

A Study on Comparative Analysis of the 14th and 15th Haryana Assembly Elections

By



Abstract

This comparative study of the 14th and 15th Haryana assembly elections is part of Prajatantra's longitudinal effort to develop an "Ease of Doing Politics" Index, which ranks Indian states based on accessibility to political entry, gatekeeping practices, and the cost of campaigning. The objective is to reveal the growing barriers to democratic participation in Haryana, highlighting systemic challenges that hinder governance-centric individuals from entering politics.

This report centres on a comparative analysis of the 14th and 15th Haryana Assemblies, utilizing data collected on 358 representatives across both assemblies and candidate data from the BJP and INC for the 15th Assembly. The findings reveal an increase in the proportion of representatives from dynastic backgrounds and a rise in financial thresholds and instances of criminal backgrounds among elected representatives. The research underscores how family legacy, wealth, and criminal antecedents function as gatekeeping mechanisms, limiting entry for aspirants from non-privileged backgrounds. Women's representation, though slightly improved, also remains predominantly tied to dynastic and influential backgrounds, with wealth playing a critical role in access to political office. By examining these trends, the study sheds light on the restricted pathways to political participation, providing essential insights for fostering a more inclusive and democratic political landscape in India.

Introduction

Haryana is one of the prominent North Indian states whose political landscape is a blend of caste and political dynasties. The state doesn't only have a stronghold of national parties like BJP and INC but has also seen a rise in many regional parties in the past. This regional and caste-based politics led to the tradition of dynastic politics in Haryana, which left an indelible mark on Haryana's political history. Since its first election in 1967, the state has witnessed the rise of many prominent political families that have shaped its political landscape. Multi-generational families such as the Hoodas, Chautalas, and Bishnois have maintained their dominance over the decades, significantly influencing party politics in Haryana. This analysis by Prajatantra examines the 14th and 15th Haryana Assemblies and the ticket distribution of the BJP and INC to assess whether the influence of wealth, dynastic families, and criminal backgrounds has increased or decreased in Haryana politics.

Background

This study examines the increasing trends in Haryana's electoral politics, specifically related to the growing dominance of dynastic individuals, wealthy individuals, and those with criminal backgrounds. It aims to uncover how these factors continue influencing political entry and perpetuating gatekeeping, effectively sidelining individuals from non-privileged backgrounds. The study also seeks to explore the extent to which political parties provide accessible pathways for non-privileged individuals to enter politics. The study primarily focuses on two key areas: Trends of gatekeeping in the 14th and 15th Haryana Assemblies, showing how family ties, wealth, and criminal influence have grown or remained static. The entry methods into politics for non-privileged individuals assess whether political parties provide opportunities for merit-based entry or consistently restrict them through gatekeeping practices.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale behind this study stems from the critical importance of inclusive political systems in shaping the quality and integrity of democratic governance. In Haryana, as in much of India, electoral representation has often been skewed by the dominance of dynastic families, wealthy individuals, and individuals with criminal backgrounds, raising fundamental concerns about the fairness and inclusiveness of the democratic process.

Access to political office should ideally be open to all individuals, irrespective of their financial or social background. However, the increasing influence of family ties, money power, and criminal networks in Haryana's electoral politics has restricted political access for those from non-privileged backgrounds. This trend undermines meritocracy and equality and distorts representative democracy by concentrating power in the hands of a few.

Studying the 14th and 15th Haryana Assemblies is crucial to understanding how these gatekeeping mechanisms have evolved and whether any democratic openings for non-privileged representatives have emerged. By analyzing the growing role of dynastic representatives, crorepatris, and criminals, this research will assess how these trends have systematically reduced opportunities for individuals from non-elite backgrounds. Moreover, the study will evaluate the methods of political entry available to such individuals, offering a comparative view of how political parties in Haryana facilitate or hinder access to political office for non-dynastic representatives.

Furthermore, the insights from this study will contribute to the Ease of Doing Politics Index, which aims to measure how accessible and open political systems are for new entrants across different states in India.

Ultimately, the study seeks to advance democratic principles by highlighting pathways to more inclusive political participation. By ensuring that politics is not solely the domain of dynastic families and the wealthy elite, the goal is to contribute to representative and fair governance, where all segments of society have an equal voice in the democratic process.

Research Methodology

The study focuses on the 14th and 15th Assembly of Haryana and the BJP and INC candidate list for the 15th Haryana elections. Data collected on various parameters, including age, education, criminal cases, assets, and method of entry into politics, is used to analyze when, how, and why politicians enter politics.

1. Age, Education, Assets, and Criminal Background

The representatives provided these parameters in official affidavits, as required by the Election Commission during the nomination filing process. Affidavit data ensures high reliability, and it includes self-disclosed information on educational qualifications, declared assets, and any criminal cases pending against the representative.

2. Method of Entry

The method of entry, detailing how each candidate entered politics (e.g., through family legacy, grassroots activism, or student politics), was gathered through past interviews of the representative and our on-the-ground stringer network. This approach provided a comprehensive view of the representative political pathways and backgrounds, offering insights beyond what is available through official documents.

Key Terms

The report explores a new dimension in electoral research, and understanding the various terms and definitions is a prerequisite.

1. Gatekeeping in Politics

- **Privilege/ Weak criteria:** If a candidate comes from a dynastic background, has assets >1 crore, or has criminal charges against him.
- **Strong privilege/ Strong criteria:** If a candidate comes from a dynastic background, has assets > 5 crore, or has serious criminal charges against them.

- **Serious criminal charges:** Offenses for which the maximum punishment is five years or more, non-bailable offenses, electoral offenses, offenses involving assault, murder, kidnap, crime against women, and offenses under the Prevention of Corruption and Representation of People Act (Section 8).
- **Self-made politicians:** Elected representatives who have won without political backing have no or only non-serious declared criminal cases and possess assets of less than 5 crores.

1. **Method of Entry**

- **Family Legacy:** Family legacy in politics occurs when an individual enters politics because of familial ties or connections to relatives already established in the political sphere, which provides them with advantages such as access to networks and resources.
- **Local Politics:** Elected Representatives in urban local bodies or Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- **Party Organizational Politics:** A person holding a non-elected post in the party structure serves as the party apparatus at any level of the political hierarchy.
- **Student Politics:** Student politics involves political activities and organizations within educational institutions, driven primarily by student participation and engagement.
- **Mass Movement:** Large-scale collective action by citizens aimed at instigating change in a government's political structure or policies.
- **Social Service** refers to voluntary or organized efforts to enhance individuals, families, or communities' well-being and quality of life.
- **Activism:** refers to practice where a person is directly involved grassroots action and public mobilization for or against any social and political issue.

Chapter 1

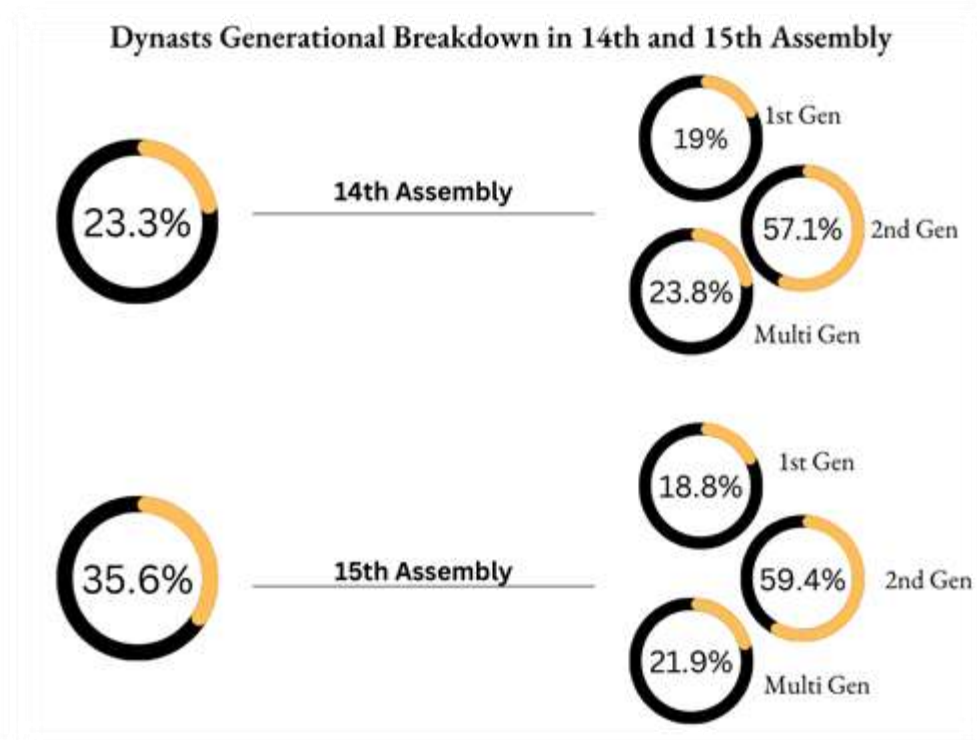
Analysis of Dynastic, Wealthy, and Criminal Representatives in 14th and 15th Assembly

For the past 3 elections, the BJP government has come to power in Haryana. With each election, the voting percentage has decreased by an average of 5.7%. While the voter turnout has decreased, the trends in dynasts, wealth, and crime have increased in Haryana. While the 14th Haryana Assembly saw 23.3% of the elected MLAs coming from dynastic backgrounds, the 15th Haryana Assembly (here on called the present assembly) consists of 35.6% of MLAs from dynastic backgrounds. The rise of 12.3% in dynastic background MLAs reflects efforts to uphold regional aspirations, control specific caste votes, and inherit the established voter bases of their forefathers.

Political dynasties have a strong presence in Haryana: In the 14th Assembly, 13.3% of the MLAs were from second-generation dynastic families and 3.3% from third-generation dynasties. However, this representation has significantly increased in the current Assembly, where 21.1% of the total MLAs belong to second-generation dynasties, and 7.7% come from third-generation political families. The ratio of re-elected dynasts to new dynasts, approximately 1:4, highlights the enduring political capital that dynastic representatives inherit from their predecessors.

Despite the influx of new dynasts, a significant portion of re-elected dynasts underscores their ability to leverage established vote bases and political networks; this suggests that even after gaps in election cycles, the political legacy of their predecessors continues to give them a decisive advantage, enabling them to secure electoral success more quickly than non-dynastic representatives.

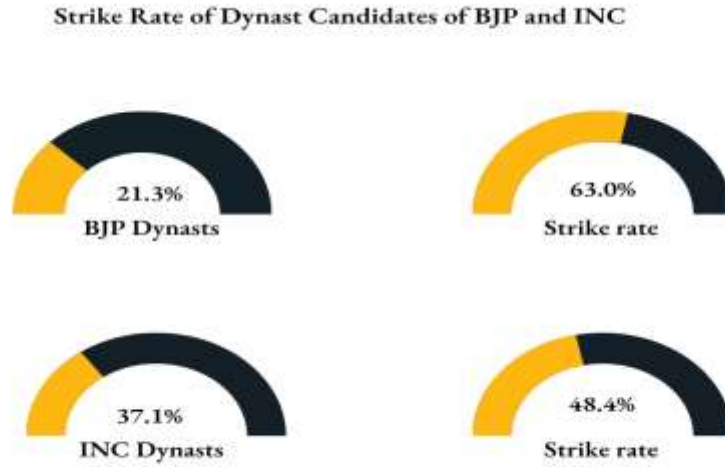
Figure 1: Dynasts and Generation Wise Breakdown



❖ **Electoral Success of Dynastic Candidates in the 15th Assembly.**

Out of the 89 candidates fielded by the BJP, 19 came from dynastic backgrounds, with 12 securing victories; this translates to over 63% of dynastic candidates winning their seats under the BJP banner. In contrast, the INC allocated tickets to 33 candidates, but only 16 emerged victorious, reflecting a success rate of 48.4%. The contrast in candidate selection, particularly regarding tickets given to dynasts in the BJP and INC, can be understood through Chhibber's (2013) argument. He suggests that dynastic leadership succession in India is more prevalent in parties that lack strong organizational connections to societal groups and where party finances are centralized within the top leadership.

Figure 2: Strike rate of Dynastic Candidates of BJP and INC



❖ **The Dual Legacy of Wealth and Muscle Influence**

Apart from dynasts presence of wealth and muscle influence also have some hold on Haryana politics. In the 14th Haryana Assembly, 45.6% of representatives had assets exceeding ₹5 crores, and 93.3% had assets above ₹1 crore. In the current assembly, this figure has risen to 75.6% for MLAs with assets exceeding ₹5 crores, while 96.6% of MLAs have assets over ₹1 crore. This highlights how politics perpetuates not only family legacies but also wealth legacies. while the wealth has increased significantly from the last assembly election but MLAs with criminal backgrounds have remained low and same. In the 14th Haryana Assembly, 13.0% of representatives had criminal cases against them, with 8.0% declaring serious criminal cases. This percentage has remained almost unchanged in the current assembly, with 13.0% having criminal cases and 7.0% declaring serious criminal cases.

Table 1: Percentage of Gatekeeping in 14th and 15th Legislative Assembly

Gatekeeping Barrier	14 th Assembly	15 th Assembly
Assets >1 Crore	93.3%	96.6%
Assets > 5 Crore	45.6%	75.6%
Criminal Cases	13.0%	13.0%
Serious Criminal Cases	8.0%	7.0%

Chapter 2

An Analysis of Gatekeeping and Non-Privileged Entry in Haryana Politics

While dynastic politics have led the way for political representation in Haryana, many representatives have moved past the dynastic gatekeeping and reached the Haryana assembly. In Haryana regional parties have mostly emphasized family ties and grassroots-level politics, national parties like the BJP and INC have seen leadership emerge from the Sangh for the former and student politics for the latter. In Haryana, dynastic politics has been a dominant force in both the previous and current assemblies. However, beyond dynasties, other methods of political entry have also made a mark. In the 14th Haryana Assembly, party organizational politics (14.4%) and local politics (12.2%) were the most prominent paths, followed by student politics (10.0%). In contrast, in the current assembly, local politics has gained more prominence (17.8%), followed by party organizational politics (13.3%) and associations with the Sangh (5.6%).

In non-privileged pathways wealth and muscle influence is there. Representatives from local politics have seen a rise of 5.6% but at the same time, gatekeeping in local politics increased from 45.5% to 75.0% this rise is indicative of the fact that non-privileged pathways are also, filled gatekeepers. Similarly, in party organizational politics, gatekeeping has increased from 30.8% to 75.0%. Student politics, which was the breeding ground of politicians in Haryana is now one of the least chosen pathways to politics and is 100% gatekept. One of the primary reasons for this is that in Haryana Student politics was banned for 22 years. Sangh has seen a considerable number of representatives coming in both the assemblies, this pathway has become one of the primary methods of entry for right-wing followers.

Figure 4: Non-Privileged Pathways to Power in 14th Assembly

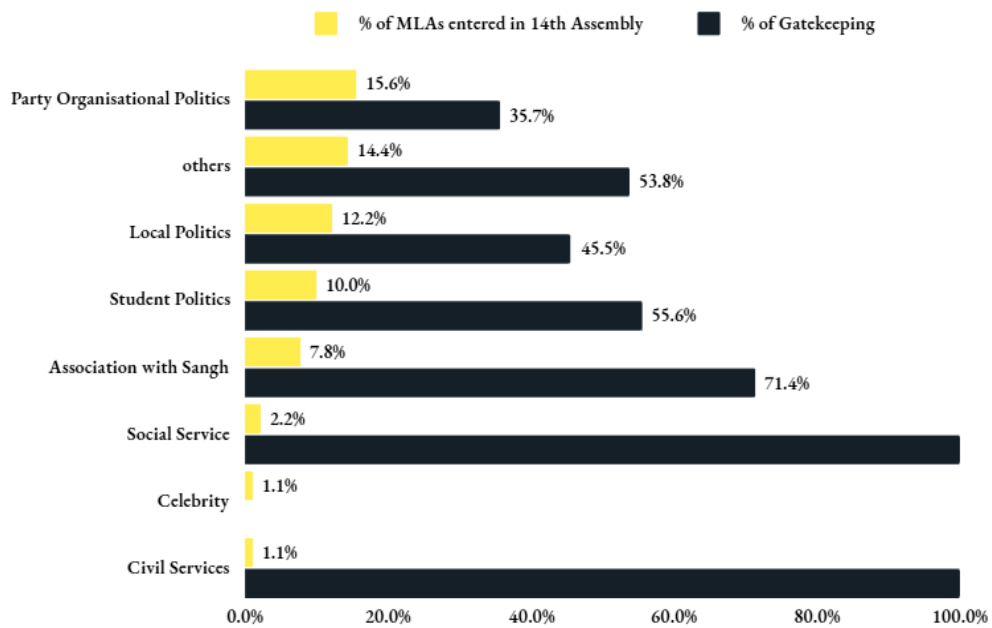
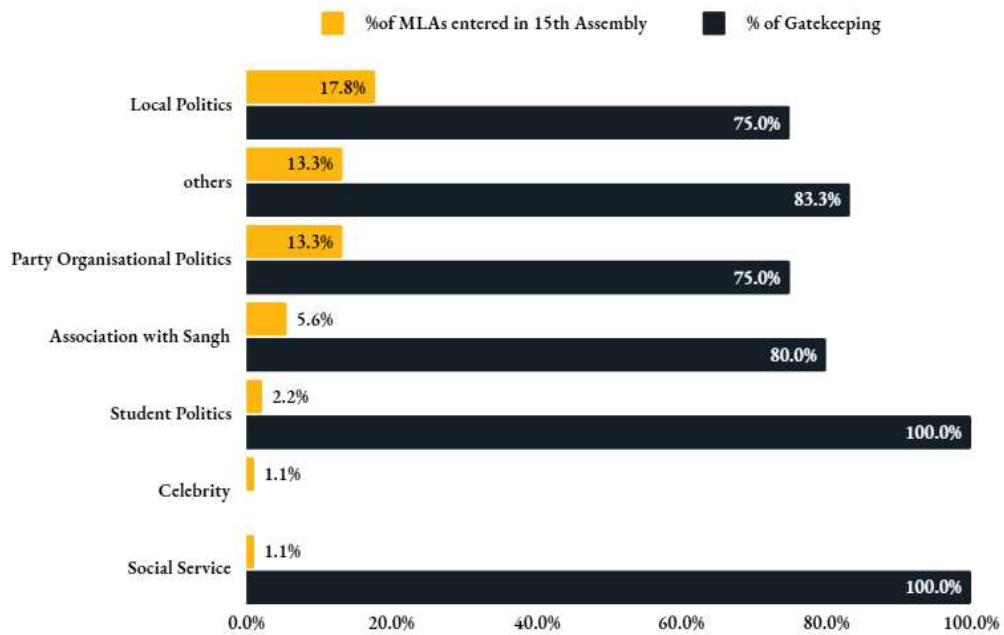


Figure 5: Non-Privileged Pathways to Power in 15th Assembly



Chapter 3

Women Representation in Haryana Politics

Women's representation in Haryana politics remains limited and is often tied to dynastic or influential family backgrounds. At both the national and state levels, women in politics are typically from dynastic families or enter through local politics, benefiting from women's reservations at the grassroots level. In the current Haryana Assembly, there are 13 women representatives, an increase from 9 in the 14th Assembly. However, of these 13, 7 have dynastic backgrounds, 2 have risen through party ranks, and 1 each comes from local politics and celebrity status. Women from dynastic backgrounds hold significant wealth, with assets exceeding 20 crores, while those from non-privileged backgrounds have assets over 1 crore. This high financial threshold makes political entry challenging for women without such resources, underscoring the barriers to achieving equitable representation.

Table 2: Method of Entry Among Women Representatives

Method Of Entry	14 th Legislative Assembly	15 th Legislative Assembly
Dynast	4	7
Local Politics	2	1
Party Org.	1	2
Celebrity	1	-
Others	2	2

Conclusion

This comparative analysis of the 14th and 15th Haryana Assemblies highlights the deepening barriers to political entry, particularly for individuals without privileged backgrounds. The study reveals an increasing influence of dynastic families, financial power, and criminal records in political candidate selection, contributing to a trend where wealth and family legacy play an outsized role in political representation. While dynastic representation has grown, wealthier candidates continue to dominate, with high financial thresholds effectively sidelining governance-focused aspirants without substantial resources. Non-Privileged candidatures need to be encouraged by parties so that new ideological thinking come into political landscape of Haryana. Women participation should also be one of the focus areas as despite local reservation, Haryana women has not been represented adequality in the assembly. Thus, the primary focus of the political parties and political ecosystem should be creating a new pool of candidates which are non-dynastic and governance centric.