

UPSC Mains Model Questions [August 16-31, 2026]



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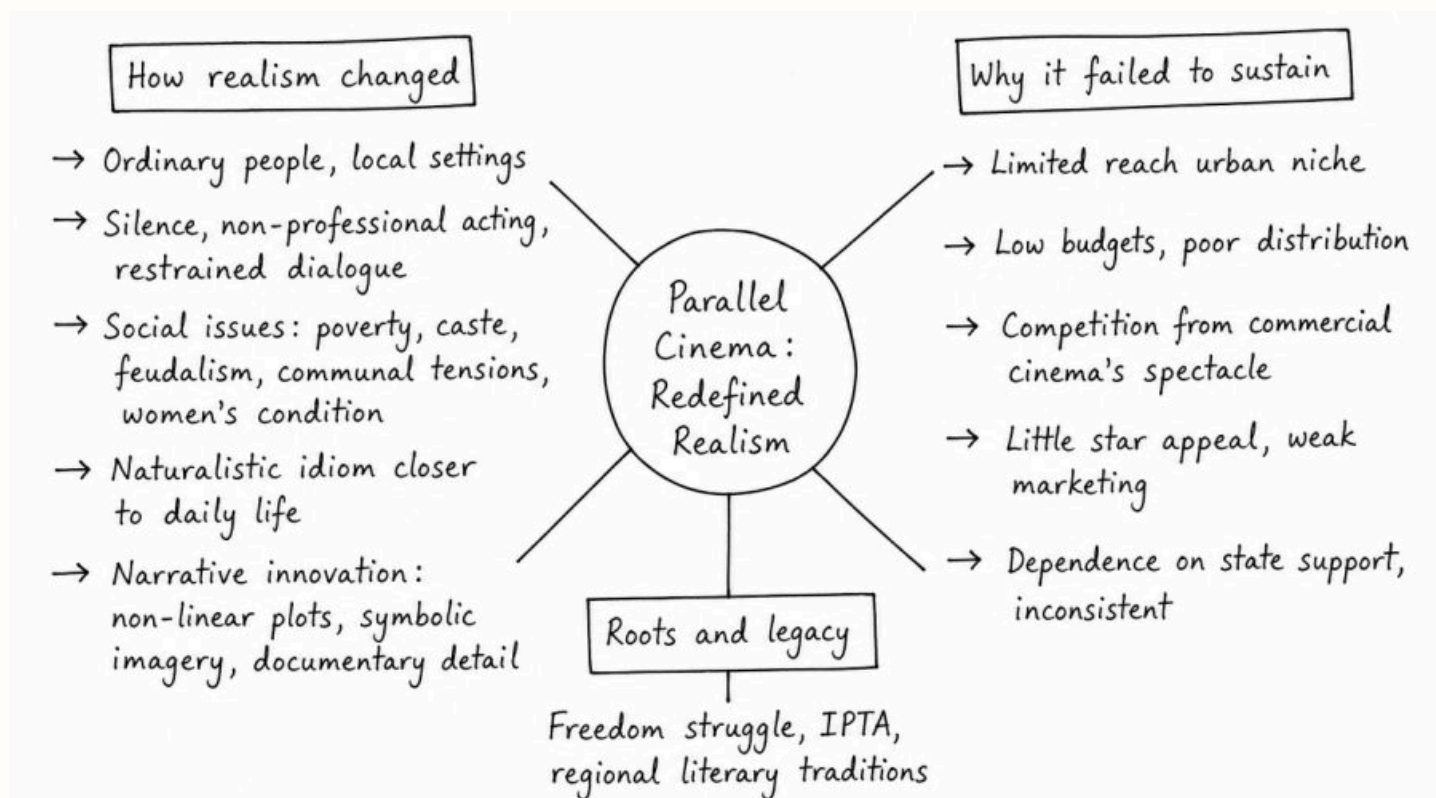
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GS-I: Indian Art, Culture & Heritage

1. Critically discuss how the Parallel Cinema movement of the twentieth century redefined realism in Indian art. Why did it fail to sustain its momentum against commercial cinema? (250 words)

Parallel Cinema redefined Indian realism by rejecting formula, spectacle and escapism in favour of lived experience, social critique and aesthetic restraint.



