

## ROLE OF LOCAL BODIES IN FEDERAL POLITICS: A STUDY OF SHIMLA MC ELECTION (2023)

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### *Abstract*

*With rapid industrialization and developments in infrastructure, urban centers have become a hub of employment. Movement of so many people to urban areas have led to more dependency on urban resources. This requires a good administrative body to handle matters related to these areas. Urban local bodies are the prime bodies responsible for administrative management in urban areas. Shimla Municipal Corporation is the oldest MC of pre-independent Punjab and has its historical importance too. Elections to Shimla MC was of great importance especially for the major rivals BJP and Congress in the state. The study aims to analyse various factors which affect voting behaviour, performance of political parties and the organic linkage between local and state politics.*

**Keywords:** *Urbanization, federalism, BJP, Congress, Municipal Elections, Voting behaviour.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Indian Constitution, there were adequate provisions to ensure democracy at the Centre and state level through the election for the Parliament and state legislatures. It was further taken to local levels after the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Acts when a third tier of government was added below the Union and State governments. A Constitutional base was provided to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indian society was predominantly rural from the ancient times and urban centers got much recognition during British era because of their vested interest to evolve urban areas in those parts of the country which suited for trading activities. With the introduction of railways and trading and business activities, many people moved towards cities to have better opportunities. In order to have proper management of urban areas it became important for the urban localities to have their administrative bodies. Hence, first Municipal Corporation was established in Madras in 1687. Afterwards, many municipal bodies constituted in the areas like Calcutta, Bombay and other port cities. Urban areas have their own problem, much different from the rural areas. Indian society already had their local governance, in urban areas the administrative system introduced by the British government was a new system with which Indian were not familiar. ULBs are responsible for good governance and administration of urban areas. Local governance is always linked with PRIs due to predominance of rural society. ULBs are also important as they manage those localities which have immense importance to shape the administrative and political system of urban areas.

## 2. URBANIZATION

In the developing societies like India, Urbanization is not a connotation. Despite its population being predominantly rural for ages, India is emerging as one of the fastest growing urbanizing countries. Urbanization traces its origin in India back during the colonial era when Britishers introduced machinery and railways leading to the rural population migrating to cities in search of work and bread. With the advent of the globalization, it was the cities which were benefitted the most. Cities are the centers for economic development as they provide efficient infrastructure and services resulting in high density of population. Urban population is increasing at a fast rate India's population has reached from 17.92% in 1960 to 35.39% in 2021. The urban population is increasing at an average growth rate of 2.07% per year. It is projected that India's urban population will be 575 million constituting over 40% of total population by 2030. Thus, to

manage such a large population it is important to have a proper channel of administration which is provided through Urban Local Bodies.

### **3. CONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE URBAN LOCAL BODIES**

Through 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, a new Part IX A and Schedule Twelfth was added to the Indian Constitution in 1994 and a uniform structure of ULBs was established. First Nagar Panchayat Bill was presented in 1985 by Rajeev Gandhi but was finally passed by Parliament in 1994. This Act made it mandatory for all State governments to decentralize the powers and responsibilities to ULBs by enacting necessary legislation so that these bodies can act as autonomous units. Articles 243P- 243ZG of Indian Constitution contains the provision related to municipality. The Act also lists five criteria for constituting the ULBs namely density, population, Revenue generated per annum, percentage of employment in non-agricultural activities and economic importance of the local body. This Act provides for periodic elections, constitution of bodies with adequate representation to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), reservation of at least one-third of all positions for women (50% in some states), powers and functions of ULBs and sources of revenue generation for smooth function of work. There is also a provision of an independent institution of the State Election Commission (SEC) under the Article 243 Z to conduct the elections for the urban and rural local bodies. Thereafter, periodical elections have been held for urban local bodies since 1994. The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment also encouraged participation of local people in the administration of local areas and helped in empowering such communities.

### **4. HISTORY OF SHIMLA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**

Shimla Municipal Corporation (MC) is the oldest MC of pre-independent Punjab and is among the oldest MCs of the country. Established in December 1851 as a Municipal Council to handle the civil matters of summer capital of British empire. In 1871, it was declared as the Class I Municipality. At that time, it was an autonomous body which handled all matters of Shimla city from water to electricity, school management and forest cover was under its control. Before 1947, Shimla had its distinct place in the British governing system. British people preferred to stay here due to favorable climatic conditions. It gained the title of Municipal Corporation in September 1970 after which its powers decreased. At that time, it was a fully nominated body. Population of the town was always a concern of the Britishers. In 1851, the population of Shimla city was about 3500 which rose to 14000 in 1901 even though strict policies were adopted by Britishers in 1898 seeing the sharp increase in the population. Now its population has reached

1.70 lakh people and continuously increasing. Shimla being the capital of the state and a major tourist attraction, has diverse demographic composition such as labour class, students and employees who form the large part of the urban population of Shimla. Further, Shimla MC is one of the richest MC in matters relating to their taxing power. Although this population is not stable still contribute a lot to urban economy and also avails facilities provided by the MC. Thus, to manage such a large population it requires appropriate infra-structure to provide the people civic amenities.

## **5. ELECTORAL HISTORY OF SHIMLA MC**

Shimla MC administers the Shimla city through the elected body of Councillors headed by a Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Five members from academic, social service and other fields are nominated by State government. There is also a provision of reservation of fifty percent of seats for women. Along with Shimla city, the surrounding areas of Totu, Dhalli and New Shimla are under the administration of Shimla MC since 2006. First election for Shimla Municipal Corporation was held in 1986. Since then, it was under the control of the Congress party until 2012 when the State BJP government decided to hold direct elections for the seats of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. In 2012, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor both were from CPI(M) but there was majority of BJP in the MC of 25 wards. In 2017, the Congress government reversed the decision of holding direct elections for the position of Mayor and Deputy Mayor and also increased the number of wards to 34. Just before the Assembly Elections of the State, the elections to Shimla MC were held in June 2017 and BJP was able to wrest Shimla MC from Congress. BJP won in 17 wards. The body was formed with 12 Councillors of Congress, one from CPI(M) and four independents. The seat for Mayor was reserved for women of SC and ST for two and half year each but since there is less than 15% population of STs in the City, hence the seat of Mayor was held by Kusum Sadret and Satya Kaundal of BJP respectively.

The elections for Shimla MC were scheduled to be held in June 2022 but due to court case regarding delimitation of wards the elections were delayed for one year as previous BJP government increased the number of wards from 34 to 41. After coming to power in December 2022, the Congress government reversed the order. This was for the first time that MC election were held after Assembly polls. After its victory in Assembly polls, Congress was excited to have a hold on Shimla MC as party appealed to the people to vote for their 140 days performance in the state. On the other hand, BJP worked to retain its hold on the Shimla by showcasing their

achievements through the Shimla Smart City Mission which is a project of the Central government.

Although CPI(M) and AAP were also in the race of MC election still the electoral battle was much concentrated on BJP and Congress.

All political parties campaigned extensively to gain the support of people. For BJP Union Minister Anurag Thakur, former CM and the Leader of the Opposition Jai Ram Thakur along with other top leaders of the party, sitting MLAs and former Ministers campaigned for the BJP candidates in the wards. On the other side, CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, MP Pratibha Singh, senior Congress leaders campaigned for their candidates. Cabinet Ministers Vikramaditya Singh, Harish Janartha and MLA Anirudh Singh worked together with candidates as 34 wards of MC fall under these three Constituencies namely Shimla Rural, Shimla Urban and Kasumpti. CM Sukhu had been Councillor twice from one of the wards of Shimla MC. The Manifestos of both the parties contained the pictures of National as well as State leaderships. Further, both parties have engaged their party cadre and leadership from former ministers to sitting MLAs to campaign for the candidates in this election. All this reflects the linkage between national, state and local elections. Local election of Shimla MC became a matter of pride for both parties who left no stone unturned in convincing voters to vote in the favour of their candidate.

For CPIM, former MLA Rakesh Singha and former Mayor Sanjay Chauhan campaigned. The campaign of AAP was solely on candidates as in majority of wards AAP was missing in terms of propaganda. For example, in Chhota Shimla ward, there was no activity by AAP candidate.

## **6. CANDIDATES SOCIO- ECONOMIC PROFILE**

Total 109 candidates filled their nomination to contest in Shimla MC while after withdrawing date only 102 candidates were left in fray. BJP and Congress contested election on all 34 seats while CPIM and AAP fielded candidates on four and 21 seats respectively. There were nine independents contesting in this election which include four rebels from Congress and five from BJP. There were three contestants per seats which reflects that was not much competition in MC election as compared to 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly polls where average per seat contestation was six candidates.

