



Non Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Offsprings of Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Mothers and their Claim on Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Status: A Threat to Indigenous Identity and Cultural Identity of Arunachal Pradesh

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Citation: Taying, M. (2026). Non Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Offsprings of Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Mothers and their Claim on Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Status: A Threat to Indigenous Identity and Cultural Identity of Arunachal Pradesh. International Journal of Academic Excellence and Research, 02(02), 78–87. <https://doi.org/10.62823/IJAER/02.02.207>

Abstract: This research article examines the rising controversy in Arunachal Pradesh concerning offsprings of non-Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribe fathers (non APST) and Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe (APST) mothers who attempt to obtain Scheduled Tribe (ST) status by adopting maternal surnames. Maternal surnames are used as a tool to get indigenous status in the state and such actions have drawn strong opposition from indigenous people, organizations, student unions and civil societies across the state. Using a socio-legal and descriptive analytical approach, this article discusses the historical, legal and cultural contexts of the issue and it also documents patterns of alleged fraudulent claims and analyzes the negative consequences for indigenous communities. The findings demonstrate that such practices are perceived as a threat to indigenous identity, demographic and cultural threat which undermine access to scarce employment opportunities and destabilize trust in governance mechanism. The article also recommends awareness measures, strict legal safeguards and policy measures to safeguard Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe rights and identity.

Article History:

Received: 26 April, 2026

Revised: 30 April, 2026

Accepted: 03 May, 2026

Published Online: 07 May, 2026

Keywords:

Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe (APST), Customary Laws, Indigenous, Offsprings issue, Social Consequences.

Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh is one of the most culturally rich and strategically significant states of India. The state has over 28 major tribes and more than 100 sub-tribes with hundreds of languages, customs, rituals and oral traditions. The communities have historically lived in isolation and have practice unique ways of life that are vulnerable to the homogenizing pressures of modernity, migration and demographic change. The Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe status carries a set of privileges and protections. They have rights over ancestral lands, natural resources, reservations in education, employment and political representation through reserved constituencies and protection under the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system. The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) of 1873, still in force, further restricts the entry of non Arunachalees without ILP into Arunachal Pradesh to protect their lands from outsiders' exploitation and protect indigenous cultures. Taken together, these measures are not "concessions" but a constitutional recognition that the very survival of Arunachal Pradesh's indigenous societies depends on insulation from outside exploitation. It is against this backdrop that a troubling phenomenon has emerged in recent decades that are the increasing attempts by non-APST offsprings of APST mothers to claim tribal identity. Traditionally, tribal societies in Arunachal Pradesh follow patrilineal systems of lineage and

inheritance. Children are identified by the father's clan, surname and tribe. Thus, if the father is non-APST, the offsprings are treated as non-tribal/non APST, even if the mother is APST. However, some offsprings of such marriages now use their mothers' tribal surnames, asserting that they should be entitled to APST recognition. This issue has gained attention as there are many people in the state who have already gotten the status of APST and APST certificates though their fathers are non APSTs. They also appeal to discourses on women's property rights arguing that women should be able to pass down land and identity to their children irrespective of the father's background. The response from many indigenous organizations has been almost unanimously oppose such claims arguing that allowing non-tribal offsprings to acquire APST status would open the floodgates for cultural dilution, land alienation and political misrepresentation. The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) which is one of the state's most powerful pressure groups has consistently resisted such attempts framing the issue as an existential threat to indigenous tribal population.

