Syllabus subtopic: Indian Culture - Salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the move and its significance; about Vittala temple; about Hampi world heritage site

News: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is contemplating installing a wooden barricade around the stone chariot inside Vittala Temple complex at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hampi.

Reason for the move

According to a few officials in the ASI wooden barricade has been thought of since a long time to protect it from vandalism given the behaviour of some of the tourists, who tend to be disrespectful towards the monuments.

Barricading necessary

- While some locals say the ASI is not doing enough to protect the monuments, the same lot also criticise the proposed move to install the barricade.

- Though the site is guarded there are always some tourists with a streak for vandalism who find a “window of opportunity” when the attention of the security personnel is drawn elsewhere.

- Tourists hoisting children atop the wheels and elephant sculptures, while elders leaning against the chariot as if pushing it and getting photographed, ignoring its sanctity. There is lack of awareness among the public that the monuments stand testimony to culture and heritage.

About Vittala Temple

- The renowned Vittala Temple dates back to the 15th century. It was built during the reign of King Devaraya II (1422 – 1446 A.D.), one of the rulers
of the Vijayanagara Empire. Several portions of the temple were expanded and enhanced during the reign of Krishnadevaraya (1509 – 1529 A.D.), the most famous ruler of the Vijayanagara dynasty. He played a significant role in giving the monument its present look.

- The Vittala Temple is also known as Shri Vijaya Vitthala Temple. It is dedicated to Lord Vitthala, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. An idol of Vitthala-Vishnu was enshrined in the temple. Legend has it that the temple was built as an abode for Lord Vishnu in his Vitthala form. However, the Lord had found the temple to be too grand for his use and had returned to live in his own humble home.

- The Vittala Temple is presumed to be the grandest of all temples and monuments in Hampi. The temple exemplifies the immense creativity and architectural excellence possessed by the sculptors and artisans of the Vijayanagara era.

Architecture

- The temple is built in the Dravidian style of architecture. It has traits and features that are characteristic of typical south Indian temple architecture. It’s elaborate and artistic carvings and magnificent architecture is unmatched by any other structure found in Hampi.

- It is believed that the main shrine of the temple originally had one enclosed Mantapa. An open Mantapa was added to it in the year 1554 A.D.

- The temple complex is a sprawling area that is surrounded by high compound walls and three towering gateways. The temple complex has many halls, shrines and pavilions located inside it. Each of these structures is made of stone and each structure is a beauty in itself.

- Notable among these structures are the shrine of the Goddess (also known as Devi shrine), Maha Mantapa or main hall (also known as Sabha Mantapa or congregation hall), Ranga Mantapa, Kalyana Mantapa (marriage hall), Utsava Mantapa (festival hall), and the famous Stone
Chariot.

- Vittala Temple is not only among the most-visited protected monuments at Hampi, but is also the most photographed.