



# SOURCES OF INDIAN HISTORY

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# AGENDA

Exploring Sources of Ancient Indian History: Literature and Archaeology

## 1 Introduction

Setting the stage for understanding the historical sources of ancient India.

## 2 Literary Sources

Delving into the rich texts and scriptures that provide insights into ancient Indian history.

## 3 Archaeological Sources

Uncovering the material remains and artifacts that shed light on the past civilizations of India.

## 4 Foreigners' Accounts

Exploring accounts and observations of foreign travelers and scholars about ancient India.

## 5 Summary and Key Takeaways

Summarizing the key findings and learnings from the literary, archaeological, and foreign accounts of ancient Indian history.

# WHAT IS HISTORY?

- A study of Past, particularly human affairs.
- It comes from a Greek origin word called “*Historia*”, which means inquiry or knowledge acquired by investigation.
- History starts when human started showing interest towards their past and consciously become interested in making documents for the future

Handing down the traditions



Father of history : **HERODOTUS** – A Greek historian, contemporary of Socrates.

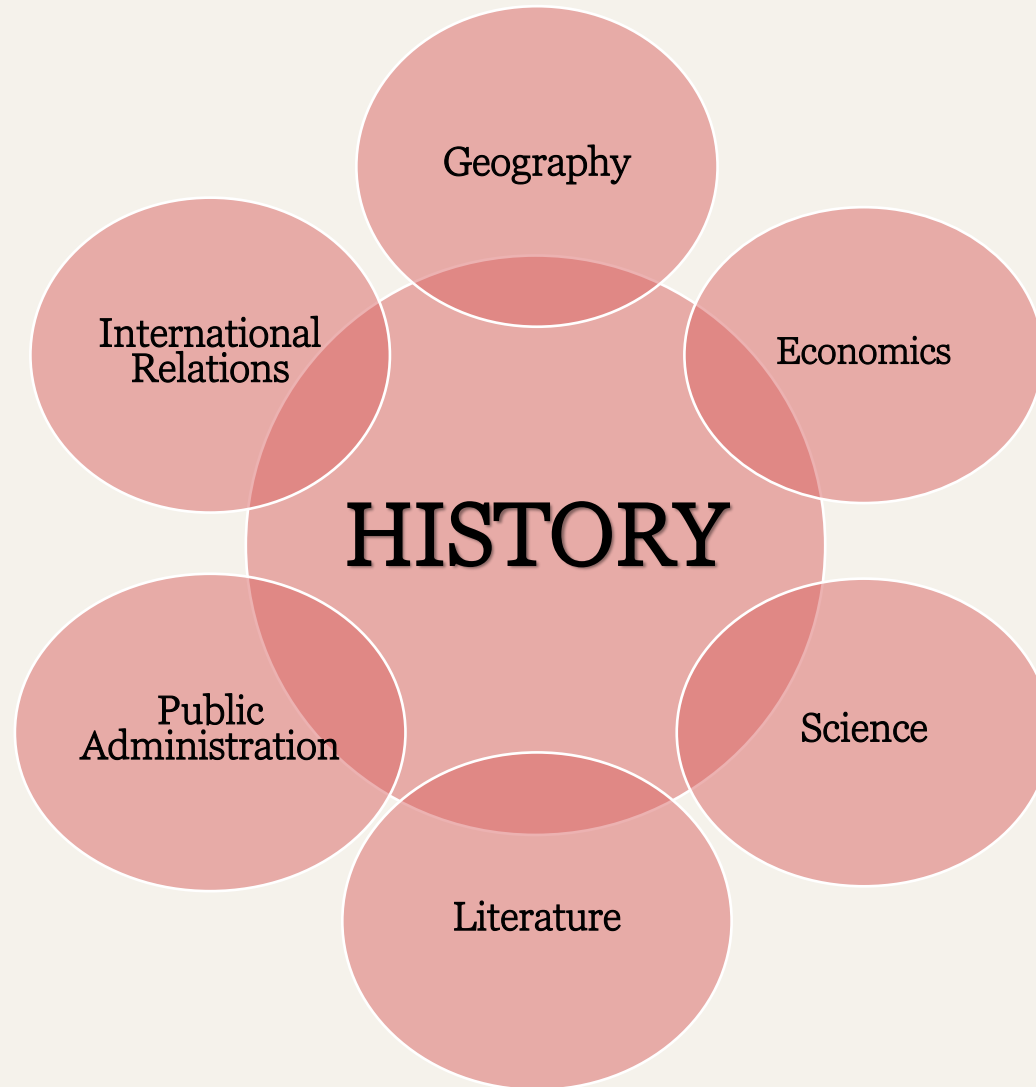
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# WHAT IS CHRONOLOGY?

