

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter will try to summarise the major findings of the present study. The contemporary discourse on the concept of gender as has been discussed in the study, was found that it revolves around the concept of gender roles which emerged with the division of society into male and female. It is often understood as social stratification or a division of class in a society based on division of labour and distribution of wages. Gender is not just about the difference between the sexes but a difference in authority. It is very clear that inequalities of power can neither be reduced, nor explained by gender differences alone. Gender is also associated with values. Peter N Sterns describes that values are deeply personal, part of individual and social identity. He also points out, that people may be particularly reluctant to surrender the standards defining femininity and masculinity, even when pressed by a society that seems exceptionally powerful and successful, and they may also seek ways to compensate for any concessions that must be made. Thus gender is, "a systematic social construction of masculinity and femininity that is little, if at all, constrained by biology." This can be argued that women have also played a role in the creation of differences because of their role in the society in trying to make the younger generation of girls accept such social norms. However one cannot ignore the fact that patriarchal socialization is responsible for creating such an attitude.

With regard to the concept of Youth Activism the idea of youth was first discussed where the UNESCO is definition is accepted. Therefore "youth" is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment. Thus the UN definition, for

statistical consistency across regions, defines ‘youth’, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. On the other hand sociologists defines youth as an ascribed status<sup>1</sup> in terms of rational-legal and social definitions focusing on the youth as an individual in terms of specific age-set or taking the youth as one of the collective categories of the population based on the generational principle.

Since the Youth activism is the theme for the study there has been various definition on youth activism, Jacob Aikaira has defined it as “extracurricular activities of student in social situation that is not included in the educational curriculum thus combining it with emotional and intellectual conviction in trying to reform society.” Scholars like Bottomore maintain that student movement has emerged as international phenomena in the late 1960’s. These attracted increasing attentions as a new form of political action emphasizing radical change. Blake describes youth Activism as a phenomenon which has certain characteristics like adopting the tactics of strike, bandhs etc. However after making a detailed study about the organisation one sees that as an organisation the definition and the characteristics of students movements taking place in and around the world seems to be applicable in the study of activism within the KSU. Though the main focus of the study was the Khasi Student Union in Meghalaya, in the matters of examining the extent of participation of girl students in youth movements in terms of the activities launched by the KSU. We sought to asses accessibility, for women, to the positions in decision-making bodies of the organization, analysed the gender content of the

---

<sup>1</sup> John Scott and Gordon Marshall, *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p.813.

KSU's perception of the role of women in society in terms of the directions and pronouncements of the organisation.

While assessing the organisation, the understanding of activism and gender had to be taken into consideration with the norms that are prevailing in society, like what according to Judith Butler, where she claimed that, Gender is neither exactly what one "is" nor is it precisely what one "has." Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes. It can be said that in the case of the Khasi, gender revolves around the social division of society of what females are capable of and what they cannot, thus putting them at the end of being the receiver.

Although the study of gender revolves on the capability of women and the role played by them in society, yet the patriarchal values seem to be prevalent in the decision making body of the organisation. This can be said because even women since ancient times were deemed to be contented with their passive role within the society. The general belief that a woman's place is within the four walls of their homes is also reflected in the Khasi society. The customary laws and adherence of these perceptions by women, not only shows contention towards an idea by teaching it to the future generation, but also to abide by these roles.

The study on youth activism of the Khasi student Union, found that like other students organisations of the world, the KSU had emerged with the sole purpose of dealing with the activities concerning the students and their affairs. However with the KSU in the course of its existence, had changed its actions where they are not only involved in the activities of the students but also in the affairs of the states. This

can be seen in the issues of MBOSE where they demanded that the office of the concerned department should be shifted from Tura to Shillong in order to bring in transparency within the administration of work, but were unable to do so because of the fact that the other counterpart, that is, the GSU (Garo Students Union) was not eager to accept such an idea. Another issue which revolves within the KSU is the issue of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) an age old law that was introduced by the British government since they were ruling India. The organisation demanded from the government in recent times, to check the influx and the issues of illegal migrants to the state. It can be seen that even in 2014 this was the burning issue that had caused several damages and loss of life. Activism within the KSU is also seen that it took its stand on the Uranium mining where it was dead against the digging of uranium within the state. No doubt there were certain sections of the society who were supporting the government on the other hand there are those who were against it because of their awareness of the ill effects. However till date because of the opposition, the government was not able to move ahead with the project, though it was suggested that if scientific mining is conducted, it could go ahead. Yet the experiences in Jaduguda, Bihar, has set an example that it does have its ill effects on people's health, thus the activism that the KSU took in this regard can be said that it is not spurious but rather an eye opener to the society on the impact on mining. Thus it can be said that as an organisation it did not only remain society oriented, but also towards Political direction put forward by Llyod I Rudolph, Sussanne Hoeber Rudolph and Karuna Ahmed<sup>2</sup>, like, ideological, Regime, Programmatic/Party, Interest and Issues. Sticking to the traditional role in students issues seems

---

<sup>2</sup> Llyod I Rudolph, Sussanne Hoeber Rudolph and Karuna Ahmed, Student Politics and National Politics in India, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Volume 6 Number 30, July, 1971, *Economic and Weekly Publication*, pp 1645-1688

impossible to the organisation because of the failure on the part of the government to fulfil the aspiration of the people. The support of the masses that includes the women in their endeavour, indeed the shift of gear from academic to social and political, even to the economic domain seems reflect that now it is a people pressure group.

The study on the position of the female members within the organisation is studied by looking at the Constitution and its details, where it was seen that according to the Constitution of the organisation women were not in equal footing with those of men. Democracy becomes a system like a monarchy or Aristocracy in which only certain sections (here it is the males) that wield power. It is close to what Hans Herman Hopp pointed out that after the Second World War when only a few countries had a say in world affairs, it was a failure of democracy because it failed to maintain a balance.

The changing trends of the Khasi society have reached a point of time where a need is felt for a serious introspection and re-evaluation of various institutional laws and cherished customs, their use and relevance in the present day. The institution that needs an introspection is the working of the Khasi Students Union, especially the Constitution and how democratic is the process of working is dealt by studying the variation within the Constitution of the organisation. This had been examined because in any organisation the Constitution plays a vital and important role in the working of the administration and the democratic process of any organisation: working for the society or any ethnic group, religion, students or women organisation. The study was necessary because of the transformation of the society from a primitive to a modern society, and it is seen that its values have undergone a

change mainly due to their contact with the socio- cultural and religious influences that came along with the advent of the British, this society has come a long way from the traditional agricultural pattern to that of the modern urbanized system.

Many Khasi people are holding blue collared as well as white collared jobs far removed from the traditional agrarian setting that had altered the Khasi social system at this stage. It can be seen that the education imparted by the Christian schools had important effect on tribal customs, dress, music, etc, the force had an impact on the values that led to the rejection of certain cultural expressions sometimes creating a conflict with and even contradicting the matrilineal beliefs , Fredrick Downs also argues that Western women movements had also had an impact on women suffrage, that is, the right to vote and by implication to participate equally with men in the political process. The fight by the women missionaries to have a say in the decision making of the mission organisation had enlightened not only themselves but the area where they are placed. It is these women who acted as torch bearers in the path for women development but not to the utmost level, what was considered a way of life came to be challenged only when women started to get education and after being exposed to the outside world thus inculcating certain predominantly western values. Therefore changes that are taking place not only changed the society but also led to the rise of an elite middle class of men and women but also questioned the sanctity of the Khasi culture. Thus organisations like the Khasi Students Union came into place that sought to protect the rights and integrity of the society, putting it in the realm of questions, wherein the working of the organisation had to be questioned, even though the Khasi women have been glorified as a symbol of freedom and importance.

While analysing the KSU Constitution like any Students organisation in India it has a Constitution<sup>3</sup> entitled as “*Ka Riti Treikam Jong Ka Khasi Students’ Union*” adopted on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 1981<sup>4</sup> and revised again on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1994. The Constitution clearly states in the introductory words that it is an organisation of students whose aspiration is to serve the community in the field of education, the society and in the economic pursuit. Their aim is also to protect the integrity and the rights of the Khasi to be the sole owners of the land, to protect the clans from disintegrating and the homogeneous identity of the group.

By looking at some of the contents one finds, like in Article 9 of the constitution, where it deals with the methods of electing the members of the Union that comprises of ten representatives from each locality, school, college and the university whose members would elect members for the Central Executive Council (CEC). The methods for electing is democratic, that is, through a single secret ballot<sup>5</sup> where there are no specification that the members would be a male or a female member and elections are usually conducted by the outgoing CEC, however under Article 10<sup>6</sup> the constitution provides for election of the president, the vice president, the general secretary, assistant general secretary, organizing secretary, assistant organizing secretary, finance secretary, assistant finance secretary, publicity secretary, the cultural educational secretary. Their powers are clearly parochial because of the fact that the word ‘UN’<sup>7</sup> was used signifying the patriarchal mindset of the organisation. The question that arises is that if the body or union is an

---

<sup>3</sup> Here the word constitution should not be inter mix with constitution of India, rather these are guidelines of how an organisation should work.

<sup>4</sup> Pascal Malngiang, *Student and Politics in Meghalaya*, Shillong: Seven Hut Enterprise Publication, 1994, pp.8-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ka Riti Treikam Jong ka Khasi Students Union*, Shillong: Singhania Printing Press, 1994, p.6

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>7</sup> This term like *U* means signifies the male gender.

organisation of students then the word 'I' (e as pronounced) should be used that would depict that it is gender neutral. Comparatively with the constitution of some of the national student organisation like the AISA following the ideology of Communism, a student body of the Communist party of India in its working committee there is no mention that the president or that the important position should be occupied by a male shows that the AISA is not gender biased though most who participate in its politics are from the patriarchal society. What it reflects is that it is the mindset of the members of the organisation or the values of democracy seeping into it, it is also a union that does not believe in any religious sentiments or cultural values, rather it is a group working for the upliftment of the society freeing the minds from perception of religious or capitalist ideology that concerns the 'self' only but to think also of the 'others'. What is needed within the KSU is raising of consciousness to change the traditional beliefs and culture of exclusivist by giving space to the other groups of people, including women, who comprised half of the members of the society or the world. The male members who are currently involved in the decision making must see to it that radical changes should be adopted so that others can also become decision making members. The reason is that if the women are also given to hold such position they too would be able to make a choice.

Comparatively in Article 11 of the organization the word 'ki' was used with regard to the election of the members to the General Executive Council (GEC) that comprises the different members of the units and the CEC. Clause 1 states that the GEC has the authority to recognize or to reject any working member selected by the CEC that is he (*uno-uno*) and she (*kano-kano*) creating a dilemma that if in article 9 of the stipulation the word *UN* was used then it shows that the other members can be women or girls but the president of the unit would be a male. Scholars like



Lyngdoh<sup>8</sup> argues that though the unique feature of Meghalaya is the matrilineal system where descent is traced from the women and they also inherit<sup>9</sup> property, free from many social restraints of the larger Indian society like caste system, dowry, female foeticide and others. Women enjoy social and economic freedom but politics and administration are considered a man's domain. Traditional belief that it is a bad omen for a woman to participate in the affairs of the state is reflected in the constitutional framework of the KSU. Women like in Ancient times are debarred from participating in the affairs dealing with choice rather they are made to believe that what has been decided for them by the male counter parts is best for them. For example *Synjuk ki Seng Kynthei* an association of women is the oldest voluntary welfare organisation in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills formed in 1947 working effectively for the upliftment of the society in general and the women in particular yet women were made to act only as a moral force (behind men) whose view sometimes are accepted or are considered not that important.

It would appear that the female members are also equally responsible for the situation because the women at large do not question the prevailing situation rather they are contented to be passive receiver or taker. Some women argue that the political and administrative domain is for the males since it is believed that Khasi tradition allowed only those with moustaches to attend the *DURBAR* and take part in the deliberations. This perception however does not take in to consideration the fact

---

<sup>8</sup> M.P.R Lyngdoh, Women in Meghalaya and the Constitution 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendments Act 1992, -Problems and Expectations, in M.S Karna, L.S Gassah, C.J Thomas (Eds.) , *Power to the People of Meghalaya* , New Delhi: Regency Publication , 1998, pp58-60

<sup>9</sup> It is to be noted that like many other Khasi Scholar Lyngdoh to cofuses custodianship with ownership. Inheritance would mean being able to take decisions about property. It is well-known that under the tradition only a dorbar of the Uncles have the right to take decisions about property which is given to daughters as custodians.

that women grow up in patriarchal cultures and are normally not in a opposition to challenge it. Women's inability to be critical of tradition too is a part of patriarchy.

