

NAGA WOMEN IN CONFLICT SITUATION: 1980-2000

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of**

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
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2003**



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07.07.2003

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled NAGA WOMEN IN CONFLICT SITUATION: 1980-2000, submitted by **BD. MARIA ANAL** is in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is an original work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Acknowledgements

I am eternally grateful to my guide, Prof. Rakesh Gupta for providing inestimable suggestions, ingenious pedagogy, and persistent stimulus throughout the recourse of this dissertation.

I am also indebted to, Sanjoy Hazarika and Nandita Haksar for providing me with constructive and substantial help during the course of this study.

It gives me pleasure to express my gratitude to the staff of JNU library, Nehru Memorial Library, Centre for Women Development Studies, and Central Secretariat Library.

No amount of appreciation, however, will ever be adequate to express the deep gratitude I feel for my friends, who, of and on, provided me with animated prodding's, and at times amusing distractions.

My family members have always been a source of sustenance and inspiration for me; needless to say this work owes a lot to them.

BD. Maria Anal

***DEDICATED TO
MOM AND DAD
..... WITH LOVE***

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Introduction

It is said that in the last hundred years or so, more than a hundred million people have died in wars. Though the data on war casualties are uncertain, the twentieth century has witnessed 250 wars and over 100 million casualties.¹ Despite many reservations about the data, it is generally accepted that in warfare at the start of the twentieth century, 85-90 percent of war deaths were members of the armed forces. However, no longer are the civilians, the chance victims of accidents or of excesses. Today, 75 percent of all war deaths are civilian non-combatants.² According to the statistics of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, women and children constitute 80 percent of the world refugees.³

Despite the current statistics, which shows a magnitude of women refugees of war, Feminists scholars critiqued that the early literature on women and war was largely gender blind, with women's participation simply not identified.⁴ Inger Skjelsback and Dan Smith pointed out that ignoring gender differences in research has meant that male norms and male behaviour have been taken to represent the human norm. The failure to address this gender perspective, according to them undermines the role of women in conflict situation.

However, literature on gender, war and peace, women and political violence in particular has grown significantly in the past decade. Debate on these issues has spilled over beyond the narrow confines of policy makers and the mainstream media.

¹ Chenoy, Anuradha M, *Militarism and Women in South Asia*, New Delhi. Kali for Women, , 2002. p.1.

² Skjelsback, Inger and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, London, Sage Publications. 2001, p.3.

³ *ibid.* p.4

⁴ For further understanding of the nature of the feminist critique, refer to Moser Caroline O.N. and Fiona C. Clark (eds.), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, New Delhi, Kali for women, 2001; and Inger Skjelsback and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, London, Sage publication, 2001.

But despite the explosion of literature and the proliferation of public debates on these issues, Feminists scholars argue that few trends still dominate, leaving many assumptions about the relationship between gender and political conflict largely unchallenged.

Cynthia Cockburn, a feminist researcher and peace activist maintains that, it is men who make war. Men have been the fighting personnel of national militaries, popular militias, political police forces and the armed gangs of warlords. She explains the reasons why men took part in violence— for money, honour, patriotism or brotherhood, in self-defence, for liberation to liberate others. Cockburn argues that many versions of masculinity in the world's varied cultures are constituted in the practice of fighting: "to be a real man is to be ready to fight and ultimately to kill and to die."⁵ Though women participated in national liberation, they do not gain equality through their active engagement in war, even at the extreme level of sacrifice. Nor do the character; culture and hierarchy of armed forces become more feminine by women's presence.⁶

During times of armed conflict and the collapse of communities, both men and women experience the severe situations of oppression and insecurity. While entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, it is women who suffer the most as a result of existing social inequalities that are aggravated by crisis situations. With the breakdown of social structures women and girls are at the mercy of unscrupulous persons and are subject to violence, sexual abuse and rape.

In the iconography of wars, the woman of peace is the mother. The 'mother' narrative highlights the conservative logic of the biological connection in the binary

⁵ Cockburn, Cynthia, "The Gendered Dynamics of Armed Conflict and Political Violence" in Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark (eds.), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, New Delhi, Kali for women, 2001p.20.

⁶ *ibid* p. 13-29.

stereotype of mother and peace, and men and war. Feminist peace analysis is uncomfortable with the motherist logic, which ends up implicitly affirming the structural inequality between men and women that is at the heart of patriarchy. As Brock-Unte defines it, patriarchy 'is a form of social organization based on the force based ranking of the male half of humanity over the female half'. Patriarchy has to do with power, most commonly with establishing control over women and nature.⁷

Feminist scholars are divided on the essentialist analysis that describes women as peaceful in nature and identified men with war. In the present context, the common media image of women in war is that women are helpless victims of a situation over which they have no control. But quite the contrary, the studies shows that they are active participants taking on new responsibilities, whether this is by their own choice or because they feel that it is imposed by the situation. Inger Skjelsback looks at women's reactions towards war and their participation in three different conflict areas- El Salvador, Vietnam and former Yugoslavia, and draws a conclusion that femininity need not necessarily be peaceful. Women can be equally war prone as men and most likely; men can be equally peace loving as women.⁸

The stereotypical belief that women are peaceful and men are aggressive flows from the over emphasis given to the biological differences between male and female. The empirical evidence demonstrates that there is nothing inherently peaceful about women. Women make up almost one- third of the combatants in the Maoist insurgency in Nepal and in the Somalia conflict, in Rwanda and in Sri Lanka; women have been perpetrators of the ethnic communal attacks and have also been involved in

⁷ Manchanda, Rita. *Women, War and Peace in South Asia*. New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001. p.16.

⁸ Skjelsback, Inger and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*. London, Sage Publications, 2001. pp.47-67.

massacres of women and children.⁹ Rita Manchanda points out, rather than thinking simply of women's natural commitment to peace, it is more useful to think of the profound depths of violence in masculine cultures and institutions.

The said empirical evidences demonstrate to us that, the way people are is not given by nature but is constructed through social, economic, cultural, historical and political factors. The stereotypical notion of women and peace is not given by nature as the essentialists perceived it to be. "We become who we are through our interactions with our social surroundings."¹⁰ Despite deep-rooted differences between the essentialist and the social constructionist positions to the gender dimensions of peace and conflict, they both agree on the need to focus on women's experiences in war.

The changing patterns of conflict that targets civilians have made women and children even more vulnerable. Wartime sexual abuse against women has occurred in almost every history of war. Inger Skjelsback and Dan Smith argue, "rape is used not simply to attack the woman, but, through her to attack another target – somebody whom she is believed to be protecting".¹¹

Rape has been often used as a weapon to terrorize populations and inflict maximum humiliation to the communities. Rape does not only exploit the physical vulnerability of the women, but brings disgrace, shame and rejection from her partner, family and community. The rejection of women by her own people lowers the status and brings her down to a more vulnerable position. Thus, in conflict situation women become not only central as victims but also marginal as agents.

⁹ Manchanda, Rita. *Women, War and Peace in South Asia*. New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001. p.17.

¹⁰ Skjelsback, Inger and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*. London, Sage Publications, 2001. p.51.

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 5.

It has been documented by international organization like the United Nations High Commission for Refugees that 80 percent of the world's refugees are women and children. This statistics indicates that the status of women becomes much more degraded in times of conflict. Studies have shown that in times of violent conflict, women are often the sole caretakers of children; they support the extended family, play a central economic role, nurture traumatized children and families and restore a semblance of normalcy to their lives. With the deaths of male members of the family or disappearances, women take up the responsibility of looking after the family. In a way women have to invent new ways of making money for their family to survive. Poverty has led them to various despicable jobs.

Women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life. They are less well nourished than men, less healthy more vulnerable to physical, violent and sexual abuse.¹² The violent conflict worsens the position of women. Food scarcity, destruction of infrastructure and basic facilities like water, roads, bridges, hospitals, shelters and farmlands have an impact on the entire social structure of a community. During wartime when there is scarcity of food, women are likely to decrease their intake. In South Asia, for example, during peace but in conditions of poverty, it is the girl child who is deprived of basic needs and education.¹³ Poverty and underdevelopment are universally recognised as a threat to peace and as condition, which particularly affect women and children.

Trapped in the crossfire, facing chaos and absolute vulnerability, women took on the challenge of building alternative organizational networks as the basis of personnel, family and community survival. It is argued that women, because of their

¹² Nussbaum Martha C., *Women and Human Development - The Capabilities Approach*, New Delhi, Kali for women, 2000, p.1.

¹³ Chenoy Anuradha M., *Militarism and women in South Asia*, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 2002 pp.29-30.

socialization and historical experience of unequal relations, bring different insight into the structure of power relations and different values to the process of peace building. Women's peace activism and feminist critical consciousness has questioned the centrality of the dominant meaning of peace as defined in the strategic discourse as an absence of war, and of security as national security. Instead, Women's perspectives tend to privilege the notion of a 'just' peace, as defined from the perspective of the discriminated and disempowered.¹⁴

Research has shown that in many countries women have not only proved to be extremely creative in developing survival mechanism, but has also taken up roles in ending violence. Building on women's direct experience and intimate knowledge of violence, they have redefined peace as not just an absence of violence but also the absence of violence both in public and private sphere. Since women are socializers, educators, and propagators they can connect the private to the public and play a key role in this process.¹⁵

Clearly, peace here is much more than an absence of conflict or an absence of fear of direct physical violence that Brock-Unte calls a 'negative peace'. A 'positive peace' she argues, includes absence, of structural inequalities in microstructures leading to unequal life chances and an absence of economic structures built up with in a country or between countries so that the life chances of some are reduced and the environment irretrievably degraded. Women's notion of peace is mediated by the vision of a 'just peace' and a 'positive peace'.¹⁶

¹⁴ Manchanda, Rita *Women, war and peace in South Asia*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001 p.10.

¹⁵ Chenoy. Anuradha M., "Gender Perspective for Peace and Decision Making" Asian Women for a Culture of Peace Conference, Hanoi, 6-9, December, 2000.

¹⁶ Manchanda, Rita *Women, War and Peace in South Asia*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001, p.18.

Traditionally, in many societies women are the sex mainly responsible for gathering firewood, looking after the hearth and carrying water. The environment is likely to have been damaged and neglected during the years of crisis, which deprived them of their normal works of life. In times of conflict, women took up the sole responsibility of social and economic burdens. Under circumstances even food and shelter are not always available. In such situations, women invent new ways to take up the responsibility of the family. Women even travelled long distance to trade. Yet, their political rights to participate in decision-making are generally ignored. Feminist scholars argue that, when conflict and violence have become important political concerns, women's role in decision-making should be recognised. Drude Dahlerup argues "Women's participation in politics on equal terms with men must be regarded not only as a matter of justice, but also as a potential for change."¹⁷ She argues that the isolation of women from decision-making simply is a failure to realize their potential for bringing a change.

Despite the horrors of tyranny and war, women do sometimes emerge from such times empowered. The war changes them. Women try to negotiate their own space within the public sphere, which was predominantly controlled by men. Many studies show that women have negotiated conflict situations by becoming citizens, combatants, heads of households, war munitions workers, prostitute, producers of soldiers and war resisters and political leaders at the local and national level. In South Asia, Manchanda pointed out how at one end is the women of violence represented by the Armed virgin of the liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), at the other end is

¹⁷ Drude Dahlerup, "Women in Political Decision Making" in Inger Skjelsback and Dan Smith (eds.) *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, London, Sage Publications, 2001, p.105.

the woman of peace, symbolized by the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) in the nationalist struggle for an independent Nagaland.¹⁸

Here I would like to draw attention to the North Eastern states of India where the region has been infested by a long over more than five decades of armed struggle. India's North East comprising seven states; Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura,¹⁹ has been the most continuously militarized region in India after independence. Since the 1950's the movement for self-determination which had been on going in the Northeast has been dealt with by a militarist response by the Indian state. An escalation of violence for more than five decades has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and property. This sustained militancy and violence have affected the civilian population in various ways. This region has become the longest theatre of insurgency in India and it is from here that India's nation building process faced its first challenge. Yet, while conflicts in Kashmir and Punjab were internationalised, "this region remained essentially a domestic Indian issue."²⁰

Today, in the whole region of the North Eastern States, Nagaland has witnessed, the longest history of state vis-a- vis community conflict. The struggle for self determination in Nagaland began way back before India got its Independence (from the British). Over more than five decades of turmoil has been a period of untold human sufferings both for the Indian state and the Naga's, the state have witnessed a situation of civil unrest.

Various laws have been enacted to counter insurgency operations. These Acts and Laws include the 1953 Assam maintenance of public order Act, the 1955 Assam

¹⁸ Manchanda, Rita *Women, war and Peace in South Asia*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001. p.11.

¹⁹ Sikkim joined the North Eastern Council in 1999.

²⁰ Bhaumik, Subir, *Insurgent Crossfire in North East India*, New Delhi, Lancer, 1996, p.41.

Disturbed Areas Act, and draconian laws such as the Armed forces special power Act, 1958. Despite appeals to the courts this particular Acts continues to be misused. It has also been well documented how it has led to the most gross abuses of human rights, including torture and rape, and been instrumental in the militarization of State policy.

As Paula Banerjee²¹ in one of her studies argues that, “the reality of the State vs. Community conflict in the North East, that is given to us, is a male reality, in contention with other realities, as most of the commentaries are male centric constructed on the basis of male power compulsion”. This to large extent is true, because, in most of the works analysed on violent conflicts in Northeast do not deal with women’s engagement in it. Yet, in armed conflict, it is women and children who are often trapped in the crossfire between militant struggles for self determination and the repressive machinery of the state, it is equally true that women in each of these areas have actively supported participated in and led struggles.

Aims of Research:

So far there has been no in depth studies about the position of the women in conflict situation in Naga society. Therefore, I would like to make an analysis of the various roles that Naga women played in situations of armed conflict, especially their interventions for peace and reconciliation processes. It aims to portray Naga women as individuals who in negotiating for peace can at times negotiate for their own space in the public sphere within the patriarchal power structure.

The Naga women interventions in armed struggle redefined the gender stereotype; it rather enabled them to innovate new means in building peace processes.

²¹ Dr. Paula Banerjee teaches at the Department of South and South East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta.

I have taken the time span of two decades i.e., 1980's till 2000. The reason why I have chosen this particular period is because the nature of the conflict within these two decades witnessed major historical events in the Naga struggle for independence. For instance, the rejection of the Shillong accord (1975) which led to the formation of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in 1980. Within a short span of eight years there was a split in NSCN and internationalization of the Naga question, and the present ceasefire between Indian State and NSCN.

This period also witnessed the most wide spread escalation of conflict. Various human right groups and activists have documented the various violation and the abuses by the security forces. Besides this, factionalism within the NSCN also gave rise to abuse of human rights within the Naga society. Another factor that occurred was an ethnic violence escalated in May 1992, in a low key manner between the Nagas and Kukis in Manipur, which lasted till 1996 when violence turned into a major destruction of lives and properties for both the communities.

However, the period is most significant in studying the, role played by the Naga women's participation in armed conflict. This period shows the greater realizations of women's engagement with every day growing violence, which led them to think on the issues of social security, peace, conflict resolution and transformation. Recognising the need to create a common platform to voice women's issues, the Naga Mothers' Associations (NMA) was formed in February 1984 in Kohima, Nagaland and the Naga Women's Union (NWUM), Manipur on the 7th January, 1994.

