

PEACE STUDIES PAPER 06

**ROLE OF WOMEN AS PEACE BUILDERS WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAGALAND**

Triveni Goswami

Peace Studies
Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change
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Guwahati, Assam, India

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**Introduction
Anuradha Dutta
Professor, Peace Studies**

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INTRODUCTION

In Northeast India, where violence has become a part of the day-to-day life, women in general have played a constructive role. Yet, women on the frontline of efforts to end -- violence and secure just peace, seldom record their experiences, activities and insights. Each woman has a story which is inspiring, teaching lessons of values, integrity and compassion. They have often acted as the bridge between civil society and the group involved in the conflict.

Nagaland's history abounds with fights, inter-tribe and inter-group clashes. In this conflict-ridden society, Pukherila, ambassador of peace has been a unique institution in itself. Pukherila is a Naga woman who gets married to a Naga man from another village. Entrusted with a lot of responsibilities, these ambassadors can move freely in times of conflict and disagreement and it is their duty to remove the wounded and dead from the battlefields. There are a number of stories about how these Pukherilas tried to prevent conflicts between villages from the very beginning by physically trying to stop both the groups from fighting with each other. In this light, Triveni Goswami, a young research scholar, tries to bring out the stories of a few Naga women who have braved all odds in the contemporary world to fight for peace. In this study, the researcher adopts a qualitative method whereby she attempts to give space to the group of people who have been working behind the scenes. This can be termed 'feminist research' which is for women by women'. Peace here has been used as a 'positive concept' which indicates an environment where women have control over their lives. The scholar infact tries to establish the fact that women do not have to be economically independent to have control over themselves. The study covers three units of Nagaland. Each unit reflects findings about women's contribution to rebuild their communities. The scholar tries to show how with the help of self-help groups, they have been able to strengthen their position with

meaningful work. Women in these units have organised Action Committees to mediate conflicts that take place between communities. Such approaches are indeed very helpful in the development of a culture of peace.

It has been found that in one unit of the study units, Vidima in Dimapur district, there are Action Groups composed of three males and three females to mediate disputes. These local institutions are transparent and very helpful for the peace process. The women's groups cover a number of activities under peace efforts like economic reconstruction, empowerment of civil society, power sharing etc. In her discussion with the Secretary of the Women's Society of Vidima, the researcher realized that women groups were very much concerned about positive peace in the society. They believe that once there is development, there will be peace. In the course of her work she found many women who emphasised on peace education. Some of the case studies reveal that women identify themselves with peace. They believe that women must have the dignity and ability to initiate joint efforts to combat all evils.

This has been a very interesting study as women involved in the study though not highly qualified, are organized in groups in different units of Nagaland. The scholar very successfully brings out how women being engaged in different economic activities like agriculture and handicrafts emerge as reservoirs of social capital. Gender discrimination squanders trust, hinders family relations, and more importantly, restricts social network. Once women manage to consolidate the resolution process, they make efforts to involve everyone in the society in the ongoing process. When women are confined to their homes, at the community level social capital is not built. This process proves how women at the grassroots have come out of the boundaries of their homes and have successfully formed social capital and in the process have contributed to 'positive peace'.

Anuradha Dutta
Professor, Peace Studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The year long journey traversing through a myriad landscape of vibrant culture and people brought me to an understanding of an existent reality. This journey was made possible with the invaluable help of several people.

I am grateful to Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD) for granting me the fellowship to conduct the research. The Director, OKDISCD, Professor A.N.S Ahmed, the faculty members of the Institute and my colleagues have always been very encouraging and helpful. The discussions that I have had with them have helped me immensely in crystallizing my thoughts. I am particularly indebted to Professor Anuradha Dutta, my supervisor, who has always been a source of inspiration for me, and who, through her valuable insight, has helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the problems inherent in society.

Dr. Chandan Rajkhowa, Director, National Research Centre Mithun, provided me with the logistical support for conducting my study in Nagaland. Dr. Anamika Sharma, Mr. Hitu Choudhry, Mr.R.C.Verma, Mr.S.S.Gadge and the other staff of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, took time out from their busy schedule to assist me in a variety of ways. Mr. Heikiding, Convenor, Union of Cooperative Societies, Jalukie, helped me in my interactions with the respondents at Jalukie. I thank them all. I would also like to thank the Kikon family in Dimapur who gave me invaluable support and made my stay in Nagaland very comfortable.

I am thankful to the librarians of the various Institutes for allowing me access to the materials in their custody.

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Triveni Goswami
Guwahati

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"And there the loom, seeking thread by thread,
reconstructed the flower, raised the feather
to its imperial scarlet, interweaving
blues and saffrons, the skein
of fire and its yellow power,
the lineage of violet lightning,
the lizard's sandy green.
My people's hands on the looms,
poor hands that weave, one by one,
the starry feathers that your
skin lacked, dark-colored Country,
substituting the sky fiber by fiber
so that man may sing his loves
and kindle grain on the gallop!"

--Pablo Neruda, Looms, from Canto General.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of armed conflicts has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last couple of decades. Contemporary conflicts are fast adopting alternative methods of warfare, penetrating into towns, villages and homes of the common people. Armed conflicts denote not only wars but the entire gamut of resistance movements and struggles for self-determination. In many parts of the world, the use of systematic force through insurgency, reduction of democratic space, violations of human rights etc. have resulted in perpetuating fear and insecurity and thereby, fragmenting the emotional fabric of the community.

Living in a region of conflict has its own fallouts. Violence becomes a part and parcel of everyday existence and one almost becomes immune to it. It ceases to hurt or affect, unless one is personally involved in some way. Otherwise, it becomes just another news item- a regular dose of encounters, abductions and murders with the morning cup of tea- mere statistics to be forgotten about. It becomes so much a part of life, that it is seldom questioned.

An upbringing in an armed conflict situation makes one more intuitively aware of one's ethnic identity. The fear and anxiety aroused by the political consciousness in the environment outside, gets enmeshed within the self. Group consciousness impacts upon individual consciousness and the divide between the personal and the political gets blurred.

A growing sense of alienation from the mainstream, coupled with a desire to assert one's own identity drives one to question and focus on 'Ingroup- Outgroup' issues. Life in an armed conflict environment also makes one more aware of the presence of uniformed men in one's life. They are literally everywhere- an overwhelming existence- permeating the entire fabric of society. One often becomes

accustomed to the assaults and intrusions into one's space- both physical and psychical. Movement gets curtailed and one's sense of freedom gets inhibited under the constant gaze of the uniformed presence. In the area of my study, the state of Nagaland, for example, the presence of the men in the uniforms is very evident. Every few kilometres or so, one can locate a set-up of a contingent of the Assam Rifles or the Indian Army. Guardedness permeates through every detail of an individual's life and threads of insecurity and fear weave the tapestry of societal relations.

Peace does not merely imply the absence of war. Instead, it involves the creation of a secure environment by fostering fundamental societal changes focussing on safety and protection, particularly of the most vulnerable segments of a population. In such a scenario, women have been found to play a prominent role in rebuilding conflict-ridden societies and social resources. But while the role of a few organisations or their leaders is usually highlighted, the role of the ordinary woman is unfortunately sidelined. Ironically it is these women in the villages who have to put up a brave front to make ends meet; women who often have to straddle multiple roles, of a mother, a social activist, and a breadwinner in their day to day lives, as they continue to live in a strife torn community.

Apart from their day to day struggle for existence, these women undertake several activities in their efforts to re-build their community. In trying to cope with the fallouts of a conflict, they have to organize themselves to fight against the proliferation of societal evils such as alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, flesh trade and the biggest threat of all, HIV-AIDS.

These Voices are however seldom heard. Often marginalized, they are the peripherals, pushed away from the vestiges of public memory, to be forgotten and unacknowledged. It is these very lives that thread together a community. Whether it be through shared economic activities or taking action against anti social elements, the women are the backbone of their communities.

In recent years women are claiming a new voice in civil society by spearheading both reactionary movements and egalitarian movements for social change. Women community leaders in many parts of the world have shown exemplary courage in facilitating mediation and

reconciliation amongst warring factions, thus laying the foundations of a peace process. In Northern Ireland, for example, women's groups spent a decade building the trust between Protestant and Roman Catholics that served as the foundation for the final agreement. The experience of being marginalized within the societal framework allows the women to work for an inclusive and just society.

