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**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF THE THARU AND  
BUXA TRIBES OF KUMAON**

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<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<i>Higher Education, Tharu Tribe, Buxa Tribe, Cultural Diversity, Kumaon, Folk Music, Uttarakhand</i>	<p>The tribes of Kumaon hold an important place in the social and cultural diversity of the region. Uttarakhand, which emerged as the 27th state of India, is renowned not only for its natural beauty but also for its religious, spiritual, and cultural significance. Kumaon division comprises six districts. Human life and social activities are deeply connected with society, and tribal communities express their emotions collectively through music, dance, and festivals, creating a vibrant cultural atmosphere.</p> <p>The tribal communities living in forests, hills, and plateau regions, often considered primitive or uncivilized from a modern perspective, are called indigenous or tribal communities. Due to their socio-economic backwardness, these communities are referred to as “tribes.” Among the major tribes found in Kumaon, the Tharu and Buxa are significant tribal groups inhabiting the southern Terai region of Uttarakhand, particularly in Udham Singh Nagar. They are especially famous for their folk songs, festivals, fairs, dance songs, and dramatic performances. Festivals are</p>



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## INTRODUCTION

The tribes of Kumaon hold an important place in the social and cultural diversity of the region. Uttarakhand, which emerged as the 27th state of India, is renowned not only for its natural beauty but also for its religious, spiritual, and cultural significance. Kumaon division comprises six districts. Human life and social activities are deeply connected with society, and tribal communities express their emotions collectively through music, dance, and festivals, creating a vibrant cultural atmosphere.

The tribal communities living in forests, hills, and plateau regions, often considered primitive or uncivilized from a modern perspective, are called indigenous or tribal communities. Due to their socio-economic backwardness, these communities are referred to as “tribes.” Four major tribes are found in Kumaon:

- Shauka or Bhotia
- Raji (Vanrawat)
- Tharu
- Buxa

Among these, the Tharu and Buxa tribes are significant tribes inhabiting the southern Terai region of Uttarakhand, particularly in Udham Singh Nagar. Tharu and Buxa communities reside in areas such as Rudrapur, Kichha, Sitarganj, Nanakmatta, Khatima, and Banbasa, while Buxa tribes are also found in Gadarpur, Bajpur, and Kashipur. The Tharu and Buxa communities are especially famous for their folk songs, festivals, fairs, dance songs, and dramatic performances. Festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm, and folk music becomes a medium for expressing their cultural identity. Men and women participate together with drums and cymbals. Holi is one of the most significant festivals of both communities, celebrated with immense joy throughout the year. Almost every member of these tribes, including children, is musically talented, making the society culturally vibrant.

## CULTURE, LANGUAGE, ART, AND LIFESTYLE OF THE THARU TRIBE

The Tharu are the second-largest tribal community of Uttarakhand. Physically, they are generally of Mongoloid features, having short stature, broad faces, small noses, and slanting eyes. The Tharu people consider themselves descendants of the army of Maharana Pratap and take pride in Indian culture. According to local traditions, after Mughal invasions in Rajasthan, several Rajput families migrated towards the Himalayan Terai and eventually settled there. The Tharu community associates



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its lineage with these Rajput families and continues to preserve the legacy and ideals of Maharana Pratap.

### **Tharu Culture**

The Tharu community has its own distinct culture. Traditionally, they worship local deities, especially “Bhuiyan Mata.” Shrines are often established beneath sacred trees in villages. They believe that the blessings of Bhuiyan Mata protect them from diseases. Sacred trees and specific places are also worshipped on special occasions. Though the Tharu do not emphasize elaborate rituals, they celebrate several important festivals, such as:

- Charai (celebrated twice a year during Chaitra and Baisakh)
- Teej (celebrated similarly to the Hindu Hariyali Teej festival)
- Mundan ceremonies
- Holi

### **Holi Celebration**

Holi among the Tharu is celebrated for nearly one and a half months. The celebrations begin on the full moon day of the bright fortnight of Magh and conclude on the new moon day of Phalguna. Holi is divided into two phases:

- “Jinda Holi”
- “Murdha Holi” (after Holika Dahan)

Throughout this period, men and women sing, dance, and celebrate together with drums and cymbals.

### **Marriage and Rituals**

Marriage ceremonies are generally performed during the month of Magh. Traditionally, Brahmins are not invited for conducting rituals. The Tharu also worship Lord Shiva and observe Shivaratri fasts. Other important festivals include Raksha Bandhan, Basant Panchami, Janmashtami, Nag Panchami, and Kartik Purnima. Life-cycle rituals such as childbirth, naming ceremonies, and funeral rites are also important parts of Tharu culture.

### **Tharu Language**

The Tharu tribe has its own distinct language, closely related to Hindi, with strong influences from Rajasthani dialects. Traditionally, the language has no script.

### **Tharu Art and Lifestyle**

The kitchen occupies an important place in Tharu households. Houses are built using wood, leaves, and reeds. Wall painting and decorative art are important artistic traditions. Men and women are fond of tattooing and body art.



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Traditional attire includes:

- Women: Ghaghra, choli, and odhani
- Men: Dhoti-kurta and pajamas

Their staple diet includes rice, maize, wheat, lentils, local vegetables, fish, and meat. Agriculture is the primary occupation, while fishing is another important activity. During leisure time, they make nets, baskets, and other handicrafts. Clay utensils and earthen stoves are widely used in daily life and are often handmade within the community.

## **CULTURE, LANGUAGE, ART, AND LIFESTYLE OF THE BUXA TRIBE**

The Buxa tribe mainly inhabits the Terai-Bhabar regions of Udham Singh Nagar, including Bajpur, Gadarpur, Kashipur, Ramnagar, and nearby areas. They live in approximately 173 villages. The Buxa consider themselves descendants of Pawar Rajputs. Physically, they also display Mongoloid characteristics such as short stature, broad faces, and small eyes.

### **Buxa Culture**

The Buxa tribe follows Hinduism and worships deities such as Mahadev (Shiva), Kali, Durga, Lakshmi, Rama, and Krishna. The Chamunda Devi temple of Kashipur is considered especially sacred among the Buxa people. Important festivals include Chaiti, Holi, Deepawali, and Navratri. The Chaiti fair is celebrated with great enthusiasm in Kashipur and continues for around fifteen days. Another important ritual is “Dhalai Puja,” performed after harvesting new crops. During Navratri, they worship local deities and organize fairs and cultural performances. The Buxa community is also fond of music, dance, drama, and Ramleela performances based on the Ramayana.

### **Holi and Shivaratri**

Holi is one of the last major festivals of the year among the Buxa. Holika Dahan involves collecting cow-dung cakes and household waste, symbolically burning negativity. Shivaratri, locally called “Shiv Teras,” is celebrated with great devotion, and fairs are organized near Shiva temples.

### **Buxa Language**

The Buxa tribe does not have a completely separate language. Their dialect resembles rural Rohilkhandi speech and includes elements of Hindi, Urdu, Kumaoni, and Braj languages.

### **Buxa Art and Lifestyle**

During Govardhan Puja, symbolic figures of bulls are made from cow dung and decorated artistically. Traditional wall paintings are also practiced. Agriculture and animal husbandry are their primary occupations. Many educated members now work in government and private sectors. Other occupations include carpentry, blacksmithing, basket making, fishing, and forest produce collection. Traditional houses are made of grass and thatch.



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Traditional clothing includes:

- Men: Dhoti, kurta, and turban
- Women: Lehenga and choli

The Buxa diet mainly consists of rice, fish, lentils, vegetables, and local grains.

## CONCLUSION

The tribes living in the southern border regions of Kumaon possess immense cultural significance. Their culture, language, art, and lifestyle reflect social values, religious traditions, and cultural heritage. However, modernization has increasingly threatened traditional customs and practices. Many ancient rituals and traditions are gradually disappearing or transforming.

The Tharu and Buxa tribes continue to preserve their folk culture through music, festivals, and community traditions. Their folk songs remain an inseparable part of every celebration, including marriages and fairs. Women of the Tharu and Buxa communities actively participate in markets, fairs, festivals, and social gatherings. The Tharu society is generally matriarchal, whereas the Buxa society is patriarchal. Despite social changes, both tribes continue to preserve their cultural identity, language, art, and traditional lifestyle. Younger generations are also showing interest in maintaining and promoting their heritage.

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