

UPSC Mains Model Questions [July 1-15, 2026]



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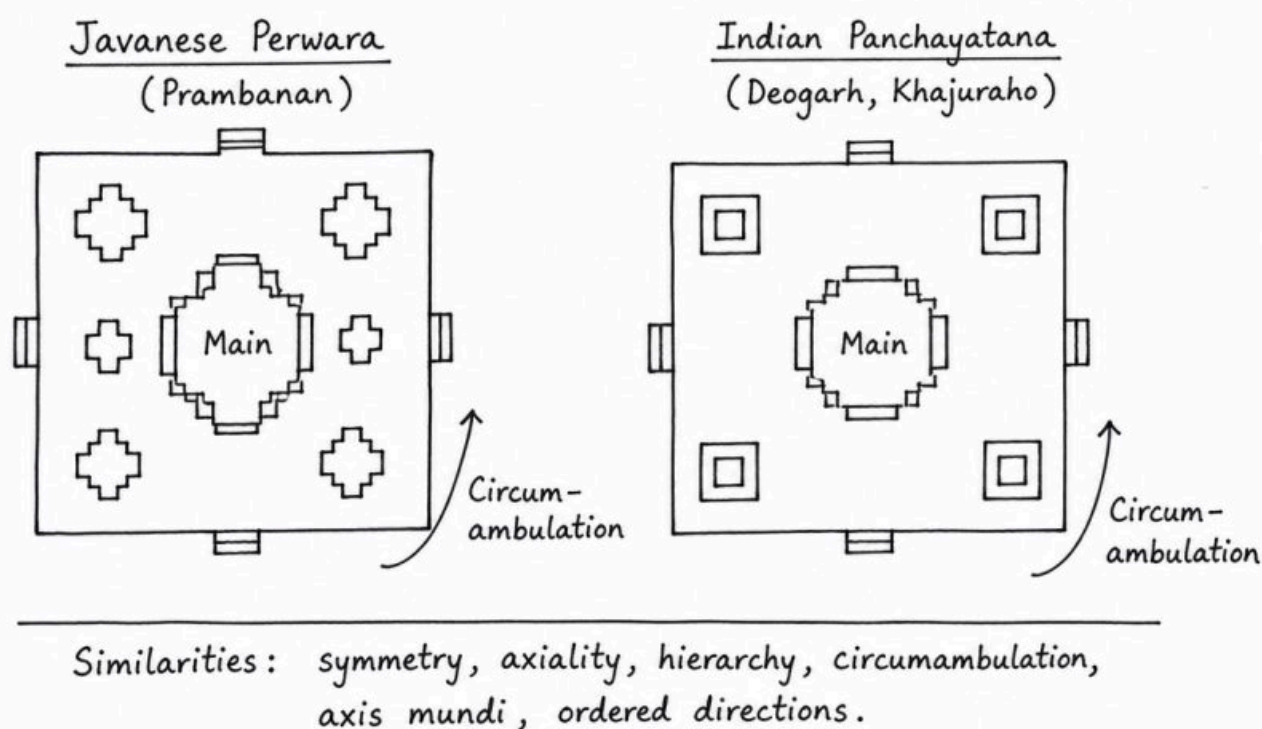
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GS-I: Indian Art, Culture & Heritage

1. With suitable examples, analyze the architectural and spatial similarities between Javanese perwara temples and Indian Panchayatana style. How do they reflect shared cosmological visions? (150 words)

Javanese **perwara** temples and the Indian **Panchayatana** plan both express a sacred centre surrounded by subsidiary shrines. The best-known Javanese example is **Prambanan**, where the tallest Shiva shrine stands at the core, ringed by smaller temples; in India, Deogarh and Khajuraho show a main shrine with four corner shrines.



- **Spatial similarity:** both use symmetry, axial planning and a clear hierarchy of scale.
- **Ritual use:** both allow circumambulation, turning movement into worship.
- **Cosmic form:** the central shrine acts as the axis mundi, while surrounding units mark ordered directions.
- **Shared symbolism:** the layout echoes Mount Meru and the mandala, joining heaven, earth and the devotee.

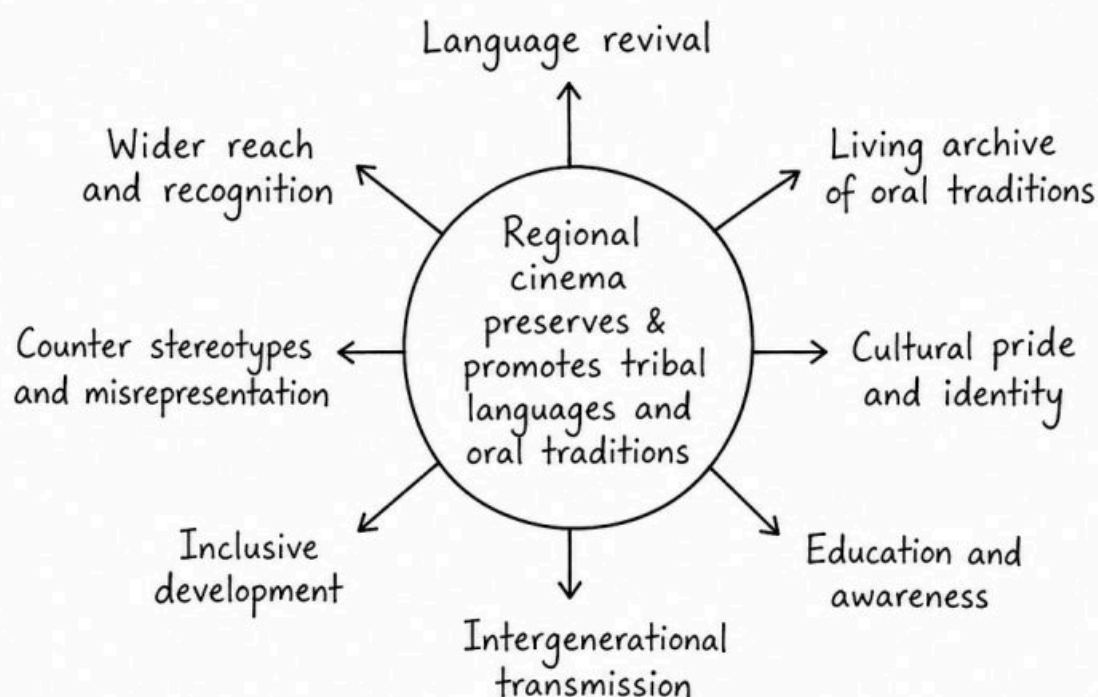
Thus, both are not mere building types but visual maps of the universe. They show a shared Hindu cosmology in which unity is expressed through ordered plurality, with the divine centre governing a harmonious sacred space.

Your Notes:



2. How can regional cinema act as an effective tool for preserving and promoting indigenous tribal languages and oral traditions? Discuss in the light of cultural preservation. (150 words)

Regional cinema can be a powerful medium for keeping indigenous tribal languages and oral traditions alive. It turns speech, songs, myths and rituals into a public, repeatable form, making culture visible to both the community and wider society.



- **Language revival:** Films in Kokborok, Irula or Gondi normalise daily use of tribal languages and attract young viewers.
- **Living archive:** Cinema records folklore, chants, proverbs and storytelling styles that are often absent from written texts.
- **Cultural pride:** Authentic casting and local settings strengthen identity and correct stereotypes about Adivasi life.
- **Education and access:** Subtitles, dubbing and OTT platforms widen reach while keeping the original language intact.
- **Policy support:** State support, tribal research institutes and film funds can help document and produce such content.

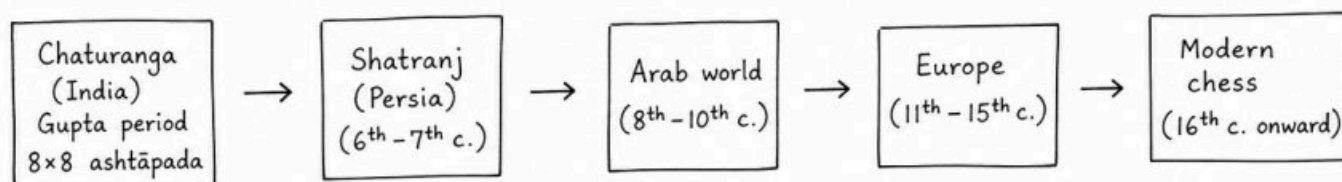
Thus, regional cinema is not only entertainment; it is a cultural safeguard. When rooted in community participation, it preserves memory, promotes linguistic diversity and supports India's plural heritage.

Your Notes:



3. Underline the historical evolution of Chaturanga into modern chess. How did ancient India leverage such intellectual board games as tools of cultural exchange and diplomacy? (150 words)

Chaturanga, the ancient Indian game, emerged in the Gupta period as a model of warfare on an **8×8 asht pada** board. From India it spread to Persia as **Shatranj**, then to the Arab world and Europe, where rule changes produced modern chess.



Evolution of pieces :

Raja → king	Mantri → queen	Gaja → bishop	Ashva → knight	Ratha → rook	Padati → pawn
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Rule changes in Europe : Queen & bishop gained greater mobility ; pawns got two-square opening move ;
castling ; draw by stalemate.



Intellectual games as tools of cultural exchange and diplomacy.

- **Evolution of pieces:** Raja became the king; Mantri evolved into the queen; Gaja into the bishop; Ashva into the knight; Ratha into the rook; Padati into the pawn.
- **Rule changes:** The queen and bishop gained greater mobility in Europe; pawns got the two-square opening move; castling and draw by stalemate followed later.
- **Historical significance:** The term **checkmate** comes from Persian “Shah Mat”.

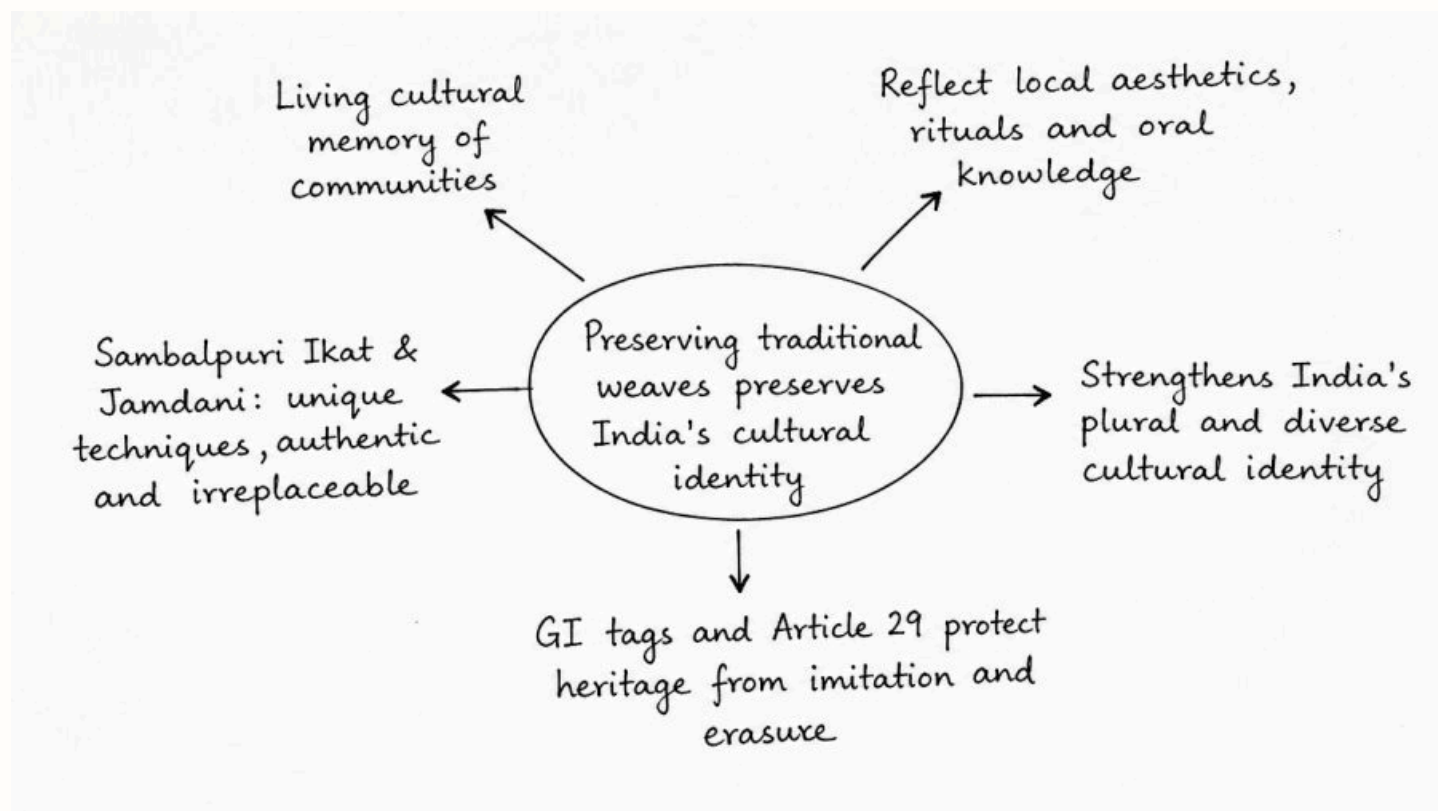
Ancient India used such games as instruments of **education, diplomacy and cultural exchange**. They trained princes in strategy, logic and statecraft, and also travelled through trade and royal gift-giving, carrying Indian ideas across civilisations. Thus, board games became both intellectual tools and quiet ambassadors of Indian culture.

Your Notes:



4. Taking example of GI-tagged crafts like Sambalpuri Ikat and Jamdani, critically examine why preserving traditional weaving techniques is vital for India's cultural identity. (150 words)

Preserving traditional weaving is vital because it keeps alive India's living cultural memory. Crafts like Sambalpuri Ikat and Jamdani are not just fabrics; they carry regional histories, symbols, skills and community pride.



- **Cultural identity:** Such weaves reflect local aesthetics, rituals and oral knowledge passed through generations, strengthening India's plural identity.
- **Distinctiveness:** Sambalpuri Ikat's resist-dyeing and Jamdani's handwoven motifs show unique techniques that cannot be replicated by machines without losing authenticity.
- **Legal and moral protection:** GI tags and Article 29 support communities in safeguarding their heritage against imitation and cultural erasure.
- **Livelihoods and sustainability:** Preservation supports artisan incomes, especially in rural areas, and promotes eco-friendly handloom production.
- **Critical concern:** Cheap powerloom copies, weak wages and declining youth interest threaten continuity, making policy support and market access essential.

Thus, preserving weaving traditions is both a cultural duty and an economic necessity. It protects diversity, sustains communities and ensures that India's identity remains rooted in its crafts.

Your Notes: