

CHAPTER 2

THE NAGAS AND THE ANGAMI NAGAS

2.1. HISTORY AND MIGRATION OF THE NAGAS

The Nagas consist of several tribes and sub-tribes living in the State of Nagaland and in the neighboring states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The Naga tribes are also found in the contiguous areas of Myanmar. It is difficult to affix the exact number of the tribes of the Naga because of the process of fusion and fission taking place among them (D'Souza 2001, pp. 7-8). According to Singh (2008), the Naga society is one of the oldest tribal societies practicing customary laws with social, political and religious moorings (p. 28). There are various theories of migration of the Nagas recorded by foreign writers and native writers; however the first reference to the Nagas was made by Claudius Ptolemy in 150 A.D. in his work *Geographia* where he referred to the Naga country as "The Realm of the Naked" (Sanyu 1996, p. 7; Imsong 2011, p. 88).

Sanyu (1996) while writing about the origin of the Nagas quoted Huang Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Assam during the reign of Bhaskarvarman in 645 A.D.

The east of this country is bounded by a line of hills, so that there is no great city to the kingdom. The frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of south-west China. These tribes are in fact akin to those of the Man people in their customs (p. 7).

Hutton (1921) an eminent scholar who wrote about the different tribes of Naga, wrote:

The history of how the Naga tribes came precisely to occupy their present position has, of course, passed into the dim obscurity of vague traditions. But enough of them remain to give some indications of the course which the migration took. The legends of the Aos and of the Semas give those tribes a more or less autochthonous origin, though these legends are probably the old legends of the race which have been given a local value. The Angamis, too, spring from ancestors who emerged from the bowels of the earth, but that not in Angami country, but in some other land to the south. And all the weight of tradition points to migration from the south (p. 6).

The exact origin from where and how the Nagas migrated to the land they presently inhabit is not known because they have no written historical records. What could be traced back to their origin have been done only with the help of oral tradition in the form of folk songs and folk-tales passed from generation to generation (Lasuh 2002, p. 14; Singh 2004, p. 1). Echoing the same note of the importance of folk-tales and songs, Savi (2012) remarked, folk-tales and folk-songs are particularly important to the Nagas as their origin, culture and traditions are passed on through these mediums. Not only historical records and documents, Nagas do not have a series of theological and philosophical documentation that conceptualized their beliefs and value systems. Nagas do not have a written account of their history, but stories told over generations have kept their history alive.

According to Sanyu (1996), due to lack of written records, it makes it extremely difficult to analyze the history of the Nagas. However, he further stated that “the indigenous societies had their own ways of recording events from generation to generation through professional storytellers” (p. 8). Hence, oral tradition or storytelling is of great importance to the Naga society. Ao (2012) stressing on and defining oral tradition quoted Momaday:

The oral tradition is that process by which the myths, legends, tales and the lore of a people are formulated, communicated and preserved in language by word of mouth, as opposed to writing (p. 7).

According to a narration by an interviewee, the forefathers of the Nagas believed that they migrated from a place called *hedzürä*, which in *Tenyidie* (Angami dialect) means a place where the sky does not cover them. It is said that the place was very cold and windy which made the people to scorn their faces. As a result their faces got wrinkled quickly leading to early ageing. Due to the cold weather they migrated to lower regions where the climate became suitable for cultivation. This, in a limited sense, pointed to the fact that the Nagas belong to a race of cultivators. They migrated to a place which they called 'Chin land', which means China. They built the Great Wall of China as Chinese prisoners. The Chinese whom they called as *Chinmia* used chariots which proved that they were quite advanced from that time. The Chinese were very cruel and arrogant towards the Nagas, so they migrated to Borneo, from Borneo to Burma and from Burma to their present habitat (Personal interview on 5th April, 2013).

The legend of *hedzürä* can also be found in Hutton's (1921) *The Angami Nagas*, where he referred to the place as *whedzura*. He wrote:

The sky is really smaller than the earth. In the beginning the sky said to the earth, "you are so big, I cannot cover you, wrinkle up your feet". So the earth wrinkled to let the sky cover it, and that is why there are hills and valleys in the earth while the sky is smooth. But even by wrinkling, all the earth could not get covered, and one place got left outside. This place is called *Whedzura*. There is no sky in *whedzura*, and so they never see the sun there, but they have a stick which is very precious by which they tell the time, and the light there is like a sort of moonshine. The air in *whedzura* is very strong and so people get old very quickly. They marry off their children one year and cannot even recognise them the next. If a man would go there he must start when he is born, it is so far, otherwise must he die of age before he reach there, growing old upon the road (p. 260).

Another legend goes to narrate that a man named Keteikezei came from the east crossing the Tizü River. He stayed in Khesora, which today is in Phek district. He named his son Kheso, and Kheso had two sons named Vadio the elder and Ceveo the younger. Kheso sent his sons to different directions to start their own villages. While sending them he gave them one *Khuroba/Ketsietheguö* (the charm stone), one cock, one cow, one dog, grains/seedlings, spear and *dao* (machete) and said *Co nnie tuo ketseya palie mu tuokevo ki nnie kiriko ruo phre parta kemochie tuoya zolie. Si vo di Khurobau teta, tefü reta mu mithu rei mota liro*

thechi süra nu riina tsheliecie (as you go separate ways, keep going till all your animals start to make a noise. If your dog starts to bark, your cow moos and the *khuroba* breaks, then start a new village there). *Ceveo* walked towards the west which is inhabited by the Lotha tribe today. *Vadio* walked towards the east and kept walking as advised by his father. On reaching a particular place, he sat down to rest, while he was resting he heard some *mekhro* (bubbling noises) from beneath. As he listened to the bubbling sound, the advice of his father came to fulfilment and so he decided to settle there and named that place as 'Mekhrora'. Mekhrora today is known as Makhel in the present State of Manipur (Ura Academy 2014, p. 24; Personal interview on 14th April, 2013).

Another legend says that the Nagas came from a cave somewhere in Burma. The legend says many people came out of the cave, fearing population explosion; the cave was blocked by a stone to prevent further growth of population. This legend suggests, the Nagas came from Burma and many of the tribes of Nagas are also found in Burma (Personal interview on 10th April, 2013). The theory of the migration of the Nagas coming from Burma and Naga tribes being found in Burma finds support in Lasuh's (2002) *The Naga Chronicle*. As per the record of Lasuh, the Naga tribes found both in India and in Myanmar (Burma) are Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chakhesang, Chang, Cheril, Chirr, Chiru, Chothe, Heimi, Hewa, Htangan, Inpui, Kayo, Kengu, Khaklak/Hkaklak, Kharam, Khiamniungam, Koireng, Konyak, Laihe, Lainung, Lamkang, Liangmai, Lotha, Macharay/Makury/Makhori, Malang, Mao, Maram, Maring, Namshik, Nokho/Noko, Nokte, Nolang, Pakang, Pangmi, Pangu, Para, Phango, Phankem, Phellongri, Phom, Pochuri, Poumai, Rangpan, Rasit, Rekho, Rengma, Rongmei, Sangtam, Saplo, Shangpuri, Singpho, Sira, Somi, Sümi, Tangsa, Tangkhul, Tarao, Thangal, Tikhir, Wanchao, Yimchungrü/Yimchunger and Zeme. Out of 65 tribes, most of the tribes are in Myanmar (p. 22). In the process of migration much fusion and fission took place as D'Souza (2001), has pointed out (p. 8), some joined them from China and some stayed back in Burma.

Lasuh (2002) also suggests that the Nagas are believed to be the original megalith builders as many of the megaliths over the world from Europe to America, Southeast Asia and Middle East are all likely to have been erected by them. These megaliths are connected with

a definite and united culture, called the Naga culture (p. 9). Till today, many megalith erections are found in Naga villages in the form of *Kharu* (village gate), pillar, memorial stones etc. An occasion which could be related to megalith erection is “stone pulling” and “log drum pulling” which is a very important occasion where all members of the village, dressed in traditional attire, gather together to participate in and celebrate the occasion.

Traces of Naga culture are also found near the sea coast, because of their skill in terrace cultivation and irrigation. One thing is visibly clear that the Nagas once upon a time lived near-by the sea as it is made explicit by their ornaments, which are mainly made of sea shells, conch, beads etc. It is important to note that the Nagas’ inscriptions and dresses have sea shells. The houses and wooden drums used for storage are similar to ships and boats (Lasuh 2002, pp. 12-13). Looking at the composition of their ornaments it is clear that the Nagas are a migratory group, which inhabit their present habitations. The Nagas love for marine shells points to a bygone settlement near the sea, their spears suggest some relationship with the Philippines and Indonesian people (Raatan 2011, p. 216; Elwin 2005, pp. 142-143). According to Tiba (2010), the Nagas route of migration from South-East Asia was substantiated by similarities in cultural traits like terrace and *jhum* (shifting/slash and burn) agriculture and use of sea shells in their ornaments (p. 12).

Augmenting the fact that the Nagas migrated from Philippines and Indonesia, Hiram (1975) in his book, *Naga Polity*, observes:

From their myths and legends one gathers that there is a dim relationship with the natives of Borneo in that the two have a common traditional way of headhunting; with the Philippines and Formosa through the common system of terrace cultivation; and with the Indonesians, as both use of the loin loom for weaving cloth. The embroidery on the Naga cloths resemble the kind done on Indonesian cloths (p. 28).

According to Sanyu (1996), some indigenous groups in Borneo and Formosa have the same culture, traditions, social and religious organizations like the Nagas. Some tribes of Vietnam also have similarities in dress and food habits of the Nagas (p. 11). Hutton (1921) also suggested that the Nagas have very strong cultural affinity with the natives of Borneo and Philippines and perhaps physical resemblance with some of them (8).

