Chapter- IV

WOMEN PARTICIPATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RESERVATION

Not everybody is agreed on what participation means. The fact is that participation has come to mean different things to different peoples. The real purpose of participation is to develop human capabilities for decision-making and action. Participation means a kind of local autonomy in which people discover the possibilities of exercising choice and thereby becoming capable of managing their own development.\(^1\) Participation, as defined in a UNESCO document, is “collective sustained activity for the purpose of achieving some common objectives, especially a more equitable distribution of the benefits of development. Although, participation is defined in different ways, the dominant view is to regard it as a strategy to improve the development process.\(^2\)

Nevertheless, initiative to increase the representation of women in elected bodies from the grass-root level namely, panchayats and local bodies, is a leap forward. Judicial pronouncements and administrative measures have supplemented and give fillip to the process of empowerment of society. The new millennium declared 2001 as the year of women empowerment.\(^3\) In this regard, participation of women in the village based formal and non-formal organizations has made significant changes in their social status as well as their position within the family. Mere participation of women in these organizations is a clear indication of a change in the traditional norm which restricted free movement of a female member of society for social and political activities. Participation of women in the different organization gives them a

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\(^1\) D. Sundar Ram, “Dynamics of Grassroots Governance in India, Dreams and Realities” Vol. 2, Kanishka, Publishers, New Delhi, 2007, p. 46.

\(^2\) Ibid, p. 47.

status in society and permits contribution of women not only in rural development process, but also for their own development. It also gives them an opportunity to work in groups on projects of common interest, participate in the decision-making process associated with the ongoing development programmes, articulate women’s needs and leadership in the national development process.  

The dawn of India’s political independence in August 1947 and the establishment of a republic form of Government in 1950, brought to women the promise of adult franchise and equality of opportunity in all spheres which included social, economic and political activities. The assumption underlying these provisions was that every adult woman, irrespective of her social status would function as a citizen and as an individual in the task of nation building. The constitutional rights were to serve as an instrument for achieving equality of status and opportunities in all spheres. Equality in all spheres is inseparable from active political participation. This means not only using the right to vote but also power sharing, profit sharing, co-decision-making and co-policy making at all levels of governments.  

The realization that women can play a more significant role than generally permitted by society has been a new awakening over the post decades of modern history. It is interesting to note how political and social events have served to focus attention on the place of women in society and have served as a springboard of action in their favour. Under Mahatma Gandhi’s magnetic leadership thousands of women from all walks of life, literate as well as illiterate, throughout the length and breadth of this vast country gathered

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together in the movement for independence.\textsuperscript{6} The year soon after independence gave women a constitutional status which moved her to a position of equality with men in the social, economic and political life of the nation. The women who had emerged as leaders during the independence struggle, continued to play an active part in the political life of the country. Several of them became members of the Constituent Assembly: an impressive number were entrusted with ministerial responsibility of Central and State level; some held office as Governors, some became members of Parliament.\textsuperscript{7} 

We are fortunate to have 33 percent reservation at the grassroots politics where women have done so well and exceeded expectation. Contrary to that, democracy in India marginalizes women. But, humanity is made of two constituents, women and men. The concept of “parity” ensures from this reality-as recognition of the fact that both women and men have something to bring to society. No real democracy is possible in India if the question of equality between women and men is not regarded as one of the constitutive elements of the political system, as well as universal suffrage, the separation of powers and accountability. A real democracy will therefore necessarily be a “parity” democracy, which will integrate not only half of humanity but humanity as a whole, and this, every member of the community. In order to achieve, this objective the strategy of parity consists of measures which will ensure the full participation of women at all levels and in all aspects of the functioning of a democratic society, on an equal footing with men.\textsuperscript{8}

There is a growing importance of role being played by women at the grassroots level. Necessarily, the women should not merely by targets of benefits of development, but they should also contribute effectively in the


\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{8} D. Sundar Ram, op. cit., 2007, p. 137.
processes of development. The entry of more and more women into the realm of rural politics suggests that their increased number will offer them equally increased opportunities to influence decision-making. The 73rd Amendment Act was a milestone in this direction. It led to over one million women assuming the mantle of grassroots leaders.⁹

To ensure adequate and effective participation of women in the Panchayati Raj System, the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1993 reserve one-third of the seats for women in all the three tiers. And now the recent Constitutional Amendment Act, 2008 has significantly enhanced the status and argument their strength as an institution of paramount significance for the political empowerment of women. Under this new act the reservation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has been increased from 33 percent to 50 percent. Most of rural women representatives have entered in the political process for the first time.¹⁰ So in the present changing situation it becomes highly essential to examine the role played by women in the PRIs due to reservation in Himachal Pradesh.

**Awareness of Panchayati Raj Act, 1993**

Article 40 of the Constitution of India speaks about the constitution of village panchayats. Though this comes under the ambit of directive principles of state policy which is not enforceable by law but notwithstanding to this, the dream of founding fathers saw the light of the day by 73rd Amendment Act, 1993. The term “Awareness” is used here to indicate the extent of information of knowledge about the Panchayati Raj Act, 1994.¹¹ The Indian Constitution specially provides for the protection of the rights of the women. A significant step in this direction obviously is the 73rd Amendment which has been introduced to the Constitution of India to ensure the representation of women in

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¹⁰ The Himachal Pradesh, Constitutional Amendment Act, 2008.
the various statutory bodies of local self-government. All the states adopted the new Panchayati legislation by 23 April 1994.\textsuperscript{12} The 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment to the Indian constitution on Panchayati Raj has not only recognized the further decentralization of Indian polity, but also inspired the women in the country in general, by reserving one-third of the seats in their favour to participate in politics and administration of grassroots level with an understanding that they are very much a part of the nation, which requires their service for its rebuilding. Women in rural areas have been gearing themselves to enter politics at its very base in the spirit of self-governance as committed citizens.\textsuperscript{13}

Efforts have been made to assess the awareness, knowledge and clear understanding among the leaders with regard to Panchayati Raj Act 1994 in the following table no. 4.1.

**Table 4.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>Solan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65.69</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.39</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table 4.1 that 220 respondents were interviewed about the awareness of 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act, out of which 128 respondents accepted that they knew in detail about the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act, which constitutes 58.18 percent of the total sample, whereas 77 respondents accepted that they had not gone through this Act. They constitutes 35.00 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 15 respondents who


In district Shimla, out of 102 respondents 67 respondents answered that they were aware of the 73rd Amendment Act, which constitutes 65.69 percent of the total sample, whereas, 31 respondents were not aware of the 73rd Amendment Act. The percentage of such respondents was 30.39 percent of the total sample. Remaining 4 respondents expressed no opinion and they constitutes 3.92 percent of the total sample.

