

An Overview on Education and Gender Inequalities in Yunnan and Manipur

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Abstract

The rapid economic growth in China and India during the last two decades is unparalleled in modern history. However, this economic dividend accruing from the high growth was not evenly distributed among the people. These marginalized sections in these parts remain disgruntled to threaten to disturb the social-political stability, thereby posing a challenge to the leadership in Beijing and New Delhi. Having seen the inequalities in both the countries, I'm convinced to study the Yunnan province of Southwestern part of China and Manipur from Northeastern part of India, taking China and India to map the broad contours in comparing education and gender inequalities between the two provinces.

Education is expected to play a significant role in bringing classes and groups together and promotes an egalitarian society. The government of both the countries also made an attempt to encourage female literacy, which has a direct impact on several socio-economic indicators for development. But in spite of all these efforts, education remains a huge gap to a vast section of society particularly the marginalized and girl child. The rate of enrolment may be negligible at primary level but as it goes to higher level the disparities or gap becomes wider. The rate of enrolment may be high at some level but this does not confirm the quality of education and the rate of retention at the end of the academic year especially in rural and mountainous region of both the provinces.

Therefore, the present paper is intended to study the inequalities which prevail in Southwestern China and the Northeastern part of India. Stratification in society is normal and inevitable, and it functions to maintain stability in a given society. But the gap should not be too wide as the provinces are facing today. Rather we must thrive to reduce inequalities which are built into the system over the years.

Key words: *Education, Gender inequality, Yunnan, Manipur*

Introduction

All societies from simplest to the most complex have some form of social inequality though the bases of social inequality are diverse and vary from society to society. Inequality takes many forms in societies. No society is

classless or unstratified. Differences in the treatment of other human beings range from reasons having to do with gender, ethnicity, race, class, and other forms of social distinctions within populations (Banks 2007:177). Stratification in society is normal and inevitable, and it functions to maintain stability in a given society. But the gap should not be too wide as the provinces are facing today. Rather we must thrive to reduce inequalities which are built into the system over the years.

Conceptualizing Social Inequalities

According to Rousseau, biological inequalities are natural and consist of differences in age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of mind and soul. He regards the concept of natural inequality and social inequality as distinct. Therefore, biological inequalities between men were insignificant, whereas socially based inequalities determine the basis for the constitution of social stratification. Aristotle believed that natural and social inequality has a logistic correspondence between them. He also presumes that men are by nature unequal and there was a natural ranked-order amongst them. His main concern inequality in birth, strength, beauty etc., which were the main attributes of natural inequality. Natural inequalities are known as physical inequalities, by which we mean differences of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind (Beteille 1981: 8). But these inequalities are small in comparison to social inequalities. Natural inequalities may affect the performance of individuals. There may be a factor accounting for the differences between individuals belonging to the same social category. But social inequalities are founded on the principles that are different involved in physical inequalities. This paper aims to conceptualise what social inequality is, and thereafter the focus will be on the theoretical framework of social inequality propounded by thinkers like Karl Marx, Max Weber and Durkheim who expounded the theory of social inequalities.

Social inequalities refers to the ways in which socially defined categories of persons, according to gender, age, class and ethnicity are differently positioned with regard to access to a variety of social goods (Borgatta and Borgatta 1992: 1850). It is a situation in which certain groups in a society do not have equal access to, and control over property rights, freedom of speech and assembly, access to health care and education. Social inequalities are caused by the society such as who is rich and who is poor, who has privileges and power and who has less, who should be the rulers and who should be subjects. The inequalities among mankind had greatly increased by the inequalities of social institutions.