The present work is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter provides a useful point of entry into the problem of understanding the Naga conflict by tracing the history of the Naga Movement for self-determination. Here I have tried

to delineate the course of the Naga movement from its beginning. The focus of the chapter lies in identifying the shifting trajectories of Naga movement.

The second chapter looks at women in Naga society by locating them in the Naga history. By doing so I have dealt with the status of Naga women in a patriarchal structure entwined with the modern political culture of violence.

The third chapter is an attempt to understand the Naga women in conflict domain. To problematise this category I will deal with the two main Naga women organization- the Naga Mothers' Associations (NMA) and Naga Women's Union Manipur (NMUM). In the course of argument, I have tried to acknowledge the various ways women suffer from the consequences of war and how in this conflict situation they have negotiated their own space in public sphere.

Chapter-I

NAGA MOVEMENT: AN UNDERSTANDING THROUGH NARRATIVE

The world has witnessed a tremendous change in the form of violent conflict in international system soon after the end of Second World War. Today, wars are not fought between sovereign states, but most of these wars are civil wars within states causing as much damage and destruction as full-scale war. Despite the fact that the end of cold war and the new world order would bring peace, the incidence of war has not diminished in any way.

Since 1945, the World has witnessed an increasing incidence of intra-state conflicts, and this trend has escalated dramatically after 1989.¹ Out of the 196 wars between 1945 and 1996, the classical war between states accounted for less than 25 percent.² More than 90 per cent of these 196 wars fought between 1945 and 1996 took place in countries of what used to be called the Third World.³ In India, the intra-state conflict in Nagaland has persisted since the 1950s.⁴ Undoubtedly, this is the oldest armed conflict that directly challenged the postcolonial Indian state.

In my present Chapter, I would discuss the specific historical context of the conflict and the response of the postcolonial Indian state. My analysis falls into a form of periodization by taking some major events during the course of the movement.

¹ Gupta, Rakesh, "India Towards a Political Economy of Intra-State Conflict", K.P.S. Gill and Ajit Sahni (eds) *Faultlines*, vol. 05. New Delhi, Bulwark Books and the Institute of Conflict Management, May 2000 p. 105.

² Jung, Dietrich and Klaus Schlichte, "From Inter-State War to Warlordism: Changing Forms of Collective Violence in the International System" in Wiberg Hakan and Christian P Sherrer (eds) *Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflict, Types, Causes and Peace Strategies*, London, Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 1999, p. 35

³ *ibid.* p. 38.

⁴ Gupta, Rakesh, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

Among the purposes of the study, I have emphasized the historical narratives of the movement.

The "Naga" includes the 36 various tribes who have spread across the present state of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and some parts of Myanmar (Burma). So, whenever the Nagas refer to Nagaland or "Nagalim,"⁵ they mean these entire areas inhabited by them.

The total Naga Population in India-Myanmar is estimated 'not less than two million and they are scattered over a contiguous region starting from the Brahmaputra valley in Assam in the West, to the Chindwin river in the north-west Burma in the east, most Manipur in the South and Tirap and Changlang district in Arunachal Pradesh to the north.⁶

Before the advent of the British into the Naga Hills, the inhabitants of these hills knew themselves by the designation of their respective tribes only. It was in the last century after the occupation of some parts of the particular hill range, that the British colonialist called the hill areas as Naga Hills, then onwards the term 'Naga' began to be widely used for all these tribes who settled in these range.

The Nagas belong to Tibeto-Burman family and sub-families of the Tibeto – Chinese race. Comparatively philology agreed to point out that "the Nagas were among those who came down through Tibet to the Brahmaputra valley and the valleys of the Chidwin, Irawady, Salwin, Mekong etc, but were forced out of by successive Tibeto- Chinese invaders and driven into the mountains were they eventually settled

⁵ The Nagas have started using the word "Nagalim in place of "Nagaland" since 1997. "Lim" simply means "land" in Ao Naga Language. When Nagas refer to Nagalim they mean entire area inhabited by Nagas in the same way they used to use the word "Nagaland", which was divided by the British between India and Burma. The Indian Union created a state in 1963 named Nagaland, comprising only one third of the area inhabited by the Nagas.

⁶ NSF Seminar prepare, "The Naga Problem: An Account", New Delhi, 1985, p.2

down”⁷ This is how they eventually settled down in the present given geographical area.

Emergence of Naga Political Consciousness

The emergence of the Naga Political consciousness was not an abrupt event. It evolved over a period of time. Under the impact of the western education and Christianity, there was a gradual change in the outlook of the Nagas. This new awakening became more profound during the dawn of the present century when the world had seen rapid changes; the Nagas were also exposed to such changes.

However, the genesis of Naga Nationalism could be traced from the First World War. On the eve of this historic war, nearly 4000 strong Naga tribal men were recruited by the Britishers to serve as the labourers on the French front in 1917. The separation of this large number of young Nagas from their tribal land had got an opportunity to intermingle with the outside world that they have not experienced before.⁸

Perhaps from the experiences they gained in the war and from their contact with the totally different advanced nations of the west, the Naga soldiers came to realize their own ethnic, linguistic social and cultural uniqueness. These differentiations of Nagas themselves from the others have cleared the way to organize themselves into a small unit called the Naga club in 1918. The formation of this exclusive ethnic club by the Naga tribe was a significant landmark, which brought the unity and oneness among the various Naga tribes. Thus, the Nagas association with

⁷ Grierson, George A. “Linguistic Survey of India”, Vol. 1, Part 1, Tibeto-Burman Family, Calcutta, 1847, p.42.

⁸ Sumi, Huska “The Naga Nationalist Movement”, Seminar Paper Presented at the Sumi Kiphimi Kukhakulu, Nagaland, January 17, 1996.

the First World War had enlightened the spirit of the Nagas, which spearheaded an upsurge leading to the Naga national movement.⁹

The Naga national movement entered into a crucial phase during World War II. The war fought in the heart of Naga Hills had tremendous impact on the Nagas. The war helped in bringing about a greater degree of unity and solidarity among the various Naga tribes.

After the World War II, at the initiative of C.R. Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hill district in April 1945, the Naga Hills District Council was formed on the nucleus of the erstwhile "Naga Club" for rehabilitation and reconstruction of war devastated areas of Nagaland. However, the fast changing political situation transformed it into the Naga National Council in the course of a year. The formation of the Council was indeed a "major step in the consolidation of Naga nationalistic forces". The most significant fact about the council is that for the first time, the term "national" was used and the Naga National Council was composed of twenty-nine members representing different tribes of Nagas on the basis of proportional representation.¹⁰

The first political move by the NNC was in October 1946. They passed a resolution demanding the deputy commissioner of Naga Hills districts, to restrict the entry of member of any political party, from the rest of India, into the Naga Hills without the consent of the NNC.¹¹

When the departure of the British from India was imminent, the NNC, after series of discussions over the issues of Nagas complete independence, resolved to request for an interim government to look after the Naga Hills for a specific period of

⁹ Yonuo, Asoso *The Rising Nagas*, New Delhi, Vivek Publishing House, 1974, p.125-126,

¹⁰ Misra, U., "The Naga National Question" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XIII no.14, 8th April 1978, pp.618-22.

¹¹ Rammuny, M. *The World of the Nagas*, New Delhi, Northern Book Centre, 1998, p.18.

time. According to NNC request “the government of India was to act as the guardian power for a period of ten years at the end of which the Nagas would be free to determine their political future.”¹²

In June 1947, a nine point agreement known as Hydari agreement was arrived at between government of India represented by Sir Akbar Hydari, governor of Assam and the NNC, However, as no understanding was reached between the Nagas and the government, they declared themselves independent on 14th August 1947.

Towards the end of 1949, the NNC changed its goal favouring independence. To prove the point that desire for independence enjoyed mass support, NNC held a plebiscite¹³ in 1951 under Phizo. This was followed by the boycott of elections in 1952.

In March 30, 1953, the Nagas boycotted the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru with his counterpart Unu then Prime Minister of Burma. Mullik, who accompanied Nehru during their visit to the Naga Hills recorded that “Pandit Nehru, the darling of India’s crowd’, ‘was effectively boycotted by the Nagas, as ‘the entire Naga audience expecting a few government servants left the place of the meeting where Nehru were addressing, and he was left to address a few dozens of government servants and their family members, most of whom were not Nagas but plains people. The reasons behind the boycott was the refusal of the Nagas demand to read out a statement at the public meeting ‘for the acceptance of the 9 point programme and conceding their right to secede after ten years.’¹⁴

¹² Mishra, Udayan *North-East India Quest for Identity* (Naga National Question) Guwahati, Omson Publications, 1988, p.7.

¹³ Phizo inaugurated the “Plesbiscite” on the issue of Naga independence at Kohima on May 16, 1951, Seven thousand Nagas were reported to have put their thumb impressions in favour of independence on that day.

¹⁴ Vashum R. *Indo-Naga Conflict: Problem and Resolution*, New Delhi, Indian Social Institute Publication, 2001, pp. 37-38

By 1954, the situation in the Naga Hills became very tense. There were the India armed forces with intensive military operations, which were often accompanied with torture, intimidation, and so on. On the other hand, there were Naga nationalist who started going underground, as they could no longer stay over ground because of the Indian military operations. The Naga Nationalists (NNC) under the leadership of A.Z Phizo also formed a government of the Nagas called the "People's Sovereign Republic of Free Nagaland" generally Known as "Hongkin Government" (Hongkin in a change world meaning quit foreigner) in September 1954 in Khamnungan area.¹⁵

Treating the matter primarily a law and order problem, the Assam Government promulgated the Assam maintenance of public order (Autonomous Districts) Act, 1953 and applied it to the entire Naga hill district. Armed conflict started between the Indian military forces and the Naga nationalists. It was the unarmed common civilians who faced most of the brunt and pay a heavy price for it.

Subsequently, the Assam Distributed Areas Act, 1955, was enforced in January 1956 and law and order duties in the Naga Hills were finally handed over to the armed forces. With chances of a negotiated settlement finally receding to the background, the NNC declared the formation of the federal Government of Nagaland in March 1956. The irredentist stance of the Assam Government made matters worse and thousands of young men and women joined the Naga Home Gurad and the Naga Women's Society.¹⁶

Thereafter, the joint forces of Assam Rifles and Armed forces went on rampant operations to subdue the Nagas. In reprisal to that, 'the Naga Home Guard'

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 38

¹⁶ Mishra, Udayan *The Periphery Strikes Back*, Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2000, p. 38.

*The Naga Home Guard was raised by Phizo from among ex-servicemen and youth recruits. It was the beginning of the Naga Federal Army. The Naga Youth Movement and the Naga Women's Society were the youth wings of the Naga National Council.

under the 'Hong Kin Government' took up arms to defend their country. They started confronting and attacking police out post, looting arms and kidnapping the Assam Rifles. This led to full scale Indo-Naga armed conflict.¹⁷

The first fierce-fighting started from Tuensang Frontier Area (Free Nagland) on 25 March 1995. In a short period, it spread to the neighbouring areas. The government of Indian was unable to contain the force of Naga resistance subsequently; they declared Tuensang and Mokokchung to be 'disturbed areas' in the name of law and order disturbances.¹⁸

However, this does not make the situation better. Rather it turns out to be bad to worse. Day after day, violence only begetting violence committed both by the Assam Rifles and the Naga rebels. It was the innocent civilians who were caught up in the cross fire unable to have a peaceful live.

The allegations of indulgence of orgy of rape, torture and murder by Indian armies and security forces were debated in the Lok Sabha on 23rd August 1956.¹⁹ The late Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia accused the Indian army of indulging in an orgy of rape, pillages and murder. He added that 2,000 people whose village were burnt down had been starving in the jungles and that over 500 were in the prison.²⁰ But Nehru denied the allegation and charge of Indian Armies involvement, where he declared, "The Army had shown remarkable patience in the face of considerable provocation,"²¹ and all incidents had been investigated and the guilty punished.

The hardship and suffering received from the Naga guerillas were retaliated to the innocent villagers by the Indian armies. They arrested the 'suspected

¹⁷ Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement, Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict*, Delhi, Regency Publications, 2001. p. 51

¹⁸ *ibid.* pp. 51-52.

¹⁹ Yonuo, Asoso, *The Rising Nagas*, Delhi, Vivek Publishing House, 1974, p. 218

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 218

²¹ *ibid.* p. 218

underground or over ground and tortured in diverse manner, kept hanging upside down for several hours, kicked with boots, hits with gun butts and subjected to electric shocks, with the intent of taking revenge".²²

And at the same time, the Naga guerillas also tortured and brutally murdered the Naga, whom they suspected of helping the Indian Government.²³ Around this time the Indian Government again initiated a major step by raising a force of local militia or village guard to fight against the Naga underground. According to B.N. Mullik "there was nearly one security troop to every adult male in the Naga hills Tuensang area".²⁴ As a consequence, the Naga guerilla also suffered heavily, but did not give up their struggle for freedom.

In the midst of the turbulent atmosphere, S.M. Dutt the Indian intelligence officer realized that "solution to the Naga problem did not lie only in fighting²⁵ with the Naga guerillas". He conceived a brilliant idea to separate the Naga Hill District from Assam to form a separate unit. In the meanwhile, the church leaders also openly came forward and condemned the violence "an appeal to the Christian Nagas to work for peace".²⁶

In 1957 (August 22 to 26), some Naga moderates (some overground Nagas) organized an All Tribes Naga People's Convention (NPC) in Kohima. They were to play the middle role between the conflicting parties – the NNC and the Indian Government. The important initial outcome of the convention was the setting up of a separate administrative unit called the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA), under the

²² Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement, Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* Delhi, Regency Publications, 2001, p-54.

²³ *ibid.* p. 54.

²⁴ Mullick, B.N. *My Years with Nehru 1948-64*, Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1972 pp-313-14.

²⁵ *ibid.* p 314

²⁶ Alemchiba, A. *Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, Kohima, The Naga Institute of Culture, 1970. p. 186.

Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India to be administered through the Governor of Assam acting in his discretion as the Agent of the president which came into effect from 1st December 1957.²⁷ Later, these members of NPC, under the leadership of Dr. Imkongmeren, bargained for the creation of Nagaland state within the Indian Union. Finally the state of Nagaland was born on 1st December 1963. The new state "Nagaland" functioned under the Ministry of External Affairs, which continued till 1972.

However, the creation and existence of Nagaland state caused great confusion and controversy among the Nagas as much as it had further divided the Nagas. The existence of Nagaland State was rejected by the Naga National Council. According to Phizo the 16 point agreement signed between the government of India and NPC "was nothing more than a 'bribe' given by the government to the members of the Naga people's convention (NPC)". He further stated that, "the Naga people's convention was no more than a puppet assembly. The Naga people will accept neither the Indian 'bribe' of statehood nor India's offer of internal autonomy as something to be ecologised. It is only a means to conceal her (India's) heinous crime against humanity". Dr. Imkongmeren who was the architect of the NPC and formation of Nagaland state was assassinated on August 22,²⁸ 1961 by the underground nationalist.

Despite the creation of Nagaland State, the incidence of violence and hostilities still continued and the need of the movement most felt was to restore peace in Nagaland. Meanwhile, concerned with the turbulent situation in Nagaland state, the Nagaland Baptist Church council held a convention at Wokha from January 31st to

²⁷ Vashum R. *Indo Naga Conflict; Problem and Resolution*, New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, 2001, p. 39

²⁸ *ibid.* p-41

February 2nd 1964. This convention unanimously resolved to request the Government of Indian and the Federal Government of Nagaland to form a 'Peace mission', Ultimately, the convention nominated B P Chaliha (the then Chief Minister of Assam), Jay Prakash Narayan; Shankarrao Deo and Reverend Michael Scott (A British Citizen). Shankarrao Deo could not join on health ground. Thus the three members of peace Mission were formed.

Within two months of formidable negotiations by the peace mission a cease fire agreement was signed on 24th May 1964,²⁹ at Sakarbama Village by the three members of the peace mission and six members on behalf of the federal Government of Nagaland.³⁰ The first Indo-Naga peace talks took place at Chedema Camp near Kohima on 23 September 1964.

With no progress coming through the intial peace talks due to the stubborn stands of both the parties concerned, the Peace Mission members launched a proposals package called "Nagaland Peace Mission's Proposals" on 20 Dec. 1964. The main idea behind the proposal was to led both the parties continue to make efforts to get to a meeting point while appreciating each others polar view points. The key differences of the stands of the Naga Federal Government and the Indian Government were also highlighted in the proposal.³¹

With the insistence of Federal Government of Nagaland, the first round of ministerial talks between the Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi and the Naga Federal leaders led by Kughato Sema, Ato Kilonser (Prime Minister) was held in New Delhi

²⁹ Aosenba, *The Naga Resistance Movement, Prospects of Peace and Armed Conflict* Delhi, Regency Publications, 2001, p-68.

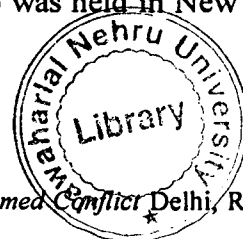
³⁰ Alemchiba. A. *Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, Kohima, The Naga Institute of Culture, 1970, p. 202

³¹ Vashum R. *Indo-Naga Conflict; Problem and Resolution*, New Delhi, Indian Social Institute, 2001, p. 42.

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on 18 February, 1966 in the presence of peace mission.³² Even those talks culminated in a deadlock.³³

Subsequently, with the failure of the ceasefire agreement, the Indian Army was called back into action and the Government of India terminated the extension of 8 years of cease-fire agreement on 1 September 1972. Soon after this from the middle of 1973, the situation in Nagaland deteriorated again.

For the first time in the history of the Naga National movement, the government of India enforced the unlawful Activities Act 1967 and banned the activities of the federal government of Nagaland, the Naga federal Army, and the Naga National Council on September 1, 1972.³⁴ The Indian Armed Forces launched extensive operations against the Naga underground. In retaliation, the Naga federal Army also took counter measures against the Indian Armies. Perhaps, this was also the time when the Naga Federal Armies escaped to China for military training. This had mounted the Indian Government to take more restrictions on the Naga underground leaders. Thus in exchange of the crossfire between the two-armed parties, more atrocities was committed to the civilians.

The Shillong Accord

In May 1975, President's Rule was imposed in the state of Nagaland, which was followed by the declaration of National Emergency (India) in the same month. During this period an understanding for peaceful negotiation was reached between the Naga underground leaders and the Government of India. After serious discussions both parties entered into agreement on 11 November 1975, which is known as the Shillong Accord. The Naga underground consisted of six members

³² Aosenba, op. cit., p.71.

³³ Vashum R, op. cit., p.42.

³⁴ *ibid*, p.47.

delegation led by Kevi Yalley, brother of A Z Phizo and the Government of India represented by L.P. Singh, then Governor of Nagaland.

However, the Shillong Accord created more complication with the Naga underground leaders. It brought disunity, misunderstanding and differences of opinion within the Nagas. After hearing the news of the agreement Isak and Th Muivah who were on "Goodwill Mission" to China³⁵ immediately "denounced the Accord as treason and the signatories representing NNC federal Government were declared traitors".³⁶ The Accord was seen as a surrender pact and not surprisingly Muivah and Isak Swu refused to lend their support. Thus Isak-Swu, Muivah and Khaplang broke away from the NNC and jointly formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) on 2 February 1980. It is said that they had chosen to "fight to a finish for one's nation freedom".³⁷ Thus the Naga National movement entered into a new chapter with the creation of NSCN.

In the past decades, especially from about the mid 1950's, there were widespread human rights violations on the Nagas. Villagers were killed, tortured and extra judicial execution during the combing operations. With the introduction of various laws and regulations, Naga men and women were tortured and sexually assaulted.

The former Nagaland Chief Minister, S C Jamir described the situation in 1974, thus, "Most of the villages and granaries were burnt down and the people preferred to run away and hide in the jungles for safety."³⁸

³⁵ Verghese, B.G. *India's North East Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development* New Delhi, Konark Publishers, 1997, p.95.

³⁶ NSCN Publication "A Brief Political Account of Nagaland", Unpublished, 1993, p.31.

³⁷ Aosenba, op. cit., p.79.

³⁸ Jamir, S.C. "The Reality and the Myth", Calcutta, The Statesman, 1974) quoted in Luithui and Nandita Haksar, (eds.) *Nagaland File*, New Delhi, Lancer, 1984, p.26.

In fact, except for a few cases of human rights violations being given some justice under the judicial system of India, many cases were committed and unattended without being known to the outside world.

Formation of the NSCN:

An underground parallel government known as the Government of peoples' Republic of Nagaland (GPRN) was established in 1980 replacing the federal government of Nagaland(FGN). In the political wing i.e. NSCN; Isak Swu (Sema Naga) was the Chairman, Khaplang (a Pangmi Naga of upper Myanmar) Vice Chairman and Muivah (Tangkhul Naga from Manipur) as general secretary.

With the NSCN's formation, the NNC members were taken as opponents close to those who signed the Shillong Accord, as it had failed to condemn the accord officially.

Beginning from 1980, the Naga Armed struggle took a fresh turned. With the rejection of Shillong. Accord by few section of the Naga underground leaders and the regenerated insurgency by National Socialist Council of Nagalnd (NSCN), created a new political turmoil in Nagalim. Insurgency started in full swing. The Indian State response to this situation was also more repressive. The failure of Shillong Accord and the regenerated insurgency by the NSCN created a fresh enthusiasm among certain section of the youth. The NSCN took advantage of this and launch a massive recruitment drive. And no wonders it was reported to have a 3000 strong army trained in modern weaponry.³⁹ On 12 May 1981 the NSCN led a major attack on the Indian outpost at Fakmali in Tuensang killing twelve-army man and carried away two light machine guns, two sten guns, three rifles, 1 wireless set and a large quantity of

³⁹ Nag, Sajal, *Contesting Marginality: Ethnicity, Insurgency and Subnationalism in North East India*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 2002, p.286.

ammunition.⁴⁰ Thus began another chapter in the history of insurgency in Naga National Movement.

In its attack on 9 July 1987 on the Assam Rifles post at Qinam in the Senapati district of Manipur, the NSCN kill 9 Jawans and carried away a huge quantity of arms and ammunition. The three tones of ammunition that they took included 90 self loaded rifles, 10 light machine guns, 22 stenguns, 28,052 rounds of ammunition, 396 handgrenades, 300 detonators, 60 bombs and two light mortares.⁴¹ In relation to this the Assam Rifles during operation bluebird' subjected the villagers of Oinam and 30 of its surrounding villages to various kinds of inhuman torture. Men were hung upside down, buried alive and given electric shocks. Women were molested and raped. In all these insurgency operation and counter insurgency operation, it is also the innocent villagers, especially women who bear the bunt of it.

However, within a short span of Eight years, when the NSCN had well established itself with popular support from the Nagas, there was a vertical split in the organization.

Split in the NSCN:

On 30th April, 1988, Muivah Camp was attacked by the S.S. Khaplang and Brigadier Khole Konyak group, killing about 140 men mostly the Tangkhuls, while 230 others including women and children here killed by bullets, hunger and sickness, some died at the hands of the Burmese armies.⁴² But Th Muivah with 33 others managed to escape and join up with Isak Swu.⁴³ The massacre of the Muivah group

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 285.

⁴¹ *ibid.* p.286.

⁴² Aosenba, *op. cit.* p.80.

⁴³ *ibid.* p.80.

was “a horrible setback to the Naga struggle for sovereignty” resulting in a split into the Khaplang and Muivah- Swu NSCN faction.⁴⁴

In the whole course of Naga insurgency the underground inspite of asserting Naga identity, couldn't overcome their worst enemy i.e. the particular identity of their own tribe to which they belonged. Both the NSCN (K) and NSCN (IM) factions geared up to consolidate their own holds in terms of military strength as well as to win mass public support, and there seems to be no compromise between the groups, each trying to out do the other, while keeping sovereignty of the Nagas as their main goal.

Thus, the NSCN organization becomes a divided house based on tribal lines as one can see now. This had created confusion in the minds of the masses that are unable to voice their opinion due to fear of bullets. Because of these reasons, today the Naga community seems to be in total suspense.

The NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) started infighting and eliminating each other. As a matter of undeniable fact, both the factions have committed enough crimes during the last few decades. Among the killed or murdered, comprised of valiant soldiers to generals, from general to civil officers, belonging to both underground and over ground leaders and patriots man and women, including missionaries and the most innocent citizens.⁴⁵

According to Dr. Lanunungshang, this kind of random killings, assassination attempts and spraying of bullets from the most sophisticated weapons within the Naga public, he said, “will be recorded as the most shameful act in the Naga history. Their own people have become their main targets of the Nagas themselves.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p.80.

⁴⁵ Lanunungshang, *From Phizo to Muivah: The Naga National Question in North East India*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2002, p.98.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p.98.

Currently, the nature of human rights violation has taken a new form. Violations of human rights abuse are not only by the Indian Armed Forces. But the fratricidal killings have become the new order of every day live. "Whether the Nagas are murdered/ shot deal by Indian Armed forces or otherwise, human rights violation is violation" said Dr. Lanunungshang. Sanjoy Hazarika, an author and a columnist, in his articles under the Caption "Banner of Revolt", said, "Nagas guns and bullets are not trained on Indian troops but against the fellow Nagas based on ethnic, ideological and personal loyalties. It is especially tragic among a deeply religious people. Who take the teaching of the church very seriously."⁴⁷ Pained by the fratricidal killings among the Naga communities, the women organizations such as the Naga Mothers' Association and Naga Women's Union, Manipur has appealed to shun violence and killing with the slogan "SHED NO MORE BLOOD."

The split in the NSCN weakened the organization considerably, and was evident from the fact that from 1987 to 1990 it did not launch any intensive attack.⁴⁸ In 1990 it came back to news headline with its attempt on the life of S C Zamir the then Chief Minister of Nagaland. On 4 August 1991 the NSCN struck again. It attacked the convoy of the then speaker Mr. Thenochu who escaped unhurt but the policemen were killed.⁴⁹

In yet another incident, the NSCN killed eight CRPF Jawans (December 1991) and made off with lakhs of rupees the Jawans were carrying. It was followed by another attack on June, 1992 an army convoy in Phek district in which five commissioned officers and several jawans were killed.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Sanjoy Hazarika quoted in Lanunungshang op. cit. p.98.

⁴⁸Nag, Sajal, op. cit., p.289.

⁴⁹The Sentinel, Guwahati, 29 June 1992.

⁵⁰The Sentinel, Guwahati, 29 June 1992.

In the 1990's if there were much report on the insurgent activities of the Naga undergrounds, as also of the North Eastern part of the Indian sub continent, it is the NSCN (IM) who had captured the centre stage.

Despite many confrontations, in the year 1993, a momentous event took place in the history of the Nagas. NSCN (IM) met the UN sub Commission on Human Rights at Geneva in August 1992 and managed to get membership of the un-represented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) on January 23, 1993 at The Hague in its third General Assembly.

The NSCN (IM) has been able to internationalize its cause by opening its office in a number of countries including Sweden, Bangladesh, Singapore, Pakistan, the United States of America, Nepal, Thailand, among others.⁵¹

It has also retained a public relations forum "Caxton Publicity limited" base in Kent UK, to handle its publicity and lobbying in various international forum to educate the, 'international forum' about the independence struggle waged so that it can attract attention of international organization towards the repression by the Indian government.⁵²

However, in the home front things don't seem to change much. The massive shootout between the Naga rebels and Indian Armed Forces took place almost every alternate day, creating a fear psychosis for the innocent civilians. On 27 December 1994 there was a massive shoot out between the NSCN (K) and the Indian Army in Mokokchung town of Nagaland resulting in the death of seven people including civilian.⁵³ On march 1995 any army convoy coming from Imphal to Kohima was fired

⁵¹ POU. P.S. Vaison 1995, *The Shepoumaramth in the Naga National Movement*, Nagaland, Shepoumaranth Region, GPRN.

⁵² Maitra, Kiranshankar *The Nagas Rebel and Insurgency in the North East*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1998, p.184.

⁵³ The Sentinel, Guwahati, 28 December 1994.

upon by NSCN (IM), subsequently it was reported that there was no firing but the sound of a tyre burst from the nearby area. The panic stricken Rashtriya Rifles too opened fires in the middle of the Kohima town resulting in the death of 8 Civilians.⁵⁴ By March 1995 the insurgent groups in the renewed escalation of terrorism and violence had killed more than 150 persons including 13 policemen, 18 army personnel and 112 civilians. Thus, no matter who the perpetrator is, the various human rights violations, which occurred daily in Nagalim ultimately affect the entire peaceful atmosphere to live, since they are caught between the insurgents and the army, repeated curfews and counter-insurgency reparations. The normal life gets paralysed. The results of the war of alteration were nothing but the loss for both the warring parties. For the Nagas it was one of the worst sufferings that they could have ever faced. Many villages were uprooted and displaced to new settlement, villages burned down, killing of thousands of people, leaving behind many widows and Orphans, raping of woman, starvation, and complete erosion of community. On the Indian side also, it was no gain in any way rather it was a tragic waste of lives, wealth time and energy for no cause of honour. Thus, the conflict ultimately gives a sad story for both the groups-mutual destruction for both.

The five decades of conflict in Nagalim has eroded the Naga society. Besides corruption in financial matters, the politicians and their allies would try to divide the Naga people on ethnic lines and factional affiliations for their own end so that they remain in power. R.Vashum points out that the Naga politicians and their collaborators have been enjoying maximum facilities that perhaps no government on earth could afford to give to its citizens- "enjoy power, make money and no work."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The Sentinel, Guwahati, 6 March 1995.

⁵⁵ Vashum, R, op. cit., p.106.