Majority of candidates contesting in Shimla MC were graduates including professional degree holders. While 35% candidates were under matric or matriculate. Two candidates declared themselves as illiterate. Twenty-two candidates were plus two passed. This shows that even in

urban areas, contestation of less educated people is more as compared to more educationally qualified people. Women candidates were much educated as compared to male candidates but majority of them were housewives. Majority of candidates were below 50 years which also highlights that more young people are coming in politics. Some candidates had criminal records too. 45 candidates declared that there was criminal case registered against them varying from cheating, murder, domestic violence etc., 22 candidates contesting election were billionaires which includes ex-Councillors as well as ex-Mayor. The socio-economic profile of candidates affirms the social conception that at every level of government, people with sound financial background and criminal records are more engaged in politics and common people stay away from politics.

## 7. ROTATION OF SEATS AMONG SPOUSES

In some wards, the seats were rotated between the spouses after reservation and de-reservation of wards. In this election, there were eight such wards where such rotation was seen and Congress has given ticket to seven such candidates while one in case of BJP. Uma Kaushal who contested from Tuditanid ward third time, her husband had been the Councillor from the same ward twice. Umang Banga, the candidate from Lower Bazar was wife of Inderjeet Singh, ex-Councillor from the ward. Whereas BJP candidate from Ruldubhatta and her husband had been Councillors from this ward in rotation for twenty years. The same trend was seen in Bharari, Majhat, Chhota Shimla, Kanlog and Bhattakuffar wards. This is against the principal of reservation and hence, undemocratic. This had led to revolt within parties. As a result, some candidates contested as independents or under the banner of AAP.

There was direct contestation between BJP and Congress in ten wards, in 14 wards there were candidates from three political parties, ten wards were such where more than three candidates were contesting.

Further out of 102 candidates contesting on 34 wards, 14 candidates were those who had been Councillors in previous MC. The parties again betted on these candidates which reflects their performance as Councillor earlier and their support in the ward.

## 8. VOTING PERCENTAGE

	Shimla Voting %
MC Election 2007	56

MC Election 2012	65
MC Election 2017	57.8
Assembly Election 2017	Shimla Urban- 64.31 Shimla Rural- 74.02 Kasumpti- 67.55
Assembly Election 2022	Shimla Urban- 62.53 Shimla Rural- 66.35 Kasumpti- 68.29
2023 MC election	58.97

**Source:** *Statistical Data on polling in Shimla*

The polling percentage of Shimla MC this year was recorded to be 58.97 which is marginally higher than previous polls (57.8%) and much less than 75.68% voters turnout recorded in Assembly polls held just six months ago. The highest voting was recorded in Bhattakuffar ward with 74.9% voter turnout and lowest in Panthghati ward with only 46.8%.

The bad weather conditions cannot not be blamed for low polling as similar trend is seen in Shimla even in Lok Sabha as well as Vidhan Sabha polls. The data shows that Shimla Urban and Kasumpti has registered a low voter turnout even in Assembly polls. In Assembly polls, 62% voters exercised their franchise in District Shimla and least voting in the State was also recorded in Shimla Urban with only 65.66% voter turnout. The participation of female voters was also less as compared to male voters of Shimla MC. In Assembly Election 2022, female voters outnumbered males in polling but in this election, male voting percentage (59.29) was higher than female voting percentage (58.60). This low polling among the voters of Shimla MC shows the apathy of urban voters. It reflects that literate and urban people vote less as compared to less educated and rural people.

## 9. PARTICIPATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

This election was important for all political parties especially BJP and Congress. There are few reasons that MC election became so important. Firstly, Shimla being the Capital attracts the attention of whole state. Secondly, the elections were held on party symbols after ten years. Last time in 2012, MC elections were held on party symbols along with direct elections for the post of Mayor and Deputy Mayor as per the decision of then Dhumal government. Lastly, it was seen as a semi-final for upcoming Lok Sabha election of 2024. Congress was testing its acceptance in the State after four months of its ruling while for BJP, it was a matter of reputation to retain the control of Shimla MC after completing its previous tenure. As a result, all parties tried to influence the voters and made several promises.

BJP promised the voters to provide 40 thousand liters of water per family, to levy single tax under 'One Nigam, One tax' for waste, sewage and dwellings, maintenance of drainage system,



build marriage palaces, constituting taskforce to control stray dogs and monkeys. It also pledged a 50% discount on waste expenses. BJP counted its work performance of last five years, comparing it with the 25 years of Congress.

Congress came with 14 guarantees like ropeway system, implementation of regulatory measures for multi-story structures, a unified tax regime, indoor stadiums, water facility, and right to build residences to non-agriculturists who settled in Shimla before 1971. Since AAP and CPI(M) didn't fielded candidates from all wards hence, their manifestos were prepared according to the needs of the particular ward.

The common promises made by all political parties were to make Shimla clean and green, to stop drug menace in the city, building parking spaces in order to curb the traffic problem, ambulance road in every ward, water facility etc. Manifestos of all the parties indicated that parties were contesting on local issues (issues were local, campaigners were the State and centre leadership). Campaigning of BJP and Congress took this election to a different level. Congress appealed the voters to vote their candidates on the basis of party's performance in last four months while BJP used Modi factor to influence the voters.

Campaigning style of all the parties reflect that local elections and local leaders depend on higher level of leadership to win the elections. They try to convince the people that the parties to which they belong would help them all the way. Vis-à-vis the state and national leadership of the parties realized the importance of the local leaders to strengthen the mass base of the party.

## **10. WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN SHIMLA MC**

Women constitute half of the population of the world. Since 1975, many efforts have been made by international organizations to reduce gender disparity worldwide. In this field, one of the strategies is to empower women politically by giving her place in law making bodies and other government and governing institutions. In case of India, women's political status is not very encouraging. She is meagerly represented in the Parliament and State legislatures. In political parties, their role is not effective. Reservation in the local bodies is one of the distinctions in the field of women empowerment and reducing gender disparity.

As per the 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act, it is mandatory to reserve seats for women in Urban Local Bodies. In Himachal Pradesh, 50% seats are reserved for women including the women from Scheduled Caste. Thus, 17 wards are reserved for women candidates including 3 wards for Scheduled Caste females. Further 3 wards are reserved for Schedule Caste category and 14 wards



are open. BJP fielded women on 24 seats while Congress gave chance to 18 women candidates against 17 reserved seats. It seemed that BJP want to have the control of Shimla MC through women representatives. This data was shocking because in comparison to MC election, very few women are given chance in Assembly and Parliamentary Elections. It reflects that women are given chance in local elections either because of reservation of seats for women or the parties want women leadership to be limited to local sphere only.

Since the first election of Shimla MC, only four women held the position of Mayor. It was possible because 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act made reservation provision for women for the position of Mayor too. Jaini Prem (1999-2002) and Madhu Sood (2009-2012) from Congress party became the mayors of the municipal corporation followed by Kusum Sadret and Satya Kaundal of BJP from 2017-2022 for half term each. This reflects that reservation policy helped women to get representation in local politics.

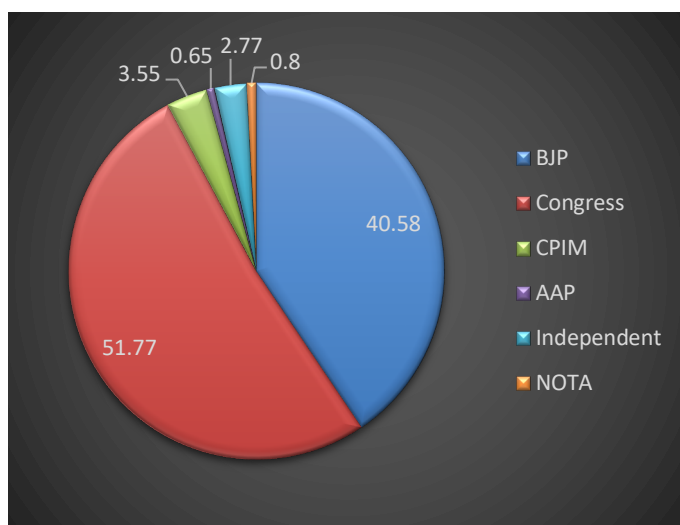
## 11. RESULTS

	2012		2017		2023		
Party	Seats won	Vote share %	Seats won	Vote share %	Seats Contested	Seats won	Vote share %
<b>BJP</b>	11	44	17	50	34	09	40.58
<b>Congress</b>	12	48	12	35.29	34	24	51.77
<b>CPIM</b>	2	8	1	2.94	4	01	3.55
<b>AAP</b>	-	-	-	-	21	00	0.65
<b>Independent</b>	0		4	11.76	9	00	2.77
<b>Total Wards</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>34</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>34</b>	

**Source:** Statistical data on Shimla MC Election 2023

The results of Shimla MC were as shocking as State Assembly Elections of 2022. Congress wrested Shimla MC from BJP with 24 seats (highest till now) whereas BJP failed to make even for double digits and managed to get 9 seats only. CPI(M) who filed candidates on four seats was able to open their account with only one seat. The candidates of AAP, the newcomer in the State, even failed to secure their deposits as none of them could touch a number of 50 votes in any ward. Ankush Verma from Engine Ghar ward, aged 28 years, is the youngest Councillor while Uma Kaushal aged 63 became the oldest Councillor. Both are from Congress party.

