

**A dissertation Report on**  
**THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN POLITICAL THEORY AND THE SPECTERS OF**  
**IDENTITY IN NAGALAND: A STUDY OF SELECTED CASES**

Submitted to the School of Arts and Languages  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of  
Master of Arts in Political Science

by

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## DECLARATION

I do here by declare that the dissertation entitled “**THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN POLITICAL THEORY AND THE SPECTERS OF IDENTITY IN NAGALAND: A STUDY OF SELECTED CASES**” submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of masters is entirely my original work and all ideas and references have been duly acknowledged. It does not contain any work that has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of any university.

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Medolenuo Ambrocia Loucii has completed her dissertation “**THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN POLITICAL THEORY AND THE SPECTERS OF IDENTITY IN NAGALAND: A STUDY OF SELECTED CASES**” under my guidance and supervision. To the best of my knowledge, the present work is a result of her original investigation and study. No part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree or diploma.

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Medolenuo Ambrocia Loucii

## List of Abbreviations

Art	.....	Article
BJP	.....	Bharatiya Janata Party
CL	.....	Customary Laws
CP	.....	Constitutional Provision
IAS	.....	Indian Administrative Service
LB	.....	Legislative Body
LS	.....	Lok Sabha
NMA	.....	Naga Mother's Association
NNC	.....	Naga National Council
RSS	.....	Rashtriya Swayam Sevak
TH	.....	Tribal Hoho's
ULB	.....	Urban Local Body
WR	.....	Women's Reservation
%	.....	Percent

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## **Abstract**

The question of Identity raises a swarm of logical questions. Although Identity seems like a very simple concept to many, the real challenge behind it is to answer what our real identity is. Many at times, people are confused of what their real identity is. The Second chapter of this paper differentiates an individual's personal identity with that of the other types of identities, called the pluralities of identity. Role sets are assigned to individual's living in the society and the functions of these role sets is what defines their identity. The third chapter of this paper gives theoretical understanding of Identity with particular reference to the specters of identity politics in Nagaland.

The fourth chapter discusses the issues circulating identity with representational cases on cow politics in India and Women Reservation crisis in Nagaland. The final chapter is a conclusion of the paper and discussions and recommendations are given as per the findings of the research.

Key words: Identity, Identity Politics, Nagaland, Pluralities of Identity, Politics, Theoretical.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

Change, in a universal understanding, is irresistible. The force of globalization has in fact contributed hugely to most changes that we experience today. Talk about the rise of women identity politics in India. Such an identity was not treated differently in the ancient Indian society. However, the impact of globalization leading to the cultural exchange of ideas, values and beliefs have also contributed to the changing mindset of the Indian society. This is because the world we live in and our lives are shaped by the “conflicting trends of globalization and identity” (Castells, *The power of identity*, 2010).

Theorists<sup>1</sup> add more to the question of identity arguing that a person has ‘plurality of identities’<sup>2</sup> over an individual representation or even for collective action. To tell the distinction between identity and role sets<sup>3</sup>, is rather challenging however, understanding Identity is more complex and can be a source of contradiction in defining the mental mode of framework. It is how we define ourselves from the others or how we define others from ourselves. Scholars agree to the distinction that Identity shapes the meaning<sup>4</sup> of an individual while the role sets describes its functions. This proves that identity has more to do with the moral attachment of a person.

But what is crucial about the “identity” of identity politics is the subject itself. The exploitation of the term identity and the politicization of identity have given birth to many differences among identity groups in the society.

It is also a bitter truth that every society has its own social distinctions and hierarchy where some sections of the group are treated as inferior or superior. Thus, identity politics rests on combining claims about the meaning of politically loaded experiences of diverse individuals. And Identity finds its way in association with the oppression, discrimination or subjugation of a particular group that identifies them as being inferior to other groups. The negative connotation of the term Identity therefore, makes its way in the in politically uplifting the identical group.

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<sup>1</sup> Manuel Castells in his book “the power of identity”

<sup>2</sup> Referring to the existence of multiple identities that a single person is identified with such as personal identity, ethnic identity, national identity and so on.

<sup>3</sup> Sociologist used the term role sets to describe the different roles or identities of a person in the society.

<sup>4</sup> Castells defined ‘meaning’ as the ‘symbolic identification by a social actor of the purpose of her/his action’.

## 1.1 Identity politics: an overview

Identity is a common catchphrase in today's world. This is so because Identity cannot be de-alienated from an individual as it is what defines them. It can be personal identity, religious identity, professional identity, national identity, territorial identity, social identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, tribal identity or even student identity (for students). As Parekh and Castells would say, these are 'pluralities of identity'. All identities are significant in an individual's life. For instance, a person an individual is bound to identify himself/herself from the other person. But while in a group, he/she is given a collective identity. In this case, let us consider it a Naga boy who is to identify himself. This very boy, in a narrower sense, will be identified as a naga male or a north-easterner, by the mainland Indians. But while in Nagaland, he is to be identified as a male<sup>5</sup>, a male belonging to one of the tribes in Nagaland<sup>6</sup>, an Indian, a male belonging to a particular religious group, etc. No matter what the identification is, all these identities are important.

However, identities concerning nationality, ethnicity and culture are more stable in comparison to personal identity and professional identity. For instance, one may be a student at a particular time, but years later, the professional identity of that particular student may change due to progress of the student in the academic field.

But when the question of identity arises, we are often confused with what our 'real' identity is.

Different scholars have therefore defined identity according to their own perceptions. Identity therefore is constructed and is developed when comparisons are made in the society. For instance, the formulation of questions like 'what makes this individual different from that' or 'who are we', leads to comparison and ultimately defines the individual and gives it an identity. Since identity differentiates the 'self' and the 'other', an individual cannot be defined without it.

Undoubtedly, every society has a dominant body of culture and values by which its members must live their personal or collective lives. This privileges some forms of life, social relationships and groups, while creates inferiority complex on the others. Members of such

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<sup>5</sup> Biological difference with women

<sup>6</sup> Tribes are groups of clans claiming common language, common ancestry, common origin, etc. There are sixteen major tribes in Nagaland.

inferior identity group, arises out of a common consensus due to shared experiences and concerns and creates a collective identity (Parekh, 2008) . Such groups try to differentiate themselves positively in order to achieve political social identity<sup>7</sup>. Politics is now closely related to identity and the politics of identity has become a contemporary issue. The discomfort and uncertainty in the surroundings of deprivation, alienation, subordination, exploitation, deficiency and discrimination present in the society challenges us to remember the word “politics” in the phrase “identity politics”. In this contemporary world, many scholars try to define the concept of identity politics by giving references to the black identity, separatist, gays and lesbians, feminist, and so on. The politics of identity thus have grown widely in its aspects as the aspect of identity touches all aspects of life, be it personal, social, human, national, cultural and so on. Scholarly analyses on the context of identity politics have analyzed ‘identity politics as a political practice with sociological analysis of the relationship between Identity and Politics’ (Bernstein, 2005).

The basic argument of this paper is the rise of Identity politics in the contemporary world with special reference to representational case studies.

## **1.2 Identity politics in India: an overview**

India is a land of diversities – diverse in culture, tradition, geography, language. In fact, it proudly claims to be a ‘unity in diversity’ because of the peaceful co-existence of many different cultures and traditions. The Indian society, like every other society around the globe is challenged with the question of Identity. Although the whole of India has one common identity i.e., the National Identity, many other forms of identity are present because of its rich culture and past history. Identity politics in India can be seen as caste identity, tribal identity, cultural identity, national identity, territorial identity, religious identity and so many more to name. The existence of pluralist identities is rightly proved in the words of Parker that ‘all politics is identity politics’. The existence of many identities increases the diversity of a nation, and at the same time creates conflicts and controversies that disrupts the peaceful co-existence of the society.