Various theories of origin have been attributed to the Nagas. One theory points out four possible routes of migration of the Nagas to their present habitat. They are, from the monarchical kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim in the north, the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Bay of Bengal in the west, Burma over Patkai hill range and through Manipur from South-East Asia (Tiba 2010, p. 12). Some connect them with the head-hunters of Malay and the races of the Southern Seas and some trace them back to China. On the basis of their language, the Nagas belong to the second wave of emigration of the Tibeto-Burmans, an Indo-Chinese race in North-Western China between the upper waters of the Yang-tse-kiang and the Ho-ang-ho Rivers (Hutton 1921, p. 8). Allen (1908), opined that the Nagas, like the rest of the tribes of Assam, belong to the great Tibeto-Burma family (p. 7).

It is evident from the physical features and cultural traits of the Nagas that they migrated to India from outside. Though the history of the Nagas is vague, their presence is possibly known in the sub-Himalayan region some 2000 years ago. The Nagas are described as Mongoloid races because they have the Mongoloid features and physical characteristics. The history of the Nagas is shrouded in mystery due to the absence of written chronicles which is a great set back to study about their history. Their tradition simply pointed the routes of migration and not the time of arrival and settlement into this region. However their presence in this part of the country (India) was noticed in the 10th century B.C. when the Vedas were compiled (Nshoga 2009, pp. 1-3).

According to Alemchiba Ao, “historically, these are only stages in the process of migration, yet the individual acts according to the traditional interpretation” (Sl. No. 117). From the above observations it can be said that the Nagas are a Mongolian race, who migrated to their present habitat from China before the Christian era. According to their legends and folklore the migration of the Nagas did not take place in one wave, but have continued for centuries in various groups (Sanyu 1996, p. 13).

2.1.1. Origin of the Word 'Naga'

The exact origin of the name 'Naga' is still unknown though it has been in use for many centuries. Many scholars hold divergent views and opinions on the meaning and origin of the word 'Naga'. According to Allen (1908), the term 'Naga' was applied by the Assamese to a number of different tribes occupying the hills between the Brahmaputra valley in the north and Burma in the south (p. 7). Imsong (2011), a Naga scholar was also of the opinion that the name "Naga" was given by the plain peoples living in Assam and Bengal to a Tibeto-Mongolian settler who occupied northeast territory of the Brahmaputra River and the Irrawady River of upper Burma (p. 24). According to Dzüvichü (2003), another Naga scholar, is of the view that the Nagas were referred to as 'Kiratas' in the 10th century B.C. She further wrote that "the ancient Sanskrit literature described them as hill men living mostly on game, fruits and roots, dressing in skins, warlike and wielding formidable weapons. Rich with natural wealth of minerals and forest produce of their mountains and were adept in the art of weaving clothes, as the Nagas still are" (p. 21).

Singh (2004), putting together different views of different scholars wrote:

In the writings of Ptolemy, the Greek writer, we find that Ptolemy had heard the word 'Noglok' speaking among the Hindus, which means the land of the naked people. W.C.Smith viewed that the root word of Naga is 'Noga' which is derived from the word Nok meaning people. It was the term 'Nok' which first appeared as 'Noga' and then became Naga. E.A.Gait also agrees to the same view and takes 'Nok' as the original term of the Naga. Captian Butler and Hutton related the term Naga to the Hindi word 'Nanga' meaning naked or the Bengali word 'Nangta' which also means naked. The term Naga in Cachari dialect means a young men and hence a warrior. Elwin traces the term Naga from the word 'Nok' (people) which is similar in Tibeto-Burman languages. Owen and Rowney is of the view that the word Naga is more related to the Sanskrit word 'Nag' which means snake..... A.Z. Phizo, the most popular Naga leader maintained that the Burmese word 'Naka' was the origin of the word Naga, where 'Na' means ear and 'ka' means pierced (p. 4).

Supporting the views of W.C. Smith and E.A. Gait, Bareh (1970) wrote that it was Holcombe, who found that the word "Naga" was not a foreign derivation but originated

from the word *Nok*. According to the trans-Patkai Nagas, the Nocte and Wancho and the Tuensang Konyak, *Nok* means ‘man’ (p. 10).

Today, whatever may be the origin and interpretation of the word ‘Naga’ it stands as an umbrella of unity/oneness for the different tribes living in the state of Nagaland, and in the adjoining states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and also in the contiguous areas of Myanmar.

2.1.2. British Colonization and Modernization of the Nagas

The modern Naga history began with the Treaty of Yandaboo on 24th February 1826. The Treaty ended the Burmese influence in North East India and laid the foundation for the colonial powers. According to D’Souza (2001) this treaty gave the foundation for the extension of British rule over the Naga inhabited area (pp. 17-18). The British relation with the Nagas can be divided into three periods. In the first period, from 1832 to 1850, the British undertook military expeditions into the Naga country and established some forms of control. In the second period from 1851 to 1865, the British followed a policy of non-interference, but in the third period which began from 1866, the British steadily extended their control over the entire Naga Hills (D’Souza 2001, p. 18; Joshi 2001, p. 47).

In 1832, Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant R.B. Pemberton with 700 soldiers and 800 coolies travelled through the Angami country in search of a route between Manipur and Assam. The first expedition was in 1839 under the stewardship of Mr. Grange to investigate the cause of regular raids by the Angami Nagas in the British territories. But this expedition met with failure as the colonizers underestimated the strength of the Nagas. The second expedition in 1840 marked the first successful expedition of the colonial power in the Naga Hills. In 1845, Captain John Butler was deputed to the Naga Hills. After some brutal encounters, a road was opened to pass through Chümukedima and subsequently a grain godown and a small market was also established. Chümukedima was originally known as Chammogooding or Chamookeding (Person Interview on 13th January, 2015). In 1849

Lieutenant Vincent invaded the Naga Hills and captured the Mezoma village, but he was defeated at the hand of Kikruma and was forced to withdraw from the hills. With this defeat the British adopted a policy of non-interference. This marked the second period of the colonial powers. The third period began in 1866, where the British subdued the Nagas and formed a new district within Assam known as the Naga Hills. In 1874 the Naga Hills district was declared a Schedule District under the Schedule District Act 1874 (D'Souza 2001, pp. 17-19; Sema 1986, p. 73).

According to Sema (1992) along with colonial power came modern education, road connectivity and health care to the Nagas. They promoted modern education which became a useful means in extending and strengthening their administration. The colonial rulers also introduced Christianity to the Nagas. (pp. 57-60).

2.2. CHRISTIANITY AND FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE

The traditional religion of the Nagas is known as *Pfutsana* in *Tenyidie*, meaning 'faith/rituals of the forefathers'. According to Mewuda and Baxla (1996), "in a broad sense, all religions can be called traditional religions, since tradition stands at the origin of all religions" (p. 288). They further stated that traditional religion depends on the lived tradition passed down in the form of folklore (pp. 288-289). The traditional religion is the beliefs and practices of a particular society influenced by spirits, like the traditional Naga society.

The Nagas belief is that all things are animated and all phenomena are inhabited by spirits. The Nagas do not worship any idol or creature but they believe in and fear spirits (Lasuh 2002, p. 16). They appease the spirits through rituals and sacrifices whenever the people face any hardship, ailments, etc. because spirits have the power to control the lives of humans (Lucy & Zehol, 2009, p. 82; Mewuda and Baxla 1996, p. 293; Horam 1990, p. 191). According to Bareh (1970):

Naga religion is described by sociologists to be animistic which lays emphasis on the existence of the deified manifestations of nature and propitiation of spirits both benevolent and malevolent. The causes of troubles and torments which befall the family and the inhabitation are attributed to the action of the evil spirits. They hold 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 spirits, and the spirits having been traced, appeasement to them follows (p. 61).

The Nagas believing in a Supreme God is supported by various scholars (both Nagas and non-Nagas). Horam (1990), a Naga scholar, is of the view that, "the Nagas belief is the existence of one Supreme God, a God of goodness and humility" (p. 191). Likewise, V.K. Nuh (2002) another Naga scholar opined that "Naga people deeply believed in a Supreme Being who is the creator and sustainer of everything" (p. 23). According to Bareh (1970), the Nagas attribute the functioning of nature to the Supreme Being, who is the author of creation (p. 61). Prior to the arrival of Christianity the world of the Nagas was one of belief in spirits and deities with a 'Supreme God/Ultimate Being' who controls everything (Neli, 2012). According to Lasuh (2002), the belief in a Supreme Being and the belief in spirits made it easier for the Nagas to embrace Christianity (p. 16).

Christianity came to the Naga Hills when the head-hunting practice was at its peak. From the seventeenth century, the Nagas like other parts of North East India, had seen a number of Christian missionaries with different historical, socio-economical and cultural background equally diverse from them (Lucy & Zehol 2009, p. 81). The first Naga tribe to embrace Christianity in large numbers was the Ao Naga tribe. Rev. Miles Bronson was the first missionary to work among the Nagas in 1842. He was the first missionary to start the foundation of education for the Nagas. He also taught the Nagas the art of cultivating tea, but had to leave due to his ill health. Rev. E.W. Clarke, another missionary settled near Amguri in a Naga territory and converted some Nagas. After two decades, the actual missionary work began in an Ao village by Godhula an Assamese Christian. On 18th December 1972, Rev. Clarke reached Malungyimchen, an Ao village and baptized the Ao Nagas. This was the foundation of Christianity to the Nagas. He wrote an Ao-English

dictionary which is still being used today. He also wrote a hymn book, a catechism and translated the Gospel of Matthew and John to Ao dialect (Maitra 1991, pp. 145-146).

