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# SAMADHAAN

Coverage: Jan 2025 till Jan 2026

(Topic-wise Segregated Notes)



## ART & CULTURE

## CURRENT AFFAIRS | 2026

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## CULTURE - INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

### UNESCO

- Formed in 1945 | Specialized Agency of the UN | Autonomous organization linked to the UN through ECOSOC | It took over from an older group called the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation
- Agenda:** UNESCO works in the fields of: Education, Science (Natural & Social), Culture, Communication & Information.
- Members:** It has 194 member states, 12 associate members, as well as partners in the non-governmental, intergovernmental, and private sector.
  - India has been a founding member of UNESCO.
  - Cook Islands, Niue, and Palestine UNESCO member states which are not UN members.
  - USA has recently withdrawn from UNESCO.
- Governance Framework & Meeting:** UNESCO is governed by the General Conference, composed of member states and associate members, which meets biannually (every 2 yrs).
  - India has been continuously re-elected to the UNESCO
  - General Conference is one of the three constitutional organs of UNESCO, the others being the General Conference and the Secretariat.
  - Recently, India has been re-elected to the UNESCO Executive Board for 2025–29 (In 2021, India won the re-election to the executive board of the UN's cultural and education organisation for the 2021-25 term)
- Headquarter:** Paris (France)
- Indices & Reports Published by UNESCO:**
  - UNESCO Science Report
  - Global Education Monitoring Report
- Programs Spearheaded by UNESCO:**
  - UNESCO Global Geoparks
  - World Heritage Convention
  - Man and the Biosphere (MAB)

### World Heritage Convention

- Adopted in 1972 | by UNESCO
- Objective:** Identify, protect, and conserve heritage sites of global importance.
- Types of Heritage Recognized**
  - Cultural Heritage – monuments, temples, historical buildings | India = 36
    - Dholavira (2021) | Santiniketan (2023) | Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas (2023) | Moidams – The Mound-Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty (2024) | Maratha Military Landscapes (2025)
  - Natural Heritage – forests, mountains, national parks | India = 7
    - Kaziranga National Park (1985) | Keoladeo National Park (1985) | Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (1985) | Sundarbans National Park (1987) | Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988) | Western Ghats (2012) | Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (2014)
  - Mixed Heritage – both cultural and natural importance | India = 1
    - Khangchendzonga National Park (2016)

- India's Status:** Ratified in 1977. As of 2025, India has 43 World Heritage Sites (35 Cultural, 7 Natural, 2 Mixed).
- World Heritage Committee:** Consists of 21 member states elected for a 6-year term; it manages the list and decides on "in-danger" sites.

### World Heritage Sites (WHS)

- WHS are places of outstanding cultural or natural importance that are considered to have universal value to humanity.
- They are designated by UNESCO under the World Heritage Convention (1972)
- To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least 1 out of 10 selection criteria.

### World Heritage Committee (WHC)

**CONTEXT:** 47th Session held Recently.

- Objective:** WHC is a committee of UNESCO responsible for implementing the World Heritage Convention -> WHC is responsible for managing all matters on World Heritage and deciding on sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage list -> It has the final authority on whether a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- Composition:** 21 member countries, elected by their General Assembly + term of office is for 6 years + Most States Parties voluntarily choose a term of only 4 years to allow other States Parties to be on the Committee.
- Meeting:** Annual + decides on the inscription or deletion of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger

### World Heritage Committee (WHC): 47th Session

- Held in Paris, France

### Maratha Military landscape

- Geographical Spread:** Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu
- Diverse and Strategic Locations:** Sahyadri mountain ranges, the Konkan Coast, the Deccan Plateau, and the Eastern Ghats.
- Forts:**
  - Maharashtra:** Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Khanderi, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg.
  - Tamil Nadu:** Gingee Fort



## Tentative List of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention

**CONTEXT:** Recently, 7 places from India were added to the Tentative List of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention.

- UNESCO Tentative List is an inventory of cultural and natural heritage sites that a country intends to nominate for UNESCO World Heritage status.
- Addition to the tentative list is a [redacted] before the inscription of any property on the World Heritage List
- Currently, there are 69 Indian sites in UNESCO's Tentative List.
- **7 New Places Included:**
  1. Natural Heritage of [redacted], Andhra Pradesh;
  2. Meghalayan Age Caves (Meghalaya)
  3. Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills (Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh);
  4. Natural Heritage of Varkala (Kerala);
  5. Deccan Traps at Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar;
  6. Geological Heritage of [redacted] (Karnataka); and
  7. Naga Hill Ophiolite (Nagaland)

### Erra Matti Dibbalu

- Located along the coast near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh (A.P)
- **Speciality:** rare coastal geomorphological features + It is composed of sand, silt, and clay, with their distinct reddish hue resulting from natural oxidation over thousands of years + ed sediments are a part of the continuation of the evolution of the earth and represent the late quaternary geologic age.
- **Other similar sites:** Only two other similar sites exist in the world, one in Sri Lanka and another in Tamil Nadu (Teri Sands)
- **Designation:** Geological Survey of India (GSI) declared Erra Matti Dibbalu a National Geo-heritage Monument in 2016.

## Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

**CONTEXT:** India is hosting the 20th Session of UNESCO's ICSICH (2025) at the Red Fort, New Delhi.

- Adopted in 2003 by UNESCO [redacted]
- More than 180 countries (including India) are signatories to the Convention
- General Assembly of the State Parties is the supreme body and meets once every two years
- State Parties are responsible for nominating cultural elements and have the primary duty to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage

### Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICSICH)

- Created under 2003 ICH Convention by UNESCO
- **Aim:** promote, supervise and operationalize safeguarding of intangible heritage globally

- **Composition:** 24-member body, elected by the General Assembly of States Parties + Seats allocated by equitable geographical representation across six UNESCO regional groups + Each State must nominate experts qualified in ICH fields
  - **Term:** 4 year period | States cannot be re-elected immediately | half the members are replaced every 2 yrs.
  - **India:** India is currently a member of the committee (2022-2026).
  - Presently, India is hosting the 20th Session of UNESCO's ICSICH (2025)

## Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

**CONTEXT:** [redacted] the most recent (Nov-2025) addition to the list.

- It refers to living traditions, expressions, skills, and knowledge passed across generations which includes performing arts, rituals, festivals, crafts, oral expressions, and social practices.
- UNESCO maintains three ICH lists: the Representative List, the Urgent Safeguarding List, and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.
- **India:** Currently, India has 16 elements on UNESCO's Representative List.
  - 1st Indian entry to ICH were Kutiyattam, (India's oldest living Sanskrit theatre tradition from Kerala)
  - Deepawali is the most recent (Nov-2025) addition to the list.
  - Complete List? [Google this Out]

## Creative Cities Network

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Lucknow has submitted its nominations for inclusion in the UCCN to be titled "City of Gastronomy"

- Created in 2004 | by UNESCO.
- **Covers 7 Creative fields:** Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music.
- **Application:** Every year, UNESCO seeks applications from various cities across the globe to put them under its UCCN project + The applications in India are routed through the Ministry of Culture.
- **Indian cities in the UCCN:** Jaipur: Crafts and Folk Arts (2015), Varanasi: Creative City of Music (2015), Chennai: Creative City of Music (2017), Mumbai: Film (2019), Hyderabad: Gastronomy (2019), Srinagar: Crafts and Folk Art (2021), and Kozhikode: City of Literature (2024) (India's 1st UNESCO City of Literature).

## World's 1st Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects.

**CONTEXT:** Recently Launched

- Launched by the U [redacted] at World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development + Developed in collaboration [redacted]
- **Aims** to create a global platform to track and raise awareness of stolen and looted cultural heritage
- **Speciality:** It is a first-of-its-kind global digital museum to display, document, and trace stolen or trafficked cultural objects from around the world

- **Designed** by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Francis Kéré + It is financially supported by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- **India:** Museum will feature India two 9th-century sandstone sculptures from [redacted], i.e. Nataraja and Brahma figure (seated in Lalitāsana).

**MONDIACULT-2025**

- By UNESCO | World's biggest cultural policy conference
- Held @ Barcelona, Spain

**Memory of World (MOW) Programme**

- Launched in 1992 by UNESCO
- **Aim:** to safeguard documentary heritage of humanity + It facilitate preservation, enable universal access and enhance public awareness about documentary heritage
- **Registers:** It consists of three registers: International, Regional and National
- Manuscript of 3 Indian literary works namely [redacted] Asia-Pacific Regional Register along with 17 other works from region in 2024.

**Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)**

**CONTEXT:** Recently, UNESCO has added three more Saudi cities — Riyadh, AlUla, and Riyadh Al-Khabra — to the GNLC in its 2025 update.

- Launched in 2013 by UNESCO.
- **Aim:** It recognises cities promoting [redacted] across all age groups through inclusive, accessible, and sustainable learning ecosystems
- **Criteria:** As per UNESCO, learning cities must demonstrate: Lifelong learning systems, Digital and AI readiness, Literacy & skills development, Innovation & entrepreneurship, and Sustainability & inclusion
- **List:** Today, GNLC includes 425 cities from 91 countries.
- **India** (Total 7 Cities) + Recent ones: Warangal (Telangana), Thrissur (Kerala), and Nilambur (Kerala), Kozhikode (2022).

**World Monuments Fund (WMF)**

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Musi River Historic Buildings in Hyderabad and Bhuj's Historic Water Infrastructure have been included in the 2025 World Monuments Watch

- Founded in 1965 | [redacted] (private, worldwide non-profit organisation) | HQ @ New York (also has an office in India)
- **Aim:** dedicated to protecting historic architectural and cultural heritage sites all over the world + WMF partners with local communities and governments to preserve historically significant sites through donations and matching funds.
- **World Monuments Watch** (launched in 1996) is a biennial program of the World Monuments Fund (WMF).
  - Launched in 1996.
  - Highlights heritage sites globally nominated by individuals and community-based organizations.
  - Recently, the [redacted] and [redacted] have been included in the 2025 World Monuments Watch.

**Musi River Historic Buildings**

- **Location:** Hyderabad
- Important landmarks: High Court of Hyderabad, State Central Library, Osmania General Hospital (OGH), City College and Former British Residency

**Musi River**

- Originates in Anantagiri Hills near Hyderabad, Telangana
- It converges from two rivulets, Esi and Musa
- Tributary of the Krishna River
- **Dams:** Himayat Sagar and Osman Sagar Dams
- Hyderabad is situated on its banks, which divides the city between the old and the new.

**Bhuj's Historic Water Infrastructure**

- **Location:** Gujarat
- Hamirsar Lake was built in the [redacted]
- Artificial reservoir central to the city's water management system

**World Craft City Program**

- Initiative launched in 2014 by the World Crafts Council
- **Aim:** It establishes a dynamic network of craft cities across the globe, aligning with the principles of the creative economy.
- **Indian Cities in List:**
  - Jaipur (Rajasthan)
  - Mammalapuram (Tamil Nadu)
  - Mysore (Karnataka)
  - Srinagar (2024)

**World Craft Council (WCC)**

- 1964 | NGO | Headquarter: Kuwait
- **Aim:** to promote fellowship among crafts persons by offering them encouragement, help, and advice.
- **Founder:** I [redacted] at the 1st World Crafts Council General Assembly in New York in 1964.
- **Working:** WCC is affiliated with UNESCO and is organized into 5 regions: Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America + WCC's presidency changes every 4 years.

**International Manuscript Heritage Conference 2025**

**CONTEXT:** 1st ever hosted by India

- **1st ever, Hosted by India** | organized by the Ministry of Culture, GoI
- **Theme:** 'Reclaiming India's Knowledge Legacy Through Manuscript Heritage'
- Conference is a part of the newly-launched 'Gyan Bharatam Mission'.

**Gyan Bharatam Mission**

- Announced in [redacted] Under the Ministry of Culture.
- **Aim:** It will focus on the "survey, documentation and conservation" of India's manuscript heritage held by academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collectors.
- It will be supplemented by the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)

**National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)**

- Launched in 2003 | NMM is autonomous organisation under Ministry of Culture | Indira Gandhi National Centre

RPS

for Art (IGNCA) is the nodal agency for the execution of NMM project

- **IGNCA:** New Delhi + government-funded + arts organization + autonomous institute under the Ministry of Culture.
- **NMM's Motto:** 'Conserving the past for the future'.
- **Aim:** to document, conserve, digitise and disseminate India's manuscript heritage

- **Mandate:** Identifying, documenting, conserving, and making accessible India's manuscript heritage + NMM has established over 100 Manuscript Resource Centres and Manuscripts Conservation Centres across India.
- **Manuscript:** Refers to a handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, [redacted], palm leaf or any other material [redacted] significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value.

## CULTURE - NATIONAL BODIES & INITIATIVES

### Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- Established in 1861 by [redacted] (Father of Indian Archaeology & first Director-General) | Premier Indian organization for archaeological research & heritage protection
- **Framework:** Statutory under Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains [redacted]
- **Nodal Ministry:** [redacted] Government of India
- **Responsibilities:** Protection, maintenance, and regulation of CPMs (currently 3,600+); enforcement of [redacted] [redacted] zones around monuments; action against encroachments and unauthorized constructions
- **Centrally Protected Monuments:** Monuments [redacted] old with historical, archaeological, or artistic value can be declared as Centrally Protected Monuments (CPMs)
- **Note:** [redacted] as the highest, followed by [redacted]
- **International Work by ASI:** Conservation projects at Bamiyan Buddhas (Afghanistan), [redacted] My Son temples (Vietnam), Friday Mosque (Maldives), Fayaztepa & Karatepa Buddhist sites (Uzbekistan)

### Sahitya Akademi

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Sahitya Akademi cancelled the awards announcements

- Established in 1954 as [redacted] organisation and registered society | India's National Academy of Letters | [redacted]
- **Mandate:** Promotes literary dialogue, publications, and literary activities in 24 languages (22 official languages from [redacted])
- **Awards:** Sahitya Akademi Award (2nd-highest literary honor after Jnanpith), Bal Sahitya Puraskar (children's literature), Yuva Puraskar (authors under 35), Sahitya Akademi Fellowship (highest honour for literary immortals)
- **Notable Recipients:** Ruskin Bond (Sahitya Akademi Fellowship 2024).