- **How realism changed:** It foregrounded ordinary people, local settings, silence, non-professional acting and restrained dialogue, creating a naturalistic idiom closer to daily life than studio fantasy. Films such as *Ankur*, *Nishant* and *Manthan* exposed poverty, caste oppression, feudal exploitation, communal tensions and women's condition. Filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and Adoor Gopalakrishnan also expanded narrative grammar through non-linear plots, symbolic imagery and documentary-like detail.
- **Roots and significance:** The movement drew on IPTA, progressive literature and theatre, while absorbing Italian Neorealism and French Poetic Realism; realism thus became both indigenous and modern, and cinema a vehicle for moral inquiry rather than mere entertainment.
- **Why it waned:** Weak distribution, poor exhibition access, limited publicity, and dependence on state funding restricted reach and continuity. Its audience remained largely urban and cine-literate, while commercial cinema retained mass appeal through stars, songs, melodrama and repeatable formulas. Television, liberalisation and rising costs further narrowed its space.

Thus, Parallel Cinema made realism socially alert and artistically serious, but its narrow market base and institutional fragility prevented it from sustaining momentum against commercial cinema.

Your Notes:



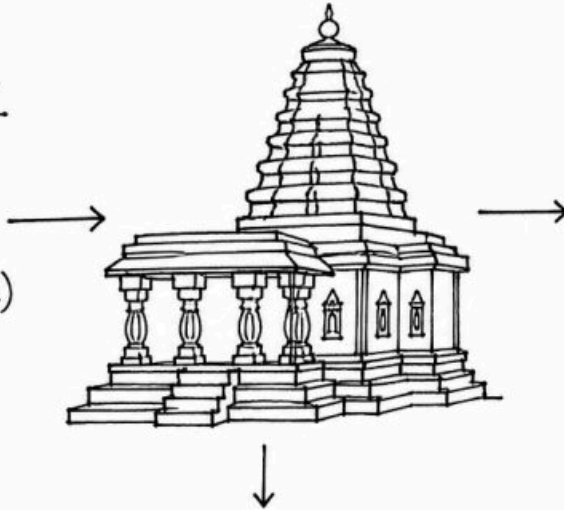
2. Explain how the architectural style of Lakkundi represents a transitional phase in Deccan temple building. Why is it distinct from the early Badami Chalukyan style? (150 words)

Lakkundi, under the Western Chalukyas, marks a mature stage in Deccan temple building. It stands between the early Chalukyan experiments of Badami and the later Hoysala elaboration, showing a clearer, richer form of the **Vesara** or **Karnata Dravida** idiom.

Lakkundi – Transitional Phase in Deccan Temple Building

Transitional character

- Dravida plans + Nagara towers
- = Vesara (Karnata Dravida) hybrid style.



Distinct from Badami

- Material: chloritic schist enables finer carving.
- More ornate: doorframes, lathe-turned pillars, rich wall sculpture.

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Stands between early Badami experiments and later Hoysala elaboration.

- **Transitional character:** Temples here combine Dravida ground plans with Nagara-type tower profiles, creating a more settled hybrid style.
- **Material shift:** The use of chloritic schist or soapstone allowed finer, deeper and more delicate carving than earlier sandstone.
- **Ornamentation:** Lakkundi is marked by ornate doorframes, lathe-turned pillars, rich wall sculpture and well-developed tower decoration.
- **Bridge to Hoysalas:** Its refined surface treatment and craftsmanship anticipate the highly sculptural Hoysala temples.

It differs from the early Badami Chalukyan style in being less experimental and more polished. Badami temples relied mainly on sandstone, simple massing, and a clearer separation of Nagara and Dravida forms, whereas Lakkundi displays a more integrated, ornate and technically advanced temple language.

