UPSC Mains Model Questions [May 15-31, 2026]



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7. Critically examine why the 'feminisation of ageing' presents distinct socio-economic challenges in India. How can community-based care models mitigate their vulnerability and social isolation?
8. With suitable examples, discuss how the rising dominance of Indian female athletes in combat sports is challenging deep-seated patriarchal structures and gender stereotypes in rural India.
9. Critically discuss how rapid infrastructure-led economic integration affects the socio-cultural fabric and land rights of indigenous tribal communities in Union Territories.
10. With suitable examples, discuss how developmental interventions can be harmonized with the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India.
11. Critically examine how rapid, unplanned urbanization in India has heightened vulnerability to urban flooding. How can river-centric urban planning mitigate this?
12. Discuss in the light of changing sociological norms, how the non-recognition of unpaid domestic work perpetuates gender inequality in Indian households.

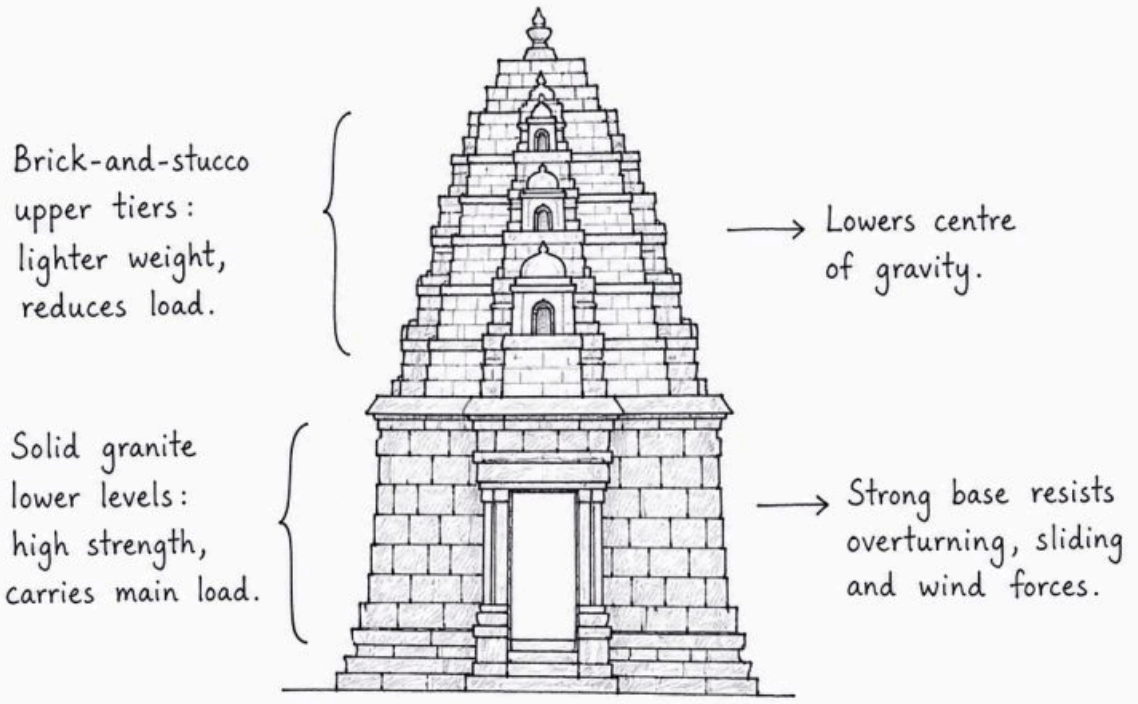
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13. Discuss in the light of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, how the creation of centralized digital health registries aligns with the constitutional guarantee of the Right to Privacy.
14. Analyse how the Chief Election Commissioner Appointment Act of 2023 impacts the institutional autonomy of the Election Commission of India. Critically discuss.
15. How does the statutory mandate of the North Eastern Council differ from Zonal Councils? Critically examine its role in addressing asymmetric federalism in India.
16. How can the institutionalization of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) mechanisms reform India's overburdened judicial hierarchy? Critically examine its constitutional viability in ensuring speedy justice.
17. Critically discuss how the state can operationalize Directive Principles related to just and humane conditions of work. Why do informal sector workers face structural challenges in accessing legislative creche benefits?
18. Explain how the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) model between Centre and States strengthens economic federalism. What administrative challenges does it present?
19. Examine how ensuring independent legislative secretariats under Article 187 safeguards the separation of powers. Why has its implementation remained uneven across Indian states?
20. Why do Indian Panchayats remain fiscally dependent despite constitutional backings? Analyse how reinforcing Own

