

Negotiating the sources-

### **Archaeological sources:**

Archaeology studies the material remains that have been created and used by humans since their appearance on the earth.

### **History of archaeology-**

C.J Thomsen the Danish scholar devised in 1817 the three age system of Stone age, Bronze age and Iron age.

In India archaeological explorations started during colonial rule .In the beginning it was dominated by takes based archaeology.

Archaeological survey of India was established in 1861 with sir Alexander Cunningham as its first director general.

In 1904 ancient monuments preservation act was passed during viceroy Lord Curzon.

### **Terms related to archaeology**

#### **Art facts**

Any portable object made and altered by human hands.

#### **Industry**

Similar Artifacts made of same material found at a site make industry.

#### **Assamblage**

All industries found at a particular site.

#### **Archaeological culture**

If similar assembly are found at several sites then the sites are supposed to belong to a same archaeological culture.

#### **Ecofacts**

Organic and environmental remains. For example animal bones, plant remains, soil and sediments. Ma'am

### **Archaeological fieldwork**

#### **archaeological exploration-**

Investigation of archaeological site on the basis of surface remains.

Light detection and ranging (LIDAR) method has been very significant in the discovery of buried structures.

#### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

Digging out the archaeological remains.

At the archaeological site remains are found of various archaeological cultures that's why stratigraphy becomes very important.

In this process layer that was lower is considered to be deposited first and other layers deposited later this is known as **law of superimposition**.

#### **Two ways of excavation are**

- **Horizontal excavation**

- **Vertical excavation**

### **Scientific techniques in archaeology**

**Carbon 14** aur radio carbon dating .

**Archaeometry** - range of scientific techniques and analyses involved to analyse the ancient objects are materials.

**Palaeontology**- study of the remains of dead organisms over a normal span of time.

**Palaeo-pathology** study of diseases ancient people suffered from by analysing their bones.

### **Ethno-archaeology**

Study of the behaviour and practices of present communities in order to interpret the evidence related to past communities

### **Salvage archaeology**

Under salvage archaeology the endangered sites are identified and conserved.

### **Epigraphy**

The study of inscription is called epigraphy.

And inscription is a writing engraved on hard surface like stone, wood, metal etc.

Epigraphy include understanding and analysing the information given on inscription.

Epigraphy also include palaeography which is the study of ancient writing.

Earliest inscription are Harappan inscriptions but they are not deciphered so earliest deciphered inscriptions are Ashoka's edicts.

These are found written in four scripts.

In Afghanistan he used **Aramaic and Greek Scripts** for his edicts. (Sir-i-Kuna S-E Afghanistan, Laghman and Taxila - Two Aramic inscriptions)

In the Gandhara region **Kharoshthi script** was used. (Shahbazgarhi and Manshera) The **Brahmi script** was used for the rest of his empire.

Potsherds with short inscriptions have been found in excavations at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka which can be dated to the pre-Mauryan period of c. 4th century BCE.

Kharoshthi script was later used in North India under Indo-greeks, Indo-Parthian and Kushana kings.

The use of Kharoshthi has almost decline by third century CE.

On the other hand Brahmi has evolved over a period of time.

Individual letters were modified century after century and all major scripts of India modified from Brahmi script.

By 6th century Gupta Brahmi evolved into a script called **Siddhamatrika**.

By 10th century CE devnagri script was standardised and by 14 15 century Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Maithili many other scripts has emerged.

Sharada script of a Kashmir has also emerged during this time.

In South India Tamil Brahmi emerged from 2nd century BCE to 2nd century CE.

### **Language of inscriptions**

Earliest inscriptions are in Brahmi script.

First pure Sanskrit inscription is from first century BCE.

The Junagarh Rock inscription of Rudradaman is considered as an early example of chaste Sanskrit written in mid 2nd century CE.

The early inscriptions were a mixture of Prakrit and Sanskrit which by c. 5th century CE were replaced by Sanskrit as the language of the royal inscriptions.

In South India old Tamil language was used for inscription from 2nd century BCE.

Tamil became important language under Pallavas and bilingual Sanskrit-Tamil inscription of pallava dynasty from 7th century onwards are also found.

Chola and Pandya dynasty also issued bilingual Sanskrit-Tamil inscriptions.

### **Dating the inscriptions**

Usually dated in regnal years.

Some later inscription give the date in form of chronographs

For example

Bhoomi (the earth)= 1

Kara (hand) = 2

Loka (the worlds) = 3

Veda =4

Kara veda Bhumi means the year 142

Different eras

Vikrama era -58BCE

Shaka era- 78 CE

Kalchuri chedi era - 248CE

### **Classification of inscriptions**

#### **According to their content and purpose**

1. **Commemorative inscription** records a specific event- for example Lumbini inscription of Ashoka. Erecting memorials for dead people.

2. **Donative inscriptions**

Donative inscriptions records the investment made by people for the establishment of a religious shrine or image etc.

Example - royal land grants

From them we came to know about the grant of lands, free from all the taxes, to the learned brahmanas. These were called the Agraharas.

Earliest inscriptions of tax free land grants are of Satavahanas and Kshatrapa found at Nashik.

The inscriptions which eulogize their patrons begin with a prashasti. The examples are the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela – the 1st century BCE-1st century CE king of Kalinga (Odisha) – and the Allahabad Pillar inscription of the Gupta king Samudragupta.

Sanskrit came to occupy a prime place since the Gupta period.

The Allahabad Pillar Inscription enumerates the achievements of Samudragupta.

Most of the Gupta epigraphs give genealogy. This became the practice of the subsequent dynasties.

The Chalukya king Pulakeshin II gives a dynastic genealogy and achievements in his Aihole inscription. Similarly, the Gwalior inscription of Bhoja gives full account of his predecessors and their achievements.

The Junagadh (Girnar) inscription of Shaka ruler Rudradaman records the construction of a water reservoir called Sudarshana lake during the time-period of Chandragupta Maurya, its completion during the reign of Ashoka and its repair in c. 2nd century CE.

### Importance of inscriptions

1. Durable
2. Political history and geographical extent of kingdoms
3. Genealogical history
4. Cultural history
5. 7th century Kudumiyamalai inscription gives the musical notes used in 7 classical Ragas.

### Numismatics

The study of coins is called numismatics.

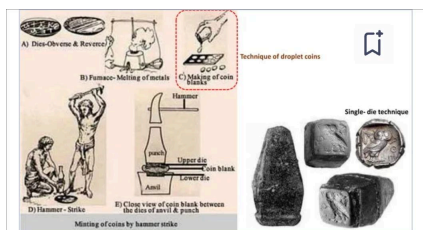
**Currency** is a medium of exchange backed by issuing authority.

**Coin** are a form of metal currency.

The side of the coin which carries the message is called **obverse** and the opposite side is reverse.

Oldest coins found in subcontinent or **Punch-marked** coins they are mostly of silver and sometimes of copper.

Panchmark coins bear symbols and the symbols were marked separately.



These have been found throughout the country Taxila to Magadha to Mysore.

**Unscribed cast coins** made of copper or alloys of copper also appeared soon after the Punch-marked coins. They have been found in many parts of the subcontinent except for south. With the expansion of Magadha Empire Magadhan type Punch-marked coins replaced the coins which were issued by other states.

### **Indo- Greek coins**

Die- struck coins

Mostly of silver and copper and gold coins are rare.

This coins bear the name and portrait of issuing ruler on obverse side.

Coins of Menander and Strato-1 show them slowly aging.



Indo-Greeks issued **bilingual** and **bi-script** coins, the name of the issuer were appear on the obverse side in **Greek** and on the reverse side in Prakrit language and usually in Kharoshthi script.

Coins of the Shakas, Parthians and Kshatrapas follow the basic features of Indo Greek coinage.

