

CHAPTER IV

NAGA WOMEN: THEIR PLACE IN TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTION AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

4.1 TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTION:

The written history of the Naga people indicates that they had their own traditional political system. The arrival of the British into this region and the subsequent establishment of their system of administration had left practically untouched the traditional administrative institutions of these people thereby enabling one the opportunity to form/have a fair idea of how they functioned.

4.1.1 Traditional system of governance: Each village had developed the system of governance based on their customary laws with the purpose to manage common affairs, maintain law and order, provide justice, and protect the people from alien aggressions. The forms of governance might be aristocratic, republican, or monarchic, but the spirit of these governing institutions. The forms of governance might be aristocratic, republican, or monarchic, but the spirit of these governing institutions appears to be more of a rudimentary democratic nature. Each village had a government either comprising of a council of elders which was chosen by the adult male villagers who are responsible for village administration and some under a distinguished leader who was a warrior, wealthy and a man of capacity to command and protect the people.

The monarchical form of government was found among the Semas and Konyaks, who's Chief, were more autocratic in nature, while democratic type of government, based on meritocracy was found among the other Naga tribes.

Traditional Naga villages were autonomous and independent, governed by a powerful Chief, whose office was hereditary or councils of old men (*Gaongbura*). Among the Konyak, the *Angh's* (king) possessed greater arbitrary power whose words were treated as laws. Among the Semas, the monarchy was the form of governance. The king had the absolute power, no doubt but there was a council of elders to assist him. According to Yonuo they were normally governed by two kings or chieftains of their respective villages who were chosen for "*their bravery in a war skillful democracy, richness in the farm of cattle and land, or power of oratory in contrast to the hereditary system in which the office of the king passes to the eldest son on the death of his father*" (1974: 18). The Chang Naga has also their chief in every village. The founder of the village becomes the chief of that village. He is called *Sandbushou*. The chieftainship is hereditary in his family but they are not as powerful as the Sema chiefs, as they do not have the same monopoly of land as the later have (Kumar 2004). The Zemi Naga is ruled over by *Kadepeo*. The priest, called *Gekungme* was the next influential and powerful person in the village. , Angamis had Chiefs and they were hereditary but were returned to office on the basis of election system from among the chieftain's family. John Butler, one of the earliest visitors to Angami area, wrote thus, "*the authority or title of the chief of a village is hereditary. The eldest son, on the death of his father or even before his death if very infirm, succeeds to dignity. In most villages there are generally two chiefs.....but their authority is nominal. Their orders are obeyed so far only as they accord with the wish and convenience of the community*" (John 1855: 146).

The early Ao villages were the symbols of republican form of government. Entire social and political system of the Aos was structured under the system of *Putu-Menden* (The council of elders). Tatars are the members who are elected from within the village on the merit of their personal influence, ability to present a case in traditional manner and also from the first class citizen called "*Impurchanu*" (original settler) in Ao dialect. The meeting of the *putu mendenis* held when majority of the member is present and continuous absence from the meeting makes him lose his seat and is replaced by others (Jamir and Ao 2005).

The Angamis, Lothas, Rengmas some other practiced peculiar type of democracy with a little variation in the nature of composition and Ao Naga practiced republican form of government. The Angami villages are found to have internal cohesion; they do not lack internal discipline inspite of the lack of chieftainship and the village council. The whole village gathers in case of any disputes; anybody who has to say something is heard and after hours of prolonged and tiring discussions, they arrive at certain decision or consensus, and the dispute is settled (Das 1993).

4.1.2 Village council:

The Village Council was the apex political organization of the Nagas, represented by elders from each clan and *khel* of the village. There was no fixation of the number of members to represent the Assembly, and the members of this Assembly vary from village to village, as per the size of the village. The traditional Naga Assembly is represented by a member who is well versed in customary law with charismatic personalities.

The Village Council Chairman along with his Council members are considered as one of the most powerful administrative bodies in the village. The Council consists of the Village Council Chairman, Clan representatives, and *Goanboras* (village elders). All the members are adult male above minimum of twenty-five years of age, and residents of the village. Clan representatives and the *Goanboras* select the Village Council Chairman. The Chairman has to be a member of the Council. They are all-powerful body in any administrative function of the village, the *Goanbora/s* their respective Khels and along with these the Village Council members also take part in administration yet he cannot pass any rule or law without consulting the Village Council members who act as his advisors. The powers and functions of the Village Council are to maintain law and order, peace and harmony and to bring about development activities in the village (Nshoga 2009). The Village Council is concerned with election, legislative, administrative, and judicial affairs of the village; it elects the members, makes rules, looks into the welfare of the village and work for its development. It also takes care of civil and criminal cases of mild nature but serious cases are usually handed over to the higher authorities or police without any further ado (Horam 1988, Das 1993).

4.1.3 The Chief:

The Naga chieftainships are hereditary. He is succeeded by his eldest son unless he was hopelessly incompetent. The Konyak Naga Chiefs, called *Angs* used to be not only the chiefs but also the priests of the community (Horam 1975). Some of the *Angs* are very powerful with many villages with smaller *Angs* under them. The *Angs* are advised by their ministers in deciding matters. Among the Semas, the monarchy was the form of governance. The king had the absolute power, no doubt but there

was a council of elders to assist him. Though not as powerful as other tribes, Chang and Zemi Naga has also their chief in every village, normally founder of the village becomes the chief (*Sandbushou and Kadepo*) (Yonuo 1974, Horam 1975, Kumar 2004).

The Chief and his Councillors were legislators in the Village Assembly. The function of the legislators does not mean that they have to make or amend the laws. They were the custodians of customary law; therefore, they simply enforced the traditional customary law, which is handed down from generation to generation. During the settlement of dispute, the Chief and his Councillors try to deliver justice to settle the case without any repercussions in future. In the interest of the public, the Councillors often kept vigil upon the Chief, so that the Chief would deliver his good offices according to the custom of the village. While the Chief performs his legislative functions, his subjects would not suffer from suppression and oppression. And to check his arbitrary powers, the Councillors exercise their powers to prevent the Chief from becoming autocratic. The Councillors must be conversant with the customary laws, so that the Chief would not misinterpret and asserted his personal rule. According to the custom and tradition of the Nagas, the Chief has no right to dissolve the Village Assembly. The Chief may die but the Village Assembly would remain an entity (Nshoga 2009).

The Chief and his Councillors acted as the judges and jury and dispensed the case on the basis of established customary laws. All the disputes were settled and give justice given to the aggrieved party by enforcing the law of the land. Inter-tribal and inter-village dispute were settled between the villages courts of both the villages, and in

case of contravene, the only alternative to settle the dispute was resort to war, where rattling of daos and spears would be the final arbiter of the dispute.

The impact of British power on the hills was territorial. When in 1832 upper Assam was restored to a subordinate monarchy, the princes were granted a limited authority on criminal prosecution, and an unlimited authority on civil justice (Myrdal 1968). According to *Act V of 1861*, the administration of the District was vested in the Commissioner of Assam, on whose behalf day to day administration was run by the Deputy Commissioner. It was provided that in exercising his powers, he would be assisted and advised by the village heads and councils. Some of his functions were strictly political in nature. Later on, the Deputy Commissioner was enlisted from the civil service, the practice which still continues. The Deputy Commissioner was assisted by the Assistant, preferably a European.

In villages, Britishers converted the traditional chiefs into agents of administration with formalized authority. On 6 August 1872, the rules for administration of justice and policing in the Naga Hills were issued (the Calcutta Gazette 1870). The duly recognized village authorities were given the power to try all civil and ordinary criminal disputes. Police forces in the hill areas were constituted by an insignificant number of regular policemen (according to Act V of 1861) and the rural police, consisting of the village heads, some of whom were appointed local revenue collectors under the name of *mauzadars* (Naga Hills). These village authorities were empowered to try petty criminal cases and impose fines up to Rs 50 within their respective jurisdictions. The rules for administration of justice in the hill district of Nagaland were slightly modified and republished in 1874 (the Gazette of India

1874). When the Naga Hills Agency was reconstituted as a district, a fresh set of rules was issued for it.