Exclusion of women from formal politics can also be attributed to the gender based rules about proper political activity that make up political socialization<sup>10</sup> - that is family which is one basis of society. Richard G Braungart<sup>11</sup>, points that Family socialization practices are affected by location in the social class hierarchy, and these in turn may influence the political attitudes and behaviour of youth. But there are other aspects of family position in the social structure which may influence socialization practices, political attitudes, and behaviour. Differences in ethnicity, nationality or race, in religion, and in political identification and activity may also affect the course of political socialization. Barbara and Choudhry argue that women's absence from formal political institutions is either their own fault or no one's fault because the prevailing situation is such that it sometimes bars women from actively participating.

The KSU constitution concentrates power in the CEC and its decision all matters is final. The division work allotted to members reflects a gender bias but it is sought to be explained in a away by a claim of reluctance of women to accept such posts. When I say non acceptance it reflects that even in answering the questionnaire only a few were willing to fill it and an assumption is made that it was their choice to not participate in the activities of the union unlike All India Students' Association<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> See Amalkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Political Sociology*, Calcutta: KP Bagchi and Company, 1977, p.103, where he describes Political Socialisation as the process by which political culture is shaped at the individual level and at the community level is passed on from one generation to generation.

<sup>11</sup> Richard G. Braungart, 'Family Status ,Socialization and Student Politics: A Multivariate Analysis, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 77, Number 1, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, p.109

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix II, constitution of the All India Students Association of India. [www.aisa.in](http://www.aisa.in)

(AISA) the Students' Federation of India<sup>13</sup>, the Democratic Youth Federation of India<sup>14</sup> (DYFI) and the All India Youth Federation (AIYF)<sup>15</sup>: at the national level where authority or people elected for higher post is not gendered. Thus, KSU is like any traditional organization. It is influenced by strong patriarchal values. It seems to believe that societies run by men except in rare circumstances when the support of the majority of women is taken into consideration. In this sense this organisation is a Male dominated family - when important decisions are to be taken women's opinion is not taken into consideration. The democratic values seem to fade when people still adhere to the traditional patriarchal practices. Women appear to be the silent spectators.

The study on the level of participation of women and the activism as a group is massive in various movements this is reflected in the media whether in the print or visual form, they have been a force in securing freedom for the male members who are arrested in various demonstration or programs of the Union.<sup>16</sup> Though considered as the weaker sex they were able to achieve or are responsible to a certain extent in achieving their desire whether personally or commonly. this was seen by looking at some of their activities like in the year 2005, was it was marked as the highest level of activism by women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by involving themselves in the activities of the KSU like , the proposed introduction of work permit suggested by the organisation was not agreed by the state government thereby leading to a confrontation with the state machinery, another issue was

---

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix III, Constitution of the Students Federation of India.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix IV, Constitution of the Democratic Youth federation of India.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix V, Constitution of the All India Youth Federation, in [www.aiyfonline.blogspot.com/2011/12/aiyf-flag.htm](http://www.aiyfonline.blogspot.com/2011/12/aiyf-flag.htm), accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Report of *The Shillong Times* 2001, where women were actively involved in freeing and supporting the demand of the KSU, they acted as human shield and also as force to put pressure against the government.

MBOSE<sup>17</sup> became more severe because of the fact that there was a lapse on the part of the authorities where problems and plight of the students was not never taken into consideration. The KSU not only played the role of a bargainers for the students but acting in swiftly on various issues, the MBOSE issue became pivotal because of the fact that women were seen to play a key role in the movement when the KSU leaders like Michael War and Kitborlang Dkhar were arrested and booked under the Meghalaya Preventive Detention Act (MPDA). The women who were part of the society took action by assembling themselves at the Deputy Commissioners Office for the release of these leaders, it was seen in the print and television that the women in their endeavour were successful because , women took active part in the activities of the KSU by organizing rallies in August 2005, where the plight of these leaders was set free by the women activist, mainly women from the *Seng Kynthei* from all localities who fought tooth and nail with the government authorities. The women were able to do so where it was seen they faced water cannon and Tear gas showered on them by the state machinery to deviate them from doing so this incident took place on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2005, the fact remains that these women had fought for the cause as it determines the future of their children.

Another incident that highlights the participation of women is 2007 when the issue of Uranium mining sprung up again in the month of June 2007 after the Public Hearing Meeting organised by the Meghalaya State Pollution Board<sup>18</sup> where it was seen that there was a tussle between those Land owners who support it and those neighbouring areas like Phlangdiloi, Wakhaji, Umdohlun, Mawmluh, Nongmawlein, Mawkyrwat and others who were stern against the mining of

---

<sup>17</sup> *The Shillong Times*, 22<sup>nd</sup>, March 2005.

<sup>18</sup> See " Pdiang ki Trai Jaka bad Trai Shnong, kyntait Ki para marjan ban shah tih Uranium", in *U Mawphor*, 13<sup>th</sup> June , 2007.

uranium, the movement against mining was indeed supported first by the KSU central body and also the KSU west Khasi Hills Unit, who jointly opposed by organizing bandh within Shillong and its adjacent areas; as it is seen that government as machinery would not bow down to the desire of the people, the arrest of the leaders of the organisation was the next step taken by the government, booked under the MPDA for disrupting public peace, road blockade and office picketing, besides crimes like arson and stone pelting. the support from within the society and the women who played a key role by demanding the release of the student leaders within three days after they were arrested<sup>19</sup> showing an impetus of women by giving an ultimatum to the government, it should be noted that in this issue the religious leaders also played a role in the cause of the union where it can be seen that the Shillong Khasi-Jaintia Church Forum (SKJCF)<sup>20</sup>, under the leadership of Rev RJ Skinner their main target was to be the mediator, and also in trying to bring into a sort of understanding between the KSU and the Government. However in the case of the the Synsuk Ki Seng Longkmie (SKSL)<sup>21</sup>, they pressurized the government to release the members within the deadline and with unconditional release of the activists. The support that the KSU had garner is seen when women activists of the SKSL under the leadership of Kong H.F Jana, Kong W Jyrwa, Kong S.Pariat<sup>22</sup> and others offered themselves to be arrested along with the KSU members on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2007. After two weeks after the release of the KSU activists it was seen that SKSL was disintegrated with the unanimous decision not of the KSU but by the women themselves that includes *Synjuk Ki Seng*

---

<sup>19</sup> See "Hapoh Lai sngi dawa pyllait ia kiba shah Kem : Pynsaneh pakhang Shnong Miet ka KSU ba kyrpad ki seng Longkmie", in *U Mawphor*, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> See "Kyrpad ki Nonialam niam ia ka KSU bad ia Ka sorkar", in *U Nonsain Hima*, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

<sup>21</sup> See "Conditional Release of KSU leaders", in *The Shillong Times*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

<sup>22</sup> See "Ym pat lait ki KSU, rai ki seng Longkmie ban shah kem Mon sngewbha", in *U Mawphor*, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2007.

*Longkmie* under the President ship of Ms B Lyngwa<sup>23</sup>: what is surprising is that women are contented by only supporting the KSU it may also pointed out that one member of the organisation made it clear that there was no misunderstanding between the KSU and SKSL , the purpose and aim of this group was to bring in peace and stability within the state.

Activism is also seen in 2009<sup>24</sup> when the KSU openly agitated against the government move to allot land to the UCIL because of the Meghalaya Government's decision not to revoke its August 24 Cabinet decision on Uranium mining, the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) has decided to burn the effigy of the Cabinet as a mark of protest in the four district headquarters of Khasi-Jaintia Hills as part of its first phase of agitation, the KSU took the decision after its meeting ,for the reason that the Cabinet decision to allot the land is a tactic to start Uranium mining in the district which the student organisation is opposing citing health and environmental hazards. Further agitation programmes were organised where it was seen that even women participated in the meetings organised.

In recent times the activism of the KSU is also seen in the preceding years like the ILP issue of 2013<sup>25</sup> and 2014<sup>26</sup>, the registration of electoral roles in 2015<sup>27</sup> and also the Village Administrative Bill<sup>28</sup>, that has been a cause of discord between the government and the organisation, where it is seen that the youth , women and even the aged are now involving themselves.

---

<sup>23</sup> See "La pynduh noh Syndon ia Ka synjuk ki Seng Longkmie", in U Nongsain Hima, 10<sup>th</sup> of July, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> See The Assam tribune , dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009 , 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009.

<sup>25</sup> See " KSU for relaxed form of ILP", in *The Sentinel*, 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> *The Shillong Times*, January- July, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> See *U Mawphor*, February, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> See " Dawa Ki Ar Seng ban Pynrung ia ka Subjection 8 bad 16 ka section 5 jong Ka VAB", in U Mawphor, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2015.

