

CHAPTER-VI

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The present study reveals that 48.8 percent of the male tribals and 87 percent of female tribals are illiterate. Only 34.5 percent of male voters and 10 percent of female voters know how to put their signature. Only 2.2 percent of male voters have secondary education while 0.3 percent of them have read upto matriculation and successfully completed the high school certificate examination. Even after more than four decades of independence only 14 percent of male and 2.1 percent of female voters can read and write. The reasons for this low level of tribal education in Tumbiguda may be attributed to their economic backwardness, Government's indifference towards their development and lack of consciousness on the part of the Kondhs. Despite the fact that they are living in a highly developed and industrialized town, the Kondhs of Tumbiguda village are educated to the level of expectation.

It may, however, be observed that though the tribals of Tumbiguda are illiterate their level of political participation in the elections to the municipal council,

assembly and parliament is encouraging. In order to know their mind as to why they vote or what purpose does their voting serve, the question "why do you vote ?" was asked to them. They were also provided with three answers so that there would not be any difficulties in understanding the question and find out an answer to it. The answers were as follows.

(a) Simply to elect candidate, (b) to help them win by providing necessary assistance, (c) to get some benefits and (d) any other reason.

It is quite interesting to note that around 75 percent of male voters and 7.4 percent of female voters stated that they exercise their franchise to elect a person to the office while 1.5 percent of the male voters told that they go to the polling booth to help a candidate win the election and before casting their votes in his favour they provide necessary assistance and support to him.

The present study further reveals that though a significant number of tribal voters turn-out to the polling booths to cast their votes, most of them are not aware of the significance of voting. Their voting

behaviour is very often influenced by various factors and reason and judgement have little role to play. Money, liquor, clothing and other benefits determining, to a large extent, their voting behaviour. The village chief exercises his influence on the voters and he is very often considered as a "vote bank". Around 8 per-cent of the voters observed that they are induced to vote by the monetary factor. 68 percent of the male voters and 43.8 percent of the female voters are influenced by their village chief. It may be observed here that about 20 percent of the male respondents and 52.4 percent of female voters did not disclose the factors that influenced their voting behaviour.

It is a common phenomenon that the power seekers lure the voters by providing them money either individually or collectively. Money is also given to undertake welfare measures and developmental activities such as digging a well or repairing a tank or constructing a building to accommodate a library, etc. In other words it may not be unpalatable to say that very often attempts are made to purchase the voters by bribing them. The right to franchise is very often made a saleable commodity. There is a kind of give and take between the voters

and the power-seekers, voting and money are bartered and exchanged by the voters and power-seekers.

But it is quite interesting to note that the voters of Tumbiguda did not openly reveal the fact that money acts as a major and important motivating factor influencing their voting behaviour. Only about 25.4 percent of male respondents came forward to say that they have been influenced by various motivating factors and allurements.

It is expected that voters should discuss political issues and be aware of different socio-economic problems that confront a society upon this awareness depends the smooth and effective functioning of democracy. It is quite significant to note that only 3.8 percent of male voter discuss political issues casually at the time of elections, 1.9 percent of them discuss often and a negligible number of respondents constituting 0.9 percent of the total voters take interest in discussing political issues regularly. Female voters do not at all discuss political issues at any time.

It may further be noted that 1.9 percent of male voters discuss political issues with their parents while

3.5 of them with their family members. It is quite surprising to note that even though the village chief happens to be a "vote bank" still then only 0.9 percent of the voters discuss political issues with him (village chief). 3.5 and 3.1 percent of the male voters discuss political issues with peer groups and leaders of the political parties respectively.

The voters are informed about the time, place and nature of election (whether election to the Assembly or the Lok Sabha) by the leaders of the clean caste of the locality. Agents of the candidate also help the respondents in this regard. And the role of the parents, friends, power-seekers, etc. is quite insignificant.

7.9 percent of the male respondents are simply passive members of either the Congress(I) or the Janata Dal and only 1.5 percent of them are active members. The rest are neither active nor passive and may be said to be quite neutral.

It is found from the study that the voters are neither cynic nor indifferent nor apathetic towards the Government. Eventhough they are motivated, influenced

and biased they exercise their franchise on a larger scale.

The voters are very much critical of their representatives and about their activities and performances. While 5.4 percent of the male respondents are happy with the performance of the local M.L.A., 0.9 percent of them have expressed their satisfaction over the work done by the local M.P. and 18.4 percent of them are satisfied with the functioning of the Chairman of the Rayagada Municipality.

Political participation not only depends upon political awareness but also promotes it. Both of them are quite inter-dependent and influence very much one another. In order to determine the political awareness of the tribal voters of Tumbiguda a number of questions were put to them.

The study indicates that 56.2 percent of male voters and 8.02 percent of female voters are aware of the functioning of only two political parties in Orissa namely, the Congress and the Janata Dal. A very few of them (10.2 percent of male and 1.2 percent of female voters) are aware of the fact that there is a third political party in Orissa. The percentage of voters knowing the existence of the fourth

and the fifth political parties is quite insignificant. None of them knows about the existence of more than five political parties in Orissa. It is because of lack of education and socio-economic and political backwardness, most of the tribal female voters and quite a few of male respondents kept quite and did not respond to the question "How many political parties are there in Orissa?".

