

The Relevance of Rani Gaidinliu In Current Context of Naga Society *Jagdamba Mall*

Born to mother **Kerotlenliu** and father **Lothuanang** on 26th January 1915 at **Lungkao** village in Tamenglong district of Manipur, Rani Gaidinliu was a very different person from the very childhood. She was affectionate, hardworking, obedient and very talented always curious to learn from all directions. She was pious and spiritual girl ever ready to serve the villagers and needy people. Her exploratory mind-set, love for religion, culture and the country drew her closer to fierce revolutionary and spiritual leader-**Haipou Jadonang** of Kambiron village. The association of **Haipou** sparked the inherent energy already in her and she became his lieutenant. But the enemy British rulers had some other plan. They implicated **Jadonang** in false murder case and hanged him in **Imphal** jail on 29th August 1931. **Rani Gaidinliu**, though a wanted lady carrying a reward on her head by British enemy, had managed to meet him on previous day along with other followers.

As a wounded lioness she was gnawing her teeth against British rulers. She organized an army of 500 jawans and gave military training to them. She attacked the enemy armies and killed several of them. There was a fierce fight in 1932 between Rani and British army at **Hungrum** village in N.C. Hills district of Assam. Over a dozen British military men were killed. Rani Ma also lost seven of her jawans. A martyrs' column has been erected at Hungrum village in their memory. The British declared her as the "**terror of northeast**" and announced a reward of Rs 500/- on her head to catch her live or dead. They spread the spy network all around the Zeliangrong area in Manipur, Naga Hills and Assam. The local people were paid heavily to furnish the information about her movement. Lastly, she was surrounded from all corners in a pre-dawn fight in **Poilwa** village and was put in jail for life. After fourteen years of jail term from 1934 to 1948, she was released from **Shillong jail** and camped in **Yimrup** village in **Tuensang** district. But she went underground again in 1956 and resumed her fight for preserving her religion and culture. When there was some approach from state Government she responded positively and under some agreement she submitted her arms to Government and started leading a life of social reformer and spiritual awakener in 1966. She was given a type iv Govt. accommodation, a freedom fighter's pension, security guards, a Govt. Personal Assistant (PA), two maid-attendants, a vehicle along with driver and journey expenditures. **Rani Gaidinliu** was of the view that culture and religion of Naga society were in peril. The traditional ornaments were thrown out and condemned as satanic practice. These ornaments were rare, costly and not easily available in the markets. She arranged to market it from outside mostly from **Delhi, Kolkata, Rameswaram, Kanyakumari and Madras** in large quantities with the help of her Hindu friends in other states and distributed amongst Herakas at very low price. She used to arrange threads-nylon and cotton, for preparing customary costumes. The Heraka training camps were organized to teach weaving of customary garments, practice of folk songs, Heraka songs and dances. New formations of dances

were evolved. Traditional musical instruments were played, competitions in traditional games and wrestling were organized and customary dress competitions were held for boys and girls separately, sea-shells and glass-beads were sold at cheaper prices to participants useful in preparation of traditional dresses. Darshan of Rani Ma and her divine healing of various ailments were regulated. The constant guidance of Rani Ma and above all, all-embracing and all-encompassing company was more adorable. Rani Ma was a saint poetess. She composed hundreds of devotional and patriotic songs. She also composed the varieties of songs sung individually and in group on various occasions like festivals, marriage ceremony and death rituals etc.

Rani Ma was a strict disciplined person. Rising early in the morning by four, sometimes before, perform prayer and meditation, getting ready before sunrise for public-darshan and spiritual healing were some of the morning routine. Then, a series of meetings occurs discussing the village and community problem. Family disputes and village disputes were easily settled by Rani Ma. If there was any serious problem, say for example, murder or any other kind of serious problem, Rani Ma would hear both the parties attentively followed by meal with the group. She would tell the aggrieved parties to meet her again next day or some other convenient day. The quarreling parties would feel relaxed with a belief that Rani Ma would certainly do justice to them. Meanwhile, she would quietly pray in the night to receive advice from **Lord Tingwang**. Next day, she would invite both the disputing parties and announce her judgment which they would accept without any murmur. That was the honor Rani Ma commanded. Very often old ladies and men would come with serious diseases and approach her for healing. She would put left hand on back of the head of the patient and her right thumb on forehead and pray for a while. The patients were healed and they returned happily. Several people who have left Heraka and converted to Christianity also came for divine healing. Rani Ma cured them with same love and affection though fanatic Christians condemned her as witch, satan and cannibal. Even after such condemnation and physical attacks on her life, she was never moved, she was never unhappy. She was always calm and quiet offering motherly love and care to Hindus and Christians both and to Nagas and non-Nagas everybody without any discrimination. She showered her blessings to one and all.

The visit of Rani Ma in any Naga area spread like wild-fire and people-Christians and Hindus (non-Christians) both used to come out on the road to have a darshan (vision) of her. She would ask her Personal Assistant (PA) **K. Abuan** to stop at gathering at prominent places, meet the people, exchange the good-wishes and then advance on journey. Sometimes, when requested she would halt for an hour or two to meet the people even though there was security risk to her life. Though there was strong propaganda and character assassination by Church at home, the Hindu society in rest part of country worshipped her like goddess. She toured the country extensively. She met second RSS Chief **M.S. Golwalkar (Guruji)** in early seventies at **Guwahati**,

attended **Second World Hindu Conference 1979** at Prayagraj (Allahabad) at Sangam (convergence) during one and quarter month long Maagh Mela. She graced the **World Women Conference** as President where the lady dignitaries from all over the country and abroad had assembled. Since then, she had close association with a number of dignitaries and organizations throughout the country. She became the bridge over gulf between Naga society and larger Hindu Samaj.

On the places like **Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Allahabad and Varanasi etc.** she was asked-why did some Nagas want secession from India? To this she would curtly reply, *"They do not know what they are doing. They do not know what they should ask for. In fact Nagas cannot survive without the assistance of people in rest part of the country. Nagas cannot survive as an independent country. The underground section of Naga society needs to be persuaded to come over ground and contribute in shaping the prosperous and peaceful Naga society."* How Nagas were converted to Christianity, to this question she said, *"Nagas were trapped. They were given the dream of Independent Naga country. The Church assured Naga National Council (NNC) to get Independence for Nagaland. That is why, NNC helped Church in converting the people to Christianity. They - the Church and NNC, were helping each other. I am also the victim of this combine. Those who refused to convert and support NNC were threatened, very often killed."* What could be the solution of Naga uprising? Rani Ma would reply-*"Nagas must revert to and revive their indigenous Hindu religion and culture and give up their demand of secession from India. They should live within India as an integral part of great Indian society. They can be happier and satisfied by doing that. Govt. of India should properly rehabilitate them. The cadres should be absorbed in state and central services on matching posts."*

For the selfless service to the society and the country she was conferred a number of awards. They are:-

(i) Freedom Fighter Tamrapatra Award 1972 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

(ii) Padma Bhushan 1982 by President Neelam Snajiva Reddy.

(iii) Vivekanand Sewa Samman 1983 by Bada Bazar Kumarsabha Pustakalaya, Kolkata.

(iv) Birsa Munda Award, 1996 (Posthumous)

In addition to this, '*Rani Gaidinliu Stree Shakti Purashkar*' was started by Govt. of India in her memory which is given on 8th March each year to veteran women social workers in recognition to the selfless sacrifice for the society. Rupees one lakh in cash and a citation are given to winners of this award. Govt. of Bharatvarsh issued a postal stamp in her memory.

The life of Rani Gaidinliu if taught to students can enlighten them to emulate the ideals of great men and women which will go a long way in shaping the Naga society in future.

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