



A Study on The Role of Women in Society: A Special Reference to YIMKHIUNG Naga Tribe.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper seeks to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of gender issues within the YIMKHIUNG tribe, with a primary focus on women, through a comprehensive socio-economic analysis. Considering the limited scholarly attention accorded to the experiences and challenges faced by YIMKHIUNG women this study focuses on political empowerment, decision-making, and women's empowerment. Through rigorous surveys, the research aims to unravel the intricate social and economic factors shaping the lives of YIMKHIUNG women. It will consider aspects such as literacy rates, access to education, economic opportunities, political participation, and the influence of traditional beliefs and practices on gender dynamics.

The paper aims to bridge the research gap and contribute valuable insights into the gender dynamics within the YIMKHIUNG tribe, the study aspires to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face. Ultimately, the research seeks to promote inclusivity and equity in the discourse on gender and women's empowerment in tribal communities, thereby facilitating informed policymaking and positive social change.

Keywords: Gender Politics, decision making, division of work, women empowerment, traditional beliefs.

Introduction:

The YIMKHIUNG Naga tribe, resides in the most eastern districts of Nagaland, they can be found in the districts of Tuensang, Shamator and Kiphire. Like any other Naga tribe YIMKHIUNG does not possess a valid written document about their origins. However, their folklores from their ancestors it is belief that they originated from Myanmar, china and Thailand, but none contains the valid document of their origins. If we talk about the "Yimkhiung Tribe" of Naga, it is one of the most eastern and backward tribe among the Naga tribe, the education came late in the region and even after the introduction of education the people still live with the old traditional beliefs and lifestyles, gradually with the passage of time people began to adapt with the modern lifestyles. Thus, the late arrival of education in the region and illiterate could be the reason why these sections of people lack behind among other tribes. Yimkhiung Naga Tribe is like any other tribes of Naga, they prefer male child over female. If we look into the political representatives of "Yimkhiung" women so far only one woman contested for elections, and if we compared it with the other this tribe is far more behind. However, it will be wrong to state that there is no women capable candidate to contest for elections and also to participate in the political arena and in the society. Customarily laws and traditional beliefs could be the hindrance why there are no women representative in the political arena, there are very few history or study conducted on this tribe, which really prompted me to do my research on this specific Tribe and which I believe will eventually help me to discover the undiscovered history and things about the Tribes. This research paper aims to explore the complex gender dynamics and the intricate interplay of socio-cultural and economic factors that shape the lives of Yimkhiung women by delving into the inheritance and property rights, marital rights, and property ownership practices, we seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of the gender question within the Yimkhiung tribe. Furthermore, we aim to shed light on the challenges faced by women in this patriarchal society and explore potential pathways toward gender equality and empowerment.

Review of Literature

The assimilation of tribal people with the rest of the population has been a continuous process and for it cultural contact with the neighboring population is held responsible. The tribal people in India have come in contact with different Hindu and other communities and there have been different degrees of cultural contacts leading to assimilation in different areas. Cultural contact has given rise to so many types of tribal's and has created a set of different types of tribes on acculturation level. Classification by Ghurye (1959), Majumdar (1947), Dube (1960) reveal that the process of assimilation has been a part and parcel of the Indian culture.

Pisharoty(2016), His study found that most of the Naga women are mistreated by their husband and in laws especially when they give birth to female child, through this study we found that discrimination against women still prevails in Naga society. In his study he mentioned one statement given by one women where she stated "My husband fed me with the meat of bigger animals when i gave birth to a baby boys, but when i delivered a girl; i was treated with a smaller-sized animal for namesake". This statement clearly depicts that women are treated unequally in the Naga society. Naga women are bound with their cultural laws was. She states that only if we change our mind-set towards women and eradicate the traditional belief of customarily law only then equality will be promoted (Swu 2016) Like in many nationalist societies around the world, the issue of gender justice and rights have remained marginal for a long time in a Naga society(Kikon, 2017). The demand of 33% reservation for women was spearheaded by NMA(Naga Mothers Associations) however it was rejected by men folks and tribal organizations stating that it was against the practice of Naga customary law(D.V Sankar, 2019.) Her studies also found that literacy rate of women in Northeast have increase over the years which have a positive impact on the ideological political and social spheres (Musei Khamniugan, 2022). The status of women during Rig Veda Period how the women were treated equally as male counterpart, in every aspect of society be it social, religious, economic or society(Dwivedi M and S Malik 2022). Both the genders were treated equally during the Rig Veda period however the treatment and status of women worsen as the society transit

Statement of the Problem:

The primary focus of my study focus on the "YIMKHIUNG" tribes of naga society which is the backward tribe of naga comparatively if we study the advance tribe and backward tribes of naga no doubt advance tribes are way more ahead then the other backward tribe be it in the field of education, literature, involvement in various organizations etc. Talking about the "YIMKHIUNG" tribes of naga since the first inception of state assembly in 1964 not even one women representative have been elected so far. As per the record only two women candidate contested for the election but not even one won the election. The society doesn't have faith in the women to handle the works of politics so they tend to franchise their vote for the male candidate rather than the female candidate. In fact, the "mind play, muscle power, money and resources" are the key factors which do not allow the women to participate in this activity. Besides the politics, women belonging to these tribes has less expose to society in every aspect be it education, leadership, or participation in societal activity. In Naga society the traditional institutions exist in every community, which is considered as the apex body or institutions, where the important decisions on matters relating to governance, decision making, fund allotment etc are discuss and passed from these institutions. If we observe and study in this institutions, every important role are handle by the men. Women do not have voice in this kind of important decision making as well, stating since the time immemorial the men folks are the one who have governed and inherited these role from their ancestral and which the same will be pass down to the future generations. In this modern world they are women who are capable to participate in these societal affairs but they are not given the opportunity to involve in this kind if related matters. Therefore, we should consider all these aspect and study the challenges and the role of women in a society.

Objectives of the study

1. To examines and study the challenges and barriers the women folks face in the society.
2. To study the areas and aspects where women need to be empowered.
3. To study the role of women in the work force participation and decision making in the society.

Research Methodology:

The research methodology used to investigate and study the role of women in YIMKHIUNG naga tribe was primarily relied on analyzing and reviewing the existing literature. In short secondary data was used to study this topic. Further, the analysis of the data has been done on the basis of individual's knowledge.

Some of the major findings of the study are:-

Women and politics

One of the most common presumptions about tribal societies in the North East or elsewhere is their “Egalitarianism” (Hausing K.K, 2017). If we study YIMKHIUNG Naga tribe through the lens of women representatives in politics, women empowerment we find that YIMKHIUNG women representatives in political spheres and in society is at the worse juncture comparing it with the rest of the Naga society. Studies have shown that naga women are not equally treated in their homes, and that the parents only give first priority only to the male child. So far there are only two Naga women representative in politics from Nagaland. Rano M. Shaiza the first Nagaland woman MP in Lok Sabha in the year 1977 and Phangnon Konyak MP in Rajya Sabha second women representatives from Nagaland in the year 2022.

However we cannot sum up stating that Naga women are not interested in political activity nor do they want to stay isolated from the political limelight, if we look into the census of women candidate from 2018 state election, five women candidate contested for elections. They are Rakila from Tuensang, Rekha Rose Dukru from Chizami, Wedie-u Kronu, Dr K. Mangyangpula Chang and Awan Konyak from Aboi but none of them were elected. As per the research the society wanted to give opportunity to male and also women candidate were given a ticket from the constituency where the number of voters are less, so that they will end up losing, so all these were societies mindset and game play to manipulate the women candidate.

Year of Election	Total seats contested	No. of Male Candidates	No. of Women Candidates	Percentage of women Candidates	No. of Women Elected
1964	40	73	Nil	—	Nil
1969	40	144	2	1.38	Nil
1974	60	207	Nil	—	Nil
1977	60	303	Nil	—	Nil
1982	60	245	Nil	—	Nil
1987	60	214	3	1.40	Nil
1989	60	140	Nil	—	Nil
1993	60	178	1	0.56	Nil
2003	60	225	3	1.33	Nil
Total		1729	9	0.52	Nil

Source: Reports on the General Assembly Elections of Nagaland, 1964-2003, Government of Nagaland.

The above table shows the women candidate contested for the election since its inception. However, as per the report till 2003 not even single women won the elections.

Law of Inheritance

Like any Naga tribe YIMKHIUNG Naga tribe practice patriarchal system. As per the law of inheritance of YIMKHIUNG community, only male heirs are entitled to inherit the land and immovable property. However in modern times the decision to whether to give the property to her daughter depends on certain circumstance for example, if the father has enough land he can share her land to her daughter during the times of her marriage or if his child is only daughter he may do so. But in case if the majority of his offspring is male the father may decide whom he would bestow his property. In case if the man dies or doesn't have his offspring his properties are automatically take by his own brothers sons, which may be divided among his closest blood cousins. In case if the man dies without his male offspring the wife doesn't have the right to acquire his property whatsoever. This shows how the women are treated unequal; the women are treated like secondary in most of the situations.

In case the husband of the women dies after her husband the decision depends upon the wife whether she would live with her husband's family and take care of her children or leave the family, if she decides to live her decisions is respected and she is considered as part of her husband's family. However, if she decides to leave the family before completion of one year after her husband demise or unilaterally it is considered as an insult to the family.

Normally, the daughters during her marriage inherit the jewellery, dresses, articles seedlings, pots, plates weaving articles, and some domestic animals. This distribution among the male and female clearly shows the inferiority treatment between the two genders, since the time immemorial women are meant and taught to remain as male subordinate. However, as per my research knowledge nowadays women are also given the share of the land during her marriage if the father has enough of his wealth and the society doesn't have any objections on that matter. Women are allowed to inherit the land if she agrees to live with her husband family in case the latter dies first. This shows that the women's place has been improved in the society and they are treated with respect and dignity in the society. The gender preference in the society has been improve but not totally accepted that both the genders are equally treated still some prefers the male child and women's are still considered as second to many parents.

Decision making and workforce participation:

Articles 371(A) always come in way when we talk about the women participation and decision making in the society. Nagas strongly adheres to the customary laws when it comes to the involvement of women in the society. The same beliefs and attitude applies to the YIMKHIUNG women, in the early days women are not allowed to take part or invited in the important decisions making in the society. Women are not given a space to raise their voice they are always considered as the secondary sections of society. However, in other activities like serving the men during the meeting and cook for all the meeting attendees are carried out and fulfilled by women. Women are called or invited for the meetings not to raise their voice, give suggestions or share responsibilities for the welfare of the society but they are invited to serve men and to make sure that the men don't go hungry while attending the meeting and that they are well fed so that they sat for the meeting till the end. Women's role are very limited in the society and always considered them as marginalization sections of society. Panchayati Raj is an important feature of the Indian Political system which ensures direct participation of the people at the grassroots level. It gives equal rights and opportunity to both male and female. But through my research it has found that nowadays women are also allowed to take part in the political activity in the society and women are allowed to contest and hold for the post of Chairman and Secretary in the village. For instance W. Manni from wangti village under Mon Districts has been appointed as VDB secretary in the year 2021 on June 5, these shows that the mindset of the people are changing and people have a faith, that women are capable and would be able to govern the society.

Women and Education:

Articles 21-A states that every child should be allowed to finished his/her elementary education from 6-14 years of age without any charge. With this implementation parents sends their child to finish their education. In the early days when we talk about education it simple means that educations are only meant for a boy child. Much in the same way the YIMKHIUNG Naga tribe has the same attitude towards education, because they believe educating a girl child will be a waste of money and that after her marriage he will settle with her husband's family and there will be no means to repay for her education, these were the beliefs of the people. As a result women were kept away from the limelight of education even after the introduction of the education in the region; it took sometimes for the people to send their daughter to school. According to my findings with the passage of time people felt the need and importance of education therefore eventually parents started to send their child to the school, the result of education can be seen in today's generation women working in NGO's, educational sectors, social organization etc. For, instance in YIMKHIUNG Naga tribe we have certain organization like Eastern Naga Women's Organization (representing all the eastern women), Yimkhiung Liberü Ariakho (Unit) YWO (Yimkhiung Women's Organization) representing all the YIMKHIUNG Naga women, SHG's and Village Level Organizations VLO working extensively for the welfare of the society and women in general, all this were the product of education, because of education nowadays women are able to stand firm on their own.

Reforms for Women Empowerment and Equitable social Change:

1. Reforming Customary Laws: Collaborate with community leaders and tribal authorities to initiate legal reforms which hinders the gender bias and promote gender equity within the YIMKHIUNG tribe, keeping in mind the customarily laws to allowed the equal inheritance of property by women. It is not easy for the Nagas to change their customary laws however they should come together and adopt what is good for the society, to bring a change for the betterment of everyone.

2. Educational Initiatives: Education should be given due important to both the genders at any cause especially in today's world. Educational programmed targeting for both men and women within the Yimkhiung NAGA tribe to create awareness about the gender equality, women's right and the importance of female empowerment primarily focusing on enhancing women's access to education, skill training and economic opportunities. If women are given a platform to utilize their skills and given a place to rise their voice like men women are capable of doing it and at the same time they will earn some sort of respect in the society.

3. Opportunities for Women: Women should be given equal opportunities and promote equal support system by supporting their entrepreneurship and income generating activities. There are times where men expect the women to stay at home and look after the household's works and raise their children. This kind of mindset should be stop, women should be given the freedom to step out of kitchen and start earning in whatever means they can. Nowadays, they are certain ways and means through which women can earn like the SHG's and VLO which is trending at the village level all these organizations are monitored by the GOI to uplift the women, therefore this kind of activity should be encourage and women take part in these kind of activity, so that they would contribute some amount to run the kitchen or to support their children's fees.

4. Cultural Preservation. The different cultural beliefs by the Naga tribe are the unique features of different Naga Tribes. While advocating for change one should emphasize the preservation of the YIMKHIUNG tribe's to promote respects for women's rights and their vital role in the community. The community should invest in capacity building programs for women, including leadership role and decision making training, to empowered and monitor them to actively participate in community and political processes. By implementing

this policy, the YIMKHIUNG tribe can work towards positive change and women's empowerment while preserving their cultural heritage and traditions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion.

The unequal treatments towards the women are not confined only in Nagaland. The term "inequality" between the men and women are accepted universal truth. Women are discriminated in workplace, healthcare, education sector and even in our kitchens. The paper collectively suggest that the socio-economic and political status of YIMKHIUNG Naga women is characterized by traditional customs and norms that limit their participation and influence in decision making process. There are multiple events and places where women face barriers some of them are:- political participation and representation, resulting their exclusion from decision making in the society. The traditional governance and the patriarchal systems are one of the few factors which consider women as marginalization section of society. However, besides all these women have managed to come out of their zone and influence their society. The term gender inequality cannot be eliminated completely from our society however we can improve the term by changing our perspective towards the girl child by sending them to school, giving equal treatment as boy child and giving them their rights to participate in every social aspects of society. With education and progressive thoughts of people, there are also reasons to think that gender inequality will be stopped with the passage of time, and irrespective of what the genders are, both should be given equal opportunity. The paper aims to explore and study the women's place in the society and add insight knowledge about the women's status, roles and responsibilities in the society.

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