



# CIVIL SERVICES ACHIEVERS' POINT

## CSAP's SMARTBOOK

### ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

**Head Office: 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Dirang Arcade, Krishna Nagar, Maniram Dewan  
Rd, Chandmari 781003**

Centres: Chandmari, Beltola, Silchar, Margherita, Cotton University, Sonapur College, JC College, GC

College, Call: 9127515541/ 8811877068

<b>CH. NO</b>	<b>CHAPTER NAME</b>	<b>PAGE NO</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY</b>	<b>2-3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE OF ANCIENT HISTORY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY</b>	<b>5-9</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>THE OLD STONE AGE</b>	<b>12-15</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>THE STONE COPPER PHASE</b>	<b>16-19</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>THE HARRAPAN CIVILAZATION –BRONZE AGE CIVILIZATION</b>	<b>20-37</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>THE LATER VEDIC PHASE(1000-600BC)</b>	<b>38-43</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>JAINISM &amp; BUDDHISM</b>	<b>44-51</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>TERRITORIAL STATES &amp; THE RISE OF MAGADHA</b>	<b>52-57</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>IRANIAN AND MACEDONIAN INVASIONS</b>	<b>58-75</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>POST MAURYAN DYNASTIES</b>	<b>76-84</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>THE DAWN OF HISTORY IN THE DEEP SOUTH</b>	<b>85-92</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>RISE AND GROWTH OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE</b>	<b>93-102</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>SPREAD OF CIVILIZATION IN EASTERN INDIA</b>	<b>103-106</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>DEFINITIONS</b>	<b>107-109</b>

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY



### PREHISTORIC INDIA

**History:** History (from the Greek word – Historia, meaning “inquiry”, knowledge acquired by investigation) is the study of the past. History is an umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the discovery, collection, organisation, presentation and interpretation of information about these events.

**It is divided into pre-history, proto-history, and history.**

1. **Pre-history** – Events that occurred before the invention of writing are considered pre-history. Prehistory is represented by the three stone ages.
2. **Proto-history** – It refers to the period between pre-history and history, during which a culture or organisation had not developed yet but has its
3. **History** – The study of the past after the invention of writing and the study of literate societies based on written records and archaeological sources constitute history.

mention in the written records of a contemporary literate civilisation. For example, the scripts of the Harappan civilization remain undeciphered, however since its existence is noted in Mesopotamian writing, it is considered part of proto-history. Similarly, Vedic civilisation from 1500-600 BCE is considered part of proto-history as well. Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures are also considered part of proto-history by archaeologists.

**HISTORICAL EVIDENCES** – the written and archaeological evidence that tells us about the period in which people lived, events, food habits, customs, culture, forms of government and literature.

**PRE-HISTORICAL EVIDENCES** – to know about the period, evidences such as things that belonged to that period– ruins, fossils, horns, bones of animals, tools made of stones, skulls and deposits found in different places around the world as well as in India.

**BC** -- Before Christ

**AD** – Anno Domini in the year of lord

**CE** – in the place of AD – Common Era

**BCE** – in place of BC – Before the Common Era

**BC 31** – Birth of Thiruvalluvar

**BT** – Before Thiruvalluvar

**AT** – After Thiruvalluvar

CSAP

## CHAPTER 2- IMPORTANCE OF ANCIENT HISTORY

- It tells us how when and where people developed the earliest cultures in India. It shows how the ancient Indians discovered and utilized natural resources, and how they created the means for their livelihood. We know about the ancient script.
- Many races and tribes intermingled in early India. (the pre-Aryans, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Hunas, the Turks). Ancient India saw the birth of Brahmanism or Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, but all these cultures and religions intermingled and interacted.
- The ancients strove for unity. The Indian subcontinent was geographically well defined and its geographical unity was supplemented by cultural integration. Though there existed many states, languages, cultures, and communities, gradually developed territorial regions.
- Our ancient poets, philosophers and writers viewed the country as an integral unit.
- We know about the great kings (Ashoka, Samudragupta) who tried to establish their authority from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and from the valley of the Brahmaputra in the east to the land beyond the Indus in the west were universally praised.
- The word Hind or Hindu is derived from the Sanskrit term Sindhu, and on the same basis, the country became to be known as 'India'. In post-Kushan times, the Iranian rulers conquered the Sindh area and named it Hindustan.
- We cannot ignore the fact that ancient Indian society was marked by gross social injustice-discrimination against women, inequalities, hatred for the lower order. India cannot develop rapidly unless such vestiges of the past are eradicated from its society.

