

Analysis of Unopposed Election in Haryana Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Sign of Social Harmony and Democratic Maturity?



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Abstract

India is first largest democracy in the world. Free, fair and periodically election strengthen the Indian Democracy. Election is political process which indicates political activity and general will of common masses. By periodically election every government got legitimacy in present time. Election is parameter to check the authenticity of works of government and Representative, So election is an essential for a vibrant democracy and it creates the sense of participation in public affair and making the people aware of their right. After 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 marked a new era in Indian Local Administration to create the three tier system of Panchayati Raj. Unopposed election are the reflection of Social harmony and political maturity in such time of state where social ethics are buried by the economic growth So, This paper provides an overview of historical development and analyze of unanimously elected panchayats in Haryana till 2016. It also highlights the decision taken by the Haryana Government for making a provision of incentives to gram panchayats regarding promotion of unopposed election and made the educational qualification mandatory for contesting the panchayats elections.

Keywords: Panchayati Raj Institutions, Gram Panchayats, Unopposed Election, PRIs, Sarpanch, Panch, Panchayat Samiti, Zila Parishad, Democratic Maturity and Haryana Panchayati Raj, Social Harmony, Special Grant and Election Commission.

Introduction

History of Panchayati Raj in Haryana:- The roots of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Haryana is found as far back as ancient time ,But after independence with the enactment of the Punjab Panchayats Act 1952 Gram Panchayat were set up at the village level on mandatory basis with the members of five to nine according to Panjab Panchayati Raj Act 1952. This act was later amended in 1961 and this structure continued to function till Haryana adhoc committee headed by Madu Singh Malik, recommendation in 1973, when Zila Parishad were abolished in Haryana¹. The local self government in Haryana were already operating when Haryana become a separate state in November 1st, 1966. It had three level on that time (Gram Panchayat at Village level, Panchayat Samiti at Block Level and Zila Parishad at District level.) formed under the 1961 Punjab Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act, followed the recommendation of Balwantrai Mehta Committee in 1957. The members (17) of Panchayat Samiti were elected by the members and sarpanches of gram panchayats from respective Block. One and Two member representing the co-operative society and market committee respectively. Six members were co-opted² and MLA also associated with Panchayat Samiti. Followed the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the Haryana government enacted the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act-1994. This new act provides three tier system of panchayati raj, gram panchayat at village level, panchayat samiti at block level and zila Parishad at third level for better development of rural area.

The gram sabha have been the centre institution in the panchayati raj, which is constitute for a village having not less than 500 population. Further new act makes mandatory that every gram sabha shall be hold at-least two meetings annually. Nomenclature of the head of village under this act are- President, Chairman and Sarpanch at Zila

Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Village respectively. The Sarpanch and the panches of the gram panchayat are now elected directly by gram sabha member by secret vote. Earlier act provides indirect election for member of panchayat samiti and zila Parishad but new act provides direct election for the members for all three level of rural panchayati raj. The Haryana Panchayati Raj Rules-1994 state that there shall be 6-20 panches for a gram panchayat and shall be transferred 21 subjects to gram panchayat listed in 11th schedule of the Indian Constitution. The seats shall be reserved for SCs/STs in proportion to their population and 1/3 seat will be reserved for women by rotation at all level of panchayati raj. Tenure for all three level of panchayati raj will be five years. The panchayat samiti will be intermediate level of rural panchayati raj. Elected member of the panchayat samiti and the zila Parishad are to be 10-30, and one member of panchayat samiti will be represent of minimum 4000 population. Under the 1994 act The Zila Parishad have been constituted afresh in Haryana after 1973 and will be apex level of panchayati raj. It further provides for the co-option of Chairman of all Panchayat Samiti within respective district as ex-officio members. M.P. & M.L.A. of the concern district will be associated as ex-officio member with zila Parishad³.

The state government has also constituted state election commission to conduct control and supervision of panchayat election and preparation of electoral rolls, after every five year. In accordance with of 73rd constitutional amendment act, Haryana government constitute a State Finance Commission to review fiscal condition of panchayat bodies and to make recommendation on tax, toll, fees and grant-in-aid distribution among panchayati raj institutions⁴.

Unopposed Elections in Haryana Panchayati Raj Institutions

The unanimous election as well as financial incentive for unanimously elected panchayats dates back to 1960s when only a few states had adopted Panchayati Raj System for local governance in 1960s, the government of Andhra Pradesh had introduced incentive in the form of cash awards, followed by the state government of Punjab and Rajasthan declared special prizes for panchayats in which elections were unanimously in 1960s. In the Punjab elections held in June 1972, the government of Punjab granted the land revenue for one year to the village from, where the members of panchayats elected including the sarpanch were elected unanimous and 30 percent to where the sarpanch was returned unopposed. The cash and prize award was promoted as a fund to be utilized by the panchayats for local development works. In Punjab, Rs 2 to 3 lakh was to be given to each unanimously elected village panchayat based on population as announced in 2008. But candidates being unanimously elected percentage decrease 7 percent⁵ in Punjab compared to 2008 elections, result to no incentive was offer for unopposed election in 2013 panchayats elections.

Haryana Panchayati Raj (Election) Rules, 1994 section 37 depicts that any one candidate

(whose nomination paper is found valid) remains after the date and time fixed for abandonment of nomination paper then the duty of the Returning Officer (Panchayat) is to declare the candidate elected and inform the State Election Commissioner through District Election Officer (Panchayat)⁶.

Unopposed election at the grass root level is the vital facet for democratic system and promotional scheme for encouraging this trend is the sign of positivism in the present Haryana political scenario. This scheme was initiated in 2008,⁷ by former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, to endorse unopposed election in panchayats by providing special grant to Panchayat Raj Institutions in Haryana. Under the provisions of above said scheme, the village panchayats were classified population wise in to three category, first category comprising up to 1500 population villages, second above 1500 to 4000 population and third above 4000 population villages. In the first, second and third categories where the whole panchayat including sarpanch is elected unopposed the provisions of the grant was Rs-one lakh, two lakh and three lakh respectively. For the panches 75000, 1.5 lakh and 2.5 lakh for above category and only for sarpanch of a village for unopposed election, the provision of the grant was 50000, one lakh and 1.5 lakh for respective category⁸.

In view of the 5th General Election to the PRIs to be held in the year 2015-16, a decision was taken by the Haryana Government to give incentive to the unanimously elected Gram Panchayats and the Sarpanches, Panches, Members of Zila Parishad and Panchayat Samiti, to promote "harmony and unity" Haryana government has decided to increase award up to Rs 11 lakh for full panchayats and other local bodies which are elected unanimously during the upcoming panchayats elections in the state. Similarly, the government will award Rs-5 lakh and Rs-2 lakhs each respectively to Zila Parishads and Panchayat Samitis each unanimously elected members. Rs 5 lakh for Sarpanch and 50,000 to each members of gram panchayat⁹. This step was taken in view of that, it also helps in reduction of litigation and saving of election expenses. This amount is utilized for development works in the villages. This is immense step of Haryana Government for intensification the democracy in State as well as become a feel possessor for Indian democratic practice.

Analysis of Unopposed Elections in Haryana Panchayats

1st Haryana Panchayati Raj Elections, 1994

The first PRIs general election was held on 12 and 16 March, 2000 in two phases. Election was held for 19 zila parishad, 114 panchayat samitis and 5958 gram panchayats. Total, 54159 panches including 21.77 percent (11793) scheduled castes, 33.10 percent (17928) women and 10.43 percent backward class panches were elected in this election. Total 5958 sarpanches including 1199 scheduled castes, 1194 women sarpanches were elected. Regarding panchayat samitis, out of total 2418 members, 33.37 percent women, 21.46 percent scheduled caste and only 4.55 backwards sarpanches were elected. 38 women and 21 scheduled caste

chairperson were elected out of 110 chairpersons. Total 303 members zila parishad including 33.33 percent (101) women, 21.12 percent (64) scheduled castes and 5.28 percent (16) backward class members were elected in 1994 election¹⁰.

2nd Haryana Panchayati Raj Elections, 2000

The second panchayat general election was held on December 11, 15 and 19, 1994 in three phases. Election was held for 16 zila parishad, 114 panchayat samitis and 6035 gram panchayats.

Table-1
Status of Unopposed Elected Representative in 2000, elections

Post	Elected by poll	Unopposed	Total Elected	Percentage	Overall % of unopposed	Vote cast Percentage
Sarpanches	5334	701	6035	11.6	50.1	77.6
Panches	24082	30674	54756	56		
Members P.S.	2000	426	2426	17.6		
Members Z.P.	269	45	314	14.3		

It is discovered from Table-1, that, out of total 6035 sarpanches 11.6 percent (701) were elected unopposed while 56 percent (30674) panches out of 54756 were elected unopposed. In middle panchayats (panchayat samitis), total 17.6 percent (426) members out of 2426 and in case of zila parishad 14.3 percent (45) out of total 314 members were elected unanimously. In all of three PRIs total 77.6 percent voter casted their vote and overall 50.1

percent¹¹ members were elected unopposed in all three tiers of rural panchayati raj in 2000 elections.

3rd Haryana Panchayati Raj Elections, 2005

Third general panchayat elections were held in two phases dated on April 13 and 15, for 6180 village panchayats, 60276 panches, 2833 members panchayat samitis member and 382 members of zila Parishad¹².

Table-2
Status of Unopposed Elected Representative in 2005, elections

Post	Elected by poll	Unopposed	Total Elected	percentage	Overall % of unopposed	Vote cast Percentage
Sarpanches	5707	473	6180	7.7	53.7	82.5
Panches	23631	36645	60276	60.8		
Members P.S.	2531	302	2833	10.7		
Members Z.P.	382	2	384	0.5		

It is cleared from Table 2 that, total 7.7 percent (473) Sarpanches were elected unopposed while this percentage was 11.6 in 2005 elections. In the case of panches total 60.8 percent (36645) were elected unopposed. The Panchkula district was at first rank with 75 percent and district Karnal was in the last with 44.6 percent regarding unopposed elected panches. Total 10.7 percent (302) and 0.5 percent members of Panchayat samitis and zila parishad respectively were elected unopposed in this election. The percentage of unopposed elected member decreased in these elections. Total 53.7 %

representatives were elected unopposed in 2005 election and 82.5 percent voter casted their vote, at all three level of panchayati raj institutions¹³.

4th Haryana Panchayati Raj Elections, 2010

During the fourth general election, 2010, there were 21 zila Parishad, 119 panchayat samiti and 6180 Gram Panchayat in Haryana. The election were held in four phases i.e. June ,6 and 12, July 6 and 10, 2010, for 6180 village panchayats, 60276 panches, 2833 members panchayat samitis members and 382 members of zila Parishad¹⁴.

Table-3
Status of Unopposed Elected Representative in 2010, elections

Post	Elected by poll	Unopposed	Total Elected	Percentage	Overall % of unopposed	Vote cast percentage
Sarpanches	5860	215	6075	3.5	34.1	85.8
Panches	35780	22857	58637	39.0		
Members P.S.	2672	49	2721	1.8		
Members Z.P.	374	0	374	0		

Table-3 shows that, total 85.8 percent voter casted their vote in 2010, elections and 34.1 overall representative were elected unopposed in Haryana. Total 3.5 percent (215) sarpanches, 39 percent (22857) panches, 1.8 percent (49) a little bit portion of members panchayat samitis and no members were elected unopposed in the election of 2010. Very high degradation reflected regarding unopposed elections in these elections. In the regarding unopposed elected panches district panchakula maintained his position 1st with 65.36 percent and followed by Ambala (48.86%) and Fatehabad district (47.14%) and

Panipat district (25.85%) again stood at last position again¹⁵.

5th Haryana Panchayati Raj Elections, 2016

Fifth panchayat elections were held after prescribed minimum educational qualification and other conditions for those, who want to contest the panchayat elections. These elections were held on January 2016. During the fifth general election, 2016, there were 21 zila Parishad, 126 panchayat samiti and 6205 Gram Panchayat in Haryana. As per the schedule, the fifth general election were to be held in the month of October,

2015. Later, the election were held in three phases i.e. January 10,17,and 24 January,2010.Followed the

Supreme Court's decision upholding the new Panchayati Raj Act¹⁶.

