

UPSC Mains Model Questions [August 1-15, 2026]



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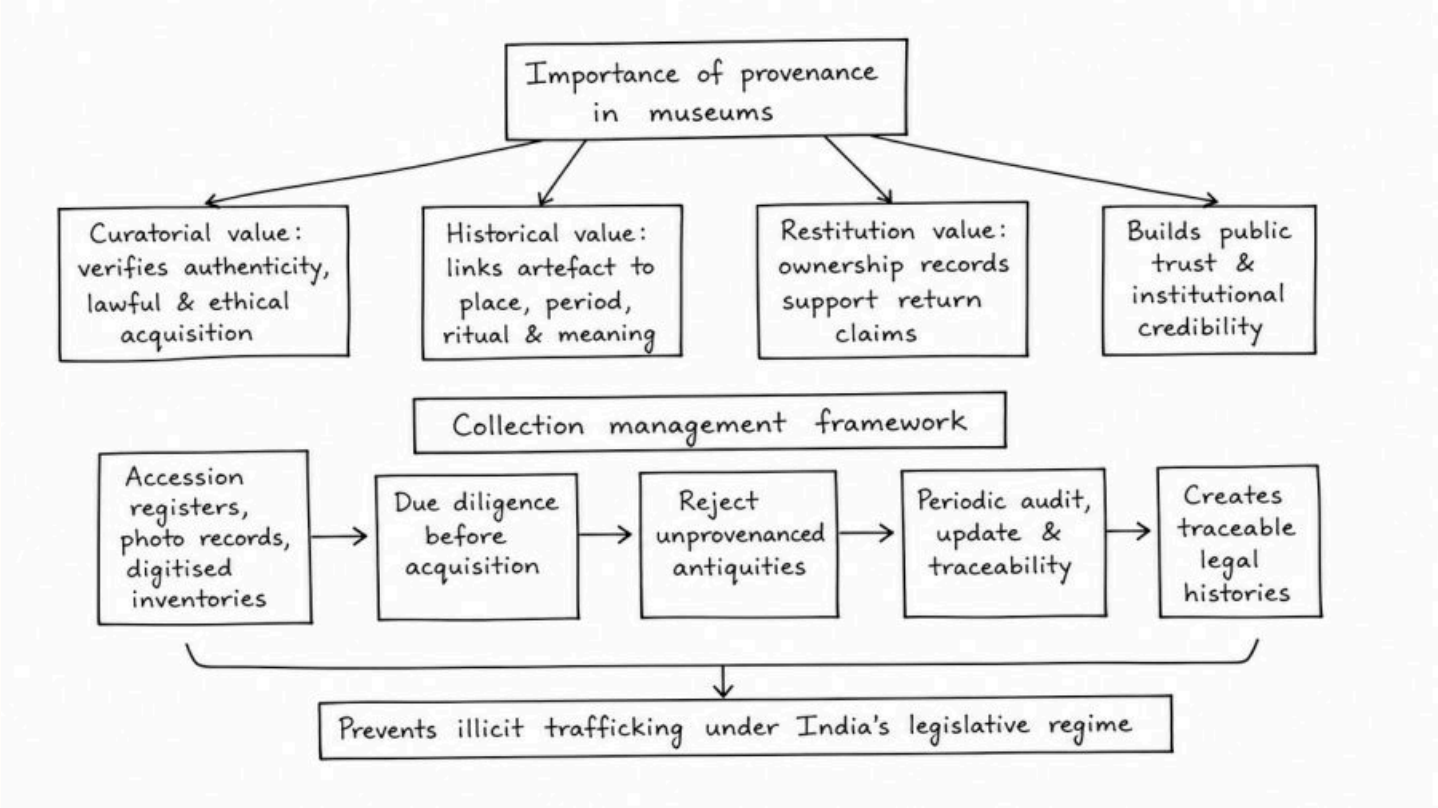
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GS-I: Indian Art, Culture & Heritage

1. Underline the importance of “provenance” in curatorial practices within national museums. How can robust collection management frameworks prevent illicit trafficking of antiquities under India’s legislative regime? (150 words)

Provenance is the documented life history of an object, from its origin to present custody. In national museums, it is vital for authenticity, legal title, cultural context and public trust.



