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225en01

HISTORY AND APPRECIATION OF ART (FROM 3000 BC TO 600 AD)

From Indus Valley Civilization (2500 BC-1750BC) to Mauryan dynasty (Third century B.C.), we see a gradual development in art and crafts. Artists of the Harappan period were extremely skilled. Mauryan period marked a new beginning in Indian history. Highly polished quality of the sculpted pillars from the Ashokan period are treasure of Indian art. Alongwith this technically improved style, there was also the tradition of popular folk art, which continued in the form of crude mother goddess figures. After the Mauryans, when the Sungas came to power, they continued with the artistic activity and we got the great **Stupa** and **sculptures** of **Sanchi** in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The Kushans, who had come from outside India, helped in the progress. During this period, we see the development of the sculpted portraiture for the first time. Gupta period is regarded as the golden period in Indian Art History. Refinement came in the representation of the human figures. Some of the most important art centres during this period were **Mathura**, **Sarnath**, **Ujjain**, **Ahichhatra** and others. Gupta sculptures show the perfect balance and blending of the style, the skill, the mastery and the imagination. The religious sculptures show a divine quality. The slight tilt of the lip, the full roundness of the figures, accurate carvings and simplicity became the stylistic stamp of the Guptas. Along with the religious, secular sculptures were also produced in a large extent. Famous paintings of **Ajanta** were done during this period. Beside paintings and sculptures, the new development in art was the **Cave** and **Temple** architectures. Some of the important sites in this respect are the **Udaygiri** caves in Madhya Pradesh and the Nachna and Bhumara, where temple architectures started. In a nutshell it can be said that *Gupta period is classical period of the Indian history.*



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, the learner will be able to:

- describe in brief the art of this period from 3000 BC to 600 AD;

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DANCING GIRL

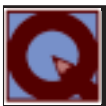
- state the names of enlisted art objects of this period;
- distinguish the materials used, sites, sizes, colours and place of collection of the enlisted art objects;
- identify distinctly the names of enlisted art objects of this period; and
- differentiate and identify the characteristics of the enlisted art objects.

1.1 DANCING GIRL

Title	:	Dancing Girl
Medium	:	Metal
Date	:	Harappan Period (2500 BC)
Finding site	:	Mohenjo – Daro
Size	:	4 inches (Approx)
Artist	:	Unknown
Collection	:	National Museum, New Delhi

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This statue is made of metal and is probably one of the finest examples of the artistic and technical skills of Indus Valley craftsmen. This female figure at the same time shows the fine skills of metal casting and artistic refinery. The figure is lanky, thin and rhythmic in character. Some very interesting points can be noticed in sculpture. First of all, while she has been shown without clothes, in her left hand she has bangles till almost her shoulder, very much like we can find in the tribal people of modern days in Gujarat and Rajasthan region. Second important thing to notice is the hairstyle. While the other mother goddess figures, which have been found from this civilization, have a queer and elaborate hair style. This figure shows a much contemporary style. Her hair is tied in a bun. Also to be noticed is its curious posture. She stands in a resting posture with her right hand at her waist and her left hand on her left thigh. The casting is perfect. It shows accuracy of the artists in metal casting during that period. There is tremendous monumentality in this particular sculpture. That means, though this is approximately 4 inches in height only, it seems to be a larger one to us. This is what makes it really unique. The craftsmanship and artistic skills have been blended successfully in Dancing Girl.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.1

- From where have we found the Dancing Girl sculpture?
- What is its height?
- Is the Dancing Girl standing or sitting?



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3. Bull capital from Rampurva.
Third century B.C.
Polished sarsolite.
Calcutta, Indian Museum

RAMPURVA BULL CAPITAL

- d) What is the dress of the Dancing Girl?
- e) What is the medium of this sculpture?
- f) What is the hairstyle of the Dancing Girl?

1.2 RAMPURVA BULL CAPITAL

Title	: Rampurva Bull Capital
Medium	: Polished sandstone
Date	: Mauryan Period (3 rd century BC)
Finding Site	: Rampurva
Size	: 7 ft (Approx)
Artist	: Unknown
Collection	: Indian Museum, Kolkata

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Emperor Ashoka engraved his edicts and teachings of Lord Buddha on pillars, rock surfaces and tablets. Ashokan pillars have been found in almost every region of India except extreme southern region. His pillars consisted of three parts – a base, an elongated shaft, and the decorated crown of the pillar, called the Capital. Capitals are mostly consisted of one or more animal figures, an inverted lotus, which serves as the base of these animal figures. A thick disc kind of structure known as abacus is between the animals and the lotus. Bull Capital is one of the most famous ones among the Ashokan capitals. It is also known as Rampurva Bull Capital, after the name of the place from where this is found. This particular one is comprised of a bell shaped inverted lotus as the base, the abacus and on the top the animal part – a majestic bull. There are plant designs around the abacus. Scholars are of opinion that these motifs had either come from earlier Middle East or Post Greek Style. The designs are very minutely and accurately carved. The figure of the Bull dominates over the lotus and the abacus. Though the part of the stone in between the four legs is not carved out, it doesn't disturb the strength or beauty of the bull. We can feel the weight and the power of the animal and there lies the success of the artist. In fact the ornate quality of the lotus base and the abacus create a contrast with the plain representation of the bull. The carving of the Bull obviously shows mastery of the Indian sculptor over their subjects. What is unique about this Bull Capital, is its extremely polished quality. This is one of the most important characteristics of the Mauryan sculptures from Ashokan period. According to the scholars, the technique of high polish was learnt from the sculptors of Middle East.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.2

- a) From where was this Bull Capital found?

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BLACK PRINCESS



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- b) What serves as the base of the Bull Capital?
- c) What is there on the abacus of the Bull Capital?
- d) Where is this Bull Capital now?
- e) What is the material of this Bull Capital?

1.3 BLACK PRINCESS

Title	:	Black Princess
Medium	:	Wall Painting (mural)
Date	:	Gupta Vakataka Period (2 nd century AD to 6 th century AD)
Finding Site	:	Ajanta
Size	:	20 ft x 6 ft (Approx)
Artist	:	Unknown

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The caves of Ajanta are situated near Aurangabad district in Maharashtra. The caves are named after the nearby village Ajintha. The caves, including the unfinished one, are thirty in number. Some of the caves served as the **Chaityas** (worshipping places) and most of them were **Viharas** (Monasteries). Ajanta paintings were done in two phases – first, the **Hinayana phase** (where Lord Buddha is represented in symbols) and the second, the **Mahayana phase** (where he is shown in human form). Most of the Ajanta paintings were done in the **Vakataka Period**. Ajanta paintings occupy a unique position in the history of Indian painting. Ajanta paintings are not done in Fresco. Fresco is a technique, where colours are mixed with water soluble binders and painted on either dry or wet plaster. But Ajanta artists have **used traditional technique of tempera**. The themes of Ajanta paintings were primarily religious in nature. But at the same time they also gave enough scope to the artists to show their creative and imaginative skills. The best part is that, even being religious paintings, they can be enjoyed by common people. Black Princess is, no doubt, one of the best examples of the Ajanta paintings. The free flowing line, subtle rhythm of the body contour, the slight tilt of the face and the curves of the eyes, all show the mastery of the artist and his control over the brush. Even the damaged painting gives a clear picture of how beautiful the colours were. There is a lyrical quality in the painting. The softness of the body contour, subtle bending of the neck and the simplicity give an heavenly quality to the painting. The colours used have been very earthly and devoid of any loudness.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.3

- (a) Where do we find the Ajanta caves?



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- (b) In which phase was Lord Buddha shown in symbolic way?
- (c) What is the type of colours used in the Black Princess?
- (d) In which phase of Ajanta painting Black Princess was done?
- (e) What is the time period of Black Princess?



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Indus Valley Civilization was named after the site from where the first evidence of this civilization was found. Main sites of this civilization are **Mohenjo-daro** and **Harappa** (now in Pakistan). Though initially it was considered that this civilization was mainly concentrated in the Indus River Valley and was named accordingly, recent excavations show that it was extended beyond the basin of River Indus. This civilization is also known as Harappan Civilization and is believed to have flourished between 2500 B.C. and 1750 B.C. Great numbers of art and antiquities have been found from this period, which include seals, potteries, jewellery, tools, toys and statuettes and other utilitarian objects.

The next important period in Indian history was the time of the **Mauryan Dynasty**, which was founded by **Chandragupta Maurya**. Though he himself is an illustrious figure in Indian history, mainly because of his administration and his minister **Kautilya**, better known as **Chanakya**, his grandson **Ashoka the Great** did lots of benevolent works and contributed much to the development of art and architecture. He was a follower of Buddhism and erected pillars all over the empire to spread the teachings of Lord Buddha.

The Mauryan period was followed by the rules of dynasties like **Sungas**, **Satavahanas** and **Kushans**. **Kushans** had come from outside India but contributed a lot in the development of Indian art and architecture.

The Gupta dynasty, founded by **Chandragupta I**, succeeded the **Kushanas**. **Guptas** were not only great warriors and administrators, but they were also great patrons of different types of arts. Under the imperial of Guptas there occurred an overall development in every field, including all kinds of art and science. This period saw the rise of the legendary personalities like **Kalidasa**, **Aryabhatta** and **Varahamihira**. It is justified to call Gupta Period as the **Golden period of Indian History** in all respects.



TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Write in short about the works of Indus Valley Civilization.
2. Describe in brief the posture of the Dancing Girl.



3. Write in short about Mauryan art.
4. Why do we call Gupta period as the golden or the classical period of Indian history?
5. What are the specialities of the Mauryan sculptures?
6. What was the contribution of the Kushans?
7. What were the characteristics of the Gupta period paintings?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

1.1

- a) Mohenjo – daro
- b) 4 inches (Approx)
- c) Standing
- d) She is without clothes
- e) Metal
- f) It is tied in a bun

1.2

- a) Rampurva
- b) Inverted bell shaped lotus
- c) Plant motif
- d) Indian Museum
- e) Polished Stone

1.3

- a) Near Aurangabad in Maharastra
- b) Hinayana Phase
- c) Earth colours
- d) Mahayana Phase
- e) 2nd – 6th c A.D. Gupta Vakataka period

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GLOSSARY/TERMINOLOGY

Statuettes	–	Small statues
Utilitarian	–	Anything with a utility purpose
Lanky	–	Thin and tall
Shaft	–	Narrow and usually vertical space
Edicts	–	Order proclaimed by authority
Frescos	–	Kind of painting done on wet walls
Portrait	–	Drawing, painting, photograph of a person
Stupa	–	Memorial on mortal remains of Saint and Worshiping place for Buddhists
Tempera	–	Water colour mixed with white.
Materealistic World	–	Common general world opposite spiritual world.
Lyrical	–	Poem like