## 12. VOTE SHARE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SHIMLA MC ELECTION 2023



**Source:** *Statistical data on Vote share in Shimla MC election 2023 procured from the newspapers*

From the above pie-diagram, it is clear that vote share of Congress in MC election 2023 was almost half of total vote share. BJP's vote share reduced from 50% to 40% along with reduction in seat share from 17 in last election to just nine seats. The vote share of

CPI(M) increased to 3.55 but their seat share remained constant while AAP, who contested on 21 seats, failed to open its account. The vote share of AAP was even less than NOTA. Out of nine independents who contested in this election, none could make a way to MC and the vote share of independents declined from 11.76% to only 2.77%. These results affirm the bi-party character of Himachal Politics. Since the elections were held on Party symbols; the results also explain the political behaviour of local people who voted in the names of parties. Rest of the parties and independents total vote share is 7.65% which could not be considered adequate for the electoral competition. Most of the candidates who were denied ticket by their parties contested as independents but still failed to influence the voters despite being ex-Mayor or ex-Councillor. This shows that the voters of Shimla are Smart who voted on the issues of their ward. The advantage of being the ruling party also helped Congress in winning with a great majority. Independents position also convey that the voter is more concerned with political affiliation of the candidate. Inference is that it is not mere the leadership but also the voters who give equal importance to the parties in the local election. Political parties have deep roots in the local politics.

The wards of Shimla MC fall under three Assembly seats of Shimla and there are two Ministers and one MLA from this area. From Shimla Rural constituency, Congress candidates won from all four wards. On 18 wards in Shimla Urban Constituency, Congress won in 14 wards while BJP got victory in four wards. The seat share in Kasumpti constituency was nearly same as Congress managed to win in 7 out of 12 wards while BJP candidates won in 5 wards. The impact of having two Ministers and one MLA is clearly visible through the results.

### **13. MARGIN OF VOTES**

The margin of votes also varied differently in different wards. With maximum margin of 773 in Vikas Nagar ward and least being 8 votes in Khalini ward. In first case, people elected the previous Councillor Rachna Bhardwaj of Congress while in second they rejected the previous Councillor with merely 8 votes. The Congress candidates from Krishna Nagar and Ruldu Bhatta lost with 23 and 27 votes respectively. BJP candidate Sunanda Karol from Ram Bazar also lost with just 34 votes. This variation in voting margin also depicted the organic mandate. The people re-elected the Councillors they were satisfied with while those who were unable to gain the support of people were rejected.

The voters of Shimla MC trusted Congress on the basis of their promises but the party credited its 140 days work in the state for their win. BJP after losing Assembly election, tried to retain their hold on MC but all went in vain. BJP blamed Congress for making attempts to affect the organic mandate. Since 1989, this trend that ruling party loses in re-election was applicable in Assembly elections only but this time the same pattern was seen in Shimla MC polls. There are chances that due to dissatisfaction from working of previous MC or Councillors, people voted for Congress in this election. The public of Shimla also gave chance to many new comers (19 new Councillors) which reflects that people here are change oriented. People voted for development. Less margin wins, similar to Assembly polls of 2022, reflects that there was neck to neck fight between parties. This resembles to system prevailing in developed countries. Development was the only issue and in past, both parties have equally worked on it after coming to power.

### **14. CANDIDATES PERFORMANCE**

Total 102 candidates were in fray including nine independents. Congress won 24 seats followed by BJP 9, CPIM 1 and AAP zero.

