



Dynamics of grassroots governance towards people's participation

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Abstract

Panchayat raj, as a system of governance at the grassroots level in rural India has been rightly conceived as the most viable and proper mechanism of realising the goals of democracy, development, peace and security. Panchayat Raj is a system of maximum welfare of maximum people and based on the principle of equitable justice. After Independence efforts have been made to create the units of self-governance at grassroots level but all went in vain since they could not produce the desired result. After Independence efforts were continued to create the panchayats as units of self-governance but the committed Central Government's initiative came out with 73rd constitutional Amendment for the establishment of panchayat raj institutions in India in 1992.

Keywords: panchayat raj, participation, gram sabha, gram panchayat, 73rd constitutional amendment, the Madhya Pradesh panchayat raj amendment 2001

Introduction

The concept of governance is not new and is as old as human civilisation. Governance means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. Governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented. An analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision (UNESCAP: 2009)^[31].

The whole idea of good and responsive governance is that of giving, of serving and of doing good of the people, or solving their problems and making their lives more liveable, satisfying and enjoyable (Sisodia: 2012)^[30]. The essential pre-requisite for quality of governance is that the system should be good and suited to the needs, aspirations, background and ethos of the people concerned and that those selected for operating the system should be endowed with character and competence and remain motivated by the spirit of public service. Governance must be democratic, participatory, transparent and accountable. The issue of governance is more crucial and important from the point of view grassroots democracy since at local level the decisions taken by the elected bodies have direct implications for the life of the major chunk of population of the country.

Governance has eight major characteristics. They are participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientedness, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability. Good governance is an ideal, which is difficult to achieve in its totality. From the Indian point of view after independence efforts have been made to meet the needs and expectations of the people. Special efforts have been made to address the rural multifaceted issues involving massive investment with the results which were not up to the expectations. After decade

and a half of decentralised governance with the motive of good governance put forward many achievements and dilemmas. The state assured peoples participation in the local governance institutions with adequate gender, class and caste representation as per the need of the amendment package. Accountable administration and governance at local level are still issues of serious concern. Despite peoples direct participation, transparency is still under scrutiny but transparency is almost ascertained because of a very informal social structure at local level. Governance at local level is directly responsive to the people as routine functioning of the local institutions is visible and questionable. The effective and efficient governance is a matter of concern due to lack of training and capacity building for the grassroots institutions.

To make the democracy meaningful and welfare oriented there is a need of decentralisation. The democracy is fundamentally decentralised system of governance. Indian democracy has adopted a unitary system. Central government at the federal level, state government at the provincial level and local government at the grassroots level. For the establishment of true democracy there is a need of local governance bodies. Fruits of democracy may reach to the public only by the local governance. Local self-government created by an Act of the Central or State Government is a government entity, including the district, town or village consists of representatives elected by the people of an area and for those who exercise their rights to human welfare (Dey, 1961: 91).

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India not only gave a constitutional status to the panchayats; it also provided uniformity and formal structure to these traditional institutions of self-governance for the sake of their effective functioning. The earlier attempts at institutionalising the panchayats were half-hearted and failed due to the absence of supportive constitutional measures and lack of political will. The 73rd Amendment initiated a fundamental restructuring of

governance and administrative system of the country, based on the philosophy of decentralisation and power to the people. The new panchayat raj institutions have the potential to usher in a new era of change and development in accordance with people's needs and priorities, and to revitalise a deeply troubled system of democracy (Behar & Kumar: 2002)^[4].

Madhya Pradesh was the pioneer state, which implemented the 73rd Amendment by enacting panchayat law, and conducted panchayat elections in 1994. The panchayat raj system in Madhya Pradesh has constantly evolved during the past decade and half, supported by a strong political will. There were several amendments to the Act and government orders were issued from time to time, which supported and strengthened the decentralisation process. The panchayat raj system in Madhya Pradesh has a dynamic growth, which has constantly responded to the needs emerging from the field. Through panchayat raj, an attempt is being made to initiate a new era of people's empowerment. Importantly, the Madhya Pradesh government perceived decentralisation and people's participation as central to its governance agenda, of which the panchayat system is living example of democracy at the grassroots level (Sisodia: 2007)^[28].

It could be argued that after fifteen years of its operation, it would be practical to evaluate all what has been constructed in the preceding analysis. The practicality of evaluation notwithstanding, the purpose for which the insights and process documents would be generated, calls for an early evaluation of the new system. Process documents providing insights on reasons for success and failures in decentralised decision making could identify role of awareness of rights of stakeholders, their notions of participatory decision making, exclusion, development, equity and justice in the decision making process. Governance assures that corruption is minimised and the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society (Sisodia: 2012)^[30].

This study is premised on the assumption that sooner the decentralisation process is documented and aspects of governance are analysed, the better would be for advocacy and action. This will also help in making midcourse corrections in the new system of governance for human development.

The Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj (Sanasodhan) Adhiniyam, 2001

The Amendment related to Gram Swaraj is discussed here in detail. Since the study is devoted to understand the Gram Swaraj, it appears appropriate to provide the detailed elaboration of the Amendment package to interpret the prime motive behind extending direct democracy to the grassroots people.

Madhya Pradesh took the lead in implementing the panchayat raj system as envisaged in the 73rd Amendment and was the first state to conduct elections to panchayats in 1994. The state government continuously devolved powers and authority to the panchayat institutions and initiated innovative measures to empower, strengthen and institutionalise the panchayat raj institutions. An analysis of six years of functioning of panchayat raj in the state clearly indicates that despite several attempts by the government, civil society and other concerned

actors, the panchayat raj institutions could not truly emerge as people's institutions. Unfortunately, the distortions of the existing political systems at the state and union levels were replicated at the panchayat level and a new class of elite and power centres led by the sarpanch emerged within the panchayat system undermining the spirit of democratic decentralisation at grassroots level. The state government recognised the growing distortions in the panchayat system and they were in the open criticism of the existing the panchayat raj has degenerated into sarpanch raj. A comprehensive process of evaluations and assessment was initiated by the state government to address the deformity in the panchayat system and to look for possible solutions. The new system of Gram Swaraj is a result of this process.

On the 21st January 2001, Madhya Pradesh government amended the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Adhiniyam (Act), 1993, to rename it as the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj (Sanshodhan) Adhiniyam 2001. The citation of the amended Act substituted the words 'Panchayat Raj and Gram Swaraj' in place of the words 'Panchayat Raj'. In fact, the new system of governance, Gram Swaraj, enacted by the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj (Sanshodhan) Adhiniyam 2001 and operationalised from 26th January 2001, is the most significant change and experiment in the system of governance since the adoption of representative parliamentary democracy in India. The operationalisation of Gram Swaraj in Madhya Pradesh will herald the beginning of a new system of governance based on direct democracy instead of indirect representative parliamentary democracy. The experience and operationalisation of Gram Swaraj will also have serious implications for discourses on governance, democracy and modernity.

Gram Swaraj is a new system of self-governance at village level, which moves from indirect to direct democracy. It is based on the premise that in a village people can assemble and sit collectively and therefore representatives to represent the views, aspirations, needs and interests of the people are not required. The new system intends to give power to the people and not to their representatives. To operationalise this system in field, it has been decided that Gram Sabhas shall be strengthened, which under the new structure will exercise all the powers of Gram Panchayats and many more powers will also be devolved to Gram Sabhas. Gram Sabhas will function as decision-making bodies and to discharge their duties and implement decision (Behar & Kumar: 2002)^[4].

The study conducted in the Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh. The study as an evaluative study on fact based, descriptive and analytical. A proportionate sampling framework adopted. Dewas district which includes eight blocks. Out of eight blocks three blocks were selected randomly for the purpose of this study. From the selected blocks, 5 Gram Panchayats were chosen for in-depth study. Thus, from three blocks 15 Gram Panchayat were chosen for in-depth study. Thus, in all, from 15 Gram Panchayats of three blocks, the size of sample was 75 Panchayat Representatives (15-Sarpanch, 15- Up-sarpanch and 45- Panch) and 150 Gram Sabha Members (75 Male and 75 Female). Thus, the total size of sample was 225. The selection of Gram Panchayat was based on random from the list of all the gram panchayats of the selected block.

For the study, both primary and secondary data were collected. Secondary data were based on books, journals, monographs, occasional papers, governments publications, circular, orders, ordinances etc. For primary data two separate interview schedules were structured and administered among the respondents (gram sabha members and panchayat representatives). The interview schedules broadly included issues of awareness and exposure of the respondents towards the indicators of governance. For data collection included both, the providers and the recipients, therefore the emerging trends were crosschecked with respect to facts, point of view, perception and attitudes towards governance with human development. For this purpose, the qualitative methods include-key informant interviews, in depth interviews, participant observation and case study analysis. The participatory assessment methods included mainly directional group discussion. Besides these, a village schedule and a directional group discussion were also administered to know the profile of the villages and other similar issues.

1. Analysis and Interpretation of Panchayat Representatives

Governmental policies stimulate human development only if they bring the masses into the mainstream of the society. This involves participation in decision-making at the regional and local levels. Legitimacy goes hand in hand with participation. Participation has many dimensions. It can be achieved through the existence of institutionalised mechanisms for regular consultation between local governments and civil society organisation on issues of economic and social policies and Programmes. It can be achieved through the legal aid and legal counsel system accessible to the poor.

Gram Sabha

The legislative empowerment of the gram sabha in India is a development of utmost importance because it marks the clearest break from the most dominant political orthodoxy of this century. In Madhya Pradesh, special efforts have been made to empower the gram sabha.

Table 1.1: Knowledge about gram sabha.

S. No.	Knowledge about gram sabha	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	18 (100.0)	34 (94.4)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	73 (97.3)
2	No	0 (0.0)	2 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.7)
	Total	18 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.1 explains the knowledge about the gram sabha. 97.3 per cent respondents have knowledge about gram sabha. There is no differentiation of caste category on the knowledge about

gram sabha. It is indeed very encouraging to notice that overwhelming majority of the respondents have knowledge about gram sabha.

Table 1.2: Information about gram sabha meetings.

S. No.	Information about gram sabha meeting	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	12 (66.7)	24 (66.7)	19 (95.0)	0 (0.0)	55 (73.3)
2	No	1 (5.6)	11 (30.6)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	13 (17.3)
3	Occasionally	5 (27.8)	1 (2.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	7 (9.3)
	Total	18 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.2 highlights of the information about gram sabha meetings. 73.3 per cent respondents do get regular information about gram sabha meetings. Only 9.3 per cent respondents get information about gram sabha meetings are occasionally. This

availability of information is highest among SC respondents. This is clear from the above analysis the considerably higher number get the information about gram sabha meetings.

Table 1.3: Participation in gram sabha meetings.

S. No.	Participation in the gram sabha meetings	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Participate regularly	13 (72.2)	27 (75.0)	18 (90.0)	0 (0.0)	58 (77.3)
If not, reasons						
2	No participation due to engagement in agriculture/labour	3 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.0)
3	No participation due to lack of information	0 (0.0)	6 (16.7)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (9.3)
4	Intentional abstinence	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.3)
5	No benefit in going	2 (11.1)	2 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (5.3)
6	No one listen	0 (0.0)	1 (2.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	2 (2.7)
	Total	18 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.3 explains regular participation in gram sabha meetings. 77.3 per cent respondents are of the view that they participate regularly in the gram sabha meetings. Along the

caste category the regular participation of ST is comparatively less whereas it is highest among SC. Further describes the reasons of not being regular in gram sabha. Maximum

respondents, seven are of the opinion that the reason is lack of information. Three respondents feel that engagement in agriculture/labour work keeps them away from regular participation. Four respondents say that no benefit in going. Two respondents say that no one listens in gram sabha meetings and one respondent do not participate intentionally

in gram sabha meeting. It is clear from analysis a sizeable number of respondents feel that lack of information keeps them away from regular participation which is indeed a matter a concern as this is a manageable problem but the reluctance of panchayat representatives is not letting them make any forward looking move in this direction.

Table 1.4: Issues discussed in gram sabha meeting.

S. No.	Issues discussed in gram sabha meeting	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* (%)
1	Information about new schemes	15 (83.3)	34(94.4)	19(95.0)	1(100.0)	69 (92.0)
2	Implementation of old schemes	17 (94.4)	31(86.1)	14(70.0)	0 (0.0)	62 (82.7)
3	Income and expenditure details of schemes	14 (77.8)	27 (75.0)	13(65.0)	0 (0.0)	54 (72.0)
4	Selections of beneficiaries	16 (88.9)	21 (58.3)	14(70.0)	0 (0.0)	51 (68.0)
5	Approval of new work/ schemes	16 (88.9)	24 (66.7)	14(70.0)	0 (0.0)	54 (72.0)

*Multiple Responses

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.4 illustrates the issues discussed in gram sabha meeting. 92.0 per cent respondents are of the view that information about new schemes is given. 82.7 per cent respondents feel that information related to implementation of old schemes is discussed. Equal number of respondents (72.0%) point out that the approval of new work/ schemes is talked about in the gram sabha meetings and discussed income and expenditure details of schemes. 68.0 per cent respondents

are of the view that the selection of beneficiaries is done in the gram sabha meetings. Interestingly, this phenomenon is prevalent across caste categories. It is very clear from the above analysis that in the gram sabha, the issues discussed are mainly revolving around the human development schemes whereas the mandate given to gram sabha is much wider and comprehensive.

Table 1.5: Role in gram sabha meeting.

S. No.	Role in gram sabha meeting	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* (%)
1	Put proposal	14 (77.8)	31 (86.1)	14 (70.0)	0 (0.0)	59 (78.7)
2	Give views on various proposals	14 (77.8)	31 (86.1)	14 (70.0)	1 (100.0)	60 (80.0)
3	Give suggestions	11 (61.1)	34 (94.4)	16 (80.0)	1 (100.0)	62 (82.7)
4	Give view point on village problems like education, health, employment	12 (66.7)	32 (88.9)	19 (95.0)	1 (100.0)	64 (85.3)
5	Discuss under construction works in village	13 (72.2)	33 (91.7)	17 (85.0)	0 (0.0)	63 (84.0)
6	Get the information of new schemes	12 (66.7)	30 (83.3)	18 (90.0)	1 (100.0)	61 (81.3)
7	Give own name for government schemes	10 (55.6)	26 (72.2)	11 (55.5)	0(0.0)	47 (62.7)
8	No role	1 (5.6)	6 (16.7)	6 (30.0)	0 (0.0)	13 (17.3)

*Multiple Responses

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.5 explains the role of panchayat representatives in gram sabha meetings. 85.3 per cent respondents give view point on village problems like education, health, employment. 84.0 per cent respondents discuss under construction works in village. 82.7 per cent respondents give suggestions. 81.3 per cent respondents get the information of new schemes. 80.0 per cent respondents give their own views on various proposals.

78.7 per cent respondents put proposal and 62.7 per cent respondents give their own name for government schemes. A small group of respondents (17.3%) play no role. The caste category differentiation on role in gram sabha very clearly emerges out as the OBC and SC categories have much higher presence in almost all the important roles cited by the respondents.

Table 1.6: Put forward view point in gram sabha for the solution of the human problems.

S. No.	Put forward the view point in gram sabha	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	15 (83.3)	23 (63.9)	19 (95.0)	1 (100.0)	58 (77.3)
2	No	3 (16.7)	13 (36.1)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	17 (22.7)
	Total	18 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.6 describes that 77.3 per cent respondents put forward their point of view in gram sabha for the solution of the human problems. Again this number is highest across SC and ST category. It is indeed important to provide view point in gram sabha meetings for the solution of the problem and a considerable number of respondents are doing this as well,

nevertheless this number is comparatively low among General and OBC category.

Gram Panchayat

Gram Panchayat is the most important tier of the three tier panchayat raj system. Actual implementation for human

development of all policies and Programmes takes place at the gram panchayat level and the selected respondents also work

in various capacities in gram panchayat.

Table 1.7: Organisation of meetings of gram panchayat.

S. No.	Frequency	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Once in a month	2 (11.1)	3 (8.3)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	6 (8.0)
2	Once in two or three month	6 (33.3)	8 (22.2)	13 (65.0)	0 (0.0)	27 (36.0)
3	Once in six month	5 (27.8)	6 (16.7)	2 (10.0)	0 (0.0)	13 (17.3)
4	On the basis of requirement	0 (0.0)	6 (16.7)	4 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	10 (13.3)
5	No regular meeting	5 (27.8)	13 (36.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	19 (25.3)
	Total	18 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.7 highlights the frequency of meetings of gram panchayat. 36.0 per cent respondents report the holding of gram panchayat meetings once in two or three months. 17.3 per cent respondents state this as once in a six month. 13.3 per cent respondents argue that it is based on the requirement whereas remaining 8.0 per cent respondents cite the frequency

as once in a month. 25.3 per cent of respondents say that there are no regular meetings. The accurate frequency is known by roughly half of the respondents. It is worrisome that a sizeable number of respondents as panchayat representatives do not know the exact frequency of meetings of gram panchayat.

Table 1.8: Participation in the gram panchayat meetings.

S. No.	Participation in the gram panchayat meetings	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Participate regularly	12 (66.7)	24 (66.7)	17 (85.0)	0 (0.0)	53 (70.7)
	If not, reasons					
2	No participation due to engagement in agriculture/labour	2 (11.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	3 (4.0)
3	No participation due to lack of information	1 (5.6)	10 (27.8)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (16.0)
4	Intentional abstinence	3 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.0)
5	No benefit in going	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.3)
6	No one listen	0 (0.0)	2 (5.6)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.0)
	Total	18 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.8 illustrates the point of view of respondents with regard to regular participation in gram panchayat meetings. 70.7 per cent respondents do participate regularly in gram panchayat meetings. This regular participation is found to be comparatively higher across SC categories. A considerable majority is regular in gram panchayat meetings and this is indeed a positive sign. Table 4.14 further elaborates the reasons for not being regular in gram panchayat meetings. Out

of 22 respondents, 12 respondents are irregular due to lack of information, equal number of respondents (three) are of the view that the engagement in agriculture/labour, intentional abstinence, no one listen to their point of view. Remaining one respondent finds no benefit in going. Thus, it is clear from the above analysis that respondents have about similar kinds of reasons for not being regular in gram panchayat meetings.

Table 1.9: Liability of whole panchayat members for development.

S. No.	Liability of whole panchayat members for human development	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	7 (38.9)	22 (61.1)	15 (75.0)	1 (100.0)	45 (60.0)
	If not, reasons					
2	The difficulty comes	1 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.3)
3	Elite people fear	0 (0.0)	2 (5.6)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.0)
4	Are not hearing	4 (22.0)	2 (5.6)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (9.3)
5	Look down upon	0 (0.0)	1 (2.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.3)
6	Lack of awareness	6 (33.3)	9 (25.0)	3 (15.0)	0 (0.0)	18 (24.0)
	Total	18 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	75 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1.9 interprets the liability of whole panchayat members for development and if not then why it is so. 60.0 per cent respondents are of the opinion that the liability of whole panchayat members for human development. 24.0 per cent respondents lack awareness. 9.3 per cent respondents are of the opinion that not one is hearing. 4.0 per cent respondents have fear from elite people and equal number of respondents

(1.3%) say that the difficulty comes and look down upon. Thus, it is clear from the above analysis that the liability of whole panchayat members for development, which is positive sign for panchayats.

2. Analysis and Interpretation of Gram Sabha Members

The legislative empowerment of the gram sabha in India is a

development of utmost importance because it marks the clearest break from the most dominant political orthodoxy of

this century. In Madhya Pradesh, special efforts have been made to empower the gram sabha.

Table 2.1: Knowledge about gram sabha.

S. No.	Knowledge about gram sabha	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	32 (76.2)	61 (73.5)	17(73.9)	2(100.0)	112 (74.7)
2	No	10 (23.8)	22 (26.5)	6 (26.1)	0 (00)	38 (25.3)
	Total	42 (100.0)	83(100.0)	23(100.0)	2(0.0)	150 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.1 explains the knowledge about the gram sabha. 74.7 per cent respondents have knowledge about gram sabha. There is no caste category differentiation on the knowledge about

gram sabha. It is indeed very encouraging to notice that overwhelming majority of the respondents have knowledge about gram sabha.

Table 2.2: Information about gram sabha meeting.

S. No.	Information about gram sabha meeting	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1.	Yes	12 (28.6)	23 (27.7)	4(17.4)	1(50.0)	40 (26.7)
2.	No	11 (26.2)	28 (33.7)	12 (52.2)	1(50.0)	52 (34.7)
3.	Occasionally	19 (45.2)	32 (38.6)	7 (30.4)	0 (0.0)	58 (38.7)
	Total	42 (100.0)	83 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	150 (100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.2 highlights of the information about gram sabha meetings. Only 26.6 per cent respondents do get regular information about gram sabha meetings. 38.7 per cent respondents get information about gram sabha meetings are

occasionally. This availability of information is highest among ST respondents. This is clear from the above analysis that the considerably higher number get the information about gram sabha meetings.

Table 2.3: Participation in gram sabha meeting.

S. No.	Participation in the gram sabha meeting	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Participate regularly	16 (38.1)	29 (34.9)	10 (43.5)	1 (50.0)	56 (37.3)
If not, reasons						
2	No participation due to engagement in agriculture/ labour	12 (28.6)	21 (25.3)	5 (21.7)	0 (0.0)	38 (25.3)
3	No participation due to lack of information	6 (14.3)	15 (18.1)	4 (17.4)	0 (0.0)	25 (16.7)
4	Intentional abstinence	5 (11.9)	5 (6.0)	2 (8.7)	1 (50.0)	13 (8.7)
5	No benefit in going	1 (2.4)	7 (8.4)	2 (8.7)	0 (0.0)	10 (6.7)
6	No one listen	2 (4.8)	6 (7.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (5.3)
	Total	42(100.0)	83(100.0)	23(100.0)	2(100.0)	150(100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.3 explains regular participation in gram sabha meetings. 37.3 per cent respondents are of the view that they participate regularly in the gram sabha meetings. Regular participation is of similar nature across all the caste categories. Further describes the reasons of not being regular in gram sabha. Maximum respondents (38) are of the opinion that engagement in agriculture/labour work keeps them away from regular participation. 25 respondents give the reason as lack of information. 13 respondents do not participate intentionally in

gram sabha. Ten respondents say that no benefit in going and eight respondents say that no one listen in gram sabha meetings. It is clear from analysis that sizeable number of respondents feels that engagement in agriculture/labour work keeps them away from regular participation which is indeed a matter of concern as this is a manageable problem but the reluctance of panchayat representatives is not letting them make any forward looking move in this direction.

Table 2.4: Issues discussed in gram sabha meeting.

S. No.	Issues discussed in gram sabha meeting	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* Responses (%)
1	Information about new schemes	23 (54.8)	44 (53.0)	12 (52.2)	1 (50.0)	80 (53.3)
2	Implementation of old schemes	14 (33.3)	40 (48.2)	10 (43.5)	1 (50.0)	65 (43.3)
3	Income and expenditure details of schemes	11 (26.2)	19 (22.9)	8 (34.8)	1 (50.0)	39 (26.0)
4	Selections of beneficiaries	11 (26.2)	32 (38.6)	10 (43.5)	0 (0.0)	53 (35.3)
5	Approval of new work/ schemes	11 (26.2)	34 (41.0)	9 (39.1)	1 (50.0)	55 (36.7)

*Multiple Responses

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.4 illustrates the issues discussed in gram sabha meeting. 53.3 per cent respondents are of the view that information about new schemes is given. 43.3 per cent respondents feel that information related to implementation of old schemes is discussed. 36.7 per cent respondents point out that the approval of new work/scheme is talked about in gram sabha meeting. 35.3 per cent respondents are of the view that the selection of beneficiaries is done in gram sabha meeting.

26.0 per cent respondents state that they discuss income and expenditure details of schemes. Interestingly, this phenomenon is prevalent across caste categories. It is very clear from the above analysis that in the gram sabha, the issues discussed are mainly revolving around the human development schemes whereas the mandate given to gram sabha is much wider and comprehensive.

Table 2.5: Role in gram sabha meeting.

S. No.	Role in gram sabha meeting	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* Responses (%)
1	Put proposal	9 (21.4)	17 (20.5)	7 (30.4)	1 (50.0)	34 (22.7)
2	Give views on various proposals	10 (23.8)	22 (26.5)	7 (30.4)	0 (0.0)	39 (26.0)
3	Give suggestions	12 (28.6)	23 (27.7)	10 (43.5)	0 (0.0)	45 (30.0)
4	Give view point on village problems like education, health, employment	16 (38.1)	23 (27.7)	10 (43.5)	0 (0.0)	49 (32.7)
5	Discuss under construction works in village	9 (21.4)	28 (33.7)	4 (17.4)	1 (50.0)	42 (28.0)
6	Get the information of new schemes	18 (42.9)	41 (49.4)	13 (56.5)	1 (50.0)	73 (48.7)
7	Give own name for government schemes	19 (45.2)	48 (57.8)	13 (56.5)	2(100.)	82 (54.7)
8	No role	7 (16.7)	11 (13.3)	5 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	23 (15.3)

*Multiple Responses

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.5 explains the role of gram sabha members in gram sabha meetings. 54.7 per cent respondents give their own name for government schemes. 48.7 per cent respondents get the information of new schemes. 32.7 per cent respondents give view point on village problems like education, health, employment. 30.0 per cent respondents give suggestions. 28.0 per cent respondents discuss under construction works in

village. 26.0 per cent respondents give their own views on various proposals. 22.7 per cent respondents put proposal and a small group of respondents (15.3%) play no role. The caste category differentiation on role in gram sabha very clearly emerges out as the OBC and SC categories have much higher presence in almost all the important roles cited by the respondents.

Table 2.6: Put forward view point in gram sabha for the solution of the human problems.

S. No.	Put forward the view point in gram sabha	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	12 (28.6)	19 (22.9)	2 (8.7)	0 (.0)	33 (22.0)
2	No	30 (71.4)	64 (77.1)	21 (91.3)	2 (100)	117(78.0)
	Total	42 (100)	83 (100)	23 (100)	2 (100)	150 (100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.6 describes that only 22.0 per cent respondent put forward their point of view in gram sabha for the solution of the human problems. It is indeed important to provide view

point in gram sabha meetings for the solution of the problems but a small number of respondents are doing this and this is indeed a cause of concern.

Table 2.7: Liability of whole villagers for development.

S. No.	Liability of whole villagers for human development	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total (%)
1	Yes	23 (54.8)	26 (31.3)	8 (34.8)	1 (50.0)	58 (38.7)
	If not, reasons					
2	The difficulty comes	0 (0.0)	3 (3.6)	1 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.7)
3	Elite people fear	2 (4.8)	13 (15.7)	4 (17.4)	1 (50)	20 (13.3)
4	Are not hearing	9 (21.4)	24 (28.9)	9 (39.1)	0 (0.0)	42 (28.0)
5	Look down upon	2 (4.8)	2 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.7)
6	Lack of awareness	6 (14.3)	15 (18.1)	2 (8.7)	0 (0.0)	23 (15.3)
	Total	42 (100)	83 (100)	23 (100)	2 (100)	150 (100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2.7 interprets the liability of whole villagers for development and if not then why it is so. 38.7 per cent respondent are of the opinion that the liability of whole villagers for human development. 28.0 per cent respondents are not hearing. 15.3 per cent respondents lack awareness. 13.3 per cent respondents have fear from elite people and equal number of respondents (2.7%) say that the difficulty

comes and look down upon. Thus, it is clear from the above analysis that the liability of whole villagers for development, which is not positive sign for panchayat.

Conclusion

To conclude Overwhelming majority of the respondents have knowledge about gram sabha. Higher number get the

information about gram sabha meetings. A sizeable number of respondents feel that lack of information keeps them away from regular participation which is indeed a matter a concern as this is a manageable problem but the reluctance of panchayat representatives is not letting them make any forward looking move in this direction. In the gram sabha, the issues discussed are mainly revolving around the human development schemes whereas the mandate given to gram sabha is much wider and comprehensive. Higher presence in almost all the important roles cited by the respondents. Provide view point in gram sabha meetings for the solution of the problem and a considerable number of respondents are doing this as well, nevertheless this number is comparatively low among General and OBC category. The accurate frequency is known by roughly half of the respondents. It is worrisome that a sizeable number of respondents as panchayat representatives do not know the exact frequency of meetings of gram panchayat. Respondents have about similar kinds of reasons for not being regular in gram panchayat meetings. Liability of whole panchayat members for development, which is positive sign for panchayats.

Overwhelming majority of the respondents have knowledge about gram sabha. Higher number get the information about gram sabha meetings. Sizeable number of respondents feel that engagement in agriculture/labour work keeps them away from regular participation which is indeed a matter a concern as this is a manageable problem but the reluctance of panchayat representatives is not letting them make any forward looking move in this direction. In the gram sabha, the issues discussed are mainly revolving around the development schemes whereas the mandate given to gram sabha is much wider and comprehensive. Role in gram sabha very clearly emerges out as the OBC and SC categories have much higher presence in almost all the important roles cited by the respondents. Provide view point in gram sabha meetings for the solution of the problems but a small number of respondents are doing this and this is indeed a cause of concern. The liability of whole villagers for development, which is not positive sign for panchayat.

Suggestions

- The provisions of the State Acts should be translated into simple Hindi and local dialect and be distributed to all panchayat functionaries in the form of pocket booklets as ready beckoners.
- The Panchayat Raj Institutions have specially empowered people to work as units of self-governance but it has been observed that the level of awareness and exposure among panchayat raj representatives and gram sabha members are very low. It is therefore important to initiate special training packages, awareness campaigns and capacity building Programmes.
- It appears that the required number for quorum is very high which needs to be relooked with ground reality.
- Gram Sabhas have been provided supreme position in the new system but people at large are least informed about these provisions. They are still accepting the supremacy of gram panchayat. For this purpose public awareness campaigns can be launched through NGOs. Electronic media (Community Television) can also be an effective

medium.

- Panchayat expected has to perform a very specific role to tackle social issue as well. The panchayat through the gram sabha should also take lead to minimise the social evils.
- The study suggests that merely by resorting to amendment in the State Act and specific provisions for new system cannot change the scenario of villages. There is an urgent need to explore effective devices whereby maximum people can be informed, made aware and motivated to come forward for the proper implementation and execution of panchayat raj to achieve the goals of good governance.

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