Rev. D. E. Witter came to Wokha in 1885 and worked among the Lotha Nagas. He prepared the first Lotha grammar and vocabulary. The first Lotha Bible was released in October 1898. In 1913, Rev. J.E. Tanquist reached the Sema (known today as Sümi) area where he started his missionary work among the Semas/*Sümis*. As a result, in 1922, a Sema Association was formed. Gradually the Naga converts spread Christianity to other parts of Naga territory (Maitra 1991, pp. 147-148).

Other prominent missionaries were Rev. C. D. King who came in 1878 to work among the Angami Nagas. He started his work by setting up the Angami Mission School which was later taken over by Rev. S.W. Rivernburg in 1886 (Maitra 1991, p. 147). According to Bareth (1970), Rev. Rivernburg was the father of the Angami alphabet, because it was Rev. Rivernburg who produced the first printed book in *Tenyidie*, the Gospel of St. Matthew in the year 1890. His other publications include translation of some hymnals from English, the Gospel of St. John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Gospel of St. Luke, a primer and a book on arithmetic (p. 195).

Rev. J.E. Tanquist started the Angami Literature Committee in 1939 after the approval of the then Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, Sir C. R. Pawsey (Kuolie 2014, p. 22). Today, the Angami Literature Committee has been changed to the *Ura Academy*. The *Ura Academy* over the years has been inducted into the formal academic teaching and learning. In 1963, the Secondary Board of School Education Assam recognized *Tenyidie* to be used in the 10th grade, and subsequently in 1964 it was introduced as a language which would be a part of the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC). In 1988, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), approved *Tenyidie* to be used in the Pre-University Course and simultaneously upgraded to the degree course and an honours paper. Nagaland University in 1997, introduced *Tenyidie* as a post-graduate course. In 2005, Nagaland University paved the way for the highest academic degree in *Tenyidie*, i.e., Ph.D., in *Tenyidie*. The *Ura Academy*, in

2014 started a B.Ed., College known as 'Ura College of Teacher Education' (Liezietsu 2009, pp. 4-5; Kuolie 2014, pp. 20-22).

According to Maitra (1998), the primary aim of the missionaries was to spread Christianity to the Nagas, but along with it they also introduced education which resulted in civilization of the Nagas (p. 9). In 1894, Impur became a Christian centre which acquired a high reputation and served as a centre of learning for the Ao, Lotha, Angami, Sema, Konyak, Yimchunger, Chang, Sangtam and Khiamnungan (Singh 2008, p. 98).

According to Sanyu (1996) among the many forces that came to penetrate the North Eastern region along with the colonial rulers, introduction of Christianity was one which stood out in playing a major role in the process of modernization. He wrote, "if one responsible dynamic factor were to be singled out for an overall change in the life of the Nagas, it would undoubtedly be the introduction of Christianity among them" (p. 115).

Christianity has transformed the Nagas from illiterate to literate and from primitive to modern. Along with sociological factors and human enterprise, it has also shaped the lives of the Nagas (Karotemprel 2004, pp. 49-50). Playing an important role in the process of change, it provided a means of preserving the identities of the people and promote their interests in the powerful force of change (Downs 1992, p. 7). Introduction of new political, judicial structure, modern communication, medicine and education made change in the region inevitable.

Christianity helped the Nagas to preserve their identity and self-respect even though it did not try to preserve the traditional ways of the traditional religion. It gave the Nagas the skills to function efficiently within the new society that modernization brought to them. According to Downs (1992), Christianity helped the Nagas ensure that political and economic power do not pass into the hands of outsiders because they were unable to function efficiently under the new situations (pp. 143-145). As a result the Nagas were allowed to settle cases according to their customary laws during the then Colonial power

and even today in spite of the existence of the well formulated laws of the Indian penal code.

Christianity has made significant impact and affected the lives of the people in different ways. It also made important contributions in various fields like literature, education, humanitarian service, culture and even the status of women (Downs 1992, p. 138). Acceptance of Christianity has brought many benefits to the Nagas. It was the missionaries who provided the first written literature in Naga languages. In this way, Christianity introduced the Nagas to modernization (Kikhi 2009, p. 258). It also led the Nagas to a transition from traditional and animistic beliefs to a more orderly society (Sanyu 1996, p. 118). One of the major contributions of Christianity is a movement of tribal society from isolation into an integrated part of the mainstream national life and from tribal social organization towards modernity. Today, the Nagas form part of the Indian administrative services, the Indian police forces, the defense establishment, Indian Foreign Service, the Indian legal system, the Indian industrial complex, and the Indian educational system. According to Sanyu (1996), it was the advent of Christianity, introduction of education and economic development, which modernized the Naga society (p. 124). Expressing the same line of thought, Karotemprel (2004) opined that it was Christianity that helped the tribal society move from tradition to modernity (p. 54).

According to Nuh (2002), Christianity had changed the outlook of the Nagas which was limited to clans and villages. With its advent and introduction of education, the Nagas began to share a global view with the rest of the world (p. 23). The introduction of Christianity to the Nagas, says Singh (2008), has helped the Nagas to view the world from a new angle, to come out of their narrow-mindedness and help them to do away with some of their wild traditional behaviour like head hunting, sacrificing animals and performing rituals to appease spirits (p. 122). The advancement of Christianity says Karotemprel (2004) has broadened the worldview of the Nagas and exposed them to a larger world, different from theirs, which is one of the major impact of Christianity on the Nagas (p. 52). Christianity which opened the Nagas to a larger world, worldview and modernity has made them imbibe the vibes of modernity including its negativity. Singh (2008) observed that the Naga society

which was classless has moved towards class-consciousness and undergone multifarious transformations on its way to modernization (pp. 159-160).

2.2.1. Literature and Education

The most important contribution made by Christianity is in the fields of literature and education. When the missionaries first arrived, the Nagas were illiterate and had no written literature but their oral literature was confined to the village. The missionaries introduced roman alphabets to the Nagas, adapted their dialects to the written form and produced the first literature in their dialects. The Christian missionaries produced linguistic materials like dictionaries, vocabularies, grammars and articles about the local dialects and even translated the Bible into local dialects. According to Downs (1992), though the primary purpose of creating a written dialect was to provide materials in schools and scripture in local dialects for the people to understand, yet it made important contributions to the development of tribal identity (pp. 187-192). Karotemprel (2004), emphasizing on the role of the Christian mission and education emphatically asserts that the Christian missionaries saved the tribal languages and dialects from extinction (p. 53).

According to (Downs 1992), education helped the Nagas to break the barriers of “superstition” that prevented the people from hearing and responding to the Gospel. It also provided a means of Christian instruction which gave the people access to the scriptures and other forms of Christian literature (pp. 199-200). Going beyond learning of Christian scriptures through the medium of education, Karotemprel (2004) was of the view that education introduced the Nagas to many new avenues and opened the doors to many opportunities, which include the ability to assert themselves, question powers that would dominate and exploit them (p. 53).

According to Sanyu 1996, education laid down the basis of all future development for the Nagas. As a result of education, the Nagas began to differentiate between their past and future and chose to advance their careers in various branches of learning. Modern education

made the Nagas enter into various professions, which made them aware of the need for employment opportunities and the need to supplement their resources and improve their agriculture. They developed new ideas to improve their cultivation, arts and crafts. The opportunities of carrying out trade were enhanced and gradually trade and commerce expanded and even extended to other countries which resulted in the development of their economy. Link roads were constructed and communications were made easier (pp. 117-125).

As mentioned earlier, it was the American missionaries who introduced education to the Nagas along with the Christian faith. The first school in Kohima, known as the Kohima Mission School was started by C.D. King in 1882 (Liezietsu 2009, p. 2). He adapted the Angami dialect (*Tenyidie*) to the Roman alphabet which is taught to school children (Bareh 1970, p. 191). According to the Statistical Handbook of Nagaland (2012), today in Nagaland the field of education has improved immensely. At present there are sixty nine higher secondary schools, three hundred thirty seven high schools, four hundred sixty five middle schools and one thousand six hundred sixty two primary schools. For higher education there are four universities, forty five colleges (both government and private) twenty four theological colleges and three law colleges. Apart from these there are professional institutes, such as - three nursing schools, six teachers training institute, three ITI, six Hindi training institutes, one school of music, three colleges of teachers' education, one agricultural college, and one management institute (pp. 81 & 93). Nagaland today has a literacy rate of 80.11 per cent. Out of this 80.11 per cent, male literacy is 83.29 per cent and the female literacy rate is recorded as 76.69 per cent (Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2012, p. 27).

2.2.2. Humanitarian Service and Health Care

Another important contribution made by Christianity in the process of social change was humanitarian service - running orphanages, undertaking relief work (in times of famine, earthquake and floods), village development and medical work. According to Downs

(1992), medical work was one of the most representative humanitarian services rendered to the Nagas by the Christian mission (p. 175). Horam, (1990), quoting from Srinivas says,

Humanitarianism resulted in many administrative measures to fight famine, control epidemics, and found schools, hospitals, and orphanages. Christian missionaries played a notable part in humanitarian activity, especially in providing education and medical to sections of Indian society most in need of them - harijans, women, orphans, lepers and tribal folk (p. 209).

