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Education and Gender Equality with reference to Maring Tribe in Manipur

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Abstract:

Education is an important device to bridge the gap between gender inequalities. There is a huge difference between man and woman in different tribes of Manipur. Maring tribe is also one of them. To understand the status of education and gender gap, there are three stages of transition period in this tribe. Women are dominated by men in most part of their life. They need to take permission to their father, husband or brothers to do their own feminine tasks. Women are engaged in bread earner of the family for their day to day survival from ancient period. They need to make baskets from bamboos and went to cultivate crops for the family for one year. They are always engaged in working in joom cultivation throughout the year. Therefore, they have no time to spend on education. Moreover, the economic status of Maring tribe is very low comparing to others. Therefore, sons are given priority in education. And daughters have to work and earn for their brother's education expenditure. Gender violence on women to this tribe was very high as most of them are uneducated. This system follows in this tribe till late 1970s. But in last four decades, there is a wave to impart education for women even up to high school levels. This is the transition period of Marings. Girls were seen hanging their bags and went to schools. Parents have to struggle and work hard for their sons and daughters education. Gender inequalities were reduced to some extent during this period. And at present all sons and daughters are compulsory for giving education up to highest level. The gender gap in Maring tribe is reduced tremendously at present. Violence against women were also become very less in this tribe. Though there are so many demerits of coming Christianity to this tribe, it is because of this religion that education becomes compulsory to all as everybody needs to read bible and hymns in worship services.

Keywords: Dominant, inequality, Christianity, Transition, education, equality.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'Maring' is derived from the two Maring words 'Mei' means 'Fire' and 'ring' means 'alive'. It means the people who kept fire alive. Women were dominated by man and every works should be done according to the will of man. There was no formal education in the beginning. Oral literature was the only type of education. But there were many rules to be done or not to be done by women. Man is the supreme in this tribe in the family in ancient period. Education was given more emphasis to man than women. It is because of gender difference and economical issues. Moreover, the geographical situation of Maring villages is also one of the factors that woman has not sent to schools in far off places. With the coming of Christianity, the

light of education has been received by women too. Gender gaps were very high in early period in this tribe but slowly decreasing with the coming of Christianity and education. But there is a huge lost in the tradition, culture, rituals, customs and particularly women's dress and behaviours.

EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN MARING TRIBE

From the very beginning of this tribe till the 1960s, it can be said that there were no educated woman in this tribe. This period can be said to be the **first stage** in education and gender difference in this tribe. Gender inequality can be seen from the very beginning period in this tribe. The knowledge of education was not much seen in this tribe during this period. They were engaged in hunting and food gathering. Women were living in lower status in the society. They have to follow any instructions given to them by men in the family and society. Disobeying the instruction was given severe punishment. They can enforce to the village authority for violence against them but it's very rare as they were afraid of their husbands. Sometimes women were not allowed to sleep inside the house for their mistakes. Women were not allowed to wear pants. They were not allowed to speak in public places most of the time. Sons were preferred more than daughters.

Women were mainly engaged in secretion of local wine, making of bamboo products and cultivation works. Two types of wine and one type of alcohol are prepared by Maring women in the past without any chemicals. They secrete the wine from local natural herbs only. The three types of locally made Maring wine and alcohol are; Waitul (wai-yu) – made by mixing with rice and husk and some amount of Thri-tlou (Khaari in Manipuri), Lhouru (Yu-ngou) – made after cooked rice were made fermented by putting proper amount of thri-tlou (khaari) and Watham (atingba)- made by mixing of thri-lhou, little amount of sugar and cooked rice. Women were not allowed to enter at the village Lhaa-maal (altar), a secrete place of every Maring village in the middle of the village, as they were regarded unclean people. Only men were allowed to enter at this secrete place. It is a place of judgement acting like a living god of the village. Every promise was done in front of this altar as a village court. Women were not allowed to speak any encouraging words while men are hunting animals. It is believed that the encouraging words were heard by the animals and become faster and faster.

