



Durga Puja on UNESCO's ICH

For Prelims: UNESCO ICH of Humanity, UNESCO, Man and Biosphere Programme, World Heritage Programme, UNESCO Global Geopark Network, UNESCO's Network of Creative Cities

For Mains: Importance of protecting Cultural Heritage for India, Significance of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Why in News

Recently, **Durga Puja in Kolkata** has been inscribed on the [UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage \(ICH\) of Humanity](#).

- It is the **first festival in Asia** to achieve recognition as UNESCO ICH of Humanity.
- Earlier, UNESCO announced the Harappan city of [Dholavira in Gujarat as India's 40th world heritage site](#).

Key Points

- **Durga Puja:** [//](#)



- Durga Puja is a **five-day festival** which begins on the **fifth night of the nine-day Navratri festival** and ends on the tenth day, which is Dashami.
- During this time, people collectively worship and invoke Goddess Durga, who is regarded as the feminine energy of the cosmos, also known as **'Shakti'**.
- It is **one of the largest cultural carnivals** and street art festivals of the country.
- During this time, **intricately-designed clay models of the Goddess are worshiped** in 'pandals' and pavilions where people get together.
 - Folk music, culinary, craft, and performing arts traditions are a part of the celebration.
- Though originating in West Bengal, which has the **largest Bengali community in the**

country, the festival is **celebrated in many other parts of India**, and also the world.

▪ **Significance:**

- It **acknowledges the festival's contribution** in sustaining and safeguarding a multitude of traditional arts and crafts, well-being and economic empowerment of communities, and energizing creativity.
 - Earlier this year (2021), the British Council in India had **mapped the creative economy of Durga Puja to over Rs. 32,000 crore** for the year 2019 and added that the **festival contributes 2.58% of West Bengal's [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#)**.

▪ **UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage:**

- This coveted list is **made up of those intangible heritage elements** that help demonstrate diversity of cultural heritage and raise awareness about its importance.
- According to **UNESCO cultural heritage** does not end at monuments and collections of objects.
 - It also **includes traditions or living expressions inherited** from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, **such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices** concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.
- The list was **established in 2008** when the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage came into effect.
 - The Ministry of Culture (India) has also launched the **[draft National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage \(ICH\) of India](#)**.
 - The National ICH List is an **attempt to recognize the diversity of Indian culture** embedded in its intangible heritage.
 - This initiative is also a part of the **Vision 2024 of the Ministry of Culture**.
- India is also a **signatory of the 2003 UNESCO Convention** which aims for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage along with traditions and living expression.

▪ **Inscribed Elements:**

- Currently, it has 492 elements from which India now has **14 intangible cultural heritage elements** on the prestigious UNESCO Representative List of ICH of Humanity.
- Other than the Durga Puja there are **13 Traditions in India recognised by UNESCO** as ICH .

Existing Traditions of India Recognised by UNESCO

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| 1. | Tradition of Vedic chanting, 2008 | 8. | Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India, 2012 |
| 2. | Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana, 2008 | 9. | Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur, 2013 |
| 3. | Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre, 2008 | 10. | Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, India ,2014 |
| 4. | Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas, India, 2009 | 11. | Yoga, 2016 |
| 5. | Mudiyettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala, 2010 | 12. | Nowruz, 2016 |
| 6. | Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan, 2010 | 13. | Kumbh Mela, 2017 |
| 7. | Chhau dance, 2010 | | |

UNESCO

▪ **About:**

- UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It seeks to **build peace through international cooperation** in Education, the Sciences and Culture.
- UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the **[Sustainable Development](#)**

Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the **UN General Assembly** in 2015.

- It has 193 Members and 11 Associate Members. India joined UNESCO in 1946.
 - In 2019, **the USA and Israel formally quit UNESCO.**
 - It is headquartered in Paris, France.
 - UNESCO-IOC (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission) is **leading a global effort** to establish ocean-based tsunami warning systems as part of an overall multi-hazard disaster reduction strategy.
 - Last year (2020), UNESCO-IOC approved the **recognition of two communities of Odisha** viz., Venkatraipur and Noliasahi as Tsunami Ready Communities.
- **Other Initiatives of UNESCO**
- **Man and Biosphere Programme**
 - **World Heritage Programme**
 - **UNESCO Global Geopark Network**
 - **UNESCO's Network of Creative Cities**

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