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Home Kerala Tribal groups set to oppose UCC, say it will strip indigenous people of their identity, way of life

# Tribal groups set to oppose UCC, say it will strip indigenous people of their identity, way of life

Prominent leaders of indigenous people feel their opinions were not considered. They termed the proposed legislation anti-tribal.



BY SREERAG PS

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Leaders of Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha in protest to secure tribal rights during 'Nilppu Samaram' in Thiruvananthapuram (Supplied)



As the BJP-led Union government tests the waters over its plan to table a Bill to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the objections of the Muslim — and even Christian — community is

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What is less well known is that tribal communities, too, have serious reservations over the UCC and fear it will impact their unique customs and traditions at a time there is already a concerted effort to “bring them into the Hindu fold”.



The contentious UCC issue once again hit the headlines when **Prime Minister Narendra Modi invoked it at a BJP-organised event in Bhopal** on 27 June.

Tribal leaders **South First** spoke to are strongly opposed to the proposal. They felt the government had not considered their views and termed the proposal on UCC anti-tribal.

Incidentally, Modi raised the UCC issue — one of the BJP’s poll promises — a few days after the 22nd Law Commission of India had sought views of the public on such a code.

**Related: Muslim League to fight Union government’s move on UCC**

## ‘Impact on tribals not considered’

Tribal leaders felt that while the impact of UCC on minority communities was being discussed threadbare, its effect on the indigenous people has not been



Modi speaking during ‘Mera Booth Sabse Majboot’ campaign in Bhopal. (Twitter)

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considered.

They expressed the fear that the implementation of the UCC would pose a threat to their identity and, eventually, their very existence itself.

It would be pertinent to note here that tribal organisations in North India have already opposed the proposed legislation, saying it would affect the Constitution-granted special status that assured them rights over *jal* (water) *jungle* (forest), and *zameen* (land).

The UCC envisages a uniform legal framework for all citizens, irrespective of their religion, and was one of the BJP's poll promises.

With more leaders raising apprehensions over the UCC, former minister of state for law SP Singh Baghel tried to allay fears. He clarified that the proposed legislation would not affect the tribal rights and customs in the Northeast and other parts of the country. Baghel is currently the minister of state for health.

**Related: [AIADMK, the BJP's southern ally, says it will oppose the UCC](#)**

## Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha to hold protest

Tribal leaders in Kerala were the first to oppose the proposed UCC. Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha president M Geethanandan told **South First** that the UCC would be detrimental to the indigenous people of the country.

“Currently, the discussion on the Uniform Civil Code is on its possible impact on minority communities such as Muslims. But a new legislation would affect the indigenous people the most, and the tribespeople in Kerala have reached a consensus to

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CK Janu.

(Facebook)

oppose the UCC,” he said.

Geethanandan said the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha would hold a protest on 9 August, the International Day of World’s Indigenous People, in Kochi.

“The laws that the indigenous people follow are framed based on those communities’ customary practices. There is a huge disparity in these laws existing in different parts of the country.

Currently, there is no clarity on how the 22nd Law Commission will address such issues,” he added.

Adivasi leader CK Janu of the Janadhipathya Rashtreeya Party (JRP), a member of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, also voiced her opposition to the proposed legislation.

“The Adivasi way of life is beyond the ambit of laws governing other civilians in the country. The identity and existence of human beings should never be wrecked. It should be sustained,” she told a private television news channel.

“We don’t need development and infrastructure at the risk of losing our identity. This (laws governing Adivasis) doesn’t adversely affect anything in the country,” she further said.

She added that JRP would continue to voice its opposition to the UCC from within the NDA.

**Related: Will Jagan offer BJP ‘the force of nine’ for UCC in Rajya Sabha?**

**‘Ploy to create rift between tribals, others’**

Several tribal outfits in Andhra Pradesh, too, raised their voice against the UCC.

Girijana Sangham, a tribal body in the Visakhapatnam Agency area, asserted that it would oppose the implementation of the uniform code.

“Tribals are the original natives of this land and country. The UCC is only a ploy by the union government to create a rift among tribespeople, the public, and other religions. We will oppose it,” Girijana Sangham’s national executive member G Appalanarasa told **South First**.

“Our Constitution safeguards and protects several castes, creeds, communities, and religions, and their distinct cultures. Who is this Union government to destroy it?”

He added that the Sangham would hold a meeting with its district committees in Andhra Pradesh to chart out its future course of action.

Adhi Kumaran, the secretary of Palankudi Nala Urimai Sangam, a tribal organisation from Tamil Nadu, said most tribal communities in that state were not fully aware of the UCC.

“There is no doubt that it will affect the education and employment of the tribal community members. We are making efforts to create awareness among the tribespeople. We also believe that the Tamil Nadu government will not agree to the civil code,” he told **South First**.

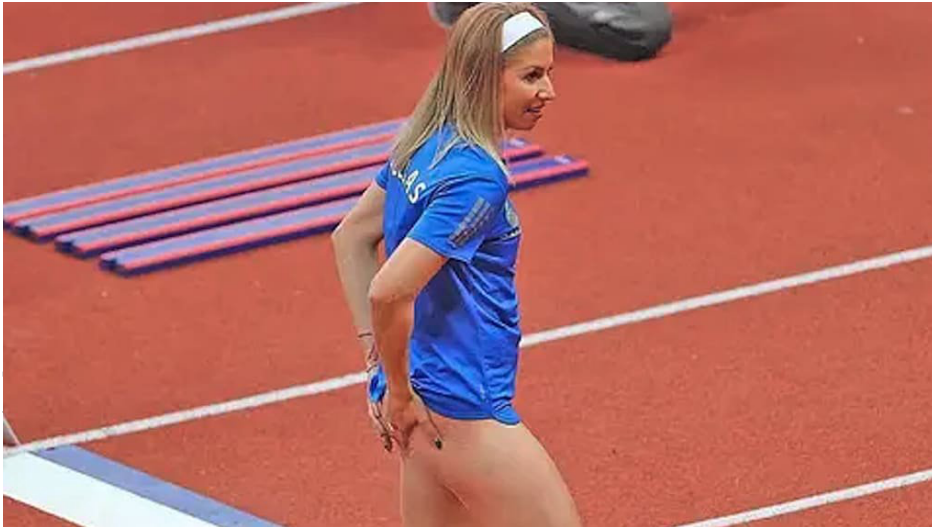
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## **Threat to tribal identity**

Balu Gadi, the state co-convener of the Rythu Swarajya Vedika, a farmers’ organisation, and a tribal rights activist in Telangana,

drew attention to another aspect.

“The implementation of the UCC is wrong. The tribals’ identity will be lost. Even in tribal communities, there are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG), and non-PVTG groups. The PVTG groups are extremely vulnerable. Many of them know **SPONSORED CONTENT** and Hindu society,” he told **South First**.



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However, he opined that there was a need for a dialogue with

