



Women empowerment in khasi society of Meghalaya

Daphisha Marbaniang¹, Nongmaithem Kishorchand Singh²

¹ Research Scholar, M.A Political Science, School of Social Sciences and Languages, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India

² Assistant Professor, School of Social Sciences and Education, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India

Abstract

Over the last few decades, there has been a growing awareness of the need to empower women and achieve gender equality through measures to achieve social, economic, and political equity, as well as greater access to fundamental human rights improvements in basic health and education. Even in the most advanced countries, gender equality and women's status are low.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate various aspects of empowerment, such as economic, social, and political empowerment, among the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya. The research was carried out in Meghalaya, specifically in the Khasi community. The study employs a few parameters, including control over resources, particularly land, inheritance of property, freedom of movement, and political awareness. Economic independence, education, freedom of movement and equal participation in political processes are the primary determinants of empowerment. These factors combinedly enable women to get involved in decision making processes both at the household and village levels so that equal benefits are bestowed upon both the sexes.

Keywords: women empowerment, khasi, matriliney, woman organization

Introduction

Women's Empowerment has become very popular in today's society. India, as a country, is committed to women's empowerment. Gender equality, as well as women's political participation, is more than just a matter of academic importance. It contains several elements that are consistently important in the political and social spheres for all people. Over the last few decades, there has been a growing awareness of the need to empower women and achieve gender equality through measures to achieve social, economic, and political equity, as well as greater access to fundamental human rights, improvements in basic health and education. Even in the most advanced countries, gender equality and women's status are low.

However, in many tribal societies, even if they are impoverished, women have an instilled special position and role that they play in various spheres with great responsibility in comparison to their counterpart men. The Khasi society of Meghalaya is an example of a matrilineal society, in which authority, title, inheritance, residence after marriage, and succession are all traced through the female line.

This unique 'matrilineal' setup is a breath of fresh air in a world where patriarchy is suffocatingly dominant. At the same time, the system is one to cherish, nurture, and preserve, as well as to be proud of, in order to achieve true gender equality. The custom is extremely empowering for women, even if the logic behind it is perplexing to patriarchal societies. However, if we believe that Khasi women have it all together, we are mistaken; this is all an illusion. They may be the mistress of the house and inheritors, but men have sole authority in issues of politics and statecraft. The eldest brother or uncle from the female side, 'u kñi' (paternal uncle), is the presiding authority in all significant clan choices, such as marriages. Females are not allowed to participate in *Dorbar* meetings or decision-making, which are analogous to village panchayats in plain areas. There have been some victories, such as the recent Meghalaya High Court order allowing women to vote in local governments (January 2020). Yet, even in such a woman-centric society as the Khasis, there is still much to strive for in terms of women's ultimate freedom. Women are not immune to difficulties relating to gender discrimination in society. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, high dropout rates, early marriages, broken marriages, domestic abuse, and divorce are some of the concerns and obstacles that women confront. Women have been stereotyped as being physically and cognitively inferior than men by society.

Hence, as shown by many studies, it is clear that women's engagement in various professions is minimal and that their status has not improved sufficiently. Despite the countless efforts and projects undertaken by the government and NGOs to promote and enlighten women empowerment, the desire for justice and equality in society persists. In the current situation, women face additional obstacles and problems. Because of the complexity of society, identifying new solutions for women empowerment is a mammoth undertaking. As a result, the initiative to discover new ideas and methods for promoting women's empowerment should continue as needed.

Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is defined as a "process of granting authority to women in order for them to become free from the influence of others, that is, to assume power over their own lives and to select their own circumstances" (Rao, 2012). Women's empowerment is a tool that helps women attain parity with men or, at the very least, close the gender gap. It is the skill or power that enables women to execute specific social tasks without which they would be unable to attain their objectives. In India, empowerment refers to the exercise of natural and inalienable rights, such as the right to 'equality,' which is incorporated in the Indian constitution as a legal right (Nayar, 1998). Efforts to emphasise and promote women's empowerment have grown rapidly around the world. In terms of women's empowerment, there have been numerous women's movements. One of these movements is the feminist movement, which has progressed in three stages. Adult suffrage, female labour participation, increased access to education, and shifts in fertility rates and reproductive responsibilities were all highlighted in the first wave. The second wave emphasised equal rights in terms of pay, education, and opportunity. The third wave concentrated on micro-politics in order to empower women. Feminist perspectives think that women have the right to political, social, and economic equality with men.

