



Political Role of Meonis in Mewat

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ABSTRACT

Political system is a forefront instrument to run an administration in a democratic country. In India politics remained male dominated since old ages except Rajiya Sultana and Rani Didda of Kashmir, Rudramadevi of Warangal. After Independence similar situation had prevailed in India upto 1990s exception of Indira Gandhi, Gayatri Devi etc.

Today, women are effectively empowered politically while compared to earlier period. Now-a-days, women are being elected as an MPs, MLAs, Zila Pramukh and Chairman, even they are appointed as ministers etc. Although some of regions remained untouched of women's leadership in any field. I am hereby, talking about Mewat region of Haryana state. Had, we look on its earlier history there were no sign of political involvement of women excepted few male one like Raja Hasan Khan Mewati during Mughal period and Nawabs of Firozpur, Ballabgarh and Tijara etc. After Independence, women representatives had remained disappeared across the country. But later on, as Ms. Indira Gandhi had turned up in Indian politics women had started been ready to play a crucial role in politics but upto 21st century ongoing, their presence was just in numbers which has been increased later on over the years and 17th Loksabha reached on 17% women representatives. This study is an attempt to explore the ground reality of political system in Mewat Region of Haryana specially Meo women who are comparatively less advanced and aware about their rights especially in political field of their counterpart districts.

KEYWORDS : Mewat, Meonis, politics, administration, women empowerment, public patriarchy, inequality, Tablighi jamaat.

INTRODUCTION:

Mewat is a geographical and cultural region rather than an administrative unit, located within the triangle formed by Delhi, Agra and Jaipur loosely touching the districts of Nuh, Palwal, Gurugram, Faridabad, Mathura, Aligarh, Alwar and Bharatpur of the states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Region got its fame during Balban's attack on Mewat. Mewat is largely inhabited by Meo community that is migrated from western part of Rajasthan and Sind. However rest might be locally originated and all those later on converted to Islam under influence of Moinuddin Chisti, Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rulers. But in actual they practice Islam after the origination of the Tablighi Jamaat in 1926. Meos were unknown about the politics specially women and it is said that, Islam reached to live in purdah, not to meet male strangers and was not allowed to go outside their homes without their maharm (for example husband). So political opportunities for Meonis never turned up neither before nor after independence.

After Independence Meonis got voting right but just few women had exercised their right, the reason was unawareness and lacking of understanding the significance of voting rights. Then, how could it be imagined that Meonis could play a pivotal role in politics. There was no sign of women to be elected MLAs, MPs not even sarpanch. Panchayat system had been organized first on 1959 in Nagore and Andhra Pradesh and later across the country even in Haryana. Panchayat elections were the form of direct democracy where every members of villages engaged in panchayat works. Panchayats have had to be worked at grass root level. One limitation of Panchayats system was existed as absence of legal sancity and no reservation to women. That's why only male persons solely authorized to be contested and elected as representatives.

POLITICAL ROLE OF MEONIS

Upto 1990, women in few villages had elected as Sarpanch, apart of it women elected neither

MLA's, MPs, Zila Pramukh, Chairman of Municipality etc. of any Tehsil, Block and constituency until 1990.

Rahmani had been reported as Sarpanch of Duranchi village of Hathin block. Few other villages had also seen their female Sarpanch. Although, it was not to empower women but to save the legacy of family and household women were made to contest elections. However entire work supposed to be done by female Sarpanch was taken over by their male (whether husband, father) to themselves.

On 23rd April 1994, 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments had held in 1993. Panchayat government subjected to get their legal sanctity or approval from parliament. Under this Act, 33% reservation for women had guaranteed along with SC/St who were subjected to depend on state legislature for their representation which was based on their population strength. Now on words, along with the country and rest of state, Mewat had seen a great jump towards Meonis as Sarpanch, Panchs, Block Samiti, Zila Parishad and in Municipalities. Although in starting chairmanship and Zila Pramukh like designations were avoided to grant to Meonis but as new centuries had ready to welcome new changes. 'Hajra Begum' become first Zila Pramukh of Mewat in 2005 for two terms consecutively. 'Anisha Begum' also being elected Zila Pramukh in 2016. Sahina Khan a 30 year old graduate, elected as vice-chairman for municipality of ferozpur Zhirka. Noksham Choudhary is aspiring to be lected as MLA from Punhana. Numerous other women even spinster are started to become a Sarpanch, members, Parshad etc. Prime Minister of India had launched a slogan "Women Empoweenment" in every field whether education, health, politics, research, competitive exams etc. to put India on progressive track since women compromised half population of India. Therefore, Haryana government has also proposed to 50% reservation for women in Panchayat election encouraging women for being elected as MLA in Haryana. Mewat which is also comprised in Iwar and Bharatpur districts of Rajasthan is witnessed of women MLA(Safiya) and Minister(Jayda Khan) from Ramgarh and Kama constituency respectively. Although in Mewat Haryana, it is yet to see a Meonis as a MLA, MP and Ministers.

REASONS FOR INCREASING ROLE OF MEONIS IN POLITICS

Education is a such a pivotal tool which has power to change the darkness into lightfull environment. Education left its influence in multiple ways:

- Broadened the mindset of people and some extent they also put women as equal and smart as men. Education also enlarged their capacity building, self-confidence and induced into their mind to do productive and creative activities.
- Panchayat Act (1994) by 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act made compulsion on government at least 33% women representation. However the Haryana government has enacted a Bill for the 50 % reservations exclusively for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Vote capturing on the name of women is a easy tool. Mutual consensus on the name of women is another way of grabbing the vote, if all brothers are fighting to contest an election then mothers name proposed ahead. That's why all four brothers will fight an election together to get victory for their mother.
- Image alienation of male person or bad image also led women to come ahead for contest an election.
- People are get to know that Islam does not hinder to be a public leader to women because instead our Prophet himself remained a great political leader.

CHALLENGES FACED BY MEONIS AS A POLITICAL LEADERS

- It has become a custom even from earlier to today that entire responsibilities of women who are elected as Sarpanches, Zila Pramukh, Members of Municipalities and Parishads taken over by their male associates like father, brother, son and husband etc. Even being hold a public office women are obviously unknowm about how to serve people and how to deal with government system.
- Most of women were and are illiterate. While Haryana government had made 8th class certificate for women candidates indispensable. Then people Mewat started forging fake documents for their women who did not attend school for a single day of her entire life. Then how such kind of illiterate women could run the administration effectively.
- Since communication is very vital for the smooth governance, but due to the male chauvinism most of the male population hesitate to communicate with their female representative. Further due to the confined atmosphere and lack of education, awareness, self-confidence their decisions are being affected negatively.
- Religious and customary laws of the Meos Women subjected to stop them to walk outside their homes alone, having interaction with male strangers as well. This is the primary reason why Meos women did not experience external exposure about socio-politico-administration.
- According to Meos overall women safety is a major issue, so Meonis are neither equal to their male counterparts nor women(for some extent) of other district in context of political leadership.
- Haryana Government amended Panchayati Raj Act 1994 in 2015 under which there was a provision of mandatory eligibility criteria of the class 8th school certificate for the women to contest the election. It was an obstruction to fight an election for the illiterate women because 63% of Meo women were illiterate as per the census 2011. So they could not contest the election. But the intention of the Act was good because it aimed to bring literate women in the administration so that they could run the governance efficiently.

CONCLUSION

As per my study based on primary and secondary data sources, it is clear that women are more empowered than the women thirty years ago. Education played a crucial role for this to be happened because it enhanced awareness, knowledge, self-confidence, etc. which led women to come out to contest the elections. This is the high time when women should be given liberty in context of their work, should allowed to go out from the home, village by their

male guardians. So that they can attend meetings, seminars, training sessions hold by the government. Which will lead them to be more efficient with respect to the professional life. It will boost their morale which will further improve their capacities and performances. This is the time when Government should Provide reservation in Parliament and state legislative assemblies to the women and their safety at their workplace. This will increase and meet the spirit of democracy exist in constitution of India.

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