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RESEARCH ARTICLE

FROM QUANTITATIVE REPRESENTATION TO QUALITATIVE PARTICIPATION OF SC MALE REPRESENTATIVES IN PANCHAYATS: THE CASE OF BIHAR.

Dr.Pradip Kumar Jha and Jeetender Kumar Singh.

1. Academic Counsellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi.
2. Doctoral student, Department of Political Science, Magadh University.

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Abstract

The 73rd amendment act ensured quantitative representation of weaker sections in the participatory mode of democratic governance. However, question remains to as to how and to what extent the quantitative representation is getting transformed into qualitative participation of weaker sections in terms of decision-making and exercising power at the *Panchayat* level. The role of *Panchayat* in empowerment of SC male representatives was examined on the basis of analysis of primary data obtained from sample of representatives, government officials, opinion leaders and focus group discussion. Indeed, quantitative reservations have had positive impact on the qualitative participation of SC male representatives in *Panchayats* though the importance of capacity building is highlighted.

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Introduction:-

Democracy provides space for participation of people in political process. The mode of participation and representation of people, however, is causally linked to the nature of democracy. Nature of democracy and the forms of democratic governance determine the extent and level of participation and representation of people in democratic governance process. Over the past few decades the idea of local democracy is getting legitimacy across the polities. Needless to add the articulation of the idea of local democracy requires institutional form at the local level. The structure of local government in its variety and form acts as important institutional mechanism of democratic and decentralised governance. The literature on federalism specifically highlights the importance of local government as institution of *self rule* organically linked to other federal institutional format of *shared rule*. It is argued that local government as third order of federal democratic governance allows people to govern themselves. It brings government closer to the people and promotes participatory governance. The participatory mode of democratic governance at the local level may promote inclusive form of governance. This, in turn, can lead to inclusion of all in the local democratic governance process. If it happens it may prove to be empowering of those who otherwise remain excluded from the entire democratic process. In case of India, *Panchayati Raj* has been envisioned as one of the most important institutional mechanisms of local government. Though the *Panchayati Raj* in India has a chequered history, the 73rd constitutional amendment has provided a new context to the whole gamut of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs). As envisioned in the 73rd constitutional amendment, PRIs may prove to be the institution of inclusive governance, participatory democracy and empowerment of weaker sections at the same time. The institution embodies transformative potentials. Among many other mandatory provisions the 73rd constitutional amendment for promoting inclusion and participation in governance, the provision of reservation is one of the most important innovative measures towards inclusion and empowerment of weaker sections. The 73rd constitutional

Corresponding Author:-Dr. Pradip Kumar Jha.

Address:-Academic Counsellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi.

amendment provides reservation to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women. In some of the states there is provision of reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) also. The provision of quotas to women and weaker sections is an attempt to bridge gender and caste inequality and to include them in the democratic governance. The inclusion of weaker sections in the process of participation and decision-making is a significant step towards social transformation. The institutional mechanism of development at primary level is community. Decentralization is devolution of authority and financial resources. Democratic polity adopts decentralization for development. In the Indian context the primary unit of self-governance, development and inclusion of weaker sections at rural level is "*Panchayat*". PRIs are increasingly considered as an agency of democracy, development and empowerment of weaker sections. Despite the limits of delivery of justice to the weaker sections from the above, it cannot be denied that institutional innovations and space created due to 73rd constitutional amendment also provide opportunity for claiming justice from below. The constitutionally mandated institutional innovations in the form of *Panchayati Raj* are proving transformative in many respects. This form of institutional innovation has opened up space for social, political and economic transformation in different parts of the country. It has also provided space for mobilization and claims of justice. Though there are variations in terms of efficacy of the institution yet one has to recognise the transformative role of the institution of *Panchayati Raj*. The weaker sections of society have gained political space for articulation of their aspirations. It is largely accepted that decentralization leads to empowerment even though the extent and amount of empowerment differs from one region to another.

Over the last six decades considerable amount of literature have come up that either deal with PRIs or empowerment of weaker sections. The available literature on PRIs focus on many critical dimensions related to it. In the same way literature on empowerment of weaker sections deals with in the context of caste, class and gender. It attempts to bring two concepts together that have been studied separately for the last six decades. Attempt is made to examine the concepts of PRIs and empowerment and their linkages in the context of SC male. There appears consensus among scholars that the 73rd constitutional amendment has opened space for participation of women, SCs, and STs in decision-making process at the *Panchayat* level (e g, Susheela Kaushik 1993; Bidyut Mohanty 1995; and Peter Ronald deSouza 2003). It may be deduced from the literature that the 73rd constitutional amendment has ensured quantitative representation of hitherto excluded women and weaker sections. The literature on PRIs and empowerment of weaker sections in the post 73rd amendment period may be classified into two groups. One group of scholar on the basis of their empirical investigation concludes that participation of weaker sections in the process of decision-making and exercising power is merely quantitative (e g, Dayabati Roy 2008 and Anand Teltumbde 2011). The other group of scholar on the basis of their empirical evidences concludes that quantitative representation is transformed into qualitative participation of weaker sections in the process of decision-making and exercising power at the *Panchayat* level (e g, B.S. Baviskar and George Mathew (eds.), 2009 and Nupur Tiwari 2009). But the literature does not mention much about extent of qualitative participation of SC male in the process of decision-making and exercising power at the *Panchayat* level. The vast gap in research necessitates a study which specifically addresses to the qualitative dimension of participation of SC male in the democratic governance and empowering potentials of PRIs.

Constitutional context of 73rd amendment:-

Finally in April 1993 the 73rd constitutional amendment act was passed, which provided constitutional status to PRIs.

PRIs have been in existence for a long time, it has been observed that it could not evolve as responsive institution due to absence of regular elections, prolonged suppression, insufficient representation of weaker sections and inadequate devolution of power and financial resources. Accordingly steps were taken to enable *Panchayats* to function as the units of self-government (Bakshi, 2002). The 73rd constitutional amendment may be viewed as the outcome of recommendations of various committees, socio-economic and political situation of that time. In the post 73rd constitutional amendment period PRIs are also considered as an agency of social change and empowerment along with democracy and development. The provision of quotas for SCs, STs and women in PRIs made it the agency of social change and empowerment of weaker sections.

PRIs in Bihar: a historical sketch:-

The politics of Bihar may be divided into two (02) phases. In the first phase, which extends up to the 1967, it is principally a story of the use of political power by the upper castes to retain their social domination. The second phase that began from 1967 is marked by the rise of upper backward caste people as major contenders of state power and forceful protest movements of the marginalized SCs and neglected STs (Ghosh and Kumar, 2003). The success

of local government to a large extent depends on the type of leadership at the local level. The latter, in turn, is greatly influenced by two dimensions: namely, the awareness of the given set of leaders of local democracy, and the extent of social closure that keeps those not born to power and privilege from entering the arena. A fourfold typology can be constructed by the combination of both (Kohli, 2001a).

Table 1:-Showing relationship between social closure and local institutions
Social closure

Awareness and power of local institutions	Social closure		
	low	High (type 1) Feudal	Low (type 2) anomie, fragmented
	high	(type 3) paternalistic, managerial	(type 4) democratic

Source: Atul Kohli (2001: 107).

From the rudimentary beginning of PRIs in 1880s until its formal appearance as part of a national policy after independence, the objective of the state has been to move local government in the direction of democracy. The idea was formally enshrined in the constitution (article 40). But the path from feudal type to the democratic type has occasionally led to anomie and fragmentation, as in Bihar, where local government lies paralysed in the midst of vicious caste wars (Kohli, 2001b). In the Assembly election of 2005 Nitish Kumar led the Janta Dal (United) and the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) to power. An Act was passed in 2006 to replace the Bihar *Panchayat Raj* Act of 1993. This Act is called the Bihar *Panchayat Raj* Act, 2006.

Salient features of the Bihar Panchayat Act 2006 are as follows:

- (i) Reservation in all categories would be under 50 percent.
- (ii) The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes reservation would be in proportion to their population.
- (iii) In all maximum 20 percent reservations would be provided to the backward class.
- (iv) In all categories upto 50 percent reservation would be provided for the women candidates.
- (v) The same pattern and norms, as mentioned above, would be followed for the reservation for the posts of *PanchayatSamiti* and *ZillaParishad*.
- (vi) To conduct fair election, the State Commission is provided with special administrative powers to punish the faulty officials involved in election work (Ministry of *Panchayati Raj*, 2008-09).

Objective:-

The constitutionally mandated institutional innovation in the form of 73rd constitutional amendment has ensured quantitative representation of weaker sections in the participatory mode of democratic governance. However question remains as to how and to what extent the quantitative representation transforms into qualitative participation of SC male in terms of decision-making and exercising power at the local level. The paper attempts to measure the extent of qualitative participation of SC male in the process of decision-making and exercising power at the *Panchayat* level.

Research methods:-

The paper was based on triangulation of theory (content analysis), triangulation of methods (qualitative and quantitative methods), triangulation of measures (SC male representatives and focus group discussion) and triangulation of observers (government officials and opinion leaders). Content analysis was used to describe, explore and explain research problem. Structured interview schedule and focus group discussion were the tools for collection of primary data (quantitative and qualitative data). Official documents, census data, legislative and executive documents of government and report of committees were the sources of secondary data. Data (primary and secondary), research questions, and literature were analysed in the light of hypotheses and research objective. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-16) was used for data processing and analysis.

Hypotheses:-

Based on the above literature review, the paper seeks to test the following hypotheses:

- (i). The constitutionally mandated quantitative representation of SC male in the institution of *Panchayati Raj* has enhanced their qualitative participation.

(ii). There is qualitative participation of weaker section community members in the *Panchayat* meetings.

Key concepts, their operational definition and limitations

PRIs- District *Panchayat* (*Zilla Panchayat*), Intermediate *Panchayat* (*Panchayat Samiti*) and village *Panchayat* are the three tiers of PRIs. District *Panchayat* and Intermediate *Panchayat* are important institutional mechanism from governance point of view. The focus on village *Panchayat* is intended towards the critical examination of empowerment in the guaranteed space of participatory governance. As the paper focuses on empowerment so the governance framework of PRIs are not taken into consideration.

Empowerment- These days empowerment is generally seen as the only effective answer to oppression, exploitation and injustice done to the weaker sections of society. The traditional Indian society is based on the deep rooted inequality of caste and gender. "Empowerment is commonly understood as the condition of having power, and being able to exercise it and obtain the benefits thereof" (Narayan, 2006: 219). Empowerment of SC male is analysed at political (qualitative participation of weaker sections and community in terms of decision-making and exercising power at the *Panchayat* level), social, economic and informational resource level.

Weaker sections- Weaker sections are used to denote the section of society who lags behind others on various socio-economic and political indicators. They are the most deprived and oppressed section of Indian society. Weaker sections are used for SC male and female but it focuses on SC male. It does not take into consideration STs.

To establish the link between empowerment and quotas or reservation it is relevant to cite: "So in the end, the Indian way of securing empowerment for the un-empowered seems to be by the safe way of providing, as extensively as possible, quotas on the basis of community, caste and gender" (Beteille, 1999: 597).

Variables:-

- (i). Independent variable- *Panchayats*
- (ii). Dependent variable- Empowerment of weaker sections of Bihar
- (iii). Intervening variable- (a). Gross District Domestic Product (GDDP)
(b). SC concentration of population

The case of Bihar:-

One may find general literature on the subject, but empirical data substantiating the instances and incidences of empowerment particularly in the case of Bihar is missing from the existing realm of knowledge. As PRIs have entered into its 4th generation it is crucially important that extensive field data is generated in order to establish a probable fit between institutions of participatory democracy and empowerment. It is needless to mention that Bihar is known for its social stratification and interest based coalitions. Study based on the techniques of survey is likely to generate possible postulate and consequent reform in the working of *Panchayati Raj* as an institution of social change and empowerment of weaker sections.

Sample for quantitative and qualitative data:-

The data for quantitative analysis was obtained by proportionate stratified random sampling. The interview of 40 government officials and 40 opinion leaders were conducted in order to get triangulation of observers. A single person meant limitation of observer and the limitation of the study. Multiple observers added their views regarding awareness about roles and responsibilities of representatives to research and reduced the limitation of the findings. The qualitative data was obtained by focus group discussion. Four focus group discussions were conducted in each district to know the perception of community members regarding the role of PRIs as an agency of empowerment.

Table 2:-Sample size for quantitative and qualitative data

Quantitative data								Qualitative data
District with GDDP	Total post	% of SC population		Proportion	Sample for SC male	Government officials	Opinion leaders	Focus group discussion
Darbhanga20	330	15.64	51.61	0.21	08	8	8	1
Gaya 10	332	30.39	100.89	0.42	17	17	17	1

Patna 1	330	15.77	52.04	0.21	09	9	9	1
Siwan 32	293	11.61	34.01	0.14	06	6	6	1
			238.55	0.98~1.0	40	40	40	4

Source: Economic survey of Bihar (2008-09: 10), www.biharprd.bih.nic.in and Census 2011 (applicable for first three columns only).

Analysis and interpretation of data:

Table 3:-Descriptive statistics (mean) on SC male representatives
Figures in brackets indicate Standard Deviation (SD).

Inference:-

Socio-economic profile	SC Male
1. Age	39.38(7.78)
2. Marital status (1=Married; 2=Unmarried)	1.18(.38)
3. Ownership of land by respondent's family (1=Landless; 2=Landholding)	1.55(.50)
4. For yes, average landholding (acres)	1.25(1.25)
5. Type of house (1=Brick; 2=Others)	1.52(.50)
Political Carrier of representatives	
6. Member of political family (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.58(.50)
7. Active in politics (1=Around one decade; 2=Around two decades)	1.48(.50)
8. Difficulty faced during election (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.38(.49)
9. Source of inspiration for contesting election (1=Self; 2=Others)	1.22(.42)
Social equilibrium	
10. Get support of other members of Panchayat (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.28(.45)
Development	
11. Role of PRIs in improving economic status of weaker sections (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.18(.38)
Government officials and opinion leaders	
12. Government officials on awareness of representatives regarding their roles and responsibilities (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.10(.30)
13. Opinion leaders on awareness of representatives regarding their roles and responsibilities (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.12(.42)
Social change and empowerment	
14. Reservation in PRIs provided opportunity (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.20(.40)
15. Untouchability and ritual distance declined due to reservation in PRIs (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.42(.50)
16. Provision of reservation in PRIs changed social attitude of upper castes towards lower castes (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.38(.49)
17. Possibility of winning from unreserved seat (1=Yes; 2=No)	1.65(.48)
Sample Size	40

From table 3 we found that the mean age of male representatives were 39.38. This was the test for null hypothesis that male representatives had the same mean age. The significance value .000 was less than .05. Thus, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there was a difference in terms of average age in the population. The age was explored and it revealed that median was 40.50. The oldest male representative was of 53 years while the youngest male representative was of 25 years. The range was of 28 years.

Table 4:-District level analysis of socio-economic profile of representatives

District									
	Darbhanga			Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total		
Male	8(20)			17(42.5)	9(22.5)	6(15)	40(100)		
Marital status									
Married					Unmarried				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total

8(24.2)	10(30.3)	9(27.3)	6(18.2)	33(100)	0(0)	7(100)	0(0)	0(0)	7(100)
Ownership of land by respondent's family									
Landless					Landholding				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
4(22.2)	7(38.9)	3(16.7)	4(22.2)	18(100)	4(18.2)	10(45.5)	6(57.3)	2(9.1)	22(100)
Type of house									
Brick					Others				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
3(15.8)	9(47.4)	6(31.6)	1(5.3)	19(100)	5(23.2)	8(38.1)	3(14.3)	5(23.8)	21(100)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

There were 40 male representatives and they were from Darbhanga (8), Gaya (17), Patna (9) and Siwan (6) district respectively. Thirty three representatives were married while only 7 were unmarried and all of them were from Gaya. Eighteen representatives were landless while 22 representatives had landholding. Nineteen representatives owned brick house while 21 representatives did not have brick house. The impact of uneven landholding was evident in the ownership of house. On the basis of GDDP Patna, Gaya, Darbhanga and Siwan occupied 1st, 10th, 20th and 32nd position respectively. Higher the GDDP, higher should be the prosperity of natives. This argument of macro economics was not accepted when applied at micro level. Significant number and percentage of representatives from Patna, Gaya and Darbhanga were landless. There was no significant relation between GDDP and landholding of SC representatives.

Table 5:-District level analysis of political carrier of representatives

Member of political family									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
3(17.6)	10(58.8)	2(11.8)	2(11.8)	17(100)	5(21.7)	7(30.4)	7(30.4)	4(17.4)	23(100)
Active in politics									
Around one decade					Around two decades				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
0(0)	16(76.2)	2(9.5)	3(14.3)	21(100)	8(42.1)	1(5.3)	7(36.8)	3(15.8)	19(100)
Difficulty faced during election									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
7(28.0)	11(44.0)	2(8.0)	5(20.0)	25(100)	1(6.7)	6(40.0)	7(46.7)	1(6.7)	15(100)
Source of inspiration for contesting election									
Self					Others				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
6(19.4)	13(41.9)	8(25.8)	4(12.9)	31(100)	2(22.2)	4(44.4)	1(11.1)	2(22.2)	9(100)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

The table revealed that 17 representatives came from political family while 23 representatives did not have political background. Twenty one representatives had been active in politics for around a decade while 19 representatives had been active in politics for around two decades. All representatives from Darbhanga had been active in politics for around two decades. Twenty five representatives faced difficulty in contesting election while 15 did not face difficulty. Thirty one representatives were self-induced to contest elections while 9 representatives were motivated to contest election. It thus, appeared that significant number and percentage of representatives were motivated to contest elections.

Table 6:-Social equilibrium at district level

Get support of other members of Panchayat									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
6(20.7)	15(51.7)	8(27.6)	0(0)	29(100)	2(18.2)	2(18.2)	1(9.1)	6(54.5)	11(100)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

Twenty nine representatives managed to get support from other members of *Panchayat* while 11 representatives did not manage to get support. All representatives from Siwan stated that they did not get support from other members of *Panchayat*.

Table 7:-PRIs as an agency of development at district level

Role of PRIs in improving economic status of weaker sections									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
7(21.2)	14(42.4)	6(18.2)	6(18.2)	33(100)	1(14.3)	3(42.9)	3(42.9)	0(0)	7(100)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

Thirty three representatives considered that PRIs played role in improving economic status of weaker sections. Irrespective of GDDP, representatives considered that PRIs played role in improving economic status of weaker sections.

Table 8:-View of government officials and opinion leaders at district level

Government officials on awareness of representatives regarding their roles and responsibilities									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
7(19.4)	15(41.7)	9(25.0)	5(13.9)	36(100)	1(25.0)	2(50.0)	0(0)	1(25.0)	4(100)
Opinion leaders on awareness of representatives regarding their roles and responsibilities									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
7(22.6)	13(41.9)	7(22.6)	4(12.9)	31(100)	1(11.1)	4(44.4)	2(22.2)	2(22.2)	9(100)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

In view of government officials 36 representatives had awareness regarding their roles and responsibilities while in view of opinion leaders only 31 representatives had awareness regarding their roles and responsibilities. It was due to frequent interaction with government officials, as compared to opinion leaders.

Table 9:-PRIs as an agency of social change and empowerment at district level

Reservation in PRIs provided opportunity									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
6(18.8)	12(37.5)	8(25)	6(18.8)	32(100)	2(25.0)	5(62.5)	1(12.5)	0(0)	8(100)
Untouchability and ritual distance declined due to reservation in PRIs									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
4(17.4)	8(34.8)	7(30.4)	4(17.4)	23(100)	4(23.5)	9(52.9)	2(11.8)	2(11.8)	17(100)
Provision of reservation in PRIs changed social attitude of upper castes towards lower castes									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
5(20.0)	9(36.0)	6(24.0)	5(20.0)	25(100)	3(20.0)	8(53.3)	3(20.0)	1(6.7)	15(100)
Possibility of winning from unreserved seat									
Yes					No				
Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total	Darbhangha	Gaya	Patna	Siwan	Total
2(14.3)	8(57.1)	3(21.4)	1(7.1)	14(100)	6(23.1)	9(34.6)	6(23.1)	5(19.2)	26(100)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

Thirty two representatives considered that reservation in PRIs provided opportunity while 8 representatives did not think so. All representatives from Siwan considered that reservation in PRIs provided opportunity. Twenty three representatives considered that untouchability and ritual distance declined due to reservation in PRIs while 17 representatives disagreed. Twenty five representatives considered that provision of reservation in PRIs changed social attitude of upper castes towards lower castes while 15 representatives disagreed. Fourteen representatives considered that there was possibility of winning from unreserved seats while 26 representatives did not think so.

Gaya (30.39%) and Siwan (11.61%) had the highest and lowest concentration of SC population in sample districts. Significant number and percentage of representatives from Gaya and Siwan had contrasting view in considering PRIs as an agency of social change and empowerment. This was due to SC concentration of population.

Focus group discussion:-

In focus group discussion attempt was made to highlight the two key points related to empowerment of weaker sections. First point was whether PRIs made difference in the status of community and majority considered that it made difference in the status of community. Interestingly, in Gaya there was lack of agreement on this point. Second point was the protection of interest of the community and there was much agreement that the representatives protected the interest of community. However, majority in Siwan considered that representatives did not protect the interest of community.

Main findings and conclusion

Table: 10 Hypotheses test

Hypotheses	Male	T	Mean Difference	Significance
1. The constitutionally mandated quantitative representation of SC male in the institution of <i>Panchayat Raj</i> has enhanced their qualitative participation.	77.18(14.41)	7.537	17.17	.000 ≤ .05 Significant
2. There is qualitative participation of weaker section community members in the <i>Panchayat</i> meetings.	54.28(13.29)	6.790	14.27	.000 ≤ .05 Significant

Figures in brackets indicate SD.

1. This was the test for null hypothesis. The positive t (7.537) value indicated that the mean of the sample was greater than the hypothesized value (60). Since the significance value .000 was less than .05. Thus, we rejected null hypothesis that the sample mean was equal to the hypothesized population mean and concluded that the mean of the sample was significantly different than the average of the population. There was a significant difference in mean qualitative participation between the sample and the population. The average qualitative participation of the sample was 17 more than the population average.

2. This was the test for null hypothesis. The positive t (6.790) value indicated that the mean of the sample was greater than the hypothesized value (40). Since the significance value .000 was less than .05. Thus, we rejected null hypothesis that the sample mean was equal to the hypothesized population mean and concluded that the mean of the sample was significantly different than the average of the population. There was a significant difference in mean community qualitative participation between the sample and the population. The average community qualitative participation of the sample was 14 more than the population average.

Table: 11 Correlation between qualitative participation of representative and qualitative participation of community in *Panchayats*

Correlations			
		Quantitative representation enhanced qualitative participation of SC representatives in <i>Panchayat</i>	Qualitative participation of community in <i>Panchayat</i> meetings
Quantitative representation enhanced qualitative participation of SC representatives in <i>Panchayat</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.933**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Qualitative participation of community in <i>Panchayat</i> meetings	Pearson Correlation	.933**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

There was positive correlation of .933 between qualitative participation of SC representative and qualitative participation of community in *Panchayat* meetings. The positive relationship could be generalised from the sample size for the entire population as the significance value was .000.

Summary:-

Panchayats are the institutional mechanism of empowerment at the local level. The selected case of Bihar is known for its social stratification and interest based coalitions. For our sample, we found that representatives were economically disadvantaged but they were well connected. Irrespective of GDDP, representatives viewed that PRIs contribute in improving economic status of weaker sections. In view of government officials and opinion leaders the informational resource of representatives was high. Despite significant percentage of awareness about roles and responsibilities of representatives there is need of capacity building. We found that in general representatives, take the 73rd constitutional amendment positively. There was positive correlation of .993 between qualitative participation of representative and qualitative participation of community. It became quite clear that ensured quantitative representation in *Panchayati Raj* was getting transformed into qualitative participation.

The research contributes to the debate whether there is merely quantitative participation or qualitative participation of weaker sections. It finds that there is qualitative participation in the process of decision-making and exercising power. Future work would benefit by comparing qualitative participation among general, OBC, SC and ST groups. Another possible direction would be to do comparative study of informational resources among general, OBC, SC and ST groups. By way of conclusion the present work summates the major trends of data, probable policy options and raises some theoretical and methodological questions for future research.

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