



## Parivartan | Oldest Railway Station | Heritage Conservation

**For Prelims:** Byculla Railway station, [UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation](#), Special Recognition for Sustainable Development, [Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus \(CST\)](#), [Ajanta Caves](#), [Rock-cut Buddhist Cave](#), [Ellora Caves](#), [Elephanta Caves](#)

**For Mains:** Impact of UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation on Architectural conservation efforts, Issues Related to Heritage Management in India.

### Why in News?

The **Byculla Railway station** has been restored to its original glory, and received the **Asia Pacific cultural heritage award from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**.

- The **169-year-old Byculla railway station** in Mumbai is one of the **oldest railway stations** in India still in use.

### What are the Key Highlights?

- **About Station:**
  - It was one of the very first stations on the **Bombay-Thane railway line**, which kickstarted rail travel in Mumbai way back in **1853**.
- **Witness to Change:**
  - Byculla has seen Mumbai evolve for over **169 years**. The station itself has transformed over time, from a **simple wooden structure** to the **grand building** in present time.
- **Restored Heritage:**
  - The station underwent a meticulous restoration project, earning its recognition with a **UNESCO award**. This ensures its **architectural beauty** and **historical significance** are preserved for future generations.
- **Restoration Work:**
  - A **Non-Government Organisation (NGO)** named took up the restoration work of the station, with the help of **heritage conservation architects** which partnered in the conservation work.

### What is the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation?

- **About:**
  - **UNESCO** seeks to encourage **private sector involvement** and **public-private collaboration** in conserving the **region's cultural heritage** for the benefit of **current and future generations**.
  - Since **2000**, [UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation](#) have been recognising the achievement of the **private sector** and **public-private initiatives** in successfully **conserving or restoring structures, places and properties of heritage**

value in the region.

- In **2020**, **UNESCO** introduced the **Special Recognition for Sustainable Development** and an updated set of Awards criteria to highlight the contribution of **cultural heritage to sustainable development**.
- In addition, **UNESCO Bangkok** is developing **capacity-building activities** using examples of the **award-winning projects** and creating opportunities for youth to learn from experienced heritage practitioners through an apprenticeship programme.

▪ **Objective:**

- To identify and promote exemplary practices in heritage conservation with increased participation from **under-represented areas** (East Asia, Central Asia, and Pacific countries).
  - To improve exchange of research and professional practice related to heritage conservation.
  - Capacity building in heritage conservation
  - To improve engagement of youth, both professionals and the public, in protecting and promoting cultural heritage
  - To improve the knowledge management of Asian heritage, including regional best practices from the UNESCO Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation
- The awards gave people a **sense of pride** and **sense of ownership** of their own heritage.

## What are the Other UNESCO Heritage Sites in Maharashtra?

▪ **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CST):**

- **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CST)** was formerly known as **Victoria Terminus**, and stands as a historic railway station in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Recognised as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, it owes its distinction to its remarkable **Victorian Gothic Revival architecture**.

▪ **Ajanta Caves:**

- Renowned for their exquisite **rock-cut Buddhist cave monuments**, the Ajanta Caves are located in the Aurangabad district of Maharashtra.
- These caves date back to the **2nd century BCE** and showcase remarkable ancient Indian art and architecture.

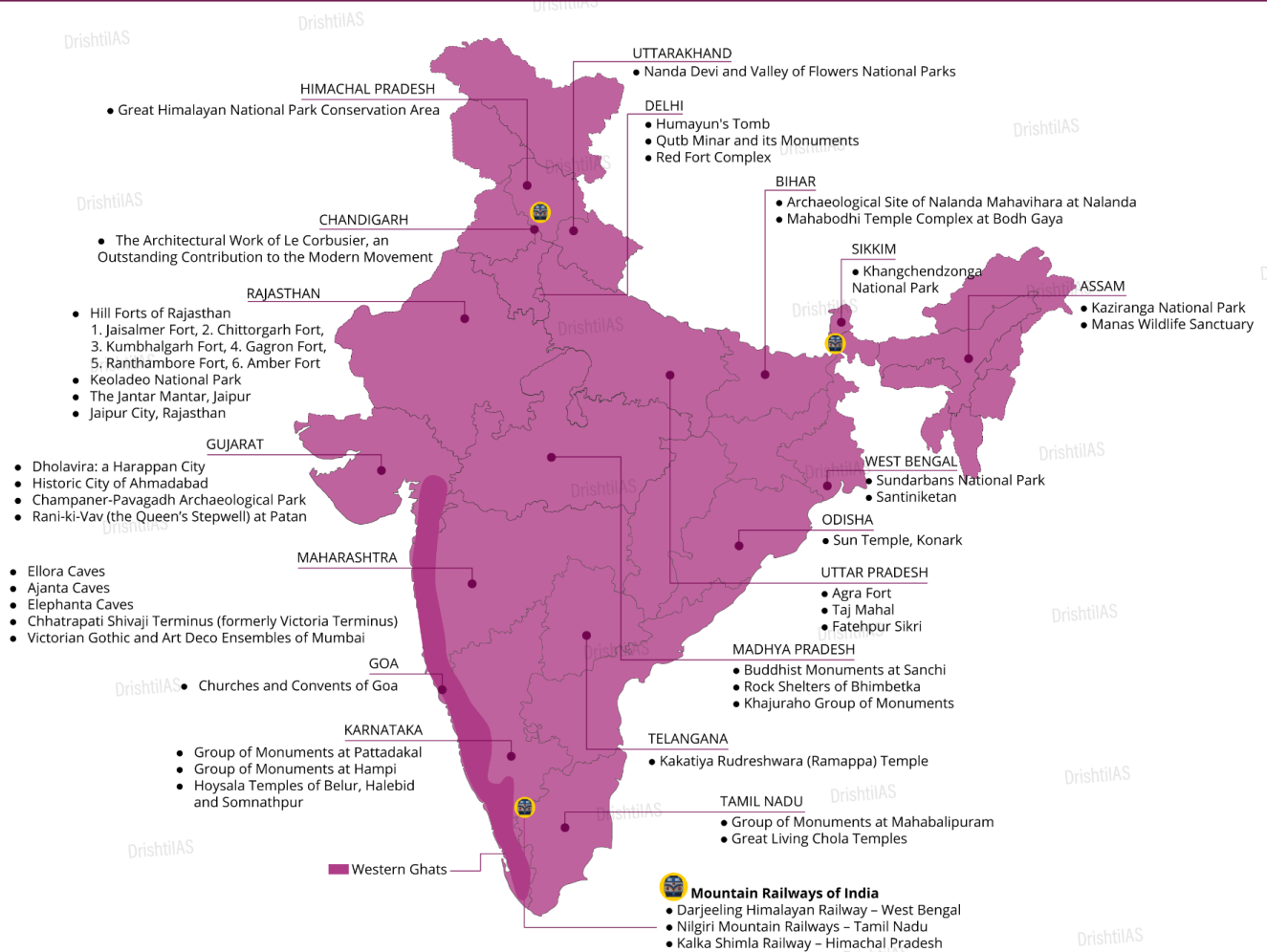
▪ **Ellora Caves:**

- Situated near Aurangabad in Maharashtra, the Ellora Caves comprise a complex of **Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain** cave temples and monasteries.
- These caves, carved out of **solid rock**, demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship and religious diversity, spanning a period from the **6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century CE**.

▪ **Elephanta Caves:**

- Positioned on **Elephanta Island (Gharapuri)** in Mumbai Harbour, the Elephanta Caves consist of cave temples dedicated to the **Hindu god Shiva**. These intricately carved caves date back to the **5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE** and are celebrated for their religious significance and artistic excellence.

# UNESCO World Heritage Sites



## FACTS

- Total Number of World Heritage Sites in India: 42
- Total Cultural Heritage Sites: 34
- Total Natural Sites: 7 (Kaziranga National Park, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Sundarbans National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Keoladeo National Park)
- Mixed Site: 1 (Khangchendzonga National Park)
- World Heritage Sites Listed First: Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves (all in 1983)
- Latest Addition (2023): Hoysala Temples (42<sup>nd</sup> site) and Santiniketan (41<sup>st</sup> site)
- Countries With the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49)
- India is 6<sup>th</sup> in number of World Heritage Sites in the World

## What Measures have been Taken for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage?

- International Initiatives:
  - [UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites:](#)
    - It necessitates stringent measures for the protection and preservation of historical monuments.
    - Till date, there are **42 sites** designated as **UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India.**
  - Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1977
  - [Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2005](#)

- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2006
- [United Nations World Heritage Committee](#)
- **Indian Initiative:**
  - [PRASAD \(Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive\) Scheme](#)
  - [Chardham Road Project](#)
  - [Swadesh Darshan Scheme](#)
  - [HRIDAY \(Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana\) Scheme](#)
  - [Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat](#)
  - [Kashi Tamil Sangamam](#)

## What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Conservation of Heritage Sites and Cultural Heritage?

- **Fundamental Right:** Under [Article 29 of the Indian Constitution](#), any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part having a distinct **language, script or culture** of its own has the right to conserve the same.
- **Fundamental Duties:** It is the [Fundamental Duty](#) of every citizen of India (**under Article 51A**) to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP):** Under [Article 49 of the Indian Constitution](#) the State shall protect every **monument or place of artistic or historic interest** (declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance) from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export.”
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958:** It is an act of the Parliament of India that provides for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance, for the **regulation of archaeological excavations and for the protection of sculptures, carvings** and other like objects.

## What are the Issues Related to Heritage Management in India?

- **Outdated Mechanism of Excavation and Exploration:** Due to the prevalence of outdated mechanisms, [Geographic Information System](#) and [Remote Sensing](#) are rarely used in exploration.
  - Also, local bodies involved in urban heritage projects are often not equipped enough to handle heritage conservation.
- **Environmental Degradation and Natural Disasters:** Heritage sites in India are vulnerable to environmental degradation and natural disasters, such as pollution, erosion, flooding, and earthquakes, which can cause irreversible damage to their physical structures and cultural significance.
  - For example, the Taj Mahal in Uttar Pradesh, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an iconic symbol of India's cultural heritage, has **faced challenges due to air pollution**, which has caused yellowing and deterioration of its marble.
- **Unsustainable Tourism:** Popular heritage sites in India often face high tourism pressure, which can result in issues such as overcrowding, unregulated visitor activities, and inadequate visitor management.
  - Uncontrolled tourism can cause damage to heritage structures, impact the local environment, and disrupt the local community's way of life.

## Way Forward

- **Sustainable Funding Models:** Exploring and implementing innovative funding models for heritage conservation, such as public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships, crowdfunding, and community-based funding.
  - This can help generate additional financial resources for heritage sites and ensure their sustainable conservation and maintenance.
  - **Example:** Encouraging corporate sponsorships for specific conservation projects, where companies can contribute funds and resources in exchange for brand recognition and promotional opportunities.

- **Technology- enabled Conservation:** Leveraging advanced technologies such as remote sensing, [3D scanning](#), virtual reality, and data analytics for documentation, monitoring, and conservation of heritage sites.
  - This can enable **more efficient and effective heritage management practices**, including condition assessment, preventive conservation, and virtual tourism experiences.
  - **Example:** Using 3D scanning and virtual reality to create digital replicas of heritage structures, which can be used for virtual tours, educational purposes, and as a reference for restoration and conservation work.
- **Innovative Measures to Increase Engagement:** Monuments that do not attract a large number of visitors and those which have no associated cultural/religious sensitivity should be used as venues for cultural programmes with the twin objectives:
  - Promoting the associated intangible heritage
  - Increasing visitor numbers to such sites.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

**Q1. Which of the following is/are among the Fundamental Duties of citizens laid down in the Indian Constitution? (2012)**

1. To preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture
2. To protect the weaker sections from social injustice
3. To develop the scientific temper and the spirit of inquiry
4. To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity

**Select the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (c)**

**Q2. Recently, which one of the following was included in the UNESCO's World Heritage list? (2009)**

- (a) Dilwara Temple
- (b) Kalka-Shimla Railway
- (c) Bhiterkanika Mangrove Area
- (d) Visakhapatnam to Araku valley railway line

**Ans: (b)**

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### Mains

**Q. Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss. (2018)**