The status of women in India shows that in ancient India, notably during the Vedic period, women's position in society was far more pleasant than in later periods. Their standing has changed dramatically throughout time, allowing them to improve their lives in a variety of ways. Since the country's independence, there has been a sea change. This is due to institutional and cultural developments that gave women with equal chances in education, work, and political engagement. Women's position in India has improved as a result of efforts and important developments in areas such as legislation, education, the economy and employment sector, political engagement and understanding of their rights on the side of women, and so on. As a result, today's Indian women are practically on par with their male counterparts. However, when power relations between men and women grew stronger, males began to dominate women in decision-making, putting women at a disadvantage during election season. Though women's socioeconomic situation has increased tremendously, their political stature has not. New difficulties are arising as a result of the changing scenario, such as increased violence against women, gender discrimination, workplace harassment of women, female education issues, media exploitation of women, and so on.

The Khasis: Roles and Responsibilities of Khasi Women

The khasis are the largest ethnic group in Meghalaya's eastern region, accounting for the majority of the population. The Khasis in the adjoining Jaintia Hills District of the State are known as Jaintias, whilst the War and Bhoi are distributed across both sides of the district boundary, and the people are known as War-Khasi and War-Jaintia, respectively. According to the Indian Census of 1971, there were 4,57,064 Khasis and 3,28,613 Garos in Meghalaya, out of a total population of 1,0011,699 people. The khasi here also includes the Jaintias. Women in Meghalaya are thought to be in a better position and have more autonomy than women in the rest of the country. Women are revered, honoured, and elevated to positions of power. "Where women are honoured, the Gods reside," says a Sanskrit proverb. This is especially true in Meghalaya, where women are given their appropriate place in the house, class, and society. Another element of Meghalayan society is that women are free of many of the social constraints that exist in the rest of India. This is because of Meghalaya's three main tribes, the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo, follow the maternal structure of society. As is generally understood, matrilineal societies give women more autonomy than patrilineal societies.

The Khasi society of Meghalaya is an example of a matrilineal society, in which power, title, inheritance, post-marriage residence, and succession are all traced through the female line. The youngest daughter is very important in khasi laws and traditions because she is the one who will have to care for both her parents and inherit the property when they die. She will receive the ancestral home, she must resume full responsibility for the household following the death of her parent, the sons are denied a share of the household because it is assumed that they will marry a daughter from another clan. This is the complete opposite from those society following a patriarchal system since most of the benefits are given to the sons of the family as lineage is being traced through them. The khasi society is tolerant of women who enjoy more social space and rights.

But even if the khasi woman inherits the properties of the parents they are merely just custodians, as the real head of the family is the maternal uncle. He manages the property and has equal control over it. The khasi women directly or indirectly participates in the socio-religious and socio-political activities in their social set up. In general, the public sphere is under the direct control of men, but men enter traditional political positions through the line of the women. Males perform socio-religious rites and ceremonies; however, they are traditionally arranged in a specific household of the female clan member. As a result, in khasi matrilineal society, both men and women have particular rights, advantages, and functions that are determined by customary customs, contributing to the social structure's continuity.

In Khasi matriliney, Nakane (1967) ^[20] pointed out the clashing gender roles. She goes into details about the issues that the eldest maternal uncle and the youngest daughter. She is referring to a man's inferior position when he marries an heiress, as well as the issues that a woman faces when she marries a maternal uncle, who is the man of power in his family and clan. This, she believes, is one of the reasons behind the high divorce and seaparanation rates in Khasi community. If a man marries a non-heiress, his status as a husband is secure and he is

better off. A woman who marries a non-authority man gets the full support of her husband both socially and economically.

When looking at gender roles in Meghalaya's matrilineal communities, it's impossible to overlook the complementing nature of the organised positions. Traditional gender roles have been defined in a way that prevents men and women from functioning independently. Men and women's roles in the family and lineage - the core elements of the Khasi social system - are complementary, as seen by the focus on the youngest daughter and the eldest maternal uncle. The 'key-roles' assigned to the society's 'key-figures,' who labour at the family and lineage level, play a critical role in building the Khasi social system. The structural-gender roles are still in place, but they need to be redefined and reconstructed to keep up with the times. It is crucial to note, that a woman's comparatively high position in Meghalaya also carries greater obligations. As a result, inheriting property entails a slew of responsibilities as well as rigorous adherence to the Khasi system's established rules.

Political and Administrative Affairs

Khasi society have commendable respect for women, but because of the traditional code of conduct it appears to be hostile and keeps the women out of all political and administrative issues and interests and forces them to focus on household matters. In the traditional structure of Khasi society, political and administrative affairs are considered to be the responsibilities of the men. The Khasi women were forbidden to attend any council (Dorbar), whether at the village or state level. As a result, women play a minor or non-existent role in the khasi political system known as 'Dorbar'. Dorbar has four stages, according to the Chief of Smit (2015): Dorbar iing (family Dorbar), Dorbar kur (Dorbar of the clan), Dorbar Shnong (Village Council) and Dorbar Raid (Dorbar of a cluster of villages). The first two appears to have lost its prominence in recent years, but the latter two have managed to maintain their political existence. Only in the family dorbar the women may express their problems and fears, and it was the men who pass on the issues to the other three dorbars.

Meghalaya's politics is surprisingly androcentric and reflects a strong patriarchal prejudice. To date, less than 10 khasi women have been elected to the state assembly so far (Mukhim, 2012). Despite having ancestral property rights, familial lineage, and social mobility, women in khasi society have less access to influence outside of their families. Traditional khasi institutions govern political matters at the village and local levels, and women are excluded from politics and decision-making roles. As a result, Dorbars are usually led by males rather than women. However, educated Khasi women and feminists argue that they are denied the right to participate and make decisions in political institutions. Interestingly, any argument or conversation about gender equity and women's participation in politics is regarded as contentious by khasi men, who believe that women are already empowered since they have lineage and ancestral property. Traditionalists, on the other hand, believe that women are meant to stay at home and in the kitchen, and that they should not be active in politics. A woman interested in politics is referred to as a 'crowing hen' in Khasi society (Planning Department, Government of Meghalaya: Meghalaya Human Development Report, 2008) ^[19].

Women Representation in the Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya

Women were not allowed to participate in traditional political institutions prior to independence. However, as new methods of administration were implemented changes were evident, first under the British and then under the Indian Constitution, allowing women to participate in politics at non-traditional level. Women were granted the right to vote in the Government of India Act 1935, although it was severely limited. The Act provides for women participation in the Assam Legislative Assembly by reserving seats from the Shillong constituency. Shillong women seat was the name given to it. Women were allowed to run for the general seats under the Act. In the 1937 election, two women, Berlina Diengdoh and Mavis Dunn ran for the reserved seats. The latter was elected, making her the first women to serve in the Assembly. She was the first khasi woman to become Cabinet Minister in the North-Eastern provinces, serving in Muhammad Saadulla's ministry from 1939 until 1941. Four more women ran for the election in 1946. Mrs. Bonniely Khongmen, T.W. Shadap, Berlina Diengdoh and Miss Mavis Dunn Lyngdoh were the participants. Mrs. Bonniely Khongmen was chosen from the Shillong Women's Seat among them.

The Autonomous State of Meghalaya was established in 1970 with its own legislature. The election to Meghalaya's provisional Legislative Assembly was done in a roundabout way. Members of the existing Legislative Assembly were elected to the Meghalaya State Autonomous State Legislative Asswmbly by an Electoral College made up of members of the existing District Councils. The House had a total of 41 members, with 18 from the Khasi Hills, four from the Jaintia Hills, sixteen from the Garo Hills, and three selected to represent minorities (Bengali, Assamese and Nepali). There were no female candidates in this race as well. Meanwhile, the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act of 1971 transformed the Autonomous State of Meghalaya into a full-fledged statehood, separate from Assam, with its own Legislative Assembly. There were 60 seats available once Meghalaya became a full-fledged state, with 24 seats allocated to Garo Hills.

Many new changes have occurred in the Khasi Hills after independence, notably since Meghalaya's statehood. Women have stepped forward to participate in politics. On March 9, 1972, the first general election for the new 60-member Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was conducted. There were nine women running for the 60 seats in this election out of which six were Khasi women, but no one came out successfully. Precylina R. Marak of the Garo Hills (APHLC) was the only women to win the election. On May 22, 1973, a bye-election was held in the Mawthengkut(ST) constituency. Raison Mawsor and Maysalin War were put against each other in the election.

Raison Mawsor defeated Maysalin War. In 1975, the Songsak (ST) constituency held a bye-election. There were two female candidates, and Miriam D. Shira, who had run the previous year, won the seat.

On February 15, 1993, the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly held its fifth general election. There were seven women candidates running for the 60 seats, but only one, Roshan Warjri from the Mawkhar (ST) constituency, was elected. It took four general elections for women to finally be elected in the legislative assembly after the constant losses a Khasi woman has finally emerged successfully, even though the number elected is less but this proves to be a huge stepping stone for the woman of the society in the political field. In the 1996 bye-election, there was only one female contender who lost. There were no female candidates in the 1997 bye-election.

On the 27th of February, 2018, the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly held its the 10th general election. This election showed an increase in the number of female candidates running for office. There were 34-woman candidates, 17 of them were Khasi women. Out of the 34-woman candidates only 3 were elected. The three winning candidates were Feerin C. A. Sangma and Dikkanchi D. Shira from Garo Hills and M. Ampareen Lyngdoh from Khasi Hills.

Thus, we can see women's participation in state politics is becoming more hopeful with each passing year. The number of Khasi women candidates has climbed from 6 in 1972 to 17 in 2018. However, the number of successful candidates remains extremely low, with only one or two women getting elected in each election.

Women's Representation in Autonomous District Councils

There were a handful of female representatives elected or nominated in the elections of the Autonomous District Councils (KHADC). Mrs. Lariarn Shullai was nominated as a member of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council in the inaugural election, held in 1952. Mrs. Louisinia Brosila Larnin and Mrs. Etrice Syiern ran for and won the following election, which was held in 1972. Mr. L. G. Shullai, the Chief Executive Member of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, chose Mrs. L. Brosila Larnin as one of the executive members in 1972, making her the first lady executive member in all of the North East's District Councils. Mrs. E. Syiern, another woman, was a member of the executive committee for a short time in 1977. Maysalin War, a member of the Provisional Assembly in 1970, ran for the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council in 1984 and was elected. Only one woman, Mrs. Irin Lyngdoh, was elected as a candidate in 2004. Mrs. Irin Lyngdoh, Mrs. Grace Mary Kharpuri, and Mrs. Teilinia Thangkhiew were chosen as members of KHADC in 2009. Three women were elected in the most recent election, which took place in 2014. Mrs. Teilinia Thangkhiew, Mrs. Grace Mary Kharpuri, and Mrs. Rona Khyndeit are the ladies in question. Despite the fact that few women run for office, statistics reveal that only a small percentage of those who do are elected.

Thus, it may be claimed that Khasi women continue to face discrimination in politics and decision-making, and that they have a lower status than men. Equal participation of women in decision-making, policy-making, planning, and administration is critical for ensuring their equality while engaging in the development process. It promotes women's direct participation in public decision-making and ensures better responsibility to women.

Changes in the Society and Gender Roles at Present

Women in Meghalaya are thought to be in a better position than women in the rest of the country. Meghalaya is a state in India where males are demanding their rights in society, same to how women are demanding rights, equality, respect, protection, and respite from violence in other areas of the country. Meghalaya used to be one of the most secluded states in the country before independence and the entrance of modern transportation. As a result, the Khasi had the fewest opportunities to mix with the people of the neighbouring plains' progressive communities. However, in recent years, there has been a significant shift in this tendency. The social order has changed over time as a result of external social and economic influences (religions, modernization, access to the outside world, polarised family, etc.), as well as inherent changes in family and social power structure.

The local inhabitants of Meghalaya have had extensive touch with the outside world. From ancient times, the Khasis interacted with people from the plains through trade and business. This contact between them inspired a select group of Khasis, presumably the Shella region, which is located on Bangladesh's border. Many people converted to Hinduism. Even now, a small percentage of the population adheres to the religion. Around the 17th century, the Khasi first came into contact with the Muslim religion when they arrived to the Khasi Hills for trading, as well as wanderers, fortunetellers, and other activities. Many of them eventually made their homes in the Khasi Hills (Bareh, 1967). Some of the even married Khasi women and spread Islam among the Khasis as a result. The British occupation in this part of the country during the early 19th century brought about profound impact on many aspects of culture and tradition. Major changes occurred with the organized effort of the Western missionaries who worked hard to proselytizing and introducing formal education to the local people. Thus, British occupancy of this area brought about a chain of changes in administration, religion, education, economy, modernization, development in communication and so on. Thus, the rights, privileges and duties of both men and women need to be redefined in the present context. The traditional matrilineal structure is resistive to the changes and the basic structure endures till date.

The rights and responsibilities of Khasi society's youngest daughter, ka Khadduh, have been influenced by different sources of change. She continues to inherit the family property and has more influence and authority over it, not just because the maternal uncle's role has eroded, but also because the emergence of the cash economy and private ownership has altered the concept of property. The younger daughter's religious position, like that of the maternal uncle, is reduced among Christians. Her residence is no longer the centre of the family's

rituals. In the past, the youngest daughter's socioeconomic and religious roles were complementary to those of the maternal uncle. The maternal uncle's status is weakened, which strengthens her position. The youngest daughter's and/or her husband's socioeconomic situation may have an impact on their place in the family and society as a whole. Furthermore, her educational standing, economic possibilities, and general urban lifestyle may improve or weaken her position. As a result, because she owns property, the youngest daughter has authority over the resources and capital, or has access to capital. This is true not only for the youngest daughter, but also for other women who inherited property or accumulated property through their own efforts.

At both the regional and national levels, women play an active role in modern politics. They take part in political campaign activities such as procession, public meetings, public speeches, and other activities during election season. Women turn out in great numbers to exercise their right to vote, and in some voting booths, women voters outnumber men. Women will be "deprived of being part in policy making decisions" if they are not elected to the State Legislature and District Councils (Lyngdoh, 1997).

Women Empowerment in Meghalaya

Women's empowerment was presented at the International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985. At the conference, empowerment was defined as the redistribution of social power and resource management in favor of women. In addition to being financially self-sufficient, it includes many other aspects. It includes education that includes self-confidence and the ability to make decisions about one's life.

The state government of Meghalaya has implemented a number of programmes and initiatives aimed at raising overall awareness and addressing gender concerns. In 2001, Meghalaya, like the rest of the country, marked Women Empowerment Year. Around the year, many awareness programmes on various topics affecting women were held throughout the state in conjunction with NGOs and Voluntary Organizations. On March 8, 2001, a symposium on the situation of women was held. The seminar's key themes were promoting women's economic growth through self-help groups, skill training, self-employment, women's health and education, women's rights, and women's leadership.

Government Programmes

Women are critical to poverty reduction activities' effectiveness. It's also been discovered that women's earnings are linked to their children's health, nutrition, and education. Increased women's income correlates more directly into improved child health and nutrition. Improving women's productivity, income, and quality of life requires a multifaceted contribution to overall growth and development. This realisation brings women at the centre stage of developmental efforts.

As a result, the government has designated numerous schemes and programmes as a method for poverty reduction and thereby enhancing people's capability at both the national and state levels. Various plans and programmes for women empowerment and gender equality have been launched by the government of Meghalaya through various government ministries as part of a poverty reduction strategy. Poverty eradication schemes, microcredit programmes, and various types of support for women workers and vocational trainings are among the government's varied programmes. These are the government's multi-faceted strategies towards women's economic empowerment.

To help in the development of the woman in Meghalaya some schemes were introduced such as the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) which helps in availing grants for the construction of household. Houses should be allocated in the names of female members of the beneficiaries' households. The Swarna Jayanti Yojana (SGSY) Scheme is a credit-cumulative subsidy scheme with the goal of lifting every supported poor person beyond the poverty line. This system has a female component, with 50% of the Self Help Groups (SHGs) founded in each block being solely for women. Piggery, Goatery, Poultry, Dairy farming, Fishery, Rabbit rearing, Weaving, Tailoring & Knitting, Carpentry, Crockery, Cane & Bamboo works, Ginger culture, Pineapple cultivation are the key operations undertaken by SGSY.

Various employment schemes, including the Prime Minister Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana Scheme (April 1999), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY), and Million Wells Schemes, cover women and the weaker sections (MWS).

Support Given to Women Workers

In the form of labour legislation, for example: The Supreme Court recently issued a significant verdict, stating that the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 should be extended to daily pay women employees of Municipal Corporations and organisations. Social security measures: The Central Government Service Rules provided for a fifteen-day paternity leave. Other types of assistance: The Short Stay Home for Women and Girls programme was established in 1969 to safeguard and rehabilitate women and girls who were in danger socially or morally.

Woman Organizations

Women's groups can be found in various villages and towns throughout the Khasi hills districts of Meghalaya, and their common goal is to bring women together for the improvement of women and society as a whole. Women's organisations have sprung up all around Meghalaya, giving women a platform to express their many concerns. To achieve their needs, women have organised themselves locally and in partnership with other

networks. They have used the media to demand their rights as well as issues affecting youngsters and other segments of society. They go to the government and file a lawsuit in order to get the government to address the numerous public issues.

Seng Kynthei Shnong Pyndemumiong

The Seng Kynthei Shnong Pyndemumiong is a Mairang sub-division-based women's group in the West Khasi Hills District. The group is collaborating with the dorbar shnong's male members. They have their own President and General Secretary who are in charge of overseeing the organization's operations. The organization's major goal is to keep the neighbourhood safe and orderly. The organization's leader explained that because the area is a market, people came from various villages and towns to purchase and sell products, causing it to become crowded. As a result, the group determined that it was necessary to engage closely with the male members in the community's overall interest. Since its founding, the women's organisation has conducted night patrols, particularly during celebratory seasons, to keep drunkards and street boys from causing havoc in the neighbourhood. They've set certain ground rules for both drunks and liquor vendors. Violations will be punished with a monetary fine, and if the problems cannot be resolved inside the organisation, specific cases will be brought before the dorbar meeting. Furthermore, if reported to the organisation, the group will consider appeals and take action against any type of domestic violence. The group also stressed the need of cleanliness in the area. For example, littering and dumping waste in public spaces is strongly prohibited, and so on. Morality is another area of concern for the organisation; for example, improper clothing and harsh language in public places will be punished according to the organization's laws and regulations.

Ka Lympung Ki Seng Kynthei (KLKSK)

The primary body of the 26 women's organisations in and around Shillong, Ka Lympung Ki Seng Kynthei, is a social-based organisation. It was established on December 12, 1992, as the coordinating body for the twenty-six organisations from Shillong's various localities and suburbs. The organization's principal goal and objectives are to bring women's organisations closer together and to address common issues among them. The organization's top priority is to work on issues affecting women, as well as to promote overall economic development, health, and educational achievement. They're also concerned about the myriad issues and societal ills that affect women, youth, and society as a whole.

Civil Society Women Organisation (CSWO)

Civil Society Women Organization is one of Meghalaya's most powerful women's organisations. Mrs. Agnes Kharshiing, President of CSWO, was an influential civil society actor in the 2009 Shillong jail break case in Meghalaya. The organization's goals are to identify numerous difficulties affecting women, children, and youth, as well as other societal challenges and human rights issues. As a women's organisation, they are concerned about crimes against women and domestic abuse, which are two of the most serious issues confronting women in Meghalaya. Kharshiing stated that the current political system in Meghalaya is already tainted; corrupt activities can be found at all levels, and residents are denied justice. In addition to women's issues, CSWO addresses all forms of human rights and corruption, as well as obstacles to progress and development.

Khasi Women Welfare and Development Association (KWWADA)

KWWADA which was also previously called as Tribal Women Welfare and Development Association of Meghalaya (TWWADAM), its operations and activities are essentially identical to those of the TWWADAM. The protection of tribal lands and trade, foreigner troubles, employment issues, social evils such as drinking, and a variety of other common problems and issues are among their key concerns. Apart from social issues, KWWADA also addresses political matters such as the "Clean Politics Campaign," in which the organization's head claims that such campaigns have been held in various villages in order to achieve a government free of corruption, and that clean politics should begin at home. They also collaborate with other groups on areas of shared concern. The organization's head claims that similar campaigns have been held in several communities in order to achieve a corruption-free government, and that clean politics should begin at home. They also collaborate with other groups on areas of shared concern.

Women can meet other women thanks to the presence of women's organisations. It allows them to learn about the issues that other women encounter. It instils in women the desire to work in close collaboration with one another and to freely communicate their issues. These groups may not explicitly encourage women to participate in politics, but they do have a good impact on women's lives. The presence of women's organisations as civil societies causes policymakers to pay attention to women and their challenges. Crimes against women, domestic abuse, and husbands' inebriation are among the key issues that Khasi women have had to deal with. Poverty and alcoholism characterise rural life, as do forsaken wives and children, who are unable to claim maintenance if their husbands abandon them. They remain silent because ladies are embarrassed to talk about their personal lives. Women must unite and organise to provide a single platform on which to address their concerns.

As a result, the presence of women's organisations as civil society actors in society is critical, and they have played an essential role in combating social problems. For the preservation of women's rights and security, women's organisations collaborate with the Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW). Women's organisations have frequently requested that the government transfer all offences involving women and children

to fast-track courts so that they can be dealt with quickly. They've also demanded that the Forensic Science Laboratory be upgraded. Women's organisations contributed directly to women's participation in the public sphere as civil society actors, as well as indirectly to their representation in politics. Other civil society organisations, with the exception of women's organisations, do not see the need of women's presence in politics since they feel that women in Meghalaya have social and economic equality.

Conclusion

Empowerment is a requirement that must be met in order to achieve sustainable development (development that occurs in a sustainable way that leads to a sustainable livelihood for people). The argument is that women are empowered to contribute in all respects. For the overall development process. The empowerment framework helps women gain the same status as men and ensure that they manage their factors of production. The present study has tried to interpret empowerment of the Khasi society in Meghalaya studying their roles and responsibilities and the status of the women in the society and how they are treated in contrast with their male counterparts. Although fairly liberal, the denial of Khasi women's participation in the political system reflects injustice to them and does not recognize their right as responsible citizens. Religious and political participation of the women in the Khasi society were however limited. Performance of religious rites and rituals were all in the hands of the men. Although property rights are passed on through women line, it is the men who play lead roles in political affairs. At this stage of modernity and development, Khasi matrilineal systems have certainly begun to feel the wind of these changes in their protracted traditional matrilineal systems. However, the majority of the Khasi still see Matrilineage as the true foundation and symbol of the Khasi identity. Political participation should also be encouraged in order to truly empower them. The government of Meghalaya has taken initiatives to promote the life of its women by introducing schemes and programmes. This has greatly helped the women in terms of poverty and also in achieving a decent standard of living. The women of the Khasi society have formed women organization in order to tackle to evil prevailing in the society and also to help them resolves their issues and it can also be called as form of way which can help women bring out their problems to the government in the form of women organizations. Hence, we can say that women organization is also a form of empowerment given to the women. Aside from that, the issue of women's empowerment must be addressed jointly and collaboratively, which necessitates significant governmental support as well as sincere efforts by NGOs and women's groups to promote women's empowerment. So, for women who need to be empowered, self-consciousness or self-awareness should be the first step toward empowerment. This is due to the reality that external stimuli will have little impact on someone who needs to empower others unless and until they develop self-awareness. As a result, in order to attain women empowerment, women must recognise their own potential and ability to change.

References

1. Agnihotri SK. Meghalaya. Itanagar: Himalayan, 2004.
2. Bareth H. The history and culture of the Khasi people. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 2016.
3. Bareth H. Meghalaya. Shillong: North-Eastern India News & Feature Service, 1974.
4. Bhalla RP. Elections in India, 1950-1972. S. Chand, 1973.
5. Baruah AK, Dev R. Ethnic identities and democracy: Electoral politics in north-East India. New Delhi: Regency Publications, 2006.
6. Bhasin K, Khan NS. Feminism and its relevance in South Asia. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2004.
7. Census of India, 2011. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, 2011.
8. Chaube SK. Hill politics in north-East India. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1999.
9. Chaube SK. Electoral Politics in North East India, Madras: University Press Publications, 1985.
10. Coalition politics in North East India. New Delhi: Regency Publications, a division of Astral International Pvt, 2020.
11. Desai N, Thakkar U. Women in Indian society. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 2001.
12. Downs FS. The Christian impact on the status of women in North East India. Shillong: North-Eastern Hill University Publications, 1996.
13. Dutta PS. Electoral politics in North East India. New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1986.
14. Kumar DG. Life and culture of matrilineal tribe of Meghalaya. New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1989.
15. Joshi HG. Meghalaya: Past and present. New Delhi, India: Mittal Publications, 2004.
16. Lyngdoh RS. Government and politics in Meghalaya. New Delhi: Sanchar Pub. House, 1996.
17. Mukhim P. Khasi matrilineal - challenges in 21st Century. USA, 2005.
18. Mawrie HO. The Khasi milieu also an introduction to the study of tribal religions by Sujata Miri. New Delhi: Concept Pub, 1981.
19. Meghalaya Human Development Report, 2008. Shillong: Govt. of Meghalaya, 2008.
20. Nakane C. Garo and Khasi: A comparative study in matrilineal systems. Paris: Mouton, 1967.
21. Nongbri T. Development, ethnicity and gender: Select essays on tribes in India. Jaipur: Rawat, 2003.
22. Nongbri T. Gender, Matrilineal, and entrepreneurship: The Khasis of North-East India. New Delhi: Zubaan, an imprint of Kali for Women, 2008.
23. Nongkinrih AK. Khasi Society of Meghalaya: A sociological understanding. Shillong: Galaxy Book Centre, 2018.

