

RELIGIOUS FOUNDATION OF RONGMEI TRIBE IN MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

As human rights is based on universal law, it have been said to rely and reflect on western idea, not acknowledging the values of traditional and primitive cultures. The specific issue is utmost important since the main concept of human rights look on the assumption that they are common and accepted throughout the world. The paper is critical that this argument be addressed and applied to all. Here also, the paper determines the foundation of human rights from religious perspective. It examines the Rongmei traditional custom and Christian with respect to some fundamental aspects of human rights that is; the idea of human rights, equality and religious liberty. The paper also concludes that religion enhance for providing a theory of human rights and, as an analysis of Christian makes clear, this foundation of rights does not only recapture western opinion. More than this, religious thoughts on human duties can make to the development and promotion of human rights especially in Rongmei community. This idea brought an important step towards a progressive awareness as it may be able to talk of the religious foundations of human rights on a Rongmei community in Manipur. The paper has been collected in primary data and some secondary data also referred to maintain a good result.

Keywords: *universal law, Rongmei, traditional custom, Christian, religious.*

I.INTRODUCTION

Human rights are the distinctive legal, moral and political concept of the last sixty years. The universal declaration of human rights was adopted by the third United Nations general assembly in December 1948, and became a model for the constitutions of many countries and domestic and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (craft R Liao). Talk about human rights and the assertions and denials of human rights is commonplace today. Human rights appear increasingly as a growing universal language that has developed with extraordinary vigor in the wake of World War II. Human rights tend to construct a moral order of universal and global scope.(Gregory j Walters).

Many ideas have been developed to explain the foundations of human rights through religions.

Examining equality in relation to freedom of religion or belief requires taking on board a range of terrains. Such context is crucial not only in distinguishing between likes and unlike for the purposes of McCrudden's four equalities but, more crucially, in assessing a state's duty to act positively to equality of opportunity throughout all its activities. (NazilaGhanea)

According to the concept of human rights, all human rights begin from the law and none from others. The source of human rights would be seen in the universal declaration of human rights. Natural law theory or natural rights theory points the foundations of human rights, and in particular human liberty and equality, on the understanding that they have a natural, universal and long lasted aspect. There is also the religious view which places human rights within the subject of a moral vision. The issue is none the less to take up one since many have asserted that religious foundations of human rights are essentially western ideas, ideas that do not embrace or reflect the motives of non-western cultures. This view is related in the lesson of the universality and cultural relativist Performa.

This paper examines the religious foundation of human rights in Rongmei tribe of Manipur. The main goal is to examine how two major religions in Rongmei tribe that is Traditional religion of Rongmei tribe and Christian, provide for a theory of human rights in Rongmei tribe. It argues that there is a relationship between the religion itself and international law of human rights. Furthermore, through analyzing aspects of traditional religion of Rongmei tribe, the paper attempts to reveals that the idea of human rights is not simply limited to the cultural heritage. This will analyze in the concepts of human rights. Human dignity and progress, as maintain in the Rongmei tribe, is a common feature of both traditions and Christian had the concepts of equality is analyzed to see whether the fundamental right has foundations in both traditions and used to further support the idea of universal human rights. Lastly, the right to religious freedom is examined. It must look from the beginning that the term human rights as it is not found in the religions but that the religions provide for a theory of human rights. This paper has taken up by collecting the information in Rongmei village in Manipur which contribute their religion in Traditional custom and Christian religion.

II. HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN DUTIES OBSERVED IN RONGMEI TRIBE

From a historical point of view, right in its objective sense is described or just actions that individuals have to discharge to maintain harmonious relationships between themselves. In the modern or subjective sense, its definition is long and divisive. Whatever may be the controversy, and scholarly discussion that surrounds the historical origins and the different meanings that right has, in general rights mean – a legal sanction or normative value. The concept of Natural rights is closely associated with the philosophy or theory of Natural law. According to this theory, nature or God alone regulates the wisdom and the activities of men. The kings being the divine origin, as representatives of God, the rules framed by them were considered divine in nature (Dr. T.S.N.Sastry).

