



The Law Of Property Inheritance Among The Garo Women In Meghalaya As A Matrilineal Society

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ABSTRACT

Although women make up around half of the world's population, they have seldom been granted the same rights as men in society or been treated equally. The disparity between men and women is caused by social attitudes, cultural beliefs, and gender isolation. In traditional patriarchal societies, women have been viewed as a subordinate or weaker segment of the population. However, in the modern age, everyone wants the equal ability to experience, acquire, and live in harmony with others without facing discrimination. Since the beginning of time, women in the state of Meghalaya have been entitled to inheritance. Meghalaya is one of the few groups in India that practices matrilineal society, and the indigenous people there also embrace it. The youngest daughter typically benefits from the inheritance that is handed from the mother to the daughters.

Keywords: Inequality, Inheritance, Patriarchal, Matrilineal, Indigenous

INTRODUCTION

Many different ethnic groups have their ancestral homes in North East India. These groupings, which are of distinct racial origin, originated in various directions at distinct times and from distinct sources. Many sociocultural customs were brought by them. The Garo are one of the major tribes in North East India and make up the universe. Meghalaya is the state that they consider to be their motherland. The three matrilineal tribes of the Garo, Jaintia, and Khasis are found in this state of Meghalaya. These are the main ethnic groups that made up the state's first occupants.

Under a given system, women are entitled to inherit both mobile and immovable property. Her husband's post-marriage inheritance and acquisitions become the wife's property. As per the usual regulations of inheritance, the right of inheritance was passed down from mother to daughter. Property is not acquired by man. The property was earned by his labor, but he is not entitled to any portion of it. Every person's lineage is always calculated and traced back to their mother. It is required that children inherit their surname from their mother rather than their father.

The entire civilization is rife with matrilineality; it is not matriarchal, but rather matrilineal. In societies with matrilineal systems, women are seen as the foundation of the inherited. The basis for inheritance is kinship with the female line. Among the Garos, kinship ties are established by the mother. Under their kinship system, paternal lineage is irrelevant. Property and succession rights in Matrilineal Garo society pass from the mother to her daughter, who is typically the youngest of the daughters.

There is no matriarchy in the Garo civilization. The leader of the family and the head of the tribe's administration are typically women in matriarchal societies. However, when it comes to administration and decision-making, women in Garo society are neither the authority figure of the family nor the leader of the tribe. Men are always granted administrative and custodial responsibility. A man appreciates having responsibility over every family member. In areas concerning the family and societal order, the older female members have less influence than their male counterparts. In terms of exercising power, making decisions, governing, purchasing and selling property, etc., they have no such function to play. Women must rely on male family members for these activities, as well as occasionally on male cousins.

The society of the Garo people is matrilineal. The mother is the only person through whose lineage can be traced—not the father. Every item in the woman's possession is hers, stays with her clan (mahari), and is transferred from mother to daughter. Children who are male are not entitled to receive or even demand any portion of the property that they may have earned through their work. Following marriage, the wife inherits

the mother's property rights in the family; she will become the new home's "woman" and its future mother. The man goes from his mother's home on the day of his wedding and moves in with his spouse to start a family of his own. Her clan will have some influence over the new family, and his kids will inherit their mother's last name. The previous mahari will now be expanded upon and enhanced by this new branch. Naturally, the guy is obligated to shower the new family with love, invest all of his energies in their upkeep and welfare, and provide his wife with his entire income. Without a doubt, he keeps his mahari surname and name. On the other hand, his mahari will always be obligated to watch out for him and support him in times of need.

Consequently, when two people are married, they form a union as members of two distinct mahari, and every mahari will do everything in its power to ensure that the other honors its liberties. The right to retain all household belongings belongs to the wife's mahari, and the right that every subsequent generation will see the heiress's husband selected from among its members belongs to the husband's mahari. The mahari of the woman always had the upper hand in the balance. The rule that stipulated that a person's line of descent must always begin with their mother also stipulates that property inheritance must follow a similar path, so limiting it to a woman's line.

The Inheritance Role of Garo Women in Society

The Garo inheritance regulations state that communal properties are not inheritable and that all personal assets are owned by the mother and can only be passed down to her daughters. The parents choose one of their daughters to be the heir; the word "nokna" literally means "woman is the heiress." If the couple is childless, a girl who is adopted as the heir is a member of the wife's clan (machong), ideally her sister's child. The nokna must wed the son of her father's sister to take possession of her family's property and possessions. She is responsible for taking care of her parents, siblings who are not married, and brothers who are widowed or divorced.

The nokna is not regarded as the sole proprietor of the land by the Garos. Her husband, who is regarded as the head of the household (nokni skotong or nokma), manages the inheritance and makes decisions on the distribution of property. As the head of the household, her husband works with Chra (the wife's maternal uncle or other male relations) to oversee the management of their joint assets. If she is proven to have disregarded her responsibilities, Chra may decide to disown her with the approval of all of her children, in which case the next female offspring will become the inheritress.

The woman is a key figure in the Society of the Garos. Although she chooses not to visit her husband's home, her spouse gets taken by the village's young men and handed over to her for marriage. The boy is chosen by her and permitted to take on the role of nokma, head of the family. In terms of work, the heirs' partner, the Nokma, does not have more authority or say over the other villages. The Garo trace their relationships using a matrilineal method. As a result, a daughter rather than a son will inherit the property. In Garo society, women are considered to be of a greater rank. She gives her brother guidance on how to find a good match for her daughter or son. It is widely believed that the boy would be best suited by the maternal uncle's daughter. As a result, the property remains within the fold. Although polygamy is rare in inner locations, tribal people generally practice monogamy. There is no polyandry among the Garo Tribe. Divorce presents several challenges. Cross-cousin marriage is a tradition that the Garos upholds. The dual interest in the property is the foundation of the Garo society's system.

Every member of the Garo community is a member of the mother's kinship group, not the father. Land and other assets are inherited by daughters. All the girls are not, however, equal inheritors except one daughter, usually the youngest, who is designated as nokna, who receives property inheritance and looks after her parents. As per the parents' wishes, additional daughters receive land and other properties. The sons receive a meager portion of the property, which is also determined by the mother. Nonetheless, the matrilineality of the Garo people never suggests that women dominate Garo society.

Conclusion

Women activists have long noted that women in Meghalaya are rarely empowered by the matrilineal system. First of all, custodianship is sometimes interpreted incorrectly as property belonging to the youngest daughter alone. The duties of custodianship include taking care of elderly parents, single or impoverished siblings, and other clan members. Furthermore, the owner of the property needs approval from her husband or maternal uncle before she can purchase or sell the land. The woman is unable to make decisions on the property because it is owned by the family or the clan. Women may have easier access to education and greater mobility.

In the Garo system, the Garos form a domestic or co-residential group that is also an economic unit and develop the common village land known as a-king, the ownership of which theoretically vests in the headman's wife representing the direct line descent of the village's founder. Unlike a Khasi village, a Garo village is homogeneous-being the administrative center of a localized descent group.

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