The latest initiative of peace talks, which was initiated, by P.V. Narsimha Rao then Prime Minister of India began with hope for conflict resolution. Later the change of government in New Delhi facilitated the peace initiative when the new Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda during his North-East visit invited the underground leaders for negotiation.⁵⁶ Prominent Naga citizens and organizations decided to seize the opportunity and strengthen the initiative. The Naga people decided to take the initiative to get the NSCN (IM) agree to unification and then sit for the talks. Thus, the Naga HoHo (the summit conference of the Naga) along with prominent NGOs like the Naga people's Movement for Human Rights, Naga Mothers' Association, Naga Student Federation and Church leaders held discussions to start the peace process. A United Naga conference was held on 6 February 1997 to deliberate on the subject.⁵⁷

Ultimately, on 1 August 1997, the ceasefire agreement came to effect between the Government of India and NSCN (IM), which continue till today. After almost 50 years guns were silent in the hills of Nagaland to some extend.

However, despite ceasefire, the fratricidal killings have not stopped. The General Secretary of NSCN (K) Dally Mungro, the second man in the command was killed in August 1999. With both the NSCN (IM) and NSCN (K) confronting each other, 'factionalism became the main obstacle'⁵⁸ for the cease fire agreement. Whatever the outcome may be, today, because of the ongoing ceasefire, tensions have reduced to a large scale. The various Naga organizations have appealed the insurgents to abjure violence and urged to give peace a chance.

⁵⁶ The Sentinel, Guwahati, 25 October 1996.

⁵⁷ The Sentinel, Guwahati, 18 February 1997.

⁵⁸ The Sentinel, Guwahati, 26 May 1997.

Inspite of many economic packages that are given to the state, majority of the Naga remained backward. Drug and alcohol abuse has become so rampant since the early 1980's. Due to this, AIDS cases started arising rapidly due to injection of heroin. A nouveau culture of sex and violence, drugs and music, bribery and corruption came into existence. The collapse of society due to political turmoil has resulted in poverty, family disintegration further eroded community ties, contributing to deviant behaviour and the spread of prostitution. This armed conflict has tremendously affected women's personal well being, their status and role in the family, their access to economic resources, their political participation and their general attitudes and perception. These generations of sufferings due to the long political turmoil in the region has necessitated a dramatic role change whereby women became the providers, and in some cases, the defenders of family and society. Even during the Naga- Kuki ethnic clash, it was women who came out to build a bridge between the two communities through dialogue and mutual understanding. Though the Naga-Kuki conflict affected the economy of Manipur as a whole, the most affected people as internally displaced persons were mainly from four districts inhabited mostly by the Nagas-Senapati, Tamenglong, Ukhrul and Chandel.

In the face of all these sufferings, the two women organizations-the NMA and NWUM intervened against violence and negotiated their own space in public spheres, which was predominantly occupied by men. In the present situation, these women organisations enjoy trust from all sides, thus, playing a very vital role in furthering dialogue and mutual understanding and thereby bringing peace to the Naga societies. Conflict open new opportunities for changing existing gender relations and emancipatory actions in Naga society, which we will be discussing in details in the next chapter.

Chapter-II

NAGA WOMEN TRACING THE HISTORY

The problem of understanding women's experience in the past and in contemporary societies is compounded by the monopoly that men have exercised over scholarship through most of our history. Men have interpreted social patterns on the basis of male observations and the work of other male scholars. Indeed, to some extent, the universal pattern of female subordination and social marginality may be an illusion created by the fact that we still see women predominantly through men's eye¹. Hardly ever, and hardly anywhere, have women written history². Many a time women's contribution is hardly documented or marginalized in any of the history books. Being characterized by tradition of sex discrimination, this is true even for the Naga women. The Naga society has the same patrilineal and patriarchal system, which discriminate women one way, or the other, which affects the status of Naga women.

This again is true that the females which constitute about half of the total human population play a vital role in socio-economic functioning of the society. As a matter of fact, since the inception of human civilization, women have been an integral part of nature, society and culture. But in reality, the contributions of women are underestimated, marginalized and their role pauperized³. This chapter is an attempt to focus the various attributes of women in Naga society tracing the history from published sources and oral history.

¹ Harris Barbara J. and Jo Ann K. McNamara (eds.), *Women and the Structure of Society*, Duke Press Policy Studies, U.S.A., 1984, p.2

² Menon, Ritu and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1998, p.14.

³ Kar, Bimal K., *Women Population of North East India: A Study in Gender Geography*, New Delhi, Regency Publications, 2002, p.1.

Naga Women and Colonial History

It is difficult to trace the history of Naga women because the Nagas did not have a written records or chronicles of the times as they did not have a written script. As such, there are no written documents about the Nagas before the advent of the Britishers to the Naga Hills. Oral history and folklore tells that the Nagas once had their own script, which was written, on a piece of animal skin. One day a dog got hold of the previous piece of skin and began chewing it. From this day onwards, it is believed that, the Nagas lost the script.

In fact, the recorded history of the Nagas begins with the advent of the British era, when the British administrators, philologists, anthropologists and American missionaries, started their researches across the vision of centuries upon the historical threads survived in those of legend traditions. These oriental scholars located this legendary tradition against the background of primitive social political, economic and religious beliefs, customs and institutions of the Nagas, amongst whom their lives were acclimatized more deeply, and they wrote about them⁴. The coming of Christians in Naga Hills in 19th century had become a striking subversive force against their long held traditional assumptions upon which the early stage of their civilization were based and eventually changed altogether to new institutions and cultural forms. The process ends an old era and defines a new era by the break it provides with the past⁵.

The missionaries brought about numerous changes in fundamental constitution of Naga's thoughts and actions by translating the Christian hymns and other literary works and distributing the Biblical and other literature by introducing the Roman

⁴ Yono Asoso, *The Rising Nagas*, Delhi, Vivek Publishing House, 1974, p.35.

⁵ *ibid*, p.119.

script into Naga languages. There is no doubt about the fact that, from this period of colonial time onwards, an orderly study of the life and history of the Nagas started.

Soon, Naga traditions and folklores attracted many research scholars and writers. Today, many accounts of Naga history have been documented in many of the books. Many of the shelves in various houses and libraries are filled with texts on the Nagas and its resistance movement from the time of colonial British administration and the Indian state. However, history does not record the name of any women except Rani Gaidinliu⁶. Though these revolts were mostly collective revolts, the names of the leaders mostly of men. To quote one observer, "if one picks up any book written about the Naga resistance movement, one may conclude that Naga women have not been represented as members in the struggle"⁷. Occasionally one comes across list of names of women raped, tortured and killed by the Indian security personals, given chronologically in the index of a book. A grievous injustice has been done to the heroic efforts of countless women. It is as though whatever changes were brought about, were the outcome of men's endeavor alone. The gender differences and discrimination that put women all over the world always at a disadvantage position is also visible in the Naga patriarchal society.

To quote Lucy Zehol, "it is now perhaps time to realize that a new perspective is needed so that women in society could be studied through the women's view point"⁸. The Naga women today has a little more advantage to address their own issues with the formation of the various Naga women organizations at village levels

⁶ Rani Gaidinliu was the follower of Jadonang who led a movement early in 1925 with an aim to revive the earlier animism, to drive the British out from Naga soil and to achieve freedom. At the young age of thirteen she felt that she had a special call from her deity to be of service to her people. Gaidinliu concentrated her rebellion in the Trans-Barak Basin i.e., the present Manipur's Tamenglong district, southern Nagaland and the North Cachar Hills of Assam. She also established a cult called "Heraka" (not impure) which is a modified form of the Zeliangrong traditional religion.

⁷ Kikon, Dolly, "Political Mobilisation Of Women In Naga-Land: A Sociological Background" Naga People's Movement for Human Rights Vol.6, No.1, Quarterly Publication, April 2002.

⁸ Zehol, Lucy, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publications, 1998, p.1.

with its apex organizations such as the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) and Naga Women Union, Manipur (NMUM).

Naga Women and Traditions

The Nagas cultural patterns cannot be regimented because it has diverse groups within the Nagas themselves. It varies from tribe to tribe and from village to village. However, traditionally the Naga society is centered on a self-contained village society. They were closely knit society based on human equality, a high sense of integrity and a belief in Supreme Being. Verrier Elwin, an anthropologist, pointed out that, "the basic interest of every Naga is his family, the clan, the khel, (part of a village) the village. This is what he regards as his culture, which must not be interfered with. He is passionately attached to his land, his system of land tenure, the arrangements for the government of his village, the organization of cultivation, the administration of tribal justice through the village and tribal courts"⁹. The main method of cultivation of the Naga people is known as jhumming cultivation or slash and burn. Hunting, fishing, pottery, basketry, blacksmith are the other forms of occupations they are engaged in. Inter village head hunting was very common in Naga society before the advent of the Britishers. In order to understand the Naga women's position in their society, the traditional village set up has to be kept in mind.

Like any other patriarchal society, men have the assertive manipulative power in almost all spheres of life in Naga society. Where he brings the women in, it is as a 'helper'. The women too have become so conditioned that they readily accept this situation. The birth of a girl child is welcome because she is considered a helper of the family. A girl child is expected to get up at dawn to make fire, fetch water and wood. She assists her mother in pounding and husking rice, weaving, chopping wood and prepares meals. She is to know all processes of procuring cotton and its preparation of

⁹ Elwin, Verrier, *Nagaland*, Calcutta, Sree Saraswaty Press, 1961, p.9.

weaving till the whole family is clothed sufficiently with the work of her art. The loom becomes exclusively a woman's possession and men may not touch it.

Majority of the household chores are assigned to women. To quote Horam, "the mother plays the main role of the domestic affairs. She looks after the children, weaves cloth for the entire family, passes the art of weaving on to her daughters, stores food for a rainy day, brews rice beer (zu) and rice wine for her husband and his friends, dries tobacco for his pipe and feeds the pigs, poultry and cattle, cooks the food, portions out the food, feeds the children, fetches water in long bamboo pipes from the distant village water supply, helps her husband chop wood in the jungle for fuel and carry it all the way home, pounds paddy, makes rice cakes and other delicacies for the family. In addition, she takes fair share in jhumming land for cultivations, digging the paddy fields, transplanting paddy and protecting the growing crops from birds and other destructive animals. Laziness is a luxury among these hard worked or, to be nearer the truth, overworked women. When not engaged in difficult work or when not on their feet, they may be seen bending over their looms or some needle work. The lady of the house is the last to retire at night and first to rise long before the crack of dawn. If her household goes hungry or if the grain falls short of the requirements due to any mismanagement of domestic affairs, accusing fingers would point at her disapprovingly for her negligence and carelessness or indifferences towards her family. Not only must she set an example by her constant hard work but she must also learn to extract work from her children."¹⁰

This summed up the role of women in traditional Naga society. She was the main force behind elevating poverty in her family, rendering great service and handing down healthy tradition of hard work to her offsprings. Women were regarded

¹⁰ Horam, M., *Naga Polity*, New Delhi, B.R. Publishers, 1975. p.46.

as greater assets in the house because without them the domestic works were not got done. In the past, the life of Naga women was unbelievably arduous. Her life was shadow by anxiety for her husband, sons and brothers and by fear for herself and children who might at any time be attack by raiders in search of human heads.

In the days of head hunting or when most men had to wage wars, the women shoulder even greater responsibilities. While the men indulged in sports of all kinds, the women held the post at home giving provisions and supplies for the fighting men, women had to worry about growing, storing and preparing food for the family and bringing up the children. When the tired husband came home with the kill after a hunt or a head after a head hunting raids, she had to entertain the friends who accompanied him or come to celebrate his achievement.¹¹ Women had to also take up the heavy burden of work in the jhum (clearings) on the steep slopes of hills often a long distance from the house. When she return in the evening, she might have to climb down a long distant to the nearest water point to fetch water, for most Naga villages are perched on the tops of hills.

As pointed out earlier, it is difficult to make a generalized statement about the status of women in Naga society due to its diverse societies. The different Naga tribes have its own set of standards for women though they have a lot in common. For instance "the position of women in the Sema tribe is ... probably higher socially, as it is morally than in either of the Ao and Angami tribes"¹² However, the Naga women as a whole has a free life. She enjoys considerable freedom. She participates freely in singing and dancing during festivals and entertains the guests. She is not subjected only to child bearing. She is married when she is mature and if her marriage is a

¹¹ *ibid*, p.49

¹² Hutton, J.H., *The Sema Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1968, p.183.

To quote Mills, "An Ao woman is very far from being a slave and a drudge. Her position is no whit inferior to that of a man. She always has her clan behind her, and were bad tempered husband to bully his wife he would soon have a swarm of angry in-laws buzzing around his ears, and his wife would promptly leave him. All her life a woman enjoys considerable freedom".¹³ So also is the case of Lhota women "A Lhota's wife is by no means a slave or chattel but a very real companion".¹⁴ In and about the house the duties are divided. The division of work among man and woman seems to be the product of a warring culture. The husband does the heavy work, while his wife cooks and makes the clothes. At feasts of merit, which are perhaps the greatest of all occasions in a man's life, his wife plays a prominent and honorable part. On days of festivity she acts as hostess and talks freely with the guests. Relations between boys and girls are free and friendly. They meet freely, work together, sing together and have great fun and laughter. "Tribal women of this region held a high position in work. They work with their men folk in the agricultural field and play an important role in agricultural activities".¹⁵

Naga Women in Folklores

There is a myth about women in Naga society, which placed women at a high position in certain aspect. In traditional Tangkhul society, "Pukriela"¹⁶ has a very significant role at the time of war or making peace. It is said that, when inter clan, inter village or inter tribal conflicts arose, pukriela would intervene with all the power and authority in her own right and bring peace among the warring groups. Pukriela would stand between the two fighting groups, stretch out her arms and shout, "Stop! Stop Fighting! It is enough, too much blood has been shed, and too many lives have been lost. You, on my brother's side and you on my husband's side, stop fighting and let peace prevail from now on for my sake. For, I am a sister for some of

¹³ Mills, J.P., *The Ao Nagas*, London, Macmillan, 1926, pp.211-212

¹⁴ Mills, J.P., *The Lhota Nagas*, London, Macmillan, 1922, p.111.

¹⁵ Sen, Shipra, *Tribes of Nagaland*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications 1987, p.29.

¹⁶The Word "Pukriela" in Tangkhul means woman married to a man belonging to a clan other than her own or a different village and/or also a different tribe for that matter.

you and a wife for some of you. If I suffer for the loss of my brothers, my husband will also be unhappy and if I become a widow, my brother will equally be unhappy for my sake. So let there be no more war between my brothers' side and my husband's side but peace and friendship reign from now on"¹⁷.

Even in Chakhesang (Chokri and Khezha) society women were believed to own the spirit associated with wealth and riches (Nyiepi-o). It is mentioned that, during inter village feuds, it was very rare that a particular village would volunteer to act as a mediator between two warring villages. In such a situation women played the commendable role of a mediator. From a village, some outstanding women were chosen as mediators called 'Demi' to mediate and call for peace between the warring villages. Apart from the above role, Demis were the only one to carry the head of the slain one to the bereaved family. Their role was so important that it was taboo to slain or kill a Demi. She was the only one to break the ice for peace talks between two warring villages.¹⁸ This myths also exist in Mao and Konyak Naga society. In Mao society, a 'nulo' (women ambassadors) performed the work of a mediator. After the harvest, the belu kotow or blessing for prosperity ceremony is only performed by women.¹⁹

However, after having said about all these myths, in reality women were not allow to address or stand before the village crowd except taking on the role of pukriela or Demi during the wars. According to Paul Leo (NPMHR), "participation of women in the decision making body has been a taboo for woman since time

¹⁷Hungyo, Valley Rose, "Pukriela" Raisunriang (Newslink), 5th issue, Naga Women's Union, Manipur, 2001 See also Zehol, Lucy, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publications, , 1998,p.23.

