



Tribal Politics: Necessity and its impact on Tharu tribe of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract: *The Tharu tribe of Uttar Pradesh has historically faced marginalization and socio-economic challenges, significantly impacting their political organization, cultural identity, and access to resources. This study examines the necessity of tribal politics in addressing these challenges, focusing on the Tharu community's traditional governance structures, contemporary political mobilization, and the effects of state policies on their rights and identity. The research highlights how colonial and post-colonial land reforms, forest laws, and socio-economic policies led to land dispossession, poverty, and cultural disintegration. Despite efforts by Tharu organizations and government initiatives, issues such as inadequate political representation, limited access to education and healthcare, and environmental degradation persist. The paper emphasizes the need for continued advocacy, policy reforms, and inclusive governance to protect the rights and heritage of the Tharu tribe.*

Key Words: *Tharu tribe, Health, Indigenous, Socio-economic Challenges.*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the native tribes residing in the Terai plain along the boundary between India and Nepal is the Tharu tribe. The Indian government recognized the five castes—Tharu, Buksa, Bhotiya, Jaunsari, and Raji ; as tribal. The Indian government added a few more castes to the list of tribal people in 2003. On the data provided by Census 2011 based on the inclusions mentioned above is clearly predictable as possible in case of Tharu tribe , 1134273 people are Scheduled Tribes according to the 2011 Census. There are 105,291 Tharu people in all in Uttar Pradesh (53,687 men and 51,604 women). In Tharus, Uttar Pradesh, children under the age of six make up around 17% of the total population. (<https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog/5049>)

The largest district in Uttar Pradesh bordering Nepal is Lakhimpur Kheri. Similar to this, the majority of the Tharu community in Uttar Pradesh resides in the districts that border Nepal: Bahraich, Balrampur, Shravasti, and Mahrajganj. The majority of them work in land agriculture, and 90% of them live in rural regions. The Tharu are known to be susceptible to a number of illnesses, including bacterial and parasite infections, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disorders, leprosy, malaria, and mental health conditions including stress, according to reports from Nepal, their neighbor. Given their similar lifestyle, genetic make-up, and socioeconomic standing to the Tharu people of Nepal, the Tharu tribe in India may likewise be susceptible to the same issues related to Tharu Tribe and their native members. Scholars and policy makers have traditionally approached the "tribal question" in central India in two ways: first, by focusing on how to distinguish between tribes and castes and, on the other hand, tribes and peasants; second, by addressing the issue of how to best alleviate the widespread perception of poverty among tribal people.

Conventional Governance -

The Tharu tribes have had their own political structures, frequently centered on "panchayats," or village councils. These councils were extremely important for managing resources and resolving disputes. The communal structure of Tharu society encouraged cooperation and group decision-making, which is still a fundamental component of their identity.

Contemporary Political Activation -

The marginalization of the Tharus led to their political mobilization in the late 20th century. The creation of groups like the Tharu Youth Federation and the Tharu Kalyankarini Sabha has been crucial in promoting Tharu rights. These groups work to solve issues related to political representation, cultural preservation, and land rights.



2. Modern Difficulties -

1. Land Dispossession: Traditional Tharu lands have been significantly lost due to historical land acquisition for agricultural and industrial expansion, which has had an influence on their way of life.

2. Economic Marginalization and Poverty

A large number of Tharu people rely on subsistence farming since they lack access to economic opportunities and live below the poverty line.

3. Insufficient Schooling

Low literacy rates and restricted access to higher education and skill development are caused by the often insufficient quality of educational facilities in Tharu-dominated communities and their nearly related families.

4. Access to Health Care

The high rates of disease and mortality in Tharu villages are a result of inadequate healthcare infrastructure and restricted access to medical treatments.

5. Discrimination Based on Social Status

The Tharus are frequently the targets of prejudice and social stigma, which limits their access to opportunities, services, and resources.

6. Insufficient Representation in Politics

Tharu leaders continue to be underrepresented in local and state government, which limits their influence in decision-making processes, even in spite of efforts to enhance political involvement.

7. Disintegration of Cultures

Traditional Tharu culture, languages, and customs are under threat from modernization and other influences, which might result in a loss of identity.

8. Environmental Deterioration

As a result of deforestation and environmental policies, many of them have lost their traditional means of subsistence and economic activity.

9. Inadequate Assistance from the Government

Although affirmative action laws exist, they are frequently poorly implemented, and many Tharus are not helped by government initiatives meant to improve underprivileged areas.

10. Deficits in Infrastructure

Inadequate transportation and sanitary facilities further separate Tharu settlements and restrict their access to resources like markets and services.

