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2-Minute Series

A compilation of foundational topics prerequisite for Civil Services

For the 4th Week

of

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(22nd February-27th February)

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1. History

1.1.The Rajasthani Schools of Painting

Kishangarh School of Painting

- The term 'Rajasthani Schools of Painting' pertains to the schools of painting that prevailed in the princely kingdoms and thikanas of what roughly constitutes Rajasthan and parts of Madhya Pradesh in the present time, such as Mewar, Bundi, Kota, Jaipur, Bikaner, Kishangarh, Jodhpur (Marwar), Malwa, Sirohi and other such principalities largely between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

- Though separated by short distances, the pictorial styles that emerged and evolved in these kingdoms were significantly diverse in terms of either execution—fine or bold; preference of colours (brilliant or gentle); compositional elements (depiction of architecture, figures and nature); modes of narration; affinity for naturalism—or had emphasis on extreme mannerism.

- Paintings were painted on waslis—layered, thin sheets of handmade papers glued together to get the desired thickness.

- The outline was sketched on waslis in black or brown followed by colours fixed therein by brief notations or sample patches.

- Colour pigments were predominantly obtained from minerals and precious metals like gold and silver that were mixed with glue as the binding medium.

- Camel and squirrel hair were used in brushes.

- On completion, the painting was burnished with an agate to lend it a uniform sheen and an appealing resplendence.

Themes of Paintings

- By the sixteenth century, Vaishvanism in the cults of Rama and Krishna had become popular in many parts of western, northern and central India as part of the Bhakti movement that had swept the entire Indian subcontinent.

Kishangarh School of Painting

- Kishangarh paintings are distinguished by their exquisite sophistication and distinct facial type exemplified by arched eyebrows, lotus petal shaped eyes slightly tinged with pink, having drooping eyelids, a sharp slender nose and thin lips.

- Kishan Singh, one of the sons of the king of Jodhpur, founded the state of Kishangarh in 1609. By the mid-seventeenth century under the patronage of Man Singh (1658–1706), artists were already working in the Kishangarh court.
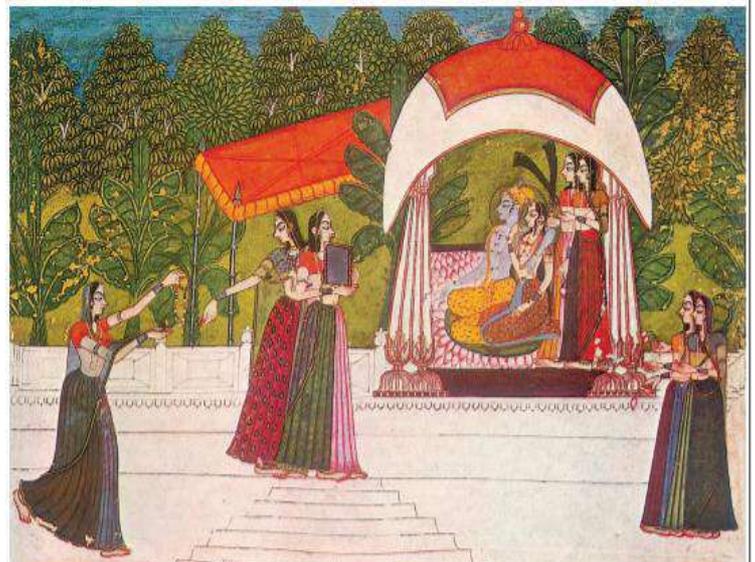
- A distinctive style of the state with a general tendency to elongate the human form, making lavish use of green and penchant for depicting panoramic landscapes had evolved by the early eighteenth century during the reign of Raj Singh (1706–1748).

- With Raj Singh getting initiated into the Pushtimargiya cult of Vallabhacharya, Krishna Lila themes became personal favourites for the rulers of Kishangarh and represented a major portion of their court art.

- Sawant Singh's most celebrated and outstanding artist was Nihal Chand.

- Nihal Chand worked for Sawant Singh between 1735 and 1757, and composed paintings on Sawant Singh's poetry that portrayed the theme of divine lovers—Radha and Krishna.

Bani Thani

- Sawant Singh composed devotional poetry on Krishna and Radha in Brajbhasha under the pen name Nagari Das.

- He is said to have been passionately in love with a young singer, who was accorded the title 'Bani Thani', the bewitching lady of fashion, because of her unparalleled beauty and elegance.

- She was an attendant of Raj Singh's wife and a gifted poetess, singer and dancer.

- Bani Thani was Sawant Singh's muse for the poetry he wrote, celebrating the love of Radha and Krishna.

- He writes about her in a poem Bihari Jas Chandrika, which became the basis for Nihal chand's painting of Bani Thani, thus, representing a blending of poetry and painting.

- Troubled by fratricidal conflict, Sawant Singh, eventually, abdicated the throne in 1757 and retired to Vrindavan along with Bani Thani.

- The exaggerated facial type of Kishangarh, which becomes the distinctive and salient stylistic feature of the Kishangarh School, is believed to have been derived from the attractively sharp facial features of Bani Thani.

- Artist Nihal Chand is attributed with the credit of contriving this exquisite and characteristic Kishangarh physiognomy that is perceived in figures of Sawant Singh and Bani Thani is always represented as Krishna and Radha in brilliantly coloured, panoramic landscapes.

- Radha's face in Bani Thani as Radha is unique in her deeply curved eyes, exaggerated arch of the eyebrows, pointed nose, serpentine curl of hair spiralling down the cheek, thin lips and pronounced chin.

- This particular painting is in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi.
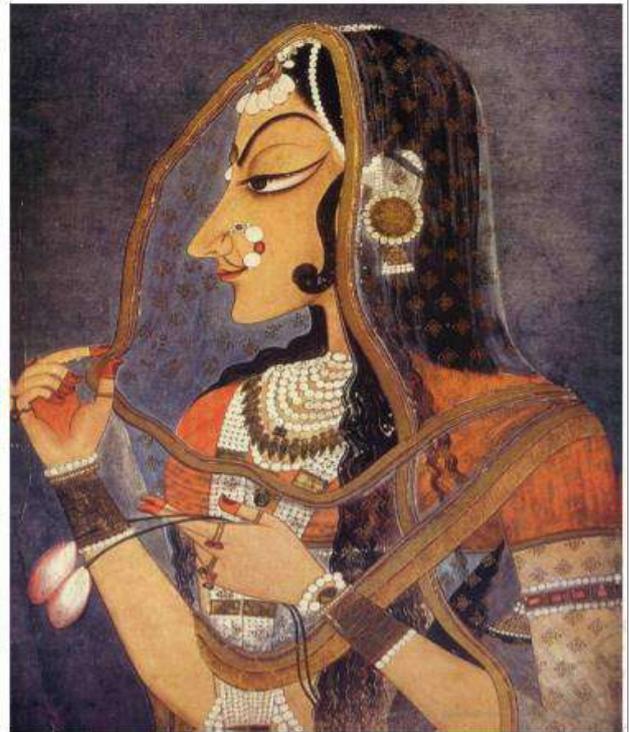
2. Polity & Governance

2.1.Delimitation Commission

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats to represent changes in population. In this process, the number of seats allocated to a state may also change.

- The objective is to provide equal representation for equal population segments, and a fair division of geographical areas, so that no political party has an advantage.

- The job of delimitation is assigned to a high-power body. Such a body is known as Delimitation Commission or a Boundary Commission.

- In India, such Delimitation Commissions have been constituted 4 times – in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952, in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962, in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972 and in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.

- Composition: According to the Delimitation Commission Act, 2002, the Delimitation Commission will have three members: a serving or retired judge of the Supreme Court as the chairperson, and the Chief Election Commissioner or Election Commissioner nominated by the CEC and the State Election Commissioner as ex-officio members.

- There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses. This was a fallout of the provision that the ratio between the number of Lok Sabha seats in a state and the population of the state is, as far as practicable, the same for all states.

- Although unintended, this meant that states that took little interest in population control could end up with more seats in Parliament, while the southern states that promoted family planning could end up with fewer seats.

- Amid these concerns, the Constitution was amended in 1976 to suspend delimitation until 2001.

- The Delimitation Commission in India is a high-power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court.

- These orders come into force on a date to be specified by the President of India in this behalf. The copies of its orders are laid before the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly concerned, but no modifications are permissible therein by them.

- Another amendment extended the freeze on the number of seats until 2026, by when the country was projected to achieve a uniform population growth rate.

- So, the last delimitation exercise between July 2002 and March 31, 2008, based on the 2001 Census, only readjusted boundaries of existing Lok Sabha and Assembly seats and reworked the number of reserved seats.

- In Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland, various organisations had moved the Gauhati High Court against the 2002-08 exercise, challenging the use of the 2001 Census for reference.

- From Assam, an all-party delegation met then Home Minister Shivraj Patil pleading that delimitation be called off because the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was yet to be updated.

- The Delimitation Act was amended in 2008, and on February 8, 2008, Presidential orders were issued to defer delimitation in these four states.

Jump To 2020..............

- On February 28, 2020, President cleared the decks for the resumption of the delimitation exercise in the four states by cancelling the order of February 8, 2008.

- The fresh order issued by the Legislative Department of the Law Ministry said "it appears that the circumstances that led to the deferring of the delimitation exercise" in Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland "have ceased to exist and that the delimitation of the constituencies as envisaged under the Delimitation Act, 2002 could be carried out now.

- It noted that there had been a reduction in insurgency incidents, making the situation conducive for carrying out delimitation.

- Subsequently, on March 6, the Law Ministry notified the Delimitation Commission for the four northeast states and Jammu and Kashmir, which was also left out in 2002-08.

- The Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir was constituted by the Centre on March 6, 2020 to redraw Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies of the union territory in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which bifurcated the state into union territories of J&K and Ladakh.

- Former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai is its chairperson, and Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra is the EC's representative on the panel.

3. Economy

3.1.Central Bank Digital Currency CBDC

CBDC

- It is a legal tender and the Central bank's liability in digital form appearing in its balance sheet.

- It has the backing of the Central Bank and the Sovereign.

- Legal Tender means that this is a recognized currency under law as a means of payment/settlement.

- CBDC is a form of electronic currency which can be exchanged at par with similarly denominated cash and traditional deposit.

- It is another variant of the fiat money (currency) which central banks traditionally issue.

- It carries the same promise like a traditional currency note.

RBI & CBDC

- The RBI issuing a CBDC would be equivalent to converting the entire INR in the economy to complete digital format, which will be backed and issued by the RBI.

Who All Can Access CBDC

- At present, access to central bank money is limited to commercial banks or certain qualified financial institutions.

- (Only those financial institutions whose credits and debits are settled in the accounts of the central bank using the reserves kept with the central bank.)

- The physical currency/cash is also a liability of the central bank held in retail form by general public.

- CBDC will be the third variant wherein the CBDC-using general public directly holds claims against central bank.

- This raises questions for commercial bank based intermediation and monetary policy administration.

Types

- CBDC can take two forms broadly:

- Wholesale CBDC:

  ✓ This type of CBDC is used for interbank payments and held by financial institutions. One can say that such type of CBDC already has a loose existence in India.

- Retail CBDC:

  ✓ This type of CBDC is for general public.

  ✓ It is a token which can exist alongside physical cash and commercial bank money.

India's stand on CBDC

- RBI has in the past cautioned against the usage of crypto currencies in general.

- However, taking note of the rapid development in the field of digital and crypto currencies, the RBI has stated that it is working on the need to introduce digital currency (CBDC) in India and if yes, the possible steps to operationalize the same.

- In 2018, the RBI banned commercial banks from trading in crypto currencies as well as from facilitating the players from trading and exchanging crypto currencies.

- However, the Supreme Court of India quashed this ban in March 2020 on grounds of the circular being unreasonable.

- Since then, crypto currency and crypto exchanges have been working in regulatory vacuum.

The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill 2021

- The 2021 budget session of the Parliament is considering introduction and passage of "The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill 2021".

- The essence of this bill is to create a facilitative framework for issuance of digital currency and to prohibit all private crypto currencies in India with certain exceptions to promote the underlying technology of crypto currencies in India.

CBDC in other Economies

- The Bank of England can be considered as the first Central Bank pioneered with the introduction of CBDC in 2014. China is likely to be the first economy to issue retail CBDC.

- China carried out a test run of the Chinese CBDC by paying salaries for their government employees as CBDC in their wallets.

- The Swedish Central Bank (Riksbank) is also looking forward to the issuance of the digital version of Swedish Krona (e-Krona).

- Turkey has initiated R&D for having their digital currency and aims to start pilots in the second half of 2021.

- In a recent Bank for International Settlements (BIS) Paper, it was observed that 86% of the 65 respondent Central banks are engaged in research or some kind of experimentation in CBDCs.

Opportunities and Risks

- Central banks could perhaps target monetary stimulus better as individual beneficiaries and vulnerable sections could be identified quickly and assisted during times of economic stress.

- These extensive powers with the central bank may spark privacy concerns, especially authoritarian governments can use it to keep track of all transactions and exercise more control over the public.

- There are implications for monetary policy too.

- For advanced economies, negative interest rates may become easier to implement as digital fiat can be directly programmed to do so.

- That is, assuming physical cash is done away with. Otherwise, savers could just hoard physical cash.

- (It pays to note that deeply negative rates can undermine confidence in the currency and prompt a rush to gold or other such assets.)

- The central bank could be compelled to accept the risky role of a financial intermediary during times of crisis, as all funds are likely to flow into its books.

- Issuance and withdrawal limits could perhaps help address some of these vulnerabilities, but not all.

4. Environment & Ecology

4.1.Tree City of the World- Hyderabad

Introduction

- Hyderabad has become the only city in India to be recognised as a 'Tree City of the World' by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

- Hyderabad as a '2020 Tree City of the World'

- Hyderabad is placed alongside 119 other cities from 63 countries.

- Hyderabad has earned recognition in the Foundation's second year of the programme along with 51 other cities in the world.

- It has become a part of an important global network leading the way in urban and community forestry.

- It is the only City in India to get this recognition so far.

- The United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are the countries with the maximum cities featured on the list, with 38, 15 and 11 cities, respectively.

- The countries have been recognised for their commitment to growing and maintaining urban forests in building healthy, resilient and happy cities.

Tree City of the World programme

- According to the official website, the 'Tree City of the World' programme provides direction, assistance, and worldwide recognition for communities' dedication to its urban forest, and provides a framework for a healthy, sustainable urban forestry programme.

Eligibility

- To be eligible as a 'Tree City', cities need to conform to the following five standards:

- Standard 1: Establish Responsibility

  ✓ The city has a written statement by city leaders delegating responsibility for the care of trees within the municipal boundary to a staff member, a city department, or a group of citizens—called a Tree Board.

- Standard 2: Set the Rules

  ✓ The city has in place a law or an official policy that governs the management of forests and trees. These rules describe how work must be performed—often citing best practices or industry standards for tree care and worker safety—where and when they apply, and penalties for noncompliance.

- Standard 3: Know What You Have

  ✓ The city has an updated inventory or assessment of the local tree resource so that an effective long-term plan for planting, care, and removal of city trees can be established.

- Standard 4: Allocate the Resources

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✓The city has a dedicated annual budget for the routine implementation of the tree management plan.

- Standard 5: Celebrate Achievements:

    ✓The city holds an annual celebration of trees to raise awareness among residents and to acknowledge citizens and staff members who carry out the city tree programme.

- Hyderabad City has pledged its commitment by meeting five programme standards that show their dedication and determination towards planting and conserving trees for a greener future.

Hyderabad's Recognition

- It is in response to its commitment to growing and maintaining urban forestry through Haritha Haram programme and Urban Forest Parks.

Haritha Haram programme

- Haritha Haram is a flagship programme of the Telangana government to increase the green cover of the State from the present 25.16 to 33% of the total geographical area.

- It is to be achieved by a multi-pronged approach of rejuvenating degraded forests, ensuring more effective protection of forests against smuggling, encroachment, fire, grazing and intensive soil and moisture conservation measures following the watershed approach.

Urban Forest Parks (UFP)

- The Forest blocks in and around cities are developed into Urban Forest Parks (UFP) under this programme.

- These Urban Forest Parks will not only provide the whole some healthy living environment but also contribute to the growth of smart, clean, green, sustainable and healthy cities in the state.

5. Science & Technology

5.1. Deficiency Diseases

Deficiency	Disease
Proteins	Kwashiorkor (enlarged liver), Marasmus (energy deficiency)
Calcium	Rickets (soft bones), Tetany (contraction of muscles)
Iodine	Goitre (enlarged thyroid gland)
Iron	Anaemia (decrease in RBCs)
Thiamine (Vitamin B1)	Beriberi (nerve degeneration and cardiovascular functioning)
Riboflavin (Vitamin B2)	Retarded growth, bad skin
Niacin (Vitamin B3)	Pellagra (inflamed skin, sores, diarrhoea)
Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid)	Scurvy (bleeding gums)
Vitamin D (Calciferol)	Osteoporosis (skeletal disorder), Rickets
Vitamin A	Night Blindess
Vitamin K	Haemophilia (reduced blood clotting)

5.2. Difference between Animal Cell and Plant Cell

Sr. No.	Feature	Animal Cell	Plant Cell
1	Cell Wall	No cell wall and cell limited by plasma membrane	Cell enclosed by a rigid, cellulose cell wall, present outside plasma membrane
2	Vacuoles	Either absent or very small	Large cell vacuole lies in the centre
3	Centrosome	Present	Usually absent (present only in some lower plants)
4	Plastids	Absent (except the protozoan Euglena)	Present
5	Photosynthetic pigments	Generally absent	Pigments like chlorophyll and carotenoids present
6	Food storage	In the form of oil and glycogen	Reserve food occurs generally in the form of starch
7	Lysosomes	Occur in cytoplasm	Generally absent (Found only in eukaryotic plant cells)
8	Mitochondira	Generally numerous	Fewer in number
9	Crystals	Usually absent	Usually present
10	Contractile vacuoles	Present for osmoregulation	Not found
11	Nucleus	Usually centric	Eccentric nucleus due to presence of vacuole
12	Shape	Not definite, can change	Distinct, definite shape
13	Chloroplast	Absent	Present because plant cells make their own food
14	Golgi Apparatus	Single highly complex Golgi	Simpler units of and prominent Golgi apparatus called dictyosomes

Which of the following statements are correct regarding the general difference between plant and animals?

1. Plant cells have cellulose cell walls whilst animal cells do not.

2. Plant cells do not have plasma membrane unlike animal cells which do.

3. Mature plant cell has one large vacuole whilst animal cell has many small vacuoles.