

# INDIAN ART & CULTURE – UPSC MAINS PYQS (BRAINSTORMING SHEETS)

## MACRO TOPIC - ARCHITECTURE

| #   | Micro Topic                       | Year | Marks | Question  |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------|-------|---|
| 1.  | Ancient & Harappan                | 2025 | 10    | Discuss the salient features of the Harappan architecture.  |
| 2.  | Ancient & Harappan                | 2020 | 10    | The rock-cut architecture represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge of early Indian art and history. Discuss.                             |
| 3.  | Ancient & Harappan                | 2014 | 12.5  | To what extent has the urban planning and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to the present day urbanisation? Discuss.                  |
| 4.  | Buddhist Architecture & Stupa Art | 2019 | 10    | Highlight the Central Asian and Greco-Bactrian elements in Gandara art.   |
| 5.  | Buddhist Architecture & Stupa Art | 2016 | 12.5  | Early Buddhist Stupa-art, while depicting folk motifs and narratives successfully expounds Buddhist ideals. Elucidate.  |
| 6.  | Medieval & Dynastic Architecture  | 2025 | 10    | The sculptors filled the Chandella art form with resilient vigor and breadth of life. Elucidate.  |
| 7.  | Medieval & Dynastic Architecture  | 2024 | 15    | Though the great Cholas are no more, yet their name is still remembered because of their highest achievements in the domain of art and architecture. Comment. |
| 8.  | Medieval & Dynastic Architecture  | 2022 | 15    | Discuss the significance of the lion and Bull figures in Indian mythology, art and architecture.  |
| 9.  | Medieval & Dynastic Architecture  | 2013 | 5     | Chola architecture represents a high watermark in the evolution of temple architecture. Discuss   |
| 10. | Temple Sculpture & Social Life    | 2022 | 10    | How will you explain that medieval Indian temple sculptures represent the social life of those days?  |
| 11. | Sculpture                         | 2014 | 10    | Gandhara sculpture owed as much to the Romans as to the Greeks. Explain.  |

## MACRO TOPIC - RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

| #   | Micro Topic                 | Year | Marks | Question  |
|-----|-----------------------------|------|-------|---|
| 12. | Vedic Religion & Society    | 2024 | 10    | Underline the changes in the field of society and economy from the Rig Vedic to the Later Vedic period.                             |
| 13. | Vedic Religion & Society    | 2023 | 15    | What are the main features of Vedic society and religion? Do you think some of the features are still prevailing in Indian society? |
| 14. | Buddhism & Pala Period      | 2022 | 15    | Discuss the main contributions of Gupta period and Chola period to Indian Heritage and Culture.                                     |
| 15. | Buddhism & Pala Period      | 2020 | 10    | Pala period is the most significant phase in the history of Buddhism in India. Enumerate.   |
| 16. | Syncretic & Sufi Traditions | 2025 | 10    | Examine the main aspects of Akbar's religious syncretism.   |

|     |                             |      |    |   |
|-----|-----------------------------|------|----|---|
| 17. | Syncretic & Sufi Traditions | 2014 | 10 | Sufis and medieval saints failed to modify the religious ideas and practices or the outward structure of Hindu/Muslim societies to any appreciable extent. Comment. |
| 18. | Tribal Knowledge Systems    | 2021 | 10 | Examine the uniqueness of the tribal knowledge system when compared with mainstream knowledge and cultural systems.   |
| 19. | Dynastic Contributions      | 2024 | 10 | Estimate the contribution of Pallavas of Kanchi for the development of art and literature of South India.   |
| 20. | Dynastic Contributions      | 2022 | 15 | Discuss the main contributions of Gupta period and Chola period to Indian Heritage and Culture.   |

### MACRO TOPIC - ART FORMS

| #   | Micro Topic                        | Year | Marks | Question  |
|-----|------------------------------------|------|-------|---|
| 21. | Paintings — Mughal, Rajput & Gupta | 2017 | 10    | How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of the Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times?   |
| 22. | Paintings — Mughal, Rajput & Gupta | 2012 | 10    | The 'flute-playing Krishna' theme is very popular in Indian art. Discuss.   |
| 23. | Paintings — Mughal, Rajput & Gupta | 1985 | 10    | What are the differences between Mughal style of painting and Rajput style of painting?   |
| 24. | Dance Form                         | 2013 | 5     | Discuss the Tandava dance as recorded in the early Indian inscription.  |
| 25. | Classical Dance Forms              | 1988 | 10    | What are the main forms of classical dance in India? Indicate two features of each.   |
| 26. | Classical Dance Forms              | 1980 | 15    | Which are the classical dances of India? Where did they originate? Name one distinguished dancer of each school.  |
| 27. | Theatre                            | 1985 | 10    | What efforts have been made to develop theatre in India? Name any two persons associated with the development of this art.  |
| 28. | Philosophy, Tradition & Monuments  | 2020 | 10    | Indian philosophy and tradition played a significant role in conceiving and shaping the monuments and their art in India. Discuss.  |
| 29. | Heritage Safeguarding              | 2018 | 10    | Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Comment.  |
| 30. | Architecture & Painting            | 2015 | 12.5  | Mesolithic rock cut architecture of India not only reflects the cultural life of the times but also a fine aesthetic sense comparable to modern painting. Critically evaluate this comment. |

### MACRO TOPIC - LITERATURE

| #   | Micro Topic                              | Year | Marks | Question   |
|-----|--|------|-------|--|
| 31. | Bhakti & Regional Literature             | 2021 | 10    | Evaluate the nature of the Bhakti Literature and its contribution to Indian culture.   |
| 32. | Bhakti & Regional Literature             | 2016 | 12.5  | Krishnadeva Raya, the King of Vijayanagar, was not only an accomplished scholar himself but was also a great patron of learning and literature. Discuss.   |
| 33. | Persian & Medieval Literary Sources      | 2021 | 10    | Persian literary sources of medieval India reflect the spirit of the age. Comment.   |
| 34. | Foreign Travellers & Historical Accounts | 2024 | 10    | Estimate the contribution of Pallavas of Kanchi for the development of art and literature of South India.  |
| 35. | University & Culture                     | 2014 | 10    | Taxila university was one of the oldest universities of the world with which were associated a number of renowned learned personalities of different disciplines. Its strategic location caused its fame to flourish, but unlike Nalanda, it is not considered as a university in the modern sense. Discuss. |
| 36. | Sangam literature                        | 2013 | 10    | Though not very useful from the point of view of a connected political history of South India, the Sangam literature portrays the social and economic conditions of its time with remarkable vividness. Comment.   |

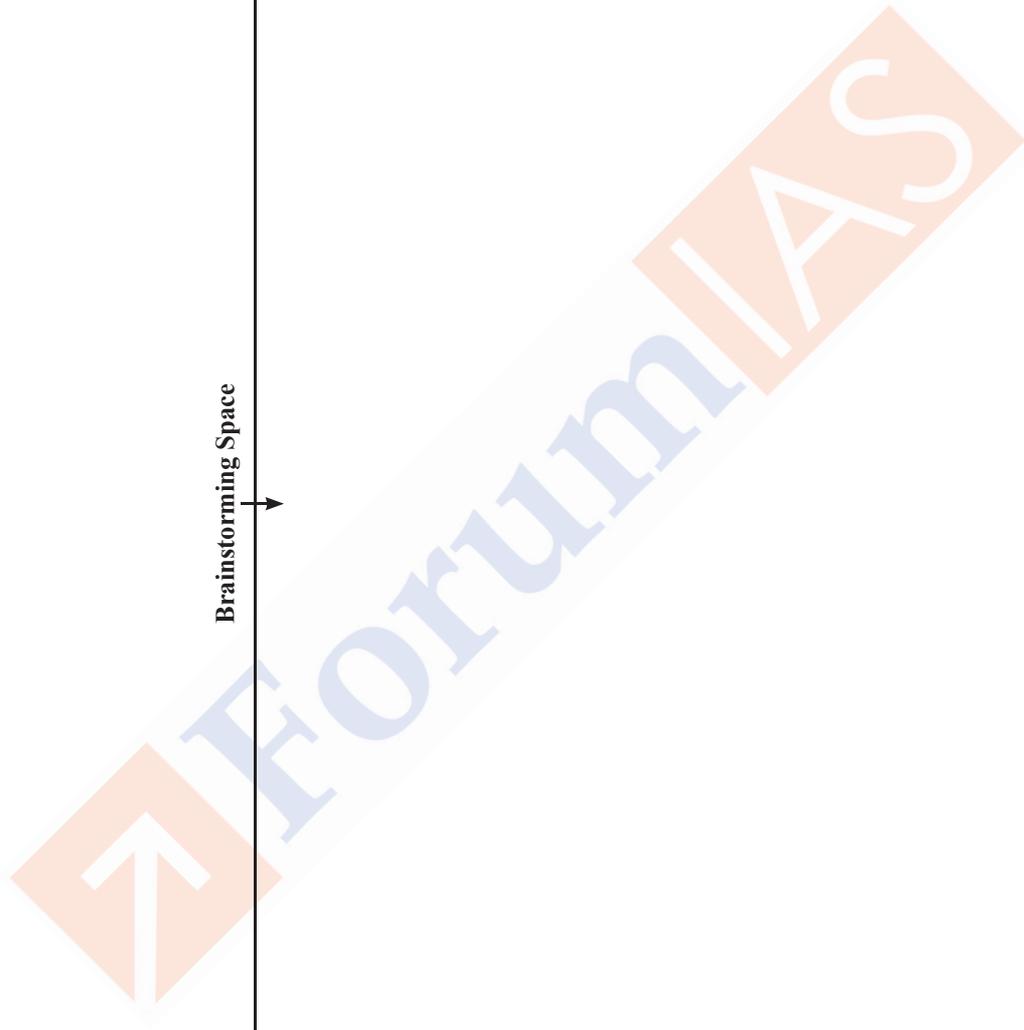
### MACRO TOPIC - CIVILISATION DEVELOPMENT

| #   | Micro Topic                              | Year | Marks | Question  |
|-----|--|------|-------|---|
| 37. | Geography & Ancient India                | 2023 | 10    | Explain the role of geographical factors towards the development of Ancient India.  |
| 38. | Geography & Ancient India                | 2015 | 12.5  | The ancient civilisation in Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without breakdown to the present day. Comment. |
| 39. | IVC & Urban Planning                     | 2014 | 12.5  | To what extent has the urban planning and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to present day urbanisation? Discuss.  |
| 40. | Technology & Sultanate Period            | 2023 | 15    | What were the major technological changes introduced during the Sultanate period? How did those technological changes influence Indian society?   |
| 41. | Foreign Travellers & Historical Accounts | 2018 | 10    | Assess the importance of the accounts of the Chinese and Arab travellers in the reconstruction of the history of India.   |

Q.1) Discuss the salient features of the Harappan architecture.

(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2025]

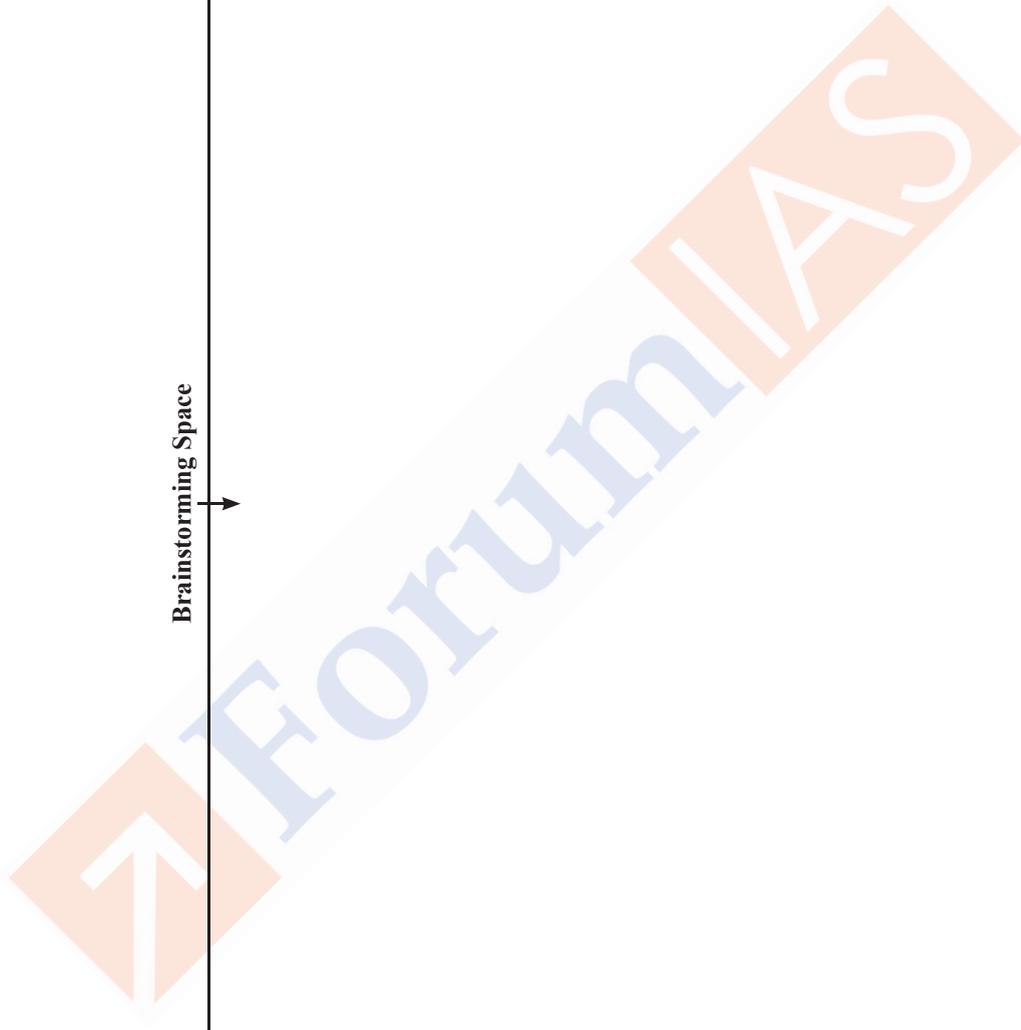
Brainstorming Space



Q.2) The rock-cut architecture represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge of early Indian art and history. Discuss.

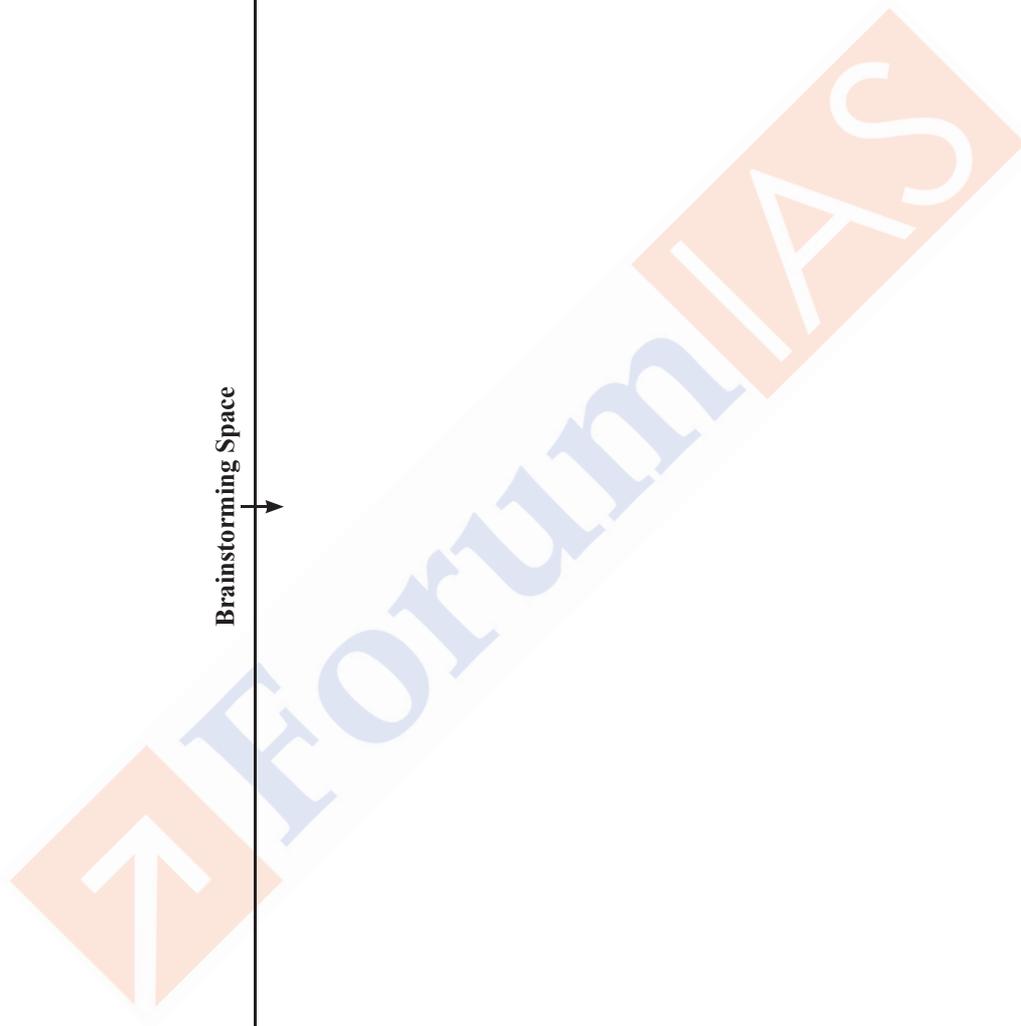
(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2020]

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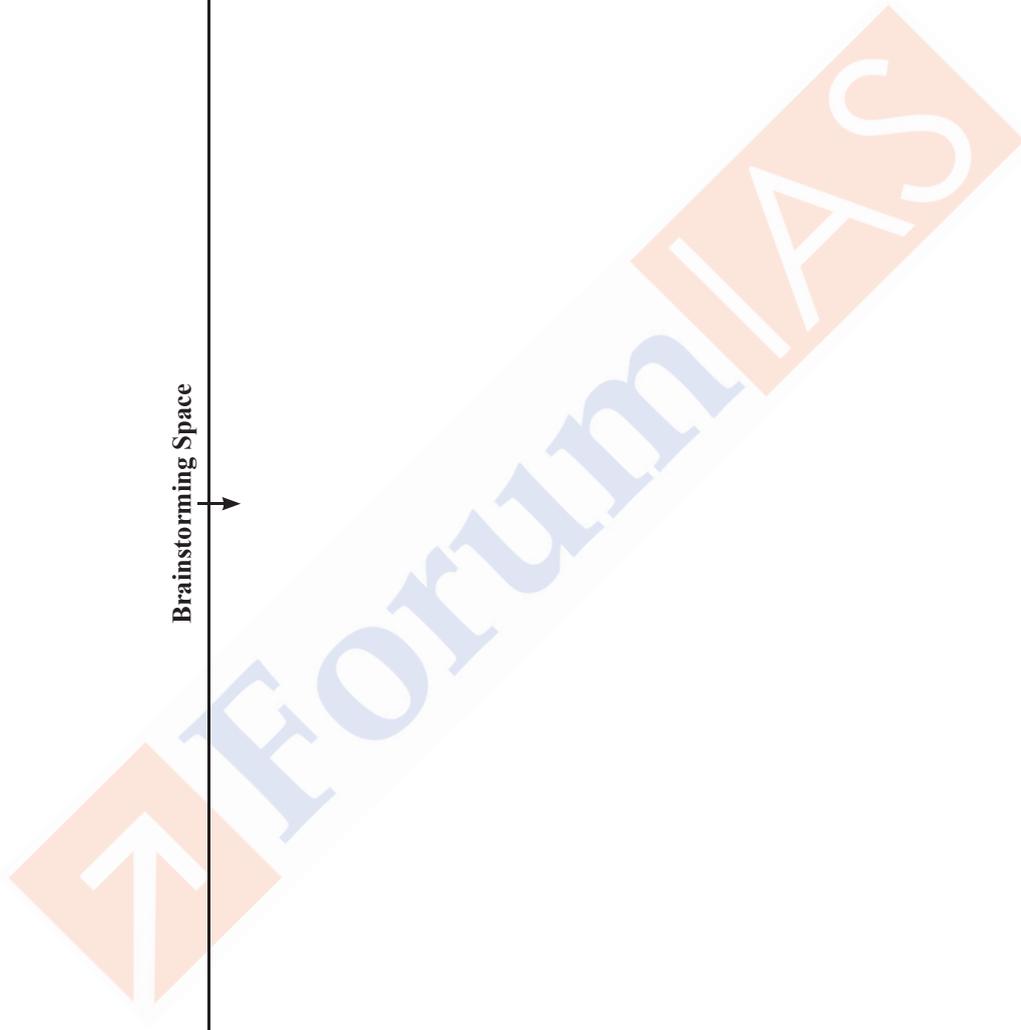
**Q.3)** To what extent has the urban planning and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to the present day urbanisation? Discuss.  
(12.5 Marks, 200 Words) [2014]

Brainstorming Space



Q.4) Highlight the Central Asian and Greco-Bactrian elements in Gandara art. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2019]

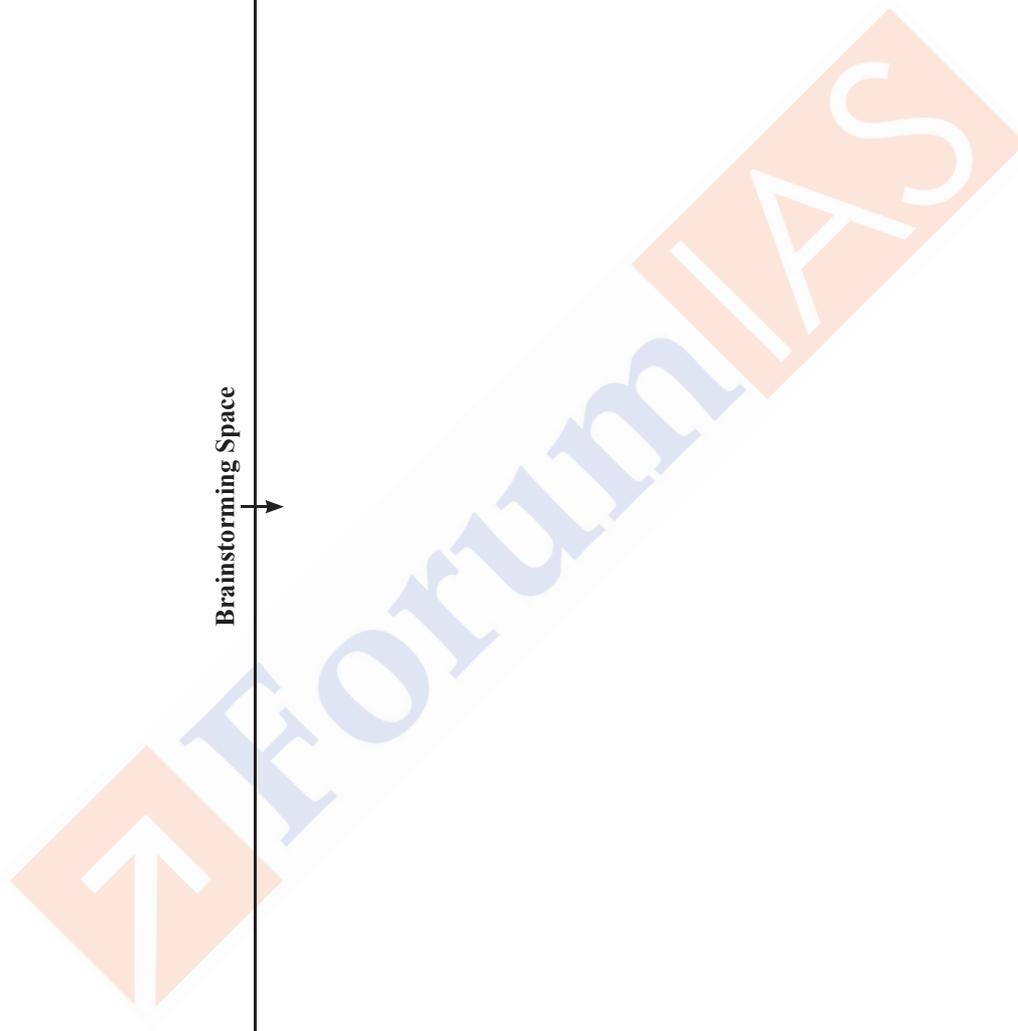
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**Q.5)** Early Buddhist Stupa-art, while depicting folk motifs and narratives successfully expounds Buddhist ideals. Elucidate.

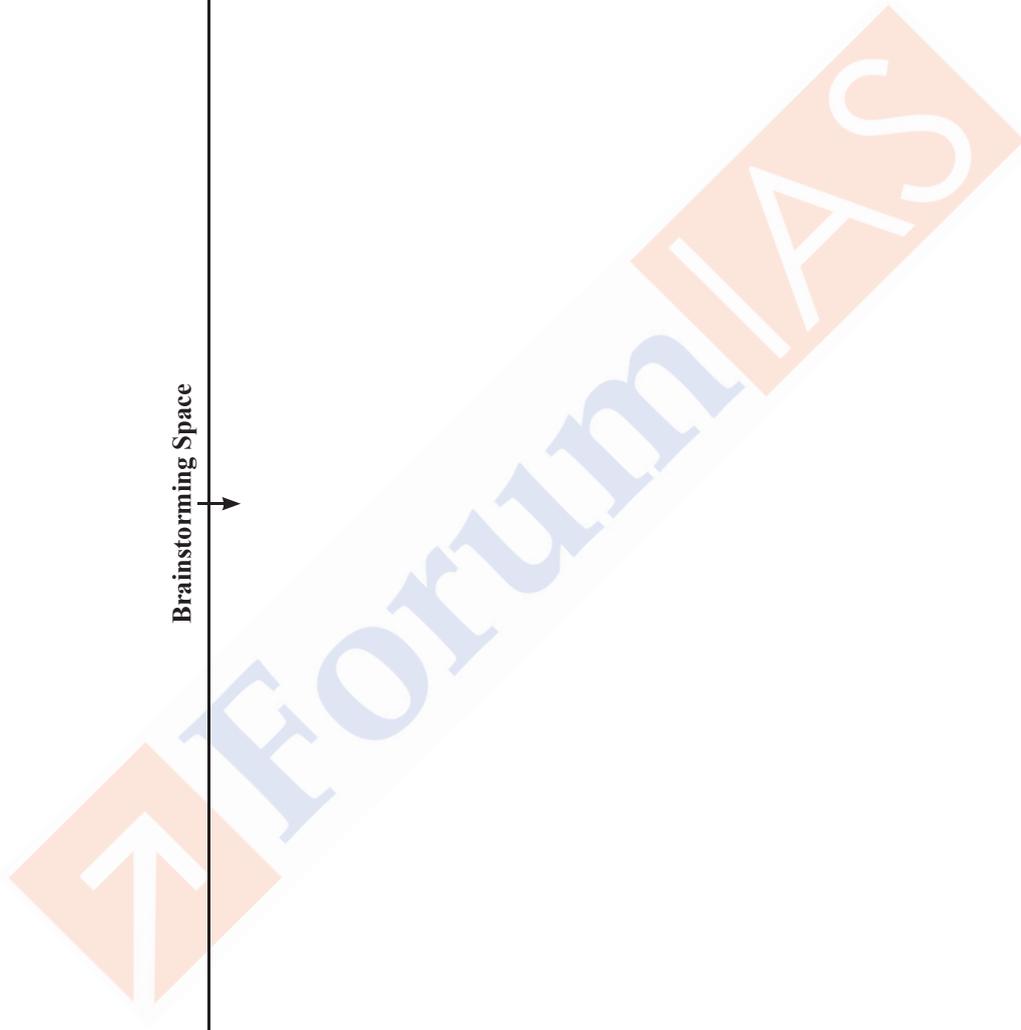
(12.5 Marks, 200 Words) [2016]

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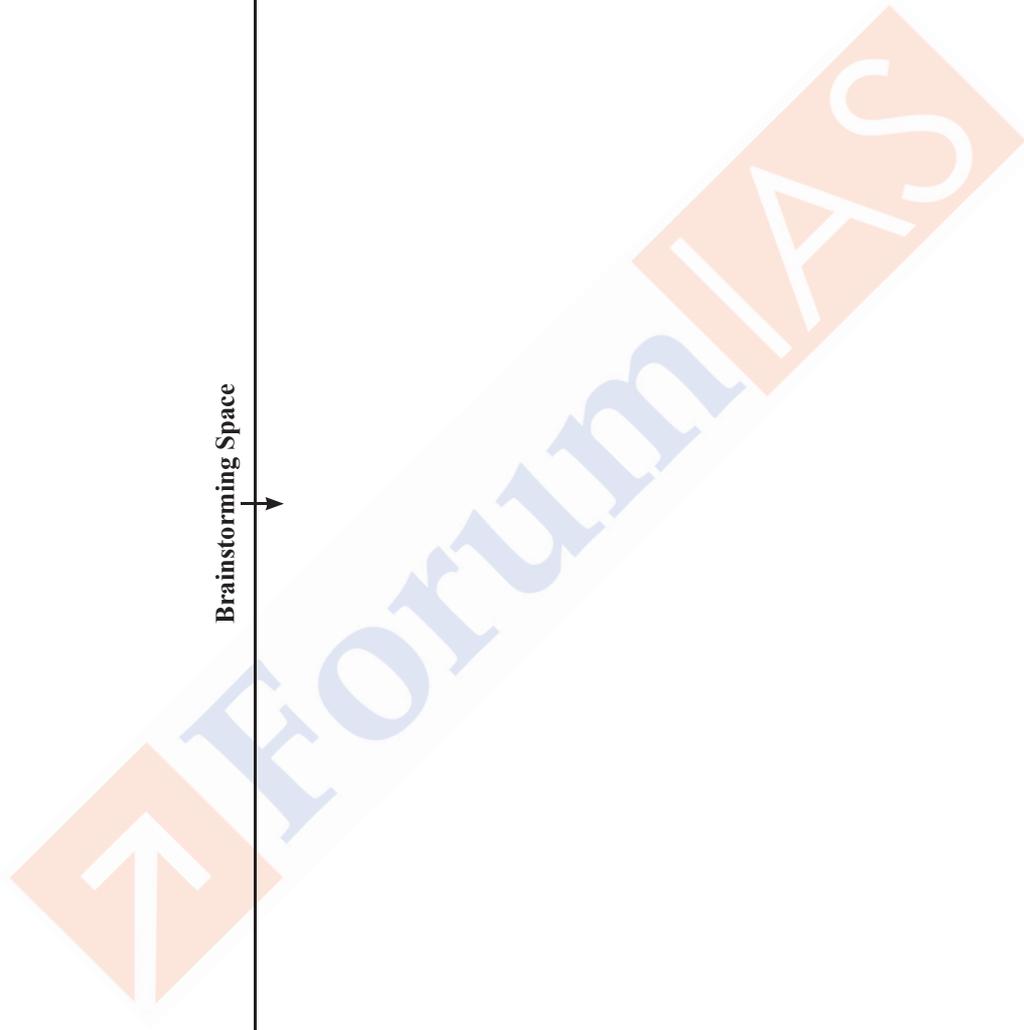
Q.6) The sculptors filled the Chandella art form with resilient vigor and breadth of life. Elucidate. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2025]

Brainstorming Space



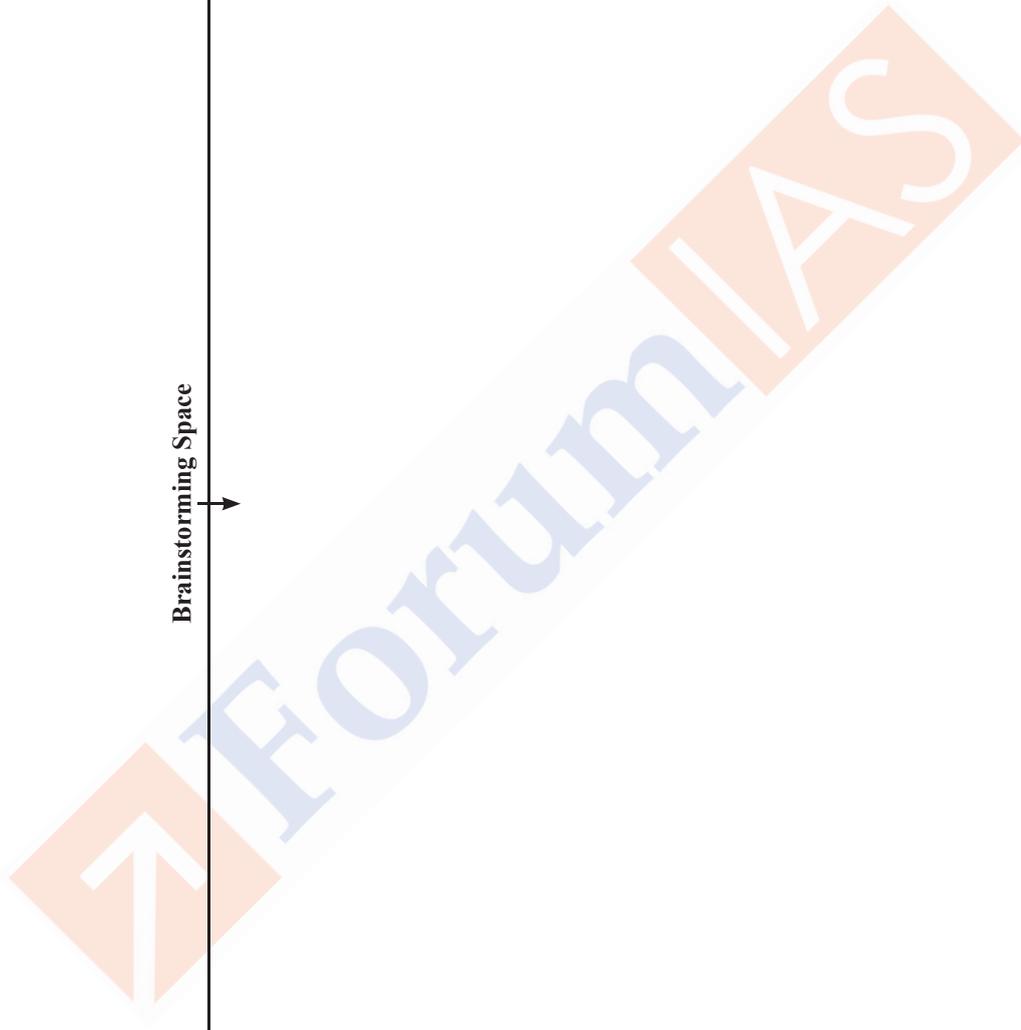
Q.7) Though the great Cholas are no more, yet their name is still remembered because of their highest achievements in the domain of art and architecture. Comment. (15 Marks, 250 Words) [2024]

Brainstorming Space



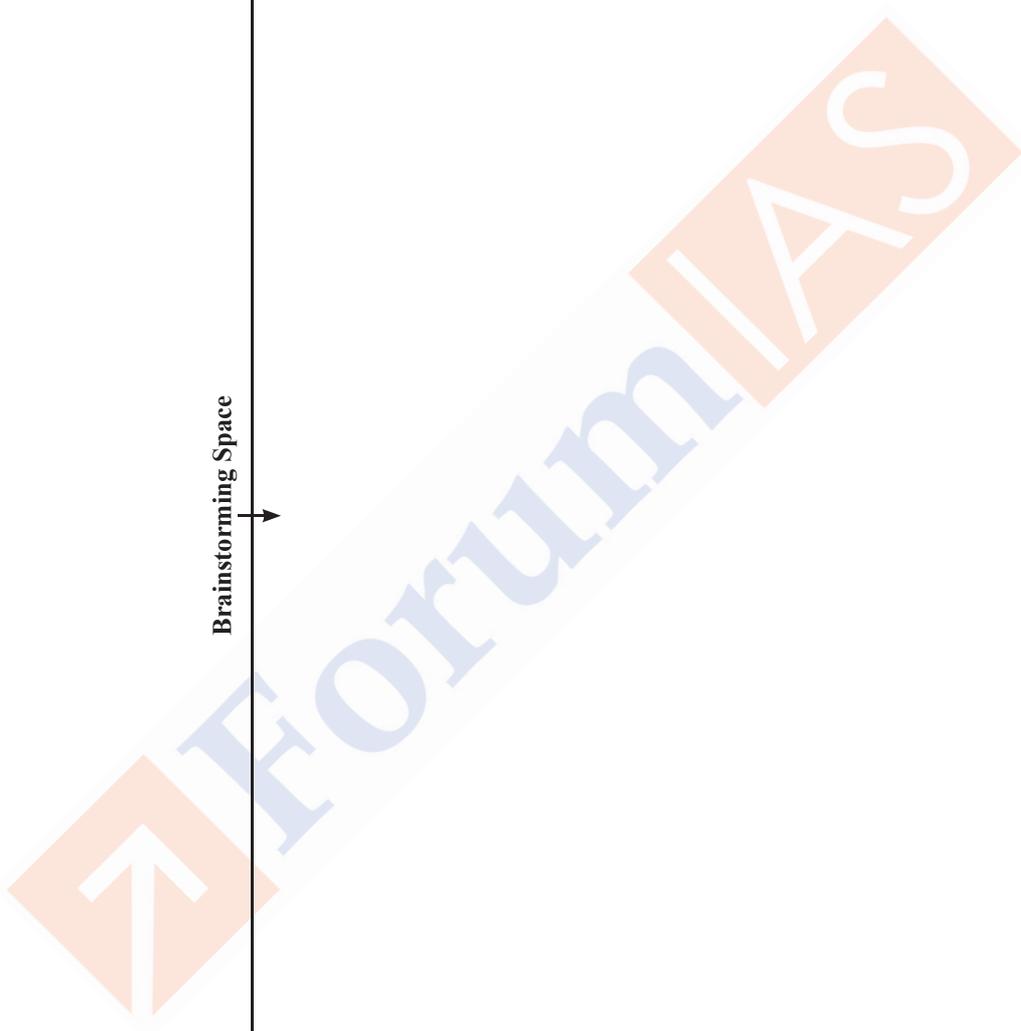
Q.8) Discuss the significance of the lion and Bull figures in Indian mythology, art and architecture. (15 Marks, 250 Words) [2022]

