

ASSESSMENT OF ELECTION EXPENSES IN MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS IN MAHARASHTRA



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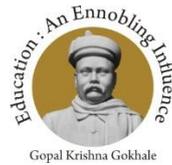
**A WING OF
STATE ELECTION COMMISSION OF MAHARASHTRA**

SEPTEMBER 2017

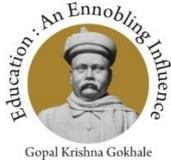
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FOREWORD

1. Maharashtra is one of the most urbanized States in the Country with nearly 44% of its population living in 360 Municipal Councils / Nagar Panchayats and 27 Municipal Corporations areas. State Election Commission which was established in 1994, following the 73rd & 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution, conducts elections for all the local bodies (both rural and urban) every 5 years.
2. State Election Commission is required to conduct above elections in a free, fair and transparent manner in order to provide level playing field to all political parties and candidates.
3. It is a known fact that both the political parties and candidates are required to spend money to inform/educate voters about their vision and policies etc. Accordingly ceiling for election expenses for candidates has been prescribed by the Election Commission besides other necessary guidelines. At present, a candidate is allowed to spend between Rs.5 lakhs to Rs.10 lakhs depending upon the size of the Municipal Corporation.
4. In spite of the above guidelines and ceiling on expenditure, it is widely reported in the media that both the candidates and political parties spend huge amounts of money in order to influence and buy voters, which hampers the purity of the elections.
5. State Election Commission, Maharashtra engaged the services of Gokhale Institute of Politics & Economics, Pune to assess the actual use of money in the Municipal Corporation elections scheduled to be held in February 2017.
6. I am happy that GIPE has conducted a survey of 9 Municipal Corporations with the help of 30 enumerators from 14th to 20th February 2017 and have come out with very interesting findings.
7. I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Rajas Parchure, Smt. Manasi Phadke and the entire team of GIPE for making this analytical study possible.
8. I am further pleased that Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics is publishing the survey findings in a booklet form elucidating their methodology and analysis. I am sure this will help in improving the quality of the candidates in future and result in more free, fair and transparent elections.

Shri. J. Saharia

State Election Commission
Maharashtra

September 1, 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very pleased to present the report titled “Assessment of Election Expenditure in Municipal Corporation Elections in Maharashtra” to discerning readers and scholars. As you must be aware, the State Election Commission of Maharashtra has been conducting local body elections in Maharashtra since 1994. It has been working tirelessly to increase the voter turnout and conduct elections in a free, fair and transparent manner.

One of the forces which distort the level playing field in an election is the prevalence of money power. Candidates and political parties spend vast sums of money on not just regular expenses such as promotional meetings, billboards etc., but have also been known to distribute cash and liquor. It is important to estimate the expenditure that is actually incurred during the run-up to the elections. Not only is this important in terms of an election-documentation exercise, but it also will serve as a useful input for the SECM for realistic revision of the limit of expenditure. Since such an exercise has never been attempted in Maharashtra, every process -- from creating a methodology, to verification of estimates, had to be developed creatively without compromising on academic vigour. I am happy to state that Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics has completed this challenging task successfully. Our findings are extremely interesting and will serve to complement the literature on local body elections fruitfully.

Let me express my gratitude to Shri Jageshwar Saharia, State Election Commissioner, Maharashtra, for granting this interesting study project to Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics. Shri Shekhar Channe, Secretary, State Election Commission, Maharashtra, guided and supported us at every stage of the project.

Mrs. Manasi Phadke has been the chief co-ordinator and principal author of this report and has been driving the processes right from the methodological construction of the problem to writing the report, meticulously. I congratulate her for coming out with a timely and interesting publication. Vishal Gaikwad was given charge of taking daily reports from this field; his intervention helped us immensely in timely completion of the project. We had especially invited Shri Anand Agashe and Shri Abhay Kulkarni to identify reporters all over Maharashtra, guide them at the commencement of the project as well as to moderate the Focussed Group Discussions (FGDs) after completion of the survey. I express my gratitude to both these senior reporters for sharing their knowledge so generously with us. I'd like to specially thank Sahil Deo, CPC Analytics, who undertook data mining in order to give an extra news-based dimension to the project. This work supported the main research of the project very neatly. Our young Research Assistants Raksha Iyengar and Bhavesh Pathade completed their tasks enthusiastically. Ms. Manisha Shinde took care of admin part of the project extremely efficiently. I thank Mr. Rajesh Bhatkar for editing the report so efficiently, as always. Mr. Vilas Mankar gave us the required technical assistance. Last, but not the least, I also place on record my sincere gratitude to all journalists who consented to be our “observers” for this project. Without their meticulous and timely inputs, this project could never have been

completed. This study is an outcome of a wonderful team effort and I congratulate all members of the team for their efforts and enthusiasm.

This project helped us to gain deep insights into the dynamics of local body elections from an expenditure perspective. I am sure that the report will serve as a useful addition to the existing literature on the subject.

Prof. Rajas Parchure

Offg. Director
Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics
Pune

September 1, 2017

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

10 Municipal Corporations went to polls on 21st February 2017. The Model Code of Conduct was declared applicable for all the Corporations in January 2017. The MCC is a set of guidelines that political parties as well as candidates wishing to contest elections have to adhere to. The MCC has evolved through a consensus of all political parties which have agreed to “abide by the principles embodied in the said code in its letter and spirit.” The MCC comes into force upon notification of the date of elections by the State Election Commission of Maharashtra in respective local bodies and covers five major sections regarding which guidelines have been issued. These are:

1. General Conduct
2. Meetings
3. Processions
4. Polling Day
5. Polling Booth

The role of the MCC is to ensure that elections in the local area are conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Though the guidelines for conduct of candidates and parties have been given clearly, violation of the code of conduct is a known and observed phenomenon throughout Maharashtra. The temptation to flout the guidelines for personal advantage gets stronger as the election date approaches. Bribing the voters through distribution of money, freebies and liquor, at times intimidating the voter, giving hate speeches, disrupting meetings and processions of opponents, etc. are known violations of the MCC. In other words, use of money and muscle power is a known phenomenon during the elections in Maharashtra.

