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FREE SAMPLE

PRELIMS 2027 EDITION

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES · PRELIMS

Indian Art and Culture

Prelims Summary + Facts

PYQS 1995–2026

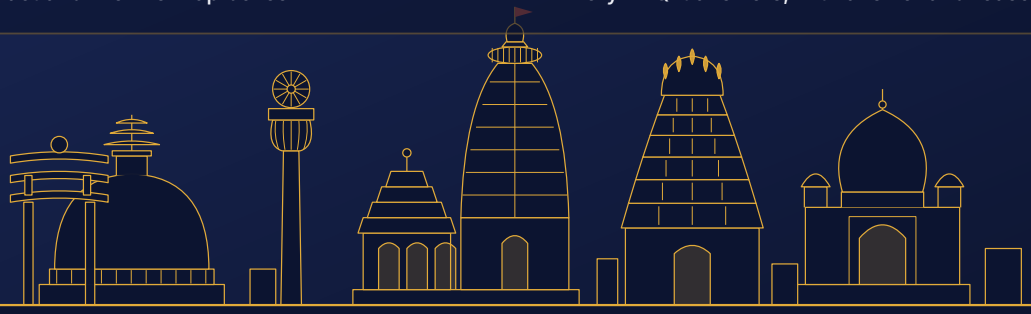
Architecture, sculpture, painting, music and dance, crafts and coins, religion and philosophy, language and literature, heritage lists, festivals, awards and institutions, as Prelims asks them.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

501	17	364	267	181
PAGES	CHAPTERS	PYQS WITH ANSWERS	FACT TABLES	PRELIMS BOXES

INSIDE EVERY CHAPTER

- A PYQ Radar box: what UPSC asked, and when
- Exam-style facts and fact tables
- Prelims Fact and Prelims Trap boxes
- Update 2026 boxes, checked and dated
- A Prelims Quick Revision panel
- Every PYQ it answers, with answer and reason



UNIT I
Architecture

UNIT II
Sculpture and Bronzes

UNIT III
Painting

UNIT IV
Music, Dance, Theatre and Puppetry

UNIT V
Crafts, Pottery and Coinage

UNIT VI
Religion and Philosophy

UNIT VII
Language, Literature and Learning

UNIT VIII
Heritage, Festivals, Awards and Institutions

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Updated to November 2026

LOTUSARISE IAS

Indian Art and Culture: Prelims Summary and Facts

Fact notes for UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination, built on the Prelims questions of 1995–2026

Prelims 2027 Edition · November 2026 · Compiled by Arvind KrS

Answers for 2011–2025 follow UPSC's official answer keys; 2026 answers follow UPSC's provisional key and are marked so.

Free sample. This sample carries the cover, the full contents and three complete chapters of the book. You may share this sample as it is, without changes.

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Questions or corrections: support@lotusarise.com

How to read this book

This is a Prelims fact book built backwards from the question paper. Chapter 1 shows what UPSC has asked from 1995 to 2026; every other chapter gives the facts in the form Prelims tests them, and ends with the questions it answers.

PYQ RADAR 20 QUESTIONS, 1995–2026

- **Asked:** the years.
- **Learn first:** the table to start with.

PYQ Radar
At the top of each chapter: how many questions UPSC has set from it, in which years, on which themes, and which table to learn first.

- The **Kailasa temple** at **Ellora** was cut from a single rock under the **Rashtrakuta** king **Krishna I**.

Exam-style facts
One fact to a line, written the way a correct statement reads in a Prelims question.

A faint yellow mark runs over the highest-yield facts. Terms are underlined in gold and dates such as 1983 are set in red.

Marks
The few lines in each section most worth reading twice, chosen by the weight of past questions.

PRELIMS FACT A FACT TO ADD

An extra list, pair or detail of the kind Prelims tests.

Prelims Fact
Extra facts beside the main lines.

PRELIMS TRAP LOOK-ALIKES

Two look-alike facts side by side, with the way to tell them apart.

Prelims Trap
Confusions that question-setters use, such as Kailasa and Kailasanatha, or Chola and Pala bronzes.

UPDATE 2026 WHAT HAS CHANGED

The current position, with its date and the body that announced it.

Update 2026
Heritage lists, GI tags, awards and recent finds, checked and dated.

Prelims Quick Revision

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

Quick Revision and PYQs
Each chapter closes with one-line revision points and then every past question it answers, with the answer and a one-line reason.

A THREE-ROUND PLAN

1. **First round:** read Chapter 1, then each chapter with its tables and boxes, and attempt its PYQs.
2. **Second round:** the marked lines, the Trap boxes and the Update 2026 boxes.
3. **Last fortnight:** the Quick Revision panels and the Rapid Revision Tables of Chapter 17.

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ART & CULTURE PRELIMS SUMMARY PYQS 1995–2026

How UPSC Asks Art and Culture: PYQ Analysis 1995–2026

This book is built backwards from the question paper. Every UPSC Prelims paper from 1995 to 2026 was read for questions on Indian art and culture: architecture and sculpture, painting, dance, music and theatre, crafts and coins, religion and philosophy, languages and literature, travellers and science, the heritage lists, festivals, tribes, national symbols, awards and cultural institutions. The 364 questions found were each placed in the chapter of this book that answers them. Of these, 264 sit squarely inside the subject and 100 on its edges (modern books and authors, tribes, prizes, languages in the Constitution); the edge questions are counted because their facts live in these chapters. The counts set the space each chapter gets; the recurring themes set which facts come first, and the traps UPSC has already used became the Prelims Trap boxes.

Every question is quoted with its options, its answer and a one-line reason. The answers for 2011–2025 follow UPSC's official answer keys, which the Commission releases after the final result of each year's examination (the 2011 key only in reply to requests under the RTI Act); the key for 2025 came out on 13 May 2026. For 1995–2010, when no official key was published, the answer is the one on which the standard solved versions of the papers agree, checked against the facts. For the ten old questions where those versions disagree, the answer given is the one the facts best support. The 2026 answers follow UPSC's provisional answer key of 27 May 2026, the first provisional key the Commission has released. Every 2026 answer is marked "(provisional key)" in the question panels at the end of each chapter. Three of the fourteen have been contested since the exam; the book keeps the provisional answer until the final key appears.

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS **History of India and Indian National Movement, including Indian art, architecture, literature, religion and heritage**

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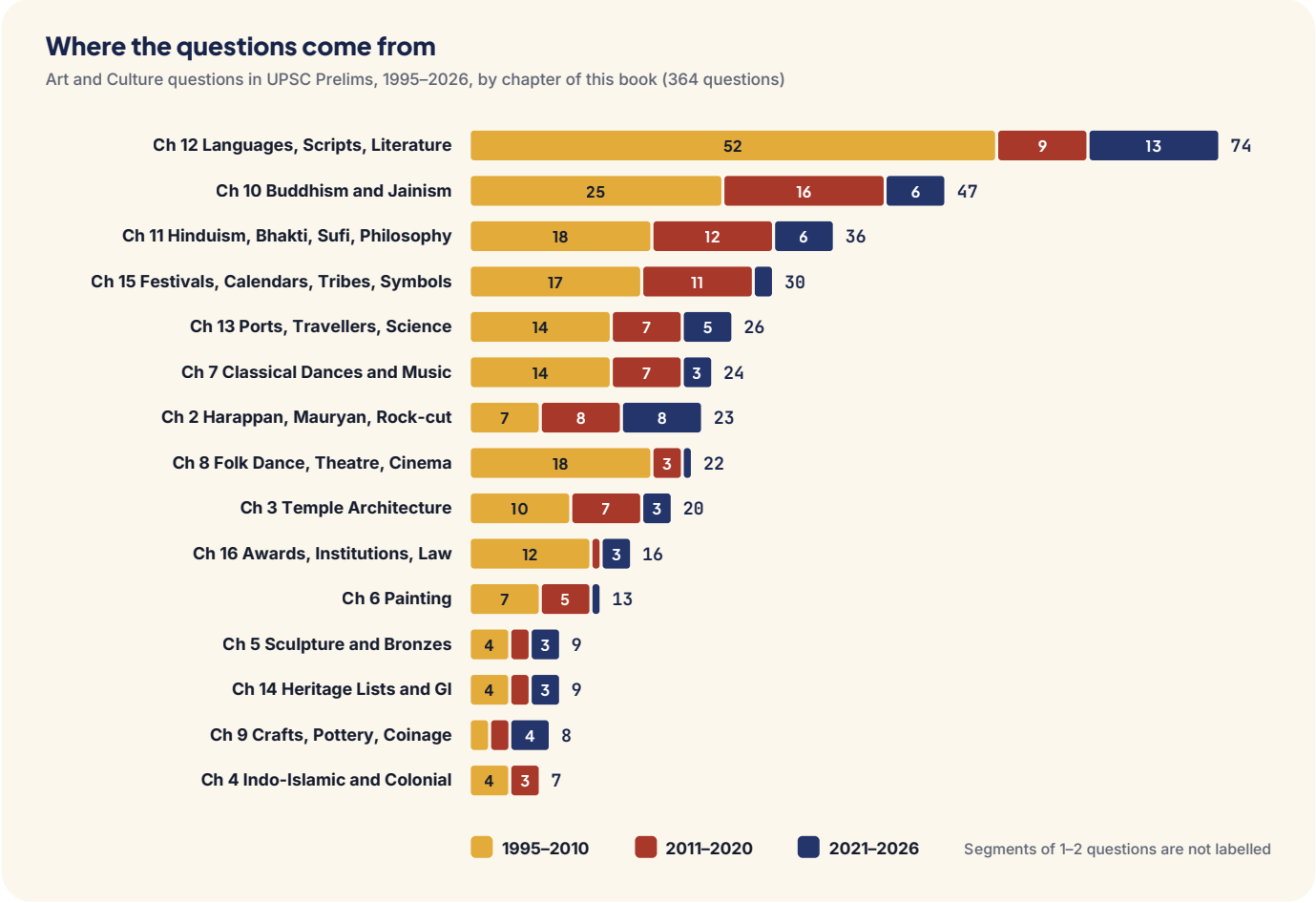
01 Where the Questions Come From
02 How Many Questions Each Year

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03 How the Questions Have Changed
04 Themes UPSC Keeps Returning To
05 The Commonest Traps
06 How to Use This Book

01 Where the Questions Come From

Languages, Scripts and Literature (Chapter 12) carries the most questions, 74 of 364 (20%), but since 2011 Buddhism and Jainism (Chapter 10) has drawn level with it, at 22 questions each. The three chapters on religion and literature (12, 10 and 11) together carry 157 questions, 43% of the total. The four smallest chapters (Indo-Islamic and Colonial Architecture, Sculpture and Bronzes, Crafts, and the Heritage Lists) have 33 between them.



Art and Culture questions in UPSC Prelims, 1995–2026, by chapter of this book, split into three periods.

The totals hide a change of weight across the three periods:

- Chapters 12, 10 and 11 repay revision first: they are among the four largest chapters before 2011 and the three largest since (22, 22 and 18 questions in 2011–2026).
- Harappan, Mauryan and rock-cut architecture (Chapter 2) has risen from 7 questions in 1995–2010 to 16 since 2011, eight of them in 2021–2026, second only to Chapter 12 in that period. Stupas, chaityas, cave shrines, Ashokan edict sites and Harappan finds are now asked almost every year.

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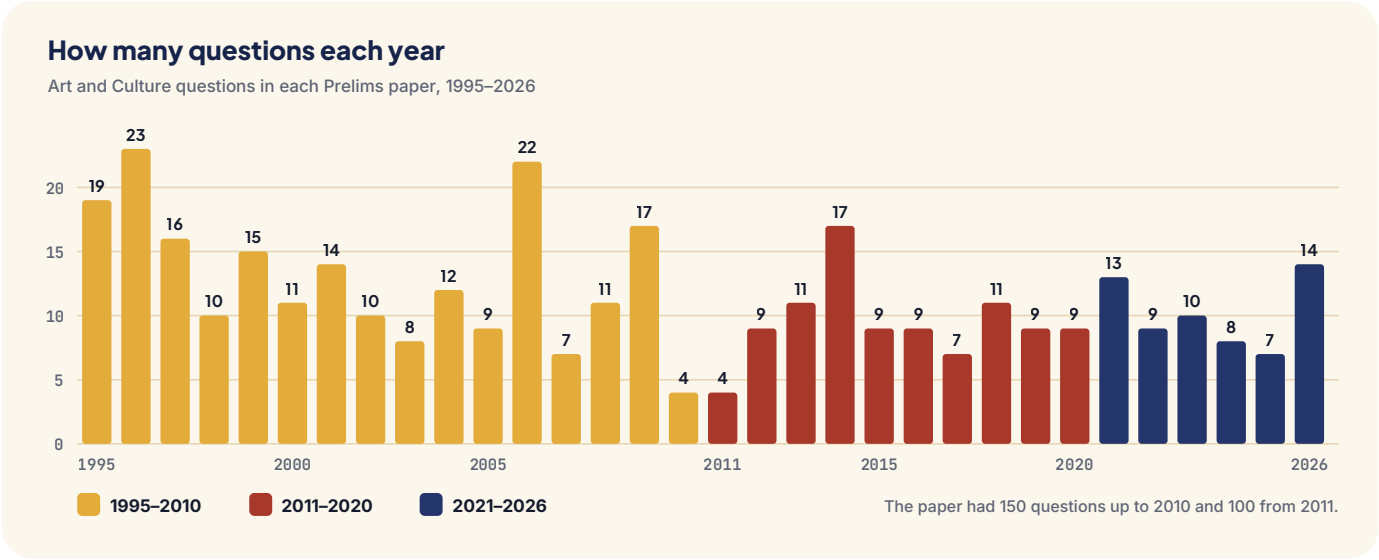
- Folk dance, theatre and cinema (Chapter 8) and Awards and Institutions (Chapter 16) set 30 questions before 2011 and eight since. Most of their old questions were on living artists, films and prizes, a type that has nearly gone (see below).
- Crafts, Pottery and Coinage (Chapter 9) is small but rising: four of its eight questions came in 2021–2026 (the fanam, National Handloom Day, coins in the Pali texts, Eri silk).

CHAPTER OF THIS BOOK	1995–2010	2011–2020	2021–2026	TOTAL	SHARE
12. Languages, Scripts and Literature	52	9	13	**74**	20%
10. Buddhism and Jainism: Teachings, Councils, Sites and Mudras	25	16	6	**47**	13%
11. Hinduism, Bhakti, Sufism, Sikhism, Other Faiths and the Schools of Philosophy	18	12	6	**36**	10%
15. Fairs, Festivals, Calendars, Tribes and National Symbols	17	11	2	**30**	8%
13. Ancient Ports, Foreign Travellers and Science through the Ages	14	7	5	**26**	7%
7. Classical Dances and Music	14	7	3	**24**	7%
2. Harappan, Mauryan and Rock-cut Architecture: Stupas, Pillars and Caves	7	8	8	**23**	6%
8. Folk Dances, Theatre, Puppetry, Martial Arts and Cinema	18	3	1	**22**	6%
3. Temple Architecture: Nagara, Dravida and Vesara	10	7	3	**20**	5%
16. Awards, Cultural Institutions and the Law	12	1	3	**16**	4%
6. Painting: Murals, Miniatures and Folk Art	7	5	1	**13**	4%
5. Sculpture and Bronzes	4	2	3	**9**	2%
14. Heritage Lists: World Heritage, Intangible Heritage and GI Tags	4	2	3	**9**	2%
9. Handicrafts, Pottery and Coinage	2	2	4	**8**	2%
4. Indo-Islamic and Colonial Architecture	4	3	0	**7**	2%
All chapters	**208**	**95**	**61**	**364**	100%

02 How Many Questions Each Year

The paper had 150 questions up to 2010 and has had 100 since 2011. Art and culture averaged 13.0 questions a paper before 2011 and 9.8 since, so its share of the paper has held at about 9–10% for thirty years (8.7% before 2011, 9.8% since). The peaks were 1996 (23 questions) and 2006 (22); the low points were 2010 and 2011, with four each. Since 2011 the highest count is 17 (2014), and the 2026 paper set 14, the most since then.

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Art and Culture questions in each Prelims paper from 1995 to 2026.

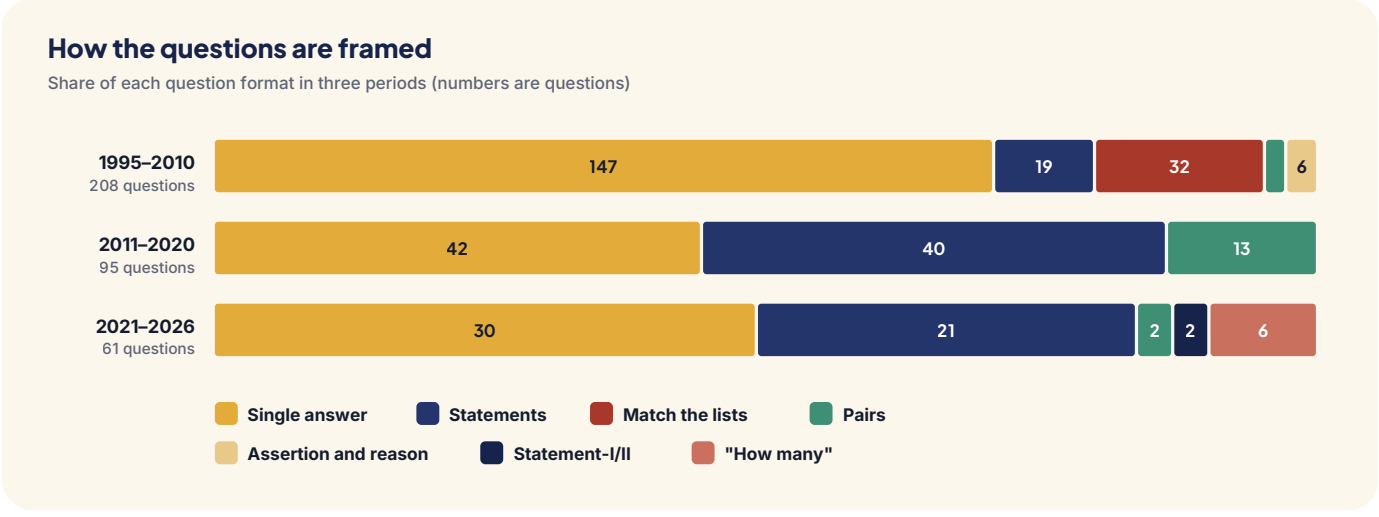
PRELIMS FACT THE 2026 PAPER

- Fourteen questions: two on music (Bilawal and Dheera Shankarabharanam; Mallikarjun Mansur of the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana), three on Buddhist sculpture and Harappan towns (the empty seat, the Amaravati stupa, spindle-whorls and weights in Harappan towns), Nagara shikharas, the Bagh caves, the Jaina gatis, the place-value system in inscriptions, coins in the Pali texts, kshetra-patni in the Atharvaveda, Eri silk, the Moidams and the film Boong.
- Three of the fourteen open with a recent event: Eri silk's Oeko-Tex certification, the Moidams on the World Heritage List and Boong's BAFTA award.

03 How the Questions Have Changed

The format

The way questions are framed has changed more than the facts they test.



Question formats in Art and Culture questions, 1995–2010, 2011–2020 and 2021–2026.

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FORMAT	1995–2010	2011–2020	2021–2026	TOTAL
Single answer	147 (71%)	42 (44%)	30 (49%)	**219**
Statements (which is/are correct)	19 (9%)	40 (42%)	21 (34%)	**80**
Match the lists	32 (15%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**32**
Pairs (which is/are correctly matched)	4 (2%)	13 (14%)	2 (3%)	**19**
Assertion and reason	6 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**6**
Statement-I and Statement-II	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (3%)	**2**
"How many" of the above	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (10%)	**6**

PERIOD	TYPICAL FORMAT	EXAMPLE
1995–2010	One-line recall; match the lists; assertion and reason; "which one pair is (not) correctly matched"	"Zero was invented by" (1995); dancers matched with their dance forms (2001); "The Gandhara School of art bears the mark of Hellenistic influence" as an assertion (1998)
2011–2021	Two to four statements, "which is/are correct?"; pairs with codes	Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam told apart (2012); Garba, Mohiniattam and Yakshagana with their states (2014); the Bodhisattva (2016)
2022–2024	"How many of the above are correct?", which defeats elimination	Ashoka's major rock-edict sites and their states (2022); Besnagar, Bhaja and Sittanavasal as cave shrines (2023); World Heritage properties inscribed in 2023 (2024)
2023	Statement-I and Statement-II: is each true, and does II explain I?	National Handloom Day and the Swadeshi Movement (2023); the National Flag under the Flag Code (2023)
2021–2026	A recent event as the hook, then a culture question	The Ramanuja statue at Hyderabad and the Somnath circuit house (2022); Garba on the Intangible Heritage list (2024); Boong's BAFTA and the Moidams (2026)

- Match-the-list questions (32 up to 2009) and assertion-and-reason questions (six up to 2001) have not appeared since. Statements, pairs and the newer multi-statement formats now make up 84 of the 156 questions set since 2011 (54%).
- "How many" questions appeared six times in 2022–2024. They give no credit for partial knowledge: with three or four pairs, one wrong judgement makes the whole answer wrong. Facts that come in sets (sites and states, texts and authors, dances and features) are therefore given in tables in every chapter.
- Seven of the 61 questions in 2021–2026 open with a news item, against two in the ten papers before. When a monument, art form or craft is inscribed, tagged, awarded or inaugurated in the year before the exam, revise its place, period, patron and style.

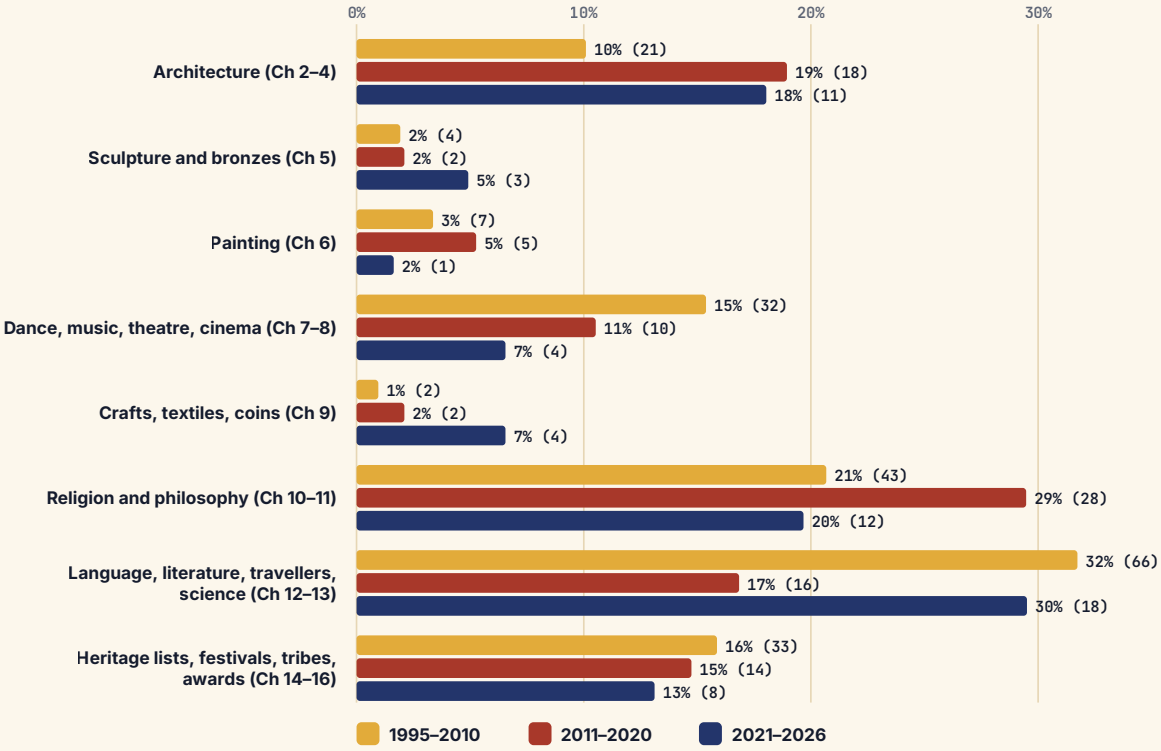
The subject

The balance between subjects has also moved. Architecture has nearly doubled its share, from 10% of the questions before 2011 to 19% in 2011–2020 and 18% in 2021–2026. Dance, music, theatre and cinema have fallen from 15% to 7%. Religion and philosophy peaked at 29% in 2011–2020, and language and literature, which fell to 17% in that decade, is back at 30% in 2021–2026 on the strength of Sanskrit drama and Sangam poetry.

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What the questions are about

Each unit's share of the Art and Culture questions in each period (% of that period's questions)



Each subject unit's share of the Art and Culture questions in 1995–2010, 2011–2020 and 2021–2026.

