels) and attended religious festivals with other communities. The womenfolk use Mekhela (lower garments) and Chadar (upper garments) for most of the time in daily life. Thus, the customary habit of half nakedness is totally forgotten. It is equally important to note that many traditional skills of Naga women like – making of colorful shawl, basket making, embroidery, many other decorated items etc. are gradually losing importance, rather women have to remain engaged for most of the time in looking after the domesticated animals, looking after the school going children and in the paddy fields. This indicates the gradual change in the role of women in the Naga villages in Assam.

The pattern of expenditure and saving is another indication in the pattern of general economic behavior of people, because it is directly related to income, capital possession and wealth. So, the expenditure behavior determines the economic status leading to the development of social class divisions among the people. Like many other tribal groups, the Nagas have also experienced a lot of economic transformation since ancient period. Our data suggest that 62.17% respondents opined in favour of noticeable change in the expenditure habits, while 9.68% stated little change and 28.15% stated ‘no change’.

Investigation goes to a certain extent of in-depth inquiry in this respect. On the basis of the information supplied by each of the respective village Head, it was

found that maximum number of families are in the lower income group and hence, the average monthly expenditure was estimated at Rs. 5000/-, while there are few families from among them Naga who have the ability to spend about Rs. 80,000/- per month. However, they are in limited number of families with larger land property, small tea gardens, one or two medical practitioners, businessmen etc. The survey also reveals that maximum possession of land property by a family is amounting to 92 bighas (about 23 acres). It was also found that out of 341 families, there are 2 families who possessed more than 50 bighas, 5 families with more than 20 bighas. We found maximum number of families with the possession of land property within the range of 2 to 10 bighas and 19 families with 1 katha of land. This is an indication about the economic scenario of the Nagas as because economic scenario of the Nagas as because economic positions quite often determines the social standing of the people.

On the basis of economic status and possession of property and wealth, one can categorise the Nagas broadly into three distinct groups – rich families, families of lower income group and daily wage earners. And, accordingly, they exhibit different standard of living, consumption habits, mode of life etc.

5.10 INTER-COMMUNITY MARRIAGES

Marriage is a social institution which brings ultimate and closest form of social relationship between persons, families, groups and communities. It is the institution of marriage that brings together people irrespective of socio-economic and cultural differences such as – caste, creed, language, ethnicity and religion. One

can understand the rigidity or flexibility, closeness and opened and even traditional or modern communities in society through the institution of marriage.

Prevalence of inter-marriages between the Nagas and non-Nagas and peoples' perception and attitudes towards such social relation is a subject of crucial interest for clear understanding of the process of assimilation. It subsequently indicates a change in the social structure.

The Nagas constitute a minor section of population in the midst of broader non-Naga population structure in Assam plains. Since their arrival and settlement in the plains, they have been maintaining a cordial relation with the people outside their own community. At the beginning the relations were mainly economic and gradually because of some linguistic similarity, they have quickly come into contact with the people of Assam. With the passing of time and under the impact of various factors, their relations with the people of plains have significantly developed. One such development is inter-marriage between the Nagas and the non-Nagas. Therefore, inter-marriage between the Nagas and other communities and the study about peoples' perception towards such issues will definitely expose the degree of assimilation small alien group and the bigger between host society. A question was understanding for seeking the opinion of the respondents towards inter-community marriage. Table 6.7 below is an evidence of field situation as narrated by the respondents.

Table 5.7
Village wise preference of inter-community marriage

Villages	Preference for marriage			Total
	<i>Within the Nagas</i>	<i>Between Nagas and others</i>	<i>Between Nagas and Assamese</i>	
V:1	40 40%	35 35%	25 25%	100 100%
V:2	42 52.5%	28 35%	10 12.5%	80 100%
V:3	09 50%	06 7.5%	03 16.66%	18 100%
V:4	19 67.85%	06 21.42%	03 10.71%	28 100%
V:5	35 60.34%	16 27.58%	07 12.06%	58 100%
V:6	19 57.57%	10 17.25%	04 6.89%	33 100%
C:1	05 50%	03 30%	02 20%	10 100%
C:2	01 16.66%	05 83.33%	-	06 100%
C:3	-	08 100%	-	08 100%
Grand Total	170 49.85%	117 34.31%	54 15.83%	341 100%

It was found that 49.85% respondents prefer marriages within Naga communities, 34.31% prefer with other communities and 15.83% prefer marriage with the Assamese families. Village-wise the responses are again different. Majority of the respondents from four villages i.e. Monaiting, Namsai, Deopani and Siloni

opined that they prefer marriages within their own communities, abiding by the rules of endogenous marriage systems whereas, a sizeable number of respondents (34.31%) prefer with other communities and 15.83% prefer marriage with the Assamese families. From the immediate observation on the data, it is visible that almost half of the respondents are strictly adhered to the rules of endogenous marriage i.e. marriage within their own communities. And such rules are followed by them as far as possible in the contemporary period also.

The other direction of the table data can be interpreted with no less significance. The two categories of responses i.e. marriage with people 'outside their own' and specifically with 'Assamese people' if combined together (50.14%) and examined a favorable trend towards inter-community relationship through marriage is visible. This signifies the favorable attitudes towards exogamous marriage system.

A close inquiry in this context reveals that a number of marriage between the Nagas and the non-Nagas are taking place in the recent years. Marriages have taken place between the Nagas and the plains tribal people such as the Deoris, Misings, Kacharis and a considerable number with Assamese families. These are one or two marriages took place through elopement between the Nagas and the Muslims also. We have detected fifty nine Nagas families whose members have married non-Nagas girls. Seventy eight Naga girls married to non-Naga families. Some marriages were formally arranged by the parents of both sides in bride and bridegroom. It is worthy to mention that both the families of bride and bridegroom have followed all rituals of marriage and with mutual agreement.

5.11 ASSIMILATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

Milton M. Gordon⁴ in his study about assimilation among some ethnic groups in America theorized that complete assimilation between ethnic groups and communities leads to certain resultant outcome in the process of development. To him such developments some aspects of hint socio-cultural and attitudinal dimensions of the groups under the process of assimilation. He referred that because of assimilation. There are a) development of people hood based exclusively on host society, b) absence of prejudice and discrimination between groups and communities and c) absence of value and power conflict between alien and host societies. These aspects, to a considerable extent may have some relevance in the case of our studied villages. We took up the issue to our respondents and the responses are presented in the table 6.8 below.

Table 5.8
Village wise Assimilation and Development

Villages	Opinion				Total	%
	Yes	%	No.	%		
V:1	86	86	14	14	100	Cent percent
V:2	52	65	28	35	80	Cent percent
V:3	16	88.88	02	11.11	18	Cent percent
V:4	20	71.42	08	28.57	28	Cent percent
V:5	40	68.96	18	31.03	58	Cent percent
V:6	30	90.90	03	9.09	33	Cent percent
C:1	10	100	-		10	Cent percent
C:2	06	100	-		06	Cent percent
C:3	07	87.5	01	12.5	08	Cent percent
Grand Total	267	78.29	74	21.70	341	Cent percent

⁴ Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life : The Role of Race, Religion and National Origin*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1964, pp. 110-117

The reply to the question is very encouraging. It is to note that large majority of the respondents were found to be agreed to such views (it is 86% from Hahchara, 65% from Monaiting, 88.88% from Namsai, 71.42% from Baregaon, 68.96% from Deopani and 90.90% from Siloni Naga village). Respondents from all other three Chowks under study also subscribed positive views to the question in large majority.

It was stated earlier that the Nagas after settling in Assam's plains were found much diffused in their socio-economic, cultural, environmental as well as political spheres of life. The Nagas have surrendered or abandoned many of the traditional practices like – hunting of wild animals and birds that was widely practiced in their traditional days, juhms or shifting destruction of forest resource and many other inherited traits acquired from forefathers' generations. Instead peoples' involvement to those practices have seen largely supplanted by wet rice cultivation, settled village economy, motif for move earnings and wage for possessing alone wealth and income.

The other side of development can be observed in socio-cultural ways of life of the Nagas in the contemporary period. The new generations, because of their contact and interaction with people of other communities have been found developing their ideas, competence and skills which they compare very frequently with their contemporaries living in the hill areas of Nagaland. Several parents were of the opinion that they would not like to send their children back to the Naga hills and according to their notions the hill areas have no job opportunities and expanded sources of livelihood as it exists in the plains.

Thus, it can be said that the degree and extent of assimilation of the Nagas with the people of the plains areas and its social environment has significantly improved.

CHAPTER – VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The topic of this research is “Social Transformation Among the Nagas: A Case Study in Sivasagar District”. This is a sociological study carried out among the Nagas inhabiting in six villages and three small villages (Chuk) localities in Assam and in the vicinity of Assam-Nagaland border. All the households of the Naga inhabited areas have been studied in detail. The foregoing six chapters therefore, are the outcome of intensive investigation centering on the theme under study.

The chapter is an attempt to recapitulate all the foregoing chapters with its major contents and trend of data. For the purpose of systematic discussion, this chapter is divided into two broad sections. The first section devotes to present a comprehensive summary of all aspects of the studied subject and its findings, and in the second section an attempt will be made to derive the conclusions as emerged out of the findings.

This research begins with few premises in the form of objective of study, hypotheses along with its relevant research questions. The objectives were (a) to gather a comprehensive knowledge about the traditional social structure of the Nagas, (b) to analyse the nature and extent of assimilation between the Nagas (alien group) and the non-Nagas (host society), and thirdly, (c) to study the contemporary socio-cultural life as a result of assimilation and transformation. To fulfill these objectives we formulated three assumptions in form of hypothesis such as –

- (a) The Nagas have been preserving their traditionally inherited characteristics and social structure irrespective of changing environment and habitations.

- (b) The Nagas living in the plains valley of Assam are in constant contact, interaction and assimilation with people outside their communities, and
- (c) Traditional social structure of the Nagas undergoes synthesis as a result of assimilation and transformation.

This is an exploratory study. The entire study therefore, in its methodological steps is an endeavour to systematically detect, analyse and establish the probable relations between facts, variables and situations.

The study is confined to a total of 341 respondents and each respondent represents one household. The studied villages and its respective households are – Hahchara 100, Monaiting 80, Namsai 18, Baregaon 28, Deopani 58, Siloni 33 and the small village localities are Bhadhara 10, Gargaon Naga Chowk 5 and Ligoripukhuri Naga Chowk 8. The villages are located in the Sivasagar district at varying distances from its district headquarters. The Hahchara village and the Bhadhara Naga *Chowk* are nearer to district headquarters, whereas Deopani Naga village and Siloni village are of a distance ranging between 70 to 75 kilometers. The other Naga villages are situated within a distance between 18 to 40 kilometers from the Sivasagar district headquarters. The location of all the villages is not far away from Assam-Nagaland border.

There are five Naga tribes inhabited in these villages. They are the Kanyaks, the Noctes, the Phoms, the Wangsos and the Dokes. The Kanyaks constitute the largest group with 204 households, the Noctes with 33 households and the Phoms and the Dokes with 9 household in each tribe. Further, each tribe has a number of

clans, such as the Kanyaks have four clans namely – *Singphoi*, *Tee*, *Looknok* and *Hantok Kanyaks*. Among the Noctes there are again four clan groups namely – *Panidoria*, *Pulung*, *Harumothou* and *Bornothon* and the Wangso society is also divided into four clans groups (Vamsa), Namely *Wangam*, *Wangchas*, *Wangchoo* and *wanpan*. Thus, from the point of number of tribes and sub-tribes/clans, the Naga villages in Assam present a complex population structure.

The Naga villages are surrounded by other villages of mixed population of non-Naga ethnic groups and communities. The major communities inhabiting in this area are the Ahoms (the descendents of royal families), Kacharis, Tea-garden labour communities, Muslims and several other plains tribes. The urban centers adjacent to the Naga villages are the Nazira town (headquarter of ONGC), Gargaon (once a capital of the Ahom kingdom), Simaluguri town, Sonari Town and Namrup industrial towns.

The methodological steps followed in this research are pilot study, use of Interview Schedule, Village Schedule, personal field observation and face-to-face, interview and many other formal and informal conversation with the respondents. Some specific cases like the village Headman, President/Secretary of the village Council, Church leaders, School teachers, older man and women, Government service holder, some educated women were also studied and interviewed in detail. Data for the study were collected mainly from two sources – primary and secondary. The primary data were collected with the help of all techniques mentioned above and the secondary data were gathered from the office of the District Economics and

statistics, Causes reports, President/Secretary of the villages Councils and many other books and articles occasionally published by local organizations, associations etc. The collected data were tabulated and the percentages were calculated in each table. In the process of analysis we usually refer the percentages instead of mentioning the raw data only.

Social Background of the Respondents

A comprehensive study of social background of the respondents is presented in the chapter III. Few major variables were undertaken to study the socio-economic profile. These are age, sex, marital status, and identity of tribe, language, place of birth, religion, education, occupation and income. The lowest age is 27 years and the highest age is 71 years. The largest number of respondents was found in the age group between 30 to 50 years. There are 87.39% males and 12.60% female respondents. As regards marital status of the respondents, it is 87.39% married, 7.33% widow and 4.39% widower.

The Naga villages under study are cosmopolitan composition with regard to the tribal groupings. The Kanyak Nagas residing in five different localities viz. Hahchara village, Monaiting village Namsai, Bhadhara Naga *Chowk* and in Gargaon Naga *Chowk*. Accordingly, the Kanyaks comprised of 59% respondents out of the total respondents.

The next largest group belongs to Wangso tribes and they constitute 25.31% respondents with 86 households distributed in two villages namely – Baregaon and Deopani. The third group of respondents in terms of representation to sample size is

the Noctes with 9.67%. Similarly, the Phoms occupy the fourth position with 2.63%. In addition to these major tribes, these are 2.63% respondents who identify themselves as belonging to Doke tribe and as reported, their original homeland is present Arunachal Pradesh.

