

35

THEMATIC
**CURRENT
AFFAIRS**
for **IAS PRELIMS 2024**

**ART &
CULTURE**

THEME #5

**LITERATURE,
SCULPTURE,
PAINTINGS
& LANGUAGE**



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Content

1. LITERATURE	01-06
◇ 11th century Sanskrit Alphabet discovered in Neelkhantheswar Mahadev Temple	01
◇ Lepakshi murals in Veerabhadraswamy temple	02
◇ Digitalising ancient inscriptions	03
◇ Buddhist monastery complex at Bharatpur of Bengal	05
2. SCULPTURE	07-14
◇ 28-foot-tall Nataraja statue: G20 Summit	07
◇ Parthenon Sculptures	08
◇ WUD Critics 'Choice Award' for 2024	08
◇ Squirrel Sculpture	09
◇ Archaeological Survey discovers 1200-year-old miniature stupas	09
◇ Chola Era Idols	10
◇ Tulu, and Kodava speakers demand priority for their languages	11
◇ Kushans	12
3. PAINTINGS	15-23
◇ J & K's Basohli paintings get GI Tag	15
◇ Indian miniature painting tradition	16
◇ Amrita Sher-Gil's "The Story Teller"	18
◇ Santhali Sohrai murals	19
◇ Other Important Painting	21

THEMATIC CURRENT AFFAIRS

UPSC CSE Prelims exam requires a candidate to link and interlink Current Affairs with the syllabus and the static concepts.

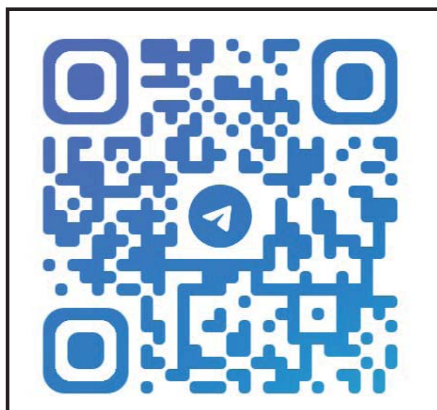
It's important to note that simply compiling current affairs won't suffice; it's crucial to learn how to utilize and link them effectively.

To aid in this process, we have categorized the entire UPSC prelims syllabus into actionable and easy-to-understand themes, and current affairs have been blended into these themes.

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UPSC CSE Current Affairs



Literature

1. 11TH CENTURY SANSKRIT ALPHABET DISCOVERED IN NEELKHANTHESWAR MAHADEV TEMPLE

CONTEXT

Recently, **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)** has discovered a **sanskrit varnamala** or alphabet in devnagri on stone slab made at temple wall of **Neelkhantheswar Mahadev Temple** in Madhya Pradesh.

Neelkhantheswar Mahadev Temple:

- ⦿ It was built by the **Paramara king Udayaditya**. He was the son of the **great king Bhoja (1010-1050 AD)**.
- ⦿ In central India, it is difficult to see precisely dated temples. But the Udayeshwar temple is one of the few, which has a precise date.
- ⦿ Two inscriptions engraved on the temple record the construction of temple during **Paramara king Udayaditya** between 1059 to 1080.

Paramara Dynasty:

- ⦿ The **Paramara Dynasty** was an Indian dynasty that ruled Malwa and surrounding areas in west-central India between 9th and 14th centuries.
- ⦿ They belonged to the **Paramara clan** of the Rajputs.
- ⦿ The dynasty was established in either the **9th or 10th century**, and its early rulers most probably ruled as vassals of the **Rashtrakutas of Manyakheta**.
- ⦿ The dynasty reached its zenith under Bhoja, whose kingdom extended from **Chittor** in the north to Konkan in the south, and from the **Sabarmati River** in the west to Vidisha in the east.

About INTACH:

- ◎ The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) was founded in **1984 in New Delhi** with the vision to spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India.
- ◎ It works on conservation and preservation of not just our natural and built heritage but intangible heritage as well.

2. LEPAKSHI MURALS IN VEERABHADRASWAMY TEMPLE

CONTEXT

A team of G-20 delegates visited the Lepakshi Sri Veerabhadraswamy temple.

About Lepakshi Temple:

- ◎ Lepakshi temple is located in Andhra Pradesh, built during the era of the **Vijayanagara Empire**.
- ◎ The temple is famous for its three shrines, which are dedicated to-
 - Lord Vishnu
 - Lord Shiva
 - Lord Veerabhadra

Mural Painting:

- ◎ Lepakshi Veerabhadra Temple complex has **India's highest sculptural wealth and mural paintings**.
- ◎ **Asia's biggest mural painting**-Veerabhadra Swamy (measuring 24x18 feet), a hanging pillar in the dancing hall and the biggest monolithic bull in the country.



