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KURUKSHETRA SUMMARY

AN INITIATIVE BY THE PRAYAS INDIA

THE PRAYAS IAS

FOLK ART AND CULTURE



Summary of Kurukshetra

April 2021

Theme: Folk Art and Culture

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Nurturing India's Rich Cultural Heritage

Introduction

- India with its glorious past has bequeathed a remarkable variety of monuments and sites spread all across the length and breadth of the country.
- There are 38 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India (as of 2021), of which 30 are cultural sites, seven are natural sites and one mixed site.
- Along with these are rich and varied intangible cultural heritage of the country like oral traditions and expressions, craftsmanship etc.
- Heritage is not just the brick and mortar, but the cultural and people who live around it ever day.

How Can Heritage Structures Change the Rural Economy

- There are various heritage structures with overwhelming cultural and historical significance in the rural hinterlands lying untapped and unattended.
- These are also tools for socio-economic upliftment at the local level and sustainability for future generations.
- These carry the potential to attract tourists on the one hand, with a multiplier effect on the village economy.
- Government of India, in its budget 2021-21, has proposed five archaeological sites namely, Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh), Shivsagar (Assam), Dholavira (Gujarat) and Adichanallur (Tamil Nadu).
- There are six Buddhist Circuits under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism.
- Rural heritage with tribal settlements is now also being recognized under the category of 'Cultural Landscape' with the World Heritage inscription of Kanchendzonga National park in 2016 on World Heritage list and Apatani cultural landscape, Cold Desert cultural landscape of Spiti-Ladakh on the UNESCO's tentative list.

Policy Recommendations

- An overarching management plan is required to revive the heritage structures with creating a National Archaeological Database at the outset.



- Post-pandemic, rural tourism is likely to increase.
- The National Policy on Conservation needs to be implemented vigorously by ASI and all State Archaeology Departments.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) or State Archaeology Departments need to identify projects that could be carried out in rural areas with MGNREGA funds.
- The ‘Adopt a Heritage’ project under the Government of India aims to develop the heritage sites/monuments, making them tourist-friendly and enhancing the tourism potential. Its novel initiative of “Monument Mitra” through the innovative concept of Vision Bidding can go a long way.
- Under the ‘Hunar se Rozkar Tak’ programme of the Government of India, training can be imparted to the rural youth belonging to the economically weaker strata of the society to become tourist escorts, event facilitators, security guards, tour assistants, transfer assistants and office assistants.
- Local community participation is essential to protect, manage and promote the heritage structures. This gives a sense of ownership. Local authorities should also be involved.
- From ‘crowd funding’ to ‘community funding’ new funding models can be explored, the archaeology departments can consider opening up the heritage structures to local communities.
- The ‘Ruritage’ programme, promoted by UNESCO aims to create innovative, rural regeneration-based models for cultural and natural heritage. Similar programme may be launched for India, bringing the role of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development and to contribute to socially inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability in rural areas.
- Rural India focused incredible India 2.0 campaign showcasing the invaluable gems of our country along with the rich intangible assets of the country could be the post pandemic plan for the tourism sector.

Art and Crafts of Northeast India

Introduction

- North-east’s artistic communities have a wide range of handicraft products, inspired by distinct and unique culture tradition of tribal communities and groups.



- The seven states of the region are home to over 160 major Scheduled Tribes and over 400 other tribal and sub-tribal communities and groups, each having its own distinct and unique cultural tradition, replete with a rich history and folklore.

Handloom

- Every indigenous community of this region whether in the hills or in the plains, has its own range of handloom textiles, each also depicting the distinct identity of the tribe or community.
- Different tribes involved include Meitei community, Tangkhuls of Manipur, Singpho women of Arunachal Pradesh etc

Bamboo and Cane

- North-east's artistic communities also have a wide range of handicraft products, mostly manufactured of bamboo, cane and reed. The Northeast is home to at least 90 species of bamboos, of which 41 are endemic to the region.
- Almost every community in the Northeast has workmanship of high order as far as bamboo and cane products are concerned. Be it the Adi, Apatani, Sherdukpen, Tangsa or Khamti tribe of Arunachal Pradesh or the Reang, Jamatia tribes of Tripura.
- With changing time and demand, bamboo and cane products like chairs, tables, stools, sofa-sets, beds and cots, shelves, besides lamp-shades, screens and hats etc have begun finding market not just within the country, but abroad too.
- Hats and caps, mostly made of bamboo and cane, as also abandoned animal parts like feathers not only have cultural and hierarchical value, but have also provided means of livelihood to thousands of families across the region. For example the decorative Jaapi of Assam etc
- Cane and bamboo craft occupies an important place in the economy of Meghalaya, next only to agriculture

