CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Human society has been based on the relationship that exist between ‘man and nature’ since ages. The interdependence of man and nature, the effect that one has on the other are issues that have long been debated and are still very far from being resolved. A distinctive model for understanding and explaining the human past and its relationship with its surroundings has been given by the environmentalist paradigm which has been explained in terms of the way in which the power of nature has exercised over human lives-shaping physical and mental characteristics, fashioning the character of laws, religions and social institutions, determining the supposed superiority or inferiority of races, governing the rise and fall of civilizations (Arnold 1996: 48). At the same time, with the shift in the environmental paradigm, in recent decades, it is being argued that mankind has won mastery over nature, have abused and mistreated it, and now must live with the environmental and social consequences of its Promethean (pro-technological, anti-ecological) act. This kind of environmentalism tends to concentrate on the harm humans have done on the environment (and hence to themselves) through industrial pollution, mechanized farming, the destruction of forests, and the extinction of animal and plants species (ibid: 10-11). In today’s age when rapid environmental change and incipient crises is apparent all about us- in the destruction of the forests, depletion of the ozone layer, the onset of global warming-it becomes pertinent to understand the relationship between the human society and the environment.
Environment has had an impact on the socio-economic and cultural life of the people. Environmental elements like the land, river systems, forests, mountain ranges etc. have always played a significant role in the making and shaping of society and its history. Ideas about the influence of environment on human culture and physique have a long history which can be traced back from the time of the Ancient Greeks, to the middle seventeenth century till the late nineteenth century. This was evident across a wide cultural and social spectrum-in medicine and science, in philosophy and aesthetics, in painting, poetry and even in landscape gardening (ibid: 18). It was broadly assumed that, the environment, typically in the form of climate and topography, and sometimes also of disease or other ‘natural’ hazards, dictates the physical and mental characteristics of a society, its modes of subsistence, its cultural life and political institutions. It even determines whether a society is able to scale the heights of civilizations or is confined to the depths of savagery and barbarism (ibid: 10). To quote Hippocrates, ‘Thus lands that boast rich, well-watered and easily cultivated soil and that are not subject to great variations of climate, produce lazy, cowardly people incapable of hard, physical work and little disposed to mental exertion either. By contrast, where the land is bare, waterless and rough, swept by winter winds and burnt by summer sun, the inhabitants are hard and spare, keen in intellect, skilled in crafts, brave and proficient in the arts of war’(ibid: 16).

Even in the later period that followed, writers and scholars advocated the idea that cultural and social formations were related to the physical feature of the environment. Indeed, supporting this understanding, Clarence J. Glackens remarks that, ‘The idea of nature was the governing idea of the age of the Enlightenment’
(ibid: 19). For philosophers, scientists, painters and poets during this period nature was more than simply a subject of intellectual enquiry but it also become one of the principal metaphors of the age, the prism through which all manner of ideas and ideals were brilliantly refracted (ibid: 19). For eighteenth century writers like Montesquieu and his contemporaries, ‘the empire of the climate’ was ‘the first, most powerful, of all empires’. Bringing out the contrast between Asia and Europe, Montesquieu wrote that the extremes of climate and topography of Asia-from the severe, cold and barren wastes of its northern regions (Siberia, Mongolia and Manchuria) to the steamy fecundity of its southern zone (Persia, India, China)-gave rise to corresponding extremes in government. Nature dictates that Asia should produce autocratic systems of government: it was ‘that region of the world where despotism is so to speak naturally domiciled. By contrast, it was the milder climate, more equable climate of Europe, and the more diverse and fragmented nature of its terrain, that results in its more moderate laws and more balanced system of government’ (ibid : 21).

Moreover, the invocation and representation of nature in religion, its belief system and rituals also indicates the man-nature relationships. Man believed that they were born out of the earth and that mother earth is the basis of life and unity (Longchar 1996: 64). These kinds of beliefs were the basis of primitive religion like animism, where nature and its elements were worshipped and rituals were based on nature. Such beliefs in the supernatural power of nature, the totem, and the sacred groves which house the most important religious and ritual relics implies the symbolic and cultural significance of nature in human belief system. The world
religions like Hinduisms, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity have also been linked with different approaches towards environment. For instance, the Christian tradition was considered to have a perspective of humankind having dominion over nature (Arnold 1996: 131), on the other hand, religion like Buddhism, Hinduisms were considered as being more environmentally friendly (ibid: 132).

Thus, the way nature promotes or prohibits certain types of social structure, economic organisation and even belief system is evident when we look at the progression of the human society. Whether it was the hunter-food gatherers who have been largely dependent and in awe of nature, the agrarian society where they control the nature for their daily sustenance, or the period of industrialization and the modern technological age where man has the mastery over nature, each of these stage of human economic progression has been largely shaped by the way people interacted with their environment.

Among the various environmental elements, forest is one of the primary components which play a pivotal role in the lives of the humankind. It has been recognised as the very basis of our survival and have been identified as a necessary resource which plays a significant role both in the social and economic development of a community and can improve the quality of life in general (Bajwa 1987: 210). The relevance of forest is obvious because even economic advancement does not reduce a society’s reliance on forest products. Humans still do depend upon the forests for his food, clothing, shelter, medicines, climate, employment etc. As countries develop, wood remains a basic raw material for construction, furniture, railroad ties, power poles, cellophanes, rayon, plastics and much more (Shangpliang
Moreover, it provides all the essential necessities such as food, fuel wood, fodder, medicine, timber, raw materials, shelter and protection as well as provides a variety of cultural and symbolic functions for many communities. At the same time, forest related activities such as the gathering of forest produces and trading these resources forms an important source of livelihood income for many people, especially for the tribal and indigenous communities.

According to World Bank (2002) more than 1.6 billion people depend to varying degrees on forests for their livelihood. Out of this, 60 million people are almost wholly dependent on forests and 350 million people live within or adjacent to dense forests for subsistence and income. In developing countries, about 1.2 billion people rely on agro forestry farming to sustain agricultural productivity to generate income. Worldwide, forest industries provide employment to 60 million people and 1 billion people depend on pharmaceuticals derived from forest plants for their medicinal needs (K. Kikhi and C. Kikhi, 2011: 4). In India alone it is estimated that over 50 million people are dependent on Non Timber Forest Products for their subsistence and cash income.

However, man started to indiscriminately exploit the environment and started plundering the forest to satisfy his greed. The destruction of forest had a massive environmental impact which has affected the lives of the humankind as well. As George Perkins Marsh pointed out, deforestation has been the single most momentous and significant aspect of environmental change (Arnold 1996: 125). With the destruction of forests, the material means that had sustained man’s livelihood and provided shelter were destroyed. And the rapid degradation of forest due to felling of trees for
commercial uses, forest fires resulted in acute shortages of forest produces. The agriculturisation of forests, marshes and heath, industrialisation, destruction of native wildlife, deforestation, the introduction of exotic species and the creation of resource reckless global economy have brought a significant aspect of change in the environment which further had a massive impact on the lives of the people and the society.