### Lalit Kala Akademi

**CONTEXT:** Recently inaugurated 64th National Exhibition of Art in New Delhi

- Established in 1954 by Government of India | Became statutory authority in 1957 | Headquarters: New Delhi
- **Mandate:** Promote and propagate understanding of Indian [redacted] nationally and internationally
- **Activities:** Organizes National Exhibition of Art (prestigious annual event), cultural agreements, and international art exchange programs
- **Regional Centres:** Chennai, Lucknow, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Garhi (New Delhi)
- **Funding:** [redacted] GoI

### Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)

- Founded in 1984 | India's [redacted] organisation for heritage conservation | Volunteer-based organisation | HQ: New Delhi
- **Purpose:** Conservation and preservation of natural, cultural, living, tangible, and intangible heritage
- **Recognition:** In 2007, granted special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

### National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)

**CONTEXT:** Recently received two Public Relations Society of India (PRSI) National Awards 2025

- Established in 1978 | Autonomous society under [redacted] [redacted], GoI | HQ: [redacted]
- **Functions:** Develops and manages science centres and museums for States and UTs
- **Network:** 26 science museums and centres across India | Central Research and Training Laboratory in Kolkata
- **International Collaboration:** Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre (Mauritius) + India Gallery on Buddhism at International Buddhist Museum (Kandy, Sri Lanka)

### Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum

- **Location:** North and South Block buildings, Central Vista, New Delhi
- **Nature:** [redacted] redevelopment project; collaboration between India and France
- **Timeline:** First gallery expected to open by end-2026
- **Scale:** Will be the [redacted] surpassing the existing National Museum
- **Collections:** Incorporates rare objects from galleries nationwide and the current National Museum collection.

### National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)

**CONTEXT:** Approved in [redacted] by the Union Cabinet to showcase 5000 years of India's maritime history at a single site.

- **Location:** [redacted] | Between [redacted]
- **Discovery:** Excavated by [redacted]
- **Significance:** Indus Valley Civilization port town | Site of the world's oldest man-made dry dock (~2200 BC) | Hub for trade in beads, gems, and ornaments with West Asia and Africa
- **Linkages:** Lothal linked via waterways to other Harappan sites like Dholavira, facilitating trade with Mesopotamia
- **Funding:** [redacted] Ministry of Culture
- **UNESCO Status:** Nominated for World Heritage List

## Kashi-Tamil Sangamam 4.0

**CONTEXT:** 4th edition began on 2 December 2025 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, under the government's cultural exchange initiative

- Launched in 2022 | Part of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Yuva Sangam' programme

- **Objective:** Promote cultural and civilisational linkages between Tamil Nadu and Kashi
- **Organized By:** Government of India
- **Implementing Agencies:** IIT Madras and Banaras Hindu University (BHU)
- **UNESCO Recognition:** Both Kashi and Chennai designated as 'Creative Cities of Music'

## CULTURE - EXCAVATIONS in NEWS

### Lakkundi Excavations

- [Redacted] (Veerabhadraswamy) Temple, [Redacted] | Known as "village of a hundred wells and temples"
- **Discoveries:** Neolithic artefacts including broken grey clay pot, stone axe, cross-shaped pedestal, Jina figure
- **Architecture:** Renowned for the [Redacted]
- **Significance:** Flourished under Kalyana Chalukyas and later Hoysalas
- **Cultural Association:** Linked with Queen Attimabbe (11th century), Jain patron and philanthropist
- **Other Important Neolithic Sites in India:** Mehrgarh (Pakistan), Burzahom (Kashmir), Chirand (Bihar), Hallur (Karnataka), Paiyampalli (Tamil Nadu).

### Keezhadi Excavations

**CONTEXT:** The ASI has asked archaeologist Amarnath Ramakrishna, who unearthed an ancient civilisation in Keezhadi near Madurai, to resubmit his report.

- Near Madurai, Tamil Nadu | On the banks of the Vaigai River
- **Period:** Dates back to around the 6th century BCE
- **Discoveries:** [Redacted], Ceramic pottery, Terracotta figurines similar to those found in the Indus Valley sites.
- **Significance:**
  - Part of the Vaigai Valley Civilisation and considered an [Redacted]
  - Findings from the 4th phase of excavations suggest that the second urbanisation of the Vaigai plains occurred around the 6th century BCE, similar to the second urbanisation in the Gangetic plains (the first urbanisation being the IVC)
- **Note:** Sangam Age in ancient Tamil Nadu is generally dated from 3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE.

### Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS)

- **What?** : AMS is a highly sensitive analytical technique used to [Redacted] especially radioactive Carbon-14 ( $^{14}\text{C}$ ), for determining the age of samples.
- **Key Features:** Directly counts individual atoms of isotopes rather than measuring radioactive decay + Detects extremely low concentrations of isotopes + Provides more accurate age estimation than conventional radiocarbon dating methods.
- **Note:** [Redacted]

### Marungur Excavation

- [Redacted] Located between the Thenpennai and Vadaravelli rivers in the ancient Naduvil Mandalam region
- **Objective:** Study prehistoric settlements and burial systems from Iron Age to Early Historic period
- **Discovery:** Found both habitation mound and burial site together (rare in Tamil Nadu excavations)

### Adichanallur Archaeological Site

- [Redacted] Situated on the banks of the Thamirabarani river near the ancient port town of Korkai | One of the oldest Iron Age archaeological sites in India
- **Interlinkage:** Likely prospered due to proximity to Korkai, a major maritime trade centre mentioned in Sangam literature
- **Timeline:** 2019 study dated artefacts between 905 BCE–696 BCE, older than the Keezhadi site
- **Evidence:** Skeletal remains show multiracial traits & indicating a cosmopolitan settlement
- **Findings:** Extensive urn burials, skeletal remains, bronze metal artefacts, and early cultural evidence of South India
- **Important Iron Age Sites in India:** Sivagalai (Tamil Nadu), Mayiladumparai (Tamil Nadu), Brahmagiri (Karnataka), Gachibowli (Telangana), Hallur (Karnataka), Paiyampalli (Tamil Nadu), Malhar (Uttar Pradesh), [Redacted]

### Sivagalai Site

- [Redacted] (Sivagalai) district, Tamil Nadu | Important Iron Age archaeological site in South India
- **Discovery:** Burial urn samples excavated from the site
- **Timeline:** Recent analysis suggests Iron Age activity around 3,345 BCE – indicates very early iron usage in the region
- **Importance:** Evidence suggests early Iron Age culture in Tamil Nadu

### Zehanpora Site

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Stupa structures dating to the Kushan period (1st–3rd century CE)

- [Redacted] Situated along the ancient Silk Route leading towards Kandahar | significant 10-acre Kushan-era (1st–3rd century CE) Buddhist complex.
- **Significance:** Represents Kashmir's Gandhara Buddhist heritage
- **Findings:** Evidence of wooden superstructures, urban settlement complex possibly including chaityas and viharas, Kushan-era pottery & copper artefacts.

## Sirpur Archaeological Site

- [REDACTED] | On the banks of the Mahanadi River | First noted by Alexander Cunningham in 1871
- **Timeline:** 5th–12th century CE archaeological site
- **Role:** Capital of Dakshina Kosala under the Panduvanshi and Somavamshi rulers
- **Significance:** Major multi-religious urban centre with Shiva temples, Vishnu temples, Buddhist viharas and Jain viharas
- **Important Monuments:** Lakshmana Temple (7th century) dedicated to Vishnu + Surang Tila built in Panchayatana style + Tivaradeva Mahavihara containing an important Buddha statue
- **UNESCO Status:** Government preparing the site for nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

## Daojali Hading

- [REDACTED] | near the Brahmaputra valley | Neolithic archaeological site
- **Discovery:** By T.C. Sharma and M.C. Goswami in 1962–64
- **Significance:** Considered first clear evidence of an Eastern Asiatic Neolithic complex in India.
- **Archaeological Evidence:** Presence of double-shouldered celts (stone tools) and cord-marked pottery, indicating Eastern Asiatic Neolithic cultural influence.
- **Metallurgical Evidence:** Furnace remains and iron slag found ~ suggests early metallurgical practices toward the end of the Neolithic period.

## Salkhan Fossil Park

**CONTEXT:** Recently added to UNESCO Tentative List for World Heritage Sites

- [REDACTED] | In Kaimur Range (part of the Vindhya range), adjacent to Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary | Officially known as [REDACTED]
- **Age:** Fossils dating back ~1.4 billion years (Mesoproterozoic era)
- **Feature:** Presence of prehistoric [REDACTED] by [REDACTED]
- **Significance:** India's one of the oldest and most well preserved sites in the world (fossils dating approx [REDACTED])
- **Scientific Importance:** Represents living relics of Mesoproterozoic life and early biological evolution on Earth
- **UNESCO Status:** Recently added to [REDACTED]
- **Global Recognition:** Qualified as a Geo-heritage site under IUCN's 2020 guidelines for "Evolution of Life" and matches UNESCO's 2021 framework on Earth's history and life evolution.

## Guryul Ravine Fossil Site

- Located in [REDACTED] near Khonmoh area, close to [REDACTED] | Part of the Vihi district geological formation
- **Timeline:** About [REDACTED]'s old fossil-bearing geological sequence
- **Evidence:** Preserves the Permian–Triassic Boundary (PTB), recording Earth's largest mass extinction event +

Geological layers indicate possible world's earliest recorded tsunami event

- **Extinction Record:** Provides clear geological evidence of the catastrophic Permian–Triassic extinction, when most life on Earth disappeared
- **Conservation Status:** Falls within the [REDACTED], a sensitive ecological zone

## Permian–Triassic Extinction Event

- Also called the End-Permian extinction or "[REDACTED]" = largest mass extinction in Earth's history
- **Timeline:** Occurred around [REDACTED]
- **Significance:** Marks the boundary between the Permian and Triassic periods and the transition from the Paleozoic Era to the Mesozoic Era
- **Extinction:** About [REDACTED]
- **Possible Causes:** Massive volcanic eruptions (Siberian Traps), climate change, ocean acidification, and oxygen depletion
- **Importance:** Reset Earth's ecosystems and paved the way for the rise of dinosaurs in the Mesozoic Era.

## Konkan Geoglyphs

- Laterite plateaus of the Konkan coast (Maharashtra, Goa, southern Karnataka) | Added to India's [REDACTED] | Nomination preparation for 2027–28 cycle
- **Nature:** Prehistoric rock engravings (geoglyphs/petroglyphs) carved on open laterite surfaces
- **Timeline:** Traditionally estimated ~10,000 years, but recent excavations at [REDACTED] suggest ~24,000 years
- **Features:** Depict humans, animals (elephants, tigers, rhinos, stingrays, turtles, peacocks) and abstract motifs
- **Unique Character:** Unlike painted cave art (e.g., Bhimbetka), these are open-air geoglyphs, which is rare in India
- **Important Indian Sites:** Ratnagiri–Sindhudurg, Kasheli, Barsu, Rundhye, Devache Gothane, Devi Hasol, Kudopi, Jambharun, Ukshi, Tali (Maharashtra) + Usgalimal/Phansaymal (Goa)
- **Global Parallels:** Nazca Lines (Peru), Atacama Giant (Chile), & Blythe Intaglios (USA)

## Circular Stone Labyrinth

**CONTEXT:** Recently, India's largest circular stone labyrinth discovered in Boramani grasslands of Solapur

- [REDACTED]
- **Structure:** Approx 50 ft × 50 ft in size | Consists of 15 concentric circles made of small stone blocks
- **Timeline:** Dates back nearly 2,000 years
- **Association:** Associated with Indo-Roman trade during the Satavahana dynasty period
- **Comparison:** While a larger square labyrinth exists at [REDACTED], the Boramani site is the largest circular labyrinth in India
- **Influence:** Design resembles classical Mediterranean labyrinths, including motifs seen on Roman-era coins
- **Note:** Earlier, the largest circular labyrinth in India had only 11 circuits, whereas this site has 15 concentric circuits.

## Ratnagiri Buddhist Site

**CONTEXT:** *The ASI has discovered significant Buddhist remains during renewed excavations at Ratnagiri, Odisha*

- [Redacted] | Located on a hill between the Birupa and Brahmani rivers near Bhubaneswar | First documented as a historical site in 1905
- **Timeline:** 5th–13th century CE, with peak construction between the 7th–10th centuries
- **Significance:** Odisha's most famous and extensively excavated Buddhist site
- **Religious Importance:** Major centre of Mahayana and Tantrayana (Vajrayana) Buddhism
- **Reference:** Some studies suggest [Redacted]
- **Discoveries:** Colossal Buddha head, massive Buddha palm, ancient structural wall, & inscribed Buddhist relics dating to 8th–9th century CE
- **Note:** Part of Odisha's [Redacted]

## Nalanda University

- [Redacted] | Most ancient university on the Indian subcontinent | Established by [Redacted] Dynasty around [Redacted] CE
- **Discovery:** By Sir Francis Buchanan in the early 19th century
- **Role:** Major international centre of learning, culture and intellectual exchange influencing India and Asia
- **Patronage:** Supported by Pala rulers and later by monks of Nalanda patronised by the Pithipatis of Bodh Gaya
- **Duration:** Flourished for about 600 yrs. until the 12<sup>th</sup> century
- **Golden Period:** Reached its zenith during the reign of Harshavardhana and the Pala monarchs
- **Courses Offered:** Medicine, Ayurveda, Buddhism, religion, mathematics, grammar, astronomy and Indian philosophy
- **Students:** Attracted scholars from China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia
- **Nalanda Associates:** Aryabhata, Harsha, Dharmapala, Nagarjuna, Dharmakirti, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Chandrakirti & Silabhadra

- **Destruction:** Destroyed in [Redacted]
- **Rediscovery:** Rediscovered in 1812 by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton and identified as Nalanda by Alexander Cunningham in 1861
- **UNESCO Status:** Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University ruins) designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016
- **Other Buddhist Centres of Learning:** Takshila (present-day Pakistan), Vikramshila (Bihar), Odantipuri (Bihar), Nagarjunakonda (Andhra Pradesh), Valabhi (Gujarat), & [Redacted]
- New Nalanda University campus inaugurated in 2024 at Rajgir, Bihar.

## Mehrauli Archaeological Park

- Located near the Qutb Complex in Delhi | Part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site | Named after the Sufi saint Jamali and his companion Kamali
- **Origins:** Considered the first city of Delhi under the Tomar rulers in the 11th century
- **Background:** One of the 7 medieval cities of Delhi along with Siri, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Firozabad, Deenpanah and Shahjahanabad
- **Associations:** Linked with the Tomar Dynasty, Delhi Sultanate, Mughal Empire and British period
- **Unique Feature:** Hijron ka Khanqah – a Lodhi-era Sufi hospice historically associated with the transgender community
- **Important Monuments:**
  - [Redacted]
  - Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb (1526–1535 AD): Example of Indo-Islamic architecture
- **Other Structures:** Rajon Ki Baoli (16th-century stepwell), Iron Pillar, Dargah of Qutab Sahib, Jahaz Mahal (Lodi-era pleasure pavilion)

## LITERATURE & INSCRIPTIONS - in NEWS

### Gundaram Inscriptions

**CONTEXT:** *Recently discovered by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)*

- [Redacted] inscription site discovered in 2025
- **Timeline:** Belongs to the Satavahana period of early historic Deccan
- **Linkage:** One inscription refers to Haritiputra lineage (connection between Satavahanas and the Chutu dynasty)
- **Iconography:** Site displays religious symbols like the trident (trishul) and damaru marking the first known instance of religious iconography in early South Indian inscriptions.
- **Significance:** Inscriptions support previous findings from Mukkutrapet and Kotilingala confirming that [Redacted] (Mahajanapada Link)

### Bhadrakali Inscription

- Located at [Redacted] | 12th-century [Redacted] related to Somnath Temple under the Solanki (Chaulukya) dynasty
- **Timeline:** 12th century CE inscription + Carved in 1169 CE (Valabhi Samvat 850 and Vikram Samvat 1255) + Confirms the 5th temple's construction by Kumarapala in 1169 CE
- **Significance:** Confirms Solanki patronage to religion, art, and literature
- **Reference:** Praises Param Pashupata Acharya Shriman Bhavabrihaspati, spiritual preceptor of Kumarapala
- **Mentions** [Redacted]
  - Satya Yuga: Gold temple built by Chandra
  - Treta Yuga: Silver temple built by Ravana
  - Dvapara Yuga: Wooden temple built by Shri Krishna
  - [Redacted]
- **Protection:** Protected monument under the State Department of Archaeology.





## Bhagwan Birsa Munda (1875–1900)

**CONTEXT:** Recently, India concluded the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Bhagwan Birsa Munda during Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh (2021-2024).

- Tribal freedom fighter and social reformer | Belonged to Munda tribe of present-day Jharkhand | Regarded as “Bhagwan” (God) and [redacted]
- **Movement:** Spearheaded tribal mass movement against British colonial rule in Bihar–Jharkhand region during late 19th century
- **Revolt:** [redacted]
- **Contribution:** Founded “Birsait faith” ✓
- **Legacy:** His revolt influenced enactment of [redacted] → Later, Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908 banned transfer of tribal land to non-tribals
- **Commemoration:** Birth anniversary (15 November) declared Janjatiya Gaurav Divas (Tribal Pride Day, 2021) + [redacted]

## Thiruvalluvar

**CONTEXT:** India's first [redacted] will soon be inaugurated in [redacted]

- Celebrated Tamil poet and philosopher | Commonly known as Valluvar
- **Work:** Author of Tirukkural (also called Kural), covering ethics, politics, economics, and love
  - Tirukkural (Tamil: “Sacred Couplets”)
  - Tirukkural is classified under three headings: aram (righteousness), porul (wealth), ibam (enjoyment);
  - Thiruvalluvar is nowhere mentioned in Tirukkural;
  - He is named first in a later collection of verses known as ‘Thiruvalluva Malai’
- **Contribution:** Established SATHYA DHARMA SALAI (1867, Vadalur, Tamil Nadu) to eradicate hunger.
- **Commemoration:** Thiruvalluvar statue in Kanyakumari, created by V. Ganapathi Sthapathi in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu.
- **Note:** Valluvar year (or the Thiruvalluvar year) is an officially recognised Tamil calendar system.

## Rani Velu Nachiyar (1730–1796)

**CONTEXT:** Prime Minister of India paid tributes on her birth anniversary.

- 18th-century queen and anti-colonial warrior | Also known as Veeramangai | Queen of Sivaganga
- **Role:** [redacted]
- **Innovations:** [redacted]

- [redacted] regarded as first woman martyr and [redacted] in Indian history
- Formed first trained women’s military unit, [redacted]
- **Alliances:** Collaborated with leaders like Hyder Ali and Gopala Nayaker.

## Vikramaditya I of the Badami Chalukya (644–681 CE)

**CONTEXT:** Recently, a rare inscription dating back to the time of Vikramaditya I of the Badami Chalukya dynasty has been unearthed at [redacted]

- Chalukya king and temple patron | Also known as [redacted] ja, [redacted] ja, [redacted] a and [redacted]
- **Timeline:** Vikramaditya I ruled from 644 CE to 681 CE
- **Legacy:** He was the 3rd son of Pulakesin II and succeeded his father on the Chalukya throne
- **Titles:** Took on the dynastic titles of “Satyashraya” (refuge of truth) and “Shri-prithvi-vallabha” + Vikramaditya I also assumed the title [redacted]
- **Achievements:** [redacted]
- **Architectural Contribution:** Development of freestanding temples which became a hallmark of Chalukya architecture

## Kushanas

**CONTEXT:** Recently, archaeologists discovered rare Kushana-era coins and decorative stones including lapis lazuli from a UNESCO-listed site near Takhashila in Pakistan

- [redacted] dynasty | Dynastic origin traced to [redacted] Ruled from [redacted] CE)
- **Prominent Ruler:** [redacted] was the greatest Kushana ruler w [redacted] sm, and [redacted]
- **Administration:** Empire divided into [redacted] governed by Satraps
- **Territorial Extent:** Controlled Gandhara, Kashmir, Mathura, and Ganga–Yamuna Doab up to parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- **Numismatics:** Kushanas issued [redacted]

## Raghuji Bhosale I

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Maharashtra government reclaimed the iconic sword of legendary Maratha warrior Raghuji Bhosale I.

- Maratha ruler and military commander under Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj | Active during the early 18th century
- **Founder:** Nagpur-based Bhosale dynasty
- **Mentored by:** Kanhoji Bhosale & rose to prominence as military commander

- **Honours:** Title 'Senasaheb Subha' by Shahu Maharaj for his military excellence.
- **Control:** Eastern regions like Chhattisgarh, Sambalpur, Chanda, and parts of Odisha and Bengal
- **Campaigns:** Led expeditions in Bengal (1745–1755) and South India, defeating Nawabs of Kurnool and Cuddapah

### Raja Prithu Rae

- [Redacted] and [Redacted] ruler | Origin traced to Narakasura
- **Rise:** Rose to power as local chiefs after the fall of Pala Dynasty
- **Established:** Kamata Kingdom (also called Kamru, Kamrud, Kamrupa, Kamata, Koch, or Koch Hajo)
- **Affiliation:** Khen rulers worshipped Goddess Kamteswari
- **Achievement:** [Redacted]; evidence recorded in Kanai Varasi rock inscription

### Ahilyabai Holkar (1725–1795)

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Prime Minister paid tributes to Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar on her 300th birth anniversary

- Maratha queen and reformist ruler | Born 31 May 1725 at Chaundi, Ahilyanagar district, Maharashtra (former Ahmednagar)
- **Dynasty:** Women ruler of Holkar dynasty (seat at Maheshwar) under Maratha Empire
- **Rule:** Took control of Malwa in 1754 after husband Khande Rao's death (Battle of Kumher)
- **Title:** "The Philosopher Queen" by British historian John Key
- **Contribution:** Established textile industry (famous Maheshwari sarees) + Protected widows' rights, supported tribal communities, and maintained secular, inclusive administration
- **Cultural Works:** Restored temples, including Kashi Vishwanath Temple (1780) and contributed to Somnath Temple restoration (1783)

### Tansen

- Legendary Hindustani classical musician | Born in Gwalior as Ramtanu Pandey & trained under Swami Haridas
- **Title:** Honoured with title "Tansen" by Raja Vikramjit of Gwalior + Conferred title "Mian" by Akbar
- **Patronage:** Became a prominent court musician for Ramchandra Vaghela and later served in Mughal emperor Akbar's court as one of Navaratnas (9 Jewels)
- **Tradition:** His descendants and disciples known as "Seniyas"
- **Contributions:** Composed "Dhrupad music" dedicated to Hindu deities and royal patrons;
  - Established "Gwalior Gharana", the first musical gharana of Hindustani classical music
- **Legacy:** Created iconic ragas including Miyan ki Malhar, Miyan ki Todi, Darbari Kanada.

### Mahatma Jyotiba Phule

- Social reformer from [Redacted] | Born on 11 April in a lower-caste Mali family | Influenced by The Rights of Man [Redacted]
- **Education:** [Redacted]
- **Reforms:** Challenged [Redacted] Vedas, advocated [Redacted] marginalized communities
- **Organizations:** Founded [Redacted] to promote caste and religious equality
- **Literary:** Authored [Redacted], [Redacted] literature; wrote stories like [Redacted]
- **Honours:** Bestowed [Redacted]

### Savitribai Phule

- Social reformer from Maharashtra | India's first woman teacher | Born 3 Jan 1831 into the Mali community | Married Jyotirao Phule at age 10, who educated her at home and later enrolled her in a teacher training institution in Pune
- **Education:** [Redacted]
- **Reforms:** Advocated widow remarriage, inter-caste marriage, provided shelter for widows and [Redacted] promoted social equality via Satyashodhak Samaj
- **Relief Work:** Assisted during 1896 famine and 1897 Bubonic plague
- **Legacy:** Led husband's funeral procession and performed last rites
- **Literary:** [Redacted] (1892), [Redacted]

### Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917)

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the 200th Birth Anniversary of Dadabhai Naoroji was celebrated across the nation

- "Grand Old Man of India" | [Redacted]
- **Leadership:**
  - [Redacted] in 1886, 1893, and 1906
  - First Indian to be elected to [Redacted]
  - Elected Member of [Redacted] (1875)
- **Economic Thoughts:** Proponent of [Redacted] + Authored [Redacted] + Member of [Redacted]
- **Journalism:** Founder-editor of the journal "Rast Goftar" in Bombay in 1851 + Started a newspaper called 'Voice of India'

- **Reform:** Co-founded “Rahnumai Mazdayasan Sabha” (1851) to reform Parsi society
- **Advocacy:** Supported women, elderly, [redacted] + Helped found ‘[redacted]’ and [redacted]”
- **Initiatives:** First Indian [redacted] + Founded [redacted]

### Vithalbhai Patel (1873-1933)

- Congress leader & Elder brother of Sardar Patel
- **Achievements:**
  - First Indian President/Speaker of the Central Legislative Assembly
  - Elected to the Bombay Legislative Council
  - Elected Central Legislative Assembly member (1923)
  - Became Assembly President (1925)
- **Career:** Co-founded [redacted]

### Lala Lajpat Rai

**CONTEXT:** Recently, PM pays tribute to Lala Lajpat Rai on his birth anniversary

- Nationalist leader & “Punjab Kesari” | Born in Punjab in 1865 | Member of extremist faction of INC and Lal-Bal-Pal trio
- **Leadership:** [redacted]
  - [redacted] over All India Trade Union Congress
  - Founded: [redacted], [redacted], & [redacted]
  - Played role in the establishment of [redacted]
- **Journalism:** Started the journal [redacted] & contributed to [redacted]
- **Literature:** Authored books such as [redacted]
- **Martyrdom:** Led peaceful protest against Simon Commission (1928, Lahore); died from police lathi charge injuries.

