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Important Facts for Prelims (29th September 2018)

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KHARTALS- Sound of the Desert

- Khartal is a traditional percussion instrument, it is an important part of Rajasthani music.
- This instrument is played by the Manganiyars and the Langa communities in Jaisalmer and Barmer.
- The instrument derives its name from the Hindi words 'kara' means hand and 'tala' means rhythm — rhythm of the hand. It is used during religious and social celebrations.
- Khartal comes under the category of idiophones of the self-sounding variety, where the properties of vibrator and resonator are combined by the instrument.
- It is traditionally made from sheesham wood or teak since this produces the required nadam or sound. Since the instrument looks like animal bone, it is also called rhythm bone.
- Khartals can also be made of metal. The instrument is usually plain but sometimes designs are drawn on it.
- This instrument is held on the hand and played. Sometimes the performer (usually played by men) play pairs of khartals with both the hands. The flat surfaces are struck together by alternately closing and opening the fingers.
- Khartals can be played both as a solo instrument or part of an ensemble. A common feature of performances in Rajasthan is the rhythmic exchange between khartal and dholak artistes.

Bhubaneswar's Tribal Museum Reflecting Tribal Culture and Art

- The Tribal Museum, as it is known in Bhubaneswar, is a quick capsule of tribal culture and art and represent Odisha's cultural identity.
- It has hut replicas, textiles, rice grain sculptures, painters at work selling finished pieces, hunting and fishing implements, household objects like husking levers, musical instruments like the gagadyadengh, the two-stringed fiddle, and the changu, a single-membrane drum.

- With more than 5,000 objects and replicas on display, most of which are digitized, beautifully reflect tribal lifestyle, history, and art.
- It reveals what is common among its subjects: the Bondas, Saoras, Dongria Kondhs, Juangs, and Kutia Kondhs, among other tribes, by legends passed on through generations.
- It is a repository of information on tribals, for example, while navigating the museum one can learn about Bonda tribes of the Malkangiri district of southern Odisha that they live on shifting and wetland cultivations and are famous for making brooms and a drink from mahua flowers.
- Although Odisha is both a Hindu and Buddhist stronghold, tribal culture spills over into its cultural identity.
- Lord Jagannath (lovingly referred to as “kaliya”) in Odisha is considered to be the saviour and father of the state cutting across various castes and tribes. For eg: along with Hindus, Jagannath is also the God of Saoras (known for music and Saura tribal painting which is a style of wall mural paintings) and some other tribes.
- Further wooden deities of the Adivasis bear great iconographical similarity with Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra.
- The state still has some of the most untouched tribal sanctuaries in the country, and because of the state government’s efforts to preserve tribal traditions there is tribal art on street walls in downtown Bhubaneswar. For example, Saora paintings are in great demand through local art dealers.
- Slow, curated tours into tribal areas are beginning to attract international, anthropologically inclined travellers. The tribal museum is a good beginning to explore tribal Odisha.

Kumaoni Aipan- Red and White Glory

- Aipan is a traditional folk art specifically made by women of Uttarakhand.
- This art is done on the floor over brick red background with white paste made out of rice flour.
- Only two colours (red and white) are used to make religious motifs, repetitive geometric patterns and nature-inspired elements, which have a distinctive local flavour.
- The typical art is done on all special occasions and household ceremonies and rituals.
- It is believed that these motifs evoke divine power which brings good fortune and wards off evil.

Thanjavur: Repository of Indian Crafts

- Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu is famous for Brihadisvara temple, which together with two other 11th century Chola temples (the Brihadisvara Temple at Gangaikondacholisvaram and the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- It has four distinctive handicrafts that have won GI (geographical indication) tags:
 - Dancing Dolls
 - Thalaiyati Bommai are dancing dolls, painted in bright colours and intricate designs
 - During Dasara, the dolls are available everywhere from stores to makeshift stalls.
 - The papier mache (a composite material consisting of paper pieces or pulp) and clay dolls are set up in elaborate tiered displays that relate mythological stories during the 'Bomma Kolu' celebrations as part of Dasara.
 - Metal Art Plates
 - Maratha King Seroffji Bhonsle was a patron of this art and many of Thanjavur's iconic crafts started during his reign and flourished.
 - The plates are made of silver, brass, copper and sometimes bronze.
 - They are embossed with figures of gods and goddesses surrounded by floral patterns.
 - Thanjavur Paintings
 - Thanjavur paintings renowned for their vivid colours, rich gold leaf work and glass bead inlay.
 - They reflect the influences of both the Maratha period in the 1700s, when they originated, and the Nayakas who ruled the region before the Marathas.
 - They are painted on wooden panels with religious theme representing Hindu gods and goddesses, and episodes from religious texts.
 - Saraswati Veena
 - It is one of the most important instruments for Carnatic music and revered for its resonant quality.
 - It is made from the wood of a mature jackfruit tree, taking an artisan two-three months of patient chipping away to complete it.
 - The bulb of the instrument is intricately carved with floral motifs or the image of Goddess Saraswati, and then polished for a gleaming finish.

Muziris Port

- Muziris is a port city in Kerala.
- It is among the oldest port in the world.
- Sangam literature describes Roman ships coming to Muziris for pepper.

- In 1341, after flooding in Periyar River basin on the Malabar Coast Muziris port was wiped off the world map.
- The remains of the port are being conserved and preserved through one of India's largest conservation projects - the Muziris Heritage Project.

Project highlights

- The largest heritage conservation project in India.
- The first Green Project of the Government of Kerala.
- Involvement of multiple Government Departments and convergence.
- More than 25 museums to appreciate the Muziris Heritage.
- A research and academic institution to support the project.
- Major improvements in infrastructure.
- Integration with local communities through native resource persons for data collection, survey etc.

Rail Heritage Digitisation Project

- Minister of Railways and Coal has launched “Rail Heritage Digitisation Project” of Indian Railways in collaboration with Google Arts & Culture.
- It will showcase country’s Rail Heritage to National and International audience in an online story-telling platform.
- The project is the largest cultural heritage digitization project in India.
- Google described this project as an extension of their partnership with Indian Railways of providing public with Wi-Fi at 400 railway stations.
- Indian Railways has four UNESCO accorded World Heritage Sites:
 - The Mountain Railways of India
 - Darjeeling Himalayan Railway located in the foothills of the Himalayas in West Bengal (Northeast India).
 - Nilgiri Mountain Railways located in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu (South India)
 - Kalka Shimla Railway located in the Himalayan foothills of Himachal Pradesh (Northwest India).
 - The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly known as Victoria Terminus Station), Mumbai.
- In collaboration with Google Art & Culture, Indian Railways have already digitized National Rail Museum, Rewari Steam Centre, three World Heritage Railways, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus building and other prominent aspects of country’s rail heritage.