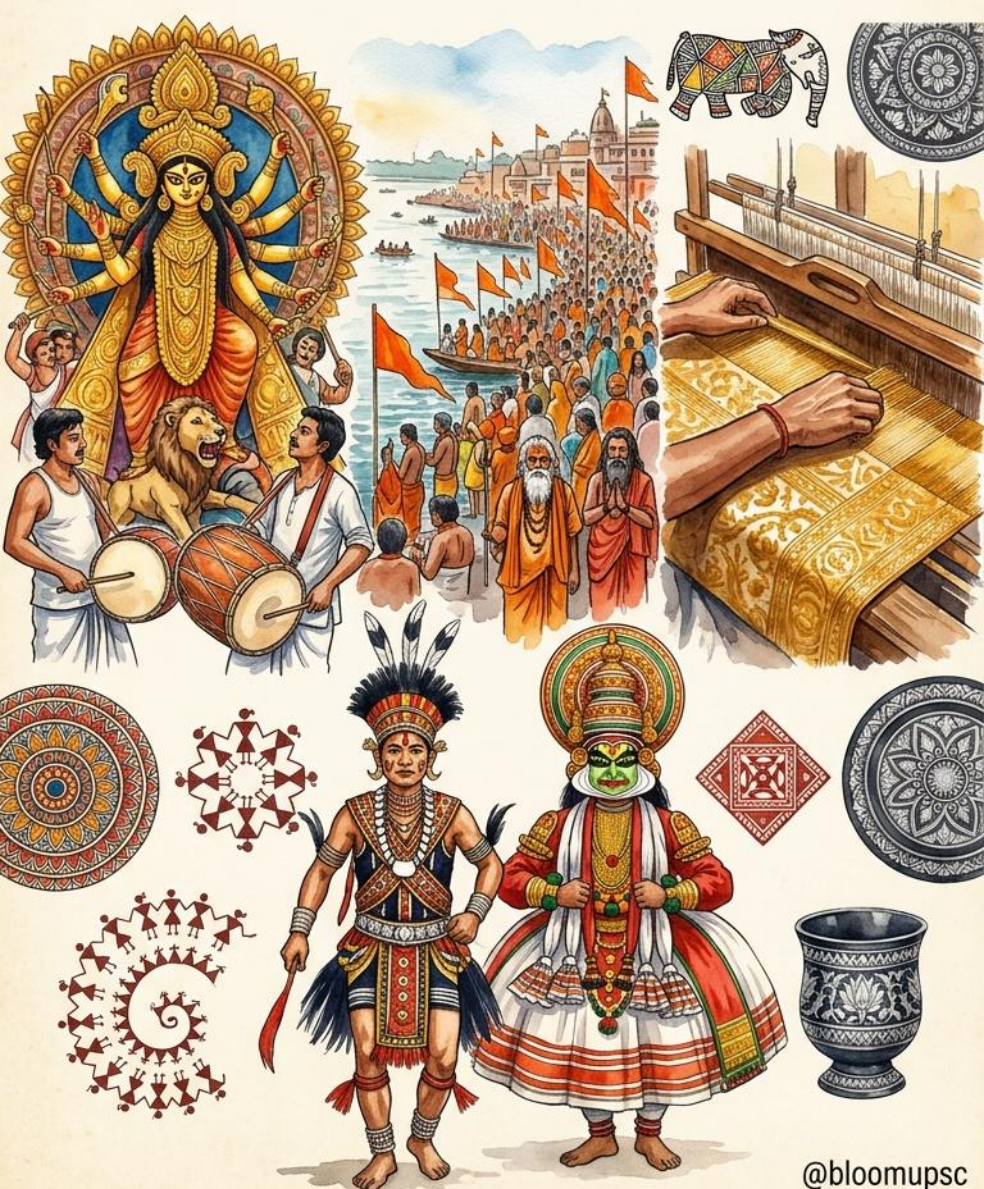


The Calendar, The Craft, The Celebration

From Harvest Festivals to UNESCO Heritage

Chapter 1.6 | 10 PYQs (2014-2024) | India's Living Culture



Officer, you've now studied the **PILLARS** of Indian culture — Architecture, Painting, Performing Arts, Literature, and Religion.

