

Post Independence Contribution of Marwari Community in the Political Process of North-Eastern Bihar

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Abstract: Marwari community refers to the immigrant traders from Marwar, Shekhawati and adjacent states of Rajasthan who have once migrated to other Indian states and abroad for trades and now have become the most successful business community in India. They are maintaining their own cultural identity along with adopting the local language, dress and culture. The conflict between Rajput and Mughal emperors in 19th century forced Marwaris to migrate from Rajasthan to different parts of India as it was affecting their trades severely. In this connection they also reached to North-Eastern (N-E) regions of Bihar for trade purpose mainly. After establishing themselves in their trades they brought their families and then their relatives and neighbours too to establish in this new area. Their main aim to bring these known people was to progress in trades mainly on whom they can trust fully. Gradually they became mixed with the local people and started to play an effective role in trades, social activities and later on local politics also. The present paper deals with the role of Marwari community in the political process of N-E districts of Bihar after independence of India. In our study we have found that the Marwari community of N-E Bihar had although played an inactive role by keeping themselves totally aloof or had played a passive role by giving financial or moral support to freedom fighters during pre-independence period of India but after independence they became gradually active and now playing a very significant role in local, state and national politics along with their main business interests.

Keywords: Political process, Marwari community, N-E Bihar, Post-independence period

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I. INTRODUCTION

Bihar is a very important Indian state and considered to be a part of Eastern and Northern India. It adjoins West Bengal to the East, Jharkhand in South, Uttar Pradesh to its West and with Nepal to the North. In ancient and classical India, Bihar was considered as the centre of power, learning and culture. Its north-eastern (N-E) part is very beautiful and situated in the lap of the Ganga, Koshi and Mahananda rivers. The people of this region is outstanding and still cherishing /maintaining in itself a religious, historical, social, economical and political legacy / patrimony. Various merchant communities such as Bihari, Bengali, Marwari, Sindhi, Khatri, Punjabi and others came and settled in this area in search of commercial pursuits but it is the Marwari community that played a pioneering and pivotal role in the development of commerce, industry and business in Katihar, Purnea and other neighbouring districts of N-E Bihar (Saha 2003, Lakshmi and Jha 2014a, 2019).

The term Marwari traditionally represents an emigrant businessman and industrial community from the vicinity of Rajasthan (Timberg 1979). They have migrated to different parts of our country and abroad too to spread their trade. Now they have become highly successful business community first as the inland traders and later on as the investors in industrial production and other sectors. Today they also control many of the country's largest media and political groups (Ajwani 2014). Ever since the time of Akbar due to conflict between Rajput and Mughal emperors Marwaris started to establish their business houses outside Rajasthan particularly in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (Banglapedia 2015). Adjacent to the international boundary of Nepal and Bangladesh and India's West Bengal, thousands of Marwari families residing in N-E part of Bihar have established their specific identity. Katihar, Purnea, Araria and Kishanganj are such N-E districts of Bihar where richness, affection and culture of these Marwari families have not only thrown the fragrance of Marwari / Rajasthani culture in the soils of this region but also established a new culture and brotherhood in this area by their presence. These Marwari families are so much happy and prosperous that they have shown their active participation in every cultural, social, religious, trade affair and other sectors including politics in this region. Like other parts of country, Marwari community has established their dominance in about 75% business of N-E Bihar (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b). They are now playing a very important role in balancing the economic scenario

of this region. They have also played an important role in freedom struggle by providing financial support or directly participating in this movement (Saha 2003, Taknet 2016). However, Marwaris of N-E districts of Bihar were politically remained very passive during the pre-independence period of India (Lakshmi and Jha 2019) but after independence they became very active in local, state and national politics (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b). So it was thought necessary to evaluate the role of the Marwari community of N-E Bihar during post-independence period.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey was undertaken during 2008-2010 to explore the role of Marwari community after independence of India in the political process of N-E districts of Bihar including Katihar, Purnea, Araria and Kishanganj districts. The survey is based on the empirical methods and report of district souvenirs, reference books and personal interviews with a set of questionnaires with different old and honourable Marwari persons of N-E Bihar.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

