

# AN UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THEIR DECISION MAKING STATUS: A COMPARISON OF WORKING AND NON-WORKING WOMEN IN RURAL HIMACHAL PRADESH

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## ABSTRACT

This research is fully based on field survey in rural Himachal Pradesh. According to this research women are participating in many activities such as Anganwadis, political activities, education, self-funded business, MNREGA, Tailoring, agriculture – both as labourers and cultivators and both. A comparison was made between working and non-working women and among the working women, between the farming and non-farming sectors. Husbands of non-working women take decision on their behalf and out of 22 families with working women in the farming sector, in 17 families husbands are taking decision and out of 15 families with working women in the non-farming sector, husbands in 12 families are taking decision. And the major finding in this research is that, out of 50 women interviewed, only 1 woman is taking decision on her own. Therefore, decision making and empowerment is a big challenge for rural Himachali women irrespective of her working status.

**Keywords:** Decision Making, Women Empowerment, Rural Himachal Pradesh.

## INTRODUCTION

Women are facing many problems in the society and they are struggling with all these problems every day. State Government has launched many schemes and Singh Yoginder (2013) has said that women empowerment is the most important instrument for the socio-economic development in India. He observed that the women in rural area especially the women who belong to poor families could not be benefited in spite of the provision of many poverty alleviation programmes. Empowerment of women is essential for social, economic and political status and this is the process for guarding them against violence. Empowerment involves building up a society and political environment where women can live without any fear of exploitation and discrimination and feeling of persecution which always goes with females in this male dominating society. Women empowerment refers to increase the political, social, educational or economic strength of communities and individuals and communities of the women within the Indian society (Syal et al, 2017) program for rural area women like, Reservation in political bodies, Beti Hai Anmol Yojna, Mukhaya Mantri BalUdhar Yojna, Mukhaya Mantri

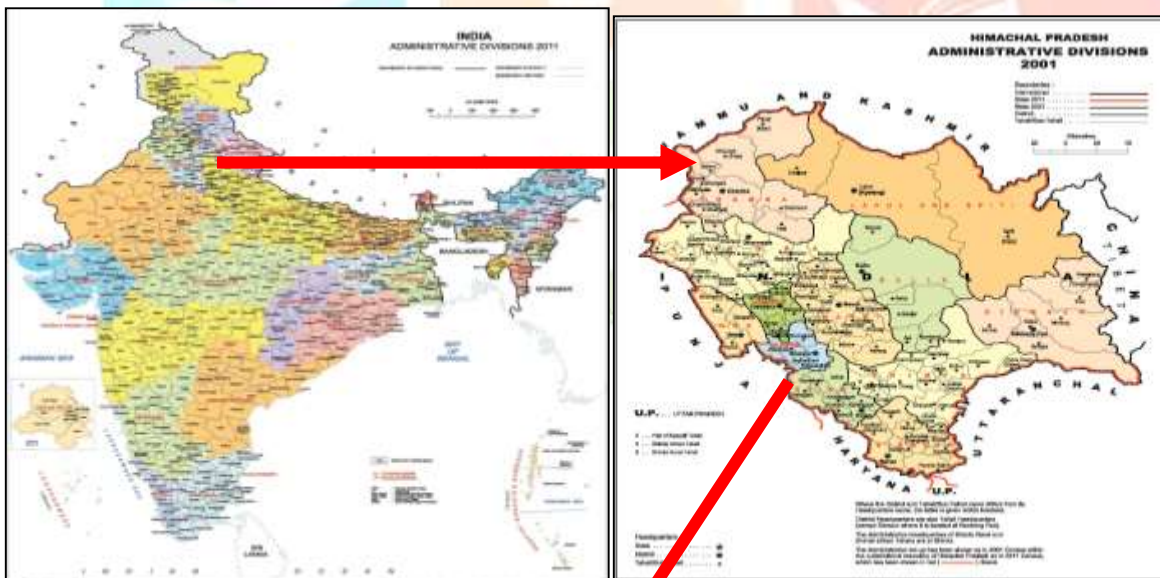
Kanyadaan Yojna, and others. These programs will hopefully help to improve women's status in rural Himachal Pradesh.

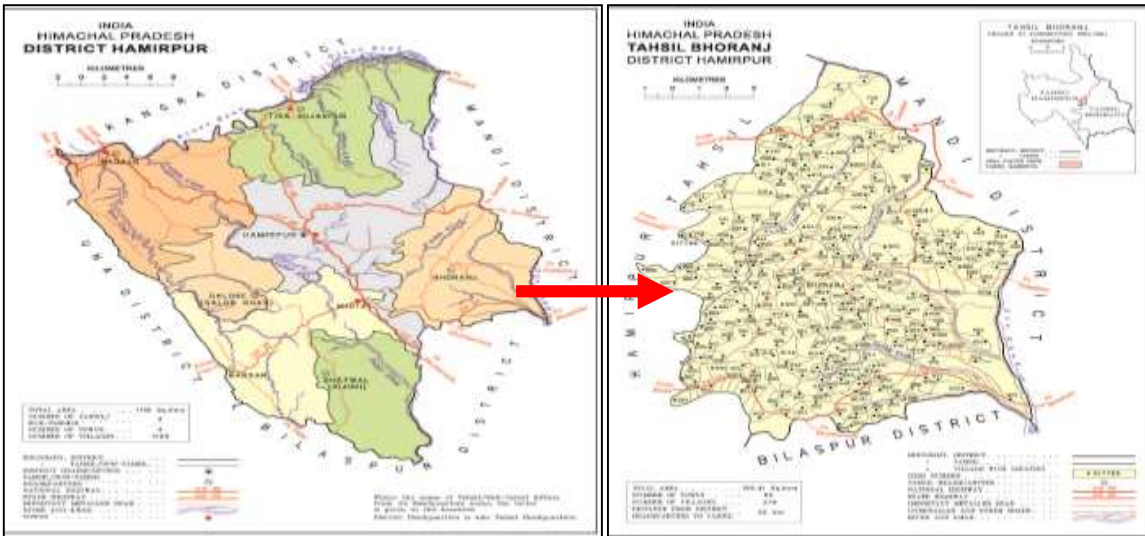
### STUDY AREA: HAMIRPUR

The smallest district of Himachal Pradesh is Hamirpur, located in western part of the state. The district is very rich of culture and is famous for its folk music which is still a very important part of the region. It is also known as *Veer Bhumi*. District Hamirpur is situated between 31°25'N and 31°52'N and between 76°18'E and 76°44'E and at an altitude of 785 meters. It shares borders with the neighbouring districts of Mandi to North, Bilaspur to South and South West, Una to West and Kangra to North West. River Beas separates Hamirpur from Kangra. Its two tributaries *Maan Khud* and *Kunah Khad* flowing across either sides of Hamirpur district, to the adjacent Satluj River. Hamirpur district has considerable density of pine forests. In this study I have selected Himachal Pradesh state and in this state I have chosen three villages in Hamirpur district. All three villages in the plain and mountainous area their name is Beharwin, Penjwin, Manoh. I have studied this area because many researchers said the women in rural area are less participating in politics and agricultural activity but other researcher said the women in rural area are more participating in this activity. I have studied this area to find out the real problem of rural area in Himachal Pradesh.

### REASON FOR CHOOSING THESE VILLAGES:

The reason for choosing these villages, is the fact that these villages are located both in the plain and mountainous areas. These villages are very poor and underdeveloped. I will try to found out the status of women in society and women role in economic activities in some of the most remote and difficult areas of Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh.





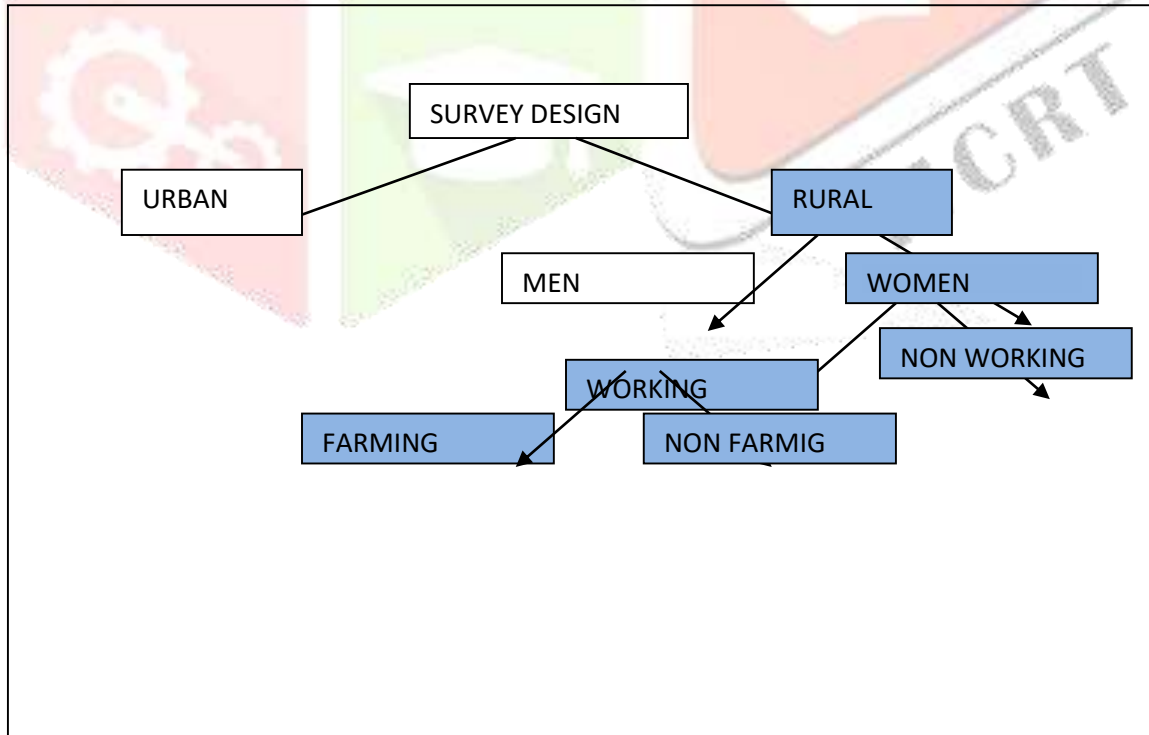
SOURCE: CENSUS OF 2001 and 2011.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To find out the women decision making status of rural Himachali women by comparing non-working and working women in farming and non-farming sectors

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study is based on primary data. To find the status of Rural Himachali women and find out the role of women in decision making system. I have set up of questionnaires and will be given to the women of the Himachal Pradesh. The information will also be taken from abstract survey of rural Himachali women. In this study, the interview is one of the primary approaches to collecting data.



Sample design: Purposive stratified random sampling. This is because the study had a specific purpose; it was stratified or categorized at every level. After which, samples were randomly selected.

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The research can be concluded with an analysis of the decision making power of women. This is because participation in agriculture, politics or any other finally should help a woman take her own decision. But the role of Himachali women in decision making system is very low. The women of rural Himachali are less participating in decision making system. Women participation in decision making process is vital for the battle of human right condition. Women have been struggling for their self- respect. Women have a right to equal participation but in rural Himachali area women are not participate in any activities.

DECISION MAKING STATUS OF WOMEN IN RURAL HIMACHAL PRADESH	
DECISION TAKER	NUMBER OF WOMEN
SELF	1
HUSBAND	35
IN-LAWS	11
AS A COUPLE	2
OTHERS	1

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey

In this research, we find that mostly husbands are taking decision in household expenditure, children education and overall decision making system. Women are less participating in decision making system. We find in the field research that 5 women are graduated but after that also they do not take decisions in any activities; only 2 women take decision for their children and other activities. 1 woman out of 50 takes all their decisions.

### Decision making according to Education Level, Social Group and Age

WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN DECISION MAKING SYSTEM BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL					
	SELF	HUSBAND	IN-LAWS	OTHERS	AS A COUPLE
NONE	0	5	0	0	0
BELOW PRIMARY	0	7	0	0	0
PRIMARY	0	8	0	0	0
UPPER PRIMARY	0	3	1	0	0
SECONDARY	1	3	1	0	0
HIGHER SECONDARY	0	8	4	0	0
GRADUATION	0	1	4	0	1



POST GRADUATION	0	0	1	1	1
TOTAL	1	35	11	1	2

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey

Status of women in hill states is different due to topographical and geographical condition where women are involved in more household activities and take care their children. More and more women are engaged in household activities and agricultural land. Education plays the most important role in women's lives therefore. According to the survey, husbands take decision for most women, followed by in-laws, which means 49 out of 50 women do not take decisions, and very sadly it includes women with education up to post graduate level. Therefore, education does not really matter in decision making as is popularly thought.

WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN DECISION MAKING SYSTEM BY SOCIAL GROUP					
	SELF	HUSBAND	IN-LAWS	OTHERS	AS A COUPLE
UNRESERVED	1	10	5	0	2
OBC	0	9	2	0	0
SC	0	3	0	0	0
ST	0	6	2	1	0
NOT APPLICABLE	0	7	2	0	0
TOTAL	1	35	11	1	2

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey

Across social groups, it is the husbands and the in laws who take the decisions for the women. Older women are likely to play a more important role in decision making as compared to younger women. Therefore, the in-laws participation is high. Younger women do not participate independently; rarely do they participate with their husbands.

#### **Comparison of working and Non- working women:**

This research is fully based on field survey in rural Himachal Pradesh. According to this research women are participating in many activities such as Anganwadis, political activities, education, self-funded business, MNREGA, Tailoring, agriculture – both as labourers and cultivators and both. Most of the rural Himachali women are not participating in any activity. More than them are agricultural labourers. Fourteen percent women are working as cultivators, means they are cultivating their own land. Twelve percent of rural Himachali women are working as a special case. Special case means they have their own but they are also working in other's land for better lifestyle. Six percent women are participating in political activities. They are participating in gram panchayat. They are not educated but they are playing a major role in panchayat. Working women in rural areas are traveling two to five kilometers daily.

WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN DECISION MAKING SYSTEM BY WORKING AND NON-WORKING						
	SELF	HUSBAND	IN-LAWS	OTHERS	AS A COUPLE	TOTAL
WORKING	1	29	4	1	2	37
NON-WORKING	0	6	7	0	0	13

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey

I visited the villages of Hamirpur in the state of Himachal Pradesh to interact with the residents and know their problems and situation. When I interacted the people of rural area women and find that 37 women are working and 13 women are non-working. 37 women are working and earning the money after that they are not taking decision, only husbands are taking decision they do not participating in decision making. The women of rural areas are facing many problems day by day. They are struggling for their self-respect both working and non-working women in rural area. It is surprised me when I asked about the winner of election and everyone would tell me her husband name because the women of rural Himachali area are less educated and they do not participating in any decision making and political activities.

#### Comparison of Farming and Non – Farming:

WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN DECISION MAKING SYSTEM BY FARMING AND NON-FARMING						
	SELF	HUSBAND	IN-LAWS	OTHERS	AS A COUPLE	TOTAL
FARMING	0	17	4	0	1	22
NON-FARMING	1	12	0	1	1	15

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey

22 women is engaged in farming activity and 15 in non-farming activities in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh. These women not only work in farm but in house also and some of them are employed in other activities. Those women who works as a employee travels 4-5 km one side daily for their work. The women who totally indulged in farming is not well educated and due to this they face problems in day to day life. Out of 22 families, in 17 families husbands are taking decision in farming sector and out of 15 families, husband in 12 families of non-farming sector are taking decision. And major founding in this research is out of 37 only 1 woman is taking decision for their own.

#### HIMACHAL GOVERNMENT HAD LAUNCHED VARIOUS SCHEMES:

- 1) **Mukhya Mantri Kanyadan Yojna:** Under this scheme 25,000 is given to the parents / gardian.
- 2) **Widow pension schemes:** under this scheme government provides 500 rupees in every widow.
- 3) **Beti Hai Anmol:** In this scheme every girl class 1 to 10+2 government provides Rs 300 to 1,500.
- 4) **Widow Re-marriage scheme:** under these schemes Rs 50,000 provides for a couple.

- 5) **Mata Shabri Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojna:** this schemes has benefiting only BPL families of SC categories.

*Source: As observed by researcher from field survey*

### SUGGESTIONS

- Aware the all society women about equal job opportunities.
- Improve the women empowerment and aware them.
- Aware the rural Himachali area to improve their knowledge skill.
- Vote should be on the basis of female choice as not on the basis of their husband choice.
- Women's should be well educated and should have awareness of laws so that she is able to take correct decision regarding her life.

### LIMITATIONS

In this research only women was included but for future researches both males and females can be taken and consequently the variation in the result can be observed, and the status of males and females can be compared in farming and non-farming sector. Further with the help of temporal analysis the benefits from the government given to the farmers can be observed. With this the changes taking place in terms of techniques used, cropping pattern can also be analyzed.

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