This chapter is where all of them come **ALIVE** in everyday Indian life.

Festivals are religion in **PRACTICE**.

Handicrafts are art in **FUNCTION**.

Traditions are history that people **LIVE**.

← Religion & Philosophy

Every festival has a **RELIGIOUS** origin.

Diwali = Rama's return.

Eid = Islamic calendar.

Baisakhi = Sikh new year.



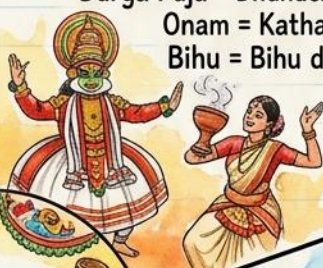
← Performing Arts

Every festival has a **PERFORMANCE** tradition.

Durga Puja = Dhunuchi dance.

Onam = Kathakali.

Bihu = Bihu dance.



← Geography (GS-1)



← Geography (GS-1)

Harvest festivals follow **AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR**.

Pongal = rice harvest (TN).

Baisakhi = wheat (Punjab).

← Architecture

Temples **HOST** festivals.

Puri Rath Yatra = Jagannath Temple.



← Literature

Many festivals celebrate **TEXTS**.

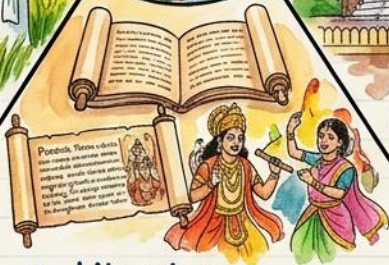
Ramlila = Ramcharitmanas enacted.

Onam = Mahabali from Puranas.

← Architecture

Temples **HOST** festivals.

Puri Rath Yatra = Jagannath Temple.



Officer, this chapter has **10 PYQs** — and **2014 alone had 6 of them**. That means UPSC can mass-test this topic in one paper.

The key: know the **STATE** → **FESTIVAL** → **CRAFT** mapping cold.

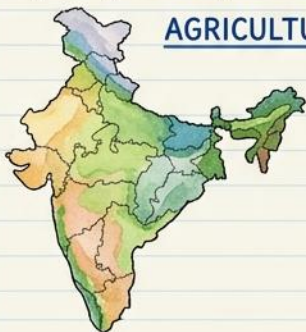
WHY DOES INDIA HAVE MORE FESTIVALS THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY?

Officer, India has 36 states and UTs, 22 scheduled languages, 6 major religions, and hundreds of tribal communities.

Each one has its own calendar, its own harvest, its own gods, its own crafts.

The result? India celebrates something **SOMEWHERE** every single day of the year.

AGRICULTURAL DIVERSITY



- Rice, wheat, millet, sugarcane — each has a different harvest season
- Pongal (Jan, rice, TN), Baisakhi (Apr, wheat, Punjab), Bihu (Apr, rice, Assam)
- Makar Sankranti (Jan, winter solstice) = the one harvest festival that's PAN-INDIA

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY



- **DANGER points**
- Hindu lunar calendar \neq Islamic calendar \neq Gregorian calendar
- Same month can have Diwali, Eid, Gurburab, and a tribal festival
- Secular republic = ALL religious holidays are national holidays

TRIBAL TRADITIONS (8.6% of India's population = 104 million people)



- 700+ tribal groups, each with distinct festivals
- Hornbill Festival (Nagaland), Sarhul (Jharkhand), Chapchar Kut (Mizoram)
- **MOST UNDER-STUDIED** but increasingly tested by UPSC

CRAFT TRADITIONS



- Each region's geography shaped its materials → its crafts
- Kashmir (cold) → Pashmina.
- Assam (silkworms) → Muga silk.
- Jaipur (Persians) → Blue pottery.

