

## Empowerment of Rural Women: Navigating Socio-Economic and Political Landscape

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**Abstract:** Empowering rural women is a critical issue, particularly in India, where two-thirds of the population lives in rural areas. Of India's 65.13 percent rural population, women make up 48.04 percent while men account for 51.96 percent. Given their significant percentage, the empowerment of women in rural regions is vital for the holistic development of families, communities, and the nation as a whole. There are three key dimensions of empowerment, namely social, economic, and political. The social pertains to women's participation in community and social decision making processes that facilitate their pro-active interaction within society. The economic encompasses women's equal participation in the marketplace, their access to and control over productive resources and say in the economic decision making. The political dimension refers to women's awareness and knowledge of political processes, political activism, and participation in decision making at the PRI levels. The study assumes that socioeconomic and political participation are crucial in the empowerment of rural women and in the reduction of gender inequality. The overwhelming majority of respondents supported the importance of these aspects in their overall life. They feel that with increasing pro-active participation, they anticipate that the process of empowerment of rural women will continue and they will advance further significantly.

**Keywords:** socio-economic, political, empowerment, rural women, sociological.

### Introduction

Empowerment is the process of giving individuals the authority and capability to make decisions, take action, and manage their work independently. In all societies, some groups are often denied their basic rights, and women are typically the most affected. Women play a vital role in any society, yet despite this being a well-known fact there is a pervasive unwillingness to accept it fully. The important thing to understand is that their

empowerment allows them to be appreciated and acknowledged for who they are and what they do (Nayar, 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

Women have played a significant role in the socio-economic and political life of human society since the very inception of human beings on the earth. She is more confident and positive regarding various problems and every aspect of social, economic, and political life. Therefore, socioeconomic, and political dimensions have gained major concern in this paper, which is essential for the overall development of rural women as well as society. During the General Debate of the 66th Session of the General Assembly in September 2011, United Nations Secretary-General BAN KI-MOON emphasized in his report, "We the Peoples," the critical importance of gender equality as a catalyst for development progress. He acknowledged that the full potential of women had not been realized due to ongoing social, economic, and political inequalities.

"Empowerment of Women in India" by Kishore provides a comprehensive analysis of the progress and challenges in the empowerment of women in India. The paper examines various socio-economic and political factors that influence women's status and highlights government policies, legal frameworks, and grassroots initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality. Kishore underscores the importance of education, economic independence, and political participation as critical pillars for empowerment. Despite significant strides, the paper acknowledges persistent barriers such as cultural norms, gender-based violence, and inadequate implementation of policies. The review concludes with recommendations for holistic and sustainable empowerment strategies. (Misra, 2006)<sup>2</sup>. 'Rahman, also highlighted the new process of empowerment, stating that it is key to understanding the polarization in gender relations and social change This process systematically enhances the well-being of families, communities, and ultimately, the entire country.' (Rahman, 1994)<sup>3</sup>

Empowerment of rural women is a critical aspect of sustainable development, particularly in regions where gender disparities are pronounced and socio-economic challenges are pervasive. 'Gender equality is a fundamental human right and a crucial foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Although progress has been made over the past decades, the world is still not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030' (United

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<sup>1</sup>Nayar, S. (2011). *Education for Women Empowerment- An Evaluation of the Government*. Delhi : Navyug Books International.

<sup>2</sup>Misra, J. K. (2006, Oct-Dec). Empowerment of Women in India. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 67(4), 867-878.

<sup>3</sup>Rahman, A. (1994, february). Women Cultural Ideology and Change in Rural Bangladesh: Conflicting Patterns and Possibilities of Empowerment. *The Canadian Journal Of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 26(1), 19-39. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23607467>

Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2023)<sup>4</sup>. Rural women face poverty, illiteracy, and limited access to resources, leaving them overworked and unrepresented. Despite this, they are vital as producers and community managers. To empower them, they need better wages, credit, ownership rights, information access, and training, as highlighted by Veenita Singh and Kishor Kumar (Singh Vineeta, 2012)<sup>5</sup>. In the context of Himachal Pradesh, a predominantly rural state in India, the empowerment of women is not only a matter of social justice but also a pivotal factor in fostering economic growth and community development. Despite significant strides in improving the status of women through various government initiatives and grassroots movements, rural women in Himachal Pradesh continue to confront many barriers that restrict their full engagement in economic, social, and political spheres.