**Perspectives to the study of environment**

Many scholars and writers have different views about the intricate linkage between man and nature. For instance, the Annales School in France considered environment as the central element in human history. The Le Play School in France emphasised the importance of the physical environment in its relation to society and especially its effect upon occupation and family life. The German School, exemplified by Schlüter, Michotte and others has stressed on the anatomy and physiology of spaces and landscapes with a view to show the development of the cultural out of the natural landscape. In America, Huntington has studied particularly the effects of the climatic factors on the distribution of human energy and the opportunities and limitations of civilization in different environments. Through all this development of social theories, the environmental approach have has been employed successfully in the study of social evolution and adaptation but Sociology’s research interest in the environment is relatively recent and many branches of sociology have started applying the ecological methods (Mukherjee 1994: 22-23).
Sociologists like Durkheim have emphasised on the symbolic side of social life which gave an insight into the different meanings ascribed to nature by different social groups. Marcel Mauss’s study on totemism as primitive classification, Levi Strauss’s wide-ranging studies on myth and folklore are also studies which took close notice of the natural world. In addition, Evans-Pritchard studies on the Nuers, Raymond Firth’s on the social life in the island of Tikopia and Edmund Leach’s study of the socio-political system in upland Burma, Verrier Elwin’s work on the importance of forest among the tribals in India, and how the take-over of forest by the state for commercial exploitation effected the economic and cultural integrity of the tribals, highlights the embeddedness of social institutions in their ecological surroundings. The studies by all these scholars on the human-nature interactions indicate the continuing vitality of ecological traditions in the discipline (Guha 1994: 9).

One possible source of inspiration for contemporary sociologists seeking to engage with environmental topics is the amount of literature available through Classical Social Theory, which has been bequeathed to us by Durkheim, Weber and Marx. To a certain extent each of these sociological pioneers had something significant to say about nature and society, although this was often more implied than direct, and was embedded in the philosophical controversies and scholarly debates of the time in which they were writing.

Emile Durkheim is probably the least likely to be recognized as an environmental commentator. His main thrust was to elevate social facts over ‘facts of a lower order’ (that is, psychological, biological). Durkheim frequently utilised
biological concepts and metaphors in presenting his theory of societal transformation. Furthermore, this theory was most certainly inspired by the Darwinian evolutionary model that was popular among intellectuals in the late nineteenth century. In The Division of Labour in Society (1893), he describes the evolution of modern societies from a state of mechanical solidarity wherein social solidarity is a product of shared cultural values, to one of organic solidarity, where the social bond is a function of interdependence, most notably that arising out of an increasingly complex division of labour (Hannigan 1995: 7). According to Durkheim, as societies become larger and denser, it would have been disastrous if everyone had continued to engage in agriculture but increasing occupational specialisation in organic solidarity through technological innovation meant that the competition over arable land was lessened and the productivity of land increased. This can be viewed as an attempt to devise a solution to what is essentially an ecological crisis of rising population paired with scarce resources.

A second sociological pioneer whose work is said to possess an ecologically relevant component is Max Weber. This environmental connection has been located in Weber’s two major works i.e. the Historical Sociology of Religion and his Comparative Research on ancient societies. Weber analysed concrete examples of struggles over natural resources, for example, the control of irrigation systems. We can also see how the neo-Weberian environmental sociology has been primarily based on Weber’s book Economy and Society. The key concept to be extracted here is formal rationalisation. Rationalisation is composed of several dynamic institutional components. Increased scientific and technical knowledge brings with it a fresh
orientation in which nature exists only to be mastered and manipulated by humans. Formal rationality thus dictates that the most efficient action is to clear-cut an old growth forest, even if this is in no way substantively rational from an ecological point of view. Thus the more we try to run things according to the principle of dispassionate calculation the more there is a swarm of unwanted and negative effects. According to him, this Ecological irrationality is manifested in a wide range of destructive consequences from sensational technological disasters such as nuclear accidents to routine pollution events such as industrial dumping into urban storm sewers (ibid : 8).

Karl Marx has provoked the most extensive response from present-day environmental interpreters. Though in his later work Marx depicts human as achieving mastery over nature, in his early work the concept of the ‘humanisation of nature’ is proposed. Marx and his early collaborator Friedrich Engels were only marginally concerned with environmental degradation per se but their analysis of social structure and social change has become the starting point for several formidable contemporary theories of the environment. They believed that social conflict between the two principal classes in society, that is capitalists and the proletariat (workers), not only alienates ordinary people from their jobs but also leads to their estrangement from nature itself. This is evident in capitalist agriculture which puts a quick profit from the land ahead of the welfare of both humans and the soil. Marx describes how a single factor, capitalism, was held responsible for a wide range of social ills from overpopulation and resource depletion to the alienation of people from the natural world with which they were once united. He provide a
powerful analysis of the main ecological crises such as the problem of soil fertility within capitalist agriculture as well as other major ecological crises of his time like the loss of forest, the pollution of the cities, and over population etc (ibid: 9).

Marx employed the concept of metabolism to describe the complex interaction between society and nature. Metabolism he observed ‘constitutes the fundamental basis on which life is sustained and growth and reproduction become possible’. This organic relationship was being seriously undercut by the practices of capitalist agriculture. Most notably, landlords were accused of callously robbing the soil of its key nutrients by declining to recycle them. This, of course, is exactly what is still occurring, especially where monocultures (a single variety of a single crop grown for commercial profit) prevail. Marx describes this as a ‘metabolic rift’- the estrangement of human beings from the natural world of the soil (ibid: 9).

Marx and Engels saw the solution as the overthrow of the dominant system of production, capitalism, and the establishment in its place of a ‘rational, humane, environmentally unalienated social order’ (ibid: 8). Marx and Engels argue for the establishment of a new relationship between people and nature. This suggests that humans will develop a new understanding of and empathy with nature. Contemporary Marxist theory emphasises not only the role of capitalists but also that of the state in fostering ecological destruction (ibid: 9).

**Growth of Environmental Sociology**

While each of the three widely acknowledged founders of the discipline of sociology-Durkheim, Weber and Marx - addressed some aspect of nature and
society, this was not really definitive to their work. Therefore, it was only after the 70’s that Environmental Sociology emerged as a discrete disciplinary area. A major theoretical task had thus emerged, that is to identify a key factor (or a closely related set of factors) that created an enduring ‘crisis’ of environmental degradation and destruction.

Among these theories of Environmental Sociology, one of the most fundamental concepts that the environment is socially constructed was advocated by the Social Constructionist model of society, based on nature and the environment (ibid: 29). Social constructionism is a school of thought introduced into sociology by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann with their book The Social Construction of Reality (1996). Social constructionism aims to discover the ways that individuals and groups create their perceived reality. Based on this school of thought, the constructionists bring forward how environmental issues and problems are socially constructed. The environmental risks and knowledge are by no means self-evident, but rather the product of social definition and construction. For the social constructionist, the role of the environmental sociologist lie not in a quest for some elusive new model that causally links ecosystem breakdown with social variables but in a return to classic sociological questions of perception and power. In this context, biophysical changes in the environment are meaningful only insofar as groups affected by these changes come to acknowledge them through a self-redefinition. The social constructionist approach also makes a valuable contribution to environmental policy-making by raising important questions about who makes claims for the existence of environmental problems and who opposes them, thus
situating the environmental issues within relevant social and political contexts (*ibid*: 33).

The Social constructionist thus advocates that we need to look more closely at the social, political and cultural process by which certain environmental conditions are defined as unacceptably risky, and therefore, contributory to the creation of a perceived ‘state of crisis’. According to this approach, the central task ahead for environmental sociologist is not to document the environmental problems but to demonstrate that they are the products of dynamic social process of definition, negotiation and legitimation. This is possible when we employ the three primary foci- the claims, the claim-makers and the claims-making process (*ibid*: 64). Claims are complaints about social conditions which members of a group perceived to be offensive and undesirable. Claim-makers are those who play an important role in constructing social problem claims, they may consist of professionals, scientists, entrepreneurs, mass media and people from the grassroot level and civil society. Claims-making process is the defining the social problem through animating, legitimating and demonstrating the problem (*ibid*: 65-66).

John Hannigan, a proponent of Social Construction of Environment advocates the study of emergent uncertainties, structure and flows through a ‘realist/constructionist model’ of environmental knowledge, politics and policy-making. According to Hannigan, in defining environmental problem, claim-makers must engage in a variety of activities. Some of these are centrally concerned with the collective definition of potential problems, others with the collective action necessary
to ameliorate them. He identifies three key tasks: assembling, presenting and contesting claim.

Assembling involves the discovering of the problem, naming the problem, determining the moral or legal basis of the claim and establishing parameters. Here it is important for the researcher to ask where a claim comes from, who owns or manages it, what economic and political interests claim-makers represent and what type of resources they bring to the claims-making process. In presenting an environmental claim, there is a need both to command attention and to legitimate the claim. This can be done by linking to popular issues and causes and by using dramatic verbal and visual imagery. And contesting claim involves invoking action, mobilising support and defending ownership through networking, developing technical expertise and opening up for policy formulation.

Resource Dependency theory is another approach which utilizes a similar social constructivist model of culture-environment linkages by identifying subsistence cultures of indigenous people and economic system of resource harvesters as the focal point of concern. As such, traditional knowledge of indigenous subsistence culture provides an alternative discourse by focussing on how resource management concerns can include elements of traditional culture within the framework of impact assessment. It focuses on threat to cultural and economic resources, how resource contamination threatens economic stability and quality of life, thereby producing ‘resource loss spirals’ for victims dependent on harvests of renewable natural resources. Thus it focuses on the relationship between people and the biophysical environment, and extends the scope of resource management to
include traditional ethnic knowledge and economic harvesters as stakeholders in an expanded discourse on environmental degradation in the modern world (Gill and Picou 1998: 806).

The Ecosystem Management Approach gives another perspective in understanding the culture-environment linkages. Grumbine (1994) provides a definition stating that ‘Ecosystem management integrates scientific knowledge of ecological relationships within a complex socio-political and value framework towards general goal of protecting native ecosystem integrity over the long term’ (Grumbine 1994: 28). On a policy level, ecosystem management is viewed as a strategy to promote sustainability, recognises resources management decisions as socially constructed goals and objectives that vary across space and over time, and adheres to a collaborative decision-making model, one that brings together all relevant stakeholders such as government agencies, tribal organisations, industry and citizens (Picou and Marshall 2002: 303).

The above theoretical approaches are some of the emerging models in environmental sociology that gives us an insight into the study of the ecological relationship of man and environment and the related resources management practices.

**Conceptual Issues**

There are diverse definitions of the terms forest, forest produces and forest management etc., based on the legal, ecological, objectives of the use, composition, forest types, region wise etc. Thus, the concept and meaning of the terms forest,
forest produce, forest management is briefly discussed here in relation to the present study.

i. **Forest:** The term ‘forest’ been derived from the Latin word ‘foris’ meaning ‘out of doors’. Etymologically, it is a ‘large uncultivated tract of land covered with trees and underwood’ (Chamber’s 20th Century Dictionary, 1943). In common parlance, it denotes a group of trees in a closed canopy. The Indian Forest Records, Vol.2, 1936, defines forest as ‘an area set aside for the production of timber and other forest produce or maintained under woody vegetation for certain indirect benefits which it provides, e.g., climatic or protective’. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of United Nation defines forest as ‘land with a tree canopy cover of more than 10 per cent and an area of more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 meters’. According to the State of Forest Report 2001, forest is determined not only by the presence of trees but also by the absence of other predominant land uses. Thus, according to FAO, timber and rubber wood plantations are classified as forest but fruit orchards and trees planted under agro-forestry system are categorised as other land with trees outside forest.

In the Indian context, the two national acts, Indian Forest Act 1927 and Forest Conservation Act 1980 have no definition of the term ‘forest’. However, the Supreme Court of India in its order dated 12.12.1996 in WP No.202/95, has defined the word ‘Forest’ and ‘Forest land’ occurring in section 2 of Forest Conservation Act as ‘the word “forest” must be understood according to its dictionary meaning. This description covers all statutorily recognised forests, whether designated as reserved, protected or otherwise for the purpose of Section
2 (i) of the Forest Conservation Act. The term “forest land” occurring in Section 2, will not only include “forest” as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any area recorded as forest in the Government record irrespective of the ownership’.

Though the above legal definitions of forest is applied in terms of the Nagaland state government official acts, the term ‘forest’ is understood among the Naga community as ‘any land that is not under cultivation nor any residential area has been established so far but there is a presence of large number of trees, plants, wildlife and water in the area’.

### ii. Forest Produce:

The Supreme Court gives a definition of ‘Forest Produce’ as only such produce of trees having natural growth or products like flowers and fruits. Wherever the Legislative wanted to include articles produced with the aid of human labour, the definition made a specific mention as in the case of ‘all products of mines or quarries’. The Court held that though bamboo as a whole is a forest produce, if a product, commercially new and distinct, known to the business community as totally different is brought into existence by human labour, such an article and product would cease to be a forest produce. Thus, bamboo mat is taken as a product distinct from bamboo in the commercial world, and therefore, it is not forest produce in the eye of the Act.

The forest department has raised the plea that exclusion of bamboo products from the definition of forest produce would frustrate the object of law and give unscrupulous dealers an opportunity to denude the country of the forest wealth. However, the court rejected the plea on grounds that it would do more harm than
good as it had the inherent danger of taking away the rights of tribal people to their habitat and livelihood.

According to the Nagaland Forest Act, 1968, ‘forest produces’ includes-

a. The following, whether found in, or brought from a forest or not, that is to say,-
timber, charcoal, caoutchouc, catechu wood oil, resin, natural varnish, bark, lac, myrabolams, rhinoceros horns, and

b. The following when found in, or brought from a forest, that is to say-

i. Trees and leave, (flower) and fruits and all other parts or produce not herein before mentioned of trees,

ii. Plants not being trees (including grass, creepers, reeds and moss), and all parts of produce of such plants,

iii. Wild animals, birds, butterflies, insects and skins, tusk and horns (other than rhinoceros horns), bones, silk cocoons, honey and wax and all other parts of produce of animals, and

iv. Peat, surface soil, rock and minerals (including limestone, laterite, mineral oils and all produces of mines or quarries).

**iii. Forest Management:** Forest management in the broadest sense deals with the overall administrative, economic, social, technical and scientific aspects involved in the conservation and use of forests. It implies various degrees of deliberate human intervention, ranging from action aimed at safeguarding and maintaining the forest eco-system and its function to favouring given socially or economically valuable species or groups of species for the improved production of goods and environmental services (Dasgupta and Debnath 2008: 21). The dictionary of
Forestry defines Forest Management as, ‘The practical application of biological, quantitative, managerial, economic, social and policy principles to the regeneration, management, utilization, and conservation of forests to meet specified goals and objectives while maintaining the productivity of the forest’ (Helms 1998: 71). On the other hand, FAO defines indigenous forest management practices as the ways in which rural people harvest, use, take care of, reproduce and improve their forests or trees and associated resources such as wildlife, water and plants, in order to attain yield sustainable over the long term.

For the Nagas, the management of forest involves prudent utilisation of the forest produces to meet their livelihood at the same time maintaining and protecting of the forest area, the trees, wild life and the forest produces based on their traditional practices and traditional ecological knowledge to conserve the forest and the environment, whereby, the management of forest and its produces forms a part of their socio-economic structure.

Thus, the working definitions in the context of the present study includes the meaning of forest as ‘any land that is not under cultivation nor any residential area has been established so far but there is a presence of large number of trees, plants, wildlife and water in the area’, forest produces as defined by the Nagaland Forest Act, 1968, and forest management as a part of the Naga socio-economic structure where the community practise the prudent utilisation of the forest produces to meet their livelihood, at the same time, maintaining and protecting the forest area, the trees, wild life and the forest produces based on the Naga
traditional practices and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to conserve the forest and the environment.

**Forest and Tribal life**

Tribals everywhere have lived in intimate relationship with forest and their entire existence has been linked with forest due to historical factors. And there existed a ‘symbolic relationship’ between tribals and forest (Hasnain 2009: 211), where the forest dwellers created a culture where they depend on the forest and treat it as a renewable means of maintaining life and the forest in turn depends on them for its preservation and continuity (D’Souza 2001: 13).

Forests have continued to be the habitat for the tribals since ages, and have provided them with their livelihood. For instance, agriculture which is the main economic activity for the majority of the tribals is usually dependent on the forest as they traditionally practice jhum cultivation which involves the slashing and burning of the forest land for the cultivation. In addition, they are engage in a number of forest based activities such as collection of forest produces, hunting and fishing etc., for their livelihood. They collect a large number of plants, animals and insects from the forest as dietary supplements. Plants collected from the forest include secondary staple foods, vegetables, fruits, flowers, seeds, tubers, mushrooms, bamboo shoots; in addition, fibres and weaving, dyeing material and medicinal plants and herbs for traditional way of treatment are also gathered from the natural forest for home consumption as well as for sale in the local markets. Thus, it has been a unanimously held view that ‘forest economy is tribal economy and vice-versa’ (Hasnain 2009: 211).
Apart from their economic life, the tribals have a strong cultural link with the forests. Longchar (1995) remarks that we cannot understand the tribal culture adequately without understanding the world of nature as land and forest provide the cultural basis of the tribal people. For the tribals, forests are the venue for religious, social, and healing ceremonies. They viewed forest in both positive and negative light as sources of evil as well as power and munificence, as providers, as well as hindrances to development. For them, forest trees are sacred housing for spirits and often symbolises the link between the spiritual world of ancestors and people. Rituals and ceremonies which draw on forest symbols often serve as link with their cultural heritage, as well as their ancestral past. Thus, forest areas and specific trees are protected and valued for particular cultural occasions and as historical symbols.

Forest also plays an important role in the tribal religious system which is embedded with the world of nature. The tribals believe in a number of spirits associated with rocks, mountains, rivers and trees and consider the forest as the natural abode of these spirits. Hence, they worship and perform their religious rites and sacrifices in the forest. And many tribes have a totemistic religion, with trees, plants and animals as the totem of the tribes and clans. They restrict the exploitation of such trees, plants and animals and plants, thus claiming a symbiotic relationship with the environment because of their totemic root (Longchar 1995: 62). Such beliefs have important implications as the trees, the plants, the animals and the forests are considered as sacred which are not to be destroyed, thus helping in the preservation of the forest.
In the North-Eastern states of India, where majority of the population is tribal, the management of forest is predominantly done by the community with much of the forest listed as Unclassified forest. In states such as Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, over 90 per cent of the forest are under the direct control of the traditional institutions, communities and private individuals which is a sharp contrast from other parts of Indian states, where state forest department retain legal and territorial control over the vast majority of forest areas (George and Yhome 2008: 2). According to Aier and Changkija (2003), these communities maintain their forest as a sustainable resource system and the practice of forest management is part of the interdependent activities of the village through which the tribal life is sustained.

However, due to the economic importance of the forest and its high potential as a source of revenue, the forest and its resources which were earlier managed by the communities were brought under the state control. The state started intervening systematically and on a wide scale in the management of forest (Gadgil and Guha 1992: vii) to the extent that the tribals rights over the forest was affected. The government implemented various rules and policies like the Indian Forest Act 1927, National Forest Policy etc, for the management and regulation of forest. Further, it classified the forest as Reserved, Protected and Unclassified forest. The Reserved and Protected forest were under the direct control of the state whereas the Unclassified forest were controlled and managed by the village communities themselves (Deori 2005: 8).
Traditional Institutions and Management of Forest

Forests being an important source of subsistence and livelihood, various resource management techniques, rules, and practices based on the traditional usage, knowledge and methods have been adapted by the indigenous communities to ensure uninterrupted supply of the forest produces. Such practices involves restraints on the use of the forest produces in terms of quality, quantity, locality and season, and protecting the land and forest in the form of sacred groves, sacred sites, hunting grounds, etc. These practices not only conserved the resource but also served as the reserved supply for the communities. In India, the ‘kans’ of Uttar Kannada, ‘Cumindad’ lands in Goa, ‘Orans’ in Rajasthan, ‘Shmilat’ forest in Punjab, ‘sacred groves’ in the Himalayas, Law Kyntang in Meghalaya, and the ‘supply and safety’ forests in Mizoram are some of the few illustrations of forest conservation by the various tribal societies.

Like the other parts of India, in the North-Eastern states also community-based conservation and management of common resources is an age-old practice under the traditional customary laws. Even today, customary laws govern land ownership and management in states like Meghalaya and Nagaland where more than 90 per cent of the forests are directly controlled by traditional institutions, communities, or private individuals, whereas in Assam and Tripura, it is about 30 to 40 per cent. Such community-based management and conservation are linked to their high forest dependence, subsistence needs, and the cultural sanctity of the resource for the communities.
Traditionally, the community manage the forest under the supervision of the Village Council or Village Chief among the Nagas, the *Doloi* in the Jaintia Hills, the *Syiem* (or raja) of the Khasi Hills, the *Nokma* or head person among the Garo tribes in Meghalaya, the *Lal* (or chief) among the Mizos, the *Thoubei* or Village Elders among the Kukis of Manipur and similar pattern of management is practiced by the other North-Eastern tribes also.

Given the diverse traditional institutions and practices among the different groups and communities, the pattern and management of land and forest differs. Generally, the Village Council enacts laws relating to the use of land and resources and all matters concerning the land disputes are dealt with by the Council. It is the Council which decides the site or plot for cultivation every year. Such measures are taken keeping in mind the fertility of the soil in a rotational practice of cultivation and to protect the forest for future use. Besides, the Council also regulates indiscriminate livestock grazing, prohibition for grazing in specific periods and areas are also designated for the villagers. The decision of the Village Council is final and any failure to abide by the Council’s decision entails serious fines and penalty. In case of Chieftainship, the Chief owns the land and its resources and, therefore, act as the guardian of the land, forest and its resources. He allocates the land for cultivations to the members of the village according to the needs of the member concerned. And the Chief along with his advisers or village elders protect and manage the land and the village.

But District councils were instituted in the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution for
protection of the rights and interests of the tribal communities, including their interest in land and forest produces, and allowed them autonomy in social and political development. The Sixth Schedule empowered the Autonomous District Councils to make laws and regulations on all matters relating to the customs, traditions and practices of the tribal people, land tenure system, water courses, forest and forest management, marriage, divorce, inheritance, appointments and succession of the chiefs and headmen (Gassah 1997: vi). Thus, the district councils were authorised to manage the forests for the purposes of agriculture or grazing, for residential and non-agricultural purposes, and also for the regulation of jhum and the establishment of village or town committees or councils (National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution 2001). This has resulted in major changes in the administration of forest and regulation of jhum cultivation.

However, the establishment and evolution of district councils, contrary to the expected outcome of recognizing and strengthening the traditional systems of governance, has generally resulted in more alienation of the communities from the state governments. With the nationalisation of policies and laws pertaining to forests, state governments asserted greater control over the forests while the strength of traditional institutions weakened in most parts of the region. No clear distinctions or boundaries exist regarding the authority of the traditional institutions and the government-introduced systems with regards to the management of natural resources. This hinders effective management of the forest for both the district council and the communities. For example, in the West Garo Hills (Meghalaya), the two parallel governing institutions – the tribal customary laws under the Nokmas and
the statutory laws of the district council – have overlapping authority over management of the forests. This prohibitive overlap is seen as one of the reasons for the mismanagement of forests in the Garo Hills. The bureaucracy showed little faith in the community’s ability to manage their forests, but at the same time, government or private agencies lacked sufficient resources to become custodians of the forests. In many parts of the region, the communities have now been prevented from exercising their traditional rights. Such cases include the vast network of (wildlife) protected areas and government reserve forests, which has been created without recognition of the communities traditional rights.

Among the Nagas, the control and management of the natural resources including forest is administered by the village/community institutions. Traditionally, there were different forms of village institutions and different systems of governance existed among the Nagas. For instance, the Ao-Naga tribe has a ‘republic’ form of village institution, where elected members forms the decision making body of the village affairs. Angami-Naga tribe has a more ‘democratic’ form of governance, where the village elders decide the affairs of the village. The Sumi-Naga tribe, Chang-Naga tribe and the Konyak-Naga tribe have Chieftainship system of governance, wherein, the Chief or the Ang (king) acts as the supreme head in all the matters of the village. Thus, traditionally the right of ownership of land and forest among these Naga tribes is solely in the hands of their Chiefs. The Chief own the land and its resources and therefore, act as the guardian of the land and its resources. He allocates the land for cultivations to the members of the village according to the needs of the member concerned. Among the other tribes such as Ao-Nagas, Angami-
Nagas, Lotha-Nagas, Rengma-Nagas etc., apart from the common village land, most individual own a piece of land for cultivation and have the control over the use of the products of the land and the management of the Community Land and Forest is under the supervision of the village council or the elders.

**Traditional Forest Management**

People have since ancient times interacted and modified the forest and its environment in a number of ways according to their needs. It was mainly based on their knowledge about the environment and their interrelationship with the forest eco-system on which their life, culture and practices depend. This becomes more relevant among the indigenous people of all nations whose intimate acquaintance and dependence on the forest has led them to manage and conserve it, a practice that have been followed since the time of their ancestors till today.

Tribal communities in India have an indigenous practice of managing their forest and land as life support systems of subsistence, environmental protection and multiple use system (Aier and Changkija 2003: 356). Traditionally, the management of natural resources including land-use, land protection, forests, planting, and harvesting and distribution practices were based on their perception of man-environment relationship and they met their needs through a long tradition of carefully maintaining forest produces. Interactions between the tribal society and their environment have helped in maintaining the richness of culture, communities, species and genetic materials in both production systems and the land. Also, a wide variety of plants and animals in the forest ecosystem has supported human existence
and contributed to the basic needs ranging from building materials, fuel wood, fodder, medicine, aromatics, dyeing materials etc. Thus, the forest management practices of the tribals do not exist independently but are a part of the continuous flow of interdependent activities, which sustain tribal life in the village (ibid: 358).

The village forests are sacred and are controlled by the customary Village Council or Chief who manages the exploitation of their numerous products. This reflects the high value given by the tribals to their forests. The village/community forests in the region illustrate a way of managing natural resources through which we can understand their skills regarding conservation of environment. The important aspect of these activities is that they do not result in forest degradation because collections and jhuming cycle are controlled by the traditional management system (ibid: 359).

Among the Nagas, it is a traditional practice to reserve the forest in the immediate surroundings of the village and such forests are never cleared for cultivation purposes but are used as a conveniently accessible source for the collection of materials for domestic requirements. The management of the forest and its resources is under the administration of the Village Council or the Chief according to their traditional customs and practices. Another practice of forest conservation is the marking of certain areas as ‘ritual’ or ‘sacred’ forests from where extraction of forest products is taboo. Many tradition and customs are also given as the reason for protecting these sacred groves, and rituals, sacrificial offerings are performed for the deities protecting these forests. These beliefs and practices related to sacred groves have saved many endangered plants in the forests and thus, these
groves form a repository of wild germplasm and biological diversity. Another indigenous practice of the Naga tribes is the observation of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ days according to the waxing and waning of the moon for extraction of forest products like bamboo, timber, palm leaves, etc. Such approaches of management has helped conserved the forest and environment.

**Statement of the Problem**

Of late there has been a tremendous pressure on the environment due to various socio-economic changes, government policies, transformation of the traditional subsistence tribal economy to a money oriented modern economy and high population growth, which are having an adverse effect on community based forest management. With the marginalization of the communities, who once were owners of the land, as managers of the forestland, there has not only been extensive degradation and deforestation of the region’s forests but a slow unconscious erosion of the sense of community and the social, cultural and religious identity that has been associated with it. This has been visible in the case of the Naga community who like other tribals have had a close affinity with the forest and traditional institutions like the village council still have an important role to play in preserving and maintaining the forest. However, the loss in the significance and relevance of the practice of prudent utilisation of forest and its produces among the Nagas affects not just the sustainability of the forest and livelihood of the community but can result in an undesirable and uncertain future of the village and the community. Therefore it becomes very crucial at this stage to see the maintenance of forest not just as a means of economic sustenance but there is a need to see beyond this approach that the
maintenance of forest is maintenance of the village and the community life. Besides, there is not much literature available nor has there been much work conducted on the status of forest among the Nagas in general and the social, cultural linkages of forest and the Nagas in particular.

These being the issues arising out of the present scenario of forestry in Nagaland, the study examine the significance of traditional forest management among the Nagas, particularly among the Ao-Nagas and Angami-Nagas. It also attempts to examine the role of the Village Council and the communities in the management of village forest and the challenges and issues faced by the communities in relation to their traditional system of forest management in view of the changes taking place in their socio-economic life. Besides, the study also looks into how the traditional knowledge and values can be employed in maintaining the sustainability of the forest globally.

**Review of Literature**

The present review of literature has been done with an aim to identify issues relating to the research theme under the present study and to assess the body of existing knowledge on the subject concerned.

Ao (1966) in the monograph of Waromung village gives a detailed description of the village starting from its historical background, physiographical features of the village, and the social, economic and administrative life of the village. He emphasised on the close association of the villagers with nature, and how their life was built around the agricultural cycle, seasons and the surrounding environment. He
also mentions the implication of forest related activities in the villager’s economic life and their dependence on the ‘collection of Jungle Produce’ especially during the lean period.

Hutton (1969) in his monograph about the Angami-Naga tribe gives an introductory about their domestic, social and religious life, and their laws and customs. The Angami-Naga tribe comprises of the Khonoma, Kohima, Viswema, Chakroma group and the Eastern Angami-Naga group. Describing the villages Hutton states that the Angami-Naga village is built either on the summit of hill, on a high saddle or in a highly defensible position and the given name of the village is ascribed to some local features. For instance, Khonoma means the men of the ‘Khwüno’ trees, a large number of which are said to have been cleared from the site selected when the village was first built. He further states that the village may be regarded as the unit of the political and religious sides of an Angami-Naga life but the real unit of the social side is the clan. And the land system in an Angami-Naga village consists of the common property of the village, the clan property and the individual property. He also mentions about their domestic life when every household items, the house, their dresses and ornaments are made using bamboos, canes and other forest products. Even their birth, naming, death and other ceremonies are performed using the natural and forest products.

Mills (1973) in his monograph ‘The Ao Nagas’ gives a general feature of the Ao-Naga society. He describes the Ao-Naga tribe as comprising of the Chungli clans and their phratries, the Mongsen clans and their phratries and the Changki clans and their phratries. The Ao-Naga villages are divided into different Mepu or Khels or
local residential units and the village gate, the Morung and the village drum are an integral part of the village. For the Ao-Naga’s their daily use and requirements are made mostly of natural and forest products like bamboo, cane, natural dye etc. Agriculture is their main economy and the land and forest is an important part of the village. Landed property of four kinds exist among the Ao-Naga tribe - private land, clan land, morung land and common land, which are managed by the council of the village, the clan or the Morungs accordingly.

Ao (1980) discussing about the Ao-Naga Customary Laws states that under the Constitution of India, provisions for safeguarding social and religious practices, customary justice and landed property of the Nagas are included under Article 371 A (1). He also says that every Ao-Naga village is a republic and the administration of the village is run by a council formed by chosen clan-representatives. Among the Mongsen group the council is called ‘Samen Menchen’ and among the Chongli group it is called ‘Tatar Menden’. The council meets and decides matters of common interest and works of the village. Talking about the land system, he mentions that there are Village Common Land, Clan Land, individual family land and group land. Village Common Land consists of jhum land, forestland, woodland, house-site and other ground. They are managed and controlled by Samen (Council) of the village. Jhum lands are distributed for cultivations of the community during jhuming cycle and rents are collected from the cultivators. The village also owns large forestlands which are split into individual holdings in some villages but are maintained as common land in some villages.
Gadgil and Guha (1992) bring out the link between ecology and history through ‘modes of resource use’ in different cultural and historical context. According to them, the human history as a whole is about prudence and profligacy of sustainable and exhaustive resource use. Focusing on the colonial period in India, they discuss the state’s intervention in the management and utilisation of forest produces and how the revenue orientations of colonial land policy contribute towards the denudation of forest. It has also resulted into social conflicts between different group of resource users like the people demanding for more inclusive participation in resource management and on the other hand the state trying to consolidate and strengthen its control over the land and forest.

Sinha (1993) gives an insight on the historical sociology of forest, starting from the colonial to post-colonial period in the North Eastern Himalayan Region. He talks about the significance of forest in the community lives of this region but the introduction of British forest policy and forest administration affected the traditional rights of the community over their land and forest and even the socio-economic autonomy of the communities. He also states that in most of the hill states like Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, though the forest are completely under the community control, the forest produces are still depleting due to lack of awareness and absence of grass root movements to safeguard their interest in forest in particular and environment in general.

Longchar (1995) discussing the traditional worldview and modernity with special focus on North East India discusses about the inseparable unity of nature and culture for the tribals. He says that tribals in India have been dependent on land and
forest which lead to their perspective that land cannot be owned but only used for the good of all. And, therefore, they cannot be bought and sold from a tribal point of view. He also points out that the land is not a mere space but it is a place which gives an identity to the community and it holds the family, clan and tribe together. Thus, for the tribals, land and forest is not just a resource that sustains them, but it also provides the cultural basis for the tribal people.

Arnold and Guha (1996) introducing the relationship of man-nature embedded in the cultures of South Asia says that, ecologically and culturally South Asia is characterised by an unparalleled diversity. And forest, pastures and the water system have played a vital role in shaping the history of South Asia and sustaining its diversity. The forest in particular has a wide variety of historical meanings and usages. It was a home and the source of livelihood for the inhabitants at the same time, a protection against invasions and expansionist ambitions of the state. They also discusses about how the forest area and pasture land were earlier under the community control but with the state’s intervention during the colonial period and after, and the pressures of population growth and the market there has been a decline and degradation of areas previously held in common.

Guha (2000) presents a global history of the environmental movement which emerged as a popular movement in the sixties. The author gives an account of the major trends, ideas, campaigns and thinkers within the environmental movement worldwide and makes a distinction of first and second wave of environmentalism. The first wave of environmentalism was the initial response to the onset of the industrialisation and the ecological degradation as a consequence of it. Whereas, the
second wave of environmentalism started when the intellectual response was transformed into a mass movement. He says, different nations take different directions with regard to the green movement but there is a flow of ideas across cultures which influences and transforms the environmental movement of the different countries of the world.

D’Souza (2005) looks into the Angami-Naga traditional practices like ownership of land and forest by the community, the method of cultivation and their religious beliefs which have contributed to the conservation of their forest. The author focusing particularly on the Southern Angami-Naga villages says that changes have begun to take place which is affecting the extent and quality of forest cover in this region. He says that in the past, exploitation of forest was prevented by a system of social control by the villagers and even their religious beliefs played an important role in preserving the forest. However, factors such as rapid increase in population leading to the extension of jhum cultivation, harvesting of forest for firewood and timber because of the spread of a consumerist culture has resulted in increased exploitation of the forest in the region.

Athparia (2002) discusses how the traditional resource management of the Karbis (one of the tribal communities of Assam, India) was well balanced with nature when the population was low and their necessities of life were minimal. Among the Karbis, the state reserved forest was managed by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council through three territorial divisions, namely, Karbi Anglong East Division Diphu, Karbi Anglong West Division Diphu and Hamren Division, whereas the unclassed state forest was managed by the respective District
Council administration. He states that the traditional practice of the Karbis like prohibition of cutting the mango, jackfruit and pearl trees which were considered as sacred and the restrictions on the hunting of wild animals to only three prominent periods in a year, have contributed to the conservation of their forest. But with the changing pattern of economic, social and environmental conditions there were changes in the traditional system of management which also weakened the traditional social ties.

Hazarika (2002) states that though forest plays diverse economic, social and environmental roles, the forest especially in the developing countries continues to be deforested due to the impacts of growing population, unsustainable use, poor management, shifting cultivation and large scale conversion to cash crops. He argues that issues and problems of forest degradation can be solved if the forest produces are used on the principles of sustainable development, i.e., ‘production of continuous flow of desired forest products and services without undue reduction of its inherent value and future productivity, without undue undesirable effect on the physical and social environment’ (Ray and Alam 2002:77). He points out that sustainable development of forest should include economic, ecological and social objectives, so that there will be proper use and management of biodiversity for the present and future generation. At the same time, it will also help in the stabilization of the communities, provide a means of regular income to the indigenous communities and protect the environmental as well as the cultural values.

Tiwari (2002) analyses the power conferred by the Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution to the Autonomous District Councils of Meghalaya with regard to
management and preservation of forest. Under the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Management and Control of Forest) Act 1 of 1958, all private as well as public forest should be registered with the District Council, and no sale, lease or gift of public forest will take place without the approval of the competent authority of the District Council. Also, the felling of trees, extraction of timber from public, private forest or from sacred forest and the community forest, are all under the regulation of the District Council. For the removal of forest products for any purpose from the Raid forest, Green Blocks, Unclassed, Protected and Reserved forest, permission should be taken from the forest officer of the District Council. He points out that in spite of all this there are many constraints in the management of the forest and there is high degradation of the forest and environment in the region. He states that, to prevent such management issues and maintain an ecologically sustainable environment, there should be co-ordination between the state government, District Council and the community, and the traditional knowledge and practices of managing forest should be taken into account.

Aier and Changkija (2003) discussing about the indigenous knowledge and management of natural resources says that the North Eastern states of India is recognised as one of the 18 hotspots of mega diversity because of the species richness and high levels of endemism. They state that their traditional practice of managing the natural resources based on the specific knowledge of their local conditions as well as their cultural beliefs has played an important role in maintaining the region’s rich biodiversity. Highlighting the indigenous knowledge of resource management among the Nagas, Mizos, Khasis and the other communities of
the region, they explain that the forest was maintained as a sustainable resource system and was managed by the people under the supervision of the customary Village Council or the Village Chief. They point out that due to social, economic changes the traditional system of resource management is disintegrating and the large scale human activities has resulted in overall environmental degradation and depletion of the natural resources of the region.

Environment Impact Assessment Report-Khonoma Green Village (2004) evaluates the impact that eco-tourism may have on the natural environment as well as on the economy, culture and social life of local communities of Khonoma. At the same, it also provides an outline of Khonoma’s social and economic context, and the nature and roles of its traditional institutions such as the Village Council, Age-group, the Khel Union etc., in the village life. Further, it gives a comprehensive list of the biodiversity of the village.

Deori (2005) examines the issues of environmental history of the pre-colonial and post-colonial Naga Hills district within the social, economic, political and administrative context. The author states that, in the Naga Hills – district, communal property rights like clan, tribe and village over forest and its products existed, but such rights were curtailed by the colonial state through their conservation and forestry regulation. Moreover, economic benefits being one of the major motives for the colonial state, there was resource exploitation and land seizure by the state. The author further explains that restrictions on their customary rights over land and forest use caused resentment among the Naga against the colonial state and it resulted in the defiance of rules and regulations imposed by the colonial power.
George and Yhome (2008) states that forest is the main source of livelihood among the Nagas and the different Naga communities manage these resources according to their own specific administrative and institutional structure. Generally, in Nagaland, the traditional system of ownership of land and forest is fundamentally of three types, Village Land, Clan/Khel Land and Private Land, and the management of these forest and land are under the supervision of the Village Council or the Chief of the village. They point out that there are changes in the management of the forest due to several structural and socio-economic changes like introduction of modern institutions for the management and control of natural resources, and the shift to a cash-oriented economy. They further explained that the marginalisation of the communities in the management of their forest produces has given rise to issues of deforestation and has affected the livelihood of the rural communities among the Nagas.

Mawrie (2009) talks about the concept of eco-consciousness and eco-spirituality among the Khasis by analysing the Khasi cultural elements like their folklore, music, dances, legends and religion. He states that the relationship that used to exist between the Khasis of old and their natural environment is declining. He explains that the loss of contact with nature due to the consumerist attitude of the modern Khasi society is one of the reasons for the decline in the relationship. Also, the destructive tendency of man has resulted in the rapid disappearance of forest and the degradation of the landscape. He points out that eco-education in schools and colleges is necessary as education can create awareness among the younger generations about the environment and its importance.
Nshoga (2009) describing the traditional Naga village discusses the importance of forest in the village from the economic and sustenance perspective as well as from its strategic importance. He mentions that in the ancient days when the head-hunting culture was practiced the Naga villages were usually located on the summit of a hill with thick forest cover because the forest not only conceals the village from the enemies but also provides the best cover for escape during sudden raids. He also mentions that the traditional Naga villages maintained land and forest under its control and the utilisation of land and forest are the customary rights and privileges of the Nagas. Forest is usually owned by the individuals, clans/khels and the village and they collect most of their necessities from the forest. And random felling of trees, burning of forest and encroachment of community reserve forest were strictly prohibited by the village authority. However, such practices have become unabated, which has led to the disappearance of community forest.

