

# Deepavali Inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

**A moment of immense pride for India and for communities across the world who keep alive the timeless spirit of Deepavali: Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 10 DEC 2025 12:09PM by PIB Delhi

Deepavali, one of India's most widely celebrated living traditions, has now been inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity today during the 20th Session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee, held at the Red Fort, New Delhi

The inscription was adopted in the presence of Union Minister of Culture Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Shri Vivek Aggarwal Secretary, Ministry of Culture, along with the senior officials of Ministry of Culture and delegates from 194 Member States, international experts, and representatives of UNESCO's global network.

Addressing the international delegates, the Union Minister of Culture stated that the inscription marks a moment of immense pride for India and for communities across the world who keep alive the timeless spirit of Deepavali. Minister noted that the festival embodies the universal message of "Tamso Ma Jyotirgamaya" the transition from darkness to light, symbolising hope, renewal, and harmony.



Highlighting the living and people-centric nature of the festival, the Union Minister emphasised that Deepavali thrives through the contributions of millions including potters crafting traditional diyas, artisans preparing festive decor, farmers, sweet makers, priests, and households that uphold age-old customs. The recognition, the Minister noted, is a tribute to the collective cultural labour that sustains this tradition.

Union Minister also acknowledged the vibrant role of the Indian diaspora, whose celebrations across Southeast Asia, Africa, the Gulf, Europe, and the Caribbean have carried the message of Deepavali across continents and strengthened cultural bridges.

The inscription brings with it a renewed responsibility to safeguard and transmit this heritage to future generations. Union Minister urged citizens to embrace the spirit of inclusivity and unity reflected in Deepavali and to continue supporting India's rich intangible cultural traditions.

Recognised for its deep cultural significance and its role as a people's festival celebrated across regions, communities, and the global Indian diaspora, Deepavali embodies the principles of unity, renewal and social cohesion. Its diverse practices such as lighting of diyas, rangoli making, traditional crafts, rituals, community gatherings, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge reflect the festival's enduring vitality and its ability to adapt across time and geography.

The nomination, prepared by the Ministry of Culture through the Sangeet Natak Akademi, followed an extensive nationwide consultation involving practitioners, artisans, agrarian communities, diaspora groups, individuals with special needs, transgender communities, cultural organisations, and tradition bearers from across India. Their collective testimonies highlighted Deepavali's inclusive character, its community-led continuity, and its wide ecosystem of livelihoods from potters and rangoli artists to sweet-makers, florists, and craftspeople.

UNESCO's inscription acknowledges Deepavali as a living heritage that strengthens social bonds, supports traditional craftsmanship, reinforces values of generosity and wellbeing, and contributes meaningfully to several Sustainable Development Goals, including livelihood enhancement, gender equality, cultural education and community welfare.

The Ministry of Culture welcomed the decision, noting that the inscription will further promote global awareness about India's intangible cultural heritage and reinforce efforts to safeguard community-based traditions for future generations.



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