

Bhumi Panduga by Koyas

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In news

Recently the Koya tribes celebrated the last 'Bhumi Panduga' in their ancestral villages.

About Bhumi Panduga

- Koya tribes in the Chintoor Agency of East Godavari district go hunting as part of the 'Bhumi Panduga' celebrations, marking the beginning of farm operations every year.
- The Koya tribes say this is the last time they are celebrating the festival in their ancestral villages in the close vicinity of the Polavaram irrigation project.
- These tribals will be evacuated from there and the government is preparing to shift them to the rehabilitation colonies.
- The shifting warrants an urgency now, as the swelling Godavari backwater has started submerging their villages.
- The tribal people have started their three-day hunting programmes in the nearby forest.
- For men, hunting is mandatory as part of the festival.
- The catch is distributed among all the families in the hamlet equally during a feast every evening.
- The tribal elders say each village fixes the dates for the celebrations.

About Koya tribe

- Koyas are commonly referred to as Koi, Koyalu, Koyollu, KoyaDoralu, Doralu Sattam, etc.
- Koya tribes can be further divided into Koya, Doli Koya, Gutta Koya or Gotti Koya, Kammara Koya, Musara Koya, Oddi Koya, Pattidi Koya, Rasha Koya, Lingadhari Koya

(ordinary), Kottu Koya, Bhine Koya, Raja Koya, etc.

- **Location:** In India, these tribals can be found in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- Koyas call themselves *Koitur* in their dialect.
- **Language:** The Koyas speak the Koya language, also known as Koya basha, which is a Dravidian language related to Gondi.
- **Culture:** Koya tribes practice marriage after maturity, and infant marriage is not practiced. The bride's maternal uncle has the deciding factor in the match, and cross-cousin marriages are permitted and common.