

UNESCO names Kumbh Mela Intangible Cultural Heritage

Relevancy:

- GS Prelims
- Art and Culture, UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

Recently:

- Kumbh Mela has been listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage under UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).
- Earlier “Yoga” and “Nauroz” were given an entry as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO

About Kumbh Mela:

- Kumbh Mela is the largest congregation of pilgrims on the planet which is held in Haridwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nashik.
- The Ministry of External Affairs said the inscription of ‘Kumbh Mela’ in the list was undertaken following recommendation by an expert body which examines nominations submitted by
- This inscription is the third in two years following the inscriptions of ‘Yoga’ and ‘Norouz’ on 1st December 2016.

About UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage:

UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage proposes five broad ‘domains’ in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested:

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- Performing arts;
- Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- Traditional craftsmanship

India’s list of Intangible Cultural Heritage apart from Kumbh Mela:

1. Nauroz/ Nawrouz:

- Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- March 21 marks the start of the year.
- A variety of rituals, ceremonies and other cultural events take place for a period of about two weeks.
- An important tradition practised during this time is the gathering around 'the Table', decorated with objects that symbolize purity, brightness, livelihood and wealth, to enjoy a special meal with loved ones.
- These practices support cultural diversity and tolerance and contribute to building community solidarity and peace. They are transmitted from older to younger generations through observation and participation.

2. Yoga:

- The philosophy behind the ancient Indian practice of yoga has influenced various aspects of how society in India functions, whether it be in relation to areas such as health and medicine or education and the arts.
- Based on unifying the mind with the body and soul to allow for greater mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing, the values of yoga form a major part of the community's ethos.
- Yoga consists of a series of poses, meditation, controlled breathing, word chanting and other techniques designed to help individuals build self-realization, ease any suffering they may be experiencing and allow for a state of liberation.

3. Traditional brass and copper craft-2014

- The craft of the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru constitutes the traditional technique of manufacturing brass and copper utensils in Punjab.
- The metals used – copper, brass and certain alloys – are believed to be beneficial for health.

- The process begins with procuring cooled cakes of metal that are flattened into thin plates and then skillfully hammered into curved shapes, creating the required small bowls, rimmed plates, to larger pots for water and milk, huge cooking vessels and other artefacts.

- Heating the plates while hammering and curving them into different shapes requires careful temperature control, which is achieved by using tiny wood-fired stoves (aided by hand-held bellows) buried in the earth.

- Utensils are manually finished by polishing with traditional materials such as sand and tamarind juice.

4. Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur-2013

- Sankirtana has two main social functions: it brings people together on festive occasions throughout the year, acting as a cohesive force within Manipur's Vaishnava community; and it establishes and reinforces relationships between the individual and the community through life-cycle ceremonies.

- Sankirtana encompasses an array of arts performed to mark religious occasions and various stages in the life of the Vaishnava people of the Manipur plains.

- In a typical performance, two drummers and about ten singer-dancers perform in a hall or domestic courtyard encircled by seated devotees. The dignity and flow of aesthetic and religious energy is unparalleled, moving audience members to tears and frequently to prostrate themselves before the performers.

5. Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region-2012

- In the monasteries and villages of the Ladakh region, Buddhist lamas (priests) chant sacred texts representing the spirit, philosophy and teachings of the Buddha.

- Two forms of Buddhism are practised in Ladakh – Mahayana and Vajrayana – and there are four major sects, namely Nyingma, Kagyud, Shakya and Geluk. Each sect has several forms of chanting.

- Chanting is undertaken for the spiritual and moral well-being of the people, for purification and peace of mind, to appease the wrath of evil spirits or to invoke the blessing of various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities and rinpoches.

- The monks wear special costumes and make hand gestures (mudras) representing the divine Buddha, and instruments such as bells, drums, cymbals and trumpets lend musicality and rhythm to the chanting.

6. Chhau dance-2010

- Chhau dance is a tradition from eastern India that enacts episodes from epics including the Mahabharata and Ramayana, local folklore and abstract themes.

- Its three distinct styles hail from the regions of Seraikella (Jharkhand), Purulia (W. Bengal) and Mayurbhanj (Odisha), the first two using masks.

- Chhau dance is intimately connected to regional festivals, notably the spring festival Chaitra Parva. Its origin is traceable to indigenous forms of dance and martial practices.

