

## Situating the Humans Relationship with Nature in the Tangkhul Naga's Lifeworld

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**KEYWORDS** Tangkhul Naga. Indigenous. Human. Nature. Land. Plant. Animal. Lifeworld. Christianity and Modernisation

**ABSTRACT** The Tangkhul Nagas are intricately bound to nature in their social, cultural, economic, ethical and religious values. The dynamics of Tangkhul's livelihood activities in many ways reflect the complexities of the human and nature relationship. Interactions between human and nature have undergone significant changes during the last century which leaves unwarranted impact on its natural environment. Today increasing scarcity of natural resources is serious in Tangkhul Naga society. Besides other than population pressures, technological intrusion and developmental activities, the arrival of Christianity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century proved ominous to the human and nature relations in the lifeworld of the Tangkhuls. The Colonial British introduced Christianity to the Tangkhul Nagas and used as a preliminary strategy to contain the hostile Tangkhuls from fierce rebellion against British dominions in the region. This paper attempts to present the symbiotic relationship of humans with nature in the antecedent lifeworld of the Tangkhuls while arguing for preserving its traditional knowledge system of nature conservation.

### INTRODUCTION

The perceptions and attitudes of human towards nature have been constantly changing due to changes in societal ideologies, religions, breakthrough of scientific thinking and technological lifestyle. For ancient Greeks, nature was a master and to follow it was to stand in contrast to unnatural. Christian ideology brought in a counter partner in supernatural for the natural thus, lowering the value of natural. Scientific thinking broke the pattern of seeing supernatural in nature. The basis and legitimation of western scientific civilization may be still traced back to the story of creation in Bible which states that God gave man rights over nature. Modern worldview on the concept of nature can be said to be derived partly from the Classical period and partly from the rationalism of the enlightenment. Nature is perceived as an external, solid and harmonious entity, which man can manipulate as long as he is aware of and respects its covering laws. Following this ideology, development can be seen in term of increasing knowledge and control over nature. The basis for this view has, however, collapsed as nature is no longer seen as stable and man has lost his privileges in nature.

In 1967, historian Lynn White (1967) wrote a provocative and controversial essay "The His-

torical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" suggesting that present environmental problems emerged from a Judeo-Christian worldview of "domination" over non-human species. For example, the biblical expository of Genesis 1:28 (man's dominion over creation) became an ethic of power and control over nature that replaced respect and protection. Further, White asserted that "By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects". White concludes that "Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy (to the environmental crisis) must also be essentially religious." Many thinkers and scholars have accepted White's basic argument and used it to call for a fundamental restructuring and rethinking of "ecological reformation" towards a faith that would remind us in a new way that we belong to the Earth and are a part of its systems. Primarily, the new movement harbors on the indigenous thought and belief in relation with their nature.

Many indigenous religions perceived the biological components of the environment and the human population as an integral part of nature system. Religions taught them to believe and act towards nature, indigenous religions governed not just by a principle of sustainability for survival's sake, but by a moral sanc-

tion against waste or greed. Notably, the world's major concentrations of biodiversity are in the areas inhabited by the indigenous peoples. Indigenous territories encompass not more than 22 percent of the world's land surface but the areas hold about 80 percent of its biodiversity (WRI, IUCN, UNEP 1991). Biodiversity conservation of indigenous people is rooted in its cultural values, norms and belief systems. The classical mythology and the ecological world-views of ancient societies such as those of Greek, Chinese, Egyptian, Indian, or Persian antiquity, advocates the notion of the path that must be taken to maintain the cosmic order on which human welfare depends. A few studies have also demonstrated that socio-religious institutions of several indigenous societies in India have number of cultural-religious mechanisms with important conservation consequences (Deb et al. 1997).

