



Name: Marak, Singje
Designation: Lecturer
Organization: Directorate of Educational Research and Training
Contact Information: Nongrimmaw, Arbuthnot Road, Laithumkrah, Shillong-793011, Meghalaya, India.
email: singjemarak@gmail.com
Language: English
Type of Presentation: Scientific Paper

About the Presenter:

Mrs. Singje Ch Marak is a Lecturer, Vocational Guidance & Counseling in the office of the Directorate of Educational Research and Training, in Shillong, Meghalaya. She is an Art graduate from the North Eastern Hill University and has a B.Ed degree with English and Social Science as specialized subjects. She did her M.A in Education from the same University. For more than 20 years she was working as an Assistant Teacher in a Government School. She earned her Diploma in Guidance and Counseling from NCERT, New Delhi in the year 2006 and since then served as a Teacher – Counselor in her school. In the year 2008, she was awarded a fellowship for the Eurasia/South Asia Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program, a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S Department of State, implemented by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). The TEA program provided her the opportunity to attend specialized seminars at the University of Lincoln, Nebraska, and participate in a practical internship in the Culler Middle School in Lincoln, Nebraska. After having participated in the professional development program, she also hosted an American teacher for ten days in her hometown. At present, besides working as a Lecturer at DERT, she is mentoring the students enrolled in the International Diploma in Guidance and Counseling in the North East Regional Institute of Education, Shillong.

Title of Paper: **Counseling Perspectives in the Traditional Garo Society**

Abstract:

Introduction:

The Garos who call themselves “A.chiks” in the North – East India and “ Mande” in Bangladesh is one of the indigenous tribes of the North-East and Bangladesh. The Garos are said to have been migrated from Tibet. Being one of the linguistic group called the Tibeto-Burman of the larger Tibeto-Chinese Speech Family, many of whom had no written literature, the Garos also depend mainly on the oral traditions for their history and civilization in the past.



Customary Laws and Social prohibitions:

For the Garos, custom is the law of the land. It is observed by the people and is handed down from generation to generation. The customary laws can be summed up in the three words –“Asimalja”, “Dakmalja” and “ Nima”.

Counseling Approaches of the Garos:

1) The Garos are strict observers of their customary laws. The word like ‘Asimalja’ is such a powerful usage that merely to pronounce it is enough to restrict any Garo from committing any evil or to keenly distress those who have allowed themselves to fall into temptation.

Another social prohibition is ‘Dakmalja’ which when translated literally would be “Thou shalt not do it”. The word ‘Nima’ is akin to Dakmalja which equally means forbidden or restricted not to be practiced or avoided. This word embodies the norms of life which regulate the life and morality of the tribe.

These social prohibitions and laws are handed down from generation to generation through strict observance and exemplary living. Some laws and prohibitions are orally handed contextually. The clans or the exogamous sept play an important role in handing these laws to the younger generation. The maternal uncles of the exogamous clans have a greater role to play, the Garo Society being a matrilineal.

2) Institution of “ Nokpante” or Bachelors’ Dormitory

Another approach of counseling in the traditional Garo Society is through the institution of Nokpante or the Bachelors’ Dormitory. It is the seat of all learning for the unmarried Garo males. The Nokpante is the place where the Garo youths are trained in the art of living. Here the younger man learns to mould himself into an all round personality, develops an understanding of himself and his place in the society and in the world.

Conclusion:

With the advent of Christianity and western education, the methods and approaches of counseling in the Garo society has changed. The Nokpante which is an inescapable institution through which their traditional life and spirit was perpetuated in a traditional Garo village is fast disappearing in the Christian villages. This institutions are now being replaced by formal educational institutions. However, the Garos have adjusted themselves to the challenges and modern civilizations, preserving at the same time the basic principles and the valuable aspects of their customs’ traditions and practices.