

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



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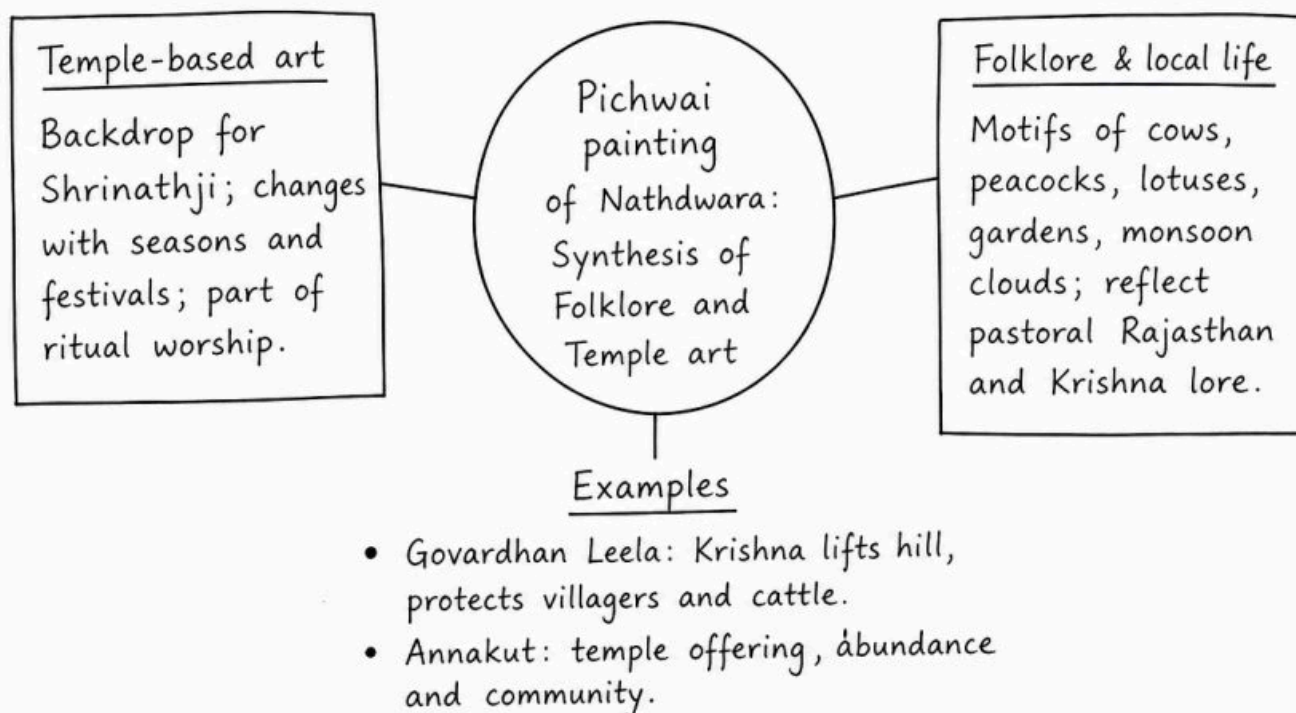
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8. Explain how Panini's Ashtadhyayi laid the foundation for modern formal language theory. Why is his grammatical system considered a precursor to computer programming languages?	
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17. Critically examine how Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's 'Vande Mataram' transitioned from a literary piece in Anandamath to a potent symbol of nationalist resistance during the Swadeshi Movement.	
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19. Critically examine how the historical demand for linguistic states has shaped modern cooperative federalism. How has it helped manage regional aspirations?	
20. Point out how folk theatre and local oral traditions served as powerful instruments of anti-colonial resistance among India's non-elite communities.	
21. Explain how the 'history from below' approach reshapes our understanding of tribal uprisings against British colonial exploitation.	



GS-I: Indian Art, Culture & Heritage

1. With suitable examples, discuss how the Pichwai painting tradition of Nathdwara reflects the synthesis of local folklore and temple-based art forms in Rajasthan. (150 words)

Pichwai painting of Nathdwara, over 400 years old, is a devotional backdrop for Shrinathji that blends Pushtimarg temple worship with Rajasthan's local visual culture.