Studying the position of women in the decision making of the organisation, it is seen that there is minimal representation despite being matrilineal society. In the study it was found that representation within the organisation is less than 2%. The reason behind this is, as shown in the study, that most of the women are contented to be part of the masses following male leaders<sup>29</sup>. As part of the present study, interviews were conducted at various levels ranging from youngest to the officials of the KSU along with a few women members of women organisation, it was seen that the perception and idea on youth activism and the roles of the women was analysed by looking at the perception of the KSU through the structured and unstructured interviews which were taken from both the rural and urban areas. In the analyses it was that about 94% of the members became associated with it is through their friends only a few of them had join the KSU through their own conscience. Amongst the 94% respondent who were interviewed joined the KSU when they joined an Educational Institution, their family neither had no role in association with the KSU, however of the 4%, they are either influenced by their family like their mother being a part of the women organisation like the civil society for women welfare (CSWO) however some them became associated with the KSU because their uncle or brothers were part of the organisation.

The second analysis had made when a second Question was asked that do they have any idea when did the girls started to participate in the activities of the KSU the answer was 90% yes that too since its inception, however with regard to the number of girls members within the KSU it was only about 15% yes who knew the actual number that too the executive members of the KSU. However the most important

---

<sup>29</sup> see appendix XII, In an interview with Mrs Irene Hujoon on the the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, she stated that non participation of women is due to the fact that some women were active only in some issues, she also points out that the laid back attitude of the women may be one of the cause that they themselves are reponsible for not being in the limelight.

question that was asked was on the important position that the girls hold it was seen that about 80% knew that too, they pointed out the cultural secretary and only a few who could name the female member who held the position of the Vice President. The response of this question is interesting because as an organisation the KSU follows the norms of democracy while conducting its affairs, election which is one the ingredient of modern society it is seen that if an individual wants to become a member of the Central Executive Council<sup>30</sup> he or she has to contest for elections. It can be agreed that elections is important but the confusion or dissolution within the organisation where the ideas is blurred like what Frank Cunningham<sup>31</sup> points out that in most controversies of political theory the line between principled differences and variations in application, interpretation, or emphasis is blurred. The idea of participation is also an exception where Mill<sup>32</sup> points out that is not enthusiasm for participation that is important but with liberty, equality is also important. Mill<sup>33</sup> is often and in important respects justly classified as an egalitarian. This seems to be lacking within the female members because of their lack of strength of mind since they are greatly influenced by customs and traditional norms.

The variation and ideas on the ideals of it cannot be disregarded that though education has enlightened women within the society. The rise of Population to more than 25lakhs does not justify that women are present at every ambit, the rise of education to about 75% merely is also not an indicator that they participated at all levels, thus while analyzing the fact women fought and supported the KSU and its

---

<sup>30</sup> Ka Riti treikam Jong Ka KSU,p.5.

<sup>31</sup> Frank Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy, A Critical introduction*, London: Routledge Publication, 2002, pp 37-45

<sup>32</sup> J.S,Mill, *On Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford Univresity Press, 1971.

<sup>33</sup> J.S Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971.



cause at various step it is surprising that women are hardly seen to be taking active part in the decision making body of the union.

It can also be argued that the lack of power for women is not only the reason: our customs, usages and tradition indeed are also responsible to this behaviour, Mr Daniel Khyriem<sup>34</sup> rightly points out that the private domain is one of the factors that women cannot be a part of the organisation, they are overburdened with responsibilities and duties thus curtailing them for being a part of the KSU. According to some male members of the KSU they feel that women do not involve themselves in the activities of the union is because of the Customary Laws<sup>35</sup>, that discourage women to participate actively in the activities and programmes of the union, Jyrwa<sup>36</sup> further points out cultural values is also a reason; the social responsibilities<sup>37</sup> that are attached to their life<sup>38</sup> the psychosis that the KSU is a male dominated organisation lies within their minds(women), and it is this attitude that according to Shemphang L Mawphlang<sup>39</sup>, that girls are not occupying important position since there are no active girls participants.

The perception of the KSU with regard to the gender roles of women within the society, remains patriarchal it is not only the men but also the women who are also

---

<sup>34</sup> see appendix VII, Interview with, Mr Daniel Khyriem, Present President of the Khasi Student Union November 2012.

<sup>35</sup> According to Evening Star War, Organising Secretary, KSU NEHU Unit, 2007-2009, points that the customary laws of the hills forbid the women from active participation in village dorbar, this is seen as a deterring factor that discourage women from participating.

<sup>36</sup> see appendix VIII, Interview with Mr Augustus Jyrwa, General Secretary of the Khasi Student Union, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Biang bor Paliar, , President of the KSU Mawlai Nongkwar unit, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> In its original form, the Khasi Matrilineal system are the following the system where, the uncle as the centre of authority and economy, and the Uncles sister with her children from a father from another clan . the authority lies with the Uncle 'Kni' that is the male in ancient times this is done so to safeguard the purity of the clan, see Sohblei.Sngi, Lyngdoh, *The Khasi Matriliney:Its Past and Future*, Pariyam M.chacko, *Matriliney in Meghalaya: tradition and Change*, Regency Publication, New Delhi, 1998,p.33.

<sup>39</sup> see appendix XI, Interview with Shemphang L Mawphlang the President of the KSU Malki Circle and the Executive of the Central Body of the KSU since 2008.

committed to the ideas. Women are expected to uphold and to carry on the cultural values of the society sometimes sacrificing their wishes and desires at the altar of tradition. The declining or non participation of women in today's modern organizations like the KSU is an indication of the strong influence of tradition on the people though there are various women organisation like the Civil Society for Women Organisation (CSWO) or the *Synjuk Ki Seng Kynthei* doing good work on domestic and social issues but what is needed is participation of women in the political realm in the activities of the KSU.

Thus when one analyses the Khasi society the definition of gender roles provides the ideological support for the domestication of women and their exclusion from the political domain. Although there are no formal laws which prevents women from holding public office like what Shemphang Lyngdoh Mawphlang said in the previous chapter, they are not allowed only to attend traditional and 'state' durbars (customary and judicial councils). A woman who dares to voice her opinion on public affairs is regarded as a hen that crows – a freak of nature. It was believe by some writers that men zealously guard their political prerogatives by defining as an arena for mature and physically fit persons. Men subtly hint that women can be equated to children they use the figure of speech *Ka Kynthei ka khynnah* (the women, the child) to describe women. This view of women and politics is even carried to the realm of modern political institution and in various others organizations.

The findings of the study are very clear, in short we found that-

- I. The Khasi definition of gender roles provides the ideological support for the domestication of women and their exclusion from the political domain.

- II. There are no formal laws which prevent women from holding public office.
- III. Gender is believed to be created by the society though some are of the view that it is a natural occurrence.
- IV. The case of Women in Meghalaya who strictly follow the matrilineal system prefer to choose a passive life, even as mere keepers of a home.
- V. That democratic process was adopted in the election of the members to the CEC, however as contenders, participation of women in such office is very less and this is attributed to the influence of the traditional customs and usages where women or society finds it hard to break the old age practice.
- VI. Social responsibility that is within the realm of the home also debars women from actively participating in the KSU programs or in the decision making bodies.
- VII. Women as a whole are seen also to be responsible when they adhere to the traditional roles of sticking to the old norms of private domain though in the field of education, employment they are no less than men as competitors.
- VIII. Activism within the KSU is existing till now and that as an organisation it did not stick to the activities of the student community but rather has stretched its wings into the domain of intervening in the political, social and economic sphere, especially the community oriented domain.
- IX. Women as a group were able to achieve and support the KSU no matter what, but what is pleasing to see that they as a force are able to attain their aspirations.
- X. The women in specific issues as the demos had the exclusive opportunity to participate and also to dissipate.

XI. Last but not the least it was seen that the policy of Inclusion was adopted by the organisation only in recent times.

Thus we can say that as an organisation the KSU were active in many deliberation, yet the patriarchal values seems to influence the participation of women, though it was perceived that they adhere to these values since women are the weaker sex and unable to decide for themselves is not true in the real sense, it can be said that sometimes it is the women themselves who also are responsible for such deeds by not involving themselves because changes can take place despite the fact that people continue to hold on to their traditional values, which has an adverse impact on modern democracies. The path of democracy is a slow process no doubt, it not only empowers and educate the masses, including women, to know their rights and to extend their influence through the participation in all realms of life. Democratic functioning should empower all, not that it should be a hindrance to one part, the females.