



The Relative Ease Of Stealing Antiquities From India Is A Matter Of Grave Concern In Preserving The Rich Cultural Heritage. In This Context, Briefly Mention The Adequate Steps That Need To Be Taken To Prevent Such Cases Of Stealing In Future. (150 Words) (GS1 Indian Culture)

Approach :

- Brief overview of state of stolen antiquities.
- Inefficient role of ASI.
- Steps to be taken.

The antiquities form part of the rich body of cultural heritage that India can boast for. However, frequent cases of stealing of antiquities have periled the perseverance of India's **rich tangible cultural heritage**, the *recent being in Tamil Nadu*. Idols are routinely **stolen by local thieves in connivance with international cartels**. There is no trace of *Sripuranthan Nataraja & Uma Maheshwari*, even after two years of being stolen.

According to **CAG report "Preservation and Conservation of Monuments and Antiquities"**, 131 antiquities were stolen from monuments & sites and 37 from museums between 1981-2012.

The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** is the **nodal agency** for retrieving stolen or illegally exported art objects. This ASI has been **highly inefficient**. It has **never participated or collected information on Indian antiquities put to sale in international auctions**. ASI has **abused its discretion in granting non-antiquity certificates for exports**. Also, it **lacks credible intelligence inputs** along with a **fragile security infrastructure**. Also its **rate of repatriation & tracing** is very poor.

Steps :

- **Robust law** on protecting cultural heritage with **enhanced penalties**.
- **Centralised management** for archaeological research authorisation.
- **specialization of public prosecutors** in cultural heritage.
- **An Inter-Ministerial committee** should be formed for the recovery of cultural objects.
- **Parliament should be updated** on stolen idols & artefacts to maintain accountability.
- **International MOUs & bilateral deals** to prevent illegal trafficking and smooth retrieval of lost artefacts. While India is a signatory to **UNESCO Convention on Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970**, it should also consider signing the **1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects**.
- A **complete inventory of movable & immovable cultural heritage** with **detailed catalogues**.
- **Regular monitoring-inspection** of cultural sites.
- **Private Sector and Community involvement** in protection.



Inspired by the motto of “**sabka prayas**”, it shall remain the duty of every Citizen, which the Constitution entrusts (**Art. 51A**), to value & preserve the rich heritage of India's composite culture.

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