

Land and Gender: looking through the Anthropological lens to explore the Rana Tharu society of Uttarakhand, India

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Abstract: Land is the most integrating asset to represent the identity and status of an individual in a traditional community. It is not sold but rather passed on to the next generation in order to satisfy and secure the economic and social needs of traditionally organized communities. The central question of this paper revolves around the social arrangements and negotiations in relation to land between men and women. The study is based on empirically examined narratives on inheritance of land and how women keep negotiating their position and status in the traditional society of the Rana Tharu, who are largely populated in the Udham Singh Nagar district, Uttarakhand- a region on the India-Nepal border. The case studies reflect on the *de jure* (practices that are legally recognised) and *de facto* (situations that exist in reality) entitlement to land, inheritance patterns, the legally provided user rights for men and women, rights acquired through customary practices, and the resulting changes in the social position of women. The narratives and case studies depicted nuances of negative connotations and stigma associated with social and economic positions of women in relation to the inheritance and decision making of land in their parental and marital home. There is an enormous gap between the land rights incorporated legally and the actual practice of inheritance pattern followed at the ground level. Despite being deprived from their legal rights of inheriting a land, women do not raise their voice in order to avoid conflicts with brothers in the natal home and to maintain the dignity and respect of the family in the marital home.

Key words : Women's land rights, Gender, Land, Tribal community