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 Research Article

A STUDY OF JATIYA POLITICS IN BIHAR: UNRAVELING THE HISTORICAL CONTINUUM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the intricate dynamics of Jatiya politics in Bihar, exploring its historical evolution and the socio-political implications for the region. Jatiya, or caste-based politics, has played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of Bihar, influencing party systems, electoral behavior, and policy-making. By tracing the historical continuum from pre-colonial times to contemporary political scenarios, this research highlights the factors that have contributed to the rise of caste-based identity politics, including socio-economic stratification, historical injustices, and the impact of social movements. The analysis delves into key political milestones, such as the role of caste in the formation of political parties, the emergence of caste-based alliances, and the effect of caste identities on voter mobilization. Through a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating historical, sociological, and political perspectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Jatiya politics in Bihar continues to shape the socio-political fabric of the state and its implications for governance and development. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on identity politics in India, shedding light on the complexities of caste dynamics in shaping democratic processes and political representation.

KEYWORDS

Jatiya politics, Bihar, historical continuum, caste politics, social movements, political history, regional identity, electoral dynamics, socio-economic factors, political representation, cultural influences.

INTRODUCTION



Bihar, a state in eastern India, has long been a focal point of social, economic, and political dynamics that reflect the complexities of caste and identity in the Indian polity. The term "Jatiya," derived from the Sanskrit word jati meaning "caste" or "community," encapsulates the intricate interplay of caste identities within the political landscape of Bihar. This study seeks to explore the historical continuum of Jatiya politics in Bihar, tracing its roots, evolution, and contemporary implications.

Historically, Bihar has been characterized by a diverse tapestry of caste groups, each with its own distinct social hierarchies and cultural practices. The significance of these castes extends beyond social identity, deeply influencing political affiliations and power dynamics. From the colonial era to post-independence India, caste has shaped political mobilization, representation, and governance in the state. The emergence of regional political parties, often based on caste affiliations, has transformed the political landscape, reflecting the aspirations and grievances of various communities.

The study examines the evolution of Jatiya politics from the pre-colonial period through the struggles for independence and into the contemporary political arena. It highlights key milestones, such as the formation of caste-based political parties, the impact of reservation policies, and the role of social movements in shaping political discourse. By analyzing these historical trajectories, the research aims to provide insights into the current state of Jatiya politics in Bihar and its implications for broader Indian democracy.

METHOD

To conduct a comprehensive study of Jatiya politics in Bihar, a multi-faceted methodological approach is essential to capture the complexities and nuances

inherent in this topic. The research employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, which allows for an in-depth exploration of historical, social, and political dimensions of Jatiya identity and its impact on political dynamics in Bihar.

The historical analysis forms a cornerstone of this study, focusing on archival research to trace the evolution of Jatiya politics in Bihar over time. This involves examining primary sources such as government records, newspapers, and political manifestos, alongside secondary sources like scholarly articles and books that document the socio-political landscape of Bihar. By situating Jatiya politics within a historical continuum, the research seeks to identify key milestones, movements, and socio-economic changes that have shaped the political identity of various Jatiya groups. This historical perspective is essential for understanding how past events influence contemporary political affiliations and power dynamics.

In addition to historical analysis, qualitative research methods are utilized to gain insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals involved in Jatiya politics. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a diverse range of participants, including political leaders, grassroots activists, and community members from various Jatiya groups. This approach allows for the collection of rich, descriptive data that captures the intricacies of identity politics, the role of caste in political mobilization, and the motivations behind political engagement. Focus group discussions are also employed to foster dialogue among participants, enabling researchers to explore collective perceptions of Jatiya identity and its implications for political participation.

To complement qualitative insights, quantitative methodologies are incorporated through surveys and



statistical analysis. A structured survey is designed to assess public attitudes towards Jatiya politics, including perceptions of representation, discrimination, and political efficacy. By employing stratified sampling techniques, the research aims to ensure that diverse Jatiya groups are adequately represented. The collected data is then analyzed using statistical software to identify trends, correlations, and significant patterns in political behavior. This quantitative aspect provides a broader understanding of the dynamics of Jatiya politics in Bihar, allowing researchers to draw generalizable conclusions about the electorate's preferences and political engagement.

A comparative analysis of Jatiya politics across different regions of Bihar and other states in India enriches the research framework. By examining how Jatiya identity influences political dynamics in various contexts, researchers can identify commonalities and divergences that contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-political landscape. This comparative approach also allows for the exploration of how regional differences in caste relations and historical legacies shape political strategies and outcomes.

Finally, data triangulation is employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings. By integrating multiple sources of data—historical records, qualitative interviews, survey results, and comparative analyses—the study aims to provide a holistic view of Jatiya politics in Bihar. This methodological triangulation ensures that conclusions drawn from the research are well-supported and reflective of the complexities of the topic.

RESULTS

To understand Jatiya politics in Bihar, it is essential to examine the historical context of caste in the region. Historically, the caste system in Bihar has been complex, with a multitude of jatis (sub-castes) existing

alongside broader caste categories such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and Forward Classes. During the pre-colonial era, caste identities were often linked to economic roles and social hierarchies, shaping power dynamics within local communities.

The British colonial administration exacerbated these divisions through policies that emphasized caste identities for administrative purposes. The introduction of the census system classified communities based on caste, leading to increased political awareness and mobilization among various groups. This laid the groundwork for the emergence of caste-based politics in post-colonial Bihar, as different jatis sought political representation and recognition in a newly independent India.

Following India's independence in 1947, Bihar witnessed significant changes in its political landscape. The consolidation of various caste identities became evident in the political arena as groups began to organize themselves to assert their rights and seek political representation. The rise of leaders from marginalized communities, particularly from the OBC and SC categories, marked a turning point in Bihar's politics.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of influential caste-based political movements. Leaders such as Karpoori Thakur and Lalu Prasad Yadav played pivotal roles in mobilizing OBC communities and challenging the dominance of upper-caste politicians. The implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations in the late 1980s, which recommended reservation for OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions, further solidified the political power of these groups.

Lalu Prasad Yadav's ascent as Chief Minister in the 1990s represented a watershed moment in Bihar's



political history. His government, which championed the cause of the backward classes, redefined the political narrative in the state. The formation of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) was a critical milestone in the evolution of Jatiya politics, highlighting the shift towards caste-based identity politics.

In the 21st century, Jatiya politics in Bihar has continued to evolve, reflecting changing social dynamics and emerging political forces. The influence of caste-based parties remains strong, with parties like the RJD, Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)], and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) vying for the support of various caste groups.

The political landscape is characterized by coalition politics, where parties often form alliances based on caste interests. For instance, the JD(U) and BJP coalition capitalized on the support of both upper and backward caste voters to secure electoral victories. However, the fragmentation of votes along caste lines has also led to challenges, with parties needing to strike a delicate balance to maintain their political base.

DISCUSSION

The roots of Jatiya politics in Bihar can be traced back to the pre-colonial period when caste played a significant role in societal organization. The traditional caste system dictated social hierarchies, occupations, and even political power. However, it was during the colonial era that caste identity began to intertwine with political mobilization. The British policies of divide and rule, coupled with the introduction of census-based politics, further entrenched caste identities, setting the stage for Jatiya politics to emerge as a formidable force in post-independence Bihar.

Post-1947, the political landscape of Bihar underwent significant changes, particularly with the rise of regional parties that capitalized on caste identities to garner electoral support. Leaders like Lalu Prasad

Yadav and Nitish Kumar emerged, representing the aspirations of marginalized and backward castes. The 1990s marked a watershed moment in Bihar's political history, as caste-based parties began to dominate the political discourse, effectively reshaping governance and policy-making.

The evolution of Jatiya politics in Bihar can be understood through various phases. Initially, political mobilization was largely driven by upper-caste elites who sought to maintain their hegemony. However, as the backward and lower castes began to assert their rights, the political landscape shifted dramatically. The formation of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in the 1990s, led by Lalu Prasad Yadav, marked a significant turning point. The party's emphasis on the rights of the Yadav and other backward castes resonated with large segments of the population, leading to its electoral success.

Subsequent political developments saw the emergence of new parties, such as the Janata Dal (United) led by Nitish Kumar, which sought to create a broader coalition by including various caste groups. This coalition politics further fragmented the political landscape, as parties began to navigate the complexities of caste alliances to secure electoral victories. The dynamic interplay of caste-based mobilization and electoral politics has thus created a historical continuum that continues to shape Bihar's governance.

CONCLUSION

The historical continuum of Jatiya politics in Bihar has profoundly shaped the state's political landscape, influencing governance, representation, and social dynamics. While the mobilization of marginalized castes has facilitated greater political participation and awareness, the challenges posed by caste-based politics cannot be overlooked. As Bihar navigates its



political future, finding a balance between caste identities and broader developmental goals will be crucial for fostering social cohesion and effective governance. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from political leaders, civil society, and the electorate to prioritize collective interests over divisive identities, ultimately paving the way for a more inclusive and prosperous Bihar.

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