Table-4
Status of Unopposed Elected Representative in 2016, elections

Post	Elected by poll	Unopposed	Total Elected	Percentage	Overall % of unopposed	Vote cast Percentage
Sarpanches	5912	274	6186	4.4	56.0	86.4
Panches	21583	38855	60438	64.3		
Members P.S.	2879	118	2997	3.9		
Members Z.P.	414	2	416	0.5		

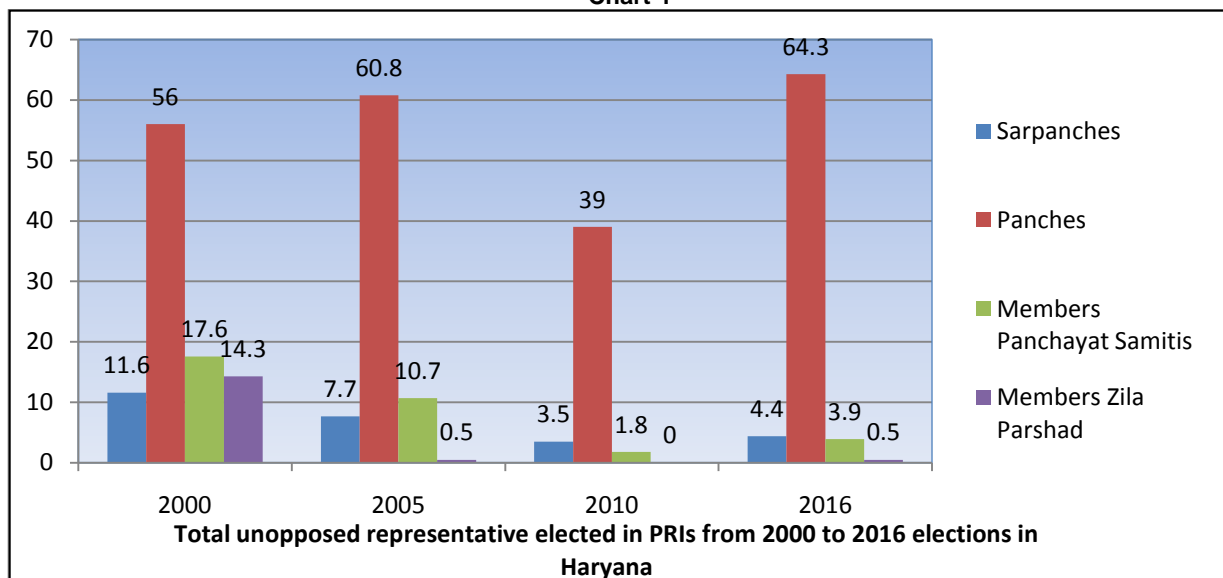
Table-4 indicates that, In this election total 38855 (64.36%) panches, 118 (3.93%) members panchayat samiti and 2 (0.5) members zila Parishad were elected unopposed out of 60438 panches, 2997 members panchayat samiti and 414 members zila Parishad. Out of 6186 only 274 (4.4%), sarpanches out of the 147 (2.37%) male and 127 (2.05) were elected unopposed. In this regarding Fatehabad district secured first position and followed by Kurukshetra district. The district Panipat was again in last position regarding unopposed election of

sarpanches. Overall 56 %) members of all tiers were elected unopposed and the share of women was 30.40 percent in this regarding. Total 86.4 percent voter casted their vote in these elections¹⁷. Winds of women empowerment may just be blowing in rural setup of Haryana. About 95 women panchayat were elected unanimously in 2016 elections.

