

Haryanvi Women's Participation in Electoral and Non Electoral Politics (1966-2001)

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ABSTRACT:

The Articles talks about the unending process of gender discriminations in the land of Mahabharata (Epic) since time immemorial till now which led to less direct and indirect participation of women in modern political system. In the light of modern political system, including Panchayati Raj system, and even social political movements the author tries to examine the role of Haryanvi women in electoral and non electoral politics and what are seen and unseen problems facing by them from historical perspective. The study reveals that lack of leadership, patriarchal system, unequal education facilities towards women and lack of social political organization for women, these factors also play a big role in less participation of women in political domain.

Key words: Bhaichara, Empowerment, Nasabandhi, Panchayat, Yojana

In Haryana majority of women could not come out from the four walls of socio-cultural atrocities, patriarchal structures, imbalanced power structure and decision-making patterns. As Haryanvi society is less egalitarian in psychological and economic share between the two genders and has burdened its women with uncounted household work. Women of the area were never involved in any political movement.

The *Arya Samajists* came to the Punjab region based on a social consciousness movement later supplementing their activities in politics for the freedom of India through the non-violence method or '*satyagraha*'. While the drive for *swadeshi* movement was taken up, the *Arya Samaj* gave a wide-open space to the women of Haryana to enter into the political and social movement. Under the patronage and guidance of the *Arya Samaj* a number of women's societies sprang up throughout the Punjab province. The women took to the social causes they were far more zealous than their men in furthering the cause of the movement. They had fixed meeting places of their own to receive papers and deliver lectures. Women's branch of the *Arya Samaj* was formed in Hissar where efforts were made to employ women preachers to travel in the villages and to make efforts for the conversion of the rural Jat women.

Since 1919, Gandhiji was the first person who visualized mass participation of women in the struggle for freedom and increased the number of Haryanvi women in non-violent freedom movement. In 1919 all the dreams of the national leaders were shattered when the government passed the Rowlatt Act, instead of considering the contribution of India in World War-I. Gandhiji appealed to the women of India to join the Satyagraha movement in large numbers and co-operate with men in the constitutional fight which they were waging against the Rowlatt legislation (CWMG, Vol. 15: 189). At Panipat a complete *hartal* was observed on 30th March, 1919, against the Rowlatt Act. Haryanvi women came to realize that they had sacrificed their sons and husbands for the sake of the empire, yet there was no end to repression and oppression (Verma, M. 2003: 34). Among the women freedom fighters, Bhag

Devi of Ambala was keenly involved in Gandhiji's peaceful movement against the Rowlatt Act. At Bhiwani, Mrs. Desai and other Gujarat women made house to house collections for the National fund was also opened (Verma, M. 2003: 41). Some Haryanavi women were keen on the development of the movement and ready to donate their property for the nation (ibid: 41).

During the Non-Cooperation movement the level of women's active participation had been increased in Haryana. At Hissar, Mrs. Lajjawati addressed gatherings of men and women. Her lectures created a wholesome effect throughout the district of Hissar. In January 1922, the civil disobedience movement reached Bhiwani. The special feature of the movement was an active participation of Smt. Parmeshwari Devi. She highlighted the importance of *swadeshi* before the women of Bhiwani in a public meeting and organized a procession. Boycott of Foreign Goods is an important part of the Non-Cooperation movement. At Hissar a large number of women attended a meeting held to make a bonfire of foreign clothes. Women at Bhiwani and Rohtak organized similar bonfires of foreign clothes also. At Hissar Chand Bai alongwith Mrs Ram Krishna Bakshi, organized spinning competitions. At Rohtak, Muslim women also participated in the boycott movement and Smt. Luxmi Arya organized spinning classes and competitions (Verma, M. 2003: 221). No buyer dared to come near the shops where women picketers were seen and even the shopkeepers used to behave well with the women volunteers (ibid, 236).

On April 6, 1930 the Congress launched a Civil Disobedience Movement and public meetings were held all over Haryana to mark the beginning of the movement. The civil disobedience movement also generated a tremendous enthusiasm among the women. The first part of the Civil Disobedience Movement began in April 1930. In Haryana, women started convening separate meetings. At Ambala women took out processions in defiance of section 144 C.R.P.C., under the leadership of Puspā Gujral and Smt. Usha Devi respectively. At Rewari, salt was prepared and auctioned for Rs. 10.32 per packet of salt. Interestingly a 12 years old girl, Kasturibai, purchased it for Rs. 60, her total saving collected, she used to get 2 paise a day. To boycott foreign goods women played a prominent part in picketing foreign cloth shops at Lahore, Amritsar, Ambala (Verma, M. 2003: 83). Women led the picketing of religious places at Ambala and several other places of Haryana. People wearing foreign clothes were not allowed to enter temples. Smt. Kasturi Bai and Durga Devi made impressive speeches on 3 May 1931 in a conference held at village Nahri (Rohtak) asking people to follow the Congress. At Mokhara (Rohtak) in a rural conference held on 20 April 1931, Chitra Devi unfurled the national flag. In July 1931, Chitra Devi was arrested from Rohtak for making speeches. In the 2nd and 3rd phase of Civil Disobedience Movement, the participation level of women was very low.

Haryanvi women like Smt. Chitra Devi, Smt. Chand Bhai and her daughter-in-law Tara Wati, Smt. Kamala Devi, Smt. Mohini Devi, Smt. Lilawati Singhal, Smt. Manhi Devi and Smt. Kastura Bai were working in different parts of Haryana (Verma, M. 2003: 169). They were arrested from Rohtak (Kastura Bhai), Bhiwani (Mohini Devi), Hissar (Chitra Devi), Sonapat (Lilawati Singhal), and from Guragon (Smt. Kamala), for their active involvement in the Quit India movement (ibid, 140).

Prior to 1966, it was a part of Punjab, when it was re-organized and makes a separate of Haryana, redrawing of boundary of these areas (Punjab and Haryana). Consequently many districts were redrawn. So as having such kind of problems it makes to collect and shown the

exact data of held elections in this region in concrete way. Consequently the researcher left this portion from the study. The fourth General Election was held in Haryana as the first General Election for the separate state.

THE GENERAL AND STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS HELD IN HARYANA SINCE, 1966-2001

Voters: Using of voting right is also one of the greatest signs of implementation or use of democratic rights directly by people and one of the foremost positive signs in the development of democracy.

Table 1: Voting Turnout of Haryana State Assembly Elections

Sex	1 st 1967	2 nd 1968	3 rd 1972	4 th 1977	5 th 1982	6 th 1987	7 th 1991	8 th 1996	9 th 2000
Male	75.33	59.83	73.45	67.53	72.03	74.49	68.51	72.17	69.97
Female	69.62	54.33	67.10	60.98	67.41	67.53	62.76	68.64	67.85
Total	72.65	57.26	70.46	64.46	69.87	71.24	65.86	70.54	69.01

Source: Election Commission of India

Female Voters in State Assembly Elections

The first State Assembly Election, after the re-organization of Punjab, was held in 1967. In this election, out of total 43,87,980 electors the number of female electors were 20,57,541. In this first election, while the number of men who cast their votes were 17,55,485 (75.33 per cent), the women numbered 14,32,461 (69.62 per cent).

Table 2 {3.18}: Voting Turnout of Haryana in the General Elections

	3 rd 1984	4 th 1989	5 th 1991	6 th 1996	7 th 1998	8 th 1998
Male	29,18,080	35,78,167	36,08,869	43,21,738	43,30,056	41,02,806
Female	22,45,719 (62.67)	26,28,944 (59.23)	27,94,927 (62.34)	35,39,125 (68.76)	33,19,032 (64.98)	29,27,158 (58.27)
Total	51,63,799 (66.84)	62,07,111 (64.41)	64,03,796 (65.84)	78,60,863 (70.48)	76,49,088 (68.99)	70,29,964 (63.68)

Source: Election Commission of India

Though the numbers of voters have been increasing with the rising population, the percentage of female voters since the first election to the last held elections showed frequent rise and fall. As per Table 1, the percentages of male voters and total voters have always been higher than that of the females. The highest percentage of females voted was 69.72 per cent in 1967 (the first election) and the lowest was 54.32 per cent in the second assembly held in 1968. Though the percentage of female voters against the male voters was always below the male percentage, the lowest percentage-wise gap between the two sexes occurred in State Assembly Elections of 2000. The female voters were 67.85 per cent and the males were 69.97 per cent. The percentage of female voters was always 5 to 8 per cent less than the male voters.

Till 1977, when the male voter percentage was fluctuating like a pendulum, with the increased number of female voters from 1428538 in 1967 to 1913839 in 1977, the percentage of female voters slowly increased from 61.32 per cent (1967) to 70.39 per cent in 1977. Since

the 1980 General Election the number of female voters have been increasing, the percentage of female voters kept fluctuating while the female voters were 62.67 per cent in 1984, it came down to 59.23 percent in 1989 and once again rose to 65.84 per cent in 1991. The lowest percentage of women voters was 58.29 per cent in 1999, as shown in Table 2 and still the gap between the male and female has not improved despite increased social, educational and economic development.

Comparatively the percentage of female voters in the Legislative Assembly has been higher. Only in the 6th General Election (1977), the female voter percentage was 70.39 per cent, while for the State Assembly Election it was 60.98 per cent only.

Women Aspirants in the State Assembly Elections

The number of women who were nominated for the election of the State Assembly Elections increased from 8 (1967), 29 (1977), 95 (1987) and 96 (2000). The highest number of females nominated for this category of election was in 1996, i.e., 212. In comparison with males, since 1967 to 2000, the female percentage of the nominated has always been lower than 7 per cent, nevertheless there was growth in percentage from 2.21 per cent (1972) to 4.60 per cent (1996) and 6.94 per cent in 2000.

Table 3: State Assembly Election, Haryana

		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
		1967	1968	1972	1977	1982	1987	1991	1996	2000
Types of constituency	Gen.	66	66	66	73	73	73	73	73	73
	SC	15	15	15	17	17	17	17	17	17
	ST	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	81	81	81	90	90	90	90	90	90
Nominated	Male	776	686	815	1668	--	3353	--	4,609	1,384
	Female	0	0	18	29	--	95	--	212	96
	Total	776	686	833	1697	--	3448	--	4,821	1,480
Nomination rejected	Male	20	10	10	34	--	98	--	178	250
	Female	0	0	1	0	--	3	--	10	33
	Total	20	10	11	34	--	101	--	188	283
Withdrawn	Male	285	278	434	983	--	1968	--	1,916	218
	Female	0	0	4	9	--	57	--	109	14
	Total	285	278	438	992	--	2025	--	2,025	232
Contested	Male	463	386	371	651	1068	1287	242	2,515	916
	Female	8	12	13	20	27	35	7	93	49
	Total	471	398	384	671	1,095	1322	249	2,608	965
Forfeited	Male		212	206	466	874	1099	105	2,297	716
	Female	2	03	3	11	17	26	29	84	35
	Total		215	209	477	891	1125	134	2,381	751

	Male	77	74	74	86	83	85	84	86	86
	Female	4	7	4	4	7	5	6	4	4
No of elected	Total	81	81	81	90	90	90	90	90	90

Source: Election Commission of India

Table 4: General Election, Haryana

		3 rd 1962	4 th 1967	5 th 1971	6 th 1977	7 th 1980	8 th 1984	9 th 1989	10 th 1991	11 th 1996	12 th 1998	13 th 1998
Types of constituency	Gen	17	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	SC	5	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	ST	--	0	0	--	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	T	22	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Nominated	M		--	108	104	216	367	470		444	186	138
	F		--	1	2	8	16	10		15	11	4
	T	--	86	109	106	224	383	480		459	197	142
Nomination rejected	M		--	4	2	6	9	8		33	30	18
	F		--	0	0	0	0	0		0	5	0
	T		3	4	2	6	9	8		33	35	18
Withdrawn	M			41	54	78	168	141		126	22	9
	F			1	0	3	6	7		6	0	1
	T			42	54	81	174	148		132	22	10
Contested	M			63	48	132	190	321		285	134	111
	F		1	0	2	5	10	3	6	9	4	3
	T			63	50	137	200	324		294	111	114
Forfeited	M			45	32	105	170	302		260	107	92
	F		0	0	1	3	10	2		7	4	1
	T			45	33	108	180	304		267	111	93

Source: Election Commission of India

Though numerically the number of female contestants who withdrew from the nomination was small, while comparing with the number of male withdrawals, the percentage of males has been higher than the females. Percentage of male withdrawal was 52.10 per cent (1972), 58.69 per cent (1987) and 15.75 per cent (2000) and the female withdrawal percentage was 22.22 per cent (1972), 60 per cent (1987) and 14.58 per cent in 2000.

The number of contestants has been increasing from 8 (1967), 12 (1972), 35 (1987), 93 (1996) and 49 (2000), whereas the male candidates were 463 (1967), 371 (1972), 1287 (1987), 2515 (1996) and 916 (2000) respectively. In all elections as per party-wise contestant analysis, the highest number of female contestants was from the Indian National Congress.

Status of Women Contestants and their Party

Till 1977, most women candidates contested from the Indian National Congress, whilst out of 8 women contestants 5 women were from INC in 1967, in the third State Assembly Election (1972) out of 12 women contestants 7 were from the INC. In 1967 and 1972, all the elected women were from INC, whereas in 1968, out of the total 7 elected female candidates 5 were from INC (Indian National Congress) and remaining 2 from VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad).

In the 1977 elections out of 12 contestants, 4 were elected and all of them belonged to JNP. In the preceding years, the women contesting as independent candidates increased from 18 (out of 27) in 1982, 24 (out of 41) in 1987 and 15 (out of 49). The highest number of women in each election was Independent candidates.

Women Aspirants Nominated in the Lok-Sabha Elections

Till the 8th General Election (1984), the nomination of women had been increasing from 1 (out of total 109) to 16 (out of 383 nominated members) in 1967 and 1984 respectively. However in the General Elections, the number of women nominations decreased from 16 (1984) to 4 in 1999 respectively.

The number of women candidates who withdrew from contesting the elections was very few as the nominations were also few, while the number of female nominations were 8, 10, 15 and 4, the number of female candidates who withdrew were 3, 7, 6 and 1 in 1980, 1989, 1996 and 1999 respectively.

The maximum number of women contestants in 1984 (8th GE) was 10. In other General Elections so far held, the number of women candidates were 1 (1967), 5 (1980), 3 (1989), 9 (1996) and 3 (1999). In the 5th General Election there were no women contestants from Haryana state. The door for women was first opened by INC, till 1977 (6th GE) the INC led, however in later 7th, 8th and 9th GE there were no women candidate from INC and later in the 10th, 11th and 12th General Elections, there was only 1 woman candidate from INC. The highest success rate of women contestant was from INC. In the 7th General Election many women stood as independents. Whilst the number of independent women candidates were 8 (8th GE), 4 (10th & 11th GE) and 2 (12th GE), the number of women contestants from National and Regional parties were not more than 1 or 2. In the 13th GE out of 3 women contesting for the Lok-Sabha, 2 were elected from INLD and Independent.

ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The Panchayat system of governance had already been functioning at village level in this region since ancient period. They were known as the *bhaichara*, (community) Panchayats. During the Muslim rulers and the British rule the traditional Panchayat system continued in the villages. Most of the cases were decided within the village itself and their laws and rules were mainly within the purview of their culture, religion and social norms of their community. The rulers (emperors and British government) gave enough space to the *bhaichara* as they did not like to involve themselves in such village level politics.