### **The Kushana coins (1st to 4th century CE)**

Kushanas were the first to issue gold coins on large scale. They mostly issued gold and copper coins, their silver coins are rare.

Kushana coins have figure name and title of the King on the obverse side and many Indian gods and goddesses depicted on kushana coin besides many Persian and Greek deities.

The coins of Vima kadphises bear the figure of Shiva standing beside a bull.

In the legend on these coins the king call himself Maheshvara.

Though the earliest coins carried only symbols the later once had figures of the kings,divinities and also mention their dates and names.

Coins also provides us information about political organisation.

For example the coins of Yaudheyas and Malavas carry the legend 'gana' which tells us about their non monarchical form of polity.

### **Satavahana coins**

Mostly issued in copper and silver.

Also issued small denomination coin made of lead and potin.

The legend were generally in prakrit language and Brahmi script but Dravidian language was also used.

The image of ship on satavahana coins of Deccan bears the testimony to the significance of maritime trade.

### **Gupta coins**

Gupta appears to have succeeded the kushanas in the tradition of minting coins.

They completely Indianised their coinage.

They issued a number of gold coins known as the '**Dinaras**' and they were well executed die struck coins.

The obverse depicts reigning king in various poses and the reverse religious symbols.

In later part of Skandgupta's reign there was decline in metallic purity of gold coins.

Gupta's also issued silver coins but their copper coins are rare.

### **Coins as a source of history**

1. Political history
2. History of language and scripts
3. History of exchange and trade
4. Socio-religious and cultural practices
5. Metallurgy

## **Literary sources of history**

### **Indigenous primary sources**

Primary source is a document or physical object which was written or created during the time under study.

These are contemporary accounts of an event written by someone who experienced or witnessed the event.

Example - Autobiographies, diaries, official records, poetry, drama etc.

Example - Arthashastra, Tuzuk-i- Babri

### **Secondary sources**

Secondary sources interpret or analyse the primary sources.

Example - Remains of Indica, Prthviraj Raso , Baburnama

### **Classification of literary sources on the basis of language and content**

Linguists and Philologist have divided the languages of the world into different families

#### **Indo European family**

Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi, Bengali, Assamese Gujarati, Sindhi, Oriya, Nepali and Kashmiri

Persian, Greek, Latin, Dutch, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Armenian

Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali belongs to Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European family of languages.

#### **Dravidian family**

Tamil, Malayalam , Telugu , Kannada and Tulu

Exception - Brauhi spoken in Balochistan area of Pakistan, Gondi in Central India and Malto in Raj Mahal hills of eastern India , Oraon spoken in Jharkhand

Among Dravidian languages Tamil has oldest literature followed by Kannada.

#### **Tibeto-Burman**

Mostly spoken in North eastern states.

Although Tibeto-Burman form of speech is much older than Dravidian and Indo-Aryan, no literature developed in those tongues because unlike Indo-Aryan and Dravidians they did not have any form of writing.

The speakers were conversant with oral legends and traditions which were first recorded by Christian missionaries in 19th century.

### Austro-Asiatic

Mon-khmer - Khasi language which is spoken in Kashi and Jaintia hills in Meghalaya.

Munda- Munda tangi spoken in Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa.

## **Classification of literary sources into religious and non religious texts**

### **The Vedas**

The earliest known literature from the Indian subcontinent is the Vedic literature.

They are traditionally regarded as Shruti i.e. 'heard' or revealed texts: words said to have been uttered by the god Brahma in the ears of the First Man. They were handed down from one generation to the next with emphasis on accurate memorization.

The word Veda comes from the root vid and means knowledge.

Each Veda has four parts

1. The Samhitas
2. Brahmana
3. Aranyaka
4. Upanishad

### **1.Samhitas**

The Samhitas or collections, namely the collections of hymns, prayers, incantations, sacrificial formulas and litanies.

#### **A. Rigvedic Samhita**

- It is the knowledge of the songs of praise (rik) and consists of 1028 hymns (suktas) constituting 10 books (mandalas).
- Books 2-7 are of an earlier date and books 1, 8, 9, and 10 are later.
- They deal with a variety of issues related to the customs, social norms and formations.
- Despite the ritual content of the Rigveda the historians have been able to successfully build on themes like the pastoral economy, the position of the clan-chief (raja), the status of vish, meanings of terms like bhaga and bali, social classes etc.

#### **B. Samveda Samhita**

- The collection of the Samveda i.e. the knowledge of the songs or melodies (saman).
- It also sometimes referred to as the musical version of the Rigveda Because barring the musical creativity and melodic novelty reflected in the 75 verses the rest have been borrowed from the Rigveda.
- It also mentions instruments like Vina (lute).

#### **C. Yajurveda Samhita**

- Yajurveda deals with the details of the performance of rituals.

- the knowledge of the sacrificial formulas (yajus) for worship-rituals like Agnihotra (welcoming the three primary seasons – Spring, Monsoon and Autumn – by offering butter and milk to fire), Vajapeya and Rajasuya and Agnichayan.
- It also yields crucial information on agriculture, economic and social life. For instance, a significant verse in the Shukla Yajurveda1 lists the crops deemed important in those times such as wheat, rice, barley, sesame, millets, sorghum, kidney-beans etc.
- It is the largest collection of primary Upanishads – the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the Katha Upanishad, the Isha Upanishad, the Maitri Upanishad, the Taittiriya Upanishad and the Shvetashvatara Upanishad – out of which the various schools of Hindu philosophy have emerged and developed. For example, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad contains the earliest extensive discussions on the Hindu concept of dharma, karma and moksha.

#### D. Atharvaveda Samhita

- The Atharva Veda is the latest Veda and contains hymns but also spells and charms which reflect aspects of popular beliefs and practices.
- A significant section also talks about herbs and nature-derived potions as medicine.

## 2. Brahmanas

- The Brahmanas are prose explanations of Samhita portions and give details and explanation of sacrificial rituals and their outcome.

## 3. Aranyakas

- (The forest books) the Aranyakas interpret sacrificial rituals in a symbolic and philosophical ways.
- It is believed and held by some that they were meant to be studied in a forest in the Vanaprastha (retired to forest/forest-dwelling) stage of life, hence the name Aranyakas.
- For example, the Aitareya Aranyaka contains specific statements on how one who follows the Vedic prescriptions and performs the sacrifices correctly goes to the abode of gods while the one who violates them is born into the lower worlds of existence as reptiles, insects etc.

## 4. Upanishads

- The term Upanishad is formed by the joining and the combination of roots upa meaning “by” and ni-shad meaning “to sit down”. It, thus, denotes “sitting down near”,
- The Upanishad contain a great variety of philosophical ideas about sacrifice, the body, the universe and are most closely associated with the concepts of atman and brahman.
- They played a momentous part in the evolution of spiritual ideas in ancient India.
- Arthur Schopenhauer called the Upanishadic theosophy “the production of the highest human wisdom”
- **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** meaning in Sanskrit “the world is one family” has been taken from the Maha Upanishad.
- **Atithi Devo Bhava**, It is taken from the Taittiriya Upanishad.
- **Satyamev Jayate**, is a phrase borrowed from the Mundaka Upanishad.

## Dating Veda

- When we refer to the early Vedic literature we essentially refer to Books II-VII of the Rigveda believed to have been composed between c. 1500-1000 BCE.



- The later Vedic literature includes Books I, VIII, IX and X of the Rigveda; Sama Veda; Yajur Veda; Atharva Veda; Brahmanas; Aranyakas and Upanishads. These were composed between c. 1000-500 BCE.

A number of supplementary texts known as Vedanga aimed at helping the proper recitation use and understanding of the Vedas.

