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Electoral Constituency of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in Himachal Pradesh

Sapna K. Sharma and Kiranjot Kaur***

*Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh (India)
E-mail:<sapna.gc@gmail.com>

**Ph.D Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh (India)
E-mail:<kiranjotkaurbinder@gmail.com>

Abstract

In order to function as the highest legislative body representing Sikhs globally, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee's electoral constituency falling in the state of Himachal Pradesh will be examined and analyzed in this study. By exploring this electoral constituency, this exploratory study aims to shed light on it. With information gathered from pertinent sources, this study aims to offer a thorough understanding of and insight into the demographic constituency for selecting the representative to the based on distinct constituencies. This paper uses a descriptive research design to attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of the legislative process and contribute to the Sikh community.

Keywords

SGPC, Election, Electoral constituency, Reservation policy.

Research Foundation International, New Delhi
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Editorial Office : D-59, Shastri Nagar, Meerut - 250 004 (INDIA)

Ph. : 0121-2763765, +91-9997771669, +91-9219658788

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1. Introduction

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), which holds elections to choose its representatives, boasts the distinction of being one of the world's oldest democratic religious organizations. The SGPC has historical significance, which emphasizes the organization's dedication to democratic ideals. This prestigious institution emphasizes accountability, inclusivity, and transparency in its electoral processes. Because it has historically used democratic methods to choose its delegates, the SGPC has established a reputation as a model of democratic governance.

A key component of democratic governance is elections, which provide people the ability to choose who will represent them in legislative bodies. An electoral constituency or electoral district is the region from which the Members are chosen. Depending on the nation and its election system, this idea includes a variety of phrases and institutions. In essence, an election constituency is a particular location where voters congregate to select their representatives. For the purpose of elections there are 170 electoral constituencies. Local residents of the community can vote and take part in the decision-making process because each constituency represents a distinct area. It's an essential component of the SGPC's community engagement strategy and guarantees that all opinions are heard when forming leadership and policies.

2. Review of Literature

The Sikh Gurdwaras Act (1925) was enacted by the British colonial authorities to transfer the authority to the elected body to control and administer the Sikh shrines. It was approved by Punjab Governor-General on 28th July, 1925 and then published in Punjab Gazette on 7th August, 1925 under notification no. 4288-S of 12th October, 1925 and finally became operative on 1st November 1925. It

ensures that the religious operations are managed effectively and preserves the holiness of Sikh sacred sites.

The Sikh Gurdwara Board Election Rules (1959) provides details about the voters registration, returning officers, voter forms submission, claims and revision. It has detailed information for the conduct of elections through ballot paper and measures to be taken before and after the conduct of elections by the Officers appointed from State by the Commissioner, Gurdwara Election.

The Sikh Gurdwara Committee Election Rules (1959) provides with all the details as to defining the committee, Commissioner, constituency, election and agents. It defines the Returning Officer responsible to conduct these elections and various stages of the election ranging from nomination papers to scrutiny of these papers, to withdrawing candidature, to polling stations, to conducting polling and declaring results.

The Haryana Sikh Gurdwaras (Management) Act (2014) is a legislative provision created by Haryana government to meet the particular needs of the Haryana's Gurdwara management committees which were previously under the control of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee for a separate management committee. Like Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925, this act provides for the formation, powers and functions, elections and other duties, Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Judicial Commission, and miscellaneous functions of the committee.

Bhalla, H. S., Kant. K., Garg, M., Sangeeta, V., & Singh, B. (2023) in 11th Report on "Rules for Delimitation of Wards and Election of the Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee" is a document that disseminates knowledge on the rules and regulations for constitution of Gurdwara Management committee and the election machinery for conducting these elections and important officials responsible for these elections.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are following:

1. To find out the strength of constituencies in Himachal Pradesh.
2. To check if the constituencies have active reservation policy in the state.
3. To demarcate the area of the constituency.

4. Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative and descriptive research design, relying on secondary data compiled from several sources such as books, journals, articles, and Acts of the Constitution of India. This meticulous approach for data collection ensures that the research is well informed and a wide range of sources are used to support the conclusions.

5. Findings and Interpretation

5.1 Constituency

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) encompasses a total of 170 electoral constituencies designated for election across the regions of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. Among these 170 constituencies it has 1 specific constituency allocated for the state of Himachal Pradesh. This constituency is named as Shimla or Shimla-1 as a representation to the state and is listed first among all other constituencies and hence Shimla-1.

5.2 Reservation of Constituency

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) has established a reservation policy which reserves seats for the Scheduled Caste Sikhs, Sikh Women and Scheduled Caste Sikh Women candidates. This reservation policy is in accordance with the demographic distribution of Sikhs within the constituency. However, it is noteworthy that Shimla constituency is unreserved meaning it operates under a open category designation, offering no reservation for any specific groups. Thus, individuals from the general category can contest for seats in this constituency.

5.3 Territorial Area

For the election purpose, the constituency for the region of Himachal Pradesh is called Shimla constituency. The Shimla constituency's borders were clearly defined in a notice released by the Ministry of Home Affairs on April 20, 1996. This region, located in the scenic state of Himachal Pradesh, has several administrative units, including the Shimla Municipal Corporation and the Jatog Cantonment Board in the Shimla district. It also covers the districts of Lahaul and Spiti, Kulu, Kangra, Hamirpur, and Una.

Furthermore, the Shimla constituency includes the Dalhousie Municipal Committee, Dalhousie Cantonment Board, and Bakloh Cantonment Board from Chamba region. Additionally, it includes the tehsils of Nalagarh and Kandaghat, the sub-tehsil of Rani Shahar, and the cantonment boards of Kasauli, Sabatu, and Dagshai in Solan district.

The Ministry of Home Affairs' demarcation of the Shimla constituency provides clarity and structure to the region's administrative divisions, ensuring effective governing and representation for the Sikhs.

6. Conclusion

The Shimla constituency in Himachal Pradesh is a crucial electoral stronghold for the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. Given that it includes the majority of the areas in the state where the Sikh population is most prevalent, this constituency is quite important. Since it is an unreserved seat, candidates from all backgrounds are welcome to apply. To ensure that their demands are recognized and met, the locals choose one representative to represent them in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

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