

Chapter - VII

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This research work started out with an attempt to study on the patterns of women's political participation in North East India. The primary focus was given on the relationship between socio-economic status and political participation of women in Manipur and Meghalaya. As such the research looks into women's standing (which is interpreted as activeness) in socio-economic field and its co-relationship with political participation. To put the thesis into proper perspective, other important issues concerning political participation of women such as factors determining the women's political participation; challenges faced by the women are also studied here. It also analyzes the gender gaps in the political participation in Manipur and Meghalaya.

This chapter is divided into five sections, viz. Background, Main arguments, Major Findings and Recommendations for Further Research.

7.2 The background

Political participation is considered as one of the most important and indispensable elements of democracy. However, the space of political participation had been for century's male exclusive in the sense that women which comprises of half of the population of the world have been deprived of political population for centuries. Thus, they have been struggling hard for a long time for a meaningful political participation. This is evident from movements of political rights entrance into the space of political participation started by women in different parts of the world. Through these movements women have put up, demand for political participation especially during the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries in the western and European

countries. But, these movements remained more or less limited in scope as they confined to demand for right to vote. Hardly there was any movement with the demand of right to take part in decision making bodies.

However, in the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the pattern was different. As around the same period most of the countries here were colonies of European powers, women along with their male counterparts confronted the colonial powers in their fight for national right to self-determination. In most of the cases women participation in these freedom struggles were under male leadership. If not organized movement, there were strayed case of raising voice against non-participation of women in electoral affairs often led by some prominent women leaders. Thus in most of these countries voting rights of women came along with their national independence. The women in India also had their own share of struggle during national movement.

With the achievement of Independence and the subsequent adoption of the Constitution, women received equal rights with men. This is how women officially began to participate in the elections and electoral politics of the country.

The issue of political participation in the Northeast especially during the colonial period is almost the same with that of other parts of the country. That means women took part in political process only in terms of sharing freedom movement. However there are some distinction features of women's movement in the Northeast. For example, in Manipur, before their participation in the electoral politics of the state began, women in the valley were already involved in the socio-economic and political affairs of the state. The distinctiveness is that women did not participate in the movement under the recognized or popular male leaders. They took to the street directly by themselves and launched movements not only for their rights but for the

community as a whole. It could be seen during the First and the Second Nupi-lan in 1904 and 1939 respectively.

In the post independence period too, they came forward and participated in all the major socio-political movements inside the state such as movement during the 1950s and 1960s and other movements such as the Nisha Bandh during the 1970s, the Meira-Paibi (a movement by the women to protect human rights of the people) from 1980s onwards and the movement against the abuse of drugs and other intoxicants, etc.

About the participation of Manipur women in democratic constitutional Politics (electoral politics), the journey began with the adoption of Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947. It was in this Act that the system of election based on universal adult franchise was introduced for the first time in Manipur. Even though no women contested in the elections, they participated as voters. This was when Manipur was still under monarchical rule. After India's Independence, when Lok Sabha elections were held in the year 1951, women in Manipur participated both as voters and as candidates like women in other parts of India. Since then, women have always participated in all the elections conducted under the provisions of the constitution. In addition to their participation in the Parliamentary elections, they also have participated in the State Assembly elections. However, their participation at the state level elections was seen in a meaningful form only after Manipur achieved statehood in the year 1972. Their participation and representation in the local self governing bodies also became more pronounced in the valleys as 33% reservation of seats for women which was effected in these bodies in accordance with the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitutions.

In the case Meghalaya, the nature of the society, commonly known as matrilineal where authority, title, inheritance, residence after marriage and succession are traced through female line, it is presumed that they do not require any special effort to make them

aware and get social, economic, political or psychological understanding and knowledge to establish their rights along with men in their society as they are automatically placed on an esteemed level. They are presumed to have access to education, ownership of property, authority in their family and society. Many of them are the heads of their families and decide what to be done or not etc. But, a recent survey conducted by the Researcher in the rural areas of Meghalaya shows that about one-third of the families are headed by the male. Also many of the families are headed by females who are either widow or deserted. Similarly in the political sphere, women are hardly found active and even in the Dorbar; females are not allowed to take part in the meeting or decision making. But in most of the socio-economic activities, still now, activeness of the women observed (even though they are assumed to be physically weak). Also, even though some families are headed by males it may be that they are just to carry out activities with the guidance of their female counterpart who has better control over assets and therefore no fear of losing anything even if they are deserted by their husbands. Therefore, a question may arise whether in Khasi tribe the status of women is ascribed or prescribed by the society. Also it is pertinent to enquire about the direction to which the position and status of women are moving with the development of the society.

7.3 Main Argument of the Thesis

In a democratic setup, political participation is one of the indispensable elements. Paradoxically, in most part of the world, the democratic set up turns out to be mostly male dominated. Similarly in India and particularly in the north east, though women constitute half of the total population, the realm of political participation is highly dominated by male. Thus, the need for greater participation of women in politics becomes a matter of intrinsic importance.

There is a general consensus that if there is socio-economic independence it gradually leads to greater political participation. The findings discussed in the previous chapters proved otherwise. Although socio-economic independence may prove to be a necessary attribute for political participation in general sense, in some particular cases, it turns out that this socio-economic independence do not necessarily turned out to be an absolute determinant for greater political participation as it has been proven from the analysis in the previous chapters.

In a given society the study of political participation needs to take into account whether or not such society is associated with democratic values. Between the two genders inequalities exist since time immemorial. These inequalities are of two types which are either natural or man-made. The ideals of democracy such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice and others, are intrinsic and significant values that guarantee equality or that helps in overcoming inequality.

Similarly, it is held that the societal setup/kind of society or the custom or tradition of a society directly influence the political participation. However, when we study two very different societies – one a patriarchal and the other a matriarchal namely, Manipur and Meghalaya respectively, though women in Meghalaya have the upper hand in terms of property ownership and are the head of the family they are far behind their male counterparts when it comes to political participation. Same goes for Manipuri women, they are subordinates in terms of property ownership and their male counterparts are the head of the family and the women of Manipur too are lacked behind when it comes to political participation.

Education is considered to be an inherent determinant of propagating and enhancing political participation. It is highly intriguing that though high percentage of women of both the states is educated, their political participation is quite meager.

On the part of government, in order to empower women and augment their political participation, the government of India has responsibly taken progressive steps, for instance, the passing of the 73rd Amendment Bill which provisioned for 33.3 percent reservation for women in local government bodies. The goal and vision of this bill is to realize greater participation of women but this provision has not been fully capitalized in regard to realizing the goal of greater participation of women in politics.

However, in a democratic establishment such as India, in its North eastern states, gender disparity still exist. Here the women are under-represented in decision making bodies both in national and local levels. As stated above the problem turns out to be not of socio economic aspects but rather of other aspects which are astoundingly dynamic and conspicuous as it had been explained in the previous chapters and mentioned in the above paragraphs.

In a society where women are economically active and independent and where democratic values prevail, there are certain determinants that are necessary for enhancing their political participation such as attitude of the society, societal setup or type of society, forms of government, customs, traditions, education, political consciousness and interest, political environment such as party system, influences of ideology, modernization and urbanization, laws of the land and the state, attitude towards the sex of child, and so forth.

7.4 Research Findings

A) Whether women's activeness in social and economic fields necessary leads to higher political participation of women?

Though women are active in social and economic field in both the states where the researcher was conducted they are not active in politics. The levels of the political participation are low. In case of

Manipur according to the data collected from the field work, the women are very active in socially and economically but they are not active in political participation. Same has been the case of Meghalaya. It means though they are active in socio-economic field, they are not active in politics according to the data. Society in Meghalaya itself is matrilineal in nature therefore they have more right in inheritance of property and also supposed to be head of the family. So from the analysis of both the states, it comes to light that women activeness in social and economic fields has no direct correlation with their high level of political participation.

B) Challenges faced by the women of Manipur and Meghalaya in the Political Participation

Many sorts of serious challenges are faced by the women of Manipur and Meghalaya in the political participation. For example, ideological factor is a serious issue. Gender ideology, is being used as an ideological tool by male whereby placing women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives. It uplifts men in the public sphere. This is one of the vital factors that shape the level of women's political participation globally. This is particularly true in the case of Manipur; gender issue is still prevalent in our society. Women have to negotiate their entry into and claim on public space.

In Meghalaya even the society traditions does not allow women to participate in political decision making bodies such as traditional institutes like dorbars. In the case of Manipur such traditional institutes are not functioning particularly among Meeteis. However, these are common elements of politics that political parties in both the states are indifferent towards women members. So this has been quite a challenge for women towards participating in political process actively.

Again, Politics is increasingly becoming commercialized and masculinized in both the cases. Women, often lack access to productive resources. This limits the scope of their political work.

Even women who have entered the political process have faced with a lot of resistance. There are many instances where they have been subjected to physical violence, threats and intimidation. This has especially occurred when elected women representatives aspired to be articulate, assertive and effective in discharging their responsibilities.

C) Nature of the women Political Participation in Khasi (Meghalaya)

The Khasi, in Meghalaya in North-East India are the followers of a unique social system, matrilineal. Though women are regarded as custodian of Khasi customs, they are traditionally not participating in any local dorbar or council as they are not entrusted with any administrative function. It is because while women are given the custody of the family property men are entrusted with the task of protecting the community and to engage in warfare if necessary and to rule. The fact is that, in contemporary Khasi society women do not rule in the real sense, but still the society follows a matriarchal system, now many of the families are literally headed by the males. The tendency is increasing with the increasing involvement of male in the socio-economic activities, expansion of education, emergence of nuclear families etc. However, there is no discrimination between male and female child. This is partly because of the economic independence of the females and their customary laws, which is still dominant in the Khasi society.

D) Determinants/ factors of women political participation

Some of the common factors that determine women political participation are as follows:

I. Psychological factors

The Psychological factors which determined political participation are as follows: Political participation an individual (as an instance) is influenced by certain psychological factors or elements such as his/her attitude, willingness, interests, etc. in

the political activities. One good example is that, in most cases especially in the northeast, the psychological perspective of female and male alike is that it is the responsibility of male to go out in public sphere and to perform public duties such as decision making, mobilizing opinion and so forth, while women prioritize their responsibility in the matters related to household or family. Thus, simply put, when the quest is to study political participation, it is of great significance to peruse through psychological perspective.

The following are the various psychological factors that determine the political participation of women:

a) Loneliness

Loneliness is one of the psychological factors that determine the political participation of women. As according to researcher common political beliefs lay the ground work for sharing equivalent emotions of anger, sympathy and distress; common interests improve the opportunities for small talk; common activities create bonds of friendship. Politics may offer to the lonely man new opportunities for associations with others – the excuse may be politics, the need may be fear of isolation. Thus, some people participate in politics due to loneliness. Usually, some people like the political leaders and workers are used to being surrounded by the people all the time. Without it, they find life very lonely and frustrating. Hence, in some cases, the psychological needs compel a political leader to be politically active until his death. In the context of North East too particularly in Manipur and Meghalaya where study was conducted the loneliness factor also affects political participation of women extensively.

b) Unconscious conflicts and tensions

Political participation subdues tensions and conflicts. Political participation may subdue these tensions in two ways. Either it may arrest these tensions by distracting the individual from the sphere of his inner conflict or it may provide some effective channels for expressing this conflict and thereby help the individual in easing out her inner tensions. Hence, in some cases, political participation makes a person free from personal, emotional and mental conflicts. In the same context of North East too, particularly in Manipur and Meghalaya where study was conclude unconscious conflicts and tensions affect political participation of women.

c) Urge to power

Man always seeks power because he feels happiness in being powerful. Since the power of the state can be exercised by capturing the political power, he participates in politics to capture the power. A person, who acquires political power, also achieves social regards and prestige. He also has a sense of pride. Thus, some participate in politics for the achievement of power.

In the finding, women in both the states always have an instilled special position in the society and play important role in different spheres with great responsibility along with their counterpart men. So, it is presumed that they do not require any special effort to make them aware of or attain psychological understanding and knowledge and to establish their rights along with men in the society, as they are automatically placed on an esteemed level. But, when it comes to political participation the activeness of women in achieving of power is not shown in politics. In these societies both women and men alike have the perception that working in public realm or matters concerning power is the exclusive responsibility of men

and women's responsibility is prioritized with those related to family or household matters.

II. Social factors

Social factor is also one of the factors which determined the women political participation. The main factors to be analyzed here are education, occupation, income, social status, sex and age. The woman in both the states had always played an important role in social life. There are lots of evident where women played a vital role in the growth and evolution of the society. In addition to their household chores and upbringing of children, it has become compulsory for every Manipuri women to participate in the social functions and festivals of their locality. From this very fact, it can be said that women of Manipur enjoyed a high status and have been playing a very important role in the society. The same goes for, the women of Meghalaya, always have an instilled special position and role they play in different spheres with great responsibility as compared their counterpart men. Therefore, it can be said that women of Manipur and Meghalaya have traditionally been enjoying a respectable status in the society. Women enjoyed high degree of freedom in public life and in the family domain. They are also observed to enjoy certain liberty in choosing profession or occupation.

The important social factors that determine political participation are as follows:

a) Education and Occupation

The first and foremost factor that helps to develop one's esteem is the level of education attained. Education gives a person greater information and expands the horizon of his interests. The higher is the education, the greater are one's sense of civic duty, political competence, interest and responsibility and also

self-confidence and articulateness. However, apart from education, other variables too are at work. The complex and technical jobs the members of the higher occupations deal with naturally increase their intellectual development and make them more articulate. In other words, their occupational skill makes them well armed with a good amount of political skill. Thus, the professional people, teachers, and public servants everywhere are found to have voting rates among the highest in the country. On the other hand, the manual or clerical workers who usually have to work long regular hours and who have less security in their work cannot be expected to have a high political participation.

The finding of the study is that in both the states i.e. Manipur and Meghalaya, the literacy of women is very high as well as in occupation too. It suggests that in terms of education which is an important social indicators woman in both the states are very active in social activities but in politics they are very less. Education has not brought in the arena of politics. Even today there are many educated women and when it comes to their choice of profession, hardly any of them take up politics as their career. The reason for this is double-sided. Firstly, there is the lack of government's efforts to take up any concrete policy for encouraging women to involve themselves in politics. Secondly, there are the age-old customs and traditions of the Khasi which do not allow women to be a part of the village administrative set up. Such a deep rooted tradition in their past also does not encourage the women to join politics. Lack of encouragement from the society in general and the Khasi men in particular towards women's entry into politics is also another important factor. Even today, most of the men think that politics is not a suitable field for the women in both the states.

b) Income

Higher income which brings greater prosperity, more leisure, less anxiety and wider opportunities naturally makes people more active in politics. Thus, the higher income groups are found to vote proportionately more frequently than those with lesser income. However, this does not mean that a rise in income has a uniformly proportionate effect on political participation in both the states. In this regard, researcher have shown, on the basis of their study of the voting pattern of women in both the states income groups, that any given rate of increase in income from one level to another has nothing to do in turn-out as one descends the income scale. From this analysis it came to light that at the individual level, it is not important correlate of political participation it may not necessarily be so at the national level.

In the finding, women in both the states indicate high percentage of economical independence. Women in Meghalaya are traditionally inheritors of ancestral property. This coupled with their working for earning makes them economically more or less independent. In Manipur too women are involved in economic activities especially in terms of earning livelihood. This gives them economically independent too. But regarding political participation, it is not so high in both the states. Still there is limited number of women in the political participation.

c) Social status

Social status is also one of the social factors which determined the political participation. Women in both the states, irrespective of their class and status, also performed all domestic works in the family and are responsible for the maintenance of the family. They also educate the children in matters relating to the social norms, values, customary laws etc. In short, women in both the states their social status and their

participation in social affairs are very active. But in political participation women in both the states is dismal. For women to be in politics, there has to be someone at home who will perform her duties at home as wife, mother, and daughter-in-law in home and meddle in politics.

Political participation, says as a function of age, sex, education and status. While dealing specifically with one mode of participation, that is, the petitioning of government officials in person, related to the possession of social skills, the desire to be close to 'greatness', some knowledge (awareness) of political life and also class status. And also it can be elaborates that it is related to class status in the following ways: 1) those of a lower socio-economic status are more likely to contact only local officials, while those of a higher socio-economic status may contact both local and national officials. 2) Those of a lower socio-economic status require greater organization and effort for an audience with an official, or to secure an equivalent effect upon that official, than those of higher status. 3) Contacting national officials on foreign policy matters is a positively accelerated function of wealth and social position.

d) Sex and Age

Extension data from various like Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura confirm that men participate more than women who are found to be more conservative, less liable to heterodoxy, less well-informed about political issues and public figures, less attentive to the diverse point of views and, therefore, have less interest in politics. Sometimes, women's major preoccupation with home and family may account for their low levels of political participation.