- Arrangement of events and dates in order of their occurrence.
  - Terms associated:
    - BC: Before Christ
    - AD: Anno Dominus ( In the year of our Lord)
    - BCE : Before Common Era- Same as BC
    - CE: Common Era- Same as AD
    - c. : Circa- Approximate year
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# RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER DISCIPLINES



# DIVISIONS OF HISTORY

It can be divided into 3 parts: Pre-history, Proto History and History

## Pre History

- Studied mainly by archaeologists
- NO scripts and written records
- Differs from location and continent due to geographic influence and human evolution
- Evidence of rock and cave paintings

## Proto- History

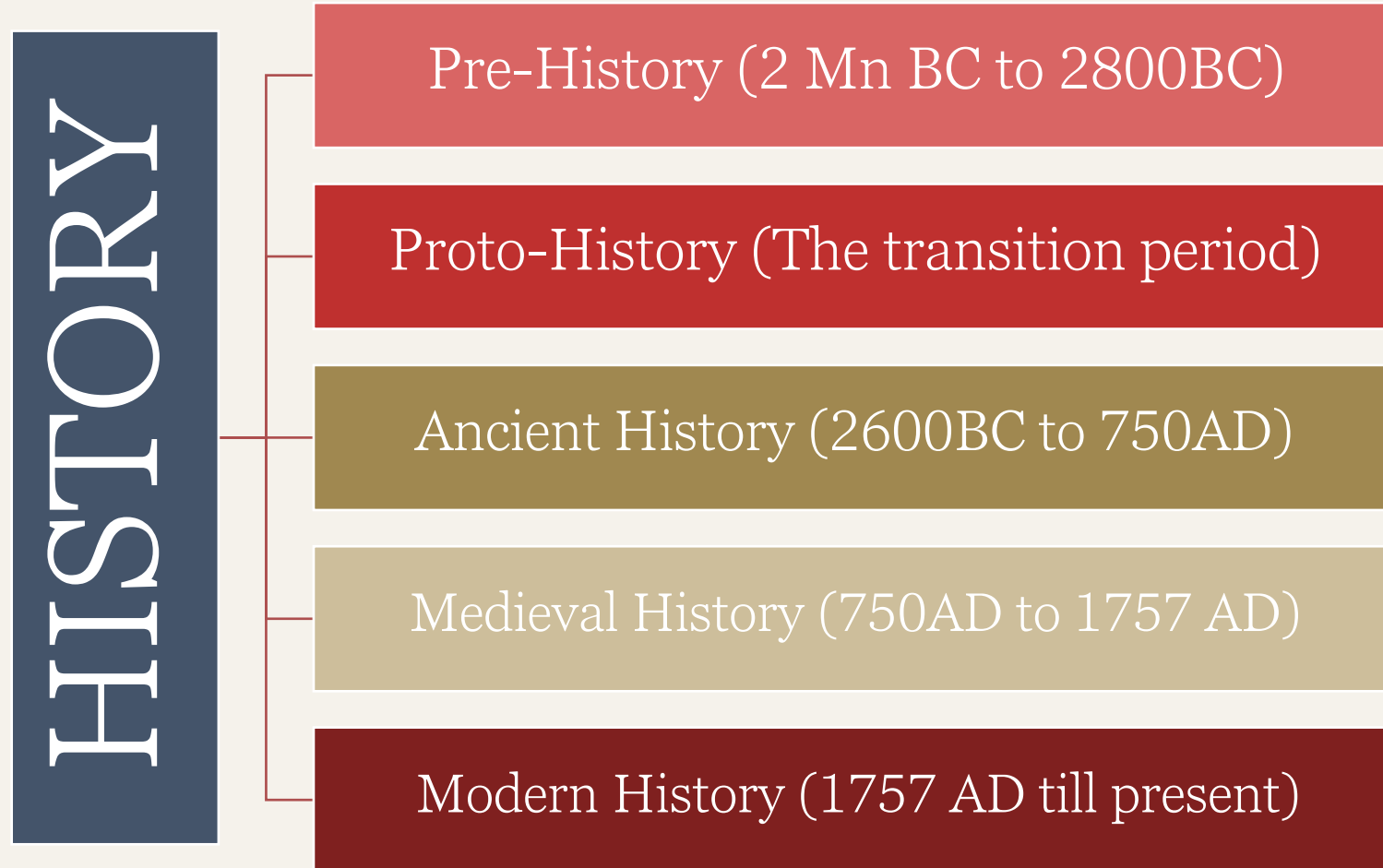
- Period between pre-history and history
- Culture and civilization in nascent phase.
- Script started to developed- NOT yet deciphered.
- Few written records are found

## History

- Written records available.
- Scripts deciphered.
- History continues till today.

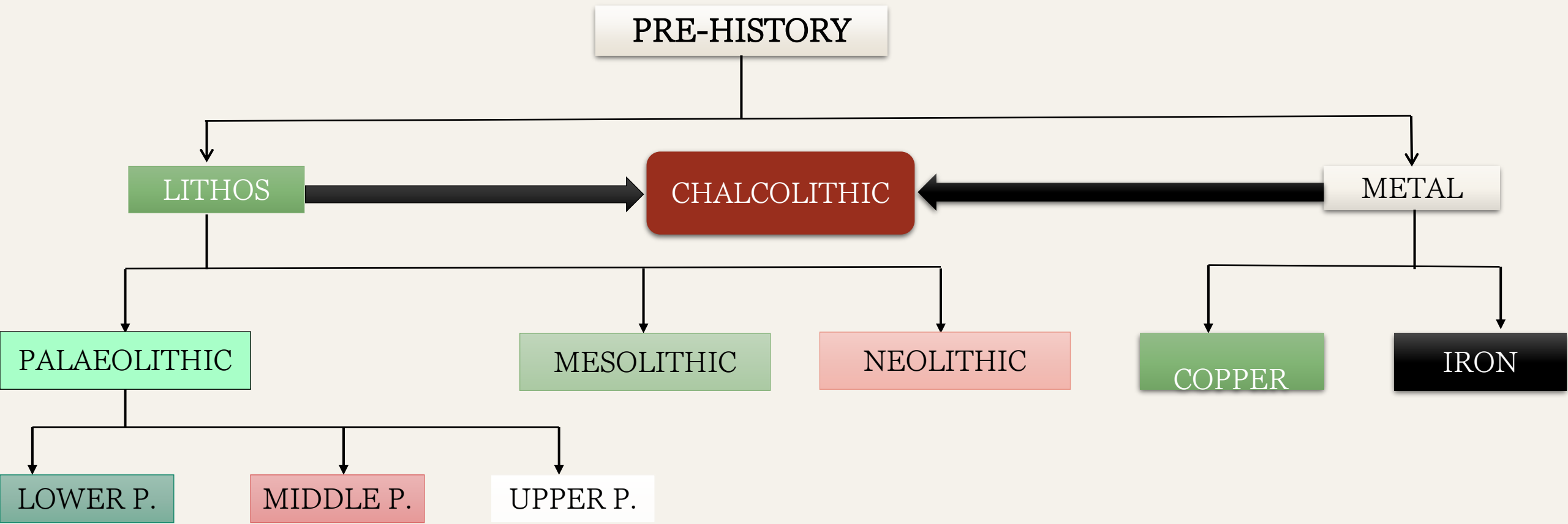


# DIVISIONS OF HISTORY IN INDIA



# PRE-HISTORY OF INDIA

Divided under following important headings





# SOURCES OF HISTORY

- Literary

- Religious
- Non-religious
- Foreign account

- Archaeological

- Excavation
  - Inscription
  - Numismatic
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# 1