India became independent on 15th of August 1947 after a very long period of slavery of about 200 years from the English. Along with other parts of India people of Katihar also started taking breathe in the free air of freedom. The suppressed political aspirations of the politically dormant Marwari community of N-E Bihar now started germination. The Marwaris of Katihar district now begin to take part in the local politics (**Table-1 & -2**). Shri Sohan Lal Jain, Sitaram Chamaria, Shambhu Sharma, Satya Narayan Sanwermal, Hansraj Sarraf, Raghunath Puranmalka, Gopal Soni and others joined the membership of **Indian National Congress (INC)** and some of them also elected as the District Organizing Secretary, District President, State General Secretary and State Treasurer (**Table – 1**). Shri Jain has the credit of being elected as the first Marwari MLA (1967-1972) from Katihar. He was sworn in as the Minister of State for Production and Revenue in the then Congress Govt. He was also elected unanimously as the Mukhiya in **Gram Panchayat Election** (1974-78).

Shri Sitaram Chamaria joined the INC in 1946 in the Meerut Session of INC at the age of 16 on the call of Mahatma Gandhi (Chamaria 2018). He shifted from Kanpur to Katihar in 1947. He was a very active member of INC and a very popular social worker. He may be regarded as the **Yuga Purush** in the politics of Katihar in true sense. He was elected as Ward Commissioner in 1967 in **Katihar Municipal Election** and soon due to his political efficiency and endeavour he became the Chairman of Katihar Municipality (1969-71). He was also the District President of **INC** and soon elected as the MLC (1972-1978) and MLA (1980-1984) from Katihar district. He has also the credits of being elected as the Bihar State Congress General Secretary (1980-1984), Treasurer and Chairman of **Bihar State Construction Corporation** (1980-1986) and **Advisory Body of Commercial Taxes**, Govt. of Bihar (1981-1984). He has also played a key role in the establishment of **Samta Party**. Besides these he had also hold the different posts in different organizations of Bihar (Chamaria, 2010). His political carrier was quite clean.

Shri Babulal Goyanka and Shyam Sundar Kabra joined the **Jansangh** and made its foundation strong in Katihar district which is working today as the cadre of **Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)**. Shri Shyam Lal Agarwal is actively associated with the **Janta Party**. Several Marwaris of Katihar district joined the membership of **BJP** and played an important role in the uplift of this party. Shri Vishwanath Mukim and Rajesh Pataawari were respectively elected as the District General Secretary and District Treasurer of **BJP**. Shri Ashok Kumar Agarwal also joined the **BJP** and is the sitting MLC from 2009 (**Table – 2**). Shri Mohan Lal Agarwal, Vimal Singh Baingani and Pankaj Tambakuwala became the State President, Executive Member and District Spokeperson of Katihar district respectively of **National Congress Party (NCP)**. Besides these political parties, the Marwaris of Katihar are not found to be specifically associated with the other political parties like **Janta Dal (U)**, **Loktantrik Janta Party (LJP)**, **CPI**, **CPI (M)** and **CPI (ML)**. The Marwari society has been found to be mainly associated with the small or large business whose main aim is to gain profit. They are the basic feeders of the capitalism and the left political parties like **CPI**, **CPI (M)** & **CPI (ML)** are the opponents of the capitalism. Therefore, due to capitalist mentality they avoid to remain associated with the left political parties (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b) although they do not feel much distance with the **Congress Party**. During the last 50 years there is a sweet and sour relationship between the Marwari Community and the Congress Party. This may be due to increasing pro-Muslim and Christian approaches of the Congress Party. However, some Marwaris of Katihar, Purnea, Araria and Kishanganj districts of Bihar have also recently associated with the newly formed **Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)** of Shri Arbind Kejriwal. This may be due to Mr. Kejriwal who is himself a Marwari and CM of Delhi. Among non-political organizations Shri Rajesh Pataawari, Nirmal Dalmia and Sanjeev Sarraf have respectively hold the post of Ex-Treasurer, State Vice President (**Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra**) and Treasurer of **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)**. Several Marwaris of this region are also associated with the **Bajrang Dal** (**Table-1**).

It is evident from the **Table-2** that no Marwari MP (Member of Parliament) has been elected from N-E Bihar till now. Even they have not fought for the MP from any of the N-E Bihar parliamentary constituencies. However, Shri Sohan Lal Jain and Sitaram Chamaria have been elected as the MLA. Late Sitaram Chamaria, Sri Mohan Lal Agarwal and Ashok Kumar Agarwal have been elected for MLC. Shri Ashok Agarwal is the sitting MLC from Katihar. In the election of Katihar Municipality Babulal Goyanka (1960-65), Vishwanath Tambakuwala (1961-65), Sitaram Chamaria (1965-71), Prabhu Dayal Agarwal (1965-78), Lakshmi Narayan Agarwal (1965-78), Shyam Lal Agarwal (1978-88), Sajjan Kumar Sharma (1978-88), Vimal Singh Baingani (1992-97, 2002-10, 2010-) and Lalan Sultania (2010 -) have been elected as the Ward Commissioners. Among these Babulal Goyanka and Vishwanath Tambakuwala have also been elected as the Vice Chairman (1960-1965) and Sitaram Chamaria as the Chairman (1967-1970) of Katihar Municipality. Dr. Ram Nivas Sharma has been nominated for the Chairman of Katihar Municipality (1992-97). Shri Suresh Agarwal, Shambhu Sultania and Girdhari Sharma have been appointed as the APP of the **Bar Council of Katihar** district by the Govt. of Bihar. The name of Shri Sajjan Kumar Sharma is very popular as a leader of Trade Union of Katihar. Shri Radheshyam Goyanka, Hansraj Sarraf, Anil Kumar Chamaria, Dr. Ram Nivas Sharma and Vijay Kumar Sharma have been elected as the members of ZRUCC of **Railway Advisory Board** and Anil Kumar Chamaria and Ram Nivas Sharma have also been elected as the members of DRUCC from time to time. Shri Nirmal Dalmia, Vimal Singh Baingani and Manoj Surana (present) have already been elected as the members of **Station Consultative Committee** of Katihar. No Marwari member has been elected for **Non-gazetted Employees Organization and Cooperative Society** of Katihar (Lakshmi and Jha 2014).

Contribution of Marwari Community in Establishing Katihar District

In 1954 Katihar was declared as the sub-division of Purnea district and its headquarter was shifted from Purnea to Katihar in 1956 (Pragati Path 2008). But the common people of Katihar was not satisfied with this. They raised their voices to declare Katihar as the district (Chamaria 1998). Gradually the demand of establishing Katihar district became violent. Mr. Sitaram Chamaria was nominated as the Chairman of District Establishment Struggling Committee of Katihar in 1972. He played a very crucial role in the establishment of Katihar District along with other non- Marwari personalities of Katihar district (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b). The other notable Marwaris contributed in the establishment of Katihar district were Sri Sajjan Kumar Sharma and Kanhaiya Lal Jain. Katihar was declared as the district on the birthday of two important world legends *i.e.* **Mahatma Gandhi** and **Lal Bahadur Shashtri** on 2nd October 1973.

Causes of the Participation of Marwari Community in the Politics of N-E Bihar

It can be discussed under the following heads :

- 1. Sense of Insecurity :** It is supposed that the process of immigration of Marwaris in N-E Bihar commenced about 260 years ago (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b). There is always a sense of insecurity among the Marwaris outside the Rajasthan like Muslim minority due to their lesser number and immigrant nature. Time to time mishap with the Marwari community by the local Bihari criminals are also responsible for this (Lakshmi and Jha 2014a). To combat these they used to participate in the local politics.
- 2. BJP's Thoughts :** In general the mentality of Marwaris resemble with those of the thoughts of the BJP. Politically they may be associated with the other political parties but usually they cast their votes in favour of BJP candidates. The Marwaris of N-E Bihar are not exception of these (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b). There may be two basic reasons for this. The first reason is their Hindu religion. Although some Marwaris are Jaini but the Jain religion also resembles with many of the thoughts of Hinduism. BJP is a pro Hindu party hence, the inclination of Marwaris towards BJP is but natural. Another important reason of inclination of Marwaris towards BJP is that during Mughal Periods the Mughal emperors caused atrocities on the people of Rajasthan. Marwaris regard themselves as the descendants of Maharana Pratap who liked the bread of grasses to eat but did not accept the slavery of Mughals. Due to the atrocities of Mughals several Marwari brave women committed suicide in the form of Johar Vrata (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b). Till now they have not forgotten the cruelty of Mughals on their ancestors. They feel that those who will advocate the causes of Hinduism are their real protectors.
- 3. Change in Political Behaviour :** The political behaviour of Marwaris is now changing with time. Before 1989 they were fully associated with BJP with their hearts, works and mind. Before BJP they were associated with the Hindu supporting party Jansangha. In 1989 **Mandal Commission** on backward castes reservation policy was implemented. This raised big conflicts between backward and forward castes of India. The law and order situation became totally out of control for several months. Several people lost their properties and lives. The Marwaris were feeling the deep sense of insecurity as several Marwaris were affected in these conflicts. Gradually the political behaviour of the Marwari community undergone changes after the full implementation of Mandal Commission. Thus the post Mandal political behavior of Marwari community can be divided into two parts *i.e.* external and attitudinal. In external political behaviour they

have tried to remain associated with the ruling party. In 1990 they joined the membership of Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) of Shri Lalu Prasad Yadav in a large scale. In attitudinal political behaviour although they tend to show their association with the ruling political party but emotionally they remain attached with their dream party *i.e.* BJP. Hence, it is very difficult to say that how many Marwaris have casted their votes in favour of RJD during the Chief Ministership of Sri Lalu Prasad Yadav (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b)?

4. **Marwari Women in Politics :** The participation of Marwari women in the politics is almost negligible. No any Marwari woman has made its identity in the local, state or national level politics from the N-E Bihar. Its main reason is the dominance of gents in the Marwari society who do not allow the participation of Marwari women in the politics. This is an example of *parochial political culture* of male dominated society of Marwari community (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b). The low education rate of Marwari females is the second important reason of their disinterest in politics. It creates a big surprise regarding low education rate and negligible participation of Marwari females in politics of such an affluent Marwari community. Marwari females are restricted themselves up to satsang mainly. However, in recent years some Marwari families of N-E Bihar have come forward for the higher education of their girl children.
5. **Voting Percentage :** The voting percentage of Marwari people in different elections is always higher. Most of the Marwaris believe in 100% voting. Both adult males and females of Marwari community actively cast their votes in the elections.
6. **Subject Political Culture :** The political behaviour of Marwaris of N-E Bihar indicates that the citizens of this community are of *subject political culture*. In this type of culture citizens are quite aware of the political process. They take interests in those political processes which affect their success or failure. If any decision comes in favour of him, they give statement, demonstration and express pleasures. If any political decision does not favour their interests then their support or oppose is not acute. They have never found leading any intense movement. Thus, economically affluent and politically conscious Marwari community of N-E Bihar can be considered as an example of *parochial and subject political culture* (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b).
7. **Interest and Pressure Groups :** Marwaris believe in their separate political and social identity. For these they have formed different interest and pressure groups in N-E Bihar. The important among them are – **Marwari Yuva Manch, Young Friends Association, Adhyatmik Chetana Manch, Kalyan Bharti, Jain Shwetambar Yuvak Parishad, Koshi Division Consumers Forum, Marwari Mahila Samiti, Agarwal Maitri Sangh, Pushkar Seva Samiti, Cloth Merchant Association, North-Eastern Bihar Chamber of Commerce and Industries** etc. Through these organizations, the people of Marwari community tend to create political pressure on district administrations and usually they use pressure in solving their interests (Lakshmi and Jha 2014b).

IV. CONCLUSION

Although economically and socially affluent Marwari community of Katihar, Purnea, Araria and Kishanganj districts of N-E Bihar did not play any significant role in the Indian Freedom Movement but after independence they became very active in politics along with the Bihari people of this region. They maintained social harmony with the local people and enhanced the political process of N-E Bihar. Perhaps they had guessed that without participation in politics his existence in the local society will always be threatened and practically they will not be able to mix socially with the local people. Hence, they started to take part in the every step of local politics like elections of Municipality, Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council, Bar Council, Trade Union, Railway Advisory Committee etc. They have been successful in every field of political election and also hold the various key posts in different political parties of India. But these facts cannot be expressed for the Marwari females of N-E Bihar. None of the Marwari females have come forward in any field of the politics. Its main reason is the highly male dominated Marwari culture and their parochial political culture and the lower rate of education in Marwari females. However, some Marwari females of N-E Bihar have become active with the help of different Mahila Mandals but their working areas are mainly social and not the political.

