

## The Electoral Representation of Women in Manipur : The Past, Present and Future

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**Abstract:** *The womenfolk of Manipur played an important role in socio-cultural life since early times. With the coming of British administration in the state in 1891, the political inspiration and aspiration of the women of Manipur started to rise in the form of agitation and protest with the decentralization of power and different administration set up in the state. The women were not much participated in the political and administrative spheres. They were dragged into the political spheres during and aftermath of 2nd Nupi Lal by H. Irabat's influences. With the coming of responsible govt with the departure of British on 15th August 1947 from the soil of Manipur, the women of Manipur was getting their first democratic right in the election of 1948 under the Manipur State Constitution Act 1947. This new experienced had given them more attention of their rights and roles in the responsible and democratic govt which could be seen in the movement of 1954, 1960 and 1970 for the statehood demand of Manipur against then different administration system of Indian govt placed under Part C State to Union Territory. There was not a single women member in the then governments but two nominated members were belonged to women each from valley and hills. Manipur got statehood in 1972 and had to wait 20 years for elected a women in the assembly but later with bye-election increased to two in 1990 and also to wait the first minister for 30 years. Currently there are five elected women members in the assembly- two each to Meitei and Kuki and one Naga. The paper is highlighting the rise of women in the politics arena apart from socio-cultural life which together ultimately enlightened them by contesting the election and won against the dominant male candidates. The paper is also discussed about the challenges and remedies measures of the womenfolk to upgrade their status in the electoral politics in the state of Manipur.*

**Keywords:** Manipur, Women, Manipur State Constitution Act 1947, Indian Dominion, Election and Challenges

### The Women in pre-Statehood Period- 1948-1972

The women of Manipur didn't remain a freehand or silent spectators in the post-merger days. The movement for responsible government continued and was

impacted in the years to come due to the denial of a full democratic government in the state after the abolition of the monarchy or constitutional monarchy by the new Indian government. The rule of Manipur in the status of Part C State under the new Indian Constitution very much offended the people of Manipur in such the lowest administration system which once ruled and flourished in Southeast Asia as an independent kingdom, often putting the armed against the Burmese since the 15th century. Earlier, Manipur got the Constitution in 1947, thereby having the first democratic election in 1948 in 53 constituencies in the state, and the first responsible govt or ministry was formed under the limited constitutional monarchy, but unfortunately, there were no women contestants rather voting and choosing the leaders or representative independently. The beginning of the political rights of the people under the responsible govt was short-lived for just two years and merged to India in Oct 1949.

The Advisory Council formed under the new administration with 14 members was not very satisfied or popular among the people of Manipur, who desired to have a responsible form of govt in the form of a state within the Republic of India. The desire to re-established of the legislative assembly in the state led to the 1st movement of statehood, started in June in 1954 by protest, agitation, and boycotts of the govt offices where women folk of the state led the movement and called for the close of the market which was dominated by the woman-folk and the police had arrested many leaders and open fired, and lathi charges to the demonstrator led to many injured.

In the 1960 movement, the womenfolk of Manipur also joined the demand for the abolition of the Chief Commissioner's rule and the establishment of a responsible govt in protesting, demonstrations, hartals, agitations, closing of markets, and blocking the roads along boycotting the offices. The women wing of the Assembly Demand Coordination Committee, the Women Assembly Demand Committee, also demanded the pre-merger political rights for democracy by submitting a memorandum to the CC of Manipur. Earlier in 1958, AFSPA was already prohibited in the hills of Manipur against the Naga insurgency. The 16 points of the memorandum of the Naga People's Convention for the creation of Nagaland state from a mere district of Assam to UT and its threatening nature of Manipur's integrity were further spearheaded or compelled for the massive support of the statehood demand in the years to come. The imposition of presidential rule instead of giving a responsible govt under a legislative assembly led to a statehood demand in 1970. Likewise, as earlier, the women of Manipur played an important role in the boycott of India's Independence Day and Civil Disobedience Movement by supporting the course of actions of the All Parties Statehood Demand Coordination Body. No doubt, the women participated in the election of 1957 except a candidate, 1962 and 1967. Yet, there was no proper leadership of women to contest against the male contestants until statehood due to mainly socio-cultural bondage of male dominance and lack of education. Before 1972, women were taking part

in the council and assembly by nominated from 1957 only, though there were three woman contestants: one in the Electoral College and Lok Sabha of 1952 and a candidate in 1957. By following in the man’s leadership and experience in politics and movement through participation at the ground level for two decades, the number of female contestants started growing in the state election after statehood. Some earlier female contestants participated in the second Nupi Lal of 1939.

**Literature Review and Methodology**

The paper is based on primary and secondary sources, mainly the electoral data or result sheets of the state and parliamentary elections in Manipur from the pre-statehood Period to the present. The methodology used in the paper is an empirical method based on the qualitative study of the historical method or historicism.

**Table 1: Women Participation in Electoral Politics 1948-1972**

Year of election	Total no. of voter			No. of contestants		Won/Nomination by Woman General (ST women)	No. of AC contested by women G/ST seat (no. of 2nd/3rd rank)	No. of seats	Party
	Total Voters	Male Voters	Women Voter	Total	Total Women (ST women)				
1948					0	0		53	
1952						1		30	
1957				148	1	2 Nominated (1)	1	30 +2	CPI
1962				174	0	2 Nominated (1)	0	30 +2	
1967	4687 07	2313 10	2373 97	155	0	2 Nominated (1)	0	30 +2	
Statehood - 1972-2022									
1972	6084 03	2943 80	3140 23	252	3 (ST-1)	0	3- 2/1 (1/2)	60	MRP/ INC-2
1974	7199 71	3571 42	3628 29	265	3 (ST-2)	0	2- 1/2 (2/1)		MRP, INC, IND
1980	9092 68	4376 18	4716 50	401	7 (ST-2)	0	7- 5/2 (2/0)		JNP-3,INC U-2, INCI- 1, CPI, IND

1984	1013 680	5093 10	5043 70	364	5 (ST-1)	0	4- 3/3 (0)		INC, IND-4
1990	1112 853	557 14	5557 39	254	8 (ST-3)	1 ST Won by Ind Ukhrul H. Shaiza	7- 4/3 (0/3)		INC, BJP, JD-2, ICS, IND-2
1995	1269 746	6313 68	6383 78	332	11 (ST-5)	0	10- 6/4 (2/2/)		INC-3,MP P-2,NPP, KNA, FPM, CPI,JD,IND
2000	1415 933	6927 42	7231 91	387	14 (ST-7)	1 G Won by Ind in NP W. Leima	14- 7/7 (1/2)		NCP-2, INC-4, BJP, SAP, FPM, JDU, RSP, MSCP,IND-2
2002	1472 919	7185 38	7543 81	361	7 (ST-2)	1 G Won by INC NP W. Leima	5- 4/1(0/1)		INC-2, BJP, NCP,DRPP, SAP, MNC
2007	1707 204	8243 69	8828 35	296	12 (ST-4)	0	10-7/3 (2/5)		INC-3,CPI-2, BJP-3, MPP, NCP, RJD, NNLP
2012	1748 399	8575 13	8908 86	264	15 (ST-5)	3, G-2, ST-1, INC-2, MSCP-1	14- 10/4 (1/3)		INC-3,MSCP -3, SHS-2, BJP, AITC, IND-3,CPM, CPI,
2017	1914 547	9374 83	9770 64	266	11 (ST-4)	2, ST-1, INC, BJP	11- 7/4 (0/2)		INC-2,BJP-2, AITC,PRJA-2, NPEP, LSP MNDE,AITC, IND
2022		9908 33	1057 336	265	17 (ST-5)	5, ST-3, G-2, BJP-3, NPP-1, KPA	15- 11/4 (2/3)		INC-4, JDU, BJP-3,NCP-2, CPI, IND-2, NPP-3, JDU, KPA

*Source:* The electoral data of woman in the state elections of Manipur from 1952-2022

The women were not contested in the first and only election in the Independent Kingdom of Manipur, which lasted for two years. They participated in the election by voting the candidates of their choice. This might be due to the myth of the man domination/Patriarchy, socio-cultural bondage, and lack of education. The making of the Constitution drafting committees was almost completed before the Indian independence and continued for three months. The Maharaja finally approved it in November, known as the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 and enforced the following year. This was the 2nd Constitution of the Independent Kingdom of Manipur. The election was held in June 1948. The Chief Minister, MK Priyabarta, remained Chief Minister until 15th Oct 1949. The election and new government showed the functioning of the new constitution of the constitutional monarchy. The signing of the Instrument of Accession and Standstill Agreement in August 1947 with the govt of India was the beginning of becoming Manipur in an integral part of the Indian Dominion, followed by the Merger Agreement on Sept 21, 1949, which was subsequently merged into the Indian Union later next month. From 1950 onward, Manipur could feel or experience the new Indian administration under the new Constitution of India and had to pass through different systems until the statehood in 1972.

The first election in India was held in 1952, and Manipur could not hold the state's election, which was under an Advisory Council of Part C State headed by the Chief Commissioner as the Chairman. Instead, the election was held for the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. In the 1st and 2nd councils, respectively, having 14 and 5 members, there was no woman representation. But for the election of the President of India, the ECI had constituted the Electoral College of 30 members to be elected from the people where a member was equated to be a member of the State legislature. One woman contested the election from the Khurai constituency and defeated three rivals by securing 1970 votes out of 4659 votes polled. She was the MK Binodini, the sister of the last king of Manipur, Bodhchandra.

In 1957, the new administration under Administrator was coming by upgrading Manipur into a Union Territory with a Territorial Council known as Manipur Territorial Council with 30 members and two nominated members with a tenure of five years. The Congress won 17 seats, but H. Dwijamani Dev Sharma formed the non-congress govt as the first Chairman and a year later, the Congress backed to power under Sibho Larho (S.T.) as the 2nd Chairman continued till the next election. The two members were nominated from women-RK Mukhara Devi and Ngalkhokim/Mrs. Akim Angnal (S.T.). One T. Sabi Devi contested the election from the Wangkhei constituency but lost.

In the 1962 election, Congress returned to power by winning 15 seats, which later increased to 24 after joining with 7 other members and two nominated members. M. Koireng Singh was elected as the last Chairman of the council. The two women nominated members were R.K. Mukhara and L. Gangte (S.T.). The govt was further changed to the Manipur Legislative Assembly with a Council

of Ministers under the Chief Minister in 1963, and M. Koireng was continued as 1st Chief Minister till the next election.

In the last election of 1967, prior to statehood, the Congress formed the govt by winning 16 seats and later increased to 25 members and continued till 1969 amid political instability and presidential rule. As no woman was in the election, R.R. Mukhara and Ms. R.T. Shinny were nominated in the assembly and later joined the ruling party.

### Post-Statehood of Woman in Electoral Politics 1972-2022

The North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, Act no. 81 of 1971 dated 30th December 1971 provided statehood in 1972 after the return of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the General Election of 1971. The act provided for a Governor, the constitutional head of the state, and the establishment of the Manipur Legislative Assembly consisting of 60 members, of which 19 seats were reserved for S.T. and 1 seat for the S.C. category. The political instability was continued till 2002 where there would be not a single Chief Minister ruled for a full term followed by president Rules.

The 1st Manipur State election was held in March, 1972 where there was no party reached the majority mark and a non-Congress ministry was formed under Md Alimuddin as the first Statehood's Chief Minister but lasted for a year only. The female voter outnumbered the male voters by more than 20000 out of 6.08 Lakh. Three women out of 252 candidates contested the election in three constituencies, including an ST, without success and were the former nominated members in the previous councils. They came as 2nd and 3rd on the list, but the nearest margin of defeat of 411 votes was by Th. Mukhra (INC candidate) in Keishamthong.

**Table 2: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 1972**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
A. Bimola	Kontha	1301	2198	6586	L by 897 in 3rd	6	MRP
Th. Mukhra	Keishamthong	1655	2066	8292	L by 411 in 3rd	5	INC
L. Gangte	Henglep (ST)	3177	5140	10685	L by 1963 In 2nd	4	INC

In the 2nd mid-term election, 1974, three candidates were out of 265 in two constituencies, each in Valley and hills-Heingang and Saikot ST. They were lost the election by securing 2nd and 3rd, but the margin of loss in Saikot by T. Kholly (Ind candidate) was 655 votes, whereas another INC woman candidate got 2121 votes, resulting in the voters divided.

**Table 3: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates in 1974**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
A. Bimola	Heingang	2859	4129	10108	L by 1270 in 2nd	6	MRP
T. Kholly	Saikot ST	2590	3245	11813	L by 655 in 2nd	8	IND
L. Gangte	Saikot ST	2121			L by 1124 in 3rd		INC

In the 3rd Election of 1980, the number of women candidates out of 401 were gradually increased to seven in 7 constituencies (2 seats in ST). They were fought on the national parties nominees but none of them won. The nearest defeat was just 119 votes in the Saitu ST seat by Althing (Lhingjaneng) as JNP candidate, followed by 617 votes got by INC-I candidate RK Mukhara in Keishamthong but listed in 6th in terms of votes. Another independent candidate, T. Kholly, came 2nd by 905 votes, defeated in Saikot ST.

**Table 4: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 1980**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
A. Bimola	Heingang	1947	3388	11915	L by 1441 in 4th	7	JNP
M. Punyabati	Thang-meiband	349	2274	10379	L by 1925 in 8th	10	INC-U
N. Joymati	Sagolband	378	1862	10099	L by 1484 in 10th	11	INC-U
R.K. Mukhara	Keishamthong	1381	1998	13300	L by 617 in 6th	10	INC-1
K. Bilashini	Bishenpur	1245	2531	12649	L by 1286 in 6th	10	CPI
Althing Lhingjaneng	Saitu ST	2496	2615	14547 in 2nd	L by 119	9	JNP
T. Kholly	Saikot ST	2814	3719	13467 in 2nd	L by 905	12	IND



In the 4th Election, 1984, the women could not win any seat out of five contested seats, mostly independent out of 364 candidates. The loss of margin to male candidates also increased the gap, and none of them could come or finish 2nd or 3rd in the election. A. Bimola of Heingang end her political career after contesting three elections without success.

**Table 5: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 1984**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
A. Bimola	Heingang	1608	3795	13542	L by 2187 in 4th	10	IND
O. Shyama	Lamlai	95	5218	12458	L by 5123 in 6th	7	IND
N. Joymati	Sagolband	601	2562	11538	L by 1961 in 6th	11	INC
Naginu Vaiphie	Jiribam	25	7172	12724	L by 7147 in 7th	8	IND
Manlianuiang	C.C. Pur ST	160	2797	12935	L by 2637 in 8th	9	IND

In the 5th Election, 1990, one woman out of seven contestants (254 candidates) in seven seats won for the first time, creating history as the first woman MLA of Manipur and also among the tribal women. She was Hangmi Shaiza, the wife of ex-Chief Minister Yangmaso Shaiza. The election showed the rise of women from political backgrounds, families, or through the husband's footsteps. She won the Ukhrul ST seat by 2875 margin of votes against INC M. Horam 6174 and two other male candidates. The political career of RK. Mukhara was also ended after three elections fought without success in electoral politics by extending the gap to 5th in Keishamthong. After the death of sitting MLA of Oinam K. Bira Singh, his wife K. Apabi Devi won the bye-election on INC ticket as the 2nd woman MLA in the state and the number of women in the assembly was increased to two.

**Table 6: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 1990**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
L. Sadadeva	Khurai	80	6111	17754	L by 6031 in 6th	7	BJP
RK Mukhara	Keishamthong	2091	6987	17246	L by 4896 in 3rd	5	ICS-SCS
P.Ishwori	Wangkhei	116	11487	20608	L by 11371 in 4th	4	JD
T. Ibemhal	Hiyanglam	1364 in 4th	5047	14831	L by 3683	5	IND



<b>Hangmi Shaiza</b>	<b>Ukhrul ST</b>	<b>7922</b>	<b>Against 6174</b>	<b>23301</b>	<b>Won by 1748</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>JD</b>
BK Rose	Thanlon ST	110	6522	13830	L by 6412 in 4th	6	IND
H. Buansing	CCPur ST	1722	3705	20002	L by 1983 in 6th	10	INC
Bye-election 1992							
<b>K Apabi Devi</b>	<b>Oinam</b>				<b>Won</b>		<b>INC</b>

In the 6th Election, 1995, 11 woman candidates (out of 332 candidates) out of 10 constituencies were contested by including 5 tribal women in hill ST 4 seats. None of them won the seat but there was close contest in Oinam. K. Apabi of INC was lost the election by 278 votes to MPP candidate Y. Jiten in Oinam. T. Kholly of Saikot and T. Ngaizanem of Singhat got the highest votes by securing 3rd and 2nd in the election in the hills by 7347 and 5223 votes respectively.

**Table 7: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 1995**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
Sagolband	RK Sarojini	2678	5037	15119	L by 2359 in 3rd	5	INC
Singjamei	Y. Sakhitombi	17	5714	14116	L by 5697 in 9th	9	IND
Lamshang	M. Ruhini	2361	4184	19127	L by 1823 in 5th	8	MPP
Konhoujam	N. Manishang	98	6313	18388	L by 6215 in 5th	5	JD
Nambol	U. Ibemhal	1015	7003	19718	L by 5988 in 5th	5	CPI
Oinam	K. Apabi	6373	6651	17174	L by 278 in 2nd	6	INC
Thanlon	BK Rose	36	5854	12960	L by 5818 in 4th	12	FPM
Singhat	T Ngaizanem	5223	6327	17530	L by 1104 in 2nd	4	MPP
Saikot	T.Kholy	7347	8938	29469	L by 1591 in 3rd	10	NPP
CCPur	Hathoi Buansing	1310	14641	25326	L by 13331 in 4th	11	INC
	Chingnou	40			L by 14601 in 6th	11	KNA

In the 7th Election, 2000, 14 women (out of 387 candidates) contestants were in each of the 7 constituencies in valley and hill seats. But only W. Leima of Langthabal (IND) won the election against SAP A. Ibobi by 1702 margin and

other 8 male candidates. She followed her husband, W. Angou, former MLA, after he was elected in the Lok Sabha. She became 3rd elected woman MLA and the first Woman's Minister for Education during the short duration until the imposition of President Rule. The former MLA Apabi of Oinam and A. Mirabai of Patsoi were came in 3rd. T. Ngaizanem of Singhat secured 2nd against JDU N. Zatawn by 1390 votes.

**Table 8: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 2000**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
Heingang	Z. Ratimanjuri	261	6250	20001	L by 5989 in 6th	6	INC
Singjamei	Y. Sakhitombi	47	8277	15832	L by 8230 in 4th	4	IND
Konthoujam	T. Manishang	36	6903	19910	L by 6867 in 5th	5	BJP
Patsoi	A. Mirabai	3591	7882	20679	L by 4291 in 3rd	6	INC
N. Pakhanglakpa	W. Leima	5418	Against 3716	21706	W by 1702	10	IND
Oinam	K. Apabi	3900	8752	18230	L by 4852 in 3rd	3	INC
Wabgai	P. Damayenti	2211	6282	19369	L by 4071 in 5th	7	FPM
Chingai	Grace T. Shatsang	2850	3950	17267	L by 1100 in 4th	7	MPP
Karong	Nengneihing	8	11210	40008	L by 11202 in 8th	10	RSP
Tamei	I.D. Sangpiliu	2894	9506	22406	L by 6612 in 4th	10	INC
Tamenglong	Mrs. Guiliangliu	964	7572	17147	L by 6608 in 5th	6	NCP
Nungba	Ms. Adim	10	6282	14892	L by 6272 in 10th	10	JDU
Saikot	Hathoi Buansing	1274	9286	32116	L by 8012 in 6th	10	FPM
Singhat	T. Ngaizanem	5060	6450	20183	L by 1390 in 2nd	7	SAP

In the 8th election, 2002, there were 7 women (out of 361 candidates) contestants in 5 seats, including a seat in Singhat ST by two candidates. W. Leima was re-elected from Naoria Pakhanglakpa by 722 votes against 7 male candidates and became the Minister of Information and Public Relations and Loktak Development Authority. A. Mirabai was secured third in Patsoi. Two women were contested each in N. Pakhanglakpa and Singhat.

**Table 9: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 2002**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
Konhoujam	T Manishang	60	5152	20582	L by 5092 in 8th	8	BJP
Patsoi	A Mirabai	4333	8622	21955	L by 4289 in 3rd	6	INC
Naoria Pakhanglakpa	W Leima	5712	Against 4990	23434	W by 722	8	INC
	S Radhapriyari	265			L by 5447 in 7th		NCP
Oinam	O Bimola	73	7182	19589	L by 7109 in 6th	7	DRPP
Singhat	T Ngaizanem	1455	6815	19067	L by 5360 in 4th	9	SAP
	Jubilee Momoi	531			L by 6284 in 6th		MNC

In the 9th term of the 2007 election, no single woman was elected among the 12 contestants out of the total 296 candidates. Seven women were secured in the second and third lists in 12 seats for,mer MLA W. Leima lost by a distant third, and Babita of Heingang and Rebika of Langthabal were runner-ups with a distant gap in votes. In the bye-election of Khangabok due to the switch of then Chief Minister to Thoubal seat after he won both the seats, his wife O. Landhoni won it and became the only member in the assembly and 4th elected woman MLA in Manipur.