### E. V. Ramaswamy (Periyar) (1879-1973)

- Social reformer and philosopher | Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s constructive political programmes
- **Publications:** Founded and published “Kudi Arasu”, a Tamil weekly promoting social reform
- **Activism:** Participated in Vaikom Satyagraha and Non-Cooperation Movement;
- Title: “Vaikom Veeran” and “Periyar” (meaning ‘great man’) by followers
- **Leadership:** Co-founded [redacted]

### MS Swaminathan (1925-2023)

**CONTEXT:** Recently, PM inaugurates MS Swaminathan Centenary International Conference on his 100th birth anniversary

- Father of India’s Green Revolution | Coined term “Evergreen Revolution” (1990)
- **Innovations:** Collaborated with [redacted] + Revolutionized Indian agriculture in 1960s–70s
- **Contributions:**
  - Developed P [redacted]
  - F [redacted]
  - Chaired [redacted] above production costs (C2+50% formula)
  - [redacted] advocated drought code, flood code, and good weather code
  - Shaped 6th Five Year Plan (1980–1985); introduced chapters on ‘Women and Development’ and ‘Environment and Development’
- **Leadership:** Founder of MS Swaminathan Research Foundation + President of Pugwash Conferences and IUCN
- **Honours & Awards:** World Food Prize (1987), Padma Shri (1967), Padma Bhushan (1972), Padma Vibhushan (1989), Bharat Ratna (posthumously 2024), Ramon Magsaysay Award (1971), Albert Einstein World Science Award (1986); [redacted]
- **Commemoration:** PM inaugurated MS Swaminathan Centenary International Conference on 100th birth anniversary
  - **Theme:** “Evergreen Revolution: The Pathway to Biohappiness”

### Madhav Gadgil (1942–2026)

**CONTEXT:** Recently, renowned Indian ecologist Madhav Gadgil passed away

- Renowned Indian ecologist and environmentalist | Founded the Centre for Ecological Sciences at IISc Bengaluru in 1982
- **Contribution and Roles:**
  - Contributed to the [redacted]
  - Chaired the [redacted] ( [redacted] 2010 & recommended graded ecological sensitivity zones
  - Served as a member of the Prime Minister’s Science and Technology Advisory Council
  - Key architects of India’s Biological Diversity Act
  - Contributed to implementation of the Forest Rights Act
- **Honours:** Received Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement, Volvo Environment Prize and UNEP Champions of the Earth award.

## CULTURE - HISTORICAL EVENTS & ORGANIZATIONS

### Iron Age (India)

- Period of dominance of iron tools and weapons | Began globally ~1200 BCE | India evidence as early as 3,345 BCE (Sivagalai, Tamil Nadu)
- **Phases:**
  - **Early Iron Age (1500–1000 BCE):** Iron used in agriculture and hunting; late Vedic texts like Atharvaveda; sites: Atranjikhhera (UP), Malhar (Chhattisgarh), Hallur (Karnataka)
  - **Middle Iron Age (1000–600 BCE):** Expansion of iron use, urban centers, fortified settlements, Painted Grey Ware culture; early Janapadas emerge; sites: Kausambi, Atranjikhhera (UP)
  - **Late Iron Age (600–200 BCE):** Rise of Mahajanapadas, Mauryan Empire; spread of Buddhism and Jainism; Ashoka's edicts; major cities: Pataliputra, Ujjain; recent excavations: Thirumalapuram (Tenkasi, Tamil Nadu)
- **Important Sites in India:** Sivagalai, Mayiladumparai, Adichanallur, Paiyampalli (Tamil Nadu); Hallur, Brahmagiri (Karnataka); Gachibowli (Telangana); Malhar, Atranjikhhera (UP)

### Vijayanagara Era

**CONTEXT:** Recently, over 100 gold coins from the Vijayanagara era were unearthed inside an earthen pot during restoration works at a Later Chola-period Shiva temple in Kovilur, Tamil Nadu

- South Indian Empire of **Sangama Dynasty** | Founded by **Harihara I & Bukka I** with blessings of Guru Vidyaranya | Capital at **Hampi** (Tungabhadra river, UNESCO World Heritage Site)
- **Monetary System:** Advanced coinage—gold pagodas (gadyanas), silver taras, copper jitals + Gold mainly for temple offerings and royal use + Coins bore images of Hindu deities (Siva-Parvati, Vishnu-Lakshmi, Balakrishna, Gandaberunda)
- **Inscriptions:** Written in Devanagari, Kannada, Tamil + Rulers' names with honorifics like "**Sri Pratapa**" + Boar emblem (Varaha) used as state symbol on coins and seals
- **Economy:** Coinage circulated widely across South India, Sri Lanka, Indian Ocean trade routes + Developed shipbuilding skills
- **Architecture:** Features tall Raya Gopurams, Kalyanamandapam with carved pillars & prominent temple complexes
- **Decline:** Empire fell in 1565 CE after **Battle of Talikota** against Deccan Sultanates; described by Domingo Paes as "as large and beautiful as Rome"
- **Recent Discovery:** Over 100 gold coins unearthed at Kovilur Shiva temple, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. These coins bore emblems from the reigns of Harihara II or Krishnadevaraya.

### Arya Samaj

**CONTEXT:** Prime Minister highlighted Arya Samaj's contributions on completion of 150 years of its foundation

- Reformist socio-religious movement | Founded in 1875 in Bombay by **Swami Dayanand Saraswati** based on Vedic principles

- **Ideology:** Rejected idolatry and ritualism & upheld infallible authority of the Vedas
- **Slogan:** "Back to the Vedas"
- **Members:** Included Lala Lajpat Rai, Bhagat Singh, Ram Prasad Bismil, Madan Lal Dhingra, Swami Shradhanand, and Sachindra Nath Sanyal
- **Social Reforms:** Promoted women's education, opposed hereditary caste system, untouchability, child marriage, equal access to Vedic learning, and forced widowhood
- **Initiatives:** Established **Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) Trust** to promote modern and scientific education

### Hyderabad Satyagraha (1938-39)

- **What? :** Movement for civil and religious rights in Hyderabad State
- **Launch:** By Arya Samaj against the oppressive rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad,
- **Reason:** Nizam restricted Arya Samajists from propagating Vedic teachings
- **Leadership:** Led by Mahatma Narayan Swami and Chand Kiran Sharda
- **Objectives:** Secure civil liberties & ensure religious freedom in Hyderabad State
- **Legacy:** Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel later acknowledged the movement's role in the liberation and integration of Hyderabad into India.

### Kakori Train Action (1925)

**CONTEXT:** 2025 marked the centenary of the Kakori Train Action

- **What? :** Revolutionary attack on British treasury
- **Event:** Occurred 9 August 1925 near Kakori, targeting the 8-Down train from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow
- **Organisation:** Executed by revolutionaries of Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)
- **Objective:** Seize British government treasury funds & finance revolutionary activities
- **Leaders:** Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Chandrashekhar Azad, Rajendra Lahiri, Thakur Roshan Singh
- **Aftermath:** British authorities launched mass arrests and trials
  - Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Rajendra Lahiri, and Thakur Roshan Singh were executed by hanging
  - Chandrashekhar Azad escaped and continued revolutionary work until his death in 1931 at Alfred Park
- **Legacy:** In 1928, HRA was reorganised as Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) with a socialist revolutionary ideology

### Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)

- **What? :** Revolutionary organisation in India
- **Formation:** Established in 1924 as a radical revolutionary organisation
- **Founders:** Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Sachindra Nath Bakshi, Sachindranath Sanyal, and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee
- **Objective:** Establish a Federated Republic of the United States of India through organised armed revolution against British rule

- **Ideology & Publications:**
  - Drafted a constitution called the “Yellow Paper”
  - Issued manifesto “Revolutionary” (1925) criticizing Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violent approach and urging youth to join armed struggle
- **Network:** Maintained branches and bomb-manufacturing units in several Indian cities
- **Major Action:** Conducted the Kakori Train Action, its first major operation
- **Later Development:** Reorganised in 1928 as Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)
- **Revolutionary Activities (HRA/HSRA):**
  - Assassination of J.P. Saunders (1928) to avenge Lala Lajpat Rai
  - Central Legislative Assembly Bombing (1929)

### Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)

- **What? :** Socialist revolutionary organisation
- **Formation:** Established in 1928 at Feroz Shah Kotla
- **Origin:** Emerged from Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)
- **Founders:** Led by revolutionaries including Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru
- **Ideology:** Combined armed struggle for Indian independence with socialist principles

### Self-Respect Movement

**CONTEXT:** 2025 marked the centenary of the Self-Respect Movement

- **What? :** Anti-caste social reform movement
- **Foundation:** Started in 1921 in Tamil Nadu by S. Ramanathan; in 1925, E. V. Ramaswamy (Periyar) was invited to lead the movement
- **Objective:** Promote egalitarian society by rejecting Brahminical authority and social hierarchy
- **Influences:** Periyar was influenced by reformers such as Jyotirao Phule and B. R. Ambedkar; he also participated in the Vaikom Satyagraha
- **Reforms:**
  - Introduced Self-Respect marriages (without Brahmin priests)
  - Upliftment of backward castes
  - Advocated women’s rights including property rights, inter-caste marriages, divorce, and widow remarriage
- **Women Leaders:** Annai Meenambal (who conferred the title “Periyar” on E.V. Ramaswamy) and Veeramal
- **Publications:** Periyar published “Kudi Arasu” (Tamil weekly) to spread reformist ideas; pamphlets included Namathu Kurikkol and Tiravitak Kalaka Lateiyam
- **Legacy:** Influenced later Dravidian parties such as Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).

### Servants of India Society

- **What? :** Organization for national service and political education
- **Foundation:** Established 12 June 1905 by Gopal Krishna Gokhale with G. K. Devadhar, A. V. Patwardhan, and N. A. Dravid

- **Objective:** Train national workers dedicated to the service of India with a strong sense of public duty
- **Activities:** Political education of the masses, constitutional agitation for reforms, promotion of national interest through lawful and constitutional methods
- **Training:** Members underwent 5 years of rigorous training
- **Members:** V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Hriday Nath Kunzru, A. V. Thakkar
- **Leadership:** After Gokhale’s death in 1915, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri became president
- **HQ:** Pune with branches in Chennai, Mumbai, Allahabad, and Nagpur

### Communist Party of India (CPI)

**CONTEXT:** On December 26, 1925, Communist Party of India (CPI) completed 100 years of its foundation.

- **Formation:** Initial meeting in 1920 at Tashkent by a group including M. N. Roy and others;
  - Formal resolution adopted at the “Kanpur Communist Conference” in Kanpur (Dec 1925)
- **Ideology:** Based on Marxism-Leninism, emphasizing the role of a communist party leading a revolution to establish a socialist state.
- **Objectives:** Nationalization of banks, workers’ and peasants’ rights, land reforms and abolition of zamindari, & establishment of a socialist state
- **Founding members:** Satyabhakta, M.N.Roy, E.T.Roy, Abani Mukherjee, Mohammad Ali, Hasrat Mohani etc.
- **Leadership:**
  - **Prominent Leaders:** M.N. Roy, Evelyn Trent-Roy (wife of M.N.Roy), Abani Mukherjee, Rosa Fitingov, Mohmmad Ali, Mohmmad Shafiq, A. K. Gopalan, S.A. Dange, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P.C. Joshi, Ajay Ghosh and P. Sundarayya etc.
  - **First President:** M. Singaravelu Chettiar (In May 1923, the 1st May Day celebration in India was organized under his leadership)
  - **First General Secretaries:** S. V. Ghate and J. P. Bagerhatta
- **Associated Organisations:** All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) (1920), All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) (1936), All India Students’ Federation (1936), & Mahila Sanghams during the Freedom struggle
- **Publications:** Ganavani (Bengali weekly), Mehnatkash (Urdu weekly) and Kranti (Marathi weekly)
- **Role in Freedom Movement:** Propagated anti-colonial revolutionary ideas & supported constituent assembly demand (1934) through labour, student, and literary groups such as All India Progressive Writers Association.
- **Major Agrarian Movements:** Tebhaga Movement, Punnappa-Vayalar Uprising, Warli Revolt Telangana Armed Struggle
- **Split:** In 1964, ideological differences during the Sino-Soviet split led to division into CPI and CPI (Marxist)

## CULTURE - TEMPLES IN NEWS

### Konark Sun Temple

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has prohibited tourists from entering the 'Nata Mandap' of the Konark Sun Temple.

- On the coastline in Puri district, Odisha | 13th Century temple dedicated to Surya (called Surya Devalaya) | Europeans refers to the "Black Pagoda"
- **Builder:** Constructed around 1250 CE by Narasimhadeva I
- **Architectural Features:**
  - Built in Kalinga (Odisha) style of architecture
  - Originally over 200 feet high, though much of the shikhara (main tower) is now in ruins
  - Constructed using three types of stones – the laterite stone, Khondalite, and Chlorite stone
  - Designed as a giant stone chariot of the Sun God with 24 elaborately carved wheels and seven horses → wheels function as sundials
  - Temple oriented eastward so that the first rays of sunrise fall on the main entrance
- **Recognition:** UNESCO World Heritage Site (1984)
- **Protection:** Protected as an 'ancient monument of national importance' under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act)

### Jagannath Temple

- Puri, Odisha | Hindu temple dedicated to Jagannath, a form of Vishnu | Revered as one of the 4 Dhams
- **Background:**
  - Built in the 12th century CE by Anantavarman Chodaganga
  - Construction evidenced by the Ganga dynasty king Kendupatna copper-plate inscription of his descendant Narasimhadeva II
- **Significance:**
  - One of the Char Dham pilgrimage sites along with Dwarka, Badrinath, and Rameswaram
  - Known as "Yamanika Tirtha", where the influence of Yama is believed to be nullified due to Lord Jagannath's presence
- **Architecture:**
  - Classic example of Kalinga (Odisha) Nagara style architecture (architectural forms: Rekha Deula, Pidha Deula, & Khakhra Deula)
  - Architectural forms of kalinga
  - Europeans referred to it as the "White Pagoda"
- **Structural components:** Deul (sanctum sanctorum); Jagamohan (assembly hall); Nat Mandir (dance hall); Bhog Mandap (hall for offerings)
- **Festivals:** Ratha Yatra and Bahuda Yatra (return chariot procession) are renowned annual chariot festival
- **Temple Associates:** Vaishnav saints such Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Vallabhacharya, and Ramananda
- **Recognition:** UNESCO World Heritage Site
- **Recent developments:**
  - Magji Ladoo (Odisha's Dhenkanal district), one of the 'Chappan Bhog' prasad at Shree Jagannath Temple got GI Tag
  - In 2024, the sacred treasury of Shree Jagannath Temple, called Ratna Bhandar was reopened after 46 years

### Jagannath Dham Temple

**CONTEXT:** Recently consecrated at Digha in West Bengal

- Digha, West Bengal | Inspired from the 12th-century Jagannath Temple of Puri
- **Architecture:**
  - Built in Kalinga-style architecture
  - Constructed using pinkish Bansi Paharpur sandstone
  - Temple complex comprises 4 primary structures: the Vimana (sanctum), Jagamohan (assembly hall), Nat Mandir (dance hall), and Bhog Mandap (offering hall)
- **Deities:**
  - Enshrines stone idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra
  - Idols are placed on the Ratnabedi (sacred pedestal)
  - Differs from the wooden Darubrahma deities used in the Puri temple tradition

### Nagshankar Temple

**CONTEXT:** On World Turtle Day (23 May), Nagshankar Temple in Assam was officially declared a "Model Temple for Turtle Conservation"

- Assam | Dedicated to Shiva | Honours turtles as incarnations of Lord Vishnu
- **Construction:** Believed to be built in the 4th century AD by King Nagashankar of Nagakha dynasty
- **Feature:** Houses a large pond, which is home to 250–300 turtles, including black softshell turtles (IUCN: critically endangered)

### Maa Kamakhya Temple

- Guwahati, Assam | Located atop the Nilachal Hill, by the banks of the Brahmaputra river | Dedicated to Kamakhya
- **Background:**
  - According to legend, the temple was originally built by Narakasura
  - Historical records date from 1565, when Nara Narayan rebuilt the temple
- **Architecture:**
  - Reconstructed in the Nilachal style of architecture (combination of Nagara & Saracenic/Mughal architectural influences)
  - Temple features a brick dome shaped as a 16-sided polygon
- **Significance:** Kamakhya is one of 51 shakti peethas or holy sites for the followers of the Shakti cult, each representing a body part of the Sati (Lord Shiva's companion)
- **Festival:** Popular Ambubachi fair is celebrated to mark the annual menstruation of the presiding Goddess in the Kamakhya Temple

### Khajuraho Temples

- Situated within Vindhya Mountain range, Madhya Pradesh
- **Background:**
  - Reported for the first time by Abu Rihan al Biruni in AD 1022
  - Later by Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta in AD 1335

- **Construction:**
  - Built between 950-1050 AD by the Chandela Dynasty
  - Constructed in Nagara-style architectural style
  - Monuments include Hindu and Jain temples
- **Feature:**
  - Erotic imagery is very common in the Temples of Khajuraho
  - Temples of Khajuraho are divided into three groups, the Western Group, the Eastern Group and the Southern Group
  - Originally 85 temples were built in the complex, but only 23 temples survive today
- **Recognition:** Got the status of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites in 1986
- **Protection:** Maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

### Tirumala Venkateswara Temple

**CONTEXT:** *Recently, Tirumala Laddu was in the news due to allegations of adulteration.*

- Andhra Pradesh | Dedicated to Venkateswara, an incarnation of Vishnu | Among the richest and most visited pilgrimage centers in the world
- **Architecture:**
  - Built in the Dravidian architectural style
  - Main shrine contains the gold-plated tower called "Ananda Nilayam", which crowns the sanctum.
- **Patronage:** Chola dynasty contributed to the development and patronage + Temple received donations and endowments during the reign of the Vijayanagara Empire
- **Religious Reform:** 12th-century philosopher-saint Ramanuja played an important role in reviving temple rituals and strengthening Vaishnavite traditions at Tirumala
- **Tirumala Laddu:** GI-tagged sacred offering (Prasad) distributed to devotees at the temple

### Simhachalam Temple

- Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh | Other Name: Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Temple | Exact date of construction is uncertain but inscription confirms the temple's existence during the Chola period
- **Dedicated to:** Narasimha, worshipped here in the form of Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha, combining aspects of Varaha and Narasimha, avatars of Vishnu
- **Architecture:** Represents a blend of Orissan and Chalukyan styles
- **Unique Feature:** Unlike most Hindu temples that face east, Simhachalam Temple faces west.

### Lakkundi Temples

- Gadag district of Karnataka | Known in ancient inscriptions as "Lokki Gundi"
- **Construction:** Built during the rule of the Western Chalukyas (also called Kalyana Chalukyas)
- **Feature:** Village contains more than 50 ancient temples and 101 stepped wells (Kalyanis)
- **Important Structures:**
  - **Kasivisvesvara Temple:** Twin temple structure & built in the Vesara style of architecture

- **Brahma Jinalaya:** An early 11th-century Jain temple
- **Musukina Bavi:** Highly ornate stepped well
- **Recognition:** Lakkundi temple complex is being considered for inclusion in the UNESCO Tentative List of World Heritage Sites

### Padmanabhaswamy Temple

**CONTEXT:** *Recently the temple hosted the rare 'Maha Kumbhabhishekam' after 270 years*

- Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
- **Background**
  - Believed to have been built in the 8th century CE
  - One of the 108 Divya Desams (sacred temples dedicated to Vishnu in the Sri Vaishnava tradition)
  - Temple was extensively renovated by Marthanda Varma
- **Architecture:**
  - Built in the Dravidian architectural style
  - Prominent 7-tier gopuram (gateway tower) decorated with intricate carvings and sculptures
  - Sanctum enshrines Padmanabha (Vishnu reclining on the serpent Ananta)
- **Thripadidanam Tradition:** Marthanda Varma performed Thripadidanam, a ritual in which he formally dedicated his kingdom to Lord Padmanabha and ruled thereafter as the servant of the deity
- **Literature:** Nammalwar, a 9th-century Alvar saint, composed 10 devotional hymns praising Lord Padmanabha + Nammalwar is one of the 12 saints of the Alvar tradition in Vaishnavism.

### Brihadeeswarar Temple

- Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu | Also known as Big Temple, Periya Kovil, Raja Rajeswara Temple, and Rajarajeshwaram | Dedicated to Shiva, worshipped here as Peruvudaiyar
- **Construction:** Built in 1009 CE by Raja Raja Chola I of the Chola dynasty
  - Constructed in the Dravidian architectural style
  - Sanctum houses a two-storey Shiva Lingam
- **Features:**
  - Considered one of the largest and tallest temples in India
  - Entire temple complex is built from granite
  - Features a pyramidal Vimanam (temple tower)
  - Tower is crowned by an octagonal dome-shaped Stupika
  - Kumbam (apex structure) at the top is carved from a single rock
  - Temple contains a massive statue of Nandi (sacred bull) carved from a single stone
- **Recognition:** Temple forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Great Living Chola Temples
  - Other temples in this group: Brihadeeswarar Temple, Gangaikonda Cholapuram (built by Rajendra I) + Airavatesvara Temple (built by Rajaraja Chola II)
- **Recent Event:** In 2024, Sadhya Vizha was celebrated in Thanjavur to commemorate the birth anniversary of Raja Raja Chola I.

## Mount Kailash

- Located in Tibet | Stands at 6,638 meters (21,778 feet) | Part of the Trans-Himalaya in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China | Also known as the "pillar of the world", the "axis mundi", and the "world tree"
- **Features:**
  - Diamond-shaped peak made of black rock
  - Despite being lower than Mount Everest (8,849 m), it remains unclimbed because climbing is prohibited due to its sacred status
  - River Sutlej, Brahmaputra, Karnali, and Indus originates from Mount Kailash
  - Lake Mansarovar is located at the base of the mountain
- **Significance:**
  - Considered a sacred peak by Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Bons (indigenous religion of Tibet)
  - Associated with Rishabhanatha, who is believed to have attained liberation nearby
  - Bon religion regards as the sacred "Nine-story Swastika Mountain"
  - Tibetans call Mount Kailash "Gang Tise"
  - In Buddhist texts, it is known as "Mount Meru" (or "Cosmic Axis")
- **Recognition:** In 2019, "Sacred Mountain Landscape and Heritage Routes" (Indian side of Kailash Mansarovar) has been proposed for inclusion in the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites of India, under the Mixed site category.

## Golden Temple

- Amritsar, Punjab | Also known as Harmandir Sahib | Holiest shrine of Sikhism

- **Background:**
  - Sacred pool (Sarovar) at the site was completed in 1577 by the 4th Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das
  - In 1604, the 5th Guru, Guru Arjan, installed the Adi Granth inside the shrine
  - Shrine was rebuilt in marble and copper in 1809 by Maharaja Ranjit Singh
  - Sanctum was covered with gold leaf in 1830, giving the temple its popular name "Golden Temple"
- **Architectural Features:**
  - Built on the lower level and it is open from all 4 sides
  - Sanctum has a low fluted dome (Gumbaz) with a lotus petal motif at the base and an inverted lotus at the top supporting a Kalash and Chhatri
  - Temple complex is arranged around the sacred Sarovar (pool)
  - Akal Takht is the chief centre of religious authority of Sikhism
- **Role & Significance:**
  - Temple organises the largest 'langar sewa' (or community kitchen) in the world
  - Became a centre of the Singh Sabha Movement (1883-1920s)
  - Played role in Punjabi Suba movement (1947-1966)
- **Recognition:** Gurdwara complex has been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCO.

## CULTURE - MONUMENTS & ARCHITECTURE

### Mohenjodaro 'Dancing Girl'

- Bronze figurine dating to around 2500 BCE | Discovered in 1926 by archaeologist Ernest Mackay at Mohenjo-daro
- **Features:** Tilted head, long arms, one hand resting on the hip, multiple bangles and ornaments
- **Technique:** Created using the Lost-Wax Casting Technique
- **Significance**
  - Considered one of the earliest bronze sculptures in the world, dating to c. 2500 BCE
  - Highlights the advanced metallurgical knowledge and skills of the Indus Valley Civilization
  - **Current Location:** Preserved in the National Museum of India, New Delhi

### Prerna Sthal

**CONTEXT:** Recently inaugurated by the PM to mark the 101st birth anniversary of Atal Bihari Vajpayee

- **Location:** Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh | On the banks of the Gomti River
- **Dedicated to:** Life and ideals of former PM Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee
- **Feature:** 65-foot-high bronze statues of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

### Thanjavur Painting

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Department of Posts transported a Thanjavur Painting of Lord Ram from Bengaluru to Ayodhya.

- Classical art form named after the town of Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu | Thanjavur was capital of the Chola dynasty | Also called "Palagai Padam", meaning a picture painted on a wooden plank
- **Patrons:** Flourished under the Chola rulers, the Vijayanagara Empire Nayaks, and the Maratha Empire rulers
- **Themes:** Well known for their depictions of Hindu deities
- **Features:** Made on wooden boards and decorated with glass beads, semi-precious stones, vibrant natural colours, and gold foil
- **Recognition:** Received GI Tag in 2008

### Ellora Caves

**CONTEXT:** Recently, India and Jordan signed a twinning agreement between Petra and the Ellora Caves

- **Location:** Situated near the Elaganga River in the Charanandri Hills at Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra
- **Timeline:** Caves were carved between the 6th and 10th centuries CE (newer than the Ajanta Caves)
- **Patronage:** Received from the Rashtrakuta dynasty and later the Yadava dynasty.
- **Feature:** Consists of rock-cut caves carved into basalt cliffs using a top-to-down excavation technique
  - Site is renowned for 34 rock-cut caves representing: Hindu deities (Shiva, Parvati, Vishnu), Buddhist Jatakas, & Jain Tirthankaras
  - Kailasa Temple (Cave 16) is the world's largest monolithic rock excavation and a masterpiece of Rashtrakuta architecture dedicated to Lord Shiva.

- **Recognition:** Ellora complex was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.

### Petra Caves

- **Location:** In present-day Jordan | Also known as the “Rose City” due to its distinctive pink sandstone cliffs
- Served as the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom from around the 4th century BCE
- **Feature:** City is uniquely half built and half carved directly into rock faces
- **Rock-cut architecture includes:** Tombs, Temples, Façades, & Water management systems.

### Bekal Fort

- **Location:** Kasargod district, Kerala
- **Feature:** Largest fort in Kerala built in the 17th century by Shivappa Nayaka of the Keladi dynasty
- **Architecture:** Designed and built with unique dark maroon laterite stones
  - Observation tower inside the fort was built by Tipu Sultan.

### Raigad Fort

- Located in Sahyadri mountain ranges, Maharashtra | Known as the “Gibraltar of the East” | Fort was seized by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in 1656 from Chandraraoji More
- **Significance:**
  - Important historical fort associated with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj
  - Declared the capital of the Maratha Empire in 1674 AD.
- **Features:**
  - Accessible only by a pathway on one side
  - Hirkani Buruj is a famous tower built on a high valley near the fort
  - Surrounded by valleys shaped by the Kal River and Gandhari River

### Maratha Military Landscapes of India

- Recently inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List | Became India’s 44th World Heritage property
- **Announcement:** Declared during the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee held in Paris
- **Location:** Forts are located across Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu
- **Significance:** Extraordinary network of 12 forts demonstrating the strategic military vision and architectural ingenuity of the Maratha Empire from the 17th to 19th centuries CE
- **Forts Included (12):** Salher Fort; Shivneri Fort; Lohgad Fort; Khanderi Fort; Raigad Fort; Rajgad Fort; Pratapgad Fort; Suvarnadurg Fort; Panhala Fort; Vijaydurg Fort; Sindhudurg Fort; & Gingee Fort.
- **Protection:** Protected by Archaeological Survey of India – Shivneri, Lohgad, Raigad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg, Gingee
- **Nodal Agency:** Archaeological Survey of India is the nodal agency for all World Heritage-related matters in India.
- **Global Ranking:** India ranks 6th globally and 2nd in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of the number of World Heritage Sites.

### Charminar

- **Location:** On the east bank of the Musi River in Hyderabad, Telangana
- **Construction:** Built in 1591 by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah of the Qutb Shahi dynasty
- **Purpose:** Constructed in honour of his wife Bhagmati after shifting the capital from Golconda Fort to Hyderabad
- **Belief:** Built to commemorate the end of a plague epidemic that had severely affected the city
- **Architecture Style:** Built in the Indo-Saracenic architecture
  - **Architect:** Designed by Mir Momin Astrawadi
  - **Inspiration:** Architectural design inspired by Shia “tazias”
  - **Symbolism:** Four pillars are believed to represent the first four caliphs of Islam
- **UNESCO Status:** Charminar along with the Qutb Shahi Monuments of Hyderabad — including Golconda Fort and the Qutb Shahi Tombs — is included in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- **Protection:** Listed as an archaeological and architectural treasure in the official list of monuments prepared by the Archaeological Survey of India.

### Rajon ki Baoli

- **Location:** Situated in Mehrauli Archaeological Park, Delhi | Also known as “Rajon ki Bain”
- **Construction:** Built in 1506 AD by Daulat Khan
- **Architecture:** A 4-level stepwell structure built in the Indo-Islamic architecture
- **Patronage:** Daulat Khan served as an Amir in the court of Sikander Lodhi of the Lodi dynasty

### Red Fort

- **Location:** Located in Delhi along the banks of the Yamuna River
- **Name:** Formerly known as “Quila-e-Mubarak” (Blessed Fort) | Also called “Qila-i-Mu’alla” during the reign of Akbar II
- **Construction:** Built in 1648 by the 5th Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as the palace fort of his new capital Shahjahanabad
- **Architectural Features:** Built using red sandstone with a blend of Timurid and Persian architectural styles
  - **Architects:** Designed by Ustad Ahmad Lahauri and Ustad Hamid
  - **Water System:** Features the famous Nahr-i-Behisht
  - Two principal gates: Lahore Gate (western side) & Delhi Gate
- **Historical Events:**
  - Played a key role during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, when Bahadur Shah Zafar was declared leader
  - Later served as the venue for the INA Trials in the 1940s
- **Independence Day Tradition:** On 15 August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the national flag from the Lahore Gate and delivered the “Tryst with Destiny” speech, establishing the tradition of annual Independence Day celebrations at the fort
- **Currency:** Monument appears on the ₹500 note of the Mahatma Gandhi New Series
- **Recognition:** UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007
- **Management:** Archaeological Survey of India

## Sheesh Mahal

- **Location:** Shalimar Bagh, North Delhi
- **Construction:** Built in 1653 by Izz-un-Nisha Begum, wife of Shah Jahan
- **Inspiration:** Built as a replica of the Shalimar Bagh in Jammu and Kashmir
- **Event:** Aurangzeb chose this mahal for his imperial coronation in 1658
- **Architectural Feature:**
  - **Material:** Built using bricks and red sandstone

- **Gates:** Entry gates located on the east and west sides
- **Main Structure:** Features a Baradari (pavilion) through which a water channel flows
- **Artwork:** Two mirror-worked chambers display paintings from: Kangra school & Rajasthani qalam + Illustrate poetic works of: Keshavdas, Surdas, & Bihari Lal Chaube
- **Adjacent Structure:** A nearby red sandstone building is believed to be a hamam (public bathhouse)
- **Protection:** Declared a monument of national importance in 1983 by the Archaeological Survey of India.

## CULTURE - FESTIVALS in News

### Karthigai Deepam Festival

- Celebrated in Tamil Nadu | Dedicated to Lord Karthikeya (Murugan)
- **Timing:** Celebrated on the full moon (Pournami) day
- **Duration:** Three-day festival observed in the Tamil month of Kartikai (Nov–Dec)
- **Literary Reference:** Mentioned in classical Tamil literature such as Ahananuru, one of the major Sangam literature
- **Poetic Mention:** Sangam-age woman poet Avaiyyar also referred to the festival in her poems

### Thrissur Pooram

- Celebrated in Thrissur, Kerala | Known as the “Mother of All Poorams”
- **Founder:** Initiated by Raja Rama Varma (Sakthan Thampuran)
- **Frequency:** Held annually in Malayalam month Medam (April–May) when the star sign “Pooram” aligns
- **Significance:** Grand festival where 10 temples around Thrissur pay homage to Lord Shiva at Vadakkunnathan Temple.
- **Conclusion:** The 7th day, called “Pakal Pooram” (Day Pooram), marks the festival’s grand finale.

### Onam

- Celebrated in Kerala | Celebrates harvest
- **Duration:** 10 days (main day: Thiruvonam) | Start on Atham and end on Thiruvonam
- **Season:** August–September (Chingam month, Malayalam calendar)
- **Significance:** Welcoming King Mahabali; celebrating harvest prosperity
- **Major Activities:** Vallam Kali (boat races), Pulikali (tiger dances), Kummattikali (mask dances), Onathallu (martial arts), and Thiruvathirakali (traditional group dance celebrating womanhood).

### Makaravilakku Festival

- Annual festival at Sabarimala Temple (Situated in the Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala) | Dedicated to Lord Ayyappa
- **Observed on:** Makar Sankranti, lasting 7 days, concluding with the Guruthi ritual
- **Rituals:** Includes Thiruvabharanam procession from Pandalam Palace and the sighting of Makarajyothi (celestial light), called ‘Makaravilakku’.

### Banni Festival

- Traditional stick-fight festival celebrated in Andhra Pradesh

- **Timing:** On the night of Dussehra (Vijaya Dasami)
- **Origin:** Originates from practices under the Vijayanagara Empire
- **Note:** Banni grasslands mentioned in historical records are located in Kutchh, Gujarat, NOT directly related to the festival site.

### Bathukamma Festival

- Floral festival celebrated by women in Telangana and parts of Andhra Pradesh
- **Significance:** Designated as Telangana’s state festival
- **Frequency:** Celebrated annually for nine days during Durga Navratri
- **Recent Highlights:** Two Guinness World Records achieved in recent celebrations in Telangana
- **Related Festivals in Telangana:** Bonalu Festival, Sammakka Sarakka Jatara

### Saraswati Pushkaram

- Celebrated at Kaleshwaram, Telangana
- Hindu religious festival dedicated to worshipping the subterranean Saraswati River
- **Location:** Celebrated mainly at Triveni Sangamam, where Godavari, Pranahita, and Saraswati rivers converge
- **Association:** Kaleshwaram hosts Sri Kaleshwara Sri Mukteswara Swamy temple
- **Frequency:** Occurs once every 12 years, coinciding with Jupiter entering Gemini (Mithuna Rasi)
- **Comparison:** Similar in ritual significance to the Kumbh Mela
- **Note:** Saraswati is considered “Antarvahini” (invisible river)

### Bonalu Festival

- Celebrated annually in Telangana
- Dedicated to Goddess Mahakali (more ferocious avatar of Goddess Durga)
- **Other festivals of Telangana:** Bathukamma Festival, & Sammakka Sarakka Jatara

### Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara

- Celebrated in Telangana | Also known as Medaram Jatara | Asia’s and India’s largest tribal festival
- **Location:** Held in Medaram village, inside Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, part of Dandakaranya forest belt of Telangana
- **Significance:** Honors tribal deities Sammakka and Saralamma
- **Frequency:** Biennial, observed by the Koya Adivasi community

## Ramman Festival

**CONTEXT:** Recently, President of India was presented with a Ramman mask at a special session of the Uttarakhand Assembly

- Celebrated in Saloor-Dungra villages, Uttarakhand | At the Bhumiya Devta temple courtyard
- **Frequency:** Annual religious festival
- **Features:** Includes Ramayana recitations, songs, and masked dances with distinct roles for each caste and community group
- **Recognition:** Inscribed in 2009 as an UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

## Baliyatra Festival

- Celebrated in Odisha on Kartika Purnima | Annual maritime and cultural festival
- **Significance:** Commemorates ancient trade and cultural links between Kalinga (Odisha) and Southeast Asia—Bali, Java, and Sumatra
- **Rituals:** Includes Bhalukuni Osha (Khudurukuni Osha) and Bada Osha
- **Tradition:** People float miniature boats with lamps on the Mahanadi River during the festival

## Rath Yatra

- Celebrated in Puri, Odisha | Annual festival of Chariots
- **Origin:** Dates back to 12th century CE during the construction of the Jagannath Temple by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva
- **Timing:** Begins on the 2nd day of bright fortnight of Ashadha (June–July) and spans 9 days, ending with Bahuda Yatra (return journey)
- **Significance:** Marks the ceremonial journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra to their aunt’s temple in Gundicha (~3 km)
- **Features:** Three elaborately carved wooden chariots (Rathas) are pulled by thousands of devotees

## Nuakhai Festival

- Celebrated in Odisha | Annual agro-based harvest festival
- Also known as Navanna

## Rongali Bihu

- Major harvest festival of Assam | Also called “Bohag Bihu”
- **Significance:** Marks the beginning of the Hindu solar calendar | Celebrated as the Assamese New Year
- **Frequency:** Annually celebrated from 14th to 20th April
- **Features:** Includes Bihu dance, performed to folk songs and traditional instruments, showcasing Assam’s rich cultural heritage
- **Other Bihus:** Kati Bihu (October) and Magh Bihu (January)

## Ningol Chakouba Festival

- Celebrated in Manipur
- **Frequency:** Annually on the second day of Hiyangei month of the Meitei calendar
- **Component of the festival:** is the visit of married sisters to their maternal homes for a grand feast

## Mera Hou Chongba

- Celebrated in Manipur
- **Frequency:** Annually celebrated on the 15th lunar day of the Mera month of the Meitei calendar

- **Significance:** Only festival in Manipur in which all indigenous communities participate

## Shirui Lily Festival

- Celebrated in Manipur | Predominantly celebrated by the Tangkhu Naga tribe
- **Timing:** 5-day cultural and ecological festival
- **Significance:** Highlights the endemic Shirui Lily (Lilium mackliniae), a rare bluish-pink bell-shaped flower, found only in the Shirui Hills
  - **Local Name:** Known as ‘Kashong Timrawon’
  - **State Symbol:** State flower of Manipur
  - **Conservation:** Classified as Endangered by IUCN; not listed under CITES or Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
  - **Associated Site:** Shirui National Park is named after the flower.

## Sangai Festival

- Celebrated in Manipur | Theme 2025: “Where blossoms breathe harmony”
- **Name Origin:** Named after the State animal – Sangai, the critically endangered brow-antlered deer found only in Manipur
- **Frequency:** Annually from 21–30 November since 2010
- **Habitat:** Keibul Lamjao National Park, dwelling over floating biomass called “phumdi” in Loktak Lake

## Behdeinkhlam Festival

- Celebrated in Meghalaya | Meaning: “Driving away the plague” | Dance and cultural festival of Pnars (Jaintias)
- **Frequency:** Annually celebrated in July after the sowing season.
- **Activities:** Includes traditional dances, Dat-lawakor (football-like game with wooden ball), and Iatan-Bhang (tug of war)

## Sunrise Festival

- **First-ever** New Year festival of Arunachal Pradesh
- **Timing:** Celebrated in January 2026 at Dong village, Anjaw district
  - Dong is India’s easternmost village, near the tri-junction of India, China, and Myanmar
  - First to receive the year’s sunrise
- **Theme:** “First to Rise, First to Celebrate”
- **Activities:** “Alo Prabhat – Dance of the Dawn”, cultural performances inspired by Meyor and Mishmi communities.

## Kheer Bhawani Festival

- Celebrated at Kheer Bhawani Temple, J&K | Also called Mela Kheer Bhawani
- **Significance:** Second largest Hindu religious gathering in Kashmir Valley after Amarnath Yatra
- **Frequency:** Celebrated annually in June 2025 on Jyestha Ashtami by the Kashmiri Pandit community.
- **Rituals:** Devotees offer milk-based kheer to the deity Bhawani Mata and participate in traditional prayers

### Kheer Bhawani Temple

- **Location:** Srinagar, J&K | Dedicated to Goddess Ragnya Devi (incarnation of Goddess Durga)

- **Naming:** Named Kheer Bhawani after the Indian dessert Kheer, which is the main offering to the deity
- **History:** Built in 1912 by Maharaja Pratap Singh and later renovated by Maharaja Hari Singh
- **References:** Mentioned in Kalhana's Rajtarangini, Bhṛigu Samhita, and Abu'l-Fazl's Ain-i-Akbari (notes historical flooding in Tula Mula)

### Mela Patt Festival

- Celebrated in Bhaderwah Valley, J&K | Dedicated to Lord Vasuki Nag, the presiding deity of the region
- **History:** Observed since the 16th century, rooted in Nag culture
- **Commemorates:** Historic meeting between Mughal Emperor Akbar and King Nag Pal of Bhaderwah
- **Cultural Practices:** Features Dikko, a traditional folk dance performed during the festival

### Simhastha Kumbh Mela

**CONTEXT:** *Next Kumbh Mela scheduled in 2027 at Nashik, Maharashtra*

- Major Hindu pilgrimage festival held every 12 years at Nashik-Trimbakeshwar (Godavari River, Maharashtra) and Ujjain (Shipra River, Madhya Pradesh)
- **Naming:** Named after the Simha (Leo) constellation
- **Timing:** Celebrated when Jupiter (Brihaspati) enters the Leo zodiac sign (Simha Rashi).
- **Relation to Kumbh Melas:** One of the 4 recognized Kumbh Melas: Haridwar (Ganga), Prayagraj (Triveni Sangam), Ujjain (Shipra), and Nashik-Trimbakeshwar (Godavari).
- **Recognition:** Inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2017) as the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth

### Mahamagham Festival

- Major Hindu festival celebrated every 12 years in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu
- Often referred to as the "Kumbh Mela of South India"
- Last major Mahamaham was celebrated on February 22, 2016

### Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh 2025

- Year-long national celebration
- **Significance:** To honour tribal freedom fighters, especially Bhagwan Birsa Munda (Dharti Aaba), and to mark 150 years of the national song "Vande Mataram"
- **Nodal Agency:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs, supported by Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs), State Governments, and Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS).

