

Grassroots Governance towards People's Participation

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Abstract

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. 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.

Key Words: Panchayat Raj, Participation, Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat and development.

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).

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). 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).

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).

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 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 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, without 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 panchayats mainly because they tend to 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 signs 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 cannot 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 people'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 and 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 answers 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.

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 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

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Role in gram sabha meeting</i>	<i>General (%)</i>	<i>OBC (%)</i>	<i>SC (%)</i>	<i>ST (%)</i>	<i>Total* Responses(%)</i>
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

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Put forward the view point in gram sabha</i>	<i>General (%)</i>	<i>OBC (%)</i>	<i>SC (%)</i>	<i>ST (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>
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 Human Development

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Liability of whole villagers for human development</i>	<i>General (%)</i>	<i>OBC (%)</i>	<i>SC (%)</i>	<i>ST (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>
1	Yes	23 (54.8)	26 (31.3)	8 (34.8)	1 (50.0)	58 (38.7)
<i>If not, reasons</i>						
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 human 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 human development, which is not positive sign for panchayat.

To conclude Overwhelming majority of the respondents have knowledge about gram sabha. Higher numbers get the information about gram sabha meetings. 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. 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. 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 human 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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