

Sao Joao Festival

After Mass, youthful Goan Catholic men jump into and swim in nearby wells, streams, and ponds as a memorial to St. John the Baptist as part of the annual Catholic celebration known as San Janv or Sao Joao, which is observed on June 24th in Goa.

The topic has a very high chance of being asked as a UPSC Prelims Art and Culture Question or as a Current Affairs Question as it has been in the news recently.

Background

St. John the Baptist's birth day is commemorated by the feast of Sao Joao. St. Elizabeth, a relative of Jesus' mother Mary, had a son named St. John. On June 24, the feast is observed. This day is significant since it occurs 3 months just after the Annunciation Feast (25 March). The angel Gabriel informed Mary at the Annunciation and said she would give birth to a boy (Jesus) and that Elizabeth already was six months pregnant with a son. When Mary came to see Elizabeth, the unborn St. John "leapt" out of her womb when Elizabeth received Mary's greeting. Nine months prior to actually Christmas, the celebration of Jesus' birth, is the Annunciation itself. When John was a child, it is said that he lived in the woods, wore garments made of camel hair, and subsisted on locusts as well as wild honey. John predicted that Jesus, the Messiah, would arrive. Jesus was baptised by St. John in the Jordan River when he became thirty years old. One of the earliest celebrations in the Christian church is the birth of John the Baptist, and records show that it was already a significant holiday in the year 506 AD.

The festival of Sao Joao takes place in Goa at a time of the year when the monsoon has typically started, the area is covered in new foliage and flowers, and wells, as well as other aquifers, are full. As a result, it appears that Goa's commemoration of St. John's birth evolved to include aspects of a rainy season festival. Jumping in wells or ponds is a representation of the baby's womb leap as well as the Jordan River baptism. A tribute to the fact that St. John used natural covers rather than garments made of fabric is perhaps also implied by men only wearing kopels composed of flowers and other ornaments and vestments fashioned from plants.

Form of Celebration

Although the feast of Saint Joao is observed on the same day throughout the Catholic world, Goa is the only location where it is observed by jumping into wells. The ghumot, mhadalem, and kansallem are some of the instruments used by groups of people as they perform traditional melodies on this day. "Tourists mistakenly believe that it solely involves diving into wells. However, they pray for a favourable rainfall before that "According to Cecil Pinto, who is regarded as the local expert on the Sao Joao festival, According to reports, both Indian and foreign tourists find the celebration to be "very popular". While the Sao Joao festivities are "centuries old," a more contemporary tradition, with vibrant floats and boats, is observed in the village of Siolim, in the Bardez taluka. These celebrations have a 175 year history, when every year, people from the villages of Chapora and Zhor in Anjuna, Badem in Assagao, and Siolim would travel by boat to the chapel of San Joao in Pereira Vaddo, Siolim, to honour the saint. The occasion is commemorated in the village of Saligao, located in the Bardez taluka, as the Vangodd de Saligao, a local festival of song and dance, with the residents frequently preparing sufficient food to

feed all the guests gratis. Sao Joao is also a day of thanksgiving for newlyweds and for parents of children born in the year prior.

Recent Developments

After a two-year break brought on by the coronavirus, the people of Goa commemorated the Sao Joao celebration, the feast of St. John the Baptist, on Friday with the customary fervour. To honour the event, revellers leapt into water bodies all around the state. The bright, theme-based floats are another iconic aspect of the celebrations.