Religious affiliation of a person is an important identity that constitutes social background. The respondents of this study were found from two broad religious grouping i.e., Hindus 43.11 percent and the Christians 56.89 percent. The two major tribes the Kanyaks and the Noctes are the followers of Hinduism and they together constitute 43.11% of the total respondents. The Hindu Kanyaks are the inhabitants of Hahchara, Siloni Naga village and in Bhadhara Naga Chowk and Gargaon Naga Chowk. The followers of Christianity are the residents of four villages and one small chowks. The Kanyaks, the Phoms, the Wangsos the small group 'Doke' from Arunachal Pradesh are the constituent tribes within the fold of Christianity. The religious affiliation thus indicates a character of religious diversity among the Nagas living in Assam plains.

The Naga tribes are believed to be the Mongoloid origins and speak Tibeto-Burmese language. Each tribe is distinguished by its distinct language or dialect, physical traits, tradition and customs. Since each tribe its own language, all the tribes and sub-tribes are internally different from each other. The language of the one tribe or sub-tribe or the language spoken in one village is not understood by other tribes or other villages. This is one great internal differentiation among the Nagas. The present study, though confined to only four tribes, it is clearly visible that such differentiation

exist among them. The Kanyaks have three linguistic sub-dialects – 71% speak Longcei, 25% speak Wangching and 4% speak Singphoi.

Apart from the primordial characteristics, a number of other socio-economic bases are also considered to study the respondents. Education, occupation, income, nature of expenditure and mode of living are indicators which determine the contemporary social organizations. The tribals of northeast India, both hills and plains have experienced rapid changes and transformation particularly in the areas of education and occupational achievement. These two factors most probably have motivated the Nagas towards more development in other spheres of life. On the basis of education our respondents are in five groups comprising 12 percent illiterates, 62.98 percent below matriculates, 14 percent matriculates and 2.34 percent are graduates. It will be north while to mention in this context about the literacy scenario of the Nagas as reported by the respective village Headmen. These are as follows –

- I. The overall literacy rate in the Naga villages is above 80 percent. Village-wise, it is 90 percent in Hahchara village, 97 percent in Monaiting village, 90 percent in Namsai, 80 percent each in Baregaon and Deopani and almost similar positions in other small village localities (Chowks).
- II. Each Naga village is having educational institutions. There are lower primary schools in each village and high schools are located at a moderate distance from the villages. The Naga children are enrolled in those schools. The enrollment of the initial stage was reported to be discouraging, but now-a-days parents take interest in sending their children to school.

III. There are some records worthy to note in the field of educational attainment of Naga children. Out of six children of the village council president of Baregaon village three daughters are post graduate degree holders, two are at graduation level and the other is in class XII standard.

There appears increasing variety of occupations pursued by the respondents. Data relating to occupation background reveal that the Nagas are involved in many non-agricultural activities as regular means of earning. There are 2 medical doctors, 11 school teachers, 37 businessmen, 18 government officials, 25 company service holders and 47 daily wage earners. In the category of business, we found a good number of Tea garden owners, suppliers and contractors, traders, shop owners in local towns etc. The government officials are the employees in Railway department, Veterinary dept. and several of them are working as third and fourth grades employees in the department of education. This shows an increasing aptitude for non-agricultural occupations among the Nagas in the contemporary period.

Income is one factor that identifies a persons' social position in society. Therefore, the study of income position of a larger number of people naturally indicates the economic position of the group or the society. The information obtained from the respondents is considered to reflect the overall income situation of their family they represent.

Majority of the families pursue cultivation as primary basis for livelihood. There are few families who possess land property only to construct their residences, a sizeable number of respondents (about 19 families) with a land holding of just 1 katha

each. Many of them have to maintain their daily livelihood as daily wage earners to others house, tea gardens, hotels and restaurants and also in the construction and repairing works in the rail lines. However, the summary of findings are presented below –

- I. There are total 242 families (70.96%) whose monthly income is below the level of Rs. 10,000/0- each, 35 families (10.26%) within Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 15,000/-, 48 families (14.08%) within the range of Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 40,000/- and 16 families constituting 4.69% with monthly income within the range of Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. 1,50,000/-. Naturally, there appears a visible economic division among the Nagas.
- II. Since a large majority (70.96%) of the Naga families falls within the income range below Rs.10, 000/-, it implies the position of economic backwardness in the socio-economic life of the Naga people.
- III. The rise of few families with bigger land property (7 families with land property of 20 bighs and above), business activities and extended earning sources is also a phenomenon to be noticed among the Nagas.

Traditional Social Structure:

The northeast region of India has been a home of various races, tribes, ethnic groups and regional communities since unknown period. These groups of people have migrated to this region and settled here and the authentic period of their movement is not available to till date. As time passed and with the passing of history and

development, each of those communities has identified their respective places of settlement and constituted the vast tribal population of northeast India.

Like many other racial and ethnic communities, the Nagas are also recognized as one prominent distinct tribes of the region. And accordingly, the history of migration and places of origin of the Nagas also not authentically recorded.

It is however, commonly agreed that the Nagas are one ancient group of people of this region. There are available descriptions, narrations etc. left by some earlier writers mainly the ethnographers, ethnologists and lateron by the British administrators and anthropologists. Even the contemporary Naga scholars have focuses sufficient light on the composition of Naga tribes in various ways. Nshoga¹ has listed 46 Naga tribes living scatteredly in the entire northeastern region and beyond including neighbouring country Myanmar. Though these writings were mainly meant for the purpose of administration by the Britishers, yet these are considered useful materials to know about these communities which were widely used and applied by the academicians, social historians, linguists and policy makers to formulate and to assess correctly about those people.

Like many other racial, ethnic and tribal communities of the region, the Nagas are also identified as distinct group of people whose distinctiveness is identified in terms of their physical traits, complexion, colour and many other linguistic and cultural features. Regarding the women chature 'Naga' there are varied expressions. After proper analysis of those views and expressions, a common agreement with

¹ A. Nshoga – Traditional Naga village System and its transformation, op.cit., p. 14

regard to the term 'Naga' has been arrived. However, instead of going into the repeated explanations (as we have discussed elaborately in chapter V), it can be arrived inform of conclusion that the Nagas are a group of tribes with slight similarities in dialect, nature of habitat and culture and with some commonalities of features that make them to identify as Nagas.

The Nagas of northeast region of India occupy an important component in the formation of the great hill tribes of the region. The present political unit Nagaland is the home state for the Nagas. But the Nagas are found to be inhabiting in several other states of northeast India such as – Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh and also in the neighbouring country Myanmar.

Traditionally, the northeast region and its population, in terms of ecological, demographic and geographical considerations has been categorized into three distinct groups – the hill tribes, the plains tribe and the non-tribal population of the plains. At this reference, we will be mainly concerned with the description of society and social order inherited by one ancient group of tribes i.e. the Nagas.

As such the way of life, habitation and practices followed from the generation who lived together which kind together the members and ultimately gives rise to a social order can be analysed in terms of social structure. The traditional social structure of the Nagas implies a meaning of great mixture of traits and features of various tribes and sub-tribes within the fold of a common name 'Naga'. The resultant outcome of such admixture together we refer here as Naga social structure.

There are sixteen officially recognized Naga tribes in Nagaland namely – Ao, Angami, Chang, Chakesang, Konyak, Khiamnuingan, Kuki, Lotha, Phom, Pochery,

Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Tikhir, Yimchungru and Zeliang and some other unrecognized minor tribes. Besides, the other fascinating feature is that there are a large number of sub-tribes within each tribe. This is the first and foremost character of traditional Naga society which signifies the heterogeneous bases of social composition leading to structural variations from one tribe to another. Since the Nagas inhabit in various parts of northeastern state and beyond, the number of tribes and sub-tribes is still a matter of curiosity and investigation for the social scientists in general and sociologists in particular. Though the Nagas are geographically isolated from one to one another they maintain a common name 'Naga' by observing similar social practices and norms of religious life and culture.²

The second important feature of the Nagas is the absence of any written records of their early history and so, traditions and customs are passed on orally from generation to generation through the medium of folklores, songs, legends, stories and memories.³ Thus, as a whole Naga social structure is the combined manifestation of heritage, customs, culture and the elements of certain common features of traits and traditions acquired from various tribes and sub-tribes. These features have been traditionally followed and preserved over generations by the members. As a result, the socio-cultural and religious institutions, norms and values, customs and ceremonies, practices etc. differ from one tribe to another.

² M. Horam – Problems of Understanding in Northeast India, in Northeast Region – Problems and Prospects of Development, (ed.) B.L. Abbi, op.cit, pp. 192-193.

³ Toshimenla Jamir – Women and Politics in Nagaland – Challenges and Imperatives, Concept Pub. Co., New Delhi, 2012, p. 18.

We developed our queries to study few basic social institutions those are supposed to shape the fundamental structure of Naga society. These are family, marriage, kinship, religion and economy. Family has been considered by all Nagas as grounding base since all acts of social relation like – strengthening kinship bond, clan relationship, marriage village integrity and identity. are related with the institution of family.

Naga society is patriarchal and patrilineal, the father or the eldest male member is the head of the household. Everything goes on the line of male side. The decision and discussion about the house site, construction and about the rituals to be performed for the purpose is taken by the male members, that is heads of the houses. The property holding particularly, land property, inheritance, naming and controlling of village etc. are under the control of the male heads. Similarly, the male heads of each family collectively take decisions regarding organization of community festivals, prayers and hunting, rituals and ceremonies commonly organized by the village, action plans for villages development, construction of roads and buildings, safety and protection, settling inter-clans and inter-tribe disputes etc. Thus, it is the males authority of the Nagas traditionally followed among them. To a large extent, the Naga tradition of such continuity is still prevalent among them.

The division of works between males and females is customarily followed by them, that is, males have the duties to perform all sorts of hard physical labours such as – cutting and cleaning jungles, hunting and food gathering from the forests, construction activities etc. An equally important functional activity of the Naga women folk is important here to mention. The Naga women help extensively the

males in agricultural activities and perform all possible agricultural activities necessary in the production process. They take up the activities like collecting fuels, water and food stuff from distant places and sell the agricultural and traditional handloom products, bamboo, cane and wooden products and earn money. By virtue of difficult hard labours, the Naga women are here admired as hard workers and they never sit idle.⁴ Such issues are frequently varied by the respondents while they repeated the question of social system of the women in society or family

We took into account to examine how far the families as the basic social institution among the Nagas exist, structurally and functionally. The basic interest of every Naga is in his family, the clan, the *Khel*, the village. That is what he regards as his culture which must not be interfered with.⁵ We studied the prevailing systems of family among the Nagas. The practice of nuclear family system is found to be quite common and popular, since 82.99% of our studied samples are from nuclear families as against 17.01% from joint family structure. With regard to the prevalence of increasing number of nuclear family set up, people expressed the view that it is the customary obligation of the parents to allow the married couples separately and independently.

On the issue of status of women in society, 38.12% revealed that the women are inferior to men in enjoying position in society, while 61.87% treat there with equal status to men. Most of the respondents as well as some specific cases under study have forwarded the views that, the role and functions of women in Naga society is no less

⁴ Elonbeni Ngullie – Urban Growth, Socio-Economic Transition and Changing Occupational Role of Lotha Women in Nagaland – A Sociological Study, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Dibrugarh University, 2016, pp. 123-167

⁵ Verrier Elwin – Nagaland, Spectrum Pub., The Research Department Secretariat, NEFA, Shillong, 1961, p. 9

inferior particularly in the sphere of household and domestic duties, participation in the production process, and therefore, the contribution of the women towards socio-economic upliftment to the family can never be ignored.

The views of the respondents with regard to family planning policy can be mentioned in this context. There are 58.36% respondents who favour the policy of family planning, while 41.64% have opposed. We could guess two different sets of inner ideas to substantiate such views. Individually, the first category of them have distinctly referred some prevailing problems of society such as job lessens unemployment and poverty and opined that increasing size of population is to be checked. The other group who advocated for the non adoption of the policy hold the idea that the society primarily dependent on agriculture need more manpower for smooth management of all agricultural related functions in society.

The Nagas in the plains of Assam are found to be the followers of the traditionally inherited religious beliefs, practices and ideas as their ancestors did. This was revealed positively by 45.74% respondents, where as for 54.25%, there are changes in those habits and ethos. They referred some environmental contexts and opined that habitation amidst non-Naga population in the plains, to a considerable extent have reduced the practices which they followed in their early life.

Our observation and study went into further detail to know about this issue. The Nagas who have converted to the Hindu fold (The Kanyaks and the Noctes) have some dissimilar views from those of Christian Nagas of other villages under study. The Kanyak and the Nocte Nagas have adopted Hinduism several generations ago and

so, they are now accustomed to Hindu tradition. According to their views the Hindu ideals have changed them to a lot in all sphere of life (Kanyaks 86% and Noctes 54.54% have agreed to such views). On the otherhand, 50.14% Christian Nagas donot have experiences of any impact of their tradition, as such, they believe that because of Christianity, many traditional animistic beliefs and faiths have been abandoned.

The life style, nature of thinking and to a great extent the behavioural patterns of persons may be the outcome of socio-religions culture and attachment to traditionalism. We investigated and inquired this aspect on the part of the tradition-bound Naga people. There was almost equal division of responses while forwarding the opinion (50.43% agreed and 49.56% not agreed). A closer observation reveals that economy of many Nagas of low income bracket has been found effected as a result of large scale expenses they have to incur towards many sorts of festival, rituals, and ceremonies. This has both direct and indirect influence in the maintenance of education for children.

The effect of tradition or culture is further investigated. The traditional Naga culture was solely based on their fundamental beliefs and assumption of their religion, and this contributes extensively to the existence of social institution. We studied the opinion of the respondents about the probable effect of tradition on the day-to-day development activities and opinions to such query vary from village to villge and from one tribal group to another. According to 68.75% from Monaiting village, 66.66% from Namsai, 78.57% from Baregaon and 72.41% from Deopani village strong attachment to religion beliefs and practices does not affect in other spheres of

life of the Naga people. While for a total of 46.42% respondents there is an effect. This shows that traditional religion and its continuity is still felt strong among the Nagas.

Thus, from the summary of the above findings we can hold the idea that the Nagas are have been maintaining stronghold with their inherited tradition such as – religion, culture, habits, practices and values.

Social Transformation:

This research aims at understanding nature and extent of transformation among the Nagas living in the plains of Assam. We undertook few strategies to comprehend the knowledge of transformation. These are – agricultural and occupational patterns and life style, exposure to languages, adoption of local wider culture, assimilation with local host culture, modification in religious practices and behavior, marital relationship etc. Lastly, are attempt is made to access change and development as a consequence of assimilation.