Many new identities like the feminist identity, the gay and lesbian identity, male chauvinism are taking shape as new forms of identity in India. This is largely due to the impact of Globalization

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<sup>7</sup> According to Turner, as cited by Huddy.

in India. Many scholars like Castells have also talked about the impact of globalization that impacts the role of identity of an individual.

Likewise, the concept of the politics of identity does not remain unaffected in Nagaland as well. Besides the Indian identity, which is the official identity of the Nagas as Indians, the Nagas carry along with them the 'Naga Identity' as national identity<sup>8</sup>. The political history of the Indo-Naga relations is a major contribution towards the creation of such identity<sup>9</sup>. The political conditions of the Nagas cannot be made referring to the Indo-Naga relations. The speed of globalization is at a high rate that it has even impacted the opinions of the Nagas. Therefore, the transition in the mindsets of the people (inclusive of both Nagas and non-Nagas), is to be explored in the process of the research to pave a way for further research into this area. It would be rather challenging to study the different types of identity in Nagaland due to the limitation of resources in this field of study.

## **1.2 A brief historical background of the Nagas**

Before we go into the understanding of the specters of identity politics in Nagaland, let us first understand who the Naga's are and what the Naga Identity is all about.

*“When India from the early part of the century was trying to reassert itself and carve out its destiny, in the distant north-east of our country, the Nagas were trying to preserve their own identity.”*

*Morkut Ramunny*

Many decades ago, Nagas were merely referred by Indian scholars as a distant 'head hunting'<sup>10</sup> horde within the north-eastern group of India. Before the advent of the British, the Nagas lived in complete isolation. “The world of Nagas was their own village, and the limit of their vision, the

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<sup>8</sup> I say so because Nagas were isolated for a long period which gave them the earnest thrust to be independent, although not all nagas wants independence from India.

<sup>9</sup> Even the use of the term 'Indo-Naga' by various scholars itself can be seen as a form of differentiation of identity between the two.

<sup>10</sup> “Nagas believed in the hidden power in the human head, which when removed from the enemy and preserved in their own villages, would bring prosperity and fertility in life and agriculture.” This is no longer a practice among the nagas today.

village horizon” (Iyer, 1994 ). In the remoteness and isolation, the Naga villages code of behavior and standard of administration. The Nagas first contact with the outsiders was when the Ahom prince passed through the Naga territory while on his way from Burma to conquer the Brahmaputra valley. The Nagas found the fear of the unknown and distrusted the outsiders. Later, the British came in contact with the Nagas, only to be received after the first attempt through Christianity. “People were identified according to their individual tribes and village names” (Chasie, 2005).

One important feature of the Nagas is that each tribe has its own area of land and since time immemorial is practically sub-divided and belonged to each tribe. According to Verrier Elwin, Naga administration presents a “varied pattern” of administration ranging from “near dictatorship”<sup>11</sup> to “extreme democracy”<sup>12</sup>.

In 1918 the Naga Club, and in 1923, the first Tribal Council were formed. The Government of India Act 1935 designated the Naga Hill Areas as “excluded areas”. In 1946, the Nagas united and jointly formed the Naga Nationalist Council (NNC) with the chief aim to unify the Nagas and to improve the political-economic condition of the Nagas. The first major political move of the Nagas was a resolution passed by the NNC in 1946, to the Deputy Commissioner to disallow any member of the political party from the rest of India to enter the Naga Hills without their consent (Iyer, 1994 ). Such incidences of the past indicate the Nagas deep desire to protect their own identity. However, the concept “Naga Identity” itself is vague and is questionable with the creation of Nagaland as a separate state in 1963.

The generic term “Naga” was used ‘for about thirty tribes of the eastern hill frontier in the states of Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur’ (Kumar, 2005). The name “Naga” itself is of a recent origin even among the Nagas themselves and “lacks claimed historical support”. According to J.H. Hutton, “it is exceedingly difficult to pronounce a test by which a naga tribe can be distinguished from other Assam and Burma tribes which are not nagas.”

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<sup>11</sup> The Semas, Changs and Konyaks followed the chieftanship system, where the word of the chief becomes law.

<sup>12</sup> The Angamis, Aos, Rengmas and Lothas chose their leaders in a democratic way.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The main concern of the research is to understand academically the concept of identity and its relation to politics. In order to understand the specters of identity with particular reference to contemporary issues, theoretical references are made to pave ways for identifying the different types of identity politics and its outcome in the Human society. This thesis answers the question of identity by reviewing selected literatures to support the statement of the problem. The academic works of Manuel Castells, Richard Parker, Bikhu Parekh, Paul Gilbert and few other selected journals were studied to complete the thesis.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study:**

1. This thesis shall deal with identity as collective identity and not as Personal Identity.
2. Naga identity will be limited to the Nagas residing in the state of Nagaland.
3. Exploration of the question of identity will be limited to political theory based on content analysis.
4. Rather than elaborate reference on multiple cases, specific cases will be studied to support the research problem

### **1.6 Objectives**

1. To explore the question of identity from a political theoretical perspective
2. To investigate the praxis of identity politics in Nagaland
3. To find out the implications of identity politics in Nagaland

### **1.7 Research Methodology**

1. Analysis on the question of identity was done on the basis of Content Analysis. Authentic academic works were appraised to prepare the research
2. Representational cases were studied using secondary resources.
3. The methodology of the research was primarily based on secondary means.
4. The collection of data was done using explorative and descriptive research method.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The interpretation of the concept of “Identity” has exponentially grown over the last decade or so within both humanities and social sciences (Huddy, Mar., 2001) to describe different phenomenon (Bernstein, 2005). The understanding of the concept of Identity thus is not limited to just “personal identity”<sup>13</sup> or “biographical details”<sup>14</sup>- the question of who am I or what makes me this and not that, but rather it also involves the question of the individual’s role in the society. In the present context, the usage of the term “Identity” itself is controversial and raises a host of philosophical questions due to various interpretations of the term identity. The question of identity itself can be seen as misinterpretation as individuals often gets confused of one’s own identity.

Identity, according to Bikhu Parekh, “involves interpretation and judgment” and not just “mere empirical description” (Parekh, 2008). Individuals can be confused over one’s own identity or even that of the other. And so, to eradicate such confusions, Parekh explains in detail three “inseparable components” of an individual’s identity by which individuals can identify themselves. The first is “personal identity” where he defines individuals as unique and distinct human beings. The second is the “social identity” where individuals are involved in a variety of relationships and are engaged in various organizations, groups and communities. The third composition is the “human identity” where individuals distinct themselves from other beings and are morally bonded as human species.

In fact, the question of what is an individual’s real identity becomes really tricky. “One is likely to attach more importance to the context in which one identifies oneself to one’s family than to those in which one identifies oneself professionally or in the bare terms of one’s official identity” (Gilbert, 2010). According to Gilbert, there is no identity that one can give which conveys who one is unless one knows the context of the question of identity being asked. Castells viewed individualism (different from individual identity) as a form of collective identity as he focus on the ‘stronger meaning of identities rather than roles because of the self-construction and individuation it involves.’ (Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2010)

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<sup>13</sup>The belief and values by which humans identify themselves as certain kind of person’.

<sup>14</sup> Bikhu Parekh 2008

Politics, like we all know, is a term that covers not only the public realms but also relates to the private context. A very close relationship between identity and politics can be understood in the words of Richard D. Parker “All politics is identity politics” (Parker, 2005-06). He justifies it by the explanation given in his ‘5 (Five) thesis of identity politics’ stating that political activities are not only about self-government (the question of who we are or what is ours). Rather to him, identity politics involves making ‘comparisons, choices and commitments of values and interest (including choices not to choose among available choices)’ by which we identify ourselves.

