CHAPTER 2

NAGA CULTURE AND EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction.

The Nagas, as a people, had survived their culture over the past many centuries. Until the dawn of a new horizon with the advent of Christianity and education, in the first quarter of the 19th century, the people held their customs and traditions very dear to them. Changes were very rapid and radical only during the last few decades. Abandonment of some traditions has taken place for better of course, for example, false economy and opulence of coriass. But nevertheless, the modern generation values no dimension as to what is worth preserving them to lose it.

Naga culture is one that values very highly whereas the Nagas themselves fail to appreciate. This regrettable state of condition is due to ignorance and lack of education among the people. Those people who came to Nagaland with an eye of acquiring neatly fine exquisite designs of the Naga crafts and arts and those with an eye of money get enchanted with music and songs. On the contrary, the Nagas youths of today being so appreciate and value their own culture. But Horum (1992:14, Social and Cultural Life of the Nagas) claims that very recently, several young people, partly disconnected with modern norms and partly abandonned by education to values of all forms of customs, are making earnest efforts to revive their vanishing traditions and half-forgotten cultural heritage. This means that some Nagas youths have started realizing their valuable cultural heritage.

2.1 Elements of Naga Culture.

Elements of culture that coords the theme of this study are delineated as follows.
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Naga culture is one that others value highly whereas the Nagas themselves fail to appreciate. This regrettable state of condition is due to ignorance and lack of education among the people. Those people who came to Nagaland with an eye of aesthetics obviously saw exquisite designs of the Naga crafts and arts; and those with an ear of music got enchanted with music and songs. On the contrary, the Naga youths of today failed to appreciate and value their own culture. But Horam (1992:14, Social and Cultural Life of the Nagas) claims that very recently, several young people, partly disenchanted with modern norms and partly awakened by education to values of all forms of culture, are making earnest efforts to revivify their vanishing traditions and half-forgotten cultural heritage. This means that some Naga youths have started realizing their valuable cultural heritage.

2.1. Elements of Naga Culture.

Elements of culture that consists the theme of this study are delineated as follows:
Language diversity definitely has its disadvantage on school education. Absence of lingua-franca of the state has definite drawback in social development and most acutely, on educational development. The students are taught in the language other than their mother tongue. Assimilation of information and knowledge is impeded when the medium of instruction is unintelligible to the taught. English is the official language of the state, but it is only the favourite language of the upper echelons of the society and the educated. Amidst the linguistic deadlock there came a rootless language in the style of Nagamese, which is neither Assamese nor Naga language. Etymologically, this language is claimed to be blend of Naga and Assamese languages, but there is no Naga word in the so-called hybrid language. This language must have been the adoption of Assamese by the first Naga travelers and contiguous Naga settlers, and spoken in their own accent thereby corrupting the real Assamese. It is obviously a difficult problem to trace the time and nature of circumstance that led to adoption of this language. "To know
about the origin of the Nagamese language it is essential to study the relation of the Naga people with the Assamese speaking population in the neighbouring areas. The Naga people had a relation with Assamese and that relation continued since the reign of the Ahom kings.” (B.K.Boruah, 1993:4, *Nagamewse the language of Nagaland*). The import of this new language has swept the feet of younger generations off the indigenous foundation of rich and multifarious Naga dialects. Most of the educated are very poor writers in their own mother tongues today. Moreover, this new invention has no utility for the common masses in rural areas. Earlier, when there was no such Nagamese the village folk learnt neighbouring tribes’ dialects, and inter-tribal communication had no problems. With the intrusion of this newfound language the necessity and the desire to learn other tribe’s language has vanished. This language has come to the family, the school, and the market place so conveniently that there is no desperate need for developing English, the official language of the state. Otherwise, the status of English language should have been better in the state than what it is now. What is more ironical is that Nagamese threatened to replace mother tongues in the family, and in the society as a whole.

The shift of language is a matter of great concern in the present Naga society. Language, as an element of culture, is undergoing degradation rather than growing. The urban offspring seem to derive pleasure fumbling about in their own mother tongue; never seem to regret for their lacking in the mother tongue, but instead indications are not wanting that deliberate faltering in mother tongue is held as a sign of modernity and fashion.

Naga languages have not received much promotional support from education system. Many tribes are still unable to come up with textbooks in their mother tongue. Textbooks in English have not helped in fostering quality education. Textual concepts are more often missed out and whatever is reproduced in the examinations is done mechanically, but not spontaneously. With this status of language in school, there is no scope for originality and creative reflection on the contents of the syllabus by students.

2. **Dress:** Naga traditional dresses are highly valued for their exquisite designs and blend of colours. Shawls for both men and women are found in many varieties. Almost every
Every tribe has its own designs and colours choice. Even within the same tribe there are different types of shawls and skirts. Both men and women have different designs of dresses. The Sumi women have about 15 types of skirts; each type having its own meaning and significance.


The potential of creativity is explicitly conveyed through the originality of designs and patterns done on their crafts and handloom. Designs of traditional and
Food: Food constitute as an element of cultural distinction of a people. The Nagas' food habit presents an interesting subject of study. The Nagas eat simple food. The major component of their daily meals is rice. They commonly use little or no spices that are widely used by the plains of India. Their food preparation and combination is different even from other neighboring states. Spices are consisted mainly of chilly, ginger, and...
garlic. Vegetables are usually cooked in simple manner. All the food items are boiled and oils are not utilized in most cases.

Common vegetables are yam, squash, mustard leaf, pumpkin, potato, brinjal, beans, wild leaves, tomato, etc. Varieties of insects constitute the delicacy of Naga dishes. The insects are found in trees, bamboos, rivers, terrace fields, in and on the grounds. The most valued insects are the pupa of hornet and other varieties of bees, and the ones found in oak trees and bamboos. Birds and animals of almost all kinds are taken as special items. The Nagas are profoundly non-vegetarians. Domesticated and wild creatures, including frogs and snakes, are taken with great pleasure. But snakes and tiger meat are not commonly favoured items.

