CHAPTER-VII
CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have clearly etched out the dynamics within which women through the lens of Motherhood have been able to position themselves, *vis a vis* the society, in two contexts that have been witness to a long history of conflict and violence. Women are powerful voices in the moderation of conflict yet they seldom find representation in the political spaces.

Women, who have taken on the mantle of mother-activists have formed collectives that have been working towards rebuilding a strife torn community in both Nagaland and Assam. Living in an environment of chronic fear and anxiety gives birth to a ‘culture of terror’, which in turn shapes the social transactions within the community. In such a scenario, women have an added responsibility to initiate measures of peace while keeping the social order intact.

A significant theme that recurred throughout the study was an ‘essentialist view of motherhood.’ The Mother was believed to be endowed with such qualities as unconditional love, protectiveness towards young ones, ability to take risks, be caring, nurturing etc., thus being naturally inclined towards peace. For most respondents thus, peacemaking was an extension of motherhood and it came naturally to mothers. This perception is flawed considering many instances from around the world, where mothers have been found to instigate conflicts on behalf of their children or to ‘protect’ them from harm.

Another pertinent issue that emerged was the contrasting growth and sustenance of Mothers organizations in Nagaland *vis a vis* Assam. Traditionally, Naga women are known to have played a pivotal role in stopping inter factional violence through the institution of the *Pukkreila.*¹ This coupled with the fact that the Naga society is more homogenous, with a strong influence of the Church, and there is a more visible presence of the NMA as a viable leader initiating steps towards social transformation

¹ Ruivah, Khashim *Social Changes Among The Nagas (Tangkhul)* Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 193-194
perhaps lends credibility to the argument that Mothers organizations in Nagaland have been able to carve a niche for themselves despite all odds. In contrast, Assam has witnessed a fragmented civil society, a leadership crisis amongst its collectives and a dismal lack of awareness regarding the existence of the Mothers organizations due to a lack of visibility in the socio-political sphere.

KGNMT has experienced a modicum of stagnancy over the years and has not been able to evolve as a potent civil society actor, as would be expected from an organization of that stature. KGNMT is part of an all India network but it has not been able to tap into its rich legacy, widespread network and capitalize on its strengths to take a leap forward. Another factor leading to its stagnancy is its inability to draw young blood into its rank and file, thus leaving out a large section of the enthusiastic young populace from its operations. This could be due to its emphasis on maintaining a strict routine for its sevikas such as wearing only Khaddar Mekhela Sador, waking up at 4am every day and being paid a meagre amount of money as salary (because primarily this work is voluntary in nature). In comparison the NMA has emerged as a visible entity not only within the confines of Nagaland but also beyond the borders of India. It has also been seen that NMA has forged linkages with organizations such as Nagaland People’s Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), Naga Hoho, Naga Women’s Union of Manipur (NWUM) etc., which are themselves quite visible institutions in the socio-political landscape of Nagaland, thus facilitating and reinforcing the image of NMA as a force to contend with.

KGNMT was also found to be centrally controlled by its headquarters in Kasturbagram in Indore. In the North Eastern region, other than the Sarania Ashram which is the state branch of KGNMT in Assam, it also has a state branch in Tripura. Besides these two state branches, it has twenty one (21) gram seva kendras in various parts of the region. But a synergy seems to be missing amongst them.

Another important theme that emerged from the study was the potential of the mother-activists to emerge as a reservoir of social capital to overcome threats of social disintegration. They have provided a viable alternative to existing social structures. In both Nagaland and Assam, the mother-activists have initiated ample efforts to engage with communities torn apart from the decades long conflict—
facilitating them to rebuild their lives, introducing beneficial economic activities at
the grassroots that have allowed the women to play an active role in expressing their
sense of agency, opposing social evils such as drug addiction and alcoholism and
working towards rehabilitating the affected youth and initiating efforts to open a line
of communication with the non-state actors, to arrive at a peaceful solution.

A significant theme that emerged in this study is the importance of sustainable peace.
Peace does not merely imply an absence of violence but also the creation of an
environment that facilitates constructive, peace-building communitarian initiatives.
The study revealed that peace is not a one off event that can be brought about by a
mere cessation of hostilities; instead, it is an ongoing process, requiring continuous
efforts from all sections of the community. This effort must be continuously
reaffirmed to sustain it. Thus, as Isabel Coral Cordero has put it “Peace building has
to do with constructing alternative local development models that focus not only on
deactivating political and social violence and its consequences, but also, and more
importantly, on preventing violence by addressing the structural economic, social,
political, and cultural inequities that favour its development.”

Hence, a deeper
understanding of the dynamics of peace and conflict can emerge only if the lived
experiences of the women are taken into account, as they have seen, understood and
lived through various dimensions of violence at the grassroots.

The study began with two hypotheses, namely,

a) Neither the civil society nor the State has capitalized on the potential of
Motherhood as peacemakers.

b) Mothers / organizations with a Motherist agenda are being used by the State or
the opposition or other non-state actors to push forth their respective agendas.

For the first hypothesis, opinions gathered from the key informants and the civil
society in both Nagaland and Assam, reflected a sense of scepticism on the role
played by the State and civil society in integrating the mothers and organizations with
a motherist agenda in the formal peace process. Questions regarding the role of the
organizations in the present political scenario, recognition accorded if any, by the

\[^2\] Moser, Caroline O.N. and Clark, Fiona C. (Ed) Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed
Conflict and Political Violence, , Kali For Women, New Delhi, 2001, pp.161-162
State and the civil society, for its peace efforts and potential as mediators in the peace process, were put forth to the respondents. For Nagaland, the respondents stated that although NMA has a significant role to play in ushering in peace within the community, neither the State nor the civil society have been able to grasp the full potential of the NMA and has thus not capitalized on its strengths. In the case of Assam too, the key informants stated that awareness levels regarding the existence of KGNMT and the activities carried out by it, is so dismal, amongst the general populace and those in power that due recognition has not been accorded to them. Subsequently, except for half-hearted efforts, by and large, the potential of KGNMT has not been taken full advantage of in the ongoing peace processes in Assam. For the second hypothesis, the opinions gathered from a cross section of the respondents from the civil society and key informants in Nagaland and Assam, reflected that mothers organizations or even individuals who have advanced the notion of motherhood while mediating with the State, are to some extent being controlled or influenced by both the State as well as the Non-state actors, with more people inclined towards the greater influence exerted by the non-State actors/rebel groups. The reason cited for this was that youth in these rebel groups come from the very society that the mothers belong to, and hence any emotional appeal made by them, tends to have a much greater influence on the mothers than the State, in contrast. Thus we can say that both our hypotheses have been proved.

**Recommendations:**

1) For KGNMT to be able to make its presence more visible in Assam and beyond, it needs to bring about changes in its functioning, be more flexible and accommodating and encourage the participation of the youth in its activities. Only then, can it transform itself from being a mere artefact to an institution that is accorded the recognition it deserves.

2) Although the members of KGNMT stated that they have taken steps to keep up with the changing times, it is felt that a lot more can be done by them. As is evident, the work carried out by *gram sevika* Anima Dutta in Bapsa district is exemplary. Steps can be taken by KGNMT to introduce such constructive
activities in the numerous Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps dotting Bodo Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD), where KGNMT has a centre.

The narratives of the participants in the study represent a chaotic maze – meandering through a landscape of violence and anger, pain and loss, and a strong sense of agency that threatens to break the impasse and create pools of empowering spirit to bring about changes within the prevalent social, political, economic and cultural spheres in the community.

As the researcher begins to tie the loose ends, many questions remain unanswered and many issues remain unquestioned. The present study is still at a very nascent stage and a relatively small attempt to showcase that there are lives that are marginalized in a society and who still continue to survive, despite the numerous obstacles – fears, anxieties, insecurities, pain and losses that they have to face in their lives.

******************