Even though the concept of “identity” was interpreted differently, the first usage of the term Identity was used by Anspach in 1979 to refer “to activism by people with disabilities to transform both self and societal conceptions of people with disabilities” (Bernstein, 2005). Fraser concludes that "the expression 'identity politics' is increasingly used as a derogatory synonym for feminism, anti-racism, and anti-heterosexism” (Fraser, 1997).

A humble sense of Identity Politics is given by Manuel Castells in his work “The power of identity”. Castell talks about the development of collective identities and justifies it by relating it to “social movements” and “power struggles” in the “network society”<sup>15</sup>.

To throw a light on the understanding of Identity, we shall refer to the forms and origins of Identity building as proposed by Manuel Castells (Castells, The Power of Identity, 2010).

- **Legitimizing identities:** where dominant institutions of the society try to extend, reproduce and rationalize their power; usually constructed by using the materials inherited from history (god, nation, ethnicity and locality). Such type of Identities according to Castells generates civil societies.<sup>16</sup>
- **Resistance identities:** Where social actors social actors who are devalued or stigmatized builds “trenches of resistance” against the prevailing norm. The Identity of Resistance<sup>17</sup>, as Castells states, leads to the creation of “communes” or “communities.

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<sup>15</sup> As I proposed years ago in this volume, politics in the network society is primarily media politics.

<sup>16</sup> “Set of organizations and institutions, as well as a series of structured and organized social actors, which reproduce, albeit sometimes in a conflictive manner, the identity that rationalizes the sources of structural domination.”

<sup>17</sup> “This may be the most important type of identity-building in our society.”



- **Project identity:** Where social actors build a new identity by redefining their position in society on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, and in so doing so seek the transformation of the overall social structure. Project Identity produces Subjects<sup>18</sup>.

However, the identification of groups not in terms of trait such as race or ethnicity or sexual orientation, but as a “minority” group and worse, the identification of an individual “member” of such a group as “a minority” is one of the most problematic identities (Parker, 2005-06) that can lead to controversies and conflicts in the society.

Build on the above three forms of identity, selected cases in relation to identity politics in Nagaland will be examined for further investigation in the thesis.

Throughout the Literature Review, there are certain limitations and also similarities among the various theorists of Identity Politics. Here are some brief comparisons of various scholars that have been reviewed. One striking similarity among most of the political theorists<sup>19</sup> is that they intertwined the aspects of identity to that of **Globalization**.

*“Globalization is a process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities.”* (Dr.Nayef & Al-Rodhan, 2006)

Manuel castells goes on to say that the world we live in and our lives itself are shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity (Castells, The Power of Identity, 2010). Morley and Robins on the other hand, explained that the logic of globalization moves towards the greater standardization and homogenization of output, thus contributing to the loss of identity (Morley & Robins, 1995). Globalization challenges traditional identities and raise a host of questions among various theorists compelling them a healthy debate in this aspect.

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<sup>18</sup> “Subjects are not individuals, even if they are made by and in individuals. They are the collective social actor through which individuals reach holistic meaning in their experience”

<sup>19</sup> Manuel Castells, David Morley & Kevin Robins, Bhikhu Parekh

Another interesting comparison can be made between two theorists regarding their concept of **pluralist identity**. Both Parekh and Castells talk about the plurality of identities. Parekh explained that humans have “plural identities”, which is a necessary fact and all these identities are interrelated and supplement each other. On the contrary, Castells argues that “plurality is a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation and social action” (Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2010).

While Identity Politics may be seen as a **threat** to traditional identities, political theorists, like Richard D. Parker defended the misguided notion of identity and gave it a broader understanding. The stereotype “Identity Politics promotes **difference and grievance** is the most guided complaint”. (Parker, 2005-06) Parker justifies it saying that difference gives a meaning to self-definition and self-assertion while grievance is a fuel that contributes to the application of political freedom.

### Chapter 3: Understanding Identity

India being one of the most diverse nation brags to the world its 'unity in diversity'. However, the hybridization of multiple cultures in one single nation is rather a challenge to the existing harmony or the so called 'unity' among these diversities.

The fear of losing one's identity first sparked when the anti-Hindi speaking region of Tamil Nadu in the Southern region of India agitated against the compulsory teaching of Hindi in schools. The fear of the imposition of the north Indian culture into the southern region is still prevalent in today's Indian society. Not denying the fact that the fear of losing identity is not only confined to the North or South Indians but rather to the whole of India, in the light of this paper, with particular reference to Naga Identity in North-East India. The fear of being assimilated to the rest of the country is in the mindset of many nagas. It is for this reason the Indian Government has given special provision to the state of Nagaland under *Article 371(A)* of the Indian Constitution.

In this prospect, we see that the issue of national identity is being questioned and the rise of ethnic identity is visible to the naked eye. Classifying the ongoing debate, let us divide the contention of the two views about the Naga Identity into: a) Traditionalist<sup>20</sup> and b) the Post-traditionalist, in order to understand the differences in the opinions of the Nagas. The traditionalist thinkers are the group of people that has made their mainstay in preserving the ancestral rule of the land and are less open towards any changes expected within the society. The post-traditionalist are the group of thinkers who are willing to accept changes in the society but not at the risk of their customary rights.

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<sup>20</sup> The term used by Khekiye H. Sema in his News article to refer it to the group of Nagas who were more traditionalistic in their approach towards the Naga Identity.

### 3.1 Marxism and Identity:

Sharon Smith<sup>21</sup> justifies and gives “a clear distinction between what is personal and what is political: an individual's personal experience is quite separate from the realm of politics, which is about how to affect society as a whole. In the case of identity, a person's identity only becomes political when it moves beyond the realm of personal experience and becomes a strategy for changing society - and in particular, for fighting against oppression, in this case.” Inequality is the basis of all oppression. Men and women are not given identical status in the society. Let us consider the recent US Presidential election as an instance. There were debates on the political arena whether presidential candidate Hilary Clinton can be the first female President of the United States. In fact, her loss to President Donald Trump in a way was because there were sections of the American Society that did not want a female President. Now this is so because, the question of identity here is politicized and in this case, gender identity. So, identity is, no doubt, but a mental mode of framework, which a person has prescribed to identify, categorize and describe something.

Marxist interpreted Race or ethnic identity interestingly. To them, “Race/Ethnicity are seen as a part of a superstructure and hence are considered secondary or epiphenomenal to the economic base and relations of production.” (Spencer, 2006)

Who leads the struggles against oppression? It is the oppressed themselves. Women will lead women liberation movements – call it feminist- and here, women leads themselves not requiring men to tell them how to lead or how to fight back. History gives to us this picture of struggles and oppression. But there is no denying the fact that are thousands of men who takes part in women movements. Sharon Smith highlighted a very important fact that the theory of identity politics have ignored. She goes on to say “that you don’t have to personally experience a form of oppression to be able to actively oppose it.”

The Marxist interpretation is rather too narrow in the sense of discrimination in the economic oppression alone. Identity is more to economic sphere than expected.

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<sup>21</sup> A SocialistWorker.org columnist and author of *Subterranean Fire: A History of Working-Class Radicalism in the United States* and *Women and Socialism*, spoke at Socialism 2008 on how to understand oppression and identity politics.

### **3.2 Multiculturalism and Identity**

Multiculturalism is one real fact of contemporary politics. The pluralities of identity will now see a clearer picture of identity in pluralistic form. The world we live in is a mixture of cultures. Even if we narrow the world to a particular area, the mixture of cultures is still evident. Say for example, India. India has multiple cultures ranging from the East to West to South to North. Even in the internal arena of these areas, there are still multiple identities within. North-East, comprising of 8 states form a beautifully diversified region of India with not only distinct physical appearance but also distinct cultures and traditions.

Multicultural although seems like a tool for unity, it can be the biggest threat to identity. In a society, there is an existence of multiple cultures, sometimes leading to an overlap of cultures among the different sections of the society. No society has ever faced an equal status. There are always differences and distinctions amongst the groups. The representational case study presented in this paper is with regard to the cow politics in India.

Although a very controversial contention, this case was referred as it depicts not only one aspect of identity but touches the different aspects of identity that is prevalent in the Indian Society.

The concept of Multiculturalism oversees the narrower aspects of race, culture and ethnic diversity. The Multiculturalist Identity can be compared to that of a salad bowl, like India. Being a multiculturalist country, many cultures come into contact and yet peacefully maintain a harmonious state, just like the various fruits that complement each other in a salad bowl. But on the flipside, there are always differences in opinions and for a country like India to remain in harmony will be a status quo and therefore with the changing growth, there are immense interactions among societies, which sometimes lead to clashes in the society.

### **3.3 Feminism and Identity**

Feminism, as the name suggests is the identification of women from the man. With that little identification, feminism has now gone a long way in challenging the prevailing concept of identity giving shape to feminist scholarship. Feminist scholarship is based on the theoretical

concept of how the inclusion of women into cultural and identity studies could change the fundamental views, associations and epistemological concerns of political theory. We shall not look into the history of Feminism as it would be a diversion from the topic. But it must be noted that the concept of feminism is a western origin and is a rising concern in India.

The various atrocities against women in India, especially with reference to the social evils, such as dowry- which is still prevalent in the present day society, domestic violence against women, rape, etc., are burning issues in the countries that triggers the feminist feeling among women, and men to some extent. Women today are more open to changes and more women are seen in almost all aspects of the society in India.

The case to be discussed in this paper is a representational case of the ongoing 33% women Reservation crisis in Nagaland. Why is the reservation a crisis, should be known to us by the end of this paper. The question of identity whether it was women Identity or national identity or cultural identity or any other sort of identity that is represented in this case still highlights some forms of identity issues.

### **3.4 Liberalism and Identity politics**

According to Brown<sup>22</sup> ‘A key condition of possibility for contemporary identity politics was institutionalized liberal democracy’. The political participation of the people which is a chief feature of democracy unites the people. The main concern of the liberals, however, is of individual freedom. When social groups are formed, by rule of the society, there are distinctions between the different groups with some being the privileged and the others less privilege. The dominant groups become the privileged groups as the other groups are being deprived. For instance, the dalits in India are considered the lowest among the Hindu stratification and therefore they are deprived in many ways. Although the government has taken up many initiatives to promote this social group, yet the exploitation of the dalits are very much prevalent in the present scenario. It is for this reason that many streets across cities and villages are named after Ambedkar, who fought for the upliftment of the dalits.

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<sup>22</sup> As cited in <https://seop.illc.uva.nl/entries/identity-politics/> as on 24.4.17

Critics of liberalism have charged the liberals stating that ‘assimilation is a guiding principle of liberalism’. If we are to consider the assimilation of western culture in to the Indian Society, this statement can be rightly proved. For instance the role of women identity or feminism is a western ideology that has made its way through to the Indian Society.

One central idea that the liberals used to charge against identity political theory was the blame that the sameness or identical feature was used to justify the political mobilization of the people i.e., rather than looking for the one with similar political values, one was looking for the sameness or identical feature of oppression or discrimination.

Due to the pluralities of identities, it is increasingly difficult to divide what forms of identity are mostly being politicized, whether it is the race, ethnicity, religion or multiculturalism. But no case the concept of identity can be denied as it is identity that leads to the classification of social groups or realization of the similarities of identities.

### **3.5 The politics of Identity**

Identity which is the mental mode of framework has increasingly become a boiling topic in the country. The politics around identity have increased massively over the years due to the involvement of politics in identity clashes.

*“I am never quite sure what people mean  
when they talk about 'identity politics.'  
Usually, though, they bring it up to complain  
about someone else. One's own political  
preoccupations are just, well, politics.  
Identity politics is what other people do.”*

*- Kwame Anthony Appiah (Appiah, 2006)*

It is in this context, understood and built that identity politics involves a range of political activities that theorizes the foundation of a group of people having common experience of oppression or injustice of members belonging to a social group. But it is out of the personal

sphere of a person as it involves the 'self' and the 'other'. For instance, Gay marriage may seem a liberal idea in the United States (US). However, it is not widely accepted in India as it may be considered just as an influence of American-style identity politics. Considering it an American-style identity politics gives this subject a pinch of negativity.

Identity politics does not seem to prosper because of its involvement in the political stage.

Kwame goes on to say that there is a way of explaining why identity matters. 'Identity' to him, 'may not be the best word for bringing together the roles gender, class, race, nationality, and so on play in our lives, but it is the one we use.' One problem with 'identity' is that it can suggest that everyone of a particular identity is in some strong sense similar, because most groups are 'internally quite heterogeneous', partly because each of us have plurality of identities. The best way to react to this problem is to be 'aware of the risk'.

When identity is at talk, there is always a contention as to whether a person is on the side of identity politics or not. But it is quite an impossible thing to answer this. Let me, for an instance, take the example of 'Eunachs' or 'Hijara's' in India. It is observed that in most Indian society, people seek for their blessings, which is either on religious or cultural lines, as this was a tradition since decades. However, when it comes to a particular family, there are incidences where parents are unable to accept the fact that their sons are born this way. This may seem a personal affair. But if we are to consider the fears of the parents, it can pretty be assumed that this fear is either for societal shame (that people may look down on the family); or that the family cannot accept the fact (so, because of a prescribed pattern of society that a man must behave like a man). In such a contention, the question whether the parents are on the side of identity politics or not is questionable now that, the protection of this social group is initiated by the government.

Samuel Huntington predicted civilizational identity clashes in the twenty first century.

Civilizational clashes are now at the headlines of every newspaper and the debates on these clashes are tremendously discussed. The recent temporary travel ban signed by the US President banning six<sup>23</sup> Muslim countries (sparing Iraq)<sup>24</sup> into the States caused outrage in the most liberal country of the world. This incident has brought up new issues on identity that the use of identity

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<sup>23</sup> Syria, Iran, Yemen, Lybia, Somalia, Sudan as cited in <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/29/politics/trump-travel-ban-countries/> as on 21.4.17

<sup>24</sup> As cited in <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/06/us/politics/travel-ban-muslim-trump.html> dated 21.4.17



is related with negativity or in simple terms with oppression. The crisis of identity is now at play in all societies around the globe. India, being a diverse nation is no exception. The travel ban clearly depicts civilizational clashes between the Americans (the whites) and the Muslim countries due to the differences in their ideologies and religious beliefs. Huntington's prediction on civilizational clashes has both religious and linguistic implications in the increasing age of anxiety and differences.

### **3.6 The Specters of Identity politics: with reference to Nagaland**

The specters of Identity Politics meant the perceptions of identity politics in Nagaland. Throughout the theses, Identity politics in Nagaland will be studied in close relation to the concept of identity politics in political theory. Let us briefly understand the specters of identity with particular reference to Nagaland.

#### **3.6.1 Cultural identity:**

All politics are identity politics<sup>25</sup> but all identity politics are not cultural identities. Gilbert in his book "Cultural Identity and Political Ethic" explains the term cultural identity by distinguishing two notions (Gilbert, 2010). Culture is basically, people's whole way of life. Cultural identities are differences within the cultures and not between the cultures.

- a) Cultural Identity firstly, is referred to an individual's identity in its cultural aspects (the features of the way in which an individual was brought up such as the linguistic, educational, religious or socially acquired attributes and manners).
- b) Cultural identity secondly, is referred to membership of cultural group which is a collective identity and is shared by other members of the group. A cultural group is a group sharing a culture and not just cultural features.

Cultural Identity should not be misread as communal identity. Likewise, Nagaland is known as a land of varied cultures in the sense that people in the state have a common way of life. The various tribal units in Nagaland although have different ways of displaying their culture, this does not give the tribes the autonomy of a cultural identity.

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<sup>25</sup> ibid

Rather, these tribal units can be seen as differences within the culture and can be carried forward for further investigation in this context.

### **3.6.2 National Identity:**

According to Dusche, nation becomes an extension of the individual self and a threat to the nation becomes like a threat to the individual self (Dusche, 2010). Parekh gives two related but different senses to give a deeper explanation to define the term national identity. Firstly, he differentiated an individual's identity 'as a member of a political community' to that of another community. Secondly, he differentiated the identity of the political community as a whole to that of another political community. National identity is one identity that 'gives an individual a home, a place they call their own and whose membership cannot be taken away from them' (Parekh, 2008). National identity is the individual's identity but is 'highly complex, multilayered and composed of conflicting stands of thoughts, values and beliefs'.

Legitimately, Nagaland was given its statehood on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1963<sup>26</sup> to officially become an Indian state. India, as per its constitution has only single citizenship. Therefore, the Nagas in Nagaland has attained the Indian National Identity. However, the question of the Indian national identity may seem a conflicting question to the Nagas because of the political past (Indo-Naga relationship) of the Nagas. Therefore, the question of the Indian National Identity on the Nagas will further be investigated to arrive at certain conclusions in the thesis.

### **3.6.3 Gender Identity:**

Although the kind of gender identity<sup>27</sup> that we see in western societies has not taken a full-fledged shape in Nagaland, there is no denying the fact that gender identity plays an important role in the Naga society. Naga society, like most societies follows the Patriarchal lineage. Men are always considered to be mighty and strong. History tells us that Nagas were head hunters and it was the duty of men to protect his clan, Khel, women and village from its enemies. This concept has however been challenged because of the

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<sup>26</sup> ibid

<sup>27</sup> Differences based on gender, not as severe as feminism.

process of modernization and globalization. Nagas now no longer live in isolation and enjoy equal rights as other Indians. With a democratic system of administration, the old concepts of the people are slowly withering away. But the system of belief that has long been in the Naga mindset cannot be flushed out so easily as it has become more like the way of life in the Naga society. Though the patriarchal system is not much of an evil, it is challenged with the question of gender identity. The advent of Christianity in Nagaland can be seen as a boon to the Naga society as it brought along with it the most important ingredient towards westernizing the society.

Today, women are more independent and can be seen in almost all spheres, be it agriculture, education, business, administration, and so on, except in politics. As we have learned in the above statements that the question of identity arises when there is differentiation between the 'self-regarding' and 'other-regarding'. Likewise, the comparison being made that women play an important role in the Naga yet it has no role to play in the decision making body gives us a new dimension to study. The objection of the thirty-three percent (33%) reservation of women passed by the State Assembly in 2016 will further be investigated to understand an overview of gender identity in the state.

#### **3.6.4 Ethnic identity:**

H. Jha<sup>28</sup> referred Ethnic Identity to “the identification and labeling of a group of people. The criteria may be linguistic, racial or cultural.” Ethnic groups are defined on the basis of shared belief, shared origin, a common history, a common destiny and culturally specific practices<sup>29</sup>. The way of life and common distinct features of a particular group determines its ethnicity from the other groups. “Theoretical works on ethnicity have brought out clearly that ethnic identity struggles are waged not by isolated tribal communities, but by politicized cultural communities who want to enter into the threshold of modern way of life” (Joseph, April 2015).

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<sup>28</sup> As cited in “Ethnicity and Ethnic conflict: a search for an identity or identity crisis? With special reference to North-East India.” By Benoy Joseph.

<sup>29</sup> According to Borgohain as cited by Benoy Joseph.

When the question of a person's identity arises, it is quite often experienced that the ethnic identity of a person is first identified. I say so because, though we may tend to identify and differentiate between an individual's personal identity and professional identity, it is the ethnic identity of a person that is firstly noticed. For instance, in an interview, when a person is asked to describe himself/herself, the initial answer of that interviewee is to answer his/her name. Now, the fact that a person is named according to the family lineage is undeniable. The family lineage carries along the cultural traits of a person that is passed on from generation to another. So, if Sharma introduces himself, it becomes obvious that this person is of an Indian origin as the cultural traits in naming a person differ and vary from society to society. When these groups of people having common traits identify themselves from other groups, it leads to identity groups – whether oppressed or not.

Nagaland has a combination of “sixteen odd tribes and sub-tribes”<sup>30</sup>, on popular ground, known as communities (though academically it can be referred to sub-community or sub-culture). The political condition of the Nagas is also affected by the existence of many tribes, although the cultural life of the people remains less affected. In the words of Zehol<sup>31</sup>, ‘ethnicity unites most communities from the outsiders but fails to organize the communities within as a common entity’ becomes applicable here in the context of Nagaland. The question whether ethnic identity is a source of conflict or a source of strength is to be explored.

*“The Conceptualization view proposes that ethnicity is a popular description of mass identity only because it encompasses so many of the other forms of group identity discussed in the modern period; the term ethnicity can refer to ‘race’, culture, geographic region, language/dialect, religion, and sometimes economic or social position. Ethnicity is often used as a proxy for all of these terms and*

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<sup>30</sup> www.nagaland.gov.in as on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

*is also used to describe groups that are characterized by  
some, often complicated, combination of them”*

(Leach, Brown, & Worden, 2008).

For instance, identity politics in India is associated with Caste Politics, Tribal politics, Ethnic politics, religion based politics, and so on. Although it can be differently understood, there is no denying that these terms are interchangeably used and are intertwined and connected in a way or the other as one may lead to the other.

## Chapter 4: Representational Case studies

### 4.1 The Identity of Cow politics

Let me start of the first case citing a constitutional article to justify an argument. Identity analyzed here is in contemporary context is a blend of caste based politics, religion based politics and ethnic based politics. In the Constitution of India, Article 48<sup>32</sup> states that:

*“The State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle.”*

The Indian Constitution prohibits the slaughtering of cows. It is for this reason that boiling disputes are in the rise. A long awaited bill to ban the slaughtering of cattles was long pending in the table of the Indian President. It was only consented under the Indian President, Pranab Mukherjee in 2015, that the Maharashtra Animal Preservation (Amendment) Bill, 1995, after nearly 19 years when the Maharashtra Assembly passed the Bill during the BJP-Shiv Sena rule in 1995.<sup>33</sup>

One of the main protagonists of identity politics in the light of the Indian context is startlingly, the innocent cow, unaware of the politics around it. Cow politics has long had its place in the Indian Politics. The Indian constitution under article 48 gives a boost to the ban of cow slaughtering in India. Many states in India have now imposed the beef ban. However, these brought tensions in many Indian states, particularly the North-East of India which are majority

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<sup>32</sup> As cited in [lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/coi-4March2016.pdf](http://lawmin.nic.in/olwing/coi/coi-english/coi-4March2016.pdf) as on 21.4.17

<sup>33</sup> As reported in <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/beef-banned-in-maharashtra-5-yrs-jail-rs10000-fine-for-possession-or-sale/> as on 21.4.17

beef-eating cultured. Assadudin Oiwasi<sup>34</sup>, coined the popular phrase “Cow is mummy in UP and yummy in North-East”.<sup>35</sup> This was to resent the violent attacks on people in the Indian mainland, very specifically in the ‘cow belt’<sup>36</sup> by the cow vigilante.

