



# INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

( Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal )

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.428 (SJIF 2026)

## Women in Chakhesang Naga Context: Social and Cultural Insights

**Eneingulou Lasuh**

Research Scholar,  
Sri Venkateshwara University,  
Gajraula (Uttar Pradesh, India)

**Dr. Neha Jain**

Assistant Professor,  
Sri Venkateshwara University,  
Gajraula (Uttar Pradesh, India)

DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2026-64331215/IRJHIS2603030>

### **Abstract:**

*Women and men are born of the same household. They live in the same society. They share many aspects together, yet the social system has put the two genders in different status and position. In many ways, women folks suffer due to ill treatment meted out to them due to social establishment. The gravity of this treatment seems to be greater in the patrilineal society where male folks dominate the household and the society. The present paper is, thus, an investigation of how women share the status with that of men in the Chakhesang Naga community. Chakhesang Naga is one of the major tribes in Nagaland. It is situated in the south eastern part of the State and sharing its boundary with the state of Manipur. In the present study, the deliberation was taken on women's status as a child, daughter, sister, mother, wife and care taker. In Chakhesang Naga society, it is observed that although the society is patrilineal in nature, women are treated with honour and respect in many ways inspite of many disadvantages in the society. The social functions and festivals are found to be incomplete without equal participation from women folks. Also, the system of inheritance known as lhabou is a unique system where women folks have the full freedom of inheritance. It is observed that male dominates family and society as a head due to patrilineal structure, yet women are also treated with love and honour in the given social structure.*

**Keywords:** *Women status, daughter, mother, feast and festivals.*

### **Introduction:**

Women and men were partners in all aspects of life from time immemorial. A number of studies have indicated that Naga women are treated better as compared to women from other parts of the country. Naga society is a casteless and classless society and therefore Naga women have enjoyed much better social position (Adaina, 2018). It is well described in the works of Haimendorf von Christoph who was an Austrian ethnographer and has studied the Naga people extensively in the late 1930's, "Many women in the more civilized parts of India may well envy the women of the Naga Hills, their high status and their free and happy life; and if you measure the cultural level of a people by the social position and personal freedom of its women, you will think twice before looking down on the

Nagas as ‘savages’” (Haimendorf, 1939). For generations, Nagas have passed on their history, through oral tradition and they have attached great value to oral tradition where men and women have co-existed peacefully. Yet, the patriarchal system influences the system that stops women from enjoying to the maximum. Uni (2009) rightly stated that “men and women share many aspects together, yet the social system has put the two genders in different status and position”. In many ways, women folks suffer due to ill treatment meted towards them due to social establishment (NEN, 2016). The gravity of this treatment seems to be greater in the patrilineal society where male folks dominate the households and the society. Therefore, to understand their culture and status, it is important to study their position in the society.

### **Area of Study:**

The present study is limited to the Chakhesang Naga tribe of Nagaland. Chakhesang Naga community is inhabited in the district of Phek in Nagaland which is located in the North Eastern part of India. Chakhesang Naga is one of the major tribes in Nagaland. It is situated in the south eastern part of the State and sharing its boundary with the state of Manipur. The present study specifically focuses on two villages of Chakhesang Naga community namely; Chizami and Enhulumi. These two villages speak the Khezha (*Khuzhale*) dialect. Chizami village is larger in terms of population (2592 total population) and geographical areas while Enhulumi village (1040) is smaller in both terms (Census of India, 2011).

The study is basically qualitative and data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is collected from field work using purposive sampling. The secondary data is also employed from relevant available materials.

### **Objectives:**

The present study focuses on the social and cultural insights of the Chakhesang Naga women. It examines the position of the Chakhesang Naga women through the empirical data from the field work. The work is therefore an attempt to study the social and cultural insights of women in the male dominated society. Also, the study examined the treatment meted out to women in the patrilineal society of the Chakhesang Naga community. The study concludes by suggesting measures for optimum growth of the society in respect of gender equality.

### **Women in Chakhesang Naga Society:**

The study investigates the position of women in the Chakhesang Naga community in the state of Nagaland. In the present study, the deliberation was specific on some selected aspects such as Chakhesang Naga women as a child, daughter, mother, sister and as a wealth care taker. Also, their position during feasts and festivals are discussed as follows.

#### **i. Chakhesang Naga women as a new born child:**

The birth of a girl child in a Chakhesang Naga family is treated well. They are well received

into the family as much as that of a boy child. The joy of a family is more complete when a girl is child born into the family in the midst of boy child/children. It is well stated by an old lady in the village on welcoming the new born baby girl that the world is all for baby girls whether food, garments, jewelries or toys (Lasuh, 2021). There is no visible preferential treatment towards male child over female child in providing health facilities. However it is also studied that male child is also desired much and the parents feel incomplete without one in the family.

**ii. Chakhesang Naga women as a Daughter:**

As a daughter in a Chakhesang Naga family, the daughter is expected to be modest, obedient and hospitable. She is involved in doing household chores more than that of the male child in the family (Vero, 2020). However, it is observed that in the field of education, they are given equal privilege to pursue higher studies. There is no discrimination against girl child for giving education basing on their gender, rather it is girl child who receives the attention of the parents for their simplicity and obedience that they possess in their natural behavior (Domheh, 2022). Modern education has played positive role in the Naga community in redefining new status for women in the society. They have started taking active part in leadership roles. It is notable to state that in Chizami and Enhulumi villages, women are found to be members of Village Council and Village Development Board which are the highest decision making bodies in the village. The Chizami Village Students' Union was also led by a woman President. Likewise, women are leading the Students' Union bodies in Sümi village and Mesulumi village which are the neighbouring villages of the present study area (Chirhah, 2022). There has been women leaders in other villages of the Chakhesang Naga community as well

**iii. Chakhesang Naga women as a Mother:**

A Chakhesang Naga mother is expected to be a good host who is trained from the younger days in her parent's house. She is also expected to be a good manager of the household (Chirhah, 2022). When it comes to decision making in the family and society, there has been increase in the participation of women. At the family level, it is observed that the husband takes the opinion of the wife for important decisions. However, the man or the husband remains a head of the family in this society. Hence, no important decision is taken without the consent of the father in the family. She is the one who plays major role in taking care of the kids and the husband at home (Vero, 2016).

During pregnancy, a mother is expected to work like any other days unless there is health complication which stops her from performing her regular duties. Even when the woman is not very strong physically, she does not complain as women are expected to be resilient. It is a common practice that a mother is offered to eat and drink nutritious diet, but it is also observed that if a woman's pregnancy is not the first and she already had children, she sacrifices the good food offered to her and give it to the kids in the family. During the delivery of a child, a mother is offered rich protein food especially chicken for days to help her recover from the childbirth. She is given hot water bath by

female relatives and even by the husband in post delivery period. This hot water bath is treated as equally important as eating rich diet during delivery and after for the good recovery of the mother's health (Kapfo, 2021).

**iv. Chakhesang Naga women as a Step Mother:**

There is a bad notion about stepmothers in the Chakhesang Naga society. This is because of the oral tales that has been passed on from forefather's time, where the stepmothers usually mistreat their step children in the olden times. Some widowers decide not to remarry fearing the ill treatment on the children by the step mother (Elah, 2022). However, it is not uncommon to see the fathers getting married again irrespective of the age or number of children.

**v. Chakhesang Naga women as a sister:**

Chakhesang Naga women as a sister are expected to assist their brothers at home and also during the important social function, yet they also take part equally with their male counterparts during festivals. They sing and dance together with men. In most of the festivals, it is incomplete without the participation of women. Also, in songs and dance, ladies have distinct role to play. In some Naga villages, festivals are observed in honour of girl child. For instance, in a Chakhesang Naga village (Porba), a day is observed as *khukhu* festival to celebrate a girl child. On this day, all the best food is served to girls and they are made to enjoy the day to the fullest. In another Naga tribe called Zeliangs, *Langsem-nyi/Chega gadi* festival is celebrated once in a year in honour of female folks. During this festival, gifts of all kinds including delicacies are given to their married daughters, sisters, cousins, aunts, and granddaughters by their male relatives (Zeliang, 2020).

**vi. Chakhesang Naga women as a (wealth) care taker:**

The Chakhesang community follows the patrilineal system. The property and wealth of the parents and grandparents are inherited by the male folks of the family. As such, forest, paddy field, firewood reserved forest, land and house goes to the male children. Here, the youngest son gets the major share with the fact that he stays with the aged parents for a longer period of time. The forefather's wealth which is passed down are denied to female family members. The lineage memberships are connected to the father's side and therefore the surname of the father is used by the children and even the wives get the surname of the husband by default. However, there is a custom of inheritance where the female child inherits. This is called inheritance of *lhabou*. *Lhabou* include garments, jewelries and ornaments and tools for handicrafts like weaving, knitting etc which is inherited from the mother's side to the daughters and granddaughters (Akami, 2022). It is interestingly observed that the male folks never claim this wealth from women (Puro, 2017). The inheritance of *lhabou* is matrilineal in nature. Another notable aspect is that, it is not uncommon to see that a daughter is given plot of land or house when she gets married depending on the capacity of the parents. However, it studied that these land or house gifted to a daughter is not the ones passed down from the forefathers as inheritance but the ones

which are earned or accumulated by the parents with their own effort.

### Conclusion:

In Chakhesang Naga society, it is observed that the social gatherings and festivals are found to be incomplete without equal participation from women folks. Hence, wide discourse on importance of women participation is required even in social set up as well as in curriculum settings. There is no visible preferential treatment towards male child over female child in providing education as well as health facilities. When it comes to decision making in the family and society, it is observed that there has been increase in the participation of women. Here, women must be included to be an equal partner in all decision makings in order to attain optimum social growth. It is worth noting that in Chizami and Enhulumi villages, women are also found to be members in the highest decision making bodies and unions in the village. At the family level, it is observed that the husband takes the opinion of the wife for important decisions, also, the system of inheritance known as *lhabou* is a unique system which women folks inherits. However, land and other properties can also be given to girl child so that it can enhance their security which will ultimately boost up their confidence. It is observed that male dominates family and society as a head due to patrilineal structure, yet women are also treated with love and honor in the given social structure. It is noteworthy to mention that women are also treated with love and honor in the form of festival celebrations. This act of honor must be promoted widely for overall growth of the family and society.

### References:

1. Adaina Kc. (2018), Endangering Development Issues in Naga Society, in Naga Women Union (NWU) (Ed.) *The Place of Women in Naga Society*, NWU, IWGIA, HMI.
2. Akami, K. (2022), Personal Interview, 12<sup>th</sup> November.
3. Chirhah, L. (2022), Personal Interview, 5<sup>th</sup> October.
4. Chirhah, Z. (2022), Personal Interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> October.
5. Domeh, V. (2022), Personal Interview, 5<sup>th</sup> October.
6. Elah, M. (2022), Personal Interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> December.
7. Haimendorf von Christoph (1939): *The Naked Nagas*, Methuen and Co.
8. Kapfo, K. (2021), Personal Interview, 20<sup>th</sup> December.
9. North East Network (NEN) (2016), Enquiry into the Status of Women in Nagaland, *North East Network*, Nagaland.
10. Lasuh, A. (2020), Personal Interview 10<sup>th</sup> November
11. Puro, A. (2017), *Aspects of Chakhesang Folklore: A Critical Study*, unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to Nagaland University
12. Unni, J (2009), Gender Differential in Education: Exploring the Capabilities Approach, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIV (9)

13. Vero, Y. (2020), "Gender disparities in socio-economic aspects of Nagaland" in *Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects of Nagaland* (Ed.) Eneingulou Lasuh, Woods Publishers.
14. Vero, Y. (2016), *Economic Growth and Human Development in Nagaland*, Heritage Publishing House.
15. Zeliang, I. (2020), Women in Socio-Cultural Life of the Nagas with special reference to Zeliang's festival, in *Women in Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects of Nagaland*, Eneingulou Lasuh (Ed.), Woods Publishers.