As far as in the district Solan, out of 118 respondents, 61 respondents believed that they were aware about the 73rd Amendment Act, which constitutes 51.69 percent of the total sample, whereas 46 respondents said that they were not aware about the 73rd Amendment Act. The percentage of such respondents was 38.98 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 11 respondents who expressed no opinion. They constitutes 9.32 percent of the total sample.

The above figure 4.1 shows a clear picture about the awareness of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act among PRIs elected women. The respondents were little a bit more in the Shimla districts who were aware about the 73rd
Constitutional Amendment Act as compared to the Solan district. Looking at another side, the share of the respondents was more in the Solan district who were not aware about the 73rd Amendment Act as compared to the Shimla district. During study, it was also observed that Gram Panchayat members were less educated. They had not vast and deep knowledge about this Act. But there were also some elected women members who had deep knowledge about this Panchayati Raj Act. It was due to their high educational qualification, awareness, attending regular PRIs meetings and attends different training programmes. So, it is necessary that every elected women should be trained in this field.

**Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions**

As discussed the 73rd Constitutional Amendment by providing reservation for women in rural local self governing bodies has provided for their representation in a ‘critical mass’ of one-third as well as for deepening of democracy in the countryside by ensuring wider representation of weaker section men and women.\(^{14}\) This landmark legislation gave India the unique distinction of having more number of elected women representatives (EWRs) than the rest of the world together. What followed over the course of the next 20 years is a political and social transformation that has impacted the nature of governance itself. The presence of more than 1 million elected women representatives in the institutions of local governance in rural India has rightly been termed as a ‘silent revolution’ with the process of democratic decentralization ushered in by the 73rd Amendment. Out of the total 28 lakh elected Panchayat representatives, around 10 lakh are estimated to be women.\(^{15}\) With the Amendment in Article 243 D of in the constitution of India in


2009, which provides 50 percent reservation for women in seats and also offices of chairpersons in all three tiers of Panchayats the number of elected women representatives (EWRs) is expected to rise to more than 14 lakhs.\textsuperscript{16} The satisfactory level of women representatives with 50 percent reservation has been given in table no. 4.2.

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Respondents Opinion Regarding 50 Percent Reservation}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Sr. No. & Response & Shimla & Solan & Grand Total \\
\hline
 & No. & Percent & No. & Percent & No. & Percent \\
1. & Yes & 94 & 92.16 & 113 & 95.76 & 207 & 94.09 \\
2. & No & 0 & 0.00 & 0 & 0.00 & 0 & 0.00 \\
3. & No Opinion & 8 & 7.84 & 5 & 4.24 & 13 & 5.91 \\
\hline
Total & 102 & (100.00) & 118 & (100.00) & 220 & (100.00) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The above table 4.2 reveals that out of 220 respondents, 207 respondents were highly satisfied with the 50 percent reservation for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, which constitutes 94.09 percent of the total sample, whereas there were no respondents whose view was against 50 percent reservation. On the other hand, there were 13 respondents, who did not express their opinion in this regard. They constitutes 5.91 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 94 respondents were totally satisfied with the 50 percent reservation for women in PRIs. They constitutes 92.16 percent of the total sample. No respondent was dissatisfied with the 50 percent reservation for women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. While there were only 8 respondents who did not express their views on the either side which constitutes 7.84 percent of the total sample.

As far as Solan district was concerned, out of 118 respondents, 113 respondents were highly satisfied with the 50 percent reservation for women in

the Panchayati Raj Institutions, which constitutes 95.76 percent of the total sample. No respondent was dissatisfied with this new provision of reservation for women. On the other hand, there were only 5 respondents who did-not express their views. They constitutes 4.24 percent of the total sample.

![Fig. 4.2: Respondents opinion regarding 50 percent Reservation](image)

The above figure 4.2 indicates that the majority of the respondents were highly satisfied with the 50 percent reservation for women in the Panchayati Raj levels. They were holding the views that this new provision made them more powerful in these grass-roots institutions. Due to this new provision, women have been elected in the PRIs not only as a Pradhan and members of Panchayat, but also elected as a chairperson of Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti. For example, in the Solan district there was a female leader discharging her duties as a chairperson of Zila Parishad. Another side there were also some elected women members in the both districts who were discharging their duties as a chairperson of Panchayat Samiti. It has been possible only increase the number of reserved seats for women from one third to the half of the total seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
Electoral Process of PRIs

Panchayati Raj represents grass-roots democracy. The success of democratic process depends largely at the village level. Panchayati Raj has offered an opportunity to the rural people to choose their own rulers at the local level. Elections are the basis of democracy. They are the fourth pillar on which the structure of democracy stands. The shape of democracy more or less depends on the system of elections. There are many countries where elections are held on the territorial basis. Yet in others these are held under the system of proportional representation. The form of Indian democracy and the governmental system was to be decided by the constituent assembly. The important question was whether the individual or the village panchayat should be the unit. Mahatma Gandhi at the Round Table Conference held in 1931, had recommended that the village should be the electoral unit because he felt that the greater the power for panchayat the better for the people.

According to the Article 243 E, F and K of the constitution, all three tiers of the Panchayats shall have direct elections. Further, chairpersons of the village Panchayats can become members of intermediate/block level Panchayats and the chairpersons of the intermediate/block level Panchayats can become members of district panchayats. Members of Parliament, Member of Legislative Assembly and Council could become members of Panchayats at the intermediate and district levels. But their functional status in the Panchayat proceedings, voting, etc., are left to be decided by the respective legislature of the states. Every Panchayat shall have a uniform tenure of five years and election to constitute a new body has to be completed before the expiry of the existing term. In the event of dissolution of a Panchayat, election will have to be

conducted compulsorily within six months of dissolution. The reconstituted Panchayat shall serve for the remaining period of the five year term. A person who is disqualified for contesting election to state assembly or under any law of the state will not be eligible to become a member of Panchayat. The state governments shall appoint an Independent Election Commission for superintendence, direction and control of electoral process and preparation of electoral rolls. The opinion of the respondents regarding satisfaction with the electoral process of PRIs is analysed in below table no. 4.3.

Table 4.3
Respondents opinion on Electoral System of PRIs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Shimla</th>
<th>Solan</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the above table 4.3 that out of 220 respondents, 169 respondents were fully satisfied with the electoral system, whereas, 32 respondents were not satisfied with the electoral system of Panchayati Raj in the Himachal Pradesh. On the other hand, there were 19 respondents who did not express their views on the either side. They all constitutes 76.82, 14.54 and 8.64 percent of the total sample respectively.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 83 respondents were fully satisfied with the electoral system, which constitutes 81.37 percent of the total sample, whereas, 7 respondents were not satisfied with the electoral system of Panchayati Raj in the Himachal Pradesh. Such respondents constitutes 6.86 percent of the total sample. Remaining 12 respondents expressed no opinion. They constitutes 11.76 percent of the total sample.

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As far as Solan district was concerned, out of 118 respondents, 86 respondents were fully satisfied with the electoral system, which constitutes 72.88 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were 25 respondents who were not satisfied with the electoral system of Panchayati Raj in the Himachal Pradesh. Such respondents constitutes 21.19 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 7 respondents who did not express their opinion on the either side. They constitutes 5.93 percent of the total sample.

The above figure 4.3 shows that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the present electoral system of Panchayati Raj in the Himachal Pradesh. But comparatively, the share of the respondents was more in the Solan district as compared to the Shimla district who were not satisfied with the electoral system of PRIs in the Himachal Pradesh.

Panchayati Raj elections have a vital bearing on the process of institutions building for rural development. Because, elections being the language of democracy proved as an important channel of two way communication between the people and the emerging leadership and shape the forms in which they relate to each other.
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**Party Politics**

India has multi party system and there are many national and regional political parties in this country. There is no chance of single party domination in the Parliament in present political situation of the country. The national and regional political parties have equally been playing their significant role from central to grass-roots level political institutions.\(^{20}\)

In grass-roots level it is found that majority of the rural women become active in party politics during Panchayat election but after the end of election a large number of them become inactive except the elected candidate and a few number of interested women. It has also come to light that many contested women candidates are given membership of the political party just on or before two or three days of submission of nomination paper. Again some contested women candidates of political party keep no relation with the party after their defeat in the election.\(^{21}\) In the present study efforts have been made to know the role of political parties in the grass-root institutions.

**Table 4.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Shimla</th>
<th></th>
<th>Solan</th>
<th></th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44.12</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58.47</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>51.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>50.98</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27.97</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>38.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{21}\) Ibid, p. 46.
It is evident from the above table 4.4 that 220 respondents were interviewed about the party politics in the Panchayati Raj elections. Out of which 114 respondents accepted that there was party politics in the Panchayati Raj elections and 85 respondents answered that there was no party politics. On the other hand, there were 21 respondents who did not give their opinion about party politics. They constitutes 51.82 percent, 38.64 percent, and 9.54 percent of the total sample respectively.

In Shimla district among the 102 respondents 45 respondents accepted that there was party politics and 52 respondents did not accept this view that there was party politics during the PRIs elections, whereas, 5 respondents did not give their opinion on this matter. Such respondents constitutes 44.12 percent, 50.98 percent and 4.90 percent of the total sample respectively.

As far as the Solan district was concerned, out of 118 respondents 69 respondents accepted the absolute party politics in the Panchayati Raj elections, while 33 respondents did not accept this view. On the other hand there were 16 respondents who were neither agree nor disagree about the party involvement in this district under study. Such respondents constitutes 58.47, 27.97 and 13.56 percent of the total sample respectively.
The above figure 4.4 indicates that the majority of the respondents were of the opinion that there was party involvement during the Panchayati Raj elections. Comparatively, the shares of the respondents were more in the Solan district than the Shimla district, who believed that there was party politics in the PRIs elections. Although it is generally said that there is no party politics in the PRIs elections but it was observed that political parties play a major role in these grass-roots institutions, especially in the Zila Parishad Elections. It has been observed in the earlier few PRIs elections that political parties were much interested in the election process of PRIs in order to keep their vote bank intact.

Other sides, the share of the respondents was more in the Shimla district than the Solan district who accepted that there was no party politics during the PRIs elections. Some respondents said that party politics is high only in the State and Centre level politics not in grass-roots level. But we know that all these grass-roots institutions are influencing by party politics day by day.

**Caste Politics**

Indian society and politics has always been caste ridden. In the past, there existed no such areas of governance where caste as political, social, economic, educational and cultural factor was not present. Even today after more than 50 years of introduction of republican constitution, the caste factor is dominant in every sphere of life of the people of this country. Before the commencement of Ambedker era, there were the untouchable Hindus in India, who due to Hindu social system, had, remained socially graded, economically impoverished, politically suppressed, religiously ostracised and indefinitely excluded from educational and cultural opportunities. They were condemned to the lost of serfs and deprived of all human rights.\(^{22}\)

Women leadership has a pivotal role in the working of Panchayati Raj Institutions. However, this remains a distant dream. In rural areas culture and traditions are observed more rigidly, family as well as caste play an important role in directing the course of life of individual. This is true for all in the society but is even more applicable for rural women, who are bound to follow the tradition and culture. The determinants that play lead role in deciding participation of women folk in governance includes caste, age, religion etc. participation of lower caste women in the activities of Panchayat whether as Gram Sabha member, as Zila Panchayat member, as elected representatives or as Pradhan remains high due to their rate of mobility and exposure to outer world. The same example of participation is applicable on the leadership pattern of rural women. Women of lower caste show better leadership skills than the women of higher caste. Women of higher caste do not often come out as true leaders and active representatives. Their presence in the Panchayat activities remains petite as compared to lower caste female.\textsuperscript{23} The present study is an effort to know the opinion of the leaders of PRIs regarding caste politics in the PRIs elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>Solan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62.75</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the above table 4.5 that out of 220 respondents, 92 respondents were agreed with this view that caste plays an important role in the Panchayati Raj Elections, which constitutes 41.82 percent of the total

sample, whereas, 107 respondents did not accept this view, such respondents constitutes 48.64 percent of the total sample. Remaining 21 respondents were silent on this matter. They constitutes 9.54 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district out of 102 respondents, 33 respondents believed that caste plays an important role during the PRI elections, which constitutes 32.35 percent of the total sample, whereas 64 respondents did not accept this view, which constitutes 62.75 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 5 respondents who did not express their opinion on the either side, they constitutes 4.90 percent of the total sample.

As far as Solan district was concerned, out of 118 respondents, 59 respondents were of the opinion that caste plays a significant role during the PRI elections, which constitutes 50.00 percent of the total sample, whereas, 43 respondents were not agreed with this view. They constitutes 36.44 percent of the total sample. While, there were 16 respondents who did not give their opinion on the either side, which constitutes 13.56 percent of the total sample.

It is clear from the above figure 4.5 that the shares of the respondents were more in the Shimla district than the Solan district who believed that there was no caste politics in the PRI elections, it means caste does not play an
important role in the PRIs elections. On the other side, the shares of the respondents were more in the Solan district who answered that PRIs elections are influenced by the caste politics. Caste factor is important in the PRIs elections rather than other factors. In Himachal Pradesh, the major caste is Brahanman or Rajput. Higher caste people influence the working and decision-making process of PRIs. There is marginal role of other castes. On the other hand it is also true that the impact of caste in rural power structure has been changed due to reservation of seats for SCs, STs and OBCs. The Constitution has provided certain provision for the equality, untouchability and upliftment of these lower level categories.

Women Participation in the Democratic Process Due to Reservation

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 has played a significant part in achieving the goal of inclusive democracy in India. With the advent of this Act, India today has more than 500 district panchayats around 5,100 block and taluka panchayats and about 2, 25,000 village panchayats. All these bodies would jointly elect three million representatives and a considerable number of them would be women.24 The representation of women in the village administration has brought about a tactical shift in the functioning of grassroots democracy. The changing situation in power structures has created opportunities for the Indian women to take active part in Panchayati Raj. Now, women are not restricted to home and hearth, but are entering into various fields and proving their capabilities. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993 grants 33 percent reservation for women in the Panchayati Raj has encouraged women to participate in their village development and plan for the

future of their villages.\textsuperscript{25} The statutory reservation of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj bodies has provided an opportunity for their formal involvement in the development and political processes at grassroots level thereby enabling them to influence the decision-making process in the local government.\textsuperscript{26}

The 110\textsuperscript{th} Amendment bill of Indian Constitution seeks to amend Article 243D to increase the number of reserved seats for women from one third to half of the total seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Similar provisions shall be made among the total number of offices of chairpersons.\textsuperscript{27} As the 50 percent reservation of seats is a recent provision (2008) for the state so far the first time in the state of Himachal Pradesh in the Panchayat Election the representation of women in the PRIs is not less than 50 percent against their male counterparts.

In the present study, efforts were made to know the opinion of the respondents about the participation of women in the democratic process due to reservation.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Sr. No. & Response & Districts & & & \\
& & Shimla & Solan & Grand Total & \\
& & No. & Percent & No. & Percent & No. & Percent \\
\hline
1. & Yes & 85 & 83.33 & 71 & 60.17 & 156 & 70.91 \\
2. & No & 7 & 6.86 & 36 & 30.51 & 43 & 19.54 \\
\hline
Total & 102 & (100.00) & 118 & (100.00) & 220 & (100.00) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Women Participation in the Democratic Process Due to Reservation}
\end{table}

The above table 4.6 reveals that out of 220 respondents, 156 respondents were of the opinion that, women are playing active role in the democratic process due to reservation, which constitutes 70.91 percent of the total sample, whereas 43 respondents were not satisfied with this view. They


\textsuperscript{27} The Indian Constitutional Amendment Act, 110.
constitutes 19.54 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 21 respondents who did not give their views, which constitutes 9.54 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 85 respondents accepted that women participation has been increased in the democratic process due to reservation, which constitutes 83.33 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were only 7 respondents who were disagree with this view. The percentage of such respondents was 6.86 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 10 respondents who expressed no opinion on this matter, which constitutes 9.80 percent of the total sample.

In Solan district out of 118 respondents, 71 respondents believed that women are playing a major role in the democratic process due to reservation, which constitutes 60.17 percent of the total sample, whereas 36 respondents did not accept it. They constitutes 30.51 percent of the total sample. Remaining 11 respondents did not express any views in this context which constitutes 9.32 percent of the total sample.

![Fig. 4.6: Women Participation in the Democratic Process due to Reservation](image)

It is clear from the above figure 4.6 that the majority of the respondents were highly satisfied with this opinion that women participation has been increased in the democratic process due to reservation. On the other hand, the
respondents were high in the Solan district than the Shimla district who believed that women are not playing active role in the democratic process due to reservation. It cannot, however, be denied that as a result of reservation for women in PRIs, their participation in the political process and democratic process has been ensured. Due to this, women are playing a constructive role in the development and welfare activities. This will definitely positive change in the entire social system.

**Satisfaction Level of Women Participation in the PRIs**

In India women’s participation is generally lower either because they have been socialized differently or because they have fewer resources. An implicit assumption in these sets of arguments is that the lower levels of participation of women are mostly the result of a process of socialization that leads them to think of political activity in a different way than men. In other words, women don’t take as active a part in political life because they don’t think (as autonomous actors) that political participation is important. An implication that follows from this line of reasoning is that women do not think that entering political life would necessarily be advantageous for if they did, as autonomous actors they would participate.  

The committee of the status of women (1974) viewed that the active involvement of women in the decision-making process will best be achieved by providing them with special opportunities for participation in the representative structure of local government. The necessity for such association of women representatives is already accepted in the country and provision for reservation of seats for women through election, co-option or nomination in these bodies has been made in their constitutions.

The committee felt that the statutory local self-government institutions do not pay much attention to the subject of women’s development. Women’s

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representation on Panchayati Raj bodies should lead to a greater participation of women in the political process and thus it would be easier to press for special progress for women’s development. The opinion of the respondents regarding satisfaction level of women participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions is analysed in the table 4.7 given below.

Table 4.7
Satisfaction with the Present Level of Women Participation in the PRIs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Shimla</th>
<th>Solan</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.29</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53.92</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table 4.7 shows that out of 220 respondents, 96 respondents were totally satisfied with the present level of women participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the percentage of such respondents was 43.64 percent of the total sample, while 102 respondents did not accept this opinion, which constitutes 46.36 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 22 respondents, who did not give any response in this context. Such respondents constitutes 10.00 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 36 respondents were satisfied with the present level of women participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, which constitutes 35.29 percent of the total sample, whereas 55 respondents were not satisfied with the present level of women participation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. They constitutes 53.92 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 11 respondents who expressed no opinion in this regard, which constitutes 10.78 percent of the total sample.