In fact, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan has said, that "women are always better equipped than men to present or resolve conflict. For generations, women have served as peace educators in their families and societies." ¹ Recognizing the value of the role played by women in the peace process, the United Nations Security Council adopted a landmark resolution on 31st of October 2000 on Women and Peace and Security, that called for the inclusion of more women in peacekeeping negotiations and peacekeeping forces worldwide, as well as within the U.N. peace-building system. Security Council Resolution 1325 (31 October 2000) on Women and peace and security. SC/Res/1325 calls on all member-states and the UN to include women at the highest levels of decision-making, especially in peace negotiations. 1325 is the first time the Security Council officially endorses the inclusion of women in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements.²

The notion of peace-building has been defined by UNIFEM as "all external efforts to assist countries and regions in their transitions from war to peace, and include all activists and programmes designed to support and strengthen these transitions." According to Mazurana and Mc Kay, ³ "peace-building also includes gender aware and women empowering political, economic and human rights. It involves personal and group accountability and reconciliation processes that contribute to the reduction or prevention of violence. It fosters the ability of women, men, girls, boys in their own culture(s) to promote conditions of non-violence, equality, justice and human rights of all people, to build democratic institutions and to sustain the environment." Peace negotiations can include a plethora of activities, namely,

- a) Power sharing agreements.
- b) Economic Reconstruction.
- c) Demobilization and Reintegration of soldiers.
- d) Legislation on human rights.
- e) Access to land, education and health.
- f) Status of displaced people.

g) Empowerment of civil society.

It is in this context that the women's organizations engage as Civil Society Actors.

Women and Peace-building in the Northeast

The Northeast, with its mosaic of entangled ethnic discontents, provides us with several examples of spontaneous women's initiatives to reduce the impact of conflict, thereby creating spaces for women to give vent to the anger festering within. Women in this region have created several such fields of protest. According to M.B. Kuumba (2003)⁴, symbols and meaning systems that involve gender are often incorporated into the logic of the resistance movements and utilized strategically during the course of a movement. Symbols of mourning and motherhood, for example, are often used by women as strategies of protest. In the Northeast, women's organisations have played an important role in an effort to build peace in the region. Mention may be made of *Matri Manch*, an organization set up to protest against the rape of minors in North Lakhimpur in 1991. The *Anchalik Mahila Sajagata Samiti* and *Chapar Anchalik Mahila Samiti* have played significant roles in mobilizing spontaneous marches of protesting women against army atrocities. The Naga Mothers Association (NMA) was established in 1984, and their peace initiative represents the use of the notion of motherhood for the political mobilization of women. In 1994-95, when army atrocities and violence due to inter-factionalism reached a peak, the NMA launched its campaign 'shed no blood'. They called for a halt to all killings and initiated a dialogue with the state and the underground leaders for a ceasefire. The *Meira Paibies* (Torch Bearers) have created a legend of sorts by spearheading large scale protest movements in Manipur. Initially set up to combat social evils like narcotics and alcohol, they were soon in the forefront of struggles against human rights violations by the security forces. These are just a few examples, but it amply reveals that women in Northeast India have been playing a prominent role in peace building efforts.

II

Nagaland: A Brief History

Nagaland is a narrow strip of mountainous territory bounded by Assam in the west, Arunachal Pradesh in the north and Manipur in the south. It also shares its boundary with Myanmar in the east. It lies between latitudes 26 degree 6 minute and 27 degree 4 minute north of the equator and between longitudes 93 degree 20 minutes and 95 degree 15 minutes east. The capital of Nagaland is Kohima. The state of Nagaland comprises of 11 districts namely, Kohima, Dimapur, Longleng, Zunheboto, Mon, Phek, Wokha, Mokokchung, Tuensang, Peren and Kiphire. There are atleast 36 tribes and sub-tribes in Nagaland, each having its own language belonging to the Tibeto-Burmese of languages.

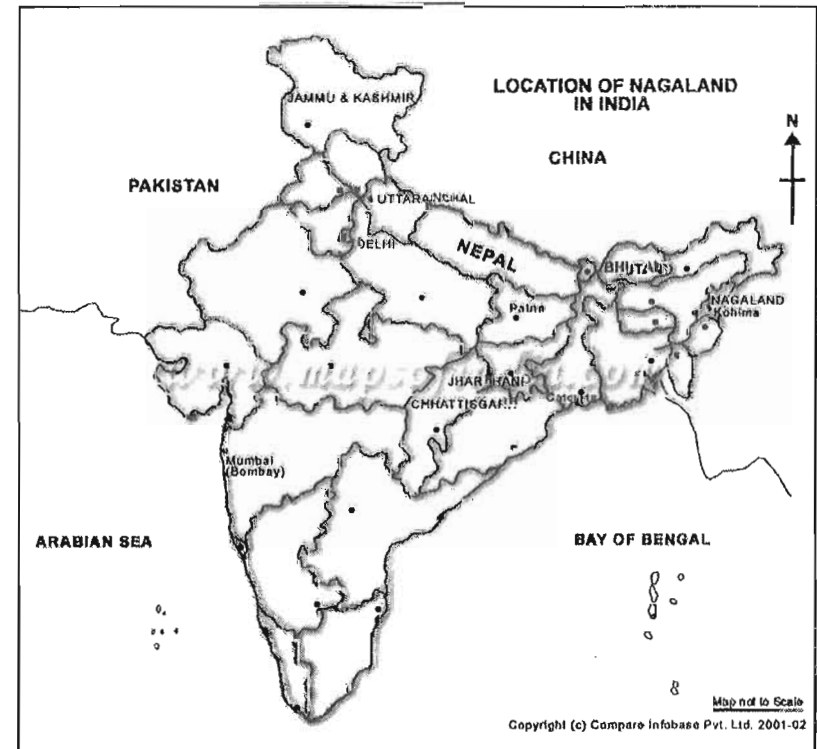
In 1879, the British came and conquered parts of Naga territory and called the area Naga Hills. When the Simon Commission visited Kohima in 1929, the Nagas pressed a demand for independence. Thereafter, according to the Indian Constitution Act of 1935, the Naga Hills was allowed to remain an "Excluded Area". On the 20th of February 1947, the Nagas demanded an Interim Government for a period of 10 years, to be effective prior to the departure of the British. A day before the Indian Union gained independence from the British colonial rule, on the 14th of August 1947, the Naga Nationalist Council (NNC) under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo, declared Independence and cabled this information to the U.N.O. On December 30th 1949, NNC made an announcement for a Sovereign State of Nagaland. On May 16 1951, the NNC arranged for a voluntary plebiscite to determine the unity of the Nagas. The results revealed that 99% were in favour of a sovereign state. On November 15th 1954, the Indian Armed Forces resorted to mass massacre in the "free Naga" territory. The Naga Constitution was approved of on January 14th 1956 and the Naga Federal Government was inaugurated on March 22 of the same year.⁵

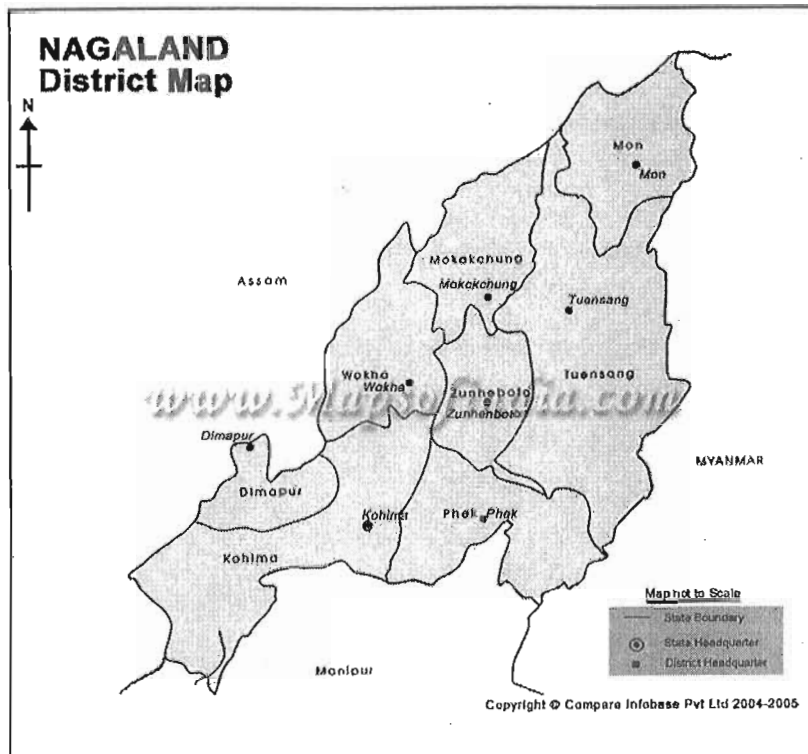
The NNC, by successfully mobilizing the people of Nagaland, enforced a complete boycott of the 1952 General Elections in India. In 1956, the NNC under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo proclaimed the establishment of a government with its own constitution and a Naga Army. In the War of Liberation between the Indian Army and the insurgents that followed subsequently, large numbers of Naga soldiers

perished. In December 1963, Nagaland was conferred status of statehood within the Indian Union. Caught in the clashes between the Indian Government and the NNC, the common people suffered. This had serious fallouts, polarising not only the Naga people but the NNC as well, into moderate and extremist factions. The moderate elements favoured a negotiated settlement. Taking this as an opportunity, in an effort to usher in lasting peace, the Naga Baptist Church took steps to facilitate the formation of a Peace Mission in 1964. The Peace Mission comprised of Jai Prakash Narayan, B.P. Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam, and Reverend Michael Scott. The Mission's recommendations were rejected by NNC and thereafter the Mission was called off.

In 1972, the Government of India outlawed the NNC, Naga Federal Government (NFG) and the Naga Army. The Shillong Accord between the Government of India and representatives of the underground organizations was signed in 1975, which resulted in the laying down of arms by a section of NNC. The Accord was repudiated by both A.Z. Phizo and Muivah. Soon, Muivah parted ways with the NNC and formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). In 1988, there was a further split of the NSCN into the Isak- Muivah and Khaplang factions. The Konyak tribes formed the NSCN-K (Khaplang) under the leadership of Khole Konyak and S.S. Khaplang. The Tangkhul faction, the NSCN-IM was led by Isak Swu and T. Muivah. The rivalry between the two factions continues till date, creating fissures in the peace process in the region.

On February 23rd, 1996, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao offered to hold unconditional talks with the Naga insurgent groups. In June 1996, the United Front forms a Federal Government and Deve Gowda becomes Prime Minister. On November 5th 1996, NSCN (I-M) welcomed Prime Minister Deve Gowda's offer to open peace talks. Following a dispute within the coalition government, Inder Kumar Gujral succeeded Deve Gowda as the Prime Minister and on May 19th 1997, the United Front Government at the centre negotiated a ceasefire with the NSCN-IM camp, which later was also extended to the NSCN-K faction. The five-year-old process of negotiations with the NSCN-IM reached a high point in January 2003 when the leadership of the outfit collectively came to New Delhi for a round of talks. The ceasefire agreement with the Government of India has been renewed for the last couple of years. The latest development in the recent round of negotiations





has been Muivah's agreement to scale down the demand for a sovereign Nagaland to a demand for Nagalim, an integration of the various Naga inhabited areas of India's North Eastern region.

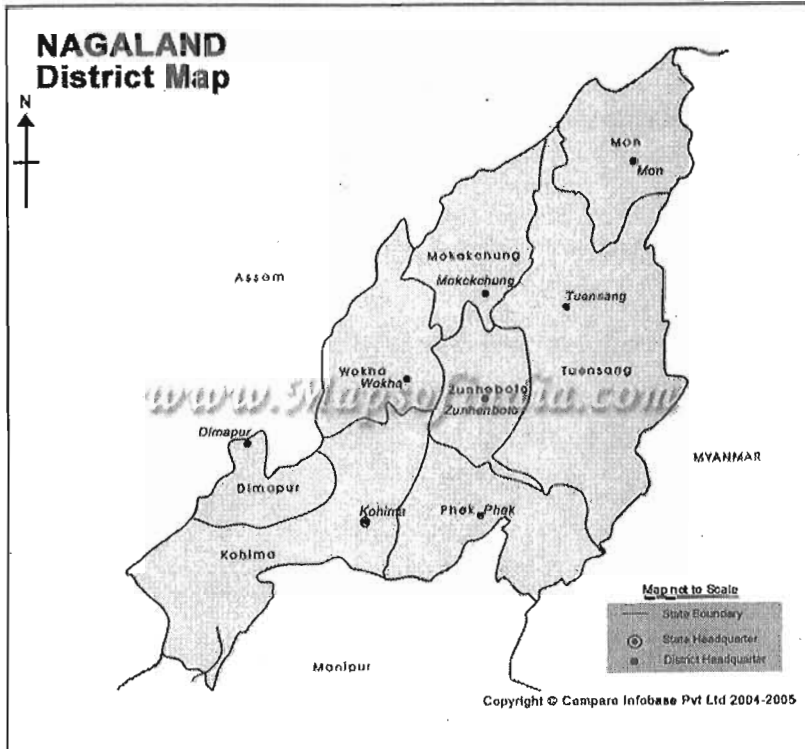
Traditionally, Naga women are known to have played a pivotal role in stopping inter factional violence through the institution of the *Pukhreila*.⁶ The woman who got married with a man of another village was known as a *Pukhreila*. During the era of headhunting as well as wars, the *Pukhreila* were entrusted with the responsibility of removing the wounded and the dead from the battlefield. They were the only persons who could move freely in times of conflict and disagreement, acting as the conciliator between warring factions. They were ensured complete protection while performing their duties and severe punishment would be meted out to anyone who tried to harm them. The *Pukhreila* were held in high esteem and accorded the same respect and privileges during conflicts as well as during peace-times. From time immemorial, they have been accorded the socially sanctioned status of a peacemaker. Carrying on with this tradition, women's associations in Nagaland like the Naga Mothers' Association, Dimapur Naga Women's Ho Ho and others are actively engaged in the peace process.

Review of Literature

A primary review of literature has revealed some significant work done on women as peacemakers. Mention may be made of the following:

* In a paper entitled *Put Women at the Peace Table* (Christian Science Monitor, Nov. 13, 2000), Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina stated that despite the effectiveness of women at the grassroots level, women are largely absent from high-level peace negotiations. For example,

- Only 2 out of 126 delegates to the Arusha peace talks in Burundi are women, although women are seeking peace within their communities there.
- Only 2 women serve on the 15 member National Council of Timorese Resistance in East Timor, although women sparked off that resistance.
- Only 5 women are in leadership positions in the U.N. Mission in



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- c) Only 5 women are in leadership positions in the U.N. Mission in

Kosovo, although women have forged the way for most of the groups that cross ethnic barriers daily to rebuild their communities.

* In the paper *While Men Make War, Women Wage Peace* (2001) by Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa, the authors have cited the following:

- a) In the South of Sudan, women working together in the New Sudan Council of churches conducted their own version of shuttle diplomacy and organized the Wunlit Tribal Summit in February 1999 to bring an end to the hostilities between the Dinka and the Nuer people. As a result, the Wunlit Covenant guaranteed peace between the two communities, who agreed to share rights to water, fishing and grazing land, which had been the key points of disagreements. The covenant also returned prisoners and guaranteed freedom of movement for members of both tribes.
- b) Since 1994, the Pakistan – India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy has worked together on specific initiatives. In 1995, for instance, activists joined forces on behalf of fishers and their children who were languishing in each side’s jails because they had strayed across maritime boundaries. As a result, the adversarial governments released the prisoners and their boats.
- c) Women in Northern Ireland have helped calm the often deadly “marching season” by facilitating mediations between Protestant unionists and Catholic nationalists. Women bring together key members of each community as mediators to calm tensions.
- d) In Columbia, women were so persistent in their demands for information regarding 150 people abducted from a church in 1999 that the army eventually gave them space on a military base for an information and strategy centre.

*In the paper *Local Initiatives for Peace: Community Level Conflict Resolution*, by Murray Thomson, Kenneth Bush and Barbara Shenstone, the authors have cited several examples of initiatives for peace taken up by small communities around the world. They have suggested that local initiatives for peace are context specific, shaped

by social, cultural, political, economic and security factors. In this paper, they have identified three models of local peace initiatives namely,

- a) Initiatives taken entirely within and by the communities themselves.
- b) Initiatives stimulated by outside factors such as aid transfers, but in which the communities are active participants.
- c) Community initiatives largely influenced by national, regional or international organizations.

In conclusion, they suggested that peace couldn’t be imposed; it must be cultivated from within –from the community to the state level and from the state level to the community.

* Rita Manchanda’s book, *We Do More Because We Can: Naga Women in the Peace Process* is a study based on the work of the Naga Mothers’ Association and Naga Women’s Union of Manipur. The study is divided into two sections, the first part dealing with the historical emergence and progression of the Naga movement and the second part dealing with the Naga women’s role and impact on: -

- 1) Negotiating with state and non-state armed actors to protect their communities.
- 2) Mobilizing for peace and reconciliation between warring factions.
- 3) Sustaining the ceasefire and peace process: bridging the inter community divide.
- 4) Mobilizing mass support and democratising the peace process.

* The book *Analyzing Gender: A Handbook of Social Science Research* (Ed. by Beth B. Hess and Myra Marx Ferre), chapter 19 ‘Feminists Thinking About War, Militarism and Peace’ (by Cynthia H. Enloe) deals with the gendered aspect of war, militarism and peace. According to the author, those women in the world with the most pressing need to discover the underlying causes of war and peace are the ones, who reeling under a state of subordination are often perceived as “threats to national security”. Patriarchy often promotes and sustains military values and needs. Two principal non-feminist theories on militarization are:

- a) Militarization as a logical consequence of capitalism.
- b) Militarization as being caused by the inherent inclinations of the state regardless of the nature of its economic system.

According to the author, several analysts propose that the reason why women are often excluded from the institution of the armed forces could probably be that, combat per se is at the core of masculine uniqueness, so that sharing this experience with women would diminish their identity as masculine creatures (Goldman, 1982; Chapkis, *et al*, 1982, 1985). The author believes that although peace is commonly understood to be the absence of violence, it is not that simple. Peace is a process and it must be able to produce itself. The *Feminists define peace as women's achievement of control over their own lives and believe that such achievement is fragile unless processes are created to reproduce it.*

*In the book *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*" (Ed. by Caroline O. N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark), Chapter 10 'Social Organizations: From Victims to Actors in Peace Building' (by Isabel Coral Cordero) deals with the activist role of women's popular movement in resisting the Peruvian armed conflict in the 1980s. According to the author, three years after the armed conflict began; the Peruvian army came into the scene unleashing indiscriminate repression. Trapped in the crossfire, the civilian population took it upon itself to face the challenge head on. They began to organize themselves as alternative networks involving the basic nuclei of the society – the family, interfamily and community spaces. Women thus organized themselves on two main fronts: as a women's movement and by linking up with other new social actors. They organised assistance to vulnerable population groups through emergency programmes and led the rebuilding of community organizations. Thus, they achieved dual roles- as women and as activists – in community organization.

*In the book *Autonomy Movements and Federal India* by Bhupinder Singh, Chapter 3 'The Naga Insurgency' deals with emergence of the insurgency in Nagaland. The author clearly outlines the progression of the movement and the form it currently takes in the political consciousness of the people in the region. The roots of this movement have been traced to the late 1940's with the birth of the Naga National Council (NNC), which was originally set up with an agenda for social

welfare and later took on political hues. The Naga Baptist Church played a significant role in initiating a dialogue for peace by forming the Peace Mission in 1964. The Shillong Accord was signed in 1975 between the Government of India and the moderate faction of the NNC, which was later repudiated by both Phizo and Muivah. Muivah's faction formed the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). Inter-tribal rivalry led to the further division of NSCN in 1988. According to the author, the desire for peace has acted as a powerful incentive for renunciation of violence. In 1997 as well as 2001, concerted efforts on both sides led to the declaration of ceasefire. The author concludes on an optimistic note stating that there is a latent aspect of a possible Naga Settlement.

Objectives:

Taking a gender perspective, the objectives of the present study are:

- 1) To find out how the notion of peace is constructed in the popular imagination of women in the region.
- 2) To find out the extent to which women are involved in the peace process.
- 3) To study the gendered aspect of decision-making and conflict resolution.
- 4) To study the contribution of women peacemakers in the economic and social reconstruction of civil society.

Thus in the present study, the researcher has made an attempt to focus on the grassroots-level initiatives taken by the women in the villages and towns of Nagaland, far away from the public glare, in their effort to rebuild their communities. The researcher hopes that the study will shed some light on their struggles to create and assert their distinctive identity and be acknowledged for who they are.

Chapter - I

INSIGHT

The notion of Peace has been defined in more ways than one, by several different theorists. A commonly accepted notion of peace is the absence of war, which is termed **Negative Peace**. The noted 20th century French intellectual, Raymond Aron, was thinking of negative peace when he defined peace as a condition of "more or less lasting suspension of rivalry between political units".¹ Negative Peace may nonetheless include prevalent **social violence** (against women for instance) and **structural violence** (in situations of extreme inequality, for instance).

The other aspect of peace is **Positive Peace** which is used to describe an 'alternative vision'. Noted researcher of Peace and Conflict Studies, Johan Galtung, defines it as a condition where not only all types of violence are minimal or non-existent, but also where the major causes of future conflicts are removed. In other words, Positive Peace denotes a situation when major conflicts of interest as well as their violent manifestations are resolved.

According to Betty Reardon, "Peace is the antithesis of exploitation, marginalization and oppression and the indicators of conditions of justice and equity that comprise positive peace."² Donna Pankhurst believes that some ideal characteristics of a society experiencing positive peace are an active and egalitarian civil society, highly and inclusive democratic and political structures and an open and accountable government.

Positive peace is a long drawn process and may be more difficult to achieve than negative peace. This is because it focuses on peace

building and establishment of non-exploitative social structures. It is an all-encompassing notion, including in its fold, efforts to re-frame the community and societal networks to promote harmony, transparency and social justice.

Armed Conflict

An armed conflict is a contested incompatibility, which concerns government and /or territory and which involves the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, and results in at least 25 battle- related deaths.

The separate elements of the definition can be operationalized as follows:

- 1) **Use of armed force:** Use of arms in order to promote the parties' general position in the conflict, resulting in deaths.
Arms: Any material means, e.g., manufactured weapons but also sticks, stones, fire, water etc.
- 2) **25 deaths:** A minimum of 25 battle – related deaths per year and per incompatibility.
- 3) **Party:** A government of a state or any opposition organization or alliance of opposition.
 - 3.1) **Government:** The party controlling the capital of the state.
 - 3.2) **Opposition organization:** Any Non-Governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force.
- 4) **State :** A state is
 - 4.1) An internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory,
or
 - 4.2) An internationally unrecognised government controlling a specified territory whose sovereignty is not disputed by another internationally recognized sovereign government

previously controlling the same territory.

- 5) **Incompatibility** concerning government and/or territory the incompatibility, as stated by the parties, must concern government and/ or territory.
- 5.1) **Incompatibility:** The stated generally incompatible positions.
 - 5.2) **Incompatibility concerning government:** Incompatibility concerning type of political system, the replacement of the central government or the change of its political composition.
 - 5.3) **Incompatibility concerning territory:** Incompatibility concerning status of territory, e.g., the change of the state in control of a certain territory (interstate conflict), secession or autonomy (interstate conflict).³

Such a definition, apart from providing a comprehensive account of what an armed conflict is, debases the very essence of humanity – by reducing the loss of life to a mere statistic. Secondly, by stating that “*at least 25 battle related deaths should take place for a conflict to merit the label of an armed conflict*”, it demeans human existence per se. The definition seems to imply that the deaths of one or two people are of no consequence, there has to be at least 25 deaths for **someone** to take notice of it.

Although the North-Eastern region of India has been bearing the brunt of several armed conflicts waged by the various ethnic elements in the region, the conflicts have never developed into full fledged wars. The nature of these conflicts has been that of Low Intensity Conflicts. The term **Low Intensity Conflicts (LIC)** has been variously defined. One such definition of LIC is “political or military confrontation between contending states or groups, below conventional war and above the routine peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. LIC are often localized, generally in the Third World but contain certain regional and global security implications”.⁴ It is seen that in such situations

women have played a very dominant role in the peace process

Women, Conflict and Peace

In their diverse capacities, women try to minimize the effects of violence. Caught amidst conflicting situations women often acquire liberation from the old social order. They have to take on roles never thought of possible previously. They become the breadwinners of the family, breaking age-old traditions, moving out of the rigid societal norms to engage in activities, which were earlier thought to be a Man's sole domain. . A woman's involvement in a conflict is often multi-layered. She can be a mother, a wife, a combatant and a breadwinner of the family – shifting from one role to another – to safeguard the interests of her community. Women in their new-found roles, often take initiatives to facilitate changes within their communities, as their efforts make a meaningful dent in the peacemaking process

In experiencing a new life and having to take on new responsibilities, the notion of freedom too undergoes a change. Thus, more often than not, conflicts lead to the reworking of the societal framework, allowing new avenues and spaces for women to grow and explore their untapped potentialities. But, these positive transformations, can in no way justify a conflict. In such a scenario, the concept of peace defined as reverting back to a pre-conflict state will no longer be desirable. Instead, as Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake has noted that “peace necessarily constitutes a creative remaking of cultural meanings and agency – a third space between a familiar, often romanticized past and traumatic present”.⁵ Thus the notion of peace implies a space incorporating elements of transition and flexibility, reworking rigidities and embracing new changes to the societal order.

