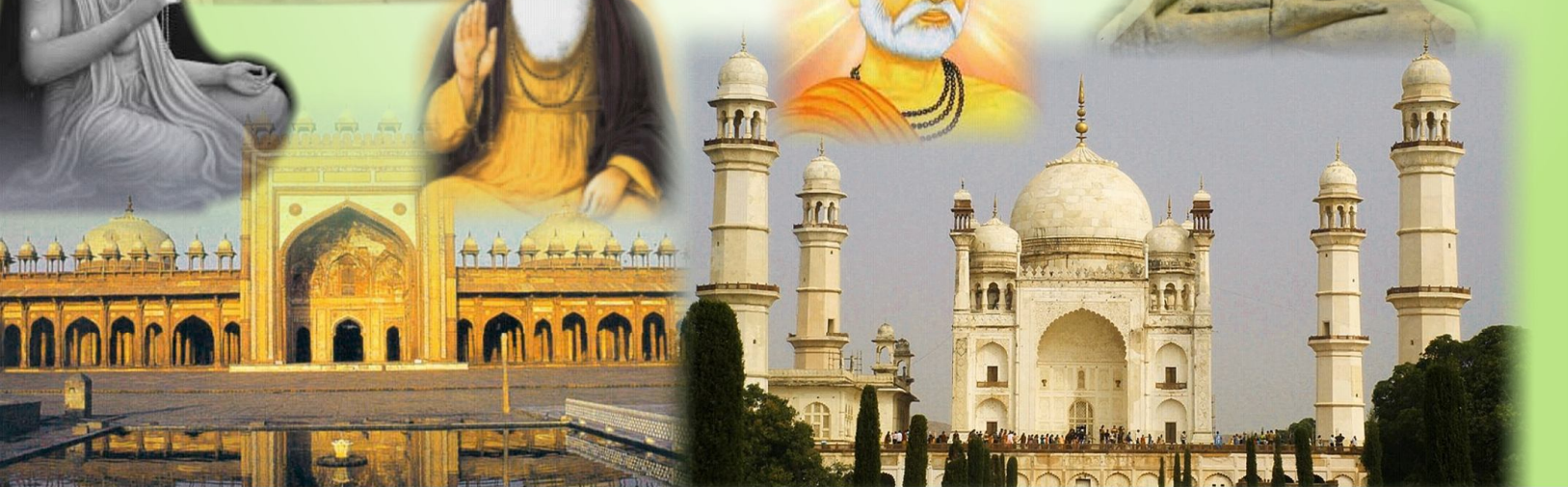
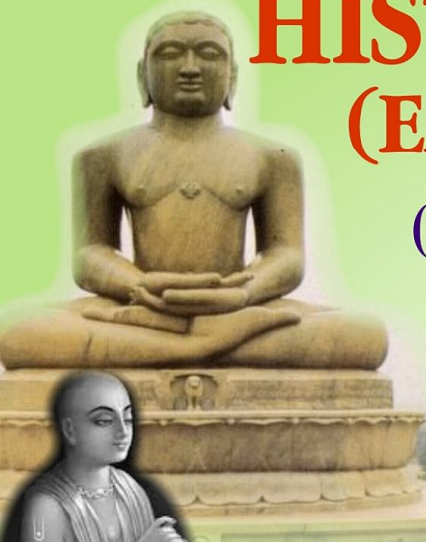


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HISTORY OF INDIA - I (EARLY TIMES TO 1750)

(GENERIC ELECTIVE PAPER -I)

For B.A., FIRST SEMESTER



Manas Kumar Das



Abhijit Sahoo

SALIENT FEATURES

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Model Question Papers

Last Minute Revision (LMR)

**HISTORY OF INDIA - I
(EARLY TIMES TO 1750)
GENERIC ELECTIVE PAPER I**

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*Dedicated To
My Mother*



Late Rambha Rani Dash

Dr. Manas Kumar Das

My Mother



Late Smt. Pravati Sahoo

Dr. Abhijit Sahoo

PREFACE

History has its lingering presence on all aspects of human being, be it science, society, economy, politics or culture. India's spiritual and aesthetic values has mesmerised the world culture. India has explained to the world about the glories of her past achievements in the sphere of politics, religion, art, architecture and literature, etc. It is the land which has given birth to the world famous religious teachers like Gautam Buddha and Mahavira, able emperors like Ashoka and Samudragupta, the Bhakti saints of medieval India, who have left their footprints on the rocks of history. It has also assimilated the foreign cultures including the Islamic culture. The masterpieces of art and architecture have been found all over India in the form of temples, mosques, palaces, etc.

The book on 'History of India - I (Early Times to 1750)' has been written for the generic elective students (2019-20) of the CBCS courses designed as a common syllabus for all Universities of Odisha. For the convenience of the students, different terminologies are clarified, summary recaps are given, points and sub-points are highlighted, Model Questions are given and LMR (Last Minute Revision) is also supplied.

In the first unit of the book, vivid depiction has been made on the sources for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history, Vedic age, Buddhism and Jainism. In the following units, discussions were also made on Mauryan Empire, Gupta society and polity achievements of Harshavardhan. Focus has also been given on post-Gupta trade and commerce, Delhi Sultanate, Suffi and Bhakti movements, and development of regional language and literature. The subsequent chapter deals with topics like Sher Shah and his administration, Mughal administrative institutions, Sulh-i-Kul, and Mughal art and architecture.

We record our gratitude towards those great savants whose works we have extensively used in the preparation of the present book. In preparing this book, we have taken the help of classical as well as contemporary books on the topics. We have also gone through different websites dealing with the subjects. All the units of this book have been presented in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

We express our sincere thanks to Mr. Niraj Pandey and Vijay Pandey of Himalaya Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. We are also thankful to Mr. Bijaya Kumar Ojha and his team for taking a keen interest in the publication of this book. Finally, we have a request to the readers. Their suggestions on the errors and improvement of this book shall be solemnly acknowledged and the authors will try their best to include the constructive and relevant suggestions in the next edition of the book. We hope that this book will surely fulfil the requirement of both students and teachers.

2019

Manas Kumar Das

Abhijit Sahoo

SYLLABUS

Unit – I: Reconstructing Ancient Indian History

1. Sources of Historical Writings.
2. Vedic Age: Society, Polity and Culture
3. Buddhism and Jainism: Principles and Impact

Unit – II: Polity and Administration

4. The Mauryan Empire: Conquests and Administration
5. Gupta Society: Land Grants, Peasantry and Beginning of Feudal Society
6. Gupta Polity: Conquests and Administration
7. Harshavardhan: Achievements

Unit – III: Early Medieval Society, Economy and Culture

8. Post-Gupta Trade and Commerce
9. Delhi Sultanate: Conquests and Administration
10. Bhakti and Sufi Movements in India
11. Development of Regional Language and Literature

Unit – IV: India on the Eve of the Advent of the Mughals

12. Sher Shah: Administration and Reforms
13. Mughal Administrative Institutions: Zabt, Mansab and Jagir
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15. Mughal Art and Architecture

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UNIT-I: RECONSTRUCTING ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

CHAPTER

1

SOURCES OF HISTORICAL WRITINGS

Structure:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Sources of Historical Writings
- 1.3 Let's Sum Up
- 1.4 Summary

1.1 INTRODUCTION

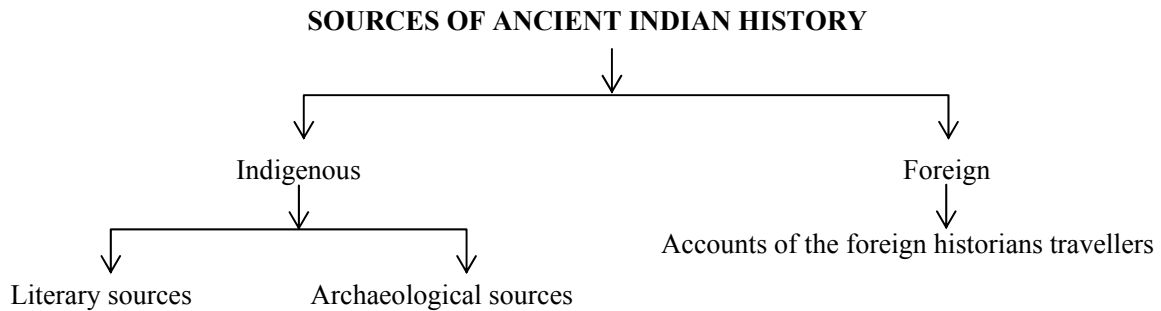
All that helps in the formation of history can be termed as sources of history. Being one of the earliest civilisations of the world, India faces the dearth of necessary sources for the reconstruction of India's ancient history. Although we have enormous ancient literature of both secular as well as religious types, but there is hardly any historical work. This is probably due to the fact that the Indian writers never took to the writing of history seriously; rather they have focused basically on religion and literature. According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, "The literary genius of India, so fertile and active in almost all conceivable branches of study, was not applied to the chronicling of the records of kings and the rise and fall of states and nations." Though India did not produce any Herodotus or Thucydides who left valuable historical records for the posterity, but it does not mean that Indians lacked in historical sense. Even Hiuen Tsang has accepted the presence of official records of events in the courts of several rulers. However, the writers did not pay full attention to the order of the happenings and did not present the facts in strict chronological order. In fact, we are confronted with several problems in the reconstruction of history of ancient India. Yet, the information we get from the literary and other sources of ancient times facilitate us for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

1.2 SOURCES OF HISTORICAL WRITINGS

In spite of all these difficulties, there are certain sources which help a lot in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

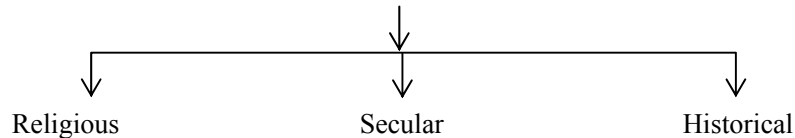
Classification of Sources

These sources can be divided into two categories indigenous and foreign. The indigenous sources include religious literature, the secular and historical literature and archaeological evidences. The foreign sources include the accounts left by foreign visitors from Greece, China and other countries.



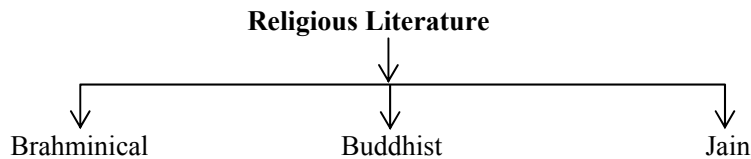
Literary Sources

The literary sources can be divided into: (1) Religious, (2) Secular, and (3) Historical.



Religious Literature

India has a rich treasure of religious literature which has greatly helped us in the reconstruction of history of ancient India. The religious literature is divided into Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain religions.



Brahmanical Literature

Amongst the Brahmanical literature, the Vedas are the most important source of information. The Rig Veda is the oldest of these Vedas. The other Vedas; Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda were produced at a later date. Though the Vedic literature is essentially religious in character we can scan through useful information about the history and political system of the Aryans as well as their movement. The Vedic literature tells us about the struggle amongst the different famous lords which were symbolic of their imperialist policies; the important position of the Sabha and Samiti during Rig Vedic period and their decline in the later Vedic age; the changes which took place in the economic, social and religious life of the people in the later Vedic age. Though the Vedic literature is not very helpful in reconstruction of political history, it provides us useful information about the socio-economic life of the people and the rich culture of the people at that early stage of history.

Features of Vedic Literature

Some important features of Vedic literature are given below:

- ❖ The Vedic literature enables us to know about the Aryans and their fighting with the Dasas and Dasyus.
- ❖ It provides the idea about their success in north-west and Punjab region.
- ❖ In the Rig Veda, the battle between the ten kings has been mentioned.
- ❖ The Vedas throw light on the social, economic, political, and cultural life of the Aryans.

Apart from the Vedas the Brahmins (which are commentaries on the Vedic hymns), the Aranyakas and the Upanishads also provide us useful insight into the Hindu thought and culture. The other important religious literature of the Hindus includes the Sutras, Vedangas, etc. The Kalpa Sutras describe the rituals of the ancient period. The Griha Sutras explain the ancient sacrifices, rites, etc. Thus, the sutras present a vivid picture of the social and religious life of the people of India.

The Epics

The two great epics of Hindus--*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which are said to have been composed between 4th century BC and 4th century AD provide us useful information about the social, religious, economic and political condition of the later Aryans. Though these works are treated as legendary, they provide us useful information about the struggle between the Aryans and non-Aryans and the ultimate absorption of the latter by the former. They inform us that the powers of the King had considerably increased by this time and powerful empires were created by subjugating weaker states.

The Puranas

The Puranas written between 300 AD to 1000 AD also provide us useful information about the history of ancient India. They provide us genealogical and dynastic chronology of various rulers and help us to reconstruct dynastic histories of several dynasties. They also provide us useful information about the historical geography of India. Above all they throw a flood of light on the social, economic, religious and political condition of India during this period. It is true that as the Puranas were written at a later date, they do not provide us correct dates and often and hence contradictory information contained in different Puranas. Further, they contain a number of legends which are not easy to separate from history. Despite these limitations, the Puranas provide us useful historical information about the early history of India.

