

UPSCprep Free Daily Answer Writing Initiative

Subject: GS 1

Syllabus: Art and Culture

Questions

Q1. Pottery has evolved from crude to highly lustrous North black polished ware. Discuss the evolution of pottery along with the cultural and historical significance of pottery.

(150 words)

10

Q2. Introduction of Islamic architectural features saw its intermingling with indigenous architecture which resulted in many similarities and differences. Discuss.

(150 marks)

10

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Model Structures

Q1. Pottery has evolved from crude to highly lustrous North black polished ware. Discuss the evolution of pottery along with the cultural and historical significance of pottery.

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Model Structure

- **Introduction(1):** Pottery is important in studying culture and plays a crucial role in reconstructing the past, as it provides valuable insights into the artistic, technological, and sociocultural aspects of ancient civilisations.
- **Introduction(2):** Pottery or ceramic art involves the process of shaping hard, brittle materials composed of non-metallic minerals while they are in a moist state, followed by firing them at high temperatures. Common materials used include clay and porcelain.

Main Body:

Evolution of pottery making in India:

- **Neolithic age:** First reference of pottery in this age. It is hand-made pottery, but during the later period, foot-wheel was also used.
- **Chalcolithic age:** It is marked by the occurrence of distinct pottery cultures. Such as Black and red-ware pottery, black-on-red ware and Ochre coloured pottery.
- **Harappan civilization:** Pottery traditions that existed during this time include- Polished Ware Pottery with a rough surface, Burial Pottery of Harappa, Ochre coloured pottery (OCP), Black-grey burnished ware, Black-on-red ware, Grey-ware and Painted grey-ware.
- **Vedic age:** Pottery traditions that existed during this time include- Painted Grey-ware (PGW), Northern Black Polished ware (NBPW), and megalithic pottery found in Kerala.
- **Mauryan period:** The use of the pottery wheel became universal. The most highly developed technology is seen in Northern Black Polished Ware (NBP), which was the hallmark of the preceding and early Mauryan periods.
- **Gupta period:** Gupta pottery remains an outstanding proof of the excellence of pottery. The most distinctive class of pottery of this period is the red ware.
- **Kushan period:** The characteristic pottery of this phase is marked by a unique red polished ware with stamped design and a large number of dull or sturdy red ware.

The historical significance of Pottery:

- **Decoding Pre-history:** The style of pottery reflects the prevailing socio-economic and environmental conditions. This helps archaeologists and historians understand our past culture.
- **Establishing chronology:** The design of pottery, along with Carbon dating of other artefacts, helps to determine the timespan of a particular phase in a particular region and, subsequently, the speed of cultural evolution in that region.
- **Language limitation:** It plays a significant role in demystifying cultures where the script was either absent or remains undeciphered.

- **Cultural diffusion:** Similarity in pottery design helps to establish possible diffusion of cultural traits.
 - E.g. Ochre, coloured pottery, which is a feature of the western Gangetic plain, has helped in establishing Parallel linkages with Northwest India.

Cultural Significance of Pottery:

- **Social condition:** NBPW was made of fine fabric and served as tableware for the richer class.
 - It is found only with the elites reveals societal stratification due to Brahmanical hegemony.
- **Technological development:** The design of pottery, its shape, and fineness in structure, whether hand-made or wheel-made, enable us to understand technological development.
 - For example, evolution from hand-made crude design in the Neolithic to fine wheel-turned NBPW in the Vedic era.
- **Economy:** From the Neolithic to Harappa, the size of pottery increased. This indicates a surplus of production and a possible beginning of trade.
- **Religious belief:** The prevalence of pottery in graves reflects intentional burial and belief in supernaturals.
 - E.g. Megalithic potteries.
- **Food habits:** Prevalence of carinated vessels with spouts and absence of dishes reflect food consumption in liquid forms.
 - E.g. Jorwe culture.

Conclusion(1): The diversity of pottery styles and motifs found across different regions of India contributes to our understanding of the cultural exchange, trade routes, and artistic influences that shaped the ancient civilisation of the subcontinent.

Conclusion(2): Pottery and the various artistic expressions on pottery vessels provide valuable insights into the mindset and creativity of prehistoric humans. In the context of India, being one of the ancient civilisations, a wide range of pottery forms have been discovered and studied. The

study of pottery has played a vital role in establishing cultural linkages between different regions within India, both in terms of North-South and East-West connections.

Q2. Introduction of Islamic architectural features saw its intermingling with indigenous architecture which resulted in many similarities and differences. Discuss.

(150 marks)

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Model Structure (use diagram to enrich this answer)

Introduction

- The Indo-Islamic or Indo-Saracenic architecture involves intermixing of Indian and Islamic style which was a result of Muslim rule in India mainly after 10th century CE.

Main Body

Many structures like minarets and tombs were built from scratch and some were converted from hitherto temple forms which led to this mixture of architectural forms. This can be understood by delineating differences and similarities between both architectures. **The differences include:**

- **Style:** Indian architecture is also known as trabeate style with horizontal beams and lintels as important features. Islamic style uses arcuate style which involves hemisphere structured top.
- Indian architecture used beams and columns whereas Indo-Islamic architecture has arches, domes and minarets as important features as evident in the Red Fort.
- **Walls:** Designs on walls of Indo-Islamic architecture are restricted to calligraphy, floral designs etc while Indian style has diverse designs like images of gods and goddesses, human images, nature etc.
- **Geometric Patterns:** Islamic architecture is known for its intricate geometric patterns, such as arabesques, tessellations, and interlacing designs. These patterns were often adopted and adapted by indigenous cultures, finding their way into the decorative elements of buildings, especially in tile work, woodcarvings, and stucco ornamentation.

But due to local influences there are many **similarities** also which include-

- Local influences like carvings of bell motifs, toranas or gateways, lintels in mehrabs and depiction of trees are seen in both architecture.
- Assimilation of both forms was also the result of employing local labor and masons who were previously trained for Indian architecture.
- Materials used in few buildings are common because they are made on remnants of previously broken architecture. Like the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Qutub Complex.
- Building Techniques: Different regions had their construction techniques and craftsmanship traditions. With the introduction of Islamic architectural elements, new construction methods and artistic expressions emerged, leading to differences in how buildings were constructed and adorned.

Conclusion

- Indo-Islamic architecture has played a role in the evolution of modern architecture and created a heritage which has added to our tourism potential.