### Deepavali Festival 2025

- **Recently,** India's Deepavali was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- **Session:**
  - During the 20th session of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee held at Red Fort, New Delhi
  - First time India hosted a UNESCO session;

- **Significance:** Deepavali became the 16th Indian element on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list
- **Celebration:** Annual festival of lights across India; begins with Dhanteras and concludes with Bhai Dooj
- **Global Observance:** Official holiday in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, Malaysia, Singapore, and Fiji
- **UNESCO India ICH Elements (From old to recent):** Kuttiyattam (Sanskrit theatre), Tradition of Vedic chanting, Ramlila, Ramman, Chhau dance, Kalbelia (Rajasthan), Mudiyetu (Kerala), Buddhist chanting of Ladakh, Sankirtana (Manipur), Traditional brass & copper craft among Thatheras (Punjab), Yoga, Navrouz, Kumbh Mela, Durga Pooja (Kolkata), Garba (Gujarat), Deepavali.

### Harvest Festivals in India

- Currently, traditional harvest festivals are being celebrated in different parts of India
- These festivals (known by different names) mark the change of seasons, the Sun's northward journey (Uttarayana), and the harvest of crops.

<b>Makar Sankranti (Maharashtra)</b>	Marks the Sun's transition into Capricorn
<b>Uttarayana (Gujarat &amp; Rajasthan)</b>	Known for kite flying, which commemorates the Sun's rise and is a day of joy and celebration
<b>Lohri (Punjab)</b>	Celebrated a day before Makar Sankranti, it marks the harvest of Rabi crops and is celebrated around bonfires with folk songs, Bhangra and Gidda
<b>Magh Bihu (Assam)</b>	It celebrates the end of the harvest season with community feasts, traditional games and bonfires known as Meji
<b>Kanuma (Telangana)</b>	Festival to express thankfulness and admiration towards the agriculture sector
<b>Pongal (Tamil Nadu)</b>	Marks the four-day harvest festival that includes Thai Pongal, Mattu Pongal, Kaanum Pongal, and Bhogi, people make the rice and lentil dish Pongal

### Pongal

**CONTEXT:** *Recently, Tamil Nadu government made a strong case for including Pongal in the list of festivals recognised by UNESCO*

- Celebrated by the Tamil community in Tamil Nadu | Annual harvest festival
- **Naming:** Derived from pongu ("to boil over"), symbolising prosperity.
- **Purpose:** To thank the Sun, Mother Nature, and farm animals for a bountiful harvest.

- **Timing:** Celebrated 13–16 January, coinciding with the Sun’s northward journey (Uttarayan).
- **Celebration Days:**
  - Bhogi Pongal – first day, discarding old and celebrating new
  - Thai/Surya Pongal – main day dedicated to Sun God
  - Mattu Pongal – honours cattle and farm animals
  - Kaanum Pongal – social gathering and family outings

## Hanukkah (Chanukah)

**CONTEXT:** Recently, an attack targeting the Jewish Community took place in Sydney, Australia, during celebration of Hanukkah Festival

- Eight-day Jewish festival celebrated in winter | Also known as Chanukah or Festival of Lights
- Celebrates the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem

## CULTURE - PRACTICES in News

### Bathouism

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Bathou religion of Bodo community in Assam assigned a separate code in the upcoming census

- Traditional faith of the Bodo community (largest plains tribe of Assam)
- **Etymology:** ‘Bathou’ from Bodo language – ‘Ba’ = five, ‘thou’ = deep philosophical thought.
- **Belief System:** World composed of five elements: Ha – Earth; Dwi – Water; Or – Fire; Bar – Air; Okhrang – Sky
- **Deity:** Worships Bwrai Bathou as the supreme god.
- **Symbol:** Faith is centered on the Sijou plant (Euphorbia splendens)

### Piprahwa Relics

**CONTEXT:** Recently, India announced the return of Lord Buddha’s sacred Piprahwa Relics

- **What?:** Associated with the mortal remains of Lord Buddha
- **Discovery:** Found in 1898 by British engineer William Claxton Peppé at Piprahwa, Siddharthnagar (ancient Kapilavastu), Uttar Pradesh
- **Contents:** Include bone fragments, soapstone and crystal caskets, sandstone coffer, and offerings such as gold ornaments
- **Inscription:** Brahmi script on one casket confirms deposition by the Sakya clan, authenticating them as Buddha relics
- **Legal Status:** Classified as ‘AA’ antiquities under Indian law, prohibiting their removal or sale.

### Santhara

- **What?:** Jain religious practice of voluntarily ending life through fasting | Also called Sallekhana, Pandit-maran, or Sakham-maran
- **Reference:** Mentioned in Agams; practiced since the foundation of Jainism
- **Types:**
  - **Trivihar:** Giving up food but not water.
  - **Chauvihar:** Giving up both food and water
- **Eligibility:** Observed when death is near, or an individual is unable to perform religious duties due to old age, incurable illness, or extreme conditions
- **Legal Status:**
  - Rajasthan HC (2015): Declared Santhara illegal, equating it to suicide under Section 306 IPC.
  - **Supreme Court:** Stayed the HC verdict, keeping the practice protected under religious freedom.

### Amarnath Yatra

- **What?:** Hindu pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine of Lord Shiva in the Himalayas
- **Location:** Amarnath cave located in South Kashmir at altitude of 3,888 m.
- **Frequency:** Annually undertaken during Shravan (July–August)
- **Significance:** It is only accessible by foot or on a pony through a steep path in Sonmarg in Kashmir
- **Organiser:** Managed by Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB)
- **Eligibility:** Pilgrims must be between the ages of 13 and 75
- **Shiva Lingam Formation:**
  - Ice lingam fully forms in May, and begins melting by August.
  - On the left of the Shiva lingam are two smaller ice stalagmites, representing Parvati and Lord Ganesh
  - Formed by water trickling from a cleft in the cave roof
- **Cave Formation:**
  - Ice lingam is formed by a trickle of water from a cleft in the cave’s roof
  - **Stalactite:** Icicle-shaped formation hanging from cave ceiling, formed by mineral precipitation from dripping water.
  - **Stalagmite:** Upward-growing formation on cave floor from minerals precipitated by dripping water.

### Jamma Bane Lands

- **What?:** Jamma Bane tenure is a form of land holding prevalent in Kodagu district of Karnataka
- **Background:** These lands were originally granted by the erstwhile kings of Coorg and the British (between 1600 and 1800) to local communities, primarily the Kodavas, in return for military service.

### Paathara Practice

- **What?:** Traditional underground grain storage pit | Referred to as Khoni in Odia
- **Significance:** Used by farmers to preserve freshly harvested paddy for long-term household use
- Primarily present in Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh), along the banks of the Mahendratanya River, near the Odisha border

### GI Tag

- **What?:** Designation used on products that have a specific qualities or a reputation linked to that origin
- **Nature:** Part of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and covered under WTO Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement (1995; India is signatory)
- **Regulation:** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999
- **Administered by:** Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trademarks
- **Recognition:** Internationally recognised under the Paris Convention
- **Important Facts:**
  - First Indian GI: Darjeeling Tea (2004)
  - Major sectors: Handicrafts (~45%) and Agriculture (~30%)

#### Recently Awarded GI Tags (2025):

- Ambaji White Marble – Gujarat
- Sikkim Lepcha Tungbuk – Three-string musical instrument
- Sikkim Lepcha Pumtong Pulit – Bamboo flute
- Kannadippaya – Kerala, traditional bamboo mat
- Apatani Textile – Arunachal Pradesh, handwoven by Apatani tribe, Ziro Valley
- Marthandam Honey – Tamil Nadu
- Bodo Aronai – Assam, handwoven scarf of Bodo community
- Bedu & Badri Cow Ghee – Uttarakhand, from indigenous hill cow breeds

### GI Tag Products (2025) from Tamil Nadu

**CONTEXT:** Recently, 5 products from Tamil Nadu have secured the Geographical Indications (GI) tag

- **Woraiyur Cotton Sari:** Traditional handwoven textile native to Tiruchi district in Tamil Nadu + Primarily produced in Manamedu village, on the banks of the Cauvery River + Saree is traditionally woven using a 'korvai loom', a special mechanism that forms the continuous 'korvai' border.
- **Kavindapadi Nattu Sakkarai (Jaggery Powder):** Kavindapadi in the Erode district of Tamil Nadu is a major centre for production.
- **Thooyamalli Rice:** Tamil Nadu + "Thooyamalli," means "pure jasmine" + Popularly known as "pearl rice" due to its glossy and lustrous grain appearance.
- **Namakkal Makkal Pathirangal (Soapstone Cookware):** Popularly known as "Kalchatti" + Crafted from naturally occurring soft-stone deposits found in the Tamil Nadu region.
- **Ambasamudram Choppu Saman (Wooden Toys):** Handcrafted wooden miniature toys + Dates back to the 18th century, these are carved from indigenous trees like the Manjal Kadamba tree (*Neolamarckia cadamba*), teak, and rosewood.

### Gond Painting

- Popular folk art of the Gond tribe in Central India | GI tag status
- **Origin:** Practiced in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh
- **Primary Location:** Mainly done in Patangarh Village in the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh
- **Evolution:** Developed from Digna and Bhatti Chitra painting traditions
- **Themes:** Depicts local flora and fauna, deities, urban culture, and daily life
- **Note:** Gond tribe is one of the largest tribal communities in India

### Madhubani Painting

- Traditional Indian art form from the Mithila region, Bihar | Also called Mithila Painting
- **Artists:** Traditionally created by women
- **Themes:** Depicts Hindu mythology, Ramayana, and daily life
- **Technique:** Line drawings filled with bright colours, contrasts, and patterns

### Sohrai Painting

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Artists of Sohrai, Pattachitra, & Patua from Jharkhand, Odisha, & West Bengal participated in the 2nd edition of Kala Utsav 2025.

- Tribal mural art | Practised by indigenous communities in Jharkhand | Sohrai-Khovar painting received GI tag in 2020
- **Occasion:** Painted by women to mark cattle worship and harvest during Sohrai festival (post-Diwali)
- **Origins:** Linked to prehistoric cave art (7000–400 BC) in Karanpura Valley, Jharkhand
- **Motifs:** Include peacocks, bulls, forests, and fertility symbols reflecting animistic beliefs
- **Technique:** Walls coated with clay, motifs drawn with fingers or sticks using earth pigments

### Pattachitra

- Traditional cloth-based scroll painting (Patta = cloth & Chitra = picture) | Practised in Odisha and West Bengal
- **Origins:** Dates back to 5th–12th century CE, closely associated with Jagannath worship in Puri
- **Style:** Recognised for bold lines, intricate mythological details, and lacquered finish
- **Recognition:** Odisha Pattachitra registered in 2008 & Bengal Patachitra registered in 2018

### Patua Art

- Traditional scroll painting with storytelling through Patua Sangeet
- **Region:** West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and parts of Bangladesh
- **Origin:** Evolved from Mangal Kavya traditions, likely after 13th century CE
- **Technique & Features:** Painted on cloth or paper scrolls + Narratives unfold as scroll unrolls accompanied by song
- **Recognition:** Bengal Patachitra, including Patua tradition, awarded GI tag in 2018

## Meerut Bugle

**CONTEXT:** Recently awarded Geographical Indication (GI) tag

- Brass wind instrument | Origin: Meerut, Uttar Pradesh
- **Usage:** Traditionally used in military drills, parades, ceremonies, and signalling
- **Recognition:** Recently awarded Geographical Indication (GI) tag

## Boreendo

- Traditional musical instrument | Origin: Sindh, Pakistan | Associated with Thari pastoral community
- **Age:** ~5,000 years old
- **Form:** Spherical, handmade clay vessel-flute
- **Historical Roots:** Linked to Mohenjo-daro artefacts and Indus Valley Civilization (3300–1300 BCE) musical tradition
- **Recognition:** Inscribed on UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding List

## Thumri

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Padma Vibhushan awardee and prominent Thumri exponent Pandit Chhannul Mishra passes away

- Semi-classical vocal form of Hindustani music | Often called the “lyric of Indian classical music”
- **Origin:** Eastern Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow and Benares) during the 18th century CE +
- **Language:** Braj Bhasha, Awadhi, Hindi dialects
- **Themes:** Love, separation, devotion; often centered on Radha-Krishna episodes
- **Association:** Closely linked with Kathak, a classical dance form of Uttar Pradesh

## Garba Dance

- Ritualistic and devotional dance | Region: Gujarat
- **Purpose:** Dedicated to the worship of Shakti (feminine energy)
- **Occasion:** Celebrated for nine days during Navratri
- **Recognition:** Inscribed in 2024 on UNESCO’s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
- **Significance:** 15th Indian cultural element on UNESCO ICH list

## Bagurumba Dance

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Prime Minister participated in Bagurumba Dwhou 2026

- Traditional folk dance of the Bodo community of Assam
- Often called the “Butterfly dance” for its flowing movements inspired by butterflies, birds, leaves and flowers
- Performed during the Bwisagu (Bodo New Year) and Domasi festival.

## Kathakali

- Classical dance form | Origin: Kerala (17th century CE) | Also called the “Ballad of the East”
- **Basis:** Natya Shastra by Sage Bharata
- **Language:** Manipravalam (blend of Malayalam & Sanskrit) + Text of Kathakali songs is known as Attakkatha
- **Themes:** Mythological stories; combines dance, music, mime, and drama

- **Gestures:** Hand gestures based on Hasthalakshana Deepika
- **Music & Instruments:** Chenda, Maddalam, Chengila, Elaththalam
- **Prominent Artists:** Ramankutty Nair, Kalamandalam Gopi.

