LOTUSARISE IAS

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UPSC 2027 EDITION

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES · PRELIMS & MAINS GS PAPER I

Indian Art & Culture

Complete notes on architecture, sculpture, painting, crafts, music, dance and theatre, religion and philosophy, language and literature, heritage, festivals and the institutions of culture.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

39	8	234	18	344
CHAPTERS	UNITS	PRELIMS BOXES	UPDATE 2026 BOXES	PICTURES AND FIGURES

INSIDE EVERY CHAPTER

- Prelims Fact and Prelims Trap boxes
- Update 2026 boxes where facts have changed
- Faint marks on key lines, definitions and terms
- A Prelims Quick Revision panel



UNIT I
Architecture

UNIT II
Sculpture, Painting and Crafts

UNIT III
Performing Arts

UNIT IV
Religion and Philosophy

UNIT V
Language and Literature

UNIT VI
Heritage, Festivals and Society

UNIT VII
Culture and the State

UNIT VIII
Trade, Travellers and Science

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Updated to November 2026

LOTUSARISE IAS

Indian Art and Culture for UPSC

Notes for UPSC Civil Services Prelims and Mains, General Studies Paper I

UPSC 2027 Edition · November 2026 · Compiled by Arvind KrS

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How to read this book

Every chapter keeps the full notes and adds a few reading aids around them. The aids sit in their own boxes or as faint marks, so the notes read exactly as before.

A faint yellow mark runs over the sentences that carry the most Prelims-relevant facts.

Key lines
The sentences worth reading twice. Only a few points in each section are marked.

Chaitya is a prayer hall with a stupa at one end.

Definitions
A faint blue mark shows where a term is defined.

The temples of Khajuraho follow the Nagara style, built under the Chandelas around 950–1050 CE.

Key terms and dates
A gold underline marks terms that UPSC asks about (the first two uses in a chapter); dates are set in red.

PRELIMS FACT A FACT TO ADD
An extra point from a Prelims point of view that the notes do not already state.

Prelims Fact
Extra facts, lists and pairs of the kind Prelims tests, checked against reliable sources.

PRELIMS TRAP A COMMON CONFUSION
Two look-alike facts set side by side, with the correct answer.

Prelims Trap
Confusions that question-setters use, resolved in a few lines.

UPDATE 2026 WHAT HAS CHANGED
The current position, with its month and year, where a fact in the notes has changed since mid-2025.

Update 2026
Counts, lists and awards brought up to date, placed right after the line they update.

Passages that were set in a box in the original notes keep a soft indigo panel.

Boxed passages
Part of the notes themselves, kept boxed as they were.

❀ **Prelims Quick Revision**

- **Term**: the point to remember.
- **Term**: one line each.

Prelims Quick Revision
The chapter's high-yield facts in one-line points, at the end of every chapter.

A THREE-ROUND PLAN

1. **First reading:** read the chapter in full, with its boxes.
2. **Second reading:** read the marked lines, the definitions and the Prelims boxes; check the Update 2026 boxes for the current position.
3. **Last week before Prelims:** revise from the Quick Revision panels and the traps.

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UNIT I

5 CHAPTERS

Architecture

From the planned cities of the Harappans to rock-cut caves, stupas, free-standing pillars and the Nagara, Dravida and Vesara styles of temple architecture.

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TOPICS COVERED IN THIS UNIT

01 **Indus Valley Civilization Architecture**
Indian Architecture · Indus Valley Civilisation Architecture

02 **Cave Architecture**
History & Origin of Cave Architecture · Rock Cut Caves

03 **Stupa Architecture**
Meaning, Function & Structure of Stupa · Stupa Architecture in different periods

04 **Pillar Architecture**
Pillar Architecture: Indus Valley Civilization · Pillar Architecture: Mahajanapada · Pillar Architecture: Mauryan's Pillars

05 **Temple Architecture**
Temples Architecture at Pre-Gupta Period · Temple Architecture at Gupta Dynasty · Evolution of Temple Architecture · Styles of Temple Architecture

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INDIAN ART & CULTURE
PRELIMS · GS PAPER I

Stupa Architecture

A **stupa (literally "heap" or "pile") is a reliquary, a shrine containing the remains of a holy or sainted person and/or artifacts (relics) associated with them, originating in India prior to the 5th century BCE as tombs of holy men and evolving afterwards into sacred sites dedicated to the Buddha** (l. c. 563 – c. 483 BCE).

Later, **stupas were also raised to honor Buddhist arhats (saints), bodhisattvas (enlightened ones), other saintly figures, or local deities.** A stupa is a **hemispherical structure**, with a spire at the top, sometimes situated on a base that varies in shape and size (depending on the designated purpose of that particular stupa) surrounded by a walkway for visitors.

Buddhism was the earliest Indian religion to require large communal spaces for worship.

This led to **three types of architectural forms** the **stupa, the vihara and the chaitya.**

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS — History of India and Indian National Movement

MAINS · GS PAPER I — Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times

CONTENTS

01 Meaning, Function & Structure of Stupa
02 Stupa Architecture in different periods

Many religious Buddhist shrines came up between the 1st century BC – 1st century AD.

The **term stupa has been referred to in Rig Veda but not in the context as we know it.** The term then referred to the **fire coming out of the sacrificial altar.**

Rigveda refers to a Stupa raised by the King Varuna above the forest in a place having no foundation.

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Pali word "Thupa" means a conical heap, a pile or a mound or a conical or bell shaped shrine containing a relic.

Stupa, originally the **focus of a popular cult of the dead, is a large burial mound containing a relic of the Buddha.**

It celebrates the Buddha's parinirvana (end of cycle of suffering), symbolizes his eternal body, and is an object of worship.

There is evidence of community patronage of landowners, merchants, officials, monks, nuns and artisans associated with these Buddhist projects.

Initially stupas were Buddha's relic places. Then it got **extended to his followers as well and gradually stupa itself became an object of worship.**

Some stupas, such as the Great Stupa at Sanchi, India, or the Boudhanath Stupa at Kathmandu, Nepal, are large, ornate structures while others are more modest.

The **construction of stupas, on a large scale and associated with Buddhism, began throughout India during the reign of Ashoka the Great (268-232 BCE) of the Mauryan Empire** (322-185 BCE) after his conversion to Buddhism.

Prior to Ashoka's reign, there were eight stupas (or ten, according to some scholars) dedicated to the Buddha (and containing his cremated remains) at different sites, which correlated to important events in his life. In an effort to spread Buddhism and encourage the enlightenment of his subjects, Ashoka had the remains disinterred and ordered the construction of **many more** (84,000, according to legend), each one receiving a certain allotment of the remains which empowered the structure with mystical energy.

Buddhist stupas are only one type, as there are also Hindu and Jain stupas, but Buddhist stupas remain the most popular, and their construction, worldwide, has been the most prolific.

> PRELIMS FACT **A JAIN STUPA AT MATHURA**
>
> Jains also built stupas. The best known stood at **Kankali Tila**, Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), dug by Cunningham (1871) and above all by A. A. Führer (1890–91). Its finds include **ayagapatas** ('tablets of homage') carved with Jain symbols and Tirthankara figures, such as a Parshvanatha tablet of about 15 CE, along with inscriptions of the Kushan period. The sculptures are now in the State Museum, Lucknow, and the Mathura Museum.

Stupas exist in countries around the world, from **India to Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, European nations, Australia, the United States, and more.** Whichever culture raises one of these structures, its purpose is always the same: to provide a sacred space for people to center themselves on higher thoughts and revitalize themselves spiritually.

After the demise of Buddha and his cremation at Kushinagar and later the **corporeal relics was distributed among 8 Mahajanapadas.**

Initially 8 Stupas (Saririka Chaityas) were constructed at 8 centres → Rajagriha, Vaishali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Ramagrama, Vethadipa, Pava and Kushinagara.

Drona the Brahmin who initiated the distribution, himself erected a Stupa to enshrine the urn that was used to divide the relics.

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Mauryas arrived too late for a share of the relic and were given the wood ashes from the cremation pyre, and **they too built a Stupa in their city of Pipphalavana.**

Thus all together 10 Stupas were erected i.e. 8 on corporeal relics and two on urn and over wood ashes by Drona and the Mauryas respectively.

Stupa is the built on the **relics of buddha** like his **bodily remains and objects used by him**.

They were built by the donations of king specially of **Satavahanas**; guilds such as **ivory workers; men and women, bhikkhus and bhikkhunis.**

Jatakas mentions about the existence of Stupa but does not throw any light on the structural details of Stupa.

Sujata Jataka and Bahiya Sutta describes Stupas as raised earthen mounds to commemorate the deceased ➔ This indicates that most probably prior to Ashoka most of the stupas were made of clay.

Archaeological excavations and findings proved that **during Ashoka's reign use of bricks and stone for constructional purpose became popular.** Predecessors of Ashoka like **Bimbisara and Ajatsatru both had constructed a number of Stupas in honour of the Buddha** which contained relics of Buddha.

With the emergence of **Mahayana sect it was not necessary that all the Stupas contained relics**. **It was taken over by the image worship**, with the transformation from non-iconic to iconic for changes were also found in the architectural patterns.

After Ashoka none of the Mauryan ruler showed any interest in propagating Buddhism. Then the Sungas gave a new dimension to the Stupa architecture. **During Sunga and Ikshvakus period enlargement and additions were made in the existing Stupas of Sanchi, Bharhut and Amravati.**



The Great Stupa of Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh

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01 Meaning, Function & Structure of Stupa

The fundamental basis of Buddhism is that **life is suffering: one suffers for want of what one does not have but, once one has that thing, suffers for fear of losing it and, once it is gone, suffers the loss**.

As long as one lives, one will suffer in this way but, the Buddha realized, **there was a way to stop suffering, and this was to change the way one interpreted the world and one's self.** Through an understanding of the **Four Noble Truths, and practicing the precepts of the Eight-Fold Pat**h, one could elevate one's understanding of existence, control one's thoughts and actions, and live at peace with one's self and others.

All that one **desires, fears losing, and mourns for are ephemeral** – they were not made to last – and so are without final meaning; one should, therefore, appreciate these aspects of life for what they are but not cling to them since it is their nature to appear for only a short time and then vanish. The **Buddhist stupa is a physical manifestation of this understanding which invites adherents to both center and elevate themselves through various rituals or simply by gathering and focusing their energies at the site**.

The **physical appearance of the stupa is intended to elevate the mind**. The **top spire (yasti) symbolizes the axis mundi (axis of the world)**, the line through the center of the earth which the universe revolves around. It is also thought to represent the World Tree whose roots are deep within the earth and branches in heaven, a symbol common in many cultures around the world. The **yasti is surrounded by a square gate known as the harmika**, and over the yasti and harmika are **parasols which symbolize protection, majesty, and the Buddha himself**.

The large hemisphere descends from the yasti to a **platform or base, sometimes square**, which is often surrounded by a wall with **four gates (toranas) corresponding to the four cardinal directions.** These directions, in turn, relate to four events in Buddha's life:

East – Birth of Buddha

South – Enlightenment of Buddha

West – First Sermon of Buddha

North – Nirvana/Release from Samsara of Buddha

Basic structure of Stupa

The stupa consists of a **square platform** known as **medhi.**

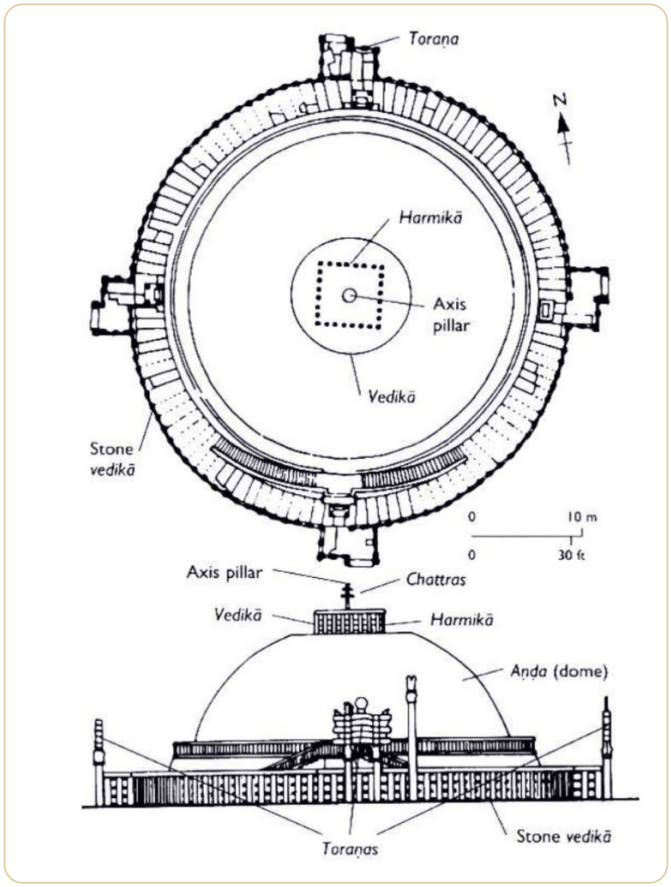
On medhi there is a hemispherical structure which encloses a casket.