With the establishment of Kohima as the new headquarter in 1878 a more comprehensive and effective administration has started by them. A house tax of two rupees was imposed on all the administrated Naga villages. In large villages, the clan generally occupied distinct territories and maintained their socio-political and ritual autonomy within the village. The territorially divided and distinctly named clans (social unit) were later called as *Khels* by the British. Gradually the word *Khel* came to be applied to any territorial unit. Local tribal elders were nominated as the “*Gaon-buras*” by the British to collect such house-tax. *Gaon-bura* is combination of two Assamese words, “*Gaon*” (village) and “*Bura*” (elder). These *Gaon-buras* were selected on the basis of their distinct lineage/ clan affiliation. Certain elders were also appointed as “*Dobashi*” (interpreters). A staff of *Dobashi* was maintained by the British whose duties were to translate from the Naga dialect into Assamese and to advice British officers on “tribal customs” for settlement of disputes. In the settlement of disputes the tribal customary laws were followed. The chiefs' were agents of the British governing system in order to consolidate their position. Since the Village Council Act of Nagaland has provided that the villages inhabited by the Sumis and Konyak which are having the hereditary chieftainship, will have them as Chairmen of the Village Court (Bareh 1970). The *Dobashis* still play an important role in the assessment and disposal of cases as legally authorized to them (Chaube 2010).

This continued till India got its independence in 1947 and the only modification was that the territorial jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner was largely reduced in

1957. The offices of *Dobashi* and *Gaon-Bura* have been retained and the governmental authority and general administration continued to be exercised through them. After independence, reorganization of the village councils in 1961-62 took place and three grades of councils have emerged out of this arrangement these are the Village, Range and Tribal Councils set up under Article 13 of the Nagaland Regulation which reorganized the Old Village Council System of administration. According to this arrangement the Village Council has been resituated and consists of the recognized Village Council Chairman, the Clan Members or Representatives and the *Goanboras* elected by the Village in accordance with the customary procedure. But in all level and in all system, women were not allowed to take part in any of the administrative processes (ibid).

Later the Nagaland Village and Area Councils, Councils Act, 1975 was enacted for self-governance at the village levels. It was enacted to empower the traditional village institutions and village courts guided by the customary law in order to make the maximum utilization of governing bodies existing at that point of time. Under this Act, no women were included as the council members were chosen as per customary practices with the village male elders, village chiefs, and *Anghs*. The Village Councils are vested with full power and authority to deal with all internal administration of the village. They act as village courts with both civil and judicial duties and have the power to maintain law and order within the village jurisdiction. In the villages, customary laws are used instead of modern laws.

From the above discussion of how the traditional political institutions functioned it can be observed that the Naga traditional political institutions manifest a blend of partial democracy and limited monarchy. It is partial democracy because it

encourages the participation of only adult males in the political affairs of the state. This trend is strictly adhered to even today where Naga, especially in rural areas are reluctant to allow women to participate in state affairs. Secondly it is a limited monarchy because *Ang* (chief) powers are to a large extent circumscribed. He performs important acts only after consulting and getting village council (*Gaongbura*) approval. Though there have been changes in the administration, the traditional village administrative system still exists.

But on examining the role played by women in traditional political institutions as mentioned in the writings of local scholars like Yonuo (1974), Horam (1975, 1988, 1992), Ruivah (1993), Zehol (1998), Zhimomi (1998), Aier (1998), kikon (2002), Vitso (2003), Vench (2004), Jamir and Ao (2005), Jamir (2007) Amer (2009), Nshoga (2009), Zehol and Zehol (2009) implicit that Naga women do not take part in activities associated with politics as tradition did not encourage women's participation in these activities.

Naga women's crucial roles in traditional society have always been associated with home and children. But on special occasion they performed one function outside the home: as arbitrators in times of conflict. As Shimray (1985) notes, a woman was like an 'ambassador' who would volunteer to act as a mediator between the warring villages. These women enjoyed full diplomatic immunity and protection. She was called the peace maker, the bearer of the torch of peace of the Naga inter-village head-hunting war. The women would boldly enter the battlefields, intervene in the fighting and stop the fight between two enemy villages. They would enter the battlefield holding up a long Y-shaped stick, and try to stop the war. Since they were related to both parties by blood and through marriage, neither side could harm them

(Shimreichon, 2000). They carried the authority to stop the violence and if anyone dared to raise a weapon after that, he was ostracized (Rose 2001). Chakesang and Konyak women played a commendable role as mediator, who were assigned some responsibilities of critical importance during the Head-hunting wars as a neutral force and were called the ambassadors of peace (Zehol 2008). During these times, women played a vital role in stopping violence. Women were socially sanctioned peacemakers. Among the Zeliangrong, it was taboo to kill a *demi*, and *demis* were the only ones allowed to carry the head of the slain to the bereaved family. In another version of the *pukrelia* tradition, a wise woman could shake or whip open her *mekhala* (sarong) and, through this public shaming, stop the violence and induce a negotiated compromise (Pamei 1996).

Though women could not become a village councillor, they played a very important role in the village council through indirect means like for example wife of *Gaongbura* is in much better situation to make her opinion felt (Horam 1975). Issues like disputes among kinsmen, marriage negotiation, inheritance and land rights easily split over into domestic realm to affect the women and therefore women voice their opinion and manipulate decision making through their husbands (Imchen 2001). Therefore, role of women at home has direct impact towards sustaining the social ethos and maintaining the societal equilibrium while their involvement in politics in traditional Naga society was always indirect.

4.2 HISTORY OF NAGALAND ELECTORAL PROCESSES:

Coming to India Context, there was no universal adult franchise before 1947. Very few men and women were eligible to the right to vote. Naga Hills was an excluded area under the Government of India act 1935. Therefore they were not considered as

fit for reform since it was a 'primitive' society, the people with no understanding of the significance of the right to vote (Bareh 1970). The Governor as the Agent of the Governor-General was in-charge and the affairs of the District were run by the Deputy Commissioner. The District remained unrepresented in the Assam Legislative Council.

After Independent on 1 December 1957 the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA), comprising the Naga Hills District (formerly a part A tribal area) and the Tuensang District (formerly a part B tribal area), was constituted as a part B tribal area within Assam (The Naga Hills Tuensang Area Regulation of 1957). The Regulation created the post of a commissioner to assist the Governor in the administration of the NHTA. The Governor appointed deputy commissioners for the districts within the NHTA, to function under the supervision of the commissioner. The rules for administration of justice for the Naga Hills District remained valid in Kohima and Mokokchung while the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Order continued to apply in Tuensang.

Shortly after independence, the District however was given representation in the Assam State Legislative Assembly, 3 seats being provided for Naga Hills District to be directly elected by adult franchise. This was the first step in the process of modernization and inclusion. But the general election both to the Assam Assembly and the Parliament in 1952 were boycotted by NNC, they showed a remarkable organizing ability through a total boycott of the general election in which the Naga district was allotted three seats in the Assam Assembly. The stage was all set for the elections, but not a single nomination paper was submitted and not a single vote was cast. In those circumstances there could be no talk of a district council (Chaube

2010). Later, in the next election held in 1957, three Naga members returned uncontested to the Assam Assembly (Bareh 1970).

Further political developments, however, led the area fast towards statehood. An interim arrangement was decided upon by the end of 1960. On 24 January 1961, the Ministry of Law (legislative Department) issued the Nagaland (Transitional provisions) Regulation of 1962. The Regulation, based on 16 points memorandum presented by the Naga People's Convention in July 1960, for the first time used the name Nagaland through the Constitution retained the name of Naga Hills Tuensang Area as a part B tribal area within Assam. Provision was made for the appointment of a 'council by the name of the Interim Body', by the Governor of Assam, with a maximum of 45 (Chaube 2010).

It was not until the formation of the Interim Government however, that Nagas came into their own, that a measure of a well organised representative Government was introduced. At the first session of the Interim Body of Nagaland, Kohima District was represented by 14 members, 3 Angami, 3 Zeliangroung, 4 Chakhesang, 2 Rengma and 2 representatives from Dimapur Mouza against 8 members from Mokokchung and 14 from Tuensang. At the Interim Body's second session in September 1961, it was decided that in matters relating to election in Kohima and Mokokchung District, it would be based on adult suffrage by forming territorial constituencies. 40 members were to be elected from both the districts. In addition, rules have been framed that the member to the Lok Sabha is elected on the basis of adult suffrage throughout Nagaland in which Tuensang is given option to perform single vote system. The representative to the Rajya Sabha is elected by the members of the Legislative Assembly as in conformity with the practice prevalent all over

India. The two political parties which played a pivotal role in the Naga politics after the inception of the Interim Government are Naga National Organization and the Democratic Party which later came to be known as the United Front of Nagaland (DHD 1969).

Arrangements were made as far as practicable that one constituency consists approximately 6,000 people. For Tuensang, the system of indirect election exists, for which its Special Regional Council shall be responsible for sending its own members until further arrangements to elect them directly. For an interim period of ten years 6 members from the Tuensang Regional Council were sent to the Legislative Assembly. It was agreed that during the subsequent arrangements, patterns should be laid down that 60 members or more could represent the State in accordance with provisions of the Election Commission (Bareh 1970).

In August 1962 Nehru moved in parliament the Bills for the 13th Amendment of the Constitution and for the creation of the state of Nagaland. The Bills were signed by the President on 4 September 1962. On 1 December 1963 the state of Nagaland was inaugurated by President Radhakrishnan at Kohima. The chairman of the erstwhile Executive Council, P. Shilu Ao, became the Chief Minister.

In 1964 elections were held to the Nagaland Assembly. Two parties appeared in the field. The then Naga civil servant, Kevichusa Angami, formed the Democratic Party, pledging peace and lasting good relationship with the Government of India. The other party was set up by Shilu Ao, and called the Naga Nationalist Organization, which was committed to Naga-land's continuity in India. Out of forty-six seats in the Assembly, Kevichusa's Democratic Party wrested twelve. The other seats, some

uncontested, went to the Naga Nationalist Organization which, however, got all the seats in 1965, after the Democratic Party suddenly resigned *en bloc* (Chaube 2010).

Therefore, in Naga society, the effect of adult franchise was felt more, since the system includes both men and women to be part of decision making, it had tremendous effect on women and their attitude towards electoral politics (Rao 1993). Thus even till date, even though women as a rule do not part in the higher level as full-fledged politician, Naga women are very active voters and active supporters.

4.3. NAGA WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS (1964 TO 2008)

Since the first election to the State Legislative Assembly conducted in 1964 to the latest one held in 2008, not a single woman has made it to the state legislature.

4.1 MEN/WOMEN CANDIDATES THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 1964-2008

Year of Election Candidates	Total seats contested candidates	No. of male candidates	No. of women election	Percentage of women	No. of women
1964	40	73	Nil	-	Nil
1969	40	144	2	1.00	Nil
1974	60	207	Nil	-	Nil
1977	60	303	Nil	-	Nil
1982	60	245	1	0.01	Nil
1987	60	214	3	1.00	Nil
1989	60	140	Nil	-	Nil
1993	60	178	1	1.00	Nil
2003	60	225	3	1.00	Nil
2008	60	214	4	2.00	Nil
Total	560	1943	14	1.00	Nil

Source: Reports on the General Assembly Elections of Nagaland, 1964-2003.

Nagaland has two parliamentary seats, one each in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. It has been more than 40 years now that Nagaland received its statehood in 1963 and since the first state Assembly elections in 1964.

As table 1 indicates, starting from the first election in 1964 to the latest one in 2008, there had been only 12 women candidates, out of a total of 1943 male contestant. This accounts for a mere 0.5 percent of the total candidature.

Since then both in General elections to Lok Sabha and the state assembly election, there is not even a single successful women candidates winning election through election. Nagaland sent a woman, Mrs Rano Shaiza, to the 6th Lok Sabha in 1977 and subsequently in the 7th Lok Sabha in election 1980 as nominee from Nagaland to represent the state. Since then, no women have represented the state in either House of parliament or for that matter even in state assembly.

According to table no-4.3. above shows female Candidates for 2008 Nagaland legislative Assembly election Rosemary Jamir and Zeneisele both secured 220 votes each only in contrast to the winning candidate's votes (men) who secured 8675 and 9515 respectively. The figures clearly indicate the wide margins between the numbers of votes secured by the women candidates as against the winning candidates.

**4.2 WOMEN CANDIDATES WHO CONTESTED IN GENERAL ELECTION TO
NAGALAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES, FROM 1963-2008:**

YEAR OF ELECTION	NAME OF WOMEN CANDIDATES	PARTY	NAME OF CONSTITUENCIES	RESULT
1964	NIL	-	-	-
1969	Ms. Ravole-u	UNF	-6 Western angami	LOST
	Ms. R.L.Kinghen	IND	-40 - Bhandari	LOST
1974	NIL	-	-	-
1977	NIL	-	-	-
1982	Ms. Rano M.Shaiza	IND	8-western Angami	LOST
1987	Ms. Sebule	IND	7 Peren	LOST
	Ms. Chubalemla	NNDP	22 Arkong	LOST
	Ms.Lochemlo Yanthan	IND	40 Bhandari	LOST
1989	NIL	-	-	-
1993	Ms. R.L.Kinghen	INC	7-Tyui	LOST
1998	NIL	-	-	-
2003	Ms. Anupama Mach	IND	3-Dimapur-III	LOST
	Ms. Akheli	INC	5-Ghaspani-II	LOST
	Ms. Chubalemla	NPF	26-Aonglenden	LOST
2008	Ms Zeneisele	JD(U)	Dimapur-I	LOST
	Ms. Rosemary Jamir	IND	Alongdaki	LOST
	Ms. Rhakilla	NCP	Sadar II (Tuensang)	LOST
	Ms. Soly	BJP	Pungro (Kiphire)	LOST

Source: report on the general elections to 11th Nagaland Legislative Assembly, 2008

**4.3: DETAILS OF WOMEN CANDIDATES AND WINNING VALID VOTES POLLED,
PERCENTAGE, MARGIN ON 11TH NAGALAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 2008.**

Assembly Constituency	Candidate's Names (both winner and Women Candidate)	Party	General votes	Total valid Vote	% of Valid Vote	Margin Between Winner And Women candidate
Dimapur-I	a. Ms Zeneisele b.Mr K.L.Chishi (winner) c. Mr Atomi d. Mr R.S.Sangtam	JD(U) INC NPF IND	220 8675 4772 766	220 8700 4774 768	1.52 60.16 33.01 5.31	8480
Alongdaki	a. Ms Rosemary Jamir b.Mr Sakosangba (winner) c. Mr Imlitemsu d. Mr Merenchiba e. Mr Tiameren	IND NPF NCP BJP INC	220 9515 91 466 5630	220 9521 91 467 5637	1.38 59.75 0.57 2.93 35.37	9307
4Sadar II (Tuensang)	a. Ms Rhakilla b.Mr Kijong (winner) c. Mr K.Imlong d. Mr Wangto e. Mr N. Kaimang	NCP INC NPF BJP RJD	7259 7608 1842 42 704	7259 7628 1855 42 705	41.56 43.58 10.60 0.24 4.03	369
Pungro (Kiphire)	a. Ms Soly b.Mr Torechu (winner) c. Mr R.L.Akamba d. Mr R.Tsapikius Sangtam	BJP NCP INC RJD	511 13192 9206 3653	513 13275 9308 3691	1.92 49.46 34.74 13.78	12762

Source: report on the general elections to 11th Nagaland Legislative Assembly, 2008

Election records show that where women candidates have been fielded by the political parties as candidates, they are usually put up in a constituency where the party position is not very strong, or where the opposing candidate has a very strong foothold and is widely predicted to emerge as the winner. A case in point is the candidature of Ms. Chubalemla being put up by the Nagaland People's Front (NPF) party in the 2003 general assembly election against Mr. S.C.Jamir, a stalwart of the Nagaland political scene. As a three time Chief Minister and the incumbent of the Chief Ministerial office, his influence and hold on the constituency (22 Aonglenden A/C) was unquestionable, and therefore, his winning the election was a foregone conclusion. Predictably, he won the election by a wide margin. Thus, the role of the political parties of Nagaland, which are all manned by male politicians, in fielding women candidates is questionable.

The pattern of candidature of the women candidates in Nagaland indicates that political parties of the state are not in favour of fielding women as their candidates. For instance, a look at their candidature from 1987 to 2008 shows that out of the six women candidates, seven of them (77.1 percent) contested as Independent candidates.

4.4 INDEPENDENT WOMEN CANDIDATES WHO CONTESTED FROM 1963-2008:

Year of election	Name of women candidates	Party	Name of constituency	result
1969	Smti Ravole-u	IND		LOST
1982	Smti Rano M.Shaiza	IND	8-western Angami	LOST
1987	Smti Sebule	IND	7 Peren	LOST
	Smti Lochumlo Yanti	IND	40 Bhandari	LOST
2003	Smti Anupama Mach	IND	3-Dimapur-III	LOST
2008	Rosemary Jamir	IND	Alongdaki	LOST

Source: report on the general elections to 11th Nagaland Legislative Assembly, 2008

The fact that majority of the women candidates contested as Independent candidates, and not fielded by any political party highlights the reluctance of the political parties in Nagaland to sponsor women as candidates in the elections. Without the backing of a major political party, the chances of any candidate winning the election becomes doubtful, given the fact that money power plays an integral part in the Naga electoral

processes. For a Naga woman candidate, a combination of financial constraints, exacerbated by a social structure that is not in favour of seeing women in political leadership role, makes the chances of winning the election as independent candidates very slim indeed.

Further, a look at the participation of the electorate during the last five Assembly Elections held in 1987, 1989, 1993, 2003, and 2008 offers a quantitative measure of political participation by the Naga women.

**4.5 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE VOTERS AND FEMALE VOTERS IN
THE LAST FIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TO THE STATE
LEGISLATURE**

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1989	273654	225168	498822
1993	387446	347489	734935
1998	110462	95326	205788
2003	474181	417316	891497
2008	573021	549362	1122383

Source: Reports on the General Assembly Elections of Nagaland, 1987-2008

Notwithstanding the election results, the above table indicates that Naga women are very active voters in the elections. Hence, there is no significant gender gap between men and women, as far as voting is concern.

The role of women in Naga politics has only slightly changed with the arrival of the post-adult franchise. Before, their involvement in politics was mere role-playing. All decisions were made by male members. Even though after decades of introduction of adult franchise and the quality of women and men and several laws guaranteeing the equality of the sexes were passed, Naga women's participation in higher political level is both numerically and substantively insignificant.

It is pertinent to mention that women in Nagaland have been able to strengthen their political visibility only as voters and loyal supporter. They duly go to the poll cast their votes but their participation ends there. Reservation Quotas for the advancement of women in state, municipal and in Local level administration were aggressively pursued but could not be implemented till date.

As for instances, in the year 2004, a group of Naga women, comprising of University teachers, media person, and social workers, who called themselves as 'Facilitators and Initiators' made an effort to field women candidates for the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha elections in the state.

They came together with the view that, *"Naga women must stop pleading for justice, but must work for and earn justice, well aware of the fact that it would take a very long time for the State Legislative Assembly (an all male bastion) to resolve to legislate women friendly acts and laws, especially in pertaining to power sharing"*.

However, their effort did not succeed in the face of non-cooperation from the male politicians, who failed to extend support for their cause. Further, most of these women, being from the elite section of society, had made no effort to garner the support of the general female electorate at the grass-root, who form the bulk of the women electorate. Their very sudden and abrupt way of coming into the electoral scene did not make much impact with the general masses, which played a significant role in their inability to succeed.

In another instances the Nagaland State Assembly in keeping with Article 371(A) of the Constitution of India had passed the Nagaland Municipal (Amendment) Act 2006 whereby 33% of seats in the civic bodies were reserved for women and the same was notified. The Act not only ensures one third reservation of seats for women in all municipalities and town councils, but also a rotational reservation of the offices of Chairpersons, in proportion to the number of seats reserved for women.

The Act states that all men members who were directly elected from those wards in the Municipalities which have become reserved for women, including women belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes under clause 10 to 3 of Article 243-T of the Constitution shall be deemed to have vacated their seats upon notification of the reservation of seats under clause.

Thus all Councilors who have been elected from the wards allotted now as reserved for women, are supposed to have vacated their seats upon the notification. However, keeping in view the welfare and rights of elected Councilors, the Act ensures that the Government shall constitute as many number of single member Committees, as are equal to the number of such members who have vacated their seats, and designate them as Chairman of such Committees with specific functions. The Chairmen so

designated shall thereupon be deemed to have become members of the respective Municipality under Article 243-R (2) (a) (IV) of the Constitution. Therefore, Councilors who have vacated their seats from the allotted wards for reservation will still be members of the Municipal or Town Council till the end of tenure.

The Act has three categories of urban bodies/councils namely, Kohima, Dimapur and Mokokchung. There are also 16 Town Committees and Urban Station Committees all over Nagaland. These Councils and Committees are given the responsibility of developing and maintaining the basic amenities and general infrastructure of their respective towns (The Morung Express, Vol. III issue 230).

Nagaland's Mokokchung district, where the Act was first meant to be implemented in the Mokokchung Town Municipal (MTC) election in 2008, the All Wards Union Mokokchung (AWUM) and the four landowner villages of Mokokchung town had barricaded the DC's office so that no women can file nomination.

But men-folk used stiff resistance and physical confrontation by literally blocking the way to DC's premises turn by turn to stop women from entering. They based their argument that women in decision making is against the customary law. And Article 371(A) of the Indian constitution, Naga customary law has been given special safeguards.

Thus hitherto in Nagaland women individuals and organizations have been trying to change the prevailing social and political system by demanding their rights but from 'outside' the political system, because they have not been able to enter the political system, i.e., the State Legislature. To make effective changes in the social system,

Naga women have to act from 'within' the political system, which necessitates that Naga women increase their political participation on all fronts.