



# Deepavali Inscribed on UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) List

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## Context:

During the **20th ICH Committee session** held at **Red Fort, New Delhi**, UNESCO inscribed **Deepavali** on its **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.

- **Significance for India:** Deepavali becomes India's **16th element** on UNESCO's ICH list.
- **Earlier additions:** Kumbh Mela (2017), Kolkata Durga Puja (2021), Garba of Gujarat (2023).

## About UNESCO

- **Full Form:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- **Established:** 1945
- **Headquarters:** Paris, France
- **Members:** 194 member states + 12 associate members
- **Mandate:** Promotes **international cooperation in education, science, culture, and communication**.
- **India:** Founding member

## About Deepavali

### Origins

- Approximately **2,500 years old**, with roots in **ancient harvest celebrations**.
- Gradually assimilated into **multiple religious and regional traditions** across India.

### Religious Significance

- **Hinduism:**
- Rama's return to Ayodhya, Lakshmi's birth, Krishna's defeat of Narakasura, Pandavas' return.
- Symbolises **victory of light over darkness, dharma, and renewal**.
- **Jainism:** Observed as Mahavira's Nirvana.
- **Sikhism:** Celebrated as Bandi Chhor Divas, marking GurHargobind's release from captivity.
- **Buddhism (Nepal):** Observed as Tihar/Newar Buddhist festival.

### Cultural Practices

- Celebrated over **five days**: Dhanteras ? Naraka Chaturdashi ? Diwali ? Govardhan Puja/Annakut ? Bhai Dooj.
- Practices include: **lighting diyas, performing pujas, decorating homes, gifting, region-specific rituals**.
- Economic Impact: Drives major activity in **textiles, gold, handicrafts, firecrackers, and e-commerce**.
- Global Influence: Increasingly observed in **several countries with official recognition**.

## Significance of the UNESCO Recognition

- **Cultural diplomacy:** Strengthens India's soft power globally.
- **Preservation:** Encourages **documentation, safeguarding, and intergenerational transmission** of Deepavali traditions.
- **Promotion of diversity:** Highlights India's **pluralistic cultural heritage**.