- **Curatorial value:** it helps verify whether an object is genuine, lawful and ethically acquired.
- **Historical value:** it links artefacts to place, period, ritual use and social meaning.
- **Restitution value:** clear ownership records support return claims for stolen or trafficked objects.

Collection management framework	Impact
Accession registers, photo records, digitised inventories	Create traceable legal histories
Due diligence before acquisition	Reject unprovenanced antiquities
Periodic audit, marking and secure storage	Reduce theft and internal leakage
Mandatory reporting under AATA, 1972	Support registration, transfer control and penalties

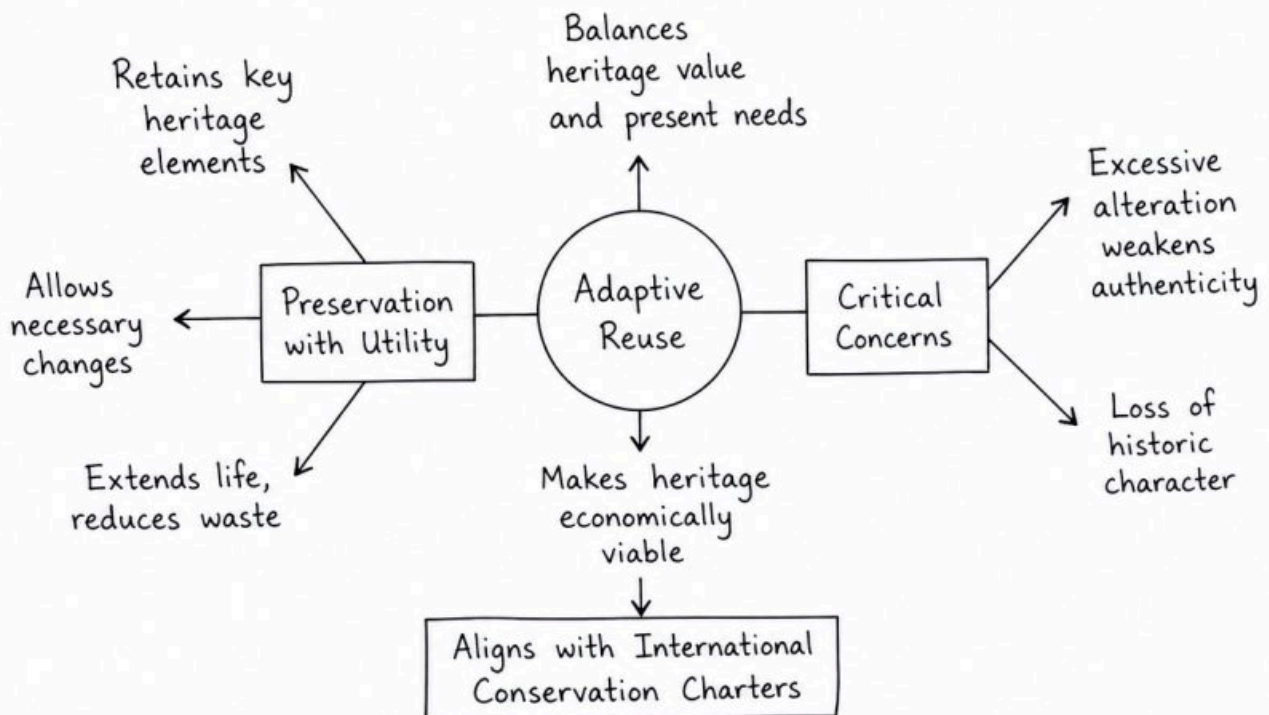
Under India’s legislative regime, such systems strengthen compliance with the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972, aid enforcement by ASI and customs, and close gaps that traffickers exploit. Strong provenance and disciplined collection management are therefore essential for preservation, legality and repatriation.

Your Notes:



2. Critically discuss how the “adaptive reuse” of heritage buildings balances architectural preservation with functional utility. How does it align with international conservation charters? (250 words)

Adaptive reuse gives heritage buildings a second life by matching historic value with present-day needs. It is a balanced strategy: neither rigid preservation nor uncontrolled redevelopment.



- **Preservation with utility**

- Retains key elements such as façades, spatial form, materials and craftsmanship.
- Allows necessary changes for safety, accessibility, services and new functions.
- Extends building life, reduces demolition waste, preserves embodied energy and supports sustainable urban renewal.
- Makes heritage economically viable by converting structures into museums, offices, hotels, cultural centres or community spaces.

- **Critical concerns**

- Excessive alteration can weaken authenticity and historic character.
- Modern services, fire norms and seismic upgrades may conflict with old fabric.
- Commercial reuse can lead to gentrification or cosmetic preservation if not regulated.

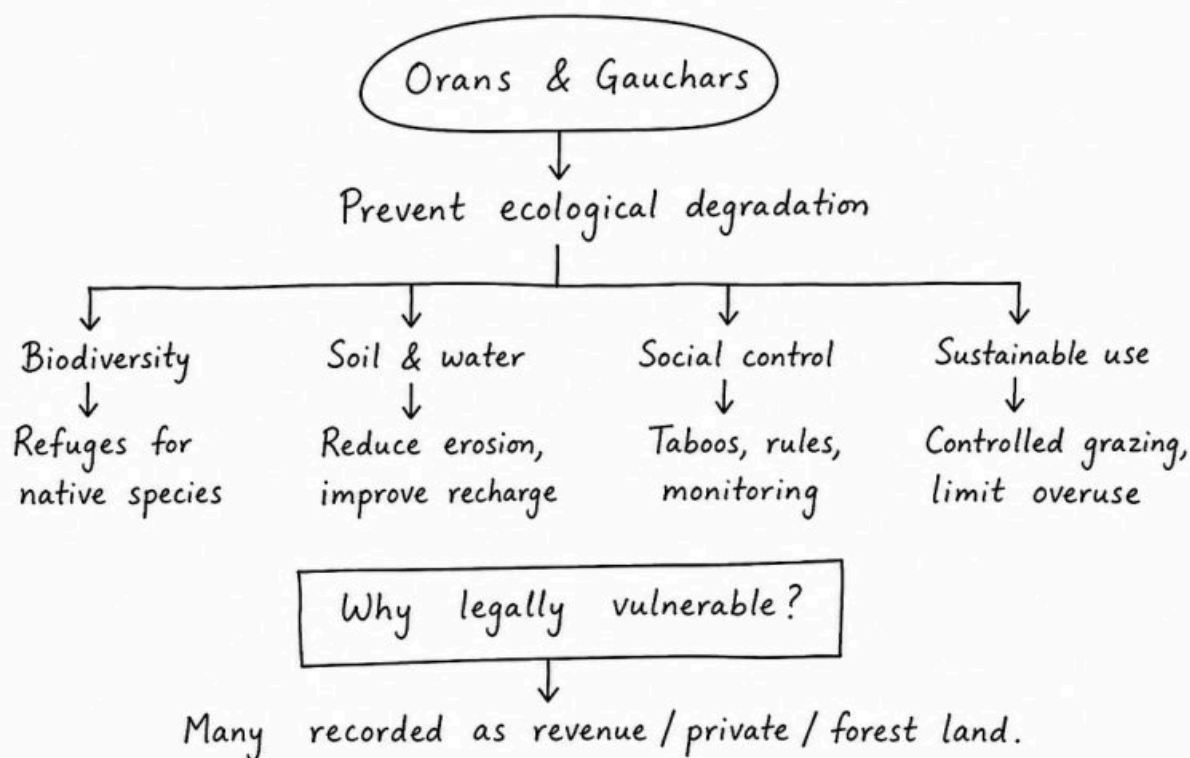
International charters support adaptive reuse with safeguards: the Venice Charter permits new use without harming layout or decoration; the Burra Charter stresses minimum intervention and least impact on cultural significance; the Nara Document broadens authenticity to include context and meaning; and the Granada, Washington and Amsterdam principles endorse conservation through compatible, living use in historic environments.

Your Notes:



3. Taking example of Orans and Gauchars, analyze how traditional community-led conservation models prevent ecological degradation. Why are these sacred spaces legally vulnerable? (150 words)

Orans and Gauchars show how local faith and custom can protect nature better than distant regulation. As shared sacred lands and grazing commons, they limit overuse, conserve native species and support water recharge in fragile dry regions.



- **Biodiversity:** They act as refuges for plants, birds and pollinators, and preserve local genetic diversity.
- **Soil and water:** Tree cover and controlled grazing reduce erosion, improve infiltration and check desertification.
- **Social control:** Community taboos, seasonal rules and collective monitoring prevent hunting, felling and encroachment.

They are legally vulnerable because many are recorded as revenue land, wasteland or uncategorised commons, not as forests. Sparse vegetation, unclear boundaries and weak recognition of customary rights make them easy to divert for mining, roads, farms and urban use.

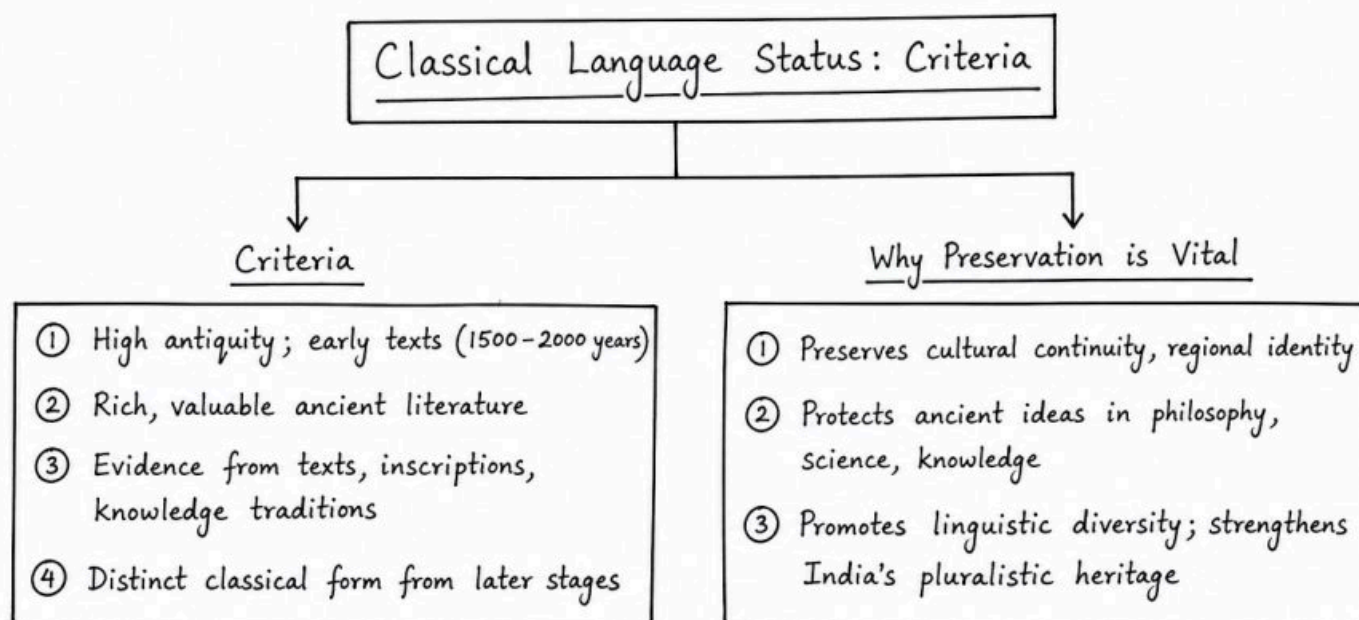
Strong survey, demarcation and legal recognition, with community participation, are needed to protect these spaces without breaking traditional stewardship.

Your Notes:



4. What are the criteria for granting Classical Language status in India? Analyse why the preservation of these languages is vital for India's pluralistic cultural heritage. (150 words)

Classical Language status in India is granted to languages with very high antiquity, an ancient and rich literary tradition, and distinct classical form. The language must have early recorded texts spanning about 1,500 to 2,000 years, along with knowledge texts, prose literature, and epigraphical or inscriptional evidence.



• **Key criteria:**

- High antiquity and documented early history
- Rich, valuable body of ancient literature
- Evidence through texts, inscriptions and knowledge traditions
- Distinct classical form, often separate from later stages

• **Why preservation matters:**

- Preserves cultural continuity and regional identity
- Protects ancient ideas in philosophy, grammar, medicine and astronomy
- Strengthens India's linguistic diversity and pluralism
- Passes on traditions, values and historical memory
- Enhances India's cultural soft power

Thus, classical languages are not merely old scripts; they are living repositories of India's civilisational memory. Their preservation safeguards the country's pluralistic heritage and ensures that diverse cultural voices continue to enrich the nation.

Your Notes: