

Raulane Festival

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance

Why in News?

Bright, colourful, and quite fascinating photos from Himachal Pradesh went viral on social media, with users discussing the unique ritual and culture of a centuries-old tradition.

- The Raulane Festival is a unique and sacred winter festival celebrated in *Himachal Pradesh's* Kinnaur district.
- This ancient festival honours *celestial fairies, known as Saunis*, said to be radiant and gentle beings.
- **Faith** Locals believe that the Saunis protect villagers during harsh winters by offering warmth and guidance.
- **Symbolic Marriage** During the festival, two men symbolically "marry" and become vessels for the Saunis, embodying a divine couple, the Raula (groom) and the Raulane (bride).
- Costume & Appearance They wear traditional woollen garments (to cope with the Himalayan cold), and masks completely cover their faces; their hands are often gloved.
- The Raulane (bride) wears elaborate headgear, jewellery, and decorative attire turning into a ritual figure rather than just a costumed person.



- Ritual Dance They also perform a slow, meditative dance at the <u>Nagin</u>
 <u>Narayan Temple</u>, and the whole village joins in.
- The festival is a celebration of faith and community.
- The Raulane festival preserves ancient Himalayan culture and traditions, with villagers coming together to honour their protectors.
- Cultural Significance Raulane is considered extremely old local belief and some sources suggest it may be around 5,000 years old.

Reference

NDTV | Raulane Festival