Six vedangas (limbs of the Vedas) were evolved for a proper understanding of the Vedas. These are:

- i) Siksha (phonetics)
- ii) Kalpa (rituals)
- iii) Vyakarana (grammar)
- iv) Nirukta (etymology)
- v) Chhanda (metrics)
- vi) Jyotish (astronomy).

## Dharmashastra

- The Sutra texts are manuals on ritualism (c. 600-300 BCE).
- These include: a) The Shrautasutra: contains rules for the performance of great sacrifices.
- b) The Grihyasutra: contains directions for simple ceremonies and sacrificial acts of daily life. Samskaras are part of this.
- c) The Dharmasutra: These are the books of instructions on spiritual and secular law – the oldest law books.
- The Dharmasutras and the Smritis are rules and regulations for general public and the rulers.
- They can be termed, in the modern sense, as the constitution, the law-books for the ancient Indian polity and society. These are also called the Dharmashastras.
- They were compiled between c. 600 BCE-200 CE. The Manusmriti is prominent among them.
- Post-sutra texts are the Smriti texts which are:
  - i) The Manu Smriti
  - ii) The Narada Smriti
  - iii) The Yajnavalkya Smriti.
- These were composed between c. 200 BCE and 900 CE. They prescribe duties for the different varnas as well as for the kings and their officials. They set out rules for marriage and property. They also prescribe punishments for persons guilty of theft, assault, murder, adultery etc.

## The two Sanskrit epics the Ramayana and Mahabharat

The two great epics – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (c. 500 BCE-500 CE) – can also be used as a historical source. They are known as Itihaas (“thus it was”) or narratives. Vyasa’s **Mahabharata** is older and possibly reflects the state of affairs from c. 10th-4th century BCE. The

main narrative which relates to the Kaurava-Pandava Conflict may relate to the later Vedic period.

According to tradition Rama lived in treta Yug and Mahabharata war happened in dvapar Yug. However some historians argue that events and characters associated with Mahabharata reflect a slightly earlier period than those of Ramayana.

Mahabharat consists of 18 Parvas (books) and has two main recensions: northern and southern.

## Ramayana

Composed by sage Valmiki

Ramayana also has two main recensions: Northern and Southern.

The language of Northern recension is more elaborate and polished than the southern one.

The Epic has 7 Kandas, first Bal Kanda and last Uttara kanda are later interpolations.

Excavation at the site of Ayodhya have indicated the existence of a settlement here from Northern black polished ware phase (nearly 700 BCE)

## Puranas

- The Puranas are a category of Hindu texts attributed to Vyasa. They are dated to the Gupta and post-Gupta period. There are 18 Mahapuranas and numerous Upapuranas.
- The following five branches are considered to form the subject-matter of the Puranas:
  - i) sarga (evolution of universe/creation of the world)
  - ii) pratisarga (involution of universe/re-creation)
  - iii) manvantara (recurring of time/periods of the various Manus)
  - iv) vamsha (genealogical lists of gods, kings and sages)
  - v) vamshanucharita (an account of royal dynasties/life stories of some selected characters).
- Later on, description of the tirthas (sacred places of pilgrimage) and their mahatmya (religious importance) was also included in the Puranic/Pauranic literature.
- The Puranas contain useful information for reconstructing the history of ancient India. They throw light on the political history and genealogies of dynasties. There is much on the ancient dynasties such as the Haryankas, Shishunagas, Nandas, Mauryas, Sungas, Kanvas and Andhras.
- The dynastic lists end with the Guptas, indicating that the Puranas may have been compiled by c. 4th-6th centuries CE. However, there are a few which are later, such as the Bhagvat Purana (c. 10th century) and Skanda Purana (c. 14th century).
- They are also important for providing geographical information on rivers, lakes, mountains etc. Hence, they are crucial for reconstructing the historical geography of ancient India.
- Besides, they are a good source of information on the three major cults of Hinduism: Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism.

## Buddhist literature

- Among the non-Brahmanical and non-Sanskritic sources of early India the Buddhist and Jain literature constitute an important category. It was written in the Pali and Prakrit Languages respectively.
- Early Buddhist literature is generally divided into canonical and non-canonical texts.
- Canonical texts are the books which lay down the basic tenets and principles of a religion.
- Tripitakas is the common name given to Buddhist canonical literature and their commentaries in Pali.
- **The Sutta Pitaka** contains the discourses of Buddha on various doctrinal issues in stories, poems and dialogue form.
- The Sutta Pitaka contains five Nikayas:-
- The Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, Anguttara and Khuddaka Nikaya
- of which the Khuddaka Nikaya is a collection of discourses. It contains Theragatha, Therigatha and Jatakas which are important sources for a historian. The Jatakas contain stories –more than 550 in number – about the former births of the Buddha.
- Theragatha (“Verses of the Elder Monks”) and Therigatha (“Verses of the Elder Nuns”) are a collection of poems, with verses which were narrated by the early members of the Buddhist sangha. Therigatha is the first surviving poetry in India supposed to have been composed by women
- **The Vinaya Pitaka** is about 227 rules and regulations for the monks and nuns of the sangha.
- **The Abhidhamma Pitaka** (literally “higher Dhamma”) contains matter related to the Buddhist philosophy in accordance with the Theravada school and contains lists, summaries and questions and answers.
- Abhidhamma Pitaka is a later work and contains a thorough study and systemisation of teachings of Sutta Pitaka through lists summaries questions and answers.
- The **non-canonical Buddhist literature** includes **Milindapanha** (“Questions of Milinda”) dated around 1st century BCE-1st century CE. It consists of a dialogue between the Indo-Greek king Menander and a Buddhist monk Nagasena.
- Nettipakarana (The book of guidance) belongs to the same period and gives a connected account of the teaching of Buddha.
- Nidanakatha (1st century CE)
- The Sinhalese chronicles Mahavamsa (5th century) (“Great History”) and Dipavamsa (4th -5th century) (“History of the Island”) entail the history of Buddhism from the time of the Buddha’s Enlightenment.
- Apart from Pali text we also have Sanskrit texts which tell us about Buddhism.
- That trend towards the use of Sanskrit intensified in the Mahayana schools.
- Lalitavistara (1st-2nd century) hagiography of Buddha associated with Sarvastivada school is in Sanskrit and Prakrit.
- Ashvagoshā’s- Buddhacharita .

## The Jain literature

- The Jain literature constitutes another important category of texts which are in a form of Prakrit called the Ardhamagadhi.

- The literature of the Digambaras is in Jain Shauraseni while the Shvetambara literature is in two dialects of Ardhamagadhi. Mahavira's teachings to his disciples were 1st compiled in 14 Purvas.
- In c. 4th century BCE Sthulabhadra convened a great council at Pataliputra and reconstructed the Jain canon in 12 Angas. Later in c. 5th century CE at a council at Valabhi the existing texts were formalized and presented in a written form.
- The scriptures accepted by the Shvetambaras are:
  - i) 12 Angas,
  - ii) 12 Upangas,
  - iii) 10 Prakirnas,
  - iv) 6 Chedasutras,
  - v) 2 Sutras, and
  - vi) 4 Mulasutras.
- They deal with code of conduct, various legends, Jain doctrines and metaphysics. The Digambaras believe that most of the original Purvas are lost. Hence, they do not accept the scriptures accepted by the Shvetambaras.
- Other non canonical literature - Adi Purana (9th century CE) Harivamsha Purana (8th century) Trishashtilakshana Mahapurana by Jinasen and Gunabhadra. Parishishtaparvan by Hemachandra

## Sangam Literature

- The earliest Tamil texts are found in the corpus of the Sangam literature (c. 400 BCE-200 CE). This is the work of poets who composed short and long poems over a period of three to four centuries, patronized by chiefs and kings.
- They assembled in colleges which were called the Sangams and the literature produced in these colleges was, thus, called the Sangam literature. There were three Sangams (literary gatherings): the 1st and last at Madurai the 2nd at Kapatapuram and 3rd in Madurai.
- There are two kinds of Sangam poems Akam and Puram.
- Akam point had love as their theme while Puram poems were mostly about war.
- The poets came from different professional and social backgrounds due to this Sangam poems offer a good idea of everyday life in the time when they were composed.

Number of Tamil didactic works were written in post 5th century period.

- Tirukkural by Thiruvalluvar is a work on ethics polity and love (5th-6th century)
- Of several Tamil epics best known are Silappadikaram and Manimekalai. (5th-6th century)
- Early medieval Tamil literature includes the devotional poetry of Vaishnav saints (Alvars) and Shaiva saints (Nayanars).
- In 10th century Natha Muni collected Alvar hymns into the canon known as Nalayira Divya Prabandham.
- The Alvarvaipavam is a sacred biography of Vaishnava Saints.
- The hymns of Nayanar Saints were compiled in 10th century by Nambi Andar Nambi and this form the core of Shaiva canon Tirumurai.
- Nambi also wrote a work called the Tiruttondar Tiruvantati.

- In 12th century the accounts of Shaiva saints were collected in a text called Periyapuranam.
- The Kalampakams ,Kovai,Ula and Tutu were other types of poems.
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### Other ancient text, Biographies and Histories

- Early Indian literature have masterpieces of drama and poetry. The historians have used them to draw the information on the times in which they were composed. The earliest Sanskrit poets and playwrights include Ashvaghosha and Bhasa.
- **Ashvagoshha** authored Buddhacharita, Sariputraprakarna and Saundarananda.
- **Bhasa** was a dramatist and wrote Pancharatra, Dutavakya, Balacharita and Svapna-Vasavadatta.
- The great Sanskrit writer-poet **Kalidasa** (c. 4th-5th centuries CE) authored dramas like Abhijnana-Shakuntalam, Malavikagnimitram, Vikramorvashiyam and poetic works such as Raghuvamsham, Kumarasambhavam and Meghadutam.
- They provide important insights into the social and cultural life of the Guptas. The Malavikagnimitram is based on events of the reign of Pushyamitra Shunga (Shungabwas the dynasty that followed the Mauryas).
- Ancient dramas on historical themes- **Vishakhadatta's** Mudrarakshasa (c. 7th-8th centuries CE). This drama is based on how Chanakya tries to win over Rakshasa – a minister of the Nandas – to Chandragupta Maurya's side. It also gives a glimpse of the then society and culture.
- His other plays Devichandraguptam centers on an incident in the Gupta king, Ramagupta's reign.
- **Kathasaritasagara** (Ocean of Streams of Stories)The Kathāsaritsāgara was composed in Kashmir in northern India in the 11th century by Somadeva, a poet at King Ananta's court. They are the collections of popular folk tales.(Sanskrit)
- **Shudrak** is another poet who has written plays based on historical events. Some of his plays are Mrichchhkatika and Vinavasavadatta.
- Biographies of well known kings are an interesting piece of literature.
- **Banabhatta's Harshacharita** (c. 7th century CE) talks in eulogistic terms about Harshavardhan of the Pushyabhuti dynasty. It is the oldest surviving biography in India.
- **Bilhana's Vikramankadevacharita** (c. 12th century) is about the later Chalukyan king Vikramaditya VI and describes his victories.
- **Vakpati wrote Gaudavaho** based on the exploits of Yashovarman of Kannauj.( In Prakrit language)
- **Kumarapalacharita of Jayasimha**,(Solanki Ruler)
- **Hemachandra** - He is popular as a Jaina poet (Swetambar sect) who lived between 1088 CE-1172 CE.
- Kumarapalacharita (Sanskrit+ Prakrit; story of Kumarapala, king of Anahilawada)
- Parishist Parvan or Sthaviravalicharitra
- (A Sanskrit maha kavya. Contains histories of the earliest Jain teachers of 480-200 BCE.)
- **Hammirakavya of Nayachandra**,(15th century)