Zehol and Zehol (2009) in their book about Khezhakeno village discuss about the sacred forest of the village and also highlight the traditional tribal practice of preserving nature by maintaining sacred sites. Such areas are maintained because of the close human forest linkage and partly because of the animistic belief system of the tribal societies. They mentioned that sacred forest are of ecological and cultural interest because the cultural practices, permitted or forbidden often reveals about the attitude of various societies to nature, at the same time such forests contribute greatly towards the preservation and protection of wildlife and other biological resources. But such sacred forest and groves are rapidly degraded because of the decline of traditional value system and the various demand of population growth.
Shangpliang (2010) examines the role of forest in the life of the Khasis. Tracing the origin, history and ecological heritage of the Khasis, she discusses the close affinity the Khasis have with their forest and how it occupies the central place in the socio-economic and religious life of the Khasis. She gives a detailed account of the system of land and forest classification in the Khasi Hills, the land tenure and forest cover of the state. She also discusses how the concept of forest as a sacred entity among the Khasis finds expression in their beliefs, legends and folktales and in their customary practice of preserving sacred groves known as ‘Law Kyntang’, which are held with high esteem even today. She further explains the parameters of forest usage in the various aspects of Khasi life and culture. And she further explains that economic development, pressure of increased population, industrial growth and urbanisation has resulted in the denudation of forest which in turn is affecting the community life.

From the above review of literature it can be inferred that the forest is a resource that sustains the community economically, at the same time, land and forest provides the cultural basis for the tribals. The available literature on forest and tribal life and culture mainly focuses on the significance of maintaining and managing the forest. However not much work has been done on the recent trends that have brought a sweeping change in the traditional system of forest management among the tribals in general and the Nagas in particular which is affecting the sustainability of the forest and the livelihood of the communities.
Objectives of the study

1. To examine the role of forest in the socio-economic life of the Nagas.

2. To make an assessment of the role of the Village Council in forest management among the communities of Waromung and Khonoma village.

3. To examine the emerging trends in forest management and thereby make an assessment of the role of the state government, the Village Council, and the community as a whole in managing the forest produces in the framework of the two communities.

Methodology

For the present study, both primary and secondary data were collected to achieve the objectives of the study. The focus of data collection was both qualitative and quantitative. Secondary data was obtained from Government official records, Annual reports of the Forest Department of Nagaland, books, articles, journals, magazines and newspapers etc.

The primary data was collected from the residents of Waromung and Khonoma village, Village Council members, members of Village Development Board (VDB) as well as officials and members of various organisations of both the village. The data were collected through in-depth interview and non-participant observation. In order to collect the data, two different sets of interview schedules were used-
i. **Official Schedule** was used for the Village Council members of both Waromung and Khonoma village.

ii. **Household schedule** was used for the residents of both Waromung and Khonoma Village.

A total of 230 respondents were drawn as sample size. The respondents were further divided into two groups. The first group of 30 respondents were comprised of 15 Village Council members from Waromung and 15 Village Council members from Khonoma Village Council. The second group of respondents comprised of 200 households, out of which 100 households belonged to Waromung and 100 household to Khonoma village.

Additionally, group discussions were held with the elders of the village, members of women group, Youth members, Student Union members and VDB members of both Waromung and Khonoma village to procure information relating to the present study.

**Field Area of the Study**

The present study is conducted in Waromung village and Khonoma village in Nagaland.

**Waromung Village** is an Ao-Naga village. It is located in the Northern part of Nagaland, at a distance of 193 km away from Kohima, the state capital and falls under Mokokchung district. The village has a total of 609 households with a population of 3064 persons (Waromung Village Council Record, 2016). The village
is divided into four Mepus or local residential units, namely, the Mongsen Mepu, Teyong Mepu, Yimsen Mepu and Waromung Compound. On the other hand, Khonoma Village is an Angami-Naga village. The village falls under Kohima district and is located in the Southern part of Nagaland, at a distance of 20 km away from Kohima, the state capital. The village has a total of 595 households and its total population is 3000 (Khonoma Village Development Board Record, 2015). The village is divided into three Thinos/ Khels or local residential units, namely, Merhümia Khel, Thevomia Khel and Semomia Khel. Each Khel is occupied by different clans and sub-clans, and the Khel is the unit on which the social, economic and political life of the village is based. Thus, each Khel has their respective Khel Union which plays an important role in the village governance.

In both these two villages, agriculture is the main economy of the community. In addition, forest-related economic activities such as collection of forest produces for food, firewood, fodder, logging, hunting, fishing, basketry, woodcraft etc. forms an important aspect of the community livelihood strategy. As far as the basic infrastructures are concerned in these two villages, power, education, health, water and sanitation are all communitised under the directives of the Nagaland Communitisation of Public Institutions and Services Act, 2002. The administration in Waromung and Khonoma is under the respective Village Council which is further aided by the VDB, Village Electricity Management Board, Village Health Committee, Village Education Committee, Water and Sanitation Committee, Village Forest Committee. Moreover, the various organisations such as the Citizens forum,
Women Organisation, Student body, Youth Organisation and church organisation gives support and co-operates with the Village Council in running the village affairs.

In both Waromung and Khonoma village, the notion of participation is well developed where every household is involved in maintaining the surrounding environment and the whole community is actively involved in the maintenance of the village forest. Because of its well conserved environment and rich biodiversity Khonoma is known as Green Village and it has become a model village for eco-tourism. Also in Waromung village, in spite of the fact that the villagers are dependent on the forest products, there is no large scale exploitation of the forest because of the effective regulations and practices of managing the forest and it has one of the largest forest lands in the Ao region. Thus, both these villages are representative of the study in the context of the significance of the forest and forest produces in the social and economic life of the community and the practise of effective regulations and management of the land and forest by the community themselves.

Chapterisation

Chapter 1: Introduction-This chapter gives a brief description of the human-environment relationship, tribal life and forest, concept of forest among the Nagas and the meaning of traditional forest management in general has been discussed. The chapter, further, discusses the Statement of the Research Problem and the Objectives of the study. And it also includes the theoretical framework, review of literature related to the study and further explains the Methodology followed in the study.
Chapter 2: The Nagas, their Land and Ecology-This chapter gives a brief introduction about the Nagas, their land and ecology with particular reference to the forest status in Nagaland.

Chapter 3: Socio-Economic Profile of Waromung and Khonoma village-This chapter gives an account of the socio-economic profile of the field areas of the study, i.e., Waromung and Khonoma village. The chapter also gives a brief description of the historical background of the formation of the two villages, topography of both the village and the structural features of the village organisation in the two villages.

Chapter 4: Traditional system of forest management in Waromung and Khonoma village-This chapter focuses on the significance of forest in the social and economic life of the Nagas. Further, it discusses the traditional forest management practices in Waromung and Khonoma village.

Chapter 5: Role of Village Council in Forest Management-This chapter gives an account of the structure, organisation and function of the Village Council of Waromung and Khonoma village with particular focus on the role of the Village Council in relation to forest management.

Chapter 6: Emerging trends in forest management-This chapter discusses the various forces and agents of change that are influencing the traditional system of forest management and the emerging trends in the management of forest among the two communities and its effects on the community life.

Chapter 7: Conclusion-This chapter summarises the findings of the study.