## Jallikattu

- Traditional bull-taming sports | Occasion: Pongal festival, Tamil Nadu
- **Alternate Names:** Eruthazhuvuthal; Variants – Vadi manjuvirattu, Vēli virattu, Vaṭam manjuvirattu
- **References:** Mohenjo Daro (2500–1800 BCE) & Tamil epic “Silappadikaram” by Ilango
- **Popularity:** Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Theni, Pudukkottai, Dindigul (Jallikattu belt)
- **Breed Used:** Pulikulam (native to Sivagangai)
- **Legality:** Banned by SC in Animal Welfare Board of India Vs A. Nagaraja citing animal rights under Article 21
- **Similar Sports in India:** Kambala (Karnataka), Bullock Cart Racing (Maharashtra, Punjab), Cockfighting (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu), Dhirio (Goa), Camel Racing (Rajasthan)

## Dhirio

- Traditional bullfighting sport of Goa
- **Legality:** Banned by the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court in 1997 for violating the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960

## Moh Juj

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Assam passed Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Assam Amendment) Bill, 2025 to allow Moh Juj sport

- Traditional buffalo fights held in parts of Assam
- **Meaning:** “Moh” refers to buffalo, and “Juj” means fight
- **Occasion:** Part of the cultural celebrations of Magh Bihu (or Bhogali Bihu), the harvest festival celebrated in Assam

## Mallakhamb

- Form of sport from Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra
- **Meaning:** ‘Malla’ = wrestler/strong man, ‘Khambh’ = pillar/pole
- **Reference:** Mentioned in Ramayana; depicted on ancient pottery from Chandraketugarh (2nd–1st century BCE)
- **Practice:** Perform intricate postures on a stationary vertical pole made of Sheesham (Indian rosewood)
- **Governing Body:** Mallakhamb Federation of India, established 1980
- **Recognition:** State sport of Madhya Pradesh + Included in Khelo India Games (2021) alongside Gatka, Thang-ta, and Kalaripayattu

## Kendu Leaves

- Also known as Tendu leaves (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) | Commonly referred to as the “Green Gold of Odisha”
- **Classification:** Minor Forest Produce (MFP);
- **Regulation:** Nationalized product with government-regulated collection, processing, and trade
- **Primary Use:** Wrapping bidis (traditional hand-rolled cigarettes)
- **Top Producing States:** Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh

## Kumbakonam Vetrilai

- It is a betel leaf or paan leaf | Recently received the GI tag
- **Cultivation Area:** Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu & fertile Cauvery river basin
- **Yield Stages:** First-year – Maaruvethalai; Second-year – Kelavethalai; Third-year – Kattavethalai
- **Global Producers:** Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Bangladesh

## Thovalai Maanikka Maalai

- Special type of garland that is made only in Thovalai (Tamil Nadu) | Recently granted a GI tag
- **Feature:** Flowers are carefully folded and arranged in precise patterns to create the appearance of gems (especially rubies) in a geometric manner

## Woolah Tea

- Bagless tea brand from Assam | Recently received a 20-year patent for its unique compressed whole leaf dip method
- **Method:** Uses Eti Koli Duti Paat (one bud and two leaves) plucking technique, tied with natural string, no plastic/nylon bags
- It selects the youngest parts of the tea plant, which are richest in essential oils and antioxidants

## Nilgiri Tea

- Variety of *Camellia sinensis* var. *Sinensis* | GI tag since 2008
- **Features:** Known for its brisk, fragrant, and full-bodied liquor, often used in iced teas and masala chai + It produces both orthodox rolled teas and CTC (crush-tear-curl) teas
- **Growing Areas:** Prominently in Nilgiris district (Tamil Nadu), smaller areas in Kerala & Karnataka
- **Cultivation:** Thrives at 1,000–2,500 metres altitude in the Western Ghats under two monsoons (Southwest & Northeast) + Lateritic loam, rich and well-drained soil favours high-quality growth + Cultivation cycle involves frequent plucking (~32 times annually).

## Kopi Luwak

- Also known as Civet Coffee | Made from beans partially digested and excreted by the Asian Palm Civet
- **Properties:** Unique flavor from civet's digestive process; highly aromatic and smooth
- **Applications:** Gourmet and luxury coffee consumption
- **Global Producers:** Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, India (mostly import dependent)
- **Note:** One of the world's most expensive and exclusive coffees

## Hathei Chilli

- Commonly known as Sirarakhong Chilli | GI-tagged (2021) product of Manipur
- **Cultivation:** Indigenous variety thrives only in the climatic conditions of Sirarakhong village, near Imphal
- **Significance:**
  - Exceptionally high American Spice Trade Association (ASTA) colour value of 164, which determines the commercial value of red pepper +
  - One of the most celebrated varieties of Manipur alongside King Chilli (U-Morok)+
- **Quality:** It is a strong antioxidant and rich in calcium and Vitamin C

## Nagauri Ashwagandha

**CONTEXT:** Recently granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag

- Also known as Indian ginseng or Indian winter cherry
- **Origin/Region:** Nagaur district, Rajasthan;
- **Cultivation:** Grown as kharif crop in dry, sub-tropical regions
- **Properties:** Rich in medicinal compounds, particularly alkaloids; superior quality compared to other varieties
- **Significance:** Important ancient medicinal plant used in Ayurveda and herbal medicine
- **Major Producing States:** Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, & Maharashtra
- **Applications:** Ayurvedic medicine, health supplements, therapeutic uses

## Kaladi

- Traditional dish originating from the Udhampur district of J&K | GI-tagged product
- It is a very dense cheese that is sautéed in its own fat and lightly salted before being served hot with bun slices
- Traditionally prepared from raw full-fat milk, using whey water as a natural coagulant.

## Ker Sangri

- Rajasthani delicacy | Recently received a GI tag
- Made up of using sangri pods from hardy khejri trees and Ker berries from Ker trees
- High in fibre, low in fat and rich in nutrients
- Known for its nutritional and medicinal benefits

## Kalanamak Rice

- Traditional, non-basmati aromatic rice | Also known as 'Buddha Rice' | Grown in eastern Uttar Pradesh
- **Properties:** Rich in iron and antioxidants; low glycaemic index; naturally gluten-free Global
- **Recognition:** Featured among specialty rice varieties of the world by FAO
- **Applications:** Premium aromatic rice used for traditional cuisine and specialty rice markets

## Adam Chini Rice

- Traditional short-grained aromatic black rice variety from Eastern Uttar Pradesh | Received GI status in 2023
- Also known as Adamchini Chawal or Vindhya Black Rice
- **Cultivation:** Mainly in Vindhya foothill agro-ecosystem across Chandauli, Varanasi, Mirzapur, and Sonbhadra districts
- **Properties:** Nutritionally rich and valued for its medicinal properties

## Jeeraphool Rice

- An ancient, indigenous, aromatic, and short-grained rice variety
- Mainly grown in the Chhattisgarh
- Awarded the GI tag in 2019

## Nagri Dubraj Rice

- Premium aromatic rice variety
- Known as the "Basmati of Chhattisgarh"
- Traditionally grown in Chhattisgarh
- Awarded the GI tag in 2023

## Totapuri Mango

**CONTEXT:** Recently, Andhra Pradesh banned entry of Totapuri mangoes from Karnataka into Chittoor district

- Indigenous to South India | Also known as Ginimoothi, Sandersha, Banglora
- **Cultivation:** Mainly in Chittoor district (Andhra Pradesh) and border regions of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
- **Climatic Conditions:** Tropical climate with moderate to high temperature; well-drained loamy soils with neutral to slightly acidic pH
- **Properties:** Rich in minerals & Vitamin A & C
- **Constitutional Provision:** Article 301 ensures free trade and commerce across India; restrictions allowed only with reasonable justification under Article 304(b) with Presidential assent.

## Nanjangud Rasabale Banana

- Unique banana variety | Received GI Tag in 2006
- **Cultivation:** Grown in Mysore and Chamarajanagar districts of Karnataka
- **Properties:** Unique flavour and aroma; considered beneficial for treating neurological disorders
- **Panama Wilt Disease:** Caused by Fusarium Wilt pathogen poses major threat to the crop

## Indi Limes

- Variety of lime primarily cultivated in the Vijayapura district of Karnataka
- Indi Lime is the 2nd lime variety after the Assam Lime to receive the GI tag (2023)
- Known for its superior quality, zesty aroma, high juice yield and balanced acidity

## Puliyanakudi Lime

- Variety of lime primarily cultivated in Puliyanakudi, Tamil Nadu | Referred to as the "Lemon City of Tamil Nadu"
- **Recognition:** Received the GI tag in April 2025 +
- **Kadayam:** Variety of Puliyanakudi lime characterised by thin peel, strong acidity, high ascorbic acid content.

## Ramban Sulai Honey

- Honey produced in Ramban district of J&K | GI Tag in 2021
- **Source:** Extracted from blossoms of the Sulai plant found in the Himalayan region
- **Properties:** Rich taste, floral aroma and high nutritional value; contains essential minerals, enzymes and vitamins
- **Recognition:** Declared as Ramban district's product under the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative

## Banderwah Rajma

- Agricultural product from Bhandarwah valley of J&K | GI Tag status
- **Cultivation:** Grown in cool high-altitude climatic conditions of the Bhandarwah valley
- **Feature:** Bhandarwah Rajma is noted for its nutritional benefits, being a good source of protein, fiber, and minerals like iron and copper

## Darjeeling Mandarin Orange

**CONTEXT:** Recently received the GI tag

- Major cash crop grown in the hills of Darjeeling, West Bengal | Locally known as "Suntala"

- **Cultivation Conditions:** Altitude of 600–1500 m; tropical to sub-tropical climate with temperature 10–35°C and annual rainfall of 100–120 cm
- **Recognition:** Recently granted GI Tag (3rd GI tagged product from Darjeeling, after Darjeeling Tea & Dalley Khursani chilli)

## Kolhapuri Chappal

- Handcrafted leather sandals | Traditionally made in Kolhapur and adjoining districts of Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka
- **Technique:** Made using vegetable-tanned buffalo hide & crafted without the use of nails
- **GI Tag:** Joint GI tag granted to Maharashtra and Karnataka in 2019

## Paithani Sarees

**CONTEXT:** Recently, praised by the Prime Minister in his monthly radio programme for its traditional craftsmanship

- Maharashtra | Originated in Paithan town on the banks of the Godavari River | GI Tagged in 2010
- **Origin:** Dates back to around the 6th century BCE; regarded as the 'Mahavastra' (royal garment) of Maharashtra
- **Inspiration:** Designs inspired by ancient artwork of Ajanta and Ellora caves
- **Technique:** Handwoven using pure silk with gold or silver zari threads; woven entirely by hand without machines
- **Features:** Vibrant colours with motifs such as peacock, lotus, mango and geometric patterns on pallu and borders

## Pashmina Shawl

**CONTEXT:** Recently, the Indian Prime Minister gifted Kashmiri Pashmina shawls to top leaders during his Ghana visit.

- Jammu and Kashmir | GI Tagged in 2011
- **Material Source:** Made from fine pashmina wool obtained from Changthangi goat (*Capra hircus*) found in Changthang Plateau of Tibet and Ladakh
- **Properties:** Extremely fine, soft and warm fibre; globally regarded as one of the finest wools
- **Production:** India contributes about 1% of global Pashmina but considered among the best quality.

## Tangail Saree

**CONTEXT:** Recently secured the Intangible Cultural Heritage tag

- Tangail district, Bangladesh
- **Features:** Intricate floral and geometric motifs
- **Technique:** Handwoven saree made using cotton or silk
- **Recognition:** Inscribed in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list at the 20th ICH Committee Session (2025) held at Red Fort, New Delhi
- **GI Status in India:** "Tangail Saree of Bengal" received GI tag in 2024

## Vrindavani Vastra

**CONTEXT:** Assam government initiated steps in London to bring the Vrindavani Vastra back from the British Museum

- **Origin:** 400-year-old traditional silk textile from Assam
- **Technique:** Woven using the complex lampas technique requiring two weavers working simultaneously

- **Theme:** Depicts Lord Krishna's childhood stories and divine pastimes
- **Patronage:** Created under guidance of Srimanta Sankardeva at the request of Koch king Nara Narayan
- **Historical Journey:** Travelled from Assam to Tibet and later acquired by the British Museum in 1904
- **Cultural Significance:** Masterpiece of sacred art and an important element of Assamese Vaishnavism

### Narasapuram Lace Craft

**CONTEXT:** *Mentioned by the Prime Minister as a symbol of women's empowerment*

- Traditional crochet lace craft from Narasapur/Narsapur, West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh | Also known as Crochet Lace Craft
- **Technique:** Made using fine cotton threads and crochet needles
- **Historical Origin:** Began in the 19th century when Christian missionaries trained local women
- **Recognition:** GI-tagged craft & also recognised under the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative
- **Key Features:** Intricate floral, geometric and paisley motifs inspired by nature

### Phulkari

- Traditional embroidery of undivided Punjab (present-day Punjab, Haryana and parts of Pakistan)
- **Technique:** Counted-thread embroidery known for neat, regular geometric and natural motifs
- **Base Fabric:** Khaddar, a handspun and handwoven cotton cloth
- **Colours Used:** Traditionally dyed in madder brown, rust red, indigo and green
- **Applications:** Used in shawls, dupattas, odhnis and ceremonial textiles in Punjabi culture

### Golconda Blue Diamond

**CONTEXT:** *Scheduled to be auctioned in Geneva, attracting attention for its royal provenance and rare colour grade*

- **Origin:** From the famous Golconda diamond mines in present-day Telangana
- **Golconda Mines:** Produced iconic diamonds such as Koh-i-Noor, Hope Diamond and Darya-i-Noor
- **Historical Ownership:** Owned by Maharaja Yeshwant Rao Holkar of Indore
- **Properties:** Rich blue diamond with high colour purity and saturation; extremely rare and valuable
- **References:**
  - Jean-Baptiste Tavernier documented Golconda's diamond trade under royal monopoly in the 17th century;
  - Travellers Jean de Thévenot and Marco Polo praised India's dominance in high-quality diamonds



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