



Ancient India

OAS Mains History Optional

*History
Paper-1*

OBJECTIVE IAS

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ANCIENT HISTORY

HISTORY - History is the chronological study of all significant human events of past.

↓
events should be in chronological order

↓
only important events that are leaving impact on later phases of life.

#WHY DO WE STUDY HISTORY?

• History is accumulated and mother of knowledge. (prepare for future, unforeseen events)

CIVILISATION

- Material advancement + culture = Civilisation
- civilisation - urban
 - ↳ based on 2° and 3° activities
- civilisation is refined but culture can be unrefined
- civilisation is educated, great tradition
- culture can be rural
- culture is a part of civilisation but civilisation is not necessarily be part of culture.

INDIAN HISTORY -

Axial of Human beings

↓
Evidence - Borli - Latuk (Maharashtra)

CULTURE - way of life

- comprises socio religious institution and practices
- form of art and architecture, music, dance and drama
- Culture is reflected in our way of life
- culture is inherited
- culture is diff b/w animals and Humans
- all of these are intangible

TOPICS

- ① Sources of Early Indian History
- ② Pre History and Proto History
 - (No written material) → (Script not deciphered)
 - ↓
 - Stone age + Chalcolithic culture
- ③ Harappan / Indus Valley civilisation
- ④ Vedic Age
- ⑤ Post Vedic Age
- ⑥ Mauryan Period
- ⑦ Social life in India from 600 BC to 1200 AD
 - Religious life " " " " "
 - Economic life " " " " "
 - Progress in science and Technology " " "
 - Development of Art and architecture " " "
- ⑧ Post Mauryan Period - Political Dimensions
- ⑨ Gupta Age
- ⑩ Post Gupta Age
- ⑪ Early Medieval Age
- ⑫ South India
 - (i) Northern Deccan
 - (ii) Southern Deccan - Tamil Land

SOURCES OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

Books - written with ink

SOURCES

Inscriptions - are engraved

LITERARY SOURCES

- (i) MANUSCRIPTS
- (ii) BOOKS

INDIGENOUS SOURCES

SECULAR

- (i) Arthashastra
- (ii) Patanjali's - Mahabhasya
- (iii) Sangam literature
- (iv) Nitisa
- (v) Works of Kalidasa
- (vi) " " Banabhatta
- (vii) Kalhana's - Rajatarangini

RELIGIOUS

- (i) Vedas
- (ii) Dharmasastras or Smritis
- (iii) Bhagvat Gita
- (iv) Buddhist books
- (v) Jaina Books
- (vi) Puranas

FOREIGN ACCOUNTS

(i) Greco-Roman writers

(a) Megasthenes - Chandragupta Maurya

(b) Pliny

(c) Strabo

(ii) Chinese Travellers

(a) Fa-Hien

(b) Huen-Tsang

(iii) Arab Travellers

(a) Al-Biruni

(b) Al-Suleman

(c) Al-Mazuli

ARCHEOLOGICAL SOURCES

Methods

EXCAVATION

(finding through digging)

EXPLORATION

(close to surface)

(i) Numismatics - study of coins

(ii) Epigraphy - study of inscriptions

Sources

- (i) Monuments - Palaces, forts, Great bath
- (ii) coins
- (iii) Inscriptions
- (iv) Pottery
- (v) Tools and implements
- (vi) Ornaments
- (vii) Other Remains

SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERARY SOURCES IN THE STUDY OF EARLIER INDIAN HISTORY

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF RELEVANCE OF LITERARY SOURCES IN THE STUDY OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

- ① India has one of the oldest and richest history in the world. India history commenced with the arrival of human being in Indian subcontinent and has continued insistently since then.
- ② Early Indian history is reconstructed with the help of information provided by literary & archaeological sources. These sources are available in plenty and throw light on every dimension of human life of Indian subcontinent.

SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERARY SOURCES

- ① The literary sources provide most valuable information about life of India during ancient age. Beginning from Vedic age the life of Indian subcontinent is known mainly with the help of information provided by literature.
- ② The literary sources such as Arthashastra and Nitilax throw light on politico-admin life in detail.
 - (1) Arthashastra was written by Kautilya - PM of Chandragupt Maurya. He wrote in detail of institutions of Mauryan empire and functions performed by various officials.

(ii) Nitisaḥ was written by Kaṁaradaka - PM of Chandragupt I in 4th century A.D.

③ Literary sources throw light on socio-cultural life as well.

Sources like Vedas and Dharmashastra deal with social institutions ^{Soc} and their functions.

④ The economic life of ancient age is also revealed by literary sources.

^{Eco}

(i) Arthashastra describes various types of Taxes, Trade routes and occupations of the age.

(ii) The Sangam literature informs about the economic life in Tamil land during early centuries of Christian Era.

(iii) The foreign A/c left behind by Greeco-Roman, Chinese & Arab writers also throw light on economic life in ancient Age.

⑤ The religious life of Ancient age is understood by with help of information provided by literary sources

^{Religious}

(i) Beginning with Vedic age immense amount of literature is available to understand religious inst. and practices of early Indians

⑥ Literary sources like Charak Samhita, Shushrut Samhita, Aynabhatyam, Siddhanta Siromani throw light on science & tech during ancient age.

^{Sci}

⑦ The nature and character of India's relations with outside

^{Foreign} world can also be inferred with the information provided ^{Rel} by literary sources.

(1) Megasthenes ^{was} ~~were~~ Bactrian ambassador in the court of Chandragupt Maurya. He wrote about relationship of Mauryan King and Seleucus Nicator.

(2) The wars and battles fought by Indian Rulers, The territorial extent of their empires, ^{& fall} rise of various political entities as ^{Battles well and empires} as changes in the character of Indian political system can also be comprehended on basis of information provided by literary sources

(1) Banabhatta wrote in details of military achievements of king Harshvardhan.

LIMITATION OF LITERARY SOURCES

① No literary source of any kind is available prior to Vedic age.

(i) The literary sources do not provide any information ^{prior} ~~Vedic~~ about stone age and Chalcolithic period.

(ii) In this way more than 99% of human history of Indian subcontinent cannot be reconstructed with the help of literary sources.

② The literary sources lack a true historical character. Writers ^{do} ~~do~~ did not pay any attention to chronology. The ^{no} ~~no~~ developments have been described more like a story

③ The literary sources are not available on a cont.

basis.

(i) Very few literary works are available for post mauryan

^{Not available} period.

(ii) Hardly anything is known from literature about dynasties like Satvahanas.

(4) Literary sources are prone to Interpolation & Extrapolation. At times it difficult to comprehend whether a literary source belongs to a particular period or different time periods.

^{Extrapolation}

^{Interpolation}

(5) It is believed that many informations found in vedas had been added later on. Some chapters of Arthashastra were added during Gupta age by Vishnugupt.

(5) The literary sources suffered from personal bias of writers.

(i) Most of the writers lived in courts under the patronage

^{bias}

of kings. Such court poets cannot be expected to present an unbiased picture of the achievements and failure of their patron.

(ii) Banabhatta - court poet of Harsha wrote in detail about Harsha's achievements but he did not mention Harsha's failure.

(6) Most of literary used in the reconstruction of early Indian history are religious works. Secular literary sources

^{More}
^{Rare}
^{works}

are few.

(7) Literary sources deal only with elite class. Focus of elite writers were generally limited to court, palace & life of nobility.

(i) Hardly anything is known about life of common people.

(ii) The literary sources represent only history from above. History from below is missing in literature.

⑧ At times the language of literary sources is vague. As a result of this these sources have been interpreted differently by diff scholars

(i) Puranas are written in future tense.

⑨ The time period of many literary sources is not known definitely / precisely.

(i) Information provided by Ramayan and Mahabharata covers ^{time} ~~period~~ ^{not known} long period. Sources like Rig Veda cover 500 years.

(ii) Some historians believe that Chanakya lived during Gupta period and Kalidasa during Mauryan age because in none of the sources dates are mentioned.

⑩ Many dimensions of human life such as technological progress and quality of life cannot be inferred by information provided by literary sources. A true estimation of these dimensions can be carried on having a look on ground realities.

- Q.1. Describe various sources used in reconstruction of Early Indian History
- Q.2. Critically examine the significance of literary sources in the study of early Indian history.
- Q.3. Why do literary sources fail in providing complete picture of early Indian history?
- Q.4. It is difficult to reconstruct Early Indian History only on the basis of literary sources. Elucidate.
- Q.5. Throw light on the limitation of literary sources used in reconstruction of ^{Early} Indian History

PURANAS

- ① Among various sources used in the reconstruction of early Indian ~~to~~ History, Puranas enjoy place of great significance.
- (i) Puranas are 18 in number and were composed over a long period of time (2nd Century BC - 10th Century AD).
- (ii) Puranas provide information about both secular & religious life of ancient age. Their significance was immense as a source of spreading secular knowledge among people.
- ② Puranas divide subject matter into 5 parts —
- Sarga - Rise
 - Prati Sarga - Fall of a dynasty
 - Manvantara - Repetition of Time
 - Vamsa - Family / Genealogy
 - Vamsanuchaita - Dynastic history
- ③ Puranas have elements of historical work because information is provided chronologically. The names of various kings and their successors is written in chronological order.
- ④ The Puranas deal with social life, morality, religion & philosophy. They also provide information about distance b/w various places, Indian geo, various methods used

for measurement of distance & time etc.

⑤ Some of the Puranas deal with specific dynasties

(i) Vishnu Purana - Mauryan dynasty

(ii) Matsya Purana - Satvahana

(iii) Vayu Purana - Gupta

⑥ In ancient age the Puranas were the only important literary work accessible to women and Shudras. Vedas were not accessible to them. Because of this Puranas propagated knowledge among majority of Indian population

(i) Acc. to Banabhatta, Puranas were read publically in ancient times and entire village used to listen them i.e. why puranas are considered most imp source of spreading secular knowledge among people of ancient age

Vedangas - links of vedas. These were created for better understanding of Vedic knowledge. 6 in number

- ① Shiksha - way to pronounce a word/Phonetics
- ② Kalpa - Ritual
- ③ Vyakran - Grammar
- ④ Jyotish - Astronomy
- ⑤ Nirukta - Etymology / origin of word
- ⑥ Chhandas - Matra / way the words are arranged

Vedas - Parts (4) → 1500 BC - 1000 BC

For Rig Veda
↑

- ① Samhitas - BOOK of Hymns
- ② Brahmanas - Explanations of Hymns
- ③ Aranyaka - Those explanations that were composed in forests / Forest Book
- ④ Upanishads - Core of Vedic Knowledge.

during
Later Vedic Age