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Where the river flows underground

- [Seema Bhatt](#)



Undisturbed: Natural beauty. Photo: Special Arrangement

Dzuleke, in Nagaland, is unique. Not only for its flora and fauna but also because this hunting village has banned hunting to protect wildlife.

Sotuno lives in the village of Dzuleke about 40 km from Kohima in Nagaland. The village gets its name from the river Dzuleke that, during its course, goes underground once it reaches Dzuleke. 'Dzu' means water and 'leke' means underground in the local language. This is an Angami (one of the major tribes in Nagaland) village. In this small village of 200 households, everyone is known to each other.

Food for thought

Sotuno was excited because some guests from Delhi were visiting her village. But she wondered why people who live in a big and beautiful city like Delhi would want to come all the way here. She asked her uncle who is also the pastor of the village. He explained to her that Dzuleke was a wonderful place for people from other parts of the country, to come and experience undisturbed nature and village life. He told her that their village and the state of Nagaland were special because of their culture and natural beauty.

But what would the guests eat, asked Sotuno? After all, there were no restaurants. The pastor reassured her that the mouth-watering food cooked by her mother and aunts would be popular. For the non-vegetarians especially, the fresh-water crab and chilli chutney served with the famous pork of the region would be a treat. The visitors could also walk to the home garden, pick some fresh corn in the season and enjoy it roasted on the kitchen fire.

Sotuno wondered what else the guests would do. Her brother pointed out that they could go on short hikes in the surrounding forests and see the fishing of the rare snow trout in the river. The two of them tried to list all the animals that the visitors would see. The village is special because even though it is traditionally a hunting community, the elders of Dzuleke decided to ban all hunting since 1999 to ensure that the wildlife in the area would be conserved. If the visitors were lucky, they would get a glimpse of the Stump-tailed Macaque, Barking Deer and the Mountain Bamboo Partridge. They might even spot, in the forests of Dzuleke, the Blythe's Tragopan, which is found only in Nagaland and is the state bird.

Sotuno realised how special her home village is. She is proud of it and is ready to welcome the guests. She decided that when she grows up, she would continue to help promote her beautiful Dzuleke to the outside world.

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