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Volume - II

Current Affairs for Prelims 2026
(OCTOBER 2025- JANUARY 2026)



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PREFACE

Concise Prelims Current Affairs 2026

Current Affairs-Sine QuaNon of UPSC Preparation

Proficiency in Current affairs is sine non qua for UPSC preparation. It is the basic foundation of any aspirant 's preparation. Knowledge and skill to relate current news with UPSC syllabus is quintessential part of the preparation.

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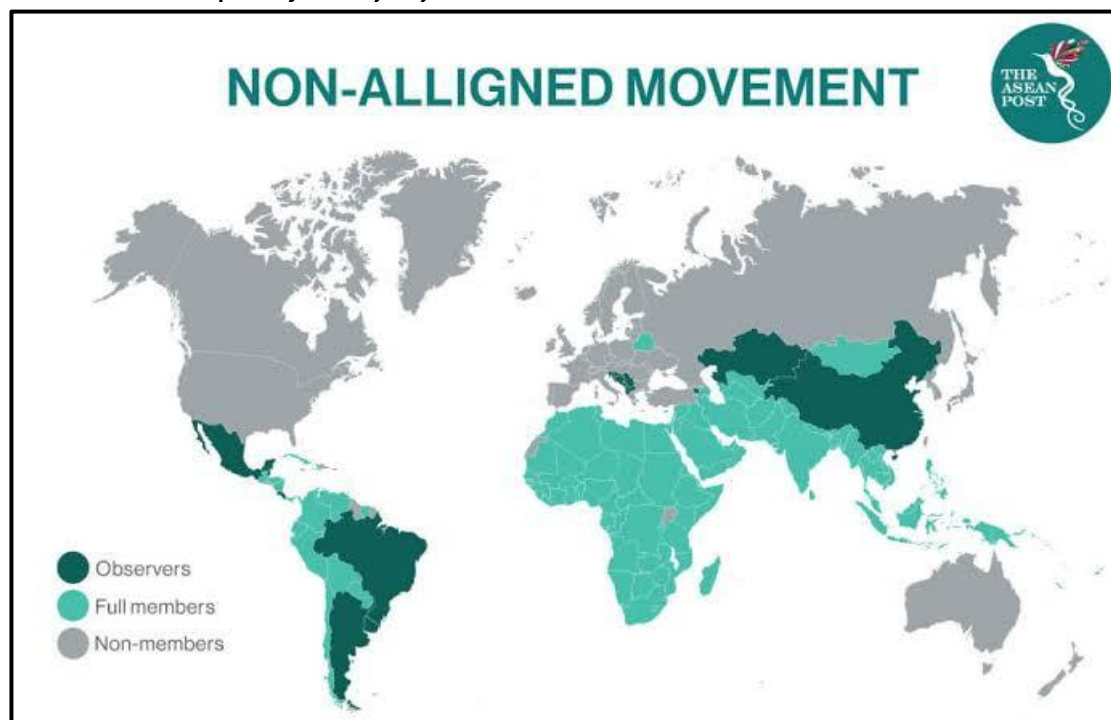
NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)

Why in News?

India, at the 19th NAM Mid-Term Ministerial in Kampala, Uganda, emphasized repurposing NAM to advance Global South goals, supported a two-state solution for Palestine, and called for reformed multilateralism and skill development initiatives.

Description:

- **Nature:** Alliance of developing nations **not aligned** with any major superpower.
- **Founded:** 1961, at the height of the Cold War.
- **Precursor:** Bandung Conference, Indonesia, 1955.
- **Founding Member:** India.
- **Members:** 120 countries
 - Africa: 53
 - Asia: 39
 - Latin America & Caribbean: 26
 - Europe: 2
 - Includes Palestine (non-UN member).
- **Observers:** 17 countries, 10 organizations.
- **Ranking:** Second-largest grouping after the UN.
- **Secretariat:** None; no formal charter, treaty, or act.
- **Summit Frequency:** Every 3 years.



Gorkhas

Why in News?

Centre appoints ex-Dy NSA Pankaj Kumar Singh as interlocutor to hold talks with Darjeeling Gorkha leaders, aiming for a permanent solution on Gorkhaland statehood and ST status for 11 sub-tribes.

Description:**Who are the Gorkhas?**

- Martial community from Nepal, known for **bravery, loyalty, and fighting skills**.
- Named after **Gorkha Kingdom**; unified Nepal under Prithvi Narayan Shah (1743–75).
- Comprising multiple ethnicities: **Gurungs, Magars, Rais, Limbus**, etc.
- Served in **British, Indian, and Nepalese armies**; recruited post Anglo-Nepal War (1814–16).
- **Gorkha regiments have been part of the Indian Army since 1815.**

Concerns of Gorkhas:

- **Gorkhaland Demand:** Separate state covering **Darjeeling, Terai, Dooars** for political, cultural, and administrative recognition.
- **Scheduled Tribe (ST) Status:** For communities like **Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang**; ensures **social justice and affirmative action**.

Parameters for Granting ST Status:**Constitutional Basis:**

Article 342 – President notifies STs for each State/UT; changes only by Parliament.

Criteria (Lokur Committee, 1965):

1. Primitive traits
2. Distinct culture
3. Geographical isolation
4. Shyness of contact
5. Backwardness

These are applied **flexibly and collectively**, not individually.

Process:

State proposal → Ministry of Tribal Affairs → RGI → NCST → Cabinet → Parliament amends Constitution (ST) Order, 1950.

Kartarpur Corridor

Why in News?

The Indian government has lifted its earlier ban, allowing 2,100 Sikh pilgrims to visit Pakistan, including Nankana Sahib, for Guru Nanak Dev's birth anniversary celebrations. However, the Kartarpur Corridor remains closed due to security reasons.

About Kartarpur Corridor:

- **Type:** Visa-free border corridor between India and Pakistan.
- **Location:** Connects **Dera Baba Nanak** (Gurdaspur, India) with **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib** (Kartarpur, Narowal District, Pakistan).
- **Distance:** Approximately 4.7 km.
- **Inauguration:** November 2019, during the 550th birth anniversary of **Guru Nanak Dev**.
- **River:** Located near the **Ravi River**.
- **Purpose:** To allow Sikh pilgrims from India to visit one of Sikhism's holiest shrines without a visa.

Historical Background:

- **1522:** Guru Nanak Dev founded Kartarpur and established the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.

Space for Notes:

- **1947:** During Partition, Kartarpur went to Pakistan.
- **1999:** Proposal revived during the Delhi–Lahore Bus Diplomacy.
- **2018:** Foundation stone laid by both India and Pakistan.
- **2019:** Corridor inaugurated jointly by both countries.

Kartarpur Corridor Agreement (2019):

- Signed between India and Pakistan to facilitate **visa-free** pilgrim travel.
- Allows **Indian citizens and OCI cardholders** to visit Kartarpur without a visa.
- **Pilgrim limit:** 5,000 per day.
- **Conditions:**
 - Valid passport required.
 - Pilgrims must return the same day.
 - USD 20 service fee charged by Pakistan.
- **Note:** Pakistani Sikhs do not have reciprocal access to Dera Baba Nanak.

Significance:

- Promotes **religious tourism** and **people-to-people contact**.
- Serves as a **symbol of peace and cultural diplomacy** between India and Pakistan.
- Called a “*Corridor of Hope*” by **UN Secretary-General António Guterres**.
- Boosts local economy and cross-border cooperation in Punjab region.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay & Vande Mataram

Why in News / Context?

- Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s ancestral house (*Baithakkhana*) in **Naihati, West Bengal**, where he wrote **Vande Mataram**, is facing neglect: damp walls, poor maintenance, and lack of funds.
- The site is preserved as the **Bankim Bhavan Gaveshana Kendra Museum**, but requires urgent repairs.

About Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay:

Administrative Career:

- One of the **first Indian graduates** of Calcutta University.
- Joined the **Imperial Civil Service (ICS)** as a Deputy Magistrate & Deputy Collector.

Literary Contributions:

Bankim is regarded as:

- A **pioneer of the Bengal Renaissance**
- A **foundational figure of modern Indian nationalism**
- A major **19th-century novelist, poet, essayist, and journalist**

Important Works:

- **Anandamath (1882)** – about the Sanyasi Rebellion
- **Durgeshnandini (1865)** – first widely acclaimed Bengali novel
- **Kapalkundala (1866)**
- **Devi Chaudhurani (1884)**
- **Krishna Charitra** (scholarly work)
- **Bishabriksha, Rajani, Mrinalini**, etc.

