

Research Article

Gendered Implications of Customary Laws on the Women of Zeliangrong Naga

Riamei Jangmei

PhD Scholar, Centre for Northeast Studies Policy and Research, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India.

I N F O

E-mail Id:

khuanjang777@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Jangmei R. Gendered Implications of Customary Laws on the Women of Zeliangrong Naga. *J Adv Res Humani Social Sci* 2022; 9(4): 19-25.

Date of Submission: 2022-09-10

Date of Acceptance: 2022-10-15

A B S T R A C T

Customary laws are established as social practises that are used as a means of social control and sanction in many tribal societies of North East India, including Zeliangrongs. The paper will examine the teeming precedence in which women are perpetually entangled in various problematic situations when bargaining their spaces pertaining to marriage and inheritance rights, with a focus on the patriarchal and patrilineal Zeliangrong tribe. It also seeks to explore how the patriarchal Zeliangrong society's social structures cloak women's development and bolster their invisibility and mute presence. Despite high literacy, power, prestige, privileges remain concentrated in the hands of a few (especially men). The paper also aims to uncover how customary laws have attributed to women's oppression by denying them social, political, and economic security.

Keywords: Customary Law, Women, Naga, Zeliangrong

Introduction

Customary Laws are age-old, unwritten or uncodified rules of behaviour that are recognised and enforced within a certain socio cultural unit. Customary laws are components of the tribal judicial system; they are accepted, acknowledged, adhered to by all members of society, serve a crucial role in fostering social cohesion. The Zeliangrong group, akin to the majority of tribes in North-Eastern India, asserts that their customary rules are of the utmost significance. Certain customary laws, however, have become obsolete as a result of the introduction of Christianity, but many customary practises in Zeliangrong society can still be observed in modern times as an affirmation of traditional values and continue to import fundamental significance as the pillars of the socio-cultural and political lives of the people.

Customary law is considered as a set of social norms (Williams, 1990), social control (Brown, 1952), recognised rules (Mair, 1965) that secure compliance with these rules. According to Pospisil (1971), customary law consists of

“devised norms or modes of conduct rendered obligatory by consequences imposed or enforced for their isolation from man's feelings or sense of justice” Customary rules are compulsory and are supported by penalties that society may impose if they are violated. Collective consciousness, according to Durkheim (as referenced by Morrison), is a body of knowledge, beliefs, behaviours, emotions shared by all members of a normal society (Morrison 1995:154). Collective consciousness will be regarded as an integral part of the formation of customary law, hence the evolving collective conscience of the community, which determines its belief and idea systems and complies with them. Vinogradoff (1974) defines customary law as social norms controlling the assignment and exercise of authority over objects.

Customary law is essentially a codification of conventional practises, despite the fact that it offers some formalisation of standards of conduct, enforcement processes, punishments for offenders. Customary laws may be both written and unwritten (Fallers, 1969; Scott, 1999:25), regulations that are bolstered and substantiated by the convictions of the

people (Pospisil, 1971). The British acknowledged the existence of unwritten Naga customary law when the Scheduled District Act of 1874 brought the Naga under their authority (Goswami 1985: xii).

Observably, the customary rule of a particular culture is its typical mode of behaviour. Moreover, the presence of customary law provides individuals with peace of mind and security for their property (Mair, 1962). According to (Montmorency: 1920), "customary law is an iron rule that no tribesman would dare to defy or dodge, yet it is not written down or enforced by a sovereign political authority, since among a great number of tribes there is no sovereign political power in any contemporary meaning of the word." Consequently, anthropologists see customary law as a mechanism of governing society, which exists in both basic and complex communities, but with different systems. Legislation evolves a truth from conventions and usages throughout time. Consequently, law derives from human needs, each community has its own norms and regulations. Others refer to it as custom or customary law (Vitso, 2003:6).

As a patriarchal and patrilineal society, the Zeliangrong do not consider women equal to males. Typically, her gender-based rights and benefits, as well as the duties that are given to her establish a woman's position. This paper is inspired by casual conversations and anecdotes with groups of elderly people in my hometown over vacation. Supplemented with secondary data and interviews from Manipur's Peripheries of Churachandpur and Noney districts, this paper seeks to elicit fundamental questions and observations concerning the position of Zeliangrong women in connection to customary rules, focusing on marriage and inheritance rights. The purpose is to solve the following two key issues: Are customary rules in certain communities deliberately or subconsciously responsible for gender distinction, thereby fostering gender bias? How can practises of a society's social structure, the role of culture, beliefs, customary laws inhibit the growth of women? In spite of the fact that there is no definitive solution, this paper examines the loopholes and suggests measures to reduce gender disparity.

Zeliangrong Naga

Zeliangrong is the collective term for the Assam, Nagaland, Manipur-dwelling Zeme, Liangmei, Rongmei or Kabui (including the Inpui). This term was first used during the inaugural Zeliangrong Conference on February 15, 1947, the same day the Zeliangrong Council was established. These three sub tribes have comparable traditions, customary laws, cultures, folk songs, folk dances, folklores, among other things. This decision to merge these tribes is intelligible by their similar linguistic, social, racial, cultural roots. According to Kamei (2004:11), the Zeliangrong are

a community with four dialects, with each group speaking more like a dialect than a tribe. The Zeliangrong are of Southern Mongoloid descent and arrived in South East Asia by a variety of routes before moving to the northeastern part of India. Both linguistically and ethnically, they belong to (Indo-Mongoloid).

G.A. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India claims the Tibeto-Burman Bodo-Naga Sub-family includes the Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei dialects of the Zeliangrong languages (Kamei, 2004:16). Manipur, Nagaland, Assam are the regions where the Zeliangrong is most prevalent. This tribe produced notable freedom warriors such as Haipou Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu, whose brave struggle and resistance against colonial power are still recounted in the annals of history.

Gender and Customary Laws

The significance of women in traditional Naga culture is evident from the earliest British ethnographies to the current day. According to McCullough(1859), Hudson(1911), Hutton(1921), Haimendorf(1937), Bower(1950), Elwin(1997), the position of Naga women is high, but they are not free from the influence of old customary rules. In his monographs, Mills (1937) asserts that customary rules govern every element of the lives of both men and women in the Naga culture. Sachidananda (1978) asserted that social contexts and conventions, religious beliefs, ecosystems, socio-economic class typically dictate the roles and status of women across the globe. The primary objective of women's studies, according to Chatterji (1989), is to elevate the consciousness of both men and women, to do so, one must oppose the patriarchal concept throughout all fields and organisations. Again, Chatterji (1993) asserts that the conventional notion of women as homemakers have robbed them of equal opportunity for personal development and societal advancement. According to Vinita, Narain, Lakshmi (1994), social structures, norms, socio-economic situations, religion define the role and status of women, particularly tribal women. Juneja (1994) argues that the ability to make choices is mostly based on the individual's ability to fulfil the wants and expectations of his or her partner. According to Sarkar (1994), the roles of men and women in society are equivalent. Consequently, it is evident that women play an essential role in society.

At this time, it is essential to emphasize certain distinctive features of the Zeliangrong. As with all other Naga tribes, the Zeliangrong social structure is patrilineal and patriarchal. Second, Zeliangrong is described as a "little republic" in terms of its political organisation and procedures (McCulloch, 1859 Op.cit). They have no hereditary chiefs or even lifetime chiefs. As with other Naga tribes, however, politics remains the exclusive realm of men. Therefore, the majority of Zeliangrong observations about this issue are equally relevant to other Nagas.

Zeliangrong social organisations do not see women as being at par with males. There is a gender-based division of labour, assignment of duties, status between men and women in all communities. Merhotra (1992) has listed the activities a male or female Zeliangrong can or must do. The fundamental premise behind this separation of roles is that men are “bestower” while women are “housekeepers.” Historically, Zeliangrong men provided stability and safety. They offered stability since property ownership, especially immovable property in the form of land and homes, was exclusively transmitted via the male line. They offered security against the constant danger of attacks and head hunting. They were instructed to be ready for any kind of conflict. In such a circumstance, women are expected to remain at home, restricted to domestic chores and the birth and care of children. Through their labour in the fields, weaving, animal husbandry, they were expected to contribute to the improvement of the household’s economic situation. However, this progress elevated the prestige of the family as a whole and the males in particular. Women compensate for domestic misfortunes if they occur. It is true that women had a great deal of independence inside the home so long as they contributed to its health and success. Even under the “democratic” framework of the Zeliangrongs, however, women had no part in public life. It is thus not surprising that they had no say in any political decisions.

It is frequently believed that, unlike many other communities, Zeliangrong society welcomes female children. Nevertheless, this welcome is extended to her since she is a family asset and a helper. From a young age, she is trained to labour throughout the day, beginning with an early morning rise to prepare breakfast, fetch water and firewood, care for the household animals. Even at an early age, she is required to care for her younger siblings and carry them on her back. In contrast, a boy is often allowed to wander and run about as he pleases. Currently, the majority of Zeliangrong females are sent to school. She is fortunate if her parents can afford to send her to a reputed school. In a scenario of economic hardship, a female is sent to local government school while a boy continues to get more attention. Thus, a female kid is a victim of gender prejudice from a young age.

Women, Inheritance rights, Customary Laws

Concerning property rights, the operation of patriarchy is vivid and discriminating. Because of the patrilineal system, only men have ownership rights to common property. In the Zeliangrong society, women are not entitled to own or hold any sort of ancestral land, whether individual or community. It is up to the owner to decide to whom he or she will gift acquired property, particularly land, but sons are often the recipients. If a piece of land is obtained in

the village of Zeliangrong, the owner cannot pass it to the daughter. This is congruent with the traditional concept that after she marries, she would be considered a part of her husband’s family and community, hence she is an outsider. According to Zeliangrong tradition, land is not permitted to be granted to strangers (Fernandes, Pereira & Khatso 2006; Zehol, 2003:303). This tradition is kept regardless of whether or not the daughter ever marries. When a man does not have a son, the daughter, with the village council’s approval, have started to inherit even the ancestors’ property (very few cases). Therefore, the transfer of property to an outsider may seem to be nothing more than a mechanism for maintaining male dominance over the possessions and, by consequence, the society. It is legitimate to assert that a Zeliangrong lady owns her self-acquired rights (Newmai, 1998:45). She takes her acquired property into the marriage and has the power to transfer it anytime she so chooses. If the woman dies without a residuary legatee, whoever administers her final ritual inherits her property. Typically, it is her brothers, the offspring of her brothers, or other male relatives.

In patrilineal Zeliangrong society, inheritance is passed down via the male line. Wives and daughters have started to acquire rights because of the Indian succession laws. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 (as amended) recognises a daughter as a property owner with equal and absolute rights. The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937 allocates half of the son’s portion to the daughter (Choudhry, 2009: xvi-xvii). The Zeliangrong Customs (Inheritance & Succession) Code, 2005 specifies Zeliangrong Chapriak (custom) khou, kapu twang kaiphwn laophwn (kairu-laoru) hei kana ‘mpowh’ (male) khang ti e, tiki kana ‘luh’ (daughter) khang timak e. (2005, 3 op.cit). This indicates that only sons are entitled to a portion of family property, not girls. Thus, a married or unmarried daughter cannot inherit her dead father’s immovable property, but she might inherit a portion of his moveable property. Even in the absence of a son, a daughter has no inheritance rights. The closest male relative will receive the property and care for the unmarried daughter(s) (Fernandes, Pereira and Khatso 2008: 37 and Zhol, 2003: 303).

At the absence of her father, a divorced daughter may remain in either her father’s house or her brother’s home. Additionally, the daughter inherits the mother’s personal decorations and jewellery. In rare instances, females may inherit immovable property from a dead father who had no sons (Makuga 2007:193-194), but only as “benefits,” not as rights. In reality, some rich families offer land (patta land) to their daughters as a wedding gift. This practise of giving land as a gift to daughters rather than a right is also seen among the Mao Naga (Muivah, 1996:51). Thus, Zeliangrong women do inherit land, but it is handed to them as a gift rather than as a right. This notion of gratuities is

so ingrained that, regardless of their level of education, Zeliangrong women discuss gratuities rather than property rights. They assert that they never demand property, but rather accept it as “benefits” (Kamei, 2010).