As far as Solan district was concerned, out of 118 respondents, 60 respondents were highly satisfied with the present level of women participation

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29 Dr. S. Govinda Gowda, op. cit., January 1999, p. 35.
in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, which constitutes 50.85 percent of the total sample, whereas, 47 respondents were not satisfied with this opinion. They constitutes 39.83 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 11 respondents who expressed no opinion in this regard, which constitutes 9.32 percent of the total sample.

**Fig 4.7: Satisfaction with the Present Level of Women Participation in the PRIs**

It is clear from the above figure 4.7 that majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. But comparatively, the share was more in the Solan district than the Shimla district, who were satisfied with the present level of women participation in the PRIs. On the other hand, the respondents were high in the Shimla district who were not satisfied with the present level of women participation in the PRIs.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions has become a power-centre for the women, but still due to family burden, lack of education, lack of motivation by their family as well as their male counterparts in the PRIs, still they are not able to participate effectively in these grass-roots institutions. So, there is a need of proper guidance and motivation.
Women Participation in the PRIs Meetings

One of the important variables of participation of women with regard to the attendance in meetings of the PRIs i.e. Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad at grassroots politics provide an important indicator for development, because these are the bodies where the final decision-making process is completed and in the absence of the women the best results cannot be achieved for development of PRIs.³⁰

The punctuality of the members in the meeting is essential because if at the appointed time of meeting there is no quorum the meeting could be adjourned by the presiding authority after the time fixed by the PRIs Act of the State.³¹ Regular attendance of the elected representatives of PRIs is essential not only to make quorum of the meeting but also to take active part in discussion and decision-making and to provide wise suggestions for solution of the problems. The statement relates to the attending meetings by the women representatives are given in the below table no. 4.8.

Table 4.8
Respondents Opinion Regarding their Participation in the PRIs Meeting (Especially in Gram Sabha)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>Solan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>92.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sometime</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Not Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table 4.8 that 220 respondents were interviewed out of which 171 respondents were of the opinion that they were regular in the meetings of Panchayati Raj Institutions, especially in the Gram


³¹ Prof. Thaneswar Lahon and Deba Kumar Datta, “Women Participation in Grassroots Politics in Dhemaji Assam”, Third Concept, September, 2013, p. 47.
Sabha meetings, which constitutes 77.73 percent of the total sample. Whereas, there were 49 respondents, who accepted that they were not regular in the different PRIs meetings. Such respondents constitutes 22.27 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, from total 102 respondents, 94 respondents accepted that they were regularly attending different PRIs meetings especially Gram Sabha meetings, which constitutes 92.16 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were only 8 respondents who were of the opinion that they were attending different PRIs meetings some time due to family responsibility and other problems. They constitutes 7.84 percent of the total sample.

As far as Solan district was concerned, out of 118 respondents, 77 respondents were of the opinion that they were regular in the PRIs meetings, which constitutes 65.25 percent of the total sample. Whereas, 41 respondents answered that they attended different PRIs meetings some time. The percentage of such respondents was 34.74 percent of the total sample.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Fig. 4.8: Respondents Opinion regarding their Participation in the PRIs Meeting (Especially in Gram Sabha meetings)**

The above figure 4.8 shows that the majority of the respondents were attending the PRIs meetings regularly. During the study, it has been observed
that most of elected women were contributing their cooperation in all the
general meetings of these grassroots level institutions. There were also some
women leaders who were not attending the PRIs meetings regularly and the
respondents were more in the Solan district as compared to the Shimla district.
It was due to more burdens from their families, their unawareness and lack of
knowledge, less education, etc. It was observed that without knowing the duties
and rights of PRIs, many women respondents were depends upon the male
members. Regular attendance of the elected representatives of PRIs is
essential for taking active part in the decision-making process.

Quorum of Gram Sabha

“Gram Sabha” is a formally constituted body under the law, which
comprises all those on the voters list of the habitations comprising the village
as formally defined. Since the ‘village’ is defined with reference to the need of
spatial planning and civic administration, it is usually a conglomeration of a
number of natural villages, each of which may be a community ‘Gram Sabha’ in
common parlance comprises village community.  

In order to revitalise grassroots democracy, the Gram Sabha has to be
recognized as the heart and soul of Panchayati Raj System. It has to develop
as an institution where common people can get an opportunity to participate in
the process of self-governance. The Gram Sabha is the first modern political
institution which seeks to place direct political power in the hands of people.
Gram Sabha is an assembly consisting of all the adult citizens of the village,
men and women, young and old. It is the counterpart of the national parliament.
Broadly speaking, the Lok Sabha should be the cumulative reflection of Gram

32 D. Sundar Ram, “Panchayati Raj Reforms in India, Power to the People at the Grassroots”,
Sabha. The Gram Sabha should elect out of themselves the Panchayat as its cabinet.  

According, J.P. Narayan, “To me Gram Sabha signifies village democracy” let us not have only representative government from the village upto Delhi. One place, at least let there be direct government, direct democracy, the relationship between panchayat and Gram Sabha should be that of cabinet and assembly. The concept of Gram Sabha was first mooted in the recommendation of the Congress Village Panchayat committee and local self-government minister’s conference held at Shimla in 1954. R.R. Diwakar Committee opined that Gram Sabha could serve to strengthen Panchayati Raj.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993, for the first time, created a statutory imperative for the establishment of legally empowered Gram Sabhas in India. The institution of Gram Sabha remained vague and half hearted about procedures and powers, and in the absence of political mobilization and awareness about the potential of Sabhas, they have for the most part remained dysfunctional and unempowered instructions.

According to Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2000, under Section 5, every Gram Sabha shall hold four general meetings every year, and every meeting shall be held on the first Sunday of January, April, July and October. The quorum of Gram Sabha is now at least one third the total number of families represented by one or more members of the Gram Sabha. If meeting is adjourned for the want of quorum at-least one fifth of the total number of families represented by one or more members of the Gram

Sabha.\textsuperscript{37} In this study efforts have been made to know the opinion of PRIs respondents regarding Gram Sabha’s Quorum.

### Table 4.9
Respondents Opinion Regarding Quorum of Gram Sabha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Distributions</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>Solan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77.45</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.59</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the above table 4.9 that out of 220 respondents, 141 respondents accepted that quorum of Gram Sabha is only on paper, which constitutes 64.09 percent of the total sample, while 64 respondents were not agree with this opinion. The percentage of such respondents was 29.09 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 15 respondents who were not holding their views on this matter. Such respondents constitutes 6.82 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 79 respondents believed that the quorum of Gram Sabha is only on paper, which constitutes 77.45 percent of the total sample, whereas, 21 respondents did not hold their opinion like this. Such respondents constitutes 20.59 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 2 respondents who were neither agree nor disagree in this regard, which constitutes 1.96 percent of the total sample.

