



Sambhav

Day 21

Question 1. The Harappan sculptors were extremely adept at handling three-dimensional volumes. Discuss. (150 Words)

Question 2. Discuss the main characteristic features of the Mathura School of Architecture. (150 Words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

Answer 1

Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about the Harappan art of sculpture.
- Discuss the main sculptural practices of the people of Harappan.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The Harappan civilization is not only famous for its excellent town-planning features but they were also known for its art of sculpting. The most commonly found were seals, bronze figures, and pottery. Some of the sculpting elements are still world-famous like the bronze dancing girl of Mohenjo-Daro.

Body

The main sculptural practices of the people of Harappan are as follows:

Seals

Archaeologists have found numerous seals of different shapes and sizes all across the excavation sites. **Steatite, a soft stone found in the river beds, was the most common material used to make seals.** Most seals have inscriptions in a pictographic script that is yet to be deciphered. Animal impressions were also there, generally five, which were carved intaglio on the surfaces.

Uses: Seals were **primarily used for commercial purposes and helped in communication.** Some seals with a hole on them have been found on dead bodies. This indicates they might have used as amulets, carried on the persons of their owners, probably used as some form of identification.

Mathematical signs have also been found on some seals, which might have been used for educational purposes as well. **Example: Pashupati seal, Unicorn seal.**

Bronze figures

The Harappan civilisation saw a wide-scale practice of bronze casting. The bronze statues were made using **“lost wax technique” or “Cire Perdue”**. In this technique, wax figures are first coated with wet clay and allowed to dry. The clay-coated figures are then heated, allowing the wax inside to melt. The wax is then poured out through a tiny hole and liquid metal is poured inside the hollow dye. After the metal has cooled down and solidified, the clay coat is removed and a metal figure of the same shape as the wax figure is obtained. Even now, the same technique is practiced in many parts of the country.

Uses: They were mostly used for art and cultural activities. Example: **Bronze dancing girl of Mohenjodaro, bronze bull of Kalibangan, etc.**

Pottery

The pottery found at the excavation sites can be broadly classified into **plain and painted pottery**. The painted pottery is also known as **Red and Black pottery**.

Uses: Plain pottery was used for household purposes, mainly storage of grains and water. Miniature vessels, generally less than half an inch in size, were used for decorative purposes. They are so marvellously crafted, even now they evoke awe. Some of the potteries were perforated – with a large hole in the bottom and small holes across the sides. They might have been used for straining liquor.

Ornaments

The Harappans used a large variety of materials, from precious metals and gemstones to bones and even baked clay, to make ornaments. **Both men and women wore ornaments like necklaces, fillets, armlets and finger rings. Girdles, earrings and anklets were worn only by women.** Beads made from cornelian, amethyst, quartz, steatite, etc. were quite popular and were produced on a large scale, as is evident from the factories discovered in Chanhudaro and Lothal. For fabric, the Harappans used cotton and wool, which were spun by rich and poor alike. Spindles and whorls were made from expensive faience as well as cheap clay.

Terracotta

It refers to the use of **fire baked clay for making sculptures**. Compared to the bronze figures, the terracotta sculptures are less in number and crude in shape and form. They were made using pinching method and have been found mostly in the sites of Gujarat and Kalibangan.

Uses: Terracotta was generally used to make toys, animal figures, miniature carts and wheels, etc. Example: **Mother Goddess, the mask of a horned deity, etc.**

Conclusion

Thus, we see that the artisans and sculptors of the Harappan civilisation made giant strides in the field of architecture and sculpture. From a scientific city plan to artistic figures, this ancient civilisation has left behind a legacy of skill and craftsmanship.

Answer 2

Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about Mathura School.
- Discuss the main Characteristic features of the Mathura School.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The Mathura school was contemporaneous with a second important school of Kushana art, that of Gandhara in the northwest. It flourished on the banks of the river Yamuna in the period between the 1st and 3rd centuries B.C. The sculptures of the Mathura School were influenced by the stories and imageries of all three religions of the time – Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. The images were modelled on the earlier Yaksha images found during the Mauryan period.

Body

The main Characteristic features of the Mathura School are as follows:

- It was developed indigenously and not influenced by external cultures.
- The sculptures of Mathura school were made using spotted red sandstone.
- It was influenced by all three religions of the time, i.e., Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism.
- It was patronized by the Kushana rulers.
- It was developed in and around Mathura, Sonkh, and Kankalitila. Kankalitila was famous for Jain sculptures.
- Buddha is shown in a delighted mood with a smiling face. The body symbolises masculinity, wearing a tight dress. The face and head are shaven. Buddha is seated in Padmasana with different mudras and his face reflects grace. A similar protuberance is shown on the head.
- The Mathura images of the Buddha developed out of an earlier tradition of large yaksha (male nature deity) sculptures found in the region.
- Mathura art includes both standing and seated statues of the Buddha.
- The Mathura School showed a striking use of symbolism in the images. The Hindu Gods were represented using their avayudhas. For example, Shiva is shown through linga and mukhalinga.
- More stress is given to inner beauty and facial emotions rather than bodily gestures.

Conclusion

Both Gandhara and Mathura Art schools reached a peak during Kanishka. The Kushana art of Mathura is important in the history of Indian art as it embodies the symbolism and iconographic forms that were adopted later.

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