This raises certain other questions – Do women have an affinity towards peace? Are they inherently peaceful? Why are women accepted as an embodiment of Peace? To find answers to these questions, we must first try to understand how the notions of Femininity and Masculinity are culturally constructed and accepted by the society at large. Since time immemorial, certain characteristics have been associated with being a Male or a Female. When such an understanding is transmitted down from one generation to another, it begins to be accepted as a cultural given.

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The notion of masculinity is often characterized by aggression and dominant behaviour and it has become a cultural norm to expect a man to be aggressive, dominant and play the role of a protector. On the other hand, femininity as a notion is culturally constructed to include characteristics such as nurturance and passivity. Thus, these very definitions mould the way a community thinks and expects a man and a woman to behave. According to Goldstein, "killing in war does not come naturally for either gender, yet the potential for war has been universal in human societies. To help overcome soldier's reluctance to fight, cultures develop gender roles that equate 'manhood' with toughness under fire. Across cultures and through time, the selection of men as potential combatants (and women for feminine war support roles) has helped shape the war system."⁶

Women have for long been subjugated and excluded from structures of power. Knowing and living through these experiences, have shaped them into strong individuals – giving them an impetus to work for justice and peace. It is women, at the grassroots level, who can, through their lived experiences, initiate efforts of peacemaking to reconstruct a strife-torn community. It is in this sense that women can emerge as peace-builders, as catalysts for social change.

Women and Peace-building

Peace-building is the construction of a new environment, transforming deficient national structures and capabilities and strengthening of new democratic institutions. Peace building creates and maintains beneficial conditions sustainable (life-enhancing) social, economic, political and spiritual development of all people.⁷ Thus the term peace- building refers to a complex web of processes - incorporating within it, different strategies, roles and interventions employed by individuals at different stages post- conflict.

John Paul Lederach has proposed a model of peace-building. He articulates this in the form of a pyramid on the basis of where individuals (the conflicting parties and peace builders) are located in a system and the approaches that work best in a particular sector or level of society.⁸ In the model, the pinnacle represents the top- level leadership or track one (policy makers, politicians, military, diplomats) who employ high level negotiations or mediations as strategies of peace-building. The middle range leadership comprises individuals

representing NGOs, educational institutions, humanitarian and relief organizations, the academia and the media and they utilize approaches such as problem solving workshops, form peace commissions etc. The base represents grassroots workers (members of indigenous NGO's, psychologists working with trauma victims etc.) who are directly affected by the conflict. They engage in psychosocial work in post-war trauma, grassroots-level training and form local peace commissions.

Women can play a key role in peace-building by initiating efforts to rebuild the community- socially, emotionally and economically. According to Anuradha Chenoy, women invariably combine the political, the social and the personal in their politics. Women can bridge the gap between the civil society and the powers to be and be effective leaders at the grassroots level. The post conflict social milieu can be fraught with uncertainties. In such a scenario, women have an added responsibility to redefine and re-negotiate gender roles and interpersonal relationships. The greatest challenge of all is to rehabilitate the social sector and create conditions for long-term social integration of the community.

The difficulty in making women's peace activism visible is that women themselves see their activity as non-political and an extension of their domestic concerns as 'stretched roles'. Their activism is dubbed 'accidental activism' so to speak.⁹ Women often seek out informal spaces within the societal framework in times of conflict, to give vent to the anger and frustration festering within. In doing so, they surpass the private-public divide, that is, they transcend the private space and participate in the struggle, as social actors.

Much of the activism is at the local, grassroots level. Women's activism is most visible when politics are less hierarchically structured. Rita Manchanda¹⁰ has rightly stated that, "because women's peace activism is grounded in the informal space of politics, it gets undervalued and as post conflict politics moves into formal space, it gets marginalized." This raises the issue of their access to power; how politically empowered they are really and how seriously their opinions are taken. Are women relegated to being mere props in any movement of change or are their voices also heard?

In the North Eastern region of India, women have been used as an

instrument for asserting authority by the opposing forces and are acknowledged as a strong pressure group in the society. Their role is confined to carrying out processions; sit-in demonstrations and other similar modes of protest. Yet, when it comes to formal, decision-making settings, women are excluded and marginalized.

Women perhaps have a better understanding of pain and conflict because they experience it so closely in their lives. They view conflict differently and can thus enrich the entire process of negotiations and peace-building, by contributing new perspectives from their day to day experiences. Thus, including women in formal discussions can lead to a more integrated and gendered perspective of what constitutes peace, conflict and human security.

Chapter - II

THE PATH TAKEN

The present study has been carried out within the conceptual framework of several perspectives, such as Feminist Inquiry, Social Constructionism, Narrative Analysis, Subalternism, among others. The idea has been to present a comprehensive account of the issues involved. The chapter has been divided into two sections. Section I provides an insight into the different perspectives, while Section II presents an overview of the sample study.

PERSPECTIVES

Narrative Analysis

Narratives represent life stories. Stories mould personal identities and construct lives. The narratives of the women in conflict are threaded in an emotional bind. In Narrative Analysis, the story is the object of its investigation. In narrating their personal experiences, narrators revisit their past, in an attempt to create an ordered mosaic for the listener. Cultures speak through narratives. In trying to interpret a narrative, much of the listener's 'self' gets created. The process of interpretation emerges from and is shaped by the listener's worldview. The meaning that is ascribed to the narrative is therefore fluid and contextual. As Nagel(1986) has stated "there is no view from nowhere". It is up to the listener to ascribe meaning to an individual's lived experience and present it as a coherent whole. The challenge is to look for similarities across the narration.¹ Thus, in this study, the researcher has made an attempt to preserve the narratives as coherently as possible to flesh out their true meaning.

Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative Research is the process to understand the subjective meanings of an individual's experiences by empathically entering the inner world of the researched. It is based on the premise that the respondent's narrative reflects the attitudes and beliefs held by him/her, which in turn represents his or her Identity. Qualitative analysis recognizes the significance of the central role of language and is concerned with individuals rather than mere statistics. It seeks to give voice to the person behind the number rather than the number itself. Qualitative research is viewed as a dynamic interaction between the researcher and the participant. In such a method, researchers often make use of *semi-structured interviews* in order to gain a more detailed picture of the respondent's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions about a particular topic. In a *semi-structured interview*, there is a set of questions that merely guides rather than dictates the course of the interview. The advantages of such an interview are that it facilitates rapport building with the respondent, allows a greater flexibility of coverage and enables the interviewer to explore, hitherto unexplored areas to gather more information. In this way, Qualitative Research makes an attempt to understand the psychological world of the participants.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory methods provide a set of strategies for conducting qualitative research. According to Charmaz, Grounded Theory methods "are a logically consistent set of data collection and analytic procedures aimed to develop theory".² This implies that one begins with an area of study and builds on the theoretical analysis, as one progresses. Grounded Theory methods consist of a set of inductive strategies for analysing data. Some of the significant features of the Grounded Theory include³:

- 1) Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research.
- 2) Creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data, not from pre-conceived hypotheses.
- 3) The development of middle-range theories to explain behaviour and processes.

- 4) Memo making that is writing analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories.
- 5) Theoretical sampling that is, sampling for theoretical construction, not for representativeness of a given population, to check and refine the analyst's emerging conceptual categories.
- 6) Delay of Literature review.

One of the most distinctive features of this method is the simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research, which blurs the rigid division between the two. This allows the researcher the flexibility to collect additional data on emergent themes of analysis. This process is eventually aimed towards developing a theoretical perspective that would in turn facilitate a better understanding of the respondent's subjective world.

Feminist Inquiry

The word 'Feminist' was invented by a French Socialist Charles Fourier, in the early 19th century. Feminist Theory is based on meta narratives - the variety of real life stories women provide about themselves.⁴ A feminist inquiry seeks to remove the power imbalance between the researcher and the subject and gives central importance to the narratives of the participants.

Feminist Research is Participatory Research. The aim in feminist research is to understand and delve deeper into a woman's experiences in the social world, through the lived experiences that she brings to the research process. In such research, there is a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the researched. It is phenomenological (taking the experience 'as it is'), experiential and responsive. Putting it simply, Yoland Wadsworth states that Feminist Research is 'research for and by women'.⁵ Some of the commonly used techniques within such research are ethnographic methods, in-depth interviews, case studies, dialogue, oral history, textual analysis etc. Feminist Research also incorporates the theory of Deconstruction, to deconstruct the power differentials prevalent in the society, in its aim to truly understand and know the actual position of women in the society.

There is no one particular Feminist theoretical framework that provides for an explanation of war but all approaches share a belief that gender related issues provide a better understanding of war. Joshua S. Goldstein speaks about three strains of Feminism namely, Liberal Feminism, Difference Feminism, Eco Feminism and Postmodern Feminism, and their diverse views on war and women .⁶

Liberal Feminists argue that women equal men in ability, and that the gendering of war reflects male discrimination against women (i.e., sexism). They believe that women have the right to participate in all social and political roles (including war roles) without facing discrimination.

Difference Feminists emphasize on the essential biological difference between the two sexes and hence they believe that women's experiences are fundamentally different from men's. In this view, the problem is not that men and women are different but that sexist cultures devalue "feminine" qualities instead of valuing, celebrating, and promoting them. The feminists belonging to this school of thought, feel that the role of the woman as a nurturer, makes her more effective in the mediation of conflicts and group decision making in comparison to men. The image of a woman is symbolized by her mothering qualities, of being a caregiver and a nurturer and hence, Difference Feminists believe that women are more likely to oppose war, shun violence and be inclined towards peacemaking within the community. Some difference feminists see such gender differences as biologically based, whereas others see them as entirely cultural.

Another Difference Feminist school of thought that grows out of the "object relations theory" in psychology argues that men and women think differently about their separateness or connection with other people. The argument is that boys differentiate themselves from their female caregivers whereas girls identify with their female caregivers. Therefore boys construct social relationships in terms of autonomous individuals, interacting according to formal rules, whereas girls construct social relationships as networks of connection. This gender difference might adapt men to kill in war.

Eco Feminism fuses various practices and theories of feminism, environmentalism, and movements for social justice and equality. Eco Feminists draw a parallel between man's subordination of women

and man's exploitation of nature, believing that all forms of oppression are inter-connected. They regard war as an extension of the aggressive and exploitative relationships embodied in sexism, racism, and the "rape" of the environment.

Postmodern Feminism opposes the binary construction of gender. Instead, Postmodern Feminists see gender and gender roles in war, as rather fluid, relative, and subjective. They believe that gender shapes the way in which, both men and women understand their experiences and actions with regard to war. Some Postmodern Feminists analyze the uses of binary oppositions, which readily map onto gender, to structure models or theories. An example is cited below.

<i>Masculine/subject</i>	<i>Feminine/object</i>
Knower/self/autonomy/agency	Known/other/dependence/passivity
Objective/rational/fact/logical/hard	Subjective/emotional/value/illogical/soft
Order/certainty/predictability	Anarchy/uncertainty/unpredictability
Mind/abstract	Body/concrete
Culture/civilized/production/public	Nature/primitive/reproduction/private

Postmodern Feminists oppose any kind of gender categorization of roles and feel that women can play different kind of roles during the war, for example a combatant, shelter provider, breadwinner etc.

Deconstruction

The Deconstructionist Approach sheds light on how discourse is dependent on social processes, which is in turn laced with issues of power. The influence of structures of domination can be observed in the production, categorization, distribution and utilization of knowledge. For example, the cultural construction of Fertility too, is shaped by the existing power relations within the society. The characteristics that define Fertility such as 'being passive', 'weak', 'inferior' etc., reflects the expectations of a largely masculinized societal framework. Thus, to understand what Fertility really means, an effort has to be made to go beyond mere definitions and look

deeper into the power structure to comprehend the 'situatedness' of women vis a vis the society at large.

According to Barbara Johnson, deconstruction is much closer to the original meaning of analysis itself, which etymologically means, "to undo" – a virtual synonym for "to deconstruct". Deconstructionism does not imply the abandonment of meaning...it is a tool to uncover the truth that lies beneath, to take apart and rediscover those concepts, which serve as the axioms or rules for a period of thought. Some of the scholars of this tradition are Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, Paul de Man, Barbara Johnson among others.

Deconstructionism provides the space for skepticism as it believes that matters of description cannot be separated from issues of power. They believe in existence of a reciprocal relationship between power and knowledge. According to Foucault (Discipline and Punish, 1979), 'power and knowledge directly imply one another, there is not any power relation without the correlative constitution of some field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'.

Social Constructionism

The Social Constructionist perspective⁷ is concerned primarily with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe or account for the world (including themselves) in which they live. Social Constructionism views discourse about the world as an artefact of communal interchange. Much of the things in this world are taken for granted. To get to their roots, they need to be challenged, questioned and understood in their entirety. Categories through which we deal with the world are culture bound and grounded in realities that are shaped by historical contexts. Thus, the reality as we see it, is in actuality a creation of the dominant powers (eg., Masculinity vs. Femininity).

Some of the basic tenets of Social Constructionism are:

- 1) Raw experiences by themselves are not enough to experience the world. For that certain categories, which are socially constructed, are required. For example, the notion of 'privacy' will be defined by our own experiences grounded in our own realities (which is in turn shaped by the culture, context,

history etc). These categories are not absolute.

- 2) The categories and concepts through which the world is understood are social artefacts, shaped by the historical context. Thus, evolution of a particular concept is rooted in historically contingent factors.
- 3) The degree to which a given form of understanding prevails or is sustained across time is not dependent on any form of empirical validation but rather on the vicissitudes of social processes(for e.g., communication, negotiation, conflict, rhetoric) . A given theory will die its natural death if the social processes negate it. Therefore, 'Zeitgeist' or the voice of the time decides the prevalence of a theory, concept or category through which we try to shape an understanding of the world .
- 4) Forms of negotiated understanding are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally connected with many other activities in which people engage. Therefore, whatever knowledge is available influences an individual's actions in a group.

Social Constructionism emphasizes that there is *no absolute truth* in the world. Reality as we experience is actually created by the dominant powers. Hence, this perspective invites one to challenge the objective basis of conventional knowledge, in an attempt to deconstruct, move beyond mere categories and understand it in its entirety.

Subalternism

The term Subaltern, coined by Antonio Gramsci, is used in post-colonial theory to refer to the lower classes. Subalternism basically refers to "*history from below*". It is a form of historical narrative focussing on the perspectives of the ordinary individuals within the society as well as regions that were not considered to be historically significant. This includes women and the working class, as well as regions like India and Africa. Gramsci describes the subaltern classes as those subordinated by hegemony excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power. Gramsci himself has workers in mind, but the term has also been used to describe other groups who are excluded and do not have a position from which to speak—for example peasant women. Gramsci further notes, "The subaltern classes, by definition,

are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'State'".

II

SAMPLE

Women have become politicised by their marginalization. In the post conflict scenario, women have often been found to be playing dual roles, first as women and secondly, as activists in community reorganization. The efforts made by women to rebuild their community and create a new social order have consolidated their role as Social Actors.

Peace implies not merely an absence of violence but also the creation of an environment that maintains and sustains women's control over their lives. This control is not limited to social or political spheres alone, but extends to economic spheres as well. A sense of command over one's life makes women more independent, more secure and gives them the confidence to express their opinions.

In the present study, the researcher has made a case study of three units in Nagaland. The case studies of these units reveal how women have been making concerted efforts to reconstruct their communities. In Vidima, the efforts have been mostly economic through the establishment of Self Help Groups. There are four Self Help Groups run solely by women, which have diversified into various productive activities such as cultivation of *maize*, *Naga onion* etc. as well as weaving of several handloom products, such as *Mekhela*, *Shawls*, *Bags* etc. Such activities have helped in not only generating income but have also encouraged women to engage in such meaningful activities. In Mhainamtsi village and Jalukie town, the efforts made by women are mostly in the social sphere although they engage in economic activities as well.

Vidima

The Self Help Groups in Vidima act as Micro-Credit Institutions. Micro-credit refers to a small loan to a client given by a bank or other institution. Micro-credit can be offered, often without collateral, to an

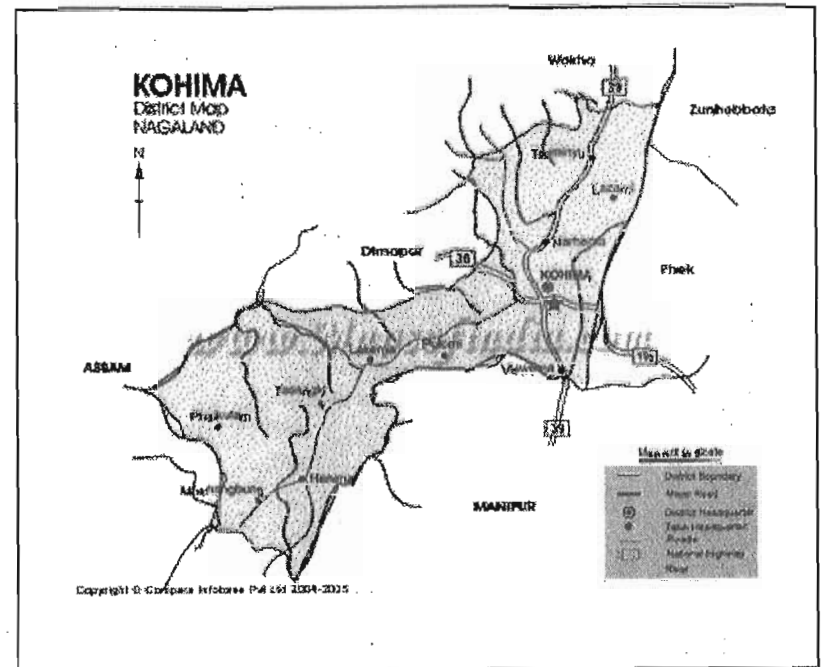
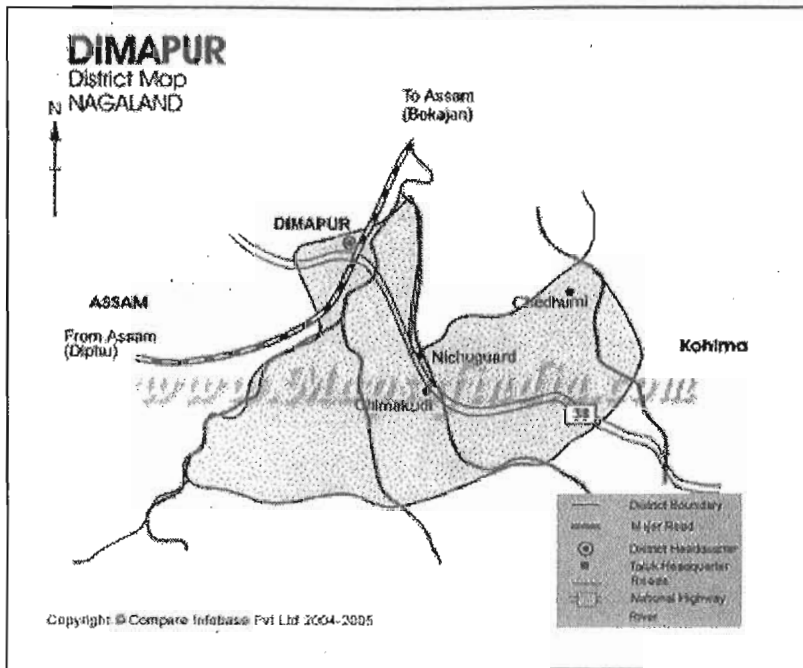
individual or through group lending. Micro-finance clients are typically low-income persons who do not have access to formal financial institutions. In rural areas, they are usually small farmers and others who are engaged in small income-generating activities. In Vidima, although each SHG has its own set of rules and regulations, they have similar functions. The women in each SHG pay an initial amount (of about Rs. 100/-) to become a member. This amount is deposited in the Bank and the Chairperson and Secretary of the SHG jointly operate the account. The members also collect money either monthly or tri-monthly (For example, Rs.10 /month/member or Rs. 1000 in 3 months / entire group) to be deposited in the account. The money is used for giving loans at a lesser rate of interest to finance their activities. Most of the groups engage in the cultivation of various crops like paddy, maize and Naga onions. They are also engaged in the making of handloom products (such as shawls, mekhela, bags etc.). They then sell these products directly in the market (Chumukedima, Dimapur or in Kohima) and the members share the profit earned. Other than that, the women in the village have organized themselves into an Action Committee, to mediate conflicts that take place within the community. Such civil society initiatives also go a long way in fostering the culture of peace.

Mhainamtsi

The Mhainamtsi Village Women's Society was set up in 1982. Their activities include, besides cultivation of cash crops (banana and pineapple), social service such as constructing sheds and houses as well as weaving. The woven products (such as *shawls*, *mekhelas* etc.) are then sold through exhibitions and the Nagaland Handicrafts Society. The profit earned is collected from all members and is then reinvested in other activities. The Society is also actively engaged in campaigning against anti-social activities like drug abuse, alcoholism, flesh trade etc.

Jalukie Town

The Jalukie Town Women's Welfare Society's main objective is to work for the eradication of social evils plaguing their community. It has taken up several programmes for the upliftment of the poor and the orphans and has also adopted a strong resolution to fight against all social evils such as lottery, video parlours screening pornographic



movies, gambling, alcoholism and drug abuse.

Besides this, a few women from an urban setting in Medziphema and a Gaon Burah of Razhuphe, Dimapur were also interviewed.

The following tables provide an overview of the units surveyed. It is important to remember that all the respondents (indicated in Tables 2.1 and 2.2) were actively associated in the activities of the organisation, which they represented.

Table 1 : An Overview of the Structural Characteristics for the Three Units of Study

INDEX	VIDIMA	MHAINAMTSI	JALUKIE TOWN
Population	828	2000+	10,000+
No. of households	104	380	1250
Resources:			
▪ Agriculture	Paddy, Mustard, Maize etc.	Paddy, Maize,	Paddy, Maize (Through cooperative farming)
▪ School	1 Lower Primary School.	1 Lower Primary School.	4 High Schools, 1 College, 2 Primary Schools
▪ Medical facility.	None. PHE under construction.	No hospital. Dispensary present although not regular	6 Health and Clinics 1 Private Health Centre.
Tribe	Angami	Zeliangrong	Predominantly Zeliangrong, but has a cosmopolitan character.
District	Dimapur	Peren	Peren
Electricity	Yes	Yes	Yes.

Table 2.1

Overview of the Content of the Sample in the Three Units of Study

CHARACTERISTICS	VIDIMA	MHAINAMTSI	JALUKIE TOWN
No. of women surveyed	8	4	4
Number of women per age group	(2) 19-29 yrs (3) 30-39 yrs (3) 50+	(2) 40-49 yrs (2) 50+	(1) 30-39 yrs (1) 40-49 yrs (2) 50+
Marital Status	7 married, 1 single	All married	All married
Average number of children per married woman	3	6	3
Educational attainment per woman (number of years in school)	5 have studied till class 8, 1 till class 9 and 2 have studied only till class 4	2 have had schooling till class 9, while 2 have studied only till class 4.	1 had a Bachelor's degree. The rest had an average 9 yrs of schooling.
Average length of membership in the cooperative (in years)	2 years	10 yrs.	6 yrs.

Table 2.2

CHARACTERISTICS	MEDZIPHEMA
No. of women Surveyed.	4
Number of women per age group	(2) 30-39 yrs (2) 40-49 yrs
Marital Status	2 Single, 2 Married

(Contd.)

(Contd.)

Average number of children per married woman	2
Educational attainment per woman (number of years in school)	3 Graduate, 1 Post Graduate

Chapter - III

THE MARGINALIZED VOICES SPEAK

Narratives

In the present study an attempt has been made to explore and understand the lives of women, who despite all odds have made earnest efforts to rebuild their strife torn communities. Each participant's life had a story to tell – of pain and anger, sorrow and hope. Their life stories shed light on the often taken-for-granted aspects of life and reveal how they have grappled with their own insecurities, fears and anxieties as they live their lives. Even though each participant had a unique life story to narrate, there were several interlinking themes that emerged.

As mentioned earlier, the study covered three units of study: Vidima (a village in Dimapur district), Mhainamtsi (a village in Peren district) and Jalukie town (in Peren district). The logic behind selecting these three units is that they are all different, varying in size, population, communitarian efforts at rebuilding etc. A semi-structured questionnaire focussing on issues such as definition of peace, role of women in peacemaking, significance of peace education, efforts of the women at peace building etc., was used to conduct interviews with the women in the three units of study and gather their views on them.

Case Study I : Vidima

Vidima, a small village covering a geographical area of 8 square kilometres, in the Dimapur district was established in the year 1976 to rehabilitate the 'national workers' who surrendered to the Government of India. Although, Vidima is predominantly an Angami

village, its inhabitants have congregated from other villages to settle here. This fact makes for an interesting case study. The village was formally recognized in 1991 but not much has been done by the authorities to provide basic amenities like schools (except for 1 LP school) and health centres for the villagers.

The village has been adopted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), which not only provides training on agricultural and veterinary related subjects but also ensures the transfer of technologies through Krishi Vigyan Kendra and provides technical guidance to the villagers.

With the help of the Wasteland Board and ICAR, the women were imparted training in several agricultural practices and encouraged to open Self Help Groups (SHGs) for income generation. The first SHG was formed in 2003 and at present there are in total four SHGs run solely by women. The SHGs have incorporated diverse activities in their fold, including weaving, raising poultry and farming. In the present study, representatives of the following SHGs and the Action Committee were interviewed and their views recorded.

Vitho

Description of the SHG:

Vitho, one of the first self-help groups in Vidima, was formed in 2003. Soon after its formation, the Wasteland Board trained six women. Today this SHG comprises of 15 members. The membership enrolment fee is Rs.100 while the monthly fee is Rs 20 only. A Chairperson who is assisted in her work by the Secretary/Treasurer heads the organisation. The members meet once a month. The researcher interviewed Sabuna, the Secretary of the organisation.

Name: Sabuna
Designation: Secretary.
Age: 28 years.
Education: High School
Religion: Christian.
Marital Status: Married with three children.

According to Sabuna, their bank account currently has a

deposit of more than Rs.6000. They provide loans with low interest rates in order to facilitate investment in stock like threads, seeds or poultry or for setting up infrastructural facilities.

Sabuna stated that her reason for joining the SHG was that she wanted to live in peace and harmony, which she believes is possible only if there is development. According to her, *"since the Government is not doing anything, this system really helps us. We have a lot of faith in this system. We contribute money every month, so whenever we require any loan...it really helps us. With the loan we can buy paddy, pigs, goats etc. To keep the money flowing in, we also engage in weaving mekhelas and bags. We do not want to depend on one thing alone because if that fails we may not be able to feed our family... we must have something else to fall back upon."*

She feels that a lot of good has come about from the setting up of these SHGs as *"they lead to unity among the people"*. Her argument seemed to be based on the maxim 'unity is strength' and she believed that *"even if there are 2-3 people and if they desire harmony, it can be achieved. If one is alone, things can prove to be difficult ...one faces a lot of problems. But if we unite together..join hands together ...we can work for the betterment.....things become possible..."*

Sabuna defined Peace as *"living together with everyone during both good times and bad times"*. She believes that women can definitely contribute to peacemaking because, as she stated, *"if something goes wrong in the society, women can work together to make it right. Even if there is a big fight, women can go out, speak to the concerned parties... try to calm them and resolve the dispute"*. She also mentioned the existence of an Action Group comprising of six members (three male and three female) that had been set up in the village to mediate disputes. The villagers place a lot of faith in its transparent functioning and hold it in high esteem.

She feels that the authorities are not doing enough for the village. *"It has been ten years now since the village was*

formally recognized but nothing has been done...it is very sad." There is just one LP school and those who can afford, send their children to Chumukedima, Dimapur or even Kohima. For the rest, the children discontinue their studies and drop out of school. The village also does not have a primary health centre though an *Anganwadi* health centre is under construction. She discussed how problematic it became when somebody fell ill in the village..." *we have to go Chumukedima or elsewhere and it is sad because all of us cannot afford such luxuries at all times*".

She believes that there is a definite relationship between peace and development. If the basic amenities such as schools, medical facilities or even proper roads, were provided, things could improve a lot and as she has stated " *we can have at least some mental peace ...it will make us happy*".

Finally, she stated that traditionally Naga women define Peace as God. She stated that " *whatever we do... whether good or bad...there is a God above us. When we die, we will go to Him. This thought gives us a lot of peace. The greatest peace of all is God and we have a lot of faith in God.*"

Her final statement sums up her narrative and reflects the deep faith that the close knit Naga community places on the Church and God.

Vikho

Description of SHG:

Vikho was formed in 2005 and comprises of 10 members. Each member has to pay an amount of Rs.100 per month, which is then deposited in the bank. This money is then used to get loans to be invested in the cultivation of crops such as pea, Naga onion, maize etc. The members meet up once a month. The Secretary of the organisation is Adeshii., whose profile is given below.

Name: Adeshii
Designation: Secretary.
Age: 30 years.

Education: Till High School.
Religion: Christianity.
Marital Status: Married with children.

Adeshii stated that the profit (which ranges between Rs.1000 to Rs.1200) from the produce is shared by all. Adeshii defined 'Peace' as " *Inner peace and happiness*". She believes that if women work together, a lot of good could come of it. She thinks that the establishment of the SHGs had brought about several positive changes within their community. First, the women felt more empowered. As an example, she stated, " *earlier, I did not do anything I just sat at home. Now with whatever little I get, I can also contribute to the family. Now both my husband and I work in the fields...and we both contribute to the household expenses*" Secondly, she believes that the SHGs have had a more positive impact on the youth, who had become more constructive these days, helping the women in their work.



Monument to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Government recognition of Vidima (2001). Vidima, Dimapur District.

According to her, women are effective in resolving conflicts and whenever a conflict occurs, women go out to mediate. She believes that peace and development are closely interlinked. Thus, she stated, " *For peace to come, development must take place. Progress in all spheres is required. A dispensary and a high school are needed. If they are set up, at least they will give us a sense of inner peace and satisfaction.*"

Keneiikotho

Description of SHG:

Keneiikotho was one of the first SHGs to be formed in 2003. It has 13 members and each member deposits Rs.10 per month. The organisation is headed by Pfuchano, its Secretary.

Name: Pfuchano
 Designation: Secretary.
 Education: High School.
 Religion: Christianity.
 Marital Status: Married with children.

According to Pfuchano, " *on a total of Rs.130/- whatever amount of Interest is incurred helps the members in their difficult times. From the money deposited, we get loans from which we buy seeds etc.*"

The SHG has a diverse range of activities that it engages in. According to Pfuchano " *it includes not only cultivation of crops but also weaving shawls, bags and mekhelas, which are then sold in Chumukedima, Dimapur or even as far as Kohima. We sell the products ourselves; there are no middlemen involved so we get the money directly.*" The price list for the various handloom products is:

	SMALL	LARGE
Angami Bag	Rs.130	Rs. 140
Angami Shawls	Rs.700	Rs.800
Angami Mekhelas	Rs. 1500	

Regarding profit, she stated " *there is profit but I cannot exactly say how much...maybe around Rs.200/Rs.300 per member. Some deposit that money again in the bank for future use while some others give it out on loan, while some reinvest in small businesses .*"

For her " *peace means happiness*". She is also convinced that " *if women work together they can contribute to the welfare of the community*". She believes that women have an extremely important role in society. " *Whenever there is a dispute, women go out to mediate and they are to a large extent able to break the deadlock because people listen to them*". She also believes that the Women's Societies and Village Committees and Village Development Boards, which include women as well, could play a very positive role in creating peace and harmony.

Another member of the organisation with whom the researcher interacted was Achiino.

Name: Achiino.
 Age: 32 years.
 Education: High School.
 Religion: Christianity.
 Marital Status: Married with children.

Achiino joined **Keneiikotho** because she felt it would help her. She defined Peace as " *happiness and harmony*" and she feels that " *if all of us work together in our groups (SHGs)...we can help each other and contribute constructively to our community*". She further added, " *Individually I may not be able to do much. But if we all work together in a group, we can do something*'.

According to her, the SHGs have had a positive impact on the youth in the village. She believes that " *the number of youth joining the Underground has lessened. Nowadays, they are also engaged in the fields for cultivation. If we (women) ever have any problem or face any difficulty, they come out to help us.*"