

CHAPTER 4

CULTURE AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF NAGA TRIBES IN NAGALAND

Culture; the people of Nagaland have a cultural legacy that is both diverse and rich in its depth and breadth. The Naga people have been able to preserve their autonomy for so long because of their intrinsic skills in a wide variety of fields, including basketry, pottery, farming, spinning, weaving, woodcarving, metalwork, etc. The customs and traditions practiced by the Naga peoples of Nagaland are uniquely their own, as is seen by the distinctive clothing worn by members of these tribes. The utilization of vibrant colors, complicated designs, motifs, and patterns that each have specific symbolic significance is one of the distinguishing characteristics of traditional Naga clothing. The fascinating aspect about Naga traditional garments is that each tribe, sub tribe, and clan has its own unique patterns, motifs, and designs that each hold a particular societal significance and may be interpreted in a different way. Their background as head hunters and their current position as giver of the feast of merit both contribute to this cultural symbolism.

The Nagas are a mongoloid race and speak a language that is distinct from other mongoloid languages. The Naga people may be broken down into seventeen major tribes in addition to a large number of smaller sub-tribes. Each of the major tribes has its own language, but all of the major tribes communicate with one another using a language called Nagamese. All of the major tribes follow a leafy clothing code, and their eating patterns and ancient rules are quite similar. The majority of Nagas adhere to the Christian faith, are friendly by nature, and are known for their warm hospitality toward visitors. What sets the Nagas' hospitality apart from that of other cultures is the fact that they see the well-being of their guests as an issue of dignity and distinction. They have a zeal for life and celebrate holidays and other days of comparable significance with a great deal of jubilation and enthusiasm because of their love for life.

Even though Nagaland is relatively tiny in terms of its physical size, it is extremely culturally rich and blessed with a wide variety of cuisines. The customs, celebrations, and artistic endeavors of each distinct tribe, as well as their handicrafts and fairs, are bursting with exuberant color and vitality. Every one of the Naga tribes celebrates its own unique traditions in grand fashion inside its own municipality or community. Tulini, Sukruhnye, Yemshe, Senkrenyi, and Moatsu are just a few of the many festivals that are celebrated by the many Naga tribes. There are many more. Every Naga tribe participates in the celebration of common holidays, such as Christmas and New Year's Day, as well as others.¹

¹ Dewan, J.P. 1933: *Naga tribes and their customs. Census of India 1931, Burma*, Vol. 11, pt. I, Appendix-E Rngoon, govt press, Pp 95-267.



Figure No. 12 Hornbill festival of Nagaland(source: Research scholar)

The Hornbill festival is a modern-day cultural extravaganza of all Naga tribes, and it is one of the festivals that is celebrated together by all of the Naga tribes. This celebration takes place annually during the first week of December. The hornbill, which has a very long tail with feathers that are used as part of ceremonial or ritual attire, is an especially significant bird for the Naga tribe as a whole. Possession of hornbill feathers is a sign of high status and may be earned by taking part in the feast of merit or by rising to the position of head hunter. In the spirit of finding unity in variety, the festival of hornbill was created and continues to be held with the intention of showcasing both traditional and modern aspects of Naga culture. This celebration happens once a year at the Kisama historical village, which is located around 12 kilometers away from Kohima. The purpose of establishing this hamlet as a historic site is to save and maintain the cultural traditions of the Naga people. Since it began operations in the year 2000, it has brought a great deal of change to the tourist industry in the state. When someone visits this location, they will have the chance to receive an insider's perspective on the cultural differences among the Naga tribes. The Heritage complex comprises a group of seventeen buildings that have been created indigenously and are referred to as morung or dormitory. Each of these dwellings is emblematic of a different tribe.²

The morung, or dormitory, played a major role in the lives of Naga people in the framework of their villages and communities in times past. This massive structure, which acted as a "youth dormitory" of sorts, was covered in ornate carvings. But its purpose extended much farther than that; it also served as a place where boys and girls of adolescent or younger age may live and sleep apart before being married. It was also utilized as a guard house during times of war when warriors

² Directorate of industries, 1970: *festivals of Nagaland*. Kohima Directorate of information, publicity and Tourism, Govt. of Nagaland.

stayed in it; this was one of the reasons why morung was erected adjacent to the village gate or at the position that offered the most strategic benefit. The passing down of traditional knowledge, skills, and practices from one generation to the next was facilitated in the morung. This is perhaps the most significant aspect of the morung. The term "morung" refers to the structure that housed the dorms that were shared by several individuals. For certain Naga tribes, the morung functioned as a dormitory for the younger males who were not yet married. Because the young morung males belonged to a certain clan. The young people who were living and working together were familiar with one another in a natural way and built a positive relationship with one another that stretched beyond the personal to the social domain.

The village council relied on the young people who lived in the morung to perform a variety of social functions on its behalf. They are responsible for important responsibilities such as directing the observance of a gene, as well as performing at a festival, an event for the community, or a wedding. In addition to this, they helped those who were in need and the elderly, maintained the village clean, and ensured that the members of each generation or age set that remained in the morung had strong mutual bonds and a strong feeling of solidarity that persisted throughout their whole lives. The responsibilities that came with belonging to a given age set were built as obligations.

The morung served as the Naga child's unofficial place of education. There, all of the history of the clans and villages, as well as folklore, music, traditional rituals, and handicrafts, as well as the laws that governed the people that lived there, were taught. In a similar fashion, the females were seen doing the very same thing in their own dorm rooms. In addition, the majority of the reprimanding of misbehaving students took place in the dormitories, but some parents also did it at home. The pride of the clan emerged from the dormitory completely ready for life and living so that they could fulfill their role in the community. They learned politics, diplomacy, and the many different ways one may interact with other people so that they could compete with anybody for the good of their town or clan. The morung was also regarded as a hallowed institution, and the entire community as well as society as a whole took any potentially corrupt behavior that occurred on its premises extremely seriously.

The Nagas culture evolved its ideas and rituals in order to strike a balance between the many demands of humans. The practice of taboo and totem helped to keep the equilibrium that was necessary to shield the natural world from the peril of excessive exploitation. This equilibrium was crucial to the protection of the natural world. By providing these regulations with a theological basis through the use of myths, they were given the appearance of being legitimate.³

Taboo; The concept of taboo should not be confused with the superstition of the same name. Something that is not allowed, something that goes against societal acceptability and is barred by

³ Dube, Leela. 1974: *Sociology of Kinship, a trend report. A survey of research in sociology and social Anthropology*, Vol II by ICSSR. Bombay, popular prakashan. Pp. 233-366.

behavioral standards is an example of what is referred to as a "prohibition" or "forbidden" action. The Naga civilization is governed by a set of rituals known as taboos, which span all aspects of daily life. It is applicable between various households, between different clan members and village-wide, and even according to the changing of the seasons.⁴ A taboo is something that should be regarded with affected awareness. Therefore, taboos are indicators that many aspects of the world are interdependent and interconnected.

One of the activities that are considered unacceptable is for a pregnant woman's husband to slaughter any kind of animal. In addition to that, he is not allowed to consume honey. Fish that do not have scales, such as the butter cat fish and the stinging cat fish, are not permitted for consumption by females.

The topic of taboo draws a lot of interest. It is very impolite to speak ill of one's parents, uncles, or aunts and uncles. The use of weapons by women is forbidden because it is thought that doing so would bring bad luck to boys or the males in the family, maybe even leading to their deaths. This is especially true during head-hunting trips when men are responsible for the safety of the village.

Many people believe that the spirit of the ultimate power keeps watch over humanity, and that those who wrong others or stand in the way of justice will reap the karmic rewards of their deeds in the form of premature death, illness, abnormality, financial loss, and unlucky circumstances, some of which may be passed down from generation to generation.

Totem; Another technique that maintains balance and harmony in society as well as with the environment is called a totem. By establishing a totemic bond with each natural thing, the Naga people prevented some plants and animals from being exploited for their resources. The practice of naming the clan after the totem and attributing its power to the supernatural is a phenomenon that is frequently seen in totem beliefs. It provides a framework for social as well as religious activity.

Because of their deep totemic roots, the Nagas communities have managed to sustain a highly robust and healthy symbiotic connection with their surrounding environment. Because of this link and the myths that are associated with animals and plants, the Naga people esteem them very highly. Because of this reverence, the whole natural resources were protected and prevented from being overexploited.⁵

A fundamental part of the Naga way of life is theological thought, which is grounded in Naga daily experience and traditional history. Instead of rejecting the Naga people's cultural and religious practices as being bad and demonic, every effort should be made to recover these practices for the

⁴ Dube, S.C. (Ed), 1977: *tribal heritage of India*, Vol. I: Ethnicity, identity and interaction. New Delhi, Vikas publishing house.

⁵ Ibid.,

sake of theological contemplation. The Naga people have been blessed with a wealth of cultural and religious treasures.

The sociocultural habits, religious beliefs and practices that have been passed down through generations are all part of traditional legacy. Myths, stories, and songs, the majority of which were passed down verbally from generation to generation, are included in this category. However, this is not an exhaustive list.

Concerning social matters, C. Singh is quoted as saying that "the Naga people are simple, friendly, hardworking, and self-respecting." The fact that Nagas were formerly a casteless society or castles is one of the aspects of their culture that receives the greatest respect and admiration. The Naga tribes do not have any biases about creed or caste against other people.

But in modern times, a class structure has begun to take shape, with materialism at its core; this has resulted in shifts in the Naga society's economic landscape and caused divisions among its members. The gap between rich and poor is widening, and the gap between rich and poor is getting wider. The status of those who amass greater riches is rising, but the principle and value of sharing one's wealth with others is falling by the wayside.

As a result of the prevalence of patriarchal customs in Nagaland's modern society, the government has instituted a policy that allocates 33 percent of all seats in decision-making bodies to women. Women are encouraged to enter the public arena via the utilization of both conventional and scriptural resources. Giving women and girls in Nagas society more independence and opportunities is a smart method to combat corrupt practices, discrimination, and violent behavior in the community.⁶

i) MYTH AND TALES OF NAGAS IN NAGALAND

A myth is a strong conventional belief, often including supernatural beings or occurrences that recounts the early history of a people or provides an explanation for a natural or social phenomenon. Myths are passed down from generation to generation. The construction of Nagaland's history is heavily reliant on the nation's mythology.

The legends and tall tales have been handed down through the generations and incorporated into folklore. A straightforward definition of folklore would be the "oral tradition" that is handed down from one generation to the next. This is how knowledge is transmitted. The passing down of a story orally from generation to generation, particularly among the more senior members of a village's population, is the primary characteristic of myths and legends.

It is also impossible to dispute the fact that the more rural areas of Nagaland produce a greater quantity and variety of stories. There are so many interesting tales and legends that swirl around

⁶ Elwin, Verrier and coverley-prince, Victor. 1959: *the Hill people of North East India*. London, Oxford university press, Pp. 31.

the lives of the people who live in Nagaland, and it is exciting to see that the culture of the tribe itself offers a variety of colors for an experience that will be made all the more important because of it..⁷

There is no written record; only tales that have been passed down orally for a significant amount of time. Documentation of folktales has just begun in more recent times, and even then, it is quite limited. They have been passed down from one generation to the next and recounted time and time again, year after year. These stories contain symbolic meaning and offer valuable lessons to their listeners. Villages not only tell them to children as bedtime stories or lullabies, but also utilize them as a means of education, using the stories themselves as an example. Even in modern times, references to them and comparisons to the life of humans continue to be made.

There are several different Nagaland folk tales. They discuss the world, its inhabitants, as well as the sky and the earth. They might be illustrative or metaphorical in nature. Some of them are sad, exciting, dramatic, romantic, and educational all at the same time. Not only are they told to instruct the youth, but they are also used as examples at social events around the town. The oral transmission of folk narratives has been preserved, and it is anticipated that they will continue to exist in the midst and heart of future generations, where they will function as sources of inspiration, enjoyment, and leisure.⁸

The myth of Nagaland: The first legendary origin narrative is something that the Angamis Nagas and many other tribes of Nagaland share in common. The legend tells of the mother (Dziilimossila) and her three boys, who were conceived when she slept beneath a banyan tree. The clouds surrounded her and suffocated her, causing her to become pregnant with all three of her children. The three children were a deity or spirit (Okha, representing the supernatural realm), a tiger (Omei, emblematic of mankind), and a man (Okhe, representative of the animal kingdom). When the mother became older, her sons took turns caring for her as she got in their advanced years. It was regarded that Omei was the "nave" of the mother since she took care of her so well despite the fact that Okhe tormented her, Orah was not a good caretaker, and Okhe and Orah were in a disagreement over the succession of the mother's estate. In order to determine who would get what from the bequest, the mother held a contest. She crafted a grass ball and stipulated that whomever touched it first would take possession of the neutral territory. As a result of Okhe's attempt to cheat, the match was restarted. Omei, the child who had cared for her the most in her old age, was given special treatment by Mother, and she instructed him to shoot a grass ball with a bow and arrow. As a result of this, he emerged victorious and laid claim to the planet. This mythological account of the world's beginning attributes its origination to a woman. She was responsible for the creation of gods, humans, and animals. The Christian tale of the beginning of humans, which centers on Adam and Eve, is put to the test by the creation myth.

⁷ Goswami, Praphulla Dtta, 1954-55: *Naga Tales. The Eastern Anthropologist*, 1(2), December-February, Pp. 8-73.

⁸ Ibid.,.

According to the myth described above, there is a web of relatedness in which everything is connected to something; to put it another way, nothing stands apart from the network of relatedness. The Naga believe that all life on earth is intertwined or interconnected, and that the existence of each living form is contingent on the survival of all other life forms. This understanding lends credence to the Naga's viewpoint. When different entities cut themselves apart from one another, life becomes more difficult. This is especially true when the choice to cut connections was made deliberately, displaying disdain for the other members of the symbolic fellowship; in such cases, the consequences might be catastrophic.⁹

TALE OF AMUGHUSU

Once upon a time in the land of Sumi, there lived a young man with the name Swu Piehena. He was known as a wise man and a teller of myths and tales told by the people. He tells tales from other cultures to other people. The "AMUGHUSU" narrative is the most significant one he tells, among all the others he tells.

The following is an outline of the events that took place:

There lived a man who was a father to two boys. Just before he went away, the father instructed his sons, "Even if I pass away, divide my property among yourselves in an accurate way, and do not be greedy." The oldest son got married while his father was still living, and the youngest son was still a tiny child when the oldest son died away. As soon as the father went away, the oldest son seized all of the property, so the youngest brother questioned the older brother, "Brother, are you not going to share my father's property?" The eldest son had taken all of the property as soon as the father had gone away. The older brother responded by saying, "Our father stored the AMUGHUSU (wooden Axe) for you, and since it is your property, you should take the Amughusu and make it your own." The younger brother became enraged and entertained the idea of murdering anybody that crossed his path with amughusu, regardless of who they were. But Amughusu told his youngest son that he would give him whatever he needed, that he would make all of his dreams come true, and that he would give him the property if he followed him or did everything he was commanded to do by Amughusu.¹⁰

Amughusu cautioned his younger brother not to get married without first notifying him about it. I will explain to you the characteristics of the sort of woman you ought to wed. The youngest brother then turned to Amughusu and inquired, "What kind of women are necessary for me to get married?" Then amughusu responded by saying, "Don't go for looks and beauty but go for the daughter of faithful, loyal, and righteous parents and tell me about her." In addition, Amughusu said, "Why are you searching for beauty?" It won't make you proud, it won't bring you luck, but rather she will leave you and go for someone who is better than you. Beauty won't give you

⁹ Bhowmik, K.L. 1964: *Moon and sun, A Naga Folk-Tale and its Analysis*. Folklore (Calcutta), 5 (7), July, Pp. 77-264.

¹⁰ Hodson, T. C. 1901: *Head-Hunting among the Hill tribes of Assam. Folk-lore*, Pp. 43-132.

anything, it won't bring you luck, and it won't make you proud. She will be subservient to others, she will be filthy, she will bring dishonour to your house, she will never clean, and as a result, your home will become filthy and it will continue to become worse. Therefore, this is the rationale behind why you should never marry a woman based on her appearance or attractiveness. Later on, the youngest son went and spoke to the girl's family, and then he returned to "ANUGHUSU" and informed Amughusu about it. Anughusu then stated that the girl never cleaned her house, never respected others, and so on. If you marry her, your neighbours and friends will pick a quarrel with you in your own home. Don't get married to her. As a result, he is now on his third trip to the women's families in preparation for the wedding. Therefore, when he returned from the third women's home and informed Amughusu about it, Amughusu answered by saying that she is the appropriate one for you and that she would make you wealthy. No matter what she does or how hard she works, the effects will be felt throughout your household. Amughusu also instructed his followers to obey one another in order to live happy. After some time, the couple worked hard and eventually got wealthy. Because of this, other people look up to them and admire them.

However, as time went on, people finally forgot about Amughusu and prioritized other types of wood; in addition to this, they even burnt Amughusu down. After that, one day they found that they needed Amughusu for their requirements, so they went looking for him and spoke to him. However, Anughusu responded by saying, "Now I am blind, deaf, and mute, and I can't speak." It was due to the fact that they torched it. After they forgot about him and destroyed Amughusu, their lives took a turn for the worst and they fell into abject poverty.¹¹

TALE OF TIMI KUDU-U

In the past, there was a Sumi tribe that resided in the region that is now known as Tapuhu (Name of a location). One of the persons that called the region around Tapuhu home was a guy by the name of Tughakhi. He was a kind of sorcerer, and in addition to that, he can transform his body. Because of his ability to transform his physical shape into that of an animal, he was once known by the moniker "Timi Kudu-u (Sorcerer)".

He is also a member of the warriors, but in addition to that, he is a witch who imparts information to others on what is happening or what is going to take place in the vicinity of their location. It is too late for the village monarchs and the warriors to stop him when he slips into Ghokemi and Hobolimi village to assault the people there. One day, he even personally assaulted one of the villages, and as a result, the king and the warriors of that town followed the footprints of the wild boar, also known as Amili, all the way to the battlefield, where they even observed the path that the wild boar had just created. Therefore, the residents of that village, including the village monarch and the local warrior, said that he would come and assault our village men and women in a manner similar to this. Therefore, the monarch said that whomever our adversaries are that are freely moving about in our territory, we will cast a curse upon them, and we will not let them live

¹¹Hodson, T. C. 1901: *Head-Hunting among the Hill tribes of Assam. Folk-lore*, Pp. 43-132

in peace. Therefore, after a period of time had passed, Tughakhai returned to that same hamlet in an attempt to attack people; however, he fell victim to the trap set by a villager and was hurt.

After a period of time had passed, the king of that village arrived and witnessed the squirrel enduring the agony of others with him. He also observed the squirrel adorned with a headdress, armour, and a steel bracelet. From there, the king learned that he is the one, and he also made an announcement to his people, telling them to come and see the guy about whom they had been talking; come and meet our adversary; come and see his body; from now on, he has taken the form of an animal; come and see how he arrived to our hamlet in such a manner to attack them. Come, and we shall have a feast after we decapitate him. The result of this was that all of the people gathered together, banged the drum, and chanted "oh enemy head (SULIPHO)" before taking his head and burying it in Kughobo.¹²

Myths regarding the Dzukou valley have been there for a very long time, and they have been handed down from the older generation to the new age. At an elevation of 2438.4 meters, Dzukhou is the second-highest valley of flowers in India, after Nandan, which is located in Uttarakhand. The vitality of this valley can be attributed to the presence of rivulets, flowers, herbs, and bushes. Dzukhou is home to some of the nation's most renowned hiking trails and hiking circuits. While housing "communities" hamlets along the route, below are some widespread misconceptions about Dzukou valley.

It would appear that the local population has come to think that the Dzukhou valley is home to a lovely female ghost who, on an annual basis, kidnaps a living guy. Therefore, male visitors to the Dzukhou who suddenly become ill while there are frequently instructed to depart the area quickly.

There is also the belief or statement that the meaning of the word Dzukou is "cold water." It is reported that the valley is so chilly that whomever visits it feels as if their own soul has been frozen. The story goes that while their forefathers were searching for a site that would be ideal for the establishment of a community, a young scout was given the responsibility of exploring in that area. He did find the valley, but it was uninhabitable, too cold, there was nothing that could be eaten there, and there were no trees in the area. In the beginning, we just named it phephu, but later we decided to rename it Dzukou.

Another Tangkhul Naga creation tale, this one revolving around the vast gathering of all the many kinds of animals, runs as follows:¹³

Kara Akhava, also known as God, called a meeting of all living things to decide how long each day and night would last. Kara Akhava solicited the feedback of the various animals, and after a spell of stillness, a mole spoke up with a suggestion that was unanimously shot down owing to the

¹² Hutton, J. H. 1923: *Folk-Ties from the Naga Hills of Assam. Folk-lore. Folk-lore*, Pp. 34.

¹³ Bloss, Lowell W. 1971: *Ancient Indian folk religion as seen through the symbolism of the Naga. Chicago University, dissertation (unpublished).*

impracticality of its implementation. The conversation carried on, but nobody offered a solution that might be considered acceptable. After then, the task of deciding how long the day and night would be assigned to the rooster. When the rooster is worn out and in need of some rest, the crow should sound. This would indicate that the day has come to an end. To reiterate, the rooster should only crow after getting a sufficient amount of rest the previous night. Preceding the start of a new day with its arrival. As a result, the rooster emerged as the world's most reliable timekeeper. The hungry flying fox soon made a scene or caused one when he woke up his fellow critters throughout the night and disrupted their restful sleep. By accident, he found himself perched on the tree, munching on a walnut. As he was doing so, the nut slipped out of his fingers and struck the crab that was resting below. The crab was so enraged that it wiped off the rest of the giants' ants, which resulted in the wild boar being stung to death by the ants. The distressed bear went on a rampage and uprooted a banana tree in the process. This once again woke up the sleeping elephant, who was startled as the little bug flew around erratically and settled in his nostril. The frightened elephant eventually went on a rampage, which ultimately led to the man's dying.

Kara Akhava demanded an explanation from all of the creatures and discovered that the flying fox was the one responsible for the disorderly situation that resulted in the death of a man. The punishment for the flying fox consisted of the amputation of one of his legs and its subsequent transfer to the magpie, who was the most senior of the other creatures.¹⁴



Figure No.13 Living stones of Tuensang(source: Research scholar)

¹⁴ Dewar, Stephen. 1966: *ceremony of erecting o megalith among the Angami Nagas*. Folklore, Pp. 69-264.

Legends of the achievements and tales of the Nagas when they were one big family abound in "Myth of the Living Stones of Tuensang Nagaland; Tale of Chunglimli Chungliyimti," which is filled with remnants of the past. Legends and anecdotes about the time when the Nagas were a unified people may be found throughout Chunglimli. Longthvroh, also known as the fabled six stones, can be found in the midst of other ancient relics that date back to the Chungliyang culture. The sangtams tribes of the Nagas believe that the stones are personifications of their old gods, and they believe that these gods once traveled from one location to another and gave birth to new stones. According to a local tradition, there are two live stones located to the west of the hamlet of Tsadang. Akangand Threla is the name for these precious gems. The two live stones apparently became friends and would spend time together at length Uroh. The locals revered them, and their opponents in the surrounding areas became frightened and disoriented whenever they ran across them while head hunting. Chungliyangti is located a distance of 4 kilometers from Tsadang.

Another version of the tale surrounding the Spirit stone, also known as Tsa-Tawo, describes it as a wonderful spirited flat stone upon which, if a basket of rice is allowed to dry out in the sun, it will produce twice as much in the evening. This is the major first settlement site of "KOZA," the main ancestral forefather of the Naga people, and it is also the location from whence numerous Naga tribes moved in the future. In spite of the fact that the stone is claimed to have lost its mystique when it was set on fire and destroyed, the fabled khezhakeno stone has left behind fragments that are being kept in their original place even to this day.

Another local myth centers on a pond in this community that goes by the name Zhi-Nhaka, which translates to "Nose of the ancient lake." The spring water level in this pond, which is a perennial source, does not fluctuate throughout the summer or the winter. It is stated that at one time the entire hamlet was submerged beneath a big body of water that emanated from Zhi-Nhaka. It is from this place that the essential meaning of the name "Zhiphemi" (guardian of the lake) drives. Its one-of-a-kind existence astounds people all across the country, which results in a significant influx of students from all parts of the country.¹⁵

Tales of Nagaland; The folktales are organized into three distinct categories, each corresponding to a certain type of story. The folktales have been categorized into the following categories according to their headings:

- a) Origin narratives
- b) Human relationships
- c) Animal tales

The characteristics of the tales served as the basis for categorizing them into one of three categories for organization purposes. After reading through all of those stories, we were able to classify them according to the traits and personalities that they possessed. The category of "origin narratives" includes all of the stories that have to do with the beginning, including discoveries, establishments,

¹⁵ Dutta, S.K. 1976: *The rascal in tribal folklore. The North Eastern spectrum*, 1(1), July, Pp. 6-23.

beginnings, and the like. Under the heading of "human relationship," we grouped together all of the stories that discussed the social structure, the inhabitants' way of life in the hamlet, their relationships, and similar topics. But "animal tales" covers a wide variety of stories where animals play important roles in the action.

The tales of the different tribes of Nagaland are given below;

In the distant past, there were three brothers who went by the names Tanyen, Zhoshu, and Penhum. They lived in a quaint little hamlet or home. Tanyen, the eldest brother, put in a lot of hard work at the farm, whilst Zhoshu and Penhum, the younger brothers, did nothing but eat and sleep all day long. The older brother told his younger brother that it was difficult to provide for the requirements of the family with the small money that they had. It is not feasible to continue on like this, therefore brother, I will go out and pursue my fortune and become rich one day so that I may care for my brothers. However, Zhoshu and Penhum did not approve of the concept; they questioned why Tanyan should become wealthy. They spoke with one another by saying, "we should both go out and seek our fortune."¹⁶

The self-centered brothers then devised a plan and went to meet Tanyan, telling him, "Brother, we have come to terms with our obligations, and as a result, we intend to seek our fortune and amass wealth so that we may alleviate some of your burden." The eldest brother spoke up and said, "As you wished, Zhoshu acted very lovingly and caringly that day; he kept walking throughout the day, and by the late evening he was hungry and tired, and he arrived in another village." The eldest brother said this with a smile on his face.

He approached the shack and knocked on the door, to which an elderly woman responded, "Who's there?"

He responded by saying, "I am just a traveler so I was wondering if I could stay for the night." The elderly woman then responded by saying that this was only possible if all of the stars in the pond were removed. She pointed to the pond. After that, he pondered, "How am I going to get rid of those stars?" After he realized that they were nothing more than a reflection of the stars in the sky, he returned back to his house in a state of bewilderment and exhaustion and reported to his family that he had been unable to discover his money anywhere.

After that, Penhum made the decision to leave his home and test his luck elsewhere. As he was puzzled about how to get to the old lady's cottage, the old lady instructed him to get the stars from the pond in the same manner that she had instructed his brother to do. What are the odds of that happening? After some reflection, he went back to his house. He lamented that there was nowhere where I could discover my riches.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

Now it was Tenyan's time, and when he arrived at the cottage of the elderly lady, he was also given the same assignment to complete. After making a humble request for a bucket, which the elderly woman graciously provided, the eldest brother waded into the pond and started pouring bucketfuls of water onto the surrounding area. He toiled all night long, and by morning the pond had been entirely drained.

Tanyen walked over to the elderly woman as soon as she emerged from her hut in the morning and showed her the dry pit, telling her, "I have removed all of the stars as you have said, my good mother." Tanyen thanked the elderly woman and went back to his house with a wealthy man. The elderly woman had been delighted by his actions, and she escorted him to a farm where she told him that this was his prize and that he would now be the owner of the land.

He told his brothers that he had discovered his riches, but they asked him where he had got it. When asked by his older brother, he responded by saying, "I have found my own hand." He then proceeded to tell them all that had occurred to him. His slothful brothers made the decision to start working hard from that day forward, and they worked hard and were happy for the rest of their lives.¹⁷

Another tale of Chang: Once upon a time, Naga, there was a guy who was unable to find a woman to marry him. As a result, he decided to establish a garden of flowers in the hope that one day, a woman would be enchanted by the beauty of his flowers and agree to marry him so that she could wear them in her ears. However, the man was unsuccessful in his search. Soon after, he became aware that someone had been coming to his garden every night and plucking flowers from it. However, he never saw any of the females in the village wearing the flowers in their ears, so he decided to keep watch in the garden one night in order to solve the riddle. When everything was quiet, a woman of extraordinary beauty came and started picking the flowers while singing quite sweetly to herself as she did so. He ran fast and caught her, and despite her efforts, he held her tightly in spite of the fact that she was struggling. She pleaded with him to release her because she was a member of the sky folk race and her name was Shambili, but he refused to do so, and they ended up being married and having a child together. They were content until one day when Shambilis told her that she needed to return to her own people since it was the season of their spring celebration. He gave her permission to go, and the day after she left, a guy who lived in the home next door passed away from his illness. On the day that she returned to her husband, he noticed her approaching from a great way carrying a basket. To his horror, within the basket he saw the malformed limb of the lame man; however, as she drew closer, he looked again, and the human leg transformed into a cow leg. She prepared that, but her husband, despite her best efforts to get him to eat it, did not consume any of it, so she ate the entire thing by herself. The entrance to the house was still locked when the villagers arrived the following morning, so one of them decided to investigate what had taken place. When he peered inside, he saw Shambili sitting on

¹⁷ Hutton, J.H. 1922: *The form of snare used among the Konyak Naga Tribes in the North of the Naga Hilla*. Man, 22(103), December, 79-178.

top of her husband's chest while she tore out his organs and consumed them. He was going to get closer, but suddenly there was a tremendous crack of thunder, and a thick cloud descended on that home. When the cloud cleared, Shambili had disappeared into the sky, and he was unable to approach the house any more.¹⁸



Figure No. 14 Tale of 'Axone' by two sisters of Sumi Naga animation(source: Research scholar)

The origin of axone, a delicacy made of fermented soya beans that can be found all across Nagaland and is typically referred to as "axone" there, is the subject of another well-known sumi Naga folktale. In this story, two sisters took their lunch of soy beans with them when they went to work in the field. When they returned three days later, they discovered that the beans had become moldy but that they still smelled and tasted wonderful. The moral of the story is that even though the beans had become moldy, they still smelled and tasted nice. Since then, members of the Sumi Naga tribe have begun to prepare axone, and the bean has developed into a key part of the culture of the Sumi Naga people. The elder sister advised the younger sister that they should always eat in this manner since the beans were so tasty.

Tale of Ao Naga, It describes how the sun became enraged and retreated into the heavens, refusing to shine on the earth any more since the rest of creation grumbled about how hot it was. When the sun is not there, the animals of the world are thrown into a state of disorder and bewilderment. They suddenly became aware of their inadequacy and the helplessness they felt in the face of the darkened world. Therefore, the animals and birds got together for a meeting to discuss the issue, and they came to a consensus. They came to the conclusion that the best course of action would be to delegate the cock to make an appeal to the sun on their behalf, pleading with it to provide

¹⁸ Hutton, J. H., 1951: *Story of shambili: A chang Naga Folklore*, Pp. 35-334.

light and heat so that they may once again live in peace and harmony in the earth. The moral of these stories is that every living thing plays an essential role in preserving the delicate balance that exists in our world. Because existence is pluralistic, each of the creatures have its own qualities and is distinctive in its own right. The symbiotic link between the many organisms ensures the continuation of life.

One such well-known story about Ao Nagas illustrates how unfulfilled promises disrupt the harmony that exists amongst the creatures. On our planet, there was once a time when human beings and rats coexisted without conflict. Rice was an unknown commodity to mankind at that historical period. One day, a rodent approached a human and said, "I will give you a present if you promise to give me a decent funeral when I die." The human agreed, and the rat proceeded to hand him the gift. The human consented to this, at which point the rat presented him with a gift of rice and demonstrated how scrumptious it was to consume. A few while later, the rate makes the decision to put the man's honesty to the test. As a result, he pretended to be dead by lying down on the bank of a creek and acting like he was dead. Soon enough, the guy and his kid made their way in that direction. The youngster brought his discovery to the attention of his parents. Instead of keeping his word, the man responded with, "What are you, a dead rat?" "Poke a stick under it and push it into the stream," the rat, which was not actually dead, leapt up in wrath and replied, as revenge for your unfaithfulness, I shall always eat your rice first and leave my droppings in it. After that, it bolted away and landed in the water of the river. It tells how the Nagas found rice with the aid of a rat. It also explains why the rat began to eat the grains and left its droppings on the grains. Finally, it teaches the people a moral lesson about the importance of keeping one's commitment.¹⁹

In the story of Chakhesang Naga, there was once a poor family that lived quite happily for a short period of time but not for very long. The family had four members in all, including the parents, and they had two children, one of them was a boy and the other a girl. Sadly, the children soon lost both of their parents to sad circumstances one after the other. At a young age, the children were expected to be responsible for their own feeding, as well as perform all of the housework and field labor. They were made to labor both at and in the field, and they were required to learn how to cook for themselves. Every single day was a struggle from one moment to the next as each day went by. Even though they put in a lot of effort, they were not able to do very much work, and at the end of each day, they would come back to their house as drained and worn out as the sun was setting.

One day, they went to the fields as usual and were surprised to find that their job had been finished and that food had been stashed away in the hut. This carried on quietly for a while, until finally they became curious about what was going on. As a result, they made the decision to unravel the enigma. They had a plan to hide out and keep watch in the shadows so that they might discover for themselves who had helped them. In the evening, they both sneak into the nearby woods, where

¹⁹ Hutton, 1923: *FOLK-Tales from the Naga Hills of Assam. Folk-lore*, 34(4), Pp 35-233.

they hide out and act as though they are leaving to go home. As they waited, the sky began to darken, and all of a sudden, they were taken aback to see two individuals making their way into the field. They were speechless as the two figures approached them from a closer distance, and when they realized who it was, they were overjoyed to see their parents assisting them. As the two figures approached them from a closer distance, they realized it was their parents. They had the intention of following their parents to find out how they were doing and where they lived, so they came up with the plan to hide in their parents' luggage. The youngster made it inside his father's bag, whereas the young lady fell short of her mother's. When the father noticed his own kid hiding in a bag, he yelled at him to come out, explaining that he did not feel comfortable being near the dead and would never feel comfortable being near the dead. However, the youngster remained in his bag and was eventually transported over mountains and valleys to the land of the dead, where he was overjoyed to finally join his loved ones who had passed on. The difference between his own life and the lives of the deceased dawned on him one day.

After a few days, he said to his mother that he missed his sister and wished to return with her. His mom agreed, so she prepared him a lunch and instructed him to eat it somewhere special. He left his sister at home and felt bad about it, so he brought the lunch home to eat with her. He was ready to feed his sister lunch when suddenly it transformed into a lump of inedible husk. After that, the youngster recalls his mother's advice on where to have lunch, and the two set off for that location. Upon reaching their destination, they eagerly unzipped their lunch bag to find an abundance of delicious treats, which they devour to their hearts' delight, resulting in a profound sense of satisfaction and contentment. Even though they grieved for their absent parents, they were able to work more and live more comfortably after that, resulting in an ever-increasing crop.²⁰

Another Tales of Chakhesang Naga, There was once upon a time a young girl without a mother named Avino who lived with her brother and her brother's wife. Her mother passed away when she was just a toddler and her father, a trader, was never seen from again after he set sail for a distant nation shortly after she learned to talk. Avino was fortunate in that she had an older brother who looked out for her.

The brother also pursued a career in business. Before beginning his adventure, he tied the knot with the daughter of a wealthy businessman. Before he passed away, he implored his wife, "Be good to my sister," and he added that she (Avino) had never experienced any kind of adversity. The responsibility of the young daughter was too much for the wife to bear because she couldn't drink wine. She has vino perform the chores and gives her a smack in the face if she doesn't finish a job assignment on time. Even at night, she wouldn't allow her to sleep inside the house. The poor girl would go to the forest outside of the village and weep the entire night while sitting under a

²⁰ Hutton, J.H. 1922: *Seven Folktales collected by C.R. Pawesy from the Angami Naga. Folk-lore*, 33(4), Oct-Dec, Pp 397-405.

tree. Everyone, even animals and birds, felt bad for her and helped her by giving her food and becoming her friends.

After the brother got back from a brief trip, his sister-in-law started acting in a new manner. She acts as though she is showered with affection by Avion, and she doesn't allow her to get her hands dirty by working. The brother, who was content with his choice of marriage, embarked on a more extensive trip this time.

As soon as her brother left, the sister-in-law of Avino altered her appearance completely. She started giving the child the kinds of jobs that there was no way she could finish. She gave Avino a three-holed pot the next day and told her to fill it with cold water from the pond. Avino was aware that this was not going to be feasible, so she left the house and went to a nearby forest, where she wept while sitting under the same tree. The frogs felt sorry for her and jumped into the kettle, where they then covered the openings so that she could fill it with ice water. The sister-in-law was taken aback, and as a result, she resolved to give her a more challenging assignment.²¹

At the subsequent mooring, she gave Avino orders to collect a significant quantity of firewood from the nearby forest. She cautioned, "Don't tie the bundle with a rope," which translates to "don't do that." This time, though, Avino was helped by a snake. It wrapped itself around the bundle of fire wood that Avino was carrying, and after she set it down in their house, it slithered away. Incredulous, Avino's sister-in-law began refusing to feed him. Then, as if that weren't enough, she mixed rice and wheat together on a massive metal platter and told her to spear the grains. Avino started crying once more, and this time a swarm of birds came to her aid and helped her finish the task before it became dark.

The next day, Avino's sister-in-law, who was more enraged than she had ever been, gave her a bucket and instructed her to gather white foam from the ocean. The beach was uncharted terrain for Avino, and none of her animal or bird pals were available to assist her at this particular moment. She traveled for days in order to reach the ocean, and when she finally did, she found that the foam she collected on the way back changed into water. After giving it another shot, she was so exhausted that she passed out on the beach. Vino was completely unaware of how long she had been sleeping. She was awoken by mysterious whispers, and as she rolled over, she saw a big sheep dock. There were a lot of males who disembarked, and her brother was one among them.

Avino began sobbing uncontrollably and recounted to her brother the ordeals she had through in his absence. After getting back to his house, her brother asked his wife for an explanation and then subjected his wife to the same treatment that she had given to his sister. The wife has come to terms with her own stupidity and has pledged to treat Avion better in the future.

²¹ Hutton, J.H. 1922: *Seven Folktales collected by C.R. Pawesy from the Angami Naga. Folk-lore*, 33(4), Oct-Dec, Pp 397-405.

Tale of Khuzami Naga, There was a young lady who was born to her mother and father once upon a time. They had a happy life for a short period of time, but then bad luck struck when the mother became ill and passed away when her kid was still quite small. After her mother passed away, she and her father were left to live on their own. Her father was the only one who could work in the field, so he had to go there by himself. When he returned home, he had to do all of the housework all over again since his kid was still too little, and there was no one else to take care of them. The father finally reached the point where he couldn't take the struggle any longer and made the decision to remarry another lady.

When their father remarried, they assumed that their new mother would be able to provide for them, but this was not the case. The new mother, alas, was disagreeable and bossy. She was quite cruel to her stepdaughter, and as a consequence, the little girl was put in a terrible position. She was at the age when she should have been able to depend on her stepmother to take care of her, but instead, she forced her to work long hours every day and did not provide her with nutritious meals to eat. Even when her father found out about it, he did not take any action because he was frightened of losing his wife. He also did not say a single negative word about his wife, and as a result, the little girl's life continued to be filled with misery as she matured into adulthood.²²

Back then, there was a tradition that every young man and women would gather together with their peers and spend one day going into the woods to collect wood for the fireplace. When the appointed time came, the group's leader had the kids get dressed and meet in one area; when the girl didn't show up, her pals rushed to find her and beckoned, "come let's go." She wanted to join them, but her stepmother insisted that she first perform the duties she had been assigned, which included cleaning the husked paddy, filling the cooking pots with water, and feeding the pig.

She rushed after her friend even though it was getting late. But as she ran, she came across a young guy, and upon getting closer, she saw that he was rather gorgeous. She said, "O young man," and then added, "Did you see my friends?" In a low voice, he told her that her friends had left ages ago and that she'd never catch up to them. Then he offered to help her out by chopping some firewood. She stared intently at the guy, but could not place him in her memory. The guy was well-dressed and impressive in look and physique. His leg jewelry included a coiled headdress made from elephant tusk strips, a kilt fashioned from sea shells, knitted wristlets in a rainbow of hues, and similarly exquisite ornamentation on his calves. The girl was so impressed by his charm that she went with him to a tree so he could cut some wood for her.

She was told not to look at him while he was up in the tree collecting firewood for her, and she disguised her face by putting the basket over her head and wrapping her blanket about her. She nodded her head in agreement and then did what he asked. After a time, she heard a loud noise that sounded like the branches snapping. She unzipped her garment very slowly and cautiously,

²² Hutton, J.H. 1922: *The use of the Bow among the Naga tribes of Assam. Folk-lore*, 33(3), July-September, Pp. 6-305

peering out. She couldn't believe her eyes when she mistook the guy for a snake. The snake was substantial, and it was twisting a branch of the tree with its tail. She re-wrapped the blanket over her head out of sheer terror. The serpent came down from the tree and became a handsome man after what felt like an eternity. He collects the cracked branches off the tree, but his chopping was haphazard and the resulting bundle is awkward. The lad had warned her that he may pay her a midnight visit, so she had no option but to have him carry her burden. The girl was ashamed to bring her burden to the hamlet, since participants in the event traditionally arranged their loads neatly and evenly, with the winner being awarded the reward. She was forced to do it since she was unable to hire someone to carry her weight, and the youngster had said that he could pay her a visit in the middle of the night.

The young guy promised to return to her house later that night after he had helped her carry her load. She became terrified, and her dread of the odd man grew as a result. She stood about with a load of firewood in her arms as she waited for her pals, and once they came, she immediately participated in the yelling and singing. She persisted to take part even though she was terrified and worried about what may happen to her. They are expected since everyone in the village is eager to see the firewood and strive to have the biggest and most impressive-looking load. When they reached the dormitory site, they unloaded their bags and headed back home, arranging to meet up again later for the campfire. She used to sleep at the village dorm with her pals since all the young females were formerly forced to do so. They would gather around campfires at night to socialize with other men their age. Recently however, all the young women in the hamlet have been free to sleep anywhere they choose.²³

In the evening, her friends arrived at her home to pick her up and take her to the hostel, but she flatly refused. She first refused to explain why she was acting strangely, but as her companions persisted, she finally admitted that something unusual had happened that day. She finally gave in to her friends' insistence that she come along, but only on the condition that she be forced to sleep on the bottom bunk while they took the upper ones. They assured her they would all sleep with her so they could all live together in peace after she told them she was afraid to sleep with them because of the strange individuals she could encounter along her trip. With that reassurance, she went along with her pals as they headed to the dorm. The outcome was that all the young men in the area gathered at the hostel for a night of revelry. They shared a meal, some laughs, and a song during their time together. Both the guy and the girl were too nervous to join in on the fun, so they sang love songs to each other and told each other how much they cared. She worried herself sick all night long, to the point that she couldn't even eat or drink. After much merriment, they decided it was time to call it a night.

²³ Ibid.,

They all slept in the dorm together that night, as they always did, and as usual, one of the girls slept on the floor with her friends, some of whom slept on top of her. Her traveling companions eventually slept off, but she remained awake, worried about what may happen.

That night, the charming young man paid a visit to the girl's place. He looked in every room but couldn't find her, so he discreetly left the home. The young guy found the dorms without any trouble. Aside from the slight sounds of breathing, the dorm room was absolutely dark and silent. Then we heard footsteps and the door opened with a squeak. A cool air rushed in when the door was opened, and the dim moonlight made it seem like a guy was standing in the room. The mysterious person stepped into the light and began scanning the room. The guy examined the faces of the girls one by one as they lay on the ground, before turning to the cluster of women who were lying on top of one another. Then, one by one, he began bringing out the women, looking at their faces and declaring aloud, "this is not the one," before moving on to the next. The young lady began yelling for help, but her traveling companions were sound sleeping and could not be disturbed. The unfortunate girl's hand was seized and the guy dragged her slowly out the building. When they woke up the next day, they found that she had disappeared, and out of worry for their friend, they started looking for her right away.²⁴

The charming guy who was able to assume the appearance of a snake married the young lady. She realized that she was powerless and that it would be pointless to fight the guy, so she got a large spool of thread and tied the end of it to the toe of one of her friends who was sleeping in the dormitory. She then walked inside the room and woke up the other friend. While she was traveling with the snake guy, she slowly unrolled the track. She believed that if her friends followed the tread, they would find her.

The next morning, when her friends sought for her but were unsuccessful, they informed the male friends of the situation, and all of them hunted for the girl together. They continued to follow the tread, which led them through a number of fields and a dense jungle until they lost track of it at the foot of a large tree. They explored the area thoroughly and shouted the girl's name in a loud voice for an uncountable number of times, but they received no answer. Even though her friends adore her, they were unable to help her in any other way, and they reluctantly went back to their homes. The snake guy married the girl and transported her to a large cave in the remote location where they both lived together as a married couple.

The girl's biological father was devastated, while her stepmother was pleased, upon learning that their daughter had disappeared. He often had his thoughts drawn back to his beautiful daughter. The thought of his daughter brought tears to his eyes every day, whether he was at home or in the field. This went on for many days, until he eventually snapped and decided to go look for his daughter.

²⁴ Hutton, J.H. 1922 *Carved Monoliths at Dimapur and an Angami Naga ceremony. Jour of the Royal Anth. Inst.*, LII, Pp. 55-70.

The grandfather pulled out his sword and polished and sharpened it to perfection. He packed a picnic, filled a flask with wine, and grabbed a spear, then set out after the snake man's footprints in his daughter's unrolled carpet. The father reached the last thread and called out for his daughter, but she did not respond. The father kept shouting for his little girl. After spending the whole day searching for his missing daughter, he finally gave up the search as the sun dipped beyond the horizon. With no new leads, he circled the thick woodland, stopping sometimes to shout for his daughter from higher ground. This went on until he had no more choices. He continued looking for many days.

On a particularly lovely day, he was screaming for his daughter when he became aware of a voice that may have belonged to a female. The reply he got this time was audible since he had increased the volume of his voice. A distant "hao" reverberated across the air. He found a cave and, upon taking a quick peek inside, spotted his daughter.²⁵

Both the father and the daughter were happy to see one other when he eventually made it to the place where his daughter was staying. "My dear daughter, how are you?" he said as he welcomed her. Later, she sobbed to her father, "I am in great trouble and nobody can understand the pain I am going through, but if you want to see the trouble I am facing, you may go up in the rack above, hide yourself, and see." Her dad took refuge in the roof rack when the snake guy showed up at their house at night. When she broke down in tears, telling her father, "I am in great trouble and nobody can understand the pain I am going through." They went to bed shortly after finishing the lovely meal his wife had prepared for them.

He turned into a huge snake and proceeded to crawl over her gently after they had both gone to bed. After that, the snake coiled around her and slithered away, crushing her under its weight. The girl was paralyzed and unable to take a breath. Her sobs were so intense that the girl's lips and nose filled with froth. The snake's tail then made its way into the girl's mouth, resulting in foaming from the mouth and nose. Her father was overcome with sorrow at what he saw and cried, but he was unable to change the situation. As he saw his daughter suffer, the father took the decision to end the life of the snake man. His daughter and her husband had already made plans to return to their town when he made this choice, so he said his goodbyes and left.

The girl's biological father visited the couple and stayed with them after a few days had gone. When the girl's father and her future husband were having dinner together, the girl's father suggested that they alternate hosting holidays and other important events. The snake guy nodded his head in agreement and then decided it would be best to have the party at the son-in-law's house first.

²⁵ Hutton, J.H. 1922 *Carved Monoliths at Dimapur and an Angami Naga ceremony. Jour of the Royal Anth. Inst.*, LII, Pp. 55-70.

The day of the feast had come, and the son-in-law had prepared a wide variety of delectable treats for everyone to enjoy. His father-in-law ate until he was completely full, and then he left the restaurant and went home.

It was finally dinnertime, so the snake made his way to his father-in-law's house. The father's cooking was based on a little type of mushroom he had harvested, dried in the sun, and then prepared. Then he took a poisonous fruit, stripped it of its rough rind, ground up the pulp, and used it to ferment wine. He invited everyone over to his house for the feast once he had prepared everything. As a welcome for the snake man, they held a daylong feast in his honor. It was becoming late, and his son-in-law wanted to use the restroom, but his father-in-law prohibited it and had him finish the mushroom curry and the wine he'd made especially for him. He was finally allowed to go after completing all of his obligations. The passage of time, however, revealed that the snake man had still not returned. The worried father eventually tracked down his son-in-law at his former residence. However, there was a very enormous dead snake in its place, not the person.²⁶

After the snake was killed, the father went to the cave where the snake man lived with his daughter. They were both happy to see one another, but unfortunately, the girl was already pregnant with the kid that would be born from the snake man. When she arrived at her house, her parents were unaware that she had already given birth to a baby snake. She concealed the newborns she had borne in a huge clay pot because, like any mother, she cared deeply for her own flesh and blood. Behind her husband's back, she fed her children breast milk. After a long day of labor in the field or on another job, she never failed to come home to make sure her kids were doing well. This led to more probing from her parents, but she consistently refused to discuss the matter with them. Her stepmother once followed her inside the house after she had returned from working in the field. As she watched, she heard a sound that sounded like tsutsu, and then she saw her stepmother approach a big clay pot, the lips of which were adorned with the heads of numerous snakes. She watched as her stepmother walked out of the room and realized the snakes had bitten her. Her stepdaughter walked outside to where the baby snakes were and began to breastfeed the newborn snakes. The stepmother heated the boiling water and poured it into the pot, which caused the snake kids' skin to become scalded and hot. One by one, the snake babies succumbed to their injuries, but some of them managed to escape the pot alive. And when the girl's family finally arrived home that evening, the mother began searching for her children, but she was unable to locate them anywhere in the house. She was overcome with melancholy and concerned about her offspring, the young snakes.

After the girl's stepmother injured the newborn snakes, people began to see all snakes as enemies and assume they have been biting humans ever since. This is due to the fact that the girl's stepmother caused damage to the baby snakes.²⁷

²⁶ Hutton, J.H. *Three points raised by certain passages in Folk-lore*. Folk-lore, Pp. 34.

²⁷ Ibid.,

ii) THE BELIEF OF NAGAS IN THE EARLY PERIOD

One of the most complicated histories belongs to the Nagas. The several tribes of Nagas that can be found in the Naga Hills each have their own unique culture and set of traditions, but they also adhere to a common belief system that is composed of spiritual practices as well as superstitions. The correct name for the spiritual practices of the Naga people, which are known as animism, is "Nagaism." All living things and their surrounding environment, such as trees, rocks, rivers, and other natural elements, are imbued with soul, as the Nagas believe. The Naga Hills were peaceful until the fifth century, when Christianity was introduced.

There are various rites that are performed on birth, death, and marriage in the Heraka religion, which is practiced by one group of Nagas. They also have designated days for worship, and on the night of the full moon, they will offer sacrifices and perform ceremonies in honor of their deity. On these worship days, they are forbidden from engaging in any kind of labor, since the purpose of these days is to honor their deity. The Herakas hold the celebration of the full moon in the highest regard as the most holy holiday, and the bulk of Herakas who followed this tradition came from the Zeliangrong Naga.

Despite the fact that the Naga people come from a number of distinct tribes, each of which maintains its own unique culture and set of traditions, the Naga people all adhere to a similar belief system about the presence of the spirit in the elements of nature. Despite the fact that each tribe's theories of creation are fundamentally distinct from one another, the rituals and beliefs that center on those origin myths have a number of common characteristics.

The Nagas believed in many various kinds of spirits, including the spirit of the sky, the spirit of the ground, the spirit of the home, the soul of the field, the spirit of the jungle, the spirit of the trees, and so on. Depending on the underlying nature of the spirit, it may be either beneficial or evil. Spirit is able to have an effect on a person's nature as well as their personality. All material objects and all occurrences are said to be inhabited by spirits, who may be appeased by the performance of rites and the offering of sacrifices. Men and women each have their own unique set of rituals and practices, such as how only women are allowed to observe fasting and perform rituals in order to satisfy the spirit of the home. It is not regarded as a sin if a mistake is performed inadvertently, but it becomes a grave sin if the error is done consciously. This is an essential component of the traditional Naga religion, and it is one of its most prominent aspects.²⁸

²⁸ Barpujari, S.K. 1969: planters and the Naga, their early relations. *Journal of University of Gauhati*, 20(1), Pp. 58-66.