

UNIT-2

EVOLUTION OF SCRIPT AND LANGUAGES IN INDIA/ANCIENT SCRIPTS OF INDIA

- A script is also known as writing system or orthography.
- It is a standard for representing the parts of a spoken language by making specific marks on a medium (Paper, rocks, birch-bark, etc).
- The two ancient scripts in India comprise ***Brahmi script and Kharosthi script.***
- Most of the ancient and modern scripts in India are developed from Brahmi script be it devanagari, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Odia, Assamese/Bengali, etc.
- Hence, It can very much be contended that Brahmi is the mother of scripts.
- However, Urdu is written in a script derived from Arabic, and a few minor languages such as Santhali use independent scripts.

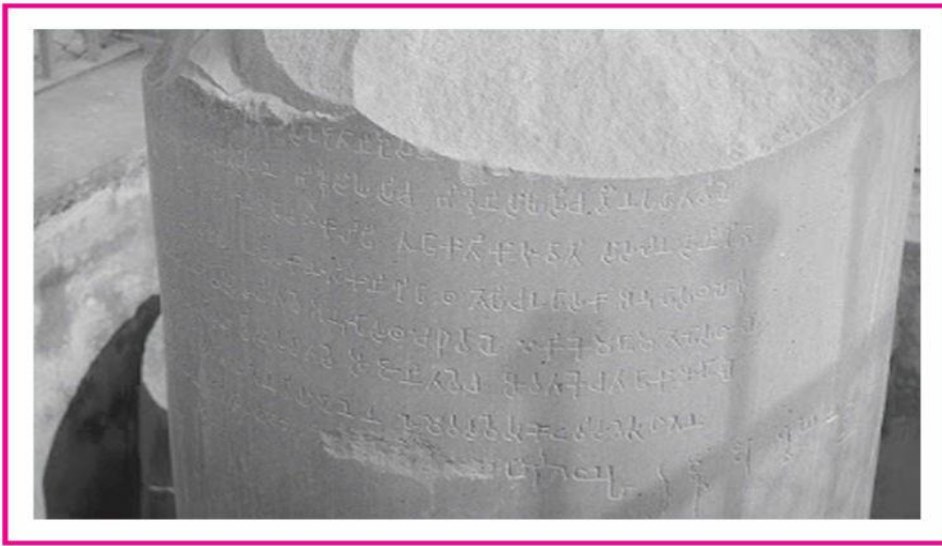
INDUS/HARAPPAN SCRIPT

- The Indus script is a corpus of symbols produced by the Indus Valley Civilization.
- Most inscriptions are **extremely short.**
- It is not clear if these symbols constitute a script used to record a language.

