

Emerging Electoral Trends In Haryana Panchayati Raj Institutions: An Analytical Perspective On Grassroots Democracy

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Abstract

Elections are an important instrument to test the legitimacy of a governance system. It is an essential and inseparable part of the modern representative democracy as a means of communication between the public and government. Indian society has the attributes of different languages, castes, and cultures. With these diversities, it seems impossible to decide the appropriate electoral dynamics at the grassroots governance level. The objective of this paper is to explore the various electoral trends of Haryana Panchayati Raj Institutions. This secondary sources-based paper uses archival, content analysis and quantitative methods to explore the electoral dynamics of grassroots democracy in Haryana. Due to the non-availability of the official Haryana Panchayati Raj Election Report, 2022 in the public domain, the present study confines its analysis to the Panchayati Raj elections conducted up to 2016.

Keywords: *Electoral Dynamics, Grassroots Democracy, Elections, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Emerging Trends.*

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I. Introduction

A core element of democracy is the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, and to stand for and vote in elections (Meyer 2011). The right to vote and right to be a candidate is the most important political right which is treated as an electoral right (Devi 2018). Various academic institutes and private organisations are working with different indicators of assessing the democratic health of world's governance system and patterns. The verities of democracy (V-Dem) institute's Democracy Report (published from Department of Political Science, University of Gothenberg, Sweedon) sheds light on the state of democracy worldwide with a special focus on the liberal democracy index (LDI) that combines the electoral "core" institutions with the liberal aspects (V- Dem 2022: 13). The V- Dem liberal democracy index has two sub- parts for the purpose of data process management, first deals with the electoral democracy index (EDI) by including different indicators of suffrage, elected officials, clean elections, freedom of association and freedom of expression and alternative sources of information and second part pin points to liberal component index (LCI) which covers the indicators of equality before law, judicial constraints on the executive and legislative constraints on the executive (V- Dem 2022: 50). India is placed at 100 (36 score) rank out of 202 countries as per V-Dem Report 2022 in electoral democracy index and ranked 85 position (with 55 score) in participatory component index (PCI). The V-Dem participatory component index includes a local government index having elected local government indicator (V-Dem 2022: 54). According to V-Dem Report, 2022, India is considered among the top 10 the major autocratizer countries as anti-pluralist parties derive autocratization in at least 6 of the top 10 autocratizers- Brazil, Hungary, India, Poland, Serbia and Turkey (V-Dem 2022:7).

The Global State of Democracy Report 2021 (published from International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Framework, USA) exposes that more countries than ever are suffering from democratic erosion (decline in democratic quality) including in established democracies. The number of countries undergoing democratic backsliding (a more severe and deliberate kind of democratic erosion) has never been as high as in the last decade, and includes regional geographical and economic powers such as Brazil, India and

United States. The backsliding countries are dismantling the core attributes of democratic systems. These trends have become more acute and warring with the onset of the pandemic. Over the past two years some countries, particularly Hungary, India, The Philippines and the USA, have seen a number of democratic violations that is, measures that disproportionate, illegal, indefinite or unconnected to the nature of emergency (Institutional IDEA, 2021 P.6). According to this report's observations, India is among the 10 democracies which have experienced declines in clean elections since 2015 (ibid P 14). Democracies are being harmed from within by illiberal forces, including unscrupulous politicians willing to corrupt and shatter the very institutions that brought them to power. The freely elected leaders from Brazil to India have also taken or threatened a variety of anti-democratic actions, and the resulting breakdown in shared values on the international stage. (Sarahand Slipowtz 2022 P.2). India has suffered a series of setbacks to political rights and civil liberties since 2019 elections (Ibid, P.8). India's ruling Bhartiya Janata Party also tried to limit the opposition's ability to compete through various methods, including by pursuing selective corruption investigations (Freedom in the World Report 2022 P.21).

According to democracy index 2021 (published from Economist Intelligence Unit, Weekly Newspaper-The Economist, UK), the most improved countries are not always the best. In case of India, whose score improved by 0.30, this follows a cumulative 1.20 decline between 2016 and 2020, reflecting a serious determination in the quality of democracy by increasing intolerance and sectarianism towards Muslims and other religious minorities (Democracy Index Report 2021:12). As per the indicators electoral process and pluralism (8.67), functioning of government (7.50), political participation (7.22), political culture (5.00), civil liberties (6.18) and overall, 6.91 score, India is ranked at 46th place out of 167 countries and lie in flawed democracy regime (Economist Intelligence, P.6&42). Indonesia and India both reversed a recent trend of deterioration in the quality of their democracies. In India, yearlong protests by farmers eventually forced the government to repeal the farm laws that it had introduced in 2020. However, the government's failure to crack down on the persecution of religious and other minorities by Hindu nationalists' countries to weigh on India's democracy score, which has declined significantly in recent years (ibid, P.43).

The above discussed every report have electoral dynamics as the basic element of their indexing and assessing criteria. At the national level, there are declining trends from the perspective of electoral democracy. But the seen at the local governance level is different from the above scenario.

II. Perspectives Of Different Commissions And Committees On Local Electoral Dynamics:

Various Committees and Commissions discussed the matter of electoral dynamics of bodies directly or indirectly. Some specific observations and recommendations in this regard are being pin-pointed in this title. A Committee on elections to Panchayati Raj bodies was constituted on 22 February, 1964 for analysing and recommending the feasible appropriate methods of elections. As per observation of this Committee, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India were working at that time in 11 states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujrat, Madras, Maharashtra, Mysore, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bangal) and Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir as well as Kerala states were designing their legislative provisions for the same (Government of India (GOI) 1965:6). Every state had their own perspective on the methods of elections (direct and indirect) according to their convenience for these local bodies. For example, in Punjab the entire village was considered as a single constituency and Panchayat members were elected through a single nontransferable vote system. It means there was not a ward system for a Panchayat member from the perspective of election and the responsibilities. Various provisions were prevailing at that time for co-opted members, nominated and ex-officio members particularly for women Scheduled Castes/Tribes instead of elected members. The committee recommended that all the members of a Panchayat should be elected based on secret ballot from a specific ward as compulsory voting (if a voter fails to cast vote then should be fined Rupee one). It was suggested that two seats should be reserved for women, one seat for Scheduled Caste where their population is less than 10 percent and two seats where their population is more than 10 percent and one seat for Scheduled Tribes where their population is more than 5 percent. The Sarpanch should be elected directly by Panchayat voters (GOI 1965:17).

In 20-40 Panchayat Samiti members, 4 women members should be co-opted out of the elected women members of the Panchayats of Samiti constituency. In case of Scheduled Caste 2 members where their population is less than 10 percent otherwise 4 members should be co-opted as Panchayat Samiti members. Regarding Scheduled Tribes, 2 representatives should be co-opted where their population is more than 5 percent. All the co-opted members should have their representatives by single transferable vote system. All the Sarpanches of the Samiti area should be the ex-officio members of Samiti (GOI 1965:23). The Chairperson of the Samiti shall be elected by an electoral college consisting of members of all the village Panchayats comprised in the Samiti area and the Vice-Chairman by its members from among themselves. Regarding Zila Prishad, in 40-60 members, 8 women members should be co-opted out of the women members of the constituent Samiti. The four Scheduled Caste members should be co-opted from the Panchayat Samiti where their population is less than 10 percent if more than 10 percent there will be 8 co-opted members and four members of Scheduled Tribe should be co-opted where their population is more than 5 percent in Samiti area. Chairmen of Panchayat Samitis comprised in the

Zila Parishad should be ex-officio members. The President of Zila Parishad should be elected by an electoral college consisting of members of the Panchayats comprised within the jurisdiction of Zila Parishad and the Vice-President of Zila Parishad should be elected by its members (GOI 1965:30).

A Committee on electoral reforms was constituted under Sh. Dinesh Goswami in 1990 and recommended that the jurisdiction of electoral machinery should be extended to Panchayati Raj Institutions elections only after ascertaining the exact details of the contemplated legislative or constitutional measures (GOI 1990:13). It was also recommended that the electronic voting machine (EVM) should be used in all elections including Panchayats and local bodies (ibid :31). The National Commission for Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), 2002 critically analysed the operational issues of Panchayati Raj Institutions electoral dynamics. As per the observations of NCRWC, there is a regular practice of State governments for delaying the Panchayat elections purely on political considerations. State Election Commission is also working as per the direction of state politics due to logistic, staff and financial supports. Sometimes the State governments restrict State Election Commission to perform its constitutional duties. In this regard, the commission recommended that amending the articles 243k and 243ZA of Indian constitution for functioning of State Election Commission independently for the state government and draw expertise as well as guidance from Election Commission of India (NCRWC) (Para 9.6.1-2). For ensuring regular PRIs elections, the Commission recommended that it should be the duty of state and union (Union Territories) to ensure the completion of local bodies' elections within the stipulated limits. Along with state government, the State Election Commission should ensure about regularity of Panchayat elections, if any delay should make a report to the Governor in this regard and suggest remedial measures to the avoid constitutional breach (NCRWC 2002:9.16.1-2).

In case of electoral rolls and delimitation, the Commission recommended that there should be a common electoral roll and common polling station for the elections of local bodies, State Legislature and Parliament (NCRWC 2002: 9.17.1-2). The delimitation of the constituencies for local bodies should be adjusted after every census and not for every election as well as the administrative boundaries of districts, sub-divisions, taluks, police stations etc. should not be change within six months prior to a Panchayat or a Municipal election (NCRWC 2002: 9.17.4). Another issue of delaying local bodies' elections is reservation and rotation of reserved constituencies offices and division of responsibilities as observed by the Commission. In this regard, it was recommended that Articles 243D and 243T should be amended to provide for rotation and changes only at the time of delimitation only and State government should provide guidelines for ensuring transparency and adequate opportunities for eliciting voter response (NCRWC 2002: 9.18.2). It was also recommended by the Commission that all election notifications to local bodies should be issued by the State Election Commission instead of state government (NCRWC 2002: 9.19.2).

A Working Group on Democratic Decentralisation and Panchayati Raj Institutions of Planning Commission recommended that all State governments may amend their legislations to confer the responsibilities of preparing of electoral rolls, delimitation of constituencies, reservation and rotation of seats, qualification of candidates, conduct of elections and functioning as the first stage of adjudication in election disputes to the State Election Commission on the pattern of Maharashtra and West Bengal (GOI 2006:25). It was also recommended by this group that a single chain of accountability instead of two parallel lines of accountability should be adopted. It means the Sarpanch should be elected indirectly because directly elected panch is accountable to people and Sarpanch should be accountable to panches only rather than the electors/voters (GOI 2006:26).

On April 27, 2007, the Government of India constituted a Second Commission on Centre-State Relations under the Chairpersonship of Justice Madan Mohan Puchi. The fourth volume of this Commission report was oriented towards local self-governments and decentralised governance. The issue of rotation of reserved seats was addressed in this report and commission recommended for two terms (10 years) regarding the membership as well as offices of their chairperson seats rotation (Kundu 2010:59-60). In case of electoral rolls and delimitation of PRIs constituencies the Commission recommended that the rolls for the Assembly elections should be adopted for elections to local bodies and Article 82 needs to be amended for setting up of State Delimitation Commission for realigning Panchayats and municipal wards (ibid 2010:65).