Similarly, in the Solan district, out of 118 respondents, 62 respondents were of the opinion that the Gram Sabha quorum is only on paper, which constitutes 52.54 percent of the total sample, while 43 respondents did not accept this view. Such respondents constitutes 36.44 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 13 respondents who were not

\textsuperscript{37} Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2000 (Act No. 4 of 2001).
expressing their opinion on the either side, which constitutes 11.02 percent of the total sample.

Fig. 4.9: Respondents Opinion Regarding Quorum of Gram Sabha

It is clear from the above figure 4.9 that the majority of the respondents was totally agreed with this view that Gram Sabha quorum is only on paper. Comparatively the shares of the respondents were high in the Shimla district than the Solan district who believed that quorum is just only on paper. In some places only a formality was being done. It was observed that meetings had been postponed due to lack of required attendance. The poor functioning of Gram Sabha was due to the lack of clarity of its role in the village development and planning.

It was observed that Gram Sabha members were unaware of their rights and responsibilities as Gram Sabha members; and many of them can’t distinguish between the Gram Sabha meeting and the Gram Panchayat meeting of elected representatives only. It has also been found that villagers in general are not informed of Gram Sabha meetings.

Gram Sabha which is the bottom level body in the Panchayati Raj System and even finds a mention in the 73rd constitutional amendment article 243 (A). It is truly the bed-rock of Panchayati Raj. It is an organ of direct
democracy but it was observed during the study that it has not been a glaring success in India. Yet, it has the potential to emerge as a powerful forum for participatory democracy. The effectiveness of Gram Sabha crucially depends of the regularity in the convening of its meetings and participation of people especially women.

**Minimum Education Qualification for the PRIs Candidates**

Education is the key that opens the door to life, which is essentially social in character. In present society, capacity to understand the issues and problems facing the community and the ability to communicate one’s ideas to others are important qualities of a leader. Education is one of the means of acquiring such a capacity. Educated or being literate helps them to understand roles and responsibilities with regard to Panchayati Raj. Education develops and insight and helps the representatives in carrying out day to day life.\(^{38}\)

On the occasion of the Human Rights Day celebrated on December 10, 2002, the President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, stressed on the importance of eradication poverty and empowering the human being through education in order to preserve human dignity. India is a country of one billion people and there are fairly impressive statistics of the action that the government has taken in the field of education.\(^{39}\)

Literacy is very important indicator of development of a particular country or state. The literacy rate increases either due to the increase in number of literates or due to the decrease population. Special attention is being laid to these aspects by the state government. Literacy rate in the State of Himachal Pradesh has risen significantly 83.87 percent in 2011 (male 90.83 percent and female 76.6 percent).\(^{40}\) In the present study efforts have been made to know

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the opinion of respondents with regard to minimum education qualification of the (PRIs) candidate.

**Table 4.10**  
Respondents Opinion Regarding Minimum Education Qualification for PRIs (Members)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>Solan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>92.16</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102 (100.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td>118 (100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the above table 4.10 that out of 220 respondents, 175 respondents were of the opinion that there should be a minimum education qualification for the Panchayati Raj members, which constitutes 79.54 percent of the total sample, whereas, 34 respondents were not agree with this view. They constitute 15.45 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 11 respondents who were neither agreed nor disagree with this view, which constitutes 5.00 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 94 respondents were favouring minimum education qualification for the PRIs members, such respondents constitutes 92.16 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were only 5 respondents who were not agree with this opinion, which constitutes 4.90 percent of the total sample. On the other hand there were only 3 respondents, whose view was neither side. Such respondents constitute 2.94 percent of the total sample.

As far as in the Solan district, out of 118 respondents, 81 respondents favoured minimum education qualification for the PRIs members, such respondents constitutes 68.64 percent of the total sample, while there were 29 respondents who were not agree with this view. They constitutes 24.58 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 8 respondents who did
not express their opinion on the either side, which constitutes 6.78 percent of the total sample.

Fig. 4.10: Respondents Opinion Regarding Minimum Education Qualification for PRIs Members

It is clear from the above figure 4.10 that the majority of the respondents were favouring the minimum education qualification for the leaders of Panchayati Raj Institutions. But comparatively, the shares of the respondents were more in the Shimla district than the Solan district regarding this matter. Since the education is very important in providing a level of understanding of political affairs, persons of higher education have more political information and greater political understanding than poorly educated persons. Education also affects the behaviour patterns of leaders. As educated leader are also likely to have a better intellectual capacity, in addition to the qualities of confidence, initiative and acumen. During study, it had been observed that highly educated women were not only aware to discharging their PRIs duties but they were also taking extra initiatives for their better involvement in these grassroots level institutions.

However, there is not essential any educational qualifications for PRIs. There were also some respondents who did not favour minimum education
qualification for the leaders of Panchayati Raj Institutions. They believed that interest and experiences is must rather than education. It has been proved in the National or State level politics, where many of elected leaders are not very qualified.

**People Participation in the Rural Development**

The term rural development means all round development of rural areas with a view to betterment of the lifestyles of rural people which in general is multi-dimensional.⁴¹ Rural development may be defined as structural change in the socio-economic situation to achieve improved living standard of low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining. It includes economic development with close integration among various sections and sectors; and economic growth specially directed at the rural poor. In fact, it requires area-based development as well as beneficiary oriented programmes. That is why rural development is one of the main and important tasks of development planning in India.⁴²

People participation focuses on the participation of people in the grassroots level development decision-making process particularly in formulation and implementation of local development programmes, sharing resources, monitoring and evaluation. Democratic decentralization is needed to make plans realistic and to permit wider involvement of people in the process of local level planning and development. The need for decentralization of power was recognized in the Fourth Plan and a modest beginning was made in this direction of extending to the lower levels.⁴³ The respondents opinion regarding people participation in the rural development programme is given in the following table no. 4.11.

