

## GRASS ROOT LEVEL POLITICS IN BIHAR

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The Act of independence (1947) brought to the surface in the Indian sub-continent political forces which had previously been submerged by the struggle for independence. Before independence, the rural political scenario at the grassroots level was such that everything was being run on the set patterns of customs and traditions and the local political process did not witness a situation of bewilderment. The influence of caste on the politics of Bihar at the grassroots level is evident; but there are also other factors which influence it. One has seen that the person who occupied the top position socially, economically and educationally is the one who actually dominate the politics of Bihar.

As far as leadership is concerned, the village scene reflects the tradition of leadership role of the landed class. Elites among the Harijans and the Backward Castes, particularly the advanced among the Backward castes have been recognised as leaders of their castes and communities.

As far as the Panchayati Raj system in Bihar is concerned, it can be said that elections have been a very irregular phenomenon, the finance of PRIs is in a bad shape since inception, and the PRIs are allotted inadequate resources by the state government. However, the provision of SFC and enhancement of financial powers of PRIs, in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, has raised hope for the better.

With regard to the politics of land reforms it can be said that ruling political actors in Bihar have been banking on such sections of the community for support that do not need any land reform.

The Bihar politics has been utterly vitiated and as a result even after fifty years of democratic experience, a large chunk of electorate are deprived of exercising their franchise. But with the appearance of voluntary organisations on the Bihar scene, the situation is gradually changing and with the active and encouraging efforts of these agencies the assertive capability of the downtrodden has increased which has clearly been reflected in the recently concluded Panchayati Raj elections.

Thus, to conclude it can be said that there is tremendous rise in social awareness among all sections of the population in Bihar. Now, it is not possible to oppress dalits and OBCs in the name of caste; rather the upper caste rural elites are in the defensive and in many places. All this happened mainly because of the changed power structure on the political surface which now allocates and accommodates caste based political power in the hands of the poor, dalits and OBCs.

The impending introduction of the new pattern of Panchayati Raj in consonance of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment has opened up new avenues for the participation of the village people in the planning and implementation of development schemes. These measures are expected to facilitate the process of social mobilisation for the development of rural areas.