Vande Mataram – National Song of India:

- Appears in **Anandamath (1882)**.
- Written by Bankim in his **Baithakkhana** at Naihati.
- Celebrates the **motherland as divine**, blending nationalism with cultural symbolism.

Adoption:

- First sung in the 1896 Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress by Rabindranath Tagore.
- In 1950, the Constituent Assembly adopted:
 - “Vande Mataram” as the *National Song*
 - “Jana Gana Mana” as the *National Anthem*
- The first two stanzas of Vande Mataram have official status.

BATUKESHWAR DUTT
Why in News?

Batukeshwar Dutt, born on November 18, 1910, is being remembered for his pivotal role in the 1929 Delhi Assembly bombing with Bhagat Singh. Despite immense sacrifice, he remained neglected post-independence, prompting renewed discussion on his legacy, erasure, and contributions to India’s freedom struggle.

Description:

- Indian revolutionary, member of **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**.
- Born: **18 November 1910**, Burdwan district, Bengal.
- Key associates of **Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev**.
- Played major role in the revolutionary movement but remained **less acknowledged**.

Delhi Assembly Bombing (1929):

- On **8 April 1929**, Bhagat Singh and Dutt threw **non-lethal bombs** in the Central Legislative Assembly (now Parliament).
- Objective: **“To Make the Deaf Hear”** – symbolic protest against repressive laws.
- Slogans: **Inquilab Zindabad, Down with Imperialism**.
- Both got arrested intentionally.
- Convicted on **12 June 1929**; sentenced to **transportation for life**.

Prison Life & Struggle:

- Imprisoned in **Multan, Jhelum, Trichinopoly, Salem, Andamans** etc.
- Undertook multiple **hunger strikes** (twice over a month) demanding rights for political prisoners.
- Was in **Salem Jail** when Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev were executed in 1931.

Post-Release & Quit India Movement:

- Released in **1938**.
- Re-arrested during **Quit India Movement (1942)**; jailed for **another 4 years**.

Recognition & Aftermath:

- Massive funeral attended by President, PM, Union Ministers, Lok Sabha Speaker, Punjab CM.
- Over time, **the memory of Dutt faded**, despite public respect at the time.
- Parliament still does **not** display portraits of Bhagat Singh or Dutt; issue raised by MPs (2014).
- Contrast: Portrait of **V.D. Savarkar** hangs prominently in Parliament.

Literature & Legacy:

- Best documented by revolutionary **Chaman Lal Azad** in *Bhagat Singh aur Dutt ki Amar Kahani* (1966).

Space for Notes:

Space for Notes:

- Contains Bhagat Singh's letters, Gandhi's letter to Dutt, rare photographs.
- Hindi translation stuck due to **copyright hurdles**.
- Later works: Justice Anil Verma's *Bhagat Singh ke Sahyogi: Batukeshwar Dutt*, Bhairav Lal Das's *Viplavi Batukeshwar Dutt*.

Saalumarada Thimmakka

Why in News?

Padma Shri awardee and renowned environmentalist **Saalumarada Thimmakka** passed away at **114** in Bengaluru. Famous for planting **385 banyan trees** along a 4.5 km stretch, she received multiple national honours. Leaders across India condoled her demise.

Description:

- Born in **Gubbi taluk, Tumakuru district**, Karnataka.
- Married to **Bikkala Chikkayya** of Hulikal village.
- Had **no formal education**; belonged to a modest rural family.
- Childlessness turned into motivation for environmental work.

Environmental Contribution:

- Planted and nurtured **385 banyan trees** along the **Kudur–Hulikal stretch** of State Highway-94.
- Trees were tended manually for decades – watering, fencing, protecting them like “children.”
- Earned the honorific “**Saalumarada**” meaning *row of trees* in Kannada.
- Also known as **Vriksha Mata** (Mother of Trees).

