

## Chapter-II

### ***Political Participation of Women in North East India***

#### **2.1 Introduction**

As highlighted in the first chapter i.e. Introduction. Political participation is one of the most important and indispensable elements of a democratic polity. Without political participation, governments will become autocratic and the rights and liberties of an individual within the state cannot be protected. It is also through political participation that people express their will and the government is made responsible and accountable. A society in which a substantial part of the population is denied any participation whatsoever is likely to be highly explosive.<sup>1</sup> It is because of this reason that even in modern non-democratic political systems the idea of political participation seems to be well nurtured. A modern fascist or a modern dictator, notwithstanding whatever power he is free to exercise, will certainly not try to follow a go-it-alone policy; instead, he will invariably try to cloak his arbitrary decisions with the veil of a mass approval secured through some form of political participation by the people.<sup>2</sup> When one looks at the history of the world, it is evident that violent revolution took place when political participation is limited. American Revolution, French Revolution, Russian Revolution are some of the glaring examples. Nowadays, political participation is extended to all the citizens in most of the countries. However, some countries allowed political participation in a limited way. Countries following a Communist ideology belong to this category because the people there do not have the freedom to political associations of their choice.

Political participation enables the citizens to be an efficient partner in the running of the government. It helps them to understand

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<sup>1</sup> Mukhopadhyay, Amal Kumar. *Political Sociology*, K.K Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1997, p.120.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the working of the government and enables them to see whether the government is working in a transparent manner or not. It is through this channel that the citizens can judge the performance of every government that rule the nation. A country that does not permit such kind of activity is very close to dictatorship or is totalitarian. According to J.J. Rousseau, “participation increased the value of his freedom to the individual by enabling him to be (and remain) his own master. Secondly, the participatory process ensures that although no man, or group, is master of another, all are equally dependent on each other and equally subject to the law that is made possible through participation..... Individuals will conscientiously accept a law arrived at through a participatory decision-making process. Thirdly, it increases the feeling among individual citizens that they ‘belong’ in their community”.<sup>3</sup> Thus, political participation is a very cardinal element of a democratic or popular system of government.

The study of political participation of any society or section of people needs to take into account whether or not it is associated with democratic values. The levels and extent of political participation of people may be restricted by the very existence of both natural and man-made inequalities. While it is impossible to overcome natural factors of inequalities, it is possible to overcome man-made inequalities simply by adopting the democratic principles and values. The pillars of democracy like liberty, equality, fertility, justice etc. are strong enough to support and protect the people from challenges posed by man-made inequalities. And also, the socio-economic environment will have a direct impact upon political participation.

Thus, the study of the nature and level of political participation and its resultant empowerment can be evaluated only on the basis of the availability of democratic values. The presence of the umbrella of democracy is a pre-requisite for the attainment of maximum extent of participation and empowerment. Empowerment is not characterized

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<sup>3</sup>Pateman, Carole. *Participation and Democracy Theory*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1970, p.22.

as achieving power to dominate others, but rather power to act with others to effect change. Political participation is a major component of empowerment. “Research in participation and empowerment links them bi-directionally, empowered individuals may be more likely to participate in organizations, and participation promotes empowerment”.<sup>4</sup>

The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences defined political participation as the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers are made accountable to the ruled.<sup>5</sup> It entails such proceedings like voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, contributing financially and communicating with representatives.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.2 Political Participation: Meaning and Implication**

In fact, Political participation is a term that has many meanings. The term is applied to the activities of people at the all levels of political system. Sometimes the term is applied more too political orientations than to activities. Political participation is defined in such a way as to include the exercise of power in non-governmental as well as governmental spheres. It is true that there exists a great deal of confusion with regard to what is meant by that term. “Participation may be viewed from two angles again-intensity and width. How deeply a person is involved in an issue and to what extent he would go towards achievement of this objective would determine the intensity. Width arises because of the complex nature of political activity that requires participation in different issues ranging from casting votes to participating in a technical expert committee or becoming a minister.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert Mc. Closky, “*Political Participation*”, International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol.12, Macmillan, New York, 1968, p. 253.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>7</sup> K. Seshadri, *Politics Linkages and Rural Development*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p. 175.

Political participation may also be defined as those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or support government and politics.<sup>8</sup> This definition is broader than most others, as it includes not only active roles that people pursue in order to influence political outcomes but also ceremonial and support activities. To Almond and Powell, “political participation is the involvement of the members of the society in the decisions making process of the system”.<sup>9</sup>

Mc Closky defines, “political participation implies those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly, in the formulation of public policy”.<sup>10</sup>

Verba and Pye define it as, “Those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and the actions they”.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, many writers have rightly argued that political participation of citizens is the distinguishing mark of modern states. More than anything else, the modern state is distinguished from the traditional ones by the extent to which people participate in politics.<sup>12</sup> High levels of political participation are usually associated with democracy, which is beneficial both to the individual and to the society. Political participation has been considered as a ‘sine qua non’ of democracy.<sup>13</sup>

It may also be argued that, political participation has been characterized as a civic duty, as a sign of political health and the best

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<sup>8</sup>Lester W. Milbrath, M.L. Goel, *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics*, Rand Menally, Chicago, 1977, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>G.A. Almond, G.B. Powell Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*, Amerind Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1975, p. 98.

<sup>10</sup>Robert E. Dowse, *Political Sociology*, John Wiley and Sons, London, 1972, p. 290.

<sup>11</sup>Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*, Harper Row, New York, 1972, p.44.

<sup>12</sup>Hari Hara Das, *Introduction to Political Sociology*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997, p.146.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

method of ensuring that one's private interests are not neglected. Although political power in every society is monopolized by a few, the incumbents of political authority in every system are found to be quite keen on ensuring some amount of political participation by the people. Thus, by involving the many in the matters of the state, political participation fosters stability and order by reinforcing the legitimacy of political authority.

Ultimately, one of the most controversial questions to be answered in arriving at a definition of political participation is the element of will or intention of the people. Thus, political participation means a process of influencing the authoritative allocation of values for a society.

For the successful functioning of democracy the maximum participation of people particularly at the lowest level is required. Panchayati Raj is an important political innovation and a vital conduit in independent India, for popular participation in democratic development. It is envisaged not merely as a method of implementation of rural development policies and the dispersal of developmental benefits, but more importantly, as a training ground for the promotion of local initiative with a view to increasing people's political consciousness, awareness of their rights and direct participation in self-rule. Nature, success and effectiveness of democracy largely depend on the extent to which equal, effective and actual participation is provided by the system to all its citizens. Citizens' active participation in political affairs in a democracy is crucial and necessary because it provides legitimacy to the system and also strengthens the democratic fabric.<sup>14</sup> Democracy will fail in its objectives if women citizens lack equal opportunity to participate in the governmental decision-making process. They are to be equal partners in the nation-building and political development.

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<sup>14</sup>Norman D. Palmer, *Elections and Political Development: The South Asian Experience*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 50-57.

Why Political democracy requires at least a minimum of people's participation in the decision making process is important because a situation which results in high participation by members of a group normally has higher potential for democracy.<sup>15</sup> It is even said that political participation is the involvement of citizens in such political activities, which directly or indirectly influence the behavior and actions of decision-makers.<sup>16</sup> It may be viewed as any "Voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods, intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs, or the choices of political leaders at any level of government, local or national."<sup>17</sup>

The real purpose and impact of participation is to make the citizens not a passive spectator but an agent in politics, to enable him to show his disagreements as much as to endorse what is proposed, as much to scotch initiatives as to launch them, as much to revise, criticize and block as to push, prod and hasten.<sup>18</sup> However, if political participation is to have any concrete meaning, particularly in a democratic setup, people should directly or indirectly take part in the decision-making processes which affect their day to day life.

It may be rightly said that in the definition of political participation involvement of people in the political process is central concern. To take some more examples, According to Herbert Mac, "Political Participation as the extent to which citizens avail themselves of those voluntary democratic rights of the political activity to which they are constitutionally entitled and the measure is held by the political culture".<sup>19</sup> According to Rousseau, "participation is the

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<sup>15</sup>Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man*, Arnold Heinemann, New Delhi, 1973, p.82.

<sup>16</sup>Norman D. Palmer, op.cit., p.1.

<sup>17</sup>Myron Weiner, *Political Participation: Crisis of Political Process*, in Norman D. Palmer, op.cit., pp. 57-58.

<sup>18</sup>Ferdinand Mount, *Anglo-Saxon Political Values: A crisis of Confidence*, The Round Table, Vol.64, No.1, 1974, pp.102-103.

<sup>19</sup>Herbert Mac Closky, *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol.11 & 12, New York, 1968, p.253.

decision making and that is, as in theories of representative Government, a way of protecting private interest and ensuring good Government”. According to H. Mc Closky, “Participation is the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers are made accountable to the ruled”.<sup>20</sup> According to Richard Johnson, “Political participation may be described as any voluntary act to influence elections or public policy. It may be simple as casting a ballot or it may mean running for office; it may be intended to influence the broad outlines of policy, or it may be very specific e.g. seeking benefits for an individual”.<sup>21</sup> Nie and Verba’s definition includes in the orbit of political participation “those legal activities by private citizens which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take”.<sup>22</sup> Huntington and Nelson’s definition refers to political participation “simply as activity by private citizens designed to influence governmental decision making”.<sup>23</sup> According to the notional definition of political participation, a strike designed to influence the management of a private company to increase wages is not political participation because it is not designed to affect governmental decision making. Only when a strike is designed to influence the government, say for example to increase the ceilings on wages, it is political participation.<sup>24</sup> D.R. Mathews and J.W Prothro defined political participation as “all behaviour through which people directly express their political opinions”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Closky, H. Mc. “Political Participation”, *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol.12. Collier Macmillain New York, 1968, p.253.”

<sup>21</sup>Johnson, Richard. “Political Participation”, *The Canadian Encyclopedia Historical*, Historical Foundation of Canada, Canada, 2008, p.112.

<sup>22</sup>Norman, Nie. H & Verba S, “Political Participation”, Greenstien F.I & Polsby N.W.(eds.) *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol.4. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Massachusetts, United States, 1976, p.1.

<sup>23</sup>Huntington, Samuel P. & Nelson, Joan M.*No Easy Choice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1976, p.4.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>25</sup>Mathews, D.R. & Prothro, J.W. *Negroes and the New Southern Politics*, Harcourt Brace and World, New York.1966, p.37.

### **2.3 Political Participation: Different modes**

The conceptualization of political participation has been undergoing drastic changes. Such changes will have a direct impact upon different modes of political participation. Citizens can participate in different and alternative ways to influence the government and the political system. Until recently most survey studies of political participation confined their enquiry to a relatively limited set of political acts. Most of them asked whether a person had voted or not and some went on to ask about such behavior as attendance at political meetings or rallies, working for a party, making a monetary contribution or seeking a public office.<sup>26</sup>

However, these alternative ways of political participation depend on the types of citizens who participate, the way in which they act, the amount of pressure they can exert and the system's response towards their activities. Thus political participation is more than the vote and more than an activity in the electoral system. Verba and Nie grouped into four broad modes of participation, the alternative activities by which citizens can participate in politics, i.e., voting campaign activity, co-operative activity and citizen-initiated contacts.<sup>27</sup> Milbrath and Goel add protest and communication to these modes mentioned by Verba and Nie, which relate individuals to the polity. They are also of the view that political acts could be hierarchically organized from the least difficult to the most difficult, if a person performed a more difficult act; he was likely to perform those that are less difficult as well.<sup>28</sup>

It is useful to consider political participation in a hierarchical sense, but it should also be born in mind that some levels of participation may be absent in some political systems.<sup>29</sup> Not all political system have elections or a form of voting, some systems

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<sup>26</sup>Lester W. Milbrath, M.L. Goel, op.cit., p.11.

<sup>27</sup>Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie, op. cit., pp. 44-47.

<sup>28</sup>Lester W. Milbrath, M. L. goel, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>29</sup>Michael Rush and Phillip Althoff, *An Introduction to Political Sociology*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, 1971, p. 81.



severely restrict or ban public meetings and demonstrations, while others forbid the formation of political parties and other types of political or quasi-political organization, and so on.<sup>30</sup> Explaining the extent of political participation Michael Rush and Phillip Althoff added that apathy; alienation and the use of violence vary clearly and considerably from system to system, but remain quite important factors in any examination of political participation.<sup>31</sup>

Examining the modes of political participation Schonfeld has mentioned ten types of activities which include (1) running for or holding public or party offices, (2) belonging to a party or other political organization, (3) working in an election, (4) attending political meetings or rallies, (5) making financial contribution to a party or a candidate, (6) contacting a public official, (7) publicly expressing a political opinion to convince others, (8) partaking in political discussion, (9) voting, and (10) exposing oneself to political stimuli.<sup>32</sup>

Political participation is the mother and politics is the child. The former creates and determines politics and hence is of utmost importance both for the nation and the individual. The politics of the nation is determined therefore; by political participation is all its processes.<sup>33</sup>

## **2.4 Variables of Political Participation**

Political participation appears to be complex phenomenon, a dependent variable that hinges upon many factors such as the psychological, socio-economic and political, which provide orientation to individuals either positively or negatively. These may be separately explained briefly.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>William R. Schonfeld, *The Meaning of Democratic Participation*, *World Politics*, Vol. XXVIII, No.1, 1975, pp. 136-37.

<sup>33</sup>Raj Bala, *The Legal and Political Status of Women in India*, Mohit Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p. 250.

#### 2.4. A: Psychological Environment

Political participation tends to meet one's psychological needs of overcoming loneliness. It refers to the degree to which citizens are interested in and concerned about politics and public affairs. Psychological attachment of a person towards political objects certainly determines the extent and gravity of political participation.

In every society there are persons who are very much concerned and interested in political affairs and at the same time there are persons who have no such concern and interest in political affairs. This difference may be due to the differences in their psychological attitudes. In this situation it becomes clear that the former are more likely to be active in politics than the latter. Again it is generally believed that men are psychologically more involved than women in politics as in their respective field of activity.<sup>34</sup>

#### 2.4. B: Socio-economic Environment

The socio-economic environment will have a direct impact upon political participation. Socio-economic variables include education, occupation, income, age, caste, religion, sex, family background, residence etc. "Political participation", says Robert Lane, "is a function of age, sex, education and status"<sup>35</sup> Thus generally, participation tends to be higher among better educated, members of higher occupational and income groups, middle aged, dominant ethnic and religious groups, people with political family background, settled residents, urban dweller and the members of the voluntary associations. However, the correlation between political participation and some of these socio-economic variables may vary from culture to culture in the different political contexts and their effect on political participation may not be stable.

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<sup>34</sup>Herbert Mc. Closky, *Political Participation, International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol.12, Macmillan, New York, 1968, p.253.

<sup>35</sup>Robert E. lane, *Political Life: Why Do People Get Involved in Politics*, Free Press, New York, 1959, p.250.

Political participation is the hallmark of democracy and modernization. In the traditional society government and politics are concerns of narrow elite.<sup>36</sup> There is positive relationship between urban residence and higher levels of political participation. It has been argued that urbanization, combined with other component process of social modernization, would bind the citizens with new ties to the nation state and increase the extent of political communication that leads to greater political awareness.<sup>37</sup>

#### 2.4. C: Political Environment

The overall political environments do influence the entire process of political participation to a great extent. The political environment refer to the nature of the party system, the means of propagaanda and campaign , the extent of modernization and urbanization, the influence of ideology and the general awareness to the people etc.

The political party is the most potent instrument in facilitating political participation. The party resembles the nation both in its symbolic force and its capacity for arousing affection, devotion and sacrifice on the part of its members and sympathizer. The party also inspires its members to develop a feeling of belongingness. It has been observed that people, who affiliated to a party vote more frequently than those who are not. Strongly attached members are more in political discussions and work.<sup>38</sup>

The propagaanda and election campaign refer to the efforts made by political parties to involve the voters in the process of political participation. The campaign has its effect on polarizing party attachments, reinforcing candidate preferences and gaining votes. It is, in fact, a process of political education. A significant aspect of this relation of individual to his political environment is the exposure to the influence of propagaanda.

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<sup>36</sup>Kalpna Roy, *Women in Indian Politics*, Rajat Publications, Delhi, 1999, p.68.

<sup>37</sup>Hari Hara Das, *Introduction to Political Sociology*, op.cit., p.159.

<sup>38</sup>Hari Hara Das, *Introduction to Political Sociology*, op.cit., p.151.

Ideology can affect political participation, positively or negatively. Normally, those who have firm faith in democratic ideology positively respond to political participation. On the other hand, persons having contempt for democratic ideology show little inclination for political participation.

Political participation is associated with political awareness i.e., actual knowledge of political affairs. Awareness is highly connected with interest. In every society the number of citizens who can be described as 'aware' is extremely small. Awareness affects both the quality and amount of participation.<sup>39</sup> It is to be noted that the three sets of variables are closely linked and intermingled. A change in any one of them, can, therefore, increase or decrease the level of political participation.

#### 2.4. D: The Non-participants

Another dimension that has to be taken into account is why some people keep off from all forms of political participation or even if they participate they are ready to play only a minimal role. In other words people who participate in most forms of political activity constitute a minority and often a very small minority. The factors, which inhibit political participation, are psychological and emotional. The non-participants are described as apathetic, cynical, alienated and anemic.<sup>40</sup> Apathy is characterized by individuals' passivity or abstention from political activity. It may be defined as lack of interest or concern for persons, situations or phenomena in general or particular.<sup>41</sup> Apathy leads to the decline of political vitality and vigilance. Widespread apathy increases the chances of opportunists and unscrupulous people to dominate the policy making process. Thus it is nothing other than lack of interest in politics. Morris Rosenberg has suggested three major reasons for political apathy. The

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p.152.

<sup>40</sup>Kalpana Roy, op.cit., p.73.

<sup>41</sup>Hari Hara Das, *Political System of India*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p.361.

first reason is perceived consequence of political activity. Second reason is that the individual may regard political activity as futile. The third reason is that political stimuli are an important factor in encouraging political activity and the absence of such stimuli may contribute to feelings of apathy.<sup>42</sup>

Cynicism is a feeling that the actions and motives of others are to be regarded with suspicion. Robert Auger and his colleagues define cynicism as being contemptuously distrustful of human nature. It is observed that a person, who is extremely cynical may well feel that political participation in any form is futile and thus join the ranks of the totally apathetic.<sup>43</sup>

Alienation is another form of non-participation with respect to a political system. While cynicism refers to a type of distaste for politics and politicians, alienation denotes actual hostility. Robert Lane defines political alienation as a person's sense of estrangement from the politics and government of his society and the tendency to think of the government and politics of the nation as run by others according to an unfair set of rules.<sup>44</sup> According to Robert Lane anemic refers to "a sense of value loss and lack of direction".<sup>45</sup> It denotes a psychological attitude in which the individual experiences a feeling of ineffectiveness. Thus while apathy means lack of interest and cynicism represents an attitude of distaste or disenchantment, both alienation and anemic imply a feeling of estrangement or divorce from the society.<sup>46</sup>

## **2.5 Women and Political Participation: A Brief Outlook**

The present study is attempt to assess and evaluate the level and extent of political participation of women which has become a very

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Kalpana Roy, op.cit., p.73.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p.74.

<sup>46</sup>Hari Hara Das, *Political System of India*, op.cit., p.362.

much relevant as to the nature and functioning of the political system as a whole.

The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEADAW) which is considered as the Human Rights Bill of Women came into being in 1979. This treaty upholds the following rights of women, (1) Their right to vote in all general elections and referendums and to be elected to general assemblies, (2) their right to participate in the formulation and implementation of governmental policies and to hold public offices and, (3) their right to participate in non-governmental and socio-political organizations.<sup>47</sup>

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on 10 December, 1948, its Article 1, proclaimed that, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Article 2 provided for equality of sexes. It states that, “every one is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of sex.” It is considered as a clarion call for the cause of women empowerment. Milbrath and Goel observed that it is a tradition in almost all societies that politics is mainly an affair of men and that women should fall in line with them politically. The changes brought by modern industrial societies are eroding this sex difference but the impact of tradition is still visible. Men tend to be more psychologically involved in politics than women.<sup>48</sup> As women comprise about half of the population, this section of society requires due attention in the system and a due share in process.

However, it may be pointed out that all citizens do not participate equally or in the same manner in any political process. The political culture of a society greatly influences the nature of political participation by individuals. It is particularly more beneficial to political parties and political leader due to the natural qualities of

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<sup>47</sup>*Manaveeyam: Sthree Padhavi Padanam- A Hand Book (Malayalam)*, State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, p.77.

<sup>48</sup>Lester W. Milbrath, M.L. Goel, op.cit., p.48.

women such as honesty, affection and sense of duty. The mobilization of women in large numbers weakened the bondage of tradition and encouraged them to develop a perspective on the wider socio-political problems.<sup>49</sup>

## **2.6 Sex Differentiation in Politics**

The political participation or the political behaviors of human beings just like any other aspects of human behavior take place in a given socio-cultural setting. It implies that the political participation is affected by social structure, economic development and historical factors joining together. The politics observed that Islamic has given equal status in matters of religion and religious observations to men and women but politically they are unequal ones.<sup>50</sup> Marcia Lee believes that, lack of female participation in politics stems from three factors, namely, children at home, fear or sex discrimination and perceptions of women that certain things are not proper to do.<sup>51</sup> In fact, the generally accepted sex role socialization process is considered to be advantageous to males in the field of political participation although women may be interested in politics.

Studies on sex differences in the political behaviour usually focus on differences in early childhood socialization. Tedin, et.al, however, give more importance to situational factor in sex related differences in political expressiveness than to socialization or structural factor women are less politically expressive because the environment of the house wife or the menial sort of employment available to most women does not encourage them to take part in politics or give stimulation to collect and discuss politically relevant

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<sup>49</sup>Raj Kumar (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Women and Development*, Vol.5, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p.36.

<sup>50</sup>ZenabBanu, *Political Status of Muslim Women: An Emperies Study of Udaipur (Rajasthan)*, U.P., *Journal of Political Science*, Vol.12, No.1, Jan-June, 1990, pp.37-43.

<sup>51</sup>Marcia Manning Lee, *Why Few Women Hold Public Office: Democracy and Sexual Roles*, *Journal of Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.91, No.2, 1976, pp.297-314.

information. Female situational factors, which lead to less political expressiveness, become institutionalized and passed on to future generations through the socialization process, which in turn makes it more difficult for women to overcome situational disadvantages.<sup>52</sup>

Discrimination against women, says Henry Chafe, finds in the deep rooted structure of society, in the roles women play and in a sexual division of labour which restricted females primarily to the domestic sphere of life.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, it is argued that only substantial social changes capable of demolishing the structural basis regarding the traditional views of male and female roles is necessary to modify the existing trends in the political participation of men and women.<sup>54</sup>

## **2.7 Women and Movement for Political Rights: The world context**

From time immemorial, women were excluded from political rights. They were excluded from voting in ancient Greece and Republican Rome, as well as in the few democratic countries that had emerged in Europe by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>55</sup> When franchise was widened in the United Kingdom in 1832, women continued to be denied of all voting rights.<sup>56</sup> The question of women's voting rights finally became an issue in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the struggle was particularly intense in Great Britain and the United States; but these countries were not the first to grant women the right to vote, at least not on a national basis.

France was the first country to take up fight for voting rights by the women. Before the fight for franchise begins, during the French

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<sup>52</sup>Kent L. Tedin, David W. Brady and Arnold Vedlitz, "Sex Differences in Political Attitudes and Behaviour: The case for Situational Factors", *Journal of Politics*, Vol.39 No.2, New York, 1977, pp. 448-456.

<sup>53</sup>William Henry Chafe, *The American: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1972, pp. 46-47.

<sup>54</sup>Imtiaz Ahmed, *Women in Politics*, in Devaki Jain (Ed.), Indian Women Publication Division, New Delhi, 1975, p.312.

<sup>55</sup>"*Women Suffrage*" Encyclopedia, Britannica, 2008 Ultimate Reference Suite, (Data Disc), Encyclopedia Britannica Australia, 2009.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.



Revolution of 1789, women were already in the forefront. During the French Revolution, when Bastille, an old castle used as a prison was stormed in on the 14 July 1789 and the revolution was accomplished, it was the women who led.<sup>57</sup> In 1789 Parisian women of the lower classes convinced women of all classes to march to Versailles and seize the king.<sup>58</sup> They proceeded to Versailles, and forced the King and the Assembly to return to Paris. Yet, though women actively involved themselves in the Revolution, enfranchisement for the women did not come with the Revolution. To achieve franchise rights French women had to struggle hard and long. France was one of the last in Europe to enfranchise women, even though the demand for women's rights was first voiced by Olympe de Gouge during French Revolution.<sup>59</sup> French suffragists, throughout the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century faced opposition from politicians, many of whom were Socialists who feared women would support Catholicism and Right-wing political conservatism.<sup>60</sup> Suffrage to women was extended in France by the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1944 Ordinance of the French Provision Government.<sup>61</sup> Subsequently, the first election with female participation was the Municipal elections which were held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1945 and the Parliamentary elections of 21<sup>st</sup> October 1945. Muslim women in French Algeria had to wait till 1958.<sup>62</sup>

In Great Britain women suffrage was first advocated by Wollstonecraft's in her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).<sup>63</sup> However, Chartist movement of 1840s was the first movement for women enfranchisement. The demand for women suffrage was increasingly taken up by prominent liberal intellectuals in England from 1850s onward, notably by John Stuart Mill and his

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Dustin, *Women in the French Revolution, Fighting for France: 1789-1793*" 10 Feb. 2009, <http://www.french.history.suite101.com> Access 07/05/13.

<sup>59</sup>"Teaching Women's Rights from Past to Present", *Women's Suffrage: A worldwide Movement*. <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com>. Access 07/05/13.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>"Women Suffrage" op.cit.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

wife, Harriet.<sup>64</sup> The first women suffrage committee was formed in Manchester in 1865 and in 1867 Mill presented to parliament this society's petition, which demanded voting rights for women and contained about 1,550 signatures.<sup>65</sup> Yet, the Reform Bill of 1867 contained no provision for women suffrage. Meanwhile women suffrage societies were formed in most of the major cities of Britain, and during the 1870s these organizations submitted to Parliament petitions demanding franchise rights for women containing a total of almost three million signatures.<sup>66</sup> The succeeding years saw the defeat of every major suffrage bill brought before Parliament. This was chiefly because neither of the leading politicians of the day, including William Gladstone nor Benjamin Disraeli, cared to affront Queen Victoria's implacable opposition to the women's movement. In 1869, however, Parliament did grant women taxpayers the right to vote in municipal elections, and in the ensuing decades women became eligible to sit on county and city councils. Otherwise, the right to vote in Parliamentary elections was still denied to women, despite the considerable support that existed in Parliament for legislation to that effect. In 1897 the various suffragist societies united and formed one "National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies" (NUWSS)<sup>67</sup> thereby, bringing a greater degree of coherence and organization to women suffrage movement. The NUWSS hold public meetings, wrote letters to politicians and published various texts. In 1907, the NUWSS organized its first large procession. This march became to be known as the "Mud March" as over 3000 women trudged through the cold and rutty streets of London from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall to advocate for women's suffrage.<sup>68</sup> Out of frustration at the lack of governmental action, a segment of the women suffragettes became militant.

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<sup>64</sup>"Teaching Women's Rights from Past to Present", *Women's Suffrage: A world wide Movement*. <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com>. Access 07/05/12.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

Ultimately, in 1903, a number of members of the NUWSS broke away and, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, formed the 'Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).<sup>69</sup> Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst and her group started using "militant tactics" and they adopted the policy of hackling cabinet ministers and disturbing meeting.<sup>70</sup> In 1905, at a meeting where Sir Edward Grey, a member of the newly elected Liberal Government was speaking, two members of the WSPU constantly shouted out, "Will the Liberal Government gives votes to women?"<sup>71</sup> When they refused to stop, they were arrested and charged for assault. When they refused to pay their fine they were sent to prison. More arrests followed each demonstration and the strength of the society grew and the WSPU became more and more violent. This included an attempt in 1908 to storm the House of Commons and the arson of David Lloyd George's country home.<sup>72</sup> In 1909 Lady Constance Lytton was imprisoned, but immediately released when her identity was discovered. In 1910, she disguised herself as a working class seamstress called Jane Warton and endured inhuman treatment which included force feeding.<sup>73</sup> In 1913, Emily Davidson, a suffragette, interfered with a horse owned by King George V during the running of the Epsom Derby and was trampled and died four days later.<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, public support for the women suffrage movement grew in volume, and public demonstrations and processions were organized in support of women's right to vote. When World War I began, the women suffrage organizations shifted their energies to aiding the war effort and their effectiveness did much to win the public wholeheartedly to the cause of woman suffrage. The need for the enfranchisement of women was finally recognized by most members of Parliament from all three major parties, and as a result the Representation of the People Act was passed by the House of Commons in June 1917 and by the

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<sup>69</sup> *Women Suffrage*, op.cit.

<sup>70</sup> Verma, op.cit., p.7.

<sup>71</sup> *Women's Suffrage*, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

House of Lords in February 1918.<sup>75</sup> Thus, after much effort and struggle by them, in 1918 the government of Lloyd George finally granted voting rights to women. Nevertheless, it was limited only to the householders and the wife of the householders who have reached the age of 30 years and women voted for the first time in 1918.<sup>76</sup> Later on, in 2 July 1928; the Conservative Government brought forward a new bill. With that a complete political equality was granted to all the women, and the women's suffrage movement in Britain ended on a note of success in 1928.

In America, the movement for women suffrage started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century during the agitation against slavery. Women such as Lucretia Coffin Mott showed a keen interest in the antislavery movement and proved to be admirable public speakers. When Elizabeth Candy Stanton joined the anti-slavery forces, she and Mott agreed that the rights of women as well as those of slaves, needed redress. Elizabeth Candy Stanton and Lucretia Coffin Mott, together with other women, namely Marha C. Wright, and Mary Ann Clintock issued a call for a convention concerning the rights of women. That convention met in Seneca Falls New York on 19-20 July 1848.<sup>77</sup> The convention adopted a "Declaration of Principles" which stated "we hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal...".<sup>78</sup> It was followed in 1850 by the first national convention of the women's movement, held in Worcester, Massachusetts, by Lucy Stone and a group of prominent Eastern Suffragists. Another convention, held in Syracuse, New York, in 1852, was the occasion of the first joint venture between Stanton and the dynamic suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony. Together these two figures led the American suffragist movement for the next 50 years.<sup>79</sup> Another two most

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<sup>75</sup>Verma, op.cit., p.7.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Schenken, Suzanne O' Dea. *From Suffrage to Senate*, An Encyclopedia of American Women in Politics, Vol.2: N-Z, ABC-CLIO Santa Barbara, California, 1999, p.606.

<sup>78</sup>Women's Suffrage Movement in United States. [http:// www.essortment.com](http://www.essortment.com). Access on 04.06.09.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

influential leaders of the women's right movement in America in the second half of the nineteenth century were Elizabeth Candy Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. However, the united struggle for women's voting rights broke into two factions following the civil war. When the Territory of Wyoming granted women the right to vote in all elections in 1869, it soon became apparent that an amendment of the federal Constitution would be a preferable plan. Led by Anthony and Stanton, those who believed that they should seek an amendment to the US constitution formed the "National Women Suffrage Association" (NWSA) in May 1869 which held a convention every year for 50 years after its founding.<sup>80</sup> Later on in the same year the "America Women Suffrage Association" (AWSA) was formed by those who favour giving pressure to state legislatures to amend state constitution.<sup>81</sup> The leaders of this group were Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe. Considered as the more conservative organization, the AWSA supported the Republican Party, sought simple enfranchisement, and counted the abolitionists among its ranks. Its members also believed in the need for organizing the movement on the state and local levels. To that end, they drafted a constitution that called for a focus on achieving the vote for women. Concentrating on organizing in the state and local levels, the AWSA encouraged auxiliary state societies to be formed and provided an effective grassroots system for the dissemination of information about the women suffrage movement. After more than two decades of independent operation, the AWSA merged with the more radical National Women Suffrage Association to form the "National American Women Suffrage Association" (NAWSA) in 1890 and worked together for almost 30 years.<sup>82</sup> They exerted their influence through the press, platforms, circulars, petitions, lobbying in the legislature, etc. Some women suffragist like Lucy Burns even tried to employ aggressive and militant methods never before

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<sup>80</sup>Schenken, op. cit., p.646.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

employed in United States. When Wyoming entered the Union in 1890, it became the first state whose constitution accorded women the right to vote.<sup>83</sup>

Subsequently, vigorous campaigns were conducted to persuade state legislatures to support amendments to state constitutions conferring full suffrage to women in state affairs. Efforts were also made to give women the right to vote in presidential elections and, in some states, the right to vote in municipal and local elections. In the next 25 years various individual states yielded to the movement's demands and enfranchised their women. By 1918 women acquired equal suffrage with men in 15 states. However, at the Federal level universal adult franchise was established only after the adoption of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the constitution in 1920.<sup>84</sup>

Of the currently existing independent countries, New Zealand was the first self-governing country in the world to grant women the right to vote in the 1893.<sup>85</sup> Though it was the first country to give women the right to vote, women got this right not easily but after a hard struggle. In New Zealand, the campaign for enfranchisement began in the year 1869 when women with a name Mary Muller published an appeal for the rights of women, including the right to vote under the Pseudonym Femmina, because her husband did not approve of feminist views.<sup>86</sup> The issue of enfranchisement for women was raised in New Zealand with greater force in 1878. The Zealand women worked together with the "Women's Christian Temperance Union" (WCTU) of America who have its branches in New Zealand by that time.<sup>87</sup> Later, the first petition on women's right to vote was signed by 10,000 women over 21 years of age and was presented to

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Schenken, op. cit., p. 646.

<sup>85</sup>Colin, Aikmen Campbell. *History, Constitutional*, A.H Mc. Lintock (eds.) An Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Vol.2., Reowen, Government Printer, Wellington, New Zealand, 1996, pp. 67-75.

<sup>86</sup>Verma, op. cit.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

parliament in August 1891.<sup>88</sup> This petition was popularly known as “Women’s Suffrage Petition”.<sup>89</sup> The petition was the largest of its kind in New Zealand and other western countries. It is comprised of 546 sheets of paper, all glued together to form one continuous roll 274 meters long. In 1892, the Women’s Franchise League was formed and it also joined for enfranchisement. Moari women also joined the struggle and finally a bill providing for women’s suffrage was passed by the House of Representatives on 11 September 1893.<sup>90</sup> In this way, women finally got the right to vote, but unfortunately women did not get the right to contest the Parliament election along with it. The struggle for that continued until 1919.

Thus, in this way, at one point of time, the political participation of women in western, European and in some other countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century mostly revolved around the struggle for equal political rights or enfranchisement. The following table shows the granting of suffrage after a hard struggle to women in some select countries.

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p.27.

<sup>89</sup> “*Teaching Women’s Rights from Past to Present*”, op.cit.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

**Table 2.1. Granting of suffrage to women in some selected countries**

*Year listed is the first year women were allowed to participation (by voting) in elections and not the year when women were granted universal suffrage without restrictions.*

<b>First phase 1892-1922</b>	<b>Second Phase 1923-1949</b>	<b>Third phase 1950-1971</b>	<b>Fourth phase 1972 onward</b>
New Zealand 1892	Ecuador 1929	Pakistan 1950	Bangladesh 1972
Australia 1902	South tria1930*	Ethiopia 1955	Jordon 1974
Norway 1913	India 1935	Cambodia 1955	Mozambique 1975
Denmark 1915	Philippine 1937	Nicaragua 1955	Marshal Island 1979
Canada 1917	Cuba 1940	Mauritius 1956	Palau 1979
Soviet Union 1917	Quebec 1940	Malaysia 1957	Liechtenstein 1984
Poland 1918	Japan 1945	Nigeria 1958	Samoa 1990
Estonia 1918	France 1945	Upper Volta 1960	South Africa 1994**
Austria 1918	Indonesia 1945	Rwanda 1961	Oman 2003
England 1918	Hungary 1945	Sudan 1964	UAE 2006
Sweden 1919	Costa Rica 1949	Somalia 1970	
United States 1920	China 1949	Switzerland 1971	

*Source: Timeline of International Women Suffrage*

<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki>. Access 15/05/09

\*Suffrage was granted only to white women.

\*\*Suffrage was granted to Black women

## **2.8 Women and Independence Movement: The world context**

In the colonies of Asia, Africa and Latin America, women's political participation was recorded in the twin fight for independence and for enfranchisement. In Latin America, Ecuador was the first country to grant suffrage to women in 1929. Even before this right was granted, Women were in the Independence movement (1802-1822); hundreds



of women came out and fought. Women also joined the army and fought battles in 1875.<sup>91</sup>

Colombian women were also in the forefront of revolts against oppressive ruler in the country and for the country's independence during the period from 1810 to 1822. However, after the 1819 Revolution, women were excluded from political participation. Women were still excluded from political enfranchisement after independence which came in 1824. So in 1930, a first platform for women's voice was organized by Georgiana Fletcher.<sup>92</sup> Another three women, Rosa Maria Aguitira, Ilde Carrizo, and woman, Dr. Zea Hernandez fought for suffrage in 1946 and she was imprisoned.<sup>93</sup> Suffrage was finally granted to women in 1954. Notably, 75 percent of registered women voted for the first time in 1957.<sup>94</sup>

In the continent of Africa, in which most of the countries were under the colonial rule, women took active roles in the fight for independence. Women of Kenya enjoyed respect in their communities before the country became a colony in the hands of the Portuguese, then in the hand of the German, and finally under the British rule began as early as between 1911-1914 when Me Katilite, a 70-year-old Giryamawoman organized her people against the British.<sup>95</sup> In this way, women became active participants in the independence struggle. Suffrage, for the women came together with independence.

In Nigeria too women's participation was not a new phenomenon. Women fought against the British when the British established judicial systems where the arbitration courts of women were made powerless and only male power structure was recognized. This led to women's war of 1929 because of the dissipation of women's function.<sup>96</sup> Women again revolted against the British rule in 1959

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Verma, op.cit.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

because of their discriminatory policy. In 1960, Nigeria gained independence, but the Federal Constitution denied the right to vote and the right to be elected to the House of the Assembly to women of Northern Nigeria.<sup>97</sup> For this discrimination, there was another movement by the women. The protest continued until 1977 when women of Nigeria got the Universal enfranchisement.

In the continent of Asia also, the women's participation in politics was not a new phenomenon. The women of Asia, particularly in Non-Islamic countries, actively participated in all the political activities. In China, during the Taipei rebellion in 1851, Women fought for equal rights for which they formed women's army.<sup>98</sup> Again, during the Boxer rebellion of 1899-1901, women set up military associations. Women school teachers also became activists during the 1911 Republican Revolution. Not only did they smuggle arms and planted mines, but they also fought at the front. After the abdication of the Qing Court, these women militants took over the fight for women's rights including the suffrage.<sup>99</sup> Tang Junyang founded the Chinese Suffrage Society in Beijing in 1911.<sup>100</sup> She led women to the first meeting of the National Assembly constituted under the 1911 Constitution and became violent when the vote was refused. In 1923, when the new President Yuan Shikai came, he crushed the women's activities and Tang Jungang was arrested. After the World War I, women came forward again in the Nationalist May 4 Movement in 1919. At last, in 1921, Hunan became the first province to grant suffrage to women.<sup>101</sup> However, the National Congress of Sun Yatsen, during its deliberations on making a permanent constitution for the country, failed to invite women and denied the right to vote to them. This led to demonstrations, which were brutally suppressed. During the war against Japan, women were again in the forefront. During the

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

third civil war after Second World War, women again demanded the right to vote. Here, women down to the grass root level were involved in the battle for enfranchisement. In one village, women who were denied the right to vote for the village head refused to recognize the elected head and decided not to sleep with their husbands till the right was given.<sup>102</sup> They succeeded soon enough. In China, suffrage at last was granted to all the women on October 1, 1949 when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded and when Chiang Kaishek retreated to Taiwan.<sup>103</sup>

Thus in this way, the political participation of women in Asia, Africa and Latin America during the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was confined to their participation in the struggle for change in the government or for the independence of their own countries. The struggle for suffrage in these countries was not intense like in Western and European countries. Suffrage for the women in these countries came together with the independence of their countries.

## **2.9 Women and Electoral Politics**

As soon as, women received the right to vote in their own country, they started participating in various political activities of their respective countries. Britain, which was known for the most intense struggle for women enfranchisement, was able to produce one of the strongest women Prime Ministers-Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Baroness Thatcher of Estevez, British Conservative party politician and Prime Minister (1979-90). Margaret Hilda Thatcher, who became the first European women Prime Minister.<sup>104</sup> She also, became the only British Prime Minister in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to win three consecutive terms. At the time of her resignation, Britain's longest continuously serving Prime Minister since 1827, she accelerated the evolution of the British

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Young, Hugo. *Thatcher, Margaret*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008, Ultimate Reference Suite, (Data Disc) Encyclopedia Britannica Australia, 2009.

economy from states to liberalism and became the most renowned British political leader since Winston Churchill.<sup>105</sup>

In America also, though there have been no women President so far, the America women have been serving in various public offices. Mention may be made of women like Catherine East, Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, etc. In 1963 Catherine East became executive secretary of the first Presidential Advisory Commission on the Status of Women, and she held senior staff positions with successive Advisory Commissions until 1977.<sup>106</sup> “National Organization for Women” (NOW) founder Betty Friedan called East “the midwife of the contemporary women’s movement” for catalyzing her and others to spearhead the drive to eliminate sexism in society.<sup>107</sup> In the following decades, the women in these countries came together with the independence of their countries disprove the claims of those who opposed feminist legislation but also helped reconcile between women labor activists and feminists. For several years, she coordinated study on women’s issues at George Washington University and subsequently (1983-86) was legislative director of the “National Women Political Caucus”, both in Washington, D.C.<sup>108</sup> Another woman, Gloria Steinem also played an important role in the early politics of America. She founded the “National Women Political Caucus” (NWPC) in July 1971 with Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug and Shirley Chisholm.<sup>109</sup> The work of this organization included identifying, recruiting, training, endorsing, and supporting women seeking public office. The organization endeavored to improve the status of women by amplifying the voice of women in government. Throughout the late 1970s and the 1980s, Steinem gave much of her time to political organizations and became an articulate advocate for the women’s liberation movement. She participated in the

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>*East, Catherine*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008, Ultimate reference Suite, (Data Disc), Encyclopedia Britannica Australia, 2009.

<sup>107</sup>Young, Hugo. “*Thatcher, Margaret*”, Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008, Ultimate Reference Suite, (Data Disc) Encyclopedia Britannica Australia, 2009.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

founding of the Coalition of labor Women Union, Voters for Choice, and Women against Pornography, etc.<sup>110</sup>

At present there are some who head the government in their own country and they are being shown in the following table:

**Table 2.2 Women Heads of the Government**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Position Held</b>
Angela Merkel	Germany	Chancellor
Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner	Argentina	President
Ellen Johnson- Sir leaf	Liberia	President
Gloria Macapagal- Arroyo	Philippines	President
Helen Clarke	New Zealand	Prime Minister
Luisa Diego	Mozambique	Prime Minister
Mary Mc Aleese	Ireland	President
Michelin Calmy- Rey	Swiss Confederation	President
Michelle Bachelet	Chile	President
Pratibha Patil	India	President
Jarja Halonen	Finland	President
Yulia Tymoshenko	Ukraine	Prime Minister
Zinaida Greceanji	Moldova	Prime Minister

*Source: <http://wikipedia.org/wiki/List-of-elected-appointed-female-headsof-state>. Access 13/5/09.*

Thus in this way, the women in different parts of the world have come to the highest post and rule the country even though they were denied the voting rights in the beginning.

## **2.10 Political participation of women in India**

Political participation of women in India may be studied under two heads: 1) during the pre-independence period and 2) during the post-

<sup>110</sup>Steinem, Gloria. Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008, Ultimate Reference Suite (Data Disc), Encyclopedia Britannica Australia, 2009.

independence period. In the pre-independence period, women's political participation was mainly confined to the struggle for national independence. However, they also had their own share of struggle for enfranchisement which has already been mentioned. In the post-independence period, they began to participate in every act of political activities, and participated in various elections conducted at different levels- local, state and national levels.

### **2.11 Political participation of women in pre-independence period**

During the British rule in India, the political participation of the Indian women was mainly confined to that of their participation in the freedom struggle. It can be noted that their participation in the national movement dates back as early as in 1883, when a number of women wrote to the Viceroy in support of the Ilbert Bill that would allow Indian judges to try cases involving Europeans. With that, women began to participate in every activities of political movement for independence. In 1889, four years after the Indian National Congress (INC) was founded, ten women attended its annual meeting.<sup>111</sup> Later on, in 1890, Swarnakumari Ghosal, a women novelist, and Kadambini Ganguly, the first women in the British Empire to receive a B.A degree and one of the India's first medical doctors, attended as delegates.<sup>112</sup>

In 1905, during the partition of the Province of Bengal, women joined men in protesting the division by boycotting foreign goods and buying only swadeshi goods, that is, goods produced in the province of Bengal. In this regard, Nirad Chaudhuri recalled how his parents decided to put away the children's foreign made clothes and buy Indian outfits. Later on in 1909, his mother took a sudden and violent dislike to a glass water pitcher that survived the Swadeshi movement

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<sup>111</sup>Forbe, op.cit., p.122.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

and ordered one of her sons to smash it.<sup>113</sup> Mrs. Annie Besant, an Irish lady born in England, who worked in the Theosophical Society in Madras and also the President of the Society in 1907, was one of the ladies who encouraged the Indian women to come out and join the national movement. She was the first President of the Women's India Association (WIA). She started the Home Rule Movement in India and under its auspices established organizations throughout the country and distributed vast quantities of propagandist literature.<sup>114</sup>

During the freedom struggle, the greatest participation of women was recorded in Gandhi's movement. In his first non-cooperation movement in the year 1920, women from different parts of the country joined the processions and propagated the use of khadi and charkha. In Bengal speaking to a group of women in August, Urmila Devi, the widowed sister of the Bengali Congress leader C.R. Das, urged women to be ready to leave their homes to serve the country. By November, 1,000 Bombay women were demonstrating against the visit of Prince of Wales to India.<sup>115</sup> Women like Basanti Devi accompanied her husband Deshbandu Chittarranjan Das in his tour of Bengal and even asked women to boycott foreign goods.<sup>116</sup> She also presided over the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chittagong in April 1922. In the same year Kasturbai Gandhi presided over a Gujarat Conference and appealed to women to take up spinning and wear khadi.<sup>117</sup> At the All Indian Ladies Conference in Ahmadabad, 6,000 women listened to Bi Amma, the mother of Shaukat Ali and Mohammad Ali, leaders of the All India Khilafat Committee. Bi Amma urged women to enlist as Congress Volunteers and, if their men folk

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<sup>113</sup>Basu, Aparna, "The role of women in the Indian Struggle for Freedom", *Indian Women: From Purdah to Modernity*, (eds.) Nanda, B.R. Vikas Publishing, New Delhi, 1976, p.17

<sup>114</sup>Jayapalan, N. "*Indian Society and Social Institution*", Vol.1. Atlantic Publisher Distributors, 2001, pp. 199-200.

<sup>115</sup>Pearson, O.Gail. "*Women in Public Life of Bombay city with special reference to civil dis-obedience movement*", Unpublished PhD thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, 1979, pp. 175-84.

<sup>116</sup>Kaul, Dr. Vanita. "*Women and wind of change*", Gyan Publishing House, Delhi, 2002, p.62.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

were arrested, to join the picket lines and keep “the flag flying”.<sup>118</sup> However, the participation of women in the first non-cooperation movement was limited to those whose husbands, fathers, sons or brothers had already joined the struggle and were in the jail. It was in the civil disobedience movement or the salt Satyagraha movement of 1930 that one saw a far greater participation of women. In this movement, Mahatma in fact nominated the famous Poetess Mrs. Sorojini Naidu to lead the raid on Dharasana Salt Works after he and Abbas Tyadji were arrested.<sup>119</sup> She steadfastly kept her faith with him and raided the Dharasana Salt works and with this, salt Satyagraha spread in other parts of India. In Bombay, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Sorojini Naidu’s sister-in-law, and Avantikabai Gokhale were among the first women to defy the government monopoly of salt manufacturing and thus break the salt law.<sup>120</sup> In April 1930, thousands of women strode down to the sea like proud warriors but instead of weapons, they bore pitchers of clay, brass, and copper; instead of uniforms, the simple sari of India.<sup>121</sup> In another incident in Bombay, when the police raided the Bombay Congress House where salt pans had been prepared, they found their way blocked by Mrs. Perin Captain, Mrs. Jamnabehn, Ratanabehn and five other women volunteers. Soon Sewa Dal camps were opened in all parts of India to train women in the techniques of Satyagraha and in other political works.<sup>122</sup>

In the East, in Calcutta a Ladies’ Picketing Board was formed, and various women’s organizations such as the Nari Satyagraha Committee, Rashitriya Mahila Sangh, Nikhil JayatiNari, etc. broke the salt law, and sent batches of women for picketing and courting

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<sup>118</sup>Gail, Minault, “*Purdah Politics: The role of Muslim women in Indian Nationalism, 1911-1924*”, Papanek, Hannah & Minault (eds.) *G. Separate Worlds*, Chanakya Publications, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 245-61.

<sup>119</sup>Kaul, op.cit., p.65

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p.67.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.



arrest.<sup>123</sup> Lord Irwin's address to the Central Assembly on July 1930 was marked by picketing on the first day by a specially chosen group of twenty-seven women volunteers drawn from Lahore, Shimla and Ambala. Assembled outside the Central Assembly Hall, they waved little black flags on his arrival and chanted in unison "Irwin, go back",<sup>124</sup> and they went away singing national songs. Meanwhile, back in Lahore, Lado Rani Zutshi's daughter, Manmohini Sehgal, the president of the student union, organized a series of student strikes and picketing at college gates and was ultimately arrested with some of her companions.

However, it was in Gujarat, the home state of Mahatma Gandhi, where women's participation was the largest and perhaps the most impressive. Special teams were started in the Sabarmati Ashram to train women Satyagrahis.<sup>125</sup> Some like Gangabehn Vidya who had been a widow at the tender age of sixteen led a procession of 1200 women in Borsad on 21<sup>th</sup> January 1931. The procession was later lathi charged, and Gangabehn was severely beaten but she did not give up the tri-colour that she was holding and she was put to prison. In this way more than 80,000 people were arrested during the Salt Satyagraha and more than 17,000 of these were women.<sup>126</sup> Writing from Naini jail, Pandit Nehru said: "I had a special feeling of satisfaction because of the activities of my mother, wife, and sisters, as well as many girl cousins and friends; and though I was separated from them and was in prison, we grew near to each other"<sup>127</sup> The role of women in the freedom movement was legendary. Not only Vijaya Laskmi and Krishna, but also the ailing Kamala Nehru was in the frontlines of leadership in Allahabad, organizing processions, addressing meetings and picketing foreign clothes shops and liquor shops.

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., pp.69-70.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., p.71.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Varma, op.cit.

Apart from the women who participated in Gandhiji's movement, there were also some women who could not accept the Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence. So, they joined the violent revolutionaries. Prominent among them were women like Madam Bikaji Cama who organized the dispatch of revolutionary literature and arms of India from Paris. Santi Das and Sunita, schoolgirls from Commilla shot death Stevens, the District Magistrate of Commilla on December 14, 1931. They had presented him with a petition to allow a swimming competition and when he went to sign it, they both pulled revolvers from beneath their shawls and fired directly into his body.<sup>128</sup>In February of the next year, another woman, Bina Das attempted assassination of Stanley Jackson the Governor of Bengal at the Calcutta University Convocation ceremonies. She was sentenced for seven years imprisonment. In Delhi, seventeen years old Roop Vati Jain was in charge of the bomb factory under Chandra Shekhar Azad. Aruna Asaf Ali, another "tigress of nationalism" went underground and organized countrywide resistance to colonial rule. Another woman, Usha Mehta played a Stella role with her daring underground broadcasts by operating underground radio station. She broadcast the "Congress news" every evening precisely at 7:30 P.M from August to November 13, 1942 till her and her colleagues were arrested and put to prison.<sup>129</sup>

In this way, the Indian women resorted to both non-violent and revolutionary techniques, and participated in the freedom struggle till India got her independence on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1948. Thus the political participated of the women in India during this period was more or less confined to the political activity for national independence.

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<sup>128</sup>Nandy, Akhilchandra. "Girls in Indian Freedom Struggle", The Patrika Sunday Magazine, Calcutta September 2.1973, pp. 1-2.

<sup>129</sup>Kaul, op.cit.

## **2.12 Political participation of women in post-independence period**

After, India got independence in the year 1947, the political participation of women took a new shape and now they participate mainly in the electoral politics of the country. The constitution of the country granted equality to women by way of political rights. Against this backdrop, a number of women got entry into the corridor of Legislature through election, and few through nomination. However, it may be noted that apart from their involvement in the freedom struggle, there were some women who already were in the politics of the state when they were given voting rights for the first time in the year 1920.<sup>130</sup> As such, in the elections for Legislative Councils, Two women contested in the Madras Assembly. In 1926, Dr. Mathu Laskmi Reddy became the first women to be elected the Deputy-President of the Madras Legislative council.<sup>131</sup> In 1932 elections in the Provinces, many women contested and many of them were elected. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit became the first woman to serve in a cabinet in the United Province.<sup>132</sup>

The Indian women not only were elected in the Legislative Councils, but they also become members of the Constituent Assembly to draft a Constitution for independence India. It had among its members, veteran women leaders like Sorojini Naidu, G Durgabai, Renuka ray, and Hansa Mehta. Besides, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur was also a member of the constituent Assembly's Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights. After independence and under the new Constitution which was adopted in the year 1950, women of India began to enjoy socio-political rights similar with that of men. With this, they began to participate in every election held at different levels. The number of women who have occupied seats in Lok Sabha since

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<sup>130</sup>Jain, C.K. "*Women parliamentarians in India*", Chhabbra, Surjet Singh, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1993, p.28.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., p.28.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p.29.

the first general election held in the year 1951 is shown in the following table:

**Table 2.3 Number of women who contested and won  
Lok Sabha Elections (1952-2014)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of seats</b>	<b>No. of contestants</b>	<b>Contested Female</b>	<b>Elected Female</b>	<b>% Win</b>
1952	499	1874	53	22	41.5
1957	494	1518	45	27	60.0
1962	494	1985	70	35	50.0
1967	520	2369	67	30	44.8
1971	520	2784	86	21	24.4
1977	542	2439	70	19	27.1
1980	542	4620	142	28	19.7
1984	542	5574	164	42	25.6
1989	529	6160	198	27	13.6
1991	521	8699	325	39	12.0
1996	543	13952	599	39	6.5
1998	543	4750	274	43	15.7
1999	543	4648	284	49	17.2
2004	543	5435	355	45	12.7
2009	543	8070	556	38	6.8
2014	543	8251	668	62	9.3

*Source: Election commission of India, New Delhi.*

The above table shows the number of women who contested and got elected in Lok Sabha since the first general Lok Sabha Election held in the year 1952. Comparing to the participation of women during the freedom struggle with that of their participation as candidates at the time of elections, their participation in the latter has been marginal. However, even though their representation was marginal, yet in India there was never an election where women were missing totally. In fact, India has seen a number of women politicians

who have created a niche in the politics of the country such as the likes of been Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Ms. Mayawati, Ms. Mamta Bannerjee, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, Ms. Jay Lalitha, Mrs. Vasundhara Raje, Mrs. Shiela Dixit, Ms. Uma Bharati, etc.

### **2.13 Political Participation of Women in North East India**

In a giant democracy such as India and particularly in North East India, where women constitute half of the population, the political participation as well as representation of women is pertinent. Nonetheless, their representation and involvement in politics is marginally low or under-represented. The essence of democracy is tremendously undermined by this shortfall of women's active political participation in the decision making process. Segregation of women in politics leads to a consequential setting where contribution of women is overlooked and their potential is not fully recognized. Political participation of women is imperatively pivotal for this present age where the concept of women empowerment is immensely crucial however cumbersome in progress it may be. Low political participation of women can be attributed to numerous socio-economic and political factors such as traditionalism, illiteracy, gender prejudices, economic dependency, male domination in the political setup and so forth. In order to empower women and augment their political participation, the government of India has been responsibly taking progressive steps, for instance, the passing of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bill which provisioned for 33.3% reservation for women in local government bodies. And on the part of society, political participation of women is to be encouraged by promoting and enhancing political culture, political awareness/consciousness among womankind. The efforts for women's active political participation can be fully realized only when the society become thoroughly aware of women's political behaviors. For this purpose, one needs to fathom the level of women's political participation in their respective societal setup in the North-

East. The section certainly aims at providing a general description about the nature and level of political participation of women in the states in the North East. As such the current chapter will present brief and concise description on political participation of women in each state. The case of Assam will be analyzed first.

#### **2.14 Political Participation of Women in Assam**

The history of political participation of women in Assam is interesting. During the Ahoms women actively participated in Political life of the region. In 16<sup>th</sup> century Assam had the heroic lady like Mula Gabharu who after the death of her husband in a fight formed a women soldier's troop to fight against the enemy and sacrificed her life for the country. Several women were there who helped the king in many ways by their farsighted capacity and intelligence.

But actually, the process of women's participation in electoral politics in Assam had begun in 1937 that is before the independence of the country. One lady (from the area which is now part of Meghalaya) Mavis Dan Lyndoh was the member in the state legislature from 1937 to 1946. The lady was very politically conscious and active, and worked hard during her term for the development of women; particularly for the women's education. She established numbers of schools and institutions including the Medical College in Guwahati. In 1946 another woman became the member of the Assam Legislative Assembly who represented Shillong (Bonile Khongman from Meghalay). She was also the first woman member of Parliament from the region, later she was also elected as the Deputy Chairman in the State Legislative Assembly (Lower House of State Legislature). During the independence movement the leaders like Hemanta Kumari Devi, NaliniBala Devi, Chandraprova Saikia, Sumitra Bhattacharya, Kiranmayee Agarwalla, Shrijuta Rajabala Das, Swarnalata Barua, Kanaklata, Bhageswari Fhukani, Khahulinath and so on took a great role in the struggle of Independent India. These Women wings also

participated in grassroots movements and in the forefront of almost all movements for social reform such as 'Assam Movement' against the illegal immigrants (1979-85). They have fought for human rights and other social cause, such as price hike, anti-alcohol, violence against women, corruption, army atrocities, and insurgency and against other anti-social activities. This is of great significance, since this grassroots level participation has broadened the base of women's participation in politics.

After independence of the country the number of woman legislators in the first State Legislature was only one, from the Congress party Usha Borthakur, who was also the member of the Upper House of the National Parliament. In the second State Assembly five women were elected. Assam had women who were active in politics as well as firm social workers, worked for social development and for the upliftment of women in society at that time too. Despite having a glorious history of the women of Assam, they could not occupy good position in decision making process. They are still lagging behind their male counterparts.

In Lok Sabha elections from 1952 to 2014, as we know Assam has 14 Lok Sabha seats and 7 seats for the Rajya Sabha. It is clear that since 1957 the percentage of the participants of Assamese women in Lok Sabha is almost same in all the general election. In the first general election of 1952, two ladies were contested in Lok Sabha election were by both were defeated. In 1957 again the two women candidates were contested in Lok Sabha election and both of them managed to win the election. In the next Lok Sabha election of 1967, out of two one (7.1 percent) was elected. The mid-term election 1971, were contested by three ladies in which only one could win the election. In 1977 out of 14 seats only 3 candidates contested in Lok Sabha election and 2 (14.3 percent) could managed to win the election. Interestingly from 1980 to 1989 not a single female candidate forwarded their candidature. Again, in 1991 election the number of

women candidate increased up to 7 but no one got elected. Both in 1996 and 1999 election 9 female candidates contested in election, and 2 in each term managed to win respectively. In the next election 2004 only 6 candidates forwarded their candidature but none could win. Women's representation increased in 2009 general election, whereas out of 169 candidates 11 were female and 2 could manage to win the election. Since 1952 not more than 2 (14.3 percent) women candidate could able to occupy the Lok Sabha seats from Assam which shows very low percentage of women in comparisons to male representation. In case of representation to Rajya Sabha, the number of women candidate is very low. In the present Rajya Sabha not a single woman is there.

Again the participation of women in the state legislature, compared to its male counterpart, is very low. The first assembly election was held in Assam in 1952. In the first election of independent India six women filed nomination. Out of six's candidates only two women's candidates (1.58 percent) were elected. In 1957 the number of women candidate increased to eight and five were successful. In the general elections held in 1962; six candidates contested and all of them were elected. In 1967 election there was a definite improvement so far as the Assembly election was concerned. The nine female candidates contested in election and 6 (4.67 per cent) could manage to win the election. The fifth Assembly election was held in 1972, 12 women contested the election to the legislative assembly and 8 (6.43 per cent) could manage to win the election. The percentage of winning slightly increased from two (1.58 percent) in 1952 to eight (6.43 percent) in 1972. It again declined to one (.79 percent) in 1997 election which is the lowest ever. The number of women contestant in 1996 election increased up to 5 and 6 (4.75 percent) could manage to win the election. In the assembly election of 2006, out of 927 male and 70 female candidates only 13 (10.32 percent) women candidates were elected. In the last assembly election 2011, out of 981 candidates the total number of male candidates was



896 were as the number of women candidates was only 85, which is highest ever in the long history of state assembly election. Among them only 14 (10.4 percent) could managed to win the election. The above analysis shows very less number of women candidates in comparison to male contestants of state assembly election. Women candidates could not able to fill up the 33 percent reserved seats of women.

Again, Panchayat election of 2002 witnessed a large number of women participation with 34 elected members. Out of 2,478 candidates, 821 women candidates joined as the President of Gao Panchyat and out of 2,487 members were Anchalik Panchayat and 129 became the member of Zilla Parishad. The percentage is 33 percent while in the all India level it was only 31.32 percent. The 2006 Panchayat election shows slight increase in the number of representation to the Government, out of 23453 representatives in Panchayat 8977 (38 percent) were female. In Anchalik or block level, 791 (36.83 percent) women represented as member of Anchalic Panchayat and 135 (34.62 percent) represented as the member of Zilla Parishad. Thus, the number of women participants in Local Self-Government is better than the women representation in Assembly and Lok Sabha election. However, comparison to male representation it is very low; it just managed to cross the 33 percent quota of women reservation seat.

Since the first election the number of women voter keeps increasing. According to the 2001 census report, out of 174,43,617 the total number of voters 84,31,467 were women and it constituted approximately 40 percent of the total voters. However, in the legislative election of 2006 women voters increased up to 70 percent. The percentage of women voters of the 2006 assembly election was 74.96 percent as compared to 76.64 percent of male voters. The voter of national level election is also high in Assam. Their average percentage is 66.80 percent in 15<sup>th</sup>LokSabha election.

Though, the percentage of women voters increases considerably, still they are lagging behind the decision making power of men. They are still regarded as the second citizen of the state. Politics at every level of participation is dominated by men.

### **2.15 Political Participation of Women in Arunachal Pradesh**

Though, the history of the growth of political process in Arunachal Pradesh dates back to 1875 when the British-India Government started to define the administrative jurisdiction by drawing an Inner Line in relation to the frontier tribes inhabiting the North Frontier Tract, the area was kept outside the purview of regular laws of the country. In those days, dominance of patriarchal value-system denies rights of participation to women in various spheres. Such structural inequalities in terms of relative deprivations in earnings, education, employment and overall well-beings, creates strong barriers for effective participation of women in decision-making, so far as the majority of the women are concerned. Along with that the internalization of patriarchal values by women themselves, through socialization processes and other means, make the articulation of independent voices of women more problematic and difficult.

In the post-independence period, the most crucial aspect of political development that needs pressing attention is the near complete marginalization of women in politics. At present there are no women representatives from the state either in the union parliament or in the state assembly. In the past, the share of women members in state legislative assembly had never exceeded 5 per cent. No woman candidate/representative had ever made it to the Lok Sabha from the state. In the last twenty five years there were only one woman member of parliament from the state, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha. Thus, at least in terms of representation in the formal structures of political power, women in Arunachal Pradesh remain completely marginalized.

A look at the 2004 state general election indicates higher women's participation as compared to that of men as voters. Out of the total 317846 women voters, 210551 women i.e. 66.24% voted as compared to total 338050 male voters out of which 209324 (i.e. 61.92%) voted. Sadly women as representatives didn't fared well as none of the 9 women who contested in the election got elected. In 2009 assembly election, 77.10% i.e. 287422 out of total 372796 women electorates voted and 72.52% (i.e. 273519 out of total 377152) male voters voted. In the election two women got made it through to the assembly viz. karyaBagang and Nang Sati Mein from chayang Tajo and Namsai constituencies respectively. In the assembly election of 2014, the total numbers of male and female voters are 379567 and 379777 respectively. Out of the total number of male voters, 240004 i.e. 63.23% exercised their franchise and 253524 i.e. 66.76% of total female voters voted. In this election a total number of six female candidates contested and just two candidates namely, Karya Bagang of Chayang Tajo constituency and Gum Tayang of Damonk constituency came out as winners.

Even today at the grassroots level, it is the traditional village-chief and the village councils, which play a crucial role in political participation and decision-making process. These institutions are considered to be democratic and participatory, in spite of considerable diversity in their power, area of operation and modes of decision-making. However, women are hardly allowed to play any role in these traditional institutions, although in recent years there have been some attempt to provide some space to them. The percentage of women village –chiefs was only 1.13 per cent in the state. However, after the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj System along with thirty three per cent reservations for women has altered women's position in grassroots level political institutions. For the state as a whole, women's shares at the village, intermediate and district panchayat levels were 39.60, 34.99 and 33.82 per cent respectively in the recently concluded panchayat elections. The introduction of

reservation for women in the decentralized institutions of governance may play a catalytic role in gradually eliminating the gender gap in sharing of political power in the state.

### **2.16 Political Participation of Women in Mizoram**

The Mizo society is patriarchal societies whereby women are having lower status vis-a-vis men in social, economic, religious and political aspects. In the past, the whole system was completely dominated by male as village chief. However, women could have chance to become village chief, if her husband had deceased without leaving major heir. We find a number of such cases until the advent of British in North East India and they had proved to be efficient not less than their male counterparts in carrying out the village administration. They even participated in the freedom struggle, for instance the Mizo chieftain, Ropuiliani in a patriarchal society of the Mizo. It has been highlighted well her patriotic and heroic roles in instilling a sense of Mizo nationhood, and mobilizing them and thereby leading Mizoram Resistance against the then Lushai Hills (Mizoram).<sup>133</sup>

After independence, the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council (later the Mizo Hills Autonomous District Council) and Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were Created under the Six Schedule to the Constitution of India in 1952 and in 1953 respectively. The chieftainship was also abolished by an Act of the Assam Lushai Hill District (Acquisition of Chiefs Right) in 1954. Both, the Councils democratized the village administration by enacting the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 and the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous District Councils (Village Councils) Act, 1954. Accordingly, the village administration was vested in the democratically elected Village Councils, which in fact started functioning from August 1954 within

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<sup>133</sup>Lalneihzovi, 'Role of Ropuiliani in the Freedom Struggle', (ed), Aizawl, printed at Gilzom Offset Press, 2005, pp. 56-60.

the respective jurisdictions of the Councils. These Acts did not provide seat reservation for women.

There were four nominated seats in each Autonomous District Councils where one of the seats had been given to woman. As the Mizo people became politically conscious during the formation of the Autonomous District Council, the women organization in the name of Mizoram Hmeichhe Tangrual was also formed to cause women empowerment by the womenfolk in Mizoram. They demanded that nominated four seats should be given to women.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, nominating women as members of the District Council became a turning point for Mizo women to participate in political leadership and decision-making. Therefore, credit must also go to the Mizoram Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl in this regard. Even though, women members were not given much chance to cause women development in the proceedings of the District Council, yet there had been one significant role played by them to causes changes in the customary law of the Mizos. Significant change was affected by the District Council. According to this change women were allowed to inherit property by “Will” if properly executed with witness. Since then the Mizo women have a right to inherit family property through “Will”.

The Mizo District Council was elevated to the status of Union Territory of Mizoram in January 1972 with a 33 elected and nominated members and a council of minister. The first General Election to the Member of Legislative Assembly was held in April, 1972. Unfortunately no political party had fielded any woman candidate while two women contested as independent candidates so far. But both of these women contestants had lost and forfeited their deposits. The Mizo Union, being the majority, formed the Ministry and nominated Ms. Saptawni. It seemed she did not find much chance in regard to upliftment of women in the society.

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<sup>134</sup>Lalneihzovi, *Changing Status of Women in North Eastern States* (eds.), New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2009, p.63.

During the demand for the formation of Union Territory period, two new political parties were formed namely, People's Conference (PC) Party, now known as Mizoram People Conference (MPC) and the Mizo Democratic Front (MDF). The MPC had six Secretaries apart from the General Secretary and one of them was female. The MDF Party was also headed by a lady, Sanglianchhungi as its President. This is a landmark in the history of Mizoram for a woman took the leadership of a political party. It also indicated that women are not inferior to men in terms of leadership in the political field. This same lady had made an important history in Mizoram as she was the same woman to contest Lok Sabha election in 1977 that too from behind the bars.<sup>135</sup> No woman or man is found doing the same till now in Mizoram.

When, the Second General Election was held in May 1978; only one woman candidate contested on party ticket i.e. MFC. She was Thanmawii, and she got elected from Serchhip Constituency. Her winning in the election became a landmark in the history of women's participation in political leadership as she was the first lady to be elected for a Member of Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA). Even though, the MFC formed the Ministry but the Ministry was dissolved. Consequently, Mizoram was under the President's Rule. A new election was required. Accordingly, the third General Election was held in April 1979. Again Thanmawii contested and won in the election but from the Aizawl East Constituency. Besides her, Sanglianchhungi, the Party President of the MDF also contested in the election but lost.

The Ministry was formed by the MPC led by Brig T. Sailo as its Chief Minister for the second time. The Third Mizoram Legislative Assembly had two women legislators by the joining of K. Thansiami to fill the nominated seat of the newly formed Ministry. She became the second woman, who entered the Assembly as nominated member after Saptawni, who made her debut in the House in 1972. The Fourth General Election was held in April 1984. In this election, K. Thansiami

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<sup>135</sup>Siamkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos*, Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 2004, p. 160.

contested from Aizawl West Constituency on Mizo People Conference (MPC) Party ticket and she won from this constituency. This new Ministry was formed by the Congress Party. Rokungi was made as nominated member by this Ministry.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, for the second time, Mizoram Legislative Assembly could have two women MLAs as one was elected and the other one nominated. However, they could not complete their term on account of peace agreement known as 'Peace Accord' between the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Government of India on June, 1986. Following this agreement a new Ministry was formed as an Interim Government with Laldenga as the Chief Minister for an interim period of six months.

After six months, the Union Territory of Mizoram attained the status of State of the Indian Union in February 1987. Consequently, the Fifth General Election to the first Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was held in February 1987, with an increase of 10 seats, making the total number of seats from 30 to 40. In this Election there were two women candidates contested and one of them had won. Having majority members, the MNF formed the new Ministry under the leadership of Laldenga as the first Chief Minister of the State Mizoram. Lalhlimpuii was also elected on MNF ticket and was inducted as Minister of State. She has been the first and the last woman Minister in Mizoram till date. Unfortunately, defection in the Mizo National Front (MNF) party led to the fall of the Ministry in September 1988. The Sixth General Election was held in 1989. In this election four women had contested. But, all of them lost in this election. The Seventh General Election to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly (MLA) was held in 1993. Two women contested in the election but both of them had lost even in this election.

While, the issue of 33 per cent seat reservation for women was being debated, no major political party in Mizoram could allot seats to women except the MNF (Nationalist), a faction of the MNF party in the

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<sup>136</sup>Lalneihzovie, *op.cit*, p.65.

1998 election. Veronica K. Zatluangi contested from the party. Besides her, there were nine women contestants as independent candidates fighting in this election.<sup>137</sup> No women contestants had won even this time. However, the election of 1998 is unique in its own way as a record number of women contested even though they had to forfeit their deposits. The Ninth General Election of 2003 saw five women candidates but none was elected. In fact, female outnumbered males by 3,010 votes during assembly polls (2003). But, womenfolk were not given their due share in terms of party tickets and full support in the patriarchal society.

In the General Election to Assembly 2008, there were as many as nine women contestants fighting in the election but none was elected. Anyhow, this election was a significant trend in the history of Mizoram due to a maximum number of women contestants were fielded by political parties. All the major political parties, namely, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC), Mizoram National Front (MNF), and the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) formed by two regional parties Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) and Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) with the backing of farmers' group Zoram Kuthnathawk Pawl(ZKP) had fielded women member on their party tickets. The Bharatya Janata Party (BJP) could field two women out of the total eight contestants (25 percent) on their party tickets. Therefore, out of total nine women contestants only one contested as independent candidate in this election.

This is, in fact, due to the painstaking efforts put by the Core Committee-Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyaan (PMSA).<sup>138</sup> This Core

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<sup>137</sup>*Ibid*, p.66.

<sup>138</sup>In pursuance of Government of India's Ministry of PanchayatiRaj's D.O. letter No. R-12012/31/2007-P-J Dated 21/1/2008, the Governor of Mizoram Constituted Core Committee for Mizoram for the purpose of successful implementation of PanchayatMahilaEvamYuva Shakti Abhiyan through Mizoram Gazette Extraordinary and Published by Authority.



Committee in their State Charter of Demands<sup>139</sup> submitted to the Government of Mizoram and to the Government of India in October 2008 included 33 per cent seat reservation for women as per the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> CAAs. They also demanded to provide 33 per cent seats reservation for women in the Village Council Act and the same must be included in the party election manifestos to cause women empowerment in Mizoram. They even submitted representation to field women in these elections to all leaders of political parties so that each party could field potential women candidates at least not less than 33 per cent to these elections of MLA and Village Councils.

The Mizoram Municipalities Act was legislated in 2007. But, this Act does not provide reservation of seats for women. Therefore, the Committee met the Chief Minister to take positive action at the earliest. The government of Mizoram was very serious with this demand. Accordingly, A Review Committee of the Mizoram Municipalities was set up by the Government of Mizoram to review the Mizoram Municipalities Act of 2007. Mainly based on the recommendations of the Review Committee, the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly amended the Act and clearly inserted the Reservation Clause of Article 243T provided by the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA. Moreover, the Core Committee of Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyaan (PMSA) had submitted representations to all the leaders of the political parties for fielding woman candidate in the 2009 Members of Parliament election on their party ticket.<sup>140</sup>

The revised electoral rolls for the State Legislative Assembly elections, 2008 showed that woman voters have outnumbered their male counterparts by 6,644. Of the total voters of 6,11,124 in the eight districts of Mizoram. 3,08,884 are females and only 3,02,240 males. It is a matter of irony in the Christian state that though women

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<sup>139</sup> *Charter of Demands from Elected Women Representatives of Mizoram under Core Committee – Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan* submitted to the Government of India and Government of Mizoram in October, 2008, p.5.

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.nerve.in/news.253500176207/> channels: India, Retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2008.

voters are more in number than men, they do not shine in the same proportion on the political stage. Immense contribution by the women to the state economy, church and social activities, but they shy away when it comes to politics, assembly elections in particular.<sup>141</sup> Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), the state's biggest women's body and other women NGOs in Mizoram have given full moral support to the Core Committee's initiatives to have politically empowered women in the state.

Since this is the case in the state of Mizoram, the women of the state especially women NGOs like Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyaan, All Mizoram Women Federation and Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl are putting pressure to the political party leaders to make room for women by reserving seat and by nominating women with party ticket. As a result, in the recent Hrangturzo Constituency By-election 2014 Vanlalawmpuii Chawngthu was given party ticket by the Mizoram Congress Pradesh. She contested in the By-election to Hrangturzo constituency along with other male contestants. Fortunately, she won this election by getting 6721 votes casted in favour of her. Thus, Mizoram State Legislative now has another woman MLA after 27 years in the history of Mizoram. She became the first and only woman elected member from Congress Party of Mizoram since the inception of the Party in the state so far.<sup>142</sup>

The Government of Mizoram adopted the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 to 1972 to carry out the village administration in its respective areas. The Village Council (VC) is a democratically elected body whose provisions can be amended by the executive/administrative orders of the Government of Mizoram under the Local Administration Department. The Act does not have nomination nor reservation seat for women. But women can fight the election through general seats. Therefore, since 1954 there have been

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<sup>141</sup>Charter of Demands, *op.cit.*

<sup>142</sup>Lalneihzovi, *Women and Political Leadership* (in) *Mizo Studies* – A quarterly Refereed Journal, ISSN- 2319- 6041, Vol. III, No. 2, Apr-Jun, 2014, p.214.

some women members who got elected to form village councils in the state.

In the General Election to Village Councils held in February 2006, there were 556 Village Councils against 2036 Village Councils seats within the six districts of Mizoram excluding the two districts lying within the Autonomous District Councils. In actual, out of a total of 2036 Village Councils seats only 33 (i.e. about 1.09 percent) women were elected in the General Election to Village Councils. And out of 33 Village Councils, only four became Village Council Presidents.

The last General Election to Village Council, for the term of 2009-2012, held in February 2009 could have more women contestants of total 84. Out of this, 34 women were elected, which is the highest number ever, recorded of women Village Councils Member in Mizoram. In this election there were 557 Village Councils having 2071 Village Councils seats within six districts of the state. It may also be mentioned here that about five women Village Council President posts, four are Vice-President and five are Treasurers within the six districts in the state. Women voters had increasing number of women Village Councils Members is due to the intervention of the Core Committee of PMSA to women at maximum number.<sup>143</sup>

Regarding the number of women working under the government and quasi-government organization in the state is also very small. There are 21.13 per cent women employees out of the total 85.06 per cent government employees as on March 2005 in the state. At the critical decision-making levels, the percentage of women is still very low. Out of the total sanctioned posts of 4,071 Group 'A' officers there are only 722 women Group 'A' officers.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, unless there are more women at the critical decision-making level and higher civil services, numbers would always remain an area of concern. The challenge to ensure that de jure participation is also de facto

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<sup>143</sup>Charter of Demands, *op.cit.*

<sup>144</sup>Government of Mizoram, *Employees Census of Different Organizations in Mizoram*, 2005, p.4.

participation continues and this primarily calls for a range of supportive interventions. There is a need to encourage and provide new opportunities and new role models in decision making structures.

Therefore, it can be said that Mizo women continue to suffer discrimination in the field of politics as well as in decision-making and occupy a lower status as compared with men. Women's participation in the decision-making process, policy-making, planning and administration is extremely important to ensure their equality while participating in the development process. It is therefore, necessary to do something so that women's participation in political leadership and decision-making can be improved to cause women's development in the society. And it is strongly recommended that the introduction of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments for the state of Mizoram. As these Amendments provide for reservation of 33 per cent of elected seats of women at different levels of local self-government in both rural and urban and there would be 1/3 reservation for women to posts of chairpersons of these bodies.

### **2.17 Political participation of women in Nagaland**

When modern democracies are striving for women empowerment and closing the gender gap by enhancing their political participation, the story of Nagaland in this regard is quite saddening. Like most of the other states, Nagaland too is predominantly characterized by patriarchal system. All the 16 tribes of Nagaland are staunch patriarchal communities thus their women enjoy lower strata as compared to their men. However there are certain exceptional instances within the Naga tribes where women played influential role within the community and one such instance is that of Longkongla, an Ao woman, who had strongly influence in the society. But, generally speaking, women in Naga society played very little or no roles in the traditional village councils as all the important decisions are made by male.

Though, the constitution of India provides provisions for equal socio-economic and political rights to both men and women, the women of Nagaland are far behind their male counterpart in terms of participating in electoral politics. Since its attainment of statehood in 1963 or since the first Nagaland state legislative assembly election in 1964 till present not even a single woman candidate had been elected to the state legislative assembly. Since the first election of 1964, out of a total of 1960 candidates, there had been only 15 women candidates which summed up just 0.76 percent of the overall candidature. At the same time, the vote shares secured by these candidates in the elections are quite dismal and this reflects the unfavorable attitude of electorates towards female candidates. For example, in the 1987 general election, women candidates in Pallel Assembly Constituency (7A/C), Arkakong Assembly Constituency (22A/C) and Bhandari Assembly Constituency (40A/C) constituencies got only 729, 2350 and 271 votes respectively as against their male counterpart who secured 2548, 3747, and 3698 votes respectively in those three constituencies. When it comes to political parties in the state, women are not welcomed to be fielded as their candidates. For instance, during the period 1987 to 2003, only seven women candidates contested in the elections held in between that period, and four out of the total 7 candidates contested as independent candidates. This reveals, the fact, that political parties are unwilling to give room for women to play bigger roles in electoral politics.

Looking at the participation of Nagaland women as electorates from the accounts of assembly elections held in 1987, 1989, 1993, 2003, 2008 and 2013 one can conclude that Naga women are active participants in electoral politics as voters only. In 1987 election, out of the total 262772 female voters, 225891 i.e. 85.96 percent of female electorate voted as against the total 319529 male voters out of which 266033 (i.e. 83.25%) voted. In 1989 election, 225248 out of 261805 female voters voted (i.e. 86.3%) as against the total male voters of 320611 out of which 273574 (i.e. 85.32%) voted. In the elections of

1993, 2003, 2008 and 2013 the percentages of women voters who voted are 89.70, 85.98, 86.93 and 91.22 respectively as against 90.64, 89.54, 85.98 and 89.82 percent male voters of the respective years. From the above statistics, one can make out that in certain years the percentage of women voters outnumbered that of male voters. Though, Nagaland women are actively participating in electoral politics as voters, lots of things are to be done to emancipate women and bolster their level of political participation as policy makers and to accommodate them in other higher positions within political process.

### **2.18 Political Participation of Women in Tripura**

Before Tripura merged with the Indian Union in 1949, it was a princely state. There were traditional village level institutions based on tribal customs, which took important decisions on matters pertaining to tribal communities and to disputes among their members. But these institutions could hardly be described as democratic, depending as they did on the social legitimacy conferred on them by the existing power structure and social order. Women were denied the right to participate in these village councils.

The Ganatantrik Nari Samity, the largest and most organized women organization was formally constituted in 1951. Before that there was no single women organization, conspicuously absent though women had participated in democratic movement under the banner of Gana Mukti Parishad and fought against the misrule of Region of Tripura Manikya ruler. The women had also taken an active part in the struggle and militantly fought against Titun Pratha (which was based on a cruel form of bonded labour). Some of the women leaders were Kumari, Madhuti and Rupasree. Smt. Kiran Mala (prabha) Debbarman was also one of them who were elected to the Electoral College in 1952 and she was the first women in Tripura to contest the elections. She was nominated by the undivided Communist Party of

India (CPI) and elected by the people, which was a great opportunity for women and participation in the political process.

After the Independence, women of Tripura participated in many democratic movements. Especially women's fight against forest repression (julum) was remarkable. Smt. Mohini Tripura, a woman leader was victim of such a repression. Thus, women in Tripura directly or indirectly have been involved with political activities of the state. Participation of women of Tripura in Lok Sabha elections, from 1952 to 2014, as it can be seen that women represented in the fifteen Parliaments election is 12 percent. The presence of women in different Lok Shaba election varies between 13 percent and 3.4 percent. During the period 1980 to 2004, women's representation in the Lok Sabha election, are nil. Women are very poorly represented in the Lok Sabha from the beginning. It is not only the case of Tripura but also many other states of our North East states. Women's representation in the Rajya Sabha from Tripura during 1974 and 2014, out of eight elections, only one female candidate was elected. In the context of the women empowerment the scenarios is not encouraging. Even, the numbers of women candidate contested Lok Sabha elections from Tripura are negligible.

Women's representation in Tripura Legislative Assembly during the period 1987-88 was two, in 1993-94 was one, in 1997-98 was one, and again in 2003-04, one women were elected as MLA's in a house of 60 members in the Tripura Legislative Assembly. Though, it observes a large number of women participating in mass meetings, processions and political activities, but, women are hardly preferred for contesting elections. Though the major political parties have provided reservation of 33 percent seats for women in state legislative assembly, yet being dominated by males, these parties show every excuse and create confusion for nominating women. As a result, women cannot even contest minimum number during the assembly elections. The numbers of female elected candidates during the period was only two

and one. While, the number of female candidates contesting the elections during the same period varies between 23 and 07 and, during the 2008, three women were elected as MLAs in a House of 60 Members in the Tripura Legislative Assembly. Comparing to the last general elections where only one out of the 17 (seventeen) women candidates in the fray got elected. In the Assembly election, 2013, 5 (five) were elected as MLAs out of the 15 (fifteen). It was definitely an impressive, comparing to the last general election.

As again, in the Panchayat election, it is observed that in all levels of Panchayati system one-third reservation policy is well followed in the state. The recent Panchayat elections in Tripura in 2014 have created more gender balance because of the efforts made by the ruling parties in terms of crossing above 33.33 percent and allowing more women candidates in Panchayat Raj system. The participation of women in three tiers-Panchayat tends to have a dynamic effect on the social and political empowerment of women general. It is surprising, to note that 50 percent women hold the post of ZillaSabhadhipati that is very rare in rural.

In the women's representation in Nagar Panchayats and Agartala Municipal Council are important from the standpoint of women's political participation. Out of 160 members in 12 Nagar Panchayats of the state, there are more than 60s female members, i.e., more than 40 percent. In Agartala Municipal Council, there are more than 15 female members, i.e. more than 40 percent.

In the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) there are 28 seats. But surprisingly there is no seat reservation for women in the Autonomous District Council resulting in a very poor participation rate of tribal women in the highest policy making body of this system. At present there is only one female member in council. This gender disparity cannot be continued for long. One-third seat reservation for tribal women should be ensured like the three tiers panchayat system.



However, in Village Committee there is one-third reservation for women. In the recently, village committee (like Gram Panchayat) election of TTAADC, women constituted more than 45 percent of the elected members, which was created an example for women in policy making body at grass root level.

Albeit the participation of women still being a hefty challenge at present for the northeastern states, recent trend in the election, or particularly, 2014 Lok Sabha election gave out quite an optimistic statistic of women participation in electoral politics as voters.

### **2.19 Political Participation of Women in Manipur**

The major analysis on the basis of collected data will be done in separate chapter. However it may be said here that womenfolk in Manipur enjoy enormous liberty, albeit their society a patriarchal set up, in various aspects and activities since time immemorial. Manipuri women of the olden days can be stratified into two classes owing to socio-political factors. Women of higher social and political class enjoyed higher status as compared to those who belonged to lower class. Common women of Manipur however enjoyed more or less similar liberty with their higher class women counterparts if comparison be made with the case of other states of India. During the monarchical days (pre British rule), Manipur witnessed many outstanding women personalities who played active and influential roles in those days' political state affairs. Some of these are, Maharani Gomti Devi, KurangaNayani, Maharani Kumudini, Shija Tampha and the likes.

From the era of British rule to the present age, the Manipuri history of women political participation is rather perplexed as women influential political contribution/participation was paradoxically blended with marginal representation in governments of different eras. The level of their political participation also varies from one time to another. Manipuri womankind has always been torchbearer of non

violent and peaceful movements. Their political participation during the British rule can be exemplified by first and second Nupi-lan movement of 1904 and 1939 respectively which protested against the British rule. These two movements are momentous in the history of Manipur as they altered the direction of its political scenario. Since then Manipuri women have been actively participating in fighting against shoddy or suppressive governmental policies and initiatives. Women's political participation had been enormous during the statehood movement in late 1960's. The 'Meira-Paibi' which is a collective womenfolk's force that emerged in 1980's is another example of Manipuri women participation.<sup>145</sup> They also have been actively participating in movement against atrocious acts such as AFSPA, 1958.<sup>146</sup>

Manipuri women have been active participants since first general elections in 1952 not only as electors but also as contestants. The first woman to be in the electoral fray and also to win the seats in the Electoral College was Smt. M.K. Binodini Devi in 1952. Smt. Iswari Devi wife of Late Maharaja Budhachandra Singh was fielded to contest the Inner Parliamentary seat as an Independent candidate in 1952. Smt. Sabi Devi who played a decisive role in the second Nupilan contested the Territorial Council elections in 1957 as a Communist party candidate from Wangkhei Constituency. There are other women who contested the election albeit they lost the election. Besides, there were nominated women members to the Territorial Council (1957-1963) as well as in the Territorial Legislative Assembly (1963-1969) such as, Smt. R.K. Mukhara Devi, Smt. A. Bimola Devi, Smt. Akim Anal and Smt. Lhingjaneng Gangte. The number of women candidates contesting in the Assembly elections had increased after Manipur attained its full-fledged statehood in 1972. In the Assembly elections held in 1972, there were three women candidates contesting from

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<sup>145</sup>Devi, Prof. Ksh. Bimola, Women in Social Movements in Manipur, in Karna, M.N. (eds), *Social Movement in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1998, p.77.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

Keishamthong, Henglep, and Heingang constituencies. They were Smt. R.K. Mukhra Devi, put up by the Indian National Congress from Keishamthong constituency. Smt. Lhingjaneng Gangte, congress candidate from Henglep constituency and Smt. A. Bimola of Heingang constituency as an Independent candidate.

In the mid-term Assembly elections in 1974, there were again three women candidates. They were Smt. Lhingjaneng Gangte nominated by Congress in Saikot constituency, Smt. Aribam Bimola Devi, Manipur Peoples Party candidate from Heingang constituency and Smt. T. Kholly, an Independent candidate in Saikot constituency. But these women candidates could not get themselves elected.

The number of women candidates increased in 1980 Assembly elections. There were seven women candidates in both the valley and Hill constituency. The percentage of votes secured by the women candidates was not very high in both the Valley and the Hills. In 1984 Assembly Elections, the number of women candidates was reduced to five.

In 1990 Assembly elections, there were seven women candidates contesting in both the Hills and Valley constituencies. According to 1990 election report, three women candidates were put up by the Congress and other women candidates were put up by different political parties. The electoral performance of the women candidates was improved as three candidates could secure more votes though not elected. Only three women candidates lost their security deposits and one woman Hangmila Shaiza (Wife of former Chief Minister, Yangmasho Shaiza) was elected from Ukhrul Constituency on Janata Dal ticket by defeating her four rivals. She was the first woman to be elected to the Legislative Assembly after Manipur attained statehood in 1972.

In the by-election held in 1992 from the Oinam Constituency, after the death of the sitting MLA K. Bira Singh, his wife K. Apabi Devi

was elected on the Congress ticket. Thus, the number of women members in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur had increased to two.

In 1995 Assembly election, there were eleven women candidates contesting in both the Hill and Valley constituencies. Two women candidates were put up by Indian National Congress (INC) and one woman candidates were put up Communist Party of India (CPI), one candidate were put up by the Manipur Peoples Party (MPP), one candidate were put up by Janata Dal (JD), one candidate were put up by Federal Party of Manipur and another candidates contested as independent (IND). But none of them got elected and some of them lost their security deposits.

In the Assembly election which was held in February 11, 2000 women contested the elections the hill and six women candidates were in the valley. In this election, three (3) women candidates were put up by Indian National Congress, two (2) candidates were put up by Bharatya Janata Party, another two (2) candidates contested as Independent and the remaining 6 women candidates were put up by different political parties.

But all of them, except one independent candidate, were defeated. Some lost their security deposits. Smt. W. Leima Devi, wife of W. Angou, sitting Member of Parliament was elected and was a Minister of Education (S) for a short period of time.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly election, 2002, February, 7 women contested elections. In the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly elections in 2002 witnessed seven women candidates in the electoral fray. There were five candidates in the valley and two in the hills. Wahengbam Leima Devi won the Naoriya Pakhanglakpa seat for the second consecutive time but under the Indian National Congress ticket this time. Only W. Leima, Former Minister of Education (S) won the election and others were defeated. Smt. W. Leima was again elected and became the Minister of Information & Public Relations and Loktak Development Authority.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly election, 2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 12 women contested elections. In the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly election in 2007 the number of women contestants has increased. This time none of them returned successful. However, out the eight candidates, four candidates did not forfeit their deposits. Among the Eight candidates, it is noted that Smt. O. Landhoni won the Khangabok bye-election on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2007.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly election, 2012, three women were elected as MLAs in a House of 60 Members in the Manipur legislative Assembly, which too, in spite of women voters outnumbering their male counterparts and many women actively was canvassing for every political party during election time. It was definitely an impressive fact that out of these three women MLAs, one of them has been inducted into the Ministry as the Minister in-charge of Social Welfare and Co-operation.

From the above Assembly election reports we may assumed that, till today only Six women candidates were elected and these women are the wives of M.P., M.L.A. or Ministers. No other common woman was elected. It shows that those who have the political background only could get elected.

In the Parliamentary elections, there were altogether four women candidates contesting from outer Manipur and Inner Manipur Parliamentary constituencies. They were Iswari Devi-Inner Manipur Parliamentary Constituency in 1952 and Lhingjaneng Gangte, MPP, outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency in 1984, Anne Mangshatabam Congress (I) Inner Manipur Parliamentary Constituency in 1996 and Kim Gangte, CPI-Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency in 1998. None of them could get elected except Kim Gangte. Kim Gangte came out successfully and represented Manipur in the House of People in 1998.

Here, in the Parliamentary election also women hardly could get elected and join in the higher political decision making body.

In the local bodies, like Municipalities and Panchayats especially after the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992 and 1993, 33 percent of the total seats were kept reserved for women. There are 7 Municipality Councils and 27 Nagar Panchayats (Small Town Committee). In 1995 election for Municipality /Nagar Panchayats were held. According to the elections result of 1995, 40 women out of 90 were elected in the Municipality Councils and 66 women out of 190 were elected in the Nagar Panchayats.

These women were elected on the basis of reservation. Again, in 1997 the Zilla Parishad and Gram Panchayat elections were held. 166 women were elected as Pradhan and 1557 as Gram Panchayat member and 16 as Zilla Parishad members.

## **2.20 Political Participation of Women of Meghalaya**

The history of the Political Participation of women in Meghalaya prior to the British period shows that there were women rulers or queens, KaLatympang, La Priang Saring of Jaintia Hills, KaLar Syiem of Nobosophoh and KaLieh Nongkhlaw (Mawlong, 2000) who were Known for their Statemanship and ability as rulers.<sup>147</sup> Women participation is not of recent in Meghalaya. During the British period the then Governor of Assam created a reserved seat, the Shillong Assembly Constituency, Assam. In the election held in 1937 two women candidates, Mavis Dunn Lyndoh and Berlina Diengdoh contested the seat, the former won and became a minister in the Muhamad Sadullah Ministry from 1939 to 1941 and again from 1942 to 1945. She was the first lady in the North East and the second in India to hold the office of a Minister. In the election held in 1946, Mrs. Bonily Khongmen won the seat. In the first general election in 1952, the ShillongLokSabha seat was contested by six women, two of whom were indigenous tribal's, Mrs. Bonily Khongmen came out victorious

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<sup>147</sup>Meghalaya Human Development Report, *Women's Empowerment in Meghalaya*, Shillong, Meghalaya, 2008.

and entered Parliaments as the first lady MP (Members of Parliament) from the then state of Assam. Since then, there has been no lady MP from the state until 2008 when Shri P.A. Sangma's daughter Agatha Sangma, was elected in the bye-election to the Tura Lok Sabha seat which became vacant when her father returned to state politics. But, in 2013, Assembly election, M. Ampareen Lyngdoh from East Shillong constituency, Roshan Warjri from North Shillong Constituency, Deborah C. Marak from William Nagar, Dikkanchi D. Shira from Mahendraganj constituency. This is quite good when compared to the last Assembly Election.

In the Autonomous District Councils, there were a number of women representatives who were either elected or nominated. Lariam Shullai was nominated to the first Khasi and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council in 1952-57. Dr. K. Rymbai was nominated to the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council. Louisiana Brosila Lamin and Etris Syiem contested and won the election in 1972. In 1984, Maysalin War contested and won the election to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council from the Congres-I ticket. In 1972, L.G. Shullai was elected as the Chief Executive Member of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC). He selected L. Brosila Lamin as one of the executive members. The inclusion of a woman as an executive member is very significant as the KHADC was the first of all the District Councils in the North East to have a lady as the executive member for a brief period in 1977.<sup>148</sup>

In the first election to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council in 1952, there were two women members in the house of twenty four, Mrs. Sujomoti W. Momin who was elected as an independent candidate and Mrs. Roneswari Marak who was nominated by the governor. In 1957, Mrs. Sujomoti W. Momin contested against two male candidates and polled an absolute

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<sup>148</sup>Information provided by Mr. W. Kharkrang, Secretary, Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, during the field work.

majority. In 1962, the election was not held due to the Chinese aggression, it was held in 1964. Only one female member Mrs. Ewinel marak contested against three male rivals and was defeated. As there were no woman members, a lady Bisadini Sangma was nominated by the Governor to represent women. In 1972, only one woman candidate Evangeline Shira contested as an independent, but was defeated. However two lady members Alleswary Momin and Janjemarak were nominated. There was no female member in 1978- 1983. In 1983, two women elected, Enilla D. Shira and Reboti Burman. In 1989, election there was only one female member Mrs. Reboti Burman who was elected. In 1994, there was no female member in the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council.<sup>149</sup>

On examining the statistics given of the women representation in the Parliament, State Legislative and District Councils, their participation is it would be befitting to trace the evolution of representation of women in the State from the first Assembly election.

In Meghalaya, one or two women MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) or MDCs (Member of District Councils) were elected from time to time. Since the time Meghalaya achieved its statehood (1972), only eight women were elected to the State Legislative Assembly, namely Mrs. Percylina Marak (1972), Mrs. Miriam D. Shira (1978), Mrs. Maysalin War (1984, 1988), Mrs. Roshan Warjri (1993 and 1988), Mrs. I. Lyndoh (2003), Mrs. D. Marak (2003), Jopsimon Phanbuh (who won the bye-election after the death of her husband in July, 2003) and Mrs. M Ampareen Lyndoh (2008).

Women elected to the Autonomous District Councils too were very few. So, political power is still eluding the women of Meghalaya except for very few. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment brought about the grass root system of governance on the Panchayati Raj with 33 percent of the elective posts reserved for women. The system has

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<sup>149</sup>Information provided by the Secretary, Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, Tura.



not been applied in Constitution. Recently, there has been some move to usher in some modification in the Autonomous District Councils for their administration to be more direct with the people at the grass root level. Nothing tangible has yet come about it. It would be a dim prospect to expect the incorporation of 33 percent reservation of seats and posts in the District Councils. The Bill was not passed when it was first introduced of seats and posts in the District Councils. The Bill was not passed when it was first introduced in 1996 and lapsed with the dissolution of the Eleventh Lok Sabha in December 1998. The Bill was re-introduced in Parliament as the 84<sup>th</sup> Constitutional amendment Bill in December 1999 and again as the 85<sup>th</sup> Constitutional amendment Bill on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2000 but has not been passed. It was passed recently. The further detailed would be discussed on the next after chapter five.

## **2.21 Conclusion**

From the analysis of women's participation in politics in each particular state in the North-East, it comes to light that the situation in the North-East is not different from other parts of the country. Though there were a number of eminent freedom fighters from the province covering all the districts of the North-Eastern part of India the actual political participation of women are limited. Even in the present context women play significant role in peace making and in controlling other social problems. Women play a very strong role in every sphere. There are strong women organizations like 'Maira-Paibi', which control every anti-social activity in the state i.e. against alcohol, insurgency, army atrocities etc. Similarly, in Nagaland also the 'Naga Mothers Association' and 'Naga Ho Ho' played a very significant role in the peace process between Indian Government and the terrorist group NSCN (I-M). It is only because of the role played by the women association the outfit group came forward and sits with the government for dialogue. In Mizoram, women used to play very important role to conduct the election in the state in a peaceful

manner. In Assam too, initiative has been taken at the individual level first, by the woman like Indira Barua for a dialogue between the militant outfit 'ULFA' and the government of India to bring peace in the state. (The process is going on in recent days.)

In this regard women's social standing in the North-Eastern region of India may be slightly different from that of the other parts of the country. However, the existing political environment shows little about women political participation.

Again, political parties have neither provided equal opportunities to women to fight election with male members nor do they ever fight for the cause of women's development. Altogether then, it may be rightly said that the marginalization of women from the political process is yet to be recognized and looked at with equal seriousness.

Like in other parts of India, gender equality is not reflected in the day-to-day functioning of political process in the North East too. No political party is concerned even with the issue like 33 per cent reservation for women or with any other agenda for the development of women. There are no organized attempts or programmes to train potential women leaders as future leaders. Leaders of political parties themselves are not clear about allotting of seats to women candidates or regarding the women specific issues they shows not much seriousness. But also, it has been observed that parties do not have any specific agenda for increasing women's representation in political parties and they are not even much concerned about gender issues. Though, the parties feel the importance of the inclusion of women in political parties for the success of democracy but it is pointless without proper agenda for it.

Although, the number of women contestants in election is increasing slowly it does not mean the increase in the political participation by women in general in real sense. Because, it has been observed that women contestants are given party tickets on some particular factors, such as wife of influential political leader or

deceased leader, a woman having strong political background gets party ticket easily. Therefore it does not affect in women's actual political participation.

After observing the political status of women in North East, some reasons have been found as to why women are not been able to perform the desired role in political parties in North East (as well as in India) such as entry of women into political party is difficult because of the male domination in the party structure. Secondly, it is very difficult for women to find place in the decision making level of political parties because of variety of reasons like domestic, public and political. Thirdly, another difficulty for women to enter into political party can be attributed to financial reason. Some women can not bear the cost of an election campaign. Majority of voters are poor and live under the poverty line. A good number of women in spite of their interest to join politics cannot take part in the election due to their financial incapacity. Fourthly, lack of legal knowledge about their rights also prevents women from joining in political activities. Fifthly, traditional social structure and the subsequent women's own attitude resulted from such structures sometimes do not allow women to come out of the four walls to join in political party. Sixthly, the traditional outlook, religious convention and lack of training and discipline among women have limited their participation in the political life.

Thus, women comprise a small percentage of the total contestants till now. Almost, all the political parties have a separate women wing but they are not able to play a very strong role as they are expected to play. Sometime they organize rallies, meetings and campaigns as a part of their political party activities.

One important observation of the ongoing analysis is that politics has always been a domain of male member of society. Women play an important role in the political process of every country but they are yet to receive the desired political status. They are virtually unseen in the political sphere of each state.