Brainstorming Space



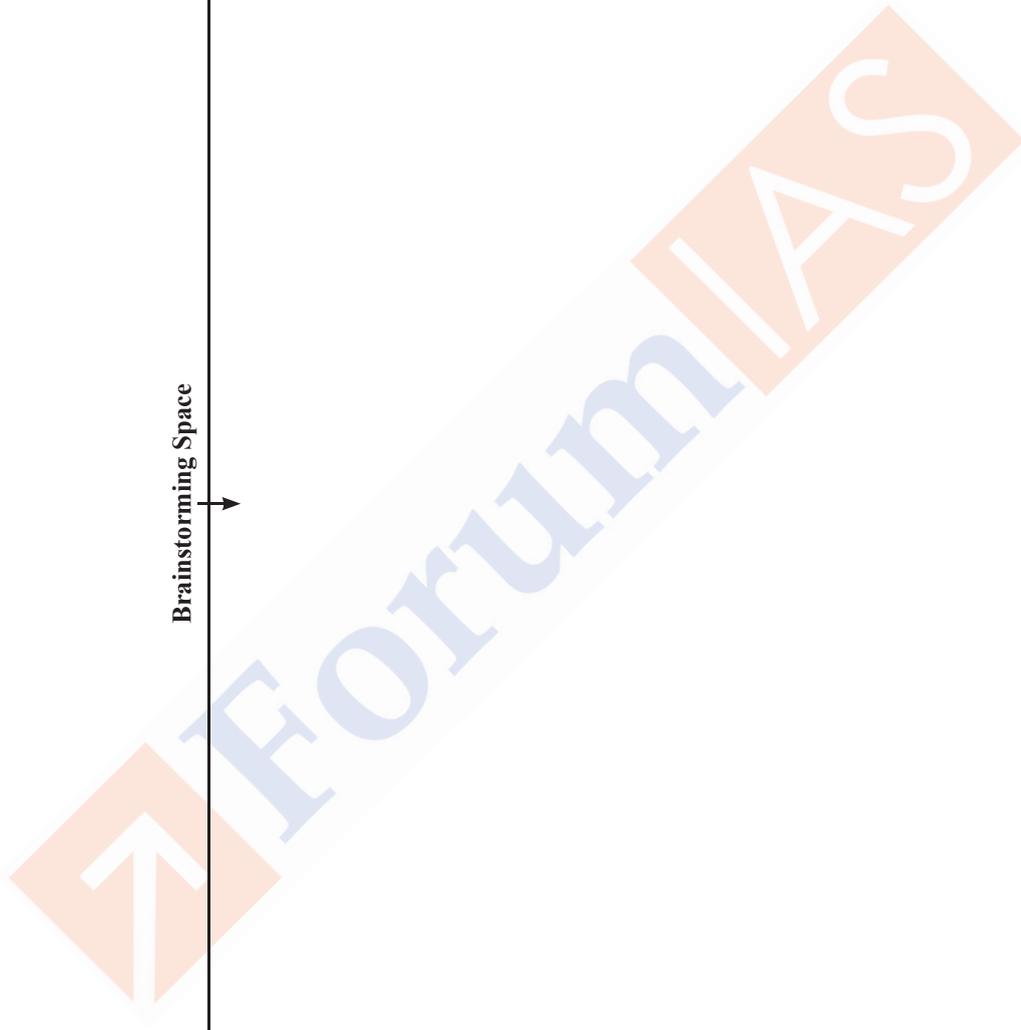
Q.9) Chola architecture represents a high watermark in the evolution of temple architecture. Discuss (5 Marks, 100 Words) [2013]

Brainstorming Space



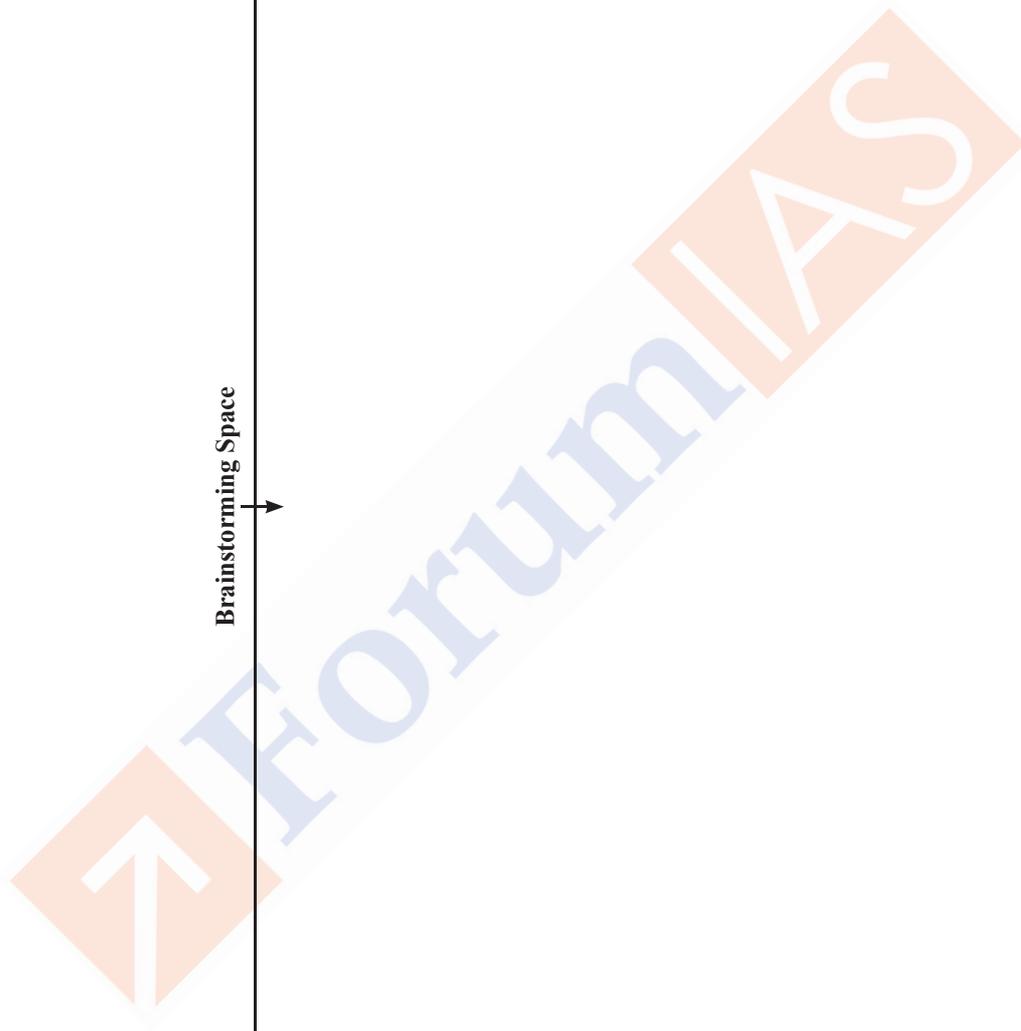
**Q.10)** How will you explain that medieval Indian temple sculptures represent the social life of those days? (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2022]

Brainstorming Space



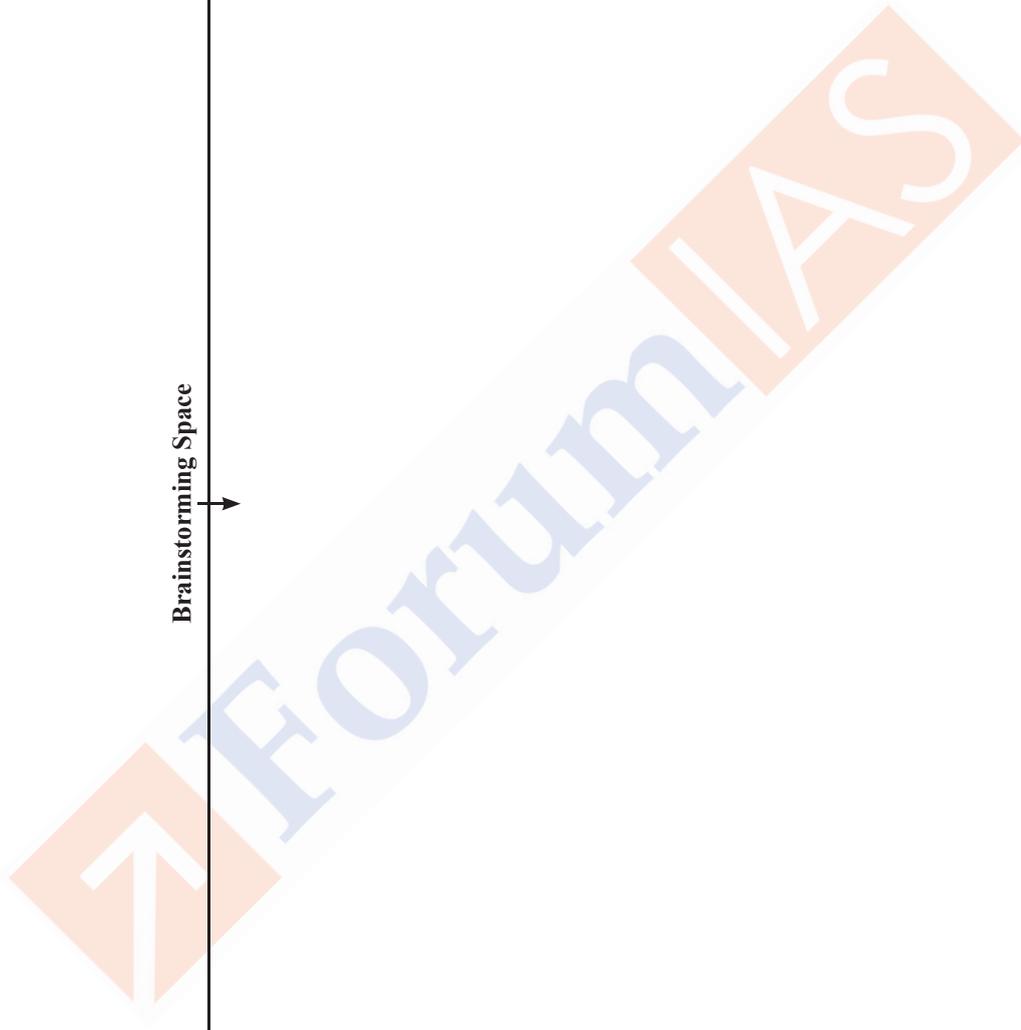
**Q.11)** Gandhara sculpture owed as much to the Romans as to the Greeks.  
Explain. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2014]

Brainstorming Space



**Q.12)** Underline the changes in the field of society and economy from the Rig Vedic to the Later Vedic period. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2024]

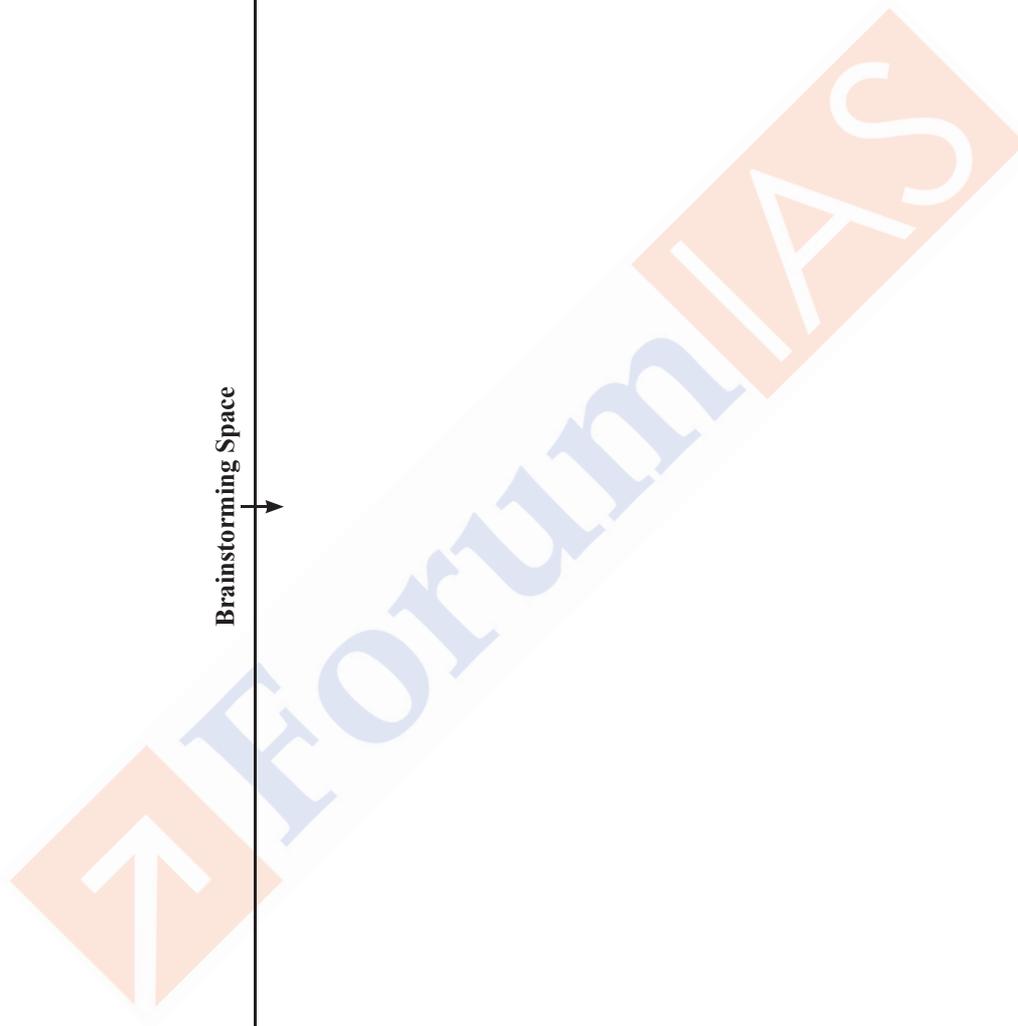
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**Q.13)** What are the main features of Vedic society and religion? Do you think some of the features are still prevailing in Indian society?

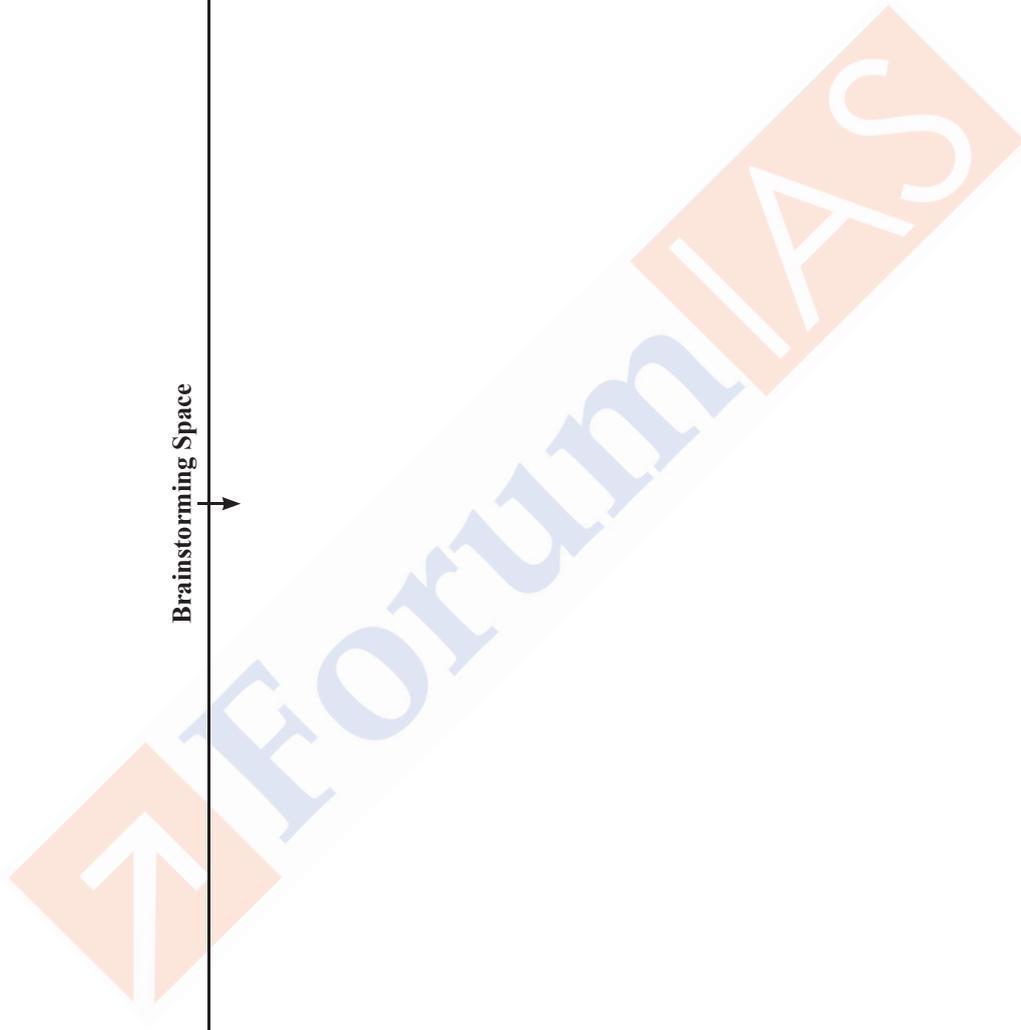
(15 Marks, 250 Words) [2023]

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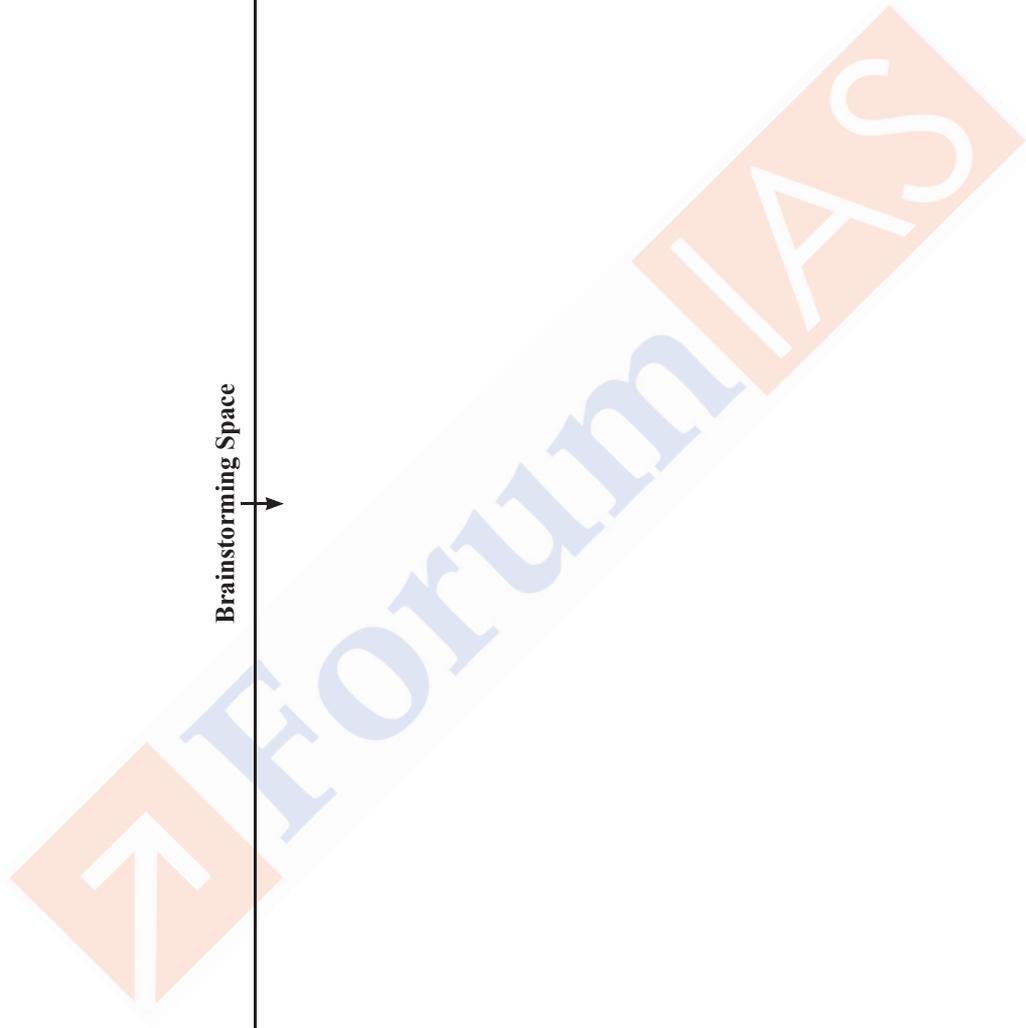
**Q.14)** Discuss the main contributions of Gupta period and Chola period to Indian Heritage and Culture. (15 Marks, 250 Words) [2022]

Brainstorming Space



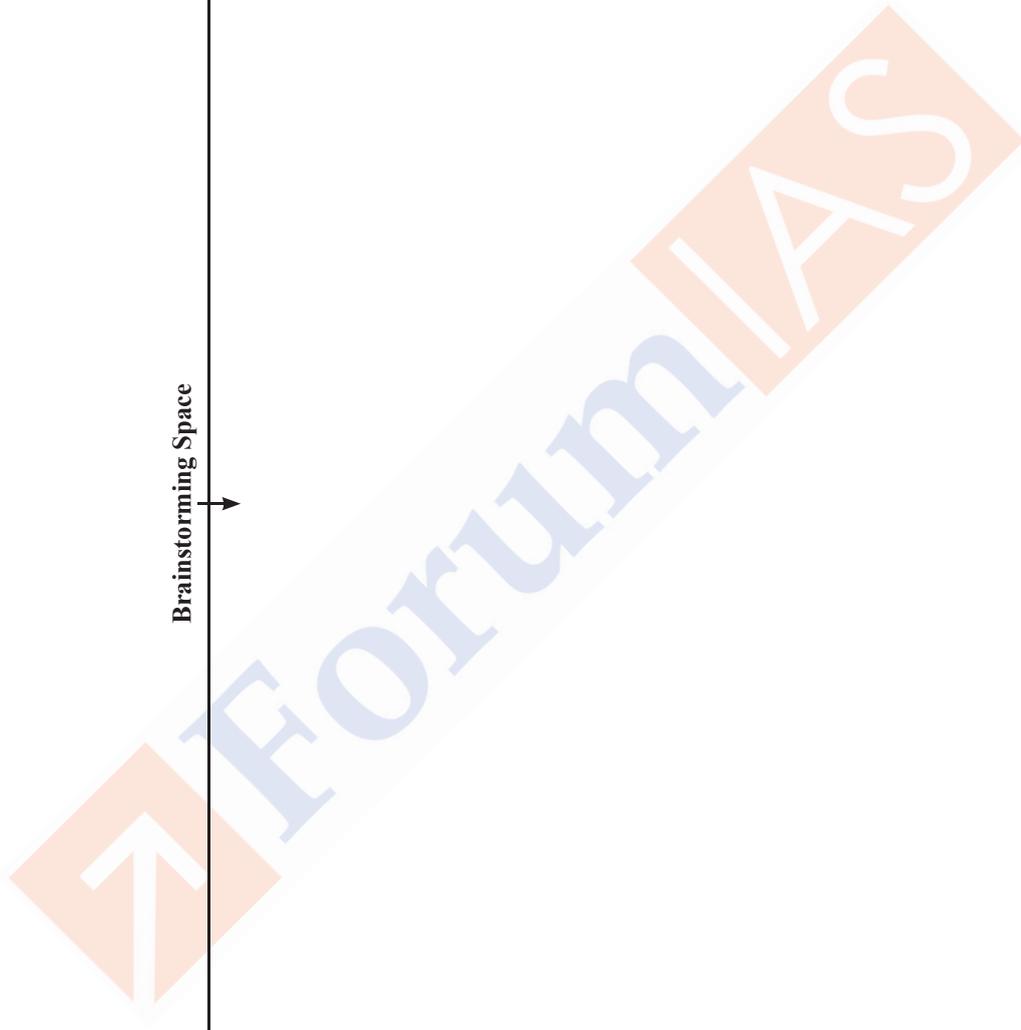
Q.15) Pala period is the most significant phase in the history of Buddhism in India. Enumerate. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2020]

Brainstorming Space



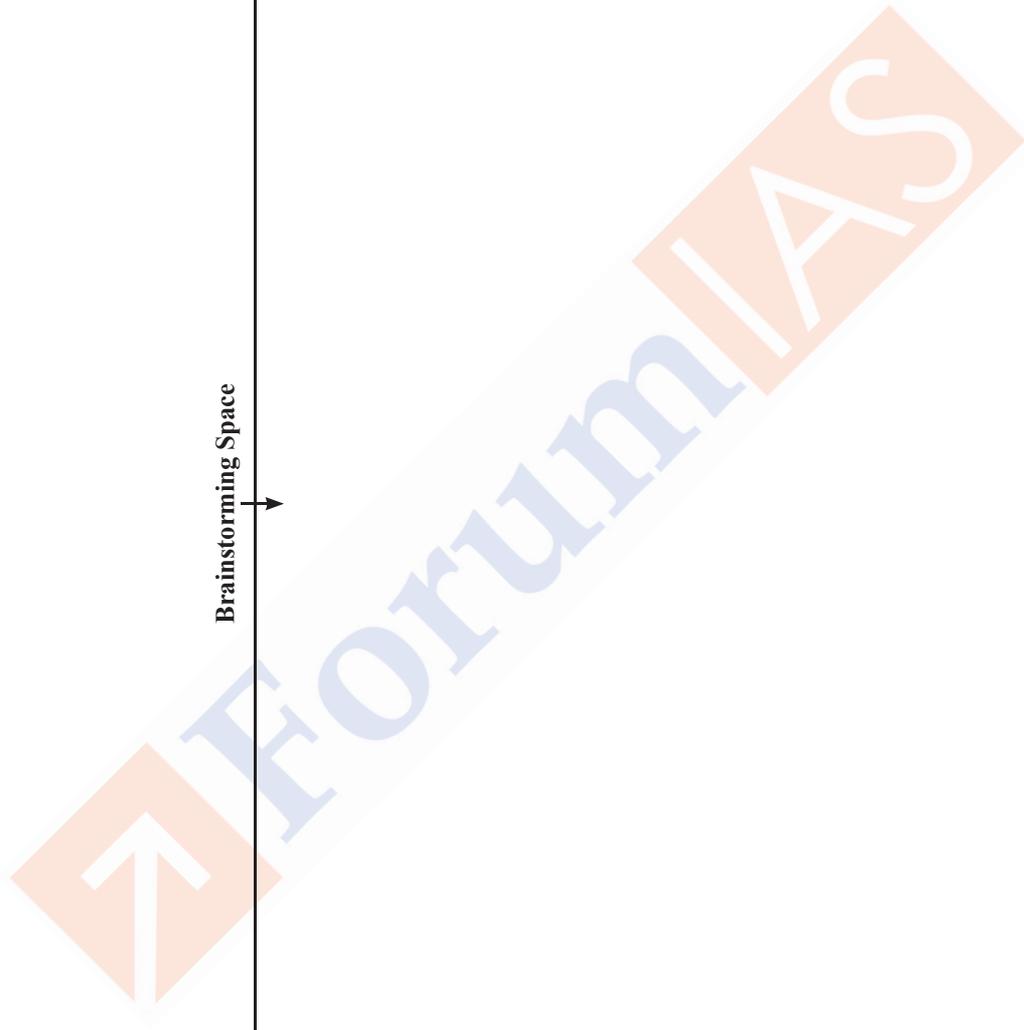
**Q.16)** Examine the main aspects of Akbar's religious syncretism.  
(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2025]

Brainstorming Space



**Q.17)** Sufis and medieval saints failed to modify the religious ideas and practices or the outward structure of Hindu/Muslim societies to any appreciable extent. Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2014]

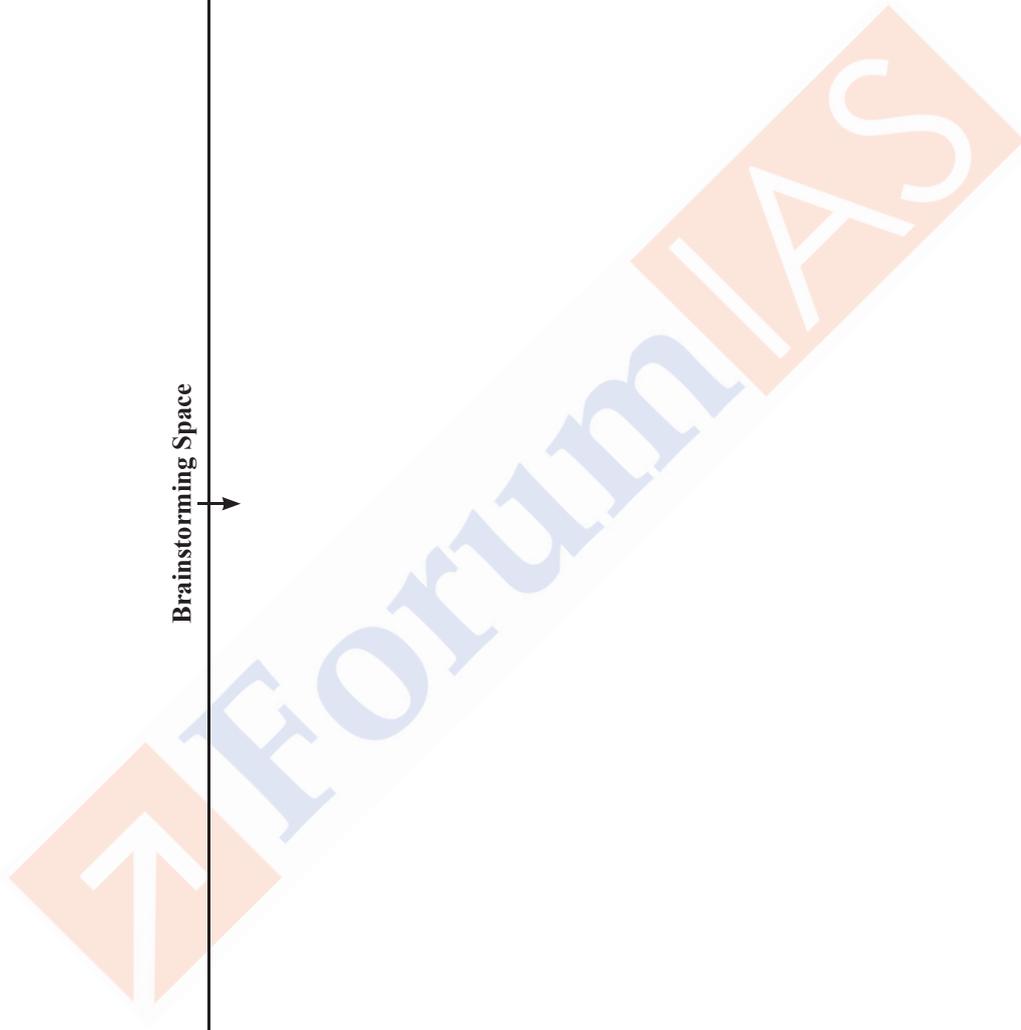
Brainstorming Space



**Q.18)** Examine the uniqueness of the tribal knowledge system when compared with mainstream knowledge and cultural systems.

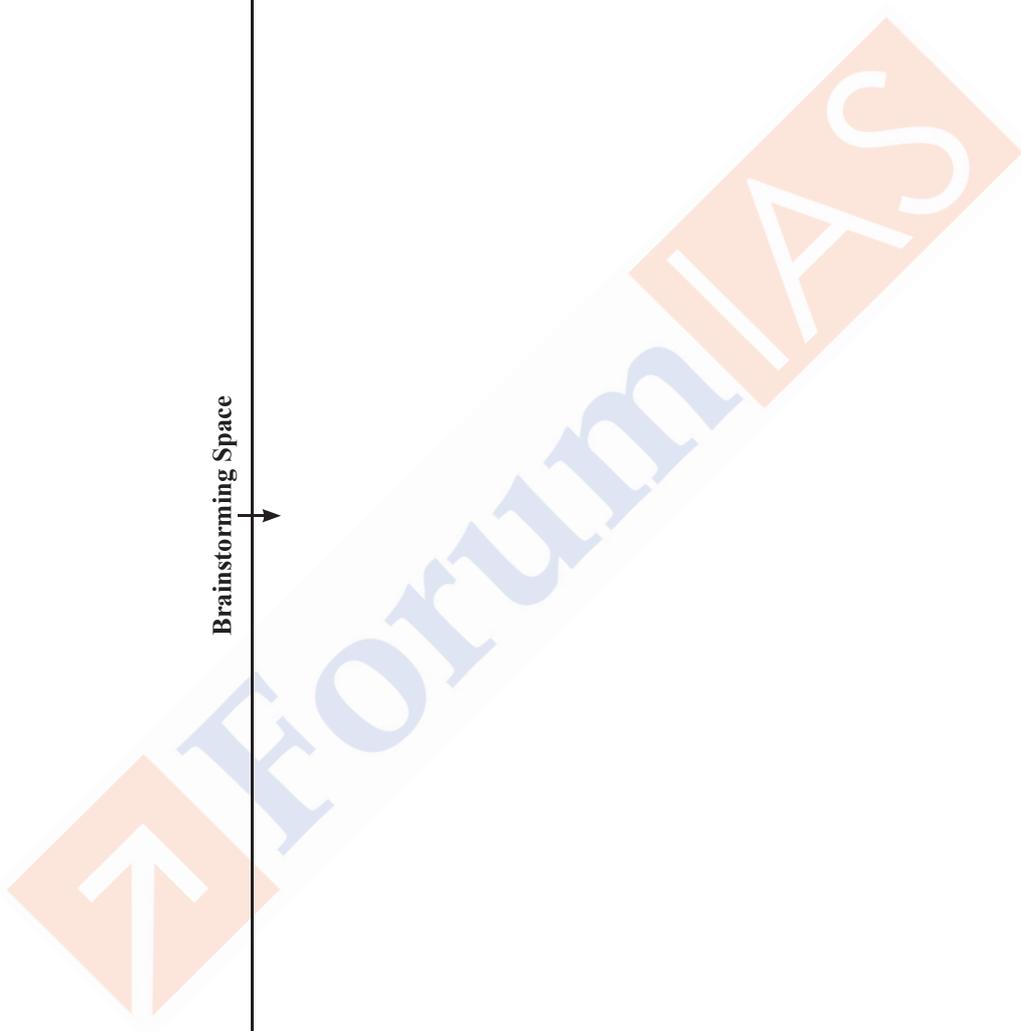
(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2021]

Brainstorming Space



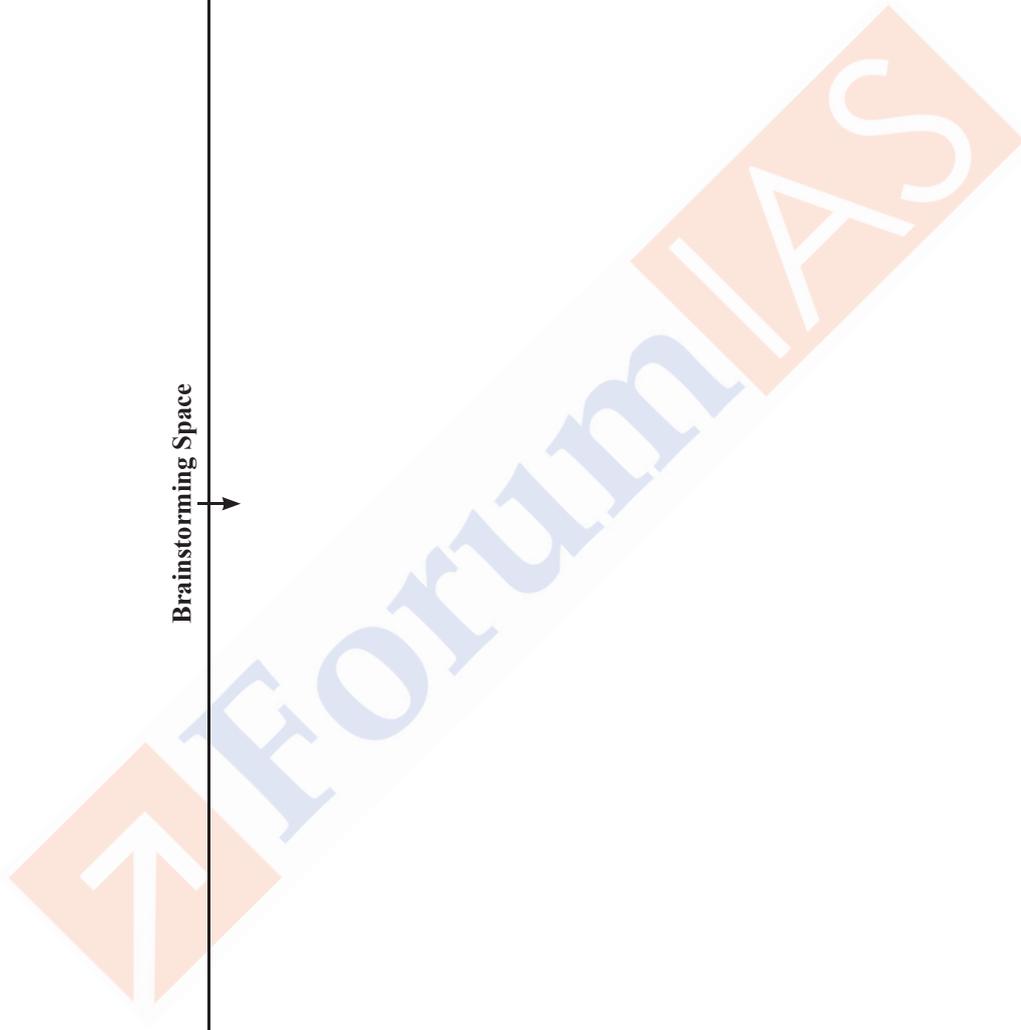
**Q.19)** Estimate the contribution of Pallavas of Kanchi for the development of art and literature of South India.    (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2024]

Brainstorming Space



**Q.20)** Discuss the main contributions of Gupta period and Chola period to Indian Heritage and Culture. (15 Marks, 250 Words) [2025]

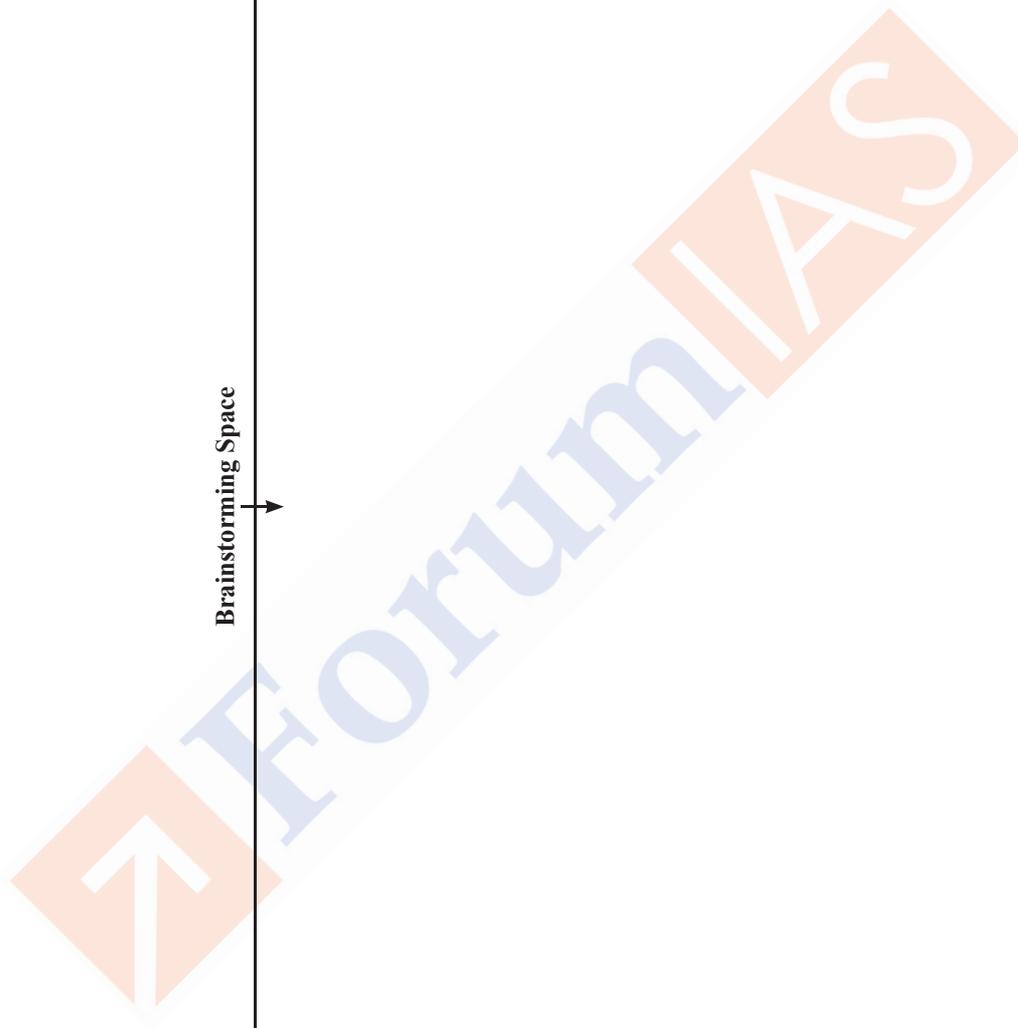
Brainstorming Space



**Q.21)** How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of the Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times?

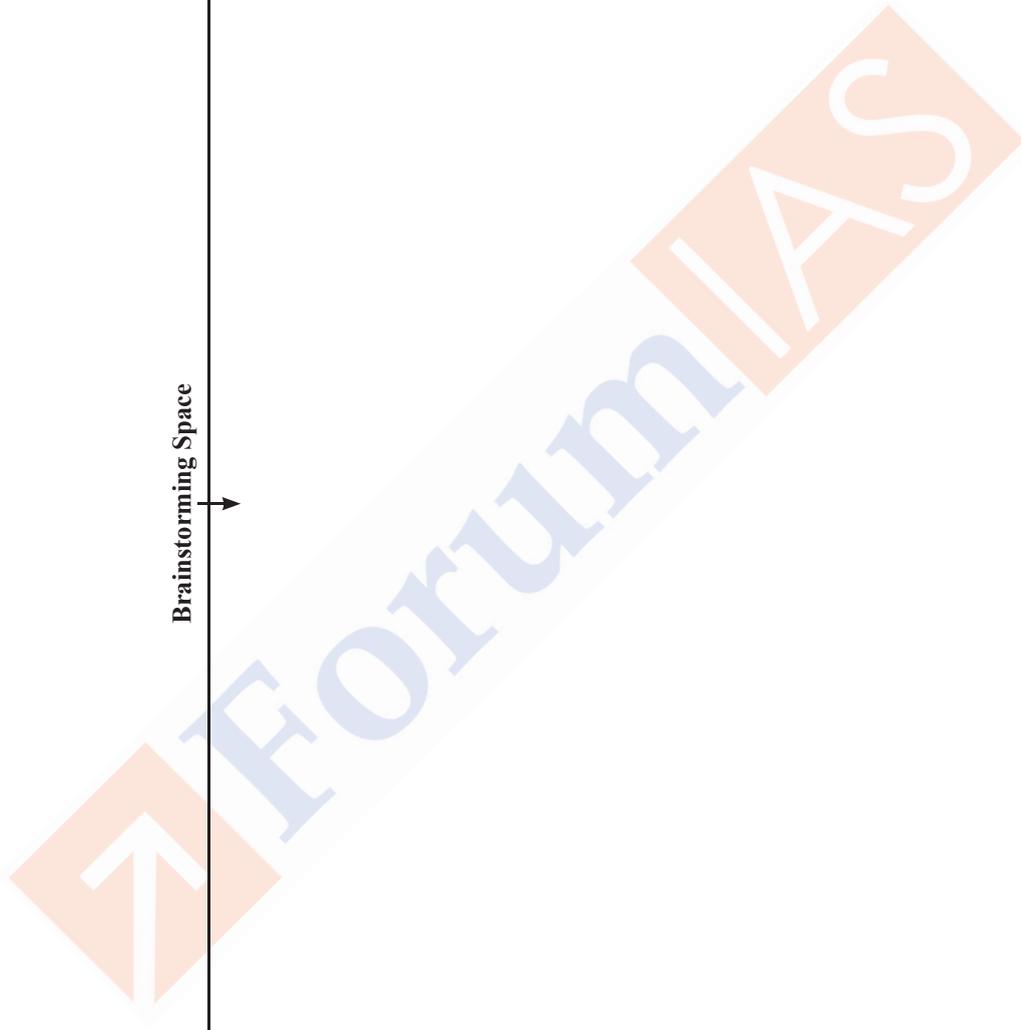
(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2025]

Brainstorming Space



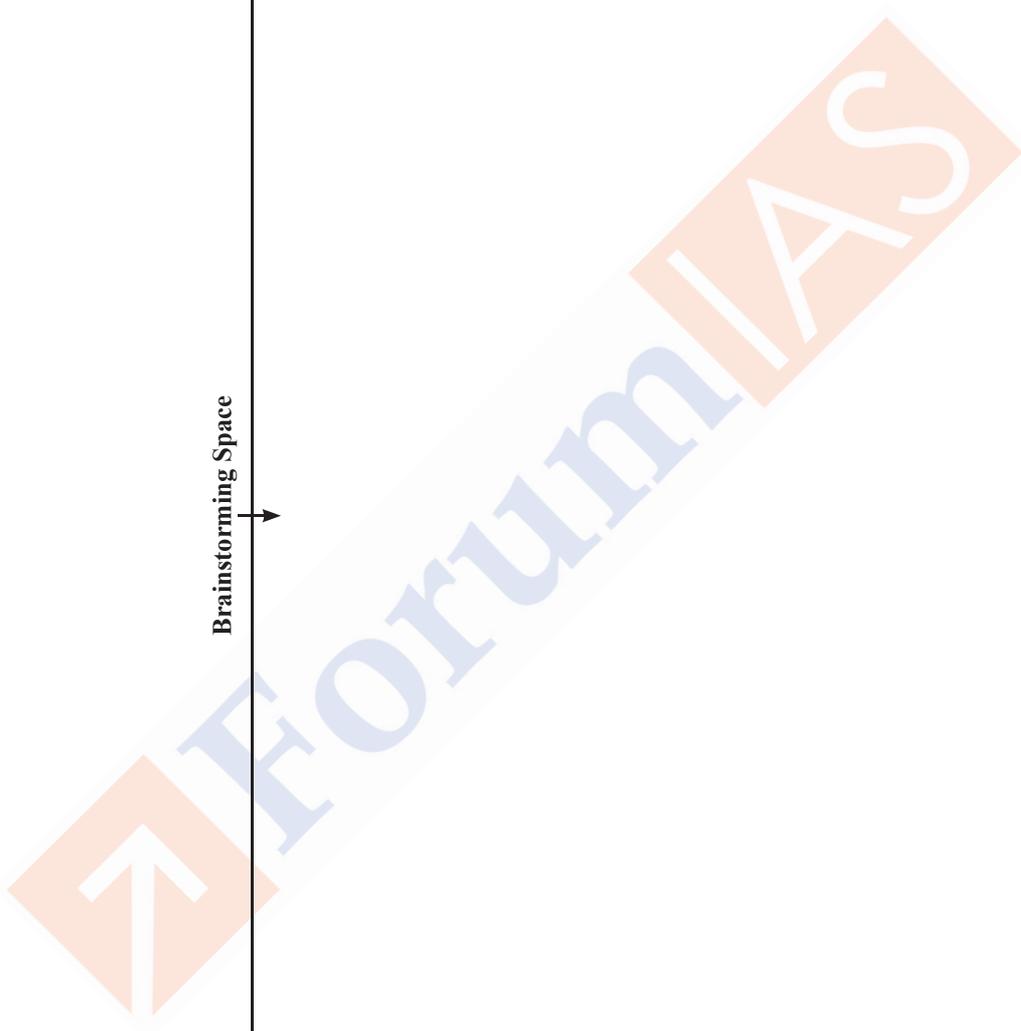
Q.22) The 'flute-playing Krishna' theme is very popular in Indian art. Discuss.  
(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2012]

Brainstorming Space



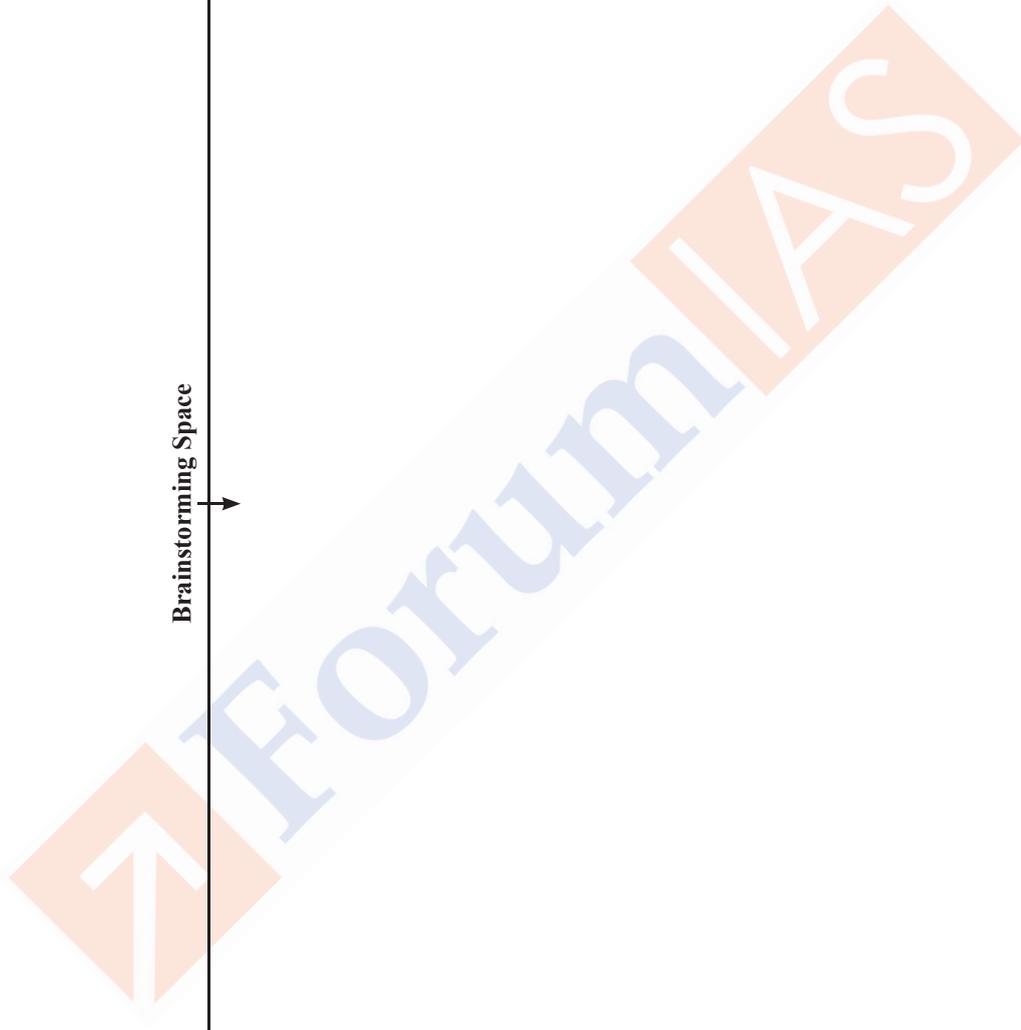
Q.23) What are the differences between Mughal style of painting and Rajput style of painting? (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2025]

Brainstorming Space



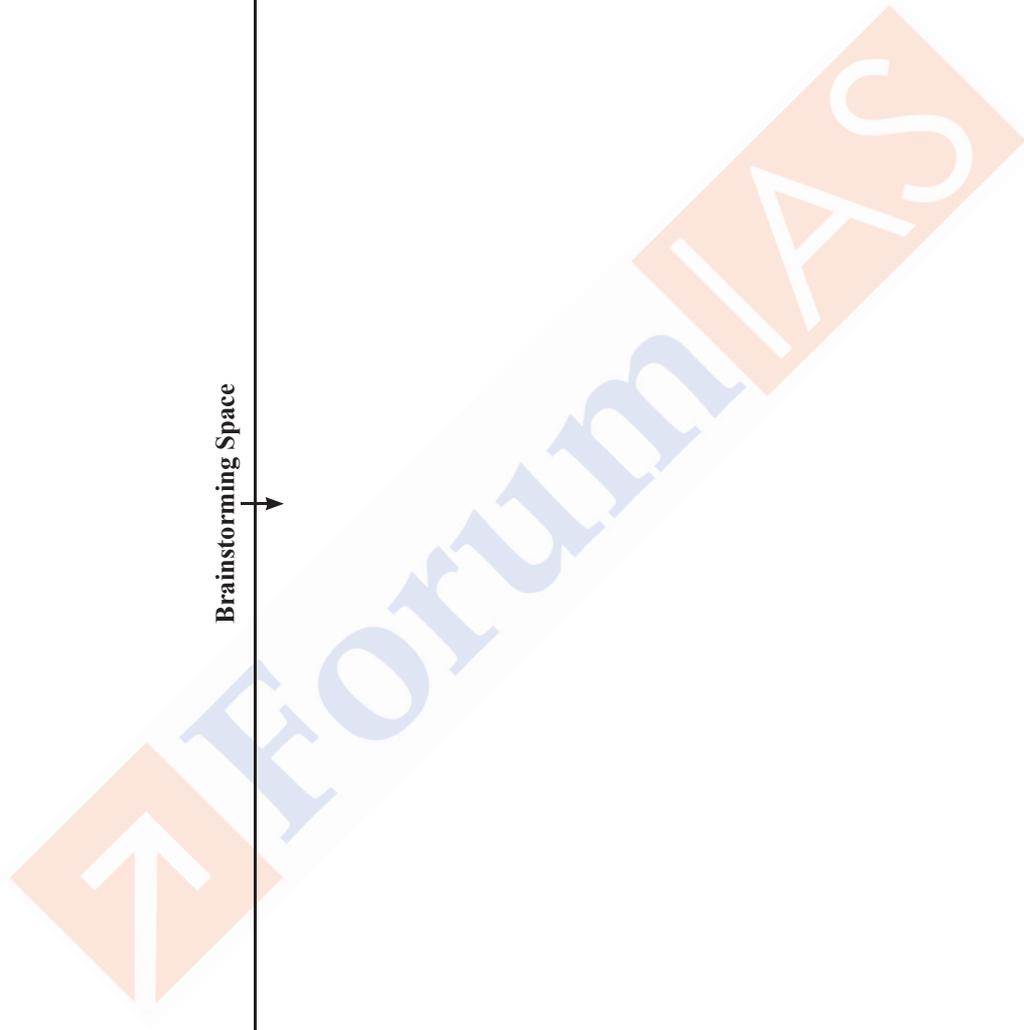
Q.24) Discuss the Tandava dance as recorded in the early Indian inscription.  
(5 Marks, 100 Words) [2013]

Brainstorming Space



Q.25) What are the main forms of classical dance in India? Indicate two features of each. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [1988]

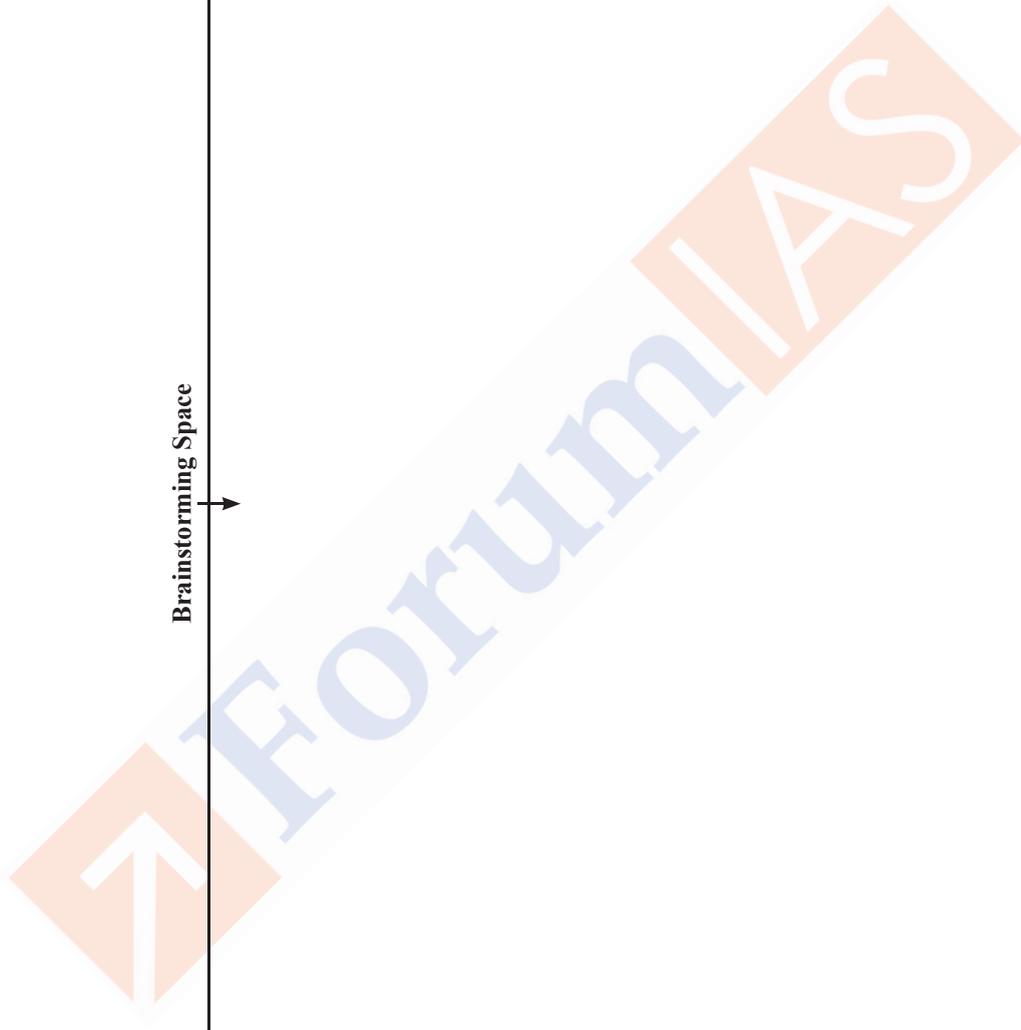
Brainstorming Space



**Q.26)** Which are the classical dances of India? Where did they originate?  
Name one distinguished dancer of each school.

(15 Marks, 250 Words) [1980]

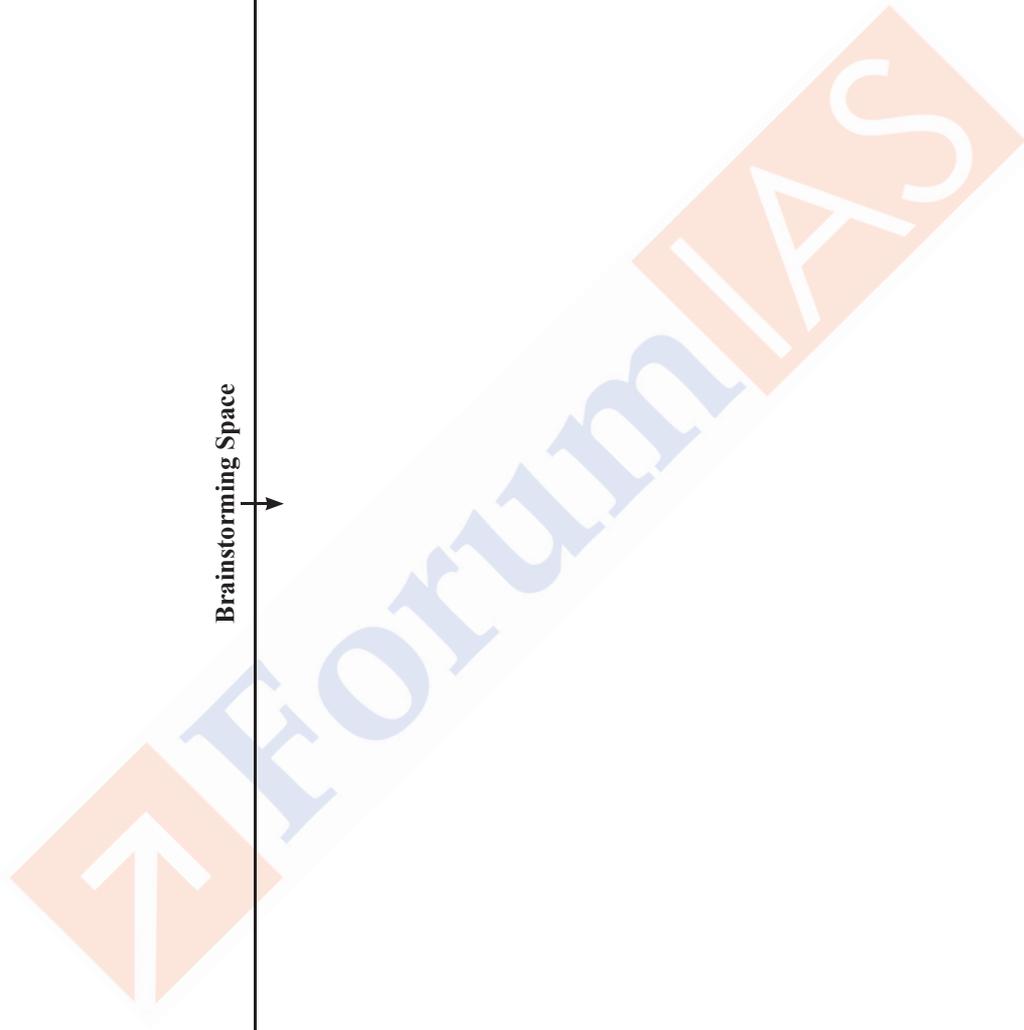
Brainstorming Space



Q.27) What efforts have been made to develop theatre in India? Name any two persons associated with the development of this art.

(10 Marks, 150 Words) [1985]

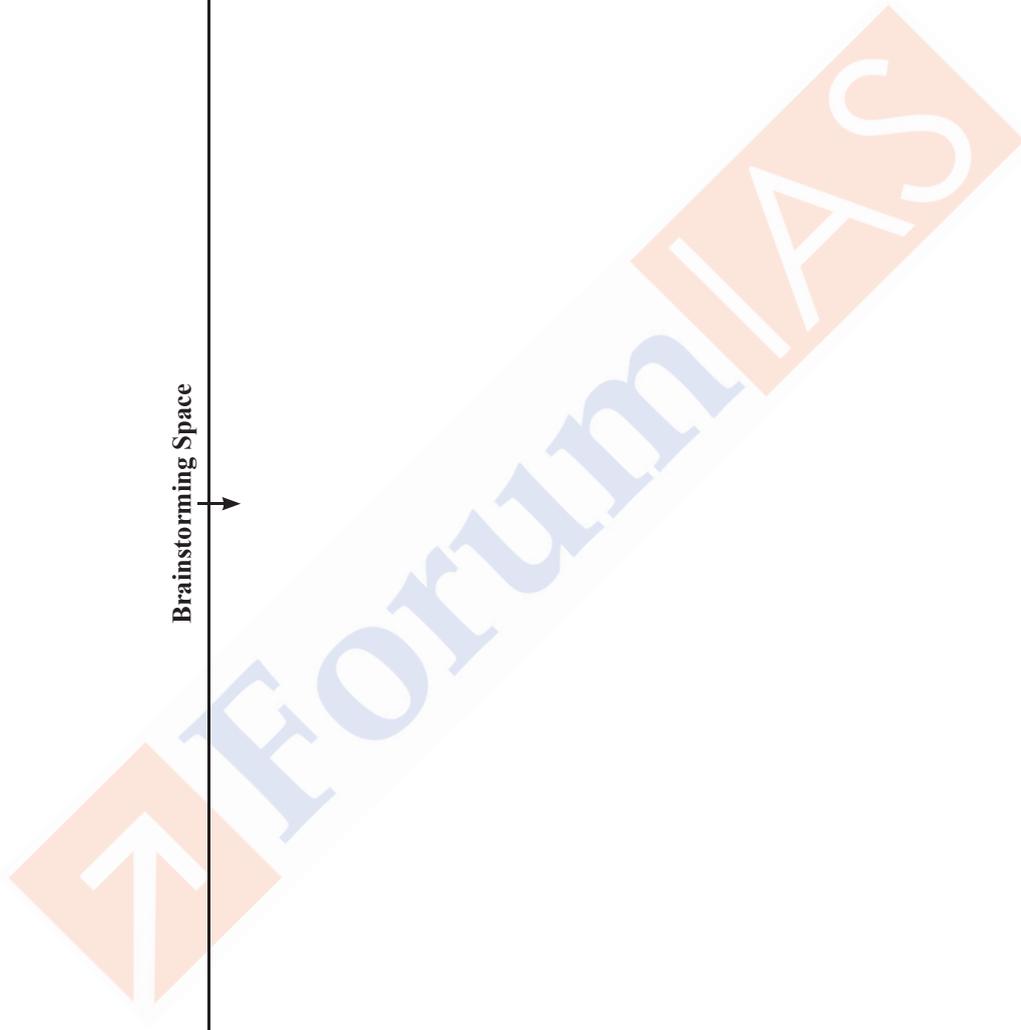
Brainstorming Space



**Q.28)** Indian philosophy and tradition played a significant role in conceiving and shaping the monuments and their art in India. Discuss.

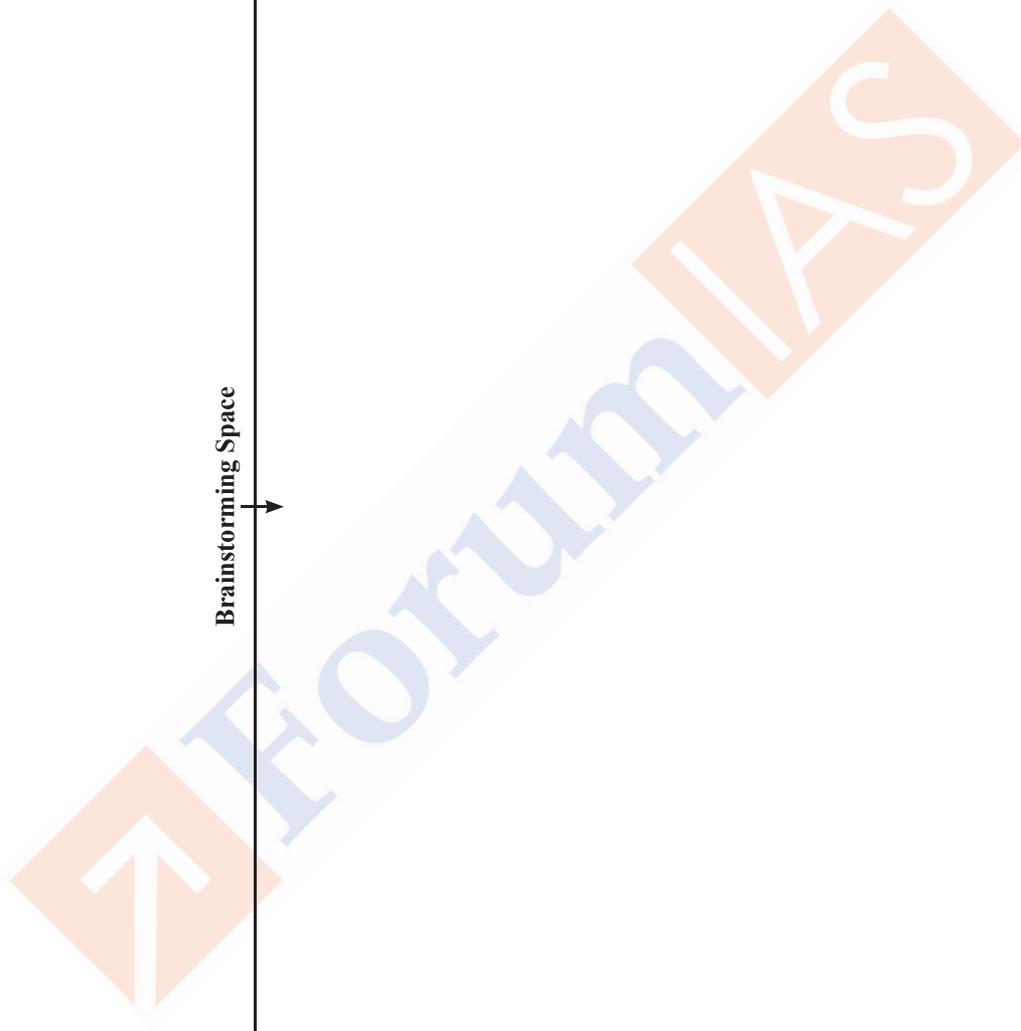
(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2020]

Brainstorming Space



**Q.29)** Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment.  
Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2018]

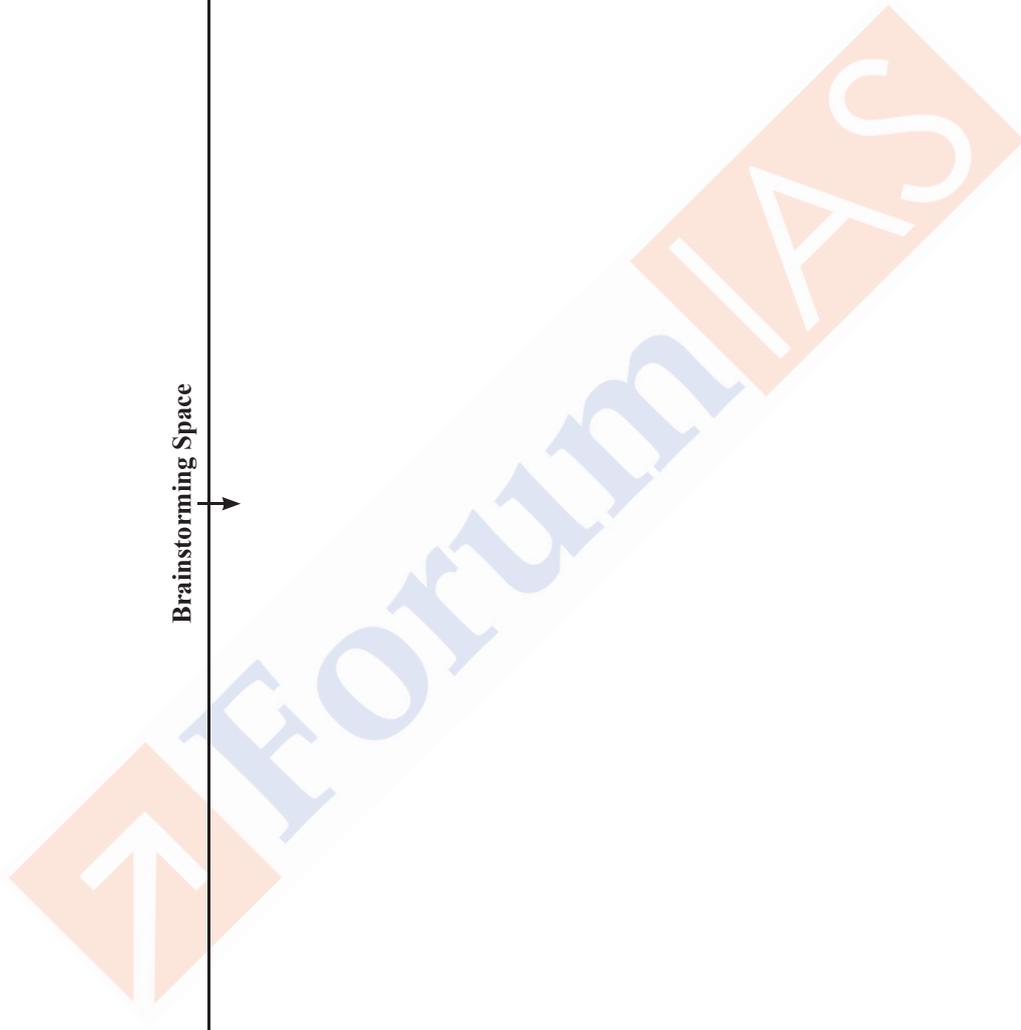
Brainstorming Space



**Q.30)** Mesolithic rock cut architecture of India not only reflects the cultural life of the times but also a fine aesthetic sense comparable to modern painting. Critically evaluate this comment.

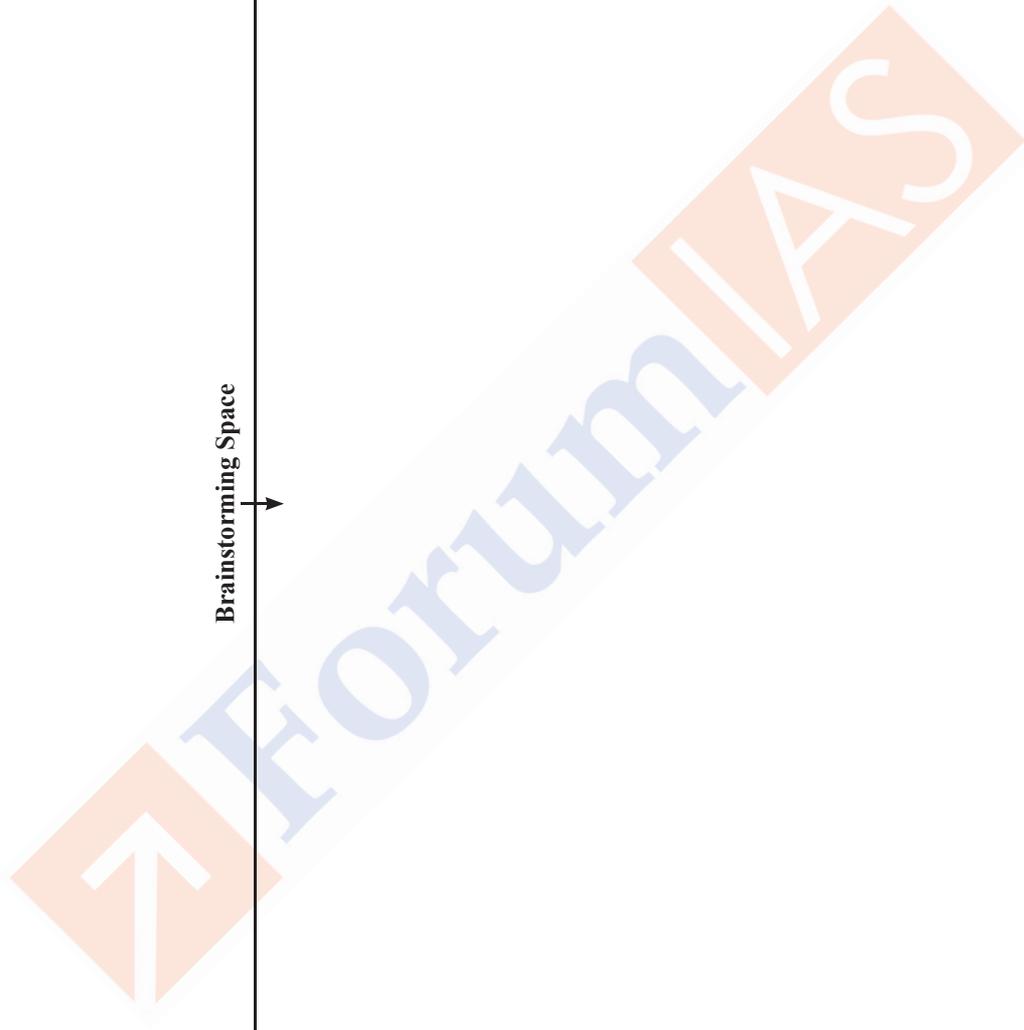
(12.5 Marks, 200 Words) [2015]

Brainstorming Space



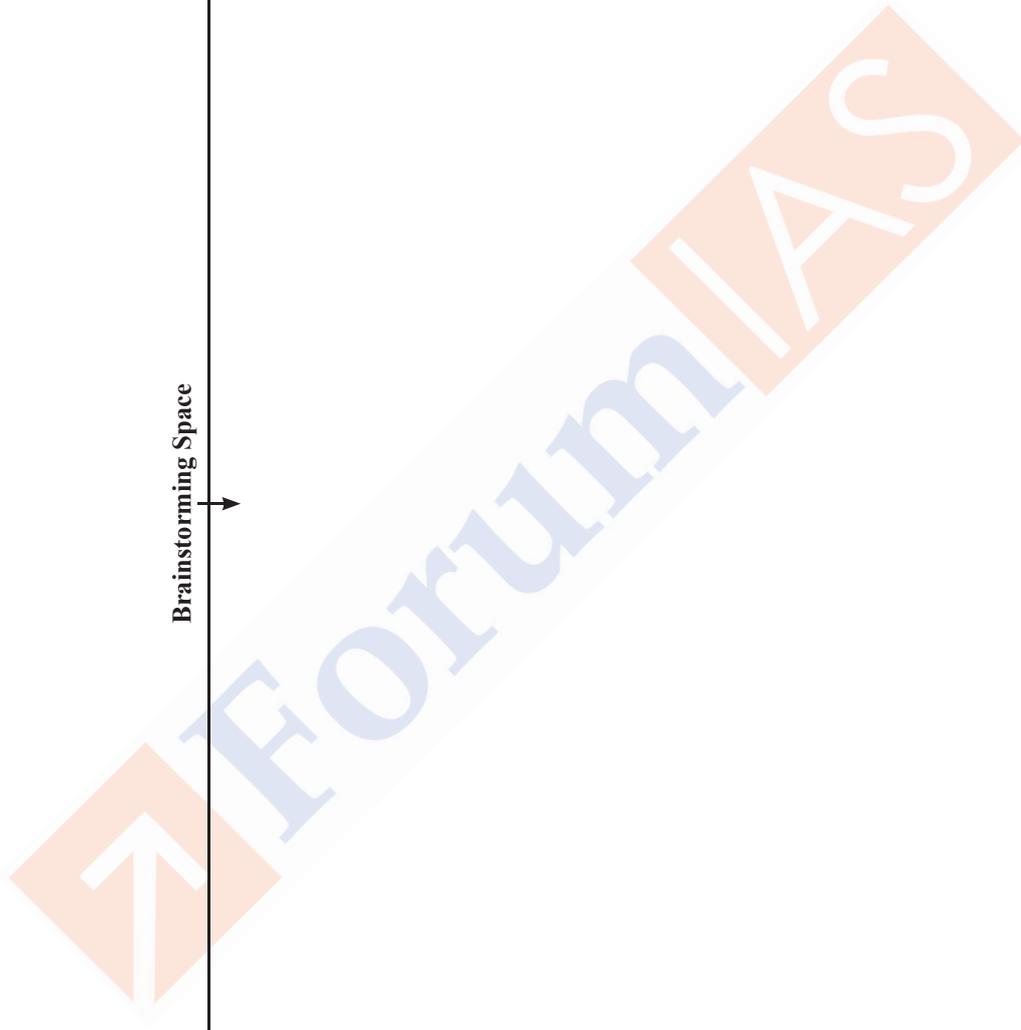
**Q.31)** Evaluate the nature of the Bhakti Literature and its contribution to Indian culture. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2021]

Brainstorming Space



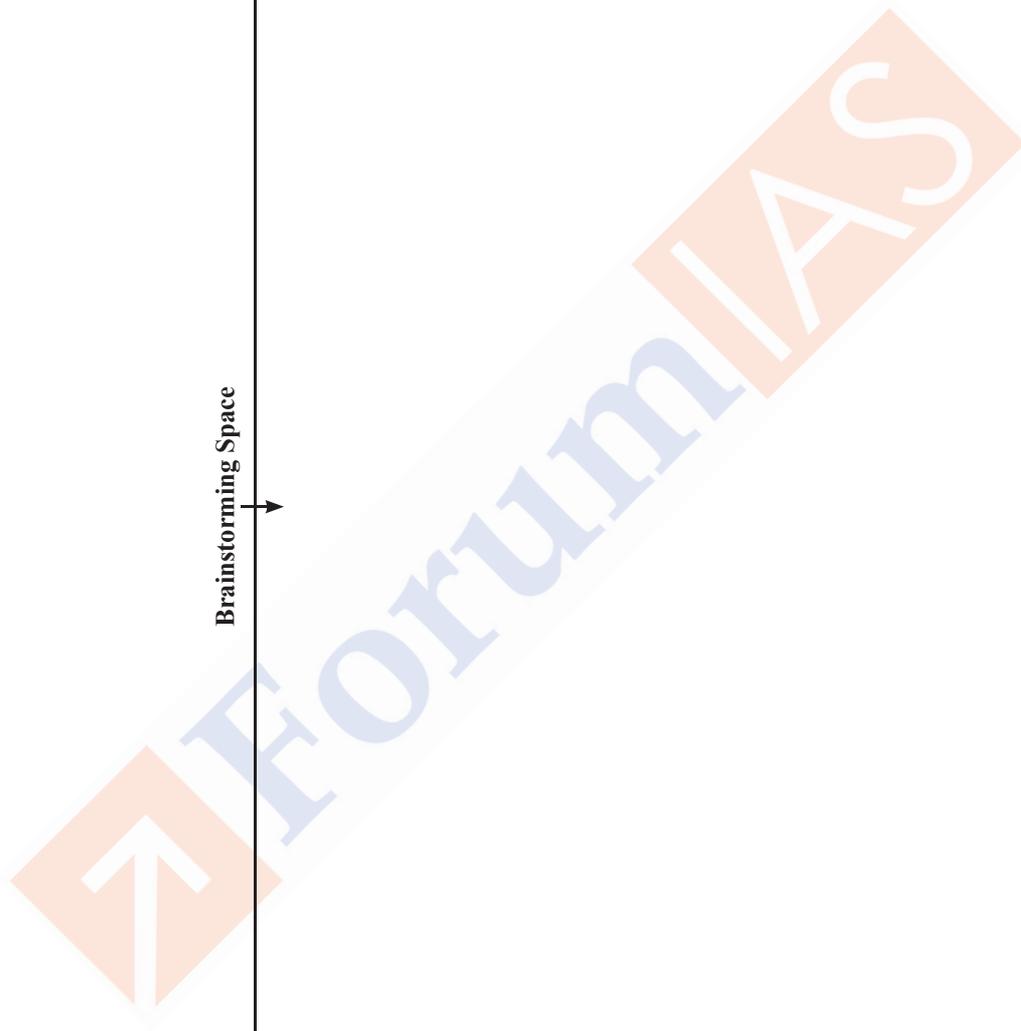
**Q.32)** Krishnadeva Raya, the King of Vijayanagar, was not only an accomplished scholar himself but was also a great patron of learning and literature. Discuss. (12.5 Marks, 200 Words) [2016]

Brainstorming Space



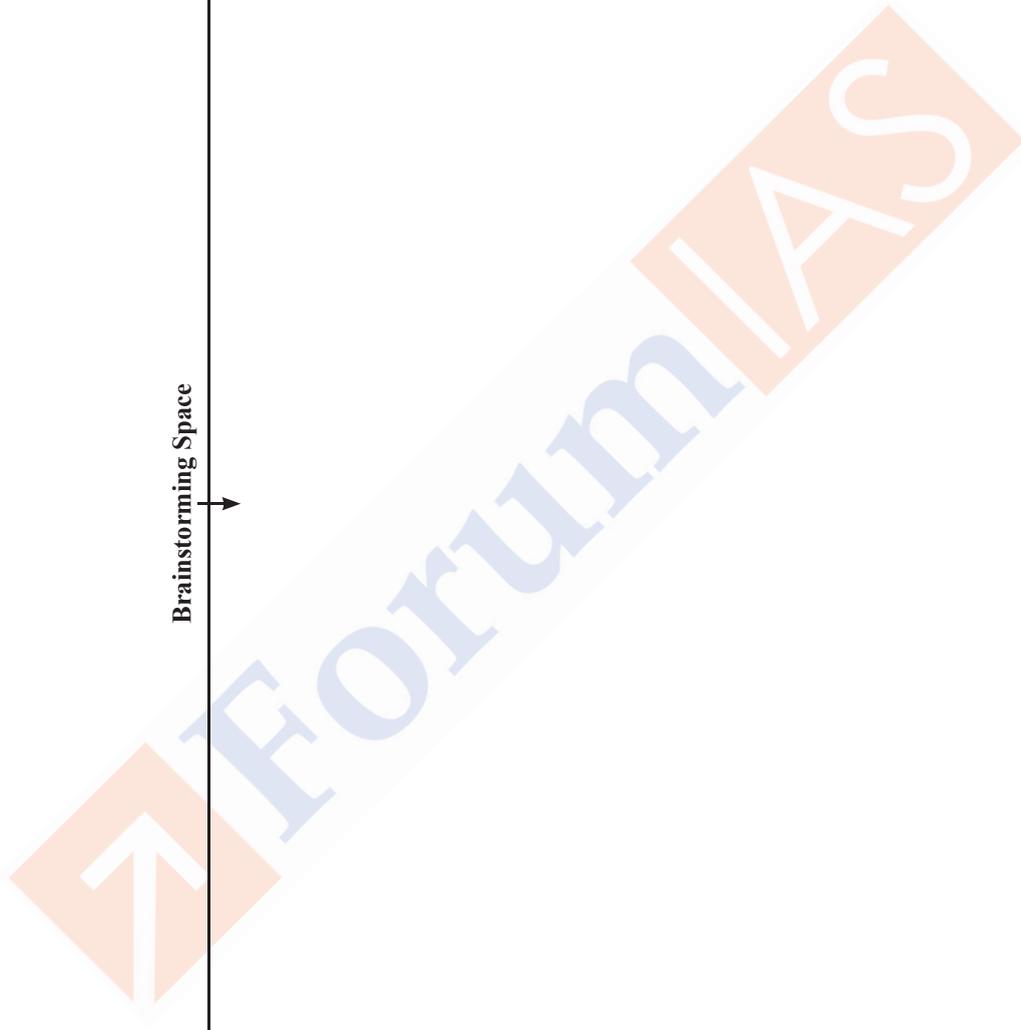
**Q.33)** Persian literary sources of medieval India reflect the spirit of the age. Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2021]

Brainstorming Space



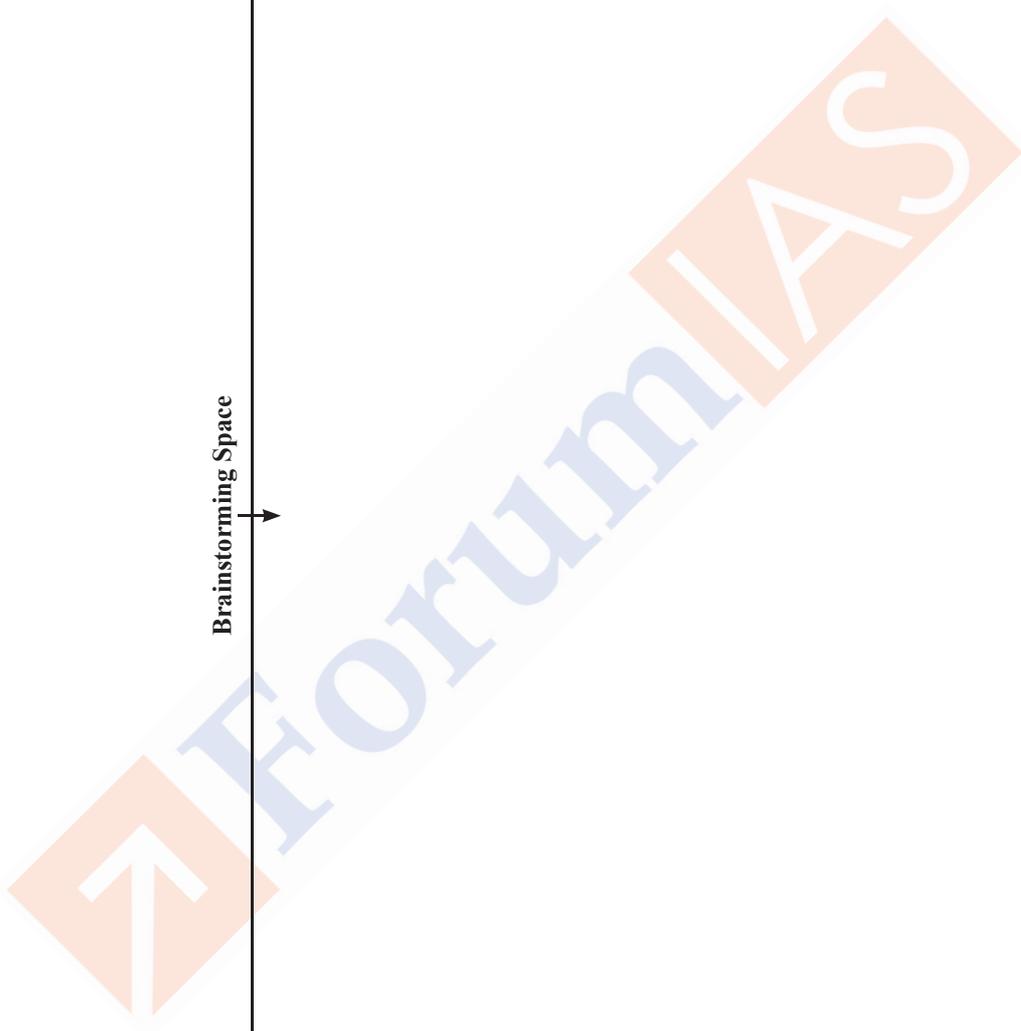
**Q.34)** Estimate the contribution of Pallavas of Kanchi for the development of art and literature of South India. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2024]

Brainstorming Space



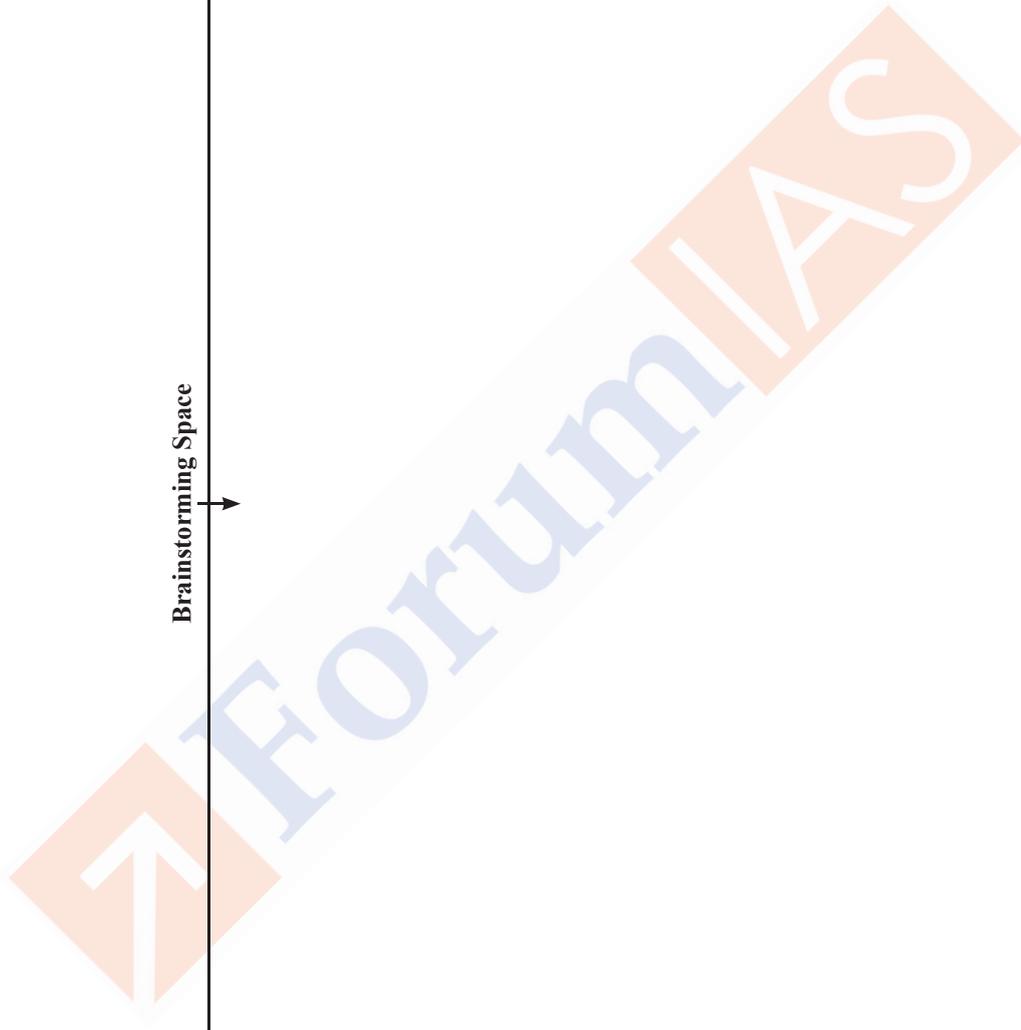
**Q.35)** Taxila university was one of the oldest universities of the world with which were associated a number of renowned learned personalities of different disciplines. Its strategic location caused its fame to flourish, but unlike Nalanda, it is not considered as a university in the modern sense. Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2024]

Brainstorming Space



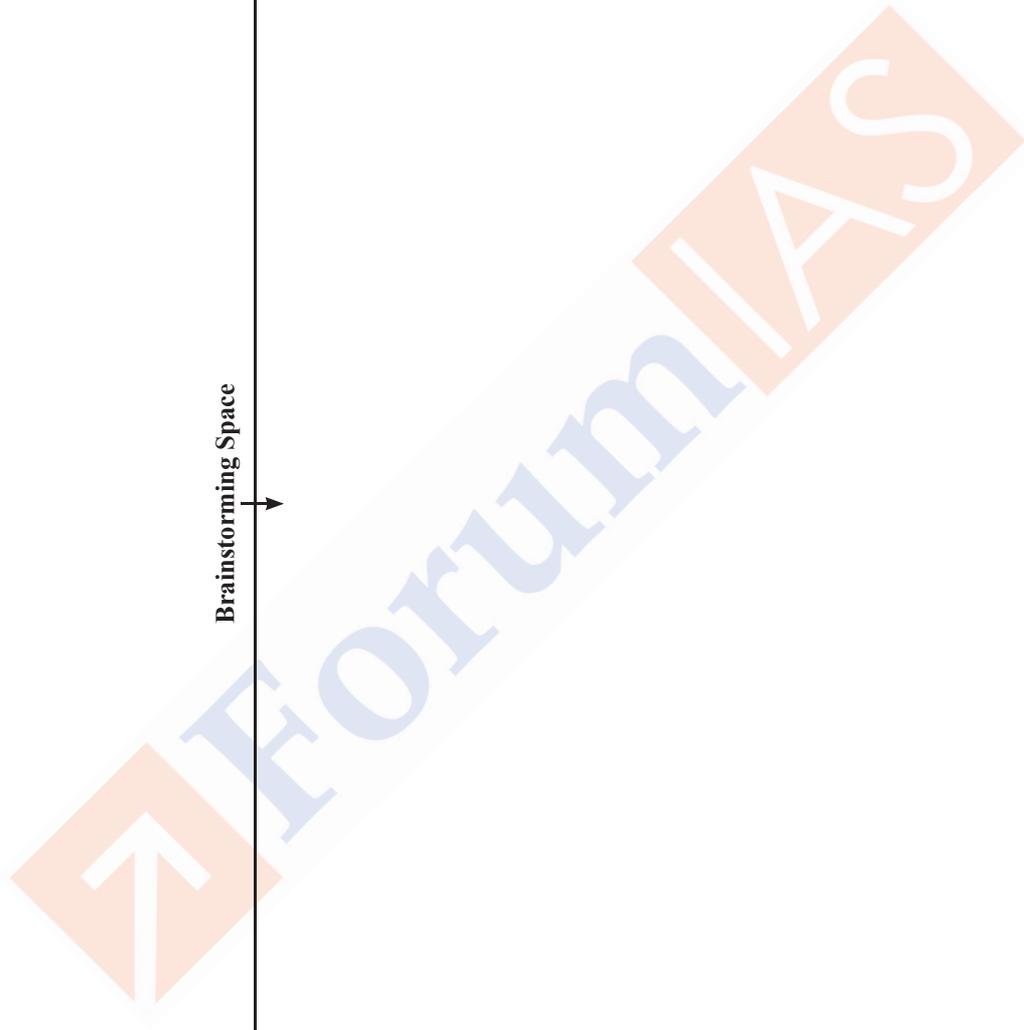
Q.36) Though not very useful from the point of view of a connected political history of South India, the Sangam literature portrays the social and economic conditions of its time with remarkable vividness. Comment. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2013]

Brainstorming Space



**Q.37)** Explain the role of geographical factors towards the development of Ancient India. (10 Marks, 150 Words) [2023]

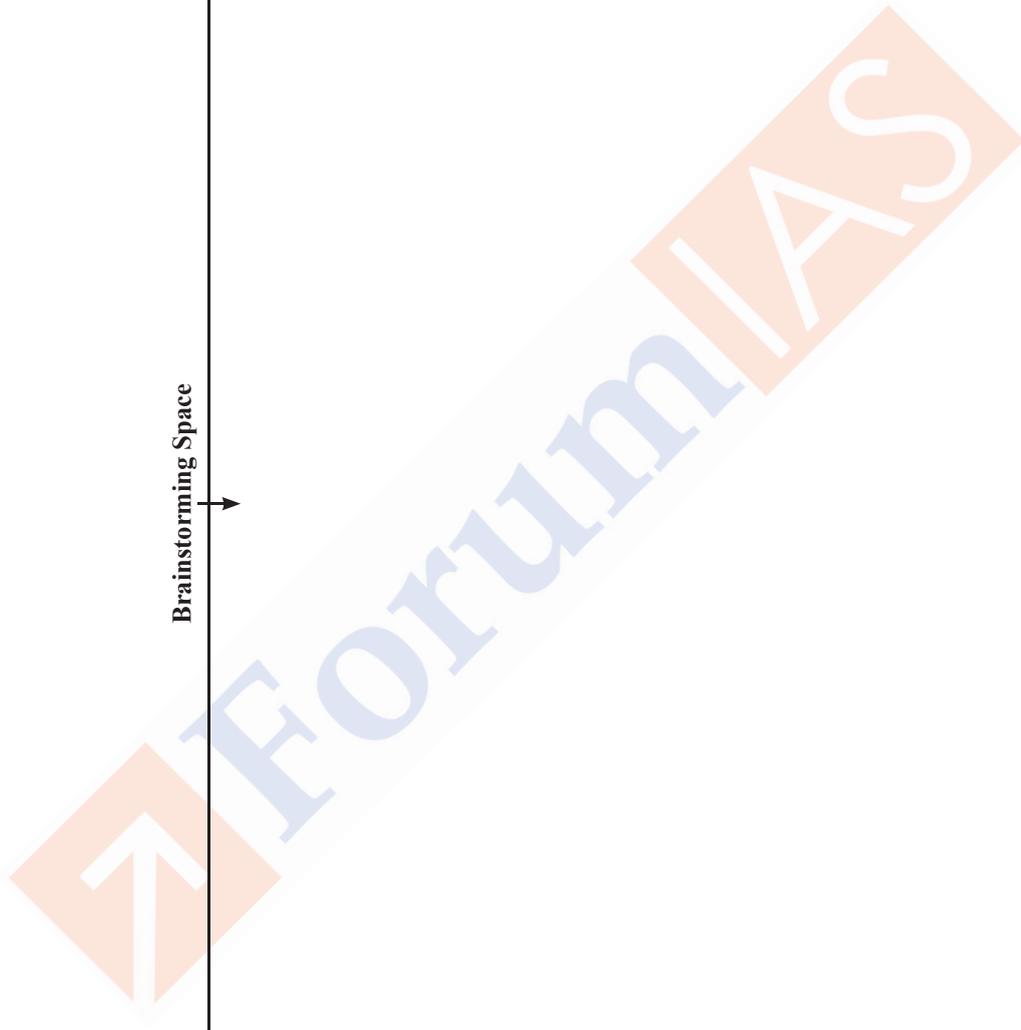
Brainstorming Space



**Q.38)** The ancient civilisation in Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without breakdown to the present day. Comment.

(12.5 Marks, 200 Words) [2015]

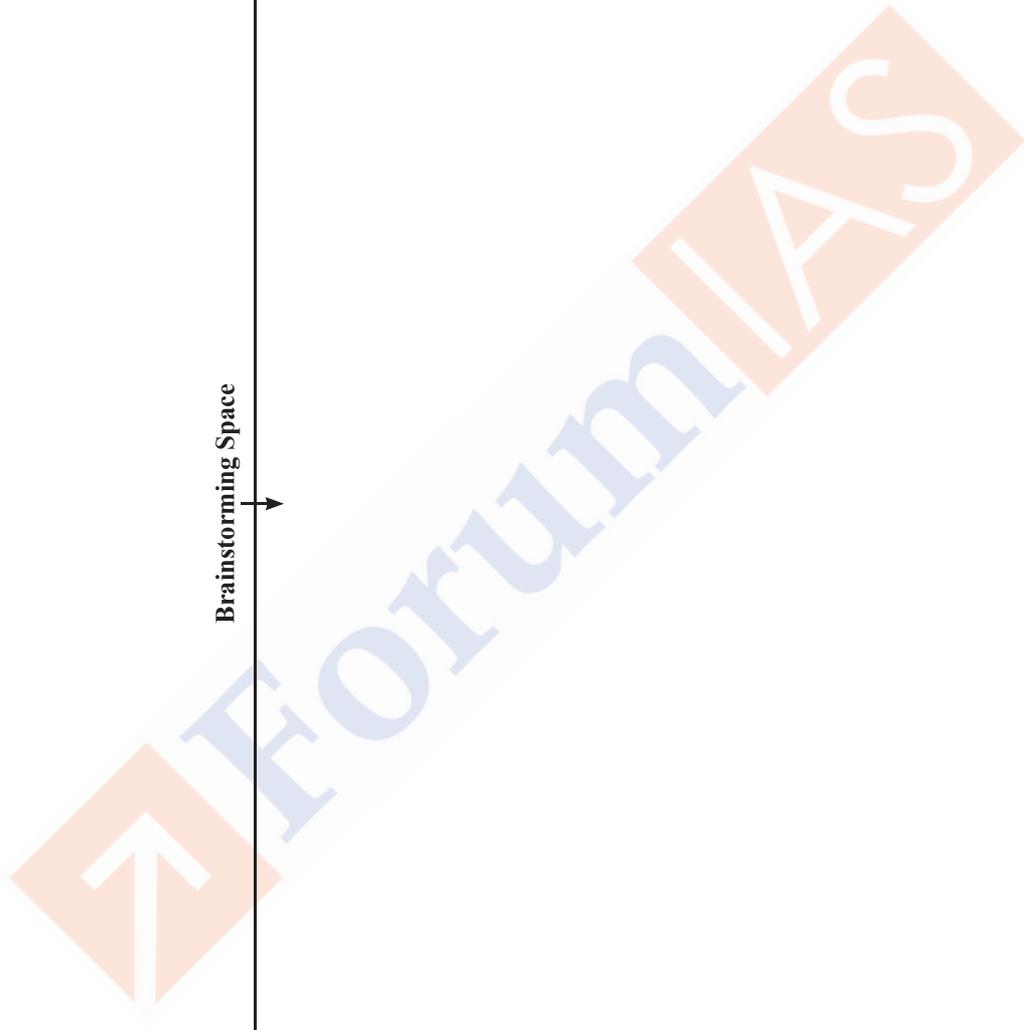
Brainstorming Space



**Q.39)** To what extent has the urban planning and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to present day urbanisation? Discuss.

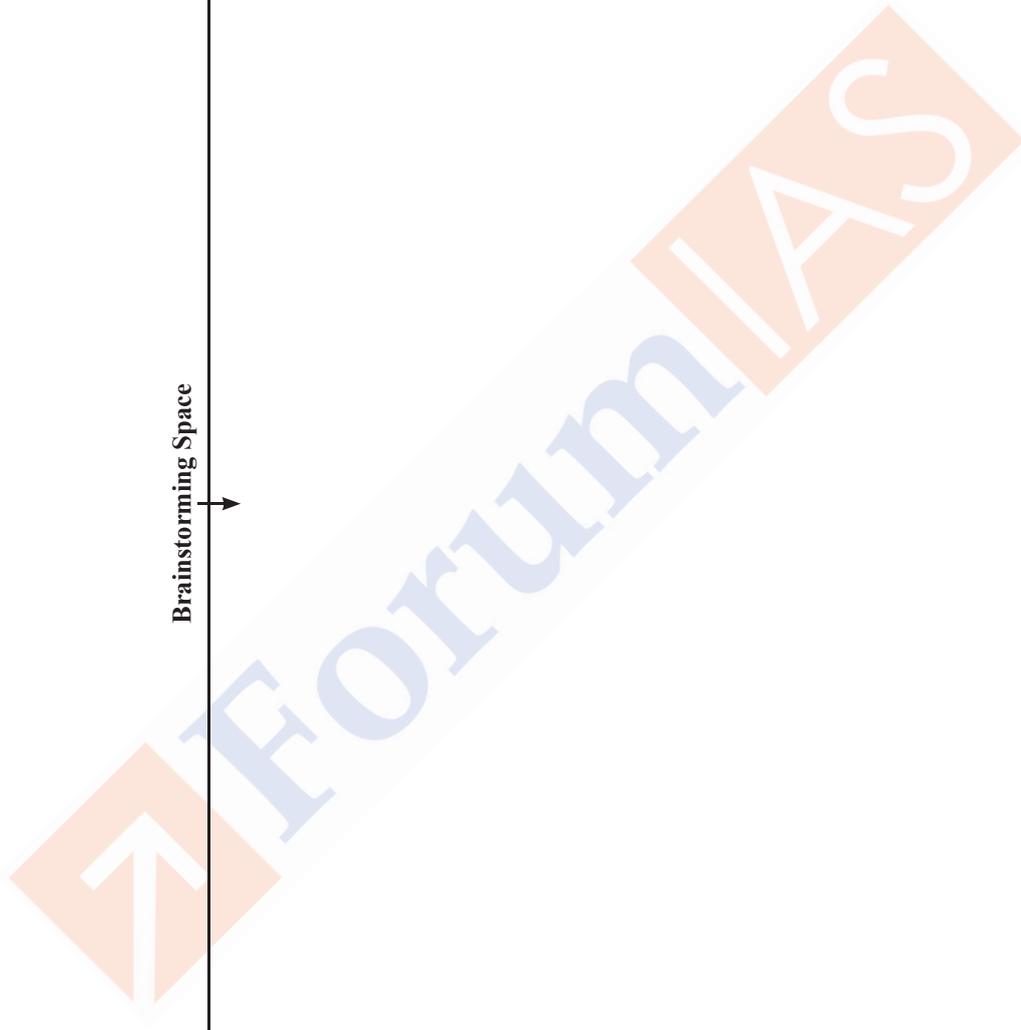
(12.5 Marks, 200 Words) [2014]

Brainstorming Space



**Q.40)** What were the major technological changes introduced during the Sultanate period? How did those technological changes influence Indian society? (15 Marks, 250 Words) [2023]

Brainstorming Space



**Q.41)** Assess the importance of the accounts of the Chinese and Arab travellers in the reconstruction of the history of India.

(10 Marks, 150 Words) [2018]

Brainstorming Space