- ◎ The Veerabhadra Temple was constructed by two brothers, **Viranna and Virupanna**.
- ◎ **Architectural style:** The temple is built in the **Vijayanagar architectural style** and has beautiful sculptures adorning the walls.
- ◎ It is one of the finest & oldest temples in India.
- ◎ It is situated atop the **Kurmasailam (tortoise-shaped) hill**.
- ◎ There is a huge **Nandi bull** made from a single granite stone.
- ◎ Lepakshi has many **murals from the Vijayanagara Era** and the famous sculpture of the **snake on the Nagalinga**.

- ⦿ The original structure is said to have been built by **Sage Agastya** and finds mention in the **Skanda Purana** as one of the **108 Saivaite pilgrimage** centres of ancient India.
- ⦿ The entire temple complex was believed to be rebuilt by **Virupanna, and his brother Veeranna** under the rule of **Vijayanagara king Achyuta Devaraya**.
- ⦿ The main shrine, the 70-pillared *nrutya mantapa*, the detailed and beautiful carvings on them depicts gods and artists playing musical instruments and dancers in various poses and mudras.
- ⦿ The high ceiling is filled with long panels of fresco paintings.

3. DIGITALISING ANCIENT INSCRIPTIONS

CONTEXT

The Union Budget 2023 highlighted the government's efforts for digitisation in the country, including a **digital library** for children and adolescents for preserving ancient inscriptions.

About the initiative

- ⦿ It will facilitate the availability of quality books in different **languages, genres and at different levels**.
- ⦿ **Objective:** The government will also try to inculcate a culture of reading by collaborating with NGOs, which will provide age-appropriate reading material to everyone.
- ⦿ **Key features:**
 - The **National Book Trust** and **Children's Book Trust** will also participate in the digitising event.
 - The library would be "device-agnostic".
 - A specialized repository will be made in a **digital epigraphy museum** by the digitization of **one lakh ancient inscriptions** in the first stage.
- ⦿ **Bharat Shared Repository of Inscriptions (Bharat SHRI)** will be set up in a **digital epigraphy museum**.

Ancient Inscriptions:

Junagarh Rock inscription



- ⦿ The **Junagarh Rock inscription** of Rudradaman is considered as an early example of chaste Sanskrit, written in mid second century AD.
- ⦿ It mentions that one of Chandragupta Maurya's governors, Pushyagupta, was responsible for building a dam on **Sudarshana Lake** near Girnar in Kathiawar.
- ⦿ From another inscription of Skandgupta we came to know that this very dam was repaired during his reign, almost **800 years** after it was built.

Mahrauli Inscription / Garuda Pillar



- ⦿ The **Mahrauli Iron Pillar** was originally placed on a hill near the Beas and was brought to Delhi by a King of Delhi.
- ⦿ This pillar credits Chandragupta with conquest of the Vanga Countries by his battling alone against the confederacy of the enemies united against him.
- ⦿ It also credits him for **conquest of Vakatkas** in a fight that ran across seven mouths of Sindhu.
- ⦿ This pillar was established **by Chandragupta-II** of Gupta dynasty as *Vishnupada* in the honor of Lord Vishnu.

Allahabad Pillar Inscription (Prayag Prasasti)



- ⦿ This was issued by **Samudragupta** and was composed by Harisena.
- ⦿ It is written in very simple and refined Sanskrit in **Champu kavya style**. It lists achievements of Samudragupta.
- ⦿ This Inscription is a eulogy of Samudragupta and mentions about the conquests of Samudragupta and boundaries of the Gupta Empire.
- ⦿ As per this inscription, Samudragupta defeated 9 kings in North, 12 Kings in South, reduced all the **Atavika states** to vassalage.
- ⦿ It also mentions that more than five states in the frontier states surrendered and accepted his suzerainty. He had close contact with the kingdom of Ceylon and South East Asian colonies.
- ⦿ The eulogy of Harisena describes him as hero of 100 battles.
- ⦿ He performed **Ashvamedha Yajna**, this has been testified by a seal of Samudragupta bearing a Horse.

Nasik Inscription



- ⦿ The achievements of **Gutamiputra Satkarni** were mentioned in Nasik Inscription that was composed by his mother Gautami Balasri.
- ⦿ The **Nasik Prasasti** describes Gautamiputra as the ruler of the **Aparanta, Anupa, Saurashtra, Kukura, Akara and Avanti** and defeated the Saka King Nahapana and restored the prestige of his dynasty by reconquering a large part of the former dominions of the Satavahanas.