3. Discrimination and Marginalization -

Tharu communities have mobilized politically, but they still face tremendous obstacles. Social stigma and discrimination still exist, especially when it comes to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities. The Tharu people live in widespread poverty as a result of the state's long disregard of these problems.

Environmental Concerns and Land Rights -

The Tharu tribes continue to have serious concerns about land confiscation. The construction of infrastructure and agricultural growth are frequently prioritized over Tharu land rights by government policy. The competition for land and natural resources is made worse by the expansion of industries and conservation efforts.



Representation in Politics -

Leaders from the Tharu community are underrepresented in local and national political systems, which limits their capacity to shape policies that impact their communities. Mixed results have been seen in attempts to boost political involvement through reserved seats in local governments and affirmative action.

4. State Policies and Their Effects –

“Deprived tribal communities will get their rights in UP: Yogi Adityanath”

The government has decided that whether it is Tharu, Cheru, Kol, Musahar, Buiya, Ahariya, or any other caste or tribe, it will be given land patta (record of rights) under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and housing under the PM Awas Yojana or CM Awas Yojana," he added. The Chief Minister launched 233 projects worth Rs 575 crore and distributed 'land pattas' on the occasion.

(<https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/deprived-tribal-communities-will-get-their-rights-in-up-yogi-adityanath20221115201143/>)

Government Programmes and Schemes -

Scholarship for Pre-Matric

Scholarships are awarded to 9th and 10th grade school going students boys and girls from scheduled tribes whose parents earn up to Rs. 2.50 lakh annually.

Scholarship for post-matriculation

Post matriculated students from scheduled tribes are provided with financial assistance. A system that permits the payment of scholarship and fee reimbursement has been set up for students whose parents make upto Rs. 2,50,000/year.

Ashram-style government – Ashram-style government schools are residential schools primarily for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students, aiming to provide free education and accommodation in a conducive learning environment. These schools are often located in remote and inaccessible tribal areas and offer various facilities like food, lodging, and sometimes even medical assistance and public funded with local support.

Of the nine schools, three are for girls and six are for males.

Up to class 12, all of these schools have undergone upgrades. Four of these schools have received CBSE recognition.

Model Residential School Eklawya

The central government is making sure a comprehensive financial aid scheme is in place with the aim of improving the educational standing of boys and girls from tribes. Under this scheme, students from class 6 to class 12 at the Eklawya Model Boarding Schools in districts Lakhimpur Khiri and Bahraich receive free lodging, boarding, uniforms, and study materials. These kinds of schools are being built in Lalitpur and Sonbhadra districts.

Aid to scheduled tribes whose families endured atrocity

The government of India offers minimum financial assistance of Rs. 85,000/- to a maximum of Rs. 8, 25,000/according to the official manual available on the subject, to personnel/families of scheduled tribes affected with atrocity under the provisions made vide scheduled caste and tribes prevention of atrocities Act, 1989 and PCR Act.

Bicycle programs and uniforms for female students from scheduled tribes

The Uniform and Bicycle Scheme provides coverage for female students attending various schools other than Government Ashram System institutions or residential schools.

As an incentive for their academic pursuits, those female students are entitled to a uniform and a bicycle.

Scheme for Matrimony Grant

Under this programme, marriage grants of Rs. 20,000 are given to the daughters of underprivileged members of the scheduled tribes category.



Hostel-- In the districts of Balrampur and Bargadva Mahrajganj a 50 student hostel is run with the goal of giving free boarding education to kids belonging to scheduled tribes.

Reservations and Affirmative Action -

The Nepalese government has put in place a number of affirmative action initiatives in response to requests from indigenous communities. The socioeconomic standing of underprivileged groups, like the Tharus, is intended to be improved by these measures. Since many Tharus still encounter obstacles while trying to receive benefits, the efficacy of these initiatives has been called into doubt.

Federalism and Self-Government -

Nepal's transition to a federal government has created new opportunities for Tharu political involvement. More autonomy is possible with the establishment of federal states. Federalism has not been applied consistently, yet, and Tharu leaders are still pushing for the acknowledgement of their political and cultural rights.

5. Conclusion

The political development of the Tharu tribes of Nepal and India is at a turning point. Though contemporary political mobilization has emerged as a crucial force in promoting human rights, traditional forms of governance nevertheless serve as a foundation for community resilience. Persistent issues with land rights, political representation, and marginalization highlight the necessity of ongoing lobbying and involvement with state policy. The capacity of the Tharu people to manage these difficulties while maintaining their rich cultural history and identity will determine the course of their politics in the future.

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