

Earmarking Haryana for Grassroots Administrative Reforms in India: Impact and Implications of Revised 'Panchayat' Norms



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Abstract

Haryana has pioneered new norms relating to Panchayati Raj. The Haryana Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act 2015 has become a rallying point for other states over apprehensions that the model may be imposed everywhere in the nation. The new norms impose an eligibility criterion that is based on educational qualifications stipulating a minimum education qualification of Class X for men, Class VII for women and Class V for Dalits respectively (See Bhadra Sinha, Smita Gupta). This study is an attempt to discuss the efficacy of panchayats monitored and enabled by the government, their evolution along government norms regarding eligibility, education standards, gender equity and positive discrimination vis-à-vis khaps. It may be a tussle between old and new order; youth and age; patriarchy and feminist accommodation of liberal governments; upper caste hegemony and emergence of depressed classes with government handholding but the dichotomy needs to be investigated.

Villages are index of social satisfaction and development at grassroots. The hinge of village community is the farmer. Thus, the smallest administrative unit in rural India is Panchayat and good governance at this level will be reflected on the agricultural panorama. The farmer as a subject central to panchayat reforms and is proclaimed to be high on central governments agenda. The study focuses on the villages of Haryana with special attention to farm communities.

The purpose of the study is to gauge the extent of behavioural change at the grassroots in the wake of Panchayati Raj Institution reforms. The investigation will be farmer- centric and aim at establishing the contribution of the norms introduced prior to Panchayat elections in creating a well-administered system at village level and generating a satisfactory civil environment in rural Haryana.

Keywords: Behaviour Change, 'Betibachao, Betopadhao', Panchayati Raj Institutions (Pris), Gender Parity, Education Norms, Sustenance.

Introduction

This study is an attempt to discuss the efficacy of panchayats monitored and enabled by the government, their evolution along government norms regarding eligibility, education standards, gender equity and positive discrimination vis-à-vis khaps. It may be a tussle between old and new order; youth and age; patriarchy and feminist accommodation of liberal governments; upper caste hegemony and emergence of depressed classes with government handholding but the dichotomy needs to be investigated. The paper, especially, assesses the impact of revised Panchayat norms vide Haryana Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Act 2015.

Aim of the Study

The aim will be to establish not just short term impact but also long term benefits and perceive the continuity in progress after initial impetus. The success of reforms will be assessed and the possibility of getting social cooperation in administrative changes for good governance will be explored. New areas where reforms can be introduced will be revealed. As media reports suggest, the average age of ZilaParishad members has gone down and the number of women Panchayat members has increased. The demographic statistics also reveal that while earlier Panchayat women were illiterate, the new brigade is educated. However,

whether this will have a dominoes effect and emerge as pervasive altruism will be assessed in the study.

Haryana: Under Scanner

The Panchayat Raj (Amendment) 2015 is a risk venture by the Indian government that promises to workout despite initial hiccups.

Additionally, through these reforms the government aims at bringing gender parity in villages by ensuring that women participate in decision-making process and also that they are educated. This bold initiative needs greater efforts to sustain and manage and will need re-fuelling post-election in form of access to more middle and secondary schools but also in creating environment where the access is not denied due to gender, caste or religious constraints.

The state under scanner has four (4) divisions with a total of 6,800 villages. About 3,500 forms are being floated to garner responses. Data is being compiled for all districts and so far 300 respondents from various villages have contributed.

Earmarking Haryana

The state may have been earmarked for the implementation of this policy for a host of reasons including, a state government that has shown great eagerness in implementing most central government dictates, the need to weaken *khap* bodies that are *sui generis* panchayats of the region, the location that makes it the closest neighbour to the capital of India surrounding it on all sides and its own characteristics that identify it as progressive region that welcomes changes but is equally assailed by gender inequity obvious in the skewed sex ratio and deprivation of women from various necessities as well as privileges.

Mandate of Youth?

Haryana has pioneered reforms relating to Panchayati Raj aimed at bringing in the mandate of youth, educated persons and digitally-savvy individuals by casting them in leadership role regulated through the recent norms.

The study while understanding how the newly constituted panchayats are functioning in their new incarnation adopts a farmer-centric approach. It reaches out to the grassroots to record their perceptions, knowledge and concerns vis-à-vis the changes that have been introduced by the government. The villagers' needs, primarily those of farmers, are compared with the administrative ease and access to grants and development work through Panchayat bodies.

The study may benefit administrators, economists and policy-makers considering that the best judge would be the direct beneficiary of a policy and in this case would be the farmer through the panchayat or a non-farmer village-dweller. The unique aspect of the study is that primacy is given to responses taken from farmers. In fact, it is only a villager who can give one an insight into the functioning and efficacy of a panchayat. The knowledge needs to flow upwards now. Mandate of administrators, economists and policy-makers is considered but farmers' opinion is regarded as the touchstone for determining his well-being. The greater significance and value imputed to a farmer's understanding has been undermined for too long by

forces claiming to be capable of panoramic vision and that seemingly demonstrate objectivity as opposed to and superior to the local farmer's subjective and parochial outlook. This study deviates from the more common inclination in being based on the understanding that the farmer talks through first-hand experience.

Beneficiary: State or Subject?

This study takes reforms introduced by incumbent government into account vis-à-vis aspirations and needs of the farmer. The impact of reforms is scanned. The actual areas demanding/needling reforms are explored. The actual social impact of changes in policy and law needs to be mapped and remains a less explored zone demanding serious study.

For instance, these valid questions emerge: What is the investment of government and expenditure on these schemes.

How much is in rubric of Panchayats to spend on these schemes or direct these programmes?

Methodology

The methodology consists of drafting relevant questionnaires informed by policy changes and objectives; the questionnaires were distributed and responses were collected from representative villages from each district.

A database has been created that refers to revised attitudes regarding female education, decision-making power, ideals upheld, access to water, orientation to science and technology, child marriage, health and hygiene, sanitation arrangements, independence and freedom of females, safety and security of women.

For this, areas of concern were identified and established and their relative importance was gauged after conducting opinion polls in various districts of the region.

The results are being analyzed, interpreted and compared for mapping reform.

Apart from the above, if during course of visits or through media reports some peculiar attitude shifts or events that are symptomatic of same are reported or perceived, these will be recorded or mentioned in the project.

For instance, political expediency created due to enforcement of new codes on the contenders may have led to possible dilution of religious, community and social norms. Mention has been found of episodes wherein villagers are seeking well-read brides that may help them meet the norms relating to panchayat poll but how long this hunt would sustain or the actual social value of educated women needs to be assessed. The study does not claim to be accurate but only suggestive as it tries to map the change in subjective attitudes through a string of questions that may help only guess the level of satisfaction, agreement or disenchantment whatever the case may be.

The methodology included drafting of questionnaires that touched these areas:

1. Acceptability of new norms and general social impact in last two-years.

2. Arrangements by Central Governments and Panchayats (local level)
3. Questions related to satisfaction with farming and progress/policies in agricultural sector.

For the database, the questions were framed in English. The questionnaires were drafted in Hindi which is comprehensible to most respondents from the villages. The volunteers helped the respondents wherever necessary. The responses being mostly in Yes/No form were easily incorporated in original English questionnaire.

Additional comments or observations have been retained and recorded as these lend depth, insight and richness to the study.

Review of Literature

The literature survey is limited to one book that give an insight into origins and functioning of panchayats in Haryana but one that offers an adequate counterfoil to current panchayat formations through its delineation of a traditional village formation of Northern India.

In his classic case study centred on a Delhi village, Oscar Lewis defines/describes a Panchayat as : 'A panchayat(literally a council of five) is a group of recognized leaders who meet to pass on judicial cases or problems, or who convene to plan some undertaking or course of procedure in a matter requiring united action.'(26). The book with the title *Village Life in Northern India: Studies in a Delhi Village(1958)* finds this Delhi village as a representative of most Northern Indian villages and the contents also suggest the same. Rampur is comparable to most villages in Haryana sharing same cultural roots and being similar in social organization.

The other important books are D.R. Chaudhary's *Khap Panchayat ki Prasangikta*. (2013) published by National book Trust India and Dharamchand Vidhyalankar's Transl. Jatton ka Panchayati Sashashan (2009).

In Chapter 1. 'The Setting.' Lewis finds the panchayat the linchpin of rural reconstruction programme under India's First Five Year Plan. Lewis highlights the assumption that panchayats are democratic, representative bodies' (26).

There are also assumptions that Panchayat is responsible for:

1. Framing programmes for the benefit of the village
2. Obtaining and utilizing government assistance

Construction of village infrastructure of roads and tanks etc. Even encouraging villagers to adopt improved standards of cultivation Organizing voluntary labour for community works are tasks of the panchayat. Besides, the stated / usual and explicit task, the village panchayat is expected to 'become the agency for land management and land reform in the village.'(p. 26 Lewis see works cited quote 27 The First Five year Plan, 1952: 165, 195-96).

Furthermore the panchayats are entrusted with the responsibility, 'to safeguard the interests of the landless tenants in the community, to enforce tenancy legislation, and to act as the local agent for land reform.'(26-27).

However, at the same time it is observed that' the village panchayat is dominated by the

landowning caste' who will not like to forego their own landed interests. The faith is considered misplaced as 'in the case of judicial disputes, the Jat-dominated panchayat cannot be considered an impartial tribunal'.

Lewis is more optimistic about 'the new statutory multivillage panchayat, which has been functioning since 1949' (27).

Lewis differentiates between traditional and new panchayats, stating that the newer ones serve as:

1. First, impartial tribunal for lower castes.
2. Characteristically these are formal and hence involve greater legal formality.
3. Elected members may be younger and better educated.
4. Emphasis on age and seniority in traditional panchayats.
5. 'Decisions in the statutory panchayat are arrived at by voting rather than through the traditional method of reaching a unanimous verdict through discussion and majority pressures.'
6. There is a schedule of meetings.
7. Records of proceedings are maintained.
8. Certified copies of records can be obtained after submission of nominal fees.

Even, this has changed over the last five years with greater intervention of bureaucratic mechanism and red-tape, especially under NDA regime with BJP government in the state of Haryana.

Lewis claims, 'Partly because of the greater familiarity and more traditional procedures, the villagers tend to turn to the traditional rather than to the new statutory panchayats. It is in the caste and village panchayats that the more vital issues affecting the people are considered.'

Other tasks:

1. Establishment of a new school
2. Problems concerning land consolidation
3. The sending of a delegation to the revenue department

The caste panchayats are also considered by Lewis.

Less familiar but important functions: Regulating moral conduct of the people. 'Panchayats may meet on a multivillage basis, and there is an organizational structure for that'(29).

Kinds of villages- *caudhar*(In haryana, we will pronounce it as '*chaudhar*' beginning with 'ch'), *dada*, *dadi*, and *vazir*.

Traces groupings under *bisgama* from *dugama* units to *tigama* and *caugama* units with the twenty-village unit 'culminating in a 360-village unit in which kinship relationships are still traced; but the two-village and four-village units are more significant in Rampur's social relationships.'

In the past:

1. They were strong enough to exile families and administer punishment and jail sentences' (31).
2. Competent to collect funds for school.

New versus Old order: Khap, Panchayat and Dispensation of Justice

Haryana offers a unique landscape within India where the specific phenomenon of khaps is organic to the society. This operates at the grassroots

in rural India and is visible in formation of inter-village bodies that may include many gotras. The cluster of villages or subcastes/ 'gotras' then agree to be governed by the same rules of marriage and social behaviour (Chapter3. Vidyalankar p.43). These khaps run parallel to the local panchayat bodies formed under the supervision of the government. The Khaps mostly have greater hold on society than a panchayat in a village. Thus, khaps can be an effective agency in any social change that the government seeks to bring about. While infrastructure development is entrusted to village panchayats and funds are also doled out to them, it is khaps that the government has to rely on for actual change in the mindset of people. This is a great challenge as khaps have a trouble tuning into changes brought upon by contemporary modernization and urbanization.

It may be understood that statutory panchayat bodies have been instituted in India post-independence, but the traditional ones still operate and are called for as and when an issue demands. These are not permanent bodies, nor do they have any definite size.

Khap is understood be the Urdu term for an association- a close-knit body. There is a reference by Bhim Singh Dahiya to 'strapi' or 'khatrapi', the area where a special group resides. The word may also be a cognate of 'shakh(a)', another word for branch and may otherwise be symbolic of 'gaut' (as in Haryanvi dialect) or 'gotra' (as in Sanskrit rendition)(qtd. DR Chaudhary; Dharamchand Vidyalankar.)

This may be something akin to a **faggot**, meaning a "bundle" of sticks in archaic English. Now, 'gaut' stands for a particular gene pool and in this way points to a traditional method of practicing eugenics or human genetics.

Even in Indian popular tales a bundle of sticks is symbolic of brotherhood, filial ties and strength in unity. It is also, reminiscent of the word 'fascism'. The Italian term *fascismo* is derived from *fascio* meaning a bundle of rods, ultimately from the Latin word *fascies*. This was the name given to political organizations in Italy known as *fasci*, groups similar to guilds or syndicates. (*Wikipedia*). But came to be associated prominently with ideology propagated by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini criticized for his violent and oppressive policies and his collusion with Hitler leading to formation of Rome, Berlin and Tokyo axis that precipitated the Second World War.