Out of 14 previous Councillors of MC 2017 contesting in this election, 8 lost. Some candidates even managed to make a hat trick. Uma Kaushal of Congress from Tuttikandi became Councillor for the third whereas it was for fifth time consecutively for her family as her husband Anand Kaushal had also been a Councillor twice. Same was seen in Ruldubhatta ward where Saroj Thakur of BJP won for the third time and the post of Councillor remained in her family for fifth term as her husband Sanjeev Thakur was also Councillor of same ward for two terms. This reflects candidate's acceptance and public satisfaction in the ward. Congress candidates Sushma

Kuthiyal from Ram Bazar, Kuldeep Thakur from Sangti ward and Surinder Chauhan from Chotta Shimla also made their third term for Shimla MC. This reflects that the candidates are contesting and winning for third time do not prefer state politics and are not able to locate themselves in State and National Politics. While Harish Janartha, CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, BJs MLA from Shimla Urban Sanjay Sood had been Councillors in Shimla MC. This reflects that the performance and support of candidate helped some leaders to make way to State politics while some chose to remain confine to local bodies only.

While there are some wards where BJP and Congress came for the first time since the formation of Shimla MC. The voters of Annadel ward elected a Congress candidate for the first time while BJP got its Councillor from New Shimla ward for the first time. This trend reflects that a mixed pattern was seen in this election as people voted for some candidates even for a third term and somewhere they have brought a direct change even by not voting to ex-Councillors and ex-Mayors.

### **15. EXTENSIVE CAMPAIGNING BY LEADERSHIP**

The top leaders of Congress, BJP and CPI(M) campaigned for their party candidates through roadshows and nukkad rallies despite bad weather conditions. There were mixed results of this activity. In some wards where the candidates lost the election despite campaigning by State and National leaders of the party. CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu campaigned for the President of Shimla Urban Congress Jitender Chaudhary who was also a two time Councillor but he still lost the election. Further, CM Sukhu campaigned for Summerhill ward candidate where Union Minister Anurag Thakur also campaigned for BJP candidate but they both lost to CPIM candidate which was a consecutive fifth time win of CPIM in the ward. Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur campaigned for ex-Mayor and two time Councillor Satya Kaundal but she also lost from her ward. But in some wards, these road shows helped in the victory of candidates. Thus, it makes it clear that voters didn't vote in the name of national or state leadership. They voted for development, their issues in the wards, their satisfaction/dissatisfaction from the work of previous Councillors. On the basis of the campaigners' viability in the election, it is clear that main issue for winning the election is development and performance of individual candidate.

### **16. REBEL FACTOR**

Rebels also played an important role in victory and defeat of parties in some wards. There were 9 independents 4 from Congress and 5 from BJP. BJP lost from Engine Ghar ward because the

ex-Councillor of BJP Arti Chauhan contested as an independent candidate when she was denied the ticket. Similarly, in Krishnan Nagar ward, ex-Mayor Sohan Lal contested as independent as a result the Congress lost with a margin of 23 votes. Rebel factor was an important reason behind BJP's defeat in Assembly polls. In this election too, the rebels became hurdle for both BJP and Congress and led to their defeat in major wards.

### 17. AREA FACTOR

Shimla is a mixed bowl of Himachal Pradesh. The original residents of Shimla are very less in number as majority of people living here are from different parts of the State especially upper Shimla region. Jubbal Kotkhai belt is predominantly the one from where most of people work and reside in different wards especially Panthaghati, Sanjauli, Chhota Shimla and Dhali. Out of total 102 candidates, 10 were from Jubbal-Kotkhai belt. For influencing the voters, BJP MLA candidate Chetan Bragta campaigned for 5 BJP candidates but only 3 candidates won. With 5 Congress Councillors, now there are 8 Councillors (collectively BJP+ Congress) from Jubbal Kotkhai belt in Shimla MC. This reflects that area factor also played an important role in this election.

### 18. Women Candidate Performance

	Total seats conteste d	Total women contestan ts	Contestatio n Strike rate	Total wome n won	Winnin g Strike rate	Wome n winnin g from SC reserve d wards	Women winning from unreserve d seats
<b>BJP</b>	34	24	70.5	7	29.1	0	3
<b>Congress</b>	34	18	52.9	14	77.77	3	1
<b>CPIM</b>	4	1	25	0	0	0	0
<b>AAP</b>	21	11	52.38	0	0	0	0
<b>Independe nt</b>	9	3	33.3	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>58.88</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>61.76</b>	<b>3/3</b>	<b>4/8</b>

Source: Statistical Data on Shimla MC election 2023

Due to the provision of 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act, 17 seats were reserved for the women candidates in Shimla MC including three for Scheduled Caste women. No ST seat was reserved in Shimla MC as ST population in the area is less than 15%. BJP fielded women candidates on 24 seats which means 17 women candidates were named on reserved seats while seven on open seats. Congress nominated women candidates on 18 seats, only one on unreserved seat. CPIM and AAP nominated one and 11 women candidates from all reserved seats respectively. There were three women contesting as independent. In total 57 women contested from different wards including 8 women candidates from unreserved seats which accounts 58.88% of total contestation. This is much higher than Assembly polls data (5.8%).

Out of 24 female candidates from BJP, only 7 got elected whereas 14 women representatives from Congress party made their way to Shimla MC. This number is much better as in addition to 17 reserved seats, 4 women candidates won from non-reserved seats. Hence, 21 women candidates won in the MC of 34 members which accounts 61.76% of total seats. Shimla MC got 21 female Councillors 7 from BJP and 14 from Congress. This number is much above than 50% reservation for women.

Further out of 14 candidates who were Councillor in 2017 MC, only 6 candidates won and that too includes 4 women candidates who recontested and won from their wards. This reflects that these women Councillors worked for their ward and people were satisfied with their work.

From this we analysed that women get good representation in local bodies but when it comes to Assembly and Parliamentary level, there is not adequate representation of women. Due to reservation, a good number of female candidates were nominated by different political parties but in Assembly and Parliamentary level where there is no provision of reservation, women lack representation. In 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly Election of Himachal Pradesh, 24 women contested against 412 males and results were much shocking as HP Legislative Assembly got only one female MLA. In Parliament there are only 14% women MPs. This point was also pointed in the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2001) that almost all parties have set up their women organisation to get the support of women who constitute nearly 50% of the electorate but in practice, very less proportion of women candidates are fielded in the elections. This reflects the patriarchal nature of Himachal politics. Women candidates are winning on unreserved seats in local body elections may it be ULBs or PRIs but this representation lacks in higher political levels.

## **19. EMPIRICAL STUDY**

A pre-poll survey was conducted by the researcher and on that basis certain findings were drawn. The survey was conducted in two phases. The data was collected from the voters through google form which candidates were personally questioned by the researcher. Among the voters responding through google form, 67.8% were males as compared to 30.2% females. This showed that women voters didn't show much interest in pre-poll survey.

Maximum respondents were between 18-30 years of age. 58.1% respondents were postgraduates. 48.8% of respondents were dissatisfied with the performance of previous Councillor and didn't want to repeat the same candidate in this election. This reflected the change-oriented nature of Shimla voters. The respondents reported that most of the wards lacked certain facilities like water, parking, cleanliness, streetlights, issue of stray animals. The voters of Shimla vote without any influence as 88.4% voters reported in the survey that casting of votes was based on their own decision. The main concern of the voters was work done by the candidate as while stating their preference, 69.8% respondents reported that will vote on the basis of work done, 2<sup>nd</sup> priority was party affiliation of candidate and 3<sup>rd</sup> was educational qualification of candidate. While answering to the role of Councillors, 59.8% people believed that local representatives moderately think about civic and development functions in their area which 16.7% think they take it lightly. This reflects that voters are dissatisfied with the non-serious nature of local representatives. 59.5% people strongly agree that political parties take keen interest in local politics which is correct in the sense that political parties work from grassroot to national level. 70.7% people agreed that local leaders are important to get better vote share in local and state election. This proves the concept of organic linkage that parties focus on local leadership for all its activities and elections. As 88.1% people were in favour that it was easy to approach local Councillor for local issues, it is clear that local leadership is much easily approachable for people as compared to state and national leadership. 62.4% voters agreed that if any political party is elected at local and state level, it will result in better financial aid to local bodies which is the essence of fiscal federalism. Without finances, no government or body can work efficiently thus, it becomes important to provide better finances to the all levels of government, particularly, local bodies.

The candidates contesting for the post of Councillors were also interviewed. Majority of candidates were such who have no party connection with the family while some candidates responded that their family members have close connection with the party. This shows that party connection proves to be a factor while allocating of tickets while some tickets were allocated to candidates for their performance in the political party. Majority candidates were contesting on



development issues. Majority of candidates saw Shimla MC election important for State and National politics in the wake of upcoming Lok Sabha election as the election was held on party symbols. They also responded that political parties take keen interest in local elections so that they can build a great organizational structure as a base for national and local elections. Some candidates showed their concern for providing more power to MCs and Councillors in order to ensure effective functioning of local body and

## **20. ANALYSES**

In Indian polity, there are three variables those are well knitted in the Indian society and have dominant position in deciding and determining the nature of the Indian politics. Urban society in India is in comparison to rural society is in infant stage. Urban life is mainly organised on the basis of the economic variable. Community and emotional variable are loose in the urban system. These variables were much visible in Shimla MC election in voting pattern of urban people. From allocation of tickets by parties to low voting percentage, all three variables played a role along with the modern factors like development.

The results of Shimla MC reflects that there are similarities and dissimilarities in local, state and national elections. People of Himachal voted differently in State and MC election. Though, BJP tried to influence voters on national issues but the voters was concerned with their local issues. Similarly in Assembly election held six months earlier, people voted for Congress despite its weak Centre. The vote share of BJP was 42.88% as compared to 43.96% of Congress. But in MC election, BJP's vote share dropped to 40.58% and there was increase in vote share of Congress (51.77%) along with increase in seat share. While Vote share of others was 7% which shows that no third force exist in Himachal. In Himachal, both BJP and Congress have strong base. People do not prefer any third party in any election. Political parties have deep roots in the local politics. Parties gradually shifting their organizational structure and functioning on the federal principles. They recognize importance of the local leadership and local self-government.

Further, good women representation at local bodies increased considerably but this lacks at higher levels of the government. It also reflects that women are able to get representation in local bodies only due to reservation policy and the patriarchal configuration to retain the seats by involving more than one family member in the local politics. Reservation is not the solution to all problems but it can be the stepping stone for better women representation in politics at higher level. Thus, the Women Representation Bill must be passed with immediate effect so that Indian politics doesn't remain male centric and open good scope for women representation.

BJP had lost two major elections in last six months in the State at the time when the Lok Sabha elections are not too far. This is something that India's biggest party need to see. For Congress it is a third win after the death of ex-CM Virbhadra Singh. This was important to provide a big boost to the party cadre at the time when party is on the verge of extinction. CPIM managed to win only one seat though it contested on four seats which reflects the declining support of the party in the city where it once had its candidates elected directly for the position of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. CPIM need to work on its organization strengthening and cadre building from losing its lone seat in Assembly elections to just contesting on just four seats in MC polls (least till date). Otherwise, party would lose its national party status similar to CPI and TMC. AAP got a clean hand in this election after losing all seats in Assembly Election too. All the candidates of AAP lost their deposits which shows that people don't trust the party even though it became a national Party. AAP which is a newcomer in the state, a newly crowned National Party, need to understand the nature of Himachal politics. After losing all seats in Assembly polls and now in Mc polls, party should work on ground level rather than showing its presence only in elections. In Assembly polls, the party came out loud after winning the neighboring state of Punjab but left the candidates in the middle of elections. Similar instance was seen in this election when the election became the responsibility of the candidates even elections were held on party symbols. Further, caste variable is negligible in the city. AAP tried to consolidate the lower castes by allocating tickets to this section. Its electoral performance indicates that class configuration cannot help to win the elections. This trend was also similar to the state and Parliamentary elections. Independents who contested in this election were either ex-Councillors or members of BJP and Congress who were denied tickets by the party. They failed to get the support of voters as well as party loyalists in the election too. Party candidates were backed by party as well as leadership but independents had to work alone. Further, the candidates who fought as independents earlier were given ticket by parties as they betted on winning candidates. This reduced the chances of independent candidates but led to rise of some rebels from the parties. Local elections also reflect the mood of the people. There is organic linkage in the elections of the different levels. Mass understanding is that development is the core issue, local governments heavily depend on higher echelons of the government for the financial resources. From this perspective, they vote keeping in mind the ruling party at the State level.

## **21. CONCLUSION**

For better function of local bodies, candidates selected must be work-oriented, must work on issues for which they contested, must work for public satisfaction, development, ticket should

not be allocated to mafias and corrupt candidates and policies should be framed in favour of masses. The results of MC Election affirms that Himachal Pradesh has a bi-party system and there is no room for a third alternative. The fight remained between BJP and Congress. Political parties have deep roots in the local politics. Hence, people of Himachal remain confine to BJP and Congress and power at local and State level keeps on shuffling between these two parties only. Further, women participation in local politics increased due to reservation of seats. Male performance of both parties remained poor as compared to females. For better women participation in national and state level politics, it is important to have same provisions in Parliamentary and Assembly elections. Also, patriarchy has its implications in the urban politics while caste variable is not strong due to demographic composition of the city. Economic variable and the development issue played an important role in determining the shape of this election. Results of Shimla MC reflected the organic linkage in the election of the different levels.

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