CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

Political participation which is considered as one of the most important and indispensable elements of democracy was denied to women for centuries. They had to struggle hard for a long time before they could enjoy meaningful political participation. This has been evidenced by suffrage movements started by women in different parts of the world. As a result, demand for political participation by women during the second half of the 19th century and 20th century in the western and European countries remained more or less confined to their participation in the movement for enfranchisement. However, in the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the pattern was different. The political participation of women in these continents during the second half of the 19th and 20th century was recorded in their participation in freedom movements. Voting rights for them came with their independence. Even though it was not intense, the women in India also had their own share of struggle for franchise rights. Regarding the participation of women in electoral politics in different parts of the world, it started mainly with the achievement of the franchise right in the western and European countries and with the emergence of independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

In India, the political participation of women during the pre-Independence period was confined more or less to their participation in the freedom struggle. With the achievement of Independence and the subsequent adoption of the Constitution, women received equal rights with men and with this they began to participate in the elections and electoral politics of the country.

Coming to that of Manipur, before their participation in the electoral politics of the state began, women in the valley were already involved in the
socio-religious and political affairs of the state. It could be seen during the First and the Second Nupi Lal in 1904 and 1939 respectively. They also participated during socio-religious and political reform movements during the 1930s and the middle of 1940s under the leadership of Hijam Irabot Singh.

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

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

Coming to the specific subject matter of the present work, the Tangkhuls
who mainly inhabit the Ukhrul District of Manipur have an age old tradition of denying space to women in the village administration. However, when it comes to the socio-cultural life of the people, women enjoyed equal status with that of men. Socially from the olden times the Tangkhul women did not find any discrimination of any sort and they lived an independent and carefree life. The dormitory system played an important role in the life of unmarried women. It was in this dormitory for women called as Ngadalong that women were taught about discipline, social behaviour, and other duties for the future responsibilities relating to housekeeping and motherhood. In the olden days, when there was no system of school education, the youth dormitory served as an institution that gave education to the youths of the village. The boys also had their separate dormitory where various lessons like war technique, handicrafts works, etc. were taught. The girls did not face any social discrimination and they participated freely in all the village festivals and fairs.

Coming to the domestic works, the main duties of the girls were confined to taking care of the house, engaging in paddy fields, animal husbandry, etc. and in their free time they weaved beautiful and colourful clothes for themselves and for the family. Every woman in the household knew the art of weaving. Even today the Tangkhul women are talented and great weavers who invent different kinds of shawls and lungis from time to time. In the religious field, the women were given one very important religious duty during Chumphu Phanit, which was the granary festival. The rite for this festival has to be performed by the women of every household in the absence of the male members of the family.

Though the coming of Christianity has resulted in the abandonment of traditional institutions like dormitories and also practises like that of Chumphu Phanit, it has actually resulted in women playing a more active role in the socio-religious life of the society. With the coming of Christianity, Tangkhul
women have come to play an important role in the religious and spiritual life of every church. All the churches have their own women society like the Chommiyar among the followers of Seventh Day Adventist Church based in Ukhrul District, Women Society of the Tangkhul Baptist Church based in Imphal, etc. Through these organisations, Tangkhul women perform various activities within and outside the church. They organise spiritual meetings from time to time at different places every year. Eminent speakers from abroad and from other states would come and deliberate on various Biblical topics which greatly enrich the spiritual life of the people. Though these meetings are organised by women, all are welcome irrespective of sex and denomination. Outside the church, these women organisations are also involved in various charity works like giving food and clothing to the poor, visiting sick people in the hospitals and praying for them and extending monetary help, helping people in time of natural calamities, etc.

While coming to the political participation of Tangkhul women, it has been examined from two different angles – 1) their participation in the electoral politics of the state and 2) their involvement in the socio-political issues affecting the interests of their people. Again, their participation in the electoral politics of the state has been examined at three different levels – 1) at the level of local self governing body elections, 2) at the level of state assembly elections, and 3) at the level of Lok Sabha elections.

About their participation in local self governing bodies, earlier women did not find any space in the traditional village administration. It can be noted that the Tangkhuls lived in independent villages, ruled by a chief known as Awungga. He was assisted in his work by a village council called as the Hangva which is formed by every clan heads of the village known as Pipa. Thus, the Awungga together with the Hangva constituted the governing body of the village. Their customs did not allow women to be members of the Hangva.
They were also not allowed to become the chief of the village. In this way, the participation of Tangkhul women in traditional administrative system of the society was as good as non-existent. Of course, there were some exceptions like Khaireila who became a member of Hangva on the death of her husband who was an Awunga of Talloi village; Seisingla and Lorungla the two daughters of Kachai Awunga K.A Siluiwung; etc. Still, these were only exceptions and not the norm.

There was, however, one role of political significance which women played in the olden days. Those Tangkhul women who got married to other villages used to intervene and stop inter-village feuds whenever these feuds have led to too much suffering on the part of the people. They were named as Pukreila and whenever a war took place between her maternal village and her husband’s village, she would play the role of a peace maker and even physically intervene in the site and demand an end to the war or feud. This was the only political role of the common women in the olden days.

The traditional village administrative set-up was altered in the year 1947 when the “Manipur State Hill Peoples (Administration) Regulation Act, 1947” was introduced by the state government. This Act replaced the traditional Village Council system and introduced the Village Authority, consisting of the Village Chief and elders nominated in accordance with the custom of the village. Under this Act also, women did not have any chance to be represented as the Act says that the village authority members shall be nominated in accordance with the custom of the village, and the custom of the Tangkhuls did not allow women to be in the administrative body of the village.

The years following the merger of Manipur into India witnessed further changes in the traditional administrative system of the Tangkhuls. In 1956, a new Act known as the “Manipur (Village Authorities in Hill Areas) Act, 1956” was introduced. The most notable feature of this Act was the introduction of
democratic elements in the Village Authority by including a provision for the
election of the members of Village Authority by means of adult franchise as
against the system of nomination under the Manipur Hill Peoples (Regulation)
Act 1947. This Act was a significant advancement so far as political
participation of Tangkhul women was concerned. Now legally speaking, there
was no bar to the women from contesting elections and they could also
participate in elections for the members of the Village Authority as voters.
Further, this Act contained one special provision for women, which was written
in Chapter III (53) of the Act, which says that no women shall, against her will,
be compelled to appear in person before a village court as an accused or as a
party or as a witness.

But, the Act did not contain any provision for the empowerment of
women politically at the grass root level of governance in the form of
reservation for women in the Village Authority. Besides, the 1956 Act could
not be implemented both in letter and spirit. The Tangkhul villages did not
adopt the Act and they continued with their traditional system of
administration. They preferred their earlier system over the new one as they
believed that the new system will usher in an era of domination of small clans
by big clans, and that all the clans, big and small, may not find representation
in the new system. In addition, the traditional village chiefs were also very
much against the new system for obvious reasons.

The next Act of local self government introduced in the hills of Manipur
was the “Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act of 1971”. It may be noted
here that just before granting Statehood to Manipur, in 1971, the Parliament
enacted an Act for the hills of the Manipur called the “Manipur (Hill Areas)
District Council Act of 1971”. The Act was implemented in August 1973 in all
the Hill districts of Manipur. The Act laid down that all the hill areas of
Manipur shall be divided into not more than six Autonomous Districts. For
each Autonomous District there shall be a District Council composed of not more than eighteen elected members and two nominated. In this way, every Autonomous District was to have an Autonomous District Council (ADC) having 20 members. Eventually, the entire hill area of Manipur was divided into six Autonomous District Councils. They were as follows:

1) Tengnoupal Autonomous District Council,

2) Manipur North Autonomous District Council,

3) Sardar Hill District Autonomous District Council,

4) Manipur South Autonomous District Council,

5) Manipur East Autonomous District Council,

6) Manipur West Autonomous District Council.

The Ukhrul District constitutes the area for the Manipur East Autonomous District Council. The council has its headquarter at Ukhrul with eighteen District council Constituencies.

In Ukhrul District, the first District Council election was held on 22 May 1973, the second on 14 November 1978, and the third and the last one on 22 February, 1984. However, all the Autonomous District Councils of Manipur were dissolved in 1988 by the state government. In all the elections conducted so far for the Ukhrul Autonomous District Council, there have been no women candidates. It is also significant to note here that the Tangkhul women have not benefited from the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution because reservation of 33% seats in the local self-governing bodies for women as envisaged by these Amendments has not been reflected in the Autonomous District Council Act. In addition to this, elections to the Autonomous District Council have not been held since the 1984 one. These factors greatly obstruct women’s empowerment at the grass root level of governance. It can be noted
that in the other parts of India, as well as in the valley of Manipur, women have already started enjoying the privilege given to them by the 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution. Yet the hill women of Manipur in general, and the Tangkhul women in particular, are still being denied of such a privilege and they have not really benefited from the above Amendments.

