

Representation of the Chepang in Local Government: A Study of Local Election 2022

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Abstract

The study analyzes the representation of the Chepang in the local election 2022. Political representation is only the way to participate people into decision making process. The issue of proper representation has been raised in since long time. Constitutionally and legally Nepal has made some provisions of proper representation and implemented through election process. In this context, the study concentrates on how is the situation of representation of the Chepang in local government that has just been formed by the election of April 2022. The study was followed qualitative research design and data were collected through secondary sources. In qualitative research design, the study applied interpretative technique and data were interpreted projected through table. Conclusion has been made on the basis of data interpretation and analysis. Through data it is found that the situation of the political representation of the Chepang in local government is in increasing trend but the current elected number is not sufficient decision making process.

Keywords: Chepang, local government, Nepal, representation

1. Background of the Study

The study highlights the issue of political representation of the Chepang in local government hat was held in April 2022 in Nepal. The word representation refers to someone or something to be exhibited. The word political representation is used in the context of the participation of elected person in the decision making process of people. It is related to an inclusive decision making process. Two Theories are used in the political representation. The first one is related to politics of idea that Pitkin (1967) notes, "two theoretical perspectives of political representation seemingly oppose. First one is related to the representation of abstract citizen and the second is the political idea of a political party " (p.7).The next theories focus on the participation that Christophe Jaffrelot (2009) expresses his idea in his book entitled *The Changing Face of Indian Legislative Assemblies* and highlights, "Second, the representation of the characteristics and identities of deferent groups and communities, of deferent sexes, ethnicities and castes that link representatives with represented, is emphasized in a 'politics of presence" (p.5). Political representation is not only related to participation of decision making process it is related to the question of identities. Alcott, (1991) explains the issue as "Ideally the message will vary and it will hardly matter if the messengers remain the same. However, the particular messengers seated in decision-making bodies will have a monopoly on articulating policies and ideas" (p.7). In a context of political representation, people from different groups participate in decision making process. Nepalese political system also follows the inclusive democracy which emphasizes on the representation of different ethnic and indigenous groups in decision making process.

Chepang is one of the indigenous nationality having own language and culture. Chepangs are indigenous nationalities living in central part of Nepal, Chitwan, Makawanpur, Gorkha and Dhading districts. Most of the Chepang villages are scattered at the altitude between 800-1500 meters in the very rugged and partially forested hills. But in the recent

years, they have also migrated to the plain area of surrounding districts. The total population of the Chepangs is 68,399 (Centre Bureau of statistics Report, 2011). Chepangs, as Gurung states, "have flat and short nose, round face, dark and brown complexion, thin and medium ears, dark eyes and prominent eye brows" (6). The physical features of Chepangs are similar to the people of other indigenous groups of Nepal although they have their own language, rituals, traditions and beliefs which make them different and unique among other ethnic communities. Political representation of indigenous group in government is one of the main political issues in Nepal. It had begun since the time of unification because existence of the nation only remains on political representation. During the time of the Rana only a family handled the nation and there was no question of political representation. After the establishment democracy in Nepal, the issue of political representation was raised in a political circle. However, the democratic system of government had dissolved by king Mahendra and panchayat government established in Nepal with the promulgation of the constitution of Nepal 1962. On the basis of constitution, local bodies have been formed. In the first local bodies election, some Chepangs were elected as and some were nominated in local bodies. In this regards, Adhikari (2016) notes:

During the panchayat period even in democratic era Chepangs were used as vote bank of political parties or certain leaders. Panchayat leaders used Chepang as vote Bank. In some cases they were nominated by leaders. In Chitwan, Jhapuram Praja was nominated as member of Jilla panchayat. He has been member of Jilla Panchayat for long time. (p.41)

Above lines indicate that during panchayat period certain individual was nominated as a member. Such practice was given the name of inclusive representation. After re establishment of democracy in 1990, political parties tried to address the issue of political representation. Self government act 1999 brought some provisions about political representation. The act mentioned the provision of local government as, "a Ward Committee shall be constituted comprising of the Ward Chairperson and Ward Members as follows elected by the Nepalese citizens who are in possession of the qualifications to become voters under the prevailing law. One Ward Chairperson, (b) One Woman Ward Member, and (c) Three Ward Members" (p.6). In the law, there is provision of participating women in the decision making process. The act is the first act that ensured the women representation in politics; however, the act is silent on the representation Dalit and marginalized people.

After restoration of the parliament in 2006 Nepal follows the republic form of government and interim condition of Nepal was promulgated in 2007. The constitution brings new insight in political representation of Dalit and marginalized group in the government. On the basis of the interim constitution, the constitution of Nepal 2015 is promulgated. On the basis of constitution of Nepal 2017, election of local bodies has held in 2074. Local government act and election act ensured the representation of women and Dalit in government. On the basis of rules, five elected persons are involved in ward committee including Dalit women, women, two members and ward Chairperson. Like that in executive body of municipality and village municipality Dalit, women and member from marginalized group should be involved. The representation of women should be ensured either Mayor or Deputy Mayor in municipality and chairperson or deputy chairperson in the rural municipality. (Local Government Operation Act, 2017). In the election of 2017 and 2022 around 240 Chepangs took part in election and took interest in decision making process of local government. The following table shows the elected member from the Chepangs.

Table 1: Elected Representative 2074 B.S local election from Chepang Community

S.N.	Name of Local Bodies	Wards	Name (Elected Members)	Parties	Post
1.	Rapti	3	Sun Bahadur Praja	UML	Members
2.	„	10	Indra Lal Praja	UML	„
3.	„	11	Dambar Praja	UML	„
4.	„	12	Arjun Praja	NC	<i>Ward chief</i>
5.	„	12	Rel Bahadur Praja	UML	Members
6.	„	13	Surya Bahadur Praja	UML	<i>Ward. Chief</i>
7.	„	13	Aaita Bahadur Praja	UML	Member
8.	„	13	Laxman Praja	UML	Member
9.	„	13	Sumitra Praja	UML	Woman member
10.	Madi	9	Purna Maya Praja	UML	Woman members
11.	Kalika	10	Narjung Praja	UML	Member
12.	„	10	Janimaya Praja	NC	Woman member
13.	„	11	Krishana Bahadur Praja	UML	<i>Word chief</i>
14.	„	11	Milan Chepang	UML	Member
15.	„	11	Man Bahadur Praja	UML	Member
16.	„	11	Nirmaya Chepang	NC	Members
17.	Icchakamana	1	Prem Praja	UML	Member
18.	„	1	Bikrma Praja	UML	Member
19.	„	1	Anju Praja	UML	Member
20.	„	2	Pancha Bahadur Praja	UML	<i>Ward chief</i>
21.	„	2	Khira Bahadur Praja	UML	Member
22.	„	3	Dil Bahadur Praja	Maoist	Member
23.	„	3	Dambar Kumari Praja	Maoist	Woman member
24.	„	6	Bhupendra Praja	UML	<i>Ward chief</i>
25.	„	6	Ganiraj Praja	NC	Member
26.	Benighat Rorang	6	Sitaram Praja	UML	Member
27.	„	6	Krishana Maya Praja	UML	Woman member
28.	„	8	Kamana Praja	Maoist	Member
29.	„	8	Ramji Praja	„	„
30.	„	„	Purnima Chepang	„	Woman member
31.	„	9	Purna Bahadur Praja	UML	Member
32.	„	10	Bir Bd. Praja	Maoist	„
33.	Gajuri	2	Sujan Praja	UML	„
34.	„	4	Surendra Praja	NC	<i>Ward chief</i>
35.	„	4	krishana Bahadur Praja	NC	Member
36.	Kailash	4	Gangal Praja	Maoist	Member
37.	„	8	Bir Bahadur . Praja	UML	„
38.	Manahari	1	Som Laxmi Praja	NC	Woman member
39.	„	4	Bishnu Bahadur Praja	UML	Member
40.	„	6	Rammaya Chepang	„	Woman member
41.	Rakshirang	1	Lal kumarChepang	NC	Member

42.	„	2	GopiChepang	NC	„
43.	„	5	Chandra Singh Chepang	Maoist	<i>Ward chief</i>
44.	„	5	Sujan Praja	„	Member
45.	„	6	Nandalal Praja	UML	<i>Ward chief</i>
46.	„	7	Kul Bahadur Praja	NC	<i>Ward chief</i>
47.	„	7	Rishimaya Praja	NC	Woman member
48.	„	8	Ram Krishana Praja	NC	<i>Ward chief</i>
49.	„	8	Raju Praja	NC	Member
50.	Gandaki	6	Bhim Bd. Praja	Maoist	Member
51.	ShahidLakhan	4	Krishana Bahadur . Praja	Maoist	<i>Ward chief</i>

Source: Election Commission's Report 2017. NC: Nepali Congress, CPN: Communist Party of Nepal, UML: United Leninist Marxist

Above table shows the number of elected member of local bodies in 2017. In the election 11 ward chairperson was elected. In total 52 representatives were elected from 10 local bodies. Among Ten local bodies, four ward chair persons were elected from Raksirang Village municipality and only one representative was elected from Madi and Shahid Lakhan Thapa Rural Municipality. The political parties did not select the Chepang for Chair Person and Deputy Chair person of the municipality and rural municipality. Representation of the Chepang was only limited to ward level.

In the local election of 2022, representation of the Chepang could not increase on the basis of their population. The population is around one Lakha (0.1 million) but the situation of the representation is not more 12 % where as total population of the Cheapng in selected local 10 bodies are around 24% . The following table shows the situation as;

Table 2: Elected Representative 2022 (2079 B.S) Local Election from Chepang Community

S.N	Name (Bodies)	Ward. No.	Name	Parties	Post
1.	Manahari	3	Hira Bahadur Praja	NC	Member
2.	„	4	Dinesh Jung Praja	NC	„
3.	Raksirang	5	hari Bahadur Praja	„	<i>Ward Chief</i>
4.	„	7	Ram Bahadur Praja	„	„
5.	„	8	Yushai Praja	Maoist	„
6.	„	5	Biraj Man Praja	NC	Member
7.	„	5	Bisan Kumar praja	„	„
8.	„	6	Bhim Bahadur Praja	UML	„
9.	„	7	Keshav Praja	NC	„
10.	„	9	Shukra Praja	„	„
11.	„	5	Mithu Maya Praja	„	Woman member
12.	„	6	AnishaPrja	Maoist	„
13.	„	7	Santa Maya Praja	NC	„
14.	Kailash	1	Aashir Praja	„	<i>Ward chief</i>
15.	„	4	Nil Raj Praja	UML	Member
16.	„	7	Man Bahadur Praja	NC	„
17.	„	2	Dilmaya Praja	NC	Woman member

18.		3	Ram Maaya Praja	Maoist	„
19.	Gajuri	4	Surendra Bahadur . Praja	NC	<i>Ward chief</i>
20.	„	3	Shyam Bahadur. Chepang	NC	Member
21.	„	4	Jayaram Praja	NC	„
22.	„	5	Govinda Chepang	UML	„
23.	„	6	Krishana Chepang	Maoist	„
24.	BenighatRoran g	10	Bikash Praja	NC	<u>Ward Chief</u>
25.	„	2	Ram Bahadur Praja	UML	Member
26.	„	6	Rajendra Chepang	Maoist	„
27.	„	7	Sitaram Praja	„	„
28.	„	7	Babulal Chepang	„	„
29.	„	8	Gopiram Praja	„	„
30.	„	8	Lok Bahadur . Praja	„	„
31.	„	9	Rajan Chepang	„	„
32.	„	9	Narendra Chepang	„	„
33.	„	10	Suryaman Praja	NC	„
34.	„	6	Sangita Chepang	Maoist	Woman member
35.	„	8	Shreemaya Chepang	„	„
36.	„	9	Rammaya Chepang	„	„
37.	Icchakamna	2	Pancha Bahadur . Praja	UML	<u>Ward chief</u>
38.	„	6	LaxmanPraja	UML	„
39.	„	1	Prem Bahadur Praja	„	Member
40.	„	1	Bikrama Praja	„	„
41.	„	3	Dil Bahadur . Praja	Maoist	„
42.	„	5	Aakash Praja	UML	„
43.	„	7	Gani Raj Praja	NC	„
44.	„	1	Anju Praja	UML	Woman member
45.	„, Kalika	10	Nara Jung Praja	NC	<i>Ward chief</i>
46.	„	11	Krishana Praja	UML	„
47.	„	3	Krishana Bahadur . Praja	NC	Member
48.	„	9	Chon Bahadur Praja	UML	„
49.	„	11	Milan Praja	„	„
50.	„	„	Lok Bahadur Praja	„	„
51.	„	„	Sita Maya	„	Woman member
52.	Rapti	13	Aasok Praja	NC	<i>Ward chief</i>
53.	„	12	Arjun Praja	NC	„
54.	„	13	Aait Praja	UML	Member
55.	„	„	Bishnu Bahadur Praja	NC	„
56.	„	10	Man Kumar Praja	NC	„
57.	„	10	Purna Bahadur Praja	UML	„
58.	„	12	Jit Bahadur Praja	NC	„
59.	„	10	Shova Praja	NC	Woman member

60.	„	13	Pan Maya Praja	„	„
61.	Gandki Rural Municipality	6	Dil Bd. Praja	Maoist	Member
62.	„	2	Kaman Shingh Praja	„	„
63.	„	„	Kunti Maya Praja	„	Woman member
64.	„	7	Kalpana Praja	„	„

Source: Election Commission's Report, 2017

Above table shows the situation of the representation of the Chepang in the election of 2022. The Chepang candidates were elected from nine local bodies including four districts. From nine local bodies only seven ward chairpersons were elected from CPN united Maoist, Nepali congress and CPN, UML. Communist groups like CPN united Maoist and CPN, UML provided more candidates than the Nepali Congress. Only males were elected in acting post (ward chair person) and women were limited to women reservation quota.

While comparing the numbers of elected candidates between two election , it was found that numbers of elected candidate was high in 2022 but the number of ward chair person is decrease. The number of elected woman was higher in 2022 than the election of 2017. In both elections the Chepang candidate was not successful o be elected for the position of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of municipality and village municipality. The representation of the Chepang shows that political representation in Nepal is not developed in a proper way. Political representation is related to formal representatives like elected from term based election, nominated on the reservation.

In the context of Nepal, the then Maoist party took the agenda of ethnic based autonomous during the time of people's war. The time, Nepali Congress, Unified Marxist and Leninist political party along with some other small parties stood against Maoist agendas. The issue was taken and blamed as tool to divide the nation in different parts. Later, major political parties initiated federalism based on language and geography rather than ethnic based autonomous region. Maoist tried to reduce the representation of indigenous people in the name of political parties, Magar, (2013) highlights:

Politics of Nepal is paralyzing every section of the society. People are divided into the different political ideology in Nepal. This political chain is tied tighter in the daily lives of the people. Caste based social strata is lying beneath the political chains. People are recognized with their political ideological brand names. Indigenous ethnic activists are not exceptional from this political branding. This creates intra and inter-ethnic divisions within ethnic political leaders affecting ethnic political movements in Nepal. (p.4)

Ethnic conflicts were never expected in Nepal, however, major political parties blamed and minimized the representation of indigenous people as Bista (1991) mentioned the issue in his book *Fatalism and Development* highlights, "Limited representation or restriction on representation is the main problems of Nepali politics"(p.34). Representation does not only involve the people in a decision making process, but it also makes them responsible for the program. Without proper representation it is impossible to promote democracy in grassroots level.

2. Conclusion

In the context of representation of the Chepang in the local government, it was found that political parties neglected the issue of political representation and unable to address legal provision in practice. Till the time, major political parties did not make the Chepang as candidate of municipality Chairperson or Deputy |Chairperson. In Raksing village



municipality, the Chepang are in majority but political parties hesitate to make candidate of chair person. Political representation of the Chepang was limited to the ward level. In one Lakha (0.1 million) population only 7 ward Chairpersons were elected in the local level election 2011. Chepang women were only elected in women reservation quota in both election 2017 and 2022. In 2022, the number of elected candidate was little bit higher, than the previous local election still the negligence of political parties was found on the representation of the Chepang in the local government. Without representing in local government, it is impossible to participate in the decision making process in the local government. Unless they participate in the local government actively inclusive democracy will not be fruitful because they will not be responsible for other decision and other programs. Representation is not only related to participation also little bit concentrates on accountability and transparency the programs run of local bodies.

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