

## **Tribal Women Experiencing Panchayati Raj Institution in India with Special Reference to Arunachal Pradesh**

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**Abstract:-**The role of women in any tribal communities is crucial. A tribal woman occupies an important place in the socio-economic structure of the society. They exercise free and firm hand in all aspects related to their social and economic life. In Agriculture, tribal women play a crucial role in wide range of activities and contributing to sustainable development. Tribal communities are at slow stages of political development. The role of tribal women in politics has been underrepresented. But with the introduction of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act and the reservation of one-third of its seats for STs, SCs and Women in Grass-roots politics, the participation of tribal women in panchayat politics has been noticed among the tribal communities. Panchayati Raj Institution can be assumed as a mechanism for rapid development of the tribal communities and also for greater participation and empowerment of tribal women. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Panchayat system was introduced as far the– North East Panchayati Raj Regulation, 1967. Elections to Panchayats were held seven (7) times between 1968 and 1992, but the result showed that at the Anchal Samiti level in 1987, there was only one (1) and in 1992 there were only three (3) female elected representatives. In higher decision making bodies also i.e., Legislative Assembly the women had never exceed 5 (five) per cent in the state. Hence, an attempt has been carried out in this paper to study the participation of tribal women in panchayat categorically on the basis of election held in April 2003, May 2008 and May 2013 respectively.

**Key words:** *Panchayati Raj Institution, Elected Women Representatives, Empowerment, Tribal Women, Participation.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The tribal population of the country is 10, 42, 81, 034, constituting 8.6% of the total population (1.21 billion) as per 2011 census. Of total 10.43 crore tribal populations 5, 24, 09,823 are males and 5, 18, 71,211 are females. 89.97% of them live in rural areas and 10.03% in urban areas. Most of the tribal population in India are found in two distinct geographical areas – the Central India and the North- Eastern Area. More than half of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in Central India, i.e., Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The other distinct area is the North East i.e., Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Tribal communities live in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. A tribal woman occupies an important place in the socio-economic structure of the society. They exercise free and firm hand in all aspects related to their social and economic life. In Agriculture, tribal women play a crucial role in wide range of activities and contributing to sustainable development. Tribal communities are at slow stages of political development. The role of tribal women in politics has been underrepresented. But with the introduction of the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment Act and the reservation of one-third of its seats for STs, SCs and Women in Grass-roots politics, the participation of tribal women in panchayat has been noticed among the tribal communities. Among the North-east state, first to enforce the provision of 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment Act are Sikkim in the year 1993, Assam, Manipur and Tripura in 1994 and lastly in 1997 Arunachal Pradesh has implemented the Panchayati Raj Institution under the guidelines of 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment Act. In view of the diverse patterns of Panchayat Institutions in North-East region; the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 has provided a special constitutional arrangement under Article 244 that the Act shall not be applicable upon the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram and hills area of Manipur. Panchayati Raj Institution can be assumed as a mechanism for rapid development of the tribal communities and also for greater participation and empowerment of tribal women.

### **II. THE PROBLEM**

In Arunachal Pradesh, the Panchayat system was introduced as far the– North East Panchayati Raj Regulation, 1967. Elections to Panchayats were held seven (7) times between 1968 and 1992, but the result showed that at the Anchal Samiti level in 1987, there was only one (1) and in 1992 there were only three (3)

female elected representatives. In higher decision making bodies also i.e., Legislative Assembly the women had never exceed 5 (five) per cent in the state. Since the role of Panchayati Raj Institution in empowerment of women has attained paramount importance; it is natural to have in depth study as to whether the objectives of implementation of 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in third tier of the democracy have achieved the goals of women empowerment especially in the case of Arunachal Pradesh where women's position in the society has not been wholly subordinate to male counterparts unlike in other parts of the country.