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⁴² Ibid, p. 44.
⁴³ D. Sundar Ram, op. cit., 2007, p. 228.
Table 4.11
Respondents Opinion Regarding People Participation in Rural Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>Solan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>58.82</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>64.41</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41.18</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29.66</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from the above table 4.11 that out of 220 respondents, 136 respondents were of the opinion that there was satisfactory level of people participation in the rural development, which constitutes 61.82 percent of the total sample. Whereas, there were 77 respondents who were not agree with this view, such respondents constitutes 35.00 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 7 respondents who were not holding their views on the either side, which constitutes 3.18 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 60 respondents were satisfied with the people participation in the rural development, which constitutes 58.82 percent of the total sample, whereas, 42 respondents answered that people participation in the rural development was not satisfactory. They constitutes 41.18 percent of the total sample.

As far as in the Solan district, out of 118 respondents, 76 respondents accepted that there was satisfactory level of people participation in the rural development, which constitutes 64.41 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were 35 respondents who were not agree with this view. They constitutes 29.66 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 7 respondents who were not expressing their views on this matter. Such respondents constitutes 5.93 percent of the total sample.
The above figure 4.11 indicate that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that people participation in the rural development is satisfactory. But comparatively, the numbers of respondents were more in the Solan district who were highly satisfied with the people participation in the rural development as compared to the Shimla district. Rural development is an integral part of country’s socio-economic development.

Another side, the number of respondents was more in the Shimla district who were not highly satisfied with the people participation in the rural development as compared to the Solan district. It is true that the rural poor have little or no participation in their own developmental efforts, which has appeared as a critical bottleneck in initiating and sustaining development of underdeveloped which has common masses on their own environment which has been the major concern in front of grassroots empowerment. The starting point for development cannot be anything else other than the people themselves. India as a democratic country requires maximum political consciousness of the citizens whether they are male or female for the successful working of democracy.
Development Programmes for Women

Although the Panchayati Raj Institutions at the grass-roots level are the main vehicles through which the rural development programmes are carried to the rural masses but often it has been seen that the developmental functionaries reach only the selected and elected ones. The benefits do not percolate deep down at the lowest level. This has made these institutions representative rather than participative ultimately defying the very logic for which they were meant.\(^{44}\)

It is a hard reality that despite implementing various schemes and programmes for empowerment of rural women, they are not able to get the benefits. First, they are not made aware about the schemes and programmes by the implementing agencies. Secondly, there are many young women who have interest to join SHG (Self-Help-Group) but due to the prevailing social customs, rituals and lack of support from their families; they confined themselves to the four walls of the house. In order to overcome this problem, National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), should ensure that at least one member from each identified rural poor household, preferably a woman, is brought under the SHG network in a time bound manner.\(^{45}\)

The ministry of rural development has restructured the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) into National Livelihood Mission (NRLM) with effective from April 1, 2013. NRLM is one of the flagship programmes of Government of India to reduce poverty through building- strong institutions of the poor, particularly women, and enabling these institutions to access a wide range of financial and livelihood services in rural areas.\(^{46}\) Development programme cannot bring about a difference in the lives of a large section of

\(^{46}\) Ibid, p. 21.
women in our society, however, unless issues of gender inequality in our social institutions are addressed. Many scholars think that women are a homogenous group with identical problems and priorities, yet Indian society is divided by caste, religion and class differences. The Government of India has also set up women specific administrative and economic structures, such, as women and child development department at the union and state government levels. The National Commission for Women has been established in several states. Government of Himachal Pradesh also initiated programmes/schemes for gender empowerment. These programmes/schemes appended below:

- Mukhy Mantri Kanyadan Yojana
- Widow/Destitute/Single Women Pension Scheme
- Widow Re-marriage Scheme
- Mother Teressa Asahay Matri Sambal Yojana
- Self Employment Scheme for Women
- State Homes
- Awareness Campaign
- State level Council for Empowerment of Women
- Women Development Corporation
- State Commission for Women
- Beti Hai Anmol Yojana
- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls
- Indira Gandhi Matritava Sahyog Yojana
- Self-Help-Groups
- Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place.

The awareness of various programmes and policies related to women is given in the table no. 4.12 up to as follows.

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## Table 4.12
Respondents Opinion Regarding Awareness of Various Women Related Programmes and Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td></td>
<td>Solan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56.86</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>68.64</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36.27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29.66</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table 4.12 reveals that out of 220 respondents, 139 respondents were of the opinion that they had proper knowledge about various programmes and policies related to women welfare, which constitutes 63.18 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were 72 respondents who replied that they had not proper knowledge about all the programmes and policies related to women, such respondents constitutes 32.73 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 9 respondents who did not express their views on the either side. The percentage of such respondents was 4.09 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 58 respondents were aware about the various developmental programmes and policies for women welfare, which constitutes 56.86 percent of the total sample, while there were 37 respondents who were not fully aware about the various programmes and policies related to women welfare, which constitutes 36.27 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 7 respondents who did not express their opinion in this regard, they constitutes 6.86 percent of the total sample.

As far as the Solan district was concerned, out of 118 respondents, 81 respondents were of the opinion that they had proper knowledge about the various programmes and policies of women welfare, which constitutes 68.64 percent of the total sample, whereas there were 35 respondents who were not aware about the different programmes and policies of women welfare. They
constitutes 29.66 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 2 respondents who were not agree nor disagree on this matter, which constitutes 1.69 percent of the total sample.

![Figure 4.12: Respondents Opinion Regarding Awareness of Various Women Related Programmes and Policies](image)

It is clear from the above figure 4.12 that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that they were aware about the various women welfare programmes and policies. If we compare about those elected women who were not much aware about the women welfare programmes, then it is clear that the share was little a bit more in the Shimla district as compared to the Solan district. But the above scenario shows a positive picture. Because it was observed during the field study that the most of the elected women of PRIs are now getting aware about the women’s necessities and welfare.