Food seasoning is always simple and natural. They depend mostly on fermented soya for seasoning of the curry. Alternative to soya are dried fish and meat. Some tribes rely on fermented bamboo shoot for seasoning of curry. The method of processing and preparation of seasoning items will not be dealt with in greater detail here. Preservation of meat, fish, soya or any other vegetable is done by smoking and drying in the sun.

4. **Agriculture**: Agriculture is the main occupation of the Nagas. Land holding system guarantees equal ownership rights to every individual of the family. Land is the common property of a family and every member of the family has a customary ownership of the agricultural land. Land is fertile and climate condition is favourable for almost every kind of crop. Jhum is a type of cultivation commonly practiced in the state. Wet cultivation is an improved system of cultivating paddy, but due to topographical unfavourability some communities do not derive much benefit from terrace cultivation.

Principal crops grown by the Nagas are rice, maize, millet, jobstears, sorghum, yam, soya, chilies, and pulses and spices. Besides these, varieties of vegetables are grown. Natural soil is suitable for the crops that there is hardly any need for the use of fertilizers in many parts of the state, and even pesticides are not generally used. Agriculture provides self-sufficiency of food and every rural family is self-reliant. Rural folk are hardworking and they sweat for sustenance of life. But, the ironical trend of aversion to work is cropping its ugly head up in the present generation. Work culture is
on a decline. The evils of dependency and irresponsibility are eating into the once hard-working Naga society. Whatever number of children a family might have, but all, except mother and father, are becoming economically dependent. And younger generations do not have the knowledge about agriculture and its importance.

5. **Dignity of Labour:** The Nagas were hard workers; for every adult it was natural to work for self-sustenance. To be lacking in skills and strength for work was an object of damnation and ridicule in the society. No one was ashamed of doing any work; rather, sincerity and honesty in taking up of work was the hall-mark of the traditional Naga society. Begging was not known in Naga society. Every member of a family, whether normal or disabled, did one work or the other according to one's own ability. In a village there would be no one who would depend on others' labour to meet his daily needs. From the smallest article of the household necessity like dao handle or a rake for use in the field, to the heaviest and the biggest object such as a house, every male member of the village was skillful enough to make himself. Thinkers Forum, Nagaland (1981) observed that dignity of labour is recognized social application in Naga society i.e. no Naga will feel shy or feel ashamed digging the earth for construction of houses, cultivation in the field etc. although there is erosion into this quality among the young generation.

With the change of time there had been a great change of occupation in search of economic pursuits. Flow of money into the hands of the Nagas for conspicuous intention of intoxicating them with easy money by unscrupulous elements had inflicted irreparable damage to the work culture of the Nagas. Work culture has slipped down to its nadir in the offices, in the schools, in the factories, and in the fields. School education has a gigantic task ahead of it for cultivating work culture in the new generation.

A popular culture among the young people has developed to keep the hand soft and clean. The present generation of the Nagas hesitate to be seen doing manual work. For them to carry an object is undignified and shameful in front of their peer group. One cannot help but accuse the education system for taking away life from work. Hamlet Bareh (1987:302, *Glimpses on the Growth of the Integration in Nagaland*), alleged that the greatest mistake of the earliest educationists was that they overlooked the good
aspects of the village oriented and traditional system of education. By traditional system of education, he meant that learning was through direct experience and active observation of work situations.

The Nagas were popularly known to be self-reliant people. ‘Sense of self-reliance was strong with our people in those days. Both rich and poor strive to have self sufficiency in food grain so as not to depend on anybody for anything’ (Zhovehu Lohe, *The Naga Work Culture*, 1997). But now any one should be hesitant to give this statement. The past was certainly proud of its skills and adventurism. There is no denying the fact that needs were limited those days as compared to the present day needs; but all the needs of a family or for that matter, the village community itself were met within the self-created means.

To bring prosperity to a people there is no substitute to work. Therefore, there is a crucial need for attitudinal change among the Naga youths, and this could be possible through proper education. The same voice was also raised by Rajput, (2000: *School Curriculum in India with focus on Value Education and Work Experience*), who stated ‘Educational institutions and society at large will have to change their mindset towards manual work – Senior functionaries when they alight from their cars do not carry their papers themselves. Someone has to come and do this job for them. This sort of mentality has to change.’

6. **Games and Sports**: The Nagas were sports enthusiasts. In spite of their heavy physical labour in the field and at home, they made it a point to set some days during the leisure seasons to play games. The important games of indigenous origin are listed here:

i) Wrestling  
ii) Kicking  
iii) Long jump  
iv) High jump  
v) Javelin kick  
vi) Top game  
vii) Alauthi (Swordbean seed game)
Myths and beliefs: Here, myths and beliefs have been clubbed together as one aspect of culture though subtle line of distinction can be drawn between these two concepts.
There is sort of fixed attachment of faith in the former and the latter can be subject to change guided by strong reasoning.

The people were simple and their minds were unadulterated. The beliefs and ideas that were imprinted in their minds have been molded chiefly by myths, usages and customs. Visible manifestations of beliefs often came through practical gennas and taboos. It is beyond the scope and rationale of this chapter to delve into elaborate discussions on myths and superstitions of the Nagas. Yet, to meet the specific need of this study, the investigator would be drawing on the merits of the moorings that guided behaviour and actions of the people.