The sixth report of Second Administrative Reforms Commission on Local Governance: An Inspiring Journey into the Future was submitted in October, 2007. The Commission had it view that there is no need of a separate Delimitation Commission for local governments. The independent State Election Commission can easily undertake this exercise and the government can issue broad guidelines in this regard (GOI 2007:33).

The Model Panchayat Election Rules, 2011 were drafted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India for generalisation of local electoral dynamics in India. According to these rules, the territorial constituencies of village Panchayats, intermediate Panchayats and district Panchayats managed by District Magistrate should comprise of from the 500, 5000 and 50000 population respectively (GOI 2011: Section 8). According to these Model Panchayat Election Rules, each district of the State shall be allotted a district code by the State Election Commission and similarly the codes of intermediate and village Panchayats codes shall be allotted by the concerned District Magistrate (GOI 2011: Section 12). District Magistrate shall prepare a draft list

of territorial constituencies of all the tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions (GOI 2011: Section 13). The allotment of reserved category seats on rotational basis shall be managed by District Magistrate and the superintendence, direction and control of the State Election Commission (Ibid: Section 14). The post of Deputy Chairpersons at all levels shall be remained unreserved in the scheduled area (Ibid: Section 17). The women reservation shall be not less than 50% at all the tiers of PRIs (ibid: Section 20). A register regarding constituency wise reservation details of Village Panchayat members shall be maintained by Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO). The District Magistrate shall be responsible for maintaining such registers for Village Panchayat Chairpersons, members of intermediate and district Panchayats and Chairpersons of intermediate Panchayats. The register of District Panchayats Chairpersons shall be maintained by the State Election Commission (Ibid: Section 22).

A roadmap document for the Panchayati Raj (2011-17) was prepared by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India in 2011. This document pin pointed that there must be parity in the electoral processes among Parliamentary, Assembly and Panchayat elections. The common electoral roll for all the tiers of PRIs was proposed under this document. Regarding rotation in the reservation of seats, the seats and offices of Chairpersons be reserved for two continuous terms for a particular category where the population of a particular category is 5 percent or more as suggested by Second Administrative Reforms Commission (GOI 2011: 55-56). The document supported for direct elections to Chairpersons of intermediate and district Panchayats because of getting meritorious candidates who directly represent the people (Ibid: 59).

A letter from the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India was circulated to 9 states and 3 Union Territories in November, 2020 regarding timely holding of Panchayat elections. Through this letter the Ministry expressed the constitutional mandate of holding regular elections to the Panchayats every five years under Article 243(I). As per the observation of Ministry of Panchayati Raj, these elections are often being delayed on the grounds of amendments in Panchayati Raj Acts, delimitation exercise, court cases, and preparation of electoral rolls, reservation aspects etc. Further clarified that these issues are administrative in nature and election schedule should not be affected. Through this letter a request is being made to review the matter personally and take appropriate steps to ensure timely preparation and conduct of Panchayat elections in conformity with the constitutional provisions (GOI 2020).

Electoral Dynamism in Haryana PRIs before 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act

After the formation Haryana as a separate State, the Gram Panchayat elections were held only five times till the passage of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 i.e. June 1971, June 1978, June 1983, August 1988 and December 1991. Before 1971, the Panchayats and panches had been elected directly by the adults of the village sabha area. First time in 1971 elections, Sarpanches were elected by the panches instead of common masses. Again in 1978 elections, the Sarpanches were elected by the voters of sabha area and continue till the first general elections after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 i.e. 1994. In this context, the Panchayat Samitis elections were held three times till 1994 i.e. 1972, 1983 and 1991 (Shamsher Singh Malik: 2005, 7). A three-tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions was established in Punjab after enactment of Punjab Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act, 1961 as per recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (Ranbir Singh 1977). This three-tier system of local governments was inherited by Haryana in 1966. The upper tier of Panchayati Raj i.e. Zila Parishad was abolished in June 1973 on the recommendations of adhoc committee constituted by the Haryana government (Malik 2004). From 1973 to 1994, a two-tier system of Panchayati Raj was functional in Haryana.

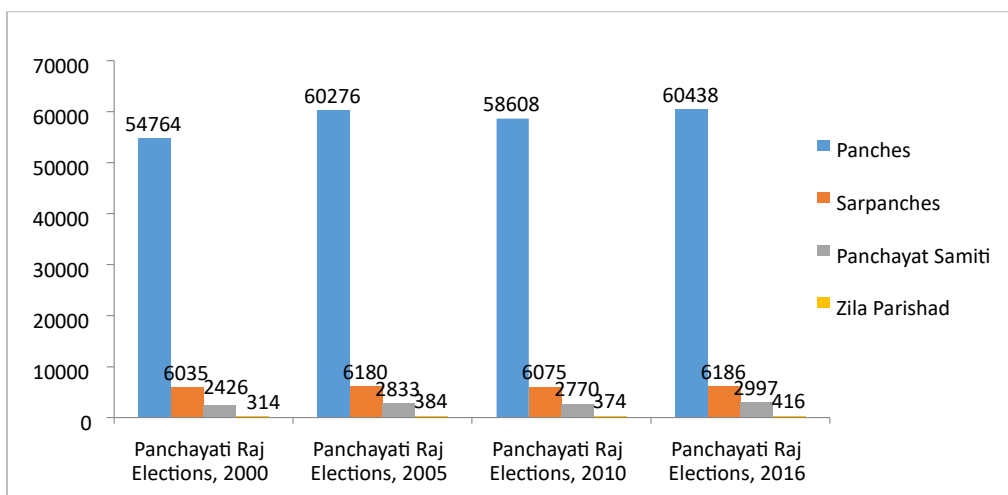
New Trends of Electoral Dynamism in Haryana Panchayati Raj

As per the provisions of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, total five general elections have been held in Haryana successfully i.e. 1994, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2016 and 2022 for the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions. It is pertinent to highlight here that Haryana Panchayati Raj Election Report 2022 is not available at State Election Commission website, so this paper covers data and new trends of Panchayati Raj Elections, 2016.

Table-1
Representation of Elected Members of Four Panchayat Elections in Haryana

PRIs Representative	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2000	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2005	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2010	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2016
	Total Elected Members	Total Elected Members	Total Elected Members	Total Elected Members
Panches	54764	60276	58608	60438
Sarpanches	6035	6180	6075	6186
Panchayat Samiti	2426	2833	2770	2997
Zila Parishad	314	384	374	416

Source: Author's Compilation from Haryana PRIs Election Reports, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2016.



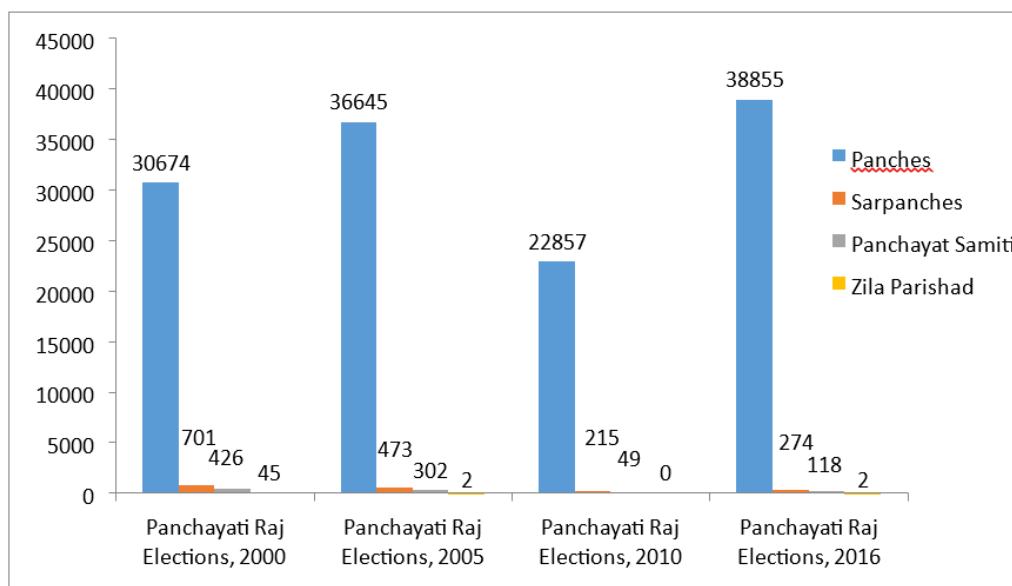
Unopposed Elections

After adoption of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 and as per the provisions of Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 the first general election for PRIs was held in December, 1994 but no record available in the election report regarding unopposed elected representatives. As per provisions of Haryana Election Rules, 1995 if for any seat, after the date and time fixed for withdrawal of nomination paper, only one contestant remains whose nomination paper found valid, the Returning Officer (Panchayat) shall declare the candidate duly elected to fill the seat and inform in this regard to State Election Commissioner through District Election Officer-Panchayat (Government of Haryana 1994: GSR 56/HA11/94/209/94). A comparative presentation in this regard of all the past four PRIs elections is highlighted in table-2.

Table-2
Representation of Unopposed Elected Members of PRIs in Haryana

Panchayati Raj Institutions Representative	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2000	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2005	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2010	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2016
	Unopposed Elected Members	Unopposed Elected Members	Unopposed Elected Members	Unopposed Elected Members
Panches	30674 (56%)	36645 (60.8%)	22857 (39%)	38855 (64.29%)
Sarpanches	701 (11.61%)	473 (7.7%)	215 (3.5%)	274 (4.43%)
Panchayat Samiti	426 (17.55%)	302 (10.7%)	49 (1.8%)	118 (0.94%)
Zila Parishad	45 (14.33%)	02 (.52%)	00	02 (0.48%)

Source: Author's Compilation from Haryana PRIs Election Reports, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2016.



The second PRIs general election was held in March 2000. In this election total 30674 (56%) panches, 701 (11.61%) Sarpanches, 426 (17.55%) Panchayat Samiti members and 45 (14.33%) Zila Parishad members were elected unopposed from their respective wards (Kundu 2012:9). The third PRIs general election was held in April, 2005 and 36645 (60.8%) panches, 473 (7.7%) Sarpanches, 302 (10.7%) Panchayat Samiti members and 2 (.52%) Zila Parishad members were elected unopposed from their respective institutions (PRIs Election Report 2005). The 4th general election of PRIs was held in June-July, 2010. Total 22857 (39%) panches, 215 (3.5%) Sarpanches, and 49 (1.8%) Panchayat Samiti members were elected unopposed (PRIs Election Report 2010). In the 5th PRIs elections at the base level of local governance total 38855 (64.29%) panches have been elected unopposed and 274 (4.43%) Sarpanches also elected unopposed. The unopposed representation in Panchayat Samitis was 118 (0.94). It is important to note here that not even a single member from Zila Parishad was able to promote the trend of unopposed representatives in this election (Kundu 2021: 486).

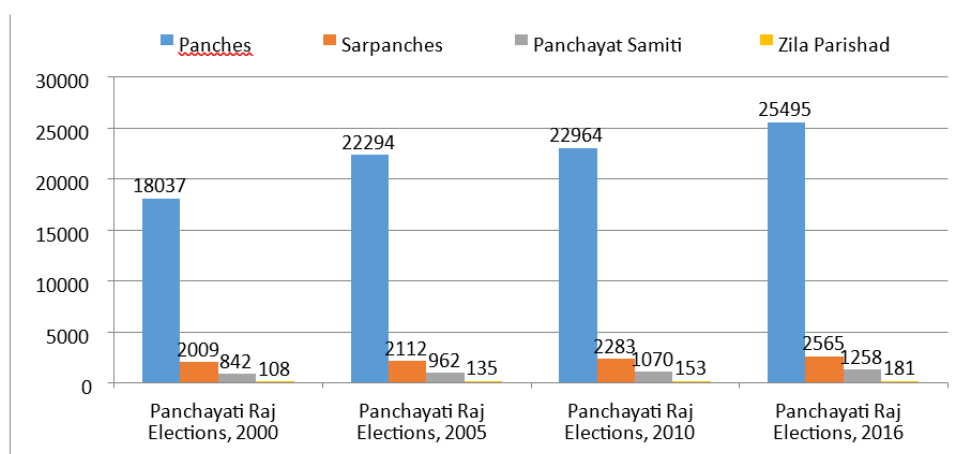
Women Representation in Haryana PRIs

After the enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act, the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 provided for 33% reservation of seats for women including Schedules Caste women by rotation and by lots. Not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Sarpanches in the block were also reserved for woman candidates. The above said configuration was same in the cases of Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad also. Presently, 50% women reservation in Haryana PRIs has been provided as per ‘The Haryana Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act, 2020’ notified on 02.02.2021(<https://www.panchayat.gov.in>). The first PRIs elections were held in December 1994 and 17928 (33.10%) women took oath as Gram Panchayat members and 1994 (33.47%) as Sarpanches. In Panchayat Samitis, there were 807 (33.37%) elected women members and 38 (34.55%) as Chairpersons. The total strength of women members and Chairpersons was 101 (33.33%) and 5 (31.25%) respectively in Zila Parishads (Government of Haryana 1997).

Table-3
Representation of Women Members in Haryana Panchayat Elections

PRIs Representative	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2000	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2005	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2010	Panchayati Raj Elections, 2016
Panches	18037 (32.99%)	22294 (36.90%)	22964 (39.2%)	25495 (42.2%)
Sarpanches	2009 (33.29%)	2112 (34.14%)	2283 (37.6%)	2565 (41.5%)
Panchayat Samiti	842 (34.65%)	962 (33.95%)	1070 (38.6%)	1258 (42%)
Zila Parishad	108 (34.39%)	135 (35.15%)	153 (40.9%)	181 (43.5%)

Source: Author’s Compilation from Government of Haryana, PRIs Elections Reports, 2000, 2010, 2016 and Report of 3rd State Finance Commission, 2008.



In 2000 elections, in Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis & Zila Parishads, the representation of women was 18037 (32.99%), 842 (34.65%) and 108 (34.39%) respectively. For the posts of Sarpanches, Chairpersons of Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads, the women acquired a significant position i.e. 2009 (33.29%), 52 (45.61%) and 7 (36.84%) respectively (Government of Haryana 2004). In the third PRIs general elections the representation of women was 21785 (36.26%), 962 (33.95%) and 135 (35.15%) in Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads respectively. In 2010 PRIs general elections the representation of women in Gram Panchayats of eight districts i.e. Ambala, Gurgaon, Kurukshetra, Mahendergarh, Mewat, Panchkula, Rewari and Yamunanagar was more than 37% and rest of the districts had this representation above 36%. The average representation of women in Panchayat Samitis was 34.65% but in Panchkula district this representation was highest i.e. 40%. The

average representation of women at Zila Parishad level was 39.42% and Faridabad district secured first position by electing 60% women in Zila Parishad followed by Mewat i.e. 55.55%. In the 5th PRIs general elections-2016, the women representation was increased to 25495 (42.2%), 2565 (41.5%), 1258 (42%) and 181 (43.5%) for the posts of Panch, Sarpanch, Panchayat Samiti Member and Zila Parishad Member respectively.

For the 517 unreserved Sarpanch posts, female candidates won in the direct fight with male contestants. In four villages of Rohtak district defeated their male counterparts. In Humayunpur village of Rohtak district, there were 10 male and 3 female contents for Sarpanch post and a female contestant Geeta won the seat. Similarly, in both the Panchayats of Ismaila Village of Rohtak district defeated their male counterparts. In Samchana village of again Rohtak district a female Kusumlata defeated two male counterparts (Amar Ujala, 2016.vi).

Minimum Education Qualification for PRIs Representation

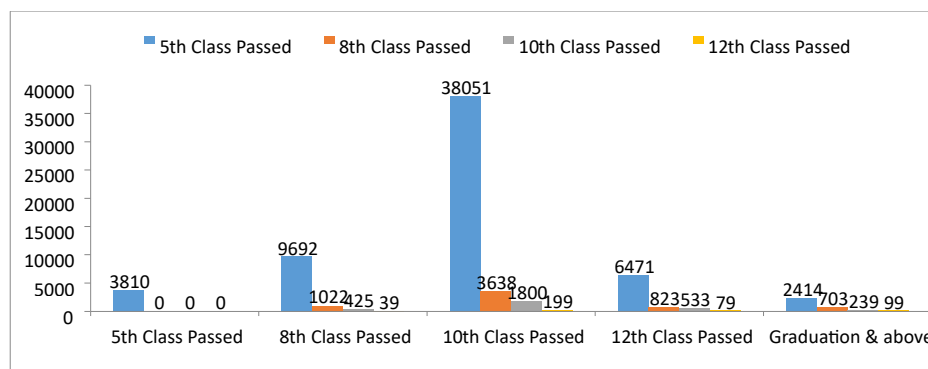
State governments have the power to make laws for proper functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions as self-government units as per the Article 40 and 246 (3) of Indian Constitution. In September, 2015 Government of Haryana amended the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 by including certain pre-requisites for contesting PRI's elections. A case was filed before Supreme Court of India as Rajbala versus State of Haryana under Civil Write Petition No. 671/2015 and the Court observed that "it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad. People do not choose to be illiterate. Therefore, prescription of an educational qualification is not irrelevant for better administration of Panchayats". It was concluded by the Court that "there is intelligible differentia and a rational nexus between the object sought to be achieve by the law and the classification itself" (Government of Haryana 2017:41)