Woodcraft

- A wide variety of trees that provide raw material to the communities to make various items out of wood.
- Wood-carving is popular across the region, and products range from human figures, replicas of birds and animals, door frames and furniture etc. Wood carving or woodcraft is particularly notable among the tribal communities of Nagaland.

Masks



- Indigenous communities of North-eastern India also manufacture and use a variety of masks in their rituals and festivals. Masks are also associated with various indigenous religious faiths and beliefs.

Jewellery

- Jewellery is said to be a mirror of a community's culture and tradition. Different communities of the North-east also make their own traditional jewellery including necklaces, earrings, bracelets etc.

Brass and Bell Metal

- In Assam, two places – Sarthebari and Hajo are traditional centres for manufacturing various brass and bell-metal products. These include household utensils, as also ceremonial items.

Pottery

- Pottery, especially based on clay, is more common in the plains of Assam, Manipur and Tripura, as also to a lesser extent in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram.
- Wheel-less pottery villages exist particularly in the Majuli island of Assam.
- Longpi, a village in Ukhrul district of Manipur stands out with its black earthenware.
- In the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, the Larnai area excels in the blue-grey earthen pottery that is shaped by hand, without the aid of a potter's wheel.

Conclusion

- Arts and crafts in the North-east are facing stiff competition from machine-made products, whether manufactured elsewhere in the country or outside India. Traditional artisans are increasingly facing a tough time.
- Therefore, the first step is to preserve these traditions from becoming extinct.
- Also, there is a need to integrate the traditional techniques with modern art form.
- Atmanirbhar Bharat call can probably focus on the traditional art and crafts sector of the North-eastern region.



Warlis: Life Around Nature

Introduction

- India has one of the largest tribal populations in the world.
- Our country has a rich tradition of folk art which originates from tribes in different parts of India.

The Warlis of India

- In the North Sahyadri mountain range of Maharashtra lives the Adivasi tribe by the name of Warlis. The word 'warli' originates from the word 'waral' which means a piece of land.
- The Warli culture revolves around the segments of nature. The Warlis daily social settings show a close relationship with the nature which is reflected in their art, communicated through their paintings on the wall in the form of story and happenings of their daily life.
- Warlis worship nature and hence believe in peaceful and sustainable co-existence depicted in their art. Warlis speak an unwritten Warli language.
- The Warlis worship the Earth and refer to it as mother goddess as they grow crops on this ground for survival.
- Farming is the main occupation and also a way of life for them. Warli life revolves around forest and forest products.
- They are seen as self-sufficient community who make the best of everything they get from nature.
- Attire: The Warlis enjoy and celebrate their comfortable and ethnic clothing.





- Beliefs: Warlis hold a very strong respect for their spirits and deities. For the Warlis, Bhagat, is their guru. They believe in tantra, mantra and in re-birth. They also believe in Jaldevta, Van devta and Vaayudevta. Also they are well known to have a faith in Tiger God (Vaghai). As they acknowledge waghoba and worship its role in balancing the food chain.
- Warli Paintings
 - The most crucial form of art is the Warli paintings. There are no records of the exact origin of this art but its roots can be traced to the early 10th century AD.
 - Warli paintings which were first made by women to communicate their daily social life situations, is now even done by men.
 - Warli Painting in fact is now a new source of income for the community.
 - The Warlis use only white colour for their paintings. The white colours are made using a mixture of rice dough and natural glues which are obtained from trees. In Warli painting, usage of basic geometric shapes like triangles, circles, squares and lines are used to add effect and beauty. All these shapes are influenced by the nature. Triangle symbolize hills and pointed tress, circles symbolize sun and moon and squares symbolize chowks.
 - The paintings highlight the struggles of their daily life. Activities of hunting, fishing, farming, festivals, dances, trees, snakes, ants and animals are depicted in their paintings.
- Dance: Dance is a very important part of the Warli culture. The Tarpa (instrument) dance, is one of the most famous dance forms.
 - Tarpa dance is usually performed on events that call for celebrations like Diwali, wedding and harvest, in order to thank the nature. Along with Tarpa dance, Dhol dance, Gauri dance are important.