▲ LITERARY SOURCES

## LITERARY SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

Understanding the rich narrative through ancient texts

Presenter Name

Signature

# VEDIC LITERATURE

Exploring the Earliest Indian Literary Traditions



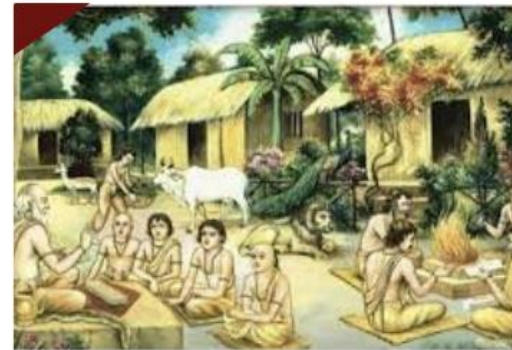
## Earliest Known Literature

Vedic literature originates from the Indian subcontinent, representing one of the oldest known literary collections.



## Four Vedas

Comprising the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda, each Veda serves distinct purposes within the Vedic tradition.



## Oral Transmission Emphasis

The Vedic texts were primarily transmitted orally, emphasizing memorization techniques to preserve the ancient knowledge.



## Content Diversity

Encompassing hymns, prayers, sacrificial formulas, and philosophical discussions, Vedic literature offers a rich tapestry of spiritual and intellectual content.

# VEDIC LITERATURE

Exploring the Sacred Texts of Ancient India

## Rigveda Samhita

A compilation of hymns and verses praising various deities, reflecting the spiritual beliefs of early Indian society.

## Samaveda Samhita

Focuses on musical melodies and chants derived from the Rigveda, used in ancient Indian rituals and ceremonies.

## Atharvaveda Samhita

Contains spells, charms, and rituals addressing various aspects of life, including health, family, and protection.

## Yajurveda Samhita

Provides sacrificial formulas and rituals to guide priests in performing religious ceremonies and offerings.



## ▲ ANCIENT INDIAN EPICS

# EPICS: RAMAYANA AND MAHABHARATA

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.

## 1 Mahabharata

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, the descriptive portion might be post-Vedic; and the didactic portions generally relate to the post-Mauryan and Gupta periods

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## 2 Ramayana

The *Ramayana* of Valmiki appears to be more unified than the Mahabharata. Some of the sites mentioned in both epics have been excavated. Ayodhya excavations have revealed settlements dating back to the Northern Black Polished Ware period.



# PURANAS

Significance of Puranas in Indian History

## 1 Eighteen Mahapuranas and Upapuranas

Comprise Eighteen Mahapuranas and numerous Upapuranas, serving as significant religious texts.

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## 2 Encyclopedic Works

Act as encyclopedic works covering a wide range of topics, providing valuable insights into ancient Indian knowledge and traditions.

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## 3 Political History Reconstruction

Essential for reconstructing political history and tracing the genealogies of ancient Indian dynasties.

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## 4 Religious and Cultural Insight

Offer crucial understanding of religious beliefs, practices, and cultural aspects prevalent in ancient India.

# SANGAM LITERATURE

Exploring the Earliest Tamil Texts and their Significance

## Earliest Tamil texts

Composed between 400 BCE - 200 CE, offering insights into ancient literature.



## Everyday life insights

Provides information on everyday life, kings, and dynasties of ancient south India.



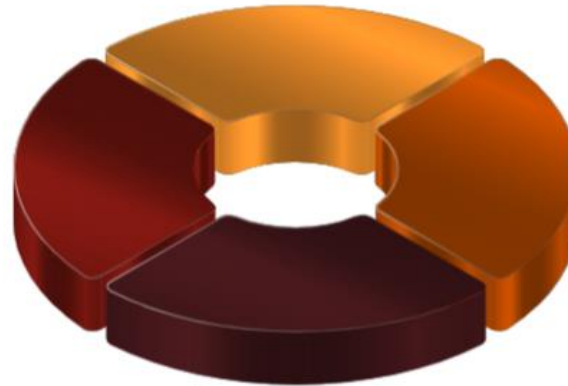
## Themes of love and war

Poems encompassing themes of love and war, reflecting societal values and culture.