During the last few decades, indigenous practice of nature has drawn ecological significance and the emphasis is to develop new ecological ethic based on indigenous knowledge. The indigenous peoples argue that the earth or the land (nature) is the source of every form of life and everything springs forth from the earth such as trees, rivers, flowers, fruits and so on. The pattern of human history and time was central on land and embedded in nature (Longchar 1995). In North America especially among the Red Indians, the relationship is not one-way; there is an explicit human-nature reciprocity in which animals have obligations to nourish humans in return for respect and other proper behavior (Trosper 1995). Native Americans saw themselves as a part of nature, not separate from it. They believed the animals were their brothers, the plants their sisters (Young 2007). As their philosophy of nature and human process stems directly from their worldview, it inevitably influences the way they think, perceive and act. There are moral norms and values that govern human behavior. Nature is the primary source of life that nourishes, supports and teaches the center of the universe. At the heart of this deep relationship lies the perception that all are intrinsically linked. As Leopold (1987) postulated in his celebrated work "land ethic" all living things have value. He insisted that this ethical relationship to land cannot "exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value." To put it bluntly in his words, "a

thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise". Thus the value of a species does not reside in itself, but in its relations to the integrity, health, function, and persistence of the community of which it is a part.

In recent times, these practices and traditions have become of great interest as a source of knowledge for sustainability of the environment. In view of the disastrous environmental impacts of contemporary conservation efforts, alternative practices and perspectives have been actively sought after. Janis Alcorn (1993) defined the indigenous societies of conservation as "respecting the nature," "taking care of the nature," or "doing thing right". It means conservation is a philosophy of managing the environment in such a way that it does not despoil, exhaust, or extinguish it or the resources and values it contains. There is a need to develop appropriate methodology for environment conservation, particularly in the areas inhabited by indigenous peoples. The present paper attempts to explore certain aspects of the meaning of the traditional understanding of (and between) human and nature with respect to the Tangkhul Nagas, and the problems that arose out of the proselytisation into Christianity.

### TANGKHUL NAGAS

Tangkhul Naga tribe lives in the present north-eastern part of India and north-western part of Burma (Myanmar). Tangkhul inhabited mainly the Ukhrul district in Manipur covering an areas of 4544 sq kms with the population of 183,115 (2011 Census). Some Tangkhul villages are found in the adjoining Senapati, Thoubal and Chandel district in Manipur and sizable numbers of Tangkhuls are also found in the Somrah tract of Sagaing Division in Burma. Tangkhul region is gifted with rich biodiversity. The climatic condition varies from place to place due to the mountainous terrain. The climate is cold in the higher altitude, but it is moderate and pleasant in the lower altitude. The rainfall is generally high and normally begins from May till the end of October. The primary occupation of the people is *jhum* cultivation though some of them have adopted wet and terrace cultivation. Rice, millet and maize are the main crops. Weaving, hunting, fishing, making beard, necklace, wood carving, cane work and basket making are their subsistence occupations.

The Tangkhuls live in villages and firmly uphold the doctrine that one never abandons “one’s village, home and clan”. The villages are generally thickly populated and are situated on the top of the hills. The village has been the highest political, social, economic and religious unit and the main source of spiritual, social and cultural bonding among the people. The hereditary village chief (*Awunga*) and his clan-based village council (*Hangva*) is the highest decision-making body in the village hierarchy who take the responsibility of looking after the welfare of the villagers. All village festivals, social and religious functions begin with rites and sacrifices by the *Awunga*.

Until the arrival of modern education and institutions, their economic, social, cultural and religious activities revolved around nature and were closely intertwined with their livelihood and culture. Tangkhul Nagas lived by adapting to changes in their immediate environment. M Horam (1977) talks of how “the early tribal life centred round the soil, the ancestral fields, sowing and harvesting. Village feast were dictated by the agricultural calendar and the seasons. Most religious ceremonies and festivals are directly connected with the fields. Gods and spirits are placated so as not to bring blight and frost and to bless the village with good harvest.” Nature in this context has provided the Tangkhuls with a solid foundation for the formation of distinct ethno-cultural trait. Everything in nature has direct impact on them and plays pivotal role in contributing to their material, social and spiritual well-being and thus shapes their cultural community life. Therefore, nature is considered in Tangkhul as a fundamental element of their life-world<sup>2</sup>.

At a closer look, Tangkhul society actually experienced crises on several fronts. Horam (1977) remarks that “the present century has witnessed sudden and drastic changes, and these and the more gradual changes that are occurring daily, have caused the present age to be labelled an age of transition. There is no aspect of these people’s life which has not been touched by change. Whether we look at the Tangkhul Nagas economically, politically, socially or in the religious field, many transformations have taken place.” This transition from traditional to the modern way of life has not been a simple one. While the people fervently give up their antecedent religious belief in favour of

Christianity, their relations to custom and cultural practices and their outlooks on the nature’s providence have also undergone changes. Christianity did not agree with most of the customs and traditions. The interaction between human and nature have been changing since the arrival of the Christian missionary in the Tangkhul Naga hills.

Meanwhile, drive for cash in the modern economy, desires for development and improved material living conditions has caused to exploit the rich resources in the land of Tangkhuls. Horam argues that “unaware of the value of their products and resources they gifted away all trade and business privileges to other communities.” Faced with these challenges, the Tangkhuls are struggling to maintain the human relationship with nature which was once a part of their cultural identity. The underlying purpose is to delineate the importance of Tangkhul’s traditional knowledge in conservation of biodiversity vis-à-vis human relation with the nature for sustainable development. The researcher believes understanding the past, while knowing the existing problems and prospects of the present will allow us in making an assessment of the challenges to be met in the future.

### **Nature Defines the Lifeworld of the Tangkhuls**

To the Tangkhuls, *Otsem* is translated as “nature”. It refers to created persons or things such as lands, plants, animals, and humans, as well as the physical environment. However, the Tangkhuls believe land is the most important of all. They contend that land is the primary source of life that nourishes, supports, and teaches the way of life. For Tangkhuls, land is a sacred quality which symbolized identity, culture, traditions and spiritual values. Land is therefore, not only a productive source but also the center of life, the core of culture and the origin of ethnic identity. Like other indigenous people, Tangkhuls do not consider the land as merely economic resource. “If the land is lost, the family, clan, village and tribe’s identity, culture, traditions too is believed to be lost” (Longchar 1996). Land is held collectively and so is the preservation of land a collective responsibility. It is the land that owns people and gives them an identity. Traditional ownership of the land does not correspond to Western capitalist notions where the tract of land belonging to one principal person, but to

all community. The land occupies a very central place in their understanding, as Shimray (2007) pointed out “the essential orientation in Tangkhul Naga tradition is that one never abandons the concept of ‘my village, my home and my clan.’ Their tradition reinforces this concept of ethno-territorialism. The land on which they are born is their basic institution”. Therefore, in the Tangkhul Naga tradition, there is no concept of land ownership. Respect for land is embodied in the spiritual and social lives of the Tangkhuls. The land not only holds the clan and village together, but unites with their spirits ancestors and creation as one family. The whole village is intended to prosper, not just individuals. To own the land means sharing of its productivity and adhere to the authority of the village, and perhaps primarily, that person’s ancestor spirits.

In their tradition, land belongs to the *Provider* and the human ownership of land is for short-term. The *Provider* is understood to enter into the soil with the seeds and rise again along with the crop. Thus the blooming of flowers and rice signifies the presence of the provider. The whole creation is the manifestation of the *Provider* through land. Without land the *Provider* ceases to work. That land is the symbol of unity of all living creatures is reflected in their agricultural practices. When ploughing the land, the first stage is for production and generally a cereal crop is planted; the second stage is for renewal, so a leguminous crop is planted to recharge the soil; the third stage is for rest and the land is left fallow. It does not matter whether one has surplus land to leave fallow or not, but that part of the land is left to rest. Tangkhuls believe that land cannot be put to use more than what it can give. The same is applied to the rivers, mountains and other ecosystems; they are regarded as a sacred place to be approached with reverence and with an appreciation for what they were, rather than for what they served human being. In a nutshell, Tangkhuls and other indigenous people experience history and time as cyclical and rhythmic rather than linear and progressive. They move along with the soil cycle; it is centred on the soil (Longchar 1996). The people’s understanding is that the year comes and goes in an unending cycle. The *Jhum*<sup>3</sup> felling season is sure to be followed by *jhum* burning and sowing season. Similarly, the festival season is sure to come in the end to give enough

time for recreation and rejoicing. The last season of the year is not the end of a year, but it is the beginning of another cycle. This is how the people experience time in a circular way. The nature of living things was that they are not mere machines.

Plants have basic importance and symbolic meanings in the life of Tangkhul Nagas. Without plants, people cannot make up their physical, cultural, spiritual and material needs. At the same time it should be noted that Tangkhuls use them for a variety of traditional knowledge related to plants. The usefulness of a plant is not always inherent to the plant itself. People try to understand the plants and find their usefulness through interaction with their biological cycle. The use of a plant as ritual medicine depends not only on the physical features of the plant but also on the knowledge and skill of the practitioner who manages to interact with the plant and draw its hidden power from the plant. People depend for their livelihoods on plants and continuity of life provides man and animals with feelings of reliability and certainty.

Tangkhul tradition also reflects some aspect for the conservation of animals. In fact, animals including domestic animals play an important role in formulation of knowledge. In many cases, animal have better instincts than humans. The Tangkhuls understand the animals’ behavior so as to understand the natural environment. During the rainy season, for instance, if ants come out of their hive to hunt, it implies that there would be no rain on that day. Further, animals are used as food, medicine, material culture and ritual. For instance, the animal skin/bone is used for wrist protectors, drum, ornaments, bow, flutes, and decorations. Animals bring joys and happiness to human, and various symbolical objectives. Some animals were regarded as sacred and allowed to be killed or eaten. Various Tangkhul customs dealt with how to treat insects, birds and animals. For instance, according to the Naga folk stories Nagas learnt the art of dancing from the hornbill and that is why the Nagas respect the hornbill to this day (Haksar 2001).

Some of the birds, insects and animal were prohibited to be eaten depending on the person’s social affiliation, social status, physical condition etc. Some restrictions are unchangeable for life, and some change through the life stage of the people. Thus people always have

to be careful to their personal attributes, kinship affiliation, social status, and sexes etc. before killing animals for food. For instance, the Keishing clan of the Tangkhuls cannot eat buffalo as they believed that they came from the same ancestor. If the priest chief eats food which is forbidden, the village may suffer a plague of boils, or of blindness. If a warrior eats food cooked by a woman before a raid, the whole enterprise will go wrong and all his companions are exposed to danger. Longchar (1996) points out that when the observances of taboo are neglected, the human community not only suffers but also animals and plants are affected. So, the strength of the restriction/taboo among the Tangkhul Nagas lies, therefore, in the indirectness and uncertainty of its sanctions. One of the main reasons is that animals are characterized as the same ancestral roots and therefore, they have a personal and social relationship. They have to be treated in a proper manner, or they will cause troubles and misfortune such as diseases and quarrels in the human world.

There are many accounts of folktales where animals interact with man, speaking, singing, crying, laughing, and dying just like human. Luikham (1983) pointed out one of the most popular folktales that taught the Tangkhuls the way of life goes like this: after *Kasa Akhava* (creator) had created all the creatures on the earth, the *Kasa Akhava* wanted his creatures to determine the duration of the day and night. So he eventually summoned all the creatures to find out their opinion. So for a long time, nobody spoke up and there was pin drop silence to what should be done. Finally a tiny-eyed Mole suggested that the duration of the day and night should be one year each. But many of the creatures opposed the Mole's proposal but did not offer any concrete suggestion. Later on *Chiklen* (warbler-like bird) proposed that "let there be short intervals for rest and equally short interval for work". The *Kasa Akhava* approved such a sound and wise proposition given by the *Chiklen* and chose him to foretell events of day and night. At the same time, he appointed the *Harva* (Cock) to determine the length of the day and night. The *Kasa Akhava* commanded the Cock, that when he became tired and could not work any longer, he should crow and sleep and that would determine the duration of the night. In the same manner, the cock should wake up when his body had fully renewed strength and

is ready to work, he should once again crow and that would be the duration of the day. Thus the Cock declared the rising of the sun and the setting of the sun by crowing "Ki...Kri...Ki" ushering in the day and the night. The cock crowing in the morning is a time to wake up and crowing at night is a time to go to bed. Since that day, the Tangkhuls claim that the world received light and darkness at regular and alternative intervals.

Even today because of the Moles's proposal for the unworkable duration of the day and the night, the mole remains hidden underground eating only grass roots and if he ever comes out into the open he normally does not survive. He is eaten by either wild cats or hawks. The Tangkhul Nagas also listen to the chirping sound of *Chiklen* whenever they take out a journey outside their village boundary or even go for hunting. *Chiklen* chirping can either be a green signal or a red signal according to the direction of the chirping. The chirping on the right side is a good omen and the person can go ahead with the plan in strong faith of meeting success ahead. If it chirps from the left side, then it is a bad omen and one has to remain at home whatever be the situation. The villagers believe that those who do not pay heed to *Chiklen* warning chirps invariably meet misfortunes.

According to other Naga folktales<sup>4</sup>, a tiger, a spirit and a man were three brothers who came into existence through the incredible union between the already existing first woman and the clouds of the sky. As their mother grew older and thin, each tended her in turn. As day went by, the man suspected the tiger of keeping an eye to eat the mother when she dies. So the man and spirit sent the tiger to the field on the day their mother was to die. On his return the tiger did not see his mother, for they had buried her. As their mother had died they dispersed in different directions in which man decided to work in the open air (village). The tiger went into the forest and the spirit to work in the dark. Thus it strongly suggests that both animals (tiger) and spirits share a special relationship with humankind. Interestingly they all had a common origin in one woman as brothers, so animals are seen not merely as some kind of lower form of life. So they share same ontological status as man since they were born of a common mother (Mao 2009; Kapai (2011). There are no boundaries between man and animals in the world of imagination and

even in the real world. Mark Woodward's (2000) study of the Nagas also shows that "Tigers and/or leopards are often believed to be lords of the jungle in the same sense that humans are lords of the village. They are also believed to have souls and can be understood as non-human persons." People feel that animals are also a part of their generation living in the forest along with man at any time. Man dearly missed his brothers the tiger and the spirit whom he could no longer be with. Hence, he invented rituals and customs (in Naga culture) that would appease his brothers and bring them back to him. Thus, the Naga culture was born (Mao 2009).

The Tangkhul society, like any other indigenous people in world believes that lands, plants and animals have same ancestral roots and therefore, humans are integral part of creation and not above creation. Human beings, the animal and divinity form one family (Aleaz 2002). The concept of village as an ecosystem of the Tangkhuls, with all ramifications involving agriculture, animal husbandry and the domestic sector including the forest and related activities such as hunting and gathering of food, fodder, fuel wood and medicinal plant collection. It also includes forest linked traditional farming practices such as shifting agriculture and a variety of other complex agricultural system. Thus the traditional Tangkhul Nagas acts as a part of ecosystem boundaries. At the heart of this deep bond is the perception that all living and non-living things and natural and social worlds are intrinsically linked (reciprocity principle). The principle of dependence governs the lives of all creatures.

The integral relationship of Tangkhuls with nature can be traced not only through their verbal folktales or myths but is also evident from their lifestyle as witness. As humans are not the master, they make use of nature with other creatures and operate within the biodiversity. They depend upon nature for every activity. The land produces a good harvest because it is fertile, and also it gets enough rain. If there is no forest land, it cannot retain its fertility, neither there will be enough rain for the plants to grow. So the Tangkhul don't look to prove his superiority but to satisfy hunger not an object to be used, to be controlled or exploited, but as a living entity, an object of respect. When the peoples meet their immediate needs they take time off to dance, rituals, ceremonials, festivals, and sing to thanks the creators. The whole understanding of Tangkhul societal, ethics, economic life is relat-

ed to their nature, which is based on sharing, caring and responsible stewardship. Hence, this centrality of the nature for understanding the reality cannot be ignored if Christian theology is to make sense and be meaningful in the tribal context (Longchar 1996).

#### **HUMAN AS THE MASTER OVER NATURE: IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY**

Prior to the colonial encounters, Nagas had limited contact with the outside world beyond their own villages (Woodward 2000). Although the British had set foot on the Naga nation as early as in 1832, their imperialistic ambition made headway only after the Christian missionaries had won the hearts of the Nagas through the gospel of Christ. E.N. Clark, an American Baptist missionary, was the first Christian priest known to have proselytized large numbers of Nagas in 1872 in Ao region, while William Pettigrew, a Scottish missionary, preached among the Tangkhuls from 1896. Tangkhuls seem to have accepted new religion, that is, Christianity without much opposition. By embracing Christian ways of life, they gave up certain traditional ideas, beliefs and practices.

The most decisive blow to the fabric of the man and nature was when the Christianity began to win converts quite rapidly. Acceptance of the new religion demanded total abandonment of the old ways. A way of life, which had sustained and nurtured generations suddenly became taboo. Christian missionaries attached all the activities of the Tangkhuls regardless of whether these activities had their origin and connected with religion or not became taboo. Food and dress code too had to undergo changes according to the new ways. Thus Horam (1975) pointed out, Christian missionaries banned "the entire culture of the hills with its rich traditions of songs and energetic dances died in one mighty sweep. With this the color and gaiety departed from Naga's life." Christian missionaries attacked the culture of the Tangkhuls and were in large measure agents of change for western on the people. The valuable Tangkhul Naga usage and practice were condemned as satanic elements even by the new converts who learnt it from the missionaries.

The other impact of Christianity fell on the power and function of the Tangkhul chief. The time honoured position, powers and functions of the chief, well tried and accepted without reservation was seriously eroded by the spread of

Christianity. When the Christian missionaries brought the new faith with its established theological principles and introduced western culture, it produced serious effects on the stagnant culture of the Tangkhuls. The devotion of the new converts to the new faith and their desire for higher life style also affected their honour and loyalty to the village chief. Two opposing religious beliefs began to exist in parallel within a village (Shimray 2001). Thus, the Tangkhul villages being, a social, political, economic and religious unit was damaged structurally and institutionally. Eaton (1984) pointed out that Christian missionaries and British rule completely undermined the traditional social order. It would be "a mistake to see conversion of Nagas as merely a function of social change." As a result, the interaction between human and nature has been changing since the arrival of the Christian missionaries contact with the Tangkhul Nagas. Their past is seen as outdated, ancient and primitive and the present is valued as advanced and refined.

Many features of Tangkhul life are hastily disappearing. The western philosophy and religious climate gave the relationship of humankind with nature based on the notion that human is master over animals and plants (White 1967). In such order, humans stand at the top of the hierarchy, and animals and plants are under the control of humans<sup>5</sup> Christian belief holds man is defined as a creature with divine origins, who has been given sovereignty over animal and plant life. By being sovereign, mankind is carrying out the will of God

As White further argues that "Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asian religions (except, perhaps Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploited nature for his proper ends." Besides, if "humanity is the central point of reference and norms" in the dominant Christian traditions, "in the tribal worldview the land is the key and central point of reference and norm" (Longchar 1995). As Gosling (2001) pointed out, "Christianity has been blamed for environmental destruction in the north-east on account of its tendency to desacralize trees, sacred groves, etc." The whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the west. Christian missionaries chopped down sacred groves which are idolatrous. The dominant Christian theologies, in short, have been insensitive to the relation of the Tangkhul people with nature.

As seen from the above, for Tangkhuls nature is not merely passive and exploitable resources for humans; but they interact with people in making the world useful and symbolically meaningful. Nature is often regarded as possessing human qualities, or, sometimes as supernatural beings. Humans and nature occupy unclear boundaries in which they are interconnected by the network of values and interactions. Christianity ingrained deeply the principles of individualism and market-based society among the Tangkhuls. As Max Weber (1958) says, Christianity (protestant work ethic) was an important force behind the unplanned and uncoordinated mass action that influenced the development of capitalist society. Now people pursuing after the model of some market economy are working with the development ideology of "catch up" at the cost of cultural and moral values. Longchar (1995) argues that "in the dominant "catch up" development model, the criteria of judging human society is economic. It undermines the cultural and moral aspects and projects the image of western society as the goal of civilization."

As the development pattern set by western consumerism and individualistic society emerges, it denies the possibility and continuity of the way of traditional living. This has created problems in Tangkhul society in which influential people are creating their own individuality, which undermines the cultural values, sense of community. The present trend denies, in real sense, of the possibility of relationship with nature in their own culture. Man seems to be environmentally unconscious because of consumerist culture, everyone sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits. As Haksar (2011) pointed out, "Naga society was based on values which were against consumerism. The man who got the highest respect was the man who gave feasts of merit in which he and his wife shared their wealth with the entire village community. Now it is the man or woman who possesses the most who is accorded the highest status and respect." One can conclude that Christianity influences the production and consumption behavior of people with regard to nature and the environment (White 1967).

## CONCLUSION

In the pre-colonial Tangkhul society, practices, beliefs and traditions were geared towards maintaining organic unity between human and

the environment. Tangkhul's traditional view towards nature is similar to what Francis Assisi believed that animals and plants are the brothers and sisters of human beings. As stated in the above, the relationship between humanity and nature has changed dramatically. As human culture changes from traditional religion to Christianity, different peoples' value orientation toward nature result in the different impact on the natural ecosystems. The challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be to figure out what value orientations should people hold for sustainable quality of biodiversity.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Tangkhul society today is in a way alienated from their traditional knowledge. However, the knowledge abides in many ways since Tangkhuls still practice traditional agricultural practices and continued the dependence on the forest. To begin with, the revival of some aspects of traditional culture should not be seen as contradicting Christianity. In fact, Christianity is to play a vital role in the context of the ecological crisis and liberate the Tangkhuls who are being dehumanized, disfigured, alienated and uprooted in our time, Christians must, first, rediscover the centrality of nature in Christian theology. Just as White suggests that Francis should be the patron of the saint of ecologists, traditional Tangkhul Naga worldview ought to be revived in respect to our relations with nature. A thorough understanding of the Tangkhuls relationships with land, plants and animals is of crucial importance for protection of nature. Tangkhuls need to rediscover the knowledge of earlier generations, who lived in close affinity with the nature. The need of the hour is the revival of the relevant aspects of the traditional Tangkhul culture.

### NOTES

1. According to him land ethic "includes soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land".
2. The term lifeworld in this study is about everyday life in all its aspects. In other words lifeworld is about concrete life and concrete structures in life.
3. Jhum (Shifting) cultivation is an agricultural system in States of North Eastern Hill Region of India and people involved in such cultivation are called Jhumia. The practice involves clearing vegetative/forest cover on land/slopes of hills, drying and burn-

ing it before onset of monsoon and cropping on it thereafter. After harvest, this land is left fallow and vegetative regeneration is allowed on it till the plot becomes reusable for same purpose in a cycle. Meanwhile, the process is repeated in a new plot designated for Jhum cultivation during next year.

4. There are different versions of the same story of man, spirit and tiger being told among the various Naga tribes.
5. Christian belief holds man is defined as a creature with divine origins, who has been given sovereign power animal and plant life. By being sovereign, mankind is carrying out the will of God.

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