Because women are believed to be physically inferior to males, Zeliangrongs feel beholden to women. Men are accountable for the village’s peace and stability. Because their culture follows a patrilineal system in which women have no claim to inherit property, he is persuaded that his position as benefactor and defender of women is innate. This system is so severe that even in the absence of a son; society prohibits a woman from inheriting property. In such instances, the property is handed to the clan of the father. The inheritor of the land is accountable for the care of the women.

A widow who continues to reside in her late husband’s home, especially if she has adult children, has the same rights as a wife. However, a widow may return to her father’s home for greater care and assistance. If she has no children, she has no claim to her husband’s property. If she has children, she continues to manage and enjoy her husband’s property, even if her son inherits it. She and her children may reside with her parents, but she will manage and use her husband’s assets. These rights are acknowledged and honoured by everybody, including her husband’s family and clan.

A woman acquires some property rights to her husband’s assets. As patrilocal residency is the custom, she has the right to remain in the new house even if the husband is the owner. Moreover, she acquires the power to manage her husband’s property. This enables her to cultivate her husband’s property, collect the harvest, store it. She may choose which crops to cultivate, particularly on Jhum land. She may sell any excess items without asking her spouse. She also oversees the care of all domesticated animals. She therefore has complete control over the production, storage, disposal of agricultural goods. Thus, upon marriage, a woman gains the right to all of her new household’s means of subsistence. The husband may be the owner, but the wife manages and exercises authority.

From what has been said so far, it is clear that customary law grants women substantial property rights, particularly land rights. This posture may be considered “very favourable” (Das 1993:71). However, one cannot disregard the other viewpoint. Rights inevitably entail obligations. The responsibility of caring for the home falls on the shoulders of women. Daughters are supposed to care for their elderly parents. Sisters typically help younger siblings. A woman must provide for her husband even if he is a societal burden. Thus, customary law grants women important economic rights, but also puts obligations on them. These disadvantages often exceed the benefits, the

rights themselves are inferior to those of males. It is time to modify or transform customary law and create parity in property rights.

Marriage Institutions And Customary Laws

For the Zeliangrongs, marriage is a significant social institution that ensures the survival of the clan and its culture, customs, traditions. The Zeliangrongs are a patrilineal society in which male dominance is absolute. The main characteristic of the family is that its members are descended from the eldest male resident in the family, the mother having been brought in from another clan, i.e. an utterly distinct set of families, under the rule of exogamy.

Marriage is the most significant transition from “one social category to another” since one of the spouses entail a change of family, clan, village, or tribe, occasionally newlyweds even move into a new home (Genep. op.cit p. 116). For a woman, marriage represents a second birth; she is now her husband’s daughter (Coulanges, 1874, as cited in Kabui 2016: 84). In reality, marriage (Noushuanmei) is the transfer of the woman’s family and clan names to those of her husband (Kabui. 2016. Op.cit. 84). She will adore her family’s ancestors and not her own parents. Gluckman asserts that among the Zulu tribes of South Africa, once a woman marries her husband, all-natal rights outside her husband’s lineage are forfeited, essentially relinquishing responsibility over her (David L. Sills 1968: 13). A married Zeliangrong woman is similarly assimilated into the clan of her husband (Kamei 2004: 82).

The law of exogamy requires daughters to marry into another clan or group of consanguineous families; yet, the woman’s dissociation from her clan of origin is not total, as the responsibility of retribution, if she is injured, stays with her clan of origin (Hudson 1911:71). Hartland may claim that the tradition of “Mandoo”¹ indicts “the foreign nature of spouse and parent.” (McCulloch, op.cit.p.27). Clearly, this illustrates that a woman’s interest in her clan of origin is not annihilated by her marriage and separation from them. This tradition demonstrates that even after their daughter’s death, the close male family members continue to demand the bone-price from her husband’s family. This tradition, which is no longer common, exemplifies the normal tyrannical authority of males over women from birth to death.