Engels (1999) provided a concept of social inequity based upon classism. He wrote about deplorable conditions of the working class people in industrial society. He referred to the working class and the owners of the masses as the

proletarians of industrial society, and he identified the owners of production as an elite group of bourgeoisie. He also provided an exposition of the rise of capitalism and the distinction between social classes (Banks 2007: 178). Engels believed that the division of society into classes rested on how wealth was distributed. In this regard, the ability to produce and exchange products was integral in shaping social and political order. He makes us aware that the main difference between the two social ranks was of an economic nature. His later works, together with those of Marx, produced a manifesto of a form of political theory that differed from what is found in industrial, capitalist society. The manifesto called for workers to unite towards forming a utopian society, which was referred to as communism. According to Marx, classes form the basis of social stratification. He classified the society into two classes based on their position in the structure of society. He believed every society has its base and super-structure, where he explained social relations in terms of material conditions which he designates the economic base of a society. The superstructure includes education, religion, politics, legal/law, family, ideologies, philosophies, values and ways of thinking. The Marxist theory argues that all groups in society are born from conflict. They believe that economic exploitation is the key cause of inequality. Thereby, people work toward their self-interest, they exploit those with little power. It is argued that conflict among groups will arise and in fact it is inevitable. The 'haves' actively work to maintain the present social order in which the 'have nots' have either very limited or no access to resources. Marx saw inequality in terms of the ownership of wealth and the control of material possessions.

Max Weber's approach to social stratification has been considered to be multi-dimensional. He classifies three analytical independent orders of economic, social, and political in studying social stratification. To him, economic power is different from social and political power though they may be closely related yet they are analytically distinct. Weber observes social stratification based on the concept of class, status and party. For him, status is related to inequalities that are to do with the way in which people judge and relate to each other. Class is to do with inequalities that have their source in the workings of capitalism and the market place. Party is related to concepts of politics in its broadest sense. Weber says people form groups and organizations to look after their own interests. Status is formed out of the tendency of people to categorise each other through social status. Some groups of people will benefit from having high status, but others may well be treated negatively. The disadvantages of belonging to a low status group, such as membership of an ethnic minority, can leave people in poorly paid, low status occupations and with little hope of advancement (DiMaggio and Filiz 2012: 95-96).

The functional approach to social stratification is generally associated with Kingsley and Davis, Wilbert Moore although they have many successors. Emile

Durkheim was one of the profounders of this theory. According to functional theory, social stratification emerges from the essential functional necessities of the society and there is thus, fundamental requisite and inevitable attribute of human societies. The functional theory of stratification must be seen in the context of functionalist theory of society where it assumes that in society there are certain basic needs or functional prerequisites which have to be met if society is to survive. It assumes that parts of the society form an integrated whole and then examine how far social stratification system is integrated with other parts of the society. It is primarily concerned with the function of social stratification with its contribution in maintenance and well-being of societal whole. It also gives consensus integration and social solidarity in the society by distributing the roles and duties as per the ability or capability of the individual as a member of the society. The members are also rewarded differently. The functionalist theories thereby, justify social stratification as a function of the society. The basic proposition of the structural-functionalist is that no society is classless or unstratified because of the functional necessity of stratification that no society can survive without social stratification, all surviving societies' exhibit social stratification (Owen 1968: 26). They argue that unequal social and economic rewards were an unconsciously evolved device by which societies ensured that talented individuals were supplied with the motivation to undertake training which would guarantee that important social roles were properly fulfilled. In this way, the most important functions would be performed by the most talented persons, and the greatest rewards go to those positions which required most training and were most important for the maintenance of the social system (Grandjean and Bean 1975: 167). According to them, social inequality is inevitable in any society and in any form. They believe stratification is found in most societies. Therefore, the reward and the positions of a person in some occupation/work require greater reward than the others. Functional theory of social stratification was first proposed by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore in 1945. They opined that stratification exists in every known society and that social stratification is ubiquitous. They attempt to explain in functional terms which call for stratification in any social system. Their main effort is to explain the universality of social stratification in a functional term. They argued that all social systems share certain functional prerequisites which must be met if the system is to survive and operate efficiently (Davis and Moore 1966:14).

A Brief Overview of Yunnan and Manipur

The rapid economic growth in China and India during the last two decades is unparalleled in modern history. However, this economic dividend accruing from the high growth was not evenly distributed among the people. These marginalized sections in these parts remain disgruntled to threaten to disturb the

social-political stability, thereby posing a challenge to the leadership in Beijing and New Delhi.

Yunnan is one of the poorest regions of the country which is situated in the Southwestern part of China. It is home to twenty-six officially recognized ethnic groups including the majority Han. It is composed of 6% ethnic minorities and 94% the Han Chinese. The ethnic minorities have their own dialects and preserve traits of indigenous religion especially in the mountainous region. It is the eighth largest province of the province of the PRC. Yunnan is rich in natural resources and has the largest diversity of plant life in China. About 94 % of its land is mountainous (Jie 2011: 172). The economic development of the province has progressed slowly, with poor infrastructure, lack of social services and a few ways for people to improve their income (Jianhua 2007: 20). The issues such as unequal development, the exploitation of natural resources, mass migration, and poorly developed education create tensions and constitute new challenges in people's lives and to the local and central political leadership. The living conditions in some ethnic minority areas are deplorable when compared to the eastern part of China. Many of the regions do not have proper access to electricity, drinking water, health clinics, primary schools or telephones. Over the years, Yunnan has become synonymous with marginal, impoverished minority areas, endangered ecosystems needing protection, lagging educational standards, inadequate public health systems', HIV/AIDS, illicit drug use and economic underdevelopment. According to some of the findings, a major factor for backwardness in the southwestern region is its geography with a substantial part being mountainous. With the introduction of economic reforms in 1978, the state has promoted economic development, in which some of the regions of China moved far ahead while others are lagging behind. Despite the Chinese government's claims of addressing rural poverty, there are several development challenges such as growing inequality between the country side and the cities. With this backdrop, this paper also delineates why the western region has been neglected over the years in spite of the central and eastern parts of China have grown at a faster pace and Yunnan is one of the provinces. Besides, the social inequalities between the Han and ethnic minorities within the region can be seen vividly.

For many it has been understood that the societies of northeast have no social inequalities particularly in the realm of education and gender in Manipur. For instance, the literacy rate of women is above the national level but it is important to note that there is a big gap between males and females especially in higher education. Besides, there are areas where women are on the margins say in the case of decision making and other social and economic inequalities continue to burden women folk. Some of the background of the state will be overviewed which will enable to understand the scenario of social inequalities of Manipur. The state of Manipur consists of two distinct geo-ethnic parts, the

hill region of the state inhabited by the tribal groups and Imphal (capital city) valley inhabited by the Meiteis (non-tribal), where there is a sharp demarcation in terms of economic and infrastructural development and the former lag behind. About two-thirds of the total population is concentrated in the valley and they are largely the Meiteis, Muslims (Meitei Pangal) and the Lois. While the remaining one-third of the population inhabit the hills which consists of 33 officially recognised tribes. It is one of the most diverse states of the country with different cultures, languages and religion. The two neighbouring villages of the same community are not able to understand one's language despite their geographical proximity, which opens the whole plethora of inter or intra community dynamics of politics and culture. The people follow different religions which include Hindu, Christian, Muslim, pagans etc. The people belong to mongoloid race except a few mixed races.

The northeast consists of eight states and Manipur is one among them, the region remained secluded to a considerable extent from the rest of the country till the advent of the British rule in India. The 1962 war between China and India gave impetus for the central government to integrate the region both politically and administratively. Having recognized the importance of the region, India's Look East Policy was also envisioned in 1991, in order to outline a focused foreign policy approach towards South East Asia and East Asia, a region of high economic prosperity. Ninety-eight percent of its border is international, shared with Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Therefore, only 2% of its corridor called chicken neck, is the only to the rest of the country. There is substantial migrant population from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar living in the region. It is also one of the most stagnant regions of the country.