## CHAPTER 3—THE CONSTRUCTION OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

The sources which help in reconstructing history are:

1. Non-literary sources
2. Literary sources – which include religious literature & secular literature

### Non-Literary Sources

- **Coins:** Ancient Indian currency was not issued in the form of paper but as coins. The earliest coins found in India contained only a few symbols, punch-marked coins made of silver & copper, but later coins mentioned the names of the kings, gods, dates, etc. The areas where they were found indicate the region of their circulation. This enabled to reconstruction of the history of several ruling dynasties, especially during Indo-Greek time who came to India from Northern Afghanistan and ruled India in the 2nd and 1st BCE. Coins throw light on the economic history of different dynasties and also provide input on different parameters involved such as the script, art and religion of that time. It also helps in understanding the progress made in terms of metallurgy and science and technology. (The study of coins is called Numismatics).



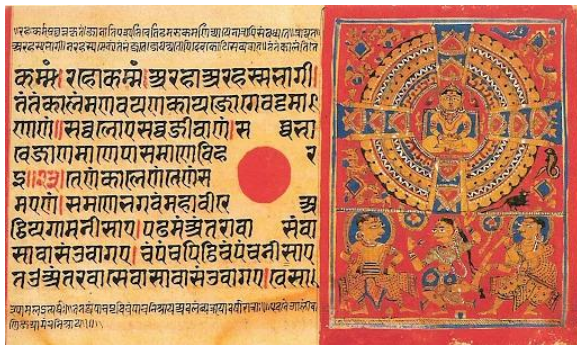
- **Archaeology/Material remains:** The science that deals with the digging of the old mounds systematically, in successive layers and enables

to formation of an idea of the material life of the people is called Archaeology. Material remains recovered as a result of excavation and explorations are subjected to various kinds of examinations. Their dates are fixed according to radiocarbon dating. For example, excavated sites belonging to the Harappan period help us to know about the life of the people who lived in that era. Similarly, the Megaliths (graves in south India) throw light on the life of the people living in the Deccan and South India before 300 BCE. The history of climate and vegetation is known through an examination of plant residues, especially through pollen analysis.

- **Inscriptions/Prashastis:** (The study and interpretation of ancient inscriptions is called epigraphy). Writings engraved on hard surfaces such as stone and metals like copper which usually record some achievements, ideas, royal orders and decisions help in understanding different religions, and administrative policies of that era. For example, inscriptions detailing state policy issued by Emperor Ashoka and inscriptions recording the land grants by Satavahanas, Kings of the Deccan.
- **Foreign accounts:** Indigenous literature can be supplemented by foreign accounts. To India came the Greek, Chinese and Roman visitors, either as travelers or religious converts, and left behind a rich account of our historical past. **Some of the notables among them were:**
  - **Greek Ambassador Megasthenes** wrote “**Indica**” and provided valuable information about the Mauryan society and administration.
  - “**The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea**” and “**Ptolemy’s Geography**” both written in Greek give valuable information about the ports and commodities of trade between India and the

Roman Empire.

- **Fa-Hein Faxien (337 CE – 422 CE), a Buddhist traveller**, left a vivid account of the age of the Guptas.
- **Hsuan-Tsang, a Buddhist pilgrim**, visited India and gave details of India under the reign of King Harshavardhana and the glory of the Nalanda University.
- **Literary Sources**



**Religious Literature:** The religious literature throws light on the social, economic as well as cultural conditions of the ancient Indian period. **Some of the sources are:**

- **The Four Vedas** – The Vedas may be assigned to c.1500 – 500 BCE. The Rigveda mainly contains prayers while the later Vedic texts (Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda) comprise not only prayers but rituals, magic and mythological stories. Read more on the four Vedas in the linked article.
- **Upanishad**– The Upanishads (Vedanta) contain philosophical discussions on “Atma” and “Paramatma”.
- **Epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana** – Of the two epics, the Mahabharata is older and possibly reflects the state of affairs from the 10th century BCE to the 4th century CE. Originally it consisted of 8800 verses (called

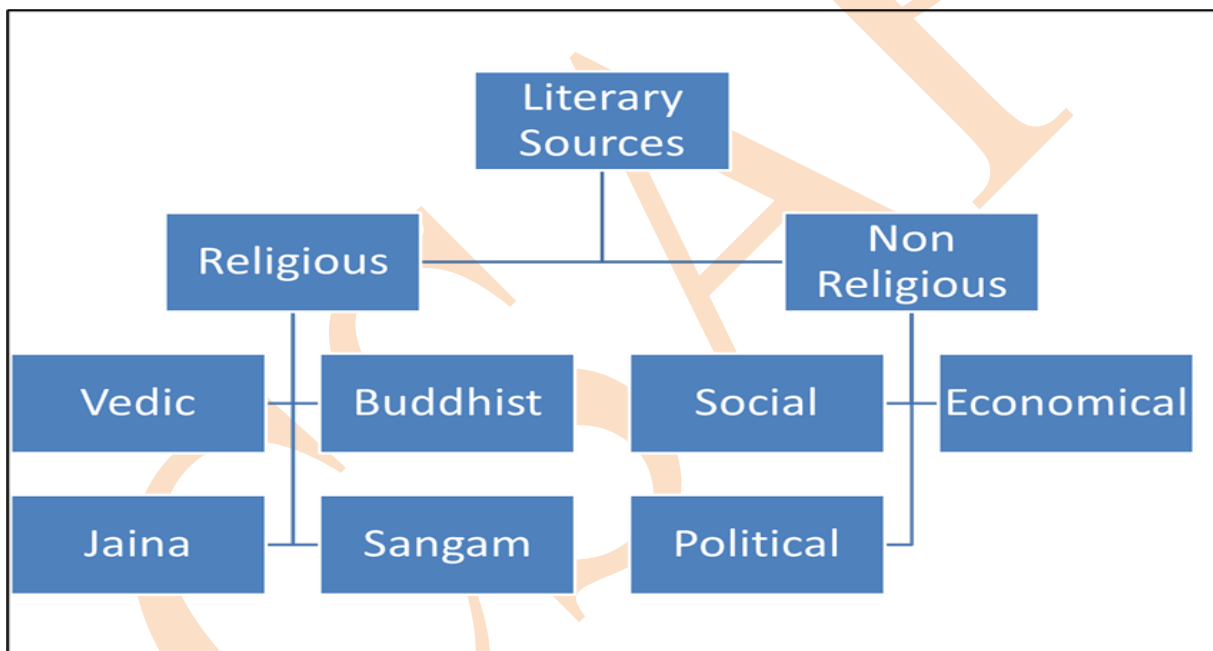
Jaya Samhita). The final compilation brought the verses to 1,00,000 which came to be known as the Mahabharata or Satasahasri Samhita. It contains narrative, descriptive and didactic material. The Ramayana originally consisted of 12000 verses which were later raised to 24000. This epic also has its didactic portions which were added later.

- **Sutras** – Sutras contain ritual literature such as Shrautasutras (which include sacrifices and royal coronation) and Grihya Sutras (which include domestic rituals like birth, naming, marriage, funeral, etc.)
- **Buddhist religious texts** – The early Buddhist texts were written in the Pali language and are commonly known as Tripitaka (three baskets) – Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, and Abhidhamma Pitaka. These texts throw invaluable light on the social and economic conditions of that era. They also make references to political events in the age of the Buddha. Read more on Buddhism.
- **Jaina’s religious texts** – The Jaina texts commonly called “angas”, were written in the Prakrit language, and contain philosophical concepts of the Jainas. They contain many texts which help to reconstruct the political history of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the age of Mahavira. The Jaina texts refer repeatedly to trade and traders.

**Secular Literature: There is also a large body of secular literature such as:**

- **Dharma shastras/Law books** – These lay down the duties for different varnas as well as for the kings and their officials. They prescribe the rules according to which property is to be held, sold and inherited. They also prescribe punishments for persons guilty of theft, murder, etc.

- **Arthashastra** – Arthashastra of Kautilya reflects the state of society and economy in the age of the Mauryas.
- **Literary work of Kalidasa** – The works of the great poet Kalidasa comprise kavyas and dramas, the most important being Abhijnanasakuntalam. Besides being creative compositions, they give an insight into the social and cultural life of northern and central India in the age of the Guptas.
- **Rajatarangini** – This is a famous book written by Kalhana and depicts the social and political life of 12th-century CE Kashmir.
- **Charitas/Biographies** – Charitas are the biographies written by court poets in admiration of their rulers such as Harshacharita written by Banabhatta in praise of King Harshavardhana.
- **Sangam literature** – This is the earliest South Indian literature, produced by poets who assembled (Sangam), and provides valuable information about the social, economic and political life of the people living in deltaic Tamil Nadu. This Tamil literature contains literary gems such as 'Silappadikaram' and 'Manimekalai'.



### Village Study

- Social inequalities which prevail despite universal suffrage indicate the nature of ancient Indian society. Rural rituals and caste prejudices illustrate many of the Dharmashastra rules governing our ancient polity and society.

### Historical Sense

Ancient Indians are charged with A lack of sense of history. It is evident that they did not write

history in the manner it is done today, nor did they write it in the way the Greeks did. The Puranas provide dynastic history up to the beginning of Gupta rule.

- The importance of time and place, vital elements in history are indicated in Puranas. Several eras, according to which events were recorded were started in ancient India. Vikrama Samvat began in 57-8 BC, Shaka Samvat in AD 78 and the Gupta era in AD 319.
- Inscriptions record events in the context of



time and place. Indians display a considerable historical sense in biographical writings, for example, Harshacharita by Banabhatta in the seventh century.

- Sandhyakara Nandi's Ramacharita (twelfth century) narrates the story of the conflict between the Kaivarta peasants and the Pala prince Ramapala.
- Rajatarangi written by Kalhana in the twelfth century is a string of biographies of the kings of Kashmir. (Many characteristics of the today's style of history writing)
- Ancient history has so far been constructed principally based on literary sources, foreign and indigenous. Coins and inscriptions play some part, but the texts receive greater weightage.
- Now new methods must be adopted. Archaeological evidence should be given importance.

### FACTS & FIGURES

- The word 'Hindu' was first used by–Greek
- Brahmavadini who composed HYMNS of the Vedas– Lopamudra
- Various Eras:
  - a) Vikrama Era- 58 BC
  - b) Saka Era– 78 AD
  - c) Gupta Era– 320 AD
  - d) Kali Era– 3102 BC
- In Sanskrit plays written during the Gupta period women and Sudras speak –Prakrit
- Ashoka referred to in inscriptions–Priyadarsi / Devanampriya

- Yavanapriya– pepper–Yavans were the Indo-Greeks who loved pepper.
- ANUVRATA– Jainism
- Cosmologic ideas–cycle of ouras (yugas)
- Krita–Treta–Dvapara–Kali
  - Temple in news regarding Devadasi– Jagannath Temple, Puri
- River most mentioned in early Vedic literature– Sindhu

### Part of early Jain literature

- a. Acarangasutra
- b. Sutrakritanga
- c. Brihatkalpasutra

(\*Therigatha is Buddhist literature\*)

- Common to both Buddhism and Jainism
  - a. Indifference to the authority of the Vedas
  - b. Denial of the efficacy of rituals
  - c. Non-injury to animal life



Jainism and Buddhism

**Which is odd one in the context of ancient Indian history**

- a. Kula
- b. Vamsa
- c. Kosa
- d. Gotra

The answer is Kosa as it means treasure and is not related to house as the other three.

- Who is known for his work on medicine during the Gupta period –Susrutha
- Which sculpture was invariably used greenschist as medium– Bharhut

CSAP