

# Recently Received GI Tags

## Why In News

- **Famous Rupa Tarakasi, or silver filigree work** of Odisha's Cuttack & Adding to their growing national and international recognition, the traditional **Majuli masks in Assam** were given a Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Centre. **Majuli manuscript painting** also got the GI label.
- A **GI tag is conferred upon products** originating from a specific geographical region, signifying unique characteristics and qualities. Essentially, it serves as a trademark in the international market.



EXAMS

## Rupa Tarakasi

- **Odisha's Cuttack** is known for its **silver filigree work**, of intricate design and fine craftsmanship. In Odia, "**tara**" means **wire** and "**kasi**" means to design. Thus, as part of Rupa Tarakasi, silver bricks are transformed into thin fine wires or foils and used to create jewellery or showpieces.
- While the exact origin of the filigree art in Cuttack is not clear, it is known to have existed as far back as the **12th century**.



- The art form received considerable **patronage under the Mughals**. Over the years, as Cuttack transitioned through the hands of different rulers, the silver filigree took on a new form with each.
- Document submitted by the **Odisha government before the GI registry said:** “The silver filigree work in which the people of Cuttack have attained such surprising skill and delicacy is identical in character with that of **Arabia, Malta, Genoa, Norway, Sweden and Denmark**, and with the filigree work of ancient Greece, Byzantium, and Etruria, and was probably carried into the West by the Phoenicians and Arabs, and into Scandinavia by the Normans and in the course also of the medieval trade between Turkestan and Russia.



- While **silver filigree as a craft** has transitioned over time, its core process has stayed the same over the centuries, with only a few changes in tools and components.
- The majority of the change has come on the **design and product fronts**. While different grades of silver are used in the main metal alloy, the craftsmen also use other metals like **copper, zinc, cadmium and tin**.
- The popular product categories now found in Cuttack are jewellery, decorative artifacts, accessories, home décor and religious/cultural pieces. The iconic items found only in Cuttack are the **Durga Puja Medha** (silver decorations for the Durga idol and pandal), Odissi jewellery, religious/cultural pieces linked directly to the customs of Odisha, and the Dama chain.



## Majuli Masks Of Assam

- **Majuli, the largest river island** in the world and the seat of Assam's **neo-Vaishnavite tradition**, has been home to the art of mask-making since the 16th century.
- Many of its **traditional practitioners** are working to take the art out of their traditional place in **sattras, or monasteries**, and give them a new, contemporary life. The handmade masks are traditionally used to depict **characters in bhaonas**, or theatrical performances with devotional messages under the neo-Vaishnavite tradition, introduced by the **15th-16th century** reformer saint **Srimanta Sankardeva**.



- The **masks can depict gods, goddesses, demons, animals and birds** — Ravana, Garuda, Narasimha, Hanuman, Varaha Surpanakha all feature among the masks. According to the application made for the patent, the masks are made of

**bamboo, clay, dung, cloth, cotton, wood** and other materials available in the riverine surroundings of their makers.



- **Sattras are monastic institutions** established by Srimanta Sankardev and his disciples as centres of religious, social and cultural reform.
- They are also **centres of traditional performing arts** such as borgeet (songs), xattriya (dance) and bhaona (theatre), which are an integral part of the Sankardev tradition.
- **Majuli has 22 sattras**, and the patent application states that the mask-making tradition is by and **large concentrated in four of them** — Samaguri Sattr, Natun Samaguri Sattr, Bihimpur Sattr and Alengi Narasimha Sattr.



- **Hemchandra Goswami is the sattradhikar** or the administrative head of the Samaguri Sattrā, and a well-known practitioner of the traditional mask-making art. “The arts of dance, song and musical instruments are closely tied to the sattras and the one who began this was **Assam’s guru Srimanta Sankardev**.”
- **In the 16th century**, he established this art of masks through a play called Chinha Jatra. The word means explaining through images. At that time, to attract ordinary people to **Krishna bhakti**, he had presented the play in his birthplace Batadrava.



- There, he presented two masks, which were worn to express what a person’s face could not. One was the **four-headed Brahma and the other was Garuda**,” Goswami said.
- **Majuli manuscript painting** It is a form of painting — also originating in the 16th century — done on sanchi pat, or manuscripts made of the bark of the sanchi or agar tree, **using homemade ink**.
- The earliest example of an illustrated manuscript is said to be a rendering of the Adya Dasama of the Bhagwat Purana in Assamese by Srimanta Sankardev. This art was patronised by the Ahom kings. It continues to be practised in every sattrā in Majuli.

