

CHAPTER 6

A CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST VIEW OF THE ANGAMI CUSTOMARY LAWS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses about the customary laws and the status of women in traditional Angami society, and the second section about the influence of modernization on customary laws and the status of women in the contemporary Angami society.

While discussing about customary laws and the status of women, Fernandes, Periera and Khatso (2005) are of the opinion that the general view of customary laws shows that tribal women enjoy a higher status compared to women in the plains. Customary laws also give women significant economic rights and impose burdens on them. They say that, to some, the burdens overweigh their rights while others view that the rights make them equal to men. However they are of the view that the truth lies in the middle. The reason which substantiates their view is quoted below:

Their societies are egalitarian in the sense that they are less stratified than “advanced” communities. So tribal women enjoy more rights than what those in other societies do but they are not equal to men (p. 46).

The status of women as Kharutso (2005) has pointed out, are socially conditioned and perpetuated by social norms and cultural practices where patriarchy and male dominance are pervasive. She also stated that any improvement in the status of women can be achieved only through empowerment (p. 4).

6.2. ANGAMI CUSTOMARY LAWS AND STATUS OF WOMEN

The word ‘status’ is often used as a synonym for role in sociological literature. Some refers it to the legal rights enjoyed by women in marriage, inheritance and participation in public affairs whereas some others refer it to the social attitudes of men and the existing customs and traditions (Ovung 2009, p. 94). Status may be based upon the differences of birth, wealth, occupation, political power and race. According to Mac Iver and Page (1950), often status is determined by a combination of two or more of these factors (p. 353). ‘Status of women’ in general refers to the position of women in society where the rights and duties are attached to that position. Such rights and duties constitute roles so that every status has a role. The status and role of women could be identified from the division of roles where men and women are assigned different sets of role (Kharutso 2005, pp. 1-2). Christina (2002) remarking the roles played by both men and women said that the basic principle of differentiation is that man is a ‘provider’ and woman a ‘home maker’ (p. 239). Roy (2010) points out that the two words ‘status’ and ‘role’ are two separate concepts but are inseparable. To him status is a collection of rights and duties and can be expressed through a means of an individual. On the other hand role represented the dynamic aspects of status (p. 6). According to Davis (2000), status is our relative position within a group, while role is the part which society expects us to play in a given status (p. 86).

Women in the traditional Angami society were confined to the four walls of their house. The roles of both men and women were equally important but sometimes customs and traditions did not give women equal rights in the society. A woman in traditional tribal society enjoyed equal status with men was a general belief but the working of customary laws especially among the Angamis was biased against women. The status of women is determined by social institutions, norms, beliefs and taboos. Visto (2003) opines that it is custom and not law that restricts women (p. 58). According to Kharutso (2005), the status of women in traditional Angami society could be identified by examining the roles performed by women (p. 1).

6.2.1. Domestic Status

Thenumia (women) of any village in the Angami performed similar roles and duties in the traditional society. Women in the traditional society were expected to perform all the household works. They were not allowed to go out of their homes and were suppressed. Compared to men, women worked seven times more; taking care of children, domestic animals, household chores and most of the work like agricultural activities. While returning from the field they carry baskets on their back and their babies in front. Women's position in a family as well as in social life occupies a subordinate position in Angami society. They are usually confined to their homes and field and have no voice in the day to day affairs in the village (Personal interview on 23rd February, 2013).

Women in traditional Angami society rose before daybreak, took care of the needs of her household; worked willingly with her hands; gathered wool and flax and spun it into yarn; planted vineyards; stretched out her hands to the poor and the needy; made warm clothes for her children; and made fine linen and sold it. The women were confined to their houses and seldom moved outside them and their lives were restricted (Nath 2004, p. 252). Visto (2003) quoting from Butler on the role of women wrote, "their duty is to fetch the firewood, draw the water, cook the food, and brew the liquor besides working in the fields and weaving

clothes at home” (p. 82). According to Fernandes (2009) a woman in traditional society was involved in children’s socialization where as men prepared boys into adulthood (p. 373).

As discussed above, in the traditional society daughters were expected to do all the household work and help their parents in agricultural work whereas sons were sent to schools. Daughters were often not allowed to go to school because they would get married and go to another house and all expenses incurred in connection with their education would not bring worthwhile return to their parents unlike the sons. The daughters were expected to learn domestic and agricultural works while with their parents, as they would run a household after their marriage (Personal interview on 20th April 2013). In Angami society girls were expected to get up early in the morning, attend the household works and look after their younger siblings. To the girls, the family was a training ground for them to learn how to run a household after their marriage. The society appreciated girls who performed both household and agricultural works with alacrity. Thus in Angami society women with enthusiasm in work were sought for marriage. Physical beauty was one of the least things that Angami men looked for in ladies. The qualities that men looked for in women were honesty and integrity, diligence and swiftness and keenness in work, hospitality, a kind and generous at heart, respectful of parents and elders, considerateness and awareness of subjects which were considered taboo and disgraceful in the society.

6.2.2. Marriage and Divorce

The Angami society is a monogamous society. Marriage in traditional Angami society was arranged marriage. Marriages were arranged with the help of a go-between. Women, mostly the paternal aunts of the boys acted as the go-between (Personal interview on 4th May, 2013). A girl was allowed freedom of choice, parents never resorted to force and cases of girls married against their wishes were rare (Hutton 1921, p. 168). Most of the marriages happened from the time of *liede* (initiation of harvest) to *tsiakra* (initiation of sowing seeds). Marriages took place only at night in the traditional Angami society. The bride was accompanied to the house of the groom at night by her *pelipfuko* (men in her peer group),

one of her friends and two lasses known as *chüchü* and *zuchü*. A woman from the groom's side handed over 4, 6 or 8 clean and uncut spades to the girl's house as a sign of pacification on the night of the marriage. On the wedding night, the bride carried her basket filled with *zu* (rice beer) and went to the groom's house. The two lasses accompanying the bride to the groom's house also carried their gourds filled with *zu*. The younger lass filled her gourd with *zu* from her own house while the older lass brought hers from the bride's house. While leaving the groom's house, the older lass was given a cock and the younger lass a hen. In traditional Angami society, marriages were kept secret till the wedding day or a few days after the wedding. After the disclosure, the villagers and the girl's peer group went to the house of the newly married couple in a procession. The girl's peer group carried their baskets filled with grains while the menfolk led the procession with *kehu* (a sound made by menfolk during processions) (Neichüriazo 2003, pp. 9-11; Personal interview on 4th May, 2013).

Divorce was common in traditional society. It could be due to adultery committed either by the wife or husband or due to misunderstanding which sometimes involved the whole village. Some divorces took place on mutual agreement; it could be mainly due to the husband and wife or due to the barrenness of the wife (Vitso 2003, pp. 68-69). Hutton (1921) writing on the Angamis said, divorce was easy to obtain, incompatibility of temper was a quite sufficient reason for divorce (p. 168). Incompatibility was one of the main reasons for divorce because in traditional society marriages were arranged. In such cases of incompatibility between the couple, *udzüzei* (very gloomy and depressed) was the expression whereby the couple could not even face each other which eventually led to divorce. If a couple divorced due to the infidelity of the wife, the law was very severe on her. Her *tsüchü* (hair rolled together in a bun) was cut off, the tip of her nose chopped off, she was stripped almost naked, with only her *neikhro* (inner garment) and sent back to her parents or brothers. On the other hand, the husband was applauded for his extra marital affair and infidelity. The extra marital affairs of men were looked upon with respect and meant to raise their status. The *keshüni* (loin cloth) of normal men were decorated with three lines of white cowries, but the *keshüni* of men engaged in extra marital affairs were

decorated with four lines of cowries as a mark of their male prowess and signifying their higher status in the society (Personal interview on 13th April, 2013; Kelhou 1993, p. 56).

6.2.3. Social Status

Women in traditional Angami society were often overshadowed by the dominant patriarchal society which was deeply rooted and bounded by the customary laws. The world of men and women was separated in the traditional society which could be seen in their dress, manners and general behavioral patterns (Vitso 2003, pp. 60 & 84). Girls were not permitted to grow their hair until their marriages for long hair signifies their marital status. It was a taboo for girls to grow their hair before marriage. Their heads were shaved and girls remained bald till they got married. If a girl did not get any proposal, she performed a marriage ritual by taking rice beer and rice wrapped in banana leaf and went to the *kharu* (village gate), and pronounced *a n ki nyi ta tuo we* (I am marrying you), then poured the rice beer and offered the rice to the *kharu*. After performing the ritual, which signified her marriage to the *kharu*, she was permitted to grow her hair. In some cases, when a girl remained bald way past the marriageable age, she married any person to earn her hair. This practice of marrying any person to grow/earn hair was known as *kiya tha pfü* (earning one's hair). Therefore, there were many cases where women married just to grow their hair and affirm their status in the society (Personal interview on 26th May, 2013).

In the traditional society, social restrictions were imposed on women even in food habit and dresses. Married women were not permitted to wear the *lora mhushü* (white wrap around) because it was worn during marriage and could be worn only by unmarried girls. Women were not allowed to eat the head of wild animals, small wild animals like squirrel, wild cat, wild rat etc., crow, eagle and those animals killed by other wild beasts. The reason was because; it was women who took out the grains from the *chünuo* (huge basket used for storing in the granary) for drying, therefore, the belief was if women eat those foods the grains or crops become excessive and the store receded fast. Hutton (1921) in his, *The*

Angami Nagas, mentioned four taboos and *gennas* observed if women eat the above mentioned them:

- 1) The flesh of animals killed by wild beasts.
- 2) The flesh of monkeys and all tree-living animals (except birds).
The reason given for these two *gennas* is that it is the woman who gets the paddy for household consumption from the paddy baskets where it is stored, and that if she indulges in the foods named the consumption of paddy will become extravagant and the store quickly used up.
- 3) The he-goat – because of his libidinous propensities, which it is undesirable that women should acquire.
- 4) The kite – because their livers will swell, if they eat it, like that of the kite, and because they will want to seize upon and bite living things (pp. 94-95).

