

**SOCIAL STUDY THE KHAPPANCHAYATS OF
HARYANA: A SURVEY (AS PER THE DATA
RECEIVED)¹**

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Abstract

Haryana contributes as much to the developing economy like India as Punjab. Since its bifurcation from Punjab in 1966, the state of Haryana has been playing a part in the growth of the country. Apart from being the economic hub, the state has also been a center for different cultures. Haryana is a state with strong cultural convictions embedded deeply in the psyche of its society. People observe strict adherence to their rituals and traditions. Disregard to these customs is not tolerated. Haryana is not only known for its strong economy, diversity of culture and tradition but also for its concept of thirty-six biradaris. Jat, Rajpoot, Gujjar, Saini, Pasi, Ahir, Rod, Mev, Vishnoi and Harijan, etc. are some of the prominent biradaris of them. Strict endogamy is a social norm in the state though there is a significant change in the outlook of the people due to education. Haryana was carved out of Punjab by the Constitution Seventh Amendment Act on Sept 18; 1966. The Parliament decided its boundaries. There are twenty-two districts in the state which are as following: Gurgaon (now Gurugram), Faridabad, Ambala, Rohtak, Mahendragarh, Hisar, Sirsa, Karnal, Jind, Bhivani, Kurukshetra, Panipat, Jhajjar, Rewari, Fatehabad, Kaithal, Yamuna Nagar, Panchkula, Palwal, Mewat and Charkhi-Dadari.

Keywords: Haryana, khap, jat, gotr, panchayat.

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Introduction:Haryana

Physical Structure

The state is a part of northern region of India spread in 44,212 square kilometers. It is located between 27°39' to 30°35' N latitude and between 74°28' and 77°36' E longitude. “With more than ninety four towns and seven thousand villages, the state is a home to more than twenty five million people.”ⁱⁱ

Expansio.

Located near the country's capital, the province is connected to the Himalayas in the north, Uttar Pradesh in the east, Rajasthan in the south and south-west, and in the north-west to Punjab and Union Territory of Chandigarh. “Rohtak, Maham, Hasi, Dadri, Hisar, Jind, Kaithal and Narwana are some of the prominent cities in the region. It has Rohtak, Jind and Maham



as central locations.”ⁱⁱⁱ

At present, we are living under two parallel but contradictory systems-- the one is democracy and modern institutions and the other is the caste system which is quite undemocratic. The caste system in Haryana has a special feature in the form of KhapPanchayats. These KhapPanchayats or Khaps, as they are popularly known, are specific to Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. Recently, these Khaps have been in the news headlines for their weird

decisions such as declaring love marriage couples as brother and sister, punishing the love couples etc. The Khaps are notoriously linked with honour killings. There is a general perception about this that in Haryana, KhapPanchayats not only pronounce death sentences to the lover couples but also do not hesitate in killing them. There was a time when the KhapPanchayats in Haryana, western UP and Rajasthan resolved the conflicts as well as tried to fight the social evils. However, some recent incidents in the past years have put a question mark on the KhapPanchayats and their compatibility with the democratic setup of our country. This has led to new debates and discussions in the news-papers.

The Meaning and the Conception of Khap

According to Kabool Singh, a President of all community Khaps for many decades, “Khap means council or federation”. A second view which links ‘Khap’ to the Vedic Period suggests that the ancient ‘ganas’ or ‘parishads’ later transformed into these ‘Khaps’ in the long course of time. Khaps are also known as ‘Pal’ in some places. Each Khap comprises of a certain number of villages. For example- BarbasniBarah has twelve villages, Karala has seventeen, ChouhanKhap has five; eighty four in TomarKhap, forty in DahiyaChalisa, three hundred and sixty five in PalamKhap, twenty four each in Meetrol and MahamChoubeesi. The present day Khaps are of two types—one, those which are formed by the people of the same clan such as the RathiKhap in which there are twelve villages with the people of the same Rathi clan. Bhaprouda village of Jhajjar district in Haryana is an example of such clan system. The second type of the clan system is where the groups of different clans make up a Khap.

Samachana village of Rohtak is one such village in which people of the sixteen different clans live together. Khap is an organization of such village groups as are inhabited either by the people of the same clan or by the people of different clans. There are big Khaps as well as small Khaps in Haryana. Sometimes, the big Khaps bifurcate into small Khaps. The influence of these small Khaps is normally limited to five or eight villages; therefore, these Khaps are also called ‘Pachgama’ or ‘Athgama’ respectively. In Haryana as well as in Western Uttar Pradesh, all the Khaps are named after some clan or the other. As regards membership, the villages are not bound to be the member of a Khap. They can quit it at their disposal. They can leave the original Khap and become the member of the other one. They have the freedom to choose their Khap. As a result of this, membership of these Khaps keeps on increasing or decreasing. An example of this is the DahiyaKhap of Panipat district of Haryana, the membership of which has increased from fifty to sixty villages. It is, nevertheless, hard to

find out why these village defect one Khap and enter another. One possible reason behind this is the influence of the other Khaps.

Functioning of the Khaps

The main function of KhapPanchayats is to settle disputes between villages, *thoks*, castes or neighboring villages under their Khap jurisdiction and to attempt to establish a sense of brotherhood, unity and harmony between the Jats and other communities of Khap region. If the elected Panchayat of the village are unable to resolve any issue then a meeting of the neighboring village Panchayats is convened, which often consists of eight to ten villages. If this Panchayat also fails to solve the problem, then the meeting of the KhapPanchayat is convened at a certain place in which the people of the village are also included.

In order to solve an issue, a meeting is convened first by the Sarpanch of the village. It is necessary that all Panchs of the village be included in this meeting. At first, the issue is considered mutually by the villagers and the decision is taken by a general consensus. In addition, the decision is signed by all the Panchs including the Sarpanch of the village. If someone has an objection to this decision, he can appeal further but for the time being, it is necessary that the guilty accepts the decision taken, and in case of non-acceptance, the handicap like social exclusion is adopted. The guilty, however, is free to go to the police or the court but, in the meanwhile, he has to remain out of the village accepting the decision.

Example:

If any problem related to the Rathi clan or the Rathi village arises, then first a meeting is convened in village to solve the problem there itself. Nonetheless, if the village Panchayat (including the elected Panchayat) fails to resolve the issue, then a larger meeting of all the twelve villages of Rathi clan is convened. If this Khap meeting, too, is unable to resolve the issue, then some neighboring villages of the RathiKhap are also included in the meeting. It is not necessary, however, that all the people of the villages attend the KhapPanchayat; only five to ten people participate in the meeting as a representative of their villages. Decisions are later conveyed to the remaining people by their representatives.

The Jat community has a hierarchy of these Panchayats. Issues are first taken to the village Panchayat, then to the Panchayat of the neighboring village and then to the KhapPanchayat.

The highest body of Panchayat is the SarvKhapPanchayat, that is, all Khap meeting. Below is given the hierarchical order of the KhapPanchayats:

Family - VanshPanchayat-BagadPanchayat - TholaPanchayat-DhugPanchayat-PannaPanchayat- Gram Panchayat-Tapa Panchayat- KhapPanchayat.

Apart from these Panchayats, there are 'community Panchayats' as well. These community Panchayats resolve issues of all castes and clans. Here is the hierarchical order of these community Panchayats:

Various castes BangadPanchayat—all caste village brotherhood Panchayat— inter-village Panchayat—various clans Tapa Panchayat—various clans/caste distant brotherhood Panchayat. At the apex level, just like all KhapPanchayat, there is an All Caste/All Khap MahaPanchayat.

On being proven guilty, the person is normally ostracized from their caste; their faces blackened, their heads shaved and are subjected to public humiliation. The conclusion is that these Panchayats are community Panchayats formed by many different castes and clans.

The Structure of the KhapPanchayats

With their specific way of functioning, these KhapPanchayats have their own structure. There are three main elements as following:

1. Gotha
2. Gawahad
3. Brotherhood.

Gotha

Clans are the most important structural element in the formation of the KhapPanchayats. All the KhapPanchayats in Haryana are established after the name of some Gotha or the other. Every GothaPanchayat has a head called Choudhari who represents the people of his clan. Even in Rajasthan, many villages of Jats are named after their Gothas such as—Sinsinwal, Sogariya and Sorat etc. All the villages under the Khap established after the name of a Gotha are part of this very Gotha and all the people living in these villages are consider sisters and brothers. The Khaps established after the name of a Gotha have a special importance. Many

Khaps such as BalyanKhap, Kudu Khap, MaanKhap, DhadaKhap, DalalKhap, SangwanKhap, HuddaKhap and RathiKhap have been formed after the names of clans. In some places, you don't find names such as Khap or Pal but only mixed organizations of the Jats.

For example - BadbasaniBaraha which includes twelve villages of different clans of Jats.

Gawahad

This word from the Jat dialect means 'aneighboring village' which is actually a group of villages bordering with the other villages. When a KhapPanchayat is not able to sort out an issue with the help of the village of its jurisdiction, then they include their neighboring village to have its say on the issue. These neighboring villages are called 'Gawahad' in the Jat dialect. Gawahad is generally a group of five to eight villages. Marriages don't happen with the people of the neighboring villages even if the couple is from different clans.

Brotherhood

The Brotherhood is the foundation of the Khaps, which is seen between the Khaps of Haryana as well as the Thirty six castes. In the rural areas, village groups formed on the basis of mutual brotherhood are known as Tapa, Baraha, or Pal. Group names of villages are mostly decided by the number of villages in the group. On the basis of number, these village groups are known as Tapa, Thamba, Chaugama, Athgama and Choubeesi.

Khap, Jat and Gotha (Clan)

According to one number, there are more than 69 KhapPanchayats in Haryana while, on the other hand, in the Western Uttar Pradesh nearly 30 KhapPanchayats are still alive in their old existence. New Khaps are coming into existence along with the old Khaps. KajlaKhap formation in 2012 is such an example. Most importantly, there are no KhapPanchayats in all the districts of Haryana. There are no KhapPanchayats in Haryana's Rewari, Ambala, Mahendergarh, Mewat, Kurukshetra, Mewat, Faridabad, Palwal, Fatehabad, Yamunanagar and Panchkula districts. KhapPanchayats are in Haryana only in Jhajjar, Bhiwani, Hisar, Sirsa, Panipat, Sonapat, Kaithal and Jind districts. According to an estimate, the number of Gothas of Jats is more than 2500. Marriages in the same clan are forbidden in many castes. In some caste, marriages don't take place in the clans of the either paternal or maternal

grandmothers. In 2009, more than half a dozen villages and Khaps in the state of Haryana have been in the spotlight due to the Gotha (clan) controversy.

The word 'Gotha' was first mentioned by DD Kosambi in his book "Ancient India". Defining the 'Gotha', D. D. Kosambi had said that "the word 'Gotha' has been described in Rigveda as a Gaushala. Thus, 'Gotha' means a herd of animals or cattle fold. While the other religious texts mention the Rishis as the basis of the origin of the Gotha. In fact, the bases of the origin of the Gotha, however, have been person, work place, trees, and titles. For example: - LakraJat in the name of Lakra Singh, DuhunJatin the name of DuhunSingh, Dahiya from Duhupal, Dalal from Dalu, Sangu from Sangu, JasaranaJat from Jasraj, Khaprao to Khapra, Budharaj to Budhwar, Kudu in the name of Kundraj, Dhamerao to Dabas, Holorao to Hooda, Dhakoji to Dhaka Jat, Champa Singh to Chaupada, Roop Singh to Rabudas, from Sindhawat to Indus, Shivra to Shyoran and Chahoo to Chahaletc. Regarding the Gotha of the Jats, there is a statement from DrSurajbhanBhardwaj. He says, "Wherever the Jats have been described, they have been mentioned as farmers".

It is evident from the above description that due to the large number of the Gothas, most of the villages of Haryana are established on the basis of Gotha as well as brotherhood. This is why the concern of the courts and the political intervention can't serve any purpose in this matter. What we need to do is to find a scientific basis for the marriage related beliefs of the Jat community.