Haryana region has had valorous queens and brave revolutionaries who were actively involved during the freedom movement of India. The local power structure comprised of Gram Panchayats and Co-operative institutions. These Panchayats were controlled by land owning peasant castes of the village for adjudication of disputes and for performing local government functions (Goegre, M. 1994). During the first half of the 20th century three groups (Jat, Gujjars, Rajputs) were the main of large land owners, including several Zaildars belonging to Zamindars or agriculturalists' castes who overruled Gram Panchayat (in 1944, & 1962 also). The persons belonging to dominant castes with upper castes and upper class background linked to well off families, had exercised more or less total hegemonic control over these institutions (Grover, V. & Arora, R. (Ed.) 1996:109-28). Thus in Haryana,

traditional Panchayati Raj Institutions experienced the impact of traditional power structure. The dates transitional society was marked with economic disparities, social inequalities, and neo-particularistic political culture based on parochial loyalties (George, M. (ed.) 1994: 74).

This basic pattern, formulated on the lines of the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta study team in 1957, was retained after 1966, as was the institution of the Gram Sabha [73]. In 1973 however, an amendment was made in the Punjab Act of 1961 through Haryana Act No 22 of 1973, based on recommendation of an ad-hoc committee by the government in 1972. By this amendment, the Zilla Parishad was abolished, leaving the Haryana Panchayati Raj system with only two tiers at the village and block level respectively. But, now the three-tier system was re-established with the enforcement of Haryana Panchayat Raj Act (HPR Act), 1994, passed in the light of the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India.

The three tiers of local government institutions are:

Gram Sabha: At the most basic level, there was the Gram Sabha consisting of all the villagers enrolled as voters. The Gram Sabha meets twice a year. The 73rd amendment makes a provision in section 11 (2) that for Sarpanch to hold two consecutive meeting of the Gram Sabha.

Gram Panchayat (GP): it was the executive committee of the Gram Sabha. The GP was constituted with a membership ranging between 5 and 9, which were elected based on adult franchise and the Sarpanch was directly elected by the people.

Panchayat Samiti: was given the most powerful status in the Panchayati Raj structure of the state. The Act of 1961 had provided for the constitution of standing committee, consultative committee and the ad-hoc committees for the performance of the functions of the Panchayat samitis. The Panchayat Samitis performed development functions pertaining to agriculture and public health and executed development plans of the state and central government. Samiti comprised of: i) primary, ii) Co-opted: women and persons belonging to the SCs were to be co-opted, iii) Associate: MLAs were the associate members and iv) Ex-Officio members: the SDO and BDPOs were members of the PS but without voting rights.

Zila Parishad: it comprised 2 members (elected by the member of each Panchayat Samiti) the chairpersons of all the Samitis in the district, the DC, the MPs and the MLA representing that district, 5 members co-opted from the SCs, and to co-opted women members (Methew, G. 1994: 76). One woman and some persons were to be nominated if nobody becomes a member of the Zillla Parishads from those sections. Under the Act 1961, Zilla Parishad was vested with the power advising, supervising and coordinating the functions of the Panchayat Samities in the district.

Panchayati Raj Election in Haryana

The information on the number of contested and elected women in the Panchayati Raj Institutes, so far held till 1994, is scattered and it would take a long time and need especial concern. The main problems are:

- a) There is no separate account on number of women nominations and contestants for the election of PRIs, till 1994. So it is hard to give separate account of the number of women participants in open category at PRI elections.

- b) Before 1994, the elections of the Panchayati Raj Institutes were held under each district's DIPR. The Directorate of Panchayat just conducted the elections and gave information on rules and regulations of the PRIs.

Panchayati Raj Elections in Haryana

Table 5 reveals that when the second Panchayati Raj elections was held in March 2000, there were 6035 Gram Panchayats, 114 Panchayat samitis and 19 Zilla Parishads whereas there were 5958 (Gram Panchayat), 110 (Panchayat Samitis), and 16 (Zilla Parishad) respectively in 2000.

Table 5: Number of Seats of Panchayat Elections, Haryana

Office	Years	S.Cs.	S.C. (W)	Women	Unreserved	Total
Gram Panchayat/Sarpanch	1994	780	419	1575	3184	5958
	2000	802	408	1610	3215	6035
Chairman of Panchayat Samiti	1994	14	8	29	59	110
	2000	14	9	43	48	114
Chairman of Zilla Parishad	1994	2	1	4	9	16
	2000	2	2	5	10	19

Source: State Election Commission Haryana, Chandigarh

With change in seat allotment, while the reserved seats of women and general seats were increasing, the number of reserved seats for the S.C. women was decreasing from 419 in 1994 to 408 in 2000 GE. In the Panchayat Samiti level the seats provided for the open category decreased from 59 (1994) to 48 (2000), as opposed to the reserved seats of SC (W) and general women reserved seats were increased from 8 (SC Women) and 29 (general W/R) in 1994 to 9 and 43 respectively in 2000 Panchayat elections. Though the number of Zilla Parishad seats increased from 16 (1994) to 19 in 2nd Panchayati Raj election as the number of district has been increasing in the respective years the reserved seats of women both in general category and SC was only 1 in each category.

Table 6: Number of Seats of Panchayat Elections, Haryana

Office	Years	S.Cs.	S.C. (W)	B.C.	Women	Unreserved	Total
Panch	1994	7932	3861	5648	14067	22651	54159
	2000	7902	4054	5696	13946	32166	54764
Member of Panchayat Samiti	1994	352	167	110	640	1149	2418
	2000	337	186	113	635	1155	2426
Member of Zilla Parishad	1994	43	21	16	80	143	303
	2000	43	24	19	86	142	314

Source: Election Commission Haryana, Chandigarh

Table 6 reveals that while the total number of panches, member of Panchayat smiti and member of Zilla Parishad were 54159, 2418 and 303 respectively in 1994, the number of seats allotted in each of the above mentioned categories in the 2nd Panchayat elections were increasing to 54764, 2426 and 314 respectively. However, the number of panches in the Gram Panchayat category has been increasing in unreserved category and common SC women's reserved categories (i.e. from 3861 in 1994 to 4054 in 2000). In general women's reserved category in 1994 while the number of W/R was 14067 it was reduced to 13946 in 2000. In the Panchayat category while the number of general W/R seats were decreasing

from 640 (1994) to 635 (2000), the number of SC W/R seats were increasing from 167 (1994) to 186 (2000) in 2nd Panchayat General Election. In Zilla Parishad tier of PRIs both in SC W/R seats and general W/R were increasing.

Table 7: Pool Percentage of Voters during 2nd Panchayat Election

Sl. No.	Name of districts	Pool percentage
1	Sirsa	88.00
2	Karnal	86.00
3	Bhiwani	85.40
4	Jhajjar	54.36
5	Faridabad	72.06
6	Panipat	72.64
7	Total	77.61

Source: State Election Commission Haryana, Chandigarh

Table 7 {3.23} depicts that in the 2nd Panchayat General Election there was tremendous voter turnout. While the average poll percentage of whole Haryana was 77.61 per cent, the highest percentage of votes polled was 88.00 percent at Sirsa. Jhajjar district had lowest poll percentage in 2nd election, i.e. 54.36 per cent.

Table 8: Total No. of Contesting Candidates (Highest and Lowest), 2000

District	Nomination accepted for the office of Panches	Nomination accepted for the office of Sarpanches	Nomination accepted for the office of Members of Panchayat Samitis	Nomination accepted for the office of Members of Zilla Parishad
Gurgaon (H)*	7067*	2604*	819*	131
Bhiwani	6964	2201	703	160*
Panchkula Θ	1578 Θ	429 Θ	122 Θ	31 Θ
Total	88230	25804	7559	1388

Source: State Election Commission Haryana

* Highest number of contestants

Θ Lowest number of contestants

Table 8 reveals that in 2000 election the number of contestants for the office of panches, Sarpanches, members of Panchayat samitis and members of Zilla Parishads were 88230, 25804, 7559 and 1388 respectively. While the highest number of contestants in each of the three tiers could be found in Gurgaon district, the lowest number of contestants in the three tiers were 1578 (panches seats), 429 (sarpanches), 122 (members of PS) and 31 (members of ZP) in Panchkula district.

Table 9 indicates that poll percentage of the PRIs in 2nd election was not less than 77 per cent. The number of contestants per seats of panch, sarpanch, PS members and ZP members were 2.39, 4.71, 3.57 and 4.99 respectively. Interestingly, in panch category the number of uncontested and elected unopposed (30674) was higher than the number of contested seat i.e. 24090 in 2nd Panchayati Raj elections.

Table 10 reveals the number of women contestants at different categories of membership in each of the three tiers of PRIs. The total number of SC women candidates,

Table 9: No. of Panch, Sarpanch, Panchayat Samiti, Zilla Parishad, 2000, Haryana

Name of seats	Total no seats	Total no. seats of each sector	No of uncontested seats/elected unopposed	No. of contested seats	Total no. of contesting candidates	Total no. of voters	Poll per cent of the seat contested
Panches	6035	54764	30674	24090	57556	8805651	77.67
Sarpanch	6035	6035	701	5334	25103	8805651	79.08
Panchayat samiti member		2426*	426	2000	7133	8805651	77.95
Member of Zilla Parishad		314@ (wards)	45	269	1343	8805651	77.61

Source: State Election Commission Haryana

Notes: *No. of wards; @ No. of wards

Table 10: Women Candidates for GP, PS, ZP, in, Panchayat Election, 2000

	No. of women candidates belonging to the S Cs elected from					No. of candidate belonging to BC elected from			No. of candidates belonging to the General category		
	W/R for SC women	Unreserved general seat (not W/R)	W/R for General women	Reserved for SC [other than SC (W)]	Total SC women candidate contested	Unreserved general seats	General W/R seats	Total BC women elected	Unreserved General seats	W/R for General	Total contested general category women
Panches	4033	94	301	14	4442	382	1050	1432	68	13868	13936
Sarpanch	407	11	44	10	472	45	150	195	26	1607	1633
Panchayat Samiti	186	11	14	12	223	8	19	33	44	655	699
Zilla Parishad	24	1	3	28	--			1	8	86	94

Source: State Election Commission Haryana, Chandigarh

contesting for the panch seats were 4442 and within this category the number of women contestants from W/R seats for SC women were 4033 in 2000, (2nd election for PRIs). While 301 women (SC) contested from W/R for general women, 94 women were contesting from unreserved open seats for the seat of Panch. Though the women candidates (SC) from their reserved seats, for sarpanchship, was highest i.e. 407, the SC women contesting from unreserved seat category was 11 and 44 SC women were contesting from women's reserved category for general. Whilst 186 SC women were contesting from their women's reserved seats (SC), the other 11 SC women and 14 SC women were contesting from general unreserved seats and general women's reserved seats respectively.

The number of women candidates belonging to BC who contested from the unreserved seats in the three tiers of PRIs was 382 (for panches), 45 (for sarpanch), 8 for Panchayat samiti membership respectively. The highest number of BC women were contesting from general W/R seats, i.e. 1050 for panches and 150 for sarpanch seats.

The highest number of women contestants found from the general category i.e. 13936 (for panch), 1633 (for sarpanch), 699 (for member of PS) and 94 (for member of ZP) respectively. Interestingly, most women candidates belonging to General category contested from their reserved rather than open category. The percentage of women candidates contested in the Open category in all three tiers (GP, PS, ZP), the SC and BC women was higher than general category women.

WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN HARYANA

During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s the women of Haryana were suffering from social, economic and political discrimination under patriarchal norms. As the character of the state and society seemed to have become different with the weakening of liberal values of tolerance and reason in the late 60s and early 70s, the oppression against the under-privileged and weaker sections increased in volume and intensity. Women became the main victims of this growing repression by the state and the increased incidence of violence in social life (ibid. 165).

Since women have less access to education, employment and health, employment and health facilities, their social position in Haryana is precarious and is a cause of concern. Deprived of any decision-making roles, women's views, desires and aspirations are very often suppressed within the family and in government institutions. Outrages against women are on the rise; dowry death cases are increasing in the state. Similarly in the case of rising incidence of eve-teasing, molestation and rape. Violence against women is on the rise both within the family and in society at large. Wife battering, aborting of female foetuses and raping of minors are on the rise. Custodial rape is also known to occur in the state (ibid 169).

Since independence, government and NGOs, have made attempts to empower women in all areas of society, including the social, economic and religious sectors, some of the most visible attempts have occurred in the political realm. The most recent policy change in government occurred in 1992 when Parliament passed the 73rd amendment of the Constitution, reserving 33 per cent of the seats for women in the Panchayats.

However, the 73rd Amendment indeed brought women into local bodies? The significant questions are:

- a) Which women have been able to take advantage of their new entitlements?
- b) Are all women even aware of the changes that have been introduced by the central government?
- c) Further, are there significant intercommunity differences in the area of whether women are aware of these developments and how they respond to them?

Women's participation is generally lower either because of the social norms and pressure (especially as far as marriage, motherhood, employment, and property ownership are concerned), or because they have fewer resources (Burns *et al.* 1994, 1997a, 1997b). Arguments are that the lower levels of participation of women are mostly the result of a process of socialization that leads them to think of political activity in a different way than men. In other words, women don't take as active a part in political life because they don't think (as autonomous actors) that political participation is important or looked on as paper.

Knowledge about Election by Women Candidates

According to reports of Multiple Action Research Institutes, while 44.53 per cent women candidates (respondents) remember the number of nominations and the number of contestants, 28.91 per cent respondents instead of knowing the name of their nearest competitors, could identify them by caste. Savitri Ray says that 20 per cent respondent could remember the name of contestants against them.

As per research findings of women's response on the Panchayati Raj System in Haryana, while 33.59 per cent respondents did not do anything about the number of voters in the elections, 27.34 per cent knew the winning margin and 21.09 per cent knew about the votes received and winning margin. Lack of knowledge, low participation in outside activities due to prevalent norms and values of the society e.g. '*ghunghat*' or '*purdah*' which stops women from speaking before men and overall lack of equal opportunities has put women in a difficult position.

Meetings

According to Savitri Ray most of women did not attend the meetings. Among those who did the son or husband also attended the meeting. Women did not have clear ideas or knowledge of issues discussed in Panchayat meetings. Around 35 per cent, including women panch and Sarpanch, attended the Panchayat meetings. At the meetings, males outnumbered the females. Even though seats were provided for them, all the women preferred to sit on the floor with their backs towards the men and the proceedings. All of them except the elderly covered themselves with their *ghunghats*. While men were discussing the issues women did not listen to the proceedings.

On why elected women were not attending the meeting of their concerned office, 25 per cent said that they did not get any prior information of the meeting, 12.5 per cent said that the *purdah* system did not allow and 10.94 per cent said that they did not attend the meetings due to their family matters.

Knowledge and Work Involvement

According to observations of Kiran though the real Sarpanch was a woman, often the husband took charge of the post in the village areas than his wife.

