



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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Bihari Cultural heritage:-Losing significance of cultural sweets of Bihar (Art and culture, GS-1)

In India, our cultural heritage has been more significant for a long time. Sweets of Bihars have been famous not only in India but also in the world for the period of 12-13th century . Many rituals of Bihar are still recognised with its sweets . But nowadays this old tradition and culture is losing its significance with the globalisation and westernisation. It should be protected .

Up to the decade of 1990s, there was a tradition popular in Bihar when a bride left for her husband's home with her dowry, she had to carry a very special bridal box. Traditionally called *kaleva*, meaning gift, it included sweets with her personal items.

These sweets were nutritious and could last for a long time without going bad," The bride was confined to her room for months till she became familiar with her new surroundings and could roam about the house freely.

Bride could not demand for food when she felt hungry, which was deemed unfit behaviour. A bride was supposed to be coy. Hence when she left for her new home, the women of her household — mother, aunts, grandmother, would prepare items such as *khaja*, *kasak*, *neura* and *bookini* that were both nutritious and long-lasting and pack them in her bridal box,”This custom probably stems from mythology, “from the time of Princess Sita’s wedding.”

Bihar’s tradition of sweets is closely connected with customs and rituals and, therefore, there are specific sweets for every occasion. Those native to the state primarily use roasted rice flour. Those made with cottage cheese, refined flour and sugar syrup have outside influences, especially Islamic cuisine. Another interesting feature that Nirala points out is that sweets with the same ingredients when shaped differently get a new name.

Historical Background of sweet Khaza-

In the drama of Bhartendu Harishchanda (first decade of 20th century) “Andher Nagri” a slogan is used – “andher nagri Chaupat Raja , Taka ser Bhaji and Taka ser Khaja ” . Khaja had been most important and costly sweet during that time The *khaja* is similar to the Turkish baklava and is made with self-raising flour, oil, ghee and sugar syrup. The palm-sized rectangular puff pastry lookalike is made with 12 to 15 layers of thin dough sheets. The most famous version comes from Silao, a small village near Nalanda, which received GI status in 2018.

Stories of its origin date back to King Vikramaditya’s time. Some even say that the Buddha relished the sweet when he passed the village on his way to

Nalanda. Today the sweet has evolved and comes in a smaller size and is made across the State.

A denser version called *gaja* is also made with the same ingredients, except oil. “Also called *piaw*, it is different from the *khaja*, as the dough is not folded multiple times. Flour is kneaded with ghee, cut into rectangles or squares, dunked in one-string sugar syrup and removed. This lasts up to two to three months,”

The personal box of the bride no longer contains sweets, because the entire social scene has changed. There are no joint families and no separation of men and women in households. The tradition of sending sweets with the bride to share among relatives and friends and distributed in the village continues. That is why the sweet shops have increased and evolved.”

Of the sweets from the box, the *bookini* is another sweet. A coarse mixture of wheat flour, crushed sugar, dry fruits and ghee, it lasted for months. It is also called *Kokadour bookini*, the powder is made with fine rice flour that is washed, dried and roasted. Crushed sugar and ghee is added to the flour. The trick is to constantly rub the flour with small portions of ghee and sugar, taking utmost care that it remains dry.

Kasak is made during festivals and weddings even in Nepal,” In Bihar it is popular during the *Chaath* festival made by soaking rice overnight and drying and grinding it into flour the next day and by adding jaggery syrup and stir till the mix is pliable. Then we roll it out into balls,”. Chopped dry fruits too can be added to enhance it.

Laddo was another sweet. It is still popular throughout India . This sweet is taking its significance in African and European countries as well.

By:- Dr Anshul Bajpai

Swarn Singh

First in person Quad Meeting. (GS 2; Bilateral Grouping)

Context: Recently, the US announced that the first in-person meeting of the Quad countries is going to be held in New York, US. The heads of all the four countries (India, Japan, Australia, and the US) are going to attend the meeting. However, China criticized the Quad and said the formation of “exclusive cliques (circles)” targeting other countries runs counter to the trend of the times and is “doomed to fail”.

Quad grouping:

- The quadrilateral security dialogue includes Japan, India, United States and Australia.

- All four nations share a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.

History

The QUAD traces its genesis to 2004 when the 4 countries joined hands together to coordinate disaster relief operations in the aftermath of the tsunami. It then met for the first time in 2007 on the sidelines of the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit. The intention was to enhance maritime cooperation between the 4 nations.

Significance of the grouping:

Quad is an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest. Members share a common vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific region. Each is involved in development and economic projects as well as in promoting maritime awareness and maritime security. It is one of the many avenues for interaction among quad members and should not be seen in an exclusive context.

Free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the futuristic interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large. Peace and tranquility can solve common challenges of terrorism and proliferation. Upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and respect for international law, freedom of navigation and overflight.

Challenges Related to Quad:

Despite the potential for cooperation, the Quad still holds an undefined vision and without any strategic mission. The Quad is not structured like a typical multilateral organisation and lacks a secretariat and any permanent decision-making body.

Moreover, unlike other international alliances like NATO, the Quad does not include provisions for collective defence, instead choosing to conduct joint military exercises as a show of unity and diplomatic cohesion.

The entire focus on the Indo-Pacific region makes the Quad a maritime grouping, rather than a land-based grouping, raising questions whether the cooperation extends to the Asia-Pacific and Eurasian regions. Also India is averse to the Alliance System, and in fact it is the only member in QUAD that is averse to a treaty alliance system. It has slowed down the progress of building a stronger Quadrilateral engagement.

Way Forward

Firstly the Quad nations need to have a clear Indo-Pacific vision in an overarching framework with the objective of advancing each other's economic and security interests. This will reassure the alongshore States that the Quad will be a factor for regional benefit, and a far away from Chinese allegations that it is some sort of a military alliance. The forthcoming Ministerial meetings

in New York can be an opportunity to define the idea and compile a future path.

India has many other partners in the Indo-Pacific, therefore India should pitch for expanding the reach of QUAD to countries like Indonesia, Singapore etc. India should develop a comprehensive vision on the strengthening Quad and the Indo-Pacific region, which would ideate on the current and future maritime challenges, consolidate its military and non-military tools, engage its strategic partners.

Source; Indian Express , RSTV

Swarn Singh

Sino-India relation (GS-2, international Relations)

For the current Chinese leadership, the 21st century is destined to be China's alone, with India to be shown its place

Fifteen months after the clashes between Chinese and Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley, India-China relations are at their lowest ebb in living memory.

There have always been political tensions even before, both over each country's territorial claims over land controlled by the other, and over such long-term problems as China's "all-weather" alliance with our hostile separated sibling, Pakistan, and our hospitality to the Dalai Lama, who was granted refuge when he fled Tibet in 1959. India had endorsed the "One China" policy, refusing to support Tibetan secessionism while limiting official reverence for the Dalai Lama to his status as a spiritual leader.

India's actions and statements are designed not to provoke our northern neighbour, but to relegate the border problem to the back burner while enabling trade relations with China (now worth close to \$100 billion) to flourish. India made it clear that it was unwilling to join in any United States-led "containment" of China.

In October 2019 in Mahabalipuram, at their 18th meeting in nine years, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had grandly pledged to take relations between their two countries to "greater heights". To mark the 70th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries, they announced they would conduct 70 joint activities, including further improving their burgeoning trade, supporting scholarly research into their ancient civilizational links, and even exchanging military delegations, in a grand show of Sino-Indian cooperation.

Prime Minister Modi, had lifted residual restrictions on bilateral Chinese investment in strategic sectors of the Indian economy (notably ports, airports, power generation and telecoms technology), so that by 2020, Chinese investment (current and planned) stood at about \$26 billion with infrastructure projects accounting for about half the total.

India engages with China diplomatically in the BRICS as well as conducting annual summits of RIC (Russia-India-China). India is a partner in the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank (NDB).

China establishes and fortifies its new deployment. The mini-crises like minor military incursions, small scale military setbacks on India etc always end with the Chinese in a better position on the ground than before. Each incident establishes a new “normal” on the LAC.

The Chinese strategy

After the recent incursions, the Chinese now reportedly control over 900 sq. km of area in Ladakh along the LAC. They are threatening India's construction of roads, bridges and similar infrastructure on undisputed Indian territory. Rather than merely patrolling, they have established a fixed presence in these areas well beyond China's own 'Claim Line', occupied the “Finger Heights” near Pangong Tso Lake, pitched hundreds of tents, constructed concrete structures and built additional kilometres of road along the LAC. The objective seems to be to extend Chinese troop presence to the intersection of the Galwan river and the Shyok river, which would make the Galwan Valley off bounds to India. The Chinese have constructed permanent structures in the area of their intrusion and issued statements claiming that sovereignty over the Galwan valley has “always belonged” to China.

India's options

India has reinforced its military assets on the LAC to prevent deeper incursions for now, and hopes to press the Chinese to restore the status quo ante through either diplomatic or military means.

India has responded with largely symbolic acts of economic retaliation, banning Chinese apps in India on grounds of data security. It is likely that Chinese companies will be barred from various lucrative opportunities i.e. Huawei and ZTE, have been barred from the ongoing trials to be picked to build India's 5G telecoms infrastructure. India has also reimposed tighter limits on Chinese investment in projects such as railways, motorways, public-sector construction projects, and telecoms.

By Rajeev Yadav

Swarn Singh

Ramappa Temple : Its cultural Significance (gs-1, Culture))

Introduction :-Rudreshwara, popularly known as Ramappa Temple, is located in the village of Palampet approximately 200km north-east of Hyderabad, in the State of Telangana. It is the main Shiva temple in a walled complex built during the Kakatiyan period (1123–1323 CE) under rulers Rudradeva and Recharla Rudra.

Recently UNESCO had tagged it as a World Heritage . Besides it there are four more world Heritage sites of Gujarat that have already been declared by UNESCO .

These are Dhaulivara , Rani ki Vav temple and Ahmedabad

History of Ramappa Temple

Rampaa temple is a very good example of classical art and architecture during the Kakatiya Period . The temple got its name Ramappa because of its chief sculptor Ramappa.

It's probably the only temple in the country to be known by the name of its sculptor. It shows that the King wanted to give credit to that sculptor for building this temple .

This temple was patronised by Kakatiya King Ganpatideva .

The famous poet Tikkana Somayaji was his court poet. Ganapatideva was one of the most popular kings of the Kakatiya dynasty . He had adopted the title of "*Rayagajekesari*"

On December 13, 1916, when Ghulam Yazdani of the Nizam's Archaeology Department travelled on the cart track from Mulugu to Palampet village to see the famed temple, he found these two sculptures below the platform. "It is reported that they were removed from the structure by one of the district officers,

And although it is said that Venetian traveller Marco Polo visited the temple, in reality, he travelled only till the Motupalli harbour on the East coast. (Debatable fact)

Art and Architecture of This Temple

Features

- Decorated beams and pillars of carved granite and dolerite with a distinctive and pyramidal Vimana (horizontally stepped tower) made of lightweight porous bricks so-called 'floating bricks',
- At the base of a lush green hillock, a channel of water gurgles as it flows out of a reservoir, an 8th century engineering marvel deep in the heart of Telangana.
- The temple's sculptures of high artistic quality illustrate regional dance customs and Kakatiyan culture.
- Outside the temple is an inscription in Telugu that describes Racherla Senapati Rudrayya, a general of the Kakatiya rulers of Warangal, who commissioned the lake and the temple, which took 40 years for completion in the 13th century.
- Located at the foothills of a forested area and amidst agricultural fields, close to the shores of the Ramappa Cheruvu, a Kakatiya-built water reservoir which show that Our ancestor used temple not only for religious purposes but also for environmental conservation and agricultural promotion
- Flanking the entrance arch are 30 medallions carved in black basalt, showing women in dance poses and playing musical instruments. It appears like a lattice screen through which the grand idol of Shiva can be viewed.
- Dance guru Nataraja Ramakrishna used the dance poses carved in this temple to revive Perini Sivatandavam, a Kakatiya-era warrior dance form performed by men.

In contrast to the softer sandstone used in the temples of Khajuraho, or the carvings of chlorite, laterite and khondarite in the Sun Temple in Konark, Ramappa's sculptures are carved of black basalt, one of the hardest stones to work with.

- The ornamentation of the central pillars and the architrave above them is rich

By:-Dr Anshul Bajpai

Swarn Singh

‘Know the enemy, know self’ is sound professional advice (GS-3, Security)

It can be achieved if the national leadership and military education system have access to full-time domain specialists.

Indian Air Vice Marshal Manmohan Bahadur(retd.) has opined that the members of both academics and professionals , rolled into one i.e. the domain experts, should be there to train the armed forces and others.He starts his views with a saying of Chinese general, Sun Tzu, military strategist, writer, and philosopher, that, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles... if you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.” Considering the recent events in

military circles, certain facets of Professional Military Education (PME) in the Indian armed forces needs evaluation..

A structured process

Knowing the adversary and yourself is a three-step process. First, gathering information (the adversary's and your own), its distillation into knowledge and finally recommending options to decision-makers; the third step is critical for national leadership.

Pragmatic leadership seeks advice from knowledgeable people. Thus, the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and NITI Aayog advise the Government and offer options on key issues. Each body must have domain specialists from important fields and when one considers the NSCS and the NSAB, the three arms of the armed forces should be represented at the senior advisory level.

Mr. Manmohan Bahadur ji did two specialist courses from France under specialized professionals illustrating how theorists and practitioners from different fields can be dovetailed to holistically train junior professionals who later hold appointments at the operational and strategic realm. The United States Air Force has its air university with a faculty of civilian academics who, having dedicated their lives studying just one particular field, are the last word in their area of expertise. Their teachings are co-related with real life experiences by uniformed service instructors.

The situation in India

It would be safe to say that in our PME institutions most, if not all, instructors are service officers posted-in from field/staff appointments who do their two/three-year tenure and move on; there is no time to become an 'expert'. Having guest lectures is no substitute to having subject matter experts on staff doing full-time teaching. The Naval War College in Goa invites an eminent academic from abroad to run capsules on operational art. The college also has an adjunct faculty of tri-Service retired officers acting as mentors in specialised areas of learning. It is also heartening to see the National Defence College at Delhi set-up a President's Chair of Excellence tenanted by a retired scholar warrior; and, this is how it should be elsewhere too.

STATUS OF Indian Defence University-

Mr. Manmohan Bahadur suggests that there should be permanent chairs for subject matter experts teaching military history, strategy, geo-politics; that the service officers should be the links to field realities. He suggests to include the experts and domain specialists. He further adds that INDU — Indian National Defence University is languishing after its foundation stone was laid in 2013 near Gurgaon. In times when road infrastructure and the setting up of additional Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management, All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, etc. are being fast-tracked, the silence on the IDU, which would be the capstone institution to guide PME architecture in India, is unfathomable. The academic presence and military professionals from all three services can be included in NSAB and NSCS, As per Mr. Manmohan Bahadur Ji.

Source:- The Hindu by

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Plutus IAS