

**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN TRIBAL UNIONS.A COMPARATIVE  
STUDY OF AO AND LOTHIA**

**Dissertation submitted to the School of Arts and Language in fulfillment of the  
requirements or the Awards of the degree of PMaster of Arts in Sociology.**

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## **Declaration**

*It is to declare that the dissertation entitled “**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN TRIBAL UNIONS.A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AO AND LOTH**”, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in sociology 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

*It is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN TRIBAL UNIONS.A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AO AND LOTHA**”, submitted by **Miss. Therali M.Humtsoe**, as part of her Masters Degree in Sociology, from Lovely Professional University is prepared under my supervision.*

*For my best understanding and knowledge, it is result of her own genuine research work, and investigation. No part of this work has been to any university for any degree or any other purposes.*

Date: 29/11/2017

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## Chapter-1

### INTRODUCTION

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Ao and Lotha are the two tribes of Nagaland who are having a distinctive identity and culture. The Lotha Naga tribe constitutes one of the major tribes in Nagaland. The tribe is nestled in Wokha district of the Nagaland state. Ao tribes live in Mokokchung of Nagaland. Both of the groups developed independent, Socio political systems based on their customary laws that reflecting their ancient wisdoms and ability to manage their affairs and survive independently. It is observed that both of the tribes remain stagnant, confined to their villages reportedly with less mobility and isolated from the rest of the world. They are simple communities who rely on basic needs of life, deeply rooted in traditional values and conventional practices. Colonial encounters and British to Naga Hills facilitated series of changes among those communities.

#### 1.1 Who is a Lotha?

The Lotha society is basically patriarchal, hence it is governed by patriarchal values that control the behavior of women to a large extent, prohibited them from participating in some specific activities. When back in times for centuries the Lotha Nagas traditional society has been one of male supremacy and dominance, where women were projected as inferiors to men. The roles of both men and women were important in society but customs and traditions never gave women equal rights.

The traditional idea of women being confined to the household activities has an important effect also on the thinking and attitude of both the genders towards women. Some of the traditions and customs that were followed or practiced were for the benefit of women but such traditions, sometimes, were the causes of discrimination against them. The coming of Christianity had a greater impact on the lives of the lotha tribe vastly contributing to lifestyle and education.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adani Ngullie (2014), *Christianization and empowerment of lotha naga women in north east India*, New Delhi: Scholars World A Division of Astral International Pvt. Ltd, p.13.



## 1.2 Ao Naga

The Aos are one of the major tribes of the Nagas. According to their traditional story they sprang up from 'Longtrok', which means six stones.<sup>2</sup> The Aos form a major tribe among the Nagas who occupy a long stretch of unbroken ranges of hills. The Aos are one of the major Naga tribes of Nagaland, Northeast India. They were the first Naga tribe to embrace Christianity and by virtue of this development the Ao Naga availed themselves to Western education that came along with Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Ao Naga is one of the major and populated groups of the Naga tribe of Nagaland. Ao Naga tribes are one of the major tribes who possess a folk literature of their own. They are well known for multiple harvest festivals held each year.

The real home of the Ao Naga tribes are the catchments of the 5 ranges in Mokokchung District of Nagaland lying between the river Dikhu on east and the plains of Assam on the west. Their main territory is from Tsula (Dikhu) Valley in the east to Tsurang (Disai) Valley in the west in Mokokchung district. The Ao Nagas are rich in their folk literature. Their folk literature reflects the background of the people, their mind, character, religion, culture, superstitions and taboos. [http://www.indianetzone.com/51/ao\\_naga\\_tribe.htm](http://www.indianetzone.com/51/ao_naga_tribe.htm) Ao Naga Tribe, Nagaland, 02/09/2015. Written by India net zone

The term Naga is used to define groups of tribesmen of Indian and Chinese descent that live in the hill country along the border of far eastern India and north-western Burma. Nagas belong to Mongoloid race and Tibeto-Burman dialectal family. During WW-II the British enlisted the Nagas (part of Labour Corps) to fight against the Japanese. Nagaland state became 16th states of the Indian union on December 1st, 1963. Nagaland state share boundaries with Assam in the west, Myanmar in the east, Arunachal Pradesh in the north and Manipur in south. The state consists of 11 Administrative districts. Each tribe is distinct in character from the other in terms of customs, language and dress. It is also one of the smaller hill states of India with the total of 17,579 sq.km and population of 1,978,502 as per 2011 census report.

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<sup>2</sup> D. P Mukherjee and M. Lakshmanudu, (1980). Ethnic variability of pattern intensity on palms. *Current Anthropology*, 21(4), p. 514-515.

<sup>3</sup> Sentinaro, N.D.R. Chandra, (Winter July-December 2009), "Culture as Reflected in Achebe's Works and Ao Naga Literature.", *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*, 1(2), p.26.

Nagaland is often considered the state with the highest number of associations and organizations. The reason behind these huge number of rising bodies is due to the large number of tribes residing in the state, interestingly almost every institution of the Naga society has their own associations. But the earliest known was the Naga National Council (NNC) through which many branches emerged. Since every tribes need to safe guard their rights and interest began to form union bodies, which is why one will find that each tribe has common tribal associations and also a separate one. Being an indigenous group of people, the tribes are also cautious about the safety of their community members residing away from their ancestral land for instance the Naga Students Federation is an umbrella of different union bodies coming together, a collective body through which they articulate their aspirations and at the same time respond to the students confronting the students and the Nagas living in other parts of Indian states. Again, Naga Students' Union, Delhi (NSUD) is the apex student body of the Nagas living in Delhi. With over 20,000 members spread across the National Capital Region (NCR), it is one of the biggest students' organizations in Delhi. Therefore the existence of unions was important to the tribal for they were the governing bodies overlooking the welfare of particular community.

In Naga society every Naga is compulsorily part of any association like the church, schools and colleges, workplace, village, towns or of their community some of the living examples of union bodies and organizations are Naga Christian Fellowship (NCF), Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), Kyong Students Union (KSU), Yimchunger Tribal Council (YTC), Pochury HoHo, Sema HoHo, Mother's associations etc.

Naga society is a male-dominated society. The descent is traced from the father side and property id inherited by the male child only. These families follows patriarchal structure of the family in which father or the male is consider as the head of the family and girl child moves to husband's family after marriage and takes up the name of the husband's family. Over the past 30 years, more than half a billion women have joined the worlds labour force and now more than 40% of workers worldwide are accounted by women. This has brought about increased productivity and many positive effects and this tremendous social transformation was probably brought up only due to education and education is the only means in bringing the social transformation in naga society.

Generally, gender inequality in Naga society has been thoroughly practiced and is strongly lawful by tradition. Usually, Naga women are more underprivileged politically, culturally, economically and have less access to control over creative resources due to socio-cultural factors, prohibiting in decision making and absence development involvement. Gender equality is the measurable equal illustration of men and women. It does not imply that they are the same, but that they have equal rights of value and should be given equal treatment. It also means equal in terms of price, prominence, authorization then chances.

Naga society has always been democratic and caste-less. Comparatively Naga, women are given certain privileges to enjoy and are allowed to perform important roles in the family and public affairs. Women are not exactly troubled. Women perform an important part in both family and public affairs. They enjoy a certain degree of freedom.

Yet, then Naga society is patriarchal with a practice of strong fighter values, it was measured an honour to be born as a man. yet, so rooted was the women are given certain privileges to enjoy and are allowed to perform important role in the family and public affairs. yet, so rooted was the Naga society patriarchal culture and traditional values that it was considered as an honour to be born as a man .

It was expected, more as a low rather than as a curtesy , naga women should be obedient humble as submissiveto the male authority that she lives with she should perform the role of wife, mother, child bearer, food producer, and household manager. She also contributes to the family economy by weaving beautiful shawls. Nonetheless women are forbidden to inherit property from their parents household and participate in decision making bodies such as the village assembly, citizen forum, village council etc. Even in eating habits, women were not likely to eat the choicest portion of the meat.

### **1.3 Mokokchung District**

Mokokchung is also one of the major district in Nagaland , the Home of the Ao Naga tribe. It covers an area of 1,615 sq. km. It is bounded by Assam to its north, Wokha to its west, Tuensang to its east, and Zunheboto to its south. The physiography of the district shows six distinct hill ranges. The range is more or less parallel to each other and runs southeast direction. The common dialect used is chungli dialect. In 2001 census the district literacy rate was declared to be about 84.6% which was the highest in the State as well as in the whole country. It has also been declared as a first fully

100% literate district in Nagaland in 2007 and has about 1004 females for every 1000 males.

