

ROLE OF NEW MEDIA IN SOCIAL MOBILITY OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN HIMACHAL: A CASE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRIBAL WOMEN SOCIAL MEDIA USERS IN HIMACHAL

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Abstract

In this information age social media has become the integral part of our modern society. It seems as essential as bread and butter for today's lifestyle. Social media use has been increasing rapidly irrespective of geographical boundaries and socio- culture environment. In a more specific way, its penetration acts as magic bullet, effects and gratification are almost similar in urban and rural areas of our society. Women are considered as main repositories of culture and traditional knowledge. A good socio-economic status of women is important for evolution and development of society. It is creditable achievement that Himachal Pradesh has shown remarkable progress in tribal women's development within last two decades. The state has shown high sex ratio (972), female literacy rate has also increased and from 50% in 2001 to 76% in 2001 and work participation of tribal women has also increased. Besides state welfare scheme and policies new media is very powerful driving force for breaking all the stereotypes about the predefined notions of male-dominating society and bringing the awareness for those women who are living in the hostile topographical conditions of remote areas lacking the good education health facilities. The main objective of the present study is an effort to assess and provide overall picture of modernisation and emerging trends in the socio-cultural milieu of tribal women social media users in Himachal. In this paper the powerful and positive role of the social media as a significant medium to bring about the scenario and environment to the tribal women in their fight for gender equality and women empowerment has been analyzed and identified.

Keywords: New Media, Tribal Women, Social Mobility, Cyber Culture, Media Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Mass media nowadays act as a catalyst for groundbreaking changes in society. With the emergence of computers and the Internet the scenario got dramatically changed. The whole range of products and services that take the help of information and communication technology (ICT) to entertain, educate and communicate is collectively called New Media.

Media is considered to be the most important tool of society in the modern times as it has the power to reach out to a large audience by mass communication and create an impact wherever it can reach, which now has become far and wide. These new media technologies have made our lives easy breezy. Social media was considered as subset of new media earlier but Due to dynamic attributes of

social media in terms of ever updating user friendly apps it has become the inevitable source of mass influence and it is all powerful to cater the needs of society for information ,education, entertainment, communication and persuasion. Thus social media has evolved as full-fledged new Media through its inclusive and versatile social media networking sites.

SOCIAL MEDIA

A computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities is known as social media. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or Smartphone via web-based software or applications. There are more than 4.5 billion social media users around the world. The most popular social media networks include WhatsApp Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Social media typically through its special features of user-generated content and personalized profiles, it has revolutionised the life style of society and people from heterogeneous demography share a common platform to build their virtual community. Typically when we consider a rural state, Himachal Pradesh, 90% people live in villages and ST Population comprises of 6% of total population of the state. Tribal community is defined in Indian constitution Article 342 and Himachal Pradesh Act 1970. However the ST population is quite dominant in Chamba, Kullu, Lahul & Spiti and Kinnaur. The major tribes of this region include Kinnaura Tribe, Lahaule Tribe, Gaddi Tribe and Gujjar Tribe. Himachal Pradesh. Tribal people are known to be indigenous people of the land; tribal are referred to Adivasis, Pahadis, Adimjati and Anusuchitjanjati etc. The literacy rate in Himachal Pradesh, has registered an increase of 6.3 percent over a decade, says a Census report. The literacy rate has increased to 82.8% in 2011 from 76.5% in 2001, with male literacy rate increasing by 4.2 % and female by 8.5% which is remarkable.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRIBAL WOMEN:

In this era of information and communication technology, way of living has been exponentially evolved with evolution of new media techniques. Communication is extremely important for women's development and here social media plays vital role as main driving force for women awareness. The beauty of social media is that it is as user friendly and handy platform as besides educated tribal women large numbers of illiterate tribal women are in position to easily use social media

networking sites like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. These women are active social media users to create and build their internet community. It is to be distinguished that social media has been contributing greatly to the growth of tribal women's awareness and social mobility.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility is defined as the ability to change your station in your society's class structure (or social hierarchy) over a period of time. Most commonly, social mobility refers to the change in wealth and social status of individuals or families. However, it may also refer to changes in health status, literacy rate, education, or other variables among groups, such as classes, ethnic groups, or countries. Today tribal women are beautifully representing the indigenous culture of Himachal Pradesh. Tribal culture of Himachal Pradesh is the main attraction, not only nationwide but on various prestigious worldwide platforms tribal women have disseminated the Mountainous rich aboriginal culture through cyber culture. Exposure to Several Social media campaigns of women empowerment and women equality have enabled tribal women vocal for their fundamental rights and to increase the participation and access of women to self-expression and decision-making.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present research was designed to study the "Role of new media in social mobility of tribal women in Himachal Pradesh: a case study with special reference to tribal women social media users in Himachal". This study is specially focuses on the targeted community of tribal women active social media users exclusively and further this study is an honest attempt to interpret the whole scenario of social media in their lives. It was designed to know the awareness of new media among women. It was also designed to find the extent of use of new media among women in Tribal area, further the study was also aimed to examine the impact of social media on various fields related to women for their empowerment. Thus, the relevant literature has been reviewed and presented under the following manner: -

