

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



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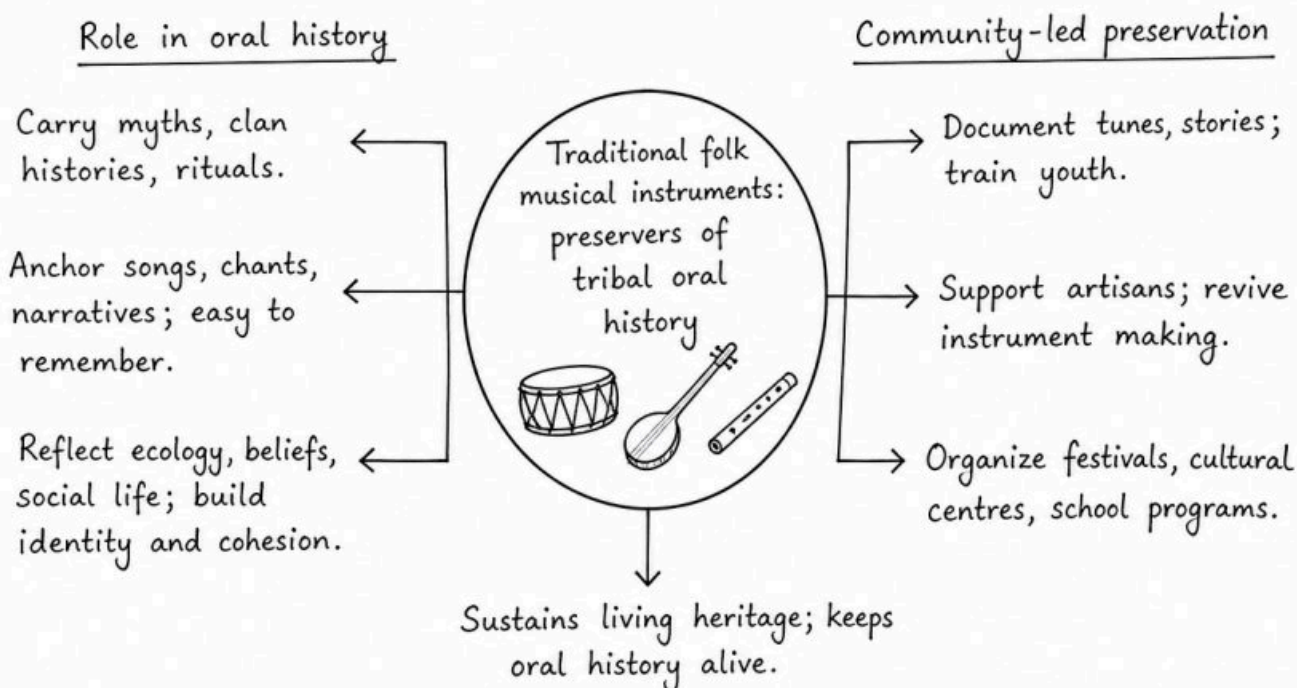
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GS-I: Indian Art, Culture & Heritage

1. Underline the role of traditional folk musical instruments in preserving tribal oral history. How can their decline be arrested through community-led preservation initiatives? Discuss. (150 words)

Traditional folk instruments are living archives of tribal memory: their rhythms, tunes and ritual use carry myths, clan histories, healing practices and life-cycle lore across generations.



- **Role in oral history:** Instruments such as the dhodro banam, bamboo flutes, madal and dolu anchor songs, chants and narratives, making them easier to remember and transmit.
- **Identity and continuity:** Their making and use reflect local ecology, beliefs and social life, strengthening collective memory and community cohesion among Santals, Gonds and Baigas.
- **Community-led preservation:** Elders, artisans and youth should document tunes and stories, create village archives, run apprenticeships, school clubs and festivals, and support cooperatives and fair markets for instrument makers.

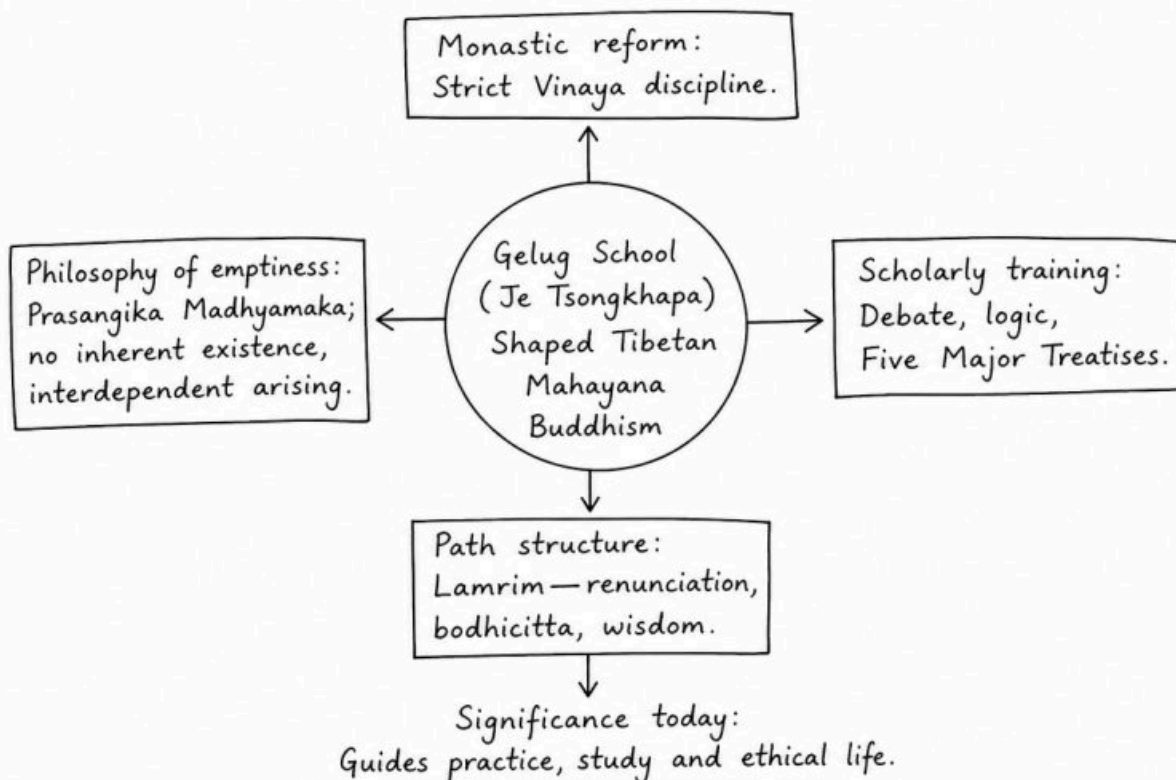
Gram Sabhas and cultural bodies can protect sacred knowledge and ensure these instruments remain part of daily tribal life, keeping oral history alive as a shared, living tradition.

Your Notes:



2. Explain how the philosophical tenets of the Gelug school, founded by Jey Tsong Khapa, shaped Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. Why does it remain significant today? (150 words)

Founded by Je Tsongkhapa, the Gelug school reshaped Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism through discipline, study and a clear philosophical method. It sought to make the path to enlightenment both morally strict and intellectually exact.



- **Monastic reform:** It restored strict Vinaya discipline, raising ethical standards in monasteries.
- **Scholarly training:** It stressed debate and logic, centred on the Five Major Treatises, producing learned monks and teachers.
- **Philosophy of emptiness:** Its Prasangika Madhyamaka view taught that all phenomena lack inherent existence and arise interdependently.
- **Path structure:** Lamrim systematised the Buddhist journey through renunciation, bodhicitta and correct view.
- **Sutra-Tantra integration:** Tantra was treated as valid only when grounded in Mahayana ethics and wisdom.