Khap region and matrimonial belief

The area of Khap Panchayats is quite wide. Every Khap has consists of certain number of villages and a marriage in one's own village or the neighboring villages is strictly prohibited. Apart from this, if the village is different or even the Gotha is different, even then it is not easy to marry. And that is why marriage is not possible even if there is no blood relation but because there is brotherhood between the villages. Most of the Jats in Haryana are known as DeshwaliJat or Bagadi Jat. Gotha is given full respect in DeshwaliJats. While committing marriages, Jats marry saving the Gotha of their grandmother, mother and their own. If there are more than one Gothas in a village, then the people of the Gotha with the larger population respect their brotherhood with the smaller group. Jats give full freedom to the people of the other castes to marry within their own castes. People living in a particular Khap area are considered to be the members of brotherhood. This is a common belief in most of Haryana's districts. This rule of Khaps is effective in the areas around 150 to 200 miles from Delhi

where the majority castes are Jat, Gujjar, Ahir, Rajpoot, Luhar, Dhobi, Nai, Teli and Balmiki, etc. Social customs don't allow marriages between distant relations of cousins, nephew-aunt, uncle-niece, etc.

Apart from that, the people of the dominant Gothadon't marry their daughters in the village. Girls belonging to the neighboring village are called 'Seemali' and considered as sister. 'Seemalis' also can't be married in the adjoining villages. Marriages take place only between the villages that are not the members of the same brotherhood. However, if a neighborhood village is not a member of the brotherhood, marriage can take place in that situation. The above description reveals that one need not go to faraway villages for marriage purposes. The only thing one has to do is to choose which pal, Gotha, Khap, or neighborhood village is to be excluded.

The social study of the KhapPanchayats of Haryana: A Survey (as per the data received)^{iv}

To understand the KhapPanchayat issue better, the districts of Haryana can be divided into two categories - those which have KhapPanchayats and those which don't have.

Districts with KhapPanchayats	Districts without Khaps
Karnal, Jhajjar, Rohtak, Bhivani, Sonipat, Kaithal, Jind, Hisar, Panipat, Sirsa.	Faridabad, Palwal, Mewat and Gurgaon.

After selecting the districts, the following villages were selected for the study of the Khap system:

	District	Village
1	Panipat	SivahGaon
2	Jind	BibipurGaon
3	Kaithal	KarodaGaon
4	Sonipat	Murthal, Karoi, and Kodagaon

5	Hisar	NalwaGaon
6	Bhivani	SarpuraGaon
7	Faridabad	BadotGaon
8	Palwal	Prithla, Ghughera and Dhatir villages
9	Mewat	AdbaraGaon
10	Rohtak	GadiSanpla and Ismaila village
11	Karnal	Rambo and Neelokhedigaon
12	Jhajjar	Bhaproudagaon

Now-a-days we can see a lot of change in the rules of the KhapPanchayats. Earlier, it wasn't possible to marry within the same village. However, present circumstances have compelled the Khaps to modify their structure a little. Barring some exceptions, the growing level of education and knowledge of law has inspired people to move to the courts against the Khaps. At one time, KhapPanchayats in Haryana protested against marriage taking place in the same village. Some KhapPanchayats such as SathrolKhapPanchayat and SangwanKhapPanchayat have given their consent to get married in the villages falling within their area. These KhapPanchayats say that they need to keep updated with time and it would be commendable if they were able to handle marriage related issues at their level itself. It is important to note that due to the problem of marriage, SathrolKhap has given permission to marry in its forty - two brotherhood villages. As far as inter-caste marriage is concerned, KhapPanchayats say that inter-caste marriages can happen, but lovers will not stay in the village; they will have to go to elsewhere, so that the village environment is not corrupted by their act. KhapPanchayats do recognize the inter-caste marriage on the condition that the marriage has the consent of the parents of both sides. It is expected that the other Khaps will also follow in the footsteps of Satrol and SangwanKhaps. The decisions of Khaps are not binding on the people. Time has change many things. Those who are not satisfied with the decision of the Khaps are free to protect their rights with the help of law. Nonetheless, the influence of Khaps can't be ruled out completely. Khap rules are followed even in those districts of Haryana where there are no KhapPanchayats. Marriage in the same village is not allowed in Faridabad, Palwal and

Mewat. And this is because Khap is not just an organization; it is more than that. Khap is a culture, a life style that is deeply ingrained in the social setup of Haryana.

In Haryana, there is a tradition of KuaPoojan which is celebrated by the members of a family upon the birth of boy. However, due to the effect of education, people perform this ritual on the birth of a girl child as well in Faridabad, Hisar, Jind, and Karnal districts. Those who don't do KuaPoojan express their joy by distributing sweets among the villagers. At least a little bit has changed, which is a meaningful initiative for the future. KhapPanchayats themselves now announce awards and give money for encouraging the girl child births. As far as the co-ordination between KhapPanchayats and the elected Panchayats is concerned, most of the problems are first attempted to be resolved by the elected Panchayat of the village at their level. When the problem gets complicated instead of being resolved then the Panchayat of the neighboring village, and after that KhapPanchayat meeting is organized. It is not necessary that all the people of the village attend the meeting. The meeting consists only of people who represent all the people of the village. Representatives are selected with mutual consent of the villagers. The decision that is made in the meeting is communicated to all the people present. Later, the decision is conveyed to the people of the other villages through their representatives. As far as Gotha is concerned, the religious texts oppose the same Gotha marriage. In Haryana, the Gotha of father and the grandmother is excluded for boy's marriage. But there is a change in it saying that if grandma is not alive then the grandmother's Gotha should be left for marriage.

Apart from this, the Khaps have also been pronouncing judgments on the issues of education, eve-teasing, water-sharing, and dowry. Recently, Kaliraman Khap Panchayat decided that a village campaign should be launched to save the water resources with the help of everyone to get rid of water shortage. Following this, Berry Khap went ahead with this campaign and decided that the houses in which there are no faucets, they would visit every such home and plant the taps. Regarding dowry practice, Khap Panchayats passed this proposal that the person who will demand dowry for marriage will be massively boycotted from the village. Beri Khap has initiated a dowry-free marriage by paying a rupee herself and has said that whoever will marry without dowry, will be honored by the Khap Panchayat. Khap Panchayats have decided to start mass boycott against those who commit embryocide and giving proper rewards when a girl is born. Panchayats have named roads and inns after the lovely epithet for girls 'lado' as in the case of 'Lado Marg' and 'Lado Sarai'. Khap Panchayats have also decided to start their

proceedings with the word 'Lado'. As far as the issue of giving property to women is concerned, attitude in this case is a bit rigid. During the research, it was found that the Jats did not possess land or property as much as they used to before, so the part of the distribution is distributed only in the boys. If parents themselves give their share of property to the girl, then there is rarely any opposition.

Conclusion

this is a small but meaningful debate on the possible issues related to the research topic so that various aspects related to KhapPanchayats can be studied. It's a strange fact that history of Khaps came too late in the knowledge of the people and that too in the bad light of honor killings. In the present time, the changed circumstances have posed the greatest challenge before the KhapPanchayats to maintain their existence and identity. KhapPanchayats have suffered a credibility crisis due to the irresponsible statements. Earlier the heads of Khaps did not contest the elections but now-a-days the Khap heads have started contesting elections and their political indulgence is growing rapidly. The widening generation gap has made the social fabric more complicated. The main reason responsible for this is lack of communication between the generations. Now the time has come to eliminate the causes responsible for the degradation of KhapPanchayats and modern democratic institutions and pave the way forward.

When the KhapPanchayats can come together on a platform on the issue of Jat reservation, then they can definitely come to a stage to do away with the abnormalities in their own ancient institution. Therefore it has become necessary that there must be efforts to abolish the social evils alongside the promotion of education. The good decisions taken by Khaps should be followed by the other Khaps as well. If the Khaps ease their structures, then the problem of the unmarried will automatically decrease. The solution to any problem is not in renouncing our culture or adopting Western civilization but by making slight changes in our system, and in the establishment of ideal society free from injustice, inequality and discrimination.

Bibliography

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^{iv}KhapPanchayats of Haryana: *A Survey (as per the data received)*