

Political Empowerment Of Women In Arunachal Pradesh: A Case Study

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Abstract: The empowerment of women represents a critical and fundamentally significant issue within the broader context of development, particularly in those countries classified as developing, where women disproportionately constitute the largest segment of the population that is impoverished, marginalized, and particularly vulnerable.

Objective: The aim of the study is to find out the political Empowerment of women in Arunachal Pradesh. **Methods and Materials:** Kamle District, one of the 28 administrative districts is our study area. Gram Panchayats at the village level and Zilla Parishads at the district level make up the two-tiered structure that governs the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) in Kamle district. Stratified random sampling method is adopted. Total number of respondents of four villages are 100 considering 25 from each village under study ($25 \times 4 = 100$). **Results and Discussions:** The introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions has fundamentally disrupted these entrenched social norms, thereby creating an essential space for women to assert their agency and play an active role in public affairs and local governance. **Conclusion:** In the realm of political participation, women often find themselves compelled to navigate a complex and demanding triple role, which encompasses the responsibilities associated with managing household duties, engaging in agricultural or business activities, and fulfilling roles within political institutions.

Keywords: Empowerment, Development, Population, Public Affairs, Local Governance

INTRODUCTION

The empowerment of women represents a critical and fundamentally significant issue within the broader context of development, particularly in those countries classified as developing, where women disproportionately constitute the largest segment of the population that is impoverished, marginalized, and particularly vulnerable. In these contexts, women frequently find themselves devoid of choices regarding the trajectory of their lives as well as lacking the necessary opportunities to enhance or elevate their circumstances to a more favourable state. Achieving the empowerment of women, alongside ensuring their complete and equitable participation in every facet of society, including but not limited to involvement in decision-making processes and access to positions of power, is essential for the realization of equality, sustainable development, and lasting peace, as articulated by the United Nations in their 1995 declaration.

Empowerment, as a concept, is understood to be a multidimensional process that enables individuals to fully realize their identity and inherent power across all dimensions of life. The term 'empowerment' itself conveys the notion of bestowing power, and in this context, power signifies the capacity and means through which one can navigate their life towards the attainment of desired objectives and goals. The essence of "power" serves as the foundational element in the concept of empowerment. This term has emerged as one of the most debated and contested notions within the realms of social and political theory, with power being conceptualized in various forms: power over others, power to act, power with others, and power within oneself, as noted by researchers Oxaal and Baden in 1997.

The notion of empowerment is characterized as the systematic process through which an individual takes control and assumes ownership of their choices and decisions. The fundamental components of empowerment have been articulated as agency, which refers to the capacity to set and pursue one's goals, awareness of the gendered power dynamics that exist within society, as well as self-esteem and self-confidence, as emphasized by Kabeer in 2001. Empowerment can manifest at various hierarchical levels, encompassing the individual, household, community, and societal dimensions, and is facilitated through the provision of supportive factors, such as exposure to new experiences that can enhance capacities, while simultaneously eliminating inhibiting factors like the lack of necessary resources and skills.

An empowered woman embodies a positive self-image and actively participates in making decisions that affect both herself and her family. She possesses self-awareness and the knowledge necessary to become self-sufficient. Furthermore, she plays a vital role in empowering her children, irrespective of their gender. An empowered woman enjoys enhanced access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision-making processes, improved capabilities to lead a healthy life, increased control over the circumstances that shape her existence, and the resilience to surmount the

limitations and constraints imposed by societal customs, beliefs, and practices. This empowerment represents a psychological state in which a woman does not perceive herself as inferior; rather, she possesses the confidence and competence required to confront and navigate the challenges and obstacles that she may encounter, as articulated by Rao in 2014.

The advent and subsequent implementation of Panchayati Raj Institutions within the geographical and socio-political context of Arunachal Pradesh have significantly broadened the horizons for the empowerment of women, primarily by enhancing their ability and opportunity to actively engage in the mechanisms of local governance. Despite the substantial advancements that have been achieved in this domain, it is crucial to acknowledge that numerous challenges continue to impede progress, primarily due to deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms, pervasive lack of educational opportunities, and the existence of inadequate support structures that are essential for fostering female participation. In order to effectively tackle these multifaceted challenges, it becomes imperative to employ a range of targeted strategies, which may include but are not limited to, capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing skills, community sensitization programs designed to shift societal perceptions, comprehensive policy reforms, and the establishment of robust support networks that are conducive to improving women's roles and influence within the governance framework. The empowerment of women through the mechanisms of Panchayati Raj Institutions not only serves to elevate the individual women who benefit from these initiatives but also plays a pivotal role in furthering the overarching objectives of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development within the state of Arunachal Pradesh, thereby contributing to the overall progress of society as a whole.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of the study is to find out the political empowerment of women in Arunachal Pradesh.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Geographical Area under Study: Kamle District is one of the 28 administrative districts established on 15th December 2017 (26th including Itanagar capital complex) of Arunachal Pradesh in north eastern India, the district headquarter is at Raga. Kamle district got its name from the river Kamle. The River Kamle joins the Subansiri river which finally meets the Brahmaputra in Assam. Total area under the district is 2253.05 km² Sq. Km with 22,256 population. Kamle district has been formed from administration circles from Lower Subansiri district and three from Upper Subansiri district. The district has 6 administrative units: Raga, Kamporijo, Dollungmukh, Puchi-Geko, Gepen, and a portion of Daporijo Sadar circles consisting of all villages which fall under Raga assembly including Ligu and Liruk which were under the administrative control of Upper Subansiri district). We have surveyed in four villages, viz. Boa, Boasimla, Thumchak and Buscamp under Kamporijo-II Block of Kamporijo circle of Kamle district (The Arunachal Times, December 16, 2017).

Gram Panchayats at the village level and Zilla Parishads at the district level make up the two-tiered structure that governs the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) in Kamle district, Arunachal Pradesh. This structure was put in place after the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act was amended in 2018 to remove the intermediate Anchal Samiti level. This was done in accordance with the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, which permits states with populations under 20 lakhs to implement a two-tier system (https://arunachaltimes.in/index.php/2018/03/16/assembly-passes-bill-to-have-2-tier-panchayati-raj/?utm_source=chatgpt.com).

Sources of Data: The facts and figures used, to analyse the issues raised and incorporated are collected from primary as well as secondary sources.

Secondary Data: Secondary data will be collected from relevant articles, reports, books, websites, different Govt. and Private Institutions, Websites.

Primary Data: Primary data has been collected from the women of households, but we do not consider more than two women from each household.

Selection of Sample, Sample Size and Sampling: Individual member of each household is the different questions in connection to their political consciousness. Stratified random sampling method is adopted. Total number of respondents of four villages are 100 considering 25 from each village under study ($25 \times 4 = 100$).

Tabulation of Data and Tools and Techniques for its Analysis: The various data collected from primary source with the help of filled up interview schedule will be scrutinised, processed, organised and tabulated logically and systematically under appropriate head in rows and columns of statistical tables in such a way to get the required result. Simple numerical calculations, percentages, graphical representations are used to analyse and interpret to write up the report of the study. Table and diagram are used to facilitate easy understanding of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Framework of Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh: The enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has conferred a significant constitutional status upon the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), with the overarching objective

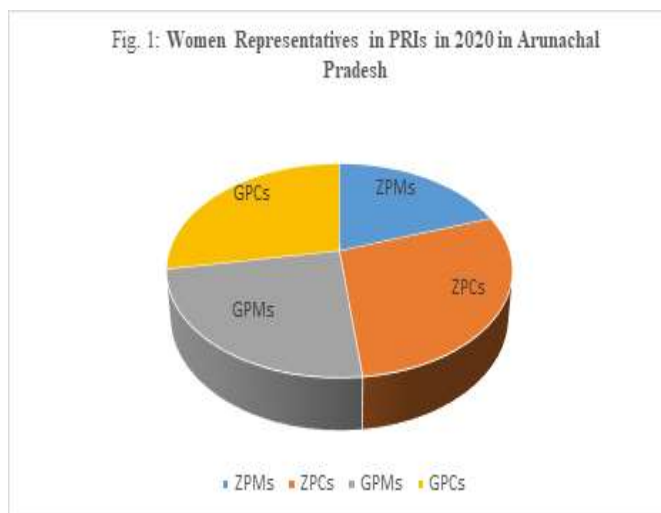
of decentralizing governance structures and fostering a robust participatory democracy that actively engages citizens in the political process. In the context of Arunachal Pradesh, the implementation of this legislative framework has resulted in a notable policy initiative that mandates the reservation of one-third of all seats specifically for women within local governing bodies, which includes the esteemed positions of chairpersons, thereby facilitating their representation in governance. This progressive legislative measure is intended to empower women significantly by ensuring their direct involvement in vital decision-making processes that occur at the levels of the village, the intermediate tier, and the district, thereby enhancing their influence in local governance.

The unique socio-cultural landscape of the state, which is characterized by a rich tapestry of various tribes, each possessing their own distinct customs and traditions, presents both valuable opportunities and formidable challenges regarding the effective implementation and operation of Panchayati Raj Institutions. While it is true that some tribal communities within Arunachal Pradesh exhibit matrilineal characteristics that afford women certain privileges, it is essential to note that many other tribes adhere to patriarchal systems that have historically marginalized women, thereby excluding them from positions of leadership and authority. The introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions has fundamentally disrupted these entrenched social norms, thereby creating an essential space for women to assert their agency and play an active role in public affairs and local governance. Now we consider the overall percentage of Women Representatives for 2 Tier PRIs in latest Panchayat election in Arunachal Pradesh, 2020.

Table-1: Overall percentage of Women Representatives for 2 Tier PRIs in 2020 in Arunachal Pradesh

ZPMs	ZPCs	GPMs	GPCs
35.70	52.00	43.66	50.50

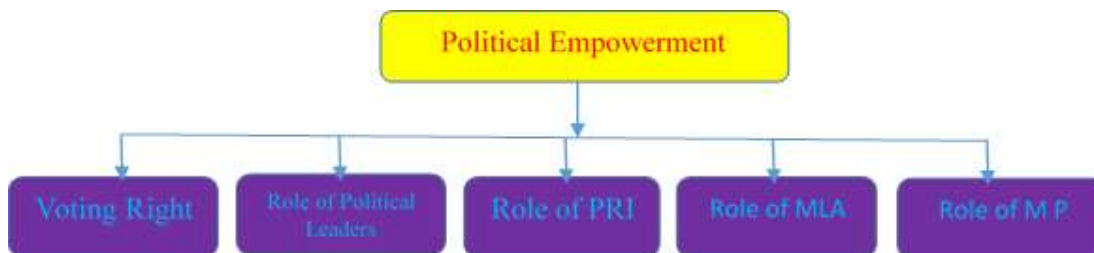
Source: Report on Panchayat Local Bodies Election in Arunachal Pradesh, 2020. Directorate of Panchayati Raj, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar.



Explanation of Table 1 and Fig. 1: From the Table 1 and Fig. 1, we see that the percentages of women in all seats are near about 50 per cents in all category of seats. Now we see the awareness of women in political arena through village study.

For Political Empowerment, the following are highlighted:

- To create awareness and consciousness on voting rights,
- To create awareness on role of political leaders,
- To watch the Role of Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI),
- Role of MLA for the Development of the Society,
- Role of M P for the Development of the Society, and
- Members are motivated to become leader.



In the following table, indicators like shown above have been taken to study to see the political empowerment of the village concerned.

Table-2: Opinion of Villagers in the Empowerment of Political Dimension

Name of Village	Do you have consciousness on voting rights		Have you participated in election campaign		Do you have Knowledge about the role of MLA/MP		Do you know the Role of PRI	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Boa	18	7	15	10	8	17	12	13
Boasimla	23	2	20	5	16	9	20	5
Thumchak	11	14	8	17	8	17	5	20
Buscamp	20	5	17	8	12	13	18	7
Total	72	28	60	40	44	56	55	45

Source: Field Study in January- March 2025. Figures within parenthesis indicate the percentage.

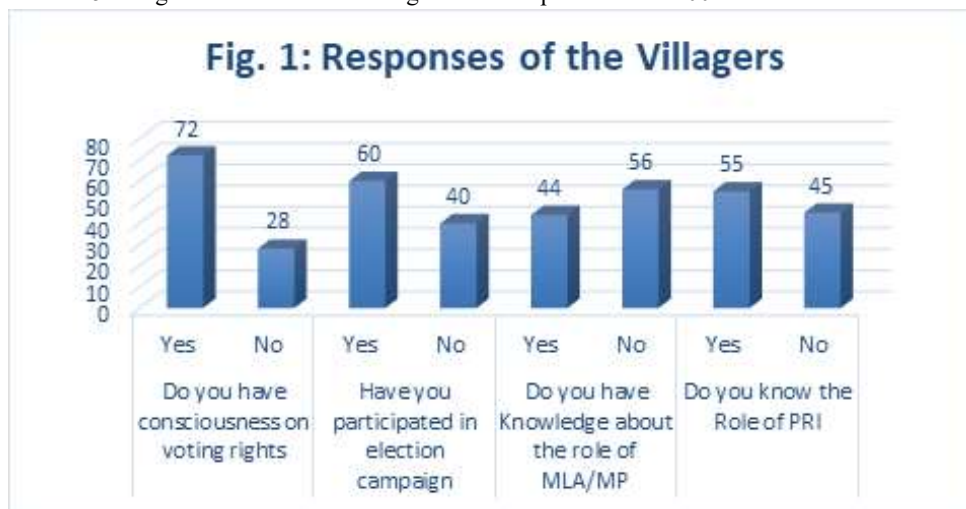
Out of 25 village women in each 4 villages. Total respondents are 100.

Table-7.3: Opinion of Villagers in the Empowerment of Political Dimension

Do you have consciousness on voting rights		Have you participated in election campaign		Do you have Knowledge about the role of MLA/MP		Do you know the Role of PRIs	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
72	28	60	40	44	56	55	45

Source: Field Study in January- March 2025. Figures within parenthesis indicate the percentage.

Out of 25 village women in each 4 villages. Total respondents are 100.



Explanation of Table 1 and Fig. 1: In question of “Do you have consciousness on voting rights” 72 per cent respondents’ response were in affirmative and 28 per cent gave answer in negative. In question of “Have you participated in election campaign” 60 per cent respondents participated in election campaign while 40 per cent did not. In question of “Do you have Knowledge about the role of MLA/MP” only 44 per cent respondents had knowledge about the role and responsibility of MLA/MP towards the development of the society while more than 50 per cent i.e., 56 per cent had no idea about it. In question of “Do you know the Role of PRI” 55 per cent had idea about the role of PRIs while 45 per cent had no idea about it.

PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Increased Political Participation: The implementation of the reservation policy has resulted in a distinctly observable surge in the engagement of women within the realm of local governance, which is a critical aspect of democratic participation. Empirical studies underscore the fact that women have begun to assume roles as elected representatives, thereby playing a pivotal role in the decision-making processes that fundamentally influence their respective communities and localities. For example, in the Namsai district, female representatives have articulated experiences of increased self-confidence and a profound sense of accountability towards the development of their communities, which is evidenced by the findings published in the South India Journal of Social Sciences.

Empowerment through Representation: The active participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has afforded them a vital platform through which they can articulate their concerns and experiences, simultaneously challenging and redefining traditional gender roles that have historically marginalized their voices. A case in point can be observed among the Idu Mishmi tribe, where the involvement of women in PRIs has instigated a significant revaluation of their societal roles, culminating in a greater acknowledgment and appreciation of their contributions to governance and community development, as highlighted in an article from journalijcar.org.

Socio-Economic Development Initiatives: Women leaders who are part of the PRIs have taken the initiative to launch and manage a myriad of development projects, which are primarily focused on crucial areas such as health, education, and infrastructure development. Their active involvement in these initiatives has been instrumental in ensuring that the unique needs and concerns of women and children are prioritized and addressed, ultimately leading to a more inclusive approach to governance that is both effective and sustainable.

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Socio-Cultural Barriers: Notwithstanding the constitutional guarantees that have been instituted to promote gender equality, women residing in Arunachal Pradesh continue to encounter substantial socio-cultural barriers that significantly impede their ability to engage fully in the functioning of PRIs. The pervasive influence of patriarchal norms and ingrained traditional practices often serve to restrict women's mobility and curtail their decision-making powers. In numerous instances, women who have been elected to serve in PRIs find themselves under the influence or control of male relatives, which ultimately undermines their autonomy and ability to lead independently.

Lack of Education and Awareness: The conspicuous deficiency in educational attainment and a general lack of awareness among women, particularly those residing in rural locales and regions that are less accessible, significantly impedes their ability to actively and meaningfully participate in governance-related activities and discussions. A rigorous and comprehensive research endeavor conducted within the Papumpare district has illuminated the troubling reality that a considerable proportion of women representatives do not possess the essential knowledge base nor the requisite skill set that is crucial for the effective execution of their responsibilities in governance, thereby highlighting the pressing necessity for the implementation of targeted capacity-building initiatives aimed at empowering these women, a situation that has been thoroughly documented and discussed in the EPRA Journals.

Limited Support Structures: The stark and glaring absence of adequate support systems, which should ideally encompass a variety of training programs as well as mentorship opportunities, critically limits the ability of women to proficiently navigate the complex and multifaceted landscape of local governance. In addition to this fundamental lack of support, the insufficiency of financial resources and logistical assistance further aggravates the myriad challenges these women encounter, ultimately impeding their overall effectiveness and diminishing their potential impact as leaders within their respective communities.

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH PRIS

Capacity Building and Training: It is of utmost importance and paramount significance to implement an extensive series of comprehensive training programs that are meticulously designed to educate women representatives on their roles, responsibilities, and inherent rights within the broader governance framework. These educational initiatives should prioritize the cultivation and development of critical leadership skills, a profound and thorough understanding of governance structures, as well as the enhancement of effective communication capabilities, thereby equipping women with the necessary tools to perform their roles with enhanced efficacy and self-assurance.

Community Sensitization: The undertaking of raising awareness within local communities regarding the crucial and significant importance of women's participation in governance is an essential strategy for confronting and challenging existing gender biases and stereotypes that persist. By actively involving men and community leaders in constructive and meaningful dialogues centered on the principles of gender equality, it becomes feasible to create a more supportive and inclusive atmosphere that empowers women leaders and encourages their valuable contributions to governance.

Policy Reforms: The advocacy for an increase in reservation quotas for women within the framework of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), particularly in alignment with successful models established in other Indian states that have effectively implemented a 50% reservation policy, can serve to further enhance and bolster women's representation within governance structures. Beyond this initiative, the development and enactment of policies that provide financial incentives and resources specifically aimed at women-led initiatives can significantly augment their effectiveness and overall impact, as has been elucidated in research published on journalijcar.org.

Strengthening Support Networks: The establishment of mentorship programs alongside robust support networks that are specifically tailored for women engaged in PRIs can furnish them with vital guidance, encouragement, and a platform for the exchange of experiences and effective strategies. Furthermore, fostering collaborative partnerships with non-

governmental organizations and civil society can yield additional resources and support, thereby amplifying the influence and impact of women leaders in local governance initiatives.

CONCLUSION

In the intricate realm of political participation, women frequently find themselves compelled to navigate a multifaceted and demanding triple role, which encompasses the responsibilities of managing household duties, engaging in agricultural or business activities, and fulfilling their roles and obligations within political institutions, all of which require a considerable amount of time, energy, and dedication.

Due to the substantial weight of this multifaceted burden, many women may experience discouragement and, consequently, a reduced likelihood of participating actively in political institutions, which are crucial for democratic governance. The onerous nature of these triple responsibilities can severely restrict women's ability to exercise and enjoy their rights at various stages of the political process, thereby significantly impeding their effective performance as elected representatives. This lack of active participation is often exacerbated by insufficient support from family members and other institutional mechanisms that are critical to enabling women to thrive in their roles as political leaders and community representatives.

There exists a widely acknowledged proverb that asserts, "the happiness of a family lies with the virtues of women," which underscores the critical role that women play in maintaining family cohesion and promoting overall well-being. However, it raises an important question: how can a society that aspires to be practical and progressive achieve a state of happiness and prosperity without first empowering women? Indeed, the family unit is fundamentally a joint venture that requires the active participation and equitable empowerment of both women and men in order to function effectively and harmoniously. Nonetheless, within the Tribal Society of the study area, it is vital to recognize that the traditional and historical context often places women in a position of disadvantage across various spheres of life, a situation that is socially constructed and culturally conditioned. Consequently, instigating meaningful changes that promote women's empowerment presents a formidable challenge. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that both the Central Government and the State Government have initiated a series of policy measures aimed at facilitating the empowerment of women within their respective jurisdictions, thereby reflecting a commitment to addressing these critical issues.

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