



## Tharu Tribals

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### Why in News

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The **Uttar Pradesh (UP) 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.
- This is expected to **create jobs and bring economic independence** for the tribal population.

### Key Points

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- **Meaning of 'Tharu'**: The word tharu is believed to be **derived from sthavir**, meaning followers of **Theravada Buddhism**.
- **Habitat**: The Tharu community **belongs to the Terai lowlands**, amid the Shivaliks or lower Himalayas.
  - Terai is a **region of northern India and southern Nepal** running **parallel to the lower ranges of the Himalayas**.
  - The Tharus **live in both India and Nepal**. In the Indian terai, they **live mostly in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar**.
- **Scheduled Tribe**: Tharu is a scheduled tribe in the states of **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**.
- **Occupation**: Most of them are **forest dwellers**, and some practice **agriculture**.

- **Culture:**

- They **speak various dialects of Tharu, a language of the Indo-Aryan subgroup**, and variants of Hindi, Urdu, and Awadhi.
- Tharus **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.
- Standard 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.

## **Theravada Buddhism**

- It is **strongest** in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. It is sometimes called '**Southern Buddhism**'.
- The name means '**the doctrine of the elders**' - the elders being the senior Buddhist monks.
- This school of Buddhism **believes that** it has remained closest to the original teachings of the Buddha. However, it **does not over-emphasise** the status of these teachings in a fundamentalist way - they are **seen as tools to help people** understand the truth, **and not as having merit of their own**.
- It emphasises **attaining self-liberation through one's own efforts**. The **follower is expected to** "abstain from all kinds of evil, to accumulate all that is good and to purify their mind".
  - The **ideal of Theravada Buddhism is the arhat**, or perfected saint, who attains enlightenment as a result of his own efforts.
- **Meditation** is one of the **main tools** by which a Theravada Buddhist transforms themselves, and so a monk spends a great deal of time in meditation.

## **Scheduled Tribe**

- **Article 366 (25) of the Constitution** refers to **Scheduled Tribes** as those communities, who are **scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution**.
- **Article 342** says that only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes.
- The **list of Scheduled Tribes is State/UT specific** and a community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State.
- The **Constitution is silent about the criteria** for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe. **Primitiveness, geographical isolation, shyness and social, educational & economic backwardness** are the traits that distinguish Scheduled Tribe communities from other communities.

- There are certain Scheduled Tribes, **75 in number known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**, who are **characterised by**:- a) pre-agriculture level of technology; b) stagnant or declining population; c) extremely low literacy; and d) subsistence level of economy.
- **Government Initiatives:** The **Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act**, 2006 (FRA); The **Provision of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act**, 1996; Minor Forest Produce Act 2005; **SC And ST (Prevention Of Atrocities) Act**; and the Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy are focused on the socio-economic empowerment of STs.

**Source: IE**