Cow politics have become a political row in India due to the diverse and different ideological and religious beliefs of the people. Undoubtedly, such a controversy is undeniable in a country like India. India comprised of majority of people professing the Hindu religion. The Hindu’s regarded the ‘cow’ as ‘holy’ and ‘sacred’. Consumption of beef was way out of their minds. 80.5%<sup>37</sup> of India’s population is comprised of the Hindus. While the other minorities consumed beef, as a cultural practice. Culture is a way of life of the people.

The beef row has now become a political issue due to the involvement of many political parties and the active role of media has depicted the issue that became the highlight of every Indian National and regional news headlines leading to contentious debates in the country. The ruling government led by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a religion-based political party as it is inclined with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). “Expressed in the simplest terms, the ideal of the Sangh is to carry the nation to the pinnacle of glory through organizing the entire society and ensuring the protection of Hindu Dharma.”<sup>38</sup>

The cow politics would not be a heated debate had it not led to the destruction of peace and harmony in the Indian society. Major killings and disharmony are now centered on this identity game. The recent death of Pehlu Khan, who died of his injuries after ‘hundreds of vigilantes attacked his cattle trucks on a highway in Alwar in Rajasthan’<sup>39</sup> is one example of cow politics. The Rajasthan Home Minister’s comment on this incident that the Vigilantes have done a good job in blocking cow smuggling adds a political approval to the row encouraging illegal acts of the vigilantes. Legal actions should be imposed upon defaulters rather than moral policing and

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<sup>34</sup> President of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen(AIMIM)

<sup>35</sup> From the editorial of nagalandpost.com dated the 6<sup>th</sup> April as on 22.4.17

<sup>36</sup> Cow belt according to Wikipedia is the combined areas of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh as on 22.4.17

<sup>37</sup> Cited from [http://censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_And\\_You/religion.aspx](http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx) as on 22.4.17

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/tXU0szgSbJsN4BDh0aa8RP/Rajya-Sabha-asks-Modi-government-to-bring-facts-on-Alwar-inc.html> as on 21.4.17

restoring to violence creating disharmony in the society. It is also observed that some vigilante groups have police backing to carry out their mission. Not at all times are these groups accurate in their research because the authenticity of the reports of people associated with consuming, trading or storing beef is not properly highlighted. Media reports also vary ethically.

The controversy now is that more crimes are recorded in the name of Gau Rakshas. Gau rakshas are believed to protectors or savers of cows in India. These people work for the protection of their sacred animal, 'the cow', and tries to prevent slaughtering or skinning of the animal for consumption or trade. However, in many Indian societies, cases against 'gau rakshas' are being reported due to the inhuman treatment of treatment of people involved or suspected to be associated with the meat of cows. It may not be really appropriate to use the term 'moral police' to this, however, there is a string of moral policing attached to these cow vigilantes.

On the political arena, in response to the various scandal circulating fake concerns in the name of cow protection, Narendra Modi, the Indian Premier<sup>40</sup> had this to say:

*"A Gau-Bhakt (cow devotee) is different, Gau Seva (cow protection) is different. I have seen that some people are into crimes all night and wear the garb of Gau Rakshaks in the day,"*

It is noteworthy that India is a multiculturalist nation which serves as the bond of the entire nation and therefore this fact must be preserved at all costs adding that the Constitutional provisions protect the rights of the citizens.

The politicization of this issue has given a bitter picture of cow vigilantes. From the perspective of identity politics, we can clearly point the different mixtures of the plurality of identities such as caste identity, religious identity, nationalist identity, ethnic identity. Although the conflict here seems to be between the Hindus, on one side and the other minorities on the other, that is not all for the complete story. The caste division within the Hindus also adds more identity definition to

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<sup>40</sup> As reported in <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pm-modi-hits-out-at-cow-vigilantes-says-most-cows-die-after-eating-plastic-1441079> when the P.M marked the second MyGov initiative as on date 21.4.17



the play of identity politics. The lower caste among the Hindus, called the dalits, in the caste<sup>41</sup> stratification, is the most oppressed or exploited caste. The dalits being considered the lowest, are made to skin cattle carcass as a traditional occupation. Even in the process of skinning a dead cow, there are incidences where the upper caste is alleged to have attacked the dalits in the name of Gau Rakshas. The attack on the dalit group by cow vigilantes was also denounced by the Indian Premier Narendra Modi, who boldly stated that if there has to be an attack, it should be on him and not the dalits.

Religious identity is another highlight of the case. The perseverance to protect the sacred animal is undoubtedly based on religious lines. The 'cow' is a sacred animal of the Hindus. The dominant political party in India – Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) is one Hindu ideological based political party. Ever since the reign of the BJP began, the minority groups are filled with fear due to constant intervention of the RSS in the political works of the BJP.

To understand the Indian society in a secular way, let us quote the father of Indian nation:

*“I have been long pledged to serve the cow but can my religion also be the religion of the rest of the other Indians? It will mean coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus.”*<sup>42</sup>

When the issue of ethnic identity arises, this case is no exception. The people belonging to the North-east of India have common traits of origin and share almost similar cultural values. While the people in the South of India, have their common traits of origin and way of life. The cow politics is less affected in the Northeast and there is no beef ban in the state of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. In the Southern region of India, the state Kerala remains unaffected. Also, the states mentioned have good proportions of Christians.

Although the proud tag “Unity in Diversity” is commonly used by Indians to define its multiculturalist society, identity becomes a threat to this feeling. The negative connotation of identity is attached when diversity becomes a concern. Since politics is considered a dirty game,

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<sup>41</sup> The caste is divided into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. Below the Sudras is the untouchables (now called as dalits).

<sup>42</sup> ibid

any association with it defiles the tag. So, when identity, which means identifying the sameness, takes a U-turn it becomes attached to politics. Not calling it a dirty game, but the negativity of the term identity politics cannot be ignored.

An interesting fact that is making a wave in the Indian news headlines currently is the issue of Aadhaar-like unique identification for cows. This initiative was proposed to prevent cow trafficking in India. "Each cow and its progeny across India should get a Unique Identification Number for tracking,"<sup>43</sup> said the government in its report to the Supreme Court of India.

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<sup>43</sup> Retrieved from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/aadhaar-like-unique-identification-numbers-for-cows/articleshow/58341292.cms> as on 25.4.17

## **Representational Case:**

### **4.2 Women Reservation in Nagaland: Women Identity, Nationalist Identity or Ethnic Identity?**

The most recent incident in the state of Nagaland that took the national news for more than week and paralyzed the normal working of the state was the row on 33% Women's Reservation (WR) in the Urban Local Bodies (ULB).

It kept many wondering: Was it a clash within the state machinery? ; Was it a clash between the state and the Centre?; was it a clash between women and the State?; Differences in opinions piled up. Negotiations through tribal unions and organizations somehow stabilized the government and led to a change in the whole of the Legislative Body (LB). The then chief minister was replaced by the president of the ruling party. It is amusing to see how a constitutional provision could trigger such a tremendous amount of confusion in the state.

The critical flow lies in the Constitutional clash between Article 371A under the Fifth Schedule and Article 243 under 12<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Indian Constitution. Article 371A gives special provisions to the state of Nagaland. Article 371A gives special provision to the state of Nagaland ensuring political, cultural and social preservation of the state of Nagaland. Article 243 highlights the Panchayati and Municipal provisions for the Indian states.

The Constitutional provision of Article 243T ensures the reservation of seats for women in the Urban Local Bodies. However, Article 243Z limits the area to which the Municipal provision can be limited. This very Article limits the municipal provision in the state of Nagaland. Therefore, one root cause for the major clash in the state was the Constitutional rift between Article 371A and Article 243. Who would have imagined that Constitutional provisions and its enactment in the state of Nagaland would have created a huge ruckus? For further reading of Article 371A, kindly refer to the Appendix 1 as attached.

*“Art 371A is a bastard subject without an acknowledged father. It is theoretically venom when Naga National sentiments are*

*expressed but defended with equal vehemence and used as a shield  
when genuine domestic problems need sorting out.”*

*Khekiye K Sema, IAS (Rtd)<sup>44</sup>*

The controversy on this case has opened up two schools of thought, basically the Traditionalist and post-traditionalist (as we have mentioned earlier). While the post-traditionalist view that it is the Article 371A that protects the Political, social and cultural rights of the Nagas yet it must still be open to changes according to the changing environment of the society.

What is the answer to the question of reservation? Can it be a temporary process or long term process? Let us try to understand these questions from a broad perspective. Reservations in most cases are given to a particular group of people in the society who are deprived economically, politically, culturally or who needs more attention to make a progress in the society. This is often for a temporary period of time until the social group is uplifted. Many social groups that are granted reservation, however, becomes more dependent on the reservation and are unable to compete with the rapid competitive force of the present generation. The reservation policy is now playing double standards in the family.

To my justification, 33% reservation is politically employed by the tribal organizations and the state government which has created a huge mind-block for the people. The common citizens, represented by the tribal organizations have made strong opposition against the reservation of women in the Urban Local Bodies. But is the representation of the common people by the tribal bodies genuine? Or is the opinion of following one decision i.e., headed by the tribal organizations, a mere brain wash to the people? No concrete declaration can be made on that. The latest reservation rift was spear headed by the tribal organizations.

Women, in Nagaland, are at equal par with men in almost every aspect of the society. Women can be seen actively in every field ranging from education and administration to entrepreneurship. The only sphere where women are not actively involved is in politics.

Rano M. Shaiza, elected to the Lok Sabha (LS) during the post-emergency Janata Era in 1977, was the only women (so far) who have made a print in the political history of Nagaland.

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<sup>44</sup> “33% women reservation Hangups” as published in Eastern Mirror Nagaland dated 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016 as on 24.4.17

Therefore, it can be correctly stated that the only ‘visible’ opposition state politics is ‘the absence of women’.<sup>45</sup>

The scheduled February 1 Urban Local Body Election in Nagaland where women would have acquired 33% reservation for the first time in the state created a history for the whole of India to be remembered as it witnessed major oppositions from the various Tribal Hoho<sup>46</sup>(TH). The issue of reservation, many believed, would not have been raised had the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) not moved to the Supreme Court in 2012. This bold move of the NMA to empower women has, in fact, contributed to the rise of women identity in Nagaland, a place where women are free to believe in their dreams but not participate in politics. Wonder if the reservation of women in the state Assembly really did infringe the constitutional provision of the Naga Customary Laws (CL). The general concept of the common people or the reason that the public obliged to obey the tribal bodies was because of the idea that the reservation of women in Nagaland would allow the ‘outsiders’ to own the tribal lands of the people. The ‘outsider’ here, is used to refer to the mainland Indians and not to create any anti-nationalist feeling. Nagas in general, consider themselves as a different nationality due to the various differences with the Centre government and diverse cultural difference.

Even a handful of women who registered themselves for the Urban Local Bodies were forced to withdraw their nominations as the tribal organizations took to media to publically ex-communicate the respective candidates from their local habitats. Men were no exception in this case. In total opposition to the Urban Local Body Election, the public under the different tribal associations walked the streets to protest against the election. Violent means were reported as there was mass vandalization of public property.

The outrage of the people is quite amusing as the people were brainwashed with the basic idea that reservation of women would only lead to the loss of property. Here’s how the view goes: the reservation of seats give women the right to control over the respective territories. Since reservation is authorized by the Central government, there is an assumption that the authority of

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<sup>45</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.dailyo.in/variety/nagaland-violence-urban-local-bodies-polls-33-percent-women-reservation/story/1/15466.html> as on 24.4.17

<sup>46</sup> In lotha-naga dialect means ‘council’.

these tribal lands will be indirectly owned by the government in the form of taxation. Nagaland witnessed only a form of taxation – taxes illegally charged by the various factional groups. The fear that that one would have to pay taxes for the land that one originally owns has triggered immense fear in the minds of the people that led to mass protests from the citizens.

The only ‘salvaging grace that protects the Naga identity among the vast cultural difference of the Indians’ is the CP, Article 371A. It is a foregone conclusion that the imposition of Article 243 concerning ULB in the state of Nagaland will shape the Customary Laws of the Nagas and the traditionalist Nagas are in no mercy to compromise any change in the special provision. In the case of WR in ULB, the role of tribal organizations came into the limelight as they led the opposition. Tribal Hohos conglomerated and formed the Nagaland Tribes Action Committee (NTAC). This committee worked on diplomatic dialectic lines to temporarily submerge the conflict.

It was at this time that the wise minds of the Nagas were put to test. The road the people chose was to protect and preserve their identity over reservation of women. To put blame on any social group would be incorrect. Needless to say, Identity was the main crux of the clash among the groups. It was also a ‘public verses government’ situation. Or putting it clearly, it was a ‘Tribal organization verses the Government of Nagaland.’

Questioning the identity of women is rather a tricky one. It is observed that the NMA worked for the upsurge of Naga women even in the political arena. Not conducting the ULB elections does not prove the failure to this social group rather challenges it to take even more gallant measures in the advancement of women. Post-traditionalists thinkers, through mass media have been expressing views on encouraging women’s reservation in the state. The WR issue is being politicized by the tribal organizations in the name of Article 371A. To reach to a concrete solution is rather impossible in the transition of opinions.

After analyzing of the case, it is now even more interesting to associate this aspect of identity politics to that of the theory of Identity politics. National identity of the Nagas, if taken into consideration, is inclined towards the Naga Identity rather than the Indian Identity. The

‘outsider’ feeling that the Nagas have created in their minds is because of the geographical, cultural, social, political alienation of the Nagas from the mainland Indians over decades.

With the politics of identity circulating women, there are many questions on the role of women in this case. Women were seen protesting on streets with men. Does this imply the double-standards of women? Judge no more, but can these women be called feminists? Also, women candidates who withdrew their nominations, can they be called feminist? If not a feminist, is it just the women identity that has strings attached to them?

To answer these questions will rather be a controversial matter. Given the freedom of speech and expression, one is free to follow and belief what one wants. Feminist is a social movement that aims to uplift women in the social, economic and political sphere.

As discussed earlier, on the recommendation of the NMA, the 33% WR bill was passed by the Supreme Court in Nagaland. The NMA is the apex body of all Women organizations. However, at the conflicting women, the Angami Mothers’ Association officially withdrew their membership from the NMA. Angami is one major tribe in Nagaland. The capital of Nagaland, Kohima is a home village to the majority of the Angami’s residing on Nagaland.

Coming to the discussion, the fear of territorial encroachment to the tribal lands of the Nagas have sparked fear in the minds of most sections of the Nagas, even impacting the women group to take such initiative.

