CHAPTER – 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
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In the present study an attempt has been to study the role of women in Naga politics. Politics is considered important for increased equality between the sexes. However, politics is neither the only source of discrimination against women nor the only source of potential power for achieving more equality. Nevertheless, it is the most important source of current discrimination and a potential avenue for dealing with many forms of gender discrimination.

Politics at every level of participation is considered to be the province of men. Women have not been regarded as part of the political arena and until recently it was considered to be quite normal. The reason offered for this phenomenon by the social scientists and by popular cultures is the women's disinterest in politics, originating in their early socialization, their incapability to assume political leadership role and their family responsibilities, which precluded political activity. This view overlooks the fact that women all over the world have now got the right to vote and also participate as workers in political movements.

Gender equality is a pre-requisite for effective participation of women in strengthening the institutional structure of democracy. The number of leadership positions at the local, regional and national level does not commensurate with their numbers in society. The inferior status of women in political institutions also results from the underlying biologism of male gendered policies for gender equality. The omission of women in positions of power seriously affects the
ability to challenge the subordination of women in all its manifestations. Women have to be in politics of power both to participate as women and to change the very nature of that power which serves to preclude women.

Women's participation in politics is very much related to certain important aspects of women's life such as marriage, family and employment. Needless to say, that there is no country in the world today, where women have equal status with men in all the major areas of life, family, health, reproduction, education, work, government and cultural expression. Although the opportunity for women to be politically active may differ across countries and societies the cause for active participation are often similar. The major obstacle to women's full participation in politics, education, employment and other important life activities is almost universal societal attitudes that value the domesticity of women.

Contrary to the belief that women participate less than men in political life, there is a greater pool of interested and qualified women who, if given the right opportunity, are capable of taking up more political responsibilities. Political subjugation is more due to the combination of prejudice against leadership role and the differential placement in the tracking system which makes it difficult for women to embark upon political careers. Further, their disadvantage in competing for power and prestige is least in those political systems where leadership rests on ability and where there is little separation between the domestic and public sphere.
In India broad based political participation of women has been severely limited due to varying traditional factors like the domination of Indian politics by considerations of caste, class, religion, feudal and family status, etc. all of which are essentially patriarchal and work in favour of men against women.

The present study, therefore, has attempted to study the role of women in Naga politics. The study has examined the participatory role of women in the ongoing Naga movement during a particular phase of its growth. In this sense, this is not the study of the status of women per se but their participatory role in Naga politics. The term Naga politics has been used here in the context of the Naga movement launched by the Naga National Council against the Indian State for achieving its political goal. In the process of the movement the Naga women were also organized under a group called the Naga Women Society within the organizational framework of the NNC. The Naga Women Society was quite active till the signing of the Shillong Accord of the 1975, which is considered to be a landmark in the history of Naga struggle. Given this broader outline the specific objectives of this study have been to trace historically the time and context of the participation of Naga women in politics, to understand the nature and extent of participation and commitment of women to Naga politics, and to assess the role played by the Naga Women Society in the Naga political movement.
The data for the present inquiry have been collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through the interview schedule administered on those women who were part of the Naga Women Society and engaged in political activities up to 1975. The secondary data were collected from books, journals, newspaper articles and other relevant sources.

A sample of 100 women was drawn from the field to analyze the level of their political consciousness and participation in the Naga movement. Two broader categories of women were included in the sample. While 50 respondents were selected from among the members of the Naga National Council Women Society, another 50 respondents were activists of the NNC. The primary difference between these two categories of respondents is that the members of the NNC Women Society acted mainly as facilitators and served as a link between overground and underground activists. The women activists, on the other hand, were actually the participants in the underground struggles carried by the underground fighters. Thus it may be said that both categories of women were associated with the NNC political struggles but there was difference among them in the nature and extent of their participation in the struggle. The major issues emanating from the present study are listed below.

