

UPSC STUDY PLAN - How to study Indian culture for UPSC Civil Services Exam?

Indian culture and heritage is a hot topic for UPSC Civil Services Prelims as well as Mains. Once you get a basic idea regarding what to study and what not to study in Indian culture, this topic would be very easy. In this post, we not only provide guidance regarding priority areas of Indian culture but also books/free study materials helpful for the preparation of Indian culture.

What does UPSC syllabus mention about Indian Culture?

Indian Culture based questions can be asked in Civil Services Exam – prelims and mains. As per the latest UPSC syllabus for IAS mains exam, Indian Culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from ancient to modern times. The topic comes under UPSC Civil Services Mains General Studies Paper 1.

Indian Art – Performing Arts, Visual Arts, and Literary Arts

Art can be further classified into three –

1. Performing Arts
2. Visual Arts
3. Literary Arts

Certain art forms can be a mixture of more than one of these types.

Performing Arts – Dance, Music, Theater and Puppets



1. Dances of India – Classical, Regional

Classical Dances –

1. Bharatnatyam
2. Kathakali
3. Kathak
4. Manipuri
5. Odissi
6. Kuchipudi
7. Sattriya

- Also, learn the Regional Dances of India.

2. Music of India – Hindustani, Carnatic, and Regional Music

1. Hindustani Classical Music
2. Carnatic Classical Music
3. Regional Music

Musical Instruments

- (i) The Tata Vadya or Chordophones – Stringed instruments
- (ii) The Sushira Vadya or Aerophones – Wind instruments
- (iii) The Avanaddha Vadya or Membranophones – Percussion instruments
- (iv) The Ghana Vadya or Idiophones – Solid instruments which do not require tuning.

3. Theatre Forms of India

1. Traditional
2. Modern

Also, learn the Puppet Forms of India – String Puppets, Shadow Puppets, Rod Puppets and Glove Puppets.

Visual Arts – Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting



1. Indian Architecture

- Pre-historic
- Indus Civilization
- Buddhist Architecture
- Temple Architecture
- Indo-Islamic Architecture
- Modern Architecture

2. Indian Sculpture

- Pre-historic
- Indus Civilization
- Buddhist Sculpture
- Gupta Sculpture
- Medieval School of Sculpture
- Modern Indian Sculpture

3. Indian Painting

- Wall Paintings of India
- Miniature Painting
- Modern Indian Painting

Literary Arts



- Ancient Indian Literature
- The Purana
- Classical Sanskrit Literature
- Literature in Pali and Prakrit
- Early Dravidian Literature
- Medieval Literature
- Women Poets of Bhakti
- Other Trends in Medieval Literature
- Modern Indian Literature
- The Emergence of Nationalism
- The Literature of Nationalism, Reformism, and Revivalism
- Indian Romanticism
- The Advent of Mahatma Gandhi
- Progressive Literature
- Making of Modern Theatre
- Search for Modernity

- The Indian Literary Scene After Independence
- Dalit Literature
- Use of Mythology
- Contemporary Literature

Indian Culture – Priority Areas

As Visual Arts include architecture and Literary Arts include literature, it can be said that **Indian Culture from UPSC perspective is a study of arts**. There are of course other important areas like Religion and Indian Philosophies, but they should be covered separately.

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