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Status of Women in India and in Arunachal Pradesh: A Comparative Study

Dr. Ram Krishna Mandal
Head and Associate Professor
Deptt. of Economics
Dera Natung Govt. College
Itanagar-791 113
Arunachal Pradesh

Abstract

The right to equality between men and women is a fundamental right in Indian Constitution. Respect for the dignity of women has been made a fundamental duty of Indian citizens and all actions derogatory to such dignity are liable to be struck down. Conversely, the social institutions and customs are more resistant to change, because they are more rooted in history and more dependent on mind-sets. Gender equality is relatively recent concept and most patriarchal societies have ordained rampant injustices and discrimination against women in the family and outside in everyday life. It is indeed bad that women's status is undermined and subordinated but worst of all is that they have accepted their position as their destiny and in many cases they are found to be an instrument of exploitation. Governance can be efficient and effective only if it articulates women issues and interests and can only be gender-fair if it is gender responsive at political, administrative and economic spheres as women have perspectives, which enhance the quality of governance.

Introduction:

Men and women have different roles and hence their own different and unique needs. These differences must be considered in formulating the agenda of development particularly in deciding common priorities and allocation of national resources. Good governance means over all development and progress of country and fulfilling the needs of all citizens regardless of ethnicity, socio economic status and gender. Gender responsive governance is good governance as it grants equal opportunity to both men and women to participate fully in governance and decision-making. The goals of good governance cannot be achieved without achieving gender equality. Giving due attention to the specific needs and interest of women could help in achieving good governance, this moreover will improve the lives of the people. All programmes and projects of the country should be gender responsive. Governance can be efficient and effective only if it articulates women issues and interests and can only be gender-fair if it is gender responsive at political, administrative and economic spheres as women have perspectives, which enhance the quality of governance. Practical experiences reveal that women are far better administrators and have much more organizational capabilities than their male counterparts and

they tend to show much more respect for ethics and values of the society, they are generally more altruistic and community oriented.

The right to equality between men and women is a fundamental right in Indian Constitution. State is specifically permitted to make laws in favour of women as a deliberate affirmative action so as to enable them to overcome traditional handicaps. Further, respect for the dignity of women has been made a fundamental duty of Indian citizens and all actions derogatory to such dignity are liable to be struck down. Conversely, the social institutions and customs are more resistant to change, because they are more rooted in history and more dependent on mind-sets. Gender equality is relatively recent concept and most patriarchal societies have ordained rampant injustices and discrimination against women in the family and outside in everyday life. It is indeed bad that women's status is undermined and subordinated but worst of all is that they have accepted their position as their destiny and in many cases they are found to be an instrument of exploitation

The discrimination from one to another depends on their socio-cultural background. Phenomenon of gender discrimination is not caused by a single factor. It has multiple causes and therefore need a multiple strategy to tackle the problem. The problem of gender discrimination may be viewed from the various angles like the roles they assume – who does what, the responsibilities they share – who is responsible for what, the resources they enjoy – who owns what, the constraints they face – who has access to what, the regards they are entitled to – who deserves what, the recognition they need – who gets recognized for what, the remuneration that is due – who gets how much for the work, the representation they make – who represents where, the regulations they make – who decides what, the restrictions imposed on them – who submits to whom or what; Man or Woman! This is very much established in Indian society especially in rural communities in general and Tribal society in particular.

The tribal population of India constitutes about 67.6 million and women in the tribal community constitute half of the tribal population. In Arunachal Pradesh, major portion of population is tribal. They were 88.76% in 1961, 79.02% in 1971, 69.82% in 1981, 63.65% in 1991, 64.22% in 2001 and 68.78 in 2011 census. The sex ratios in the state were 1013 in 1961, 1007 in 1971, 1004 in 1981, 998 in 1991, 1003 in 2001 and 920 in 2011 census. The well being of tribal community depends very much on the women. Status and condition of tribal women relating to their socio-cultural locale, their economic rights, their participation in management, their access to employment, food, health, and resources etc. have not been properly focused. Nutritional status of tribal girls is compromised and overlooked by unequal access to food, by heavy work demands, and by special nutritional needs (such as for iron), which makes females particularly susceptible to illness, such as anemia, trapped in a cycle of ill health exacerbated by childbearing and hard physical labour. There are many taboos and myths which are barriers to health practices and growing body of adolescence tribal girls.

