

Tharu tribe

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In news

Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has started a new scheme to put Tharu villages on the tourism map, and to create jobs and bring economic independence to the tribal population.

A brief note on the scheme

- The U.P government is working to connect Tharu villages in the districts of Balrampur, Bahraich, Lakhimpur and Pilibhit bordering Nepal, with the home stay scheme of the UP Forest Department.
- The idea is to offer tourists an experience of living in the natural Tharu habitat, in traditional huts made of grass collected mainly from the forests.
- With this scheme, Tharu homeowners will be able to charge tourists directly for the accommodation and home-cooked meals.

About Tharu tribe

- They live in both India and Nepal. In the Indian Terai, they live mostly in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar
- Tharu community belongs to the Terai lowlands, amid the Shivaliks or lower Himalayas.
- Most of them are forest dwellers and some practice agriculture.
- The word tharu is believed to be derived from sthavir, meaning followers of Theravada Buddhism.
- They represent the biggest chunk of U.P's tribal population

Their language

- Tharu tribes speak various dialects of Tharu, a language

of the Indo-Aryan subgroup, and variants of Hindi, Urdu, and Awadhi.

- In central Nepal, they speak a variant of Bhojpuri, while in eastern Nepal, they speak a variant of Maithili.

Food system

- The Tharu people survive on wheat, corn and vegetables grown close to their homes.
- Most Tharu tribals consume alcoholic beverages, and some eat beef.
- Major items on the Tharu plate are bagiya or dhikri which is a steamed dish of rice flour that is eaten with chutney or curry and ghonghi, an edible snail that is cooked in a curry made of coriander, chili, garlic, and onion.

Culture and customs

- They worship Lord Shiva as Mahadev, and call their supreme being "Narayan", who they believe is the provider of sunshine, rain, and harvests.
- Tharu women have stronger property rights than is allowed to women in mainstream North Indian Hindu custom.