Moreover, there have been alarming reports of non-APST offspring lobbying poor APST men without male heirs to adopt them, thereby seeking to legally transform themselves into tribals. This manipulation exploits poverty and desperation but its long-term consequence would be devastating as it will pave the way for the legal infiltration of non-tribals into indigenous communities. Some even ask their maternal grandfather or their mother's brothers to legally adopt them. Some even change their fathers and get new Arunachalee father in order to get APST status. The issue is not merely legal or administrative but it is deeply political, cultural and existential matter. It is a matter of concern for survival of indigenous people of Arunachal Pradesh. It pits two sets of rights against each other that is the individual rights of offsprings born of mixed marriages (of non APST fathers) versus the collective rights of indigenous communities to safeguard their identity. Resolving this conflict requires a nuanced understanding of history, law, culture and politics. This article takes up that challenge by observing and examining the phenomenon in detail. It explores the historical context of APST identity, the emergence of non-APST claimants, the strategies they employ, the overwhelming opposition of indigenous peoples and the consequences of agreeing to their demands. It also examines the role of AAPSU and CBOs in resisting such attempts as well as the need for legal safeguards and policy reforms. Ultimately, the article argues that granting APST status to non-tribal offspring is fundamentally incompatible with the constitutional vision of protecting vulnerable tribal communities. Many people of Arunachal Pradesh cites the example of the government of Mizoram where they passed a Bill in 2026 where all the Mizo women marrying non Mizos along with their children and grandchildren will lose their Schedule Tribe status and will no longer governed by Mizo customary laws and shall lose the right to inherit ancestral property as well. This study situates these debates in socio-historical context, analyses consequences for indigenous peoples and proposes practicable policy responses to safeguard collective indigenous rights.

Background

- **Ethno- legal protections for indigenous communities in India and Arunachal Pradesh**

In India, constitutional and statutory instruments create affirmative protections for tribal communities. At the state level, Arunachal Pradesh employs registries and certificates such as Schedule Tribe (ST) certificates and Permanent Residential Certificates (PRCs) to operationalize access to reservations in education, employment, land rights, resource rights and political safeguards. These instruments are both legal documents and symbols of indigenous identity and its misuse or politicization of them thus threatens not only material benefits but also cultural recognition and indigenous identity as well.

- **Matrimonial patterns and surname transmission**

Usually in Arunachal Pradesh, marital patterns lead to children taking paternal surname either by family choice, local custom or administrative expediency. The practice of children using their mother's surnames especially when the mother is APST and the father is non APST has emerged as a focal point of dispute in the state because it is used as an instrument to assert APST identity and APST status as well which helps them to buy lands and access to many government benefits too.

- **Civil –society activism and the “offspring” controversy**

Local and regional civil-society groups such as student bodies and scheduled –tribe welfare associations have publicly expressed concern and mobilized action (rallies, calls for surrender of allegedly fraudulent certificates, filing criminal complaints) against perceived misuse of Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe status by non- indigenous persons such as offsprings of mixed marriages

(between APST mothers and non APST fathers) who claim APST status through maternal lineage. These campaigns frame the issue as both a demographic threat and a legal fraud problem.

Research Objectives of the Study

The issue of non-APST offsprings whose mothers are APSTs attempting to claim APST status is highly sensitive and multi-dimensional in nature which encompasses legal, cultural, social and political aspects. To understand it in a holistic way, this study formulates the following objectives:

- To analyze the issue of how non-APST offsprings whose mothers are APST are claiming Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Status
- To assess lobbying tactics and manipulation strategies of non APST offsprings
- To propose legal safeguards and policy reforms

Methodology

This research employs socio-legal and descriptive analytical approaches that examine the issue of non-APST offsprings whose mothers are APSTs claiming Scheduled Tribe (ST) identity in Arunachal Pradesh relying primarily on observations of events and secondary sources.

Analyze the issue of how non-APST offsprings whose mothers are APST are claiming APST status

- **Changing Social Patterns in Arunachal Pradesh**

Arunachal Pradesh, once largely insulated from external influences, has undergone significant transformation. With the spread of modern education, employment opportunities and inter-community interactions, marriages between APST women and non-APST men have become increasingly visible. While such marriages are a matter of individual choice, the status of the offsprings from these unions has become a contentious issue. Traditionally, under the patrilineal framework of most tribes, children inherit the identity, clan and rights of their fathers. This system historically ensured clarity about membership within the community and protected the boundaries of tribal identity. However, in the last few decades the offsprings of non-APST fathers and APST mothers are trying their best to get tribal system to get APST status. They are often raised within their mother's tribe and they try to get recognition as APST tribal.

- **Use of Maternal Surnames**

One of the most visible strategies employed by non-APST offsprings are the adoption of their mother's surnames. In tribal societies, surnames are powerful markers of belonging. They not only identify an individual's tribe but also link them to a specific clan, lineage and set of cultural obligations. By using these surnames, non-APST offspring attempt to pass as members of the tribe, creating confusion in social and administrative contexts. For example, a child of a non-APST father may adopt the surnames belonging to Arunachal Pradesh tribals which are associated with specific APST tribes. On official documents, school admissions and even social media the use of such surnames blurs the distinction between genuine tribals and non tribals. For now, these offsprings may not take Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe certificates but later using of mother's tribal surnames may pave the way for them to claim Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe Status. All these practices, while seemingly harmless for now will lay the foundation for broader claims to Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe identity.