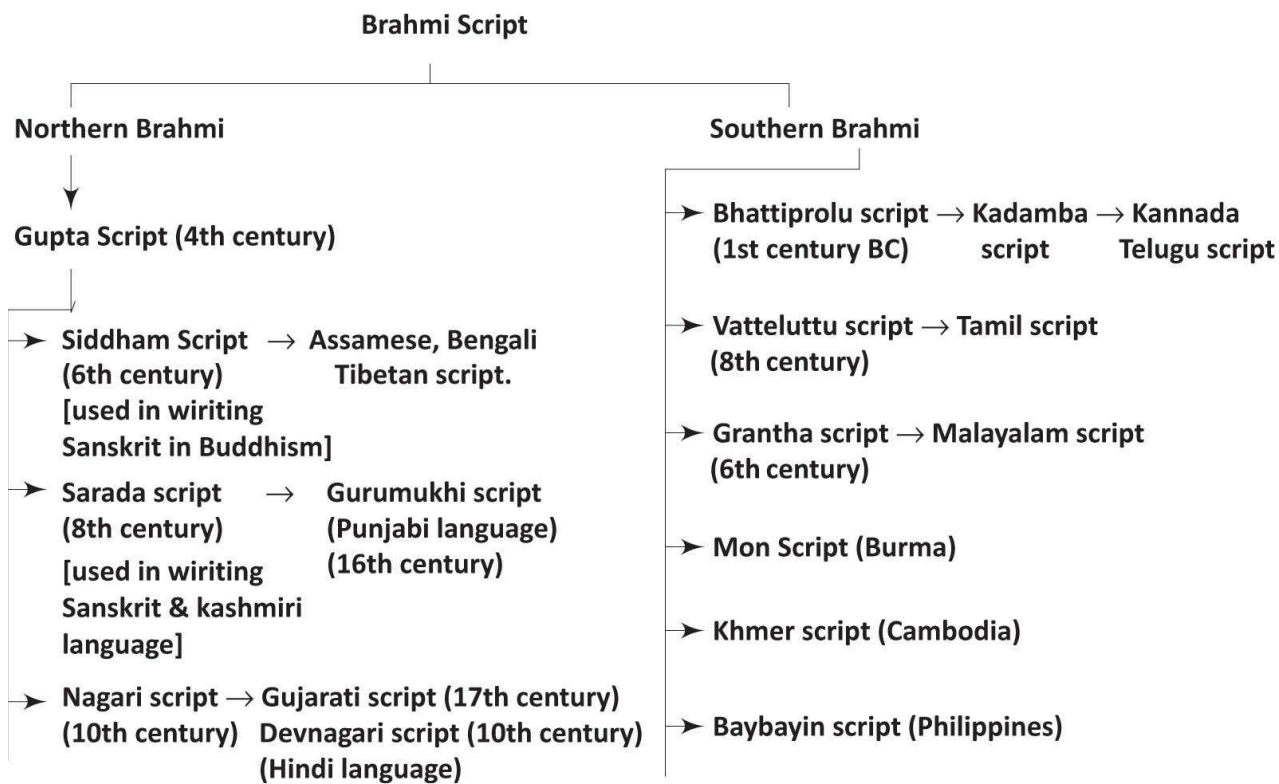


BRAHMI SCRIPT

- Brahmi is the **oldest writing systems** used in the Indian subcontinent and in Central Asia during the final centuries BCE and the early centuries CE.
- Some believe that Brahmi was derived from contemporary Semitic script or may be Indus script.
- All surviving Indic scripts in South East Asia are descendants of the Brahmi.
- The best-known Brahmi inscriptions are the **rock-cut edicts of Ashoka** in north-central India, dated to 250–232 BCE.
- The script was **deciphered in 1837 by James Prinsep.**
- Brahmi is usually written from **left to right.**
- Brahmi is an **abugida**, meaning that each letter represents a consonant, while vowels are written with obligatory diacritics called matras in Sanskrit, except when the vowels commence a word.



BRAHMI SCRIPT ON ASHOKAN PILLAR



ANCIENT INDIAN LITERATURE

Ancient Indian literature can be placed in two categories:

1. Religious and non religious or secular. Religious literature has the four Vedas –
 - **Rig Veda**- The oldest of the Vedas contains **1028 hymns** known as **Sukta** or “Well said”.
 - **Sam Veda**- Contains the hymns that are sung by a special class of priests at the time of soma Sacrifice
 - **Yajur Veda**- Contains hymns that are recited at the time of ordinary sacrifice.
 - **Atharva Veda**- Collection of songs, spells, magical charms for the evil spirits, etc.
 - **The Brahmanas** - attached to the Vedas. They explain in detail the value and efficacy of sacrifices.
 - **Aranyakas**- are the concluding portions of the Brahmanas.
 - **Upanishads** - Meant to be learnt sitting near the guru.

- **Epics** like The **Ramayana** and **The Mahabharata**
- **Buddhist** literature
- **Jain** literature

THE VEDAS

- The Vedas are the earliest known literature in India.
- They were written in Sanskrit and were handed down orally from one generation to the other.
- Preservation of the Vedas till today is one of our most remarkable achievements.
- To be able to keep such a literary wealth as the Vedas intact when the art of writing was not there and there was lack of writing material is unparalleled in world history.
- The word '**Veda**' literally means **knowledge**.
- They treat the whole world as one human family **Vasudev Kutumbakam**.
- There are four Vedas, namely, the- Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda.
- Each Veda consists of the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Aranyakas.
- The Rig Veda, Sama Veda and the Yajur Veda are collectively known as **Traji**.
- In later years the Atharava Veda was incorporated in this group.

