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Topic of Research : **Political Participation of Meo Women in Panchayati Raj: A Case Study of Mewat District of Haryana**

Keywords: *Political Participation, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Representation, Meo women, Mewat, Haryana*

Abstract:

The present study is an attempt to shed light on the various aspects of the elected Meo women representatives' political lives, such as their age when they first entered active politics, the barriers they face, the enabling environment that aids them in their election, etc. Therefore, in general, the objectives of this study were to assess their socio-economic, educational, and political backgrounds, and in particular the extent to which they have gained knowledge, confidence, awareness, and the ability to make decisions since their entry into local self-government. After a thorough examination of the data relating to women's participation in the PRIs, it has been revealed that, in addition to social and economic status, women's 'age' is also considered an important factor in their political participation. If we try to see this statement of age in the context of the present study, especially among Meo women, then they can be seen breaking the traditional norms prevailing in women's political participation. As a result, the role of "education" in accelerating this process has proven to be very important.

Accordingly, the thesis has been organised into the following 'six' main chapters, apart from the chapter of conclusion. The first chapter of the thesis serves as an 'introduction' to the entire study, including the 'background of the study', 'objectives', and 'methodology'. It also focuses on the literature available in areas related to the status of Indian women, their participation in

PRIs, their political status, and their attitudes. Simultaneously, the second chapter deals with the concepts of ‘empowerment’, ‘representation’, and women’s ‘political participation’. It also focuses on the general nature of women’s participation in politics. Here, the level of participation of all sections of women across the states has been taken into consideration to understand the patterns, challenges, and obstacles to women’s participation in Indian politics.

The third chapter deals with the development of PRIs in India, the efforts made towards decentralisation and devolution of power by various committees, and the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in chronological order. It also examines and discusses the political participation, performance, and experiences of women in the PRIs of different states in India. Similarly, the fourth chapter is related to the administrative structure of Mewat district, its population, the ‘historical background’ of the Meo community, their ‘origin’, and their ‘conversion’ into Islam. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to focus especially on evaluating the social status of Meo women, their political participation, and their attitude towards social and educational awareness.

The fifth chapter of the thesis deals with the important information gained from in-depth interviews conducted with government officials and members of the Meo community in the district. The sixth chapter is purely based on the data collection and interpretation and deals with the socio-political profile of the respondents. With the help of a detailed ‘questionnaire’, it examines the different ‘aspects’ and ‘dimensions’ of Meo women’s political participation, attitudes, and involvement at the grassroots level in political processes. The final chapter concludes with a summary of the ‘key findings’ and ‘suggestions’ of the present study. Furthermore, an overview of the changing attitude formulation and an overall assessment of the extent of Meo women’s participation in the political process are also discussed in this chapter. Finally, yet importantly, a few ‘suggestions’ and ‘recommendations’ are also included for future studies.
