GENERAL STUDIES I

Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar 2026: UPSC Notes

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The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar has returned to the national spotlight with the selection of 106 talented young artists for the award years 2024 and 2025. Instituted by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 2006, this national recognition honours exceptional practitioners up to 40 years of age across music, dance, theatre, traditional performing arts and scholarship. The award consists of ?25,000, a Tamrapatra and an Angavastram. These Civil Service Gurukul notes explain the award's history, eligibility, selection mechanism, the life and legacy of shehnai maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan, India's performing arts institutions, and their importance for UPSC Prelims and Mains 2027.

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UPSC PRELIMS & MAINS 2027

UPSC ART & CULTURE | PRELIMS IN FOCUS

Complete UPSC notes on Sangeet Natak Akademi, award eligibility, prize money, Indian classical music, dance, theatre, traditional performing arts, heritage preservation and Prelims MCQs.

Published: 21 October 2026 Award Years: 2024 and 2025 GS Paper I Civil Service Gurukul

Why in News? The Ministry of Culture announced that the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the award years 2024 and 2025 would be conferred on **106 young performing artists** on 19 October 2026 in New Delhi. The award, instituted by Sangeet Natak Akademi in 2006, recognises outstanding young performing artists and promotes the continuity of India's rich artistic traditions.

106

Artists Selected

2006
Year Instituted

?25,000
Prize Money

40 Years
Age Eligibility Limit

UPSC Syllabus Relevance

GS Paper I: Indian culture, salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture.

GS Paper II: Government institutions, cultural policies and initiatives for preserving heritage.

Prelims: Art and culture awards, national academies, Indian classical music, dance, theatre, folk and tribal art forms.

Essay: Cultural diversity, intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge and India's civilisational heritage.

Table of Contents

1. What is the Yuva Puraskar?
2. Why Was It in the News?
3. Eligibility and Award Benefits
4. Five Major Fields of Recognition
5. Sangeet Natak Akademi
6. Life and Legacy of Ustad Bismillah Khan
7. India's National Cultural Academies
8. Significance for Cultural Heritage
9. Challenges for Young Artists
10. Way Forward
11. Prelims Quick Revision
12. UPSC Practice MCQs
13. Mains Model Answer
14. Frequently Asked Questions
15. Conclusion

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1. What Is the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar?

The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar is a national honour instituted by Sangeet Natak Akademi, India's national academy for music, dance and drama.

It was established in 2006 to recognise promising young artists who have demonstrated exceptional talent in the performing arts.

The recognition helps encourage emerging practitioners to continue their artistic development and contribute to India's cultural heritage.

The award is named after Ustad Bismillah Khan, the legendary shehnai maestro and recipient of India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna.

2. Why Was the Award in the News in October 2026?

The General Council of Sangeet Natak Akademi, during its March 2026 meeting in New Delhi, selected 106 artists for the award years 2024 and 2025.

The Ministry of Culture announced an investiture ceremony scheduled for 19 October 2026 at the Meghdoot Complex, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi.

Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat was scheduled to confer the honours.

Particular	Details
Recognition	Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar
Award Years	2024 and 2025
Artists Selected	106
Selection Announced	June 2026
Scheduled Ceremony	19 October 2026
Venue	Meghdoot Complex, Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi
Organising Institution	Sangeet Natak Akademi
Administrative Ministry	Ministry of Culture

UPSC examination distinction: The figure of 106 applies to the combined selections for the award years 2024 and 2025. It should not be interpreted as the standard annual award ceiling.

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3. Eligibility, Selection and Award Benefits

Age Limit

The award is intended for Indian nationals up to 40 years of age.

The Akademi's guidelines reckon age with reference to 1 April of the relevant nomination year.

Award Components

Cash Prize

Each recipient receives ?25,000 as prize money.

Tamrapatra

An official citation issued under the Akademi's seal.

Angavastram

A ceremonial garment presented as part of the honour.

National Recognition

Recognition of exceptional talent and artistic promise at a relatively early stage of an artist's career.

Important Guidelines

- ✓ The standard annual ceiling is 33 awards.
- ✓ An artist who has already received this Puraskar is not eligible to receive it again in another field or category.
- ✓ The Puraskar is not awarded posthumously.
- ✓ Nominations undergo institutional scrutiny and selection procedures.

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4. Five Fields Recognised Under the Puraskar

Field	Examples / Scope
Music	Hindustani, Carnatic and other recognised music traditions
Dance	Classical, traditional and other eligible dance forms
Theatre	Acting, direction, playwriting and allied theatre practices
Traditional, Folk and Tribal Performing Arts	Regional music, dance, theatre and puppetry
Contribution / Scholarship	Research, documentation and meaningful contributions to performing arts

Classical Dance Traditions

India's recognised classical dance forms include Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Manipuri, Mohiniyattam and Sattriya.

Folk and Tribal Tradition

India's cultural diversity is reflected through regional theatre, community music, ritual performance, tribal dance and puppetry.

Supporting younger artists can strengthen the intergenerational transfer of these traditions.

5. Sangeet Natak Akademi: India's National Academy of Performing Arts

Sangeet Natak Akademi is India's national academy for music, dance and drama.

It was established in 1953 and functions as an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture.

Major Objectives

- ✓ Promote and preserve Indian performing arts.
- ✓ Recognise distinguished artists and cultural practitioners.
- ✓ Encourage training, research and documentation.
- ✓ Support regional, folk and tribal artistic traditions.

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✓ Facilitate cultural exchange and artistic development.

Three Important Categories of Honours

Honour	Nature	Prize Money
Akademi Ratna	Prestigious Fellowship	?3,00,000
Akademi Puraskar	Recognition of distinguished artistic contribution	?1,00,000
Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar	Recognition of emerging young talent	?25,000

Prelims Insight

Sangeet Natak Akademi relates primarily to performing arts.

It should not be confused with Sahitya Akademi, which focuses on literature, or Lalit Kala Akademi, which focuses on visual arts.

6. Ustad Bismillah Khan: Life, Music and Legacy

Ustad Bismillah Khan (1916–2006) was one of India's most celebrated musicians and a legendary exponent of the shehnai.

Born in Dumraon in present-day Bihar, he became closely associated with Varanasi, particularly its rich Hindustani classical music tradition.

Major Contributions

Bismillah Khan helped bring the shehnai from its traditional ceremonial setting into the mainstream of Hindustani classical concert performance.

His performances contributed to the instrument's national and international recognition.

Major Civilian Honours

Honour	Year
Padma Shri	1961
Padma Bhushan	1968
Padma Vibhushan	1980

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Honour	Year
Bharat Ratna	2001

Ustad Bismillah Khan's artistic journey represents the living relationship between Indian classical music, cultural traditions and the city of Kashi.

Civil Service Gurukul — Art and Culture takeaway

7. Comparison: India's Three National Cultural Academies

Institution	Established	Field
Sangeet Natak Akademi	1953	Music, dance and drama
Sahitya Akademi	1954	Literature and languages
Lalit Kala Akademi	1954	Visual and fine arts

These institutions play complementary roles in promoting India's artistic and literary heritage.

For UPSC Prelims, questions may test the matching of an academy with its principal field.

8. Why the Yuva Puraskar Matters for Indian Culture

Preservation of Intangible Heritage

Music, dance and theatre are forms of living cultural heritage that depend on skilled practitioners and community participation.

Encouragement to Young Artists

Early recognition can help practitioners develop professional identity, credibility and opportunities.

Regional Cultural Diversity

The award includes classical and traditional performing arts from different parts of India.

Continuity of Guru–Shishya Traditions

Traditional performing arts often rely on sustained learning relationships between teachers and students.

Support for Lesser-Known Traditions

Recognition may increase public attention towards regional, folk, tribal and traditional artistic practices.

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9. Challenges Faced by Young Performing Artists

Financial Insecurity

Irregular performance opportunities can make artistic careers economically uncertain.

Unequal Cultural Infrastructure

Training institutions and professional opportunities may be concentrated in major cities.

Changing Audience Preferences

Some traditional art forms face declining visibility and reduced intergenerational participation.

Documentation Gaps

Oral and community-based traditions may lack systematic digital documentation.

Awards are valuable, but long-term preservation also requires consistent training, funding, institutional support and access to audiences.

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10. Way Forward: Strengthening India's Performing Arts Ecosystem

- ✓ **Young Artist Fellowships:** Expand structured training and mentorship.
- ✓ **Digital Documentation:** Record endangered regional performance traditions.
- ✓ **Community Cultural Centres:** Improve training access outside major cities.
- ✓ **School-Level Arts Education:** Encourage practical engagement with performing arts.
- ✓ **Public Performance Opportunities:** Support regional festivals, touring productions and cultural exchanges.
- ✓ **Artist Livelihoods:** Strengthen opportunities for sustainable careers.
- ✓ **Cultural Research:** Promote scholarship and documentation of traditional knowledge.

11. UPSC Prelims 2027: Quick Revision Table

Topic	Important Fact
Award	Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar
Instituted	2006
Institution	Sangeet Natak Akademi
Ministry	Ministry of Culture
Age Eligibility	Up to 40 years
Prize Money	₹25,000
Other Components	Tamrapatra and Angavastram
Standard Annual Ceiling	33 awards
Artists Selected for 2024–25	106
Instrument Associated with Bismillah Khan	Shehnai
Bharat Ratna to Bismillah Khan	2001
Sangeet Natak Akademi Established	1953

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12. UPSC Prelims Practice MCQs

Question 1

The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar is conferred by:

(a) Sahitya Akademi
(b) Lalit Kala Akademi
(c) Sangeet Natak Akademi
(d) Archaeological Survey of India

View Answer

Correct Answer: (c). Sangeet Natak Akademi administers the award.

Question 2

Consider the following statements:

1. The Yuva Puraskar was instituted in 2006.
2. The maximum eligible age is 40 years.
3. The prize money is ?1 lakh.

Which statements are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) All three

View Answer

Correct Answer: (b). The prize money is ?25,000.

Question 3

Ustad Bismillah Khan is most closely associated with:

(a) Sitar
(b) Sarod
(c) Shehnai
(d) Shantoor

View Answer

Correct Answer: (c). He was an eminent shehnai maestro.

Question 4

Which of the following is correctly matched?

(a) Sahitya Akademi — Sculpture
(b) Sangeet Natak Akademi — Performing Arts
(c) Lalit Kala Akademi — Astronomy
(d) National School of Drama — Literature Awards

View Answer

Correct Answer: (b). Sangeet Natak Akademi is associated with music, dance and drama.

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Question 5

Which of the following are recognised broad fields under the Yuva Puraskar?

1. Music
2. Dance
3. Theatre
4. Folk and tribal performing arts

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) All four

View Answer

Correct Answer: (d). All four are included within the awards recognised artistic fields.

Question 6

Which statement about the 2024–25 awards is correct?

(a) 106 awards are mandatory every year
(b) 106 young artists were selected for the two award years combined
(c) Only literary authors were eligible
(d) The award is administered by the Election Commission

View Answer

Correct Answer: (b). The 106 selections relate to 2024 and 2025.

13. UPSC Mains GS-I: Model Answer

Practice Question — 15 Marks

"National cultural institutions and awards play an important role in preserving India's intangible cultural heritage." Discuss with reference to Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar.

Suggested word limit: 250 words

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Model Answer

Introduction: India's intangible cultural heritage includes music, dance, theatre, folk traditions and community-based artistic knowledge. Institutions such as Sangeet Natak Akademi support their recognition and continuity.

Role of National Institutions: Sangeet Natak Akademi, established in 1953, promotes Indian performing arts through recognition, training, documentation and institutional support.

Importance of the Yuva Puraskar: Instituted in 2006, the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar encourages exceptional artists up to 40 years of age. It covers classical, folk, tribal and other performing traditions, helping younger practitioners gain wider recognition.

Challenges: Despite these efforts, traditional artists face economic insecurity, limited institutional access, changing audience preferences and inadequate documentation of vulnerable art forms.

Way Forward: India should strengthen artist fellowships, regional training centres, digital documentation, arts education, public performances and livelihood opportunities. Community participation and intergenerational learning should remain central to cultural preservation.

Conclusion: Awards are effective symbols of recognition, but sustainable cultural preservation requires continuous institutional, financial and social support.

Additional Mains Practice

1. Examine the contribution of national academies to the preservation of Indian cultural diversity. (10 marks)
2. How can public recognition and livelihood support encourage the survival of traditional art forms? (15 marks)
3. Discuss the importance of the Guru–Shishya tradition in the transmission of Indian performing arts. (10 marks)

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14. Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Who instituted the award?

Sangeet Natak Akademi instituted it in 2006.

Q2. How many artists were selected for 2024 and 2025?

A total of 106 young artists.

Q3. What is the age limit?

Up to 40 years, as defined in the award guidelines.

Q4. What is the cash prize?

?25,000, together with a Tamrapatra and an Angavastram.

Q5. Which ministry oversees Sangeet Natak Akademi?

The Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Q6. Why is Ustad Bismillah Khan important?

He helped establish the shehnai as an important instrument in Hindustani classical concert music.

15. Conclusion: Recognising the Next Generation of India's Artists

The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar represents an important national initiative for encouraging young practitioners of Indian performing arts.

The selection of 106 artists for 2024 and 2025 highlights the diversity of India's musical, theatrical and dance traditions.

The award is also a reminder that cultural preservation depends on transferring skills, knowledge and artistic practices to younger generations.

For UPSC aspirants, the essential facts are the awarding institution, year of establishment, eligibility, prize money and the association of Ustad Bismillah Khan with the shehnai.

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