The above facts mean that there have been no real initiative and efforts on the part of the government for political empowerment of women at the District level of governance. This is in addition to the denial of women in the village administration which is being run more or less entirely based on the traditions and customs of the Tangkhuls. So far there is no prospect of any change and modification of the Tangkhul customs and traditions to fit women in the governance of the village polity. All these factors have adversely affected the overall electoral participation of the Tangkhul women. When women were not given proper opportunity to involve at the grass root level of governance, their involvement at the other levels of governance is also bound to be in a very poor shape as grass root governance is considered to be the first hand ground for training future leadership.

As regards the electoral participation in the state level, the Tangkhul women got equal opportunity with that of men when the first ever election for the state legislature was held in 1948 under the provisions of the Manipur State Constitution Act 1947. The Act provided space for the Tangkhul women to participate in the politics of the state as they got the right to contest elections as well as cast their votes in the election for the state legislative assembly. It may be noted here that the Act provided for a 53 members Legislative Assembly comprising representatives elected on the basis of universal adult franchise.

In the post independence era, when Manipur got merged into India, she ceased to be an independent monarchy. By an order of the Central government dated 22 January 1950, Manipur was declared as a Province of the Chief
Commissioner. Subsequently Manipur was put under the category of the Part 'C' State of the Constitution. With this, the Legislative Assembly was dissolved and the Chief Commissioner became the Administrator of the state. From this point till 1956, women of Manipur did not have the opportunity to participate in electoral politics meant for constituting a legislative assembly and a government responsible to it for the state.

The administrative set up was changed again with the passing of the State Reorganization Commission Bill, 1956. With this, Manipur ceased to be a Part "C" state from 1 November 1956 and she became a Union Territory. The "Territorial Council Act of 1956" made a provision for constituting a Territorial Council of 32 members for a term of 5 years. Out of this 30 were to be elected and 2 were to be nominated by the Central Government who will not be a government employee. In this way, the election for the 30 members of Territorial Council was held in the month of January 1957. In this election the women of Manipur including the Tangkhul women had the right to participate both as voters and as candidates. In addition to this, two women, namely Smt. R.K. Mukharą Devi and Mrs. Akhim Anal were nominated in the Territorial Council. After that, the second election of the Territorial Council was held on 19 February 1962. Till this period, the Tangkhul women's electoral participation at the state level was confined to voting.

Then in 1963, with the enforcement of the Government of Union Territories Act 1963, Manipur became a Union Territory having a Territorial Legislative Assembly of 30 elected and 2 nominated members. In this Territorial Assembly, one Tangkhul women namely Mrs. Shiningla Keishing was nominated as a member in the year 1967. This was a significant development for the Tangkhul women because one could see for the first time a Tangkhul woman occupying a seat in the legislative body of the state when they were still denied access in the village administration.
Finally, with the passing of the North Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Bill in the year 1971, Manipur became a full-fledged state on 21 January 1972. Along with it, the Manipur Legislative Assembly with strength of 60 members was also instituted. This obviously gave a new impetus to electoral participation of women in Manipur including the Tangkhul women as they started participating in the state legislative assembly elections.

After the attainment of statehood, though Tangkhul women got all the opportunity to participate in the electoral politics of the state, one could see that their electoral participation remained still confined to voting mainly. The number of Tangkhul women contesting elections or joining political parties remained utterly negligible. It was only in the year 1990 that one saw a Tangkhul women elected in the state Assembly. Mrs Hangmila Shaiza, wife of late Yangmaso Shaiza, the former Chief Minister of Manipur was elected from the Ukhrul Assembly Constituency in the year 1990 and she became the first women in Manipur to be elected in the State Legislative Assembly. However, her winning of the seat was mainly because of the sympathy wave as she contested the election in place of her brother-in-law Lungshim Shaiza who was assassinated during the pre-poll election campaign. Her husband was also a victim of political assassination earlier. Even then it was a very significant development for the Tangkhul women because it was for the first time that people supported and elected a woman candidate. Unfortunately, after her, one cannot see any Tangkhul women winning a seat in the state assembly elections. Apart from her, only two other women have so far contested in the state assembly elections till now. They are Ms. Grace Shatsang who contested from Chingai (ST) Assembly Constituency in the year 2000, and Mrs Valley Rose Hungyo who contested from Phunyar (ST) Assembly Constituency in the 2007 Assembly Election. This shows the lack of interest by the Tangkhul women in choosing politics as their career.
While coming to the Tangkhul women's electoral participation at the level of Parliamentary elections, since the first election held in the year 1951, the Tangkhul women once again have been participating merely as voters most of the time. One saw a Tangkhul woman contesting a seat in the Lok Sabha election only in the year 1989, when Mrs. Valley Rose Hungyo contested from the Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency. She tried her luck again in the 1996 Lok Sabha election but so far she has failed miserably in all the three attempts. Other than her, there have been no women who had contested for the Lok Sabha seat from among the Tangkhul women, or for that matter from among the Naga women.

After analysing their electoral participation at the three levels, it is found that majority of the Tangkhul women's main activity at the time of election is limited to voting. Other forms of activities like campaigning, contesting as candidates, enrolling in the political party, raising party fund, attending political meetings etc. are not common among the Tangkhul women. However, one can see a handful of them in every public meetings organised by different political parties at the time of election. It may also be noted that most of the Tangkhul women do not relate their voting with its political consequences. Majority of them are not independent voters. They voted on the dictum of their husband or sons or other male members of the family. Only those few women who are literate and conscious of the political happenings of the state voted independently in view of the works and performances of the government. Otherwise, majority of the Tangkhul women vote in accordance with the wishes of their male head of the family, their husbands, etc.

Educationally, the Tangkhul women have made lots of advancements and have excelled in terms of getting jobs, both in private and government sectors. There are women who have become an IAS officer, IFS officer, doctors, engineers, lecturers, etc. For example, Primrose Raikhan Sharma
became the first Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer among the Nagas and her sister Christianson Raikhan Chibber also became the first Indian Administration Service (IAS) officer among the Tangkhuls. Thus the seed of education that was brought in the land of the Tangkhuls by the missionaries resulted in producing enlightened and educated women in the Tangkhul society.

However, education has not brought the Tangkhul women in the arena of politics. Even today there are many educated Tangkhul women and when it comes to their choice of profession, hardly any of them take up politics as their career. The reason for this is double-sided. Firstly, there is the lack of government’s efforts to take up any concrete policy for encouraging women to involve themselves in politics. Secondly, there are the age-old customs and traditions of the Tangkhuls which do not allow women to be a part of the village administrative set up. Such a deep rooted tradition in their past also does not encourage the Tangkhul women to join politics. Lack of encouragement from the society in general and the Tangkhul men in particular towards women’s entry into politics is also another important factor. Even today, most of the Tangkhul men think that politics is not a suitable field for the women. For women to be in politics, there has to be someone at home who will perform her duties at home as wife, mother, and daughter-in-law. In Tangkhul society, there is hardly any woman who could sacrifice her duties at home and meddle in politics. The other reason for the low level of participation by the Tangkhul women in politics is the very nature of politics which is increasingly characterised by violence, criminalization, character assassination, etc. Obviously, women are rendered more vulnerable than their male counterparts in such a vicious environment. Thus the electoral participation of the Tangkhul women remains in a very poor shape.
While electoral participation is no doubt one of the most basic aspects of political participation, there are other activities which come within the scope of political participation like that of the involvement of the people in the socio-political issues concerning the society. About the participation of Tangkhul women in such issues, it has been really a commendable one. Their involvement in socio-political issues started with the emergence of the armed Naga underground movement in the middle part of the last century. The uprising of the Naga Nationalist movement in India has a great impact upon the life of the Nagas in general and the Tangkhuls in particular. The movement grew strong in Manipur during the 80's with the emergence of the NSCN on 31st January 1980. It was also about the time when there emerged various underground organisations in the valley of Manipur too. In order to suppress all these movements, the Government of India imposed various Acts upon the state of Manipur. The Armed Forces (Special Power) Act, 1958 was also one of them. Armed with this powerful Act, in the name of counter-insurgency, the Indian soldiers sometimes breached the rights of the people including the Tangkhuls. They have not spared even women including the Tangkhul women. It was against the backdrop of two incidents that took place in the two remote Tangkhul villages that the Tangkhul women came together and formed an organisation called as the “East District Women Association” in the year 1974 (the name of which was later change into Tangkhul Shanao Long (TSL) in the year 1984) to fight for the protection and promotion of their human rights. The first incident was that on 3 March 1974 in one of the remote village of the Tangkhul called as Ngaprum (now Kumram) village situated in the south-east of the Ukhrul District a village girl was raped by two BSF officials. Consequently, on the next day the girl committed suicide. The second incident relates to the harassment and molestation melted out to the villagers of the Grihang village (which is situated in the eastern part of the Ukhrul District) which starts from 3 March and lasted till 6 March 1974. In particular one
woman of about 23 years of age was molested and raped continuously for three days and on the third day, she was kicked, beaten, forcibly stripped, and a stick was forcibly inserted into her private part causing profuse bleeding. Starting from that incident the Tangkhul women have never look back and began to work for the protection and promotion of the human rights of the people in a situation of armed conflict between the underground militants and state forces till the year 1997. Some of the important human rights violation cases they took up were those of Miss Rose Ningshen rape case; Mr. C. Daniel and C. Paul abduction and murder case; Miss Luingamla Muinao attempted rape and murder case; etc. In this way, the Tangkhul women under the banner of TSL have taken up various human rights violation cases of the district thereby trying to book the culprits and get justice for the victims. In such endeavors, they work in close collaboration with other civil bodies like the Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR). They also work together with the Naga Women’s Union Manipur (NWUM) which was established in the year 1994. In fact, the TSL also became one of its units.

The TSL in all its agitations adopts peaceful and non-violent methods. It has never resorted to the use of violence in any way. The methods that they adopted are peaceful means like submitting memorandums; organising meetings, rallies, boycotts and strikes; appealing to the law courts; issuing press releases to give proper publicity of the issues at stake; etc.

Regarding the leadership of the organisation, the TSL does not operate under the leadership of an ordinary woman. Normally, the minimum educational qualification for the President and Vice-President is graduation. As such, most of the leaders are educated and well qualified women. Nevertheless, when any agitation was organised by the TSL all the women irrespective of occupation or educational qualification join it. Even illiterate women from the
villages also join the agitations organised by the TSL. In this way, the TSL led out and the rest women followed.

However, one of the problems facing the TSL whenever it organise any agitation and fight in the court has been that of financial problem. Because of financial constraints, sometimes the organisation could not accomplish what it set out to achieve. This also made it very difficult for the TSL to organise all the women in every nook and corner of the Tangkhul villages. Yet, in spite of the financial constraints, the TSL has never rested and has always been ready to face any challenge in any situation that threatens the rights of the Nagas in general and that of the Tangkhuls in particular.

One could see a shift in the activities of the TSL from the year 1997. The year 1997 was historic for the Nagas, because it was in this year that ceasefire between the Government of India (GOI) and NSCN (IM) began. After the agreement of ceasefire between the GOI and the NSCN (IM) took place, the TSL and the common Tangkhul women turned their attention to another issue without abandoning their role as a vanguard of the human rights of the people. From the year 1997, the TSL in collaboration with the other Naga civil organisations like the Naga HoHo, United Naga Committee (UNC) etc. began to involve in taking up initiatives for the promotion of peace and unity among all the Nagas against the backdrop of Indo-Naga peace talk. The peace and unity movement was started to bring peace and unity among different sections of people and also for the amicable solution of the vexed Naga issue. The peace and unity campaign was joined by the common Tangkhul women as members of different civil society organisations as well as in their own individual capacity. At the corporate level, the TSL joined in every initiative for peace organised by Naga HoHo, UNC, etc. The women societies within the churches also conduct fasting and prayer meetings for creating peace and unity among the Nagas. At the individual level many Tangkhul women also observe in their
respective homes, prayer and fasting to bring peace in their land and for the early solution of the Naga issue which has created lots of hardship and sufferings for the Nagas. Thus, from the year 1997 onward the Tangkhul women assumed a new role as a peace maker. In this work also the TSL and the common Tangkhul women adopted a non-violent method. The strategies they adopt include appeals to the different Naga underground outfits to maintain peace and unity among them; submitting memorandums to the Central Government for the peaceful and amicable solution of the vexed Naga problem; issuing press releases; organising peace rallies, prayer and fasting; sending representations to consultative meetings; etc.

Thus, political participation of the Tangkhul women is recorded in their twin participation in the electoral politics of the state under the Constitution of India as well as their involvement in the socio-political issues affecting them. One can say that while their involvements in the previous remains far from the desirable extent, the work they have done in connection with the latter have been really commendable.

After analysing and assessing the overall political participation of the Tangkhul women, one may also say that the Tangkhul women are involved more or less in the spectator activities as elaborated by Lestar Milbrath which includes voting, influencing others to vote in a particular way, making and joining a political discussion, exposing oneself to political stimuli and wearing a button or showing a sticker. Though exposing oneself to political stimuli and wearing a button or showing a sticker are limited, the Tangkhul women's activities at the time of elections include voting, influencing others to vote in a particular way, making and joining a political discussion once in a while, etc. The other activities included in political participation, namely, Gladiatorial activities and Transitional activities as elaborated by Lester Milbrath are limited to only very few Tangkhul women. Gladiatorial activities are related
with the small number of party activists, whose active association with political parties keeps them engaged in a series of direct party activities like holding party offices, fighting the elections as party candidates, raising party funds, attending party meetings and joining the party campaigns. These activities are again limited only to a very few Tangkhul women. The number women contesting elections, and engaged in a series of direct party activities like attending party meetings, joining party campaigns, raising party funds, etc. are very much negligible. Transitional activities which include attending party meetings as party supporters or party sympathisers or just as neutral but attentive listeners, making contributions to the party funds and coming in contact with public officials or party personnel are also engaged by very few Tangkhul women only.

About the time and energy they devote, the Tangkhul women spend these more in other socio-political activities than in the electoral politics of the state. They spend more time and energy in addressing other socio-political issues concerning their people than they do in time of electoral politics. Their involvement in this aspect of political participation is far more meaningful than their participation in electoral politics.

A number of measures have to be taken up in order to promote political participation of Tangkhul women in a more complete and meaningful manner. They are being listed as follows:

1. Reservation of seats for women in local self governing bodies:

In the face of disadvantages faced by the Tangkhul women in the traditional village polity, and also in view of the fact that the benefits of the 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Constitution have reached their counterparts in the valley of the state as well as in other parts of the country, reservation of seats for women in all the local self governing bodies of the hill areas of Manipur is a must. This will benefit not only the Tangkhul women but all the
tribal women in the hills and bring them at par with their counterparts in the valley in terms of enjoying special safeguards provided by the Constitution.

2. Need to implement hill administration acts in letter and spirit.

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

3. Customary laws of the Tangkhuls should be modified:

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

4. Need for breaking the hegemony of Male Chauvinism:

Male Chauvinism among the Tangkhul society also serves as one of the detrimental factors that obstruct meaningful electoral participation of the
Tangkhul women. Breaking the hegemony of male chauvinism in the Tangkhul society will go a long way in making the Tangkhul women politically empowered. Tangkhul women usually feel themselves subordinate to the male members of the family and male themselves also consider women as inferior to them. The problem is double sided; it comes from the women themselves and from the male members also. In Tangkhul society, women from the olden days were not considered as the decision makers. Rather they were considered as the one to take care of the domestic chores and other agricultural works. This attitude of the male still prevail at present, and can be seen in the organisation of the *Tangkhul Naga Long*, an apex judicial organisation of the Tangkhuls based on the customary law of the Tangkhuls. In the organisation of the *Tangkhul Naga Long*, women were denied to be its members. This clearly reveals the low status women are accorded with inside the Tangkhul society at the time of decision making. To encourage meaningful participation of women in politics, such symptoms of male chauvinism should be done away with.

5. Need for independence and encouragement:

Like the rest of the Indian women, the Tangkhul women remain dependent on their father or brother or male cousin, etc. right from their childhood, and this dependent nature continues in their life after marriage. Developing positive attitude in her by enlightening her about her potential for contributing to overall development of a society and in the body politics of the society will encourage her on the path of meaningful and healthy participation in politics. Educating Tangkhul women to be independent in their thinking and attitude without much dependence to male will help them to enter firmly and boldly in politics and be a part of the decision making process of the society.
6. Economic development of the people must be there:

   Economic development of the people is also a must. With it, economic independence of the women will be there. This in turn will increase the ability of the women to decide things for them by themselves.

7. Role of parties:

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

8. Reservation for women in the local self governing bodies, state legislative assemblies and Parliament a must:

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