

UPSC with Saurabh Kaushik

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GS-I: HISTORY

Previous Year Questions

UPSC Mains 2013 – 2024

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Art and Culture

01. Indian Culture – Salient Aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from Ancient to Modern Times

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-I History)	Year	Marks
Performing Arts & Artistic Traditions	Discuss the significance of the lion and bull figures in Indian mythology, art and architecture.	2022	15
	Discuss the Tandava dance as recorded in the early Indian inscriptions.	2013	10
	Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss.	2018	10
Bhakti & Sufi Movement	Evaluate the nature of the Bhakti literature and its contribution to Indian culture.	2021	10
	Sufis and medieval mystic saints failed to modify either the religious ideas and practices or the outward structure of Hindu/Muslim societies to any appreciable extent. Comment.	2014	10
	The Bhakti movement received a remarkable re-orientation with the advent of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Discuss.	2018	15
Buddhist Art & Architecture	Early Buddhist Stupa-art, while depicting folk motifs and narratives successfully expounds Buddhist ideals. Elucidate.	2016	12.5
	Gandhara sculpture owed as much to the Romans as to the Greeks. Explain.	2014	10
	Highlight the Central Asian and Greco-Bactrian elements in Gandhara art.	2019	10
Ancient Civilizations, Geography & Learning Centres	The ancient civilization in Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without a breakdown to the present day. Comment.	2015	12.5
	To what extent has the urban planning and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to the present day urbanization? Discuss.	2014	10
	Underline the changes in the field of society and economy from the Rig Vedic to the later Vedic period.	2024	10
	Explain the role of geographical factors towards the development of Ancient India.	2023	10
	Taxila university was one of the oldest universities of the world with which were associated a number of renowned learned personalities of different disciplines. Its strategic location caused its fame to flourish, but unlike Nalanda, it is not considered as a university in the modern sense. Discuss.	2014	10
South Indian Kingdoms & Temple Culture	Chola architecture represents a high watermark in the evolution of temple architecture. Discuss.	2013	10
	Discuss the main contributions of Gupta period and Chola period to Indian heritage and culture.	2022	15

	Krishnadeva Raya, the King of Vijayanagar, was not only an accomplished scholar himself but was also a great patron of learning and literature. Discuss.	2016	12.5
	Estimate the contribution of Pallavas of Kanchi for the development of art and literature of South India.	2024	10
	"Though the great Cholas are no more yet their name is still remembered with great pride because of their highest achievements in the domain of art and architecture." Comment.	2024	15
Northern & Medieval Dynasties	Indian philosophy and tradition played a significant role in conceiving and shaping the monuments and their art in India. Discuss.	2020	15
	How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times?	2017	10
	Pala period is the most significant phase in the history of Buddhism in India. Enumerate.	2020	10
	What were the major technological changes introduced during the Sultanate period? How did those technological changes influence the Indian society?	2023	15
Literature, Inscriptions & Historical Sources	Assess the importance of the accounts of the Chinese and Arab travellers in the reconstruction of the history of India.	2018	10
	How will you explain that medieval Indian temple sculptures represent the social life of those days?	2022	10
	Mesolithic rock cut architecture of India not only reflects the cultural life of the times but also a fine aesthetic sense comparable to modern painting. Critically evaluate this comment.	2015	12.5
	Persian literary sources of medieval India reflect the spirit of the age. Comment.	2020	15
	The rock-cut architecture represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge of early Indian art and history. Discuss.	2020	10
	Though not very useful from the point of view of a connected political history of South India, the Sangam literature portrays the social and economic conditions of its time with remarkable vividness. Comment.	2013	10
	What are the main features of Vedic society and religion? Do you think some of the features are still prevailing in Indian society?	2023	15

Modern History

02. Modern Indian History – Mid-18th Century to Present (Significant Events, Personalities, Issues)

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-I History)	Year	Marks
Economic Impact & Structural Changes under Colonial Rule	Examine critically the various facets of economic policies of the British in India from mid-eighteenth century till independence.	2014	10
	Examine how the decline of traditional artisanal industry in colonial India crippled the rural economy.	2017	15
	How did the colonial rule affect the tribals in India and what was the tribal response to the colonial oppression?	2023	15
	Why did the armies of the British East India Company - mostly comprising of Indian soldiers - win consistently against the more numerous and better equipped armies of the then Indian rulers? Give reasons.	2022	10
	Why was there a sudden spurt in famines in colonial India since the mid-eighteenth century? Give reasons.	2022	10
Nationalist Leaders & Ideological Perspectives	Highlight the differences in the approach of Subhash Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi in the struggle for freedom.	2016	12.5
	How different would have been the achievement of Indian independence without Mahatma Gandhi? Discuss.	2015	12.5
	Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, despite having divergent approaches and strategies, had a common goal of amelioration of the downtrodden. Elucidate.	2015	12.5
	Throw light on the significance of the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi in the present times.	2018	10
	What was the difference between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore in their approach towards education and nationalism?	2023	10
Revolts, Uprisings & Military Conflicts	Clarify how mid-eighteenth century India was beset with the spectre of a fragmented polity.	2017	10
	Explain how the Uprising of 1857 constitutes an important watershed in the evolution of British policies towards colonial India.	2016	12.5
	In what ways did the naval mutiny prove to be the last nail in the coffin of British colonial aspirations in India?	2014	10
	The 1857 Uprising was the culmination of the recurrent big and small local rebellions that had occurred in the preceding hundred years of British rule. Elucidate.	2019	10
	The third battle of Panipat was fought in 1761. Why were so many empire-shaking battles fought at Panipat?	2014	10
	The women's questions arose in modern India as a part of the 19th century social reform movement. What were	2017	15

Social Reform Movements & Women's Question	the major issues and debates concerning women in that period?		
	Trace the rise and growth of socio-religious reform movements with special reference to Young Bengal and Brahma Samaj.	2021	10
British Administration & Viceregal Policies	In many ways, Lord Dalhousie was the founder of modern India. Elaborate.	2013	10
	Evaluate the policies of Lord Curzon and their long term implications on the national movement.	2020	10

Freedom Struggle

03. Freedom Struggle – Various Stages, Important Contributors / Contributions from Different Parts of the Country

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-I History)	Year	Marks
Key Contributors & Ideological Currents	Several foreigners made India their homeland and participated in various movements. Analyze their role in the Indian struggle for freedom.	2013	10
	Why did the 'Moderates' fail to carry conviction with the nation about their proclaimed ideology and political goals by the end of the nineteenth century?	2017	10
	Highlight the importance of the new objectives that got added to the vision of Indian independence since twenties of the last century.	2017	15
	Discuss the role of women in the freedom struggle especially during the Gandhian phase.	2016	12.5
Major Movements & Phases of Freedom Struggle	It would have been difficult for the Constituent Assembly to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India in just three years but for the experience gained with the Government of India Act, 1935. Discuss.	2015	12.5
	Many voices had strengthened and enriched the nationalist movement during the Gandhian phase. Elaborate.	2019	15
	Bring out the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi during Non-Cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement.	2021	15
	Assess the role of British imperial power in complicating the process of transfer of power during the 1940s.	2019	15
	Examine the linkages between 19th century 'Indian Renaissance' and the emergence of national identity.	2019	10
	What were the events that led to the Quit India Movement? Point out its results.	2024	10

Post Independence

04. Post-Independence – Consolidation and Reorganisation within Country

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-I History)	Year	Marks
Nation-Building: Policies, Leaders & Movements	The New Economic Policy - 1921 of Lenin had influenced the policies adopted by India soon after independence. Evaluate.	2014	10
	Critically discuss the objectives of Bhoodan and Gramdan movements initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and their success.	2013	10
	Discuss the contribution of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to pre-and post-independent India.	2013	10
	Write a critical note on the evolution and significance of the slogan "Jai Jawana Jai Kisan".	2013	10
States Reorganisation & Federal Integration	Assess the main administrative issues and socio-cultural problems in the integration process of Indian Princely States. (150 words)	2021	10
	Discuss whether formation of new states in recent times is beneficial or not for the economy of India.	2018	15
	Has the formation of linguistic States strengthened the cause of Indian Unity?	2016	12.5
	The political and administrative reorganization of states and territories has been a continuous ongoing process since the mid-nineteenth century. Discuss with examples.	2022	15
Wars, Diplomacy & Territorial Integrity	Analyze the circumstances that led to Tashkent Agreement in 1966. Discuss the highlights of the agreement.	2013	10
	Critically examine the compulsions which prompted India to play a decisive roles in the emergence of Bangladesh.	2013	10

World History

05. History of the World – Industrial Revolution, World Wars, Redrawal of National Boundaries, Colonization, Decolonization, Political Philosophies

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-I History)	Year	Marks
American & French Revolutions	American Revolution was an economic revolt against mercantilism. Substantiate.	2013	10
	Explain how the foundations of the modern world were laid by the American and French revolution. (250 words)	2019	15
Anti-Colonial Movements & Decolonization	Africa was chopped into states artificially created by accident of European competition. Analyse.	2013	10
	The anti-colonial struggles in West Africa were led by the new elite of Western-educated Africans. Examine.	2016	12.5
	What problems were germane to the decolonization process of Malay Peninsula.	2017	10
	What were the major political, economic and social developments in the world which motivated the anti-colonial struggle in India?	2014	10
	What were the events that led to the Suez Crisis in 1956? How did it deal a final blow to Britain's self-image as a world power?	2014	10
	Why indentured labour was taken by the British from India to other colonies? Have they been able to preserve their cultural identity over there?	2018	15
Industrial Revolution & Technological Change	How far was the Industrial Revolution in England responsible for the decline of handicrafts and cottage industries in India?	2024	15
	Latecomer Industrial revolution in Japan involved certain factors that were markedly different from what west had experience.	2013	10
	Why did the industrial revolution first occur in England? Discuss the quality of life of the people there during the industrialization. How does it compare with that in India at present?	2015	12.5
	Bring out the socio-economic effects of the introduction of railways in different countries of the world.	2023	10
World Wars, Great Depression & Totalitarianism	What policy instruments were deployed to contain the great economic depression?	2013	10
	"There arose a serious challenge to the Democratic State System between the two World Wars." Evaluate the statement.	2021	15
	How far is it correct to say that the First World War was fought essentially for the preservation of balance of power?	2024	15
	To what extent can Germany be held responsible for causing the two World Wars? Discuss critically.	2015	12.5