



INDO - ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE - GS I MAINS

Q. The Indo-Islamic architectural style not only served religious purposes, but also left a lasting impact on the cultural and architectural heritage of the Indian subcontinent. Discuss (10 marks, 150 words)

News: *Ayodhya mosque to be 'better than the Taj Mahal'*

What's in the news?

- The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), the trust overseeing the construction of the mosque in Ayodhya, has decided to try a different approach to funding the project that has not taken off yet due to paucity of money and administrative delays.

Key takeaways:

- Panel aims at building **one of India's biggest mosques**, which will host the world's biggest Quran.
- The construction is expected to begin this year.
- It will also be the **first mosque in India to have five minars**.
- A **water-and-light show** is also being planned.
 - We will have water playing in sync with the azan (prayers) inside the mosque.
 - The lights of the mosque will come on at sunset and go off at sunrise automatically.

Indo-Islamic Architecture:

- Indo-Islamic architecture is a rich and diverse architectural style that emerged in the Indian subcontinent during the medieval period, blending elements of Islamic and indigenous Indian styles.

Key takeaways:

- Characterized by its intricate geometric patterns, calligraphy, and the extensive use of domes and arches, Indo-Islamic architecture reflects a harmonious amalgamation of Persian, Central Asian, and Indian influences.
- Examples include the Qutub Minar in Delhi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that showcases the early period of Indo-Islamic architecture, and the Taj Mahal in Agra, an iconic masterpiece of the later Mughal era.

Characteristic features of Indo-Islamic form of architecture:

- Indo-Islamic buildings were constructed using **brick, lime, and mortar**.
- The predominant style was **arcuate**, which utilized **arches, domes, and vaults**.



- Islamic art **avoided human figurines** and instead **used geometric patterns** such as arabesques, floral motifs, and various styles of inscriptions. Inlay on marble, or pietra dura, was also popular.
- Buildings often featured **ornamental, perforated lattice screens with arabesques, star motifs**, and geometric shapes such as pentagons, hexagons, octagons, and circles.
- **Gardens** played a significant role in Islamic architecture.

Styles of Islamic architecture in the Indian subcontinent:

1. Imperial Style:

- Also known as the **early Indo-Islamic style**, this period saw the **conversion of existing buildings into mosques**, incorporating elements of ruins from Hindu temples.
- The palaces were intricately decorated with arches, domes, and Hindu motifs such as floral patterns.

2. Provincial Style:

- This style of architecture spanned over two hundred and fifty years, during which buildings were **constructed using locally available materials and combining regional styles with Muslim features** such as domes, arches, minarets, and mihrabs. Initially, they used the ruins of Hindu and Jain temples, but later they developed their unique style of building art.

3. Mughal Style:

- The Mughal style of architecture flourished in India under the patronage of the Mughal Empire during the mid-16th to the 17th century.
- It is a **fusion of Indo-Islamic, Persian, and Turkish influences**, resulting in buildings that are remarkably symmetrical and uniform in pattern, with intricate ornamentation.

Types of buildings in Islamic architecture in the Indian subcontinent:

1. Mosques:

- Mosques, also known as "**masjids**", serve as places of the congregation for Muslim men during prayer.
- They often feature hypostyle halls and may include attached Madrasahs.
- The **mihrab**, a niche **indicating the direction of Mecca**, is an important element in mosque architecture.
- **Minarets, towers** adjacent to or attached to mosques, are used to announce the call to prayer.
- **Domes**, also known as "qubba", and calligraphy are commonly used decorative elements in mosques.

2. Forts:

- Forts were built on a larger scale than palaces and served as a city within a city for the monarchs and their people.
- Their primary purpose was **defence against enemies**.
- Regional influences can be seen in the construction of forts, particularly in Gujarat and Punjab.

3. Tombs:

- The **Taj Mahal, a white domed marble structure surrounded by large gardens**, pools with fountains, and four tall minarets, is a prime example of the Indo-Islamic style of architecture.



- It represents a **balanced and symmetrical form** and is an architectural accomplishment of Mughal building art.
- Mumtaz Mahal's tomb is just one of many beautiful structures built during the Islamic reign in India.

The Indo-Islamic architectural style not only served religious purposes, evident in the grand mosques and tombs, but also manifested in palaces, forts, and other structures, leaving a lasting impact on the cultural and architectural heritage of the Indian subcontinent. Indo-Islamic architecture stands as a testament to the artistic and cultural exchange between diverse communities, creating a distinctive visual language that continues to captivate admirers worldwide.

Go back to basics:

Evolution of Indo-Islamic Architecture:

1. Delhi Sultanate:

- The arrival of **Turks** brought new architectural styles from Persia, Arabia, and Central Asia.
- Engineering features such as **domes, arches, and minarets** were incorporated into palaces, mosques, and tombs built by rulers.
- Indigenous architecture was blended with new techniques, resulting in a new synthesis.
- **Examples** include Quwwatul Islam Mosque, Qutub Minar, Hauz Khas, tombs of Mohammad Tughlaq and Firoz Tughlaq, and forts of Tughlaqabad.

2. Regional Kingdoms:

- Regional kingdoms in **Bengal, Gujarat, and Deccan** developed their architectural styles.
- **Examples** include Jama Masjid, Sadi Saiyyad Mosque, and shaking towers at Ahmedabad, Jama Masjid, Hindola Mahal, and Jahaz Mahal in Mandu, and Gol Gumbaz at Bijapur.
- **Bengal's** distinctive features include oblong structures and **peculiar roof construction**.
- In **Jaunpur**, Atala mosque had a gigantic screen covering the dome, while the tomb of Hoshang Shah at Malwa is entirely made of marble with inlay work.
- **Bahamani** sultans borrowed from styles of Persia, Syria, Turkey, and temples of Southern India.

3. Mughals:

- Mughals introduced a new era in architecture, reaching the **zenith of Indo-Islamic architecture**.
- **Examples** include Humayun's Tomb, forts at Agra and Fatehpur Sikri, Buland Darwaza, the tomb of Salim Chishti, the Palace of Jodha Bai, Ibadat Khana, and Birbal's House at Fatehpur Sikri.
- **Shahjahan** was the greatest builder among the Mughals, using marble extensively with decorative inlay work, arches, and minarets.
 - Examples include the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, and the Taj Mahal.
 - Taj Mahal reflects all architectural features developed during the Mughal period, including the central dome, minarets, gateway, inlay work, and gardens.
- Mughal style influenced later period architecture with courtyards, pillars, and sculpted living beings.