This paper aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of women's empowerment in rural Himachal Pradesh, examining the interplay between economic, social, political, and educational factors. It seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current state of empowerment among rural women, highlighting the successes of various initiatives as well as the persistent challenges they face. The focus will be on understanding how these dimensions interact to influence the overall empowerment process and identifying the gaps that need to be addressed to ensure sustainable and inclusive development.

### Review of literature

In contemporary research, the literature review plays a pivotal role in contextualizing and framing new investigations within the existing body of knowledge. It serves as a critical synthesis of previous studies, highlighting both foundational theories and emerging trends. Several studies have been conducted by several scholar on “rural women’s empowerment” Some of the notable studies pertaining to the present study have been reviewed which are as follows: -

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<sup>4</sup>United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA). (2023). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition*. United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

<sup>5</sup>Singh Vineeta, K. K. (2012, July -September). Empowerment of Rural Women. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 73(3), 453-456.

Ahmed, Shabbeer (2013) in his study entitled “Socio-economic Empowerment of Rural Women: An Overview” highlighted that women’s socioeconomic development is essential for any community to empower women.<sup>6</sup>

Pundar, S. (2013) in her study entitled ‘Role of Education in Empowering Women with Special Reference to Economic Independence and Decision Making’. The study concluded that economic independence and decision-making are two main prerequisites of empowerment and these two variables can be improved through the education of women.<sup>7</sup>

Singh, Dr. Sanjeet, in his paper ‘Empowerment of Women through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Area of Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh: An Empirical Investigation’

Prasad, Baleshwar (2018) in his paper “Women Empowerment in India: Social and Economic Upliftment” stated that the empowerment of women is presently a pressing concern in the mind of national policymakers. Further, the author highlighted that it is not easy to change the deep-rooted perception that women are inferior, dependent, and dispensable.<sup>8</sup>

Genani, Dr. S. & Eswari, Dr. w., (2024) in their study “Women Empowerment in Rural Areas: An Analysis with Case Studies” analyze the challenges and opportunities among rural women in rural areas. The author adopted a qualitative approach to document the achieved women's personalities in the study area. In this study, the author conducted 5 case studies in the rural area of Gandhinagar, district Dindigul of Tamil Nadu. Studies revealed that self-help groups and various earning opportunities serve as means for the empowerment of women in all sectors.<sup>9</sup>

The studies on the empowerment of rural women in India are diverse, addressing different facets such as economic, social, political, and educational empowerment. Key studies highlight the role of education in the empowerment of rural women, microfinance

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<sup>6</sup>Ahmed, S. (2016). Socio-Economic Empowerment of Rural Women: An Overview. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 1(3), 33-45.

<sup>7</sup>Pundar, S. (2013). Role of Education in Empowering Women with Special Reference to Economic Independence and Decision Making. *Ph.d Thesis*. Department of Home Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University ( Shodhganga).

<sup>8</sup>Prasad, B. (2018). Women Empowerment in India: Social and Economic Upliftment. *International Journal of Creative Research Thought*, 6(2), 288-301.

<sup>9</sup>Genani, D. S. (2024, January). Women Empowerment in Rural areas: An Analysis With Case Studies. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 12(1), 31-36.

initiatives, and government programs in enhancing the socio-economic status of rural women.

