

# ASPECTS OF CHAKHESANG FOLKLORE

*A Critical Study*

A THESIS

Submitted to  
NAGALAND UNIVERSITY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
**Doctor of Philosophy in English**

Submitted by  
**ANEILE PURO**  
Ph.D. Regd. No. 512/2012 of 21.08.2012

Under the Supervision of  
**Dr. JANO S. LIEGISE**  
Associate Professor  
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**  
School of Humanities and Education  
Nagaland University  
Kohima Campus, Meriema  
2017

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**Campus: Kohima -797 001**

**2017**



(A Central University established by the act of Parliament, 35/1989)

Department of English  
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14th of May 2017

## SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, *Aspects of Chakhesang Folklore: A Critical Study*, is a bonafide record of research work done by Ms Aneile Puro, Regn. No.512/2012, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2012-17. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or other title and the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision.

Ms Aneile Puro has completed her research work within the stipulated time.

The 15<sup>th</sup> of May, 2017  
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## CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Aneile Puro, hereby, declare that the thesis entitled, *Aspects of Chakhesang Folklore: A Critical Study*, is a bonafide record of research work done by me, under the guidance and supervision of Dr Jano S. Liegise, Associate professor, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema, during the period of my research (2012-2017), and it has not been submitted, either in full or in part, to any other university or institution for the award of any degree, diploma, or title.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. Jano L Sekhose, Supervisor, Associate Professor, Department of English, Nagaland University for her individual guidance, understanding, encouragement, patience and her overall support, all of which has enabled me to complete this study.

My gratitude also extends to the *Chakhesang* elders, who have walked down memory lane, those who knew folklore and songs. Thanks to two elderly persons from *Enhulumi* village who narrated and sang a popular song, "*No Hi Mozho*", sung by men to woo ladies and vice – versa. It would be incomplete without mentioning the names, Desmond, my school teacher, who has helped in translation and Bodzuwe Rose for helping in the typing works.

This work would not have been possible without my dear husband, Merimvu Doulo for understanding and encouraging me, accompanying me for field works from the beginning till the end of my work.

To my daughters, Love-u and Beve-u, the joy of my life.

Finally, to God, for sustaining me to complete this work.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Over generations, legends, myths and oral narratives have been passed down the ages in the form of folklore. Folklore in a very simple definition is the lore of 'oral tradition' that is passed down from one generation to another. It includes the customs, stories, sayings, riddles, proverbs, idioms, songs, art and culture of a particular group of people, with more or less the same ethnic background, geography, religion, language, costume etc. Today, folklore studies, in its broader aspect, are inclusive and cover folk way of life. The word "Folklore" was coined in 1846 by William Thoms and began as a study of antiquities and as K.D. Upadhyaya has stated in *A General Survey of Folklore Activities in India*:

Folklore is a fascinating study for the understanding of the social customs and religious beliefs of the people. In Europe and America various societies have been established to collect folklore material in the form of ballads, songs and tales. Such societies have successfully investigated problems of deep social interest. In India folklore studies offer fertile research areas. India is a country which is very rich in the materials of folklore. It is a land where many races have intermingled. This is why practices of different patterns of traditions, rites, customs, rituals, beliefs, and culture are to be seen ( 201-202 vol 4, No 4).

# **1. FOLKLORISTICS AS THE STUDY OF FOLKLORE**

In Folkloristics, as the Study of Folklore, it is important to understand how the component parts of the terms 'folk' and 'lore' were first considered to mean. The word 'folk' originally was applied to rural, frequently poor, and illiterate peasants only. A more contemporary definition of folk is a social group which includes two or more persons with common traits, who express their shared identity through distinctive traditions. Folk is a flexible concept which can refer to a nation or to a single family. This expanded social definition of 'folk' supports a wider view of the material considered to be folklore artifacts. These include things people make with words, 'verbal lore', things they make with their hands, 'material lore', and things they make with their actions, 'customary lore'. The folklorist studies the traditional artifacts of a group. They study the groups, within which these customs, traditions and beliefs are passed on.

Tradition, as the Folkloristics say, is initially a remembered behavior. Once it loses its practical purpose, there is no reason for further transmission unless it is imbued with meaning beyond the initial practicality of the action. The above understanding is the core of folkloristics, the study of folklore.

For a wholistic account of Chakhesang folklore, the present thesis will attempt to present and examine into those components that go into the construct of folklore in its wider perspective i.e. both oral tradition and folklife. As aspects of such, 'verbal lore', 'material lore' and 'customary lore' will be considered.



This study hopes to provide a basis for further intensive investigations into Naga folklore or comparative studies, nationally or internationally.

Nagas inhabit a corner in the Northeast of India. The term 'Naga' has been subjected to various interpretations. Kumar in *Naga Identity* writes:

Capt. Butler linked the term with Hindi word 'Nanga' and Bengali word 'Nangta', and some with Sanskrit 'Nagna'. The words mean naked. Gait, Peal, Holecombe and Elwin link it with the word 'Nok' (meaning people in Nocte; Sanskrit 'loka' people). Qwen favours the derivation of the term from 'Nag', meaning mountain.

Hutton favours its derivation from the Sanskrit 'Nagna'... E.T. Dalton has also linked the term 'Naga' to the Sanskrit root, meaning 'Naked' to the Sanskrit 'Nag', snake (24)

Thus, 'Naga' is a generic term given to the natives, who do not have a common native language, and who lived in isolation from each other, for centuries. Chasie points out that researchers have noted of how ancient Hindu literature mentions about "early Indo-Mongoloid (Kirati) in eastern India" known as cave dwellers, of indicators that the region provided travel route to China for Roman and Greek merchandise, of Nagas being

mentioned in the chronicles of the Ahoms when in 1228, the Tai-Ahoms migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from Burma through Naga territory (26).

Today, there are sixteen recognized tribes in Nagaland viz the Naga tribes of the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Konyak, Khiamniungan, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Yimchugru and Zeliang. The Kachari and the Kuki are also included among the recognized tribes of Nagaland. They spread over eleven districts, namely, Kohima, Mokokchung, Phek, Longleng, Zunheboto, Peren, Kiphire, Tuensang, Wokha and Dimapur. Nagas also inhabit adjoining areas of other states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, as well as the country of Myanmar, erstwhile Burma.

The district of Phek is home to the Chakhesang group and the Pochury group of tribes.

Tradition and culture are an integral part of Naga society. Nagas have been living with traditions and culture. With the advent of Christianity, the attitudes towards their mythical beliefs are gradually changing. In a generation, folklore has been orally passed down to the next because of the fact that they have a strong belief or has a moral behind them. Much folklore has evolved in the form of myths, legends and has representations through symbols, linguistic forms, rituals and other aesthetic or expressive manifestations through culture and tradition.

An indepth study of the culture and tradition of the Nagas remains a challenge nevertheless, interesting and worth noting to let its legacy live on. N. Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang stress this in *Naga Society and Culture*:

Every society and culture has its own beauty and charm. The Northeastern part of India is absolutely a land of tribal people having very rich cultural heritage that speaks the fact of the great culture of our country. However, very little is known about them by the rest of the world and even in India. The study of tribal society and culture of Northeastern states is therefore one of the interesting and challenging tasks. Through the study of any tribal society and culture like the Nagas, one can learn many hidden lessons from them (1).

Cultural diversities exist in every Naga community and they are distinct in their own way. Some of the inherent and prominent features can be understood in what Nandita Haksar has specified in *ABC of Naga Culture & Civilization*: that “The Nagas have always been proud of their enourmous cultural diversity ...each of these communities has a distinct language, dress, ornaments, customs, oral traditions and culinary delights” (46).

In the midst of war among their own kind, the Nagas must have been surprised to see new coloured skin people making entry into their wild lives. That they

were brave and victorious warriors can be seen in the account of the British entry into the Naga soil given by the historian Mackenzie and collected by Verrier Elwin in his book, *Nagaland* writes of how the British, who first came into regular contact with the Nagas about 1832, found such a scenario:

‘The Assam valley surrounded north, east and south by numerous savage and warlike tribes whom the decaying authority of the Assam Dynasty had failed of late years to control (19).

Prior to the British colonization of the Naga Hills, the Nagas enjoyed complete independence without interference from any foreign power. In his exploration amidst the Nagas, Again, Verrier Elwin in *Nagaland*, elaborated a story behind how Nagas started hunting heads:

The Nagas say that originally they did not know how to make war but one day a bird dropped a berry from a tree, and a lizard and a red ant fought for it. Someone saw the ant cut off the lizard’s head and thus men learnt to take heads (11).

Intriguing as the term sounds, head-hunting was an art for self defence and acquiring status. A few reasons to add to this practice was that more heads meant fertility, more prosperity, there was no difficulty in attracting the most beautiful girl in the village and a wife. In regard to this, Verrier Elwin writes:

Head-hunting was something more than war. It inspired wonderful dances. It stimulated artistic production, for the most elaborate textiles could only be worn by a successful head-hunter or his relations. Small replicas of heads were carved to be worn almost like medals. Wooden pipes, with their bowls fashioned as heads, were made. Strong and vigorous human figures were carved and attached to baskets and the warrior's grave were the most splendid of all.

Head-hunting virtually ceased soon after the British began to exercise effective control over the Naga Hills area, though it continued in Tuensang until recently. Here also it would probably have died out altogether if not it had not been revived as a result of rebel action in the more distant villages. The last recorded case was in 1958 (12).

Broadly speaking, Naga history can be divided into three periods, Pre-Colonial Period-Prior to 1832. Colonial Period-1832-1947. Post Colonial-1947 onwards. After the British first set foot in Naga areas in 1832, when capt. Jenkins and Pemberton made an expedition from Manipur towards the plains through the forests of native Nagas, various policies were taken into consideration to penetrate deeper into the Naga soil and bring under their administration. They realized that it was not easy to gain entry into the land of the Nagas.

A salt depot was opened as described in *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*:

In 1841, authorized to enter the hills to have friendly visits to the villages, conciliating the chiefs by personal intercourse, Lieutenant Biggs met with no opposition, and concluded friendly agreements with the Angami community. Depot for salt was at their request opened at Dimapur (Venuh 33).

To meet their needs for communication and carry out their administration smoothly, an outpost was created:

In 1866, therefore, an outpost was established at Samaguting and a school and dispensary were opened there (Elwin 1961 24).

K.S. Zetsuvi, too, notes, “The establishment of a British administration centre in the Naga Hills was aimed at keeping the turbulent Nagas under control, particularly these Angami villages which resisted any form of the British authority (59) in *The Angami Nagas under Colonial Rule*.

These establishments opened greater opportunities for the British Empire to expand and change the perspectives of the Naga people. And in the course of time, Naga people got influenced and they began to adapt non-native and westerners elements. Therefore, in their observation, they felt the need to

document and preserve the ways and practices of the Nagas as mentioned in *Nagas Today, Indegenous Discourse*:

Besides the colonial rule, Christianity began to penetrate the Naga society that ushered unprecedented waves of change in their belief systems and cultural practices of then autochthonous Nagas. Therefore, in order to preserve the cultural identity of the Nagas from the rapid transformation taking place, the colonizers especially the ethnographers improvised written records about the Naga society, before all their traditional practices were driven into oblivion (Yanthan eds. et.al vii).

Head hunters and the tribals, the wild paths and the deep woods have made the American Missionaries a challenging mission in their quest to spread Christianity and one major task was to introduce and transcribe the written script as is given in the book *One New Humanity*, by Nagaland Baptist Church Council, followed by inception of the first church:

The first Missionary to Nagaland Dr. Edward Winter Clark introduced the Roman script for Naga writing in 1870 and transcribed the Ao Naga spoken language into written language and put them in Roman script in 1871 (164).

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1872, the first church of Christ was founded in the Ao Naga soil on that very historic day ( Ibid 57).

It is interesting to note how ancestral lores passed down many generations through oral form. Two similar accounts given in *The Ao-Naga Oral tradition* and *The Angami Nagas under Colonial Rule* tell of why and how native script disappeared:

“The script was written on the hide of an animal and was hung on a wall. One day, when the people were away in their fields, a dog dragged it down and ate up. From that time onwards, the people had to commit all knowledge to memory and began transmitting the game by word of mouth to succeeding generations. (Ao 8).

In the olden days God gave men a deer skin on which they were asked to write their traditions. The plains men acted accordingly, but the hill men being so hungry, cooked the skin and ate it up. The result was that, they were bereft of written language. (Zetsuvi 12).

These tales of how Naga Script disappeared is popular among many tribes. Though such similar stories are found among the Naga tribes, they may slightly vary in their narrations, nevertheless, the tales lead to the loss of the script.



In the book, *One New Humanity*, states that “once the primer was printed, the Clarks started the first school in 1878 at the newly formed village Molungyimsen” (164) by Nagaland Baptist Church Council. Referring to this, it also mentions about the behaviour of the learners in a new learning situation, “On opening our first school the children came pouring in as if for holiday; but as soon as they understood that quiet and attention were the rule, all was changed... (Ibid).

An account of the school, the students and their activities are presented by M.M.Clark in *A Corner in India*:

To get them in at all, it was necessary to hold our session in the early morning, before the day’s work in the field began and, even then, we were never certain whether they would be in the schoolroom or, like monkeys, in the trees, on the roofs of the houses or some place. But gradually there came to be some appreciation of what educated boys and girls might be and do (84).

A few larger girls whose work would not permit their attendance mornings, came each evening to the bungalow, chatting merrily, lighting their path with torches of firebrands. After an hour with books, sewing, and conversation about the new religion and other matters, the torches were brought to a blaze, a pleasant good-

night salaam was given, and these bright, happy girls were off-girls whom any one might enjoy the offer to elevate! (85).

Certain changes were brought about in the administration of the Nagas by the British colonization infused in their minds to liberate themselves from any other control over them which are stated in *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*:

The British policy for colonizing Nagaland was basically the outcome of the necessity to protect their interests in the administered areas of Assam. But it had awakened to the Nagas to protect their rights, through contact with outside world, Christian Missionary, education and the most important factor was bringing together the Nagas under administrative unit which brought the unity. The British officials who served in the Naga hills had contributed to the Naga people how to develop one people, one nation. The British did not solve the Naga problem when they were about to leave the Indian continent. They safely ducked away and the Indian took the saddle. From August 15, 1947 onwards the Naga struggle had become one of liberating themselves not from British rule but from Indian rule (Venuh 67).

Thus, the Christian missionaries had significant inroads by the time Nagaland state was born as Verrier notes on the announcement that, "On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1960,

the final decision was announced by the Prime Minister to include ‘Nagaland’ as a new State” (83). Nagaland state was formally declared a state in 1963 and became the sixteenth state of India. After the statehood was achieved, some districts were created where the district of Phek also came into existence. In V.K. Nuh’s *50 Years of Peace Work by Nagaland Churches and Civil Societies*, the Nagas being the last to fall under the British rule states:

Of all the British colonies, Nagaland was the last to fall to the British administration in 1880. As a result, the British had the shortest stay in Nagaland for a period of about 70 years (154).

Christianity and modernization has brought drastic changes amongst the Nagas. Despite all the modernity and developmental changes, the Nagas do try to hold on to their values, both of the material and the non-material. These traditional values have been passed from one generation to the next by way of oral narration.

Erstwhile, known as the Eastern Angamis, the people of the Chakhesangs have their own story. Like all other Naga tribes, Chakhesang tribe underwent a change with the influence of the Christianity and establishment of a church as given by Nagaland Baptist Church Council in *One New Humanity, ‘Church and Education in Nagaland’*:

The establishment of the first church at Chozuba in 1895 in the Chakhesang area took place (64).

The entry into Kohima enabled the British to move further as is given in *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*:

Following the occupation of Kohima in 1878, British began slowly penetrating into interior of Naga Hill (Venuh 45).

It has been pointed out in *People of Nagaland* that the British entry into the Chakhesang area known as Eastern Angami was explored in 1902 by the British colonials and that an outpost was opened in this area to protect it from the “Kuki migration” (Singh 12).

Most of the Naga tribes believe their ancestors had migrated from the Chakhesang land. As per oral lore as well as accounts collected from elderly Chakhesangs, there were two migration routes. Some Naga tribes traced its migration routes from *Maikhel* to *Leshemi* and dispersed. Whereas, some Naga tribes dispersed from *Khezhakheno* to other Naga areas. Home to Chakhesangs and Pochuries, like any other parts of Nagaland, Phek district abounds in its beauty which is given in *The Chakhesangs, A Window to Phek District*:

The natural beauty that adorns Phek is always a travelers’ delight. With its inherent gifts of mountainous and charming landscape, coupled with the rich and colourful tradition of this land, Phek district serves as a place of enormous prospect for tourism to grow.

The simple fact that the district has come to be known as “The land of Traditions” in the recent years, is proof to the unique culture that the people of this area practice. It does not only testify to the richness of its cultural wealth, but also exhibit priceless values of their forefathers that its generation continues to hold with pride. It is no wonder then, that the inhabitants of Phek, the majority of which are of Chakhesang tribe, are pioneers of Entrepreneurship in the state of Nagaland. Adversely affected by the Indo-Naga conflict in its historic past, Chakhesang people are believed to be lacking behind in the academic field, but the limited scope for formal education during those days has certainly not stopped its people in becoming leaders in the area of Agriculture and farming, eventually marking the rise of prominent Entrepreneur Personalities from the district ( Krocha and Rekha Rose Dukru ix).

In the past the grandchildren gather to listen to folktales which are orally narrated. So, the listeners are at awe and wonder at the stories told and it was so because the story teller possessed the art of storytelling by way of expressions: oral, tone, body gestures and facial expressions. In the younger days, visiting the village was not just visiting friends, uncles and aunties or touring the village in the evening for it also gave opportunities to listen to the stories orally narrated.

One such person was Late uncle Lhikemvü Chirhah, orally telling tales to the children. Many of the Folk stories, folk sayings and folk riddles are a recollection of what is listened to in younger days. Sometimes we sit outside with the fire almost burning down to ashes. What is most intriguing among the stories listened to and read is about the warriors termed as head-hunters. The *British Columbia Folklore Society* writes:

Folklore is common to all people. Understanding, appreciating and sharing one another's folklore transcends race, colour, class and creed more effectively than any other single aspect of our lives and as a source of our past and present society. It is something that we can all relate to. Its value is no less than any other part of our history and heritage. It must be documented and preserved as a legacy for our future (folklore.bc.ca ).

*From Antiquity to Modern*, by Temsula Ao also says what folklore study is:

Folklore study has come a long way from the days of antiquity and has emerged as a discipline in its own right...Geography too plays a significant role in tracing the evolution of folktales and identifying actual locations from legends and myths. The ramifications of folklore can now be heard in political discourse and ethnic assertions. Further, folklore or / and cultural studies

have now become an integral component of comparative literature in many universities. Oral traditions, the source of all folklore is now being hailed as the chronicle of Human history, by providing evidence to the origin of people and their subsequent migrations to their final destinations (3).

The sheer love of the open, and the peculiar history of Head Hunting; a game played by the Nagas to exhibit their gallantry, using the enemy's head as a trophy, compelled the people to build their villages on the peak of the hills, some as high as 2000 metres. Agriculture is the main food crop. They are the pioneers in rice terrace cultivation, rearing of domesticated animals such as pig, dog, cow and chicken in Nagaland. The entire Chakhesang range enjoys vegetation and good climatic condition throughout the year.

The priceless values of the forefathers of the Chakhesangs of Phek District are nonetheless exhibited through their cultural and traditional beliefs. The rich culture and traditions may not be strictly practiced at all times but it can be seen to be prevalent mixed with the Christian spirit and modernism in all the villages.

## 2. ORIGIN OF CHAKHESANG TRIBE

Chakhesang Nagas were known as Eastern Angamis prior to 1945. However, with the initiative of late, Mr. Goyiepra Kenye, a tribe to be called as Chakhesang finally came to existence found in *Chakhesang Baptist Church, Kohima. Golden Jubilee, Souvenir*:

The then D.C. of the Naga Hills, Mr. C.R. Pawsey convened a public meeting at Phek on 1st November 1945 where the three sub-tribes *Chakrüi*, *Khezha* and *Sangtam* attended. The meeting was headed by Mr. Goyiepra Kenye. Consequently, the nomenclature, "*Cha-Khe-Sang*" was coined by extracting the first syllable of each sub-tribe i.e. *Cha* for *Chakrüi*, *Khe* for *Khezha* and *Sang* for *Sangtam*. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, 1945, Mr. Goyiepra Kenye convened another meeting at *Chizami* wherein a public declaration was made pronouncing *Chakhesang* as a separate tribe thereon. The tribe *Chakhesang* formally got recognition on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, 1946 (4).

Venuh also states in *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas*:

The Tribe remained under the District of Kohima until on 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1973, when a separate district was created and named as Phek with headquarters at Phek; after the name of Phek village (91).



Like the other parts of Nagaland, Phek district is a mountainous region. The land is bounded by Burma (Myanmar) in the East, Manipur in the South (Thangkhul and Mao Nagas), Kohima district (Angami Naga) in the West and Zunheboto district (Sema Naga) in the North. The land has evergreen forests and ranges. The highest mountain is Mt. Zanibu followed by the picturesque Mt. Kapamodzü. The river Tizu is the biggest in the district which flows into Chinwin river in Myanmar. The people of Phek District are called the Chakhesangs. A major tribe amongst the Nagas, the Chakhesangs is a blend of diversified culture and vibrant traditions.

### **3. MIGRATION**

It is commonly believed that the the Nagas came from central Asia through Burma and proceeding further as found in *Nagas Today, Indigenous Discourse*:

The group that took the northwesterly direction reached and settled down at the present Mao village of Makhel in Senapati district (Manipur), where some sections migrated to other places, such as the present villages of Khezhakenoma in the Chakhesang region in Phek district of Nagaland (Yanthan eds.et al 33).

They, then, scattered to different Naga areas where details about their migration is furnished in *The Hidden World of the Nagas, Living traditions in Northeast India and Burma*:

It is agreed that Naga Tribes moved to their respective places as of now, from Khezhakheno. The Chakhesangs moved towards North-East. Hutton stated that migration proceeded northward through Mao-gate and spread Westward and Eastward (Stirn and Peter Van Ham 44).

Mention has also been made by J.H. Hutton about the origin and myth of Khezhakheno in *The Angami Nagas*:

The *Angami* story of the origin of the Naga tribes centres in the *Kezami* village of *Kezakenoma*. There was, the story gives, once upon a time an old couple with three sons living in that village. Every day they used to spread paddy to dry upon a great flat stone, and at dusk a single load spread to dry had become two loads, for the stone inhabited by a spirit. The three sons used to take it in turns to spread their paddy on this stone, but one day they quarreled bitterly as to whose turn it was, and their parents, fearing bloodshed broke eggs on the stone, covered it with brushwood, laid faggots about it, and set the whole on fire. The stone burst with a crack like thunder, the spirit went up to heaven in a cloud of smoke, and the virtue of the stone departed. The three sons then separated and became the ancestors of the *Angami*, *Lhota* and *Sema* tribes, while from the parents who remained are descended the seven *Kezami* villages (19).

However, the exact origin and migration of the Nagas in general and the Chakhesangs in particular is a mystery because of lack of written records. Lhota is now spelt Lotha. But whatever it may be, oral tradition has played an important role in passing on the stories of one migration to another. The way of migration of the Nagas has also been noted by N.Venuh in *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas*:

Their migration occurred in family groups or clans and never in large numbers. It appears that the migration and settlement of the people had been gradual. (97).

It is interesting to learn that a Chakhesang village called *Leshemi* village is one of the oldest villages formed. Therefore, in times of anything to be consulted or clarified upon the *Kesemi* (elders), referring to the elder inhabitants of this village were met and consulted.

From oral narration and in Lekromi Baptist Church, *Souvenir*, three persons migrated from *Maikhel* carrying different objects with them in search of a new settlement.

The one with the Paleolithic stone seat settled at *Leshemi* village; the one with cotton spinning stone went towards *Poumai* region and the person with the metal plate settled at *Lekromi* village (15).

The paleolithic stone seat at *Leshemi* village and the metal plate at *Lekromi* village are kept and preserved till date. From the study carried out on the Chakhesang tribe, we are able to understand to a great extent the oral history and cultural heritage of the people. As per the lore obtained from some Chakhesang elders, it is said that some of them scattered from Maikhel and formed a new settlement in other places as well.

We can definitely say that migration of the people was a gradual and continuous process accompanied by rituals and religious observations. They had their own defined territorial polity after settlement. The villages had frameworks of independent village republics.

In the following chapters, Aspects of Chakhesang folklore will be examined under the following heads: Socio-Cultural Aspect, Religious and Political Aspects, Folk Narratives, and Traditional Words and Conceptual Terms.

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## CHAPTER 2

# SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECT

The Chakhesangs are a patrilineal group of people. Ancestral Chakhesangs practice the same religion and have common culture. Since the beginning of village settlement, each Naga village, small or big, had its own polity and sovereignty within its own state. The Chakhesang people have had good social relationship with other villages for security reasons which had been since the days of head hunting and this has led to festivities in each other's villages. In the past, inter village wars were severe but they maintained a strong and peaceful relationship with certain villages. While waging war, when they could not return to their village they stopped at a village with which they were in good terms. They helped each other in times of need because they knew people of their own referring to what has been said in *The Chakhesangs, A window to Phek District*:

Perhaps, it is right to fight for one's unique identity, to belong somewhere and to live by its rich legacy (Krocha and Rekha Rose Dukru 3).

That every Naga village is unique in its own existence, the Chakhesang villages are also unique in its own way of life. Some striking remarks in this regard are given in that they seem to be the same but also different in so many ways though they live together which is described by Julian Jacobs in *The Nagas*,



*Hill Peoples of the Northeast India* as, “Although sharing many social and cultural traits, such as feast-giving as a means of acquiring status, the thousands of small Naga villages, perched on isolated hill spurs, seemed to be very different from each other. They adopted different political systems, ranging from the egalitarian to the autocratic, and spoke more than a dozen mutually unintelligible languages” ( Front Flap).

Chakhesang villages have an egalitarian society. Society changes according to change of time and with it, Culture, which is the backbone of every society also, changes. But they adapt to new environment where culture becomes a fusion of the old and the new. Such an adjustment has been noted in *Naga society and Culture*:

As a sum total of human’s effort, they adjust themselves with different incoming socio-economic environment and improve their modes of living. As a group, dynamic culture is adopted, changed and learned. Every culture of the world has its own charms and the Naga culture is one, which is enchanting with its multifarious awe, beauty and richness (Jamir and A. Lanunungsang 3).

The qualities that Nagas possess and which are said to be fine qualities of a man have been reiterated by V.K. Nuh who echoes J.H. Hutton in *Nagaland Church and Politics*:

Nagas have fine qualities. They are simple, cheerful, colourful, humorous, courteous and hospitable people (50).

The above is a general statement, but The Chakhesang Nagas are also said to have these qualities. They are nature loving, humorous, simple, courteous, hospitable and fun loving people. Though differences may prevail, similarities are also present in the culture of the different tribes where many practices are found to be uniform, more or less, as described in *Naga Society and Culture*. When we say Naga culture, it is the culture that has been handed down from their forefathers although with some modifications in changing lifestyles in the society:

The way of living pattern irrespective of tribe is common such as domestic activities, construction of house, living standard and style, dressing and simplicity in nature. These are highly appreciable and recordable (Jamir, and A. Lanunungsang 20).

A significant remark given to the Nagas is to be found in the comment of J. P. Mills, one time Deputy Commissioner, which is that 'Naga people never lie.' Referring to this comment, V. K. Nuh. States:

Those comments were given by non-Nagas after careful observations and therefore are not flattery (1986. 50).

Every Naga village is known and remembered from its songs, stories, dance etc. Likewise, Chakhesang villages in the present time are trying its best to

preserve and promote its rich cultural heritage through the use of its respective language. A note on this is given in *ABC of Naga Culture and Civilization*:

The most important part of Naga culture is the wealth of songs, stories, oral traditions and they can access only if the Naga languages are kept alive (Haksar 41).

We see that the use of mother tongue is diminishing day-by-day. Even among family members, within the houses, the children converse in other languages, apart from the use of mother tongue to the use of English and the so called pidgin 'Nagamese' which has emerged as a lingua franca which is a combination of Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and Nepalese.

It is evident that Naga culture is rich and this rich culture can be remembered only when they are put down in words. Much of Naga folklore are still undocumented, and as set down in *Naga Society and Culture*, it is possible that "The common origin and migration of the Nagas, their history, culture and common way of life may attract any sincere writer and scholar" for, Naga "folksongs, dance and ceremonies, art, dress, ornaments, institutions etc speak about the beautiful Naga society and culture." (Jamir and A. Lanunungsang 2) which are unique, attractive and interesting.

Cultural changes taking place can be seen in the Chakhesang Nagas. The ancient culture in material and non-material forms are fast fading. For example

the folk songs echo in our ears only during festivals and occasions some of the cultural practices like peer-group activities have been long forgotten except for a few living elders in the villages. The mode of marriage, once bounded by the traditional system has been Christianized, but more westernized in its details. No one in the present day would be willing to wear traditional costumes these days. Awkward, one may say, both for the bride and groom and even for the observers. Due to the influence of mass media and technologies the socio-cultural behaviour and the outlook of the Naga people are undergoing changes rapidly.

The belief that Nagas have a sense of belongingness, hospitable, honest, respect for elders, hard-work, are now gradually eroding.

## **1. AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY**

Though ancestral Chakhesangs were primarily farmers, they were gatherers too. They collected wild vegetables and fruits. The forefathers proved that as long as they were hale and hearty, they were wise enough to fight and survive against any odds as they had knowledge about what to eat and what not to eat. Chakhesang villages are more or less found to be self-sufficient. An extract from *Naga Society and Culture* emphasizes the importance of cultivation for the Nagas:

The main source of their livelihood is shifting cultivation and the entire socio-cultural aspect of life is centre on this practice. Nagas are laborious people, whose main occupation is cultivation.

(Jamir and A. Lanunungsang 341).

Details involved for cultivation through terracing are given in *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*:

The terraces are irrigated by channels which carry water from stream or torrent, for a distance that may sometimes be measured in kilometers and many fields being fed on the way. Each terrace, of course, cannot have its own channel, but usually obtains water, either from the next terrace above it or from one terrace in the same row. The terrace being so carefully graduated so that the water may flow from terrace to terrace round a whole square and back again to a point little below that from which it started. Water is often also carried from one terrace to another terrace in a hollow bamboo passing over other terraces and channels in between.

Water is considered as property. The first man to dig a channel tapping acquires the right to the water source. The water that is drawn naturally in the course of time becomes itself the subject of all sorts of rights; rights of purchase, of customs and of

inheritance. Ownership of terraced fields is not communal but strictly individual (Venuh 6).

The field needs cleaning and weeding from time to time. Depending on the time of ripening of the paddy, harvesting is done by the end of October and early November. Reaped with saw-sickle, grains are separated from the stalk than thrashed by stick and stamped upon by feet. Paddy grains are then measured and finally paddy is carried to the village.

Economy of the Chakhesang is based on agricultural products, handicrafts, rearing of animals, hunting etc. Trade between other villages existed. The medium of exchange was goods. The goods for exchange were usually local products like cotton, chili, ginger, brine-salt and food grains etc. Although each village is self-sufficient, trade gets an important place. The Nagas, in general, traded local products to the plains and in return got things which were not locally available like cloth, beads and shells. Agriculture, the main occupation of the Chakhesang Nagas is still practiced and the terrace fields stand as one of the features of its landscapes. Many are charmed by such landscapes.

In *The Naga Story, First Armed Struggle in India*, too, mention has been made that:

Irrigated terraces are however never changed and are looked after with great care and love. The speed with which forest grow back

in this region of heavy rain is magical. One has to see it to believe it (Chandola 221).

The socio-economic structure of the village is simple. Their socio-economic status can be classified on the basis of the types of houses constructed, shawls, performance of religious rituals and contribution towards the village.

A reference is given here from *The Nagas, Hill Peoples of Northeast India*:

The use of the land underlies all other aspects of Naga society. That is to say, not only must the land be worked to produce basic subsistence food for the people, but the ladder of social prestige can only be climbed by individuals accumulating sufficient surplus to afford the lavish sacrifices and feasts involved. Wealth is also sought in order to make a good marriage or a political alliance (Jacobs 33).

Among the Chakhesang people, most of the property is inherited by the male members of the family where the youngest son gets the Lion's share. So the youngest son becomes responsible for taking care of his parents. Properties in the form of *Kadzü* (land), *Kie* (house), *Ekhulo* (terrace fields), *Tshükhe* (forest reserve) and *Melu* (jhum land) are inherited. Property is generally shared by men but women also gets the right to inherit valuable ornamental items like bracelets, necklaces, earrings and also gifts from marriages. Traditionally it is said that the property that a woman inherits is known as *Lhabou* (collection of

ornaments and clothes) which is passed down the female line. If a woman dies without daughters it will be passed to her matrilineal line within or outside the village. The inheritance of Lhabou brings back the legacy of the past matrilineal relationships that existed which would otherwise have been forgotten. This traditional system of inheritance is prevalent till the present time and the dispute regarding inheritance does not arise.

Agriculture is still the main source of their livelihood in the villages but cultivation, is being replaced with mixed occupations. People are getting engaged in occupation where they no longer need to wake-up early, take meal early, collect their agricultural implements and hasten to their fields finally returning for an early retirement to bed quite early out of fatigue. The present scenario sees people, more and more engaged in government sectors or private entrepreneurship which have boosted their economic conditions, but changing their old world picturesque community.

## **2. VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS**

### **Nhetho (Village Settlement)**

The settlement of *Nhetho* (village) is carried out by a group of exogamous patrilineages having the characteristics of common customs and practices of a particular culture, exercising territorial supremacy, maintaining its own form of democratic governance, economically self-sufficient and protecting the territorial boundaries of the village. Solidarity and conformity in the village was supreme.



Uniqueness of the village is described in *Naga Society and Culture*:

The social fabric of Naga society is based on Village network and its dominance. It seems to be narrow in approach and in understanding but their village which comes first in order of importance. They feel proud of their village and found prepared to sacrifice for its cause. Thus, Naga society means the village society, a kind of water tight society having the highest degree of social cohesion. To a Naga, his village identity is the supreme identity followed by tribal community (Jamir and A. Lanunungsang 16)

With ancestral Chakhesangs, setting up of Nhetho (Village) is not done according to their desires or suitability but set up their Nhetho (Village) where traditional rituals favour them. Rituals and ceremonies have been an integral part of their forefathers. They were performed depending on the condition of fortune and misfortune, and new ventures. Through oral narration obtained it is said that, when the Chakhesangs set out in search of a new place for settlement, rituals were observed. In the search, a mithun, a rooster, a dog, seedlings, basic utensils and a piece of thatch hung on the body were taken with them. As they journeyed, they look for the the signs, when the rooster crowed, the dog barked or the thatch broke and fell, or even when the mithun bellow, they halted. These signs make them believe that it is a good omen, regardless of the spot and location, to establish a new village.

They exclaimed “*Zetshekewe ruke keku kajucie tengubera*”. (The victorious spirit is showing us the signs of the land now). Thus, a new village settlement begins.

Once the land is identified according to the signs, blessing is sought for the village after performing a ritual called *Erumeshu* which requires them to make fire by splitting bamboo into half. In the ritual, blessing is also sought for the new village for many generations to come. Then, the settlers divide the land and construction of houses begins. The best plot of land is allotted and given to the *Mewu* (Priest) and *Pfüsemi* (Clan) elder receives the second best plot of land.

### **Kedo** (Colony)

Villages are organised and demarcated into many colonies. Each colony is called *kedo*. A *Kedo* is a definite area with clear boundaries. There are colonies for specific and practical purposes such as to accommodate the different clans and for better management.

### **Mapumo** (An Assembly)

Every *kedo* is organised into *mapumo* (an assembly of men-folk). Daily events are discussed in the assembly, it is also a place for learning. Youngsters are moulded here, for instance, if a person does something wrong in the family or village, the eldest in the *mapumo* corrects and directs the person not to repeat the offence. It is here, in the *mapumo* where men sit together to relax and share

drinks. Sometimes, important issues and matters are discussed. In the *mapumo*, usually *hazi*, (local brew) and *Lezu* (food item that serves as a snack), are brought by individuals and shared. This gathering normally takes place before setting off to work in the morning, and after returning from work in the evening. They sit by the fire and discuss various issues and events. Young boys joining the *mapumo* (Assembly) become bonafide members. They learn to respect the elders here. Respect for elders gets a prominent place in the Chakhesang culture. One such example, young boys vacate seats for the elders when they come in. They are not supposed to take their seats as long as elders are around. The tradition of respecting and honoring elders is sacred. It involves societal taboo and disrespect invites not only the community's censure, but is also believed to have serious consequences in the future.

### **Keyike/Kekhroke (Dormitory)**

In the olden days boys and girls had separate dormitories known as *Kekhroke* and *Keyike*. *Kekhroke* is for boys and *Keyike* is for girls. Every *Kedo* (Colony) had their own *Keyike* and *Kekhroke*. An ideal place was selected and the owner of the house was appointed as *Kezupfu* (warden). The *Kezupfu* was expected to teach the youth the ways of life; he was supposed to be well-versed in traditional songs, games, crafts, stories, etc. It was in the dormitories that the young boys and girls learnt about responsibilities and obligation to the family, neighbors, friends, elders, priests and their role in society, religious and political matters.

A very important aspect of dormitory life was to prepare young boys and girls to take up responsibilities as adults in the society. All the girls and boys were members of *Keyike/Kekhroke* before getting married. Here, they would learn about their ancestry, tales of heroism, of headhunting, of war and other things. They would even talk, joke and praise each other through folksongs and melodies. Besides, the girls learn how to spin, weave shawls and compose folksongs.

Sanctity of the dormitory was strictly maintained and adhered to. The boys would visit the girls whereas the girls were not allowed to visit the boys. It was restricted for a man to visit any girl in private according to their own whims and fancies. Occasionally, when the boys visit the girls they would sit in *Kecorü*, the entrance of a house where there is fire place. The girls were called out to come and socialize with them. For ancestral Nagas, the dormitory is an important social center of learning in a play-way method for young boys and girls. It is part and parcel of Naga way of life. Nagas do not have a common language, but the tribes have their own terms for their respective dormitories. The general term, 'morung', seems to have come from the arunachali term for their long, big dwellings, and serves as a common term for convenience.

Relating to activities in the morung, Nandita Haksar in *ABC of Naga Culture & Civilization* says:

It was here where young men were trained in the Naga way of life, in the tenets of Naga religion. Although girls' and boys' dormitories were separate there were many occasions for them to mix, chat and this was the time when they found their life partners (54.)

### **Telepe (Village Watch)**

As the season of *teka* (spring) approaches, each *Kedo* (Colony) practices *telepe* (Village Watch). The youth will gather together after *mapumo* (an assembly) and keep watch of the village until the first cock crows. They would watch the village to keep it safe from fire, enemies or any other vandals. The watchmen were assigned to secure the village especially during the season of *jhum* cultivation. Therefore, they would go round their respective *kedo* (Colony) shouting *Aho...Aho...* to assure the villagers that they can sleep without fear.

As referred from '*Socio-Cultural Heritage of Kuzhami Chakhesang Nagas*':

*Metshütele* (mass) and *Maputele* (small group) are two types of *Telepe*. *Metshütele* includes all the unmarried youth and young teenage boys of the *Kedo*. *Maputele* is only for the youth. Thus, they were divided into different groups and a routine was made for each day to watch over the village (Lohe 26).

### **Rikhu** (Village Guard)

Two types of *Rikhu* (Village Guard) were prevalent in the village. One is known as *Eriwa Rikhu* (who guards farmers in the fields) and the other is *Ekie Rikhu* (who guards the village during the day). The main purpose of *Ekie Rikhu* is to keep an eye on children, thieves, fire, enemies and any other unforeseen danger. A farmer guard is to guard the farmers from their enemies and to allow them to work peacefully in their respective fields. For *Eriwa Rikhu*, each colony arranges two persons every day. They have to go ahead of cultivators in the morning and return only after the cultivators return in the evening.

Each colony has a particular place call *Rikhube*, a guarding place on the hilltop/hillock where they could view the paddy fields and communicate with one another. They shout moving up and down on the range of the hilltop throughout the day. They shout at the top of their voices to inform the farmers about the time/hour for lunch and to return home from their fields. The farmers also gain more courage when they hear the shout. The voice of this person was a time watch for farmers and most of all it was a relief to hear him shout for it provided them the time to eat their lunch, time to stop and get ready to go home and that somebody was keeping watch over their safety. Those who do not respond and heed after information is given, and faces accident or any untoward incidents, the responsibility is not shouldered by the guard.

### **3. FAMILY KINSHIP**

Setting up of a proper family is considered to be very valuable. The family was found to be the most important agency of socializing in the past and this close bond still exists today. The family system is patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal. The beliefs, practices, rituals, festivals etc still exist in the present socio-cultural life of the Chakhesang people and Verrier Elwin states about the importance of kinship:

The basic interest of every Naga is in his family, the clan, the khel, the village. This is what he regards as his culture which must not be interfered with. He is passionately attached to his land, his system of land-tenure, the arrangements for the government of his village, the organization of cultivation, the administration of tribal justice through the village and tribal courts (2).

People are bound together in the society in groups by various kinds of relationships. The universal and the basic bonds are based on kinship by social ties of blood and marriage. The ethnic loyalty of the Nagas has been elaborated by N. Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang :

They first owe allegiance to the family, the village, the tribe and lastly to the Naga community as being a Naga. This integrated networking system of ethnic loyalty is found to be very strong

among the Nagas. This is the most unique feature of the Nagas which is missing in case of other community (17).

The Chakhesang Nagas for that matter have much respect and allegiance to their families and clans. For them, the need of the family comes first before any other need.

The husband and the wife see that family matters are met first and fulfilled. The children also learn this act of loyalty from their parents. The parents also see that their children are loyal, hard-working and well-behaved in their lives. They are taught to be loyal and respect their families and their kinship not only in their manners but also in addressing them as well.

Certain terms are used to identify and address each other in the kinship relationship. These terms of addressing one another is considered as a must in the society:

1. All the grand children address grandfather as *apfüse*.
2. All the grand children address grandmother as *azuse*.
3. All the children address the elder brother of their father as *apfüde*.
4. All the children address the younger brother of their father as *apfüno*.
5. Children call their father as *apfü*.
6. Children call their mother as *azu*.
7. Maternal uncle or male clan members are addressed as *apu*.



8. All male clan members including brother and father-in-law call the girl's husband as *ama*.
9. Sisters of a girl address her husband as *ase*.
11. Older maternal aunts are called *azukese*.
12. Younger maternal aunts are called *azuketsu*.
13. Paternal aunts are called *anyi*.
14. Brothers call a brother's wife as *ano*.
15. Daughter - in- law is referred as *amoe*.
16. Maternal uncle addresses neices and nephews as *atsi*.
17. Parents refer their children as *anu*.
18. Elderly men and women generally address unknown girl as *ale*.
19. Elderly men and women generally address an unknown boy as *alo*.
20. Man calls his best friend as *akhra*.
21. Women refer to the women of the same age as *akezüpile*.
23. Men refer to their younger brothers as *atshikezuo*.
24. A brother refers to his sister as *atepi*.
25. A sister refers to her brother as *apruo*.
26. Men call their friends as *akezüi*.

### **Kelaketshu (Marriage)**

Marriages to be successful needed to adhere to customary laws and fulfill religious sacrament. The background of the boy and the girl to be married are greatly taken into consideration. There is one go-between who is usually a woman known as *tenaketemi*. The proposal is sent from the boy's family

through this woman. After accepting the proposal, she comes to the boy's house along with her best friend from the girl's dormitory to partake food in his house. After acceptance from both the families, the marriage ceremony takes place.

Marriage relations between villages at feuds were of great importance. It opened a channel and provided an incentive, a mechanism and a way to achieve truce. Nowadays Christian marriages are in practice, and unlike quiet simple marriages, grand popular feasts are given.

Julian Jacobs' *The Nagas, Hill peoples of Northeast India* in his observation of the marriage system writes:

Marriage is also vital for the social advancement of the individual male for most of the ceremonial feasts that confer status depend on a man having a wife. The new household is both a new economic unit and ritual unit, for the head of the household and his wife become in effect a ritual unit responsible for the daily and yearly rituals which promote the health of the family and the family crops (61.)

### **Pfüsemi (Clan)**

In the village social structure, the clans are considered to be the basic backbone to help and support each other in times of need.

In any village each member belongs to a clan which is based on lineage. Even in matters of decision making and administration, the leader of a clan is sent as a representative to settle matters.

The offices of *Mewumi* and *Pfüsemi* are hereditary. The practice of clan exogamy is prevalent among the Chakhesangs. It is considered a privilege for a village when a person married an outsider as both the villages could maintain better relationship in times of peace and war. He had the opportunity to act as a mediator in times of trouble and hardships. Such type of a person was known as *Edemi* (mediator). His duty was to return the head of the beheaded warrior after rituals were performed. For identification, a bunch of tree leaves was carried all the time with him when he had to perform his duties so he would not be killed. It was forbidden to kill him in his trademark identity. After head hunting was abolished by the British, the role of *Edemi* slowly began to disappear but not forgotten.

Each Chakhesang village is a very well organized, well-knitted unit right from the grassroots. The smallest being the family, the *Kedo* (Colony) and finally the village. Today, one would call it networking. The interaction, co-operation and work ethics of the different members of the community made it a very vibrant, self-reliant, self-sufficient and secured society as a village unit, giving it a unique Ethnic Identity of its own.

Like the Nagas, in general, Chakhesangs are hospitable; always ready to welcome strangers and give them best food they have in the house. Rice and local brew are the main stay of the people. Like the Scottish Highlanders, every Naga ethnic group uses peculiar patterns of garments, therefore whether be it a group or an individual can at once be easily identified by their costumes.

The rich tradition of the people is also depicted in their hand woven cloths (the product of loin-loom), woodcrafts and carvings on drinking mug, pounding table, dao, pillar, log drum, plates, *morung* etc. In all social interaction the 'Senior-Junior' relationship is of vital importance. The young are always expected to defer to their elders, whether in the family, the village or inter-village relationship. Wealth is another factor in the determination of status but it does not count in terms of silver in those days but of livestock and rice supplies. The *mithun* owner enjoys a high status.

#### **4. NATHSÜ (Traditional Costumes)**

Chakhesangs have varied and colourful ornaments and traditional costumes which speak volumes about their creativity and artistry. In reference to the costume, Julian Jacobs has documented that, "Appearing to be both one people and many tribes, the Nagas displayed both unity and diversity in their dress and ornament". In ancestral times, weaving is an important activity in a woman's life. A good weaver is also highly respected for her skill.

*Chakhesang Naga Attires and Ornaments* describes the age old tradition of weaving which has gained popularity in the present time. It beautifully depicts the talents and creativity of its people. Many modern designs are seen but they cannot replace the importance and value of the originals:

Long before any written records, the Chakhesangs had the knowledge of cotton cultivation, knew the art of spinning cotton into yarn, dying and weaving. Besides cotton, shawls were woven from nettle fibres and Deccan jute plants. The shawls were hand-woven in Squares or rectangular pieces which were tied or wrapped around body parts in various fashions. They did not have any intricate cuts or styles and many of them use either plain or had very simple lines. However some of the cloths were beyond simplicity, as is evident from the intricate patterns, motifs with perfect colour combination which would impress even modern accomplished designers. For example the wrap around skirts like Melhapulu/Müyhonie/Nunhamenie/Murhotimuni has very fine, intricate patterns which speak volumes about the level of creativity that our ancestors possessed (*Chakhesang Women Welfare Society* 13).

Shawls are hand-woven using traditional methods. Every girl is expected to have the knowledge of weaving. Teenage girls had their own toy-set of weaving implements to start learning the art of weaving. Instead of cotton

years, they used fibres of ginger lily (*Hedychiumcoccineum*) to practice weaving.

On the “*Ornaments and Status Symbolism*”, Julian Jacobs comments:

Naga men and women don ceremonial dress and ornaments. All is colour and motion. For the Nagas, ornaments are more than a matter of aesthetics. They help make statements about, and to define, the identity of individuals and groups. Indeed, their importance is such that ornaments are part of the definition of being truly human. It is only from a corpse that ornaments are removed (103).

Traditional ornaments, some, as known to be made from elephants’ tusks and conch and beads, considered to be valuable and precious have been written about in *Naga Cultural Attires and Musical Instruments*:

The original conch necklace is very difficult to get and it is expensive also. It is mostly worn by women folk of Angami, Chakhesang and Rengma Tribes (Ao ed. 25).

Chakhesang garments and ornaments will be illustrated below. The terms will be given first in Khezha followed by Chokri and Sapou dialects of the Chakhesang sub-groups.

## WOMEN'S CLOTHING AND ORNAMENTS

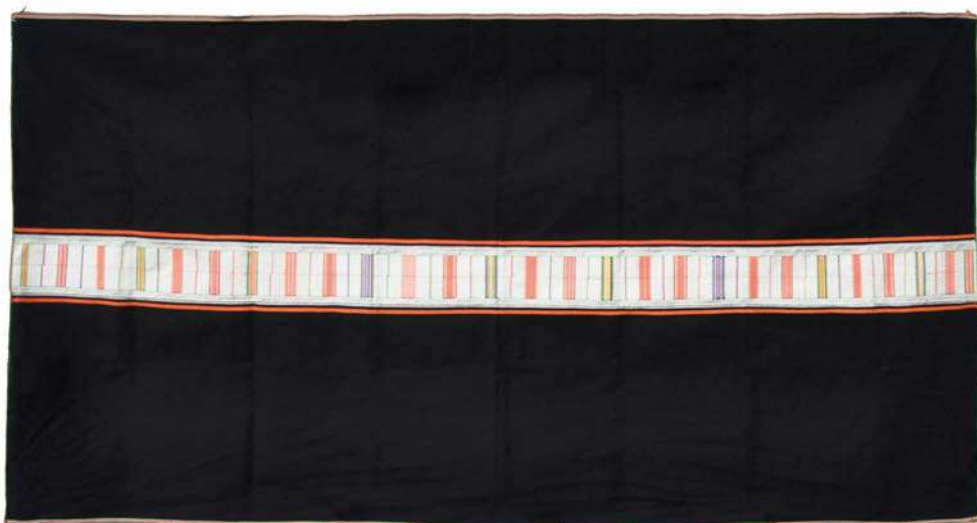
### **Rashe/Bachhi/Sapu**

It is a small bodice used by women for wrapping their body. It is black in colour with yellow/orange/red border. All the different colours were dyed by women themselves. It is a must wear for young and single women at festivals.



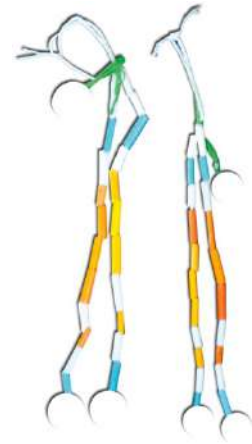
### **Melhapulu /Müyhonie/ /Murhotimuni**

The knee-length traditional attire worn by women known as Mene (wrap around skirt) is handcrafted with designs/motifs in the middle. It is worn with a bodice called Rakhalashe. It is worn during traditional festivals.



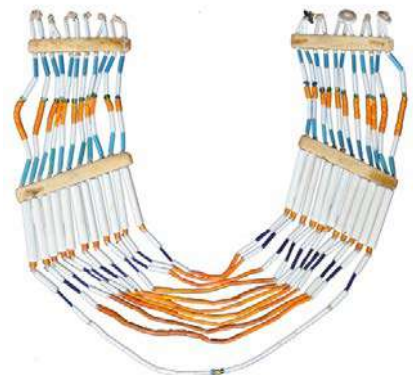
### **Menaketha/Chodonie/Nuvomüdo**

It is a long stringed earring around half foot made of different beads. This earring is only meant for unmarried women. Removal of this Menaketi from the ear shows that the woman is no longer in her youth.



### **Tsükemouphra/Tila/ Tourakhu**

It is a necklace made of corn shell with bone spacers.



### **Tsükemöu/Tiza/Tuze**

It is a necklace called Cornelian necklace.



### **Tekhou//Bathsü/ Tusü**

Conch shell necklace worn on the back of the neck by rich men's children.





**Lapri/Müsühnyie/ Nuri**

It is a round brass earring worn only by married women.



**Thoudie/Naotusa**

It is made of brass and worn on the wrists.



**Zhithu/Nozhi/Bathukha**

It is made of lead and worn on the arms.



**Thöubi/Nuripribasa**

It is smaller than Zhithu and Thudie in size which is made of brass and worn on the wrist.



## MEN'S COSTUMES

### **Tsükha/Piphü/ Pido**

A headgear made from Bear's fur with hornbill feather on top.



### **Raluo/Pila/ Roleh**

It is a headgear made of bamboo.



### **Tsükemouphra/Tila/ Tourakhu**

It is a huge necklace of six or more strings of conch shell beads with bone spacers and other varieties of colourful beads placed in rows.



### **Rhe/Türha/ Narha**

It is a colourful sash worn across the shoulders.



### **Chünamenie/Tüsünie/ Tösümuni**

It is a black coloured kilt sewn in lines with cowrie shells. It is woven from cultivated cotton and locally dyed black in colour.



### **Tephe/ Chophre/ Lopfo**

It is a hanging white cotton yarn decorative belt worn above the *Chünamenie* (Kilt).



**Phekherü/Phepa/ Phida**

Phekherü refers to the article used for decorating the shin. Traditionally, it was worn by the rich male youth of the village made of cane designed with yellow orchid stem.



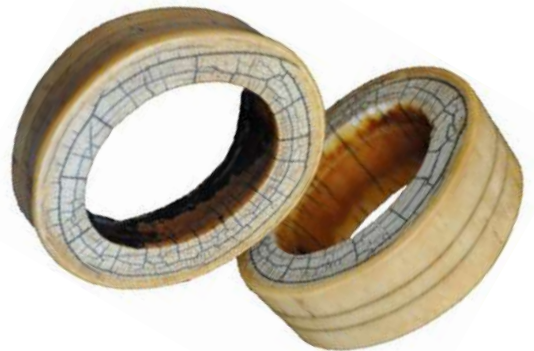
**Bakha/Bepa/ Bakha**

It is a wristlet made from yarns and palm leaves.



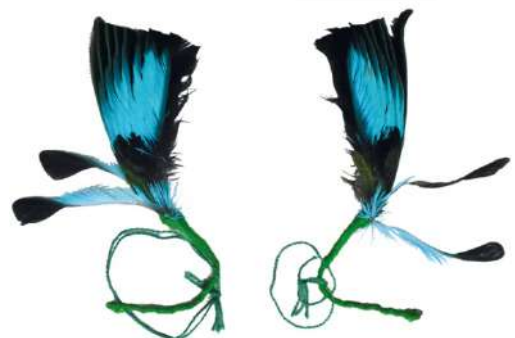
**Thöupriha/ Thüyichü/ Baothukha**

It is an armlet made from an elephant's tusk.



**Chüzhümena/Müzanie/ Muzüme**

It is an earpiece made from the feather of a long tailed broadbill bird.



### **Thsüketsura/Thüpkhu/Hapidasa**

In the past, the rich would host feast of merit which were marked by providing abundance of meat and rice beer and rituals were performed. In this feast all the villagers and neighbouring village or villages on invitation would partake. No ordinary person could offer such a feast as the feast giver has to be economically well-off depending on his agricultural products and host not one but two designated feasts to earn the right to wear the shawl of the highest honour.

It is believed that a Chakhesang conceptualized the idea of weaving this prestigious shawl as a gift for her brother on the occasion when he was offering the 'feast of merit'. It is also said this shawl was supposed to be woven in a day before sunset and therefore, being a taboo otherwise only families having three to four daughters could weave this shawl. Because of this process, the shawl could not be meticulously designed in its finery.



In order to live the legacy, those who are able to offer Christmas feasts in their respective villages in modern times are allowed to wear this prestigious shawl. This *Thsüketsura/Thüipikhu/Hapidasa* shawl carries the highest honour and it symbolizes prosperity and generosity. Originally, this honor was bestowed on a couple who have performed all the designated feasts of merit.

The patterns with hues such as white, green, red in the shawl indicate the different credits the person has earned. These shawls contain motifs which signify their own importance. These are explained below:

### **Elephant**

The elephant pattern in the shawl symbolizes strength and abundance. It also signifies prosperity as the elephant eats little compared to its size and strength. The pattern represents powerful virtues and also symbolizes abundance of meat of any kind to be plentiful.



### **Mithun**

Mithun is a traditionally reared animal. The mithun is highly valued above other species of animals during feasts. Any well to do family while hosting the 'Feast of merit' to the entire village considers the mithun as the



most preferred animal. The skulls of mithuns are preserved and used to decorate rich men's house. The pattern of the mithun in the shawl symbolizes prosperity and wealth.

### **Butterfly**

The butterfly represents good spirits because of its elegance, smartness, light and swift movements.



### **Flower**

The flower signifies happiness and contentment shared among the people both rich and poor in partaking of the feast.



### **Peacock**

The shawl also carries the illustration of Peacock to signify beauty and all those entitled to wear it would be as beautiful as this magnificent bird.



### **Star**

Like a star in the sky, partakers of the celebration should be as bright as the star. The star also represents happiness and contentment. Further, just as the stars shines for everybody and as much as the flower blooms for the whole humanity, everybody is also equal in the true human approach.



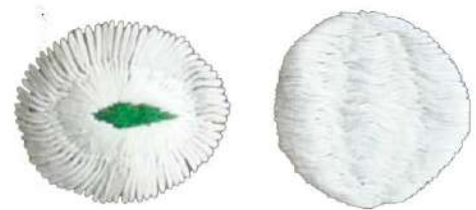
### **Animal Head**

Those who have performed the 'Feast of merit' have the privilege of decorating the entrance of their homes with the head of a mithun/buffalo carved in wood. As such, its significance richly blends with the honor that comes from performing this traditional rite and is therefore depicted in the shawl.



### **Sun/Moon**

The sun or the moon signifies eternity.



### **Pleats**

The parallel pleats in between the shawl depict the status/milestone achieved after the toils and sweats.





### **Thebvora/ Sazükhü/Lusa**

This shawl is made from the bark of a stinging nettle plant, the making of which is absolutely indigenous. The process is illustrated with a photo essay in the following pages. Due to its warm and hardy qualities, it was a utilitarian piece of clothing; its utility ranged from being used as a bag for enemy heads to being used as a quilt. This was also used to carry paddy and other agricultural products



The following steps are followed while processing this priced item:

Nettle, the plant most commonly found in the cold, mossy and moist wild areas, is best prepared during early winter especially in the month of November. The reason for this time of the year is mainly because the leaves of the nettle plant withers, flowers fall and dries up which results in stronger and firmer barks.

- a. The nettle plant is cut and the bark is stripped off from the stems.
- b. After being slashed from the stems, the slashed barks are exposed to the sunlight at least for 3 days for drying
- c. The barks are again stripped into thinner splits.
- d. The thinner splits are then soaked in clean water for it to be prepared as a yarn with thinner and finer pieces which are twirled and rolled into balls of yarn.
- e. The balls are again dabbled into water and is dried under the heat of the sun so that the yarn becomes firmer. After it is dried, the yarn is coiled around the wooden swirling tool.
- f. It is again removed from the wooden swirl and cooked in a hot boiling '*pavuno/megiünyo/vonya*' (ash water) to remove the thin layered cover from the barks which is cooked not for less than a day.
- g. After removing the yarn from the cooking pot, it is beaten with a wooden block to soften the yarn and then rinsed thoroughly to be soaked in hot water for another 3-4 hours. It is further rinsed in clean rice flour broth in a '*kedzukhu/betükhu/Loure*' (wooden basin). Rice flour broth is also used as a dye to make the yarn whitish.
- h. Sorting is done following the rinsing of the yarn with the rice flour broth. (The flour bits that fall from the yarn are baked into rice cakes which are beaten by young girls)
- i. The hank is recoiled into a ball making it ready for warping. The yarn is also made ready for meandering which is used with the shuttle for weaving.



Illustrations given are extracts from the Chakhesang Naga Attires and Ornaments published by Chakhesang Women Welfare Society. (110)

## 5. ENYE (Festival)

Festivals are part and parcel of ancestral Naga way of life and many of the festivals are observed according to agricultural cycles. Chakhesangs have a number of festivals in relation to different times and seasons of a year. Festivals are observed with joy and merriment. Stone pulling ceremonies are also held as a part of celebration. It is worth mentioning that many many festivals are related to 'feasts of merit' which are performed according to time and season. Nandita Haksar mentions about festivals which are associated with agriculture in *ABC of Naga Culture & Civilization*:

Cycle reflects the anxiety farmers have about their crops and often rituals included prayers, fasting and propitiation of deities in order to ensure a good harvest (59).

Some of the *Chakhesang* festivals are mentioned below:

### **Sükrünye**

*Sükrünye* is one of the most colourful festivals of the Chakhesang community. It is a festival of purification and celebrated in the month of January. During this festival, boys and girls are purified through religious ceremonies and rituals and observed for a period of ten days. *Phek, The Land of Tradition* gives a glimpse of *Sükrünye* :

The festival period is preceded by a day known as '*thiza*'. On this day animals are slaughtered and all other necessary preparations, especially *hazi* (local brew) are made ready for the celebration.

The **first day** is known as '*cedii*'. The main activity of the festival starts on this day. The meat is prepared and the rice beer specially brewed for this occasion is brought out on this day.

The **second day** is '*thupu sühkrüh*', it is meant for men folk. '*sühkrüh*' signifies sanctification of young, innocent boys by way of a ritualistic ceremony. Immediately after the first crowing of the rooster in the morning, the men folk go to the well to bathe and purify themselves.

Thereafter, the unpolluted water considered to be sanctified, is brought home. A new fire place is built and new utensils are used to perform this ceremony (*Sühkhrüh*). After the fire is made through the traditional fire making method an unblemished rooster is killed and cooked with the sanctified water. The food thus prepared is eaten by the boy/boys, signifying that they are purified for the rest of their lives. Even when a man constructs a new house, *Sühkhrüh*, is performed in order to get his house sanctified. On this day the entire men folk go for community bird trapping. The multi-colored collected birds are hung on a

decorated tip of a tall bamboo, as a symbol of '*Sükrünye*'. This is believed to predict the fortunes of the individuals concerned in the forthcoming days of the year.

The third **day** is called, '*thünonuso*', which is meant only for women. The mother performs the ceremonial ritual to consecrate her young innocent daughter/daughters. They prepare an unblemished young hen and eat the meat to sanctify themselves for their entire lives.

The **fourth day** is known as '*thunye zadi/miüthi cehu*', where social feasts such as '*mulehu*' or feast of social peer groups, etc. begin. In some villages '*zhotho muza*'(feast of merit) also begins on this day. This day is free from Religious restrictions.

The **fifth day** is known as '*cedüzhongu*' which means accomplishments of the festivals.

The **sixth day** is known as '*meve*'. This day is set aside to perform rituals to prevent occurrence of any natural calamities, especially fire outbreaks.

On the **seventh day**, now that the festival's religious pursuits are relaxed, they continue feasting, dancing and singing. Games are also performed throughout the day .The other festive days that

follow are called, '*sühre gada*'. For two days no regular work is done, on these days.

The *last day* of the festival is called, '*thunye zho*'. The day is kept holy in order to prepare for the rest of the year.

*Sükrünye* is a festival of purification of the boys by their fathers and girls by their mothers (6).

With the coming of Christianity, the religious and traditional ceremonies and rituals of '*Sükrünye*' is no longer in practice in most of the villages. However, '*Sükrünye*' is still celebrated with great significance and enthusiasm by the *Chakhesangs* of Phek District, in keeping with the Christian Spirit of renewal.

### **Tekrünye**

In a paper presentation on “*Social and Cultural tradition*” on “*Enhulumi village seminar on Leadership, Social, Economic and Human Development Reformation*”, K. Sekhamo presents:

*Tekrünye* is a ten-day festival usually celebrated in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of January. This is a festival of atonement of boys and girls and to refresh their health. During this festival, boys purify themselves by taking bath early in the morning before the water got

contaminated. Cleansed cocks were killed and cooked with new fire called “*Erumesü*” which was lit by rubbing stick with *Teprü*. (split bamboo pieces). If there is any *Ezaketshü*, a great feast offering, it is to be offered during this festival. Community hunting is pursued during this festival. Birds killed during this festival were hung on tall bamboos for decorating the public gathering places, which is illustrated below:





## **Etshünye**

*Etshünye* festival is celebrated in July. *Etshübe* (foxtail millet) is the first crop to be harvested among the crops; hence, people observe this festival for five days and this festival are considered to be the first festival of the traditional year. As per narration, during this festival, *Kedinyi*, a type leaf is used to decorate the entrance of every house to prevent evil spirits from entering the house. On the last day of this festival the whole youth conduct mass social work, clear major footpath leading to fields and also clear '*Zathomi Tsobe*', i.e. the stones erected by the persons who have offered *Zatho* Feast.

## **Mewunye**

*Mewunye* is a festival which is celebrated for five days in the month of March to observe the blooming of a tree called '*Mewupabo*' (Mountain Ebony). This festival was observed during the spring season. This blooming tree was admired for its beauty on the mountainous regions in the midst of green trees. Its flowers are edible both in its fresh and dried form.

## **Enonye**

During this festival, people do not travel and are prohibited to dry clothes or plant any kind of vegetables. During this time, people also abstained themselves from going to fields and doing any works. *Enonye* was observed in the month of August. In olden days, this festival is observed for ten days. *Enonye* is a religious ritual observed to avoid natural calamities and to prevent destruction of crops by animals, birds or insects. They observed this festival to

be rewarded with good harvests of different crops planted. However, as it is too long, the period was reduced to seven days and again to three days.

### **Yikhenye/Tsükhenye**

According to the Chakhesangs, the month of April is the time of the year when the trees that shed their leaves get regenerated. So this month symbolizes revival. It signifies growth and renewed strength for nature. Interestingly, the significance does not end there. It is considered that along with the metamorphosis of vegetation, young boys and girls also assume a process of physical as well as emotional development.

The term *Tsükhenye* is derived from three different words. *Tsükhe* is derived from *Tsakhe* or *Thokhe* meaning end. Thus *Tsükhenye* in simple term implies the end of a period of festivity starting in the later part of the previous year and ending with the dawning of chief agricultural tasks for the current year.

On the second day, young men participate in wrestling competition and each household gives out gifts to relatives and family friends. The third day is a day of ritual cleansing while the fourth and fifth day is for ritual ceremonies performed by older folks and the young men and women take time out for walks and companionship.

So, *Tsükhenye* is the last festival that the Chakhesang community celebrate before the onset of agricultural activity begins. Hence it explains the fervor and

vibrancy of the festival. The festival is celebrated over a period of five days with each day having its own theme. During the day long festival, young men and women attired in their fineries display the significance of the festival. The first day of the festival is marked by everyone staying home and feasting on new wine and slain animals.

### **Ebuchito**

The Chakhesang people observe a festival after the harvest call '*Ebuchito*' falling in the month of November call *Ebuchito khru*, named after the festival. It is celebrated for three days. In this festival, fishes and crabs are the major items which are collected and cooked. It is taboo to consume newly harvested paddy until the *Ebuchito* festival gets over. On this day the women folk gather paddy which are kept near the village gate and added a small amount to each *Ebu* (traditional bamboo baskets used for storing rice grain after harvest) as a ritual and a sign to show that they have harvested and stored a large amount each year. It is forbidden to blow *Khubo, khutsü, Lichi and Erülotsü*, (traditional trumpets) before *Ebouchito*.

### **Erünye**

Another festival call *Erünye*, a ten-day festival is observed in the month of December. A young cow is sacrificed and the meat is shared by every household in the village. The small pieces were to be kept on the '*Mekhreh*' (shelf above the hearth). The ritual behind the folklore is that there were two

orphan brothers who were unable to work in a particular year. Those who showed mercy upon them would not face crop damage. Those who did not show any concern or sympathy would face damage to their crops and their wine would become stale and decayed. Misfortune would befall those who did not show any mercy upon the two orphan brothers.



Folk practices are still found to be prevalent especially during festivals, certain periods of time in a year and also in a person's self conduct. Special days are observed for repentance and for seeking blessings from God. It is taboo to swear falsely using the name of God for they believed that curse will befall up to seven generations. When a person dies, it is believed that the soul continues to come and so food is kept ready to be eaten.

The tradition of celebrating or observing different kinds of festival is still very popular among the Chakhesangs. The main festivals, the Chakhesangs now

observe are *Ebuchito*, *Sükrünye*, *Tekrünye*, *Tsükhenye*. The festivals, as mentioned, are not strictly observed anymore, in the sense that they are celebrated to let tradition live on. Number of days is shortened and no rituals are performed in festivals. There are no village priests anymore to invoke blessings. *Sükrünye* and *Tsükhenye* assume great significance as festivals celebrated by the Chakhesang as a whole, whereas, most of the festivals are observed in individual villages only. In the present celebration of festivals, the community comes out to celebrate the vibrancy of their culture. The youth, too, tries to live up to the expectations of the community and indulges them in a pageantry of color, energetic dance rituals, tribal chants, war cries, songs, and of course food! Food and wine are as much part of the *Naga* festivals as music and color!

## **6. FOLKDANCE**

A Folkdance depicts the bountiful and beautiful dance steps of the Chakhesang Nagas in colourful traditional costumes. Not only is the beauty of the dance witnessed but the song that blends with the dance enralls the heart of the onlookers. Different types of dances are performed on different occasions, like the Warrior dance and the Harvest dance.

Dances are simple, not intricate unlike some dances of other Naga tribes like Zeliang Nagas, whose traditional dance is well known among the Nagas. However, they possess a charm of their own, specific to *Chakhesang* tribe.

Fully adorned in their traditional costume, they present a vigorous and lively nature in different ways which is described in *The Chakhesangs, A Window to Phek district*:

The vigor and energy that comes from dancing is seen on many celebrating moments in the district, sometimes in big ways, other times in smaller circles but always, with a sense of belonging to one's culture (Krocha and Rekha Rose Dukru 46).

### **Ephe/Melophe**

This is a folk dance which is usually participated by the youth of both the genders clad in traditional attires, especially during the festive seasons. It is performed in the acrobatic forms for which it enhances the physical strength of the youth.

The creativity of the dance steps depends on the creativity of the leader and then people come to know if a particular village is creative or not.



## **Etshü**

This is a folk dance performed only by men. The men dance with their legs in a very fast manner where they are not supposed to lift their legs very high nor low. Guns were fired as they moved together in a line and chant *wooh ... oh...hoh*

## **Khrotshü**

Initially they maintain silence jumping with rhythmic steps and finally thump both their feet on the ground where his strength is shown. And at the end of this, they invoke the blessing of the spirit with arms stretched in attacking position. Again in some occasion, this warrior gives a thumping sound with both legs and says, “*Apfü cie medo*” i.e. he is the defender or hero of the village or hero of household. Such dance cannot be performed by timid man. Sometimes, it is performed by two individuals in opposite directions as an act of challenging one another.



Dancing, an important feature of Naga culture suggests different activities of their lives. *The Seven Sisters of India*, documents this feature of Naga dance:

Festivals and celebrations that call for the participation of the entire community frequently involve dancing, which playfully promotes and strengthens social cohesion. Love is a primal passion of the human heart of which courtship dances are born. Although these allow free mixing of the sexes, providing a welcome if temporary reprieve from social taboos, they carry no sexual overtones. Erotic songs, however, are relatively common, as are those about legendary lovers. Frequently mirrored in dance is the community's dependence on nature. A bumper crop, which ensures the survival of the village, calls for rejoicing, which is expressed through dance. The growth of crops is thought to be fostered by performing rain rites or invoking fertility spirits. Some dances suggest everyday tasks, such as planting, winnowing and fishing, or occupational activities, such as rowing a boat, pounding the earth, crushing grain or casting a net (Stirn and Peter Van Ham77).

Chakhesang dancers emulate the movements of head hunters, animals and agricultural work cycle which is associated with the life cycle. The people of Chakhesang Nagas are renowned for their acrobatic dances. Folk dance



formations usually take the form of lines and circles. Simplicity and elegance are executed by the dancers.

## 7. MERUKETSHÜ (Games)

The Physical activity especially sports of the *Chakhesangs* involves wrestling, spear throwing, bamboo jumping is significantly noticeable. The practice of all these activities is said to be due to the influence of the stories of folklores and folktales have had on the minds of the people especially the youth.

Some of the games are obtained through oral source and a few have been documented in *Socio-Cultural Heritage of Kuzhami Chakhesang Nagas* mentioned:

### **Lorhiketshe**

*Lorhi* (Ginger Lily- *Hedychiumcoccineum*) is found in the forest and used as spear. This game is the most important game for the teenage and the adult youth. This was a training ground for young people to prepare themselves in the art of headhunting. They throw *Lorhi* at each other in a re-enactment with enemies. The techniques of this game trained them how to pursue the enemies, how to tackle the enemies' pursuance and how to defend themselves. They were also trained how to hold and throw their spears and *daos*. This game is only for men (33).

## **Kusükewe**

It is a very popular game played with the aim of hitting the opponent's top and competes to keep the top spinning longer:

They made *Kusü* (Top) with the best known wood known as *Khrusü*. They plait the cotton thread tightly and roll the top and throw it to the ground to make it spin. The opponent has to throw his kusü at the spinning one in the court to stop it and also to remove the spinning one out of the court. If a person commits a mistake and injures his friend there will be no penalty for the person. It trains the youth to have a good aim at hitting targets and to be alert to escape from the jumping top in any direction. They exert the force to hit the opponent's top; it is a sign of hitting their enemies and preparing for war. This game can be played by a group of people. The person who starts the game will give away his top on the ground. All the players will attack the spinning top on the ground (Ibid 34).

## **Fülatshe**

*Fülatshe* means throwing *Füla* (a type of reed plant) to a distant place and it is one of the popular games for children. They compete with each other to throw to long distances. It is believed that the one who throws the farthest will be a good warrior in throwing spears at enemies (Ibid 35).

## **Dochiemo Dorachie**

This game is played by a mixed group of female and male and young and old. There is one person who acts as a tiger to kill the last person in the group. In the group, the strongest and bravest person will lead the group and try to stop and also to catch the tiger. All the members in the group will be girdled at the waist with shawls and pull one another's shawl. The tiger says; "*kezato, kezato*" (to catch and eat), and attack any member in the group to kill. The leader of the group will stop the tiger and they put their best to catch the tiger. All the members in the group follow the direction of the leader. If the leader goes to the right side the members will follow him and if the leader goes left, all the members will follow his direction. The tiger says '*kezato, kezato*' and the group will say '*dochiemo dorachie*'. Once the tiger touches and catches a member, the man is considered dead and leaves the game. The game continues until the tiger kills all the members in the group or the group catches the tiger. (Ibid)

Traditional games and sports offer entertainment, fun and laughter, physical fitness. However, for men, it is also a training ground for warfare is conspicuous.

## Pinosacho

In this game a circle is drawn and players stay inside the perimeter of the circle drawn. It is a traditional game played by both the men and women. Then, they say ‘*Pinosacho*’ and the leader tries to touch the others’ feet with his/her feet leaning with two hands on the ground, with one leg up and with each hop, each hand touches the chest alternatively. The person whose feet has been touched will take the lead again. Finally, the person whose foot is untouched will be declared the winner.

## Thoyitshü

This game is played by two groups or between individuals. It can be boys and girls or they can be divided into groups according to their conveniences. In this game they compete to get more *thoyi* (Big wild pod seed) and different steps were also followed to finish off to win the game. In the olden days the collection of the best *thoyi* (Big wild pod seeds) found in the forests is carried out and they bring with them the best of their collections for competitions.



## **Wanotsüpfo**

It is a game where bamboo pieces about six inches are sliced and placed in rows at a distance. The players then sit and jump from a drawn line, keep on collecting until and unless the person is exhausted. The player who collects the highest number of sliced bamboo sticks wins the game.

## **Meno**

This is one of the most popular traditional sports in the past and has gained much popularity, even today. A game of strength, men prepare themselves physically and spiritually. Nutritious food and drinks are taken by the players to give strength. In this sport, wrestlers are girdled at their waist tightly with cotton cloth. They hold the girdled cloth of the opponent and use various tactics and put down their opponent to the ground. So, the physically stronger or men with techniques of wrestling wins the sport.



## **Ezutsi**

*Ezutsi* (Long jump) has been in practice and is a common game. There was no reward for the winner but it is a training ground for young people to prepare themselves to run over the river, fencing etc. for the sport of head hunting and hunting animals and is a part of ancestral way of life.

## **Tshüwepi**

Bamboo/wood is cut into short lengths. They are held in the *bazü* (palm) and then carefully thrown to place them on *bakhrü* (dorsal) and back again to the palm and in the process, whoever catches the highest odd number of sticks will win the game. The number of sticks collected becomes his or her treasure. It is mainly a game for children and the youth.



## **Khulo Ketu**

This traditional game is played by a group of men where a wooden pole is pushed towards each other. The game is similar to a tug - of -war but the force is pushed towards the opponent. As interesting as any other games, this sport is a game of strength. A mark or a line is drawn demarcating the opponents and the group which pushes the *Khulo* across the mark becomes the winner.



In the olden days games and sports are played not only at festivals but at leisure times. These sports are competitive in spirit and they are not only for entertainment but also to improve physical skills and agility. Sports like wrestling are held to identify to be the fittest or the strongest in village. Most traditional games and sports are outdoor games. Compared to the present time they are far healthier, creative and bind individuals together though they are losing much popularity today.

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## CHAPTER 3

# RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ASPECTS

In this chapter, the religious and the political aspects of the Chakhesangs will be dwelt upon. Such has been necessitated because these two aspects are closely intertwined. Every society has its own code of conduct to teach, mould and rule its own society. Society cannot exist without a common belief and common aim. They are interconnected with each other as religion declares certain beliefs and aims and politics regulates the practical realization in political matters. As Venuh, too, points out in *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, with the Naga people, Laws fall under two broad categories, a. Divine Law and b. Man-made Laws:

### a. **Divine Law**

Divine laws are believed to have been given by God through the medium of the earliest of priests. These have been handed by the priests where priest-hood was hereditary from one generation to another. For example, divine law ordains that a woman is not entitled to become a village chief and hence women are forbidden from holding such a position. The belief behind is that a village if ever ruled by a woman is cursed in the eye of God as this is against his will. The priest always tells this and so the people believe it without questioning. The priests wielded considerable

authority over the people whose lives were at one time intricately bound with countless taboos. As W.C. Smith puts it effectively, “Where something is wrapped about with tradition and supported by magic there is no difficulty in compelling the individual to yield to the village”.

**b. Man-made Laws.**

Man-made laws are those, which were enacted by the wise men of the village from time to time. However in the recent past no new man-made law has been incorporated in the existing laws. In fact, these have been coming from time immemorial and, perhaps no one knows who made these laws. All laws are unwritten and handed down by oral tradition. This does not make them flexible. On the contrary, they are rigid as any written codes could be and there is hardly any room for alteration. Numerous folk songs and stories coming down from generation to generation speak of the strictness of their laws, the superstition attached to them and the cruel punishment awarded to those who violated them. For example, the warrior must observe certain conduct on the eve of the battle. One such conduct of a warrior was to abstain from physical conduct with his wife in order to keep himself pure and be prepared for the happenings of the next day. Failure to comply with this law, it was thought, would bring death for the person, and what was worse: bring defeat for the entire village. No man,

therefore, had the audacity to break this law for fear of inviting the wrath of both God and man. Any warrior breaking this law was punished with death (24).

## 1. LENYI (Religion)

Ancestral religion plays a very significant role. Religion is a way of beliefs which is related to sacred things. Spirits were believed to be present everywhere and this is observed in *The Hidden World of the Nagas, Living traditions in Northeast India and Burma*:

The Naga world was once full of Spirits. Every tree, Shrub, Hillock, every body of water harbored a spirit or demon. Spirits were seen to cause all natural phenomena-thunder, storms, rain, wind and illness. Man was considered an integral part of this animated nature... ( Stirn and Peter Van Ham 92).

The belief of the Nagas in spirits and nature is pointed in *The Seven Sisters of India*:

“according to animistic belief, numerous Gods, demons and spirits inhabit the earth and are the forces underlying its myriad phenomena. Natural phenomena are attributed with supernatural powers, revealing the peoples’ deep-seated reverence for wind, rain, thunder, rivers and trees. The hierarchy of the different spirits varies from tribe to tribe” (Stirn and Peter Van Ham 43).

Verrier Elwin in *Nagaland*, has described that the religion of the Nagas is a type which is common throughout tribal India:

There is a vaguely imagined supreme creator and arbiter of mankind, and many minor deities, ghosts and spirits of trees, rivers, hills: all nature is alive with unseen forces. There are priests and medicine-men who placate these spirits, banish those who give disease, attract those who help and guard, and who take the lead in the rites and festivals which stimulate the processes of agriculture, bless the marriage bed and protect the craftsman at his work.

Naga ideas of the after-life are confused and vary from tribe to tribe, but there is universal agreement that the soul does not perish at death. Some says it goes onward by narrow path guarded by a spirit with whom it must struggle; some says that the good souls go to a village of death towards the sunrise, the bad to a less pleasant place towards the sunset (10).

The practices and beliefs of the Chakhesangs are described in *Socio-Cultural Heritage of Kuzhami Chakhesang Nagas*:

The Religious beliefs and practices of *Chakhesang* people is known as *Medani* religion. They believe that *Medani* was one of

the fathers of *Chakhesang* people. The history of oral tradition shows that *Medani* was the person who gave all the religious instruction. That is why they called this religion a *Medani* religion. In *Medani* religion there is no written dogma about the idea of God and faith. But it is well expressed in the religious rituals. God is known as *Menupi*. *Menupi* is the father of gods and *Eruzu*, mother of gods. He is the Creator of the Universe, powerful and omnipresent (Lohe 69).

They believe in the existence of two types of spirits, one type is known to be benevolent and the other to be malevolent. The benevolent spirit/s is believed to be the spirit who is responsible for the success, welfare and prosperity of the human race. This spirit is believed to protect and guard the humans from all sorts of natural calamities all kinds of misfortune. So, they follow a tradition of offering the first fruit, food wine from plates and cups as a share for *Menupi* before taking or for that matter even before drinking *hazi* (Local brew).

They also believe that the malevolent spirit is dangerous and causes destruction to all human affairs that all forms of human sufferings, natural calamities, diseases, accidents of various kinds, etc occurs because of the work of this type of spirit.. V. K. Nuh highlights J.H. Hutton's in *Nagaland Church and Politics*, about the Nagas and comments, "The Nagas are well built and enthusiastically looking for a true God and are also religious (50)". Sacred things like stones were worshipped by the Nagas as expressed by Harish Chandola:

All Naga tribes worshipped memorial stones. Even today, in the village of *Khezhakenoma* which falls in the Naga area of Manipur, is their first stone memorial... Villages had stones that were sacred. These were considered as living souls (214).

All the rituals were performed by the village Priest. Religion occupied a vital role in the society because its beliefs governed all the important events and happenings in the village. Since they believed that supernatural forces caused natural calamities like hailstorms, droughts, earthquakes, famine, even death, for which they observed *Menyi*, a day sacredly maintained for worshiping and to appease the Gods so that misfortunes do not befall them. They observe a day, if needed more days, as a sign of acknowledging their powers and of their need for repentance.

The people of the past believed that there were certain rocks, stones or trees where the spirits stayed or took it as their home. And so they restricted themselves from touching them or harming them. If they cause any disturbance, it may result in disaster, misfortune and death.

They believed that all the actions of the people will be judged by Menupi. If and when any difficult case would come up for hearing, the Jury would give the verdict to the person who would swear in the name of Menupi and solve the problem. If a person does wrong and swears falsely, God's curse will be upon his or her next generations to follow, is what the forefathers believe in.



The folklore of *Menupi* has played a very significant role in its contribution to the growth of Chakhesang culture today. It was not so difficult for the believers of *medani* religion to accept Christianity. This was because, they believed as the Christians do, in one Supreme creator God; the Creator of the entire Universe who is powerful and Omnipresent. It seems that the transition from *Medani* religion to Christianity, because more acceptable for this reason. So, the transition of the Chakhesang people to Christianity was smooth despite initial problems. This culminated in the Chakhesang Nagas giving up head hunting. The present generation has a great responsibility to preserve, safeguard and propagate Chakhesang folklore for the future generations to come. And observe the changes that have come about right from the time of our forefathers, the transition times, with the advent of Christianity, to the present day scenario. According to Verrier Elwin he speaks of religion in *Nagaland*:

Naga religion is of a type common throughout tribal India. There is a vaguely imagined supreme creator and arbiter of mankind, and many minor deities, ghosts and spirits of trees, rivers, hills: all nature is alive with unseen forces. There are priests and medicine-men who placate these spirits, banish those who give disease, attract those who help and guard, and who take the lead

in the rites and festivals which stimulate the processes of agriculture, bless the marriage bed and protect the craftsman at his work.

Naga ideas of the after-life are confused and vary from tribe to tribe, but there is universal agreement that the soul does not perish at death. Some say it goes onward by a narrow path guarded by a spirit with whom it struggle: some think it finds its final home below the ground, many believe that it takes the form of various insects, especially butterflies: some say that the good soul goes to a village of the Dead towards the sunrise, the bad to a pleasant place towards the sunset (10).

Burial rites are strictly followed among the Chakhesang Nagas in the olden times. The reasons for their death are examined as of the time and cause of their death for which the priest gives them the appropriate ritual. When an elderly person dies, guns were fired. Again, that “Naga religion is intimately related to feasting practices as celebrations of life and life’s beauty” has also been stated by Aglaja Stirn and Peter Van Ham (95).

A 93 year old, *Keziütshulo Marhu* from *Lasumi* village, narrated about some rituals practiced by the Chakhesangs and one of them is ‘*Thogha*’ ritual which he had seen and participated for two consecutive years. He said that, this is a

ritual observed after the celebration of 'Rünye' festival for 10 days. This ritual is observed to find out the predictions of crops, weather, the possibility of war by communicating with the spirits.

### **Kerhiketshü**

After celebrating *pupfü*, one morning is set aside when every male adult come out of the village perimeter and take an oath that 'No one shall lie, steal or break the law of the land' and whoever breaks these commitments should get cursed by saying 'Tshü', 'Oo phrüi, Oo phrüi'. Sharp pointed sticks were pierced into wrapped plant leaves, illustrating that whoever breaks the commitment should get his heart pierced like piercing of wrapped plants. They return after this is completed to the residence of the priest and curse those who have violated and who will be violating the village customary laws. Their belief is that the wrong doers will be badly cursed. Anybody suffering from serious, unknown or deathly diseases' are considered to to have been cursed. Therefore, the villagers fear to lie, steal, kill, or commit any other kind of offence. The village is peaceful and a good relationship is maintained. In *The Hidden World of the Naga, Living traditions in Northeast India and Burma*, this is what S.C. Sardeshpande, an Indian army major general stationed for four years, in Nagaland has to say:

The Nagas are magnificent! You have to see and live amidst them to believe this simple statement... There cannot be a better friend than a Naga once he identifies his friend; there cannot be a worst

foe than a Naga once he feels deceived and let down... His codes of conduct are superbly maintained... no house is locked in the villages. No guest goes without a present... ( Stirn and Peter Van Ham 11).

## **2. FUNERAL RITUAL**

Chakhesangs bury their dead. The corpse is generally retained for a day but if dead occurs in the morning the corpse is disposed off in the evening on the same day. If the person dies in the afternoon or evening, his/her corpse will be kept for a night and a day. The rituals followed have been documented in detail in *Socio-Cultural Heritage of Kuzhami Chakhesang Nagas*:

As soon as a person dies, some of the household's articles like gun, spear, bow, pot, plate, spoon, cup, etc are kept outside the house. After that, they wash the dead body with *keni-niso* [Bark of a tree used for washing] and *kephou phouso* [A tree root mixed with the bark for bathing dead bodies]. If a man dies his body will be washed by the man and if a woman dies the women will wash the body. They cover the dead body with a shawl, which he/she earned in performing different rituals, and make it lie on the bed. They arrange a cup of *hazi* to be kept near the bed of the dead body. They pour out the *hazi* with a spoon on the ground often till the body is buried.

They kill an animal on the day of funeral ceremony. The *Khurhomi* [Person in-charge of grave digging] is the first person to start beating the animal and others will follow him. They share the meat with all the clan members, intimate friends and relatives. *Khurhomi* also gets eleven pieces of meat as he is the one who digs the grave and performs the rituals. For *Khurhomi*, it is *kenyi* [taboo] to eat rice, drink *hazi* and eat meat before they bury the corpse. The number of animals killed depends on the family. If it is a rich family many domestic animals are killed but if the family is poor a lesser number of domestic animals are killed.

*Khurhomi* sees an omen for digging the grave. He takes *lenyi* and splits it into two and drops it beside the head and beside the foot. If both sticks face down, it shows that there is no grave and if both sticks face up, it is a sign of having a dead body under the ground. After seeing the omen *Khurhomi* plucks *ethsopa* [it is used for rituals during funeral], kills a small chicken and ties it with a hoe handle and keeps it on the *dotaka*. [last and lowest wooden beam placed from the front to the back of a house]

*Khurhomi* will ask small children to start digging the grave and he follows in digging the grave. After the digging starts, others will also help *Khurhomi*. Whoever helps the *Khurhomi* in digging the grave is given meat by the bereaved family.

When they are about to bury the dead body, *Khurhomi* would burn a bundle of thatches and swing the fire around the grave after which the dead body is placed in the grave. One piece of timber is used as a bed for the dead body. After that, slabs of stone are kept over the body and the grave is filled with earth.

If a young husband dies, the wife will bite *lerunitshe* and say “*khune chiye khu molo*”. [It seems so bitter but not]. After biting that *lerunitshhe* [the seed of a bitter leafy vegetable used to perform the ritual] it is *kenyi* to eat and drink anything that night. If a young wife dies, the husband would bite *lerunitshe* for his deceased wife.

The next morning, they make a sort of basket with *tekhrubo* [a type of bamboo used for the ritual] and keep all the goods such as necklace, etc. in that basket. In the evening, the bereaved would take it again. They collect *thonedzï*, [a type of garlic] *ekibe* [a type of paddy], and *edzïudzïwe* [a type of yam] and crush them into powder and bury it in the grave. It is *kenyi* to germinate the *ekibe*, *thonedzï* and *edzïudzïwe*. On the next day, the bereaved family will kill a fowl and offer the liver to the soul. From that day onwards, they cook rice and meat every evening before they prepare the food for the household. It is *kenyi* for the household to cook for themselves before cooking the food

for the soul. The system is known as *ketshikhumesa*. They believed that the soul comes and eats food every night till the end of the year.

On the fourth day, they would bring back all the household articles which are kept outside the house. If there are some utensils which they forgot to take out on the day of the death, they throw them away from the house. It is taboo to use them again in the house.

*Nubotshü* is the burial of the dead body without any rituals. If a person has more than three children and all of them die they would perform *nobotshü*. They dig the grave and bury the death without observing any rituals. They do not observe *menyi* for three days *bakhe*. They do not even use stone slabs to cover the dead body. They believed that, if they revere the dead body too much, another child may die (Lohe 79).

Funeral ceremonies are performed with rituals in *Medani* religion. They believe that even the dead should also be equipped for the afterlife. All this rituals have gone out of practice with the spread of Christianity.

An incident which brings to light about the existence of heavenly spirits is documented in *Tribal Ethical Values and Practices – A Search for A Better World*:

A person Wepelo Wezah said that Hisheno worked with the spirits of the Supreme Being. Whenever sick people came to him and ask him to heal their sickness, he would tell them to wait because he had to call his friends from heaven to come down for healing. He said that it was not he who heals, but the heavenly spirits. When they arrived, he would be smiling and the sick people received healings (Wezah 8).

Folklore is the very life of the people of a particular time and place in history. So Chakhesang Folklore, which is the very identity of the people, must be preserved. Chakhesangs may not practice them in all details, especially ancestral religion, but the authentic folklore must be documented, much of it especially the folk narratives are fading away.

The practices may slightly differ from village to village. But they all believe that the spirits eat and drink whatever they share with the spirits. Righteous living is practiced so that they will receive a good judgment from the spirits even after their death. And so this was passed down to generations. The fear of the Supreme Being followed by the forefathers and fear of the Supreme Being followed by the Christians of today, merged into each other.



### 3. KENYI (Taboo)

*Kenyi* means forbidden or taboo. The term *Kenyi* is very forceful and it restrains people from doing all kinds of evils in the society. A person who violates *Kenyi* is punishable and it is believed that the person will face some sort of calamity like unnatural death, sickness, blindness, dumbness and poverty. It is a very deep-rooted concept that is prevalent in the religious and social life of the people. Essentially, *Kenyi* helps people to abide by the law, rules and regulations of the society. It disciplines the people to live together in peace and harmony.

Taboo receive a lot of attention. It is especially a taboo to curse parents, uncles and aunties. Women are also prohibited to touch weapons, for it may bring bad luck, like loosing of life especially when men are on head-hunting expeditions.

It is the belief that the spirit of the Supreme Being watches over the conducts of the people so that if anyone ill-treats or prevents justice, they would face consequences of death, diseases, abnormality, lost of wealth, bad luck, which may even pass from generation to generation.

Some important types of *Kenyi*/Taboo as obtained from oral source are mentioned below:

It is *kenyi* for any village to permit an illegitimate son or daughter to live in their village.

It is *kenyi* for a person to swear falsely.

It is *kenyi* to remove land boundary stone or to extort from others and to cheat the mentally weak in the society.

It is *kenyi* to eat and drink before the elders.

It is *kenyi* for a man to marry a woman who is of the same clan.

It is *kenyi* to mistreat animals or say bad words to them for they may run away or may not grow fast.

It is *kenyi* for women to go hunting and fire guns.

It is *Kenyi* for men to involve in sexual intercourse when they are to proceed for wars, hunting and games.

It is *Kenyi* to spit on others.

It is *Kenyi* to cut the crops and trees planted by the other people.

It is *Kenyi* to kill anyone who enters a house and says 'father'.

It is *Kenyi* to insult handicapped person.

It is *Kenyi* for men to weave cloths.

It is *Kenyi* for the bereaved family to cook food for themselves before the food is being cooked for the dead soul. The forefathers believed that the dead souls come out at night and eat their food.

#### **4. MENYI (Sacred Abstention Day/Days)**

The *Menyi* is observed as a sacred day by worshipping God to protect them from natural calamities, famine, sickness, bad luck and drought. The observations of all these *Menyi* are conducted by the *Mewu* (village priest) in

the village. It is learned that a lot of *Menyi* days were observed on the first day of the month and in connection with festivals, diseases, plantation and harvesting of crops and seasonal changes. When *Menyi* is observed, strict rules and regulations were maintained, like, not speaking to strangers, abstention from field-work.

## **5. METYMI (Religious Mediums And Mediators)**

*Metymi* is a person who claims to have contact with spirits. *Metymi* acts as the mediator between men and spirits. It is believed that he could cure diseases and heal the sick with the power of spirits. He gives advice to the sick to offer chicken, cloth etc to be healed. Thus, people look up to him in times of sickness. People believe that *Metymi* could escort the soul of the death to *kethsimike* (A place where the soul of dead persons lived). They believe in the transformation of the soul where dead souls live a similar life as on earth. As will be seen, the religious, the political and the socio-cultural practices are inter-related.

## **6. ADMINISTRATION OF THE VILLAGE**

The British occupation of Kohima was a landmark in the history of the British colonization of Naga Hills. Administration remained informal. Law and order was maintained. The techniques of control and Native system of administration which functions under British paramountcy are described in *British*

*Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity* which is a collection of many documents:

This technique of administration served the dual purpose of keeping the Nagas free to govern themselves in their traditional ways and at the same time immensely reduced the responsibility of government from the detailed and costly affairs of administration. Thus the British adopted the native system of administration which would suit local tastes and at the same time be conducive to the maintenance of law and order among the tribes. In other words, the British did not rule to interfere in the internal affairs of the Nagas nor try to administer them from the European model. The colonial administration utilized two layers of native administrative agencies. First, the village chiefs whose traditional leadership at the village level were utilized for village administration. This began with the extension of British protection to the Naga villages in 1874, protection automatically bound the chiefs to abide by the policy of the government in matters of their relations with the tribes beyond British control as well as their obligation to pay annual house tax. However, symbolizing their special responsibility and relation with the administration, the chiefs were presented red blankets. Secondly, the Dobashi system which was first started in 1842 as a system of tribal residentary delegates from the different Nagas clan, had

been continued, since 1860, on a regular basis as the system was proved to be useful for the promotion of Anglo-Naga relations.

The administration of justice was assigned to the Gaonburas who maintained law and order in their respective village jurisdiction. On the other hand, the authority of the district officer was limited to receiving the collection of revenue from the Gaonburas, and to intervening in the village administration in such cases which could not be settled by the court of Gaonburas and Dobashis. This system of administration largely left the Nagas free to run their local administration without much intervention from the British. The Gaonburas village headmen became the agent of the colonial administration; the people had direct contact with their chief or headmen and had little to do directly with the district officials. Thus, the structure of the district administration left the Nagas within direct link with the alien rule. The British rule did not seriously effect the basic social structure of the Nagas, and thus it remained traditional in character (Venuh 41).

Under the colonial rule, the Naga hills has three layers

- (1). Village chief or elders (Gaonburas).
- (2). Dobashis (Interpreters)
- (3). District Administration (Deputy Commissioner and Sub-Divisional Officer).

At the beginning in 1882, Gaonburas (GB) were appointed following a local practice and the customs of various communities. There is a Head G.B. for each khel of the village (Ibid 49).

The village administration is carried out efficiently as elaborated in *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas*:

The administration of the village society was mainly in the hands of the clan elders, seers, and the *Mewu*, the Chief Priest. While the *Mewu* was the head of the village, his position was more of a spiritual leader. In the matter of criminal cases, settlement of disputes and war, the collective agreement of the clan elders was necessary and then judgment was passed (Venuh 127).

The *Mewu* cannot take food from other's house because he has too many restrictions in his diet. If in case, he has to take, his food has to be cooked from a fresh fireplace and new pots. Only then, he will consume whatever has been prepared for him.

### **Mewu** (Chief Priest/Village Head)

In the olden days the *Mewu* who is the village priest as well as the administrative head performed all the ancestral rites and rituals. He could also enforce law and order in the village. The village *Mewu* had the authority to

give a final decision on all matters relating to the disputes and maintain territorial integrity. Peace, harmony and solidarity of the people depended on him for proper administration of justice.

The *Mewu* was assisted by a council of elders known as *Pfüsemi*, who are representatives of different clans. They made secular laws for the village and even religious laws for the priests. The warriors occupied a great role in ensuring that the villagers were properly secured. They would guard the cultivators to their fields and guard them back home. Cultivation could be done in peace only by the security the warriors provide at the risk of their own lives. The warriors were therefore, regarded as having the highest social status but they did not have any power in decision making. Customary laws were established to settle disputes.

The term *Mewu* literally means fasting, to describe a person who has to perform the necessary rituals, done under ritual obligation. Thus, clearing every important ritual ceremony, the man has to fast in order to ritually sanctify the occasion. He is the chief ritual priest of the village, normally the first settler(s) and his sons become the next *Mewu* and his descendants occupy the position.

The *Mewu* wore only a white cotton kilt and his wife wore two, the one worn underneath being called '*Nethro*' (undergarment).

In order to be a *Mewu* a man has to qualify certain criteria

- (a) Only a male can be a *Mewu*.
- (b) The person has to be fully physically fit.
- (c) He should not be handicapped or have any scar.
- (d) The person has to undergo the prescribed rituals.
- (e) The person has to be of the same blood of the *Mewu* family lineage.

The day the *Mewu* passes away, the people observe a three-day *genna*, i.e.. a ritual which involves abstention from works, nobody goes to work in their fields. Normally, the eldest son is selected to be the next *Mewu*, *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity* states:

Any influential and powerful person in a village could not just become a chief. Although in normal course, the leader of the first settlement should become the chief of the village, ancient beliefs, traditions and customs prevailing among them required that he should have the sanction of the Gods before assuming his chieftainship; otherwise the people would refuse to obey him. This, he must prove by performing certain rites. One such rite was the sowing of the paddy. If the paddy seeds sown by him did not sprout or grow well, it was considered that he could not claim the right to be the chief. If the paddy grows well, he was to make another test, by throwing kidney beans which would not grow so



easily in the hilly areas. If the kidney beans sown by the chief grew well, he had to undergo the third test by rearing the living animals, particularly cocks. If the cock grew on time and in full harmony of high and low sounds, then it was believed that the Gods had favored him to be the chief of the village. Thus the assumption of chieftainship by a person is a long and arduous process; and he must undergo the hardship with great patience (Venuh 16).

### **Kuzhanu Khru (Tribute or Tax)**

The *Kuzhanu khru* was paid to the eldest man in a village, a sign of respect and a sign of honouring God. They expected blessings from God by giving a gift to the oldest man in the village. The oral history tells that *Kuzha* was the eldest among the groups who came to the same region during the course of migration and he was honoured with gifts and tributes. This trend of paying honour and tributes to the oldest passed on and its terminology came to a common usage in his name. The practice of paying tribute or tax to *Kuzhami* is said to have existed since time immemorial. The Chakhesangs have traditions of respecting the eldest man in any place.

So, whenever animals are trapped or hunted the best portion is given to the eldest person to receive his blessings. The blessing is sought so that one will be

prosperous in his agricultural activities and have success in hunting animals and victorious in warfare. Any person who does not have respect for the elders are cursed which is mostly feared by the people.

Later the custom of paying tribute became as a tax, *known as Kuzhanu khru, Kuzhanu* (people of *Kuzha*), *khru* (tribute or tax). This practice is understood or referred as a tribute to the eldest, having the power to control, subdue, maintain peace and make treaty. Further, details of its term, its origin and its significance is written in *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas*:

Time to time, the warriors visited the villages in these regions and collected tribute. These warriors had their ears decorated with red flowers as befitting their errand. This collection of tribute was called as *Kuzha-nu-khru*. Literally ‘*Kuzha*’ means *Khezha*, ‘*nu*’ means children or people and ‘*khru*’ means tribute. Though this practice of collecting tribute has practically ceased since the coming of the British, the practice of asking for tribute is still practiced in the village by the unclothed kids, who come to every house crying out ‘*naw, naw, naw*’ as imitating the mewing of the house cat and collect grain. They then cooked them and par-take a feast of it.

The first encounter by the *Leshemi* people with the Europeans was beyond the *Kabvii* (Kohima) when the warriors of *Leshemi*

village came into contact with the British. The British asked the warriors of the significance of the red flowers worn on their earlobes, and when the reason was given, the British asked the warriors to become *Gaonburas* (villagers) under their authority, and to pay them tax. The *Gaonburas* were then to be presented with a red shawl once every three years. The tax was set at *Mezo-ketsü* (Rs.3) per house, and of the *Mezo-ketsü* submitted, *Mezo-kele* (rupee 1) was to be retained by the *Gaonburas*. Thus, the *Kuzha-nu-khru* which was collected by the *Leshemi* village was taken over by the British who henceforth came to collect the same (Venuh 99).

This collection slowly spread through the villages where the *Kuzha* has a reference or a relation. *Kuzhanu khru* turned to become a kind of mission for the villages. Strong men or warriors were deputed. They are to control, make peace and treaties. The warriors also prepare themselves with weapons and necessary equipments. These men also performed rituals by keeping themselves pure and abstain from sexual contact with women food and wine preparing themselves for expeditions.

The expedition also involves a particular person in the village by the title *Cizie* who prepares himself physically, mentally and spiritually for the welfare of those who are to be sent for this expedition. He has to fast, restrain himself

from food and water for many days till the warriors return from their expedition. The *Cizie* becomes physically weak out of thirst and hunger in his extreme fasting state. His mouth could not be opened and the family members would use sickles to keep his mouth opened. In due course the villagers also comfort and encourage him saying that the warriors are about to reach. Such such information have been obtained from oral narration and which also is recorded in *Socio-Cultural Heritage of Kuzhami Chakhesang Nagas*:

In their mission they also carry things that are symbolic, significant and metaphorical. A few of these are *Khuchi takie* (dried fish), *Keniwu takie* (dried frog) - these two are signs of emptiness or dryness cursed upon the tax payers who refuse to pay. Another item is the devil nettle seeds called the *Thebvothsii* which is spread across the jhum land also as a curse to reap the plant not the paddy.

This *Kuzhanu khru* continued until the advent of the British. It has been told that when the *Kuzhami* warriors went for expedition in Sethekiema, they saw the mighty power of British soldiers with uniforms and guns and they spread the news to all the *Kuzhami*. The *Kuzhami* warriors carried the tribute: cloth, cowries shell, salt and other things and met the British East India

Company in Naga Hills. The British asked them “what are you carrying and for what purpose?” The warriors replied that it is *Kuzhanu khru* collected from the people. The British also asked to whom they pay their tributes to. And they replied saying that they pay the tributes to *Kuzha Kademi* [The Great *Kuzha*] (Lohe 103).

The introduction of the institutions of Dobhashi and Gaon Burah, during the colonial period is also mentioned in *Socio-Cultural Heritage of Kuzhami Chakhesang Nagas*:

With the advent of the British, they introduced the institutions of Dobhasi (DB) and Gaon Burah (GB) for the settlement of cases and administration. Dobhasi were interpreters-cum-political agents. They are government servants and receive their regular pay along with one red woolen blanket each. GBs are however, non-governmental agents. Hence, they have much power and prestige in the village (Lohe 91).

## 7. TRADITIONAL CUSTOMARY LAWS

Unwritten customary laws bind the life of the Nagas to customs and traditions. Customary laws existed in oral form, to maintain peace and order. Once a new village is set up the villagers are expected to live accordingly in their best civil behaviors and manners. They were expected to be righteous, disciplined, truthful, peaceful, obedient and respectful of one another.

There were times when disputes occur in villages which could not be settled, the disputants are then, asked to swear in the court of customary laws. Though customary laws exist as oral tradition and are not written down, they were based on the principles of equality and justice. *Naga Society and Culture*, has the following entry:

Naga society is custom bound society where customary laws are supreme than any other law (N.Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang 21).

In the villages, there is no rich or poor, no weak or strong, no man is considered to be wiser than the other, everybody is treated equally to live up to truth, peace, harmony and justice.

In Verrier Elwin's *Nagaland*, 'A fine people', he has stated about Naga people's opportunity of self development after Indian Independence:

On the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1960, Mr. Jawarharlal Nerhu told India's Lok Sabha (House of Commons) that his government had decided to create a new, sixteenth State within the Indian union to be known as Nagaland. Although this was hardly noticed by the world at large, it was the most momentous and exciting occasion in the extraordinary history of an extraordinary people.

For years the Nagas had been clamoring and struggling for some sort of autonomy. Had they realized it, the essentials of this had been for years within their grasp. For as Prime Minister said in his speech at the time, Our policy has always been to give the fullest autonomy and opportunity of self-development to the Naga people, without interfering in any way in their internal affairs or way of life.

India, he said again, 'achieved her independence thirteen years ago and the Nagas are as independent as other Indian citizens. We have not the slightest desire to interfere in the tribal customs and usage of the Nagas or in their distinctive way of life' and in the new State they should be able to find the fullest opportunity for self-expression (1).

Today special provision in respect to the state of Nagaland is given to its people in, *The constitution of India*:

Article 371 A. Special provision with respect to the State of Nagaland.

(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution,-

(a) No Act of Parliament in respect of

- (i) Religious or social practices of the the Nagas,
- (ii) Naga Customary Law and Procedure,
- (iii) Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice involving decisions according to Naga Customary Law  
(Ramasubramanian 444).

Mention has been made in Verrier Elwin's *Nagaland* about a document concerning Naga customary laws:

Its preamble recognized the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes. It went on to establish that all cases, civil or criminal, arising between Nagas within the Naga Hills should be disposed of by duly constituted Naga courts according to Naga customary law.

On the executive side, the general principle was accepted that what the Naga National Council was prepared to pay for, the



Naga National Council would control. No laws passed by the Provincial or Central Legislatures, which would materially effect the terms of the agreement or Naga religious practice, would have legal force without the consent of the Naga National Council.

Land with all its resources in the Naga Hills would not be alienated to a Non-Naga without the consent of the Council. On taxation the agreement was that the Naga National Council would be responsible for the imposition, collection and expenditure of land revenue, house-tax and such other taxes as might be imposed by it.

The then administrative divisions should be modified so as to restore all its forests to the Naga Hills district and bring as far as possible all the Nagas under one unified administrative unit. (52)

There would be a legislative assembly to which the council of Ministers of the new State would be responsible. Certain safeguards, similar to those in the existing Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, would be provided for the religious and social practices of the Nagas, Naga customary laws and procedure and the ownership and transfer of land (Ibid 83).

Section 7 gives protection to Naga law and customs and runs as follows:

No Act or law passed by the Union parliament effecting the following provisions shall have legal force in Nagaland unless specifically applied to it by a majority vote of the Naga Legislative Assembly –

1. Religious or social practices.
2. Customary Naga laws and procedure.
3. Civil and Criminal Justice so far as these concern decisions according to Naga Customary law. The existing laws relating to administration of civil and criminal justice as provided in the Rules for the administration of Justice and police in the Naga Hills District shall continue to be force.
4. The ownership and transfer of land and its resources.’

The traditional system of tribal councils is continued in section 8: ‘Each tribe shall have the following units of rule-making and administrative local bodies to deal with matters concerning the respective tribes as areas:

1. The Village Council
2. The Range Council
3. The Tribal Council.

These Councils will also deal with disputes and cases involving breaches of customary laws and usages.

Appeals will lie to (1) the District Court-cum-Sessions Court (for each district), the High Court of Assam and the Supreme Court of India and (2) the Naga Tribunal (for the whole of the Nagaland) in respect of cases decided according to Customary Law (Ibid 85).

The British administration brought about changes in the politico-judicial and political structure of Chakhesangs. Administrators were based on kinship system. Therefore:

They introduced *Gaon Burah* as clan representatives. Initially there were a few *Gaon Burahs* in the village as clan representatives. But due to the growth of population, the numbers of GBs were increased. The British imposed *Kuzhanukhru* (House tax) to all Naga households and the GBs collected them. Till today the *Kuzhanukru* is collected for the present government by the GBs. After the introduction of the GBs, there was a transfer of judicial power from the *Mewu* and *Pfuisemi* became the authority of religious rituals only. The head GB presides over the village general assembly whenever it is held. All the cases in the village as well as inter-village cases are now settled by the GBs (Ibid).

The GBs were the sole authority until the villages set up the village council in the political and judicial administration. The GBs maintained all the rules pertaining to law and order as adopted by the village general assembly. Irrespective of the clan, the GB is selected whether he is a Christian or not. The village General assembly is the sole legislative organ of the Chakhesang village working under the same principles of a modern legislative assembly. This institution of direct legislation is a distinctive feature of village democracy which finds fullest expression in mass meetings. In the village assembly all the legislative matters are discussed and resolutions are adopted. The village council is entrusted with the executive and judicial functions:

The old systems of hereditary institutions of *Mewumi* and *Pfüsemi* have disappeared and are replaced by modern village political structure. By introducing this new system of direct democracy, villagers now elect the members of the village council from among themselves to carry out the executive and judicial functions of the village. The *Mewu* and *Pfüsemi* institutions were devalued by various exogenous factor viz: Christianity, administration and State policy. Likewise, the powers of the GBs are now reduced with the establishment of the village council. Today, the Village Council is the highest authority in the Chakhesang villages (Ibid 92).

Various laws and acts pertaining to empowerment of the Nagas is given in detail in *Nagaland Village Empowering Laws (A Compilation)*:

### **The Nagaland Village Councils Act, 1978**

**(Nagaland Act No. 1 of 1979)**

Received the assent of the Governor on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1979.

an Act

to consolidate and amend the law relating to constitution of Village in Nagaland and to regulate their duties and functions and for matters connected therewith.

It is hereby enacted in the twenty-ninth year of Republic of India as follows:

#### **Short title: Extent and Commencement**

1. (i) This act may be called the Nagaland Village Councils Act, 1978.
- (ii) It extends to whole of Nagaland.
- (iii) It shall come to force on such date as the State Government may by notification in the Gazette; appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act. (Angami 1)

In adjudication of the cases, the village court is presided over by the chairman of village Council. There is historical legacy of customary laws which are adaptive and accretive by adding new rules to adjust with demands of a new social system. All fees or fines imposed in accordance with the village

customary laws are documented in *Socio-Cultural Heritage of Kuzhami Chakhesang Nagas* as given under:

The processes and procedures for settlement of disputes are known as *Teshe*. It can be a *Kajü Teshe* (Land dispute case) etc. Generally, they hold the case in the residence of the priest, but most of the land and water dispute cases are held at place of dispute. The complainant has to verbally inform to the *Mewu*, (in the past) Head GB (in the present), or village council Chairman (in the present). He summons his colleague and fixes the time and date. Unless the subject matter of the case is very urgent the trial is usually fixed at a convenient time of the judge as well as both parties of complainant and respondents. If it is an urgent case such as murder, attempt on other's life, etc. the trial is conducted at the earliest possible.

It is a custom that the complainant has to provide *Hazi* (Local rice beer) or tea for the judge if the case is settled at the spot in the morning. But if it takes the whole day in the paddy field or outside the village, the complainant has to provide heavy lunch such as meat, rice and *hazi* (Local brew) or tea (Lohe 139).

Traditional Customary laws were established to settle disputes. Some cases as obtained through interactive sources are listed below:

1. If anyone had stolen anything the village elders would give orders to pay *Ebe* (rice) of 70 *Evü* (a big basket bigger than tins, approx. 20 kgs). They usually did not take all but gave some *evüs* back to the owner; things stolen will also be given back.
2. If one had eloped with a married person, the eloped male would have to pay a cow measuring 7 *Epvü* (foot, at least 20 centimeters) to the husband of the woman he had eloped with.
3. Any person involved in the act of poisoning was chased out of the village for 7 years and could return after 7 years.
4. When they *Esü* (swear) the person who swears should bring *aphu* (life), consisting of 7 or 8 families.
5. If one had raped a woman, one was asked if that happened below or above the road. If that happened above the road there was no fault found which suggested they were courting each other. If the incident occurred below the road it was found to be guilty. A fine would be imposed by way of paying with *Ebe* or any animal specially *Efü* (fowl)

In recent years, many changes have started taking place in different dimensions in the various spheres of Naga society, but hardly any change is identified in the traditional customary laws. It may be pointed out, here, that lack of women's voice in decision-making under customary laws, is conspicuous.

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## CHAPTER 4

# FOLK NARRATIVES

Folk narratives of the oral tradition having survived since time immemorial, from one generation to the next, have great authentic value for having passed the test of time. The main feature of a folktale is its oral tradition which is a practice especially of the elderly people in villages; passing down tales from one generation to the next.

Chakhesang folktales have also come down the ages in a similar way, through ancient oral tradition has been stated in *The Chakhesangs, A Window To Phek District* interestingly:

One also cannot deny the richness of stories that emerge from the rural hearts of Phek district. With so many interesting myths, folklores and traditional beliefs that revolve around the lives of the people here, it is fascinating to note that the culture of the tribe in itself promises a variety of colours for an enriching experience (Krocha and Rekha Rose Dukru ix).

There is no written record but only stories retold for a long time. Only in recent time, folktales are being documented, albeit few and far between. They have been narrated, time and again, year after year, from one generation to the next.

These tales have allegorical elements and are inspirational. They are not just bedtime stories or lullabies. Villagers use them to educate and cite the stories as an example. Even today they are referred to and compared with the lives of mankind.

The Chakhesang Nagas feel very intimately related to the animal world around them. This is seen not only in many Chakhesang cultural expressions, but also in their mythological beliefs and derivative social customs.

Chakhesang folk narratives are numerous. They talk about mankind, creatures, the Earth and the Heavens. They may be allegorical and illustrative. Some are dramatic, thrilling, melancholic, romantic, and educative. They are told not only to educate the younger generation but are also used as illustrative references in village gatherings. Folk narratives told orally continue and are expected to live in the minds and hearts of generations to come and become sources of encouragements, amusements and leisure.

## **1. A CHAKHESANG NAGA ORAL TRADITION**

### **Life in the Keyikie/Kekhrokie (Dormitory)**

To look at dormitory life from a closer angle, and get a picture of subtler details, given below is a sample of a traditional oral interaction when boys visit girls at their *Keyikie/Kekhrokie* (Dormitory) which has been documented by Lohe in his book, *Social-Cultural Heritage of Khuzami Chakhesang Nagas* :

Boys : *Eyimiro ! ediwi khato wu ami keshümi mepu ye?*

Dear ladies! What have you taken for meal and come to  
fellowship with unworthy men like us?

Girls : *Etshü khato wu nomi kewemi mepuya.*

A good meal of meat and come to fellowship with you good men.

Boys : *Khato keso mone ?*

Did you really have a good meal of meat?

Girls : *Khato keso.*

Yes, we really had.

Boys : *Oh! Am keshümi nhe pumvü moi purüra krala raro.*

We thank you for not being reluctant to disclose that to unworthy  
men like us.

Girls : *Keto keso mai ediwi kralai tshüma.*

It is not food or drinks, so why thank us.

Boys : *Enimi sepu shü ketokeso dzüyi kra.*

The words of a lover is more valuable than food.

Girls : *Nomi nimi kemomishü amihiam.*

We are the ones whom you don't admire.

Boys : *Ami nimishü nomi hiam.*

You are the ones whom we admire.

Girls : *Nomi ketini puya ne nomi lin kesoma.*

Your mouth says so, but your hearts are not true.

Boys : *Soh! Nomi we tshowe dai dekhima.*

If your pride says so what can we do?

Girls : *Ami tshowe, thsowepfo lade tasie whuü*

Our pride has left us with no one considering us to talk to.

Boys : *Nomi whuüira diketshümi be rilo?*

If women don't have people to talk to who will?

Girls : *Amini bera diketshümi whu dilo.*

If we are worthwhile who are the unworthy to be talked to.

Boys : *Sho! Nomi esepu moni menaketi kelose mezh noh.*

Your words are like the thread coming out from a  
beautiful *Menaketi* (Ear-piece as ear-ring).

Girls : *Sho! Nomi ni esepu moni etsümou kele lo mezi noh.*

Your words are like coming out from *etsümou* ( necklace).

Boys : *Shoh! Nomi ni tekronyi do karhü epoukele dze pfo no mi*

*nimi tsü jai keso no ?*

Is it true that you gifted a wrapped *Karhü* (dried local beans) with  
a *Tekronyi* leaf for your lover?

Girls : *Shoh! Nomi ni Ewutejonyi so karhü zhole kele dzepfo no*

*mi nimi tsü jai kesole?*

Is it true that you also gifted a wrapped handful of  
*Karhü* with *Ewutejonyi* leaf for your loved one?

Boys : *Shoh! Nomi Thomhikusü pfo nomi nimi thi thi kezo jai keso no?*

Is it true that you seive rice powder with wings of a fly for your  
dear one?

Girls : *Shoh! Nomini Ecülhibou khupfo nomi nimi thi thijai kesole?*

Is it true that you pound rice with the arms of the flea for your  
loved one?

Boys : *Luzakhunie palho tekhri ni tahunyi fü mewi ne cüye, nomi*

*keyimini hatsülewu tshü be iloh.*

We thought we heard the whispers of Pine leaves  
from Luzakhune (a forest) but it is you *keyike* girls  
singing *hatsülewu*.

Girls : *Shoh! Tahulupa cüsonyi fü mewi ne shüyi nomi kekhromi ni*

*teleyi tshü ya hi?*

We thought we heard the whispers of Oak leaves from *Tahulupa*  
(a forest) but it is you *kekroke* boys singing *teleyi*.

Boys : *Shoh, ele kewe ele riyo.*

Let us conclude in good time.

All : *Oh, sho a ro medu emo we re.*

All : Okay. Wishing everyone sweet dreams (22).

Keeping in view the seemingly light-hearted casual interaction of the boys and girls, it is significant to note that it is common, even now, to greet another in a passing encounter, or to initiate a conversation between two or more people,

by enquiring whether meal (morning or evening, as the case may be) has been taken, of what was cooked or is being cooked. Nagas being non-vegetarian, meat is uppermost as the preferred choice of food item. What may be viewed as poor self-image, of being 'unworthy', also stems from diplomacy, of considering others better than oneself, and a way to check individual egotism and maintain social harmony.

Amply clear, is also the fact that Naga women enjoy a certain position of equal social standing and respectability, although they lack crucial voice in decision-making, which is a burning question today. The group's conversation can be deemed flirtatious, but the humour and wit involved, which are greatly appreciated by Nagas as a whole, cannot be overlooked.

If the girls sound coquettish, beating around the bush, the need to be cautious of flatteries, the desire for sincerity and faithfulness, is universal. Thus, it can also be seen as inculcating awareness of potential dangers, as well as right behaviour, for both groups.

The exchange of words leads to teasings and banterings which seem to have room enough to accommodate spontaneous expressions unendingly. However, that the time factor is important, 'Let us conclude in good time', is sounded and marks the boys' departure. Towards the end of the visit, one also notes the poetic utterances with the reference of each other to their natural surrounding, of the 'whispers of pine leaves' and 'Oak leaves'.

A word about bidding each other 'sweet dreams', in parting. There is a difference here, say, from a westerner's casual bidding. For ancestral Nagas in general, and the Chakhesangs, in particular, dreams occupy a significant place in their lives. Dreams, it is said, can actually control and guide their activities like hunting, war expeditions, marriages and so on.

Today, traditional morungs/ dormitories as informal centres of learning have given way to formal educational institutions to cater to the needs of changing times. But remains of the oral tradition reflect a way of life that has come to define the identity of a unique people called Nagas, of which Chakhesang is a tribe.

It is the similarity of the oral traditions that largely gives unity to the, otherwise, independent group of tribes, speaking different languages, which come under the term 'Naga', a name given to them by others. Ancestral way of life has passed away, but intrinsic socio-cultural values of social harmony, mutual respect, diligence, sincerity of feeling, wit and humour, etc. remain, to emulate, to propagate, and to be appreciated.



## 2. FOLKTALES

The Folktales of the different tribes of the Nagas in the Northeast of India can be categorized into different types of tales: tales of orphans, step-mother tales, animal tales, supernatural tales, romantic tales, fables, origin tales, heroic tales, mythological tales etc. Aarne-Thompson tale type index “organizes folktales into broad categories like animal tales, fairy tales, religious tales, etc. Within each category, folktale types are further sub-divided by motif patterns until individual types are listed” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aarne%E2%80%93Thompson\\_classification\\_systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aarne%E2%80%93Thompson_classification_systems)).

### 2.1 TALES OF ORPHANS

Folktales of orphans are heart rending, inhuman and tragic. It causes heartaches to the narrator as well as the listener. One cannot imagine the situations of the orphans treated so cruelly by the stepmother or the miserable life without parents. Yet, most of the stories end in such a way, that misfortunes are overturned. Orphans mentioned in the story are usually good natured and possess the quality of endurance.

#### **The Two Orphans**

Life stories of children who have lost their parents though, sad is faced with happiness one way or the other, will be seen in the story referred from *Folktales of Kuzhami Nagas* as:

There was once a humble family who lived very happily but not for long. The two lovely children, one boy and a girl; soon lost their parents one after another due to some unfortunate circumstances. The children had to fend for themselves, in doing all the household work, and field work at a tender age. They had to learn to cook by themselves, compelled to work both at home and in the fields. Every single passing day was as miserable as the other day. They worked in the field weeping and when night time approached; their tears would wet their pillows. Though they worked hard, they could not accomplish much work and everyday they returned home tired and exhausted at sunset.

One day when they went to work in the fields as usual, they found to their utter surprise that someone had done the work for them and there was some food kept for them in the hut as well. This went on for quite some time, until their curiosity got the better of them. So they planned to solve the mystery. They decided to lie in wait secretly and witness for themselves; who, their benefactors were. In the evening both of them hid in the nearby woods in the pretence of leaving for home. As they waited, it was getting dark and all of a sudden they were surprised to see two figures approaching the field. When the two figures came nearer to them, they were dumbstruck. The two figures happened to be none other than their own parents. They were so happy to know that their parents were helping them. They wanted to follow their parents to see how and where they lived. They decided to jump into their parents' bags. The boy jumped into his father's bag and was successful. The girl missed jumping into her mother's bag. Unfortunately, the father saw the boy, his own son and

told him to come out of the bag, as it will not be comfortable for him to be with the dead. The boy refused to come out and was carried across mountains and valleys, into the kingdom of the dead. He was very happy to be with the dead. One day they went hunting and a rat was killed, which to the dead was a wild boar. He saw that the life of the dead was very different.

After some days life became very boring and he told his mother that he wanted to go back to his sister. His mother agreed and packed lunch for him, telling him to eat the lunch at a particular place. Feeling sorry for his sister, whom he had left alone, he took the lunch home to share with his sister. As he was about to share the lunch with his sister, the lunch changed into a bundle of husk which they could not eat. The boy remembered what his mother had said where to eat the lunch. So, they decided to go to that very place. After reaching that place, on opening the packet they found that the lunch pack contained so many sweet items of food which they enjoyed to their heart's content. They were filled with happiness. Though they missed their parents, they were able to work harder and live a better life, yielding a bountiful harvest every year (Kapfo 13).

Like this folk tale, there are other stories where the dead comes back or the living enters the world of the dead. For ancestral *Chakhesangs*, much of their concern and yearning is for the earthly life. Their idea of after-life is hazy. In any case, their simple, yet well-founded logic is that if one lives well and the gods are appeased, the death will take care of itself.

## **Sokutsu**

A story of longing for home is depicted in *Folktales from Nagaland* as shown:

Once upon a time there lived a boy named Sokutsu whose parents died in his childhood. He was then brought up by his aunty. She loved him very much.

One day, his aunty was weaving while he was playing nearby. Suddenly the weaving-sword slipped away from her hand striking the boy on his forehead. Sokutsu was by nature too sentimental. He took the incident too sentimental. He took the incident as a deliberate one. Out of anger he immediately ran down to the village-gate where he remained busy for sometime playing alone.

Soon after some unknown basket dealers arrived there on business purpose and saw Sokutsu.

It then occurred to their mind to earn something by selling away the boy. So deciding they captured Sokutsu and brought him to another village a few hours later for sale. A girl of that village purchased the boy from them. This girl happen to be the only child of a rich couple who were always anxious to make their daughter happy and joyous. To please her, one day, they told that she might buy anything of her choice no matter without their consent or even in their absence. So deep was their love and affection for the daughter.

The girl felt immensely happy to have a nice looking boy like Sokutsu. She then took him to her house and fed him. The parents were by then away

working in the field. With the approach of the evening the girl became anxious. For she was afraid that her parents might rebuke her for buying the boy. So she hid the boy somewhere on the roof of the house before they returned home. The parents came home. After a short while they noticed some drops falling down from the roof. They could understand nothing and enquired of the cause from their daughter. The girl in reply told that she had washed some utensils and had put all those on the roof to dry up. And the drops, she asserted were nothing but of the water falling down from the recently washed utensils. Hardly had she finished her words when the parents looked at the roof and saw a boy there. He was weeping and tears from his eyes were rolling down. They looked at the girl suspiciously while she disclosed everything to them. On hearing the couple decided to adopt the boy. In course of time the boy grew into a healthy, handsome young man. He had immense interest in hunting, sports and gradually schooled himself renowned in both. But unfortunately all the youths of the village were very much jealous of his quality and wanted to harass him.

It was winter. The villagers were busy arranging dresses and such decorative articles for an inter-village festival. The custom was, as it is even present day, there in such a festival all the able bodied male population of a village would go to another village and the host would entertain them. The village youths took the chance and kept all about the festival secret from Sokutsu. He anyhow managed to know that it was his native village who would entertain the village he was living then though he was not aware of the exact date of the occasion.

On the scheduled day, they moved for the other village as arranged. Sokutsu was surprised but could not follow them mainly because he dared not go without ceremonial dress. At once he went down to the forest, collected some colourful feathers of birds, adorned himself with those plumes and hastened out for his native village. It was just before reaching, they saw Sokutsu coming behind them. Then they decided not to refrain him as it was too late now.

Meanwhile they entered the village and were received warmly. And as arranged, everyone went away with his host concerned but Sokutsu refused to be the guest of anybody. He was rather trying to recollect the house of his aunty and at last managed to be her guest.

But his aunty could not recognize him. As usual she offered wine to her guest in a dried gourd mug. Sokutsu was unmindful, busy recollecting his childhood. Suddenly he saw a toy hanging on the roof and jumped up saying, "This is the same toy of my childhood." The woman was stunned. She thought the guest was none but Sokutsu. Soon after he narrated her the whole event. After listening to him she changed the mug in which Sokutsu was offered wine a few minutes ago. For that was an ordinary mug. She served him wine in another mug made of buffalo horn which could only be given to a dearest and nearest one and entertained him heartily.

The festival was soon over. Sokutsu returned to that village and married the girl who bought him from the basket dealers. But he was not happy. Because the

villagers did not give him the honour and prestige of a bonafide inhabitant rather they treated him as a stranger. So he resolved to go back to his own village. Yet he open his mind to her one night but of no avail. Thereafter the wife became alert and took all sorts of precautions as she was afraid that her husband might go away secretly. Since then she used to tie up her husband's cane-knee-cape with her cloth before going to sleep every night. Few days thus rolled on.

One night when she was deeply asleep, Sokutsu cut the cane-knee-cape with his pointed nails and left her. Soon after she woke up and found Sokutsu missing. She then hurriedly took some of the decorative garments belonging to Sokutsu and ran after him but could not catch him up. Yet she went on running till she reached the bank of a river wherefrom she saw Sokutsu going ahead crossing the river. She called aloud " Sokutsu, Sokutsu please look back to me once." Sokutsu recognized her voice, looked behind and saw her tearing off his garments. She thought that seeing her destroying his dresses, he would come back but Sokutsu was firm in his decisions.

Sokutsu reached his native village and stayed with his aunty. But he had no peace of mind. Because he could not forget his wife. So he decided to bring her by any means. He thought out a plan. One day he asked his friends to accompany him to a head-hunting raid. They agreed upon and set out. On reaching his wife's village he asked them to halt at a certain place.

He then advanced alone and climbed to a tree just nearby the well wherefrom his wife used to draw water. As expected his wife came down to the well to draw water and to her utter surprise saw the image of Sokutsu reflecting there. She looked upward, and saw the tree on which Sokutsu was hiding. Sokutsu immediately climbed down and caught hold of his wife and rushed towards his village with his friends. Sokutsu, however, did not tell his friends that the woman was his wife.

So on the way they asked him now and then whether it was time to chop off the head of the captured woman as was the practice then. But Sokutsu kept on replying, “No, not yet”. After reaching a certain spot near the village, Sokutsu told his friends to bring down their beloved wives to be killed along with his own wife. Thus, his friends came to know that the woman was none but Sokutsu’s wife and were very much ashamed of what they had said. Sokutsu lived with his wife very happily thereafter (39).

The descriptions of feasts, head hunting, etc. are some of the features about the Naga way of life. It may be noted here that the name *Sokutsu* also goes by the name *Ciekatsu*. The story of the individual being the same, irrespective of what names it goes under.



## 2.2 CRUEL IN-LAW TALES

There are a number of cruel-in-law tales which usually involves a young child, especially one where the mother dies early. An example is given here. In the *Fables from the Misty Mountains*, we find a story of a young motherless girl called *Avino* who lived with her brother and wife:

Her mother died when she could barely walk and her merchant father never returned from a voyage to some far off land after she learnt to speak. Thankfully, *Avino* had an elder brother who cared for her.

The brother became a merchant too. Before leaving for his journey, he married the daughter of a rich man. “Be good to my sister,” he told his wife before leaving. “She has never felt any hardship”, he added. The wife couldn’t tolerate *Avino*, the young girl was a burden she could do without. She forced *Avino* to do the chores, walloped her if she failed to complete a work in time. She didn’t even let her sleep inside at night. The poor girl would sit under a tree in a forest outside the village and cry all night. All animals and birds had pity on her, gave her food and became friends.

When the brother returned after a short trip, his wife behaved differently. She pretended to shower her love on *Avino* and didn’t let her soil her hands by working. Pleased with his wife, the brother left for a longer journey this time.

Avino's sister-in-law changed colours as soon as her husband left. She began thinking of chores the girl couldn't possibly fulfill. The very next day, she gave Avino a pot with three holes and ordered her to fill up with cold water from the pond. Avino knew this was impossible, so she went to the tree again and cried. The frogs took pity on her, jumped into the pot and blocked the holes for her to fill up with cold water. The sister-in-law, surprised was determined to assign her a tougher task.

The next morning she ordered Avino to bring a large bundle of firewood from the forest. "Don't you tie the bundle with a rope or thread", she warned. This time a snake came to Avino's aid. It coiled around the bundle of firewood for Avino to carry, slithering away after she put it down at home. Astonished, the sister-in-law now began depriving Avino of food. If that were not enough, she mixed wheat and rice on a large brass tray and ordered her to separate the grains. Avino cried again and this time a flock of sparrows helped her do the work before nightfall.

Angrier than ever, the sister-in-law handed *Avino* a bucket the following day and told her to collect white foam from the sea. The sea-shore was unknown territory, none of Avino's animal or avian friends were around to help her this time. She trekked days to reach the coast and every time she gathered foam to take back home, it turned into water.

Exhausted after trying again and again, she fell asleep on the shore. Avino had no idea how long she slept. Strange voices woke her up; she turned over to see a large ship dock. Many men disembarked, and among them was her brother.

Avino wept inconsolably and told her brother how she had suffered while he was away. After returning home, the brother sought an explanation from his wife and made her go through what she had meted out to his sister. The wife realized her folly and promised not to ill-treat Avino again (80).

There are many stories about cruel step-mothers. Mortality rate of young mother may be high. This folk tale is especially interesting because big water body is mentioned. It may corroborate the theory of migration of Naga tribes, that they once lived near the sea.

Their ornamental shells and boat-like log drums also points out to such a theory. R. R. Shimray comments:

Nagas must have come from the sea coast or at least were associated with some island or sea as is evidenced by their lifestyles and their ornaments which are noticed till today in many Naga villages (13).

Julian Jacobs is of the opinion that Nagas have some connection with the sea, for which he gives two possibilities:

Sea-faring peoples in out-rigger canoes might have brought this influence from island S.E. Asia to main land S.E. Asia and the Bay of Bengal, and hence overland to the Naga hills. Alternatively, it may be that the route was more directly overland from a postulated source area in southern China (12).

### **2.3 ANIMAL TALES**

#### **The Cat and The Tiger**

Many Naga tales revolve around animals and this story is such a type which has been recorded in *Folktales of Kuzhami Nagas*. The story goes:

Once upon a time, there lived a Tiger and a Cat in a jungle. They had never met each other before. The Tiger had heard about the cat and her cunningness. The Tiger was looking for an opportunity to meet the Cat, to test her. The Tiger had heard that the Cat was witty and that their physical features and appearance resembled each other. Their legs, arms, living habits and the way they preyed upon the other animals were found to be the same. But there was one thing that made the Tiger very eager to meet the Cat and that is to see her wits and tricks.

One fine morning the Tiger chanced to see the cat from the side. The Cat was waiting for her catch. The Tiger was very pleased to see the Cat. He requested the cat to come and meet him, so that they would be able to talk with each other. On seeing the tiger, the cat began to have fear as the tiger was much bigger and stronger, so she tried to get away. The tiger called out to the cat,

saying not to be afraid and that he will never harm her, after getting the assurance from the tiger, the cat slowly crept up towards the tiger.

When they came face to face with each other, the tiger was all praise for the cat. The tiger told the cat that he would like to learn more about her. The cat told the tiger that, there will not be anything for him to learn as he was a very big creature, much stronger than her, but if there was anything for her to do, the tiger was most welcome, to ask.

As she spoke to the tiger, she was always on her guard, all the time ready to escape as and when the tiger would pounce on her. In order to test the cat, the tiger asked the cat to climb the tree in front of them and come down swiftly to show her smartness. The cat did so by climbing up swiftly, and came down quickly without any difficulty with her head facing downwards. The tiger was very impressed and with the request from the cat, the tiger also climbed up quickly but came down slowly, with his head facing upwards. When the cat saw this, she told him to act like her and leave both his hands free. Listening to the cat, the tiger let go both his hands and fell down injuring his nose.

This trick made the tiger very angry and he chased the cat to kill her. The cat climbed up a tree quickly for safety. "I will not leave you", said the tiger. But the cat said that she will never come down, and that she will catch flies for her survival. The Tiger also said that he will sit and wait for the Cat to come down surviving on the Cat's droppings. With such arguments both of them stayed in their own places, not daring to move away because of their pride. The Tiger

became restless and soon fell asleep, though at times he tried and pretended not to. All this time the Cat was watching the Tiger and when she finally saw that the Tiger was fast asleep, the Cat slowly crept away. When the Tiger woke up, he searched for the cat but he could not find her. Finally he also went away feeling very unhappy. Remembering the words of the Tiger to eat her droppings, the Cat digs the earth to hide her stool and covers it up again with the earth. The Tiger also could not smell because of his nose injury and so till today it is believed that the Tiger's sense of smell is weak (Kapfo 230).

There are many tiger tales, here, folks belief of why and how tigers have weak sense of smell is accounted for and also the reason why cats hide their stool.

### **The Story of a Tiger and a Fox Marriage**

An animal folktale of Nagas taken from *Naga Folklores, Bridging Tradition with Conservation* by Nagaland Biodiversity Board, Government of Nagaland referring to the character of the fox is cited below:

A fox fell in love with a tigress and wanted to marry her however it did find an opportunity to express his love to the tigress. One day as the fox was roaming in the jungle in search of food he found a tiger lying dead on the way. The fox spared no time in making a plan to trap the tigress to marry him. The fox went to the tigress and reported that her lover was lying injured in the jungle and so wanted to talk to her for the last time. He also told that her husband wanted to consume the best rice beer and food prepared by his wife before he died. The

tigress was very sad and prepares the best food and rice beer and carried it to the jungle to feed her ailing husband. In the meantime the fox had already reached the spot in advance and had entered into the body of the dead tiger. When the tigress came the fox talked in the voice of the tiger and asked the tigress to feed him with the food and rice beer she had brought for him. The fox ate and drank the supply and after the feast he told the tigress its last wish. The fox in the skin of the dead tiger told the tigress to marry the fox after its death. It let the tigress promise to fulfill its last wish. The tigress promised and later got married with the fox.

The fox and the tigress lived as husband and wife for a long time. One fateful day, the couple made a program to go out together for hunting. They roamed in the jungle and finally saw a boar.

The fox was no match for the boar. However, it went forward to attack the boar, since it did not want to defame the status of being a husband. As the fox leap to devour on the wild boar, the boar kicked the fox on the nose. The fox returned to the tigress and pretended that the boar farted and it could not bear to go near it because of the smell. The tigress then went and killed the boar. They feasted on the meat of the boar. After they had their fill, they decided to carry the leftovers home. The tigress carried the larger portion of the meat and let the fox to carry the intestines and other visceral organs. However, that was too heavy for the fox to carry and as a result it left some pieces on its way

home. When the fox arrived home late with very little meat, the tigress complained and said that the fox was weak and had dragged home little amount of meat. However, the fox was very clever, it told the tigress (its wife) that it met many relatives on the way and had to stop to talk to them. He also lied to his wife that he had given some share of meat to relatives it met on the way (30).

This story depicts the witty personality of the fox.

## **2.4 TALES OF ORIGIN**

Stories of origin are well known among the Chakhesang people. These tales also explains why certain things are the way they are or behave the way they do. Some stories relating to this are found in *Naga Folklores, Bridging Tradition with Conservation* by Nagaland Biodiversity Board, Government of Nagaland are mentioned below:

### **Origin of Nakro Clan**

Once upon a time when a woman named, Swülü, was going to her field, she spotted an edible mushroom locally called 'Pekro'. The mushroom was of the size of a large wooden plate. She tried to pluck the mushroom but could not manage to break the mushroom. She then covered the mushroom with her basket and decided to pluck it when she returns home from the field. When she came back in the evening to pluck the mushroom she found a baby instead of



the mushroom. She took the baby home and named him 'Nakro' and this was how the Nakro clan originated. To this day the Nakro clan of Chakhesang tribe do not eat the Pekro mushroom in the belief that the mushroom was their ancestor (27).

### **A Cultivator and Earthworm**

The description about the relationship between a cultivator and earthworm as documented in *Tribal Ethical Values and Practices – a search for a better world* is presented here:

A cultivator began to cultivate his field and his crops did not grow well. He was extremely worried that he might not have any harvest and his family may face starvation. An earthworm noticed the sadness of the cultivator. So the earthworm came and asked the man, "What is the matter with you? I could see some problems in your face". The cultivator replied, "I am sad because soil is dry and my crops are not growing well". The earthworm replied, "Well, I could help you if you can agree (make a pact)". The man replied, "I would agree if you could help me". The earthworm said, "Do not hate (or despise) me. Do not crush me so that I will make your land fertile, and your crops will grow well". The cultivator replied, "Curse be upon me if I and my children despise you". From that time onward, the earthworm made the soil fertile with its excreta. Even today, children are told not to despise and crush earthworms because they made their land fertile and enable the land to produce good crops (146).

Such tales are educative and also shows the close relation between man and living creatures and dependence on each other.

### **Why the Sun rises to the Call of the Rooster**

Naga folktales also reflect relationship with celestial bodies and this story which depicts such relationship in *People, Heritage and oral history of the Nagas* is cited:

Once upon a time, the sun had a wife. Unfortunately, Man shot the wife with the catapult and she died. The grieving sun would not rise. Everyone, including the birds and animals excepting the rooster went and called upon the sun. But still, the sun would not rise. It was then that the rooster who was a very close friend of the sun went to a hill-top and called on the sun. When the sun did not answer, the rooster threatened to kill himself and then tuck up its head underneath its wings and lay down playing dead. When the sun spied his seemingly headless friend, he feared that the rooster had carried out its threat and came and lifted up his friend. The rooster suddenly jumps up and crowed. Since the sun has already risen, he couldn't retrace his steps, and since then has risen when the rooster crows (201).

This story is another tale that imaginatively explains why some things in life behave in a certain manner.

## **The Argument between the Grass Hopper and the Earthworm**

This story shows how if cursed, will face consequences:

One day, the grasshopper and the earthworm entered into hot argument. In the end, the earthworm cursed the locust that it may never reach the earth to die. Since then, the grasshopper has always clung to a plant or a stem when it is dying (Ibid 230).

Chakhesangs have a strong belief in the power of curses and blessings.

### **2.5 TALES OF BRAVERY AND COURAGE**

Bravery and Courage are vital for a man to gain status, respect and honour in life. Heroes are heroes because they are blessed with extraordinary skills of warfare. Some tales are even imagined beyond human's capability; the feat of bravery, the deed they portray or even the world they live in appear extraordinary. One's acts of achievements and heroism, spreads far and wide, such are the heroes that the rivals or the enemy tremors with fear by the whisper of their names. They are believed to be supernatural beings or the God himself; he is the rumor and the talk of the time. A man of such honour and respect becomes a legend and becomes a living legacy.

## **Sophüre and Lalule**

A story of bravery, which man earns in taking heads is beautifully intermingled with romance:

In the days of headhunting and warfare the bravest of all men or the hero was the one who had the privilege to take the hand of the most beautiful girl of a village. Such was *Sophüre* who was the hero and the bravest in the village. His bravery was known and his name was feared by all. His heroic qualities attracted *Lalule*, the most beautiful woman in his village. *Lalule* who was eyed by men came to be known as *Sophüre's* beloved. *Sophüre* was very much in love with the girl.

But as warfare and headhunting continued, he was cautious for the safety of his girlfriend because she becomes vulnerable ultimately. He had two things then to defend: his own life and his precious woman. He was fully aware that if his enemies could not behead him then they will make his beloved their target. The thought of losing his beloved troubled him day and night.

So, *Sophüre* took his beloved to a cave to stay for her safety reasons. The cave was in a steep cliff where below only a narrow pathway led to it. It was in a place where no one would dare risk their lives to venture into. One had to use a ladder to climb up and enter the cave. *Sophüre* and his beloved stayed there for safety. As he kept her hidden in the cave, *Sophüre* had briefed her about the warfare and headhunters. That she should be very careful, cautious and vigilant

all the time. He brought food for her and made a ladder to climb up and down. He warned *Lalule* of one thing, that she should drop the ladder for him only as and when she hears him sing a secret song. Only then should the ladder be laid down, it would be meant only for him and nobody else's feet should touch the ladder. The song was meant for her ears only.

*Sophüire* would come singing.....

*Lole Lala Sophüire teyo*

Sophüire has arrived

*Lalule - Lashe pfo phe jezu Lala*

place the ladder

*Sophüire teyo*

Sophüire has arrived

*Süratepfü mayo*

Not an outsider

Than *Lalule* would gently put down the ladder for her lover to climb up after the song is sung. So this is how they usually met in their hideout. For days together *Sophüire* and *Lalule* continued meeting in this manner with their secret code in song. This kept her safe from other headhunters, even in the absence of her lover. But their secret meeting was not meant to last for long. There were trespassers who had heard the song and imitated the song. It happened that an enemy heard the song while passing through that particular area. The enemy had secretly observed how the reputed warrior met his lover. Seeing this as a

great opportunity to bring down his reputation, the enemy prepared himself to go there. So one day in the absence of *Sophiire* he sang the song for her and *Lalule* believing it to be her lover lowered the ladder. To her surprise she found that he was an enemy in disguise when that person entered the cave. Then and there her head was beheaded and taken to another village.

When *Sophiire* returned to meet his lover, he sang the song several times but to his dismay she did not let the ladder down for him. He realized that something terribly awaited him. Having lost his beloved, he was dismayed and became restless. To him vengeance was the only way to prove his love and the loss of his lover. His search was far and wide. With no other thought but to avenge the death of his dear one in his mind, he ventured night and day. His mission was weary and tiring, rough and coarse yet, he lingered on until he found his foe. A ferocious mortal combat was fought between the two, as both men were heroes; both were warriors, courageous, headhunters, fierce. Yet, *Sophiire* returned home carrying both the heads - his enemy's in the front and his lover's behind. Finally, he avenged the death of his beloved.

This story is obtained from oral source. As pointed out, great warriors are deeply respected, not only among the *Chakhesangs*, but among the warrior tribes of the Nagas. The precarious life of ancestral times is such that avenging the death of a dear one is a great consolation and is believed to give peace to the dead. A song appears in this folktale. Likewise, there are many *Chakhesang* folk song which are based on folk stories and legends.

## 2.6 TALES OF ROMANCE

The Folktales of Romance highlight abiding love which is universal in love stories, however, it is in the details that makes Naga folktales very interesting, in the way they reflect their society. It is learned that they even sing songs of joy, praises, love to each other in the form of conversations. In this romantic venture, they transcend to another world and find pleasure in each other's company. Yet they never forget that they are obligated to moral and social principles. Tales of Romances may be of happy endings or tragic:

### **Cekatsü and Dulilü**

Unfulfilled courtships, betrayals are portrayed in this story found in *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas* and also through oral interaction:

Once upon a time, there was a boy called *Cekatsü* (called *Tsü-o* among some Chokri villages) and a girl called *Dulilü* who were both cowherds. They lived in different villages. They used to meet each other in the forest when they were tending to their cows. They thus fell in love with each other. As *Dulilü* often came late, her parents got worried and enquired what the matter was about. *Dulilü* replied that since the footpaths were very rough and full of stones, the cows cut their hooves which made them limp, and cause her to come late. So, the footpaths were made good. But, still *Dulilü* came late. Hence, one day, her parents sent her brother to keep an eye on her. The brother followed the girl

and at last found her sister in the arms of *Cekatsü* in a cave. The brother returned but he told his parents that he had seen nothing. *Dulilü*'s parents were however not satisfied and stopped her to tend the cows from the next day onwards. Alone in the forest, *Cekatsü* waited in vain for his beloved to come. In the evening, the frantic *Dulilü* escaped her parents' watchful eyes and hastened to the forest. She found *Cekatsü* was getting ready to return home, and asked him to wait for her. *Cekatsü* had however waited for her the whole day and felt hurt. He told her that he had waited for too long and that it was late now and he had to return home. *Dulilü* pleaded to *Cekatsü* to stay for a few moments, but *Cekatsü* remained unforgiving. He told her that he had left her something and asked her to go to the cave and look around for it. When *Dulilü* came to the cave where they used to sleep together, she found a cup neatly made from leaves which was filled with liquid. It was the tears that *Cekatsü* had shed while waiting for his love. Sadly, *Dulilü* took up the cup and drank it. Many days passed and the two lovers had not seen each other. Then one day, *Cekatsü* lost one of his cows. He trailed his lost cow to the house of *Dulilü*. It had followed the cows of *Dulilü* and come to her house. When *Dulilü* came out, *Cekatsü* enquired if she might have seen his lost cow. *Dulilü* replied that it was in her cow pen along with her cows. *Cekatsü* entered the pen and twisted the tail of his cow. The startled cow jumped and cleared the fence followed by the nimble *Cekatsü*, and off he went with his cow. The mother of *Dulilü* hearing the noise outside asked her daughter what the matter was. *Dulilü* replied "*It is the person whom my family does not favour*".



The mother murmured to herself, “*Hmm, whoever such a person is, whether he be my own son or another’s must be strong and handsome*”. In the course of time, *Cekatsü* married another woman from his own village, *Dulilü* got married to another, and both had children. It so happened that while *Cekatsü* was working in his field with his wife, their baby son was in the field-hut being looked after by a young girl. It chanced that *Dulilü* happened to be crossing near-by. Seeing the baby-son, she enquired the young boy whose son he could be. When the boy replied that *Cekatsü* was the father, she came and took the baby in her arms and taking out one of her necklace she put it on the boy child and said, “*when you grow up, may you not be short-tempered as did your father*”. She then left. When the boy told about this episode to his father, the father said, “*It must have been Dulilü*”. Both *Cekatsü* and *Dulilü* however couldn’t forget each other and because of this, *Dulilü* became thin and *Cekatsü* too grew ill. After some time had passed they met and both of them seeing the plight of each other sighed. Seeing that *Cekatsü* was ill, *Dulilü* asked what the matter could be. After they had talked with each other, *Dulilü* then said to *Cekatsü* “*I have never let the right of my breast to be suckled, not even my own child. You may suckle from it*”.. *Cekatsü* did suckle from her right breast, and it is said that *Cekatsü* got well (Venuh 2014 210).

There are many tragic Chakhesang folktales about unfulfilled love affairs like the story of *Cekatsü* and *Dulilü*. Cow herding also has an important place in the community. There are many cow-herders’ songs. The physical agility is much respected and valued can also be seen from this folktale.

## **Tsou and Terhuopudiu**

That cow-herding is a common occupation of the society, is seen again and again in folktales, and that a necklace is a prized possession which under normal circumstances, cannot be given away. This tale also has a moral about the irreparable danger of hot-headedness. That for a man to be good-looking, he has to be agile, drawn out from *Naga Folktales Retold* is also reflected in the story.

In the days of yore, the rich people of the village usually had herds of cattle. *Tsou* and *Terhuopudiu* happened to belong to rich parents from different villages, who were handsome and beautiful, respected by all. In their own villages, both of them were vied by all. However, these two villages had been at war and were not in good terms.

Whenever *Tsou* and *Terhuopudiu* took their cattle to graze, they saw each other from opposite meadows and they would quietly watch each other singing songs of love for each other and as evening approached, they would go back their separate ways heading home with their cattle.

Life, it seems could not go on like that just by watching each other every day. They realized that they were falling in love. As they brought their herd of cattle to graze together, every day was a joy to tend to the cows' grazing and the days worth looking for. They started sharing their packed lunch and shared stories of

their own. Often they would doze off to sleep while waiting for their cattle to graze.

One day warriors crossed their path and saw them in deep slumber. It could have been very easy for the warriors to behead them but when one of the warriors came near, he was stopped by his comrades. These two persons looked innocent and beautiful to the eyes of the warriors lost in their peaceful world. So, he just let them be as they were. The warriors left them quietly, leaving them to dazzle in the sun, in their own sweet world.

*Tsou* and *Terhuopudiu* wanted to get married but their parents would not give consent because of their ancestral enmity. *Terhuopudiu's* mother sternly objected to her plead saying that she will never allow her to be married to an enemy who had taken many heads from their village. She asked *Terhuopudiu* to see sense in that and that her request will be impossible to be granted. The same objection was faced by *Tsou*. Both of them were warned to forget each other. Still, they looked forward to their days of herding cattle together though they knew that they can never be together forever.

One of *Tsou's* cattle went missing one day. He knew it had followed *Terhuopudiu's* cattle to her house. As he went to search for his missing cow, he could hear *Terhuopudiu* singing along with her mother. He asked her if his cow was with hers, she replied, "look for yourself" in between her singing.

He saw his cow and leapt in to get his cow and leapt out and got away. After he left, the mother asked who the handsome, well built, fine person was. *Terhuopudiu* said that he was none other than the suitor whom they have objected for her to marry.

One fateful day, *Terhuopudiu* was kept waiting for her lover at the usual spot where they used to meet. As he was not in sight she felt deceived by him. And as she thought about him, tears rolled down her cheeks and down to a stone. She folded a leaf to collect her tears, kept the leaf of tears for him and slowly walked away.

All of a sudden *Tsou* appeared from the bush and saw his lady love in a sad mood who had already crossed a river. He yelled out to her to come back. Seeing that she was determined not to come. He requested her to just give him a glance for one last time. As she glanced at him for one last time, he held her tear filled cup of leaf and drank it. Both of them departed there for the rest of their lives.

Years went by and they lived their own lives. Then, one day, *Tsou* was working in a field with his son. When it was time for lunch he sat down to make fire but he could not light a fire. He had not brought his fire lighter. As he looked around, he saw smoke from the opposite field. He sent his son to borrow any fire lighter from the person who had lighted the fire.

The son went to a woman who had lighted the fire. The woman was surprised to see this young boy standing in front of her looking handsome and with a fine physique asking for a fire lighter. She was certain that the son was none other than her lover's son for he was equally handsome as his father. So, she told him straightaway like this, "*Don't cheat women like your father*" and placed a necklace on his neck.

The son returned with a fire lighter and narrated the incident to his father. Listening to him the father choked while having lunch and he could not eat anymore. The father, *Tsou* returned home with a heavy heart remembering *Terhuopudiu* and her words, "*Don't cheat women like your father*" ringing in his ears (Iralu 111).

The tragedy of this romantic tale arises from a misunderstanding between the lovers. There are other similar accounts of unfulfilled romance, and the gifting of a necklace by one of the former pair. It must be noted that a necklace is an intimate prized possession among the Nagas. A fire lighter is usually a burning firewood. Cattle grazing and cow-herding in the forest is a common occupation among the Nagas, in general. That is why; cow herder's song is prominent among the Chakhesang .

## 2.7 NARRATIVES ABOUT WILDLIFE

Given below are some of the folklores of the Chakhesang Nagas with regard to wildlife in *Naga Folklores, Bridging Tradition with Conservation* by Nagaland Biodiversity Board, Government of Nagaland:

Foxes/Jackal was abundantly found in the Chakhesang area and folklores related to the animal were often talked and in some place such beliefs were upheld in their traditional way of life. The animal is locally called 'Sache' which is a two word derivation. The word 'Sa' means 'blackside' and 'che' means 'catch or attack'. As the name suggests, this animal always attack its victim from the back to kill it for prey. This animal in English is Jackal.

It was a belief among the Chakhesang people that killing of the animal would bring bad luck to the family of the hunter and to the village. Therefore killing of the animal was prohibited and restrained in the Chakhesang region. It was also believed that whoever eats of the meat would always drag behind in his life's endeavour because this animal never attack from the front but does it from behind its prey. This character of fox/jackal is feared to be inherited by whosoever eats of its meat.

In a similar way, women and children were not allowed to eat rodent meat. Rodents destroy standing crops in the field. It also eats up crops stored in the barn. Even when the store is made of highly protective material to avoid

rodents from destroying the stored grains, it always has its means to reach the grains. Rodents are by nature destructive and, therefore women and children were not allowed to eat rodents. Among the Chakhesangs, women folks go to the barn or granary to fetch paddy or rice for week's consumption for the family. If women eat the meat of rodents, it was feared that their barn would exhaust sooner than expected. There was no restriction for male folks to kill and eat the meat of rodents. However, for those individuals or families who have hosted a feast of merit, they do not eat rodents (28).

Among the Chakhesang Nagas, various species of birds and animals were not served to women folks and children at home. Birds like Eagle, Owl, Hornbill, Crow etc were regarded unclean. There was a belief that eagle and owls feeds on other animals and it was not good for women folks to consume the birds of prey. There was a belief that the women and children being delicate and vulnerable would easily be infested with the bad qualities of the birds. In the case of the crow, it was not proper to eat the meat because the crows steal human food kept in the field hut. If a person eat the meat of a crow, it would acquire the character of a crow and start stealing others belongings. Therefore, crow meat was never served to the women and children in the Chakhesang kitchen (Ibid 28).

The traditional Chakhesang society had a wide knowledge about wildlife and its behavior. They narrate stories of animals and birds and it was done

through folk knowledge. Some ancient people might have had a kind of interest in observing wildlife behaviors in the past. They talk about a python and had distinguished the reptile into two types. One type roam in the forest while the other type is found inhabiting river ponds. If the roaming python is killed the person becomes poor. If the water python is got in a hunt, the hunter should always take good care before he leaves his house to attend public gathering or a party. It was believed that dirt or animal wastes stains his dress and create an embarrassing situation to him. The water python are known to stay stagnant for months together in the river pond and when branches fall into the water where it stayed, it challenges the branch to whether which of them would last longer without rotting (Ibid 29).

There is also the folk belief that sparrows came from rodents and so they were taken to be unclean and not edible and thus, not hunted normally. The book also tells of snake that lays its egg in bamboo grooves:

During egg laying season it is dangerous to go and cut bamboos. The male snake would climb on one bamboo and guard the female snake. If any intruder trespass its territory it glides down and strike at its enemy. This snake is a threat for human being therefore, the snake if found is not spared but killed instantly (Ibid 29).



## 2.8. ASSORTED TALES

There are many Naga folktales where there is a blending of the types in a single tale that makes it difficult to fit them neatly into a particular category, as in the case of the following Chakhesang tribe folktale. This folktale, in its details, can be seen as a step-mother tale, an animal tale, a supernatural tale, a tale of horror, origin tale or a tale of why something is as it is, will be on the smooth blending of realism and the grotesque, of how the folktale begins realistically about the day-to-day activity and life of the sad lot of a girl, bereft of her biological mother; of how she meets a handsome and helpful youth who turns out to be a snake-man; of how, as opposed to the fairy tale frog-prince, the turn of events move from bad to worse as in a nightmarish grotesque horror story; how at the end, the tale is resolved and ends with the explanation of the origin of the enmity between man and snakes. Such an end skillfully blends and finds a harmony between realism and the grotesque.

### **A Girl and a Snake**

The story of *A Girl and a Snake* has been recorded by Kapfo in his book, *Folktales of Khuzami Nagas*:

Once upon a time there was a little girl born to her parents. They lived together happily for some days, but as luck did not favour them, the mother fell sick and died while her child was very young. After the death of her mother, she and her father lived alone. Her father had to go to the field alone and when he came

back from the field, he had to do all the household chores again, since she was too young and there was none to take care of them. The father could not bear this hardship anymore and since there was no alternative, he decided to marry another woman again.

### *Life with the Step-Mother*

When the father remarried, they thought that the new mother would be able to look after them well but it was not so. Unfortunately the new mother was domineering and unkind. She was very cruel towards her step daughter and the little girl was in a very miserable state. She was still very young and had to depend on her step mother to take care of her. She was not given any proper food to eat and was made to work very hard every day. Even after her father came to know of it, he did not do anything since he was afraid that he might lose his wife and he did not utter a word against his wife. So, the life of the little girl continued to be in a very sad state.

### *The Day of Firewood Collection*

In those days, a day would be set aside when all the young men and women would go out together to the forest and collect firewood. Each male was supposed to cut firewood for him and the girl he admired. That day arrived and when the leader informed all the youth to get ready and so they gathered in one spot. But the girl did not turn up. Her friends went to her and called up, "Come, let us go". She wanted very much to accompany them but her step mother did not allow her to go, for she had given her lots of works. She was asked by her

step mother to clean the husked paddy, fill the pots in the kitchen with water and feed the pigs and told the girl that she cannot join her friends unless she finished all her jobs. And by the time she finished whatever she had been asked to do by her step mother, it was too late for her to catch up with her friends. They had all left long back and had gone far away.

*Encounter with a Handsome, helpful Young Man*

As she hurried after her friends, she happened to see a young man. When she approached the young man, she found that he was very handsome. She enquired, “O young man, did you see my friends?” He gently replied, “Your friends have left and you will not be able to catch up with them”. He then offered to cut firewood for her. She looked intently at the man but could not remember ever seeing him before. The man was exceptionally good looking and well built. He dressed very richly, his head gear was rolled with strips of elephant tusks, kilt made of sea-shell, the wristlets were colourfully knit and his calves were also decorated very finely with a beautiful ornament. The girl was captivated by his charm and followed him to a tree. The man asked the girl to sit by the side of the tree while he cut the firewood for her.

As the man climbed the tree to collect firewood for the girl, he asked her to cover her head with her shawl and place her basket over it and never to look at him. She agreed and covered her head as told. After a moment she heard a loud sound resembling the breaking of the tree branches. She was very much frightened and so she slowly opened her cloth and peeped and to her shock she

saw that instead of the man, there was a big snake and it was twisting a branch of the tree with its tail. She was terrified and covered her head again with her shawl. After sometime the snake came down from the tree and changed to the handsome man again. He collected the branches which he had broken from the tree. But the branches were not cut evenly and the bundle was not in good shapes. Therefore, the girl felt shy to carry her load to the village. Since for that occasion people used to arrange their loads nicely and evenly and the neatest bundle received the prize. But she had no choice since she could not make her load of firewood herself and except for the young man, there was no one to make her load for her. Then the boy told her that he would be visiting her in the night.

#### *Incident at the Dormitory*

After making her load, the young man went away telling her that he would come to her place at night. She was terrified by this and started getting scared of this unnatural man. And with her load of firewood she waited for her friends and when they came singing and yelling, she accompanied them. She was full of tension and could not stop worrying about what would happen to her. In the village, all the people were waiting for them to see their loads of firewood and to judge whose firewood load would be the biggest and the best looking. And lastly they all reached the place of their dormitory where they put down their loads and left for their homes only to come back in the evening for the campfire. In olden times all the young girls in the village were made to sleep in a dormitory, which was called *Keyike/Kekhroke*. She also went there and slept

with her friends. There they used to have campfires in the evening hours with men of their age.

When evening came her friends came to her house and called her to go to their dormitory. But she refused to accompany them. When they asked her the reason of her refusal, she would not tell them. But when they insisted she told them, “Don’t ask me. I saw a strange thing today. It was a very frightening sight”. Even then her friends insisted her to accompany them. When she could refuse them no more, she said, she would agree to them on one condition, “if I have to go with you, you must all lie above me and make me sleep at the bottom”. She then told them that she was afraid to sleep with them because of the person she met on her way that day as he had told her that he would come again and take her away. Then her friends told her that they would all lie with her together if need be and said that they all would live together as friends. Still she was not convinced, so she repeated her condition, to which they all agreed. With that assurance she agreed to go to their dormitory and left together for their dormitory.

As evening came all the young men of the Village came to their dormitory and they had a joyous evening. They sang songs and shared jokes and had their food and drinks together. The boys and girls serenaded one another and talked of love for each other. But the girl was not able to enjoy with them because of the fear of the man who told her that he would be coming to her that night.

Therefore, she could not eat nor drink and she continued to worry all throughout the night. And after all the merriment they called it a day.

That night, as usual all the girls were sleeping together in the dormitory. And as agreed the girl slept on the floor with her friends around her and some on the top of her. All her friends fell asleep one after the other, but the girl remained awake as she could not stop worrying.

That night the handsome young man went to the house of the girl. He went into every room but she was nowhere to be found, so he tiptoed away. The young man found his way to the dormitory. Inside the dormitory it was all dark and silent but for the faint sounds of breathing. Then there was a sound of footsteps and the door creaked open. As the door opened, a gust of cool wind came into the room and the dim light from the moon gave the impression of a man. The dark figure entered the room and began looking around. The man stared at each girl's face lying on the floor and then turned to the group of girl's lying on top of each other. He pulled out the girl at the top and looked intently at her face and then muttered to himself, "This is not the one". He pulled out the girls one after another and as he stared at each face, he said aloud to himself "This is not the one". When at last he reached the girl at the bottom, he exclaimed, "Yes, this is the one" and he pulled out the girl. The girl started shouting and called for help, but all her friends were in deep sleep and they could not be awakened. The man grasped the hand of the poor girl and steadily led her out. The next

morning when the girl's friends woke up they found that she was missing. They were very much afraid for their friend and frantically searched for her.

#### *The Marriage between the Girl and the Man*

The handsome man who could turn into the form of a serpent took the girl as his wife. As she was helpless and it would be worthless fighting the man, she took a big roll of thread and tied the end to the toe of one of her friend who was sleeping in the dormitory. As she went with the snake man she quietly unrolled the thread. She thought the thread would lead her friends to her.

The next morning when her friends failed to find her, they reported the matter to their male friends and they looked for the girl together. They followed the thread which took them across many fields and a thick jungle and lost trace of it at the base of a big tree. They carefully searched the area and called the girl's name aloud a thousand times but there was no response. The thread had exhausted long before reaching the snake's dwelling place. Though her friends loved her very much, they could not do anything more and so they sadly returned home. The snake man took the girl to a big cave in a faraway place where they lived as man and wife.

#### *The Reaction of the Girl's Parents*

When the girl's parents heard the news of their daughter's disappearance, the step mother was very happy, but her father's heart broke. He could not stop thinking of his dear daughter. Every day at home and in the field he would

think of his daughter and his eyes filled with tears. This went on for a number of days but when at last he could not tolerate anymore, he decided to go and look for his daughter.

#### *Father went in Search of His Daughter*

The father took his weapon and thoroughly cleaned and sharpened them. He took his lunch pack and collected his wine in the flask and armed with a spear, a Dao (a kind of machete) and a shield started his journey. He followed the line of the thread which his daughter had unrolled as the snake man took her away. When the father reached the end of the thread, he shouted for his daughter, but there was no response from his daughter. He searched for his daughter the whole day and only stopped as the sun went down and finally disappeared from the horizon. As he had no more lead, he went around the thick jungle and whenever he was at an elevated place, he shouted for his daughter. He continued his search for many days.

One fine day as he was calling out his daughter's name, he heard something that sounded like a girl's voice. He called out louder and this time the reply was clearer. It sounded like, "*Hao...*" It came from a very distant place and he went in the direction of the sound. When at last he reached the place, he found a cave and as he looked into the cave, he saw his daughter.

#### *Father meets daughter*

When the father reached the place where his daughter was dwelling they were delighted to see each other. At first the girl could not believe what she saw. She



had given up what little hope she had of being found. When her father asked, “My dear daughter, how are you, are you alright?” she started crying and said, “My father, I am in great trouble and nobody can understand the pain I am going through. Not even you. But if you want to see the trouble I am facing, you may go up in the rack above, hide yourself and you will see it yourself”. So her father went up and hid in the rack. When the night set in, the snake man came home. He had a hearty meal which his wife prepared and they went to bed.

#### *The Father's Horror*

After they went to bed the man had changed to a big snake and he glided over her. The snake then rolled around her, crushed her with its weight. The girl could not move and even had difficulty breathing. The tail of the snake then went into the mouth and nostrils of the girl which made her mouth and nostrils frothy and she whimpered as though the pains would kill her. Seeing all this made the heart of her father fill with anguish and he shed tears, which fell upon the snake. This alarmed the snake and he asked his wife what fluid it was. His wife told him, that her father has come and was lying in the rack above them.

Hearing this snake was embarrassed and he said to his wife, “you should have told me that before, your father should not have seen my bad behavior” and stopped torturing his wife and they went to sleep. The girl's father was heartbroken to see his daughter being tortured by her husband. But the poor

father realized that he was helpless, he could not do anything against the snake man, as he was both a superman and a devil. All day and night he was filled with grief and made up his mind to somehow kill the snake man and rescue his daughter. And with that decision, he said goodbye to his daughter and her husband and departed for his village.

### *The Plan of the Father*

After some days the girl's father visited the couple and stayed with them. One evening as they were having dinner, the girl's father suggested to his son-in-law, that they feast in each other's house. The snake man agreed to this. And they decided that they will feast in the house of the son-in-law first and with that, the father departed.

The day of the feast came and the son-in-law had prepared so many delicious items such as chicken, strong wine and many other delicacies. His father-in-law ate to his satisfaction and went back home.

Now the time came for the snake to feast in his father-in-law's house. The father had collected a small variety of mushroom which he had dried in the sun and prepared a dish with it. He then took a poisonous fruit called, "*Thozhiso*", removed the hard shell, ground them to a fine powder and prepared wine with it. After preparing all the items he called his son-in-law for the feast in his house. When the snake man arrived they feasted for the whole day. When evening came his son-in-law wanted to go for nature's call, but his

father-in-law would not allow him and made him to finish the mushroom curry and drink the wine made especially for him. After sometime when he could no longer delay his son-in-law, he was excused. Time passed by and the snake man did not return. When it had been very long, the father went in search of him and found that in the place where his son-in-law had gone, instead of the man, there was a big snake. The snake was dead. It was very big.

*The Father brings his Daughter Back Home*

After the death of the snake, the father went to the snake man's cave. Both the father and daughter were delighted to see each other. But alas the girl had already been pregnant with the snake man's child. When she reached home, without the knowledge of her parents, she gave birth to baby snakes. But as any mother, she dearly loved the babies born unto her as they were her flesh and blood and she kept them hidden in a big earthen pot. She secretly breast fed her children from time to time. Whenever the family went to the field, on some pretext she used to go home and feed her children in their house. Sometimes she used to leave early for home to see her children. This became a regular phenomenon and so her parents asked her the reason, but she refused to tell them. One day when she left their field, her step mother silently followed her to their house and as she kept watching, she heard some noise as, "Tsü... Tsü... Tsü...Tsü..." When her step mother approached a big earthen pot she saw many baby snakes with their heads out to the brim of the pot. Her step daughter went to the baby snakes and breast fed the young snakes.

*The Enmity between Man and Snake*

The stepmother remained hidden and when her step daughter left the house, she went in and opened the big earthen pot, to see the baby snakes. She was shocked to see that there were so many baby snakes in the pot. She then went and heated water in another pot and once the water boiled, she poured it over the baby snakes. The baby snakes squeaked and wriggled about as their skin got hot, scalded and died one after the other. But all of them did not get killed. Many of them rushed out from the earthen pot and slithered away from the house. And when in the evening the family of the girl returned home, she went and looked for her children but they were nowhere to be found. She felt very sad and worried for her children, the baby snakes.

It was said that as a result of hurting the baby snakes by the girl's step-mother, the snakes became the enemy of the people and they started biting the people as a revenge ever since.

The realistic details of the folktale, *A Girl and a Snake*, are such that they serve as a reflection of a typical Naga community. Collecting firewood in the forest, fetching water, husking paddy grains, feeding pigs, are daily routine works in the villages even today. Traditional dormitory life and activities, where peer groups get together for work and leisure, are briefly but vividly drawn. Such dormitories or morungs may have passed away, but their function as informal educational centres are well-known. Slight, but interesting in a representative way, is the manner in which a competition of firewood collection is held

among the peer-group where the neatness of the stack is equally important. Such is a typical instance of learning life's skills through play-way method of these traditional centres. Again, there are gleanings of traditional wears, of kilt, shawl, headgears and bracelets. Other typical objects mentioned in the course of the narration, are the spear, dao, shield, brew-flask which is usually made of dried gourd, basket which is woven with bamboo strips.

The grotesque element grows gruesome with the entry and elaboration of the snake-man's intentions and actions which leads to the unnatural marriage and birth of baby snakes, and finally to the killing of the snake-man by the troubled father.

While the girl's difficult early life as a step-daughter is not difficult to see, her eerie experience as the spouse of a snake-man is horrific, there is also a blend of realism and the grotesque in the way the girl takes care of the baby snakes with a motherly affection. The story leads up to the killing of the baby snakes by the step-mother which finally rounds off to a mythic belief as to the origin of the enmity between mankind and the snakes. The folktale merges the realistic with the grotesque, seamlessly, to be handed down from generation to generation, part instructive and part entertaining like a gripping horror tale. Truly, there is much beneath a seemingly simple folktale which can bear much socio-cultural material, and not for nothing is a skilled story-teller a favoured one among the rest (33).

## **Lüpy Lhitsomoe and Thropfü Wetelhi**

This story is about the fateful marriage between the tiger and Lüpy Lhitsomoe and how the brave Thropfü Wetelhi rescues the girl.

There was once a woman who was bearing a child in her womb. One day she went to her field and there she saw a fig tree in the woods from the distance. She saw that there were lots of ripened figs on the fig tree and she could not resist from plucking the fruits as it is the nature of pregnant women to crave for fruits.

### *The Encounter with a Tiger:*

When she started eating the figs on the tree, a ferocious looking Tiger suddenly appeared in front of her and startled her. He said that the fig tree belongs to him and told the woman that he could not allow anyone to eat his figs. He threatened to kill the woman and eat her up. The woman was very frightened and trembled at the sight of the Tiger and by his threats. As the tiger looked very fearful and was very furious with the woman, the woman begged the Tiger for mercy since she did not know that the tree belonged to him. But the Tiger was very stubborn and he did not yield to her request and continued to threaten to kill her and devour her. But it happens that the Tiger saw the woman was in immense fear and as he saw that the woman was pregnant, he agreed to pardon her on one condition. The Tiger said that if the child which was in her womb is born a female child, the baby girl must be given to him to be his wife. The woman had no other alternative but to agree even to that or she would be killed

and eaten. It was better for her to give away her child rather than both of them dying together. So the woman agreed and said, “Yes, yes. I will give my child to you to be your wife if a female child is born, so please spare my life and do not kill me”. The Tiger was then satisfied with the promise of the woman that she would give her child to him for marriage if the child is a girl. Then the Tiger left her and allowed her to eat as many figs as she wanted, but the woman could not eat the figs any more out of shock and fright. She returned home trembling. When she reached home she narrated to her husband what had happened to her that day. But her husband could not believe the story initially. He said, “What type of Tiger would own a fig tree or would marry a human being”. He further said, “Man and animals are quite different in nature and therefore such could not be true”. But the wife insisted that it was true, and he believed her words finally.

*The Birth of the Child:*

After some days, a child was born to them. But to the mother’s shock and disappointment, the child was a girl. And so they named her as Lüpy Lhitsomoe, meaning, ‘The little girl with an unfulfilled life’.

The Tiger came one night beside their wall and asked the woman if the child was born. On hearing that, the parents were very much terrified. But they could not bear the thought of their little girl to be taken away by the Tiger, so that night they lied to the Tiger and told him that the child was not yet born. They were much worried and wondered what was to be done with their child. If they

refused to give their child to the Tiger, the Tiger would come and kill both the mother and the child and even the husband. They also knew that it would not be possible for them to lie to the Tiger for long. Since there was no escape from the Tiger, they finally decided to give their child to the Tiger, but they decided to part with her only when she had grown up to a marriageable age. The Tiger was very anxious for the child and was repeatedly coming in the nights and continuously asking them about the birth of the child. But they also repeatedly replied to him that the child was not yet born. They continued to lie to the Tiger until the girl grew up to be a young girl.

*The Parents prepare to Part with their Little Girl:*

Then one day when their child had grown up fully, they decided to tell the truth to the Tiger and therefore they started preparing their child to be the Tiger's bride. The father worked on a carrying basket for the child to carry on the day of her marriage to the Tiger, and his wife also had started weaving a shawl for Lüpy Lhitsomoe for the same purpose. As they were working side by side, both of them were very sad and they were weeping and shedding their tears. When their child saw them weeping she wondered why they were both crying. Then she asked her father why he was crying, her father said, 'your mother's loom shuttle had injured my eyes, and that is why my eyes are watering'. Then she asked her mother why she was crying, her mother replied saying, "Your father's bamboo lath had injured my eyes, and that is why I am shedding tears". Her parents did not have the courage to tell her the truth. They never revealed



the fact to their child that she would be married to the Tiger until all their preparations were completed for their daughter.

*The Daughter Marries the Tiger:*

Again as usual, the Tiger came one night and asked them whether the child was born. That night they decided to tell the truth to the Tiger, and they told him that the child is born and he could come next morning to the path of the village well, where he could take her as she would be sent to the well to fetch water. So the next morning Lüpy Lhitsomoe's mother asked her to dress up with new clothe and get prepared to carry the new carrying basket which her father had made for her and asked her to go to the well to fetch water. The girl had refused to wear the new clothes and carry the new basket for fetching the water. She said, "what fool will wear new cloths and carry new basket for fetching drinking water? I will not wear them" and she refused to wear new cloths. But her mother insisted and said that there was no rule not to wear new cloths even while fetching water, besides, she was a very amicable girl in their village. So she should go with the new clothes and there was no question of feeling shy about wearing new clothes and carrying new baskest. So finally she was convinced and put on with her new cloths, and with the new carrying basket she left their house to fetch water at the well.

As the girl was approaching the well, the Tiger came from the mist and took her away to the forest to his lair. The girl was very frightened and at the same

time, she was worried for her parents as they would be all alone in their house. She was also thinking of her sweetheart. Thropfü Wetelhi meaning, ‘a boy living a good life’, was a friend with whom she used to have good times while she was at home. But there was no way for her to escape from the Tiger so she submitted herself to her fate.

Meanwhile her parents knew that she had been taken away by the Tiger and she would not be home again. They wept and continued to think of her, days and nights.

*Lüpy Lhitsomoe’s Sweetheart looks for Her:*

In the meantime the boyfriend of Lüpy Lhitsomoe, Thropfü wetelhi did not see her for some days and he wondered where she might be. Therefore, the boy went to her parents and asked them about Lüpy Lhitsomoe, his girlfriend, saying, “Father of Lüpy Lhitsomoe and Mother of Lüpy Lhitsomoe, where has Lüpy Lhitsomoe gone? I have not seen her for some days and I crave to see her”. But her parents were reluctant to tell him about their daughter and they replied that they did not know where she had gone, that she went missing for some days since she did not return home after she went to the well to fetch water one morning. But the boy was not satisfied with the vague reply and he persistently asked them about the girl’s whereabouts. Later, they narrated the whole story about her and told him the fact that she has been taken away by the big Tiger into the forest and he would not be able to see her anymore.

*Thropfü Wetelhi's Venture:*

On hearing about his beloved, Thropfü Wetelhi was enraged. And he decided to seek revenge for her. And so Thropfü Wetelhi decided to go into the forest and search for his girlfriend. He started to prepare himself well before going into the forest to look for his girlfriend and rescue her. Day after day, he started sharpening his implements, viz, spear and dao. After he was satisfied of his days of preparations, he tested the sharpness of his implements. He took his implements, and threw his spear into a thick and hard bush and found that the bush had been cut through without any resistance. He was then fully satisfied with the sharpness of his tools. The next day he packed his food, a bunch of a pale pink coloured flower, called 'Telhapa' which they were both fond of, and he started walking towards the thick forest. He went to a hill top and looked over the surroundings but failed to see either his sweetheart or the Tiger. He proceeded further to the forest deeper and climbed up another hill top and looked for them again. Still he could not see either Lüpy Lhitsomoe or the Tiger. He went even further and deeper into the thick jungle and ascended another hill top. This time he was fortunate. He saw smokes coming out from a distance. He slowly crept through the thick forest and finally reached the Tiger's lair and saw Lüpy Lhitsomoe alone in a big cave, weaving a cloth.

*The Lovers Meet:*

And as he slowly crept through and reached for his beloved from behind her, he threw the bunch of the flower which he was carrying for her. After seeing that beautiful bunch of flowers, Lüpy Lhitsomoe became very sad and

recollected her days together with her beloved Thropfü Wetelhi. She said to herself, “oh these are the beautiful flowers with which I and Thropfü Wetelhi used to play with when we were together in the village”. She could not help her tears falling. Thropfü Wetelhi jumped down to her side, she was so overwhelmed with joy to see him. But Lüpy Lhitsomoe was afraid of her husband, the Tiger and told Thropfü Wetelhi, “If the Tiger sees you, you would be torn into pieces, you should not have come like this”. Luckily the Tiger was not there that day. But he would arrive by evening, so she hid Thropfü Wetelhi under her weaving loom before the Tiger arrived.

*The Tiger's Reaction towards the Man:*

When the Tiger arrived to their cave, the Tiger got the smell of human being, and he shouted, “Swe, I get the smell of human being, where is he?” He was restless and began looking here and there for the man. Then Lüpy Lhitsomoe, the wife of the Tiger scolded her husband, the Tiger, “Don't be silly. Why are you talking such things, be quite, your brother-in-law has come” and after that the Tiger calmed down and asked about his brother in law and that he was anxious to meet him. After which he asked Thropfü Wetelhi to come out and she introduced Thropfü Wetelhi to the Tiger, her husband. They became very friendly with each other and in no time they started relating stories to each other. They stayed together for some days happily in the cave without any problem. Thropfü Wetelhi had won the confidence of the Tiger and the Tiger would go to nearby places in the forest, leaving them alone and bring animals for them.

*The Plan of the Couple:*

Thropfü Wetelhi's real purpose was to take Lüpy Lhitsomoe away from the Tiger and for which he had come all the way from the village, but the Tiger did not suspect anything. Thropfü Wetelhi and Lüpy Lhitsomoe started to make plans secretly, whenever the Tiger went hunting. They were patiently waiting for the right opportunity to escape from the Tiger, and go back to their village and live there as happily as they were before, and get married. The Tiger wanted to please his brother in law and so he fed him with the tastiest wild animals as desired by *Thropfü Wetelhi* all those days. Everyday, the Tiger asked him what animals he would like to eat. When Thropfü Wetelhi mentioned some particular animals, the Tiger would bring it for his brother-in-law without much difficulty.

And as days passed, the Tiger asked *Thropfü Wetelhi* the usual question "my dear brother-in-law, which flesh would you like to eat today? Tell me and I would hunt it for you. Thropfü Wetelhi had no real desire for any particular meat now, but his desire was to take his girlfriend back home. He thought for some time and named a particular animal which was extremely difficult to find, so that while the Tiger went searching for the animal they would escape to their village. Later, it came to his mind that a pregnant doe might be the most difficult to catch. So he said to the Tiger, "My brother-in-law, the Tiger, I crave for the meat of a female deer who is pregnant and about to give birth". The tiger agreed to search for it and set out again to hunt for a pregnant doe.

*The Couple Flees:*

As soon as the tiger left their cave to hunt for the pregnant doe, the boy and the girl, too, quickly packed up and hurriedly left the cave and proceeded for their village. But after reaching a certain distant place, something came to the mind of Lüpy Lhitsomoe, “Oh I forgot something very important, I must go back and get it” and when Thropfü Wetelhi asked her what that was, she said, it was ‘*Metri Phanuotso*’, an implement for grinding cotton seeds. The boy told her not to worry about it and that he would be able to make it for her when they reach home. But the girl insisted that it was a very important implement for a girl and by all means, it had to be with her where ever she went. And after arguing for some time, Thropfü Wetehi agreed to go back and get the implement. Lüpy Lhitsomoe told him that the implement was lying next to the ‘*Ezhi Liepu*’ (Big Iron Pot) and she warned him that the big iron pot should not be touched with the instrument while taking it out from its place. In case, the big steel pot made some sound, the birds would pass message to the Tiger immediately that the Tiger’s wife had run away and the tiger would come and kill both of them.

Thropfü Wetelhi understood the danger of it and he promised that it would never be touched, and said that he would be very careful about that and he left for the cave. He ran to the cave and after reaching there he looked for ‘*Metri Phanuotso*’, he found it and hurriedly took out the instrument. He totally forgot about the warning and in his excitement, he carelessly yanked out the

instrument, it struck the big iron pot and produced a loud ringing sound. After which the birds started chirping and signalled that the Tiger's wife had escaped and the message reached the ear of the Tiger in no time.

*The Tiger's Chase:*

The Tiger immediately ran home and carried the big iron pot and followed the couple. He carried the big pot because Lüpy Lhitsomoe and he had made an agreement that if any one of them escaped from each other, the other would carry the same while chasing for the one who escaped. Then the Tiger ran very fast with the iron pot on his back and reached the river which the couple had already crossed. When he went into the river with the big steel pot on his back to cross the river, the water in the river entered the steel pot and filled it up, and as a result the Tiger could not carry it anymore to cross the river because of its weight. So he returned to the river bank, poured out the water from the steel pot and reentered the river to cross it, but the same thing happened again when he entered the river. So for the second time he went back to the river bank and emptied the big steel pot and tried to cross the river again. Still the same thing happened and, therefore, he could not cross the river. For the third time he had to go back to the river bank to empty the water.

*The Death of All the Three:*

The third time when he returned to the river bank, he left the big steel pot there and crossed the river empty handed and started running after the couple as fast

as it can. Though the couple too ran very fast as they could, they were not able to run as fast as the Tiger, so the Tiger reached them before they could go very far from the river. When they came face to face, they started fighting in that particular spot. The Tiger bit and struck them with his paws and the man pierced the Tiger with his spear, and finally all of them succumbed to their injuries. The Tiger lay on one side and the boy and the girl were on the other side.

*The Spirits find the Dead Bodies:*

After some time a group of young Spirits crossed the spot, while they were roaming. They first saw the Tiger lying dead on one spot and after a short distant they saw again two persons lying dead side by side. As they were looking at them they decided to return them to life. They started debating whom they should raise to life first, whether the Tiger or the people. Some of them suggested that they should give life first to the Tiger, since the Tiger was older than man. But after a short while one '*Merünöcü*h', (an orphan child), among them suggested that they should first raise the boy and the girl. The *Merünöcü*h said that, the people used to give thanks to the spirits and offer them with everything whatever they get, even their food and drink, whereas the Tiger, though, he gets so many things he never offer anything to them. The suggestion of the orphan child was appreciated by the members and they decided to first raise the people, the boy and the girl.



*The Raising of the Dead:*

So they set working and they raised the two people. When the two people came to life, they could not walk properly at first. After sometime, they were able to walk straight and went quickly on their way. They thanked the spirits profusely for giving them life again. As they walked away, they requested the spirits not to raise the Tiger till they reached a resting place near their village. They said that as soon as they arrive at that resting place, they would shout to inform them of their arrival and, then, they could raise the Tiger from dead. They also said that if they raise the Tiger to life before they reach the spot, the Tiger would come and kill them again. The spirits agreed to their request and they waited for the people to reach to the resting place. When they shouted and informed the Spirits of their arrival, the Spirits worked on the Tiger and was raised to life.

*The Unfortunate Tiger:*

When the Tiger got back his life he was also very drowsy and was not able to crawl straight. However, after a few moment life came to him fully and he started walking straight and was able to run as fast as before. He ran towards the people, and tried to reach them before they could enter their village. But before the Tiger could catch up with the couple, they had already entered the village. The Tiger stood at the village gate for some time thinking whether he should enter the village to look for his wife. But he realized that it was not safe for him to go into the village where there were so many young warriors. The Tiger returned to the deep woods sadly.

*The Couple in the Village:*

When Thropfü wetelhi and Lüpy Lhitsomoe reached home, it was a great surprise for everyone in the village to see them return home. They all came to know that the big Tiger has taken Lüpy Lhitsomoe away to the deep forest and they never expected that she would come back home. Above all, they admired the strength and courage of Thropfü Wetelhi who had risked his life to rescue Lüpy Lhitsomoe from the Tiger.

Thropfü Wetelhi was greatly honored by the parents of the girl and gave her to be his faithful wife for the rest of their lives. They thanked the Spirits who turned them to life and honored their request and continued to offer the Spirits with all the things whatever they get for the rest of their lives (Ibid 51).

For the Chakhesangs, the naming of a child has great significance, more so, during ancestral times. Some take the name of the forefathers, others are given meaningful names. Children are named according to specific wishes of parents or elders, circumstances etc. In this tale, too, the girl has been named according to the circumstance she was born into. This folktale skillfully weaves such narratives together. The story also involves a tiger which seems to be commonly found. It also reflects native's religious mindset. The story also is about a marriage between a girl and an animal which seems to be a common topic of Chakhesang folktales. It also shows the implements used by men and women. The story also has a moral lesson, that acts of worship will be rewarded by supernatural spirits.

### **Ekhwi, Erumi, and Emi (Tiger, Spirit and Man)**

This tale about the Tiger, Spirit and Man is popular among other Naga tribes.

The Chakhesang version is found in Venuh's book *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas*:

*Ekhwi*, (Tiger), *Erumi*, (Spirit) and *Emi*, (Man) were brothers, who lived with their mother. *Ekhwi* was the eldest, *Erumi* second and *Emi* was the youngest. When *Erumi* and *Emi* were not at home, *Ekhwi* was always threatening his mother and saying that he wanted to eat her. Then one day the woman became sick and was soon on the threshold of death. When *Ekhwi* was not around, she called *Erumi* and *Emi* and said, "Even if my dead body is to be buried, *Ekhwi* is sure to dig me up and eat me. Have my body buried underneath the fire place and over it you can cook your food".

The woman died and was buried underneath the hearth and *Erumi* and *Emi* cooked their food over it. Since then it is not taboo to make a hearth over a grave and cook food from it. Then in order to fool *Ekhwi*, *Erumi* and *Emi* prepared a look-alike form of their mother sleeping using a barrel filled with water. *Ekhwi* then pounced upon the bed thinking the woman was on it. When asked by *Erumi* and *Emi* why it was pouncing here and there, *Ekhwi* replied that it was play-acting. *Emi* then asked *Ekhwi* what it

feared most. *Ekhwi* said of all the things it feared Tu-tu (blow-horn), and noises like Zu-zu and bo-bo. *Emi* then filled a bamboo tube with some stones and tied it to *Ekhwi's* tail and then trumpeted a buffalo horn. And off went the terrified *Ekhwi*. The sound from the hollow bamboo behind the back added to its fright and *Ekhwi* fled. After some time *Ekhwi* called for *Emi* from the jungle, bellowing “*Emi- Emi*”

When *Emi* answered the call, *Ekhwi* told the man that of every game it killed, a leg or an arm of the game would be placed by the foot path of the man brother. *Emi*, who was a little hard of hearing replied, Hah? Hah? (what? What?). After some repeated failures, the frustrated tiger got annoyed and yelled, “After every meal, I will empty my bowels across your path”. The man unwittingly answered, “very well”. *Ekhwi* then returned to the forest.

After *Ekhwi's* departure, *Erumi* and *Emi* lived together for some time. It happened that in those times, human beings were not known as ‘Minu’ (men), and both *Erumi* and the human being wanted to become man. To settle matters a leaf was placed at some distance, both agreed that whoever touched the leaf first would be man. The spirit flew off and the man shot the leaf first with his bamboo catapult. Again they decided who would be better. *Erumi* threw a stone to a great distance, while *Emi* picked up a red insect and threw it which flew off to a greater distance. *Erumi* agreed that *Emi* has won. Hence forth *Emi* and his descendants came to be known as man.

It also happened that *Erumi* and *Emi* owned separated fields. But while *Erumi's* plots were always clear of weeds and reeds, *Emi's* was full of it. When *Emi* asked why this was so *Erumi* told him to dig a big hole nearby his field. When *Emi* had done this, *Erumi* collected all the weeds and reeds and pushed them down the hole and covered up the hole. *Erumi* warned the man not to open the cover until he shouted from the top of a hill. But, curiosity and impatience got the better of *Emi* and he uncovered the hole before *Erumi* told him to do so. And, Alas! All the weeds and reeds flew up and again filled the field. Thus it was said that *Emi's* fields are always full of weeds and he has to clear them in order to cultivate.

It was then that *Erumi* and the man decided to go separate ways. When *Emi* asked *Erumi* where he would live, *Erumi* answered that he would live in the Kecheba or in the wild, but not those areas which are covered by thick tropical virgin forest. *Emi* then asked *Erumi* to first take the lives of the oldest and aged persons. *Erumi* agreed, but only if *Emi* would first harvest from his field those grains. Likewise, it would be impossible to distinguish the old from the young, and hence, death claims both the young and the aged.

Before parting *Erumi* asked *Emi* to come closer and look at him. When *Emi* did so, *Erumi* threw dust into *Emi's* eyes and then asked him if he could still see him. *Emi* replied he could not. And away went *Erumi*. But he forgot to throw dust into the eyes of the dog, which was besides *Emi* and had remained silent. Hence though men do not see *Erumi*, the dog always sees him.

Thus, it was that *Ekwhi*, the eldest went to live in the forest, *Emi*, the youngest came to occupy the house. Ever since then, human beings are afraid of the Tigers, when they enter the thick forest and of *Erumi* when he passes beyond the village into the wild (Venuh 198).

The relationship between man, animals and spirits is also the foremost subject in Naga religious thought. In their creation myths the Nagas recount that the first man, together with the first spirit and the first tiger, were siblings, born of the same primal mother. Only a competition between man and tiger reveals the difference between them: intelligence, of which man is more generously endowed than the tiger.

A race to an agreed point was to be held to determine which of them was to live in villages and which was destined to roam the jungle. Man allied himself with the spirit, shooting an arrow at the target while the tiger ran toward it. Thus man reached the target first and the furious tiger had no choice but to make the jungle his home.

This folktale shows the relation between tiger, spirit and man since they share the same mother. It also reflects the higher intelligence of the spirit and man who can repeatedly fool the animal tiger. The story has accounts of how tigers came to live into the forest, how humans came to be called man and how he has to constantly weed out the ground for cultivation, of why spirits inhabit the

wild and dogs can sense spirits, why man live in houses and are frightened of tigers and spirits, of how death befalls the young and the old.

Naga folktales have multiplied through such accounts of why things are as they are by nature.

### **Of Lycanthropy**

The Nagas have a saying that certain people have spirits of animals. Some men and women, even today, are considered or believed to be, were-tiger or were-snake. Such stories are found in *'The Hidden World of the Naga' living traditions in Northeast India and Burma:*

Among the Naga many legends exist of mating between humans and animals and even plants, e.g. trees indicating Naga animist beliefs. Lycanthropy is a curious Naga belief still alive today. Lycanthropy here applies to metamorphosis into any animal.

There are many instances of this belief dating back to Paleolithic times and certain forms found among other tribal people far from the Naga's are very similar if not identical to that of the Naga's. Thus in Naga as in West African tradition the relation between man and animal is so close bonded so close that the animal's death causes the man's death and vice-versa.

A were-animal is an alternative form or double of a human. The transformation may be voluntary or involuntary, temporary or permanent. The were-animal may be the man himself metamorphosed, a double whose activity leaves the real man apparently unchanged, his soul which has left the body in a state of trance, or it may just be the human's messenger whose close connection to its owner results in the phenomenon of "repercussion", whereby any injury done to it is believed to cause a corresponding injury to the human being.

In Sulawesi tradition the marks a were-tiger bears after a fight can appear on the man (76).

Lucy and Kevekha Kevin Zehol says that myths deal with and explains the questions of when, how, and why things, events and humans came to be, as elucidates:

Myths, primarily, are used to provide a way to support and explained verbally a society's beliefs and rituals. Myths tell how one state of affairs become another state of affairs, for instances, how with the order of chaos the universe came about; how the world was populated with humans, animals and plants, how immortals Gods, creator or spirits became mortals, how the



reasons and various features local eliminate came to exist, and how humans can seek to control their (94).

Among the Chakhesang people, it is said that such a transformation still exists. These persons are considered to be extraordinary. They are believed to possess powers and spirit of the animal they become, as they also believe that a were-tiger or a were-snake person, have body odor of a tiger or a snake respectively.

One cannot ascertain the truth, yet the story goes on that whenever such a tiger or animal gets hurt, the man or the woman is also hurt in the same part of the body as that of the animal. Men or women could be a were-animal of Tiger, Snakes or deer may not live near them but spend their lives and live in forests as actual animals. It is also said that when the animal dies, so does the human and vice-versa.

An excerpt from *Folktales from Nagaland* is given here, to corroborate the nature of Naga folktales as illustrated:

The folk-tales of a region may have an unmistakable similarity in theme and motif with those of others but as “Folk-tales are the myths of the race”, they distinguish each other sharply. The folktales of a particular area reflect the mind, the character, the background, the belief, the religion and taboos, the superstition,

the traditions, the culture and everything that makes them distinct from others (vi).

When folk narratives are reservoirs of ancestral way of life, there are not many tellers and listeners today. The oral tradition of passing down narratives in the Morungs or Traditional Dormitories has disappeared, and with that, tales have been disappearing and fading away into oblivion.

### **3. FOLKSONGS/POEMS**

The folksongs of the Chakhesang Nagas tell stories in melodies. All the folktunes have meanings behind the voices blended together. They are songs about beauty, love, courage, victory, daily life, etc. Many of the conversations in the bygone days were exchanged in the form of songs which are very rich in meanings. Although the Chakhesang Nagas sang these folksongs while working in the fields, while returning from work, while wooing each other, this practice has faded. Though, appreciated by many, not anyone can pick up its unique melody. The beauty of the folksong is now only heard and sung on festive occasions only.

*The Hidden World of the Naga, Living traditions in Northeast India and Burma* refers to the famous British anthropologist, Elwin, who writes about the Nagas' free spirit:

It is because of the Naga's free and independent outlook, typical of highlanders everywhere. The Nagas are a people of whom their country can be proud: They are strong and self-reliant, good to look at, with an unerring instinct for colour and design, friendly and cheerful, with a keen sense of humor, gifted with splendid dances and a love of song. (Stirn and Peter Van Ham 9)

Interactions especially with the elders who have walked down history lane and those who knew folklore and songs were memorable besides being very informative.

Two elderly persons, narrated that in the early days a popular folksong, '*No Hi Mozho*' was sung by boys to woo girls. Of how they sing that, without the girls there is no joy in life and the world is empty without their existence. They further related that courtship was very different from the present day. Their relationship was pure because they had nothing to hide or fear, wooing each other in songs. One cannot forget that they woo in groups, too, especially outside the girls' morung.

Songs of these kinds were sung not only by boys, but also by girls to woo boys. Songs are sung to express their appreciation and feelings for each other. Most of these songs are melodious and sung with high pitches for they are sung whole heartedly. Some elderly people expressed that it was a moment to

reminisce and that none had come until that point of time to have such interactions on the subject.

The musical approach that the Nagas have, has been described in *A Corner in India*:

The Naga burden-bearing song with response, “Oh-hee! Hee hoh! Ha-hee, Ho-hum! Halee-he, Ho-hum!” with repetition and variation, now sounding on my ears for the first time, was indeed very musical (Clark 29).

In the folksongs, the Chakhesangs have different parts to make it melodious.

These are the parts of folksong; their equivalents will be given alongside:

*Pe* (soprano)

*Rö* (alto)

*Lephe* (lower alto)

*Lephe Tekro* (high alto)

*Letsu* (tenor)

*Lebo* (bass)

The Chakhesang folksongs are wide and varied. They are very typical in their tune. Not anybody can sing them in their beautiful and harmonious melody.

Michael Oppitz, et al. observes:

Further features of the melodies and harmonies are the use of a glottal stop while singing, the formation of tones from vibrato to an excessively intense tremolo that borders on yodeling. The latter is particularly common among the Chakhesang (225).

They are sung on different occasions and for different purposes. They can be sung by a single person, two persons and in groups as well. How songs are used to communicate with each other is seen in Ao, A. Lanu. *Naga Cultural Attires and Musical Instruments*:

It was their system to communicate with each other through songs on many important matters either in group or in individual. For instance, if a man wanted to address and say something to a woman, he will rather speak through songs. This again will be replied through another appropriate song in response to him just as we find in Hindi films song today. They used to argue and interact through songs in that manner. In this way they go on composing the words as the songs of the deeper meaning. Thus, the traditional Naga songs are very philosophic (111).

The Chakhesang people used instruments to accompany their songs as well. They say that the use of instruments added to melody and harmony to their song. Moreover, their songs could be more in tune synchronizing with timing. Only two instruments are found existent to accompany their songs which are *Tati* and *Khuno*. *Tati* being more popular in use till date and the use of *Khuno* is almost extinct. Though *Tati* is very much in use in musical accompaniment even today, playing of the *Khuno* is fading and almost forgotten. But history tells that *Khuno* nevertheless occupied an important and valuable instrument in the musical arena of the Chakhesang people. These instruments cannot be played by all and sundry, they need practice and dedication to master the skill of playing them.

The process of making these instruments and the method of playing them is meticulously described in *People, Heritage and Oral History of the Nagas*:

### **Tati**

The *Tati* was made from the urinal bladder of the pig which when dried is spread carefully but tightly over the face of a cut-out hollow vegetable gourd. The edge of the gourd covered with the thin laid out urinal bladder is carefully stitched. A thin but long stick is taken and one side is driven through the gourd. A single string usually made of the tendons of animals or from the nettle fiber is tied from one end of the stick to the other. The sound is produced by plucking the string; the fingers from the

other hand are made to brush the stricken string to produced the musical note. A wooden piece inserted at the end of the gourd is twisted around as the case may be in order to tone up or tone down the sound produced. The *Tati* is played in accompaniment to any folk music, particularly love-songs ( Venuh 232)



A description of a unique instrument of the Chakhesangs is published by Department of Health and Family Welfare in *Phek, The Land of Tradition*:

### **Khuno**

During festivities, while young men and women move around the village in merrymaking, the older folk sit around the kitchen, drinking rice beer playing poignant and melancholic sounds on a tiny split bamboo instrument. A string tied to the split bamboo causes it to vibrate and produce sounds when played (6).



Like the Naga folksongs, there are varieties of Chakhesang folksongs. There more conspicuous Chakhesang folksongs are the ones like the canon song, and those songs where there is constant vibration of the vocal cords. What Peseyie, Dean of Music, Patkai Christian College (autonomous), has to say about Angami folksong, is also true about Chakhesang folksong :

...classification of songs depend on the nature of the tune, the circumstances under which the song is performed, and in some cases, the number of singers (109).

Understandably, the leisurely songs at leisure times are more complicated and are different from the simpler field songs which are sung to motivate workers and to keep up the spirit. One common feature of the Naga folksongs, is the use of vocables, like, 'ho', 'hi', 'ho-yi' etc., which have no particular meaning by themselves, but spices up the songs and keeps the rhythm. In the work songs, they also aid in letting out the breath. Some folksongs are given below:

### **Medoyi (Love Song)**

*Medoyi*, a love song, is a solo sung by men only. It is sung in dormitories when a man visits his lover. Some say that when *medoyi* is heard, it gives solace to those who have weary hearts. The silent listeners go off to sleep soundly after *medoyi* is sung. A man expresses his feelings for his lover with these words:



*Anyimio, elisü mozha, iyizo tshürino*

My lover, if not loved, for you I will not sing. (2 times)

*Anyimio, no diwi mesü beo*

My lover, what thoughts do you have? (2 times)

*Hanyi dzero, mesü elisü mono*

Our story, don't you remember? (2 times)

*Mite whi, I we medo yo*

Among all, you're the one I love. (2 times)

*Miremi wewhi, a remi khri mo*

Though others are good, there's none like you (2 times)

*Tekhro tedzü-i, iwe mesü yo*

Everywhere I go, I think of you (2 times)

*Ezü mhai, iwe mesü*

Even in my sleep, I think of you (2 times)

*Tshülo wezha, kekhero diye mesü yo*

If possible, don't think of parting (2 times)

*Kadzü hida, tshi mese ho*

On this earth, we will not die together (2 times)

*Kekho de mezi, eri thsile awe meze hile*

If we are to part, turn back and give me a glance. (2 times)

## Patsoyi (Canon)

*Nohi mozha*

If not you

*Anyi huyo*

There's no other

*Lisü mozha*

If not loved

*Hiye dino*

Should I be

*Thsülo wezha*

If possible

*Erone moyo*

Don't be proud

*Enyi tuwhi*

Though all are admired

*Nohi anyi yo*

You are most loved

*Lisu mezi*

Though much loved

*Amlï thsemo*

My love not known

*Thsimo rimo*

Die, we will

*Diwi mesüdio*

What more thoughts

*Aro medu*

All of us are

*Kethsimi tu*

Going to die

*Kathi mepfo tsomoi*

Before the year ends

*Thsi dei thsemo*

We may die

*Süjo lisu mono*

Therefore, aren't we to be loved

This type of song is one of the most enthralling folk songs. In the olden days the women and men praised each other and showed their admiration through this type of song. Here, one group comprising of two women stand on the opposite side of a hillock where a group of two men follow their song and sing in turns, praising each other through their song. After 'Patsoyi' is completed they shout out loud saying 'Elisüyo' to each other (a word which have a deeper meaning than love which have nuances of love, sympathy, remembrance.).

### **Awu-u Yi (Lullaby)**

In the past or even in villages today, mothers would sing *Awu-u yi*, a lullaby sung to sway their babies to sleep. The song is melodious and sung softly to calm babies and lull them to sleep.

*Kethro anu*

My dear child

*No tresä ide*

Please don't cry

*No metso bede,*

Be a good child

*a..... awu-u*

## **Niza yi**

*Niza* is the name of an insect (similar to a Cicada). Some people believe that when it is heard, it symbolizes or indicates that a well known person is about to die. In the olden days when lovers go to gather edible snail together, they come to a bathing place to wash themselves and go back home. It is told that on hearing the sweet sound of *Niza*, they request it to sing for them in this way:

*Nohi mozha*

If not you

*Anyi huyo*

Theres no other love

*Lisü mozha*

If not loved

*Hiye teho*

I will not wander

*Ho- yi, Nizayi*

*Nizayi...ni mi*

Nizayi love

*Nizayi.*

*Dzüphaluo*

Bathing place

*Thono eru tele hile*

Chant , again

*Hiyole, Ho! Hi! Ho-yi*

## **Tuphakezüyi (Cotton spinning song)**

It is a folk song about how cotton is spun into yarn. While singing a demonstration accompanies the song.

*Ami yimi*

We women

*Hiye honi*

In this manner

*Tupha nyohi*

Cotton is kneaded

*Choyi kerü*

Cotton is rolled

*Hiye zulo*

Spun in this way



**Enu yimi kenyi-i yizo (Tribute to a Girl Child)**

*Anu no*

My dear child

*Metso be ide*

Be a good child

*Ketsü za dzü*

Short is the childhood

*Kesemi za tha*

Long is the adulthood

*Anu no hi*

My dear child

*Ikelhi re thsemo*

Your destiny is not known

*Ichie thsü pfvüu*

Once you pack and get ready

*Tepe kede thsi*

To be gone

*Edelo ho*

There is no return

*Mesüu lisü yo*

Lovingly you will be remembered

*Lisü mezi*

Though dearly loved

*Kekho mo ho yo*

We have to part

*Anu no hi*

My dear child

*Kewe thsü tele*

May good fortune be with you

In the olden days this was sung if a girl child is born to them. It is a very heart touching song, a tribute for a daughter knowing that one day when she grows up, her fate in marriage is a mystery. It shows the love and concern the parents have specially for the daughters future welfare.

One of the significant traits of the *Chakhesang Nagas* is their love for music. Music seems to run in their blood. They sing songs while working in the fields, festivals and gatherings. While some folk songs are sung without the accompaniment of instruments, there are songs which are also accompanied by instruments. There are two well known instruments, Kono and Tati. It takes skill and time to traditionally produce them in perfection.

#### **4. FOLK SAYINGS / IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS**

In the olden days, the blessings and the curses pronounced by the *Mewu* were said to be very effective. From various sources gathered, it is learnt that the folk sayings were considered to be very important and if any person did not pay any heed to what was forbidden to say or do, the person is believed to face the consequences once the *Mewu* utters the curse. So also blessings pronounced by the *Mewu* are a treasure for them. There are many ritual expressions, moral sayings, of wisdom, teachings, descriptions etc.

Some of the folk sayings are still recalled and referred to at appropriate times.

Some sayings are mentioned below:

The folk sayings used during the time of transplantedation of paddy till the time of harvest are pronounced in the following manner

*Erübe tshe metshe ho Emvü tshe khri ekre we re*

The paddy shall bear seeds like the seeds of the varnish tree.

*Etshe apa zowe mezü re, ebo etse re*

The paddy flowers shall be beautiful like a flower,  
the stem shall be strong.

These sayings were believed to be very sacred. These were the sayings of the *Mewu* said during the beginning of paddy transplantedation. The *Mewu* was the first one to sow seeds and plant the paddy. Once this was done the rest of the villagers would do the same.

After the sayings gets over, he performs a ritual in the act of taking some *emvü tshe* (*Rhus semiliata*) fruit and *Pfütsü Thopi/Thopi Piso* (*Artenesia*) and placed them by the side of the paddy. The reason why he selected this particular fruit, *emvü tshe* is because of the numerous fruit this tree has and also the *Pfütsü Thopi/Thopi Piso* was used because of its smell and strength.

*Erübe kuma etse re, Etshü we rare*

Paddy shall have strong roots, paddy seeds shall be bountifull.



When the season of harvesting approaches, the villagers get ready to harvest their paddy. As the women proceed for paddy harvest they collect a special plant called 'Kukhro' on their way to their fields. They collect two plants by uprooting them properly and the plants should be of a first single stem indicating that the stem that came out first has not been touched or cut down, and are carried them on their head baskets. One uprooted 'Kukhro' plant is placed on a paddy by the women and an act of blessing is given by saying: "Erübe kuma etse re, Etshü we rare"

*Tom Pulu, Som Pulu, Kakru ra melo le*

May food, may drinks be abundant, may harvest be bountiful.

After harvesting a little amount of paddy a blessing is pronounced by saying "Tom Pulu, Som Pulu, Kakru ra melo le", a process was followed where the women again place the second uprooted *kukhro* plant with a little amount of rice between the 'Ezu' (mat used for harvesting) and paddy straw and says,

*Tom Pulu, Som Pulu, Kakru ra melo le.*

*Toh eru meke kenyi, karhi toreyi, Elesu re kenyi, kewe kadu tshü masü*

Even if anything poisonous is eaten,

May you never fall sick, live big.

During lunch time the women pour 'hazi' (local brew) for them to drink. Then rice was spread near the 'Ezu' and performed 'Metshü' an act of infatuating or luring the *Erumi* (spirit) and did 'Keponyi' (a slight touch on the forehead)

By touching the forehead slightly using these words it signifies that whatever has been consumed will not harm the health.

*Kakru hi medo le*

Let a good number of paddy grain be collected.

After harvesting, the women take a handful of the harvested paddy; throw them into the air to check the direction of the wind for winnowing. And then, the men are requested to stand according to the direction of the wind to winnow. While winnowing the menfolk sing *Aho...Aho..., ho...ho...* Once the paddy was winnowed, the grain would be collected by the women saying "*Kakru hi medo le*" and the paddy grain would be measured and gathered.

*Emi we ewi ro, kewe kere tshü kenya. Ooh Phrui, ooh Phrui*

Those who steal let no good fall upon them.

During the observation of *Kerhi*, all male adults gather outside the village perimeter in the morning and say these curse words "*Emi we ewi ro, kewe kere tshü kenya. Ooh Phrui, ooh Phrui*". The word 'Phrui' is a term that is used when a person or thing is greatly cursed. It is supposed to be a word which should not be used unaware or used without conscience. They held sharp

pointed sticks and after saying the cursed words together threw them at an effigy of human made from plants and leave and pierced its heart. It was demonstrated to show that anybody who was cursed, the heart would be pierced like the human effigy and says:

*Ezho werhu ro kewe kere tshü kenya*

Those who break the law of the land let no good befall them.

They are *ese* (cursed) with the same cursing words as “*ooh...phrui, ooh...phrui*”. So, the people in the olden days were afraid of stealing or lying or breaking the law of the land. *Metha* (fear), *kenyi* (forbidden) and *tanye* (shame) were strongly regarded as words almost synonymous to taboo. These, being implanted in their minds/hearts, the society lived a harmonious life.

*Thsümrika dzü awe kedzü khri, lhiwe iwe metha medzü re kenyi*

Thunder bolt will strike me, I will be in no measure be equal to you

These were the words used while taking *asü* (oath). If a person lied while taking this oath it was believed that a curse like disease, death, misfortune will befall the person till the seventh generation. This will lead to barrenness leading to the end of their generation. The elders said that whenever the same clan or family members' faces misfortune of the same kind, their ancestral curse had led them in that state or condition.

## **Sayings of Khamile and Metilo-u**

The forefathers of *Enhulumu* village passed these sayings that two women came from *chokri* area and stayed in the village for some time by the names of *Khamile* and *Metilo-u*. The natives observed that these two women had a unique way of saying about things which sounded so mysterious and confused them as well. As per the narration, one was a human and the other a spirit. Which one is which could not be identified. Some were of the opinion that *Metilo-u* represented a human whereas *Khamile* represented a spirit. Their sayings are still remembered and have been compared greatly in the present time with great significance. It was difficult in the past to understand or imagine what was meant by their sayings. But for the present generation it is easier to refer back to their sayings and try to decode.

They foretold that:

*Kenunyi lhikewuwa lade ro arhe rhe pha re me*

In the future to come the roads will be filled with lines and strokes.

Metaphorically, the present day natives have interpreted such a prediction to mean that the roads will be filled with traffic or vehicular movements.

*Kenunyi wa Kenyi bo whe medu mele re me*

In the future men will be able to climb a millet plant.

It is impossible for a human to climb a millet plant. Here, *Khamile* and *Metilou* seems to mean that in the future men will be accomplishing things beyond imagination or impossible feats.

*Nhetshü nyi kaphotshe cie cie pe re me*

Human eyes will be as big as the apple fruit.

The concept here is that the humans will have a bigger or wider perspective. On the other aspect we understand that life will become more exposed.

*Kenyi pharü cie cie wi pe re me*

Humans' ears will be as big as a winnowing tray.

A very well believed saying is that in the days to come, a person's ear will become so big that it will be unable to heed to anything said. It is believed that this saying indicates the younger generation not heeding to the words of the elderly and the parents.

*Hitshiwa, ketsu kelhi medu makhriivü bo mele re*

In the future, the younger generation will be climbing tobacco plant.

Today, some believed that what they have predicted is that the future generations (the present times) will be consuming tobacco by both the old and the young.

*Ewu keko ko re, Turha keko ko re*

To multiply like Crabs and Spiders

It is a comparison given as a blessing to a boy and a girl when they get married.  
The blessing is for them to have children and expand their family line.

*Ekhwi khwide khume le kenyi nhyi kepfü pfü re*

To be fruitful like the ear and tail of a huge Tiger

This is a blessing given during transplantation for the product to be fruitful.  
The paddy should bear its seed like the ear and tail of a huge Tiger which is big  
and hairy.

*I le we meso Tshüzü le to luo*

Your voice is as good as migratory winter bird

In the olden day's boys and girls said these words to each other to show their  
admiration and affection for each other. They said that this bird has an  
enchanted sweet voice which appears only during winter.

*No ke khromi zowe pfo keru bowa khre*

Your son is as handsome as a river bird

The son's beauty was praised by making a comparison with this beautiful blue  
river bird which lives along the river. It is learned that in the past, words of  
admiration and love to woo each other were used idiomatically with many  
comparisons.

## 5. FOLK RIDDLES

1. What comes out only after calling from the back and then the front?

*Yiebo* (Snail).

It only comes out after you suck from the back and then from the front.

2. What always puts on *Tsükhriü* (umbrella) wether rain or sun?

*Batsükwe/Phetsükwe* (Nails)

Nails protect the tip of the fingers from getting hurt.

3. What wears green shawl when young and wears red shawl when old?

*Tsütshe* (Chilli)

Tender chilli is green in colour but turns red on maturing.

4. What always keeps on fighting the whole day?

*Nhethsü mhi* (Eye lash).

When one blinks the eye lash come in contact all the time. Whole day refers to the time when one keeps the eyes open

5. What has no pain even when the neck's chopped?

*Ebuh* (Grain barn)

Grain barns have covers. The cover has to be removed to keep and take out paddy grain. Removal of the cover is refered to the neck being chopped.

6. What dead feeds the living?

*Tshü Lacie* (Wooden spoon)

Dead refers to the wooden spoon and living refers to the living beings.

7. What never passes stool even after food?

*Dzü Hapu* (Bamboo water holder).

Water is filled from the mouth and poured out from the mouth in a bamboo water holder.

8. What is the heaviest thing in the world that nobody can carry?

*Ebrü* (Stool)

Stool is considered as the heaviest thing because when the need comes, it cannot be controlled thus cannot carry

9. What gives birth from the head-top?

*Ngathse* (Banana)

Since banana comes out from the top of its plant. Giving birth at the head-top is compared to bananas.

10. What gives birth from the arm-pit?

*Krita* (Maize)

Maize sprouts out in the nodes of its plant. Therefore it is compared as giving birth from an arm-pit.

11. What always says “I will be the first, I will be the first”!?

*Ephe* (Feet)

It denotes the movement of the feet when walking.

12. What is the strongest?

*Thacho* (Ants)

Ants are said to be able to lift seven times of its weight



13. What does not bear food even though it is ripe?

*Themapu* (The greying human hair)

Everything that ripens or matures bear fruits but the grey human hair does not bear anything.

14. What pierces you with spear when it is young and cuts you with dao when it has matured?

*Lezhi* (Straw plant)

It pricks you when young plant is sprouting but cuts you with sharp edges of its slender long leaves when old.

15. What is dead but carries both the dead and the living?

*Ezü* (Bed)

Both the dead and the living lay on the bed.

16. What is dead in the middle, but alive at the tip and at the bottom?

*Emhi* (Spear)

The top and bottom of the spear is made to kill but the middle part doesn't do anything.

17. What keeps its eyes open day and night?

*Keci* (House-horns)

Tradition houses have horns-like structures with holes thus compared as the eyes which stay open at all times.

18. What leaves no wound even when pierced?

*Edzü* (Water)

There are things when hurt shows marks but water does not show wounds.

19. What wears trousers when young but go naked when old?

*Kavü* (Bamboo)

The covers of bamboo fall off when it matures.

20. What shows its teeth the whole day?

*Tshüwe/Kewu* (A 'T' shaped wooden tool with comb-like spikes)

The spikes of the tool are compared to the teeth which is visible all day.

This is a bare wooden tool with a long handle which is never covered.

They are used for clearing weeds and spreading grains.

21. What keeps looking at each other day and night but never talks to each other?

*Keci* (House horns)

House horns facing each other but never talks to each other.

22. What does not know even if things are stolen inside its house?

*Patshi* (Three Stone ovens)

The oven is not aware even when ashes are removed.

23. What encircles the village?

*Tekro* (A thorny vine)

In the olden times this thorny creeper grows around the villages and they act as protective barriers.

24. What has five eyes?

*Kulutshe* (Wild Slippery fruit like Berry)

The top of this wild fruit has five marks which is referred to as its eyes.

25. What is dead but kills a living?

*Kusa* (Trap or snare)

A trap used to catch birds and animals made of bamboo or metal piece.

26. What briefly follows you in and out and only for one step?

*Chikhie* (Door)

The door always follows you when opening or closing and it is just only a step that you can come in or out.

The riddles are part witty, part funny and are homely and localized. They can reflect folk life and things associated with the *Chakhesangs* in particular, like the type of local fruits which are endemic to the area, tools and implements. The few given riddles also mention the house-horns which signify givers of feast of merit and hunters of merit. The use of traps and snares are also a common practice of obtaining meat. Water-catches like molluscs/snails, crabs, fresh water fish, prawns etc. are part of their diet. The hearth with 3-stone fireplace, bamboo water containers, thorn creepers and bushes along with sharpened spikes as defensive barriers, all reflect folk life.

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## CHAPTER 5

# TRADITIONAL WORDS AND CONCEPTUAL TERMS

Terms and concepts can be authentic indicators of ancestral Chakhesang culture, religion and beliefs, and general way of life. Therefore, they function as nuggets, encapsulating features of Chakhesang identity. Given below are some significant terms and conceptual traditional words:

### **Chele**

It is a melodious folk tune sung during festivals and even during the daily chores at home or at the fields.

### **Chü Mewu**

is the second Mewu in charge of millets, maize, etc, who gives his blessings by performing a ritual called “*Tshe Ngu Kemo Romi Pfü Kedu-O*” during sowing and harvesting time. During harvesting, the whole village observes a day called “*chü methsa meni*”, only after which they can consume the new harvest.

### **Ciewi**

*Ciewi* (Mithun) is an animal which occupies an important place among the *Chakhesangs* signifying the wealth and status of a person. Ritually, it is regarded as the most valued animal.

## **Cizie**

*Cizie* is the name given to a person who held and kept rituals for warriors who goes to collect *Kuzhanu khru* .He has to keep on fasting till the warriors return.

## **Ebuh**

It is a traditional granary basket made of bamboo.The wealth of a person is counted by the numbers of *ebuh*.

## **Echie**

A traditional head basket, used by one and all in the everyday life.

## **Echiebe**

Stone seats were made beside the pathway for people to take rest while coming home with heavy loads from the fields. They were arranged for everybody where the resting places also gave them places to communicate





## **Edemi**

It is a name given to the person who marries a person from another village. He is the mediator who carried information relating to feuds and casualties and also the time to stop war.

## **Ekhrami**

*Ekhrami* are peer groups. They exchange animal's heart, chin, fats etc. and whenever help is needed, they extend it happily.

## **Ekieketshekeshü therü**

It is the name of a seasonal rain. *Ekieketshü ketshü* means constructing a new house. It rains during the construction of a new house usually in the month of January. It is a regular rain that occurs every year.

## **Enhi**

It is used as a rainshade and as a protection from the sun's heat and rain. They are made out of wild date palm leaves worn while working in the fields. It is used by both men and women. Leaves are dried and then soaked in water. Then split into two and rolled by two pieces and netted together.



## **Emhi**

*Emhi* is traditional spear being the most important weapon for warfare and hunting of animals.

## **Epa**

It is a big table like pounding household item to pound paddy and other grains placed in the entrance room.



## **Eri-Ewhi.**

*Eri-Ewhi* It is a procession of people shouting *aho-aho*.

## **Evü**

A bamboo basket used as a measurement for the quantity of paddy harvested approximately a tin full.

## **Eyitho**

Traditional bow and arrow mainly used for hunting purposes.

## **Ezuh**

A bamboo mat mostly used for drying paddy and other grains in the sun.



## **Hazi**

It is the main traditional drink which was locally made. It is made with sticky rice and mixed with *ekhre*, an ingredient to make the local brew.

## **Kache**

A Retaining wall for houses and residential plots were made by piling of stones. They made retaining wall for footpath, gate, paddy fields and canals for irrigation, residential places and centre guards.

## **Kahulabu**

In the olden days, there are no separate rooms for the kitchen and the bedroom. They slept in this room near the fireplace or on thick wooden plank. In this room all necessary and basic household things are kept and stores.

## **Kapfu**

It is an agricultural tool used to clear weeds, dig earth, plough fields and gardens.



## **Karhü**

It is an edible cereal crop belonging to the family of soya beans. They serve as substitutes of meat.

## **Keda**

This is the first feast where the feast giver, the man earns the right to wear *Terükadura* (a shawl which is pure white in colour). Pieces of fresh meat is distributed to the villagers and *Hazi* (Local brew) is served to the villagers.

## **Kecikie**

The Chakhesangs use *Kecikie* (house horns) to embellish houses and to identify its inhabitants. Not anybody can build a *Kecikie* house. There are different types of *Kecikie*. The first type of *Kecikie* is earned when a second feast is provided known as *poriikie*, which is also a house horn but without a full crossed horn. The third feast known as *Zatho* is also to be performed to build *Kecikie*. A fully crossed house horn placed at the top-front of the house indicates that the owner has fully undergone all necessary rituals and feasts and has earned the right to construct *Kecikie*.



## **Keleliekiemene**

Two villages organize a feast of relationships called *keleliekemenye*. Villages can be near and far. Thus, any villager who can communicate and are physical fit to follow in the procession partake in the feast. Villagers celebrate the

*keleliekemenye* in their best and full traditional attire. Each male of the hosting village receive a male guest. This relationship and friendship is known as *Ekhrami*. In the feasts, the best food is offered to each other. Delicacies and dishes of dogs, pigs, roosters are prepared and served along with special *hazi*. The host village offers the best of the best to strengthen the inter-village relationship.

### **Ketsakhu**

These are fortifications with solid stone structures of a village wall. They are built at a certain distance away from the village gate. They are stone slabs carefully piled over one another into a step or a footpath. They are a defense zone for a village.



## **Ketsamvü**

Village gates are called *Ketsamvü*. They are either common entrance or exit of a village. Village gates are also found leading to paddy fields, wells, jhum lands, forests, etc. These gates are made of large stones or large logs of wood erected side by side with a door. The door is carved with intricate designs and motif and made usually with a large single plank of wood.

## **Ketshimeru**

They are platforms piled up with numerous stones. They are normally constructed besides a common footpath. The *Ketshimeru* are significant on their own and represent achievements or feats. Stones are carved in the shape of human, animal and other motif. For instance, two statues erected on *Ketshimeru* represents husband and wife, the tiger refers to the tiger one has killed, animals represent the animal one has killed. There are also figures of domesticated animals representing the many domestic animals one have stolen or killed from other villages. Small erected stone represents the number of women one had slept with in a life time.



## **Khukie**

This is a practice to give cooked/fresh meat rice and *Hazi* to any relative child below a three year old during festivals and also to the eldest men and women or grandparents as well.



## **Khulaciebu**

A drying tray placed above the fire place mainly to keep wooden spoons and drying purposes.

## **Khumhi**

A pounding pole used alongwith pounding table.

## **Kie**

Houses were made of wooden posts, wooden planks, bamboo mats were used for walls and thatch for roofing. The houses are generally rectangular in shape and the sizes vary from house to house, depending on the wealth and social status of the owner. At the foot of the door an *Evolaso* (small wooden planks/bamboo nailed to the door posts) was kept to prevent pigs from entering the inner room.



## **Lethe**

A feast is offered a second time where the man earns the right to wear licirta or *Thsüketsüra* and the women, *Terükadura*. Fresh pieces of meat are distributed along with *Hazi* (Local brew). In this feast a calf and a pup are thrown from the top of a house or *Phadze* (an elevated platform). Young boys who haven't reached the age of wearing kilts participate in taking and killing the calf or pup thrown.

## **Lezie kro**

This is a name given to a working group or peer group. They may be formed by age groups of women and men. The *Lezie kro* work in each others' fields alternately. They also form a social unit and form the best singing and dancing group.

## **Mekhreh**

The top most wooden structure above the fire place used as a shelf for keeping bamboo mats bamboo baskets etc.

## **Menupi**

A term used to address the Creator God, the Supreme being.

## **Meshi**

Ululation or War cry

## **Mewu**

*Mewu* is a person who had both political and religious powers in the village. He is the political and the religious chief of the village. The *Mewu*'s role is to perform rituals for warriors, other religious ceremonies and even engaged in economic activities. The priority of the *Mewu* is to be in the village and not to go to war. For this reason *Mewu* is given the best place at the founding site for his residence, best paddy field and the best agro forestry.

## **Mezhi**

A shield used for self defence in times of war. They are made from animals' hides and bamboos.

## **Nhu**

*Nhu* is sort of a platform for resting and rituals. It is rounded in shape and about 4 feet in height. They are spherical in shape and built with boulder like stones on which the topmost part are placed with flat stones for sitting purposes. This platform was also used as a playground for children and for performing rituals during certain festivals.



## **Pharü**

It is a winnowing tray used to clean grains and separate husk from chaff.

## **Pupfhü**

*Pupfhü* is a kind of festival that is observed without rituals. It is celebrated after finishing the monsoon paddy transplantation. A day is fixed for the feast wherein animals like cocks, dogs, mithuns, fishes were slaughtered and whatever they could afford to consume for this *Pupfhü*.

## **Ri Mewu**

is the chieftain of the village. During the years of head hunting, the one who kill an enemy will bring the severed head to *Ri Mewu's* house to conduct certain rituals called "*Mewu ke methe*". Both the *Mewu* and the head hunter including the *Rithozo pfü* (whose approval and blessing is needed before the warrior sets out for head hunting) will get due credit for the head.

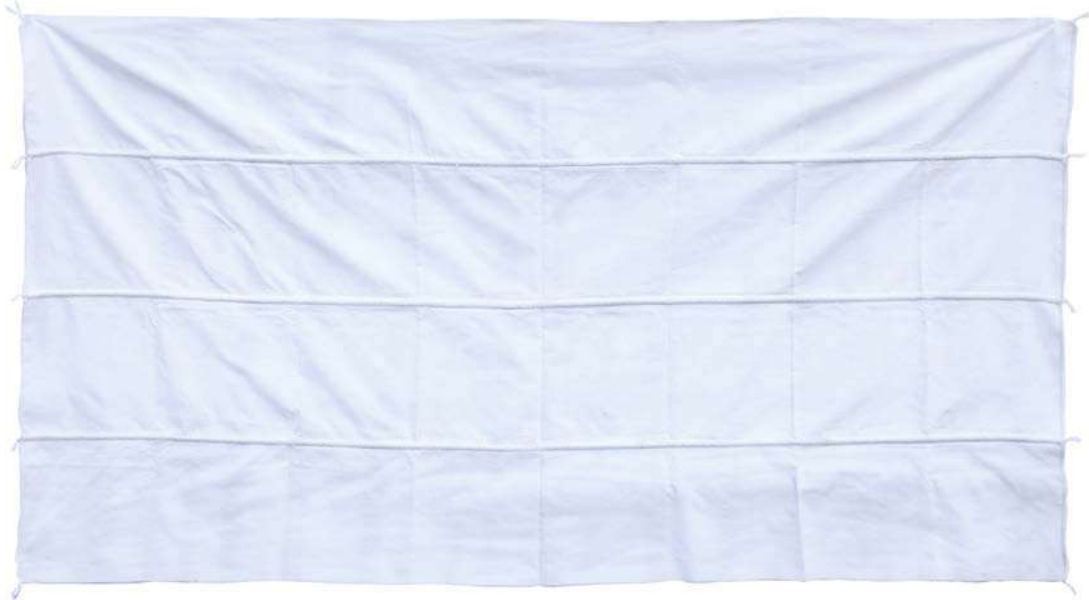
## **Rideketshe**

*Rideketshe* 'Ri' means war' 'de' means great, 'ketshe' means spearing at each other. Thus *rideketshe* means a great war of throwing spear at each other.

**Rü Mewü** is in charge of *rübe* (paddy). No villager is allowed to sow or transplant paddy seedling without his blessing. He sow *losou meri* (first seeds) after which the villagers follows. After "*rü metsha meni*" and "bulo meni" rituals are observed, the villagers are accordingly allowed to harvest and consume the new produce.

### **Terurakedu.**

It is a white shawl stitched with a big thread worn only by people who offer a feast of *Sedese*, *Elito*, and *Zhatho*.



### **Thezu**

It is a small portion of hair kept long by men at the back of their head. This portion of hair serves the purpose of using during festivals/occasions by rolling them to place decorative headgears.

### **Tshünokeda**

*Tshünokeda* are the decorated three lines of cowry-shells in *Chünamenie*. Ancestors brought cowries and sew them together in lines. They refined the crude cowries by rubbing them against stones. It was men only who sew the cowries.

## **Thsüwe**

A 'T' shaped tool used for spreading out paddy grains.

## **Zase**

This is the tenth and the last feast where stone pulling takes place. The villagers enjoy the feast offers of meat and *hazi* (Local brew) provided by the feast givers.

The name of the feasts, rituals, rewards differ from village to village. In *Enhulumi* village a feast giver, Lt Eyielo Kapfo is said to have pulled fourteen stones in the tenth feast which he had offered. Feast stones are pulled and erected in their own land or besides the village foothpath.

## **Zatshü**

This is the third feast where a stone is pulled in the name of the man, who is the feast giver. The villagers clad themselves in their best traditional costumes for the stone pulling ceremony. Merriment takes place in the form of drinking to the hearts content, *Hazi* (Local brew) and meat which is given to the villagers.

The fifth *Zatshü* feast is considered to be more important for the feast givers than the other feasts. Two stones are pulled for the man and the women finally earn the right to wear *Thsüketsüra* (Shawl meant for the feast giver only). The status and symbol as feast givers is equally earned only in the fifth feast.

## **Zathomitso**

Monolithic stones erected at specific places and also besides the village footpath are known as *Zathomitso* (feast stones). They can be erected only after offering feast to the village called the feast of *Zatho*. They are also erected by performing certain rituals and ceremonies. Erected by the rich only, one can find these stones still existant today.

The Chakhesangs are known for erecting Megalithic structures which has occupied an important place in their traditional and cultural life. Some of the megaliths still remain within the village while some outside the inhabited village. These remains shows that the megaliths were erected or placed in their rude form mostly made from stones which were pulled by themselves or transported by using wooden sledges.



It is interesting to note from oral narration that it is taboo except for a feast giver to narrate about feasts and rituals, specially, feast of merit. They are supposed to be kept sacred and a secret as well. Christianity has made a great

impact here that these festivals are more about givers of festivals during the Christmas season. It is sad to find the knowledge of this practice fading away and with this, a part of Chakhesang identity will fall into oblivion.. Pulling of monolithic stones are still practiced but for occasions and festivals in a Christian perspective. Many of the traditional terms are being replaced by the English language. Considering these, the understanding of concepts behind terms can prove to be vague, except to a few elders who are still alive. Hence, the importance of documenting of traditional words and conceptual terms of the Nagas in general, and Chakhesangs in particular, have arisen with great urgency.

## **Personal Interview**

Epao, H. 06 February, 2012  
Elah, K. 06 September, 2013  
Chirhah ,W. 29 December, 2013  
Elah, K. 0 8 March, 2014  
Puro, K. 30 December, 2014  
Lohe, K. 12 May, 2015  
Chirhah, W. 28 October, 2016  
Kenye, M. 30 October, 2016  
Sekhamo, K. 04 March, 2017  
Puro, T. 04 March, 2017  
Kapfo, K. 04 March, 2017  
Puro, Y. 04 March, 2017  
Lohe, K. 16 May, 2014  
Lohe, K. 12 November, 2013  
Sekhamo, M. 10 November, 2015  
Chirhah ,W. 20 February, 2014  
Sekhamo, K. 20 February, 2014  
Marhu, K. 28 October, 2016  
Puro, K. 04 March , 2017  
Tsuzu, N. 12 April, 2012



## CHAPTER 6

# CONCLUSION

Through this study of the *'Aspects of Chakhesang Folklore': a critical study*, it can be concluded that such a story do not begin or end by itself. There is always a basis for folk practice which evolves as their culture. It is found that the Chakhesangs still observe important festivals and rituals which are passed down from the forefathers. For defining the terms and concepts, it is found that one should be very careful in the traditional lore for their values are maintained as precious in keeping their ancestry to keep on living in the hearts of the people. The Chakhesangs are highly aware of tradition and a big revival movement is currently underway in the preservation. There is the re-erection of feast-givers' houses, and the revival of Chakhesang folksongs which includes a unique style where vibration of the vocal cords are very conspicuous.

Though Chakhesangs are said to have rich culture consisting of what Robert Mc Henry (ed) defines culture as, "Consisting of languages, ideals, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of arts, rituals, ceremonies and other related components" (784), a cultural transition mixed with the old and new are taking place. Many of the old practices have, however, perished and in some cases their meanings have become lost because

of the penetration of modern ideas and the coming of Christianity. There is the need to learn about one's roots if not to practice them and keep our rich cultural heritage alive.

According to Verrier Elwin, traditional functions have often been transformed, rather than lost, and he concludes:

I have little doubt that with the growth of material prosperity there will be a cultural and spiritual renaissance. Naga dancing is famous and as the people dance more they will revive in their hearts old memories and joys. The Nagas have excellent taste, a perfect sense of colour, and there are welcome signs that they will not permit a so-called modernism to banish colour from their lives and depress them into the drab uniformity of the dress and ornamentation of today. Naga music and singing can be beautiful and need not be destroyed, as traditional music has been destroyed so many parts of the world, by a slavish imitation of the cinema hit or rock 'n roll (101.)

This was stated in 1961 in his book *Nagaland*. In every society change in belief systems means change in cultural practices too. Moreover, the introduction of western education and modern ideas contributed much to the eroding of old customs.

In religion, the basic belief in one divine Supreme God, creator of the universe and life after death remains the same, followed by Christian's doctrine. In *Nagaland, A Journey to India's Forgotten Frontier* writes:

Nature could not have been kinder to Nagaland, sometimes referred to as the Switzerland of the East; the exquisitely picturesque landscapes, the vibrantly colourful sunrise and sunset, lush and verdant flora...this is a land that represents unimaginable beauty, moulded perfectly for a breathtaking experience (49).

In his conversation with a Naga friend he has written about what they have discussed about Nagaland in its pristine days. She said, "There was virtually no written records of Naga life before the arrival of the British, she said, so we can only listen to folk songs and stories handed down from generation to generation to get a picture of what life was life before guns and machines" (Ibid 216).

V. Nienu makes a statement in *Naga Cultural Milieu, An adaptation to Mountain Ecosystem* that Nagas are closely related to nature:

Mountains, hills, forest, and rivers were held sacred and respected, for they were the source of all goods things and had the power to affect crops fertility- all believed to be controlled by supernatural forces. These features of the natural world became

the source of the Naga's spiritual and emotional aspirations... Their love of nature continues to be profusely expressed in the various forms of arts and crafts, in dress and ornaments, in religious ceremonies, and in the stories and songs of rich oral traditions (35).

Known to be hardworking, brave, chivalrous, hospitable, jovial, nature loving and God fearing people remains true, though change is imminent, As such, Verrier concludes in *Nagaland*:

And, like everyone else, the Naga is changing rapidly. This is nothing new: contact with the plains through trade has been continuing for much more than a hundred years : a new religion, an ordered administration, two world wars, the recent disturbances have had their varied impact, and it does, in fact, say much for the vitality of Naga culture that it has not disappeared altogether (15).

It is no longer possible to wear some of the finest products of Naga textile art, for these depended on success in war or generosity in feasting. Wood-carving has suffered for the same reason. The architecture of houses has changed, for certain features could only be added by families who had earned the right to do so. The maintenance of the boys/girls dormitory is no longer urgent, now that there is no need to keep a guard always on duty and they have become aware of a life beyond their confinement as in *Passing Things On* explains:

Globalization has affected the Nagas in the positions they traditionally maintain as subsistence agriculturalists and part time artists. Most of the Nagas today are no longer illiterate, even if they are, they are no longer confined to an unchanging world. They have developed awareness to worldwide events through global interconnectedness (Heneise ed.et al 53).

The folklore of their forefathers made the culture of Chakhesang people to be hard-working religious, brave, chivalrous, hospitable, jovial, nature loving people as expressed in *A Corner in India*:

On a little plateau, our procession came to a halt, and some one started a fire. We exclaimed, “Why, we are not going to eat again!” “No, only make a smoke to notify the village that we are coming.” Naga telegraphy! And that too wireless, has been practiced for ages! (Clark 31).

Reminiscing folk melodies by the elderly Nagas, Michael Oppitz, et al. notes:

There are still some aged Nagas who remember how in their childhood and adolescence people sang all the time, wherever they were – that singing was a part of the way people communicated : romantic feelings were conveyed in songs, as mere ridicule or reproaches (21).

*Tribal Ethical Values and Practices* says:

Culture is dynamic. Along with the change in culture, tribal ethnics reflect on the issue and try to reorder the pattern of human behaviors. Cultural change is a sign of seeking to construct a more satisfying system of society. On the other hand, recognizing the need for a new order of society, people take initiative and participate to bring a transformation in society. On the other hand, accepting or adapting other religious beliefs, norms and practices bring changes in society and behavior. For people have to conform to new ways of life. Many tribes in different parts of India have been influenced; some have accepted Hinduism, Islam, Sikkism, Buddhism and Christianity through evangelization and close contact. But there cannot be a total rejection of the older religion, culture, ethical values and practices. They remain with people in some ways (Wezah 58).

Today, the culture of the present generation when it will be narrated as a folklore or folktale will be based very much on the present day culture of the people. *The Ao-Naga Oral Tradition* says:

It is an undeniable fact that the rhythm of the tradition is disrupted and its relevance certainly diffused. In many ways it finds itself out of step with the modern world and it is at a stage

where, ostensibly, the only acknowledgement it receives is in the wearing of traditional garments and ornaments on special occasions. Old songs and dances are re-learned in a hurry and presented awkwardly. But on another level one believes that the moral values imparted by the tradition are still relevant and they continue to govern the people wherever they may live, not because they are the values of a certain people but because they are universal human values (Ao xvi).

In this sense, the age-old values of *Chakhesang* people such as, hard-work, diligence, honesty, communal harmony, loyalty in friendship, prudence, etc are held up as the virtues of their forefathers; worthy to be emulated. Today, there is so much talk of climate change, maintaining eco-balance, deforestation, extinction of wildlife species. Through the tales our forefathers told to us we have come to learn how man and his environment have lived a sustainable living. Man and nature has co-existed with due respect to each other's growth and development - truly a sustainable style of living.

Every Naga tribe is trying to keep alive and revive what the forefathers have practiced, to re-live them if not practice them. Likewise the, members of Chizami range comprising of 5 Villages organized a festival for a day known as *Tsükhenye* festival on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2017 at *Chizami* village. This festival was very much observed by the forefathers of this range significantly that the

sowing and planting season had been done marking its end. *Tsükhe* meaning to say finished. Therefore, this festival was observed very strictly.

Nagas are artistic and are admired for their rich repertory of beautiful folk tunes and folk dances. They are normally cheerful, full of vigor and have a zest for life. In spite of the tremendous advance of modernity, the people still love and vigorously practice their traditional dance and songs. They have a penchant for vigorous dances and colorful festivals and are celebrated by various tribes all year round during which the villagers are most lively and vibrant with songs and dances.

Chakhesangs are known for their wrestling and robust health. The Chakhesang live by agriculture and they are known for their terraced cultivation. The land is so fertile that every/any crop can grow so well. Their terrace fields carved out of the hill slopes are a sight to behold. It speaks of their engineering skills.

Some of the most colourful species of orchids are found here. Chakesang culture and customs are quite different from the other Naga tribes. The stones and pillars in and around the villages tell tales of value of the ancient Chakhesangs, who were formerly known as *Eastern Angamis*. Their folk songs and folk dances are melodious, rhythmic and lively. People are amicable, healthy, hospitable, peace-loving and their simplicity is known all over Nagaland and thus outsiders describe them as hospitable, honest, humorous, courageous, vigorous, cheerful, generous, self-reliant, social, trustworthy, and having a unique community life reflecting solidarity and unity as a people.



There is a saying that, time stands still when you are in Phek district. Maybe it is because she allows everyone to soak in the hidden treasures that she has to offer. The old festivals, games, hunting, food gathering are still known and practiced and finally, the folklore: folktales, folksongs; folkdances and folkways of life continue to mingle in the life of the Chakhesangs.

## **REVIVING CHAKHESANG FOLKLORE**

### **Kuzha Cultural Society**

The *Kuzha* Cultural Society was formed at *Zapami* village in Phek district in the year 2002 with a vision to promote the indigenous folk art and music. The name *Zapami* is derived from the word "*Zipami*" which literally means the people living above or by the side of a lake. The village is located at an altitude between 1700-1800 Meters above sea level under Pfütsero Sub-Division of Phek District, Nagaland. It is located in the foothills of *Kapamodzü* range, the inter-state border of Nagaland and Manipur.

The inhabitants of this village are active and lively in their very nature. It is seen that peace, harmony and cooperation exist among them. Encountering the people of this village and the society broadened my knowledge and gave me a great insight, learning many more about Chakhesang folklore.

Given below are some of their activities which promote to revive and preserve their age- old lores. In their own way, they have transformed ancestral folkdance and folksongs in memory of their forefathers.

## **Melophe (Dance)**

This is a folk dance which is participated by the youth of both the genders clad in traditional attires especially during the festive seasons. It is performed in acrobatic forms accompanied with a folksong which enhances the physical strength of the youth.

## **MelopheLü (Dance Song)**

Thromilümi - Kezülütshüde

Boys-girls – Let's sing together

Melophehi - Ni dzüpashe du

Melo dance - I'm very fond of

Nye medulo - melophehitshü

In all festivals - Melophe dance is performed

Melophehi - Dumitshülhiwö

Melophe is - Performed by forefathers

Duminaro - Tshüvüsonütshü

Forefather's dress - Worn and performed

Na kewero - Ketelodekhe

Good dresses – Let's treasure them

Enye hida - Tekewomiro

In this festival - Those who are present

Aromedu - Tekhengulokhe

All of us - May we receive blessings

## **Rünye Lü (Harvest Song)**

After paddy is harvested, a festival of harvest is celebrated for ten days in the month of December. This is the harvest song sung in this celebration.

*Rünyehinü - Nye kediekele-o*

Rünye is - The biggest festival

*keshekechü - Na ketshepfürö*

Old Young - Wearing new cloths

*Rünyehinü - Zacerünye*

Rünye is - Celebrated ten days

*Kechüronü - Kesherohachi*

Young ones - Serve wine to the elders

*Kesheronü - Tekhekhepfotsü*

The elders- Give blessings

*Zacerü nye - Thoqhapfürö*

Ten days - Putting on girdles

*Samü rube - Tshürizorö*

All crops - Looking at warfare

*Tsülo rohi - Kewekesüche*

Time will tell - The good/evil days

## **Thebvo KetshüLü** (Nettle plant processing song)

This particular folk song is sung with observation of ritual during the process of collection of raw material from the stinging nettle plant till the weaving is completed. One of the main sources of materials for producing cloths was the stinging nettle plant in the olden days. To keep this tradition alive, this song is sung with demonstration. Only a few are able to keep this tradition alive. It is a witness to keep on reviving the wonderful manual process of producing shawls.

### *Thebvo thelode- Dzü ketshu lode*

Nettle plant will be cut - Washed in water

### *Thebvo tölode - Lota kenhe lode*

Nettle bark will be cleaned - Soak in rice flour broth

### *Mechi kerülode - Lo ketshülode*

Removing the nettle spikes - Coiling of Yarn

### *Thebvo melülode - Thebvora ralode*

Spinning of the yarn -Yarn is made ready for meandering

### *Che ketshülode - Lo metsülode*

Nettle yarn will be re-coiled - Yarn will be coiled in a bamboo stick

### *Thebvo zhülode - Thebvora dolode*

Nettle yarn will be refined - the yarn will be woven

### *Thebvo wölode - Ra therülode*

Nettle yarn will be warped - Shawl will be stitched

*Thebvo khalode - Rado balode*

Nettle yarn will be soaked - Woven Shawl will be worn

*Thebvo do lode*

Nettle Shawl will be woven .

The continuity of folklore of a certain group of people through the ages definitely implies that they have relevance and acceptance. So also Chakhesang folklore, whose major aspects have been discussed, including accounts of migration, have survived and been handed down for having meaningful relevance, from generation to generation. The trajectory that Chakhesang folklore has taken, will be summerized under three sections.

### **1. Pre- Colonial Period : Prior to 1832.**

1832 being the year that British colonial representatives first set foot on Naga territory, is a significant date because in the course of time they gained more and more control over the natives and left its stamp on Naga traditional community as a whole. Prior to 1832, that is, in the pre-colonial period, oral tradition reigned supreme. Chakhesang community, like the other Naga tribes, is a warrior tribe, fighting and warding off enemies and indulging in head hunting. There are the traditional folktales about Chakhesang warriors, their war-dance, folk songs about warriors. Their spears, daos and shields are well-maintained. There are their games and sports which have relevance to the warrior community. Warriors earn their hard-won decorations in battles, which raise their status and improve their marriage alliances. Outstanding

warriors become legendary figures, and even in death, they are given befitting funerals and live on in folk memories and narratives. There are the warrior's specific religious rituals and taboos. For their livelihood, ancestral Chakhesangs cultivate the land and are farmers and agriculturists. They rear animals like chicken, cows, dogs and pigs, for consumption as well as for ritual purposes, and each household have their own plot to cultivate. Many of their rituals are related to agricultural concerns. The festivals follow the cycles of agriculture. Many of their pronouncements of blessings and curses are related to agricultural concerns. They are religious-minded and superstitious. Their awareness of life after death is vague; to be alive and to survive is all.

For them, the supernatural is natural enough and their superstitious are factual. For instance, lycanthropy is not merely a myth but taken to be true. There are many accounts of such people existing among them. Hutton, Furer-Haimendorf and others have written of how superstitious beliefs of Naga natives and their predictions through dreams, are actually said to have taken place. Horam points out the reasoning of W.C. Smith, as to why numerous taboos were adhered to:

Where something is wrapped about with tradition and supported by magic, there is no difficulty in compelling the individuals to yield to the village (90).

As for the Dormitory/Morungs, which functions as informal educational centers, they greatly helped in preservation and propagation of folk culture and tradition. Their taboos have both religious and secular basis. It is interesting that their religious head and governing village head meets in one person. So, then, it is not surprising that they have religious laws as well as man-made laws. Taboos have to do with their values for personal and collective good, and have varying degrees of seriousness. Thus, traditional Chakhesang communities of the villages are composite societies. All aspects of the folklore are closely and intimately connected with each other. The democratic nature of governance, with clan or khel representatives, give voice to collective decisions. This probably gave no room for any serious rebellion or the need to change, as such.

## **2. Colonial Period : 1832 to 1947**

Impact of colonization which led to Christianization and westernization is deeply felt. American Baptist missionaries reached the natives via the British. Colonization has a different nature from that of a typical definition, which has to do with suppression of natives. Nagas' relationship with the aliens has bitter sweet twists. If the colonizers burnt down villages to the ground in order to quell their raiding habits, through the policy of non- interference, they gave them a certain freedom by allowing natives to follow their traditional customary laws. If Christianization divided societies between believers and non-believers of Christianity, head-hunting gradually came to an end. If

missionaries burnt traditional costumes because natives believe they were given by the gods, they gave the Naga tribes a script to make it their own. In the first place the British people entered Naga soil not so much to colonize them, as it was basically to protect the neighbouring people under them in the administered areas.

The colonizers general policy of non-interference, their policy to let traditional customary laws be continued, the setting up of 'gaonburas' or village elders, and 'dobashis' or interpreters, as mediators, served well to facilitate a friendly and workable relationship between the two, the colonizers and the natives. However, the breakdown of the dormitory/morungs or traditional dormitories, with the introduction of formal schools, led to drastic changes, more and more. Working the land, speaking native language, singing of folk songs and dances, listening to folk narratives, participating in festivals and accompanying rituals, all began to weaken and alienate natives from ancestral roots, veering towards western or modernized way of life.

Yes, society cannot remain static, and culture changes with changing times and needs. Despite the motives of the colonizers and the culpable actions of some zealous missionaries who could not differentiate between culture and religion which led to culture losses, there are positive takeaways from the colonial period. In an ironical way, the British administrators and other western individuals and scholars pioneered the recording of Naga folklores.



### 3. **Post-Colonial Period: 1947 Onwards**

The continuity of practicing traditional customary laws through the ages even in the post colonial era to this day, has helped to keep alive fundamental traditional ways. Article 371 A of the Indian constitution safeguards traditional ways and identity of the Nagas. Yes, the danger of westernization and modernization, at the expense of traditional way of life cannot be overlooked. Nagas, on the whole, are attracted to western clothing. There is over emphasis of English at the cost of native language because of English medium schools to a large extent. The Chakhesang language of *Chokri* and *Khezha*, are taught up to class 8 in the district of Phek, but due to mixed population in the urban like the capital of Kohima and Dimapur, all the Naga tribal languages, including Chakhesang are not taught. However, there is a way of hope in the way Chakhesangs are putting more and more efforts in reviving their folklore, though much needs to be done. Yes, the field is large, and folk memory is disappearing with the older generations passing away. It may be mentioned, that the aged man, Lt. Sotshü Kapfo of Enhulumi Village, who had been interacted with, for this research study, has passed away last year. Such is the scenario today, and there is no knowing how much of folk knowledge have already gone unrecorded, and how much of Chakhesang traditional terms and conceptual words have been buried forever. Because of non usage of many traditional words with the changing times, especially of poetic folksongs, many words have become unfamiliar except to the older members of the society.

If dormitory/morong is a thing of the past, cultural societies and cultural wings of student organizations, try to keep their folk songs and dances, folktales and narratives, alive while traditional costumes are encouraged to be worn during occasions. Today, their garments can have a mixture of traditional and modern patterns and hues. For children, they have stoles and girl-skirts instead of wrap-arounds which can be difficult to wear, and there are boy-jackets and mufflers with traditional designs. In this way, the words of Verrier, regarding the possibility of transformation of Naga tradition, have come to pass. There are songs with traditional tunes and Christian or secular lyrics. Female wrap-arounds are worn on a daily basis especially by many married ladies, which have traditional and modern patterns and colours.

Festivals are observed without the primitive religious rituals, more as a social celebration and get-together. Traditional agriculture method of terracing paddy fields and slash and burn/jhum, are carried on along with other kinds of plantation. Chakhesang cabbage has grown to be a household name, kiwi fruits which are unknown earlier in these parts of the region are grown for commercial purpose. Hornbill festival of Nagaland which attracts many foreigners and tourists from other parts of India, epitomizes the transformational aspect of Naga folklore, where traditional and the modern mix freely.

In an interesting way, contemporary Naga writers, especially fiction a lists delve into oral traditional materials, recasting them in contemporary settings. Agnes Krocha Tapa is such a creative writer.

The relevance of folklore today, of why Chakhesang natives are going back to the roots and reviving them, lies in the way their folklore represents their identity and ancestral values.

Some typical Chakhesang features give them a unique identity. Some features are shared by some or the other Naga tribes, but the collective features of the Chakhesang tribe go to give its members an identity of their own :

- The migration oral accounts which put *Leshimi* and *Khezhakeno* in the Chakhesang area, at the forefront, have great significance and have received the attention of writers and scholars.
- Like the Angamis, Lothas, and some other Naga tribes, Chakhesang people also have a democratic way of governance, unlike *Semas* and some *Konyak* villages which have chiefs and *anghs*, following a semi autocratic system.
- With the patriarchal and patrilineal Chakhesangs, like and unlike the other tribes, it is the youngest son who inherits the bulk, including the parental house.

- Chakhesangs have an egalitarian society and there is no bride-price, unlike the ancestral *Semas* who have royal descents, from which follows that would-be brides entail higher bride-price.
- Each Naga tribe have unique designs and color combinations of their traditional costumes. So also, Chakhesang wears can be easily identified especially the giver of Feasts of Merit shawl.
- Like the *Angamis*, a staple food of the Chakhesang people is rice, since time immemorial, which is cultivated through the method of terracing and jhumming, unlike some other tribes like the *Aos* who grows rice but traditionally cultivates paddy through the jhum system of slash and burn, while the staple food of the *Changs*, *Phoms*, *Khiamniungans* etc. comprise of beans, maize, yam etc.
- Naga folk songs have various tunes for various occasions which can sound repetitive and similar, especially with their combination of vocables which have no meaning by themselves. However, typical Chakhesang folk songs can be identified without difficulty; of the conspicuous tune, one can find for instance in an audio visual disc recorded in the course of this research which has been submitted along with the thesis.

*Aspects of Chakhesang Folklore: A Critical Study*, has been conducted to put together what has been written as well as what has not been documented, and to examine the scholar's traditional heritage.

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