

Sangeet Natak Akademi Inscribes 3 Madhya Pradesh Traditions in India's National Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory

Maihar Band, Agaria iron-smelting practice and Nimari culinary heritage enter the national register, paving the way for future UNESCO nomination

BHOPAL, MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA, July 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Government of India's nodal institution for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), has formally inscribed three traditions from Madhya Pradesh in India's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage: the Maihar Band orchestral tradition, the Agaria community's traditional iron-smelting practice, and the culinary heritage of the Nimar region. Inclusion in the national inventory is a key procedural step towards potential nomination to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, for which the Sangeet Natak Akademi serves as India's nodal agency.

Together, these three traditions represent the remarkable diversity of Madhya Pradesh's living heritage—spanning music, metallurgy and cuisine—and reflect generations of knowledge sustained across communities, landscapes and cultural practices. Their inscription further



Maihar Band Orchestra - Madhya Pradesh



strengthens the state's rich cultural profile, complementing its UNESCO World Heritage Sites, GI-tagged crafts and growing focus on community-led, experiential and cultural tourism.

“The inscription of these traditions in India’s National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage is a significant milestone for Madhya Pradesh. It not only recognizes the richness and continuity of our living traditions but also strengthens their visibility on the global cultural map. As these practices move closer to potential UNESCO recognition, they reinforce Madhya Pradesh’s position as a destination where heritage is not only preserved but continues to thrive through its communities,” says

— Dr. Ilayaraja T., Secretary, Tourism, Government of Madhya Pradesh & Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board

Maihar Band: A Unique Orchestral Legacy

Founded in 1918 by the legendary Ustad Allauddin Khan under the patronage of Maharaja Brijnath Singh Judeo of Maihar, the Maihar Band is one of India's most distinctive orchestral traditions. It brought together Indian classical and Western instruments within a single ensemble—an innovative concept for its time.

The orchestra features instruments such as the sitar, sarod, esraj, violin, cello, harmonium and tabla, while its most remarkable element is the Nal Tarang—a percussion instrument ingeniously crafted by Ustad Allauddin Khan from decommissioned gun barrels, each tuned to a different pitch. The instrument remains unique, with no known equivalent elsewhere.

The ensemble gained national prominence after performing at the Bhatkhande Music Festival in



Agaria community's traditional iron-smelting practice



Nimari Cuisine of Madhya Pradesh

Lucknow in 1924 and was honored with Madhya Pradesh's highest cultural award, the Shikhar Samman, in 2016. Its inclusion in the national ICH inventory formally recognizes a century-old musical tradition that continues to flourish through successive generations of musicians in Maihar.

Agaria Iron-Smelting: Preserving an Ancient Metallurgical Tradition

The Agaria community has practiced traditional iron smelting in Madhya Pradesh for centuries, employing indigenous techniques that use locally sourced iron ore, clay furnaces and charcoal. The highly specialized process—covering ore selection, furnace construction, temperature control and metal forging—has been preserved through oral transmission under the guru-shishya tradition rather than written documentation.

Historically, Agaria artisans produced agricultural implements, household tools and decorative iron objects that served rural communities. However, changing livelihoods and declining intergenerational transmission have placed this knowledge system at risk.

Its inscription in the National ICH Inventory provides important recognition and supports efforts to document, safeguard and revitalize this rare metallurgical tradition, aligning with Madhya Pradesh's broader commitment to community-led heritage conservation and responsible tourism.

Nimari Cuisine: Celebrating the Flavours of the Nimar Region

The culinary traditions of the Nimar region—covering present-day Barwani, Khargone and Burhanpur districts—reflect centuries of agricultural wisdom, seasonal produce and community customs. Rooted in local farming practices and regional ecology, Nimari cuisine showcases simple yet distinctive flavors through dishes such as Dal-Pania, Bafla and Bhutte-ki-Kees, prepared using locally grown ingredients and recipes passed down through generations. The inscription marks the first regional culinary tradition from Madhya Pradesh to be included in India's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, recognizing food traditions alongside performing arts, crafts and traditional knowledge systems.

For cultural tourism, the recognition opens new opportunities to showcase the Nimar region's unique gastronomic identity while highlighting the role of food as an integral expression of living heritage.

Strengthening Madhya Pradesh's Cultural Profile

The inclusion of these three traditions significantly expands Madhya Pradesh's documented intangible heritage, reinforcing the state's position as one of India's richest cultural landscapes. Beyond its celebrated monuments and natural attractions, Madhya Pradesh continues to preserve vibrant living traditions that are practiced, transmitted and sustained by local

communities.

For international travelers, researchers and the global travel trade, these inscriptions underscore the state's commitment to safeguarding its cultural legacy while creating authentic, community-based experiences that celebrate music, craftsmanship and regional cuisine for future generations.

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Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board

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