- **Temple-based art:** Used behind the idol, Pichwais change with seasons and festivals such as Janmashtami, Govardhan Puja, Holi and Diwali, making art part of ritual.
- **Folklore and local life:** Motifs like cows, peacocks, lotuses, gardens and monsoon clouds reflect pastoral Rajasthan and Krishna lore familiar to devotees.
- **Examples:** In **Govardhan Leela**, Krishna lifting the hill protects villagers and cattle; **Annakut** shows temple offering, abundance and community devotion. Seasonal Pichwais use lotuses for summer and peacocks for monsoon.

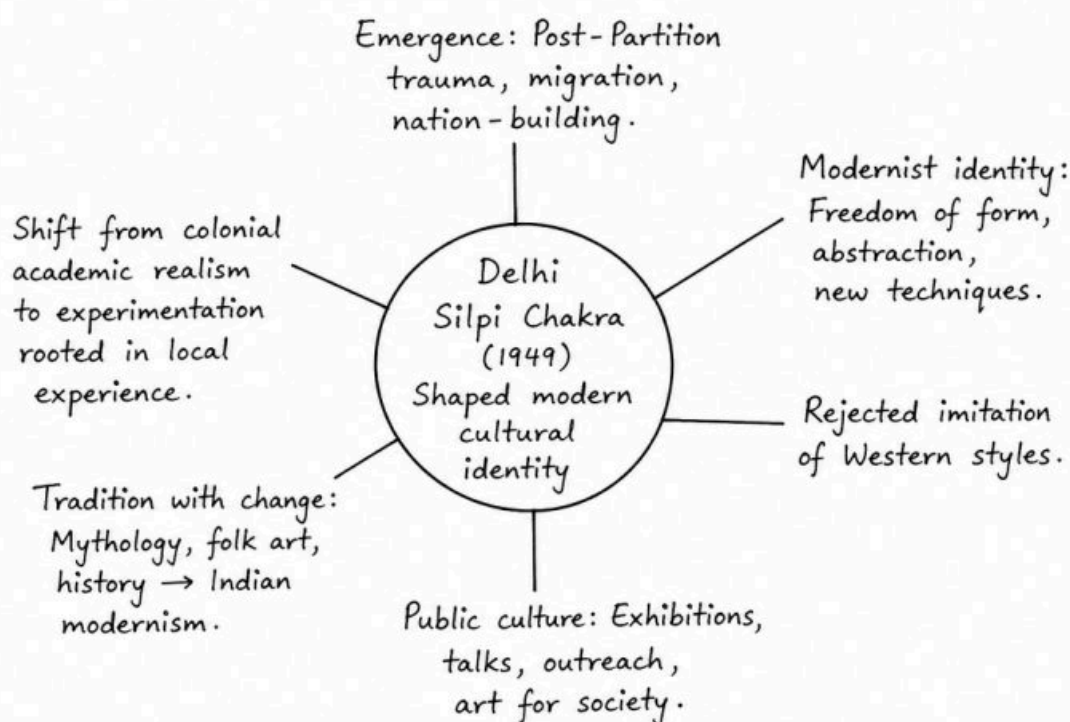
Thus, Pichwai fuses sacred narrative, seasonal symbolism and regional craft into a living temple art of Rajasthan.

Your Notes:



2. Critically discuss how post-partition art movements, like the Delhi Silpi Chakra, shaped India's modern cultural identity. (150 words)

Post-Partition art movements gave India a modern cultural voice shaped by trauma, migration and nation-building. The Delhi Silpi Chakra, founded in 1949 by refugee artists in Delhi, became a key platform for this search. It helped move Indian art away from colonial academic realism towards experimentation rooted in local experience.



- **Modernist identity:** It encouraged freedom of form, abstraction and fresh techniques, while rejecting mere imitation of Western styles.
- **Tradition with change:** Artists drew on mythology, folk art and history, creating a distinct Indian modernism.
- **Public culture:** Through exhibitions, talks and mohalla shows, it made art more democratic and socially relevant.

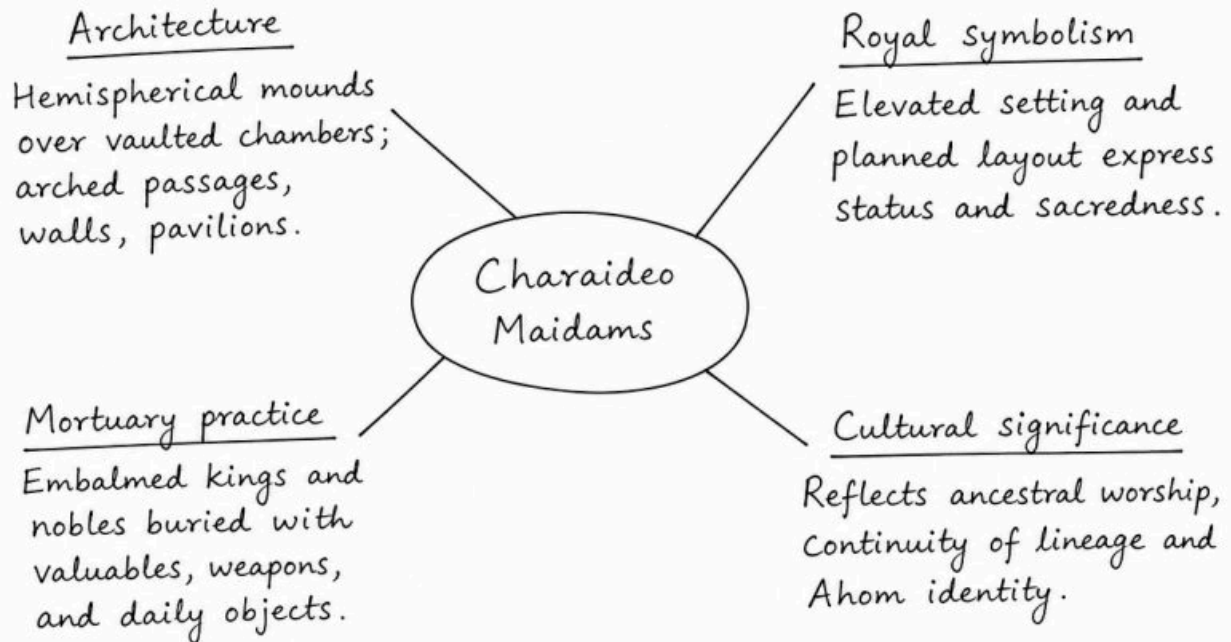
Its limits were also clear: elite urban circles still shaped access, and no single style emerged. Yet, by linking memory, resilience and innovation, the Delhi Silpi Chakra and similar groups helped define India's modern cultural identity as plural, experimental and post-colonial.

Your Notes:



3. Examine the architectural and cultural significance of the Charaideo Maidams. How do they reflect the unique mortuary traditions and ancestral worship of the Ahom dynasty? (150 words)

Charaideo Maidams are the royal burial mounds of the Ahom dynasty at Charaideo, Assam. They are important not only as funerary monuments but also as living symbols of Ahom statecraft, faith and identity.



- **Architectural value:** Hemispherical earthen mounds built over vaulted chambers, with arched passages, boundary walls and pavilions, they show a refined mix of earth, brick and stone.
- **Royal symbolism:** Their elevated setting and planned layout express the status of the dead rulers and the sacredness of the site.
- **Mortuary practice:** The Ahoms buried embalmed kings and nobles with weapons, ornaments and daily goods, reflecting belief in an active afterlife.
- **Ancestral worship:** Maidams embody the Ahom idea of dam and phi, where ancestors remain protectors of the living. Rituals such as Me-Dam-Me-Phi keep this link alive.

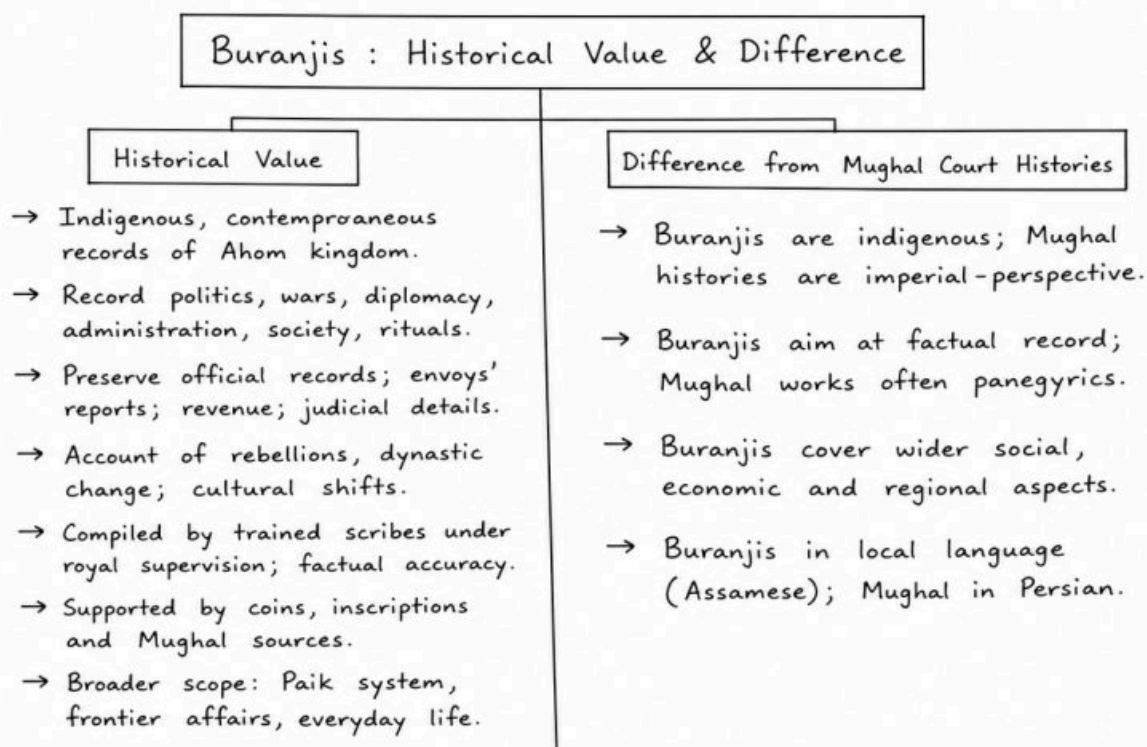
Thus, the Charaideo Maidams combine architecture, ritual and memory, revealing a distinct mortuary tradition rooted in ancestor veneration and royal continuity.

Your Notes:



4. Point out the historical value of 'Buranjis' in reconstructing medieval Assam's history. How did these chronicles differ from traditional court histories of the Mughals? (150 words)

Buranjis are the most important indigenous sources for medieval Assam. They record the Ahom kingdom's politics, wars, diplomacy, administration, society and ritual life in a continuous and often chronological form.



- **Historical value:** They preserve official records, envoys' reports, revenue and judicial details, and accounts of rebellions, dynastic change and cultural shifts.
- **Reliability:** Compiled by trained scribes under royal supervision, they aimed at factual accuracy and are supported by coins, inscriptions and Mughal sources.
- **Broader scope:** They go beyond kings and battles to show the Paik system, frontier affairs and everyday statecraft.

How they differed from Mughal court histories:

- They were less eulogistic and more documentary.
- They reflected an Assamese, not imperial, viewpoint.
- They covered local society and administration in greater depth.
- They were written in Tai-Ahom, later Assamese, unlike Persian Mughal chronicles.

Thus, Buranjis are vital for reconstructing Assam's past and for correcting the bias of court-centred imperial histories.

Your Notes: