

## Assessing the Representation of Ethnic and Madeshi Communities in Nepal's Federal and Provincial Parliament: A Study of 2022 Election

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### Abstract

*Without political representation it is impossible to participate in policy formulation procedure so that political representation is important for inclusion. Nepal also follows the inclusive democratic political system and constitutionally guaranteed political representation of women, minorities, Dalit and indigenous nationalities through adopting mixed (direct and propositional) method of election system. In this context, the study concentrates on the political representation of Indigenous nationalities and Madeshi in 2022 general election, mainly in the house of representation in federal and province assembly. The main objective of the study is to analyze the situation of political representation of indigenous Dalit, and Madeshi people as well as women in both federal and province assembly province parliament. Qualitative method was used to analyze the data and information collected from secondary sources. Conclusion and findings of this study are based on data presentation and analysis. Constitutional provision which could not properly work in the direction of inclusive representation in Nepal is the main finding of this study.*

**Keywords:** Election, indigenous, Nationalities, Politics, Representation

### 1. Background

Nepal is a multi-culture and multi ethnic national where people with various identities have been living since long time. Indigenous and Madeshi people have also separate recognition in Nepal. On the basis of constitutional provision these communities have also used political rights through on inclusive democratic political system. Nepal constitutionally adopted inclusive democratic political system in 2007 after promulgated of interim constitution of Nepal 2007. The constitution made the clear provision of political representation of indigenous nationalities as:

Article 4 State of Nepal (1): Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and fully democratic State. Articles, 138 Progressive restructuring of the State (1) to bring an end to discrimination based on class, caste, language, gender, culture, religion and region by eliminating the centralized and unitary form of the State, The State shall be made inclusive and restructured into a progressive, Democratic Federal System. (Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007)

On the basis of constitutional provision the inclusive character was prepared in 2007 and applied the character in the first election of constitution assembly 2009. Since the time, Nepal has been using the inclusive election model with adopting direct and proportional election. In the election 2009 people around 34% indigenous were elected whereas in 2012

election the number was reduced and limited in 29%. (Election Commission Report, 2018). With the promulgation of constitution of Nepal in 2015 the inclusive political provision was institutionalized and election of province and deferral parliament completed in 2017 for the first time and the second election also completed in 2022. In both elections political parties followed the constitutional provision and nominated the candidate for election. This paper has analyzed the representation of indigenous and Madhesi people in the parliament of federal and province level.

## **2. Reviews Related to Indigenous and Incisive Representation**

The term indigenous nationalities refer to the equal term to ethnicity or ethnic in international level, however, Nepali scholars deny using the term. The term ethnic refers to the minorities' community living in certain geography. Bhattachan, & Kanti, (2005) notes:

An ethnic group is a distinct category of the population in a larger society whose culture is usually different from its own. The members of such a group are, or feel themselves or one thought to be, bound together by common ties of race or nationality or culture. (P.167)

In the context of Nepal, indigenous community also bounded with certain common entities like Maciver & Page (1996) highlights, "An ethnic group is generally conceived to be one whose members share a distinctive social and cultural tradition, maintained within the group from generation to generation, whether as part of a more complex society or in isolation" (386). Magil, (2003) focuses fourteen features; common geographical origins; migratory status; race; language or dialect; religious faith or faiths; ties that transcend kinship, neighborhood, and community boundaries; shared traditions, values and symbols; literature; folklore and music; food preferences settlement and employment patterns; special interests in regard to politics; institutions that specifically serve and maintain the group; and internal sense of distinctiveness; and an external perception of distinctiveness.. In the context of Nepal, the Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (2002) defines "indigenous nationalities as "those ethnic groups or communities, who have their own mother tongue and traditional customs, different cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or oral history" (p. 34). Each Indigenous nationality has the following characteristics:

- A distinct collective identity.
- Own language, religion, tradition, culture and civilization
- Own traditional egalitarian social structure
- Traditional home land or geographical area
- Written or oral history
- Having we feeling
- Has had no decisive role in the politics and government of modern Nepal.
- Who are the Indigenous or native people of Nepal and
- Who declares itself as "Janajati". (Onta, P. , Kumar Y. and Bhaskar G. 2001)

**Table 1:** National Indigenous act 2001 registered the following Caste as Indigenous Group

Mountain Region	Hilly Regions	Inner Terai	Terai
Wallung	Limbu	Majhi	Meche
Topkegola	Lepcha	Danuwar	Kisan
Thudam .	Yakha	Bote	Satar(Santhal)
Sherpa	Rai	Darai	Rajbanshi
Larke	Sunuwar	Kumal	Tajpuria
Siyar	Hayu	Raji	Dhimal
Barah Gaule	Jirel		Ganagai
Tangbe	Thami		Jhangad
Thakali	Surel		Dhanuk
Chhairotan	Tamang		(Rajbansi)
Dolpo	Hyolmo		Tharu
Lhopa	Pahari		Kuswadiya
Mugali	Newar		
Bhote	Bankariya		
Byansi.	Chepang		
Marphali	Free		
Thakali	Baramo		
Tin Gaule	Kusunda		
Thakali	Bhujel		
Lhomi	Gurung		
(Shingsawa)	Dura		
	Chhantyal		
	Magar		
	Raute		

**Source:** National Commission of Indigenous Nationalities (2022)

Mgar, Tharu, Gurung, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Thakali, Sherpa, Bhote, Raute, Chepang, Majhi, Rajbansi, Dhimal, Madhasi etc. are considered Janajati in Nepal. They are called by some as tribe, by some as ethnic groups, by some as indigenous people or by some as minority people (Gurung, 2007). Issue of inclusion is important in political representation because it is related to inclusion. Pradhan (2006) defines the term inclusion as:

Terms social inclusion and social exclusion originated in Europe in response to the crisis of the welfare state and the fear of social disintegration caused by social and economic crisis, but have now gained wide currency worldwide, including in Nepal, especially in the literature on development and social policy and perhaps to some extent in popular discourse. (1)

Social inclusion plays an important role in political representation. On the basis the principle of inclusion, political party nominated the candidates from various castes and community people. In the national election 2022, political parties like Nepali congress, Nepal communist party united Maoist, Nepal communist party Marxist Leninist and other political parties selected the candidates on the basis of inclusion character, however, in the national election of 2022, candidates from advance communities, like Rai, Limbu, Newar were elected and candidates from minorities and marginalized groups were hardly elected through proportional election method.

**3. Methodology**

The study was based on qualitative research design. Data were collected through secondary source of data mainly reports of election commission and other documents related to inclusion and political representation. Numerical data were presented through tabulation and graph. Like that paragraph description was used to interpret non-numerical data collected from various sources like thesis, dissertations, books and articles. Conclusion and findings of this study are based on data analysis and interpretation.

**4. Representation of Ethnic and Madeshi in 2022 National Election**

In 2022 November 20<sup>th</sup> the general election was held and 59 political parties participated in the election. Election conducted through inclusive democratic system by adopting both direct and proportional election system. In election representatives of both province and federal parliament were elected once at time by using separate ballot paper. In total including direct and proportional 275 candidates were elected in the election.

