

Matua Maha Mela

March 21, 2023

In news— The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has urged people to visit Matua Maha Mela in large numbers and paid tribute to Shri Shri Harichand Thakur Ji for showing the path of kindness and service.

About Matua Maha Mela-

- The mela is being organised to celebrate the **212th birth anniversary of Sri Sri Harichand Thakur ji**, the founder of the Matua sect.
- **The mela, organised by the All India Matua Mahasangha**, has been estimated to be visited by around 45 lakh people during the week to seek blessings of the sect founder.
- It is held at Sridham Thakurnagar, Thakurbari in North 24 Parganas of West Bengal.

A brief note on Sri Sri Harichand Thakur ji-

- He was born around 1811 to a peasant family of Thakur community in Orakandi, Gopalganj District of Bengal presidency (presently in Bangladesh).
- He dedicated his whole life to bring salvation to the downtrodden. He worked among the untouchable people of Bengal Presidency.
- The social and religious movement started by him originated in Orakandi (now in Bangladesh) in 1860 and led to the formation of the Matua Dharma or a sect of Vaishnavite Hinduism called "Matua".
- This was adopted by members of the Namasudra community, who were then considered to be untouchables.
- The Matua sect was opposed to caste oppression and work towards education and social upliftment of Dalits.
- It has subsequently attracted adherents from other caste communities that were marginalized by the upper castes,

including the Malis, Telis and Chamars.

- After the death of Sri Sri Harichand Thakur, his son, Guruchand Thakur (born 1846), have taken the lead of Matua Mahasangha. He established number of schools for the education of Dalit community.
- He was the man, under whose phenomenal leadership Matua sect achieved its doctrinal cohesion and major organizational push, as it came to be associated with the Namasudra social protest movement started in 1872.
- A considerable body of Dalit literature that mixes religious and secular themes has emerged around Thakur's legacy and Matua Mahasangha.
- As of now, Matua sect is a leading community working for the upliftment of Bengali Dalits residing in India & Bangladesh.