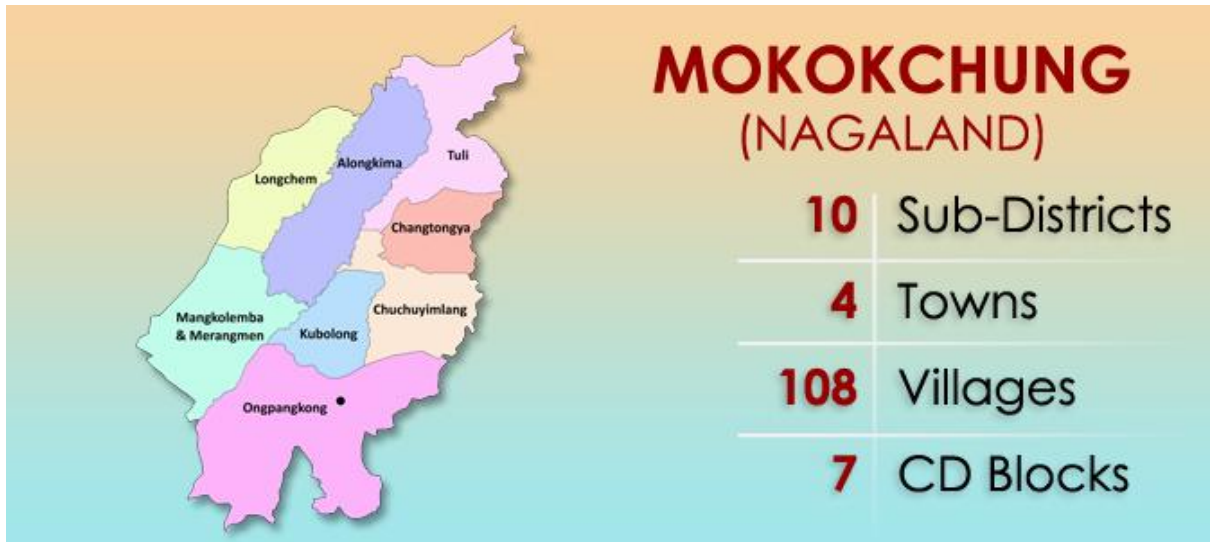


Figure 1: District Map, mokokchung, Nagalnd.(Courtesy: <http://www.districtwokha.com/Index.aspx>, Accessed on: 10/03/2017)

Politically, it is considered as one of the most significant districts in Nagaland. It sends 10 (of 60) legislators to the state assembly. At present four of its legislators are in the ruling DAN government while the other six belong to Congress, the main hostility party in the state. Alichen-Mokokchung-DEF is the largest urban group area of the district. The AO Senden(organization)is the largest led organisation in Mokokchung, they are hugely responsive to any negative or positive incidents taking place in the district and also in the state. Of course, there are also other associations regarding institutions, religion and community.

#### **1.4 Wokha District:**

The home of Lotha is Wokha. Their total geographical area of 1628Sq.Km, relaying 9.82% of the total geographical area of the state.Wokha District is located in the mid-western part of the Nagaland State.Under the wokha district there has morethan 144 villages.

The Lotha language is part of the *Sino-Tibetan* language family, spoken by almost 166,000 people in Wokha district. Wokha district, declared as '*the land of plenty*' by the

state government of Nagaland, due to their rich mineral resources, soil fertility and plentiful flora and fauna, is located at the *latitude of 26°8° North and Longitude of 94°18° East*. The district is situated at an economically strategic location sharing borders with Assam in the West and North, Kohima and Dimapur in the South, Zunheboto in the East and Mokokchung in the North East.

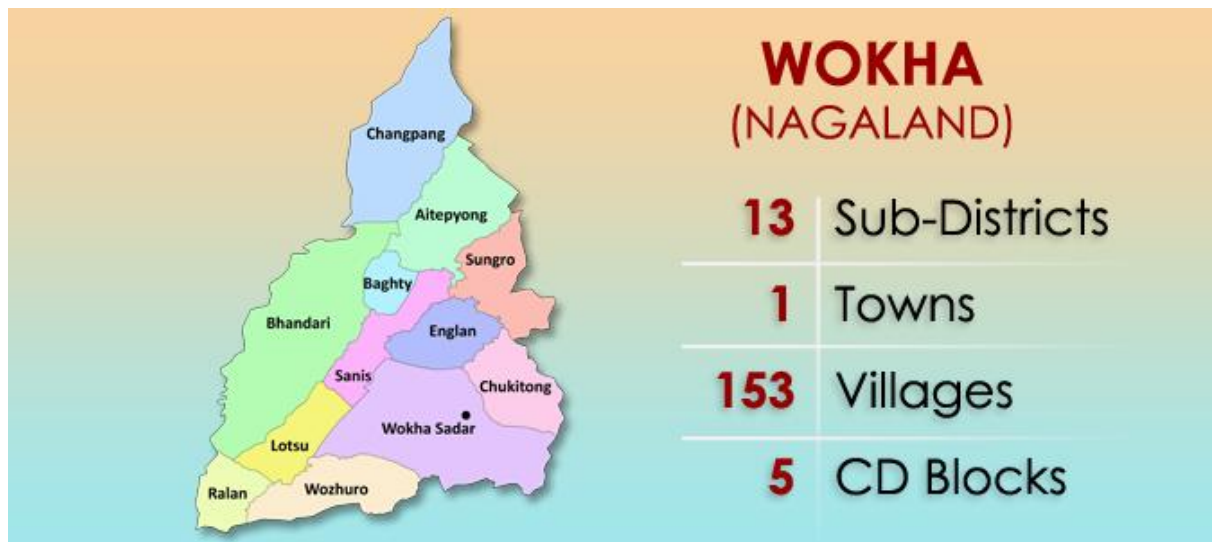


Figure 2: District Map, Wokha, Nagaland. (Courtesy: <http://www.districtwokha.com/Index.aspx>, Accessed on: 10/03/17)

The word wokha literally means "head count" or "census" in Lotha dialect of Naga. It covers 1628 Square kilometers of geographical area which constitute 9.82 percent of the State geographical area and a population of 1, 66,343 with a literacy rate of 87.68 percent. The district is dominantly settled by the Lotha tribe. Kyong (Lotha) is the most /commonly used language for communication, while Nagamese (broken Assamese) and English are also used with non-locals.

The district has four gathering electorates and 125 known villages. Kyong student's union is the largest student association in the lotha community. The Lotha Hoho is an apex body for the lotha community, serves as an shield in protecting and preserving the welfare of their particular tribe.

### **1.5 Tribal Unions**

The word Scheduled Tribes first used in the Constitution of India, In Article 366 (25) it is defined that scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under *Article 342* to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution"and in *Article 342 its mentioned that* prescribes procedure to be followed in the matter of description of scheduled tribes. The Tribal Unions have always played a important role in the lives of the people of Nagaland. There are at least 16 tribes in Nagaland, all these tribes reside in their respective districts. Every tribe has their own union of bodies which are responsible in governing the state of the tribe.

The Tribal Unions looks forward in strengthening and keeping their community safe and secure, for that is the major feature as to why it has been formed. One can visibly notice and witness the roles played by these unions to discipline and maintain villages, towns, institutions and religion. However, the unions are packed with male figures and one can see less participation of women in them, which is very normal in a patriarchal society. No doubt there are being of women led organizations and associations, but they are not independently working, women associations are highly wrought by male authorities.

### **1.6 Woman Participation in Tribal Unions**

In the twenty first century, the most central sickness to social development is the ignorant attitude of the mass to combine females into managerial institutions and builds at all levels. This needs to be talked as the Naga society stands at the connection over the very question of counting women in decision-making. The current high court ruling on the 33%reservation for women in the municipal and town council in Nagaland is a major momentous in Naga women's history. But in their social reality it continues to be controlled by the outdated modes of thinking based on male-controlled rate system. The pattern of socialization of girls and the social norms of motherhood resulting in the opposition of public and private sphere is responsible to a large extend for the sadness of the Naga women's public role in the 21st century. Women in Naga society are characterised with a very low sense of political effectiveness. The little political effectiveness of the Naga women demands attention in the light of their offensively low level of participation in the political process of the state.

The Naga women were facing the gender intimidating, menace of bodily violence and ex-communication from their tribes over these years as they took the challenge head on. Like women elsewhere who have fought against male favouritism within their own societies, the Naga women are in a drain clash against the patriarchal favouritism against women within their own tribes, and it is tough fighting against such a widespread opposition as the entire decision-making institutions, modern and traditional are almost a man's club.

The recent news on the women 33% reservation is the best example to view and think how women are denied the role emerging leaders. Naga rulers constituting mostly of men are enquiring vision - incompatible tooth and nail the Naga women's right to 33 per cent reservation in the Municipal Council, a legislation which they had themselves permitted in the Assembly in 2006. Once again, the support of bold patriarchy that is Nagaland showed its controlling male fist when the Ao Senden, the apex council of the Ao tribe, issued a fatwa against the women's October 1st rally to complaint the diminishing of this law by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA). Therefore, patriarchy also plays a repulsive role in accepting the victories of Naga women.

### **1.7 Review of Literature:**

J.P Mills (1922) "*The Lotha Nagas*", The Lotha Naga tribe constitutes a main tribe in Nagaland in North East India. The Lotha Nagas developed independent, Socio political systems based on their customary laws that reflecting their ancient wisdoms and ability to manage their affairs and survive independently. They remained a quiet society confined to their villages, and secluded from the rest of the civilized world. They relied on minimum needs of life, deeply rooted in outdated values and conservative practice till the advent of the British in the Naga Hills.

The Lotha society is basically patriarchal, hence it is governed by patriarchal values that control the behaviour of women to a large extend, prohibited them from participating in some specific activities. The roles of both men and women were important in society but customs and traditions never gave women equal rights. The traditional idea of women being confined to the household activities has an important effect also on the thinking and attitude of both the genders towards women. It says that some of the traditions and customs that were followed or practiced were for the benefit

of women but such traditions, sometimes, were the causes of discrimination against them.

Lotha Women of the old days live a much uncomplicated life unaware of any outside influences, and was contented living a busy life as a house wife. Women although enjoyed considerable freedom, have to face various problems and restrictions due to traditional social customs which have hampered their emancipation for a long period.

J.P Mills (1926) “The Ao Nagas” he states that for the Nagas, family is the elementary unit of society, constructed on source of the institutions of marriage and kinship. The Aos still strictly follow the rules of exogamy and endogamy to preserve their racial purity and social integrity. Patriarchy governs organization of the family.

The narrative tradition of the Aos reveals how these institutions standardize their personal as well as the community lives and ensure the continuity of their identities in changing times. Family (kibong) is the basic social institution established through the custom of legitimate marriage (Kiyimba) and function on the norms of patriarchy. Marriage rests on the stringent rules of exogamy and endogamy. The norms of kinship are strictly followed in terms of marriage and related behaviour. Polygamy and adultery in conjugal life are prohibited for Aos, whereas Lotha Nagas observe it. The narrative tradition suggests the women (wives) not to compete with men (husbands) in family life as both are complementary in their role behaviour. The society warns the women that they receive more bites from men than privilege. The women have vital role to play in bringing up the children as per the norms of the Ao society if the father dies in tribal warfare, hunting or in protecting their community or away from home.

The society expects that the men should always be ready with his Dao to die for the cause of his community. Every woman wishes that her husband or son should emerge as a head hunter and prove his virility and prowess as a member of Ao-Naga society. Though the nature of the family is nuclear, parental care is mandatory as per their custom.

The children are eligible for inheriting property as well as debts of their parents. The family functions on division of labor. The gender roles and functions are determined by custom. In order to regulate and reiterate the values and norms of the society the Ao’s observe several customary and obligatory rituals both in personal (familial) as well as at community (social) realms and thereby protect their core identities in change.



Tim Dyson and Mick Moore on (1983) “*kinship structures, female sovereignty and demographic behaviour in India*”, he states that female’s social status should be probably the single most important element in the demographic scenario and also the social dimension of the marriage alliance should be given important. There are differences between the Northern and Southern cultural areas, so both the females play a different role. We expect and find a generally greater degree of health services and family planning consumption by women living in the south. It is also creating certain strong presumption in favour of a broadly feminist mode of social action specially to increase the autonomous social and political capacity of groups of female’s times.

Kelkar.G Nathan’s. (1991). “*Gender and Tribe: Women, Land and forests in Jharkhand*”, in this article it comprises of the roles of women in tribes in Jharkhand and their socio-economic characteristics. As Jharkhand being a hunting society, their women are more involved in the Agricultural fields, rather than hunting and gathering. It also highlights the role of women in the society over the years. It not only discusses the women role, but also the political struggle for an independent state. Though the women in that society faced lot of social pressure in their participation, they are fighting for breaking the social stereotypes.

Lucy Zehol(1998)”Women in Naga Society” in this article it states that there are many opinions circulating the status of the Naga Tribal women of Northeast India. Scholars like Barrier Elwin feel that the Naga women folks are no different from any other tribal women folks elsewhere. While some scholars like Haimendorf are of the view that as compared to other societies the status of Naga women seems to be more relaxed and higher in every aspect of activity. Indeed, there are also restraints for the women folks in certain areas like in decision making which usually the men folk part take. The roles of men and women are divided thus they act accordingly given. The changing trends due to globalization and Westernization also heavily contributes to the changing lifestyles and attitude of the women, which in fact has given a new challenge to the women folks helping them to gain better access and discard unhealthy old traditional values. Almost all the 16 tribes of the Naga society follow similar lifestyles and teachings. But a pinch of dissimilarity can also be found among the tribes depending on the way they function.

Temsula Ao in her book “The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition” (2012), she stated every tribe that falls under the Naga society has always followed the patriarchal form of society. It is a form of society where the males inherit the properties of their fathers while the women can only inherit movable properties like household. Patriarchal society is a male dominated society as a result most of the powers are vested on men alone. The women on the other hand have little say during decision making. There are no hard and fast rule that chains the belief and practice system of the Nagas but customary laws and norms still govern the Naga society. When the men folks are considered the bread earners of the family the women folks are the homemakers. Even in other fields like education and politics especially the women folks were to stay aside and only watch what the men decide, so women were limited only to household chores and family. It’s all because of the patriarchal system men were preferred more to women.

Therefore, the system gave men more power over most of the institutions in the society. No doubt women wanted to also experience better role play like their male counterparts, but they were weak because of their economic instability for land was seldom handed over to them and land meant economy for them. That was how most women continued to live and play second fiddle to the male members. Even today the Naga society follows the patriarchal form, but times have changed, and women are coming up with certain interest and demands, which was due to modernization and urbanization.

Marilyn Lake, (2014), “Diversity in Leadership”, in this article, the researcher has emphasized that the main achievement that was achieved from the women’s movements were, making Australian government agreeing to embrace women’s rights. Australian’s were scared to go against government, even against slavery. However, women’s rights movement fought against discrimination between men and women.

They claimed equal opportunity in terms of pay, immigration Law, etc. these rights should be same in Australia as well as outside. The efforts of Australian women activists are remarkable event and historic.

Benito Z. Swuin his article Empowerment of women today (2016) argues that empowerment of women is not going to take place only with the reservation given to them. Though the women in Nagaland are equal partner with the men folk and are bread earners themselves, the bottom line is that like anywhere in the India or world in

Nagaland as well have problems faced by the women will decline gradually if only the economic independence of women are ensured. Self-Help Group movement with micro-credit facility will also greatly help in empowering women. The Naga gender equity question can be realistically met only if the clear majority of our needy females who are still engaged in the field of cultivation and the associated sectors are empowered. Their capacity needs to be built upon. They need to be given the maximum of micro-credit facilities and people need to be trained in making the best use of the micro-credit facilities.

Rosanna Kikon(2016) “women, Polygyny and Economy”, An Analysis on the Pre-Colonial Naga Society of North East India with the Special Reference to the Lotha Nagas describes that it has been observed that the Lotha society was androcentric and men held power in all the important institutions of the society. Women were prevented from participating in social functions and ceremonies. They were considered to be lacking in rationality, and were excluded from the role of citizens. According to the Lotha customs women were access to land as she would come under the protection of the man she marries. It has been stated in the Assam Census Report of 1981 that, the inferior position of Naga Women as compared to men was due to the fact that they could not inherit landed property. A land, to which women had closer contact through their economic activities, was not theirs.

Dr. AJ Sebastian “Matriarchal Hegemony in *Easterine Iralu’s* , “A Terrible *Matriarchy*”. During the earlier times before Christianity and modernization entered Naga society, the status of women was extremely low. Education, need of affection or even a good piece of meat was considered not fit for a woman. There existed lots of taboos for women like, prohibited to entered male dormitory which is traditional called as *Morung*, not considered fit enough to be educated, not allowed to participate in village or tribal council etc.in some cases when no male child was blessed the husband was allowed to divorce his wife and go for another marriage. But with the end of modernity and specially Christianity, most of these taboos and restrictions are extinct.infact in the present Naga society the Naga women enjoys equal of status with the men. Today the woman can choose her occupation, be educated at her own will and can have even the rights to marriage. Though the Nagas still followed patriarchal society the status of women has improved immensely increased modern day.

Moanaro Imchen Jamir , “*The Role of Ao Women in Church and society*” States that the part of Women in the Church has always been well-defined in a great portion by the outdated part of women in Ao Society. Status of women in a tribal context is seen to be a comparatively better than that of a woman in general society. A Naga woman is privileged to many platforms since time and till date. It has been knowing that in the year 1939, for the first period in a Naga society where a female received a Bachelor’s degree. A good number of woman folks has come up with good educational status and is also engaged in delivering the values in the form of seminars and workshops. In this present day, a woman is seen taking part in chairmanship of a village level for giving assistance to the larger extend of the community. Talking about women in leadership the impact of demands of 33%reservation in ULB election is found to be a major step taken by women folks especially in Nagaland. Organisation based in women society has become common and one can witness its participation in the affairs against corruption and many social evil practices.

Morung Express News wokha, April 16, (2016), states that the latest program of women in social affairs. The Lotha Eloehoho in partnership with the department of women development, Government of Nagaland is all geared for the Lotha women summit on April 21 and 22nd at Wokha town on the theme “Towards Pledge for Parity”. PB Acharya, Governor of Nagaland and Assam will be grace the occasion as the chief quest. For the first time in the history of the Lotha women, a summit of this magnitude will be held where various topics on women empowerment will be deliberated minutely by resource persons with enough expertise. Other topics include livelihood intervention through Skill and resource development, women in Primary Sectors, Acts and Legislations, Rights and duties relating to women, Gender and Health, climate change, disaster Management and Interactive Session with young Lotha women achievers etc. Mhonlumo Kikon, Parliamentary Secretary of Labour and Employment, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Border Affairs will also address the gathering. As one of the youngest Naga Politicians he is not only pro youth, supporting the causes and Rights of Women but also a great initiator of peace and harmony having enough influence with leaders of the neighboring states and even in mainland India. Men and women of dynamic personalities from various fields will share the dais with a common vision,” To help and let the common women realize, feel guts and start living towards pledge for parity” .

Sangeeta Barooah (2016), *The Myth of Nagaland's Empowered Woman*, a recent study pointed out that how in tribal society also discriminate between girl and boys. The author vividly stated that 'gender equality in northeast is a popular myth'. This highlights the status of women in Nagaland despite having constitutional laws but in the village people are rarely use it. Being an empowerment among Nagas woman is really a myth. Though the urban areas women are getting education now-a-day but still rural women are busy in home only, because the decision making power is still in the hands of men dominant community. The customary laws of Nagas also not in a written form, they are just practicing it. Since they are not written, it is possible of misinterpreted from the original laws because the interpreters of customary laws are only men. In this paper, the author questioned 132 women of Naga tribes and concluded that women continue to be discriminated against under tribal habitual rules.

Patriarchy society still exists in our society. Studies say about how Ao Naga woman suffers from some disqualification for her physical weakness. It is said that Ao woman cannot developed a member of outdated community or tribal council. She can't become a village councilor, either can't participate in debate of public interest, and also, they can't get inherent property etc. There are so many gender discriminations in Naga society. Because of these only women can't get their proper chance to empower. Because of the customary laws, the political participation of woman is still pending in Nagaland.

This article says that though women are getting chance to speak or taking decision in their house, but they are not allowed to speak in public because of men do not want to give participate in politics and all. There are so many organization of Nagaland are trying to change this situation or trying for women empowerment in tribal union but still it is not successful so much.

### **1.8 Scope of Study:**

Despite the constitutional law regarding women's participation in various fields, they are still treated as second class citizens and therefore the empowerment level is losing ground. Thus, there should be equal level of participation in every field to bring gender equality among the people. Therefore, the contemporary study is an challenge to learn about a participation of womenfolk in tribal unions: A comparative study of Ao and Lotha.

This research specifically will be focusing on Ao and Lotha tribe of Nagaland. In this study the researcher will try to look on the role of women in tribal society. With comparison to the review of literatures there is a very minute participation of women in Politics.

Therefore, this study would also try to determine the factors and policies that influence the women's participation in unions.

### **1.9 Research Objectives:**

1. To examine the status of women in Naga Society with the special reference to programs, plans and participation in Tribal Union.
2. To study the level of female participation in tribal unions in Ao and Lotha Nagas.
3. To Analyse and compare the status of women between the Ao and Lotha Nagas.

### **1.10 Hypothesis of The Study**

1. Ao and Lotha Woman are underrepresented in the tribal unions, due to the patriarchal and traditional values of Naga society.
2. Woman participation in the tribal union remain very low and which is related to over all status of woman in the state and there is no proportionate betterment of representation in tribal union when their educational and economic status are improving.
3. Ao women possess better status in terms woman's status and representation in comparison to Lothas.

### **1.11 Research Methodology:**

The study was analytical and qualitative interpretation about status and representation of woman in Ao and Lotha Communities. Women enjoy lower status in the said communities due to various reasons. The study was conducted using ethnographic method. Being a member of Lotha, the researcher enjoyed the access of participant observation without bothering anyone. Access to Ao communities were also easy to the researcher, since her mother belong to the community. The study heavily relied on

autoethnographic content in order to analyse the status of woman based upon following factors:

- a. Educational status of woman
- b. Income and employment
- c. Representation of woman in tribal unions

As an ethnographic study, the researcher collected data using multiple techniques like participant observation, non structured interview of female activist and leaders of Tribal Unions from both communities. The researcher had tried to incorporate opinion of male members as well since they are directly responsible for lower status of woman. Being a qualitative study, the work provides diachronic interpretation heavily depending on narrative styles.

The study depended on primary sources like census report, reports published by state government and district administration as well as narrations of various peoples from both tribes. At the same time, the work also collected and analysed data from books and articles published on the similar topics were also consulted.

### **1.12 Framework of The Dissertation**

The dissertation has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction of the work. It deals with the concepts and definition of the study. The introduction also tries to elaborate the rationale and style of the work. It also deals with objectives and hypothesis of the study along with a lengthy literature review, including all the major works done on the field.

The second unit discusses provides socio-cultural details of Lotha and Ao. it also deals with their origin and current status and passing through historical phases. In the absence of written source several attempts and interpretation have been made by anthropologists and scholars to retrace the origin of the generic term 'Naga' through various probable dimensions'. However, it is not intended to argue or postulate any hypothesis on this subject. Lotha Naga society, Women are happy with their position and status since they get enough insurance and care from men. Aos claim their origin in the 'Longterok' which means six stones. It is believed that due to the natural increase of population let people to move crossing Dikhu waterway by Cane Bridge, and they cut off the bridge leaving some behind

The Naga women are considered to have freedom. However, in reality this is just a myth. Naga women have certain restriction though it is better as compare with other communities in the country. Third unit deals with status of woman among Naga women- concentrating on Ao and Lotha communities. being empowered by freedom that they have? Empowerment is not merely given a certain position it is more than giving a space to other who are considered a weak or not have say in the social system. In this sense, mere election of women representative and sending to the state or Lok Sabha does not suffice empowerment. Empowerment has manifolds which does not necessarily only political capitals. To say the least, the Ao and Lotha Nagas are considered as one of the advance tribes in Nagaland. In reality they are the most patriarchal society where role of women is just in face value.

The last two chapters of the dissertation deal with summary and conclusion of the dissertation. Naga women has suffered great inequality from the very inception of the Naga society. Being a patriarchal society woman were bond to be under the male dominance. Women were subordinate to men. Women were confined only to child bearing, kitchen and other household works.it slowly began to change as the time gone and literacy of women increased. Today the participation of women folk in any social gatherings are slowly growing in number and are heavily addressed and sensitized wherever possible which are the result of education and modernization. It is only after decades the significance of the women folk has emerged as the pillar of strengthening and improving the various blocks of development. The women workforce according to state census 2011 is higher than their male counterparts given their strong contribution to the economy of the state.



## Chapter-2

### **SOCIO-CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE LOTHAS AND THE AOs**

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#### **2.1 Lotha Tribe of Nagaland:**

Lotha tribe is one of the sixteen major tribes of Nagaland who inhabit the District of Wokha. The district is located on the mid-west of the State of Nagaland and it is intercepted at the heart by latitude 26 degree 8' N and longitude 94 degrees 18' E.<sup>1</sup> With a geographical area of 1628 sq km, it is the third smallest region in terms of area of the state. It is located in the mid-western part of Nagaland together to Sibsagar plains of Assam state. It is bounded by Mokokchung district in the North, Kohima district in the South, Zunheboto district in the East, and the state of Assam in the west. The Wokha District is situated at a latitude of 26°8' North and a Longitude of 94°18' East. According to the census of 2011 published by the directorate of economics and statistics, the population of the district is 166,343 persons.<sup>2</sup> The literacy rate is 87.69 percent. The volume of the population is 102 persons per sq.km

Lothas were also practiced headhunting in the olden days, but after the advent of Christianity, they gave up this practice. However, the mainstream of the Lothas are Baptist, there exist a sensible amount of other forms of Christianity like the Catholics. In Nagaland Catholics are more concentrated in Wokha than in other parts. Dr. W. E Witter was the first American Missionary to the Lothas. There are about 70 to 80 villages within the Lotha community. Each and every village has their own church build for worship.<sup>3</sup> Being a Christian this tribe gives a lot of importance as far as religious ceremonies are concern. A Pastor or a Priest performs all religious activities in the church. The Lotha people now are all Christians and have great influence to other tribes.

#### **2.2 Origin And Migration Of Lothas(Kyong)**

In the absence of written source several attempts and interpretation have been made by anthropologists and scholars to retrace the origin of the generic term 'Naga' through

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<sup>1</sup> Ramanath Gopalakrishnan, (1991). *Political Geography of India's North East*. Guhawati: Stosius Inc, Advent Books Division, p.46.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 57

<sup>3</sup> Amos Humtsoe (1992). *Christian Ekhumkho Motsu (Echungren Ovungo ji lona tiruk nandang)*. (Church History from the 1st to the 6th generation) Wokha: Kyong Theological Text Book Comtt., p. 46

various probable dimensions'. However, it is not intended to argue or postulate any hypothesis on this subject.

It is rather difficult to ascertain; however verbal sources confirm that a group of Naga tribes including the Lothas are probably from Manchuria (Mongolia china). According to the Lotha forefathers, they trace the Lotha back to Manchuria and that they are of Mongoloid origin. The Lothas keep on migrating from place to place and homesteaded at a place called 'Phitson' a miraculous stone.<sup>4</sup>(Khezakenoma now in Phek District) later called '*Phitsonglong*'. PHI meaning spread and dry, TSON meaning multiply, LONG means stone. It is believed that when a basket of paddy is dried upon the flat stone(Phitsonlong) in the morning, it doubles the quantity in the evening.

However, the miraculous properties of the stone was defiled by making a man and woman lay on the stone, which ensued a quarrel between the family. The story goes on to say that one Aphong by name Burned the stone as a result of which the stone was broken and lost its magical power.<sup>5</sup> The same stone exist today at Kimono Khel of Kezakenoma Village.

After the incident, the Lothas migrating towards Mao, southern Angami area then to KHAYIMA. KHA meaning counting, YIMA meaning puzzle or confuse, in other words, on counting they could not get the exact number of people because of the great population. Now *Khayima* is called as Kohima. Lothas went to TSENZA Wozhu, the lake belonging to Tsenza (the present THIZAMA lake) from Kohima. And from there with *Angamis* pressing at the rear, reached CHECHUMA.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter they moved on till they reached *Honohoyonton* (fowl throat cutting hill), known to the Rengmas as Terugunyu or Themoketsa hill. From Honohoyonton the Lothas pressed on one body through lower Doyang to Koro and Pyangsa and another body to Ngochitaphen-Phiro, while the bigger and the main body to Shantaki-Rhuzenung and then to Wokha Hill where a huge village called Tiylongchum was established. Then on to Longsa, Longsachung, Hiyinmong, Mhor Josu, Zukhumki, Elumyo, Wokha, Yikhum and then spread slowly to the present Lotha Region.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.18.

<sup>5</sup> Tsenchibemo Lotha, (1996), "Gospel on Ecology and Environment", in *The Biblical Perspectiv*, Dimapur: Printwell

<sup>6</sup> Mhonsao N. Ngullie (1984), "Kyong Erang Motsu ejoma", In *Some Lotha Folktales*, Kohima; NEIU Printing Press, p.36.

<sup>7</sup> Amos Humtsoe (1992). *Christian Ekhumkho Motsu*, p.47

The Lothas are originally known as Kyong. The word Lotha, which came after the British, might have been derived from the Khuza language, “LA-THA” meaning “gone to a far off place”. It is believed that the British must have acquired the name LOTHAS for KYONG from the Khuza language, “LA-THA”

### **2.3 Socio Economic Condition Of Lotha Women**

Nagaland has been a patriarchal society from time immemorial and the dependence is deeply concentrated on the males of the family. It is clear from the fact that the production of scholars and educated are born out of a man in the Naga society.

However, things have been quite different after post-independence and thus Naga women contribute a very significant role in uplifting the family and society. Though the name patriarchy is used in all the dimensions of the Naga society, women constitute a vast majority in the running of the economy and the social structure in Nagaland.

Customarily, Lotha Naga women were less monetarily free. Concurring to Lotha Naga standard law, women can't acquire a genealogical property (landed property), ladies can have just moveable property.<sup>8</sup> Children have, generally speaking, control over whatever properties the guardian(s) have gathered. Without male issue or other male beneficiaries, the property and legacy went to the closest father's relative or tribe as opposed to his girls.

At the point when the spouse bites the dust the property and youngsters remain inside the focal overlay and the responsibility of the spouse's family and in addition to secure the dowager and her youngsters. On the off chance that the dowager remains unmarried she is permitted to utilize her better half's properties and property until her passing, yet she has no appropriate for legacy. Dowagers were permitted to remarry; however, they lose their claim over their youngsters. If there should arise an occurrence of separation because of the unfaithfulness of either the spouse or the spouse, the husband can in any case hold the properties and pick up the authority of the youngsters, yet the spouse gets nothing.

In the event that the spouse is believed to be unfaithful or a commanding spouse she would be tossed out of the house and at risk to be separated by paying just Rs.10. This was the custom of the general population where the spouse would be given nothing at

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

some point not by any means her things. Be that as it may, if the spouse submitted infidelity, despite everything he had the privilege to guarantee whatever properties had a place with him legitimately or actually dissimilar to the spouse who got nothing.

Lotha Naga society, Women are happy with their position and status since they get enough insurance and care from men. There are no authentic confirmations of women's rebel against the specialist of men.<sup>9</sup> It is guaranteed that women were not looked downward on nor saw as insignificant sex objects. Today they are relied upon to play different in the general public. The customary dissimilarity between the genders is narrowing down with the spread of western instruction. In any case, the generally subordinate position of ladies may proceed in light of the fact that the custom, traditions and standards of the general public still decide their position.

A nearer examination of women's exercises uncovers the womanly ethics in a society understood for its insularity, absence of education, subsistence level economy and animistic conviction and practices.<sup>10</sup> Supreme nonappearance of the purdah framework, free interest in the farming exercises and free development of Lotha Naga women were not solitary attributes of the Nagas alone. In any case, it is similarly valid for good country womenfolk of North Eastern Region. By and large talking, in long time past time slope staying reasonable sex once in a while nurture their physical appearance after the birth of a tyke. Such women tend to the great name essentially by getting to be plainly pleased mother of solid kid, however their enduring popularity relies on the diligent work that the womenfolk put towards home-continuing including strenuous horticulture work to help her better half. To them, the higher resource of ladies was unending limit with respect to physical drudge instead of a vain radiance of physical excellence.

#### **2.4 Brief Profile of The Nagas**

The Ao Nagas is also one of the main Naga tribes of Nagaland. The Aos community is gerontocratic in authority, patrilineal in descent, patrilocal in residence and clan exogamy in marriage. Property is inherited by the son, and if a man without issue and died, his property will pass onto his nearest relatives or brother's child. The Aos have

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Lakhuti osi Lotha metalo Catholic ekhumkho soyinogoj (1976), *The Introduction of Catholic Church in Lakhuti and Lotha Area*, Lakhuti: Ntheo Louis, p.10.

Mongoloid physical trait like any other Naga tribes. Normally, they are shorter in stature yet their lives are very active. The general population are healthy, well-constructed and solid in form. The Ao village, according to A.W. Davis (1891) is a little republic. Men are fairly darker in appearance and substandard in body to the Angamis. Traditional Ao's villages are generally build on the slope mountain with fortified or defence.

The Aos tribe were pioneered in bringing Christianity and western education into Naga hills. The coming of Christianity and embracement by the Aos to the alien religion resulted in drastic changes in the social system. Christianity coupled with western education has positive impact as they were able to read and write in contrast to the other Naga tribes. Subsequently, the Aos have progress in the fields of education, economy and so on. Christianity initially entered the Ao domain when an American Baptist minister, Edwin W. Clark, came to Ao town named Molungkimong in 1872.<sup>11</sup> Tsula (Dikhu) Valley is the main territory located in the east to Tsurang (Disai) in the west of Mokokchung region, popularly acknowledged for the crop celebrations which seized every year. Majority of the people follow Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Though the essential target of the early Christian Missionaries was to spread Christianity, but Missionaries were also responsible for educating the individuals.

## **2.5 Ethymology of 'AO'**

Aos claim their origin in the 'Longterok' which means six stones. It is believe that due to the natural increase of population let people to move crossing Dikhu waterway by Cane Bridge, and they cut off the bridge leaving some behind (Soalemba, 1989). They said that, people who have crossed were known as Ao or Aor implies going or gone. The Ao Naga are categorised into four groups i) Chungle, (ii) Mongsen, (iii) Changki and (iv) Memokpu speaking. The Mokokchung region is divided into ongpankong, Chuchuyemlang, Tuli, Alongkima, Kobulong, Longchem, Mongkolemba and Changtongya. Aos who comprises of 80 to 90 percent with a population of 82,857 inhabited five ranges such as Ongpankong, Asetkong, Langpankong, Chanjkikong and Japukong.

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<sup>11</sup> Clark, M. M., 1978, (Reprint), ed., A Conler in India, Philadelphia: American Aaptist Publication Society

<sup>12</sup> Lakhuti osi Lotha metalo Catholic ekhumkho soyinogoj (1976), *The Introduction of Catholic Church in Lakhuti and Lotha Area*, p.12.

## **2.6 Status of Women**

The early ethnographic account suggested that the status of women have been dominated by male bias. This is because administrators turned researchers have fundamentally been males and in this manner, they could not have discovered the space where women have been occupied. In social orders, throughout the recorded history, women's positions were constricted to the kitchen, caring of children, cooking and other household activities. This does not imply that women's lives are totally constrained to home, but outside activities tend to expand their familial parts and connections and its relationship. Subsequently investigation on the familial parts (little girl, spouse, mother and sister) is central for the understanding of women and their place in the society.

Without a doubt motherhood has been valued than role of a female. It is her utmost essential contribution or gift to the society. Her role as a wife is to provide continuity to own or her significant other's or husband's ancestry. The issue of whether men ought to do work that is assigned to women is a matter of personal choice and culturally determined values. But men's capacities are never being question. They may first need to master the feminine skills but there is most likely that they can do, if they wish to. Then again, women are regularly rejected from men's culturally allotted role since it is assumed that they lack capabilities. There is no evidence of inborn limitation of women, though they involved in a wide variety of economic activities.

In rural areas, many women engaged in selling vegetables, handicraft works and running small shops. Along these lines it added to the preservation of the family. However, today we can find countless women are in administration sectors in state and National levels. Among the educated women, teaching has become commonly practicing profession. There is no task that is not being performed by women. It regards to the role of women in traditional society is related to family as daughter, sister, wife and mother.

In emerging society, status of women is portrayed by her accomplishments or achievement in education and the position she holds or earns. The status of women is not even among all the diverse groups which vary from society to society due to the rise of new services. The new services have transform the ownership and leading to formation of class to which where the process that the women were consigned to lower position. It is because result of flaw existing in the social system that has been

accounted for low status of women.<sup>13</sup> Education is considered to play a major role in pushing the mobility in upward direction.

Effort has been made to eliminate the ignorance and illiteracy from the social system. Only a hundred years prior, the movement for education for women took place. In the beginning, women were not allowed to study in the school, college and universities or admitted them. Women fought and won and remove all the social stigma preventing women from studying.

Today much is being have written, said and heard about changing the role and status of women to make their participation in the process of development more viable. For every person, status turns into a configuration or state of the individual's position within different inter-related circles of life. The levels of economic equity and independence are the 'markers statuses' of women in the society. We can say that there are few indicators of the status of women, which must be considered to judge, Ao tribe is the area of our interest at present.

Theoretically speaking, the Naga women have the same rights and obligations like men. Practically, they are not allowed as per the customary practices, to partake in related to legislative issues, fighting, and hunting and furthermore in some religious activities. Though, both men and women are partner in thoughts and functions. Modesty and commitment to husbands and family after marriage are considered as viable. It is said that during the head hunting era women being kidnapped to make the wines for the triumphant foes.

## **2.7 Status of Ao's Women**

It is noteworthy to specify that the position of women in Ao society, where physical quality, forces, and strength are respected. Women were viewed as substandard because they had a place with the weaker sex. Regardless of the status, they were a long way from being a slave. Women were viewed as assets in the house because without them the local works cannot be completed. They have the impressive degree of freedom although their exercises, particularly in the traditional society were restricted to certain characterized territories.

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<sup>13</sup> Amenla (06/07/2017), personal conversation, Ao senden office Mokokchung

Generally, the Aos have a rural economy and the women have always been effectively associated with the horticultural activities. Both men and women are in-charge of money related to the family. In addition, the position of women in business matters may best be comprehended by having a clear idea about the legacy framework and property rights.

In Ao society, women have no privileges of legacy. She cannot acquire property and immovable but just a blessing. If women receive a secure property generally from her father as endowments, it remains hers till her demise, after which it backpedals to her father's inheritors.<sup>14</sup> For such endowments, in the event that she had made even a minor cost to her father, it becomes her entire property and has the privilege to retain it if she so wishes.<sup>15</sup> But if the exchange of the property were not done amid her lifetime, at the occasion of her passing, the property would back to her father's relatives. In any case, if a woman is well sufficiently off, she can even purchase and possess a property. In spite of the fact that women are not allowed to acquire property, she can have an extensive level of independence and has the privilege to purchase, to possess, to oversee and to offer property.

In related to socio-cultural matters, women are dealt with respect and doors are open to express their sincere beliefs. In marriage, price of women which is called *tenmen* is paid in kind. However, whatever costs are paid, such costs are extremely ostensible and hence represent no issue if the couple desires to divorce. No celebration is ever observed without the presence of women's relative or family members. In all general and private ceremonies, men assumed and played a significant role. In the family services, husband acts as family minister. While performing the family related activities, the presence of wife is exceptionally fundamental, as the sacrifice is thought to be more powerful. In case of widow, she can perform sacrifices for good crops.

Every Ao political system is republic in which a citizen irrespective of riches and rank and everyone has the right and privilege to take part or to participate. The Ao traditional governing body is called Putu Menden and it is constituted by representative of clan – elected from every clan. However, women could not be a member of the Putu Menden or participate in any approach making matters. Traditionally, it is believed that women

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<sup>14</sup> Rev.Sangyula Imchen Associate Pastor women Mangmetong Baptist Church (26/07/2017), Personal Interview, Mangmetong, Nagaland.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*



did not go to war but during the head hunting day, heads of women were valued as it symbolises fertility<sup>16</sup>. So, for this reason, extreme care is taken avoid or losing the worth fertility -women and young people.

The Ao custom does not display any discrimination on the ground of gender, and do not practice infanticide or killing of selective sex – female. Regardless of male or female, elatedly welcome into the family and society. It is taken as a gift of the creator and no discrimination were meted out against anyone in their upbringing. However, in some rare cases, divorce occurs, on the ground of not bearing child or not having male progeny. As per desire of the family and clan members, having children is an addition to the member of the clans – membership. It is also a desire of the patrilineal society to have male child which means it increase the strength of the family and society.

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<sup>16</sup> A. Lanunungsang Ao (2002) From Phizo to Muivah. The Naga National Question in North-East India. New Delhi: Mittal publication, p.29.

### **Chapter-3**

#### **GENDER IDENTITY AND STATUS OF WOMAN AMONG AO AND LOTHA TRIBES**

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The political participation of women hence, remains a leading issue in modern democracies. United Nations International Human Rights instruments affirm that women are allowed to enjoy all the rights and freedom on the same root as men. The equal participation of women's is important to the manner of democratic elections. When we look at the practical level, an election fails to fulfil with International responsibilities and standards unless the chance for full and equal participation by women is provided. Equality in all spheres is inseparable from active political participation and is integral to the progress of women. Without active and continuous participation of women at all levels of government, including local party structure, equality in true sense will continue to remain deceptive. The pattern of entry of the females entrants in Nagaland indicates that party-political of the state are not in favour of fielding women as their candidates. For instance, a look at their submission from 1987 to 2003 shows that out of the seven women candidates, four of them (57.1%) contested as Independent candidates.

The fact that majority of the women candidates contested as Independent candidates, and not fielded by any political party highpoints the unwillingness of the political parties in Nagaland to patron womenfolk as applicants in the elections. Without the support of main political party, the balances of any candidate engaging the election becomes uncertain, given the fact that money power plays an integral part in the Naga electoral processes.<sup>20</sup> For a Naga women candidate, financial constraints, exacerbated by a social structure that is not in favour of seeing them in political leadership role, makes the chances of winning the election as independent candidates are very thin.

The reasons are that the absence of understanding for female applicants in various constituencies in overall and the women voters in particular, lies in the causes of their voting behaviour, which are most often not politically interested. The important

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<sup>20</sup> A. Lanunungsang Ao (2002) From Phizo to Muivah. The Naga National Question in North-East India. New Delhi: Mittal publication, p.29

determinants of voting for the Naga women includes deliberations of kinship ties, economic considerations, and political affinity of family members, where the political ideology or party principles does not play any role. Naga Women political leaders claim that maximum of the ground works during the campaigning are complete by the women.

However, they are not given due recognition for their efforts by their male colleagues. Even within the party hierarchy, Naga women find it hard to reach the top party position where all the decisions are taken. For instance, in the BJP State Working Committee, out of twelve members, there is only one woman, in the middle rung of the party hierarchy. Again, even in the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) Office bearers, which is the oldest and most organized political party in Nagaland, there is no women representative in twelve members.

The political consequence of the Naga tradition and culture on the women are their almost total eclipse from the administrative and decision-making bodies and institutions, which continue till date. With the granting of statehood, even though a new democratic political system has been introduced in Naga society, it was merely superimposed on the pre-existing social system where the women have no space in the governing body.<sup>21</sup> The Naga Mother Association (NMA), an apex body is currently engaging in awareness programme on the norms of voting behaviour for women, and to clean up the electoral politics in the state.

In the year 2004, a group of Naga women, comprising of University teachers, media personnel, and social workers, who called themselves as 'Facilitators and Initiators' tried to field women candidates for the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha elections in the state. They came together with the view that Naga women must stop pleading for justice, but must work for and earn justice.<sup>22</sup> Aware of the fact that, it would take a very long time for the State Legislative Assembly (an all-male bastion) to resolve to legislate women friendly acts and laws, especially in pertaining to power sharing. However, their effort failed due to the non-cooperation from the male politicians as they failed to extent support.

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<sup>21</sup> Tiala Imchen (12/07/17), personal interview Dimapur, Nagaland

<sup>22</sup> Haris Jamil and Anmolam (02/08/2017), "Why Aren't We Dealing With the Lack of Women in Indian Politics?", The wire, (Accessed on: 10/10/2017) Url: <https://thewire.in/163311/politics-womens-representation/>

Improving the political status of Naga women is an important part of overall tricky of socio-economic change in Naga society. Given the positive trend towards Naga women's educational attainment and their achievements in other arena, it is anticipated that a gender-sensitized re-structuring of the official institutions in society, both traditional and contemporary, will improve the Naga women into equal partnership with men in politics and other aspects as well. In February 2017 Nagaland was in headline for wrong reason, against the 33% women reservation in local urban body.

customarily, women in the Naga society have not adored slightly precise ended land. they have not had much voice in the village councils — the central of Naga society — where men have been the ones to exercise control and take decisions. there is a fear that if women are given a share of the decision-making process in community bodies, they would have a say in how resources (money) are spent and how land is utilised for various projects. many men feel this would violate customs and its effect could infect to the villages, which in turn could upset how Naga society has functioned for centuries, with men being in control and womenfolk remaining in the tracker.

The anti-reservation movement of 33% in Nagaland was prompted due to the protective *Article 371* of the India constitution. *The Article 371(A)* is the Nagas's badge of pride which stated:

“Notwithstanding anything in this constitution, no Act of parliament in respect of religious or social practices of the Nagas, Naga customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, ownership and transfer of land and resources, shall apply to the state of Nagaland unless the legislative assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides.”

Vekhosayi Nyekha, co-convenor of Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), anti-reservation movement in Nagaland stated: “*Article 371(A)* was not something gifted to us, we have earned it. And we will not let it get diluted. We respect our mothers and sisters, but as per our customs, we will not allow them to have political powers.”<sup>23</sup>

Niketü Iralu, an eminent Naga peace activist expresses that:

“*in the past, the role of men in our society was to fight and women took care of children and home. Reservation for women in election could be*

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<sup>23</sup> Utpal Prashar (08/02/2017), “Nagaland crisis: Clash of traditional values and women empowerment”, The Hindustan Times, URL: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nagaland-crisis-clash-of-traditional-values-and-women-empowerment/story-ITazq3LTTuRhp8EnTD7rpL.html>, (Accessed on : 12/06/2017)

*too much for our society, which is trying to emerge. Most men feel that women in Naga society, which is predominantly Christian, are already more 'empowered' than their counterparts in other parts of India and they do not need reservation to contest elections".<sup>24</sup>*

Rosemany Dzuvichu, advisor to the Naga Mother Association (NMA) stated that: “*we respect our customs, but Nagas must change with the times.*” Facing their from the apex Naga body, many women have separated themselves from the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), who is fighting for nearly four-decade-old for gender rights and justice. The disapproval by tribal organisations enforced the state government to declare the public elections worthless and cancelled.

This aggressive opposition from the Naga male shows the male chauvinistic behaviour. It is also expose the timidity of Naga men. If the Naga male are for women empowerment why they vehemently opposed the said the reservation which is constitutionally valid regardless of the Article 371(A). It also brings into the question of fundamental rights of the Indian constitution which state that everyone is equal in the eye of law, but in the case of Naga women, as per customary law, forbid women to have a space in decision making body. Lip service will not bring any positive outcome until it is legally binding for the womenfolk. Naga malefolk speaks of greater mobility and having freedom of womenfolk in the society but in reality, it is not. At the same time, it is also responsibility of the womenfolk for not supporting one another.

### **3.2 Status of Naga women**

The Naga women are considered to have freedom. However, in reality this is just a myth. Naga women have certain restriction though it is better as compare with other communities in the country. Are Naga women being empowered by freedom that they have? Empowerment is not merely given a certain position it is more than giving a space to other who are considered a weak or not have say in the social system. In this sense, mere election of women representative and sending to the state or Lok Sabha does not suffice empowerment. Empowerment has manifolds which does not necessarily only political capitals. To say the least, the Ao and Lotha Nagas are

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid,

considered as one of the advance tribes in Nagaland.<sup>25</sup> In reality they are the most patriarchal society where role of women is just in face value.

Monisha Behal opines that the influence about women being authorized in Naga society is an fable. Despite development has been made in the field of education and employment but still empowerment in the real sense is uncertain because women do not have any space in decision-making at home, community, over the landed resources, over marriage, over reproductive health and so on. Since Naga has being a patriarchal society, customary laws have always been took from a patriarchal attitude and there is a unfairness largely in laws related to women.

My filed experience shows that “on consideration of a woman’s physical weakness, an Ao Naga woman suffers from ineligibility in the following ways:

- i) She cannot become a member of *Putu Menden* (traditional village/clan/tribal council which is the highest decision-making body in Ao society)
- ii) She cannot become the *patir/putie* (village councillor) though she may be the oldest person in the village.
- iii) She is disqualified from the accomplishment of sacred rites and sacrifices.
- iv) She cannot partake in arguments of public interest
- v) She is not permitted to get honour, designation and recognition.
- vi) She cannot receive landed property. After the father dies, even the mother have to seek son’s permission to cut firewood from his land.

Because of the customary laws, the political participation of women in Nagaland is utterly dismal. In the last assembly polls for the 60-member house, only two women candidates participated. According to Performing Right Society (PRS) Legislative Research, Nagaland is the only state that has never had a woman MLA.

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<sup>25</sup> Unknown Author (08/02/2017), “Nagaland crisis: Clash of traditional values and women empowerment”, NE live, URL: <https://www.nelive.in/nagaland/news/nagaland-crisis-clash-traditional-values-and-women-empowerment>, (Accessed on: 10/08/17)

### 3.3 Salient features of Ao women:

AO and Lotha women are considered to be enjoyed freedom. Field experiences testify that it is just a myth. Ao and Lotha women have certain restriction though it is better as compare with other communities in the country. Empowerment is not merely given a certain position it is more than giving a space to other who are considered a weak or not have say in the social system. In this sense, mere election of women representative and sending to the state or Lok Sabha does not suffice empowerment.<sup>26</sup> Empowerment has manifolds which does not necessarily only political capitals. To say the least, the Ao and Lotha Nagas are considered as one of the advance tribes in Nagaland. In reality they are the most patriarchal society where role of women is just in face value

#### 1. Active participation in social events:

*Watsu Mungdang* is a registered non-profit society, established in 1982 as the apex organization of the Ao women in Nagaland. The organization had celebrated 25th years of its existence in 2007. All the Ao women come within the ambit of this organization but the membership fee is collected only from women above the age of 18. The ‘Watsü Mungdang’ is propagating a change in the customary law which will allow even female children the right to an equal share in the parents’ acquired property.

#### 2. Active participation in church:

Women play a consultative role in preparing and implementing pastoral programmes for women. For example, a proposed integration of women’s perspective in seminar formation. They also participated in the decision-making process of the church at some levels.

#### 3. Guardian of the family:

For decades Ao women take it as their job to act as protectors of the family and this trend has been continuing till date.

#### 4. Checks the evil practices in the society;

Women particularly of Ao community has taken many initiative and have formed various organizations to safe guard the society for example marketing and selling of

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<sup>26</sup> Channa, S. M. (ed.), 1992. Nagaland: A Contempormy Ethnography. New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, p.25.

illegal drinks and other products in the community. They have taken various measures and actions to stop all this illegal activities.

5. Independent set of minds: No doubt about the role of women in Ao society. They are the backbone of the family and society at large. Ao Women give a lot of importance to education for self and children. However, why Ao women only give more important to their children. It is men have no role to play in children career and future?. It is not about no role or role play in the society and family but both men and women should give equal importance in upbringing of their children. The assigned status to the women should be abandon as women are equally capable of doing what menfolk does or do for living and supporting their children.

### **3.4 Socio Economic Condition**

Traditionally, women take active role in agricultural activities whereas men do the physical labour. However, women also engage in selling vegetables and other items on Wednesday bazaar in Mokokchung in daily local markets as well. But if we focus on the current society of the Ao Nagas,<sup>27</sup> there are good number of women who travel around the world either for the business or other works. In addition, there are good number of Ao women writers such as Temsula Ao, Intijungla Longchar, Moanaro Imchen Jamir etc.

Even though the old-style culture gave women an lower status, both Ao men and women are honored of their custom.<sup>28</sup> Ao have their own traditional way of choral, dancing, dressing etc. Traditionally one could easily tell not only the name of the tribe but even the clan to which an Ao women fitted by the way she dressed.

Ao women have played an active role in bringing changes to the society through participation in village developmental programmes of many varieties. For example, Shed are being constructed for weaving and knitting units, social work, tree plantation, SHG etc. Many women organization like the Naga Mothers Association *Watsu Rogo Mungdang*, Nagaland Baptist Church Council(NBCC) Women department, women societies at the district raised their voice against corruption and other evil practices in

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<sup>27</sup> Channa, S. M. (ed.), 1992. Nagaland: A Contemporary Ethnography. New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, p.48.

<sup>28</sup> Yanthan, M.N. (2012), "Tokhu Motsu Rua", in *Story of Lotha Tokhu Festival*, Dimapur: Popular Printing Press, p.22



the society. Talking in particular, the organization like *Watsu Rogo Mungdang* tries to keep Ao Naga culture in a better and more honourable way. It seeks to improve the society and the status of women through changes which will preserve the valuable traditional Ao children culture but remove those practices that lead to the poverty of women and society in general.

### **3.5 Political Condition:**

As it has mentioned earlier in traditional Ao society the highest administrative power is held by the village council known as *Putu menden*. In this woman were given no rule. Ao society is termed as patriarchal society and does not provide any place for the public workout of leadership for women or even member in decision making bodies. Important decision making was not a proper role for women , who in this respect is positively regarded as inferior.<sup>29</sup> At village level this tradition is still continued. Hereafter, women are reduced to the status of second class citizens, of a lower order than men.

At state level, the situation is somewhat different. But the fact remain that all the parties are conquered by male leadership. one of the result is that women themselves binds to be a sad about a political matters, not calming their rights in an organized way among the Aos so far only one, Mrs. *Chubala* has contested an election .the question is often asked these days as to why women cannot play an important role in politics when examine closely , it is clear that the outdated arrogance continues to influence attitudes concerning the contribution of women in politics. Modern politics is a theory that gives people freedom to select their own candidates but when it comes to selection people are unwilling to select women as politics is been viewed as an area where only men can exercise power, authority and control.

### **3.6 SALIENT FEATURES OF LOTHIA WOMEN**

In the Lothia society women are fully dependent on men. There is no sign of women's revolt against the authority of men. It is claims that women were not looked down nor viewed as mere sex objects. Today they play vital roles in the society. The traditional gap between the sexes is narrowing down with the spread of western education.

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<sup>29</sup> A K NONGKYNRIH ((MAY 8-14, 2010), "Scheduled Tribes and the Census: A Sociological Inquiry" *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(19): p. 46.

However, inferiority of the position of women may continue because the tradition, customs and norms of the society still fix their position.

Today, due to the education women has become economically independent which also encouraged young girls to go for higher studies. More women also started earning due to the education. However, the conservative mindset is still prevail discouraging the girl education. In spite of increased in number of working women, still it dependence on men for financial matter prevails. The most interesting is society considered wife's earning is a sort of supplement to the husband's earnings.

Though, in reality, a woman in salaried job is not looked down upon, as was the case in earlier days. In fact, to keep up with the fast-changing society and the increased needs of the family, it is rather encouraged that a woman should do whatever is in her capacity to support and share the family finance.

In the present scenario Lotha women became very forward comparing to the ancient time. They started to play a great part in the development of the society and making it an advanced and modern society. Hence, the literacy rate also started to grow and many new foundations or societies are formed by the women. Some of the societies are as follows:

### **3.6.1 Enyathung women society**

Enyathung women society is located in wokha nagaland. It is registered as a society at Soku village of state Nagaland. The chairman of Enyathung women society is Arenei Lotha and Chief Functionary Officer, the secretary Libeni Tungoe and the Treasurer Nkono. This Enyathung women society NGO charity is working on animal husbandry, dairying & fisheries, aged/elderly, agriculture, art & culture, biotechnology, children, civic issues, differently able, disaster management, drinking water, education, environment and forests, food processing, health and family welfare, housing, human rights, information and communication technology, legal awareness and aid, labour and

employment, land resources, micro finance (SHGs), minority issues, micro small and medium enterprises. This society spreads to eight districts in Nagaland that is Dimapur, Phek, Mon, Tuensang, Wokha, Zunheboto, Kohima, and Mokokchung.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.6.2 Women Welfare Society

This Women Welfare Society is located in Wokha Nagaland, it is registered as a society at Kohima of state Nagaland with Ngo unique registration id 'nl/2010/0031399'. The NGO registration is done by registrar of societies with registration number h/rs-917 on the date of 2000 July 12th wed, its parent organization is Paul foundation

. The chairman of women welfare society is Abeni Lotha and chief functionary officer is Mhao Lotha, and secretary is Benathung. This women welfare society NGO charity is working on key issues of professional exercise, water resources, women's development and empowerment and youth affairs. The main aim of objective is to develop the women in any field.

- To create awareness among the girls in education, sports, culture, and other activities.
- To aware the women in health care programme and other activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Enyathung Lotha Women Soceity "India Ngo Directory and Database Indian Ngos List" .

## Chapter- 4

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AO AND LOTHIA

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#### 4.1 Literacy

According to the Census Report of India 2011, Wokha District had population of 166,343 of which male and female were 84,505 (50.80%) and 81,838 (49.20%) respectively.

**Table5.1: literacy of Wokha.**

| Total Population | %       | No. of literate | Literacy % |        |
|------------------|---------|-----------------|------------|--------|
| Male             | 84,505  | 50.80%          | 67,385     | 52.55% |
| Female           | 81,838  | 49.20%          | 60,823     | 47.66% |
| Total            | 166,343 | 100%            | 128,208    | 100%   |

Source: Census Report of India, 2011  
(<http://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/611-wokha.html>)

#### MOKOKCHUNG

According to the Census Report of India 2011, the population of Mokokchung had 194,622 of which male and female were 101,092 (51.94%) and 93,530 (48.6%) respectively.

**Table 5.3: Literacy of Male and Female<sup>2</sup>**

| Total Population | %       | No. of literate | Literacy % |        |
|------------------|---------|-----------------|------------|--------|
| Male             | 101,092 | 51.94%          | 83,479     | 52.33% |
| Female           | 93,530  | 48.6%           | 76,015     | 47.66% |

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<sup>2</sup> Census Report of India (2011), People and Demography of Nagland”, URL:  
<http://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/609-mokokchung.html>, Accessed on: 14/08/17

|       |         |      |         |      |
|-------|---------|------|---------|------|
| Total | 194,622 | 100% | 159,494 | 100% |
|-------|---------|------|---------|------|

#### 4.2 LITERACY RATE OF AO AND LOTHAN WOMEN

**Table 5.2 :Literacy of Mokokchung<sup>3</sup>**

|       |        |                                    |
|-------|--------|------------------------------------|
| Ao    | 76,015 | 55.55%                             |
| Lotha | 60,823 | 44.44%                             |
| Total | 136838 | 47.56% (women of both Communities) |
|       |        |                                    |

According to the census of India 2011 the literacy rate of Ao women is 55.55% whereas the literacy rate of Lotha women is 44.44% so the Ao women is more literate comparing to Lotha women. However, when we see the political field in both the tribes the women were not given to equal rights for example among Ao nagas Mrs.chubala who contested election in 2003 has not been elected because of the inferiority complex that women are not capable of controlling powers over man, that responsibility etc. and till that still no women has been contested for the election. When we see the *Lotha Nagas* context same scenario is happening so in both the cases women are still not given the equal rights as men. So the main reason behind is that the traditional attitude (that women should take the responsibility of their household not in society) continues to effect the contribution of women in politics. So, in political field still women are not upgrading comparatively.

Again, when we see the scenario in both the cases in Ao and Lotha Nagas it is necessary for the church to scrutinize and change that traditional attitude towards women which has led to the formation of male conquered and concerned with churches. If the church is to be reconstructed and such a way that discrimination against women is removed, so that community of the believers compose of both women and man can live and love and harmony with one another and can thus be more active representatives of Gods mission in the world.

<sup>3</sup> census Report of India, (2011), Report on people and demography of Nagaland” URL: <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/609-mokokchung.html>, Accessed on: 12/10/2017)

In the Lotha society women are fully dependent on men. There is no sign of women's revolt against the authority of men. It is claims that women were not looked down nor viewed as mere sex objects. Today they play vital roles in the society. The traditional gap between the sexes is narrowing down with the spread of western education. However, inferiority of the position of women may continue because the tradition, customs and norms of the society still fix their position.

Today, due to the education women has become economically independent which also encouraged young girls to go for higher studies. More women also started earning due to the education. However, the conservative mindset is till prevail discouraging the girl education. In spite of increased in number of working women, still it dependence on men for financial matter prevails. The most interesting is society considered wife's earning is a sort of supplement to the husband's earnings.

Though, in reality, a woman in salaried job is not looked down upon, as was the case in earlier days. In fact, to keep up with the fast-changing society and the increased needs of the family, it is rather encouraged that a woman should do whatever is in her capacity to support and share the family finance.

In the present scenario Lotha women became very forward comparing to the ancient time. They started to play a great part in the development of the society and making it an advanced and modern society. Hence, the literacy rate also started to grow and many new foundations or soceities are formed by the women

## Chapter-5

### CONCLUSION

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The AO and the Lotha Nagas are two prominent tribal groups of Nagaland. Status of women among these two tribes are much satisfactory in terms of their education, and employment. However, in the light of the political and social context, this two tribes are not giving space to womenfolk. In the hindsight, there is significant improvement in literacy rate. woman participation in the politics is being hampered. This happen because of the practice of customary law where the decision making is uncontrolled only by the male figure. In the field of education Ao women are higher in number comparing to the Lotha tribe.

Therefore, in terms of the employment, literacy rate Ao women are high but when we see the other side like political field both the tribes are very low. So far there is only a handful women participated and it was not a successful one. When we see deeply in the field of political background none of the women folk is holding such a position like MLA, MP etc till today. But in the field of literature the ao women folk showed promising aspect for the future betterment. whereas lotha womenfolk are not showed much participation in any socio economic aspect as compared to the Ao women folk. In the comparison of literacy rate between the Ao and Lotha Tribes in the census report of 2011 Ao women is 55.55% whereas the Lotha women is 44.44% so the Ao women is higher than the Lotha women.

According to the various findings the Ao and Lotha Naga women are found to be very promising and fulfilling in the demography of achievement and development. This is so because it is unbelievably hard to penetrate a system of customs and traditions that has been passed down and practised since ages. It is also sad to witness the poor reality of such hard work and labour by the Naga women in the various field of literature, social, cultural and economy of the tribal lives. Though both the women folk constitute from the major tribes of the Nagas, they are similarly striving to breathe and increase their status in their society. Mainly due to the practices of patriarchal society the women folk are the ones usually playing the second fiddle in every stream of their society, in

fact most of their local and self-contribution to their communities are often forgotten or paid lesser heed.

Today the participation of women folk in any social gatherings are slowly growing in number and are heavily addressed and sensitized wherever possible which are the result of education and modernization. It is only after decades the significance of the women folk has emerged as the pillar of strengthening and improving the various blocks of development. The women workforce according to state census 2011 is higher than their male counterparts given their strong contribution to the economy of the state.

### **Summary and Findings**

1.Naga women has suffered great inequality from the very inception of the Naga society. Being a patriarchal society woman were bond to be under the male dominance. Women were subordinate to men. Women were confined only to child bearing, kitchen and other household works.it slowly began to change as the time gone and literacy of women increased.

2.Among Ao being a patriarchal society there was no scope for women in the public. There were many restrictions for women such as she cannot become a member of village councils. They cannot part take in argument and so on. However, Ao women give a lot of importance to education for self and children.

3.Lothas also belong to the patriarchal family. Women were fully dependent on men. In olden days Lotha women lived a hard and complicated life.yet women lived could inherit landed property in the post-independence period women played significant role in changing the economy in the society.

4. Till today Status of women is very low in terms of the political institutions in both the tribes. They are not getting any opportunity to hold the position because of the social construction of the society that women are inferior than men.

5.According to 2011 census the literacy rate of Ao women folk is 55.55% whereas the literacy rate of Lotha women is 44.44% so the Ao women is more literate comparing to Lotha women. Now days parents and guardians are encouraging and motivating their children especially girl child due to which literacy is increasing.



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