When Christian missionaries first arrived, disease was widespread and unhealthy for both natural and political reasons (Downs 1992, p. 175). The Naga Inhabited areas were remote and prone to various kinds of diseases. According to Horam (1990), the Nagas were not clean in their personal habits and led an unhygienic life (p. 202). To take a bath was a social taboo among some Naga tribes; a certain day was set aside to take a bath, preferably during festivals. This taboo was associated with the religious belief that a person's wealth would be washed away if s/he took a bath. Cholera, malaria, sores, leprosy, syphilis, small-pox etc., were very common due to the unhygienic conditions which often gave birth to germs (Nshoga 2009, p. 290; Horam 1990, p. 202). The unhygienic living conditions caused by the taboo made the remote Naga inhabited areas more prone to diseases which often become fatal. The older generation till today holds this perception that bathing daily or frequently, washes away an individual's wealth.

Against the challenge of living in an unhygienic living condition, the missionaries not only gave treatment and free medicines to the Nagas, but also taught them the value of cleanliness and sanitation (Barpujari 2003, p. 220). In the traditional Naga society the only remedy to get rid of the diseases was to consult sorcerers/priests about animal sacrifices and rituals to appease the spirits (Nshoga 2009, p. 291). Apart from consulting sorcerers and performing rituals, the Nagas also depended on herbs and other indigenous remedies which could not be relied on fully. Downs (1992), remarked:

In the traditional world-view religion and disease were closely related. Illness was perceived to be caused by the displeasure of the deities; curing illness was, therefore, a religious activity. The responsible spirits had to be identified by divination and propitiated by observance of taboos and offering of sacrifices prescribed by the village priests (pp. 183-184).

The concept of healthcare among the tribal was introduced based on hygienic living habits in contrast with the unhealthy practices (Stanislaus 2004, p. 284), where domestic animals and human beings lived under the same roof in the traditional society. Against the backdrop of unhygienic living condition and wide spread diseases and epidemics, modern healthcare was brought by the Christian missionaries and it became a powerful movement. Dispensaries and hospitals were set up in remote villages and district headquarters respectively (Karotemprel 2004, p. 56). Among the Nagas, the first modern hospital in Kohima was started by the British Governor-General in recognition of the Nagas loyalty to the Colonial rulers (Joshi 2001, p. 58). In 1979, Spanish Sisters were invited to give their service in the newly opened government hospital in Kohima (Downs 1992, p. 181). With the introduction of modern health care and the advancement in the field of medicine, life expectancy increased and at the same time the mortality rate of the Nagas too decreased.

2.2.3. Promotion of Culture

Christianity recognized the identity of the Nagas and promoted it in different ways. Some of the most significant contributions of Christianity are the promotion of tribal languages, cultures and customs. Christianity has also brought the different tribes of Nagas together and brought them in contact with other parts of the country and the world. According to Karotemprel (2004), Christianity has been promoting culture through various activities, in a way by promoting harmony and integration among the people. Firstly, it inspired and also sponsored the printing press. Secondly, the introduction of Church libraries is one of the most powerful instruments in promoting culture. Thirdly, it was the setting up museums to preserve and promote tribal cultures. Finally, it was the introduction of Theological Colleges which were important centres for promotion of ecclesiastical and secular culture (pp. 51-58).

According to Downs (1992) some observers have the opinion that Christianity is also responsible for the destruction of cultural values of the tribes, while some say that very little fundamental importance have changed. Downs defended the Church as the agent of cultural

destruction of the Nagas and supported the Church as the agent of enhancing the culture. He wrote:

Many elements in traditional life that on the surface of it seem to have been abandoned by the Christians in fact survived in new guises under the new order. The Christian hostel replaced the bachelors' dormitory and the Christmas feast replaced the feast of merit. The tradition of community feasting remained very strong among the Christians, as is seen not only at Christmas time but also during the annual church gatherings..... The impact of traditional understanding of religion on Christian practice is also seen in the way Sunday is observed by those who belong to tribes that traditionally practiced genna or taboo days-days on which it was believed that serious harm would come to the entire family, clan or village if anyone were to leave the village and engage in ordinary work (p. 168).

While defending Christianity, Downs (1992) said that it is not the question of substituting one with the other but is more of continuity between the old and the new. Further he added:

Christianity liberated the people from a world-view in which they were socially and psychologically enslaved by fear of spirits. Another way of putting it is to say that theology replaced animism.... Christianity provided more than material models for a new life style; it also provided ideological undergirding for living under the new circumstances resulting from British occupation and the resultant introduction of a whole new world-view (pp. 170-171).

2.2.4. Status of Women

The Christian missionaries emphasized on the improvement of the status of women which is an important objective. In the traditional society, the status of women was low and the attitude of men towards women were oppressive (Downs 1992, p. 157). Women were not allowed to take part in public affairs because they could not go to wars, so they had to stay at home and look after the family (Nuh 1996, p. 74; Personal interview 14th April, 2013). The missionaries introduced the concept by educating women and girl-children. Women' education, emancipation and empowerment of women in Nagaland are considered as a major contribution towards the development of the Naga society. Karotemprel (2004) was of the view that the positive changes in the status of women was brought about by

Christianity (pp. 54-55). Echoing a similar view point of Karotemprel, Palackapilly (2004) wrote: “Christian missionaries were the first to break the shackles in which the women were bound, and set free to know and understand the world” (p. 87). According to Downs (1992), the church laid more emphasis on the education of women which resulted in an equal status (both men and women) in the family and in the society (p. 160).

According to Saldanha (2004), the advent of Christianity was a landmark in the history of women’s empowerment in the Naga society (p. 321). Women became aware of their rights and as a result the first Women organization was formed in 1980, and was named as Angami Women Organization in 1996. The organization was started as a reaction against inhuman treatment towards women and to fight against anti-social element in the society. Later in 1984, Naga Mothers Association was formed with the same motive of the Angami Women Organization to address the issues and problems faced by women (Personal interview on 29th December, 2013; Personal interview on 28th December, 2014). Speaking on the importance of women and women’s empowerment, Abdul Kalam (2004), the former President of the Republic of India asserted, “when the women are empowered a stable society is assured” (p. 27). The Christian mission equipped with modern education indeed has changed the Nagas’ perception of women and their roles and also changed the Naga culture and tradition which includes festivals, village organization, life-cycle beliefs and practices, personal and social life, ideals and aspirations, dance, bachelors dormitory, religious status of women, economic life, health and hygiene, ideas and attitudes etc., (Lucy & Zehol 2009, p. 90). In short, Christianity has affected changes in the social, cultural, religious and even political life of the Nagas (Philip 1976, p. 203).

2.3. FORMATION OF THE STATE OF NAGALAND

In March 1917, 2000 Nagas went to France as labour corps to help the Allied Forces. When they returned in June 1917, there was a sense of awakening among them to have unity. The

Nagas became aware of their ethnic identity and developed a sense of nationalism, which they had not dreamt of before. To protect and safeguard their interests, the first organization of the Nagas known as the Naga Club was formed in 1918 consisting of a few educated Nagas, Government officials, *Dobashis* and village elders (Imsong 2011, pp. 105-106; Rengma 2011, pp. 3-4).

When the Simon Commission visited Kohima in 1929, the Naga Club presented a memorandum demanding that the Naga Hills should not be included in the Reformed Scheme of the Government of India. As a result, the British Parliament excluded the Naga Hills from the Government of India and treated it as an Excluded Area. In the same memorandum, the Naga Club demanded that if the British were to leave, the Nagas should be left alone to determine for themselves as was the case in ancient times (Liegise Sl. No. 151; Rengma 2011, pp. 4-5). But the British ignored this demand, which resulted in a great political upheaval when they withdrew from the Naga Hills.

In 1945, Sir Charles Pawsey, the last British administrator established an institution known as the Naga Hills District Tribal Council. The institution changed its colour and tone rapidly and did not last long. On 2nd February, 1946, when the representatives of the tribes met, the Naga National Council (NNC) took its birth (Naga National Council Sl. No. 153; Singh 1995, p. 80). The Naga National Council (NNC) the only political organization in the then Nagaland seeks to work for the political aspiration and will of the Nagas. On the eve of the India's Independence, Nagaland witnessed a great political upheaval when some British officials suggested that the tribes of North-East India and Burma form a crown colony and be under the direct control of the British.

The Naga National Council (NNC) wanted and demanded that the Nagas be left alone to decide their political aspiration after the British withdrawal. This demand was rejected by the Government of India. However, the Nagas declared their independence on 14th August 1947 under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo, a day before the Indian Independence Day.

A.Z. Phizo was the most prominent Naga who appeared on the Naga political scene in 1946 after his return from Burma. He wholeheartedly immersed himself in the Naga National movement which was spreading to the whole of Naga territory. His main objective was to work for the unification of the entire Naga tribes. The damages of the Second World War, British withdrawal from India, Gandhi's Non-violence Movement, Netaji's violent means of Nationalism and the dawn of new era in the whole world, all these shaped the political philosophy of A.Z. Phizo. On 11th December 1950, A.Z. Phizo was elected as the President of NNC. Under his leadership, the Nagas conducted a plebiscite on 16th May 1951; it became the most famous historic event. 99.9 per cent of the Nagas voted for Sovereign Republic of the Naga people and for a single Naga national identity (Ao 2002, pp. 16-18; Phizo 2011, p. 4).

The Naga electorates boycotted the first general election in 1952 and the election for Naga representative in the Assam Legislative Assembly. As a result, the Assam Legislative Assembly and the Indian Parliament went without any Naga representatives till the second general election in 1957 (Singh 2008, p. 171). All these reasons led to serious conflicts between the Nagas and the Government of India. A.Z. Phizo became the key person in organizing violent means and brought arms to fight for the Naga cause (Ao 2002, p. 19). The Naga National Council (NNC) on 22nd March 1956 declared 22nd March as Naga Republic day and the Naga Hills was changed into Nagaland. The Naga National Council (NNC) also formed the Federal Government of Nagaland on 22nd March 1956 (Rengma 2011, pp. 27-28) and since then maintained an army of its own known as the Naga Army. During the 1950's and 1960's the Nagas saw the bloodiest conflict of an undeclared war with the Indian Army.

In 1957, a group of Naga liberal leaders formed an organization known as the Naga People's Convention. The primary aim of the Convention was to end the bloodshed and to search for a solution to the Naga political issues. After several attempts of negotiations and meetings an agreement was reached known as the 16 Point Agreement. This forms the basis of negotiation with the Government of India to settle the Naga political issue. In a meeting with the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru in July 1960, the 16 Point Agreement was

presented and was accepted by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru announced the acceptance of the 16 Point Agreement in the Lok Sabha on 1st August 1960. The State of Nagaland Bill was tabled in Parliament by the Prime Minister of India on 21st August 1962. It led to the Nagaland Act 1962, which provided for formation of a separate State to be known as 'Nagaland' comprising of the territories of the Naga Hills - Tuensang Area (Bareh 1870, p. 55; Singh 1995, pp. 83-100).

The Naga National Council (NNC) vehemently opposed the Agreement of 1960, but in spite of the opposition, the Government of India, as a result of the 16 point Agreement of 1960 decided to create the State of Nagaland. Nagaland, thus, became the sixteenth State of the Indian Republic. The State of Nagaland was officially inaugurated on 1st December 1963 by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then President of India at Kohima with Mr. P. Shilu Ao as the first Chief Minister (Singh 1981, p. 90; Nuh 1986, p. 185). With the creation of the State of Nagaland, the Government of India keeping in mind the 16 Point Agreement, guarantees provisions to and safeguards the Naga customary laws under Article 371 A of the Indian Constitution in the Thirteen Amendment Act. The 16 Point Agreement between the Naga People's Convention and the Government of India in July 1960 is given at Appendix I.

2.4. THE ANGAMI NAGAS

The Angami Naga tribe is one of the major tribes in Nagaland. The traditional habitat of the Angami corresponds more or less to central and southern parts of the present Kohima and part of the Dimapur districts of Nagaland. Today, the Angamis are broadly divided into four regions for administrative purpose and various social reasons. The Northern Angami consists of Kohima and the surrounding villages, those to its west are the Western Angami, those to the south of Kohima are the Southern Angami, also known as *Japfiphiki*, and those living on the slopes along the National Highway from Kohima to Dimapur are the Chakro

Angami. J.H. Hutton (1921), an eminent writer on the tribes of the Nagas in the early 20th century identifies four distinct groups of the Angami Naga tribe corresponding to the present classification of the Angami Region, namely: 1) the Khonoma group, 2) Kohima group, 2) Viswema group, and 4) the Chakroma group (p. 15). *Tenyidie* is the common language of the Angamis. It is the first Naga language to be introduced at the University level (Liezietsu 2009, p. 7).

2.4.1. Meaning of the Word ‘Angami’

The original name of the ‘Angami’ is *Tenyimia*, however, the name Angami is attributed to them by their neighbouring tribes or people. The name ‘Angami’ seemed to be a distortion of the Manipuri word *Gnamei* (Hutton 1921, p. 14). According to Sanyu (1996), “the word Angami was coined by the Zemi from their word ‘gami’ meaning ‘invaders’ (p. 59). The Angamis are known as *Tsungumi* by the Sema Naga tribe, *Tsungung* by the Lotha Naga tribe, and *Mour* by the Ao Naga tribe (Das 1994, p. 63). The name ‘Angami’, has been in use for a long time, and now the Angami themselves use it to identify themselves. *Tenyimia*, which seemed to be the original name of the Angami tribe now assumes new status and a bigger tribe. Today, the *Tenyimia* group consists of the tribes of the Angami, the Rengma, the Zeliang, the Pochury, the Chakhesang, the Mao, the Maram and the Poumai (Liezietsu 2009, p. 4). Apart from the above mentioned tribes the *Tenyimia* group initially also includes the Sema and the Lotha. The Lothas were earlier known as *tsiiziemia* (one whose share exceed). According to a narration, in olden days each *Tenyimia* tribe was given their share of food every year, other tribes finished theirs and asked for more, but the Lothas could never finish theirs and there was always excess of food. This was the reason they were known as *Tsiiziemia* (Personal interview on 13th January, 2015). Hutton (1982), in his book *The Rengma Nagas* wrote that the Angamis, Semas and Lothas belong to the group that traces their dispersal at Khezhakenoma. He also mentioned that the Lothas and Rengmas were one (p. 4).

2.4.2. Myth of Origin

According to a legend, Khezhakenoma, a village of the present area of the Chakhesang tribe was the origin of the Angami Naga tribe. Legend suggested that a person named Koza came from the East, on reaching Mekroma (Makhel) in the present day Manipur, he prayed to God for guidance and direction. Suddenly a bird flew by and alighted on the horn of his *mithun* (bison) and flew off in the direction of Khezhakenoma. In order to check the divine guidance, he sighted an omen with the help of his walking stick by dropping it on the ground. The stick fell on the ground pointing to the same direction in which the bird had flown. Koza took this to be guidance from the divine and continued to journey towards Khezhakenoma. On reaching his destination, he saw the same bird resting on a stone. On this same stone, Koza noticed a toad that had brought grains and left on the stone. The grains soon multiplied into double the amount. This observation of the strange multiplication of grains caused Koza to dry a basket full of rice on the same stone. To his surprise, the rice doubled up. From then on Koza decided to settle in Khezhakenoma and in course of time he was blessed with sons (Sanyu 1996, pp. 15-17).

According to Hutton (1921), Koza had three sons. The three sons continued the practice of spreading paddy on the stone. They took turns in drying their paddy on the stone slab. But one day, they quarreled bitterly as to whose turn it was. Their parents fearing bloodshed broke an egg on the stone, covered it with brushwood and set it on fire. The stone slab burst with a loud-sound and the spirit went up to heaven in a cloud of smoke. From that day onwards the sacred stone lost its magical power. The three sons separated in search of a new place to settle and became the ancestors of the Angamis, Lothas and Semas (p. 19).

Khezhakeno village is believed to be the legendary place of origin for many Naga tribes. It is an important place in the migration route of the Nagas. The name 'Khezhakeno' derived from the word *khezhan* which means 'tax', because even after leaving, villages both near and far paid annual house tax/*khezakeno* to their ancestral home (Lucy & Zehol 2009, pp. 1-2).

According to a legend, the *Tenyimia* group was the first to leave Khezhakeno village. The word *Tenyi* in *Khezha* dialect means ‘wanting to go’ (Lucy & Zehol 2009, p. 102). It is a general belief among the Nagas that the Nagas migrated to their present habitats in different waves. Some of them stayed at Khezhakenoma for some time and then divided into smaller groups. The ancestors of the Angami moved away from Khezhakenoma to their present habitat. The theory and history of the migration of the Angami Naga tribe cannot be ascertained with historical and chronicle details, however, the importance of the Khezhakenoma village in the history and migration of the Angami Naga tribe cannot be denied.

As the legend suggested that when Koza first settled at Khezhakenoma, the toad brought him grains, thus, till today a festival known as *Theyu-u Khupfhiinyi* is observed by the Angamis when paddy ripens. The term *Theyu-u Khupfhiinyi* literally means ‘toad’s meal’. As the term itself indicates ‘toad’s meal’, before eating the prepared food, toad’s meal is laid outside the house. It is a common belief among the Angamis that the toad brings wealth to the family which induces this act or the celebration of the *Theyu-u Khupfhiinyi* (Kelio 2015, p. 64).

2.4.3. Economic Activity

The general economic activity of the Nagas is subsistence agriculture with rice as the main crop. One of the most noticeable and unique feature of the Angami Naga tribe from the rest of the tribes of the Naga is the practice of settled cultivation in the form of terrace cultivation. The Angamis traditionally practiced terrace cultivation on the hill slopes with terrace benches using irrigated water from streams. Another method is the use of water from upper catchments harvested in ponds and used for growing paddy along with fishes and snails in the *kharif* season and for cultivating vegetables in the *rabi* season. This system of farming seems more sustainable, productive and ecologically less detrimental than the *jhum* cultivation (Jamir 2011, pp. 25-26).

The land under terrace cultivation looks like staircases. According to Lucy and Zehol (2009) the terrace fields are prepared in such a way that the sides of each flat piece of land are raised up to retain and hold water. Water is channeled through an outlet from a nearby river or stream or collected rain water (pp. 50-51). D'Souza (2001), quoting from Shakespeare, on the terrace cultivation of the Angamis wrote:

To a stranger suddenly in the Angami country nothing strikes him with greater surprise and admiration than the beautiful terraced cultivation which meets the eye everywhere, on gentle hill slopes, sides and bottoms of valleys, in fact, wherever the land can be utilized in this way. In preparation, upkeep, and irrigation, the greatest care is taken, far in excess of anything seen in the northwest Himalayas. The appearance of the countryside for miles south of Kohima, for instance, is such as to suggest the handiwork of labor of a far higher order of people than these wild Nagas. These terraced fields are often bordered with dwarf alder bushes, are carefully irrigated by an elaborate system of channels bringing water down from mountain streams, and luxuriant crops of rice are grown on them. To pass through the valley where stand the two powerful villages of Khonoma and Mezoma during late October when the crops are ripe is indeed a delight for the eye, a veritable golden valley (pp. 10-11).

The Angami Naga along with the settled cultivation also practiced *jhum* cultivation; however, the terrace cultivation formed the main economic activity of the Angami Naga. The processes in *jhum* cultivation are first clearing the plot of forest land, then burning the cleared area, followed ploughing and smashing. A particular plot of land is used for cultivation for two to three years, then one shifts to another plot for cultivation. In the meantime, the old plot is left fallow for the land to regenerate its fertility. After some years, the old plot is used for cultivation again (D'Souza 2001, p. 27; Jamir 2011, p. 26). The Government of Nagaland in order to promote terrace cultivation launched a programme through the Department of Agriculture *i.e.*, farmers practicing terrace cultivation are sent to other parts of Nagaland to teach terrace cultivation (Lucy and Zehol 2009, p. 50). According to Bhattacharjee (1990), the Angamis apart from farming and agricultural practice, are also expert blacksmiths, carpenters and weavers (p. 102).

Today in the Angami society people are practicing other occupations along with agriculture, unlike the traditional society where people depended only on agriculture. With many

engaged in government services, other occupations like cultivation of cash crops, animal husbandry (poultry, piggery etc.), pisciculture, horticulture, bee keeping, construction, carpentry, rubber and other commercial plantation, business, weaving, small scale household production etc. are taken up by the people.

2.4.4. Religion

The Angamis are staunch believers of spirits. The Angamis believed that Nature is inhabited by spirits, and therefore, s/he appeases Nature. In the Angami society there are a number of spirits both benevolent and malevolent. The spirits are known by different names and functions. Some of the spirits are *Chükhie-o*, *Rutshe* and *Keshüdi (Rhoulo)*, *Temi*, *Telepfü*, *Rapuo*, *Kamvülhou phrie*, *Miawenuo*, *Rapfhe*, *Dzüraiü* etc. *Chükhie-o* is the God of wild animals. Menfolk seek his grace for hunting. He is known as the spirit of menfolk. *Rutshe* and *Keshüdi* are spirits of death; anyone who comes across these two spirits does not survive. They are also known as *Rhoulo*. *Temi* is the ghost or spirit who scares people. *Temi* scares and frightens people by throwing pebbles and shaking trees and bamboos. *Telepfü* is a mischievous spirit who carries people away and hides them. *Rapuo* is the spirit of nightmares. *Kamvülhou phrie* are vampires, these spirits suck human blood. *Miawenuo* is the goddess of fruitfulness or gift giver. *Rapfhe* is the guardian angel, who guards every village. *Rapfhe* protects the village from malevolent spirits. *Dzüraiü* is the goddess of fishing. She is known as the goddess of the womenfolk. Women seek her blessing before they go to catch fish, snails and crabs (Personal interview on 21st April, 2013).

It is interesting to note here that most of the benevolent spirits are female and most of the malevolent spirits are male. Though there are a number of spirits the head of all these is *Ukepenuopfü*. According to Meyieho (2009), “the Angamis believe in a God-head who is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent”. He further stated that, “the God-head of the Angami i.e., *Ukepenuopfü* meaning one that gives birth, has a female connotation as the suffix *pfü* in Angami is addressed to a female or one having female quality” (p. 193).

According to D'Souza (2001), the traditional religion of the Angamis is labelled as Animism. This belief system deals with both benevolent and malevolent spirits. The animistic beliefs and practices play an important role in Angami society because it is a means of social control (p. 53). Expressing a similar standpoint, Saikia (1994) wrote:

Angami religion concerns beliefs and rituals directed at a supernatural realm of forces, powers and deities. It has profound impact on everyday occurrences including economy. Religion mobilizes the people to perform an economic role. At every stages of agro-economic activity i.e. selection of land, sowing seed, transplantation, before and after harvest, before testing new product of the field, Angamis worship their appropriate deities, observe *gennas* (taboos), consult omens which are related to their daily life. All these are accepted as “a way of life”, “a way of worship” (p. 223).

Alemchiba Ao, while writing on the religious beliefs of the Angamis quoted A.W. Davis in his report *Census of India, 1891, vol.1*, wherein he wrote:

The Angamis (Nagas) have practically no religion. They recognize a supreme creator called *Terhopfü*. They also believe in the existence of spirits which reside in rocks, trees and pool of water. These are usually propitiated in case of illness by offerings of fowls, pigs, or cattle. Customs similar to these are common to the whole of the Naga and Kuki tribes within this district. Of a future state after death, their ideas are extremely vague (Sl. No. 115).

The Angamis now are predominantly Christians with the exception of a sizeable number still practicing indigenous/traditional beliefs. The conversion of the Angamis into Christianity was due to the colonial expansion policy of the British. It is important to note here that the Angami was one of the first Naga tribes to come into conflict with the colonial expansion of the British (Ao 1993, p. 4).

2.4.5. Politics

Since the time of the colonial power the Angami Naga tribe played an important role in the ethnic movement of the Nagas, especially under the leadership of Dr. A.Z. Phizo. Even to this day, the Angamis continue to play a major role in the state politics of Nagaland. Since

the formation of the state of Nagaland in 1963, four Chief Ministers viz., Mr. T. N. Angami 1966 - 1969, Mr. Vizol 1974 - 1975, 1977 - 1980, Mr. J.B. Jasokie 1975, 1980 - 1982, and Mr. Neiphiu Rio 2003 - 2008, 2008 - 2014, arose from the Angamis. The Angami Naga tribe had played an important and major role in the ethnic conflict and movement of the Nagas and even today continues to engage in a major role in the politics of the state of Nagaland (Bhaumik 1996, pp. 40-50). It is important to note here that the Angamis accepted no chieftain to mediate its social and political life but have a *Kemevo* or *Phichüü* also known as *Zievo* (High Priest) to regulate its agricultural activities and the observances of *penyie* or *genna* (day of obligation and abstinence from work, especially manual work). The Angamis has the tradition of village elders to settle disputes, maintenance of peace and to exercise the customary laws of the village. The village elders are selected by the people. The *Zievo* and the village elders of the Angamis do not enjoy any political or social status but only mediate on ritual and protect their customs (Personal interview on 23rd April, 2013).

Until the arrival of the British in the political and administrative scene of the Naga territory followed by the spread of Christianity, the Angamis maintained their unique culture and identity, like their age-old customary laws to adjudicate civil and criminal disputes and administration of justice (Murry & Hesso 2003, pp. 3-4). The arrival of British Colonial power along with modern education and Christianity made the Angamis to come into contact with the outside world, which in turn changed their world-view to a great extent. However, even today in spite of the outside influences the Angamis are not without their traditional polity of the importance of the elder(s) known as *Kemevo* and *Zievo*. The role of *Kemevo* and *Zievo* are still very significant in Angami villages which still practice traditional faith.

2.5. THE ANGAMI VILLAGE AND ITS ORGANIZATION

Villages in Angami are known as *riina*. The boundaries of Angami villages are well-defined and every village has a distinct and unique identity different from the other. Almost all Angami villages are situated on the spur of hill tops. The entrance of the Angami village is marked by a traditional gate known as *kharu* (Dzövchü 2003, p. 42). *Kharu* in Angami society is a symbol of friendship, peace and unity. Another significance of *kharu* is to safeguard the village in the event of any warfare.

The Angami village may be called a village-state as every village is distinct and have a political unit of its own. As noted earlier Angami villages differ from one another, but a common feature is no village has a chieftain to regulate its activities. The Angamis do not have chieftains to govern them, but the elders of the *Khels* play an important role in the functioning of the society. According to Lasuh (2002), the Naga leaders of the Naga villages are selected on the basis of their merit and efficiency and not on the basis of heredity (p. 16).

Every Angami village is a sovereign state and its customary laws are maintained by the village elders. The Angami villages are divided into *Thinuos* or *Khels* (clan). According to Allen (1905), *Khel* is a term borrowed from the Afghan border (7). The British used the word *Khel* to signify the clan territory. Today, the usage of *Khel* is more prominent than *Thinuo*. Among the Angamis, *Khels* are named after the apical ancestors. Every *Khel* has a *kharu* (gate), *Kichüki* (bachelor's dormitory) and *Thehouba* (a raised platform for a sit out).

In former times bachelors had a common dormitory known as *Kichüki*. The *Kichüki* was the place of socialization where the youths learnt the art of living and the traditional and cultural practices. Apart from the dormitory, *Kichüki* also served as a place where the young men learnt traditional lore, art of living and the art of warfare. But today, the *Kichüki* has lost its significance and importance among the Angamis. *Thehouba* was the place of meetings to discourse on or disseminate information. *Thehouba* was situated on higher points in the *Khel*. Like *Kichüki*, the *Thehouba* today has lost its sting and serve merely as a sitting place

A *Khel* is an effective social and political unit. It is an organization of well-defined smaller social groups. It is an autonomous unit and has a territory of its own. It is within the *Khel* that the segmentary system of social organization is operative. In some Angami villages like Kohima, *Khels* are subdivided into different *Thehouba* (sectors) and every *Thehouba* has a *Gaonbura* to over-see its welfare. Another interesting feature of the Angami village organization is the existence of a peer group known as *Peli*. Hence, there are a number of *Pelis* in a *Khel* (Personal interview on 3rd January, 2014).

2.5.1. Administrative Agencies

The Naga village is a politically organized society with elders who are vested with a great deal of authority (Horam 1977, p. 76). Likewise, the elders in the Angami society are known as *Pehümia* or *Peyumia* (Personal Interview on 5th January, 2014). The elders were named as *Gaonburas* by the colonial rulers and later instituted the office of the *Gaonburas*. During the colonial period, the colonial administration utilized two layers of native administrative agencies, namely the village elder, which was instituted in 1874, and the *Dobashi* which was instituted in 1842 (Sema 1992, p. 29; Imsong, 2011, p. 104) for settling disputes according to the customary laws. For an *Angami*, the village is her/his country and the local village court is her/his supreme court, whose judgment is final (Ao, Sl. No. 94).

The British government in order to avoid the complicated system of administration of justice recognized the village court and also strengthened it by appointing *Gaonburas* from different *Khels* in the village and *Dobashis* from bigger villages (Ao, Sl. No. 94). The *Gaonburas* and *Dobashis* exercised their powers not according to the hereditary system as in the monarchic feudal system, but were elected on the basis of their merit and efficiency (Lasuh 2002, p. 16). On 25th march 1937, the Governor of Assam prescribed revised rules for the administration of justice and police in the Naga Hill District. Under these rules the authority of the village Chiefs, *Gaonburas* and headman are recognized and certain powers

for both criminal and civil cases are given to them. They are empowered to settle cases, impose fines and examine witnesses on oath (Ao, Sl. No. 94).

Along with the offices of *Gaonbura* and *Dobashi* the colonial power also instituted the office of District Administrator to supervise the overall administration (Venuh 2004, p. 96). The District Administration is supervised by Deputy Commissioners and Sub-Divisional Officers. Every *Angami* village like other Naga villages has a village council of its own. The development of the village council is due to the formation of Nagaland Village Area and Regional Council Act of 1970. Through this Act of 1970, the village development funds are channeled through the village council to make the councils strong and effective. One of the most notable and visible things to make the village council strong and effective is the institution of 'Village Panchayat' and 'Village Development Board' (VDB). The first VDB was launched on 11th November, 1978 by the then Deputy Commissioner of Phek, Padmashree A.M. Gokhale, IAS (Retd.), at *Ketsapomi* village under Phek district. The VDB articulated development priorities for the village, prepared action plans and executed the developmental works using village community funds or other funds. The composition, tenure and functions of the VDB are provided in the Village Development Board Rules, 1980 (Lucy & Zehol 2009, p. 13).

2.5.2. Institution of the *Gaonburas*

Gaonbura is a combination of two Assamese words, *Gaon* meaning 'village' and *Bura* meaning 'elder'. The British principle of interfering with the locals as little as possible had helped to prevent the decay of administrative responsibilities and judicial authority of the village elders (*Gaonburas*) (Das 1993, pp. 30-31). The selection of *Gaonburas* are not heredity, they are appointed by the Deputy Commissioner on the nomination of the *Khels* (Hutton 1921, p. 143) or the *Thehouba*. Understanding the important role of the *Gaonbura*, their status and position in traditional Naga society is an indispensable prelude. It is important to note that the growth of leadership began with the oldest member of the family. The *Gaonburas* are presented with a red blanket annually since 1988, to symbolize their

special responsibility and relations with the administration (Personal interview on 2nd June, 2013; Sema 1992, pp. 29-30). They are responsible for the general well-being of the village and the people, and are expected to hold periodical consultations with the village council about the problems of each *Khel* and the village in general (Horam 1977, p. 77).

According to Sema (1992), the *Gaonburas* as native leaders, their functions are multifarious at the same time quite simple (p. 32). They initiate the discussion and present the case but they do not exercise unlimited powers (Horam 1977, p. 77). The *Gaonburas* apart from the responsibility of administering justice and maintenance of law and order in the villages, are responsible for collecting the *Khezanuo* (annual house tax). The colonial government's interest was served best as the *Gaonburas* were recognized and appointed to assist the colonial administration in carrying out the respective village administration (Venuh 2005, p. 49).

Today, the *Gaonburas* are given the responsibility to look after the legal system (customary laws) in the village. The use of the red shawl and collecting house tax is still practiced. As mentioned earlier, the *Gaonburas* are elderly men nominated by their respective *Terhrüba* and *Khels*. The names of the selected *Gaonburas* are forwarded to the office of the Deputy Commissioner in consultation with the village council for their appointment. *Gaonburas* are generally selected for their oratory skills, intelligence, knowledge, patience, experience, diplomacy, honesty (it is the most important personality trait) and are expected to have a good moral character and knowledge of the customary laws (Dzüvichü 2003, pp. 95-98). The *Gaonburas* are appointed until their death, however, voluntary resignations are accepted, if they think that they are too old to perform their duties. As mentioned above, the office of the *Gaonbura* is not hereditary, any person whether educated or uneducated could become a *Gaonbura* but not women till date.

2.5.3. Institution of the *Dobashis*

The word *Dobashi* is an Assamese word - *Dobashia*, which means 'a man of two words'. The *Dobashi* court is an institution introduced by the British administration. The institution of *Dobashi* was one of the chief means through which the British colonial Government established successful relations with the diverse Naga tribes. The Naga society, by the end of the World War I was marked by a significant socio-political upsurge, where the *Dobashis* played a prominent role. They were the right hand-men of the colonial administration as they became a link between the native inhabitants and the colonial administrative officers (Sema 1992, pp. 32-35). *Dobashis* were appointed by the British colonial power to translate Naga dialect into *Naga-Assamese* and also advise the British officers on tribal customs and customary laws for settlement of disputes (Das 1993, p. 30).

According to Venuh (2004), the creation of *Dobashi* as a system lies in the history of the British relations with Nagas (p. 50). The institution of *Dobashi* served both as an instrument of pacification on the Nagas and as a native team of intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. The British government in the early 1840's started the system of receiving the Naga visitors to Nowgong and Sibsagar (Assam) to have good and amicable relationship with the tribes of the Nagas. But this came to an end with the policy of non-intervention in March 1850. Later, in 1886 with the re-occupation of Samaguting (Chümukedima), the officiating Deputy Commissioner, Lt. Gregory, once again resumed the system of receiving the Naga tribes to establish and maintain good relationship (Sema 1992, p. 33). The system of receiving the Naga tribes was made permanent in 1881 when the Government of India was convinced of the usefulness of the native delegates. During the colonial period the *Dobashis* advised the British officers in settlement of cases according to the customary laws. The British Parliament Act 5 of 1861 brought the whole Village Administration of the then Naga Hills under one Deputy Commissioner whose headquarter was in Kohima (Lucy & Zehol 2009, p. 16). Later in the year 1875, a sub-division was instituted with the Sub-Divisional Officer under the Deputy Commissioner (Bareh 1970, p. 154). According to Venuh (2005), the *Dobashis* helped and strengthened the Deputy Commissioner (DC) in the administration of the district (pp. 51-52).

The office of the *Dobashi* which was established during the colonial power has come to stay and is operative even today. Now the office of the *Dobashi* in the Angami society like all other Naga tribes is attached to the office of the DC. The office of the *Dobashi* functions as a court which settles disputes and conflicts according to the customary laws, therefore it is often referred to as the '*Dobashi Court*'. The *Dobashi* court is authorized to settle both civil and criminal cases. *Dobashis* are looked upon as the judges and lawyers of the Naga society. There is no secular qualification for one to be elected to the office of the *Dobashi* but they are appointed by virtue of wisdom (knowledge of history and custom, customary laws). A recent rule for the appointment of the *Dobashis* has been passed, which states the minimum qualification should be matriculate. In the context of the Angamis, the *Dobashis* apart from academic qualifications, are expected to know the customs, folk songs, folk dances and *mepfvü* (a festive cry/shout of males during festive occasions). For the Angamis, *mepfvü* is the most important quality a *Dobashi* should possess. Like the *Gaonburas*, the *Dobashis* also receive a red vest coat and a badge (Dzüvichü 2003, pp. 99-100).

The *Dobashi* courts are placed directly under the district administration and presently, there is a customary court in every office of the DC, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Sub-Divisional Officer, Civil (SDO) and Extra Assistant Commissioner (EAC) (Lucy & Zehol 2009, p. 16). Each district is headed by the DC, which is divided into sub-divisions headed by the SDO (Civil). In a like manner, the office of the *Dobashi* is also divided. Thus, not every village has the office of the *Dobashi*, but it is attached to the Sub-Divisional offices. In recognition of the notable services of *Dobashis*, separate Service Rules for *Dobashis* have been introduced by the Government in 1970.

The importance of *Dobashis* and *Gaonburas* have been reviewed after the statehood of Nagaland with the introduction of the Indian Constitution, the 16th Point Agreement and the 1962 Nagaland State Act, which provided provision for the protection of customary laws (The North East Frontier Magazine 2000, p. 11). According to the 16th Point Agreement and the 1962 Nagaland State Act, any legal arrangement in Nagaland has to co-exist with the customary laws that should supplant it. The offices of *Dobashi* and *Gaonbura* began as

interpreters between the native and colonial power, but today, they assume a new role and status affecting policies and powers.

2.5.4. District Administration

The overall administration of the district is under the supervision of district officers namely the DC and the SDO (Civil). The DC and SDO (civil) through their constant interaction with the people tried to promote relations, which affected development (Sema 1992, p. 37). The office of the DC is to maintain law and order in the district. This office is empowered to make by-laws which are often made in the form of standing orders. The office of the DC also supervises the construction of link roads, collection of house tax, gives guidance for the improvement of agriculture, supplies medicine to dispensaries, inspects schools etc. There are no fields of activities, which do not come within the purview of the DC (Venuh 2005, pp. 52-53). The powers and functions of the SDO (Civil) is the same as that of the DC. Although, the SDO (Civil) is the overall in charge of the sub-division, this office exercises its powers under the DC (Sema 1992, p. 40). The DC wields a central authority at the district level and unites the people both politically and territorially. Today, the Deputy Commissioners are junior IAS Officers, who maintain law and order in the district(s).

2.5.5. Village Council

The Angamis like other tribes of the *Nagas* had a self-governing system since the time of pre-colonial period. Lucy and Zehol (2009) opined that Village councils had been established to restore the traditional village authority system and on codification of the Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act, 1978, it was established to usher in a befitting administration (pp. 13-14). Today, every Angami village has its own 'Council' headed by a council chairman, referred to as the Village Chairman. The Village Council formed the ultimate authority in maintaining peace, fraternity and harmony in the village according to the customary laws (Lasuh 2002, p. 16).

Before the introduction of the Village Council, a Council of Elders was responsible for the smooth functioning of the village. The Council of Elders was the supreme legislative and judicial body in the village, represented by every *Khel*. In 1964, the Nagaland Village Council Act was enacted and the Council of Elders was replaced by the Village Council (Christina 2002, pp. 243-244). Augmenting the supreme powers of the Village council, the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978 laid down that:

The village council shall administer justice within the village limits in accordance with the customary laws and usages as accepted by the canons of justice established in Nagaland and the law in this regard as enforced from time to time (The North East Frontier Magazine 2000, p. 10).

The Village Council is the most important institution in the Naga society. The Council constitutes the supreme body of the village and is referred to as ‘the wise men’ of the village (Venuh 2005, p. 22). The Village Council whether big or small forms the core of the village administration. On the resolution of the Village Council and the recommendation of the Deputy Commissioner, the State Government appoints the Chairman of the Village Council to head the Council (Lucy & Zehol 2009, p. 13). The Chairman and the Village Council work in collaboration with the *Gaonburas* for the welfare of the village.

The Village Council performs all executive, administrative and judicial functions. The executive function of the Village Council is to settle disputes and ensure the smooth functioning of the village. The Village Council takes effective measures for the execution of its decision. The Council never allows its authority to be defied or undermined, and is supreme in its executive power. The Council assists the Chairman in matters of defense of the village and co-operates with him on all matters relating to the administration of the village. The Council is relied upon to work for the welfare of the village, just as the electorates of a constituency relies upon its representatives in the legislature to work for its well-being. In matter of judicial administration, the Indian Penal Code and Codes of Civil Procedures are not in force in the Naga Hills District in general and the Angami society in particular. In place of the Indian Penal Code and Codes of Civil Procedures, the Council members together with the Chairman constitute the judiciary and settle cases according to the customary laws (Venuh 2005, pp. 22-24).

All disputes arising between individuals and families, and all affairs relating to the village are decided by the Village Council (Horam 1977, p. 90). The Village Council is responsible for the overall administration of the village. It looks after the welfare works such as issue of ration card, *Antyodaya Anna Yojana* (AAY) and other beneficiaries meant for people Below Poverty Line (BPL), Above Poverty Line (APL), enforcement of orders, rules and regulations, maintenance of law and order in the village. All disputes are settled under the judicial board and any case which is taken to the judicial board of the village cannot be taken to other high courts for appeal. In Angami society, lawyers are not allowed to settle any cases pertaining to the village. It is only the judicial board that settles cases or disputes in the village (Personal Interview on 5th January, 2014). Thus, the judicial board plays an important role and is also the most important constituent unit of the Village Council.

2.6. WOMEN IN ANGAMI SOCIETY

Thenumia (women) enjoy special privilege and share the same status with men in the Angami society is something which one often hears about. But in reality it is quite the opposite; women are controlled by men in every sphere of their life. Traditionally a girl is not permitted to grow her hair until her marriage as long hair signifies her marital status. In order to earn her hair, a girl has to marry someone even if she does not like him. Women of any village in the Angami society perform all the domestic duties without proper rest. In traditional society men are not supposed to fetch water, except during certain *penyie* or *genna*. Even though women wear torn clothes, the clothes of men should be clean and presentable. When a man wear torn or dirty clothes not only his wife but his sisters are criticized by the members of the society. Women are judged and criticized for everything and anything, like hospitality, diligence, the way they perform their household duties, considerateness, integrity, etc. They have to be conscious of what is considered disgraceful and forbidden in the society, whether the agricultural works are done in time etc.

Mills (1969) has rightly observed that women weaved cloth required for the family, worked in field, brought in firewood, fetched water and performed all manner of drudgery (p. 284). According to Ghosh & De (2003), the woman is confined to her house and seldom moves outside it and her life is restricted (p. 252). Writing on the status of women on the hills, Downs (1992) emphatically made the following statement:

If we are really to improve the home surroundings of these hill tribes, we must educate the women and work through them. Women may not have, in these hills, the same influence amongst the community or in family life that they possess in more civilised countries, but i am confident that the more we civilise and raise the status of women, the better the condition of the people will be, both from a material and moral point of view (p. 159)

Allen (1905) discussing about Naga women, wrote women after marriage become mere household drudges and quickly lose their good looks (p. 58). Kelhou (1993) made the following remarks on the status of women and the hardships women have to bear in the Angami society:

In the traditional circle, ‘women’, whether wife, daughter, sister or mother were made to feel inferior to men. As a wife or mother, she was all in charge of household chores but in other matters she was fully subject to her husband. Even in regard to the daughter, she was expected to stay close at home and learn the household chores, as daughter was seldom encouraged to study. In fact, there were many cases where the daughter was totally prohibited to attend school in spite of her abilities and desire to learn. This was so because education was seen as a means of making girls go wayward and unhomey. Being a sister was also no big deal, because the sisters were often subject to her brothers in most cases. The brothers were given undue importance just for being a man (p. 59).

The occupation of woman in the traditional Angami society is first a house wife and a mother and secondly a farmer (Kelhou 1993, p. 55). The economic roles of men and women could be distinguished from the fact that the women are confined within the house and men engaged in activities outside the home. Women are often responsible for the economy of the village because she oversees the agricultural activities all-round the year (Vitso 2003, pp. 69-71). Although men are considered to be ‘bread-earners’ and women as ‘home-makers,’ the women are the ones who takes care of the home, agricultural work and other activities as well. In traditional society, the basic feature of social life was the separation between the

world of men and women which was found in dress, manners and general behavioural patterns (Vitso 2003, p. 84). But the irony in the Angami society is though men are the 'bread-earners' when a family does not have enough or a decent meal it is the woman who is criticized. Therefore, the question here is, if men are the 'bread-earners' why are women blamed?

Naga's traditional history has been defined by a male-game called "head hunting". Lucy and Zehol (2009,) opined that head hunting is not a senseless killing of enemy but a tradition connected with tribal principles of heroism, justice, honour, pride and recognition as the victim's head is a trophy of honour and chivalry (p. 28). During the head hunting days, women played the role of *demi* (mediator) between two warring villages in the traditional society. They mediated and negotiated between the warring villages for peace. They delivered the head of the victim to the bereaved family of the enemy village. It was a taboo to kill the *demi* because she played important role of ushering peace to the warring villages (Vitso 2003, pp. 76-77). However, Vitso also opined that although women played vital roles as the *demi* and enjoyed a status, but their status is never projected or brought to the fore front like their male counterpart. Hümtsoe-Nienü (2012,) expressing a similar thought on women's status points out that while the men went for warfare, women are the contributory agents, the virtual linchpins in sustaining the village life (p. 69), and nevertheless, women could not be presumed to enjoy equal status with men before the arrival of Christianity.

The Angami society reserved special duties for the women folk, yet its customary laws and customs are biased against women. Christianity and western education has brought about a new outlook in the Naga society. Western education has broadened the world view of women and encouraged women to explore their domains. The Naga society, especially Angami society is male dominated (patriarchal and patrilineal) both in the pre-Christian and Christian eras; however, today the status of women has improved considerably compared with the traditional society. Although women's participation in various activities of social life and their status has witnessed an upward movement, they are still to make a significant mark in areas such as, being appointed as Village Council Members, Village Chairpersons, head of churches, *Dobashis* and *Gaonburas*. Lucy and Zehol (2009) opined that

encouraging and empowering women to play greater role as leaders in churches, villages and political and decision making arenas would enable women to reach their full potential and also enable them to bridge the gender gap that has plagued the Naga society (p. 92).

Today with the progress in the field of education and the coming of Christianity the conservative view has slackened giving scope to the women folk to come to forefront of the society. However, even today in matters of politics and decision making, women still take a back seat *i.e.*, 33% reservation of seats for women in Nagaland is still to be successfully implemented, and the appointment of women as Council Members, Village Chairpersons, *Dobashis* and *Gaonburas* seems to be anathema and a distance dream. In spite of all the customary laws and customs that act against the women folk, the importance and significance of women in the life of the Angami cannot be ignored. The concept of God and the God-head whom the Angamis call as *Ukepenuopfü* (one that gave us birth) has a female connotation (Kelio and Meyieho 2015, p. 119). Women in Angami society have an important and vital role, as they are the initiators of most of the traditional customs and activities. In the Angami society, it is the woman who initiates the harvest (*Liede*), dedicates the house (*Kizie*), performs the annual ceremony in remembrance of the death (*Mekhru Zie*), etc. (Kelhou 1993, p. 56). Every festival of the Angami has a common ritual known as *kizie*, which is performed only by the woman of the house. No feast commences without the *kizie*, a man without a wife or widowers are deprived of this ritual (Kelio 2015, p. 60). Thus, women play a vital role in the Angami society, therefore, if the customary laws and its administrative agencies of the *Angamis* should continue to be relevant to contemporary times, the Angami patriarchal bias against women need to re-tune itself with the changing times and development.