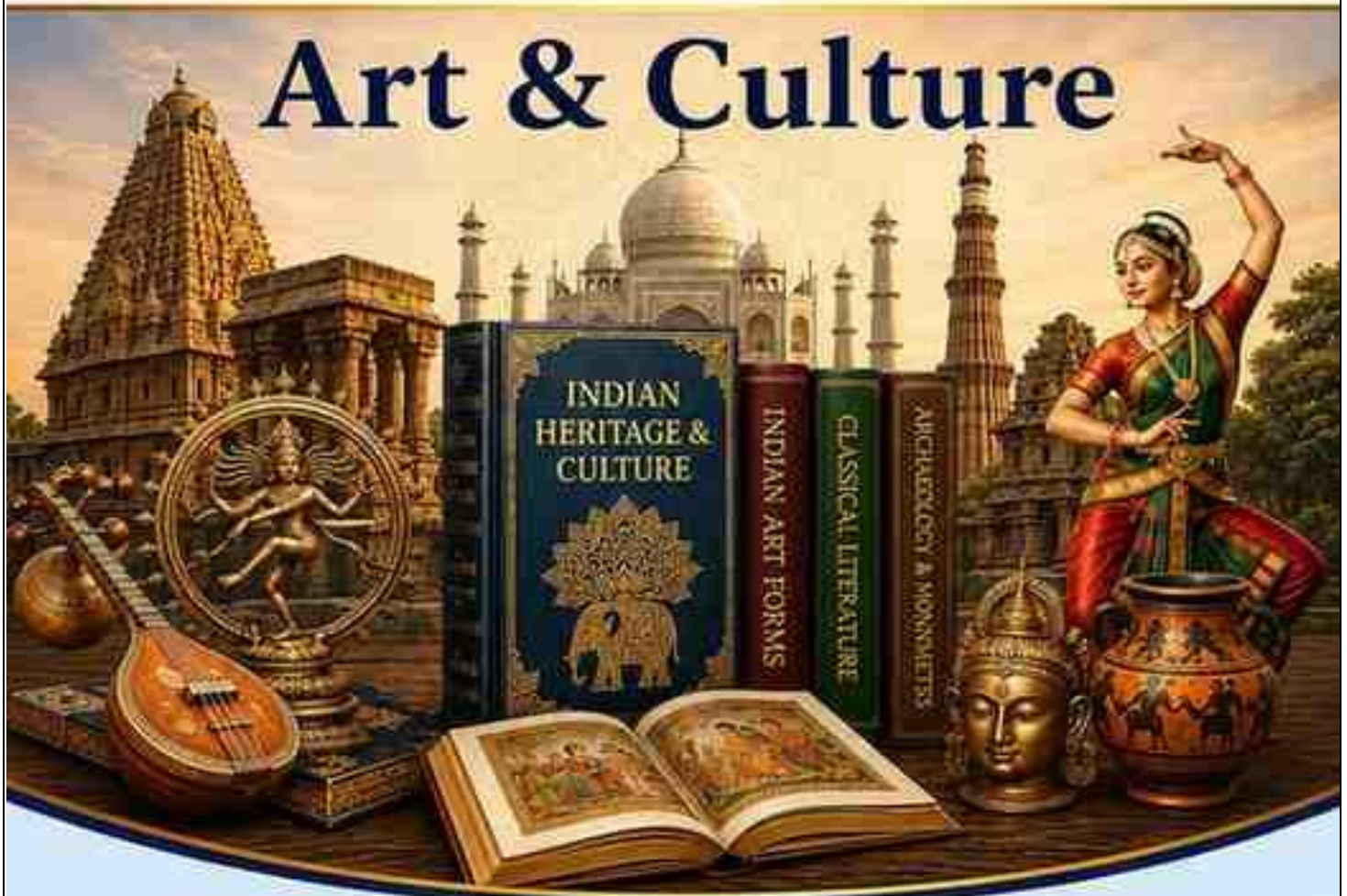




P.L. RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Civil Services Study Material

Art & Culture



UPSC Prelims Current Affairs (July 2026)

MONTHLY COMPILATION



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1. Panda Vani

Prelims:

