

The Morung Express

Questions to civil organizations in Nagaland against their stance on women reservations

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Zhalie Neinu Naga: I am having a hard time trying to understand why some of our leaders are vehemently trying to oppress our Naga womenfolk.

I have a few questions:

1. Is 33% reservation detrimental to all Nagas?
2. Is helping our Naga women to lead our community degrading and evil?
3. Can we give our women at least a chance to prove that 33% might be the missing puzzle piece to strengthen our community?
4. It is alright if some tribe hohos oppose to 33% reservation, just do not oppose other tribes from availing the opportunity to positive social transformation.
5. Is it not unjust to trample upon our womenfolk and on the other hand give wide stretched arm opportunities to illegals and non-Nagas to thrive and prosper in Nagaland?
6. Time to seek forgiveness from our womenfolk and build together a better Nagaland.
Kuknalim!

Humtsoe Zanbeni: Skimmed through press statements of both Naga Hoho and Ao Senden. I was flabbergasted, to say the least. How does giving opportunity to the much-repressed Naga women negate Article 371 (A)? And Ao Senden even went to the extent of stating, "It is very

disheartening to see our Ao women folks drawn to sink down to 2nd class status by the state government.”

Indeed it is really disheartening to see that Naga women have been rendered voiceless once again. Once again it is the phallogocentric organizations like Naga Hoho and Ao Senden who has to speak for the Naga women, as if 33% reservation is all about them.

I guess they should also oppose job reservations and concessions in eligibility criteria for STs and minorities since it “negates Article 371 (a)” and since it is against “Naga custom”.

Mk Dzeini Mathew: I have gone through the newspaper article vis-a-vis Ao Senden and their perceived fear of undermining provisions of 371A consequent upon reserving 33% ULB/TC seats for women in Nagaland.

Their fear is understandable. Ao Senden or any apex bodies who are contemplating to stand opposed to 33% women reservation still nurse the notion of an egalitarian Naga society. If this reservation is made into law in Nagaland, it would make the Naga society officially at par with other societies in India where women are not empowered enough that they would require to be discriminated positively by means of reservation. And this stands in contradiction to Naga customs which are protected under 371A.

But pertinent to ask that in our orally recorded Naga history, who were the ones that made the laws for all? How many female members of our Naga society were included in all those meetings that made laws to be observed by all? And based on these laws, have apex bodies come to a conclusion that the society is equal for all? Indeed, all are equally treated in our society but a part of the society is more equal than the others. Inheritance by females of ancestral property is at pittance till today, for example. Under such circumstances, can we put our headgears and howl out loud that we Nagas are an egalitarian society?

Time changes and so do the circumstances. Sticking to old moribund customary laws just to protect one’s ethnic pride reeks of one’s aloofness of the reality of present times. What good is the customary law if it is the source of discontent? If women had nothing to say about their political rights and participation in 1960s, then it does not mean that they still have nothing to say in 2000s.

33% reservation is a good piece of legislation. The apex bodies, at the least, can be the bridge between our ladies and their political aspirations. Those who nurture the notion that if at all woman wants to be part of decision making bodies, why reservation? To them, think of ST reservation that we all enjoy. Had there been no reservation and only strong desire to enter jobs/colleges, do you think we could make the impact as of today? Do the math.

Personally, I support women's participation in every field. Real equality will not only give our women more space but will also lessen men's plight.

For every woman tired of acting weak when she knows she is strong, there is a man who is tired of acting strong when he is vulnerable.

An extra responsibility taken by woman may result in a lesser responsibility for man, and not total denial as most would like to think. A step towards woman's liberation would make man's freedom a bit more easier to attain.

Apex bodies, spare our ladies for this day. For this moment. Please.