CULTURAL HERITAGE

History Semster 2

Cultural heritage serves as a bridge between past and present . Indian cultural heritage refers to the various unique oral and literary traditions, places and sites which form the collective identity of the country. These include art forms, dance, music and languages which are further categorised into tangible and intangible heritage. Indian culture is like a sponge that soaks up the influence of every culture throughout historic time periods and it is also reflected in our present in the form of the caste system, the ideal of joint family and the panchayat system. Indian cultural heritage is the collection of India's traditions, customs, arts, monuments, values, and that have been inherited from the past and preserved for future generations. There are two types of cultural heritage - Tangible and intangible heritage . Tangible includes monuments, temples, forts, sculptures, paintings, and historical sites such as the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar and intangible heritage include traditions, festivals, music, dance forms, languages, and traditional knowledge.
For preservation purposes tangible heritage are preserved by the government institutions , different academies etc and for preservation of intangible heritage different institutions have been set up one fine example is lalit kala academy etc. Archaeological Survey of India and UNESCO play an extremely important role in the preservation of ancient cultural heritage . ASI plays a very important role in tangible heritage preservation and UNESCO in intangible heritage .

It is the legacy of tangible and intangible heritage that is inherited from the past generations to preserve the historical origin and identity, like said , tangible and intangible heritage but also natural heritage as India is home to various rare forms of flora and fauna.Cultural heritage in India is a way of life . It is the way we think and even do other activities. Cultural heritage is all the different traditions, norms and customs passed down from the older generations to ours. It serves as a guideline as to how to act or behave. For example the greetings that we have are very different in different parts of the country indicating the diversity of the country. The way we greet each other in West Bengal is very different from how people greet each other in other states. The understanding of Indian cultural heritage includes a comprehensive and clear analysis and understanding of - Monuments in different areas (architecture),Language (various dialects),Dance and other art forms ,traditions, festivals, monuments and art.

However with the coming of globalisation and industrialisation, we have been seeing a slow extinction of our culture like for example the growing predominance of english spoken in a country with multiple languages. Rapid deforestation and loss of tribal culture has also occurred due to unlawful industrialisation and building of data centres. While there are several institutions in India that look after preserving our cultural heritage like Archaeological survey of India and Sahitya Akademi, there is still much work to be done. The primary risks threatening Indian cultural heritage include -

1. Environmental and Climate Threats

Acid Rain and Air Pollution: Industrial emissions and high vehicular traffic near historic zones generate sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. When mixed with atmospheric moisture, they form acid rain that corrodes marble and limestone—a long-standing battle fought to protect the pristine facade of the Taj Mahal.

2. Urbanization

Modern commercial and residential buildings frequently creep into the "buffer zones" of protected monuments. Unregulated construction alters the historical context, strains local soil stability, and can physically damage buried archaeological strata

3. Mass Tourism

While tourism is vital for the economy, unmanaged "foot traffic" actively degrades material heritage

4. Artefact Trafficking

Unprotected or remotely located temples and archaeological mounds remain vulnerable to artifact looting. The illicit international antiquities trade continuously strips historical contexts from valuable numismatic hoards, bronzes, and temple sculptures before they can be scientifically documented.