

# Kanwar yatra

July 14, 2021

**In news-** The Supreme Court issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh state government against the state's decision to allow 'Kanwar Yatra'. While the UP government has allowed the yatra from July 25 despite concerns raised about possible third wave of COVID-19, the neighbouring Uttarakhand state has suspended the kanwar yatra.

## **About the yatra-**

- The Kanwar yatra is an **annual pilgrimage of devotees of Shiva**, known as **Kānvarias or "Bhole"**, to Hindu pilgrimage places of **Haridwar, Gaumukh and Gangotri** in Uttarakhand and **Sultanganj** in Bihar to fetch holy waters of Ganges River.
- Millions of participants **gather sacred water from the Ganga** and carry it across hundreds of miles to dispense as offerings in their local Śiva shrines, or specific temples such as Pura Mahadeva and Augharnath temple in Meerut, and Kashi Vishwanath, Baidyanath, and Deoghar in Jharkhand.
- The phenomenon surely existed in the early nineteenth century when English travelers reported seeing Kanwar pilgrims at many points during their journeys in the north Indian plains.
- Kanwar Yatra is named after the kānvar, a single pole (usually made of bamboo) with two roughly equal loads fastened or dangling from opposite ends.
- The kanwar is carried by balancing the middle of the pole on one or both shoulders.
- Kanwar-carrying pilgrims, called Kanwarias, carry covered water-pots in khanwars slung across their shoulders.
- The yatra is related to the churning of the ocean of milk in the Hindu Puranas.

- The festivals run during the monsoon month Shraawan (July – August).
- While most pilgrims are men, a few women also participate in Yatra.