## Trade with Yavanas

Mentions flourishing towns and trade with Yavanas (Greeks), revealing historical trade relations.





▲ LITERARY INSIGHTS

# BIOGRAPHIES, POETRY, AND DRAMA

Exploring Ancient Indian Literary Works



## Works by Ashvaghosha, Bhasa, Kalidasa, Vishakhadatta

Literary masterpieces by significant ancient Indian writers, contributing to the rich cultural heritage.



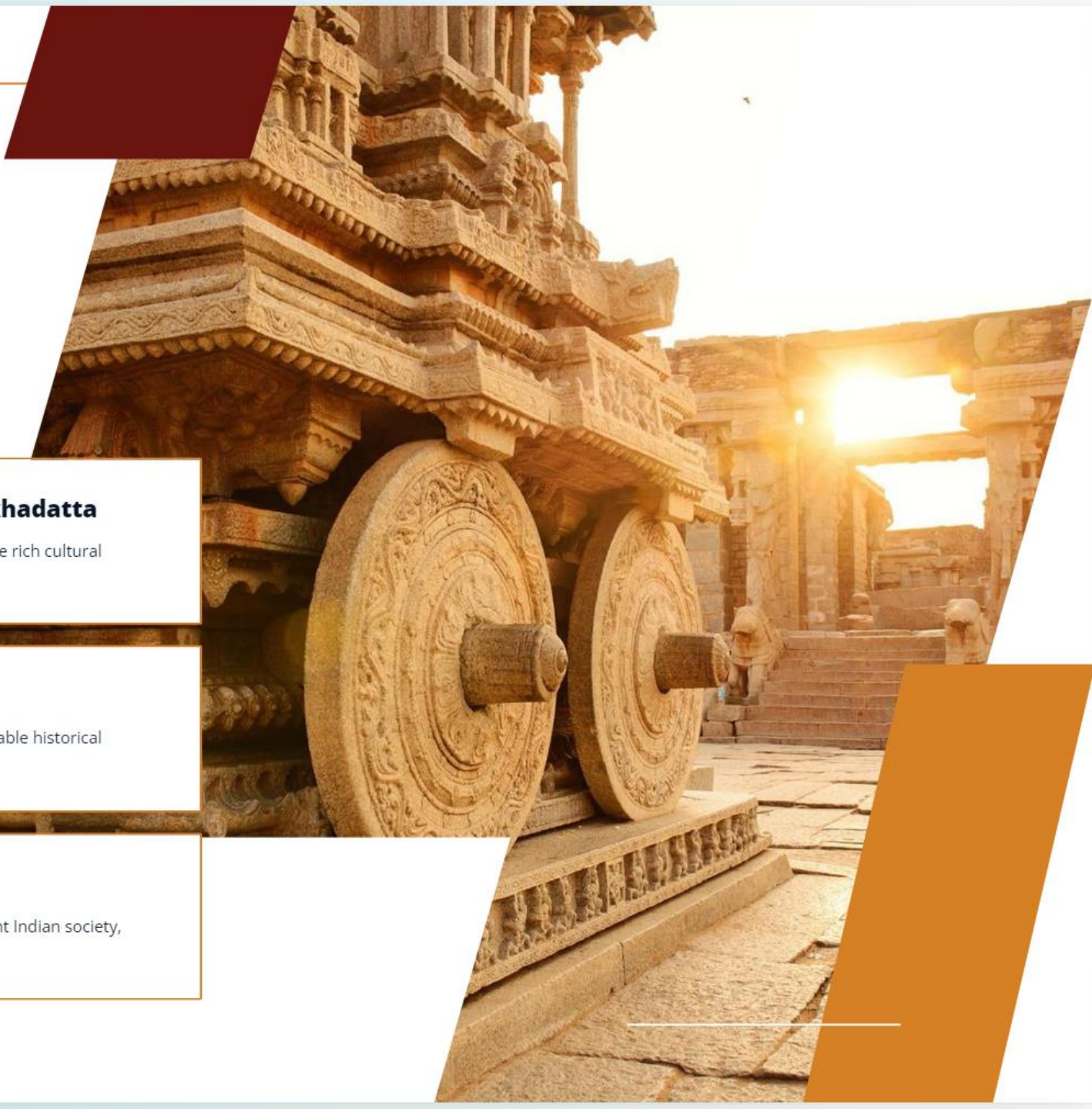
## Historical Insights from Biographies

Biographies such as Harshacharita and Vikramankadevacharita provide valuable historical information about ancient Indian rulers.



## Cultural Glimpses through Drama and Poetry

Drama and poetry offer insights into the social and cultural aspects of ancient Indian society, reflecting the ethos and values of the time.



## **Buddhist Texts**

Include Tripitakas, Sutta Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, and Abhidhamma Pitaka, comprising a rich source of Buddhist teachings and principles.

## **Jain Texts**

Encompass Ardhamagadhi, Jain Shauraseni, and Shvetambara literature, offering insights into Jain philosophy, ethics, and practices.

## **Historical Significance**

These texts provide valuable historical records, shedding light on ancient Indian society, culture, and religious beliefs.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

# Archaeological Sources

Exploring material culture and artifacts revealing ancient India's history

HISTORICAL INSIGHTS

# Archaeology

Exploring Material Culture for Historical Insights

## 01 Studies Material Culture

- Involves analyzing artifacts like sculptures, pottery, bone fragments, etc.

## 02 Reconstructing the Past

- Critical for piecing together prehistoric and proto-historic eras.

## 03 Deciphering Ancient Civilizations

- Helps in understanding the lifestyle, practices, and evolution of ancient societies.

## 04 Contributing to Historical Narratives

- Aids in creating comprehensive historical accounts of ancient civilizations.

## 05 Interpreting Cultural Evolution

- Sheds light on the cultural transformations and progress over time.







NUMISMATICS

# Coins

Understanding Ancient India Through Currency

# EARLY INDIAN COINAGE: PUNCH-MARKED TO POST-MAURYAN

- The Significance of Coins
  - Second most important historical source after inscriptions.
  - Found in excavations (archaeological finds) or hoards.
  - Provide insights into:
    - Chronology
    - Cultural context
    - Economic activity
    - Political organization





# EARLY INDIAN COINAGE: PUNCH-MARKED TO POST-MAURYAN

❑ **Second Urbanization (c. 6th century BCE):** First evidence of coinage.

- Materials: Copper, silver, gold, lead.
- Punch-Marked Coins: Earliest in India.
- Silver (mostly), copper, rare gold.
- Symbols only, no inscriptions.

❑ **Indo-Greek Coins:**

- Silver, copper, rare gold.
- Beautiful artistic features, king portraits.
- Reveal over 40 Indo-Greek rulers.

❑ **Post-Mauryan Coins:**

- Lead, potin, copper, bronze, silver, gold.
- Large numbers indicate increased trade.



*Coin from Kushan Era*



# THE GOLDEN AGE: KUSHAN AND GUPTA COINAGE

- Kushan Coins:

- Gold and copper (mostly), rare silver.
- Found throughout North India.
- Depict Indian, Persian, and Greek deities.
- Vima Kadphises: Shiva on coins, calls himself "Maheshvara."



*Kushan coin with Shiva and bull*

- Gupta Coins:

- Gold and silver, gold more numerous.
- Indianized coinage.
- Dinars: Well-executed gold coins with king portraits.
- Kings depicted hunting, playing instruments, performing rituals.



*Gupta coin with Samudragupta playing Veena*

# COINS AS HISTORICAL CLUES

## ❑ Coin legends:

- Reveal rulers' names, titles, dates.

## ❑ Circulation areas:

- Help reconstruct dynasties' territories.

## ❑ Images and symbols:

- Offer insights into culture and religion.

## ❑ Yaudheya and Malava coins:

- "Gana" suggests non-monarchical polity.

## ❑ Satavahana coins:

- Ship image indicates maritime trade.



*Satavahana coin with a ship*

## HISTORICAL RECORDS

# Inscriptions

Vital Historical Records Carved in Stone

### 01 Reliability of Inscriptions

- Inscriptions are crucial and credible sources for historical documentation.

### 02 Various Surfaces

- Carved on diverse mediums like seals, copper plates, temple walls, etc., providing rich historical insights.

### 03 Ashokan Edicts

- Among the earliest deciphered inscriptions, offering valuable historical accounts.



# MONUMENTS OF INDIA

## ❖ Temples and Sculptures:

- Found throughout India from the Gupta period onwards.
- Showcase architectural and artistic history of Indian culture.

## ❖ Caves:

- Ajanta and Ellora: Large excavated caves with chaityas (prayer halls) and viharas (monasteries).

## ❖ Rock-Cut Temples:

- Kailash Temple (Ellora)
- Rathas (chariot-shaped temples) at Mamallapuram

## ❖ Medieval Monuments:

- Reflect grandeur and wealth of ruling class.
- Illustrate regional styles of architecture and influences.
- Excavated Townships (Buddha's Time):
- Taxila, Kaushambi, Kashi (Rajghat), Ayodhya, Vaishali, Bodhgaya.
- All but Taxila said to have been visited by the Buddha in c. 6th century BCE.





01

# Kailash Temple at Ellora Caves

The Kailash Temple is a remarkable monolithic rock-cut structure dedicated to Lord Shiva, showcasing intricate carvings and sculptures.



Draupadi Ratha      Arjuna Ratha      Bhima Ratha      Dharmaraja Ratha      Nakula Sahadeva Ratha

02

## Temple of Pancha-Rathas at Mamallapuram

The Pancha-Rathas temple complex features five chariot-shaped monolithic structures, each representing a different architectural style.



03

# The Ghositaram Monastery

The Ghoshitaram Monastery in Kaushambi is an ancient Buddhist site known for its serene surroundings and historical significance.







TRAVELERS' INSIGHTS

# Foreigners' Accounts

Insights from Travelers Visiting India

LITERATURE AND GEOGRAPHY

# Greek and Roman Accounts

Insights from Ancient Writers and Geographers

**Megasthenes,  
Deimachus, Dionysios**

01

Ambassadors at the court of  
Chandragupta Maurya.

**Periplus of the Erythrean  
Sea**

02

Provides information about  
Indian coasts and trade.

**Ptolemy's Geography**

03

Geographical treatise offering  
insights on India.



01

# Fa-Hien's Journey

Fa-Hien, a Chinese Buddhist monk, visited India between 399 and 412 CE. He documented his travels in his work 'Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms'.



02

# Xuan-Zang's Pilgrimage

Xuan-Zang, a Chinese Buddhist monk, journeyed to India during the Tang Dynasty in the 7th century. His travels and experiences were recorded in the 'Great Tang Records on the Western Regions'.



# ACCOUNTS FROM MEDIEVAL AND MODERN INDIA

- **Al-Beruni (Abu Rihan):**
  - Contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni.
  - Learned Sanskrit to study Indian texts and culture.
  - "Tahqiq-i-Hind": Encyclopedic work covering various topics.
  - Valuable source for 11th century India.
  - Identified initial year of Gupta era.
- **Sulaiman:**
  - Mentioned India in his accounts, likely due to Arab-Indian oceanic trade.
- **Official Histories (12th Century Onwards):**
  - **Tabkat-i-Nasiri:** By Minhaj-ud-din Siraj, earliest example of commissioned history.
- **Other Important Sources:**
  - Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi (Zia-ud-din Barani)
  - Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi (Mahammad Quasim Farishta)
  - Ain-i-Akbari & Akbarnama (Abu'l Fazal)
  - Tabqat-i-Akbari (Nizammuddin Ahmad)
- **Later Periods:**
  - **Shahjahan & Aurangzeb:** Ample court accounts available.
  - **Modern Period:** Abundant historical material in various Indian and European languages (English, French, Dutch).



**Any  
Queries?**

