

Democracy, exclusion and informal institutions in Nepal

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Informal institutions or conventions or codes of behaviour play significant role in constraining human behaviour that have important political consequences. Despite a lot of focus on institutionalism, informal institutions' role in political behaviours and outcomes has not been scrutinized thoroughly in political science. This paper investigates the contribution of informal institutions to the political exclusion of marginalized groups such as Dalit, indigenous nationalities, Madhesi, minority religious groups, and women in democratic Nepal (1990-2002). Scholars have pointed out the role of formal institutions like the unitary state and the first-past-the-post electoral method in the exclusion. But, formal institutions do not account for all the exclusion. Not a single Dalit was nominated to the cabinet during 1990-2002. This was not due to formal restriction, but because of informal norms that influence behaviour of political leaders and people. In this paper I will discuss the role of patriarchy on the exclusion of women, hill nationalism and the exclusion of Madhesi, and caste system and Bahunbad and the exclusion of indigenous nationalities and Dalit. I will also discuss how nepotism, and patronage, and clientelism helped to perpetuate political and social exclusion. I will look at the trend of political exclusion during the democratic years of 1990-2002 and will analyze the political consequences of social norms and attitudes of parliamentarians towards the marginalized groups' issues. Analyses of informal institution are important, because even if formal institutions are changed, exclusion may still continue because informal institutions may persist. The exclusionary informal institutions may have to be tackled to produce more inclusive polity.

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