Kanwar Yatra

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Why in News?

In recent years, the Kanwar Yatra has attracted scholarly interest due to its increasing scale and cultural significance.

- **Kanwar Yatra –** It is an ***annual religious pilgrimage***.
- It begins weeks before the new moon (Amavasya) during the month of Shravan (July-August).
- It is undertaken by millions of Lord Shiva's devotees, known as Kanwariyas.
- Devotees travel to the holy city of Haridwar to collect water from the Ganges River and then return to their native places across India.
- They travel from holy sites like Haridwar, Gaumukh, and Gangotri to Shiva temples, particularly the Shiva lingam.
- They return with holy Ganga water in Kanwars (decorated containers carried on a bamboo pole).
- This water is then offered to Shiva temples, including the 12 Jyotirlingas across India.
- This annual event involves walking long distances while carrying the sacred water in decorated containers called ***Kanwars.***
- **Similarities -** Kanwar yatra in North India is celebrated as Kavadi festival in Tamil Nadu in which Lord Muruga is worshipped.
- **Mythology -** The ritual goes back to the 'samudra manthan', narrated in the Bhagavata Purana and in the Vishnu Purana, which explains the origin of 'amrita', or the nectar of immortality.
- Another origin story of the Kanwar yatra is linked with Lord Parashuram, a devotee of Shiva.
- The term ***"Bol-Bam"*** refers to pilgrimages and festivals in the countries of India and Nepal glorifying Lord Shiva who is also known as Bam.

Reference

The Indian Express| Why millions join the Kanwar Yatra