

# 50 Most Important Topics of History (Part 1): UPSC Prelims 2023

# ANCIENT HISTORY

# 1,300-yr-old Buddhist Stupa



# Context

- Recently, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) **stumbled upon a 1,300-year-old stupa right in the middle of a mining site** in Odisha's Jajpur district



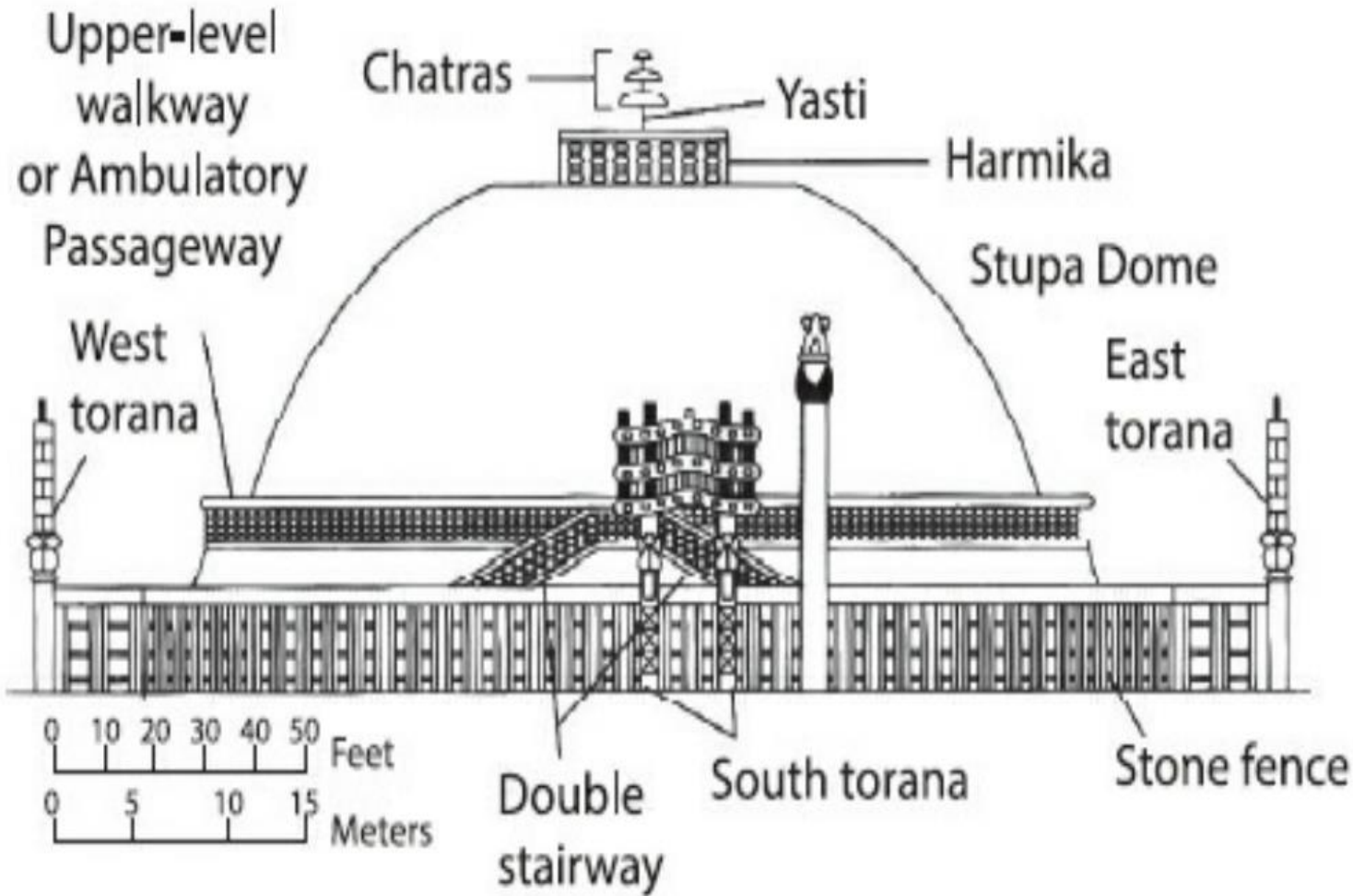
# Analysis for Mains:

## Background Information on Stupas

- Stupas were **burial mounds** prevalent in India from the Vedic period.
- It is a conventional **representation of a funeral cumulus** in which relics and ashes of the dead were kept.
- Although a Vedic tradition, **stupas were popularised by the Buddhists.**
- **During the period of Ashoka, the art of stupas reached its climax.**



# Analysis:



**Q.)Which one of the following statements is correct?  
(2021)**

- A. Ajanta Caves lie in the gorge of Waghora river.
- B. Sanchi Stupa lies in the gorge of Chambal river.
- C. Pandu-lena Cave shrines lie in the gorge of Narmada river.
- D. Amaravati Stupa lies in the gorge of Godavari river.

