



General Studies Manual for UPSC and State Public Services Examinations 2014

Salient Features of Indian Culture
Module-7: Fairs, Festivals and Indian Traditional Sports and Martial
Arts

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Chapter 1. Select Fairs and Festivals Various States and Uts

Select Fairs & Festivals from Andaman & Nicobar

Subhash Mela

- Subhash Mela is celebrated at Havelock Island in Andaman & Nicobar Islands in January to celebrate the birth anniversary of Netaji.

Block Mela

- Block Mela is celebrated at Diglipur in Andaman and Nicobar Islands in January or February to draw attention to the rural development in the island.

Select Fairs & Festivals from Andhra Pradesh

Rajula Festival

- Rajula Festival falls in month of Ashadha (June - July) on full moon day. It is celebrated in honour of Polam Raju or Nagoba deity, which protects the cattle and herdsmen.

Bodemma Festival

- Bodemma is a worship of goddess Gauri, so Bodemma festival is the festival of unmarried girls.

Select Fairs and Festivals from Arunachal Pradesh

Losar Festival

- Losar is a New Year festival of the **Monpas**. Monpas are the major people of Arunachal Pradesh.

- This festival is also most important holiday in Tibet and Bhutan. The Tibetan calendar is made up of twelve lunar months and Losar begins on the first day of the first month, which generally falls in February or March.
- In the monasteries, the celebrations for the Losar begin on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month. That is the day before the Tibetan New Year's Eve. Before the commencement of the festivities, the Monpas make a local beverage *equivalent to beer* which is called **changkol**. They enjoy the **changkol** and wish each other happy New Year by saying **Tashi Delek**.

Solung Festival

- SOLUING is a socio-cultural festival of the the **Adi community of Arunachal Pradesh**. The festival is celebrated in first week of September every year
- **Solung festival** also called *festival of refreshment* is celebrated for better and rich harvests. 'Ponung' is the dance associated and organised with the Solung festival. It is also known as 'Solung-Ponung'.

Mopin- Adi Festival

- Mopin festival of the Adi community of Arunachal Pradesh is a festival of Goddess of peace and welfare and is celebrated in order to get rid of natural calamities diseases, effects of evil spirits and for good harvest, health, wealth and prosperity.
- It falls in April generally.

Select Fairs and Festivals from Assam

Bihu

Bihu is the name of the biggest festival of the Assam. The people in Assam celebrate three Bihus as follows:

- **Bohag Bihu:** In mid-April, this is the largest festival and also the state festival of Assam. Related to spring season. It is also known as **Rongali Bihu**. This festival celebrates the onset of the Assamese New Year and the coming of Spring. It continues for seven days which is called Haat Bihu (Saat (seven) for Hindi). These are called Chot Bihu, Goru Bihu, Manuh Bihu, Kutum Bihu, Senehi Bihu, Mela Bihu and Chera Bihu
- **Magh Bihu:** In mid-January. Related to winter season.
- **Kati Bihu:** in mid-October, related to autumn season. This is also known as Kangali (poor) Bihu. It coincides with the arrival of Kartik month of Hindu Calender and coincides with the autumnal equinox. The people pray and welcome Goddess Lakshmi and lighten the mustard oil lamps in the fields where paddy is growing, in front of the sacred tulasi (basil) plant, store (bharal ghar) etc. for one entire month.

Dehing Patkai Festival

- Dehing Patkai Festival, whose name is a combination of the Patkai hills and Dehing river, is an annual festival celebrated in the Lekhapani in Tinsukia district of Assam. This festival is organized by the Government of Assam since 2002 as a tourist attraction.
- Several events such as tribal fairs, tea heritage tours, golfing, adventure sports and wildlife safaris are organized. It also organizes a trip to 2nd World War cemeteries and the Stilwell Road, once the passage to Myanmar.

Me-Dam-Me-Fie festival

- 'Me-Dam-Me-Phi' festival of the Tai Ahom community has been celebrated across Assam with religious fervour and traditional gaiety.
- The Tai-Ahoms offer oblations to their departed ancestors and offer sacrifices to Gods in traditional manner on this day. The Tai-Ahoms believe that their worthy ancestors are still living in the Heaven.
- The Ahom Kings, who ruled Assam for around six hundred years till 1826, performed this annual 'ancestor worship' initially at Charaideo, the erstwhile capital of the Ahom Kingdom, now at Sibsagar in Upper Assam.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Bihar & Jharkhand**Chhath Puja**

- This is the main festival of people of Bihar, celebrated elaborately in Bihar, Jharkhand, Eastern UP and the Terai regions of Nepal as well as all over Indian and world by migrants of these areas.
- The festival is dedicated to Sun God so Chhat Puja is also known as **Surya Shasti**. It is celebrated on the sixth day after Deepawali, for a period of four days. They include holy bathing, fasting and abstaining from drinking water (Vratta), standing in water for long periods of time, and offering prashad (prayer offerings) and aragh to the setting and rising sun.
- The married women flock on the bank of any river or other waterbody and make ritual offerings to Sun God thanking him for sustaining life and seeking prosperity, happiness and peaceful life of their family members as well as the long lives of their husbands. Offerings include cow's milk, coconut and other fruits.

Sarhul (Tribal Festival)

- Sarhul is the most popular of all tribal festivals in Bihar and Jharkhand. It is celebrated during spring season when the Saal trees get new flowers on their branches, very much like the Vasant Panchami of other parts of northern India.
- It is a worship of the village deity who is considered to be the protector of the tribes. The new Saal flowers are offered to the deity. The people sing and dance with Dhol, Nagara and Turhi.

Karma festival

- This festival is observed by the tribals as well as non-tribals of Bihar and Jharkhand. The tribal youths spend the whole night singing and dancing. The songs sung on this occasion narrate the legends of Karma and Dharma.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Chandigarh**Rose Festival**

- Rose Festival or the Festival of gardens is the biggest Rose Show in India, celebrated in Chandigarh. This show is organized by the Tourism Department of Chandigarh Administration in the last week of February, at Dr. Zakir Rose Garden in Chandigarh, which is one of the largest Rose Gardens of Asia.
- Around 500 exotic varieties of roses are displayed in the three day long celebrations, which also include the cultural programs consisting of classical and folk dances, musical performances, flower shows and exhibitions by local artists.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Daman & Diu**Garba Festival**

- The most important festival of Daman and Diu is the Garba festival, which pays homage to Goddess Amba. This festival stretches for nine days.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Delhi**International Mango Festival**

- International Mango Festival is a two day festival held in Delhi's Talkatora Indoor Stadium in the month of July. Some 500 varieties of Mango are displayed and enjoyed in the festival. Several competitions on Mango eating and mango cuisines are organized.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Goa**Various Jatras**

- Jatra is a festival dedicated to the temple deities in Goa. Jatra in Goa is best celebrated at Shantadurga Temple at Fatropo in Quepem, at Bogdgeshwar Temple in Mapusa and Devki Krishna Ravalnath Temple at Marcela in Ponda.
- Fair is held during the Jatra at Shree Dev Bodgeswar Temple in December or January.

Feast of St Francis Xavier

- St Xavier was a Catholic missionary, who preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Asia. His body lies in a silver casket in the Church of Bom Jesus in Goa.
- This mummified body was displayed for public in the month of December till 1990s. It is not displayed anymore but the festivities are organized in December every year. The feast of Saint Francis Xavier is celebrated on 3 December. It is a large celebration in Velha Goa, Goa and beyond.

Chovoth

- Chovoth, which is the local term used for Ganesh Chaturthi, is the most important festival of Goa. This festival is generally celebrated for three days or more. Worships of Gauri, Mahadev and Ganapati are held.

Shigmo Festival

- Shigmo is a colored spring festival of Hindu community of Goa. It is celebrated in Falgun (March). The celebrations begin with the Holi.
- This festival commemorates the homecoming of the warriors who had left their homes and families at the end of Dussera to fight the invaders.
- During Shigmo festival ripening of the winter crop is also included as a reason for the festivities. Artists display the martial dances like 'Ghode-morni' or the horse dance, with main figures in display of legendary rulers of the area like the Rashtrakuts, Kadambas, Portuguese etc. The themes are mostly from Hindu scriptures. Sita-haran ; Draupadi's vastraharan and Lord Krishna coming to her help; Luv-Kush taking on Lord Rama by trying to tame the horse after the Ashwamedh Yajna; the conquest of Ravana's Lanka; etc.
- There are two variants of Shigmo festival: **Dhakto Shigmo** ("small Shigmo") and **Vhadlo Shigmo** ("big Shigmo"). Dhakto Shigmo is generally celebrated by farmers, the labour class and the rural population, while Vhadlo Shigmo is of greater consequence and is celebrated by everyone together.

Vasco Saptah

- Vasco Saptha, a seven day festival, is held in Vasco da Gama. It is celebrated in the month of Shravan (July-August) at the Shri Damodar temple, dedicated to Lord Damodar, an incarnation of Lord Shiva.
- As per the Department of Tourism website of Goa, this is the biggest festival in Goa in terms of sheer number of vendor stalls, the crowds and the duration of its celebration.

Goa Carnival

- The Goa carnival is an annual event held in February. The streets of Goa come alive with colour for three days and nights just before Lent. Celebrated by the Christian population in Goa, the festival is an integral part of the Portuguese heritage of the state that was a dominion of Portugal till 1961.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Gujarat**Uttarayan: International Kite Festival**

- This festival coincides with the Makar Sankranti in rest of north India. In 1989, the International Kite Festival was organized for the first time.
- It is now held every year on January 14 and is a major tourist attraction in Ahmedabad as well as other major cities of Gujarat.

Rann Mahotsav

- The 'Kutch Mahotsav' or the 'Rann Mahotsav' is celebrated at the time of the Shiv Ratri in February/ March. The centre of the festival is Bhuj in Kutch.
- It has crafts, fairs and folk dances and music and cultural shows, all organized by the Gujarat Tourism. This is a month long festival which introduces the visitor to the indigenous cultural and ethnical flavor of the people of Katch.

Modhera Dance Festival

- Modhera is a small village near Mehsana, which is home to a Sun Temple built in 1026 AD by King Bhimdev of the Solanki dynasty.
- Modhera dance festival is held in the third week of January every year. The objective is to present classical dance forms in an atmosphere they were originally presented in. The festival is organised by the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat.

Dangs Darbar Fair

- Dang is a district of Gujarat. Here an annual fair is held in Ahwa, which is known as Dangs Darbar also as Jamabandi Darbar. Its origin goes back to the British Era when a darbar of Rajas and Naiks of neighbouring area used to assemble there. The Dangs is one of the most delightful districts of Gujarat and is located high in the Saputara hills, the original home of the adivasis, the tribal population of Gujarat. It is essentially an important tribal fair of Gujarat.

Shamlaji Fair

- Shamalaji is an important pilgrim site in the Sabarkantha district of Gujarat, where the 11th century Shamlaji Temple of Lord Vishnu is located. The deity of this temple is known with various name such as Gadadhar (bearer of the mace) and Shaksi Gopal. A fair is organized here in the month of Karthik in which thousands of tribal people flock. The fair lasts for 2 weeks.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Himachal Pradesh

- Haryali Teej and the Surajkund Mela are the important fairs and festivals of Haryana.

Surajkund Mela

- Objective of the annual Surajkund Crafts Mela organized by the Haryana Tourism Department is to promote the traditional Indian Handicrafts in rural ambience.
- The Surajkund mela was first time organized in 1981. It offers to its visitors, skilful paintings, textiles, wood stock, ivory work, pottery, terracotta, stonework, lac work and cane and grass work.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Himachal Pradesh

Kullu Dussehra

- A week-long international Kullu Dussehra is organized from Dussehra day onward in Kullu in Himachal Pradesh. About 200 local deities converge at Kullu to pay obeisance to Lord Raghu Nath Ji, which make the festival rare.

