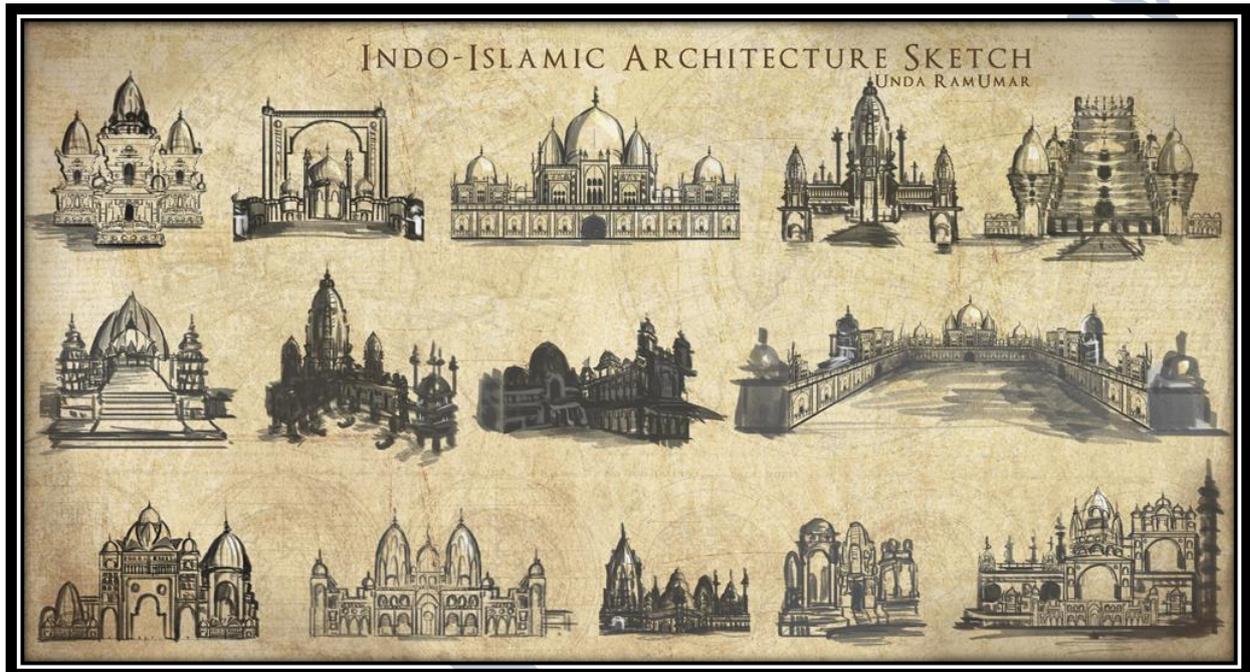


## Art and Culture: Indo – Islamic Architecture.

GS Paper 1: Indian heritage and culture – Indian culture covers the salient features of literature, art forms and architecture from ancient to modern times.



The medieval period saw great developments in the field of architecture in India. With the coming of Muslims to India, many new features and techniques came to be introduced in buildings. The development of Muslim Style of Architecture of this period can be called the Indo-Islamic Architecture or the Indian Architecture influenced by Islamic Art. The Indo-Islamic style was neither strictly Islamic nor strictly Hindu. It was, in fact, a combination of Islamic architecture elements to those of the Indian architecture.

Islamic buildings initially had to adapt the skills of a workforce trained in earlier Indian traditions to their own designs. Unlike most of the Islamic world, where brick tended to predominate, India had highly skilled builders very well used to producing stone masonry of extremely high quality. As well as the main style developed in Delhi and later Mughal centres, a variety of regional styles grew up, especially where there were local Muslim rulers. By the Mughal period, generally agreed to represent the peak of the style, aspects of Islamic style began to influence architecture made for Hindus,

with even temples using scalloped arches, and later domes. This was especially the case in palace architecture.

## The Decorations

The designs were either left plain or covered with colours. Motifs were also painted on or carved in stone. These motifs included varieties of flowers, both from the sub-continent and places outside, particularly Iran. The lotus bud fringe was used to great advantage in the inner curves of the arches. Walls were also decorated with cypress, chinar and other trees as also with flower vases. Many complex designs of flower motifs decorating the ceilings were also to be found on textiles and carpets.