HARVEST FESTIVALS — THE AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR OF INDIA

Officer, harvest festivals are the oldest festivals in India — older than any religion. They celebrate the **EARTH**, not the gods. Understanding them means understanding India's agricultural geography.

JANUARY (Winter harvest):

LOHRI — bonfire festival. Celebrates end of winter. Songs for Dulla Bhatti.

PONGAL — 4-day festival. Bhogi (old → new), Thai Pongal (rice cooked in new pot), Mattu Pongal (cattle), Kaanum Pongal (family).

MAKHAR SANKRANTI — Sun enters Capricorn. Kite festival (Gujarat). Til-gul (Maharashtra).

MAGH BIHU — harvest of winter rice. Meji (bonfire). Feast.

APRIL (Spring/Rabi harvest):

BAISAKHI — wheat harvest + Sikh new year (Khalsa founded 1699). Double significance.

VISHU — Malayalam new year. Vishukkani (auspicious first sight).

POHELA BOISHAKH — Bengali new year. Mangal Shobhajatra (UNESCO ICH 2016 – Bangladesh).

BOHAG BIHU / RONGALI BIHU — Assamese new year. Dance, music, 7-day festival.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER (Kharif harvest):

ONAM — 10-day festival. Mahabali legend. Pookalam (flower rangoli). Vallam Kali (boat race). Onasadya (feast on banana leaf).

DURGA PUJA — 5 days. UNESCO ICH (2021). Pandal art. Dhunuchi dance.

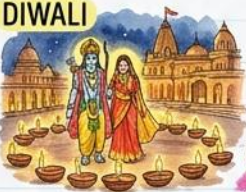
Officer, UPSC pattern: they don't just ask "which state" — they ask about the PRACTICES. Know the specific rituals: Pookalam = Onam. Meji = Bihu. Kite-flying = Sankranti in Gujarat.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS — THE SACRED CALENDAR

Officer, religious festivals overlap with harvest festivals — Diwali celebrates Rama's return AND the autumn harvest. UPSC tests the MYTHOLOGY behind the celebration.

HINDU FESTIVALS

DIWALI



Kartik Amavasya. Rama's return.

5 days: Dhanteras → Naraka Chaturdashi → Diwali → Govardhan Puja → Bhai Dooj

HOLI



Phalguna Purnima.

Holika-Prahlad legend. Colors.



NAVARATRI



9 nights. Sharad (autumn, Durga) + Vasant (spring, saraswati).

Dandiya in Gujarat. Golu in TN.



GANESH CHATURTHI

Maharashtra primarily. Bhadrapada.

Lokmanya Tilak made it a mass public festival (1893).



RATH YATRA Ashadha. Puri, Odisha. Jagannath temple.



CHHATH PUJA Bihar/Jharkhand/UP. Sun worship. Only festival where SETTING sun is worshipped too.

SIKH FESTIVALS

BAISAKHI



Khalsa foundation (1699). Also harvest.

GURPURAB



Birthday of Guru Nanak (Kartik Purnima). Prabhat Pheri, Langar.

BUDDHIST



BUDDHA PURNIMA



Vaishakha Purnima.

Birth + Enlightenment + Mahaparinirvana — all on same day.

ISLAMIC

EID-UL-FITR



End of Ramadan fasting. Moon sighting.

EID-UL-ADHA



Sacrifice. Prophet Ibrahim's story.

MUHARRAM



Remembrance of Hussain. Shia mourning.

JAIN



MAHAVIR JAYANTI

Chaitra. Birth of 24th Tirthankara.

PARYUSHANA



8-10 days of fasting and forgiveness.

GI-TAGGED HANDICRAFTS — INDIA'S CRAFT GEOGRAPHY

Officer, Geographical Indication (GI) tags are UPSC gold. They combine Art & Culture with Economy (IPR) and Geography. Know the craft, its state, and what makes it unique.



GI 2008.

PASHMINA — Kashmir. Changthangi goat hair. World's finest wool.