➤ Sanchi: Betwa

➤ Pandu-lena: Gomai

➤ Amaravati: Near Krishna



# MEDIEVAL HISTORY

# GURU RAVIDAS



# Context

Recently the **Sant Guru Ravidas Jayanti** was celebrated across the country.

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

## Important points to remember:

- Ravidas Jayanti is celebrated on Magh Purnima, the full moon day in the month of Magh according to the Hindu lunar calendar.
- Guru Ravidas was a **saint and reformer** of the **Bhakti movement** in North India. (14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century???)
- It is believed that he was **born in Varanasi** in a cobbler's family.
- He gained prominence due to his belief in one God and his **unbiased religious poems**.

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

- He dedicated his whole life to the **abolition of the caste system** and openly despised the notion of a Brahminical society.
- Most scholars **believe** that Ravidas met Guru Nanak Dev.
- Around 41 of his poems were **included** in 'Guru Granth Sahib'.
- He is believed to be a **disciple of the bhakti saint-poet Ramananda** and a contemporary of the bhakti saint-poet **Kabir**.

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

- Among Ravidas's moral and intellectual achievements were the **conception of "Begampura"**, a city that knows no sorrow; and a society where caste and class have ceased to matter.
- He **abandoned saguna** (with attributes, image) forms of supreme beings, and **focused on the nirguna** (without attributes, abstract) form of supreme beings.



# MODERN HISTORY

# Regulating Act of 1773

- Permitted the company to retain its territorial possessions in India
- Changed the post of Governor of Bengal to “**Governor-General of Bengal**”.
- **Establishment of Supreme Court in Calcutta**
- For the first time, **the British cabinet was given the right to exercise control over Indian affairs.**



# Regulating Act of 1773

- **Creation of Executive Council to Assist the Governor-General**
- **Reforms to curb corruptions**

## Reasons behind 1773 Act

- Territorial expansion
- Corruption amongst the servants of company
- Lack of proper judicial administration
- Lack of proper central authority
- Deteriorating financial condition of the company
- Company's defeat in 1769 at the hands of Hyder Ali
- Terrible famine in Bengal
- The Company applied for a loan of one Million Pounds in 1772

# Pitt's India Act, 1784

- Named after ????

## Pitt's India Act (1784)

- ◉ Distinguished between commercial and political functions of the company
- ◉ Court of directors were allowed to manage commercial affairs and established Board of control to manage political affairs (**double government**)
- ◉ Company's territories in India were for the first time called the '**British possessions in India**'

# Charter Act of 1813

## • Continental System in Europe & Napoleon

### ▪ Features:

1. Charter act of 1813 ended the monopoly of the East India Company in India, the company's monopoly in trade with China and trade in tea with India was kept intact.
2. The company's rule was extended to another 20 years.
3. The act granted permission to the persons who wished to go to India for promoting moral and religious improvements.  
(Christian Missionaries)
4. There was also a provision that Company should invest Rs. 1 Lakh every year on the education of Indians.
5. It empowered the Local Governments in India to impose taxes on persons and to punish those who did not pay them.



# Charter Act of 1833

## Charter Act of 1833

GGB → GGI  
GGI Power ↑  
4<sup>th</sup> Member by Invitation  
Formation of Agra Presidency

Monopoly Gone, EIC  
reduced to Admin Body.  
St Helena Act.

Codification of Laws.  
1<sup>st</sup> Law commission  
established.