The typical marriage forms in Zeliangrong culture are discriminatory. Khamthan Nouswan (arranged marriage), Chamime¹ (debt-relief marriage), Nimjaime¹ (forced marriage), Noumangmei (marriage by servitude and matrilineal residency) (Kamei, 2004, p.257) Chamime and Nimjaime marriages are an advanced manifestation of the disparity that exists in society when selecting spouses. The masculinity and control of males are depicted by

their exchange of their daughters for debt cancellation. As the head of the family, the males make the ultimate choice about the sale of their daughters. The nimjaimei case defends masculinity under harsh conditions. The boy abducts the girl and convinces her family to give their assent. Once a girl is kidnapped, it is believed that her dignity has been compromised, she is then married off without her will.

McCullough provides a thorough description of the marital system, including the payment of the bride price, the penalty for adultery, the payment of the Bone-price, polygamy. He was well familiar with the system's complexities and importance. His statement on bride price is historically significant: "Seven buffaloes, two daos, two spears, two strings of beads made of conch shell beads, two ear ornaments, two black clothes, two dining utensils, two hoes, what is called Meilon"¹ (Kamei, 2004: 101). Typically, except for the wealthy and affluent who can afford to pay a high price for a daughter-in-law, regular people pay less for these items. Those wealthy enough who can afford it become a source of pride.

Bride price, also known as nouman/chaman lubo, refers to the gifts that the groom's family gives to the bride. It's conceivable to think of the price as either a labour or a soul price. Marriage results in the loss of a family member of great value. The family of the lost daughter of the groom will get a bride as restitution. The bride's wealth compensates the bride's family for the loss of an active member, since female members of Indian tribes contribute significantly to production via agricultural and other home activities (Barau, 2001:64). This reward is not intended for the bride. It is used by the family since it is sometimes used to seek a bride for one of the family's sons (Brown, A.R and Forde, 1964, Pp 53-54). In certain cultures, the father of the bride uses the bride price to marry himself a second wife. Obviously, bride money is not a method of acquiring a woman; rather, it is a method of legitimising the marriage (Bozman, E.F, 1967:250).

Frequently, the bride price is an assurance that the young lady will be treated favourably in her new family. The bride fee is an integral part of their marriage system. It signifies several beliefs and ideas, compensating the parents for the loss of their daughter and signifying the beginning of a new bond between the two families. Despite the fact that it is just to be followed and respected in order to acquire customs, that the cost is only symbolic and nominal, it reflects deeply established patriarchal situations. The tradition of using the bride price to seek a wife is an ethnic slur to the egalitarian nature of Naga culture and perpetuates the commercialization of women via the institution of marriage. The critical but rhetorical issue that arises is: What is the relationship between bride price

and the apathetic treatment of young wives? Although the practise of paying and receiving a bride price is never used to purchase or sell humans, it does reveal how the society defines the status of women.

The freedom to choose spouses is a fundamental aspect of Naga customary law. This was noted by Haimendorf (1939:101): "If you judge a people's cultural level by the social position and personal freedom of its women, you won't look down on the Nagas as "savages," despite the fact that many women in more cultured parts of India may be envious of the high status and pleasant existence of the women of the Naga Hills." Occasionally, this data by Haimendorf is frequently cited to illustrate that Naga women have a large lot of flexibility in choosing a partner. However, it depicts a different image in reality. When a girl is emotionally coerced into marrying a person she detests, an equal partnership is often imperilled. Customary rules regarding out-of-wedlock births, sexual harassment and rape, adultery, divorce, widow treatment are also strongly biased against women. Thus, customary laws are prejudiced against women and discriminatory. In the context of the Zeliangrong Naga, the depiction portrayed by Haimendorf is closer to a myth than an accurate reflection of reality.

Customary Laws: Persistence And Continuum

Many changes have occurred in Zeliangrong society in recent years. Female literacy has increased dramatically. Many Zeliangrong women have entered the contemporary workforce. The conventional patriarchal institutions and mindset, however, remain intact. Consequently, females are regarded as fundamentally inferior to males.

Nevertheless, since patriarchal ethos is so pervasive, females are continually reminded of their inferiority. "Every Naga woman has encountered humiliations and insults from males because of her gender." These men are not strangers or outsiders; they are 'revered' uncles, cousins, in some cases fathers and brothers who never cease to remind women of the 'predestined inferior duties' that have been assigned to them" (Kikon, 2001: 4-5). Thus, the patriarchal norm embodied in customary law is the primary limitation on Naga women's progress.

According to customary law, the governance of a Zeliangrong village is gerontocratic in character. The Council of Elders was formerly the top legislative and judicial body. Each clan sends a delegate to the Elders' Council. However, no woman could possibly represent her family. Women had no say in public matters under customary law. The Village Council eventually succeeded the Council of Elders. These sophisticated democratic institutions could have given women a role. However, the women's position stays unchanged. Women were only included in certain villages' councils to help with cooking and serving while the men

assembled. Most villages have a Women's Society, but its scope is confined to welfare and cultural activities.

Elections to legislative assemblies are held in all Indian states using the universal adult franchise. Even in the new democratic systems, women continue to be silenced. Women are theoretically eligible to run in the elections. But it's rare to hear of a Zeliangrong woman contemplating, let alone contesting in, these elections. Nonetheless, women participate in electoral campaigns. As per Zeliangrongs Naga, a candidate who has the support of women is almost guaranteed to win the polls. However, women's problems are rarely addressed in political campaigns. Given the conventional institutions and processes, it is questionable if women are assured secrecy when voting. In this framework, women and women's organisations, by whatever name they are known, can only express their feelings and thoughts. Customary law forbids them from doing so, the strong ethos of tradition appears to preclude them from actively engaging in democratic processes.

Despite being well protected, women are still not treated equally, not even by their own parents. It is fascinating to note that almost all Zeliangrong parents prefer sons over daughters. Spouses have abandoned their wives in the past because they were unable to conceive a son. Women are prohibited from actively participating in social and political concerns. They have no say in matters affecting their own family, such as marriage, inheritance, so on. The Zeliangrong Nagas view women's engagement in political, social, familial issues as a terrible portent for society as a whole; hence, they forbid women from having any voice in such matters.

The social shift that occurred in Naga society with the arrival of the British was multifaceted and intense. Though the British did not want to engage with the Nagas' traditional social and cultural customs, certain of their regulations and procedures had a significant impact on them. For example, the prohibition of head hunting triggered a series of social and cultural changes. British colonial economic practises influenced Naga society as well. Other reasons of change were Naga acceptance of Christianity and the development of modern education. While these causes have had an impact on Naga society in general, they have also had an impact on Zeliangrong Customary law.

The arrival of Christian missionaries in Zeliangrong civilization brought a major shift in her people's viewpoint. This was due to the missionaries' strong opposition to some customary rules and customs that were contrary to their faith and were deemed unfit for the people to practise or follow. Many traditional gennas associated with agricultural and life cycle events have been abandoned. As a result of the changing conditions in their community, many taboos and beliefs were abandoned, new types of culture were

developed. However, most archaic societal standards placed on women in the form of dos and even educated and modernised individuals validate don'ts. One way to look at this is as a case of cultural lag. However, research also suggests that the socialisation process reinforces conventional gender biases against women. Finally, it suggests that the conventional patriarchal mindset is quite entrenched.

Education and employment are two more major aspects that have influenced people's lives. According to (Bose, 1964), conversion to Christianity is the primary cause of change in tribal culture, both in terms of economic and socio-cultural lives of the people. Phillip (1983) is too inclined to believe that Christianity is to responsible for pushing for change in Naga society. According to Syiemlieh (1990), the advent of Christianity caused a transformation in Naga society. Nonetheless, customary rules continue to have an impact on the Zeliangrong people's lives.

However, it is ludicrous to argue that the introduction of Christianity and Western education significantly enhanced the position of women in Zeliangrong Naga culture. This is an illusion, because their situation has deteriorated significantly. Women are now not only permitted to attend public meetings, but also to make public statements. In my perspective, this is the only transformation that civilization has gone through. Even now, parents prefer boys to girls because they feel girls would lose their ethnic identity. It is also true that even today's so-called educated parents do not push their daughters to further their education. They are persuaded that investing in their daughters' education is pointless since they would not be able to reap the benefits of their education.

Eliminating patriarchy and patriliney may be difficult. However, it is undeniably possible to change the patriarchal worldview of male supremacy by suitable socialisation and educational practises. It is a collective obligation to initiate and sustain such balanced socialisation. Women, on the other hand, may actively and significantly contribute to gender equality in their offspring. If women themselves are convinced that a change is required, then women's customary law can be altered. This requires Zeliangrong women to work together in a concerted effort of socialisation, education, political articulation, action. Changing gender roles should result in changes in women's positions.

Conclusion

There is a considerable gender divide in Zeliangrong society. Customary laws, particularly inheritance law, discriminate against women. Women in the Zeliangrong, on the other hand, are not submissive. Practically speaking, they do not ignore or attempt to violate traditional rules in order

to enrich themselves. As previously said, men and women must be treated equally for society to flourish. Inheritance rights are one of the most effective ways for achieving the millennium development goals among Zeliangrong men and women. The first step in achieving inheritance rights will be to redefine property inheritance as «rights» rather than «benefits». It is critical to remove the stigma associated with women who campaign for their rights. The second approach should be to treat men and women equally through the institutions of marriage, allowing women the «right» to choose their husbands and have a say in bride prices rather than having these decisions and restrictions established and enforced by tyrannical males.

As Indian citizens, the law treats men and women equally. Our Constitution guarantees equality to all people, regardless of their race, gender, caste, religion, region, or other traits. It is illegal to deny Zeliangrong women the right to choose their life partners and to inherit their ancestors' and community property. When problems with women's rights arise, communities typically politicise the issues by framing them as concerns about both their identity and existence, the women's issue is drowned out.

References

1. Barau I. The Tai Tarung of Assam Allahabad KK Publication 2001; 64.
2. Bhai LT. Women's Studies in India New Delhi, 2000, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation.
3. Bozman, E.F (ed.) Everyman's Encyclopaedia , Fifth Edition, Vol. VIII, London, 1967 P. 250.
4. Brown, R., A.R and Forde, Daryll (eds), "African Systems of Kinships and Marriage" Oxford University Press, 1964 pp. 53-54.
5. Das, N.K. kinship politics and Law in Naga Society, Calcutta, Anthropological Survey of India, 1993.
6. Fernandes, W., & Barbora, S. Modernisation and Women's Status in North Eastern India: A Comparative Tribes, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, 2002, pp.86-87.
7. Goswami, M.C. (ed.).Customary Laws and Practices of Angami Nagas of Nagaland, Guwahati: The Law Research Institute, Guwahati High Court, 1985.
8. Haimendorf, F. The Naked Nagas", London: Methuen & co, 1939.
9. Hutton J. The Angami Nagas", Bombay: Oxford University Press, First Published in 1921, London: Macmillan & co.
10. Kabui, B. K. Traditional Village Administration Among the Kabui: A Comparative study with other Naga Tribes and Kuki Tribes", Akansha publishing House, New Delhi, (2016), pp: 79-89.
11. Kamei, G. History of Zeliangrong Nagas: From Makhel to Rani Gaidinliu, Spectrum Publications New Delhi, 2004 pp: 101-102.
12. Kikon, D. Political Mobilisation of women in Nagaland: A Sociological Background, Paper presented at National Conference on Changing Women's Status organised by the North-Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, Mimeo, 2001.
13. McCulloch, W. An Account of the valley of Munnipore and the Surrounding Hills Tribes in a comparative vocabulary of Munnipore and other language, Calcutta 1859.
14. Riamei, G. Social Structure of Zeliangrong Society, The Sangai Express, January 27, 2013.
15. Rongmei K. S. & Kapoor, S. Zeliangrong Today: A Naga Tribe of Manipur Url:<https://doi.org/10.10.1080/0972639x.2005.11886526>
16. Vitso, A. Customary Law and Women; The Chakhesang Nagas", Regency Publications, 2003.