The tribal women in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts couldn't inherit property in accordance with Hindu Succession Act of 1956. Literature related to legal fight for paternal property of tribal women has been accessed comprehensibly through several case studies and landmarks judgments published on various

newspaper or web news portals. Women's right groups have been protesting for decades against this tribal custom. They told IANS the law bars even widows from inheriting their husband's property, which is transferred to the sons, even if they are minors. These activist further state the they are fighting for the tribal women's rights for the past four decades and they have not given up the hope of getting justice," 65-year-old social activist Rattan Manjari, chairperson of the Mahila Kalyan Parishad, a rights group based in Kinnaur district, told IANS.

Interview about Himachal's first tribal woman Renu Negi to make a mark in filmmaking has been accessed through various prestigious newspapers. Her story of struggle and achievement was thoroughly studied. Born and raised in a humble family in the lesser-known dubbing village of Kinnaur, a tribal district, Renu Negi began with the making of small videos of Himachal folk dances which were telecast on a royalty basis on Doordarshan, Delhi. Later, she started producing documentaries related to Himachal, Art and Culture as well as health issues in 1997.

The plight of tribal women has been highlighted in a short documentary film 'No Woman's Land' directed by Dr. Dev Kanya Thakur. She took an initiative to raise the issue of tribal women through her short documentary film in front of the state and Central governments to do something to protect the rights of tribal women. It is a one hour documentary film based on the property rights of tribal women in Himachal Pradesh in India. Talking to The Tribune, Film Director Dev Kanya Thakur said that today, we talk about women empowerment, women security and imbalance in child sex ratio. A large amount of money is spent on women programmes. But the law in one corner of India here is still gender biased. General Law is not applicable here like other parts of the country. Patriarchal law prevails in tribal areas of Himachal. This is a revenue law according to which a woman cannot inherit the ancestral property both from paternal and maternal side."

Several documentaries of documentaries short films on lives of tribal women have been watched and review and reaction of the other tribal women have noticed carefully.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Statement of Problem: Indian society is a patriarchal society and there is a male domination everywhere. Women, who constitute half of the human population,

have been discriminated, harassed and exploited irrespective of the country to which they belong, unmindful of the religion which they profess and oblivious of the timeframe in which they live (Jena, 2008). Women living in the tribal districts of Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and a few parts of Chamba are deprived of their rights, they are bound by a century-old patriarchal law that allows only men to inherit ancestral property, and the tribal women are more illiterate than to their male counterparts. They share problem related to reproductive health, early marriages and also face atrocities in adverse family environment of polygamy and polyandry. When primary and secondary activities are counted, tribal women work more than that of men. Despite several economic political and social changes women of tribes are still far behind and issues of tribal woman are still prevalent in all perspective.

Through intensive literature review about studies conducted in past two decades it is found that Despite backwardness, illiteracy, poverty, male dominance, restricted by traditional mythical boundaries, tribal practices and complex superstitions tribal women are open minded, possess free will and more than ready to adopt present socio-economic and technological changes. Condition of these tribal women is gradually changing, woman are becoming strong headed for their fundamental rights. Besides welfare scheme of (tribal development framework) state government and other centrally sponsored schemes, social media is a significant platform for tribal women through which they are reaching news milestones of their lives. Present study is reveals the role of social media for improving the tribal women conditions, and also interpret to what extent social media facilitates their socio- economic conditions.

Need of Study: Social media has become the part of our lives. With the emergence of technologies social media is updating with its interactive features which has revolutionized the whole world and merged into a global village. Through social media we have a access to build a global community. Similarly social media can play very important role for improving the life style of women living in a marginalized societies. Women who are devoid of the fundamental rights in a very regressive environment, where they never thought about fighting for their own rights, now on an open platform of social media besides educated women, uneducated tribal women are also showing courage and being vocal for their right to equality. Social media has contributed a lot in a positive way for

women empowerment simultaneously the dark side of social media is also challenge for society. Therefore some honest efforts for social media studies have to be done in order to evaluate the effects of ever changing new media technologies in our society.

Scope of Study: There is a comprehensive scope of social media studies is India as well as Himachal Pradesh. Social media performs multiple tasks in our modern world of cyber culture. For education, information, entertainment, social media applications has proved to be a powerful platform. The importance of social media studies can be understood from a survey conducted in 2019 concludes that approx 20% of marketing budget has been allocating for social media marketing.

OBJECTIVES

Present paper aims to study the following aspects: -

- To study the participation of tribal women to self expression and decision-making of their lives after exposure to social media.
- To study the role of new media as an agent of positive change in tribal women lifestyle.
- To promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of Tribal women
- To assess the formulated hypothesis by interpreting the relationship among women literacy rate, social media exposure and social mobility of tribal women.
- To study the emerging trends on social media about preservation of tribal cultural heritage of Himachal Pradesh by some notable tribal women social media users.

Research Area: Present Paper is exclusively study about the tribal women of Himachal Pradesh. There are five notified districts in Himachal with dominant tribes. The sample of the study comprised of 200 women from notified tribal region of Himachal Pradesh.

Research Method tools: The present research was designed to study the “Role of new media in social mobility of tribal women in Himachal Pradesh: a case study with special reference to tribal women social media users in Himachal”. A qualitative methodology tools has been used for data collection. Focused group interview have conducted from uneducated tribal woman who are active social media users and performing key function for their self identity. Some social media influencer on Instagram has been joined in the chat shows and they were

asked about the issues pertaining to tribal women. From some popular You tuber online interview was conducted and asked about the emerging trends in the revival of folklore , folk music, custom , food habits, traditional attire and lifestyle has been observed.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

From comprehensive study about tribal women from different sources like short film, documentaries, tribal development Frameworks (TDF), news paper article and one on one interview with tribal women we have observed that:

- Comparing final reports of the census of 2001 and 2011 of Himachal about male literacy rate has increased by 4% and female by 8.5% , clearly state that with emergence of new Media woman have become more aware and their work participation has also incredibly increased.
- Social media has enhanced the popularity of women filmmakers like Dr. Dev Kanya whose film *Behind the Bars* based on the jail reforms in 2018 has won first prize from the Human Right Commission of India. She has also received *Ladli Media* awards in 2016 for writing on gender issues.
- Mobile revolution has brought remarkable evolution in Tribal society in last one decade. Despite being illiterate and with almost zero information technology (IT) expertise, tribal women have adopted and learnt to use mobile this can be credited to support from school going children in family and perhaps popular demand of graphical user interface (GUI) such as requirement of having video calls to family and friends living distant places, watching videos, taking photographs or making videos on social media platforms and build community.

FINDINGS

- Tribal women on social media are enabled to perform various prominent roles: As repositories of tribal culture, social media activist to tribal woman plights, social Media influencer, tourism promoter and many more.
- New Media has brought great change for the progress of women living in remote areas with hardships.
- Gradually regressive mindset of tribal people about preference of male over female has reduced.

- Tribal Women's knowledge about media and its access to control over the various forms of conventional and modern media is still limited in most societies which are only improved by the various awareness programmes.
- Through focus groups interview it has been observed that these tribal women uses social media actively have been facing cyber bullying, body shamming, and caste shamming from virtual communities.

SUMMARY

In this paper by social mobility we typically mean the upward movement of tribal women in their socio- economical status and role of social media to facilitate this upward growth of tribal women. Social media considered as agent of change. Issues like domestic violence, early marriages, male dominance, constraints of proper medical help, demand of dowry, exploitation at work place, cyber bullying, eve-teasing, triple talaq and instant divorce caught the nation's attention, things are still unfair for women, especially those in tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. social media only helps to facilitates these women to get motivated from one another's struggle story besides that social media also is common platform to make these tribal women aware about centrally and state welfare scheme for them simultaneously it also a index for authorities to know about the prevailing issues in lives of these tribal women through various social documentaries and social media platforms. The powerful and positive role that the media can play in the empowerment of women and gender equality should be supported and further explored.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Alone social media is not a solution for rooting out the problems of tribal women of Himachal Pradesh. Presents paper reveals the only study about the positive role of social media but there is Dark side of social media is also a great challenge for society. This study is the exclusive about those women who are social media active users who updated with the emerging trends on social media and getting benefits of new media technologies for social interaction and running business through but these tribal do not represent all tribal women completely as tribal women community is also a heterogeneous group. Few women are still not aware how to use Smartphone, here social media has very limited role play.

FURTHER SCOPE

Father of our Nation Mahatma Gandhi used to say “*Real India lives in Villages*”. Tribes of India are the treasures of rich indigenous culture of ancient India. Mass media communication plays a crucial role in tribal development, several media studies has communicated the essence of real India through their sincere efforts, but in ever changing civilization with modern techniques there is always the great scope to come with new insight. Awareness about social media is equally important as awareness through social media; hence there is great scope to explore the unexplored phenomena such as importance of social media literacy for tribal woman, Revival of tribal culture through cyber culture and many more. The powerful and positive role that the media can play in the empowerment of women and gender equality should be supported and further explored.

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