

Raisunriang

(Newslink)

Naga Women's Union, Manipur

First Issue

Released at its 2nd Assembly

Held at Senapati District Headquarter

24th- 27thOctober, 1995

Newslink – Raisunriang

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Ms. T. Shangnu

Mr. PA. Thekho

A Word from the Editor

The dream of the Naga Women's Union, Manipur is being fulfilled with the first publication of this Newslink – RISUNRIANG. RAISUNRIANG is a term coined out of three Naga words. RAI is a Poumai term for "rope", SUN a Tangkhul word meaning "to link" and RIANG a Zeliangrong term for "rope". It literally means, "rope link rope" but it actually means the rope that links all Naga tribes and all around us.

It is intended to serve as a link a common platform, a common forum for the Nagas in particular and all others in general. So, all the right thinking citizens, are expected to make Maximum use of this Newslink in sharing ideas and views on various issues.

The status of any gender can be determined only in relationship with the other. I believe, a woman is as much as human being as a man is and both are complementary to each other.

The society is becoming more and more complex and the Nagas as well as other have to evolve the way and means to preserve their identity.

It will be best if the concept of a society is based on one's ability or quality rather than gender. This will create on equal opportunity to all and contribute their share and lead their People towards a strong and united society.

To begin with, the Union will continue the publication of Newslink atleast twice a year. The ideas and views in the articles are of the contributors.

Due to limited time and financial constrain, few of the articles are published in this issue. The rest will be published in the following issues.

A good response is expected from all tribes one and all in the interest of uplifting our society.

The Union is grateful to the Well-wishers and generous contributors in bringing out this Newslink successfully.

Dr. Gina Shangkham.

First among Naga Women

There may be many more women among the Naga tribes in Manipur who have made records in different fields or professions as the FIRST WOMEN AMONG NAGA TRIBES in Manipur. In spite of our best effort, we have limited means and sources to collect the accurate information as to who are the record breakers. To begin, we have come out with few names of Naga women in Manipur who are found to be holding the first record (subject to correction). More will be followed in the following issues. We hope, it will be worthwhile for everyone to know who are women are.

1. First freedom fighter:- Ms. Rani Gaidinliu.
2. First Lady Doctor :- MS. Pamreiphy Shaiza LMP from Dhaka Medical School, MBBS condensed course from Darbhanga Medical Collage, Bihar, 1962/63.
3. First Registered Nurse and to become Nursing Superintendent.:- Ms. Thinengla Vashum (Thomas).
4. First Matriculate:- Ms. Pamleiphy Shaiza . Passed matric from Calcutta University in 1938, 2nd Divn. From Golaghat Mission Girls, High School.
5. First MBBS :- Ms. Pamleiphy Shaiza 1958 (First MBBS among all Manipur women).
6. First BA :- Ms. Alice Shaiza, in 1964.
7. First IFS :- Ms. Primrose Raikhan, 1975.
8. First IAS :- Ms. Christianson Raikhan.
9. First Woman Pastor :- Ms. Shiningla Keishing, Pastor, Bungba Khullen B. Church 1941- 1943.
10. First Woman Announcer in AIR :- MS. Ayung Raikhan. AIR Imphal 1963.
11. First Direct MBBS :-Dr. Angamla Zimik, from Bhopal Gandhi Medical College 1966.
12. First Nominated MLA :- Ms. Shiningla Keishing (Bernes) 1967-1972.
13. First Military Nursing Service :- Colonel Paishola Keishing jointed in 1962-1988, Retired . 1992.
14. First Collage Lecturer :- Ms. Ashikho Rebecca G.P Women's College- 1978.
15. First Air Hostess :- Ms. Lungshimla Keishing – 1973.
16. First Advocate :- Ms. Chanmayo Jajo - 1983.
17. First Ph. D :- Ms. Ashikho Henia JNU – 1989.
18. First Contest MP:- Ms. Valleyrose Hungyo - 1989.
19. First Elected MLA:-Ms. Hangmila Shaiza - 1960.
20. First publisher and Editor Aja Paper:- Ms. Valleyrose Hungyo -1992.

Chief Minister

Imphal

October 20, 1995

Message

I am Happy to learn that the 2nd Assembly at the Naga Women's Union, Manipur is being held at the Senapati District Headquarters from 24th to 27th October, 1995 and that the Union's first Newslink RAISUNRIANG is also being brought out on the occasion.

I hope that the Assembly will provide an opportunity to the Naga women folk living in the far flung areas of Manipur to exchange their ideas and views. I also hope that the efforts made by the Naga Women's Union will go a long way in the preservation of the identity of each and every Naga tribe and also in the development of Naga womenfolk as a whole.

I convey my best wishes to the organisers and the participants and wish the Annual Assembly a grand success.

Sd/-

(Rishang Keishing)

G. Gaingam
President
United Naga Council
Manipur.

The 7th October, 1995

Message

I'm very glad to know that Naga Women's Union, Manipur is bringing out a newslinK known as 'Raisunriang' on the occasion of its 2nd Union Assembly Session being held from the 24th – 27th October 1995 at Senapati District Headquarter. I am also grateful to the sincere effort of the NWUM that enable to bring out this special Issue which I took not as a little thing but a new asset to the Naga Societies.

I wish the publication and the Union Assembly Session a grand success.

Sd/-
G. Gaingam

K. Samuel Jendai

MLA

Imphal

Message

First of all, I take this opportunity to greet you and congratulate you on the occasion of the first newslink called “Raisunriang” during the 2nd Annual Assembly on Oct, 24- 27, 1995, at the Senapati Headquarter, Senapati District.

It is my firm belief that all the Naga Women should be united in the bond of christs’ love; the Naga women to have the vision of providing quality of education in religion/caste, creed, race, etc. and further to lift the social, background of the women’s status in every society.

Progress and achievement of the vision of the Naga women has to be the united effort of all concerned.

With much Christian regards.

Sd/-

(K. Samuel Jendai)

M. Thohrii
Minister
Tribal Development & Hills
Manipur

Dated 20th October, 1995.

Message

I am greatly delighted to learn that Naga Women's Union, Manipur is bringing forth its Newslink called "RAISUNRIANG" during the 2nd Annual Assembly from 2th to 27th October, 1995.

The issue of such publication will greatly enhance the image of the Naga Women's Union and its socio-economic status and unity among the womenfolk. The role of women in the development of society, the state and the Country is very much significant. The world of to-day stands for equality of rights and privileges among men and women. The Naga women should not lag behind other women of this world. I do hope this publication will be able to carry this important message to every Naga women of Manipur.

I would convey my best wishes for this Newslink and the Naga Women's Union on the occasion.

I wish the publication a grand success.

Sd/-
M. Thohrii

L. Jonathan
Minister
Horticulture & Soil Conservation

Manipur – 795001
October 20, 1995

Message

I am happy to learn that Naga Women's Union is bringing out its first Newslink RAISUNRIANG during October, 1995.

I send my good-will message in this occasion and wish the task a grand success.

Sd/-
(L. Jonathan)

Professor Gangmumei Kamei (MLA)

**Dated: Imphal
the 18th October, 1995.**

Message

The Naga Women's Union has emerged as an effective organisation working for the upliftment and empowerment of Naga women. It has carved out a place for itself as a forum for protest against violation of Human Rights and social wrongs.

Naga Women have been the most sustaining factor in Naga Society. With highly educated and enlightened women social activists taking up the leadership. I am sure Naga women's Union will contribute to the general development of our society as a whole.

I am further glad that the Union is bringing out a Newslink entitled "Raisunriang" on the occasion of the 2nd Annual Assembly of Naga Women's Union at Senapati.

I wish the Newslink and the General Assembly a grand success.

Sd/-
(Gangmumei Kamei)

A.S. Arthur
Minister
Forest & Gen. Admn. Deptt
Manipur.

The 20th October, 1995

Message

It is indeed a happy augury to know that the “Raisunriang” a Newslink of the Naga Women’s Union, Manipur is for the first time to see the light of the day.

Civilisation tilts by the progress and perfection attained by women as equal partners, if not more, and history is living witness. Women in this part of the globe too endowed with knowledge, beauty and grace have made big strides leading the people ahead. Making a strong people and a strong nation is in the way women mould. Let this message strike the thought of each and every womanhood.

Sd/-
A.S. Arthur

N P M H R

Imphal, the 19th October 1995.

Message

The Naga People Movement for Human Rights pleased to know that the Naga Women's Union, Manipur is bringing out the 1st edition of a Newsmagazine called "Raisunriang" to culminate its 2nd Annual Assembly to held from 24th to 27th October, 1995 at Senapati Headquarter, Senapati District. The importance of the role of women in shaping the future of a nation is well known. And the dedication and hard work of Naga women like their counterpart in various parts of the Globe in uplifting the society which has been greatly afflicted by the gender inequalities deserves a special mention in the chapter of National Conference on Women in Beijing China which is otherwise known as 'Beijing Agenda' has spelt out a blue print for ensuring gender equity and the commitment of the conference to squarely confront the major challenges and underlying causes of women's low position today would prove a milestone achievement of our campaign against the social-permitted taboos and evils which recognises the discrimination of the girl child.

We hope and believe that the publication of such a journal is timely and the main focus should be to highlight the activities and help in identifying the areas that require greater attention and participation of both women and men in making a better society for our tomorrow.

We wish the publication a grand success.

(K.S. Paul Leo)

Convenor, NPMHR

for and behalf of

Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights.

NAGA WOMEN'S UNION, MANIPUR.

A Report

Background:

The historic declaration of 1993 as the "International Year of the World's Indigenous people's on 10 December 1992 and its commemoration by the Naga people as "Naga Week" on December 1-5, 1993 at Kohima, gave birth to the eventual formation of the Naga Women's Union, Manipur. During the Celebration, the initiatives of Ms. P. Veronica Zingkhai, President Tangkhul Shanao Long, the need to form the Union was felt. Thus the first, though informal, a meeting was held at Kohima on the 4th Dec, 1993. Many Naga women from Manipur attended. Where they shared and exchanged their ideas on the formation of the Union. It was decided to conduct a second meeting. Thus, on the 7th January 1994, the second meeting was held at the premises of Tangkhul Baptist Church, Dewlaland Imphal. The Union was born at this meeting under the name "Naga Women's Union, Manipur". A resolution was adopted on the framing of the Constitution to be prepared by a drafting committee consisting of Ms. Aram Pamei, Ms. Grace Shatsang, Ms. Valleyrose Hungyo, Ms. NL.Khangam MS. S.Adaphro and others. Follow-up

meetings were conducted with Ms.P. Veronica Zingkhai, President, Tangkhul Shanao Long as the convenor. The main architects of this Union were MS. P.Veronica Zingkhai, Aram Pamei, Ms.Valleyrose Hungyo, Ms.Grace Shatsang, Ms.Adaphro, Ms.W.Tomanlei, Ms. NL.Khangam, R. Techa, Nemi Charanga and few others friends. In the following meeting, it was decided to conduct the first Seminar cum Assembly. The Tangkhul Shanao Long volunteered to host it. Thus, on October 3-6, 1994 the first Seminar cum-Assembly was held at Ukhrul, which was attended by more than 100 representatives from 12 Naga tribes. The minutes of the proceedings of the sessions were recorded by Ms.Grace Shatsang and Adaphro.

THE SEMINAR TOPICS AND RESOURCE PERSONS WERE:

1. Naga Women and Culture- Dr. Gina Shangkham.
2. Naga Women and Education- Ms. Aram Pamei.
3. Naga and Women and unity- Ms. Valleyrose Hungyo.

4. Naga Women and Laws- Ms. Achamliu Gonmei.

“Man cannot live by bread alone”.

Thus, two spiritual ministers- Dr. YL. Mingthing and Rev. Tamthing Ruivanao enriched the delegates with spiritual food. There was an Exhibition cum Sale and was inaugurated by Ms. Masophy Nakhedei, the 1st President of Tangkhul Shanao Long.

The first general assembly was held with Miss Chonchon Luithui as the speaker. The Constitution of the Union prepared by the Drafting Committee was approved and adopted by the house after each article was read and discussed minutely.

As laid down by the Constitution, the aims and objectives of the Union are:-

1. To stand for rights and dignity of Naga Women in particular and women in general.
2. To promote traditional values.
3. To promote education of Naga women and women in general.
4. To improve the living standard of the Naga society.
5. To educate ourselves physically, mentally, socially and spiritually by conducting awareness programmes/training both short and long terms.
6. To undertake all such other activities which are as conducive to

attainment of all or any of the objectives of the Union.

The Union adopts the “gourd” as its Emblem as a symbol a container and the sustained of life force of the Nagas and “Strength and Prosperity” as its motto. A rainbow is adopted as the Union’s flag, a symbol of colourful Naga (culture) life and unity in diversity.

The Union came to be effective with the approval and adoption of its Constitution.

Based on the discussions on the seminar papers mentioned above, the house adopted at least few resolutions. They are:- Marriage, Divorce, Property inheritance. Village Administration, Equal wages, Naga common language. Forth coming general election, 4th World Women’s Conference 1995.

As pre the provision of the constitution, the Union is governed and administered by:

1. The Union Assembly.
2. The Executive Committee consisting of the elected officials, representatives of each Naga tribe and other co-opted members.

The first general election as provided by the constitution, was held during the Assembly.

The elected members accepted their post unwillingly for fear of their inability to

discharge their duties efficiently. Thus, lots had to be cast in two instances to decide their fate.

The members were elected for a term of three calendar years. The elected members are:-

1. President :- Dr. Gina Shangkham
2. Vice President :- Valleyrose Hungyo
3. Secretary :- Aram Pamei
4. Asst.Secretary :- T. Shangnu
5. Treasurer :- RS. Roselind.

The representatives of each Naga tribe are:-

1. Sng. Shanghring : Anal
2. Th. Diachim : Chothe
3. Aten Thoirei : Chiru
4. R. Khalothem : Kharam
5. Th. Shangpem : Lamkang
6. A. Kosia : Mao
7. Rn. Hanah : Maram
8. R. Techa : Maring
9. Ts. Thumdin : Monsang
10. Chanbini Nguwruw : Mayon
11. Ng. Pousi Pao : Poumai
12. K. Shimtharla : Tangkhul
13. M. Khamningkham : Tarao
14. Bk. Rebecca : Thangal
15. Achamliu Gonmei : Zeliangrong

CO-OPTED MEMBERS ARE:

1. P. Veronica Zingkhai

2. NL. Khungam
3. Grace Shatsang
4. W. Tomanlei
5. S. Adphro

ACTIVITIES:

1. The members of the union participated in a one day seminar on International Decade of the World's Indigenous people on the 10th December 1994. A paper, "Naga Women Today" was presented by Dr. Gina Shangkham who is a member of the union executive highlighting the status of Naga women and their rightful place in the society.

2. They also participated in a conference on the International Women's day, on the 8th March 1995 and Valleyrose Hungyo, a member of the union presented a paper on "Role of Women in Media".

3. They joined a fact finding team in the Namtiram incident of the 7th August 1995 under United Naga Council, consisting of NWUM, NPMHR and ZNU. The team left for Tamenglong on 23th August and returned on 27th August after 1995 after the verification on the spot and in the Hospital. A joint memorandum was submitted to DC. Tamenglong.

4. They participated in a discussion on "Community land rights and women" and joined a trip to Loktak area for study of the impact of the Loktak Project. It was found out that the effects are more negative than positive. As participants

both in the discussion and the trip, feel that development must be for the people and not vise-versa. The people should be given the choice for their own development and not impose from above. Such situations have created in the alienation of land from the people in the name of development and many of them are yet to be rehabilitated.

5. The union co-operated with the UNC, ANSAM and NPMHR, on important issues and in turn, its role was recognised by them.

6. The members of the union shared the sorrow and suffering of the victims of the ethnic violence by condemning such acts and condoling their deaths. They also paid visits to the bereaved family members and refugees.

7. Regular Executive meetings were conducted to discuss important issues. Resolutions were then adopted to take up different programmes/workshops/seminars for the women folk. However, due to the

paucity of fund, such programmes are yet to be conducted.

PROBLEMS:

The union is facing financial problems. It depends mainly on the contributions of the member themselves.

NEWSLINK:

It is the desire of all the members of the union that a news link be published quarterly to bring awareness among the people and the women folk in particular, about their status in the changing world.

CONCLUSION: The needs and problems of women are basically the same. One has to start from a grass-root level. The union intends to take up such tasks and co-operate with other organisations on issues relating to women and people in general.

Ms. Aram Pamei
Secretary, NWUM.

NAGA WOMEN MARCHING WITH TODAY'S CIVILIZATION

By: Moala Kashung.

It is a fact that modern era is the result of various influences working together. The increase of knowledge, the new social order, the development of new internationalism are some of the outstanding landmarks of the new era, whether we welcome or dislike them they have come to stay. Along with them has come a change, pregnant with possibilities, a change which is altering the whole basis of human life and silently reforming for good or bad each one of us. The change is nothing other than position of women in the social, political, economic and spiritual spheres. The old philosophies "He for God only, and she for God in him, he the bread winner, she the housewife..." are abandoned. They are now admitted to equal citizenship with men.

Women are discharging duties which a generation ago were denied to them. A man is treated by a women Doctor, advised by a women lawyer, addressed by a woman journalists. He buys things manufactured by women. As has already been said, the idea that woman must be dependent either as spinster upon her

relatives or as wife upon the husband is already falsified. It is now realised that we can reach without serious catastrophe a level on which equal partnership between the two sexes could be attained, and the endowment of mother-hood is the chief but not the sole or only profession for women. Having said much in general, let us turn to our Naga community and see whether any improvement has come to women's condition. Unlike the other women in India, the Naga women are very far from being slaves or drudges. Her position from the beginning is whit inferior to that of a man. All her life a woman enjoys a considerable freedom. A girl is given freedom to choose her own husband and the dowry system is unknown. There is in general, joint authority and responsibility between husband and wife.

No doubt the women have more freedom when compared to that of plain women (Mayangs). We have to admit with an impartial mind that the coming of Christianity along with education has considerably improved and is improving

the condition of women in Naga society Naga women are realising their own values and they are trying to develop their personality as well as status.

Indeed, Naga women can successfully do both tough and long courses of study, discharge significant service in their own professions: in politics, in social service, medical science, etc. Let us be proud of it. However, if plain women, who are being kept under purdah system can achieved so much and raise their status, the Naga women who are given much more freedom in social life should be to excel the rest of the women in any field. In order to do that we need strong determination and commitment to the profession we enter.

The church also has to contribute her share to women's combined efforts a success. It is high time for church to think seriously about restrictions she has imposed on women entering to full time ministry

because of their sex. Where a woman shows that she is being called by God and is capable and committed, the church should not refuse her valuable services on the sole ground that she is not a man.

In my conclusion, women's organisations as well as individuals should be on the alert to use every ounce of opportunity they get in public life. Most importantly, imparting higher education to talented sisters should be encouraged. Looking unto Christ our saviour and redeemer of our nation, let us join our hands as sisters in Christ and in blood, and march towards our goal. Victory is ours!

Kuknalim.

Progress Report of Anal Sinnu Ruwl (ASR) 1995-95.

Introduction:

The Anals live in a contiguous and compact area in the south of the Chandel district. They form the second largest Naga population in the district. There is an apex body of all the Anals. It is called Anal Naga Union, Manipur. Besides this, the Anal women also form a Union called “Anal Sinnu ruwl” (Anal Women Union). It was once again reorganised on the 20th Jan. 1994. The Union stands for the Anal community at all costs. The aim and objects of the Union are:

1. To follow and stand for the right and dignity of women of Anal community.
2. To promote the cultural and traditional values.
3. To improve the existing social and educational conditions.
4. To uplift the present living conditions of women in the society.
5. To stop and eradicate the evil practices adopted by the youths such as drug addiction, alcoholism, etc.
6. The Union is not affiliated to any government body.

Activities of the Union:

Since its existence in 1994, The Union worked towards the fulfilment of the aims and objectives. The following are a few of its activities.

1. Every Sunday some elected members of the Union go from village to village to reach about peace and harmony and conduct fasting programmes to the ethnic clashes.
2. On the 7th Feb. 1993, Mr. Late H. Ngamhlung was shot dead by the commandant 8th Battalion. M.R. The Union condemned and protested against the killing and demanded compensation for the dead. During the protest rally 9 girls got injured due to the firing of CRPF.
3. On hearing the news of the Indian Military operations to be conducted in the Chandel district, the Union submitted a number of memorandums to the authorities of the district.
4. On the 15th Aug. 1994, the personnel of CRPF and 6th Madras fired at random on hearing a slight blast in the heart of Chandel town. They forced the people including

women to lie down on the road in the sun whole day. The Anal Sinnu Ruwl protested against the army harassment and submitted a memorandum to Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, Chandel district. A pregnant woman had still-born child due to the army harassment.

5. About 80 members of the Union visited Salluk village which was a grouping centre of the refugees from KANCA area on the 3rd May 1994 and gave the refugees some relief materials such as cash, rice, salt, utensils, cloths, etc.
6. The Union conducted a seminar on 27th July, 1995 at Chakpi Karong village. The main theme was to revive and improve the existing cultural and traditional dresses of

the Anal Tribe. Discussions followed after each speech and finally decide to have dresses for different occasions, in accordance with the changing world.

The Union condoled the death of Mrs, ST. Toyang (47 yrs) of Chakpikarong village. She was an advisor to the Anal Sinnu Ruwl. She had rendered her valuable service to the Anal Women. We pray for the repose of her, soul.

NL. Khungam Anal

Dated 6thOct. President

1995. Anal Sinnu Ruwl (ASR)

A Brief Account of Chiru Women

B: Mrs & Mr. Chongba Thoirei

Introduction:

Chiru is an indigenous and recognised Scheduled tribe of Manipur. They are scattered over 13 villages in Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Thoubal and Senapati districts of the state. A few of them are also found in Cachar District Assam.

The Chirus have a democratic administrative set up at the village level. A common Union of all the Chirus is there at the tribe level and is the highest body. The Chiru in general have not made any significant change in the field of education or others. Economically, they are underdeveloped. The nature of the location of their villages not only in different areas but also in different district has been a stumbling block for their unity.

Chiru Women in the Traditional Society:

Chiru women are considered an asset of the society but unequal to men. The society compares women with children “Nupaang Sanai” (literally meaning women children).

Traditional Chirus have a dormitory system for unmarried boys and girls called SHER and MERE SHER respectively. Separate dormitories were constructed for the purpose in the past but today they have

become a thing of the past. The eldest among them “Nungak Ulen” takes charge over the rest. It is an informal educational institution where the girls learn anything for their life including the future. In case any problem arises among the inmates, it is solve by the leader. Both girls and boys undergo certain stages of development which is formally recognised by the society. Once the girls become seniors, they start keeping their hair long; wear traditional dresses and ornaments which are removed on their marriage. No girl can marry before this stage.

There are separate traditional dresses and ornaments for men and women. The women use 1) suiboh (loin cloth), 2) Ponbong (shawl), 3) Kongkhit (Waiste band), 4) Lukai (head cover) etc.

The role of girls during festival and other activities is interesting. During the seed sowing festival “RENREI” the girls are to carry pots of rice-beer on their head to the front of the boys’ dormitory LAMVA wearing their traditional dresses. Once they reach the spot LAMVA which is the front portion of SHER, they are automatically considered senior girls. No girl can escape this ordeal just as no one

can avoid a grave. Thus the proverb “Sherpui le thanpui...”.

As a girl, she has duty not only towards her family members but also toward other social groups. She renders service when a team consisting of unmarried boys engage itself in the agricultural activities whenever the team works, there should be four girls of which two must be junior and the two seniors. Their duty is to carry water for the boys.

A Chiru girl can marry a person of her choice though there is an arrangement marriage system. A bride price is demanded from the groom which must be paid compulsorily but as per agreement between the two families.

The girl though married is not completely cut off from her parents. In fact, the couple are to live with her parents for three years following the marriage. It is called MAAKSHA SHE. It was compulsorily but once the Chirus embraced Christianity, the practice has disappeared altogether.

Whenever there is some function, her husband must compulsorily render his service to her parents. When he kills any wild animal, he takes it to the house of his

father-in-law. There, the village elders take the full responsibility. It is an act of respect for his father-in-law.

Intra clan marriage is a social crime for the Chirus. In case of such occurrence, they are compulsorily separated and their issue, if any, must be given to the father.

There is no case of divorce among the Chirus so far. In any case, no man or woman has any right to divorce his or her partner.

As far as inheritance of property is concerned, only the sons of the family have the right to inherit. In the case of male issueless go to the nearest relatives.

In the village administration, a woman has no role to play. It has no role to play. It is the duty of men and women have no say in it.

CONCLUSION: Chiru women still live the traditional life and a few of them are aware of their rightful place in the society. Christianity has brought a lot of changes but in the case of Chirus, there is no significant change other than religion. Women need to be educate because it is they who are better guides and inspiration for their children the future of the society.

IV-UN conference on Women and NGO Forum,

Beijing, '95.

Personal Experience

By: Ms. Valley Rose Horam Hungyo

“Look at the world through Women’s eyes” was the main slogan of the NGO Forum on Women, held at Beijing Huairou from 30th August to 8th September 1995, where more than 36 thousand women from all over the world gathered.

It was one of the largest gatherings of a UN level in the history so far. It was a parallel conference to the 4th UN conference on women held in Beijing from 4th to 15th Sept. 1995, only those women working at the grassroot level of the societies all over the world through Non-Governmental organisation attended the conference. Ms. Khumying Supatra Masdit of Thailand was the convenor, Ms. Irene Santiago was the executive Director and Ms. Gertrude Mongella from Tanzania was the Secretary General. The whole arrangement was done in collaboration with the all China Women’s Federation with Madame Chen Muhua as President. The 1st UN conference on women took place at Mexico city in 1975, 2nd one was held at Copenhagen in 1980, the 3rd was held at Nairobi in 1985. The 4th one was

the one which was held in Beijing this year. In the first 3 conferences, the attendance and participation was mostly from the governmental level and very few from the NGOs. So the progress was not so satisfactory. That’s why, for the 4th conference, more networking was done in all the countries so as to bring more grass root level workers from all the corners of the world. As a result, the 4th UN Conference was not only The UN official conference but with a parallel conference for the NGOs. The NGO Forum on women at Huairou (which is about 50 km. away from Beijing) was the one I attended. The whole activities were centered on 13 themes, such as Economy Governance & Politics, Human/Legal Rights, Peace and Human security, Education, Health, Environment, spiritual & Religion, Science & Technology, Media, Arts & Culture, Race & Ethnicity and Youth. The activities were taken up in two main parts, plannery and workshops.

PLANNERY SESSIONS:

In the plannery sessions, the speeches of VIPs and others were taken up. In the opening sessions, the convenor of the NGO forum Khumying Supatra Masdit addressed the sessions. The key note address of Burma, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel peace lauret was read out. Many other distinguished ladies also addressed.

The main topics taken up in these sessions were, Approaches to Governance, Obstacles to peace and Human security including the effects of Militarization, Violence and Poverty Challenges posed by the globalisation of the economy, Media, Culture and Communication, Political participation, Violence against women, etc. Among many speakers, Ms. Kiran Bedi IPS from India was one who spoke on Violence against women (strategies).

Ms. Hillary Clinton, the US 1st lady addressed on the 6th Sept, under tight security. In her speech, she reflected the sufferings of women in India, Bangladesh, and other countries. She called upon NGOs to really come up with the mission to fulfil the dreams of women all over the world for equality. Towards the end of her speech, she also read out the poem the Indian girl wrote "Breaking the Silence".

Among many deliberations, "what to do after Beijing" was a serious concern.

WORKSHOPS:-

There were thousands of Workshops held in different times and different places throughout the conference. There were not less than 300 workshops a day by different groups on different topics. All the participants attended these workshops as per their choice and they also conduct such workshops at their appointed time. Though there are thousands of workshops, they were all centred on 13 main themes.

In one such workshop, delegates from Northeast Indian conducted a workshop on "Voices of North East Indian". There were 20 delegates from NE India, 4 from Manipur, 2 from Nagaland, 5 from Meghalaya, 4 from Assam, 1 each from Tripura and Mizoram, 2 from Arunachal Pradesh and Nandita Haksar Hongray advocate.

In the workshop, delegates spoke about their problem specially relating to arm conflicts and Militarization under Arm Forces Special Power Act in many areas, Threats from Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), Illegal migration from across the borders and the threats to the security of the indigenous people of the region, the socio-economic problems of the people, the status and problems of women and children in such a conflict situation and also about their customary practices which also discriminate women in many ways.

The delegates also displayed different items if their handicrafts, ornaments and many other special items of our customary fineries.

In the workshop, sisters from Shri Lanka and other countries also shared our grievances. There were people from Thailand, China, Japan, USA and many other countries who attended and participated in discussion during the workshop. All the participants showed and expressed their support and solidarity to the suffering and issues of the people in the region.

Another workshop was conducted on the topic “Women in conflict situation” under the banner of Naga peoples, Movement for Human rights. In the beginning, Ms. Valley Rose Horam Hungyo made an introductory speech about the Nagas. Then Miss Chanmayo Jajo spoke about the activities of the NPMHR. Thereafter, Ms Nandita Haksar Hongray presented the extend of Naga peoples’ suffering with the help of slides projectors, on the “Operation blue bird” the oinam incident in Manipur. Ms. Vitoli Sema from Nagaland presented with a Sema Naga folk song. There were a lot of exchanges of opinion from the participants. There were particular sharing from women who are in similar situation in Australia and other countries and Islands. Many other points were also focused on the rights of the people of the

region, supported by fellow friends from Myanmar and countries.

GLOBAL TRIBUNAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

There were times where Global Tribunal on accountability for women’s Human Rights was held. Another time, it was the Global hearing on crime against women. In both the sessions, there were 6/7 renowned women judges from all over the world who listened to the stories of woo confessed by the women victims. The victims who shared their testimonies in these two sessions were those women from Philippine and Korea who were victimised as comfort women during the 2nd World War by the Japanese soldiers. Their Human Rights were violated so much that they were not more than a sexual slave. There were Women who shared how they were forced into flesh trade. How they suffered during those days. There were women from Muslim community who shared about the kind of discrimination in the name of religion and customs, how the girl child was mutilated (circumcised). In the process, how many girls lost their lives and those who survive how much they suffer to remain as a sexless creature but still undergo the suffering of married life and childbirth. There were women from India who shared the agony she had gone through to kill her two daughters after they were born just because she is being ill-

treated by her husband and her in-laws for she did not bear them a son but only daughters. There were many more testimonies from all over the globe. The sad stories of those women were so heart-renting that almost everyone in the hall listening to them could not hold back their tears. We all wept with the victims.

In the Political Workshops, women were very assertive in their demand for equal participation in politics and equal representation in all the decision-making bodies. So, when we talk about equal representations, why talk about 30 or 35%? There's no point, was a strong argument during most of the political workshops. The whole thing was very interesting.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Apart from thousands and one workshops, there were many more activities at the NGO Forum site. All were not officially enlisted but these things were even more interesting and significant. There were different groups who took out processions and demonstration on many issues. There were the Tibetan women who came in different countries passports. There, they gathered and staged a peaceful (silent) demonstration with hankies on their face. They were encouraged and supported by many people who were around there.

There were also the Korean women who demonstrated on the Forum site by beating

drums, banner, songs and shouting lots of slogans against the Japanese Govt. against the Utilisation of Korean women as "comfort women" during the 2nd World War and the inhuman treatment meted out against them. There were survivors among the demonstrators and many others who fight for women's Rights as Human Rights. They demanded official apology by Japan Govt., direct compensation to the victims and their families and referendum from the Japanese Govt. The Korean women were not alone; they were joined by women from Thailand, China, Philippine even Japanese women and many others.

There was a friendly procession by women from the South Asia Countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives expressing their solidarity for each other's sufferings. They demanded the women from countries want to live peacefully, no war against our neighbours, no nuclear arms against each other's, we want peace. It was a very solemn one.

More processions from more groups like the Africans, the Europeans, the Arabians, the Lesbians, the Migrant workers and so many groups, expressing their own problems and issues and all the women shared their solidarity.

There was a time when thousands of women joined their hands and formed a

Human chain, demanding equal representations of both men and women in the decision making bodies. It was great encouragement to see such huge crowd supporting to these issues.

More people who were concerned about environment and ecology staged another demonstration. There was also a big rally against testing of Nuclear weapons. Thousands of Muslim women took out another demonstration condemning the violation of women's rights in the name of religion.

Apart from demonstration, there were a lot of exhibition and display of handicrafts, posters, books, ornaments and all sorts of information's by many NGO's and also Govt. agencies. Every participant goes around the stalls and picks up the information kits free of cost and sometimes they also buy the items as per their choice. There were free distributions of the Forum Newspaper every day. Video cassettes of the opening ceremony of the NGO Forum and the opening ceremony of the UN Forum were also made available for purchase to the delegates.

Apart from all these activities, there were solemn moments where delegates can spend some time peacefully at the peace tent and the spiritual tents. Other places like the Youth Tent and the special tent for the Aged also provided a good place for

these groups of people to discuss and share their problems and feelings. The indigenous people also got a special place to come together and reason their common cause. On the last day, the indigenous peoples Forum came out with a consensus declaration.

At another time, there was a press conference specially arrange for the people who live in troubled situations in the Asia and Pacific Islands. I was fortunate enough to have got the chance to speak to the well-attended press conference where I spoke on behalf of the North East Indian women. Special mention was made again on the unrest law and order situation, arm conflicts, the problems and aspirations of the people, threats from across the border by way of Adjustment Programs with special mention to Tipaimukh dam and Thoubal Multipurpose Dam as example, De-forestation and destruction of ecological balance and the Ethnic problems. The step motherly treatment and the attitude of the centre Govt. towards the people of this region were also mentioned. There was coverage from the BBC, voice of America, Philippine T.V and many other important papers from several countries.

At every corner and at the sides of the NGO Forum, many women put up their countries' fineries, costumes, handicrafts, etc. It looked like a market place with

many delegates thronged at the site of display and picking up their choice. It also became a place of exchange of gift with one another, with love for ever remembrance.

Every evening was a great show of cultural programs from different countries. Varieties of items were shown by the Chinese, the Africans, the Asians and the Pacific Islanders, the Europeans and every participant countries. The whole thing was so exciting. One feels so good and relaxed after a hard day's work. One feels as if we are much younger and closer to each other. I felt as if all were living in a small cosy world.

The whole thing at the NGO Forum was so encouraging and touching. There were so many thousands of people varied look, colours, size and shapes. But everyone has the same thing, the same concern in their hearts, that is "women". Upliftment of women, equality, development, peace and friendship. Yes, that was the ultimate goal of the women at the Forum.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

My personal observations on the people at the NGO Forum were even more interesting. I saw that some women from some western countries came with their babies as small as one month old. It shows how really concerned they are about the women's issues. There were many

disabled and blind people too. They were on wheelchairs and being guided by other people. The attitude of these people makes me feel that we have not really done enough for our women in our society. We need patience too in order to pull along the weak and the under privileged women in our society. More and more women from all walks of life should come forward and share the burdens if we really want to improve and become equal with our men in our society. One should not just sit and watch and criticise on what others do. All must join hands and work in their own capacity, so that we achieve our goal "equality".

THE PEOPLE OF CHINA:

In my observation, the people of China seem to be very sober. They behave well cultured. There is mutual respect and regards between male and female. One child system in China seems to be well accepted by the people. The only child, boy or girl makes no difference to them. The children are well trained and well disciplined. They are taught to be more tough and self relied in every way. They are not spoiled at all.

The Chinese people are very hard working. Every man and woman work according to their own capacity. May it be Govt. employed or as a farmer. Most of the sweepers are young boys and girls. They show no any sign of regret or shyness for

doing the job. They work with full dignity. Their clothing are so clean. Dignity of labour is a very important thing we ought to learn. Equal rights to jobs and employment are proved by them. There are so many young beautiful girls as public bus drivers. They drive the big buses so elegantly. The departmental stores and market places have both men and women as salesmen. The restaurants have all young boys and girls as attendants. The policemen dress is worn equally by both boys and girls. Very interesting.

Cleanliness is another thing I noticed during the conference. Though there were so many thousands of people, the places were so clean. No dirt is thrown at any place except in the dustbins. The public toilets were maintained so clean. The streets were so clean and so green. All along the sides of the highway were tree plantations in rows. Next to them are the crops or the fruit orchards. No any place of land is left as waste. All the hills bears a dark green look which seems like a deep forest jungles, but when you come closer, they were not just jungles, they were all fruit bearing trees of different kinds. They were all fruit orchards. Others were the vegetable gardens. That's how the people can enjoy plenty of fruits and fresh vegetables in their daily diet in plenty. It may be the reason or the secret behind their good complexion and health.

The **GREAT WALL of CHINA** was another wonder I found. It was so thrilling to climb up the top of the wall in a cable car. Standing at one of the highest point of the wall and looking over all the branches of the great wall on top of the hills makes one think how the Emperor who built the Great Wall had that idea to construct such a wonderful thing. How many people and how much labour would have involved in it. The whole branches of the great wall when joined exceed 600 kms. It is built 11 feet high and 6 feet wide. You can walk on the steps of the wall and feel yourself so high and on the top of the world. It was really so magnificent.

CONCLUSION:

On the whole, the NGO Forum opened my eyes even greater to see the need of our society. One has to really look into the dept of all the problems in order to find a way to solution. To fine solution' it is not only the women who have to work but both men and women have to share equally every joy and sorrow to make our world a paradise of love and peace.

NAGA WOMEN TODAY

By-Dr, Gina Shangkham

“Naga women, today” is a vast topic but this paper makes an attempt to highlight it, based on the Naga tradition, costumes and the changes that have taken are still taking place up to the present day. Different aspects of life are taken into account in order to understand the status of women in the past and in the present day society. For improvement of their status, the women themselves have started asserting their rightful place in the society. The willingness of their counter parts to accept their ideology will certainly boost their status and that will create a conducive atmosphere for a more or less balanced Naga society where the fundamental right of equality of both sexes will reign supreme. Any positive criticism with fruitful suggestions is welcome.

The discussion of the topic is limited to Manipur. There are not much variations with other Naga women living elsewhere as their status is concerned.

In order to understand their status in the past and in the present day, it is pertinent to take into account the role of women which may be assigned or otherwise in different basic aspects of life as well as the changes in the society. Thus their

traditional role in the social economic, political, religious and cultural life and the changes that have taken place are discussed in order to reflect the Naga women of today.

THE PLACE OF NAGA WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY:

The Naga society like many others is patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, and these traditional practices/customs give more importance to males. Thus, it is a male dominated society. Women were looked down and were just considered fit to do the household chores and for procreation. Almost all the tribes have certain common sayings or proverbs about women. Some tribes compare women with children, some having limited knowledge even though they have long hair, some compare them to vapour while men are compared with kiln, etc. Such concepts are still prevalent though there are signs of change of ideas about women. The women in the past considered themselves as cited above- foolish possessing limited knowledge, weak mentally and physically. It was therefore difficult for them to think that any women could do better than men.

Women in general felt that they should be subordinate to men and so when any women become bold, she was considered unlady like, folk. The women were afraid of their counterparts and would not dare assert their rights of equality.

Differences of treatment between the two sexes start right from birth and ends with death. A girl is expected to do the household tasks from her tender age while a boy of her age is given more freedom. A bride-price is demanded from the groom according to some tribal custom, the man must serve his in-laws for three years though it is now, a thing of the past.

In the past, a family that had more girls never lacked food because they could work better. The above indicate the benefit of having girls in the family. Thus, prosperity can be associated with women, yet they are not given equal treatment with their counterparts.

The traditional beliefs or practices are still, prevalent among most of the Nagas even though many of them are the followers off Christian religion which is a new culture. It is because one's traditional culture or inherent nature cannot be easily discarded as it has formed one's culture. In other words, what was the nature or characteristic or culture of a particular individual or tribe in the past is still and may still be unless one makes a strong effort to change it. This means, that the

present status of women is a reflection of the past though there is definitely some positive change.

On the question of divorce, the tradition practice remains the same. Thus, a woman was and still a loser when a divorce took or takes place. According to the existing custom, a man can put her away when he wants even if she is not guilty. There are some Naga tribes which as does not permit as women to divorce her husband. A man can marry more than one wife according to some tribes, and the first wife has to accept the second women to divorce her husband and it can be said that equal right is given in that respect. However, whenever a divorce takes place, it is the woman who is being driven out of the house, i.e. when a man divorces his wife, she is made to leave her children and the house and goes away with the bride price and some share of the properties that they purchased or earned together. When a woman divorces her husband, she forfeits everything such as the house, the properties, bride price and the children. She divorces her husband at her own risk while the man loses nothing except the bride price (if any). Thus, divorce of any kind is disadvantageous to woman. Children born of their union are their common properties but are claimed or given to the father as the custom says that they are at their father's mercy fathers blame their wives

when the children are not up to their expectations as if they are her own children. But when he divorces her, he claims the children as his, and she is deprived of the children. The society thinks it is justice and thus it goes on even to this day. The whole idea or belief behind this is that the society is patrilineal. Yet it cannot be denied, the fact that the children are the outcome of the common labour of both husband and wife.

When she marries, she goes to her husband's house. It is her permanent home. In some cases, she even takes her husband's surname. But in case her husband divorces her, she is driven out of her own house and goes back to her parents. Her house is where her husband is and if he does not want the house. So, he should leave the house and go somewhere. She has no other house other than the house she had chosen on her marriage, she left her parents' house and it no longer is hers. So, it is justified and right that whoever divorces the other should leave the house. The Naga women were aware of this injustice but did not raise their voice as they thought that it was the natural and social practice. However, today they have decided to fight for their rights and after forming a Union, in Ukhrul on October 3-6, 1994, they took a resolution on divorce. "It has been observed that whenever a divorce takes place, it is the women who

suffered more. A resolution was adopted that whoever (man or woman) divorces his wife or her husband, should leave the house and the properties for the one who is being divorced (resolution no, 2). Just as a woman forfeits everything when she divorces her husband the man must also forfeit everything when he divorces his wife. This is justice to both".

THE ROLE OF NAGA WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC LIFE:

By tradition, women were and are considered housewives while men are to be the head of the family. They are expected to do all the household chores starting from their childhood while boys are given freedom. This traditional practice is however, not very popular among many educated parents. Yet, there is a tendency to expect service from girls and boys are still given the preference to study than the girls particularly among the uneducated parents. Since there are many uneducated parents, the old concept about girls and boys remains unchanged, and the girls are thus neglected. The reason given by such parents is economic problem. So long as the girls are neglected and uneducated, the Naga society will remain imbalanced. The development of a society requires the contribution of each and every individual irrespective of sexes and religion.

The role of a married woman in the family is very great such as bearing and rearing

her children, performing all the household chores besides tending to all the needs of the family members. Even if she is a bread earner, she does the above task. However, as one cannot do all the work, a helper is engaged who in turns is help. This system is found in the families where the mother is a working lady.

A woman is concerned about the well-being of her parents even after her marriage. If she happens to be a working lady before her marriage, she maintains the house. She may construct house or buy some lands but, on her marriage they belong to her parents or brothers. She gets nothing as per custom though she can be gifted by her parents. Her own labour is gifted to him and not given to her as her share because she has no right of inheritance. Today's Naga women are aware of this custom and during their assembly in Ukhrul on 3-6 October 199, the adopted a resolution on this property inheritance issue, "Resolved to demand for equal right of inheritance of family/parental moveable or immovable properties for both male and female (Resolution No. 3).

With the concept on belief that women are weak, they are given less wages. This is injustice, and the Naga women in their meeting, call upon all the Naga communities that women should be given

equal wages with men for equal works (Resolution No. 5).

POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN:

Political arena from time immemorial has been a taboo for women, and it continues even to this day particularly in the village level. They had and have no say in the village administration. They were and are still not permitted to observe their proceedings of the village administration let alone participate in it. Yet, some tribal customs would not accept any unmarried candidate for the village council. Again some tribes would not permit a man who marries another woman not belonging to his tribe to be their head. These indicate the importance of women in the village councillors. There were times when women would influence their husbands to decide certain cases. In other words the women are behind the successful decision makings in the village in some case.

The constitution of India enshrines the fundamental right of equality of both sexes. This enables the women to cast their votes and choose their representatives to the state Assembly and the parliament.

On the other hand, no Naga tribe concedes this right to women on the village level. Naga women have contested for the parliamentary and state Assembly in 1989 and 1990 respectively. Ms valley Rose Hungyo contested in the last parliamentary election in 1989 and Mrs Hangmila Shaiza

in the Manipur state Assembly in 1990 and was elected but was not given any portfolio in the ministry. No Naga women contested in the last state Assembly.

If the constitution of India gives equal rights for all the citizens, why are the Naga tribes still imposing this taboo to women as far as village administration election is concerned? The Naga women feel that it is injustice and demand equal participation in the village decision making. The resolution adopted in this connection by the Assembly of the Naga women in Ukhrul says “Resolved to call upon all the Naga tribes that women should be included in the village administration (Village Authority/ Council) as is done in other aspects of social life” (Resolution No. 4, dated 3-6 October, 1994).

ROLE OF NAGA WOMEN IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE:

In the practices of the traditional religion, no women could perform any ritual relating to the village though she could do for an individual patient. Some tribes keep a sacred place for performing ancestral worship. However, no widow is permitted such privilege. Thus, inequality even in religious matters is maintained. Based on this practice, it was earlier believed that only men should take up the religious leadership. In fact, till late a man was a secretary for women association. This idea has however become a thing of the past

among some tribes because women had taken up the task. According to the Christian doctrine all are children of God and are equal before Him. Yet, the male dominance in religious matters is not absolutely absent.

ROLE OF NAGA WOMEN IN THE SOCIO CULTURAL LIFE:

The Naga women so far have played various roles whether assigned or otherwise in the society and accepted their subordinate position to their counterparts. However, with the change of value system due to education, modernisation, technology, etc., the women themselves feel the need to take their rightful place in the society in different aspects of life thereby change the old traditional beliefs of inequality of sexes. They are not against the whole traditional system. In fact they are for upholding some of the social practices particularly on the exogamous system of marriage and adapted a resolution. “The Naga women are aware of the unfortunate prevalence of endogamy (intra clan marriage), which is not the Naga custom. It was therefore resolved that all Naga should strictly abide by the Nagas custom of exogamy (i.e. marriage out one’s clan) as it is the traditional custom of the Nagas. We took this resolution on this day reaffirming this custom”. It was further resolved that those who break this custom should not be given

any leadership in the society. Thus, the Naga women want to preserve the traditions and customs which are worth and important cultural heritage.

Every Naga tribes has its own unique traditional culture, costumes, ornaments, other article etc., with varieties of colours, design size and numbers. Each of them has a significance of any important event. Creations or designing particularly of costumes were and are done mostly by women. It was and still they who wove and weave the different traditional colourful clothes. Again, it is they who exhibit the typical costume of their tribe more than their counterparts. Very often a lady is known by the dresses she wears. Yet, the wearing of her tribal costumes is not a guarantee that she will be in her original tribe because the society expects her to change her clan or tribe to the one she is married. The choice is hers.

NEW CHALLENGING TASKS:

The Naga society in the past was a simple one confined mainly to the villages. The women played their role complacently in the political and religious affairs. Simplicity and ignorance of women of those days can be served the purpose. However, the whole social set up has undergone changes. Life is not confined to villages only. Even if it is so, the very village society has changed to a complexed one. The change is a natural phenomenon

and one cannot check it. But effort must be made to check certain unwanted social elements posing serious threats to the society. The situation poses new challenges to the people in general and women in particular because with the complexity of life, the role of women too has increased as they are a part of the society.

Today, a number of Naga women are found in all walks of life. Wherever and whatever positions they hold, they have duties towards their society and many of them are aware of this.

The Naga society which once was dominated by the male-folk pointed out earlier had done injustice to women-folk. The Naga women are not demanding a reversed position but a balanced society where both sexes are treated equally.

It is a well-known fact that there was no common women's forum though each tribe had its own respective organisations. Again, the formation of the tribe level women organisations followed that of the tribe-level organisation or Unions spearheaded and dominated by the men. Further, the need to form such organisations arose out of some common issue or events. Thus, the celebration of Naga Week in Kohima last year (1993) inspired some prominent Naga ladies to form a common Union. Henceforth, they made all efforts to materialise their ideas.

The Union was formally formed in Ukhrul on the occasion of the 1st seminar cum Assembly of the Naga women of Manipur after deliberations of talks on different aspects such as Naga women and culture, Naga women and education, Naga women and unity and Naga women and law.

The seminar papers highlighted the status of women and indirectly helped or facilitated the formation of the Union already conceived of. The women's union was formed for the first time under the title "NAGA WOMEN'S UNION, MANIPUR". After the approval of the constitution of the union the office bearers and executive members were elected for a term of three years. The assembly adopted some important resolutions which have been mentioned earlier on marriage, divorce, property inheritance, equal wages, participation in the village administration, etc.

The constitution speaks of their aims and objectives which are for the welfare of women in general and Naga women in particular. Their emblem is a "gourd" which is a container, sustainer and carrier of the most unavoidable and indispensable substance- water which is the life force itself.

Drawing from above background of the essential Naga life, the Naga women's Union, Manipur had adopted their motto.

"STRENGTH AND PROSPERITY"

They also adopted a rainbow as their flag. It represents the different colours with unique cultural heritages of the different tribes of Nagas.

Under the banner "Naga Women's Union, Manipur", the Naga women have started asserting their right (already mentioned) besides taking up new challenges to combat social evils such as immoral activities, drug trafficking, illicit wine production for commercial purpose through the respective Naga tribal women organisation (Resolution No. 9, Ukhrul, 3-6 Oct., 1994).

The most recent and serious problem in Naga society is the impact of militarism and its continuity. It has created nightmares and insecurity among the women and children. Women feared wild animal in the past. Today they fear army personal. The fear psychosis created among the women will continue for generations to come. It is a challenging task before the union.

They have another challenges before them namely, the treatment meted out towards the unmarried and divorced women. The society looks on these women at the same time considers them to be a family assets of their unmarried brothers. This itself creates inequality as freedom is not given to them. Freedom of both the sisters-in-law is curbed by the presence of the other in the same house. A choice should be given

to the unmarried women as she should not be a burden (not necessarily in terms of money) to her sister-in-law nor should the latter be to her. The concept of the Naga society should change and she should be treated as a full-fledged individual with her own aspirations and freedom and not take her for granted. When the aspirations and

freedom of anyone are curbed, rebellion is to come.

The aspirations of the indigenous Naga people will be achieved when men and women are given equal opportunity in all aspects of life.

SIGNIFICANTS OF EMBLEM & MOTTO OF NWUM

Right from the beginning of life, water has been the most unavoidable and indispensable substance to Naga life. Be it in our daily life in ceremonial sacrifices/ritual performances, purification of the self, exorcising the evil spirits. The use of water attains a cosmic significance in the life of Naga in that it cleanses both the physical and spiritual world. In short, water is the life force itself and gourd the container and carrier of life force, having close affectionate attachment to every Naga women. In the like manner, Naga women are the repository of all the positive qualities of our society the elemental human feeling and emotion, love, peace, stability and prosperity, sustainer and carrier of the sacred and intrinsic Naga being. And they must, of necessity and strength the Naga life force itself. Drawing from the background of the essential Naga life, Naga Women's Union, Manipur has come into existence with the Motto "Strength & Prosperity".

FLAG:

All primary and secondary colours fused together from the beautiful Rainbow. The Naga tribes are each a distinct and colourful tribe together as enriching the colourful Naga Nation. Each tribe shall remain distinct as each colour of the rainbow is distinct and yet be part of that

unity of beauty in diversity: the Naga Nation. Naga women are custodian of this colourful Naga life and shall remain to be so enriching the colourful unity of the Nagas, under the blue sky like our flag flying high free in the air.

USES OF GOURD:

There are different types of gourds with different sizes and shapes. Some are edible and form food items while others are bitter and are used as containers of rice, food stuff, water, rice-beer, etc. and still others particularly are used as mugs and musical instruments. It is used at home, at work on the fields, journeys, hunting, during festivals and rituals. A gourd is believed to be a source of wealth. It is therefore, kept in the granary. It is a sapi-tong i.e. the jar of the goddess of paddy (Sapi). It is a source of paddy itself. Rice is therefore stored. Thangal tribe compares a prosperous clan with a gourd. Rice-beer is believed to increase its quantity when kept in gourd. Seeds are preserved in it because it is insect free. When a child is born, the placenta is kept in it. It is used as a medicine when stung by a bee. For any kind of ritual gourd is used as a carrier of rice-beer to be offered to the deities. Carrying Rentei festival (Chiru), by the girls signifies a stepping step in their life. They become members of girls' dormitory.

The use of gourd continues even after one's death. Thus, a gourd must be given to the departed soul by keeping it over the grave.

'A Girl is Born'

But that's not fair, mother!
You never scold my brother!
When he stays out late
To gossip with his friends
You never make objection
You never take offense
But when I came a little late
I find you raging hot
Your son can never do a wrong
But I'm always at fault!
With your brother don't vie!
But why, mother, tell my why?
Because he's a male and you're a female, that's why!
So what? What difference does it make?
Of course, it makes a lot of difference. He needs to learn
About the world. He has to go out and earn a living.
Your Daughter, shall be married and gone for good.

[From 'A Girl is Born' by Jyoti Mhap sekar,
Published in VENA JOURNAL].

Report of the Maringa Napuiya Yinglam Maring

(M.N.Y.M)

Before giving a report of the Maring Napuiya Yinglam Maring, it is pertinent to mention about the background of the Maring tribe. The Marings are found in two districts namely Chandel and Senapati. In the former district, they form the highest Naga population occupying a contiguous and compact area. Today some of their villages are in ruin due to the ethnic violence. A number of Marings were killed, many got injured and many were rendered homeless as a result of the destruction of their houses and villages. They are yet to be securely settled.

HOW THE MNYM CAME INTO EXISTENCE AND ITS AIM

With the above mentioned background the need to form a Union was felt among the women particularly the social workers, teachers and other members. Thus, the maring Napuiya Yinglam Maring was formed on the 16th March, 1993. The Union at the beginning concentrated on the atrocities torture and violation of human rights by the Indian army. However, its role has been broadened. The Union thus takes up in different aspects of social development such as upliftment and safe

guarding of the status and the rights of the women folk.

IT'S JURISDICTION

The Union is the highest Maring women organisation. It extends its co-operation to other women organisation and functions under the Naga women's Union, Manipur. The present Union covers 64 villages with a population of 22100 souls.

OFFICE BEARERS.

The MNYM functions under the elected members such as President, Secretary and 13 members.

ACTIVITIES

1. MNYM organised relief programmes for the affected people. It is also helped 18 affected villages and 35 injured persons.
2. In 1993, the MNYM received some relief materials in kind from Mayon, Monsang, Lamkang, Tarao, Chothe, Anal tribes and Tangkhul Church women society Imphal. The MNYM collected rice from some Maring villages. The above relief materials were distributed to the affected families.
3. The MNYM participated in the first conference of Naga Women's

Union, Manipur at Ukhrul on 3-6 Oct. 1994. It is also participate in the protest rally at Chandel on 14th May, 199 and 7th June, 1995. The Union also participated in the solidarity March on human rights organised by committee on Human Rights at Imphal. The Union gave full cooperation to the peace march team from Imphal to Moreh in 1-3 March 1993.

The Union is grateful to Ms. Valley Rose Hungyo for the concern and service rendered for the welfare of the victims of the Marings.

CONCLUSION:

The Maring women Union has started to realise that the development of a society can be achieved only when women are given equal opportunity for any task.

N.H.Joylita
Secretary MNYM
7-10-1995

FATEFUL WOMEN

By:- SINA KHAYI
Research Scholar, M.U

Women are wiser than men
They know less and understand more,
Men's progress depends on women's –
and is part of it,
for the women's cause is men's cause.

The most beautiful creation-
Humble, weak and kind,
The most beloved company
Softening every dry bones
With love and understanding,
Giving to the world,
hope and life
Her noble character.
Worth far more than rubies.
She is a friend, teacher, saint.
A blessed gift to the world.

Alas! The world fail to recognise 'Equality'
She is suppressed, dominated
the scripture too enjoin a women
to regard her husband as lord.
"The lord made them all" did never exist.
considering women inferior beings,
they made no bones about their conviction

Blessed mother is but a mere human machine.
This indefatigable human machine,
that start working before the crack of dawn,
toil the whole day sweating with blood
Just to nourish her loss-

with leftover crumb in the shadow
ending her day scrubbing the utensils
late into nights.

Forty eight years of our Independence
Yet almost every year stratum of our Social life.
Man id there to lord it over her
Few educated brave souls fights this 'injustice'
Isolated efforts are too scattered
too few to make any difference,
Leaving it to let alone change policy.
Deep down women remain
Inspite of her pretention to liberal thinking

The same obedient slave
of the decadent customs and traditions
that our grandfathers were.
That old engrained attitude die hard.
The wretched belief still exist.
Yet, the best man and women.

THE TARAO WOMEN

The Tarao tribe is found mainly in Chandel district of Manipur. Though a few in numbers, the Tarao have created a place among the Naga tribes in the field of education, cultural activities and other professions and thus are an asset of the Naga society.

The Tarao women's Society:

The Tarao women have great regard for their menfolk. They do not make their men do the women's work such as carrying water, weaving, cooking, washing, etc. They do not allow them to touch women's clothes particularly the loin-cloth. They do not speak among men as a sign of respect for them. The married women even to this day do not address their husbands by name. The women cannot touch men by their foot.

The creativities of Tarao women:

Tarao women are well known for their weaving particularly in designing. They make different kinds of beautiful, colourful and intricate designs. In olden days, they made yarn out of a plant, *bullathing* by boiling the bark of the plant with ash. They weave into clothes called *bullapun*. It is use to this day.

That the Tarao women could create designs is known from the back ground of some of their shawls. *Leijingpun*, a traditional shawl was originally design by a Tarao women. It is said that once a Tarao

girl got in love with a Python in a human form. When her parents came to know of it, the snake was tackfully killed. The girl made the designs of the Python on a cloth as a token of love and remembrance. There is another shawl *Lukphaivom* which got its name out of the designs of a burnt basket *Sikuk*. It is said that basket which was completely burnt to ashes. The women, however, made a beautiful design out of it and wove a shawl. It came to be known as *Lukphivom*. Another shawl *Langamshunpun* was designed by a Tarao woman by looking at the stars. Besides the above mention shawls, there are many other shawl and dresses. Looking at these beautiful and colourful designs of the Tarao costumes, it will not be an exaggeration to the state that Tarao women excel the rest of the Naga tribes.

A festival of Tarao women:

There is an annual festival for the Tarao women. It usually falls on the 2nd Saturday of October. It is exclusively their festival but share their happiness with the menfolk to whom they extend their invitation and make the festival a complete success. In the pre-Christian days, they used to prepare rice-beer for the festival.

**Ms. M. Khamningkham,
Tarao**

Zeliangrong Folktale on Gourd

Amang was a very poor orphan and yet that heavens had destined a fortune for him. Left a complete destitute, there was none to show a little sympathy to him except his only aunt. As time went on his aunt also got married and he was left alone to his fate with no one to care for him. One day his aunt called him and advised to lay a trap near the granaries in the village outskirts where he could catch a bird for his meal if fortune would smile on him.

As the heavens had willed, lady luck smiled on him that day and he caught a wild dove at his trap. After roasting the bird, Amang opened up the lump in its throat and found it filled with paddy grains. Amang did not have a single seed to sow, and his aunt advised him to preserve those paddy grains taken out from the throat of wild dove to use as seeds. His aunt also advised him to slash a jhum field. Accordingly Amang slashed a vast expanse of a hill for his jhum field. His villager mocked at him saying that even though he did not have a single seed to sow he is cutting a big jhum field. Seed sowing season came and Amang burnt up his jhum field and sowed the few seeds taken from the throat of the bird in his expanse field where upon his villagers

took him for a mad man and laughed at him. Germinating time came but his seed didn't germinate paddy plants and instead they sprouted and gourd plants appeared.

Once again Amang became a laughing stock in his village just because he was an orphan as the villagers began to mock at him saying that the heavens had destined an ill-fate on him as his seeds would not germinate paddy plants but gourd plants.

However, Amang kept on weeding and nurturing his gourd plants lovingly and tirelessly. As time went on, the vast expanse of his field was completely covered by a creeping gourd plant and it began to bear hundreds and thousands of gourds. One day Amang slashed opened one of the many gourds and much to his surprise he found that the gourd was filled with paddy grains. Confused yet happy at the discovery he informed of it to his aunt. His aunt now instructed him to build an exceptionally large granary. The gourds became ripped and Amang gathered them to his granary. Now his large granary was filled with paddy grains.

On one fine morning Amang announced to the surprise of his villagers that he had arranged a Feast of Merit and everyone was invited. None did the villagers knew

that poor Amang could afford such a large feast. Some people even thought that he was cutting a practical joke and they did not turn up for the big feast. Only the poor, aged women and children turned up for the feast Amang was giving. So Amang urgently, invited all the living beings

animals of the forest, birds of the air and fishes and crabs of the river and seas and they came. The feast turned out to be a greatest event and poor Amang (now rich) was blessed by everyone who came.

2ND EDITION

A BRIEF REPORT OF THE NWUM second Annual Assembly.

In the second Annual Assembly of the Naga Women's Union, Manipur which was held at the Indoor Stadium, Senapati Dist. Headquarter from October 24-27, 1995. 291 women registered representing the women's Organisations of the tribes: They are:-

1. Anal Sinnu
2. Chiru Women Organisation
3. Chothe Women's Union
4. Lamkang Snu Lop
5. Maram Women's Union
6. Maring Napuiya Yinglam
7. Mao Naga Women Welfare Association
8. Monsang Union women society
9. Moyon Sanuw Ruwrkkeh
10. Poumai Naga Women Organisation
11. Tangkhul Shanao Long
12. Tarao Chotnujurei
13. Thangal Women's Union
14. Zeliangrong Women Society.

The host District represented the largest contingent and gathered more than a thousand in every session.

Its theme was the "NAGA WOMEN IN THE CHANGING WORLD" relevant to the Nagas who are also at the threshold of entering into the 21st century with much change taking place in their society some for good and some other for their destruction. The challenges of the theme to the Naga women are to take advantages of the changes for their growth, goodness, happiness, prosperity and to keep on developing with the changes.

On arrival in the afternoon a warm welcome was accorded to the delegates who came to attend the Assembly and also a formal reception was offered to the four delegates of Manipur to the 4th World Women's Conference in Beijing in September, 1995 in which the

participants in the World Women's Conference shared their experiences with and put forth challenges before the delegates.

Thereafter as per the schedule there was an Informal Meet of all the delegates which served as a breakthrough from the stereotype formal programmes. The informal meet gave them opportunity to share their talents with one another with open minds and to know each other as the Naga Women came from different corners and dialectical groups of Manipur.

There were three seminar sessions on the following topics with the following resource persons:

1. Valleyrose Hungyo- Women's Equal Participation in the decision making bodies.
2. Dr. Gina Shangkham- Naga Women and the effects of Drug iambuses
3. Chanmayo Jajo- Naga Women and Human rights

The main resolution and commitment taken during the meet was to put more effort for bringing peace within and without the state. The women resolved to appeal the masses to shun any more shedding blood. To this effect a joint Press Release of the Naga Mothers' Association, Nagaland and the Naga Women's Union, Manipur was issued as a follow up action of the informal meeting of the two organisations held during the meet. They resolved to have common understanding and work jointly for peace and harmony.