

2020



drishti

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

**INDIAN CULTURE AND  
HISTORICAL EVENTS**

13<sup>th</sup> January - 18<sup>th</sup> January



BusinessLine



## **1. Uttarayan**

### **Why in News?**

Recently, the Gujarat government celebrated the 31st international kite festival on the occasion of Uttarayan or Makar Sankranti in Ahmedabad.

- Ahmedabad has been hosting the International Kite Festival since 1989.

### **Uttarayan**

- The day is known as Makar Sankranti due to the movement of the sun which begins its northward journey from the Tropic of Capricorn to the Tropic of Cancer, known as Makar.
- This movement begins to occur a day after the winter solstice in December which occurs around 22 December and continues for a six-month period through to the summer solstice around June 21.
- The day marks the onset of summer and the six months auspicious period for Hindus known as Uttarayan – the northward movement of the sun.
- The festivities associated with the day is known by different names in different parts of the country:
  - Lohri by north Indian Hindus and Sikhs
  - Sukarat in central India
  - Bhogali Bihu by Assamese Hindus
  - Pongal by Tamil and other South Indian Hindus
  - Maghi in Punjab
  - Saaji in Himachal Pradesh
  - Kicheri in Uttar-Pradesh

## **2. Kathak**

- It is one of the eight classical dances of India.
- The word Kathak has been derived from the word Katha which means a story.
- It is primarily performed in Northern India.

### **Evolution**

- In the beginning it was a temple or village performance wherein the dancers narrated stories from ancient scriptures.
- Kathak began evolving into a distinct mode of dance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the spread of the Bhakti movement.
- The legends of Radha-Krishna were enacted in folk plays called rasa lila, which combined folk dance with the basic gestures of the kathak story-tellers.
- Under the Mughal emperors and their nobles, Kathak was performed in the court, where it acquired its present features and developed into a form of dance with a distinctive style.

- Under the patronage of Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Awadh, it grew into a major art form.

### Dance Style:

- Usually a solo performance, the dancer often pauses to recite verses followed by their execution through movement.
- The focus is more on footwork; the movements are skillfully controlled and performed straight legged by dancers wearing ankle-bells.
- Kathak is the only form of classical dance **wedded to Hindustani or the North Indian music.**
- Some prominent dancers include Birju Maharaj, Sitara Devi.

### 3. Bojjannakonda & Lingalametta

#### Why in News?

- The Practice of stone pelting carried out at the Buddhist site Bojjannakonda has almost been done away at **Sankaram** village situated in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- The stone pelting ritual is carried out on the kanuma day during Sankranati.
- Following the intervention of INTACH, the practice has almost abandoned.

#### Key Points

- The main stupa is carved out of rock and then covered with bricks, with a number of images of the Buddha sculpted on the rock face all over the hill.
- Bojjannakonda and Lingalametta are the twin Buddhist monasteries dating back to the 3rd century BC.
  - At Lingalametta, there are hundreds of rock-cut monolithic stupas in rows.
- These sites have seen three forms of Buddhism-
  - **Theravada period:** when Lord Buddha was considered a teacher.
  - **Mahayana:** where Buddhism was more devotional.
  - **Vajrayana:** where Buddhist tradition was more practised as Tantra and esoteric form.
- The name Sankaram is derived from the term, 'Sangharama'.
  - It is famous for votive stupas, rock-cut caves, brick-built structural edifices, early historic pottery and Satavahana coins that date back to the 1st century AD.
- Visakhapatnam is famous for Buddhist sites at Thotlakonda, Appikonda, and Bavikonda too.

## Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

- It is a non-profit charitable organisation founded in 1984 in New Delhi.
- It aims to spearhead heritage conservation in India.
- It has pioneered the conservation and preservation of not just our natural and built heritage but intangible heritage as well.
- In 2007, the United Nations awarded INTACH a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

## 4. Monasteries of Moghalmari

### Why in News?

Recently, a study of inscriptions on clay tablets recovered from excavations at Moghalmari have confirmed the presence of two Buddhist monasteries.

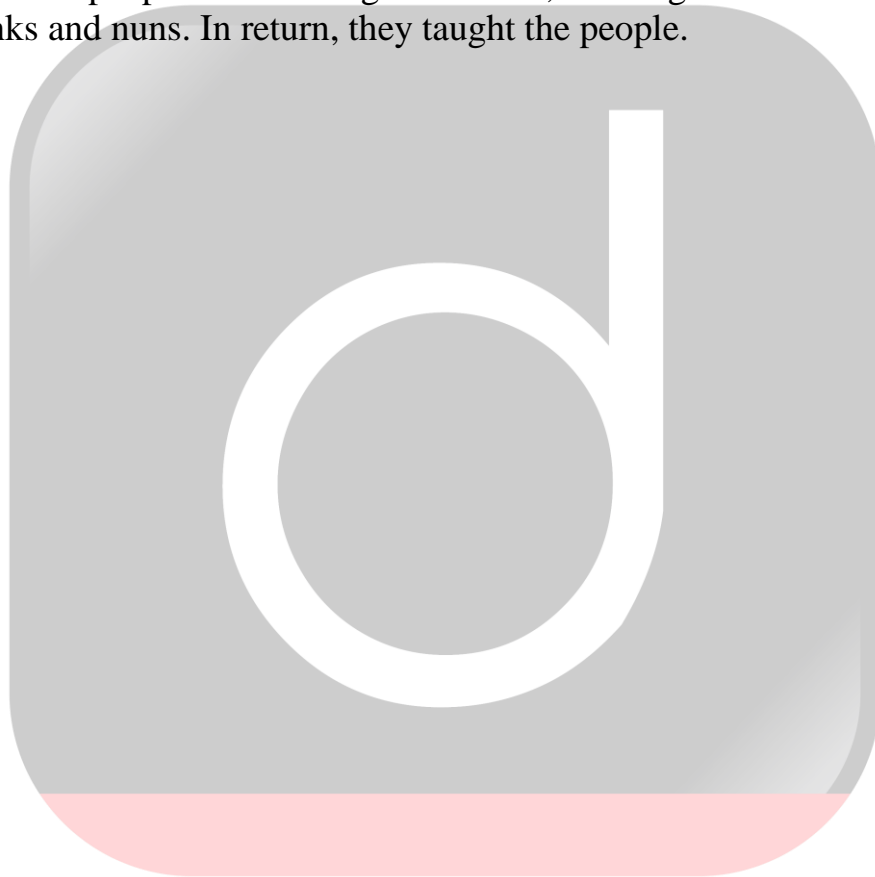
- Moghalmari is a **Buddhist monastic site** of the **early medieval period** in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district.

### Key Findings

- Presence of two monasteries at Moghalmari:
  - Mugalayikaviharika
  - Yajñapindikamahavihara
- Six tiny fragments of inscribed seals were found.
  - Each of them contained a set of letters accompanied by the **deer-dharmachakra symbols**.
  - The eight-spoked wheel represents the first turning of the dharma wheel by the Buddha.
  - The male and female deer on the right and left represent the male and female disciples who take pleasure in listening to the teachings of the holy dharma.
- The **inscriptions are in Sanskrit** and the script is a transitional phase between later north Indian Brahmi and early Siddhamatrika.
- The first name **Yajñapindikamahavihara**, implies etymologically 'a place of sacrificial offering'.
- The second name on the seals, **Mugalayikaviharika**, bears a phonetic resemblance to the modern name of the site, Moghalmari.
- Inscriptions support the point that **Buddhist monasteries have a definite hierarchy**- Mahavihara, Vihara and Viharika.
- The monasteries at Moghalmari date **from the 6th century CE** and were functional **until the 12th century CE**.
- Chinese traveller **Xuanzang** (more widely identified as **Huen Tsang**) referred to the existence of 'ten monasteries' within the limits of Tamralipta (modern day Tamluk in adjoining Purba Medinipur district).
  - However, he did not refer to any specific name or location.
  - Huen Tsang visited India in the 7th century CE.

### Buddhist Monasteries

- Buddhist Monasteries, also known as **Viharas**, are permanent shelters built for the monks to stay in one place when it was difficult to travel.
- Viharas **were made of wood, and then of brick**. Some were even in caves that were dug out in hills, especially in western India.
- Very often, the land on which the vihara was built was donated by a rich merchant or a landowner, or the king.
- The local people came with gifts of food, clothing and medicines for the monks and nuns. In return, they taught the people.



drishti