

**THE CONSEQUENCES  
OF SUSTAINED  
DISPARITIES:  
GENDER POLITICS  
IN NAGALAND**

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Published by Zubaan Publishers Pvt. Ltd 2019

In collaboration with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation



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Typeset in Arno Pro 11/13

# **THE CONSEQUENCES OF SUSTAINED DISPARITIES: GENDER POLITICS IN NAGALAND**



## **INTRODUCTION**

The paper takes a close look at Naga women's participation in politics historically and in the existing modern Naga society. Because Naga women in formal politics are almost absent, 'politics' in this paper is used more in the sense of formal politics or electoral politics. However, the paper does not argue that Naga women were never political just because they were not, and still are not, given political representation; as this may imply that joining a political party may be the only way to do meaningful politics. The paper reminds one of Naga women's political consciousness which has been historically premised on the social construct of motherhood vis-à-vis the Naga Mothers' Association and other women's organizations in the various tribes. Naga women's political activism, political skills and political competencies in these women's or mothers' organizations have not

only shaped their political trajectories but have also provided them with the knowledge of right behaviour in politics in an informal space, which is still the only political space available to them. Informal politics is produced and reproduced in the political activism of Naga women's organizations against the formal political space that they are denied. The focus of this paper is the denied formal political space to Naga women; however the paper is careful in not assuming that formal political institutions are the only way to achieve gender equality. The paper looks at how women's inclusion in political representation is one of the strategies for promoting creative and inclusive political institutions for the attainment gender justice.

The argument that women's access to political spaces does not guarantee gender equality, however, may expose the fallacy that gender equality will easily be achieved without institutional solutions like women's reservations. My research explores multiple lines of thinking on the socio-political upheavals around 33 per cent reservation for women in Urban Local Body (ULB) elections in 2017 in Nagaland.<sup>1</sup> A critical aspect of the protest against the reservations led to a pertinent question on social justice and gender.

To give a brief historical background, the 74<sup>th</sup> amendment bill was passed in 1993 which provided reservation for women in ULBs. In 2001, the Nagaland Municipal and Town Council Act (2001) was passed in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. However, 33 per cent reservation for women, which is a mandatory provision in Article 243-T, Part IX-A was not included in this. Till date, the law has not been adopted in Nagaland because of the argument over whether the 33 per cent reservation for women in ULBs violates Article 371A of the Indian Constitution. Violence broke out in the state after the Supreme Court vacated the stay on a writ petition filed by civil society in June 2011 for the 2017 elections. Naga Hoho, the apex body representing major Naga tribes demanded withdrawal of women's candidatures and imposed sanctions on the candidates calling the reservation a violation of Naga customs and traditions.

The discussion around 33 per cent reservation for women in Nagaland does not present a simple narrative, because multiple stakeholders have their own versions. One suggestion is that it will be very hasty to jump-scale to a feminist discourse right away while analysing gender justice in the context of the ULB elections in 2017 in Nagaland. Before moving to the complex discourses, the specificities around the protest need to be understood while positing women around the discourse on Article 371A in Nagaland. This paper tries to understand gender hierarchy by looking at the sustained over-representation of men in the socio-political history of the Nagas. The dominant question of who is socially approved to be a political leader of the Naga people directly correlates to the hegemonic presence of Naga men in the formal political space in the state.

Given the nature of the issue almost all sources, organizations and respondents wanted to remain anonymous. A few respondents gave permission to use their real names but as this may put them at risk, anonymity of all primary sources is maintained in this paper for ethical reasons.

## **NAGA MOTHERS: INCOMPATIBLE WITH FORMAL POLITICS**

The entry point for Naga women in the public sphere was through a mothers' organization which connotes a nurturing/mother figure. The articulations of this imagery constitute the politics for Naga women. The Naga Mothers Association (NMA) has been the sole gateway for Naga women's entry into the public sphere, making a mark on the public stage and in civil society. NMA started in February 1984 in Kohima, with a preamble that stated, 'Naga Mothers of Nagaland shall express the need of conscientising citizens towards more responsible living and human development through the voluntary organization of the NMA' (Banerjee, 2001: 160). NMA's membership is open to

any Naga mother or adult Naga woman. Most of NMA's members are organized through apex women's organizations in each tribe. Their goal is raising the consciousness of the people about responsible living and human development; creating interest in the traditional socio-political life of the Nagas; maintaining their self-identity and peaceful living; and fighting against social evils that are prevalent in the state like drug abuse and violence amongst Naga youth through workshops, reformation and rehabilitation through active participation. For its efficient functioning, NMA collaborated with experts from Kripa Foundation in Mumbai and organized awareness programmes and campaigns. NMA set up a de-addiction and rehabilitation centre called Mount Geliad Home on the outskirts of Kohima and other similar projects were also undertaken.

NMA's other programmes include providing help to AIDS victims, afforestation and environmental conservation. In 1986, it took up social tree plantations, and trees were planted in school compounds in Kohima town and on the town's outskirts. In 1994, NMA analysed that the political turmoil because of extortions and killings was related to poor economic conditions as a result of unequal distribution of resources (Chenoy, 2002: 134). In recent years NMA has become more involved in political issues. NMA was also successful in lobbying with the government and the Nagaland Students Federation over an age limit for jobs and pensions (Banerjee, 2001: 161). In 1994, NMA changed its appeal to interventions. NMA has played a role in negotiating with the government for compensation, pensions and jobs, and opened up a dialogue with their communities (Chenoy, 2002: 28–29).

The number of women in formal decision-making processes is restricted in Nagaland but they have formed groups and associations to articulate their demands. Chenoy (2002) argues that the role of such peace groups<sup>2</sup> is indispensable because these groups democratize the peace process and bring it into the realm of civil society. NMA initiated an inquiry into the Mokokchung incident, in which the army killed many innocent civilians in December 1994, and submitted a

memorandum to the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR). It strongly opposed the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) (1958) and insisted that any incident involving army violence against women and children be referred to it. NMA's president Neidonuo Angami said, 'NMA is critical of the amount of human rights violations in Naga society both by the over ground government and the underground government', and this was released as a pamphlet on May 25, 1995 as an appeal to both the parties to stop the killings (Banerjee, 2001: 161).

