

UPSC PREPARATION

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritages In India- UPSC Art & Culture

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that works for world peace through global cooperation in the fields of education, culture, and the sciences. UNESCO General Conference adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage as an international treaty acknowledging that cultural heritage is more than tangible objects, monuments, and places.

The World Heritage Program promotes the conservation of natural and cultural sites of universal value. India has 38 world heritage sites, including 30 cultural properties, 7 natural properties and 1 mixed site. The latest one included is Jaipur city, Rajasthan.

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritages

With the aim of ensuring better protection of important intangible cultural heritage across the world and in order to create awareness of their significance, UNESCO established the **Intangible Cultural Heritage List**.

- This list also encompasses living expressions and traditions. Intangible cultural heritage means the skills, knowledge, expressions, representations, practices – as well as the artifacts, objects, instruments, and cultural spaces associated with them that various groups, communities and in certain cases individuals recognize as a part of their cultural heritage.
- This list is published by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Its members are elected by State parties meeting in the United Nations General Assembly.
- It aims at drawing attention to the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage and is a repository of cultural diversity and creative expression.

‘Khongthong’ the country’s only ‘whistling village’ seeks to get the UNESCO Intangible and Cultural, Heritage Tag. It is known as the Whistling Village because residents often communicate with each other by whistling. Residents of the village also have ‘whistling names’ apart from their formal names.

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritages in India

India, known for its heritage and cultural diversity, has 13 cultural heritages in UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage list. The below image briefly explains the Intangible Heritages of India in terms of culture:

LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGES IN INDIA

Recognized by UNESCO

1 BUDDHIST CHANTING

The sacred texts chanted by the Buddhist lamas (priests) in the Ladakh region. Each of the Buddhist sects has several forms of chanting.

2 KALBELIA

A folk song and dance form of Rajasthan. 'Khanjari' percussion instrument and the 'Poongi', a woodwind instrument are used during the performance. Kalbelia songs disseminate mythological knowledge through stories. At times, the lyrics are spontaneously composed and improvised during the performance.

3 CHHAU DANCE

A tradition from eastern India that enacts episodes from epics including the Mahabharata and Ramayana, local folklore and abstract themes. It is closely connected to the regional festivals specifically the Chaitra Parva.

4 KOODIYATTAM

A Sanskrit theatrical tradition practised in a province of Kerala, traditionally performed in theatres called as Kuttampalams located in the Hindu temples.

5 KUMBH MELA

The festival of a sacred pitcher where the pilgrims bathe or take a dip in the sacred river.

6 MUDIYETT

A ritual dance drama from the state of Kerala based on a mythological tale of the battle between Dairika - the demon and goddess Kali.

7 NAWRUZ

The Persian New year celebrated worldwide. It involves street performances of music and dance, public rituals involving water and fire, traditional sports and the making of handicrafts.

8 RAMLILA

The traditional performance of Ramayana performed across North India during the festival of Dussehra. Most representatives are those performed in Sattna, Vrindavan, Varanasi, and Ramnagar.

9 RAMMAN

A religious festival in honour of the tutelary god, Bhumiya Devta practised in the villages of Saloor-Dungra in the state of Uttarakhand. Each of the caste and occupational groups has distinctive roles in the festival.

10 SANKIRTANA

Includes a set of arts performed to mark religious occasions and various stages in the life of the Vaishnava people of the Manipur plains.

11 TRADITIONAL BRASS AND COPPER CRAFT OF UTENSIL MAKING

The craft of the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru constitutes the traditional technique of manufacturing brass and copper utensils in Punjab.

12 VEDIC CHANTING

The tradition of Vedic chanting, chanted during sacred rituals and recited daily by the Vedic communities known not only for the rich content of its oral literature but also for the ingenious techniques employed by the Brahmin priests.

13 YOGA

The art of unifying the mind with body and soul for greater spiritual, mental and physical well-being. It consists of a series of poses, meditation, controlled breathing, word chanting etc.

Kumbh Mela

“Kumbh Mela” was the latest addition to the list.

- It is one of the largest human congregations in the world. It is held in four pilgrimage places on sacred rivers in Haridwar, Ujjain, Nashik and Prayag.
- Kumbh Mela was inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity during the 12th session held at Jeju, South Korea.

National List of Intangible Cultural Heritages Draft

The Government of India launched a draft National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture in April 2020.

- The National ICH List is an attempt to recognize the diversity of Indian culture embedded in its intangible heritage.
- It aims to raise awareness about the various intangible cultural heritage elements from different states of India at the national and international levels and ensure their protection. This initiative is also a part of the Vision 2024 of the Ministry of Culture.
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