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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH RESERVATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN NAGALAND

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ABSTRACT
Nagaland became the first Indian state to institute a quota for female citizens. The Nagaland Municipal (First Amendment) Act, 2006, which established quotas for women in urban local bodies, was passed by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. This change aimed to advance gender parity and guarantee women's representation in municipal decision-making. Women's reservation in Nagaland has helped increase their political representation and economic independence. It has allowed women to have their voices heard, fight for their rights, and participate in policymaking at the local level. In addition, political groups have been motivated by the reservation policy to run more women candidates in the next elections. As a result, more women are participating in politics and gaining experience in administration, which can help drive them into positions of greater authority. The Nagaland Municipal (Second Amendment) Act of 2016 legally established women's reservations in Nagaland. All urban local authorities were required to set aside one-third of their seats for women following this law, and so elections were held in February 2017 to form these bodies. The methodology taken is descriptive analysis.

KEYWORDS: *Reservation, Local Governance, Gender Equality, Women's Representation, Women's Rights*

INTRODUCTION
Reservations for women in Nagaland's local government have been an important step towards achieving gender parity and inclusive growth in the state. Women have been given more opportunities to participate in local decision-making since reserve policies were put into effect. As a result, policies and programs have been created to deal with issues that are unique to women and other underrepresented groups in society. Nagaland's development agenda, women's rights, and general prosperity are all being shaped by the many women who are taking up leadership roles in the region's village councils and municipal committees. To promote women's empowerment and social transformation in the state, reservation in local government has emerged as a potent weapon.[1] Over the years Nagaland has made great strides towards achieving gender equality and inclusive decision-making through women's empowerment through reservation in local governance. Local governing organisations, such as town councils, village committees, and municipal councils, must set aside a specified number of seats for women by the reservation policy. This program aims to give women the same chances as men to participate in the political process and advance their local communities.[2] To a large extent, women in Nagaland have benefited from having a greater say in local politics thanks to quotas for women's representation. It has been essential in dismantling the societal norms that prevented women from holding positions of power. Reserving seats for women guarantee that their opinions and ideas will be considered during the planning and execution of development initiatives. This improves women's representation and increases the diversity of ideas discussed, ultimately leading to better governance that benefits everyone. Women have been inspired to assume leadership roles and participate more actively in public affairs thanks to reservations in local governance. It has given them chances to grow as leaders, improve their self-esteem, and connect with others in their neighbourhoods. Women's participation in local governance has allowed them to lobby for policies that advance gender equality, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, as well as address issues that directly affect them.[3] The public's view of women in leadership roles has shifted in part because of the reservation policy. It has pushed back against rules and preconceptions that kept women in the home and prevented them from participating fully in public life. Other women have been encouraged to participate in local politics after seeing strong female leaders succeeding in their communities. Long-term sustainable growth requires this mental shift because it fosters gender equality in all spheres of society.[4]

In the present study, the researcher uses a descriptive and analytical method. Secondary data were sourced from research journals, articles, newspapers, books, magazines, and government documents were also referred. The objectives are first to discuss the reservation of women in local bodies, second one explains about gender equality in the state, and third one talks about rights of women.

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The reservation policy for women in local administration in Nagaland was first implemented in 2001, and since then, the state's social and political landscape has seen a slow but profound transformation. Like other parts of India, Nagaland has struggled for a long time with ingrained patriarchal traditions and gender inequities that restrict women's participation in public life and decision-making. However, reserving seats for women was a major step forward in the fight for women's emancipation and gender parity. Under this strategy, women were guaranteed representation in lower-level governing bodies by having a specific number of seats reserved in groups like village councils, municipal councils, and district councils. This change was necessary by law, but it was also a major step in ending the discrimination against women that had persisted for centuries. The intention behind the reserve policy was to give women a voice in local politics so that they could help shape the future of their neighbourhoods. The initiative's ups and downs over the years are indicative of Nagaland's complicated social dynamics. Nagaland's journey towards gender equality through reservation in local administration is an inspiration to other countries seeking to break down barriers to women's empowerment.[5] Women's representation in local decision-making has been bolstered by a new policy instituted by the state government in 2017: a 30% quota for women in Panchayati raj institutions (PRIs). The state's social and economic development have both benefited from this decision to empower women. Women's representation in positions of power and influence in the state has also increased as a result of the reservation policy. The Nagaland State Commission for Women found that with the introduction of the reservation policy, more women had taken up posts as chairpersons and members of PRIs. This has paved the way for female representation in local government and challenged entrenched patriarchal values. Additionally, the reservation policy has contributed to the state's growing prosperity. Improvements in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities are just some of the ways in which women have helped advance their communities. The quality of life in Nagaland has improved as a result of this, especially for women and underprivileged groups.[6]

Reservation of Women in Local Bodies:

Women's quotas in local government have been widely hailed as a powerful tool for advancing women's rights and gender parity. The reserving of seats for women in local government organizations in Nagaland has been essential in empowering women and assuring their involvement in decision-making processes there. The reservation policy in Nagaland was instituted to rectify the underrepresentation and marginalization of women in the state's governing bodies. In local government entities like town councils, village councils, and municipal authorities, the provision of reservation guarantees that a set number of seats are allocated solely for women candidates.[7] One of the main advantages of women's quotas in local government is that it gives them a place to have their voices heard and their opinions considered. Because of this, they are able to aid in the progress and prosperity of their neighbourhoods. Women's participation in local administration allows them to work on issues like healthcare, education, sanitation, and infrastructure development that touch them directly. Breaking down stereotypes and rethinking old gender norms are additional benefits of reservation. Women who hold positions of power in their communities set an example for younger generations of women and girls, encouraging them to pursue leadership roles of their own and encouraging them to question traditional gender roles. This causes a gradual shift in public opinion in favour of women's rights and gender parity.[8] In addition, policies and programmes tailored to the needs of women have been implemented as a direct result of women's quotas in local government. Issues including maternal health, childcare facilities, preventing gender-based violence, and economic empowerment of women are more likely to be prioritised by delegates who are women. Their presence guarantees that sufficient time and energy are devoted to addressing these problems. The policy of quotas has also encouraged more women to become politically active. It has motivated them to participate in government, learn about their rights, and use their rights at the polls. This has helped further the democratisation of society by ensuring that a wide range of perspectives are heard and considered throughout policymaking. Women's emancipation is essential, but it will take more than reservations to get there. It needs to be accompanied by additional initiatives, such as training programmes, awareness drives, and the establishment of policies that make it easier for women to take on leadership roles. To guarantee their efficacy and address any issues or shortcomings, reservation rules need to be continuously monitored and evaluated for their impact.[9] Reserving positions in local governance for women can help promote gender equality and increase women's participation in decision-making processes. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution mandated the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj (rural local governance) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), which have been implemented in Nagaland along with many other parts of India to empower women through reservation in local governance institutions.[10]

Some highlights of Nagaland's reservation program for women's participation in local government:

1. Constitutional Provisions: Seat reservations for women in Panchayats and Municipalities were made mandatory by the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution in 1992. The goals of these changes were to level the playing field in politics and increase female representation in positions of power.[11]
2. Implementation in Nagaland: Village Councils, District Planning and Development Boards, and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) including Municipal and Town Councils all have quotas set aside for women as a result of these constitutional provisions being put into effect in Nagaland, as they have been in other Indian states. The precise reservation percentage may change over time and between jurisdictions.[12]
3. Challenges: Women in Nagaland, as in many other states, continue to suffer social and cultural impediments, scarce resources, and patriarchal attitudes despite the restrictions. Overcoming these obstacles is still something we hope to do down the road.[13]

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Gender Equality

Increasing women's representation in local government is a complex task, especially in a region with a rich history of tribal culture. Following the principles of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution, the first step is to establish a strong legal and administrative framework that guarantees gender parity in local governments. The achievements of this endeavor, however, go far beyond merely passing a law. It calls for a concentrated effort to inform the public and open doors to education and training for women who aspire to positions of leadership. These courses not only provide women the tools they need but also the self-assurance to succeed in a traditionally male-dominated field like politics. Political parties in Nagaland should actively recruit women, support female candidates, and stand behind them no matter what.

It is critical to provide women in leadership roles with access to mentorship programmes, networking events, and other resources. This support structure aids female politicians in overcoming their particular obstacles. Equally important is economic empowerment, which can greatly improve women's participation in local governance by giving them with access to financing, business opportunities, and financial autonomy.[14] The 73rd Amendment Act of 1992, which mandated the reservation of seats for women in local bodies like village councils (Village Development Boards) and urban local bodies (Municipal Councils), was a major step towards women's empowerment in Nagaland. The goal of this quota system was to give women a voice in local politics and decision-making. There have been numerous positive effects on women's empowerment in Nagaland as a result of the reserving of seats for women in local governance. The first positive effect is that it has given women a place to have their voices heard and participate in policymaking. Women in politics have been essential in bringing up issues affecting women and their communities, including healthcare, education, infrastructure development, and social welfare.[15] Women's participation in municipal politics has contributed to the dismantling of entrenched gender roles in Naga society. Women have become role models for younger generations as a result of their leadership roles and public involvement. This has helped shift views about women's competence and the value of their participation in decision-making. The obstacles to women's full participation in local governance must be removed if we are to make progress in empowering women and achieving gender equality. Social and cultural obstacles, a lack of awareness and education, restricted access to tools and information, and bias against women all contribute to these difficulties.[16]

To promote women's empowerment in Nagaland by achieving gender equality in local governance, it is important to keep the following in mind:

1. Legal and Policy Framework: Make sure that the policies and laws in place promote gender equality. To this purpose, the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution have been put into effect, as have rules and regulations that reserve seats in local authorities (Panchayati Raj institutions) for women.
2. Awareness and Education: Improve access to education and training for women who are interested in taking on leadership roles at the local level. Capacity-building initiatives can take many forms, such as workshops and seminars.
3. Political Representation: Inspire more women to get involved in politics and run for office at the municipal level. Political parties ought to encourage and facilitate the candidature of women.
4. Financial Inclusion: Support initiatives that expand women's access to banking services, credit, and economic participation. The participation and impact of women in local government can be strengthened through economic empowerment.

Rights of Women:

One of the most important ways to advance gender parity and guarantee women's meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels of society is to ensure that women in Nagaland have equal rights to participate in local governance. The Northeast Indian state of Nagaland has made great strides in advancing women's equality and their participation in local government. The term "women's rights" is used to describe the equitable treatment of women in all domains of society, including the political, social, economic, and cultural ones. To achieve gender parity and enable women's full participation in society, these rights are crucial.[17] Like other parts of India, Nagaland has a history of discrimination and marginalisation towards women. Legal reforms, legislative interventions, and capacity-building programmes have been implemented over time to address these problems and advance women's empowerment. The 73rd Amendment Act of the Indian Constitution, which established reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), was a major step towards the empowerment of women in Nagaland. At least one-third of PRI seats at the village, block, and district levels must be set aside for women following the amendment. This includes members of the Gramme Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zilla Parishad.[18] A major factor in women's increased participation in local decision-making has been the practise of reserving seats in PRIs for them. It has aided in dismantling cultural obstacles and opposing patriarchal conventions that prevented women from holding positions of power. Many positive improvements have resulted from women's increased involvement in municipal politics. For one, it has helped underrepresented groups finally feel heard and included. Women in all walks of life have found powerful ways to voice their concerns and demands, resulting in more welcoming policies and initiatives.[19] Despite some recent successes, this region still faces substantial obstacles on the road to gender equality. The following are some of the most salient aspects of women's empowerment in Nagaland through the protection of women's rights in municipal administration.[20]

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1. Reservation of seats: Reserving seats for women in local bodies including village councils, municipal councils, and district councils is a crucial first step towards achieving gender parity in local government. Similar to the rest of India, Nagaland sets aside a percentage of local positions for women. This quota ensures that women have a voice in policymaking.
2. Participation and Representation: Women are empowered to take leadership roles in their communities through access to reserved seats. They can have a voice in the debates, decisions, and policymaking that have an impact on their neighbourhoods. This contributes to dismantling limiting notions of gender in society.
3. Community Support: It's crucial to rally public and political backing. In order to increase the number of women in positions of power and influence in their communities, influential members of society, including males, can play a crucial role.
4. Women's Self-Help Groups: One strategy to give women more agency at the community level is to support the growth of women's self-help organisations. Income generating, education, and social services are all areas where these communities may excel.
5. Economic Empowerment: Economic independence is just as crucial as political participation. Women can gain economic independence and play an active role in their communities through programmes that encourage entrepreneurship, provide access to credit, and enhance existing skills.

Legal reforms, education, awareness campaigns, economic empowerment, and community involvement are all necessary for women's empowerment in Nagaland through women's rights in local governance. It's a long-term strategy that can help make society more just for everyone, but especially women.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Nagaland's reservation of seats for women in local governance has been significant in advancing women's rights and fostering gender parity. Increased chances for women to take part in decision-making and advance their communities have resulted from the establishment of reservation policies. Women's participation in local government has allowed them to push for laws that protect their rights and improve their quality of life. The representation it gives women is one of the main advantages of women's reservation in municipal governance. It ensures women's representation in historically male-dominated groups by designating a specific number of seats for them. In the absence of reservation regulations, women's problems, viewpoints, and experiences may have been disregarded or marginalised; this representation gives them a platform to share them. As women leaders show their skill and effectiveness in local government, they help disprove harmful gender preconceptions and biases. In addition, policy priorities and outcomes have shifted for the better as a result of women's quotas being implemented. Education, health care, cleanliness, economic opportunity, and the elimination of gender-based violence are common concerns voiced by women in positions of power. Their participation in governing bodies guarantees that these concerns receive enough consideration and funding. Communities as a whole, and especially those at the periphery who experience the most negative effects of socioeconomic disparities, have benefited.

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