6.2.4. Laws of Inheritance

Angami customary laws do not allow women to inherit ancestral property. It was an age old practice even though there was no written law about the inheritance. Women were not entitled to inherit any ancestral property like land, house etc., (Kelhou 1993, p. 55). Ancestral property could be both movable and immovable. Apart from ancestral property, women could inherit acquired property.

Christina (2002) classifying the movable and immovable property wrote:

The chief immovable forms of property are the house, the residential site and all form of land. Land itself is a comprehensive term as it includes arable land, water channels and forest. Chief items of movable property includes agricultural implements and tools, personal objects like clothing, ornaments, livestock, stores of food grains and any other item that is considered valuable (p. 241).

Unmarried daughters could use the parents properties but do not have right to sell the property even though it was acquired by the parents. But once they get married they lose the right to make use of their parental properties if it was not given to them. On the other hand sons have complete control of all the properties whether ancestral or acquired by parents. As discussed in the third chapter, if there was no male offspring, the ancestral property was

given to the father's nearest male relative. In some special cases, under such circumstances, a girl inherited the ancestral property. In such a case of a girl child inheriting the ancestral property, after her marriage she was permitted to stay with her husband and children in her portion of the ancestral house that she had inherited. However, in a special case like this, the patriarchal system required a symbolic transfer of a small piece of land and some household articles to the immediate male kin who traditionally perform the funeral rites. A widow was permitted to stay in her husband's house with her children. If she had male offspring the ancestral property was inherited by him. But if she did not have any male offspring from the deceased husband she was not entitled to inherit her husband's property but she was permitted to use it so long as she survived and continued with her widowhood (Christina 2002, pp. 242-243).

6.2.5. Economic Status

The occupation of women in the traditional Angami society were first house wives and mothers, and secondly farmers (Kelhou 1993, pp. 55-56). The economic role of men and women were distinguished from the fact that women were confined within the house and men engaged in activities outside the house (Vitso 2003, p. 69). Although, men were considered as the 'bread earners' and women as 'home makers' (Christina 2002, p. 239), the women took care of the homes, agricultural works and other activities.

Women contributed equally with men to the economy of the household and village through weaving (it was an important activity which boosted the economy of the village and also made women economically independent), selling of vegetables and finished products, and agricultural activities. Agriculture being the main occupation of the people in the traditional society, women played an important role (Vitso 2003, pp. 69-71). Agricultural activities were connected to festivals in Angami society, and to celebrate a festival women had to perform the *kizie* ritual, without which no festival could commence. Apart from *kizie*, women initiated the harvest, and sought the blessings to preserve and protect the harvest. Glancing at the agricultural activities it could be concluded that women were responsible for

the economy of the village especially in the field of agriculture because they carried out the agricultural activities all year round (Vitso 2003, p. 71).

6.2.6. Administration

The male chauvinism was strongly felt when it came to administration and its offices. Women were not a member in the village council, *Dobashi*, *Gaonbura* and had no voice in decision making. The traditional Angami society had *pehümia* (male elder leader) but did not have *pehüpfümia* (women elder leader). According to Christina (2002), in traditional Angami society public platform were not given to women and women had no role in decision making (p. 244). Angami society believed that the duty of women was to maintain and look after the family. Though women did not take part in decision making directly, they played an important role, *i.e.*, to make things right or make it worse depended on women because they indirectly affected the decision making (Personal interview on 23rd April, 2013).

6.3. MODERNIZATION AND CONTEMPORARY ANGAMI WOMEN

According to Goswami (n/d), “modernization is a process of sociocultural change in which development is the economic component” (Sl. No. 126). It is the term for the process of social change where less developed societies acquired characteristics common to developed societies. “Modernization is a factor as well as a process through which society and its tradition innovates change” (Saikia Sl. No. 120). Change is the difference in behavior and norms from old to new. The advent of colonial powers and Christian missionaries brought about socio-cultural and political developments which made an impact on the Naga society (Saikia, Sl. No. 120). Modernization in Naga society began when they first came in to contact with other groups. But the credit mostly goes to the colonial power, for along with

them came Christianity and modern education. Sanyu (1996) has rightly pointed out that Christianity played the most important role in the process of modernization (p. 115). In the light of Saikia's remark on modernization as a process of change, this section discussed the changes taking place with regard to the status of women in the contemporary Angami society.

6.3.1. Domestic Sphere

In the last few decades there have been a few changes in the status of women with regard to family in the Angami society. But the role and duties of women both in traditional and present contemporary society remain the same. Almost all household chores are done by women. Even today, women in the Angami society are expected to behave like the society expects them to, which means washing men's clothes, taking care of younger siblings, cooking, weaving and respecting all the elders etc. Change in the role and duties of women in family are still not visible in the Angami society. The *Morung Express* (20 January, 2015) reported, "change need to start from our homes with our children" (p. 3). From the data collected, works done by women are cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and utensils, fetching water, taking care of children, looking after domestic animals etc. The works done by men are those which require more physical strength and those which women found difficult to do. Work done by men are chopping firewood, construction work etc., but in most cases chopping of firewood is done by women despite the fact that it required more physical strength. Though men also participate and help in household work there is a perception that it is the duty of women to perform household works. Fernandes, Periera and Khatso (2005) has rightly pointed out that in order to arrive at a reasonably good understanding on the status of women, it is important to know the role of women in family (p. 77). The figures below present the role of women in family

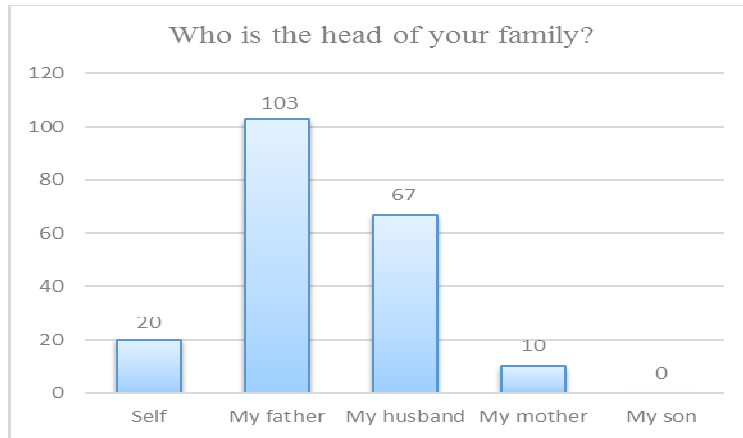


Figure 6.1.

Angami society being a patriarchal society, men heads the family which is presented in the figure 6.1. It shows that 10 per cent of the respondents (20 respondents), say that they (women) are the head of family; here those who say that they are the head of family are either divorcees or widows. 51.5 per cent (103 respondents) says that the father is the head of family, 33.5 percent (67 respondents) says that husband is the head of family and 5 per cent (10 respondents) says that mother is the head. Here those who say that mothers are the head of the family are unmarried children who are still living with their divorced or widowed mothers.

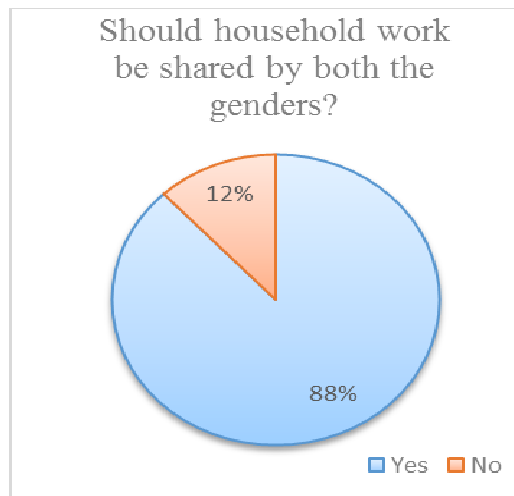


Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 shows that 88 per cent of the respondents (176 respondents) are of the opinion that both men and women should share household work equally because it should not be confined to women alone. There are things that only men can do which women cannot and vice-versa, therefore responsibilities have to be shared with the growing needs and demands of everyday life. Moreover, it is important to have economic contribution of both, which will result in better understanding between the genders. On the other hand, 12 per cent of the respondents (24 respondents) do not agree about men and women sharing the household work equally because unlike women, men have more responsibility in the society. At the same time women do household work better than men.

When it comes to children’s upbringing, in most of the families both men and women take collective decisions, though the role of women are more important in the family. According to Fernandes, Periera and Khatso (2005):

Every society assigns to women the task of children’s upbringing. Most tribes give them also the decision-making role in the family and turn men into its interface with society. As a result, for women their family and work are tied into one. In combining these roles, tribal tradition also assigns them a relatively high social status (p. 77).

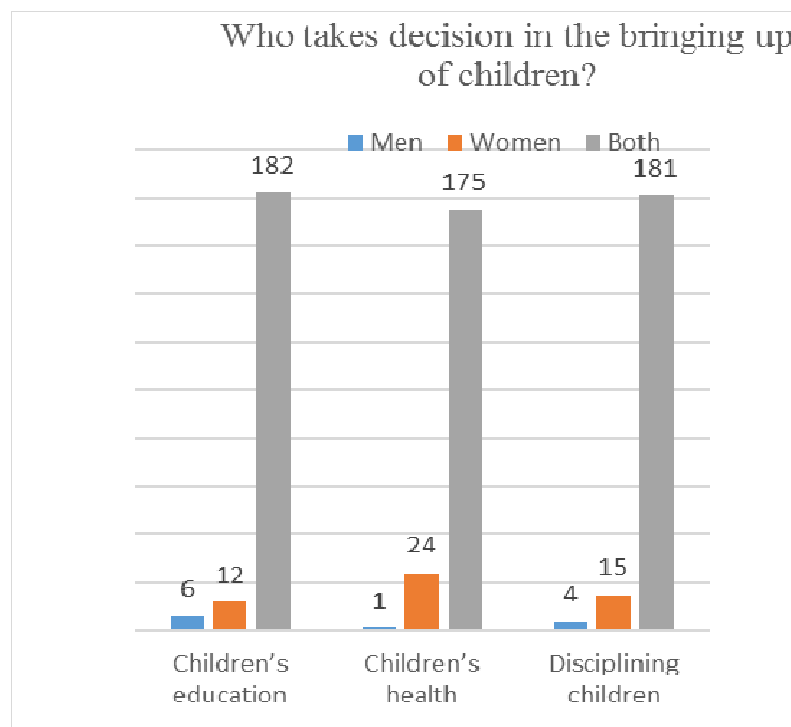


Figure 6.3.