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Table-1: Distinguished Marwari Personalities In Different Political Parties / Organizations Of Katihar District

Parties / Organizations	Eminent Marwari Personalities	Specific Roles in Party / Organization
Political Parties		
a. Indian National Congress (INC)	1. Shri Sohan Lal Jain 2. Late Sitaram Chamaria	Minister of State (Prod. Revenue) President, Dist. Congress Treasurer, Bihar Congress General Secretary, Bihar Congress MLC, MLA Organiz. Secret., Dist. Congress
b. Jansangh	3. Shri Shambhu Sharma 1. Late Babulal Goyanka 2. Late Shyam Sundar Kawra	
c. Janta Party (JP)	1. Shri Shyam Lal Agarwal	District General Secretary
d. Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)	1. Shri Vishwanath Mukim 2. Shri Rajesh Patawari 3. Shri Ashok Kumar Agarwal	District President MLC District General Secretary
e. Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD)	1. Shri Ram Nivas Sharma 2. Shri Lalan Sultania	Active Member Active Member
f. National Congress Party (NCP)	1. Shri Mohan Lal Agarwal 2. Shri Vimal Singh Baingani 3. Shri Bhuwan Agarwal 4. Shri Pankaj Tambakuwala	President, Bihar State Executive Member, Bihar State Active Member District Spokesperson
g. Janta Dal (U)	-	-
h. Loktantrik Janta Party (LJP)	-	-
i. Communist Party of India (CPI)	-	-
j. CPI (M)	-	-
k. CPI (ML)	-	-
Political Organizations		
a. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)	1. Shri Rajesh Pataawari 2. Shri Nirmal Dalmia 3. Shri Sanjeev Sarraf	Ex- Treasurer State Vice President (VKK) Treasurer
b. Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)	-	-
c. Bajrang Dal	1. Shri Suresh Sharma	Ex-District Coordinator

Table - 2 : Elected / Nominated Marwari Public Representatives Of Katihar District

Organizations	Public Representatives	Posts
a. Parliament	-	-
b. Bihar Legislative Assembly	1. Shri Sohan Lal Jain (1967-72) 2. Late Sitaram Chamaria (1980-84)	MLA, Minister of State Production and Revenue MLA Bihar Congress Gen. Secretary & Treasurer, Chairman, Bihar Construction Board
c. Bihar Legislative Council	1. Late Sitaram Chamaria (1972-78) 2. Shri Mohan Lal Agarwal (2003-09) 3. Shri Ashok Agrawal (2009- Contd.)	MLC MLC MLC
d. Municipality	1. Late Babu Lal Goyanka (1960-65) 2. Sri Vishwanath Tambakuwala (1961-65) 3. Late Sitaram Chamaria (1965-71) 4. Shri Prabhu Dayal Agarwal (1965-78) 5. Sri Lakshmi N. Agarwal (1966-78) 6. Shri Shyam Lal Agarwal (1978-88) 7. Shri Sajjan K. Agarwal (1978-88) 8. Shri Vimal Singh Baingani (1992-97, 2002-10, 2010-) 9. Shri Ram Nivas Sharma (1992-97) 10. Shri Lalan Sultania (2010-15)	Ward Comm.,Vice Chairman Ward Comm.,Vice Chairman Ward Commissioner, Chairman (1967-70) Ward Commissioner Ward Commissioner Ward Commissioner Ward Commissioner Ward Commissioner Chairman (Nominated) Ward Commissioner
e. Bar Council	1. Shri Suresh Agrawal 2. Shri Shambhu Sultania 3. Shri Girdhari Sharma	APP APP APP
f. Trade Union	1. Shri Sajjan Kumar Sharma (1960-)	President
g. Railway Advisory Committee		
* ZRUCC	1. Shri Radheshyam Goyanka 2. Shri Sansraj Sarraf 3. Shri Anil Kumar Chamaria 4. Dr. Ram Nivas Sharma (2002-08) 5. Shri Vijay Kr. Sharma (2008-2010)	Member Member Member Member Member
*DRUCC	1. Shri Anil kumar Chamaria 2. Dr. Ram Nivas Sharma (11.02.2010- 15.02.2010)	Member Member
*Station Consultative Committee	1. Shri Nirmal Dalmia (1985-87) 2. Shri Vimal Singh Baingani (1987-89) 3. Shri Manoj Surana (2008-2010)	Member Member Member
h. Non-Gazetted Employees Organization	-	-
i. Cooperative society	-	-

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