

# Editorial

Thursday, August 29, 2019

## The changing face of Manipuri Women

All women are strong, even stronger than their male counterpart when it comes to the struggle for survival. In the Manipuri society every knows that women are the army which always march forward to protect the land, identity or for protection of the male folk as well as the children who are the future of tomorrow. However, what is shocking is the series of report about domestic violence, murdered or abetted suicide of young married lady, rape etc. In most of the incident it again was the women who came on the forefront to fight for their rights.

Seem like the women of today's Manipur had changed as they now had come out of fear of being played as a doll by male folk. A rare incident that happened yesterday showed that women now have become stronger and they are now not going to be easy prey of dirty minded male folk. It was at the Nambul River bank on Paona Keithel side that women who was walking alone bashed up a man who had touched her taking advantage of the darkness. Instead of shouting and beg for help she stopped him and assaulted him with her powerful punch followed by action star Bruce Lee kick. Had there been no one around the man could have sustain serious injury as the lady seems to have cross her limit of anger.

The action of the lady will definitely teach a lesson to that man who seem to bullied or underestimated ladies of Manipuri society who came out from their home to earn for the fielding the stomach of her family. There are thousands women who came out in market place to support their family out of necessities. We have also heard many stories of these women being molested and harassed taking advantage of their weakness. Not only that these women face the trouble at their way to earn money or while returning from the hard day work , they sometime face humiliating words from their family too.

But now women of the kind now are stronger and felt no pity for the male counterpart who disrespects them.

What is more relevant is that, today the state celebrates 88<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Haipou Zadonang. The freedom fighter who wage war against the British Empire. If one recalled the history of his time , Haipou Zadonang was the leader who had encouraged Rani Gaidinliu to become a leader.

On the other hand, Manipur is still proud for MC Mary Kom who had shown the world that Manipuri women are undefeated. Like Mary Kom, Sharita, Khumukcham Sanjita, etc. besides there are many Manipuri lady who are in the Indian army and state police at higher rank. These prove that Manipuri lady have now comes out of the groove and shadow of oppression by male folk. If this message can reach to all the other ladies of this region, who are either victims of the domestic violence or those facing trouble from gangster, the power of women to protect themselves will be automatically come to them.

Let's spread this news that women have the strength to fight for their protection so that no woman falls as a prey of rapists.

## NRC for Assam to be published on August 31

Agency  
New Delhi Aug 29,

The National Register of Citizens, NRC for Assam will be published this Saturday. State government has said it will provide free legal aid to needy people whose names do not figure in the NRC. Besides the government, the state's ruling BJP and opposition Congress have also extended their help to the needy people left out of NRC. AIR correspondent reports that all necessary arrangements are being made to provide legal aid to needy people through District Legal Services

Authorities. The free legal services include fees for processing, drafting, typing, clerage and remuneration of lawyers empanelled with the state legal service authority.

The people who are left out of the NRC will not be detained under any circumstances until the Foreigners Tribunals declare them foreigners. Only Foreigners Tribunals are empowered to declare a person a foreigner. Therefore, non-inclusion of a person's name in NRC does not by itself amount to him or her being declared as foreigner. Assam is the only state in the country where the NRC updation exercise is taking place.

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail : [imphaltimes@gmail.com](mailto:imphaltimes@gmail.com). For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.

## The Zeliangrong Movement: Contribution of Rani Gaidinliu

By-Soihiamlung Dangmei

**Introduction:** The Zeliangrong Movement was described in different ways by different writers. For an instance, J.P. Mills described Haipou Jadonang as the 'Messiah King', while Robert Reid described the movement as 'Zeliangrong Uprising' (Kamei 2009: 1). Ursula Graham Bower referred Jadonang as a religious mystic, while A.Z Phizo, A. Dasgupta, Khushwant Singh, D.P. Tracey, B.B. Ghosh and Hamlet Barh referred to the movement as a 'Naga revolt against British colonialism'. Besides, more importantly, somescholars referred to the Zeliangrong Movement as 'Naga Raj'. The movement gained momentum during the British India because it coincided with the Non Co-operation movement of India. However, with the death of Jadonang, the movement became a socio-religious reform movement. The reformed religion came to be known as Heraka. The followers of Heraka are found mostly in N.C. Hills of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur. Nevertheless, the legacy of the Zeliangrong movement remains to the present generation.

The Zeliangrong Nagas are one of the various groups of Mongoloid race with distinct culture, laws and customs. According to some linguists and anthropologists, the Zeliangrong Nagas belonged to the Tibeto-Burman family and sub-families of the Tibeto-Chinese race. The Zeliangrong Nagas inhabit the compact and contiguous geographical area which has been fragmented into the states of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland in India. In Assam, the Northeast North Cachar Hills district is the ancestral Zeliangrong homeland. They are also settled in Cachar valley of Assam. In Manipur, Tamenglong district is the ancestral homeland of the Zeliangrong people. They are also settled in western Sadar Hills, Tadubi sub-division of Senapati district, Loktak Project area of Churachandpur district, certain villages in Bishnupur district, and about seventy villages in Imphal valley of Manipur. In Nagaland, Peren district is the ancestral homeland of the Zeliangrong people. They are also settled in Dimapur district and Kohima district.

The British administration that came in North East India much before the advent of Christian missions was primarily the agency of change among the people in the region. With the British conquest of the region, a new administration began where the North East region came under the British rule and control. In order to strengthen their presence and administration, the British introduced laws and jurisprudence in the region. Various laws were enacted for efficient administration which in turn had an impact on the indigenous social and political structures.

The British had some contact with North Cachar Hills of Assam by 1832, but it was only in 1854 that an administrative sub-divisional headquarters became operational. The British presence in North Cachar Hills was largely a strategic entry point to the region; Christian missionary movements also started making their presence felt. The British annexation of North Cachar was disastrous for the Zeliangrong population.

In Manipur, McCulloch had added the oppressive rule of Manipur Kingdom being responsible for the desertion of the villages once inhabited by the Zeliangrong. Another acute reason was the immigration of the Kukis into Manipur especially the southern and western hills occupied by the Zeliangrong and the feuds between the Kukis and the Zeliangrong. The boundary between Manipur and Naga Hills was settled in 1872 after a protracted

on-the-spot survey of Thangal Menjor and R. Brown. The demarcation of the boundary along the Dzukou River put many of the Zeliangrong villages south of it in Manipur and North of it in Naga Hills.

### Contribution of Rani Gaidinliu

Rani Gaidinliu loved the Zeliangrong as such she was like a mother of the whole population (Nayyar 2002: 13). After the martyrdom of Jadonang, Gaidinliu, the charismatic spiritual and political successor of Jadonang continued the legacy of Jadonang. The arrest, trial and execution of Jadonang stunned his followers with fear and anxiety. Jadonang's role was the preparatory phase and real action came during the phase of Gaidinliu, his brilliant and determined disciple. The visit to Kambiron (Manipur) around 1926-1927 was the beginning of a master and disciple relationship between Jadonang and Gaidinliu. She realized the spiritual power of Jadonang, and wanted to learn from him, and she became devoted to his master. Though, their association was only for about four years, Gaidinliu could follow the language and teaching of Jadonang. For an instance, Jadonang composed many songs and poems; Gaidinliu could learn them and also added her own in the later years. During the last pilgrimgate to Bhuhon cave, Lord Bisnu revealed to Jadonang and Gaidinliu, a new reformed religion, which is called Heraka.

Gaidinliu reorganized the movement and challenged the British inspite of the innumerable odds and struggle. By her spiritual strength and skill in organization, she could convince the people and move forward to accomplish the mission of Jadonang. Several attempts to arrest her were failed for sometimes as the troops were allured that she appeared in different places simultaneously but actually she moved from place to place under the protection of her disciples. Troops were sent to Zeliangrong territory from all directions. At last, she was arrested in early 1933, tried and sentenced her to life imprisonment for starting such a heinous cult and carrying out insurrection against the British government, although it did not wholly succeed in suppressing the ideology on which it was built. She was released from Tura Jail when India became independent in 1947. Whatever might have been her teaching, Gaidinliu's heroism had moved veteran Indian nationalist Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who gave her the title of Rani in 1937. Her political programme was the translation of Jadonang's idea of the establishment of a Naga Raj. She continued to work for the welfare of the Zeliangrong people till her last breath. The important legacy of Gaidinliu was the reforming of the traditional religion which is known as Heraka.

The objective of the Zeliangrong movement under the leadership of Rani Gaidinliu was defense of the political fight for the integration of the Zeliangrong into a common homeland. The Naga national workers in their political campaign took up Christian proselytism as a main function. Many of the Zeliangrong people who followed the indigenous religion were condemned or coerced to convert to Christianity. They formed into the Zeliangrong army and had a force, which in the course of six years of active existence (1960-66) reached a strength of 400 combatants and 1000 non-combatant civil followers. They came to be known as Rani party, parallel to the Federal Government of Nagaland. The Zeliangrong government of Rani Gaidinliu was engaged in the twin objectives of preservation and promotion of the Heraka cult against the Christian preaching and establishment of a



Haipou Jadonang



Rani Gaidinliu

Zeliangrong administrative unit, either as a district or union territory. They were not opposed to the Naga independence movement as such, but their clash was more on the religious issue. The Rani party had not only created an army but also a civil government where Rani Gaidinliu was the patron saint chief of the Heraka religion and chief of the government.

