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Q1

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

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS I · 10 marks · Indian Heritage and Culture

Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Core demand of the question

- How do you justify the view that the level of excellence of the Gupta numismatic art is not at all noticeable in later times?
- Cover Gupta coin types, portrait and legend skill, and later decline under successor states
- Keep the explanation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Gupta gold showed the king as archer, lyrist, or horseman with Lakshmi or ritual reverses and Brahmi verse.

Metal was relatively pure and the die work was sculptural.

Post-Gupta and early medieval coins often debased metal and used stiff stock types.

Sultanate and Mughal art followed another visual language.

The claim holds for Gupta-style numismatic art, not for all later mint skill.

Flow diagram

Gupta dinara -> Portrait legend Lakshmi

Debase copy Huna

Medieval types

Portrait legend Lakshmi -> Later series

Debase copy Huna -> Later series

Medieval types -> Later series

Later series -> Excellence not continued

Conclusion

- Justify the view with die quality, metal, and iconography, and name Samudragupta's lyrist type against a later bull-and-horseman piece.
- Treat the break as a change of court taste and metal supply after the sixth century, not as the death of all Indian coin skill.

Gupta numismatic art set a peak of portrait, legend, and ritual reverse on gold. Later Indian coinage remained useful money, but that particular excellence of modelling and royal theatre

is not noticeable in the same way.

Facts & figures

Samudragupta lyrist type

Gold dinara showing the king playing the veena, a high point of Gupta royal portraiture.

Chandragupta II archer and lion-slayer

Gold types that present the emperor as a martial and hunting figure with a goddess reverse.

Ashvamedha type

Coin linked to the horse sacrifice, tying mint art to imperial ritual.

Bull-and-horseman coinage

Widespread early medieval device that replaced Gupta-style individual portraits.

Huna debasement

Successor and Hunnic issues that copied Gupta gold with poorer metal and cruder dies.

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