

**Women Empowerment with Regard to Social Media among the Tharus of  
Bahraich district in Uttar Pradesh**

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**ABSTRACT**

Woman in India make up to 52% of its total population. Woman empowerment in India is a much debated topic and a harbinger of challenging task as one need to acknowledge the fact of gender divide issues and discrimination against women as social malice since thousands of years. Mass media plays one of the significant roles in women's development and its empowerment. Media can create an awakening inspiration to achieve their potential as prime movers of change in society. Women of the Tharus of Bahraich are also not devoid of social media. Thus the present study is an anthropological study of women empowerment with regards to social media among the Tharus.

**Keywords-** Women Empowerment, Tharus, Bahraich, social Media,

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society. Empowering women aims to inspire women with the courage to break free from the chains of limiting self belief societal and patterns or religious conditioning that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to see their true beauty and power. Media will be focused as one of the chief important alternative requisites in helping the women empowered. It will help as the best means and access to speak out against the oppression and marginalization of women at the grass root level. Such media will help rediscovering the purpose of mass communication as any conventional or mainstream media refuses to acknowledge mass communication as the mission for the benefit of the common people and their survival. Social media encompasses a wide variety of online content, from social networking sites like Face book to interactive encyclopedias like Wikipedia. Social media are computer mediated technologies that allow the ideas, career interests, creating and sharing of information, and other forms of expression via virtual community and network. Social media are interactive web 2.0 internet- based applications. User generated content, such as text posts or comments, videos or digital photos, and data generated through all online interactions, are the lifeblood of social media. Users create specific profiles for the app or website that are designed and maintained by the social media organization. Social media facilitate the development of online social Network by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals and groups. Social media changes the way individuals and large organizations communicate. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of technical studies Social media is changing the way individuals and large organizations communicate.

Women Empowerment refers to increasing and improving the social, political, economic and legal strength of the women, to make them confident enough to claim their rights and to ensure equal-right to women such as freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity, have complete control of their life, both within and outside of their home and workplace, women to make their own decisions and choices, Women to have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities, Women have equal social status in the society, Women have equal rights for social and economic justice, economic choices and determine financial, Women get equal opportunity for education, Women get equal employment opportunity without any gender bias, Women get safe and comfortable working environment, Women have the rights to get their voices heard.

Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed. Women Empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not to the individuals but to the society as well. The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also help develop the society. Unlike earlier days when they stayed at home only and do only kitchen stuffs, nowadays, they roam outside and also earn money like the male members of the society. Women empowerment helps women to stand

on their own legs, become independent and also to earn for their family which grows country's economy. Women Empowerment leads to decrease in domestic violence.

Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. Women are making the nation proud by their outstanding performances almost every sphere including medical science, social service, engineering, etc. Thus the paper will specially highlight the positive perspectives of social media as a developmental tool to resonates and portray the views and ideas of the oppressed and marginalized Tharu women with regards to social media.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The present paper is the based on anthropological research done on Tharu tribe of District Bahraich. The Tharu tribe is schedule tribe of India which inhabiting the tarai area of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Anthropological field work methods like Rapport establishment, Purposive and Snowball Sampling, Participant and Non-participant Observation, Structure and Unstructured Interview are used. It also used secondary sources that include books, articles published in journals and online websites.

### **ABOUT THE TRIBE**

Tharus mostly live in the Tarai belt of Uttar Pradesh. The Region covers five districts of Uttar Pradesh namely Lakhimpur Kheri, Balrampur, Bahraich, Shravasti and Maharajganj close to the border of Nepal. Some of the Tharu villages are in District Uddham Singh Nagar (which was earlier a part the district Nanital of the then Uttar Pradesh and now is a part of newly formed state of Uttaranchal).

The Tharu is well known scheduled tribe of Uttar Pradesh. It was declared as scheduled tribe in U.P. in the year 1967, along with four other tribes. After independence, for the first time in June, 1967 the President of India notified five tribes of U.P. viz Raji, Bhotia, Jaunsari, Tharu and Bhoksa as scheduled tribes four, out of these five tribes namely Raji, Bhotia, Jaunsari and Bhoksa (Buxa) have now become a part of Uttarakhand, though some villages of the Bhoksas are still in district Bijnor of Uttar Pradesh. Hence there were only two scheduled tribes left in Uttar Pradesh namely Tharu and Bhoksa after the division of the state in the year 2000.

### **ABOUT THE AREA**

District Bahraich is situated in North eastern part of Devipatan Division. It is situated between the 28.24 & 27.4 latitude & 81.65 to 81.3 eastern longitudes. District Bahraich has an international border with Nepal on the Northern part. There are 15 blocks in Bahraich district in which Nanpara tehsil has 4 blocks, out of these 4 blocks only Mihinpurwa has tharu population village. Mihinpurwa have population. And the present study is done on three village Vishunapur, Fakeerpuri and Bardiya. it also include the Tharus women of Lakhimpur Kheri.

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITH REGARDS TO SOCIAL MEDIA**

Tharu woman enjoys higher status than their men fold among, some section (Rana Tharus) of Tharus it is believed by outsiders that tribal women enjoy freedom or superior status in the society. Majumdar, Srivastava and Hasan all maintain in their writings that the tharu women enjoy a high and dominating position. The Tharu explain this dominance of women on the basis of the Rajput percentage from their mother’s side. The above said statement is famous in context of the Rana Tharu. According to Uttar Pradesh district Gazetteer - Gonda (1989). The Tharu society is matriarchal. The women have very respectable position in the family and have unfettered freedom and full authority to run the house hold.

However, the researcher found that in Present times, this is not true in the case of Tharus of District Bahraich Here among the Tharus male are more authoritative. Therefore the impression of a strong woman authority among Tharus is false. The tharu society here is Patrilineal, Patrilocal and Patriarchal.

**ECONOMIC ASPECT OF THARU WOMEN**

To understand women empowerment among Tharus first we should better understand the status of tharu women in that society. To better understand status of women we should understand their social economic and political condition how they are treated in every aspect. They are treated as an economic asset in the family as well as in agricultural activities except ploughing work. The women of poor families mostly landless, work as wage earners too, the tharu women though are earning money independently have no right to utilize their money according to their needs. Their earned money has given to husband or senior male members of the family, who decide what to do and where to be spent, Hence freedom of economic activities or participation cannot be consider as women empowerment. Following table is showing their economic activity as compare with tharu men.....

**Table-1: Division of Labour Between sexes**

S. No.	Different Economic Activities	Men	Women	Both
1.	Agriculture	Spading and ploughing of fields, sowing of seeds, watching over the crops at night and stocking	Preparing of seeds for sowing weeding the field, taking of meals to men folk in the fields, steering husking and grinding of the corn	Carrying the seeds for sowing to the fields and sometimes helping in sowing harvesting, bundling the ears of corn loading them winnowing, Gardening
2.	Hunting and Fishing	Hunting		Fishing

3.	Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building of new hose and repairing of old ones</li> <li>• Making of ropes, Mats, Nets and traps and musical instruments, carpentry, Blacksmith</li> <li>• Rearing of cattle and grazing of cattle Bringing of fruit from forests</li> <li>• Performance of magical rites and rituals</li> <li>• Labour and service</li> <li>• Boys help the fathers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastering of walls and making of artistic designs and figures on them</li> <li>• Gathering of wild fruits and roots from the forest</li> <li>• Basket making pottery</li> <li>• Cooking of food and fetching of water from wells, preparing of curd and ghee stitching their and children's clothes and also rearing animals.</li> <li>• Domestic labour such as, grinding or pounding of gram.</li> <li>• Girls helps the mothers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milking the buffalo's and cow</li> <li>• Poultry Farming</li> </ul>
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Female of the household are performing harvesting, threshing etc. except ploughing the field which is considered a taboo for tharu women. The tharu women like sowing, weeding harvesting threshing etc. except ploughing the field which is considered a taboo for tharu women. The women work in the field along with their men. Tharus female are more hard working then men as table show they participate in Plastering of walls and making of artistic designs and figures on them Gathering of wild fruits and roots from the forest Basket making pottery Cooking of food and fetching of water from wells, preparing of curd and ghee stitching their and children's clothes and also rearing animals, Domestic labour such as, grinding or pounding of gram .Girls helps the mothers. Fishing, Animal Husbandry.(Table-1)

But when they are not performing in any economic activity their life style is totally change. Following table showing their daily routine

**Table-2: Daily Routine of tharu women-**

Time	Female's Activities
05 A:M to 09 A:M	Rising up later, sweeping and cleaning of house, fetching of water from the tube well, cooking of morning meal in the fields.
9 AM to 11 AM	Returning and eating their own meal, cleaning of the utensils and tidying the kitchen
11 AM to 3 PM	Busy with pounding or grinding the grain, making of baskets or pottery.
3 PM to 5 PM	Cooking of evening meal, cleaning the house
6 PM to 8 PM	Making of evening meals, cleaning of utensils, retiring to bed early like men except when they have their tribal music. Or watching movie

It is seen in the district that the tharu women are definitely more hard working than men.women are performing in all economic activities along with household work. Many time men forced by their wives to go to the field or undertake agricultural operations, because men would like to smoke, drink, gossip and play cards, inspire of being over worked they do not get the due respect. The reason for this is that women consider themselves inferior to men because of their physical weakness and their inability to perform some task like ploughing the agricultural fields a taboo for women etc. All this compels them to obey their husband and other male members of their family.(Table-2)

In family, the male is head of the family controls other members he take cognizance and gives advice in all matters affecting the family and inter-family relations. The Tharu women occupy no important position in the family. Decisions performing to financial and political matters one takes by the men only. She is rarely consulted for any matter those decisions related to household chores are taken by the eldest female of the family beating the wife and very common among Tharus. Many of them are beaten by their husbands even on small pretexts.

Tharu women are assigned duties and rights different from that of their men. In the field of economic organization women contributed a lot but they are assigned fewer rights than their counterparts. This shows that gender discrimination persists here. It was seen that the girl child is assigned more work as compared to the male child. However, inspite of such inequalities in the gender discrimination the women never raise have this consciousness that they are deprived of any such rights the reason behind is that the tharu community in itself does not have the concept of rights. They only know that every human being is born with some duties and responsibilities which must be performed. The nature has assigned specific duties and work to specific person as the men's duty is to earn livelihood and security for his family, while the women's duty is to look after the household, work agricultural work and bringing up children.

The Women have no right to question about their marriage to the person selected by their parents. They cannot select their spouse on their own. The decision of male member would be final in cases where views are not similar. They are supposed to accept the decision taken by elder male member of the family regarding their marriage, education, health and other important matters concerning their life. Even between the parents the consent of father is important than that of the mother is the father or the head of the family has decided something, upon a particular proposal the disagreement of the mother makes no difference.

#### **POLITICAL ASPECT OF THARU WOMEN**

In political matters the tharu women play a submissive role and are dependent on their husbands for support and assistance. Among Tharus the women are not considered fit for important duties of political nature. They count more as a vote. Their presence in the gram panchayat has been negligible because of their customs. This is also due to a lack of awareness education and experience in a world outside their home. The tharu women contest elections if their husbands or other family members decide that but Nowadays due to the reservation of S.T. women in village panchayat the tharu women are elected as *Pradhan* in some of the tharu villages. In practice however the power and authority of the post of the *Pradhan*, is exercised by their husbands. It was observed that many of these women are the Pradhan only for namesake. The actual decisions and privileges are still being taken and enjoyed by male members of the family, either their husband or son.

It was observed during the field work that in Vishnapur village the Pradhan is a tharu women but her husband carries out all the work and duties of Pradhan. Amongst the villagers he recognized as a Pradhan instead of his wife. also known as Pradhanpati. The woman Pradhan is illiterate totally unaware of the outside world and very busy at home. She is totally unaware of the happening of the Panchayat has no clue as to how the meetings held, and what are the duties and responsibilities of the gram Panchayat and of Gram Pradhan. The husband attends all the meetings of Kshetra, Panchayat and Zila Panchayat executing the duties of the Pradhan. he has full knowledge of this Block Pramukh and all the other higher authorities, neither anybody question this scenario nor

try to create awareness among the females about their rights. The tharu woman attends the meeting only when it becomes essential. The reality is that the women Pradhan act only as a rubber stamp. It is mainly because the traditional political system of Tharus does not give much freedom to the women folk to participate in decision making in the Biradari Panchayat. Thus it can be said that however the Panchayati Raj act prouder reservation to S.T. women in panchayat but it has not led to any real upliftment to tribal women.

Unlike that fakeerpur village Pradhan was. also Tharu women name as Madhuri is powerful lady n take all decisions. she is lady today's empowered women./she is not consider inferior then men among that tharu village,.she also ride bikes and dress like man also.

### **SOCIAL ASPECT OF THARU WOMEN**

Now a day, the tharu girls are getting educated but they generally leave school at primary level or pre secondary level only to assets in family economy. Previously, Tharu women were not allowed higher education like men and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies as their economic status allow them, Daughter of Pradhan of vishnapur village went to Bardiya (Nepal).and she started computer center for tharu girls.

Literacy rate of tharu tribe of Bahraich is 81.25% among them 37.7% female literacy rate .that show females are less educated; this is only because their poor economic condition, but those families that have better economic status send their daughter to school. Now other girls are also going district degree college that will improve their condition that lead to women empowerment.

When impact of social media is shown on whole world then how tharu can left. They are fond of watching movies and trying to copying them. Tharus youth are going to school, degree college and outside come contact with outsider. Tharu girls are now fond of social media as they are getting computer education. They are using whatsapp, Face book, Twitter, Instagram etc . and use of these social media platform bring lot of changes in their personality n life style also. Tharus are also creating group for business purpose also, name of some pages are *Tharu Jewelry From India, Tharu Organic, Tharu creation etc.* twitter account *The Rising Tharu tweet* girls from Tharu tribals inside the parliament of India, Sports based intervention are making positive impact on young girls, meeting of tharu women with leading politician is showing that tharu women are now not limited to their house only. they are also meeting with mainstream.

The Tharu females are very shy and rarely talk with outsiders especially with ales in matter of marriage, remarriage, separation elopement as well as pre-mutual sex; the tharu males have considerable freedom. But time has been change as thinking change so the people are. The marriage pattern which was endogamy is now changing to Exogamy. Love marriages are also increasing as social media connecting people to people. People are

come to know about latest trends. they are creating lots of Face book groups also examples are *Tharus are Best, Welcome Tharus, We are Tharus, Tharu's culture, tharu community* and so on in which lot of tharu youths are member of that groups, these group brings lots of tharu girls and boys on same platform, where they share their ideas and also making friends. Social media also influencing Family institution, members are more becoming individualistic and career oriented. it also influencing their life style their dressing sense ,ideas and thought.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Mahatma Gandhi aptly said “if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family”. So education is also one of the prime needs of tharu women towards its development and empowerment in the society.

Women Empowerment is a burning issue all over the world. Women empowerment and women equality with men is a universal issue. World economy suffers a lot because of the unequal opportunity for women at workplaces. Women are equally competent. Nowadays, tharu women are even ahead of men in many socio-economic activities. Tharu women are as talented as men. Tharu women empowerment can reduce poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of Tharu women help the family to come out of poverty trap. It encourages women to show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.

Tharu women who are deprived of basic human rights can reach to various helpline through the initiative of social media groups and members. There is no doubts that the developmental facts of tharu women has always been the prime focus of planning since independence and a clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles on the path of tharu women emancipation from the Government and tharu women themselves. Impact analysis of popular media throws light on empowering and debilitating influence of Social media.

Generation of Social media for women empowerment and protest against derogatory and indecent portrayal of women in media must go on simultaneously. Committed and gender sensitive men and women can implement gender sensitive strategies within the system and effective use of the media by activists. outside the system can generate awareness and non scientist masses for social transformation favorable to empowerment of women. Likewise, Social media and other positive approaches need to harness to bridge the age old gender divide issues in tharu community to achieve the rightful share of tharu women and their empowerments in most optimal way. The various Challenges posed by the new era have forced us to provide a concrete and developmental aspects alternatives in lieu of empowerment of tharu women through the possible available media.

Promoting a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of tharu women in the media is very important to use it in a progressive way and avoiding the ill-effects of any type medium of Media. Tharu women's knowledge about

media and access to and control over the various forms of modern and conventional media is still limited to their tharu community. We need more action oriented programmed and policies which inculcate tharu women in understanding the various technicalities and prospects of media. Keeping into consideration tharu women's empowerment is a must need of the society.

The increase in the participation and access of tharu women to decision-making and self-expression through the media and new technologies of communication is in a way empowering women. For women empowerment of tharu tribals social media helping lot in spreading awareness and of motivation

Nowadays several Initiatives have been also taking by Government and Non-Government organization. Recently chief minister of Uttar Pradesh announce schemes for tharu women to empowering them by education and skill development. The positive and powerful role that the media can play in the empowerment of women and gender equality should be supported and further explored.

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