**MNREGA–For the Economic Betterment of the Rural Women**

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), currently known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) 2005, aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of country by providing at least one hundred (100) days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The most distinguishing feature of MGNREGA is its approach towards empowering citizens to play an active role
in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes, through Gram Sabha, social audit, participatory planning and other activities. The Act covered 200 districts in its first phase, implemented on February 2, 2006 and was extended to 330 additional districts in 2007-08. All the remaining rural areas have been notified with effect from April, 1, 2008.\textsuperscript{49}

For the first time in the history of post independence India, and beyond all expectations, PRIs are directly involved in planning, implementing and social audit of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). Gram Sabha (GSs) and Gram Panchayat (GPs) identify, approve, allocate, supervise, monitor and are accountable for all works under NREGS. The active participation can engender millions under (NREGS).\textsuperscript{50} The opinion of the respondents regarding MNREGA scheme for the economic improvement of the rural women is examined in table 4.13 given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>Solan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>76.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the above table 4.13 that out of 220 respondents 148 respondents were of the opinion that MNREGA scheme has been beneficial for the economic betterment of the rural women, which constitutes 67.27 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were 50 respondents who were not agree with this view that MNREGA scheme has been beneficial for the economic betterment of the rural women, such respondents constitutes 22.73 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 22 respondents whose views


\textsuperscript{50} Village Democracy for \textit{“Inclusive”} Governance, Chronicle, Vol. XXIV, No. 3, September 2012, p. 118.
was neither side in this regard, which constitutes 10.00 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents 78 respondents replied that economically women condition has been improved due to MNREGA scheme, which constitutes 76.47 percent of the total sample, while there were 15 respondents who were not think like this, such respondents constitutes 14.71 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were only 9 respondents who were silent on this issue, which constitutes 8.82 percent of the total sample.

As far as in the Solan district, out of 118 respondents 70 respondents said that economically women status has been improved through MNREGA scheme, which constitutes 59.32 percent of the total sample, whereas, there were 35 respondents whose views was opposite in this context. Such respondents constitutes 29.66 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 13 respondents who did not reply on the either side. They constitutes 11.02 percent of the total sample.

![Fig. 4.13: Respondents Opinion Regarding MNREGA Scheme](image)

Comparatively, it is clear from the above table 4.13 that the numbers of the respondents were high in the Shimla district who favoured the MNREGA scheme for the economic betterment of women. On the other hand, the number
of the respondents was high in the Solan district who replied that financial condition of women has not been improved due to MNREGA scheme.

**Improvement of Women Status through Reservation**

Status of women, particularly in India, has always been considerably depressed. This section of society i.e., half of the total population forms as important a human resource as its counterpart men and can contribute significantly to all the fields of development of the society. Still an uphill task is ahead to bring the status of women at par with men in employment, education and political participation.51

Women after being marginalised for long are being brought to the forefront through their involvement in decision making process. Passage of the 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Constitution played a key role in it. Through reservation, leadership of women was given statutory status. This status is a channel to address the issue of women empowerment and to wipe away inequality prevailing in the society. It is evident that women aspire to come out of their traditional roles to create a new environment for the new generation but their assigned roles prevent them from discharging their roles effectively.52

Measures to improve the status, role and participation of rural women must be given high priority both because women have a fundamental right to enjoy equality with men in all aspects of life and because women can play a crucial role in and must fully participate in the sustainable development process. It is therefore essential to integrate gender perspectives in policies, projects and programmes that can be achieved by gender analyses. All plans and projects within community programmes should be assessed using the “gender law” in order to achieve the gender justice for women. The opinion of

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the respondents regarding status improvement of women due to reservation is examined in table 4.14 given below.

### Table 4.14
Respondents Opinion Regarding Status Improvement of Women due to Reservation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Shimla</th>
<th>Solan</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53.92</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.75</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table 4.14 reveals that out of 220 respondents, 127 respondents were highly agreed with this view that women status has been improved after implementation of Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 and after the provision of 50 percent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions, which constitutes 57.73 percent of the total sample, whereas, 65 respondents were not agree with this view. They constitutes 29.54 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 28 respondents who did not express their views on the either side, which constitutes 12.73 percent of the total sample.

In Shimla district, out of 102 respondents, 55 respondents accepted that women status has been improved due to reservation, which constitutes 53.92 percent of the total sample, whereas, 34 respondents were not answering like this. The percentage of such respondents was 33.33 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 13 respondents who expressed no opinion in this regards, which constitutes 12.75 percent of the total sample.

As far as in the Solan district, out of 118 respondents, 72 respondents were fully agree with this view that women status has been improved due to reservation, which constitutes 61.02 percent of the total sample, while 31 respondents were not happy with the status improvement of women due to
reservation. They constitutes 26.27 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, there were 15 respondents who did not express their views in this context, which constitutes 12.71 percent of the total sample.

![Graph showing respondents opinion regarding status improvement of women due to reservation.](image)

**Fig. 4.14: Respondents Opinion Regarding Status Improvement of Women due to Reservation**

It is clear from the above figure 4.14 that the majority of the respondents were more in the Shimla district than the Solan district, who were not satisfied with the status improvement of women due to reservation. It was observed that status improvement of women in the existing social structure was not upto the desired level. The squeal is the women folk of our country is still repressed and neglected, given that the society is more patriarchal there egalitarian one.

Another side, the number of respondents were more in the Solan district who were satisfied with the status improvement of women due to reservation as compared to the Shimla district. Politically women are now getting more conscious than earlier. For a holistic development of the women, therefore, the social development plan models should be arranged or otherwise the women of our country, despite constituting the half of the population would remain either sidelined or laggard in the planned development process.
Conclusion

To sum up, it may be said that women’s participation in politics as voters, candidates, representatives and decision-makers is essential not only for the success of a democratic political system but it can also play a vital role in their advancement as well as in the reconstruction of the society. Proof of this is best seen in what has happened at the level of local self-government, the Panchayati Raj, over the last decade, which has demonstrated the enormous possibilities and potential that exist among rural women who have come to power due to reservation at the Panchayat levels. Elections of Panchayati Raj Institutions held after 1993 in Himachal Pradesh have witnessed an appreciable turnout of women as voters as well as candidates. Women need to make themselves politically visible and politically empowered to stake a claim as participants and beneficiaries in the process of development, as well as to provide directions for modernization. Until women acquire political power, their social position is unlikely to change. The 73rd Amendment and new provision of 50 percent for women in Himachal Pradesh have given ample opportunity for the entry of large number of socially backward category such as women to enter into the domain of local institution and their performance is very encouraging. It would provide a path to bring a sense of equality in gender.

“Women’s presence at the decision-making levels will not only enhance the status of women but will also strengthen democratic traditions and make democracy more meaningful in fighting injustice and oppression while at the same time help to bring a different, explicitly female perspective to the political arena. Unless women are brought into the decision-making levels directly, important women issues will never be tackled with the seriousness they require. It is very much necessary that women should actively participate in the PRIs which are at present monopolized by men. This is not only for the sake of the democratic principle, but also for their own sake to voice their grievances
and assert their position to benefit from the issues which directly affect them and for which there are no other appropriate forums to seed redressal. Their participation would also help in bettering the conditions of women and improving their status in the society and hence add directly to the well being of households in particular and that of the nation at large.