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'Campaigning money could have helped us'

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Thane: With civic polls approaching, the political parties are leaving no stone unturned to woo voters in the city areas, however, they seem to have completely forgotten the tribal pockets residing in the Yeoor Hills.

While these parties seem to be spending big bucks in putting up hoardings or modifying massive vehicles with themes that urge citizens to consider them while casting their votes, they seem to have conveniently forgotten the 2000-plus tribal voters residing in the interiors of the green zone in Thane region.

The members of these Adivasi communities who have spent years fighting for proper drinking water supply, walkable roads, electricity and other such basic facilities in their region have begun wondering whether their votes will actually change their situation for the better.

While some areas of the village receive civic water supply occasionally, the 60-plus families living in Vanicha Pada and Jambul Pada have to actually use the watering holes and natural springs used by the fauna here, for drinking. In most pockets, the Adivasis have to wade through knee high grass and shrubs as their locality lacks even the basic mud paths.

Apoorva Agwan, a social activist working with these communities over the years, said, "When these natural ponds dry up in the summer, things get worse for those living here. Washing clothes is unthinkable and the level of dehydration shoots up. Citizens and NGOs have provided some areas with temporary LED lights so that the village doesn't disappear in darkness, but it is high time that the politicians do something for their 2000-plus vote bank here."

"Now with the elections approaching, politicians have begun spending a lot of money on campaigning. If they utilised this money to help the Adivasi community instead, they would be able to rid the grievances of these citizens in a day," Agwan added.

"The lack of waste disposal is also a huge issue in this region as hoteliers as well as picnickers dump their waste along the roads and forest region, which attract rodents and thus, leopards in the areas. While some NGOs and forest officials clean the area once in a while, the constantly accumulating filth has also added to the health and safety woes of this community," added another social activist.