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Q8(a)

What is cultural Revivalism ? Give some examples from performing arts , language dissemination and arts crafts in recent times

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- What is cultural revivalism? Give some examples from performing arts, language dissemination, and arts and crafts in recent times
- Treat as a 20-mark answer

Revision summary

Revivalism organises a selected past against loss or rivals.

Performing arts return as national and tourist stages.

Language campaigns spread purified or regional tongues.

Crafts are branded while artisans often stay poor.

Canons are caste-marked; counter-revivals also exist.

Introduction

Cultural revivalism is an organised attempt to restore, purify, or stage a past that is said to have been lost to colonialism, the market, or rival communities. It is not mere memory. It is a present politics of identity that selects which past will live.

Body

What revivalism does

- **Yogendra Singh's modernisation of tradition is close:** old forms return through new associations, media, and the state.
- Revival can be defensive (language boards, craft museums) or majoritarian (a single civilisational aesthetic).
- G. S. Ghurye's Indological Hindu whole often supplies the archive that revivalists quote.

Performing arts

- Classical music and dance sabhas, and state academies, revived temple and court forms as national culture.
- Folk theatre and ritual performance are restaged for festivals and tourism, sometimes stripped of Dalit or women's original roles.
- Cinema and television recycle bhakti and epic, a mass revival that is also an industry.

Language dissemination

- Sanskrit promotion, shuddha Hindi, and anti-English campaigns are revival as linguistic nationalism.
- **Counter-revivals exist too:** Tamil, other scheduled languages, and tribal scripts claiming schools and signboards.
- Print, apps, and temple classes spread a standardised tongue that village dialects may not speak.

Arts and crafts

- Handloom and GI tags revive weaves as heritage while weavers remain poor, a socio-spatial cousin of heritage tourism.
- **Khadi** is both a Champaran-to-Gandhi nationalist craft ethic and a boutique brand.
- Tribal painting and bronze enter galleries; the grove that fed the motif may be mined.

Critique

- Revival often cements upper-caste canons.
- **Ambedkarite and women's groups revive other pasts:** Buddhist, labour, and protest song.

Flow diagram

Cultural revivalism -> Performing arts sabha
Cultural revivalism -> Language boards scripts
Cultural revivalism -> Craft GI khadi
Selection of past -> Cultural revivalism

Conclusion

Cultural revivalism restages arts, languages, and crafts as a usable past. Recent examples run from sabhas and GI weaves to language boards and televised epics. Sociology should ask who owns the canon, and who only supplies the labour of authenticity.

Facts & figures

Sabha classical revival

Twentieth-century staging of dance and music as national heritage.

GI crafts

Legal branding of weaves and objects that may not raise artisan power.

Khadi

Nationalist craft revived as both ethic and market.

Yogendra Singh

Tradition modernised through associations and media rather than simply dying.

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