The tribal voters are quite ignorant about the election symbols of different political parties. Except the symbol of the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal, symbols of other political parties are not known to the voters. It is quite interesting to observe that 98.4 percent of male voters and 25.6 percent of female voters know the symbol of Congress(I), 75.7 percent of male respondents and 6.9 percent of female voters are aware of the symbol of Janata Dal. This indicates that these two political parties are more popular than other political parties like the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India(Marxist), the Bharatiya Janata Party, etc. with the tribal voters.

They are also quite ignorant about the programmes and policies of various political parties. They are also not aware of the manifestoes of different political parties. While 7.3 percent of male voters do know about the

manifesto of Congress(I), only 0.6 percent of them are aware of the Janata Dal manifesto. None of the female voters knows about the manifestoes of any political party.

Despite the fact that voters turn-out to the polling booth on a large scale most of them are ignorant about the political process. They do not know the powers and functions of presiding officers as well as polling officers. It is significant to note that only one voter who was the member of Orissa Legislative Assembly from 1952 to 1957 and has successfully completed High School Certificate Examination, is aware of the election process.

While casting their votes the Kondhs of Tumbiguda voters are least aware of the socio-economic background of the contestants, their level of education, their contributions to the society etc.

In order to determine their political awareness the voters were also asked to name a few leaders of different political parties. 90.7 percent of male and 15.5 percent of female voters know Rajiva Gandhi the former Prime Minister of India and 51.7 percent of male and about 10 percent female voters know Biju Pattnaik, the leader of

Janata Dal at the State level. Neither they know about any Congress leader of the state nor any leader of the Janata Dal at National level. The leaders of other political parties like C.P.I., C.P.I.(M), etc. are not popular with the tribal voters.

That the Congress(I) is more popular with the tribals is evident from the following. While 79.5 percent of male and 78.6 percent of female voters preferred Congress(I) to other political parties, only 17.2 percent of male and 13.3 percent of female voters were in favour of the Janata Dal. Only 2.5 percent of them supported the cause of the C.P.I.(M).

It may be mentioned here that 85.9 percent of male and 11.2 percent of female voters preferred a political party for its service to the cause of the people only 7.9 percent of male voters supported a political party for its leaders. Most of the female voters remained silent because of their ignorance.

For the sake of determining their awareness the voters were also asked several questions like "who is the President of India ?", who is the Prime Minister of India ?, who is your M.P. ?, who is your M.L.A. ?, who is the Governor of

Orissa ?, who is the Chairman of your Municipality ?, who is the Chief Minister of Orissa ?" etc. 4.1 percent of male voters know the President of India and 52.07 percent of male voters and 8.5 percent of female voters know Prime Minister of India. While 48.8 percent of male and 4.2 percent of female voters know the local M.P., 86.9 percent of male and 23.3 percent of female voters know the local M.L.A. whereas 21.7 percent of male and 7.4 percent of female voters know the Chairman of the Rayagada Municipality. Only 2.8 percent male voters know the Executive Officer of the Municipality. 6 percent and 8.9 percent of them know the Governor and the Chief Minister of Orissa. 80.1 percent of male and 33.7 percent of female voters know Indira Gandhi whereas 51.7 percent of male and 10.00 percent of female voters know Biju Pattanaik. 22.6 percent of male and 27.2 percent of female voters know Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation.

It is quite disheartening to note that despite the fact that the Kondhs of Tumbiguda live in an urban area the level of their education is quite low and discouraging. Urbanization and industrialization, it seems, has no impact on them.

Even though they are uneducated and illiterate the degree of their political participation is encouraging. However, the level of their political consciousness and awareness is low and quite disappointing.

Their voting behaviour is influenced by several factors including money. Most of them do not discuss politics either with their parents or friends or political leaders. They are neither active nor passive members of the any political party. They are least interested in occupying any political office. Therefore, they are not "powerful".

Even though the Kondhs of Tumbiguda are urban-dwellers and could have availed all the facilities that a town provides to its people, they have remained economically poor and backward, illiterate and uneducated and politically dormant.

Poverty and economic backwardness have debarred them from enjoying facilities like electricity, water modern amenities like radio, television, etc. Even though they have street lights, their houses are yet to be electrified and provided with water. For water they have

to depend upon common taps. They are too poor to afford these luxuries. The respondents work either in industries or in fields or serve as domestic servants for their livelihood. Economic backwardness has not only forced them to shun education but also compelled their children to work in industries and fields. And this has helped the child labour to be inhumanly and mercilessly exploited in the Indian society by the industrialists and landlords.

Now the time has come to think seriously about the tribals and take effective steps to promote their welfare. The measures adopted by the Government for tribal development are not adequate. Whatever grant has been sanctioned by the Government to improve their living conditions, a substantial amount of this goes to the pockets of the officials and middle-men. Slates, chalks, blackboards, books, pens, pencils, etc. are purchased to be distributed among the tribal students. But most of them are kept by the concerned officials for their private use. Tribal funds are misappropriated and misused. All this goes on with the knowledge of the Government which, instead of taking effective steps to check them, has remained as a silent spectator. The unholy alliance between the political actors and bureaucrats has resulted in perpetuating the economic

backwardness of the tribals in general.

It is now high time on the part of the Government to take effective steps to promote the welfare of the tribals by providing them all the required incentives and necessary encouragements. Otherwise there is every possibility that the Indian society may witness another movement which may be more violent than the Naxalite movement which has taken a heavy toll of human lives, caused a serious threat to the functioning of some state governments and has become a matter of serious concern for the Government of India.

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