¹⁸ Zehol Lucy, *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, , 1998,p.70

¹⁹ Mao, Xavier, "Status of Women in Mao Society" in Lucy Zehol (ed) *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi,Regency Publication, , 1998,p.39-40

However, after having said about all these myths, in reality women were not allow to address or stand before the village crowd except taking on the role of pukriela or Demi during the wars. According to Paul Leo (NPMHR), "participation of women in the decision making body has been a taboo for woman since time immemorial and it continue even to this day particularly in villages".²⁰ The women in Ao society are not allowed to be a member of Putumenden²¹ (the traditional Ao political institution). The office of the awunga (chief) is passed on to the eldest son, since the chiefship is hereditary. If the chief has no male issue, his eldest brother's son or nearest male kin succeed him. The women are not allowed to hold this office²². Even in Zeliangrong Nagas, women were prohibited from having any say both in social and family affairs for the simple reason that the presence of women in such affairs is a bad omen for the whole society.²³

These kinds of restrictions on women taking part in political and social institutions existed in all the different Naga societies irrespective of different tribes. Naga society like many other patriarchal societies give more importance to men. It is essentially a male dominated society where women are considered good only for household chores and procreation. They are also considered to be foolish, possessing limited knowledge, mentally and physically weak. The Naga traditional and customary practices overwhelmingly give more importance to males. Women were forbidden to touch male weapons like spears, shield and dao. It was a taboo for women to utter a word while going for head hunting, the believed being that, for such

²⁰ Leo, K.S. Paul, "Naga Women and Human Rights" Raisunriang (Newslink), 5th Published by Naga Women's Union, Manipur, 2001,p.14

²¹Rizvi, Roy, *Tribal Customary Laws of North East India*, Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1990,p.72

²² Ibid,p.132-33

²³ Hunibou, Newmai, "The Status of Women in Zeliangrong Society" in Lucy Zehol (ed) *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, , 1998,p.44

words uttered by women, their mission would fail. Gender inequality blind by customs and traditions further deteriorate the status of women in Naga society. However, as woman are believed to be a carrier of social change, the participation of women either directly or indirectly in social transformation cannot be ruled out whatever her status is in the society.

Naga women's equality, a myth or reality.

On this issue let us begin by quoting Haimendorf, "Many women in more civilized parts of India may envy the women of the Naga Hills their high status and their free and happy life; and if you measure the cultural level of a people by the social position and personal freedom of its women, you will think twice before looking down on the Nagas as 'savages'."²⁴ While Verrier Elwin notes, "the tribal woman is, in herself, exactly the same as any other woman, with the same passions, loves and fears, the same devotion to the home, to husband and children, the same faults and the same virtues".²⁵

It is true that the Naga women are treated with real affection and respect by their parents, husbands, and their children but it is also not true that Naga women enjoy equality with that of their even in society. The Naga society like any other patriarchal society look down upon women as inferior in all socio-economic, political religious and cultural life. Men take all the major decisions inside and outside the family. "Chastity and devotion after marriage are considered as *efficacious* as to be their most priced virtues falling short of which they are divorced and also fined by the village authority".²⁶

²⁴ Haimendorf, Christoph Von Furer, *The Naked Nagas*, London, Methuen, 1939, p.101

²⁵ Elwin, Verrier, "Tribal Women" in *Women of India*, Delhi, Director Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958, p.200

²⁶ Yonuo, Asoso, *The Rising Nagas*, Delhi, Vivek Publishing House, 1974, p.13

Women after marriage have to abide by certain traditional norms and customs. In almost all Naga society if the wife proves to be barren, the husband has every right to marry again without divorcing his first wife. A husband is looked down by the society if he interferes in the domestic affairs. When divorce takes place, it is a woman who is driven out of the house, i.e., when a man divorces his wife, she is made to leave her children and the house and goes away with the little bride price and some share of the household properties. For example, in Ao society a man can divorce his wife if she fails to bear him a heir within a reasonable period, say five or six years. He may also demand separation if she gives him no son for he is anxious to perpetuate his name, something which the daughters cannot do since they take their husbands after marriage. If a woman leaves her husband on flimsy grounds after marriage it is customary for the man to make the fact known to her parents. He then awaits her return within a reasonable period failing which he is free to take another wife.²⁷

From social point of view, the traditional treatment of woman is unhealthy, cruel and negligent, though almost equal rights of woman with men are there. Even in Anal Naga society, a barren woman and women without a male child, earned social stigma. "She was always blamed for the childless state of the couple and unceremoniously divorced". This gives a clear picture about patriarchy in Naga society trying to impose their norms and attitudes on women. Thus, none of the above propositions seems to define equality between men and women in Naga society, rather a clear dominance of men over women who are consider as weaker section.

²⁷, Horam, M., *Naga Polity*, New Delhi, B.R Publishers, 1975, P.100.

Naga Law Of Inheritance

The Naga law of inheritance permits only males to inherit property. Females have no such right. The traditional customary laws are so rigid that it does not permit woman to have a share of property even in the absence of a son. To quote Mills, "no man can, however, will his property away contrary to custom."²⁸ Neither the widow nor daughters have any claim or right to property except to movable property, paddy, clothes, and ornaments. In case of default of sons, the property of the deceased goes to the brothers or as an exogamic law dictates to the other men of the same clan. Writing on the Angami Naga Hutton notes, "if there is no male issue the property goes to the nearest male relatives. In case of no relations being found, the kindred inherits and failing the kindred, the clan."²⁹

From her girlhood till her marriage her life is a real period of long training for the responsibilities to do the household chores and Jhumming cultivation. She has to toil and work and not to own or inherit the fruit of her labour.

Naga Women And Education

The missionaries first introduced formal education called schooling into the Naga Hills in the 1880's, followed by the Britishers. With the advent and spread of Christianity and western education, majority of the Naga society view this as a turning point in elevating even the status of women to a higher plane. However, in the early times education was imparted only to the boys because girls have to look after the domestic works and also look after the younger children. People thought that educating a girl is wasteful because after her marriage she belongs to other.

²⁸ Mills, J.P. *The AO Nagas*, London, Macmillan, 1926, p-190

²⁹ Hutton J.P. *The Angami Nagas*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p.136

This is evident by what Dr. Clerk wrote in his letter. He mentioned that, "On asking the villagers to send their daughters to school, the shrewd reply was who then will fetch water, cook and do household work?"³⁰ Off course, it was also women who had the same feelings.

Prior to the spread of western education and Christianity in the Naga Hills, literacy and education remained very low till the beginning of the present country. It was a time when there was hardly a literate woman in the area out of one hundred women population. This notion of not sending girls to the school has changed in the past two decades. Today, realising the significance of women's role as a sustainer and carrier of traditions in modern times, educating girls has become important as equally with the boys.

Naga Women Today

With science and modern education having permeated the closed tribal psychology, things have now changed to a great extent. Naga women are seen in every walk of life. They have taken up various professions, which were long being denied to them. But, even today the literacy rate compare to men is lower for women. As the Naga population is spread out in various different states within India, it is difficult to give a clear statistics about the entire Naga women profile. But for our convenience, I would like to bring here the status of women in the state of Nagaland. The literacy rate of women is only 54.75 per cent against 67.62 for men (Census of India 1991). In spite of increasing awareness as regards to education, the need to improve the condition of women in Naga society is extremely important. Women

³⁰ Aeir, Anungla, "Women in Ao scoeity" in Lucy Zehol (ed) *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi , Regency Publication, , 1988, p.98.

faced increased poverty and the mortality rate is going up. The reasons behind being women forced to give up jhum cultivation. In the work front, according to the 1991 census 46.86 per cent of men are engaged in work participation whereas only 37.96 per cent among women.³¹ In Nagaland between 1981 and 1991 more than 4 per cent of the cultivators lost their lands and joined the ranks of the unemployed or non-workers. In the same region there are 178,974 male cultivators to 192, 623 females.³² So if the percentage of cultivators goes down it is largely women who are suffering. In many places women are the sole breadwinners but they are losing their sources of livelihood. 'All these (factors) have accelerated the process of impoverishment, inequality and hardship'.³³

This statistics shows that though it is women in the Naga society who toil all their lives both in domestic sphere and cultivation, their contribution does not improve their state of living. According to UNDP report, women's economic contribution is immensely significant although most of their works remain unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued. But in the real sense, without the long hours of work that women put in both outside and inside home, many of the economic activities would have come to a halt. Summarily, women share at least half, if not more, the burden of most of the works.³⁴

Like any other traditional society, the Naga society is also taking the shape of a modern society and its basic philosophy of life style is undergoing drastic changes. With the growing section of modern educated, a new breeze began to blow through

³¹ Kar, K Bimal, *Women Population of North East India A study in gender Geography*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, , 2002, p.105

³² *Statistical Handbook of Nagaland*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Nagaland, Kohima, 1997.

³³ Surya Kumar, 'The Battered Half', *North East Sun*, 15-31 July, 1996

³⁴ Kar, K Bimal, *Women Population of North East India: A study in gender Geography*, New Delhi Regency Publication, 2002, p.142.

this new traditional clad society adopting the modern comforts of life. As said earlier, women are now taking up professions, which a generation ago was denied to them. Nevertheless, this does not mean that their status or living standards have improved. There are still a large section of the girls in the villages and rural areas who have not still moved out of the village gate and there are many who are still bounded by the traditional norms.

It is well understood that all patriarchal structure demands that a wife should be subordinated to her husband. What ever may be her educational status, it is restricted to challenge the authority of a man. Speaking about Indian women Kamla Devi pointed out that, “ their world has been composed for centuries of traditional commitments which meant deep involvement in family, obligation to immediate needs, individual problems; all of which may be termed ‘root functions’. Where the women are also in professions, the burden grows even heavier, for these only become additional jobs, over and above the root functions.”³⁵

The Naga women no exception to the above said situation, share the same burden with her other sisters in caste societies. For Dolly Kikon (NPMHR), “Every Naga woman has undergone humiliations and insults from men on the basis of her womanhood. These men are not outsiders or strangers, they are ‘respected’ uncles, cousins and in some cases fathers and brothers who never fail to remind women about the ‘predestined inferior’ roles that has been already stated out for her.” She notes, “some Naga men today vent out their frustration by telling women that no matter what educational qualification she posses or even if she ‘goes up to the moon and comes back’ she will end up washing her husband’s under garments and waste his posterior

³⁵Chattopadhyay, Kamaladevi, *Indian Women's Battle For Freedom* ,NewDelhi , Abhinav Publications, 1983, p.6.

after he defecates”.³⁶ The above quotes show the gender biases, which has become a social discourse within Naga society.

In the midst of rapid changes in Naga society from tradition to modernity, it is also essential to mention the new elements, which have crept up into the Naga society. Quite contrary to the traditional way of life, today the Naga society is witnessing rampant increase in drug trafficking, smuggling, corruption and hatred. The spread of HIV/AIDS in the region has further deteriorated the Naga society. There is also an erosion of traditional values and norms relating to sexual behavior, with some young women ending up as vagrants and prostitutes. Moreover, the prolonged political violence in the region has resulted in a chronic underdevelopment of the people. In the process of political violence in the region, Naga people have suffered innumerable. Dr. Gina Shangkham the President of Naga women Union, Manipur states that, “in the conflict situation faced by the Nagas, the most vulnerable component of Naga society are the women”.

Role of NMA and NWUM

In seeking to advance the role of women as equal partners to shape a society that is free of violence, free of poverty and free of gender discrimination, the various women organizations with its apex organization such as the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) and the Naga women Union, Manipur, are undertaking initiatives for a socio-political transformation in a broader framework. I would like to briefly explain the backdrops against which these particular organizations were formed. The Naga Mothers' Association was formed on the 14th February 1984 at Kohima, with

³⁶ Kikon, Dolly, “Political Mobilisation Of Women In Naga-Land: A Sociological Background”, New Delhi, NPMHR Publications, Vol:6; No:1, April 2002

the motto "Human Integrity". The main aims and objectives are to uphold womanhood, to serve as a channel of communication for Naga Women's mutual interest and welfare, to fight against social evils prevailing in the state, etc. Similarly, the Naga Women's Union Manipur was formed on the 7th January 1994 at Imphal, Manipur, with the motto "Strength and Prosperity". As laid down by the constitution the aims and objectives of the union are- to stand for rights and dignity of Naga women in particular and women in general, to promote traditional values, to promote education of Naga women and women in general, to improve the living standard of the Naga Society etc.

Today, the NMA with their theme "shed no more blood" and their active involvement as negotiators and mediators of peace and justice beyond tribal lines, they have become a part of the vanguard of the process of attaining justice and peace for the Nagas. In a symbolic gesture of the rejection of violence, irrespective of whom the perpetrator, the NMA persists in covering with dignity the body of every victim with a shroud. Once again in this conflict situation, the NMA and the NWUM are acting as a peacemaker, the traditional belief of women being Pukreila and Demi in times of wars. Rallies and demonstrations on the withdrawal of the Armed forces Special Power Act, workshop on cancer awareness, seminars on anti-drug trafficking are held from time to time. The NWUM, while working hard for the said causes have also raised the issue of empowerment of women, human rights issues gender sensitivity, right to poverty inheritance and representation of women in decision making bodies, both in traditional and constitutional platform. This shows how the organization has gone about mobilizing for the emancipation of Naga women. The women organizations have been giving emphasis on to bring a lasting, peaceful and honourable solution to the political struggle for self determination by creating

awareness about the need for dialogue even amongst the people. After the 1997 ceasefire was declared between the Indian Government and NSCN, the NMA and NWUM are actively participating in bringing about peace in the region.

The NMA and NWUM have been working relentlessly towards reconciliation and unification of the different factional underground groups. They have made efforts and have traveled far and wide to meet all the groups and factions. During the inter ethnic violence between Kukis and Nagas spanning from 1992 and 1996, the NWUM initiated a peace campaign to resolve the conflict between the two communities. In NWUM and the Kuki women worked together in order to bring peace and normal relationships between the two communities, which was impossible for a man to do so.

In a transition from traditional society to modern society, it is crucial for the Naga society to ponder upon few questions about what should be the role of a woman, what will be a woman's contribution to society? Shimreichon Luithui notes, "while many Naga men still need to be educated with respect to gender equality in society, many women still need encouragement to assert their rights".³⁷

In this context it is important to mention what Gandhiji said at an annual gathering of the Bambay Bhagini Samaj: "Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in every minutest details in the activities of man, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him."³⁸

The Naga women with a deep sense of community and concern have worked relentlessly in social transformation for a better society. Women have never been a silent spectator even in the Naga armed struggle ever since the beginning of the Naga Resistance Movement. Among the many who joined the moment, is Ms. Limayangla

³⁷ Luithui, Shimreichon, "Women For Peace In Nagalim", New Delhi, NPMHR, Winter 2000-2001

³⁸ Janapathy, V. *Indian Women Through the Ages*, New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 2002, p-16

who was the first Ao lady graduate to become an active member of the underground movement³⁹. The women organizations have always joined hands with other Naga mass based people's organizations such as the NPMHR, Naga HOHO, United Naga Council, Naga Students' Federation etc. in showing political and economic solidarity. "A woman with a clear vision, a sense of responsibilities and dedication with a capacity to see things and to judge for herself with an intellectual acumen, is definitely an asset to her husband and to the family."⁴⁰

History shows that women are the fountain stone of human growth, happiness, peace and civilization. When woman is neglected, civilization retards. So women should not be discriminated as a weaker sex and be neglected. The Naga women with their consistency and the crucial role they play in Naga society have gained much respect. Their active participation and cooperation they play today, may ultimately help in bringing about a lasting peace for the Nagas.

³⁹Aeir, Anungla, " Women in Ao Society" in Lucy Zehol [ed] *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi Regency Publications , 1988, p.101.

⁴⁰ Janapathy.V, *Indian Women Through The Ages*, New Delhi,, Gyan Publishing House, 2002,p.viii

Chapter-III

CASES OF VIOLENCE AND ROLE OF NAGA WOMEN, NAGA WOMEN ASSOCIATIONS

An environment that maintains world peace and promotes and protects human rights... is an important factor for the advancement of women. Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men and development ... violations of the human rights of women in situation of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.... During times of armed conflict and the collapse of communities, the role of women is crucial. They often work to preserve social order in the midst of armed and other conflicts. Women make an important but often unrecognized contribution as peace educators both in their families and in the societies.

Beijing Platform for Action.

In the past few decades, brutal conflicts between and within nations are more widespread than before despite the declaration of a new world order and hope that the end of cold war would bring more peace. However, today, no longer are civilians the chance of victims of accidents or excesses. War has been brought to civilian population. When war is brought to civilian population, women become vulnerable to all kinds of violence. They are caught up in conflict not of their making. They become the butt of reprisal killings. They make up most of the worlds refugees and displaced people. More than 80 percent of the displaced are women and children.

This violence against women in armed conflict situation is one of the most massive scale violations of human rights, in terms of the atrocities and the number of persons affected. Yet history has hardly recorded war crimes committed against women. It is only now that these war crimes against women are being given attention on a national and international level mainly because the women victims have decided to come out and tell the stories which they have tried to

forget. The fourth world conference on women in Beijing (1995) brought the topic of women in armed conflict to international attention.

This use of violence against women have been documented and unrevealed by various women organizations and human rights groups in every recent major conflict in the world – former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Vietnam, Guatemala, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh etc. In all this case studies, the general breakdown of law and order which occurs during conflict and development lead to an increase in all forms of violence. One form of violence specifically targets women during armed conflict is rape and sexual exploitation which are common features, if not actual “weapon of war”.¹

In India’s North Eastern states of Nagalim, the struggle for self-determination for the past more than five decades, have resulted in a number of gross abuses of human rights including torture and rape. Indiscriminate firing and abuses by the armed forces has become the common feature in inquiry reports done by various human rights groups and activists. The army fury was worse if the insurgents killed any of the army personnel in an ambush. The army in such cases retaliated with a vicious and inhuman attack on the villagers to avenge the murder of their colleagues. In one such ambush 22 army Jawans were killed by the NSCN on 19 February 1982, the retaliation was on the villagers of Ukhrlul, the base of the insurgent organization. The villagers suffered untold atrocities at the hands of the rampaging army men.²

The Indian State response to this on going armed struggle in the region has been the implementation of various Acts and Regulations, which I have already

¹Skjelback, Inger and Dan Smith (ed), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, London, Sage Publication, 2001, p.4.

² Chaitanya, Kalbag, ‘The North East: The Human Trajedy’ India Today, 31 October 1982.

discussed, in my first chapter. Enormous powers were given to the army vide various Acts. For instance, under section 4 of the Armed Forces Special Power Act (as amended, 1972) any commissioned officers, warrant officers, or non-commissioned officer not below the rank of Havildar of the armed forces may, in disturbed areas:

- (a) If he is of the opinion that it is necessary to do for the maintenance of public order, after giving such due warning as he may consider necessary, fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death, against any persons who is acting in contravention of any law or order for the time being in force in the disturbed area prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons of the carrying of weapons or of things capable of being used as weapons or fire arms, ammunition or explosive substances.
- (b) If he is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so destroy any arms dump, prepared for fortified position or shelter from which armed attacks are made or are likely to be made or are attempted to make or any structure used as a training camp for armed volunteers or utilized as a hideout by armed gangs or absconders wanted for any offence.
- (c) Arrest without warrant, any person who has committed a cognizable offence or against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he had committed or is about to commit a cognizable offence and may use such force as may necessary to effect the arrest;
- (d) Enter and search without warrant any premises to make such arrest as aforesaid or to recover any person believed to be wrong fully restrained or confined or any property reasonably suspected to be

stolen property or any arms, ammunition or explosive substances believed to be unlawfully kept in such premises, and for that purpose use such force as may be necessary.³

With all these powers in their hands, whenever there was an ambush by the Naga rebels, the counter insurgency operations covered out by the later unleashed unbearable harassment to the civilian populations. Wherever, this kind of routine harassment, indiscriminate firing, and house-to-house searches were carried out, it is the women who became an easiest target for sexual abuse. In such a situation not only has the Naga women's suffering increased but also their responsibilities double up.

History shows that, in a war torn societies, it is women who hold families and communities together, often playing a key role in food production and other economic activities, and caring for the children, the elderly and the sick. War distorts and disrupts these patterns and responsibilities, making them infinitely more difficult to fulfill, just when they are even more essential because of the breakdown of community structure.⁴ Consequently, in many communities, women felt trapped in their homes. Fears of violence and sexual abuse prevented women from moving about freely, restricting their social and economic activities.⁵

This chapter is an attempt to examine the impact of conflict upon the Naga women and how they have created a space for themselves for their activism without challenging the cause of Naga nationalism

³ Vashum, R, *Indo-Naga conflict: Problem and Resolution*, New Delhi, Indian Social Institute Publication, 2001, pp.175-176.

⁴ Bennett, Olivia, Jo Benley, Kitty Warnock (eds) *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect; Women speak out about Conflict*, London, Panos Publication, , 1995, p.2.

⁵ Kumar, Krishna (ed) *Women and Civil War; Impact, Organization, and Action*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001, p.8.

Violation of Human Rights

One can talk of the various forms of human rights violation in Nagalim and give lists of chronology of events since the early 50's till today. Though, the nature and consequences of these operations or the regular perpetration of human rights violation in this area is little known to the rest of the country, in reality the Army atrocities in this region include murder, rape, torture, destruction and displacement.

According to one report the forms of repression used by the military and paramilitary forces were execution in public, mass rape, deforming of sex organs, mutilating limbs and body, electric shock, puncturing of eyes, hanging people upside down, putting people in smoke filled rooms, burning down of houses, food stocks and crops, concentration camps, suffocating a person by fully covering with a dripping wet blanket, economic blockade leading to starvation and forced labour.⁶ In all of these cases, women were singled out for committing indignities like rape, parading nude in the open and assault on pregnant women. Amnesty International, which also compiled a report on violation of human rights in Manipur (Naga Hills) recorded cases of sexual abasement by the Assam Rifles personnel whose names the Amnesty International knew.⁷

Rape by Indian Armed forces became a very common phenomenon in almost all the operations. It is impossible to list all the inhuman atrocities committed on women by the security forces. To cite few examples: On July 11,1971, the First Maratha Regiment came to Yankeli, village in wokha sub-

⁶ Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File; A Question of Human Rights*, New Delhi, Lancer International, 1984, pp.234-240.

⁷ Amnesty International 1990, India: "Operation Bluebird," A Case Study of torture and Extrajudicial Executions in Manipur, London, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 'Easton Street, London WC1X8 DJ

division of Mokokchung district of Nagaland, at about 6. pm. They herded all the women folk in a house. Then the captain handpicked" four girls from among the crowd who were taken to the church building. One Mr. Peleo was taken along with the girls. Once inside the church, Peleo was sent back and a 17 year old girl name Shachano was striped naked, her hands and legs were tied against the chair and after a brief interrogation she was taken to the pulpit and was raped by a Captain and Second lieutenant by turns. She was then let out, allowed to dress and sent away. The same was repeated with Mseno (15), Sukrumo (12) and Thungteno (11)⁸. On 3rd march 1974, 95th BSF, under Majors Pundir and Brahm Prakash and Captain Negy had subjected Ngapurum and Gihang villagers (Ukhrul District, Manipur) to torture and sexual assaults. A Ngapurum girl, Rose committed suicide a day after she was raped by Major Pundir and Captain Negy on 3 march 1974 before the eyes of the helpless village elders held at gun point.⁹ In Matikhru village of Phek district (Nagaland) the Indian army rounded up all the men folk, executed them, hounded the women out and then razed the village down. In Ignasumi village a pregnant woman was shot at while harvesting in the field and her dead body was dragged along the jungle route. When the villagers went to retrieve her battered body, they found it with the protruding head and limbs of the aborted baby. On July 11, 1977 pregnant wife of a pastor was stoned and kicked so badly that the woman subsequently (30 July) aborted and a dead child with broken skull came out of her womb.¹⁰ On January 24, 1986 Captain Mandir Singh

⁸ Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights*, New Delhi, Lancer International, 1984, p.200.

⁹ Ibid p/35.

¹⁰ Nag,Sajal," State Atrocities as History" in Ranju R, Dhamala and Sukalpa Bhattacharjee (eds) *Human Rights and Insurgency: The North East India*, Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2002 P.76.

of 25 Madras Regiment on an attempt to rape Ms. M. Luinganla (17 years) shot her dead.¹¹

The Oinam incident is one of the worst human rights violation cases in the Naga history. The inhuman sufferings the repression of the event still remains in the minds of the Nagas. The incident took place when the NSCN attack on 9 July 1987 on the Assam Rifles post at Oinam in the Senapati district of Manipur. The NSCN killed 9 jawans and carried away a huge quantity of arms and ammunition. The Assam Rifles sealed off the area and on 11 July began an extensive combing operation, code named "Operation Bluebird", in an attempt to recover the arms. Men were hung upside down, buried alive and given electric shocks. Women were molested and raped. Two women were even compelled to give birth to their babies in full view of the jawans.¹² Pregnant women were also beaten, some aborting afterwards.¹³ Women say they were sexually abused. At least three women were raped, one woman by a commanding officer (CO). Several other young women were sexually harassed by Assam Rifles officers whose names are known to Amnesty international. Those particularly vulnerable to abuses were women whom the security forces said had relatives in the NSCN.¹⁴

At a convention on political prisoners, the Naga human rights activist L. Luithui observed, "the only freedom the Nagas know is the freedom to obey and submit to the military authorities. But none of us love this freedom. We hate it bitterly because this freedom means the freedom to be insulted, tortured and raped

¹¹ Raisunriang (Newslink), Naga women's Union Manipur Publication, 2nd Issue, March 1996, P.35.

¹² North East Sun, Aug 15-31, 1998, Vol 4. NO.2, p.10.

¹³ Amnesty International 1990, India: "Operation Bluebird," A Case Study of torture and Extrajudicial Executions, in Manipur, London, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 'Easton Street, London WC1X8 DJ,p.6

¹⁴ Ibid, p-7.

in public... In deep agony we wonder how all these things are going on in our land without any protest from the great Indian people.¹⁵

In another incident, on 31st July 1996, at around 6:00 pm about 20-25 personnel of the 20th Assam Rifles were on patrol at Viewland Bazaar, in Ukhrul, Manipur. One Jawan accidentally pulled the trigger of his SLR creating panic and fear amongst the Jawans, which resorted indiscriminate firing. Following the firing, the Jawans went on a rampage beating up innocent passersby. They assaulted and molested many women at gunpoint. In one such cases, MS T. Shimreiphy's modesty was outraged. The Jawans broke into her house breaking the door. She was assaulted and molested. MS. Awon and MS Alan were taken into a dark passage while their brother Ningshan was held at gun point. Mrs. Thaja, who was pregnant, was slapped and attempted rape.¹⁶ In a similar kind of incident, on 30th march 1997, a minor girl of 12 year old was raped by a soldier from the 15 Maratha Light Infantry Camp.¹⁷ The list of sexual assault being committed on the Naga women by the Indian Army is endless.

Besides rape, women have been used as human-shields too. On March 11, 1996, provoked by the NSCN, the 20th Assam Rifles used women as human shields by placing the nozzle of their guns on the women's shoulders. One MS. Kanchungla was made to cover Captain Sharma with a Naga shawl while the army was approaching Huishu village.¹⁸

¹⁵ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), *The Naga Nation and its struggle against Genocide*, Copenhagen 1986, Document No 567, pp 135-229.

¹⁶ Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights Vol.II, No.05, Quarterly Publication, Delhi, October 1996, p.4.

¹⁷ Ibid, Vol.III, NO.06, December 1997, p.3.

¹⁸ Hindustan Times (Delhi) May 11, 1999 See also, Naga, Peoples Movement for Human Rights Publication, VOL 1, No.04, Delhi, July 1996, p.3.

As a result of all these abuses, women's organisations reported that women are constantly subjected to and paralysed by fear and unable to perform their normal activities. The very sight of men in uniform is traumatizing.¹⁹ The same reports from Nagaland indicate that the incidence of rape of Naga women by security forces is four times higher than what is reported.²⁰

Rape whenever it occurs is considered as a weapon against community identity, especially where ethnic or religious purity is at stake. Defiling women is a way of violating and demoralising men-rape is often performed in full view of family and community. In this sense it is an attack on everyone, although it is the women who suffer physically and bear the burden of shame and social ostracism.²¹

After having gone through sexual abuse or exploitation, the far most reaching consequences for every woman is rejection or devaluation by their own families and wider by community. Even where the community acknowledges that they were victims of war and feels pity, they can be seen ever afterwards as "damaged goods".²² Nirmal talking about the fate of women who were abducted and raped in the course of India's partition, recounted how "even when they were united with their own families, brothers and fathers weren't prepared to take them back". The women were no longer seen as deserving respect, "people pitied these women, showed them kindness, but they thought of them as orphans, as deserted children... as if something had gone wrong with them."²³

¹⁹ "Where 'Peacekeepers' Have Declared war." Report on violations of democratic rights by security forces and the impact of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act on Civilian life in the seven states of the North East. National Campaign Committee Against Militarization and Repeal of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act April 1997, p-15.

²⁰ Ibid p.15.

²¹ Bennett, Olivia, Jo Benley, Kitty Warnock (eds) *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women speak out about Conflict*, London, Panon Publication, 1995, p.8.

²² Ibid p.9.

²³ Ibid pp.113-118.

This kind of rejection and devaluation of women cut across all communities. The Naga women are no exception to this fate. To quote Nandita Haksar, "infact, among the Tangkhul Nagas, a women who is even suspected of being raped is treated as being polluted and in all probability will not find a man willing to marry her. Not only is there a social stigma, their religion looks upon here as having committed a sin".²⁴ With no fault of her, a woman has to become a victim and suffer hopelessly the rest of her life struggling to forget the pain that she underwent through physically, and the psychological trauma and nightmares that will haunt her forever.

Besides, the violence experienced by women in conflict zones, especially in internal ones, women experience ambiguous transformation due to the scattering, displacement and break down of their families and communities.²⁵ The Naga women's suffering does not end by becoming victims of raped. However, they experience conflict by becoming refugees or the internally displaced. Within more than five decades of armed struggle, many of the villages were burned down, population uprooted and displaced to new settlements. Villages were shifted from their original sites and settled to new places. This kind of regrouping caused acute human trauma to the villagers especially for women and children. Wherever information regarding the insurgents taking shelter in a particular village comes to the knowledge of the Army, curfew would be imposed and no one would venture out of his or her houses. The Army took over and launched the counter insurgency combing operation. In many such cases encounter broke out between the army and

²⁴ Luithui and Nandita Haksar, *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights*, New Delhi, Lancer International, 1984,p.230.

²⁵ Senayake, Darini Rajasinghan, "Displaced Women in the Hidden Economics of Armed Conflict in Srilanka"as quoted in Binalakshmi Nepram,*South Asia Fractured Frontier:Armed Conflict,Narcoticsand Small Arms Proliferation in India's North East*,New Delhi,Mittal Publications,2002,p.186

the insurgents resulting in casualties. In all these encounters, the Naga women again confront a new kind of suffering. They may have lost their male relatives in the armed struggle and therefore find themselves in a situation of economic and social disempowerment.

In the words of Marie from Lebanon “the real experience of war is not the shelling and so on, those are just moments, though they are the ones you see on TV, War is what happens afterwards, the years of suffering hopelessly with a disabled husband and no money, or struggling to rebuild when all your property has been destroyed”.²⁶

Besides the impact of armed violence on women and that of the ambiguous transformation that occurred, a lot of Naga women are also joining the armed insurgent movement.

*I went around taking photos of the cadres. And I spotted an innocent face in the drilling crowd. I looked at her face and decided to take a close up of her. After the drill I spoke to her. Amy Ngullie (20) was doing her B.A. from Wokha College when she gave up her studies to join the NSCN in April last. What made her choose the jungle over college? I wanted to serve my own people for our cause, revealed Amy.*²⁷

Amy is just one among many Naga women who took up arms to fight for the cause of an independent Nagalim. Limayangla,²⁸ for instance was one among the first Ao Lady graduate to become an active member of the underground movement.

²⁶ Bennett, Olivia, Jo Benley, Kitty Warnock (eds) *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women speak out about Conflict*, London, Panon Publication, 1995, P.267.

²⁷ Excerpt of an interview by Deepak Dewan, Political Editor, North East Sun. March 1998, Vol.3, No.16, 15-31..

²⁸ Zehol, Lucy(ed) *Women in Naga Society*, New Delhi, Regency Publication, 1998, p.101.

The hostile affection of women, freed of the consciousness of their own suffering, having seen their near and dear ones being killed, the desire to work for a cause for the welfare of her society may be some of the reasons why women join the insurgent movement.²⁹

There is no doubt that Naga women become victims of armed conflict in various ways such as, direct victims of violence, rape or killed in conflict as I have discussed. They experience armed conflict by becoming refugees or internally displaced, economic and social disempowerment by the loss of male relatives. They also become woman combatants and as women perpetrators of violence.

Having said all this, I would like to further examine the nature of Naga women in a conflict situation classifying into three broad categories:

- i. Social and Psychological.
- ii. Economic
- iii. Political

If we look at the literature on women and war, one can realize that women suffered from physical insecurity in almost all the case studies done in conflict torn societies. Women live in constant terror. Consequently, in many communities, they felt trapped in their homes. In Naga areas, the long problem of armed conflict contributed to new social problems, which the Naga mothers have to confront in their day-to-day life. To be precise, it was in the early eighties that heroin, a narcotic drug invaded every nook and corner of Northeast India especially Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram. It is very important to note that it was around the same time that insurgency started in full swing too. Within two decades, these states saw over 1,10,000 drug addicts and over 6,871 HIV positive

²⁹ Nepram, Binalakshmi, *South Asia's Fractured Frontier: Armed Conflict, Narcotics and Small Arms Proliferation in India's North East*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication, 2002, p.186.

cases, with Manipur contributing to nearly 8 percent of India's total HIV positive cases.³⁰ According to Phanjaobam Tarapot, "the issue of drug abuse appears to be more dangerous than the decades old insurgency problem in the region".³¹

According to the World Drug Report 1997, the reason being – the rapid disintegration of traditional social structure has been put forward as a contributing factor to new patterns of drug abuse in countries in state of transition.³² The feelings of marginalisation, of non-identification with the cultural environment are also attributed to be reasons for drug abuse.³³

It was around this time that almost every Naga mothers face the brunt of their children as immediate victims to this drug abuses, creating havoc at home affecting not only many families but society as a whole. The Naga mothers' societal responsibilities became greater and bigger each passing day because of this new element confronting the society at that particular time. The heroin powder was at that point of the time easily available in its purest form at a very low price, which passes through the heart of Kohima town enroute National Highway, 39 (Manipur) straight from the "Golden Triangle" of Burma (Myanmar). Despite living in constant terror due to the armed conflict, the Naga mothers were encountering one of the most social evil affecting their own families and witnessing their children died due to this problem. The problem of tackling this social evil became the foremost challenges for every Naga mother.

³⁰ Makunga, Morung, Minister of Health, Govt. of Manipur Speaking in the United Nation's General Assembly Special Session on Drugs. Panel on Drug Abuse and HIV/AIDS, New York, June 9, 1998 (Country; Imphal Free From).

³¹ Tarapot, Phanjaobam, *Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in North East India*, Delhi, Vikas House, 1997, p.53

³² UNDCP, World Drug Report (New York: OUP, 1997, pp.53-54.

³³ Nepam, Binalakshmi, Paper presentation on "Small Arms, Narcotics and Insurgency in India's North East", New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, November 10, 1999.

Caught in the crossfire, the Naga women have been driven out of their homes and deprived of all material possessions. Some women have been displaced on several occasions. There is also, the problem of the increasing numbers of war widows. All these reasons contributed to a substantial decline in their standards of living and subsequently becoming part of the most impoverished sector.

Psychological trauma.

The brutalities of war-separation from loved ones, forced migration, sexual abuse, starvation, and extreme violence and cruelty left deep scars on both women's and men's psyches.³⁴ According to the definition of World Health Organisation on health, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity."

However, due to the continuous war like situation in Nagalim, there is a state of fear psychosis for almost everyone in the region. Fear and suspicion has become the mental status of the Nagas. Not only this, there is also a foreboding sense of fear and disgust mixed with hatred and violence. Sexual abuse, assault and discrimination in the most obvious and overtly violent forms were a problem that afflicted not only women but men as well. However, with women this led to more repression within their own families and societies. The situations of long-term conflict in the Naga areas have rapidly eroded the conditions of life and environment. The primary basic services and infrastructure becomes an easy victim of the disruption. Rapid degeneration of life support system has lowered the health of the people resulting in various illnesses and intensifying poverty. Apart from this, displacement, suppression of traditional health system and destruction of habitat has created a new form of Post Trauma Stress Disorders among the people.

³⁴ Kumar Krishna [ed]. *Women and Civil War; Impact, Organizations, and Action*, London ,Lynne Rienner Publishers, , 2001,p-9.

A study³⁵ was carried out by Drug Action Forum, West Bengal in 1990, on some of the people from the Naga Hills of Manipur who have been tortured by the security forces. Here is the report of the study carried out on the torture victims 22 months after the Oinam incident (11 July 1987). The enquiry report states that, after the incident there was a high rate of Post Trauma Stress Disorders (PTSD).

They also found an unquestionable relationship with the type and nature of torture with their symptoms, like recurrent distressing dreams of the event, falling and staying asleep, recurrent and intrusive painful recollection of the torture etc. Thus, barking of dogs, sounds resembling gun shots, sight of olive green dress and even the colour green, sound of jeep, helicopter and sounds of children running downhill simulating marching troops, still disturbed these victims with vivid memories of torture and intense psychological distress. A good number of victims have lost their self-confidence and developed a sense of fatality. Many of the villagers (most of them cultivators) strongly feel that they have been ruined physically, though the medical team found no loss of muscle power on examination. The results of the studies show that individuals who were subjected to torture and their family members who are often forced to witness the torture, have developed serious mental health problems. The way their villages with their granaries were razed to the grounds and burned to ashes, the way they were uprooted from their villages, grouped and herded together like animals and kept in concentration camp like situations where, torture, brutal killing, disappearances and rapes were common.

Lack of medical and other facilities and obstruction of medical teams from attending to the victims by security personnel aggravate the stressful situation.

³⁵ Drug Action Forum, West Bengal (1990), Report of a medical study on the delayed effects of torture on Nagas in Manipur,

In another study³⁶ carried out on the victims of the 27th December 1994 Mokokchung incident revealed that out of the 115 victims studied, 81 (70.43%) were found to be suffering from PTSD. Among these, 95.06% were having recurrent and intrusive recollections of the events, 83.95% were still continuing to suffer from distressing dreams of the events, 88.88% were feeling as if the traumatic events were recurring, 91.36% were suffering from intense psychological distress at exposure to internal and external cues that symbolizes or resembles an aspect of the traumatic events, 95.06% were found to have physiological reactivity mostly in the form of palpitation and breathlessness on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolizes or resembles an aspect of the traumatic event, 65.43% were found to be unable to have loving feelings after the trauma while 96.60% were found to having difficulty in concentration and 66% have lost self confidence and developed a sense of foreshortened future.

These victims not only survived the merciless brutality of the Army but were also witness to gunning down of persons, looting, destruction and burning down of buildings, hearing the seeking voices of agony of those persons who were being roasted alive. The women were invariable stepped of their garments, which were rolled into balls, then soaked in petrol and thrown, into the burning buildings. Some of the soldiers taking advantage of the situation raped many women at gunpoint. The Oinam incident was one worst of its kind. Women too were tortured and several pregnant women reportedly miscarried as a consequence. There were also reports of threats against children, the beatings of mothers in the presence of their children, and the ill treatment of children in the presence of their mothers. Mrs. Somila, who was seven months pregnant at the

³⁶ Red cross Society, n.d, 'Post Traumatic State of Mental Health': A medical Study on the Effect of Trauma on Mental Helath of the Victims of the 27 December 1994 Incident at Mokokchung in Nagaland by the Red cross Society and the Medical Team.

time of the Oinam incident, was slapped very violently and punched by the Army until blood oozed out from her mouth and nose. Her baby was born on November 3rd but died eight days later.³⁷ Nandita Haksar also highlighted in her report, about how villagers from affected areas suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder four years afterwards. The Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) took these cases to court.³⁸

According to Dr. Roy Laifungbam, “the potential for greater spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, increases dramatically during conflicts. Population movements, rape, sexual violence and the breakdown of established social values all increase the likelihood of sexually transmitted infections. Reduced access to reproductive health services, including education, increases the vulnerability of adolescents in particular- the female adolescent child is particularly vulnerable”.³⁹

In all these above case studies on psycho-social trauma of the victims in armed conflict area, we find that women who have witnessed the killing of close relatives in gruesome fashion, are also in need of mental health care as many of them suffer from trauma and depression. In my field studies, which I have undertaken in Nagaland and Manipur, I would come across mothers who went virtually insane due to their lost children and husband in armed conflict. Where innocent mothers have to endure such horrible sufferings, no one could manage to console the pain and suffering that they go through. The helpless mothers would

³⁷ Amnesty International 1990, India: “Operation Bluebird,” A Case Study of torture and Extrajudicial Executions in Manipur, London, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, ‘Easton Street, London WC1X8 DJ, p.21

³⁸ Haksar, Nandita “State Terrorism and its Repercussions”, Official Report, Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights’ Conference, Kohima, November 2-3, 1990.

³⁹ “Broken Promises” a report, Published by National Coalition on Children in Armed Conflict, Guwahati, February 2002, p-28.

bust wide open to their sorrows, suffering and bitterness and let it all flow in ceaseless tears.

Closely related to psychological trauma is the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation of women during armed conflict. Women experience very diverse reactions following rape. The resultant psychological stress can be overwhelming, if unresolved, leading to suicide. The task of reconstructing the emotional lives of women who have experienced rape is formidable, and a very complicated one. Higher levels of anxiety and depression, social and sexual difficulties, and the well-founded fears of stigmatization within their own families or wider society, make rape and sexual violence against women very difficult to deal with. Women who had lost their children and husband, their homes, and then sexually abused are more prone to stress disorders, linked to a lost sense of personal worth.⁴⁰

Economic Impact ✓

With the increase in the number of Naga men as dead or away fighting, imprisoned and disabled during the armed conflict, the number of households headed by single mother/ women increased. Such households transformed the traditional division of labour between men and women in traditional Naga society. Conflict eroded the traditional social and political order, leading women to assume new economic roles and responsibilities. This is partly because men and boys are targeted for recruitment and face presence to take an active part in the conflict. The burden on women therefore become increasingly one of meeting survival needs of the family and society at large. The burden of women in the past few decades have increased dramatically with women assuming male roles, including

⁴⁰ Ibid- pp.75-76.

disciplining male children, building and repairing houses, dealing with community leaders and government officials, and fulfilling social and religious obligations. Thus women assumed the responsibility of both maintaining the domestic and also the social economy.

The consequences of the ongoing conflict in Nagalim have resulted in a very sad picture. Hardship and deprivation face women who have to support a family alone, in an economy itself distorted by the violence. This generation of sufferings for some women is greater when they have to endure the loneliness and the vulnerability of separation and bereavement. There has been a rise in increased poverty and the mortality rate of women. Majority of the people in this region depended primarily on subsistence agriculture and survive on the produce of their own fields. With the rise in constant warfare, there has been constant economic blockade leading to starvation and acute poverty. For example-most of the hill districts of Manipur (Naga inhabited areas) which are strongholds of insurgents, are ruling under acute poverty mainly because of under-utilization of their natural resources due to lack of infrastructure. In Chandel district, over 64 percent of the people live below the poverty line while in Churachandpur, Ukhrul and Tamenglong districts, it is between 51 and 55 percent. Of late, poverty levels in the North Eastern States mostly hit by insurgency is increasing while the national average fell by about seven percentage points during the 1987-88 to 1993-94 period.⁴¹

Though women take up the sole responsibilities of looking after their families, they (Naga women) are deprived of the right to property inheritance under customary laws. The challenges of surviving their family in the absence of

⁴¹ Nepam, Binalakshmi, *South Asia's Fractured Frontier: Armed Conflict, Narcotics and Small Arms Proliferation in India's North East*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication,, 2002 ,p.201.

men and the deprived opportunities of property rights contributed to further vulnerability of the Naga women.

Political impact.

While it is important to acknowledge the specific ways in which Naga women suffer from the consequences of armed conflict, the tendency to see these women merely as “victims” of war ignores the potential contribution they made for durable solutions. Naga women are not merely victims of armed conflict, passive subjects of abuse in conflict situation but they also participate as active agents of peace-the case studies which I will be dealing particularly on two Naga women organizations i.e., the Naga Mothers’ Associations (NMA) and the Naga women Union, Manipur (NWUM).

Formed in the year 1984, the Naga Mothers’ Associations was concerned over the rapid collapse of their families and society. They soon concentrated on the menace of addiction and all the social evils associated with it, including HIV and AIDS. The NMA started checking drug trafficking which was rampant in the state by going after drug peddlers themselves in various localities and also assisting the state law enforcing agencies. Realising the need to restore the lives of the addicts and their families while tackling the trafficking and peddlers at the same time, it was the NMA dream to set up a drug De-addiction cum Rehabilitation centre for addicts. As such, the present Mount Gilead Home was inaugurated as on February 12, 1989 as one of the first de-addiction cum rehabilitation centre in the North East India.

In 1994, in response to the increase in killings the NMA felt that these were consequences of the “political turmoil in the state and decided to actively engage in the tasks of peace. The Naga Mothers’ observed a “Mourning Day” on

the 5th of August 1994 at state Academy Hall in remembrance of all those who died due to the outcome of political violence, those who were killed from the hands of miscreants and conflicts and all cold blooded deaths. As a proactive measure the NMA initiated a "NMA peace team" with the theme "shed no more blood."⁴² This is a mediating message both to the Indian State (with its coercive military force) and the insurgent sons in the NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland). Black placards and posters bore messages "Let not their death be in vain", "Mothers anguished over tragic killings and deaths" and "Forgive and Unite." About 2000 women and some public leaders participated. The NMA initiated appeals, meetings with political leaders like the Chief Minister entering the realm of conflict and peace processes.

The NMA initiated an inquiry into the Mokokchung incident in December 1994 where the army fired, killing many innocent civilians and submitted memorandum to the National Human Rights Commission. They Came out strongly against the imposition of the Armed Forces special powers Act (1972) on Nagaland and insisted that any incident involving the army, violence and women and children be referred to them. They addressed the issue of women's participation in the peace process to both their own society and the government. "We are puzzled if this is the consensus decision of the Naga leaders. If not the voice of the mothers/women who constitute 50% of the Naga population cannot be ignored".⁴³ Thus challenging the patriarchal process of decision making at all level.

⁴² "Observation of NMA Mourning Day," 5th Aug 1994, Collection of Documents of NMA 6th General Assembly, Nagaland 15-16 September 1998, P-58.

⁴³ Memorandum submitted to the Governor of Nagaland and Lt. Gen. K.L. Seth, April 1995, Ibid P-46.

In a pamphlet released on 25th May 1995, the representatives of the Naga Mothers' Associations state that, 'the ways in which our society is being run whether by the over ground government or underground government, have become simply intolerable.'⁴⁴ The NMA expressed its anxiety over the increasing number of widows and orphans due to the armed conflict and the restoration of lasting peace in the region. They appealed the parties to stop fighting. "An assassinated man may be a husband, a father, a son, or a brother. His whole family is sheltered by his violent liquidations no matter what reasons his liquidators chose to give for snuffing out his life".⁴⁵ The NMA president Neidomeo Angami stated that the NMA were critical of "... the amount of human rights violations in our society both by the Indian security forces and the different factional Naga National workers".⁴⁶ The NMA was clear that peace not just as an absence of conflict but involved justice and human rights.

A call to shun all kinds of violence was made by the NMA peace team. The team has been meeting Naga leaders both State Governments and National workers and appealing them and also challenging them to show their wisdom and statesmanship and arrest the violent "Bloodshed." The NMA with its themes "shed no more blood" also state positively to "give peace a chance".⁴⁷ A public peace rally was organised at Kohima to create awareness on Human Integrity and "consequences killing" which was described by media as "Historic event". The NMA undertook a number of pledges to bring halt to violence and ensure peace and tranquility in Nagaland. The pledges, originally adopted as resolution were taken as the voice of the mothers which says- "Bury the past and forgive one

⁴⁴ A Call from the Mothers' of the land 25th May 1995, Ibid p.46.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.46.

⁴⁶ Speech of Neidonuo Angami, President NMA, 2nd October 1995.

⁴⁷ Speech of Mr. Huzo Mero, on 22.11.95 at Kohima- on the occasion of public peace Rally.

another”, “Rise above narrow tribalism and work for common interest”, “Call our children back home if they are going against the society”, “shed no more blood. The Naga Mothers, whose sons are engaged in the battle with the Indian State, act as mediators between their sons and the civil society.

The NMA focused on human values and rights and initially look into social issues such as drug abuse and violation common amongst Naga youth through workshops, reformation crusades and rehabilitation centers. They then took on to developmental issues such as schools, felling of trees, environmental concerns. The NMA initiated interventions now is more political such as repealing the draconian Armed Forces Special Power Acts, which gives the armed forces rights over civilian processes, assisting the election commission in correct enumeration of the rolls, and women’s reservation in Parliament and questions of peace. Clearly, the NMA was moving out of the purely social issues to more direct political ones. Speaking at the 5th General Assembly of NMA, Niketu Iralu a social worker state, “.... The formation of the Naga Mothers Associations is (the women’s) response to the destructive tendencies Nagas face in their struggle to be a people”.

Naga Women’s Union Manipur

Recognizing the need to create a common platform to voice women’s issue, the Naga women’s union, Manipur was formed on 7th January 1994. The Union comprises of all the women of the Naga Tribes of the State. It is the open body of all women organizations of the Naga Tribes of Manipur.

One of the main aims of the union is to bring about awareness among the Naga women themselves on their position and responsibilities in the society. Various meetings, workshops and seminars are held in this regard. The Naga

women's union also recognizes the role women plays as peacemakers and works strongly to create an atmosphere for peace and understanding among the different tribes and groups. It upholds the principles of non-violence for resolving any conflict and has mobilized various peace campaigns and seminars. It also has been actively involved in human rights groups in carrying out fact-finding missions to various places. They have also been issuing press releases and condemnation statements against incidents of human rights violations.

Since the time of its inception, the Naga women's union has continuously voiced its concern with regard to property inheritance divorce, child guardianship, marriage and other social issues.⁴⁸ In the Naga society, right to inheritance of parental property is given only to the male children. The NWUM has been working towards changing the system to accommodate female children too. The disparity in wages that exists between male and female workers in the society, they say, must be corrected. It has also generally been observed that in a diverse case, it is the women who are always at a disadvantage. The Union wants justice to be guiding principle instead of basing it only upon the patriarchal system of functioning. The union also looks at marriage as a ways to strength bonds between different clans and Tribes. They believe that endogamy is an effective way of reducing tribal rivalries.⁴⁹

The NMA and NWUM have been relentlessly working together hand in hand towards reconciliation and unification of the different factional groups. After the organisation split within the NSCN, both the groups started infighting and eliminating each other. The NSCN organization became a divided house based on

⁴⁸ Raisunriang (Newslink), Naga Women's Union, Manipur Publication, First Issue, 24-27 October, 1995.

⁴⁹ Ibid...

Tribal lines, which led to fratricidal killings among the Nagas themselves. Pained by the fratricidal killings, the NMA and NWUM made a joint appeal on 14.11.1995 to shun violence and killing and work together for peace and unity amongst the Nagas. "We appeal to the public to be aware of the forces that work for Nagas disunity and fragmentation and shun divisive tribalistic ideas from within and without,"⁵⁰ thus the statement goes.

Once the 1997 ceasefire agreement had been negotiated between the NSCN and the Indian Government, the NMA and NWUM were in the forefront of strengthening the peace process. In support of the ceasefire the NMA and NWUM have travelled far and wide to meet all groups and factions. They tracked across the eastern Nagalim, in Berma, to meet the NSCN Khaplang faction to appeal to him for reconciliation with the other groups and towards finding a lasting solution. When ever the ceasefire has come under strain, the NMA and NWUM made every effort to sustain its effort. The NMA and NWUM have been participating in various meeting and consultations under the Naga HoHo, United Naga Council and Naga People Movement for Human Rights on Naga issues. These two women organizations have become an indispensable part in the Naga society. Once the ceasefire began, the NMA and NWUM implore the Naga people to stop furtherance of any fratricidal acts rather appeal to pursue attainment of the cherished goal of the Naga people by respecting each other and mutually learning to live together even in the midst of multiple differences.

By the first phase of the ceasefire, factionalism of the Naga underground became the main obstacle.⁵¹ Internecine clashes between the different

⁵⁰ Naga Mothers' Association and Naga Womens' Union Manipur, Joint Appeal, 14 November 1995, Collection of Documents of NMA 6th General Assembly, Nagaland, 15-16 September 1998,p.36.

⁵¹ Sentinel,26 May, 1997.

underground groups began to take place again. At this time the NSF, NMA and NPMHR in their press release dated 13 July 1998, urged the Naga people to support the ceasefire. They implore that, "The peace process must go on. People must continue to open their minds. The 50 years of struggle cannot go in vain".⁵²

The NMA and NWUM have also participated in the consultation with the NSCN (IM) leaders and civil society. They also met the NNC leader Adino Phizo and her brother who is adviser to NNC in London. They appealed to them to help bring the different groups and factions together.

In September 2000, as the peace process came under increasing strain, the President of the NMA, Ms Neidonuo Angami and the President of NWUM, Dr. Gina Shangkham appealed to the Indian Prime Minister and the Chairman of NSCN (IM) to heed their cry of peace and sustain the peace process. The women intervention has greatly reduced the tensions in the society.

In an attempt to have people to people dialogue between the Indian and the Naga civil society, the NPMHR together with the leading Naga organizations initiated to organize "journey of conscience" on 29th January 2000, in Delhi to strengthen the peace process. Travelling from all over Naga areas to New Delhi, the journey of conscience draws people from many walks of life. The delegates which comprises 66 members including active participants from NMA and NWUM, had interactive consultations with Delhi based civil and democratic rights organizations, Indian intellectuals to participate in prayer meeting at Gandhi Samadhi, Rajghat, New Delhi. Beginning the journey to New Delhi, the Naga women have continued the journey to other cities along with the NPMHR, the

⁵² Press Release, 13th July, 1998, Collection of Documents of Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) 6th General Assembly 15-16 September, 1998, P-11.

church leaders and other Naga people's organization. The NMA and NWUM has been carrying out various peace conferences and has been sending out several women delegates to undergo training in various skills including peace building and conflict resolution. The participation of NMA and NWUM in training to improve their capacity is also part of an empowerment process to ensure that women's views and position are taken into account in the discussions on the future of the Naga society.

From the study of these two Naga women organizations one can draw that although they were victims of armed conflict in many ways, these women were not helpless, but active and resourceful, had enough courage and strength to support and protect their families and resist despair. The Naga women's organization pledge, as "our focus in conflict situation should be to learn how to creatively deal with conflict rather than to avoid it or to allow it to destroy us."⁵³

Upholding the traditional role of Pukreila or mediator, the Naga women saw and experienced that woman's agency could play mediator between various warring groups and defuse tension. Though, Naga women's participation in decision making body is a taboo since time immemorial, the Naga community has realized the need of women participation in peace processes. This off course is true; because when Naga women talk of peace they do not talk against the cause of Naga independence. By making demands in changes in women's inheritance and property rights broaden their movement to include emancipation, empowerment, peace and justice. When Naga women talk of peace it is associated with justice and development. In this entire analysis Naga woman addresses the central concern about the question of recognition and redistribution.

⁵³ Raisunriang (Newslink), Naga Women's Union, Manipur Publication, 5th Issue, 2001, p.7.

Conclusion

This dissertation is an attempt to look at the conflict from a gendered perspective. We have aim at delineating and analysing the roles of two major women organisations i.e., the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) and Naga Women's Union, Manipur(NWUM) by way of locating interventionist possibilities which such women organisations generate. Crucial to the understanding of women role in conflict as we have seen in the earlier chapters is that, they redefined peace not simply in terms of the absence of war but also in terms of improving the status of women and ensuring them political rights, thereby envisaging a more egalitarian society. The Naga women who are denied of formal political decision making in the past is trying to assert their own space challenging the patriarchal structures through their experiences of war. In doing so the call for Naga Nation is not diminish but re-articulated as a more egalitarian social and political space where women will also have a say.

Another trust of my analysis is to recover women from the dominant perceptions as victims of war and restored to them a sense of agency which is at once political and social, we will have to keep in mind that these women organisations have undertaken major social tasks such as anti-drug trafficking including HIV and AIDS, alcohol, abuse of violence and environmental concerns. This have contributed in a positive way to the struggle by holding a check the social ill prevalent in Naga society. They also work hard towards empowerment of women, gender sensitivity, right to property inheritance and representation of women in decision making bodies, both in traditional and constitutional. By doing

so, they broadened their movement to include emancipation, peace and justice. Thus, linking peace with justice and development.

The Naga Women's powerful Slogan "shed no more blood" is not only directed against the Indian State but also as against their own insurgent men. The Naga Mothers' whose sons are engaged in a battle with the Indian state, act as a mediator between their sons and civil society. Though the language of victimhood finds expression time and again in numerous pamphlets, this trope of victimhood describes their own as well as their society. This language then becomes an assertion in its own right, it is used as a plea to protect their children from further massacre and violence. The exposure to the long political violence has destabilised the women both physically and psychologically. This made them regard themselves as victims, but it is important for them that their children will not be victims. Therefore, they work for building peace where there is respect for the right to live with dignity and to have security especially for their children's future. From the dis-empowered position the women manipulate the various agencies of state power to ensure a just society.

The conflict changed the lives of these women. This can be evident from the way Naga Women have created a space for themselves through women organization such as NMA and NWUM. Today, these women organization enjoy power from all sides and their voice cannot be diminish and de-legitimize to private domain, thus leading to a reworking of gender roles in decision making.

However, the language of victimhood always runs the risk of essentialising women as a group on which violence is perpetrated and undermines the political significance of transformative agency they exercise even as they extend their

traditional roles as mothers into the public spheres. The case of Naga Women organisations will be of specific interest to feminist scholarship in understanding political agency not as a rupture or a break from traditional role but as an extension of the same. By asserting their motherly roles in their negotiations with the Indian State as well as the Movement they are at once utilising and re-inventing this role for a very political purpose. The possibilities and limitations of such re-inventing identities may offer greater scope for investigating the potential of such agency.

The quint essence of their intervention is that both sides should shun violence. They appealed both the Indian security forces and Naga National workers to exercise extreme restraint in their conduct so that their actions and its repercussion should not cause pain and harassment to the innocent public. Realising the inadequate representations of women to a large extent in the village HoHo's of their tribes as well as at the government institutional level, these women organization felt that they need to be actively involved in politics at all levels so that their concerns and prespective can influence decision making. This would enable women to be an instruments of peace in violence. In other words, empower women in both the private and public domain. The women organisations also voiced their concern with regard to property inheritance towards changing the system to accommodate female children too. The disparity in wages that exists between male and female workers in the society, they say, must be corrected. So also, the customary practices of divorce which keep women at a disadvantage position should be given up and men and, women be treated equally instead of basing it only upon the patriarchal system of functioning. Thus, the Naga women organistions talk of peace not as an absence of war but associated with justice and human rights keeping the goal of the Naga independence.

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