The above figure 6.3 shows that in children's education 91 per cent (182 respondents) says that both men and women takes decision together, 6 per cent (12 respondents) says that the women take decisions and 3 per cent (6 respondents) say that men take decisions about the children's education. In taking care of children's health 87.5 per cent (175 respondents) agree that both men and women make equal contributions to issues of the children's health, 12 per cent (24 respondents) express that women are more concerned, and 0.5 per cent (1 respondent) remark that it is men who take care of the children's health. In disciplining children 90.5 per cent (181 respondents) agree that both own equal responsibility in disciplining children, 7.5 per cent (15 respondents) say that women are the ones who discipline the children and 2 per cent (4 respondents) express that men discipline the children.

6.3.2. Agriculture

The Angamis practice both *jhum* and terrace cultivation, men and women work together and do the same work. In *jhum* cultivation heavy work like cutting trees are mostly done by men and women do the ploughing, sowing seeds, weeding, harvesting, threshing etc. In terrace cultivation men ploughs the field and see that there is sufficient water supply. Women carry out most agricultural operations like preparation of nursery bed, sowing seeds, ploughing, transplanting, weeding, harvest etc. The different processes, which cover various steps both in *jhum* and terrace cultivation are mostly done by women, nevertheless women's wages are less than the men. Till today, in the Angami society there is wage disparity between men and women. There is a general belief that men could do more work than women within an equal amount of time. But when we look further, the women are the ones who play a vital role in agriculture. Hence it is important that women are given due consideration as their male counterparts, and not naïvely looked upon as weak and less productive than men.

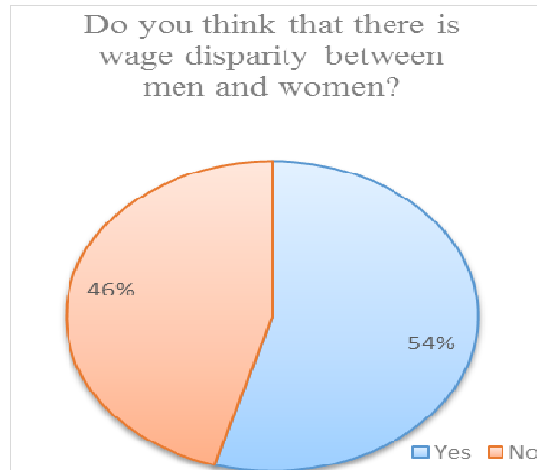


Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4 shows that 46 per cent (92 respondents) does not agree that there is wage disparity between men and women. They argue that men engaged mostly in heavy work as women are physically weaker than men. Hence, it is an accepted norm to give more wages to men who do more intensive laborious work.

On the other hand 54 per cent (108 respondents) are of the view that there is wage disparity and that men get higher wages compared to women, though the working hours remain the same. Though both men and women give equal effort in agricultural activities, men are paid more. The society still has the notion that men have more physical strength and can do more productive work and still have the belief that men contribute more. There is also a general belief that men can do more work than women within an equal amount of time and maybe because women are considered to be less efficient physically compared to men. But when we look further, it is the women who play a vital role in agriculture. Therefore, it is important that women are given due consideration and paid equally like their male counterparts. It would be naïve to say that women being the weaker sex give less output and perceive as less productive than men.

6.3.3. Education and Equal Opportunity

Education came along with colonial powers to Nagaland. Today, education plays an important role in the Angami society and people are realizing the importance of education. There is commendable improvement in the field of education and the literacy rate of women has gone up to 81.56 per cent (Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2013, p. 27), with women topping in many boards and university examinations which was male dominated before. Education has given a great impetus in bringing change to the society as a whole. According to Kelhou (1993), the thought that women were not competent enough to participate in the intellectual caliber, prevailed for a long time, which is gradually changing. She said that due to the negligence there are few lady officers today. However she remarked that women are faring well in academic and professional pursuits which presents women on the higher rung of the academic ladder, compared to their male counterpart (p.60).

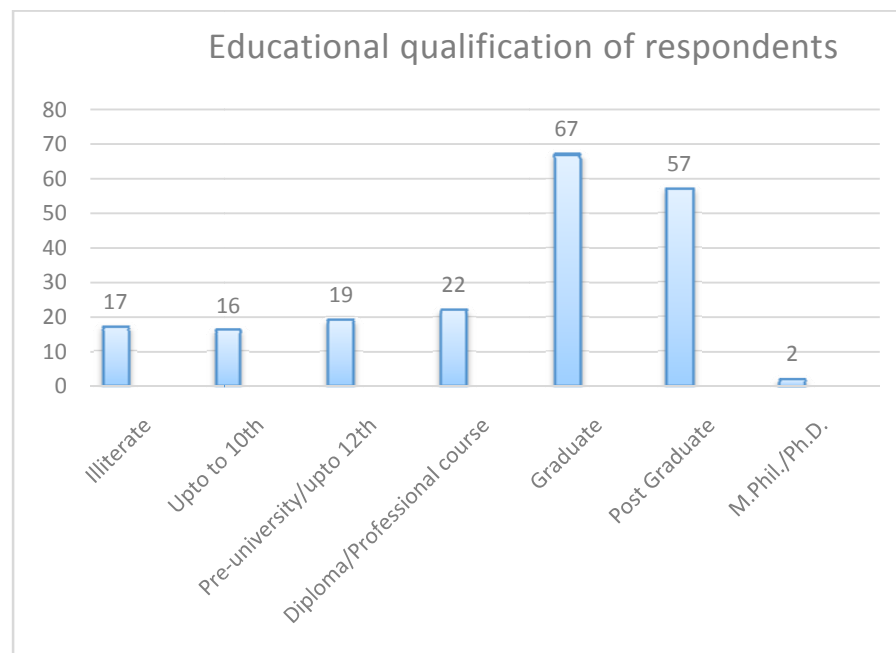


Figure 6.5.

According to figure 6.5., 8.5 per cent (17 respondents) are illiterate, 8 per cent (16 respondents) studied up to class ten, 9.5 per cent (19 respondents) studied up to pre university or 12th standard, 11 per cent (22 respondents) are at degree level and other professional courses, 33.5 per cent (67 respondents) have graduated, here some respondents

are pursuing post-graduation. 28.5 per cent (57 respondents) have completed their post-graduation, here also some respondents are pursuing higher studies like doctoral degree, 1 per cent (2 respondents) have completed their M.Phil. and Ph.D. respectively.

Equal educational opportunity is accessible to both boys and girls compared to the last few decades, when boys were sent to school and girls were sent to the fields to do agricultural work. In the traditional Angami society, there was a general belief that girls would become wayward if they were sent to school. Today, all these conservative views have been removed and girls are given equal educational opportunity with the boys (Personal interview on 16th February, 2014). Some respondents are of the view that since women do not have any share in inheritance, it is the duty of the parents to provide equal educational opportunity to girls so that they can get salaried jobs and be self-reliant.

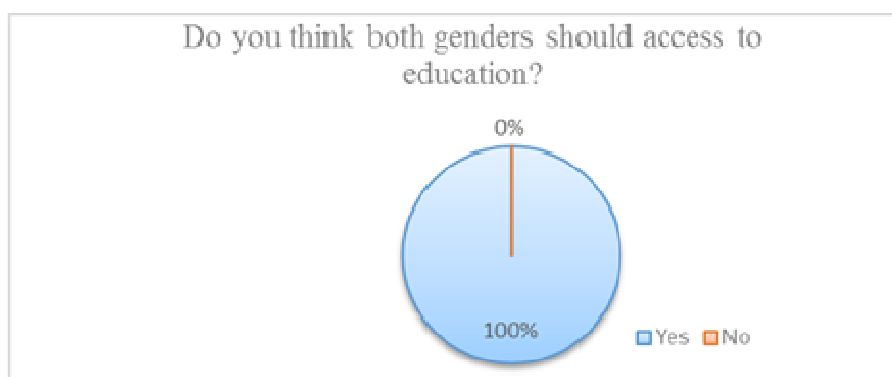


Figure 6.6.

Figure 6.6 shows that 100 per cent *i.e.*, all 200 respondents are of the opinion that both boys and girls should be given equal educational opportunity. Women have started to pursue higher studies unlike the olden days. The number of educated women is increasing and they have the right to choose their profession. Education has empowered women to participate fully in the development process. According to Savi (2012), “education is a strong weapon for empowering women”. Women’s education should be linked to their children’s educational attainment, household negotiations, family planning and health improvement, elimination of poverty, awareness about social problems, good recognition and image of family in the society

With the introduction of modern education, men are realizing and appreciating the values of women. At the same time women are realizing their capabilities. Education has opened the eyes of the society regarding women's status. "The coming of Christianity and the introduction of formal education has in a way helped Christian men to develop a progressive attitude towards women" (Savi, 2012). It has made women become more aware of their rights as women, and to raise their voices and be heard. Education has made women economically independent and equal with menfolk. It has uplifted the status of women in the society as they have an honored position. It is also slowly changing the view of the society regarding men and women's equality. Education has placed its hands on all changes. It is shaping, molding, building and developing the society. To sum up, education is the way forward for social change for a better society.

6.3.4. Village Administration and Politics

With the advancement in education, the outlook of the people has become broader. However, when it comes to village administration, decision making and politics women participation is still negligible. Vitso (2003) is of the opinion that, the reason for women not shouldering such responsibilities is mainly because custom does not encourage women to take up such activities (p. 92). Echoing similar views, Fernandes, Periera and Khatso (2005) also said that customary laws confine women to the domestic sphere and effectively thwart them from taking part in the decision making process of the society (p. 117). Some of the areas discussed below are: women in the Village Council and Village Development Board (VDB), women in decision making, 33 per cent reservation for women and women in politics.