Fulaich

- Fulaich is a festival of flower-watching (*ukhyang*) in the Kinnaur valley. It commemorates the dead.

Minjar

- Minjar is one of the important Monsoon Festivals of Himachal Pradesh.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Jammu & Kashmir

- In Jammu & Kashmir, the Hindu festivals are celebrated in Jammu, Muslim ones in the Kashmir Valley and Buddhist temple festivals in Ladakh and Zanskar.
- The latter, held around local monasteries, typically feature masked dances and village fairs. The important fairs and festivals of Ladakh include the Spituk (January), Stok (March) and Thiksey (November), Lamayuru (June), Hemis (July) and Takthog (July).

Leh Singhe-Khababs Festival (Sindhu Darshan)

- The Sindhu Darshan or Sindhu Festival is celebrated in Leh-Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir and projects the Indus as a symbol of India's unity and communal harmony. The festival promotes tourism in the country.
- Now the State Government of Jammu and Kashmir has renamed the Sindhu Darshan Festival as "Leh Singhe-Khababs Festival (Sindhu-Darshan)" based on the recommendation of Ladakh Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh. This festival is being held every year in the month of June.

Losar Festival

- This is the festival of Ladakhi New Year, celebrated in Buddhist homes and gompas with feasts, rituals and dances.

Dosmoche Festival

- It is the Buddhist New Year festival held in February or early March. It is marked by masked dances; and burning of the effigies representing the evil spirits of the old year.

Hemis Festival

- This is celebrated every year in the month of June in the Hemis monastery in Ladakh to mark the birth anniversary of Padmasambhava, the patron deity of the gompa or the monastery.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Karnataka

- Navarasapur-Pattadakkal (January), Coorg Festival (February), Hoysala Mahotsava held at Belur, Halebid (April), Vijayanagar Hampi Festival (November).

Mysore Dasara Festival

- The Mysore Dasara festival was first started by the Raja Wodeyar I (1578-1617 CE) in the year 1610 at *Srirangapatnam*. After fall of Vijayanagar Kingdom, the Wodeyar's of Mysore continued the Dasara Festival. This festival continues for 10 days.
- The Wodeyar royal couple performs a special puja to Goddess Chamundeshwari in the Chamundi Temple on the top of Chamundi Hill at Mysore. It was followed by a special durbar, which is still held as a private Darbar by the members of the Wodeyar royal family.
- 2010 marked 400th anniversary of the event.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Kerala**Onam**

- Onam is Kerala's most important festival, celebrated in honour of the ancient asura king Mahabali. The occasion also heralds the harvest season. It falls in the month of 'Chingam' usually in August or September. This ten day festival is the state festival of Kerala coinciding with the rice harvest season. The people celebrate the Asura King Mahabali's annual visit from Sutala.
- King Mahabali is welcomed from *Atham*, which is the first leg of the festival. The main festival is held for four days of which 'Tiruvonam' is the last and most important as Mahabali is supposed to visit his kingdom on this day. The festivities end with Thiruvonam- the tenth day of Onam Celebrations.
- Major attraction of the Onam celebrations is the famed snake boat races along the backwaters at *Champakulam, Aranmula and Kottayam*.

Aarattupuzha Pooram

- The famous Ayyappa temple at Aarattupuzha is just 14 kms from Thrissur and celebrates its annual Pooram festival during March. The final pooram is conducted with sixty one caparisoned elephants bearing bright colored umbrellas and parasols, presenting an unparalleled spectacle. The temple ensemble lends a majestic tenor to the extravaganza.
- Boat Race (*Cochin-Alleppey-Quilon - January*) and Great Elephant March (December) are other important events of Kerala.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Madhya Pradesh**Tansen Samorah, Gwalior**

- Tansen Sangeeth Sammelan or Music festival is held in Gwalior in memory Tansen. The festival is held, near the tomb of Tansen at Morar, Gwalior in the month of November/ December every year.
- Renowned classical singers from the country gather and perform for five night-long sessions.

Khajuraho Dance Festival, Khajuraho

- This festival is organized in the first week of February at the Western Group of temples, Khajuraho. This cultural festival highlights the richness of the various Indian classical dance styles such as Kathak, Bharathanatyam, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Manipuri and Kathakali with performances of some of the best exponents in the field.
- The dances are performed in an open air auditorium, usually in front of the Chitragupta Temple dedicated to Surya (the Sun God) and the Vishwanatha Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, belonging to the western group.

Dhrupad Samorah, Bhopal

- Dhrupad Samorah is one among the important event in Bhopal, that organizes various musical concerts of notable classical musicians in Dhrupad style of Hindustani Music.

Lokrang Festival, Bhopal

- The five day long festival of Lokrang in Bhopal begins every year on 26th January (the republic day). It is a cultural exposition organised by Madhya Pradesh Adivasi Lok Kala Academy.
- The main features of the Lokrang are folk and tribal dances, classical dances, performing art form, exhibition and presentation of art and craft and cultural presentations from abroad also are a big draw.

Kalidas Samorah, Ujjain

- First Kalidasa Samorah at Ujjain was inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in 1958. This important annual festival at Ujjain is organized in November (Kartika Shukla Ekadashi) and attracts the best known artists in the field of dramatics and dance performance.
- The Samaroha consists of Productions of Kalidas's original plays in Sanskrit, versions of Sanskrit plays in Hindi and other Indian Languages, performances of traditional theatrical and dance forms, ballets, and dance recitals, and an All India Exhibition of Art and Sculpture. Weeklong seminars, scholastic discussions and encounters on various aspects of Kalidasa, Sanskrit theatre and literature highlight the celebrations.

Kalidasa Akademi

Government of Madhya Pradesh established Kalidasa Akademi at Ujjain in order to organize the Samoraha every year. Accordingly, the Akademi starts to organize the Samoraha from the year 1979 in collaboration with Vikram University under the patronage of the department of culture Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Maharashtra**Banganga Festival, Malabar Mumbai**

- There is a legend that Rama, on his way to Lanka, stopped on the hillock of Malabar Hill. He shot an arrow into the ground to obtain fresh water of Ganga for his followers. This mythological story is related to many places around India.

- Every year, in January, a cultural festival is organised at Banganga, where top artistes from around the country perform live classical music concerts. This two day musical extravaganza is a major tourist attraction of Mumbai.

Elephanta Festival

- It is being held every year in February since 1989 at the Elephanta Island, near Mumbai. During the festival, renowned dancers and musicians perform outside the caves to a select audience.

Ellora Festival

- Organised by Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) every year in December at the Ellora Caves, near Aurangabad. Renowned artistes display their virtuosity in music and dance during the festival.

Narali Pournima

- The full moon day of the month of Shravan is celebrated with characteristic fervour in different parts of Maharashtra and is known variously as *Narali Pournima, Shravani Pournima, Rakhi Pournima or Raksha Bandhan*.

Vithoba Festival

- This festival is held thrice in a year in April, July and November at the Vithoba Temple at Pandharpur, Maharashtra in the honour of Lord Vithoba. ***This is a major festival of the Varkari sect.***
- The festivals associated with Vithoba primarily correspond to the bi-annual yatras (pilgrimages) of the Varkaris.
- The pilgrims travel to the Pandharpur temple from *Alandi and Dehu*, the two towns closely associated with *Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram* respectively. On the way to the temple, they sing abhangas dedicated to Vithoba and repeat his name, carrying the palkhis of the two important Varkari sect.
- Kindly note that the members of the Varkaris sect *don't engage in ritual worship* but only practice darshan of the deity. The ritual worship is restricted to the Vithoba festival and is done only by the priests.

Vithoba

God Vithoba is known by many names, including: Vitthala, Panduranga, Pandharinath, Hari and Narayan. He is one of the manifestations of Vishnu or his avatar Krishna, often depicted as a dark young boy, sometimes accompanied by his main consort Rakhumai (refers to Rukmini).

Vithoba's main temple stands at Pandharpur in Maharashtra. Vithoba legends revolve around his devotee Pundalik, who is credited with bringing the deity to Pandharpur. Tukaram and Dnyaneshwar, as we all know, are two main saints of this sect.

Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Festival

- We all know that Sawai Gandharva was guru of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. He trained him from 1936 to 1940. Sawai Gandharva died in 1952 and in his memory; Pandit Bhimsen Joshi started the annual Sawai Gandharva Music Festival in Pune in 1953.
- This is most popular and biggest music festivals of India. Now it is known as **Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Festival** and is organized by the Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal (ASPM).

Select Fairs and Festivals of Manipur

Yaoshang Festival

- Yaoshang Festival of Manipur coincides with Holi in other parts of the country. This festival is celebrated for six days commencing from the full moon day of Phalguna. This is the biggest festival of Manipur.
- In this festival, the bamboo huts, Yaosangs (precisely Yawol Shang) are constructed on the roadside and Manipuri god "Pakhangba" is remembered by his plays in there. This hut is later set on fire and the idol of god is removed before it is burnt.
- During Yaoshang, Manipuri Vaisnavite elders perform the traditional Holi Pala and Eshei (devotional songs) at various places of worship including the historic Shri Govindajee temple at the Kangla Fort compound in the heart of Imphal and other places.
- Main highlight of the festival is the **Thabal Chongba** dance. Thabal Chongba is a Manipuri folk dance where boys and girls form a circle and hold hands and sing and dance.

Cheiraoba / Sajibu Cheiraoba

- Cheiraoba is the new year of Manipur. Since the festival is observed on the first lunar day of the Sajibu month of Manipuri Calender, that falls in March or April, it is also known as Sajibu Cheiraoba. People of Manipur clean and decorate their houses and worship the local deity Sanamahi.

Kang Festival

- Kang Festival is the Ratha Jatra of Manipur. It is one of the greatest festivals of the Hindus of Manipur in which Lord Jagannath leaves his temple in a car, pulled by hordes of pilgrims.

Ningol Chakouba

- Ningol Chakouba is a social festival of the Meiteis, of Manipur.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Meghalaya

Wangala

- Wangala is an important harvest festival of the Garo people in Meghalaya, held in honour of Saljong, the Sun-god of fertility. Wangala literally means "Hundred Drums", during this festival; the entire valley is resounded by the Drum beats and dances.
- That is why it is also known as **Hundred Drum Wangala Festival**. This festival was first started in the 1970s and now has become a prominent festival of the Garos.

Shad Nongkrem

- Shad Nongkrem is the important religious festival of the Khasi people. It is held annually at Smit, the capital of the Khyrem Syiemship near Shillong in November. An important part of this festival is Pomblang (sacrificing of goats by decapitation) and offerings are made to the Gods. Important feature is the Nongkrem dance, during this five day long religious festival of Khasis held at Smit village.

Behdiengkhlem

- It is the most important festival of the Jaintias and is celebrated annually at Jowai in Jaintia Hills during the month of July.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Mizoram

- The festivals are called Kut in Mizo language. The three Kuts viz. Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut and Pawl Kut. All the three festivals are connected with agricultural activities. The festivals are celebrated with feasts and dances. These festivals have faded out in recent times.

Chapchar Kut

- This is a thanksgiving festival after the completion of the cutting of jhums. It is celebrated in March after successful Jhum cutting. The festival is marked by wide scale killing of pigs and usage of alcohol beverage called Zu.

Mim Kut

- Mim Kut is celebrated in September and this festival is related to memory of those who were died in the previous year. It is also related to the Jhum cultivation. Fresh vegetables, maize bread, necklaces and cloth are placed on the memorials of the dead as offerings to them.