24. Ray AK, Athparia RP. Women and changing power structure in north-East India. Shillong: North-East India Council for Social Science Research, 2006.
25. Roy S, Rizvi SHM. Tribal customary laws of North-East India. Delhi, India: BR Publishing Corporation, 2011.
26. Syiemlieh DR. British administration in Meghalaya: Policy and pattern. New Delhi, India: Heritage Publ, 1989.
27. Bhandari KL. Elections and electoral reforms. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 1991;37(3):331-334. doi:10.1177/0019556119910309
28. Das Gupta M, Choudhury H, Das MB. Discrimination against women in a matrilineal society: A reality in the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya. *Arthshastra: Indian Journal of Economics & Research*, 2013;2(4):44. doi:10.17010/aijer/2013/v2i4/36078
29. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*. doi:10.29034/ijmra. Accessed 29 Apr. 2022. Accessed 29 Apr. 2022.
30. Mohanty A. Guest Faculty in English, Rajdhani College, Bhubaneswar., Das, P., & Associate Professor, College of Home Science, CAU, Tura, Meghalaya. Changing roles of women with time. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 2017;5(10):1011-1013. doi:10.21474/ijar01/5618
31. Nongsiej E. Plieladdalin. "Women and political participation in Meghalaya." *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 2018;8:5:363-374.
32. Nongbri T. Khasi women and Matriliney: Transformations in gender relations. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 2000;4(3):359-395. doi:10.1080/09718524.2000.11909976
33. No. 2613. Convention on the political rights of women. Opened for signature at New York, on 31 march 1953. In *United Nations Treaty Series UN*, 2001, 178-178.
34. Krishna, Sumi. "Gender, tribe and community control of natural resources in North-east India." *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 2001;8:2307-321.
35. Ghose Bholanath. Status of Women in the Rural Khasi Society of Meghalaya. University Library of Munich, Germany, 2007.
36. Soanes, Rebecca. "Gender and Political Participation in the Traditional Political System of the Village: A Study on the Khasi tribe of Mawkynrew village in Meghalaya." *The Oriental Anthropologist*, 2022. 0972558X211063737.
37. MINAKSHI KEENI. Tribal culture and religion impacting women empowerment A study on the Khasis of Meghalaya. Diss. Tohoku University, 2019.
38. Halder Diganta. "Rural Khasi Woman and Their Dismal Political Status—A Major Hindrance in the Way of Their Political Evolution." *International Journal of Computer Applications in Engineering Sciences*, 2012;2:334.
39. Keeni M, Takashino N, Nongkynrih A, Fuyuki K. Women empowerment in a rural matrilineal society of Meghalaya, India. *Journal of Asian Rural Studies*, 2018;2(2):144. doi:10.20956/jars.v2i2.1417
40. Rani M. Empowerment of rural women through self-help groups: A sociological study. *Contemporary Social Sciences*, 2018;27(3):230-236. doi:10.29070/27/58084
41. Chapter 8 Women's empowerment in Meghalaya. (n.d.). Retrieved, 2022. from <https://megplanning.gov.in/MHDR/8.pdf>
42. Ghosh B. Empowerment of khasi women in Meghalaya. Retrieved, 2014. from https://www.academia.edu/3829866/Empowerment_of_Khasi_women_in_Meghalaya
43. Mawkhroh I. (n.d.). Political participation of women in Meghalaya a comparative study of khasi and garo women. Retrieved, 2022. from <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/jspui/handle/10603/203345>
44. Mukhim S. One region, many visions, Retrieved, 2018. from <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/one-region-many-visions/cid/1613494>
45. National Portal of India. (n.d.). Retrieved, 2022. from <https://www.india.gov.in/official-website-meghalaya-state-commission-women>
46. Nongbri T. (n.d.). A situational analysis of women and girls in Meghalaya (edition). Retrieved May 1, 2022, from https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23208978M/A_situational_analysis_of_women_and_girls_in_Meghalaya
47. Nag O. The khasi people of meghalaya: Where women rule. Retrieved, 2019. from <https://www.worldatlas.com/news/the-khasi-people-of-meghalaya-where-women-rule.html>
48. Mzuir.inflibnet.ac.in:8080. (n.d.). Retrieved May 1, 2022, from <http://mzuir.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/262/1/S.T.%20Lalzarzovi%20%28EVS%29.pdf>
49. Women's issues in Meghalaya: Role of the Government, ngos, and the ... (n.d.). Retrieved, 2022. from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/MinakshiKeeni/publication/330519125_Women%27s_Issues_in_Meghalaya_Role_of_the_Government_NGOs_and_the_Village_Leadership/links/60f683b10859317dbdf4f321/Womens-Issues-in-Meghalaya-Role-of-the-Government-NGOs-and-the-Village-Leadership.pdf?origin=publication_detail
50. ADR. (n.d.). Total women candidates: Meghalaya Election. Retrieved, 2018. from Myneta.info website: https://myneta.info/meghalaya2018/index.php?action=summary&subAction=women_candidate&sort=edu