



Cultural Beliefs of Tharu Tribe of Lakhimpur Kheri District, Uttar Pradesh

¹Naureen Bano, ²Dr. Alam Ara

¹Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology and Social Work, SHUATS, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

²Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology and Social Work, SHUATS, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

Email - ¹naureensheikh1989@gmail.com, ²alam.shiats@gmail.com

Abstract: This research paper is a result of the fieldwork which was conducted in two blocks of Lakhimpur Kheri i.e. Palia block and Nighasan block among the people of Tharu tribe. The people of Tharu tribe are nature loving and simple people who reside on the border of India and Nepal in Terai plain. The Government of India considers Tharu tribe as a scheduled tribe. For the present study descriptive design and purposive sampling has been selected. The main purpose of this study was to see the socio-cultural and health problems of Tharu tribe on the basis of few factors like their religious beliefs, their beliefs in magic and spirit, transportation problem, types of diseases and their beliefs in types of health care facilities. Even after getting better education, people of Tharu tribe were superstitious. They believe in black magic, ghosts and spirits. They still choose jhad phook and ethno medicine instead of going to hospital for treatment. They go to the government hospital when the situation of a patient gets critical. It was observed during the study that with the passage of time and due to impact of modernization now they are educating their children but they are still not leaving their superstitious beliefs which have direct impact on their socio-cultural and health status. Hence this present research provides crucial and important data to the government and other important agencies so that they can take major steps to improve the socio-cultural and health status of Tharu tribes in Palia block and Nighasan block of Lakhimpur Kheri district, Uttar Pradesh. This study will also be important and helpful for the development of other tribes across the world.

Key Words: Ethno-medicine, health, socio-cultural, superstitious, Tharu tribe.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Tribal culture is considered as an integral part of our cultural heritage. Therefore, complete knowledge of tribal culture is very important for showing different Indian culture. Because tribal culture shows true meaning of unity in diversity. The tribal population in India have their different typical customs, traditions, rituals, beliefs and law which make them unique. Previously tribal were unable to organize their socio-cultural life and also they did not have any particular social interaction. They did not have any definite system, except homogeneity. But slowly-slowly as tribal people gained experiences, knowledge they learnt to live and work together. Thus, this way the concept of social organization and cultural system started in tribal areas.

The Tharu tribe occupies a sizable portion of the Indo-Nepal borderlands. Several researchers claimed that Tharus were descended from Rajputs, and that they also belonged to the Mongoloid race because of their outward look. (Singh, 1965)

Tharus refers to them as Hindus since they identify as being of Rajput heritage and celebrate all Hindu festivals including Holi, Diwali, and Teej in addition to their traditional tribal festival *Charai* and *Maghi*, which they observe as their new year on the first of *Magh*. In the past, they observed *Diwali* as *Barsi* Day to ensure the tranquility of their ancestors' spirits. It was used to prepare special meals called *bhandara*. All households are gathered to provide the ingredients for creating food. But now that they have embraced Hindu culture, they observe this festival by lighting candles and making god or goddess prayers. Women from the Tharu tribe perform their folk dance, which they refer to as "*Hori*," during *Holi* festivals. They also perform their traditional dance during the *Maghi* festival, which is celebrated similarly to how Hindus celebrate the *Khichdi* festival. Marriage and death are the only two life cycle rites practised by them. But, some of them who are financially secure and educated have started to celebrate *Chhati*, *Mundan*, and other functions. The bulk of this tribe's members are not vegetarians and enjoy drinking alcohol. The staples of Tharus' diet are rice, vegetables, fish, and meat. They typically consume three meals a day.



Together with their own ancient Gods, they also worship a number of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. They revere *Hanuman*, *Parvati*, and *Shankar*. They had great faith in *Parvati Devi* and *Shankar Bhagwan*. They typically have miniature idols of their *kuldevta Bhuiya*, *Budhe Baba*, and other ancestors that they revere. To satisfy God, Tharus essentially offers coconut, beer, chicken, goat, pig, and other things. They claim that the pig is *Budhe Baba's* most beloved offering. They give their priest, whom they refer to as "*Bharra*," the highest position and frequently seek his counsel. Actually, their botanist is *Bharra*. In Tharu civilization, this title is given to someone who is knowledgeable about the qualities of natural plants. He also understands the *Vashikaran mantra*. *Bharra* demands nice food and payment for his counsel in order to appease the God and Goddess. They also worship many plants, including *peepal*, *aam*, and *tulsi*, as well as cows, snakes, and monkeys among other animals.

The Tharus have a strong superstition. Like other tribes, they place a strong emphasis on ghosts and spirits. They attempt to heal patients through exorcism rather than bringing them to a doctor. The superstitious Tharu tribes revere ghost spirits and souls. They sacrifice animals and must make preparations for *Bhandara* in order to keep the phantom souls at peace. Modern society's citizens still practice superstition, but they do not alter their way of life the way Tharu people do. They mostly practice agriculture and animal husbandry; hence they worship a variety of deities to ensure the success of their agricultural endeavours.

The Tharu tribe is distinct in that it respects both its elders and those who are older than it. They never use names to address their elders. Even women are unable to accept their younger sister's husband's name. They respect them without fail. But, when speaking to their younger children, they use their given names or a specific kinship term. A teknonymy rule is observed between a husband and wife. They also adhere to the avoidance rule. Male steer clear of his wife's older sister, his daughter-in-law, and his younger brother's wife. There is a light-hearted link between *Dewar-Bhabhi* and *Sali-Jija* among the Tharu tribe to some extent.

The Tharus place a high value on friendship, which they refer to as "*Maitana*," in addition to relationships formed through marriage and blood. There is no requirement for *Maitana* relationships to exist within the community; they can exist with other communities as well.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Verma (2011) found Tharu tribe is proceeding under social motion fastly and their new generation are taking a big part in this procedure. The new generation of Tharu community are not much conscious of higher education but they have ruling place in their community politics. It is right that Tharu people do not have very high administrative services in governmental or private section but they have numerous constitutional and political posts at their community and territorial level. Now youth of Tharu community are neglecting and rejecting their customary systems so their main identification i.e. their culture is disappearing but it is not only happening in Tharu community but it can be seen in all common communities. Currently Tharu youths are fighting for their virtues and individuality but they should know that they can't get shining future if they will not admire their past. Therefore giving importance to their socio-cultural and their traditions and customs is very essential. He also suggested that government should financially support the culture of Tharu community. It was also found that new generation of Tharu community are underdeveloped in the matter of modern education, communication and technology. They hesitate to go to other developed cities for education. The main problems of Tharu youth are found poverty, lack of communication and illiteracy. Currently there are many other communities residing in Tharu region so the procedure of cultural interchange is still on-going.

Singh et al. (2015) found in their research paper "Tharus and Their Enhancement in Modern Time of Lakhimpur - Kheri District, U.P." that Tharus believed in matriarchal society in which women have rights to take decision in their daily life and in his study he also found that Tharus practice negotiation type of marriage in which parents of both bride and groom arrange their marriage and divorce is also easily permitted if both husband and wife are not happy with their relationship and they can remarry if they find another partner.

Neupane (2019) described that it is clear that not only tourism has made important impression in one's culture, tradition, language, dressing style and other cultural events but also the change of newest technology like mass media, social media, globalization and latest styles of universalization of art, culture, literature and classically influence uniformly.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Locale of the study: According to population, Uttar Pradesh, also referred to as U.P., is one of the larger Indian states. Lucknow serves as the state's administrative capital, and Allahabad serves as its judicial capital. Uttar Pradesh



has a total area of 2, 40,927 square kilometres (Sq. km.). The states that border Uttar Pradesh are Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand.

Research Design: For this study, a descriptive research design has been used. It details the social, cultural, and economic standing of the Tharu tribe in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Kheri District.

Selection of District: Purposive sampling was used to choose the Kheri District for this study because Lakhimpur Kheri has a large Tharu community.

Selection of the Block: In the district of Lakhimpur Kheri, there are 15 blocks. Purposive sampling was used to choose Palia Block and Nighasan Block from this group because of the high concentration of Tharus in these blocks.

Selection of Respondent: Purposive sampling was used to choose 250 respondents for the current investigation.

Interview Schedule: An interview schedule was created to gather data from respondents while keeping in mind the various study objectives.

Participant observation: The researcher has taken part in their cultural dance and other cultural activities to gather actual data.

Individual Interviews: With this approach, the researcher interviewed each respondent individually. So that respondents can give interviews freely and without fear, maintain their confidence, and the researcher can obtain correct data.

Secondary Data: Secondary data was primarily collected from Block office, Tehsil, Government health hospitals, Pariyojna samiti, prior studies, published articles and the internet.

Audio and Visual Aid: To gather information, the researcher used a mobile phone and a speech recorder.

P.R.A Technique: With the aid of these techniques, the researcher quickly learned information about the community and villages through transect walk and pilot survey.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on the No. of Rooms in their House

n=250			
S.No.	No. of Rooms	Frequency	Percentage
1.	One	30	12.00
2.	Two	135	54.00
3.	More than 2	85	34.00
	Total	250	100.00

The above table 1. represents that majority of respondents i.e. 54.00 per cent had two rooms in their house, 12.00 per cent respondents had only one room and the remaining 34.00 per cent respondents had more than 2 rooms in their house. Tharus keep one room as a worshipping room which they call in their native language as *Thaan* in which they have photographs of all their deities whom they worship and they believe that if any outside person enters that room then there will be harm on any family member.

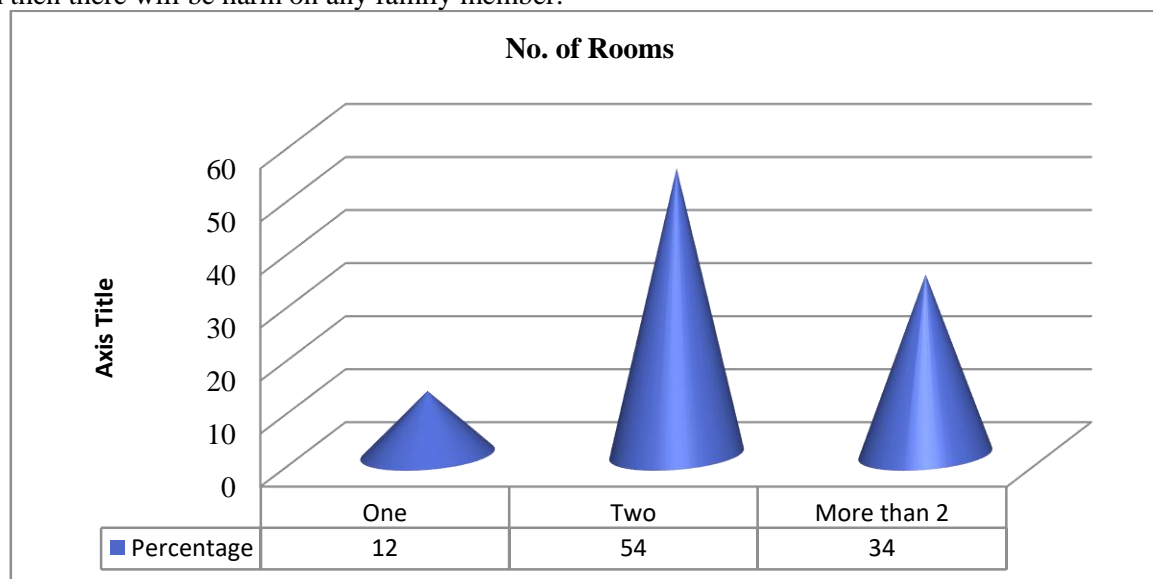


Fig. 1: Distribution of respondents based on the No. of Rooms in their House



Table 2. Distribution of the respondents on the basis of their believe as Almighty (*Kuldevta*)

n=250

S.No.	Almighty (<i>Kuldevta</i>)	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Shiv – Parvati	87	34.80
2.	Bhuiya	98	39.20
3.	Budhe baba	65	26.00
	Total	250	100.00

The above table 2. reveals that 34.80 per cent respondents believe Shiv-Parvati as Almighty (*Kuldevta*) and when two brothers have separation with mutual understanding then they make idol of Shiv – Parvati in the courtyard. So that blessings of their *Kuldevta* remain on the both house, 39.20 per cent respondents believe *Bhuiya* as their Almighty (*Kuldevta*) while 26.00 per cent respondents believe Budhe baba as their Almighty (*Kuldevta*). They also worship other Hindu God/Goddess as they consider Rajputs as their ancestors.