### **Research Gap**

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain that need further exploration: While many studies focus on economic empowerment, there is a lack of holistic approaches that integrate economic, social, political, and educational dimensions comprehensively. This gap suggests a need for more interdisciplinary research that examines how these dimensions interact and reinforce each other. There is a scarcity of longitudinal studies that assess the long-term impacts of empowerment programs on rural women. Most existing research provides short-term evaluations, which may not capture the sustained effects and potential long-term benefits or drawbacks of these initiatives. The existing literature often treats rural women in India as a homogeneous group, overlooking regional disparities and variations. More research is needed to understand how geographical, cultural, and economic differences within the state influence the empowerment outcomes for women in different regions. The above review also shows that there are no studies and research work has been conducted on the socio-economic and political empowerment of rural women in Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh in particular. Hardly any studies focus on different indicators i.e. social, economic, and political. The present study focused on the above-mentioned indicators in the study area. Addressing these gaps will provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the empowerment of rural women in Himachal Pradesh. Our research aims to contribute to this effort by focusing on these underexplored areas, thereby offering insights that can inform more effective and sustainable empowerment strategies.

### **The objective of the Study:**

To examine the extent of women's participation in socio-economic and political activities in the rural setting in Himachal Pradesh.

### **Geographic Locale, Universe, and Sample**

The study was carried out in Rohru Block, District Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. This block has been chosen due to its adequately representative population and cultural homogeneity. Moreover, this part of the state remains so far least explored about women's empowerment. The universe of the present study is all the women in the age group 18-60 years of these three selected panchayats. A complete list of all women in this age group of these three panchayats has been prepared with the help of a panchayat record. The total number of women in these three panchayats in the age group of 18-60 years came out to

be 1557 (Bhalara=544; Kui=483; Jagothi=530). This constitutes our universe of study. To keep the sample size manageable, 40 women from each panchayat were included randomly in our sample which came out to be 120. This constitutes our study's sample.

### **Tools and Techniques of Data Collection:**

An interview schedule was used in the collection of information from the respondents on various facets of their lives related to the objectives of the study. The secondary information was collected through census reports, office records, gram panchayat records, books, journals, and other related data available from other sources.

### **Social Participation of Rural Women**

Social participation is defined as a person's involvement in social activities that provide interaction with others in the community or society as we know that social participation is multidimensional. Thus, in this part of the paper, an effort has been made to evaluate the participation of rural women in various social activities like cultural programs/local festivals/ functions, participation in developmental activities, and participation in activities organized by Mahila Mandals, etc.

### **Participation in Cultural Programs/ Local Festivals and functions:**

To know the participation of the respondents in the sociocultural activities in the study area, a question was asked them whether they participated in the cultural program of the area or not. It is discovered that a percent of the respondents take part in cultural programs/local festivals and functions of the area.

Another question that was asked from the respondents was whether they participated in the developmental activities of the study area. Table one indicates the opinions of the respondents in this respect.

**Table 1**  
**participation in Development Activities**

| <b>Sr. No.</b> | <b>Responses</b> | <b>No. of respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1              | Yes              | 65                        | 54.16             |
| 2              | No               | 55                        | 45.84             |
|                | Total            | 120                       | 100.00            |

Table one shows that the vast majority of the interviewees (54.16) are of the view that they participate in developmental activities and 45.84 percent of the respondents stated that they do not participate in developmental activities of the area. Therefore, it is clear that the majority of the respondents take part in the developmental activities of the area.

Further, those respondents who take part in developmental activities were asked to mention the developmental activities in which they participate. Table 2 shows the responses given by the respondents.

**Table 2**  
**Developmental Activities in which they Participate**

| Sr. No. | Responses   | No. of respondents (N-65) | Percentage |
|---------|---|---------------------------|------------|
| 1       | Sanitation program + developmental program organized by the panchayat | 49                        | 75.38      |
| 2       | MGNREGA/SHG   | 30                        | 46.15      |
| 3       | Developmental program organized by panchayat and village              | 3                         | 4.61       |

**Note:** Multiple choices are given by respondents, therefore percentages are taken out of 65 respondents

Table two shows that the majority of the respondents (75.38%) participate in sanitation programs and developmental programs organized by panchayats, 46.15 percent respondents take part in MGNREGA/SHG and 4.61 percent respondents take part in developmental programs organized by panchayats and villages and other voluntary and non-voluntary organization of the area. Thus, it is clear that respondents take part in different types of developmental activities organized by the panchayat, village, and other voluntary and non-voluntary organizations of the area.

#### **Membership of Mahila Mandals/Any other Voluntary Organizations:**

The Mahila Mandals are voluntary organizations of rural women interested in working together with the help of Gram Sevika, Mukhiya Sevikas, and Lady Circle supervisors.

In rural areas, Mahila Mandals are very important organizations for women, women do many cultural and developmental activities at the village and panchayat levels through these organizations. The respondents were asked whether they weremembers of Mahila Mandal or any other voluntary organizations. Table three shows the view regarding the membership of Mahila Mandal or any other voluntary organization.

Table 3

**Membership of the Respondents in Mahila Mandals/Voluntary Organization**

| Sr. No. | Responses | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| 1       | Yes       | 66                 | 55.00      |
| 2       | No        | 54                 | 45.00      |
|         | Total     | 120                | 100.00     |

Table three highlights that 55.00 percent of interviewees are members of Mahila Mandals/voluntary organizations and 45.00 percent of the respondents are not a member of the Mahila Mandals/voluntary organizations. Further, those respondents who are members of Mahila Mandal were asked whether they take part in the activities organized by Mahila Mandal in their area and village. It is revealed that cent percent of the respondents participate in the activities organized by Mahila Mandals.

Further, those respondents who are members of Mahila Mandal and take part in the activities of Mahila Mandal/ voluntary organizations were asked to mention the activities in which they participate. Table four shows the responses given by the respondents.

Table 4

**Participation in the Activities Organized by Mahila Mandal/ Voluntary Organization**

| Sr. No. | Responses                          | No. of respondents (n=66) | Percentage |
|---------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1       | Developmental and cultural program | 62                        | 93.93      |
| 2       | National day celebration           | 20                        | 30.30      |
| 3       | Sanitation program                 | 25                        | 27.87      |
|         | Total                              | **                        | **         |

**Note:** the number of respondents exceeds due to multiple responses. The percentage is taken out of 66 respondents.

Table four reveals that the majority of the respondents (93.93) percent take part in the developmental and cultural programs organized by Panchayats and Mahila Mandals, 30.30 percent of respondents take part in the National Day Celebration and 27.87 percent take part in the sanitation program. Therefore, it is evident that most of the respondents take part in multiple activities organized by Panchayats and Mahila Mandals.

The finding of the present section of the paper shows that a percent of the respondents take part in the cultural programs in the area. It is also clear that the majority of the



respondents take part in developmental activities in the area. The finding of the present section also reveals that the majority of the respondents take part in different types of developmental activities like sanitation programs, MGNREGA, and developmental programs organized by panchayats, villages, and other voluntary and non-voluntary organizations. In rural areas, Mahila Mandals are very important organizations. It is found that most of them are members of Mahila Mandal and cent percent of the respondents take part in activities organized by Mahila Mandal. It also reveals that respondents take part in multiple activities like the developmental and cultural program, national day celebration, and sanitation programs organized by panchayats and Mahila Mandals.

### **Economic Participation of Rural Women:**

A woman can be economically prosperous if she can participate equally in the markets that are currently in place, has access to and control over productive resources, can find decent work, has control over her own time, life, and body, and has more agency, voice, and meaningful participation in decision-making at all.

The economic roles that Indian women play portray a very clear and distinct picture. In the process of earning a livelihood for the family, the women had a unique and acknowledged role to play. Women's contributions to economic advancement are necessarily significant, specifically for low-income households. Esther Duflo also explores the 'bidirectional relationship between women's empowerment and economic development and argues that economic growth enhances gender equality, while empowering women further drives economic progress, highlighting a bidirectional relationship'(Dulfo, 2012)<sup>10</sup>

In this part of the paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the participation of rural women in various economic activities. An attempt has been made to analyze the daily routine work of rural women, their occupation, the nature of their work, their family attitudes about the employment of women, and their views regarding the use of income, etc.

### **Daily Routine Work:**

The respondents' perspective on their regular work routine is shown in Table 5.

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<sup>10</sup>Dulfo, E. (2012, December). Women Empowerment and Economic Development. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 50(7), 1051-1079

**Table 5**  
**Respondents' opinions about their daily routine work**

| Sr. No. | Responses                  | No. of respondents (n=120) | Percentage |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| 1       | Cooking meals              | 85                         | 70.84      |
| 2       | Milking cows and buffaloes | 69                         | 57.5       |
| 3       | Working in the fields      | 26                         | 21.66      |
| 4       | Any other                  | 30                         | 25.00      |

**Note\*\*** the number of respondents exceeds due to multiple responses, other activities include fetching water, studying, private job, gathering fuel, etc.

Table five shows that 70.84 percent of respondents are involved in cooking meals regularly as their daily routine, whereas 57.50 percent of respondents are involved in milking cows and buffaloes, followed by 21.66 percent of respondents who are involved in working in the fields. Further, 25.00 percent of respondents are involved in other activities like fetching water, gathering fuel, studying, private jobs, etc. Thus, it is clear that most of the interviewees are rural women who are involved in cooking meals daily as their daily routine.

Another question asked of the respondents was whether they were employed or not. It is evident that the vast majority of the respondents (90.84%) in the sample are housewives and students and only 9.16 percent of the respondents in the sample are employed and working outside as Asha Workers, Anganwadi Workers, and one respondent is working as a clerk whereas five respondents are also working as teachers in private schools.

#### **Women should Work outside the Home to Earn:**

Further, a question was asked the respondents whether women should work outside the home to earn or not. A vast majority of the respondents (95.00%) are of the view that women should work outside the home to earn and just 5.00 percent of respondents are of the view that women should not work outside the home to earn. Therefore, it is clear that a large proportion of the respondents are of the view that women should work outside the home. Further, those respondents who are in favor of women working outside the home to earn were asked to mention the reason why women should work outside the home to earn. This reveals that the majority of the respondents (63.16%) who are in favor of women working outside the home to earn are of the view that they can support their family financially, 55.26 percent are of the view that they become financially independent, 18.42 percent are of the view that they get empowered economically and 9.64 percent are of the view that women should work outside the home

to attain socio-economic status in the society. Those respondents who did not agree to women working outside homes to earn were of the view that if the husbands are earning then no need for women to work outside the home to earn.

### **Attitudes of the Family Members Towards Women's Gainful Employment:**

To know the views of the respondents regarding the attitudes of their family members toward their gainful employment, a question was asked, how do you perceive the attitudes of your family members toward your gainful employment? It is found that a percent of the respondents believe that the attitudes of their family members towards their gainful employment are favorable. This shows that people in rural areas are favorable to the gainful employment of women outside the home.

Further, the respondents were asked whether their gainful employment has improved their status in society or not. It has been revealed that a percent of the respondents are of the view that their gainful employment has improved their status in society due to this they have become economically strong and their participation in decision-making power has also increased. Further, the respondents were also asked whether they get equal wages/salary as men for the same work. It has been found that all the respondents are satisfied as they get equal wages for the same work as men. There is no discrimination based on wages/salary in government as well as private jobs.

Further, the respondents who are housewives were asked whether, in addition to their household work, they do some work to enhance their family income. It has been found that only 19.05 percent of respondents who are housewives have started some additional work like sewing, weaving, and knitting to enhance their family's income. Further, the respondents were asked where they get the financial assistance to start their work/activity. They stated that they did not get any financial assistance from any agency and they started it on their own with the support of their families.

### **Making use of Self-Income:**

Further, to know the opinions of the respondents regarding the use of their self-income, a question was asked from the participants if they are earning how do they make use of their self-income? It has been found that a large percentage of the respondents (78.57%) who are earning are of the view that they deposit their savings in the bank, 7.14 percent are of the view that they spend money to meet the day-to-day household expenditure, 7.14 percent are of the view that they make use of their income on purchasing the domestic household items, whereas 3.57 percent are of the view that they spend the earning on the education of their children and also 3.57 percent respondents are of the view that they spend their self-earning on their personal use.

To sum up the above discussion, it is revealed that the majority of the respondents are engaged in household activities. It is also clear that most of the respondents are not working outside and they are housewives or students. The respondents are of the view that the attitudes of their family members towards their gainful employment are favorable. The people are favoring the employment of women in the study area. It is also found that working women are providing financial assistance to their families. It is also found that most of the earning respondents keep their self-income in the bank as savings.

### **Political Participation of Rural Women:**

The "political participation" is relatively broad. It is related to the "Right to Vote" along with political activism, political consciousness, and involvement in the decision-making process. In India, women vote and run at a lower level than men for political parties and public office. The two most prominent forms of political participation for women are voting and political activism. The Indian government has implemented reservations for seats in local government to reduce gender disparity in politics.

Women's political participation has its roots in the reform movements of the 19th century. Social reformers like Behramji Malabari, Mahadeva Govinda Ranade, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rajaram Mohan Roy, and others felt that educating women and increasing awareness may end social problems.

### **Need for Political Participation of Women:**

According to UNICEF, women should participate in politics for the following reasons:

- Women's political participation has the power to transform society; it may affect women's and children's outcomes, particularly when it comes to how local resources are distributed.
- To safeguard the security and protection of children and vulnerable groups, their involvement in peace talks and post-conflict reconstruction is crucial.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments of the constitution have made the reservation of women in Panchayati Raj institutions and municipal bodies compulsory. It has now become the constitutional right of women to participate in these bodies. The participation of women in politics has increased. But still, most women are not participating in politics and their male counterparts are deliberately keeping them aloof (Malik, 2001).<sup>11</sup>

In this section of the paper, an analysis has been attempted to understand the participation of women in various political activities concerning their interest in politics,

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<sup>11</sup>Malik, S. (2001). Women Empowerment and Panchayati Raj. In *Governance at Grassroot Level*. New Delhi : Kanishka Publisher Distributer

the level of their participation in politics, reservation for women in politics, and the basis on which women cast their votes in the election.

### Interest in Politics:

To know the interest of the respondents in politics, they were asked whether they were interested in politics or not. Table 6 illustrates the respondents' opinions regarding their interest in politics.

**Table 6**

#### Interest in Politics

| Sr. No. | Interest in politics | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------|----------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1       | Yes                  | 32                 | 26.66      |
| 2       | No                   | 88                 | 73.34      |
|         | Total                | 120                | 100.00     |

Table six demonstrates that most interviewees (73.34) are not interested in politics, whereas 26.66 percent of respondents are interested in politics. Thus, it is clear that most of the respondents in rural areas are not interested in politics.

### Participation in Politics:

By international norms, men and women have an equal right to fully engage in all facets of the political process. However, in reality, it is more difficult for women to exercise this freedom. To know the participation of women in politics, a question was asked from the respondents whether they take part in politics. If yes at what level? It has been found that only 6 (5.00%) respondents take part in politics and they take part at the village and panchayat levels only.

Jharta (1996) in her book 'Women and Politics in India' analyzed the role of education and family in women's participation in politics and highlighted that education and family act as both boosters and hindrances in their participation in politics.<sup>12</sup>

Further, to know the views of the respondents regarding women's participation in political activities, the respondents were asked whether women should take part in political activities. It has been revealed that the majority of the respondents (72.50%) are of the view that women should take part in political activities whereas 27.50 percent of the respondents are of the view that women should not take part in political activities. Those respondents who have leadership qualities in women and get politically

<sup>12</sup>Jharta, B. (1996). *Women and Politics in India*. New Delhi : Deep and Deep Publication.

empowered. Those respondents who are not in favor of women's participation in political activities stated that the political participation of women is just a waste of time and that the majority of women are not interested in politics.

### **Reservation for Women in Politics:**

As we all know, gender equality and equal participation of men and women in political activities are essential for the overall development of society and nation. However male-dominated or patriarchal societies created a situation where the Indian society reflected unequal gender relations. As we read literature related to ancient times that reveals women had to stay in the veil and she could not come forward. So, it is very difficult for women to participate in politics. After the independence 73<sup>rd</sup> or 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments have made the reservation of women in PRIs and municipal bodies compulsory. Due to reservation women's participation in politics has increased but still, most of the women are not participating in politics due to multiple reasons such as cultural barriers, historical inequality, and sometimes systemic biases within politics.

Further to know the perspective of the interviewee regarding the reservation of seats for women in assemblies and parliament as in the case of Panchayati raj institutions and municipalities were ascertained, table seven exhibits the opinions of the interviewee in this regard.

**Table 7**

### **Views regarding the reservation for women in Politics**

| <b>Sr. No.</b> | <b>Reservation for Women in Politics</b> | <b>No. of Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1              | Yes                                      | 90                        | 75.00             |
| 2              | No                                       | 30                        | 25.00             |
|                | Total                                    | 120                       | 100.00            |

Table seven reveals that most of the respondents (75.00%) support the reservation of women in politics whereas 25.00 percent respondents are not in favor of the reservation of women in politics in assemblies and panchayats. Those who are in favor of the reservation of women in politics think that reservation is necessary for women's upliftment and also helps develop the quality of leadership. Those who are not in favor of the reservation of women in politics think that males and females are equal so there should be no need for reservation of seats for women. Our constitution has provided equal political rights and opportunities to both men and women and capable and interested women will join politics of different levels on their efforts and merits.

**Basic of Casting the Vote:**

The respondents were asked whether they cast their vote in different elections. It has been found that a percent of the respondents cast their votes in different elections. Further, the respondents were also asked to mention the basis on which they cast their vote in the elections. Table eight shows the responses of the respondents in this issue.

**Table 8**  
**Basis of Casting the Votes in the Elections**

| Sr. No. | Basis of casting vote      | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------|----------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1       | Political party basis      | 80                 | 66.66      |
| 2       | The merit of the candidate | 25                 | 20.84      |
| 3       | Caste basis                | 10                 | 8.34       |
| 4       | Regional basis             | 5                  | 4.16       |
|         | Total                      | 120                | 100        |

Table eight indicates that 66.66 percent of respondents cast their vote based on political party affiliation, 20.84 percent on candidate merit, 8.34 percent on caste, and 4.16 percent based on region. It has been found that there are no such respondents who cast their votes on religious and gender basis. This shows that women in rural areas give preference for modern-oriented factors as compared to traditional factors while casting their votes in different elections.

Further, the respondents were also asked how they cast their votes. It has been found that the majority of the respondents (92.50%) cast their vote own and 7.50 percent of the respondents cast their vote on the advice of their family members. There are no respondents who cast their vote on the advice of their husbands and the advice of friends/relatives.

The finding of the present section of the paper reveals that most of the respondents are not interested in politics and very few numbers of respondents only 6(5.00%) respondents take part in the election. Most of the interviewees are of the view that women should take part in politics because political participation develops leadership qualities in women and they get politically empowered. It is also found that most of the respondents are in favor of reservation of women in politics, they think that reservation is necessary for women’s upliftment. The majority of the respondents cast their votes according to their own choice. Most of the respondents cast their vote on political party affiliation. Thus, democratization and politicization of rural women are taking place in the study area.

## Conclusion

Based on the interpretation and analysis of the data collected, it was found that the empowerment of women is directly linked with the socio-economic and political participation of rural women. Most of the respondents stated that they take part in multiple activities like developmental, cultural programs, and national day programs organized by panchayats and Mahila Mandals. The second section of this paper highlighted that most of the respondents are housewives in the study area and they are involved in household activities. This section also reveals that people favoring the employment of women in the study area and working women are providing financial assistance to their families. Further, All the respondents are of the view that their gainful employment has improved their status in society due to this they have become economically strong and their participation in decision-making power has also increased. The views regarding the political participation of rural women reveal that women should take part in politics because political participation develops leadership qualities in rural women and they get politically empowered and aware. This shows that nowadays democratization and politicization of rural women are taking place in the study area. The study highlights the fact that socioeconomic and political participation of rural women are the major areas of the empowerment of women and their participation also reduces gender inequality; almost all respondents supported this view. With the change in society, it is found that the empowerment of rural women has certainly taken place during the past few years, especially due to their active participation in all spheres of life. It is hoped that with the vigorous participation of rural women in all spheres of life and the impact of other modernizing forces, the empowerment of rural women will become more pronounced and more changes in their role structure will occur.

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