### **III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To understand the percentage of tribal women in Panchayati Raj Institution
2. To understand whether tribal women are fulfilling the existing quota of one-third reservation of seats
3. To compare the tribal women participation in three phase of Panchayat election

### **IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

Descriptive research design has been adopted to study the tribal women's of Arunachal Pradesh. The purpose of this research design is to describe the percentage of tribal women participation in Panchayati Raj Institution and also to understand that whether reservation has made some significant change so as to provide them political empowerment which encompasses social and economic empowerment. The data for the present study have been gleaned from both primary and secondary sources which have been duly acknowledged.

### **V. PARTICIPATION OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTION**

As it has been already stated that the participation of women in Panchayat in Arunachal Pradesh has not been so much encourage before the introduction of 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment Act, 1992. The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment Act heralds a new opportunity to the millions of women to test their experiences in panchayat politics in India, by reserving one-third of its seats especially for the women besides for STs and SCs. To meet the requirement of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, the Arunachal Government issued an ordinance (The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Ordinance 1994), which later on was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act 1997. The Act has come into effect from 14<sup>th</sup> November 2001. It also heralds a new opportunity for the tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh to enter into the grassroots politics by providing one third reservations of seats in the Panchayats. As per the Act, state has already hold three consecutive Panchayat elections viz, 2003, 2008 and 2013 respectively. And in the state (Arunachal Pradesh), women are making significant gains by taking active participation in various activities of the Panchayati Raj Institution. The further detailed description of the Panchayat election held in 2003, 2008 and 2013 in the state has been carried out with the help of the data imparted in table-1, table-2 and table-3 respectively.

**Table-1** shows that of total 8,260 elected seats, women representatives hold 3,183 seats which comprise 38.54 per cent of the total elected seats. Moreover, comparative analysis among the districts shows that West Kameng district has hold highest numbers of women representatives which comprise 44.43 per cent of total 601 elected seats and West Siang district hold lowest numbers of women representatives which comprise 34.75 per cent of total 1025 elected seats of the district.

**Table-2** shows that of total 9,287 elected seats, women representatives hold 3,889 seats which comprise 41.88 per cent of the total elected seats. Moreover, comparative analysis among the districts shows that East Kameng district has hold highest numbers of women representatives which comprise 50.50 per cent of total 602 elected seats and Upper Siang district hold lowest numbers of women representatives which comprise 32.28 per cent of total 285 elected seats of the district.

**Table-3** shows that of total 9,231 elected seats, women representatives hold 4,069 seats which comprise 44.08 per cent of the total elected seats. Moreover, comparative analysis among the districts shows that West Kameng district has hold highest numbers of women representatives which comprise 52.20 per cent of total 590 elected seats, followed by East Kameng (52%) of 600 elected seats of the district. Tirap district has hold lowest numbers of women representatives which comprise 31.90 per cent of total 395 elected seats of the district.

### **VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The following are the findings of the study-

- The study noticed an increasing rate of tribal women participation in Panchayati Raj Institution. In 2003 panchayat election women representatives hold 38.54 per cent of the total seats while in 2013 panchayat election women representatives hold 44.08 per cent of the total seats in the state.
- A large numbers of women representatives have also notices that contested from open seats and thus defeated their male counterparts by holding 50 per cent of seats in the district (West Kameng, East Kameng, etc.).
- It is also noticed that in few of the district (Tirap, Upper Siang, etc.) women representatives has not performed well and even unable to hold 33 per cent of the total seats.

**Table-1**  
**Result of 2003 Panchayat Election and District-Wise Elected Members of Panchayati Raj Institution of**

Sl. No.	Name of District	Elected No. of Male / Female									GRAND TOTAL		
		GPM			ASM			ZPM			T	M (%)	F (%)
		T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F			
1.	Tawang	293	170	123	80	51	29	6	4	2	379	225 (59.37)	154 (40.63)
2.	East Kameng	400	225	175	118	75	43	10	7	3	528	307 (58.14)	221 (41.86)
3.	West Kameng	496	269	227	96	59	37	9	6	3	601	334 (55.57)	267 (44.43)
4.	Papumpare	337	208	129	77	50	27	10	7	3	424	265 (62.50)	159 (37.50)
5.	Lower Subansiri	621	328	293	190	123	67	14	10	4	825	461 (55.88)	364 (44.12)
6.	Kurung Kumey	571	347	224	161	106	55	13	8	5	745	461 (61.88)	284 (38.12)
7.	Upper Subansiri	497	290	207	145	95	50	13	9	4	655	394 (60.15)	261 (39.85)
8.	East Siang	561	354	207	144	95	49	11	7	4	716	456 (63.69)	260 (36.31)
9.	West Siang	827	536	291	211	141	70	18	12	6	1056	689 (65.25)	367 (34.75)
10.	Upper Siang	220	140	80	62	43	19	4	2	2	286	185 (64.69)	101 (35.31)
11.	Lohit	840	545	295	173	107	66	12	8	4	1025	660 (64.39)	365 (35.61)
12.	Changlang	504	329	175	101	65	36	7	5	2	612	399 (65.20)	213 (34.80)
13.	Dibang Valley	70	39	31	21	13	8	3	2	1	94	54 (57.45)	40 (42.55)
14.	L/Dibang Valley	248	144	104	60	39	21	6	4	2	314	187 (59.55)	127 (40.45)
Total		6485	3924	2561	1639	1062	577	136	91	45	8260	5077 (61.46)	3183 (38.54)

#### Arunachal Pradesh

**Source:** Compiled by researcher based on- Name of Elected Panchayat Members of Arunachal Pradesh (As Notified in Extra- Ordinary Gazette of 6<sup>th</sup> August 2003) Department of Panchayat Raj, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2003.

**Notes:** T= stand for Total, M= stand for Male, F= stand for Female, GPM = Stand for Gram Panchayat Member, ASM= stand for Anchal Samiti Member, ZPM= stand for Zilla Parishad Member.

### VII. CONCLUSION

For the first time in the history of Arunachal Pradesh, 33 per cent reservation of seats for women in the Panchayat bodies was implemented and in fact, the state have exceeded the number of women representatives in all the three levels. It is noticed that the reservation policy paved an easy entry for the women members to become panchayat leaders at different level. No male members can effort to contest on reserved seats of the women candidates. This reservation policy has increased the proportion of women's participation in panchayat now a day. It can be understand that the tribal women are getting more and more conscious about the importance of Panchayat, and treated Panchayati Raj Institution as a mark of turning point in their life. It can be assume that the presences of women in panchayat are making significant gain in the political sphere and believed that participation is rapidly empowering them and boosts their confidence and also improving their status and position in society. Women's empowerment here refers to the process by which women acquire due recognition on par with men, to participate in the development process of the society through the political institutions as a partner with human dignity. It is observed that the same tribal women, who were heisted to say single words in 'kebang' (traditional village council) now become an active path bearer for the development of the village as a whole by involving into Panchayati raj of the state.

**Table-2**

**Result of 2008 Panchayat Election and District-Wise Elected Members of Panchayati Raj Institution of Arunachal Pradesh**

Sl. No.	Name of District	Elected No. of Male / Female									GRAND TOTAL		
		GPM			ASM			ZPM			T	M (%)	F (%)
		T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F			
1.	Towing	298	146	152	80	53	27	6	4	2	384	203 (52.86)	181 (47.14)
2.	West Kameng	483	268	215	97	59	38	9	5	4	589	332 (56.37)	257 (43.63)
3.	East Kameng	451	216	235	137	77	60	14	5	9	602	298 (49.50)	304 (50.50)
4.	Papumpare	338	191	147	76	47	29	10	6	4	424	244 (57.55)	180 (42.45)
5.	Kurung Kumey	555	293	262	155	103	52	13	9	4	723	405 (56.02)	318 (43.98)
6.	Lower Subansiri	656	325	331	195	127	68	14	9	5	865	461 (53.29)	404 (46.71)
7.	Upper Subansiri	516	284	232	148	99	49	14	9	5	678	392 (57.82)	286 (42.18)
8.	West Siang	825	497	328	214	132	82	20	13	7	1059	642 (60.62)	417 (39.38)
9.	Upper Siang	220	150	70	62	40	22	3	3	-	285	193 (67.72)	92 (32.28)
10.	East Siang	578	361	217	156	105	51	13	9	4	747	475 (63.59)	272 (36.41)
11.	Dibang Valley	71	36	35	21	13	8	3	2	1	95	51 (53.68)	44 (46.32)
12.	L/Defang Valley	253	139	114	60	39	21	6	4	2	319	182 (57.05)	137 (42.95)
13.	Lohit	711	378	333	133	77	56	8	5	3	852	460 (53.99)	392 (46.01)
14.	Changiang	470	269	201	100	63	37	7	4	3	577	336 (58.23)	241 (41.77)
15.	Tirap	779	521	258	104	70	34	16	11	5	899	602 (66.96)	297 (33.04)
16.	Anjaw	144	93	51	41	26	15	4	3	1	189	122 (64.55)	67 (35.45)
Grand Total		7348	4167	3181	1779	1130	649	160	101	59	9287	5398 (58.12)	3889 (41.88)

**Source:** Compiled by researcher based on- Name of Elected Panchayat Members of Arunachal Pradesh (As Notified in Extra- Ordinary Gazette of 2008) Department of Panchayat Raj, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2008.

Table-3

**Result of 2013 Panchayat Election and District-Wise Elected Members of Panchayati Raj Institution of Arunachal Pradesh**

Sl. No.	Name of District	Elected No. of Male / Female									GRAND TOTAL		
		GPM			ASM			ZPM			T	M (%)	F (%)
		T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M (%)	F (%)
1.	Tawang	307	165	142	80	51	29	06	4	2	393	220 (55.98)	173 (44.02)
2.	West Kameng	484	226	258	97	52	45	09	4	5	590	282 (47.80)	308 (52.20)
3.	East Kameng	447	201	246	139	79	60	14	8	6	600	288 (48.00)	312 (52.00)
4.	Papumpare	338	183	155	76	50	26	12	7	5	426	240 (56.34)	186 (43.66)
5.	Kurung Kumey	346	284	262	151	102	49	14	8	6	711	394 (55.41)	317 (44.59)
6.	Lower Subansiri	640	291	349	195	130	65	14	10	4	849	431 (50.77)	418 (49.23)
7.	Upper Subansiri	515	263	252	148	94	54	14	9	5	677	368 (54.06)	311 (45.94)
8.	West Siang	770	430	340	200	127	73	21	12	9	991	569 (57.42)	422 (42.58)
9.	East Siang	639	377	262	161	105	56	16	11	5	816	493 (60.42)	323 (39.58)
10.	Upper Siang	206	131	75	39	36	23	7	5	2	272	172 (63.24)	100 (36.76)
11.	Dibang Valley	62	31	31	21	14	7	3	2	1	86	47 (54.65)	39 (45.35)
12.	L/Dibang Valley	250	138	112	60	38	22	6	4	2	316	180 (56.96)	136 (43.04)
13.	Lohit	715	383	332	154	78	56	8	5	3	837	468 (54.38)	391 (45.62)
14.	Anjaw	144	90	54	41	26	15	4	3	1	189	119 (62.96)	70 (37.04)
15.	Changiang	449	264	185	100	65	35	11	6	5	560	335 (59.82)	225 (40.18)
16.	Tirap	332	226	106	56	38	18	7	5	2	395	269 (68.10)	126 (31.90)
17.	Longding	446	250	196	48	33	13	9	6	3	503	291 (57.85)	212 (42.15)
Total		7290	3933	3357	1768	1120	648	175	109	66	9251	5162 (55.92)	4089 (44.08)

**Source:** Compiled by researcher based on- Name of Elected Panchayat Members of Arunachal Pradesh (As Notified in Extra- Ordinary Gazette of 2013) Department of Panchayat Raj, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2013.

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