UNIT OF THIS BOOK	1995–2010	2011–2020	2021–2026	TOTAL
Language, literature, travellers, science (Ch 12–13)	66 (32%)	16 (17%)	18 (30%)	**100**
Religion and philosophy (Ch 10–11)	43 (21%)	28 (29%)	12 (20%)	**83**
Heritage lists, festivals, tribes, awards (Ch 14–16)	33 (16%)	14 (15%)	8 (13%)	**55**
Architecture (Ch 2–4)	21 (10%)	18 (19%)	11 (18%)	**50**
Dance, music, theatre, cinema (Ch 7–8)	32 (15%)	10 (11%)	4 (7%)	**46**
Painting (Ch 6)	7 (3%)	5 (5%)	1 (2%)	**13**
Sculpture and bronzes (Ch 5)	4 (2%)	2 (2%)	3 (5%)	**9**
Crafts, textiles, coins (Ch 9)	2 (1%)	2 (2%)	4 (7%)	**8**
All units	**208**	**95**	**61**	**364**

The largest single change is the end of the "who is who" question. Up to 2010 the paper regularly asked about living musicians, dancers and theatre people, recent books and their authors, films and the year's prizes: who wrote "My Music, My Life", which dance Bimbavati Devi performs, who won the Booker or the Dadasaheb Phalke Award. Such questions made up 51 of the 208 questions in 1995–2010 (25%) and only 4 of the 156 since 2011 (3%). They explain most of the fall of Chapters 8 and 16: of the 44 questions that Chapters 7, 8 and 16 set before 2011, 34 were of this type. The four since 2011 are on prizes and films: the film on Ramanujan (2016), the Bharat Ratna and Padma Awards (2021), the Gandhi Peace Prize jury (2025) and Boong (2026). What has

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replaced them is ancient and early medieval heritage: Buddhist and Jaina doctrine, stupas and caves, Sanskrit drama and Sangam poetry.

04 Themes UPSC Keeps Returning To

Some topics come back every few years. The counts are questions, 1995–2026, with the split for 1995–2010, 2011–2020 and 2021–2026 in brackets; a question can belong to more than one theme.

THEME	QUESTIONS	WHAT IS ASKED	CH
Living artists, recent books, films and prizes	**55** (51, 1, 3)	Musicians, dancers and theatre people with their art; Indian English, Bengali and Urdu books and authors; Booker, Phalke and Bharat Ratna winners; the first film show (1896) and Alam Ara; since 2011 only a film on Ramanujan, whether the Bharat Ratna is a title under Article 18, the Gandhi Peace Prize jury and Boong	6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16
Buddhism: teachings, sects, councils, texts, monasteries	**33** (17, 13, 3)	The Fourth Council and Vasumitra; the Milindapanho; the eightfold path; Nirvana; Bodhisattvas, Mahayana and the paramitas; Sautrantika, Sammitiya, Sthaviravada and Mahasanghika; the Bhumisparsha mudra; Tabo, Tawang and Kye monasteries; epithets of the Buddha	10
Ancient and early medieval texts and authors	**24** (12, 3, 9)	Visakhadatta, Sudraka, Bhasa and Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitram; Bhavabhuti and Hastimalla; Sangam poems and vadakkiruttal; the Kathopanishad and Atharvaveda; the Mitakshara; Mahendravarman's titles; the Persian Yogavasistha	12
Temples: styles, dynasties, sites	**20** (10, 7, 3)	Nagara, Dravida and Vesara; temples matched with dynasties; Hampi and the kalyana mandapa; Konark, Lingaraja and the Hoysala temples; panchayatana; sun temples; the Chausath Yogini temple; Somnath; Nagara shikharas at Aihole and Deogarh	3
Languages and scripts	**20** (15, 2, 3)	Kharosthi, Modi and Nastaliq; apabhramsa; Khasi as Austric; Prakrit in Sanskrit plays; the Eighth Schedule; classical languages; Halbi, Ho and Kui; International Mother Language Day	12
Buddhist art: stupas, chaityas, Gandhara, Amaravati, Ajanta, Bagh	**18** (6, 6, 6)	Green schist and Hellenistic influence in Gandhara; chaitya and vihara; Ajanta and Bagh murals; the Kanaganahalli portrait of Ashoka; the stupa's origin; the Amaravati stupa; the empty seat	2, 5, 6
Bhakti, Sufi and Sikh saints	**17** (11, 5, 1)	The saints' trades; Ramananda and Hindi; the Bijak and Pushti Marg; the Chishtis and sama; Siddhas and Lingayats; who was contemporary with whom; Guru Arjan and the Adi Granth; Ramanuja	11
Jainism: doctrine, sects, texts, sites	**16** (9, 4, 3)	Anuvrata and anekantavada; souls in rocks and water; the Sthanakvasi sect; Kharavela; Palitana; the Mahamastakabhisheka; early Jaina texts; the four gatis	10
Tribes and communities	**15** (9, 6, 0)	Tribes with their states and islands (Onge, Shompen, Sahariya, Karbi, Bonda); PVTGs; the Changpa; the Agaria; living root bridges	15
Classical dance and music	**13** (3, 7, 3)	Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam; Sattriya; Manipuri Sankirtana; the tribhanga pose; Dhrupad; Tyagaraja; Tansen; Paluskar's Gandharva Mahavidyalaya; Bilawal; the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana	7

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THEME	QUESTIONS	WHAT IS ASKED	CH
Calendars, eras and national symbols	**11** (6, 3, 2)	The Saka, Vikrama, Gupta and Kali eras; 1 Chaitra; the Islamic calendar; the 24 spokes; Satyameva Jayate from the Mundaka Upanishad; the national aquatic animal; the anthem and the Flag Code	15
Harappan civilisation: sites, seals, religion, art	**10** (3, 4, 3)	Animals on the seals; sites and finds; religion and cotton; Dholavira's water system; the bronze Dancing Girl; spindle-whorls and weights	2, 5
Science, mathematics, medicine and technology	**9** (6, 1, 2)	Zero; Brahmagupta; Sushruta; the Baudhayana Sulba Sutra; Aryabhata and Varahamihira; the araghatta; place value in inscriptions	13
UNESCO lists and GI tags	**9** (4, 2, 3)	World Heritage Sites in India; the Kalka-Shimla railway; Rigveda manuscripts in the Memory of the World register; Garba; the Moidams; the GI Act and TRIPS	14
Foreign travellers and pilgrims	**7** (3, 2, 2)	Faxian, Xuanzang and Yijing in order; Roe at the Mughal court; Tavernier on diamonds; Nuniz on Vijayanagara women	13

Facts asked twice or more

Several facts have been asked again, often years apart and sometimes in the same words.

FACT ASKED AGAIN	YEARS
Nagara, Dravida and Vesara, the three styles of Indian temple architecture (the same question in 1995 and 2012; Nagara shikharas in 2026)	1995, 2012, 2026
What Buddhism and Jainism had in common (almost the same question)	1996, 2012
Kosala and Magadha, the kingdoms linked with the life of the Buddha (the same question)	2014, 2015
Mahayana and the Bodhisattva ideal (Avalokiteshvara, Maitreya, deification of the Buddha, paramitas)	1997, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020
Visakhadatta wrote the Mudrarakshasa and the Devichandraguptam	1996, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2023
The Mricchakatika is by Sudraka	1997, 1998, 2003
The Saka and Vikrama eras and the national calendar (1 Chaitra falls on 22 March, 21 March in a leap year)	1995, 1997, 2003, 2014
Mughal painting peaked under Jahangir, who turned to albums and portraits	1996, 2019
Paintings of the Bagh caves (the Gupta-period murals besides Ajanta)	2010, 2026
Padmapani, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (also the Ajanta painting)	1997, 2017
Hoysala temples at Belur and Halebid (Dwarasamudra)	2001, 2002, 2020, 2024
Hampi: the Vittala and Virupaksha temples, on the Tungabhadra	2007, 2009, 2019

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FACT ASKED AGAIN	YEARS
Tabo monastery is in Spiti, Himachal Pradesh	2006, 2009, 2014
Faxian (Fa-Hien): when he came (under Chandragupta II)	1999, 2004, 2025
Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang) and his account of Harsha's India	2004, 2013
The Fourth Buddhist Council under Kanishka in Kashmir (Vasumitra presided)	2001, 2004
Mitakshara and Dayabhaga, the two schools of Hindu law	1995, 2021
Chandraketugarh in West Bengal, known for terracotta	2021, 2024
Chapchar Kut is a festival of Mizoram	2002, 2018
The GI Act of 1999 was passed to meet the WTO's TRIPS obligations	2010, 2018
Classical language status (Kannada, Telugu, Odia)	2014, 2015
Languages added to the Eighth Schedule (71st Amendment, 1992; 92nd, 2003)	2008, 2024
Bengali's number of speakers (more than French, Japanese or Portuguese; second in India after Hindi)	2003, 2008
Pandit Ravi Shankar's autobiography "My Music, My Life"	2000, 2005
Ebrahim Alkazi, theatre director and teacher	2006, 2008

05 The Commonest Traps

Most wrong options are a real name with one detail changed, and the changed detail is usually of one of the kinds below.

TRAP	EXAMPLES (YEAR)	HOW TO AVOID IT
Right item, wrong state	Mohiniattam placed in Odisha (2014); Gatka placed in Kerala (2009); Sujni embroidery placed in Maharashtra (2018); the Karbi placed in Himachal Pradesh (2013); Chandraketugarh placed in Odisha (2024)	Learn every site, dance, craft, monastery and tribe with its state; the tables in each chapter give the state column
Right name, wrong religion or sect	Sautrantika and Sammitiya called Jaina sects (2017); the Bodhisattva made central to the Hinayana (2016); the Sthaviravadins put in the Mahayana (2020); Aryadeva called a Jaina scholar (2022); Besnagar called a Shaiva cave shrine (2023)	Fix the school of every thinker, text and sect: Buddhist, Jaina, Shaiva or Vaishnava, and Hinayana or Mahayana
Wrong author	The Buddhacharita given to Vasubandhu (1998); Navanna given to Nabin Chandra Das (1999); the Bijak given to Dadu Dayal and Pushti Marg to Madhvacharya (2014); the Devichandragupta given to Bilhana (2023)	Learn texts with their authors as pairs, and the author's patron with them

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TRAP	EXAMPLES (YEAR)	HOW TO AVOID IT
Wrong patron or contemporary	Faxian placed at Kanishka's council (2004); Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi made a contemporary of Ibrahim Lodi (2002); the title Tansen credited to Akbar (2019); Nimbarka placed in Akbar's time (2019); Panini placed under Pushyamitra Shunga (2020)	Put every saint, scholar and traveller against the ruler of his time
False firsts and origins	The Arya Samaj dated to 1835 (2001); gunpowder and the arch and dome credited to Babur (2015); the stupa called Buddhist in origin (2023)	Ask whether the thing existed before the person or faith credited with it
Absolute words: only, oldest	The Badami caves called the oldest surviving rock-cut caves (2013); cymbals called the only instruments of Manipuri Sankirtana (2017); the Chausath Yogini temple called the only circular temple in India (2021)	Test the absolute word first; one exception makes the statement false
Look-alike terms	Chaitya and vihara swapped in the options (2013); the brass-plate dance given to Bharatanatyam (2012)	Learn paired terms side by side: chaitya and vihara, Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam
Wrong river or hill	Hampi put on the Malaprabha (2019); Omkareshwar put on the Satmala Hills and Pushkar on the Mahadeo Hills (2015)	Learn the river or hill of each pilgrim and heritage town with its state

- **PRELIMS TRAP** PAIRS AND "HOW MANY" QUESTIONS
  - A single wrong pair is usually wrong in one detail only: the state (Mohiniattam in Odisha, 2014), the river (Hampi on the Malaprabha, 2019) or the faith (Besnagar as a Shaiva cave shrine, 2023). Check every column of every pair; a familiar name does not make the pair right.
  - In a "how many" question, decide each pair or statement separately and count only at the end. Do not look for a pattern in the answer options.

06 How to Use This Book

After this analysis, Chapters 2 to 16 follow the units of the subject: architecture (2–4), sculpture (5), painting (6), the performing arts (7–8), crafts and coins (9), religion and philosophy (10–11), language, literature, travellers and science (12–13), and the heritage lists, festivals, symbols, awards and institutions (14–16). Chapter 17 gathers the sets that come up most into Rapid Revision Tables for the last weeks before the exam.

Each chapter opens with a PYQ Radar box: how many questions the chapter has drawn, in which years, grouped by theme, and the table to learn first. The facts follow in short sentences written the way a correct Prelims statement reads, with tables for anything that comes in sets, Prelims Fact boxes for details worth adding, Prelims Trap boxes for the confusions UPSC uses and Update 2026 boxes for lists that change. Each chapter closes with a quick revision panel and every Prelims question from 1995 to 2026 on its topics, newest first, with the answer and the reason. Read the Radar before the chapter, and try the questions at its end before checking the answers; a wrong answer there points straight back to the fact that needs another look.

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❀ Prelims Quick Revision

- **The bank**: 364 Art and Culture questions in Prelims 1995–2026; 208 in 1995–2010, 95 in 2011–2020 and 61 in 2021–2026.
- **Answer keys**: UPSC's official keys for 2011–2025; the agreed standard answers for 1995–2010; UPSC's provisional key of 27 May 2026 for 2026, each 2026 answer marked "(provisional key)".
- **Largest chapter**: Languages, Scripts and Literature, 74 questions (20%); since 2011 Buddhism and Jainism has drawn level with it at 22 each.
- **Religion and literature**: Chapters 12, 10 and 11 together carry 157 questions, 43% of the total.
- **Share of the paper**: 13.0 questions a paper before 2011 (150 questions) and 9.8 since (100 questions), about 9–10% throughout.
- **Busiest papers**: 1996 (23 questions) and 2006 (22); fewest in 2010 and 2011 (4 each); 2026 set 14, the most since 2014 (17).
- **Rising chapter**: Harappan, Mauryan and rock-cut architecture, 7 questions in 1995–2010 and 16 since 2011, eight of them in 2021–2026.
- **Living artists, books, films and prizes**: 51 of 208 questions in 1995–2010 (25%), only 4 of 156 since 2011 (3%).
- **Formats that have gone**: match the lists (32 questions, last in 2009) and assertion and reason (6, last in 2001).
- **Statement formats**: statements, pairs, "how many" and Statement-I/II make up 84 of the 156 questions since 2011 (54%).
- **"How many" questions**: six in 2022–2024; one wrong judgement makes the whole answer wrong.
- **Statement-I and Statement-II**: two Art and Culture questions, both in 2023 (National Handloom Day; the Flag Code).
- **News hooks**: 7 of the 61 questions in 2021–2026 open with a recent event, such as the Ramanuja statue, Garba, the Moidams and Boong.
- **Asked again**: Nagara, Dravida and Vesara (1995, 2012, 2026); Visakhadatta's plays and the Mahayana Bodhisattva ideal (five times each).

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ART & CULTURE PRELIMS SUMMARY

PYQS 1995–2026

Temple Architecture: Nagara, Dravida and Vesara

The Hindu temple took shape in the Gupta age, when a square sanctum with a pillared porch replaced the shrine cut into a cliff. By the 7th century two orders had separated: the Nagara of the north, with a curving shikhara, amalaka and kalasha, and the Dravida of the south, with a stepped vimana inside a walled court entered through gopurams. In the Deccan, the Chalukyas and later the Hoysalas mixed the two into the hybrid called Vesara. Each order then split into regional schools under its patrons: the Eastern Gangas in Odisha, the Chandelas at Khajuraho, the Solankis in Gujarat, and the Pallavas, Cholas, Vijayanagara kings and Nayakas in the south.

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS **History of India and Indian National Movement, including Indian art, architecture, literature, religion and heritage**

CONTENTS

01 Beginnings and the Gupta Temple
02 Five Stages of the Early Temple
03 Parts of a Hindu Temple
04 Nagara, Dravida and Vesara Compared
05 Nagara Temples of the North
06 Dravida Temples of the South
07 Vesara: Temples of the Deccan
08 Buddhist and Jaina Temples
09 Temple Towns, Pilgrim Centres and Temples Abroad
10 Temples on the World Heritage List
11 Previous Year Questions

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PYQ RADAR 20 QUESTIONS, 1995–2026

- **Asked:** 1995, 1997, 2001 (twice), 2002, 2006 (twice), 2007, 2009 (twice), 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2026.
- **Temple, place and dynasty** (6 questions): Deogarh, Khajuraho, Badami and Panamalai with their dynasties; the city of the Lingaraja; Hoysala monuments at Halebid and Belur; four temples and their states; the Vittala and Virupaksha temples at Hampi.
- **Styles and plans** (4): Nagara, Dravida and Vesara as temple styles (twice), panchayatana, which temples have a Nagara shikhara (2026).
- **Single temples** (5): Gomateshwara and Hoysaleswara, the Konark wheel as a logo, Vijayanagara kalyana mandapas, the Chausath Yogini temple at Morena, Somnath.
- **Sun temples and temple geography** (4): Arasavalli among sun temples; pilgrim centres and their hills; places and their regions; old place names and present states.
- **Temples abroad** (1): Angkor Vat and Suryavarman II.
- **Learn first:** "The Regional Schools at a Glance" and the Odisha, Chola, Badami and Hoysala tables, because most questions match a temple to its dynasty, place or style.

01 Beginnings and the Gupta Temple

- Ancient texts call the temple **devalaya**, **devayatana**, **devakula** or **devagriha**, the "house of the god"; other regional names are mandir, kovil, deul, devasthanam and prasada. The English word comes from the Latin *templum*, a sacred precinct.
- The temple was conceived as a **microcosm of the universe** and as the dwelling of a deity; it was not built for congregations. Devotees offered puja and walked round it (pradakshina).
- The **Besnagar** (Vidisha) Brahmi inscription of the 2nd century BCE records the column raised by **Heliodorus** in honour of **Vasudeva**; the **Ghosundi** inscription (1st century BCE) records a stone enclosure for the worship of Sankarshana and Vasudeva built by a chief named **Gajayana**.
- Kautilya's **Arthashastra** prescribes temples on the divisions of the *vastu* for the site deities (vastu-devata) and for Aparajita, Jayanta, Shiva and Vaishravana.
- **Kharavela** is recorded as repairing temples of different sects; Hala's **Gatha Saptashati** mentions temples in the 2nd century CE; the **Bilsad** inscription mentions a temple to Skanda-Mahasena.
- The earliest free-standing religious building identified (by A. L. Basham) is a small **round hall at Bairat** near Jaipur, 3rd century BCE, of brick and wood, which probably held a Buddhist stupa.
- The temple at **Jandial**, excavated at Taxila (now in Punjab, Pakistan), was probably **Zoroastrian**: a square sanctuary, a hall and a courtyard, with entrances flanked by large pillars of the Ionic order.
- No standing free-standing Hindu temple survives from before the Gupta period (only foundations survive, such as those of the apsidal temple at Besnagar); the earliest standing structural temples date from the **5th century CE**.
- Free-standing temples were built of standard parts that could be made separately, carried and assembled, and gradually replaced cave shrines in importance as community centres.
- Temples served as religious centres, administrative centres, controllers of large landholdings and revenue, and centres of education; their income came from donations and land revenue.

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What the Gupta Age Added

- The Gupta period is called the "Golden Age" of Indian art; rock-cut architecture reached its height and the **free-standing temple** began.
- The basic elements of the Indian temple, a **square sanctum** and a **pillared porch**, emerged in the Gupta period; the evolved Gupta temple added a covered **pradakshina path** for circumambulation.
- Early Gupta temples had a **flat, monolithic slab roof**; later brick and stone temples developed a **shikhara**.
- Doorframes gained new motifs: goblins (ganas), couples, flying figures, door-keepers, and a relief of the enshrined deity at the centre of the lintel.
- The iconographic canons of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina deities were perfected and standardised in this period and served as models in India and beyond.
- Temple sculpture also carried secular themes: military processions, court scenes, musicians, dancers, acrobats and amorous couples (mithunas), besides **apsaras or devanganas** (celestial women) and **vyalas** (composite animals).
- Many Gupta temples to Shiva, Vishnu, Surya and Kartikeya were destroyed by the **Huna** invasions or lost to time.
- Rock-cut work of the Gupta and Vakataka age and after: the chaitya halls of **Ajanta** (a nave divided by rows of pillars, aisles on three sides for circumambulation, a shrine facing the entrance) and its viharas (halls with cells on two sides); the twelve Buddhist caves of **Ellora** (Caves 1–12; Caves 1–5 form the "Dhedwada group", and the later Caves 6–12 are larger); and the **Udayagiri** caves near Vidisha, worked under Chandragupta II, with the colossal boar-headed **Varaha**.

EARLY TEMPLE	PLACE	NOTE
Temple 17, Sanchi	Raisen, Madhya Pradesh	Flat roof; square sanctum with a four-pillared porch; 5th century
Gupta shrine, Udayagiri	Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh	Same plan as Sanchi 17, at a Hindu cave site
Tigawa (Vishnu)	Katni, Madhya Pradesh	Flat roof; Ganga and Yamuna on the doorway
Eran (Vishnu)	Sagar, Madhya Pradesh	Gupta Vishnu temple
Bhumara (Shiva)	Satna, Madhya Pradesh	Covered ambulatory; two small shrines flank the entrance steps
Nachna Kuthara (Parvati)	Panna, Madhya Pradesh	Raised platform; covered ambulatory
Bhitargaon	Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh	Brick; tall shikhara; 5th century
Dashavatara, Deogarh	Lalitpur, Uttar Pradesh	Stone; panchayatana; early 6th century
Bhitari	Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh	Gupta brick temple
Mukund Darra	Kota, Rajasthan	Gupta temple
Shiva temple, Koh	Central India	Gupta temple
Lakshmana, Sirpur	Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh	Brick; 7th century; Panduvanshi

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Bhitargaon, Deogarh and Sirpur

- **Bhitargaon** (Kanpur district) is among the earliest surviving structural temples: a 5th-century Gupta **brick** temple, the oldest terracotta Hindu shrine with a roof and a high shikhara.
- Its sanctum doorway is one of the first **semicircular arches** in India, which **Alexander Cunningham** (first Director General of the ASI, 1871) called the "Hindu arch"; terracotta panels of Shiva, Parvati, Ganesha and Vishnu separated by pilasters cover the walls, and a Varaha at the back suggests it was a Vishnu temple.
- The tall pyramidal shikhara of Bhitargaon prepared the way for the Nagara tower of north India.
- The **Dashavatara temple at Deogarh** (Lalitpur district, Uttar Pradesh, in the Betwa valley) is an early 6th-century Gupta stone temple, among the earliest surviving Hindu stone temples, and an early example of the **panchayatana** plan and of the curving latina shikhara.
- Deogarh is a one-cell square shrine on a platform with steps on four sides and a subsidiary shrine at each corner; it is **west-facing**, unusual since most temples face east or north.
- Its three great Vishnu reliefs are **Sheshashayana** (Vishnu on the serpent Ananta, south wall), **Nara-Narayana** (east) and **Gajendramoksha** (north), the doorway being on the west; the doorway has **Ganga** (left) and **Yamuna** (right).
- Deogarh is built of stone with some masonry brick; it also shows Shiva, Parvati, Kartikeya, Brahma, Indra, the river goddesses and a panel of the five Pandavas; it is one of the earliest temples to draw on the stories of Rama and Krishna. Its patrons are unknown, and the name "Dashavatara" rests on a guess that the four corner shrines held Vishnu's avatars.
- Deogarh is known locally as **Sagar Marh** ("temple on the tank") from the rock-cut pool in front of it.
- **Sirpur** (Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh, on the Mahanadi) was the capital of the **Panduvanshis**; its Buddhist, Hindu and Jaina monuments date from the 5th to the 12th century.
- The 7th-century brick **Lakshmana temple at Sirpur** was built by **Vasata**, mother of Mahashivagupta; its stone doorframe shows Anantashayana Vishnu, a Krishna panel and the ten avatars, and it stands on a stone jagati (about 40 by 80 feet) and faces east.

PRELIMS TRAP DEOGARH OR BHITARGAON?

- **Bhitargaon** (Kanpur): **brick and terracotta**, 5th century, the oldest surviving brick temple with a high shikhara, the "Hindu arch".
- **Deogarh** (Lalitpur): **stone**, early 6th century, panchayatana plan, west-facing, Sheshashayana relief.
- Both are Gupta and both are in Uttar Pradesh; the material and the panchayatana plan tell them apart.



Left: Bhitargaon, brick. Right: Dashavatara temple, Deogarh, stone.

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02 Five Stages of the Early Temple

STAGE	FEATURES	EXAMPLES
First	Flat roof; square plan; single cell with a shallow porch on four pillars; low platform	Temple 17, **Sanchi**; Tigawa
Second	Higher platform; some two-storeyed; **covered ambulatory** (pradakshina path) round the garbhagriha	Parvati temple, **Nachna Kuthara**; Shiva temple, Bhumara
Third	Flat roof gives way to a low, almost square **shikhara**; Nagara style begins; **panchayatana** plan with subsidiary shrines	**Deogarh**; Bhitargaon; Durga temple, Aihole
Fourth	Main shrine becomes more **rectangular**; apsidal back with a barrel-vaulted roof	**Ter** (Dharashiv district, Maharashtra); Kapoteswara, Chejarla
Fifth	**Circular** temples with shallow rectangular projections	**Maniyar Math, Rajgir** (Bihar)

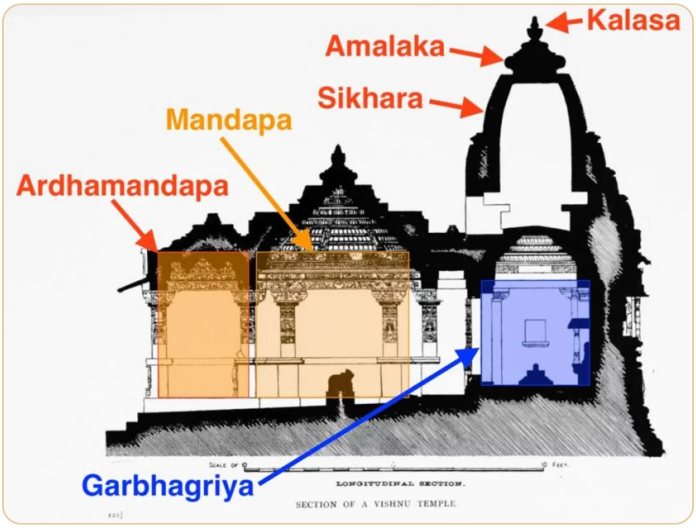
- **Panchayatana** ("five shrines") is a style of temple construction (asked in 2014), a plan with the main shrine at the centre and four subsidiary shrines at the corners; with the mandapa extended in front, the main temple becomes rectangular and the ground plan cruciform.
- Panchayatana temples include Deogarh, the **Kandariya Mahadeva** and **Lakshmana** temples at Khajuraho, the **Brahmeswara** temple at Bhubaneswar and the **Jagdish temple** at Udaipur.

03 Parts of a Hindu Temple

PART	WHAT IT IS	STYLE
Garbhagriha	"Womb-house": the small, dark sanctum, usually a cube with one entrance, holding the main icon	All
Mandapa	Porch or pillared hall for worshippers in front of the sanctum; **ardhamandapa** (entrance porch), **mahamandapa** (main hall)	All
Antarala	Vestibule joining the mandapa to the garbhagriha	All
Pradakshina patha	Circumambulatory path round the sanctum, covered in Nagara temples	All
Shikhara	North: the whole curving tower over the sanctum. South: only the crowning cupola (octagonal or domed stupika) on the vimana	Nagara / Dravida
Vimana	Stepped pyramidal tower over the sanctum	Dravida
Amalaka	Ribbed stone disc, shaped like the amla fruit, at the top of the shikhara	Nagara
Kalasha	Pot-shaped finial above the amalaka (or above the southern shikhara)	Both
Gopuram	Monumental gateway tower in the enclosure wall	Dravida
Prakara	Enclosure wall; large temples have several concentric prakaras	Dravida
Jagati (pitha)	Raised platform on which the whole temple stands	Nagara, Hoysala

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PART	WHAT IT IS	STYLE
Vahana and **dhvaja stambha**	The deity's mount (Nandi, Garuda) and flag pillar, placed on the axis before the sanctum	All
Ratha (paga)	Vertical offsets of the wall: triratha, pancharatha, saptaratha, navaratha	Nagara
Deul / jagamohana	Odisha names for the tower-sanctum and the hall	Odisha Nagara
Torana	Ornamental arched gateway	Nagara (Solanki, Odisha)



Section of a Nagara temple: garbhagriha under the shikhara, with amalaka and kalasha; mandapa and ardhamandapa in front.

- River goddesses **Ganga and Yamuna** guard the garbhagriha doorway in a **Nagara** temple; fierce **dvarapalas** guard the gopurams and doorways of a **Dravida** temple.
- **Mithunas** (embracing couples), the **navagrahas** and **yakshas** are placed at entrances; mithunas are auspicious and appear at the entrance, on outer walls or between the mandapa and the shrine.
- The eight **ashtadikpalas** (guardians of the directions) face outward on the walls of the sanctum; forms of the main deity fill its outer niches, and subsidiary shrines house the deity's family or incarnations.
- Common ornaments are the **gavaksha** (window motif), **vyala or yali** (mythical beast), **kalpa-lata** (wish-fulfilling creeper), amalaka and kalasha.
- As temples grew, architects added projecting walls and niches round the same basic plan ("additive geometry") to create more surfaces for sculpture.

04 Nagara, Dravida and Vesara Compared

FEATURE	NAGARA	DRAVIDA	VESARA
Region	North India	South India	Deccan, between the Vindhyas and the Krishna
Growth	Regional schools	Dynastic schools	Hybrid, regional and dynastic

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FEATURE	NAGARA	DRAVIDA	VESARA
Tower	**Shikhara**, curving inward to a point	**Vimana**, a stepped pyramid of receding storeys	Stepped tower of reduced height, often with a curving outline
Crown	**Amalaka** and kalasha	Octagonal or domed **shikhara** (stupika) and kalasha	Mixed
Towers	Later temples cluster many shikharas, tallest over the sanctum	One main vimana; no clustered towers	Several shrines side by side
Plan	Square sanctum; panchayatana, cruciform	Square; five vimana shapes	Increasingly complex; **stellate** (star) plan
Base and enclosure	Raised stone platform; no elaborate boundary wall	High **compound wall**	May or may not have one
Gateway	No gopuram	**Gopuram**, growing larger over time	May or may not have one
Tank	Usually none in the premises	Tank within the enclosure	May or may not have one
Door guardians	Ganga, Yamuna, mithunas	Dvarapalas	Both traditions
Sub-schools	Odisha, Khajuraho (Chandela), Solanki (Maru-Gurjara)	Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Vijayanagara, Nayaka	Badami and Kalyani Chalukya, Hoysala
Examples	Deogarh; Lakshmana and Vishwanatha, Khajuraho; Jagannath, Puri	Shore temple; Brihadisvara, Thanjavur; Meenakshi, Madurai	Durga temple, Aihole; Doddabasappa, Dambal; Keshava, Somanathapura

- **Nagara, Dravida and Vesara** are the three main styles of Indian temple architecture (asked in 1995 and 2012); the two broad orders are Nagara and Dravida, and Vesara is treated by some scholars as a separate style formed by selectively mixing the two.
- The Nagara style spread across north India from the 5th century CE; the garbhagriha always lies directly under its tallest tower.
- Silpa texts call a Nagara temple a **prasada** and a Dravida temple a **vimana**.



Left: Nagara shikharas, Khajuraho. Right: Dravida vimana, Brihadisvara, Thanjavur.

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PRELIMS TRAP SHIKHARA, VIMANA, GOPURAM

- In the north the **shikhara** is the whole curving tower; in the south "shikhara" means only the small octagonal or domed cupola that crowns the vimana. The southern cupola does the work of the northern amalaka and kalasha.
- The **vimana** is the tower over the sanctum; the **gopuram** is the gateway tower in the outer wall. At Thanjavur the vimana dwarfs the gopurams; from the later Pandyas onward, and above all under the Vijayanagara kings and Nayakas, gopurams outgrew the vimana.
- Vesara is a Deccan style, yet the **Kailasa at Ellora** is a fully Dravida temple and **Pattadakal** has Nagara and Dravida temples side by side.

The Regional Schools at a Glance

SCHOOL	PATRONS AND PERIOD	HALLMARKS	EXAMPLES
Odisha (Kalinga)	Somavamshis, Eastern Gangas; 7th to 13th century	Rekha deul, jagamohana; carved outside, plain inside; boundary wall	Lingaraja, Jagannath, Konark
Khajuraho	Chandelas of Bundelkhand; 10th to 11th century	High platform; carved inside and out; erotic sculpture; sandstone	Kandariya Mahadeva, Lakshmana
Solanki (Maru-Gurjara)	Solankis (Chaulukyas) of Gujarat; 11th to 13th century	Torana; step-tank (suryakund); marble in Jain temples	Modhera; Dilwara, Mount Abu
Pallava	7th to 9th century	Rock-cut mandapas, monolithic rathas, first structural temples	Mahabalipuram; Kailasanatha, Kanchipuram
Chola	9th to 13th century	Giant vimana; Dravida at its height; bronzes	Thanjavur, Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Darasuram
Pandya	Early Pandyas, 7th to 10th century; later Pandyas, 13th century	Rock-cut shrines; later, gopurams begin to outgrow the vimana	Vettuvan Koil, Kalugumalai (monolithic)
Vijayanagara	1336–1565	Gopurams on all sides; **kalyana mandapa**; yali pillars	Vittala, Virupaksha, Hazara Rama (Hampi)
Nayaka (Madurai)	16th to 18th century	Prakarams (long corridors); tallest gopurams	Meenakshi, Madurai
Chalukya (Vesara)	Badami Chalukyas from the 7th century; Kalyani Chalukyas, 10th to 12th century	Mixed northern and southern towers	Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal; Dambal
Hoysala (Vesara)	1050–1300	Stellate plan; chloritic schist; jagati; minute carving	Belur, Halebidu, Somanathapura

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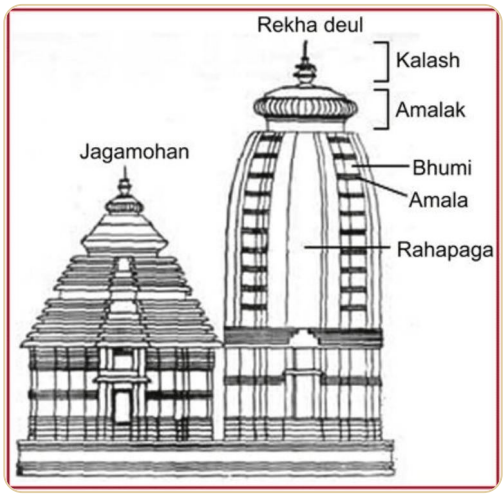
05 Nagara Temples of the North

NAGARA SHIKHARA	SHAPE	USE
Latina or **rekha-prasada**	Square base; walls curve inward to a point	Over the garbhagriha; the commonest type
Phamsana	Broader and shorter; roof of slabs sloping up in a straight line to one point	Mostly over mandapas
Valabhi	Rectangular base; roof rising into a vaulted chamber	"Wagon-vaulted" buildings, like apsidal chaitya halls

- Nagara temples stand on a raised stone platform with steps; they usually lack elaborate boundary walls, gateways and water tanks, and have assembly halls (mandapas) in front of the shrine and pillared porticos.
- The Nagara shikhara ends in a horizontal fluted disc, the **amalaka**, topped by a pot-shaped **kalasha**.
- The wall is broken into vertical planes or **rathas**: triratha at first, later pancharatha, saptaratha and navaratha, each plane a panel for narrative sculpture.
- Later latina temples carried many smaller towers clustered round the main one like mountain peaks, the tallest always over the garbhagriha.
- The temples of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are mostly of **sandstone**.

Odisha (Kalinga) School

- Odisha temples form a distinct sub-style of the Nagara order, concentrated in ancient Kalinga: Bhubaneswar (ancient Tribhuvaneshvara), Puri and Konark.
- The Odisha tower, the **rekha deul**, rises almost vertically and curves sharply inward near the top; the hall in front is the **jagamohana**.
- The ground plan is square, becoming circular in the crowning **mastaka**, so the spire looks nearly cylindrical.
- Exteriors are lavishly carved, interiors plain; temples usually have **boundary walls**, as in the Dravida style.
- Porches have no pillars; iron beams support the roofs.



Odisha temple: rekha deul with amalaka and kalasha, and the jagamohana.

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PRELIMS FACT ODISHA ORDERS BY ROOF

- **Rekha deul** (rekhapida): tall curvilinear tower over the sanctum.
- **Pidha deul**: pyramidal roof of receding horizontal tiers, over the jagamohana and other halls.
- **Khakhara deul**: oblong, barrel-vaulted roof, favoured for Shakti shrines, e.g. the 8th-century **Vaital Deul**, Bhubaneswar, of Chamunda.
- A complete Odisha temple has four structures in a line: **deul, jagamohana, nata mandira** (dance hall) and **bhoga mandapa** (offering hall), all four seen at the **Lingaraja** temple.

ODISHA TEMPLE	BUILT BY	FACTS
Lingaraja, Bhubaneswar	Somavamshi kings, 11th century; Ganga additions	Shiva; the finest rekha deul; all four Odisha halls
Jagannath, Puri	**Anantavarman Chodaganga** (Eastern Ganga), 12th century	"White Pagoda"; one of the four Char Dhams
Sun temple, Konark	**Narasimhadeva I** (Eastern Ganga, 1238–1264), c. 1250	"Black Pagoda"; chariot of Surya; UNESCO 1984
Vaital Deul, Bhubaneswar	8th century	Khakhara deul; Chamunda
Brahmeswara, Bhubaneswar	Somavamshi, 11th century	Panchayatana plan
Rajarani, Bhubaneswar	11th century	Named after its red-gold sandstone; no presiding deity

- The **Konark Sun temple** (c. 1250) is a colossal chariot of Surya with **24 wheels** (twelve pairs) drawn by **seven horses** carved at the entrance staircase; the wheels are read as the 24 hours or the 12 months, the horses as the days of the week.
- Konark's shikhara, said to have reached about **70 m**, had collapsed by the 19th century; the surviving **jagamohana** is said to be the largest enclosed space in Hindu architecture.
- European sailors called Konark the **"Black Pagoda"** as early as 1676; a green-stone image of Surya stands on its southern wall, one of three such images on three walls, the fourth wall holding the doorway through which the sun entered the sanctum.
- The wheel logo of Indian Airlines (later "Indian") was based on the carved chariot wheel of Konark (asked in 2006).
- Rabindranath Tagore said of Konark that here "the language of stone surpasses the language of man".
- The **Jagannath temple, Puri** is called **Yamanika Tirtha**, where Yama's power is believed to be nullified; it has four gates: **Singhadwara** (east, the main gate, with two lions), Ashwadwara (south), Vyaghradwara (west) and Hastidwara (north).
- The **Aruna stambha** (sun pillar) in front of the Puri temple originally stood at Konark.
- The temple dancers (**devadasis**, called **maharis**) of the Jagannath temple, Puri, were the source of Odissi; the devadasi service there ended with the death of the last mahari, **Sashimani Devi**, on 19 March 2015.

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PRELIMS TRAP THREE ODISHA TEMPLES

- **Lingaraja**, Bhubaneswar: **Shiva**, 11th century, Somavamshi (its city asked in 2001).
- **Jagannath**, Puri: **Vishnu** as Jagannath, 12th century, Anantavarman Chodaganga, the **White** Pagoda.
- **Konark**: **Surya**, c. 1250, Narasimhadeva I, the **Black** Pagoda. All three are Odisha-style Nagara temples; only Konark is a World Heritage Site.

Khajuraho (Chandela) School

- The **Khajuraho** temples (Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh) were built by the **Chandela** kings of Bundelkhand in the 10th and 11th centuries; of about 85 temples, only some 20–25 survive, Hindu and Jaina; UNESCO listed them in 1986.
- The finest is the Shaiva **Kandariya Mahadeva** temple, built in the reign of **Vidyadhara**, c. 1030.
- The **Lakshmana temple** (Vaikuntha Vishnu) was built by **Yashovarman** and completed by **954**, the date of an inscription of his son **Dhanga**; it stands on a high platform with four corner shrines (panchayatana).
- Khajuraho temples are of **sandstone**, stand on high platforms, face north or east, and are carved on both interior and exterior walls.
- They are known for **erotic sculpture**, often linked to Vatsyayana's Kamasutra; figures are almost in the round, with sharp noses, prominent chins and long slanting eyes.
- A standard temple has a garbhagriha, mandapa and ardhamandapa (entrance porch), and some have an **antarala**; the halls and porches carry smaller towers rising step by step to the main tower, like a mountain range.
- Other temples: the **Vishwanatha** temple, Jaina temples and a **Chausath Yogini** temple.

PRELIMS FACT CHAUSATH YOGINI TEMPLES

- Yogini temples are **hypaethral** (open to the sky), with small cells for the yoginis (usually 64) round a courtyard; most were built between the 9th and 12th centuries, when the Tantric yogini cult was strongest.
- **Khajuraho**: rectangular, of rough granite blocks, older than the 10th-century temples there; Badoh and Rikhiyan are also rectangular, most others circular.
- **Mitaoli** (Morena, Madhya Pradesh): circular, 11th century, **Kachchhapaghata** period; 64 cells, each with a Shiva linga, round a central Shiva shrine (also called Ekattarso Mahadeva); a Shaiva and yogini temple, not Vaishnava; popularly, without firm evidence, linked with the circular plan of the old Parliament House (asked in 2021).
- **Bheraghat** (Jabalpur): a large circular temple with 81 cells; **Hirapur** (Odisha) is a small circular one. Mitaoli is therefore not the only circular temple in India.

Solanki (Maru-Gurjara) School

- The school grew in Gujarat and Rajasthan under the **Solankis** (Chaulukyas) of Gujarat, a dynasty distinct from the Chalukyas of Badami and Kalyani, between the 11th and 13th centuries.
- The **Sun temple at Modhera** (Mehsana, Gujarat) was built in **1026–27** by **Bhima I**; in front of it lies the stepped tank called the **surya kund**, perhaps the grandest temple tank in India, with **108** miniature shrines carved between its steps.

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- The temple is **east-facing**, so that at the **equinoxes** the sun shines straight into the central shrine; the walls of that small shrine are left plain, while the rest of the temple is lavishly carved in the manner of Gujarat woodcarving.
- A huge ornamental **torana** leads to the sabha mandapa, which is open on all sides; the garbhagriha is joined to the mandapa inside and outside.
- Solanki builders used sandstone, black basalt and soft white **marble**; marble is seen in the Jaina temples of Mount Abu (11th to 13th centuries) and the 15th-century temple at Ranakpur.
- The **Somnath** temple at Prabhas Patan near Veraval (Gujarat) is one of the twelve **jyotirlingas**; **Al-Biruni** described it in his account of Mahmud of Ghazni's raid, and Mahmud sacked it in January 1026.
- Somnath was rebuilt many times: by the Solanki king **Kumarapala** in the 12th century and by **Ahilyabai Holkar** in the 18th; after Independence Sardar Patel led its restoration, and President **Rajendra Prasad** performed the installation of the present temple on 11 May 1951 (asked in 2022).
- **Shamlaji** (Aravalli district, Gujarat), a Vishnu pilgrimage centre, has grey-schist sculptures of the 6th to 8th centuries that mix local traditions with a post-Gupta style; its temple has an elephant gate with an arch and the **Shyam Sarovar** lake behind it.

- PRELIMS TRAP SUN TEMPLES
  - **Konark**, Odisha: Eastern Ganga Narasimhadeva I, c. 1250.
  - **Modhera**, Gujarat: Solanki Bhima I, 1026–27; surya kund.
  - **Martand**, Mattan (Anantnag), Kashmir: Karkota king **Lalitaditya Muktapida**, 8th century; in ruins.
  - **Arasavalli**, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh: ascribed to the Eastern Ganga king Devendra Varma, 7th century; Kalinga-style rekha deula, largely rebuilt in 1778.
  - **Amarkantak** (source of the Narmada) and **Omkareshwar** (a jyotirlinga on the Narmada) are Shaiva and Narmada pilgrim centres, not sun temples (asked in 2017).

Eastern India and the Hills

- In Bengal and the North-East **terracotta** was the main medium for building and for plaques of Buddhist and Hindu deities until the 7th century.
- Assam: a 6th-century carved door frame from **Dah Parbatia** near Tezpur and sculptures from Rangagora Tea Estate near Tinsukia show the Gupta idiom; by the 12th to 14th centuries the Tai migrants from Upper Burma, mixing with the Pala style, produced the **Ahom style** around Guwahati.
- The **Kamakhya** temple, a Shakti Peeth on Nilachal hill in Assam, was rebuilt in 1565 under the Koch king **Nara-Narayana**, with later Ahom additions.
- Bengal sculpture of the 9th to 11th centuries is called the **Pala** style, and that of the mid-11th to mid-13th centuries the **Sena** style; Pala-era temples follow the local Vanga style.
- The 9th-century **Siddheshvara Mahadeva** temple at **Barakar** (Paschim Bardhaman) has a tall curving shikhara crowned by a large amalaka, an example of the early Pala style.
- Many temples of the 9th to 12th centuries at **Telkupi** (Purulia) were submerged by dams; the basalt and chlorite pillars and arched niches of Purulia temples influenced the first Bengal Sultanate buildings at **Gaur and Pandua**.
- The curved roof of the Bengali bamboo hut became the **Bangla roof**, adopted even in Mughal buildings; 17th-century terracotta brick temples stand at **Vishnupur**, Bankura, Burdwan and Birbhum.
- Hill temples of Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal and Kashmir combine a latina shikhara over the sanctum with mandapas in the older wooden, pitched-roof tradition; some take a pagoda shape.

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- Kashmir absorbed **Gandhara** influence by the 5th century CE and Gupta and post-Gupta traditions from Sarnath, Mathura, Gujarat and Bengal.
- The **Karkota** period is the most important for Kashmiri architecture; the **Pandrethan** temple (8th to 9th century, probably Shiva) stands on a plinth in the middle of a tank, with a peaked roof and little ornament.
- The **Martand Sun temple** (8th century, **Lalitaditya Muktapida**) stands in a colonnaded courtyard ringed by small shrines, the largest such peristyle in Kashmir; later chroniclers blame its destruction on Sultan Sikandar (1389–1413).
- At **Avantipur**, Avantivarman of the Utpala dynasty built the Avantishvara (Shiva) and Avantiswami (Vishnu) temples in the 9th century.
- The **Lakshana Devi** temple at Chamba (Himachal), with images of Mahishasuramardini and Narasimha, was built in the reign of **Meruvarman** (7th century); the yellow images are of a zinc-copper alloy used in Kashmir.
- **Jageshwar** near Almora and **Champawat** (Uttarakhand) are classic Nagara temples of Kumaon.

06 Dravida Temples of the South

- A Dravida temple stands within a **compound wall**, entered through a **gopuram**; its tower, the **vimana**, is a stepped pyramid rising geometrically, crowned by an octagonal or domed **shikhara**.
- A large **water tank** within the enclosure is common; subsidiary shrines are built into the main tower or stand separately beside the main temple.
- A vestibule, the **antarala**, joins the hall to the garbhagriha, whose entrance carries dvarapalas, mithunas and yakshas.
- In the most sacred temples the central shrine often has one of the **smallest** towers, being the oldest part; each new, taller enclosure wall received loftier gopurams. **Srirangam** (Tiruchirappalli) has seven concentric enclosures.
- From the 8th to the 12th century temple towns such as Kanchipuram, Thanjavur, Madurai and Kumbakonam made the temple a rich administrative centre controlling large areas of land.

VIMANA SHAPE	PLAN
Kuta or caturasra	Square
Shala or ayatasra	Rectangular
Gaja-prishta ("elephant-backed") or vrittayata	Elliptic; from apsidal chaitya halls with a horseshoe-shaped entrance arch (**nasi**)
Vritta	Circular
Ashtasra	Octagonal

Pallava Temples

STAGE	KING	FORM	EXAMPLES
Mahendra group	Mahendravarman I (early 7th century)	Rock-cut pillared halls called **mandapas**	Mandagapattu, Pallavaram, Mamandur

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STAGE	KING	FORM	EXAMPLES
Narasimha group	Narasimhavarman I **Mamalla** (from c. 640)	Richly carved mandapas; monolithic **rathas**	Pancha Rathas, Mahabalipuram
Rajasimha group	Narasimhavarman II **Rajasimha** (700–728)	First true **structural** temples	**Shore temple**; **Kailasanatha**, Kanchipuram; **Talagirisvara, Panamalai**
Nandivarman group	Nandivarman II and successors	Smaller structural temples, close to the Chola Dravida style	Vaikuntha Perumal, Kanchipuram

- Pallava temple building began with the rock-cut shrines of **Mahendravarman I**, a contemporary of the Chalukya king Pulakeshin II; his **Mandagapattu** inscription says the shrine to Brahma, Ishvara and Vishnu was made without brick, timber, metal or mortar.
- Mahendravarman I took the titles **Mattavilasa**, **Vichitrachitta** and **Gunabhara**, and wrote the Sanskrit farce **Mattavilasa Prahasana**.
- Under Mahendravarman "mandapa" meant the whole rock-cut temple; in the Nagara style it means only the hall.
- **Narasimhavarman I Mamalla** avenged his father's defeat by Pulakeshin II and began most of the work at Mahabalipuram, named **Mamallapuram** after him.
- The **Shore temple**, Mahabalipuram, built under **Rajasimha** (700–728), has three shrines: two to Shiva (one facing east, one west) and one to Vishnu as Anantashayana; its wall is lined with Nandi figures, and the compound shows a water tank and an early gopuram.
- Rajasimha also built the **Talagirisvara** temple at **Panamalai** (Viluppuram district, Tamil Nadu), known for its Pallava paintings (asked in 1997, with Deogarh of the Guptas, Khajuraho of the Chandelas and Badami of the Chalukyas).
- The **Kailasanatha temple, Kanchipuram**, built by Rajasimha and completed by his son Mahendravarman III, is a sandstone structural temple; the **Vaikuntha Perumal** temple, Kanchipuram, of **Nandivarman II** Pallavamalla (8th century) is its Vaishnava counterpart.

RATHA (LARGEST TO SMALLEST)	DEITY	FEATURE
Dharmaraja	Shiva; reliefs of Harihara and Ardhanarishvara	Largest; three-storeyed vimana on a square base; model of the later Dravida temple
Bhima	Vishnu reclining	Rectangular, like a Buddhist chaitya hall; no figure carving
Arjuna	Shiva	Almost a copy of the Dharmaraja ratha
Nakula-Sahadeva	Indra	Apsidal **gaja-prishta** vimana; elephant figure beside it
Draupadi	Durga	Smallest; shaped like a thatched hut; four-armed Durga; lion in front

- The **Pancha Rathas** (Pandava Rathas) are 7th-century **monolithic** temples, each cut from a single rock.
- Mahabalipuram (now in Chengalpattu district) became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984 as the "Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram": rathas, cave mandapas, open-air reliefs and the Shore temple.

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- Its cave temples include the Varaha, Krishna, Panchapandava and **Mahishasuramardini** mandapas (Durga slaying Mahishasura); the Krishna mandapa shows village life with cows and herdsmen.
- The open-air relief **Descent of the Ganga**, also called **Arjuna's Penance** or Bhagiratha's Penance, is carved on two huge boulders; nearby is the boulder called **Krishna's Butter Ball**.

- **PRELIMS TRAP** KAILASA (ELLORA) OR KAILASANATHA (KANCHIPURAM)?
  - **Kailasa, Ellora** (Cave 16, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, formerly Aurangabad, district, Maharashtra): **Rashtrakuta** king **Krishna I**, 8th century; **cut from a single rock**, from the top down; a complete Dravida temple with a Nandi shrine, gopuram-like gateway, cloisters and a vimana about 30 m high, standing on a base of carved elephants; the relief of **Ravana shaking Mount Kailasa**.
  - **Kailasanatha, Kanchipuram** (Tamil Nadu): **Pallava** king **Rajasimha** (Narasimhavarman II), early 8th century; a **structural** temple of sandstone blocks.
  - Both are Dravida and both are to Shiva as lord of Kailasa. The test is rock-cut versus built, Rashtrakuta versus Pallava, Maharashtra versus Tamil Nadu.

Chola Temples

- The Cholas carried the Pallava tradition forward; the mature Dravida style is often called the **Chola style**, and over a hundred important Chola temples survive.
- The **Brihadisvara** (Rajarajeshvaram) temple at **Thanjavur** was built by **Rajaraja I** between about 1003 and 1010; its granite vimana of 13 storeys (about 61–66 m) is crowned by a monolithic octagonal stupika, and it is the first temple with two large gopurams planned together with it.
- Huge Nandi figures stand at the corners of its shikhara; the main deity is a huge linga in a two-storeyed sanctum, and murals and sculpture line the walls round it.
- **Rajendra I** built **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** (Ariyalur district) as his capital after his campaign to the Ganga, and its temple, completed in **1035**, has a 53 m vimana with a gently curving outline.
- The **Airavatesvara** temple at **Darasuram** (near Kumbakonam) was built by **Rajaraja II** in the 12th century; its vimana is 24 m high.
- The three form the UNESCO property **Great Living Chola Temples** (Thanjavur 1987; extended 2004).

- **PRELIMS TRAP** THREE CHOLA TEMPLES
  - **Thanjavur** Brihadisvara: **Rajaraja I**, 1010; tallest vimana; straight, severe tower.
  - **Gangaikonda Cholapuram**: **Rajendra I**, 1035; also called Brihadisvara (Gangaikondacholisvaram); curving vimana.
  - **Darasuram** Airavatesvara: **Rajaraja II**, 12th century; smallest of the three.
  - Rajaraja I and Rajaraja II are different kings, a century and a half apart.

Table: The Chola Nataraja (Shiva dancing the *tandava*), the peak of Chola sculpture. The earliest known Nataraja is a relief in the **Ravana Phadi** cave at Aihole, of the early Chalukyas.

PART OF THE IMAGE	MEANING
Upper right hand: drum (*damaru*)	Sound of creation
Upper left hand: fire	Destruction, the counterpart of creation

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PART OF THE IMAGE	MEANING
Lower right hand: **abhaya mudra**	Protection; "do not fear"
Lower left hand points to the raised foot	Path of salvation
Dwarf under the foot	Ignorance and ego
Flowing locks	Flow of the Ganga
Male earring in one ear, female in the other	Fusion of male and female (Ardhanarishvara)
Snake round the arm	Kundalini power
Ring of flames (*prabhamandala*)	Endless cycles of time

Vijayanagara and Nayaka Temples

- The **Vijayanagara** kings (1336–1565), with their capital at **Hampi** on the Tungabhadra, combined Chola, Hoysala, Pandya and Chalukya forms and took some Indo-Islamic elements from Bijapur and the other sultanates.
- Vijayanagara temples have **gopurams on all sides**, larger enclosure walls, several mandapas and a **kalyana mandapa** for the divine marriage (asked in 2019); pillars carry the **yali** and rearing horses, and walls are covered in carving and geometric patterns.
- Monolithic pillars and a separate shrine for the god's consort (**Amman shrine**) are typical; secular buildings such as the **Lotus Mahal** appear within royal complexes.
- Hampi temples: the **Vittala** (Vijaya Vittala) temple, enlarged under Krishna Deva Raya, with its stone chariot (a Garuda shrine) and **56 musical pillars** (asked in 2007); the **Virupaksha** (Pampapati) temple; the **Hazara Rama** temple with Ramayana friezes; the Raghunatha temple; the monolithic **Lakshmi Narasimha** seated on Shesha. Hampi became a World Heritage Site in 1986.
- The **Vidyashankara** temple at **Sringeri** (Karnataka) is of the early Vijayanagara period (14th century); the **Bhimeshvara** temple at **Draksharama** is in Andhra Pradesh (asked in 2009 with Rajarani, Odisha, and Kandariya Mahadeva, Madhya Pradesh).
- The **Nayakas** (16th to 18th century) built in the **Madurai style**: Dravida, on a much larger scale.
- Nayaka temples added **prakarams**, huge pillared corridors with roofed ambulatories round the sanctum, and the gopuram reached its climax; the **Meenakshi temple, Madurai** is the chief example, its tallest (southern) gopuram about 52 m.
- Taller gopurams are modern: the 13-tier **Rajagopuram of Srirangam** (about 73 m, completed 1987) and the 20-storey Raja Gopura at **Murudeshwar**, Karnataka (about 76 m, 2008).

Kakatiya Temples

- The **Rudreshwara (Ramappa) temple** at Palampet, Telangana, was begun in **1213** under the **Kakatiyas**; it became a World Heritage Site in **2021**.
- Its pyramidal vimana is built of light, porous **"floating bricks"**, and its granite and dolerite pillars and brackets carry sculptures of regional dances; it stands near the Kakatiya reservoir Ramappa Cheruvu.

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07 Vesara: Temples of the Deccan

- **Vesara** (the Karnataka or Chalukya style) is a hybrid of Nagara and Dravida that became popular in the Deccan after the mid-7th century; it was built by the **Badami (early) Chalukyas**, the **Kalyani (later) Chalukyas** and the **Hoysalas**.
- Vesara temples stress the **vimana and mandapa** joined by an antarala, have an open ambulatory, and carve their pillars, doorways and ceilings richly.
- The square base and curving outline of the tower come from the Nagara style; the stepped, terraced vimana and dense sculpture come from the Dravida.
- Examples: the **Doddabasappa** temple at **Dambal** (Kalyani Chalukya, 12th century, with a 24-pointed star plan), the Lad Khan and Durga temples at Aihole, and the temples at Badami.

The Chalukyas of Badami: Aihole, Badami, Pattadakal

- **Pulakeshin I** founded the early western Chalukya kingdom round **Badami** (Vatapi) in 543; the Rashtrakutas replaced the dynasty in the mid-8th century. The Chalukyas built in soft **sandstone**, first in rock-cut caves and then in structural temples.
- **Aihole** has about seventy temples; the **Lad Khan** temple (Shiva), with a flat stone roof copied from wooden hill temples, is among the earliest; the **Durga temple** is **apsidal** like a Buddhist chaitya hall, with a Nagara shikhara; the **Huchimalligudi** temple is rectangular, with a **Nagara** (rekha) shikhara over the sanctum.
- The **Malegitti Shivalaya** at Badami (7th century) is a small temple with a **Dravida** vimana; Badami and Aihole thus have both orders, like Pattadakal (asked in 2026).
- The **Meguti Jaina temple** at Aihole carries **Ravikirti's Aihole inscription** of 634–35 CE on Pulakeshin II.
- The **Ravana Phadi** cave at Aihole, probably the earliest Chalukya cave, has a Nataraja surrounded by the saptamatrikas.
- The temples at **Mahakuta** near Badami and the Swarga Brahma temple at **Alampur** take more from northern styles.

BADAMI CAVE (6TH CENTURY)	FAITH	MAIN SCULPTURE
Cave 1	Shaiva	Nataraja; Harihara
Cave 2	Vaishnava	**Trivikrama**; Vamana; Varaha lifting Bhudevi
Cave 3 (largest; **Mangalesha**, dated 578)	Vaishnava	Trivikrama, Anantashayana, Vasudeva, Varaha, Harihara, Narasimha
Cave 4	**Jaina**	Bahubali in *kayotsarga*; Parshvanatha with a five-hooded cobra; Mahavira on a lion throne

- Badami Cave 3, dated **578** under Mangalesha, is the oldest firmly dated Hindu cave temple; the Badami caves are not the oldest rock-cut caves in India, since the Mauryan **Barabar** caves are some eight centuries older. More caves near the **Agastya lake** may be Buddhist.
- **Pattadakal** (Bagalkot district) has Nagara and Dravida temples side by side: the Dravida **Virupaksha**, Mallikarjuna and Sangameshwara, and the Nagara Kashi Vishwanatha, Galaganatha, Jambulinga and Kadasiddheshwara; the Papanatha mixes the two.

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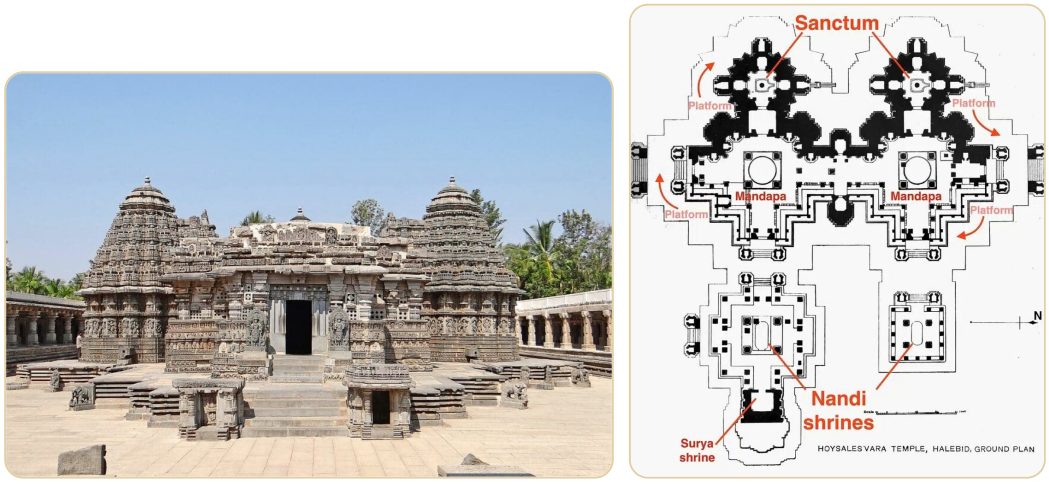
- The **Virupaksha** temple, Pattadakal (c. 740), was built by Queen **Lokamahadevi** to mark **Vikramaditya II**'s conquest of Kanchipuram, and follows the Pallava Kailasanatha; an inscription on its east porch names its architect, given the title **Tribhuvanacharya**. Pattadakal became a World Heritage Site in 1987.
- The **Kailasa at Ellora** was cut after the **Rashtrakutas** (c. 750–983) took over the Chalukya Deccan; it is the culmination of the rock-cut tradition and a fully Dravida design.

Hoysala Temples

- The **Hoysalas** (1050–1300) of southern Karnataka, with their capital at **Dwarasamudra** (Halebidu), built some hundred temples; the best known are at **Belur**, **Halebidu** and **Somanathapura** (Halebid and Belur asked in 2001).
- Hoysala temples have a **stellate (star-shaped) plan**, are built of soft **chloritic schist** (soapstone), and stand on a raised platform, the **jagati**, about a metre high.
- Several shrines open off a central pillared hall; walls and stairs zigzag; horizontal mouldings divide the towers into orderly tiers; every surface, down to the jewellery of the gods, is minutely carved.
- The **Hoysaleswara** temple at Halebidu is a double temple with a Nandi pavilion before each shrine; in its lowest frieze of elephants, no two are said to be alike. The towers of Halebidu and Belur fell long ago.

HOYSALA TEMPLE	BUILDER	DEITY
Chennakeshava, Belur	King **Vishnuvardhana**, 1117	Vishnu
Hoysaleswara, Halebidu	Ketamalla, an officer of Vishnuvardhana, c. 1121	Shiva
Keshava, Somanathapura	Somanatha, a general of Narasimha III, 13th century	Vishnu

- The three were inscribed together on the World Heritage List in **2023** as the **Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas**, the same year as Santiniketan; Rani-ki-Vav was listed in 2014 and Mahabodhi in 2002.



Keshava temple, Somanathapura, and the star-shaped plan of the Hoysaleswara temple, Halebidu.

08 Buddhist and Jaina Temples

- The first shrine at the foot of the Bodhi tree, **Bodh Gaya**, is ascribed to **Ashoka**; the present **Mahabodhi** temple, one of the earliest Buddhist temples built wholly of **brick**, dates from the late Gupta period (5th to 6th

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century) and was heavily restored in the 1880s; many niche sculptures are 8th-century Pala work. It became a World Heritage Site in 2002.

- The Mahabodhi tower is neither Nagara nor Dravida: narrow like a Nagara temple, it rises without curving like a Dravida one.
- **Nalanda** is a **mahavihara**, a complex of monasteries; **Kumaragupta I** laid the foundation in the 5th century CE. Its sculpture in stucco, stone and bronze grew out of the Gupta art of Sarnath: Mahayana deities at first (standing Buddhas, Manjushri Kumara, Avalokiteshvara on a lotus, Naga-Nagarjuna), Vajrayana deities such as Vajrasharada (a form of Saraswati) and Khasarpana Avalokiteshvara in the 11th to 12th centuries, and crowned Buddhas commonly only after the 10th century.
- **Tawang** monastery in Arunachal Pradesh is the largest Buddhist monastery in India.
- Odisha's great monasteries are at **Ratnagiri, Lalitagiri and Udayagiri**; the port of **Nagapattinam** remained a Buddhist centre into the Chola period.
- Jainas built temples across India except in the hills; the oldest Jaina pilgrimage sites are in Bihar, and Ellora, Aihole, Deogarh, Khajuraho, Chanderi and Gwalior have notable Jaina temples.

JAINA SITE	STATE	BUILDER AND FACTS
Gomateshwara (Bahubali), Shravanabelagola	Karnataka	Image of **Bahubali**, son of the first Tirthankara Rishabhanatha (not of the last, Mahavira); granite monolith about 17 m (57 ft), one of the tallest free-standing monolithic statues; commissioned by **Chavundaraya**, minister and general of the Western Ganga kings, c. 983
Vimala Vasahi, Dilwara, Mount Abu	Rajasthan	Adinatha; c. 1031; **Vimal Shah**, minister of the Solanki king **Bhima I**; white marble; carved ceilings and bracket figures
Luna Vasahi, Dilwara	Rajasthan	Neminatha; 1230; brothers **Vastupala and Tejapala**, ministers of the Vaghela Viradhavala
Ranakpur	Rajasthan	15th-century marble Chaumukha temple of Adinatha, built by Dharna Shah in Rana Kumbha's reign
Shatrunjaya hills, Palitana	Gujarat	Scores of temples clustered together on the hills, in Kathiawar, near **Bhavnagar**

09 Temple Towns, Pilgrim Centres and Temples Abroad

PLACE	PRESENT STATE	REGION OR SETTING
Khajuraho	Madhya Pradesh	**Bundelkhand**
Tirupati (Venkateswara)	Andhra Pradesh	**Rayalaseema**
Bodh Gaya	Bihar	Magadha (not Baghelkhand)
Shirdi	Maharashtra	Ahilyanagar (Ahmednagar) district, western Maharashtra (not Vidarbha)
Nashik	Maharashtra	Western Maharashtra, on the Godavari (not Malwa)

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PLACE	PRESENT STATE	REGION OR SETTING
Srisailam (Mallikarjuna, a jyotirlinga)	Andhra Pradesh	**Nallamala Hills**
Omkareshwar (a jyotirlinga)	Madhya Pradesh	Mandhata island in the Narmada, Vindhyan region (not the Satmala Hills)
Pushkar (Brahma temple)	Rajasthan	Aravallis near Ajmer (not the Mahadeo Hills)
Amarkantak	Madhya Pradesh	Maikal Hills; source of the Narmada
Bhilsa (Vidisha)	Madhya Pradesh	Besnagar, Udayagiri nearby
Girinagar (Girnar)	Gujarat	Junagadh
Dwarasamudra (Halebidu)	Karnataka	Hoysala capital (not Maharashtra)
Sthanesvara (Thanesar)	Haryana	Kurukshetra (not Uttar Pradesh)
Palitana	Gujarat	Shatrunjaya hill, Bhavnagar district

- **Angkor Vat** (Cambodia) was begun in the 12th century under the Khmer king **Suryavarman II**, as a Vishnu temple (asked in 2006).
- The **Sri Mariamman** temple, Singapore, is a Dravida-style temple of the 19th century; the **Batu Caves** near Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) are a Murugan shrine; the **Kamakhya** temple is in Assam.

10 Temples on the World Heritage List

SITE	STATE	YEAR	BUILDERS
Ellora Caves (Kailasa, Cave 16)	Maharashtra	1983	Rashtrakutas and others
Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram	Tamil Nadu	1984	Pallavas
Sun Temple, Konark	Odisha	1984	Eastern Gangas
Khajuraho Group of Monuments	Madhya Pradesh	1986	Chandelas
Group of Monuments at Hampi	Karnataka	1986	Vijayanagara
Group of Monuments at Pattadakal	Karnataka	1987	Badami Chalukyas
Elephanta Caves	Maharashtra	1987	Shaiva cave temple
Great Living Chola Temples	Tamil Nadu	1987, 2004	Cholas
Mahabodhi Temple Complex, Bodh Gaya	Bihar	2002	Brick temple, 5th to 6th century
Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple	Telangana	2021	Kakatiyas

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SITE	STATE	YEAR	BUILDERS
Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas	Karnataka	2023	Hoysalas

- **UPDATE 2026** NAGARA AND DRAVIDA IN A NEW TEMPLE
  - On **25 November 2025** the Prime Minister hoisted a saffron flag on the shikhara of the **Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple, Ayodhya**, marking the completion of its construction (as of 25 November 2025; source: PIB).
  - The shikhara is in the North Indian **Nagara** style; the 800-metre **parkota** (circumambulatory enclosure) round it follows the South Indian tradition. The outer walls carry 87 carved stone episodes from the Valmiki Ramayana (source: PIB).

- **UPDATE 2026** TENTATIVE LIST AND KONARK
  - India's tentative list for World Heritage gained the **Serial nomination of Chausath Yogini Temples** (13 temples in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha, including Khajuraho, Mitaoli, Bhedaghat and Hirapur) and the **Serial nomination of Gupta Temples in North India** (including Sanchi Temple 17, Udayagiri Cave 1, Nachna, Bhitargaon, Deogarh, Tigawa, Bhumara, Maniyar Math, Mahabodhi and Bhitari), both submitted on 11 February 2025 and added on 7 March 2025 (as of 28 November 2026 both are still on the tentative list; source: UNESCO, Ministry of Culture).
  - The **jagamohana of Konark**, filled with sand and sealed by the British in 1901–1903, is being opened: the ASI began cutting a 6 by 5 foot passage in its western wall in April 2026, but the sand had not yet been removed (as of 7 November 2026; source: ASI).

- **UPDATE 2026** TEMPLE ANNIVERSARIES
  - The Ministry of Culture held the **Aadi Thiruvathirai festival** at **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** on 23–27 July 2025 to mark 1,000 years of **Rajendra I**'s maritime expedition to South-East Asia and of the start of the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple; on 27 July 2025 the Prime Minister released a commemorative coin honouring Rajendra I (as of 27 July 2025; source: PIB).
  - The **Somnath Swabhiman Parv** (8–11 January 2026) marked 1,000 years since **Mahmud of Ghazni**'s attack on the Somnath temple in January 1026, and 75 years since the restored temple reopened on **11 May 1951** in the presence of President Rajendra Prasad (as of 11 January 2026; source: PIB).

❀ Prelims Quick Revision

- **Earliest structural temples**: Gupta; Bhitargaon (brick, 5th century), Deogarh (stone, early 6th century).
- **Five stages**: flat roof (Sanchi 17), ambulatory (Nachna), shikhara (Deogarh), apsidal (Ter), circular (Maniyar Math).
- **Nagara**: curving shikhara, amalaka and kalasha; usually no gopuram or wall; Ganga and Yamuna at the door.
- **Dravida**: stepped vimana; compound wall with gopurams; tank inside; 'shikhara' only the octagonal crown; dvarapalas at the door.
- **Vesara**: Deccan hybrid of Nagara and Dravida; Badami and Kalyani Chalukyas, Hoysalas.
- **Nagara shikharas**: latina or rekha-prasada (curving), phamsana (straight slope, over mandapas), valabhi (wagon-vaulted).

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- **Odisha**: rekha deul and jagamohana; Lingaraja (Shiva), Jagannath (Anantavarman Chodaganga), Konark (Narasimhadeva I, Black Pagoda).
- **Khajuraho**: Chandela; Lakshmana (Yashovarman, by 954), Kandariya Mahadeva (Vidyadhara, c. 1030); UNESCO 1986.
- **Modhera**: Solanki Bhima I, 1026–27; surya kund with 108 shrines; sun enters the sanctum at the equinoxes.
- **Pallava stages**: Mahendra (mandapas), Mamalla (rathas), Rajasimha (Shore, Kailasanatha), Nandivarman.
- **Kailasa, Ellora**: Rashtrakuta Krishna I, rock-cut Dravida; **Kailasanatha, Kanchipuram**: Pallava Rajasimha, structural.
- **Chola**: Thanjavur (Rajaraja I, 1010), Gangaikonda Cholapuram (Rajendra I, 1035), Darasuram (Rajaraja II).
- **Vijayanagara**: gopurams on all sides, kalyana mandapa, yali pillars; Vittala, Virupaksha, Hazara Rama at Hampi.
- **Nayaka**: Madurai style; prakarams; gopuram at its climax; Meenakshi temple.
- **Hoysala**: stellate plan, chloritic schist, jagati; Belur, Halebidu, Somanathapura (UNESCO 2023).
- **Ramappa**: Kakatiya, begun 1213, floating bricks; UNESCO 2021.

Previous Year Questions

2026 Which of the following temples has/have a Nagara-style shikhara?

1. Malegitti Shivalaya, Badami
2. Huchimalligudi Temple, Aihole
3. Dashavatara Temple, Deogarh
4. Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal

Select the answer using the code given below:

a 1 and 2 | **b 2 and 3** | c 3 only | d 3 and 4

Answer: (b). The Huchimalligudi at Aihole and the Gupta Dashavatara temple at Deogarh carry Nagara shikharas, while the Malegitti Shivalaya and Pattadakal's Virupaksha have Dravida vimanas. (PROVISIONAL KEY)

2022 The Prime Minister recently inaugurated the new Circuit House near Somnath Temple at Veraval. Which of the following statements are correct regarding Somnath Temple?

1. Somnath Temple is one of the Jyotirlinga shrines.
2. A description of Somnath Temple was given by Al-Biruni.
3. Pran Pratishtha of Somnath Temple (installation of the present day temple) was done by President S. Radhakrishnan.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a 1 and 2 only | b 2 and 3 only | c 1 and 3 only | d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Somnath is a Jyotirlinga and Al-Biruni described it in his account of Mahmud of Ghazni's raid of 1025–26, but President Rajendra Prasad performed the 1951 consecration.

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2021 With reference to Chausath Yogini Temple situated near Morena, consider the following statements :
1. It is a circular temple built during the reign of Kachchhapaghata Dynasty.
2. It is the only circular temple built in India.
3. It was meant to promote the Vaishnava cult in the region.
4. Its design has given rise to a popular belief that it was the inspiration behind the Indian Parliament building.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

a 1 and 2 | b 2 and 3 only | **c 1 and 4** | d 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (c). The Mitaoli (Morena) temple is an 11th-century Kachchhapaghata yogini shrine, popularly linked with Parliament House's design; it is not Vaishnava, and other circular yogini temples exist, such as Hirapur.

2020 With reference to the history of India, consider the following pairs:
Famous Place — Present State
1. Bhilsa — Madhya Pradesh
2. Dwarasamudra — Maharashtra
3. Girinagar — Gujarat
4. Sthanesvara — Uttar Pradesh
Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

a 1 and 3 only | b 1 and 4 only | c 2 and 3 only | d 2 and 4 only

Answer: (a). Bhilsa (Vidisha) is in Madhya Pradesh and Girinagar (Girnar) in Gujarat, but Dwarasamudra, the Hoysala capital, is in Karnataka and Sthanesvara (Thanesar) in Haryana.

2019 Building 'Kalyaana Mandapas' was a notable feature in the temple construction in the kingdom of

a Chalukya | b Chandela | c Rashtrakuta | **d Vijayanagara**

Answer: (d). Ornate pillared kalyana mandapas, used for the ceremonial marriage of the deity, are a hallmark of Vijayanagara temples, as at the Vitthala temple, Hampi.

2017 Which of the following is/are famous for Sun temples ?
1. Arasavalli
2. Amarakantak
3. Omkareshwar
Select the correct answer using the code given below :

a 1 only | b 2 and 3 only | c 1 and 3 only | d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Arasavalli (Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh) has an ancient Sun temple, while Amarkantak and Omkareshwar are Shaiva and Narmada pilgrim centres.

2016 Consider the following pairs :
Famous place — Region
1. Bodhgaya — Baghelkhand
2. Khajuraho — Bundelkhand
3. Shirdi — Vidarbha
4. Nasik (Nashik) — Malwa

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5. Tirupati — Rayalaseema

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

a 1, 2 and 4 | b 2, 3, 4 and 5 | c 2 and 5 only | d 1, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: (c). Khajuraho is in Bundelkhand and Tirupati in Rayalaseema, but Bodhgaya is in Magadha (Bihar), Shirdi and Nashik are in western Maharashtra, not Vidarbha or Malwa.

2015 Consider the following pairs :

Place of Pilgrimage — Location

1. Srisailam — Nallamala Hills
2. Omkareshwar — Satmala Hills
3. Pushkar — Mahadeo Hills

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

a 1 only | b 2 and 3 only | c 1 and 3 only | d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Srisailam's Mallikarjuna shrine stands on the Nallamala Hills, but Omkareshwar is on a Narmada island in the Vindhyan region and Pushkar lies in the Aravallis near Ajmer.

2014 With reference to the cultural history of India, the term 'Panchayatan' refers to

a an assembly of village elders | b a religious sect

c a style of temple construction | d an administrative functionary

Answer: (c). A main shrine with four corner shrines, as at Deogarh.

2012 The Nagara, the Dravida and the Vesara are the

a three main racial groups of the Indian subcontinent

b three main linguistic divisions into which the languages of India can be classified

c three main styles of Indian temple architecture

d three main musical Gharanas prevalent in India

Answer: (c). Nagara, Dravida and Vesara are the northern, southern and mixed Deccan styles of temple architecture.

2009 Where is the famous Virupaksha temple located?

a Bhadrachalam | b Chidambaram | c Hampi | d Srikalahasti

Answer: (c). The Virupaksha temple, the chief shrine of the Vijayanagara capital, stands at Hampi on the Tungabhadra.

2009 Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the code given below the lists:

List I (Famous Temple)

A. Vidyashankara temple

B. Rajarani temple

C. Kandariya Mahadeo temple

D. Bhimesvara temple

List II (State)

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1. Andhra Pradesh
2. Karnataka
3. Madhya Pradesh
4. Orissa

a A-2, B-4, C-3, D-1
b A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1
c A-1, B-4, C-3, D-2
d A-1, B-3, C-4, D-2

Answer: (a). The Vidyashankara temple is at Sringeri, the Rajarani at Bhubaneswar, the Kandariya Mahadeva at Khajuraho and the Bhimesvara at Draksharama in Andhra Pradesh.

2007 Where is the famous Vijaya Vittala Temple having its 56 carved pillars emitting musical notes located?

a Belur
b Bhadrachalam
c Hampi
d Srirangam

Answer: (c). The Vitthala temple at Hampi, enlarged under Krishnadeva Raya, has the musical pillars and the stone chariot.

2006 The initial design and construction of which massive temple took place during the reign of Suryavarman II?

a Sri Mariamman Temple
b Angkor Vat
c Batu Caves Temple
d Kamakhya Temple

Answer: (b). Angkor Vat in Cambodia was begun in the 12th century under the Khmer king Suryavarman II.

2006 Indian Airlines (now renamed 'Indian') have redesigned their logo which is a graphic wheel. This logo has been inspired from which one of the following?

a Hampi Temples
b Mamallapuram Temples
c Sun Temple, Konark
d Khajuraho Temple

Answer: (c). The wheel logo was based on the carved chariot wheels of the Konark Sun Temple.

2002 Which one of the following statements is NOT correct?

a The statue of Gomateshwara at Sravanabelagola represents the last Tirthankara of Jains
b India's largest Buddhist monastery is in Arunachal Pradesh
c The Khajuraho temples were built under Chandela Kings
d The Hoysalesvara temple is dedicated to Siva

Answer: (a). The Gomateshwara colossus, raised c. 983 by the Ganga minister Chavundaraya, depicts Bahubali, son of the first Tirthankara, while the last Tirthankara was Mahavira.

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2001 In which one of the following cities is the Lingaraja Temple located?

a Bhubaneswar | b Bijapur | c Kolkata | d Shravanabelagola

Answer: (a). The eleventh-century Lingaraja temple, the finest example of the Kalinga rekha-deul style, stands in Bhubaneswar.

2001 Hoysala monuments are found in

a Hampi and Hospet | b Halebid and Belur | c Mysore and Bangalore | d Sringeri and Dharwar

Answer: (b). The finest Hoysala temples are the Chennakeshava at Belur and the Hoysaleswara at Halebid (Dwarasamudra), the Hoysala capital.

1997 Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

List I
A. Gupta
B. Chandella
C. Chalukya
D. Pallava
List II
1. Badami
2. Panamalai
3. Khajuraho
4. Deogarh

a A-4, B-3, C-1, D-2 | b A-4, B-2, C-3, D-1 | c A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1 | d A-3, B-4, C-1, D-2

Answer: (a). The Gupta Dashavatara temple stands at Deogarh, the Chandella temples at Khajuraho, the early Chalukya cave temples at Badami and the Pallava Talagirisvara temple at Panamalai.

1995 The Nagara, the Dravida and the Vesara are

a the three main racial groups of the Indian subcontinent
b the three main linguistic divisions into which the languages of India can be classified
c the three main styles of Indian temple architecture
d the three main musical gharanas prevalent in India

Answer: (c). Nagara (north), Dravida (south) and Vesara (Deccan, a blend of the two) are the three main styles of Indian temple architecture.

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ART & CULTURE PRELIMS SUMMARY PYQS 1995–2026

Classical Dances and Music

Indian dance and music share one root text, Bharata's Natyashastra, which treats drama, dance and music as a single art and sorts instruments into four classes. Classical music split in about the 14th century into the Hindustani style of the north, shaped by Persian contact and the gharanas, and the Carnatic style of the south, built on the kriti and the 72 melakartas. Classical dance grew out of temple ritual, court patronage and the Bhakti movement; the Sangeet Natak Akademi counts eight classical forms, from Bharatanatyam in Tamil Nadu to Sattriya in Assam. Around them sit the folk songs of every region, devotional forms such as bhajan, kirtan and qawwali, and a large body of folk instruments.

SYLLABUS

PRELIMS **History of India and Indian National Movement, including Indian art, architecture, literature, religion and heritage**

CONTENTS

01 Natyashastra, Rasa and the Elements of Dance
02 Classical Dances at a Glance
03 Foundations of Indian Music
04 Hindustani Classical Music
05 Carnatic Music
06 Devotional and Fusion Forms
07 Folk Music
08 Musical Instruments
09 Musicians and their Instruments
10 Music Communities and Modern Music
11 Previous Year Questions

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PYQ RADAR 24 QUESTIONS, 1995–2026

- **Asked:** 1997, 1999, 2000 (twice), 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 (twice), 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012 (twice), 2013, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2025, 2026 (twice).
- **Who is who** (10 questions): artists matched to their art: vocalists, dancers, violin, ghatam, sitar, flute, santoor, mridangam, the Gundecha brothers, Bimbavati Devi, Ravi Shankar's autobiography; all between 2000 and 2009.
- **Hindustani forms, gharanas and figures** (6): Paluskar, Venkatamakhin, Shyama Shastri and Amir Khusrau; the Kitab-i-Nauras and qawwali; Dhrupad; Tansen; the first Gandharva Mahavidyalaya (Lahore, 1901); Mallikarjun Mansur and the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana (2026).
- **Ragas and Carnatic music** (3): a morning raga (Todi); Tyagaraja and Annamacharya; the Carnatic equal of Bilawal (2026).
- **Classical dance features** (5): the solo dance; Kuchipudi against Bharatanatyam; the tribhanga pose; Sattriya; Manipuri Sankirtana.
- **Learn first:** "Classical dances at a glance" and "Musicians and their instruments", because almost half the questions match a person or a feature to a form.

01 Natyashastra, Rasa and the Elements of Dance

- The **Natyashastra** of **Bharata Muni**, compiled between about 200 BCE and 200 CE, is the earliest treatise on drama, dance and music; it is called the **fifth Veda** (Natya Veda).
- Bharata says the Natya Veda took words (pathya) from the **Rigveda**, music (geet) from the **Samaveda**, gestures (abhinaya) from the **Yajurveda** and emotions (rasa) from the **Atharvaveda**; in the myth Brahma composed it when the gods asked for a pastime.
- The Natyashastra calls dance the "complete art", covering music, sculpture, poetry and drama, and describes techniques, postures, emotions, ornaments, the stage and even the audience.
- The first literary references to dance are in the **Vedas**; a fuller history comes from the epics, the Puranas and Sanskrit nataka and kavya. Classical Sanskrit drama mixed speech, gesture, mime, stylised movement and music.
- From the 12th to the 19th century regional musical plays called **sangeet-nataka** flourished; today's classical dances grew out of them.
- Archaeology: a bronze statuette (the "dancing girl") from **Mohenjo-daro** and a broken torso from **Harappa** (2500–1500 BCE) suggest dance poses; the Harappa torso is read as a precursor of the **Nataraja** pose. Rock paintings at **Bhimbetka** show community dancing.
- Shiva's **tandava** stands for the cycle of creation, preservation and destruction; Parvati's response is the feminine counterpart.
- All classical forms follow the Natyashastra and pass knowledge from guru to disciple (**guru-shishya parampara**); the traditions handed down are called sampradayas.

TERM	MEANING
Tandava	Masculine aspect: heroic, bold, vigorous; stress on rhythm and movement
Lasya	Feminine aspect: soft, lyrical, graceful; grace, bhava, rasa and abhinaya

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TERM	MEANING
Nritta	Pure dance: rhythmic movement with no mood (bhava) or meaning
Nritya	Expressive dance that conveys a theme or idea through mime and hand gestures
Natya	The dramatic element, the story; stressed today mainly in dance-dramas such as Kathakali
Abhinaya	Expression, of four kinds: **angika** (body and limbs), **vachika** (song and speech), **aharya** (costume and adornment), **sattvika** (moods and emotions)
Karana	A unit of dance movement; the Natyashastra describes 108
Nayaka-nayika bhava	The deity as hero (nayaka) and the dancing devotee as heroine (nayika)

Rasa: the Nine Emotions

- **Rasa** (literally "juice") is the aesthetic emotion an art form evokes in the performer and the audience; its end is **aanand** (bliss). Art is "an expression of all characteristics of the human mind aesthetically", and the varied human emotions are the rasas.
- Singing, dancing and acting are performing arts; sketching, painting and sculpture are visual arts.
- To present nritya and natya a dancer is trained to show the **navarasa**: **Shringara** (love), **Hasya** (laughter, mirth), **Karuna** (pathos, compassion), **Raudra** (anger), **Vira** (heroism, courage), **Bhayanaka** (terror, fear), **Bibhatsa** (disgust), **Adbhuta** (wonder) and **Shanta** (peace).
- After the 15th century **Bhakti** (devotion) also came to be accepted as a rasa; some musicologists treat Bhakti and Shanta as one.

PRELIMS TRAP EIGHT RASAS OR NINE?

- The rasa chapter of the **Natyashastra** discusses **eight** rasas; **Shanta** (peace) is a later addition, debated for centuries.
- **Abhinavagupta** of Kashmir (10th–11th century), in his commentary **Abhinavabharati** on the Natyashastra, defended Shanta as the rasa underlying all the others; later writers count nine, the navarasa.
- Raudra is anger and Vira is heroism; Bhayanaka is terror and Bibhatsa is disgust. Do not swap them.

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PRELIMS FACT NATYASHASTRA AND ABHINAYA DARPANA

- **Natyashastra** (Bharata): 36 chapters; the hand gestures (chapter 9) number 24 single-hand (**asamyuta**), 13 two-hand (**samyuta**) and 27 nritta hastas, 64 in all; it also divides the octave into 22 shrutis and instruments into four classes.
- **Abhinaya Darpana** ("Mirror of Gesture"), by **Nandikeshvara**: the main textual source for the technique and grammar of body movement in Bharatanatyam; it lists 28 single-hand and 23 two-hand gestures, 13 nritta hastas, and gestures for gods, the ten avatars and the nine planets. Its date is not settled; it is later than the Natyashastra.
- Nandikeshvara divides dance into **nritta, nritya and natya**; Coomaraswamy translated the text as *The Mirror of Gesture* (1917).
- All 108 **karanas** 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 them on an upper corridor wall.
- Ilango Adigal's **Silappadikaram** describes the dancer **Madhavi**, who trained for seven years and won a garland of 1,008 gold leaves.

PRELIMS TRAP MUDRA OR HASTA?

- In the dance texts a hand gesture is a **hasta** (hasta mudra); "**mudra**" is the everyday word and the term used for the gestures of images, such as the Buddha's abhaya, varada or bhumisparsha mudra.
- Single-hand gestures: 24 in the Natyashastra, 28 in the Abhinaya Darpana. Two-hand gestures: 13 and 23. A question that mixes the two texts' numbers is a trap.
- Named gestures to know: **Katakamukha hasta** (Bharatanatyam, three fingers joined to symbolise "Om"); **Nagabandha** (Manipuri, the body curved in the shape of an "8"); the 24 basic mudras of the **Hastalakshana Deepika** used in Kathakali and Mohiniattam.
- **108** is the number of **karanas** (units of movement) in the Natyashastra; neither text has 108 hastas.

02 Classical Dances at a Glance

- The **Sangeet Natak Akademi** recognises **eight** classical dances: Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Odissi, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Kathak and Sattriya. Many lists add **Chhau** as a **ninth** because the **Ministry of Culture**'s dance pages describe Chhau beside the eight; no notification of a ninth classical dance has been issued.
- **Kerala** has two classical dances (Kathakali and Mohiniattam); every other state has at most one. **Sattriya** (Assam) was the last to be added, on 15 November 2000.
- Bharatanatyam and Mohiniattam are solo dances by origin; Bharatanatyam is the form most associated with the solo recital (asked in 1997). Kuchipudi and Kathakali began as group dance-dramas.

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DANCE	STATE	FEATURES	EXPONENTS
Bharatanatyam	Tamil Nadu	Oldest by tradition; devadasi Sadir; solo; fire; Carnatic music; codified by the Tanjore Quartet	Rukmini Devi Arundale, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Padma Subrahmanyam, Mrinalini and Mallika Sarabhai, Lakshmi Viswanathan, Priyadarshini Govind, Pratibha Prahlad, Geeta Chandran, Leela Samson, Chandralekha
Kuchipudi	Andhra Pradesh (Kuchipudi village, Krishna district)	Dance-drama; dancers speak and sing; Tarangam on a brass plate; Bhama Kalapam; earth	Vempati Chinna Satyam, Radha and Raja Reddy, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Indrani Rahman, Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Swapnasundari, Vanashree Rao
Kathakali	Kerala	Male dance-drama; painted make-up and headgear; eye movements; Kalaripayattu training; sky	Guru Kunchu Kurup, Kavungal Chathunni Panicker, Guru Gopinath, Kottakkal Sivaraman, Rita Ganguly
Mohiniattam	Kerala	Solo by women; lasya; swaying, no leaps; Sopanam music; white and gold; air	Kalyani Amma, Krishna Panicker, Madhavi Amma, Kalamandalam Kshemavathy, Sunanda Nair
Odissi	Odisha	Chowk and tribhanga; maharis and gotipuas; Gita Govinda; "mobile sculpture"; water	Kelucharan Mohapatra, Pankaj Charan Das, Sonal Mansingh, Madhavi Mudgal, Rekha Tandon, Sreyashi Dey
Manipuri	Manipur	Ras Lila; Sankirtana; pung drum; veiled faces; Nagabandha; devotion over sensuality	Jhaveri sisters, Guru Bipin Singh, N. Madhabi Devi, Bimbavati Devi, Sohini Ray, Poushali Chatterjee
Kathak	Uttar Pradesh (north India)	Storytellers (kathakars); footwork and chakkars (spins); four gharanas; Hindustani music	Birju Maharaj, Lacchu Maharaj, Sitara Devi, Damayanti Joshi
Sattriya	Assam	Sankaradeva's sattras; borgeets; male monks (bhokots); Ankia Naat	Maniram Datta Moktar, Bapuram Bayan Attai, Ghana Kanta Bora, Jatin Goswami, Indira P. P. Bora
Chhau (the “ninth” in some lists; not in the SNA’s eight)	Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand	Mask dance with martial roots; three styles; UNESCO 2010	Seraikella, Purulia and Mayurbhanj troupes

Table: Order of a recital in five classical dances.

DANCE	ITEMS IN ORDER
Bharatanatyam	Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Shabdam, Varnam, abhinaya items (keertanam, kritis, padams, javalis), Tillana, Mangalam
Kuchipudi	Invocation (Ganesha Vandana), Jatiswaram (nritta), Shabdam, Kalapam (natya), Tarangam

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DANCE	ITEMS IN ORDER
Kathakali	Kelikottu, Todayam, Purappadu, Melappadam, the play with kalasams; ends at dawn
Odissi	Mangalacharan, Batu, Pallavi, Tharijham, Moksha or Trikhanda Majura
Kathak	Ananda, Thaat, Todas and Tukdas, Padhant, Jugalbandi, Tarana, Kramalaya; Gat bhaav



The eight classical dances recognised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi and their states.

- Each dance is said to embody an element: **Bharatanatyam fire**, **Kuchipudi earth**, **Odissi water**, **Mohiniattam air** and **Kathakali sky** (ether).
- Pure-dance finales match across forms: **Tillana** (Bharatanatyam), **Tharijham** (Odissi) and **Tarana** (Kathak); the Tillana has its origin in the tarana of Hindustani music.

Bharatanatyam

- **Bharatanatyam** of **Tamil Nadu** is considered the oldest of the contemporary classical dances, traced by tradition to over 2,000 years ago; the Natyashastra and later texts describe it, and the **Abhinaya Darpana** of Nandikeshvara is a main source for its technique.
- The name joins "Bharata" and "natyam" (dance); "Bharata" is also read as **bha**(va), **ra**(ga) and **ta**(la): emotion, melody and rhythm.
- It was nurtured in temples by the **devadasis** (servants of god), then taken to princely courts; the **Chola** and **Pallava** kings are believed to have been its great patrons.
- The temple dance was earlier called **Sadir** (also Dasiattam); at the Madras Music Academy in 1932 **E. Krishna Iyer**, a freedom fighter, proposed the name Bharatanatyam and led its revival.

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- **Rukmini Devi Arundale** gave it world recognition; she founded **Kalakshetra** at Adyar, Madras, in January 1936, was the first Indian woman nominated to the Rajya Sabha (1952) and chaired the Animal Welfare Board of India from 1962.
- The recital was codified in the 19th century by four brothers, the **Tanjore Quartet** (Chinnayya, Ponniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu), at the Thanjavur court of the Maratha king **Serfoji II** (r. 1798–1832); under them it was also called Tanjore Natyam, and their descendants were the first nattuvanars (dance teachers).
- Recital: **Alarippu** (invocation, "to adorn with flowers", pure dance with sound syllables); **Jatiswaram** (short pure dance of adavus to any Carnatic raga, no words); **Shabdam** (dramatic element with abhinaya); **Varnam** (nritta and nritya together, the core item, in two speeds); **Padam** and **Javali** (love lyrics, often divine); **Tillana** (pure dance finale); **Mangalam** (blessing).
- It is a solo, feminine dance by origin, now also danced by men and groups; its theme is love, often devotion to the Supreme Being or a mother's love for her child; its **ekaharya lasyam** style has one dancer play many roles.
- Knees are mostly bent with the weight spread evenly on both feet; it is known for grace, purity and sculpturesque poses and gives equal weight to tandava and lasya.
- Instruments: mridangam, manjira, veena, violin, kanjira, surpeti, venu (flute) and tanpura. The costume is a richly embroidered silk dhoti with a pleated cloth falling from waist to knees.

Kuchipudi

- **Kuchipudi** of **Andhra Pradesh** takes its name from the village of Kuchipudi (Kuchelapuram, Kusselavapuri) in **Krishna district**; it grew as a product of the Bhakti movement and lies, in place and style, between Odissi and Bharatanatyam.
- It began with troupes of actors (Kusselavas) going from village to village; with Vaishnavism it became the preserve of male Brahmins, the **Bhagavathalus**, who staged stories from the Bhagavata Purana in temples.
- The 17th-century **Siddhendra Yogi** gave it its dance-drama form and wrote **Bhama Kalapam**, on the jealousy of Satyabhama; in 1678 Abul Hasan **Tana Shah**, the last Sultan of Golconda, granted the dancers land round the village.
- It was patronised by the Vijayanagara and Golconda rulers; in the 20th century **Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry** brought in solo dancing and women dancers. The solo recital order has been settled since the late 1940s.
- Kuchipudi combines speech, mime and pure dance: its dancer-actors sometimes speak dialogue and sing their own lines; each main character enters with a **daaru**, a short song-and-dance of self-introduction.
- Nritta in Kuchipudi is made of teermanams and jatis (sollakath or patakshara); nritya of shabdams; natya of acting with mudras; **kavutvams** are acrobatic pieces.
- Solo items: **Tarangam** (the dancer stands on the rim of a brass plate in shakatavadanam paada, moves it in rhythm, sometimes with a water pot or lamps on the head); **Manduk Shabdam** (story of a frog); **Dashavatara** shabdam; **Jala Chitra Nrityam** (drawing pictures on the floor with the toes).
- Music is Carnatic, sung in **Telugu**; instruments are mridangam, manjira (thalam), veena, violin, kanjira, surpeti, venu and tanpura. Lasya and tandava are both important; shringara rasa predominates.

Kathakali

- **Kathakali** ("katha" story, "kali" dance or play) is the dance-drama of **Kerala**, combining literature, music, painting, acting and dance; it blends Aryan and Dravidian elements in its technique.

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- It took shape in the 17th century out of older Kerala forms: **Ramanattam** and **Krishnanattam** (temple dance-dramas under feudal patrons), **Koodiyattam** (Sanskrit theatre), **Chakyar Koothu**, Mudiyettu, Theyyam and Sastrakali.
- **Chakyar Koothu** is performed by the **Chakyar** community in the temple theatre called the **koothambalam**, to the **mizhavu** drum; it was traditionally watched by upper-caste Hindus.
- Kathakali is performed by men, who also play the female roles; actors train in **Kalaripayattu**, Kerala's martial art, and convey the rasas through movements of the eyes and eyebrows.
- Its stories, from the Puranas, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, stage the conflict of good and evil; characters are **satvika**, **rajasika** or **tamasika**. It is also called the "ballad of the east".
- The text is the **Kathakali padam**, sung in Carnatic ragas in **Manipravalam** (Malayalam mixed with Sanskrit); the drums are the chenda and the maddalam.
- A performance opens with the **kelikottu** (drums and cymbals in the courtyard at dusk), then the **todayam** (a devotional invocation by one or two characters), the **purappadu** (pure nritta), the **melappadam** (a display by musicians and drummers); **kalasams** are pure dance passages. It runs through the night in open-air theatres or temple grounds, lit by a brass lamp, and ends at dawn when good wins.
- Props are few; elaborate facial make-up and headgear carry the meaning: green for nobility, divinity and virtue, red patches beside the nose for royal pride (the kathi of proud, evil-streaked kings), black for evil, yellow for saints and women, an all-red face for evil, a white beard for higher beings.
- In 1930 the poet **Vallathol Narayana Menon**, with Mukunda Raja, founded the **Kerala Kalamandalam**, which revived Kathakali and Mohiniattam; it moved to Cheruthuruthy (Thrissur) in 1936 and became a deemed university in 2006.

MAKE-UP TYPE (VESHAM)	COLOUR	CHARACTERS
Pacha	Green	Noble heroes: Krishna, Rama, Arjuna, Nala
Kathi (knife)	Green with red markings	Proud warriors with an evil streak, such as Ravana
Thadi (beard)	Red or white beard	Red: evil (Dushasana); white: divine (Hanuman)
Kari	Black	Hunters and forest dwellers
Minukku	Soft yellow	Noble women such as Sita and Panchali
Teppu	Special designs	Garuda, Jatayu, Hamsa

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PRELIMS TRAP KATHAKALI, KUCHIPUDI OR BHARATANATYAM?

- **Make-up:** Kathakali actors wear thick painted faces (pacha, kathi, thadi), a white rice-paste frame (**chutti**) round the face, huge headgear and reddened eyes. Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam dancers wear ordinary stage make-up and jewellery; no painted mask.
- **Who dances:** Kathakali is an all-male troupe tradition; Kuchipudi was danced by Brahmin men but now has many women soloists.
- **Tarangam** on a brass plate belongs to **Kuchipudi**, not Bharatanatyam; speaking dialogue is a Kuchipudi trait (asked in 2012).
- Both Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam use Carnatic music and have jatiswaram and shabdam items; Kuchipudi is from Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh, Bharatanatyam from Tamil Nadu.
- The painted faces and headgear of **Yakshagana** (Karnataka) look like Kathakali; Yakshagana is a folk theatre, not a classical dance.

Mohiniattam

- **Mohiniattam** ("Mohini", the enchantress, and "attam", dance) is the solo dance of **Kerala** by women; it tells of the feminine dance of **Vishnu** as Mohini and also carries the idea of **Ardhanarishvara**. It is called the "dance of the celestial enchantress".
- It combines the grace of Bharatanatyam with the vigour of Kathakali but has its own identity; **lasya** dominates: swaying movement with no jerks or leaps, glides and rises on the toes like waves, palms and paddy fields; soft footwork without thumping.
- The hand gestures, 24 in number, come mainly from the **Hastalakshana Deepika** (also used in Kathakali), with some from the Natyashastra, the Abhinaya Darpana and the Balarambharatam; **adavus** (atavukal) are its 40 basic movements.
- Music is Carnatic, sung in the lyrical **Sopanam** style that dwells on bhava; instruments include cymbals, veena, drums and flute. The costume is white or off-white with gold brocade; there is no heavy face make-up.
- The theme is love and devotion to god; the dance of the enchantress destroys the wicked and delights the good.
- **Swathi Thirunal**, poet-composer king of Travancore (full charge from 1829), patronised it, and **Vadivelu** of the Tanjore Quartet worked at his court; after a decline, Vallathol revived it at the Kerala Kalamandalam with **O. Kalyani Amma**, its first renowned dancer and teacher (from 1933), who went to teach at **Santiniketan** at Tagore's request in 1936; Krishna Panicker and Madhavi Amma then took over the teaching.

PRELIMS TRAP MOHINIATTAM, MOHINIYATTAM, MOHINI

- **Mohiniattam** and **Mohiniyattam** are two spellings of the same dance; questions use both (1997 and 2014 "Mohiniattam", 2001 "Mohiniyattam").
- It belongs to **Kerala**; the 2014 pair "Mohiniattam: Odisha" was wrong. Odisha's classical dance is **Odissi**; in the same question Garba (Gujarat) and Yakshagana (Karnataka) were correctly paired.
- Kerala's two classical dances differ: Mohiniattam is a **solo by women** in lasya; Kathakali is a **male dance-drama** in tandava with painted faces.

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Odissi

- **Odissi** of **Odisha** descends from the **Odra-Magadhi**, the south-eastern regional style named in the Natyashastra ("Odra nritya"); it closely follows the Natyashastra and the Shilpashastras.
- The earliest evidence, from the 2nd century BCE, is in the **Udayagiri and Khandagiri** caves near Bhubaneswar; the Jaina king **Kharavela** is linked with its patronage.
- For centuries the **maharis** (temple dancers) kept the dance; when they were drawn to royal courts and the art declined, boys called **gotipuas**, dressed as girls, danced in temples and for the public; a court variant was called **Nartala**.
- Its movement rests on two postures: the **chowk**, a square, masculine stance with the weight balanced equally, and the **tribhanga**, a feminine stance in which the body is bent at the neck, torso and knees.
- Its poses copy temple sculpture, so it is called "mobile sculpture"; the lower body stays largely still while the torso moves; it balances lasya and tandava and has foot movements like Bharatanatyam.
- Themes come mostly from Jayadeva's **Gita Govinda** (the Ashtapadis) and centre on Krishna.
- Recital: **Mangalacharan** (entry with flowers offered to mother earth), **Batu** (nritta in chowk and tribhanga), **Pallavi** (a raga shown in slow movement building to complex rhythm), **Tharijham** (pure dance), then **Moksha** (dance of liberation) or **Trikhanda Majura** (leave-taking of the gods, audience and stage).
- It is danced to **Odissi music**, a regional classical style that is closer to Hindustani with some Carnatic elements; instruments are manjira, pakhawaj, sitar and flute. Dancers wear stitched pyjama-style costumes of Odisha handloom silk and **silver** jewellery with an elaborate hairstyle.
- Charles Fabri and **Indrani Rahman** helped bring it world fame in the mid-20th century; foreign exponents include Sharon Lowen (USA).

PRELIMS TRAP TRIBHANGA AND CHOWK

- **Tribhanga** ("three bends"): one leg bent, the body curved in opposite directions at the waist and the neck (asked in 2013). It is a pose of dance and sculpture from ancient times, central to Odissi.
- **Chowk** is the other Odissi posture: square, masculine, weight balanced equally.
- A combination of make-up, gestures and facial expression to show epic characters describes **Kathakali**, not tribhanga; "a little smile, curved waist and hand gestures for love" describes no single named pose.
- Kathak is the opposite case: its weight stays on the vertical and horizontal axes, with no sharp bends or curves.

Manipuri

- **Manipuri** traces its mythical origin to the dance of **Shiva and Parvati** in the valleys of Manipur with the local Gandharvas; it gained prominence with **Vaishnavism** from the 15th century, which brought compositions on Radha and Krishna.
- It grew partly from **Lai Haraoba**, the Meitei ritual festival at which the maibi (priestess) dances.
- Maharaja **Bhagyachandra** (r. 1759–1798) composed the Maha, Basanta and Kunja Ras; the **Ras Lila** was first staged 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**.
- Manipuri stresses devotion over sensuality: faces are covered by a thin veil and facial expression matters less than hand gestures and gentle footwork; it has tandava and lasya, with the stress on lasya.

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- **Nagabandha** mudra, with the body curved in an "8", is a key posture; the female costume is the **potloi** (patloi), a stiff cylindrical skirt.
- Manipur's main forms are the **Ras** (Radha, Krishna and the gopis, often the pain of separation), the **Sankirtana** and the martial **Thang-Ta**; short compositions such as the swarmala, chaturang and keertiprabandh belong to the repertoire, and Jayadeva and Chandidas are sung.
- **Sankirtana** is ritual singing, drumming and dancing that narrates the life and deeds of **Krishna**; male dancers play the **pung** (drum) and the **kartal** (cymbals) as they dance, so cymbals are not its only instrument. UNESCO inscribed it in 2013.
- The male dances of the Sankirtana are the **choloms**: **Pung cholom** (drum) and **Kartal cholom**; the pung is the Manipuri classical drum.

Kathak

- **Kathak**, from Sanskrit *katha* (story), comes from **Uttar Pradesh**; it traces its origin to the **kathakars**, nomadic storytellers of north India who recited the epics with gesture and music, and to the medieval **Ras Lila** of the Braj region.
- The 15th-century Vaishnava wave brought Radha-Krishna lyrics and the songs of Mirabai, Surdas, Nandadas and Krishnadas; under the **Mughals** Kathak moved from the temple courtyard to the court, took on Persian costume and style, and became court entertainment in Hindu and Muslim courts.
- Its technique is intricate **footwork** and spins (chakkars), with the weight even on both axes and no sharp bends; nritta and abhinaya both leave wide room for improvisation.
- Recital: **Ananda** (entry), **Thaat** (soft gliding movements of neck, eyebrows and wrists), **Todas and Tukdas** (short fast rhythmic pieces), **Padhant** (the dancer recites bols and then dances them), **Jugalbandi** (contest between dancer and tabla player), **Tarana** (pure nritta like the Tillana), **Kramalaya** (fast concluding footwork); **Gat bhaav** is mime without music.
- Kathak grew with north Indian music: dhrupad and khayal accompanied it, and **thumri**, dadra and ghazal entered in the Mughal period.
- Costume: women wear a ghaghra, choli and veil; men a dhoti-kurta or kameez-churidar with a vest; gold and silver ornaments and ankle bells (ghungroo). **Lady Leela Sokhey** (Menaka) revived the classical style in the 20th century.

KATHAK GHARANA	PATRON OR FOUNDER	STYLE
Lucknow	Nawab **Wajid Ali Shah** of Awadh (r. 1847–1856)	Grace, poise, abhinaya, thumri, dadra and hori; Birju Maharaj its chief representative
Jaipur	Kachhwaha kings of Jaipur; begun by Bhanuji	Powerful footwork, many spins, long rhythmic patterns, pakhawaj parans
Banaras	Janakiprasad	Only natwari (dance) bols; few chakkars, taken both ways; much use of the floor; symmetry
Raigarh	Raja **Chakradhar Singh** of Raigarh (r. 1924–1947), Chhattisgarh	Stress on percussion

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Sattriya

- **Sattriya** was created in the 15th–16th century by the Vaishnava saint **Sankaradeva** (1449–1568) of Assam as part of his **Ankia Naat** one-act plays, performed in the **sattras** (Vaishnava monasteries); it is a living tradition of the Vaishnavas of Assam and combines music, dance and drama.
- The Sangeet Natak Akademi recognised it as a classical dance on **15 November** 2000, the most recent of the eight.
- For centuries it was danced only by male monks, the **bhokots**, as daily ritual and on festivals; today men and women outside the sattras dance it on stage, and on themes beyond myth.
- It draws on the treatises and on Assamese forms, mainly **Ojapali** and the **Devadasi** dance; it narrates the stories of Vishnu and Krishna and has nritta, nritya and natya.
- It is danced to **borgeets**, songs by Sankaradeva and **Madhavadeva** set to classical ragas; instruments are the **khol** (drum), cymbals (manjira) and flute. The Ankia Naat were written in **Brajavali**, a mix of Assamese and Maithili; the staging of these plays is **Bhaona**.
- Genres include Apsara, Behar, Chali, Dasavatara, Manchok, Natua, Rasa and Rajaghariya Chali Nritya, Gosai, Bar and Gopi Prabesh, Jhumura, Nadu Bhangi and Sutradhara; strict rules govern hastas, footwork, aharya and music.
- It has two streams: the **Gayan-Bhayanar Nach** and the **Kharmanar Nach**. Men wear a dhoti and paguri (turban); women wear ghuri and chador of Assam pat silk.

- **PRELIMS TRAP** SATTRIYA
  - Sattriya songs are the **borgeets** of **Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva**; they are not the songs of Tulsidas, Kabir or Mirabai (asked in 2014).
  - The name comes from the **sattra** (monastery); the related prayer hall is the **namghar**. Ankia Naat is the play, Bhaona its staging, Sattriya the dance.
  - Sattriya is classical (2000); **Bihu**, **Bagurumba** and **Ojapali** of Assam are folk forms.

Chhau

- **Chhau**, from Sanskrit *chhaya* (shadow, image, mask; another view derives it from *chhauni*, a military camp), is a semi-classical dance of eastern India with martial, tribal and folk roots; it ranges from martial arts and acrobatics to dances on Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava themes, and natural themes such as the Sarpa (serpent) and Mayur (peacock) Nritya.
- Its three styles are **Mayurbhanj** (Odisha), **Purulia** (West Bengal) and **Seraikella** (Jharkhand); Purulia and Seraikella dancers wear masks, Mayurbhanj dancers do not.
- UNESCO inscribed Chhau on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in **2010**; the film *Barfi!* shows Purulia Chhau.

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UPDATE 2026 IS CHHAU CLASSICAL?

- Asked in the Rajya Sabha why Chhau had not been given classical status, the Ministry of Culture replied on **6 February 2025** that such decisions rest with the Sangeet Natak Akademi, and listed its training work for Chhau, including the Chhau Kendra at Chandankiyari, Jharkhand (2018); no classical status was granted (as of 28 November 2026; source: Ministry of Culture).
- The Akademi still names eight classical dances; Chhau has its own award category among the Akademi's dance awards (Nripen Sahis for 2024; Pagulu Jena, Mayurbhanj Chhau, for 2025) (as of 13 August 2026; source: Sangeet Natak Akademi, PIB).

03 Foundations of Indian Music

- Tradition says sage **Narada** brought music to earth and taught people about **Nada Brahma**, the sound that pervades the universe; the syllable **Om** is held to be the source of all ragas and notes.
- A seven-holed **flute** has been found at Indus Valley sites; by legend the bowed **Ravanahatha** comes from the Hela civilisation of Sri Lanka and is among the oldest instruments in the world.
- The **Samaveda** is said to contain all seven notes of the raga **Kharaharapriya** in descending order; **Gandharva Veda**, the science of music, is an Upaveda of the Samaveda.
- The **Aitareya Aranyaka** names the parts of the veena; the **Jaiminiya Brahmana** speaks of dance and music together; **Panini** (4th century BCE) made the first clear reference to music-making.
- The late Vedic **Samgana** set chanted verses to musical patterns; **Jatigan** narrated the epics; **Prabandh Sangeet**, in Sanskrit, was popular in the 2nd–7th centuries CE and gave way to the simpler **dhruvapad** in Hindi, the parent of dhrupad.
- The **Gupta** period is considered the golden era of Indian music.
- **Persian** music had the deepest foreign influence, mainly on north Indian music; Hindustani and Carnatic, both rooted in the Natyashastra, **diverged in the 14th century**. The dhrupad was established by the 15th century and the khayal by the 17th–18th.
- Gurukul (ashram) system: the student lived with the guru, a sage, for 12 years and learnt by serving him; kings and the wealthy patronised the hermitages; prince and commoner were treated alike.

TREATISE	AUTHOR	PERIOD	KNOWN FOR
Natyashastra	Bharata	c. 200 BCE to 200 CE	First to set out the octave of 22 shrutis (keys); four classes of instruments
Dattilam	Dattila	Early	Also holds 22 shrutis to the octave
Brihaddesi	Matanga	Between the 6th and 9th century	Earliest text to define *raga* directly
Sangeeta Makaranda	Narada	11th century	Music treatise
Sangeeta Ratnakara	Saranga Deva	13th century	About 264 ragas, north and south; classified microtones; written at **Devagiri** under the Yadava king **Singhana II**

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TREATISE	AUTHOR	PERIOD	KNOWN FOR
Man Kutuhal	Raja Man Singh Tomar	1486–1516	Dhrupads of the Gwalior court; Persian version Rag Darpan (1666)
Swaramela-kalanidhi	Ramamatya	16th century (c. 1550)	The **mela** (parent scale) system of grouping ragas
Chaturdandi-prakasika	Venkatamakhin	17th century	Scheme of the **72 melakartas**

Swara, Raga, Tala and Thaat

- **Swara, raga and tala** are the three pillars of Indian music.
- **Swara** (sur) is a note; the seven are shadja, rishabha, gandhara, madhyama, panchama, dhaivata and nishada (**Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni**), together the saptak or sargam; the primeval sound Om is said to have given birth to swara.
- **Sa** and **Pa** are fixed (**achala swar**) and form the tonal base of all Indian classical music; the other five have variant forms (**chala swar**).
- A **shruti** is the smallest gradation of pitch: of the **22 shrutis**, 12 are audible, the seven shuddha (natural) and five vikrit (altered) swaras. The notes repeat in upper and lower registers.
- **Raga** comes from Sanskrit *ranj*, to delight; it is the basis of melody, with its own personality and mood, its own ascent (**aroha**) and descent (**avaroha**).
- Elements of a raga: **nada** (sound: anahata, unstruck, and ahata, struck), pitch as swara and shruti, and the rasa it evokes.
- By number of notes ragas are **Audav** (5, pentatonic), **Shadava** (6) or **Sampoorna** (7); every raga needs at least five notes. By type they are **shuddha** (unchanged if absent notes are played), **chhayalag** (changed by them) and **sankeerna** (mixing two or more ragas).
- The main note is the **vaadi** ("king"), the second the **samvaadi** ("queen", a fourth or fifth from it); the other notes are **anuvaadi**, and notes left out are **vivaadi**.
- Tempo (laya) is **vilambit** (slow), **madhya** (medium) or **drut** (fast).
- Hindustani music names six principal ragas: **Hindol, Deepak, Megh, Shree, Malkauns and Bhairav**; each has five **raginis**, and all ragas derive from thaats. Carnatic ragas are **melakarta** (parent, rigidly organised, built on 16 swaras) or **janya** (derived, shaped by usage).
- **Tala** is the rhythmic cycle of beats, from 3 to 108 beats; it is independent of the music and has its own divisions. Of over 100 talas, about 30 are known and 10–12 used: dadra, kaharwa, rupak, jhaptal, ektal, adha-chautal, chautal and **teentaal** (16 beats, the commonest).
- **Laya** is the tempo and **matra** the smallest unit of a tala; Carnatic **thalas** are built of **laghu, drutam and anudrutam**, 35 thalas each in five jatis (175 in all), and the commonest is the 8-beat **Adi thala**.
- An instrumental raga unfolds in **alap** (slow invocation), **jor** (rhythm added, tempo rising) and **jhala** (the fast climax, struck with a plectrum on the right index finger); the **gat** is the fixed composition, spread over 2 to 16 cycles of a tala.
- In singing, the **alap** is sung in aakaar (on "aa"); a composition has the **sthayee** (mukhda) and the **antara**; **taans** are fast runs of notes, and a short three- or four-note taan is a **murki**; an **alankar** is a set pattern of notes (Sa Re Ga, Re Ga Ma).
- **Samay**: each raga has its hour. A raga whose vaadi lies in the lower half of the octave (**purvanga**, Sa to Ma or Pa) is a **Poorva raga**, sung from **12 noon to 12 midnight** (Yaman, Bhupali); one whose vaadi lies in the upper

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half (**uttaranga**, Ma or Pa to upper Sa) is an **Uttar raga**, sung from **12 midnight to 12 noon** (Bhairav, Asavari, Todi). The **Chaturprahar** festival at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai, is built on this time theory.

- **Thaat** classifies ragas; **V. N. Bhatkhande** grouped all Hindustani ragas under **10 thaats**: Bilawal, Khamaj, Kafi, Asavari, Bhairavi, Bhairav, Kalyan, Marwa, Poorvi and Todi.

Table: Traditional hours and seasons of ragas (the ragamala schemes differ on seasons and moods).

RAGA	TIME	SEASON OR MOOD
Bhairav	Morning (dawn)	Autumn; peace
Hindol	Dawn	Spring; sweetness of a young couple
Deepak	Night	Summer; compassion
Megh	Midday or afternoon	Rains; courage
Shree	Evening	Winter; gladness
Malkauns	Midnight	Winter; youthful love
Todi (Miyan ki Todi)	Morning	Sung early in the day
Bhimpalasi	Afternoon	Longing
Bhupali and **Yaman**	First part of the night	Evening ragas
Darbari Kanada	Late night	Grave; Tansen's creation
Miyan ki Malhar	Any time in the rains	Monsoon
Basant, **Bahar**	Spring	Seasonal

- **Todi** is sung early in the morning (asked in 2000); **Darbari** belongs to late night, **Bhimpalasi** to the afternoon and **Bhupali** to the early night.

BASIS	THAAT	RAGA
Origin	A scale made from the 12 swaras	Belongs to a thaat
Notes	Exactly seven	At least five
Movement	Ascending only (aroha)	Aroha and avaroha
Sung?	Not sung; no emotional quality	Sung; melodious
Vaadi and samvaadi	None	Has both
Name	Named after a popular raga	Has its own name, mood and hour

Table: Each Hindustani thaat has the same notes as a Carnatic melakarta.

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THAAT	MELAKARTA (NUMBER)	THAAT	MELAKARTA (NUMBER)
Bilawal	**Dheerashankarabharanam** (29)	Bhairav	Mayamalavagowla (15)
Khamaj	Harikambhoji (28)	Kalyan	Mechakalyani (65)
Kafi	Kharaharapriya (22)	Poorvi	Kamavardhini (51)
Asavari	Natabhairavi (20)	Marwa	Gamanashrama (53)
Bhairavi	Hanumatodi (8)	Todi	Shubhapantuvarali (45)

- **Bilawal**, the thaat of all natural (shuddha) notes, the major scale, matches the Carnatic **Dheerashankarabharanam**, the 29th mela (asked in 2026); Natabhairavi matches Asavari, Kamavardhini Poorvi and Hanumatodi Bhairavi.

04 Hindustani Classical Music

- Indian classical music is also called **Marg Sangeet** or **Shastriya Sangeet**; its two schools are Hindustani in the north and Carnatic in the south.
- Hindustani music stresses musical structure and the room for improvisation; it adopted the **Shuddha Swara Saptaka** (octave of natural notes).
- Its ten main forms of singing are **Dhrupad, Dhamar, Hori, Khayal, Tappa, Chaturang, Ragasagar, Tarana, Sargam and Thumri**.

Dhrupad

- **Dhrupad** (from *dhruva*, fixed, and *pada*, words) is the oldest and grandest form of Hindustani vocal music, "the literal rendering of verse into music"; it grew from the older Prabandha and Dhruvapada.
- Dhrupad is devotional and spiritual in essence and of temple origin; its **alap**, sung without words, uses syllables drawn from **Sanskrit mantras**.
- It was adapted for court performance under **Raja Man Singh Tomar** of **Gwalior** (1486–1516), before the Mughals; so it did not originate in the Rajput kingdoms of the Mughal period (asked in 2012).
- Man Singh compiled his court's dhrupads in the **Man Kutuhal** and helped move song texts from Sanskrit to the local tongue; dhrupad is now often sung in **Brajbhasha**.
- Its great names were **Baiju Bawra** and others of Man Singh's Gwalior, the Vrindavan saint **Swami Haridas** and his pupil **Tansen**, under whom it reached its peak at **Akbar**'s court; it declined in the 18th century.
- A dhrupad opens with a long alap that rises slowly in tempo and sets the raga's mood, then the composition begins with the **pakhawaj**. Compositions have four or five stanzas and are often sung by a **pair of male singers** (as the Dagars and the Gundechas do) with tanpura and pakhawaj.
- Dhrupad has four **banis** (vanis): **Dagar, Khandar, Nauhar and Gauhar**.

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DHRUPAD GHARANA	BANI	NOTES AND EXPONENTS
Dagar	Dagar vani	Stress on alap; men trained and sing in pairs; Muslims who sing Hindu texts; the **Gundecha brothers** (Umakant and Ramakant), pupils of Zia Mohiuddin and Zia Fariduddin Dagar, the best-known pair of recent times (Ramakant died in 2019)
Darbhanga	Khandar and Gauhar	Composed songs over improvised alap; varied layakari; the Mallik family (Ram Chatur Mallik, d. 1990; Prem Kumar Mallik), Siyaram Tewari (d. 1998)
Bettiah	Nauhar and Khandar	Family techniques; the Mishras (Indra Kishore Mishra)
Talwandi	Khandar	Based in Pakistan

- The dhrupad of the Bettiah and Darbhanga schools is called the **Haveli** style.
- **Tansen** (born Ramtanu), one of the nine jewels of Akbar's court, came from Raja Ramachandra of Rewa in 1562; the name Tansen is traced to Raja **Vikramajit** of Gwalior, and Akbar gave him the title **Mian** (so "the title Tansen was given by Akbar" is wrong, asked in 2019).
- Tansen composed dhrupads on Hindu gods and goddesses and on his patrons, and created ragas such as **Darbari Kanada**; his tomb lies in the complex of his Sufi master **Muhammad Ghaus** at Gwalior, where the **Tansen Sangeet Samaroh** is held every December.
- UNESCO Creative Cities of Music in India: **Varanasi** (2015), **Chennai** (2017) and **Gwalior** (2023).

Gharanas and Khayal

- A **gharana** (from *ghar*, house, Sanskrit *griha*) links musicians or dancers by lineage or apprenticeship and by a shared style; it grew from the guru-shishya bond and shapes thinking, teaching and performance. Gharanas differ mainly in how the notes are sung.
- **Khayal** ("idea, imagination", Persian) is the most prominent Hindustani vocal genre, romantic in style; its origin is credited to **Amir Khusrau**, and **Hussain Shah Sharqi** of Jaunpur (15th century) was its greatest early patron.
- Khayal became the leading form in the 18th century, a blend of Hindu and Persian culture; its marks are **taans** and **bol-taans**, which set it apart from dhrupad, and it gives less room to alap.
- A khayal song is a **bandish** of two to eight lines; each singer renders the same bandish differently. Themes are mostly love, even when addressed to God, a king or Krishna.
- A performance has a **bada khayal** in slow tempo (vilambit), most of the recital, and a **chhota khayal** in fast tempo (drut) as the finale.

KHAYAL GHARANA	FOUNDER	STYLE	EXPONENTS
Gwalior	Oldest khayal gharana; Nathan Pir Bakhsh at the Gwalior court, then his grandsons Haddu and Hassu Khan (19th century)	Simplicity; well-known ragas; equal stress on melody and rhythm; raga vistar and alankar	Nathu Khan, Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Gururao Deshpande, Malini Rajurkar, Meeta Pandit
Kirana	Traced to Nayak Gopal; made popular by Abdul Karim Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan (early 20th century)	Named after Kirana (Kairana), Uttar Pradesh; precise tuning; slow ragas; clear words	**Bhimsen Joshi**, **Gangubai Hangal**, Sawai Gandharva, Hirabai Barodekar, Prabha Atre

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KHAYAL GHARANA	FOUNDER	STYLE	EXPONENTS
Agra	Khuda Baksh (19th century) or Haji Sujan Khan; revived by Faiyaz Khan of the “Rangeela” line	Khayal blended with dhrupad-dhamar; stress on the bandish	Mohsin Khan Niazi, C. R. Vyas, Vijay Kichlu
Patiala	Ali Baksh and Fateh Ali ("Aliya-Fattu"); Maharaja of Patiala	Ghazal, thumri and khayal; rhythm; fast "taan-bazi" taans; tappa figures	**Bade Ghulam Ali Khan** (also famed for thumri)
Jaipur-Atrauli	**Alladiya Khan**	Laykari; rare jod and sankeerna ragas; steady medium tempo	Kesarbai Kerkar, Mogubai Kurdikar, Kishori Amonkar, **Mallikarjun Mansur**
Bhendibazaar	Chhajju Khan, Nazir Khan, Khadim Hussain Khan (19th century)	Named after Bhendi Bazaar, Bombay; long passages in one breath; some Carnatic ragas	
Mewati		Khayal and tarana	Pandit Jasraj, Rattan Mohan Sharma
Rampur-Sahaswan		Khayal	Rashid Khan
Indore	Amir Khan	Slow, meditative khayal	

- **Mallikarjun Mansur** of Dharwad, Karnataka, sang in the **Jaipur-Atrauli** gharana (asked in 2026); most Hindustani singers from Karnataka, such as Bhimsen Joshi and Gangubai Hangal, belong to the Kirana gharana, so he is the exception.
- **Bhimsen Joshi** of the Kirana gharana received the **Bharat Ratna**, announced in November 2008 and presented in February 2009 (listed for 2009); he is known for "Mile Sur Mera Tumhara" (1988).
- **Tarana** weaves meaningless syllables (bols) into rhythmic patterns sung fast; it is credited to **Amir Khusrau** and was also used by Guru Gobind Singh. Its Carnatic counterpart is the **Tillana**. **Rattan Mohan Sharma** of the Mewati gharana, known for fast tarana, was called "Tarana ke Baadshah" at the Pandit Motiram Sangeet Samaroh, Hyderabad.

- PRELIMS FACT **TWO REFORMERS OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC**
  - **Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande** (1860–1936) devised the ten-thaat classification and a notation system, collected compositions in the six-volume *Kramik Pustak Malika*, and helped found the Marris College of Music at **Lucknow** (1926), now Bhatkhande Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya.
  - **Vishnu Digambar Paluskar** (1872–1931), a pupil of Balkrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjikar of the Gwalior gharana, founded the first **Gandharva Mahavidyalaya** at **Lahore** on 5 May 1901 (asked in 2025) and later moved it to Bombay.
  - Paluskar set **Vande Mataram** to music and sang it at Congress sessions (asked in 1999); his son **D. V. Paluskar** was also a noted singer.

Semi-classical Forms

- Semi-classical forms use swaras but loosen the raga: lighter ragas such as Bhupali or Malkauns, lighter talas, madhya or drut laya, and more stress on bhava and lyrics than on alap-jor-jhala.

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- **Thumri** grew in eastern Uttar Pradesh, mainly **Lucknow** and **Banaras**, in the 18th–19th century; it flowered at the Lucknow court of Nawab **Wajid Ali Shah** (1847–1856), where his courtier **Sadiq Ali Khan** shaped the bandish thumri, and it was influenced by hori, kajri and dadra.
- Thumri is romantic, often erotic, "the lyric of Indian classical music"; texts in **Braj Bhasha** tell of Radha and Krishna and a girl's love for Krishna, a Bhakti inheritance. It uses ragas such as Khamaj, Kafi and Bhairavi, mostly in a female voice, with free improvisation; it is linked with **Kathak**.
- Thumri has two types, **Purbi** (slow) and **Punjabi** (fast and lively), and three gharanas, **Benaras, Lucknow and Patiala**; "thumri" also covers lighter forms such as dadra, hori, kajari, saavan, jhoola and chaiti.
- Thumri singers: **Rasoolan Bai**, **Siddheshwari Devi**, **Begum Akhtar**, and **Girija Devi** of the Purab ang of the Benaras gharana.
- **Tappa** grew in the late 18th century from the folk songs of the **camel riders** of north-west India, credited to **Shori Mian** (Ghulam Nabi) of Multan, and gained standing at the Mughal court of Muhammad Shah. The word is said to mean "jump".
- Tappa songs are short Punjabi love songs in shringara rasa, sung in fast, zig-zag runs called **zamzama** in thumri ragas (Bhairavi, Khamaj, Des, Kafi, Jhinjhoti, Pilu, Barwa); Varanasi and Gwalior are its strongholds; exponents include Shori Mian, Laxman Rao Pandit of Gwalior and Shanno Khurana. The "baithaki" style grew in zamindari baithak-khanas and jalsaghars.
- **Dhamar-Hori**: dhrupad-like songs in praise of Krishna in the dhamar tala, sung at Holi, Janmashtami and Ramnavami; the hori describes spring and Radha-Krishna's love pranks.
- **Dadra** is close to thumri and as amorous, but has more than one antara and is set in the dadra tala; it is usually sung after a thumri.
- **Chaturang** ("four colours") joins fast khayal, tarana, sargam and a tabla or pakhawaj **paran**; **Ragasagar** strings 8 to 12 ragas into one song, its words naming each change.

Ghazal and Bhajan

- The **ghazal**, "the pride of Urdu poetry", is more a poetic than a musical form: rhyming couplets (**sher**) with a refrain, usually about 7 to a ghazal; its single theme is love, often unattainable, read in the subcontinent as spiritual love.
- Arabic in origin, it took shape in **Iran in the 10th century** out of the Persian **qasida** (praise poem); it spread in the 12th century through Sufis and the Sultanate courts, began in north India with **Amir Khusrau**, had its early home in the Deccan courts of **Golconda and Bijapur**, and peaked in the 18th–19th centuries at **Delhi and Lucknow**.
- Names linked with the ghazal: Mirza Ghalib, Muhammad Iqbal, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and the Persian poets Rumi (13th century) and Hafez (14th century).
- **Bhajan** (from *bhaj*, to worship or serve) rose with the Bhakti movement; it has no strict grammar, stresses lyrics and a melodious raga, and is based on **shanta rasa**, with themes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the lives of Rama, Krishna and Shiva.
- Bhajans are sung solo or by a group following a lead singer, in temples and gatherings, to harmonium, tabla, dholak, jhanj, manjira, daphli and chimta. Classic composers include Mirabai, Kabir, Surdas, Tulsidas, Guru Nanak and Narsi Mehta; singers include Anup Jalota, Anuradha Paudwal and Manna Dey.
- The **Gandharva** or marga music sang the praise of god and led to the dhrupad; **Sugam Sangeet** (light devotional music) grew from Prabandha and Dhruvapada.

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05 Carnatic Music

- **Carnatic music** belongs to Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala; it has a highly developed theory, is based on ragam and thalam, and is **kriti**-based, stressing the sahitya (lyric).
- **Purandaradasa** (c. 1484–1564), a Vijayanagara-era follower of Madhva who sang in **Kannada**, codified the teaching of Carnatic music and is called its father (Pitamaha); he made raga **Mayamalavagowla** the first lesson for beginners.
- **Venkatamakhin** (Venkatamakhi), the great theorist of Carnatic music, devised the **72 melakarta** scheme of classifying ragas in his **Chaturdandi-prakasika** (17th century) (asked in 1999).
- Carnatic music took its present form in the 18th century, the age of the **Trinity**.

COMPOSER	DATES	LANGUAGE AND DEITY	KNOWN FOR
Annamacharya	1408–1503	Telugu; **Venkateswara** of Tirumala	First known Carnatic composer; about 32,000 sankirtanas on copper plates; "grandfather of Telugu song-writing"
Purandaradasa	c. 1484–1564	Kannada; Krishna (Vithala)	Father of Carnatic music; Dasa Sahitya; held an avatar of Narada
Kshetrayya	1600–1680	Telugu; Krishna	Padams sung in Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi; wandering poet
Bhadrachala Ramadasu	1620–1680	Telugu; Rama	A vaggeyakara (wrote words and music)
Shyama Shastri	1762–1827	Telugu; goddess Kamakshi	Eldest of the Trinity; fewest kritis; signature "Syama Krishna"; the svarajati
Tyagaraja	1767–1847	Mostly Telugu; **Rama**	Pancharatna kritis; created new ragas; own name as signature; a crater on Mercury bears his name
Muthuswami Dikshitar	1775–1835	Mostly Sanskrit; many gods and temples	Signature "Guruguha"; gamaka; also a veena player
Swathi Thirunal	Travancore king, full charge from 1829	Several languages	Composer-king; patron of music and dance

- All three of the **Trinity**, Shyama Shastri, Tyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar, were born at **Thiruvarur** in the Thanjavur region; the **Tyagaraja Aradhana** is held at his samadhi at **Thiruvaiyaru** on the Kaveri, where musicians sing his five Pancharatna kritis together.

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PRELIMS TRAP THREE SOUTHERN COMPOSERS

- **Annamacharya** (1408–1503) of Tallapaka sang Telugu sankirtanas to **Venkateswara**; **Tyagaraja** (1767–1847) sang mostly of **Rama**, not Krishna, and created new ragas. Annamacharya died more than 250 years before Tyagaraja was born, so they were not contemporaries (asked in 2018).
- **Purandaradasa** composed in Kannada; **Dikshitar** mainly in Sanskrit; Tyagaraja and Shyama Shastri mainly in Telugu.
- **Shyama Shastri** was a proponent of Carnatic music; khayal is credited to **Amir Khusrau**, raga classification (72 melas) to **Venkatamakhin** and the Vande Mataram tune to **Paluskar** (1999).

PART	WHAT IT IS
Pallavi	First one or two lines, repeated after each stanza; the core of the **Ragam Tanam Pallavi**, the main improvised item
Anupallavi	The next one or two lines, sung at the start and sometimes at the end
Charanam	The stanzas; the last and longest verse closes the song
Varnam	Opening composition that shows the raga's form; purvanga and uttaranga halves
Kriti	Highly evolved song set to a raga and a fixed tala
Ragam	Melodic improvisation in free rhythm, without the mridangam
Tanam	Another free-rhythm improvisation, with a pulse
Trikalam	The pallavi sung in three tempi over a constant tala
Swara-kalpana	Improvised sargam passages with the drummer, in medium and fast speed
Ragamalika	"Garland of ragas": free improvisation through several ragas, returning to the theme

Hindustani and Carnatic Compared

POINT	HINDUSTANI	CARNATIC
Region	North India	South India
Influence	Arab, Persian, Afghan	Indigenous
Improvisation	Wide scope; much variation	Less scope; improvisation within set items (ragam, tanam, swara-kalpana)
Sub-styles	Many, giving rise to gharanas	One prescribed style
Main stress	Raga; instruments as important as voice	Tala; vocal music first
Raga system	10 thaats; six principal ragas	72 melakartas and janya ragas
Time theory	Ragas tied to time of day	Not strictly followed

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POINT	HINDUSTANI	CARNATIC
Main instruments	Tabla, sarangi, sitar, santoor	Veena, mridangam, mandolin
Common to both	Flute and violin	

PRELIMS TRAP HINDUSTANI OR CARNATIC TERM?

- **Thaat** (10, Bhatkhande) is Hindustani; **mela** or melakarta (72, Venkatamakhin) is Carnatic. Bilawal = Dheerashankarabharanam.
- **Taal** and **teentaal** (16 beats) are Hindustani; **thalam** and **Adi thala** (8 beats), built of laghu and drutam, are Carnatic.
- **Sthayee and antara** are the parts of a Hindustani bandish; **pallavi, anupallavi and charanam** those of a Carnatic kriti.
- **Tarana** (Hindustani) and **Tillana** (Carnatic) both use rhythmic syllables; **alap** (Hindustani) corresponds to **alapana** or ragam (Carnatic).
- **Tabla** and **pakhawaj** accompany Hindustani music; **mridangam**, **ghatam**, **kanjira** and **morsing** Carnatic music.
- **Gharana** is the Hindustani lineage word; Carnatic music speaks of a **bani** or parampara. Dhrupad's four banis are Hindustani.

06 Devotional and Fusion Forms

- Folk and classical music met in fusion forms, devotional music above all, where royalty and the masses worshipped alike; they include **Sugam Sangeet** (bhajan, kirtan, qawwali, shabad), **Rabindra Sangeet**, **Haveli Sangeet** and **Gana Sangeet**.
- **Kirtan**, Vaishnava singing of Radha-Krishna love, prevails in **Bengal**; **Chaitanya Mahaprabhu** (15th–16th century) turned it into song-and-dance congregations inspired by Jayadeva's Gita Govinda. Its two types are **Nama-kirtana** (chanting the name and glory of God) and **Lila-kirtana** (episodes of Radha and Krishna); it is sung to the mridanga (khol) and cymbals. Kirtan is faster and more energetic than bhajan, with many performers singing and dancing.
- **Qawwali** is the devotional music of the Sufis, in praise of Allah, the Prophet, his family and Sufi saints, in Persian, Urdu and Hindi, set to a raga and sung by a group with one or two lead singers; it came from Persia around the 13th century and is a mode of singing more than a form of composition.
- **Amir Khusrau** (1253–1325), a disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya, shaped the early **qawwali** (asked in 2003); the Chishti founder **Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti** upheld **sama** (devotional music) as a way of coming close to God.
- Qawwali was first sung to the **daff**; now the dholak, tabla, manjira and harmonium accompany it. Singers include the Sabri brothers, Aziz Naza, Aziz Mian, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Aziz Warsi.
- **Ibrahim Adil Shah II** of Bijapur (1580–1627), called "Jagadguru", wrote the **Kitab-i-Nauras**, Dakhni songs set to ragas in praise of Saraswati and other Hindu deities and of Sufi saints (asked in 2003).
- **Shabad**: devotional songs of the Sikhs sung in gurdwaras, ascribed to the Sikh Gurus and Bhakti saint-poets; Guru Nanak and his companion **Mardana** are credited with its spread, and it took a set musical form later.

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Three styles: raga-based, traditional (Adi Granth) and light tunes; instruments harmonium, tabla, dholak and chimta; singers the Singh Bandhu, D. V. Paluskar and Vinayak Rao Patwardhan.

- **Rabindra Sangeet**: over 2,000 songs of **Rabindranath Tagore** mixing classical and Bengali folk strains, on God, nature, love, life and patriotism; **Baul** music deeply influenced them.
- **Haveli Sangeet**: temple music of Rajasthan and Gujarat, now also sung outside temples, kept by the **Pushtimarg Sampradaya**.
- **Gana Sangeet**: chorus songs with a social or patriotic message, such as protest songs against exploitation of women and children; **Vande Mataram** is the best-known example.

FORM	STATE	PURPOSE
Abhanga	Maharashtra	Praise of Vithoba; by Tukaram, Namdev and others
Bhatiali	West Bengal	Boatmen's songs of nature and daily life
Tevaram	Tamil Nadu	Shaiva hymns sung by the **Oduvars**
Kirtan	West Bengal	Singing and dancing inspired by the Gita Govinda
Sopana Sangeetham	Kerala	Temple music, religious themes

07 Folk Music

- **Folk music** is community music about social life or the singer's feelings; it follows no fixed rules, unlike classical music bound by the Natyashastra and the guru-shishya tradition. Most of it goes with dance, and it marks childbirth, engagement, weddings, sowing and harvest.
- The **Bauls** of Bengal are mystic minstrels, both a syncretic sect and a musical tradition of Vaishnava Hindus and Sufi Muslims; their **Baul gaan** carries Bhakti and Sufi ideas like the songs of Kabir, and preaches mysticism in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. They play the **ektara** and **dotara**; exponents include **Lalon Fakir**, Purna Chandra Das, Yotin Das, Naboni Das and Sanatan Das Thakur Baul.
- **Pandwani** of **Chhattisgarh** narrates the Mahabharata with **Bhima** as hero, in singing (gayan) and playing (vadan) to a **tambura** hung with bells and peacock feathers that becomes Bhima's mace or Arjuna's bow. Its styles are **Vedamati** (seated, text-based, after Sabal Singh Chauhan's Hindi Mahabharata; Jhaduram Devangan) and **Kapalik** (standing, acted, from memory; **Teejan Bai**, Padma Vibhushan 2019, and Ritu Verma).
- **Alha**, the ballad of Bundelkhand (Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), tells of the warrior brothers **Alha and Udal** who served Raja **Parmal** (Paramardi) of **Mahoba**; sung in Braj, Awadhi and Bhojpuri, it casts Alha, Udal, Malkhan, Lakhan and Deva as the five Pandavas reborn.
- **Maand** of Rajasthan grew in royal courts and is close to thumri or ghazal; it is neither a full raga nor a free folk song, and the bards sing the glory of Rajput rulers; "Kesariya Balam" is a Maand.
- **Powada** of Maharashtra narrates a hero, incident or place "in glorious terms"; the lead singer, the **shahir**, plays the duff. **Lavani**, sung mainly by women to the dholki, goes with the **Tamasha** theatre.

FOLK FORM	STATE	FEATURE
Wanawan	Kashmir	Auspicious wedding songs

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FOLK FORM	STATE	FEATURE
Chhakri	Kashmir	Most popular group song; noot (earthen pot), rabab, sarangi, tumbaknari; fairy tales and love stories
Bhakha	Jammu	Sung by villagers after harvest; very melodic
Laman	Himachal Pradesh	Girls and boys sing stanzas to each other from facing hilltops
Jhoori	Himachal Pradesh	Celebrates extra-marital romance
Ghasiyari Geet	Garhwal, Uttarakhand	Women going to cut grass sing of the dignity of labour
Basant Geet	Garhwal, Uttarakhand	At Basant Panchami
Dhadi	Punjab	Ballads of bravery
Bhangra	Punjab	Dance music now in pop; the women's dance is **giddha**
Rasiya Geet	Braj, Uttar Pradesh	"Filled with rasa"; part of daily life, not tied to a festival
Hori	Uttar Pradesh	Holi songs of Radha-Krishna's pranks
Kajri	Uttar Pradesh	Women sing all night in the rains, on the third day of the dark half of Bhadra, dancing in a semicircle
Sohar	Bihar, Uttar Pradesh	At the birth of a son; a form spread to Muslim families, a mingling of cultures
Sukar ke Biah	Bihar	Love between the deities Shukra and Brihaspati
Pankhida	Rajasthan	Peasants sing in the fields to algoza and manjira; "pankhida" means lover
Lotia	Rajasthan	Chaitra festival; women bring lotas and kalash of water decorated with flowers
Panihari	Rajasthan	Women fetching water: scarcity, distance, chance meetings, mother-in-law quarrels
Teej songs	Rajasthan	Union of Shiva and Parvati, monsoon, peacock dance
Manganiars	North-west India (Rajasthan)	Songs of Alexander, local kings and battles
Dandiya	Gujarat	Navaratri dance music, adapted for pop
Pai	Madhya Pradesh	Rainy-season festival songs of farmers for a good monsoon; the Saira dance
Ovi	Maharashtra, Goa	Women's four-line songs at work: marriage, pregnancy, lullabies
Bhavageete	Karnataka, Maharashtra	Slow, ghazal-like songs of nature, love and philosophy

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FOLK FORM	STATE	FEATURE
Mando	Goa	Slow verse and refrain on love, tragedy, injustice and resistance in Portuguese times
Burrakatha	Andhra Pradesh	Dramatic ballad; the lead plays the tambura, co-performers clay drums (gummeta)
Kolattam (Kolannalu)	Andhra Pradesh	Stick dance-song in two circles, like dandiya
Villu Pattu	Tamil Nadu	"Bow song"; the lead singer is the main performer; good conquers evil
Naattupurapaattu	Tamil Nadu	Village and city folk music
Dollu Kunitha	Karnataka	Drum dance of the Kuruba community, named after the dollu
Veeragase	Karnataka	Dussehra processions
Bhuta song	Kerala	Ritual to drive away evil spirits; eerie music, vigorous dance
Daskathia	Odisha	Ballad worship by the "das" (devotee), named after the **kathi** (wooden clappers)
Pala	Odisha	Religious ballads
Bihu songs	Assam	New-year blessings; fertility cult; young people choose partners
Borgeet	Assam	Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, 15th–16th century; Ekasarana Dharma
Zikir	Assam	Teachings of Islam
Jhumair	Eastern states	Popular with the tea tribes of Assam
Sana Lamok	Manipur	Sung by the maiba (priest) at a coronation to invoke Pakhangba
Lai Haraoba songs	Manipur	Festival of the gods for Umang Lai; Ougri Hangen (creation) and Heijing Hirao on the last day; Sanamahism
Khongjom Parba	Manipur	Ballad of the battle of Khongjom (1891) against the British
Khubakeshei	Manipur	Song accompanied only by clapping
Saikuti Zai	Mizoram	Poetess Saikuti's songs praising warriors and hunters (Mizos, the "singing tribe")
Chai hia	Mizoram	Songs of the chai dance at the Chapchar Kut festival
Ja-jin-ja, Nyioga	Arunachal Pradesh	Wedding songs; Nyioga at the end of the ceremony
Heliamleu, Neuleu, Hereileu, Hekaileu	Nagaland	Dance songs; legends and myths; war songs; songs about oneself

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08 Musical Instruments

- The **Natyashastra** divides instruments by how sound is made: **tata vadya** (chordophones, strings), **sushira vadya** (aerophones, wind), **avanaddha vadya** (membranophones, drums) and **ghana vadya** (idiophones, solid instruments that need no tuning).
- Tata instruments are **bowed** (sarangi, violin), **plucked** by finger or plectrum (veena, sitar, sarod, tanpura, and the gottuvadyam and swarmandal) or **struck** with light hammers or sticks (**santoor**).
- The bamboo **flute** is among the oldest Indian instruments, in use since the Vedic period; the **shehnai** is a double-reed pipe widening at the lower end, played on auspicious occasions; the **harmonium** is a reed instrument that accompanies classical, light and devotional singing.
- Avanaddha instruments have one or two faces of hide; the oldest is the **bhumi dundubhi** (earth drum). The **tabla** accompanies most Hindustani vocal music, the **mridangam** Carnatic music.
- The **manjira**, small brass cymbals of temple worship, is attested from Indus Valley excavations; striking different parts gives different effects.
- The **santoor**, a struck string instrument of about 100 strings, is the traditional instrument of Jammu and Kashmir and accompanies **Sufiana kalam**.



Tata vadya. Left: veena (plucked). Right: santoor (struck).

INSTRUMENT	TYPE	TRADITION	EXPONENTS
Sitar	Tata (plucked)	Hindustani	Ravi Shankar, Nikhil Banerjee, Debu Chaudhuri
Sarod	Tata (plucked)	Hindustani	Ali Akbar Khan, Amjad Ali Khan
Veena (Saraswati)	Tata (plucked)	Carnatic	Muthuswami Dikshitar, D. Srinivas
Rudra veena	Tata (plucked)	Hindustani (dhrupad)	Jyoti Hegde
Gottuvadyam (chitravina)	Tata (plucked, stopped with a slide)	Carnatic	
Tanpura (tambura)	Tata (plucked drone)	Both	
Santoor	Tata (struck)	Kashmir; Hindustani	Shivkumar Sharma, Bhajan Sopori, Tarun Bhattacharya
Sarangi	Tata (bowed)	Hindustani	Ram Narayan

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INSTRUMENT	TYPE	TRADITION	EXPONENTS
Violin	Tata (bowed)	Both; mainly Carnatic	T. N. Krishnan, A. Kanyakumari, N. Rajam
Mandolin	Tata (plucked)	Carnatic	U. Srinivas
Bansuri (flute)	Sushira	Both	Hariprasad Chaurasia, Ronu Majumdar, Rakesh Chaurasia
Shehnai	Sushira (double reed)	Hindustani; weddings, temples	Bismillah Khan
Nadaswaram	Sushira (double reed)	Carnatic; temples	
Pungi, mohuri	Sushira	Folk and temple	
Tabla	Avanaddha	Hindustani	Alla Rakha, Zakir Hussain, Shafaat Ahmed Khan, Kumar Bose
Pakhawaj	Avanaddha	Dhrupad, Kathak, Odissi	
Mridangam	Avanaddha	Carnatic	T. V. Gopalakrishnan, Thiruvarur Bakthavathsalam
Kanjira	Avanaddha (frame drum)	Carnatic	
Pung	Avanaddha	Manipuri Sankirtana	
Khol	Avanaddha (clay drum)	Kirtan (Bengal), Sattriya (Assam)	
Chenda, maddalam, mizhavu	Avanaddha	Kerala: Kathakali, Koodiyattam	
Ghatam	Ghana (clay pot)	Carnatic	Vikku Vinayakram
Morsing	Ghana (jaw harp)	Carnatic	
Jaltarang	Ghana (bowls of water)	Hindustani	
Manjira, kartal, chimta, talam	Ghana	Devotional and folk	

- Other ghana instruments: kanch-tarang (glass), kasht-tarang (wood) and khartal.

Folk Instruments

INSTRUMENT	TYPE	WHERE AND HOW
Tumbi	Tata	Played in Bhangra, Punjab
Ektara (tun tuna)	Tata	One string; wandering monks

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INSTRUMENT	TYPE	WHERE AND HOW
Dotara	Tata	Two strings; Bauls
Chikara	Tata (bowed)	Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh
Dilruba, esraj	Tata (bowed)	Punjab; Rabindra Sangeet in eastern India
Onavillu	Tata	Kerala; bamboo bow
Sarinda	Tata (bowed)	Santhals of eastern India; also Rajasthan and Assam; like a sarangi
Kamaicha	Tata (bowed)	Manganiars of Rajasthan
Pungi (been)	Sushira	Snake charmers; dried gourd and two bamboo pipes
Algoza	Sushira	Double flute; north-west India, Punjab
Tangmuri	Sushira	Khasi hills, Meghalaya
Titti	Sushira	Bagpipe of goatskin; Kerala, Andhra Pradesh
Mashak	Sushira	Bagpipe; Garhwal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh
Gogona	Ghana (bamboo jaw harp)	Bihu, Assam
Ghumot	Avanaddha	Ganesh festival, Goa
Idakka	Avanaddha	Kerala; like a damru
Udukai	Avanaddha	Tamil Nadu; hourglass drum
Sambal	Avanaddha	Konkan, Maharashtra; played with sticks
Tamak	Avanaddha	Santhal two-headed drum
Diggi	Avanaddha	Ghariya village, Uttar Pradesh
Chimta	Ghana	From fire tongs; Punjab
Gharha	Ghana	Earthen pots; Punjab
Andelu	Ghana	Pair of hollow metal rings; Burrakatha



Left: shehnai (sushira). Right: tabla (avanaddha).

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Manjira: ghana vadya, used since the Indus Valley Civilisation.

09 Musicians and their Instruments

MUSICIAN	ART	NOTE
Ravi Shankar	Sitar	Autobiography *My Music, My Life* (1968); Bharat Ratna 1999
Nikhil Banerjee, **Debu Chaudhuri**	Sitar	Hindustani
Ali Akbar Khan, Amjad Ali Khan	Sarod	Hindustani
Shivkumar Sharma	Santoor	Of Jammu; adapted the santoor for classical music; duo Shiv-Hari with Hariprasad Chaurasia
Bhajan Sopori	Santoor	Kashmir (asked in 2007)
Hariprasad Chaurasia, **Ronu Majumdar**	Flute (bansuri)	Ronu Majumdar asked in 2004
Bismillah Khan	Shehnai	Varanasi; Bharat Ratna 2001
Ram Narayan	Sarangi	Made it a solo recital instrument
Zakir Hussain, **Shafaat Ahmed Khan**	Tabla	Zakir Hussain was the son of Alla Rakha
T. V. Gopalakrishnan	Mridangam	Carnatic (asked in 2007)
T. N. Krishnan, **A. Kanyakumari**	Violin	Carnatic
N. Rajam	Violin	Hindustani; "singing violin", gayaki ang
Vikku Vinayakram	Ghatam	Carnatic
U. Srinivas	Mandolin	Carnatic
M. Balamuralikrishna	Carnatic vocal	Asked in 2000
M. S. Subbulakshmi	Carnatic vocal	Bharat Ratna 1998
Gundecha brothers (Umakant, Ramakant)	Dhrupad vocal	Dagarvani dhrupad (asked in 2009); Ramakant died in 2019

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MUSICIAN	ART	NOTE
Gangubai Hangal, Bhimsen Joshi	Hindustani vocal	Kirana gharana
Malini Rajurkar, **Meeta Pandit**, **Madhup Mudgal**	Hindustani vocal	Asked in 2002, 2000 and 2004
Kishori Amonkar, Mallikarjun Mansur	Hindustani vocal	Jaipur-Atrauli
Pandit Jasraj	Hindustani vocal	Mewati
Girija Devi, Begum Akhtar	Thumri, ghazal	Benaras; Lucknow-Faizabad

- In the 2000 match, **Balamuralikrishna** sang Carnatic, **Meeta Pandit** Hindustani, and **Nikhil Banerjee** played the sitar; the key paired **Kanyakumari** with the ghatam, though A. Kanyakumari is a Carnatic violinist.
- Names in the same questions from other fields: **Hiren Bhattacharya**, puppeteer; **E. C. G. Sudarshan**, physicist; **V. Shanta**, cancer specialist; **Mahesh Dattani** and **Neelam Mansingh Chowdhry**, theatre; **Mandakini Amte**, social work; **Romila Thapar**, history; **Amrita Sher-Gil**, painting; **Suryakant Tripathi Nirala**, poetry.
- Dancers in the same questions: **Rukmini Devi Arundale**, **Pratibha Prahlad**, **Priyadarshini Govind**, **Lakshmi Viswanathan**, **Geeta Chandran** and **Leela Samson** (Bharatanatyam); **Vempati Chinna Satyam**, **Swapnasundari** and **Vanashree Rao** (Kuchipudi); **Kalamandalam Kshemavathy** (Mohiniyattam); **Kottakkal Sivaraman** (Kathakali); **N. Madhabi Devi** and **Bimbavati Devi** (Manipuri); **Birju Maharaj** (Kathak).
- **Chandralekha**, a Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer, was elected a Fellow (Akademi Ratna) of the Sangeet Natak Akademi for 2004 and received it on 26 August 2005.

- UPDATE 2026 HONOURS FOR MUSIC AND DANCE
  - Padma Awards 2026 (announced 25 January 2026): Padma Vibhushan to violinist **N. Rajam**; Padma Shri to tabla player **Kumar Bose** (Banaras gharana), santoor player **Tarun Bhattacharya**, Carnatic vocal duo **Ranjani and Gayatri**, Tevaram singer **Othuvaar Thiruthani Swaminathan**, mridangam player **Thiruvarur Bakthavathsalam**, Kuchipudi dancer **Deepika Reddy** and Mohiniyattam dancer **Kalamandalam Vimala Menon** (as of 25 January 2026; source: PIB).
  - The President presented the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and Awards for 2024 and 2025 on **13 August 2026**; the seven new Fellows (Akademi Ratna) are Ramlal Bareth, A. V. Anand, Rita Ganguly, Puru Dadheech, Chittaranjan Jyotishi, Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma and Sudharani Raghupathy. A Fellowship carries ₹3 lakh, an Award ₹1 lakh (as of 13 August 2026; source: PIB).

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- **UPDATE 2026** MASTERS LOST
  - Tabla maestro **Zakir Hussain** died in San Francisco on 15 December 2024 (as of 28 November 2026; source: PIB).
  - **Chhannulal Mishra**, Padma Vibhushan singer of khayal and the Purab ang thumri of the Banaras gharana, died at Mirzapur on 2 October 2025 (as of 28 November 2026; source: press reports).
  - Pandwani singer **Teejan Bai**, Padma Vibhushan 2019 and the first woman to sing in the standing Kapalik style, died at AIIMS Raipur on 5 July 2026, aged 69 (as of 28 November 2026; source: press reports).

10 Music Communities and Modern Music

COMMUNITY	STATE	FEATURE
Langha (Muslim)	Gujarat, Rajasthan	Songs praising the Rajputs
Manganiar (Merasi, Muslim)	Rajasthan	Classical folk songs to the **kamaicha**
Karta Bhajas	West Bengal	Chanting of mantras
Bauls	West Bengal	Mystic country singers
Jogi	Rajasthan	Nath followers; ballads of religious and moral teaching
Bhopa	Rajasthan	Episodes of folk deities at all-night jagrans
Barot, Charan, Gadhvi	Gujarat	Songs of gods, heroes and saints
Muria	Chhattisgarh (Bastar)	Songs called relo
Kamar	Chhattisgarh	Marriage songs
Baghela	Madhya Pradesh	Songs to the deity Hardaul
Puraya hill tribes	Tamil Nadu	Melodies called talams
Idu Mishmi	Arunachal Pradesh	Ritual and fertility dance
Moken	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	Ancestor worship; no organised religion
Bazigar (Goaar)	Punjab	Feats of strength, balance and courage

- Indian music today is classified as **classical** (Hindustani, Carnatic), **folk**, **fusion of classical and folk** (Sugam, Rabindra, Haveli and Gana Sangeet) and **modern** (rock, pop, jazz, trance, psychedelic and blues).
- **Indian rock** mixes Indian music with rock; in the 1960s the Yardbirds, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Doors and the Byrds drew on Indian classical music for psychedelic effects.
- **Jazz** reached India in the 1920s in Bombay and Calcutta through African-American musicians; Goan musicians carried it into Hindi film music.
- **Psychedelic trance** uses high-tempo riffs and layered melodies; **Indian pop** is music made independent of film soundtracks.

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❀ Prelims Quick Revision

- **Natyashastra**: Bharata, c. 200 BCE to 200 CE; fifth Veda; 108 karanas; 22 shrutis; four classes of instruments.
- **Abhinaya Darpana**: Nandikeshvara; main source for Bharatanatyam technique; 28 single-hand and 23 two-hand hastas.
- **Eight classical dances** (Sangeet Natak Akademi); Chhau is often added as a ninth, a count credited to the Ministry of Culture.
- **Bharatanatyam**: Tamil Nadu; Sadir renamed 1932 (E. Krishna Iyer); Tanjore Quartet; Kalakshetra 1936.
- **Kuchipudi**: Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh; Siddhendra Yogi's Bhama Kalapam; Tarangam on a brass plate; dancers speak.
- **Kathakali**: male dance-drama of Kerala; pacha green for heroes; chutti and headgear; Kalaripayattu training.
- **Mohiniattam** (Mohiniyattam): Kerala solo by women; lasya; Sopanam music; Kerala Kalamandalam 1930.
- **Odissi**: chowk and tribhanga; Udayagiri-Khandagiri caves; maharis and gotipuas; Gita Govinda.
- **Manipuri**: Ras Lila (1779, Bhagyachandra); Sankirtana with pung and kartal, UNESCO 2013.
- **Sattriya**: Sankaradeva's sattras, Assam; borgeets of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva; classical since 15 Nov 2000.
- **Dhrupad**: devotional; alap on mantra syllables; Man Singh Tomar's Gwalior (1486–1516); four banis.
- **Khayal**: credited to Amir Khusrau; Hussain Shah Sharqi; bada and chhota khayal; gharanas.
- **Jaipur-Atrauli**: Alladiya Khan; Kesarbai Kerkar, Kishori Amonkar, Mallikarjun Mansur.
- **Thaat and mela**: 10 thaats (Bhatkhande), 72 melakartas (Venkatamakhin); Bilawal = Dheerashankarabharanam.
- **Carnatic Trinity**: Tyagaraja (Rama), Dikshitar (Guruguha), Shyama Shastri; all born at Thiruvarur.
- **Instruments**: tata (strings), sushira (wind), avanaddha (drums), ghana (solid); santoor is struck tata.

Previous Year Questions

2026 Which one of the following Carnatic music ragas is similar to Raga Bilawal in Hindustani music?

a Nat Bhairavi	b Kamavardhini
c Hanumatodi	d Dheera Shankarabharanam

Answer: (d). Bilawal, the Hindustani thaat with all natural (shuddha) notes, corresponds to the Carnatic melakarta Dheera Shankarabharanam (29th mela), the major scale. (PROVISIONAL KEY)

2026 Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur, the famous classical singer from Karnataka, represented the:

a Agra Gharana	b Gwalior Gharana
c Patiala Gharana	d Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana

Answer: (d). Mallikarjun Mansur of Dharwad was a leading khayal singer of the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana founded by Alladiya Khan, whose sons trained him. (PROVISIONAL KEY)

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2025 The first Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, a music training school, was set up in 1901 by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar in

a Delhi | b Gwalior | c Ujjain | **d Lahore**

Answer: (d). Vishnu Digambar Paluskar opened the first Gandharva Mahavidyalaya at Lahore on 5 May 1901, later moving it to Bombay.

2019 With reference to Mian Tansen, which one of the following statements is not correct?

a Tansen was the title given to him by Emperor Akbar

b Tansen composed Dhrupads on Hindu gods and goddesses.

c Tansen composed songs on his patrons.

d Tansen invented many Ragas.

Answer: (a). Tradition credits Raja Vikramajit of Gwalior with the title 'Tansen' (Akbar gave him the title Mian), and Tansen composed dhrupads on deities and patrons and created ragas such as Darbari Kanada.

2018 With reference to cultural history of India, consider the following statements:
1. Most of the Tyagaraja Kritis are devotional songs in praise of Lord Krishna.
2. Tyagaraja created several new ragas.
3. Annamacharya and Tyagaraja are contemporaries.
4. Annamacharya kirtanas are devotional songs in praise of Lord Venkateshwara.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

a 1 and 3 only | **b 2 and 4 only** | c 1, 2 and 3 | d 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (b). Annamacharya, the fifteenth-century Tallapaka poet, sang of Venkateshwara, and Tyagaraja (1767–1847), a Rama devotee, created new ragas, so they were not contemporaries.

2017 With reference to Manipuri Sankirtana, consider the following statements :
1. It is a song and dance performance.
2. Cymbals are the only musical instruments used in the performance.
3. It is performed to narrate the life and deeds of Lord Krishna.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

a 1, 2 and 3 | **b 1 and 3 only** | c 2 and 3 only | d 1 only

Answer: (b). Manipuri Sankirtana (UNESCO intangible heritage, 2013) is a ritual singing, drumming and dancing that narrates Krishna's life; the pung drum is used besides cymbals, so statement 2 is wrong.

2014 With reference to the famous Sattriya dance, consider the following statements :
1. Sattriya is a combination of music, dance and drama.
2. It is a centuries-old living tradition of Vaishnavites of Assam.
3. It is based on classical Ragas and Talas of devotional songs composed by Tulsidas, Kabir and

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Mirabai.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a 1 only | b 1 and 2 only | c 2 and 3 only | d 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b). Sattriya, a living tradition of the Vaishnava sattras of Assam, combines music, dance and drama, but it is built on the compositions (borgeets) of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, not of Tulsidas, Kabir and Mirabai.

2013 In the context of cultural history of India, a pose in dance and dramatics called 'Tribhanga' has been a favourite of Indian artists from ancient times till today. Which one of the following statements best describes this pose?

a One leg is bent and the body is slightly but oppositely curved at waist and neck

b Facial expressions, hand gestures and make-up are combined to symbolize certain epic or historic characters

c Movements of body, face and hands are used to express oneself or to tell a story

d A little smile, slightly curved waist and certain hand gestures are emphasized to express the feelings of love or eroticism

Answer: (a). Tribhanga: one leg bent, the body curved oppositely at waist and neck.

2012 With reference to Dhrupad, one of the major traditions of India that has been kept alive for centuries, which of the following statements are correct?
1. Dhrupad originated and developed in the Rajput kingdoms during the Mughal period.
2. Dhrupad is primarily a devotional and spiritual music.
3. Dhrupad Alap uses Sanskrit syllables from Mantras.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

a 1 and 2 only | b 2 and 3 only | c 1, 2 and 3 | d None of the above is correct

Answer: (b). Dhrupad is an older devotional form, raised to new heights at Raja Man Singh Tomar's Gwalior court before the Mughals arrived, and its alap uses mantra-derived syllables.

2012 How do you distinguish between Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam dances?
1. Dancers occasionally speaking dialogues is found in Kuchipudi dance but not in Bharatanatyam.
2. Dancing on the brass plate by keeping the feet on its edges is a feature of Bharatanatyam but Kuchipudi dance does not have such a form of movements.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a 1 only | b 2 only | c Both 1 and 2 | d Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a). Kuchipudi grew out of dance-drama, so its dancers sometimes speak dialogue, and dancing on the rim of a brass plate (Tarangam) is a Kuchipudi item, not a Bharatanatyam one.

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2009 The brothers Umakant and Ramakant Gundecha are

(a) Dhrupad vocalists (b) Kathak dancers (c) Sarod maestros (d) Tabla players

Answer: (a). The Gundecha brothers are Dhrupad vocalists of the Dagar tradition.

2008 Bimbavati Devi is a well-known dancer of which type of dance?

(a) Manipuri (b) Bharat Natyam (c) Kuchipudi (d) Odissi

Answer: (a). Bimbavati Devi is a Manipuri dancer.

2007 Match List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the code given below the lists:

List-I (Person)
A. Bhajan Sopori
B. Birju Maharaj
C. Priyadarshini Govind
D. T V Gopalkrishnan
List-II (Known as)
1. Bharatanatyam Dancer
2. Exponent of Santoor
3. Mridangam Maestro
4. Kathak Dancer
Codes:

(a) A-2 B-1 C-4 D-3 (b) A-3 B-1 C-4 D-2 (c) A-2 B-4 C-1 D-3 (d) A-3 B-4 C-1 D-2

Answer: (c). Bhajan Sopori plays the santoor, Birju Maharaj is a Kathak dancer, Priyadarshini Govind a Bharatanatyam dancer and T. V. Gopalakrishnan a mridangam maestro.

2006 Who among the following is a Hindustani classical singer?

(a) Geeta Chandran (b) Leela Samson (c) Gangubai Hangal (d) Swapnasundari

Answer: (c). Gangubai Hangal was a Kirana gharana vocalist; the other three are classical dancers.

2006 Match List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the code given below the lists:

List-I
A. E. C. G. Sudarshan
B. V. Shanta
C. T. N. Krishnan
D. Mahesh Dattani
List-II
1. Theatre
2. Violin
3. Research in Physics
4. Cancer treatment

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5. Water-harvesting
A B C D

a 3 1 2 4 | b 3 4 2 1 | c 2 4 5 1 | d 2 1 5 4

Answer: (b). Sudarshan is a physicist, V. Shanta an oncologist, T. N. Krishnan a violinist and Mahesh Dattani a playwright.

2005 Whose autobiography is the book "My Music, My Life"?

a Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma
b Ustad Amjad Ali Khan
c Pandit Ravi Shankar
d Ustad Zakir Hussain

Answer: (c). My Music, My Life (1968) is the autobiography of sitar maestro Ravi Shankar.

2004 Who among the following is well known as an exponent of flute?

a Debu Choudhri | b Madhup Mudgal | c Ronu Mazumdar | d Shafaat Ahmad

Answer: (c). Ronu Mazumdar is a bansuri player; Debu Chaudhuri plays the sitar, Madhup Mudgal is a vocalist and Shafaat Ahmad a tabla player.

2003 Consider the following statements:
1. Kitab-i-Nauras, a collection of songs in praise of Hindu deities and Muslim saints, was written by Ibrahim Adil Shah II
2. Amir Khusrau was the originator in India of the early form of the musical style known as Qawwali
Which of these statements is/are correct?

a Only 1 | b Only 2 | c Both 1 and 2 | d Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c). Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur wrote the Kitab-i-Nauras with songs to Saraswati and Sufi saints, and Amir Khusrau is credited with shaping the early qawwali.

2002 Match List I (Artist) with List II (Art) and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:
List I (Artist)
A. Hiren Bhattacharya
B. Malini Rajurkar
C. Pratibha Prahlad
D. Vempati Chinna Satyam
List II (Art)
1. Bharatanatyam dance
2. Hindustani vocal music
3. Kuchipudi dance
4. Puppetry

a A-4, B-2, C-1, D-3
b A-3, B-1, C-2, D-4
c A-4, B-1, C-2, D-3
d A-3, B-2, C-1, D-4

Answer: (a). Hiren Bhattacharya is a puppeteer, Malini Rajurkar a Hindustani vocalist, Pratibha Prahlad a Bharatanatyam dancer and Vempati Chinna Satyam a Kuchipudi guru.

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2001 Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the Lists:

List I (Dancer)

A. Kalamandalam Kshemavaty

B. Kottakkal Sivaraman

C. Lakshmi Viswanathan

D. N. Madhabi Devi

List II (Dance)

1. Kathakali
2. Manipuri
3. Mohiniyattam
4. Bharata Natyam

a A-1, B-3, C-2, D-4

b A-3, B-1, C-4, D-2

c A-1, B-3, C-4, D-2

d A-3, B-1, C-2, D-4

Answer: (b). Kalamandalam Kshemavathy is a Mohiniyattam dancer, Kottakkal Sivaraman a Kathakali artist, Lakshmi Viswanathan a Bharatanatyam dancer and N. Madhabi Devi a Manipuri dancer.

2000 The Raga which is sung early in the morning is

a Todi

b Darbari

c Bhopali

d Bhimpalasi

Answer: (a). Todi is a morning raga, while Darbari is sung late at night and Bhimpalasi in the afternoon.

2000 Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the Lists:

List I (Artist)

I. Balamurali Krishna

II. Mita Pandit

III. Kanyakumari

IV. Nikhil Bannerjee

List II (Medium of music delivery)

A) Hindustani vocal

B) Ghatam

C) Sitar

D) Violin

E) Carnatic vocal

Codes:

a I-E, II-A, III-B, IV-C

b I-D, II-C, III-A, IV-E

c I-C, II-A, III-E, IV-B

d I-E, II-D, III-A, IV-C

Answer: (a). Balamuralikrishna is a Carnatic vocalist, Meeta Pandit a Hindustani vocalist and Nikhil Banerjee a sitarist; the keys pair Kanyakumari with the ghatam, though A. Kanyakumari is a violinist.

1999 Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the Lists:

List I

I. Pandit Vishnu Digamber Paluskar

II. Venkatamahi

III. Shyama Shastri

IV. Amir Khusru

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List II
A. Introduced the scheme of Raga classification of Indian music
B. Proponent of Carnatic music
C. Proponent of the Khayal form of Hindustani music
D. Wrote the music for the song 'Vande Mataram'
Codes:

a I-D, II-A, III-C, IV-B
b I-D, II-A, III-B, IV-C
c I-A, II-D, III-C, IV-B
d I-A, II-D, III-B, IV-C

Answer: (b). Paluskar's raga rendering popularised Vande Mataram, Venkatamakhin devised the 72 melakarta raga scheme, Shyama Shastri is one of the Carnatic trinity and Amir Khusrau is credited with khayal.

1997 Which one of the following dances involves solo performance?

a Bharatnatyam
b Kuchipudi
c Mohiniattam
d Odissi

Answer: (a). Bharatanatyam is the classical form most commonly presented as a solo recital.

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