



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the profound influence of Indian philosophy and tradition on the conceptualization and formation of monuments and artistic expressions throughout India's history (250 words)

13 May, 2024 GS Paper 1 Indian Heritage & Culture

Approach

- Begin the answer by briefly mentioning Indian philosophy and tradition.
- Elaborate on how Indian Philosophy and tradition impacted India's monuments and artistic expressions in different phases.
- Illustrate using examples of related architectures throughout history.
- Conclude as per the requirement of keywords.

Introduction

Indian philosophy generally includes Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Philosophy, among others. In India, the inseparable link between philosophy and religion has acted as a powerful inspiration for artistic expression. This influence is evident across the spectrum of religious structures, from the early Buddhist monuments to the grandeur of Hindu temples, and even in the mosques and churches built later, all reflecting the unique philosophical underpinnings of their respective faiths.

Body

- **Early Civilizations:**
 - The Indus Valley Civilization (Harappan) displayed advanced urban planning and used symbols like the swastika, hinting at a well-developed philosophical and spiritual system, which influenced later Hinduism.
- **Vedic Age:**
 - The Varna system, established during this period, impacted social structures and influenced how cities developed.
 - Vedic texts explored philosophical concepts alongside rituals and beliefs. The worship of nature deities like fire and sky led to the creation of fire altars, still significant today.
- **During the rise of Buddhism and Jainism:**
 - Cave paintings and sculptures in places like Ajanta and Ellora became powerful tools to depict the teachings of these philosophies.
 - Images of Buddha's life cycles and Jain Tirthankaras serve as examples.
 - The ascetics belonging to Ajivika, Jainism, and Buddhism required places for meditation. Rock-cut caves like Lomas Rishi, Ajanta or Ellora were carved out to provide a place of solitude for the monks and sages.
- **Ashoka's Reign:**
 - Buddhist philosophy heavily influenced the design of Ashoka's pillars and stupas. The pillar's chakra symbolizes the setting in motion of the Dharma wheel, and the stupas' chattra represents the Three Jewels of Buddhism.
- **Gupta Period and Beyond:**
 - Hindu temple architecture flourished, with distinct styles like Nagara, Vesara, and Dravida. Sculptures depicting stories and characters from Hindu epics and mythologies adorned the

temples.

- The Khajuraho temple's territory is laid out in three triangles that converge to form a pentagon to reflect the Hindu symbolism for three realms or trilokinatha, and five cosmic substances or panchbhuteshvara.

- **Pallava and Chola Dynasties:**

- Temples became central social hubs under these rulers. They built magnificent structures like the "ratha" temples of Mahabalipuram and the Kailashanathar and Vaikunthaperumal temples by the Pallavas.

- **Medieval Period:**

- Mughal Emperor Akbar's attempt to create a unified religion, Din-i-Ilahi, exemplifies the ongoing synthesis of philosophies. This blending of cultures led to new artistic expressions across various fields.

- **Modern India:**

- While European architectural styles gained popularity during British rule, a unique Indo-Saracenic style emerged, blending Indo-Islamic and European influences.

Conclusion

Indian philosophy has served as a constant source of inspiration for artistic expression throughout the country's history. From the Indus Valley Civilization to the modern era, it has shaped the design of cities, monuments, and art, leaving behind a rich and diverse cultural landscape.

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