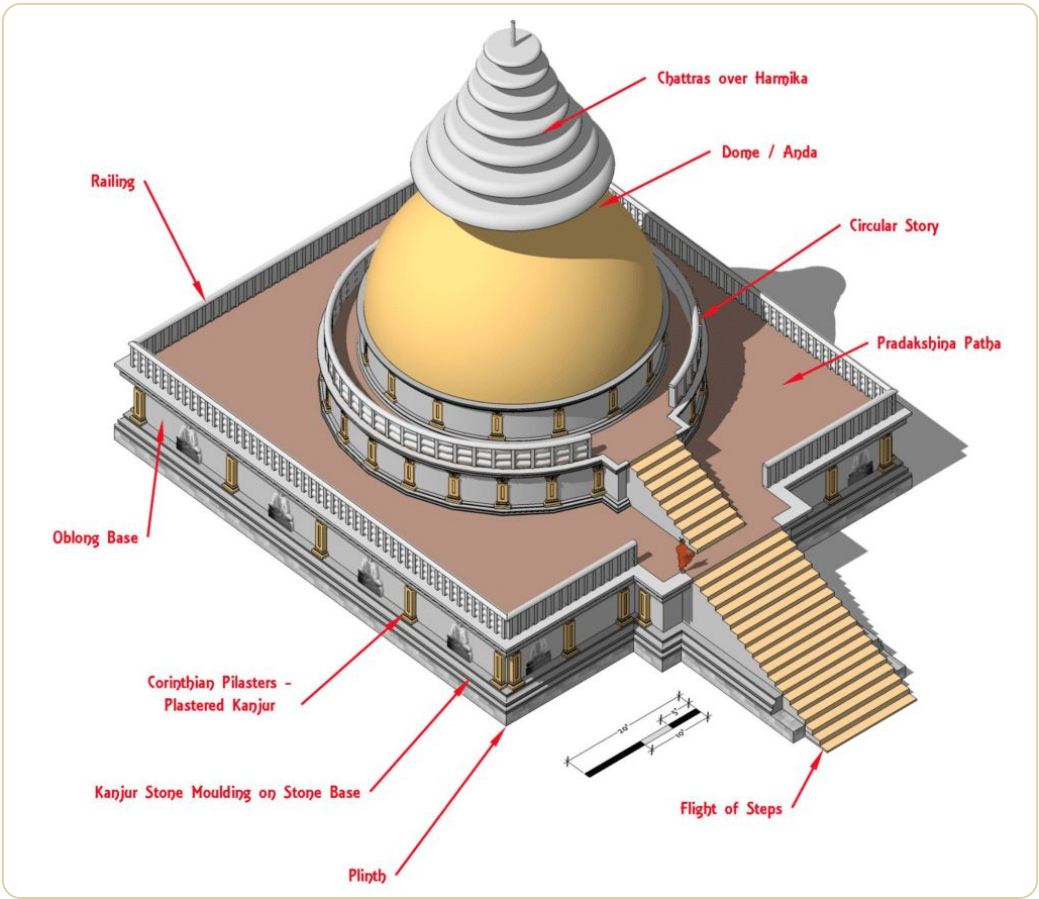
The medhi is surrounded by **vedika(boundary wall).**

Between the medhi and the vedika was pradakshina path or the circum-ambulatory.

On the stupa there was **harmika** followed by **one or more chatris** which signified **'axis mundi' or axis of the world.**

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FEATURES OF STUPA

The stupa's core was composed of **unburnt brick**, with a **burnt brick outer face covered** in a thick coating of plaster.

The stupa was capped by a wooden railing that encircled a **pradakshina walkway** (circumambulatory path).

It is a magnificent stupa with a circumambulatory route and a circular mound. During the **time of Ashoka**, the big stupa at **Sanchi** was erected with **bricks**, then covered with stone and many further additions were made.

Gateways were added in addition to the **circumambulatory circuit.** With the elaborations in stupa design, architects and sculptors had plenty of room to plan elaborations and carve out images.

Wooden sculptures were used to embellish the **medhi and toran**. As a form of worship, devotees walk around the pradakshina patha, or open ambulatory pathway.

Sculptures were largely utilized to decorate stupas, the **torana,** and the **medhi,** as well as a form of religious expression.

The **three chhatra** on the stupas symbolize the **Buddhist triratnas: Buddha** (the enlightened), **Dhamma** (doctrine), and **Sangh** (community).

Bairat in Rajasthan has one of the **outstanding examples of a stupa building from the third century BCE.**

Sanchi Stupa in Madhya Pradesh, for example, is the m**ost well-known Ashokan stupa**. The **oldest is the Piprahwa stupa in Uttar Pradesh.**

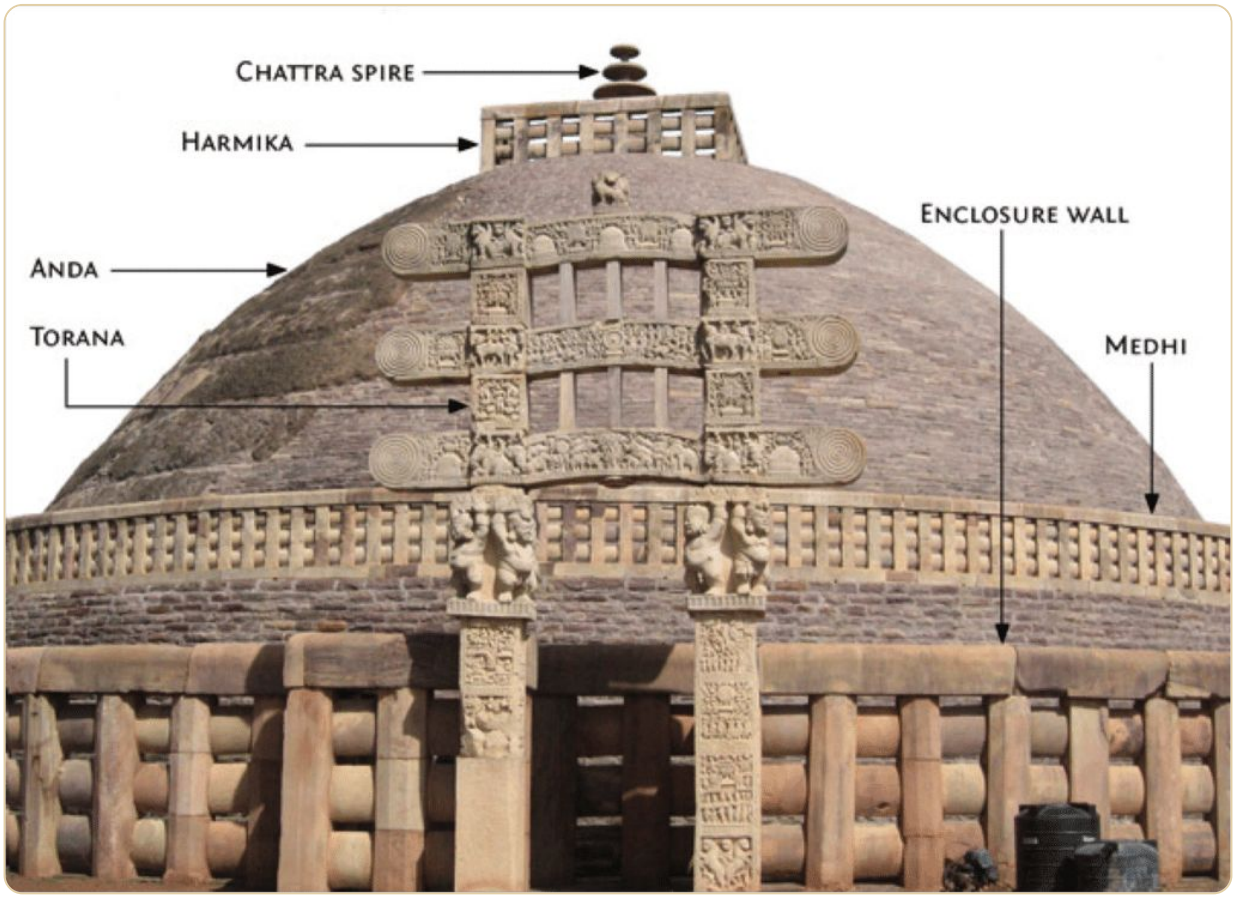
Rajagriha, Vaishali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Ramagrama, Vethadipa, Pava, Kushinagar, and Pippalivana are the nine stupas built following Buddha's death.

STRUCTURE OF STUPA – TERMINOLOGY

- **Anda**
  - It is the semi-circular mound built on earth.
- **Harmika**
  - It is the balcony like structure above anda.
  - It is believed to be the living place of god.
- **Yashti**
  - It is the mast above harmika surmounted by umbrella.
- **Railing**
  - It is around the mound believed to separate the stupa from surrounding world and make it sacred.
- **Chatra**
  - It is the umbrella built on the **top of the dome**
- **Pradakshinapatha**
  - It is the path for clockwise circumambulation surrounded by a fence built encircling the stupa.
  - Stone balustrade (wooden fence) consisted of thabas (octagonal upright posts) capped by uhnisa (continuous caping stone).
  - These posts are connected by **3 horizontal rails** called **Suchis**.

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- **Torana**
  - Gateways having sculptures depicting Jataka Tales
- **Medhi**
  - Square platform
- **Aniconist buddha**
  - It is related with Hinayana or Theravada Buddhism.
  - It prohibits representing Buddha in human form.
  - Instead they use symbol ➔ Example Empty seat to indicate meditation of Buddha; wheel represent Dharmachakra and first sermon of Buddha in sarnath, stupa indicate mahaparinirbana of buddha.



STUPA ARCHITECTURE IN NORTH INDIA

- There is very little information regarding the history of the development of Stupa architecture in north.
- The Gupta period is considered as the golden age of Indian history.
- Guptas were Vaishnavites but were tolerant towards Buddhism.
- It is said that the Stupa at Sarnath was built during the Gupta period.

STUPA ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTH INDIA

- The architectural movement in the south (Andhra) flourished under Satavahanas.
- Rock cut architecture of Hinayana sect became more prominent.

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NORTHERN INDIA	SOUTHERN INDIA
Presence of torana dwara	**No torana dwara**
Circular stupa	**Non circular** stupa
No decorations on hemispheres	**Decorations** present on hemisphere
Buddha depicted by symbols	Buddha depicted by **symbols as well as in anthropomorphic forms**

- **Different kinds of Stupas**

Sharirik – the casket enclosed the **mortal remains of various Buddhist figures** such as the sariputra and maudgalayan stupa at sanchi.

Paribhogika – the casket enclosed the **various objects and utensils** used by the various Buddhist figures during their lifetime.

Uddeshika –mainly **used for pooja and aradhana**

- **Classification of Stupas based on form and function**

Relic Stupa–in which the relics or remains of the Buddha, his disciples and lay saints are interred.

Object stupa – in which the items interred are objects belonged to the Buddha or his disciples such as a begging bowl or robe, or important Buddhist scriptures.

Commemorative stupas – built to commemorate events in the lives of Buddha or his disciples.

Symbolic stupa – to symbolise aspects of Buddhist theology, for example, Borobudur is considered to be the symbol of "Three Worlds (dhatu) and the spiritual stages (bhumi) in a Mahayana bodhisattva's character."

Votive stupas – constructed to commemorate visits or to gain spiritual benefits, usually at the site of prominent stupas which are regularly visited.

02 Stupa Architecture in different periods

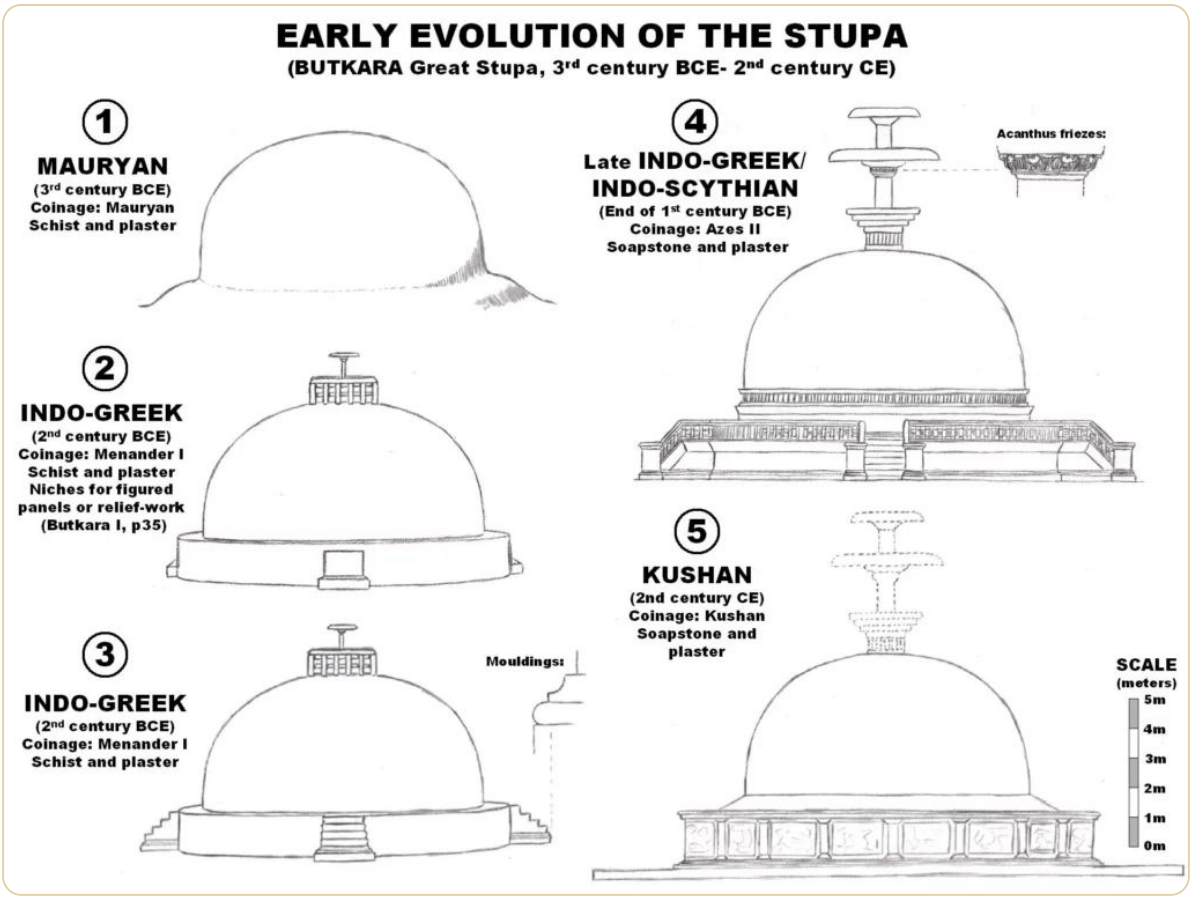
- The shape of the stupa represents the Buddha, crowned and sitting in meditation posture on a lion throne.
- His crown is the top of the spire; his head is the square at the spire's base; his body is the vase shape; his legs are the four steps of the lower terrace; and the base is his throne.
- The stupa represents the **five purified elements**
  - 1. **The square base represents earth**
  - 2. The **hemispherical dome/vase represents water**
  - 3. The **conical spire represents fire**
  - 4. The **upper lotus parasol and the crescent moon represents air**
  - 5. The **sun and the dissolving point represents the element of space**

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- The core of the stupa was made up of unburnt brick and the outer face of burnt brick, covered with thick layer of plaster.
- The stupa was crowned by an umbrella of wooden fence enclosing a path for pradakshina (circumambulatory path).
- One of the best examples of the structure of a stupa in the **3rd century BC is at Bairat in Rajasthan**. It is a very grand stupa having a circular mound with a circumambulatory path.
- The great stupa at Sanchi was built with bricks during the time of Ashoka and later it was covered with stone and many new additions were made.
- Ashoka was responsible for the construction of several stupas, which were large halls, capped with domes and bore symbols of the Buddha.
- The most important ones are located at Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Sanchi, Amravati and Nagarjunakonda.
- **In the subsequent century, stupas were elaborately built with certain additions like the enclosing of the circumambulatory path with railings and sculptural decoration.**
- There were numerous stupas constructed earlier but expansions or new additions were made in the 2nd century BC.
- The stupa consists of a **cylindrical drum and a circular anda with a harmika and chhatra on the top** which remain consistent throughout with minor variations and changes in shape and size.
- The **three chhatra on the stupas represent triratnas of Buddhism i.e. Buddha (The enlightened), Dhamma (doctrine) and Sangh (order).**
- Apart from the circumambulatory path, gateways were added.
- Thus, with the elaborations in stupa architecture, there was ample space for the architects and sculptors to plan elaborations and to carve out images.
- **During the early phase of Buddhism, Buddha is depicted symbolically through footprints, stupas, lotus throne, chakra, etc.**
  - This indicates either simple worship, or paying respect, or at times depicts historicization of life events.
  - **Gradually narrative became a part of the Buddhist tradition.**
  - Thus events from the life of the Buddha, the Jataka stories, were depicted on the railings and toranas of the stupas.
  - Mainly synoptic narrative, continuous narrative and episodic narrative are used in the pictorial tradition.
  - While **events from the life of the Buddha became an important theme in all the Buddhist monuments, the Jataka stories also became equally important for sculptural decorations.**
  - The main events associated with the Buddha's life which were frequently depicted were events related to the birth, renunciation, enlightenment, dhammachakrapravartana, and mahaparinibbana (death).
  - Among the **Jataka stories that are frequently depicted** are Chhadanta Jataka, Vidurpundita Jataka, Ruru Jataka, Sibi Jataka, Vessantara Jataka and Shama Jataka.
  - The original brick Stupa built during Ashoka's time was at first enclosed by wooden fence and later replaced by the massive stone balustrade.

