

Rural-Urban Migration and Its Impact on Traditional Village Society: The Case of Mokokchung District of Nagaland

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Abstract:

Migration is a complex and multi-faceted phenomena which has a great impact on the economic, social and cultural life of the people both at the place of origin and destination. Migration from rural to urban areas in India is neither a new nor a recent phenomenon; however, the rate of rural-urban migration has increased over the years. There are more and more people migrating to urban areas in search of jobs, education, health care and various other facilities that are not available in the rural areas. However, such a move has resulted in negative consequences for the traditional village society. This paper is an attempt at understanding the various factors that have led to an increase in rural-urban migration and the socio-economic impact of migration on the traditional village society. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through fieldwork using open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The findings of the paper suggest that rural-urban migration has led to the erosion of family ties, traditional community practices and pose a challenge to the overall interest of the traditional village society.

Keywords: Migration, Rural Community, Nagaland, Social Impact, Family Structure

Introduction

Since the beginning of human civilization, human beings have been involved in the process of migration. Migration is considered as the movement of people from one geographical region to another which may be temporary or permanent basis (Edith Ochuko Amreurayire and Vincent Nduka Ojeh, 2016). Migration has been defined as one of the three basic components of population growth of any area which influences not just the size, composition and distribution of population but influences the social, political and economic life of the people. While migration in the early history had been slow and for short distances, migrations over the years have become easier with improved means of transport and communication. People are on the move more than ever before. Dharmendra Pratap Singh and Rejeshwari Biradar (2022) argues that migration at present, is a response to technological progress, industrialization, and urbanization, and is facilitated by convenient transportation. In most countries, it has been observed that industrialization and economic development have been accompanied by large scale movements of people from villages to towns, from towns to other towns and from one country to another country (R.Lusome and R.B.Bhagat, 2020). Priya Deshingkar (2004) states that due to the increasing mobility of rural population, urban and rural areas all over the world are becoming closely linked socially, politically and even economically. There are various factors which play an important role in the migration process. People may migrate due to economic, social, cultural or political factors.

The history of Northeastern part of India is also a history of migration. Before written history, the flow was mainly from the eastern direction, so that most of the ethnicities that today claim to be the autochthons can trace their ancestries to the east of India, mostly to Southeast Asia (Uddipana Goswami, 2007) While intra district migration dominates migration in the region, states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Meghalaya

have a significant interstate migration as well (R.Lusome and R.B.Bhagat,2020). The movement of people from rural to urban areas is very common occurrence in Nagaland. For the Nagas, it is believed that their ancestors migrated in different groups to their present locations and they established their own sovereign village states. From 1901 till 1951 urban population in Nagaland constituted less than 2% of the total population. Urban population steadily increased to 5% in 1961 from 2% in 1951. By 1981, 16% of the population was living in urban areas which remained almost stagnant for the next twenty years. The decade 2001-2011 saw a remarkable increase in urban population by 2.2 lakhs, a decadal increase by 67%. As per 2001 census, people living in the rural areas constitute 82.3 percent of Nagaland's population as against 90 percent in 1971. This is an indication that people are moving from rural areas to urban areas in the state.

The urban population of Nagaland as on 2011 is 28.86% which is slightly lower than the national average of 31.16%. The state experienced a high growth of urban population during 2001-2011. Ayemi and Kar (2020) points out that the number of urban centres in Nagaland had been as small as 3 in 1971, which increased to 9 in 1991 and 26 in 2011. In Nagaland, since its statehood in 1963, the small administrative blocks and headquarters have been steadily growing in population as more and more people migrate from the surrounding villages in search of jobs, education, health care and various other lifestyles that are not available in the villages. Subsequently, the small townships and hamlets have been expanding and growing in population. Judging by the number of people living in rural areas constituting 71.03% of Nagaland's population in 2011, as against 82% in 2001, it can be inferred that it is an indication of rural to urban migration in the state (Longchar, 2014). But the distribution of urban population is not uniform, the concentration is higher in few towns like Kohima and Dimapur. For instance, more than 55% of the state's urban population is concentrated in Dimapur and Kohima alone in 2011. Urban population constituted 51.95% in Dimapur, 45.6% in Kohima, followed by Mokokchung with 28.81%, the third place in 2011. Unplanned process of urbanisation and concentration of urban population in the two major towns, such as Kohima and Dimapur have consequent effect on the life of urban dwellers. (Hulin and Jamir, 2018) The majority of the migrant population in Nagaland is drawn from the rural areas, and the phenomenon of continued out-migration essentially tells upon the conditions in the rural areas, making the life increasingly difficult.

