

Nuakhai festival

September 2, 2022

In news- The Prime Minister of India has extended his good wishes to the farmers on the occasion of Nuakhai(September 1)

What is Naukhai?

- Nuakhai is an **annual harvest festival in Odisha, celebrated to welcome the season's new rice.**
- Celebrated a day after Ganesh Chaturthi, Nuakhai is one of the most important festivals in western Odisha and neighbouring areas in Simdega district of Jharkhand.
- The much-awaited festival of western Odisha, Nuakhai is celebrated with Nabanna offering to Goddess Samaleswari on September 1.
- In **Nuakhai, nua means new and khai means food.** So, the festival of nuakhai is a festival to celebrate newly harvested food by the farmers.
- Nuakhai is celebrated by people across socio-economic strata. The preparation for Nuakhai begins well in advance. **'Safa-sutra' and 'Lipa-puchha'** or the cleaning and mopping of the households are carried out by family members.
- The verandah and mud walls are adorned with **'Jhuti'** which is akin to the Rangoli design. It is different from the more common Rangoli in being white only and drawn with fingers dipped in soaked rice powder.
- Early in the day, **'Nabanna' or the first harvested paddy is offered to the local deity of the region.**
- Devi Samaleswari in Sambalpur, Pataneswari in Bolangir/Patnagarh, Manikeswari in Kalahandi, Sekharbasini in Sundergarh, and Sureswari in Sonapur are offered 'Nua' on **a predetermined time called 'Lagna'.**
- Once the rituals in the temples are accomplished, the celebration shifts to the individual households. The head of the family, who is usually the eldest family member, offers his prayers and performs the customary

rituals. **This is followed by distributing 'Nua'** (rice grains) to every member.

- After thanking mother earth for providing them with food for their sustenance and the almighty for keeping them together for yet another year, the members consume the rice.
- This is followed by **'Nuakhai Juhar'** where **youngsters touch the feet of the elders to seek their blessings.** Friends and relatives meet and greet each other with a Nuakhai Juhar, by folding hands.
- The occasion sees the preparation of the two **most loved delicacies of the place- Pitha and Mitha.**
- Non-vegetarian dishes especially mutton curry, are cooked and taken with rice.
- Community function called **'Nuakhai Bhetghat'** is a major part of the festival.
- **Popular folk dance forms like dalkhai, rasarkeli, maelajada, bajnia,** nachnia and chutkuchuta are performed on the foot-tapping beats of traditional musical instruments like dhol, taasaa, nisan, and the melodious Sambalpuri songs.