Maring tribe is one of the most dangerous tribes in the history of Manipur. In the past Maring men were regarded as warriors. They fought war with different tribes of Manipur. During the war period women were engaged to look after their children when their husbands had gone for war. It is believed that women were not allowed to stand or walk on the road when men are coming out of the village for war. They were regarded as bad omen. Women have to hide or diverge the way and try not to face with the warriors. Maring tribe is recorded fighting with a number of kings of Manipur. The first encounter was with Meetingu Thangpi Lanthapa in 1302 A.D. They fought against the Manipuri kings; Meetingu Punsipa 1404 A.D, Lamphen Ngampa 1511 A.D., Khoipung Lokpam Mayang 1610 A.D., Loitongpam Chengpa 1611 A.D., Yangampam Aakeng 1624 A.D., Meisupam Lamming 1625 A.D, Heisnam Chengpa 1626 A.D., Chongtham Tenpa 1627 A.D., Nongpokpam Ngangpa 1630 A.D., Loitongpam Kapum 1664

A.D., Langtem Mayang 1682 A.D., Takhen Monsang 1728 A.D., Moirang Koirang 1740 A.D., Kapo Laseng 1741 A.D. and Suknu Kyampa 1742 A.D.

In the family, there were strict rules for women to be followed. Women were not allowed to touch the centre pillar of the household called “Soot-Lai”. Soot-Lai is regarded as the god of the family. Any development works of the family must be concerned with the husband or the father. They were not allowed to study in the past. It was generally accepted in this tribe that daughters were going to leave the family when they grown up. So, they are no need to impart education. But teaching of household chores was strictly done. It is because, if daughters were not expert in doing household chores, discipline and respect to elders, their family is not well regarded by the society. Educated men are highly accepted by the society. So, most of the sons are sent to the schools. Parents and daughters earn for their son’s and brother’s education. Gender inequalities were recorded maximum during this period in this tribe.

The **second stage** can be started from around 1960s and covers up to the period of 1980s. During this period, girls were seen hanging their bags and went to school. Primary schools were started establishing by state government in Maring villages too. But most of them drove the schools at primary level. Hardly one or two girls in a village continued further study up to high school level and secondary level. In this level too women were not given priority to education. It was widely said in this tribe that men needs higher education than women. Women are going to engage in household chores and looking after their children. Only basic education is enough for women. Woman who left the family and went to earn money by working in any office is highly disliked by their husband and society. They have always in mind that those women are earning money by having physical relationship with other man. Government jobs were given priority to men as they are going to be the pillar of the family. Women were not given government job facilities as they are going to their husband’s house one day leaving their parents. The basic knowledge of the education to women was because of the coming of Christianity in this tribe. Gender violence was reduced to some extent during this period as there were many educated man in the village. During birth, sons were more preferred than daughters.

The **third stage** can be said to start from the period of 1980s and is continuing till date. In this stage there is equal status for sons and daughters in the field of education. Every child is send to schools for education. Girls are allowed to study up to the highest level degrees. It can be said that there is no gender bias in education. Therefore, the gender gap between man and woman is much acceptable. Women are allowed to work in every field. They can study, work and go anywhere they like to. Domestic violence against gender inequality is reduced to acceptable levels. Women are also engaged in private and public jobs to large extend.

Christianity:

It was around the 1970s that the newly arrival foreign religion called Christianity came into Maring Villages. There arouse a big conflict between the traditional religion and Christianity. In a family, if the wife converts to Christianity but the husband follows the traditional religion, most of the wife is beaten severely by their husband. In this tribe, the population of women are

more and pioneer to Christianity than man. It is mainly because women had struggled for gender inequality for a long period. It is widely accepted in this tribe that there are so many demerits of converting Christianity in traditional life. Traditional religion, culture, customs and rituals disappeared day by day. On the other hand, Christians were ready to sacrifice even their life for the foreign religion. The population of traditional religious worshippers were in pathetic condition. It seems they had forgotten their ancient history and floating on the modernised culture which was not their own origin.

Though there are so many disadvantages and demerits of accepting Christianity, there are certain merits and credits to Christianity. Education becomes compulsory for both man and woman as they were to sing hymns and read bible during the worship services. Therefore, both girls and boys are compulsory to impart education. Women were allowed to come on the stage and sing worship hymns and dance. It is very interesting to watch girls sing on the stage to sing, dance and share their testimonies. It encouraged the parents to send their daughters to schools. As the girls become educated, the gender gap is withdrawing day by day in this tribe too.

The population and status of education and gender inequalities is reflected on the Census data of Manipur 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Total population					
1991	2001	2011			
		Total household	Total Population	Male	Female
15,698	23,238	5,687	26,424	13,337	13,087

The Scheduled Tribe population in Manipur is predominantly rural with 95.3 per cent rural and 4.7 per cent urban population. Of the thirteen major STs, kacha Naga (99%), Anal (98.5%), Maring (98.2%) and Simte (98.1%) have returned majority of their population in rural areas as it had recorded in 2001 census report.

The sex ratio of ST population of the state is 980 in 2001, which is higher than the national average for STs (978). The sex ratio is comparatively low in Maring, recorded as 954 in 2001 but increase to 981 in 2011.

Literacy rate of Maring tribe according to the census report 2001 and 2011

Years	Total	Male	Female	Difference
2001	53.1%	63.4%	42.3%	21.1%
2011	60.9%	68.6%	53.2%	15.4%

The highest gender gap in literacy has been recorded among Maring. The total literacy

rate among the major tribes in Manipur is 53.1 per cent, with 63.4 percent male and 42.3 per cent female literacy, the Maring females are lagging behind by 21.1 percentage points in 2001 but decrease to 15.4% in 2011.

The marital status of Maring has recorded as in census report 2001

Never married	currently married	Widowed	Divorced/separated
57.7%	39.2 %	2.9 %	0.2 %

Of the thirteen major Scheduled Tribes in Manipur, Maring has recorded the highest Work Participation Rate (WPR) at 50.4% in 2001 and 60.7% in 2011. It is significant that in Maring, the female WPR is higher than that of their male counter parts. Among the thirteen major tribes, Maring has recorded 75% main workers as cultivators in 2001 and 61.1% in 2011.

According to the Census report of 2011, the study of 4(four) Maring Village in Northern regions has been recorded as follows:-

Particulars	Total no. of house hold	Population			Children percentage			Literacy rate percent		
		Total	Male	Femal e	Total	Male	Femal e	Tota l	Male	Femal e
Laiphrok Maring	96	452	221	231	59	32	27	69.72	83.07	57.35
Phunal Maring	216	1212	587	625	134	73	61	63.91	69.07	59.22
Sandang Senba	141	665	342	323	64	33	31	59.6	72.82	45.55
Kwarok Maring	62	277	138	139	21	11	10	44.53	50.39	38.76

The data in the table shows that the literacy rate of male is must higher that of females. And even the total literacy rate of a village is still below 50 percent. It is one of the biggest reasons; this tribe is far behind the development in Manipur. These villages are situated only in the valley areas of Manipur nearly 15 km to 30 km ranges. It will be worsen in those villages located at the border areas of Manipur.

Conclusion

In the past Maring tribe follows their ancestral way of living style. It gave a huge affect on women as they have to follow the male dominant society culture willingly or unwillingly. If they were unwilling to obey the order, than they were punished. It was because there were no light of education. But with the coming of education, the conditions of women were becoming much

better. On the other hand educated men also try to upgrade the status of women nowadays. The wife can enjoy her right in the family and in the society too. It is only because of education as the main source that the gender gap in this tribe is at acceptable level.

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