The Buddhist Literature

The Buddhist religious literature is also very important for the study of ancient Indian history. This literature has three branches known as: (1) Pitaka, (2) Jataka, and (3) Nikaya. The Pitakas were the most important of the Buddhist canonical literature. The religious literature of the Buddhists popularly known as *Tripitaka* (consisting of Vinayapitaka, Suttapitaka and Abhidhammapitaka) contain several birth stories of Buddha and his teachings. They deal with the monastic discipline, rules and regulations and doctrines and philosophy of Buddhism. The works provide useful information about the political, social, economic and religious conditions prevailing in ancient India. In later years the Mahayana school of Buddhism produced works like *Vaipuyasutra*, *Lalitavistara* and *Saddharmapundarika* which deal with the life of Buddha and other aspects of life.

Other Important Buddhist Works

In Pali literature other books like *Milindpanha* contains the dialogues between the Greek King Menander and the Buddhist saint Nagasena. The Ceylonese chronicle *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* describe the history of Ceylon and India from the 6th century BC and 4th century BC. In addition they also provide useful information about the political conditions in South India. Anguttara Nikaya is another important book of Buddhist literature. It gives a remarkable description of political, social and religious conditions of the 6th century BC. The books composed by Nagarjuna, a great teacher of Buddhism are 'Satasharika', 'Prajnaparamita' and 'Mahayana Sutra', while 'Mahayana Sutramalankara' by Asanga and 'Abhidharma Kosha' by Vasubandhu are other important books which give a vivid

description of the contemporary society. Moreover, we get a lot of information from Buddhist literature about Ashoka, Kanishka, etc. On the other hand, the Jatakas provide lots of information about the social condition of the Buddhist period.

Jain Literature

The Jain religious literature is also very helpful for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history. From the historical point of view, the most important work was 'Parisista Parvana' by Hemachandra. The Jain religious literature was written in Ardhamagadhi Prakrit and consists of twelve Angas; twelve Upangas; ten Prakirnas; six Chheda Sutras; four Mula Sutras and four other texts. These works contain rules of conduct for monks, religious doctrines, stories of various religious teachers, etc. They also provide incidental information about the social and economic conditions of the period. It is true that the religious literature of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains cannot be compared with the historical works of Herodotus and Thucydides, but none the less it has proved immensely helpful in the reconstruction of the history of ancient India.

The Secular Literature

Besides the enormous religious literature, there exists significant secular literature in the form of biographies, dramas, historical texts, works on polity, and scientific and technical works which provide us useful information about ancient Indian history.

The Biographical Works

The biographical works do not supply a genuine history of ancient India, but they are certainly helpful in reconstructing an authentic account of the ancient period. The prominent biographical works which provide us useful information are *Buddhacharita* (life of Buddha) by Ashvaghosa, a contemporary of Kanishka, *Harshacharita* (life of Harsha) by Banabhatta who lived at the court of Harsha; the *Gaudavaho* (murder of the king) by Vakpatiraya, who lived in the court of Yashovarman, ruler of Kannauj, *Ramcharita* which deals with the story of King Ram Pala of Bengal, *Kumara Pala Charita* by Hemachandra, *Prithvi Raj Raso* by Chand Bardai, etc.

Dramas

In reconstructing the history of ancient India, a number of dramas written during the ancient period also provide us useful information about the political, social, economic, and religious conditions prevailing at that time. Kalidasa in his *Raghuvamsa* gives a description of the expedition of Raghu, identified with Samudragupta or Chandragupta-II by different scholars. In his drama *Malvikaagnimitra*, Kalidasa provides us an insight into the war between the Vidarbha and Vidisha. He also mentions about the defeat of the Greeks on the banks of river Indus by the Shambhu Kings. Vishakhadatta in his *Mudrarakshasa* deals with the story of war between the Nanda King and Chandragupta and highlights the role of Chanakya in bringing Chandragupta to power. The other notable dramas which provide us useful information about historical facts are *Chintamani* of Mayar Jeng, Prabandha Kosh of Rajashekhar, etc. Thus, the dramas also help us in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

Chronicles

A genuine chronology in the true sense of the word was written in the 12th century AD by Kalhana. A historical text of note is *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana which deals with the history of Kashmir from its legendary beginnings to the middle of the 12th century AD. It also contains several references

to events in other parts of India. In writing this work Kalhana took great pains to collect material from the existing chronicles and other sources, and also laid down certain general rules for the writing of history. Dr. R.C. Majumdar regards Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* as the only work of ancient Indian literature which can be regarded as a historical text in the true sense of the word, even though Kalhana has mixed legendary stories with historical facts. Moreover, other chronicles of Gujarat like 'Ras-Mala' and 'Kirti Kumudini' of Nepal also help us to go through the history of India.

Works on Polity and Grammar

On politics we have works like Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Kamandaka's *Nitishastra*, which helps a lot in the reconstruction of the history of ancient India. Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which is regarded as the greatest treatise on politics deals with the history of Mauryas. It provides us useful information about the art and principles of administration. It provides us an insight into the position of the King and his relations with the Council of Ministers during the Mauryan period. Kautilya also deals with several other aspects of administration, viz., foreign relations, declaration of war and peace, etc. In fact, there is hardly any field of administration which is not dealt with in *Arthashastra*. On the other hand, Kamandaka's *Nitishastra* also provides us useful information about the art of government and the system of administration prevailing at that time.

Likewise, Panini's *Mahabhashya*, though essentially a work on grammar, provides us useful information about the non-monarchical form of government existing in the 4th century B.C. Similarly, Patanjali in his commentary on *Mahabhashya*, which was composed in the second century B.C., provides us useful information about the contemporary conditions especially about the Greek invasion which took place in the 2nd century B.C.

Scientific Works

In addition to the above, certain technical and scientific works of ancient times also provide us useful information about social, economic and political conditions. Similarly, other technical and scientific works like *Charak Samhita* by Charak and *Sushruta Samhita* by Sushruta also provide us useful information for the reconstruction of history.

Sangam Literature

In the south, the Tamil texts compiled during *the Sangama* age which lasted between 1st century BC and 1st century A.D. provides us useful information about the history of several kings of Pandya, Chola, and Chera dynasties.

Archaeological Sources

The archaeological sources can be divided into the following heads:

- ❖ Historical sites
- ❖ Monuments
- ❖ Inscriptions
- ❖ Coins
- ❖ Architecture
- ❖ Sculpture
- ❖ Paintings

The above sources provide us useful information for the reconstruction of history of ancient India. In fact, the archaeological finds are the only source of our information for the pre-Aryan period.

Excavation of Sites

Though most of the monuments of ancient India have since perished due to climatic conditions, but whatever has still come to us as a result of various excavations gives us useful information about ancient Indian history. For example, the excavations at Harappa, Mohenjodaro, etc. testify the existence of an advanced urban civilisation in the Indus valley region long before the advent of the Aryans. Similarly, the excavations at Taxila have done much to clear the uncertainties about the chronology of the Kushanas or Indo-Scythians. Likewise, the ruins at Patliputra give us an idea about the plan of the old capital of the Mauryas. The discovery of *Angkor Wat* in Cambodia and *Borobunder* in Java confirms the existence of close cultural links between India and these countries in ancient times. Likewise, the ruins of temples of Deogaon in Jhansi and Bhitrigaon near Kanpur provide us an insight into the artistic activities of the Gupta period. The excavations at Samath provide us useful information about Ashoka and Buddhism. The excavations in Chinese Turkistan and Baluchistan confirm intimate contacts between India and these countries. In addition to above monuments there are numerous other monuments which provide us an insight into the social and religious life of the people.

Inscriptions

The inscriptions are another important source for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history. Thousands of inscriptions belonging to ancient times have been discovered which provide us authentic and direct evidence of historical facts. These inscriptions are to be found on rocks, stones, pillars, metal plates, etc., and are available in several languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, etc. They contain references about important events, deeds, decrees, donations, chronology, etc. Often these inscriptions also make a mention of the dates. Even where these dates are not mentioned these can be determined by comparing the writing in the inscription with other inscriptions of known dates. The earliest inscriptions belong to Ashoka which are spread all over the country, except extreme south which indicates that his empire did not extend to the extreme south. These inscriptions are essentially religious in character even though they also throw useful light on the administrative system prevailing at that time. They also provide an insight into ideals of kingship during the Mauryan period and the political conditions prevailing at that time. However, the earliest inscriptions belong to the period of Indus Valley civilisation which have not been deciphered so far.

Another notable inscription pertains to king *Kharavela* of Kalinga and is located at the Hatigumpha cave at Udaygiri in Orissa. This inscription in Prakrit gives us detailed information about the exploits of King *Kharavela*. The Girnar inscription at Junagarh gives detailed account about the achievements of Saka ruler Rudradaman. It makes a mention of his victories over Satavahanas and Yandhe Yas and even refers to the repairs carried out Sudarsana lake built by Chandragupta Maurya. This inscription also bears fourteen edicts of Ashoka and inscription of the Gupta ruler Samudragupta. Another inscription of note is Allahabad pillar inscription composed by Harisena, which gives details about the character and achievements of Samudragupta. The Aihole inscription composed by Ravikirti, provides us useful information about the early history of the western Chalukyan rulers up to the times of Pulakesin- II. It gives graphic account of the victories of Pulakesin- II. In addition to some of the inscriptions referred to above, several inscriptions make a record of land grants made by various princes and chiefs. These inscriptions provide us useful information about the land system and administration in ancient India.

Coins

The coins of ancient Indian kings are yet another important source for the study of ancient India. These coins have not only helped us to resolve several chronological puzzles but also provided useful information about certain other aspects which were not known to us. We come to know about the script used at a particular period of history as well as the religion of the rulers from these coins. They also provide us an insight into the personal habits of the kings. For example, Samudragupta has been shown playing upon a lyre in one of his coins which testifies his love for music. On another coin he is shown wielding a battle axe (a weapon of Lord Yama) which suggests that he was a worshipper of Lord Yama.

We get an information about the imperial title used by Samudragupta from his coins where he is referred to as '*Parma Bhattarka Maharajadhiraja Shri Samudragupta*'. Similarly, the use of epithet *Asvamedha-rajana* on certain coins shows that the concerned ruler held faith in Vedic religion and performed *Asvamedha* (horse sacrifice). The Kushan coins show the king sitting in Roman fashion and wearing Roman fashion hat, which is indicative of close impact of Romans on the Kushans. The coins also display the artistic standard of the people of a particular age and the extent to which the science of metallurgy had developed. Above all, the coins provide us information about the economic condition of the country and the extent of the various ancient Indian empires.

Art, Sculpture and Painting

Art, sculpture and painting also provide some help in the reconstruction of history of ancient India. The earliest architect of India is to be found in the Buddhist Stupas, Chaityas and Viharas. A critical study of the material used for the construction of these monuments helps us to understand the economic position of the people as well as their social and religious life. The sculpture also provides us an insight into the religious belief of the people of a particular period as well as the policy of various rulers towards other religions. For example, the existence of a large number of gods during a particular reign testifies policy of religious tolerance of the ruler.

The paintings of ancient time, though in bad shape, show love of Indian people for this art, and give us an insight into the socio-economic life of the period. For example, the Ajanta paintings show princes in their palaces, ladies in their harems, coolies with their loads slung over their shoulders, beggars, peasants and ascetics, together with all the many beasts, birds and flowers of India, in fact, the whole life of the times, perpetuated on the dim walls of the caves by the loving hands of many craftsmen. Everything is gracefully drawn and delicately modelled. Hence, we can say that architecture, sculpture and painting also enable us to acquire an insight into the conditions prevailing at a particular period of history.

Foreign Sources

Apart from the indigenous sources, certain foreign sources have also greatly helped us in the reconstruction of the ancient Indian history. These foreign sources include the accounts of the foreign visitors from; (1) Greece, (2) Rome, (3) China, and Islamic world, etc. Though these accounts may not be self-sufficient for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history, they have certainly supplemented the indigenous sources and helped in corroboration of certain facts.

Greek Writers

A number of Greek writers, who visited India after the first contacts between India and Greek were established in the 4th century BC, have left useful information about India in their writings. The

earliest amongst these Greek writers was Herodotus who wrote a lot about India and the Indians. He recorded, “The Indians are by far the greatest multitude of all the people of men who we know.” Skylax was another early Greek writer who came to India as a navigator and left useful information.

A number of Greek writers came to India along with Alexander and left a detailed account of the people of India during their times. The notable among these were Nearchus, Aristobulus, Onesicritus, Clitarchus, etc. Another notable Greek writer who has left valuable account about India is Magasthenese, who served as Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta Maurya. In his *Indika* which is not available in the original form and has come down to us only in the form of quotations in subsequent writings, provides us useful information about the Mauryan system of administration. It also provides an insight into the social and economic activities of the people of Mauryan period. It is true that the account given by Magasthenese suffers from exaggeration, but still lot of useful information can be gleaned from it through careful analysis. Dyonisis and Deimachos were other Greek ambassadors who visited India and left valuable information about their times. Later on in around 130 AD, Ptolemy wrote *Geography* which not only provides useful information about the geography and commerce of ancient India but also about the people and rulers of India. Another unknown Greek writer wrote *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* in the second half of the first century AD which makes mention of various coastal towns, products and rulers of various places in India.

The notable Latin writers which have provided us useful information include Pliny and Justinus. Pliny in *Naturalis Historia*, written in the 1st century AD, gives us useful information about the political situation in India as well as the trade relations between India and Italy. Justinus on the other hand provides us useful information about the relations between Seleucids and Bactrians and India.

Chinese Travellers

Probably the most useful information has been provided by the various Chinese travellers like Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang and Itsing. It is chiefly on the basis of the Chinese sources that we learn that Scythians and Yue Che tribes invaded India.

Fa-Hien

Fa-Hien who stayed in India in the first decade of the 5th century AD throws a flood of light on the political, social, economic and religious condition of India under Chandragupta- II. He also provides us valuable information about the administration of the Guptas. However, his account is not fully reliable and we notice several fallacies in his account. For example, he records that Buddhism was prospering at that time which is difficult to accept because we know it for certain that the Gupta rulers were followers of Vaishnavism. This observation of Fa-Hien was made probably because he was himself a Buddhist. Likewise, he records about the economic condition that the cowries were the medium of exchange. This is also difficult to accept. We know for definite that during the Gupta period coins of various metals, including gold, were in circulation. May be for small transactions the cowries were also used. Probably Fa-Hien did not come across any major transaction which involved use of coins.

Hiuen Tsang

Hiuen Tsang, who has been described as the ‘Prince of Pilgrims’ visited India in the 7th century AD (he was in India for 18 years from 626 AD to 644 AD) and left useful information in his book *Si Yu Ki*. His information has been helpful in the reconstruction of historical geography of India. It is

mainly on the testimony of his book that it has been possible to establish a link between several modern places with the ancient ones. We learn about the extent of Harsha's empire only through his accounts.

He also provides us useful information about the social and economic conditions prevailing at the time of Harsha. We also learn from his account that Buddhism was in state of decline at that time and that the people of various religions lived in perfect amity and co-operation. He also provides useful information about the system of education during ancient India because he spent much time in the ancient universities of Nalanda and Taxila. Itsing was yet another Chinese pilgrim who visited India from 671 to 695 AD and has left useful information about the conditions prevailing in India. A notable feature of the account of various Chinese pilgrims is that they are not based on hearsay but based on actual observation by these pilgrims.

Muslim Sources

Among the foreign sources some of the Islamic books have also provided us sources for the reconstruction of the history of India. 'Tehiqat-e-Hind' written by Alberuni gives us information about the Hindu manners, science, and literature of ancient India. He had come with Muhhamad of Ghazni and was well versed in Sanskrit. He had acquainted himself with the Hindu social and religious customs of India.

1.3 LET'S SUM UP

To conclude, we may say that though India does not possess historical works of Herodotus and Thucydides, yet we possess sufficient information in the form of numismatics, sculptures, architecture, secular and religious literature which helps us to reconstruct the ancient Indian history. We have to put the collected facts carefully and not just by believing on the face value of the above sources. Thus, in order to study Indian history in a comprehensive manner, one has to depend on literary as well as archaeological sources which help us to form a complete picture of the ancient Indian history.

1.4 SUMMARY

- All that helps in the formation of history can be termed as sources of history.
- Being one of the earliest civilisations of the world India faces the dearth of necessary sources for the reconstruction of India's ancient history.
- Although, we have enormous ancient literature of both secular as well as religious types, but there is hardly any historical work.
- This is probably due to the fact that the Indian writers never took to the writing of history seriously; rather they have focused basically on religion and literature.
- According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, "The literary genius of India, so fertile and active in almost all conceivable branches of study, was not applied to the chronicling of the records of kings and the rise and fall of states and nations."
- Though India did not produce any Herodotus or Thucydides who left valuable historical records for the posterity, but it does not mean that Indians lacked in historical sense.
- Yet, the information we get from the literary and other sources of ancient times facilitate us for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.

- In spite of all these difficulties, there are certain sources which help a lot in the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.
- These sources can be divided into two categories - indigenous and foreign. The indigenous sources include religious literature, the secular and historical literature, and archaeological evidences.
- The foreign sources include the accounts left by foreign visitors from Greece, China and other countries.
- The two great epics of *Hindus-Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* which are said to have been composed between 4th century BC and 4th century AD provide us useful information about the social, religious, economic and political condition of the later Aryans.
- The Puranas written between 300 AD to 1000 AD also provide use useful information about the history of ancient India.
- The Buddhist religious literature is also very important for the study of ancient Indian history. This literature has three branches known as: (1) Pitaka, (2) Jataka, and (3) Nikaya.
- In Pali literature other books like *Milindpanha* contains the dialogues between the Greek King Menander and the Buddhist saint Nagasena.
- The Ceylonese chronicle *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* describe the history of Ceylon and India from the 6th century BC and 4th century BC.
- The Jain religious literature is also very helpful for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.
- From the historical point of view, the most important work was 'Parisista Parvana' by Hemachandra.
- Besides the enormous religious literature, there exists significant secular literature in the form of biographies, dramas, historical texts, works on polity, and scientific and technical works which provide us useful information about ancient Indian history.
- The biographical works do not supply a genuine history of ancient India, but they are certainly helpful in reconstructing an authentic account of the ancient period.
- In reconstructing the history of ancient India, a number of dramas written during the ancient period also provide us useful information about the political, social, economic, and religious conditions prevailing at that time.
- Kalidasa in his *Raghuvamsa* gives a description of the expedition of Raghu, identified with Samudragupta or Chandragupta- II by different scholars.
- A genuine chronology in the true sense of the word was written in the 12th century AD by Kalhana. A historical text of note is *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana which deals with the history of Kashmir from its legendary beginnings to the middle of the 12th century AD.
- On politics we have works like Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Kamandaka's *Nitishastra*, which help a lot in the reconstruction of the history of ancient India.
- Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which is regarded as the greatest treatise on politics deals with the history of Mauryas. It provides us useful information about the art and principles of administration.
- In addition to the above, certain technical and scientific works of ancient times also provide us useful information about social, economic and political conditions. Similarly other