Nanaghat Inscription



- ⦿ The **Nasik and Nanaghat** inscriptions are the major sources that give detailed information about the **Satavahana Empire**.
- ⦿ The Nasik inscription was made by Gautami Balasari and Nanaghat inscription was issued by **Naganika**.

4. BUDDHIST MONASTERY COMPLEX AT BHARATPUR OF BENGAL

CONTEXT

Recent excavations at Bharatpur in West Bengal's Paschim Bardhaman district have revealed the presence of a Buddhist monastery.

About the site:

- ⦿ The last excavation at the site was taken place **about fifty years** back in the 1970s.
- ⦿ At that time black and red ware pottery belonging to the **Chalcolithic Age** was recovered with a Buddhist stupa.
- ⦿ The recent excavations have revealed the presence of an extended monastery complex at the site.

Key findings:

- ⦿ Recent excavations have revealed the presence of a Buddhist monastery.
- ⦿ According to experts, the Buddhist sites in the State are the presence of a large stupa along with a monastery complex and black and red ware pottery from the Chalcolithic or Copper Age.
- ⦿ In the 1970s, **five beautiful seated sculptures** of the Buddha in **Bhumisparsha Mudra**.

Bhumisparsha Mudra is the gesture of hand showing five fingers of the right hand towards the earth symbolising the Buddha's enlightenment.

- ⦿ These miniature sculptures, each about 30 cm in height, were most likely used for worship in the monastery.

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Sculpture

1. 28-FOOT-TALL NATARAJA STATUE: G20 SUMMIT

CONTEXT

A 28-foot-tall Nataraja statue was exhibited during the G20 Summit in Delhi.

About

- ⦿ The statue symbolises **Lord Shiva as the 'lord of dance'** and his cosmic power of creation and destruction.
- ⦿ Weighing 19 tonnes, and made of eight metals: **gold, silver, lead, copper, tin, mercury, iron and zinc (Ashtadhatu)**, the statue was made in a small town in Tamil Nadu's Thanjavur district.
- ⦿ The sculpture was made by the sons of famous sculptor **Devasenapati Satapati** of Swamimalai district in Tamil Nadu.
- ⦿ The height of the statue is 22 feet. It is then placed on a 6-foot high pedestal - taking its total height to 28 feet.
- ⦿ The statue was made using the ancient lost-wax technique of metal casting.



Metal Casting

- ⦿ The clay that is used to make the statue is available on a stretch of the Cauvery River that runs through Swamimalai.
- ⦿ After allowing the clay to dry, the whole mass is heated.
- ⦿ The melted wax is then filled with molten bronze.

2. PARTHENON SCULPTURES

CONTEXT

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak cancelled a meeting with his Greek counterpart Kyriakos Mitsotakis over the status of the Parthenon Sculptures housed at the British Museum, sparking a diplomatic row sparked between Greece and the UK.

About

- ⦿ The Parthenon Sculptures at the British Museum are more than 30 ancient stone sculptures from Greece that are more than 2,000 years old.
- ⦿ Most of them originally adorned the walls and grounds of the Parthenon temple on the rocky Acropolis hill in Athens.
- ⦿ Completed in 432 BC, the temple is dedicated to the goddess Athena and is seen as the crowning glory of Athens' Golden Age.

Route to Britain

- ⦿ They were removed from the Parthenon in the early 19th century by Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin and then-British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.
- ⦿ The marbles were taken to Britain and purchased by the British Museum in 1816.

3. WUD CRITICS 'CHOICE AWARD' FOR 2024

CONTEXT

World University of Design presented the '**WUD Critics' Choice Award' for 2024** to renowned sculptor, writer, orator, academician, and philosopher **KS Radhakrishnan** to recognize his outstanding contributions to the field of sculpture.

Indian Sculpture

- ⦿ The tradition of Indian sculpture extends from the **Indus valley civilization** of **2500 to 1800 BCE**, during which time small **terra-cotta figurines** were produced.
- ⦿ The **great circular stone pillars** and **carved lions** of the **Mauryan period (3rd century BCE)** gave way to mature Indian figurative sculpture in the **2nd and 1st centuries BCE**, in which Hindu and Buddhist themes were already well-established.
- ⦿ A wide range of styles and traditions subsequently flourished in different parts of India over the succeeding centuries, but by the **9th–10th centuries CE** Indian sculpture had reached a form that has lasted with little change up to the present day.

- ⦿ This sculpture is distinguished not by a sense of plastic volume and fullness but rather by its linear character; the figure is conceived from the standpoint of its outline, and the figure itself is graceful, slender, and has supple limbs.
- ⦿ From the 10th century this sculpture was used mainly as a part of architectural decoration, with vast numbers of relatively small figures of mediocre quality being produced for this purpose.

4. SQUIRREL SCULPTURE

CONTEXT

Bengaluru-based sculptor Kalyan S Rathore has hewn a 15-foot statue of a squirrel that would be placed in the Ayodhya Dham Junction railway station's atrium.

About

- ⦿ The 2.5-tonne sculpture is crafted from **Corten steel**.
- ⦿ The sculpture requires minimal maintenance and will develop a rust-like exterior due to exposure to moisture over time without corroding.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY DISCOVERS 1200-YEAR-OLD MINIATURE STUPAS

CONTEXT

Patna circle of the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has discovered two 1200-year-old miniature votive stupas during landscaping activities.

About

- ⦿ **Location:** It has been found near **Sarai Tila** mound within the premises of '**Nalanda Mahavihara**', a world heritage site in Nalanda district in the state.
- ⦿ The stupas, carved from stone, depict Buddha figures.

What are stupas?

- ⦿ A Stupa is a hemispherical structure which **symbolizes the burial mound of Buddha**. It rose to prominence after the advent of Buddhism and peaked during **Ashoka's reign**. Stupas evolved as **Chorten in Tibet and pagodas in East Asia**.



Photo Credit: nrm.ac.in

Nalanda Mahavihara site:

- ⊙ The Nalanda Mahavihara site comprises the archaeological remains of a monastic and scholastic institution dating from the **3rd century BCE to the 13th century CE**.
- ⊙ It includes stupas, shrines, viharas (residential and educational buildings) and important art works in stucco, stone and metal.

Importance of stupas

⊙ Religious importance –

- **Relic repository:** In the beginning stupas were built to venerate and safeguard relics and remains of Buddha.
- **Sacred place:** Along with monasteries (viharas) later, stupas were included in chaityas, which is a prayer hall.
- **Circumambulation path:** an important Buddhist ritual around the path surrounding it.
- **The object of veneration–** it is believed that relics of buddhas body were buried within the stupas

⊙ Philosophical–

- **Meditation:** It is an important place for meditation.
- **Commemorative:** In the Tibetan tradition, stupas were built to celebrate the life events of the Buddha.

⊙ Symbolic: The stupas encapsulate the teachings and ideology of Buddha

- **Dhamek stupa at Sarnath marks the spot** where the Buddha gave his first sermon after attaining enlightenment, revealing his Eightfold Path leading to nirvana.

⊙ Historical: Provide information about the various dynasties who ruled India. Eg :

- **Mauryas:** Bairat stupa , Sanchi stupa , Bharhut stupa etc
- **Sathavahanas:** Amaravati stupa etc

⊙ Architectural –

- **Oldest stone structures:** The stupas at Sanchi and Bharhut are one of the oldest stone structures in India.
- **Inclusion of text in narrative panels–** at Bharhut (Queen Maya’s dream)
- **Use of marble–** at Amravati stupa
- **Taxila excavations reveal stupas with Boddhisatva images,** Gandhara influence and patronage of Kanishka.

6. CHOLA ERA IDOLS

CONTEXT

Recently, the **Idol Wing-CID** has submitted documents to U.S. officials through the Central government to retrieve **six exquisite Chola-Era bronze idols**.

About

- ⊙ These idols went missing from the **Arthanareeswarar Temple, Veeracholapuram in Kallakurichi district** in Tamil Nadu the 1960s.
 - **Arthanareeswarar Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.**
 - Presiding deity is called **Arthanareeswarar** and mother is called as **Anubhambikai**.
 - The temple is situated on the banks of **Manimutharu River**.
 - The temple was constructed during the 12th century AD by **Chola king Rajendra Chola**.

Chola Dynasty

- ⊙ The reign of the Cholas began in the **9th century** when they **defeated the Pallavas** to come into power.
- ⊙ This rule stretched over for over **five long centuries** until the 13th century.
- ⊙ The Early periods of the Chola rule saw the **onset of the Sangam literature**.

7. TULU, AND KODAVA SPEAKERS DEMAND PRIORITY FOR THEIR LANGUAGES

CONTEXT

Speakers of Tulu and Kodava have opposed the draft of the **Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Bill, 2022**, which aims to ensure the “extensive use and propagation” of the Kannada language.

Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Bill, 2022

- ⊙ **R. Bannurmath-headed committee** prepared the draft of the Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Bill, 2022.
- ⊙ The Bill only gives importance to Kannada and to the use of English for administrative purposes like communication with the Union government or in courts etc.
- ⊙ There is no mention of Kodava and Tulu in the bill.
- ⊙ The Bill provides for penalties for violations of rules, with fines prescribed for various offenses.

Tulu

- ⊙ Tulu is a **Dravidian language** spoken mainly in two coastal districts **Dakshina Kannada** and **Udupi** of **Karnataka and Kasaragod district** of Kerala.
- ⊙ As per the 2011 Census report, there are 18,46,427 Tulu-speaking people in India.
- ⊙ People have been demanding it to give official language status and include it in the eighth schedule.

Kodava

- ⦿ The Kodava is an endangered **Dravidian language** and it is spoken in the **Kodagu district** in Southern Karnataka, India.
- ⦿ The 2011 Census of India, for a total of 113,857 persons who identified one of these languages as their mother tongue.

8. KUSHANS

CONTEXT

Recently, the coins used in the **Kushana Empire** have been found with images consisting of God and Goddesses and are considered the first to use the image of '**Goddess Lakshmi**' on their coins.

Background

- ⦿ Coinage with images of gods and goddesses dates back to Kushans.
- ⦿ The Coinage of India began anywhere between the early **1st millennium BCE to the 6th century BCE** and consisted mainly of **copper and silver coins** in its initial stage.
- ⦿ The coins of this period were '**Karshapanas**' or '**Pana**'.
- ⦿ The kingdoms that minted their own coins were; **Gandhara, Kuntala, Kuru, Magadha, Panchala, Shakya, Surasena, Surashtra, and Vidarbha, etc.**
- ⦿ The **Vijayanagara kings** also used coinage with Hindu idols.
- ⦿ Harihara-II (1377-1404) introduced coins that had **Brahma-Saraswati, Vishnu-Lakshmi, and Shiva-Parvati**.
- ⦿ The tradition of minting coins to win the confidence of local people continued when the **French and Dutch** minted coins showing **Vishnu** between 1715 and 1774 and **Goddess Kali** till the late 17th century.

Do you know?

The tradition of '**Indian coinage**' in the 2nd millennium evolved with **Indo Islamic** rule in India and the British Raj in the **19th century**.

The Kushana Empire:

- ⦿ **Kushanas** were descended from the **Yuezhi**, a people that ruled over most of the northern Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan, and parts of Central Asia during the first three centuries of the Common Era.
- ⦿ The Yuezhi conquered Bactria in the **2nd century BCE** and divided the country into five chiefdoms, one of which was that of the **Kushans (Guishuang)**.
- ⦿ Under **Kaniska I (flourished 1st century CE)** and his successors, the **Kushan kingdom** reached its height.

- ◎ It was acknowledged as one of the four great **Eurasian powers** of its time (the others being China, Rome, and Parthia).
- ◎ The Kushans were instrumental in spreading Buddhism in Central Asia and China and in developing **Mahayana Buddhism** and the **Gandhara and Mathura schools of art**.

* * * * *

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Paintings

1. J & K'S BASOHLI PAINTINGS GET GI TAG

CONTEXT

Recently, the **Basholi (Basoli) paintings** received the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** following approval of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, Jammu.

About

- ◎ Basholi painting is a reputed school of **miniature paintings**.
- ◎ The Basholi painting of Kathua is the **first independent GI-tagged product** from Jammu region.
- ◎ Basholi painting, school of **Pahari miniature painting** that flourished in the **Indian hill states** during the late 17th and the 18th centuries, known for its bold vitality of colour and line.



Basholi is a town in **Kathua district** in the state of **Jammu and Kashmir**, India.

Key features:

- ◎ These paintings known for its vivid, evocative colors, bold lines, and deep-set facial patterns.
- ◎ It was founded by **Raja Bhupat Pal** in the 16th century.
- ◎ Basholi paintings are considered as the **first school of Pahari paintings**, many of which have evolved into the much more detailed and widespread **style of Kangra painting school**.

Geographical Indication (GI) tag:

- ◎ The GI is a form of **intellectual property right** that identifies goods originating from a specific geographical location and having distinct nature, quality and characteristics.
- ◎ The Geographical Indication is recognised by the **World Trade Organization**.

⦿ India became a signatory to this convention, when, as a member of WTO, it enacted the Geographical Indications (Registration and Protection) Act, of 1999, which came into effect on September 15, 2003.

Paintings in India:

⦿ Principles of Indian Paintings:

- Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism were three new religions that emerged in India, and they all provided important sources of inspiration for artists.
- The development of Indian Paintings has been significantly influenced by various factors, including India's deep-rooted history and culture.
- In the famous paintings of India, spiritual themes, noble ideals, and common beliefs are depicted.