BANARASI SILK — UP. Gold zari brocade. Mughal-era technique.



PATOLA — Gujarat (Patan). **DOUBLE IKAT**. Both warp AND weft tie-dyed. Extremely rare.



CHANDERI — MP. Sheer fabric. Gold border. Light as air.



KANCHIPURAM — TN. Heavy silk. Temple borders. Wedding sarees.



POCHAMPALLY — Telangana. Ikat technique. Geometric patterns.



BALUCHARI — Bengal (Murshidabad). Mythological scenes **WOVEN** into pallu.



MUGA SILK — Assam. **GOLDEN** natural silk. Only from Assam. Semi-wild silkworm.



SAMBALPURI — Odisha. Ikat. Bandha technique.



PHULKARI — Punjab. Embroidery on coarse cotton. Geometric flower patterns.



BIDRIWARE — Karnataka (Bidar). **SILVER** inlay on **BLACK** zinc-copper alloy.



BLUE POTTERY — Jaipur. Persian origin. **NO CLAY** — quartz + glass.



DHOKRA — Chhattisgarh/Bengal. **LOST-WAX** metal casting. Tribal. 4000 years old.



ARANMULA KANNADI — Kerala. Metal **MIRROR** (no glass). Unique alloy.



CHIKANKARI — Lucknow. White embroidery on muslin. Mughal origin.



FILIGREE — Odisha (Cuttack). Delicate silver wire work.



THANJAVUR PAINTING — TN. Gold leaf + gems on wood. Maratha influence.



NIRMAL PAINTING — Telangana. Herbal dyes on softwood.

EXAM SHORTCUT: If GI tag question → think **STATE + MATERIAL + TECHNIQUE.**

Patola = Gujarat + Silk + Double Ikat.

Bidriware = Karnataka + Metal + Silver inlay.

TRIBAL & FOLK ART — VISUAL IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Officer, UPSC increasingly tests tribal art identification — matching art style to state and community. This page gives you the **VISUAL ANCHORS**.



MADHUBANI (Bihar, Mithila region)

- Natural dyes on cloth/paper. Done by **WOMEN**.
- Marriage scenes, Krishna, lotus.

VISUAL ANCHOR: If you see geometric borders filling **EVERY** inch → Madhubani

WARLI (Maharashtra, Thane district)

- Tribal (Warli adivasi).
- Rice paste on mud walls.
- Farming, dancing, animals.

VISUAL ANCHOR: White triangular humans on dark background → Warli



GOND (Madhya Pradesh/Chhattisgarh)

- Gond tribe. Dots and dashes create texture. Stories of nature and gods.

VISUAL ANCHOR: Colorful animals with dot-dash filling → Gond

PATTACHITRA (Odisha/Bengal)

- Scroll paintings on treated cloth.
- Jagannath Puri connection.

VISUAL ANCHOR: Bold outlines + Jagannath → Pattachitra



KALAMKARI (Andhra Pradesh, Machilipatnam + Srikalahasti)

- Two styles: Srikalahasti (pen, freehand) vs Machilipatnam (block-printed)

VISUAL ANCHOR: Epic scenes on cloth → Kalamkari

PHAD (Rajasthan)

- Scroll paintings of folk deities — **PABUJI** and **DEVNARAYAN**

VISUAL ANCHOR: Long scroll with hero on horse → Phad



UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE – INDIA'S LIST

Officer, UNESCO ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage) is different from World Heritage Sites. Sites are **PHYSICAL**.

ICH is about living traditions – performances, rituals, crafts, festivals.

India has **15 ICH elements** as of 2024. UPSC tests the latest additions.



2008

RAMLILA – Traditional performance of the Ramayana

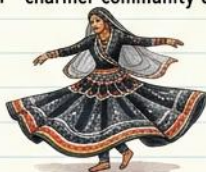
2009

NOWRUZ – Persian new year (shared with Iran, Afghanistan, etc.)



2010

MUDIYETTU – KALBELIA – Rajasthan. Snake charmer community dance. Kerala. Ritual theatre. Bhadrakali legend.



CHHAU – Jharkhand/Odisha/Bengal. Martial dance. 3 styles: Seraikella (masks), Purulia (masks), Mayurbhanj (no masks).

2012

BUDDHIST CHANTING – Ladakh. Sacred chanting in monasteries.



2013

SANKIRTANA – Manipur. Ritual singing and drumming. Vaishnavite.



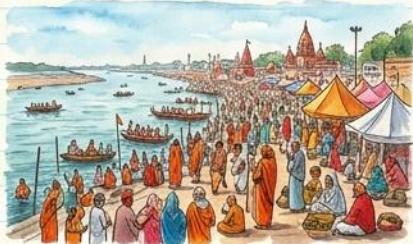
2016

YOGA – Global practice, Indian origin. Includes philosophy + practice.



2017

KUMBH MELA – World's largest peaceful gathering. 4 cities: Haridwar, Prayagraj, Ujjain, Nashik.



2021

DURGA PUJA – Kolkata. Pandal art. Community celebration.



2023

GARBA – Gujarat. Circular dance. Navaratri.



EXAM TIPS:

- Latest addition: **GARBA (2023)**. Know the latest 3-4 for current affairs crossover.
- Chhau has 3 styles – UPSC tested this in [2018 Q22]. **Purulia = masks**, **Mayurbhanj = NO masks**.
- Kumbh Mela rotates: Haridwar (Ganga), Prayagraj (Triveni Sangam), Ujjain (Shipra), Nashik (Godavari).



THE TRAPS UPSC SETS — AND HOW TO SURVIVE THEM

Blue Pottery = Clay?



✓ Persian origin. Jaipur. The 'blue' is from cobalt oxide. ♠

This is one of UPSC's most reliable GI tag traps.

✗ Blue Pottery has **NO CLAY**. It uses quartz, glass, Multani mitti, borax.

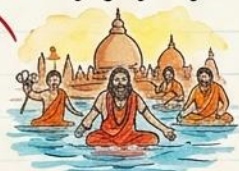
P Pongal = Only Tamil Nadu?



✗ Called **MAKAR SANKRANTI** in most of India, **UTTARAYAN** in Gujarat

✓ Same astronomical event (sun entering Capricorn). Different names by region. ♦

K Kumbh Mela = Prayagraj only?



✓ Ardh (half) Kumbh = every 6 years. Purna Kumbh = every 12 years. Maha Kumbh = every 144 years.

✗ Rotates among **FOUR** cities: Haridwar, Prayagraj, Ujjain, Nashik

4 Hornbill Festival = Arunachal Pradesh?



✓ Named after the Indian Hornbill bird. All 17 Naga tribes participate.

✗ It's **NAGALAND**. Kohima. December.

Dhokra = pottery?



✗ **LOST-WAX CASTING**. Bronze/brass figurines.

✓ Tribal art. 4000 years old. Chhattisgarh/Bengal/Jharkhand.

✗ Dhokra is **LOST-WAX METAL CASTING**. Bronze/brass figurines.