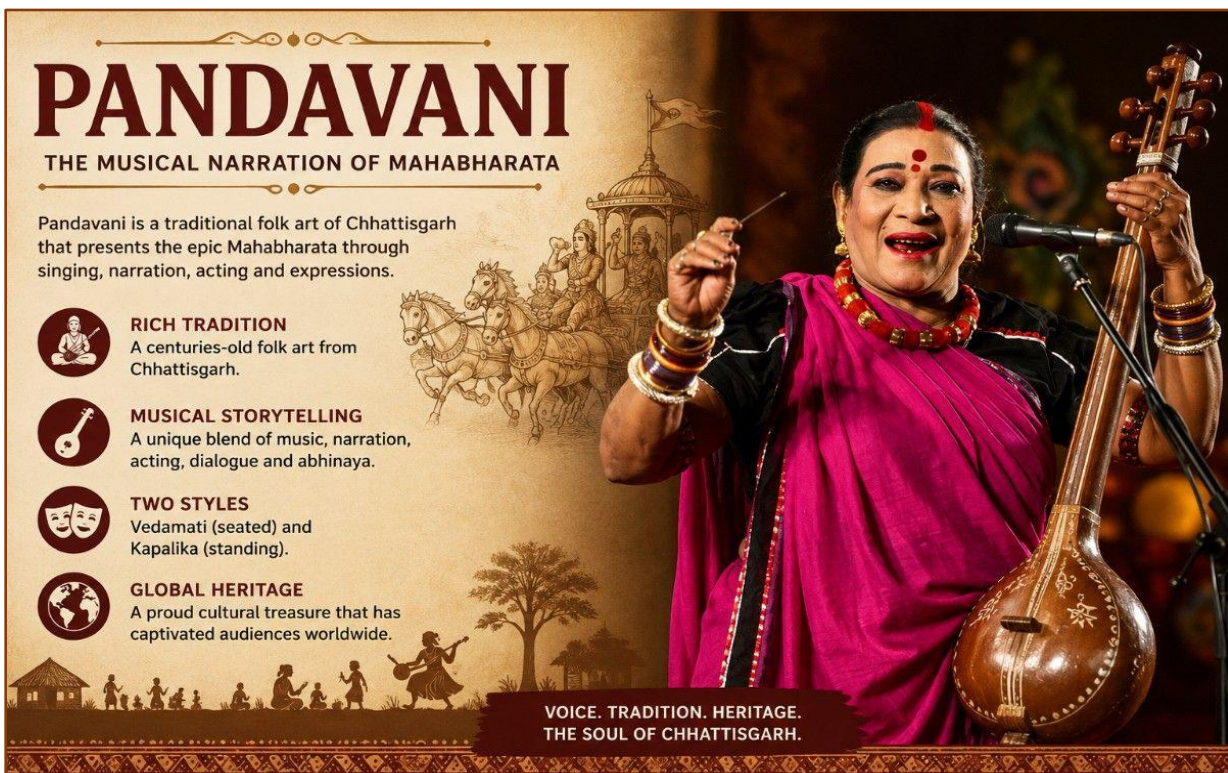
Art & Culture

Mains:

GS Paper I-Indian Heritage and Culture, GS Paper IV-Ethics

Current relevance:

Padma Vibhushan awardee Teejan Bai, the legendary exponent of **Pandavani**, the traditional musical storytelling of the **Mahabharata** from Chhattisgarh, passed away at the age of 70 after a prolonged illness.



Highlights:

About Teejan Bai:

1. Teejan Bai was a renowned **Panda Vani artist** from **Chhattisgarh** and one of India's most celebrated folk performers.
2. She popularised Panda Vani across India and internationally, and was honoured with the **Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Vibhushan**.

About Panda Vani:

1. A traditional **folk storytelling and musical performance** based on the **Mahabharata**.
2. It is originated in **Chhattisgarh**.
3. It Combines **singing, narration, acting, dialogue, and music**.
4. Usually accompanied by the **Tanpura** and other traditional instruments.
5. It popularised the **Kapalika** style by performing **standing with expressive acting, dialogues, and dramatic narration**.

Significance:

1. Preserved and revitalised the traditional **Panda Vani** art form.
2. Enhanced global recognition of India's **intangible cultural heritage**.
3. Demonstrated the **transformative role of women** in preserving cultural traditions.
4. Inspired younger generations to protect and **promote India's folk arts**.

Source: THE HINDU - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pandavani-legend-teejan-bai-dies-at-70/article71185044.ece>

2. Prambanan Temple

Prelims:

Art & Culture, International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper I-Indian Heritage and Culture, GS Paper II-International Relations

Current relevance:

India and Indonesia jointly inaugurated a **conservation and restoration project** for the **Prambanan Temple Complex**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.



At a glance:

1. The initiative reflects the **deep historical, cultural, and civilisational ties** between India and Indonesia, rooted in centuries of shared heritage and cultural exchanges.
2. The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** will serve as the lead Indian agency for implementing the restoration project in collaboration with Indonesian authorities.
3. **About Prambanan Temple:**
 - i. It is the **largest Hindu temple complex** in **Indonesia**, located in **Yogyakarta**.
 - ii. It was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in **1991**.
 - iii. It is dedicated to the **Trimurti—Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Brahma**.

Source: THE HINDU - <https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-hindu-international-9bn2/20260709/281741276167539>

3. Australia to Repatriate Three Stolen Antiquities to India

Prelims:

Art & Culture, International Relations

Mains:

GS Paper I-Indian Heritage and Culture, GS Paper II-International Relations

Current relevance:

Australia announced the repatriation of **three culturally significant antiquities** stolen from temples in **Tamil Nadu**, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, marking another milestone in India's efforts to recover its stolen cultural heritage.



Highlights:

1. Repatriation of Antiquities:

Australia will return **three ancient artefacts** that were illegally removed from temples in **Tamil Nadu** and later traced to the **National Gallery of Australia**.

2. Legal Framework:

- The repatriation is being carried out under the **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)** between India and Australia.
- Investigations by the **Tamil Nadu Idol Wing CID** established that the artefacts had been illegally removed from temples and trafficked overseas.

3. Historical background:

The artefacts date back to the **11th–12th centuries** and belong to the **Chola period**, renowned for its exceptional temple art and bronze sculptures.

- **Granite Nandi Sculpture:**

- i. **Nandi**, the sacred bull, is the **vahana** and foremost **devotee of Lord Shiva**.
- ii. It originally stood in a **Shiva temple in Tamil Nadu**, facing the sanctum (garbhagriha), symbolising **devotion, strength, and righteousness**.

- **Basalt Karthikeya (Shanmukha) Sculpture:**

- i. It is originally from the **Naganathaswamy Temple**, Manambadi (Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu).
- ii. The **six-headed (Shanmukha) deity** represents **wisdom, courage, victory, and divine knowledge**, and is an important symbol in South Indian temple traditions.

- **Bhadrakali Bronze Trident (Trishul):**

- i. The **Bronze Trident** is a ceremonial weapon associated with **Goddess Bhadrakali**, a fierce manifestation of Goddess Parvati symbolising **power, protection, and the destruction of evil**.
- ii. Originally belonged to the **Sri Kasi Viswanatha Swamy Temple**, Kollumangudi (Tiruvarur district, Tamil Nadu) and was used in temple rituals and processions.

Source: THE HINDU– <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/australia-to-return-three-antiquities-stolen-from-tamil-nadu-temples/article71202173.ece>

4. Museum of Word

Prelims:

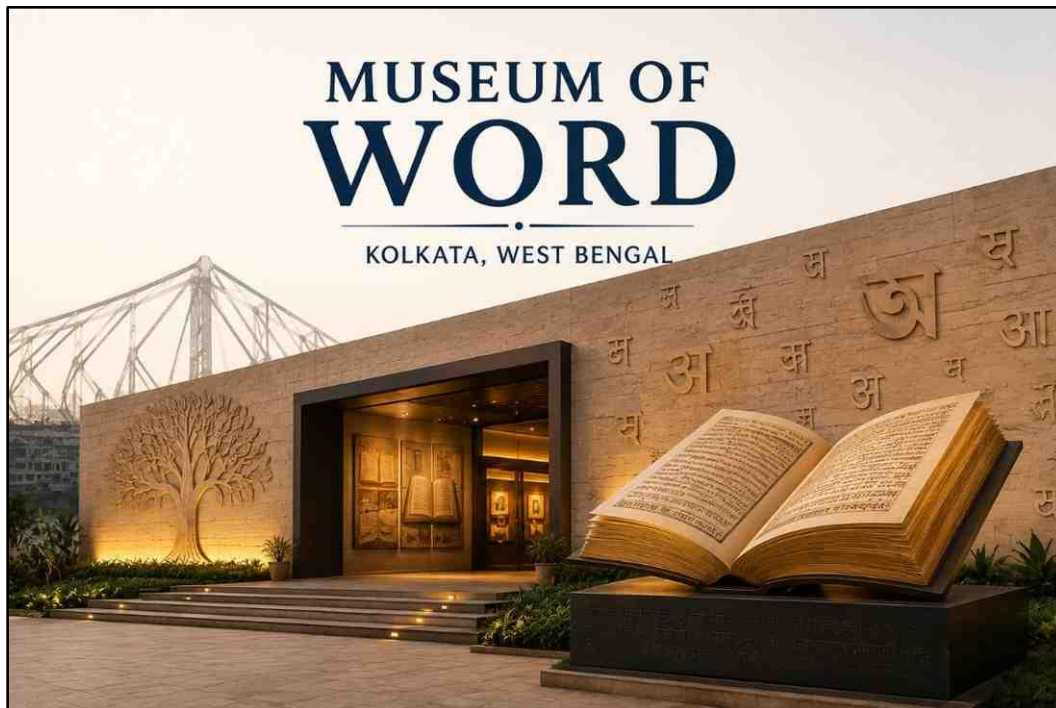
Art and Culture

Mains:

GS Paper I-Indian Culture, GS Paper II-Government Policies and Interventions, GS Paper III-Science and Technology

Current relevance:

Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the **first phase of the 'Museum of Word'** in Kolkata, **West Bengal**.



Highlights:

1. The **Museum of Word** is an **innovative cultural initiative** that preserves India's **multilingual heritage, knowledge traditions**, and collective memory through visual, auditory, tactile, and immersive experiences.
2. **Key Features:**
 - i. Illustrates the evolution of Indian languages from **Omkar and Panini's grammar to the Shrutis and Smriti traditions, palm-leaf manuscripts, stone inscriptions, the printing press, and the era of Artificial Intelligence.**
 - ii. Transforms the **science of language and words** into an engaging, interactive learning experience through modern museum technologies.

- iii. Preserves **India's rich linguistic heritage** by showcasing its diverse languages, dialects, manuscripts, inscriptions, and literary traditions.

3. Five Principles for Language Preservation:

- i. Every family should serve as a child's **first school of learning** from an early age.
- ii. Education should begin in the **mother tongue** to strengthen conceptual understanding, cognitive development, and cultural identity.
- iii. Universities should foster **original thinking, innovation, and research** for knowledge creation and national development.
- iv. Every Indian language should **be integrated with digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence** to ensure its preservation and future relevance.
- v. Every citizen should learn **at least one additional Indian language** besides their mother tongue to promote linguistic diversity and national integration.

Source: PIB-

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2286356®=48&lang=2>

5. Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath

Prelims:

Art & Culture, History

Mains:

GS Paper I-Indian Culture, GS Paper II- International Organisations

Current relevance:

At the **48th Session of the World Heritage Committee** held at Busan, South Korea, the **Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath** was inscribed on the **UNESCO World Heritage List**, becoming India's **45th World Heritage Property**.



Highlights:

Historical Significance:

1. Sarnath is the sacred site where **Gautama Buddha** delivered **his first sermon**, known as **Dharmachakra Pravartana** (Turning of the Wheel of the Law).
2. The establishment of the **Buddhist Sangha** and the dissemination of the teachings of the **Noble Eightfold Path**.
3. It is regarded as **one of the four principal Buddhist pilgrimage sites**, as identified by the Buddha himself.
4. Flourished as an important Buddhist centre under **royal, monastic, and lay patronage** for centuries, before falling into decline after the **12th century CE** and being rediscovered in the **18th century**.
5. Excavations at Sarnath led to the discovery of the **Ashokan Lion Capital**, later adopted as the **National Emblem of India**, and the **Dharmachakrapravartan Buddha** of the Classical Gupta period.

About the Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath:

1. It is located near **Varanasi** in **Uttar Pradesh**.

2. Sarnath was historically known as **Rishi Atana, Ishipatana, and Mrigadava**.
3. The inscribed serial property comprises two component parts:
 - i. **Chau Khandi Stupa**
 - ii. Archaeological Remains of Sarnath, including **Dhamekh Stupa, Dharmarajika Stupa, Mulagandhakuti Vihara, Ashokan Pillar**, and other monuments.
4. The site contains a continuous sequence of monuments dating from the **pre-Mauryan period (5th–4th centuries BCE)** to the **12th century CE** and is one of the most extensively excavated archaeological sites studied by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.

UNESCO Inscription Process:

1. Sarnath was placed on the **UNESCO Tentative List** in **1998**.
2. In **2026**, the **Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath** was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, becoming India's **45th World Heritage Property**.
3. India now has 45 World Heritage Sites, ranking **6th globally** and **2nd in the Asia-Pacific region**.
4. The site was inscribed under **Criteria (iii)** and **(vi)** for:
 - i. Its enduring spiritual significance as **one of the four principal Buddhist pilgrimage sites**.
 - ii. Its direct association with **Buddha's first sermon** and his meeting with the **first disciples**.

Source: PIB–

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2289399®=48&lang=1>