6.3.4.1. Village Council and Village Development Board (VDB)

Unlike the past, the Angami society has women members in the VDB in some villages, but so far no women members in the Village Council. There are some reservations for women in VDB and women send their representatives to the VDB. The women VDB members are either nominated or selected by the women's group. Twenty five per cent of the VDB funds are reserved for women's development programme; however, women in many villages are still unaware of these provisions. As a result they do not get any of its benefits. In some villages, there are separate VDB for women and they have their separate VDB halls. Through this separate VDB the government aid is channeled to the women SHG's (Self Help Group) in general and women in particular (Personal interview on 23rd February, 2014).

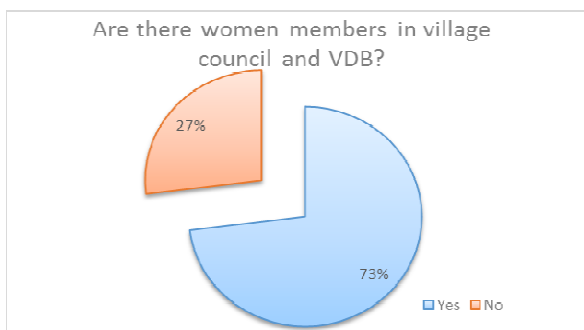


Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.7 shows that seventy three per cent says that there are women members in the Village Council and VDB.

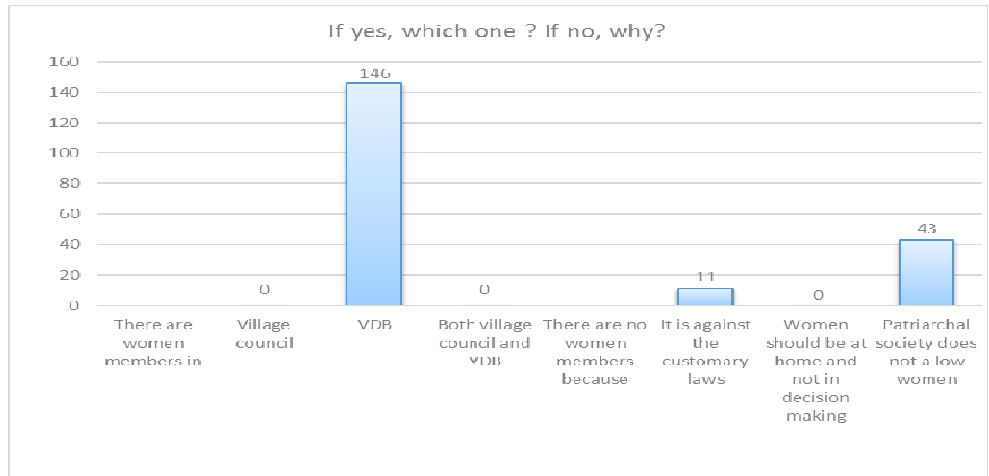


Figure 6.8.

As shown in figure 6.8, Seventy three per cent (146 respondents) say that there are women members in VDB but no women members in the village council.

Although there are women members in VDB, women still cannot become the Chairman (chairperson in case of a woman) of the Village Council. So far there are no women members in the Village Council, let alone the opportunity of becoming Chairperson. As shown in the figure 6.9 where 45 per cent (90 respondents) consider that women could become Chairpersons and 55 per cent (110 respondents) are of the opinion that women cannot become a member of the Village Council and Chairperson of Village Council because of the customary practices where men are the head and society believes that it is for men to hold such positions. Women could become Chairperson of a Village Council, only if they are permitted to become members of the Village Council and be competent enough to win the trust of the people, but they are not nominated by the *khels*. Besides women are unlike men, are tied to household activities and rearing and caring of children (Personal interview on 30th December, 2013).

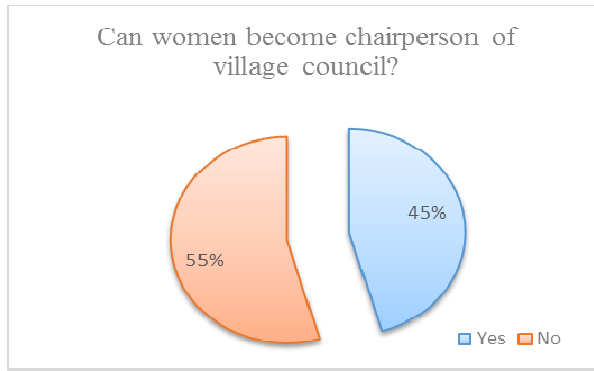


Figure 6.9.

Discussing about the Village Council, Hibo (2009) has pointed out; customary laws are used instead of modern laws in the Angami society. In this set-up he says, women have no status, no role, no voice nor representations in any manner. He further stated that the Village Council is particularly strong since they have the support of the government through the Nagaland Village and Area Council Act, 1978 (p. 153).

6.3.4.2. Decision Making

When it comes to decision making in the society, women have no voice. Decisions are taken by men and passed on to women and youth organizations. In cases pertaining to women, decisions and cases are settled by women but not without the approval of the menfolk. Women play an important role in the society in settling of misunderstanding between clans/*Khels* by acting as peace makers. Though women act as peace makers, in decision making they have no voice (Personal interview on 29th December, 2013). Thus in decision making, women take the backseat where as men take the lead role. The role of women in decision making is to support the decision made by the menfolk and firmly cooperate with them. Most of the time women play a supportive role rather than ruling out the verdict.

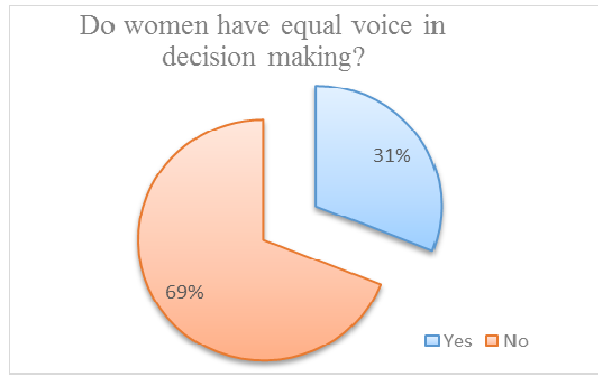


Figure 6.10.

The above figure 6.10 shows that 31 per cent (62 respondents) says that women have equal voice in decision making whereas 69 per cent (138 respondents) do not agree that women have an equal voice in decision making. The role of women in decision making is to support the decision made by the menfolk and firmly cooperate with them. Women could give their opinion and share their views regarding social issues and matters concerning women. Sometimes the advice of women is taken into consideration if majority of the members agree and decisions are made final. But most of the time women play a supportive role rather than that of passing the verdict. They have every right to raise the issue of women, yet do not have much voice, except when there are areas where the collective decision of men and women are required.

Menfolk are perceived as superior to the womenfolk in decision making because there is a pre-conceived notion that they have better knowledge in decision making and women are very sensitive with their emotions. On this Chishi (2009) has made the following remarks:

Grounds of gender should not be the defining factor to confine women within the frame work of the kitchen instead she should be treated justly and her voice should be considered in the process of decision making. Perhaps, then equality will have its desired meaning and bring about a positive change in the society (p. 2).

Echoing a similar view, the *Eastern Mirror* (11 July, 2014) reported:

Times have changed and women must be given an opportunity to participate in the decision making process of elected governments at various level.....this will bring in true emancipation of women in the state (p. 5).

The Angami society, being a patriarchal society, men take all important decisions and have the final say in both family and social matters. In matters of dispute like land, the opinion of women does not hold good because women do not have the customary right to control land and land resources. Men decide all disputes, conflicts and social issues based on customary laws.

6.3.4.3. Thirty Three Per cent Reservation

The issue of 33 per cent reservation for women is a much debated subject. According to Yepthomi (2009), women's reservation is not against men but a fight against traditions that weighs down women. Therefore, he said, women should be liberated individually and throw off the shackles which have ignored their talents and skills. He further wrote:

There is a vast provision for gender equality in our constitution....Article 15(3) states that 'Nothing in this Article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children'. Keeping in mind the reality of gender inequality, the state government basing on the 108 Amendment bill sought to bring the 33% reservation for women in the Municipal Council....Unfortunately in our society, women have been denied the fruit of Panchayati Raj System due to the existence of unique traditions and customs in our society.....33% reservation for women in Municipal Council may not be the only solution to the problem but the truth is women constitutes almost 50% of our population and unless women are empowered to take decisive part especially in political sphere (decision making & policy formulation level) development in our State is at stake (p. 6).

Discussing women's right in Nagaland, the *Eastern Mirror* (11 July, 2014) reported, the government should hold elections with 33 per cent reservation for women, because the society needs to internalize the process of emancipation of women without judicial intervention (p. 5).

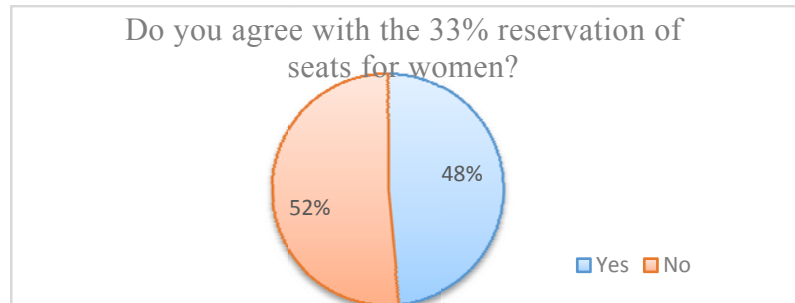


Figure 6.11.

When it comes to 33 per cent reservation for women, as seen in figure 6.11, 48 per cent supports it. On the other hand 52 per cent are against it because women enjoy many privileges and honour. They are against the 33 per cent reservation because by this reservation equal rights would be neglected. The 33 per cent reservation for women although it is good it needs to be perceived and understood in the right spirit *i.e.*, the acceptance of the right of reservation should not view women as a weaker sex or less equal than their male counterpart. Women are equal to men and they should enjoy the same equality and opportunity. Nevertheless, the Angami society, being a patriarchal society, 33 per cent reservation of seats for women will be the first step towards women's empowerment and will help women to play an important role in policy and decision making.

