

# **The Angami Naga Society: Continuity and Change**

*Medonuo Pienyu\**

## **Abstract**

*Human society has never remained static. It is constantly changing; but the ideas, values, traditional practices are enduring. Using the observation and interview as methodological tools, the present article is an attempt to understand this interface among the Angami Naga Society particularly focusing on their social organisations and their women. It examines the traditional practices and culture of the Angami society to see whether there have been any changes in their traditional practices. It also explains the rationale behind the change and continuity among the Angami society. Changes are observed in their social organisation, status and position of women. Nevertheless, it is also observed that the direction of social change is linear in the sense the traditional values and culture is still continuing especially for women. There is tradition and modern interface in the Angami Naga Society.*

## **Introduction**

There have been several discussions on how to look at the concept of continuity and change. Some view continuity and change on the basis of comparisons between the past and the present or evaluate change over time using the ideas of progress and decline. Continuity and Change signify tradition and modernity. Tradition and modernity are expressions of values that seek to explain the process of social and cultural transformation at different stages of development. Every society has a tradition, and the traditional societies refer to a specific historical phase of social and cultural development. Modernity is an expression of contemporary behaviour, values that are new and fresh and the way of doing things.

In the fast changing modern world, it becomes difficult to analyse the relevance between tradition and modernity due to the fact that every person faces contradiction between traditional culture and modern values. The present society faces hurdles in integrating the two together. It would be wrong to conclude that practices of the past are bad, and that modern life styles are better. Both have their manifest and latent functions. For instance, the usage of computer and cell phones at present has replaced the work done in the past with pen and paper. The political structure, the economy, the way of life, food habits, dress, etc., have changed tremendously. Urbanization and industrialization not only brought about development, but also land, water and air pollution. In the past, socializing and meeting people was physical, there was more closeness and community feeling; at present, most of the interaction is done through the websites and cell phones. The personality development of an individual and his/her cultural growth are affected because of less interaction with friends and families. People are more into the virtual world than the real world. Thus, on the basis of the above discussion it is imperative to understand the importance of traditional values and modern spirit. Accordingly, the present paper looks at the concept of traditional values and modern spirit among the Angami Nagas of Nagaland.

The Angamis, known as *Tenyimia*, are the fourth largest Naga tribe inhabiting the present Kohima District and parts of Dimapur District. The term *Tenyimia* is derived from the Angami word *Tuonyimia* which means 'swift walker'. The Angamis are identified by their geographical location into four groups: namely, the Northern, Southern, Western and Chakroma groups. The groups living in Kohima and the villages surrounding it are known as the Northern Angami; those living in the west are called the Western Angami; those living in the south are the Southern Angami; and those who have established themselves in the plains and slopes along the national highway, from Kohima to Medziphema and around Dimapur, are known as the Chakroma group. The Angamis are of Tibeto-Burman origin and their spoken language *Tenyidie* is written in the Roman script. *Tenyidie* language teaching was first introduced by C.D King in 1884. Later in 1988, *Tenyidie* was recognized by North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) Shillong, to be introduced in the pre-university level. Nagaland University introduced

*Tenyidie* in 1997 till post-graduate level. Kohima college was the first among other colleges to introduced *Tenyidie* at pre-university and degree level (Liezietsu, 2009).

### **Continuity and Change**

To understand the process of continuity and change in the Angami society we need information on the village and its organisation; family; status of women, property, succession and inheritance; marriage and divorce; birth and death; religion; status of women, politico-judicial administration and economy from different historical period.

### **Village and Its Organisation**

The Angami villages are divided into *Khels* (*Thinuo*) on clan lines which are clustered together and surrounded by fields outside the residential areas. *Khel* is a definite area with clear boundary where the villagers live together. *Thinuo* is an Angami term that refers to *Khel*. Clans form the backbone of the Angami village social structure. Clan members are linked with all the socio-economic activities such as administration and marriage ceremonies in the village (Lohe, 2011). Each *Khel* is surrounded by walls and gates known as *Kharu* (Angami village gate), representing the territory of a particular clan, *Chienuo* (Clan in Angami), that consists of at least two segments or moieties such as *Tepo* and *Teva* (the two moieties who were brothers according to Southern Angami legends). Each of the moieties performs different rituals for the well-being of the village and, therefore, the presence of both the sections of the moieties was considered essential in the village (Sanyu, 1996). Within the village, a clan was an autonomous unit named after an apical ancestor. They framed and execute laws or rules in the form of *Gennas* known as *Kenyü* and *Penyie* for health, wealth and progress of the individual or the community (Lohe, 2011; Roy, 2004). The word *Genna* is used in the Assamese lingua franca of the Naga Hills Districts to refer to restrictions and taboos. *Kenyü* and *Penyie* are the Angami term. *Kenyü* refers to restrictions applied to the individual. *Penyie* refer to taboos (forbidden) applied to the community.

Prior to the colonial rule, the Angami political structure was a sort of sovereign state with no village chief. There were fixed rules and regulations even for war or head hunting between villages, and law-breakers of such rules and regulations were punished (Lohe, 2011; Das, 1994). Though there were several raids and wars for territorial gains, for security reasons and to secure power and prestige over other villages (Roy, 2004) there also existed good inter-village trade relations in the form of barter. The most prominent feature of the Angami villages was the function of *Morung* known as *Kichuki* and *Tehuba* controlled by the *Khel* to impart formal education to both boys and girls. *Morung* is the name given by ethnologists and anthropologists to Naga dormitories. The Angamis used the term *Kichuki* for the female and *Tehuba* for the male dormitories. Usually, girls were members of the morung before their marriage and learnt about their culture, traditional practices such as cultivation, trade skills, skills of warfare, etc. (Lohe, 2011; Roy, 2004). Today, the school and the Church have replaced the traditional learning process.

### **Family**

The Angami social organisation is patrilineal, patrilocal and patriarchal. The married woman leaves her natal home and reside in her husband's house and the children trace their lineage, descent and surname from the father's line. Because of the patriarchal structure, usually the birth of the male child is welcomed by special feasts and celebrations. Although the birth of a female child is welcome, the family wants a son. This is one of the reasons for large families. Even at present many families want a male child though they have two or more daughters. The reason for favouring the male child could be that women are considered as other's property or someone else's property after marriage, and it is the man who will continue the family lineage and take care of the family and clan property (Field Data, 2013).

Family planning, birth control measures, modern ideology and official policies of a small nuclear family have not yet reached the Angami communities due to lack of awareness and the unwillingness of the communities to accept family planning. They were not in favour of birth control measures. Though generally the Angamis prefer nuclear family there are also traces of joint family system. Joint family existed

particularly when the parents were ill, or when there were family related problems. In the past, the family took the responsibility to nurture and mould their children into respected and committed persons according to the accepted norms and values of the tribe, teaching them honesty, respect to elders, and compassion to the sick and needy, obedience, politeness, competitive spirit and social prohibition (Roy, 2004; Lanunungsang and Oving, 2012). Today, the role of family to teach the younger ones has shifted to educational and religious institutions.

### **Status of Women**

In the traditional society, women were confined to the four walls of the house. They were not allowed to mix freely with the outsiders. In the Angami culture, no women were allowed in the decision making process or chosen as an elder or chief. Women were excluded even from the meetings meant to select the chief or leaders. The customary law goes against female property rights. The traditional system of division of labour still continued based on sex and age among the family members (Personal Interview, 2009). Women perform household chores, field work, child-rearing and food gathering, while hunting, warfare, administration, trade and business, cutting firewood, and clearing the jungles were men's work.

Today, there is not much division of labour between the male and female. Both perform each others' work. One can see women cutting the firewood and men engaged in child rearing and vice versa. Though there were no written laws or set of patterns the *Tsana* (the way of the ancestors) were passed on through words and actions. However, there are certain works assigned only for man and woman, which are strictly followed even today. For instance, women cannot go for hunting and men are hardly seen doing household work. A man is looked down upon if he interferes in the domestic affairs and household activity. The assigned roles from their society are still the same. The assigned role as *Liedepfü* (the first reaper), *Tsakro* (the first sower) and *Tekhusekhrüpfü* (the first planter) are only performed by women. Similarly, the headman or *Goanbura* are assigned to men.

Today, the educational status shows that the Angamis have been able to gain access to education. In fact, an earlier study showed that two thirds of the graduates and post-graduates in the southern Angami area were women; but two thirds of the jobs in the administration went to men whom the customary and the patriarchal ethos considers as bread-winners (Fernandes and Barbora, 2002). The study also presents that equal access is provided in education to both boys and girls; but boys are encouraged to go on to the professional level. A reason given for this form of discrimination is that the customary law stipulates that the husband be better educated than the wife (Personal Interview, 2013).

There were certain taboos (*Genna*) on women in the past; this might seem to be discriminatory to the modern interpreter; but traditionally taboos acted as protection to women from defilement in performing sacred rituals for the family, community and village. Some of the taboos that are strongly in practice are seen during the *Sekrenyi* or *Phousanyi* festival (a festival or celebration for the male community at the beginning of the sowing season); it is a taboo for a woman to have sexual contact with men during this festival which is meant for invoking the blessings of the spirits for a bountiful harvest. Similar to this festival is the festival of *Khoupfhiinyi* or *Theyu-ukhuka* or *Liekhwenyi* (a festival or celebration for the female community towards the end of the planting and harvesting of some of their crops such as millet). During this festival the *Genna* is observed in ritual cleansing by the act of cooking and eating from a different hearth away from the male members (Roy, 2004). Due to the impact of modern development such as the spread of education, globalisation and urbanization, and of Christianity certain taboos observed by women have been reduced or made less strict. These are a) the mother and the newly born child being kept at home for at least nine days; women touching certain weapons, tools and musical instrument; not eating the meat of animals killed by wild beasts and even the flesh of monkeys and other tree-living animals excluding birds. This last practice was due to the belief that it would lead to shortage of food in the family (Roy, 2004). The observance of these taboos are left to the individual/family preferences.

When it comes to decision making in the family, the woman still retains her subordinate position despite her qualification and well salaried job. In marriage, women are given the freedom to choose their

life partner; but still she cannot take the final decision. She is expected to maintain certain social norms within and outside the family. Certain norms are laid down for their behaviour after marriage, and free mixing with others is still looked down upon by their communities. In religious matters, she retains her role by participating in every activity; but there is a bias regarding her selection to become a priest, pastor or deacon. In the political sphere, the democratic principles provide her the freedom to participate; but she is hardly appointed as a leader and even if she is appointed, it is after a hard struggle. Therefore, in such a context the present society has not enhanced her status; in fact, the influence of customary law is still very strong in this regard.

### **Property: Succession and Inheritance**

In the Angami tradition, the clan owns the land and the right to inheritance and the line of descent are considered a male prerogative. Women can use their ancestral land for agriculture but do not inherit it. The right of inheritance allows the Angami men to trace their ancestors up to fourteen generations; however, they keep trace of their mother's lineages only up to four generation (Hutton, 1921). The Angami Customary law bars women from inheriting ancestral land and property; but there is no bar on a widow or a divorcee purchasing land for oneself. However, the Angami traditional law gives rights to the individual owners to use their land according to their wish, to sell, mortgage, rent it to others, or give it to their daughters during marriage or upon the parents' death. These are referred to as *Pozephü* land (Das, 1994). *Pozephü* land is the land bequeathed to the Angami daughters during marriage or upon parents' death. It is the land owned by the parents and not the ancestral land. This practice is followed by Viswema and Kedima of the Southern Angami villages. *Siephru* (ancestral property like land, house etc of the Angami's) can be owned only by the male child. In the absence of the male child, the ancestral property is handed over to the immediate male relatives. The possession of such ancestral property by the next of kin is called *Kayie* (refers to the ancestral property *i.e.*, *Siephruo* handed over to the next kin (male) in the absence of male child in the family) (Kelhou, 1988). This is observed even today.

## **Marriage and Divorce**

In the past, marriage was an important phase of life for the Angami societies and the rituals associated with marriage differed from village to village, built on the taboos associated with women on the concept of their 'purity, chastity and innocence'. Observation of such taboos was rigid and closely monitored. In the Angami tradition, marriage takes place with the consent of both the man and the woman. The *Morung* play a significant role for the boys and the girls to choose their partners for marriage. In the past, a man or the husband was applauded and highly respected with honour if he had many wives or had extra marital affairs (Kelhou, 1988). If a man had illicit relations to indicate his male prowess, he wore a loin cloth decorated with four lines of cowries. But such practices were not allowed in the case of Angami women. They were expected to be pure so as to safeguard the integrity of the community as a whole (Roy, 2004).

Traditionally, a woman could marry only once and it was a taboo for her to keep long hair before marriage. Unmarried women were seen as unlawful and abnormal; and so, women were compelled to get married whether they liked it or not. Shaving the heads of the Angami girl child was associated with the concept of purity as growing hair by unmarried women was considered as *Kemetho Tha* (Meaningless life) (Roy, 2004). The only way to grow long hair was to get married. That shows the importance of the institution of marriage among the Angamis. Such practices are no more prevalent today. Women are allowed to choose their partners with the final decision taken by the father or the clan man. At marriage women is gifted with clothes, ornaments, a basket, paddy, cattle and even agricultural land mainly by her mother, but such practice is not binding. Usually, Angami marriages were monogamous. There were two kinds of marriages: ceremonial and non-ceremonial. The ceremonial marriage was performed according to the rituals and was highly respected. The non-ceremonial marriage was performed without any ceremonies. Both the type of marriages were accepted and socially approved though ceremonial marriage has greater respect and honour than the non-ceremonial marriage. Among the Angamis, the practice of trial and cousin marriages existed, but polygamy was not allowed and sororate marriage was forbidden (Hutton, 1921). Today, the Church law



has replaced the traditional marriage system. But there are non-Christians who follow the traditional way.

The Angami traditions allow widow remarriage though these were rarely practised and not appreciated by the community. Widows could get married to any men and had the freedom to select their mates except under certain conditions. For instance, in the case of the Angami, her (widow) mate should not be the deceased (husband's) eldest brother; but it could be the youngest brother. This was possible only if the deceased family gave their approval (Hutton, 1921). The same rules are relevant today.

The practice of *Kekhawa* (divorce) was rare in the past and widow remarriage was allowed if the separated couples could reunite after having been divorced for several years with no marriage rituals. The punishment for divorce was biased against women. If divorce was due to the husband's infidelity, the property was equally distributed between the husband and wife. But if divorce was due to the wife's infidelity, punishment was severe wherein the wife had to leave the husband's house with only a skirt and a shawl (Zehol, 1998; Kelhou, 1988). Such practices are hardly heard of at present. After divorce, the father takes the responsibility for the children; and if the mother insisted on keeping the children, then the sons would go to the father and the daughters to their mother. The divorce rules are still operating today. If a woman wishes to remain single, she has the right to build her own house and cultivate a part of her ancestral field to maintain herself; none of the male members can claim it. At her death, she disposes of it according to her wish. Usually her brothers, their children or those who look after her become the heirs (Das, 1993; Kekhrieseno, 2002).

### **Birth and Death**

The birth of a child was a significant event in the Angami communities. There were no discrimination or *Gennas* associated with the birth of a child. Usually the birth of a male child was celebrated by killing a cock, and a hen for the female child. However, the rituals connected with the birth of a boy child and a girl child differed from one tribal group to another. For instance, among the Angamis, women, after giving birth, stay at home for nine days (Hutton, 1921). Such birth rituals

are strictly followed by non-Christians today. For others, the rules have become flexible. Today, the birth of a girl child is welcomed; however, many families still wish to have a boy child (Field Data, 2011).

In the past, the Angamis believed that death was an unfriendly act of *Terhuomia* (spirit) and was the end of everything; and so it was deeply mourned by the family, relatives and friends. In the words of Hutton (1921), for the Angami's, death was "the abhorrent end of everything" (p. 229). The death of a person is highly mourned and honoured if the deceased was a respectful person. If the deceased had been tarnished with bad reputation or misconduct, the bereaved family, even the whole community to whom the ill reputed had belonged to, was blamed. Such belief continues even today.

Among the Angamis, the body of the deceased was usually buried in the family or clan land with their ornaments, dress or the image or effigy of the dead, made of wood. Certain *Genna* (taboo) were associated with the death and burial of the deceased.

The burial ceremony among the Angamis depended on the nature of death. If death was unnatural such as being killed in war, by wild animals, suicide, dying in childbirth, etc., they were buried outside the precincts of the village so as to avoid misfortune or bad luck to the entire village (Hutton, 1921; Vitso, 2003). In case of normal death, the dead body was washed by a child of the same sex and then the body was wrapped in his own (the dead) clothes to be buried in the country yard. Rituals of death were performed by observing taboos for five to ten days among the Angamis (Hutton, 1921). Usually on the fourth day of the burial, the Angami family members come together and eat the cooked flesh of the cock, marking the end of the long death ceremonies (Roy, 2004). The Angamis did not believe in life after death. The one aspect of life after death that worries them was the unnatural death of the young, especially the 'headless ones' (heads lost to head hunting practices); the Angamis believed that the headless ones would not get to the abode of *Kepenuopfü* (The Divine) and so "unnatural death was all more lamented and mourned" (Roy, 2004, p. 61). Even after their conversion to Christianity many families still follow the traditional death rituals (Personal Interview, 2012).

## **Religion**

The traditional path of faith was the belief in animism (*Pfüstana* - Tradition of the elders), *i.e.*, belief in the spirits. Their divine being (*Kepenuopfü*) was considered as the creator and protector of the universe. Two spirits, the benevolent and the malevolent, were responsible for guarding and protecting them from natural calamities and misfortunes. It was believed that the malevolent spirit was dangerous and would cause destruction to all human affairs (Personal Interview, 2010). So, in order to avoid such distresses, countless sacrifices were made. Usually, a priest (*Zievo*) who specialized in performing sacrifices conducted the rituals (D'Souza, Kekhrieseno and Nokhwenu, 2002; Lohe, 2011).

The concept of *Gennas* (restrictions or taboos) associated with festivals, crops, diseases and seasonal changes were strictly observed by the communities. Certain days of the year were set aside to observe such rituals wherein the communities restrained themselves from doing normal works in the field. Such practices are still in vogue today due to the belief that disrespecting it would lead to unnatural death, diseases, and deformities like dumbness and blindness (Lohe, 2011; Roy, 2004).

Christianity among the Angami society has stopped many of these rituals; however, the societies still have a strong belief in *Penyie* and *Kenyü* related to agriculture even today. Christians follow the agricultural calendar announced by the traditional religious leaders. Christian prayers and rituals are performed on the day of *Penyie*. Some of its rituals are performed by women (Singh, 1994). The *Sekrenyi* festivals of the Angami tribes are examples of traditional rituals functioning along with Christian doctrines (Field Data, 2011). This shows that traditional religion and *gennas* functions together with Christian religion. In the Church too, women are allowed to perform some functions in the religious ministry. Thus, their customs have changed with their Christianization; but they retain their patriarchal ethos.

## **Politico-Juridical Administration**

The village was the centre of traditional Angami political organizations. Historically, the administration of justice in the villages

was the responsibility of the priest known as *Zievo*. Assisted by a council of elders, he framed secular and as well as religious laws. The traditional assemblies of the people can be found to be existing even today, where the elder male members participate, share, and express their grievances in the presence of everyone. Maintaining peace and harmony in the village depended on the proper functioning of the administration of justice.

After the introduction of *Goanbura* and *Dobashi system*, the judicial power from the village priests was transferred to the *Goanbura*. The British introduced the *Goanbura* system. *Goanbura* are non-governmental agents and *Dobashi* are interpreter cum political agents in the village. Though the *Dobashis* receives regular salaries, the *Goanburas* have much power and prestige in the village. Christianity also caused changes in the functioning of the *Zievo* (village priests) regarding religious matters. Many Christians rejected the traditional religion and subsequently two societies emerged: those with Christian doctrines and those with *Pfũtsana* doctrines. However, customary laws and practices are still in use even among the Christians, which integrated the traditional practices of the *Pfũtsana* with that of the Christian doctrines.

Today, the Angami villages are headed by the village chairman, who is the head of the Village Council and organizes the affairs of the village. The Village Council is the apex body of the village administration. This further promoted the democratic values of voting and electing the right representative from among themselves to carry out the executive and judicial functions of the village. Today, the highest authority in the village is the village council (Personal Interview, 2010). Though many changes in the village organization have taken place, the traditional customary law still plays an important role in the village. In a study on the Angami society, it mentions that such practices still find relevance in the life of the Angamis (Kelhou, 1988). The introduction of Village Welfare Forum, Women Society, Students Union, Youth Society and Village Development Board (VDB) further changed the functions of the Angami villages and their social structure. The various social organisations present in the villages contribute in maintaining social harmony of the various communities (Lohe, 2011; Das, 1994). Many villagers have entered the fields of politics and they engage in socio-

political activities of the mainstream India. Notable among them is the formation of the Angami Public Organisation (APO) in 1972.

### **Economy**

The main economic resources of the Angamis were land, forest and water. Land was an important asset for the communities not only in terms of cultivation but also for high status and prestige. A person was looked upon with high respect if he was the owner of big lands. Therefore, in the past, families, big or small, rich or poor had to own land, either as individual property or as clan/ community land. Land is divided into: i) village lands or community land, i.e., a portion of it is set apart for public and forest use under the control of the village council and land located at a distance is meant for economic activities (Nongkynrih, 2007 cited in Fernandes and Barbora, 2008); ii) clan land used only by the clan members, iii) individual, i.e., inherited or acquired land that is privately owned and can be sold (Saikia, 1987). Most of the land belonged to the communities and so, there was demarcation between virgin forestland and cultivable agricultural land. The virgin forestlands were reserved for the village and it was prohibited to cultivate in the forestland. The cultivable land was divided into: wet terrace field, dry terrace field, *jhum* land, agro-forestry and kitchen garden (Lohe, 2011).

Terrace cultivation continues to be the dominant and most preferred form of the land use among the Angamis. In the past, agriculture was the main occupation of the communities. Rice, maize, millet, chilly, cotton, banana, plum, pineapple, etc., were their main crops. Other practices besides cultivation were black smithy, local drinks, weaving, pottery, basketry, carving and woodwork, musical instruments, hunting, fishing, domestication of animals and salt making (Hutton, 1921). The village priests, along with the communities, performed all the rituals associated with agriculture in the communities. Some of the Angami rituals are: *Sekrenyi* or *Sekrenyi* or *Phousanyi* (purification of the body), *Kreghaghi* (reaping the harvest); *Kinoghe* (sacrificing an animal), *Terhiinyi* (completion of the agricultural year), *Gnonyi* (beginning of agricultural operation) and *Pichepeli* (feeding the priests for their blessings) (Hutton, 1921).

In the Angami culture, involvement of women was limited to household work and agriculture within the limits of the patriarchal ethos. Women were free to decide on agricultural practices but men took precedence in the selling of agricultural produce and appropriating the money it brought. Women assisted men in trade and business; but their role was confined mostly to entertaining guests and to being good hosts (Personal Interview, 2010). Agriculture was the soul of Angami life. Even during wartime, women and children worked in the fields. From a very young age, both boys and girls were trained to work in the field as a *Peli* (peer-group) as practiced by the Angamis. The *Peli* system is the most remarkable feature of the Angami culture and a unique feature of their agrarian life. It was a group activity, where each *Peli* worked in the fields in rotation giving ample opportunities for its members to mingle with each other. It helped them to identify themselves with their peer groups and provided freedom for the youth to socialize in a manner approved by their society (Roy, 2004). Even today, the *Peli* in Angami continues to play a significant role both in agricultural operation and for socialising.

Prior to the colonial rule, the village had a subsistence economy characterized by the barter system. The barter system has given way to the monetary system as trade practices in the region developed. A sort of currency made of iron and conch shell was the principal method of trade with the neighbouring people. For instance, one cone shell was equal to the worth of a cow. Iron hoe bought from Manipur was used as a currency (Hutton, 1921). However, with the colonial rule and introduction of modern education, the barter system was replaced by the monetary system. During the Second World War, the Japanese currency was in circulation for a few months, which was replaced by the British currency when the Japanese withdrew from the Indian frontiers (Hutton, 1921; Lohe, 2011). The first salaried persons were the *Dobashis* (interpreter-cum-political agents) and *Chowkidars* (gate keeper). At present, the restrictions regarding the exchange and selling of the ancestral land in the Angami villages have forced many families to encourage their children to seek government job than to engage in agricultural activities. The early government interventions to implement developmental plans in the village without creating awareness among the

people had upset the traditional village system (Fernandes, Medonuo Pienyü, *et.al.*, 2011).

### **The Rationale: Continuity and Change**

It is now apparent that the colonial intervention, introduction of modern education, mechanization of agriculture and modernization of tools and instruments of work resulted in the gradual decline in the use of handicrafts, which poses a serious threat to the Angami village economy. The old technique of agriculture changed, and machines replaced labour intensified agricultural practices. As time passed, more and more people started looking for government jobs. The encounter with the outsiders had undoubtedly changed their attitude towards commercializing the agricultural products.

The family life also changed. The traditional role of imparting education to the children had been formalised with the introduction of schools and modern education. The tribal religion “Animism” began to diminish in most of the village except in some families where it is still practised. Various tribal rituals such as observing certain taboos, marriage rituals, agricultural rituals has been altered with the arrival of Christianity. Christian marriages became prominent and the rituals associated with traditional Angami marriage are no longer practiced by the Christians. The role of the priest changed from administrative functions to religious functions. *Taboos* or *Gennas* associated with birth and death are hardly observed.

The village economy that depends on the barter exchange is now producing goods from agricultural products. Trading and marketing economy developed. Another important practice of the Angami is weaving, which is done by women. Domestication of animals, fowl, fishing, black smithy, basketry, woodcarvings are some of the important commercial practices among the Angamis. The forest, agricultural land and water remain as the main source of livelihood. The Angami communities, along with the Village Development Board (VDB), are promoting the practice of tree and bamboo plantation and horticulture. Earlier, fruits were meant for self-consumption and flower plantation was almost absent; now most of the communities are planting fruit trees and flowers plants for economic returns. Important trees such as bamboo,

teak, cane and alder trees are planted. The practice of tree plantation can be seen even at present. Thus, the Angami societies witnessed a shift in the village social, religious, political and economic life. However, this shift or alteration is external while the culture, the tradition, the mindset which are internal to the community has not changed much.

The study conducted on the Angami society reveals that, the people were not in favour of improved seeds, fertilizers, and better implements due to the believe in cultivating crops naturally without the use of any chemicals and fertilizers (Field Data, 2009-2014). Besides, the socio-cultural features like land right conflicts, and customary law of the region act as impediments in the march to development. There is lack of support from the communities on any development project initiated by the government on their community-owned land. Most of the land belongs to the communities and their members were not willing to give their land for any development project initiated by the Government (Field Data, 2011). The Angami women also show their willingness to learn technical skills, but within their own region. The idea of moving out from their hometown to learn technical skills was not favored. This indicates the internalization of their pre-destined role as women. They have stronger commitment towards marriage and family and therefore, unlike men, they make the 'choice' not to acquire skills to maximize their wage earning capacity; rather their labour is utilized more effectively within the family.

## **Conclusion**

Today's civil/modern society is experiencing the impact of globalisation that is peppered with elements of westernization, urbanization and technological advancement. This has a wide range impact on traditional societies and cultural practices. But for the 'indigenous' or the 'local' to survive, it is desirable to achieve or initiate a dialogue between the traditional values and modern spirit. Modernity requires locating itself within the local to survive and then to thrive, thus requiring a period of transition that would allow it to settle in a complete break from the old traditions is perhaps never on the cards. Socio-cultural developments take time and are never homogeneous allowing such elements of continuity. The present Angami society stands at the cross roads of traditional and modern culture locked in a negotiation. The



traditional practices like head hunting, shaven head, food taboos, gennas on birth, death, marriage, etc., are no longer prominent today. But many other traditional values are still relevant in modern Angami society such as simplicity, honesty, hospitality that can co-exist with modernity. Modernity implies rationality, liberal spirit and plurality of opinion, autonomy, secular ethics and respect for the private world of the individual. Such modern values are contradictory to the traditional rituals and practices involving the community at large and its customary rules. The Angami societies, in their attempt to manage a fruitful bargain out of the negotiations, seem to still resist radical changes. Thus, the direction that such social change has taken from tradition to modernity in the Angami society seems to be in a linear form. What is required perhaps is to introspect using tools of modernity in order to strengthen the traditional and enable the local to survive the global. This may be in 'hybrid' forms or in forms of 'invented traditions', whichever suits the respective purposes. The rich culture of the past preserved in music, dance, handicrafts, food, dress and festivals can be used for this purpose. A careful enquiry into the structure and working of the major social institutions such as family, religious and educational centres can possibly play an important part to blend the traditional values and modern spirit among the Angami society.

### References

- D'Souza, A., Kekhrieseno, C. and Nokhwenu, V. (2002). *Status of Women in North-East India: A Comparative Study of Three Ethnic Groups in North-East India, Aka, Angami and Dimasa*. Nagaland: St. Joseph's College, Jakhama.
- Das, N.K. (1993). *Kinship Politics and Law in Naga Society*. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India.
- Das, N.K. (1994). Naga Angami. In Singh K.S (Gen. Ed) N.K. Das and C.L. Imchen (eds.). *People of India-Nagaland*. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India & Seagull Books. pp. 10-75.

- Fernandes, W. and Barbora, S. (2002). *Modernization and Women Status in North Eastern: A Comparative Study of Six Tribes*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre.
- Fernandes, W. and Barbora, S. (2008). *Land, People And Politics: Contest Over Tribal Land In North East India*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre.
- Fernandes, W. and Pienyü, M. *et.al.* (2011). *Development-Induced Displacement and Deprivation in Nagaland 1947-2008 and in Sikkim 1975-2008: A Quantitative and Qualitative Database on Its Extent and Impact*. A project organised by North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati in collaboration with St. Joseph's College, Jakhama, Nagaland and Salesian College, Sonada, Darjeeling; Sponsored by ICSSR, New Delhi.
- Hutton, J.H. (1921). *The Angami Nagas*. London: Macmillan & Co. Reprinted 1969. Bombay: Oxford University Press.
- Kekhrieseno, C. (2002). Customary Laws and Women's Development in Nagaland. In C. Joshua Thomas and Gurudas Das (ed.). *Dimensions of Development in Nagaland*. New Delhi: Regency Publication. pp. 137-146.
- Kelhou. (1998). Women in Angami Society. In Lucy Zehol (ed.). *Women in Naga Society*. New Delhi: Regency Publishers. pp. 55-61.
- Lanunungsang, A and Ovung, A. 2013. *Nagaland the Land of Festivals*. Dimapur, Nagaland: Heritage Publishing House.
- Liezietsu, S. (2009). Ura Academy and the Evolution of Tenyidie. In Kedilezo Kikhi, *et.al* (eds.). *Angami Society at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House. pp. 1-10.
- Lohe, K. (2011). *Naga Village: A Sociological Study*. Guwahati: Eastern Book House Publishers.

- Roy, A.C. (2004). *Women in Transition: Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*. Kohima: ACLS Offset Press.
- Saikia, J. (1987). Land Relations in Nagaland. In B. B. Dutta and M. N. Karna (eds.). *Land Relation in Northeast India*. New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House. pp. 202-207.
- Sanyu, V. (1996). *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Tradition Village Formation*. New Delhi: Common Publishers.
- Singh, K.S (ed.). (1994). *People of India: Nagaland*. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India.
- Vitso, A. (2003). *The Customary Law and Women*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Zehol, L. (1998). *Women in Naga Society*. New Delhi: Regency Publishers.

\***Medonuo Pienyu** is the Head of Department of Sociology, St. Joseph's College, Jakhama, Kohima, Nagaland.