**Table 2: Elected Candidates from Indigenous Nationalities in General Election 2022 (direct)**

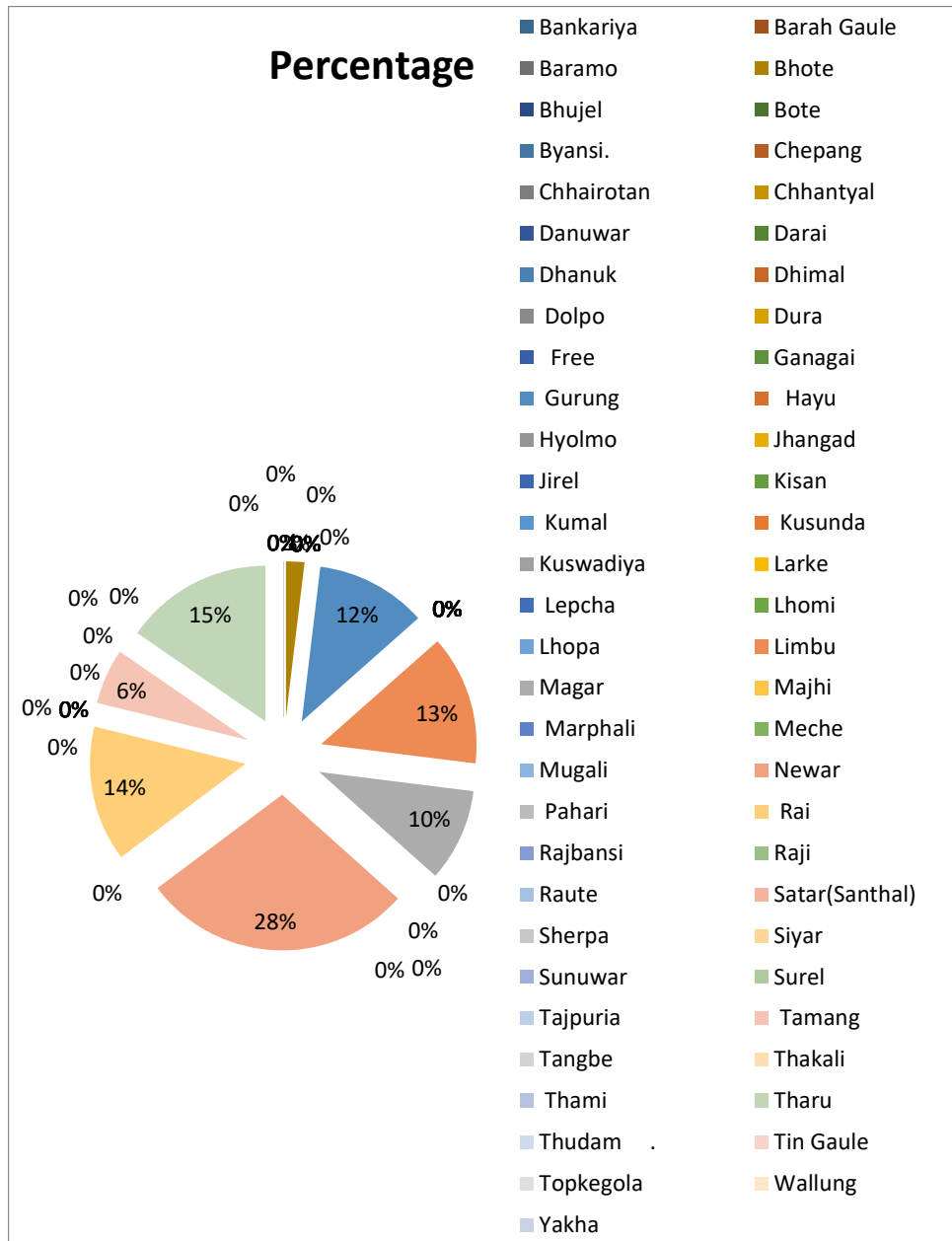
S.N.	Indigenous Nationalities	Elected Candidates	Percentage
1.	Bankariya	0	0
2.	Barah Gaule	0	0
3.	Baramo	0	0
4.	Bhote	1	0.60
5.	Bhujel	0	0
6.	Bote	0	0
7.	Byansi.	0	0
8.	Chepang	0	0
9.	Chhaintan	0	0
10.	Chhantyal	0	0
11.	Danuwar	0	0
12.	Darai	0	0
13.	Dhanuk	0	0
14.	Dhimal	0	0
15.	Dolpo	0	0
16.	Dura	0	0
17.	Free	0	0
18.	Ganagai	0	0
19.	Gurung	6	3.63
20.	Hayu	0	0
21.	Hyolmo	0	0
22.	Jhangad	0	0
23.	Jirel	0	0
24.	Kisan	0	0
25.	Kumal	0	0
26.	Kusunda	0	0
27.	Kuswadiya	0	0
28.	Larke	0	0
29.	Lepcha	0	0
30.	Lhomi	0	0

31.	Lhopa	0	0
32.	Limbu	7	4.24
33.	Magar	5	3.03
34.	Majhi	0	0
35.	Marphali	0	0
36.	Meche	0	0
37.	Mugali	0	0
38.	Newar	8	8.84
39.	Pahari	0	0
40.	Rai	4	4.42
41.	Rajbansi	0	0
42.	Raji	0	0
43.	Raute	0	0
44.	Satar(Santhal)	0	0
45.	Sherpa	0	0
46.	Siyar	0	0
47.	Sunuwar	0	0
48.	Surel	0	0
49.	Tajpuria	0	0
50.	Tamang	3	1.81
51.	Tangbe	0	0
52.	Thakali	0	0
53.	Thami	0	0
54.	Tharu	8	4.84
55.	Thudam .	0	0
56.	Tin Gaule	0	0
57.	Topkegola	0	0
58.	Wallung	0	0
59.	Yakha	0	0
60.	Yamba	0	0
61.	Total	42	25

**Source:** Election Commission Report, 2022

Table 1 shows only 6 indigenous nationalities only succeeded in representing federal parliament. Among 59 indigenous nationalities 53 indigenous did not get success to represent in federal parliament. Inclusive democratic system of government could not properly apply in Nepal. Total population of indigenous people was 37.8 whereas in parliament only 25% occupied by the indigenous people and it was low representation in according to population. The representation of Newar, Rai, Limbu represent higher than its population but other indigenous people cannot get success o represent direct election. Their representation only ensured through proportional election system. In proportional election system too only 12 indigenous community people ensured their representation in parliament (Election Report 2022). Political parties were neglected to implement the spirit of the constitution of Nepal. Political parties only thought about the loophole of the constitution

**Figure 1:** Elected Candidate from Indigenous Nationalities in General Election 2022 (Direct)



#### 4.1 Representation in Provinces

In general election 2022, 330 (60) members were elected through direct election in seven provinces. In direct election only 20 indigenous people were elected. The following table shows the representation of indigenous community in province parliament.

**Table 3:** Representation of indigenous community in province parliament (Direct) Election

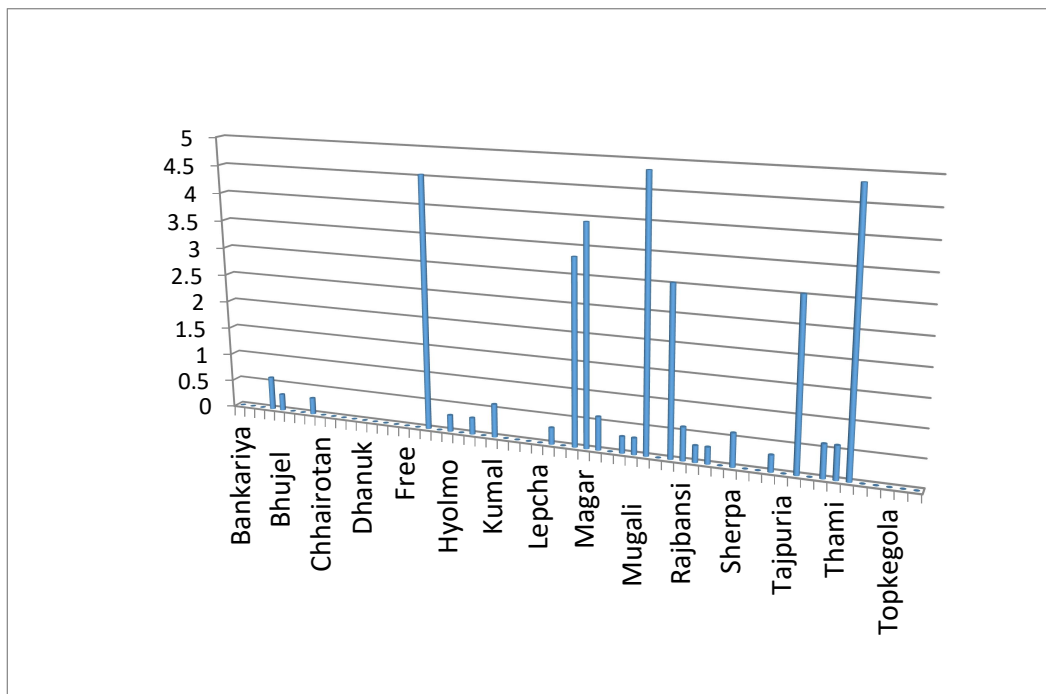
S.N.	Indigenous Nationalities	Elected Candidates	Percentage
1.	Bankariya	0	0
2.	Barah Gaule	0	0
3.	Baramo	0	0
4.	Bhote	2	0.60
5.	Bhujel	1	0.30
6.	Bote	0	0
7.	Byansi.	0	0
8.	Chepang	1	0.30
9.	Chhairotan	0	0
10.	Chhantyal	0	0
11.	Danuwar	0	0
12.	Darai	0	0
13.	Dhanuk	0	0
14.	Dhimal	0	0
15.	Dolpo	0	0
16.	Dura	0	0
17.	Free	0	0
18.	Ganagai	0	0
19.	Gurung	15	4.54
20.	Hayu	0	0
21.	Hyolmo	1	0.30
22.	Jhangad	0	0
23.	Jirel	1	0.30
24.	Kisan	0	0
25.	Kumal	2	0.60
26.	Kusunda	0	0
27.	Kuswadiya	0	0
28.	Larke	0	0
29.	Lepcha	0	0
30.	Lhomi	1	0.30
31.	Lhopa	0	0
32.	Limbu	11	3.33
33.	Magar	13	3.93
34.	Majhi	2	0.60
35.	Marphali	0	0
36.	Meche	1	0.30
37.	Mugali	1	0.30
38.	Newar	16	4.84
39.	Pahari	0	0
40.	Rai	10	3.03
41.	Rajbansi	2	0.60
42.	Raji	1	0.30
43.	Raute	1	0.30
44.	Satar(Santhal)	0	0

45.	Sherpa	2	0.60
46.	Siyar	0	0
47.	Sunuwar	0	0
48.	Surel	1	0.30
49.	Tajpuria	0	0
50.	Tamang	10	3.03
51.	Tangbe	0	0
52.	Thakali	2	0.60
53.	Thami	2	0.60
54.	Tharu	16	4.84
55.	Thudam .	0	0
56.	Tin Gaule	0	0
57.	Topkegola	0	0
58.	Wallung	0	0
59.	Yakha	0	0
60.	Total	115	34.84

Source: Election Commission Report, 2022

Table shows the representation of indigenous nationality in province parliament. In seven provinces only 115 (34.84%) representation was found lower than the population. There is 38% population of indigenous nationalities, however, representation only limited to 34%. It was necessary to increase the representation. Only some indigenous nationalities are succeed in competing with non-indigenous people. The Tharu, the Magar, the Rai, the Limbu and the Magar are succeed maintaining representation in the province parliament.

Figure 2: Representation in Provinces (Direct Election)



#### 4.2 Representation of Madeshi in General Election 2022

According to CBS report 2011, Madhesi population occupied 31% population of Nepal and their representation also near about the total population, however, only some elite



and large number group like Yadav, Shha, Jha Singh highly covered the representation in Terai. The following table shows the representation of Madhi people in the federal parliament.

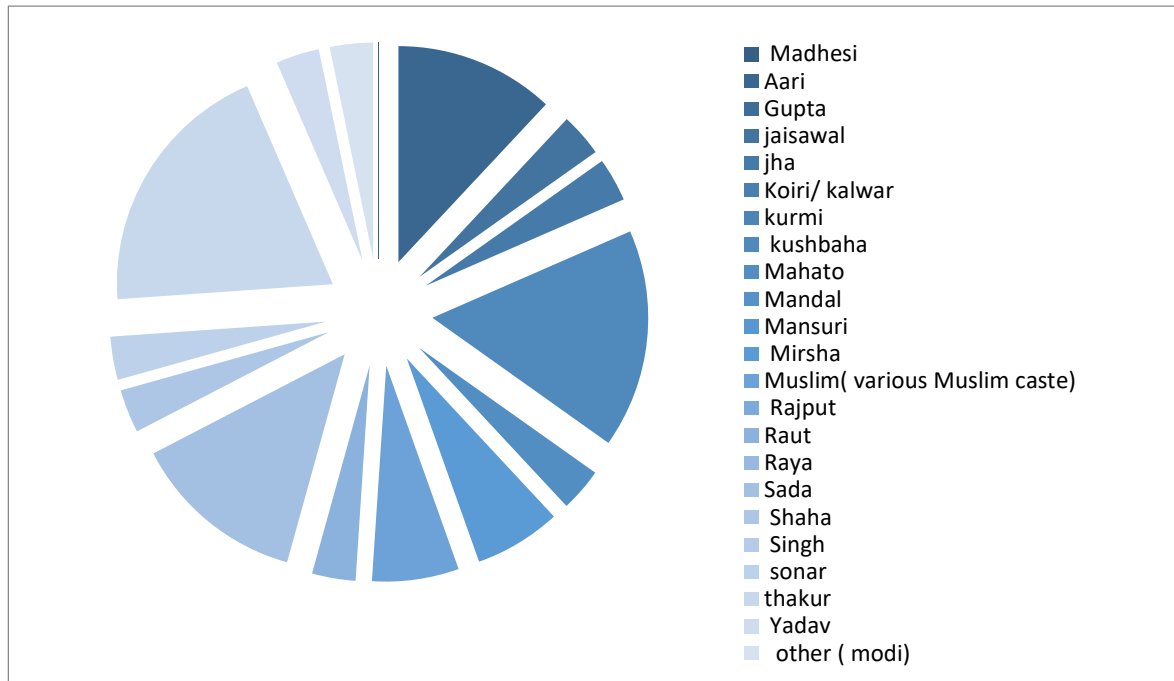
**Table 4:** Representation of Madhesi people in Federal Parliament in 2022(Direct Election)

