



Mains Practice Question

Q. Chola bronze sculptures are considered as the most elegant. Substantiate. (150 words)

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Approach

- Brief introduction about Indian bronze sculpture
- Show how Indian bronze sculptures have evolved
- Demonstrate why Chola bronze sculpture is the most elegant

Answer

Introduction

Indian sculptors had mastered the bronze medium and the casting process as much as they had mastered terracotta sculpture and carving in stone. The bronze sculptures are characterised by exquisite beauty and aesthetic appeal. The 'Dancing Girl' from Mohenjodaro is one of the earliest simplified figurines.

Body

The making of bronze sculptures reached a high stage of development in South India during the medieval period. Although bronze images were modelled and cast during the Pallava period in the eighth and ninth centuries, some of the most elegant and exquisite statues were produced during the Chola Period:

- The ninth-century kalyanasundara murti is highly remarkable for the manner in which Panigrahana (ceremony of marriage) is represented by two separate statuettes.
- The union of Shiva and Parvati is very ingeniously represented in the Ardhanarishvara murti in a single image.
- The well-known dancing figure of Shiva as Nataraja was evolved and fully developed during the Chola Period and since then many variations of this complex bronze image have been modelled.
- A wide range of Shiva iconography was evolved in Thanjavur (Tanjore) region of Tamil Nadu during this period.
- In spite of being devoid of ornamentation, the Chola bronze sculptures are elegant, expressive and exquisitely beautiful. The poses and the expressions on the faces of the figures are very explicit.
- Apart from the mudras or the poses, the artisans have taken special care of the other details such as the weapons and the 'vahana'.
- Chola bronzes are created using the lost wax technique. In artistic terms, it is known as "Cire Perdue" which demands a high degree of skill.

Conclusion

The Chola period was an age of continuous improvement and refinement of Dravidian art and architecture. The circumstances in which bronzes were cast during this period, and the contexts within which they were and are sited, continue to have profound relevance for our present-day understanding of art, poetry, science, history and society.

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