

Education in Peren District – Past and Present

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Abstract

Education is paramount to determining how people live, adapt and progress. It is important to assess and reassess how education is progressing in the country in order to take steps to ensure that it keeps pace in a global world economy. In order for the country to progress and to increase literacy and human development indices, there has to be uniform development in all the states and districts of the country. It is also important to understand past perspectives and how education has developed over the course of time.

The present paper delves into the study of Morung system of education which existed in the Zeliang areas especially in Peren District of Nagaland during the Pre-Literacy days. It was found that morung was an important centre of learning for young boys and that girls' education was also catered to by an institution called "Releiki".

The present paper also explores the inception and development of formal education in the district. It also makes an attempt to highlight the present status of education in the district. The paper is a historical- descriptive study and data was gathered mainly from secondary sources. The procedure of collecting data involved the gathering of evidence from books, magazines, journals and official gazettes, and records. The findings of the documentary analysis are systematically arranged and presented.

Keywords: Naga Society, Decision Making, Political Participation, Reservation, Naga Women.

1 Introduction

Education is paramount to determining how people live, adapt and progress. It is important to assess and reassess how education is progressing in the country in order to take steps to ensure that it keeps pace in a global world economy. In order for the country to progress and to increase literacy and human development indices, there has to be uniform development in all the states and districts of the country.

The objectives of this paper are as follows –

- a. To study Morung system of education in the pre literacy days.
- b. To trace the inception and development of formal education in the district.
- c. To highlight the present status of education.

The paper is a historical-descriptive study and data was gathered mainly from secondary sources. The procedure of collecting data involved the gathering of evidence from books, magazines, journals and official gazettes, and records. The findings of the documentary analysis are systematically arranged and presented under the following sections.

2 Brief Profile of Peren District and its People

Peren District is one of the newest districts of Nagaland and was carved out of Kohima district on 11th February 2004. There are seven administrative circles and four rural development blocks.

The Zeliangs constitute one of the major tribes in Nagaland inhabiting Peren District. Peren district lies in the South-Western end of Nagaland bounded by Assam in the West, Manipur in the East and South and Dimapur District in the North and Kohima District in the North East.

As per the 2011 Census of India the population of Peren District is 95,219 of which 49,714 are male and 45, 505 are female.. The overall sex ratio is 915 females for every 1000 males while the child sex ratio (0-6 years) is 935. Population density is 55 persons per square kilometer.

The Zeliangs are comprised of different clans and khels. Traditionally the Zeliang society had a patriarchal and patrilineal system and this system continues till today.

The Zeliangs are a tribe well known for their rich cultural heritage. They are known to be generous, hospitable, loyal and honest people. One of the values that they hold most dear is that of selflessness in every area of life which in Zeme dialect is termed as '*leirau*'. Till today this peculiar trait of the people- that is of their ever ready spirit of putting others and the society above is maintained and emphasized. Physically the Zeliangs are like other Naga tribes, are mongoloid in appearance with thick black hair, are well built, and eyes with epicanthic folds. They have short to medium stature with various shades of light brown to fair complexion.

Zeliangs have been known to be fond of erecting monoliths and resting places and it is through this that the vital information about the past were handed down. Every folk song and folk tale is a narrative of the customs, traditions and beliefs and values of the people. These narratives are invaluable because the details of the people, their land and boundaries, way of life, talks of love and war, migration and settlement are recorded therein.

The Zeliangs are known for their love of dance and their dances are quite popular. Their traditional attires are colorful and striking and are aesthetically designed. The Zeliangs also love

to wear ornaments made of cowrie shells, conch and colorful stones and beads. The Zeliang men love to wear the black and white feathers of the hornbill and the feathers of a colorful bird called 'Nzaimai' as earrings. Every village had a village gate. This gate was set up as a security from animals and enemies alike in the past.

The Zeliang social life revolves around important institutions such as family, peer groups, morung and village. In Zeliang society close interfamily linkages are maintained through exchange of labour during shifting cultivation, house construction, hunting, fishing, and support of one another at times of death or sickness. The family was and is still one of the most important institutions from where people learn about their customs and traditions and history.

3 Morung Education of the Zeliangs

The Zeliangs have no class or caste system. They were divided into clans and khels and each clan had a morung of its own. The most important social institution was the boys' dormitory called 'Rehangki'/'Hangseuki'. Girls slept over in their 'Releiki'/'Leuseuki' or girls dormitory and learnt all social nuances from there. Morung provided the best education to the youngster. On attaining the legal age, boys could take part in all activities and observed all the norms set by the community as a member of the Morung. The elders also gathered in the Morung after the day's work and narrated tales and sang songs that told of the origin, customs and laws of the people. The boys were taught the art of wrestling, warfare, folk songs, folk lore, art and craft sports and games which required brawn and brain. Thus Morung was the centre for informal education where custom, religious philosophy, etiquettes were imparted to the youth and also served as a sort of recreational club. Self-discipline and social values of cooperation were also inculcated to the youth. Morung also served as a council hall where the rights and objectives of every member were regulated.

The caretaker of the Rehangki was known as 'Kizeupei'. Interestingly every hunted head of the animals is brought to the dormitory and the male members feast together. The skull of the animals were preserved to indicate their skill and adventurous spirit. The caretaker of the Releiki or girls' dormitory caretaker was known as 'Kizeipui'. Girls learnt the art of weaving, spinning, twisting of the thread, folk song and dances, love affairs etc. in the Releiki.

In the indigenous system of education, young boys and girls were taught through the principle of learning by doing in which the youth learned the various aspects of life such as technique of wars, wrestling, folk dance, folk songs, folk lore, past histories, art and crafts.

Morung was the most significant traditional and educational institution that acted as the platform for transmission of knowledge, culture, tradition, and values from one generation to another. Morung (*Rehangki*) was known to be a centre for the young boys. On attaining the legal age, boys could participate in the activities of Morung and observe all the norms set by the community as a member. The Morung education of old was comprehensive as it imparted education in all areas of life from customs, religious philosophy and-etiquette. Stern discipline was enforced through the informal mechanism of social control. Self-discipline and social values of cooperation were also inculcated to the youths.

With the introduction of Christianity, Morung which was the most important informal institution met its end. With the dying down of Morung many important aspects of culture were lost. There are many positive elements in the traditional type of education that perhaps need to be revived and recaptured. The entry of Christian missionaries marked a dramatic turning point in the course of Zeliang history, leading the way to the two greatest forces of change – Christianity and formal education.

4 Peer Group and Working Group

Another institution where the life of the youngster evolved in the past was the peer group. Youngsters were divided into groups based on age called 'hegut'. This group worked together in fields and earned and saved so that at the end of the year at the time of harvest they could engage in merry making and festivities with their earnings. The main objectives of having such groups were for the interaction and cooperation among the different Khel men while at the same time working together for the good of the village.

The most significant impact of formal education was that the age old system of learning and education was discontinued.

5 Development of Formal Education

Formal education was introduced in Peren District, then under Kohima District with the the first Government lower primary school which was established at Benreu in 1912. The Morung gradually came to be replaced by school. The practices of sleeping over in the Morung and providing training in different arts and craft and storytelling were slowly done away with. Youngsters also went away to other places in pursuit of education. In this way traditional learning system was gradually replaced by formal education and in the process the age old values and traditions were slowly replaced by new values. New values like pursuit of formal education, competition

among the young for formal education, pursuit of government employment and so on gained in importance and learning of traditions, folk songs, dances, traditional arts and crafts in Morung slowly diminished.

In 1885 Heizieluing of Benreu village was baptized by Rev. C.D. King, an American Baptist Missionary at Kohima field which blessed the whole Zeliang tribe. Christian Missionaries played an important role in early education efforts by conversion.

However education did not see a giant leap there and then. When formal education was introduced in 1912 the people were initially reluctant to adopt new mode of learning because they thought farming and agriculture to be more productive and also because these were the only way of life known to them since time immemorial. Many parents were not willing to send their children especially girls to school for fear of losing man power for work. They feared that education would take over and influence their culture and religion. However education did progress albeit at a slow pace.

The first Government lower primary school was established at Benreu in 1912 but it was confined to that village alone and did not make further expansion to educate the people in the area. Education was neglected for about 20 years after the first primary school was established and people lived without the knowledge of formal education because of the emergence of 'Kampai' (Heraka) religion in Zeliang areas.

After India got Independence the government established schools which gave an opportunity to the Zeliangs to receive formal education. The medium of instruction was Angami, which gradually changed to mother tongue. After few years several primary schools were established such as the primary school established at Ntu village in 1935, at Poilwa village in 1946 and at Peren Town in 1947. These first schools were under the sub inspector of schools, Kohima district. It was only in the year 1979 that the office of the deputy inspector of schools was established. When these schools were in the initial stage the medium of instruction was changed to English. From 1954 more primary schools were established year after year.

The first church run private school in Peren district was established on 1964 by Zeme Baptist Church Council known as Baptist English School in Peren Town through the Government order No. ED/DEV/97/68-69 dated Kohima the 22nd Jan. 1969 and first private individual managed school was established in 1976 known as L M School, Mhainamsti by Shri. Longbe Meru in order to cater the need of the Zeliang people.

6 Present Status of Education in Peren District

The literacy rate of the district is 77.9 per cent. Out of this Male literacy stands at 82.8 per cent while Female literacy is 72.6 percent. These figures indicate that the district literacy rate is lower than the overall literacy rate of the state. Also there is a significant gap between male and female literacy rates in the district which indicate that gender disparities are existing and need to be addressed.

As regards the number of educational institutions in the district altogether there are 184 Government schools, 120 primary schools, 44 middle schools, 16 high schools and 3 higher secondary schools under the Department of School Education in Peren district at present.

There are also 2 central Government Aided Schools namely Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya and Sainik School at Punglwa. Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya was established on 17th November 2006 at Jalukie. This residential school is financed and administered by Government of India through an autonomous organization of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.

Sainik School at Punglwa of Peren district was inaugurated on 12th May 2007. This school functions under the Sainik School Society, Ministry of Defence. This is a residential school for boys only with an aim to prepare boys academically, physically and mentally for entry into the National Defence Academy.

There are 43 private schools in Peren District, 12 primary schools, 14 middle schools, 14 high schools and 2 higher secondary schools which are managed by church, individuals and different organizations like Heraka namely Jadonang Memorial Primary School at Old Tesen, Zeliangrong and Heraka High School at Tening and Vidya Bharati School at Jalukie 'B' which are sponsored by Association affiliated to Vidya Bharti, Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Santha, New Delhi. The following table shows the educational institutions by type of management in Peren district.

Table 1: Types of Educational Institutions in Peren District

Types of educational institutions	Government	Government Aided	Private	Total
No. of Colleges	1	-	1	2
No. of Higher secondary Schools	3	2	2	7
No. of High schools	16	-	14	30
No. of Middle Schools	44	-	14	58
No. of Primary Schools	120	-	12	132
Total	184	2	43	229

Source: District Mission Authority, Peren as per UDISE report 2014-15

The above table shows there are 184 Government educational institutions in Peren district with 120 primary schools, 44 middle schools 16 high schools, 3 higher secondary schools and 1 Government College. There are 2 Central Government Higher Secondary Schools namely Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya and Sainik School. The data also reveals that there are 43 privately managed educational institutions in Peren District which includes 12 primary schools, 14 middle schools, 14 high schools, 2 higher secondary schools and 1 Private college. This shows that the main agency responsible for education is the Governemnt. The table also reveals that there needs to be concerted efforts for the development of higher education in the district.

There are also two Pre-schools namely Kingdom Academy and Ramzie School being run by private individuals in the district at present.

7 Conclusion

Education in Peren district still has a long way to go both in terms of quality and quantity. More schools at all levels need to be opened and more importantly it needs to be ensured that trained teachers are recruited. There is also a need to encourage higher education in the District as the number of colleges for the whole district is very less. Colleges and higher secondary schools offering different streams of study is a must for the developmentof the district and to ensure that youngsters are able to access quality education in the district. Performance wise as well Peren District needs to improve. All stakeholders concerned including the Government, private parties and NGOs, need to join forces to bring about positive change and development in the District.

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