



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Political Science

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF NAGALAND IN NORTH-EASTERN STATE OF INDIA

KEY WORDS: women, politics, elections, vote, participation, patriarchy, customary law, reservation, representation, decision-making

Kekhruohinuo Christina Rame

Ma In Political Science, Final Year Student, Department Of Government And Political Science, Lovely Professional University, Punjab

Dr. Javeed Ahmad Bhat

Department Of Government And Political Science, lovely Professional University, Punjab

ABSTRACT

The subject of the paper examines the political stratification of women in Nagaland. Politics has become a paradigm for the development of women's equality, rights and security in society. There is no denying of the fact that Naga women enjoy an equal social life as compared to women of other states in the nation, the status of women in the literature sector is much stride than that of men in the state of Nagaland, it is a state which encompasses both men and women in the society but when it comes to the political participation it is known to be a male dominant. In general, Naga society has a patrilineal and patriarchal traditional society. The status of women is impacted by the patriarchal rules and customary laws present in such society. The idea that men are superior to women and vice versa serves as the basis for institutions and traditions. At present, the inclusion of women in decision-making is a question that has the Naga society in a dilemma. For women to participate in decision-making, they must overcome obstacles like public opinion, political culture, and the electoral system. This paper studies on how the government of Nagaland agreed to carry out the elections following the cabinet's directives and the interim order issued by the Supreme Court to implement the 33% reservation for women in the elections for Urban Local Bodies (ULB). The action, however, sparked a controversy in the state because it was challenged by tribal representative bodies who said that it violated the terms of Article 371 (A) of the Constitution. Does Article 371(A) of India constitution which protects the customary laws of Naga's interlinks with the 33% reservation for women in Urban Local Bodies (UBL)? This paper argues on the hurdles to Naga women's political engagement, women's political socialization and participation, and the role and status of women in politics in the state. Given political opportunity will Naga women turn up to contest into election as candidate? Reservation of women in politics. From varied angles within tribal society, women's inclusion in politics and advocating for women can result in a society with a developed social milieu and bring about a well-known respectful state in the nation.

INTRODUCTION

Women's political participation has long been a contentious question in Nagaland. The three fundamental institutions of modern liberal democracies are the state, which has exclusive authority to uphold the peace, implement the law, and deliver security and basic public amenities, the rule of law, which places limits on the authority of the state and the elite, and democratic accountability, which relies on free and fair elections to guarantee that the state acts in the best interests of the people (Kapoor. Ravi,2022). One of the most challenging issues in Nagaland's electoral studies is the discourse regarding women's exclusion from the political system. According to data sources, women in Nagaland have significantly better in educational and employment outcomes than men, with female literacy rates at 76.11% far higher than the 64.6% national average. However, when it comes to women's political representation, Nagaland still stands apart as slow in progress. Regarding this Indian President Droupadi Murmu, addressing the large gathering Organised in Kohima in 2022 said, "Women's empowerment leads to higher socioeconomic growth. Women must be empowered to participate in politics, and the subject of their knowledge and concern must be seriously handled with attention to gender issues. Women would provide a new viewpoint to Nagaland's development process by leading with empathy and care." The traditional patrilineal and patriarchal structure of Naga society is pervasive. The patriarchal norms and customary laws that exist in such a system have an impact on the status of women. This patriarchal concept and practices have given huge birth to gender stereotypes and the gender gap in society. Women were indeed thought to be physically and mentally inferior to males, and it was believed that their minds weren't capable of much learning. Both theology and law mandated their submission (S. Rajendra,2021). In 1945, the United Nations (UN) Charter declared equality between men and women. The belief in equal rights for men and women, first outlined by the world's governments in the United Nations Charter, was once again reiterated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Nonetheless, it is

corroborated that the majority of the world has made much less progress towards equality than was promised. According to the Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), women to be treated equally as men in any society. Because of their gender, they experience a personal silhouette of insecurity from cradle to grave (Jamir,2012). In 2023 Nagaland Legislative Assembly election, two women made history in Nagaland by becoming the first two women to win the Assembly elections, namely Hekani Jakhalu and Salhoutuonuo Kruse both are members of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP). "We are all starting a new chapter with this." In her maiden victory speech, Hekani, 47, stated: The credit for her win goes to the people, who put their hopes and ambitions in her. Meanwhile fellow-victory Salhoutuonuo, 56, stated "We have produced triumph, today this historic victory belongs to us", She also added stating that, her success is an opportunity to illustrate that women can become decision makers at the highest level in government for the welfare of the people (Kalita,2023). This give a stepping pride for the women to guts themselves forwards with their representation in politics against the political domination of male in the Naga society.

Nagaland will commemorate its 61st statehood anniversary in Dec, 2023 with four female Naga legislators. State legislature from the first election in 1969 until 2023 there are only four women MLAs in the state. It might be said that the Naga women's victory in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA) election took six decades. Whatsoever, egalitarian challenges rather than territorial considerations are the cause of the devastation that Nagaland is currently witnessing. The election commission reports from 1964 to the general elections in 2023 demonstrate how women were liberated from being just an absent electorate to being active voters. Women are unable to take advantage of this positive trend of becoming "active voters" to contest the election and run for office. Males are clearly dominating politics in general, while women's participation and representation are less apparent (Odyuo, Sentsuthung,2023). According to the data, there has

been a significant increase in Naga women voters. But the number of women contesting in election has not increased; instead, they have only engaged as voters.