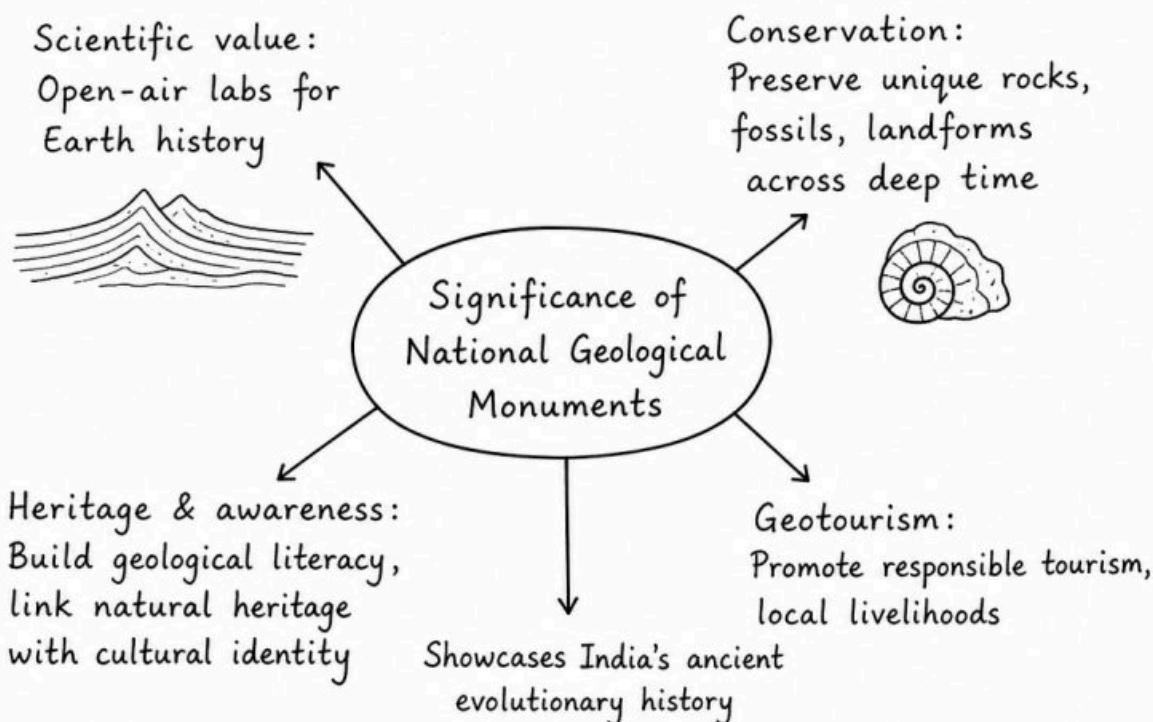
It remains significant because it anchors the Dalai Lama lineage, preserves Tibetan Buddhist learning in exile, and continues to influence global Buddhist practice. Its balance of discipline, reasoning and compassion gives it enduring relevance in a fragmented world.

Your Notes:



3. Underline the significance of declaring National Geological Monuments in India. How do these heritage sites contribute to preserving and showcasing the subcontinent's ancient evolutionary history? (150 words)

Declaring National Geological Monuments helps protect India's rare geological records as national heritage. These sites are not only scientifically valuable, but also educate the public about the subcontinent's long and complex natural history.



- **Scientific value:** They act as open-air laboratories for studying tectonic movement, volcanism, fossil evolution, climate change and mineral formation.
- **Conservation:** They preserve unique rocks, fossils, landforms and structures that record events across millions to billions of years.
- **Heritage and awareness:** They build geological literacy and link natural heritage with cultural identity.
- **Geotourism:** They support responsible tourism, local livelihoods and site maintenance.