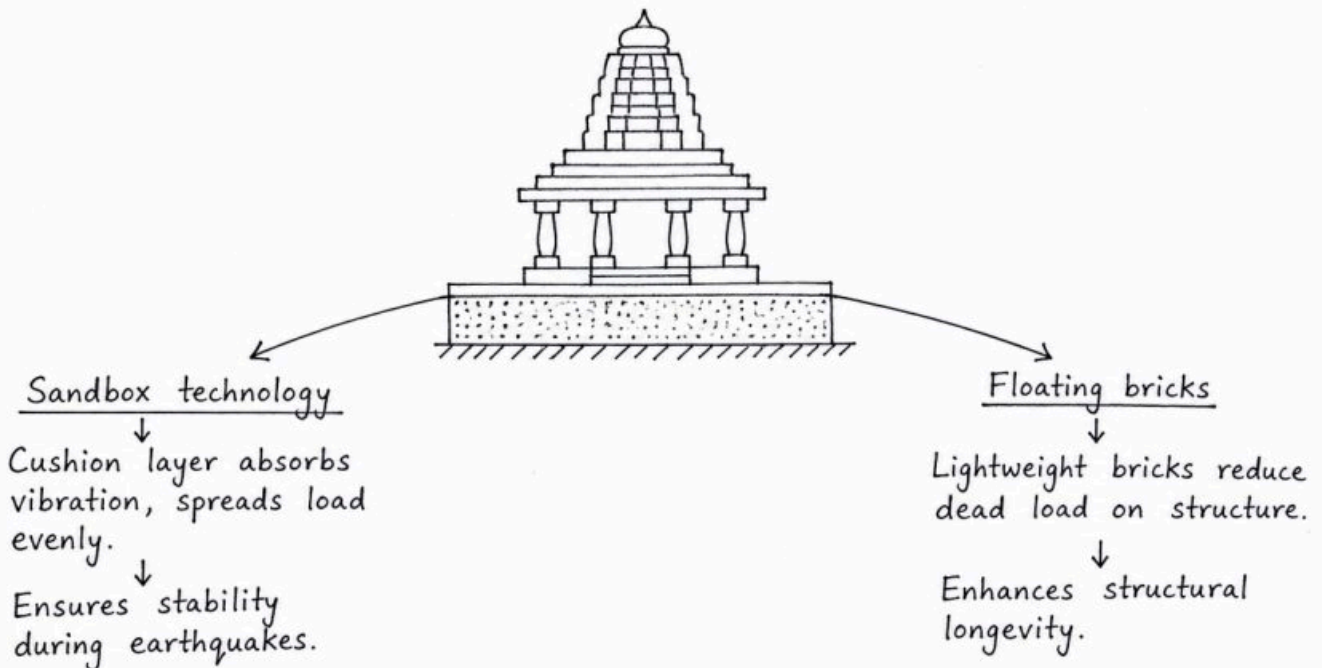
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3. Taking example of Kakatiya temple architecture, explain how engineering innovations like sandbox technology and floating bricks ensured structural longevity. (150 words)

The Kakatiya temples, especially the **Ramappa Temple** at Palampet, show advanced engineering behind their beauty. Their endurance came not only from design but also from clever use of materials and foundations.

Kakatiya Temple Engineering



- **Sandbox technology:** A deep pit was filled with sand, lime, jaggery and other binders. This layer worked like a cushion, spreading load evenly and absorbing vibration, much like modern base isolation in earthquakes.
- **Structural effect:** It reduced stress on the superstructure and helped temples remain stable even after tremors over centuries.
- **Floating bricks:** Lightweight bricks made with organic matter burned out during firing created tiny air gaps. These bricks were used mainly in the tower.
- **Structural effect:** Their low weight reduced pressure on walls and foundations, improving stability and durability.

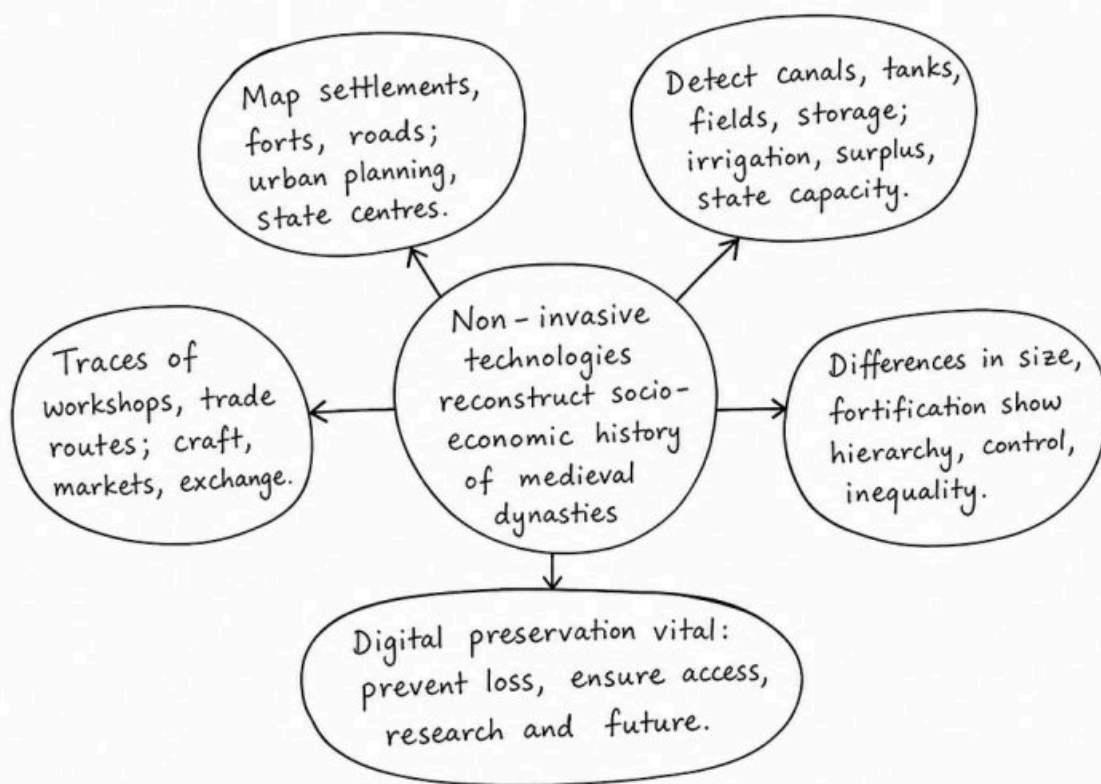
Thus, Kakatiya builders combined local materials, scientific foresight and practical design. Their innovations made temples both elegant and resilient, explaining their survival for centuries and their relevance to modern earthquake-safe construction.

Your Notes:



4. Critically examine how non-invasive archaeological technologies help reconstruct the socio-economic history of medieval dynasties. Why is digital preservation vital for undocumented heritage? (250 words)

Non-invasive archaeological technologies have reshaped the study of medieval dynasties by revealing buried landscapes without damaging fragile sites, especially under cities, forests and wetlands.



- **Socio-economic reconstruction:** LiDAR, satellite imagery and drones map forts, habitations, roads and enclosure systems, helping identify royal centres, urban planning and controlled settlements. Ground-penetrating radar, magnetometry and resistivity detect canals, tanks, stepwells, field systems and storage areas, indicating irrigation, surplus production and state capacity. Geophysical traces of workshops, river crossings and trade routes suggest craft specialisation, market networks and regional exchange. Differences in structure size, fortification and spatial segregation also help infer hierarchy, labour control and administrative organisation.
- **Critical limits:** These tools reveal patterns, not direct artefacts or texts; they are affected by soil, moisture and vegetation, and must be tested through targeted excavation for dating and firm historical interpretation.
- **Digital preservation:** It is crucial for undocumented heritage because it records vulnerable sites before loss through erosion, construction, looting or conflict, while creating searchable archives, 3D models and maps for research, conservation and public access.

Thus, non-invasive methods provide a broad spatial-economic picture of medieval society, but their value is maximised when combined with selective excavation and robust digital archiving, since undocumented heritage, once destroyed, cannot be recovered.

Your Notes: