Syllabus subtopic: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the ritual and the Buddhist sites associated; about INTACH and its role in conserving Indian heritage

News: After a sustained campaign, heritage lovers and officials have been successful in almost stopping the stone-pelting ritual at Bojjannakonda, a famous Buddhist site at Sankaram, 3.5 km from Anakapalle and 41 km from Visakhapatnam.

About the ritual on Kanuma day

The villagers, as a part of an ancient ritual, would throw stones at a belly-shaped object at the site, believing it to be a part of a demon.

About the Buddhist sites

Bojjannakonda and Lingalametta are twin Buddhist monasteries dating back to the 3rd century BC. These sites have seen three forms of Buddhism —

1. the Theravada period when Lord Buddha was considered a teacher;
2. the Mahayana, where Buddhism was more devotional; and
3. Vajrayana, where Buddhist tradition was more practised as Tantra and in esoteric form.

The name Sankaram is derived from the term, ‘Sangharama’. The site is famous for many votive stupas, rockcut caves, brickbuilt edifices, early historic pottery, and Satavahana coins that date back to the 1st century AD.

- The main stupa was carved out of rock and then covered with bricks, and a number of images of the Buddha are seen sculpted on the rock face all over the hill.

- At the nearby Lingalametta, one can see hundreds of rockcut monolithic stupas in rows.
Efforts of NTACH to protect the site from damage

Following the intervention of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), the practice carried out on the Kanuma day during Sankranti has almost been done away with. With the support of the police and the district administration, it has been able to stop pelting of stones for the past few years.

About INTACH

- The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) was founded in 1984 with the vision to spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India.
- INTACH’s mission is to conserve heritage is based on the belief that living in harmony with heritage enhances the quality of life, and it is the duty of every citizen of India as laid down in the Constitution of India.
- INTACH is recognized as one of the world’s largest heritage organizations and has pioneered the conservation and preservation of not just our natural and built heritage but intangible heritage as well.