

Status of Naga Women with reference to Customary Laws in Nagaland (2010).

Research objective:

- Identify general customary practices discriminatory towards women particularly with regard to issues of marriage, divorce, property distributions, child custody, criminal acts such as rape and sexual abuse of women.
- Documenting and generating materials and issues on how the traditional practices and modern approach to gender and women's rights is being negotiated and resolved by the community.

Background: The Naga Society is a traditional society where the institution of customary laws, and practices, constitutionally recognized by the government of India; still have a direct bearing on the lives of the people. Customary laws as the guiding principle of dispensing justice and maintaining the social order and tribal identity of the various groups have wide social implications. Thus at the local and individual level, the customary laws plays an important role in determining community decisions and legal actions.

The contemporary Naga society presents a blend of traditionalism and modernity. In this changing context, a development driven modernistic focus on the importance of women as equal partners of a progressing society on one hand, and the traditional practices of customary laws on the other are playing important decisive roles in shaping the status of modern Naga women. However, there is very limited literature and reference materials with regard to the status of women in contemporary Naga society particularly with regard to issues of marriage, divorce, property distributions, child custody, criminal acts such as rape and sexual abuse of women.

The Naga society which is patriarchal and patrilineal is based on traditions of stringent customary practices where a woman occupies a subsidiary socio-political space. In the contemporary situation, women worldwide are being recognised as partners at bar with their male counterparts in the development of the society. Considering this and recognising the need

of devising culturally negotiable approach towards gender equity, the documentation of the status of women with reference to customary law of the Naga society is being undertaken.

The main objective of the documentation process is to gather sufficient cultural data In order to define, create necessary instruments (legal, social instruments) for the empowerment and upliftment of women to suit contemporary situations and demands.