The Nagas after they have migrated and subsequently settled in the plains of Assam had to inhabit amidst non-Naga surrounding. Since agriculture is the primary occupation for the Naga community, the Nagas therefore, directly or indirectly came in contact with others. This may be considered as the initial process of assimilation with the host population. Our field data indicate thus – 87.09% respondents agreed that there is a change in the agricultural practices. Similarly, occupational avenues have been widened as because 88.56% were in favour of such changes. This

information may also be substantiated if we look of the occupational data in our earlier discussion in chapter III.

The Nagas have accommodated themselves with permanent cultivation as well as settled village organization. This has reflected in their present way of life. Almost all the families in the villages under study have constructed Assam Type houses. There are available instances of RCC buildings also among them. The house patterns, homesteads, kitchen garden and household practices are quite similar to those of local non-Naga families. Such ways of life is quite dissimilar to those of their ancestors lived in the hill areas. Thus, 92.08% respondents were of the opinion that there is visible change in house patterns, life, behavior patterns etc. among the Nagas.

Language is the first means of interpersonal contact and communication. We asked the respondents about this issue pointing out the categories of communication such as – language they can speak, read and write. It was found that Assamese language was popularly adopted by almost all inhabitants of the Naga villages irrespective of their age, and male-female considerations. There are 87.09% respondents who can read and write Assamese language. In this context it is worthy to mention that few numbers of Naga men and women are regular writers in Assamese language and they got reputations in publishing their writings in local occasional magazines, souvenirs, institutional journals etc.⁶ On the otherhand 57.47% respondents can speak Hindi, 26.68% can speak English and only 0.58% can speak Bengali

⁶ Few references in this context are – Oly Kanyak – *Sivasagar Oitihakhik Naga Gaon* (in Assamese), Souvenir, Hahchara Junior College Silver Jubilee Volume 2015-16 (ed.) J. Saikia ; Jyomati Kanyak – *Naga Gaon (Tingya) Mekjap*, Souvenir, Mech Kachari Jatiya Parishad Convention, 2017.

language. Comparatively, English language is more popular than the Hindi language. This is evidenced from the fact that 26.09% can read and 22.87% can write English whereas 6.15% can read and write Hindi language. Thus, the Nagas in plains Assam linguistically more closer to the Assamese speaking population.

In the preceding theoretical discussion on assimilation (Chapter II), we derived some ideas of cultural contact between communities, and formulated that reciprocal interaction and communication takes place between minority (alien group) and the bigger group (host society). The 'alien-host' model certainly does not find its place in context of Naga non-Naga context. The nature of ethnic assimilation in northeastern situation is found to be different. If there is assimilation between ethnic groups, it occurs since time immemorial.

Traditionally, the Nagas are a distinct cultural group, but at the sametime they are the assimilating group also. The nature of cultural contact between the Naga and the local culture was studied at three levels i.e. 'complete assimilation', 'partial assimilation' and no 'assimilation'. The empirical data suggest that for 26.09% respondents it is 'complete assimilation', for 68.62% it is partial and 5.27% donot experience such assimilation. Again, 48.68% perceived that there is also assimilation in the line of religion.

Respondents in higher number were of the opinion that the Nagas living in Assam's plains are under a significant phase of transition especially in their religious and cultural live (81.23%) we have discussed in detail about such aspects in chapter VI. Elaborating this fact, we pointed out the core idea that each Naga tribe is different from

one to another in terms of dialect they speak, dresses and ornaments they use, rituals, festivals and ceremonies they celebrate etc. In contemporary life situation, organization and arrangement of such festivals are in much wider scale, thereby trying to establish identities of their own. The celebration of such occasions is often marked by addition of new cultural items popularly borrowed from other cultural groups.

The Nagas in Heterogeneous Environment:

Assimilation is an ongoing process. The Nagas do not have any written documents with regard to the period of settlement, number of families came etc. to Assam's plains. As pointed out earlier, there is some scattered description prepared during the rule of Ahom dynasty who ruled the region for about 600 years. Those writings, apart from many other facts, pointed out and emphasized that the Nagas are cordial, amiable and possessed the quality of adjustment and hospitality. Several other descriptions have authentically stated these qualities of the Naga people and stated that these are the inherited ethnic traits of the Nagas like similar other ancient communities of the region. And therefore, assimilation of the Nagas with others could be understood from entirely different socio-historical perspectives.

A careful and in-depth understanding of the socio-historical background of the Nagas and their nature of environmental adjustment with other communities delineate many hitherto unexplored facts. Respondents as well as the aged persons of the community unhesitatingly expressed that the Nagas they have settled permanently in Assam plains. The establishments of permanent village structure, adoption of settled wet rice cultivation, nature of constructing houses, domestication of animals etc. associated

with follow up practices have necessarily contributed to a great extent in the life of the Nagas. The Nagas believed that the traditionally inherited skills, tools, techniques and methods in the field of cultivation have been virtually shattered and it has been almost modified and replaced by the local culture. So, according to their expression, the changing methods and production has altered all other modes of daily life, situation and culture of the Nagas. Thus, they are of the view that the Nagas have adopted themselves with the demands of the new environment to run their process of livelihood.

Similarly, there is significant effect on the celebration of festivals. There are a number of festivals and rituals performed by the Nagas throughout agricultural life-cycle. Similarly, the people of Assam observe three important *Bihu* festivals and these are mainly related to the life and culture of the peasants in particular and the Assamese people in general. It is to be noted that the festivals of the Nagas and the Assamese people are simultaneously observed. One can find the mixing of the Nagas and the Assamese to mark those occasions and to take part with each other. Such practices are gradually gaining prominence and interest.

The Hinduised Nagas (Kanyaks and Noctes) celebrate all these three *Bihu* festivals in their villages and follow the rituals and associated norms. *Bhowna* (a theatrical performance in the old Assamese style) is popular among the Hindu Nagas. They organize *Bhowna* regularly in their villages as well as outside. Besides, the Hindu Nagas celebrate *Saraswati Puja* (worshipping Goddess of learning), *Ai-nam* (worshipping and offering to Goddess Ai-mother) etc. regularly at their *Namghar* (religious place of the Vaisnavas).

Marked changes are also seen in the food habits of the Nagas. The Nagas have almost abandoned in the practice of going to the forests for collecting food stuff, instead they remain engaged in the paddy field and in the own household gardens to produce the need for daily consumption like – vegetables, banana fruits etc. Almost all the studied households possess a homestead garden of their own where vegetables are grown. Mostly the women take the duty to manage the homestead garden. It was further observed that the Nagas have acquired and borrowed the habit of taking food almost similarly, there seem to have a significant impact of Assamese culture and tradition while they receive guests at their houses.

There is noticeable impact on the wearing of dresses, ornaments etc. Most of the Naga women wear *mekhela* (lower garments of women and *chadar* (upper garment of women) in their daily habits of dress patterns. Similarly, the men folk wear *dhoti* and *kurta* shirts and *payjama* and habitually use *gamosa* (a handloom made Assamese towel). The portraits and photographs of many Hindu gods and goddesses are popularly displayed as decorative items in the drawing rooms of many Konyak and Nocte households.

Assimilation is a continuous process. The Nagas of Assam's villages, irrespective of their religious affiliation have followed the customs and rituals traditionally practiced by the Assamese people. Almost in all families of the Hindu Nagas as well as the Christian families have adopted naming of children like the Assamese people with surnames of their own. The school and college going children talk in Assamese language in day-to-day conversation, gossips and play time.

We introduced five different areas of socio-cultural life of the respondents to express opinions about the possible experience of change in their society. These are – tools and techniques in production process, food habits, dresses and ornaments, religious practices, mode of travel and expenditure habits. Opinions were found from majority number of respondents showing the degree and extent of changes. It is 58.95% in tools and techniques in production process, 57.48% in food habit, 63.34% in dress and ornaments, 51.61 in religious practices and 62.17% in expenditure habit where there is significant change.

Thus, traditionally inherited habits of life and culture of the Nagas are found in a state of change and transition.

Assimilation through marriage :

The bond of marital relationship is a part of structural assimilation also, terms as amalgamation. It is the marriage through which there appears a development of a sense of people hood, the disappearance of prejudice attitudes and for discriminatory behavior and the absence of civic conflict between alien and host societies or between minority and majority communities.

Prevalence of inter-marriages between the Nagas and non-Nagas and people's perception crucial importance for understanding assimilation in a heterogeneous society. It may subsequently indicate a flexible order of social structure.

Almost half of the total number of respondents (49.85%) agreed to have practice of marital relationship within their own tribes and communities outside their own, and marriage between the Nagas and the Assamese was favoured by 15.83% respondents.

Such attitudes on the part of the Nagas indicate some closer relationship with other ethnic groups and communities. At the same time, it is considered a transitional state of the Naga society towards maintaining flexible outlook and less rigidity of social structure.

Opinion on this issue can be interpreted on several directions substantiating factual evidences. A close inquiry in this context reveals some prevailing facts of marriage took place between the Nagas and the non-Nagas. We have also found out that there are fifty nine Naga families whose members have married non-Naga girls and seventy eight Naga girls were married to non-Naga families. Few of such marriage were formally arranged by the parents of both families of the bride and the bridegroom and both the families have followed all formalities of rituals, customary rules of marriage.

Assimilation and Development:

At the last endeavour we made an attempt to visualize the possible effect of assimilation in bringing about change especially in developmental aspects of Naga society. This form of inquiry is supposed to assess the mindset of the respondents with regard to complete view on change among them as a result of assimilation. We found a large number of respondents commented on the positive effect of assimilation and according to their views there is considerable alteration in the traditional social structure of Naga society. Specially most of them pointed out the new forms of adaption and modification of the old ethnic traits and quality

Out of the total 341 respondents, 78.20% opined that there is a change in traditional Naga outlook towards their inherited belief patterns of practice. If we consider the responses village-wise, it is 86% in Hahchara, 65% in Monaiting village,

88.88% in Namsai village, 71.42% in Baregaon, 68.96 from Deopani and 91.90% in Siloni Naga village.

Such responses definitely indicate some changing outlook on the part of the Nagas. There is substantial alternation of old intuitional values which was binding force in traditional society. Traditionally, the Nagas have internal divisions maintain themselves based on clan changes sub-tribe, khal, tribe and village. Living in a composite and heterogeneous population the Nagas have experienced a sense of modification in the broader context of reciprocal relationship in which people have to embrace others culture. As a result of such changes the old bases of internal differentiations have undergone modification and new expectations are gradually emerging. Thus, development possibly be understood in the process of gradual modification of social attitudes, not in clan, tribe and village considerations.

Conclusion:

This study in its holistic approach attempts to explain the structural and functional aspects of an ethnic community of the north-east region of India. The study of change, transformation and dynamic nature of the tribes living in this part of the country is not done in proper sociological prospective. This study therefore, has two dimensional approaches with an aim to investigate the Nagas living in the plains region of Assam. The first approach obviously deals with the understanding of the traditional socio-cultural life of the Nagas, here focused as traditional social structure and secondly, the changing parameters of the traditional traits and characteristics under the preview of social transformation. The study reveals a lot of fascinating facts

and characteristics of both traditions as well as transformation stages. As far as the structural aspects and concerned, the Naga social life is rooted through the institutions like – family, kinship, clan, tribe and village. The family as the basic institutions of the Naga society governs all other aspects of social life like, kinship network, village organization, khel, marital relationship as well as identity formation. The prevalence of social and religious institutions and associated practice, obligations and attainment are found to be effective in managing all forms of social activities. So, as per objectives outlined in the introductory chapter I, it can be undoubtedly stated that, the Nagas as distinct ethnic community is still conformity to their traditional traits and values which are inherited by them from generation to generation.

The traditional social structure of the community is clearly featured by ethnic characters, social institutions, religion and ritual behaviour, culture, myths and folk tradition. The social structure in the contemporary Naga villages in Assam has preserved all those features since their settlement even amidst vast heterogeneous population.

The study of three hundred and forty one Naga families in the district of Sivasagar, Assam may be here treated as specific empirical representation that illustrates ample evidence of social transformation in Naga society. Undoubtedly, the Nagas of plains Assam, over the last few decades, have been experiencing transformation in various aspects of their life. In few areas of social life, such transformation is significant and in some areas, it may be considered with little flexibility. It is specially in the field of agriculture, process and mode of production,

occupational pursuit, earning sources as well as consumption behaviour of the people where changes are significantly visible, these areas of life patterns automatically influenced other areas of life such as – rituals and practices related to agriculture, norms and values related to religion etc.

The study of the contemporary Nagas social life and situation helps to identify some causes and factors responsible for such change. The existing available literature suggests that transformation occurs in society due to both external and internal factors. In case of the Nagas in the plains even of Assam, the internal factors were found to be more effective in findings about transformation among them. This can be broadly explained under the socio-historical perspectives of the ethnic groups of northeast India. Industrialization, urbanizations, technology, money economy and globalization may have implication for large scale social transformation and wider global level, but such forces are not always applicable in case of the society at peripheral level. The structure of peripheral societies is significantly featured by its unique history of ethnic assimilation fostered by linguistic, racial, ethnic and cultural assimilations. The study of the Naga society in the plains of Assam may be cited as an example of unity amidst diversity, similarity amidst differences and peaceful and harmonic living amidst prejudice and conflict.

Historically, the diverse ethnic groups of northeast India have been maintaining a bond of inter-ethnic and inter-community relationship and this has socio-historical strength in the emergence of composite social structure and culture. It is an obvious fact that tribal transformation and assimilation of northeast India has

gained momentum particularly after independence of India. This is reflected in the changing scenario of primitive method of cultivation to modern settled cultivation, occupation from agricultural to non-agricultural, changing institutional values like-family, marriage, kinship and village settled life, rethinking of rituals, beliefs and religious practice, and cultural adaption leading to transformation of attitudes, behaviour and normative patterns.

Suggestion for further study

The process and consequences of social transformation has been viewed from divergent prospective throughout the world. It is true that assimilation, whatever the nature of alien and host societies, lead to the formation of new dimension of social life and values giving rise to the emergence of new social order. The formations of mixed, heterogamous and composite population structure and culture in the northeast region of India definitely evoke interest for in-depth investigation for the social scientists in general and sociologists in particular. In this context, a few suggestions for future research may be forwarded as follows –

- I. The integration of the tribes, ethnic groups and the communities of northeast India exhibit a social structure different from other region of the country. Hence a new perspective completely based on socio-historical approach may be applied for in-depth study of change and development.
- II. The simultaneous existence of continuity and change of the diverged groups of people of the region needs special attention to formulate the ideas of structural development of the region. The future research may consider this aspect for study.

- III. Social transformation is a continuous process. The nature of assimilation and change among the Nagas in other part of Northeast India needs a systematic sociological investigation for a comparative and wider knowledge.
- IV. The issues of transformation and development are a matter of concern for the social scientists. The emergence of new social order as a result of synthesis between the Nagas and the non-Nagas may also be considered as important area of study in priority basis.

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Sl. No.....

Social Transformation Among the Nagas of Assam: A case study

Sivasagar District

Village schedule

Simanta Boruah

Research Scholar

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Set-One. Basic information about the village

*(To be obtained from the President of Panchayat/Head of the village/Namgharia/
Village Council Members/Church Leaders/Elders)*

A. Personal Identification of the respondent.

1. Name of the respondent : _____
2. Sex : Male ☐ Female ☐
3. Age :
4. Marital status : Married ☐ Unmarried ☐
5. Tribe :
i. Konyak ☐
ii. Phom ☐
iii. Nocte ☐
iv. Wangsos ☐
6. Religion : Hinduism ☐ Buddhism ☐ Christianity ☐
7. Language : Own dialect ☐ Assamese ☐ English ☐
8. If own dialect please name it : _____

9. Place of Birth : Within the village ☐
Outside the village ☐
10. Education Level : i. No formal education ☐
ii. Under HSLC ☐
iii. HSLC ☐
iv. Higher secondary ☐
v. College and above ☐
11. Occupation : _____

B. Basic information.

1. Name of the Village :
2. Year of establishment :
3. Name of the Block :
4. Distance of the Village : i. From district Hqrs. ☐
ii. From block ☐
iii. From railway station ☐
iv. From airport ☐
5. Name of the present Panchayat President :

6. Name of the present Village head :
7. Total no. of population (2011) :
8. Total no. of household :

Type of house	Total No.
RCC	
Naga/Hill type	
Kutcha	
Pucca	
Thached hut	
Any other (Please specify)	

9. Total no. of Clans :

Sl.No	Name of the clan	No. of Household	Population (2010)	No. of Female	No. of Male
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

10. Clan-wise Village Head/Panchayat President during the last five years (2011):

Sl.No	Name of the clan	Designation	Year
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

11. Religion :

Sl.No	Denomination	No. Household	Population	Monthly Income
1	Hinduism			
2	Buddhism			
3	Christianity			
4	Islam			
5	Any other (Please specify).....			

12. Literacy rate (2011) :

1. Male :

2. Female :

13. Institutions:

Sl. No.	Name of the Institution	Total No.	Year of estd.	No. of membership / Enrolment	No. of Boys	No. of Girls
1	Namghar					
2	Temple					
3	Monastery					
4	Church					
5	Mosque					
6	Club					
7	Dormitory					
8	Govt. Primary School					
9	Govt. Middle School					
10	Govt. High School					
11	Private Schools					
12	Govt. College					
13	Private College					
14	Any Technical Institutions					

14. Infrastructure of the institutions:

Name of the Institution	Type of building				Electrification	Water connection	Toilet attached
	RCC	Kutchha	Pucca	Temporary			
Namghar							
Temple							
Monastery							
Church							

Mosque							
Club							
Dormitory							
Govt. Primary School							
Govt. Middle School							
Govt. High School							
Private schools							
Govt. College							
Private college							
Any technical institutions.....							

15. Number of vehicles in the village:

Sl.No	Type of vehicles	Total No.
1	Hoe (JCB)	
2	Tractor	
3	Bus	
4	Truck	
5	Small car	
6	2 wheelers	

16. General status of amenities in the village :

Sl. No.	Types	Total No.
1	Television	
2	T.V with cable network	

3	T.V with individual satellite antenna(Dish)	
4	Landline telephone	
5	Mobile	
6	Computer	
7	Newspapers	
8	Village Library	
9	Radio	
10	Any other, (Please specify).....	

17. Business enterprises:

Sl. No.	Types	Total No.
1	Rice mills	
2	Shops	
3	Hotels	
4	Sawmills	
5	Cottage industries	
6	P.C.O	
7	Bee keeping	
8	Handloom	
9	Carpentry shops	
10	LPG gas (Household)	
11	Any other, (Please specify).....	

18. Occupational status in the village:

Sl. No.	Types		No. of employee
1	Govt. Servant	Class 1	
		Class II	
		Grade III	
2	Grade IV		
3	Private		
4	Farmers/cultivators		
5	Labours/Daily wage earners		
6	Business/ entrepreneurs		
7	Politicians		
8	Contractors		
9	N.G.O		

19. Clan-wise/ward-wise occupational status in the village:

Sl.No.	Types		Name of the clan/ward			
			No. of employee	No. of employee	No. of employee	No. of employee
1	Govt.servant	Class I				
		Class II				
		Grade III				
2	Grade IV					
3	Private					
4	Farmers/cultivators					
5	Labours/Daily wage earners					
6	Business/ entrepreneurs					
7	Politicians					
8	Contractors					
9	N.G.O					

20. Natural disasters (2011-2015):

Sl.No	Types	Yes/No	Year	Total. No.
1	Famine			
2	Cyclone			
3	Landslide			
4	Flood			
5	Earthquake			
6	Drought			

21. Do you practice the type of cultivation/farming in your village?

Sl. No.	Types of farming	Yes/No
1	Jhum	
2	Terrace	
3	Mixed	
4	Cash crops	
5	Fishery	
6	Plantation	
7	Apiculture	
8	Sericulture	
9	Piggery	
10	Cattle rearing	

22. Has your village experienced any of the following anti-social elements during the last five years (2011-2015)?

Sl.No	Types	Yes/No	Total No.
1	Robbery/theft		
2	Violence/conflict		
3	Extortion		
4	Drug abuse/Alcoholism		
5	Gambling		
6	Adultery		
7	Religious conflict		
8	Killings		

23. Has your village experienced any of the following Crime/Violence within the last five Years (2003-2007)?

Sl. No.	Types	Yes/No	Total. No.
1	Rape		
2	Molestation		
3	Kidnapping & Abduction		
4	Homicides		
5	Wife battering		
6	Eve-teasing		
7	Female infanticide		
8	Foeticide		

24. Who plays key roles while taking major decision in your village, Please mark serial number in order of priority?

Sl.No	Types	Mark in order of priority
1	Panchayat President	
2	Village Head	
3	Religious Head	
4	Village council	
5	Teachers	
6	Political parties	
7	Clan leaders	

25. How do you settle disputes?:

- i. Village elders ☐
- ii. Village council ☐
- iii. Panchayat ☐
- iv. District court ☐

26. Sanction/grant received from the Govt. in the last five years (2011-2015):

Sl. No.	Year	Amount received in cash
1	2003	
2	2004	
3	2005	
4	2006	
5	2007	

27. Major achievements of the village during the last 5 years (2011-2015):

Sl. No.	Types	Funding agency/ies	Year	Total No.
1	Community Houses constructed			
2	Foot path			
3	Irrigation projects			
4	Link roads			
5	Village gate			
6	Granaries			
7	Water supply			
8	Any other, (Please specify).....			

28. Clan-wise extent of migration: mention the name of the village in the column given below as ? from they migrated

Name of the clan	Migrated from						Others	Total

29. Reasons of migration in order of merit:

Sl.No	Reasons	Merit (in serial No.)
1	Employment	
2	Education	
3	Business	
4	Lack of sufficient land for cultivation	
5	Political reasons	
6	Any others (Please specify)	

30. Birth and Death census during the last five years (2011-2015) in your village:

Birth	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
Population	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Death	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
Population	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F

31. Do you have any administrative unit to administer the village functions?:

Yes ☐ No ☐

32. Do you have “Marang Ghar?” : Yes ☐ No ☐

Note: A brief history of the village regarding its settlement, origin, meaning and location should be obtained in separate sheet.

Sl. No.....

Social Transformation Among the Nagas of Assam: A case study
Sivasagar District

Interview schedule

Simanta Boruah
Research Scholar
Department of Sociology
Nagaland University

A. Social background of the respondents

1. Name of the respondent :
2. Sex : Male ☐ Female ☐
3. Age :
4. Marital status : Married ☐ Unmarried ☐
5. Tribe : i. Konyak ☐
ii. Phom ☐
iii. Nocte ☐
iv. Wangsos ☐
6. Religion : Hinduism ☐ Buddhism ☐ Christianity ☐
7. Language : Own dialect ☐ Assamese ☐ English ☐
8. If own dialect please name it : _____
9. Place of Birth : Within the village ☐ Outside the village ☐
10. Education Level : i. No formal education ☐
ii. Under HSLC ☐
iii. HSLC Pass ☐
iv. Higher secondary ☐
v. College and above ☐
11. Occupation : _____
12. Income (monthly) :

B. Social Structure of the Nagas

1. Your original place of residents? : i. Nagaland ☐
ii. Assam ☐
iii. Else where.....
2. Which form of family do you follow? : i. Patriarchal ☐
ii. Matriarchal ☐
3. What is the nature of your family? : i. Nuclear family ☐
ii. Joint family ☐
4. Did you feel any difficulty at the initial time of
Settlement in the present land? : Yes ☐ No ☐
5. If yes, what short of difficulty? :
5. If not, how did you settle those difficulties? :
6. What is your opinion about social status of women in your society?
a. Superior
b. Inferior
c. Equal
7. What is your idea of family planning?
a. Favourable
b. unfavourable
8. Is your present religion differs from your
Ancestral religion? : Yes ☐ No ☐

9. If yes, who converted you to your present religion? : i. The village head
ii. Selected one
iii. Any other persons.....

10. How do you access life pattern of the Nagas
between hills and plains : a. There is difference
b. particularly difference
c. No difference

11. Do you believe that old traditions still have some impact on : Yes ☐ No ☐

Your present generation?

12. Do you find any change in : a. Agriculture
b. House Building
c. Occupation

C. Social transformation among the Nagas

1. How many language you can speak, read and write ?

Languages	Exposure		
	<i>Can speak</i>	<i>Can read</i>	<i>Can write</i>
Own Language			
Assamese			
Hindi			
English			
Any others.....			

3. how do you adopt local culture ? : a. Completely
b. Partially
c. No adoption

4. Is your traditional culture and religion assimilating with the
local culture?

5. Do you believe that old traditions still have some impact on : Yes ☐ No ☐
your present generation?

6. Is your traditional belief and practices playing an important : Yes ☐ No ☐
role in the advancement of your family?
5. Do you think that traditional belief and practices are opposed : Yes ☐ No ☐
to independent or liberal thinking and doing ?
6. What is your preference for marital relationship
with other community ? : a. Within won community
b. With other community
c. With Assamese community
7. Can you say that yours' all traditions are not resistance to development? :
Yes ☐ No ☐
8. Do you follow traditional social practices in your family
at present? : Yes ☐ No ☐
9. Do you find any change in agriculture, house-building, attitude
toward occupation etc? : Yes ☐ No ☐
10. whether your society is keeping pace with
Present changes? : Yes ☐ No ☐
11. How many language can you speak, read and write ?
12. Is your traditional culture and religion assimilating with the
local culture? : Yes ☐ No ☐
13. Do you think that the impact of the local culture which
surrounds you undermine certain aspects of your original culture ?
: Yes ☐ No ☐
14. Do you believe that the acceptance of certain cultural aspects from
the local people will direct you in the path of development? : Yes ☐ No ☐
15. Do you prefer marriage between Nagas of your society and local people?
: i. Nagas ☐ ii. Assamese ☐
16. Living in the surrounding of the Assamese people, are you
incorporating with them in a common cultural life? : Yes ☐ No ☐

17. If yes, did you have to face certain obstacles at the very outset by
the host population : Yes ☐ No ☐
18. Are you adopting the Assamese culture? : Yes ☐ No ☐
19. Is there any social change in your society most prominent?
: Yes ☐ No ☐
20. Do you think that yours' traditional belief and practices are
changing gradually? : Yes ☐ No ☐



Naga man & women clad in traditional dress



Maga youngsters with traditional dress



Celebrating Auling Festival with traditional dresses



Celebrating Auling Festival in contemporary period



Naga girls with traditional dresses



Naga girls with Assamese dresses in a marriage ceremony



Naga person driving power tiler in the field



Naga women planting rice paddy



Naga girl pouring traditional wine to guest



Naga girls serving guests with food



**Naga family in Dhekiakhwa Bor Namghar wearing
Assamese gamosa**



Nagas sitting in a wedding ceremony



Entrance Gate of a Naga village



Morung Ghar



Old generation Nagas



New generation Nagas with Author



A Naga residence in Baregaon village



A Naga residence in Monaiting village



Naga girl students



Naga women with changing dresses



Naga king & queen of Nocte village



Naga husband & wife in Bhadhara Naga Chowk



Church of Hahchara Naga village



Church of Deopani Naga village



Naga headman in Nocte village with his grand-daughter in-law



Naga Children in Monaiting Naga village



House of Nocte village king



Assam Type Naga house in Monaiting village



Naga girls with Sonowal Kachari girls



Naga women in Aouling Festival



A Naga girl marrying to Assamese boy



An Assamese girl marrying to a Naga boy and with her sister-in-law



Images of Hindu gods & goddess in a Naga home



Morang Ghar in Naga village



**Old Naga woman with
daughter-in-law**



Naga Husband & wife



Naga Boy in Aouling Festival



Naga girl in Aouling Festival



Tea garden of a Naga family



A fishery of Naga villagers



Naga women in Assamese dresses



A Naga old man in traditional style



Naga boys & girls



A cultural programme performed by Naga youth



Naga boys & girls performing Bihu dance



A Naga ornaments & garments



A Naga family in Dhekiakhwa Namghar (Estd. 1528)



The researcher interviewing a Naga lady