



# Representative Politics And Social Development Of Tribal Women Of Bihar

**Manoj Kumar (Senior Research Fellow)**

**Department of Political Studies**

**Central University of South Bihar**

## **Abstract**

Democracy has become one of the pillars of this 21<sup>st</sup> century nation state. This democracy has been popularized because it represents all the section of the society. In modern times, representative politics has become one of the trademarks of social development. For the country like India, representative politics play a crucial role as it represents the diversity of the country. The tribal women of Bihar are also trying to get appropriate representative in this representative politics. This article tries to present the brief scenario of the tribal women of Bihar. It also tries to assure that without the political representation of tribal women, the concept of social development can't be fulfilled.

Key words: Democracy, political representation, tribal women, social development

## **Introduction**

Democracy is an idea that has worked its way from the Greeks to modern times. It offers the most liberal and the most narrow-minded space through the vote to govern. People feel a sense of involvement with the state, and in the penultimate sense, there is a possibility that they can control their destiny. The word when unpacked can offer as many meanings as there are users. For those who persistently suffer inequality and injustice, it is the only acceptable political structure, which allows them minimal space to participate in the business of governance. It translates into the promise of equality and justice, though it eludes us in its performance.

Political representation is an important aspect of any democracy, as it ensures that diverse voices are heard and that marginalized communities have a say in governance. It is acting in the interest of a person or persons whose interests are not immediately present" (Pitkin, 1967). According to her, representation involves not only the selection of individuals to stand for others but also the act of standing for and acting on behalf of others. Representative politics is a form of government where citizens elect

individuals to represent their interests and make decisions on their behalf. Citizens participate in regular elections to choose their representatives. These elected representatives delegated the authority to these individuals to make decisions and enact policies on their behalf. Representatives are accountable to the electorate for their actions and decisions. Through mechanism such as elections, citizens have the opportunity to hold their representatives fail to fulfil their duties or act against the interests of their constituents, they may be voted out of office. Representative politics is grounded in democratic principles, such as the rule of law, protection of individual rights, and respect for majority rule with minority rights.

In the Indian Context, representative politics plays a crucial role in the democratic system of the country. It refers to the system of governance in which elected representative act on behalf of the citizens in making and implementing political decisions. It is the fundamental aspect of Indian democracy, where citizens exercise their right to vote to elect representatives who will represent their interests and concerns in the legislative bodies and other political institutions. India is the world's largest democracy, with a vibrant political landscape characterized by diversity, complexity, and periodic elections at various levels of the government. "It is the process by which political power is acquired, expressed, and distributed among the people through elected representatives" (Kothari, 1970, p. 84). Indian citizens participate in regular elections to elect their representatives at multilevel of government. Elections are conducted by an independent elections commission, which ensures free and fair electoral processes. India is a diverse country with a multitude of languages, cultures, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. Representative politics in India strives to ensure the representation of this diversity in decision making processes, with affirmative action measures such as reserved seats for scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST), and other backward classes (OBC) in legislative bodies.

Bihar is a state in eastern India with a population of over 100 million people, including a significant 13 lacs tribal population (census 2011). Tribal communities in Bihar have historically faced social, economic, and political marginalization, and their representation in elected bodies has been limited. Tribal communities in Bihar have historically been marginalized and have faced several challenges in terms of political representation and social development. This is especially true for tribal women, who have been doubly marginalized due to their gender and their tribal identity. The tribal women of Bihar, like in many other parts of India, represent a unique and diverse segment of the population with distinct cultural, social, and economic characteristics. In Bihar, tribal women have historically been underrepresented in politics, with only a few women from the tribal community being elected to the parliament state assembly or the local governing bodies. The political representation of tribal women in Bihar, like in many other parts of India, has been a subject of discussion and advocacy aiming to address their underrepresentation and ensure their voices are heard in decision- making processes.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between social development and political representation is intrinsic and it is one of the parameters of the social development. Social development generally refers to the progress and improvement in various aspects of a society, such as education, healthcare, poverty reduction, gender equality, human rights, and overall well-being of the population. It is about collaborating people at the centre of development. Social development requires decentralization of power and decision making so that process of planning would be done effectively at the grass root level. As said by Biliance, "It is the promotion of a sustainable society that is worthy of human dignity by empowering marginalised groups to improve their status and to acquire their rightful place in the society. The United Nations has also recognized social development as a fundamental component of sustainable development. United nation has included inequality, social exclusion and gender discrimination etc. as important parameters which have to be addressed in its Social Development Goals.

Political representation, on the other hand, pertains to the inclusion and participation of individuals or groups in the political decision-making processes. Different Scholars have defined the term political representation differently. It is a set of mechanisms through which political actors claim to stand in for others in a representative democracy" (Manin, 1997). Representation is a very important tool for empowering citizens and enabling them to participate fully in the political process (Mensbridge, 2003). True democracy may requires active participation by all citizens in all aspects of governance (Kothari,1970).

Political representation plays a crucial role in promoting social development. It plays a crucial role in social development as it ensures that diverse voices, perspectives, and interests within a society are heard and addressed. Here are a few ways in which they are interconnected:

1. **Policy formulation:** Political representation ensures that diverse voices and perspectives are included in the policy-making process. Representatives are elected or appointed to advocate for the interests and needs of their constituents. When different segments of society especially tribal women are adequately represented, policies are more likely to address their social issues, promote equity, and contribute to social development of the tribal women.
2. **Accountability and responsiveness:** Political representation provides a mechanism for citizens to hold their representatives accountable for their actions or lack thereof. Effective representation requires responsiveness to the concerns and aspirations of the people. When representatives are responsive and accountable, they are more likely to address social challenges and work towards social development goals.
3. **Addressing inequalities:** Social development aims to reduce inequalities and ensure equal opportunities for all members of society. Political representation plays a vital role in addressing these inequalities by advocating for marginalized particularly tribal women and their specific needs. When

underrepresented groups like tribal women have a voice in politics, it can lead to policies that promote social inclusion and equal access to resources and opportunities.

4. **Legislative action:** Political representation directly influences legislative action. Elected representatives have the power to introduce bills, propose policies, and vote on legislation that affects social development. When representatives prioritize social development issues and collaborate with relevant stakeholders, they can enact laws and policies that drive positive change.

5. **Public participation:** Social development requires active citizen engagement and participation in the form of electorate or voters. Political representation provides avenues for tribal women to participate in decision-making processes, express their opinions, and contribute to shaping social development agendas. Engaged tribal women can influence policies and programs that align with their social development priorities.

It is important to note that the relationship between social development and political representation is not always linear or guaranteed. Various factors such as institutional structures, power dynamics, corruption, and unequal access to resources can influence the extent to which political representation translates into meaningful social development outcomes. Nonetheless, inclusive and responsive political representation is considered as a critical component for achieving social development goals in a democratic society.

## **POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF TRIBAL WOMEN OF BIHAR**

Tribal communities in Bihar often have rich cultural traditions, including unique languages, folk arts, dances, and rituals. Women play a significant role in preserving and transmitting these cultural practices from generation to the next. Despite the cultural richness, tribal communities in Bihar often face socio-economic challenges, including poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare, and limited economic opportunities. Tribal women, in particular, may experience intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. After seventy-five years of independence, as well as, planned development the political condition of tribal women is still worse. Traditionally tribal women in Bihar have been involved in various livelihood activities such as agriculture, forest-based livelihoods, handicrafts, and informal sector work. However, economic modernization, environmental degradation, and changes in land-use patterns have impacted their traditional livelihood. Although representative politics in India has been enshrined in the Constitution, which guarantees the right to vote and the right to be elected as a representative. It provides for a multi-level system of government, with elected representatives at various levels, including the Parliament, State Legislatures, and local governing bodies, to ensure representation and decentralized decision-making. It is guided by the principles of equality, participation, and accountability. It ensures that citizens have the opportunity to elect their representatives through free and fair elections, and those

representatives are responsible for representing their constituents' interests, concerns, and aspirations in the political arena.

The elected representatives are expected to deliberate, debate, and make decisions in the best interests of the people they represent, while being accountable to them. Political representation as a process of acting on behalf of others, delegating authority, empowering citizens, and engaging in joint decision-making. Various articles regarding representation such as article 330,332,334,243D,243T has been provided particularly to the tribal people including tribal women in the constitution. According to 2011 census, Bihar has significant number i.e.1,336,573 tribal population out of which 6,54,057 are females. This is all the more significant when one considers that a greater number of women voters participate in Bihar elections than men. According to provisional data scraped by Trivedi Centre for Political Data (TCPD), women's turnout in 2020 assembly election was 59.7% against 54.7% for men, a gap similar to that in the previous election.

Thus, marginalisation of women particularly tribal women in electoral politics does not serve any purpose other than perpetuating old prejudices and discrimination against them. The government should take lots of initiatives to provide the political representation of tribal women in Bihar. Such, as adequate reservation in local governance. Tribal women benefits from these reservations, allowing them to contest elections and hold positions of power at the local level. These reservation aims to ensure their representation and participation in grassroots-level governance. Efforts are underway to empower tribal women politically through various initiatives such as capacity-building programs, leadership training, awareness campaigns, and support networks. These initiatives aim to equip tribal women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to actively engage in political processes and decision-making. Women's self-help groups have played a significant role in mobilizing and empowering tribal women in Bihar. These groups provide a platform for women to come together, discuss issues, access financial services, and collectively advocate for their rights and interests, including political representation. Civil society organizations, NGO's, and advocacy groups work towards advocating for the political representation of tribal women in Bihar. They raise awareness about the importance of inclusive governance and lobby for policy changes and interventions that promote the participation of tribal women in political processes.

## CONCLUSION

Representative politics is a widely practices form of government that seeks to balance the participation of citizens with the need for efficient decision-making and governance. Despite of various challenges such as ensuring genuine representation and preventing elite capture of power, representative politics remains a cornerstone of modern democratic societies. India has also adopted this representative structure for its governance. Despite the democratic ideals of representative politics, India faces challenges such as political corruption, caste-based politics, regional disparities, and the influence of money and muscle power in elections. These challenges often undermine the effectiveness of

representation and hinder the realization of democratic principles. Overall, representative politics in India is a dynamic and evolving process that reflects the country's democratic aspirations, while also grappling with various socio-political challenges inherent in a diverse and complex society.

Tribal women in Bihar have historically faced several challenges in terms of political representation and social development. Motivating factors which increase political participation of tribal women are educational opportunities, empowerment process, changing roles by the women, reservation policy, and decentralisation of power. There have been some positive developments in recent years. The Panchayati Raj system has resulted in a significant increase in the number of tribal women in local governance, while various government schemes and grassroots initiatives have aimed at improving their social development indicators. Despite reservations, tribal women in Bihar, like in other parts of India, face various challenges in actively participating in politics. These challenges include socio-cultural barriers, lack of access to resources and education, limited mobility, and patriarchal attitudes within both their communities and the political sphere. Tribal women in Bihar face numerous challenges, there are also opportunities for empowerment and development through targeted interventions that recognize their unique socio-cultural context and address their specific needs. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to ensure the effective political representation of tribal women in Bihar. Continued efforts are needed to address the barriers and create an enabling environment where tribal women can fully participate in and contribute to the political life of the state. However, there is still a long way to go, and more efforts are needed to ensure that tribal women in Bihar are truly empowered and have access to equal opportunities and representation.

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