Pawl Kut

- Pawl Kut is also a harvest festival.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Nagaland**Hornbill Festival**

- Hornbill Festival is a weeklong annual event of Nagaland. The popularity and importance of Hornbill festival is not just a national phenomenon but has gained popularity around the world.
- Organized by the State Tourism and art and Culture Department, Hornbill Festival dubbed as the Festival of Festivals in Nagaland, encourages inter-tribal interaction, showcasing the entire array of Naga life and culture.
- Hornbill Festival is held at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama which is about 12 km from Kohima.
- All the tribes of Nagaland take part in this festival. The aim of the festival is to revive and protect the rich culture of Nagaland and display its extravaganza and traditions.

Moatsu Festival

- The Moatsu Mong is a six day festival, celebrated by the Ao people of Nagaland in May after the sowing is over. During this festival one of the symbolic celebrations is Sangpangtu where a big fire is lit and women & men sit around it.
- The best women serve the best wine and meat and make merry. Forecast is made by the righteous men who live by the guidance of the Almighty to see whether good or evil days are awaiting the people.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Odisha

- Important fairs of Odisha are
 - Makar Mela (January)
 - **Magha Mela** (Jan-Feb): Popular festival of Konark that falls on the 7th day of the bright half of 'Magha'.
 - Dola or Holi (March-April)
 - Taratarini Mela.
- Important festivals are
 - **Ashokastami:** Car Festival of Lingraj in Bhubneshwar
 - Chaitra Parba
 - Sitalasasti
 - **Rath Yatra:** Rath Yatra (Car Festival) is the most spectacular event in Jagannath temple at Puri. This festival is celebrated in the month of Asadha (June-July).
 - **Bali Yatra:** Held in Cuttack to commemorate the glorious past of commercial voyages to the islands of Bali, Java and Sumatra by Odiya traders.
 - **Konark Dance Festival:** Konark Festival was organised for the first time in 1989 in the Open Air Auditorium at Konark. Conceived as a festival of Classical Dances of India, the objective of Konark Festival was to promote Konark, as well as Orissa as a tourist destination. An array of celebrated dancers from all over the country performs in the open air auditorium. The festival is a celebration of the much appreciated Odissi, Bharathnatyam, Manipuri, Kathak and Chau Dance.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Puducherry

International Yoga Festival

- Government of Pondicherry conducts an annual international Yoga festival from January 4th-7th. It aims to develop the conscious process at all levels-physical, mental, emotional and spiritual-and completeness in every aspect of life.
- The programme consists of practical Yoga classes and discussions on the various topics of Yoga.

Bastille Day

- Bastille Day is the English name of the French National Day - La Fete Nationale. This day is celebrated by French people everywhere, in France and also in their old colonies across the globe on 14 July.
- In India, Bastille Day is recognized and celebrated in Pondicherry. The day commemorates the Fete de la Federation of 1790, which was celebrated during the first anniversary after the storming of the Bastille. The storming of the Bastille occurred on the 14th of July, 1789.

Sani Peyarchi festival

- Sani Peyarchi festival is a famous festival of Pondicherry held in December at Sri Agneeswarar temple popularly known as 'Pongu Saneeswarar' temple at Keeralathur near Mannargudi. The 'karuppu ellurundai' (gingili cake), signifying the auspicious gift from the Lord, is distributed free to all the devotees.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Punjab**Baisakhi**

- Baisakhi is the rural festival of North India, marking the beginning of the solar year. This festival is especially celebrated in Punjab. For Sikhs, the Baisakhi day is celebration of New Year along with the commemoration of the founding of the 'Khalsa Panth' by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.
- Baisakhi also signifies the end of the harvest of Rabi crop.

Hola Mohalla

- Hola Mahalla or Hola is a sports event which begins on the first day of the Chet month of Nanakshahi calendar (generally March). This week long event consists of camping out and enjoying various displays of fighting prowess and bravery, followed by kirtan, music, and poetry. Langars are integral part of this festivity. The event concludes with long, military-style procession near Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib, one of the five seats of temporal authority of the Sikhs.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Rajasthan**Bikaner festival**

- Organized in January, the Bikaner festival is dedicated to the indispensable 'ship of the desert', camel.
- The festival starts with magnificent procession of bedecked camels against the backdrop of the Junagarh Fort.

Gangaur

- The Gangaur festival of Rajasthan is dedicated to Gauri, a manifestation of Goddess Parvati; consort of Lord Shiva, which commences on the first day of Chaitra, the day following Holi and lasts for 18 days.

- The festival is celebrated by girls and married women. The images of Gauri are ornamented and offerings are made.
- Gauri is worshipped by unmarried women for blessing to get a good husband and by married women for the welfare, health and long life of their husbands. This is also an auspicious day for young people to select their life partners.

Teej

- Teej refers to the monsoon celebrations coinciding with the commemoration of Goddess Parvathi's union with Lord Shiva. The festival commemorates the day when Parvati was united with Lord Shiva after a penance of a hundred years – making them a symbol of an ideal marriage.
- It is believed that invocation of Parvati's blessings on this day results in continued marital bliss. The festival falls in Shravan month of Hindu calendar. The images of Teej Mata are taken out in ceremonial processions escorted by caparisoned elephants, camels and horse drawn chariots, as the bride Parvathi leaves her parents' home for her husband's.

Desert Festival, Jaisalmer

- Desert Festival is organized in the golden city of Jaisalmer which coincides with the full moon in February. It is a major tourist attraction and during these three days, Jaisalmer gets a chance to parade its exuberant charm to the world.
- Major attractions are exciting camel dances, camel acrobatics, camel races, and camel polo, competitions for the best decorated camel and tug-of-war between musclemen.

Ajmer Urs

- Urs is held every year at the tomb of the Sufi Saint **Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti**, commemorating his death.
- It is celebrated from the 1st to the 6th day of Rajab; the seventh month of the Islamic calendar. This is one of the important Islamic Pilgrimage sites of the world.

Elephant Festival, Jaipur

- This is held in the month of March during the festival of Holi. Several spectacular elephant sports and vibrant festivities mark the event.

Pushkar Fair

- Pushkar is the venue of the largest cattle fair in India and is held in the month of November. Intriguing bazaars, auctions, sports and cultural events mark the Pushkar Fair.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Sikkim

- Traditional local festivals of Sikkim include Maghe Sankranti and Bhimsen Puja, among the Hindu festivals and *Losar* (called Loosong in *Sikkim*), *Saga Dawa* (refers to Buddha Purnima), *Lhabab Duechen*, *Drupka Teshi* and *Bhumchu* among the Buddhist festivals. During the *Losar* (Tibetan New Year), most offices and educational institutions are closed for a week.
 - **Losoong:** It is the New Year Festival of Sikkim and corresponds to Losar.

- **Pang Lhabsol:** This festival is celebrated to worship Kanchenjunga, the guardian deity of Sikkim.
- **Saga Dawa:** It is considered as the "Triple Blessed Festivals" and holiest of all the Buddhist festivals, corresponding to Buddha Purnima. It is on this day Lord Buddha was born, achieved Enlightenment and attained Nirvana.

International Flower Show

- Sikkim is home to around 5,000 species of flowering plants, numerous rare orchids, primula and rhododendron species, oak and bamboo varieties, Fern and Medicinal plants.
- The International Flower Show is a rare show of exotic varieties of flowers, orchids and other plants native to Sikkim. It is held in March every year.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Tamil Nadu

Pongal

Pongal or Tamizhar Thirunaal, which is Makara Sankranti elsewhere in India, is a four-day harvest festival of Tamils. The saying *Thai Pirandhal Vazhi Pirakkum* — literally meaning, the birth of the month of Thai will pave way for new opportunities – is often quoted with reference to this festival. It is held from last day of the Tamil month Maargazhi to the third day of Thai.

Pongal takes its name from the surging of rice boiled in a pot of milk. It is very popular particularly amongst farmers. Rice and pulses cooked together in ghee and milk is offered to the family deity after the ritual worship.

The four different days have different names as follows:

- **Bhogi Pongal:** This is the first day of Pongal festivities. It is celebrated by throwing away and destroying old clothes and materials by setting them on fire to mark the end of the old and emergence of the new.
- **Surya Pongal:** This is the second day. It is the main day of festivities which falls on the first day of the tenth Tamil month Thai.
- **Mattu Pongal:** The third day, Maattu Pongal, is meant to offer thanks to the cattle, as they provide milk and are used to plough the lands.
 - **Jallikattu**, a bull taming contest, marks the main event of Mattu Pongal among the Pongal festivities.
- **Kaanum Pongal** – This is the third day on which brothers pay special tribute to their married sisters by giving gifts and Landlords present gifts of food, clothes and money to their workforce. Kaanum literally means to view and on this day, people visit relatives and friends to enjoy the festive season.

Chitrai

- Chitrai is the first month of Tamil Calender and it corresponds to advent of spring. On the full moon day, the images of gods and goddesses from the temples in and around Madurai

are taken to the bed of the river Vaigai, in colourful processions accompanied by the hundreds and thousands of people and musicians.

- The atmosphere is one of mirth and merriment. The festival marks the marriage of Madurai's powerful presiding deity, Meenakshi with Lord Shiva.

Mahamagam Festival

- Mahamagam Festival is a holy festival celebrated once in twelve years in Tamil Nadu. Mahamagam Festival, which is held at Kumbakonam. This festival is also called as Kumbamela of South.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Tripura

- Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Ashokastami and the worship of the Chaturdasha deities are important festivals of Tripura.

Select Fairs and Festivals of Uttar Pradesh

- Kumbh Mela, organised in the month of Maagha, is a major festival held every three years in rotation at Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik.
- Lath mar Holi is a local celebration of Holi at Barsana near Mathura.
- Taj Mahotsav, held annually at Agra, is a colorful display of the culture of the Braj area.
- Dussehra, Diwali, Holi and Ramnavami are major festivals of Hindus.
- Buddha Purnima, which marks the birth of Gautama Buddha, is a major Hindu and Buddhist festival, while Christmas is celebrated by the minority Christian population.
- Other festivals are Makar Sankranti, Vasant Panchami, Ayudha Puja, Ganga Mahotsava, Janmashtami, Sardhana Christian Fair, Maha Shivaratri, Mahavir Jayanti, Moharram, Bārah Wafat, Eid, Bakreed, Chhath puja, Lucknow Mahotsav, Kabob and Hanuman Jayanti

Lathmaar holi of Barsana in Mathura

- It is a special form of traditional festivity. It is famous and Unique Holi with sticks wherein women beat up men with sticks and men protect themselves with shields. It takes place at Barsana near Mathura in the state of Uttar Pradesh and well before the actual Holi celebration. The main attraction is Radharani temple.

Select Fairs and Festivals of West Bengal

- Durga Puja in October is the most popular festival in the West Bengal.
- Poila Baishakh is the Bengali New Year.
- Other festivals are Rathayatra, Dolyatra or Basanta-Utsab, Nobanno, Poush Parbon (festival of Poush), Kali Puja, SaraswatiPuja, LaxmiPuja, Christmas, Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Adha and Muharram.
- Jhapan is the most important festival of Vishnupur, held in the glory of Manasa, the daughter of Shiva and goddess of snakes. Jhapan represents the snake worship cult in Bengal. It is basically a regional harvest festival and closely associated with the fertility cult too.

Chapter 2. Select Fairs and Festivals celebrated all over India**Makar Sankranti**

Makar Sankranti Celebrated as follows:

- **Thai Pongal :** Tamil Nadu
- **Makar Sankranti:** Andhra Pradesh, Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Goa, Karnataka, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh
- **Uttarayana:** Gujarat and Rajasthan
- **Lohri:** Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab
- **Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu:** Assam

Here are some more notable points about the Makar Sankranti, which you can read and ignore.

- In Uttar Pradesh, Sankranti is called '*Khichiri*'. Taking a dip in the holy rivers on this day is regarded as most auspicious. A big one-month long 'Magha-Mela' fair begins at Prayag on this occasion. Apart from Triveni, ritual bathing also takes place at many places like Haridwar and Garh Mukteshwar in Uttar Pradesh, and Patna in Bihar
- In West Bengal every year a very big mela is held at Ganga Sagar where the river Ganga is believed to have dived into the nether region and vivified the ashes of the sixty thousand ancestors of King Bhagirath. This mela is attended by a large number of pilgrims from all over the country.
- In Andhra Pradesh, it is celebrated as a three-day harvest festival Pongal. The Telugu people call it 'Pedda Panduga' meaning big festival. The whole event lasts for four days, the first day *Bhogi*, the second day *Sankranti*, the third day *Kanuma* and the fourth day, *Mukkanuma*.
- In Maharashtra on the Sankranti day people exchange multi-colored tilguds made from til (sesame seeds) and sugar and til-laddus made from til and jaggery.
- The festival in Karnataka is also celebrated in the same way by exchanging 'Ellu Bella' (sesame seeds and Jaggery).
- In Gujarat, Sankranti is observed more or less in the same manner as in Maharashtra but with a difference that in Gujarat there is a custom of giving gifts to relatives.
- In Punjab huge bonfires are lit on the eve of Makar Sankranti is celebrated as "Lohri". The following day is celebrated as "Maghi".
- In Kerala, the 40 days anushthana by the devotees of Ayyappa ends on this day in Sabarimala with a big festival.
- The Bhuya tribals of Orissa have their Maghyatra in which small home-made articles are put for sale.
- In Assam, the festival is celebrated as Bhogali Bihu.

New Year festivals

Different regions follow different cultures and so the New Year traditions also vary. Every Indian state has its own history behind the New Year celebrations. People in various parts of the country celebrate New Year as per their traditional calendar.

Ugadi

- Ugadi is celebrated as New Year's Day in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The name Ugadi is derived from the name "Yuga Adi", which means 'the beginning of a new age'. It is celebrated on the first day of the Hindu month Chaitra, which marks the onset of spring.

Gudi Padwa

- Gudi Padwa is celebrated as New Year's Day in Maharashtra. It is celebrated on the same day as Ugadi i.e., the first day of the month Chaitra. Lord Brahma is worshipped on this day and the gudi, Brahma's flag (also called Brahmadhvaj), is hoisted in every house as a symbolic representation of Rama's victory over Ravana.

Puthandu

- Puthandu, also known as Varuda pirappu, is celebrated as New Year's Day in Tamil Nadu. It is celebrated on the first day of the Tamil month Chithirai, which falls on 14 April.

Vishu

- Vishu is celebrated as New Year's Day in Kerala. It is celebrated on the first day of the Malayalam month of Medam (mid-April on the Gregorian calendar). Offerings to the divine called ***Vishukanni*** are neatly arranged on the eve of the festival and consist of rice, linen, cucumber, betel leaves, holy texts, coins and yellow flowers called konna (*Cassia fistula*). It is considered auspicious to see the Vishukanni first thing in the morning.
- On this day, people read the Ramayana and go to temples, Hindu places of worship. Children burst crackers, people wear new clothes and prepare special dishes and the elders of the house give out money to the children, servants and tenants. The money given is called ***Vishukaineetam***.

Navreh

- Navreh is the lunar New Year celebration in Kashmir. This coincides with the first day of the Chaitra (spring) Navratras. This day finds mention in Rajtarangini and Nilamat Purana of Kashmir and is regarded as sacred in Kashmir as the Shivratri. Navreh falls on the same day as Ugadi or Cheiraoba or Gudi Padwa.

Mahavishuva Sankranti

- Mahavishuva Sankranti is celebrated as the Odisha New Year. On this day, religious people offer delicious Pana, a sweet drink, to their deities.

Bestu Varas

- Bestu Varas is the New Year's Day for Gujaratis and this falls on the day next to Diwali. On this day, people greet each other on this day with "Nutan Varsha Abhinandan".

Chaitti and Basoa

- The festivals of Chaitti and Basoa are celebrated as New Year festivals in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Chaitti is celebrated on the first day of month of Chaitra. The first day of this month is considered very important and is celebrated all over the state.
- The festival of Basoa, also known as Bishu, is celebrated on the first day of the month of Baisakh. The aboriginal and the farming folk celebrate the Basoa festival.

Baisakhi

- Baisakhi falls on 13 or 14 April, the first day of the second month of the year according to the Nanakshahi Calendar.

Nowruz

- Nowruz is the name of the Iranian/Persian New Year in Iranian calendars. Originally being a Zoroastrian festival, and the holiest of them all, Nowruz is believed to have been invented by Zoroaster himself. It is celebrated on 21 March every year, a date originally determined by astronomical calculations.
- Nowruz is associated with various local traditions, such as the evocation of Jamshid, a mythological king of Iran, and numerous tales and legends. It is included in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Kumbh Mela

- Held four times every 12 years at four different locations across central and northern India, the Kumbh Mela is the largest religious congregation and largest peaceful gathering on the planet. This vast celebration attracts tens of millions of Hindu pilgrims, including mendicant nagas.
- Kumbh is held every third year at one of the four places by rotation: Haridwar, Allahabad, Nashik and Ujjain. Thus the Kumbha Mela is held at each of these four places every twelfth year. The Ardha Kumbha Mela, which is next in sanctity, is held only at Haridwar and Allahabad. In summary:
 - Kumbha Mela: Held at all four places.
 - Ardha Kumbha Mela: Held at Haridwar and Prayag, every 6 years.
 - Purna Kumbha Mela: Held only at Prayag every 12 years.
 - Maha Kumbha Mela: Held only at Prayag, every 144 years.
- The rivers at these four places are Ganga at Haridwar, the Prayag Sangam at Allahabad, the Godawari at Nashik, and the Shipra at Ujjain. The largest crowd is held on Mauni Amavasya. The Bhagvat Purana is the first written evidence of the Kumbha Mela. Another written evidence of the Kumbha Mela is in the works of Huen Tsang, who visited India in 629–645

AD, during the reign of Harsha. The Samudra manthan episode is mentioned in the Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu Purana, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana.

Select Muslim Festivals Celebrated in India

Muharram / Ashura

- Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and considered to be the most sacred of all the months, excluding Ramadan. The tenth day of Muharram is the **Day of Ashura**, which to Shia Muslims is part of the Mourning of Muharram.
- Ashura, which literally means the "Tenth" in Arabic, refers to the tenth day of Muharram. The festival is the day of mourning for the martyrdom of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad.

Mawlid / Baarah Wafaat

- Rabi' al-awwal which is the third month of the Islamic calendar is considered as month of birth of prophet Muhammad. He was born on 12th day of this month. Muslims celebrate Mawlid on this day. However followers of Shia Islam consider the 17th day of this month as month of birth of Prophet Mohammed.

Shab-e-barat

- The festival of the Shab-e-barat is based upon the faith of the *Muslims that on this night, the almighty composes the fortunes of all humans for the approaching year by taking into accounting the feats committed by them in the yesteryear*.
- This festival is celebrated on the 13th or 14th day of Shaban, the 8th month of the Islamic Calender. This happens to be fifteen days before the beginning of Ramazan. Shab-e-Barat means the **night of forgiveness** or **Day of Atonement**.
- People pray to god both in preparation for Ramazan and for the forgiveness of the sins committed by them. In Arabic, the day is called **Lailatul Baraat**, meaning the night of emancipation. Shab-e-Barat is also seen as a night of good luck and a common legend says that on this night the Prophet travels to each house and allays the ailments of humanity.

Chapter 3. Select 1 & 2 markers on Indian Sports, Games and Martial Arts

Bharashram and Bharamanshram

- Bharashram and Bharamanshram are two Sanskrit words that correspond to the weight-lifting and walking. Both of these have been part of ancient Indian Martial arts and have been described widely. Both of them are established Olympics disciplines at present times.

Malla Khamba

- Malla Khamb is an ancient sport in which a gymnast performs feats and poses in concert with a vertical wooden pole or rope. The sport is as ancient as our Epics. The players are required to have a unique technique and players mastering it can also excel in



Mallakhamb

wrestling, gymnastics, pole vault and other sports. It was recently declared state sports of Madhya Pradesh.

Chaturanga

- Chaturanga is the ancient parent of Chess. In Mahabharata period, Chaturanga referred to the four limbs of the army viz. elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry. The most reliable sources say that Chess originated in India during Gupta period from a game of Chaturanga that existed earlier. Chaturanga was played on an 8×8 uncheckered board, called **Ashtāpada**. A variant played on a larger ten-by-ten board is known as Dasapada.

Dhopkhel

- Dhopkhel is the name of a traditional ball game of Assam. The game is played between two eleven member teams on a 125m by 80m field bounded by four flags. The players take turns throwing the ball at the opponent to knock them out of the game, while seeking to catch the ball and evade other players. It is a test of speed, stamina, and acrobatic skills. The game was once played to amuse Ahom royalty as a spectator sport. It is no longer widely played in Assam, though efforts are being made to revive it.

Asol Aap and Asol - Tale Aap

- These two terms are related to Andaman and Nicobar Islands. *Asol* means Canoe (Small and light boat; pointed at both ends; propelled with a paddle), and *Aap* means race.
- Asol Aap is the Canoe racing and the Asol Tale Aap is Canoe Race on Sand. These are two traditional games of the Nicobarese.

Vallam Kali

- Vallam Kali is a Malayalam word meaning Boat Game. This term refers to the traditional canoe racing in Kerala, particularly as a part of Onam festivities.
- The race of snake boats (Chundan Vallam) is the major event. Most spectacular of the boat races, are those held at Aranmula, Champakulam and Kottayam.



Vallam Kali

Kalaripayattu

- Kalaripayattu is an Indian martial art from Kerala. It is one of the most ancient fighting systems that are even practiced today. It was originally practised in Kerala and some parts of Karnataka. Today it is practiced in Kerala, Tamil Nadu as well as Karnataka and some parts of Sri Lanka.
- It originated in 4th century and reached its zenith in the 16th century, in the days of **Thacholi Othenan** - a celebrated chieftain of north Malabar. This art includes the physical exercises and mock duels - armed and unarmed combat.
- It is not accompanied by any music or drumming, but is a silent



Kalaripayattu

combat, where style matters the most. Kalari Payattu is practiced by women also. Kalari Payattu is now seen as a method of physical fitness, and an empty-handed means of self-defence.

- Yet, it is tied to traditional ceremonies and rituals. In recent years, efforts have been made to further popularise the art, with it featuring in international and Indian films.

Musthi-Yuddha

- Musti-yuddha or mushti-yuddha is "fist combat". It seems to be one of the most ancient art, as we find its reference in Rig-Veda. During Mahabharata, its variant was the Duel, called *niyuddham*, which were often fought to the death. Bheema killed Jarasandha in a Niyuddham only, which was planned by Krishna.

Jallikattu

- Jallikattu is the bull taming sport played in Tamil Nadu as a part of Pongal celebrations on Mattu Pongal day. Jellicut is the name of a special breed of bull for this fighting. The majority of jallikattu bulls belong to the pulikulam breed of cattle.



Yubi lakpi

- Yubi lakpi is a seven-a-side traditional football game played in Manipur using a coconut. The game has some similarity with rugby.

Mokshapat

- Mokshapat means "Moksha" or "Patana" (fall). The game is Snakes & Ladders, which was invented by Gyandev.