

## CULTURE NOTES – Part I

### SYLLABUS GS PAPER II

- Indian culture covers the salient features of Literature, Art forms, and Architecture from ancient to modern times
- Salient aspects of Diversity of India and Indian Society

#### 1. KONARK TEMPLE

Konark Sun Temple is a 13th Century temple about 35 kms northeast from Puri on the coast line of Odisha. The Konark Sun Temple takes the form of a huge chariot (30 m high) for sun god Surya, with 12 pairs of stone-carved wheels and a team of seven galloping horses (only one of which survives intact).

The temple is attributed to king Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There is festival every year Chandrabhaga Mela around the month of February.

#### 2. MAHAMASTAKABHISHEKA

Location: Shravanabelagola Karnataka

Bahubali Gommateshwara Statue 57 feet high Monolithic

Anointment every 12 years

88th year held in 2018 from 17-25<sup>th</sup> February

Commenced 981 AD

Anointing the statue of Gommateshwara with milk, saffron, sugarcane juice, sandalpaste, rice flour, flowers etc.

Bahubali was the son of Rishabhanatha, the first Tithankara of Jainism.

#### 3. WORLD HERITAGE DAY

Every year on 18<sup>th</sup> April we celebrate the “International Day for Monuments and Sites”.

The Day is celebrated with different types of activities, including visits to monuments and heritage sites.

The International Day for Monuments and Sites was proposed by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1982 and approved by General Assembly of UNESCO in 1983.

The aim is to promote awareness about the diversity of cultural heritage of humanity, their vulnerability and the efforts required for their protection and conservation.

#### 4. BOAT RACE IN KERALA

Vallam Kali is a traditional boat race in Kerala. It is a form of Canoe racing and uses paddled war canoes. It is mainly conducted during the season of the harvest festival Onam in autumn. The race of Chundan Vallam (snake boat) is the major event. Hence Vallam Kali is also known as the Snake Boat Race and it is a major tourist attraction. Other types of boats which do participate in various events in the race are Churulan Vallam, Iruttukuthy Vallam, Odi Vallam, Veppu Vallam etc etc. The Nehru Trophy Boat Race is a popular Vallam Kali event held in Punnamada Lake near Alappuzha, Kerala, India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of Independent India visited Kerala in 1952. He was given a roaring reception by the people of Alleppey, escorted by the huge snake boats.

Jawaharlal Nehru donated a rolling trophy to be awarded to the winner of the race. The trophy is a replica of a snake-boat in silver, placed on wooden abacus on which the following words are inscribed. "TO THE WINNER OF THE BOAT RACE WHICH IS A UNIQUE FEATURE OF COMMUNITY LIFE IN TRAVANCORE-COCHIN." Until Nehru's death in 1964, the trophy was named 'Prime Minister's Trophy', and it was on 8<sup>th</sup> Aug 1964 that the trophy was renamed. The 100-120 foot long canoes made of wood locally called "Aajili thadi" carrying 90-100 rowers which moves like a snake through the channels (hence the name) is an eye catching sight for any tourist.

## **5. GOA CARNIVAL**

Carnival is the most famous festival in the Goa State. It has been celebrated since the 18th century as a precursor to the abstinence of Lent. It was introduced by the Portuguese who ruled over Goa for over five hundred years.

## **6. KUMBH**

The bathing in these rivers is thought to cleanse a person of all sins.

At any given place, the Kumbh Mela is held once in 12 years. There is a difference of around 3 years between the Kumbh Melas at Haridwar and Nashik. The fairs at Nashik and Ujjain are celebrated in the same year or one year apart. The exact date is determined according to the combination of Zodiac positions of Jupiter, the Sun, and the Moon.

At Nashik and Ujjain the Mela may be held while a planet is in Leo, in this case it is also known as Simhhastha.

At Haridwar and Allahabad an Ardh Kumbh Mela is held sixth year a Maha Kumbh Mela occurs after 144 years

The festival is of the largest peaceful gatherings in the World and considered as the world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims.

An estimated 120 million people visited Maha Kumbh Mela in 2013 in Allahabad. Over a two month period. Including over 30 million on a single day, on 10th Feb 2013, the day of Mauni Amavasya.

## **7. TRIBAL IN INDIA**

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands is home to 4 Negrito and 2 Mongoloid tribes. Those belonging to Negrito origin –The Great Andamanese, the Onge, the Jarawas and the Sentinelese are still at hunting-gathering stage of economy.

250-400 Jarawas are left.

## **8. DANCES OF INDIA**

The Indian dances are broadly divided into Classical dances and folk dances. The Classical dances of India are usually spiritual in content. Though the folk dances of India are also spiritual and religious in content but the main force behind the folk dances of India is the celebratory mood. Dances are a form of coherent expression of human feelings. Like the Indian culture, Indian classical dances are equally diverse in nature. There are various classical dance forms in India and innumerable folk dances. Each dance form can be traced to different parts of the country. Each form represents the culture and ethos of a particular region or a group of people.

The most popular classical dance styles of India are Bharatnatyam of Tamil Nadu, Kathakali and Mohiniattam of Kerala, Odissi of Odisha, Kathak of Uttar Pradesh, Kuchipudi of Andhra Pradesh and Manipuri of Manipur.

Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniattam and Odissi dance forms basically use the same 'mudras' or signs of hand as a common language of expression and were originally performed in the temples to entertain various Gods and Goddesses.

## **9. INDIAN FOLK DANCES**

India is a land of varied cultures and traditions. Diversities in all spheres make the Indian culture quite unique. Indian folk and tribal dances are product of different socio-economic set up and traditions. Indian folk and tribal dances are simple and are performed to express joy. In India we have festivals and celebrations virtually every day. This has added to the richness of Indian culture. Since every festival is accompanied by celebration, folk dances have become an integral part of our social milieu.

## **10. JALLIKATU**

Jallikattu is a traditional practice in the state of Tamil Nadu as a Pongal celebration on Mattu Pongal day, which occurs in January.

Bull such as the Pulikulam or Kangayam breeds is released into crowd of people, and multiple human participants attempt to grab the large hump on the bull's back with both arms and hang on to it while the bull attempts to escape. The participants try to bring the bull to a stop.

Animal organisations have called for a ban to the sport. The court had banned it but a new ordinance was made in 2017 to continue the sport.

## **11. SOMNATH TEMPLE**

The Somnath temple is located near Veraval in Saurashtra on western coast of Gujarat. It is the first among the twelve Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva. The temple was destroyed and reconstructed several times in past by several muslim invaders and Portuguese. The present temple was reconstructed in Chalukya style of Hindu temple architecture and completed in May 1951.

## **12. DWARKA**

Dwarka is an ancient city in the north-western Indian state of Gujarat. It is located on the right bank of the Gomti River. Dwarka is one of the foremost Chardhams. Dwarka is often identified with the Dwarka Kingdom, the ancient kingdom of Krishna.

## **13. KANHARI CAVES**

The Kanhari Caves are a group of caves and rock-cut monuments cut into a massive basalt outcrop. They are in Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai. They contain Buddhist sculptures and relief carvings, paintings and inscriptions dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Kanheri comes from the Sanskrit Krishnagiri, which means Black Mountain. The cave complex comprises one hundred and nine caves.

Kanhari had become an important Buddhist settlement on the Konkan coast by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Most of the caves were Buddhist viharas, meant for living, studying and meditating. The larger caves were chityas.

#### **14. ELEPHANTA CAVES**

Elephanta Caves temple predominantly dedicated to the Hindu God Shiva. Now it is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

They are located on Elephanta Island, Gharapuri in Mumbai Harbour 10 km to the east of the city of Mumbai in the state of Maharashtra.

There are 5 Shaivite Caves and few Buddhist stupa mounds. They are of 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC. There are two Buddhist caves with water tanks.

The Elephanta Caves contain rock cut stone sculptures that show syncretism of Hindu and Buddhist ideas and iconography.

The caves are hewn from solid basalt rock. The temples are placed in mandala pattern.

#### **15. ELLORA CAVES**

Ellora is one of the largest rock-cut monastery - temple cave complexes in the world.

Now it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cave depict Buddhist, Hindu and Jain monuments, and artwork. It dates from 600-1000 AD. Cave 16 features the largest single monolithic rock excavation in the world. The Kailasha temple a chariot shaped monument dedicated to Shiva.

There are 100 caves at the site. They have been excavated from the basalt cliffs in the Chharandri Hills. Only 34 caves are opened to public - 12 Buddhist caves, 17 Hindu and 5 Jains. They represent the religious harmony that existed that time.

The caves were built during Rashtrakuta dynasty. Jain caves were constructed during Yadava dynasty.

#### **16. AJANTA CAVES**

The Ajanta Caves are 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments which date from 2<sup>nd</sup> century to 480 AD.

Ajanta caves were discovered by an Army officer in the Madras Regiment of British Army in the year 1819.

The caves are in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra State.

During the Gupta period (5-6 century) many more richly decorated caves were added to the original group. The paintings and sculptures of Ajanta are considered masterpieces of Buddhist religious art. The Ajanta Caves constitute ancient monasteries and worship-halls of different Buddhist traditions. Paintings depict birth and rebirth of Buddha, pictorial tales from Aryasura's Jatakamala.

These caves served as a monsoon retreat for monks as well as a resting -site for merchants and pilgrims in ancient India.

#### **17. KARLA CAVES**

The Karla Caves are a complex of ancient Buddhist Indian rock-cut caves near Lonavala, Maharashtra.

The Caves were developed over the period- from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD. The oldest Cave shrine is believed to date back to 160 BC.

Karla Caves are near to a major trade route running eastward from Arabian Sea into Deccan.

The Karla rock-cut Buddhist site is much smaller as compared to other sites of Maharashtra.

Karla is known for the "Grand Chaitya" which is the largest and most completely preserved Chaitya hall of the period.

Many traders and Satavahanas rulers made grants for construction of these caves. The location is marks the division between North India and South India.

## 18. **BANI THANI**

Bani Thani refers to an Indian miniature painting painted by Nihal Chand from Marwar School of Kishangarh. It portrays a woman who is elegant and graceful. Bani Thani was a singer and poet in Kishangarh in the time of King Sawant Singh. (1748-1764) Very often she is compared to Mona Lisa.

Inspired by Radha, Bani Thani is characterized by idealized distinct features such as arched eyebrows, lotus like elongated eyes and pointed chin.

This painting was featured in an Indian stamp issued on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1973.

Bani Thani was believed to be the mistress of King Sawant Singh, and later became one of his wives. Her real name was Vishnupriya. She came to be known as Bani Thani which means the decked-out lady.

## 20. **SANGAM LITERATURE**

The Sangam literature is the ancient Tamil Literature of the period in the history of ancient southern India spanning from 300BC to 300AD.

The collection contains 2381 poems in Tamil composed by 473 poets. The poems mainly deal with human relationship and emotions. Very few were religious poems.

The poems were written by both men and women from various professions and classes of society. These poems were later collected into various anthologies.

## 21. **MAJOR DYNASTIES OF DECCAN**

- Pallavas
- Satavahana
- Vakataka
- Chalukya
- Rashtrakuta

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