

- iii. What interventions can be suggested to bring about a change in gender relations?

Chapterisation Scheme

This study is organized as follows:

Chapter I, '*Introduction*': This chapter analyses the historical role of *khap* panchayats in North India, and the continuing role of these traditional bodies in contemporary times in the context of a modern political democracy. The linkages of these caste bodies with gender, culture and gender inequality has been brought out. The increased activities of the *khaps* in recent times especially their resurgence in the state of Haryana, are significant in the backdrop of the unequal gender relations in the state. This is characterised, most visibly, by a low sex ratio. In this context, a statement of the problem has been formulated, and the objectives of the research and the research questions have been formulated.

Chapter II, '*Review of Literature*': This chapter provides a review of literature and analyses the main themes on the subject. Some of the areas covered relate to the political organization of *khaps* (Pradhan 1966), their social context (Gupta 2010), and their interventions in control of marriages and contested marriages (Chowdhry 2004; 2007; 2011). Works relating to the assertion of 'masculinities' through *khap* panchayats (Chowdhry 2005), the impact of the adverse sex ratio (Kaur 2010) and the role of women's agency in resisting the *khap* panchayats (Kaur 2010) have also been reviewed. The 'justice' pronounced by these bodies has been critically examined through case studies by Madsen (1991) and Dhagamwar (2009), apart from the extensive coverage of a number of contemporary cases in the press. Another theme in literature is the regressive gender and social attitudes of these bodies (Ahlawat 2012),

which have been further fuelled by the equality given to women in the modern inheritance laws (Chowdhry 1997). The concept of ‘honour’ as being a gendered one (Cohan 2010); Hussain 2016; Bond 2012) has been looked at with examples of cases of ‘honour killings’ from many parts of the world, and closer home. Finally, along with the rigidities of the *khap* panchayats, the changing values, especially of the educated youth, are also an emerging area of exploration (Chowdhry 2007) in the literature on the subject.

Chapter III, ‘*Methodology*’: delineates the methodology used in the study. The research design is descriptive and analytical, and both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been used, in order to provide a more reliable and complete picture. Primary data, which was the base of the present study, has been collected by designing and administering a questionnaire to the respondents; Besides, the qualitative approach for collection of primary data was also adopted through the use of ‘Focus Group Discussions’. In addition, secondary sources were used, like government publications, Gazetteers, journal articles and articles in the mass media, specially newspapers and magazines. The study is limited to Haryana, and the districts in Haryana characterised by the activities of the *khaps*, include - Rohtak, Jind, Bhiwani, Sonapat and Hissar. Jind, was selected, which is characterised by an abysmal sex ratio, lower than even that for the state of Haryana. Within the district, Kandela village, which has a powerful *khap*, the Kandela *khap*, was selected for administering the questionnaire. 178 respondents of this village were selected on the basis of purposive sampling to cover respondents belonging to different castes, age groups, gender, socio-economic backgrounds etc. The participants of ‘Focus Group Discussions’ comprised of the following categories: the leaders and members of some of the *khap* panchayats primarily, of districts Jind, Hisar, Rohtak and Kaithal; some

of the male and female questionnaire respondents respectively, belonging to village Kandela, and lastly, some of the women members of the elected Panchayati Raj institutions. While the questionnaire was administered in Hindi, the ‘Focus Group Discussions’ were conducted in Hindi and the local *Haryanavi* dialect. A limitation of the study is that due to the constraint of time, the scope of the study does not include other districts in the state and a comparative analysis across areas/states has not been attempted.

Chapter IV, ‘*Role of Khap Panchayats in Rural Haryana*’: This chapter analyses, through an interpretation and discussion of the data, the role played by a traditional body like *khap* panchayat in the contemporary rural society of Haryana, as well as the attitudes of this society, especially women, towards these bodies. In this context, the main areas of activity of the *khap* panchayats in rural areas have been discussed. An attempt has been made to understand the role of these panchayats as ‘informal courts of justice’. Issues like fairness and justice of the *khaps*, attitudes towards challenging their decisions in the Courts, faith in *khaps* vis-à-vis other institutions and the responses in case of being aggrieved by a decision of the *khap* have been examined. Attitudes towards inclusion of women in these male dominated bodies, and the relative importance of the *khap* panchayats in the social sphere vis-à-vis the elected Panchayati Raj institutions, has also been analysed.

Chapter V, ‘*Gender Relations in Khap Areas of Rural Haryana*’: This chapter attempts to comprehend the perceptions and awareness of different sections of rural society, in the backdrop of the influence of the *khap* panchayats, towards various aspects of gender relations and women’s rights, by an analysis and interpretation of data. In this context, the issues analysed relate to aspects like women’s education and

employment, marriages, their norms, regulation by *khaps* and the ‘honour killings’ committed for ‘transgressions’. Besides, the chapter looks at the mind-set of son preference, attitudes towards *pardah* and women’s inheritance rights, perceptions about women’s capability and imposition of restrictions on the mobility of girls and prescriptions for their behaviour. Further, it also discusses the issue of independent exercise of the voting right by women, and their working in the statutory grassroots bodies, the Panchayati Raj institutions.

Chapter VI, ‘*Conclusions and Recommendations*’: This chapter gives the conclusions of the study and attempts some suggestions for policy makers and program implementers, to bring about changes in gender relations. The conclusions of the study, relating to the role of the *khap* panchayats in Haryana in contemporary times and the attitudes of different sections of rural society towards gender relations and women’s rights, against the backdrop of the activities of the *khaps*, have been discussed. This chapter also suggests some recommendations to bring about more equitable gender relations. Some of them include, increasing women’s participation in paid employment, combatting the sex ratio and the mind-set of son preference. Moving away from the restrictions of the *pardah*, a ‘de facto’ status in inheritance rights for women, and changing perceptions, cultures and ideologies, have also been suggested. Collective action, freedom from violence and safe environments, and a gender sensitive role for policy makers and development practitioners has been emphasized. Encouraging a reformist transformation of the *khaps*, and making our legal system a true dispenser of justice, are some of the other recommendations of the study.