As per Section 175(1)(V) of Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 the prerequisites of minimum education qualification of matriculation or its equivalent examination passed from any recognized institution/board was incorporated for the representatives of all the tiers of PRIs except women and scheduled castes candidates. The middle examination passed minimum qualification have been introduced for general category women and Scheduled Caste male candidates. The fifth-class examination passed scheduled caste female candidate are eligible for contesting the PRIs elections in Haryana. As other prerequisites, A contesting candidate should not fail to pay any arrear of any kind due to him/ her to any primary agriculture cooperative society, district central cooperative bank, district primary cooperative agriculture rural development bank (GOH Section 175(1), electricity bill (GOH Section 175 (4) and to submit self-declaration to the effect that he/she has a functional toilet at his/her place of residence (GOH Section 175 (4)). The education qualification-wise detail of PRIs representatives is given in table-4.

Table-4
Education Qualification-wise Representation of Elected Members of PRIs in Haryana

Education PRIs Representative	5 th Class Passed	8 th Class Passed	10 th Class Passed	12 th Class Passed	Graduation & above
Panches	3,810 (6.3%)	9,692 (16%)	38,051 (63%)	6,471(10.7%)	2,414 (4%)
Sarpanches	-	1,022(16.5%)	3,638(58.8%)	823 (13.3%)	703 (11.4%)
Panchayat Samiti	-	425 (14.2 %)	1,800 (60.1 %)	533 (17.8 %)	239 (8.0%)
Zila Parishad	-	39 (9.4 %)	199 (47.8%)	79 (19.0 %)	99 (23.8%)

Source: Author's Compilation from Haryana PRIs Election Reports, 2016.



The table-4 highlights the educational qualifications of elected members in Haryana's Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across different roles—Panches, Sarpanches, Panchayat Samiti members, and Zila Parishad members. Among Panches, the majority (63%) have a 10th-grade education, with smaller proportions attaining

12th-grade (10.7%) or graduation and above (4%). Sarpanches show a similar trend, with most (58.8%) educated up to the 10th grade, and higher qualifications, including graduates (11.4%), gradually increasing. For Panchayat Samiti members, the majority (60.1%) are 12th-grade pass, while graduates constitute 8%. Zila Parishad members have the highest representation of graduates (23.8%) and the lowest percentage of members with education below the 8th grade (9.4%). Overall, higher educational attainment increases with the hierarchy of PRI positions, reflecting a correlation between leadership roles and educational qualifications.

Category-wise Representation of Elected Representatives of Haryana PRIs

The category-wise representation of elected representatives in Haryana's Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) reflects an inclusive and participatory democratic framework at the grassroots level. These institutions emphasize gender equality through mandatory reservations for women and promote social equity by reserving seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. This inclusive approach fosters leadership opportunities for marginalized groups, empowering them to actively participate in governance and decision-making. By integrating people from different categories, Haryana's PRIs uphold the essence of decentralized democracy, addressing local needs while ensuring representation aligns with the principles of equity and justice.

**Table-5
Category-wise Representation of Elected Representatives of Haryana PRIs**

PPRIs Posts	Schedule Castes		Backward Class		Women		Unreserved Category	
	Seats Reserved	Actual Elected	Seats Reserved	Actual Elected	Seats Reserved	Actual Elected	Unreserved Seats	Actual Elected
Panch	14127 (22.6%)	15468 (25.6%)	5945 (9.5%)	14,116 (23.4%)	22936 (36.7%)	25495 (42.1%)	26312 (42.1%)	13724 (22.7%)
Sarpanch	1278 (20.6%)	1436 (23.2%)	00	1672 (%)	2097 (33.8%)	2565 (41.4%)	3,273 (52.8%)	2,785 (45.1%)
Panchayat Samiti	689 (22.9%)	784 (26.1%)	126 (4.2%)	449 (16.6%)	1029 (34.2%)	1258 (41.9%)	1,432 (47.7%)	835 (27.9%)
Zila Parishad	92 (22.2%)	96(23.1%)	21 (5%)	54 (13%)	144(34.7%)	181(43.5%)	195 (46.9%)	135 (32.5%)

Source: Author’s Compilation from Haryana PRIs Election Reports, 2016.

