

Q1. What are the key features and themes of Sangam literature? Discuss. In the context of Sangam literature, what do you understand by 'akam' and 'puram'?

Approach

Students are expected to write about sangam literature first and then its key features and themes. And also highlight upon what is Akam and Puram in sangam literature.

Introduction

Sangam period is the period in the history of ancient southern India (known as the Tamilakam) spanning from c. 3rd century BC to c. 4th century AD. It is named after the famous Sangam academies of poets and scholars centred in the city of Madurai. Sangam literature is the name given to the earliest available Tamil literature. It is dated between 400 BCE and 300 CE, although most of the work is believed to have been composed between 100 CE and 250 CE. The word 'Sangam' literally means association. Here, it implies an association of Tamil poets that flourished in ancient southern India.

Body

Key features of sangam literature:

- Sangam literature which combines idealism with realism and classic grace with indigenous industry and strength is rightly regarded as constituting the Augustan age of Tamil literature. It deals with secular matter relating to public and social activity like government, war, charity, trade, worship, agriculture etc.
- The earliest script that the Tamils used was the Brahmi script. It was only from the late ancient and early medieval period, that they started evolving a new angular script, called the Grantha script, from which the modern Tamil is derived.
- Some of the contents of the Sangam literature are corroborated by the writings of some Greek and Roman classical writers of the first and second century A. D, leading us to fix the period of Sangam age roughly between third century B.C. to third century A.D. So most of the Sangam literature also must have been produced during this period. The Sangam literature was finally compiled in its present form in circa A.D. 300-600.
- Sangam writings are possibly unique in early Indian literature, which is almost entirely religious. Many of the poems, especially on heroism, display great freshness and vigour and are singularly free from the literary conceits of much of the other early and medieval literatures of India.

The Sangam literature themes includes:

- Tolkappiyam authored by Tolkappiyar is the earliest of the Tamil literature. It is a work on Tamil grammar but it provides information on the political and socio-economic conditions of the Sangam period.
- The Ettutogai or Eight Anthologies consist of eight works – Aingurunooru, Narrinai, Aganaooru, Purananooru, Kuruntogai, Kalittogai, Paripadal and Padirrupattu.
- The Pattuppattu or Ten Idylls consist of ten works – Thirumurugarrupadai, Porunararrupadai, Sirupanarrupadai, Perumpanarrupadai, Mullaippattu, Nedunalvadai, Maduraikkanji, Kurinjippattu, Pattinappalai and Malaipadukadam.
- Pathinenkilkanakku contains eighteen works mostly dealing with ethics and morals. The most important among them is Tirukkural authored by Thiruvalluvar.
- Silappathigaram written by Elango Adigal and Manimegalai by Sittalai Sattanar also provides valuable information on the Sangam polity and society.

Both Ettutogai and Pattuppattu were divided into two main groups – Akam and Puram.

- Akam (Inner and love): Abstract discussion on human aspects such as love, sexual relations, etc. Akam deals purely with the subjective emotions of the lover.
- Puram (outer and valour): Human experiences such as heroism, customs, social life, ethics, philanthropy, etc. Puram deals with all kinds of emotions, mainly the valour and glory of kings, and about good and evil.

Conclusion

Thus, the Sangam Literature can also be regarded as a source of history of kings and culture of the period during which it was created. The claims mentioned in Sangam literature are highly exaggerated specially about the kings and should be used as a source of information with caution. However the sangam literature is very valuable with respect to the social and cultural life of the people at that time.

Q2. India's ancient sculpture leaves many clues to understand the social and economic status of women? Do you agree? Substantiate with the help of suitable examples.

Approach

Candidate is required to give a brief overview of architectural diversity across India and connect that with the knowledge it offers of that period. Making a comment on status of women with the help of examples answer can be concluded.

Introduction

An understanding of culture in its broadest sense is indispensable in comprehending the development processes of a society, culture is the quality of mind, life, and civilization. Our ancient monuments represents our culture and rich heritage. Also they tell us a condition of society in ancient India and in a way status of a women.