Education and Gender Inequalities in Yunnan

Although legislations have been made since 1949 on the issue of education and numerous promises have been made by the government, the condition of Chinese education in remote regions and rural areas is deplorable. They have even deteriorated further. Deng Xiaoping talked about some regions and peoples to get rich first and lead and help other regions and other people gradually to become rich at the same time. With the decentralization process, it also favours those places and peoples who are better positioned to take advantage of the "reform and opening up" policies. Yet, inequality among regions has grown significantly (Guo 2007: 217). It ultimately led to the disparities of fund allocation and widened regional gap and the provision of public education. The Basic Education in Western Areas Project was designed to improve educational opportunities for poor children and ethnic minorities so that they would be better prepared to take advantage of economic and social opportunities. The project was implemented in 5 provinces in Western China,

namely, Gansu, Guangxi, Ningxia, Sichuan and Yunnan, provided investments to complement and improve the effectiveness of good government policies and programme (World Bank 2010). Improving the quality of education in poor rural areas has been an important issue of education reform in the current “Go West” movement, which aims to meet the demands of the new market economy (Xiao 2006: 111). The project further reinforced the idea of expanding economic opportunities to poor western regions and made poverty reduction efforts central to development.

Education is expected to play a significant role in bringing classes and groups together and promotes an egalitarian society. The government of China has adopted programs aimed at achieving female literacy as this has a direct bearing on several socio-economic indicators for development. But in spite of all these efforts, education remains a huge gap to vast sections of society, particularly the marginalized and the girl child. The rate of enrolment may not be negligible at the primary level but as it goes to higher levels the disparities or gap becomes wider, the enrolment disparity between rich and poor provinces grows as students move on to secondary and higher levels. The level of illiteracy in these communities’ stands at 42 percent and in nine minority groups even exceeds 50 percent (Jianhua 2007: 20). According to the population census of 2010, the overall literacy rate in the PRC was 95.92%. In different regions, the illiteracy rates vary considerably. And it is incontrovertible that women still comprise the majority of people with low levels of education in Yunnan (Jie 2011: 178). There is a great deal of diversity among rural women in Yunnan. Major differences include ethnicity, geography, kinship and marriage, class and family wealth and mobility. UNDP report in 2003 showed that the rate of illiterate and semi-illiterate women in Yunnan Province has grown up to 16% (UNDP, 2005). Although twelve years of schooling was made universal in China, 20 percent of the country’s populated rural areas had not attained the legally guaranteed nine years of education. Some of the findings pointed out that the schools are underfunded by the government and are increasingly dependent on tuition, fees and profit from school-owned business to generate profits. The shortage of funds affects all schools, but it is the poorest counties that face the most serious challenges due to their scarce resources. Another factor is the lack of equity in education systems. Only a few parents can afford higher tuition fees and send their children to better schools and those economically disadvantaged students are largely ignored. The migrant population has difficulty sending their children to the public schools due to the lack of residence permits. China’s residency system strictly limits freedom of movement from one’s place and the migrant does not have legal permanent residency status. With the temporary residence permits, they are not entitled to the services provided by the municipal government, which includes education.

The Confucian ethic, with its emphasis on filial piety, contributed over the centuries towards keeping the family system strong. However, there have been several changes in the system in the last few decades. After the liberation, the communist leaders saw the family as contributing to much of China's conservative and oppressive behavior and sought to undermine its influence on society. In more recent years, the practice of family planning has also altered family structures and status of women in Yunnan and China as a whole.

High sex ratio at birth due to son preference is another major problem in China. In patriarchal societies with strong son preference, combined with official policies to limit family, China has the most severe shortage of girls compared to boys of any country in the world (Lofstedt 2004: 86). Son preference has been considered particularly strong in rural areas and among less educated parents. In less developed areas, especially those more dependent on agriculture or those lacking social safety, the incentive to have more children tends to be higher. Having more children means having more people to work in the fields when they grow up and also increases the chance of having a boy, who by custom does not move away after getting married and thus provides social security for his aging parents later in life (Guo 2007: 219). Regarding rural women's participation in politics, the problems of rural women's fluctuating rate of political participation continues, and their participation in general is declining throughout Yunnan, the participation of women is still limited during decision-making processes and in democratic management in village self-government. Today, there still exists a large gap in income levels between men and women, which make the latter, particularly in rural areas to have less resources and power. Faced with lack of information and resources, women have limited control over choices made for them by other male family members. Besides, family responsibilities and economic inequality also affect women getting access to health care. Just as Tiirmen pointed out, "women's illness may be ignored until they are unable to perform daily tasks (Tiirmen 2003: 417). Women lack control over their lives due to lack of access to material resources and restrictions on their freedom of movement (Li 2003: 696). Especially in the rural areas women are still seen as temporary members of their parents' families. After they get married, they belong to their husbands' families (He and Wu 2004). As a result, education and property rights are restricted for women before they get married and this makes them more dependent on their parents' families and subordinate to male members.

Education and Gender Inequalities in Manipur

The education system in Manipur is quite diverse before the advent of the Western education. Among the Nagas (tribal community), traditional education

was imparted in the morung or dormitories¹ for the adolescent and unmarried youth of the village. The morung system declined with the advent of modern educational institution in the 20th century. Like the Naga's, the other tribal communities passed the oral tradition from generation to generation. The hill people developed a universal system of imparting basic skills for social and economic survival like weaving, dancing, martial arts and warfare, relying entirely on an oral tradition in dormitories, the people from the valley had an exclusively and highly developed literary and scholarly tradition (Horam 2000). The advent of British rule brought in its wake rapid changes in the system of learning. One view is that the main objective of the colonial rulers in educating the local people was to equip them to assist the government in clerical work. Formal education under colonial rule was thus confined to a small section the society. After independence, formal education was extended to every section of the society, although there are still wide disparities in educational infrastructure and literacy levels across regions. Historically, education was the monopoly of "upper" caste/class in every part of the country. The society in the past was conservative and hierarchical in its structure. Though there has been a lessening of discrimination in social life and economic realm socially vulnerable sections still prevail. They continue to lag behind in educational attainments as well. It was from 1944, educational institutions, offices and others were established in Manipur (Devi Bimola 2008: 102).

Unequal opportunity in education is found not only with reference to individual and social categories, but also in terms of regions and territorial aggregates such as rural and urban. There are huge gaps in terms of regions, sexes, districts, rural-urban areas etc. imbalances do vary in degree and nature. Our education

¹ In pre-Christian era, though there was nothing to call as movement, there was certainly an organized commune of women in the form of 'Girls Dormitory' housed by respectable family in the village community. This dormitory system afforded the natural growth of leadership amongst women in the village. It is here, where the girls lived together, sat together, sang together, learned together all arts of weaving, spinning, handicrafts, singing, dancing processing, designing etc. the talent developed because the elder peer group could enforce strict discipline to the younger peer group in the dormitory. Trained under such rigorous disciplined responsibilities they had to own up life with their husbands their in-laws and their children (Shangkham 2001: 130).

system is patently urban-based in matters of location of facilities, allocation of finance, and content of curricula. Most of the institutions of higher learning as well as better equipped schools are concentrated in urban areas. This is one issue which has been continuously posing a great challenge to the planning process of the state.

Manipur is lagging far behind in comparison to other states in every aspect of development. In terms of education, particularly the minority communities are lagging behind the better off communities. Manipur's progress in literacy has been tremendous during the last few decades. However, a feature that remains consistent in the existence of large disparities in literacy achievements between different sections of populations, based on gender and communities. Gender gaps in literacy remain high, in some of the regions more than half the rural females in Manipur are still illiterate. The gap even becomes wider in higher education.

In the recent past, India has been attempting to achieve completion of basic education to all children by 2015 as a goal to eliminate gender disparities in education in line with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With the passing of the 93rd Amendment of the constitution, it has made elementary education a fundamental right. Despite this landmark, there is a wide diversity of socio-cultural, political and economic background of children. Therefore, the study attempts to look into some of the challenges in accessing quality education by various sections of the society. It is also suggested that the state must provide the conditions that enable every child to exercise his/her right to access equitable quality education irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, and class. Though it is the duty of the state to ensure compulsory education, the state miserably fails to execute its responsibilities in imparting education to all sections may it be on rural-urban, or say female-male divide. Promoting compulsory education itself is also not enough when the income or status in which family the child belongs is not taken care of because today the transition to school depends on the income of the family, the type of school or the place where the children are sent are based on the family background. The recruitment of teachers was another problem for the education system in Manipur. It is not on the basis of merit and capability of the individual but lies with the money power along with other back-up or else you've to be influential. The inappropriate way of recruitment, placement and transfers lies in the hands of political leaders which affects severely the school and students particularly in the hill areas. Most of the teachers from the valley get themselves transferred to their region or in the Meitei dominated areas, or else keep a substitution teacher as proxy teacher. These teachers are not trained to teach and their performance is not satisfactory. The system of proxy is not rare among the hill people as well. Most of the government teachers are engaged in alternative work or business. Because teachers do not get their salaries on time for 5-6 months or

even more, which results in looking for alternative income for their survival. The infrastructure of government schools is deplorable especially in the tribal areas. The inadequate facilities and poor transportation in the rural areas are the main problems.

Historically, women in the state have assumed a key role in the process of development and conflict resolution. The women in Manipur enjoy higher freedom and the society puts fewer restrictions on their movements as compared to other societies (Devi Binarani 2008: 109). The Meitei women of Manipur have a long and established tradition of agitations against the authority to have their grievances redressed. The history of Manipur is also famous for two Nupilans² after the annexation of Manipur by the British. Women also took part in the demand for responsible government in Manipur. During the inter-village or tribal feuds, woman act as a mediators. Since the 1950s the army has been carrying out their counter insurgency operations in Naga inhabited areas. They were beaten, tortured, raped and murdered. Besides, the entire villages were burnt down. In all this, women continued to play an important role in defending their land and people. Yet as Devi Binarani (2008) points out “the role of women is higher but their status is not in Manipur”.

No matter how liberal the society may be, the sexual division of labour is usually regarded as a source of gender inequality. It brings about the private and public dichotomy thereby women are confined to the house and burdened with the household chores considering men to be the breadwinner. The work that women do at home is considered inferior. The family itself becomes a mechanism for fostering gender inequality. Other forms of discrimination are the gennas (taboos) which serve to emphasize the distinction between men and women which in turn re-enforces the division of society on the basis of gender. Unmarried women are not allowed to eat certain food. Even today, the mother,

² It is a female's warfare. They fought three major wars; the first was against the Britishers. The movement was against the forced extract of teak wood for the construction of house of the Assistant Superintendent of Police. The 2nd nupilan of 1939 was launched against the export of rice from Manipur in a domestic food scarcity situation. The Marwaris traders used to controlled rice export trade. They used to export rice to other parts of the British India. The established monopoly in purchase of rice and procured paddy from the cultivator and local petty traders. They also offer higher prices than the local traders (Devi Binarani 2008: 112).

a woman, who prepares food in the family, always attaches priority to feeding the husband and the sons. Most women have the mentality to treat girls as inferior to boys. Feeding, clothing, educating and health care for women or girls are often considered as secondary tasks as compared to those for men. In the society women have been victims of discrimination. They have been on the margins not only of society but also of the family. The birth of a girl is not a joyous occasion in most of the families. Women continue to be discriminated in spite of the legislative measures adopted in favour of women.

In Manipur the society follows a patriarchal system but the women take considerable responsibility of the family. Women also play a dominant role in agriculture, handicraft and market-based economy. However, this is not uniformly found among different communities. Women in Manipur are economically active by pottery and weaving from the ancient time. It is also a fact that women work shoulder to shoulder with their men and contribute substantially in economic activities, but they are deprived of inheriting landed property. This is because the tribals have patrilineal system and the land is generally owned by the whole clan. Though, the constitution grants equality of opportunity and status to women, they lag behind men in every sphere. It is important to ponder, are the women in Manipur really free and independent as is often considered by outsiders? They may enjoy socio-economic status as compared to other communities or states. Yet women have remained excluded from the political arena. The political system in Manipur also differs from community to community. For instance, the cases in the Nagas in Manipur, the decisions taken by the chief and village authority council affect all members of the village including men and women. But women have no place in the council of the village and they do not have any say in the decisions. This puts them at a disadvantage with men. In spite of the participation of women in the local bodies as a result of the reservation provided by 73rd and 74th Amendment Act of the Constitution of India. In the assembly elections of 2000, there were altogether ten women candidates both in the hill and the valley of Manipur. Two were in the hills and eight in the valley. In the last 2012 election, 16 women candidates contested the election for 60 seats. Thus, the performance of women candidates in both the assembly and parliamentary elections is not very encouraging though women are recognized as active political workers and their share of voting is higher than men. The inequality between women and men seems to be most pronounced in this area.

Conclusion

Social inequalities continue to remain a major concern both in China and India. As compared to India, China is in a better position as it has better provision of essential public services than that of India. It is indeed an irony that a democratic country like India has done worse than a communist state like China

in rendering social justice to its people in the realm of education and gender. Given the success story and wealth in its possession, and given the strong delivery mechanism that China has put in place in a command structure, it is believable that the injustices being faced by the people of Yunnan and others will soon be mitigated but the same cannot be said with confidence for the state of Manipur, a state in a democratic country. True democratic participation, free expression and rule of law are enshrined in the Constitution but remain mere aspirations for people in India. The manner in which laws are interpreted at the time of implementation by the law enforcers, the real fruits of “freedom” available for the average citizen appear to be no different from those available to the people of China.

Education and gender inequalities in Yunnan and Manipur have become the order of the day resulting in the widening gap between the rich and the poor, rural and urban. Although there has been a policy to create more equality of opportunities in education for the ethnic minorities, but there is still a difference between the proportions of students especially in higher education. Therefore, ethnic minorities and women have a long way to go in both the regions. It is important to help the ethnic minorities who are still lagging behind, especially those living in mountainous and rural areas. Providing adult education especially for women will be a great help. Many women in the region are illiterate, which has significant negative implications for the health and education of children and, in particular, girls. Even in the realm of correcting gender inequality in Yunnan and Manipur there are several challenges that need to be factored. Some of the problems that can be identified are financial cost, poverty and cultural norms which prevent women from achieving a reasonable level of education. Governments need to take up the measures of giving awareness particularly to women. Today, the major challenges for both the countries are not only to accelerate growth alone, but to ensure sustainable growth and equity, reduce poverty and promote human development. Both should meet the increasing material and cultural demands for subsistence, especially the population still in poverty, such as food and clothing, employment, education, health, housing and wipe out the gender disparity, so as to raise the level of human development and enjoy a higher standard of living. It is also necessary to pay more attention to the remarkable disparities of economic growth and social development among different provinces/states especially in the more backward areas, both in rural and urban areas. Both Yunnan and Manipur share a similar situation with diverse culture, language, religion, and with agriculture as the single most important economic sector. They are imbued with the natural resources. There is a sharp demarcation between the rural and urban in Yunnan and particularly those living in mountainous region likewise the hilly and valley in Manipur. In the case of Manipur, most of the time, the state government blames the centre for not sanctioning sufficient money for state development and the people do the same

to the state government for not taking enough care particularly in the hills and the region which are far away from the capital city. Often the minorities are blamed for not taking the opportunities provided to them. But the blame game will not address social inequality. It requires mutual trust, participation and commitment from all the communities.

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