The animist Nagas were strong believers of the law of cause and effect. And this phenomenon was viewed within the perceivable limit of their narrow confines of immediate worldview. Their actions were governed by the age-old principles of reward and punishment for good and evil deeds. For example, it was tabooed to steal fowl, squirrel or any trapped animal from the snare of others, because it was believed that the culprit would incur the same torturous death at the end. Thus, stealing was not only believed as unethical but a taboo.

Respect for elders and senior citizens were a rule that came to be accepted as a tradition. And this tradition was based on the belief that to please older people was to be blessed in return. It was a taboo to scoff at senility of the aged. The Nagas believed that to hurt the sentiment of older people would invoke misfortune upon the offender. Here, a critic might argue that good habits of abstention from stealing and respect for the aged are non-spontaneous but for fear of taboo. Such an argument stands valid to the extent that immature children behave non-volitionally and under external control. But very soon, they get conditioned and accustomed to the social practice, and the virtues get ingrained in them so that their attitudes change in due course of time.

Taboo was a very powerful word that effectively controlled the behaviour of the people. Any unwanted action, say for instance, stealing firewood from stack of others, killing or wounding others’ animals, plucking fruits from others’ trees without permission, cutting trees from others’ forest etc., were restrained by the belief in taboo. Mythical belief was so strong that it worked effectively in controlling moral and social
8. **Festivals**: Festival is one of the oldest institution for imparting social and cultural values to the people of the Nagas. In the absence of formal system of education in the traditional society, the most effective agent of education of younger generations was through the festivals. Festivals are the core of folk beliefs, fears, joys and sublime life. Every Naga tribe has its own festivals. Every tribe has several kinds of festivals. Festivals are the occasions for observing gennas that are characterized by forbidding for certain activities. There are varieties of gennas that are observed throughout the year. Rituals are the practical manifestations of gennas. But it must be noted that festivals are not the exclusive occasions for gennas.

Festivals are mainly for eating, drinking, singing and dancing, and merry-making. 'The participation of large social units in public performances and entertainments leads to another kind of social folk customs to which terms festival and celebration generally apply. Music, dance costumes, floats, and processions may all enter into festivals, which are based on both religious and secular traditions', (Dorson, M.Richard, 1972:4, *Folklore and Folklife an Introduction*). Individuals and households
Naga society is basically agricultural, and hence festivals are observed mostly on agricultural significance. As Horam (1992:39, *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas*) puts it, ‘Agricultural success or failure depends on the clemency or the fickleness of nature. This agency has to be won over and kept satisfied.’ Gennas are observed and rituals are performed in festivals to propitiate the Supreme being for protection of crops from destruction by devastating wind and hailstone. Rituals include offering prayers for bumper harvest for the year.

Among the Sumi Nagas, gennas are observed in the beginning of jungle cutting during a new cycle of cultivation, so as to avoid accidental injury from the use of dao. Festival of sowing is observed to mark the completion of the busiest and the most crucial season. The Angamis and Chakhesangs observe festival at the completion of transplantation in the wet cultivation. Besides this, the Angamis celebrate gate-pulling

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<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Date/month</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angami</td>
<td>Sekrenyi</td>
<td>20th February</td>
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<td>Ao</td>
<td>Moatsu</td>
<td>1st week of April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chakhesang</td>
<td>Sukrunyi</td>
<td>15th January</td>
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<td>Chang</td>
<td>Naknyulum</td>
<td>1 – 3 July</td>
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<td>Khiamniungan</td>
<td>Tsokum</td>
<td>2nd week of October</td>
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<td>Konyak</td>
<td>Aolin</td>
<td>13 – 15 April</td>
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<td>Kuki</td>
<td>Mimkut</td>
<td>17th January</td>
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<td>Lotha</td>
<td>Tokhu Emong</td>
<td>7th November</td>
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<td>Phom</td>
<td>Monyu</td>
<td>1st week of April</td>
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<td>Pochuri</td>
<td>Yemshe</td>
<td>1st week of October</td>
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<td>Rengma</td>
<td>Ngada</td>
<td>1st week of November</td>
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<td>Sangtam</td>
<td>Amongmong</td>
<td>3rd September</td>
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<td>Sumi</td>
<td>Tuluni</td>
<td>8th July</td>
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<td>Yimchungru</td>
<td>Metemneo</td>
<td>8th August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zeliang</td>
<td>Nga-ngai</td>
<td>Last week of December</td>
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Jamir, Toshi, A.M.(2001): *General Knowledge – Naga Hills to Nagaland*

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9. **Arts and crafts**: Creativity and aesthetic sense is inherent in the tribes of the Nagas. Even the common articles of daily use are adorned with great designs and decorations.
The Nagars are the most dexterous and versatile in beautifying almost every single article they use in their daily life (Kamaladevi, 1978:91, *Tribalism in India*).

The Nagas are the outstanding lovers of beauty. Crafts items are painstakingly bestowed with delicate designs. Be it dao handle, walking stick, basket or mat, exquisite pattern is laced upon it. Womenfolk make clothes not only to provide warmth to the body but they are made to look gorgeous. Naga bag is a common household item that is used to carry anything that it can hold, yet it is made in fine designs and added adornment. Konyak woolen bag is a classic example of this. 'Though these articles are of mundane use, great skill, fine aesthetic taste and delicate work is painstakingly bestowed on each item, (Kamaladevi, ibid: 92).

Womenfolk make shawls and skirts for themselves and shawls for male members of the family. Rural Naga women are completely self-reliant in matter of clothing. Cotton is grown in the fields and on maturation, cotton balls are plucked from its plant. This raw material is processed just by hand to finally convert into fine shawls. ‘The production of textiles is the preserve of women. Cotton is seeded by rolling a round stick over it on a flat stone, ... rolled into a sausage-shape suitable for spinning. This is spun onto a spindle, weighted with a stone spindle-whorl and twirled against the spinner’s thigh’, (Julian Jacobs, 1990: *The Nagas – Hill Peoples of Northeast India*).