The present inquiry shows that the majority of the respondents are aged and belong to the age group of 61-70 years. It is further obvious that the number of women in the younger age group is relatively less. It may be because of the fact that the nature of movement itself started changing in subsequent phases. On
the whole, it is apparent that the association of women with the Naga National Movement is not only old but has also continued for long.

It has to be kept in mind that although Naga as such in considered a common category but practically it includes a large number of tribes. The individual tribal identity is so strong that a Naga identifies himself always in terms of his/her own distinct tribal group. Given the scenario it is clear that even in the present sample as many as thirteen tribes are represented. Our data support the general contention that six major Naga groups have played very dominant role in the Naga movement. They are Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Sema, Lotha and Mao. Demographically, also these tribes have been dominant communities.

The movement has been quite widespread which is evident from the fact that a number of communities, which are located in different parts of the Naga territory, have also participated in the movement. For example, numerically Rengmas, Sangtams, Phoms, Yimjunger, Khianmongons are relatively smaller communities but they have also participated actively in the movement.

The educational pattern as reflected in our sample corresponds with the educational scenario in the present day Nagaland. The levels of literacy and educational attainments have been very low in Nagaland till recently. In fact, in the initial phase of the Naga National Movement in early 50s there were very small group of people who could get formal education. Naturally most of our respondents are illiterates of just literate. Regarding occupational background of
the families of the respondents it is evident that most of them came from the agricultural background.

The patterns of recruitment to the movement show that the younger people came to the movement primarily due to the persuasion of the community. It is a known fact that community and kinship relationship continues to be very strong in tribal society. Individuals are constantly under the influence of the latter. Sometimes the common members of the community even operate against their own wishes. They have to abide by the wishes of the community. In addition of this, the Naga National Council had floated several front organizations such as the Women Society, Youth Movement, Safe Guard, Home Guard, Naga army, etc. The NNC Movement assumed the militant character from the very beginning but most of the women joined the Women Society that worked overground and functioned as facilitators.

Another related question is the continuity of these members and activists in the movement. It is quite natural that the women activists could be actively involved for a limited period only due to their other family commitments. Of course, the age factor must also have been a constraint in continuing organizational activities for a longer period. The question of continuity with the NNC Organization is also reflected in the fact that whether they completely disassociated with them in subsequent phases or left it for good. Almost all the women have continued to be in the organization but only a few took active part
and most of them remained just members without actively participating in the
day-to-day activities of the organization.

Arms training was not given regularly to women under the NNC
dispensation. It is difficult to say whether it was some sort of discrimination
between male and female members. But the pattern is quite visible in this regard.
However, it is fascinating to note that in our sample there are a large number of
women who were arrested by the Indian Army and Assam Police at different
places in different times. They were sent to different jails and kept them shifting
from one jail to another jail. They narrated numerous stories describing their
plight in these jails.

The system of decision making in any organization under the situation of
a movement is another important dimension to judge the role of various groups
involved in it. However, this dimension was never a crucial point in the NNC
movement since most of the participants of the movement were males. It is quite
possible that the role of women in decision making in the movement must have been marginal. Nonetheless apart from the decision making, in rest of the
political activities women played much better role than their counterparts.
Women were not only facilitators but also the real mobilizers in the movement. In
support of their argument regarding the active participation in political activities
most of the respondents said that women formed the major force through which
the problem could be attended to. The study further tried to find out whether
women had experienced any difficulty in gaining access to the leadership role in
the movement. Many of them said that this question did not arise because women were not educated to assume such a role.

In order to find out whether there is any affect in the family with their active participation in the movement we specifically asked the respondents to narrate their experiences in this respect. We find interesting reasons and answers in this regard. It was important to find out whether the respondents had any other members in politics at different levels or the respondent herself was the first to enter the politics. They have given various answers about their entry in the politics. It is thus clear that most of the women joined the movement along with the other family members.

Attempt was also made to find out whether there was any separate demand concerning women issues. The study shows that the Movement never identified women's demands separately. The nature of equality between the male and female is an important aspect in any movement. The study shows that males were satisfied with the women's participation of in the movement. They considered them as equal partners in the movement.