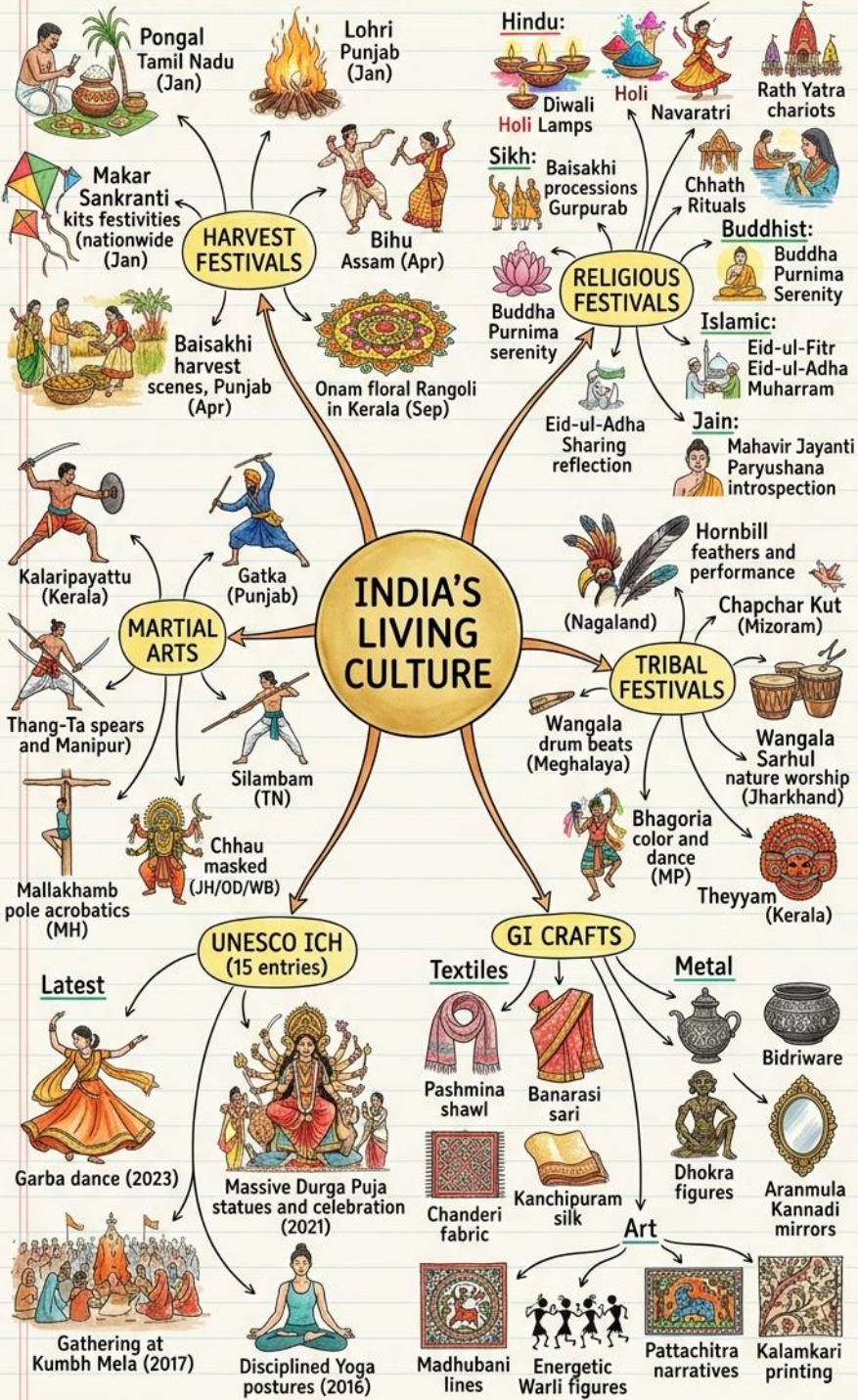
Muga Silk = available across India?



✓ It's naturally **GOLDEN**. That's the GI tag — color + origin + silkworm are all unique.

✗ Muga silk **ONLY** comes from Assam. Semi-wild silkworm. Cannot be bleached.

TRADITIONS, FESTIVALS & HANDICRAFTS — THE COMPLETE MAP



WHERE TRADITIONS CONNECT TO EVERYTHING ELSE

Officer, you've now completed the **CORE** of Art & Culture — all 6 topics. Architecture, Painting, Performing Arts, Literature, Religion, and Traditions.

What remains are the cross-cutting tools: the **Visual Bank** (every diagram you need), **Connection Webs** (how A&C links to other subjects), and the **Exam Day Sheet** (your rapid-fire recall).



Officer, with 6 topic chapters done, you have the **KNOWLEDGE**.

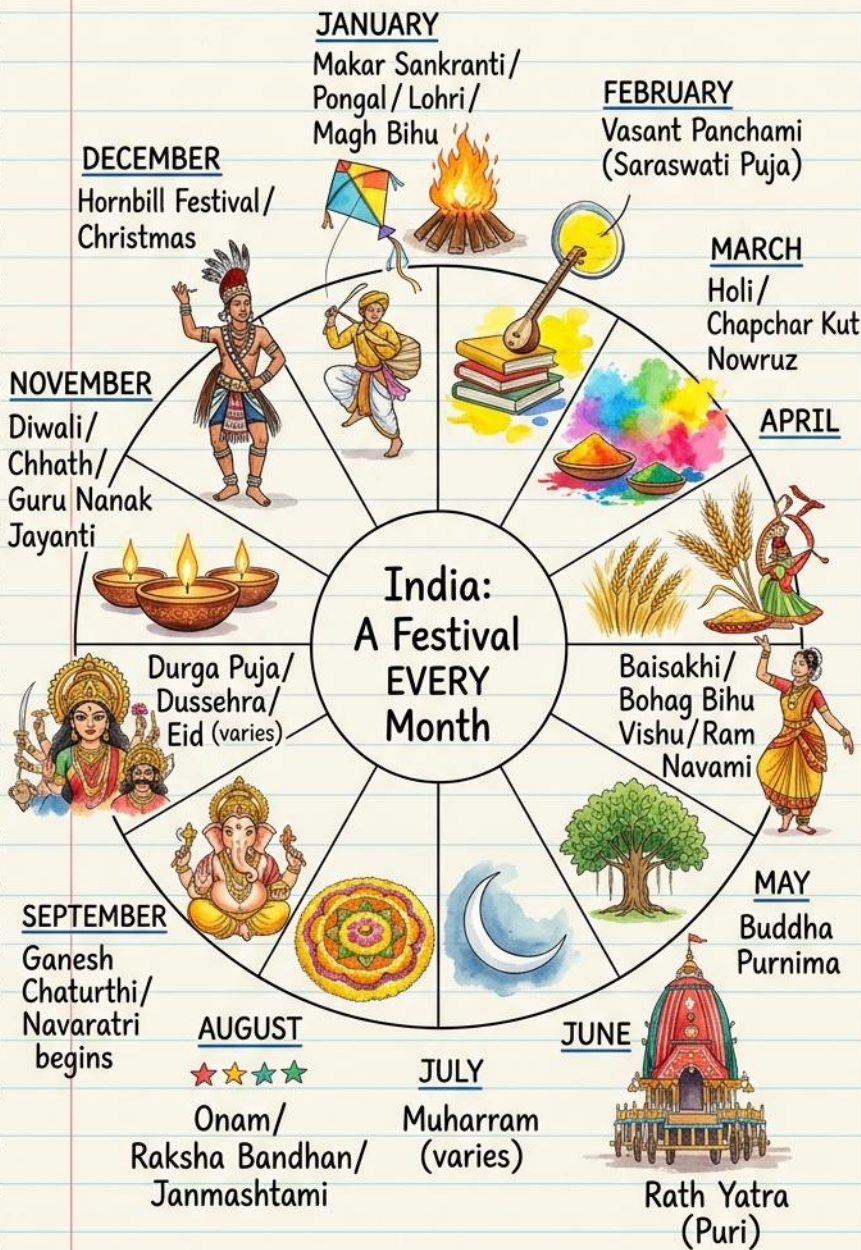
The **Visual Bank** gives you the **RECALL SPEED**.

The **Connection Webs** give you the **CROSS-LINKING** ability.

The **Exam Day Sheet** gives you the **CONFIDENCE**.



INDIA'S FESTIVAL CALENDAR — 12 MONTHS, 12 FESTIVALS



NOTE: Islamic festivals shift by ~11 days each year (lunar calendar). Hindu festivals shift slightly (lunisolar calendar). Only Gregorian dates are fixed.

CRAFT MAP OF INDIA – EVERY GI CRAFT ON ONE MAP

