

Durga Puja of Kolkata

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In news– Recently, UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage put “Durga Puja in Kolkata” on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

About Durga puja of Kolkata-

- It is an annual festival celebrated in September or October, most notably in Kolkata.
- It marks the ten-day worship of the Hindu mother-goddess Durga.
- In the months preceding the festival, small artisanal workshops sculpt images of Durga and her family using unfired clay pulled from the Ganga River.
- The worship of the goddess then begins on the inaugural day of Mahalaya, when eyes are painted onto the clay images to bring the goddess to life.
- The next significant day of the festival is the sixth day (Sashthi), on which devotees welcome the goddess and festive celebrations are inaugurated.
- It ends on the tenth day, when the images are immersed in the river from where the clay came.
- Thus, the festival has also come to signify ‘home-coming’ or a seasonal return to one’s roots.
- The goddess along with Lakshmi, Saraswati, Ganesha, and Kartikeya are revered.
- Durga Puja, also known as Durgotsava or Sharodotsava, and is celebrated because of Durga’s victory over Mahishasur.
- Since 2016, the West Bengal government has been organising a Durga Puja Carnival – a parade of popular pujas from Kolkata and adjoining districts along with cultural performances – at Red Road to attract global attention for the festival and boost tourism.
- The ‘Probasi Puja’ [Durga Puja organised by the Bengali

community **outside West Bengal] is more of a community event like bhog [offering].**

- Art historian Tapati Guha-Thakurta has played an important role in getting Durga Puja in Kolkata included in UNESCO's list.

UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity-

- It comprises the diverse cultural practices and expressions of humanity, and seeks to raise awareness of the importance of such practices and expressions, encourage dialogue that respects cultural diversity, as well as give due recognition to the practices and expressions of communities worldwide.
- It has 492 elements in its list, which includes 13 entries from India.
- Besides Durga Puja in Kolkata (2021), the India list has:
 - Kumbh Mela (2017).
 - Nowruz (2016).
 - Traditional brass and copper utensil-making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab (2014).
 - Sankirtana of Manipur (2013).
 - Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012).
 - Chhau dance, Kalbelia dance of Rajasthan, and Mudi yettu of Kerala (2010).
 - Ramman festival of Garhwal (2009) and
 - Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre, Ramlila, and Vedic chanting (2008).
- **The 2021 Representative List also has entries including** Arabic calligraphy, Uzbekistan's Bakhshi art, Congolese rumba, falconry, Inuit drum dancing of Denmark, and the traditional Italian knowledge and practice of truffle hunting and extraction.
- Apart from the Kolkata Durga Puja, the Saint John celebrations in Venezuela, the Corpus Christi festival

celebrated in Panama and the Bolivian Grand Festival of Tarija were also included in UNESCO's list of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'.

- The list now also includes Nora, an acrobatic form of dance theatre from southern Thailand, and Al-Qudoud al-Halabiya, a form of traditional music from Aleppo (Syria), along with the Congolese rumba and Xòe, a Vietnamese dance form.
- In addition, Ceebu Jën, a Senegalese culinary art form, and pasillo, a type of music and dance that emerged in Ecuador, were also added to the coveted list.