Main Observations

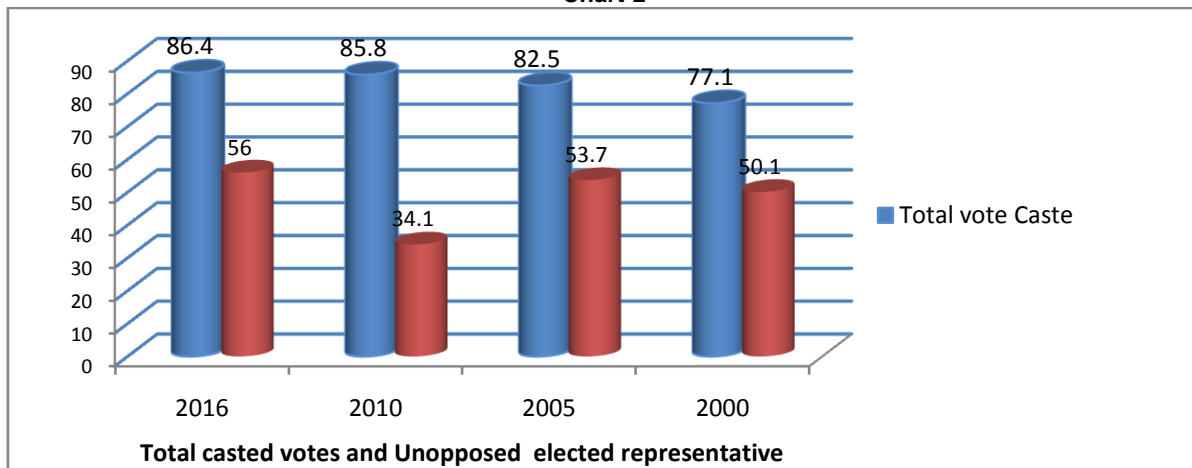
The main observations regarding unopposed elections in Haryana since 2010 are:

Chart-1



1. Chart -1 shows that unopposed sarpanches have been increased (4.4%) in 2016 election compared to (3.5%) 2010 elections while decreased compared with 2000 elections which was (11.6 %) in 2010 elections.
2. Unopposed panches were increased compared with 2000 (56%), to 64.3 percent in 2016 elections. In case of panchayat samitis and zila parishad members decreased from 17.6 percent to 3.9 percent and 14.3 percent to 0.5 members respectively compared with 2000 elections.
3. It can be concluded that percentage of unopposed elected panches found increased continuously whereas, Sarpanches, members panchayats samitis and zila parishad were decreased.
4. Slightly increased unopposed sarpanches, members panchayat and zila parishad compared with 2010 elections only and big changes in unopposed elected panches in 2016, it may be due to promotional scheme by Haryana Government before 2016 elections.
5. Low percentage of unanimously elected sarpanches may be because Haryana Panchayat elections are sarpanch centric due to powerful office..
6. At the level of gram panchayat consensus making may be easy but it is difficult to make consensus at block samitis and zila parishad level.
7. This trend breakdown the social barrier to choose the weaker section women by the dominated castes.

Chart-2



1. Chart-2 shows that, overall downfall in unopposed representative in 2010 elections though increased in 2005 and 2016 elections.
2. It indicates that, vote percentage continuously increased since 2000 from 77.1 to 86.4 in 2016 elections. It shows that voters of Haryana are becoming politically matured.
3. Total 15825 candidates were elected unanimously in 2016 elections.
4. Share of women and scheduled castes found increased.
5. Unanimously elections increased by some promotional schemes like in 2016 announced and hiked the special grant to unopposed candidates.

Suggestions

1. More special grants should be given to weaker section and women individual representative who have been elected unopposed.
2. More grants should be given to full women unopposed elected paanchayts.
3. Special grant should be enlarging to urban local bodies.

Conclusion

After analysis of data it may be concluded that, where there is 'no election' for PRIs, it would saving election expenses, help in reduction of litigation, selection of candidate through a process of consensus and, thus, bringing peace, harmony and brotherhood in the village and so on. It is true that is why many of the states have unanimously elected representatives like Haryana where the trend of unanimously is increased in every panchayats elections. In other side accepted by some scholar that, this trend of unanimous elections may be threat to Indian democracy. Threat of Money-crazy in unopposed chosen panchayats is gradually more a threat as funds overrides contestations and representation through election as described by Varsha Bhagat in her research paper "Unanimously Elected Panchayats : A Threat to Democracy?" Election in representative democracy be considered a imperative element, through this process we select the competent representatives, not only at national level but also at local level. We also look for changing the leadership through periodically election, as the system of rotation and reservation offers an opportunity for change of leadership and facilitate to weaker sections of society. At local level PRIs is one of the central concerns.

While comparing the unanimously elected panchayat and elected panchayat, it is clear that when

an election is held, the village people choose a person who they be familiar with and will work for them, as they are conscious of the person's background. The elected sarpanch wants to perform better than his previous one. This election was called 'indirect election' and we should not promote unanimously elections on the argument that direct elections are expensive. So at last we can say that unanimous election take us to step forward regarding social harmony and brotherhood but, make us backward same step to using the political right of voting and to choose our representative by vote.

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