

Glossary

agradhikar

'Prior rights' – the idea that members of the titular ethnic group have extra rights such as right to head the government in the respective province.

Bahun

The common term used in the hills of Nepal for Brahmans, the highest in the Hindu caste hierarchy, and generally denotes Brahmans of hill origin. Comprising 12.2 per cent of the population, Bahuns are the country's second largest social group.

bandh

A shutdown of all establishments and public and private transport usually called by political parties and interest groups, and enforced with violence or the threat of it. A *bandh* can be nationwide or localised depending on the context. A variation of the *bandh* is the *chakka jam*, literally 'frozen wheels', when no wheeled transport except bicycles are allowed to operate but establishments remain open.

Chhetri

The common term used in the hills of Nepal for Kshatriya, the second highest in the Hindu caste hierarchy, and generally denotes Kshatriya of hill origin. Comprising 16.6 per cent of the population, Chhetris are the largest social group in the country.

Dalit

The term used for the group that was formerly considered 'untouchable' by law. Dalits consist of the larger hill Dalit group and Tarai Dalits, and together comprise 12.6 per cent of the population.

Janajati

Also Adivasi Janajati (or Indigenous Nationalities) and previously known as ethnic groups or 'tribals', Janajati is the term applied jointly to the scores of groups that identify themselves as such. The number of Janajati groups has continued to rise since the census started enumerating social groups in 1991, from 26 in 1991 to 45 in 2001 and 64 in 2011, reflecting a corresponding increase in identity consciousness. Janajatis range from Magars (7.1 per cent of the population) down to Kusunda (273 in total). Janajatis live across the country's three ecological regions and can accordingly be divided into Mountain Janajatis (0.6 per cent of the population, the most famous being the Sherpas), Hill Janajatis (25.5 per cent), and Tarai Janajatis (9.8 per cent, with the largest being the Tharus at 6.6 per cent, the second biggest Janajati group overall).

Khas Arya

Referring collectively to the four 'upper caste' groups of Bahun, Chhetri, Sanyasi/Dasnami and Thakuri, Khas Arya is the most recent term to come into currency in Nepal, mainly as a reaction to growing assertiveness of the Dalits, Janajatis and Madhesis. The Khas Arya make up 31.2 per cent of the population.

Madhesi

Nepal's southern Tarai plains are also called Madhes. Hence, people with origins in the Tarai are called Madhesi (derogatorily, Madhise). The Madhesi identity is claimed by Tarai-origin Hindu caste-groups (14.8 per cent of the population), including by Tarai Dalits (4.5 per cent), by Tarai Janajatis (8.5 per cent) and also by Muslims (4.4 per cent, nearly all of whom live in the Tarai). But, there is a strong streak among Tarai Janajatis to carve a separate identity, which is also seen on occasion among Muslims as well as Tarai Dalits.

Panchayat

The Partyless Panchayat System was introduced in 1962 by King Mahendra following his ouster of Nepal's first elected government in 1960, as part of the attempt to graft 'new institutions ... on what was essentially an absolute monarchy', in the words of political scientists Bhuwan L. Joshi and Leo E. Rose. Also touted as the Partyless Panchayat Democracy, the polity underwent some reforms after the national referendum of 1980 but remained essentially a tool for an authoritarian monarch during which political parties remained banned. The Panchayat system came to an end after the successful 1990 Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, which saw the Nepali Congress party and the communists join hands for the first time.

sanatan dharma

Hinduism is also known as *sanatan dharma*, literally 'eternal duty', or the practice of beliefs and customs passed down through the ages.

Tarai

Also called the Madhes, the Tarai is a strip of flat land in the southern part of Nepal. Geographically, the Tarai covers 17 per cent of Nepal's territory, but administratively it consists of the 20 southern districts that make up 23 per cent of the country's landmass. The Tarai is Nepal's 'breadbasket' and home to 50.3 per cent of the population. The Tarai population comprises 63.1 per cent Madhesis, 35.7 per cent people of hill origin and 1.2 per cent identified as 'Others', according to the 2011 census.