Changing Trends of Election Campaign in Panchayat Elections
A Study of Dewas District of Madhya Pradesh, India

Dr. Akhilesh Pal*, Sunita Baghel**

(*)   Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Dr. Hari Singh Gour Central University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh.

(**)   Doctoral Fellow, M. P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.

In India efforts have been made after Independence to meet the needs and expectations of the people. Special measures have been taken to address the multifaceted issues in rural areas through massive investment but the results have not been up to the expectations. As a result, the 73rd Amendment act was promulgated to re-establish the panchayat raj institutions. A decade and a half of decentralised governance with the motive of good governance put forward many achievements and delemmas. 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. However, accountable administration and governance at grassroots level are still issues of serious concern. Due to a very informal social structure at grassroots level, transparency can be ascertained to a significant level. Governance at grassroots level becomes automatically responsive to the people directly 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.

It has passed 65 years since India has become a democratic country. There is a need to evaluate its achievements and progress whatever the country have achieved in 65 years. There is a also need to reform the old strategies and adopt new ones to face the challenges that confront in new century. The country is progressing rapidly in all the walks of life and growth rate is near about nine per cent promising a healthier economy. But this is not sufficient. Even now there are several problems of education, poverty, lower income and unemployment. These problems can only be solved by more democratic government at the grassroots level i.e. Panchayat Raj System. To make the democracy meaningful and welfare oriented there is a need of the decentralisation of democracy through the panchayat raj institutes and democracy is the fundamentally decentralised system of governance.

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. Panchayat raj is the form of direct democracy. In the democratic system, panchayat is the only institute that takes the governance to the door of common people. The conception of democracy finds more realistic expression by the means of panchayat raj institutions. In this form of governance, villagers take part to decide their own future collectively. Since the problems are concerned with their villages, people take interest in solving them with the help of panchayat.

Actually, the future of Indian democracy is dependent on the realisation of panchayat raj system. After Independence, steps have been taken to realise it. Sometimes by village development and sometimes by community development schemes, ground of panchayat raj was cemented. In various states different type of experiments have been conducted to implement the pachayat raj system. Some were successful and some were unsuccessful. Successful pattern was imitated by the other states too.

73th Constitutional Amendment makes provision for the establishment of panchayat raj institutions. Madhya Pradesh was the first state to launch panchayat raj, according to the 73th Amendment. After the establishment of PRIs rules deterring their development were modified. Panchayat has been imposed with a significant role to strengthen the democracy. In determination of socio-economic condition, village development plays a vital role because even today a large number of population our country is residing under the poverty line. Socio-economic conditions of the people have to be changed. To achieve this end, human development is a best

instrument. It has multifaceted role which includes social, economic and political development as well as the development of social infrastructure of the backward region.

A major of proportion of population that lives in villages is underdeveloped. This is worrying subject. Only significance of the development lies in these facts that it should reach to the marginal men of the society. For this purpose government has started several programme but the reality is that needy have not benefited by all these programmes in expected manner. In this scenario, the roles of panchayat raj become prominent. Provisions of panchayat institution provide the rules that the work of human development should be accomplished through the panchayat. Works of land development, social forestry, housing, employment, road construction, public distribution system and social welfare have been handed over to the panchayat.

Village development is considered as the centre point of the people. Panchayat should complete its responsibility. Representatives of the panchyat raj institutions should perform their duty and include the villagers to design the development programmes of the village. Only this way panchayat raj institution may be successful.

Efforts have been made to empower people through legislation but there are indications that the level of participation of people at grassroots level is very low and the grassroots institutions like-gram sabha are almost formal institutions with no role to play in various assigned works. It is unfortunate that both the grassroots leadership and grassroots bureaucracy have not been able to strengthen the gram sabha. In village, there is a stronghold of traditional leadership, which creates hindrances for the smooth functioning of panchayats. Low participation can be attributed mainly to a strong and invincible social and economic stratification in villages. The performance and efficacy of panchayat members are strongly influenced by the social stratification and class distinctions. Moreover, gram panchayats are not adequately accountable to gram sabha. The gram sabha is not aware of the gram panchayat's functioning. The idea of participation, as an important part of panchayat raj, has rarely been observed in practice. In retrospect, it seems inevitable that persons of influence would look at larger community participation with hostility.

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).

Against this backdrop, the study is designed to investigate the human development through grassroots governance as well as analysis and interpretation of panchayat representatives, who are the operators of the system. A structured interview schedule was administered for this purpose. Besides, informal discussions and field observations also proved to be helpful in providing inputs to strengthen the arguments in analysis. This chapter analyses in detail the various facets of grassroots governance from the point of view of panchayat raj representatives. The chapter has been divided in nine parts where the part first provides the background information of respondents and analysis of basic questions pertaining to panchayat raj. Remaining parts are classified as indicators of governance.

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).

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).

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 Adhiniyyam (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 operationlised 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 operationlisation 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 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).

Composition of Gram Sabha

There shall be a Gram Sabha for every village. The Gram Sabha shall be a body corporate by the name specified therefore having perpetual succession and a common seal and shall by the said name sue and be sued and shall be subject to the provisions of this Act.

There shall be held at least one meeting in every month, of the Gram Sabha, which shall be convened by the Secretary of the Gram Sabha. The date, time and the place of the first meeting of the Gram Sabha shall be fixed by the Sarpanch. Special meeting of the Gram Sabha could be called if the Sarpanch, or more than ten per cent of the members or fifty members of the Gram Sabha whichever is less, give requisition in writing. The secretary shall call such a meeting within seven days.

Not less than one-fifth of the total number of members of the Gram Sabha shall form a quorum for a meeting of Gram Sabha, out of which not less than one-third shall be women members and members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be represented in proportion to their population in the Gram Sabha. Quorum shall be necessary for each and every meeting of the Gram Sabha.

The meeting of the Gram Sabha shall be presided over by Sarpanch or in the absence by Up-sarpanch. In the case of both Sarpanch and Up-sarpanch being absent, the meeting of the Gram Sabha shall be presided over by a Panch to be elected for such meeting.

Decision Making in Gram Sabha

If any dispute arises as to whether a person is entitled to attend a meeting of the Gram Sabha, the same shall be decided by the person presiding on the basis of the entry in the list of voters of the Gram Sabha area and his decision shall be final. Any dispute arising between Gram Sabhas or any matter concerning more than one Gram Sabha comprised within the area of Gram Panchayat and all matters contained shall be brought before a joint meeting of all Gram Sabhas.

The decision taken at the joint meeting shall be deemed to be the decision taken by each of the Gram Sabha. If the Sarpanch, or more than ten per cent of the members or fifty members of the Gram Sabha whichever is less, give requisition in writing for a special meeting of the Gram Sabha, the Secretary shall call such a meeting within seven days of the receipt of such requisition. The Secretary of the Gram Panchayat shall also be the Secretary of the Gram Sabha. The Secretary shall be under the control of the Gram Sabha and perform such duties as assigned to him by the Gram Sabha. All matters brought before any meeting of Gram Sabha shall be decided, as far as possible, unanimously, failing which by general consensus of the members present; provided that where there is difference of opinion on any issue such matter shall be brought before the next meeting. If a decision is not taken unanimously or by general consensus in successive two deferred meetings then such matter shall be decided by majority. (6 C) If any dispute arises as to whether a person is entitled to vote, the same shall be decided by the person presiding on the basis of the entry in the list of voters of the Gram Sabha area and his decision shall be final.

Functions of the Gram Sabha

The Gram Sabha shall perform the following powers and functions (**7**) – sanitation, conservancy, prevention and abatement of nuisance; construction, repair and maintenance of public wells, ponds and tanks and supply of water for domestic use; construction and maintenance of sources of water for bathing and washing and supply of water for domestic animals; construction and maintenance of village roads, culverts; bridges, bunds and other works and building of public utility; construction, maintenance and clearing of public streets; latrines, drains, tanks, wells and other public places; filling in of disused wells, unsanitary ponds, pools, ditches and pits and conversion of step wells into sanitary wells; Lighting of village streets and other public places; removing of obstructions and projections in public streets and places and sites not being private property or which are open to use of public, whether such sites are vested in the panchayat or belongs to the State government, regulating and control over entertainment shows, shops, eating houses and vendors of drinks, sweet meats, fruits, milk and of other similar articles; regulating the construction of house, latrines, urinals, drains and water closets; management of public land and management, extension and development of village site; regulating places for disposal of dead bodies, carcasses and other offensive matters; disposal of unclaimed corpses and carcasses; earmarking places for dumping refuse; regulation of sale and preservation of meat; maintenance of Gram Sabha property; establishment and management of cattle ponds and maintenance of records relating to cattle; maintenance of ancient and historical monuments other than those declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance, grazing lands and other lands vesting in or under the control of the Gram Sabha; maintenance of records of births, deaths and marriages; rendering assistance in the census operation and in the surveys conducted by the State Government or Central Government or any other local authority lawfully constituted; rendering assistance in prevention of contagious diseases; rendering assistance in inoculation and vaccination and enforcement of other preventive measures for safety of human beings and cattle prescribed by Government Department concerned; rendering assistance to the disabled and destitutes; promotion of youth welfare, family welfare and sports; establishment of Raksha Samiti for - safety of life and property; prevention of fire and extinguishing fire and safety of property during outbreak of such fires; plantation and preservation of village forests; removal of social evils like dowry.

Granting loans for the purposes of providing medical assistance to indigent persons in serious and emergency cases; disposal of dead body of an indigent person or any member of his family; or any other purpose for the benefit of an indigent person as may be notified by the State government from time to time subject to such terms and conditions as may be prescribed.

Carrying out the directions or orders given or issued by the State government, the Collector or any other Officer authorised by the State government in this behalf with respect to the measures for amelioration of the condition of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes and in particular in regard to the removal of untouchability; perform such functions as may be entrusted to it by Zilla Panchayat or Janpad Panchayat by general or special orders; to exercise and perform such other powers and functions as the State government may confer on or entrust to under this Act or any other law for the time being in force in the State; Provided that where any such function is entrusted to the Gram Sabha, it shall act as an agent of the State government, Zilla Panchayat or Janpad Panchayat, as the case may be, and necessary funds and other assistance for the purpose shall be provided to it by the State government, Zilla Panchayat or Janpad Panchayat, as the case may be.

Plan and manage basic amenities; select beneficiaries under various programmes; implement, execute and supervise development schemes and construction work within the Gram Sabha area; control and monitor beneficiary oriented schemes and programmes; promote general awareness amongst the people at large; organise voluntary labour and contribution for community work and promote the concept of community ownership; to plan, own and manage minor water bodies up to a specified water area situated within its territorial jurisdiction; to lease out any minor water body up to a specified area for the purpose of fishing and other commercial purposes; to regulate the use of water of rivers, streams, minor water bodies for irrigation purposes; to exercise control over institutions and functionaries in all social sectors transferred to or appointed by the Gram Sabha.

In the post 73rd amendment phase different states have responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Madhya Pradesh responded with innovativeness and remarkable commitment to making the system sustainable and successful. The state's effort to institutionalise the system is evident in the number of amendments that have been made to the State Panchayat Act as a dynamic response to the problems at the ground level. During the implementation of the panchayat raj system, Madhya Pradesh has faced several opportunities and difficulties. The experience of the State is extremely rich and provides vital insights into the process of institutionalising panchayat raj. On the negative side, is the story of bureaucracy resistance, functional, political and institutional challenges, financial inadequacy and mismatch of capacities and roles. On the other hand, it involves the grassroots people in a democratic and participative governance system and therefore potentially unleashes its considerable energy (Sisodia: 2012).

The gram sabha at the lowest rung of village is the first modern political institution, which seeks to place direct political power in the hands of people, withought the mediation of elected representatives. The vision of gram sabha in a village situation can be compared with the Parliament and Assembly. Gram Sabha is the most powerful foundation grassroots governance but unfortunately it could not become a vibrant and important institution at grassroots level because of local leadership and bureaucracy. Mostly gram sabhas were dominated by sarpanches and a small group of their associates.

Participation in gram sabha meetings has been low. Low participation can be mainly attributed to the strong and invincible caste, class and gender divide in villages. Sarpanch and other influential people dominate in decision-making process. Two prominent and sharply contrasting groups leading the panchayats-one is group of traditionally influential representatives and other that of new entrants. The performance and efficacy of panchayat members is strongly influenced by the caste and class distinctions. Gram panchayats are not adequately accountable to gram sabha. The gram sabha is not aware of the gram panchayat functioning. The concept of participation as an important part of panchayat raj has been rarely seen in practice. In fact, in retrospect, it seems inevitable that persons of influence would look at larger community participation with hostility.

The state government was unhappy with gram panchayas mainly because they tend be dominated by sarpanches and small groups of their associates. The then Chief Minister Digvijay Singh was said to have remarked, I did not expect panchayat raj to become sarpanch raj (Manor: 2001). Decentralised governance at grassroots level has given both positive and negative sign in Madhya Pradesh, Gram Swaraj has emerged after an extensive process of deliberations, refinements and dialogue. It is also a result of the grassroots experiences of functioning of panchayat raj coupled with Madhya Pradesh government's stated commitment to democratic decentralisation. (Behar: 2001)

It is certain that unless we have a vibrant gram sabha, but we can not have empowered and accountable panchayats (Nambair: 2001). The gram sabha are empowered in tribal regions with all powers since 1997 but a study concludes that the people at large are least informed (Sisodia: 2002). The gram sabha is a peple's Institution and has been made a statutory body through a Constitutional Amendment. Gram Swaraj system has provided all powers and duties to gram sabha. The resource flow to gram sabha and its ever-increasing powers authority have generated a lot of interest in people. This interest is likely to translate into a more broad based and participative leadership at grassroots level.

In this backdrop, the study was an attempt to find out all the pros and cons of the working of grassroots democracy and its implication for the panchayat raj as a whole. The study aimed at finding out the processes and mechanisms working in panchayat raj of Madhya Pradesh. The study tried to seek answer to basic questions like: How free is the community participation in the governance? What is in the best interest of the whole community for sustainable human development? How concerns of the most vulnerable in society are being taken into consideration in decision making? How well mediation of the different interest groups is initiated to reach a broad consensus in society? Whether all the members in the community feel that they have a stake in and feel included in the decision making? How well do PRIs produce results that meet the needs of society? How the village institutions are accountable to those who will be affected by their decisions or actions?

It could be argued that 15 years of PRIs operations, it would be practical to evaluate panchayat raj in the context of the framework which has been constructed in the preceding analysis. The practicality of evaluation notwithstanding, the purpose for which the insights and process document providing insights on

reasons for success and failures in decentralised decision making could help to identify role about awareness of rights of stakeholders, their notions of participatory decision making, exclusion, development, equity and justice in the decision making process.

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

The background information of respondents depicts the overall scenario of leadership at the grassroots level. The respondents have been classified in the categories of General, OBC, SC and ST to make an assessment with regard to different caste categories. The caste categorisation is done keeping in view the analysis pattern wherein all the indicators have been cross tabulated with caste category. The caste category wise representation of respondents in sample is as follows: General (18), OBC (36), SC (20) and ST (01) totaling 75. This background information very clearly brings forth the socio-economic status of respondents with respect to caste category.

Table 1.1
Basis of Fighting Panchayat Election

S. No.	Basis of fighting election	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* (%)
1	Human development issues such as education, health, employment	17 (94.4)	27 (75.0)	18 (90.0)	1 (100.0)	63 (84.0)
2	Rural development and improvement	18 (100.0)	34 (94.0)	19 (95.0)	0 (0.0)	71 (94.7)
3	Social service	7 (38.9)	26 (72.2)	9 (45.0)	0 (0.0)	42 (56.0)
4	Women and child development	0 (0.0)	8 (22.2)	2 (10.0)	1 (100.0)	11 (14.7)
5	Regeneration of poor	11 (61.1)	10 (27.8)	10 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	31 (41.3)
6	No basis	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.3)

Multiple Responses   *Source: Primary Data*

Table 1.1 depicts the basis of fighting panchayat election. Overwhelming majority (94.7%) of the respondents put forth rural development and improvement as a basis to fighting election. 84.0 per cent respondents propose the basis of human development like education, health, employment. 56.0 per cent respondents give the social service as a basis. 41.3 per cent respondents argue for regeneration of poor as a reason to fight election. 14.7 per cent respondent are of the view that the basis is women and child development whereas 1.3 per cent respondents do not find any basis. Interestingly, the caste category wise data also endorses almost in a similar pattern. It is evident from the above analysis that the majority of leadership gives extra ordinary weightage to human development with rural development and improvement which is indeed a positive sign.

Table 1.2
Basis of Receiving Votes

S. No.	Basis of receiving votes	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* (%)
1	On the basis of issues	17 (94.4)	35 (97.2)	20 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	73 (97.3)
2	Party support	3 (16.7)	7 (19.4)	9 (45.0)	0 (0.0)	19 (25.3)
3	Better canvassing than other candidates	13 (72.2)	11 (30.6)	3 (15.0)	1 (100.0)	28 (37.3)
4	Caste basis	0 (0.0)	8 (22.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (10.7)
5	Personal image	16 (88.9)	16 (44.7)	19 (95.0)	1 (100.0)	52 (69.3)

Multiple Responses   *Source: Primary Data*

As we discuss politics and election where manifesto is one thing and getting votes is another thing. The same situation persists here as well. Table 1.2 clarifies the basis of receiving votes, where 97.3 per cent respondents receive votes on the basis of issues. 69.3 per cent respondents earn the votes on account of as personal image. 37.3 per cent respondents endorse better canvassing compared to other candidates as the basis for winning votes. 25.3 per cent respondents give credit to party support for receiving votes. 10.7 per cent respondents are of the view that caste is the basis of receiving votes. Although caste is a very strong and deeply rooted phenomenon in election which has not been endorsed by the respondents. But interestingly, only OBC respondents (22.2%) receive votes on the caste basis. Personal image is more pronounced as a reason for receiving votes among SC and ST. It is clear from the above analysis that the panchayat elections are fought on the basis of issue and personal image.

2. Analysis and Interpretation of Gram Sabha Members

The background information of respondents depicts the overall scenario of gram sabha members at the grassroots level. The respondents have been classified in the categories of General, OBC, SC and ST to make an assessment with regard to different caste categories. The caste categorisation is done keeping in view the analysis pattern wherein all the indicators have been cross tabulated with caste category. The caste category wise representation of respondents in sample is as follows: General (42), OBC (83), SC (23) and ST (02) totaling 150. This background information very clearly brings forth the socio-economic status of respondents with respect to caste category.

Table 2.1
Basis of Fighting Panchayat Election

S. No.	Basis of fighting election	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* Responses (%)
1	Human development issues such as education, health, employment	31 (73.8)	55 (66.3)	14 (60.9)	0 (0.0)	100 (66.7)
2	Rural development and improvement	25 (59.5)	66 (79.5)	15 (65.2)	1 (50.0)	107 (71.3)
3	Social service	29 (69.0)	48 (57.8)	17 (73.9)	1 (50.0)	115 (63.3)
4	Women and child development	19 (45.2)	25 (30.1)	12 (52.2)	2 (50.0)	58 (38.7)
5	Regeneration of poor	18 (42.9)	41 (49.4)	9 (39.1)	2 (100)	70 (46.7)

Multiple Responses   *Source: Primary Data*

Table 2.1 depicts the basis of fighting panchayat election. Overwhelming majority 71.3 per cent of the respondents put forth rural development and improvement as a basis to fighting election. 66.7 per cent respondents propose the basis of human development issues such as education, health, employment. 63.3 per cent respondents give the social service as a basis. 46.7 per cent respondents argue for regeneration of poor as a reason to fight election. 38.7 per cent respondents are of the view that the basis is women and child development. Interestingly, the caste category wise data also endorses almost in a similar pattern. It is evident from the above analysis that the majority of respondents put forth human development with rural development and improvement as basis, which is indeed a positive sign.

Table 2.2
Basis on which Representatives Receive Votes

S. No.	Basis of receiving votes	General (%)	OBC (%)	SC (%)	ST (%)	Total* Responses (%)
1	On the basis of issues	29(69.0)	43 (51.8)	18 (78.3)	0 (0.0)	90 (60.0)
2	Party support	19 (45.2)	42 (50.6)	11 (47.8)	1 (50.0)	73 (48.7)
3	Better canvassing than other candidates	36 (85.7)	58 (69.9)	17 (73.9)	2 (100.0)	113 (75.3)
4	Caste basis	6 (14.3)	37 (44.6)	6 (26.1)	2 (100.0)	51 (34.0)
5	Personal image	30 (71.4)	53 (63.9)	13 (56.5)	1 (50.0)	97 (64.7)
6	Do not know	1 (2.4)	5 (6.0)	2 (8.7)	0 (0.0)	8 (5.3)

Multiple Responses   *Source: Primary Data*

As we discuss politics and election where manifesto is one thing and getting votes is another thing. The same situation persists here as well. Table 2.2 clarifies the basis of receiving votes, where 75.3 per cent respondents endorse better canvassing compared to other candidates as the basis for winning votes. 64.7 per cent respondents earn the votes on account of as personal image. 60.0 per cent respondents receive votes on the basis of issues. 48.7 per cent respondents give credit to party support for receiving votes. 34.0 per cent respondents are of the view that caste is the basis of receiving votes. Although caste is a very strong and deeply rooted phenomenon in election which has not been endorsed by the respondents. But interestingly, OBC (44.6%) and ST (100.0%) respondents votes receive on the caste basis. Better canvassing than other candidates is more pronounced as a reason for representatives to receive votes. It is clear from the above analysis that the panchayat elections are fought on better canvassing than other candidates and personal image.

To conclude majority of leadership gives extra ordinary weightage to human development with rural development and improvement which is indeed a positive sign. Panchayat elections are fought on the basis of issue and personal image. It can be inferred that around only one fourth of the respondents have full knowledge about panchayat raj institution, which is not positive sign. Education related schemes known to the highest number of respondents. Majority of respondents put forth human development with rural development and improvement as basis, which is indeed a positive sign. Panchayat elections are fought on better canvassing than other candidates and Personal image.

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. Posters can also be prepared and displayed on the walls of Gram Panchayat building.
- 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 has often been seen that the gram sabha members find it difficult to perform their duties due to the complicated rules and procedures. It is, therefore necessary that the rules and procedure be simplified and included in the pocket booklets.
- 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. It is important to make them aware about such provisions. For this purpose public awareness campaigns can be launched through NGOs. Electronic media (Community Television) can also be an effective medium.

References:
Behar, Amitabh & Kumar, Yogesh (2002): 'Decentralisation in Madhya Pradesh,   India: from Panchayat Raj to Gram Swaraj (1995 to 2001)', *Working Paper 170,*ODI, London,   UK.

Behar, Amitabh (2001): Madhya Pradesh Gram Swaraj: Experiment in Direct   Democracy', *Economic and Political Weekly,* March 10.

Dey, S.K. (1961): *Panchayati Raj: A Synthesis,* Asia Publishing House, New Yark.

Manor, James (2001): 'Madhya Pradesh Experiments with Direct Democracy', *Economic and   Political weekly,* March 3.

Nambiar, Malini (2001): Making of Gram Sabha Work, *Economic and Political Weekly,* August 18.

Sisodia, Yatindra Singh (2007): *Experiment of Direct Democracy: Gram Swaraj in   Madhya   Pradesh*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur.

Sisodia, Yatindra Singh (2012): *Dynamics of Local Governance in Post 73rd Amendment Scenario: A Study Functioning of Panchayat Raj Institutions in   Villages of Madhya Pradesh* (Study Report of Indian Council of Social Science Research, Govt. of India), MPISSR, Ujjain.

UNESCAP (2009): *What is Good Governance?,* United Nations Economic and Social   Commission for Asia and the Pacific.