



Preservation of Cultural Heritage

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For Prelims: Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act 1958, ASI, National Monuments Authority, UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites

For Mains: Significance of Cultural Heritage, Challenges in Preserving Cultural Heritage

Why in News

- The 13th century [Sun Temple at Konark \(Odisha\)](#), the world heritage monument, entered into controversy over allegations that the stone carvings on the outer surface are being replaced with plain blocks of stones causing irreplaceable loss to the uniqueness of the temple.
 - It is alleged that the stones used in restoration do not match the quality of the original stone blocks, which are still available nearby.
- Although the [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has denied the allegations, the issue highlights the need for preservation of cultural heritage.

What is Cultural Heritage?

- **Cultural Heritage** includes the **physical, or tangible cultural heritage**, such as artworks. These are generally split into two groups of movable and immovable heritage:
 - **Immovable heritage** includes buildings, historic places and monuments.
 - **Moveable heritage** includes books, documents, moveable artworks, music and other artefacts that are considered worthy of preservation for the future.

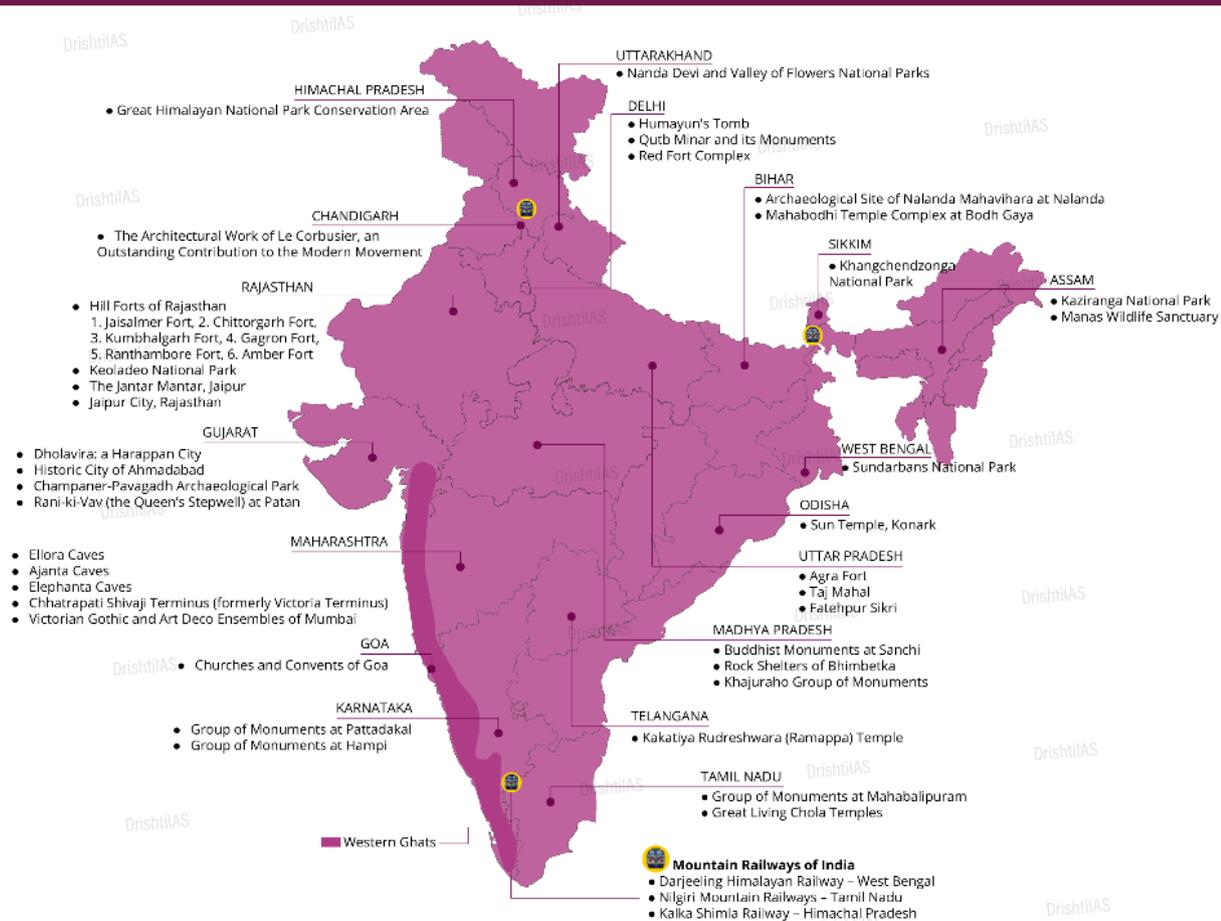
What Measures have been Taken for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage?

- **International Initiatives:**
 - [UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites](#)
 - It **necessitates stringent measures for the protection** and preservation of historical monuments.
 - Till date, there are 40 designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India.
 - Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1977
 - [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2005](#)
 - Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2006
 - [United Nations World Heritage Committee](#)
 - India is a Signatory to all the above-mentioned conventions
- **In India:**
 - **Fundamental Right:** Under [Article 29 of the Indian Constitution](#) - Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own has the right to conserve the same.
 - **Fundamental Duties:** It is the [Fundamental Duty](#) of every citizen of India (under

- Article 51A)** to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.
- **DPSP:** Under [Article 49 of the Indian Constitution](#) (Directive Principles of State Policy), the **State shall protect every monument or place of artistic or historic interest** (declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of **national importance**) from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export.”
 - **Statutory Backing:** The **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act 1958** provides for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
 - **Institutions Responsible:** The [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) under the **Ministry of Culture**, is the **premier organization** for the archaeological research and **protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.**
 - It administers more than 3650 ancient monuments, archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
 - The [National Monuments Authority \(NMA\)](#) established in accordance with the AMASR Act is responsible for the **conservation and preservation of monuments and sites** (and banned/restricted areas surrounding centrally designated monuments).
 - One of the NMA's roles is to evaluate **granting permits to applicants for construction-related activities** in restricted and regulated areas.

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UNESCO World Heritage Sites



FACTS

- Total Number of World Heritage Sites in India: 40
- Total Cultural Heritage Sites: 32
- Total Natural Sites: 7 (Kaziranga National Park, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Sundarbans National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Keoladeo National Park)
- Mixed Site: 1 (Khangchendzonga National Park)
- World Heritage Sites Listed First: Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves (all in 1983)
- Latest Addition (2021): Harappan city of Dholavira (40th site), Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple (39th site)
- Countries With the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49)
- India is 6th in number of World Heritage Sites in the World



What is the Significance of Preserving Cultural Heritage?

- **Economic Significance:** The **cultural industries are key components of modern economies**. The prevalence of cultural sites, services and art forms tend to **boost tourism, sustain livelihoods, and attract investment**.
- **Historical-Social Significance:** The non-economic benefits of culture include the **preservation of history, the generation of knowledge, and the nurturing of creativity**.

What are the Gaps in Ensuring Safety of Heritage Structures in India?

- **Limited Trained Manpower** in structural safety and limited infrastructure, particularly of experimental and numerical facilities are possible reasons for not undertaking the necessary research and development in structural safety by govt agencies.

- At institutional level lack of efforts in mainstreaming heritage preservation as a career and providing skills remains a formidable challenge.
- **Infrastructural Shortcomings:** There is a **lack of convergence between modern-day engineering education and traditional knowledge** of construction materials and practices; this is a serious hindrance to preservation of heritage.
 - Heritage conservation efforts in the private sector in India largely **address only the aesthetic aspect** with architects typically steering these projects and **structural safety is not in focus.**
- **Informalisation of Systems:** Formal systems are absent in India, which recognise the need for use of scientific tools for diagnosis and quantitative assessment of residual capacity before choosing repair or strengthening strategy.
 - India has a large stock of heritage structures, which has to be addressed through a formal platform focussing on their structural safety.
- **Lack of Awareness:** There is **widespread lack of civic sense among domestic visitors** who tend to deface historical monuments e.g. by inscribing their names on historical monuments.
- **Environmental Pollution:** There are several types of environmental pollution which are killing the heritage properties e.g. **Taj Mahal was badly affected by Sulphur dioxide** etc. emitted by the oil refinery at Mathura.
- **Lack of Funding:** Finances continue to be crucial challenges for preservation of cultural heritage. The conservation and preservation of heritage has **not received due attention from public authorities.**
- **Lack of Centre-State Coordination:** Despite the presence of some of the best conservation and heritage management institutions in India like Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH) , **a multidisciplinary approach to practising heritage conservation is lacking** due to lack of coordination between the centre and the state.
- **Outdated Mechanism of Excavation and Exploration:** Due to the prevalence of outdated mechanisms, [Geographic Information System](#) and [Remote Sensing](#) are rarely used in exploration.
 - Also, **local bodies involved in urban heritage projects are often not equipped enough** to handle heritage conservation.

What More Can be Done to Preserve India's Cultural Heritage?

- **Implementation of Operation Guidelines:** The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention need to be stringently followed by the authorities involved in protection of cultural and natural heritage.
 - These guidelines set forth the procedure for:
 - The inscription of properties on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger.
 - The protection and conservation of World Heritage properties.
 - The granting of International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund.
 - The mobilization of national and international support in favour of the Convention.
- **Changes in Foundational Level:** Holistic preservation of Indian heritage would require **recourse to pedagogical changes in school and higher education** intended to rediscover the ancient Indian wisdom in arts, sciences and philosophies, which hinges on mainstream fundamental research and R&D in the area.
 - Economic viability of heritage will be a by-product of the process due to a revival of traditional arts and crafts, known popularly as intangible heritage, and **initiation of new disciplines.**
- **Value Based and Scientific Approach:** It is essential that a holistic conservation plan through a multidisciplinary team is prepared following a **value based and scientific approach** before undertaking any conservation works.
 - Need for partnerships with various institutions and organisations for **specialised conservation works** is required to fill in the specific **expertise gap in ASI.**
- **Integrating Heritage-City Planning:** Heritage Impact Assessment of all major infrastructure

projects should also be taken into account.

- Heritage Projects need to be synced with the planning of the city and merge with typical historic character in different areas of the city.

▪ **Heritage Tourism and Education:** By promoting **heritage tourism**, India can successfully preserve cultural and historic resources while boosting local **economies** by generating jobs, new businesses and **generating revenue to the governments**.

- There is a need to **create awareness about the heritage resource and spread a quest for heritage preservation** among the local population and the visitors.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q1. Which of the following is/are among the Fundamental Duties of citizens laid down in the Indian Constitution? (2012)

1. To preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture
2. To protect the weaker sections from social injustice
3. To develop the scientific temper and the spirit of inquiry
4. To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (c)

Q2. Recently, which one of the following was included in the UNESCO's World Heritage list? (2009)

- (a) Dilwara Temple
- (b) Kalka-Shimla Railway
- (c) Bhitarkanika Mangrove Area
- (d) Visakhapatnam to Araku valley railway line

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss. (2018)