- Its vocabulary of movement includes mock combat techniques, stylized gaits of birds and animals and movements modelled on the chores of village housewives.

- Chhau is taught to male dancers from families of traditional artists or from local communities. The dance is performed at night in an open space to traditional and folk melodies, played on the reed pipes "mohuri" and "shehnai."

- Chhau is an integral part of the culture of these communities.

- It binds together people from different social strata and ethnic background with diverse social practices, beliefs, professions and languages.

- However, increasing industrialization, economic pressures and new media are leading to a decrease in collective participation with communities becoming disconnected from their roots.

7. Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan-2010

- Songs and dances are an expression of the Kalbelia community's traditional way of life.
- Once professional snake handlers, Kalbelia today evoke their former occupation in music and dance that is evolving in new and creative ways.
- Today, women in flowing black skirts dance and swirl, replicating the movements of a serpent, while men accompany them on the "khanjari" percussion instrument and the "poongi," a woodwind instrument traditionally played to capture snakes.
- The dancers wear traditional tattoo designs, jewellery and garments richly embroidered with small mirrors and silver thread.
- Kalbelia songs disseminate mythological knowledge through stories, while special traditional dances are performed during Holi, the festival of colours.

8. Mudi yettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala-2010

- Mudi yettu is a ritual dance drama from Kerala based on the mythological tale of a battle between the goddess Kali and the demon Darika.
- It is a community ritual in which the entire village participates after the harvesting of summer crops.
- Mudi yettu performers purify themselves through fasting and prayer, then draw a huge image of goddess Kali, called as "kalam", on the temple floor with coloured powders, wherein the spirit of the goddess is invoked.
- This prepares the ground for the lively enactment to follow, in which the divine sage Narada importunes Shiva to contain the demon Darika, who is immune to defeat by mortals.
- Shiva instead commands that Darika will die at the hand of the goddess Kali.

- Mudiyettu is performed annually in 'Bhagavati Kavus', the temples of the goddess, in different villages along the rivers Chalakkudy Puzha, Periyar and Moovattupuzha.

- Mutual cooperation and collective participation of each caste in the ritual instils and strengthens common identity and mutual bonding in the community. Responsibility for its transmission lies with the elders and senior performers, who engage the younger generation as apprentices during the course of the performance.

- Mudiyettu serves as an important cultural site for transmission of traditional values, ethics, moral codes and aesthetic norms of the community to the next generation, thereby ensuring its continuity and relevance in present times.

9. Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas, India-2009

- Every year in late April, the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra in the state of Uttarakhand (northern India) are marked by Ramman, a religious festival in honour of the tutelary god, Bhumiyal Devta, a local divinity whose temple houses most of the festivities.
- This event is made up of highly complex rituals: the recitation of a version of the epic of Rama and various legends, and the performance of songs and masked dances.
- The festival is organized by villagers, and each caste and occupational group has a distinct role.
- Combining theatre, music, historical reconstructions, and traditional oral and written tales, the Ramman is a multiform cultural event that reflects the environmental, spiritual and cultural concept of the community, recounting its founding myths and strengthening its sense of self-worth.

10. Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre-2008

- Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre, which is practised in Kerala, is one of India's oldest living theatrical traditions.
- Originating more than 2,000 years ago, Kutiyattam represents a synthesis of Sanskrit classicism and reflects the local traditions of Kerala.

- In its stylized and codified theatrical language, netra abhinaya (eye expression) and hasta abhinaya (the language of gestures) are prominent.
- Actors undergo ten to fifteen years of rigorous training to become fully-fledged performers with sophisticated breathing control and subtle muscle shifts of the face and body. The actor's art lies in elaborating a situation or episode in all its detail. Therefore, a single act may take days to perform and a complete performance may last up to 40 days.
- Kutiyattam is traditionally performed in theatres called Kuttampalams, which are located in Hindu temples.
- The male actors hand down to their trainees detailed performance manuals, which, until recent times, remained the exclusive and secret property of selected families.

11. Tradition of Vedic chanting-2008

- The Vedas comprise a vast corpus of Sanskrit poetry, philosophical dialogue, myth, and ritual incantations developed and composed by Aryans over 3,500 years ago.
- Regarded by Hindus as the primary source of knowledge and the sacred foundation of their religion, the Vedas embody one of the world's oldest surviving cultural traditions.
- The Vedic heritage embraces a multitude of texts and interpretations collected in four Vedas, commonly referred to as "books of knowledge" even though they have been transmitted orally.

12. Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana

- Ramlila, literally "Rama's play", is a performance of the Ramayana epic in a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue.
- It is performed across northern India during the festival of Dussehra, held each year according to the ritual calendar in autumn. The most representative Ramlilas are those of Ayodhya, Ramnagar and Benares, Vrindavan, Almora, Sattna and Madhubani.
- This staging of the Ramayana is based on the Ramacharitmanas, one of the most popular storytelling forms in the north of the country. This

sacred text devoted to the glory of Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, was composed by Tulsidas in the sixteenth century in a form of Hindi in order to make the Sanskrit epic available to all.

UNESCO's list of honour.

Relevancy:

- GS Prelims, Facts for prelims
- Art and Culture, UNESCO world heritage

Recently:

UNESCO declared -

- The art of Neapolitan pizza-making as a world heritage.
- UNESCO accepted the art of Neapolitan “pizzaiuoli”, or pizza-makers, on the world body’s list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- Italy argued the practice of the “pizzaiuoli” — preparing and flipping the dough, topping it and baking it in a wood-fired oven — was part of the country’s cultural and gastronomic tradition.
- Tradition holds that the Margherita pizza was created in 1889 by a local chef in honour of Queen Margherita, who was visiting Naples, south of Rome on Italy’s Tyrrhenian coast.

UNESCO also accepted on its Culture list the following:-

- Chogan, an Iranian horse-riding game accompanied by music and storytelling,
- The craft of millers operating windmills and watermills in the Netherlands,
- Traditional boat making on the Indonesian island of South Sulawesi, and
- Nsima, a maize-based culinary tradition from the African country of Malawi.

FRDI Bill

Relevancy:

- GS Prelims, GS Mains paper III
- Economy, Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill

Recently:

- There is furious public debate around the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill tabled in August and now under the scrutiny of a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).
- The Bill seeks to lay down a clear resolution mechanism for banks and financial firms in the case of default.

Clause 52 of the Bill- Powers to the Resolution Corporation:

- This clause is sending ripples of unease among savers.
- The Bill seeks to repeal the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act of 1961, handing over its role to the new Resolution Corporation.
- Clause 52 of the Bill empowers the Resolution Corporation overseeing bank defaults to use a bail-in provision against creditors to absorb losses.

- In invoking this bail-in, the Corporation can cancel any of the bank's liabilities or change their terms.
- Speculation is rife that the Centre is planning to take the route taken by regimes such as Cyprus, where public deposits were cancelled to fund bank haircuts on bad loans.

Bail-in versus Bail-out:

- A bail-in is rescuing a financial institution on the brink of failure by making its creditors and depositors take a loss on their holdings.
- It is the opposite of a bail-out, which involves the rescue of a financial institution by external parties, typically governments using taxpayer's money.
- Typically, bail-outs have been far more common than bail-ins, but in recent years after massive bail-outs some governments now require the investors and depositors in the bank to take a loss before taxpayers.

What are the points that must be taken care of by the JPC:

1. Clause 52 clearly exempts deposits covered by deposit insurance from the purview of bail-ins.
2. The Bill requires banks to first incorporate a bail-in clause into their creditor contracts.
3. Even today, depositors in Indian banks are protected only to the extent of the insurance cover provided by the DICGC which stands at ₹1 lakh per bank. Depositors who hold in excess of this can even today be subjected to 'bail-in' if a bank fails.
4. Most Indian savers are unaware of this Rule (Insurance upto only Rs 1 Lakh) and put faith in banks presuming an implicit sovereign guarantee.
5. But given the precarious state of some PSB balance sheets, and the fact that crores of Indians have just embraced banking through the Jan Dhan Yojana, this is a particularly bad time for lawmakers to test this faith.

Conclusion:

- The Centre should redraft the ambiguously worded portions of the Bill to clarify if deposits will be subject to bail-ins, and if so, with what basic protections.
- The reiteration of the sovereign guarantee to PSBs is reassuring, but informed depositors may like more details about how the insurance mechanism will change under the FRDI and the extent of discretionary powers to the Resolution Corporation.
- The time is also ripe to sharply increase the measly deposit insurance cover of ₹1 lakh per depositor set over two decades ago. The JPC must incorporate these aspects into its ongoing review of the FRDI Bill.