



# Gender and Political Participation: A field-based analysis in Arunachal Pradesh

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## Introduction:

Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the north-eastern corner of India. The state is the largest among the north-eastern states in terms of its physical entity with sprawling area of over 83 thousand sq km. However, it “is a thinly populated hilly tract lying roughly between the latitude 26° – 28 and 29°-30 N and the longitude 91° – 30 E and 91° – 30 E on the north-east extremity of India.” It has a long international border, namely, with Bhutan in the west (160 km), and to the extreme north with Tibet and China (1030 km). It borders with two of the Indian states i.e. Assam in south (618.5 km) and Nagaland in south-east (58.6 km).

The state is mainly a mountainous territory which is conveniently divided into three district physiographic units. The first unit comprises the Kameng, Subansiri and Siang districts and partly of Lohit district which is an eastward extension and continuation of Bhutan Himalaya. The Tirap district, which is a part of Patkairange and a link between Lohit Himalaya and Naga Hills of Nagaland, is designated as the second unit. The third physiographic unit is the fringe portion of eastern Assam plains, which include Siang and Lohit districts. The mountainous territory encompasses about 75000 square km<sup>1</sup>.

The inaccessible and difficult geographical has always been a factor that prevented the local tribes to mingle among themselves as well as with the neighboring people. This has resulted in the development of multiplicity of languages and customs<sup>2</sup>. The present nomenclature of the state as “Arunachal Pradesh” was suggested by B. Das Shastri, the then Director of Research, Government of NEFA, Shillong and announced by late Indira Gandhi on January 20, 1972 at Ziro, the then head quarter of Subansiri district (presently Lower Subansiri district) and was designated as a Union Territory. Before the state attained its present identity, it had gone through numerous jurisdictional, administrative and territorial transformation and adjustment.

Before the advent of the British, the Ahom policy towards the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh was according to the exigencies of the political situation and strength and weakness of the tribes. Sometimes the Ahom rules were aggressive and sometimes they followed the policy of conciliation. The Ahom had compelled several tribes of Changlang and Tirap districts to pay tribute to them and accept the suzerainty of the Ahom kingdom. Some Ahom tribes maintained friendly relations with the hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh which is evident from the fact that the Nyishi were allowed right to levy *posa* (payment in kind to buy peace) from foothills areas bordering Darrang under which the Assamese Paikes were bound to serve the Hillman. The right to *posa* also had been ceded to other tribes such as Adi, Akas, and Sherdukpens.

The policy of ‘*posa*’ was adopted in order to appease the tribal groups and keep them in good humour. However, the policy did not have the desired results since the border areas saw repeated aggression from the tribes. After defeating the Burmese (1824-26) and the signing the Treaty of Yandaboo (February 1826), the British took over the charge of administration in Assam. The British also followed the same policy of appeasement towards the hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and continued the payment of ‘*posa*’, which provided the main basis of the superstructure of the Ahom-tribal relations<sup>3</sup>. However, the policy was not successful in course of time as the hill tribes carried on feudatory incursions into the plains of Assam to punish the refractory subjects who escaped from the hill masters and who refused to pay taxes defying the age old traditions. The tribe of Arunachal Pradesh clashed with the British on several occasions and the final fall came in the year 1911 when the Adis were defeated in the Anglo-Adi War 1911. After the defeat of the Adis,

<sup>1</sup> B, Sastri (ed.): “Mineral Resources of NEFA. Arunachal Pradesh Bulletin”, 1972, quoted in Sanjay Dubey’s Dynamics of Tribal Local Polity and Panchayat Raj in Arunachal Pradesh, New Delhi: Premiere Publishing House, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Bose, M. L. History of Arunachal Pradesh, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1997. P. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Dutta, S. “The Posa System: A Historical Analysis” in S. Dutta and B. Tripathy (ed.), the Sources of the History of Arunachal Pradesh – New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2008, P. 164.

the authorities followed forward policies and undertook extensive survey operations from West Kameng bordering Bhutan to Tirap bordering Mynmar under the name of Abor Mission, Miri Mission, and Mishimi Mission during 1911-12 and established the Headquarters of the Assistant Political Officer at Pasighat. The British Government also carried forward the outer line covering all the areas inhabited by the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh upto present Mac Mohan Line in 1914 and formally initiated the British administration in Arunachal Pradesh<sup>4</sup>. The reason for not bringing the region under their effective control was absence of any tangible economic benefits accruing from the region. They would rather keep these areas outside their administrative jurisdiction and follow the policy of isolation, thus, isolating the hill people from the plains. "Inner line" – an administrative device of demarcating boundaries of plains with hills was a British strategy to keep their administration intact in the plains so as to safeguard their benefit of tribal people<sup>56</sup>.

In 1914, these hill areas were separated from the plains and North-East Frontier Tract was formed. It had three administrative units created by three separate notifications of the Govt. of India, namely, 1) Central and Eastern section, 2) Lakhimpur frontier tract, 3) Western section. This tract can be considered as the nucleus of the territorial and jurisdictional pattern of present Arunachal Pradesh. In the year 1914 the first and third units were placed under the charge of a political officer and the Deputy Commissioner Lakhimpur district was given the additional charge of the second unit. The Political Officer of the central and eastern section had its headquarters at Sadiya. The office of Political Officer of the western section was located at Charduar. A policy of peaceful penetration was pursued during 1913-14. The survey of Mishmi and Abor countries were successfully completed. The Lohit Valley road was carried to Theronliang and communication with the hill tribes was kept up by promenades to Walong in the Mishmi country and through the Aka and Dafla countries. The British officers on these promenades visited Dirang Zong, Tawang, and Rima. In 1919, the then Commissioner of Assam Sir Beatson Bell recommended that the earlier division of Eastern and Western section be renamed as the Sadiya Frontier Tract and the Balipara Frontier Tract respectively. However, the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract continued with same name. In 1937, the Balipara, Lakkhimpur and Sadiya Frontier Tracts came to be known collectively as the Excluded Areas of the Province of Assam under the provision of Section 91 (1) of the Government of India Act of 1935. These excluded areas came under the direct control of the Governor who administered these in his discretion under section 92 of the said Act, through the Political Officer and the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur.

After independence, the plain portions of the Balipara Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract, Abor Hill District and Mishmi Hill District were transferred to the administrative jurisdiction of Government of Assam in 1950. In 1954, the North East Frontier Tract was renamed as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) which did not include the transferred plains portions together with the Naga Tribal Area. Under the North East Frontier Areas (Administration) Regulation of 1954 the administrative units were also reconstituted and renamed with definite boundaries. Accordingly, the Balipara Frontier Tract was bifurcated into: Kameng Frontier Division and Subansiri Frontier Division, Abor Hills District was renamed as Siang Frontier Division, Mishmi Hills District as Lohit Frontier Division, Tirap Frontier Tract as Tirap Frontier Division and Naga Tribal Areas as Tuensang Frontier Division. However, in 1957, the Tuensang Frontier Division was included in the newly constituted Naga Hills – Tuensang Area which now forms the state of Nagaland.

NEFA was administered under the Ministry of External Affairs and in 1965 NEFA was transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of India. From September 1, 1956 the five frontier divisions came to be known as the five districts and there was no change of their headquarters. On October 2, 1969, a four tier territory, at the district, block, and village level was introduced on the recommendation of Dying Ering Committee which initiated the systematic process of democratic decentralization.

NEFA was part of Assam until January 21, 1972 and was administered by the President of India through the Governor of Assam acting as his agent under the provision of part B of the 6<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution. NEFA acquired an independent political status of Union Territory in 1972.

The 37<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment passed by Parliament provided for a Legislative Assembly consisting of 33 (30 elected+ 3 nominated) - members with Chief Minister and a cabinet to assist the Lieutenant Governor. This Act also made provision for two elected MP's from Arunachal Pradesh to Lok Sabha. On August 15, 1975, the Pradesh Council was converted into Provisional legislative Assembly and the office of the Chief Commissioner of the Union Territory was re-designated as lieutenant governor. In the same year, Itanagar in Papumpare district (erstwhile Subansiri District) was made the capital of the state followed by shifting of the secretariat of Arunachal Pradesh situated in Shillong till 1974 to the new capital.

Till May 1980, Arunachal Pradesh consisted of five districts, namely, Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, and Tirap. At present, the state has sixteen districts carved out at different points of time from the above mentioned five principal districts for administrative convenience. They are Tawang, West Kameng, East Kameng, Papumpare, Lower Subansiri, KurungKumey, Upper Subansiri, West Siang, East Siang, Upper Siang, Divang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit, Anjaw, Changlang, and Tirap. On February 20, 1987,

<sup>4</sup>Lego, N., Modern History of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar: Mrs. Ponung Lego, 2006. P. 107.

finally, Arunachal Pradesh was granted statehood with a 40 number Legislative Assembly was also raised to 60 in September 1988.

Thus, Arunachal Pradesh has experienced constitutional and political developments both during the colonial and post colonial period. It will not be out of place to put that the people of Arunachal Pradesh have traversed many centuries within the span of just a few decades. Modern participatory democratic political process made a late beginning in Arunachal Pradesh. Local Self Government under the North East Frontier Agency Panchayati Raj Regulation (Regulation 3 of 1967) was the first administrative mechanism that provided the legal base to the already existing notion of age-old institutions of different tribes through which the people of Arunachal were governed. It, practically, helped to prepare the ground for strengthening and furthering the democratic process in this nascent frontier state of north east India.

The emergence of Arunachal Pradesh as a full-fledged state has resulted in the formation and functioning of different political parties. Both national and regional political parties provide adequate choices to electors to vote the party to power. The political parties also have successfully mobilized people towards political participation and creating an interest among local populace on the operational dynamics of [parliamentary system](#).

The term 'Participation' came to the fore in the politics of many western democracies such as in British and the United States of America in the 1960's. Material contentment and subsequent political development and political modernization has led to an increased contact between the citizen and the government. A good number of studies and researches have been undertaken on the theme of political participation, mostly, in the European and American Continent.

Arunachal Pradesh was inducted into modern participatory democratic political process with a lot of enthusiasm and eagerness by its people and leaders. Local self-government under the North-East Frontier Agency Panchayati Raj Regulation of 1967 was such first administrative mechanism that provided the legal base to the already existing notion of age-old traditional institutional practices through which the people of Arunachal were governed. It paved the way for political evolution of Arunachal Pradesh that enabled the people to take part in modern participatory political activities. The people of Arunachal Pradesh, though far behind in terms of political development, were not fully unfamiliar with self governing institution at village level. Each community had its own village council that had been functioning as an effective tool of village governance. The traditional village councils differed from tribe to tribe in its workings. A typical tribal village council consisted of village chiefs, local priest, and elderly, matured and influential persons of the village. All the villagers would join and participate in the deliberations. The statutory Panchayati Raj Institutions introduced in 1969 recognized the already existing notion of participation and propelled it towards a modern mode of political functioning. The advent of political parties, emergence of numerous groups, and the people's participation in the democratic process such as periodic election exposed the state and the people to the democratic principles and ethos. With the introduction of democratic processes, the people have been participating in electing their representative since 1977. So far the state has had nine Parliamentary elections and seven Assembly elections. They have been participating in local bodies' election as well.

It is assumed that the people's participation in politics does not remain limited to the participation in the election process alone. A modern participatory democratic set up will be one in which citizens have the maximum opportunity for political participation. Such a polity would portray a populace interested in politics, turning out in numbers to vote in local, state, and national politics, attending electoral meetings, forming groups to campaign for shared objectives, contacting public representatives, and officials, signing a petition, attending public inquiries, taking out procession, and going for demonstration and agitation. There are a good number of factors that can be observed facilitating the increasing level of political participation of people in the state. The heightened activities of political parties for broadening its base to capture power, expansion of education, rise of a new class of intellectual and elite groups, impact of modernity, role of mass – media, perceptible change in people's outlook to identify themselves with the pace of political changes – all have a catalytic effect in promoting the people of the state to engage in diverse political activities.