Overall, 16082 (25.7%) seats reserved for general category women but 10120 (16.7%) women were elected from this category. 6854 (11%) seats had been reserved of SC category women and 8365 (13.8%) women from this category were elected. Not even a single seat was reserved for Backward Class (BC) women but 7010 (11.6%) women elected from this category. The reservation of seats for BC Category is common (male+female) i.e. 5945 (9.5%) but total 21126(35%) BC members were elected which is more than 3 times of their reserved seats. Total 22936 (36.7%) seats were reserved for all categories women panches and 25495 (42.2%) women were elected in this regard. There is no provision of BC Category seat reservation for the post of Sarpanch but 662 (10.7%) women and 1010 (16.3%) male and total 1672 (27.0%) Sarpanches elected from BC category. Overall total 1303 (21.1%) women Sarpanches elected against 1642 (26.5%) reserved seats. Regarding SC category women representation, total 600 (9.7%) Sarpanches were elected against 455 (7.3%) reserved seats for them. In nutshell total 2565 (41.5%) women Sarpanches were elected against 2097 (33.9%) reserved seats. No seat was reserved for BC women in Panchayat Samitis but 288 (9.6%) women and 499 (16.6%) male members were elected from this category. 591 (19.7%) women of general category were elected against 755 (25.1%) reserved seats. Total 379 (12.6%) SC women were elected against 274 (9.1%) reserved seats for them. Over all total 1258 (42%) women members were elected against 1029 (34.3%) reserved seats in Panchayat Samitis of Haryana. One seat in each district reserved for BC category in Zila Parishads but 20 (4.8%) women and 54 (13%) male members were elected on 21 reserved seats for them. Total 111 (26.7%) women from general category were elected against 108 (26%) reserved seats but regarding SC women, total 50 (12%) members elected against 36 (8.7%) reserved seats for them. Overall, 181 (43.5%) women have been elected against 144 (34.6%) reserved seats in Zila Parishads of Haryana (Kundu 2021).

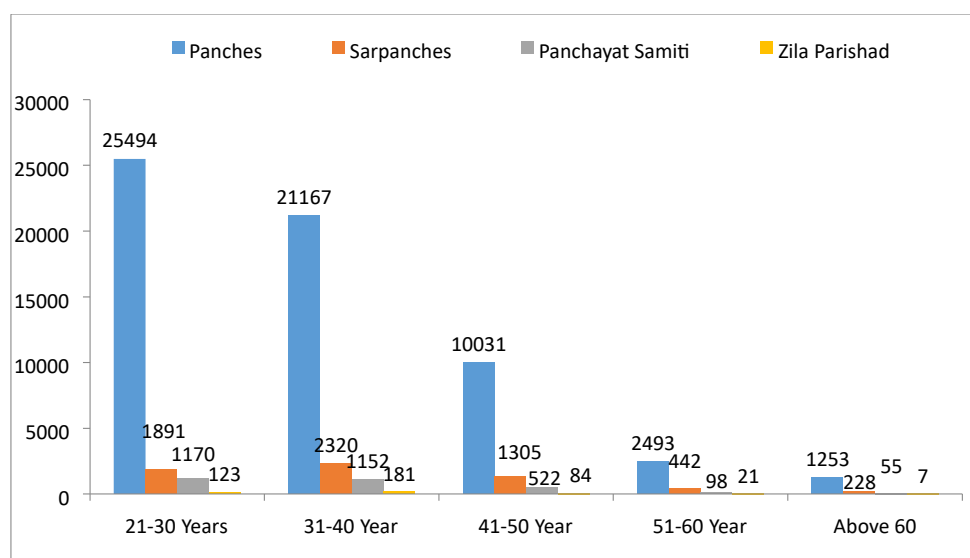
Rural Leadership in the Hands of Youth:

Traditionally the rural leadership was operated by the old age group of the society because of their experience of community life and maturity level of understanding things in a specific perspective. After 2016 PRIs elections, a scenario of youth leadership was emerged in rural leadership.

Table-6
Age-wise Representation of Elected Members of PRIs in Haryana

Age PRIs Representative	21-30 Years	31-40	41-50	51-60	Above 60
Panches	25,494 (42.2%)	21,167 (35%)	10,031 (16.6%)	2,493 (4.1%)	1,253 (2.1%)
Sarpanches	1891 (30.6%)	2320 (37.5%)	1,305 (21.1%)	442 (7.1%)	228 (3.7%)
Panchayat Samiti	1170 (39.1%)	1152 (38.4 %)	522 (17.4%)	98 (3.3 %)	55 (1.8%)
Zila Parishad	123 (29.5 %)	181(43.5 %)	84 (20.2 %)	21 (5.1 %)	7 (1.7%)

Source: Author's Compilation from Haryana PRIs Elections Report, 2016.



The average age of panches was 33.57 years in this election and it was 36.19 years for Sarpanches. In Mewat district, the average age of panches and Sarpanches was 30 years. In case of upper average age, it was 36 years for panches in Rohtak, Jhajjar and Sonapat Districts. Rewari district was at top with 39 years as average age of Sarpanches. The average age of Panchayat Samiti members was 33.85 years, it was again lower in Mewat district i.e. 30 years and highest in Jhajjar, Sonapat and Yumnagar i.e. 36 years. Regarding Zila Parishads, this average age was 35.28 years, lower again in Mewat district i.e. 32 years and highest in Faridabad i.e. 40 years. Ultimately, the rural leadership steering was in the hands of educated youth population of Haryana.

Diluting the Domination of Majority Caste Factor

Electoral dynamics is directly related to majoritarian (caste/ category/religion etc.) due to vote politics. But there are examples in Haryana, where the majoritarian ignore the caste factor for their village governance. Mr. Amit Kumar Khatri, a youth of Chandlan village of Kaithal district in Haryana already married with a Scheduled Caste woman Reena. Generally, inter-caste marriages are not acceptable in village society. During 2016 Panchayat elections, the Sarpanch post declared as reserved for Scheduled Caste woman and Reena was elected with heavy majority. (Dainik Bhashkar, 2016). Khapar village (Jind District) of total 2200 votes and majority of votes (1400) belong to Jat community was reserved for woman Sarpanch but Smt. Sonia w/o Mr. Pardeep, a tea shop operator belongs to Brahmin Community having only 25 votes was elected unopposed in elections (The Tribune, 2016: 2). Sahnava village of Hisar District having only single family of carpenter community's Mr. Ashwani, a private school teacher was elected unopposed as Sarpanch of the village. Not only this the villagers also paid his bank loan of Rs. 1.75 lakh (The Tribune, 2016: 4). Likely, Sumra Khera and Issharwal village of Hisar District unopposed elected their Sarpanches from Backward Class and Scheduled Caste candidates respectively to unreserved posts of Sarpanches. Similarly, Sh. Balbir Singh a Backward Class candidate of Buwana village of Jind district was elected unopposed in a Jat community majority village. In Jhuppa kalan village of Bhiwani district, the post of Sarpanch was reserved for general category woman but a woman of Backward Class was elected unopposed and only 13 voters belong to carpenter community (Backward Class) out of total 900 votes (The Tribune January 2016:4).

Electoral Non-Violence Message

Some villages in Haryana were famous for electoral violence, booth capturing and electoral deaths but during 2016 PRIs elections. Since 2005 PRIs elections in the Chhapraula village of Palwal district four deaths were commuted due to electoral tension but during 2016 PRIs elections the Sarpanch post was reserved for woman. First of all, woman of this village decided not to commit electoral violence, this proposal supported by youth and then the old age people. Ultimately, Smt. Pratibha Tewatia was elected unopposed in the village. Again, Badhraula village of Faridabad district was famous for booth capturing, due to this woman voters often avoided casting their votes. During 2016 elections, a youth Jaivinder Sardana started to motivate the voters by visiting door to door about unopposed elections. Initially, four candidate started campaign for Sarpanch post but observing the mood of voters, the leader of unopposed election campaign Mr. Jaivinder Sardana was elected unopposed in this village (Dainik Bhaskar, 2016 January 2).

Social Acceptance of Inter Caste Marriage:

In PRIs elections 2016, the traditional ideology of boycotting the inter-caste marriage was also accepted by the society. Dhani Mohabbtpur village of Adampur block is having a carpenter community (Backward Class) majority population but the post of Sarpanch was reserved for Scheduled Caste. A carpenter community youth Kamal did love marriage with Scheduled Caste lady Suman in 2011 and she fought for the reserved post. Similarly, in Bholaut village of Rohtak district Sonia, Scheduled Caste lady performed love marriage with Krishan in 2011, a general category male and fought unsuccessfully for the post of Sarpanch (Dainik Bhashkar, 2016: 2). A lady Meena of Gorakhpur village married inter-caste with a youth of Gaddi Kheri village of Rohtak district and defeated eight Scheduled Caste contestants in this election (Amar Ujala, January 2016: 1). It may be concluded that a person can take step for fighting an election when there are some voters with the contestants. Above examples of inter caste marriage shows that such inter caste marriages are acceptable by the concerned social strata of the area.

Voters Negate the Negative Trends:

Mew Community of Mewat District tried to manage the electoral marriage with already married women in the name of qualified women for securing their leadership lust. Ex Sarpanch Deen Mohammad of Akalimpur Nuh village of Nagina Block (Mewat) arranged an electoral marriage with educated wife of his brother-in-law Sajia but voters elected Jayada another educated contestant of this community. In another case Ex-Sarpanch Hanif Singar village of Mewat district manage an electoral marriage with Sanjida on September 11, 2015 and filed her nomination for reserved Sarpanch post but the voters casted their valuable votes in favour of B. Tech girl Aamna and elected as Sarpanch.

Ignore the Political Family based Candidates:

Most of the times the political families are taking advantage of their background but during 2016 PRIs elections this trend was ignored by the voters. In Kuleri village of Hisar district, Bhartiya Janta Party State President Subhash Barala's brother-in-law BalChand's wife Kanta Devi was defeated by 446 votes on the post of Sarpanch (The Tribune 2016 January 20: 2). From the same district, Dr. Kamal Gupta, MLA and Parliamentary Secretary's maternal sister Lakshimi Devi of Mandi Admpur defeated by 1373 votes in the contest of Sarpanch post. In Bhiwani district, Sombir Singh, Ex-MLA's nephew Amar's wife Manpreet of Gagarwas village got third place in the contest of Sarpanch post. In same district, Ex-Chief Minister, Sh. Banshilal's nephew Kuljeet of Kharkri Bawni village remained at third position for Sarpanch post (The Tribune, January 2016, 5:2). In Mewat district, Ex-Deputy Speaker's Azad Mohammad's son of Nimar Khera village (Firozpur Zirka Block) lost the post of Sarpanch by 91 votes. Ex-MLA of Pundri Sh. Makkhan Singh's brother Karan Singh of Kaul village got 6th place with only 453 votes for Sarpanch post. Ultimately, during 2016 PRIs elections the voters taught a lesson of democratic governance at the lower tier of Indian governance and leadership school.

III. Conclusion:

The electoral dynamics in Haryana during the 2016 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) elections exhibited a departure from traditional majoritarian considerations, such as caste and religion, in some instances. The examples highlighted instances where voters defied caste affiliations, opting for candidates based on merit and social acceptance. Inter-caste marriages, which were traditionally opposed in some villages, gained social acceptance when individuals involved in such marriages successfully contested and won elections. Additionally, there were instances of electoral non-violence, where communities known for violence during elections witnessed a shift towards peaceful and uncontested elections. Moreover, voters displayed a willingness to negate negative trends, rejecting candidates from political families and opting for individuals based on their capabilities rather than familial connections. This demonstrated a shift in the electorate's mindset, rejecting the influence of political backgrounds. Overall, the 2016 PRIs elections in Haryana showcased a trend towards more inclusive and merit-based electoral practices, challenging traditional norms and promoting democratic values at the grassroots level.

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