

CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

Since ages nations have always engaged in discussing what should be the place of women in society and the debate continues. Every society is a product of its own ideologies, derived from its tradition or religious influences. The amount of freedom a woman enjoys in the developed world and her share in developing the world is beyond comparison. Whatever the ground realities may be, it is a general consensus that women should have equal importance in society.

The decision reflects the fact that the reservation for women is not a reward or help but an honest recognition of contribution in nation building and a mode of encouragement to do more. Gradually, as women are empowered, the system could be slowly abolished in stages. More number of women representatives means more women will be involved in policy making which would also help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect between opposite sexes and prevent gender inequality. The active participation of women could bring a human touch to governance and stop leaders from running the countries like corporate houses. They might give a different dimension to our imagination about security, hunger and shelter. If they are adept enough in negotiations, their concern filled with compassion and love could convince governments to avert evils like war. In a country like India where women and children die of malnourishment and diseases and where our population explosion adds insult to injury, women could play an important role. In ministries like cultural, educational, health and medical, women leaders could bring about constructive changes in making the population aware of serious issues plaguing our country like population control, sexually transmitted diseases and poverty.

The present research inquiry has proved the hypothesis that “74th amendment has served as a major breakthrough towards ensuring women's equal access to and increased participation in social, political and economic spheres”.

The study in the first chapter deals with the facts and observations that are confined to one Municipal Corporation Shimla (MC) and two Municipal Councils--Rampur and Theog of Himachal Pradesh. In this study it was enquired from the general public to elucidate as to how women's participation in the political arena improves their decision making in all fronts either it is related to economic or social aspects of role.

For making an in-depth analysis, one MC Shimla and two Municipal Councils (Rampur and Theog) were selected. The present study was conducted with the objective of the awareness and participation of elected women representatives of urban local institutions on account of their recent constitutional reservation policy. In the present study, 409 respondents were taken in which, elected members, general public, officials of MC Shimla, Urban development office, Municipal council Rampur and Theog were selected randomly.

The second chapter deals with history and geographical area of Himachal Pradesh, Municipal Corporation Shimla, Municipal Council Rampur and Theog, urbanisation trends in India and State, functions of ULB's, Budget, financial powers of Municipal Corporation, Shimla etc. In earlier times the things were different, people did not have many rights or amendments to improve their social conditions. After the amendment of these acts the things have improved considerably but there are still some loopholes to be taken care of. After the 74th Amendment, women's status has improved in the Urban Local Bodies. They are now actively taking part in the decisions for their benefits. And the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 provisions, thus, provide a basis for the State

Legislatures to guide the State Governments in the assignment of various responsibilities to municipalities and to strengthen municipal governance. Accordingly, State Government has amended their Municipal Acts/Laws/Legislations so as to bring these in conformity with the Constitutional Provisions. It is also learnt that the municipalities are confronted with a number of problems, despite the amendments in the State Municipal Acts and the implementation of the 74th CAA provisions. For instance, there exists a problem of ineffective participation in the decision-making process despite adoption of the policy of reservation, delays in the transfer of funds to the municipalities despite constitution of State Finance Commissions, poor recovery from various tax and non-tax sources despite devolution of powers, etc. It is further learnt that there is an influence of various social, economic and political factors on the functioning of municipalities in India.

In the third chapter it may be said that the socio-economic profile of the councillors, officials and general public has raised various issues. As is known that because of this reservation policy now more and more women have become aware of their rights. Now women are opting for smaller families, adult education is a success among them. They have also chosen to actively participate in political processes especially at the local level.

As maximum male and female respondents were from the urban background it was helpful for them to be aware of the problems and issues were part of the towns. Women's educational level is increasing and literacy is a very important indicator of the development of a particular country or state. The results clearly reveal that nuclear system is not very much prevalent in our society. Quite a large number of people still live in joint families. Joint family, works as a support system for women when they go out from home and in nuclear family it becomes exceedingly difficult. However, with an increased emphasis on women

education, there is a growing awareness that their contribution is well recognised and rewarded too. There are several trades which can be started as a cottage industry and their initiation into production of good quality and high value floriculture crops is a step forward in their economic emancipation. With increased educational opportunities; the women are getting more organized into small groups i.e. self help groups through the efforts of many Non-Govt. organizations.

When the researcher probed the respondents they said that they were satisfied with the income given to them. The facilities given were lacking and insufficient. Women 35 percent councillors were from a business background and from the administrative side. This shows that female councillors were mainly from the business or administrative background showing that they were more involved in public activities.

Majority of male and female respondents were aware about the local government problems. As far as the national issues were concerned less number of respondents took interest in it. It was clear from the tables that 100 percent male and female respondent were aware about the local issues. 75 percent of female respondents were not the member of the previous council, only few percent were re-elected this shows that the people have faith in their representation and wanted the same representatives to be re-elected because they thought that their problems were represented well by that particular councillor. This also proves a part of the hypothesis that people have shown trust in women representatives as their leader to take forward their issues at the local level.

In the fourth chapter the researcher discussed about the political representation of the women. 100 percent female councillors believed that the reservation policy has helped women to bring their causes/issues to the fore, not only at the social but also at policy making level. Maximum male respondents also believe that the 74th

constitutional amendment has helped women to improve their situation. After reservation policy, it was found that women work more independently and try to understand their rights. The status of women seemed to be improving in the society, but lot of sensitization toward women's issues was also observed.

Women councillors were of the view that there were political interferences in their decision-making in resolving the local issues and they were aware of their power and functions to some extent. It is true that first time elected respondents were not aware of their rights properly. Prior organisational experience can give them confidence and ability to perform. It was observed by the researcher that political awareness and participation seem to be too low among the respondents. Most male and female respondents take women representation in a very positive way. 100% male and female respondents said that they attended all the meetings of councils/corporation regularly. With the help of these meetings they became aware about the functioning of the council, their effective role in society, and they also came to know about the measures to overcome people's problems. 75 percent male respondents believed that the work taken up by women members is done efficiently. A large number of respondents were of the view that even after reservation power was generally with higher caste/classes, they believed that power played a very important role, since the power was with the higher caste/classes they got their work done immediately without any problem. Many of the respondents said that the grant-in-aid given by the government to their localities was not sufficient to get the different works done by them to improve the status of their locality. It was clear from the analysis that if they involve local people it becomes easy for them to sort out their problems. The grassroots women movement of today from the earlier movements for women's rights is because of the rise of separate organisations for women at the grassroots and the mass based participation of poor women. The number of Mahila Mandals and/or

Sanghas (women's collectives) with or without the help of the government have grown tremendously in the last four or five decades. So, it may be said that women are coming together under one platform for societal issues as well as problems specifically related to women.

In the fifth chapter it was revealed that women's participation in politics and in policy-making sphere has increased significantly over the years, throughout the world. Women have become aware of the outside world and instead of prioritizing their households alone; they have come forward and easily claimed 50 percent of constituency seats in the open. Women's active participation in local bodies is creating a paradigm shift. The buzz word today is "Women can do it" which is proved very emphatically by various luminaries in different walks of life. It has become clear from various discussions carried on with women representatives that the male representatives fielded either their wives or other women relatives after their seat became reserved. This practice was noticed in many constituencies/wards where they did not want to leave their strong hold in the area and women were made proxy members of the council or corporation. In course of time women have become aware about their rights and they also try to actively participate in politics even if they entered politics by default. But presently no women representative admitted for having been discriminated on the basis of gender. In case of higher officials it did not matter whether the councillor was male or female, since there were number of women on high posts and performing their duties well. 80 percent females asserted that they always gave their opinion in the meetings. It was clear from the observation that after 50% reservation given to them has increased their part greatly and the work assigned to them was satisfactory and it was also found that women actively participated in the decision-making process as also their voice was listened to. The government gave reservation to the weaker section of

the society. Today India is a male dominated society, 50% reservations places women alongside men, after leaving her household chores in order to initiate change in the personal and social level. 100% women respondents believed that the organization headed by women members work efficiently.

Majority of male and female respondents agreed to having had some training after getting elected. However, there were several barriers for women councillors to participate in the training imparted to them. Due to the restrictions imposed on their mobility, the distance of the training centre to the residence, the number of days of training involved, non-availability of transport facility, the opportunity cost of training in terms of the wages lost, non-availability of support from family members to take care of the household chores and children, lack of support services, etc. impede the participation of women in training programmes organised for them. In one of the training programmes attended by the researcher it was analyzed that the husbands of the women councillors accompany their wives for training, they said that they cannot send their wives alone for training. This indicates the interest of women councillors to enhancing their knowledge and skills, to improve their performance. The data revealed that there was considerable enhancement in the confidence and decision making capacity of the trained councillors. It was also clear that the women participants in local bodies who had been mere spectators in the early stages have now become active participants. 100 percent of female respondents wanted that the trainer should be female. The reason they cited was that female trainers were easy to get along with. They understood problems and cleared their doubts sensitively.