While money power is evident, there has been no formal attempt to assess the extent of money spent by candidates/parties on elections to local bodies. Depending upon the number of seats within Municipal Corporations, the SECM has set limits on expenditure a candidate may undertake to contest a seat from that Corporation. The limits were revised for the 2017 elections and are shown in the table below.

Table 1.1: Limits set by the SECM for Election Expenses in Corporations (2017)

No. of Seats	Maximum permissible expenses limit per candidate (Rs.)	Eligible Corporations
151 seats and higher	10 lakhs	Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation
		Pune Municipal Corporation
116-150 seats	8 lakhs	Thane Municipal Corporation
		Nagpur Municipal Corporation
		Nashik Municipal Corporation
		PimpriChinchwad Municipal Corporation
86-115 seats	7 lakhs	Amravati Municipal Corporation
		Solapur Municipal Corporation
Less than 85 seats	5 lakhs	Akola Municipal Corporation

While post-facto, all candidates submit records of expenses which are invariably well within the expense limits, the actual amount of spending is known to be well above these limits.

The objective of this survey was to assess the extent of actual expenditure incurred by a candidate during the week prior to elections in the Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra.

1.2 LOCATION OF THE STUDY

10 Municipal Corporations conducted elections on 21st February 2017. These are given in the following table.

Table 1.2: List of Municipal Corporations which went to polls on 21st February 2017

Sr. No	Municipal Corporation	District	Division
1.	Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation	Mumbai	Konkan
2.	Thane Municipal Corporation	Thane	Konkan
3.	Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation	Thane	Konkan
4.	Pune Municipal Corporation	Pune	Pune
5.	Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation	Pune	Pune
6.	Solapur Municipal Corporation	Pune	Pune
7.	Nagpur Municipal Corporation	Nagpur	Nagpur
8.	Amravati Municipal Corporation	Nagpur	Nagpur
9.	Akola Municipal Corporation	Nagpur	Nagpur
10.	Nashik Municipal Corporation	Nashik	Nashik

The present study was conducted in all of the above Corporations, except in Ulhasnagar Municipal Corporation.

1.3 TIMELINE OF THE STUDY

The survey commenced on 14th February 2017 and concluded on 21st February 2017. Since the polls were scheduled on 21st February, the timeline provided the observers an opportunity to actually observe, assess and report on the actual expenditure on field in the week leading to the elections.

CHAPTER - II

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION ELECTIONS IN MAHARASHTRA: SALIENT FEATURES

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, which gave constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), was passed in 1992. The same Amendment provided for creation of the State Election Commission of Maharashtra (SECM) for conduct of elections in urban and rural local self-governance bodies. All urban and rural local body elections in Maharashtra since 1994 have been conducted by the SECM. While urban bodies include Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats, rural bodies encompass Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samitis and Gram Panchayats.

In Maharashtra State, at the time of establishment of the SECM, some of the local bodies, rural as well as urban, were already in existence and were functioning with elected members. It was decided to allow such local bodies to continue and hold elections to these local bodies as and when they completed their 5-year term. Thus, in Maharashtra, all local bodies do not go to polls at the same time. Different local bodies, urban and rural, go to polls as and when their 5-year term ends.

Since its establishment, the SECM has conducted 4 rounds of elections in all the local bodies. The first round was from 1994-98, the second round was from 1999-2003, the third from 2004-08 and the fourth from 2009-13. From 2014 onwards, the fifth round of elections is being conducted by the SECM across all rural and urban local bodies in Maharashtra. Whilst some bodies have already conducted the fifth round of elections, in nearly 26 out of 36 districts in Maharashtra, all urban and rural bodies went to polls from November 2016 to March 2017.

Following are some of the salient features of the first four rounds of Municipal Corporation elections in Maharashtra¹.

1. Voter turnout for Municipal Corporation elections across all 4 rounds of elections stands at 56 per cent. The voter turnout percentage increased in the elections held in 2004-08, but dropped again in the 2009-13 elections.

2. Voter turnout in a Corporation in any round of elections significantly depends on the voter turnout in that Corporation in the past round. Thus, a Corporation with a high turnout in the last round of elections is likely to show higher turnouts in the next round too. Thus, in influencing voter turnouts, it is important to acknowledge the role of the “voting culture” of that area.
3. Within Corporation limits, the proportion of SC and ST population across all rounds of elections has been around 13 per cent. Around 40 per cent of seats are reserved for SC, ST and BCC candidates across all Corporations.
Voter turnout is significantly affected by reservations. Data shows that Corporations with higher proportion of seats for reserved candidates tend to have higher voter turnouts. Such Corporations are mostly found in less developed districts of the State.
4. Political parties also engage in close contests when the voter turnout is high. With a lower voter turnout, chances of a single party dominating the Corporation are higher. Hence, if a political party has a stronghold over a Municipal Corporation, and if the voter turnout in that Corporation tends to be high, there is a chance for the competitor party to try and break the stronghold of the former. Hence, it is in such Corporations that there will be bitter contests amongst political parties. A study² by Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics identifies those Corporations wherein such patterns prevail; it is in these Corporations that effective implementation of the Model Code of Conduct plays a very important role.
5. Competition between political parties is normally very high in the lesser developed districts. Thus, political parties seem to be more active near the grassroots level. It is here that the MCC machinery ought to be focused.
6. Political alignment with State Government is normally seen to be high in Municipal Corporations belonging to lesser developed districts with high voter turnouts and a higher proportion of seat reservations.

7. It is in the more developed districts of the State that the voter turnout is low and the voters vote for parties in power, which are typically not aligned with the party in power at the State Government.
8. Only 9.24 per cent of the seats in Municipal Corporations are won by Independent candidates. In contrast, around 17 per cent of the seats in Municipal Councils are held by independent candidates. A lower proportion of independent candidates winning at Corporation level could be the manifestation of the higher money power that is required to contest Corporation elections as compared to Council elections.²
9. Independents tend to win more with higher voter turnout. An interesting observation is that the proportion of Independent candidates winning Corporation elections is normally higher in the lesser developed districts of Maharashtra. This again could be a manifestation of the fact that the money power required to contest independently from developed districts such as Mumbai or Pune is enormous.

CHAPTER - III

MONEY POWER, CAMPAIGN FINANCE AND EXPENSE LIMITS

Former PM Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee said famously, “Every legislator starts his career with the lie of the false election return he files.” This statement, coming from a Prime Minister of arguably the biggest democracy in the world, creates a logical platform to discuss the role of money power in elections, and whether expenditure limits manage to curb it.

World over, one finds different views, rules and indeed laws pertaining to campaign finance i.e. raising of funds by political parties to fund their election expenses, as well as pertaining to limits on election expenses.

In the US for example, there are strict rules governing campaign finance i.e. how much finance can be raised by candidates from small individual contributors, large individual contributors, political action committees, and self-finance. The rationale of the move is quite simple. If donors excessively support political campaigns financially and those candidates win, then the policy of the candidates threatens to mirror the view of a small but financially influential part of the society. Thus, issues of concern to the majority of the populace could take a backseat, whilst the Government policies and programmes get swayed by the interests of the rich donor class. Unrestricted donations towards campaign finances could thus threaten the very spirit of elections and democracy. However, in the US, whilst there are tight controls over campaign finance, there are no controls over how the candidates may then spend the money so obtained. In the highly contested Presidential election in 2016, Hillary Clinton raised \$1191 million in campaign finance, whereas Donald Trump raised only \$646.8 million. The money was spent on print and electronic media, rent, payroll and administration in the local state offices, telecommunications, etc. Thus, the total amount of campaign funding raised by the two Presidential candidates alone in the 2016 US elections stood at about \$1837 million. In Rupee terms, this translates approximately into Rs.11940 crores. The overall cost of the election is much higher; the Centre for Responsive Politics³ estimates this to stand at about \$6.9 billion i.e., about Rs.45000 crores.

Compare this to the combined campaign cost of the Modi and Gandhi campaigns in the run up to the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, which is estimated to be about \$205 million³ (or about

Rs.1332 crores) together. Thus, the campaigns of the most visible leaders in the 2014 Indian elections works out to be a tenth of the campaign finance raised by the American Presidential candidates.

However, the cost of the overall NDA and UPA campaigns in India, according to the Centre for Media Studies, worked out to be a mind-boggling \$5 billion⁴ or Rs. 33000 crores, which is an astounding 72 per cent of the overall US election expenditure.

Comparison of election expenses to the GDP estimates of the respective countries provides some interesting insights. The overall expenses of the US Presidential campaign account for 0.03 per cent of the US GDP, whereas the overall expenses of the Indian Lok Sabha elections 2014 accounted for 0.25 per cent of the Indian GDP.

Comparison of cost of elections per voter is another way of arriving at cross country comparisons. In the US, the cost of elections worked out to be about \$52 per voter in 2016, whereas in India the cost of 2014 LS elections per voter was about \$7.69 per voter. This is still higher as compared to the UK, where the cost of elections per voter stood at \$1.85.

The main difference in elections in India and the US is the fact that while in the US the source of funding is regulated, in India, it is the quantum of expenditure on elections that is regulated.

Issues of limits on expenses by parties and candidates, limits of political contributions by different entities etc. are covered in India under RoPA, 1961, Income Tax Act, 1961 and the Companies Act, 2013. Currently, there are no limits on individual as well as corporate contributions to political parties. However, for corporate contributions, the company has to be at least three years old and cannot contribute more than 7.5% of its aggregate net profits of the preceding three years. Further, there are no limits on political parties accepting contributions. Only if the contribution from individual or a corporate body stands at more than Rs.2000, then the political party is expected to make a disclosure to the Election Commission in every financial year. Further, companies are also required to disclose the amounts given to political parties, together with their P&L statements every financial year. The glaring issue or loophole here is the limit⁶ of Rs.2000. If individuals make multiple contributions of Rs.1999 to a political party in the course of a year, this contribution

completely evades disclosure⁷. Secondly, it is important to realize that such contributions could either be from individuals practicing corrupt or worse, criminal activities. It is this money that is then used to distribute cash, gifts or liquor amongst the voters, thereby swaying voter preferences. It also sets off a vicious cycle wherein muscle or money power of the individual candidates backs the money power of political parties, which, after coming to power, are forced to condone the illicit activities of the donors. Thus, disclosure of all amounts accepted by political parties as contributions has become the focal point of the current debate on electoral reforms in India.

That higher expenditure by candidates and/or political parties can and does distort the level playing field and adversely affects the electoral prospects of candidates with lower election budgets, is a harsh reality of Indian elections; however, placing limits on expenditure in order to create a level playing field appears to be a utopian idea that may instead fuel corruption.

Imposition of expenditure limits as a tool of creating a level playing field is flawed; further, the actual expenditure limits allowed are too low to be realistic.

These issues create a backdrop in which the present study has been undertaken. In Maharashtra, the State Election Commission of Maharashtra conducts elections to the local bodies, i.e., Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats (urban governance bodies), and Zilla Parishads, Nagar Panchayats and Gram Panchayats (rural governance bodies). The framework of setting limits on election expenses is common to all Election Commissions across the country.

It is a known phenomenon that money power plays a bigger role in local body elections as compared to national polls. Cash, liquor and freebies are distributed more aggressively at the local levels, because the candidates represent wards with smaller voter base sizes. While the media often reports on instances of money power deployed during elections, there has been no formal study to assess how much money could actually be changing hands during local body elections in Maharashtra.

It must be noted that election expenditure begins nearly 8-10 months prior to the elections. Such expenditure could be in the form of sponsorship of Ganesh Mandal activities during the Ganesh festival, “Haldi-Kunku” programs around Navratri, cricket matches or music fests

during winter, etc. Such sponsorship is actually an expense towards brand building, which is considered as a positive contributor in the upcoming elections. Corporators have been known to build pukka roads, clear drainages, even paint compound walls of housing societies as the elections draw close. Distribution of freebies can range from distributing trash-cans for wet and dry garbage to appeal to the sentiments of the eco-friendly, upper middle class lobby in Pune, to distribution of cotton shopping-bags in Nashik. If this expenditure is incurred before the election is announced and the Model Code of Conduct is enforced, then there is no apparent violation of the MCC.

However, once the election is declared (typically 40 days prior to the actual polling date), the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which also includes guidelines on expenditure, becomes applicable to those zones. The State Election Commission declares limits of “Allowed Expenses” for candidates and the candidates are required to submit disclosure of the actual expenses incurred towards elections from such time as the MCC become applicable. Now, the branding effort has to be intensified just at the same time when the MCC come into effect; the candidates thus over-spend, thereby violating provisions of the MCC and later, under-quote their expenses, thereby flouting the disclosure norms.

It is really difficult to fathom the extent of money power in municipal elections; a naive method is to apply the Lok Sabha factor of 0.25 per cent of Indian GDP to the Maharashtra State GDP from urban areas. The CSO estimates for Maharashtra SGDP in 2016 stand at about Rs.18 lakh crore. If we assume that 50 per cent of the same comes from urban areas, and if we apply the 0.25 per cent factor, it implies that the total election expenses in urban Maharashtra (Nagar Panchayats, Municipal Councils, and Municipal Corporations) could be around Rs.2250 crores.

This creates a logical backdrop to explain the objective of the present study. The present study aims to create a formal estimate of the total election expenses that may be incurred by candidates contesting in Municipal Corporation elections. It needs to be noted that the study tracks only the election expenses incurred by candidates in the week preceding the elections. Such a study not only helps to get an estimate of the money power in the local body elections in Maharashtra, but will also be useful in terms of eventually revising expenditure limits realistically.

CHAPTER - IV

METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSMENT OF ELECTION EXPENSES

The study to undertake formal assessment of expenses in the weekly run up to the Municipal Corporation elections is unique and first of its kind attempted in India. It is certainly the first of its kind attempted on local body elections in Maharashtra. While estimates of the election expenses incurred by some candidates in Corporation elections may be informally available and might have been sporadically reported in the media, there have generally been no attempts to arrive at a fair estimate of the expenditure incurred at the city-level.

4.1 QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF EXPENSES

The main objective of the present study was to arrive at a fair estimate of the expenditure incurred by a candidate contesting the Municipal Corporation election, and then scale-up the estimated expenditure to the ward and the city level. Accuracy of the estimates of election expenditure largely depends upon the methodological construct of the study. Given that this was the first attempt at probing into election expenses at a Municipal Corporation level in Maharashtra, there was no readily available methodological construct which could have been followed in this study. Thus, the present study had to begin with the formulation of a methodology to assess election expenses. The details of the methodology devised for the purpose of this study are given below.

- As has been detailed in the earlier chapter, the study was undertaken in 9 out of the 10 Municipal Corporations which went to polls on 21st February 2017.
- In each of the Corporations, observers with experience in reporting were deployed in different prabhags/wards. Their task was to report their observations regarding the daily election activities of the candidates and provide an estimation of the expenses the candidates were likely to have incurred in organizing such activities. The format

in which they were directed to report their observations regarding the daily election activities and an estimate of their corresponding expenses is given in Appendix A.

- “Prabhags” were chosen for observation in consultation with the reporters. A Prabhag is a group of electoral wards. In Mumbai, wards were not grouped together and hence, for Mumbai, a Prabhag is the same as a ward. For all other cities, 4 wards were grouped together into one Prabhag. Whilst choosing Prabhags for purpose of this study, heed was paid to choose Prabhags with different socio-economic population mixes, because expenses incurred on campaigns by contestants would vary as per the socio-economic classification of the voter classes. Again, Prabhags were chosen in a manner that ensured good geographical spread within each city since people with similar socio-economic classifications are generally clustered in certain geographical areas. A geographical spread of the Prabhags would again help us to assess election expenses incurred in places with diverse socio-economic population mixes.
- In each Prabhag, the reporters were asked to observe the activities of any 4 of the “prominent” candidates. There is a huge number of big and small political parties, which are influential in Maharashtra. Whilst BJP, SS, NCP and INC have a presence at a city level almost all across the State, there are other parties like MNS, RPI, PWP and MIM too which have a good presence in certain pockets. Given the presence of so many political parties across all cities, it was expected that at least 4 parties would put up strong candidates in any randomly chosen Prabhag, and hence, it was decided to follow 4 strong candidates per Prabhag.
- The reporters were also asked to state the total number of candidates contesting the elections in the Prabhag they were observing, and the proportion of the total candidates they felt were “prominent”.
- The present study focuses on “how much” is the extent of expenditure and not “who” or “which political party” incurred the expenses. Hence, reporters were asked to maintain a daily track of election activities carried out by all the chosen prominent candidates in the selected Prabhags, and not that of particular candidates or parties.

- Election activities typically include meetings, rallies, processions, campaign vehicles, printing of pamphlets, banners and cut-outs etc.
- Under the activity head “meetings”, reporters were instructed to provide details of the meetings, such as the size of the stage, projectors, generators, banners, LED screens, cut-outs, mikes and sound systems, rented chairs or other seating arrangements, floral arrangements, presence of celebrities, whether people or voters were brought in by trucks for the meetings, whether the meeting was advertised in print media, beverages served at the meetings, caps or stoles distributed during the meetings etc. They also were asked to maintain similar records for chowksabhas, corner sabhas, processions and rallies organized by political parties or candidates. Since these were observable events, they were also advised to file photographs of such activities in support of their observations. Finally, they were also directed to submit on a daily basis, the estimated expenditure that was likely to have been incurred on election-related activities in that ward within the Corporation. Given that the research team at GIPE had the break-up of activities together with the photographs, it was easily possible to create an informal estimate of the expenses for the said activity. Thus, two expense estimates were created around every activity. One was the overall estimate as reported from the field. The other was an estimate prepared by the research team based on the individual components of the activities. If the estimate prepared by the research team was in sharp deviation from what was submitted to us from the field, the reporters were directed to verify their estimate against each of the components of expenditure.

Necessary precaution had to be taken while accounting for expenditure incurred on organization of meetings. Sometimes, political parties organize really big rallies or meetings with a “Star Campaigner” such as a senior MP who is especially flown in from New Delhi to address a big rally of voters. Such meetings are not ward-specific; prominent candidates from multiple wards may be hosts of such meetings. In such cases, double-counting of election expenses was likely and hence, whilst reporting meetings or Sabhas, reporters were asked to provide specific information whether the

meeting was restricted to the voters of the ward they were covering, or whether it was for multiple wards.

- The observers were also asked to keep track of the number of big and small banners, hoardings and cut-outs put up by each candidate/party, and provide approximate cost of such banners/hoardings/cut-outs. The observers were also required to provide photographs of such banners/hoardings etc., in evidence of their observations.
- Under the activity head “campaign vehicles”, reporters were asked to keep a track of the type of vehicles that were used for campaign (auto-rickshaws, jeeps, SUVs, etc.) and the approximate rental and fuel cost per day. Again, the data was to be substantiated through photographs or videos.
- Manpower is a very important component in any election. How many karyakartas or party workers were roped in by the candidates for campaigning and promotional activities? What was the approximate payment made to the workers per day? Such data would provide insight into the manpower cost of the campaign. It is to be noted that this was a typical component of election expenditure wherein no supporting documentation or proof would be readily available, and we had to rely on the reports filed by our reporters from the respective field areas.
- Paid news is the latest gimmick in electoral campaigns. Candidates do not directly print advertisements in the media; instead, media is paid to get their interviews printed, or to cover their campaign issues in the format of news. It was observed that some candidates had an arrangement with consulting firms to get their news printed in the media. Sometimes, the political party itself would have a formal tie-up with consulting firms, which would then cover the stories of all candidates belonging to that party. In many cases, newspapers and media agents themselves offer formal “packages” to cover paid news. These form a one-time expense for candidates and/or political parties and cannot be tracked on a day-to-day basis. However, since most observers had first-hand experience of reporting on electoral practices they were privy

to information on the extent of expenditure incurred by the candidates/parties in the form of paid news. Such expenditure was listed as one-time expenditure rather than daily expenditure on electoral activities.

- Candidates/parties also hire consultants/agencies to manage bulk SMS or other text feeds to the voters using mobile phone technology. Such consultants/agencies are generally paid a one-time fee for managing a certain number of SMSes within a month. This expenditure was also listed as one-time expenditure.
- Political parties and/or candidates also hire marketing consultants for managing their image on social media, notably through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Since Lok Sabha elections 2014, social media has become a very powerful medium to reach out to voters and influence their perceptions about the candidates. One time fees paid to social media consultants were also listed as a part of the election expenses.
- The above mentioned heads of expenses are the “observed” components of election expenses, i.e., components that are easily visible to any observer. However, there are various other expenditures incurred in an election in a clandestine manner and therefore, not easily noticeable. Such “invisible” expenses typically include distribution of cash, food, liquor and such other freebies to voters. The nature of these activities is such that they dodge physical evidence and it is rather difficult to estimate the amount actually spent on such activities.
- Reporters were asked to report their estimates of such “invisible” expenses on the basis of their observations. Very few of these “invisible” expenditures could be backed by photographs or other physical evidence. If the news of cash being distributed amongst voters etc. was covered in any local newspaper, our reporters were also asked to submit those articles which could then act as a back-up to their estimates. Similarly, if the numbers quoted by observers in two similar wards were vastly different, (for example, if one reporter in a ward reported that Rs.8000 were paid per voter as bribe whereas a reporter in a nearby area reported that Rs.25000 were paid per voter) it would immediately invite further authentication/verification

from the research team. If the liquor distribution observed, say, in one of the cities, was too high or too low as compared to the estimates from other cities, the reports would again be subjected to further verification. Cross-verification of estimates of invisible expenses in a ward against other wards in the same city, and cross-verification of estimates of invisible expenses in a city against other cities created some checks to understand whether the observations pertaining to invisible expenses were correctly captured or not.

- Note that the daily observations by reporters were restricted to only 4 prominent candidates in each prabhag; our observers were also asked to report how many prominent candidates contested election from that Prabhag. The total number of prominent candidates in that Prabhag divided by 4 would give us the prominent-candidate multiplier. The expenses of prominent candidates multiplied by the prominent-candidate multiplier gave us the expenses of all prominent candidates within the Prabhag.
- It was assumed that the non-prominent candidates would spend on an average, 40 per cent of the expenses incurred by prominent candidates. This expense, estimated in consultation with the reporters, was then multiplied by the number of non-prominent candidates in a Prabhag; this helped us to estimate the total expenditure by non-prominent candidates.
- The expenses estimated for prominent and non-prominent candidates were then summed up to derive Prabhag level expense estimates. The next step was to scale up the assessment of election expenses from a Prabhag level to a city level.
- For every city, Prabhags with similar socio-economic classifications were grouped together into a cluster for the purpose of the analysis. The geographical spread of the study had been so created that there was one observer per cluster. When the Prabhag level election expense was estimated, it was multiplied by the number of Prabhags within the cluster to arrive at the cluster level election expense.

- The expenses of all clusters were summed to arrive at a realistic estimate of expenses incurred across all Prabhags in the city.

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study. The next chapter reports the actual estimates of the expenses as calculated by us using this methodology.

CHAPTER - V**ESTIMATES OF EXPENSES IN MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS
IN THE WEEK PRIOR TO ELECTIONS**

The State Election Commission has fixed the expenditure limit for candidates contesting in a particular Corporation, on the basis of classification of the Corporations as per the number of seats. The post-election returns filed by the candidates on expenditure incurred on the election generally claim that the expenditure has been well within the prescribed limits. However, in reality the expenditure incurred on the field before the elections is much higher than the prescribed limits.

The objective of this study was to assess the extent to which money power manifests itself in the week prior to elections in Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra. In the 9 Municipal Corporations selected for this survey, observers with experience in reporting were directed to simply record visible instances of money power in the elections to the Councils. These included the legally permitted “regular” expenses such as those incurred on meetings, processions, pamphlets, campaign vehicles etc. which could be backed by visual or tangible proof. Observers were also instructed to maintain a record of expenses such as distribution of cash, freebies and liquor as observed directly or through information from reliable sources.

For elections to the Municipal Corporations, the permissible expense limit per candidate ranges from Rs.5 lakhs to Rs. 10 lakhs; the limits increase as the number of seats in the Municipal Corporation increase. For each Corporation, we multiply the number of candidates contesting elections with the allowed expenditure limit per candidate. This gives us the “Allowed Expenditure” per Corporation. We next compare the “Actual Expenses” as computed by us, with the “Allowed Expenditure” in the following table.

Table 5.1: Comparison of Actual Expenditure with Allowed Expenditure in 9 Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra

Corpns	No. of Prabhags	No. of seats	No. of contesting candidates	Allowed Expenditure per candidate	Allowed Expenditure in the Corporation	Estimated Expenditure in the Corporation	Estimated/ Allowed	Average multiplier by Clusters
BMC	227	227	2275	10 lakhs	227 cr	886.92 cr	3.91	4.95
PMC	41	162	1090	10 lakhs	109 cr	654 cr	6.00	
Nagpur	38	151	1135	8 lakhs	90 cr	384.25 cr	4.27	5.05
Nashik	31	122	821	8 lakhs	66 cr	266.45 cr	4.03	
Thane	33	131	805	8 lakhs	64 cr	292 cr	3.30	
PCMC	32	128	773	8 lakhs	62 cr	532 cr	8.58	
Amravati	22	88	628	7 lakhs	44 cr	59.15 cr	1.35	2.58
Solapur	26	102	643	7 lakhs	45 cr	133.35 cr	3.81	
Akola	20	80	579	5 lakhs	29 cr	41.96 cr	1.45	1.45
AVG					736 cr	3006 cr		4.08

The assessment of the recorded as well as invisible expenses reveals the extent to which money power manifests itself during election week. The average expenditure incurred in Municipal Corporation elections in Maharashtra is at least 4 times higher as compared to the permitted expenses. This implies that as compared to the total allowed expenses of Rs.736 crores, the actual spending in the Corporation elections is an astounding Rs.3006 crores, and that too only in the last 7 days of the campaign in the run-up to the elections.

The standard deviation of the ratio of actual expenses to allowed expenses is 2.2. We next cluster Corporations and see which of these cluster more closely around the average. It is interesting to observe that those Corporations in which the ratio of estimated to allowed expenses exceeds the average by more than one standard deviation include two Corporations in Pune district i.e. Pune Municipal Corporation and the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal

Corporation. In PMC and PCMC, the ratio of actual to allowed expenditure stands at 6 and 8.58 respectively. The smaller Corporations in Amravati division, namely Akola and Amravati Municipal Corporations, are the ones wherein the actual expenditure is lesser than the mean by more than one standard deviation. It is easy to sense that big budget Corporations with big development plans are the ones where money power manifests itself rather ostentatiously.

We next carry out a similar analysis on expenditure, albeit this time, on the expenditure carried out per ward, rather than expenditure carried out per Corporation.

In Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, each Prabhag contained only one ward and hence, the elections were held for only one seat per ward. However, in all the other Corporations, each Prabhag contained four wards and hence, the elections were held for four seats in every Prabhag.

It is for this reason that it would be inappropriate to compare the per Prabhag expense of BMC to the per Prabhag expenses of other Corporations. The following table has identical estimates of expenditure for the Corporations, but the expenditures per ward have been worked out by dividing the per Prabhag expense by 4 for all Corporations except the BMC.

Table 5.2: Comparison of per Ward Expenditure in 9 Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra

Corporations	No. of Prabhags	Estimated Expenditure	Expenditure per Prabhag (Rs.crores)	Expenditure per ward (Rs.crores)
PCMC	32	532.00	16.63	4.16
PMC	41	654.00	15.95	3.99
BMC	227	886.92	3.91	3.91
Nagpur	38	384.25	10.11	2.53
Thane	32	292.00	9.13	2.28
Nashik	31	266.45	8.60	2.15
Solapur	38	133.35	3.51	0.88
Amravati	22	59.15	2.69	0.67
Akola	20	41.96	2.10	0.52

The above analysis shows that the per ward (or per seat) expenditures are the highest in the three richest Corporations of Maharashtra, namely, PCMC, PMC and BMC. Candidates contesting a seat in Pimpri-Chinchwad spend around Rs.4.16 crores on election expenses in the week prior to elections. In contrast, the per seat expenditure works out to be around Rs.52 lakh in Akola. The per ward (or per seat) expenses are thus, the lowest in Solapur, Amravati and Akola, the small budget Corporations of Maharashtra.

We next compute the average number of candidates contesting every seat in each of the Corporations. This enables us to estimate the average expense per candidate in every Corporation in Maharashtra.

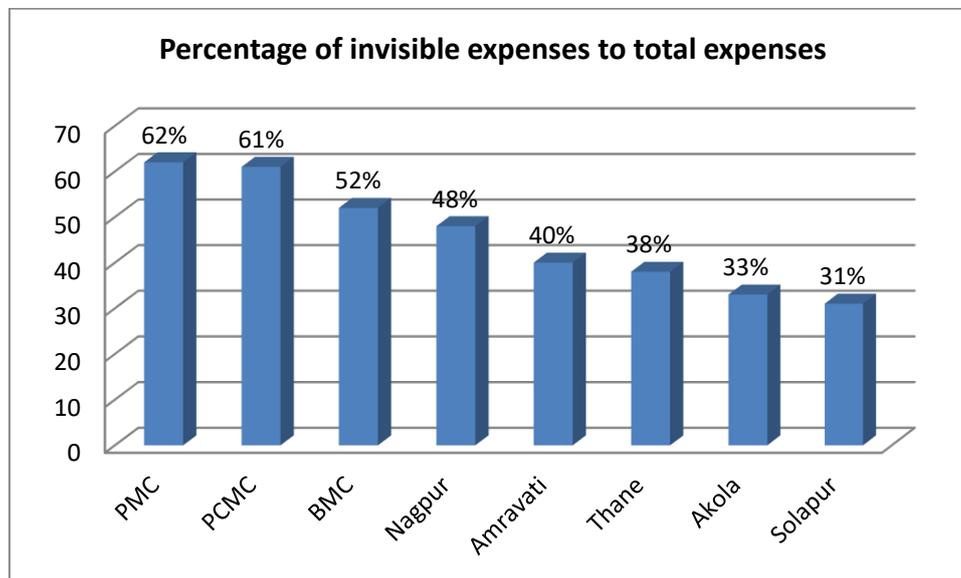
Table 5.3: Expenditure per candidate (in Rs. Crores) in 9 Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra

Corporations	No. of Prabhags	Estimated Expenditure	Expenditure per Prabhag (Rs.crores)	Expenditure per ward (Rs.crores)	Number of candidates per seat	Expenditure per candidate (Rs. Crores)
PCMC	32	532	16.63	4.16	6	0.69
PMC	41	654	15.95	3.99	7	0.59
BMC	227	886.92	3.91	3.91	10	0.39
Nagpur	38	384.25	10.11	2.53	8	0.34
Thane	32	292	9.13	2.28	6	0.37
Nashik	31	266.45	8.6	2.15	7	0.32
Solapur	38	133.35	3.51	0.88	6	0.14
Amravati	22	59.15	2.69	0.67	7	0.09
Akola	20	41.96	2.1	0.52	7	0.07

It is interesting to note that in none of the Corporations is the average per candidate expenditure lesser than the limits prescribed by the SECM.

Further, it was observed that nearly 46 per cent of these expenses are "unrecorded" and are incurred on liquor, cash distribution or gifts. Thus, only 54 per cent of the actual expenditure is incurred on expense heads such as meetings, processions, pamphlets, etc. The other half is spent on bribing the voters using cash, liquor or freebies. The Corporation-wise percentages of unrecorded expenses are shown below.

Graph 5.1: Percentage of Invisible Expenses to Total Expenses in 9 Municipal Corporations of Maharashtra



It is interesting to compare the ratio of invisible (unrecorded) to total expenditure for Municipal Corporation elections held in February 2017 and Municipal Council elections held in November 2016.

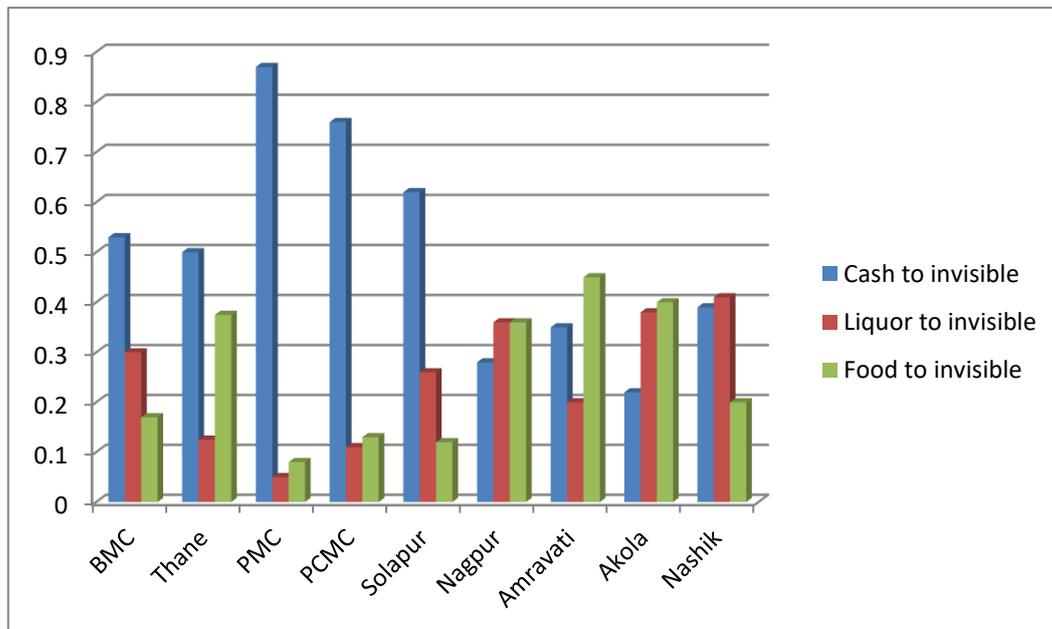
The ratio of unrecorded to total expenditure stands at average of 46 per cent for Municipal Corporation elections. The same ratio for Municipal Council elections held in November 2016 was seen to be much higher at 60 per cent as per the study conducted by GIPE in November 2016.

Since the Municipal Council elections in Maharashtra were held immediately after demonetization was announced, the elections were in fact seen to be one mode through which old notes could be distributed off amongst the voters. Thus, the Municipal Council elections

of November 2016 actually saw cash distribution emerge as a huge source of invisible expenses; this could be one of the reasons why the ratio of invisible expenses was generally higher in the Council elections.

Finally, we comment on the sources of invisible expenses. Amongst all the invisible expense heads, cash distribution to buy out other candidates as well as votes was seen to be highly prominent in the Municipal Corporation elections. 49 per cent of the invisible expenses were observed to be in the form of cash distribution. Highest proportion of cash spending was observed in PMC, PCMC, Solapur, BMC and Thane. It is interesting to note that the proportion of cash in invisible expenses stood at a much higher 67 per cent in the Municipal Council elections. The additional 18 per cent as observed in the Council elections (as compared to Corporation elections) may be attributed to the demonetization impact. Most reporters claimed that liquor distribution in the Corporation elections was limited since the police authorities were on high alert.

Graph 5.2: Components of Invisible Expenses in 9 Municipal Corporations of Maharashtra



This chapter offered insights into the election expenses carried out at the Corporation level, at the ward level and at a per candidate level. Data suggests that in each Corporation, the last one week itself witnesses expenses that are at least 4 times the limit prescribed by the SECM. The average expense incurred by each candidate exceeds the per candidate limit set on expenses by the SECM. Of these expenses, 48 per cent are “invisible” expenses incurred on buying out candidates and votes, liquor parties and freebies.

Of the invisible expenses, cash distribution accounts for 50 per cent across all Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra.

We next use some data-mining techniques to view this study from another angle.

CHAPTER - VI

DATA MINING AND PERCEPTION OF ELECTION FRAUDS

The earlier chapters of this report establish the extent to which the actual expenses incurred by candidates are higher as compared to the limits prescribed by the SECM. The instances of excessive election-related expenditure, notably dominant cases of cash buyout of candidates from other political parties, blatant bribing of voters through cash, gifts and freebies, liquor parties etc. have regularly been reported in the print and social media. Thus, another way of supporting the observations made by us during the course of this study was to track news of electoral fraud on digital news media and social media platforms.

For this purpose, data mining algorithms were employed to track news content related to electoral fraud during the same time frame when the study on assessment of election expenses was carried out.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The data mining process was a sub-theme to the main study carried out by GIPE. The main objective of the process was to create news-based insights that could support the observations reported by the study team on field. Following were the research questions around which the data mining process was centred:

1. What were the main topics of interest in election related discussions on social media?
2. What is the ranking of the Corporations based on perception towards electoral fraud (and related events) for Municipal Corporation elections of 2017?

DATA- MINING METHODOLOGY

Natural language processing algorithms were used to track relevant news items for this study. Along with this, advanced home grown algorithms were used to identify patterns in these communications.

Topic clustering was carried out on unstructured text data to bring forth relevant actionable insights. Marathi, Hindi and English were the primary languages considered for this analysis.

Over 50 news publications were tracked for this part of the study and a base data pool of over 4.7 lakh articles was scanned. Out of the above mentioned data pool, approximately 13,000 relevant news articles were identified and analyzed for the study. Data was also gathered from prominent social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. A pool of over 1.2 crore data points was analyzed for this study.

MAIN FINDINGS

1. Whether in news media or on social media, 93 per cent of the content is related to political campaigns and not to the political processes. In other words, most of the content is about candidates and/or political parties and not about civic or electoral issues.
2. Amongst the social media discussions related to elections, electoral fraud was the primary topic of discussion
3. This was followed by voters' names missing in the voter list
4. Background of the candidates, including their education, assets, and criminal records were also subjects of aggressive debate.

5. There also were a lot of comments/ posts on the new panel system put into place in all Municipal Corporations except Mumbai, wherein 4 wards were grouped into a single Prabhag.
6. Citizen engagement and interest in the Mumbai elections was seen to be the highest, followed by Pune, Nashik and Pimpri-Chinchwad
7. Perceptions of electoral fraud were seen to be particularly high in BMC, PMC and PCMC elections
8. Reporting and discussions on electoral fraud increased in the last week of the electoral campaigns.

The findings of the data mining exercise support the observations of our team on field in the run-up to the Municipal Corporation elections.

CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSIONS

- This study is the first of its kind attempt to estimate the actual expenditure carried out in Municipal Corporations in the week prior to elections
- Although candidates and political parties always report expenses that are well within the limits set by the State Election Commission of Maharashtra, the actual expenses incurred by them are much higher
- The actual expenses incurred by candidates and parties is observed to be at least 4 times higher as compared to the expenditure limits set by the SECM, and that too in only the last week prior to elections
- PMC and PCMC, both Corporations with big budgets and bigger development agenda, were observed to be having higher ratios of actual to allowed expenses as compared to other Corporations
- The smaller Corporations such as Akola and Amravati show lower ratios of actual to allowed expenses
- 46 per cent of the total expenses are “invisible” expenses or “unrecorded” expenses; thus, of the total expenses incurred by the candidates, only half of the expenses are incurred on expense heads such as political rallies, sabhas, pamphlets etc. The other half is on invisible cost heads such as distribution of cash, liquor parties and distribution of food and freebies
- Of the invisible expenses, nearly half is incurred only on distribution of cash.

APPENDIX A: FORMAT FOR DAILY REPORTING BY OBSERVERS

Daily - Visible	Expenditure per unit	How many?	Total Expenditure	Remarks
Big Sabha				
Small Sabha				
Processions				
Campaign vehicles				
Karyakartas				
Any other				
TOTAL				

Daily- Invisible	Remarks	Total Expenditure
Cash distribution		
Freebies, Gifts distribution		
Free food		
Liquor parties		
TOTAL		

One time	Expenditure per unit	How many?	Total Expenditure	Remarks
Posters- Small, big, LED				
Banners				
Cut-outs				
Paid news				
Marketing campaign				
Buying out other candidates				
Pamphlet distribution				
Any other				
TOTAL				

SOME MAJOR EXPENSE HEADS UNDER EACH CATEGORY- INDICATIVE GUIDELINES

1	Meetings	
	Stage- Material and construction	
	Mikes	
	Speakers	
	Generator(s)	
	Projectors	
	CCTV/Photographer	
	Lights	
	TV screens	
	Beverages	
	Celebrities	
	Vehicles	
	Karyakartas/ other attendees	
	Flower arrangements, garlands, bouquets	
	Banners/ Hoardings	
	Pamphlets distributed	
	Chairs	
	Labourers	Others
2	Posters	
	Hoardings	
	LED hoardings	
	Banners	
	Cut outs	
	Pamphlets distributed	
3	Campaign vehicles	
	Two wheelers	
	Cars/ Jeeps/ Scorpios	
	Rickshaws with banners and mikes	
	LED fitted vehicles	
	Others	
4	Marketing, in which	
	Paid News	
	Whatsapp messages	
	SMSes	
	Advertisements in newspapers	
	TV campaign	
	Radio campaign	
	FB campaign	
	Twitter campaign	
	Payment made to marketing companies	

APPENDIX B

FGD STRUCTURE AND DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Every participant to fill out the information sheet on expenses observed in his Corporation, without discussion with the others. RAs to collect it immediately.
2. Every participant to give a 3-4 minute talk on the elections at the Corporation he/she has covered. This talk should ideally encompass the political structures in the Corporation, electoral strategies, change in power dynamics, ways in which voters were approached, innovative campaign strategies

Potential Discussion Points:

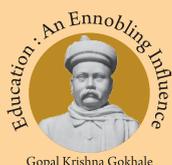
1. Who won the elections in the wards you covered? Did the candidates with higher expenses win more?
2. Did more voters cast their votes in the afternoon than in the morning? If yes, why may that be the case? Was there news of cash being distributed on the day of the elections?
3. Were SMSes, WhatsApp messages, other social media being used innovatively by candidates. Has the composition of spending by candidates moved to more formal methods such as spending on marketing firms that offer media services?
4. What innovative formats of expenditure were observed by you in the run-up to the elections?

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