India's parliamentary democracy is reputed to be the largest and one of the strongest in the world. To provide for equal political involvement, the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts were passed in 1993 and 1994 by the Government of India, reserving one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI). An essential statistic to measure success in eradicating gender inequality in the nation is the representation of women in Parliament. Currently, the majority of States have already passed Panchayati Raj Acts, but the presence of women in the federal and state legislatures, especially in Nagaland, is highly invisible. For this the Naga Mother's Association (NMA) and other women's groups in the various tribes which is historically been based on the social construct of motherhood, has influenced Naga women's political consciousness and their demand for 33% reservation in the Urban Local Body (ULB). At present, the implication of reservation for Naga women at ULB level and inclusion of women in decision-making in Naga society is still a question. Whatsoever, if we have any faith in democracy at all, we must concede that a state can only function effectively if everyone has access to its institutions and procedures. One can never recognise democracy as a strong and functional form of government if it only has 50% of the population participating. Women must be allowed access to the room in politics, and the subject of their knowledge and concern must be seriously addressed with consideration for gender issues.

Review of Literature

There are number of studies which highlight the representation of women in politics some of the present studies are like, Amer.M “Electoral Dynamics in India: A Study Of Nagaland” (2014) discusses how women in Nagaland are constantly viewed as voters but are unable to gain prominence in decision-making. The Naga society's patriarchal structure is one of them, as are cultural and social traditions that place a premium on male leadership, though there is high availability of resources and educational opportunities for women. Authors like Vaiphai Lianboi (2017), Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty (2016) and Simran Sharma (2022), state that women are frequently excluded from decision-making processes under the traditional Naga political system, which is based on tribal and village councils. The authors suggest a multifaceted strategy for boosting women's political engagement in Nagaland to solve these concerns. This includes programmes like quota systems, seats reserved for women in political organisations. The writers stress the importance of a bottom-up strategy for advancing gender equality that involves women's groups and civil society organisations. Chakrabarti, Angana “Just 2 Women MPs, no MLAs since 1963: why Women's Representation continues to lag” (2022), She mentioned that the literacy rate of women in Nagaland are far more better than the national average however when it come to political status of women it is a surprise that there is no woman MLA since 1963 in Nagaland. According to study of the experiences of women leaders in Nagaland, women who entered politics encountered several difficulties. Toshimenla Jamir in her book “Women and Politics in Nagaland Challenges and Imperatives” (2012) discusses gender inequalities in the modern day. The goal of the book examine the obstacles Naga women faced on their journey to political emancipation. Understanding the social processes at action in their social and cultural environment, which have an impact on their political engagement particularly and their socioeconomic standing in general.

The researchers emphasized the need for actions to combat patriarchal norms and advance women's leadership, as well as more resources and support for women in politics. The connection between women's political engagement and

gender equality achievements in Nagaland has been examined in several studies. Women's health and educational outcomes are found to be positively correlated with the representation of women in society. Multiple studies emphasised how crucial it is for women to become politically active to achieve gender equality in Nagaland and other contexts.

Overall, the available literature generally indicates that, notwithstanding recent advancements, the political status of women in Nagaland is still confined by institutional and cultural restrictions. To overcome these obstacles and encourage women's political engagement and empowerment in the state, further study and campaigning are required.

Research Gap

As presented in the review of literature section, many research academics and studies have discussed how patriarchy and traditional customary laws in the Naga society are limiting women's ability to engage in politics and decision-making. However, the gender disparity in Naga society and how the visibility of women in politics will end the harp on gender equality remain unclear. The authors have mentioned that though given a chance women are not yet ready to present themselves in the political spheres, but fail to reason the problems that are holding women to proceed into politics. According to a comparison the author made, the tradition in Naga society is associated with the status quo, mistrust of ex-cultural ideas, and discomfort with the idea of change. Contrarily, contemporary culture is vibrant, more open to fresh perspectives, and unafraid of criticism. Here the author fails to explain why the contemporary Naga society which is open to fresh perspectives and criticism is still lacking behind to present women in public society taking the old Naga traditions as an excuse.

Research scholar have not given a clear statement to one of the most controversial discussions that whether women's participation in politics is interlinked with the Naga customary law which is protected under Article 371(A) a unique provision granted to the state of Nagaland under the Indian constitution. Different scholars discussed on about Article 243T of the Indian Constitution, Rule 23A was included to the Nagaland Municipal Act of 2001 to require the reservation of one-third of the seats for women and in which the Naga Mother's Women Association and different women association who has stand for 33% reservation in the urban local bodies and how demand for 33% reservation has led to the breakout of violence in the 2018 Nagaland assembly election. However, researchers have failed to investigate the political awareness and representation of women in the Naga society.

Women Representation as Voters

No. Of Electors who voted in Assembly Election (1964-2023)

Table Figure:1

Year	Male voters	Female voters	Total
1964	41331	21388	62719
1969	71751	66907	138658
1974	161166	136464	297630
1977	176606	154795	331401
1982	240272	2037500	443972
1987	266023	225878	491901
1989	273654	225168	498822
1993	387446	347389	734935
1998	110462	95326	205788
2003	474181	417316	891497
2008	573021	549362	1122383
2013	541919	538968	1080887
2018	487832	498561	986393
2023	554485	570972	1125457

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi

The aforementioned table unequivocally demonstrates that women have been actively engaging in the state's electoral process. Looking at the voter participation in the state, it appears that women as voters have participated in significant numbers in nearly every election in Nagaland. As from the above table (Table Figure:1), it is visible that in the recent past, two years of the state assembly election 2018 and 2023 female voters turn out at a higher number than male voters. A higher percentage of female voters indicates their participation, which demonstrates that women valued their involvement in the election process.

In a democratic country, political engagement must be regarded through the lens of acquiring and exercising power and exercising citizen rights. As a result, voting is widely considered the standard form of political engagement. The voting behaviour and selection of state representation is a demonstration of authority to which a citizen is entitled to practice their universal franchise which is given under the constitutional framework. It is also a representation of a person's morality and knowledge. Voting can act as a catalyst for improvements to the political and social environment. Accordingly from (Table Figure:1), the Naga Women participated actively in the electoral process. As far as voting is concerned, it is abundantly evident that there is no appreciable gender disparity between males and females. However, this factor must be evaluated in the context of how women candidates succeeded in similar elections. the worrisome truth that women candidates are downtrodden in elections to hold office persisted despite the high turnout of female voters. So it becomes crucial to investigate what influences women's voting behaviour in the state.

Considering this author Toshimenla Jamir in her book "Women and Politics in Nagaland" mentioned that this leads to two possibilities: First of, if these women voters exercised their right to vote so, it may be a sign that Naga women were socially and culturally indoctrinated to view men as having political power and might not get over this perception. Second, female voters may not always cast their ballots independently; instead, they may follow the instructions of the men in their families. Whatsoever, when it comes to electoral voting Naga women are held responsible and given the opportunity to participate and cast their vote to the political candidate but the Naga women are not given the opportunity to represent as political candidate in the election and the percentage and participation of women candidate is still far behind other states as shown below in the Table Figure:2.

Women Contesting in Legislative Assembly Election as Candidate of Nagaland (1964-2023)

Table Figure:2

Year	Male Candidate	Female Candidate	Total Candidate
1964	73	0	73
1969	142	02	144
1974	219	0	219
1977	204	0	204
1982	244	01	245
1987	211	03	214
1989	140	0	140
1993	177	01	178
1998	80	0	80
2003	222	03	225
2008	214	04	218
2013	185	02	187
2018	190	05	195
2023	180	04	184

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi

According to the Constitution of India, democracy is practised in a representative and parliamentary manner, with elected officials accountable to the people. People can choose their representative at regular intervals practising their Universal Adult Franchise. The Constitution of India attempted to create a democracy that was "the government of the people." Therefore, the democratic political system implies that the electoral process is a fundamental component of it. The above data shows that participation of women in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA) as a candidate is much less frequent as compared to that of male candidates. Data (Table Figure:2) showed that since 1964 to 2023, a total number of only 26 women have contested the assembly election as a candidate. The year 2018 saw five women candidates contesting in election, which is the highest number of women participating in assembly elections as candidates in the history of the state to date. From the above table, during the 13th state assembly election, there were 5 women candidates against 190 male. Therefore, one cannot dislodge the visibility of male domination in politics. The traditional practices that govern many facets of Nagaland's society are to blame for the consistently low numbers of women candidate and male domination in politics. Traditional law establishes gender classifications and separates roles. Where women are only allowed to handle household issues, while men handle governance-related issues. It is for this reason, among others, that women are discouraged from entering into politics (Sharma,2022). In the patriarchal society of Nagaland, men have often occupied positions of authority and decision-making. The use of two distinct definitions of "morality" to evaluate the women candidates' personalities was a significant issue that acted against women in the Naga electoral process. Concerned leaders in politics and voters at large instantly begin to scrutinize any woman's "morals" and "character" when her candidature is projected. A vivid example of the patriarchal mindset that sought to keep women in their place as subordinates and pushed them out of the power field by the male-centric Naga society was the prevalent culture of dual standards used against the female candidates (Jamir,2012). Men in Naga society have not fully embraced the idea of involving women in decision-making in society because it will directly give a positive impact to female candidates in politics. Political parties in Nagaland typically have a male majority because the issues surrounding women's political participation in decision-making have not been dealt with honesty (Sahoo,Lotha,2015). This are the reasons why women are frequently excluded and are discouraged from getting involved in politics. Women who stepped into politics faced a number of challenges, such as gender-based prejudice, social exclusion, and a lack of support from male peers. There are certain generational customs and practices from Nagaland's traditional culture place restrictions on women's engagement in politics which greatly impact women's involvement not only in representation as candidate but in winning and holding political office. Which will be discussed further below.

Women Candidate Who Won in Legislative Assembly Election of Nagaland (1964-2023)

Table Figure:2

Year	Total no of seat	Male candidate who won seat	Female candidate who won seat
1964	40	40	nil
1969	40	40	nil
1974	60	60	nil
1977	60	60	nil
1982	60	60	nil
1987	60	60	nil
1989	60	60	nil
1993	60	60	nil
1998	60	60	nil
2003	60	60	nil
2008	60	60	nil

2013	60	60	nil
2018	60	60	nil
2023	60	58	02
		Total - 798	Total - 02

Source: Election Commission of India, New Delhi

From the above (Table Figure:3), one can see that in 1974, the number of members of the Legislative Assembly was expanded from 40 to 60 seats. Nagaland has hosted 14 General Assembly Elections to the state Legislature since its independence on December 1, 1963. The current status of women's representation in the Nagaland state Legislature still display a low improvement. From the very first election, held in 1964 until 2023, a total of 26 women have participated in elections as candidates (Table Figure:2), out of which the data (Table Figure:3) showed that only two women were able to make history by becoming the first two female MLAs in Nagaland from the State Assembly election held in 2023 and advancing their visibility in decision-making politics. The first two female MLAs in the state are Hekani Jakhalu and Salhoutuonuo Kruse of the BJP coalition ally National Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP). On the Dimapur-III seat, Hekani Jakhalu defeated Azheto Zhimomi of the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) with a margin of 1536 votes. Salhoutuonuo Kruse won the Western Angami constituency by 7 votes over independent contender Keneizhakho Nakhro (Shekhar,2023). After more than sixty years as a state, Nagaland got it's first state female MLAs. Not only have there been less improvement for women in elected positions at the assembly and legislative levels, but also slow progress for women to be elected in the parliament.

In 1977, Rano M. Shaiza of the UDF party made history by electing as the first woman from the State to be elected in the Lok Sabha as a Member of Parliament (via a direct race against a male opponent), making history around forty-six years ago. Then, on April 4, 2022, Phangnon Konyak, a member of the BJP party, was sworn in as a member of parliament (Rajya Sabha), making her the first woman from Nagaland (and unopposed) to sit in the Upper House (Rajya Sabha). Consequently, after 45 years since Rano M. Shaiza won office in 1977, Phangnon Konyak is the second woman to be elected as an MP. (Jamir,2023). Not just for the sake of balance, but also for empowerment, women must be elected to political office. Women's interest in politics can increase when they are given the opportunity of certain legal power by electing them to hold political power. Multiple studies that claim visible female candidates can boost political engagement on a variety of legislative matters among women confirm these ideas that women are more inclined to participate in discussions and engage in politics in places with more female politicians because they have a greater incentive by the actions of visible role models to women in those places (Wolbrecht and Campbell,2007). Therefore there is need for an awareness efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes and support women in leadership.

Nagaland in particular, the male political parties prefer to see women in more traditional roles rather than as political leaders. Naga women typically find it difficult to enter politics with their male counterparts because political parties frequently fall short of aiding and assisting female candidates. Although every political party in Nagaland includes a women's section, women are not encouraged enough to seek political office. Despite every political party in the state having a women's wing, for instance, the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) Women's Wing, etc., women were typically barred from the main body of the party, which stand as the centre of the organisations of power. Therefore, Unless women at the local level were given political empowerment, it was not envisaged that the inclusion of the few elite women in the political parties would have a significant impact on the larger political system in the

Naga electoral area (Jamir,2012). The male politicians' discriminating attitudes and actions deter women from running for political office. Also, public opinion, economic resources, the political and cultural patriarchal system, and the electoral system are some of the barriers that women must overcome (Lotha,2015). Another explanation is that electors in a patriarchal environment are more prone to believe that female candidates for elections are less qualified than male candidates. Women have been indoctrinated to view politics as something "alien" to their nature because of the persistent belief that political activities belong to the "Public Sphere" whereas women, by nature, belong to the "Private Sphere." In current society, gender stereotypes are still widely used and accepted. Society has conditioned men and women to fulfil separate roles (Amer,2013). Such a pervasive attitude towards women is a key obstacle to the nomination of women to hold political office which results in the absence of faith many voters have in women candidates. Base on reports in Naga Society women are not coming out to participate and are not ready to turn up in support for their fellow women who are participating in politics. Because of this, the few women who would be interested in competing may be reticent to do so, and if they do, they may not garner enough support to prevail in public votes. As previously stated, the 2023 assembly election is the first election in which women were elected to the assembly. This simply portrays the poor performance of female candidates in elections which does not predict well for the future.

Challenges to Women's Political Participation in Nagaland: An Analysis

The analysis of women's participation in Nagaland politics emphasises the challenges and of Naga women in decision-making. India has half of the world's female population, however, women are underrepresented in the political system. Nagaland is part of Indian states with a low percentage of women in decision-making positions. One of the gigantic reason is that Nagaland's strong patriarchy denied women equal positions and low chances in political administration. For this the patriarchal structure ought to be broken, and Naga women's political representation must increase so that they may become autonomous in decision-making and decide for themselves what is in their best interests. Despite the gender equality statistics, Naga women's political participation has not increased. This is largely due to the Naga society's continued adherence to traditional norms that firmly define gender roles. Domestic issues, such as those involving the family, are primarily a woman's responsibility whereas, the larger administrative positions and decision-making in the hamlet are typically given to men in Naga society. This practice in the contemporary 21st century cannot be a part of state-of-the-art. A state that denies women the right to engage in politics cannot be said to have a true democracy if its electoral process continues to be dominated by men. Equality in decision-making performs important roles that are typically performed by men without providing women with the same opportunities.

Naga women are generally said to be independent and free, and their roles in society and family are well recognised when compared to the rest of the state, yet the vast challenge is holding political office which remains illusive for women although, female voters turned out in greater numbers than male voters in the most recent two assembly elections as shown in Table Figure:1, 2018 and 2023 in which we can state that women are becoming politically aware as voters or either they are influence to partake in politics as voters. However, Naga's political representation as a candidate in the election is still dominated and controlled by man-power as discuss in the Table Figure:2. So far, there are only two women MLAs in the state of Nagaland meanwhile the other numbers of the seat in state legislative assembly is dominated by men (Table

Figure:3). Despite the large number of female voters, the Naga sociocultural environment can be used to analyse the poor performance of female candidates in electoral politics. The election results of the female candidates are negatively impacted since the majority of men in Naga society have not yet fully embraced the idea of placing women in positions of power. The Naga electorate's, including women voters, lack of sympathy for female candidates can be attributed to the factors that most typically determine their voting behaviour and are not rooted in politics.

Women who contest for public office may have to take into account the possibility of being labeled as defeat or unsuitable as women and facing social stigma. Rarely are male politicians subjected to examination, but not in the case of women. The ineffectiveness of Naga women lack enacting politics is also partially their fault. They don't want to speak up, and many of them now believe that males should lead in politics and women should lead in other areas of life. They have little interest in politics.

Female candidates who run for the political parties in Nagaland are place little value. Despite the fact that political parties have female wings and the majority of the groundwork throughout the Women often find that their efforts to enter politics are marginalized because the parties do not support their ability to succeed as candidates. Electioneering is done by women. The problem of women's political engagement, whether as party leaders or as part-time candidates, has not been seriously addressed by the male-dominated political parties.

Another visible challenges is between the Indian Constitution's prominent Article 243T (2) and (3), which calls for the reservation of seats for women, and the essential Article 371A, which makes special provisions for the state of Nagaland with Article 371A(2) as the main dispute, continue to be an ongoing impasse, making women's role in politics grim and singly irreversible. The patriarchal Naga customary laws conventional political structure, which keeps women out of all decision-making institutions and to be inclusive at home. This pervasive perception of women leads to a lack of confidence in women, which makes it difficult for women to participate relating to decision making authorities. It is believed that only men are capable of exercising power, authority, and control in politics.

Way Forward For Naga Women Political Participation

Appropriate involvement in government and development cannot exist until both genders contribute equally in every facet of life and at various levels of decision-making for the uplifting of the state. Women's political empowerment through participation in decision-making will open the door to achieve equality with the opposite gender and may help to end the gender gap. Equality between men and women and the empowerment of women are frequently discussed and contested at all levels, including international, national, and state. However, women everywhere are marginalized, with lesser status and lower involvement in decision-making politics than men. The greatest contribution made by women to society is their ability to properly guide and raise their offspring to become compassionate, responsible adults. The "woman" we are talking about here might refer to your wife, mother, sister, or daughter (Kikhi,2011). Improving women's status does not imply that they will reign over men rather, with women's increased in political participation, they may be a strong leader in providing products to people, families, and society. Political women with good education and morality will wisely contribute to the betterment and development, sharing their views and ideologies along with males which will transform into a strong administration. It can also improve their decision-making contribution through logical thinking sharing both the gender ideas. In addition, women should be

given an equal opportunity to compete with males in the social, political, and educational spheres, and they should have access to enough policy-making power to advance on all fronts.

Campaign on political awareness must be conducted by the concerned administration and authorities so that, both man and women should be made aware and awakened of their political responsibility and rights which is given by the government to every citizen of the country. When we address political awareness here, media plays a dynamic role in this contemporary time. Therefore, Media should take wise responsibility for imparting and visualizing political awareness to every citizen. "Online political associations are successful in uplifting women because they involve them in the decision-making process. Undoubtedly, having more women in positions of power can significantly increase the efficacy of political practices. Social networking is useful for re-framing the ideas of participation and political engagement. Due to the exchange of original and sensible ideas through media, political engagement is beneficial for the growth of the country" (Opeyemi,2020). It might also be added that media can increase public awareness about the legal rights in politics and increase participation in electoral politics.

State elections and related activities' legislative and legal facets must empower and improve women's reservation in politics. More specifically, it may be further emphasized that political movements and participation are effective in empowering women since they engage them in fundamental leadership. Without a doubt, women in positions of basic leadership being aware of their legal responsibilities and rights in politics might develop more women interest and increase participation in the political arena not only as electoral voters but as candidates on political grounds and for this the need for reservation of seat for women arises.

Reservation to Naga Women in Present Time

The 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts were passed in 1993 and 1994 by the Government of India, reserving one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI). The Nagaland Municipal Act, 2001, has been amended in multiple instances by the Nagaland Municipal (First Amendment) Act, 2006. Along with certain administrative adjustments, Section 23A was especially added, bringing the reservation of seats in municipalities for women, people belonging to Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes to comply with the provisions of Article 243-T of the Indian Constitution, clauses (1) to (3). Therefore, Nagaland being a tribal state (ST) were to implement this amendment. The goal of this process is to guarantee that those groups are fairly represented in the political decision-making bodies. However, due to issues relating with land and building taxes, the government was unable to put it into effect right away.

The inherent areas and cultural society of the Naga tribes are protected by having the special status under Article 371A of the Indian Constitution which state, "Special provision with respect to the State of Nagaland.". Despite any other provisions of this Constitution, Unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland decides otherwise in a resolution, no Act of Parliament pertaining to (i) Naga customary law and procedure, (ii) Naga customary law and practices, (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions made in accordance with Naga customary law, (iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources, will be applicable to the State of Nagaland.

The approval of the 33% reservation bill for women in the ULB and State Assemblies has been met with unrest-related incidents, including violent outbursts tracing back to 2017 when several tribal organisations in Nagaland, particularly the Naga Hoho, proposed a boycott of the 2017 urban local

body elections to protest the women's reservation. Despite the protests, the Nagaland state government opted to introduce 33% reservation for women in urban local bodies on the given day. Following this statement, protests became more passionate, resulting in skirmishes between police and civilians in Dimapur, Nagaland, where two youth were killed in clashes with the police. Because of the chaos soon before the urban local body elections, the state government declared the electoral process null and void.

Again, on March 8, 2023, the State Election Commission announced that the 39 ULBs in Nagaland would hold elections on May 16, 2023, with 33% of the seats reserved for women. Women's groups like the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) who has been long standing fighting for reservation of women were delighted by this very implementation. However, Organizations in Nagaland's three urban areas spoken out against the State government's proposal to hold municipal elections with 33% of the seats designated for women. These organisations are All Ward Union Mokokchung Town, Dimapur Urban Council Chairman Federation, and the Association of Kohima Municipal Ward Panchayat. These organisations state that Naga customary laws prevent women from participating freely in political and socioeconomic decision-making bodies and citing Article 371A of the Indian Constitution, which mentioned that "no Act of Parliament would apply under the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution decided in respect of Naga customary laws and procedures, administration of civil and criminal justice, ownership and transfer of land, land and social practices." The organisations also requested changes to several provisions of the Nagaland Municipal Act that deal with property ownership, taxes, and building owners. They claimed that the request are necessary to prevent violations of the rights protected under Article 371A. With regard to this, Imna Along, Nagaland MLA and state BJP president he stated that additional time is required for the state administration to examine the issue with different organisations, Naga civil societies, and NGOs in order for elections for urban local authorities to take place within the customary Naga scenario. Concerning the opposition against the adoption of the 33% reservation for women in Urban Local Government Organs, according to studies, has resulted in discrimination towards women (Amer, 2013). The Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) objects with the decision taken to revoke the Nagaland Municipal Act 2001 and withstand to it being made without engaging in a civil conversation or consulting women.

The Naga tradition of excluding women from decision-making organisations acted as a significant barrier to women's admission into contemporary decision-making organisations. The Nagaland Municipal Act of 2001 has to be reviewed and re-written because it violates Article 371-A, a unique provision for Nagaland that prohibits enacting an act of the Parliament without a decision for the same from the State Assembly. Tradition in Nagaland is still regarded as static and unalterable because they are old and ancient however, it's time to get rid of aspects of culture and practices that are exploitative and cause social inequality. The tradition-argument, which claims that something is good because it has been in existence for ages, is an unethical appeal to history, expertise, and experience to support outdated sociopolitical institutions and power structures that continue to oppress women (Libenthung, 2017). Here, it is the responsibility of the Government of India to take up the matters and demands considering the best outcome in both ways for the state of Nagaland. As was already mentioned, Nagaland might not easily achieve gender equality in decision-making bodies. Especially gender equality and women's rights in several spheres of life still have a long path to go, the claim that women's participation in politics does not ensure gender equality may disprove the myth that achieving gender equality will be simple in the presence of institutional reforms like women's reservations in political sphere.

Women who can express their intelligent ideas and opinions with clarity are currently present on society. They should be backed, motivated, and given the chance to participate in this local level decision-making process.

CONCLUSIONS

In politics as a whole, men are blatantly in control, whereas women's participation and representation are less visible. The election commission reports from 1964 to the most recent general elections in 2023 demonstrate how women were liberated from being turned into active voters. As from the above different *Table Figures* mentioned the data indicates a change in the increase number of Naga women voters. However, women are still downtrodden to be elected into political administration; rather, they only entered the race as candidates. Women fail to take advantage of this positive trend of becoming dominant voters to run for office. As of now, Women are inspired to see support for the Municipal Council's adopted governmental policy of the Women Reservation Bill. However, there are also cases where Naga people, in particular certain tribal and village councils and men, are reluctant or delayed to recognise the constitutional rights afforded to women out of fear of losing their traditional customary laws, status, authority, or ability to exert power over women. The Naga Mothers Association urged political organisations to provide women candidates with their reservations to ensure that they are supported and given a chance in the state political and decision-making process. But for Naga women to enter the decision-making room and political office seems to be insurmountable because Naga society still appears to be looming by patriarchy and traditional customary laws which at large barred women specially into decision-making room. In the end, we can infer that equitable participation of males and females in the political and governing processes is essential for a democratic state. As a greater number of Naga women participate in politics, Nagaland will see an increase in gender equality. Women who are politically engaged can recover their esteem, respect, liberty, and strength in both the public and private world. So, to achieve female autonomy in Nagaland, political participation additionally becomes necessary. Once women are given equal representation in politics and with the disappearance of male dominance and control over politics, Nagaland will be displayed and noted down as a state which holds the highest status not only in women's literacy and services in the nation but also the equal political status of representation of both men and women with both socioeconomic growth in the nation.

REFERENCES

1. Achumi, I. H. (2019). The Consequences of Sustained Disparities: Gender Politics in Nagaland. *SPF Grant Paper*. New Delhi: Zubaan. Accessed July, 10, 2020.
2. Ahmed, N., Laskar, J. H., & Hussain, A. Women's Participation in the Legislative Assemblies of Northeast India: An Outlook.
3. AKAR, A., & MESHRAM, M. P. (2019). Power and representation: Women Reservation Bill. *ProBono India*.
4. Amer, M. (2018). Engendering Democracy in Nagaland. *Democracy in Nagaland: Tribes, Traditions and Tensions*. Kohima: Highlander Books, 87-100.
5. Amer, M. (2013). Political status of women in Nagaland. *Journal of Business Management & Social Science Research*, 2(4), 91-95
6. Ahmed, N., Laskar, J. H., & Hussain, A. Women's Participation in the Legislative Assemblies of Northeast India: An Outlook.
7. Banerjee, N. (1996). Issue paper: exploring integration of gender dimension into NEPED [Nagaland Environment Protection and Economic Development].
8. Banerjee, P. (2016). Women, conflict, and governance in Nagaland. In *Government of Peace* (pp. 133-166). Routledge.
9. Baruah, J. (2021). An Analytical Study of Women Empowerment in the Light of Their Social Status, Political Participation and Attainment of Education-A Myth or Reality. *Indian JL & Just.*, 12, 92.
10. Chhabra, S. EMPOWERING WOMAN: A STUDY ON NAGALAND. *Lok yata*, 4, 85.
11. Chandrashekar, M. (2016). *Political and Social Change and Women in India*. Anchor Academic Publishing.
12. Changkiri, L. A. (2015). Socio-Cultural and Political History of the Nagas.
13. Das, D. (2017). The politics of census: Fear of numbers and competing claims for representation in Naga society 1. In *Democratisation in the Himalayas* (pp. 54-78). Routledge India.
14. Fernandes, W., & Bharali, G. (2009). Customary law-formal law interface: Impact on tribal culture. *TB Subba et. al.(eds.): Christianity and Change in northeast India*, 93-108.

15. Gour, V. Native Culture and Gender Politics in Nagaland: A Study of Easterine Iralu a Terrible Matriarchy.
16. Hazarika, O. B., & Das, S. Gendered Implications of Customary Laws on the Women of Northeast India: The Case of Nagaland.
17. Kapoor, M., & Ravi, S. (2022). The road to inclusive democracy: measuring the political participation of women in India (1951-2019). In *The road to inclusive democracy: measuring the political participation of women in India (1951-2019)*: Kapoor, Mudit | uravi, Shamika. New Delhi, India: ORF, Observer Research Foundation
18. KALEONIA, P. A. L. M. U. (2018). WOMEN IN POLITICS: A STUDY OF TRIBAL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE. *loksZn;, oe lkekftd U; k; dk xka/khoknh ifjizs (j. kthr flag, 113(01)*, 37-44.
19. Kuotsu, R. K., & Walling, A. W. (2018). A social inquiry on legal pluralism in nagaland: Engendering Art 371 (A). *Journal of Politics and Governance, 7(2)*, 21-28.
20. Vaiphei, V. (2017). Equality and tradition clash as Naga women in India's Northeast fight for political representation. *The Conversation*.
21. Moral, R. (2018). Peoplehood Beyond the State: Rebellion in a South Asian Borderland. *CLAMANTIS: The MALS Journal, 1(4)*, 8.
22. Network, N.E. (2016). Enquiry into the status of women in Nagaland.
23. Ojha, R. (2014). Women in Electoral Politics in Nagaland, India. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences, 3(11)*, 47, 50.
24. Opeyemi, O. E. (2018). Role of social networking and media in political awareness in public. *IOSR Journal of Mobile Computing & Application, 5(4)*, 6-9.
25. PARASHAR, A. DOCUMENTING INTANGIBLE HERITAGE THROUGH TANGIBLE ARTIFACTS: A CASE STUDY OF NAGALAND.
26. Parween, S. (2014). Gender Quota: Travails of the Women Reservation Bill in India. *Journal of Humanities And Social Sciences, 19(3)*, 98-103.
27. Phukan, A. Writings from the North East and Tribal Studies of India.
28. Roselima, K. P. (2014). Customary law and women in North East India. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences, 3(9)*, 59-62.
29. Saxena, K.S. (1999). Women's political participation in India. (*No Title*).
30. SDV, Jose. K. kikh, Kedilezo. (2021) "NAGALAND Vibrant Ethnic Communities in Transition Land, People, Livelihood Vol-1."
31. Spary, C. (2020). Women candidates, women voters, and the gender politics of India's 2019 parliamentary election. *Contemporary South Asia, 28(2)*, 223-241.
32. Sumangala, R. K. (2016). Women Reservation and national development—A Study. *IJRAR-International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR), 3(4)*, 490-499.
33. Tomar, N., & Nasreen, R. (2021). Need for National Policy on Women Empowerment. In *Women and Entrepreneurship in India* (pp. 153-168). Routledge.
34. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/objection-to-womens-reservation-three-associations-look-for-amendment-before-nagaland-civic-polls/article66606642.ece>
35. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kohima/women-empowerment-will-uplift-society-says-murmu/articleshow/95266694.cms>
36. https://www.iwgia.org/images/documents/Books/The_Place_of_Women_in_Naga_Society.pdf
37. <https://ceo.nagaland.gov.in/ER>
38. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/33-reservation-for-women-is-just-a-mirage/article19673294.ece>
39. <https://theprint.in/politics/just-2-women-mps-no-mlas-since-1963-why-womens-representation-in-nagaland-continues-to-lag/892793/>
40. https://www.ijmra.us/project%20doc/2023/IJRSS_MARCH2023/IJRSS5M arch23_14678.pdf
41. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/ht-newsletter/htmindthegap17072022.html>
42. <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2210069.pdf>
43. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357322575_THE_STATUS_OF_AO_NAGA_WOMEN_REFLECTIONS_ON_THE_RECENT_DEBATES_IN_NAGALAND
44. <https://spjmr.com/gallery/31-spjmr-955.f.pdf>
45. <https://morungexpress.com/participation-of-naga-women-in-electoral-politics>
46. <https://www.abebooks.com/9788180698828/Women-politics-Nagaland-challenges-imperatives-8180698823/plp>
47. <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/nagaland-assembly/hekani-jakhalu-becomes-first-woman-mla-in-nagaland-history/article66571124.ece>
48. <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/womens-political-participation-in-india/>
49. <https://morungexpress.com/33-women-reservation-bill-nagaland-an-analysis-women-view-point>
50. <https://nagalandpost.com/index.php/analysing-the-present-status-of-naga-women-in-nagaland/>
51. <https://zubaanprojects.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SPF-2018-Grant-Papers-Naga-Womens-Perspectives-On-Gender-Roles.pdf>
52. <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/india/2001/national-policy-on-the-empowerment-of-women-2001>
53. <https://nwmindia.org/gender-lens/gender-media-elections/2023-assembly-elections/women-media-and-elections-in-nagaland/>
54. <https://nwmindia.org/gender-lens/gender-media-elections/2023-assembly-elections/women-media-and-elections-in-nagaland/>
55. <https://www.rawatbooks.com/gender-studies/gender-implications-of-tribal-customary-law>
56. <https://thefederal.com/states/north-east/close-look-nagaland-has-never-elected-woman-to-its-assembly/>
57. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/data-nagaland-women-socially-empowered-underrepresented-in-politics/article66569239.ece>
58. <https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/story/nagaland-election-women-politicians-woman-mlas-hekani-jakhalu-kense-salhoutuonuo-kruse-2343050-2023-03-06>
59. <https://cnpr.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Status-of-Gender-Equity-in-Nagaland.pdf>
60. http://dspace.lpu.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/3436/1/11311600_5_5_2015%203_17_50%20PM_lipeni%20complete.pdf
61. https://www.rippublication.com/gjps19/gjpsv7n1_01.pdf
62. <https://tcpd.ashoka.edu.in/gender-politics-in-nagaland/>
63. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356467857_Women_Participation_in_Indian_Politics_Struggle_for_Visibility
64. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/33-reservation-for-women-in-urban-bodies-needs-more-discussion-nagaland-minister/articleshow/99646512.cms>
65. <https://nagalandpost.com/index.php/on-33-percent-women-reservation/>
66. <https://morungexpress.com/debunking-deniers-patriarchy-naga-culture>
67. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/14874-nagaland-general-legislative-election-2023/>
68. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3652-nagaland-general-legislative-election-2018/>
69. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3646-nagaland-2013/>
70. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3644-nagaland-2008/>
71. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3642-nagaland-2003/>
72. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3640-nagaland-1998/>
73. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3639-nagaland-1993/>
74. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3638-nagaland-1989/>
75. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3637-nagales-2008/>
76. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3636-nagaland-1982/>
77. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3635-nagaland-1977/>
78. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3634-nagaland-1974/>
79. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3633-nagaland-1969/>
80. <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/3632-nagaland-1964/>