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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. The provincial style of architecture during the Delhi Sultanate period was greatly influenced by Indo-Islamic style. Discuss. (250 words)

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Approach:

- Discuss the term Indo-Islamic architecture.
- Discuss with examples, the various provincial architecture during Delhi Sultanate period that are influenced by Indo Islamic architecture.
- Conclusion

Introduction

- The term Indo-Islamic indicates the growth of composite culture as a result of contact, intermixing and assimilation of the cultural tradition of India and the Islamic world during the medieval period.
- In the field of architecture, a mix of many structural techniques, stylised shapes, and surface decorations came about through constant interventions of acceptance, rejection or modification of architectural elements. These architectural entities or categories showcasing multiple styles are known as Indo-Saracenic or Indo-Islamic architecture.

Body

- The Indo-Islamic Architecture after 12th century AD began to evolve, adding to it the local flavour of the provisional kingdom of Bengal, Gujarat, Jaunpur, Golconda, Malwa and the Deccan. Thus, leading to development of provincial style of architecture.
- **Features of Indo-Islamic Architecture**
 - Arch and dome method(arcuate style)
 - Existence of minars
 - Mortar was used as a cementing agent to create arch and dome.
 - Avoided the representation of human beings.
 - Provided spaciousness, massiveness and breath to Hindu architecture.
 - Use of pietra dura technique
 - Use of arabesque method
 - Significance of Symmetry
 - Use of water in premises

○ **Features provincial style of architecture :**

- **Malwa style:** The cities of Dhar and Mandu in the Malwa plateau became prominent seats of architecture.
The most prominent feature of the buildings here is the **use of different coloured stones and marbles**. The **pietra dura technique** was used for decoration purposes.
 - The buildings had **large windows and were decorated by a stylised use of arches and pillars**. It made the buildings and rooms well-ventilated.
 - **Artificial reservoirs known as 'baulis'** were constructed in the premises for storage of water based on the imperial architecture.
 - The use of **batter system** introduced by the Tughlaqs made the buildings strong.
 - **No use of minars** as found in other Indo-Islamic architecture.
 - Example: Rani Roopmati pavilion, Jahaz Mahal, Ashrafi Mahal etc.
- **Jaunpur style:** The main feature of Sharqi mosques is the **huge rectangular pylon (gateway) with arches**. Through these arches, we entered the three main mosques in Jaunpur: Atala Masjid, Jama masjid and Lal Darwaza.
 - They are made of stone and have fine carving and latticework. Unlike the Delhi mosques of the same period, there are no minarets.
 - The unique feature of the buildings here is the **use of bold and forceful characters painted on huge screens** in the centre and side bays of the prayer hall.
- **Bijapur or Deccan style:** A special feature of the Bijapur style was the **treatment of its ceilings**, which were without any apparent support.
 - Iron clamps and a **strong plaster of mortar** were used to give strength to the buildings. The walls were decorated with rich carvings.
 - The number of mosques, tombs and palaces which were unique in the use of **3-arched facade and bulbous dome**, which were almost spherical and with a narrow neck.
 - It emphasizes minarets in preference to multiple or large domes, beautifying monuments through surface decoration and artistic parapets.
 - Example: Gol Gumbaj, the mausoleum of Adil Shah, in Bijapur
- **Gujarat style:** It was said to have a markedly regional character for patrons **borrowed elements from regional temple traditions** such as **toranas, lintels in mihrabs, carvings of bell and chain motifs, and carved panels** depicting trees, for tombs, mosques and dargahs.

- **Bengal style:** It characterised in its use of **bricks and black marble** suitable for the very heavy rains, were adopted into a distinct local style of Indo-Islamic architecture.
 - The mosques built during this period continued the **use of sloping 'Bangla roofs'**, which was previously used for temples.
 - Examples: Qadam Rasul mosque in Gaur, Adina Mosque in Pandua, etc.

Conclusion

- The influence of Indo-Islamic architecture of Delhi on the provincial style depended on the distance of the province from Delhi and the association of the rulers of the province with that of Delhi. However, the local architects retained certain flavours of the local architectural traditions as well.
- The building art varied by the reasons like availability of local materials, building techniques and even climatic conditions.