Ancient History · GS - I

How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of the Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2017	GS - I	Ancient History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Gupta gold coinage; artistic excellence; realistic portraiture; iconography; metallurgy; inscriptions; comparison with later coinage; cultural legacy

Model Answer

Introduction

The Gupta period (fourth to sixth centuries CE) is often regarded as a golden age of Indian coinage, particularly because of the artistic sophistication of its gold coins.

Excellence of Gupta Numismatic Art

1. Artistic Quality: Gupta coins displayed refined engraving, balanced compositions, and detailed representations of rulers and deities.

2. Diverse Designs: Coins depicted rulers as archers, horsemen, lion-slayers and musicians. Samudragupta's *lyrist type* reflects the cultural interests of the period.

3. Religious Symbolism: Images of Lakshmi and other deities reflected religious traditions and royal legitimacy.

4. Metallurgical Skill: High-quality gold coinage demonstrated advanced minting techniques and considerable craftsmanship.

5. Inscriptions: Sanskrit legends and royal titles added political and cultural significance to the coins.

Comparison with Later Periods

Later dynasties developed distinctive coinage traditions, but changes in economic conditions, regional politics, metal availability and artistic priorities meant that the Gupta combination of fine engraving, portraiture and thematic variety was not consistently reproduced.

Conclusion

Although later Indian coinage also achieved notable artistic excellence, Gupta numismatic art remains an important benchmark for its craftsmanship, diversity and integration of political, religious and cultural expression.

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