Crafts and woodworks portray not only the sense of beauty, but it was a way of life of self-dependence. The Nagas, unlike the present, did not have the need to buy basins, dishes, cups and spoons. They used self-made articles. The choicest of wood from the forest was used for their masterpieces. Naga houses were adorned with woodcarvings. Porch portion of the house was full of figures and pictures carved out of the solid wood. Figures and pictures had ritual significance, as observed by Julian Jacobs (ibid. ‘woodcarving produces a variety of objects for functional and ritual purposes. ...functional objects such as husking tables or tables, and small ornaments, might be carved by any man. On the other hand grand-scale carving of house-posts, grave effigies, gates and log-gongs, are more likely to be done by specialists or at least on special occasions.’ Common craft items are household articles of daily use such as baskets, winnowing fans, dao handles, agricultural implements, husking tables, etc. Every male
Naga folk music is the outcome of the ingenuity of words and sounds by some exceptionally gifted people. The thought of the origin of folksongs is simply astonishing. The lyrics of the songs representing various themes, and the lyric expression in multi-tonal sounds; all these emanated from a non-literate society and hence deserve profound admiration and wonder. The origin of most of the folk music was a reflection of fertile imagination and spontaneity. There are songs of romantic expression between admirers. Lovers exchanged words through music, which were in the equivalence of the post-literate love letters. Here is a sample of Naga poem wherein the boy conveys his heart to his girl friend concerning the choice of life partner:

Lojilimi nono asa kichhe thotsu,
(My love, even for your hair-do),
Aghoshi-aloshi chhepu aye nguno;
(You do have the like of your own);
Akinhii no aloshi nhichhetsu.
(May the bride's full- will be done).
Khaji-khali aye aloni kene,
(Fine, had it been for a few days),
Akithi kumo dolo kughuna nikeno;
(But, it's for life until the end);
Chheju puqho-chheju piqi
(Make your search and find)
Aghomi-alomi kilo woina.
(Marry the one of your own heart).

10. Folk music: The term ‘Folk music’ is often loosely applied to cover all traditional or aurally transmitted music, music that is passed on by ear and performed by memory rather than by the written or printed musical score. In a specific sense the term refers to aurally transmitted music found within society that also has art or cultivated music that is transmitted through the music score. Richard Dorson (1972: Folklore and Folklife – an Introduction) traces out that the term folk music was originally applied to the traditions of the rural peasant societies of Europe. It has since been broadened to characterize all types of traditional music found in western civilization.

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The Nagas have a rich collection of poems on various themes. These poems reflect the richness of thought and artistic talent of the Nagas. The poems and folk songs were adequately found in the non-literate society of the Nagas in the past. Poetic talents and prolific minds are still found to exist in Naga society, and the education system has a role to promote and develop them.

Naga music can fall admirably only to those with a musical ear. To others it will appear to be too crude and monotonous. One does not have to be defensive about the melody, because most of the folk music was poetically sung, and some are more of chanting rather than singing. Naga folk songs are comprised of varied themes; such as agriculture, love, war, farewell, admonishing, admiration, entertainment and diplomacy.

Folk songs do have auspicious occasions to be sung on. Festivals are normally a time of dancing, singing and merry making. Yet, besides festivals, seasonal songs are sung throughout the year. Folk songs include working songs for every season. There is no unsung season; for example, there are earth-breaking song, sowing song, weeding song, pruning song, harvest song, etc. Working songs are sung in groups with the sole purpose of lightening the burden of work.

With regard to musical instrument, the Nagas posses very limited kind of instrument. Whatever few instruments they have, they are simple and crude. Some of the instruments commonly used among the Angamis and Chakhesangs are hollowed gourd with a string fitted on a long shaft fixed onto the gourd, and a simple mouth organ. The Sumis also use mouth organ. The Kukis, the Zeliangs, the Konyaks, and the Aos beat drum to the accompaniment of songs and dances.

11. Folkdance: What is folkdance? How deceptively simple such a question appears. One might reply, logically, "Folkdance is dance done by the folk." Alan Dundes was quoted by Dorson (1972: Folklore and Folklife – an Introduction) who tells us that ‘the folk’ are any group of people ‘who share at least one common factor.’ Immediately one gets into trouble if we consider a group whose common denominator is a non-folk dance form. For example, if a classical ballet company comprises a folk, its dance, by this logic, is folkdance. Clearly no folklorist would admit, however, that much of their story themes
are based on or inspired by folkdance. What do they mean by folkdance? According to Joan Wheeler Kealiinohomoku, (as collected by Dorson, 1972) folkdance means “national” dance or and or racial dance, and they usually mean the “unrefined” dances of European peasants. But folkdance is not primitive dance. Curt Sachs, for example, claimed that folkdance fits on an evolutionary continuum, midway between primitive and civilized dance, and its presence in the contemporary world is a kind of living relic.

Folkdance is an important element of Naga culture. Dances are the expression of joy and manifestation of success and victory. Naga folkdances had their origin in the victory over the adversary in the war; attainment of the highest goal in life and its celebration. Great feasts are celebrated with indispensable performance of dance. Entertainment dances usually go with festivals and merriment. Horam (1988:51, 1992:39, Social and Cultural Life of Nagas) mentioned Naga dances, such as war dance, funeral dance, agricultural dance, youth dance, marriage dance and village gate-pulling dance, etc. Most of the Naga tribes have both men and women dance. There are some dances performed jointly by men and women. Horam (ibid), romantically points out; ‘women also participate in most forms of dancing as it is they who lend colour and excitement and they are the cynosure of many eyes. While dancing, discreet distances are maintained even by lovers, and in the course of dancing he would indeed be a daring man who deliberately attempts to brush the hand of his lover or any other woman.’