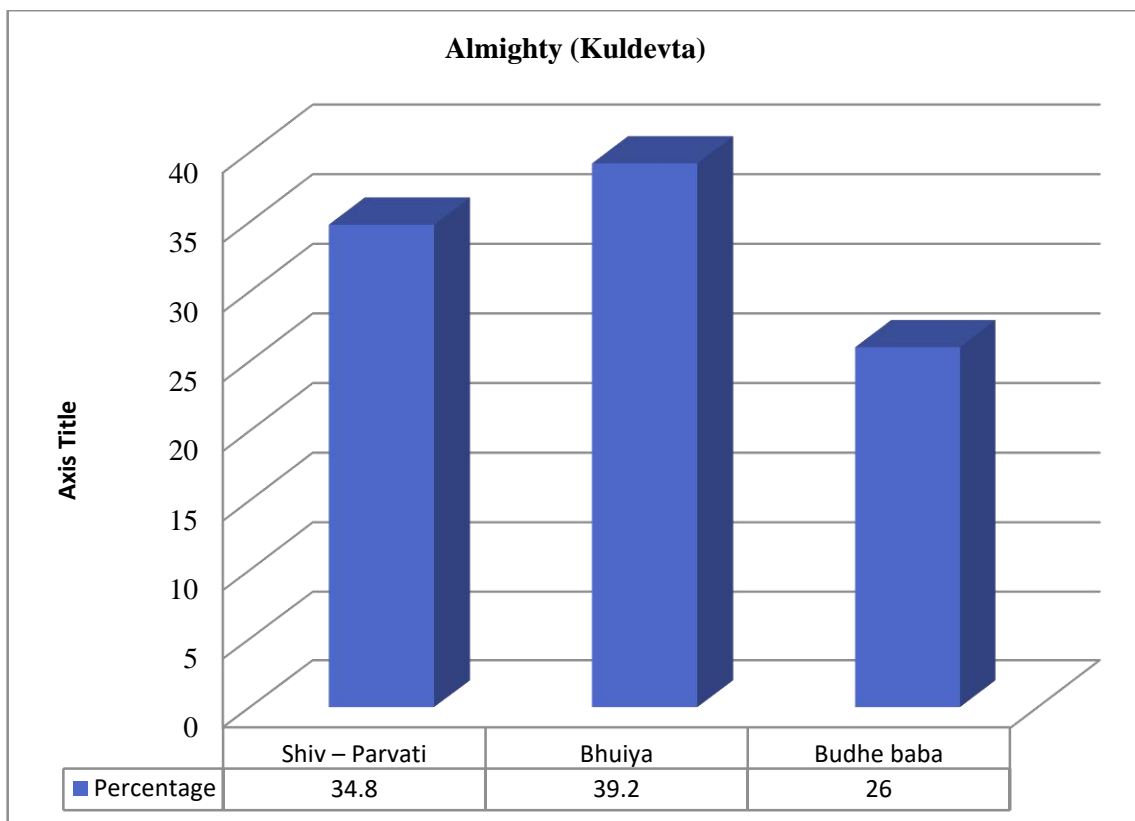


Fig. 2: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of their believe as Almighty (*Kuldevta*)

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents on the basis of their Religious Belief

n=250

S.No.	Religious Belief	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Naturalism+Animism+Totem	159	63.60
2.	Animism+Totem	26	10.40
3.	Naturalism+Totem	65	26.00
	Total	250	100.00

The above table 3. shows that 63.60 per cent respondents belief in worshipping naturalism+animism+totem, 10.40 per cent respondents have belief in animism+totem and 26.00 per cent respondents have belief in naturalism+totem.

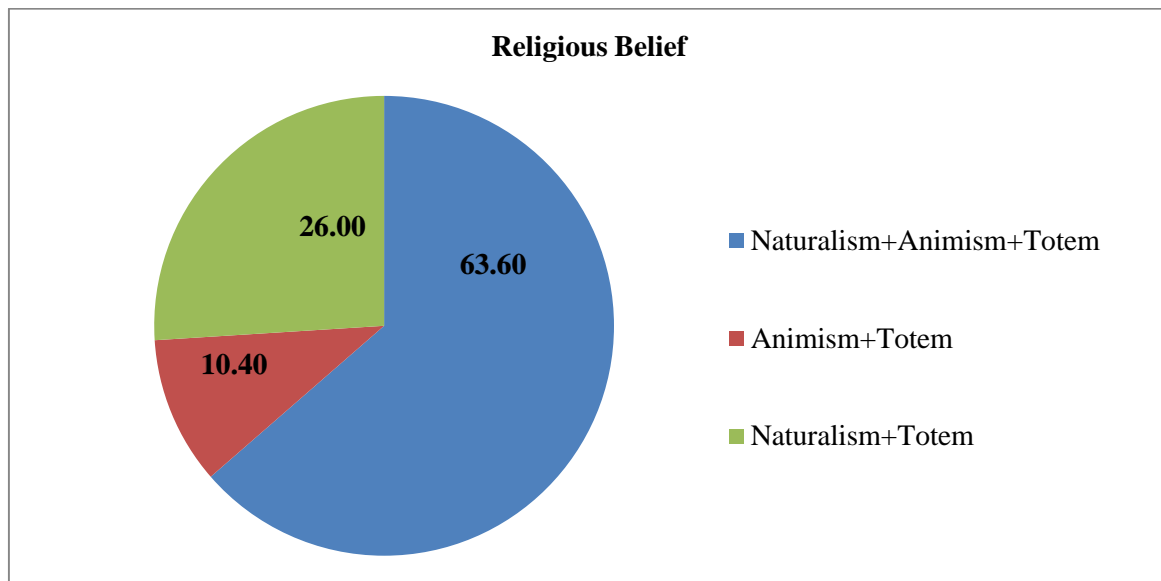


Fig. 3: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of their Religious Belief

Table 4. Distribution of respondents on the basis of Worshipping Place in their House

n=250

S.No.	Worshipping Place	Frequency	Percentage
1.	In the room+In the courtyard+Outside the house	148	59.20
2.	In the room+In the courtyard	60	24.00
3.	In the room+Outside the House	42	16.80
	Total	250	100.00

The above table 4. shows that 59.20 per cent respondents had worshipping place in the room+in the courtyard+outside the house, 24.00 per cent respondents worship in the room+in the courtyard while 16.80 per cent respondents worship their *Kuldevta* idol in the room+outside the house. Tharus worship in the room and they believe that if someone else other than family member enters in that room then one of the family members will face any type of harm and to cure that harm a *Bharra* is called who does *pooja* to cure that family member.

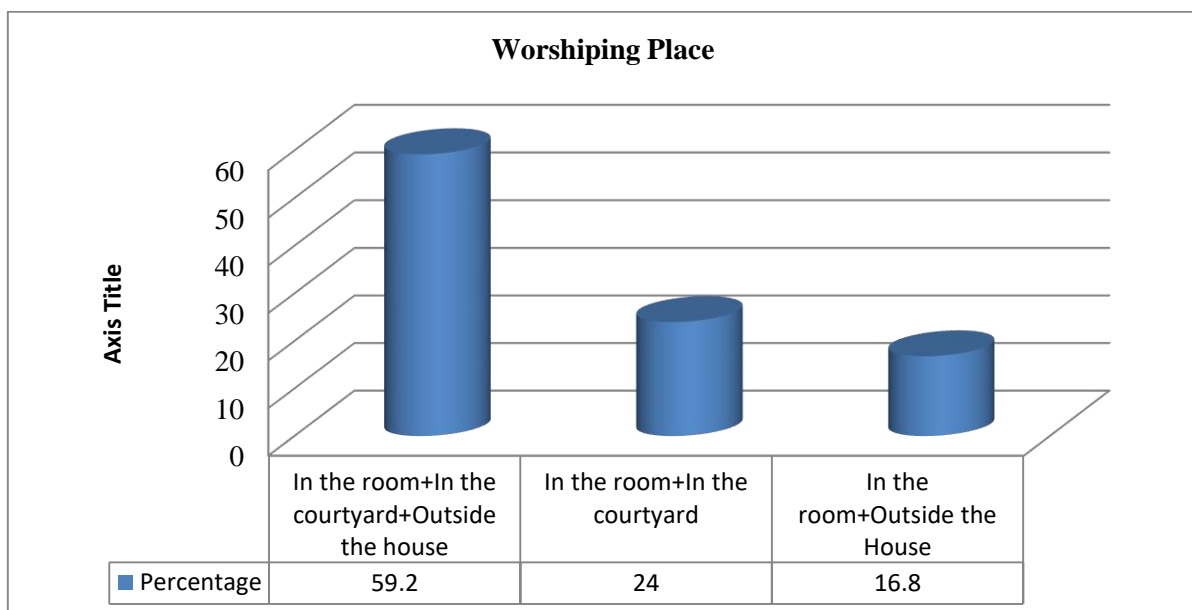


Fig. 4: Distribution of respondents on the basis of Worshipping Place in their House



Table 5. Distribution of the respondents on the basis of Festivals they celebrate

n=250			
S.No.	Festivals	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Holi+Diwali+Maghi+Dussehra	42	16.80
2.	Holi+Diwali+Maghi+Shivratri+Dussehra	77	30.80
3.	Holi+Diwali+Maghi+Shivratri+Navratri+Dussehra	131	52.40
	Total	250	100.00

The above table 5. reveals that 52.40 per cent respondents used to celebrate Holi+Diwali+Maghi+Shivratri+Navratri+Dussehra with great enthusiasm. They celebrate Holi in different way, on the first day of Holi one member of the family plant a Semal plant and before playing Holi with colours, they first play with the ashes of *Holika Dahan*, 30.80 per cent respondents used to celebrate Holi+Diwali+Maghi+Shivratri+Dussehra like other Hindus. In previous researches it was found that Tharus used to celebrate Diwali festival as *Barshi*, but in present study it is found that like Hindu culture if someone dies in a family and do not practice *Terahvi* rituals before Diwali then they do not celebrate Diwali, 16.80 per cent respondents celebrate Holi+Diwali+Maghi+Dussehra. Tharus celebrate Maghi festival in the celebrate *Khichdi*. On Holi and Magh they perform their traditional dance on their folk songs.

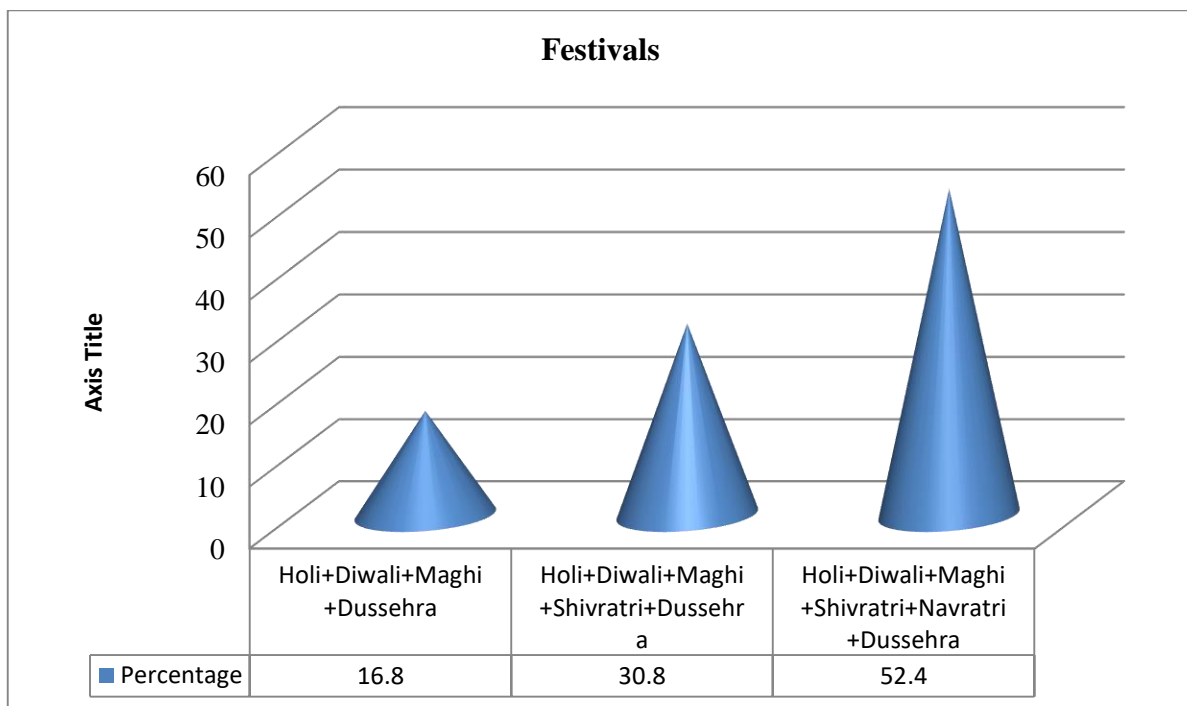


Fig. 5: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of Festivals they celebrate

Table 6. Distribution of the respondents on the basis of their Offering to Please God

n=250			
S.No.	Offering to Please God	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Goat+Hen+Grain	114	45.60
2.	Hen+Grain	56	22.40
3.	Grain	45	18.00
4.	Pig	35	14.00
	Total	250	100.00

The above table 6. reveals that 45.60 per cent respondents favourite offering to please God was Goat+Hen+Grain, 22.40 per cent respondents prefer to offer Hen+Grain to please God, 18.00 per cent respondents likes to offer Grain while remaining 14.00 per cent respondents offer Pig to please God which is favourite sacrifice of their *Kuldevta Budhe baba*.

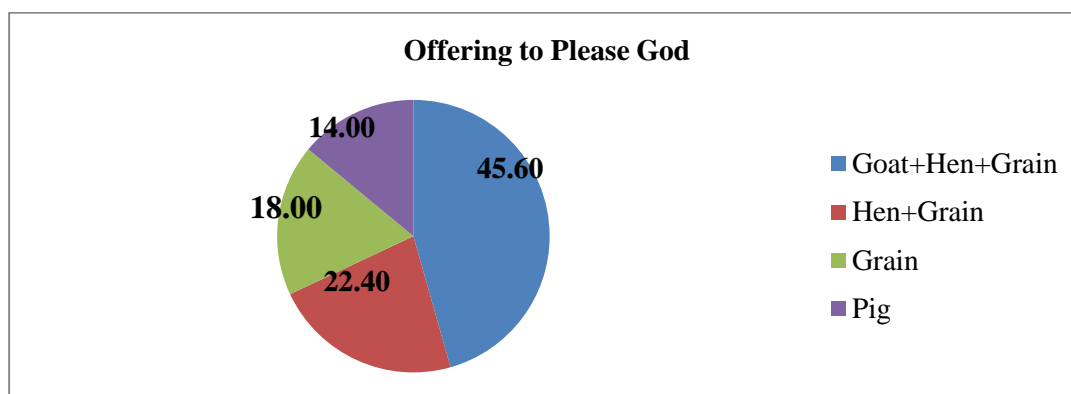


Fig. 6: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of their Offering to Please God

Table 7. Distribution of respondents on the believe in Type of Spirits

n=250

S.No.	Type of Spirits	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Ancestral Spirit	123	49.20
2.	Good Spirit	17	06.80
3.	Bad Spirit	110	44.00
	Total	250	100

The above table 7. reveals that Tharu tribe after modernization and after getting educated then also they believe in spirits. 49.20 per cent respondents believe in their Ancestral spirit and believe that their ancestral spirit help them in their difficulty, 06.80 per cent respondents believe in good spirit while the remaining 44.00 per cent respondents believe in bad spirit.

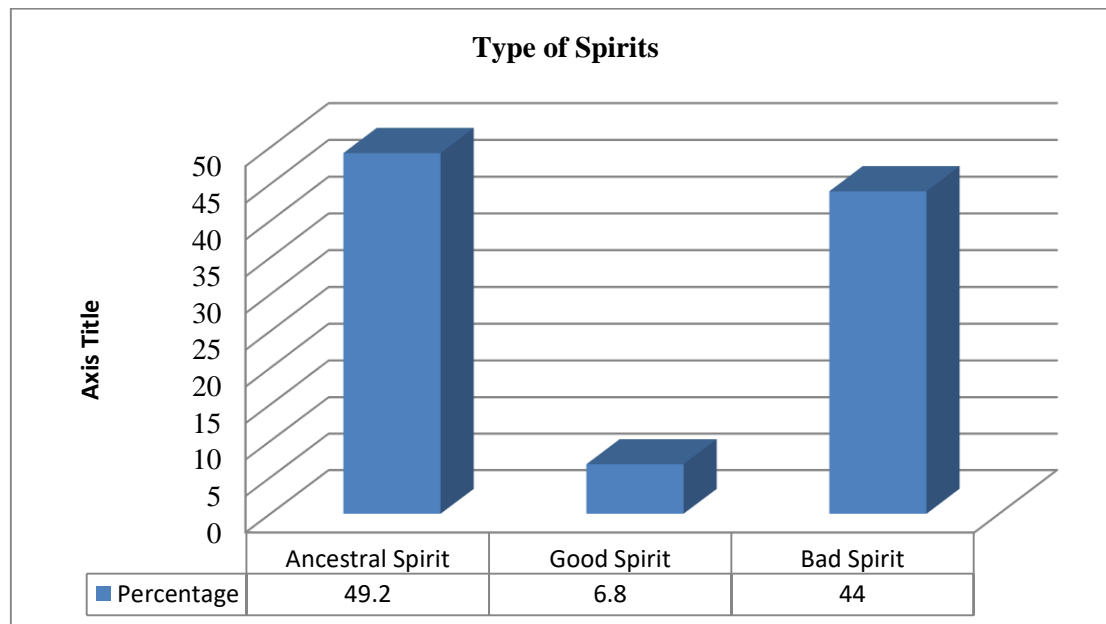


Fig. 7: Distribution of respondents on the believe in Type of Spirits

Table 8. Distribution of respondents on the basis of Body Art

n=250

S.No.	Type of Body Art	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Tattoo+Piercing	130	52.00
2.	Tattoo	62	24.80
2.	Piercing	58	23.20
	Total	250	100.00



The above table 8. represents that majority of respondents i.e. 52.00 per cent respondents practice tattoo+piercing art, 24.80 per cent respondents used to practice tattoo while 23.20 per cent respondents were found to practice piercing only. During the survey it was observed that there were two types of tattoos which were found among them. One tattoo which was noticed on their hands and another one which can be seen on their forehead which is a unique tattooing art which is different from other tribal area. They believe that if someone has pain on any part of the body and do tattoo on that part then they can get relief from that pain and new generation consider tattoo as a part of fashion. It was also noticed that the female Tharus pierce in the middle of their nose.

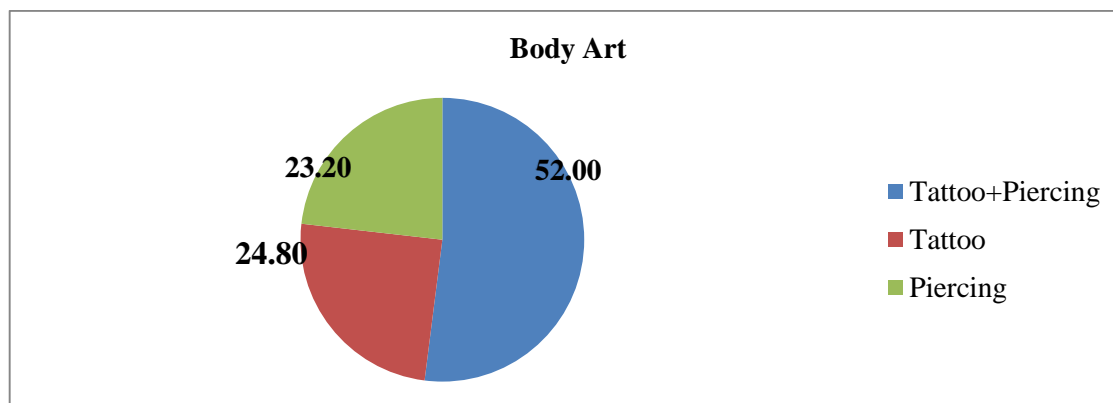


Fig. 8: Distribution of respondents on the basis of Body Art

Table 9. Distribution of respondents on the basis of their Believe in Magic

n=250

S.No.	Type of Magic	Frequency	Percentage
1.	White Magic	50	20.00
2.	Black Magic	125	50.00
3.	Don't believe in any type of magic	75	30.00
	Total	250	100.00

The above table 9. shows that majority of respondents i.e. 50.00 per cent used to believe in black magic and the lady who do black magic is called '*Dahaniya*' and to cure the black magic *Bharra* is called by the victim family who chants '*Mantras*' to cure that person, 20.00 per cent respondents believe in white magic whereas the remaining 30.00 person who belong to new generation do not believe in any type of magic.

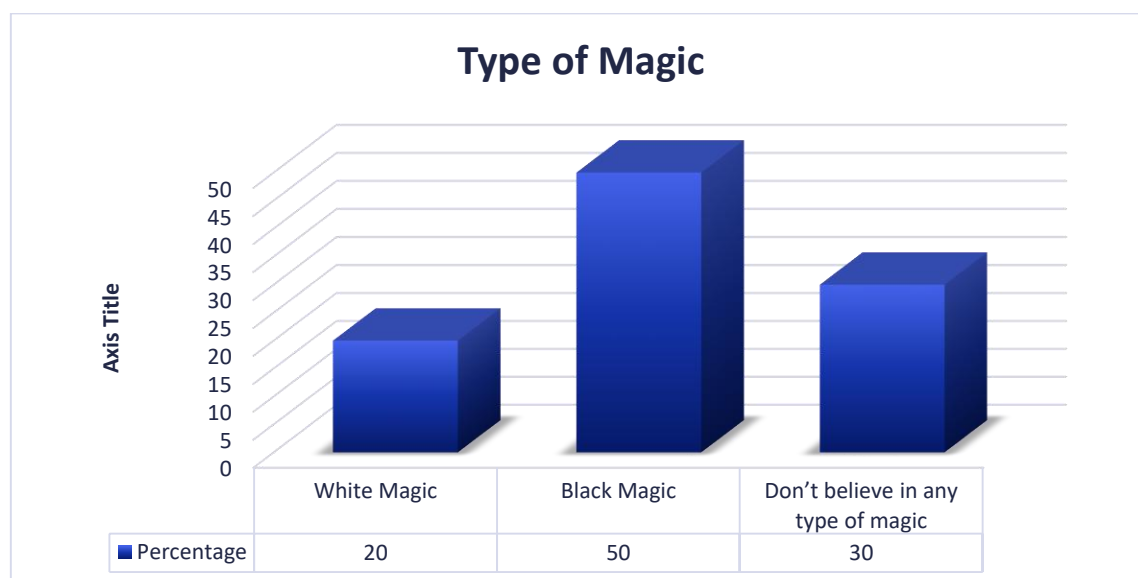


Fig. 9: Distribution of respondents on the basis of their Believe in Magic



5. CONCLUSION:

It is concluded after completing the study that if we look at the Tharus culture, it was discovered that they were very eco – friendly, all cultural thing and activities of this tribe was deeply related with nature. Their residence, food, clothes, art, religion, economy and many other part of life was based on nature and keep ecological balance. Their culture was incredibly fascinating and unique, and this was visible in their music, dancing, tattoos, handicrafts and magic. Tharu people worship other Hindu God/Goddess but mainly they worship their tribal Goddess i.e., The Earth which they call as 'Bhuiya' in their folk language. They had firm faith in God Shiva and Goddess Parvati referred to as *Gaura* and *Parvati*. They observed all Hindu festivals, including Holi, Diwali, Dussehra, Maghi, Shivratri etc., however Holi, Shivratri and Maghi were observed with greater fervour. They maintained their superstition even after receiving better education. They hold a belief in ghosts, spirits, and black magic. The current generation is forgetting their own cultural language as a result of receiving education in both Hindi and English. The old Tharu culture is under peril because they are ignoring their original tribal customs. To maintain their identity, however, old culture must also be preserved.

6. RECOMMENDATION:

Tharus should be made aware of the need to protect their own culture and traditions against other migrants in the area who might assault them. They must to be urged to hold on to wholesome customs and cultures and renounce harmful ones.

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