However, such movement poses problems both for the rural and urban centres. In the rural areas, there is a deterioration of not just the rural economy due to the excessive drain of the youths from the rural villages, but it also impacts the socio-cultural practices of the villagers. Jamir (2000) writes that a Naga individual knows no other life except that of a community life. Individual had no existence apart from the community. However, this outlook changed with the advent of urbanisation and education. Nshoga (2009), mentions that urbanisation resulted in migration of people to the urbanised centres, who began to involve in new professional activities. The collective village life, based on common interests and the outcome of cooperative relations gave way to individual competition and struggle. Aier (2006) writes how the urban situation represents an environment of relative freedom, as opposed to traditional constraints of customs and practices which brought about a detachment from community enterprise and corporate mono-goal activity of the village. He further argues that modern education has proved to be latent with elements to foster individual hybridisation, coupled with the urban spirit of competition, which opposed the communal cooperativeness of the old society. Jamir (2000) also writes that community living has become an impossible dream in the age of consumerism. Thong (2012) points out that for the educated Nagas, the attachment to White people through education and employment created alienation from their own community and culture. There is a tendency towards individualism and personal achievement at the expense of alienation from the community and culture, which was previously unthinkable but has now become an acceptable norm. Migration from the rural to urban areas also poses an increasing pressure on the state government to meet the needs of the urban population in terms of the basic

facilities like housing, sanitation, water, waste management, adequate health services etc. While it cannot be denied that rural to urban migration does have its positive impacts, the negative impacts seem to far outweigh the associated benefits with migration.

Review of Literature

Migration is considered as the movement of people from one geographical region to another, which may be on temporary or permanent basis. As per International Organisation for Migration, 2015, approximately one in five international migrants are estimated to live in just 20 cities -Beijing, Berlin, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Hong Kong SAR, China, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Moscow, New York, Paris, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, Vienna and Washington DC. Migration occurs as a response to economic development as well as social, cultural, environmental and political factors and effects on areas of origin as well as destination. People tend to move away from a place due to need to escape violence, political instability, drought, congestion in various dimensions and suspected or real persecution. Also, adverse physical conditions such as flood, landslide (erosion and earthquake), insects and pests, soil infertility contribute largely to the reasons why people leave one environment for another (J. Gbemiga Adewale, 2005). Gbemiga Adewale J.(2005) points out that people leave for urban centres because of their inability to secure jobs in the towns, due to transfer of work to rural areas, or retirement and high cost of living in the urban areas. The International Organisation for Migration, 2015, further states that migrants are increasingly attracted to countries experiencing higher economic growth in East Asia, Brazil, southern Africa and western India. Thus, cities everywhere are experiencing a constant ebb and flow of people between urban, regional, national and global communities bringing growing challenges of managing migration-induced diversity.

Richard Rhoda (1983) in his study on migration mentions two models that is social and economic models of migration. Under the social models, he discusses the migration decision making process through four general factors which are origin factor, destination factors, intervening obstacles and personal factors. The economic models of migration are human capita or cost-benefit approach, the expected income model and the inter-sectoral linkage model. He argues that migration is primarily motivated by economic considerations and by the educational opportunities offered in urban areas, or marriage, joining a family that is already at the destination and to escape from rural violence of war. Further, he points out that migration is stimulated by activities which increase access to cities, commercialize agriculture, strengthen rural-urban integration, raise education and skill levels or increase rural inequalities. Rural- urban migration therefore involves the quest for a better quality of life by low-skill and low-wage workers as well as high-skill and high-wage workers from less developed rural areas to more developed urban areas, especially among the poor in the developing countries (Chukwuedozie K.Ajaero and Patience C. Onokala, 2013). However, the future of migration flow is further determined by the level of accumulated migration experience, as well as individuals' extent of access to it (Filip Garop & Sara Curran, 2010). In terms of migration, male tend to migrate more than female. Lomoro Alfred Babi Moses et al (2017) in their study points out that male migrate more than female and the propensity to migrate is directly related to educational attainment. Further they point out that until the imbalance or disparity in socio-economic development between the rural and urban areas are removed, no amount of persuasion or force can put a stop to rural-urban migration and its' multiplying effects.