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- All the four gateways were in beautiful sculptures.



Piprahwa Stupa (Uttar Pradesh)

- Piprahwa is a village near Siddharthnagar city in **Siddharthnagar district of the Uttar Pradesh.**
- Piprahwa is best known for its archaeological site and excavations that suggest that it may have been the **burial place of the portion of the Buddha's ashes** that were given to his **own Shakya clan.**
- A **large stupa and the ruins of several monasteries as well as a museum** are located within the site. Ancient **residential complexes and shrines** were uncovered at the adjacent mound of **Ganwaria.**



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Ramabhar Stupa (Kushinagar, UP)

- Ramabhar Stupa was built over a portion of the Buddha's ashes on the spot where he was cremated by the ancient **Malla people.**
- Ramabhar Stupa, also called a **Mukutbandhan-Chaitya, is the cremation place of Buddha**. This site is 1.5 km east of the main Nirvana Temple on the Kushinagar-Deoria road.
- dome shaped monument having brickworks and stands at a height of 49 feet



First Relic (Saririka) Stupas at Vaishali



- Buddha Relic Stupa, enshrining **one of the eight parts of the mortal remains of Lord Buddha after he attained Mahaparinirvana**, is one of the most revered sites for Buddhists and a protected one for Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), located around 55km northwest of Patna in Vaishali district.

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- The **Buddha Relic Stupa was built by Lichhavis as a mud-stupa in the 5th century BC.**
- **Asoka→ opened the stupa to take out a little of the relic and thereafter closed the monument** while keeping back the original casket and coated the stupa with bricks.
- The stupa was later discovered in an archaeological excavation carried out under the aegis of Patna-based K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute during 1958-1962.
- The relic casket excavated from the core of the stupa contained the holy ashes of Lord Buddha mixed with earth, a piece of conch, pieces of beads, a thin golden leaf and a copper punch-marked coin.
- The casket was brought to Patna Museum in 1972.

Kesariya Stupa (Bihar)

- Kesariya stupa is a Buddhist stupa in Kesariya, **located at a distance of 110 kilometres (68 mi) from Patna, in the Champaran (east) district of Bihar**.
- The stupa is said to be the **tallest and the largest Buddhist stupa** in the world.
- Kesariya Stupa has a **circumference of almost 400 feet (120 m) and raises to a height of about 104 feet (32 m).**
- The ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) has declared it a protected **monument of national importance.**
- **History:**
  - The **first construction of the Stupa is dated to the 3rd century BCE.** The original Kesaria stupa probably dates to the time of **Ashoka (circa 250 BCE),** as the remains of a capital of a **Pillar of Ashoka** were discovered there.
  - The current stupa dates to the **Gupta Dynasty between 200 AD and 750 AD** and may have been associated with the 4th century ruler **Raja Chakravarti.**
  - The **stupa mound may even have been inaugurated during the Buddha's time,** as it corresponds in many respects to the description of the stupa erected by the Licchavis of Vaishali to house the alms bowl the Buddha has given them.
    - In ancient times, **Kesaria was under the rule of the Mauryas and the Licchavis.**
  - **Two great foreign travelers, Faxian (Fahien) and Xuan Zang (Hsuan Tsang),** had visited this place in ancient times and have left interesting and informative accounts of their travels.
  - The **discovery of gold coins bearing the seal of the famous emperor Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty (AD 30 to AD 375)** goes on to further establish the ancient heritage of Kesaria.
- **Exploration:**
  - The stupa's exploration **had started in the early 19th century** after its discovery led by Colonel Mackenzie in 1814.
  - Later, it was **excavated by General Cunningham in 1861-62 and in 1998 an ASI team led by archaeologist K.K. Muhammad** had excavated the site properly.

Bairat Stupa

- Bairat Temple is a **freestanding Buddhist temple**, a **Chaityagriha**, located about a mile southwest of the city **Viratnagar, Rajasthan**, India, on a hill locally called **"Bijak-ki-Pahari" ("Hill of the Inscription")**.

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- The temple is of a **circular type, formed of a central stupa surrounded by a circular colonnade and an enclosing wall.**
- It was **built during the time of Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE**, and near it were found two of Ashoka's **Minor Rock Edicts**, the Bairat and the Calcutta-Bairat Minor Rock Edicts.
- Bairat's history goes back to the time of the Mahabharata, when it was known as **"Viratnagar". Viratnagar was the capital of the ancient Mahajanapada (kingdom) of Machcha or Matsya.**
- The **Banganga River originates from a nearby village, Mair.**



Sanchi Stupa

- Sanchi is a **Buddhist complex**, famous for its Great Stupa, on a **hilltop at Sanchi Town in Raisen District of the State of Madhya Pradesh.**
- Early Indian sculpture that adorned the 1st-century BC entrances of the Buddhist relic mound known as the **Great Stupa at Sanchi,** Madhya Pradesh, which is considered one of the most spectacular monuments of its time. **From the 3rd century BC to the 11th century AD, the territory of Sanchi, like the great centers of Sarnath and Mathura**, had a continuous artistic history.
- The **Sanchi Stupa** is one of India's most important **Buddhist landmarks**, and it houses some of the country's earliest stone buildings. Also, It is an important monument of Indian architecture and one of India's oldest stone constructions.
- It was commissioned in the **third century** BCE by **Mauryan ruler Ashoka** the Great. It began with a basic **hemispheric brick** edifice erected over the **Buddha's relics.** Originally, it was smaller than its present dimensions. It was expanded in later periods.
- Sanchi, a historical city nestled in the **Vindhya Range** 46 kilometers from Madhya Pradesh's capital Bhopal, also has 50 additional sites, including temples and monasteries.
- The beautiful carvings and inscriptions show Indian architecture from the **Mauryan era** (3rd century BCE) through its downfall in the later medieval age (around 11th century CE).

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- The **Mahastupa (Great Stupa)**, the **Ashokan pillar (with its inscriptions),** and the beautiful torans are all noteworthy features of the Sanchi complex (gateways).
- **Since 1989, Sanchi Stupa has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site**. Madhya Pradesh is home to Sanchi.
- It is possibly India's best-preserved Buddhist monument complex.





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Historical background

- Sanchi's monuments currently consist of a collection of **Buddhist monuments** that date from the **Mauryan Empire (3rd century BCE),** continue through the **Gupta Empire (5th century CE),** and conclude around the 12th century CE.
- The **Great Stupa, also known as Stupa No. 1, is the oldest and greatest monument**.
- It was created under the **Mauryans** and is **ornamented with one of Ashoka's Pillars**.
- The **Great Stupa** was enlarged and ornamented **with gates and railings** in the succeeding centuries, particularly during the **Shungas and Satavahanas,** and minor stupas, including **Stupa No.2 and Stupa No. 3,** were also built in the vicinity.
  - **Stupa-1** is presumed to have the **relics of the Buddha**,
  - **Stupa-2**, the relics of ten less famous **arhats** belonging to three different generations. Their names are found on the relic casket.
  - **Stupa-3** has the relics of **Sariputta and Mahamougalayana**.
- According to **Ashokavadana,** the stupa was vandalized sometime during the 2nd century BCE, an incident that some have linked to the ascension of the **Shunga** monarch **Pushyamitra Shunga**, who overthrew the **Mauryan Empire** as an army officer.
- The first stupa may have been **demolished by Pushyamitra**, and **his son Agnimitra rebuilt it**, according to legend.
- During the Shunga period, the original brick stupa was covered with **stone**.
- In 1819, British captain **Edward Fell** wrote one of the first accounts of the Sanchi Stupa.
- It took another 93 years for John Marshall to 'rediscover' the site, and another seven years for it to be restored to its current state.

Sanchi Stupa – Features

- The **Mahastupa (Great Stupa)**, the Ashokan pillar (with its inscriptions), and the beautiful torans are all noteworthy features of the Sanchi complex (gateways).
- The **torans and fencing** are reported to be modeled after the bamboo crafts of the surrounding areas.
- The design of the stupa's fencing, as well as the torans' design, are reminiscent of bamboo craft and knotted bamboo.
- **Bricks** were used to construct the original construction. It was afterward covered with stone, **vedica**, and **torana (gateway).**
- The **stupa has four entrances**, with the southern one being the first to be completed. Others were added subsequently.
- The **gateways are ornately carved and ornamented with statues**. **Two vertical pillars and three horizontal bars** make up each **torana.** On the front and back of the bars are **magnificent sculptures.**
- They feature depictions of **shalabhanjika,** or **women grasping a tree branch**.
- Here are carved stories from the **Jataka tales.**
- A lower and upper pradakshina patha, or circumambulatory walk, runs around the structure. This stupa's upper pradakshina patha is unusual.

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- The **Ashokan Lion Capital pillar,** which has inscriptions on it, may be seen on the **southern side of the stupa.**
- Buddha is shown symbolically as an **empty throne, feet, chhatra, stupas, etc.**
- The **Anda** refers to the stupa's hemispheric dome. It is where the Buddha's relics are kept.
- On top of the dome/mound lies the **harmika,** which is a square railing.
- On top of the **harmika,** the **chhatra** is an umbrella. The location contains a sandstone pillar inscribed with **Ashoka's Schism Edict**.
- During the rule of the **Shunga dynasty**, the original brick dome was doubled in size, with stone slabs covering the previous dome.

PRELIMS FACT SANCHI'S GATEWAY INSCRIPTIONS

- On the **southern gateway**, the earliest of the four, a Brahmi inscription on the top architrave records it as the gift of **Ananda**, foreman of the artisans of the Satavahana king **Siri Satakarni**.
- Another inscription on the same gateway says that the **ivory-workers of Vidisha** carved one of its reliefs, suggesting that local ivory carvers also worked in stone.

The gateways went up in the order south, north, east and west.

Connection with Buddhism

- Surprisingly, **Buddha never came to Sanchi.**
- Foreign travelers like **Hiuen Tsang,** who documented the famous Buddhist circuit in India but didn't mention Sanchi in his books, didn't know either.
- Sanchi was not as revered as other Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India, according to Marshall's The Monuments of Sanchi (1938).
- The **iconic images of Buddh**a (like the Bodhi tree, a riderless horse, an empty throne, etc.) at Sanchi, according to scholars like Alfred A Foucher, are the result of **Graeco-Buddhist architectural** interaction.

Bharhut stupa

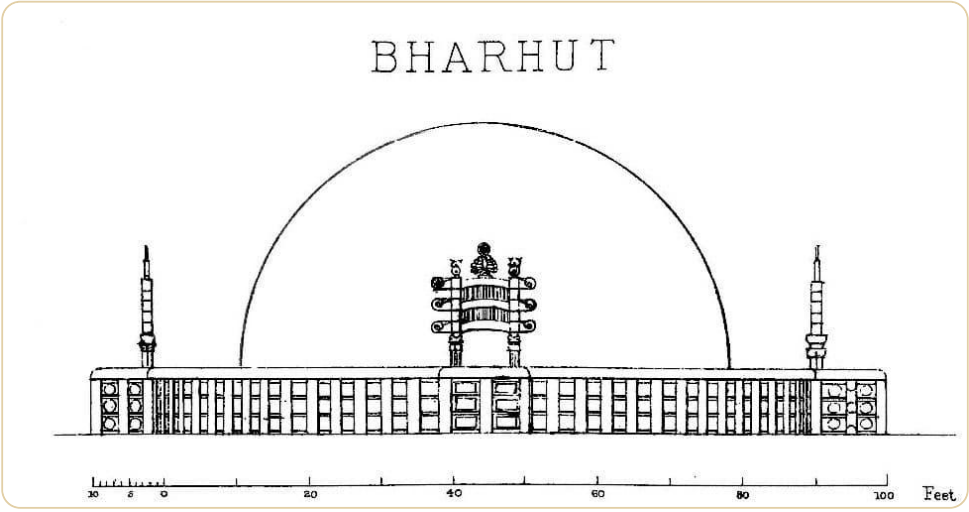
- **Bharhut stupas** are tall, like the Mauryan depictions of Yaksha and Yakshini, and the sculptural volume is modeled in low relief to ensure linearity. A large stupa was built in **100 B.C. in Bharhut,** which is now part of modern-day **Madhya Pradesh in Satna District**).
- The **Bharhut stupa may have been established by the Maurya king Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, but many works of art were added during the Sunga period,** with many friezes from the 2nd century BC.
- This stupa is primarily important for its sculpture as the dome is **now vanished.**
- Bharhut sculptures are tall, like the **Mauryan depictions** of **Yaksha and Yakshini,** and the sculptural volume is modelled in low relief to ensure linearity.
- The illusion of **three-dimensionality** is conveyed with slanted perspective in the relief panels displaying storytelling. The **narrative's clarity** is improved by focusing on key occurrences.
- Its **railings are made of red stone.**
- Gateways, pillars and the uprights and crossbars, all are full of sculptures depicting **pictorial representations of nature.**

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- These sculptures portray some realistic scenes of daily life.
- The **stupa (now dismantled and reassembled at Kolkata Museum)** contains numerous birth stories of the Buddha's previous lives, or Jataka tales.



East Gateway and Railings Bharhut Stupa



Architectural Significance

- Unlike the Mauryas' imperial art, the reliefs and figures in **Bharhut stupa** were provided by **lay people, monks, and nuns,** according to inscriptions on the railings. As a result, it is considered one of the earliest instances of Maurya popular art.
- The Buddha's previous incarnations' birth stories, known as **Jataka tales**, are depicted on the railings.
- The **aniconic phase** of Buddhist art is represented by the Bharhut stupa. Buddha has been shown as a **series of symbols.**
- Except for one foreigner, presumed to be an **Indo-Greek soldier,** who is represented wearing the Indian dhoti with **Buddhist iconography,** the style is mainly flat, with low bas relief, and all figures are depicted wearing the Indian dhoti.

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- The Bharhut stupa railings feature several depictions of **yakshas and yakshis,** who have long been a part of Indian society.
- The earliest depictions of the **Yakshas and Yakshis**, which later became part of later art, may be seen at Bharhut. These represent the spirit of nature and help to remind us of the divinity that lurks beneath all we see.
- The **Yakshas and Yakshis** represent nature's protection and plenty, which ensures the continuation of life.
- **Kubera,** whom the Yaksha and Yakshis attend, is depicted on the north gateway of the **Vedika at Bharhut.**
- The photos of Yakshi Chandra and Krishika, who are seen entangled with a tree, can be found. Another Yakshi, Ashok Dohada, holds an Ashoka Tree leaf in her palm as well as a kid in her womb (two hearts) and weaves her way through the tree like a creeper, symbolizing fertility.
- One of the sculptures depicts **Laksmi** on the Bharhut's railing, which is the earliest representation of the goddess.
- The sculptures on the Bharhut railings are in low relief and do not have the depth of later **Indic art.**
- A **Greek warrior** is depicted on a pillar of the vedika. He has short hair and a headband and is dressed in boots and a tunic.
- **A Nagaraja,** the serpent king, is shown on another fence, dressed in human form but wearing a **serpent hood**. **Naga deities**, like yakshas and yakshis, serve to remind us of the power, protection, and fertility of nature.
- The railing of the Bharhut "stupa" depicts **Queen Maya's dream,** which occurred before the Buddha's birth.
- The figure of the Buddha was never depicted in early Buddhist art. Instead, symbols of him were there, including a seat, footprints, the **Bodhi tree,** the wheel, and the "stupa." The railings' sculptural reliefs are a veritable collection of early **Buddhist iconographic elements.**
- **Narrative reliefs** at Bharhut show how artisans used the pictorial language very effectively to communicate stories.
  - In one such narrative, showing **Queen Mayadevi's (mother of Siddhartha Gautam) dream, a descending elephant is shown.**
  - The **queen is shown reclining on the bed whereas an elephant is shown on the top heading towards the womb of Queen Mayadevi**.

PRELIMS FACT BHARHUT: FINDS AND LABELS

- **Alexander Cunningham** visited Bharhut in 1873 and excavated it in 1874; his assistant J. D. Beglar continued the work.
- Many relief panels carry a short **Brahmi label** naming its scene or figure, which makes Bharhut a key to reading early Buddhist narrative art.
- A gateway inscription says it was set up by **Dhanabhuti** during the rule of the 'Suganam' (suganam raje), usually read as the Shungas, though other readings exist.

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Dhamek Stupa (Sarnath)

- **Dhamek Stupa** (also spelled Dhamekh and Dhamekha, traced to Sanskrit version Dharmarajika Stupa, which can be translated as the **Stupa of the reign of Dharma**) is a **massive stupa located at Sarnath, 13 kilometres (8.1 mi) away from Varanasi** in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India.
- An **Ashoka pillar with an edict engraved on it stands** near the site.
- **It was built in 500 CE to replace an earlier structure commissioned by Ashoka in 249 BCE**, along with several other monuments, to commemorate the Buddha's activities in this location.
- While visiting Sarnath in 640 CE, **Xuanzang** recorded that the colony had over 1,500 priests and the main stupa was nearly 300 feet (91 m) high.
- In its current shape, the stupa is a **solid cylinder of bricks and stone** reaching a height of 43.6 meters and having a diameter of 28 meters.
- The basement seems to have survived from Ashoka's structure: the stone facing is chiseled and displays delicate floral carvings of Gupta origin.
- The wall is covered with exquisitely carved figures of humans and birds, as well as inscriptions in the Brāhmī script.

IMPORTANCE OF SARNATH

- The Dhamek Stupa is said to mark the spot **Rishipattana**, where **Buddha gave the first sermon to his first five Brahmin disciples after attaining enlightenment, "revealing his Eightfold Path leading to nirvana".**
- In several of the ancient sources the site of the first sermon is mentioned to have been at a "Mriga-dayaa-vanam" or a sanctuary for animals.

STORIES ASSOCIATED WITH SARNATH

- From Bodh Gaya, Buddha went to the **Deer Park (Mrigadava) in Sarnath**, where the five monks who had been with him during his ascetic phase were staying.
- It was there that he gave his first sermon, an event known as the **Dharma Chakra Pravarttana, or turning of the wheel of law.**
- In ancient times, this place was known by many names — **Rishipatana, Mrigadava and Mrigadaya**.
- The word Sarnath comes from a corruption of the name **Saranganatha (lord of deer)**.

THE FIRST SERMON

- In his **first sermon to the five companions, Buddha spoke of the Four Noble Truths and the eightfold path that frees people from suffering.**
- He said that **there are two ways of life: one is to indulge in all the pleasures of the world and the other is to deny oneself these pleasures.**
- The **middle path is the way to achieve nirvana**, he said.

FOUNDATION OF SANGHA

- It is in Sarnath that Buddha laid the foundation of his sangha, or organisation of monks.
- He had 60 disciples whom he sent to different parts of the country to spread his teachings.
- He also established an order of female monks, which was joined by his wife.

EXCAVATION IN COLONIAL PERIOD

- The beautiful stupas and monasteries in Sarnath were excavated under Sir **Alexander Cunningham**.

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- He excavated the Dhamekh, Dharmarajika, and Chaukhandi stupas along with a monastery and temple between 1834 and 36.
- Many excavations followed these, the most famous among them being the 1904-05 excavation by **Friedrich Oscar Oertel** of the Ashoka Pillar, including the Lion Capital.

PRELIMS TRAP THREE STUPAS AT SARNATH

- **Dhamek**: the standing cylindrical tower with Gupta-period carved stone facing, marking the spot of the First Sermon.
- **Dharmarajika**: an early stupa linked with Ashoka, now only foundations; in 1794 workers of Babu Jagat Singh of Benares dismantled it for its bricks.
- **Chaukhandi**: a terraced brick mound where the Buddha is said to have met his five former companions; the octagonal tower on top was added in 1588, in Akbar's reign, to commemorate a visit by Humayun.

NATIONAL EMBLEM OF INDIA

- **On top of the Ashokan pillar in Sarnath was the Lion Capital and the Dharmachakra, but the Lion Capital is now housed in Sarnath museum**, while the pillar remains where it was originally.
- The **Lion Capital was adopted as the national emblem of India in 1950**.

SURVIVED SEVERAL INVASIONS

- After Ashoka, the other rulers who added to Sarnath's glory were the Kushans, the Guptas and Harshavardhana.
- Under the Guptas, the Dharmekh stupa was encased with stone-carved floral designs.
- Sarnath suffered from the Huna invasions, but Harshavardhana later restored some of the earlier buildings.
- Sarnath also suffered when it was attacked by Mahmud of Ghazni. Mahipala, the Pala king, restored the monuments.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

- Architect James Fergusson remarks that the sculptured band on the central part of the Dhamek stupa, which has geometric patterns of great intricacy similar to the mosques in Delhi and Ajmer.
- The calligraphy on the screen of Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque, built by Qutbuddin Aibak in the Qutub complex in Delhi, does bear resemblance to the stupa.

UPDATE 2026 SARNATH ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

In **July 2026**, the **Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath** was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List at the **48th session** of the World Heritage Committee in Busan, Republic of Korea, under criteria (iii) and (vi). The serial property has two components: the **Chaukhandi Stupa** and the Archaeological Remains of Sarnath, which include the Dhamek and Dharmarajika stupas, the Mulagandhakuti Vihara and the Ashokan pillar. It is **India's 45th** World Heritage property (position as of November 2026).

Amaravati School (Amaravati Stupa)

- The **Amarāvati Stupa (also known as Mahachaitya)** is a **ruined Buddhist stūpa at the village of Amaravathi, Palnadu district, Andhra Pradesh** (on the banks of the **Krishna River**).

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- The Amravati Stupa, **also known as the Great Stupa of Amravati**, is a damaged Buddhist monument.
- It was probably **built in phases between the third century BCE and about 250 CE**, but in later centuries it was **transformed from a Hinayana shrine to a Mahayana shrine.**
- Developed **during the period of the Satvahana & Ikshvaku dynasty**.
- The Archaeological Survey of India is in charge of safeguarding the site.
- The site's notable sculptures are now housed at a number of museums in India and overseas, many of which are severely damaged.
- Amaravati stupa is different from the Bharhut and Sanchi stupas. It had **free-standing columns surmounted by lions near the gateways.** The **dome was covered with sculptured panels**.
- The stupa had an **upper circumambulatory path on the drum** as at Sanchi. This path had two intricately carved railings. The **stone is greenish-white limestone** of the region.
- Other locations where the Stupa were Built in Southern India – **Goli, Jaggiahpeta, Bhattiprolu, Gantasala, Nagarjunakonda**

- **PRELIMS TRAP** BHARHUT, SANCHI OR AMARAVATI?
  - **Bharhut**: red stone railings of the Shunga period; flat reliefs with Brahmi labels; the Buddha shown only by symbols.
  - **Sanchi**: four carved gateways of the 1st century BCE; the Buddha still shown only by symbols.
  - **Amaravati**: greenish-white limestone of the lower Krishna valley, Satavahana and Ikshvaku periods; the Buddha shown by symbols and, later, in human form.

The largest collections of Amaravati sculpture are in the Government Museum, Chennai, and the British Museum, London (the 'Amaravati Marbles').



Buddhist Monuments of South India

- **Vengi** in Andhra Pradesh has many stupa sites like **Jagayyapetta(AP), Amaravati(AP), Bhattiprolu(AP), Nagarjunkonda(AP), Goli(AP)**, etc.

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- At **Anakapalli near Vishakhapatnam**, caves were excavated and a huge **rock-cut stupa** was carved out of the hillock during the fourth–fifth centuries CE.
  - It is a unique site as it has the **biggest rock-cut stupas** in the country.
- **Bojjannakonda and Lingalakonda** are two Buddhist sites which exist on adjacent hillocks near a village called Sankaram in Anakapalli district, located just a few kilometers from Anakapalle.

Nagarjunakonda

- The second most important site after Amaravati is **Nagarjunakonda** located near Nagarjuna Sagar in **Palnadu district** of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.
- This was a large **monastic vihara or "university"**, which is now submerged under a lake created by the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam.
- Many remains were relocated to what is now an island in the lake, but most sculptures are now in various museums, in India and abroad.
- **The Chandavaram Buddhist site is another large stupa.**

Sannati Maha-stupa

- Sannati or Sannathi is a small village, located **on the banks of the Bhima River in Chitapur taluk of Kalaburagi district of Northern Karnataka.**
- mahastupa the diameter of which was around 75 ft.
- exposed the **medhi along with hundreds of sculptured slabs with lotus designs** and other decorations
- **Kanganahalli**
  - Image of Ashoka – Ranyo Asoka inscribed on it
  - Prakrit and Brahmi Script
  - limestone bas-relief sculptures

Gandhara Stupa

- The **Gandhara stupa is a further development of stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut.**
- In **Gandhara stupas the base, dome and the hemisphere dome are sculpted**.
- The stupa tapers upward to form a tower like structure.
- The **stupas of Nagarjunakonda in Krishna valley were very large.**
- At the base there were brick walls forming wheel and spokes, which were filled with earth.
- The **Maha Chaitya of Nagarjunakonda has a base in the form of Swastika, which is a sun symbol**.

Sungas, Kushans and Satavahanas

After the death of Ashoka, Mauryan dynasty came to an end and the **Sungas and Kushans ruled in the north and the Satavahanas in the south.**

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These dynasties made **advances in art and architecture** in areas like stone construction, stone carving, symbolism and beginning of temple (or chaitya hall) and the monastery (or vihara) constructions.

The period between **2nd century B.C. and 3rd century A.D.** marked the beginning of the sculptural idiom in Indian sculpture where the elements of physical form were evolving into a more refined, realistic and expressive style.

Under these dynasties the Ashokan stupas were enlarged and the earlier brick and wood works were replaced with stone-works.

The **Sanchi Stupa was enlarged to nearly twice its size in 150 B.C.** and elaborate gateways were added later.

The **Sungas reconstructed the railings around the Bharhut Stupa and built the toranas or the gateways.**

The Satavahanas constructed a large number of stupas at Goli, Jaggiahpeta, Bhattiprolu, Gantasala, Nagarjunakonda and Amravati.

During the Kushan period, the Buddha was represented in human form instead of symbols.

Buddha's image in endless forms and replicas became the principal element in Buddhist sculpture during the Kushan period.

The Kushans were the pioneers of the Gandhara School of Art and a large number of monasteries; stupas and statues were constructed during the reign of Kanishka.

PRELIMS FACT **KANISHKA'S STUPA, PESHAWAR**

The greatest Gandhara stupa was **Kanishka's stupa** at Shah-ji-ki-Dheri, outside Peshawar (Pakistan), founded by the Kushan king in the 2nd century CE. The Chinese pilgrim **Faxian** (5th century) called it the highest of all towers; modern estimates put it at about 120 m. Excavations under D. B. Spooner in 1908–09 found in its base the **Kanishka casket**, a reliquary with a Kharosthi dedication naming Kanishka.

Prelims Quick Revision

- **Stupa**: hemispherical relic mound (Pali 'thupa'); building on a large scale began under Ashoka, credited by legend with 84,000 stupas.
- **Ten original stupas**: eight over the corporeal relics, one by Drona over the urn, one by the Mauryas of Pipphalavana over the ashes.
- **Parts**: medhi (platform), anda (dome), harmika (railed box), yashti (mast), chhatra (umbrella), vedika (railing), torana (gateway).
- **Three chhatras**: stand for the triratnas, Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.
- **Kinds**: Sharirik (bodily relics), Paribhogika (objects used by the Buddha), Uddeshika (commemorative).
- **Bairat (Viratnagar, Rajasthan)**: circular Ashokan-era shrine round a stupa; Bairat and Calcutta-Bairat Minor Rock Edicts found nearby.
- **Vaishali relic stupa**: Lichchhavi mud stupa; its relic casket was found in the 1958–62 excavations.

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- **Kesariya (East Champaran, Bihar)**: brick stupa about 104 ft high; excavated by an ASI team under K.K. Muhammad (1998).
- **Sanchi (Raisen, MP)**: Ashokan brick stupa cased in stone under the Shungas; southern gateway built first; UNESCO 1989.
- **Sanchi Stupa 3**: relics of Sariputta and Mahamoggallana.
- **Bharhut (Satna, MP)**: Shunga-period railings with Jatakas, yakshas and the earliest Lakshmi; now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata.
- **Dhamek Stupa, Sarnath**: Gupta-period casing; marks the First Sermon; Sarnath became a UNESCO World Heritage property in July 2026.
- **Amaravati (Palnadu, AP)**: greenish-white limestone; Satavahana and Ikshvaku periods; Buddha in symbols and human form.
- **Nagarjunakonda**: now under the Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir; its Maha Chaitya has a swastika-plan base.
- **Anakapalli (AP)**: the largest rock-cut stupas in India, carved in the 4th–5th centuries CE.

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UNIT III
7 CHAPTERS

Performing Arts

Classical and folk music and musical instruments, classical and folk dances, theatre, puppetry, martial arts, the circus and Indian cinema.

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13 **Dances of India**
Indian Classical Dance Forms · Folk Dances of India · Martial Dances of India

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INDIAN ART & CULTURE
PRELIMS · GS PAPER I

Dances of India

Dance in India has a rich and vital tradition dating back to **ancient times.** Excavations, inscriptions, chronicles, genealogies of kings and artists, literary sources, sculpture and painting of different periods provide extensive evidence on dance. Myths and legends also support the view that dance had a significant place in the religious and social life of the Indian people. However, **it is not easy to trace the precise history and evolution of the various dances known as the 'art' or 'classical' forms popular today.**

In literature, the first references come from the **Vedas** where dance and music have their roots. A more consistent history of dance can be reconstructed from the epics, the several Puranas and the rich body of dramatic and poetic literature known as the nataka and the kavya in Sanskrit. A related development was the evolution of classical Sanskrit drama which was an amalgam of the spoken word, gestures and mime, choreography, stylised movement and music.

From the **12th century to the 19th century there were many regional forms called the musical play or sangeet-nataka**. Contemporary classical dance forms are known to have evolved out of these musical plays.

Excavations have brought to light a bronze statuette from Mohenjodaro and a broken torso from Harappa (dating back to 2500-1500 BCE.) These are suggestive of **dance poses**. The latter has been identified as the precursor of the **Nataraja pose** commonly identified with **dancing Siva.**

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS — History of India and Indian National Movement

MAINS · GS PAPER I — **Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times**

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01 Indian Classical Dance Forms
02 Folk Dances of India

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The earliest treatise on dance available to us is **Bharat Muni's Natyashastra,** the source book of the art of drama, dance and music. It is generally accepted that the date of the work is between the 2nd century BCE-2nd century C.E. The **Natyashastra is also known as the fifth veda**. According to the author, he has evolved this veda by taking **words from the Rigveda, music from the Samaveda, gestures from the Yajurveda and emotions from the Atharvaveda**.

PRELIMS FACT KARANAS IN STONE AND VERSE

The **Natyashastra** describes 108 **karanas**, the key units of dance movement. All 108 are carved, each in its own niche, on the eastern gopuram of the **Nataraja temple at Chidambaram**. The Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur has 81 of the 108 carved on an upper-storey corridor wall; the blocks meant for the rest were left blank. In Tamil literature, Ilango Adigal's **Silappadikaram** describes the dancer Madhavi, who trained for seven years under the best teachers of the Chola kingdom and won a garland of 1,008 gold leaves for her dance.

Aspects & Elements of Various Dances

As per **Natya Shastra**, there are two basic aspects of **Tandava and Lasya** to Indian classical dances.

- **Tandava:** The **masculine**, is heroic bold and vigorous.
- **Lasya:** The **feminine** is soft, lyrical and graceful.

Abhinaya, broadly means expression. This is achieved through **angika**, the body and limbs, vachika song and speech and aharya, costume and adornment; and satvika, moods and emotions. As per the ancient treatises, dance is considered as having **three basic elements: natya, nritya and nritta.**

- **Natya** highlights the dramatic element and most dance forms do not give emphasis to this aspect today with the exception of dance-drama forms like Kathakali.
- **Nritya** is essentially expressional, performed specifically to convey the meaning of a theme or idea.
- **Nritta** on the other hand, is pure dance where body movements do not express any mood (bhava), nor do they convey any meaning.

To present nritya and natya effectively, a dancer should be trained to communicate the **navarasas**. These are: **love (shringaara), mirth (haasya), compassion (karuna), valour(veera), anger (roudra), fear (bhayanak), disgust (bibhatsa), wonder (adbhuta) and peace (shaanta).**

01 Indian Classical Dance Forms

Presently, **eight Indian dance forms** have been considered as classical dance forms **by the Sangeet Natak Akademi of India, they are:**

1. **Bharatnatyam**
2. **Kathakali**

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3. **Odissi**
4. **Manipuri**
5. **Kuchipudi**
6. **Mohiniyattam**
7. **Kathak**
8. **Sattriya**



Bharatnatyam

- Bharatnatyam, **originating from Tamil Nadu**, is the **oldest among the contemporary classical dances** and is considered to be over 2000 years old. It has its roots in Indian legends.
- Several texts beginning with **Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra** (200 BCE. to 200 C.E.) provide information on this dance form.
- The **Abhinaya Darpana by Nandikesvara** is one of the main sources of textual material, for the study of the technique and grammar of body movement in Bharatnatyam Dance.
- According to the Hindu tradition the name of the dance form was **derived by joining two words, 'Bharata' and Natyam' where 'Natyam in Sanskrit means dance and 'Bharata' is a mnemonic comprising 'bha', 'ra' and 'ta' which respectively means 'bhava' that is emotion and feelings; 'raga' that is melody; and 'tala' that is rhythm**. Thus, traditionally the word refers to a dance form where bhava, raga and tala are expressed.

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Origin of Bharatnatyam

- This dance form was **nurtured in the temple by the Devadasis**, servants of the God.
- It was taken to the **princely courts and the Chola and the Pallava kings** were believed to be the great patrons of this art.

Theme of Bharatnatyam

- Bharatnatyam is a **solo, feminine type of a dance** (now performed by male and group artists as well), which is **tender and erotic**.
- The **basic theme is love**, where the female dancers usually perform as a devotion to the Supreme Being; or love of a mother for child.
- This dance is **considered to be a fire dance**, where there is a mysterious display of the abstract element of fire in the human body.

Development of Bharatnatyam

- The dance form went through various assessments to gain the present shape. The dance form was **codified and documented as a performing art in the 19th century by four brothers who were called the Tanjore Quartet. Chinnayya, Ponniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu** of the Tanjore Court during King Sarabojis rule between 1798 CE-1824 CE introduced Bharatnatyam with its **various forms such as the Alarippu, Jathiswaram, Sabdham, Varnam, Tillana.**
- The dance form was carried from one generation to another and the direct descendants of these four brothers formed the original of **Nattuvanars (Guru) or dance teachers** of Bharatnatyam in Tanjore.

Role of Music in Bharatnatyam

- **Music plays an important role in Bharatnatyam**. The musical instruments used are **Mridanga, Manjira, Veena, Violin, Kanjira, Surpeti, Venu and Tanpura.**
- The costume consists of a richly **embroidered dhoti of silk** for both male and female dancers. There is a **pleated or frilled cloth hanging** from the waist to the knees which is laced over the Dhoti.
- Bharatnatyam is known for its **grace, purity, tenderness and sculpturesque poses**.

Elements of Bharatnatyam

- The repertoire of Bharatnatyam is extensive, however, a performance follows a regular pattern as defined by the **Tanjore Quartet**. These elements in their order are:
  - **Alarippu:** It is an invocation song. Literally it means to adorn with flowers. It is an abstract piece combining pure dance with the recitation of sound syllables.
  - **Jatiswaram:** It is a short pure dance piece performed to the accompaniment of musical notes of any raga of Carnatic music. Jatiswaram has no sahitya or words, but is composed of adavus which are pure dance sequences – nritta.
  - **Shabdam:** It is the dramatic element, which includes the abhinaya in the song.
  - **Varnam:** It encompasses both nritta and nritya and epitomises the essence of this classical dance form. The dancer here performs complicated well graded rhythmic patterns in two speeds showing the control over rhythm.

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- After the strenuous varnam, the dancer performs a number of abhinaya items expressing a variety of moods. The common pieces are:
  - (i) **keertanam** (text is important)
  - (ii) **kritis** (musical aspect is highlighted)
  - (iii) **padams and javalis** (theme of love, often divine)
- **Tillana:** A Bharatnatyam performance ends with a tillana which has its origin in the tarana of Hindustani music.
- The **performance ends with a mangalam** invoking the blessings of the Gods

Exponents of Bharatnatyam

- **E Krishna Iyer**, a prominent freedom fighter, revived this dance form.
- **Rukmini Devi Arundale** was a famous dancer and an animal lover. She is responsible for giving global recognition to the dance.
- Others include – **Yamini Krishnamurthy, Padma Subramaniam, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Mallika Sarabhai** etc.

PRELIMS FACT **FROM SADIR TO BHARATNATYAM**

The temple and court dance of the devadasis was earlier called **Sadir**. At the Madras Music Academy in 1932, **E. Krishna Iyer** proposed renaming it Bharatnatyam to restore its dignity.

- **Rukmini Devi Arundale** founded **Kalakshetra** at Adyar, Madras, in January 1936.
- She was the first Indian woman nominated to the Rajya Sabha (1952) and headed the Animal Welfare Board of India from its creation in 1962.

Kuchipudi

- Kuchipudi, originally called Kuchelapuri or Kuchelapuram, a hamlet in Krishna district is the classical dance form from the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, where it grew largely as a product of Bhakti (devotion) movement beginning in the seventh century CE
- It derives its name from the village of Kuchelapuram. It is known for its graceful movements and its strong narrative or dramatic character.
- Both geographically and stylistically, Kuchipudi dance can be best understood as located between the classical dance styles of Odissi and Bharatnatyam.

PRELIMS FACT **SIDDHENDRA YOGI AND BHAMA KALAPAM**

The dance-drama form of Kuchipudi is credited to the 17th-century Telugu Brahmin **Siddhendra Yogi**, who wrote **Bhama Kalapam**, the story of the jealousy of Satyabhama, Krishna's proud consort. He trained young Brahmin boys of Kuchipudi village to perform it. In 1678 **Abul Hasan Tana Shah**, the last Sultan of Golconda, granted the dancers land around the village on condition that they kept the dance-drama alive. In the 20th century **Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry** led its revival, developed solo dancing and brought women into the form.

Style and Technique of Kuchipudi

- The Kuchipudi is a dance-drama of **Nritta, Nritya and Natya**. The Nritta consists of teermanams and jatis, the Nritya of Sabdams, and the Natya of acting with mudras for the songs.

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- While fast becoming a solo presentation, Kuchipudi still has strong ties to the dance-drama tradition. It combines the elements of speech, mime and pure dance.

Music in Kuchipudi

- The music used in Kuchipudi is **classical Carnatic**.
- The musical instruments used to accompany Kuchipudi dance are Mridangam, Manjira (Thalam), Veena, Violin, Kanjira, Surpeti, Venu and Tanpura.

Features & Elements of Kuchipudi

- From the later part of the fourth decade of this century a sequence of the presentation of the solo recital has been widely accepted.
- A recital of Kuchipudi begins with an invocatory number, generally **Ganesha Vandana**.
- It is followed by nritta, that is, non-narrative and abstract dancing. Usually **jatiswaram** is performed as the nritta number.
- Next is presented a narrative number called **shabdam**. One of the favourite traditional shabdam number is the **Dashaavataara**. Manduk Shabdam is another popular solo element which tells the story of a frog.
- The Shabdam is followed by a **natya** number called **Kalaapam**.
- A Kuchipudi recital is usually concluded with tarangam. In this the dancer usually stands on a brass plate locking the feet in **shakatavadanam** paada and moves the plate rhythmically with great dexterity.
- Both lasya and tandava elements are important in this dance form.
- Jala Chitra Nrityam – It is the item where the dancer draws pictures on the floor with his or her toes while dancing.

Famous Exponents

- Radha Reddy and Raja Reddy, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Indrani Rehman, Vedaantam Satyanarayana Sharma

PRELIMS TRAP KUCHIPUDI OR BHARATNATYAM?

Both are southern styles danced to Carnatic music, and both have items called jatiswaram and shabdam, so they are easily confused.

- **Tarangam**, danced standing on a brass plate, belongs to **Kuchipudi**, not Bharatnatyam.
- Kuchipudi keeps its dance-drama roots: it combines speech, mime and pure dance, and its dancer-actors sometimes sing their own lines.
- Kuchipudi comes from Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh; Bharatnatyam from Tamil Nadu.

Kathakali

- Kathakali, a **dance drama belongs to ancient Kerala**. This classical dance form is still practised in the state. Kathakali is a combination of literature, music, painting, acting and dance. **"Katha" means story and "Kali" stands for dance.**
- It symbolizes a **blending of the Aryan and Dravidian cultures**, for shaping its technique. The most striking element in Kathakali is the **dramatic quality** which is inspiring and belongs exclusively to a world of myth and legend.

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Origin of Kathakali

- The **actual roots of Kathakali can be traced to at least 1500 years earlier**.
- It evolved out of the earlier dance forms like the **Chakiayarkoothu and Koodiyattom, Mudiyettu, Theyyattom, Sastrakali, Krishnanattom and Ramanattom of Kerala**.

Elements of Kathakali

- A Kathakali performance begins with the **kelikottu**. The todayam is a devotional number performed where one or two characters invoke the blessings of the gods.
- **Kelikottu** is the formal announcement of the performance done in the evening when drums and cymbals are played for a while in the courtyard.
- Kelikottu is followed by the **todayam** .
- A pure nritta piece known as the **purappadu** comes as a sequel to this.
- Then the musicians and drummers hold the stage entertaining the audience with an exhibition of their skills in **melappada**.
- **Kalasams are pure dance sequences** where the actor is at great liberty to express himself and display his skills.

Features of Kathakali Dance

- Most Kathakali recitals are a **grand representation of the eternal conflict between good and evil.** Kathakali draws upon the inexhaustible treasure of the **ancient puranas, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana**.
- Kathakali dance is chiefly interpretative. The characters in a Kathakali performance are broadly divided into **satvika, rajasika and tamasika types**.
- Kathakali is remarkable in the **representation of the rasas** through the **movement of eye and eyebrows**.
- The use of props is minimum in Kathakali recital. However, elaborate facial makeup along with a headgear is used for different characters.
- Different colours are used in the facial makeup with each color having their own significance.
  - **Green** indicates nobility, divinity and virtue
  - **Red** indicates royalty
  - **Black** indicates evil and wickedness
- When it comes to music, several poets have contributed to a Kathakali script, which is called **Kathakali Padam**. Each Padam is a poem which is recited in one of the **Carnatic music ragas**. The stories for dance, the poetic compositions of legendary stories are performed in **Carnatic style**.
- **Men usually perform in Kathakali. Men dressed in women's costume portray female characters.** A Kathakali actor needs to have **immense concentration, skill and physical stamina**, gained from the training based on **Kalari Payette (Kalaripayattu),** the ancient martial art of Kerala.
- Kathakali is generally performed in **open air theatres or temple premises**. The performance generally **begins in the evening and it continues throughout the night**, culminating at the **auspicious hour of dawn**, when
  good finally conquers evil.
- Kathakali symbolizes the **element of sky or ether.**

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PRELIMS FACT KATHAKALI MAKE-UP TYPES

Kathakali characters fall into fixed make-up types (vesham):

- **Pacha** (green): noble characters such as Krishna, Rama, Arjuna and Nala.
- **Kathi** (knife): proud warriors with an evil streak, shown by red markings on a green face.
- **Thadi** (beard): red for evil characters such as Dushasana; white for divine beings such as Hanuman.
- **Kari** (black): hunters and forest dwellers; **Minukku**: noble women such as Sita and Panchali.
- **Teppu**: special figures such as Garuda, Jatayu and Hamsa.

Famous Exponents

- **Guru Kunchu Kurup, Kavungal Chathunni Panicker, Gopi Nath, Rita Ganguly etc.**

Mohiniattam

- Mohiniyattam literally interpreted as the **dance of 'Mohini',** the celestial enchantress of the Hindu mythology, is the classical **solo dance form of Kerala.**
- Mohiniattam though **born out of the fusion of Kathakali and Bharatnatyam**, has developed its own identity.
- In the word Mohiniattam, **'Mohini' means a maiden who charms the onlooker and 'attam' means dance.**
- The Mohiniattam dances describe episodes from the **epics** and legends through graceful steps, rhythmic movements of her arms and facial expressions.
- The delicate **body movements and subtle facial expressions are more feminine (dominance of lasya) in nature** and therefore are ideally suited for **performance by women.**

Type and Theme of Mohiniattam

- Mohiniattam is also known as the **'Dance of the Celestial Female magicians'**. It narrates the story of **feminine dance of Vishnu.**
- It is essentially a **solo dance, performed by female dancers**. However, the basis of this dance also signifies the **transformation of Lord Vishnu into a female form** and also the **concept of Ardhnareeshwara** that is male and female as one.
- The theme of Mohiniattam is **love and devotion to god**. Mohiniattam signifies the dance of enchanters that causes destruction of the wicked and **brings delight and pleasure to the good**.

Salient Features

- Mohiniyattam is characterized by **graceful, swaying body movements with no abrupt jerks or sudden leaps**. It belongs to the **lasya style** which is feminine, tender and graceful.
- The movements are **emphasized by the glides and the up and down movement on toes**, like the waves of the sea and the swaying of the coconut, palm trees and the paddy fields.
- The **foot work is not terse and is rendered softly**. Importance is given to the hand gestures and Mukhabhinaya with **subtle facial expressions**.
- The hand gestures, 24 in number, are mainly adopted from **Hastalakshana Deepika**, a text followed by Kathakali. Few are also borrowed from **NatyaShastra, AbhinayaDarpana and Balarambharatam**.

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- This art form denotes the **element of Air.**
- The **vocal music for Mohiniattam is Carnatic Music**. The music also accentuates these movements by being extremely lyrical, sensuous and concentrating more on bhava than trying to articulate the swara patterns. This mode of singing is called **Sopanam.**
- There is a typical costume for Mohiniattam, which is a **mixture of white and gold**.

Famous Proponents

- The first renowned Mohiniattam dancer was **Kalyaniamma**. She also taught in **Shantiniketan**.
- The other notable proponents are **Krishna Paniker, Madhavi Amma** etc.

PRELIMS FACT PATRONS AND REVIVAL IN KERALA

Swathi Thirunal, the poet-composer king who took full charge of Travancore in 1829, sponsored Mohiniattam and Bharatnatyam artists at his court, which helped systematise modern Mohiniattam. In 1930 the poet **Vallathol Narayana Menon**, with Mukunda Raja, founded the **Kerala Kalamandalam**, which revived both Mohiniattam and Kathakali. It moved to Cheruthuruthy in Thrissur district in 1936 and became a deemed university in 2006.

Odissi

- Sensuous and lyrical, **Odissi is a dance of love and passion touching on the divine and the human, the sublime and the mundane**. The Natya Shastra mentions many regional varieties, such as the southeastern style known as the **Odhra Magadha** which can be identified as the earliest precursor of present day Odissi.
- Archaeological evidence of this dance form dating back to the 2nd century BCE is found in the **caves of Udayagiri and Khandagiri near Bhubaneshwar.**
- For centuries **Maharis** were the chief repositories of this dance. The maharis, who were originally temple dancers, came to be employed in royal courts which resulted in the degeneration of the art form. Around this time, a class of boys called gotipuas were trained in the art, they danced in the temples and also for general entertainment.
- **Odissi closely follows the tenets laid down by the Natya Shastra**. Facial expressions, hand gestures and body movements are used to suggest a certain feeling, an emotion or one of the nine rasas.

Elements of Odissi

- **Mangalacharan:** It is the opening item where the dancer slowly enters the stage with flowers in her hands and makes an offering to mother earth.
- **Batu:** Here the basic concepts of the Odissi nritta technique are highlighted bringing out the duality of the masculine and the feminine through the basic stance of the chauk and tribhanga.
- **Pallavi:** There is flowering and ornamentation of music and movements in Pallavi. A musical composition in a particular raga is visually represented by the dancer with slow and subtle movements, building up into complex patterns highlighting rhythmic variations within the tala structure.
- **Tharijham:** It is pure nritta like the Thillana of Bharatnatyam or Tarana of Kathak

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- The dance can be concluded in two ways. Moksha is dance of liberation through joyous movements. The Trikhanda Majura is another way of concluding, indicating leave taking from the gods, the audience and the stage.

Salient Features of Odissi Dance

- Odissi derives its theme from **Geeta Govinda mostly.** The themes of Odissi revolve around **Lord Krishna**. The **Ashtapadi of Jayadeva** is a very common theme. Odissi centers on **spirituality and devotion**.
- Odissi dancing follows the **basic rules of the Natyashastra and the Silpasastra in its techniques**. It has **similar foot movements as Bharatnatyam**. The essence of Odissi dance lies in its sculpturesque quality. Its beautiful poses resemble the sculptures of the famous temples, which once nourished this art.
- The techniques of movement are built around the two basic postures of the **Chowk** and the **Tribhanga**. The chowk is a position imitating a square – a very masculine stance with the weight of the body equally balanced. The tribhanga is a very feminine stance where the body is deflected at the neck, torso and the knees.
- Odissi presents a **fine synthesis of Lasya and Tandava aspects** of the Indian Classical Dance. The dancer very efficiently changes from one to the other according to the need of the expressional number, rhythmic syllables and abhinaya.
- **Hand gestures play an important role both in nritta** where they are used only as decorative embellishments and in nritya where they are used for communication.
- The **music is a combination of Hindustani (predominantly) and Carnatic classical styles**.
- Odissi dance attire has a stitched costume in **pyjama style made out of the special Odisha handloom silk sarees**, draped in a comfortable style. Odissi dance uses **silver jewellery.**
- This art form denotes the **element of water.**

Famous Proponents

- **Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra**, Guru Pankaj Charan Das, Madhavi Mudgal, Rekha Tandon, Sreyashi Dey and many more.

Manipuri

- Manipuri dance form finds its mythological origins to the **celestial dance of Shiva and Parvati** in the valleys of Manipur along with the local **"Gandharvas"**.
- The dance gained prominence with the advent of **Vaishnavism**. With the arrival of Vaishnavism in the 15th century CE, new compositions based on episodes from the **life of Radha and Krishna** were gradually introduced.

Salient Features of Manipuri Dance

- Manipuri dance incorporates both the **tandava and lasya and ranges from the most vigorous masculine to the subdued and graceful feminine.**
- Grace, divinity and a seamless majesty characterize Manipuri dance. The Indian religious themes and the devotional aspects of Indian philosophy and religion shape the dance pattern.

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- Music in Manipuri dance is bound by sheer technicalities of this dance form. Short musical compositions like the **swarmala, the chaturang, and the keertiprabhand** form an important part of the dancer's repertoire.
- **Nagabhanda mudra**, in which the body is connected through curves in the **shape of '8'** is an important posture in Manipuri dance form.
- The **cult of Radha and Krishna**, **particularly the raslila**, is central to its themes but the dances, unusually, incorporate the characteristic cymbals (kartal or manjira) and double-headed drum (pung or Manipuri mridang) of sankirtan into the visual performance.
- The most popular forms of Manipuri dance are the **Ras, the Sankirtana and the Thang-Ta**.
  - In **Manipuri Ras**, the main characters are Radha, Krishna and the gopis. The themes often depict the pangs of separation of the gopis and Radha from Krishna.
  - The **Kirtan form** of congregational singing accompanies the dance which is known as Sankirtana in Manipur. The male dancers play the Pung and Kartal while dancing.
  - The **masculine aspect of dance – the Choloms is a part of the Sankirtana tradition**. The main musical instrument is the Pung or the Manipuri classical drum.
- Rich and vibrant colours with attractive jewelleries are used as Manipuri dance costumes. **"Patloi", is the typical costume of the female dancers.**

Manipuri Proponents

- The **Jhaveri sisters – Nayana, Suverna, Darshana and Ranjana Jhaveri** are well known Manipuri dancers.
- Other well known performers are Sohini Ray, Poushali Chatterjee etc.

PRELIMS FACT MANIPURI: KEY LANDMARKS

- **Lai Haraoba**, the ritual festival of the Meiteis at which the Maibi dance is performed, is one of the ritual traditions from which Manipuri dance grew.
- Maharaja **Bhagyachandra** (r. 1759–1798) composed the Maha, Basanta and Kunja Ras and began public performances of the Ras Lila; it was first staged in Manipur on the full moon of Kartik in 1779.
- **Rabindranath Tagore**, after seeing a Manipuri Goshtha Lila at Sylhet in 1919, brought Guru Budhimantra Singh to teach at Santiniketan.

Kathak

- **Kathak dance is originally from Uttar Pradesh**. It is a combination of **music, dance and narrative**.
- The name Kathak is derived from the Sanskrit word **katha meaning story**. This dance form traces its origins to the nomadic bards of ancient northern India, known as **Kathakars, or storytellers.**
- The present day Kathak dance mainly depends on the medieval period **Ras Lila, a local dance in the Braj region of Uttar Pradesh**. It combined in itself music, dance and the narrative.
- Eventually popular Kathak became highly stylised in both Hindu and Muslim courts and came to be regarded as a sophisticated form of entertainment.

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- There are **four major schools or gharanas of Kathak** from which performers today generally draw their lineage:
  - **Lucknow Gharana:**
    - It came into existence mainly in the **court of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah the ruler of Awadh** in the early 19th century.
    - It is characterized by graceful movements, elegance and natural poise with dance. Artistically designed dance compositions, emotive vocal compositions like **thumri-s, dadra-s, hori-s** along with abhinaya (expressional acting) and creative improvisations are the hallmarks of this style.
    - Pandit Birju Maharaj is considered the chief representative of this gharana.
  - **Jaipur Gharana:**
    - The Jaipur Gharana developed in the **courts of the Kachchwaha kings of Jaipur in Rajasthan**.
    - Importance is placed on the more technical aspects of dance, such as complex and powerful footwork, multiple spins, and complicated compositions in different talas.
    - There is also a greater incorporation of **compositions from the pakhawaj, such as parans.**
  - **Banaras Gharana:**
    - The Benares Gharana was **developed by Janakiprasad**.
    - It is characterized by the exclusive use of the **natwari or dance bols,** which are different from the tabla and the pakhawaj bols.
    - There are differences in the **thaat and tatkaar, and chakkars** are **kept at a minimum** but are often taken from both the right- and the lefthand sides with equal confidence.
    - There is also a **greater use of the floor**, for example, in the taking of sam.
  - **Raigarh Gharana:**
    - It developed under the patronage of **Raja Chakradhar Singh.**
    - It lays emphasis on **percussion music.**

History and Development

- The **Vaishnavite cult** which swept North India in the 15th century and the resultant **bhakti movement** contributed to a whole new range of lyrics and musical forms. The **Radha-Krishna theme** proved immensely popular along with the **works of Mirabai, Surdas, Nandadas and Krishnadas**.
- With the coming of the Mughals, this dance form received a new impetus. A transition from the temple courtyard to the palace durbar took place which necessitated changes in presentation.

Elements of Kathak

- **Ananda** – introductory item through which the dancer enters the stage
- **Thaat** – comprise of soft gliding movements of the neck, eyebrows and the wrists
- **Todas & Tukdas** – small pieces of fast rhythm
- **Padhant** – in it the dancer recites complicated bols and demonstrates them
- **Tarana** – it is pure nritta like the Thillana of Bharatnatyam
- **Kramalaya** – it is concluding element comprising of pure rhythmic movements

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Salient Features of Kathak Dance

- The Kathak dance technique is characterized by the use of an **intricate system of foot-work**. The **weight of the body is equally distributed along the horizontal and vertical axis**. There are **no deflections and no use of sharp bends or curves of the upper or lower part** of the body.
- Both in **nritta (pure dance) and the abhinaya (mime)** there is immense scope for improvisation of presenting variations on a theme. The dancer's greatness lies in his capacity for improvisation on the **melodic and metric line on the one hand and the poetic line on the other.**
- **Jugalbandhi** is main attraction of kathak recital which shows competitive play between the dancer and tabla player.
- The dance could not remain away from the growth and development of north Indian music, specially the khayal. Both the **dhrupad and the khayal accompanied the dance**.
- The **Kathak female dancers wear a Ghaghara, a choli and a veil.** For the **men, the costume includes Dhoti-Kurta or Kameez-Churidar-Vest.** Gold and silver ornaments are used for head, neck, arms, hands fingers, waist and feet. Ankle bells are also an essential part of adornment.

Kathak Proponents

- **Birju Maharaj, Lacchu Maharaj, Sitara Devi, Damayanti Joshi** etc.

Sattriya

- The Sattriya dance form was introduced in the **15th century A.D** by the great **Vaishnava saint and reformer of Assam, Mahapurusha Sankaradeva** as a powerful medium for propagation of the Vaishnava faith.
- The **creation of Sattriya Nritya by Sankardeva was an accompaniment to the Ankiya Naat** (a form of Assamese one-act plays devised by him), which were usually performed in the sattras, as Assam's monasteries are called.

Salient Features of Sattriya Dance

- The dance incorporates different elements from various treatises, local folk dances prevalent in Assam, mainly **Ojapali and Devadasi.**
- Conventionally, this dance form was performed only by **male monks (also known as Bhokots)** in monasteries as part of their daily rituals or to mark special festivals . In the **modern days, Sattriya is performed on stage by women and men**, who are not members of sattras, on themes not merely mythological.
- **Sattriya Nritya is divided into many genres:** Apsara Nritya, Behar Nritya, Chali Nritya, Dasavatara Nritya, Manchok Nritya, Natua Nritya, Rasa Nritya, Rajaghariya Chali Nritya, Gosai Prabesh, Bar Prabesh, Gopi Prabesh, Jhumura, Nadu Bhangi, and Sutradhara,among others.
- Sattriya Nritya is **performed with musical composition called borgeets** (composed by Sankardeva among others) which are usually based on classical ragas.
- Sattriya dance tradition is governed by **strictly laid down principles** in respect of hastamudras, footworks, aharyas, music etc.
- The dance tradition has developed into two distinctly separate streams- the **Gayan-Bhayanar Nach and the Kharmanar Nach.**

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- The dress is typical of Assam as the silk that are worn are produced in Assam, woven with meticulous designs.

- **Sattriya Proponents**
  - Maniram Datta Moktar, Bapuram Bayan Attai, Ghana Kanta Bora, Jatin Goswami, Indira PP Bora etc.

> The **Sangeet Natak Akademi has recognised 08 classical dance forms** whereas, the **Ministry of Culture has recognised 09 classical dance forms** including Chhau.

PRELIMS FACT SATTRIYA: THE LATEST CLASSICAL FORM

The Sangeet Natak Akademi recognised **Sattriya** as a classical dance on **15 November** 2000, making it the most recent addition to its list of eight. The dance grew out of **Bhaona**, the staging of Sankardeva's Ankiya Naat in the sattras of Assam, and remained for centuries a living ritual tradition of the Vaishnava monasteries.

Chhau Dance

- Etymologically the word Chhau is derived from Sanskrit "Chhaya" meaning **shadow, image or mask.**
- Chhau dance is a **semi classical Indian dance** with **martial, tribal and folk origins from eastern India.** It is a form of **mask dance.**
- The dance ranges from celebrating **martial arts, acrobatics and athletics** performed in festive themes of a folk dance, to a structured dance with religious themes found in **Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism.**
- It is found in three styles named after the location where they are performed: **Mayurbhanj Chau of Odisha, Purulia Chau of Bengal, Seraikella Chau of Jharkhand.**
- Natural themes such as **Sarpa Nritya (serpent dance) or Mayur Nritya (peacock dance)** are also performed
- **Masks form an integral part of Chhau dance in Purulia and Seraikella styles.**
- The popular Hindi film **Barfi!** has several scenes that features the Purulia Chhau in it.
- **In 2010 the Chhau dance was inscribed in the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**

02 Folk Dances of India

- Indian folk and tribal dances range from **simple, joyous celebrations of the seasons of the harvest, or the birth of a child to ritualistic dances to propitiate demons and invoke spirits.** There are dances involving balancing tricks with pitchers full of water, or jugglery with knives.
- Other dances highlight activities like ploughing, threshing and fishing.

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- The costumes are generally flamboyant with extensive use of jewelry by both the sexes.
- Some dances are performed exclusively by men and women, but most have them dancing together. Nearly all involve **singing by the dancers**.
- The **drum is the most common of the folk instruments** that provide musical accompaniment to these dances.

Folk Dances of Uttar Pradesh

Folk dances of Uttar Pradesh show the rich cultural heritage of the state. The dance dramas based on the **mythological stories of divine characters like Lord Rama & Lord Krishna** reflects the traditional essence. The major folk dances of Uttar Pradesh include **Raslila, Ramlila, Khayal, Nautanki, Naqaal, Swang, Dadra and the Charkula Dance.**

Raslila

- The **Raslila performed in this state is known as the Braj Raslila**, since it has originated from the **Braj area of Uttar Pradesh.**
- The story revolves around **Lord Krishna's** charming childhood, adolescence and the early youth of Krishna, where it explores the relationship of Lord Krishna with his consort Radha.

Ramlila

- Ramlila is considered as a traditional art form reputed in **folk culture of Uttar Pradesh.**
- It primarily deals with the **life of Lord Rama in Ramayana,** who is also another incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
- This dance form depicts the story of the exile of Lord Rama from Ayodhya, his success over Ravana and his interaction with Sita.

Khyal

- Khyal is a **folk arts form**, which is simultaneously popular in many Indian states and it started as a **prime dance form in Uttar Pradesh.**
- The performances of Khyal start with an invocation, which begins with hymns to the respected deities and various instruments like the nakkara or the dholak drum, cymbals and the harmonium give the music.

Nautanki

- Nautanki is a form of **street play or skit** that is popular in the northern side of India especially in the **states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.**
- Nautanki performances are operas based on a popular folk theme derived from **romantic tales, mythologies, or biographies of local heroes.**

Naqaal

- Naqaal is a folk art form of all the **villages of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in the north India.**
- There is a storyteller character in all the plays of Naqaals, where generally the themes are based on a common man.

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- **Swang (Saang)**
  - Swang is a popular Indian folk dance **drama practiced in Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh.**
  - Swang flourished with song and it is considered as a rich performance with literary wealth. This dance drama is dialogue-oriented rather than movement-oriented.
  - It focuses on various mythological and social topics. Amateurs or new artists personify this folk drama and it is played either in the open or on the specially created platform.

- **Dadra**
  - This is a **popular dance form of Uttar Pradesh**. It has a unique style.
  - The play back singers use to give support to the dancers on the stage.

- **Charkula Dance**
  - This is the most spectacular dance performance, which is widely **performed in the Braj region of Uttar Pradesh.**
  - It is a dramatic dance performance that is **visually attractive**. This dance form symbolises the **birth of Radha.**

Folk Dances of Rajasthan

- **Ghoomar Dance**
  - The Ghoomar dance is a very famous and a community **dance of Rajasthan**. It is performed on various **auspicious occasions like fairs & festivals by women.**
  - The dance is chiefly performed by **veiled women who wear flowing dresses called ghaghara.**
  - The dance typically involves performers pirouetting while **moving in and out of a wide circle.**
  - The word ghoomna describes the **twirling movement of the dancers** and is the basis of the word ghoomar.
  - This dance is also done by **women of Bhil tribe.**

- **Gowari Dance**
  - The most famous art form of the **Bhil tribe is the 'Gowari'**, which is a kind of dance drama.
  - The **performers travel from village to village** as a troupe for a month, during which the nine functionaries follow a strict regimen.

- **Terahtali Dance**
  - This fascinating dance form is **performed by women and is considered as a devotional form of dance**.
  - Manjeeras are tied on the **wrists, elbows, waists, arms of the performers**. The women with dexterous and fine movements dance at a strong rhythm on beats of **'Manjeeras'**, whereas, the male partners sing and play on the **'Tandoora.**

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- **Drum Dance**
  - It is a professional dance-form of **Jalore region of Rajasthan**, where only the **men participants can perform.**
  - In this dance, **five men beat huge drums** that are tied around their necks; a dancer, which holds huge cymbals in their hands, also accompanies them.
- **Fire Dance**
  - The stirring fire dance is performed by the **'jasnathis' of Bikaner and Churu districts.**
  - This dance is example of **Jasnathis's life style**. These devotional dances can be seen only in late nights.
- **Chari Dance**
  - It is a **dance form of the villagers and executes the happiness of them when they go to search water** and find it.
  - The **women go many miles just to collect water to fulfill their daily needs**. While going they express their joy through the Chari dance.
- **Kathputli Dance**
  - It is the **dances of puppets**.
  - Through the puppet shows all the real stories of great heroes have been told from village to another.
- **Kalbeliya Dance**
  - The **Kalbeliyas, is snake-charmer from which a community Rajasthan**, performs the Kalbeliya dance.
  - They **rely heavily on this dance performance for their living.**
  - The **UNESCO has inscribed Kalbelia folk songs and dances in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010.**
- **Gair Dance**
  - Gair Dance is a folk dance of the **Bhil community of Rajasthan**, which is performed at the **festival of Holi.**
  - There are several differences in the performance of men and women in this dance.
- **Bhawai dance**
  - This form is **very difficult and can only be performed by skilled artists**. This dance basically involves women dancers balancing 8 to 9 pitchers on their heads and dancing simultaneously.
- **Panihari Dance**
  - As water is a scarce commodity in the parched desert lands of Rajasthan and **women who fetch water from afar called Panihari.**
  - The overworked women created melodious numbers that often had water and rains as their theme. Soon Panihari songs became famous and common.
  - **Panihari slowly came to be a part of the rich folk dance and music culture of the state.**

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Folk Dances of Kashmir

Kashmir includes prominent folk dances like the **Bhand Jashna, the Dumhal and the Kud Dance.**

- **Bhand Jashna**
  - Bhand Jashna is a famous **"festival of clowns"** of Kashmir, which also has a legacy of 300 to 400-year-old genre of Kashmiri folk theatre.
  - It is considered as a traditional folk theatre style having **combination of play and dance in a satirical style.**
  - It mostly depicts parodies on social situations, expressing many strong sentiments through dance, music and clowning.
- **Dumhal Dance**
  - It is performed on **set occasions and at set locations**. Generally, this dance is performed by only the men folk of Wattal, wearing long colourful robes and tall conical caps, which are usually studded with beads and shells.
  - Apart from dancing, the performers also sing along songs in chorus, tuned with music by various drums.
- **Kud Dance**
  - It is a **typical community dance, performed in the middle mountain ranges of the Jammu region**. The Kud dance is performed during the rainy seasons and it exhibits swaying & sinuous movements.
  - It is basically a ritual dance performed in **honor of the Lok Devatas** and **men, women and children**, attired in their best, gather around a bonfire for this nightlong ritual.

Folk Dances of Punjab

- **Bhangra Dance**
  - Bhangra is one of most popular dances of India **performed during Baisakhi only by the men in Punjab**.
  - Bhangra includes the drummer who usually stands in the centre of the circle in an open space surrounded by dancers. Giddha is female counter part of male Bhangra.
- **Jhummar Dance**
  - **Jhummar dance is a dance of ecstasy and a living testimony of the happiness of men**, so performed **only by men.**
  - Jhummar is performed mostly during the melas, weddings and other major functions and celebrations.
- **Luddi Dance**
  - Luddi Dance is also a **male folk dance of Punjab** and it is to celebrate a victory or success that is gained in any field. This is basically the dance of slow movements and some even identify it by integrating with that of the Bhangra.

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- **Dhumall Dance**
  - It is a **male dance** and, likewise it is danced in a circle, where the drum is used as the accompanying instrument.
- **Dhankara Dance**
  - **Dhankara Dance is a dance of celebration.** This form is also called the **Gaatka dance**. This form is often performed in marriage celebration.
- **Giddha Dance**
  - Giddha dance is considered as originated from **West Punjab**.
  - This dance form is derived from the ancient style of ring dancing.
- **Kikli Dance**
  - Kikli is more of a sport than a dance and is generally popular within the **young girls**.
  - Usually, the dance is **performed in pairs.**

Folk Dances of Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh includes folk dances like the **Wancho, Khampti, Buiya and the Ponung Dances.**

- **Wancho Dance**
  - **Wancho Dance belongs to a particular tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.**
  - This dance is performed only in **special occasions like festivals and ceremonies.**
- **Khampti Dance**
  - The Khampti Dance is basically a folk dance performed by the **Khampti Communities**.
  - Khampti dances are based on some **mythical stories.** These are drama based stories, which have some hidden lessons for its viewers.
- **The Buiya Dance**
  - The Buiya dance of **Digaru Mishmis is performed on any festive occasion** which have the purposed for the prosperity and good health of the performer and his household.
- **Ponung Dance**
  - Ponung dance is the **famous folk dance of Adi tribal people.**
  - This is the **women dance.**
  - The purpose of this festival is seeking a **good harvest and welfare of the village community.**

Folk Dances of Haryana

- **Phag Dance**
  - This dance form is performed by the farmers in the **month of Phalgun.**
  - **Both men and women can perform this dance.**

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- During performance women wear colourful traditional cloths where men wear colourful turbans.

- **Dhamal Dance**
  - The Dhamal dance is **famous in the Gurgaon area,** which is **inhabited by Ahirs**.
  - This dance is **performed only by men**.
  - It is said that the people perform this dance whenever their crop is ready for the purpose of the harvest.

Folk Dances of Maharashtra

- **Tamasha**
  - It is among the major forms of **Maharashtra folk theater.**
  - The **love songs called 'Lavanis' form the heart of this dance** form and are thus well-known.
  - Tamasha is linked with two Maharashtra communities which are **Mahar and Kolhati.**

- **Lavani**
  - Lavani is a mixture of traditional dance and song, which is performed mainly to the beats of **'Dholak'**; an instrument like a drum.
  - This folk dance is executed by beautiful **women** wearing sarees of nine-yards.
  - The women whirl on the quivering beats of conventional music.

- **Koli**
  - Koli Folk Dance is another folk dance of **Maharashtra** which got its name from fisher folk of the state called 'Kolis'.
  - The Kolis are known for **their lively dances and a separate identity.**

- **Dhangari Gaja**
  - Dhangari Gaja is one of the most famous folk dances performed in the Indian state of **Maharashtra**.
  - It is performed by the **shepherds of the Solapur District** who are also known as Dhangar.

- **Povadas**
  - Povadas form a **part of Marathi ballads**, depicting the Marathi leader **Shri Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's life**.
  - Through the Povadas, people remember **Shivaji,** a famous hero of his period.

Folk Dances of Gujarat

- **Garba Dance**
  - This dance is performed by the **womenfolk of Gujarat.** This dance form has connection with **Shakti-Puja and its origin is believed to be in the worship of goddess Jagdamba.**
  - At the time of Navaratri this dance is **performed throughout nine nights** where women dance in circular movement with rhythmic clapping.

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- **Dandiya dance**
  - The most popular Dandiya dance is also known as the **'stick' dance.**
  - This dance form is **always performed in a group in a circular movement** to a measure steps.
  - The **sticks used** in this form are believed to be the **sword of Goddess Durga.**
- **Bhavai**
  - The Bhavai Dance is believed to be **dance of emotions.**
  - The Bhavai drama is a continuous performance lasting the **whole night and staged in open grounds** before the audiences, as a source of entertainment.
- **Tippani Dance**
  - There are many folk dances in India that typically represents the **community** related activities and their functional aspects, and the Tippani folk dance is also a dance of such a pattern.
  - This dance is performed **during wedding ceremony.**

Folk Dances of Odisha

- **Pala**
  - Pala is widely performed in **Odisha** and a very famous performance associated with the **cult of 'Satyapir'.**
  - The entire performance of the **Pala** is to evoke the **deity of Satyapir**, intended for the well being of the people.
- **Daskathia**
  - 'Daskathia' has originated from the **Ganjam District.** As, it got wide popularity; it spread to all other parts of Odisha.
  - The word **'Dasa' means a devotee & 'Katha' refers to wooden pieces arranged in tune for the prayer of the devotee.**
- **Danda Nata**
  - Danda Nata is performed during the **festival observed by the Kaibartas in the month of Chaitra** from the **full moon day to eight day of Vaisakha.**
  - The participants in a Danda Nata invoke the **blessings of Lord Shiva to get blessed by a child, to fulfill certain ambition, to get rid of sickness, seeking happiness in life, good harvest or even peace and happiness** to all the communities.
- **Prahlad Nataka**
  - Prahlad Nataka is considered as a **form of traditional theatre**, which is very famous in the region of Odisha, however, this folk art form is originated in **Ganjam District.**
- **Bharat Lila**
  - Bharat Lila is an example of presenting the **stories from epics with expressive acts & dances**.
  - It is the most colorful presentation of folk dance performed & prevalent in **Ganjam District of Odisha.**

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Dalkhai Dance

- The 'Dalkhai' is an **eye-catching dance** performance by the **tribal women from the Sambalpur district of Odisha.**
- The **festival of 'Dusserah'** is the occasion of performing Dalkhai, which is the most popular folk-dance of western Odisha.

> **PRELIMS TRAP** ASSAM, NOT ODISHA
>
> The next four dances printed under this heading belong to **Assam**, not Odisha:
>
> - **Jhumur**: dance of the tea-garden (Adivasi) communities of Assam.
> - **Bagurumba**: danced by Bodo women.
> - **Deodhani**: performed at the worship of Manasa, the snake goddess.
> - **Dhepa Dhuliya**: a drum dance of Darrang district.
>
> Odisha's forms in this section are Pala, Daskathia, Danda Nata, Prahlad Nataka, Bharat Lila and Dalkhai.

Jumur or Jumu Nach

- This dance is called as **'Chah Baganar Jumur Nach'** that means **Jumur dance of tea garden**.
- This dance is very much prevalent in all tea garden surrounding areas & performed by girls and boys together to make the people relax while working.

Bagurumba Dance

- It is a folk dance of the **Bodo community**, which is very rich in cultural wealth.
- It has many folk dances to boast about their culture, but among all the dances the best and the most attractive dance is the **Bagurumba dance.**

Deodhani Dance

- Deodhani is danced as a **solo or group performance**.
- In the group performance, it essentially includes 3 or 4 females and it is performed on the occasion of the worship of **Devi Manasa or Maroi.**

Dhepa Dhuliya Dance

- Dhepa Dhuliya Dance is another form of traditional folk art of **Darrang region of Assam**.
- In this dance performance , **two to four performers play the Dhepadhol and it is specially to generate a unique sound, while beating it.**

Folk Dances of Madhya Pradesh

Maanch

- Maanch is a lyrical folk drama and a form of operatic ballet that is **very popular in Malwa in Madhya Pradesh.**
- "Maanch" means the **stage or place of performance and as an indigenous & distinct folk-form.**

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- **Gaur Maria Dance**
  - Gaur Maria dance is one of the important dances of **Bison Horn Marias of Abhujmaria plateau of Bastar in Chhattisgarh.**
  - This is a very beautiful and joyful dance and is basically performed as an invocation on the occasion of marriages.
- **Jawara**
  - It is a harvest dance popular in **Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh**. The peasants' community of the area performs this dance, to celebrate their joy and bliss.
  - The women carry a basket full of Jawara crop on their heads while performing the dance.

Folk Dances of Manipur

- **Pung Cholom Dance**
  - Pung Cholom is folk art form with a combination of sound and movements, which sometimes demand acrobatic abilities and stamina.
  - The dancers themselves play the **Mridanga (Pung)** while executing the performance in front of the audience.
- **Maibi Dance**
  - **Maibi dance** is performed during the celebration of **festival Lai Haraoba**, which is an annual ritual festival of the Meitei Manipuris, living in the valley of Manipur.
- **Nupa Dance**
  - Nupa dance or **Nupa Pala is also known as Kartal Cholom or Cymbal dance**, performed in a group, only by the men folk.
  - This dance represents the **unique Manipuri style of dance and music,** where the performers sing and dance to the rhythm of the Pung.

Folk Dances of Mizoram

- **Cheraw Dance in Mizoram**
  - Cheraw dance is also known as **'Bamboo dance'** as bamboos are used while performing the dance.
  - This dance is one of the **most colourful and distinct dance of the Mizos.**
- **Khuallam Dance in Mizoram**
  - Khuallam is also known as **'dance of the guests'** and it is performed at the time of ceremony called **'Khuangchawi'**.
  - In this dance a group of males perform to the tunes of drum and gong.
- **Chailam**
  - This dance is performed during the **festival of Chapchar Kut.**
  - This dance is **performed by men and women standing in circles.**

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- **Sawlakin**
  - This dance is actually a **Lakher dance** that has been adopted by the Mizos.
  - A warrior starts the dance who has hunted a man or an animal.
- **Chheihlam**
  - It is a **group dance performed by both men and women**.
  - It is performed surrounding a rice beer in the evening.
- **Zangtalam**
  - This is dance of the **Paihte group**.
  - It is danced to the tune of the drums.
- **Sarlamkai**
  - Sarlamkai is the variation of **Solakia dance**. However the dressing is different in this dance.
  - **Gongs or cymbals or drums are used.**

Other Folk Dances of North Eastern States

- **Bihu Dance, Assam**
  - The Bihu is considered as feature of **folk dance of Assam** and is enjoyed by all sections of society.
  - It is the most popular & colorful folk dance of Assam.
- **Ankiya Nat, Assam**
  - It is believed that Ankiya Nat is a one-act play, **initiated by Sankardeva**.
  - Shankardeva composed various forms of literary kind of work like Bargeet, Ojha Pali songs and numerous dances, which were incorporated into the dance drama, termed as Ankiya Nat.

Other Folk Dances

- **Dollu Kunitha Dance, Karnataka**
  - Kunitha are considered as the **ritualistic dances of Karnataka**, of which the Dollu Kunitha is one of the ritualistic dances that is popular with the kurubas of **'Beereshvara Sampradaya'**.
  - One of the popular dance forms of Karnataka, kunitha is accompanied by the beats of the drums, and singing of the dancers.
- **Hurka Baul Dance, Uttarakhand**
  - The Hurka Baul dance is performed during the **cultivation of paddy and maize in the farms.**
  - The dance is named according to the Hurka, which is the drum used for musical accompaniment in the performance of the dance and **Baul is the song.**

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Pangi Dance, Himachal Pradesh

- Pangi dance of **Himachal Pradesh** is a fascinating dance form which is usually performed by the womenfolk.
- The performers stand in a **circle** and execute the steps in a **slow form**.

Pandwani Dance, Chhattisgarh

- Pandwani is an Indian folk Dance in ballad form **performed predominantly in Chhattisgarh.**
- It is also popular in the **neighbouring tribal areas of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh**. It depicts the story of the **Pandavas**, the leading characters in the **epic Mahabharata**.
- Pandwani is narrated in a very lively form, almost constructing the scenes in the minds of the audience.

Panthi, Chhattisgarh

- Panthi dance is one of the important dance forms of **Chhattisgarh** State of India.
- This Indian folk dance is basically a prominent ritual of the **Satnami community of Chhattisgarh**.

PRELIMS FACT PERFORMING ARTS OF CHHATTISGARH

- **Pandwani** has two styles: **Vedamati**, narrated seated, and **Kapalik**, in which the singer stands and acts out the scenes. **Teejan Bai** (1956–2026), the first woman to sing in the Kapalik style, received the Padma Vibhushan in 2019; she died in Raipur on 5 July 2026.
- **Raut Nacha** is danced by the Raut (Yadav) cowherd community in worship of Krishna, from Govardhan Puja during Diwali until Dev Uthani Ekadashi.
- The **Raigarh gharana** of Kathak grew under Raja Chakradhar Singh, who ruled Raigarh from 1924 to 1947.

Padayani, Kerala

- Associated with the festival of certain temples, called **Padayani or Paddeni.**
- Such temples are in **Alleppey, Quilon, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam districts.**
- The main **Kolams (huge masks)** displayed in Padayani are Bhairavi (Kali), Kalan (god of death), Yakshi (fairy) and Pakshi (bird).

Taranga Mel

- It is a dance in **Goa** that involves a lot of energy. It is usually performed on the occasions of **Dushehra and Holi** by young boys and girls.
- It derives its name from the streamers also known as “tarang” involved in the dance. The dance performers wave multi coloured flags and streamers and make noises to the beat of the instruments such as **“Dhol” and “Romut”.**
- The dancers in Taranga Mel wear colourful costumes that makes it an eye-catching dance. They create a spirit inspiring and inviting everyone to join in the festivities.

Kummi

- It is a folk dance, popular in **Tamil Nadu and Kerala** in India, danced mostly by Tamil women in circle.

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- Dancing may be different. In some places, it is very simple, with rhythmic clapping. Kummi often accompany by songs, called **"Kummi songs"**. It is often danced during **festivals**. It is also danced by Tamils of Sri Lanka. Kummi songs became a popular addition to Kuthiyottam festivities in modern times.



03 Martial Dances of India

Kalarippayattu: It is a famous Indian martial art from land of attraction **Kerala** and one of the oldest fighting systems in existence.

Silambam: It is a weapon-based Indian martial art from **Tamil Nadu**.

Gatka: It is weapon-based Indian martial art basically created by the **Sikhs of Punjab**.

Thang Ta: It is popular term for the ancient Manipuri Martial Art also known as Huyen Lallong. Manipuri martial arts with swords and spears, is a strong yet gracefully sophisticated art.

Mardani Khel: It is an armed method of martial art **created by the Maratha**. This traditional martial art of Maharashtra is practiced in kolhapur.

Paika Dance: It is a martial art form of **Orissa**, which has withstood the test of time.

Paika Akhadas thrive in several villages of the state till today. As early as the 15th century CE, **Gajapati Raja** was believed to have raised an army of Paika warriors.

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The brave Paikas raise their voice of rebellion against the British rulers as early as 1817, four decades before the **Sepoy Mutiny broke out**. **Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar Mahapatra Bhramarabar Roy led the Paika Bidroha**.

The Paiks of Khorda did not allow the British to enter the region and that is why Khorda is known as the last freedom fort of India. The heroism of these warriors influenced the art, architecture and literature of Orissa.

The carvings that adorn the **Konark Temple** depict the martial prowess of the Paikas. Many of the performing art forms of Orissa, namely the Mayurbhanj dance, Ranapa dance etc., have been influenced by this glorious martial tradition.

❀ Prelims Quick Revision

- **Natyashastra**: Bharata Muni's treatise on drama, dance and music (c. 2nd century BCE–2nd century CE), called the fifth Veda.
- **Abhinaya Darpana**: Nandikesvara's text, a main source for Bharatnatyam technique.
- **Tanjore Quartet**: Chinnayya, Ponniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu codified the Bharatnatyam recital from Alarippu to Tillana.
- **Elements**: Bharatnatyam fire, Odissi water, Mohiniattam air, Kathakali sky (ether).
- **Tarangam**: Kuchipudi finale danced standing on a brass plate; Bhama Kalapam is Siddhendra Yogi's dance-drama.
- **Kathakali**: Kerala dance-drama by male actors; green (pacha) make-up for noble characters; training rooted in Kalaripayattu.
- **Mohiniattam**: lasya-dominated solo dance of Kerala, sung in the Sopanam style; revived by Vallathol's Kerala Kalamandalam (1930).
- **Odissi**: chowk and tribhanga postures; earliest evidence in the Udayagiri–Khandagiri caves; themes from Jayadeva's Gita Govinda.
- **Manipuri**: Ras Lila first staged under Bhagyachandra (1779); Pung cholom and Nupa (Kartal) cholom are male dances.
- **Kathak gharanas**: Lucknow (Wajid Ali Shah), Jaipur (Kachchwaha court), Banaras (Janakiprasad), Raigarh (Chakradhar Singh).
- **Sattriya**: Sankardeva's dance of Assam's sattras; Sangeet Natak Akademi classical status on 15 November 2000.
- **Chhau**: Purulia and Seraikella styles use masks, Mayurbhanj does not; UNESCO list 2010; classical only in the Ministry of Culture's list.
- **Kalbelia**: dance of Rajasthan's snake-charmer community; on UNESCO's intangible heritage list since 2010.
- **Gaur Maria**: bison-horn dance of the Marias of Bastar, Chhattisgarh.
- **Pandwani**: Mahabharata ballad of Chhattisgarh in Vedamati (seated) and Kapalik (standing) styles.

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