- Nayachandra Suri was a Kashmiri poet who lived in the 12th century CE. He is best known for his epic poem, Hammira-Mahakavya, which tells the story of Hammira, the last Hindu ruler of the kingdom of Anhilwada Patan.
- **Navasahasankacharita of Padmagupta**(11th centuryAD)
- This epic poem is written in Sanskrit language which tells the story of King Sindhuraja's life and conquests mixing history with fiction. Also the epic tells the romance story between Parmara King Sindhuraja and the Naga princess Shahshiprabha.
- **Bhojaprabanda of Ballal,**
- Bhojaprabandha (narrative of Bhoja of Parmar), written by Ballala Deva, is the story of Bhoja, King of Malwa during the 11th Century A.D. This book contains many interesting legends about great poets like Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and Bana.
- **Prithvirajacharita of Chanda Bardai.**
- 15th -16th century and Epic poem in Brijbhasa.

## Foreign Accounts

- Many travellers came to India as pilgrims, traders, settlers, soldiers and ambassadors. They have left behind accounts of places they visited and things they saw. If studied with due caution these accounts give a lot of valuable historical information.
- Ambassadors were sent to Pataliputra by Greek kings. Some of them were Megasthenes, Deimachus and Dionysios. Seleucus's envoy Megasthenes wrote **Indica**.
- The Greek and Roman accounts give useful information about the Indian Ocean trade in early India. An anonymous Greek author settled in Egypt wrote **Periplus of the Erythrean Sea** (c. 80-115 CE) on the basis of his personal voyage of Indian coast in about 80 CE.
- He gives valuable information about Indian coasts. Another writer Ptolemy Wrote a geographical treatise on India in 2nd century CE (c. 150 CE).
- The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea and Ptolemy's Geography, both written in Greek, give information about the geography and ancient trade of India. The early Greek and Latin works by Strabo, Arrian, Pliny the Elder tell us about the Oceanic trade. Arrian wrote a detailed account of the invasion of India by Alexander on the basis of information from those who accompanied the campaign.
- The Chinese travellers visited India from time to time.
- Fa-Hsien/Fa-Hien(399-414CE) who visited India in the 5th century CE, and Hsuan Tsang and I-Tsing who came in the 7th century.
- Fa-Hsien has described the political, social, religious and economic conditions during the Guptas and Hsuan Tsang, those during Harshavardhan's times.
- **Arabs-** Al- Mamun the 9th century Abbasid Caliph established an academy called the Beyt al-Hiqam (house of wisdom) in Baghdad. Scholars of this academy translated Greek, Persian and Sanskrit texts on philosophy and science into Arabic.
- **Al-Beruni**, was a contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni, visited India to learn about its people and study Indian texts in their original language.
- **Tahqiq-i-Hind** is truly encyclopedic in nature and covers topics like Indian scripts, sciences, geography, astrology, astronomy, philosophy, literature, beliefs, customs, religions, festivals, rituals, social norms and laws. His work is a valuable historical source

for the 11th century India and he was the 1st to have identified the initial year of the Gupta era.

- With the beginning of the 12th century we start getting the official histories commissioned by rulers or even written by courtiers. The earliest such example is **Tabkat-i-Nasiri by Minhaj-ud-din Siraj**. Subsequently, we find such important sources of medieval history as: Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi by Zia-ud-din Barani, Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi by Mahammad Quasim Farishta, Ain-i-Akbari and Akbarnama by Abu'l Fazal, Tabqat-i-Akbari by Nizammuddin Ahmad, and so on.
- For the period of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb also we have enough court accounts. For the modern period there is no dearth of historical material in several Indian languages as well as in English, French and Dutch.
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