Regarding age, the studies in both the states show that in comparison to children, young man, and old person, the middle aged males and females have higher rate of political

participation. Lack of stability and security in the early age and also the relative inability to confront with a sustained zeal the various conflict situations naturally make the young rather evasive of participation. Similarly, the sense of political efficacy starts dropping sharply at around the age of fifty five when a person normally approaches retirement that, making an end of his active life, saps his self-confidence and thereby affects the rate of his participation.

From the above analysis it is cleared that women in both the states, very interestingly and also significantly are active in social affairs and independent in almost all the aspects. It is only the timing of food intake and the indicators of remarriage that show different status in both the states. Otherwise be it, child sex preference, social meeting and gathering, visiting nearby towns, thinking of dependency women in both the states enjoyed independent status are equally accepted in society. Thus, it may be said that socially women in both the states, are active in social affairs but their participation in politics is meager.

III. Political Factors

Political factor is also one of the determinants of the women political participation. In terms of politics women in both the states i.e. Manipur and Meghalaya are not active in politics. But majority of the women in both the states are active in social and economic fields. In the political factors analyze the determinants like attitudes of the government, political parties, election etc. The political factors that determine political participation are as follows:

a) Attitudes of the government

In a country where competition for power is open and the rules of voting simple, more people participate in the politics. If the government encourages voters to vote, they vote in large

number and vice-versa. There are two reasons regarding about the attitudes of the government in the political participation of women. Firstly, lack of government's efforts to take up any concrete policy for encouraging women to involve themselves in politics. Secondly, the nature of politics as finds which is increasingly characterized by violence, criminalization, character assassination, etc. Obviously, women are rendered more vulnerable than their male counterparts in such a vicious environment. Thus the electoral participation of the women in both the states remains in a very poor shape.

b) Political Parties

Political parties also play an important role in political participation. Inter-party competition in the states affects political participation. When there is more vigorous competition between the parties, there is greater the interest of the citizens in election and larger the voter turnout. When parties and candidates compete vigorously, they make news and gave a large play via the mass media. Thus the setting of competitive politics tends to have a greater amount of political stimuli available in the environment than does a setting with weak competition. People also tend to follow a close election with more interest. Furthermore, in a close contest they are more likely to perceive that their votes count and thus they are more likely to cast them. An additional factor is that when parties are fighting in a close contest, their workers tend to spend more time and energy in campaigning and getting out the vote.

c) Election

If the election is conducted properly following the proper norms of democracy, people will enthusiastically participate. Free and fair election encourages the people to join politics in a greater number. However, if the election is not free and fair, people will have no desire to participate and not only that, they will feel

alienated from the state and there will be less political participation. At the time of election, the issues raised by the political parties also affect political participation. If the issue is of national importance, more people will participate and vice-versa.

From the above, it can be concluded that the success for any efforts to enhance political participation has myriad of determining factors. The women in both Manipur and Meghalaya possessed/met most of the factors/determinants mentioned above their political participation is still very less. This gives us the evidence that although a society possessed or met most of the requirements for bolstering political participation, if certain factor is not met it can slacken/hamper the progress of political participation.

E. Gender-gaps

The persistence of gender inequalities in the social, economic and political domain invites a host of questions about the root causes of gender gaps and on the effectiveness of political issues in eradicating the structural inequalities. Over the past two decades, many countries around the globe have great improvements in eradicating gender gaps in many aspects of public life. Gender equality is considered a critical element in achieving social and institutional change that leads to sustainable development with equity and growth. Although the Constitution of India removed gender inequalities among caste and gender discrimination continues to be a widespread barrier to women's political participation. Discriminatory attitudes manifest in the limitations presented to Indian women including low access to information and resources.

Discussing gender gaps become more complex when the focus is on the two north eastern states of Manipur and Meghalaya. In these two societies, male and female are equal in almost all aspects. In order to find out the existing gender gaps in the two states, one has to

carefully understand the finer nuance of their customs, way of living, level of political consciousness and interest, working and perception of organizations such as political parties or other associations. Most of the time, in the two states, both women and men alike have the perception that working in public realm or things concerning public decision is the responsibility of men and women's responsibility is prioritized with those related to family or household matters. Thus, there are evidential gender gaps in institutions which are of public in nature such as political parties and other institutions which prioritized their efforts/targets in politico-administrative functions of the state/government.

7.5 Government's Initiatives for Promoting Women's Political Participation

It will be important to mention briefly, at this juncture, the initiative taken up by the government so far. A number of measures have to be taken up in order to promote political participation of women of Manipur and Meghalaya in a more complete and meaningful manner. Some of the implementation and demanding measures are being listed as follows:

- a) Reservation of seats for women in local self-governing bodies

In the face of disadvantages faced by the Manipur and Meghalaya traditional polity, and also in view of the fact that the benefits of the 73rd and 74th Amendment of the constitution have reached their counterparts in the state as well as in other parts of the country, reservation of seats for women in all the local self governing bodies is a must. This will benefit the states of Manipur and Meghalaya and bring the two genders at par with their counterparts in these states in terms of enjoying special provisions provided by the constitution.

b) Hill administration acts

Many acts have been introduced in the hills during the past sixty years or so with a view to help the village administration evolve on lines of democratic constitutionalism. However, as evidenced by the working of village Authorities in their villages, these Acts have not been implemented fully in letter and spirit. They remain mostly in paper. In most of the villages, the village Authority comprises clan representatives as per their traditional customary laws, and not elected members.

c) Customary laws of the Meghalaya

In the era of liberalization, there is an urgent need for the states to ponder for modifying the customary laws so as to give space to women in the village polity. The traditional customary laws of the states do not allow their women have any say in their traditional administration system. Women have been absolutely denied of any space in their traditional administrative system. Such a custom is not conducive to the evolution of meaningful political participation by the women and as such should be modified. Continuance of such customs is bound to adversely affect their overall involvement and participation in other greater and bigger issues at stake as well as their participation in the electoral politics of the state. The need for changing such customs is all the more there in view of the manner the village Authorities are functioning at present, and also in view of the absence of reservation of seats for women in local self governing bodies.

d) Need for breaking the hegemony of Male Chauvinism

Male Chauvinism across societies also serves as one of the detrimental factors that meaningful electoral participation of the women. Breaking the hegemony of male chauvinism in the society will go a long way in making the women political empowered. Women usually feel themselves subordinate to the male members

of the family and male themselves also consider women as inferior to them. The problem is double sided; it comes from the women themselves and from the male members also. In society, women from the olden days were not considered as the decision makers. Rather they were considered as the one to take care of the domestic chores and other agricultural works. This attitude of the male still prevails at present, and can be seen in the society. In the society women were denied to be its members. This clarity reveals the low status women are accorded with inside the society in the time of decision making. To encourage meaningful participation of women in Politics, such symptoms of male chauvinism should be done away with.

e) Need for independence and encouragement

Like the rest of the Indian women, Manipur and Meghalaya women remain dependent on their father or brother or sister or male cousin, etc. right from their childhood, and this dependent nature continues in their life after marriage. Developing positive attitude in her by enlightening her about her potential for contributing to overall development of a society and in the body politics of the society will encourage her on the path of meaningful and healthy participation in politics. Educating women to be independent in their thinking and boldly in politics and be an apart of the decision making process of the society.

f) Role of parties

Parties should do much more than paying mere lip service towards political empowerment of women. They should encourage women to join parties and work towards evolving active and vibrant women's wings of their parties. They should secure posts for women in each and every stage of the organizational hierarchy of the party. Women should also be encouraged to join electoral as candidates and not see them as mere numbers.

g) Reservation for women in the local self governing bodies, state legislative assemblies and Parliament a must

h) The benefits of the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution should be extended to the women in the hills of Manipur and Meghalaya by making adequate provisions for reservation of 33% of the seats for women in these bodies. The 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill or the Women Reservation Bill (WRB) reserving one-third of all seats in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies and Parliament Should also be passed. It will go a long way in securing to all women their rightful place in the decision making system of the society.

7.6 Recommendations

At a consultation involving the partner organizations and individuals the above short and long-term recommendations with reference to the government and NGOs have been prioritized in the order of importance. Further, strategies for action have been evolved in order to fulfill the prioritized recommendations. Following are the short-term and long-term recommendations with their respective action-plan.

A. Short Term

1. To enact the 85th Constitutional Amendment Bill pending in the Parliament, providing reservation for women, thereby involving women in the political and decision-making arenas. Thus providing space for women to ensure their concerns and perspectives are incorporated while strategizing and planning for action.
 - a. Initiate a countrywide movement for 1/3 reservation at higher levels.
 - b. Nation-wide revival of campaign
 - c. Use of electronic media/press for campaign and get women in the media to take initiative of the campaign for women's reservation

- d. Mark a day preferably April 24th to initiate the movement, involving the Government and elected women members from all levels of governance
 - e. Networking with existing women groups
 - f. Initiate dialogue with political parties at state and national levels
 - g. Media workshops for journalists (English and Vernacular)
 - h. Gender sensitization of women and men in politics
 - i. Highlight success stories focusing to reach village women and communities through regional/local papers
 - j. Use existing women's groups as fora for discussions and create others with several stake holders to dialogue and mobilize public opinion
2. To introduce and enforce several measures to stop corruption, criminalization and communalization of politics.
- a. Set up Women's Rights Commission in each district and get women watch committees to monitor it at local level
 - b. Survey and document increased incidences of violence against elected women. The State Commission for women and the departments of women and child development and rural development and panchayat raj should be trained and facilitated to conduct this using the CEDAW framework
 - c. Interviews and panel discussions with successful women in politics at all levels be highlighted in visual media (prime time) to motivate other women to enter/sustain their interest in politics
 - d. Train women from communities, activists, researchers in fact finding and documentation of such cases of violations
 - e. Local information management system to be put in place

- f. Putting accountability mechanisms in place by pressuring the politicians to disclose their properties and assets. This would check the use of money and liquor power to contest elections.
3. To amend the Representation of Peoples Act, making it mandatory for every political party to have one-third of its cadre to be women.
- a. One third reservation for women in all levels of the parties to be introduced through electoral reforms.
 - b. The clause regarding the disqualification of persons who have more than two children from politics to be repealed from the People's Representation Act
4. To create awareness among women through mass media about the electoral process and also the candidates contesting for election, thereby eliminating powerful men taking advantage of the ignorance of women and controlling their decisions in exercising their right to vote.
- a. Right to information campaign.
 - b. Critical citizenship, training modules on rights.
 - c. Highlighting women in politics who have successfully confronted corruption and communalization as a motivating factor to other women to enter into politics.

B. Long Term

1. Within the political party hierarchy, there should be efforts to have at least a minimum of 33 per cent women in all levels of decision- making.
2. To facilitate the formation of women's associations, collectives and cooperatives to support and strengthen women's political participation.
 - Build women's constituencies and in parties to enable them to organize themselves into formal and informal collectives.
 - Develop dialogue mechanisms to raise awareness across different levels of women in politics e.g. women counselors.

- Increase awareness among school and college students on the importance of women in politics.
- Networking of women groups/organizations to ensure dissemination of information.
- Generate a data-base on urban governance and governance at state and parliament levels.

3. Women do not have easy access to financial resources as they are denied property rights. They have no control over their earnings and form the low-waged or non-waged strata of society. Therefore, it is necessary to earmark special funding assistance to enable women contest elections.

- ❖ State funding to empower/enable women to contest elections.

4. To enhance the existing training for elected women representatives in terms of content. The package must address the gender responsiveness and issues affecting the lives of women, in addition to the necessary input of the functional responsibilities that would enable women to govern effectively.

5. To create awareness about the importance of Gram Sabhas (People's Forum) thus initiating the process of ensuring transparency and accountability of the local governing unit.

Altogether, the current study found that the issue of women's political participation is serious in the North East India too. However, significantly it is also found that the activeness in social and economic sphere do not necessarily lead to higher level of political participation. This proves the hypothesis constructed during the initial period of the research. However, if the recommendations provided above are put into place, the level of political participation of women will be expected to improve.