



Mains Practice Question

Q. What were the different types of art and crafts of Harappan civilization? Also, examine their significance. (250 words)

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Approach

- Give general features of Harappan art and crafts in introduction
- Briefly explain features and uniqueness of individual art forms
- **Significance**
 - general – what the art forms tell about IVC and its effect in present;
 - specific – how individual art forms were used in social life.

Introduction

Art works of the Indus Valley Civilisation emerged during the second half of the third millennium BCE. The artists of that time surely had fine artistic sensibilities and a vivid imagination. 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 forms of art found from various sites of the civilisation include sculptures, seals, pottery, jewellery, terracotta figures, etc.

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 figure were common example Dancing Girl Statue, buffalo with its uplifted head, back and sweeping horns and the goat are of artistic merit
- Metal-casting remained a continuous tradition. The late Harappan and Chalcolithic sites like Daimabad.

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.
- Beads were made of carnelian, amethyst, jasper, crystal, quartz, steatite, turquoise, lapis lazuli, etc. Metals like copper, bronze and gold, and shell, faience and terracotta or burnt clay were also used for manufacturing beads. 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

Other Arts

- Spindles and spindle whorls indicate spinning of cotton and wool was very common. Spinning is indicated by finds of whorls made of the expensive faience as also of the cheap pottery and shell.

Significance

Such variety of art and crafts tell lot about the Harappan Civilisation:

- 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.
- This showcases one of the earliest examples of civic planning. Houses, markets, storage facilities, offices, public baths, etc., arranged in a grid-like pattern. There was also a highly developed drainage system.