Gbemiga Adewale (2005) in the study on the effects of rural –urban migration on the rural communities of Southeastern Nigeria points out that the effects of rural-urban migration in the rural places of origin of migrants is manifested in two ways. First, the rural-urban migrants send remittances to their relatives in the rural areas, and these remittance-receiving households use the remittances for various purposes. Secondly, these rural-urban migrants execute various rural developmental projects in their rural areas of origin. Their

study shows how rural-urban migration contributes not only towards the development of the rural communities through monetary remittances, but they are themselves involved in the community development projects. These community associations in the urban areas articulate, from time to time, the developmental needs of their rural communities of origin and contribute resources to execute projects such as road construction and the award of educational scholarships to students in the rural areas. S.M. Essang and A.F. Mabawonku (1975) on the other hand argues that rural –urban migration creates a population structure that is characterised by predominance of children and old people in the rural areas who cannot effectively perform farming operations. It also tends to increase the land/man ratios and hence the farm size of the affected families. They are then compelled to depend considerably on hired labor to cope with the task of agricultural production.

Dharmendra Pratap Singh and Rejeshwari Biradar (2022) in their study on migration in India mentions that the rural-urban migration as a type of spatial movement which is an accompaniment of the process of industrialization. They argue that as the economy of the country develops, so does the internal migration increase and brings about radical changes in the occupational patterns and in the type and location of economic and social activities. They consider rural-urban migration as a result from the search for perceived or real opportunities as a consequence of rural-urban inequality in wealth. Similarly, according to R.B.Bhagat (2010) interstate mobility increased considerably during the period 1991-2001, coinciding with India's economic liberalization programme, which was initiated in 1991, but migration flows at the state level continued to be towards the developed states, namely Maharashtra, Haryana, Delhi, Punjab and Gujarat. The growth rate of interstate migration was 80 per cent in Maharashtra, followed by Haryana with close to 70 per cent, Delhi with 63 per cent, Punjab with 56 per cent and Gujarat with about 50 per cent during the period 1991-2001.

T.S Papola (1988) discusses that migration from rural to urban areas is a reflection of a structural shift in economic activities in economic activities from agriculture to non-agriculture. It is also because the urban areas provide better access to non-economic facilities and amenities which is attractive to the rural population. High rate of rural to urban migration is a reflection of a high degree of rural –urban difference in incomes and economic opportunities and also the presence of absolute poverty and destitution in rural areas. J.P Singh (1984) on the other hand draws linkages between distance and migration. According to him, for an ethnically heterogeneous society like India, diversity in cultural practices, language and sometimes regional politics acts as a deterrent to long distance migration. The longer the distance from the place of origin, the greater will be the number of obstacles in acquiring jobs and making social adjustments in a new and distant environment.

Rural- urban migration has been argued to have both positive and negative impact on the rural and urban areas. Migration to urban areas is mainly due to the inequality and/or urban bias in development. There is an overwhelming concentration of wealth, assets, purchasing capacity, economic activities, and variety of services in the urban centres. This in turn results in the continued neglect and degradation of rural environment or areas (Dharmendra Pratap Singh and Rejeshwari Biradar, 2022). T.S Papola (1988) argues that there are social costs of migration that is dislocation of family and community life in rural areas, a negative impact on the productive activities in rural area, which deprives rural areas of the relatively more productive, skilled and enterprising workers and congestion and stresses on services in urban areas.

Study Area

Mokokchung is a town and a municipality in the district of Mokokchung, Nagaland. It is bounded by the state of Assam to its north, Wokha, Tuensang, Zunheboto to its west, east and south respectively. It lies between 93.530 E and 94.530 E longitude and 25.560 N latitude. The area of the district is 1615 sq. km with a total population of 1, 94,622, of which 101,092 are males and 93,530 females with 138,897 constituting the rural

population (GOI, NABARD, 2016-17). As per 2011 census, 71.37 % population of Mokokchung districts lives in rural areas. The total Mokokchung district population living in rural areas is 138,897 of which males and females are 71,373 and 67,524 respectively (Census 2011). Villages are spread across the six distinct hill ranges of Mokokchung district namely Ongpangkong, Asetkong, Jangpetkong, Japukong, Langpangkong and Tsurangkong.

Methodology

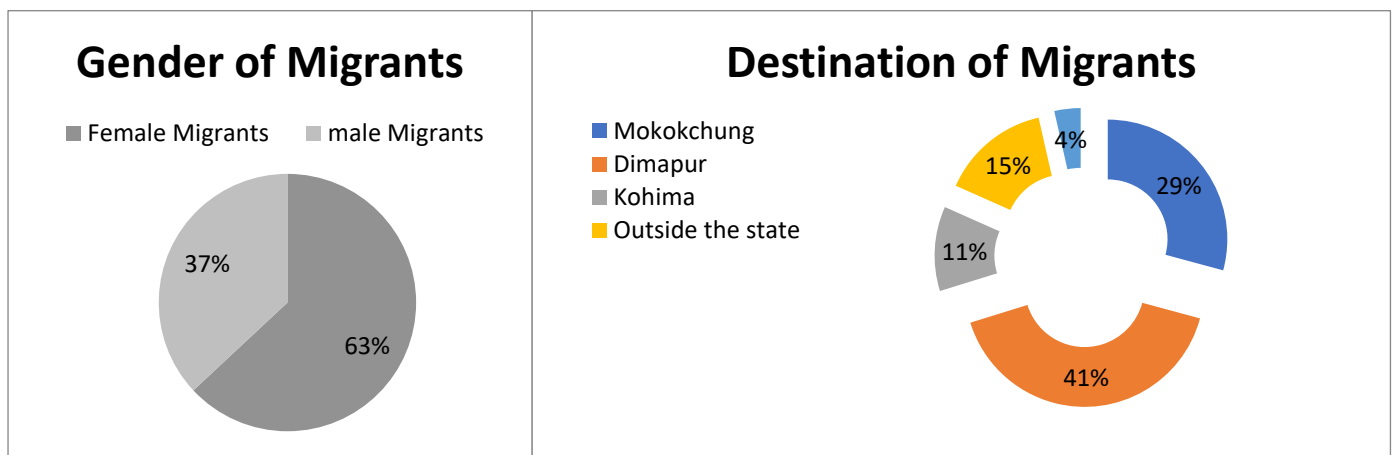
The data has been derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected through fieldwork using open ended questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The secondary data includes books, journals, government records and other published materials related to the area of study. The study has been confined mainly to the district of Mokokchung, Nagaland. For the purpose of the study, fieldwork was conducted in the six distinct hill ranges namely Ongpangkong, Asetkong, Jangpetkong, Japukong, Langpangkong and Tsurangkong. Using stratified random sampling method, villages were divided on the basis of the population in the six hill ranges. Further two villages (one big and one small village) from each range were selected for the purpose of the study. A total of 198 households were selected using purposive sampling from 12 villages namely Settsu, Longkhum, Nukshiyim, Changtonya Yimsen, Longpa, Mopungchuket, Changki, Chunliyimsen, Nokpu, Aonukpu, Chungtiayimsen, Watiyim. Along with the households, indepth interviews were also conducted with the members of the Village Councils to ascertain the impact of rural-urban migration on the village community. The data was analysed using simple statistics and is represented through graphs and pie charts.

Results and Discussion

1. Broad Pattern of Migration in Mokokchung District

In the case of Mokokchung district 76% of the respondents responded that there has been an increase in the rate of rural-urban migration from the villages. From 198 households, 192 households responded that members from their family have migrated. Of the total members migrated, 63% were female and 37% were male members of the family. Among the group of migrants, the highest rate of migration was reported between the age group of 20-29 years and those less than 20 years of age. An analysis of the data on the destination for migrants showed that 41% had migrated to Dimapur district, 29% within Mokokchung district itself, 15% had migrated outside the state, 11% to Kohima and 4% to other districts within the state itself.

Figure 1: Gender and Destination of Migrants

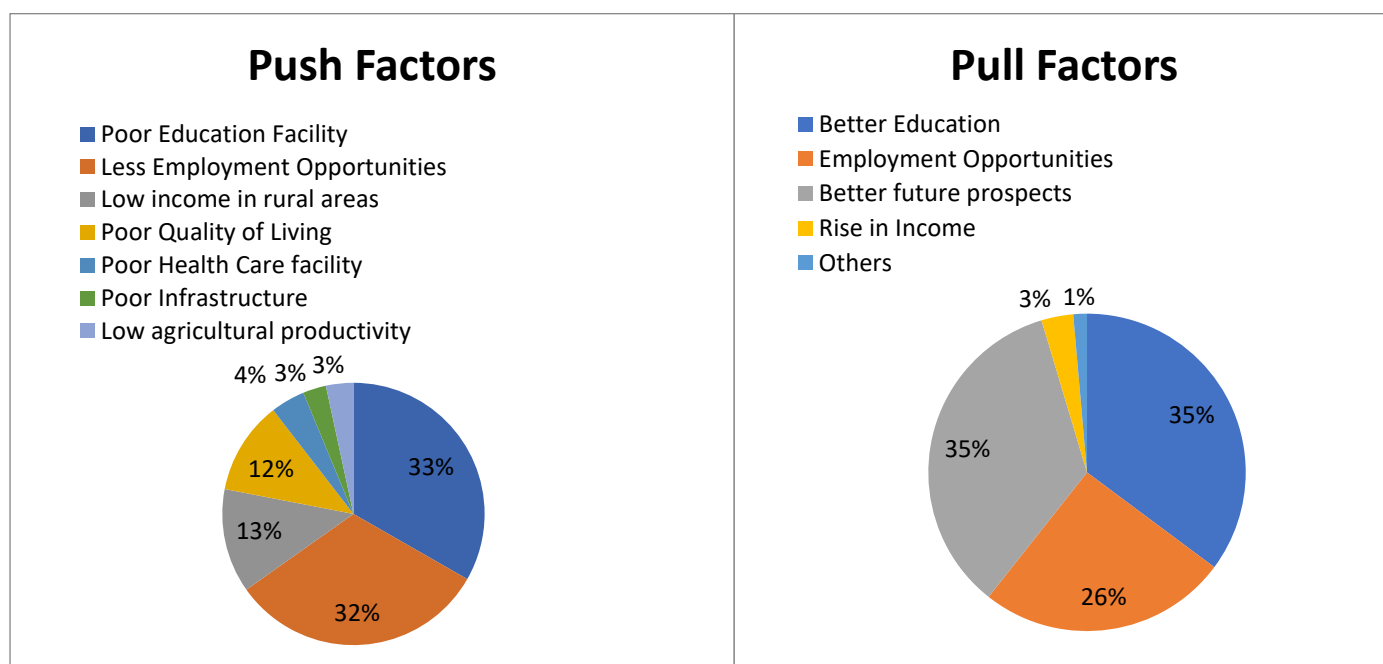


Source: Fieldwork

2. Causes of Rural to Urban Migration in Mokokchung District

Over the passage of time, rural to urban migration in Nagaland has increased mostly due to the increasing gap in the socio-economic development between rural and urban areas. In the case of Mokokchung, migration was largely due to the negative socio-economic forces operating in the rural areas in the form of unemployment, low income, inadequate educational facility, health care facilities and infrastructural facilities. Migration from the rural areas of Mokokchung was a result of the interplay of both the push and the pull factors at the point of origin and the destination. Among the push factors, migration due to poor educational facilities in the rural areas was the main cause of migration (33 %) followed by lack of employment opportunities (32%) low wages (13%), poor quality of living (12%), poor health care facility (4%), poor infrastructural facilities (3%) and low agricultural facilities. Similarly, the pull factors identified from the data was the desire to improve the future prospects of the family (35%) the desire to give better education to the children (35%), employment opportunities (26%), higher income (3%) and medical facilities (1%). This shows that migration in the rural areas of Mokokchung was largely driven by the lack of good educational facilities at the villages and the desire to improve the overall living condition of the family.

Figure 2. Push and Pull Factors of Migration



Source: Fieldwork

3. Rural –Urban Migration and its Impact on the Rural Community

Nagas are a group of people whose society revolves around a set of customary laws and practices and are predominantly confined and attached to village life. The village, therefore, becomes a marker of identity for a Naga (Nshoga, 2009). However, due to the increasing rural –urban migration, there have been various negative impact on the rural community. Some of the major impacts due to the increasing rural- urban migration are given as follows:

- 1. Depopulation of the Village:** This was one of the major impacts which was reported in almost all the villages where fieldwork was conducted. Many respondents reported that over the years, the population of the village has come down. This was mainly due to the large-scale migration of

people from the rural areas to urban centres particularly the youth, highest between the age group of 20-29 years, followed by those below 20 years of age. Almost all the villages reported that while there are deaths in the village every year, births are very low. In Longpa (Asetkong Range) the village reported 12 deaths but not a single birth within a period of one year. One reason cited for low birth rate was mainly because young people do not want to get married. This was a major concern for all the villages. For the Nagas, the village holds a very significant part of their lives. It is from the village that every Naga derives their identity and trace their roots. However, increasing depopulation of the village was seen as a threat to the very identity of the Nagas.

2. **Aging Population** – Many villages reported that since there are no high schools in the villages, children around 14 years and above usually migrate to urban areas for further education. So, villages are left mainly with elderly residents over 50 years of age who continue to engage in farming more out of necessity than by choice.
3. **Less labour for agricultural activities** – In Nagaland, land in the village belongs to the community and almost every family own land and are engaged in agriculture. However, due to the lack of good educational facilities in the village, young people from the villages migrate to the urban centres. Since parents prioritize the education of their children, many children and young people also have less knowledge about traditional agricultural practices. Due to this, traditional agriculture practices which are purely labour-intensive work are slowly fading away. While agricultural activities in the past used to be a community affair where different age groups (Zunga) use to come together and help in the fields, this is no longer practiced. Labour which was freely available, has become a costly affair as labourers have to be hired and paid wages even if it is one's own village member.
4. **Disconnect among the young people towards the tradition and traditional practices** Migration of young people from the villages is usually made in the interest of the household welfare. Parents send their children to urban centres with the hope that their children will get better education and employment opportunities which in turn will improve the overall wellbeing of the family. However, in the process, young people get disconnected with village and the community. Young people particularly those who have migrated find the traditional practices rigid, unattractive and disconnected from the modern practices. One example can be the Zunga system among the Aos. In the Ao Naga society, the whole village is divided into age groups called 'Zunga' where anybody born within a particular period of three years are counted as the same age group irrespective of male or female. Each of age groups has well defined role in the village. However, most of the young people who have migrated are not only unfamiliar with their roles but are unable to perform those roles assigned to their age groups. In one village respondents said that most of the young people between the age group 14-17 years which comes the 'Sungpur zunga' – the first stage to enter into the zunga system usually move from the village to avoid all the traditional manual, labour intensive work which are assigned to this age group. Many of the elderly respondents also raised concern on how the young people who have migrated are unable to address their elders as per tradition and use words casually like 'Aunty', 'Uncle' for any category of elders mindless of the relationship between clans and villages. Such gaps in the knowledge of the traditional practices further pushes the younger generation away from the village leading to the fading of the rich traditions and cultural practices.
5. **Families stay separated:** This was another major impact reported from the fieldwork. Many respondents reiterated that due to rural –urban migration, the traditional family ties have been weakened. While parents, mostly the elderly are left in the villages, the young members of the

family stay in the urban centres. Family members left in the rural areas reported that due to the migration of the young members, the family struggles to perform agricultural activities due to the lack of labour which leads to low agricultural productivity and hence low income. Migration had also led to increased expenditure as parents of young migrants have to support their children in the urban centres in paying for their education and other requirements. Respondents reported that since members of the same family stays apart for most part of the year; it impacts the emotional and social ties of the family leading to weakening of emotional bonds among the family members.

Conclusion:

The study shows that majority of the villages in the rural areas of Mokokchung have family members particularly the young people who have migrated to urban areas of the state and beyond due to the various push and pull factors. The most important being the lack of good educational facility and employment opportunities in the rural areas. Migrants were particularly those below 30 years of age- the young, capable, energetic youths. Due to this, villages in the Mokokchung district were experiencing depopulation which in turn had impacted the various traditional practices of the village community. One of the main affected traditional practices is agriculture. Agriculture practices which play an important role in sustaining the Naga tribal cultural history is slowly transforming itself from a rich traditional practice to that of pure economic activity. Most of the rituals, festivals and the belief system which is tied to the agricultural practices have either been discontinued or modified as per convenience of the village community. Along with this the traditional social ties, community practices and family bonds were negatively impacted. Migrants particularly the youths who had migrated to urban areas early, had very less knowledge of the traditional and cultural practices and felt less attached to the traditional village society. Migration had also impacted the community centric village society which was being transformed into an individualistic society. People no longer engage in community agricultural practices or share the harvest freely like in the past.

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