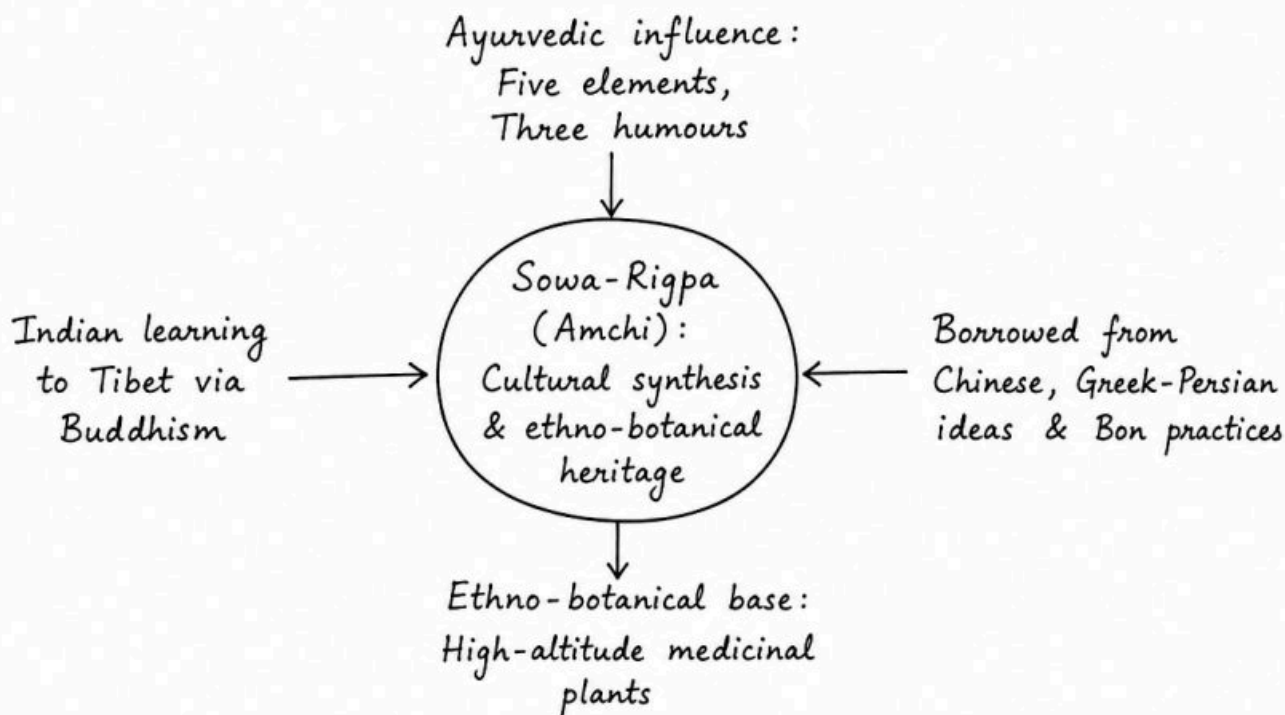
These heritage sites preserve evidence of ancient life through fossil parks, and of Earth processes through features like unconformities, fault zones, basalt flows and gneissic rocks. In doing so, they showcase India's evolutionary story in a visible, public and enduring form.

Your Notes:



4. With suitable examples, explain how the Sowa-Rigpa (Amchi) system of medicine represents a unique historical synthesis of cultural exchange and ethno-botanical heritage in the trans-Himalayan region. (150 words)

Sowa-Rigpa, or “**knowledge of healing**”, is the Amchi tradition of the trans-Himalayan people. It is not a closed local system, but a living example of medical exchange across India, Tibet, China and Central Asia.



- **Cultural synthesis:** Its core ideas on five elements and three humours reflect strong Ayurvedic influence, especially from the Ashtanga Hridaya. Tibetan texts such as the Gyud-Zhi gave it formal shape.
- **Cross-regional borrowing:** Buddhism carried Indian medical learning to Tibet, while Sowa-Rigpa also absorbed Chinese pulse diagnosis, Greek-Persian ideas and Bon practices.
- **Ethno-botanical heritage:** Amchis depend on local alpine plants and oral knowledge. In Ladakh, species like *Rhodiola*, *Hippophae rhamnoides*, *Saussurea lappa* and *Aconitum heterophyllum* are used for varied ailments.
- **Regional adaptation:** Its remedies suit harsh cold-desert ecology, showing close links between health, livelihood and biodiversity.

Thus, Sowa-Rigpa is both a product of centuries of cultural contact and a repository of fragile Himalayan medicinal knowledge that needs conservation.

Your Notes: