



Mains Practice Question

Q: The historic structures in medieval India showcase the entire range of structures that catered to life. Discuss (250 words)

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Approach:

- Give a brief introduction of medieval Indian architecture.
- List the variety of structures constructed at that time.
- Justify how the structures reflected the everyday life of the period.

Introduction

- Medieval Indian architecture accommodated the local and regional cultural traditions and social requirements, economic prosperity, and religious practice of the time.
- Indian architecture is a synthesis of indigenous styles and external influences which has lent it a unique characteristic of its own. The medieval period saw the synthesis of Persian and indigenous styles of architecture.
- Structures meant for public activity including temples, mosques, tanks, wells, bazaars were built highlighting the combination of needs, imagination, capacities of the builders and capabilities of the workers.

Body

- With the arrival of Turks during the thirteenth century came a new technique of architecture- the architectural styles of Persia, Arabia and Central Asia. The engineering features of these buildings were the domes, arches and minarets. So, during the course of time blend of islamic style with the Indian architecture culminated into Indo-Islamic architecture with syncretic features.
- **Many forts were built with sophisticated defence system.** Most of these forts had ingenious water structures designed for harvesting and storage, including step-wells, elaborate reservoirs and channels.
 - For example- The famous Srirangapatna fort, also called Tipu's palace, in Mysore, Karnataka, was built in 1537 in Indo-Islamic style. This magnificent fort is considered to be the second toughest fort of India.
- Architectural building like **mosques for daily prayers, the Jama Masjids, tombs, dargahs, minars, hammams, formally laid out gardens, madrasas, saraisor caravan sarais, Kos minars,** etc., were constructed over a period of time.
 - For example:Quwwatul Islam Mosque at Delhi and the Qutub Minar with beautiful engravings of calligraphy both in the mosque and on the tower.
 - Gol Gumbaz at Bijapur and the fort at Golkonda are the architectural marvels of the time.
 - Some mosques have Islamic calligraphy and Quranic verses on the walls to assist worshippers in focusing on the Koran, as well as for decoration. The Mecca mosque in Hyderabad and the J?m? Masjid in Delhi illustrate these features of Indian mosques.
- Many **grand mausoleums** were built in the memories of royal members. For example, the Taj Mahal, the mausoleums of Akbar (at Agra), Humayun (Delhi), Mohammed Adil Shah (Bijapur) etc.
- **Gardens with running water** like Nishat Bagh in Kashmir, the Shalimar Bagh at Lahore and the

Pinjore garden in the Punjab were laid down.

- Elaborate **commemorative architectures** were built to glorify the kings. For example:
 - Buland Darwaza, a magnificent gateway was added later in 1571-72 to commemorate Akbar's conquest of Gujarat.
 - The Vijaya Stambha is an imposing victory monument located within Chittorgarh fort in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, India. The tower was constructed by the Mewar king, Rana Kumbha.
- In medieval India **Temples** were social hubs where people congregated. Temples were also sites where the arts of dance, music and combat were honed and have been passed down for generations. For example, Chennakeshava Temple, Karnataka; Adi Kumbeswarar, Tamil Nadu.
- Many **stepwells** were built in medieval times. Stepwells are wells or ponds in which the water is reached by descending a set of steps. They may be multi-storied with a bullock turning a water wheel to raise the well water to the first or second floor.
 - They are most common in western India and are also found in the other more arid regions of the Indian subcontinent, extending into Pakistan.
 - The construction of stepwells is mainly utilitarian, though they may include embellishments of architectural significance, and be temple tanks.
 - Some of the examples of Baori in medieval times are: Rani ka Vav(Gujarat), Chand baori in Rajasthan, Agrasen ki Baoli in Delhi.

Conclusion

- Thus, the historic structures ranging from military and defensive structures, mortuary, royal courts, mosques, temples showcased the entire range of structures that catered to life in the medieval period in India.

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