⦿ In the **third century AD**, Vatsyayana wrote about the **six main shadanga or principles of Indian painting** in his work Kamasutra. These were:

- **Various Forms:** Rupabheda
- **Emotional immersion:** Lavanyayoganam
- **Combining colours to simulate modelling effects:** Varnikabhanga
- **The proportion of the object or subject:** Pramanam
- **The portrayal of the subject's likelihood:** Sadrisyan
- **The use of colour to create lustre and gleam:** Bhava

2. INDIAN MINIATURE PAINTING TRADITION

CONTEXT

The Indian art historian Brijinder Nath Goswamy, best known for his scholarship on Indian miniature painting tradition, passed away at 90.

Who was Brijinder Nath Goswamy?

- ⦿ He was born in Sargodha, now in Pakistan, in 1933.
- ⦿ Goswamy was best known for shining the spotlight on the figure of the painter, presenting him as a creative intellectual.
- ⦿ Until the publication of his book Nainsukh Of Guler in 1997, miniature paintings had been viewed purely from the lens of the patron, often sifted into broad heads such as Pahari, Rajput or Kangra, essentially markers of geographies that the patrons belonged to.
- ⦿ The painter remained in the shadows, a hazy, anonymous figure.
- ⦿ He developed the Museum of Fine Arts at Panjab University.
- ⦿ He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1998, and Padma Bhushan in 2008.

About Miniature Painting

Miniature painting is a traditional style of art that is very detailed, often referred to as painting or working "in miniature".

Famous miniature Paintings in India:

School of Painting	Description
<p data-bbox="316 504 596 548">1. Rajput School</p> 	<ul data-bbox="791 577 1445 887" style="list-style-type: none">⦿ Geographical Origin: Rajasthan and the surrounding regions.⦿ Features: Rich, bold colors, intricate detailing, and a focus on themes like love, nature, and religion.⦿ Different sub-schools include Mewar, Marwar, Bundi-Kota, and Kishangarh.
<p data-bbox="309 985 603 1030">2. Mughal School</p> 	<ul data-bbox="791 1111 1445 1357" style="list-style-type: none">⦿ Geographical Origin: Flourished during the Mughal Empire, primarily in North India.⦿ Features: Blend of Persian and Indian styles, realistic portrayal of subjects, fine detailing, and use of gold and vibrant colors. Known for historical and courtly themes.
<p data-bbox="312 1507 600 1552">3. Deccan School</p> 	<ul data-bbox="791 1630 1445 1883" style="list-style-type: none">⦿ Geographical Origin: Deccan plateau, including Golconda, Bijapur, and Ahmadnagar.⦿ Features: Fusion of indigenous styles with Persian influences, vibrant colors, and intricate patterns. Often depicted royal portraits, battle scenes, and hunting scenes.

4. Bengal School



- ⦿ Emerged in the late 19th century as a response to Western academic art. Emphasizes simplicity, use of wash technique, and incorporation of Indian themes. Nandalal Bose and Abanindranath Tagore were key figures.

5. Malwa School



- ⦿ **Geographical Origin:** Flourished in the Malwa region.
- ⦿ **Features:** Known for its distinctive use of bright colors, especially green, and depiction of rural life, festivals, and courtly scenes.

Some famous miniature paintings include:

- ⦿ Ragamala (1680 AD)
- ⦿ Bhairavi Ragini Painting
- ⦿ **Bani Thani** (Monalisa of India) by Nihâl Chand and Radha and Krishna of Kishangarh
- ⦿ Gita Govind, Palm Leaf Painting.

3. AMRITA SHER-GIL'S "THE STORY TELLER"

CONTEXT

A recent auction of a painting pegged the Indian contemporary art at a record-high position. The Story Teller oil on canvas piece by renowned 20th century Sikh-Hungarian artist Amrita Sher-Gil fetched a staggering ₹61.8 crore, making it the most expensive artwork from India to be auctioned.

The Painting

- ◎ The Story Teller is one of Amrita Sher-Gil's most significant works.
- ◎ It portrays women, a common theme in her art, reflecting her indomitable spirit and dedication to her craft which has left an indelible mark on Indian art history.
- ◎ The painting "The Story Teller" beautifully fuses influences from both **Pahari and Parisian art**, depicting a group of women immersed in various independent activities in an open space.



About

- ◎ Born in 1913 to a Sikh father and Hungarian mother, Sher-Gil spent her earlier days in Europe and later moved to India.
- ◎ She is the **first Asian artist** to win a gold medal in painting at **Paris' elite Ecole des Beaux Arts**.
- ◎ In 1976, she was declared one of **India's nine 'National Art Treasure' artists** by the Archaeological Survey of India.
- ◎ Her other well-known portraits of women include **"Three Girls", "Women on the Charpai", "Hill Women", and "Young Girls"**.