Whether, they have knowledge or are involved on the official work of PRIs, women were complaining about the lack of funds. But in reality they were very rarely involved in PRIs. Either their husbands, in-laws or sons take the responsibility of decision-making, holding meetings and collection of *chulah* tax in the village. Village people also bring their problems to their men. Only women from their community come and discuss marriage negotiations of their children and dowry, etc. The elected women's men attend the office without consulting her. They are not familiar with the actual name of the schemes. Under DWRCA scheme the group is making biscuit and *panjiri* so they call it biscuit and *panjiri yojna*. They were equipped with information regarding their Panchayat. They have lack of knowledge and responsibilities. Most of them sign the papers blindly. Some women who regularly attended the meetings were accompanied by their male family members,

Alexander L. Geertz advocated that one must first consider carefully the nature of women's power in society, and then determine to what extent women's power in government

influences the other spheres of women's lives. Are there other modes of exercising power within society that are not affected by this so-called progressive action for women?

The elected women responded that ever since she came out to contest, the campaigning, expenditure, on meetings, etc. depend on their men and family. Often, it is argued that changes in legislation will be ineffective without the support of educational or training programs that promote gender consciousness. The presence of women in politics alone has very little effect on the status of women in society.

On his survey, conducted in Haryana, the researcher found that most women did not know about reservations, 44 per cent did not know what the extent of the reservation was. However, they were aware of the influence of politics in their lives and majority of them said that political participation would be good for them, participation would solve the problems faced by women, and it would also raise their social status. More importantly, most women also did not see their entering political life as disrupting any other facet of their life, such as looking after family and children, in a significant way.

In the village areas, women followed the *Purdah* system. They were not aware that their rights were consequently dominated by male society in social and political discourse. Women accepted the dominant male ideology, though most women (56 per cent), when asked whether men are responsible for their lack of social mobility, answered in the affirmative.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

After the 73rd amendment and its implementation in Haryana Panchayat elections and its functionaries there was significant improvement in the number of the women's direct participation in the grassroots level politics. To observe the social, cultural, economic and education level of rural Haryana women's condition, the new system in the Panchayat Raj institution seems to be most appropriate.

However, strong patriarchal traditions, bride price system, casteism, landlord control system, female infanticide and high foeticide rate, high dowry death rate etc., continue despite the 33 per cent reservation for women.

Political Involvement Level of Women Prior to Elections:

Very few women candidates were involved in community work before they contested the election. Out of the total elected women 10 per cent were engaged in community work others were not at all. Their priority was household work. They contested the election because of their father-in-law or husband's or family's pressure. Most of the women contestants elected as panch and sarpanch claimed that the post being held by them were male posts and they had been elected only as short-term substitutes.

On campaigning:

According to Savitri Ray most of the women were not involved in the election campaign and other procedure. Instead of involving them in the processes from nomination to campaigning all was done by their male relatives. Only 3.85 per cent of respondents replied that they were involved directly in their own election campaign. The survey report of the Multiple Action Group especially conducted on women's position in Haryana at the Grassroots level politics revealed that while 60.58 per cent had campaigned with the help of their family members/relative neighbors, 33.65 per cent of women contestants (respondents) responded

that only males from the family members relatives and neighbors campaigned for her seat. Interestingly, only 5.77 per cent of the respondents had campaigned for themselves.

Expenditure:

Many women respondents, according to TCMS, were not able to give a figure since the men from their family did all the expenditure. According to Savitri Ray at the Sarpanch level only 10 per cent of the women candidates were aware of the expenditure incurred during the election.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN HARYANA

The UN declared the 80s as 'Women's Decade', when the liquor shops were mushrooming throughout the nook and corner of Haryana. This tended to increase the problems of liquor consumption among the males in Haryana. Consequently, the family or house, the most sacred place for most women became a major place of atrocities, tortures and tensions for women. The village roads and village bazaars became hubs for eve-teasing and sexual harassment. During 1980s to first half of 1990s this socially hazardous habit of liquor consumption spread throughout Haryana (Pathania 1996: p.171). Women from all walks came out from their homes and begun a mass social anti-liquor movement in their localities which were most affected. The anti-liquor movements were conducted in Nahri, Ferozepur Baangar and, other villages of Sonipat and, Kurukshetra districts in 1987-88. This was one of the first women's mass movements in Haryana after independence.

The causes of the movement were:

- i. The huge number of liquor shops opening up at large.
- ii. Drunken men shouting obscenities could be encountered anywhere, anytime.
- iii. Women could not move around freely in the village for fear of running into a drunkard. At Ferozepur Bangar village, it became difficult for girls to cross the village bazaar area. They frequently faced humiliating treatment from drunkard men.
- iv. Money for basic needs was denied as men started spending a big part of their earnings on liquor.
- v. Wife-beatings became much more common than before.
- vi. Some families were forced into selling their property on account of drinking habits of their male members.
- vii. Several children were trapped into consumption of liquor after being initiated out of curiosity. Thus, the children started stealing and selling utensils or other belongings of their families to be able to purchase liquor.

When the situation went beyond all tolerable levels, women and many youth from different parts of villages of Haryana started a mass anti liquor movement in the early 1980s. Many political youth and women wings from different national and local parties like SUCI (Socialist Unity Centre of India), DYU (District Youths Organisation), MSS (Mahila Sanskriti Sangh) welcomed this step. The women responded on how they managed time for the movement alongwith doing their household chores, thus "we get up very early in the morning and finish the house work to be able to come to the dharna." The women were the most enthusiastic participants, to join the protest and their numbers increased daily. From school girls to grandmas several women came regularly. The protestors did not care about the

hot summer or cold night or morning in December when they were scouting against the liquor, singing songs and requesting the owners of liquor shops and concerned government authorities to remove the liquor vends from their village areas.

Bharat expressed his own experienced as a journalist in Haryana, when anti liquor movement was spreading throughout Haryana, that a women who played a leading role in Nahri village interviewed by him expressed her opinion on movement that, “Women were in such a mood that the tasks considered most urgent like crop-harvesting can wait but not this aim of chasing out the liquor contractor”. The very remarkable case was that in every meeting about anti liquor movement the large numbers of women was attended. The most villagers especially women asked the liquor contractor not open their *thekas* nearby villages.

Problems Faced by Women

Thus, in late 80s the women’s movements were against social evils that had spread through different districts of Haryana. However, the main causes for low success rate of the movements were:

- i) lack of leadership,
- ii) patriarchal systems against women,
- iii) lack of education and other resources available by women,
- iv) lack of social political organization to fight against the women’s social atrocities

In 1990s, when the critical issues and infringement of women’s rights were frequently happening, women began coming forward on their own to fight against these social atrocities and biased treatment. On rape and sexual harassment issues in 1994 at Hansi, after the incidence of kidnapping and rape at Samalkha in 1994, also the Padhana village (Jind) mass rape incident in 1995, all sum thousands of women participating in demonstration against these heinous crimes.

Grassroots level movement emerged in a majority of districts in Haryana around the issue of alcohol. The sale of alcohol adversely affects women in those households, where men are habitual drunkards, as it leads to fights, wife beating, meager earnings being squandered and women being forced to sustain the family needs. Therefore, a large section of women were participating in the *Nashabandi movement*. With the increase of the drunkard population in Haryana, the incidents of sexual abuse and eve-teasing had been increasing in the public places and road sides of the villages. When the tolerance level was beyond control thousands of women came out to close the business of liquor in their respective locality. They prevented the auction of liquor vends in Nanakpur Colony in Kaithal in 1995. In 1995 they also threatened to burn the liquor vend situated in Mohamadpur village (Rohtak) in 1995, if proprietor were not ready to accept demand. However, the *Nashabandi movement* mainly involved those women with true sense and dignity to fight against the social evil. On the other hand, the political parties and their affiliates viewed the whole issue of *Nashabandi* as an electoral issue where women mattered to them only to the extent that they constituted a vote bank and the issue of liquor consumption as a source of women’s oppression was almost totally sidetracked by them.

The anti-alcohol movement failed in Haryana, again proving that women are trying to break the age-old shackles but the patriarchal structure is so well entrenched that women have a very small voice but no teeth. Politically they do not have much of a say, inspite their numbers as voters because they vote according to the command of the menfolk in the family.

Winds of change will take much more time. The Constitution grants them equal rights but they are on papers only.

CONCLUSION:

Since 1967 in every State Assembly elections, women were contestants not less 7 in number. Nomination level of women also was high in Haryana. Most of the women of Haryana were contesting through the party. Prior to 1982 most women were contesting through reserved parties but later through independent seats.

When Haryana became an independent state in 1966, the local government institutions operating in the state had three tiers i.e. Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zilla Parishad at the district level. In 1973, an amendment was there in Punjab Act of 1961 and under this amendment; the Zilla Parishad was abolished, leaving the Haryana Panchayat Raj system with only two tiers at the village and block level respectively.

The most significant amendment indirectly benefited towards women was the Haryana Act No. 13 of 1987 (amended from *Punjab Gram Panchayat Act, 1952*), which made provision for the reservation of the members of the backward classes if their population was two per cent or more in the *Gram Sabha* area.

The women elected in the panchayat and casting the vote women were rarely having the knowledge of their own field. Lack of knowledge, low participation in outside activities due to prevalent norms and values of the society e.g. 'ghunghat' or 'purdah' which stops women from speaking before men and overall lack of equal opportunities has put women in a difficult position. At the meetings most women did not attend the meeting and those who went to meetings were also along with male members and seating on the ground rather shares the power with men. In addition, women did not care for the responsibility once they were selected. Most of women were rarely involved in Panchayat work as their sons or husbands are directly involved in the work. The elected women were not having the knowledge of various schemes running from the panchayat. Out of the total elected women 10 per cent were engaged in community work. They contested elections because of pressure from their father-in-laws, husbands, or family or to keep the hierarchy on that post. On campaigning, meeting, knowledge there was quite difference among them. Manipuri are fighting for their cause whether it is right or wrong.

Women movements of Haryana took place when situations were uncontrollable, though it could give impact to their specific local areas by stopping the local liquor vendors in late 1980s and 1990s. However, the impact of upto the level of sacking the state functionaries was not reached like their counterparts' women's organization of Manipur. The main weakness of Haryana women's movements was that there was no organized women's organization of women like *meira paibi* (torch bearers) or *nisa bandh* in Manipur. Nevertheless, we cannot say that they are weak in participation level because many women leaders in the national level came out from Haryana.

ENDNOTES:

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- vii Pathania, Sunita. "State of Women's Movement in Haryana: Problems and Challenges." *Social Action* 46 (April-June 1996): 171.