Naga women's sense of political consciousness has been historically premised on a social construction of motherhood vis-à-vis NMA and other women's organizations in the various tribes. Naga women's ascribed space has been mostly voluntary services, charity work, community service like prohibiting alcohol in the state, resolving domestic violence, taking care of abandoned children, orphans, dependents and providing services that need nurturing, mothering, caring and compassion. With a distinct socio-cultural segregation of men and women's separate roles, Naga women's tactics and strategies of doing politics are confined to informal politics, which over a period of time has led to the domestication of politics. Electoral politics in Nagaland so far has been defined by manhood and masculinity, the antonym to an effeminate role.

In the context of the ULB elections in 2017 and positioning the women in these elections we first need to look at the history of the Municipal Act in Nagaland. The Nagaland Municipal and Town Council Act (2001) was passed by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly in 2001; however, 33 percent reservation for women which is a mandatory provision in Article 243-T Part, IX-A was not included in this Act. Miss Khetoli filed a PIL in the Gauhati High Court, Kohima Bench appealing for the court's intervention to include 33 per cent women's reservation as provided by the Constitution of India under Article 243-T, Part IX -A. The High Court in a judgment in 2005, directed the state government to include 33 per cent reservation for women in the Municipal and Town Council Act (2001). Accordingly,

the state government implemented the High Court judgment by amending the Municipal and Town Council Act in 2006 by including 33 per cent reservation for women in the Act. However, since the tenure of those elected in 2004 was till 2009, the 33 percent reservation for women was not immediately implemented.<sup>3</sup>

## **WHAT DOES ARTICLE 371A MEAN TO THE PEOPLE OF NAGALAND?**

As per Article 371A,, ‘no Act of Parliament shall apply to Nagaland in relation to religious or social practices of the Nagas, Naga customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to the Naga Customary law, ownership and transfer of land and its resources’ (Constitution of India, 1950). Article 371A evokes an emotive imagery of the unique history and identity of the Nagas, which they think must be protected at all costs (Kanato and Avitoli, 2018). The protests at the time of the 2017 ULB elections in Nagaland were not solely over the 33 per cent reservation for women, which according to the Nagas was one of the factors violating Article 371A. The objectional section in the Municipal Act which led to the protests points towards two main factors: a) Taxation on land and buildings. b) 33 per cent reservation for women in ULBs. A retired Naga lawyer interpreted Article 371A as:

Although not directly, but one can say that all the objectional points raised in the protests against the ULB elections were spiritually linked to one another since all of them land, taxation and women are related to Article 371A. This provisions and rights given to the Nagas in the Constitution of India are too powerful which others do not have, not even the Mizos. The municipal is not above the Constitution and any law passed in the land should be in consonance with the Constitution.



There is no relation between the two factors of land and building taxation and 33 per cent reservation for women. However, the indirect correlations between the two drawn by the people are: a) In Naga society, land is never inherited by women because inheritance flows exclusively through the male line, so any issues over land are not a matter for Naga women. b) If the ULB elections proceed without resistance, it is the women (whoever gets the seats with reservation) who are going to tax the Naga people and further take important decisions on land and taxation. For them, these points go against the customs and traditions of the Nagas at many levels. By introducing women's political culture which was not there in traditional Naga society, wider collective concerns over Article 371A culminated in unrestrained violence during the protests.

The apex body, Naga Hoho, and the respective tribal bodies demanded withdrawal of nominations of women candidates and imposed sanctions on women who did not comply. It is easier to critique than to undermine the representation of these tribal organizations as they represent the voice of the collective in Nagaland. In modern Naga society, the Naga tribal councils or organizations<sup>4</sup> have continually stood as guardian structures and custodians of Naga customs and traditions and Article 371A. These Naga tribal apex organizations are 'all male' organizations. Naga women also have similar organizations but in affiliation with and subordinate to male tribal bodies.

Primordial identities take over ascriptive identities at the very heart of the interpretation of Article 371A by the Nagas. More than positing an academic standpoint of what is right and wrong, this paper is more interested in understanding the multiple truths and interpretations of Article 371A and what it means to the people of Nagaland. It would be worthwhile to understand why people do what they do while trying to un-layer the violent protests around the ULB elections in Nagaland in 2017. For the Nagas, Article 371A is related to both territory and the people; for them it states that land and all its resources belong to the

people. All resources include people and women, and hence according to them, a law deciding on the political rights of Naga women rests with the people. Article 371A is a right granted to them that protects Naga tribes from the colonial as well as the Indian system of taxation. The legal interpretation of Article 371A by a senior advocate at Mokokchung town, on the objectional clauses of the Nagaland Municipal Act 2001, reads:

If we pay tax to the government then it implies that the land belongs to the government. According to the law of the Indian land, anything belonging to the top soil belongs to the government. But in our case, it belongs to the people because of Article 371A. If a 15 per cent tax is levied on the demarcated municipal area, there will be many poor people who will lose their land and buildings because they will not be able to pay their taxes. In Nagaland, municipal areas may not necessarily be urban areas. Some of the municipal areas are under-developed and rural. We cannot tax the poor people.

Most of my respondents agreed that Article 371A did not have a provision that directly states that Naga customs are against women's reservation, but their argument was that it violates the customs in a way that participation of women in formal politics contradicts the existing law of the land. For the Nagas, it is because of Article 371A that they can make laws on their own land including laws on taxation, resources, women and people. 'Women contesting in the elections, be it for the state legislature or the Parliament was not in Naga customs,' said one of the male respondents, a young Naga entrepreneur:

If this clause in the Municipal Act is for gender equality then why are women given seats by demeaning the other gender which is Naga men? The opportunity to win should be based on equality without any reservations for both men and women. Just like caste reservations do not make any sense for Naga society since we are tribes, reservation for women is also not apt for our society.

Naga men's claims about the protests are that as per the customary laws of the Nagas, women are not treated as inferior like in other parts

of India, but as equals. Reservations are a foreign concept for them and their customary practices and reservations for women may bring the concepts of hierarchy and inferiority to Naga society. These arguments and flawed notions of Naga society being an egalitarian society are both conceptually and experientially problematic as was validated by the violence and protests against 33 per cent reservation for Naga women in the ULBs. The interpretation of Article 371A does not stop at Naga women belonging to the home and being mothers or wives. A reading of the fierce safeguarding of Naga traditions is embedded with apprehensions about Naga men giving up the prevailing social order where they are the sole enforcers and decision makers.

## **OSTRACIZING AND PATRIARCHY: LAND, VILLAGE AND TOWNS**

The protests against reservations are also indicative of Article 371A giving exclusive rights to Naga men over land, buildings, material resources as well as a non-tangible right over customary rights. Both lineage and material resources flow through the male line, and Naga women have no right over resource ownership and control. It is important to understand the narratives on land and taxation so as to understand how patriarchy operates in the state, Naga identity and traditional strictures that keep Naga women from entering politics even in a post liberalized era of modern Naga society.

A village is the genesis of the history of town formation in Nagaland. Towns like Kohima, Zunheboto and Mokokchung emerged out of an agglomeration of land from different villages surrounding the town. For example, the land where Zunheboto town stands today was donated or purchased land from villages like Bimo, Shotomi, Lizu naghuto, Natha new and Natha old (Kanato and Avitoli, 2018). The land on which Mokokchung town stands today was built on land taken from three villages: Mokokchung, Khensa and Ungma. The land in

and around the towns in Nagaland was either purchased or donated by the chiefs or clan members of the tribes who were the owners of the land.<sup>5</sup> Given this history of town formation, jurisdictional issues of the village's authority over the land and the people and who has the rightful authority are bound to come up between land owners and administrative functionaries of the state. A member of *lika* (landowners in Mokokchung town) said:

The landowners have sold their land, and it is now the private property of many town settlers but the clans still have ownership over the land because the atmosphere, water and other resources are theirs. They use the key phrase 'hardi toh dia nai' meaning that when they sell the land, they just sell the flesh but the bones still remain and belong to the clan. So, the land is taxable by the landowners.

The first elections under the Municipal and Town Council Act (2001) were conducted in 2004 in the state without 33 per cent reservation for women. India drew its attention to Nagaland and the political upheaval and resistance against the 33 per cent reservation for women in 2017, but the protests over all the provisions including those related to tax on the land and buildings in the Nagaland Municipal Act date back to the time of its enactment in 2001. For example, in Mokokchung the *Ayim Asem Lika* (land owners from Mokokchung, Ungma and Khensa villages), who contributed land to Mokokchung town, have been protesting against the Municipal Act which resulted in Mokokchung district not participating in the first elections held in 2004 to protest against all provisions related to taxation on land and buildings. The rest of the state participated in the elections without 33 per cent reservation for women and functioned till 2009. Clearly, narratives from the field suggest that issues of land are not of any concern to Naga women even in modern Naga society, partly because if the elections proceed with reservations, women as decision makers will be normalized and naturalized over a period of time. Beneath the resistance to land taxation, one of the strongest forces of the protest is patriarchal foresightedness and vision with a propaganda to deny

Naga women access to a political platform. An associate professor at Nagaland University, a Naga woman said:

It is a political ploy where the sitting politicians are instigating the protests, and Article 371A is being used as per their convenience. Article 371A is just a provision in the Constitution, and rumours about the government trying to take over the governance of the Nagas is misinterpreted because ULBs have nothing to do with rural governance. The apex tribal bodies are not the right organizations to take decisions on the implementation of policies like 33 per cent reservation for women. There is nothing sacrosanct about Article 371A which the Naga men keep pulling out as per their needs. Article 371A is not anti-reservation, and if Article 371A is anti-women's reservation then the provision is in conflict with the Right to Equality.

The urban-rural divide is clear at least administratively but not in the perceptions of the people especially in the context of governance. Although separated geographically, every urban member is a member of his village and is still bound by the village's quasi jurisprudence. The apex Naga Tribal Council, the organization at the forefront opposing reservation is talking on behalf of all tribal bodies under its ambit. The respective apex tribal bodies consist of all the Village Councils in each village of that tribe. An important question to ask here is: How free or how strongly attached are the urban Naga dwellers to customary laws mainly under the ambit of the Village Council in post statehood Nagaland? A village is still the heart not only of the social but also the political life of the Nagas in modern Naga society. Every town dweller traces back his or her identity to his or her village through male descent. If every urban Naga dweller is a member of a village then it is correct to say that every Naga is still controlled by the Village Council and its customary practices. Village membership is at the heart of Naga identity, especially in defining 'Naga' as a nation or a community. It is gendered as it operates in a patrilineal line because women forfeit the membership of their fathers' villages and acquire a membership of their husbands' villages the day they get married. The Village Council

is powerful because every member irrespective of whether he is in the village or in a town is customarily, emotionally and socio-politically linked to the village he belongs to. During the State Legislature elections, in a situation where two candidates decide to stand for elections, the Village Council can endorse one candidate and advise the other candidate to step down. An elderly Ao Naga man who spoke several times in public forums against the 33 per cent reservation for women said in an interview:

Even the male candidates, wherever they may be, are within the ambit of the Village Council; then why not women? Even if an Ao Naga is a NRI or a citizen of America, he will get his plot of land when the distribution of land is done by the clan.

The existing superimposed polity of the Naga Village Council did not have a clear social and political demarcation between the rural and urban divide during the protests in 2017. The social imagination of a village community for the Nagas is way beyond the village gates. Administratively, Naga people are unable to differentiate between the power of the Village Council and perhaps its indirect infringement of the power over urban jurisdictions. During the protest over the ULB elections, threats of ostracizing women from their villages or communities flooded daily papers in Nagaland. The intended women candidates were threatened by banishment from their villages if they contested the elections. The question, then, is whether urban areas are completely detachable from villages in modern Naga society. Banishment or being ostracized from the village means shame and dishonour in the context of the Nagas. In Ao Naga dialect, *Jendoker* means being ostracized from the society/community/village or *Jendokba* which means shame and dishonour. This significance is derived from the Naga traditional society's notion of utter shame when one's membership or citizenship is taken away as part of punitive action under customary law. A retired Naga government officer said:

It's very simple; in one case where a woman refused to withdraw her decision to file her nomination, we just had to tell the Village

Council of her husband's village that one of your citizen or the citizen's wife is going against the law of the land. The Village Council told the husband to control his wife after which her nomination was withdrawn.

The hegemonic patriarch's diktats have already resulted in very poor implementation of the 25 per cent reservation for women in the management committees of village development boards (VDBs) under the Nagaland Village and Area Councils Act (1978).<sup>6</sup> People are not even aware of the existence of this policy, which raises a question about whether the government's policy and enactment guarantees the participation of women. The cultural and customary inclusion of women's participation needs to be parallel to the social policy of the state, without which this policy may backfire or remain on paper. In terms of the administrative apparatus, there may not be a direct infringement of the Village Councils by the administrative jurisdiction of the town/municipal councils, but one can say that the Village Council's authority is not limited by its physical geography. The quasi-jurisprudence of the village is still equally pervasive over its members who are citizens of towns and cities. A Naga man, a senior citizen of Mokokchung town commented:

An Ao Naga woman cannot become a member of the Putu Menden (Ao Naga Village Council)<sup>7</sup> ...A woman is not allowed irrespective of her education or achievements.

Similarly, in the history of the traditional Sumi Naga society, it is a norm that the *akukua* (chief of a village) has to be a man. The social structures of Naga tribes are by and large dominated by men. The carryover of traditional Naga customs in modern Naga society is one of the important factors influencing Naga women's political future now. It is believed that traditional Naga women need protection. The enactment of laws for women to access government and the state's resources, perhaps overlooked historical, cultural and structural constraints, which will be discussed in detail throughout the paper. These overarching structures and subtle social dynamics embedded in

the interpretations of customs and traditions prevent women's entry into formal politics. In contemporary times in Nagaland, the political identity of a Naga woman does not correspond with Naga customs and traditions. The interpretation of Article 371A by the Naga tribal Hoho is in complete contradiction to gender justice. The claim of incompatibility between 33 per cent reservation for women in politics and Article 371A has become a landmark discourse on law, governance and gender justice.

There is an absence of political imagery that a Naga woman can identify with, which could be an alternative image to a naturalized image of a Naga woman as primarily responsible for domestic roles – a mother, wife and daughter whose space is relegated to her home or nurturing and peace-making roles in civil society. This raises an important question about whether these stereotypical images of women or the popular view of Naga women as incompetent political beings, decision makers and incapable of being protectors is only held by the Naga tribal apex bodies, or do the Naga women themselves carry such images about themselves. Such perceptions are not limited to men but internalized by Naga women themselves. One young Naga woman candidate from Dimapur said:

I am apolitical as a woman and as a person, but I am contesting because people are proposing my name because my husband could not contest this time due to the reservation roster.

The gender identity of a Naga woman as a 'woman' and the professional identity of a Naga woman as a 'politician or policymaker' seem to be two separate incompatible identities in modern Naga society. There is a need for a new political identity for Naga women to counter these stereotypical identities based on gender.



## DOES CULTURE MATTER IN RESISTANCE AND VIOLENCE?

This paper focusses on culture and politics, and the encounter of the two within the frame of patriarchy. Some important questions that the paper addresses are: Is resistance to women's reservation shrouded in the appropriation of Naga culture? Are sustained underpinnings manifesting themselves in different forms of protests against women's visibility in politics? The politics of protests highlights the gendered cultural rhetoric and exclusionary practices of the hegemonic political life of the Naga people. It is worth exploring the ethnography of culture from the vantage point of the Nagas and seeing how culture matters in modern politics. Like other cultures, Naga culture too has different meanings and expressions, whether it be Sumi Nagas, *Konyak* Nagas or Ao Nagas. For example, in the traditional political institution of the Ao Naga tribe, Ao women were never allowed to be a part of a *Putu Mendng*, and this restriction carries on till today. Each Naga tribe has different cultural praxis which give them a unique character in the national identity of the Nagas and so even within the category 'Naga', each Naga tribe may contextualize Article 371A from its own reference point. What kept these different Naga tribes together during the protests was the burning issue of Article 371A, which evoked a sense of nationhood among many. Nagas collectively arrived at the point that Naga society was and is a patriarchal society, and this character needed to be maintained in modern Naga society as well.

The violent protests and the deaths of two young Naga men shows the extent to which Naga men can go to protect their 'customs and culture'. The two young Naga men were defined as martyrs, as they were thought to have sacrificed their lives for safeguarding Article 371A and their customs and traditions.

Women are not just daughters, mothers and wives but they also carry national or community customs and values. The image of a Naga woman like the image of a woman in other South Asian societies is frozen in a traditional society as an emblematic symbol of customs and

traditions. The idea of women being present in governance is missing today. An elderly Naga man in an interview at Mokokchung said:

We do not disrespect our women. Angami Naga women may not have a better status when it comes to the position of women, but Ao men and Sema men treat their women right; 33 per cent reservation sounds high but we have to understand that women should be well equipped to enter policymaking and be able to understand the cultural differences in our society. Educated women like you are not entering politics but just mere housewives are. Women who are not capable or educated enough will represent Naga society with this reservation system. Justice done to one tribe may not be justice for another tribe in Naga society. Do you think Naga women who were never a part of Naga political councils will be able to balance these differences in Naga society and make good policies for everyone?

Preliminary observations suggest that Naga men perceive themselves or men in general to be better politicians, a naturalization of the role attached to the Naga masculine identity. These perceptions can lead to full-fledged arguments. Naga women transcending boundaries from their ascribed private sphere to the political sphere is intolerable for Naga society because the very essence of Naga culture and customs is established in patriarchy. Declaring their femininity and a gendered interpretation of culture, history and nation has placed oppressive strictures on Naga women. Naga women are seen as a repository of Naga cultural heritage and customs. Gender disparities in political representation in Nagaland are not confined to the violence over the issue of women's reservation in the ULB elections in 2017, because patriarchy can be seen in everyday occurrences through characterization and stereotyping of gender roles in the state. Naga society has a long history of sustained unequal distribution of material resources and political power between men and women which has persisted and permeated politics leading to a dichotomy of masculinity

and femininity. In a group discussion with one women's organization, the president of the organization said:

This issue is not even about our credentials but about 'me' being a woman or 'us' being women. Almost every Naga woman is literate and many are highly educated but if an educated woman stands for elections, she will not get a vote because she is a woman. But if a man, even if he is 'pagala' (mentally unsound) stands and speaks, more weightage is given to him because he is a man. It is as blatant. It all boils down to 'being a woman'.

Clearly men were given more weightage and value for political roles in traditional Naga society as they are in modern Naga society. Naga women have been trying to influence the government and the state from outside electoral channels. It will not be inaccurate to say that educated Naga women have already acquired competent political skills. Naga women are almost at par with men in advanced degrees and this negates the notion that women's marginalization in political leadership is due to poorer performance or lesser qualifications. Nagaland has a high female literacy rate and is faced with the irony of fierce resistance in terms of women's political representation. While women are very active in the economic sector and in entrepreneurship, this is not leading to an increase in their political power or their visibility in formal politics. The criteria for accessing formal politics is clearly not a woman's educational credentials or her professional skills and experience but is based on her gender identity. The Joint Action Committee on Women's Rights (JACWR)<sup>8</sup> in Nagaland which was formed to act as a pressure group on the ruling government and moving ahead with the reservation for women was charged with being hasty and confronting Naga customs. There was a negative portrayal of Naga women who were leading the movement as well as of women candidates. They were accused of forcefully trying to gain entry into politics and power, a political game monopolized by Naga men but an opportunistic play for Naga women. It is imperative to understand that in Naga society the standards set 'to speak politics,'

and 'to do politics' are equated with 'being a man.' Men being the norm in politics can represent both men and women but women neither represent themselves nor men on political platforms. More than half a century after attaining statehood and a standard yardstick for 'politics' is still 'being a man' in Nagaland. The belief that women are weaker physically, less mobile and not decisive is not yet a thing of the past but exists even now in Naga society. A retired Naga advocate in Mokokchung said:

After the emergence of modern democratic processes, only one woman, Rona Shaiza<sup>9</sup> became a Member of Parliament who contested in free competition and was selected without any dispute. Naga customs are not against free elections but against reservations. If Naga society wants to exercise equality then why discriminate against women? The right is there and we allow that right but why reservations within that right? For example, if my wife wants to contest then I will not allow her because Naga society is a patriarchal society and women are disadvantaged physically and financially.

The impasse on 33 per cent reservation for Naga women in ULBs revolves around the thinking that women belong to the domain of their 'homes.' The radical departure of Naga women from their nurturing world to the materialistic and competitive world represents an unconventional role for Naga women. Implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women will clearly be a manifestation of Naga men's fear of social disharmony, an infringement of the masculine political space and a violation of private and public boundaries. An advisor to a tribal Hoho, an elderly Naga man said:

In some tribes, women are even supposed to sit in a certain posture and have a certain demeanour. Political reservations are threatening our customs and culture. The introduction of such an alien culture to our land will lead to divorces. We don't ask for reservations in the kitchen, so why are women asking for reservations in politics?

The nurturing Naga women appropriated by Naga customs and culture provide stability to the community. While the state and the church are two important institutions in modern Naga society that maintain social order, the institution of family or home is assured of its stability by Naga women and their unwavering role in this private sphere. The private sphere is relegated to women and the cultural representation of a feminine identity is that of being shy, fearful, immobile and unfit for politics. These is the stereotypical and culturally coded behaviour of feminity. Decision making in the political life of the Naga community is influenced by gendered relations of power. Naga men and women have different expectations of their roles both in the private and public spheres. A woman maintains social order in the society she lives in by acting out the roles given to her by the culture of Naga society.

## **PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES**

The impasse on 33 per cent reservation for women is one among many factors that led to the protests at the time of the ULB elections. Absence of women's imagery as politicians or policymakers is not just limited to the ULB elections but also extends to State Assembly elections, as evident in the political history of Nagaland. Although a handful of women have contested<sup>10</sup> the State Assembly since its statehood, the first and only woman till now who successfully contested and got elected was Lt. Rano Shaiza in 1977. The binary between 'nurturing'/ domestic women and politics and the 'incompatibility' between the two deters Naga women from entering formal politics. This binary is imprecise because although Naga women intervene in the public sphere, they only have access to soft politics as negotiators and peace makers like through mothers' organizations and not as policymakers. Naga women have been making efforts to push the boundaries of their informal political space towards formal representation. Five women in

a total of 227 candidates stood for elections in Nagaland in the 2018, elections which is just 2.56 per cent of the total number of candidates. The results of the individual performance of women candidates in the state Legislative Assembly elections in Nagaland in 2018 reflect the minds of the voters and their preference for Naga women politicians. Wedieu-u Ronu of NPEP party secured 483 of the 26,921 total valid votes and Rekha Rose Dukru, an independent candidate got 338 votes of the 15,199 total valid votes (Election Commission of India-State Election 2018 to the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland).<sup>11</sup> Although seen as miserable attempts, these were attempts at pushing the boundaries towards women's representation in formal politics. There has been a spill-over effect of the absence of Naga women in the political imagery in traditional Naga society. An understanding of men as a political subject and women as being apolitical explains the stereotypes of political behaviour in Naga society. An alternative image of a Naga woman that not only refuses to accept a subordinate position but also resists the politics of masculinity is required in modern Naga society. The defeat of a visible face and a personality like Chubalemla Ao was talked about by a few respondents to validate their arguments about the position of Naga women in formal politics:

Chubalemla was one of the most capable educated Naga women and many hoped that she would win. She is also from a political family. If women like her who have education, money and power do not win, how will we win without reservations?

Like Rano Shazia is remembered as an iconic 'vanguard' of Naga women's politics, Chubalemla despite her failures is remembered as an empowered woman, a powerful personality whose failed attempt brought to light the entrenched gender binary in Naga politics. Chubalemla Ao, a Padma Shree recipient in 1981 for her work in the field of social work, contested the State Assembly elections in 2003 against S.C. Jamir, and got only 928 votes against her opponent who won with 8,714 votes.<sup>12</sup> More interesting than this failure is the small number of votes Naga women candidates get in the

elections. It is interesting to see how Naga women themselves do not vote for other women candidates. However, this may not be a simple question of whether Naga women want to or do not want to vote for women candidates, as the explanation may lie in how Naga women's preferences for political parties are also dictated by a narrow patriarchal family model. In an ideal Naga family, it is the father or the eldest male who usually gets to decide which political party and candidate the family will vote for. This practice coupled with a proxy voting system, although accepted as a usual normative practice in Naga society, drastically impacts the voting numbers and the votes that Naga women candidates get.

### **THEIR VOICES: WOMEN CANDIDATES SPEAK IN ANONYMITY**

This section gives a voice to the women candidates who either intended to contest or officially filed their nominations and withdrew their candidature for the ULB elections in 2017. It talks of the experiences and struggles of not only the women candidates who were my respondents for this paper but of all the Naga women who have and are attempting to push the boundaries that they have been given. These voices are a collage of voices and experiences captured from the field. The narrator is not the author but the women candidates in the field.

'None of us actually officially filed any nominations because the day we all were ready to go and file our nominations, there was a huge protest in front of the DC's office called by the Naga Hoho over the death of two Naga youth who had died during the protests to safeguard Article 371A. There was a large number of men outside the office so we did not go. There was no formal nomination in Mokokchung district but this does not mean that there were no women candidates who were ready to contest. There were women who wanted to contest but they were threatened over the phone and through other informal

channels even before they filed their nominations. Men stood near some nomination centres “*khuri loi kena*” (with a beating stick), who did not allow them to file their nominations. The political party I was working for asked me and a few of my other friends to get ready for elections, while the ward authority told me not to. All the women were informed not to come out of their houses, but I could not stay at home. I went to my friend’s house because the ward authority was searching for me. From my friend’s place, I was supposed to go to the office to file my nomination. But later on, the party told us not to file our nominations because the public was not accepting women candidates and was rejecting their nominations. So, we never filed our nominations. We were quite a few women who wanted to file our nominations. In Dimapur we could file our nominations, but after we did, our tribal organization called us for a meeting; and we were made to sign an agreement that we will withdraw our nominations. I didn’t withdraw but one of my friends had to leave her house and hide, because she had received some telephonic threats to withdraw her nomination. Like a few others, she was not ready to give up. Initially, she had her husband’s support but later he changed his mind. She finally withdrew her nomination because of immense pressure from her family. We all visited her and comforted her. We visited her because she was depressed. Others were not allowed to come out of their houses, it was like being under house arrest. In Dimapur it was different, a woman candidate feared a mob attack because there were threats that they would vandalize her house if she did not withdraw her nomination. We feared the men protesting against reservations because we heard that they had vandalized women candidates’ houses in some other districts.’

‘Many women candidates opined that Article 371A was not related to 33 per cent reservation for women. The men did not have any problem with free and fair elections or nominations but they had a problem with reservations for women. The question is, whether women enter politics through free elections or through reservations, if our presence in politics is violating Article 371A, then either way



it will be violated. How come only reservations are seen as violating our customs and traditions? This issue is not free from political instigation. The government and political parties were initially with us but there was so much public resistance that the then Chief Minister of Nagaland had to step down as a result of the protests. With reservation or without, I am ready to contest if elections take place. Women should be in policymaking.'

## HIERARCHY AND POLITICAL INACTION

The voices of women candidates reflect the negative stereotypes about women's capabilities and fierce resistance against Naga women's entry into formal politics. Unlike other districts in Nagaland where official nominations were filed, there was no formal nomination filed in Mokokchung, but the very intentions of the women candidates wanting to contest for the ULB elections created a wave of resistance in the town. The response of the Nagas baffled administrators, researchers and activists. Premised on their struggles, trauma, depression and their collective experiences during the period of the protests, a collective emotional bond was formed between the different cohorts of women candidates. However, a wider collective inter-subjectivity among the Naga women as political beings was lacking. One of the Naga women leaders in one women's organization said:

I am hesitant to say this because this is a fight for all Naga women, but not all women are cooperating. The organization needs the support of the masses, especially women, 'hoilebi a mi maiki khan ekjun ke underestimate kure ki kuribo' (but we women underestimate one another, what to do?) There is a division of ideas and frictions among 'us' women. We are not united. Had the NMA or JACWR<sup>13</sup> organized mass protests demanding reservations, then we would have joined.

There was no direct communication between the various women's organizations and women candidates or between JACWR and women candidates. JACWR which represented the larger Naga women's identity maintained that the 33 per cent reservation for women in ULBs did not infringe Article 371A vis-a-vis the customary law, because municipal councils deal with town and urban development and do not infringe the power vested with the Village Council. This stand invited threats and intimidation, resulting in the tribal apex bodies' direction to women's tribal bodies to cut off ties with the parent bodies, the NMA and JACWR. Rosemary Dzuwichu, chief adviser of NMA said:

Women from different tribes who were part of the Naga Mothers Association, started receiving threats asking them to either dissociate from the Joint Action Committee on Women's Reservation (JACWR), a conglomeration of several women's rights organizations, including NMA and Watsu Mungdang)<sup>14</sup> or stop being citizens of their tribes. These were all married women, living in a society like ours where family and tribe play an important role. With all this in mind, and the assurance from the government that it will hold elections, we decided to dissolve JACWR and withdraw the petition.<sup>15</sup>

The threat to Naga women that they would be expelled from the community's citizenship if they joined JACWR was a strategic move to prevent a Naga women's movement on a massive scale. This move was taken to dismantle NMA's hold over both the collective consciousness and the structures of various women's organizations in Nagaland. Using threats of ostracism from their tribal communities and villages, the possibility of a communication link between Naga women leaders and the masses was strategically dismantled. Hence, a massive Naga women's movement demanding political rights and reservations was successfully and prematurely aborted. When asked why none of the Naga women were seen on the streets during the protest except as volunteers, a middle aged man, a Naga entrepreneur responded:

Why would they come out? For what work would they come out? Women volunteers were there for the state bandh which was

organized to protest against women's reservation, because Article 371A is not only for Naga men but also for Naga women. It is the duty of Naga women also to safeguard Article 371A.

The huge disjoint in the relationship between gender inequalities and an 'egalitarian Naga society' is evident in the inconsistent narratives of Naga men. The strategies of cultural appropriation constructed by the Nagas are facilitated and enforced by apex Naga tribal organizations. A Naga man, an advisor to one of the tribal councils asked:

Why 33 per cent reservation in municipal bodies when we do not have such reservation in jobs like railways or other public-sector bodies? Why are we jumping reservation suddenly to municipal councils which are related to policymaking? In other parts of India, maybe it is needed because women do not have access to education but Naga women are literate and they do not need reservation.

The various arguments against 33 per cent reservation for women highlight the convenient functioning of patriarchy, followed by political inaction and dearth of political commitment. Although there is no written law on the hierarchy, there is a tacit cultural understanding that all Naga women/mothers' organizations will function below the apex tribal bodies which are dominated by men. A member of a tribal Hoho said:

So long as a women's organization does not impact or affect the working of the apex body, we regard its autonomous status. Any decision in conflict with customary practices of the tribe or the community needs the consent of the apex tribal council, be it a Naga students' body, youth or women's organization.

The relation between Naga tribal Hohos and women/mothers' organizations is one of subordination. Although it seems that there is a direct power tussle between the men's apex organization and the women's organizations, an un-layering of this reveals that a direct confrontational power tussle is not possible because the

vertical hierarchy between the two is very clear. Power tussle on an unequal plane places hegemonic power with the Naga men's apex tribal body over and above women's organizations. This is evident in the negotiations and bargaining strategies used by the women's organizations who are conceding to the men's position amicably. Naga men who firmly stood for nominations for selecting Naga women representatives instead of elections are of the view that Naga women should not contest and fight men. The nomination process is proposed through the tribal apex body or the Naga Mothers Association in consultation with the Deputy Commissioner. Naga women in general hold the view that the nomination process is being imposed on them because being nominated gives them no voting rights. They believe that nominations will give them no voice even if they are nominated. Women's groups are divided in their political stand about nominations as an option over elections. In a discussion with a group of women's organizations, the president of an organization said:

Kiman kotha koi le bi (no matter how much we talk), we go back home, and to take any decision without our husbands is not possible. For a Naga woman to tell her husband to keep quiet on the decision she has taken is unthinkable. Men are men. There is no written rule that women's organizations are under the apex body since all women's organizations are autonomous; but in actual fact, we do function under the apex body which is dominated by men. So, we are bargaining with them for nominations with voting rights, portfolios and all other facilities that are available. This is just our current negotiation as far as our organization is concerned, but we cannot say that it is the same with other women's organizations in Nagaland.

Gender hierarchy in politics is an internalized truth for Naga women, which is a pattern similar to political patterns in other South Asian countries. Naga customs and traditions have historically upheld such traditional symbols and ideologies, but what is more interesting now is how most of the Naga women's organizations may be reproducing these images even in their political negotiations and

bargaining. The way Naga women at the grassroots level envision their empowerment may not necessarily be in line with feminist discourses. Naga feminists and JACWR have a few highly educated and empowered Naga women who take a different stand on the method of nominating Naga women as representatives. The state government had a series of discussions and dialogues with the various stakeholders such as JACWR and offered them nominations with voting rights. But the women's groups refused to accept nominations and insisted on elections as per the provisions of Article 243T of the Constitution. The different bargaining strategies were not only seen in the negotiations of these different Naga women's organizations but were also evident in their political activism. In Dimapur, when a state bandh was called against women's reservations what confused activists and researchers was seeing a few Naga women in traditional attire enforcing the bandh. A difficult empirical enquiry here is, who were these women? and who were they representing? A member of a women's organization who was present as a volunteer on the day of state bandh said:

The apex tribal body called the state bandh, representatives and volunteers in Naga traditional attire were asked to be present on the day from all organizations including women's organizations. We went because penalty was imposed every day on those organizations who did not send volunteers. Most Naga women present that day were compelled to be present for the bandh, organized by the tribal body to protest against women's reservation in the Municipal Act (2001).

Women's visibility in the protest against women's reservation in Dimapur and an absence of a women's movement for reservation for women around the ULB elections in 2017, suggest that we cannot use blanket statements like all Naga women are for reservations and all Naga men are against women's reservation. A few tribal bodies prohibited their members to have an opinion on the issue and certainly a few men who were for reservations were not upfront about their position. Naga women who were for reservations resented the silence stating that 'no say' is equal to anti-reservation. Naga women

raising their voice against 33 per cent reservation for women was an eventuality following the death of two young Naga men on January 31, 2017 on the eve of the scheduled date of elections. There was a paradigm shift and the discourse became complex with different mothers' organizations from various tribes condemning the state. Prior to this event, the state and women's organizations were on the same page, but this event created a rift. This incident made many women change their views and perceptions about 33 per cent reservation for women and the ULB elections. Women's voices for reservations were very less and disproportionate to a very high percentage of educated women who were against reservations or were quiet on the issue. The mass political inaction of Naga women has reduced their opportunities of accessing the formal political space both in the past as well as in the present.

### **WHY RESERVING A SEAT MAY NOT BE ENOUGH**

Political affiliations, party loyalty and the opposition's stand had already been decided around the time the state government decided to go ahead with the Municipal and Town Council Act (2001). After an exhausting search for amicable resolutions, the state was directed to proceed with the ULB elections, incorporating 33 per cent reservation for women. The notification to conduct the ULB elections with 33 per cent reservation for women led to violent protests in which two young Naga men died, which led to the then Chief Minister T. R. Zeliang stepping down in February 2017. It is pertinent to note that the violent protests and resistance around Article 371A and anti-women reservations were not free from narrow partisan politics. Since the proposed method for the implementation of 33 per cent reservation for women is based on a roster system, male candidates who were planning to contest on some seats were suddenly displaced.

In the wards reserved for women candidates as per the roster system, men candidates from those wards were automatically disqualified from filing their nominations. These Naga male candidates who were prepared to contest the elections had to wait for the next elections, while a few endorsed their wives or female relatives as candidates. One Naga woman candidate, an established entrepreneur recalled:

I did not withdraw my nomination like my other friends had to because I had full support of our people. We had all resources to contest the elections. My husband was supposed to contest but with the reservation for women, my family and relatives proposed my name because of my education and family background. I supported the same party as my husband. We are not saying that we will snatch a man's rights but we will be by his side to give him women's insights.

The role of the family, the family's network and class position in society needs to be examined while analysing the political participation of women in any society. The influential networks of the family can create a political space for women; but if the family's identity takes over the gender identity, the key reason for a wife's entry into formal politics is perhaps for continuing and enhancing the power of her husband's family network. Such a representation fulfils all the criteria and the seat is occupied by a woman, but the question about whether this is just symbolism for empowerment and gender justice remains. In such cases, the women representatives may retain their passive dependent identities and represent their families or husbands rather than representing truly empowered women. Whether having a seat in a ULB or any political platform for a Naga woman is enough to guarantee gender justice is still questionable. If women's political empowerment is aligned with men's vested interests, politics will still remain a man's prerogative. A way out for the Nagas is complex, but an excerpt issued by the Department of Municipal Affairs, Government of Nagaland reflects the state's low threshold for gender justice and further enhancement of Naga men's monopoly of political power:

Article 243-T being mainly aimed for empowering scheduled castes and scheduled tribe women, Nagaland is not exempted. Nagaland State does not fall under sixth schedule or scheduled areas where the Act is exempted. To go for election now without 33 per cent women reservation is not permissible under the constitution. If the people do not want municipalities and towns councils in the State, it is possible. Since the women group have submitted withdrawal Petition from the Supreme Court, the people can decide whether to have municipalities and town councils in the State of Nagaland or not. The Government is of the view that even after the case is withdrawn, India being a free nation, any person, lawyer or woman activist, not necessarily a Naga woman, may file again a similar petition. In that event, it will be back to square one. If the State Government and all the stakeholders cannot arrive at an amicable resolution of this issue at the earliest, the best option appears to be to seek exemption of Nagaland from Part-IXA of the Constitution, which contains a mandatory provision under Article 243T for 33 per cent women reservation in ULBs, which will put to rest the issue and avoid further misunderstanding among the people. (Issued by the Department of Municipal Affairs, Government of Nagaland).<sup>16</sup>

A myopic way forward by the state government is stopping the agitations and violence over attaining gender justice, a step which will further encourage the sustained gender disparities in Naga society. In the government's short-sightedness, women remain the best exception. For the Nagas, to seek an exemption from the mandatory provision of 33 percent reservation for women is the same as stating that, it is neither mandatory nor vital for Naga women to be in politics; thus the State can exempt this provision exceptionally for the state of Nagaland. This seeking of an 'exceptional state' is appealed to the state by Naga men on behalf of all the Naga women, which indicates that Naga men can represent Naga women but Naga women cannot represent Naga men. For Nagaland to seek exemptions from a mandatory provision under Article 243T for women's reservation in ULBs is like putting gender justice back in its grave. The state has forgotten that conflict



resolution is not only about attainment of peace but is the attainment of justice.

## CONCLUSION

In South Asia and in a country like India, where the people have different cultures, traditions and customs, one of the major challenges for the state and the Constitution is adequately implementing gender equality at par with other provisions. Gender as a category is not constructed without the identity of the people, whether it be ethnic, culture, caste or tribe identity. This paper discussed gender politics in Nagaland to understand women's subjectivities and the confrontational negotiations which may be paving the way for new subjectivities amidst resistance in modern Naga society. Narratives from the field showed multiple self-contradictory and inconsistent arguments on Article 371A and 33 per cent reservation for women. The rationale for the resistance to land taxation seems clearer as compared to the inconsistent arguments on 33 per cent reservation for women and the violation of Article 371A of the Constitution.

The Nagaland Municipal and Town Council Act (2001) does not consider the history of town formations which is directly linked to the problem of Naga customary laws on land, taxation and gender identity. A pertinent point of analysis in this paper brings out the way in which 33 per cent reservation for women in the ULB elections became a site for Naga men's political warfare over Naga customs, land, taxation and women's political rights. Mapping the symbolic site of the contentions that emerged were the narratives of emancipation by a few Naga women clashing with narratives of a subordinate female imagery of Naga women in general. Major divergent narratives around Naga women's identity include: a) one that envisages justice and women without borders. b) women's identity with stricter traditional borders. This has allowed scholars to take a fresh look at many

important questions on Article 371A vis-à-vis the provisions on gender equality as enshrined in the Constitution of India. There is a need to shift away from the traditional idea of women's position as nurturers to a new idea of their entering politics in relation to the functions of state and citizenship. This transition of polar political cultures may un-domesticate politics for Naga women and replace it with a broader idea of citizenship and citizens' political rights.

## NOTES

1. The state of Nagaland is inhabited by 16 major and other minor tribes of the Nagas on the Eastern Himalayan borderland of Northeast India.
2. The NMA experience draws attention to women's role as peace negotiators and provides a gender perspective on peace and conflict-resolution. Women as peace negotiators belong to a category in which women leaders take the initiative for conflict resolution but are not always supported. Such women are often seen as agents of either the state or the militants, and sometimes attempts are made to silence them. NMA is one such group (Chenoy, 2002: 139).
3. *Important events pertaining to elections to ULBS* (Issued by the Department of Municipal Affairs, Government of Nagaland), *The Morung Express*, 9 February, 2017.
4. Naga Hoho is the apex organization and under its umbrella function different tribal organizations namely: the Angami Public Organization (formed in 1972), Ao Senden (in 1980), Chakesang Public Organization (in 1979), Lotha Hoho (in 1978), Sumi Hoho (in 1979) and the Konyak Union (in 1980) ( Kanato and Avitol, 2018).
5. These cases did not apply in Dimapur because history of land acquisition and the land system in Dimapur is different, so the hold of the Village Council over Dimapur is different as compared to Kohima, Zunheboto and Mokokchung districts. However, a detailed discussion of land system in Dimapur is outside the scope of this paper.

6. Kanato G. Chophy and Avitoli G Zhimo. Naga Tribal Councils; A Formidable Political Force, *Economic and Political weekly*, August 2018.
7. The traditional Ao Village Council which is still functional today is called *Putu Menden* and its council members do not contest but are nominated from each clan for a period of 30 years. The post of the chief of the council is not hereditary but the chief is elected by its members.
8. JACWR represents Naga women from all the Naga tribes.
9. Lt. Rano M. Shaiza was and still is the only woman MP from Nagaland. In 1977 she was elected to the Lok Sabha during the Janata Dal era.
10. Nagaland had two women candidates in the State Assembly elections in 1969: Ravole and R.L. Kinghen. Twelve more have contested in Assembly elections over 53 years with four women being the highest to contest in 2008 (*A right step in Right Direction, Moa Jamir, Morung Express, August 14, 2016*).
11. Chakravarty, Ipsita, 2018, February 24. 'Why does Nagaland rank last on national list of women candidates contesting elections?' Scroll.in. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/869804/why-does-nagaland-rank-last-on-national-list-of-women-candidates-contesting-elections>. Accessed on May 16, 2018.
12. Elections.IN: India's First Elections Website, 2014, April 9, 2014. 'Sitting and previous MLAs from Aonglenden Assembly Constituency'. Retrieved from [www.elections.in/nagaland/assembly-constituencies/aonglenden.html](http://www.elections.in/nagaland/assembly-constituencies/aonglenden.html). Accessed on November 27, 2018.
13. Joint Action Committee on Women Rights (JACWR) represented Naga women from all the Naga tribes.
14. Watsu Mundung is an all Ao women's organization. Every Ao woman, both married and unmarried is a member of watsu Mungdang. Watsu Mungdang is independent of the Naga Mothers' Association.
15. Cited from [www.livemint.com](http://www.livemint.com) on the march of Naga women. Despite a high female literacy rate and an active women's rights movement, the struggle for political empowerment in Nagaland is only just beginning, Nov 03 2017, Ashwaq Massodi. (<https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/URkzhfycsCGFTHYBD1yBcK/March-of-the-Naga-women.html>), accessed on 12 November 2019.
16. *Important events pertaining to elections to ULBS* (Issued by the Department of Municipal Affairs, Government of Nagaland), *The Morung Express*, 9 February, 2017.

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- (iii) The Nagaland Extraordinary gazette, October 18, 2001.
- (iv) The Nagaland Municipal (First Amendment) Act, 2006 (ACT No.4 of 2006), Urban Development Department (Municipal Administration Cell), Nagaland, Kohima.
- (v) Government of Nagaland Home Department: Home Branch, Notification in pursuance of Nagaland Municipal Act 2006. No. MAC/HOME-9/2006, Dated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2007.
- (vi) Government of Nagaland Urban Development Department (Municipal Administration Cell) Notification No. TC/HOME-36/76 (PL-III).
- (vii) Government of Nagaland Office of Commission Nagaland: Kohima, Notification No. CND-7/8/23 (1), Dated 9<sup>th</sup> January 2004.