6.2 SUGGESTIONS

1. There is gross under-representation of women at every level of party hierarchy. In all its wings and in important committees of the party

this continues even after the implementation of women's quota at local level. Political parties have not initiated any special drives for the recruitment and training of women with the vigour that they should have. The political parties are encouraged to amend their constitution to provide 33 % organizational quota for women at every level of the party hierarchy, in every wing and in all decision making bodies of the party organization. This will widen the pool of eligible women candidates, reduce the percentage of proxies and improve the efficacy of women's participation. Where major national parties do not have even 10 % women members, it is unrealistic to expect them to field 33 % women activists as candidates.

2. One-third seats of the committees dealing with women's empowerment should be reserved for men. This will convey the message that women's cause should not be the concern of women alone.
3. Political education of the electors will reduce the number of proxies. Responsible electors will reduce the role of money and muscle power and other parochial narrow-minded loyalties, which largely determine the effective merit.
4. Gender sensitization needs to be an integral component of such education. Such programs will be instrumental in neutralizing the male backlash. Joint gender sensitization programmes for women representatives along with their spouse may be conducted on a trial basis. Despite the change in the role of women in the public sphere their roles in the private sphere have not changed. The contribution of women to the public sphere must be compensated by an equal contribution of men to the private sphere. This would give a more humane face to both the spheres and the family will not become an obstructive site for women in their pursuits in the public sphere.
5. Elected representatives must be provided with adequate honorarium, training and other support services to enable them to

function better. Administrative support and guidance is required for women representatives at least in the short run.

6. Relief from day-to-day household chores is essential for women if they have to perform well in the public sphere. This will call for an attitudinal a paradigm-shift change on the part of men as well as women. Gender sensitization is necessary for bringing about this change. A massive project of such sensitization needs to be initiated by the NGOs, Centers for Women's Studies and women's organizations. A trial could be given to joint gender sensitization programs for women representatives and their spouses.
7. Women representatives, women activists and women academics should work in close collaboration for women empowerment.
8. Women's groups should gender sensitize press reporters and should try to turn them into allies and ensure gender sensitive news reporting.
9. National and local governments should provide the elected representatives with an adequate amount of honorarium to enable them to perform efficiently.
10. Political Science Departments and Women's Studies Departments should undertake an ongoing massive training campaign for increasing the functional efficacy of elected women. Governments should allocate special funds for this.
11. The 'Urbanisation strategy/urban development policy' should be formulated to improve institutional, fiscal, functional and administrative capacities of urban development institutions in the state.
12. Decentralisation of powers by transfer of funds, functions and functionaries to ULB's is a must for strengthening these institutions of local self government.

13. Existing policies regarding land development, urban and rural planning and environmental conservation should be suitably modified for sustainable development of urban areas.
14. Capacity building of urban policymakers (elected and appointed representatives of ULB's) and implementers of infrastructure development programmes is necessary for institutional development and sustainable management and use of resources in urban areas.
15. Organize regular and comprehensive impact assessments of empowerment policies and programmes for women participation in decision making bodies.
16. Political equality for men and women in state constitutions need to be re-emphasized.
17. Strategies to expand the participation of women in state and international bodies, such as quotas for women should be supported. Such strategies should include both participation of and leadership by women.
18. Economic empowerment strategies at the level of policy decisions as well as policy framework need to improve the lives of poor women and men in equal measure. This is important if women and men from all strata of society are to participate in decision-making.
19. Massive efforts for comprehensive political education and gender sensitization are necessary. Training camps for political workers may be organized by professional training institutes or even universities. This will establish hitherto missing linkages between formal education of political science and political education of citizens.
20. Leadership training of women participating in political processes is a key resource for their effectiveness as a member of an organization. However, training of men in deliberation of policies and decision making can enhance the processes of participation and is also

crucial. Conscientisation of both men and women should be the focus of training.

21. Women's participation in political decision making plays a crucial role in the process of enhancing women's participation in public life. The increased participation of women is thus, needed to alter the male-dominated structures of political processes. Political parties will have to introduce new strategies and tactics by making women's rights functional and giving them due representation. Greater participation of women, right from the grassroot level, will help direct the rate and type of changes in the general status of women. Access to policy-making powers and facilities will enhance their social status.

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