This mean that even in Rongmei tribe, individuals possess human rights. They are general rights that take from no special recognized beyond membership in the human race. One does not need to have other than just as a human being and therefore human rights is the idea that all humans equally hold them. This equality is maintained in terms of a dignity equally descended in each individual. So human rights views of the inner value of human beings, which make equal and common to all simply by virtue of them being human.

2.1. Traditional custom

The Zeliangrong people have their own history, which are rich in cultural heritage and well developed religion. The traditional religion of Zeliangrong was not an organized religion because there was no such common foundation of authority which could maintain and control the religious affairs at the community level except in the village. Their religion as existing religion has no founder, but many diviners like *Amhang*, *Tenglam*, *Tingpurengsonnang*, *Meijipui*, *Tinglapu*, *Thonggramang*, *Tingtranpu* etc. and HaipouJadonang and Ranigaidinliu made the revelations of God's wishes and messages to mankind. They made the foundation of TingkaoRagwangChapriak(TRC) religion. Proper establishment of Zeliangrong religion was started during the time of HaipouJadonang and Rani gaidinliu, the freedom fighters of India. They build the house of worship of TingkaoRagwang, the supreme God locally known as "kalumki" in many places of zeliangrong inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. The mode of worship of TinGkaoRagwang varies from a small offering of water (*DuiganChakmei*) to the great sacrifices of *MakuBanru*, *Taarang Kai Shumei* etc. TingkaoRagwang is worshipped through prayers, songs, sacrifices and meditation. TingkaoRagwang ordains the Zeliangrong community to maintain the ceremonies of birth, admission to dormitory, marriage and all, moral law of the society. It is followed by the celebration of annual festivals with collective spirit and worship of TingkaoRagwang and other lower realm gods. In spite of their only traditional religion of the community there was scanty of limited literary sources from all officials recorded some accounts of the people and that was not enough for the reconstruction of the past history and religion of the people. In this regard, prof. Gangmumei Kamei has rightly stated that history to the ancient Zeliangrong is the oral tradition which had descended from one generation to another. (ChaobaKamson)

With the hardship struggle by the elders and leaders of the community, a new suggestion was opened in the history of Zeliangrong with the formation of a common religious authority locally called ZeliangrongRachapriakPhom, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland on 16 April 1994 with the true spirit of the people minded (which renamed as TingkaoRagwangChapriakPhom, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland since 16 April, 2008) from then onward, the traditional religion was well establish and ordered at the community level having a proper name of religion known as TingkaoRagwangChapriak (TRC), a place of worship of TingkaoRagwang recognized as TingkaoRagwangkalumkai and religious literature. TRC is focus on the three pillars of religion that is (1) TingkaoRagwang (2) the system of worship of TingkaoRagwang and (3) the religious organization namely the TingkaoRagwangChapriakPhom, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland like Buddhism. In this Zeliangrong community, Rongmei also included as an indigenous tribe.

The devotees of TingkaoRagwangChapriak (TRC) have faith in the concept of TingkaoRagwang who is the creator and protector of the all present in the universe. TingkaoRagwang creates gods, men, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, celestial bodies, nature, birds, animals, creatures, living beings and non-living beings. TingkaoRagwang according to Zeliangrong tradition, hymns and rites is endowed with all the divine elements derived to God.

- TingkaoRagwang is eternal; there is no beginning and no end.
- TingkaoRagwang is the creator of everything present in the universe.
- TingkaoRagwang is good and supreme.
- TingkaoRagwang is the source of life, giver of the soul and the giving goal of the human soul.
- TingkaoRagwang is the maker of men's destiny.
- TingkaoRagwang is holy and source of holiness of all.
- TingkaoRagwang is the source of knowledge and wisdom.

2.2. Christian

According to the Rongmei Naga Baptist Association, the first missionary of the gospel of Jesus Christ came to Manipur on 6th February 1894. William Pettigrew from England was the person to light into the deep darkness of Manipur. Soon after three people have converted to Christian to light among the Zeliangrong who were in darkness was Mr. Namrijinang alias MaipakKahmei, he received Jesus as his personal savior and committed his life in preaching among his own people in 1920. The first church of Jesus Christ was built in Kaikao and thereon shifted to Sempang village in the same year. Afterwards, the active church was organized in 1915 after Namrijinang was baptized in the hand of U.M. fox in Dec. 6th 1915.

There is a resolution of the churches delegate annual meeting of February 10th-12th 1976, and from there, Rongmei speaking group has decided together and form Rongmei churches fellowship in 3rd Feb 1976. Bolongdai was chosen as their main head office. After 9th years of practical experiences in their respective fields as fellowship under ZBA (M), the Zeliangrong churches were in the opinion that up gradation from the Zeliangrong Baptist Association to Zeliangrong Baptist Church council by equaling the four fellowships to the level association in the ultimate action taken in the annual delegate of December 17th-18th 1985. From there, the Rongmei of Assam and Nagaland has taken unanimous decision and formed planning committee decided on a delegates meeting at Bethel Baptist Church, Tamenglong head quarter with 30 thirty representatives. Decision had taken after deep discussion to make the framework and structure of the association.

The aim and objects are:

- To have fellowship and sharing to build up one another in Christ.
- To maintain and strengthened the bond of unity in faith and practices.
- Preaching gospel and disciplining of the people.
- Developing in all rounds like education, social welfare relief, health care, women and child programs.
- To regulate and cooperate with national and international Baptist churches and evangelical organizations like faith.
- Maintain training institute, theological, vocational and health care.

Functions:

- To form a common governing body to guide the member churches in doctrine and practice
- To ordain and license ministers of the gospel and to make workers and minister, to preach, teach, and administer ordinances and to officiate in marriage within the member churches.
- To make conferences for promoting the fellowship and enrich faith.
- To send out evangelists and missionaries in home and abroad so as to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
- To manage educational institute, vocational training institute and social welfare project.
- To maintain relief works.
- To ensure social economic development project and health care project.
- To uphold and administer fund for the accomplishment of the objective set forth herein
- To have legal right and to procure, own and sell properties both movable and immovable properties.
- To suggest the member of the churches in matter referred to it and decide dispute when requested to do so, by the parties concern.
- To coordinate and maintain relationship with the other Christian bodies/organizations.
- To relate the missionary works.

III.EQUALITY

3.1Traditional Custom

Worshipping of TingkaoRagwang is simple. Every devotee of TingkaoRagwang should take bath (well dress) and sprinkle water before entering the temple for worshipping. After making the programmed, an official of TRC will read out the programed one after another. To begin the prayer service, a devotional song of opening of holy door of the divine will be sung and offering of sacred wine to TingkaoRagwang by two priests praising the name of TingkaoRagwang to give blessings to the mankind will be made and followed by lighting of candle and agarvati. After this, three prayer songs will be sung by the devotees who came to worship inside the temple. The praising of the name of TingkaoRagwang for one minute will follow. A message is normally delivered as routine work by any person who knows well on the theology and teachings of TingkaoRagwang, culture, festivals, customs, rituals etc. Devotional songs and hymns to be sung on birth day, hymns for everlasting life, prayer for blessing child, hymns of marriage, hymns of learning, hymns of intellectual, hymns of winning, healing of the sick will be sung and praises if individual's are requested. An announcement in worship will be made on progress of religious matters of TRC and its policy and programs. Any request to worship with a cock or a pigeon, a priest will perform the rite with hymns on behalf of the family. Last hymns (khammeiLuh in Rongmei) and farewell song to TingkaoRagwang will follow. Thereafter, every devotee may worship stepping up the altar. After all, *KhaamNimmei* (sindoor) will be put on the forehead of the devotees.

TingkaoRagwangChapriakphom brought to achieve some objectives.

- To preserve and maintain the traditional religious belief, practices of the Rongmei people.
- To study and systematize the mode of worship, rites, rituals and ceremonies of the indigenous of the Rongmei people.
- To inherit the Rongmei indigenous religious ideals and philosophy.
- To inherit the social, cultural and religious identity and solidarity of the Rongmei people.

3.2 Christian

For a Christian Society in Rongmei community of Manipur, it is also similar to the worship of TRC. One can say that from conversion to Christianity, it is same as the people worship in other society. Every believer should respect and honor the Almighty father. There may be Baptist, Catholic, Seventh day etc. but then the day of worshipping should take as important. As the field area was mainly concern on Baptist Association, even in Friday was taken as important to worship in the house of god. Adultery, wrong doers are considered to hold the post of the churches. A woman should cover his head while entering the house of god. It is also noted that for man formal shirt with color must dress well. Bells are ringed ahead for inviting the people to worship and also for maintaining the time. The times are set according to season. Hymns are sung led by choir master of the churches during the services. Messages are given by local pastor and theologian. More than this, any requested from outside whether evangelist, preachers are given privileged. Without the concern of the pastor, any preacher should not give authorized. During the services or worshipping, offering are taken as a thankful to god. Sometime, for a specific day organized under the association, offering are given half percent from the collection. Information is also given whether it may be birth, marriage, individual, society etc. during the worship.

IV.FREEDOM OF RELIGION

4.1 TingkaoRagwangChaoriak (Traditional Custom of Rongmei)

TingkaoRagwang has given knowledge to mankind. Man and TingkaoRagwang could not meet nor talk directly each other. In order to give knowledge, wisdom, intellect etc, TingkaoRagwang co- ordinate mankind through animals, fowls, plants, vegetables etc. by showing unnatural happenings like birth of chicken having three eyes, jumping of paddy on mat, jack fruit bearing in the creeper of pumpkin, man with three legs etc. When such incident was seen man used to ask a priest or priestess who had possessed divine power. The priest or priestesses are given direction to mankind for performing a ritual with faith. Usually, man performed one of the following rituals of *MakuBanru*, *Taraangkaishumei*, *Bamzoujangmei(kimei)*, *ragaidai* etc. If performed a rituals with prayer to TingkaoRagwang, the unnatural things seems never happened or incident would not see in future. With this belief, the rituals were performed. Man would be in distress, agony and might suffer fatal or even death if it is not done the ritual.

4.2 Christian

Even in Christian community, there is a relationship with the almighty father even though it is not seen. Every Christian believes that god is omnipresent. A man should be full consult with god whether in the time of sorrow or pain, joyful through prayer. When it had depart from god, there is a lots of struggle and painful.

4.3 Why Christian Rongmei left traditional custom

According to my informant, one and all, the motive and idea are same. It has mentioned that they converted to Christian not for ignoring the traditional custom. In case of traditional custom there have been a sacrificial or offering of earthly things like animal for their goodness. It is also believed that those works are not continuing for long lasting. Many rites and ritual make hindrance even in group. In other side, Christian work is good as it wrote that believing in Christ will possess eternal life. Still then the cultural heritage are possess in Christian group of Rongmei.

V. CONCLUSION

From the above article we came to know that religious foundation of Rongmei tribe is a significant among the indigenous tribe of Manipur. Rongmei tribe of Manipur has categories the religion into traditional (custom) and Christian. Religious practice of traditional belief has also significant as the western have that is Christian. One cannot ignore completely mostly the Christian society, for their traditional custom. This has to preserve the cultural heritage. The belief of traditional custom in Rongmei community has founded itself about the religious. Both traditional religion worshipper and Christian maintain their foundation for uplift of the Rongmei community.

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