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GS-I: Indian Art, Culture & Heritage

1. Point out the engineering advantages of using solid granite for lower levels and brick-and-stucco for upper tiers in Gopurams. How does this maintain structural stability? (150 words)

Gopurams use a smart vertical material gradient: heavy granite at the base and lighter brick-and-stucco above. This is not only economical and artistic, but also a sound structural strategy for tall, tapering towers.



Material gradient ensures stability in tall, tapering Gopurams.

- **Granite for lower levels:** Its high compressive strength carries the main dead load. Its density lowers the centre of gravity, improving resistance to overturning.
- **Granite base stability:** Thick stone masonry also offers strong friction and shear resistance, helping the tower stay anchored against sliding and wind forces.
- **Brick-and-stucco for upper tiers:** Bricks greatly reduce weight on the lower storeys. Stucco allows rich detailing without adding much mass.
- **Behaviour under stress:** The lighter upper tiers reduce seismic and wind forces at height. They also provide a slightly more flexible response than brittle stone.

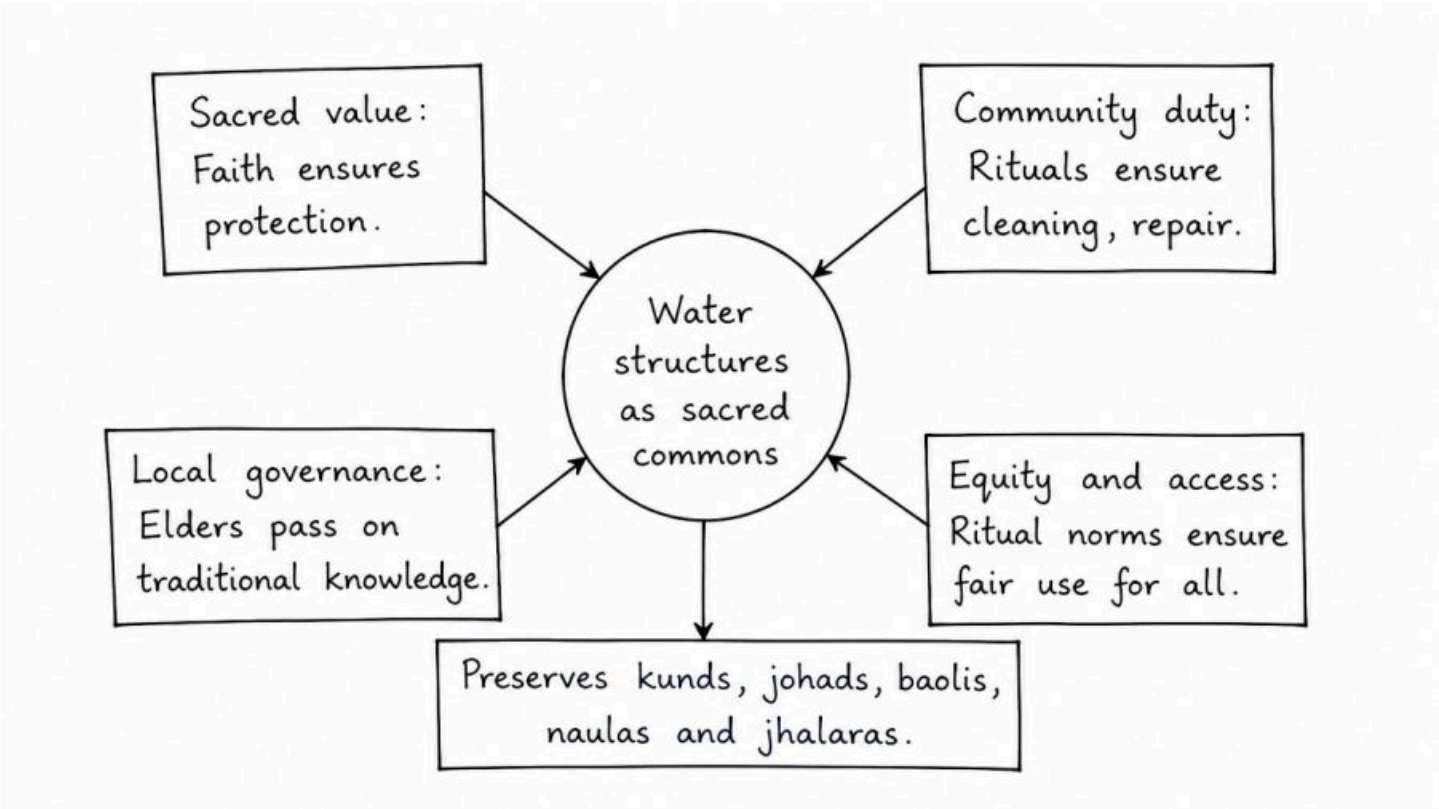
Thus, the heavy, rigid base and the lighter, tapering upper structure work together to keep the gopuram stable, durable and less prone to toppling or cracking.

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2. Underline the role of traditional cultural rituals and community-led water worship in preserving historical water harvesting structures in arid regions. (150 words)

Traditional cultural rituals turn water structures into sacred commons, not mere assets. In arid regions, this belief has helped preserve **kunds**, **johads**, **baolis**, **naulas** and **jhalaras** for centuries.



- **Sacred value:** Water worship links wells, ponds and stepwells with faith, so people avoid pollution, encroachment and neglect.
- **Community duty:** Festivals, offerings and seasonal rites create regular public attention and collective responsibility for cleaning and repair.
- **Local governance:** Elders and traditional builders pass on site-specific knowledge on rainfall, runoff and soil, ensuring repairs use indigenous methods.
- **Equity and access:** Ritual norms often support fair sharing of water and protect structures used for drinking, farming and religious needs.

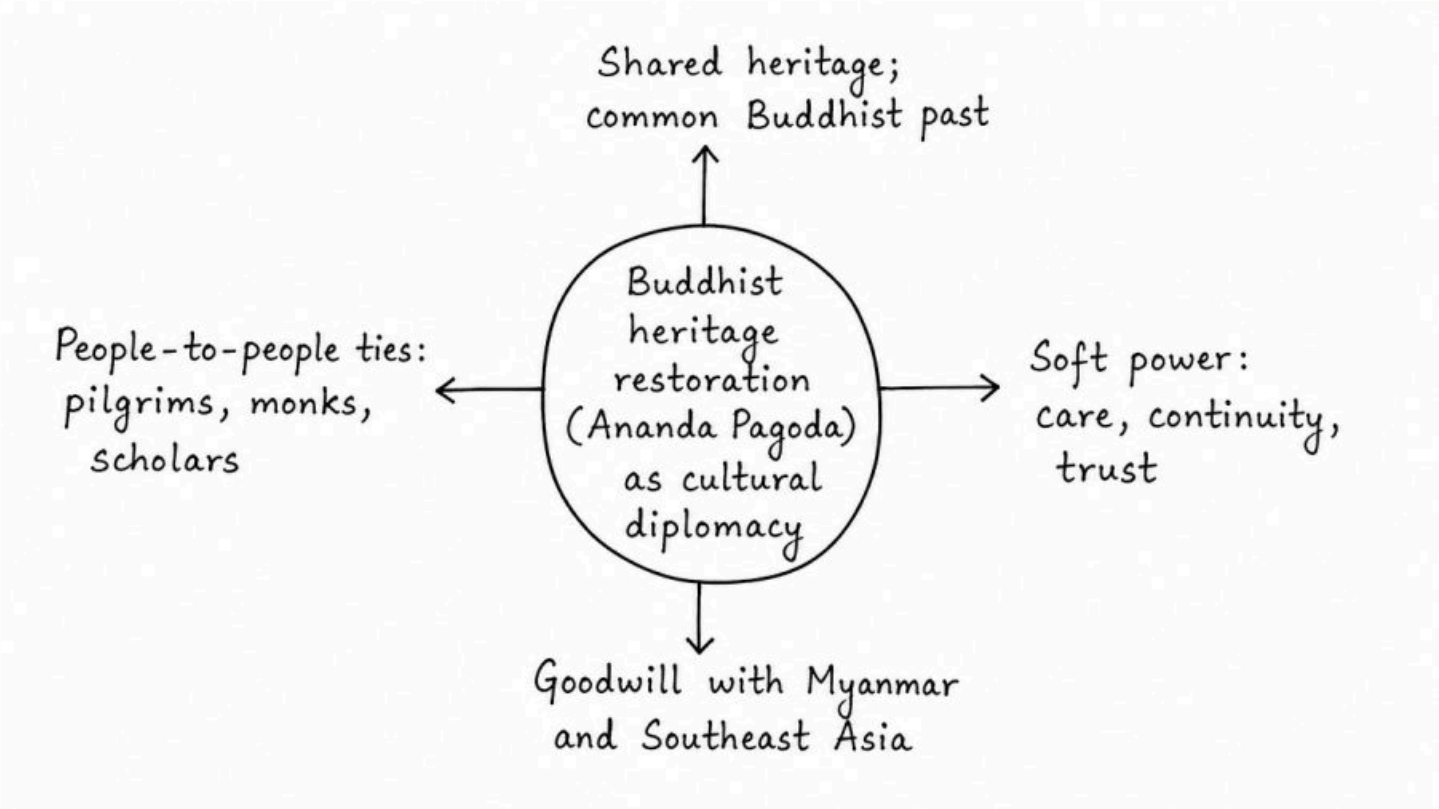
Such traditions make conservation socially acceptable and durable. When supported by present schemes and local participation, they can revive historic water systems and strengthen water security in dry regions.

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3. Comment on how Buddhist heritage restoration, such as the Ananda Pagoda, serves as an effective tool for India's cultural diplomacy in Southeast Asia. (150 words)

Restoration of Buddhist heritage is an effective and low-cost instrument of India's cultural diplomacy in Southeast Asia. It links India's civilisational identity with living religious traditions, creating goodwill beyond formal agreements.



- **Shared heritage:** Projects like the Ananda Pagoda at Bagan show India as a guardian of a common Buddhist past, not an outside actor.
- **Soft power:** ASI-led conservation after the 2016 earthquake and the 2017 Prime Ministerial visit projected care, continuity and trust.
- **People-to-people ties:** Such sites attract pilgrims, monks and scholars, deepening emotional connect with Myanmar and the wider region.
- **Policy value:** These efforts support Act East, complement relic expositions, Buddhist summits and circuit development, and reinforce India's image as a cultural partner.

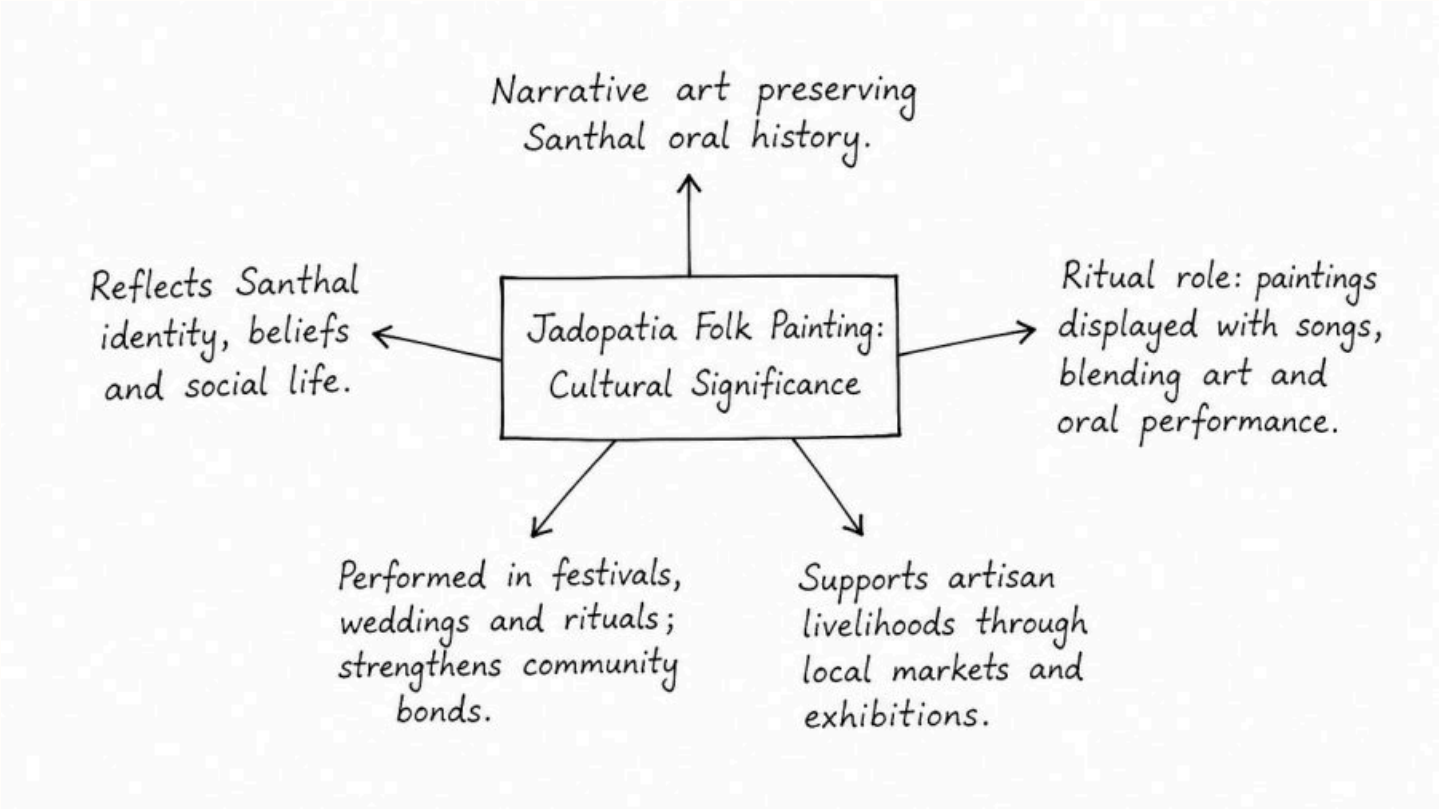
Thus, heritage restoration converts history into diplomacy. By preserving sacred monuments across Southeast Asia, India strengthens influence through respect, partnership and shared memory.

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4. Underline the cultural significance of Jadopatia folk painting. How does this narrative art form serve as a medium for preserving the oral history and cosmology of the Santhal tribe? (150 words)

Jadopatia, or Jadupatua, is a distinctive scroll painting tradition from Jharkhand, especially among Santhal communities. It is not only art, but also a living form of narration, ritual and memory. Recognised with a GI tag, it reflects the tribe's identity, beliefs and social life.



- **Cultural significance:** It uses natural pigments and is performed during festivals, weddings and rituals, strengthening community bonds.
- **Economic value:** It supports artisan livelihoods through local markets and exhibitions.
- **Ritual role:** The paintings are displayed with songs, making them a blend of visual art and oral performance.

As oral history: Jadopatia preserves Santhal legends, migrations, daily life, fairs, wars and the origin myth of Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Budhi. The painter-singer, or Chitrakar, recites Pater Gaan while unrolling the scroll, acting like a portable archive.

As cosmology: It depicts creation, death, afterlife and divine forces, including the soul's journey after death. Thus, Jadopatia keeps Santhal memory, belief and worldview alive across generations.

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