



Mains Practice Question

Q. The artists of Indus valley Civilisation surely had fine artistic sensibilities and a vivid imagination. Substantiate the statement with examples.

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Approach

- Give a brief introduction on Harappan art forms.
- Discuss the features, uniqueness and vivid imagination of art forms of the artists of Indus valley civilisation (IVC).
- Explain the significance of the distinct art forms used in social life.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

- The arts of the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) emerged during the second half of the third millennium BCE. The forms of art found from various sites of the civilisation include sculptures, seals, pottery, jewellery, terracotta figures, etc.
- Their delineation of human and animal figures was highly realistic in nature, since the anatomical details included in them were unique, and, in the case of terracotta art, the modelling of animal figures was done in an extremely careful manner.

Body

The artists of IVC surely had fine artistic sensibilities and a vivid imagination. This can be seen in the following examples from the Indus valley civilization:

- **Stone Statues:** Excellent examples of handling **three-dimensional volumes**, for example male torso figure in red sandstone and bust of a **bearded man** in soapstone.
- **Bronze Casting:** Bronze statues were made using the 'lost wax' technique. Human as well as animal figures were common examples: **Dancing Girl Statue**, **buffalo** with its uplifted head, back and sweeping horns and the **goat** are of artistic merit.
- **Terracotta:** Compared to the stone and bronze statues the terracotta representations of human form are crude in the Indus Valley. They are more **realistic** in Gujarat sites and Kalibangan.
 - Deities like bearded man, mother goddess and toy carts, animals were common.
- **Seals and tablets:** Made of steatite, and occasionally of agate, chert, copper, faience and terracotta, with beautiful figures of animals, such as unicorn bull, rhinoceros, tiger, elephant, bison, goat, buffalo. Rendering of animals in various moods is remarkable, for example **Pashupati Seal**.
 - Commonly used for commercial purposes but usage for amulets for identity cards.
 - The standard Harappan seal was a square plaque 2×2 square inches, made from steatite. Every seal is engraved in a pictographic script.
 - Square or rectangular copper tablets, with an animal or a human figure on one side and an inscription on the other, or an inscription on both sides have also been found.
- **Pottery:** It consists chiefly of very fine wheel made wares, very few being hand-made. Plain

pottery is more common than painted ware.

- Plain pottery is generally of red clay, with or without a fine red or grey slip. It includes knobbed ware, ornamented with rows of knobs.
- The black painted ware has a fine coating of red slip on which **geometric and animal designs** are executed in **glossy black paint**.
- Polychrome pottery is rare and mainly comprises small vases decorated with **geometric patterns** in red, black, and green, rarely white and yellow. Incised ware is also rare and the incised decoration was confined to the bases of the pans, always inside and to the dishes of offering stands.
- Perforated pottery includes a large hole at the bottom and small holes all over the wall, and was probably used for straining beverages.
- **Beads and Ornaments:** Produced from every conceivable material ranging from precious metals and gemstones to bone and baked clay, gold and semi-precious stones, copper bracelets and beads, gold earrings and head ornaments, faience pendants and buttons, and beads of steatite and gemstones.
 - The beads are in **varying shapes**—disc-shaped, cylindrical, spherical, barrel-shaped, and segmented. Some beads were made of two or more stones cemented together, some of stone with gold covers. Some were decorated by incising or painting and some had designs etched onto them.
- **Significance**
 - The sites of Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) like Harappa and Mohenjodaro showcase excellent town planning as well, like houses, planned streets, public baths, drainage systems, storage facilities, etc.
 - They tell how the Indus Valley people used stone in construction. The artists and craftsmen of the Indus Valley were extremely skilled in a variety of crafts—metal casting, stone carving, making and painting pottery and making terracotta images using simplified motifs of animals, plants and birds.

Conclusion

Their artistic versatility showed in the range of materials they used and the forms they made out of it. The patterns, motives and designs found on the articles shows the creativity that existed and judging from the excavated evidences, one can only conclude the people of Indus civilization were indeed true art patrons.

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