4. SANTHALI SOHRAI MURALS

CONTEXT

The Santjali communities of Odisha and Jharkhand are changing their ways of **painting Sohrai murals**.

About Sohrai Khovar Painting:

- ◎ It is a **traditional and ritualistic mural art** being practised by local tribal women during local harvest and marriage seasons using local, naturally available soils of different colours in the area of Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand.
- ◎ The style features a profusion of **lines, dots, animal figures and plants**, often representing religious iconography.
- ◎ **Khovar** refers to the **decoration of the marriage chambers** and **Sohrai** is the **harvest painting on the mud houses**, repairing it after the rains and offering a thanksgiving to the forces of Nature.

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- ⦿ In 2020, Jharkhand received a **Geographical Indication tag** for its Sohrai art particularly for the murals painted by women in Hazaribagh district who do not belong to the Santhal tribe.
- ⦿ The **murals of Hazaribagh** are more primordial with different motifs, whereas the **Santhali Sohrai art** features only geometric shapes.
- ⦿ Women of Hazaribagh only **use earth colours — red, black and white** — for their murals.

About Santhals:

- ⦿ The Santal, or Santhal, are an **ethnic group native to India and Bangladesh** in South Asia.
- ⦿ Santals are the largest tribe in the **Jharkhand state** of India in terms of population and are also found in the states of **Assam, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal**.
- ⦿ The word 'Santal' is derived from two words; **Santa meaning calm** and peaceful and **ala meaning man**.
- ⦿ In the past, the Santals were leading a nomadic life.
 - Gradually they came to settle down in the Chotanagpur plateau.
- ⦿ **Ethnic Language of Santal:**
 - Santali language belongs to the sub family of **Austro-Asiatic cluster** and classified under the '**Mundari**' group of languages.
 - They have their own **scripts known as Ol-Chiki** discovered by Pandit Raghunath Murmu in the year 1920s.
 - Initially 'Ol-Chiki' was regarded as copied one and also considered as one which doesn't have any characteristic of language.
 - In the year 2003, the Santali language has been included in the eighth schedule of the Constitution of India.

5. OTHER IMPORTANT PAINTING

Madhubani paintings

- ⦿ Madhubani paintings are the most celebrated style of folk painting from India; it is a form of wall art that arises in the Mithila region of Bihar.
- ⦿ This eye-catching art style never fails to amaze one by its beautiful illustrations on the exposed interior walls of the houses in Bihar.
- ⦿ Madhubani paintings are a perfect example of artistic expression and evocative portrayal of culture and traditions. The designs make perfectly distinctive geometrical patterns, scenes from mythology, and symbolic images.
- ⦿ The perfect blend of bright vibrant colours and unique patterns make Madhubani stand out from other painting styles.
- ⦿ **Katchni, Tantrik, Bharni, Khobar, and Godna** are five different styles of Madhubani paintings.
- ⦿ **Lalita Devi and Bua Devi** are National Award winning artists for Madhubani artworks from India.

Warli

- ◎ **Warli** is a 2500-year-old traditional painting style from Maharashtra majorly practiced in Thane and Nashik region.
- ◎ Warli paintings illustrate the nature and social rituals of the tribe. Warli paintings also showcase day-to-day life scenarios of the local people of that particular community just like dancing, farming, hunting, praying, etc.
- ◎ The local women used twigs to draw such beautiful lively designs with rice paste on mud walls to convey the celebration vibes of harvests or weddings.
- ◎ **Jivya Soma Mashe** is a Padma shri honoured artist for her traditional tribal artwork from India.

Kalighat painting

- ◎ The Kalighat painting was discovered around the mid-19th century at Kali Temple in Calcutta. These paintings and drawings were done on paper by a community known as "patuas".
- ◎ A Kalighat painting depicts scenes of everyday life and mythological deities in a captivating manner.
- ◎ Kalighat artists use subtle earthy Indian colours like indigo, ochre, Indian red, grey, blue and white. **Anwar Chitrakar** is a National Award winner recipient for Kalighat artworks from India.

Phad

- ◎ **Phad** is a traditional Rajasthani scroll painting from India, depicting the stories of local deities, heroic figures from battlefields, adventure stories, and legendary romantic stories on horizontal cloth scrolls with the hues of red, yellow, and bright orange.
- ◎ Phad Painting marvellously portrays multiple stories in a single composition and beautifully maintains the aesthetics of artistic expression.
- ◎ **Shri. Shantilal Joshi** is a National award winning artist for establishing this impeccable Phad paintings and artworks.

Miniature painting

- ◎ Miniature painting is Mughal influenced art form; this style was introduced in India during the 16th century and transformed its identity in the history of Indian art. Miniature paintings are a blend of Islamic, Persian, and Indian elements.
- ◎ These paintings are created using all-natural mineral colours, precious stones, conch shells, gold, and silver.
- ◎ Across India, the miniature style painting has developed its own identity into distinct schools of miniature paintings like Kangra, Rajasthan, Malwa, Pahadi, Mughal, Deccan, etc.
- ◎ **Gopal Prasad Sharma** is an National award winning artist for miniature style artwork from India.

Gond paintings

- ◎ Gond paintings are a series of arranged dots and dashes developed by the Gondi tribe of central India.

- ⦿ The tribes used to recreate some famous epic mythological tales of histories to traditional songs and rituals with rich detailing and bright colours.
- ⦿ Traditionally, the colours used for gond paintings were derived from natural resources like cow dung, plant sap, charcoal, coloured soil, mud, flowers, leaves, etc.
- ⦿ With growing times, the Gond art has moved beyond being a tribal art style.
- ⦿ **Bhajju Shyam** is a National award winning artist from Madhya Pradesh for this Gond style artwork.

Kerala mural paintings

- ⦿ Kerala mural paintings are the most unique art form and have deep spiritual roots depicting themes of Hindu mythologies, epics of the bygone era, classic tales of Krishna, and mystic forms of Shiva and Shakti.
- ⦿ These traditional art styles are made up of bold strokes, and vivid colours.
- ⦿ White, ochre-red, bluish-green, yellow-ochre, and pure colours are predominantly used in Kerala mural painting.
- ⦿ **Achutan Ramchandran Nair** was honoured with **Padma Bhushan** for his outstanding Mural artwork contribution towards the art world.

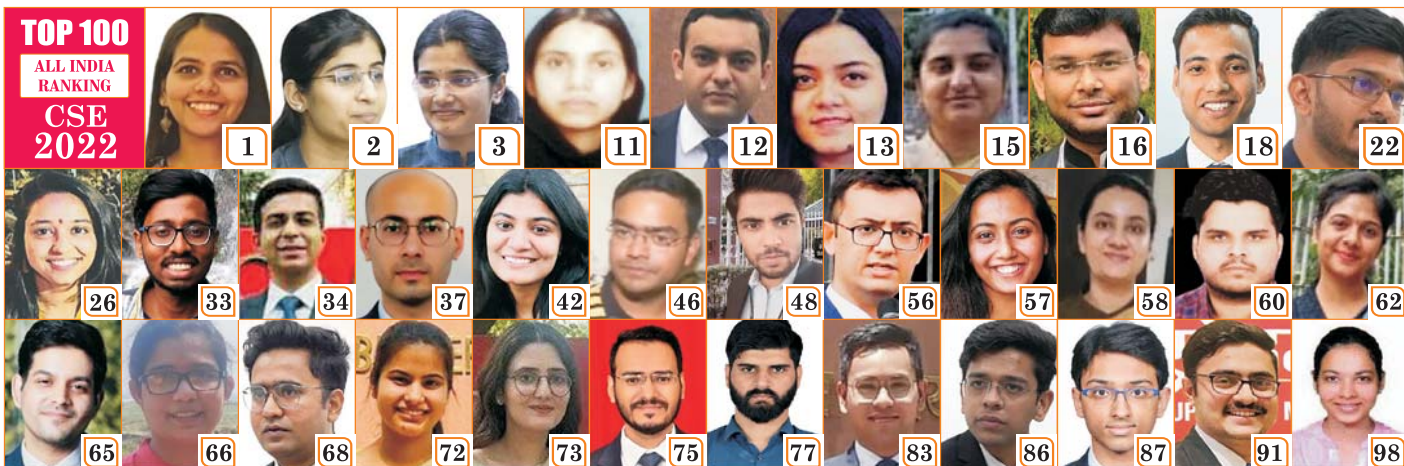
Patachitra

- ⦿ **Patachitra** is a traditional art form from Odisha. Patachitra paintings are mostly derived from mythological and religious themes done beautifully with bold, strong outlines, vibrant colors like white, red yellow, and black with decorative borders.
- ⦿ **Sharat Kumar Sahu** is an National Award winning Patachitra artist who traced this traditional artform internationally.

Pichwai artwork

- ⦿ Pichwai artwork was made as wall hangings behind the main deity in Krishna temples in Nathdwara which narrates the stories related to Lord Krishna.
- ⦿ Pichwais are the most colorful and intricate work concealed with symbolism in the artistic motifs.
- ⦿ This classified devotional art practice has passed from one generation to another and a fine example of spirituality in art.
- ⦿ **Kalyan Mal Sahu** is a national award recipient in 2011 for his splendid contribution towards **Pichwai art**.

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