According to Savi (2012), the majority of men has resented and opposed the 33 per cent reservation for women in municipal bodies, which shows that women leadership is still not accepted. Dzüvichü (2007), discussing on the issue of reservation remarked:

Gender equity, gender budgeting and mainstreaming, engendering development are all important issues emerging today and it needs an equal partnership between both the genders. One third reservation for women is a beginning for the men folk to prove they still retain the Naga chivalry and respect for women as equal partners (p. 39).

Goldsmith (2012) writing on the women share of equal rights states:

The women are poorly represented when it comes to making decision in family matters, community affairs, village/town level to the state level functioning, very few women have been made formal authorities in governance, despite having a right to constitutional equality and similar spaces. 33% reservation of seats for women in Nagaland has taken long to be successfully implemented. It is unfortunate that the discriminatory manner, in

which customary practices are interpreted in Naga society today, continue to deny women access to the rights of decision making..... To them the Customary Laws, even while respecting them, need to open to change.

However, the Nagaland Legislative Assembly passed a resolution keeping with the customary practices of the Nagas that would keep women out of civic bodies like town and municipal councils (The Telegraph, 2012, p. 7).

6.3.4.4. Politics

Women's participation in politics is not at all visible in the Angami society. The presence of women in political decision making level is still very weak though women are educated today. In Nagaland, State elections begun in 1964 and so far there is not a single woman in the State Legislative Assembly. The only woman member in the Lok Sabha so far was Rano Shaiza who was elected in 1977. Except Rano Shaiza there are no women members in the State Legislature or in the Parliament. Even in the new democratic process women's issues are inadequately addressed due to the ethos of tradition that continues to be strong and prevents them from actively participating in the democratic processes. Although, the constitution of India guarantees equality of rights before law irrespective of gender in a patriarchal society like the Angami society, gender bias is still prevalent and the male chauvinism is also deeply rooted (Vamuzo 2009, p. 2; Yepthomi 2009, p. 6).

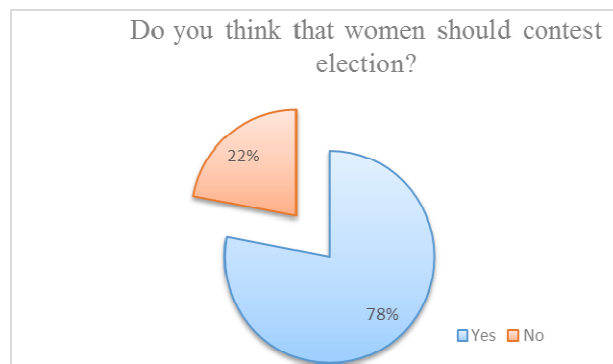


Figure 6.12.

As shown in figure 6.12 twenty two per cent (44 respondents) do not want women in politics, whereas 78 per cent (156 respondents) want women in politics. Most of the respondents want women in politics because women are equally able in political and administrative fields. Women's participation in politics must move out from campaigners to leaders because women are intellectually as capable as men and it will also result in balanced decision making as there are no women politician so far. Christina (2002) while discussing about women's participation in politics stated that, although women do not directly contest in elections they are active in election campaigns. She also states that, there is a view that a candidate who has the backing of women is almost sure to win the election, though women's issues do not surface in election campaigns (p. 244). Despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most countries, women are largely under represented at most levels of government especially in political affairs. According to the observations made by Savi (2012), no women have led the state politically, not because they are incapable but they are not given the space to do so. Adding to that she also says that there are no women Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) which also shows that women are yet to find a political voice and create a role for themselves in political sphere.

Discussing on women's participation in politics Raina (2014) quoting from Dorjee writes,

The socio-cultural perception that a woman candidate isn't capable of serving the people, they are only for kitchen and social service, and general myths like Bhutanese women aren't interested in politics restrict their participation.... When people come with these preconceived notions, it becomes very difficult for people to accept a woman as candidate (p. 7).

The Angami society has the same notion as the Bhutanese that there is no place for women outside their home. However, as Vamuzo (2009) has said, it is the legitimate right of every individual to avail rights to shelter, food, education and health. So also every woman has the right to voice the demands and not only be confined to the home but active in political spheres in order to bring advancement, development and empowerment for a better meaningful life (p. 2).

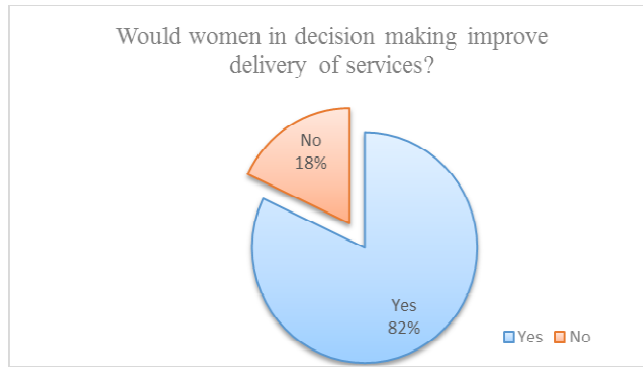


Figure 6.13.

The above figure 6.13 presents that 82 per cent (164 respondents) support the view that women in decision making would improve delivery of basic services and 18 per cent (36 respondents) do not support it. Most of the respondents' support it because, there are certain areas which men tend to overlook which would be effectively managed by women. Moreover, customs expect women to fulfill household activities, this has made women more down to earth and thus decision making becomes fair, quick and easy on basic services. But unless the system of corruption, favoritism etc., is wiped out, the presence of women in the delivery of basic services would be hard to achieve.

Due to customary laws and practices women joining in the village administration and politics were very few. But today, women are taking up high places in administration, taking part in contesting, campaigning and voting in politics. The issues regarding the community now include women organizations however; the decisions are made by the village council, which is devoid of women member. One of the visible changes regarding the status of women and women's participation in politics is the reservation in VDB (Personal interview on 22nd March, 2014). Women have their own roles played effectively and efficiently compared to the administration in the last few decades. Yet being a patriarchal society, the male dominant is still prevalent and equality and freedom for women are restrained when it comes to leadership roles (Savi, 2012).

Hazarika (2013), while writing on gender equality has made the following remarks,

A revolutionary change in the social and cultural values and behavioral pattern is necessary to foster the process of achieving gender equality. When women feel that they have the capability to operate the society at the same term as men have, then achieving a distant equality will not remain a distant dream (p. 6).

6.3.5. Economic Position

Women are no more confined to the four walls of their house and engaged in agricultural activities alone. The Indian constitution states that there should be no discrimination in giving job to any citizen of India base on gender. Adding to that with women literacy rate at 76.69 per cent in Nagaland (Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2012, p. 27), there are many women taking up different professions. At the same time women today also have the required qualification to take up salaried job which gives them financial stability and makes them economically independent. Moreover, the coming up of SHG's (Self Help Group) in different areas help women to be empowered, which is playing a very vital role in boosting the economy of the society. Economic independence helps women to appreciate their so called bread-earning male members, at the same time gives them more confidence and the sense of self value. To be economically independent and not depending on others for the smallest need and also improves the condition of her family. It has also made their voices heard and uplifted their status in the society.

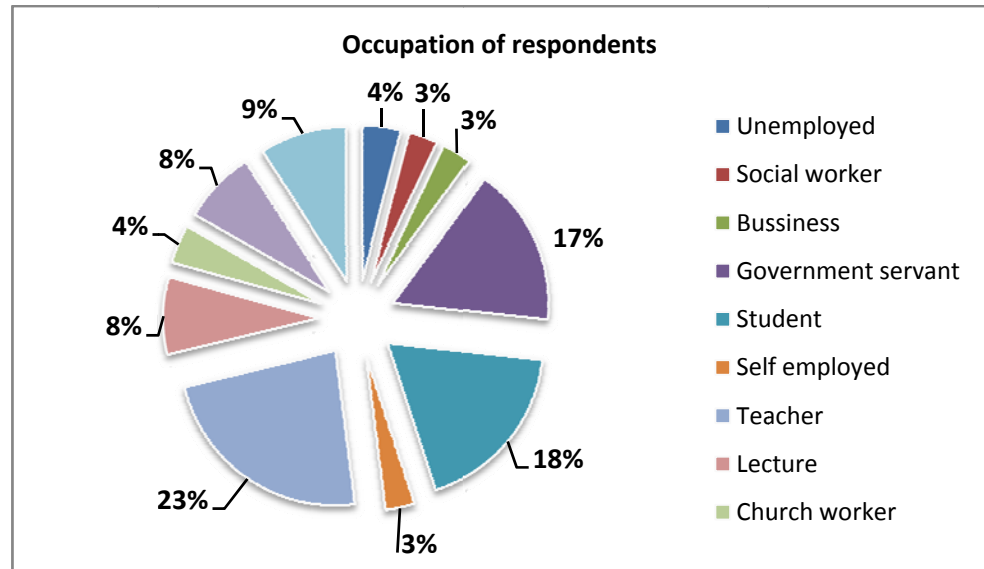


Figure 6.14.

As shown above the occupation of the respondents in figure 6.14. Four per cent (8 respondents) are unemployed, 3 per cent (6 respondents) social workers, 3 per cent (6 respondents) business persons, 17 per cent (34 respondents) government servants, 18 per cent (36 respondents) students, 3 per cent (6 respondents) self-employed. The self-employed referred here are those who are engaged in weaving, poultry, horticulture etc. 23 per cent (46 respondents) and 8 per cent (16 respondents) teach in different schools and colleges respectively, 4 per cent (8 respondents) are church workers *i.e.*, working as evangelist, missionaries etc. 8 per cent (16 respondents) are housewives, and 9 per cent (18 respondents) are agriculturists.

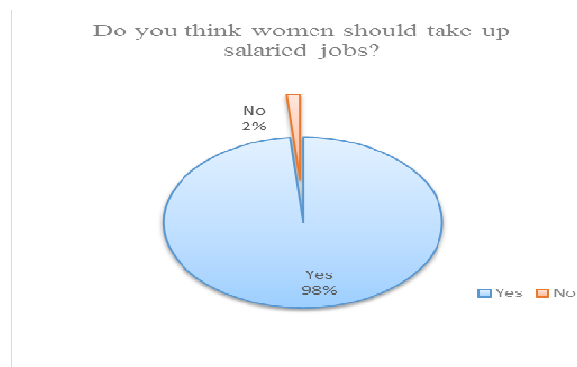


Figure 6.15.

The above figure 6.15 show that 2 per cent are not in favour of women taking a salaried job because after marriage it is the responsibility of women to take care of children. On the other hand 98 per cent support women taking up salaried jobs because working women are more confident, self-reliant and empowered economically. It gives them a sense of security because women also should earn their livelihood. Economic independence help women to appreciate their so called bread-earning male members, at the same time give them more confidence and a sense of self value. It has also allowed their voices to be heard and their status in the society to be uplifted.



Figure 6.16.

As seen in figure 6.16, all 200 respondents *i.e.*, 100 per cent of the respondents want women as entrepreneurs, leaders, officers etc. It is because women are becoming more career oriented. Career-wise women have progressed many fold, there are successful women entrepreneurs, administrators, lawyers, academicians, police officers and even women faring very well in media as film makers, writers etc. Naga women are now competing with the rest of the world in various fields like sports, music, technology etc.

Kelhou (1993), discussing about the changes in *Angami* society writes:

With the progress in the field of education, more and more women are becoming salaried wives/daughters. The conservative view has slackened giving more scope to girl education... Today, a woman in a salaried job is not looked down upon as crossing the social norms as was in the case in yonder days. In fact, to keep up with the fast changing

society and the increased needs of family, it is rather encouraged that a woman should do whatever is in her capacity to support and share the family finance (p. 56).

When it comes to work, there is no discrimination in gender for any work. Women are as capable as men in the work place and in handling the responsibilities given to them. Equal job opportunities have been given to both men and women including entrepreneurship which the Angami society accepts well. Moreover the society encourages equal participation and contribution from both genders. They are considered equally responsible for the society. Unlike the past few decades the role of women has changed in the society. Women are excelling in many fields including civil services, leadership, entrepreneurship etc. In some cases women have outshone others and proved to be better than their male counterpart. Today disparity between the genders in the economic sphere has melted a lot compared to the traditional perception, and society's perception in our times towards women is witnessing a positive change.

Today there is no discrimination in gender for work. Equal job opportunities have been given to both men and women including entrepreneurship which the Angami society accepts well. Moreover the society encourages equal participation and contribution from both genders. Unlike the past few decades the role of women has changed in the society. Women are excelling in many fields including civil services, leadership, entrepreneurship etc. In some cases women have outshone and proved to be better than their male counterparts. Today disparity between the genders in the economic sphere has melted a lot compared to the traditional perception, and society's perception in contemporary times toward women is witnessing a positive change (Personal interview on 10th January, 2014). There has always been a general perception of the society that since men are the bread winners they are more dominant than the women. However, in a society like the Angamis economic empowerment will not make a woman more confident to have her say, because of the patriarchal culture that is largely intact.

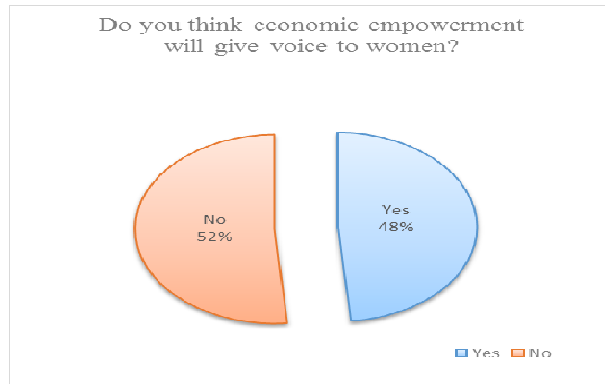


Figure 6.17.

Coming to women being bread earners and their voice in society, figure 6.17 shows that 48 per cent (96 respondents) supports the view of economic empowerment of women by being a bread earner, which in turn would make them have voice in the society. However, 52 per cent (104 respondents) do not agree to this view. Women being bread earners do not necessarily mean they have more say in the society because the Angami society is male dominated society. Though theoretically, women are considered equal to men, men are considered to be more important because of the biased nature of the customary laws. No matter what the status of women is, women do not have much say in the society. Even if a woman becomes a bread winner the traditional working pattern continue to be a barrier to a woman's participation in public life because of discriminatory attitudes, customs and practices, family and child care etc.

6.3.6. Inheritance

Customary laws in the Angami society do not allow women to inherit ancestral property. The economic status of women have changed, with women contributing to the family, but still women do not have the customary right to inherit ancestral property. It is mainly because of the patriarchal mindset that once women get married, they go to their husbands' house and everything they own goes to the husbands. Therefore, in order to keep the ancestral property within the same family or clan, women are not permitted to inherit ancestral property. *Morung Express* (20 January, 2015) reporting on women issues

highlighted that women have no access to land, inheritance and are not entrusted with maintenance of land and resources in Nagaland. And despite the changes in Naga society today where parents who could afford/give land and property to their daughters, the paper also points out that these are all acquired property and not ancestral property. She remarks that only around two per cent of women in Nagaland own land today (p. 3).

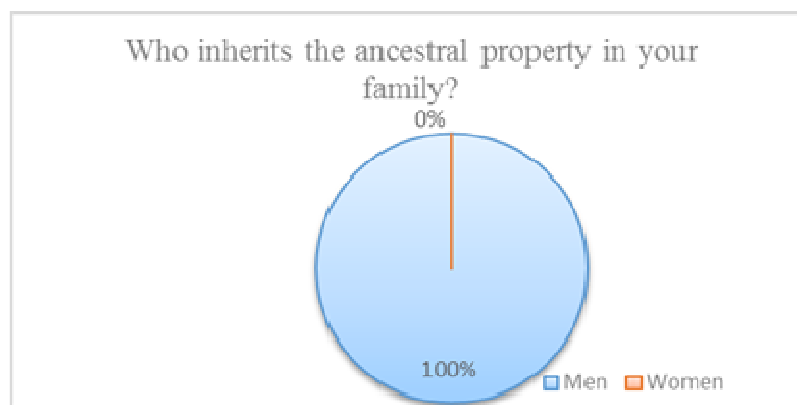


Figure 6.18.

The above figure 6.18 shows that 100 per cent (200 respondents) say that men inherit ancestral property. None of the respondents say that women inherit ancestral property; this is because the Angami society is a patriarchal system of heritage where men have complete authority.

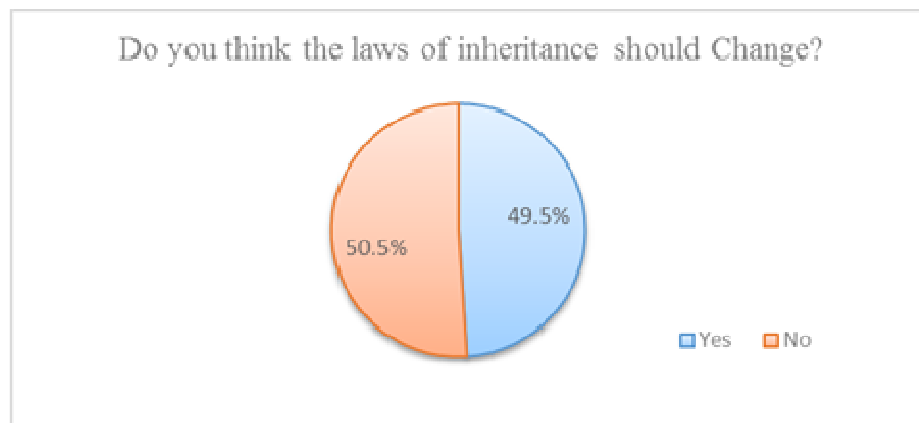


Figure 6.19.

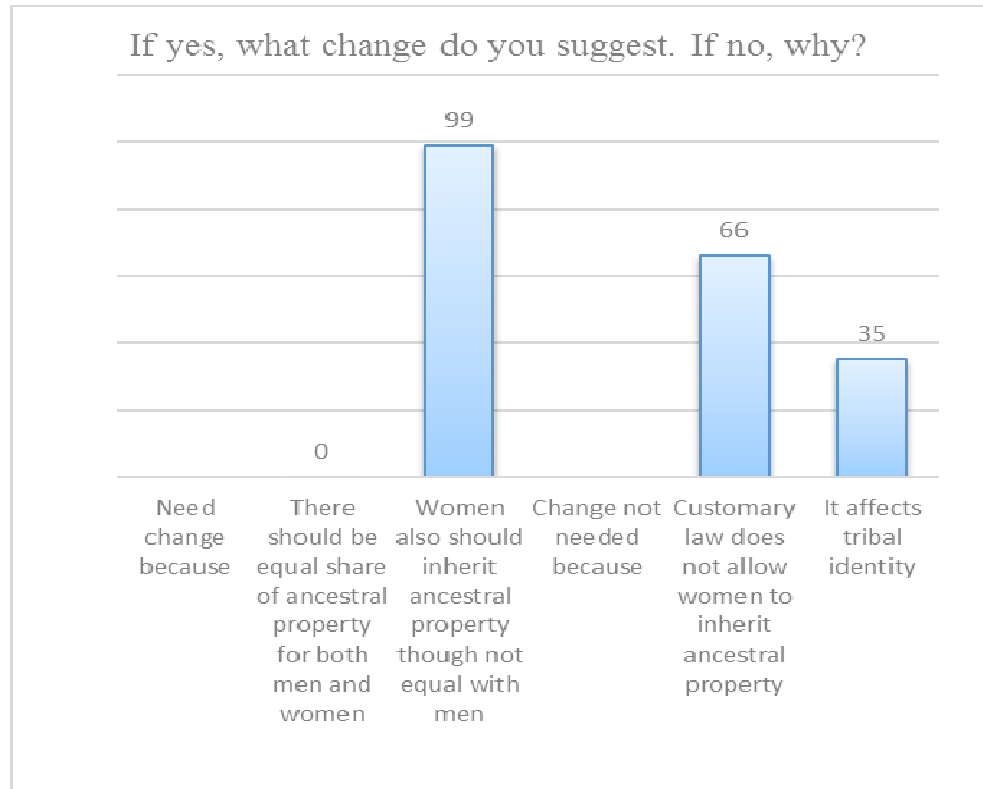


Figure 6.20.

As shown in figure 6.19, 49.5 per cent (99 respondents) wants change in the law of inheritance and 50.5 per cent (101 respondents) does not want change. Figure 6.20 shows varied reasons why change is needed and why it is not. 49.5 per cent (99 respondents) wants change in the law of inheritance. They feel that women also should inherit ancestral property even if it is not equally shared with the male members. On the other hand, 50.5 per cent (101 respondents) do not want change in the law of inheritance. Thirty three per cent (66) respondents say that customary law does not allow women to inherit ancestral property while the other 17.5 per cent (35 respondents) opine that any change in the law of inheritance would affect the Angami tribal identity.

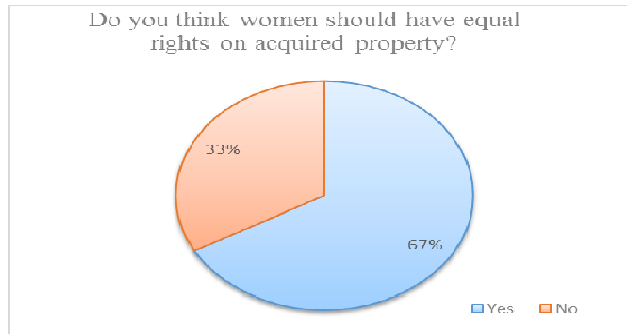


Figure 6.21.

With the changes taking place in society, acquired property by parents are given to women though not equal to that given to men. Acquired properties by parents such as plot of land, grains, cattle's etc., are given to women at the time of their marriage by their parents as gifts. Figure 6.21 explains that 67 per cent (134 respondents) want women to have equal rights on acquired property; on the other hand 33 per cent (66 respondents) do not. In many families a plot of land is given to women at the time of marriage, which is acquired by parents. But when the woman dies, her brother(s) take back the land given to her by her parents even when she has a husband and children (Personal interview on 16th February, 2014). For this reason, the Angami Women Organization (AWO) has come up with certain rules taking in consideration that, though women cannot inherit ancestral property, acquired property (land) given to them by their parents cannot be taken back by their brothers after their death (Peseyie & Seyie 2005, p. 7). There are also instances where there are no male heirs; the acquired property of the parents goes to the women. Fernandes (2009) also commented that, the movement towards women's equality is the slowest in the inheritance area. Men even use modern inputs like education to justify exclusive male inheritance. Education provided to daughters is a gift and is considered their share of inheritance (p. 376).

6.3.7. Marriage and Divorce

Marriage customs have changed from traditional to westernized system which integrated well with Christianity. The Western influences on marriages are visible in dresses (wedding gown) and lavish parties for marriages. The Christian marriage has replaced traditional marriage, where the former is considered pious, however, the customary practice of a go between/mediator (match-maker) is still prevalent. Like the traditional society, the role of go between is played by the maternal aunt and her role is very important in marriage. Today, women have a voice in matters of marriage with freedom to choose their partners *i.e.*, love marriages, unlike olden times where all marriages were arranged by parents. The consent of both men and women are taken prior to marriage arrangements. Today, inter-tribal marriages have increased resulting to exogamous marriage.

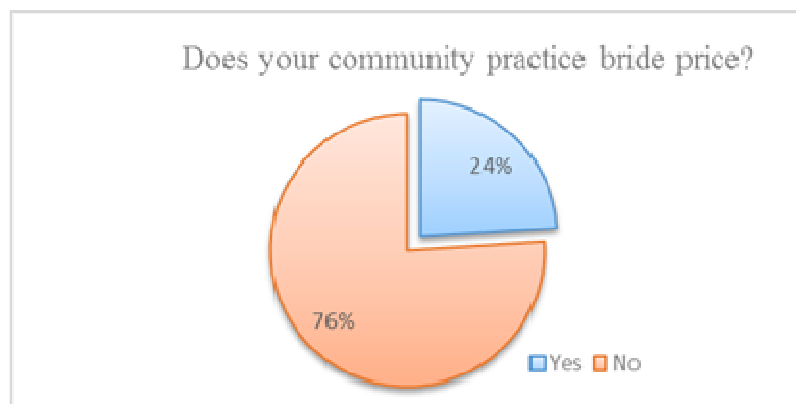


Figure 6.22.

The above figure 6.22 shows that 76 per cent (152 respondents) say that there is no bride price, while 24 per cent (48 respondents) say that there is bride price. Practice of bride price varies from village to village. In some villages, like Kohima village there is no bride price but if the boys' side want to give anything to the girls' side they are free to do so. Usually cattle are given to the girls' side for the party in such cases. The girls' family is not supposed to make a demand to the boys' family because daughters are not commodities to be exchanged with other commodities. Moreover, it is taboo to sell daughters (Personal interview on 2nd June, 2013).

Today, divorce has decreased considerably contrary to traditional society where a man/woman married twice or more. One of the reasons for the decrease in divorce rate could be attributed to embracing of the Christian faith and Christian marriage. With the coming of Christianity and Christian marriage replacing traditional marriage, vows are pronounced and exchanged between spouses and they are bound by their vows. Divorce rules have become firm in the present Christian society (Kelhou 1993 p. 57), as a result women today no longer marry to earn their hair. Another reason for the decrease in divorce rate is education. With the number of educated women on the rise, they are more vocal against the injustice meted out to them by their husbands.

6.3.8. Religion

The advent of Christianity has ended some superstitious beliefs and also done away with many rituals. Christianity has emancipated women from the gender bias of customary practices. It has opened doors for women to enjoy better status and opportunities in society. Christianity has promoted the welfare of women who were not given much importance in the past due to the strong hold of the traditional concept that women were inferior (Kelhou 1993, p. 60). According to Savi (2012), Christianity in Angami society has opened the door in some measure for women to take up the leadership role in the church and in the society. But, one should not overlook the traditional concept of women that continued to dominate the mindset of the people where men took the lead role in deciding for the society and women took the backseat. The patriarchal mind-set is so strong that till today ordination of women is not encouraged. This fact confirms that patriarchal society does not welcome the leadership of women even in church. Although the advent of Christianity into Nagaland happened more than 150 years ago, yet so far in the Angami society there has been only one woman who was ordained as Reverend - Rev. Beilieü Shüya. She was ordained on 5th November, 1978.

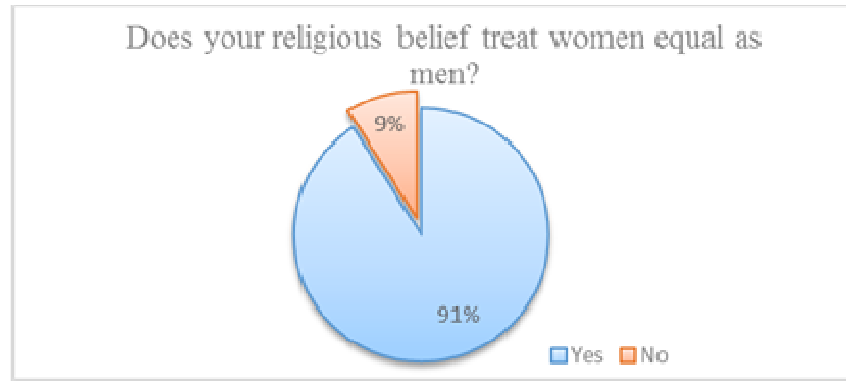


Figure 6.23.

The figure 6.23 show that 91 per cent (182 respondents) are of the view that their religious belief treats both men and women equally. On the other hand 9 per cent (18 respondents) expresses that their religious belief does not treat women equal to men.

Women have become educated which encourages them to take active part in religious activities. The advent of Christianity has given women a role and a platform to participate in churches and in the public arena. Today, women have a status in contrast to the customary practices in terms of their participation in various church activities and ministry as preachers, deacons, directors, church secretaries, youth leaders, superintendents, evangelists, missionaries etc. At the same time, women are given the privilege to serve as heads in different departments of the church like the youth department, women department, children ministry etc.

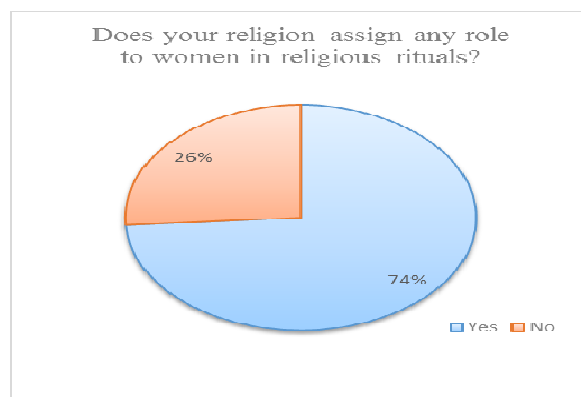


Figure 6.24.

The above figure 6.24 shows that 26 per cent (52 respondents) are of the view that women are not assigned roles in religious rituals and ceremonies. Whereas 74 per cent (148 respondents) are of the opinion that women are assigned roles in religious rituals and ceremonies because women plays a certain indispensable role in religious affairs.

In the Angami society, the gap of gender equality in the church has been significantly reduced; but equal opportunity is still a big challenge. At present, women are encouraged to exercise their leadership in different activities of the church through their fellowships and organizations, but women leadership is still an issue as no church is under the leadership of a woman. Women play a proactive role in the church as attendance of menfolk in churches are less compared to that of women but decisions are the prerogative of the men. Thus, although Christianity has to some extent emancipated the women yet Christianity in Angami society is not without the patriarchal influences of the customary practices. Equal opportunity for women to realize their full self and capacity in the Church is still a myth in the Angami society.

6.3.9. Customary Laws

Customary laws have been in use since time immemorial. In spite of the well formulated law like the Indian Penal Code and the existence of statutory courts, customary laws still find a place in the Angami society.

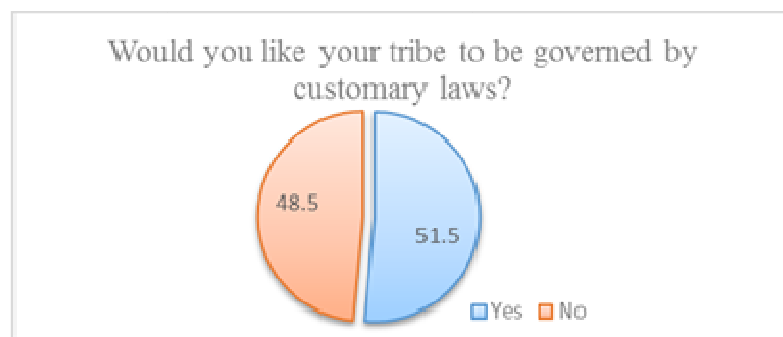


Figure 6.25.

The above figure 6.25 shows that 51.5 per cent want their community to be governed by customary laws. On the other hand 48.5 per cent do not want their community to be governed by customary laws.

Figure 6.26, which is presented below, explains that out of 51.5 per cent of the respondents who want their tribe to be governed by customary laws, 25.5 per cent (51 respondents) says customary laws preserve their culture. Eight per cent (16 respondents) are of the opinion that it has easy conflict resolution mechanism and 18 per cent (36 respondents) state that it fosters unity of the community. On the other hand out of 97 respondents who do not want their tribe to be governed by customary laws, 13.5 per cent (27 respondents) are of the view that customary laws are not gender sensitive. 25.5 per cent (51 respondents) say that it does not cover all areas of life and 9.5 per cent (19 respondents) are of the view that it is outdated and out of touch with the present time.

According to the data collected those who want their society to be governed by customary laws point out that it preserves their culture and identity, but at the same time it should be modified according to contemporary developments and changes. They are also of the opinion, customary laws are cheap and easy for illiterate people to have access to. Those who do not want their society to be governed by customary laws substantiate their statement by saying that with the change of time, customary laws cannot resolve many issues of contemporary times which include the rights issues of women.

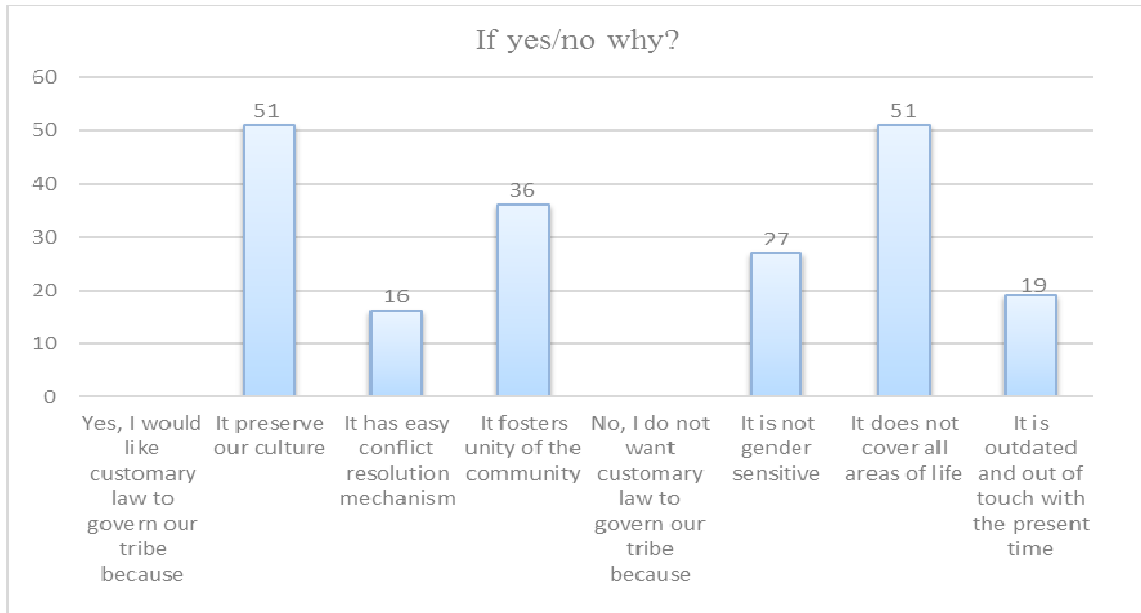


Figure 6.26.

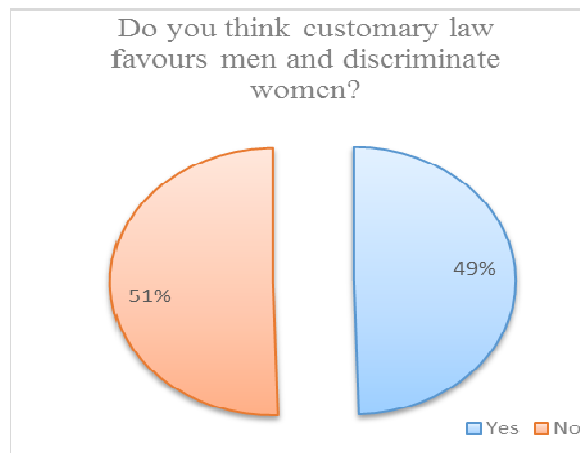


Figure 6.27.

Figure 6.27 shows that 51 per cent have the view that customary laws favour men and discriminate against women. Whereas 49 per cent have the opinion that customary laws neither favour men nor discriminate against women.

Customary laws favour men and discriminate against women because customary laws are developed by men and interpreted by men. It gives more opportunities to men and treats men as superior. An example can be seen in the laws of inheritance and divorce. In divorce,

customary laws favour men even if they are at fault. In decision making, the verdict is pronounced by men, women have no say in customary laws. In olden days, men were considered to be the guardians of the village for which they were considered more important than women. On the other hand there are lots of restrictions on women which hold back their freedom.

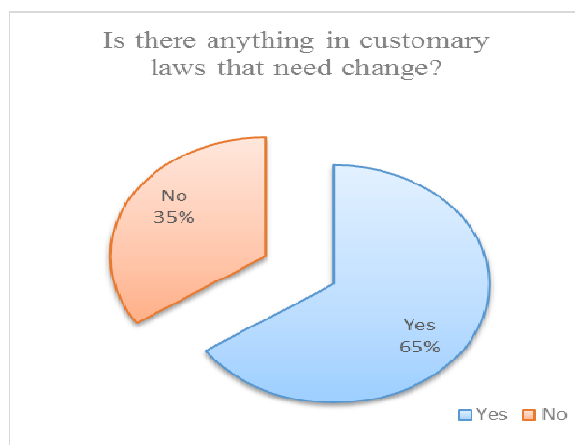


Figure 6.28.

As shown in figure 6.28, 65 per cent say that customary laws need changes. On the other hand 35 per cent are of the view that customary laws need no changes because the forefathers have formulated their laws with careful thoughts, which resulted in customary laws without any ill-intention. They are also of the opinion that change in customary laws might hinder peace and development and disturb the prevailing peace, and it might lead to cultural and identity crisis.

Contrary to the above view on the customary laws, the *Eastern Mirror* (11 July, 2014) reports:

Times have changed; we are no longer the society for which these ancient laws sufficed, our society has advanced and developed to a stage where men and women now should have equal responsibilities in terms of governance and all other aspects of life under the new dispensation (p. 5).

There is need to change the irrelevant rules and include new rules as per the need and change of time. Moreover, old practices that are not relevant anymore can be done away

with. Customary laws which are biased against women need to re-look into the issues of women and their status in the light of the contemporary developments and issues. Recently, a women's commission has been set up to take care of women's rights and women related issues.

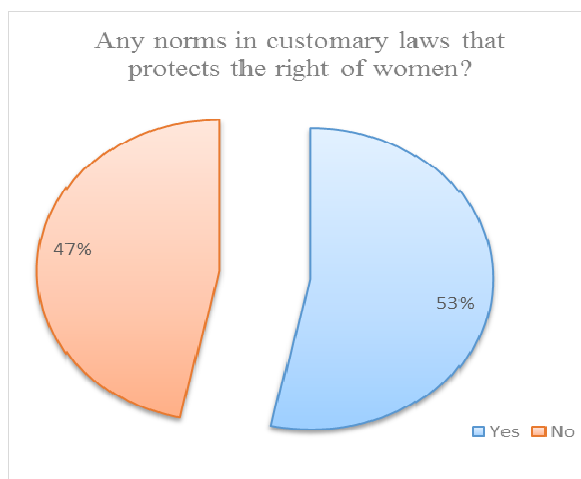


Figure 6.29.

In the above figure 6.29, 53 per cent say that there are norms in customary laws that protect the right of women. Whereas 47 per cent say that there are no norms in customary laws that protect the right of women.

When asked whether the government is doing its best to uplift the status of women, most of the respondents agree that government is doing its best to uplift the status of women, because government departments like social welfare and women development works to uplift the status of women in the State. Recently, a women's commission has also been set up to take care of women's rights and women related issues. The introduction of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) has filled the gap of wage disparity between men and women and also government funds channeled to women through Self Help Group (SHG) has helped women to be economically sound and independent. However, some are of the opinion that that government should also check to see, whether women have benefited because there are many instances where women are deprived of their rights and opportunities.

Education has played a significant and an important role and has placed its hands on all changes in the society, especially with regard to women issues and empowerment. Women today with access to equal educational opportunity, the literacy rate of women has gone up to 76.69 per cent and the number of educated women has increased. The traditional mindset of the people has changed with the progress in the field of education and gave a broader view to the superstitious and conservative minds. People have begun to think more rationally and logically, even in case of health care they have become much more hygienic. The conservative view has loosened giving scope to the women folk to come to forefront of the society. Women are no more confined to the four walls of their house. Christianity and education has broadened the world-view of women and encouraged women to explore their domain. Career-wise women have achieved much developing from a conservative housewife and agriculturist to a proficient earner and worker. Today there are women entrepreneurs, officers (both state and central), church workers, academicians, business women etc.

In spite of all this, the patriarchal system is deeply rooted. The Angami society still does not have any woman heading the church, village council or VDB. Even in decision making men take all important decisions and have the final say in both family and social matters. When it comes to 33 per cent reservation for women, men oppose and resent it, and it is still to be successfully implemented. After looking into the traditional and present contemporary Angami society, it can be said that the perception that women enjoy equal status with men seems misleading because in reality women are controlled by one or the other customs in every sphere of their life.