technical and scientific works like *Charak Samhita* by Charak and *Sushruta Samhita* by Sushruta, also provides us useful information for the reconstruction of history.

- In the south the Tamil texts compiled during *the Sangama* age which lasted between 1st century BC and 1st century AD provide us useful information about the history of several kings of Pandya, Chola, and Chera dynasties.
- The inscriptions are another importance source for the reconstruction of ancient Indian history.
- The coins of ancient Indian kings are yet another important source for the study of ancient India.
- Apart from the indigenous sources, certain foreign sources have also greatly helped us in the reconstruction of the ancient Indian history.
- In fact, we may say that though India does not possess historical works of Herodotus and Thucydides, yet we possess sufficient information in the form of numismatics, sculptures, architecture, secular and religious literature which helps us to reconstruct the ancient Indian history.
- We have to put the collected facts carefully and not just by believing on the face value of the above sources.
- Thus, in order to study Indian history in a comprehensive manner one has to depend on literary as well as archaeological sources which help us to form a complete picture of the ancient Indian history.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Fill in the blanks.

- (a) The Kalpa Sutras describe theof the ancient period.
- (b) The Vedic literature enables us to know about the and their fighting with theand Dasyus.
- (c) In theVeda, the battle between the ten kings has been mentioned.
- (d) The two epics are..... and
- (e) The Ceylonese chronicleand describe the history of Ceylon.
- (f) 'Parisishta Parvana' was written by
- (g) *Buddhacharita* was written by
- (h) *Raghuvamsa* gives a description of the expedition of
- (i) *Mudrarakshasa* deals with the story of war between the King and
- (j) *Rajatarangini* of which deals with the history of
- (k) *Nitishastra* was composed by
- (l) and by Arya Bhatta.
- (m) *Arthashastra* was written by.....
- (n) Harshacharita was written by.....
- (o) The Hatigumpha cave is situated at..... in Odisha.
- (p) The Girnar inscription at gives detailed account about the achievements of Saka ruler

- (q) Allhabad pillar inscription was composed by
- (r) The Aihole inscription was composed by

2. Answer the questions in one word or one sentence.

- (a) What is Veda?
(b) Who was Kalidasa?
(c) Who was Chandragupta Maurya?
(d) Who was Ashoka?
(e) What is Arthashastra?
(f) Who was Chanakya?
(g) How many darshanas are there?
(h) What is Jataka?
(i) What is Dipavamsa?
(j) Who was Hiuen Tsang?
(k) What is 'Parishista-Parvana'?
(l) Who was Harisena?
(m) Who was Kalhana?
(n) Who has written Ratnavali?

3. Answer the questions in two or three sentences.

- (a) Write two important features of the Vedic literature.
(b) Write the important works of Kalidasa.
(c) Write some important works of Harshavardhan.
(d) Write some important lines on Hiuen Tsang.
(e) Why Rig Veda is famous?
(f) What is the importance of Brihat Samhita?
(g) What is Sangam literature?

4. Write short notes on.

- (a) Banabhatta
(b) Rajatarangini
(c) Sangam literature
(d) Inscriptions of ancient India
(e) Meghasthenis
(f) Fa-Hien
(g) Ashoka inscription
(h) Samudragupta
(i) Ancient coins
(j) Harappa
(k) Coins
(l) Kanishka
(m) Mahabharata
(n) Ramayana

5. Long questions

- (a) Give information on the written sources for history writing of ancient India.
- (b) Give information on the archaeological sources for history writing of ancient India.
- (c) How foreign accounts help us to reconstruct ancient Indian history? Discuss.
- (d) Write an essay on the role of religious literature in writing of early history of India.
- (e) Analyse how different sources can be used for reconstruction of ancient history accurately.