### Methodology:

The basic objective of the present paper is to find the extent of woman's political participation in the context of democratic processes in Arunachal Pradesh. It will explore the degree of their interest and involvement in politics of the nascent state in terms of political development. For this purpose, data have been collected mainly from the primary sources. It is supplemented by secondary data and has been collected by consulting books, journals, articles and archive records for which different libraries have been visited.

Field study was conducted to collect the first hand information. Arunachal Pradesh is the largest state in the North-East India consists of various tribes, sub-tribes and the study was conducted through a sample survey. Specific study areas have been selected by using stratified random sampling. Field study has been conducted in the above area. In the first phase, the number of respondents from each constituency was drawn on the basis of proportionate stratified sampling. Following this sampling method, the number of respondents proportionate to the total population from each five selected constituencies was selected. This is presented in the following table.

**Table No.-1** Number of respondents on the basis of population size of the study areas

Sample constituencies	Total electors	Proportion to each Stratum
Itanagar	42596	0.4745596
Khonsa East	8993	0.1001905
Pasighat East	18823	0.2097059
Sagalee	10812	0.1204558
Tawang	8535	0.0950879
Total electors	89,759	

**Table No-2** The distribution of strata sample to cover an overall sample size of 500 is as follows:

Itanagar	500 x 0.4745596	=237
Khonsa East	500 x 0.1001905	=050
Pasighat East	500x 0.2097059	=105
Sagalee	500x 0.1204558	=060
Tawang	500 x 0.0950879	=048
Total Respondents		=500

The second phase of sampling, i.e. selection of respondents from constituencies posed some difficulty. In each constituency the respondents (electors) are arranged under several Polling Stations. For instance, Itanagar constituency has 50 polling stations. It is not possible to cover the entire Polling Stations of these constituencies. It was, therefore, decided that one or two Polling Stations located in rural area and one in town area would be selected on the basis of simple random sampling using Lottery method.

It is ensured, at the time of selection of Polling Station, that large-sized polling areas are included as there are Polling Stations having as low as 49 electors while higher ones accommodates as high as 1441 electors (respondents).

In the third phase of sampling, respondents from already selected rural and urban areas were drawn on the basis of systematic sampling. Systematic sampling was given preference since it would spread over the entire population and more evenly, that would be helpful to obtain diverse information.

Initially, a total of 500 respondents were proposed to be selected for the purpose of administration of schedule through multi-phase sampling. However, many of the respondents could not be contacted because of variety of reasons such as, some were out of station, few were not alive, and others were reluctant to give the interview. Therefore, the total respondents who were actually administered schedules stood at 425.

### STUDY AREA AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS:

The study is primarily concerned with people's participation in politics, their interest and extent of engagement in different political acts. Participation in politics differs from individual to individual in a society as it is largely dependent upon various socio-economic variables such as income, occupational pattern, age, gender, educational level, the level of political development, effects of modernization as well as upon the opportunities made available by a state structure. This chapter will present a profile of study area and socio-economic profile of the respondents. It is divided in two sections: the first section focuses on study area and the second section presents a study of socio economic profile of the respondents.

#### Section I

For the purpose of the present study, five areas have been selected namely Itanagar, Khonsa East, Pasighat East, Sagalee and Tawang. All five study areas are Assembly constituencies in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The study area profile will help us to understand the specificities in each of the selected areas such as the distribution of different tribal groups in the area, their additional socio-political institutions, cultural moorings, geographical features, total electors, male-female composition, and other relevant statistical information Table 2.1 presents the areas selected for the purpose of the study.

**Table 2.1 Study Area**

Name of the district	Name of the Assembly Constituency	Name of town / urban area	Name of the village/ rural area
Papumpare	Itanagar	Itanagar	Borum /Sood /Tarajuli village
Papumpare	Sagalee	Sagalee	Hibia /Mepsoro/Kheel
Tawang	Tawang	Tawang	Khartoot
East Siang	Pasighat East	Pasighat	Minsan and Takilang

\* It may be mentioned here, that there is limited statistical data for a particular town or villages and therefore, information available for district to which a town or village belong has been used and presented

Tirap	Khonsa East	Khonsa	Lama Village and Khonsa Village
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### Itanagar:

Itanagar is the capital town that comes under the district of Papumpare. The state government declared Itanagar and Naharlagun urban blocks during the 2001 Census. Tribes such as Monpa, Khampti, Hillmiri, Tagin, Adi, Apatani, Singhphos, Nocte and Wanchos have substantial population who are mostly engaged in government service and business activities. Nyishis, however, have the highest concentration in and around of capital town because of being contiguous to their settlement districts. They belong to Tibeto-Mongoloid stocks. The capital district was a part of Lakhimpur district of Assam till 1914. By Government of India notification of 1914 the area covered by this district became a part of North-East- Frontier Tract'. It was renamed as 'Balipara Frontier Tract' in 1919. The district (Like other part of NEFA) was also under the Ministry of External Affairs and was placed under the overall in charge of a political officer. Again the area was carved out of the Balipara Frontier Tract in the name of Subansiri area in 1946 with its headquarter centered at North Lakhimpur in 1954, "Subansiri area "got rechristened as Subansiri Frontier Division" and its headquarter was transferred to Ziro.

In 1965, the Ministry of Home Affairs took over the administrative charge of NEFA from the Ministry of External Affairs. It was on 22nd September 1992 Papumpare district was created and inaugurated at Doimukh after bifurcating from Lower Subansiri district.

The district has three Assembly constituencies, namely, Itanagar, Doimukh, and Sagalee. The district has the highest number of urban population as compared to rest of the urban areas in the state. The urban population stands at a little over half of the population (50.90%) and remaining is rural population (49.10). The district also has the highest literacy rate, 70.31% for male and 61.72% for female. The density of population is also quite high. The average density of population per sq.km is 42 persons as compared to 14 persons for whole of Arunachal Pradesh. The total Scheduled Tribe population in the district is 69,007 i.e. 56.56% of the district's total population (1, 22,003, 2001 census). This is indicative of having a quite large chunk of non-indigenous population groups in this particular capital district. Amongst the schedule tribe population, a vast majority of 60.41% schedule tribe population is recorded as rural dwellers and 39.59% is as urban residents. Itanagar provides a mixed type of population consisting of a variety of tribes and non-tribe groups. Most of the non-native population comes from Bihar -Uttar Pradesh, Assam - Bengal, Orissa and Nepal and other parts of India.

The sex ratio of the district is 900 female per 1000 males.\* It has 11 circles with 268 villages and two urban blocks. There are 4 Community Development Blocks, namely Sagalee C.D. Block, Mengio C.D. Block, Kimin-Doimukh C.D. Blocks and Baligan C.D. Block in the district. The Deputy Commissioner is the overall in charge of the district who maintains law and order with the help of administrative officers and police force. The Assam Frontier (Administration of justice) Regulation 1945 authorizes the village councils to settle all civil matters and petty crimes falling within the jurisdiction.

So far as the number of electors in Itanagar Assembly constituency is concerned the net electors stand at 42,596, out of which 23,816 are male voters and 18,780 are female voters after special revision made in 2004. There are 50 general polling stations and 1 auxiliary polling station. Itanagar is selected as the urban area for administering the schedules and rural areas are Borum/ Sood/Tarajuli under the Itanagar Assembly Constituency.

### 2. Sagalee:

Sagalee Assembly Constituency also comes under Papumpare district of Arunachal Pradesh. The state government declared Sagalee and Doimukh as urban blocks in 2005. It has four circles, namely Mengio, Leporiang, Sagalee and Toru. The Nyishi tribe is the dominant tribe in this area. The Nyishi is a major tribe in the state. It is divided into several exogamous clans. The Nyishi traces their descent from a legendary ancestor whose three sons are believed to have been the forefather of the three clans known as Dapum, Dodum and Dol respectively. The first mention of Nyishi is found in the Ahom Buranjis.<sup>9</sup>The Bangnis, whose settlement are found in East Kameng district area considered as the western branch of Nyishi tribe. Nyishi family is polygamous with patrilineal clans. They do not have regular traditional council like the Mishmis and Adis. The Arbiter system bears much importance for the tribes. The arbiter performs the role of a mediator, negotiator and a broker. Small sized villages and scattered settlement had not been conducive for having a regular authoritative body for the Nyishi tribe. The Nyishi has an impressive edifice of customary laws based on common accepted convention and has been functioning effectively to serve the purposes of simple life style of the tribe.

The Nyishi are primarily agriculturists and practice shifting cultivation (Jhuming), although permanent cultivation is gradually and progressively adopted where ever it is found feasible. Rearing of mithun, cow, pig, goat and fowls forms an important area of their economic activity. The Sagalee Assembly constituency

\*The sex ratio for the state stands at 901 females per 1000 males.

<sup>9</sup> Bose, M.L., History of Arunachal Pradesh, concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1997, p-19



has been divided into 22 polling stations. After a special revision of electoral roll was made in 2004, the net electors in this constituency stand at 10,812 out of which 4902 are men and 5910 are women. Sagalee is the lone town under the constituency and Hibia, Mepsoro and Kheel are the rural locations for the study.

### 3. Pasighat East Constituency:-

Pasighat East constituency comes under East -Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. There are four other Assembly constituencies in this district namely, Pangin, Nari-koyu, Pasighat- West and Mebo. Adi tribe is the local inhabitant of the district. It is a great family of tribes and sub-tribes. The Adi tribe is spread over East Siang and West Siang districts. A small section of Adi people namely, Padom live in the Dibang Valley district. Regarding the origin of Adis, R.C.R Gumming recorded in the Census Report in 1931, "In none of these tribes there are any traditions of origin going back very far. All claims origin from one race or tribe settled at Killing in the Bomo-Janbo country. From Killing, part of the tribe journeyed south across the Siyom river and occupied the hilly country between that river and Subansiri and Brahmaputra. These are known as Galong. Others crossed the Dihang (San Fo) or settled on its bank or neighborhood"<sup>10</sup>. The Adis are considered as having the most effective systems of village administration. Their village council is known as *Kebang* which has democratic structure. Every male reaching the age of reason becomes an active member of Assembly. Women are normally not found attending *Kebang* session except for purposes of giving evidence or to lodge complaint. However participation of women is not a taboo. All village activities are directed by *Kebang* on the basis of traditional laws which are rarely questioned. Its sessions are usually held in the *Mashup or Dere* (bachelor's dormitory), Wilcox, British explorer who visited the Adi country in 1825 described the hall of audience and debate, where *Kebang* met. He emphasized that everyone had an equal vote but notes that though not acknowledged by them, it is evident that some, either through their superior wealth, hereditary, esteem or real ability, exerts very strong influence as the rest can be swayed over to any measure<sup>11</sup>. Generally; the senior members present are given precedence in speaking. A member can speak for whatever length of time he chooses to speak.

*AdiKebang's* are of three kinds, at village level- *Bane Kebang* and *Atek Kebang* which are primarily concerned with different village activities. In the second comes the *Bango Kebang* where mutual interest or disputes of two or more villages are deliberated. *Bogum Bokang Kebang* is the supreme body where representatives of different village *Kebangie*. *Bane* and *Atek*, and *Bango* participate to discuss issues of war, peace, culture, development and for consideration of cases of greater significance to their society.

The East Siang district covers an area of 4687 sq. km. The total populations of the district 87,397, out of which 45,265 are male and 42,132 are females. Pasighat is the only town in the district. There are five sub-divisions. namely, Pasighat, Mebo, Ruksin, Nari and Boleng as per 2001 census. There are 144 inhabited villages and almost 75% of the populations are living in rural areas. In terms of literacy it ranks third in the state with 60.7 percent just below Papumpare (69.30) and West Kameng district (60.80). There are 16 polling stations in the Pasighat West Assembly Constituency and the net elector stands at 10,247 after special revision of 2004. Pasighat is only town in the Assembly Constituency and is selected for the present study. The names of the villages are Mirsam and Takilalung.

### 4. Khonsa East:

Khonsa East Assembly Constituency falls under the Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. Besides this assembly constituency, there are six other assembly constituencies that are covered by the district. They are Namsang, khonsa East, Borduria- Bogapani, Kanubari, Loding- Pumao, and Pongchau-Wakka. The geographical area of the district is 2362 sq.km. The total population of the district is 1, 00326, out of which 52,537 are male and 47,789 are female (As per 2001 census). It has the highest average density of population (43 persons per sq km). Nocte, Wancho and Tangsa are the major tribal groups that inhabit in the district. The Nocte lives in the central part of Tirap district and to the north of Wanchos. They have long and traditional contact with the people of the neighboring Assam plains. Chieftaincy prevails among all the three tribal groups as a strong system of village governance. Growing betel leaves and making salt from springs are their indigenous industry. Nocte were fierce head hunters in the past and today many of them are Vaishnavite. The Wancho tribe is similar to Nocte tribe and inhabit in the south western part of the Tirap district bordering Nagaland. In the past Wanchos were too fierce head hunters. This tribe is also organized under chiefs. A chief rules over a number of villages and receives tribute from his subjects. They follow animistic religion and believe in benevolent and malevolent deities. Tangsa tribe denotes dozen of tribal groups within its fold, and each tribe is sub divided into number of exogamous clans. They inhabit east of the central part of Tirap district, which goes along Indo-Myanmar border. Among all other tribes of Arunachal, Tangsas appear to be the only tribe which adheres to monogamy."<sup>12</sup> They migrate very frequently from place to place in search of land for shifting cultivation. They are followers of the Hinayana sect of Buddhism.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Verrier, Elwin: A Philosophy for NEFA, P-156, quoted in Sanjay Dubey's Dynamics of Tribal Local Polity and Panchayat Raj in Arunachal Pradesh, p.2.6.

<sup>12</sup> Dubey, Sanjay Tribal Local Polity and Panchayat Raj in Arunachal Pradesh, Premiere Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, P.1.14.

The Assembly constituency of Khonsa East has a total of 27 general polling stations. After a special revision of electoral roll was made in 2004 the net elector in the Assembly constituency is 8,993 out of which 4,910 are male voters and female electors stand at 4083. Khonsa is selected as the urban location and Lamsa and Khonsa Village are as the rural locations under the Assembly Constituency.

### 5. Tawang:

Tawang constituency comes under Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The district covers an area of 2172 sq.km. The total population of the district is 38,924 and the average density of population is 18 persons per sq. km. (2001 census). The total Scheduled Tribe population of the district is 29,191 out of which 14,241 are male and 14,950 are female. The percentage of urban population is just 21.52 and a vast proportion of the population lives in villages. So far as literacy in the district is concerned, it is below fifty percent (47.3%). (Census of India, 2001) The Monpa is the pre-dominant tribe in the district. Monpas are quite, gentle, artistic and dignified<sup>13</sup>. The sub-tribes' amongst them are Tawang, Dahing and Kalan. They regard themselves as migrated from Bhutan and their script has come from Tibet. They have patriarchal society. They have got caste and clan system with no social hierarchy and discrimination.

The Monpa tribe has a well developed form of village council with strong democratic tradition. They have a strong sense of protocol. The influence of Buddhism could be seen in all aspects of their life. Agriculture is their main economy stay. They are distinguished for their terrace cultivation, carpet making, wood carving and yak and sheep rearing. The Buddhist monastery of Tawang is the heart of the Monpa life. There are three Assembly constituencies that come under the districts of Tawang, namely, Lumla, Tawang and Mukto. Tawang Assembly constituency has 18 General polling stations. After special revision of electoral roll made in 2004 the net electors in this constituency stands at 8535, out of which 4596 are men and 3939 are women. Schedules were administered in the only town, namely, Tawang and in the village, namely, Khartoot.

### Section II Socio-economic profile of the respondents:

The study, initially proposed to select a total of 500 respondents from both urban and rural locations in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. However, it may be mentioned that in the final stage of administration of schedules respondents numbering 425 could be contacted for interview as some had expired, some were found to be out of stations, and few were reluctant to give the interview. While selecting the study areas, it was considered essential to include the tribal groups having distinct characteristics in their social-political governance. On this basis five study areas have been selected, namely, Itanagar, Sagalee, Tawang, Pasighat East and Khonsa East. Each of these areas is the Assembly Constituency in Arunachal Pradesh. One town and one or two rural locations have been selected from each of the Assembly Constituency for the purpose of selecting the respondents. The division of respondents into rural and urban category can help in giving enough evidences of the rural-urban differences in political participation. In the table below, presents the area-wise distribution of sample size.

**Table 2.2 Distribution of Sample Size**

Study Areas	Sample Size
Itanagar	200
Khonsa East	50
Pasighat East	75
Sagalee	52
Tawang	48
Total	425

**Table 2.4 (a) Distribution of respondents by sex (Rural Area)**

Sex	Borum/Sood/Tarajuli	Mirsum and Takilalum	Hibia/Mepso ro/Kheel	Khartoot	Lamsa Village and Khonsa Village	Total
Male	40 (58%)	17 (53%)	20 (59%)	14 (70%)	12 (60%)	103 (59%)
Female	29 (42%)	15 (47%)	14 (41%)	06 (30%)	08 (40%)	72 (41%)
Total	69 (100%)	32 (100%)	34 (100%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)	175 (100%)

(Source: Field work)

The above table is clear and self-evident so far as distribution of male and female respondents is concerned. In the rural areas, the number of male respondents is higher than the female respondents. There are 103 male as against 72 female and their percentages are 59 and 41 respectively.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.1.8.

**Table 2.4 (b) Distribution of respondents by sex (Urban Area)**

Sex	Itanagar	Pasighat	Sagalee	Tawang	Khonsa	Total
Male	76 (66%)	26 (60%)	19 (56%)	15 (56%)	20 (65%)	156 (62%)
Female	39 (34%)	17 (40%)	15 (44%)	12 (44%)	11 (35%)	94 (38%)
Total	115 (100%)	43 (100%)	34 (100%)	27 (100%)	31 (100%)	250 (100%)

(Source: Field work)

Table 2.4 (b) shows that there is a pre-ponderance of male respondents in the urban areas. In urban areas, the percentage of male is little higher than the rural areas (62%) whereas in terms of female representation, it is lesser than rural representation (38%). Out of the total 250 respondents in the urban area, 156 are male and 94 are female.

**Table 3.3 Distribution of respondents by sex and their electoral participation (Rural)**

Age Group (In years)	Voted in an election		Do you think voting gives my benefits?		Types of benefits you have received			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Monetary	Material benefits	Job/Contract	Opportunity to select candidate
Male	98 (95%)	05 (5%)	52 (53%)	46 (47%)	08 (15%)	13 (25%)	07 (14%)	24 (46%)
Female	69 (96%)	03 (4%)	14 (20%)	55 (80%)	03 (21%)	1 (7%)	02 (14%)	08 (58%)
Total	167 (95%)	08 (5%)	66 (40%)	101 (60%)	11 (17%)	14 (21%)	09 (14%)	32 (48%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

Table 3.3 shows the voting participation of male and female respondents in election. In the rural areas, women have been found to have slightly more participation in voting than their male counterpart. Out of the total 72 women respondents, 69 of them have voted in an election. Women respondents, however, overwhelmingly negated that voting has any benefits at all for them. Eighty percent of them said that voting right does not give any benefits. Perhaps, most of them see voting participation in the context of self-well being. A little over half of the male respondents look voting in different perspective and rather in a positive overture. For them, because of voting, they have been benefited, if not all of them personally, but it is seen as an important tool in their hand to select a right representative for societal development.

A few male respondents who are politically more active and conscious and close to political leaders have also been benefited in terms of monetary and material gains. In absolute numbers, out of the total 175 respondents in the rural areas 34 respondents have expressed that they got some benefits.\

**Table 3.4 Distribution of respondents by sex and their electoral participation (Urban)**

Age Group (In years)	Voted in an election		Do you think voting gives my benefits?		Types of benefits you have received			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Monetary	Material benefits	Job/Contract	Opportunity to select candidate
Male	148 (95%)	08 (5%)	34 (23%)	114 (77%)	06 (18%)	02 (6%)	02 (6%)	24 (70%)
Female	80 (85%)	14 (15%)	06 (8%)	74 (92%)	02 (33%)	0 -	0 -	04 (67%)
Total	228 (91%)	22 (9%)	40 (18%)	188 (82%)	8 (20%)	02 (5%)	02 (5%)	28 (70%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

In the urban areas, there is a slight variation in voting participation of the male and female respondents tilting favorably towards the male respondents. 95 percent of the male respondents have exercised their franchise in an election. Women in the urban centers have shown less interest to vote, as compared to male respondents, although their aggregate percentage of 85 is encouraging. To the question of voting benefits, again, female respondents are less inclined to say any benefits accruing out of voting rights. Urban male respondents also see more or less not much beneficial consequences of their franchise right. Very few male respondents are there who have benefited monetarily or receive some type of material benefits. 18 percent of



them have admitted of receiving monetary benefits whereas for material benefits, the percentage of respondents is just 6 percent. 70 percent of the male respondents and 67 percent of the female respondents see voting as an important political right which gives them an opportunity to select right and honest candidate who will contribute towards the development of the state. In the urban areas, the respondents are found to be more matured and politically conscious and so such, they talk of voting benefits not in terms of individual gains but collective good of the society. The collective sense of welfare is found lacking in rural areas of the state.

**Table 3.13 Distribution of respondents by sex and their political interest and efficacy**

(Rural) Sex	Do you discuss with friends / neighbors before casting vote for a candidate?			Do you and your family members decide to caste vote in favor of same candidate?	
	Sometimes I do	All times	Never	Yes	No
Male	56 (57%)	03 (3%)	39 (40%)	67 (68%)	31 (32%)
Female	27 (39%)	06 (9%)	36 (52%)	53 (77%)	16 (23%)
Total	83 (50%)	09 (5%)	75 (45%)	120 (72%)	47 (28%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

Table 3.13 gives the male-female difference in respect of political interest in the rural areas. It shows that male takes part more in this particular mode of political discussion than their female counterpart in the rural area of the state. 60 percent of male have discussed with friends, colleagues or neighbors before deciding on a candidate whereas only 48 percent of female do so. It is clear that more than half of the female population is not involved in this type of political discussion. To the second question as to whether the respondents and their family members decide to vote in favor of same candidate, 68 percent of male and 77 percent of female respondents respectively say that they do so. Women respondents show lesser degree of political maturity and interest to take their own independent decision and happily go along with their family members.

**Table 3.14 Distribution of respondents by sex and their political interest and efficacy  
(Urban)**

Sex	Do you discuss with friends / neighbors before casting vote for a candidate?			Do you and your family members decide to caste vote in favor of same candidate?	
	Sometimes I do	All times	Never	Yes	No
Male	70 (47%)	00 -	78 (53%)	64 (43%)	84 (57%)
Female	30 (38%)	06 (7%)	44 (55%)	46 (58%)	34 (42%)
Total	100 (44%)	06 (3%)	122 (53%)	110 (48%)	118 (52%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

In urban area, more than half of the total respondents (53%) have not discussed for deciding a candidate to be voted before an election (table 3.14). It could be seen that 47 percent of male respondents said that discussed with friends or neighbors. In case of female, 38 percent participated in political discussion only 'sometimes', while 7 percent do so 'all the times'. There is some difference between the rural residents and urban residents so far the political discussion is concerned. In this respect, the rural population shows little more interest and involvement than their urban brethren.

Family discussion for the choice of candidate can also be an important catalyst agent in influencing the decision of an elector. The above table shows that only 43 percent of male respondents said that they decided to cast vote in favor of same candidate along with their family members whereas 58 percent of female do so. Urban women respondents are found better in taking political decision than their rural counterparts. This could be because of obvious reasons that many of them are equipped with education, exposed to mass media, relatively bigger social and better economic life. However, they are still to come a long way to become more independent in taking political decision.