- **Framing the Claim: Gender Equality and Women's Rights**

Perhaps the most striking development has been the framing of claims around gender equality. Non-APST offsprings argue that denying them APST recognition is discriminatory because children of APST men automatically receive APST status regardless of the mother's identity. They contend that this double standard perpetuates patriarchy and denies APST women the ability to pass on their tribal identity.

Also there is a growing alarming situation that in the name of gender equality and women's rights, universities in Arunachal Pradesh are increasing being often used to influence the younger generation to accept the claims of non APST offsprings. Activities such as seminars, workshops and academic discussions are sometimes framed in ways that shape opinions in favour of granting such recognition. This concern is also further linked to the presence of individuals working in the universities who themselves are offsprings of non APST fathers and APST mothers.

- **Adoption as a Backdoor Strategy**

A particularly concerning trend has been the use of adoption to gain Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe recognition. Reports from community organizations and local leaders reveal that some non-APST offsprings approach poor APST men without male heirs and persuade them to adopt them legally. By becoming their adopted "sons", these individuals attempt to inherit not only the man's property but also the APST status. This practice is seen as exploitative because it preys on the vulnerabilities of marginalized APST families. In many cases, elderly or economically disadvantaged APST men are promised financial support or companionship in exchange for adoption. The long-term implications, however, are grave and once legalized such adoptions could open a floodgate of non-tribals infiltrating Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe status through loopholes.

- **False Claims of Non-Usage of ST Benefits**

Some non-APST offsprings attempt to downplay indigenous concerns by claiming that they do not use Schedule Tribe reservation benefits in education or employment. They argue that their demands are limited to recognition. However, this claim is misleading. Even though they do not use reserved quotas but being recognized as APST would give them land ownership rights and APST status which are the most sensitive issue in Arunachal Pradesh.

Currently, non-tribals are prohibited from owning land in the state. Granting APST recognition to these offspring would legally entitle them to purchase and inherit land, a move that could fundamentally alter the demographic balance. Land is not merely property in tribal societies but it is sacred, communal and central to identity. Allowing non-tribals into this domain would unravel the very fabric of indigenous survival.

- **A Tension between Individual and Collective Rights**

The emergence of non-APST claimants highlights a deeper philosophical conflict between individual rights and collective rights. On one hand, the Indian Constitution promotes equality and non-discrimination. On the other hand, it also recognizes the special status of tribal communities to ensure their protection and preservation. Reconciling these two principles is at the heart of the debate. While non-APST offsprings present their case as one of individual justice on the other hand the indigenous peoples argue that the survival of entire communities outweighs individual claims. For them, allowing even a small number of such claimants would set a precedent that could snowball into irreversible demographic and cultural erosion.

Non-APST Offspring Tactics: Lobbying, Legal Petitions and Narratives

The persistence of non-APST offsprings whose mothers are APSTs in trying to secure tribal recognition in Arunachal Pradesh is not an accidental or casual phenomenon. It is the result of well-structured lobbying efforts, carefully framed narratives and repeated attempts to leverage legal and political platforms. This section examines the various tactics deployed by these groups to push their claims despite widespread resistance from indigenous communities.

- **Framing the Debate around Gender Equality**

One of the most prominent strategies used by non-APST offsprings whose mothers are APSTs are to argue that excluding them from APST status amounts to gender discrimination. They frame their demands within the broader discourse of equality, contending that if a child of an APST father automatically receives APST status, the same should apply when the mother is APST. This narrative appeals to constitutional ideals of equality (Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution) and attempts to portray indigenous opposition as patriarchal or regressive. By doing so, they hope to win sympathy from policymakers, women's rights organizations and the judiciary.

- **Appeals Through Women's Property Rights**

They are closely tied to the gender argument and they claim that children of APST mothers should inherit through their mother's land rights and in some cases they even voices to inherit the ancestral properties. Non-APST offsprings whose mothers are APSTs often highlight cases where APST women marry non APSTs but continue to live in their native villages or in the state. They argue that denying APST status to their children unfairly prevents them from inheriting ancestral property. In legal petitions, this argument is often linked to Article 300A of the Constitution (Right to Property). Some

petitions also cite judgments from other states where children of mixed parentage were granted rights to inherit ancestral properties.

For indigenous communities, however, this claim is unacceptable. Land in Arunachal Pradesh is not just private property but it is the collective heritage of tribes safeguarded by customary laws. Allowing non-tribal offsprings to inherit tribal lands would be the beginning of a land transfer loophole effectively bypassing the protections like BEFR, 1873.

- **Strategic Use of Surnames and Identity Symbols**

Another tactic is the deliberate adoption of tribal surnames by non-APST offsprings. By using their mother's clan surnames, they attempt to blend into tribal society, creating confusion over who is genuinely indigenous. This tactic has social and political implications such as:

In schools and government records these individuals appear indistinguishable from genuine tribal. In local communities, it becomes difficult to draw boundaries between insiders and outsiders. In politics, some of them can portray themselves as "representatives of tribals" while pushing agendas that favor outsider integration. Indigenous leaders warn that such practices amount to identity theft creating long-term confusion about the boundaries of tribal identity.

- **Influencing Vulnerable APST Families through Adoption Loopholes**

As highlighted earlier, some non-APST offsprings exploit the adoption route by convincing poor APST men without sons to adopt them. This strategy allows them to bypass legal restrictions by acquiring APST status through adoption certificates. Lobbying for such adoptions is done quietly often with financial inducements creating a dangerous precedent. If unchecked, this could lead to systematic transfer of tribal rights and lands to outsiders under the guise of kinship.

- **False Assurances: "We Don't Use ST Benefits"**

A subtle but effective tactic used by some non-APST offspring is to claim that they are not using Schedule Tribe quotas in jobs or education and therefore should not be opposed but they are using the surnames of their mothers. They argue that their demands are limited to social recognition. But indigenous leaders see this as a deceptive argument. Even if reservation benefits are not directly claimed but acquiring APST status opens the door to land ownership and political participation. In Arunachal Pradesh, land is more critical than reservation because it guarantees survival, identity and continuity. Thus, the assurances ring hollow.

- **Usage of Society Registration and Institutional Mechanisms for Land Acquisition**

In recent years, a more structured and sophisticated method has emerged through which non-APST offsprings and associated non tribal actors attempt to gain indirect access to land in Arunachal Pradesh. This involves the strategic use of society registration, trusts, NGOs and institutional entities as legal fronts to bypass restrictions imposed on individual land ownership. This development marks a shift from individual –level claims to collective, organized and legally layered mechanisms of land acquisition, posing a deeper and more systemic threat to indigenous land security.

- **The legal Loophole:** Societies as "collective entities": Under Indian law, societies and trusts are often treated as separate legal entities. While land ownership in Arunachal Pradesh is restricted to non APST individuals, ambiguity arises when land is acquired in the name of registered societies, welfare organisations, educational trusts, cultural or religious institutions. Non APST offsprings exploit this grey area by registering societies with APST members as nominal office bearers, using their APST-linked (through maternal surname or association) to legitimize the entity, the facilitating land transactions in the name of the organisation. Although technically legal on paper, such arrangements function as proxy ownership models, where actual control rests with non tribal individuals.
- **Modus Operandi:** The typical pattern observed in such cases includes
 - **Formation of a Society or NGO:** A group registers a society under the Societies Registration Act, often with a mix of APST and Non APST individuals.
 - **Inclusion of APST names for legitimacy:** APST individuals (sometimes economically vulnerable or unaware) are included as presidents, secretaries or trustees to fulfill legal requirements.

- **Acquisition of land in the name of the Society:** Land is acquired under the pretext of educational institutions, health centers, cultural preservation initiatives or welfare organizations
- **De Facto Control by Non-APST Individuals:** Despite formal ownership being attributed to the society, control, financial investment and decision-making often lie with non APST actors including offsprings of APST mothers. Over time such lands are repurposed for commercial establishments, rental income generation or private residential or business use.

All these effectively results in indirect land transfer which is otherwise prohibited under state laws. And in many cases, non APST offsprings are the primary beneficiaries even if their names do not appear directly in land records. Unlike individual land purchases, society-based acquisitions are harder to detect and regulate, making land alienation more systematic and widespread. If such practices continue unchecked, they will render existing protections like the Arunachal Pradesh Land Settlement and Records Act, 2000 ineffective. Through societies and trusts, non tribal actors can gradually establish economic dominance even without ownership rights. Land acquired in the name of societies and trusts are often removed from customary governance systems, weakening the authority of village councils and traditional institutions.

Consequences for Indigenous Peoples if Such Claims Succeed

- **Erosion of Land Rights and Territorial Integrity**

The most immediate and devastating consequence of granting APST status to non-tribal offsprings whose mothers are APSTs would be the erosion of land rights. Under existing laws like the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (1873) only tribal of Arunachal Pradesh can legally own land in the state. If non-APST offsprings gain recognition as tribal then they would automatically acquire the right to buy, sell and inherit lands. This change would open the door to a shadow market of land transactions where non-tribal will use their “tribal” identity to gradually accumulate plots. Wealthier non-APST offsprings backed by resources and external networks could easily exploit loopholes to gain control over large swathes of indigenous lands. In a state where land is not just property but the very foundation of cultural and spiritual identity such erosion would tear apart the fabric of tribal life.

- **Threat to Demographic Balance**

Arunachal Pradesh is a state of small with scattered tribal populations. The demographic strength of each tribe is one of the key factors in maintaining cultural and political autonomy. Recognition of non-tribal offsprings would artificially inflate tribal population statistics with individuals whose loyalty to indigenous culture is partial at best and absent at worst. Over time this could dilute the demographic balance in sensitive border areas, weaken the voice of smaller tribes and even alter electoral constituencies leading to outsiders gaining disproportionate political influence under the guise of being Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe.

- **Distortion of Reservation and Quota Systems**

The APST status is tied to a host of affirmative action policies such as reserved seats in education, government employment and political representation. If non-tribal offspring succeed in gaining this status, they would become direct competitors to genuine tribal for these limited opportunities. This distortion would be devastating. Already many poor APST students and job seekers struggle to compete even within their reserved categories due to lack of access to quality education and resources. Adding non-tribal claimants in the state would further marginalize the poorest of the poor defeating the very purpose of reservation policies.

- **Weakening of Customary Laws and Tribal Governance**

Tribal customary laws form the backbone of indigenous governance in Arunachal Pradesh. Recognition of non-APST offspring whose mothers are APST as tribal would raise complex legal questions such as: Would they be subject to customary law? Would they have rights within traditional village councils? Could they inherit clan property under customary norms? Such ambiguities could create legal chaos and weaken the authority of customary institutions. For instance, village councils might face disputes over whether a non-tribal offspring has the right to perform rituals, inherit community land or lead in festivals. This would erode the social cohesion and respect for traditional systems that have sustained tribal life for centuries.

- **Cultural Dilution and Identity Crisis**

Another serious consequence is cultural dilution. Non-tribal offsprings may not share the same upbringing, rituals or deep-rooted sense of belonging as indigenous APSTs. By claiming tribal surnames and legal status they might outwardly appear to be tribal but lack the lived cultural essence of being one. This creates an identity crisis for genuine tribal who feel their heritage is being hijacked. Over time, this blurring of lines could lead to a hollowing out of authentic tribal identity.

- **Increased Social Tensions and Conflicts**

If non-tribal offsprings gain APST status then social tensions are bound to rise. Indigenous people, who already express near-total opposition to these demands, would see such recognition as an act of betrayal by the state. This could lead to protests, boycotts and even violent conflicts in certain areas. Furthermore, divisions within communities could deepen if some APST individuals perhaps motivated by financial gain or political pressure begin to support the claims of non-tribal offsprings whose mothers are APSTs. This would fracture community solidarity creating mistrust among tribals themselves.

- **Exploitation of Vulnerable APST Families**

Another dangerous consequence relates to the adoption loophole. Reports already suggest that some non-APST offsprings try to influence poor APST families especially those without male heirs to "adopt" them as sons so that they can legally gain tribal status. If their demands are legitimized then such exploitative practices will multiply.

Poor APST men, driven by economic hardship, might agree to these adoptions, unknowingly handing over their land and tribal privileges to outsiders. This would create a cycle of exploitation where the most vulnerable sections of Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe society bear the brunt of identity dilution.

- **Undermining Indigenous Women's Genuine Rights**

Ironically, if non-tribal offsprings whose mothers are APSTs succeed by using the rhetoric of gender equality, it could actually undermine the genuine struggles of APST women. Indigenous women's movements, which fight against polygamy, equal participation in governance and social empowerment, would be overshadowed by this larger controversy. Opponents might argue that using women's rights as a shield to push for outsider recognition cheapens the struggle and risks making gender reforms appear as a threat to tribal survival which is counterproductive.

- **Legal Complications and Policy Confusion**

Recognizing non-tribal offspring as APSTs would trigger endless legal complications. Courts, government departments and community bodies would face disputes over definitions of "indigenous". Policy confusion would emerge such as "Who qualifies as an APST?" How lineage is determined? Can mixed-heritage individuals (from non APST fathers) claim benefits? Such legal uncertainty could paralyze policy implementation and create loopholes for exploitation. Outsiders with resources would be far better positioned to exploit these ambiguities than ordinary tribal further disadvantaging indigenous communities.

- **Long-Term Assimilation and Loss of Tribal Sovereignty**

The most far-reaching consequence is the gradual assimilation of indigenous peoples into the mainstream eroding their indigenous tribal identity distinctively. If tribal identity becomes diluted with non-tribal elements both the state and central government may eventually treat Arunachal Pradesh's communities as "integrated populations" rather than distinct tribes requiring special protections.

In the long run, this would jeopardize not just land rights and cultural practices but also political autonomy. For many tribals, this is the ultimate nightmare which would lead to the slow but steady disappearance of their people as a distinct entity.

Legal Safeguards and Policy Amendments to Prevent Misuse

The problem of non-APST offspring of APST mothers claiming Scheduled Tribe status poses a serious threat to the socio-political and cultural survival of the indigenous peoples of Arunachal Pradesh. While AAPSU, district students unions, community based students unions, various Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and other organizations such as Save Arunachal Save Indigenous, Arunachal

Pradesh Non APST Offspring ST Surrender Abhiyan etc. have been actively resisting such claims, a permanent solution requires clear legislative safeguards and robust policy frameworks.

- **Existing Legal and Constitutional Framework**
 - The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 (Inner Line Permit system): Protects the state from uncontrolled migration and prevents non-tribals from settling or buying land.
 - The Arunachal Pradesh Land Settlement and Records Act, 2000: Restricts land ownership strictly to non APSTs.
 - Customary Laws of Tribes: Tribal identity and inheritance are governed by customary practices which overwhelmingly follow paternal lineage in matters of tribe recognition.
- **Clear Definition of APST Status**
 - APST status should be legally defined as being inherited strictly through paternal lineage in accordance with tribal customary law.
 - A constitutional or state-level amendment should state explicitly that children of non-tribal fathers cannot claim APST recognition even if the mother is an APST.
- **Ban on Surname Misuse**
 - Legislation should prohibit the use of APST surnames by non-tribal offsprings whose mothers are APSTs.
 - Heavy penalties should be imposed for misrepresentation of identity.
 - Community councils should be empowered to validate surname usage through traditional authority.
- **Regulation of Adoption Practices**
 - Adoption laws should be amended to disallow non-tribal from acquiring APST rights through adoption.
 - Awareness campaigns should inform poor APST families that adoption loopholes are being weaponize to steal indigenous rights.
- **Strengthened Land Laws**
 - Explicit safeguards should reaffirm that land rights are exclusively for genuine APSTs closing loopholes that allow non-tribal offsprings to inherit land through mothers.
 - A land verification committee should be created, involving both government and tribal councils before land mutation or sale is approved.
- **Policy on Reservation Benefits**
 - Guidelines should clarify that reservation benefits, electoral rights and job quotas are strictly for individuals with APST paternal lineage.
 - False claimants must face cancellation of certificates, disqualification from jobs/education seats and legal penalties such as fines and imprisonment.
- **Legislative Safeguards at the State Level**

The Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly should introduce a special bill to:

 - Codify the paternal-lineage rule in APST recognition.
 - Criminalize surname misuse and false tribal claims.
 - Prohibit land transfer through maternal inheritance to non-tribal offsprings. For example, state like Mizoram also passed a bill (Mizo Marriage and Inheritance Act, 2026) where the amendment states that Mizo women who marry non-Mizos, will lose their Schedule Tribe status along with their children as well as grandchildren and will no longer fall under the ambit of Mizo Customary Law and shall have no right to inherit ancestral lands.
 - Create Identity Verification Tribunals involving both government and customary institutions to review disputed Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe status claims.
 - Re amend article 371 H in accordance with that of article 371 A.

- **Legislative Safeguards at the Central Level**

Since Scheduled Tribe status is a constitutional matter, the Government of India must also act:

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs should issue a clarification that children of APST mothers and non-tribal (non APST) fathers do not qualify for APST recognition.
- The Parliament should consider amending Article 342 provisions to reinforce customary law as the basis of ST recognition in Arunachal Pradesh.
- A Supreme Court precedent could be sought to establish that gender equality arguments cannot override protective discrimination measures meant for safeguarding tribals of Arunachal Pradesh.

- **Role of Judiciary**

Courts should play a critical role in this matter. However, judicial interpretations have sometimes leaned towards expanding rights in the name of equality without considering the unique protective framework for tribals. Therefore:

- Courts must respect customary laws while interpreting claims.
- The Gauhati High Court and Supreme Court should be petitioned by the Arunachal Pradesh state government to establish binding precedents against non-APST offspring claims.
- Tribunals with customary representatives should be created to settle disputes before they reach higher courts.

- **Role of Awareness and Enforcement**

Even the strongest laws will fail without grassroots awareness and strict enforcement. Therefore:

- A statewide awareness campaign must be launched to inform APST families of the dangers of allowing non-APST offsprings to misuse surnames, adoption, inheritance, so on.
- Government officers who issue false APST certificates must face strict penalties.
- Village councils should be empowered to flag cases of identity misuse.
- Educational institutions should include modules on indigenous rights protection.

- **Prevent the Gender Equality Misuse Narrative**

One of the strongest lobbying tactics of non-APST offsprings is the argument that denying them APST status violates women's rights and gender equality. While gender equality is important but it cannot be applied blindly in tribal contexts where land, identity and survival are at stake.

To address this:

- Laws should clarify that women's property rights do not automatically extend Schedule Tribe recognition to their non-tribal children.
- Policies should separate gender justice and tribal safeguards to ensure that gender justice is not misused to weaken tribal safeguards.
- Women's organizations should be included in awareness campaigns to prevent this misrepresentation.

Land acquired through societies and trusts should be properly checked. Proper policy and legal measures should be made to prevent misuse societies and trusts. Following safeguards are necessary:

- **Restriction on Land Ownership by Societies**

- Amend state laws to clearly state that societies, NGOs or trusts cannot own land unless all members are verified APSTs.
- Mandate that land acquired by societies must be used strictly for declared public purposes with periodic audits.

- **Mandatory APST Verification**

All office bearers of societies involved in land transactions must undergo strict APST verification based on paternal lineage.

- **Community Consent Mechanism**

Land acquisition by any society must require approval from village councils, local CBOs and District-level indigenous committees.

- **Regular Audits and Monitoring**

- Introduce annual audits of societies holding land to ensure compliance with declared objectives.
- Cancel registrations of societies found engaging in proxy land ownership or commercial misuse.

- **Criminal Penalties**

Strict penalties should be impose for fraudulent society registration, misrepresentation of tribal identity and indirect land transfer to non-tribals.

Conclusion

The threat posed by non-APST offsprings claiming APST status is not just a social issue but it is a matter of survival issue for the indigenous peoples of Arunachal Pradesh. Without robust legal safeguards and policy amendments, the community could face land alienation, cultural erosion and political marginalization. The government must act decisively and state laws must codify tribal customary practices. Central clarifications must be made in such a way that it will prevent judicial misinterpretations. Strict enforcement and awareness must be carried out in such a way that it would close every loophole. Only then the indigenous peoples of Arunachal Pradesh will feel protected and it will help them to permanently protect their indigenous unique identity.

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