

aware about the village development in their tribal area due to various reasons like backwardness, illiteracy and family responsibilities etc. whereas only few tribal women are aware about the village development in the tribal area due to family background, education and their personal instinct to serve the tribal society.

CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

True democracy is a system in Abraham Lincoln's words, is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. While most of the democracies have given a system which government elected by all the section of societies, it is debatable whether the government comprises of all the diverse sections irrespective of the gender, class, caste and region respectively. In this context, the problem of low participation of women is of special concern for democracies and without changing that true liberal democracy can never be achieved. Women's political participation in decision-making process is essential for women's interests to be incorporated into governance. However, it has been widely experienced that governance structures which do not provide for adequate participation of women, often suffer from state inventions, which are neither inclusive nor democratic. Including women, especially in local governments are an essential step towards creating gender equal opportunities and gender sensitive policies and importantly whether the government works for all the citizen of the society. The concept of participation of tribal women in rural politics has assumed great importance with the growth of literature on social change and economic development.

Beginning of women participation after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was a historic step towards democratic decentralization process. In fact no serious attempt was ever made by any government of India. However, this amendment brought about a major change in the political process. There used to be women members in the rural politics to some extent but their role was negligible, it was the 73rd Amendment which ensured 33 per cent women representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. As a result of this constitutional amendment Himachal Pradesh government passed a Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 in which the spirit of 73rd Constitutional Amendment was incorporated. For the first time 33 per cent women's seats

were reserved in PRI's. As a result of Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, for the first time the election to PRI's were held in 1995. In which it was ensured that the elections to these institutions will be held after every five years. Prior to this act, the elections to these institutions were not regular. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment had an article 244 (1) and 244 (2) which pertains to tribal areas. As a consequence of this article Himachal Pradesh Government incorporated the provisions for tribal areas in its Act of 1994. As a result of Sh. Dalip Singh Bhuria Commission report in which it was recommended that the special provisions are to be incorporated for the tribal areas in India. In 1996 Panchayats (Extension of the Scheduled Areas) Act, was passed by the Central Government. Himachal Pradesh state has followed the provisions of this act.

Various amendments have been made by the Himachal Pradesh Government pertaining to women's participation in the grassroot institutions. In 2008 the percentage of women was enhanced from 33 per cent to 50 per cent. As a result of it women participation has been increased in tribal areas. It is pertinent to mention here that present study which is concerned with women of tribal areas, particularly study belongs to district Chamba of Himachal Pradesh. In which two tribal areas namely Pangi and Bharmour, which are geographically, socially, economically, educationally and politically quite backward than other areas of Chamba district. Geographically these areas are snow bound which remained cut off from rest of the state for more than six months. This is the primary reason of backwardness of the people of these areas and particularly women do not have exposure like other women of the state. They are educationally and socially backward in comparison to other women of the state.

The present study was a maiden attempt to find out the awareness, education level, economic status, political awakening, awareness of day to day events, awareness of the Panchayati Raj Act, the various schemes meant for tribal areas, their rights and other parameters of development. During the

study the followings things were revealed by the tribal women respondents both by elected as well as non-elected.

It is found in the study that most of the elected and non-elected tribal women respondents are from the younger age group i.e. 20 to 40 years and it was also observed during the study that divorcee tribal women respondents had no representation and political participation in the rural politics. On the other hand it is evident from the study that married women are more active in rural politics. The analysis of the above study reveals that unmarried and widowed tribal women respondents are lagging behind in the political participation at grassroot level of PRI's.

The study revealed that in both the tribal blocks most of the elected and non-elected tribal women respondents were having two and more than two children. The present study also shows that there is a relation between number of children, the less the children more the participation. The reason of low participation of tribal women having more and no children is mainly the fact that they have no interest in the rural politics. Hence, it is also evident from the study that tribal women respondents from joint families take more part in rural politics as compared to the respondents from nuclear families.

The study also shows that large portion of the elected and non-elected tribal women belong to dominant caste in the tribal society. The dominance of upper caste in the politics of grassroot institutions is also observed from the study and on the other hand weaker sections and lower caste are having low level of their political participation in the grassroot level.

Besides caste, other factors are also equally considered important. These are education, social behaviour, honesty, social status and hard work. In nutshell we can say that dominance of caste and its impact cannot be ignored in the rural politics of tribal areas.

However, the voting behaviour of the tribal women is influenced by political parties, caste system and awareness of the respondents. Most of the tribal women cast their vote as per the wishes of their family members. Women do not exercise their right to vote independently.

The study revealed that tribal women hardly take any part in protests movement like dharnas, bandhs and calls etc. due to their social taboos, educational backwardness and family obligations particularly looking after the children and household responsibilities.

The study also shows that most of the women were not aware of constitutional provisions meant for tribal women's in the grassroot institutions. In many cases women were not aware of the existing reservation policy of the government for the tribal women. Some women were satisfied with the existing arrangements of reservation for the tribal women. However, some were of the opinion that more reservation is still required to increase the participation of tribal women in the rural politics. The analysis of both the tribal blocks revealed that the most of tribal women's who participate and elected in the Panchayati Raj Institutions are illiterate or very less educated.

The study also reveals that there is proxy politics. Some of the women respondents do not take active part in the meetings, particularly of gram sabha where majority of the decisions pertaining to development of their areas is concerned. Most of the decisions are taken by the influential strata and male members of the gram sabha. Some of the elected tribal women members do not know the priorities of development in their areas due to lack of interest in the rural developments and their ignorance about the various rural development schemes meant for tribal areas.

It was also observed during the study that in both tribal blocks leadership of PRI's belonged to lower income class of the society. The most of tribal women are into agriculture and horticulture activities. They are marginal and land holdings are very small. They are marginal farmers having below 10 bighas of land. It is found in the study that due to the growth of population, the size of land holdings in the state is decreasing every year. But despite that tribal women are taking active role in the rural politics and credit goes to different measures taken under 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

The analysis of both the tribal blocks reveals that national political parties particularly congress and BJP have dominant position in the study

area. The affiliation of the elected and non-elected tribal women respondents with the two political parties became relevant in the present study.

The study also reveals that majority of the elected and non-elected tribal women are aware of objectives and provision of the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. Apart from awareness about the provision of Panchayati Raj Act, they are also satisfied with their presence and working in the gram panchayats. They responded that there is wide spread culture of favouritism in identification of beneficiaries for tribal development schemes. Most of the respondents were not satisfied with the identification of beneficiaries.

It is observed that the most of the tribal women were satisfied with the role of MGNREGA in the rural development schemes. It proves that MGNREGA has brought about a basic economy empowerment and change in the rural economy of the two tribal blocks of district Chamba.

However, during the study, it is observed that there is corruption in the implementation of MGNREGA scheme. On other hand, some of the respondents were of the opinion that MGNREGA has a very positive impact on the rural employment, which ultimately resulted in economic betterment of the tribal areas.

The study also shows that the majority of the tribal women agreed with this view that the central government has played effective role in the implementation of various schemes in tribal areas. Consequently, the financial position of gram sabha is very strong in the tribal area.

It is also found in the study that the presence of women in the gram sabha meetings is very low as per the requirement of Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. Tribal women take little interest in the gram sabha meetings as their ignorance and awareness about their rights and duties.

It is found in the study that national political parties as they use to influence grassroot politics and it can also found in the study areas. They try to influence voting behaviour at the grassroot level politics. Apart from that caste, merit of the candidate and education are the factors which influence

voters while making their choices. The study also reveals that only few tribal women are capable of carrying their view point in the meetings of gram sabha.

However, it is also observed from the study that only few tribal women are interested in attending and arranging public rallies during the elections of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in tribal belt. On the other hand major strata of the tribal society are not much interested in attending and arranging public rallies at the time of election to PRI's due to burden of household work and social backwardness.

The study also revealed that a majority of tribal women among elected and non-elected get political information from the male members and guardians of the family, which thus an edge over the other resources of political information like newspaper, radio, television and magazines respectively.

The analysis of both the tribal blocks revealed that nearly half of the tribal women contestants, contested elections by the inspiration of their family members. However, influence by friends relatives and own decision are also important to some extent. The study further reveals that the participation of the tribal women in the rural politics is influenced by the male members of their families. Only few women were educated who are also under the influence of their male members of the family and do not take decision independently. In other words the contribution of elected tribal women members is negligible. And to a great extent male members decides on their behalf. It is due to social taboos and educational backwardness of the female in the tribal area.