However, unlike fascist units, khaps emerged as democratic units that operated by reaching decisions through consensus-building. Khaps are based on republican formation- 'gantatra vyavastha'. It is asserted that khaps have been active along Mahabharata and even Buddha's times but these were destroyed by Gupta Empire in cities and sustained themselves only in rural areas.

In his book on Khap in Hindi (Prologue/author's note) DR Chaudhary uses the word 'Parighatna' [consider suitable translation while apprehending positive/negative connotations] meta-event/super-event; sub-event/incident]in reference to khaps. He suggests that khaps are somehow

'incidental' and emergent as a mere random occurrence in a particular soci-cultural context in the agrarian belt of Haryana(Southern part of undivided Punjab). It is derivative not an original or organic way of decision-making.

Khap meetings are called(they are natural conglomerates/affiliates pre-existing an issue) to resolve issues, to resist/fight a common enemy and to discuss appropriate punishment in case the consensual agreement is not abided by. To understand the contemporary face of khap better still, the following questions were posed to respondents. A representative example is exhibited(Respondent R1 Phool Kumar Malik, Nidana village, Khap: Gathwala):

Q1. Does a traditional village panchayat still exist parallel to statutory panchayat? If so, do these have a competitive or collaborative function?

R1. Yes, depending on occasion and complexity of issue.

Q2. Of which khap is your village a part? How useful is the participation?

R1. Gathwala Malik Khap, it is very impactful and sometimes resolves very complicated issues dispensing justice speedily and free of cost.

Q3. Do non-Jats still participate in the khap body as in ancient times? What are there stakes, if they do?

R1. Yes, they do, if there happens any dispute between jats and non-jats then they do participation! beside that they do participate on common to all community matters.

Q4. How useful is the voted panchayat vis-a-vis non-government panchayat?

R1. Influence is the big difference; voted panchayats do not enjoy it in proportion to non-government ones.

Q5. If the traditional panchayat exists no more, is it an indicator of decreasing clout of dominant caste and success of government panchayats?

R1. Not at all, if the khaps go out of existence it will be an indication of the end of democracy and republic.

Q6. Which Jat gotra dominates the khap of which your village is a part?

R1. Gathwala (Malik)

There was a resurgence of 'honour killing' in Haryana, especially as media debate on this issue seemed to grow. Thankfully, this has been curbed with khaps taking cognizance of the changing reality and social dynamics. The khaps displayed an orientation to change in response to societal needs breaking old brotherhoods to save couples and softening the gotra injunctions. While Khaps initially responded with rigidity and posed arrogantly valorizing killings in name of tradition in the beginning and asking for change to Hindu Marriage Act, the attitude has lately softened and there has been a turn towards adaptation and accommodation by compromising on 'bhaichara' or brotherhood to avoid more killings. In September 2015 at Rohtak, a Khap forum (comprising of Malik- Gathwala Khap, Dhankhar Khap, Jhakhar Khap, Hooda Khap, Kadian Khap, Dahiya Khap and the Rohrai-Panchgama khap) called for banning of jeans, curbing pornography on mobile phones, reintroduce the subject of moral education and a change in the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 but number of taboos has also been reduced in

response to changing times as there is a severe dearth of suitable matches given the number of gotras that had to be avoided for marriages within the caste.

The Satrol khap was perhaps the first to respond by introducing changes to atleast a 300 years old tradition of not allowing inter-caste marriages within villages in five kilometer periphery. They have been followed by kadians etc. February 18 news report only emphasize how 'hundreds of men remain unmarried' in Haryana due to skewed sex ratio.

In Hisar, a mahapanchayat validating inter-caste marriages has taken place in 2015. (Editorial, *Tribune*). 'The Jatukhap 84 having an influence in 84 villages of Bhiwani and Hisar districts has decided to raise a corpus fund to support education for girls from underprivileged sections of society' reports *Tribune* of April 2 taking into account the good initiative begun in Bhiwani district of Haryana.

A February 2015 newsreport from Jhajjar district points out, 'Eight prominent khaps (sub-caste councils) of this region have decided to endorse matrimonial relations by removing a century-old social impediment that prohibited such alliances among the eight gotras'. This will be the end of 'bhaichara' or brotherhood amongst the sub-castes of the area.

On December 20, 2015 in Jind, the Sarv Bhura Khap panchayat decided to 'fight foeticide' and dowry by honouring parents of girl children and curtailing wedding expenses (Tuli, Aanchal. *Vagabomb*). The Akhil Bhartiya Jat Mahasabha and Sarv jat Khap panchayat in April 2015 assured the incumbent government to support the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign that aims at girl education and saving the girl child. The Jats dominate the region and the support of their social bodies that also exude power will prove significant.

Always Progressive: Reforms in Khap

In keeping with progressive outlook for which Jats have distinguished themselves over the centuries, the khaps have heralded changes:

1. A Khap panchayat held at Jind has declared to commence a fight against female foeticide. They will honour parents who do not accept dowry and parents of two daughters who will not attempt another issue in desire for a son. (The Tribune. P.5. December 21, 2015).
2. Nogama khap consisting of nine villages ended the centuries old brotherhood to facilitate a couple coming from Sanga and Bura gotras that cannot inter-marry.
3. Satrol khap spearheaded the reform process by being perhaps the first khap to declare that inter-caste marriages amongst cluster villages was acceptable and by diluting the exclusion principles in which the gotras of nani over several descents had to be followed.
4. Khaps have also vowed, as in Karnal, to endorse organic farming but they have proven to be ineffectual.
5. At the moment, the khaps are driving for reservation and lobbying support to get the agrarian committee the benefits of positive discrimination available to other agrarian

communities of the region like Ahirs, and Gujjars and Sainis (2016- 2017).

Revised Norms and functions: Power and Practice

But these were traditional panchayats – on the other hand, Haryana has just gone through a radical experimentation in Panchayati Raj where there has been reduced autonomy, greater demand for digitalization from the government's end, youthful decision-makers, more-inclusive decision-making favouring the marginal groups like Dalits, OBCs and women. Naturally, these panchayats are constituted on different lines than khaps.

Perhaps to deflate the khaps or destroy the clout of traditional panchayats, the government is exercising greater control over the constitution of government-ordained panchayats. The vision may be that the new age Panchayats may be effective alternatives to Khaps and help neutralize them.

Yet for overall development even khaps have to be taken along as they represent the cultural ethos of the region and organic units emerging in the state. The khaps can actually aid all-round development and be agents of real social change if they change with the needs of the times. The government can enhance the efficacy of its programmes by seeking cooperation of these bodies that seek to uphold farmer's interests and cultural values of the region. Total 9 districts were covered by May 2017.

First suggestions came from three districts:

Palwal District

Janauli(1), Alalpur(2), Dighaut(1), Bhurja, Ghordi(1), Gaon Badhram, Ghago, Mittrol, Hasanpur, Tarukaadarsh Colony, Swamika Tehsil, Sehgaoli, Agwanpur

Faridabad District

Dadasiya, Chandawali, Seekri

Mewat District

Punhana (1)

Next, segment comprised of 6 districts:

1. Jhajjar District- Bupniya(5)
2. Rohtak District- Bhalout, Garhi Sampla, Bahu Akbarpur, Pakasma, Sanghi, Samargopalpur, Ismailia, Sunaria Khurd, (5 from each village), Meham Distt.-Madina(5)
3. Sonapat Distt.-Jaatjoshi(5), Murthal(5)
4. Panipat District- Karad, Bhalsi(5)
5. Bhiwani District- Neemriwali(1)
6. Delhi-Jatkhod(5) Remarks: (around Haryana as spill over)

Observations/Remarks/ Lacunae

Many of the villages are covered by various schemes:

Adarsh Gram yojana, Sab Padhen, Sab Badhen and Swacch Bharat yojana.

When villagers are asked if their village is beneficiary under any government scheme, they respond by enumerating various flagship campaigns of the government like, 'sabka saath, sabka vikas', 'swacch bharaat' etc. but when they are asked pointedly if toilets are built they respond in negative. Even in this case, it may be understood that the government is stressing on self-help rather than funding these projects. The expenditure is going in

media and conclaves on these programmes but not on villages through these programmes.

The data can be interpreted in a more favourable pro-government approach as well. So, if a village has toilets even before the campaign was launched, and even if government has not spent a penny, the mere fact that a toilet-(functional/defunct/un-usable) - may be taken in favour of the government.

In Mohana, 'there was a scheme to build toilets outside the houses, but no funds were released,' claims a resident-respondent.

(Note: Remarks: What is the investment of government and expenditure on these schemes. How much is in rubric of Panchayats to spend on these schemes or direct these programmes?)

The questionnaire also recorded Minimum Support Prices(MSP) that could alleviate agricultural crisis and create a sustainable agrarian economy.

Range of MSP(Suggestions)

1. Wheat:2300-2400-2500-3000
2. Sugarcane:400-450-500
3. Paddy/Rice:2000-2600-3000-4000-4500-6000
4. Basmati:3500-5000-7000
5. Guwar:2000-5000-15000-18000-20,000-28,000
6. Mustard:5000-5500-6000-8000
7. Gram:6000

Note: General Suggestions Regarding Minimum Support Prices(MSP):per quintal or Rupees per hundred KG

The MSP suggestions garnered from farmers show that they give rational suggestions that are need based rather than desire based. The tendency of policy-makers usually is to negate inputs related to prices coming from farmers as they assert that farmers will quote prices in excess and demand inflated irrational MSP.

Major Findings

1. Reforms have been welcomed and adopted.
2. Reforms, however, have had little impact on social and economic conditions of the farmer.
3. Areas where govt. policies have reached: no policy except Crop Insurance scheme with zero satisfaction level.
4. Education reforms have been accepted but though mixed responses are reflected regarding ability of youth to take decisions, women have been absolutely rejected in the role. This is primarily because women are dependent on their husbands even as panch(s).
5. While the well-read 'bahu' has become an asset, the daughter is still a liability.
6. MSPs are way below required.

A Subjective Insight

Some amusing remarks to an urbanite, may only be underlining a stark tragedy of rural life. For example, Sandeep of Mohana, Haryana, aged 23 and a farmer asserts, "a farmer's son or farmer cannot get married today; he is considered ineligible." This is a real crisis- symptomatic of farm distress underneath a social change.

Reforms: A Critical Assessment

The reforms have been criticized for 'exclusionary' approach as while accommodating the

'educated' candidates with 'merit', the reforms have marginalized the illiterate superannuated elders from the process of decision -making . This is based on the assumption that illiterate people have no skills, wisdom, knowledge and thus, no real ability to take decisions. This in fact, is not the spirit of original grassroots panchayats emerging in the region.

An overview of responses highlights a constant demand, nay need, for 'compensation' points a gaping fact- there is no profit but loss and hence, compensation is demanded.

The truth is that the demand must be for profit but farmers do not see that happening and hence, ask for more immediate relief in terms of compensation for their losses. But there can be no social cooperation to be expected from deprived section- farmers, primarily.

It seems that empowered *panchayats* and *khaps* that synergize with government regulated *panchayats* can be agents of considerable change for good at village level. This can have positive impact on farming and agricultural scenario. The need for People-Government partnership to sustain the change is stressed frequently by regulating agencies/authorities. The response of the contenders and electorate to Haryana Panchayati Raj Institutions Act has been quite favourable. But to sustain the change, the government needs to step-in and provide education, health facilities and sanitation and not leave it on individuals who are ambitious to contest.

Similarly, the autonomy and limited sovereignty that the panchayat bodies used to exercise have been reined in by the current government. These need to be restored for real grassroots emancipation.

As a utopian policy, the scheme seems to be beneficent. However, the pace at which the government is introducing reform is exponential and not in consonance with traditional mindset of the people in the region. This needs a pragmatic approach and astute implementation to be successful.

As far as women are considered, the changes have again proven to be less efficacious than hoped for.

Apart from other promising indicators a news story by Deepender Deswal bearing the heading 'Women power storms villages' carried by *The Tribune* affirmed that '41% of panchayats have women sarpanches' with Hisar's Bhiwani Rohilan village having all-woman panchayat with all members elected unanimously. But the sustained interest and inputs from women panchay members will be necessary to realize true parity. For the civic bodies in Haryana, there is already a 33 per cent reservation in seats for women. Gender parity still remains a far cry especially as security and safety of women become prime concern.

Future scope

This data may be compared to existing statistics to find improvements and comment on significant deviations from earlier trends. For instance, enrollment figures after the elections will be noted and compared with figures before elections. The study will refer to existing databases of Census reports,

Haryana Civil Registration system, and Human Development Index (HDI), Happiness Index and News reports in *Tribune* and create a more relevant database to gauge the level of social optimism initiated, created and sustained by reforms.

Talks, interviews, awareness workshops will be conducted to assist change and contribute to the government's initiative to herald change.

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