Significance:

- Work exemplifies **grassroots environmental stewardship**.
- Trees have become a **living green corridor** improving ecology, soil moisture, and microclimate.
- Inspired **community-led conservation movements** across India.
- Multiple botanical gardens, nurseries, and awards named after her.

Awards & Honours:

- **Padma Shri (2019)** for social work and environmental conservation.
- State and national recognitions for afforestation.
- Honorary doctorate for ecological contributions.
- Recognised internationally for sustainable community action.



Saalumarada Thimmakka
1911-2025

VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE

Space for Notes:

Why in News?

103 punch-marked Vijayanagara-era gold coins were unearthed inside an earthen pot during restoration work at a Later Chola-era Shiva temple in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. Archaeologists will evaluate their heritage value before they are deposited in the district treasury.

Description:

- Founded in **1336** by **Harihara I & Bukka Raya I** of Sangama Dynasty.
- Influence of **Vidyaranya** (Sringeri Math).
- Capital: **Vijayanagara (Hampi)** on Tungabhadra River.

Dynasties

Dynasty	Period	Important Rulers
Sangama	1336-1485	Harihara I, Bukka I, Deva Raya I, Deva Raya II
Saluva	1485-1505	Saluva Narasimha
Tuluva	1505-1570	Krishnadevaraya (Zenith)
Aravidu	1570-1646	Tirumala, Venkatapati II, Sriranga III

Important Administration Features (Prelims Favorite):

- Centralised monarchy
- **Amara-Nayaka System** → military chiefs granted land in return for military service
- Land revenue → generally **1/6th produce**
- Nayaka / Mandaleswara = provincial governor
- Local bodies had administrative autonomy

Economy:

- One of the wealthiest medieval empires (foreign traveler accounts)
- Major ports: **Goa, Bhatkal, Honnavar, Mangalore, Chaul**
- Exports: cotton, spices, iron, sugar
- Imports: horses (from Persia & Arabia), silk, coral

Society & Culture:

- Multilingual literature → Kannada, Telugu, Sanskrit, Tamil
- **Ashta Diggajas** in Krishnadevaraya's court (Telugu literature)
- Devadasi system + Sati existed
- Vijayanagara encourages temple building as political-cultural assertion

Architecture (Very Important):

- **Raya Gopuram**
- **Kalyanamandapa** - carved pillars
- Example temples: **Vittalaswamy Temple, Hazara Ramaswamy Temple, Virupaksha Temple**
- Use of hard granite in Hampi region

Krishnadevaraya (Most Important Ruler):

- Titles → *Abhinava Bhoja, Andhra Pitamah*
- Author of **Amuktamalyada** (Telugu)
- Patronized scholars → Tenali Rama, Allasani Peddana etc.
- Victories against Gajapatis of Odisha

Decline:

- Battle of **Talikota (1565)** - decisive defeat by Deccan Sultanates
- Empire continued under Aravidu dynasty but gradually weakened till ~1646

Vande Mataram: 150-Years

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Context:

India is marking **150 years** of the composition of *Vande Mataram* (1875–2025).

Historical Background:

Year	Event
1875 (Akshaya Navami)	Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay composes <i>Vande Mataram</i> .
1882	Publication of <i>Anandamath</i> ; <i>Vande Mataram</i> appears as a hymn symbolising the motherland.
1896	First public singing at Indian National Congress session by Rabindranath Tagore .
07 Aug 1905	Used as a political slogan during the Swadeshi Movement (anti-partition agitation).
1907	Madam Bhikaji Cama unfurls the flag with the words <i>Vande Mataram</i> at Stuttgart, Germany.
24 Jan 1950	Constituent Assembly adopts <i>Vande Mataram</i> as the National Song of India ; President Rajendra Prasad emphasises reverence equal to the national anthem.

Features of the National Song:

- Written in a **blend of Sanskrit and Bengali**, showcasing India's linguistic plurality.
- Represents **devotion to the motherland**, selfless service, and collective identity.
- The tune was composed by **Yadunath Bhattacharya**.
- The song has **two stanzas** recognised for official purposes.
- It is **not mandatory** to sing, but it holds **equal reverence** to the national anthem as per Constituent Assembly clarification.

Bankim's Framing of the Nation:

- *Anandamath* introduces the idea of **Motherland as Mata**, merging spiritual and political identity.
- Bankim uses the **maternal metaphor** to construct a new nationalist imagination where serving the motherland equals moral duty.
- The novel is set against the **1769–73 Bengal famine** and the **Sanyasi Rebellion**, presenting early resistance to colonial rule.
- Scholars (Anderson, Chatterjee) interpret the novel as shaping a modern "**imagined nation**", linking spirituality, sacrifice, and patriotism.
- This ideological framing directly elevated *Vande Mataram* into a **nationalist symbol**.

Operation Trident (1971)

Context:

India observes **Navy Day** on **4 December** to commemorate **Operation Trident**, a naval strike on **Karachi harbour** during the **1971 Bangladesh Liberation War**.

Background:

- War situation escalated after **Pakistan Air Force pre-emptive strikes** on Indian airfields (Dec 3, 1971).
- India declared war on **Dec 4**, triggering naval operations on the western front.

Features of Operation Trident:

- **Surprise night attack** on Karachi harbour on **4 December 1971**.
- **Missile Boats Used:** INS *Kiltan*, *Katchall*, *Nipat*, *Nirghat*, and *Veer*.
- Severely crippled **Pakistan's fuel reserves and naval capability**.
- India suffered **zero casualties** in this operation.
- Indian mission received the **code word 'Angaar'** after success.
- Cdr. (later Vice Admiral) **J. S. Kohli** planned and led the operation as Western Fleet C-in-C.

Follow-up Operation:
Operation Python (8 December 1971):

- Launched to inflict further damage on Karachi harbour.
- Pakistan Navy vessels reportedly ventured out with decreased ammunition to reduce blast risk.

Outcome of the 1971 Naval Front:

- Continuous attacks on Karachi weakened Pakistan's western naval command.
- Pakistan signed the **Instrument of Surrender** on 16 December 1971 (Lt Gen A. A. K. Niazi; overseen by Lt Gen J. S. Aurora).
- Operation Trident remains the **signature naval victory** in Indian military history.

Golden Temple
Context:

The Golden Temple (Sri Harmandir Sahib), the holy shrine of Sikhism, is currently in focus due to the restoration of a rare **Guru Gobind Singh fresco**, using **traditional Kangra (Pahari) painting techniques**.

Key Terms:

- **Fresco Painting:** Technique of mural painting executed on wet laid lime plaster. Pigments chemically bind with plaster while drying. Durable but **climate and moisture sensitive**
- **Kangra School:** A major school of **Pahari miniature painting** that flourished in the western Himalayas.
- **Pahari Painting:** Group of miniature painting styles from Himalayan hill states (Basohli, Guler, Kangra, etc.).

Genesis & History:

- **Founded by:** Guru Ram Das (4th Guru)
- **Completed by:** Guru Arjan Dev (5th Guru)
- **Adi Granth installed:** 1604 CE
- **Foundation stone laid by:** Mian Mir (Sufi saint)
- **Gold plating:** Added later under **Maharaja Ranjit Singh** (early 19th century)
- Shrine built **below ground level** → symbolism of humility
- Surrounded by **Amrit Sarovar** (Sacred water tank)

Kangra Painting:

- Origin: **Kangra Valley, Himachal Pradesh**
- Peak patron: **Maharaja Sansar Chand (late 18th–early 19th century)**
- Style: Naturalistic figures, Soft colours (blue, green), Delicate facial expressions, Lyrical landscapes

Administration:

- Managed by **Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)**
- SGPC governed under **Gurdwaras Act, 1925**

Space for Notes:

Khaleda Zia (1945–2025)

Space for Notes:

Context:

Former Prime Minister **Khaleda Zia**, Bangladesh's **first woman elected PM** and a central figure in the country's politics for decades, passed away at the age of 80.

Key Facts:

- **Country:** Bangladesh
- **Political Party:** Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
- **Historic First:** First woman elected Prime Minister of Bangladesh
- **Spouse:** Ziaur Rahman (former President & military leader)

Political Significance:

- Along with **Sheikh Hasina**, defined Bangladesh's **two-party political rivalry** for nearly three decades.
- Key role in shaping **multi-party democracy** and electoral politics in Bangladesh.