**Table 3.23 Distribution of respondents by sex and their engagement and interest in political acts (Rural)**

Sex	How much effort does it take to decide which party to vote in an election?				Involved in an argument while deciding to vote for a party		Intend to contest election in future	
	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	34 (35%)	58 (59%)	06 (6%)	00 -	37 (38%)	61 (62%)	39 (40%)	59 (60%)
Female	10 (14%)	40 (58%)	18 (26%)	01 (2%)	11 (16%)	58 (84%)	18 (26%)	51 (74%)
Total	44 (26%)	98 (59%)	24 (14%)	01 (1%)	48 (29%)	119 (71%)	57 (34%)	110 (66%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

Table 3.23 shows the male-female differences in political engagement in the rural areas. It is clear from the above table that women do not show much interest to engage themselves in political activities. 26 percent of women respondents said that they put 'very little' effort in deciding a party to be voted in an election whereas 14 percent put 'a lot' of effort on this. Only 35 percent of male respondents put 'a lot' of effort in this respect. There are only few female respondents who are found to be politically active and thus, their minimal involvement in political acts could be observed. Only 16 percent of women respondents said that they had an argument with the supporters of opposing political party while deciding for a party to vote, whereas the percentage is more than double for male respondents (38%) who have this kind of argument. From this, it can be inferred safely that women are largely an apolitical group and like to keep themselves outside the arena of political activities which most of them consider as male's domain. In the third question, more or less a similar pattern of political engagement and interest is visible. Majority of both male and female respondents do not take active participation in politics through election contest as their future goal though there is certain degree of difference with regard to the percentages of male and female respondents which stand at 60% and 74% respectively. Accordingly, only 26% of woman respondents are interested to fight election in future and it is 40% for male respondents. Thus, it is obvious that woman is still much behind with their male counterparts in respect of their engagement and interest in politics.

**Table 3.24 Distribution of respondents by sex and their engagement and interest in political acts (Urban)**

Sex	How much effort does it take to decide which party to vote in an election?				Involved in an argument while deciding to vote for a party		Intend to contest election in future	
	A lot	Some	Very little	Not at all	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	26 (18%)	74 (50%)	48 (32%)	00 -	26 (18%)	122 (82%)	22 (15%)	126 (85%)
Female	22 (28%)	44 (55%)	14 (17%)	00 -	08 (10%)	72 (90%)	06 (8%)	74 (92%)
Total	48 (21%)	118 (52%)	62 (27%)	00 -	34 (15%)	194 (85%)	28 (12%)	200 (88%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

In the urban centers, the women respondents are found putting more effort while voting for a political party. 28 percent of the female respondents say that they put 'a lot' of effort and 55 percent of female respondent put 'some' effort. In comparison, only 18 percent of male respondents put 'a lot' effort and 50% of them put only 'some' effort. Regarding respondent's involvement in a more intensified type of political act, the female engagement is less than male counterparts. Only 10 percent of female respondents are found to have involved in an argument with the supporters of opposition political party/candidate while deciding to vote and 18 percent male respondents have done so. In terms of contesting election, there is a somewhat gloomy picture. Both male and female respondents do not show much interest to pursue politics and compete for electoral post. Only 8 percent of female respondents and 15 percent of male respondents express their intention to contest election in future if they get right opportunity.

**Table 4.3 Distribution of respondents by sex and their participation in political acts (Rural)**

Sex	Are/were you member of a political party?		Did you go out for canvassing for a political party/candidate?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	29 28%	74 72%	74 72%	29 28%
Female	07 10%	65 90%	36 50%	36 50%
Total	36 21%	139 79%	110 63%	65 37%

(Source: Fieldwork)

In respect of male-female differences and party membership, it can be observed that women respondents are not much interested to join a political party. It is seen that only 10 percent of female respondents are member of a political party. Most of them said that they were pre-occupied with household works, looking after their families and they had little time to devote for the more active form of political activities. On the other hand, male have a pre-dominant position so far as their membership in political party is concerned. 28 percent of male respondents said that they had a party membership ties. So far as canvassing is concerned, substantial numbers of female have participated in campaigning activity. Half of them said that they had gone out for canvassing a candidate of a political party. The reason for their sizeable and encouraging participation is as given by them, that since it is a periodic occurrence in political scene and they can afford sufficient time to spare. Therefore, a wide gap does not seem to exist between male and female respondents so far as canvassing is concerned. With regard to male canvassing participation, an overwhelming percentage (72%) has been found to be a regular campaigner for a candidate.

**Table 4.4 Distribution of respondents by sex and their participation in political acts (Urban)**

Sex	Are/were you member of a political party?		Did you go out for canvassing for a political party/candidate?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	14 9%	142 91%	48 31%	108 69%
Female	04 4%	90 96%	24 26%	70 74%
Total	18 7%	232 93%	72 29%	178 71%

(Source: Fieldwork)

Urban respondents are found to be less active politically than their counterparts in the rural areas. People in the urban areas hold rather a cynical view about politics and politicians. Most of the respondents stated that they were pre-occupied with their own family and work. They cannot afford the time required to join and work for a political party. As such party membership and its activities do not stimulate much interest among the urban populace. Perhaps, the political parties in the state also could not reach out to many section of the population due to weak and half-hearted mobilization efforts. Only a small proportion of the male respondents (9%) said that they had been member of a political party, while smaller is the percentage for women who are enrolled to a political party. Just only 4 percent of female respondents said that they were associated with a political party as a member. In respect of canvassing also, a big gap of participation could be observed between rural and urban respondents.

Male respondent's engagement in canvassing is little more than the female participants. 31 percent of male in the urban areas as against 72 percent in the rural areas said to have gone out for canvassing a candidate of political party whereas 20 percent of women in the urban areas as against 50 percent in the rural belt said to have done so. In the urban centers, people seemed to have a preference for keeping distance with political activism. Apparently, they are less inclined to get involved in the political acts because of their cynical attitude toward politics as well as because of their preference to mind own work and family affairs.

**Table 4.13 Distribution of respondents by sex and their engagement in conventional and non-conventional political activities (Rural)**

Sex	Did you contribute fund for political party?		Did you attend public meeting organized by a political party?		Did you attend meeting organized by pressure group?		Did you take part in a strike/demonstration/ protest march?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	34 (33%)	69 (67%)	91 (88%)	12 (12%)	42 (41%)	61 (59%)	22 (21%)	81 (79%)
Female	00 -	72 (100%)	36 (50%)	36 (50%)	05 (7%)	67 (93%)	08 (11%)	64 (89%)
Total	34 (19%)	141 (81%)	127 (73%)	48 (27%)	47 (7%)	128 (73%)	30 (17%)	145 (83%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

The male-female differences in the political engagement (table 4.13) shows that politics is still a male's domain. Female political participation in all forms of engagement is much lower than the male counterpart. There is not a single female respondent who said to have contributed fund for a political party. In respect of attending public meeting too, women's participation is much lower than male. 50 percent of female respondents said that they had attended in a public meeting organized by a political party whereas 88 percent of male did so. Women are also not much interested in joining a pressure group and its activities. A very minuscule percentage of women i.e. 7 percent of them said that they had attended in a meeting organized by a pressure group. Their participation in unconventional form of political acts is also not different. 11 percent of women joined in a protest form of activity whereas the male's percentage is 21. It is evident that in rural areas, politics is still not a women's domain of activity, lack of formal education, exposure, and their pre-occupation with family responsibility discourage them to share their role in politics.

**Table 4.14 Distribution of respondents by sex and their engagement in conventional and non-conventional political activities (Urban)**

Sex	Did you contribute fund for political party?		Did you attend public meeting organized by a political party?		Did you attend meeting organized by pressure group?		Did you take part in a strike/demonstration/ protest march?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	10 (6%)	146 (94%)	90 (58%)	66 (42%)	16 (10%)	140 (90%)	18 (12%)	138 (88%)
Female	00 -	94 (100%)	20 (21%)	74 (79%)	00 -	94 (100%)	06 (6%)	88 (94%)
Total	10 (4%)	240 (96%)	110 (44%)	140 (56%)	16 (6%)	234 (94%)	24 (10%)	226 (90%)

(Source: Fieldwork)

In the urban areas too, women do not seem to have much interest in the aforesaid political acts. Surprisingly, there are no female respondents who contributed fund for a political party. Compared, to rural respondents, urban residents show little interest with political party and their candidate. There are a very low percentage of urban respondents who said to have provided finance for political party activity (6%). In respect of attending public meeting, percentage shows a heavy tilt towards the male respondents. 58 percent of male and 21 percent of female respondents have attended in such public meeting. Again, there is not much variation in attending pressure groups meetings. They demonstrated little involvement in group activity and policies. There is no female respondent who said to have attended in a meeting organized by pressure groups. The unconventional act of politics also appears to be fully dominated by the male respondents. A very small percentage (6%) of women respondents said of their participation either in a protest march or in a political strike whereas the percentage of male is 12. On the whole, it can be concluded that people in the urban areas are little detached from active politics. On many forms of political acts including the above mentioned acts, both urban man and women are lagging behind their rural brethren. The most plausible cause may be due to losing of trust on politicians and the elected representatives.

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is home to 26 major tribes and hundreds of sub-tribes with their own distinct traditional socio-political norms of governance. Modern methods of election have been quite newly installed experience for the people of the state. While democracy as an idea took many years to take to a working

shape, quite in a lesser span of time, the placement of democratic practice in a traditional society of Arunachal Pradesh has fitted finely cutting across the barriers of myriad of differences in socio-cultural practices and beliefs. In all democratic society, it is not all people that take part in the acts of political participation and take an equal measure of interest in politics.

### Concluding remarks:

Woman participation in politics is always less compared to the man since the beginning of governmental system. However, without woman participation, democracy is incomplete and without substance. Participation in governmental affairs is essential both for man and woman considering the requirement of different approaches to the policy needs. However, all over the world, woman's participation is relatively less in comparison to man's participation level. Question may arise as to what and how it can impact upon the social system/ society as a whole. How does it may affect the development efforts, peace and happy life in a society?

While political participation is simply understood as the citizen's engagement in the regular activities of the state in the form of voting, campaigning, competing for the post of public offices, organizing and attending public meetings, joining political party/pressure groups, membership of different social and political organizations, and sometimes in the protest form of activities. The purpose is to create a vibrant, a stable and successful democracy for delivering the needs and services for the citizens.

While comparing the indexes of political participation of man and woman, the present study finds that in most of the categories, woman has less participation rate than the man. Voting participation of female does not vary much with man. Both male and female shows a higher degree of participation in the act of voting (90 %+). Political awareness and political discussion among the female respondents are found very less than the male counterparts. It is generally, expected since woman remain busy in their daily household tasks and looking after family. They show lesser degree of interest and involvement in political discussion and largely devoid of political competence which was seen in respect of their decision to vote for a candidate and political party. They tend to go along the family line while resorting to political decision. 8% of the female against 15% male respondents said they would like to contest election in future, if given an opportunity. In terms of membership, barely 10% female against 28% male respondents expressed that they have membership of a political party or a pressure groups. Women are still to be part of civil societies and organizations. In similar line, a very small percentage of 6% of woman respondent said to have participated in a protest march or in a political strike against the male's participation percentage of 12.

The present study is an indicative that in the several indexes of political participation, woman has a limited participatory role due to several structural and traditional constraints. Research conducted in several Western countries has proved that policies are skewed in favor of those who participate in the governmental affairs. Thus, it is imperative that woman in large number should come forward and take part in the democratic and decision making processes for the system to evolve into a strong, resilient and effective means of governance. Only woman can resolve their problems, know, protect, and promote their self-welling being and interest. Formulation of popular woman-oriented policies, programmes and schemes are only possible when they participate actively and in large numbers. It will facilitate in the evolution of a better, efficient and balanced political system nourishing the roots of democracy.

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