Adolescence is a period of dynamic changes in physical, sexual growth and psychological development, influenced by both nutrition and ecological factors. If the nutrient intake

is not adequate it will adversely affect their growth and will lead to poor performance in later part of their life. In Arunachal Pradesh with varying social customs and common beliefs against females there is a high prevalence of malnutrition amongst girls. The problems of tribal women differ from a particular area to another area owing to their geographical location, historical background and the process of social change in the phase of transition in development process. The tribal women should be brought into main stream, if they are to be benefited from the progress on the development front. Thus, like other women in different tribal societies, the tribal women are also not recognized by their social system regarding their freedom and rights. Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace (IV World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995).

Equality among Men and Women:

There is a need to have equality for both men and women in Choices, in Opportunities and in Rights. Equality in the family can be ensured by participatory decision making; sharing the responsibilities; trusting, loving and serving each other; respecting one another and economic independence for both men and women.

In a world where equality is often misunderstood, misinterpreted and exploited for political gains, it is imperative that "equality" should be redefined. Equality, irrespective of the sex of the individual should promise a life of freedom, choice, opportunities and dignity. The low value for female life is the biggest problem. The desire to have male issues has reduced the chance for girls to be born and thus female infanticide is on the rise. Economic conditions and cultural ethos of India have forged an invisible combination that threatens even the female embryo. Even if a female child is born against such heavy odds, she is not given a chance to survive. She suffers malnutrition, lack of medical attention, early marriage and frequent child births. The crude death rates fostered by abortions and child birth without proper medical care indicate the reduced life span of women. Another major problem is that of illiteracy. Despite a significant increase in the gross enrolment rate of girls in primary schools from 25 per cent in 1950 to 66 per cent in 1980 and 70 per cent in 1982, a large number of girls are still not receiving primary education, while 95 to 100 per cent boys are now enrolled in elementary schools.

Discrimination in Educational Opportunities in India:

Only a few girls take up higher education in Arunachal Pradesh. Every year only about 10 percent of the total girls who appear for plus two examinations take up higher studies. The remaining discontinues their academic pursuits due to myriad of reasons. The considerable reasons observed are; due to gender discrimination, such as traditional family decisions – not to invest in their daughter's future as there will be no financial returns, etc. In case of higher education the tendency is very much same with a greater decline. The proportion of the girl student which pursue higher education is too less when compared with the two plus level. When we look at the overall educational status there is a huge decline or variation in the proportion of education of girls from primary to higher education..

Phenomenal progress since independence:

Importance of education of women has been recognized since the achievement of independence. Accordingly strenuous efforts have been made in this area. The following figures reveal that literacy among women has increased proportionately as compared with men. Yet much more is needed to bring it at par with men. This is shown in Table-1, Table-2 and Fig.-1.

Table-1: Sex-wise Literacy Rate 1951 – 2011 in India

Census Year	% of Literacy	% of Male	% of Female	Male-Female Disparity
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.3
1961	28.31	40.46	15.34	25.12
1971	34.45	45.95	21.97	23.98
1981	43.56	56.37	29.75	26.62
1991	52.11	63.86	39.42	24.44
2001	55.30	64.13	45.84	18.29
2011	72.99	80.89	64.64	16.25

Notes:

- Literacy rate for 1951, 1961 and 1971 related to population aged five years and above. The rates for the years 1981 and 1991 relate to the population aged seven years and above. The literacy rates for the population aged five years and above in 1981 have been shown.
- The 1981 rates exclude Assam where the 1981 Census could not be conducted. The 1991 Census rates exclude Jammu and Kashmir where the 1991 Census was not conducted.

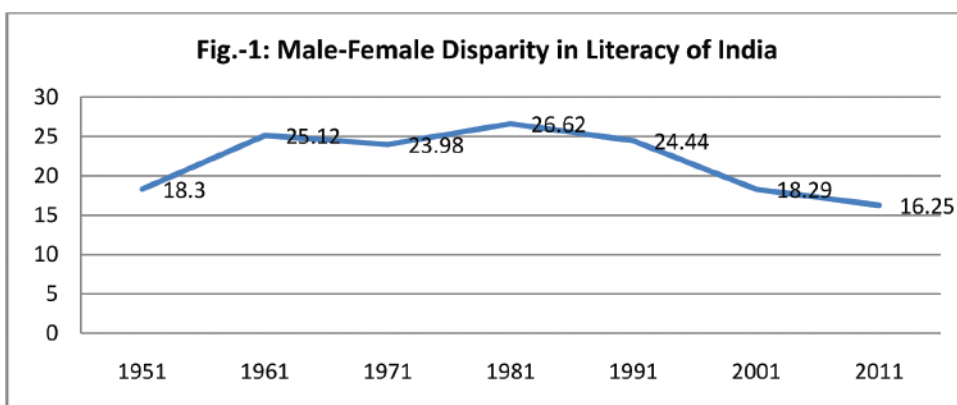


Table-2: Number of Women per Men in Higher Education since 1950-51

Year	Number of women per hundred men
1950-1951	14
1960-1961	17
1965-1966	24
1981-1982	38
1982-1983	39
1983-1984	40
1985-1986	42
1987-1988	46
1988-1989	46
1989-1990	47
1990-1991	47
1999-2000	55

Source: University News, Vol.44. No. 48

Concerted efforts were made only after independence to advance the education of girls and women. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985. The term empowerment was defined as "a distribution of social power and central of resources in favour of women". Education is the milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to challenges, to confront their traditional roles and to change their lives. Similar ideas were supported in international conference-1994. It claimed that education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Educating women benefits the whole society. It has a more significant impact on poverty and development and even on men's education. Male-female disparity is highest in 1981 and after that it is decreasing. It is good sign for the educational progress and empowerment of women in India.

Position of Women in Arunachal Pradesh

In the tribal world of Arunachal Pradesh, various tribal communities are at different stages of development. Necessarily the status of women differs from community to community. Tribal women's right is customary in nature rooted in their tradition and mythology. Heritage status of women, it may be tribal or non tribal, largely depends upon the kind of economic and political rights they enjoy. The position of women in Arunachal Pradesh is respectable but not very high. The prevalence of polygamy, bride price has no doubt lowered their position. Till recently child marriage was quite common. Victim of "bride-price", "sex-abuse" and "child marriage" in tribal society are generally devoid of equal political and property rights. Tribal women have a busy life, helping men folk in almost every walk of life. From cooking to cultiva-

tion and from hard work to dance, they are al-ways busy, in fact; they are the backbone of tribal pasto-ral economy. But economically they remain dependent on their male counterpart and thus they virtually hold a subordinate position. In Rousseau’s modified language “Arunachalee woman is born free but every where she is in chains.” Every society accords social status to women members as per its own perspective. The status and role of women in tribal society is also governed by their own norms and values. The tribal family is patriarchal. Kinship is recognized on the side of men. The tribal women’s status in Arunachal Pradesh is lower than that of men. She faces many problems in all walks of her life simply because of being a female. In this male dominated society a women is considered inferior to a man. She is meant to depend on and under subjugation of man. The family in which she was born as a daughter does not consider her as a permanent abode. She is looked upon as a transient member to be handed over on marriage to her in-law’s family. She cannot have a share in the immovable property at all. Decision making and exercise of authority go under power of men.

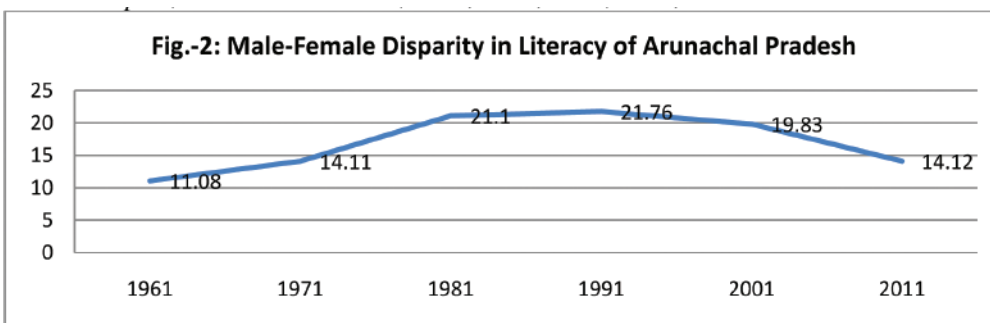
Educational Scenario:

In Arunachal Pradesh, till independence literacy rate was only less than 1%. In the succeeding five years plans, an increasing percentage of expenditure on education has given good results despite of formidable constraints like inaccessibility of territory, people’s unawareness of the need of education and traditional dependence on children for domestic and field work. Thus, with increasing emphasis through successive plans the State has achieved commendable progress in the field of education. The literacy rate census wise from 1961 to 2011 in Arunachal Pradesh is shown in Table-3 as census started first in the state from 1961. Male-Female Disparity is also shown in Table-3 and Figure-2.

Table-3: Census wise Literacy Rate in Arunachal Pradesh

Census Year	Person	Male	Female	Male-Female Disparity
1961	7.13	12.5	1.42	11.08
1971	11.29	17.82	3.71	14.11
1981	25.55	35.12	14.02	21.1
1991	41.59	51.45	29.69	21.76
2001	54.74	64.07	44.24	19.83
2011	66.95	73.69	59.57	14.12

Source: Census Report, Arunachal Pradesh, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.



From Table-3 and Fig.-2, it is observed that the good fruit of education in the State is achieved though the females are lagging behind the males. Higher education in Arunachal Pradesh needs a far-reaching structural reconstruction. We get more or less same picture in case of Arunachal Pradesh. Male-female disparity is highest in 1991 and after that it is decreasing. It is good sign for the educational progress and empowerment of women in the state.

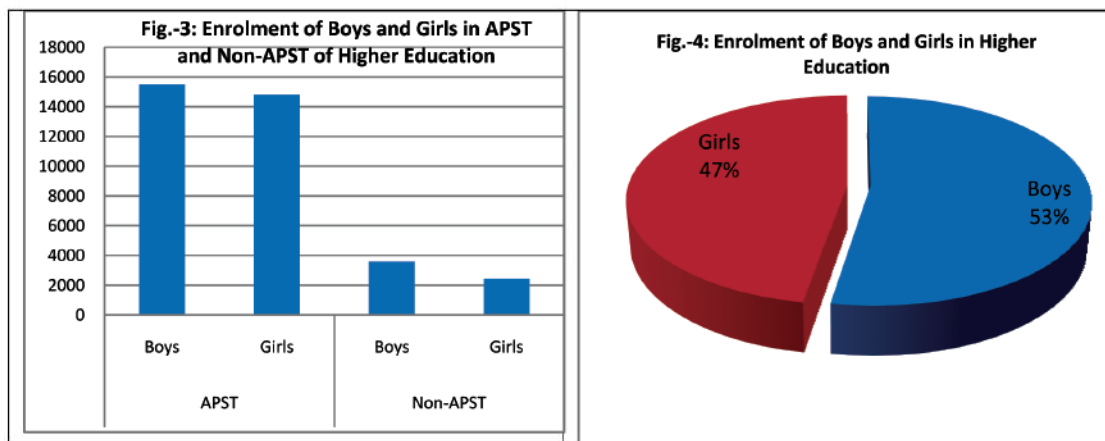
Higher education in Arunachal Pradesh needs a far-reaching structural reconstruction. The enrolment of students in the higher education of Arunachal Pradesh during academic session 2015-16 is shown in Table-4.

Table-4: Enrolment of Students in the Higher Education in Arunachal Pradesh during Academic Session 2015-16

Institution	Total Student			APST			Non-APST		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
University Level Institutions	5316	4508	9824	3526	3659	7185	1741	898	2639
Private Universities	2022	1217	3239	1221	741	1962	817	460	1277
Govt. Degree Colleges	8478	8553	17031	7754	7815	15569	718	744	1462
Private Degree Colleges	1991	1823	3814	1849	1732	3581	111	122	233
Other Central Institutions	160	203	363	58	88	146	102	115	217
Professional Institutions	348	164	512	342	135	477	05	30	35
Private B.Ed Colleges	206	468	674	194	468	662	12	20	32

Polytechnic Colleges	605	186	791	543	157	700	77	48	101
Total	19126	17122	36248	15487	14795	30282	3583	2437	5996

Source: Directorate of Higher and Technical Education, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar, 2015-16



From Table-4, Fig.-3, it is observed that the girls in higher education including university education are little less than the boys in case of APST and Non-APST i.e., they are not lagging behind so much. In Fig.-4, enrolment of Boys and Girls in Higher Education is shown where girls are 47% while boys are 53%. There is minor difference in their enrolment. It means that the entry of girls in education is increasing very fast. But still there is slow progress in overall.

Causes of Slow Progress

- a. Economic and social backwardness of the rural community.
- b. Lack of proper social attitudes in the rural areas for the education of girls.
- c. Lack of educational facilities and infrastructure in rural areas.
- d. Lack of women teachers.
- e. Lack of proper supervision and guidance due to inadequate women personnel in the Inspectorate.
- f. Lack of proper incentives to parents and children.
- g. Lack of adequate incentives.
- h. Lack of suitable curriculum.
- i. Co-educational aspects.

Significance of Women Education:

Dr. Radhakrishnan has very emphatically stated, “Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. The position of women in any society is a true

index of its cultural and spiritual level.”

The resolution on the National Policy on Education (1968) stressed the importance of women education in these words, “The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation”.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967) took note of the great contribution made by women to social, political, economic and cultural life and the part they play in the family and particularly in the rearing of children and recommended the following in Article 9 of the Declaration: “All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels and in particular.

- (a) Equal conditions of access to and study in educational institutions of all types, including universities and vocational, technical and professional schools;
- (b) The same choice of curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standards and school premises and equipment of the same quality, whether the institutions are co-educational or not;
- (c) Equal opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;
- (d) Equal opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult literacy programmes.
- (e) Access to educational information to help in ensuring the health and well being of families.

Discrimination in Power:

The concept of leadership has not been examined seriously from a feminine angle. Most of the researches have made an attempt to compare women’s managerial capability with that of men, taking the latter as paragons of leadership. Such approaches are not loyal to the facts and there is a need to break new grounds to understand women’s leadership potential. Being relatively more patient and considerate, women would be more sympathetic to public grievances, and beings dedicated to the task, they could take bold step to implement welfare programmes. If women constitute half of the population of the country, it is natural that their special aptitudes, talent and expertise are captured for doing well in different sectors (Goretti, 2002). Therefore, we need to deliberate on how to ensure adequate representation of women positions of leadership? What changes in policies and professional training may be required to attract and retain women in leadership positions should be the action agenda of today.

Amendment in constitution in 1972 to strengthen the sharing of power by women at local level has opened a new chapter in the history of women’s struggle for empowerment. The enactment of the 73rd constitutional amendment i.e., Panchayati Raj, in India is, no doubt a landmark event in this regard. It is important because of revolutionary measure by reserving 33 per cent seats for women at all levels in the local governance. Local governance interpreted as

the active involvement of the local population within the territorial boundaries in local government is ensuring improved quality of service and leadership at the local government level. This is a significant shift in the approach towards the well being of women from 'Welfare during Fifties' to 'Development during Seventies' and to "Empowerment during Nineties".

Political empowerment at local level i.e., Panchayati Raj assumes particular importance as a means of producing democratic functioning and decision making decentralized governmental power, thereby restructuring political institutions. This development i.e., amendment in the constitution has brought the question of competitiveness of Indian women to the center stage of controversy. In view of the majority of Indian rural women being illiterate and new in this role, this question has attracted the attention of the large number of commentators and researchers.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Report (1995) opines "inverting in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and development". The report reaffirms that "Human development is impossible without gender equality. As long as women are excluded from the development process, development will remain lopsided. Sustainable human development implies engendering the development paradigm.

Reservation of Seats for women in Panchayati Bodies:

Under the framework of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, the one-third of the seats in Panchayat bodies is being reserved for the women for the first time in India. This was a new message for the rural population. Though the Galo society accords high status to the women in the society, the women never enjoyed such status in the corporate decision-making forum. Thus, the message of reservation was received with mixed response.

The tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh had their own system of local self governance. "Age old traditional system of self governance in Arunachal Pradesh was replaced by Panchayati Raj Institutions in 1968". With the coming into force of the Constitution (Seventy Third Amendment) Act 1992 with effect from 24th April 1993, it was incumbent upon the state government to enact the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj legislation. Reservation for women in the Panchayati institution have a stronger case because they can lead to empowerment at the level of local society. Through such empowerment social change is possible on broad scale.

The system ordained though the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation 1967 continued with regular elections till 1992. The Constitution (73rd Amendment Act) 1992 paved the way for restoring Panchayati Raj System in the state. It would suffice to mention here that several interactions across various levels were held to ensure to maintain the relevance and applicability of the act in the context of Arunachal Pradesh. The present strength of PRIs in the state is depicted below in Table-5 and Fig.-5 for 2003 PRIs Election and in Table-6 and Fig.-6 for PRIs Election for 2008.

**Table-5: Strength of Elected Members of PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh
(As on 29th August, 2003)**

Sl. No.	Level of PRIs	Nos.	Members			Chairpersons	
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1	Gram Panchayats	1639	3924	2561	6485	1092	547
2	Anchal Samities	136	1062	577	1639	86	50
3	Zilla Parishad	14	91	45	136	8	6
	Total	1789	5077	3183	8260	1186	603

Source: Department of Panchayat Raj, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar

Note: *Above figures do not include the allotted strength of Tirap District as PR elections were not held in that time.*

Table-6: Present Strength of Elected Members of PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh, 2008

Sl. No.	Level of PRIs	Members		
		Male	Female	Total
1	Gram Panchayats	4167	3181	7348
2	Anchal Samities	1130	649	1779
3	Zilla Parishad	101	60	161
	Total	5398	3890	9288

Source: Department of Panchayat Raj, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar

N.B.: *863 Gram Panchayat, 140 Anchal Samit and 25 Zila Parishad increased in Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat election, 2008. But there are no changes of percentage of female Panchayat member though number of female member increased in different Panchayat bodies*

Fig.-5: Participation of Male and Female in PRIs in 2003

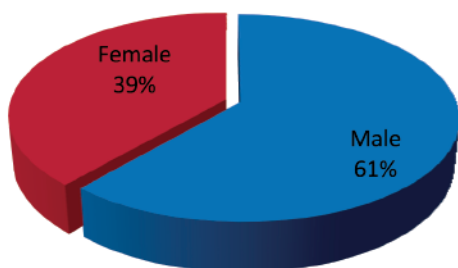
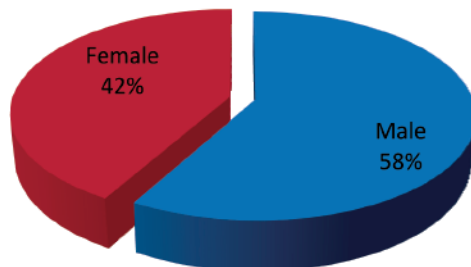


Fig.-6: Participation of Male and Female in PRIs in 2008



In the above Table-5 and Fig.-5 and Table-6 and Fig.-6, it has been observed that the overall participation of women in PRIs is 38.5% only. The Panchayati Raj Institutions also played a very important role in bringing about a major socio-political change in the traditional tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh with the increasing growth in education and political awareness at rural people and their increasing interface with the outside world due to greater mobility.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions serve as a training ground for rural people and equip them with both knowledge and experience about the democratic system of government in the country thereby enabling them to play more important and useful role in the state and as well as in the nation. The State government is firmly committed to the reservation; development and strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutions throughout the state, democracy and women empowerment of the state have been the guiding policy for the state government. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj System in the state, a large number of elected Panchayat members would be involved in all development initiatives in rural areas in accordance with their levels (Srivastava, 2006). Change in the traditional concept of rural leadership based on the age factor. Thus, age is no longer a criterion for the emerging leadership.

Leadership of fair sex is altogether absent in Arunachal tribal world. Women, rarely contest elections. For this, some of the reasons may be: (i) mass illiteracy among women, (ii) low social statuses, in some cases where the more women a man has the greater social status he enjoys, (iii) lack of political training in leadership or political affairs. In most village councils, women are not allowed to participate or they do not participate whatever case may be, (iii) in many other aspects of life, women are subject to unequal treatment in a majority of the tribes. Devoid of property rights or rights over land or debarred from inheritance of father's property as case may be, and also their economic dependence on men are a great issue for debate.

Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "To awaken the people, it is women who is meant to be awakened, once she is on the move, the family moves, village moves and the nation moves". Swami Vivekananda also once said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing". Likewise no nation can flourish keeping half of its population in negligence and ignorance, as women constitute half of its human capital. A modern society cannot bring all round development without utilizing the talent of its women.

Dr. Radhakrishnan has very emphatically stated, "Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level."

Disparity in Sex Ratio:

One of the important indicators of gender disparity is sex ratio. According to the Cen-

sus of 1991 the sex ratio of our country was that for every 1000 males there were 972 female. It is decreased to 933 per 1000 in 2001. Male child is more favoured and celebrated for by the family. Mothers are more emotionally attached towards their sons and they want to marry their daughters at the early age (Thangamuthu and Rasi, 2003). Hospital records show that more male take admission to the hospitals for treatment than female. Several studies reveal that most of the boys are taken to more qualified doctors and more money is spent on their treatment. The girls receive less immunizing vaccines against childhood disease even though such facilities are available free of cost.

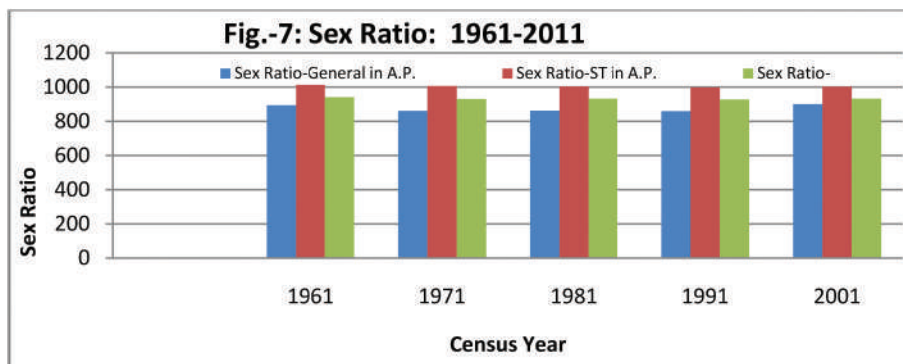
Pattern of Sex Ratio in Arunachal Pradesh: - The findings of the study are elaborated below. The findings are deducted on the basis of sex ratio analysis based on secondary data from the census. Though all the aspects of the study do not provide a very clear picture about why female population in the State are lower than that of male population but certain inferences have opened a new vista to go for further studies on the lines of population genetics.

Table-7 below highlights the details about the sex ratio from 1961 to 2001 Censuses concerning the population of Arunachal Pradesh and India. This may be significant to mention here that the first population census in Arunachal Pradesh took place in the year 1961.

Table-7: Sex Ratio - Arunachal Pradesh and India 1961- 2001

Census	Sex Ratio-General in A.P.	Sex Ratio-ST in A.P.	<i>Sex Ratio-General in India</i>
1961	894	1013	941
1971	861	1007	930
1981	862	1004	933
1991	859	998	927
2001	901	1003	933
2011	920	1032	940

Source: Census Report: 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 & 2001.



The overall trend of general sex ratio in the State as well as for the country as a whole shows a continuous decline, except for a marginal improvement in 1981. In 2001, there is an improvement in the proportion of females to 893 in the State and to 933 for India as compared to 1991 Census. If we look at the change in sex ratio for India as a whole in the period flanked by 1991-2001, then it is observed that there is an addition of +6 for all India in contrast to the substantial addition in case of the State to +34. In 2011 Census the State as well as the country as a whole maintained almost the same trend. We find there is an addition of +27 and that of +7 for the State and India respectively. It is a good sign for both the State and the Country. The comparison of sex ratio in context of General population and ST population in the State and the Country has been represented in Table-7 and Fig.-7 with the help of bar a diagram.

It is interesting to find that the female population of scheduled tribes has always been higher than that of males. While the generality in this case needs to be answered through systemic study of population genetics, this might be worthwhile to mention here that female sex is generally stronger than that of males. Thus, there is all likelihood of the female to live longer than male (as the gentler sex is biologically stronger) and hence more males die than the females not only at birth but also at all ages.

Women in tribal society, lead a very busy life helping the men folk in all walks of life. Tribal society enjoys an egalitarian status and women are considered as assets as the bride price is paid by the groom's family at the time of marriage. This is one of the valid reasons why females are better off in tribal society in contrast to the general population in the country as a whole. A large number of women are living below poverty line; they suffer also from nutritional deficiency. Lack of alertness and access to balanced diet and right foods during pregnancy, insufficient intake of irons, proteins and micro nutrients such as iodine and vitamins is the principal cause of very high incidence of nutritional deficiency diseases like anemia, diarrhea, night blindness, goiter, etc. Low body resistance due to malnutrition farther may complicate minor ailments and make it a health hazard. As a result, females' death rates in villages of the State are much more than males.

Conclusion:

A key policy intervention is the comprehensive promotion of the empowerment and rights of women and girls, including rights of descent ownership and inheritance as well as full social and legal status as human persons. The platform for action that has emerged from the series of conferences all over the world on Women must be taken seriously as a charter for action because the fate of today's women directly affects the fate of today's girls who may or may not become tomorrow's women. To do this in earnest, we need greater commitment, accountability and resources from government and society at large. The challenges are to implement the recommendations that have been agreed upon by the international community so that they will actually improve the life changes and realities of women and girls everywhere.

Women's empowerment is also children's empowerment. The promotion of women's

reproductive health and reproductive rights would help ensure that every child is wanted and healthy; woman can exercise their reproductive rights only when they are empowered to do so. The control of women's fertility is also related to the control of their sexuality. Female genital mutilation continues to be inflicted on women and girl children as a customary means of controlling their sexuality and therefore their fertility. Women's rights over their own bodies thus constitute the foundation of their rights to economic and political resources (Dharagi, Malipatil & Basavaraj, 2007)

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