Legal & Later Years:

Convicted earlier in **corruption cases**; later **acquitted in the final case (2025)** by Bangladesh's Supreme Court. Released from prison in **2020** on medical grounds.

Zia's BNP & India relations:

- BNP governments under Khaleda Zia were generally less India-aligned, marked by friction over cross-border insurgent groups and security cooperation deficits.
- The longstanding rivalry remains relevant as Sheikh Hasina has resided in India since her August 2024 ouster.
- Despite these tensions, Indian leadership officially condoled Zia's death, acknowledging her significant role in bilateral relations.

Karthigai Deepam

Context:

The **Madras High Court (Madurai Bench)** upheld an order permitting the lighting of **Karthigai Deepam** at a stone pillar (*deepathoon*) within temple premises at Madurai, rejecting the State's apprehension of public disorder.

About the Festival:

- **Region:** Predominantly Tamil Nadu
- **Time:** Tamil month of **Karthigai** (November–December)
- **Occasion:** Celebrated on **Purnima (full moon)** when the moon aligns with the **Karthigai star constellation**
- **Nature:** Festival symbolising **light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance**

Religious Significance:

- Closely associated with **Lord Murugan** and **Lord Shiva** traditions
- Thiruparankundram is one of the **six sacred abodes (Arupadai Veedu)** of **Lord Murugan**
- Lighting of the **Deepam** signifies divine presence and spiritual illumination

Core Rituals:

- Lighting of **oil lamps (deepam)** in homes and temples
- Lighting of a ceremonial lamp at designated temple locations
- Temple prayers and participation by devotees

The Battle of Basantar (1971)

Space for Notes:

Context:

The **Battle of Basantar (1971)** was a key armoured battle on the **Western Front**, where Indian forces repelled a Pakistani offensive in the **Shakargarh Bulge**, securing the **Punjab–Jammu sector**.

Strategic Geography: The Shakargarh Bulge

- **Location:** The battle took place in the **Shakargarh Bulge**, a wedge-shaped territory in Pakistan that projects toward the Indian districts of Gurdaspur and Amritsar.
- **Significance:** Capture of this region was vital for India to protect the **Jammu–Pathankot axis**, the critical land link connecting Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India.
- **The Basantar River:** A tributary of the **Ravi River**. The Indian Army had to breach deep minefields and establish a "bridgehead" across this river to advance.

The Hero of Basantar: 2nd Lt Arun Khetarpal

- **Unit:** He belonged to the **17th Poona Horse**, an elite armored regiment.
- **The Action:** On December 16, 1971, despite his tank (named **Famagusta**) being hit and set ablaze, Khetarpal refused to abandon his position.
- **Famous Last Words:** Over the radio, he famously stated: *"No Sir, I will not abandon my tank. My gun is still working and I will get these guys"*.
- **Legacy:** He destroyed 10 enemy tanks before being killed in action at the age of 21. He is the recipient of the **Param Vir Chakra (PVC)**, India's highest gallantry award.

Aiyanoor Ammanoor Festival (Kota Tribe)

Context:

The **Aiyanoor Ammanoor festival** of the **Kota tribe** was recently celebrated at **Solur Kokkal** village near **Udhagamandalam** in the **Nilgiris**, highlighting the living cultural traditions of one of India's **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.



Key Facts:

- **Community:** Kota tribe
- **Location:** Solur Kokkal village, Nilgiris district, Tamil Nadu
- **Occasion:** Annual/periodic traditional tribal festival
- **Central Deity:** *Aiyanoor Amman* (village/guardian deity)

Core Features:

- **Women-centric ritual dance** performed in traditional white attire with distinctive borders
- **Collective worship** seeking protection, wellbeing, and harmony of the community
- **Strong oral tradition** – rituals transmitted across generations without written texts

Kota Tribe:

- Kota tribe is classified as a **PVTG** in Tamil Nadu.
- Example of **intangible cultural heritage** preserved through community practices rather than formal institutions.

Who are PVTGs?

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are a sub-category of Scheduled Tribes identified by the Government of India based on **pre-agricultural level of technology, stagnant or declining population, extremely low literacy, and subsistence-level economy.**

- Total PVTGs in India: **75**
- State with the highest number of PVTGs: Odisha – **13 PVTGs**

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