Art & Culture · GS - I

How will you explain that medieval Indian temple sculptures represent the social life of those days?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2022	GS - I	Art & Culture

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Temple sculptures serve as historical sources for understanding everyday life, social customs, occupations, clothing, ornaments, performing arts, gender relations and religious practices in medieval India. However, they reflect cultural ideals and artistic conventions as well as actual social conditions.

Model Answer

Introduction

Medieval Indian temple sculptures were not merely religious decorations; they also depicted various aspects of contemporary society. They provide valuable visual evidence of the social and cultural life of the period.

Body

Representation of Social Life

1. Clothing and Ornaments: Sculptures portray the garments, hairstyles, jewellery and decorative accessories worn by different sections of society, reflecting contemporary fashion and craftsmanship.

2. Occupations and Economic Activities: Figures of artisans, musicians, dancers, warriors and attendants illustrate occupational diversity and specialised skills.

3. Performing Arts: Sculptures at temples such as Khajuraho and Konark depict dancers and musicians, highlighting the importance of music and dance in cultural and religious life.

4. Family and Gender Relations: Images of couples, women, children and domestic scenes offer insights into social relationships, beauty ideals and gender representations.

5. Religious and Cultural Practices: Sculptures portray rituals, festivals, mythological narratives and interactions between religious traditions.

6. Social Hierarchies: Royal figures, attendants and different occupational groups indicate distinctions in status and power, although they do not provide a complete picture of ordinary people's lives.

Conclusion

Thus, medieval temple sculptures are valuable sources for reconstructing social history. Their evidence, when combined with inscriptions, literary texts and archaeological findings, helps develop a balanced understanding of medieval Indian society.

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