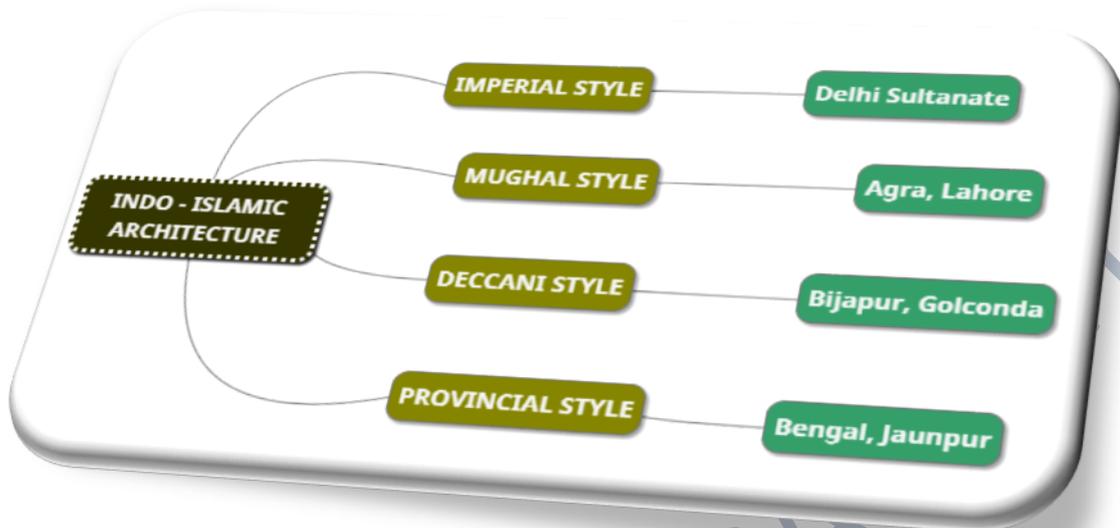
PIETRA DURA

In the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tiles were also used to surface the walls and the domes. Popular colours were blue, turquoise, green and yellow. Subsequently the techniques of tessellation (mosaic designs) and pietra dura were made use of for surface decoration particularly in the dado panels of the walls. At times lapis lazuli was used in the interior walls or on canopies. Other decorations included arabesque, calligraphy and high and low relief carving and a profuse use of jalis. The high relief carving has a three-dimensional look. The arches were plain and squat and sometimes high and pointed.



ARCHES

The arches were plain and squat and sometimes high and pointed. From the sixteenth century onwards arches were designed with trefoil or multiple foliations. Spandrels of the arches were decorated with medallions or bosses. The roof was a mix of the central dome and other smaller domes, chatris and tiny minarets. The central dome was topped with an inverted lotus flower motif and a metal or stone pinnacle.

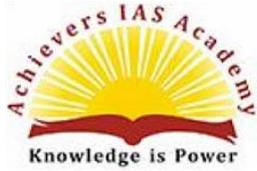


## Forts, Minars and Tombs

Building monumental forts with embattlements was a regular feature in medieval times, often symbolising the seat of power of a king. Some examples of strong, complex edifices which still exercise the imagination of the visitor are the forts of Chittor, Gwalior, Daulatabad, earlier known as Devgiri and Golconda. Commanding heights were utilised to great advantage to construct forts. These heights gave a good perspective of the region, strategic advantage for security, unfettered and unhindered space to make residential and official complexes while simultaneously creating a sense of awe in the people.

Another form of stambha or tower was the minar, a common feature in the sub-continent. Two most striking minars of medieval times are the Qutub Minar in Delhi and the Chand Minar at Daulatabad. Fort. The everyday use of the minar was for the azaan or call to prayer. Its phenomenal height, however, symbolised the might and power of the ruler. Chand Minar, built in the fifteenth century, is a 210- feet-high tapering tower divided into four storeys. Painted peach now, its façade once boasted of chevron patterning on the encaustic tile work and bold bands of Quranic verses. Although it looked like an Iranian monument, it was the combined handiwork of local architects with those from Delhi and Iran.

Monumental structures over graves of rulers and royalty was a popular feature of medieval India. Some well-known examples of such tombs are those of Ghyasuddin Tughlaq, Humayun, Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, Akbar and Itmaduddaula. According to Anthony Welch, the idea behind the tomb was eternal paradise as a reward for the true believer on the Day of Judgement. This led to the paradisiacal imagery for tomb construction.



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## Questions

1. Enumerate four styles of Indo-Islamic architecture.
2. What was the significance of a fort in medieval India? What were the strategic devices adopted in the construction of forts to confuse or defeat the enemy?
3. Which forms of secular architecture evolved during medieval times? What significance did these buildings have in the sociocultural lives of contemporary people?
4. In spite of the obvious Saracenic, Persian and Turkish influences, Indo-Islamic structures were heavily influenced by prevailing sensibilities of Indian architectural and decorative forms. Critically examine.