S.N.	Madhesi	Elected Candidates	Percentage
1.	Aari	0	0
2.	Gupta	2	2.21
3.	Jaisawal	0	
4.	Jha	1	0.60
5.	Koiri/ kalwar	1	0.60
6.	Kurmi	0	0
7.	Kushbaha	0	0
8.	Mahato	5	3.030
9.	Mandal	1	0.60
10.	Mansuri	0	0
11.	Mirsha	0	0
12.	Muslim( various Muslim caste)	2	1.20
13.	Rajput	2	1.20
14.	Raut	0	0
15.	Raya	1	0.60
16.	Sada	0	0
17.	Shaha	4	2.42
18.	Singh	1	0.60
19.	Sonar	0	0
20.	Thakur	1	0.60
21.	Yadav	6	3.63
22.	Other (Modi)	1	0.60
	Total	28	16.96

**Source:** Election Commission Report, 2022

Above table notes the elected numbers of candidates in the general election of 2011 from Madhesi communities in the federal parliament. In total 165 direct elections only 16% portion was covered by Madhi communities where as national population census 2011 showed the total population of Madhisi community covered 31% population. It showed the lower representation of Madhesi in direct election. In 40% proportional election candidates were prepared according to inclusive clusters so that representation was grunted in the proportional election system. The following figure indicates the situation as:

**Figure 3:** Representation of Madhesi people in Federal Parliament in 2022 (Direct Election)



**4.3 Representation of Province Parliament through Direct Election**

The second province parliament election also held in Nepal on November 20, 2022 with federal election. In the election process around 1024 Madhesi candidates were involved in election from various parties and independent candidates. Among them only 91 candidates succeeded in representing in various provinces. The following table shows the situation as;

**Table 5:** Representation of Madhesi people in Provinces Parliament (Direct Election)

S.N.	Madhesi	Elected Candidates	Percentage
1.	Aari	1	0.30
2.	Gupta	5	1.51
3.	Jaisawal	2	0.60
4.	jha	4	2.21
5.	Koiri	3	0.90
6.	Kurmi	2	0.60
7.	Kushbaha	1	0.30
8.	Mahato	6	1.81
9.	Mandal	3	0.90
10.	Mansuri	1	0.30
11.	Mirsha	1	0.30
12.	Muslim( various Muslim caste)	10	3.03
13.	Rajput	4	1.30
14.	Raut	3	0.90
15.	Raya	2	0.60
16.	Sada	1	0.30
17.	Shaha	8	2.42
18.	Singh	7	2.12
19.	sonar	1	0.30
20.	Tiwari	1	0.30
21.	Yadav	25	7.57
	Total	91	27.57

**Source:** Election Commission Report, 2022

Above table shows the situation of representation of Madhesi community in various provinces through direct election. From Madhesh Pradesh majority of Madhesi candidates were elected in province, however, in other provinces their representation was almost zero so that their representation only limited in Madhesh province which created problems in the overall representation. In total 27.57% representation could be seen but in Madhesh province 72% Madhesi candidates were elected in general election. Yadav, Shaha and other elite group Mandal, Mahaset, Gupta were highly elected in the general election so the inclusion could not properly use in Nepal including Madhesh province.

#### **4.4. Representation in Proportional Election**

According to the constitutional provision and the provision of election rule 40% candidates of federal and province parliament are elected from proportional election system on the basis of inclusion clusters like Khash Arya, indigenous group, Madhesi, women, Dalit, Muslim, Tharu, minorities (disadvantage) and marginalized group so that there is no other option to elected in federal and province parliament, however, political parties misuse the provision the constitution and neglect to participate poor and disadvantage in the representation.

#### **5. Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations**

In the context of Nepal, the inclusive political representation is the process of applying, however, the process could not lead in positive direction. Political parties' leaders neglect the spirit of inclusive democracy and concentrate on the interest of political party and personal benefit. Representation percentage of indigenous communities is going to reduce one election to another election. In 2009 indigenous and Madhesi covered 44% representation; however, in 2012 it decreased and limited around 25%. The process was continued and in 2022 it only limited around 22% including indigenous and Madhesi in both federal and province parliament. Among Madhesi and indigenous elite castes only elite groups could not succeeded in getting chance in representation. Issue of inclusive representation was still questionable in Nepal due to the nature of and legacy of centralized elite based on the poetical system.

To enhance the representation of indigenous and Madhesi people in Nepal political party leaders should be honest to implement the constitution and legal provision of inclusive representation. Lack of empowerment and backwardness marginalized community cannot victory in direct election so that government should provide election expenditure to the poor and marginalized community candidates. Election commission and courts of Nepal should be honest to the implementation of laws and constitutional provision to implement the inclusive political participation in Nepal.

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