Understanding Indian Classical Dance

Introduction



- Broadly, dance has two main categorization which are Western and Classical. While the latter has roots connected to Indian traditions, the Western Dance encompasses varied forms, originally from Western countries like the US, such as hip-hop, contemporary, jazz, ballet, etc.
- Classical dance started out in the form of worship in temples, then in the kingdoms of Mughal Empire, and this even gained acceptance (since 18th-19th centuries) at international level in the field of 'Art and Culture' This involve strict techniques and rules relating to body movements, bhava (expressions), costumes, hand and leg postures, etc. and its earliest evidence can be traced in Bharata Muni's Natya Sastra (believed to be written prior to 200 C.E.)
- Indian classical dances are broadly represented in two formats: Tandava corresponding to emotions like aggression, courage etc and another is Lasya, which displays grace, love, beauty, gentleness.
- Interestingly, classical dances have a deep-rooted devotional Guru-Shishya Parampara, involving blessings of Goddess Saraswati. Ghungroos or ankle bells are worn by the dancers as the pre-requisite.
- **Bharatanatyam**, as one of the most famous Indian classical dances, belongs to the State of Tamil Nadu and has one of the toughest leg postures (Mandala), i.e. Aramandi.
- **Khatak** is a popular dance form of North India and has three Gharanas: Lucknow, Jaipur and Benaras. This involves telling a story through expressions, and footwork (Tatkar) and spins (Chakkar).
- **Kathakali** is from Kerala with a perfect blend of dance, music, drama, expressions, and the costumes are huge and enchanting.
- **Mohiniattam dance**, which is also from Kerala, is more subtle with delicate movements of body parts and is generally performed solo by woman (known as dance by the enchantress).
- **Manipuri** dance from Manipur has more devotional form and is based on Radha-Krishan's Raslila.
- **Odissi** is one of the ancient dances which depicts archeological culture of Odisha and has circular movement of legs. *Tribhanga* is its main standing posture.
- **Kuchipudi** dance belongs to the state of Andhra Pradesh and has fast foot movements with dramatic expressions and dialogues. It is also performed on the edge of a brass plate (known as Tarangam) on the beats of Carnatic music
- Classical dances are, however, different from folk dances which lack strict rules.
- There are various benefits of Classical Dance:
 - Helps in proper Acupressure Treatment: Research shows that classical dance acts as a natural acupressure remedy without going to a therapist. This helps to banish tension and pain in the



body, heals organs of the body such as kidney and heart, resolves constipation, regulates blood pressure and diabetes, cures arthritis, and stimulates better coordination of neuro-motor skills.

- Enables Free Expression of Creativity and Loving all our Emotions: Classical dance is performing Art, which involves innovative communication of emotions and feelings, depending on the wish/mood of a performer. The feeling of unconditional love and empathy towards each emotion is naturally generated, as most of the base of classical dance is Devotion and Surrender to God or Higher Power.
- Bestows on us Yogic Benefits of Different Hand Mudras as well as Connects us with Nature: Mudras in simpler terms are the gestures done by hand, and their reference is generally obtained from Abhinaya Darpana by Nandikesvara. It may be challenging to perform yoga mudras daily, but these become pious and exciting when done with classical dances.
- Helps in Perfect Alignment of Body and Keeps us Physically Healthy: Through classical dancing, one gets to learn the art of balancing. With regular practice of classical dance, our thighs and arms are toned up, due to immense exercising of muscles, thereby imparting proper flexibility and strength. Further, our entire system cools down when we dance due to sweating. In fact, it is asserted that classical dancers are blessed with better cardiovascular stamina.
- Promotes Better Coordination of Left and Right side of Brain: Classical Dance contains narration of a story with expression of emotions of both male and female, this helps in balancing feminine and masculine qualities. Balancing these two energies is the essential condition to live a better life as a human being.
- Fills us with Natural and Life-supporting Vitamins – Vitamin D2 and P2; and Provides benefits of ‘Living in the Present Moment’: Vitamin D2 refers to regular dosage of Discipline and Dedication, and Vitamin P2 refers to Patience and Perseverance. A high level of determination, practice and devotion has to be delivered to achieve perfection even in one mudra or posture.
- Releases Good Hormones and Aids in Mental and Psychological Health: When one dances, it is equivalent to a big activity which secretes feel-good hormones like Endorphins (which is released in the brain to deal with pain and curtails stress hormone Cortisol), Dopamine as the happiness hormone and Serotonin as a mood-uplifting hormone, etc. It helps us in being joyful and happy.
- Improves Beauty: Classical dance helps in bringing natural glow on our face and remove impurities due to frequent movement of facial muscles.



- Overall, Classical Dances are one of the best ways of “Active Meditation”. It is high time for Indians to give due importance to Classical dances and utilize their advantages at a length. These are one of the best ways for doing inner-work, which pandemic has also enforced upon us.

Traditional Toy Industry – New India’s Sunrise Sector

Introduction

- The history of the Indian toy industry stretches back to the birth of our nation itself. Manufactured all over the country, Indian toys reflect cultural diversity in the range of products manufactured.
- Toys are an important part of childhood, as they aid in physiological, mental and emotional development.
- Traditional toys are also an important cultural asset as they depict ancient mythological stories and display the beliefs and traditions that exist among communities.
- The Indian toy manufacturing industry is the livelihood of thousands of craftsmen and their families. This sector also plays an important role in generating employment opportunities for women and providing a regular source of income for rural households. In the toy industry over 60 percent factory workers are women.
- Currently, 85 percent of the domestic demand for toys is met through imports from China, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Germany, and the US.



Initiatives to boost toy Industry by the Government

- National Action Plan – a comprehensive action plan to boost local manufacturing and incentivize toy and handicraft manufacturers in the country.



- Toy Fair – organized from February 27 – March 03, 2021
- Toycathon – To promote toy manufacturing among domestic players, particularly rural entrepreneurs, a Common Service Centre (CSV) and a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) under the Ministry of Electronics and IT, joined forces with the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to organize ‘Toycathon 2021’. This concept is a first-of-its-kind hackathon to develop indigenous toys and games – highlighting India’s culture, history and mythology.
- Toy Cluster Programme – 90 percent of the Indian toy industry is unorganised. To streamline this sector, the government announced the ‘Product Specific Industrial Cluster Development Programme’ in 2020 to build toy clusters in dedicated SEZs and help them become customized, self-sustained ecosystems catering to export markets.
 - Karnataka is creating India’s first toy cluster in Koppal district, designed with the view of housing an inclusive ecosystem of ancillary suppliers and industrial and social infrastructure.

New India’s traditional toy industry is at the cusp of unprecedented growth. The industry is witnessing rapid transformation through a plethora of technological innovations and is likely to become a major contributor to the economy in the coming years. The growth of traditional toy industry is truly a step towards the vision of a self-reliant New India.





Role of Folk Media in Nation Building

Introduction

- Rural India is a treasure trove of folk art, theatre, music, dance, art and craft. Folk media are the arts which have been transmitting values, thoughts, norms, beliefs and experiences of people in a homogenous society through its various forms.
- This media can play an important role in nation building as it is depicting realistic culture of people.
- The slogans under Atmanirbhar Bharat include ‘vocal for local’, ‘local for global’ and ‘Make for world’
 - Local for global implies that local products in India should have global appeal and reach. This slogan has also been extended to sectors such as the toy sector, “time to be vocal for local toys”.
- Mass media has been playing a major role in nation building, but the main concern has been the reach of mass media, which has been limited to urban areas.

Role of Folk Media

- Rural India is a treasure trove of folk art, theatre, music, dance, art and craft. Folk media are the arts which have been transmitting values, thoughts, norms, beliefs and experiences of people in a homogenous society through its various forms. This media can play an important role in nation building as it is depicting realistic culture of the people.
- It is a term used to denote “people’s performances”.
- In India, folk performance is a composite art. It is a total art created by the fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic ballad recitation, religion and festival peasantry.
- It is a medium of developmental communication.
- The first significant international recognition of the traditional media in the communication and development strategies of the developing countries, came in the year 1972, when the international parenthood federation and UNESCO organized a series of meetings in London relating to integrated use of folk and traditional media in family planning communication programmes.
- Baul, Kavigan, Chhau dance of Bengal, Lavani of Maharashtra, Gee-Gee of Karnataka and Villupattu of Tamil Nadu, change their content and focus, depending on the contemporary needs. There were also effective in arousing the conscience of the people against the colonial rule of the British.



- Rapid transformation of mass media can be used as an effective blend along with folk media for bringing about effective participation of people in nation building activity. All these together can contribute immensely for making AtmaNirbhar Bharat a reality.

Strategies for Promoting Role of Folk Media for Nation Building

- Identifying Interest, Needs and Attitude of rural community – this will result in proper understanding grass root situation and will be helpful in drawing attention of people towards making country AtmaNirbhar.
- Planning – Communication gap and time lag are major barrier in communication. Through proper planning, the gaps in communicating the message will be eliminated.
- Utilising the Social Structure of Village – to promote development of nation, there is a need for understanding the rural situation, its social structure and potential change agents.
- Integration of Folk Media, Mass Media and Social Media – this would add flavor which would create great value to the dissemination of message. The advantage of integration of folk media is to spread message to large number of masses in a short period of time.

Preserving Performing Arts

Introduction

- Performing arts are needed to be safeguarded as it is locally connected, community-based living practice.
- Performing art is an art that is performed before the audience and is appreciated for its content, form, style and the aesthetic approach. Music, dance and drama are the forms of performing arts.
- India has a repository of performing arts. Performing arts are the repository of “Cultural Heritage”, the intangible cultural heritage. Performing arts include traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors in the form of diverse performing arts like oral traditions, song, dance and drama.
- Preservation is a way to sustain the best quality of live representations, without losing their originality, by documenting the inherited techniques of the stakeholders in the presentation of the performing arts.
- Performing arts makes a natural bonding between the generations by exploring the conflicting stories of human characters being told in the form of song, music, dance and drama.



- Performing arts are needed to be safeguarded as it is a locally connected, community-based living practice and promotes cultural diversity and human creativity. Human being can be connected to their roots through the performing arts.

Significance of Performing Arts in India

- India has a repository of performing arts. Bharatnatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Sattariya, Mohiniyattam are recognized as classical dances of India. In music we have Hindustani and Carnatic Classical music divisions. Traditiona, ritual, regional, and folk music, dance, and drama are also very attractive experiences for tourists coming to India.
- Many regional, traditional, contemporary, dramatic, musical, and dancing expressions in India re being performed to a common audience by the performing artists. The performances not only happen on stage but also in many other spaces, such as rooftops, gardens, halls, grounds, etc.
- Artists of the performing arts are the ideal practitioners of democracy. In the space of performing arts, any form of discrimination is not allowed. The artists are born liberals and believe in peace and harmony.
- Performing arts develop a strong logical character with the human resources. The performing arts create an intangible cultural experience that needs to be safeguarded, preserved, and recreated, and transmitted to the next generation as heritage.

Need to Preserve Performing Arts

- We must explore the opportunity to showcase the practice of various performing arts to acknowledge the specific practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills, appropriate, associated instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces and forms.
- Developing the idea of a specific museum (Living Home) of live performing arts at the regional level is needed to preserve the various living practices in the different parts of India.
- There is a need to be sensitive towards the practice and presence of performing arts in different parts of the country to support the establishment of the living houses for performing artists.
- The establishment of a performing arts council at the regional level will be helpful to take measures to ensure the substantial existence of the art form.
- We must encourage the practice of the performing arts in the schools and institutions.



- As we are dealing with living practice, the community members are needed to be involved and trained to document the practice with all its tangible and intangible elements.
- It is suggested to establish Indian Cultural Services, to bring some best administrative minds of the country to enhance the status and practice of performing arts.
- For the further betterment and innovation in performing arts, there is a need to have more investments, cultural administrators, professional performing artists at district levels, museum cultural complexes etc.
- Low cost fully equipped auditoriums at the block level may support the artists in a big way.
- Performing arts are the three-dimensional human idea in practice to keep the abstract creative urges and character transparent for the masses in a defined, disciplined space with the strength of content and the beauty of expression to keep the society in control of the body, voice, and mind to maintain peace and harmony in the locality and on the globe for a future generation living happily in harmony with nature and universe.