

## UPSC Mains Model Questions [September 16-30, 2026]



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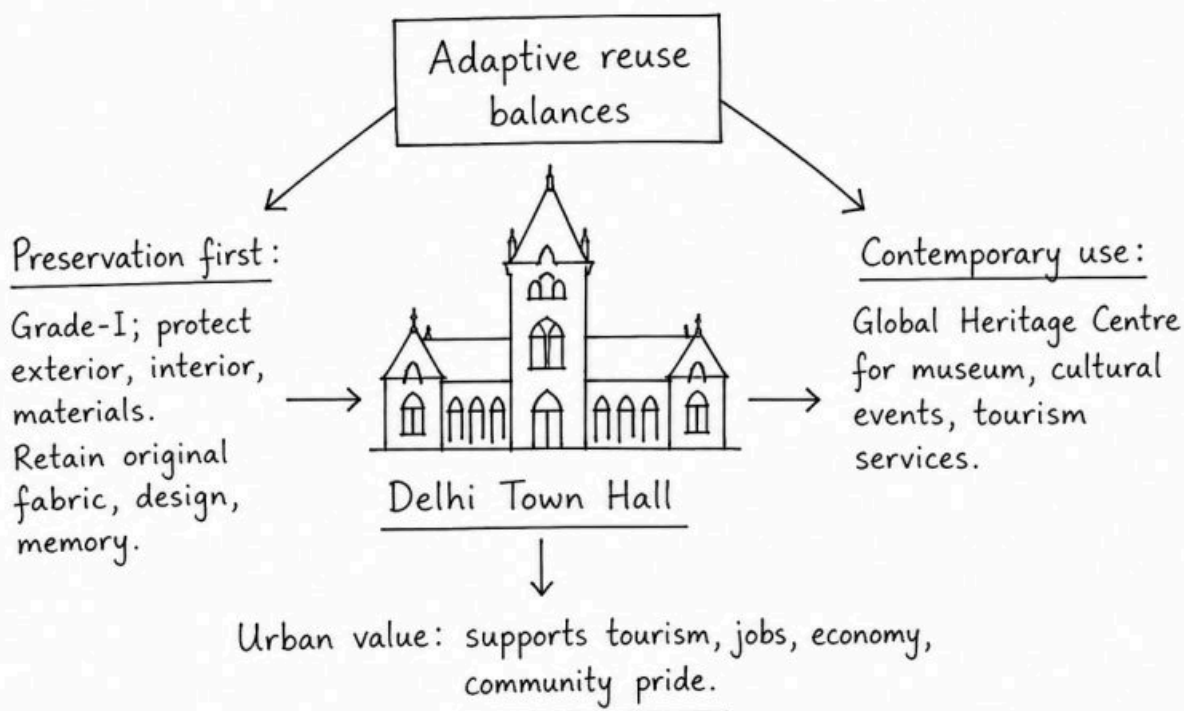
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## GS-I: Indian Art, Culture & Heritage

1. Taking example of Delhi Town Hall, discuss how adaptive reuse balances the preservation of Grade-I heritage structures with contemporary urban needs. (150 words)

Adaptive reuse is a practical way to keep Grade-I heritage structures alive while meeting present-day urban demands. Delhi Town Hall, a Victorian landmark in Chandni Chowk, shows how a vacant civic building can be transformed without losing its historic character.



- **Preservation first:** Grade-I status demands strict protection of exterior, interior and materials. Adaptive reuse avoids demolition and keeps the original fabric, design and memory intact.
- **Contemporary use:** The proposed Global Heritage Centre can host a museum, cultural events and tourism services, making the building useful again.
- **Urban value:** It supports local economy, public access and heritage tourism, while reusing embodied energy and reducing waste.
- **Governance:** Surveys, structural checks and a detailed project report help ensure safe change within heritage limits. Public-private partnership can add funds without handing over ownership.

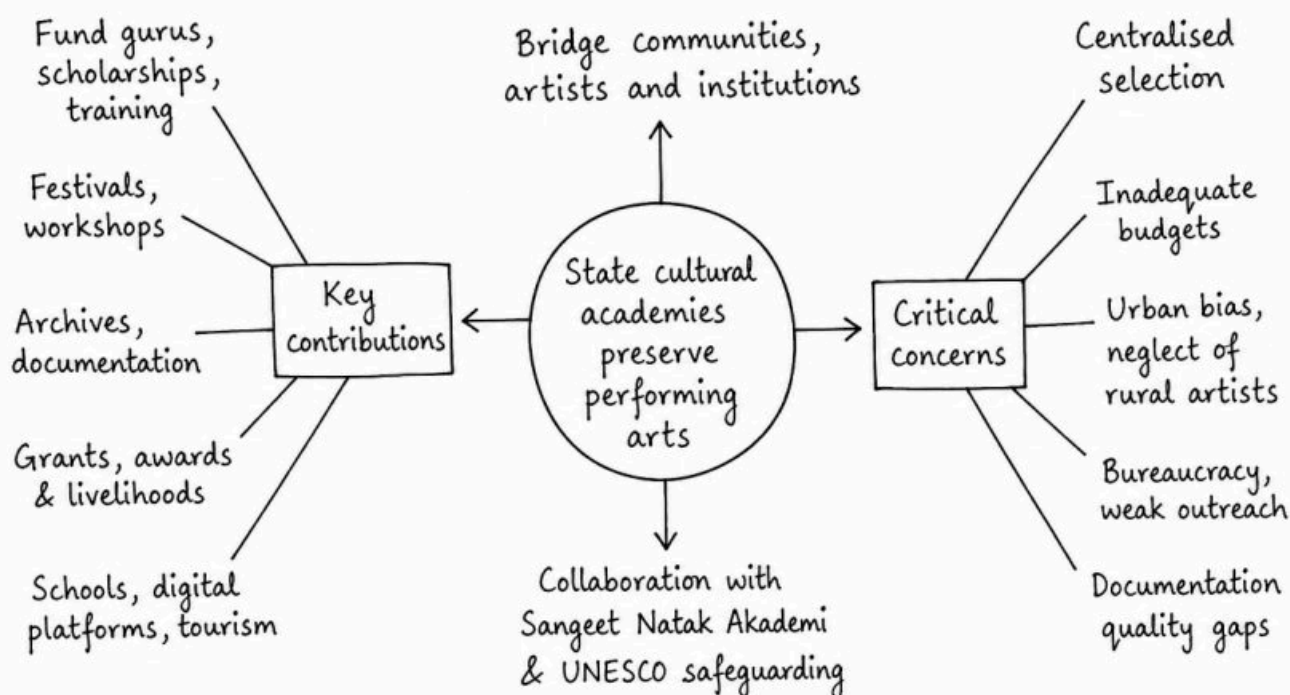
Thus, adaptive reuse turns a protected monument into a living civic asset. It balances conservation with utility, so heritage remains relevant in a growing city.

Your Notes:



2. How do state-level cultural academies like the Sangeetha Nataka Akademi preserve regional performing arts? Critically examine their role in sustaining India's diverse intangible cultural heritage. (150 words)

State-level cultural academies bridge communities, artists and institutions. By supporting transmission, documentation and performance, they keep regional music, dance, theatre and ritual traditions living rather than museum objects. **Key contributions**



- They fund gurus, scholarships and guru–shishya training, enabling inter-generational transfer of endangered folk and classical forms.
- They organise festivals and workshops; archives preserve recordings and performance knowledge. Cultural mapping improves visibility.
- Grants and awards support livelihoods, while schools, digital platforms and cultural tourism widen audiences. Collaboration with Sangeet Natak Akademi supports UNESCO safeguarding.

### Critical concerns

- Centralised selection, inadequate budgets and opaque awards may favour established artists. Festivals can commodify traditions, detach them from communities and reward spectacle over context.
- Remote regions, women practitioners and dying forms remain underrepresented; digital access and infrastructure are uneven.

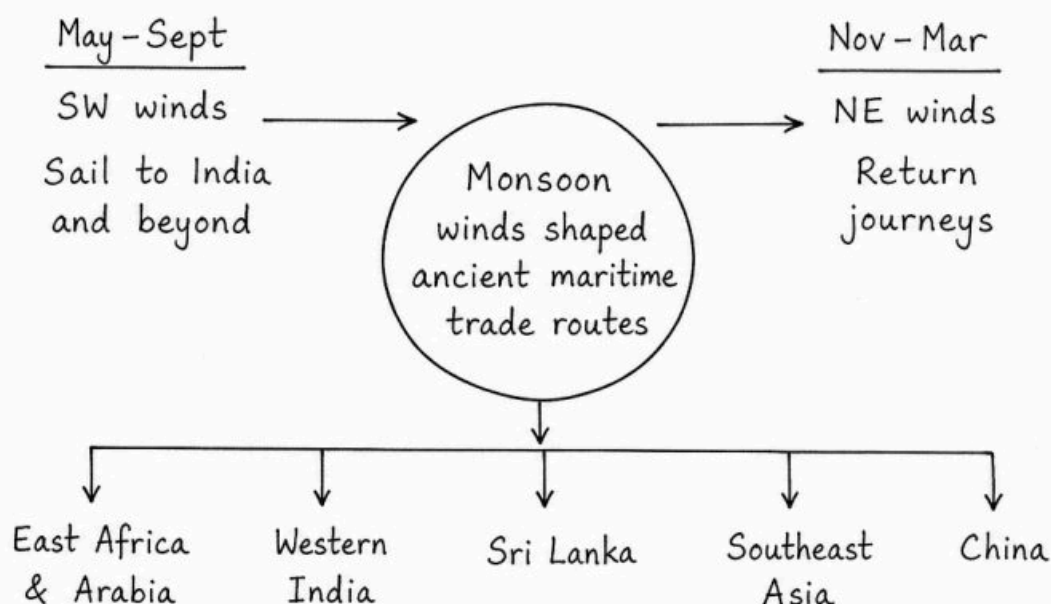
Thus, academies are vital, but preservation must be community-led. Transparent funding, fair remuneration, local archives, apprenticeships and artist participation in decisions can make heritage both authentic and economically sustainable.

Your Notes:



3. Discuss in the light of Project Mausam, how did monsoon winds shape ancient Indian maritime trade routes across the Indian Ocean? (150 words)

Project Mausam views the Indian Ocean as a connected maritime cultural landscape, not a set of isolated coastal societies. Its core insight is that seasonal monsoon reversals converted a hazardous sea into a navigable, recurring trade system. **Routes and rhythm** From May to September, south-west winds supported voyages towards India and beyond; from November to March, north-east winds enabled return journeys. This predictable maritime calendar reduced uncertainty, encouraged larger cargoes, and linked ports from East Africa and Arabia to western and eastern India, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia and China. **Ports and exchange** Indian ports such as Muziris, Bharuch and Tamralipti became entrepôts where merchants waited. Spices, textiles, ivory, metals, horses and precious stones moved across these networks, while sailors, translators and merchant communities transmitted Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and knowledge. **Significance** Mausam therefore presents monsoon winds as an organising force, showing how shared maritime heritage can strengthen contemporary Indian Ocean partnerships.

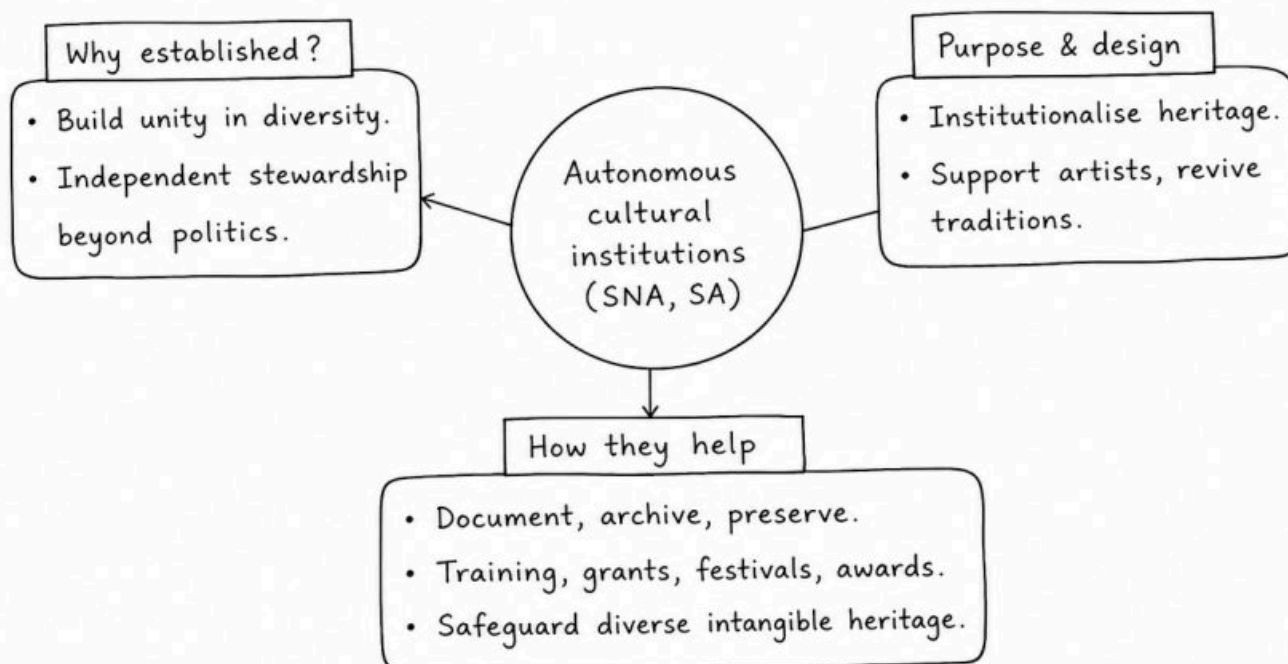


Your Notes:



4. Explain why post-independence India established autonomous institutions like Sangeet Natak Akademi and Sahitya Akademi. How have they helped in preserving India's diverse intangible cultural heritage? (150 words)

After Independence, India needed institutions that could build national unity without erasing linguistic and cultural differences. Autonomous academies offered independent stewardship of heritage, free from short-term political control and able to correct colonial neglect. **Purpose and design** They were created to institutionalise cultural patrimony, support artists, revive marginalised traditions and make culture a basis of citizenship. Their autonomy encouraged selection, regional representation and continuity. **Preservation in practice**



- Sangeet Natak Akademi documents music, dance and drama through archives, instruments and audiovisual records; supports guru-shishya training, specialist centres, festivals, grants and awards. It also coordinates UNESCO intangible-heritage nominations and supports endangered folk and tribal forms.
- Sahitya Akademi sustains literature in 24 languages through awards, publications, translations, workshops, oral and tribal literature centres, and grassroots programmes. This preserves memory while enabling exchange across linguistic communities.

Together, they transmit traditions, create livelihoods and strengthen diplomacy. Yet relevance requires digital archiving, youth participation and support for marginalised languages.

**Your Notes:**