Deepavali added in UNESCO’s Representative list

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Why in News?

India's Deepavali inscribed on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity recently.

- Deepavali is added to the UNESCO's Representative List under the social practices’ domain of Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- Deepavali or Diwali is a five-day Hindu festival, also known an ***Indian festival of lights***.
- **Meaning –** ‘Deepa’ means lamp or light and ‘Vali’ means string or row, and Deepavali means rows of lights.
- **Central theme –** Triumph of good over evil.
- **In North India –** It celebrates the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom Ayodhya after 14 years of exile and his victory over the demon Ravana.
- **In South India –** It marks the day Lord Krishna and his wife Satyabhama defeated the demon Narakasura.
- **Timing –** It falls on Amavasya (new moon day) in October/November, based on lunar cycles.
- For Hindus, Diwali is one of the most important festivals of the year and is celebrated in families by performing traditional activities together in their homes.
- **Day 1 (Dhanteras)** – People buy jewelry or utensils and worship is offered to God for prosperity.
- **Day 2 (Naraka Chaturdashi (Chhoti Diwali))** – It marks the death of demon king Narakasura.
- Homes are decorated with flowers and mango leaves and firecrackers are burst to drive away evil spirits.
- **Day 3 – Diwali (Main Day)** – Families worship Lord Ganesha (good luck) and Goddess Lakshmi (wealth), diyas (lamps) are lit, sweets are shared, and prayers are offered.
- **Day 4 – Govardhan Puja** – Commemorates Lord Krishna lifting

Govardhan mountain to protect villagers from heavy rains and worship of Govardhan Parvat continues as tradition.

- **Day 5 – Bhai Dooj** – On this day, sisters pray for their brothers' long lives and brothers give gifts in return.
- **Other Communities that Celebrate Diwali –** It was originally a Hindu festival but is now celebrated by ***Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Newar Buddhists***.
- Each community connects it to different stories, yet the festival always symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil.
- **Global Reach –** Official holiday not only in India but also in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, Malaysia, Singapore, and Fiji.

Quick Fact

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH)
• **ICH** – Includes the practices, knowledge, and expressions that communities recognize as part of their cultural identity, along with associated objects and spaces and transmitted through generations. • ***UNESCO's 2003 Convention*** aims to safeguard this heritage, fostering respect for diversity and sustainable development by supporting these evolving traditions. **5 broad domains –** • **Oral traditions & Expressions** – Including language as a vehicle of heritage • **Performing Arts** – Traditional music, dance, theatre • **Social Practice** – Rituals, festivals, celebrations, ceremonies, and community traditions. • **Knowledge and practices** – Concerning nature and universe like traditional ecological knowledge, healing practices, astronomy. • **Traditional Craftsmanship** – Skills in creating handmade objects, textiles, instruments, and tools.

References

1. Hindustan Times | Deepavali inscribed on UNESCO'S Intangible Cultural Heritage list
2. Utsav.gov.in | Deepavali
3. National Geographic | Deepavali



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