**Table 10: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 2007**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
Heingang	M Babita	6674	10697	23425	L by 4023 in 2nd	6	MPP
Keishamthong	L Sumatibala	555	11266	22252	L by 10711 in 3rd	3	CPI
Konhoujam	T Manishang	67	5475	22926	L by 5408 in 8th	8	BJP
Patsoi	A Mirabai	7196	8936	26133	L by 1740 in 3rd	7	INC
Langthabal	Rebika N	4226	5805	20862	L by 1579 in 2nd	7	NCP
	L. Tilotama	2443			L by 3362 in 5th		INC
N Pakhanglakpa	W Leima	6561	10598	26893	L by 4037 in 3rd	5	INC

Wangoi	M M Tombi	445	7171	21848	L by 6726 in 5th	6	BJP
Phungyar	Valley R. Hungyo	562	10700	21839	L by 10138 in 3rd	3	NNLP
Saitu	Mangshi	435	17637	32786	L by 17202 in 4th	4	BJP
Henglep	T Haokip	3822	5653	21814	L by 1831 in 3rd	9	RJD
	Kim Gangte	906			L by 4747 in 6th		CPI
Bye-election							
<b>Khagabok</b>	<b>O Landhoni</b>				<b>Won</b>		<b>INC</b>

In the 10th Election of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, 2012, there were 264 candidates contestant for the 60 seats, where 15 candidates in 14 constituencies belonged to women candidates. Three of them were elected from Khangabok, Patsoi and Kangpokpi. They were O. Landhoni (2nd term), the wife of then Chief Minister O. Ibobi (3rd Term), A. Mirabai and Nemcha Kipgen where the latter was won by narrow margin of 443 votes in Kangpokpi. Ak. Mirabai became the 2nd woman Cabinet Minister for Social Welfare and Cooperation for full term. Two of them were from the INC party, and Nemcha Kipgen belonged to MSCP. The rest of the women candidates were finished with the last or least votes. With the new two MLAs, who had no political background, the women elected members of the assembly reached so far 6 numbers. Nemcha Kipgen became the 2nd Tribal woman elected member and also the first Kuki woman MLA in Manipur.

**Table11: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 2012**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
Uripok	N Ibema Devi	1357	4864	17470	L by 3507 in 6th	7	AITC
Sagolband	M. Kshet-rani	55	9150	18095	L by 9095 in 5th	5	IND
Keishamthong	Y Romola Devi	178	9795	20950	L by 9617 in 4th	6	CPM
Konhoujam	N. Shakhi Devi	823	10807	23560	L by 9984 in 4th	4	CPI
<b>Patsoi</b>	<b>A. Mirabai</b>	<b>14257</b>	<b>Against 8710</b>	<b>27077</b>	<b>W 5547</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>INC</b>
Langthabal	W Shyama	1091	7575	21174	L by 6484 in 5th	6	INC
Bishnupur	Th Bindhasakhi	63	13308	24080	L by 13245 in 7	7	SHS
Thoubal	O Indira	3668	19121 in 2nd	23046	L by 15453	3	BJP

Heirok	Sumatibala N	4136	13535	25435	L by 9399 in 3rd	3	MSCP
<b>Khangabok</b>	<b>O Landhoni</b>	<b>18339</b>	<b>Against 8419</b>	<b>26959</b>	<b>W by 8620</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>INC</b>
Chandel	SS Olish	5512	13324	35650	L by in 7812 in 3rd	8	IND
Phungyar	Bountia Keishing	967	8525	16377	L by 7558 in 3rd	4	MSCP
	Teresa Rimai	55			L by 8470 in 4th		SHS
<b>Kangpokpi</b>	<b>Nemcha Kipgen</b>	<b>6639</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>17024 6196</b>	<b>W by 443</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>MSCP</b>
Singhat	Ngaineikim	49	12851	15383	12802 in 4th	4	IND

In the 11th Assembly Election, 2017, there were 266 candidates frayed in the election where 11 woman candidates contested from 11 seats in which the previous two women MLAs were returned for 2nd term. They were AK. Mirabai (INC) of Patsoi won by just 114 votes and Nemcha Kipgen (BJP) by 2297 votes. The coalition government was formed under the BJP, and Nemcha Kipgen became Minister for Social Welfare and Cooperation in 2017-2020. Another woman candidate SS Olish got 9842 as BJP candidate but finished distance third. The renowned lady of Manipur, I. Sharmila, fought against former Chief Minister Ibobi in Thoubal but got only 90 votes. A Meitei-Pangal woman, Najima Bibi, was contested for the first time in 45 years of statehood under PRJA of I. Sharmila was also got only 33 votes. After this, Sharmila stopped the hunger strike against AFSPA.

**Table 12 : The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 2017**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
Sagolband	G Satyabati	982	9211	19567	L by 8229 in 3rd	5	NPEP
Keishmathong	Y Romola Devi	96	10000	23107	L by 9904 in 8th	9	MNDF
<b>Patsoi</b>	<b>A Mirabai</b>	<b>13405</b>	<b>Against 13291</b>	<b>31460</b>	<b>Won 114</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>INC</b>
Langthabal	L. Tilotama	983	9625	24681	L by 8642 in 6th	7	INC
Bishnupur	Th Bindasakhi	105	14150	26641	L by 14045 in 5th	5	AITC
Thoubal	I Sharmila	90	18649	27271	L by 18559 in 5th	5	PRJA
Wabgai	Najima Bibi	33	12474	27622	L by 12441 in 7th	7	PRJA

Chandel	SS Olish	9842	14216	42336	L by 4374 in 3rd	8	BJP
Karong	T.K. Savanai	951	14038	44096	L by 4374 in 6th	7	LSP
Kangpokpi	Nemcha Kipgen	13485	Again	26065 11188	Won 2297	5	BJP
Tipaimukh	T Sinate	106	4997	11798	L by 4891 in 6th	6	IND

In the 12th Manipur Assembly Election, 2022, there were 17 women candidates out of 265 candidates, of which 5 were victories. They are S Kebi from Naoria Pakhanglakpa (BJP), Nalini Devi from Oinam (NPP), SS Olish from Chandel (BJP), Nemcha Kipgen from Kangpokpi (BJP) and K.H. Hangshing (KPA). All of them are currently under the ruling govt formed by the BJP. Nemcha Kipgen, which won her 3rd consecutive term, is given the Minister of Commerce and Industries, Textiles, Cooperation and Tribal Affairs and Hills. P. Sumati of Lamshang and Ak. Mirabai were defeated by a narrow margin of 400 and 687 votes, respectively, as NPP and INC candidates finished 2nd. This election is the greatest representation of women so far- two from Meitei, Two from Kuki and one Naga communities. Hangshing and Olish became the 3rd and 2nd woman MLAs for the Kuki and Naga tribes, respectively.

**Table 13: The electoral result sheet for woman candidates 2022**

Name of the Candidates	Assembly Constituency	Total votes	Winner votes	Total voting	Win (W) /Loss (L)	No. of candidates	Party
Yaiskul	Th Brinda	4574	9724	24181	L by 5150 in 3rd	6	JDU
Sekmai	M Anita	99	10010	27296	L by 9911 in 9th	9	IND
Lamshang	P Sumati	14785	15185	31839	L by 400 in 2nd	6	NPP
Konhoujam	K Binarani	75	13432	28415	L by 13357 in 6th	6	NCP
Kakching	Y Roma	676	8546	27231	L by 7870 in 6th	7	CPI
Oinam	Nalini Devi	10808	Against	26513	W 442	8	NPP
	T Ithoibi	3287	10366		L by 7521		INC
Kshetrigao	Punnamrani W	99	13118	34162	L by 13019 in 6th	6	NCP
Kumbi	N Sarojini Devi	330	8513	26273	L by 8183 in 5th	6	IND
Patsoi	A Mirabai	11499	12186	34865	L by 687 in 2nd	5	INC
N Pakhanglakpa	S Kebi	11058 10527	Against	33127	W 531	5	BJP

Keisham thong	A Pramodini	73	8874	25381	L by 8801 in 6th	6	INC
Chandel	SS Olish	37066	Against 9725	47023	W 27341	2	BJP
Kangpopi	Nemcha Kipgen	14412	Against	25235 9016	W 5396	3	BJP
Tipaimukh	T Sinate	1315	6267	12738	L by 4952 in 3rd	3	NPP
Saikul	K.H. Hanshing	6710	Against 5461	26573	W 1249	9	KPA
	L Haokip	935			L by 4526 in 6th		INC

### The Outcome/Result of the Elections 1972-2022

There have been only 10 women members of the Manipur Legislative Assembly from the formation of the state of Manipur to the 2022 election, which has 12 assemblies so far. They are Hangmi Shaiza (first woman MLA) from Ukhrul, K. Apabi Devi from Oinam, W. Leima from N. Pakhanglakpa, O. Landhoni from Kangabok, Ak. Mirabai from Patsoi, Nemcha Kipgen from Kangpokpi, Nalini Devi from Oinam again, S. Kebi from Naoria Pakhanglakpa, SS Olish from Chandel and K.H. Hangshing from Saikul. Many women from different communities fought the election from different regional parties to different national political parties and won seats against the male rivals, except for the woman of Meitei-Pangal, who so far contested just 1 seat. Most of them inherited their political entry and leadership from their husband's background in politics, and some are muscle power connections, except Ak Mirabai, who rose from an INC background with three consecutive losses from 2000 to 2007 and ultimately won in 2012 and 2017, which narrowly lost the 2022 election. Some other candidates are having some sort of muscle power in their families.

The constituencies that produced female MLAs are Ukhrul 1990, Oinam 1992 and 2022, Naoria Pakhanglakpa 2000, 2002, and 2022, Khangabok 2007 and 2012, Patsoi 2012 and 2017, Kangpokpi 2012, 2017 and 2022, Chandel 2022 and Saikul 2022. The 15 times of women in the assembly have been elected so far among the 10 women candidates in just 9 constituencies since the first election of 1972 to the present and also produced a woman ministerial five times from three Ministers. The Ministers are W. Leima in 2000 and 2002, Ak Mirabai, 2012 and Nemcha Kipgen 2017 (three years) and 2022. From regional parties to national parties, the female candidates fought the elections.

Out of 60 constituencies, 47 seats are already contested by female candidates, including SC and ST. Out of 20 seats in the hill ST (except GS Kangpokpi), 17 seats are already contested by the women maximum in Saikot and Singhat but they won only three till now from Ukhrul, Kangpokpi, and Saikul. The three seats not yet contested by women are Tengnoupal, Tadubi and Mao. In the Valley there are 40 seats (including a SC seat) and 29 of them are contested by



the woman with maximum in Heingang, Keishamthong, Oinam, Konthoujam and Patsoi and won only in 4 seats from Oinam, Langthabal, Khangabok, Patsoi and Naoria Pakhanglakpa. The 10 seats that are yet to be contested by women are Thongju, Keirao, Khundrakpam, and Andro of Imphal-East, Moirang and Thanga in Bishnupur, Wangkhem, Wangjing Tentha and Lilong in Thoubal and Mayang Imphal and Sugnu. The maximum number of contestants of women in a constituency or constituencies are from the Imphal areas where the educational and healthy life under urbanization are already affected or influenced in political awareness and participation.

### **Women in Parliamentary Election**

Manipur has two Lok Sabha seats—one general seat in Valley and one in ST seat along a Rajya Sabha. The first woman to contest the 1st Parliamentary election held in 1952 was Ishwori Devi as an independent candidate in the Inner seat but defeated. The next candidate came in the Outer seat by Lhingjaneng Gangte as an MPP candidate in 1984 and again in 1989 by Valley Rose as a JD candidate without success. In 1996 election, there were three candidates- Kimneishing Gangte as an Independent, Valley Rose as an SP candidate in Outer seat and Annie Mangsatabam as INC (T) in Inner seat but none of them won.

In the 1998 election, Kim Gangte was contested as a CPI candidate in the Outer seat and won, creating the first woman and only MP in the history of Manipur. She was in office just for a year and was defeated in the next year's election contested as a JD(U) candidate. In the 1998 election, there was also a candidate in the Inner seat L. Sarojini Devi, as an FPM candidate, but also defeated. Kim Gangte was again contested as an MPP candidate in 2007. In 2009, there were three candidates- Valley Rose Hungyo and Rose Mangshi as independent candidates in Outer seat and L. Khetrani Devi as RBCP candidate in Inner seat- but the defeat continued.

In the 2014 election, a woman, Indira Oinam, was contested against the 7 male candidates securing just 1% of votes as an independent candidate. No woman candidates were in the next two elections of 2019 and 2024.

Kim Gangte who was in the office for a year was the only elected MP among the 10 woman contestants so far. In Rajya Sabha, there was not a single nominated woman from the state but until the President of India nominated as Sport quota, in 2016, Mary Kom. She was in office from 15th April 2016 to 24th April 2022.

In the last year 2023, the Govt of India passed the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, which reserves 1/3rd of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of NCT Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs. This reservation will be effective after the publication of the census conducted following the Act's commencement and endures for a 15-year period, with potential extension determined by parliamentary action. In the 18th Lok Sabha election, there were 74 women MPs in the House just 13.6% out of 542 members followed by 27 MPs in Rajya Sabha out of 231 members.

### **Municipality and Panchayat Election**

After passing the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts in 1992 and 1993, 33% of seats were reserved for women in the local bodies of Municipalities, Nagar Panchayats, and Panchayats. All the elections held afterward had a reservation of 33% seats for women, including Chairman Zilla Parishad and Pradhan. This was given in principle by the state's existing reservation system, SC, OBC, and ST. Thus, women's representation in the local bodies has now reached 1/3rd or more after the enforcement of the acts.

### **Challenges of women in the election**

Earlier, the women contested the election under the different political parties, but their performances were not enough to be satisfactory by securing 2nd and 3rd largest votes next to the winning candidates. The gap of winning by votes was distant, and sometimes just got two-digit votes. The first four elected women belonged to the political background of former elected MLAs and MPs. The first woman MLA was seen after two decades of statehood in 1990 in the hill seat of Ukhrul and one more after the bye-election in rural Oinam. In the capital, it was only in 2000 that W. Leima, a woman, was elected from Langthabal and also served as the first woman Minister for a short duration. The maximum number of women were elected for the first time in the last decade, where three woman candidates were elected for full term in 2012 and five women in 2022, and in each of its terms, one became the full-term Minister in the state. The Ex-Minister Ak. Mirabai was won after three straight losses in Patsoi, showing the rise of an independent woman who had no connection to the political background in her family. The Congress party had been in power for a long time, and the party had to come forward for her campaign to attract the voters by promising to give a woman Minister. Some have the background of muscle power from their family in the elected seats. From the above background, some challenges were analyzed below in the low representation of women in the state assembly.

1. The former nominated members were the initiators for the contest of state election by women but could not win any election till 1990 as they were not very experienced in political awareness, campaign, and voter behaviour. Many contestants were seen just as contesting the election not for winning but for namesake only.

2. Earlier female winners were the result of compulsive politics for entry into the assembly due to the political background of the family or sympathy of the public for her husband. Their political careers were over when the sympathy wave for her husband ended.

3. The people or voters still prefer the old-aged guard or party in the center, not ready for the powerful youth or woman leadership, which hardened to trust yet as the state was so far dominated by the men in ruling and politics from

early times. The political parties are also still preferred the male candidates for better security and muscle powers in time of needs such as public protests or agitations. Also, the people are not ready to trust women candidates.

4. Even though women enjoy high social and cultural status in society, there is a lack of women leadership in politics because the parties and voters give preference to male candidates. The number of social workers among women is small, and they lack the ability to speak convincingly to the people in political language.

5. Gender inequality no doubt is everywhere in politics, but the lack of women leadership or less representation within the party structures and office bearers is the reason it could not produce women speakers or leadership in the party. Merely joining or enrolling in a party does not mean that she is an active member. Even though the ticket is given to her, there are many things where she needs to learn before she establishes herself as a prominent political figure.

6. Educated working women have greater political awareness and influence, which is not reflected in their electoral participation. They still prefer to think or feel that politics has not solved the problems of their daily life and activities of social and economic issues. She has the right to choose a suitable candidate or even contest the election against the male candidates, but she can only recognize her voice once she belongs to a higher social group or high intellectual or in government services.

7. There was a changes in the women representation in the Municipalities and Panchayat election by giving 1/3rd seats for women in according to caste reservation. Here too only the reserved seats are won by women candidates but yet to win hardly in the general seat. Nevertheless, the given reserve is paving the way for further empowerment in the state election, and the bill for the same in State and Parliamentary elections has already been passed and is yet to be enforced.

8. The social-cultural barrier is one of the important factors that contribute to the low representation of women in the election. Even though many women contested the election in many constituencies where they lost by huge margins and won by narrow margins, the stigma of male candidates among female voters is still looked upon or preferred by the male family. The women leaders of political parties or intellectuals do not create awareness to benefit women's representation, where they can overcome their problems by raising their voices in the assembly and decision-making. Besides, most female leaders prevent other women from growing higher than her or competing so that she may remain in the office or exercise the power herself. The male voters want only male candidates to win so that they get free money for functions, attend any time day and night, use alcohol and other intoxicant substances, and misuse power for enemies where female candidates are difficult to exercise.

9. Among the factors which deter women from active participation in politics are the increasing expense of elections, threats of violence and pitiable recourse

to baser tactics like character assassination. Economic or financial problems are one of the basic elements that women face, and they cannot meet the needs and demands of the expenses during the election.

10. The women are also campaigning for win only for the wealthy family candidate and mainstream ruling or opposition parties where the capable woman candidates are also neglected. The case was for Irom Sharmila, the Iron Lady of Manipur who fought against AFSPA for 16 years and got below 100 votes in the 2017 state election against the the incumbent Chief Minister.

### **Remedies and Measures**

1. Implementing Women's Reservation Bill 2023 as soon as possible to enforce which seeks to allocate 33% of the seats in the directly elected Lok Sabha and State Assemblies including Delhi which is frozen till next delimitation.

2. The women's wings of the political parties should be enlarged and strengthened by incorporating and producing many charismatic qualities and leaders of women from the ground level and promoting them to prominent posts by way of participation in the decision-making and connecting the people through the role of women.

3. The different women's organizations and clubs of the locality need to know and understand the role and importance of women in the development of society through directly participating in the decision-making in politics apart from social mobility and social and cultural roles. In the decision-making, they can bring out many causes of women's problems like education, health, sports, schemes, livelihood, safety and security measures, crimes, gender inequality, etc, thereby proving that women themselves can solve their problems through politics.

4. Women also need to come out strongly from society which denies their voice in politics through gender inequality and equity, not in extreme feminism, without affecting the men's role so that the man can support any cause in uplifting and upgrading the status of women. Women need to support themselves for any reason by supporting the strong women of society rather than pulling down to the ground or hating or being jealous of power. The women leaders also try to persuade the men to support them through their blessings and wishes, using sweet words.

5. The socio-cultural barriers to women need to be broken as women also can take part and lead the people as a leader of the state, which has many Chief Ministers, Ministers, President, Prime Ministers, Governors, etc, across India. For this, strong charismatic leadership is needed from the women of Manipur, which can overcome the many preconceived notions against women in the state.

6. The women of Manipur are taking an active role in the social mobility and cultural movement and peace during the dark days of AFSPA and insurgency ethnic conflicts, and communal riots. However, in the political sphere, they need to take more steps and more leadership with well-trained and quality

leadership skills, which can be learned by giving more awareness and training from the political parties and government policy and program.

7. The education from within the family is that the boys and girls are treated equally by the parents in facilities and opportunities given the same attitude and treatment, and the girls are not inferior to boys by birth. Also the schools and colleges, the backbone of the society, need to properly treat boys and girls equally while framing the syllabi and instructions. These will give more encouragement and boost to the girls and to the family, society, educational institutions, and services or jobs.

8. Lastly, the Panchayats or Municipalities already reserved 33% of seats for the women, and the women themselves need to rise through this platform and experience to reach the assembly. The propaganda used in the election is to win, so the women candidates should overcome such character-killing activities and stand boldly towards the commitment and file the cases immediately, but should not be emotional and personal.

### **Conclusion**

The women of Manipur have played a very important role in the social, cultural, and political movements since colonial times, for instance in 1st and 2nd Nupilal, movements for responsible govt, role during AFSPA and insurgency movements, Sanamahi revivalism, Meira Paibis, anti-foreigner movements, for peace in Communal riots in 1990s, anti-ceasefire movement in 2000 and ILP movement. No doubt, the womenfolk are very much conscious and aware of the current state scenario where they are now popularly known as Maira Paibis. However, when it came to electoral participation, either contesting or voting, it failed to prove its worth for entry to the legislature. The women have outnumbered the male voters in the last few decades, and it took 20 years to produce an elected woman MLA from the Hill constituency, and later, another was elected in a bye-election from Valley. They followed the footprints of their husbands and won sympathy. Besides, many candidates were contesting from hill to valley seats among the Meitei, Naga and Kuki women. The first woman MLA was seen in Imphal, from Langthabal in 2000 and again in 2002 became the first Woman minister. Kim Gangte became the first MP from the state in 1998 from the Kuki community. The maximum number of women MLAs elected was three in 2012 and increased to five in 2022. This success of women candidates depends upon the campaign strategy adopted and the personality, including the family background, which has either muscle power or political background. Many of the women candidates come from the social and political elites of the state where they entered the representative process more because of support within a party rather than through work among the people. The traditional socio-cultural barriers and notions and lack of leadership or negligence in the politics among the women rather than pressure groups are the main factors for failure to participate in the electoral politics apart from voting in the election.

To overcome the ongoing notions against women, the voters, especially women, need to give more education and awareness through the intellectual levels, political levels, and govt levels and from the grass-root to state level to campaign against the barriers of this politics that have nothing to do with the gender divide and women also having their space for it where women reservation for 1/3rd seats are already delivered in the local self-government in Panchayats and Municipalities in the state. The need of the hour is to implement the same reservation that already passed in the Parliament in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, which will boost or encourage women's participation in the assembly and also, at the same time, the national parties should give more seats to woman candidates by producing more women leaders in electoral politics rather than focus only on campaign and voting.

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