The study further shows that funds for the movement were raised in different ways for supporting the activities of the movement. It is generally believed that in movements of this nature funds are always collected through illegal means. But our data contests such a contention.
We ascertained the names of some important women leaders of the Naga National Movement and details about profiles. Their names have been mentioned at the appropriate places.

Some of the open questions were also asked to find the individuals’ opinion and attitude, concepts and notions about the problem being faced by the Naga society today and the Naga national movement. These issues are mentioned below:

Our respondents feel that the Naga Sovereignty should not yield to any other nations as we have declared independent one day prior to India’s independence. We have adopted our own constitution and now we are waiting for the UNO decision. Every Naga should keep in mind the 16th May 1957 plebiscite and should not confuse with the Indian Constitutional framework, which is not a part of our country. The Naga issue of the political movement is not for the inclusion of Naga country in the Union of India. It is a free country since times immemorial and the Nagas are not Indians.

Regarding the conception of the Naga country the statements show that it is a “Free Country” outside the Indian Union we don’t pay any tax to others. Naga political issues are quite different from other political issues in India. It has the people’s mandate and our country has a clear geographical identity. It is also purely a country of the people, owned by the people, managed by the people. It was never ruled by any other sovereign nation. It was “Un- administered Territories” and “Excluded Area” in British India. Land belongs to the people, as
its neighbours never conquered private and personal property and Naga country.

Regarding the notion of individual liberty, the study clearly shows that an individual liberty is associated with the norms and values of society itself.

In this kind of movement one has to be very dynamic and intelligent to adopt different tactics. Our inquiry suggests that women are more competent to tackle the underground activities. But in certain kinds of underground activities both men and women have to play active role to tackle the situation successfully. In this sense they are interdependent. It is interesting to know whether any women had ever occupied high position in the organisation of the movement. Some respondents said that some women occupied high position in the intelligence wing of the organisation that is one of the topmost positions in the underground set-up.

A large number of women are still in the organization and some of them are just members as they have finished their terms while some of them discontinued due to family commitments while some of them became handicapped and aged. Thus even after such a long struggle in the Naga political movement women are still involved in the different activities at present. Apart from the problems that affect their day-to-day lives, it is also true that women have started taking interest in other public spheres. In this regard, respondents pointed out some of the major problems which the Naga society is facing today. They are- factional killings, extortions, tribalism, lack of unity among the leaders, and insecurity among the common people. These problems reduce the feeling of oneness among the people.
In conclusion, it may be stated that the Naga women participated actively in the movement, and did so not as women but as Nagas. They primarily identified themselves with the Naga national ideas and the gender dimension never assumed a crucial place in the politics. The commitment of the women towards the movement was basically determined by their ideas of political independence which had taken a definite shape during the course of the movement. It is because of this strong sense of attachment that Naga women continue to associate themselves with the Naga political struggle.

Further, it is pertinent to highlight that this study contests the prevailing understanding about the nature of women’s full participation in politics. The study also indicates that women have actively participated in political activities inspite of gender inequalities. Thus, the study reveals that, although the path is never easy, with determination, perseverance and commitment women can work in partnership with men to achieve set goals.

While the present study has been one of the first few efforts towards understanding the Naga movement and the subsequent developments on the political arena, with special emphasis on the role of women, further research is required to examine the vexed Naga problem from other significant perspectives such as the role of women in the Naga peace process, or the role of Naga women towards reconciliation among the different factions involved in the Naga movement, to mention a few. The simple methodology adopted in the present study can be applied in such studies.
In final conclusion to the present study, it may be stated that a relevant dimension of the Naga movement and the degree of involvement of the Naga womenfolk has been highlighted. It is hoped that the present study will generate renewed interest and further research on the increasingly perplexing developments associated with the Naga movement. Indeed, the fact that further research on the contemporary Naga movement needs to be more responsive to ground realities cannot be overemphasised. Research on any aspect of the Naga movement presents a challenging area that is likely to remain so for quite some time.