The Patriarchal system in the Naga society is so strong a feeling that it plays safely its part in the society in the name of imparting freedom to women in all fields, except in ‘politics’. The common thinking that politics is not meant for women is still a mainstay in the mindset of the people. Most men today encourage women to participate in politics; however, it is even lacking in women the zeal to involve in active politics. The administration in Nagaland, have women in the execution but the traditional thinking of the Nagas that women have less prowess as compared to men still cripples the minds of both sections – male and female – in the Naga society.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

A lot of theoretical and empirical work has suggested that “social competition is the predominant way in which people achieve a secure and positive identity for themselves” (Leach, Brown, & Worden, 2008). True to the theoretical statements, there are pluralities of identities that eventually classify or group the different social groups. These social groups unite and bring together the people sharing common ideologies and beliefs. When people sharing the same identity are met, there is positive energy extraction among themselves to stand up among the other groups. If critically analyzed, Identity politics is an even more politicized concept that is now rapidly arising even in the world of Globalization.

In Western philosophy and psychology, identity is all about conflict. There was always an ideological clash since time immemorial. Many theorists have also predicted identity clashes. Since identity is the mental mode of framework, it is an undeniable concept that is every human mind even in the day to day aspects and thus makes an influence in the decision making rationality of humans.

Identity and the struggles to attain and maintain it, therefore is an independent source of conflict and violence between ethnic groups in the political arena. In the case of India, diversity as a form poses as a threat to the Identity crisis due to the divergent types of Identity. The diversities in India are too vast and to compare the mixture of diversities to that of a boiling pot is way impossible. The cultural diversities complement each other but does not mix with one another. Even among the mixtures of diversities, there is always a standout among a certain group of people sharing their common identities.

‘Nevertheless, conflict is not the only way that individual or group identity forms or maintains itself. Large-scale international studies of intergroup conflict have *not* found that strong and positive group identity *necessarily* leads to conflict with or derogation of other groups.’

Naga identity, due to less theoretical underpinnings cannot be properly defined as Nagas are believed be scattered in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, with the majority residing in Nagaland. Therefore the views discussed here in the name of Nagas are made with the only mention of these tribal groups residing in Nagaland.



## **5.1 Discussions**

### **5.1.1 Women identity is now being politicized in the name of ethnic identity in Nagaland:**

To agree or disagree is upon the reader. Nonetheless, the visible fact is that women are seen nowhere around the decision making body of the state. In the selected case study, the 33% WR in ULB elections have aerated massive opposition from the tribal organizations or the tribal Hoho's. In the name of the Constitutional Provision, the tribal Hoho's have boldly influenced the public in the opposition of Article 243 which legalizes the reservation of women. The controversial conflict that the ULB election infringes the protected Article 371A, also gives us an opportunity to revise this special provision of the Nagas. Nagas being a minority tribal unit and having its identity alienated from the mainland India is in bad need to march towards development and such a provision ensures the internal working of the state with local and grass-root representation, however, it still continues to hamper the development due to massive corruption in the state.

Article 371A has now become sacrosanct to the people as the dependence on it on various issues has become a trend. This article being a Constitutional Provision is respected and therefore any decision taken against it gets curtailed due to the authority that this provision possesses. Some sections of the Nagas have even suggested for an amendment of this Article. However, this Article has made its close bond with the Naga Identity that to bring a change would mean bringing a change in the Naga Identity.

**5.1.2** Deep preservation of the Naga Ethnic Identity can be a threat to development and progress in the state in the dynamic context of the Indian Development administration. Even mentioned earlier, the limitation of the Nagas in tight preservation of their identity is a big threat to development. The Nagas have always believed that they are not Indians. Many Naga martyrs in the past have fought for the Naga Nationalism for this cause. To this day, the preservation of this identity is still strongly felt. The internal conflict among the Nationalist groups created enough disharmonies and distrust in the minds of the people and to battle against the Central government for the Naga National Identity will only weaken the Naga Society and defy the Naga Identity. Article 371A is both a blessing and a curse in disguise for the Nagas. It preserves and

protects the Identity of the Nagas, while on the other hand is a threat to the Indian National Identity.

**5.1.3** The rise of women's Identity politics is likely seen as a threat to the identical responsibility in the male dominated society. Naga society being a male dominated society or Patriarchal society puts man above the women. Ancient Nagas were head hunters. The male were the only ones who carried out this process in order to protect their families, clans and village. Since men are always regarded as masculine, strong and protector, the tag has since time immemorial being associated with men. But now the society has changed, men are no longer the only bread-earner in the family. Women are now bold and strong enough to manage a decent living. The Naga saw a transition from head hunting to this present western-influenced society. Yet, the long gone traditions which are only orally passed on are strictly followed and are closed to changes. The tremendous rise of women in the field education, administration, entrepreneurship and in other areas are now causing fear in the minds of most Naga men that the male-dominated society may seem to disappear.

**5.1.4** More schools of thought about the Naga Identity- the traditionalist and (could we say the) post-traditionalists. Ever since the controversial rows of the ULB elections have grown, more schools of thought among the Nagas have tried to share their opinions through public forums. Taking the views from newspaper articles, a classification was made to identify the traditionalist- the staunch Nagas who are not at all open to any change in the provision of the Nagas; and the post-traditionalist – who are not far different from the Traditionalists yet, are more prone to accepting change in the society. Some post-traditionalist even took to media to publically share their strong opinions in accepting change. The basic difference that we find between the two schools of thought is that the Post-traditionalist have shown more interest in promoting the 33% Women Reservation in Nagaland. The distinction between the male and female identity is a modern concept in Nagaland as Nagaland is a land where women have access and touch to aspects of freedom, the only exception being in politics.

In an article written by Anand Patwardhan<sup>47</sup>, he boldly commented that identity politics was a ‘double-edged weapon’<sup>48</sup> so long as the oppressed groups unite through common identity. When there is a sense of shared identity, it is good but the worst is seen when these groups with shared identity turns into an ‘exclusivist movement’. Let us for instance take the case of WR in the Nagaland ULB elections. The common identity of being a Naga was shared by all people sharing the Naga Identity, irrespective of the biological difference – be it male or female. However, with the rise of WR in Nagaland, a new twist took turn as the people opposed to the reservation bringing in the protection of their ethnic common identity. Such a difference in bringing the rise of the identity politics has in a way contributed to the growth of identity studies from a new perspective.

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<sup>47</sup> As published on April 25, 2017 1:07 am in <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/ethics-is-the-answer-abvp-rss-rohith-vemula-dalits-4626871/> as on 25.4.17

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Special Provision for Nagaland: Article 371A**

(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution,

(a) No Act of Parliament in respect of

(i) Religious or social practices of the Nagas,

(ii) Naga customary law and procedure,

(iii) Administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law,

(iv) Ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the State of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides.

### **Appendix 2**

#### **243T Reservation of seats**

Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Municipal area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the Municipal area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to the different constituencies in a Municipality.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(4) The offices of Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

(5) The reservation of seats under clauses (1) and (2) and the reservation of offices of Chairpersons (other than the reservation for women) under clause (4) shall cease to have effect on the expiration of the period specified in article 334.

(6) Nothing in this Part shall prevent the Legislature of a State from making any provision for reservation of seats in any Municipality or offices of Chairpersons in the Municipalities in favour of backward class of citizens.

### **Appendix 3**

243ZC. Part not to apply to certain areas.—(1) Nothing in this Part shall apply to the Scheduled Areas referred to in clause (1), and the tribal areas referred to in clause (2), of article 244.

(2) Nothing in this Part shall be construed to affect the functions and powers of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council constituted under any law for the time being in force for the hill areas of the district of Darjeeling in the State of West Bengal.

(3) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may, by law, extend the provisions of this Part to the Scheduled Areas and the tribal areas referred to in clause (1) subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be specified in such law, and no such law shall be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposes of article 368.



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