It was also observed during the study that there is influence of party in power in the rural politics of the tribal areas. It is proved that there is no paucity of funds for the tribal areas development but there is a influence of party in power. The analysis of both the tribal blocks revealed that various schemes meant for the development of tribal areas have failed to brings out

desired results. However, it is revealed that the funds allocated for various schemes are being not been fully utilized.

Suggestions

There is a great need of improving educational level of the tribal community particularly the tribal women education. Unless and until tribal women are not educated no social change can be expected in the tribal society. There is a need to change the mindset of rural women which are from long time are socially and educationally backward. There is a great need to change, mindset of tribal women, who are of the opinion that they are meant for household responsibilities and they second rate status as compare to male members of the society.

Economic status of tribal women need to be a serious issue of focus. The dependence and economic poverty of the tribal women make them dependable on their male members of the family. Tribal women should be brought in the mainstream of the rural development schemes. Their involvement and participation in various rural development schemes through special schemes meant for tribal women and MGNREGA. Unless and until economic status of their women folk of tribal area is not increased their participation and involvement cannot be expected. Awareness is a very essential in their participation and living standard.

All weather route will improve the economic conditions of the Pangi region. The migration of people of Pangi region will reduce to a greater extent, which will help to retain their old culture, heritage and customs of the tribal society.

The role of mass media should be made effective to strengthen their level of confidence to confront the various issues. The role of NGO's and SHG's is very essential to improve the awareness amongst tribal women. Government should monitor from time to time the progress made by the schemes introduced by the central and state government. In some of the cases it has been observed that the desired results are not coming out and the schemes are still in force. The area under study that is Pangi region which

remains cut off from rest of the world for around six months needs a special attention to make approachable throughout the year. Lot of money is spent every year to remove snow to clear the road. It would be better if central and state governments should focus to make a tunnel from Pangni to Chamba to improve the lot of this tribal belt. At present there is no means of transportation during the winter season. If someone falls seriously ill, there is no alternative than a helicopter lift, which is also impossible during bad weather. There is a major problem in the tribal area of district Chamba is the medical, educational staff and other important functionaries of the government meant for tribal area do not take interest in serving these areas because of backwardness in transportation, educational facilities for children and day to day essential requirements.

As a result of it, there is lack of medical, educational, transportation and availability of different economic services. Although Bharmour region is connected by all weather roads yet the area is quite backward in the modern amenities. Hence, special attention is required for both Pangni and Bharmour region for development in all weather roads and overall development of these tribal areas. Although some hydel power projects have been established which were helpful in development in terms of roads and employment to the local residents. On the other hand, these hydel power projects have some negative effects on the inhabitants of the tribal area. The cracks in the houses of residents due to large scale blasting by the people of hydel power projects has left negative effect on the local residents. At the same time the traditional water resources have gone dry. These projects have negative effect on environment and pollution. There is a great potential for tourism in Bharmour region due to significance of Holy Manimahesh Peak, but there is a lack of proper hotel facilities. Government of India as well as Himachal Pradesh should take steps to provide proper boarding and lodging facilities to the pilgrimage during Manimahesh Yatra.

The elected representatives of the people especially tribal women need training to be able to perform their duties because of their illiteracy and

limited knowledge to public affairs. These are no separate schemes exclusively for the capacity building of tribal women and this should be taken care of. Steps must be taken to ward off proxy politics of male members related to elected tribal women representatives in the meetings of panchayat. Training should be provided to the newly elected tribal women representative to train them about the working of the PRI's and in the art of decision making process. However, it is necessary for effective political participation of tribal women that there should be provision of two or three terms for the representatives to contest the election.

Hence, education, experience, awareness, exposure, confidence, self motivation, encouragement and cooperation from the society as well as family and government officials mainly contribute in the effective participation and involvement of tribal women in PRI's and their complete empowerment as well. If these suggested measures are considered on the top priority by tribal women and by all others in tribal society, it will definitely benefit our rural politics, and will also empower the tribal women to a greater extent.