Body

- One of the earliest examples of sculpture of women is Mohenjo-Daro dancing girl where her pose portray confidence and self-contentment rather than being a timid product of suppression
- Some of the earliest sculptures show women as yogini i.e. female master practitioner of yoga. Depiction of female as divine aspect related to mythology and spirituality.
- In mauryan period worship of Yaksha and mother goddess was prominent. Yakshini figure of Didargunj reflects elegance and shows sensitivity towards human physique.
- In ancient times primary social role of a women in reproductive qualities was highlighted in characters like "lajjagauri" and "dugdhadharini" but they were not reduced to reproductive functions only, she had equal access to resources
- In ellora caves sculpture of shiva and parvati represents "Purush" and "prakriti" where she is seated on lap of Shiva and taking part in daily proceedings at shiva's court, this tells us that parvati is equally important when it comes to consultation on various matters.
- Ardhanarishwara sculpture of elephanta caves represents highest ideal of conjugal attachment. This form of shiva is considered most sacred because he is incomplete without parvati.
- Khajuraho complex of temples is yet another excellent example of sculptures representing women in different roles. For example on Kandariya laxmana temple we can see a women with a purse in hand purchasing stuff from market showcases economic independence and her ability to make choice.
- Also Khajuraho is famous for erotic sculptures, where we can see women are supremely confident when it comes to exploring their sexuality. Practice of polyandry is evident on temple walls

- In Assam, Kamakhya temple architecture reproductive parts of goddess are worshipped, genital parts are shown as symbol of fertility and menstrual cycle is not considered as impure.
- Above examples gives us a glimpse of societal and economic condition of women where they were not subjected to taboos and stigmas of modern day society. They were empowered enough to take their decisions and their role extended beyond clutches of household.

Conclusion

Sculptures are gateway to comprehensive understanding of particular period. From ancient times, modern day gendered constructs of Indian women can be seen challenged in these sculptures. From sexuality to concepts of beauty are confidently portrayed in this art form and they tell us a story of women free from stigmas and taboos.



Q3. In terms of themes and style, what are the main differences between the paintings of north and south India? Illustrate.

Approach

As the derivative is illustrate therefore the answer will generally involve the use of many examples, such as tables, figures, graphs, or concrete research statistics and evidence. The aim is to use these examples to demonstrate knowledge of the subject of the question and to further explain or clarify your answer.

Introduction

India had always been known as the land that portrayed cultural and traditional vibrancy through its conventional arts and crafts. The 35 states and union territories sprawled across the country have their own distinct cultural and traditional identities, and are displayed through various forms of art prevalent there. Every region in India has its own style and pattern of art, which is known as folk art. Painting is one such form of folk art. Depending on the medium on which the art is done, paintings are of different types. Paintings that are done on walls and ceilings are called murals. While the ones that are done on wet plaster are called fresco. Paintings that can be easily carried around and are made on canvas, paper or wood are called miniature paintings. Every region in India can be associated with a particular form of art, ranging from Mithila paintings of North to Tanjore paintings of the South.

Body

Main differences between the theme of paintings of north and south India

Paintings of North India	Paintings of South India
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The themes of paintings of north India are famous for portrayal of landscapes, natural scenes, animal and birds on wood. The earliest miniature paintings in India were found on palm leaves. Example: These early miniatures, regarded as Pala and Jain, were followed later by different schools of art such as Rajasthani, Mughal, Pahari and Deccan miniatures, each of which have their own characteristic style and uniqueness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The paintings of south India are famous for their mythological themes, especially the depiction of episodes from Hindu Puranas, Sthala-Puranas and other religious texts. Example: Tanjore style of painting which is a colourful panel painting done on a wood plank with a deity as the main theme of the composition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though the Mughal era is known mostly for the miniatures, the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murals of south India are present in rich amount as large works

<p>enthraling murals embellished on the walls of forts and palaces of Akbar and Jahangir quietly speaks of the influence of Persian styles.</p>	<p>executed on the walls of solid structures directly and they mainly depict religious themes of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These paintings successfully depict the religious beliefs of the people of that time as well as it portrays the insights of the social life of the people at the time of medieval period. Therefore, reflecting the deep insights of the life of commoners and royals. Example Rajasthani paintings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These paintings are famous for the elegant and majestic portrayal of Hindu gods and goddesses. Also, mythological, religious stories and folklore depiction as theme. Example: Mysore painting and PattaChitra painting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of Hindu painting are hardly known in north India until the late sixteenth century, and then in a quite different guise. Religious painting remained at a consequently lowly level. Examples include items such as the paintings made for the Nag Panchami festival. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The themes for most of these paintings are Hindu Gods and Goddesses and scenes from Hindu Mythology. In modern times, these paintings have become a much sought-after souvenir during festive occasions in South India. Example Tanjore painting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterized by Mineral colours, precious stones, conch shells, gold and silver are used in the paintings of north India. • Example: The Mughal Miniatures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterized by vivacious imagery, bold strokes, and vivid colours. • Example: ochre-red, yellow-ochre, bluish- green, white and pure colours are predominantly used in Kerala mural painting.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These paintings are known for strenuous, bold and imaginative artistic skills. • Example: Basholi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These paintings are known for strong connect with motifs and use of the stylized animal forms, floral motifs and designs. • Example: Kalamkari Paintings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve use of fine brushwork, intricacy, detailing and stylization are the unique attributes of miniature painting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve high skill technique. Example: A gilded and gem-set technique, which uses gold leaves and sparkling stones (artificial stones are used today) to highlight specific aspects of the Thanjavur paintings

Conclusion

Traditionally, most of the Indian painting styles existed as wall paintings or murals. In due course of time, urbanization brought these painting forms on paper, canvas, and

cloth etc. Indian painting styles are not just a reflection of the indigenous lifestyle but a perfect example of artistic expression through simple yet distinct compositions. These simple art forms can transport you back in time and leave you in awe and admiration of their rustic charm.



Q4. India is going to have a new parliament. Where does the proposed design of the building take inspiration from? Discuss.

Approach

As the directive here is discuss it is necessary to write in detail all aspects of the proposed design of the new parliament building also there should be a brief mention of the importance of the parliament in a democracy like India and the role parliament has played in making a largest successful democracy of the world also how this new building will fulfil country's aspirations.

Introduction

Parliament is a central feature of a successful democracy. It is a place where people's aspirations are given a shape. Old parliament building gave India a direction where millions were taken out of poverty and rights and dignity was ensured. Old Parliament building gave a new direction to India after independence. New building will be a witness to building of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Body

Need for a new parliamentary building:

- The idea of a new structure for Parliament is not a recent one — two former Speakers highlighted this need as the number of parliamentary staff, security personnel, media visitors, and parliamentary activities have seen a steep rise. During a Joint Session, the Central Hall is jam-packed and a few MPs have to sit on additionally-arranged chairs.
- Since Parliament is a heritage building, there are severe limitations to the structural repair, alteration and modifications that can be made. The existing Parliament building lacks several safety features such as earthquake-proofing, a standard fireproofing system and also has inadequate office space.
- Article 81 of the Indian Constitution provides for the delimitation of parliamentary constituencies. Since the last delimitation exercise was conducted based on the 1971 census, the ongoing freeze on increasing the state-wise distribution of seats will end in 2026. Subsequently, the number of MPs will undoubtedly increase, which poses an urgent demand for appropriate arrangements for the upcoming legislators

Proposed design and inspiration:

- Under the Central Vista redevelopment project, the new Parliament building is an indigenous design compared to the old building which was designed by Edwin Lutyens and Hebert Baker who were both British.

- The new parliament building will have a triangular shape to reflect the importance of triangles being a sacred geometry in various religions signifying India's multireligious and secular traditions.
- The interiors will have three national symbols as their main themes-Lotus, peacock, and Banyan tree.
- The ceiling of the parliament has fresco paintings like that in Rashtrapati Bhawan taking inspiration from the traditional temples and designs.
- The interior walls will have shlokas inspired from the old parliament building.
- Dholpur stone will be used which again oozes traditional design along with the artistry of our multicultural society.
- Also, the new building will be a state-of-the-art structural design with all the new technological features which will withstand the aspirations for another 150 years.
- The new building will be environment friendly with 30% its energy needs to be fulfilled from renewable sources.

Concerns:

- Central Vista has been accorded the highest Grade 1 heritage status by the Unified Building Bye-Laws of Delhi. Grade 1 classified buildings cannot be changed, and "no intervention can be made unless it is in the interest of strengthening and prolonging the life of the buildings."
- The Opposition, environmentalists, architects and citizens have raised many concerns even before the pandemic brought in extra issues. They have questioned the lack of studies to ascertain the need for the project and its impact on the environment, traffic and pollution. But, several key approvals for the proposed Parliament building have been pushed during the lockdown. This led to allegations of a lack of transparency.
- They have questioned the lack of studies to ascertain the need for the project and its impact on the environment, traffic and pollution.

Conclusion

India has imbibed democratic values and these are a part of our cultural ethos —be it the 12th-century Anubhava Mandapa of Bhagwan Basava or Buddhism from the sixth century BCE onwards, which taught liberty, equality and fraternity to the world. B R Ambedkar, chairman of the Constitution's draft committee, lucidly elaborated these facts during the Constituent Assembly debates. The US's present parliamentary building was constructed within 25 years of its independence; it took 70 years to build its parliament. In 1988, Australia proudly dedicated its new parliament building in Canberra. Thus, it is imperative to undertake this historical exercise to develop our post-colonial people's Parliament. This glorious project will depict India's democratic tradition and represent India as the mother of democracy in a real sense.

Q5. Do you agree with the assertion that building heritage is an ongoing process? In this context, share your views on the proposal to build statues of historical personalities like Shivaji Maharaj.

Approach

You need to provide your view with regards to efforts for building heritage as being an ongoing process in the first part while in the second part, you need to share your views on the proposals to build statues of historical personalities like Shivaji Maharaj. Also, views should be properly substantiated rather than just being comments.

Introduction

The Indian sub-continent is endowed with the richest and the most diverse stock of cultural and architectural heritage, with a significant proportion of them constituting living monuments. Traditional construction materials and practices are still used in renovation of heritage structures along with a recent focus towards constructing new heritage structures to fulfil the needs and aspirations of present times, some of which are reflected in construction of grand statues.

Body

Yes, building heritage is an ongoing process as –

- The modern understanding of heritage is fluid and dynamic. At its core, it represents a holistic understanding that perceives heritage as “a social and political construct encompassing all those places, artefacts and cultural expressions inherited from the past.”
- They are seen to reflect and validate our identity as nations, communities, families and even individuals, and thus are worthy of respect and protection as well as new efforts towards rejuvenating these ideas.
- Today heritage is perceived far more broadly than was the case by previous generations —including the pioneers of the preservation movement — as its protection and safeguarding for future generations which also necessitates new heritage structures for the future generations to highlight our age.
- Further, building heritage doesn't necessarily mean they won't serve public utility or be a wasteful expenditure as every heritage structure of past served some practical function in its days and same will be the case in present times with aesthetic considerations of its times.

Every society decides what is and isn't heritage. Since every collective decision involves politics, the construction of heritage too is deeply political. Political considerations also involve prioritising competing interests, which need to be balanced, where –

- Limited resources need to be allotted to safeguard and conserve present heritage structures rather than constructing new ones.
- Socio-economic condition of vast section of our population in present times also raises questions on allocation function in terms of monetary costs for building new heritage.

In this context, the proposal to build statues of historical personalities like Shivaji Maharaj can be understood from the following points –

- People care for heritage like statues because it contributes to and enhances our collective self-understanding. Further, it helps in focusing on personalities which embody our civilizational heritage as well as virtuous human conduct.
- Statues affirm our collective identity, is a source of pride. It is that part of history which is continuously brought to life by artefacts, integrated with our lived collective experience. And because it directly touches identity, it evokes strong feelings.
- Statue construction involves ethics too. It is the valued past of societies: intangible, preserved say, in narratives, music or performances but also tangible, materially embodied in statues where a grander scale helps in identifying with the noble virtues of the historical personality involved.
- Integral to the construction of statue then is an assessment of what must be remembered and forgotten, what calls for respect and celebration and what is a 'stain' remembered only to be prevented in future. Raj Ghat is not only a place where we remember Gandhi but also where we mourn his assassination by one of his own countrymen.
- Heritage is a way of addressing and rectifying past wrongs. The Holocaust memorial in Berlin and Washington's Vietnam memorial are both gestures towards reparation, monuments of public apology.

But at the same time, there are multiple concerns with regards to recent spree of announcements to build statues across India, some of these concerns are –

- The major problem is recouping the investment from tourism. The Taj Mahal, India's most famous monument, draws in millions of dollars in revenue each year, but even should the Shivaji Maharaj statue achieve the same benchmark, it will take decades to break even.
- Aside from the cost of construction, the expenditure for ongoing maintenance will be a vacuum on government revenue. Funding for the project will aggravate the already troubled debt situation.
- Public display of the heritage of only a few is a source of profound estrangement and exclusion for others. Heritage is often linked to cultural domination that invites resistance. It follows that heritage is that which brings comfort or unease, to which people are either attracted or repulsed.
- In societies where caste hierarchies abound, the continual denial of public recognition to Dalit symbols leads to demands of greater inclusion of their heritage. And when after struggles for recognition, Ambedkar's statues finally

make their way into public spaces, many see vandalism during times of social tension.

- With one of the largest stocks of heritage structures in the world, lack of adequate quality and quantity of manpower is a serious bottleneck in India in addressing the task of understanding and protecting heritage structures from natural hazards, ageing and weathering effects. Thus, focus should be on conservation of existing heritage structures and statues.

Also, our persistent obsession with political power, begs the question of why is there no movement to erect statues of M.S. Subbulakshmi, Kumar Gandharva, or Begum Akhtar for their massive contribution to our cultural heritage?

Conclusion

People must have the first priority in cultural heritage, not objects. A holistic understanding of the heritage is at stake, where the complexity of heritage should be taken into account and a balance should be brought in public discourse to ensure effective utilization of public funds as well as highlight the role of historical figures through appropriate means.