Naga folk dancer needs strength and agility because he not only dances, but at the same time sings to the rhythm of dance. Songs in the dance generally have no lyrics but consist of sounds ‘ho’ ‘he’ and ‘oh’ in stretched single syllables. While in the midst of dancing, some dancers or any on-looker would shout war cries vociferously. There are types of dances that go with every dancer holding each other’s hand in continuous chain. Other type of dance go with the dancer holding dao and spear on both hands. There are different folkdances among the tribes, and they can be called tribal dance, such as Ao dance, Sumi dance, Chang dance, Konyak dance, etc. Among the dances, war dances are most exciting and for the first-time viewer they would be horrifying and thrilling as well.
Folldance is the art of all the menfolk of the village. Every normal person starts to learn and take part in folldance from the early stage of life. No special coaching or class is held to teach folldance, but it just comes as natural gift to all. To learn dances one must have started participating with the group of performers.

12. Rule of Customary Law: Mores represent the living character of a group or society, operative in conscious or unconscious control over its members. They both compel behaviour and forbid it; in their forbidding function they are known as taboos.

When the mores that come to have some special organization for their enforcement may be called laws. However, not all the mores are enforced, but only those that are more important ones. According to G.R. Madan, (1991:132, *Theoretical Sociology- Some Essays*) “If there is no legislative body for the enactment of new rules not previously part of cultural heritage, the law in this case is called ‘Customary Law’. It is further clarified that “Laws that are not formally enacted but are formally decided and enforced are sometimes called Customary Laws.”

The Nagas had no written culture. Yet mores were in perfect operation for ages. Customary laws were orally decided and enforced in full reverence. The enforcers were normally the village elders whose credibility lay on flawless interpretation of customs of their predecessors. Customary laws were respected in great awe.

In Naga tradition, every village is a sort of sovereign entity. Every village had its own laws that were sacred and inviolable, so that infringement of its customary laws by others amounted to grievous offense. Above the village practices and customs there are tribal customary laws that prevail over the individual village laws in case of inter-village or inter-tribal conflicts.

The present so-called village constitutions are chiefly the adoption of customary laws, with the difference that the present constitutions are written ones unlike oral laws in the past. In traditional Naga society there was no jail or police. But whenever any breach of law occurred, penalty was justly awarded in accordance with the provision of the customary laws and no one dared to challenge the sanctity of the law.
Agriculture: In the field of agriculture there can be no better technique than what these hill men have evolved over the centuries. "The Nagas are farmers and practise two kinds of agriculture, both obviously well adapted to the difficult hill terrain" (Julian Jacobs, 1990: *The Nagas – Hill Peoples of Northeast India*). Modern agricultural science has not brought any profitable alternative to the traditional system of agriculture, at least in the context of Nagaland. A simple farmer knows the day and month on which a particular seed should be sown. He also knows after how many days of sowing the field is reaped. Trials and errors over the years of experimentation at last yielded positive result. The villagers can precisely predict monsoon of the year by observing the environmental changes, and accordingly, advance or delay agricultural operation.

In the construction of irrigation, which goes zigzagging across great distances on the hillsides, appropriate slope of the bed of the canal is measured by the

13. Folk science: The words ‘Folk science’ may appear to be paradoxical in the modern context. Science, as generally perceived, may be accepted as highly advanced subject therefore, to be prefixed with ‘folk’ may sound incongruous in as much as folk is referred to as crude and ill developed socially, culturally and intellectually. Tribals are, by definition, the group of people sharing the same custom, beliefs and traditions, and are not highly civilized. These groups of people who share the commonness of way of life are called folks. Therefore, the term ‘folk science’ may seem self-contradictory. Yet, a careful observation of the process of adaptation of the tribals to their environment reveals intriguing instances of scientific involvement. Some important aspects of folk science may be seen as under:

a) Agriculture: In the field of agriculture there can be no better technique than what these hill men have evolved over the centuries. "The Nagas are farmers and practise two kinds of agriculture, both obviously well adapted to the difficult hill terrain" (Julian Jacobs, 1990: *The Nagas – Hill Peoples of Northeast India*). Modern agricultural science has not brought any profitable alternative to the traditional system of agriculture, at least in the context of Nagaland. A simple farmer knows the day and month on which a particular seed should be sown. He also knows after how many days of sowing the field is reaped. Trials and errors over the years of experimentation at last yielded positive result. The villagers can precisely predict monsoon of the year by observing the environmental changes, and accordingly, advance or delay agricultural operation.
angle of the foot to ensure the flow of water. No other instrument is used for this purpose. Agricultural activities are also operated according to the time indicated by the sound of some birds. They believe that birds have inborn intuition to react or behave in consonance with the forces of nature. Therefore, birds that give sounds seasonally are believed to give correct indication of the time for a particular activity in agriculture. An example, the Sumis wait for the sound of Kashopapu (a bird that sounds during the spring) to sow paddy. To them it is the right time to sow paddy when this bird started sounding. They also follow the voice of cicada for certain work in the field, for example, the one that sounds in the autumn, which indicates that pruning of paddy leaves has come.

b) **Medicine:** The Nagas had the practise of believing in faith healing and also on herbal cure. Pre-christians relied on magic healing. This practice of healing was the preserve of some magicians who possessed power to see the cause of ailment and prescribed the cure. But besides these people there are practical men who use traditional way of treating wounds, pains and varieties of sicknesses with leaves and barks of plants and trees. There are many plants, juices of which effectively control profuse bleeding. In emergencies, herbal aids are accessed in remote places where life-saving drugs are non-existent.

c) **Zoology:** The village folks have practical knowledge about wild creatures. They have their own names for every kind of creature; from the smallest to the largest. Their environment is such that they live with animals and therefore, have chance to easily observe the behaviour and activities of all the animals. They know what animal takes what food, where to live, what sounds to make, when and how to breed, and how to catch prey.

d) **Botany:** The closeness of life of the people with nature provides firsthand knowledge about the plants. Innumerable plants that consist the flora of the state have indigenous names for each variety. People know well soil and climatic conditions suitable for every variety of plants and trees. Seedling, transplantation, and pruning of bushes and trees go
according to the appropriate methods and seasons. Different trees and plants provide food and shelter to a variety of animals. They know by observation as to what insect infest on what plants and at what season. It is customary to fell a particular tree or bamboo in a particular month of the year. This knowledge is very necessary from the point of view of keeping these materials from wastage by insect infestation. For example, bamboo should be cut in winter so that insects do not infest on it.

### 2.2. Factors of Cultural Devaluation:

Most of the cultural elements discussed in this chapter are on the decline. While discussing the rich Naga cultural heritage, one cannot remain complacent without taking notice of what it actually is going through at present. There is fast erosion of social and cultural values in our present society. Some of the factors responsible for cultural devaluation are mentioned below:

1. **Wrong conception about Naga culture by the younger generations as inferior, crude and savageous as compared to western culture.**
2. **Cultural colonialisation by the British imperialism.** In order to succeed in political and economic exploitation, even the ruled were colonialised culturally. In the words of Piketo Sema, (1991: *British Policy and Administration in Nagaland 1881-1947*) “Cultural colonialisation was thus an important phenomenon of British imperialism.”
3. **Proselytisation by the American Baptist missionaries** was another reason for cultural change. On embarking Christianity the indigenous animism and its related rituals and cultural practices were abandoned. Christianity and its revival wave that swept across the state significantly dealt a dead-blow on indigenous culture. People’s mindset was so parochial and single-tracked that most of the cultural practices were treated as sinful and obsolete objects. They thought that cultural elements such as folk dance and songs were devilish and unchristian.
4. **Access to modern information media such as radio, T.V., newspaper, journals, etc. ushered in a new life style and behaviour in the people.** Milada Ganguli,
2.3. Cultural Education.

In ancient Indian education educational arrangements were adopted for the development, preservation and propagation of culture. Venkateswara (1980:299, *Indian Culture through the Ages- Education and Propagation of Culture*) recalls, "Education was not merely concerned with the instruction of the young; nor even with the formation of habit and the development of will-power. It sought to build up the whole being of the individual, and enable him to lead the highest and the best kind of life possible for him in the circumstances in which he was placed. The system included … the gradual developing of the senses of values in the adult in the little-thought of acts of daily life."

Studentship was not for the pursuance of good living only but building of the whole being of a man. "It scoffed as such of them as took to a career of discipleship (studentship) merely to make sure of a decent living, and it mocked at those whose
learning sat loosely on the tongue, and even at those who were earnest in their study but unwilling to look on studentship as a discipline" (Venkateswara, ibid.).

In India there have been serious concerns to integrate education with culture. For example, National Policy on Education (1986) has observed that education has an accelerating role.

According to J.S. Rajput (2000:101, *School curriculum in India with focus on Value Education and Work Experience*), "Education without culture becomes a rootless exercise. Culture provides sustenance and an anchor. It is, therefore, imperative that curriculum should take note of this fact and explore ways and means to acquaint students with the broad features of Indian culture."

At national level there has been a very strong feeling that education had failed to propagate Indian rich culture when gradually the education system “got pre-occupied with techno-information and job-oriented skills” (P.D. Shukla, 1990: *The New Educational Policy in India*). As a result, concern for cultural education received significant place in the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986. Part 8 of the NPE, 1986 carries elaborate clauses on the importance of cultural education. They are quoted as follows:

### Part 8.1

"The existing schism between formal system of education and the country’s rich and varied cultural traditions needs to be bridged. The pre-occupation with modern technologies cannot be allowed to sever our new generations from the roots in India’s history and culture. De-culturisation, de-humanisation and alienation must be avoided at all costs. Education can and must bring about the fine synthesis between change-oriented technologies and the country’s continuity of cultural tradition."

### Part 8.2

"The curricula and processes of education will be enriched by cultural content in as many manifestations as possible. Children will be enabled to develop sensitivity to beauty, harmony and refinement. Resource persons in the community, irrespective of their formal educational qualifications, will be invited to contribute to the cultural enrichment of education, employing both the literate and oral traditions of
A policy document for Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) by Lokshala Project (1995;6) has the vision for evolving child-centred pedagogy such that it gives ample scope for expression of locally meaningful manifestations, thereby promoting socio-culturally diverse ways of perceiving education. It also stresses on using mother tongue as the medium of learning in the early primary stages, with provision for gradual switching over to the regional and link languages. The policy also propounds the need of forging dynamic linkages between the school and the community and vice versa.

Part 8.3. “Linkages will be established between the University system and institutions of higher learning in art, archaeology, oriental studies etc. Due attention will also be paid to the specialized disciplines of Fine Arts, Museology, Folklore etc. Teaching, training and research in these disciplines will be strengthened so as to replenish specialized manpower in them.”

Part 8.4. “In our culturally plural society, education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integrity of our people. Such values should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism.”

Part 8.14. “Work experience, viewed as purposive and meaningful manual work, organized as an integral part of the learning process and resulting in either goods or services useful to the community, is considered as an essential component at all stages of education, to be provided through well-structured and graded programme. It would comprise activities in accord with the interest, abilities and needs of students, the level of skills and knowledge to be upgraded with the stages of education. This experience would be helpful on their entry into the workplace. Pro-vocational programmes provided at the lower secondary stage will also facilitate the choice of the courses at the higher secondary stage.”

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Lamenting the present education system, V.M. Tarkundi (1978: *Education for our People*) said that ‘the existing educational system lays greater emphasis on individualism, competition, verbal fluency or linguistic ability, and mere acquisition of information. ... What is even worse, the ethos of the existing system is highly authoritarian where values such as equality, love of truth, or spirit of enquiry cannot be fostered. In the new concept of education, we should recognize the significance of social objectives co-operation and team work, the complementarity of intellectual and manual work, promotion of skills, and the building up of character.’

Stressing on the need for revision of curriculum, J.S. Rajput (2000:99) urges, ‘the changes all around the pace of these changes clearly indicate that a thorough revision of the curriculum is an urgent necessity. It has to take full cognizance of requirements of schooling and learning jto ensure that the curricula fully respond to the social, cultural and economic contexts of the people.’ Referring to the school curriculum in Nagaland, Milada Ganguli (1984:274, *A Pilgrimage to the Nagas*) specifically asserted that Education department of the Government of Nagaland must introduce compulsory classes in tribal dancing and singing leading to monthly cultural shows in schools and colleges. It was even suggested that the students could also set up cultural clubs in towns and villages where boys and girls would not only learn singling and dances of different tribes but also traditional Naga games and sports.

Cultural education can be possible by accessing to the elements of culture of the state. The cultural education of the people must be kept up by constant reference to the reservoir of our culture i.e. older people. Teachers’ role is of vital importance in cultural preservation and promotion. Personal inclinations of teachers towards cultural propagation will the basis for success of cultural education. Devotion and sincerity on the part of a teacher will come as a powerful force in enrichment of education with culture.

Cultural education is a new concept, which is unheard of in the state. By cultural education it does not mean a specialized subject for specific duration. But it must be a continuous process and indispensable element of school education. No worthwhile attempts have so far been made to incorporate cultural education in the school curriculum. There seems to be lack of consciousness and concern about the need to
inculcate cultural education. Present educational programmes are stuffed with examination-oriented curriculum, and there is absolute neglect on man-making education.

Cultural education will mean inculcation of moral and social values, dignity of labour, knowledge of one's own history and origin, community-based society, traditional virtues, fraternity, equality, humility, and perseverance. In all these virtues the Nagas excelled. Naga culture has got so much to do with values. Hence, a cultural decline would imply erosion of values in the society. Lack of value amongst the present generation is the major concern that calls for an overhauling of education system in the state. Naga culture derived its strength from virtues of simplicity, hospitality, hard working, egalitarianism, frankness, humorousness, and straightforwardness politeness, respect and honour for old people, corporate spirit of life, etc. Cultural education lays emphasis on inculcation of value system of a society because 'the chief aim of value education is to achieve maximum human resource development so as to improve our total life' (K.L. Gandhi, 1993:10, Value Education – A Study of Public Opinion).

Education is not worth its name if acquisition of it does not meet the core desire of man i.e. realization of values. The meaning of value may be clearly seen in the words of Edgar Brightman as quoted by Sundaram and Shah (1976: Education or Catastrophy?) “Value means whatever is actually liked, prized, esteemed, desired, approved or enjoyed by anyone at any time. It is the actual experience of enjoying a desired object or activity. Hence, value is an exciting realization of desire.”

Dorothy Lee’s definition was referred again by the co-authors (Sundaram & Shah, ibid.) that says; “By human values, by a value or a system of values, I mean the basis upon which an individual will choose one course rather than another, judged as better or worse, right or wrong.”

The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences says; “values are conceptions of the desirable, influencing selective behaviour.”

By cultural education, there is an inherent stress on value-oriented education for a continuous and consistent respect for moral conventions and social mores. As Larry P. Nucci (1982, Implications for Values Instruction) puts it, ‘the primary aim of values education is to develop students’ ways of thinking about morality and social
convention. More specifically, the aim regarding social convention is to move students through the progression of stages in conceptions of convention toward a coordinated understanding of the importance of convention for the organization and coordination of social interactions within social systems.

Schools, being the catalyst of moulding society, need to play a pivotal role in preserving our value system and promote cultural continuity. Culturally, the Nagas were the lovers of dance and music. Art and crafts were necessary part of life. Respect and care for older citizens was a customary practise rather than for courtesy sake. Stealing and trickery, jealousy and slandering were unknown in Naga society.

The Naga society needs to go back to work culture if it has to survive as a people of distinct entity. The irony about the present Naga society is dependence on easy money, and abhorrence to manual work. Manual work is treated as undignified and shameful. This mentality is sure to bring chaos and social bankruptcy. Schools, which deal with the youth of potential age, can effectively set the direction of these young people into productive and useful citizens through culture-based school curriculum.

Socially Useful Productive Works (SUPW), which is a compulsory component of school curriculum, has been treated lightly in schools. No tangible result has been seen out of this subject. Apart from this subject there is practically no other activity in the schools that could cultivate work habits. Knitting instructors are appointed to all government High Schools, but they are out of job throughout the year.

Recalling work activities in schools in the past, Thinkers Forum, Nagaland (1981:88, School Education in Nagaland) asserted that during the British regime in the Naga Hills, school gardens were compulsorily opened wherever schools were established by the British government and the boys were trained how to dig the earth in school gardens, water the plants, protect the plants and fence the plants properly. They were trained to learn dances and singing of folksongs. But these have not been practiced in the Primary and Middle schools today. In the same statement, it was reported, “training in carpentry, blacksmithy and masonry were given in the Middle English Schools, .... and this helped them in their future career when they could not study in the school.”
Citing the advantage of working habits on physical well being and building self-reliance economically, G.K. Ambady (1981:122, *Child Education and Training*) propounded that gardening can provide complete relaxation with the advantage of fresh air. He says; “Contact with earth seems to give an accession of strength as in the case of Antaeas of Greek mythology. Skill in the use of the common tools of the gardening and the workshop may be found rewarding in the evening of life, and is indispensable in these days of ‘do it yourself’ economy. Youth therefore, need education and supervised work experience in such skills.”

Post-literate society has done much damage to the oral tradition in respect to learning situations. The present school curriculum is formidably overfed with information through bulky textbooks to belearned by rote memory. The minds of the students are unduly strained in the process of cramming up of textbook contents. If there is anything to learn outside the school routine, they learn violence, immorality, meanness, and trickery from written, visual and practical sources. In the realm of oral tradition, learning occurred by direct observation and experimentation of and with the nature of harmonious and simple community life. Their mind was so relaxed and peaceful in the absence of time bound curriculum.

The present school curriculum compels the students to store up vast information, which is expected to be smartly reproduced either orally or in writing or both during competitive examinations. The best reproducer thus emerges as the super candidate. But no one cares to evaluate the total quality of a man. The fact should be that real abundance of life derives its meaning from the possessing of total spectrum of values of life and its culture, because “people who have everything else assume that they possess culture also, and people who have nothing else are proud of their sole possession – culture,” (Mujeeb, 1971: *Education and Traditional Values*). The damage to traditional system of education was also prominently noted by Hamlet Bareh (1978: *Glimpses on the Growth of the Integration in Nagaland*), who said; “the greatest mistake of the earliest educationists was that they over-looked the good aspects of the village-oriented and traditional system of education. The modern system of education, to a great extent, minimizes the corporate and traditional meaning of life, and the concept of citizenship as
The following points are discussed as principles of cultural education:

i) Culture is the common heritage of a society: Culture is a heritage that is passed on from one generation to another. The Nagas, as a people, have, through centuries, exhibited a close-knit family kinship as a people. In order that modern explosion of information and new desires should not fragment the fabric of the Naga society, school education must enable the young generations to grow in their culture perpetually.

ii) Culture must be preserved, developed and improved: Education must play a preservative role for sustenance of culture. Traditional values must be preserved, protected from alien invasion, and refined. There may be room for refinement of old practices that may be incongruent with the change of time. Improvement on such aspects may be welcomed. As John Martin (1968: *Education and Human Values*) stated; “Our educational institutions are expected not only to transmit the heritage but also to prepare youth for future
occupations, develop sound character, promote physical health, and teach the ways of the culture.” In the act of preserving the culture education needs to play a protective role also; because presently our culture is being attacked by both internal and outside forces, and when it happens “A culture may be weakened by internal social change or destroyed by outside influences. In either case its members suffer” (Broom, et al 1981: Sociology- A Text With Adapted Readings).

iii) Without culture there is no identity of community: There is no society on earth that wishes for no identity. Cultural identity is one of the most crucial attributes of regional or national entities of the world. Self-consciousness is not against world-brotherhood, but it is the basis for dignity and responsibility. Education must be able to inculcate this spirit. Identity also aims at fostering unity, and in turn the survival of identity “depends on the strength or existence of a prior identity and a history of maintained unity, for example, its coherence, and also its allies in the process of consolidation” (Colin Brock and Tulasiewicz 1985: Cultural Identity and Educational Policy). These authors also propound that cultural identity is a set of adaptations ranging from ethnicity, through religion, philosophy, social structures, privilege patterns and national consciousness, art and science to domestic practices, myths, games and language patterns acquired in different informal and formal ways, including through educational policies.

iv) Every culture is unique: No culture is inferior to other cultures. There is a faulty conception about our own culture in the minds of the present generation, who glorify anything that is western, but despise their own indigenous culture. This attitude facilitated the passage for cultural invasion from without. For them ‘others’ is good, but ours is bad.’ To reverse this gear of mind will depend on conscious efforts of the school programme framers and curriculum developers.

v) Culture is continuous, yet it dies down if left unnurtured: Culture is continuous and growing process. Popularity of a culture depends on how
2.5. Rationale of the study

With the advent of education and interaction with other societies of the world, the old rich practices are being forgotten in the garb of pseudo-development. Time has come when people of this land will have to make objective observations and realize the incoming weaknesses and thus to adopt appropriate strategies for reviving old traditions and culture.

Youths of today have different aspirations and their interests are tilted towards self-gratification so that they have the least regard for the traditional values. L.S. Mehra (1977: Youth in Modern Society) mentions, “The youths of today have evolved their own ideals, values and standards which are different from those of the older generation. The attitude and aspirations of the modern youths reflect the sense of growing materialistic achievements. They have become indifferent towards the values of the past”.

A similar comment was made by P.C. Joshi (1989: Culture, Communication and Social Change), “With economic development and modernization a new class of society ‘middle class’ has been created. There has been (and it is still the trend) a feverish rush for self-gratifying accumulation of wealth and social life was thus shattered. In the process of seeking political and economic opportunism, vision for cultural continuity got blurred. Our traditional tranquility was taken by surprise with the mighty wave of the west and ungrudgingly our culture was allowed to be swept away in the whirlwind.”
The Nagas have come to a threshold of modernization and opened to a wide world. The wave of cultural fusion is hitting hard on the Naga society when it is unprepared to face it. To be late in realizing this trend would only mean to allow Naga culture to be swallowed in the vortex of this mighty wave of cultural invasion. There seems to be an ignorance among many people about the steady undermining of the value of their culture.

In the light of the glaring instance of cultural decline in Naga society, a study into the cause of this decline, and turning to school education as a redeemer of losing culture was felt an urgent need. It was felt that the present study was very timely and significant. It was with a hope of restoring Naga culture through deliberation of this research work by means of throwing light on culture and traditional practices, and the potential role of culture in sustaining holistic society in future; that school education in relation to culture has been studied.

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