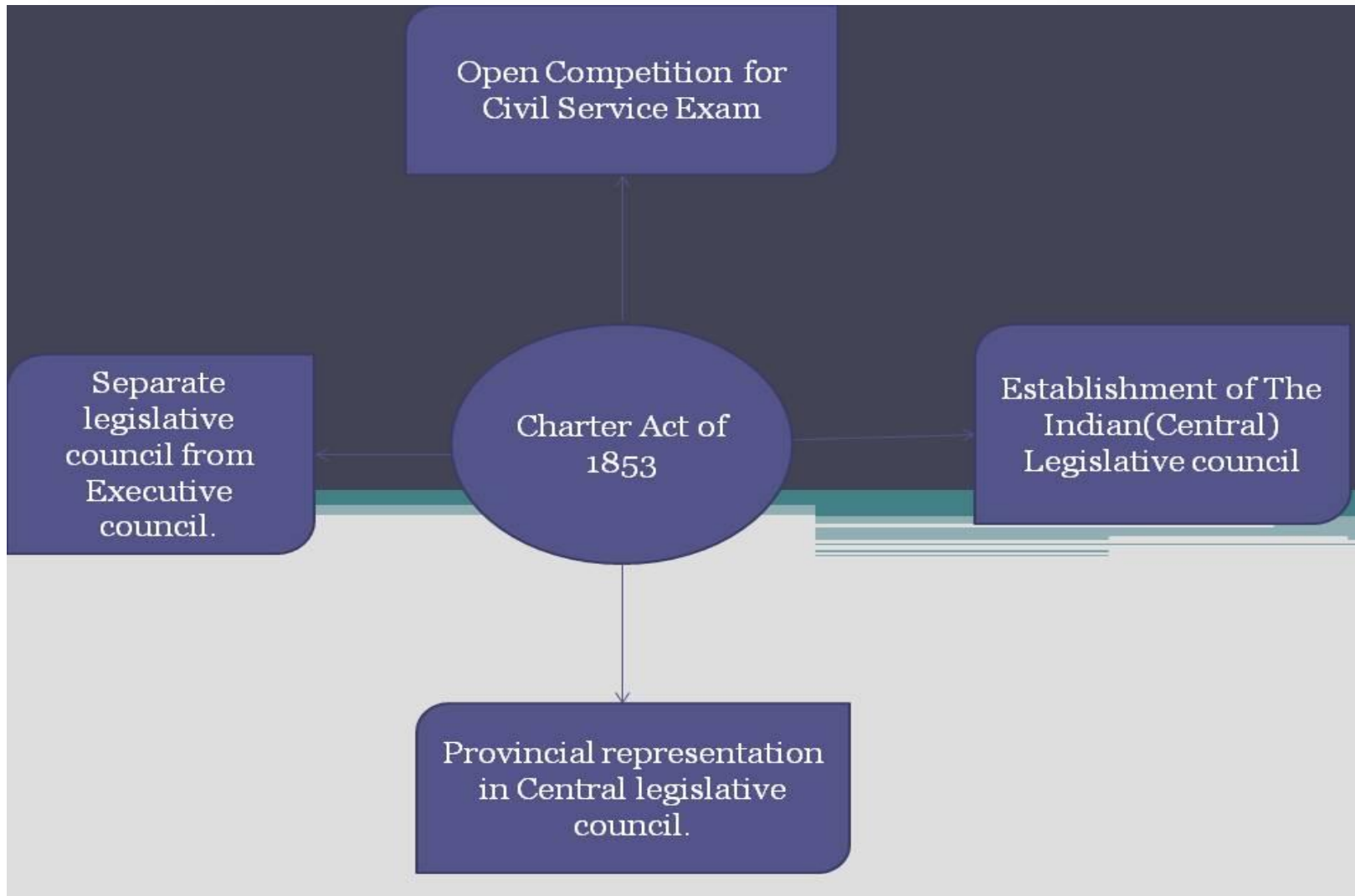
Civil Service: Idea of  
open competition

Centralization ↑  
Madras and Bombay  
Presidency legislative  
Power ↓





# Charter Act of 1853



# Queen's Proclamation, 1858

➤ What was/were the objective/objectivess of Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858? [**PYQ**]

1. To disclaim any intention to annex Indian States
2. To place the Indian administration under the British Crown
3. To regulate East India Company's trade with India

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

# Queen's Proclamation, 1858

**'Act for the Good government of India'**

Ended the Dual government scheme

India became a direct British colony through the passage of this act

Viceroy

# Indian Councils Act, 1861

- Restored the legislative powers of the Governor-in-Councils of the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay (which was taken away by the Charter Act of 1833).
- Lord Canning, who was the Viceroy at the time, introduced the **portfolio system**. In this system, each member was assigned a portfolio of a particular department.
- For legislative purposes, the Viceroy's Council was enlarged. Now, there were to be between 6 and 12 additional members (nominated by the Viceroy).
- Lord Canning nominated three Indians to the Council in 1862 namely, the Raja of Benares, the Maharaja of Patiala and Sir Dinkar Rao.



Sir Dinkar Rao, formerly Dewan of Gwalior (Mahratta)

# Indian Councils Act, 1861

- Viceroy also had the power to promulgate ordinances without the council's concurrence during emergencies.
- Provision made for the formation of legislative councils in other provinces. New provinces could also be created for legislative purposes and Lieutenant Governors be appointed for them. Legislative councils were formed in other provinces in Bengal in 1862, North-West Frontier Province in 1886 and Punjab and Burma in 1897.

# Indian Councils Act, 1892

- Increased the number of additional (non-official) members in the Central and provincial legislative councils, but maintained the official majority in them.
- Members could now discuss the budget without right to vote on it. They were also not allowed to ask supplementary questions.
- A system of indirect elections was introduced to elect the members of the councils. The universities, district board, municipalities, zamindars and chambers of commerce were empowered to recommend members to provincial councils.
- Said to be a first step towards the beginning of the representative government in India. However such representation was via only indirect elections and there was nothing for a common Indian. The system of indirect election prevented direct contact between the public and the representatives.





# Indian Councils Act, 1909

- The legislative councils at the Centre and the provinces increased in size.
- Central Legislative Council – from 16 to 60 members; Legislative Councils of Bengal, Madras, Bombay and United Provinces – 50 members each; Legislative Councils of Punjab, Burma and Assam – 30 members each



MORLEY-MINTO  
REFORMS  
1909



# Indian Councils Act, 1909

- The legislative councils at the centre and the provinces were to have **four categories** of members as follows: **Ex officio members**: Governor-General and members of the executive council; **Nominated official members**: Government officials who were nominated by the Governor-General; **Nominated non-official members**: nominated by the Governor-General but were not government officials; **Elected members**: elected by different categories of Indians.
- The elected members were elected indirectly. The local bodies elected an electoral college who would elect members of the provincial legislative councils. These members would, in turn, elect the members of the Central legislative council.
- The elected members were from the local bodies, the chambers of commerce, landlords, universities, traders' communities and Muslims.



# Indian Councils Act, 1909

- It introduced **separate electorates for the Muslims**. Some constituencies were earmarked for Muslims and only Muslims could vote their representatives.
- The members could discuss the budget and move resolutions. They could also discuss matters of public interest. They could also ask supplementary questions. No discussions on foreign policy or on relations with the princely states were permitted.
- Lord Minto appointed (on much persuasion by Morley) **Satyendra P Sinha** as the first Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.
- Two Indians were nominated to the Council of the Secretary of State for Indian affairs.

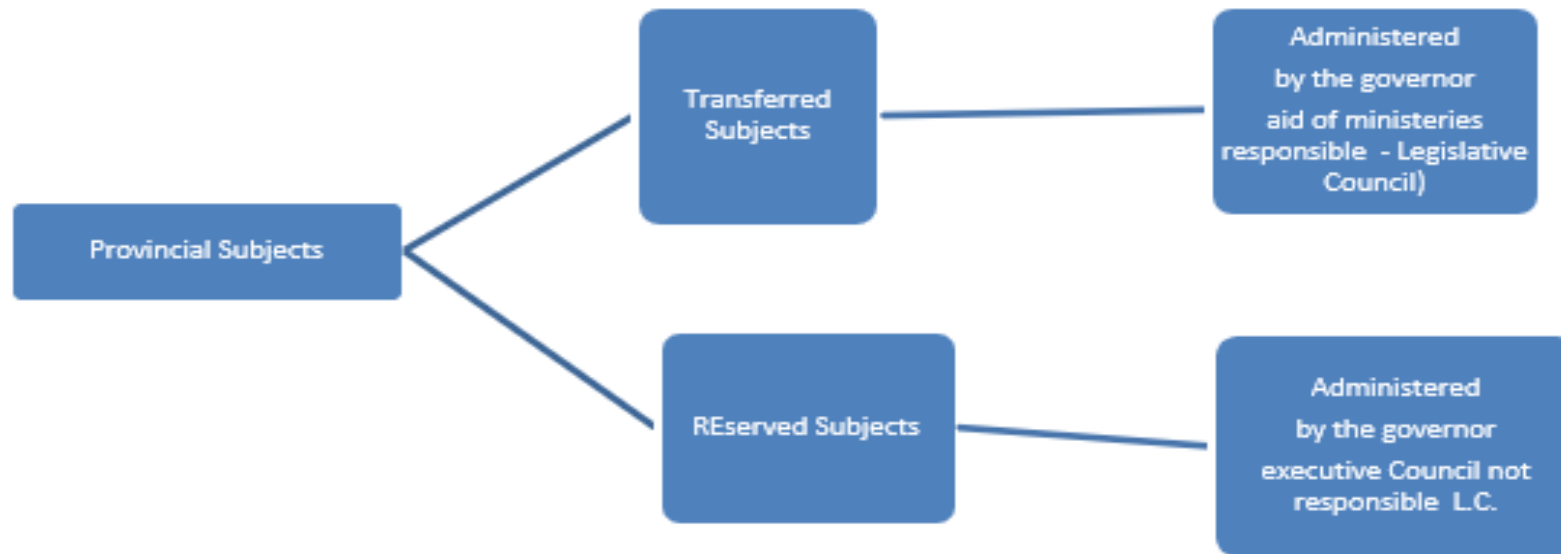


# GoI Act, 1919

- Based on the recommendations of a report by Edwin Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, India's Viceroy between 1916 and 1921.
- It relaxed the central control over the provinces by demarcating and separating the central and provincial subjects. The central and provincial legislatures were authorised to make laws on their respective list of subjects. However, the structure of government continued to be centralised and unitary.
- It **further divided the provincial subjects into two parts—transferred and reserved**. The transferred subjects were to be administered by the governor with the aid of ministers responsible to the legislative Council. The reserved subjects, on the other hand, were to be administered by the governor and his executive council without being responsible to the legislative Council. This dual scheme of governance was known as '**dyarchy**'—a term derived from the Greek word di-arche which means double rule.

# GoI Act, 1919

- It introduced, for the first time, bicameralism and direct elections in the country. Thus, the Indian Legislative Council was replaced by a bicameral legislature consisting of an Upper House (Council of State) and a Lower House (Legislative Assembly). The majority of members of both the Houses were chosen by direct election.



# GoI Act, 1919

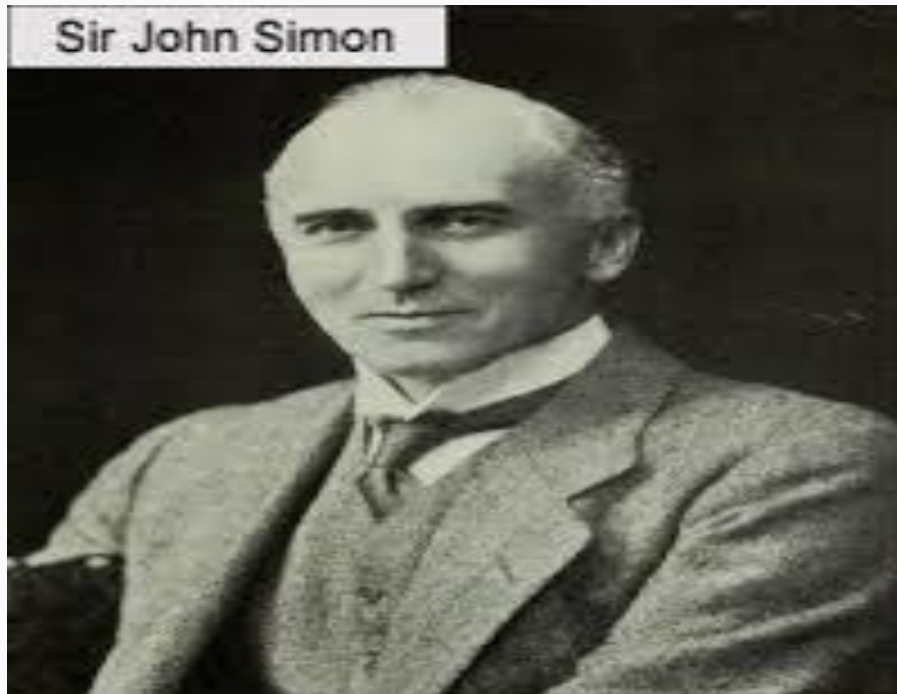
- It granted franchise to a limited number of people on the basis of property, tax or education.
- It required that the **three of the six members of the Viceroy's executive Council were to be Indian.**
- It **extended the principle of communal representation by providing separate electorates for Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans.**
- It provided for the establishment of a public service commission. Hence, a Central Public Service Commission was set up in 1926 for recruiting civil servants.
- It created a new office of the High Commissioner for India in London and transferred to him some of the functions hitherto performed by the Secretary of State for India.





# GoI Act, 1919

- It provided for the appointment of a statutory commission to inquire into and report on its working after ten years of its coming into force.



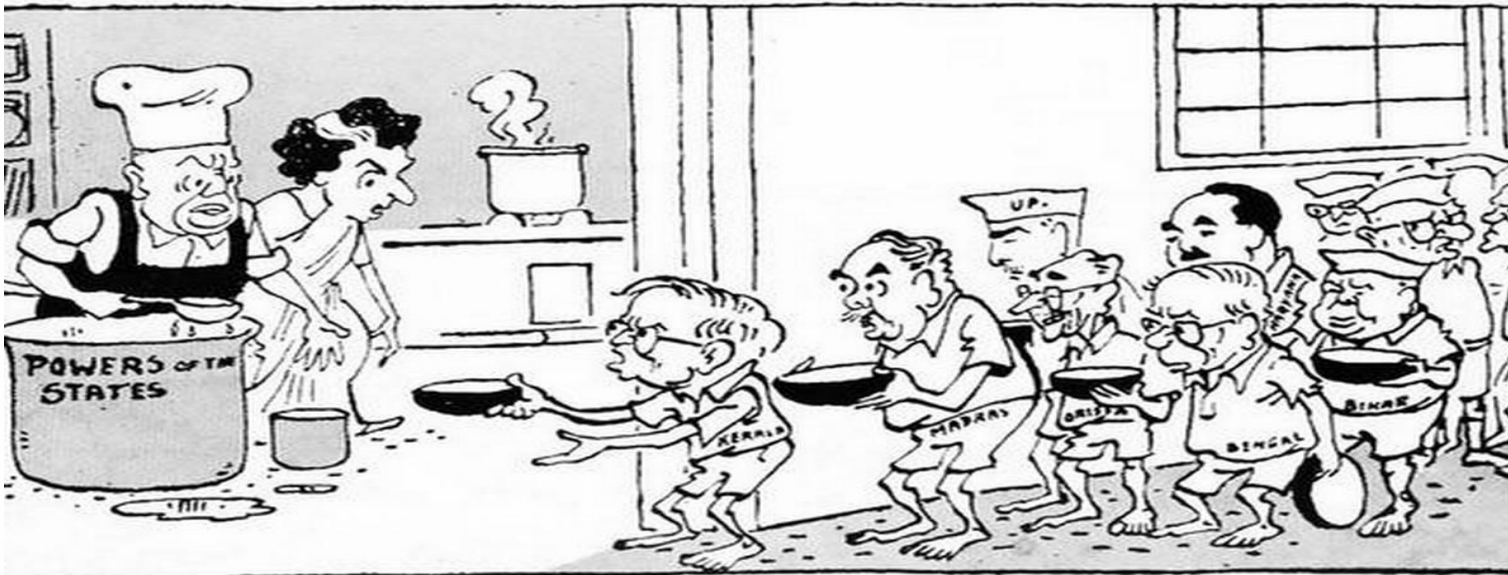
# GoI Act, 1935

- While under previous Governments of India Acts, the Government of India was unitary, the Government of India Act, 1935 prescribed an **All India Federation**, taking provinces and princely states as units. Although, it was optional for Indian states to join the Federation.
  
- **Distribution of Legislative powers between Centre and the Provinces**
  1. Federal List- External Affairs, Currency and coinage, Naval, Military, Air-Force, Census, etc.
  2. Provincial List- Police, Provincial Public Service, Education, etc.
  3. Concurrent List- Criminal Law and procedure, Civil Procedure, Marriage and Divorce, Arbitration, etc.

# GoI Act, 1935

## ➤ Provincial Autonomy

Act proposed provinces as autonomous units of administration. It **ended dyarchy at the provinces** introduced in the Government of India Act, 1919. The executive authority was to be exercised by a Governor on behalf of Crown and was required to act with advice of Ministers responsible to legislature.



# GoI Act, 1935

## ➤ Dyarchy at Centre

Under the Act, the Viceroy had two functions:

1. Administration of defence, external affairs, tribal area in his discretion with the help of 'counsellors' who were not responsible to legislature.
  2. Other subject matters- on advice of 'Council of Ministers' who were responsible to legislature.
- 
- Act introduced bicameral legislature in 6 of the 11 Provinces. Bicameral legislatures were introduced in provinces like Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Bihar, Assam and the United Provinces.
  - The act provided for the establishment of Reserve Bank of India.
  - A Federal Railway Authority was set up to control Indian railways.

# GoI Act, 1935

## ➤ Federal court

A federal court was to be established at Delhi for the resolution of disputes between provinces and also between the centre and the provinces.

- The Act also provided for the establishment of federal, provincial and joint Public Service Commissions.

## ➤ Reorganisation

1. Sindh was carved out of Bombay Presidency.
  2. Bihar and Orissa were split.
  3. Burma was severed off from India.
  4. Aden was also separated from India and made into a Crown colony.
- The Government of India Act, 1935 extended the franchise to one-sixth of the adults.



# PYQ

➤ Which one of the following is not a feature of the Government of India Act of 1935?

- (a) Dyarchy at the Centre as well as in the provinces
- (b) a bicameral legislature
- (c) provincial autonomy
- (d) an All-India federation



# MAHARSHI DAYANAND SARASWATI





# Context

- PM recently inaugurated the year-long celebrations commemorating the 200th birth anniversary of **Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati**, at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Delhi.

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

## Important Points to remember:

- Dayanand Saraswati was **born on 12 February 1824** in Gujarat. His birth name was **Mool Shankar Tiwari**.
- The deaths of his younger sister and his uncle from cholera led Dayananda **to ponder the meaning of life and death**.
- He was engaged in his early teens, but he **decided marriage was not for him** and ran away from home in 1846.

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

- He spent **nearly twenty-five years, from 1845 to 1869, as a wandering ascetic**, searching for religious truth.
- During these years he **practised various forms of yoga** and became a disciple of a religious teacher named **Virajanand Dandeesha**.
- The **first Arya Samaj unit** was formally set up by him **at Bombay in 1875** and later the headquarters of the Samaj were established at Lahore.
- There are **10 guiding principles of Arya Samaj**, enunciating the Ten Universal Principles as a code for Universalism, called **Krinvanto Vishwaryam**.

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

- The Arya Samaj upholds the **infallibility of the Vedas**. It also **believes in karma theory** (the accumulated effect of past deeds), the concept of rebirth, sanctity of the COW.
- It **opposes image worshiping**, animal sacrifice, shraddha, untouchability, child marriage, pilgrimages and temple offerings.
- Arya Samaj- Reformist or Revivalist????

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

- Dayanand Saraswati said the **four Vedas are the only true uncorrupted sources** of Dharma, revealed by the Supreme Lord, at the beginning of every creation.
- He gave the slogan **“Back to the Vedas”** which was a call for a **revival of Vedic learning** and Vedic purity of religion and not a revival of Vedic times.
- He stressed the **significance of individual interpretation** of the scriptures and said that every person has the right of access to God.
- He **criticised later Hindu scriptures** such as the Puranas and the ignorant priests for perverting

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

- He **subscribed to the chaturvarna system** in which a person was identified as a brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya or shudra **not by birth but according to the occupation and merit of the person.**
- Dayananda's views were **published in his famous work, Satyarth Prakash** (The True Exposition).

# Analysis for Mains and Prelims

- Arya Samaj **started the shuddhi (purification) movement** to reconvert to the Hindu fold the converts to Christianity and Islam.
- It is argued that an aggressive campaign of shuddhi **led to increasing communalisation of social life during the 1920s** and later snowballed into communal political consciousness.



Q.) Which among the following events happened earliest? (2018)

- A. Swami Dayanand established Arya Samaj.
- B. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote Neel Darpan.
- C. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote Anandmath.
- D. Satyendranath Tagore became the first Indian to succeed in the Indian Civil Services Examination.

# GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE



# Context

- Recently, death anniversary of Gokhale was observed.

# Analysis for Prelims:

## Important Points to remember

- He was **born on 9 May, 1866** in present-day Maharashtra.
- He joined Indian National Congress in 1889 and was associated with the Moderate Group of INC.
- He was a **member of the Bombay Legislative Council** from 1899 to 1902.
- Later, he became **member of Imperial Legislative Council** from 1902 to 1915.

# Analysis for Prelims:

- At the Imperial legislature, he played a **key role in framing the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909.**
- He **became president of INC in 1905 in Banaras session.**
- The Indian National Congress session of 1905 under his presidentship resolved to: (i) **condemn the partition of Bengal** and the reactionary policies of Curzon, and (ii) **support the anti-partition and Swadeshi Movement of Bengal.**
- He established the **Servants of India Society in 1905.**

# Analysis for Prelims

- He was also associated with the Sarvajanik sabha journal started by Govind Ranade.
- In 1908, Gokhale founded the Ranade Institute of Economics.
- He started English weekly newspaper, The Hitavada (The people's paper).
- He is regarded by Mahatma Gandhi as his political guru.
- Gandhiji even wrote a book in Gujarati titled 'Dharmatma Gokhale'.
- He died on 19 February, 1915 in Mumbai.

**Q) "A graduate at 18, professor and associate editor of the Sudharak at 20, Secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha and of the Provincial Conference at 25, Secretary of the National Congress at 29, leading witness before an important Royal Commission at 31, Provincial legislator at 34, Imperial legislator at 36, President of the Indian National Congress at 39, a patriot whom Mahatma Gandhi himself regarded as his master". [1997]**

This is how a biographer describes:

- (a) Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya
- (b) Mahadev Govind Ranade
- (c) Gopal Krishna Gokhale
- (d) Bal Gangadhar Tilak



**Q) What was the main reason for the split in the Indian National Congress at Surat in 1907? (2016)**

- A. Introduction of communalism into Indian politics by Lord Minto
- B. Extremists' lack of faith in the capacity of the moderates to negotiate with the British Government
- C. Foundation of Muslim League
- D. Aurobindo Ghosh's inability to be elected as the President of the Indian National Congress



# VISVA-BHARATI UNIVERSITY



# Context

- Visva-Bharati University will **soon get the 'heritage' tag from UNESCO** to take the distinction of **world's first living heritage university**.

# Analysis for Prelims

## Important Points to remember

- Normally heritage tag is given to a “dead monument” by the UNESCO.
- For the first time in the world, a **living university which is functioning is going to get the heritage tag from UNESCO.**
- Visva-Bharati is a **public central university** and an **Institution of National Importance** located in **Shantiniketan, West Bengal.**

# Analysis for Prelims

- It was **founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1921** who called it Visva-Bharati, which means the communion of the world with India.
- Until independence **it was a college**.
- Soon after independence, the institution was **given the status of a central university in 1951** by an act of the Parliament.
- Its **first vice-chancellor was Rathindranath Tagore**, the son of Rabindranath Tagore.

# Analysis for Prelims

- Tagore believed in **open air education** and had reservations about any teaching done within four walls.
- He devised a new system of learning in Visva-Bharati. He allowed **students to continue their course till the student and his teacher both are satisfied.**
- Visva Bharati was **inaugurated as a Centre for Culture** with exploration into the arts, language, humanities, music.



# Analysis for Mains

## Background Information on UNESCO World Heritage Sites

- India has **40 UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.
- Out of total **40 sites from India**, 32 sites are 'cultural', 7 sites are 'natural' and 1 site is 'mixed'.
- Out of these 40, **most sites are located in Maharashtra (5), Gujarat (4) and Rajasthan (4)**.

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# MAHARASHTRA'S FOLK DANCE

## 'LAVANI' IN CONTROVERSY



# Context

- Recently, some political parties have accused a younger generation of women dancers of vulgarising the traditional **folk art form of Lavani**.



# Analysis for Prelims:

## Important Points to remember

- Lavani is one of the **most famous folk dance forms from Maharashtra**.
- It is also one of the most popular genre of music that is popular in Maharashtra.
- It is a **combination of traditional dance** and song that is performed usually on the **beats of the Dholki**, which is a percussion instrument.
- The **music is unique** as it is perfect for dancing.
- It has a **powerful rhythm and beats** which ensures that everyone dances merrily.



# Analysis for Prelims:

- As an indigenous art form, Lavani has a history going back several centuries, and it attained particular **popularity in the Peshwa era in the 18th century.**
- Traditionally, performances were held in front of kings or lords, and for the **entertainment of tired soldiers** resting during breaks in fighting.
- There are **several sub-genres of Lavani**, of which the **most popular is the Shringarik (erotic) kind**, in which the lyrics are often teasing, with sensuous dance steps and delicate gestures employed to convey erotic meaning.

# Analysis for Prelims:

- Over the years, Lavani has **gained more acceptability among the people**, even though certain taboos around it continue.
- The audience has **historically been all-male**, but in **recent years**, some women too have begun to attend performances.

# MOHINIYATTAM



# Context

- Recently, the Classical dance legend **Kanak Rele** and the Mohiniyattam exponent, passed away.





# Analysis for Prelims

## Important Points to remember

- Mohiniattam or the Dance of an Enchantress ('Mohini' meaning beautiful woman and 'attam' means dance), is essentially a **solo dance performance by women**.
- It was further **developed by Vadivelu in 19th century and gained prominence under the rulers of Travancore** in the present state of Kerala.
- The patronage of **Swathi Thirunal the Travancore ruler** in 19th century, is notable.

# Analysis for Prelims

- After it had fallen to obscurity, the **famous Malayali poet V. N. Menon** revived it along with Kalyani Amma.
- Mohiniattam combines the **grace and elegance of Bharatnatyam** with the vigour of **Kathakali**.
- There is a **marked absence of thumping of footsteps** and the footwork is gentle.
- Mohiniattam generally **narrates the story of the feminine dance** of Vishnu.
- It has its **own Nritya and Nritya aspects** like that of other classical dances.



# Analysis for Prelims

- The Lasya aspect (beauty, grace) of dance is dominant in a Mohiniattam recital. Hence, it is **mainly performed by female dancers**.
- The dance is accompanied by music and songs.
- Costume is of special importance in Mohiniattam, with **white and off-white being the principal colours** and presence of gold coloured brocade designs.
- There is no elaborate facial make-up.
- The dancer wears a **leather strap with bells (Ghungroo) on her ankles**.

# Analysis for Prelims

- The element of air is symbolised through a Mohiniattam performance.
- 'Atavakul or Atavus' is the collection of forty basic dance movements.
- Musical instruments used are: cymbals, veena, drums, flute, etc.

# Analysis for Prelims

## List of Classical dances of India

<b>Classical Dance</b>	<b>State</b>
Bharatnatyam	Tamil Nadu
Kathak	Uttar Pradesh
Kuchipudi	Andhra Pradesh
Odissi	Odisha
Kathakali	Kerala
Sattriya	Assam
Manipuri	Manipur
Mohiniyattam	Kerala



# Thank You.