Rani Gaidinliu continued the Zeliangrong movement urging the government of India to integrate the Zeliangrong areas into a separate political unit. She was persuaded by the government of Nagaland to press her demand in a peaceful way. She was invited to stay at Kohima. Other Zeliangrong leaders and organizations also endorsed the demand. In 1964, the first memorandum for a separate Zeliangrong administrative unit was submitted to Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. In 1966, Rani Gaidinliu demanded the integration of the Zeliangrong areas of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland into a political unit. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India assured special coordinated development programme for the Zeliangrong people. But the government of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland ignored the demands of the Zeliangrong people. Realizing the need for a unified leadership, the Zeliangrong People's Convention (ZPC) was formed in 1980 under the leadership of Rani Gaidinliu to spearhead a democratic, peaceful and constitutional movement of Zeliangrong Homeland within the Indian Union.

The issue of the integration of the Zeliangrong area into a single administrative unit was raised earlier by different Zeliangrong organizations and leaders including Rani Gaidinliu. Though the government of India had rejected the demand for a Zeliangrong district in 1966, Rani Gaidinliu after the fading away of the Naga integration movement pressed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to consider the Zeliangrong integration issue. Indira Gandhi pleaded her inability and assured that she would consult the chief ministers of the concerned states where the Zeliangrong areas are situated. In 1980, the Zeliangrong People's Convention (ZPC) was formed, the supreme body of the Zeliangrong people to deal with the integration of the Zeliangrong areas into a political unit, a district, a union territory or a state.

In 1981, the ZPC declared the demand for Zeliangrong homeland within the Indian Union. Several rounds of talks were engaged between the Zeliangrong leaders and New Delhi but availed no solution. New Delhi stated that it was extremely difficult to redraw the existing boundaries of the existing states and persuaded the ZPC to agree to a development structure, preferably a central authority. However, the ZPC pressed for the Zeliangrong homeland; before matters could be solved Rani Gaidinliu passed away in 1993.

Rani Gaidinliu received a

number of recognition from government and other organizations. In 1956, she was elected the president of the Freedom Fighters Association of India, and in 1972 she was awarded a Tamrapatra as a freedom fighter. Again in 1982, gaidinliu was conferred Padma Bhushan, and also received 'award of recognition' from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kohima, Nagaland. In 1996, the Anthropological Survey of India posthumously awarded her the Birsa Munda Award. In the same year the government of India released a one-rupee postal stamp in her honour.

Besides being a freedom fighter and prophetess, Gaidinliu was a socio-cultural reformer. She was against the Western influences on the culture of the people. It was on this ground that she opposed Christianity as foreign religion that destroyed the traditional religion. She always stood for the preservation of indigenous culture and identity. Basically, it was for this reason that she always appeared on traditional attire. In one instance, while she was in Lucknow in her traditional attire, a Zeliangrong youth saw her and called her *apui* (mother). Then Gaidinliu told him that 'today you could recognize me because of my traditional attire, otherwise you would not recognize me, so wear our traditional dresses so that we could recognize one another'. To the present day, the Heraka instructed men to put on bronze earrings, and women to have short hair in the front side, so that they could recognize their fellow Heraka. Heraka means pure, which is not mixing with other evil things. The word *Hera*-means God and *Ka*-means fence. It means God fencing out to the evil gods and kept his people inside his fencing. Those who are inside the fencing, they are called *Herakame*, which means the pure people (Newme 1991: 1).

**Conclusion:** The Zeliangrong movement which embarked on fighting against the British colonial rule and subsequently a demand for homeland in post-independent India witnessed radical change in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the death of Haipou Jadonang and Rani Gaidinliu, the movement was halted, and it became a socio-religious reform movement. Besides, the movement lack proper mobilization among the Zeliangrong people and there was no proper propaganda which resulted in partial participation. Another hindrance to the Zeliangrong movement is the interference from the Naga insurgents on the pretext that it would affect the Naga movement. However, the purpose of the Zeliangrong movement has been the assertion and preservation of the Zeliangrong regional identity within the Naga nationalist landscape. In fact, the Zeliangrong movement does not oppose the Naga national movement. What the Zeliangrong convention maintained was that the special problem of the Zeliangrong people namely the fragmentation of their areas into the political units be recognized by all concerned.

### About the author:

Dr. Soihiamlung Dangmei teaches Political Philosophy and Theory at the Department of Political Science, and also Coordinator of the Department of Tribal Studies, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, RC- Manipur.