RIG VEDA

- The Rig Veda is the earliest of the Vedas.
- It is a collection of 1028 hymns in Vedic Sanskrit.
- Many of these are beautiful descriptions of nature.
- The prayers are largely for seeking worldly prosperity.
- It is believed that these recitations are the natural outpouring of Vedic rishis experiencing a mentally spiritual stage.
- Some of the well-known rishis are **Vasistha, Gautama, Gritasamada, Vamadeva, Vishvamitra** and **Atri**.
- The prominent gods of the Rig Veda are **Indra, Agni, Varun, Rudra, Aditya, Vayu, Aditi** and the **Ashwini** twins.
- Some of the prominent goddesses are **Usha** - the goddess of dawn, **Vak** - the goddess of speech and **Prithvi** - the goddess of earth.
- Most of the hymns spoke of universally recognized higher values of life such as truthfulness, honesty, dedication, sacrifice, politeness and culture.
- The prayers are for seeking worldly prosperity and for the development of a highly cultured society.
- Along with religion Rig Veda provides us knowledge about social, political and economic condition of ancient India.

YAJUR VEDA

- Yajur means **sacrifice** or **worship**.
- This Veda is concerned mostly with **rites** and **mantras** of different sacrifices.
- It gives directions for the performance of the **yajnas**.
- It has both poetic and prose renderings.
- Being a treatise (exposition) on rituals, it is the most popular of the four Vedas.
- There are two major branches of Yajur Veda, namely **Shukla** and **Krishna** Yajur Veda i.e. **Vajasaneyi Samhita** and **Taitriya Samhita**.

- This text reflects on the social and religious condition of India at that time.

SAMA VEDA

- Sama means melody or songs.
- This Veda consists of **16,000 ragas** and **raginis** or musical notes.
- Out of total 1875 verses only 75 are original and others are from the Rig Veda.
- The Sama Veda prescribes the tunes for the recitation of the hymns of the Rig Veda.
- It may be called the **book of Chants** (Saman).
- This book is an evidence of the development of Indian music during this period.

ATHARVA VEDA

- The Atharva Veda is also known as the **Brahma Veda**.
- It contains treatment for **ninety-nine diseases**.
- The source of this Veda is traced to two rishis called **Atharvah** and **Angiras**.
- The Atharva Veda is of immense value as it represents the religious ideas at an early period of civilization.
- It has two branches, the **Paippalada** and the **Saunaka**.
- This book gives detailed information about the family, social and political life of later Vedic period.
- In order to understand the Vedas, it is necessary to learn the **Vedangas** or the limbs of the Vedas.
- These supplements of the Vedas provide education (siksha), grammar (vyakarana), ritual (kalpa), etymology (nirukta), metrics (chhanda) and astronomy (Jyotisha).
- A good deal of literature grew around these subjects. It was written in the form of precept (principles or rules) in the sutra style.
- A precept was called **sutra** because of its **brevity**.
- The most famous example of this is **Panini's** grammar, **Ashtadhyayi**, which illustrates the rules of grammar and also throws light on society, economy and culture of those times.

BRAHMANAS AND ARANYAKAS

- After the four Vedas, a number of works called the Brahmanas were developed.
- These books gave a detailed explanation of Vedic rituals and instructions and deal with the science of sacrifice.
- The latter portions of the Brahmanas were called the **Aranyakas** while the final parts of the Aranyakas are philosophic books named **Upanishads** which belong to the later stage of the Brahmana literature.
- Each of the four Vedas have their own Brahmana books.
- Rig Veda had **Kaushitaki** and **Aitreya**.
- **Taittiriya** belongs to **Krishna Yajur Veda** and **Shatpath** belongs to **Shukla Yajur Veda**.
- **Tandav**, **Panchvish** and **Jaiminiya** belongs to **Atharva Veda**.
- It is through them that we get a detailed information of the social, political and religious life of the people.
- The Aranyakas deal with soul, birth and death and life beyond it.
- These were studied and taught by men in Vanprastha i.e. **Munis** and the inhabitants living inside the forests.

- All these works were in Sanskrit. Initially they were handed down orally and were put to writing much later.
- It is very difficult to determine the age of the Vedas and also the time they were written.
- **Max Muller** says that the Rig Veda was composed before 1000 B.C. While according to **Lokmanya Tilak** it appeared before 6000 B.C.

THE UPNISHADS

- The word Upanishad is derived from **upa** (nearby), and **nishad** (to sit-down), that is, “sitting down near”.
- Groups of pupil sit near the Guru to learn from him in the Guru-shishya parampara or tradition.
- The Upanishads mark the peak of Indian thought and are the final parts of the Vedas.
- As the Upanishads contain abstract and difficult discussions of ultimate philosophical problems, they were taught to the pupils at the end. That is why they are called the end of Vedas.
- Vedas start with the worship of the visible, as that is obvious and then slowly transform to the knowledge of the pure (absolute).
- There are more than **200** known Upanishads, one of which, the **Muktika**, gives a list of 108 Upanishads – this number corresponds to the holy number of beads on a mala or Hindu rosary.
- The Upanishads form an important part of our literary legacy.
- They deal with questions like the origin of the universe, life and death, the material and spiritual world, nature of knowledge and many other questions.
- The earliest Upanishads are the **Brihadaranyaka** which belongs to the **Sukla Yajur Veda** and **Chand yogya** which belongs to the **Sama Veda**.
- Some of the other important Upanishads are the **Aitareya, Kena, Katha** Upanishad.

THE RAMAYANA AND THE MAHABHARATA

- Our two great epics are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
- The Ramayana of **Valmiki** is the original Ramayana.
- It is called **Adikavya** and **Maharishi Valmiki** is known as **Adi Kavi**.
- The Ramayana presents a picture of an ideal society.
- The other epic, **The Mahabharata**, was written by **Ved Vyas**.
- Originally, it was written in Sanskrit and contained **8800 verses** and was called “**Jaya**” or the collection dealing with victory.
- These were raised to **24,000** and came to be known as **Bharata**, named after one of the earliest Vedic tribes.
- The final compilation brought the verses to **100,000**, which came to be known as the Mahabharata or the **Satasahasri Samhita**.
- It contains narrative, descriptive and informative material, relating to conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas.
- The Mahabharata and the Ramayana have several renderings in different Indian languages.
- The Mahabharata contains the famous **Bhagavad Gita** which contains the essence of divine wisdom and is truly a universal gospel (teachings).
- Though it is a very ancient scripture, its fundamental teachings are in use even today.

- In the Bhagvad Gita, Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and prince and elaborates on different Yogic and Vedantic philosophies with examples and analogies.
- This makes Gita a concise guide to Hindu philosophy and self-contained guide to life.
- In modern times **Swami Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi** and many others used the text to help inspire the Indian independence movement.
- This was mainly because the Bhagvad Gita spoke of positiveness in human actions.
- It also spoke of duty towards God and human beings alike forgetting about the results.
- **The Gita** has been translated nearly in all the main languages of the world.

PURANAS

- The Puranas occupy a unique position in the sacred literature of the Hindus.
- They are regarded next in importance only to the Vedas and the Epics.
- There are said to be **eighteen Puranas** and about the same number of **Upapuranas**.
- Some of the well known Puranas are - **Brahma, Bhagvat, Padma, Vishnu, Vayu, Agni, Matsya and Garuda**.
- Their origin can be traced as far back as the time when Buddhism was gaining importance and was a major opponent of the Brahmanic culture.
- Puranas are mythological works which propagate religious and spiritual messages through parables and fables.
- They have a potent influence in the development of the religious lives of the people.
- The Puranas follow the lines of the epics, and the earliest Puranas were compiled in the Gupta period.
- They are full of myths, stories, legends and sermons that were meant for the education of the common people.
- These Puranas contain important geographical information/ histories and deal with the mysteries of creation, re-creation and dynastic genealogies.
- This period also saw the compilation of various smritis or law books written in verse.
- The phase of writing commentaries on the smritis begins after the Gupta period.
- **Amarasimha** the Sanskrit Lexicographer (A person who compiles dictionary), states that a Purana should describe five topics-
 - Sarga (Creation)
 - Pratisarga (Secondary creation)
 - Vamsa (Geneology)
 - Manvantara (Manu periods)
 - Vamsanucarita (dynastic history)

BUDDHIST AND JAIN LITERATURE IN PALI, PRAKRIT AND SANSKRIT

- The religious books of the Jains and the Buddhists refer to historical persons or incidents.
- The earliest **Buddhist** works were written in **Pali**, which was spoken in **Magadha** and **South Bihar**.
- The Buddhist works can be divided into the canonical and the non-canonical.
- The **canonical literature** is best represented by the **“Tripitakas”**, that is, three baskets - **Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka**.
- **Vinaya Pitaka** deals with rules and regulations of daily life.
- **Sutta Pitaka** contains dialogues and discourses on morality and deals with Dharma.

- **Abhidhamma Pitaka** deals with philosophy and metaphysics. It includes discourses on various subjects such as ethics, psychology, theories of knowledge and metaphysical problems.
- The **non-canonical literature** is best represented by the **Jatakas**.
- **Jatakas** are the most interesting stories on the previous births of the Buddha.
- It was believed that before he was finally born as Gautama, the Buddha practicing Dharma passed through more than 550 births, in many cases even in the form of animals.
- Each birth story is called a Jataka.
- The Jatakas throw invaluable light on the social and economic conditions ranging from the sixth century BC to the second century BC.
- They also make incidental reference to political events in the age of the Buddha.
- The **Jain texts** were written in **Prakrit** and were finally compiled in the sixth century AD in **Valabhi** in **Gujarat**.
- The important works are known as **Angas, Upangas, Prakirnas, Chhedab Sutras** and **Malasutras**.
- Among the important Jain scholars, reference may be made to **Haribhadra Suri**, (eighth century AD) and **Hemchandra Suri**, (twelfth century AD).
- Jainism helped in the growth of a rich literature comprising poetry, philosophy and grammar.
- These works contain many passages which help us to reconstruct the political history of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

OTHER SANSKRIT LITERATURE

- We also have a large body of books dealing with various sciences, law, medicine and grammar.
- The law books called the **Dharmasutras** and **smritis**, together known as **Dharmashastras**.
- The Dharmasutras were compiled between 500 and 200 BC.
- These lay down duties for different varnas as well as for the kings and their officials. They prescribed the rules according to which property had to be held, sold and inherited. They also prescribe punishments for persons guilty of assault, murder and adultery.
- **The Manusmriti** tells us about the role of man and woman in society, their code of conduct and relationship with each other.

KAUTILYA'S ARTHASHASTRA

- Kautilya's Arthashastra is an important treatise of the Mauryan times.
- It reflects the state of society and economy at that time and provides rich material for the study of ancient Indian polity and economy.
- The works of **Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidasa** and **Banabhatta** provided us with glimpses of the social and cultural life of northern and central India in times of the Guptas and Harsha.
- The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on the works of **Panini** and **Patanjali**.

FAMOUS SANSKRIT AUTHORS

- The Gupta period was India's golden age of culture and one of the greatest and most glorious times.
- The Gupta kings patronized the classical Sanskrit literature.
- They helped liberally the scholars and poets of Sanskrit.
- This enriched the Sanskrit language.

- In fact Sanskrit language became the language of cultured and educated people.
- Many great poets, dramatists and scholars appeared during this period and works in Sanskrit reached great heights.
- The Kushana kings patronized Sanskrit scholars.
- **Ashvaghosha** wrote the **Buddhacharitra** which is the biography of the Buddha. He also wrote **Saundarananda**, which is a fine example of Sanskrit poetry.
- India produced great literary works on subjects like Math's, Astronomy, Astrology, Agriculture and Geography etc.
- Books on medicine were written by **Charak** and on surgery by **Sushruta**.
- **Madhava** wrote a book on **pathology**.
- Books written on astronomy by **Varahamihira** and **Aryabhatta** and on astrology by **Lagdhacharya** had all achieved prominence.
- There is none that can compete with **Varahamihira's Bhrihatsamhita**, **Aryabhatta** and **Vedanga Jyotisha**.
- The post-medieval period in northern India saw the rise of Sanskrit literature in Kashmir. **Somadeva's Katha-sarit-sagar** and **Kalhan's Rajatarangini** are of historical importance.
- It gives a vivid account of the Kings of Kashmir.
- **The Geet Govinda** of **Jaidev** is the finest poem of Sanskrit literature of this period.

Kalidas:

- Poet Kalidas wrote many beautiful poems and plays.
- His works in Sanskrit are considered the gems of Literature.
- He wrote passionate plays and poems.
- His wonderful skill is exhibited in his poem **Meghaduta**, **Ritusambara**, **Kumar Sambhavam** and **Raghuvamsha**.
- His plays are **Abhijan Shakuntalam**, **Vikramorvasi** and **Malvikaganimithram**.

Vishakhadutta:

- Vishakhadutta was another great play writer of this period.
- He wrote two great historical plays like- **Mudra Rakshas** and **Dev Chandra Gupta**.

Shudraka:

- He wrote an exciting play **Mrichchha Katikam** or the **Toy Cart**.
- It is a great source of socio-cultural conditions of that time.

Harisena:

- Harisena was one of the greatest poets and play writers of the Gupta period.
- He wrote poems praising the valor of **Samudra Gupta**.
- It is inscribed on **Allahabad pillar**.

Bhasa:

- He wrote **thirteen** plays which echo the lifestyle of the era along with its prevalent beliefs and culture.

TELUGU, KANNADA AND MALAYALAM LITERATURE

- The four Dravadan languages Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malyalam developed their own literature.
- Tamil being the oldest of these languages began writing earlier and produced the sangam literature - the oldest literature in Tamil.

TELUGU LITERATURE:

- The **Vijayanagara** period was the golden age of Telugu literature.
- **Nachana Somanatha**, a court poet of **Bukka I**, produced a poetical work titled **Uttaraharivamsam**.
- **Krishnadevaraya** (1509-1529), the greatest of the Vijayanagara emperors, was a poet of great merit. His work **Amukta Malyada** is regarded as an excellent prabandha in Telugu literature.
- Eight Telugu literary luminaries, popularly known as **ashtadiggajas** adorned his court.
- Among them, **Allasani Peddana**, the author of **Manucharitram**, was the greatest.
- He was known as **Andhra kavitaipitamaha**.
- The other seven poets of the group were **Nandi Timmana**, the author of **Parijathapaharanam**, **Madayagari Mallana**, **Dhurjati**, **Ayyalaraju Ramabhadra Kavi**, **Pingali Surana**, **Ramaraja Bhushana** and **Tenali Ramakrishna**.
- **Dhurjati**, a devotee of Shiva, composed two poetical works of great merit known as **Kalahasteeswara Mahatmayam** and **Kalahasteeswara Satakam**,
- **Pingali Surana** composed two works **Raghavapandaviyam** and **Kalapuranodayam**. In the former, he attempted a literary feat telling the story of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata simultaneously.
- Tenali Ramakrishna, the court jester, was an interesting figure of the Krishnadevaraya's court. His practical jokes on high-placed men of the time are recounted with pleasure even today.
- Ramakrishna was the author of Panduranga Mahatmayam which was considered one of the greatest poetical works of Telugu literature.
- Ramarajabhushana was the author of Vasucharitram. He was also known as **Bhattumurti**. His other works include Narasabhupaliyam and Harishchandra Nalopakhyanam. It is a poetical work on the model of Raghavapandaviyam. One can read in it stories of Nala as well as Harishchandra.
- Madayagari Mallana's work Rajashekharacharitra is a prabandha dealing with the wars and loves of Rajashekhar, king of Avanti.
- Ayyalaraju Ramabhadra was the author of two works Ramabhyudayam and Sakalakathasara Sangraham.

KANNADA LITERATURE:

- Apart from Telugu, Vijayanagara rulers extended their patronage to Kannada and Sanskrit writers as well.
- Many Jain scholars contributed to the growth of Kannada literature.
- Madhava wrote Dharmanathapurana on the fifteenth tirthankara.
- Another Jain scholar, Uritta Vilasa, wrote Dharma Parikshe.
- The Sanskrit works of the period include Yadavabhyudayam by Vedanatha Desika and Parasara Smriti Vyakhya of Madhavacharya.
- Kannada language developed fully after the tenth century AD.
- The earliest known literary work in Kannada is Kavirajamang written by the Rashtrakuta King, Nripatunga Amoghavarsha I.

- Pampa, known as the father of Kannada wrote his great poetic works Adi Purana and Vikramarjiva Vijaya in the tenth century AD.
- Pampa lived in the court of Chalukya Arikesari.
- In his poetic skill, beauty of description, delineation of character and development of rasa, Pampa is unrivalled.
- Ponna and Ranna were two other poets who lived during the reign of Rashtrakuta Krishna III.
- Ponna wrote an epic named Shanti Purana and Ranna wrote Ajitanatha Purana. Together Pampa, Ponna and Ranna earned the title ratnatraya (the three gems).
- In the thirteenth century new feats were achieved in Kannada literature.
- Harishvara wrote Harishchandra Kavya and Somanatha Charita whereas Bandhuvarma wrote Harivamshabhyudaya and Jiva Sambodhana.
- Under the patronage of later Hoysala rulers, several literary works were produced.
- Rudra Bhata wrote Jagannathavijaya. Andayya's Madana Vijaya or Kabbigara Kava is a work of special interest in pure Kannada without the mixture of Sanskrit words.
- Mallikarjuna's Suktisudharnava, the first anthology in Kannada and Kesirja's Shabdamanidarpana on grammar are two other standard works in the Kannada language.
- Kannada literature flourished considerably between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries under the patronage of the Vijayanagara kings.
- Poets of all religious groups made important contribution to it.
- Kunura Vyasa wrote Bharata and Narahari wrote Tarave Ramayana. This is the first Rama Katha in Kannada composed on the basis of Valmiki's Ramayana.
- Lakshamisha who lived in the seventeenth century wrote Jaïmini Bharata and earned the title of Kamata-Karicutavana-Chaitra (the spring of the Karnataka mango grove).
- The other eminent poet of this period was the great Sarvajna, popularly known as the people's poet. His aphoristic tripadi (three-lined) compositions serve as a source of wisdom and ethics.
- A special mention may be made of Honnamma, perhaps the first outstanding poetess in Kannada. Her Hadibadeya Dharma (Duty of a Devout Wife) is a compendium of ethics.

MALAYALAM LITERATURE:

- Malayalam is spoken in Kerala and the adjoining areas.
- The language of Malayalam emerged around the eleventh century AD.
- By fifteenth century Malayalam was recognised as an independent language.
- Bhasa Kautilya, a commentary on Arthashastra and Kokasandisan are two great works.
- Rama Panikkar and Ramanuj an Ezhuthachan are well known authors of Malayalam literature.
- Though it developed much later compared to other South Indian languages, Malayalam has made a mark as a powerful medium of expression.
- Now a large number of journals, newspapers and magazines are published in Malayalam.
- When people read and write in their own language, they enjoy it more. This is because language is a part of their culture. It is so well inter woven in their social life that they can express and feel their emotions as well in their own language.

TAMIL OR SANGAMA LITERATURE

- Tamil as a written language was known since the beginning of the Christian era.

- It is, therefore, no wonder that considerable Sangama literature was produced in the early four centuries of the Christian era, although it was finally compiled by 600 AD.
- Poets who in these assemblies were patronised by kings and chieftains produced the Sangama literature over a period of three to four centuries.
- Poets, bards and writers, authors came from various parts of South India to Madurai. Such assemblies were called “Sangamas”, and the literature produced in these assemblies was called “Sangama literature”.
- The contributions of Tamil saints like Thiruvalluvar who wrote ‘Kural’ which has been translated into many languages are noteworthy.
- The Sangama literature is a collection of long and short poems composed by various poets in praise of numerous heroes and heroines.
- They are secular in nature and of a very high quality. Three such sangams were held.
- The poems collected in the first sangam have been lost.
- In the second Sangam about 2000 poems have been collected.
- There are about 30,000 lines of poetry, which are arranged in eight anthologies called Ettuttokai.
- There are two main groups – the Patinenkil Kanakku (the eighteen lower collections) and Pattupattu (the ten songs). The former is generally assumed to be older than the latter, and considered to be of more historical importance.
- Thiruvalluvar’s work ‘Kural’ is divided into three parts.
- The first part deals with the epics, the second part with polity and government and the third part with love. Besides the Sangama texts, we have a text called Tolkkappiyam, which deals with grammar and poetry.
- In addition, we have the twin epics of Silappadikaram and Manimekalai.
- These two were composed around the sixth century AD.
- The first is considered as the brightest gem of Tamil literature and deals with a love story. The second epic was written by a grain merchant of Madurai.
- These epics throw light on the socio-economic life of Tamils from second century to sixth century AD. From the 6th to 12th century AD, the Tamil devotional poems written by Nayanmars (saints who sang in praise of Shaivism) and Alvars herald the great Bhakti movement which engulfed the entire Indian sub-continent.
- During this period, Kambaramayanam and Periya Puranam were two Tamil literary classic writers.

NORTHERN INDIAN LANGUAGES & LITERATURE

- The languages in India were evolving at two levels: the spoken and the written language.
- The old Brahmi script of the Ashoka days had undergone a great change. The alphabets during Ashoka’s period were uneven in size but by the time of Harsha, the letters had become of the same size and were regular, presenting the picture of a cultivated hand.
- The studies indicate that all the scripts of present northern Indian languages, except Urdu, had their origin in old Brahmi.
- If we compare the scripts of Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi, we can easily understand the change.
- As for the spoken word, there are over 200 languages or dialects spoken in India at present. Some are widely used while others are limited to a particular area. Out of all these, only twenty-two have found their way into our Constitution.

- A large number of people speak Hindi in its different forms that include Braj Bhasha, and Avadhi (spoken in Oudh region), Bhojpuri, Magadhi, and Maithili (spoken around Mithila), and Rajasthani and Khadi Boli (spoken around Delhi).
- Rajasthani is another variant or dialect of Hindi.
- This classification has been made on the basis of literature produced by great poets over a length of time.
- Thus, the language used by Surdas and Bihari has been given the name of Braj Bhasha; that used by Tulsidas in the Ramacharitamanasa is called Avadhi and the one used by Vidyapati has been termed as Maithili. But Hindi, as we know it today is the one called Khadi Boli.
- Though Khusrau has used Khadi Boli in his compositions in the thirteenth century its extensive use in literature began only in the nineteenth century. It even shows some influence of Urdu.

PERSIAN AND URDU

PERSIAN

- Although the roots of Persian language are as old as Sanskrit, it came to India with the coming of **Turks and Mongols** in the **twelfth century**.
- It is during their rule that Persian became the mode of communication of the court.
- One of the finest Persian poets is **Amir Khusrau Dehlavi** (Amir Khusrau of Delhi).
- Apart from his **Diwan** (collection of poetry in Persian), he also wrote **Nuh Sipihr** and the **Masnavi Duwal Rani Khizr Khan**, that is a tragic love poem.
- In the Delhi Sultanate, multiple texts were written in Persian.
- Most of them were concerned with creating histories for the rulers.
- Zia-ud din **Barani** is amongst the top historians of that period and he wrote **Tarikh-e-Firuz Shahi**.
- Another famous historian was Minhajus- Siraj.
- There are several travel accounts written by famous travelers like **Ibn Batuta** (Moroccan traveller) that explain the socio-political scenario of the period.
- The production and dissemination of literature in Persian shot up in the Mughal period.
- Mughal emperor **Babar** wrote **Tuzuk-I-Babari** in Turkish, which is his *autobiography* and gives us important information about the Mughal conquest of India.
- One of the greatest sources about the period of Jahangir was **Tuzuk-I-Jahangiri**.
- Another important work is **Humayun-nama** which gives an account of his life and struggles to get the throne, written by half-sister of Humayun, **Gulbadan Begum**.
- The greatest emperor of this period was **Akbar** and **Ain-e Akbari** and **Akbarnama** written by his court historian **Abul Fazl**, are the best examples of literature of this period.
- He ordered several translations of Sanskrit texts like *Ramayana*, *Bhagwata Gita* and several *Upanishads* into Persian. Two major examples are the *Mahabharata* which when translated into Persian was called **Razmnama**.
- One of highly illustrated works from this period is called **Hamzanama**, which depicts the story of the mythical Persian hero, Amir Hamza.
- Malik Muhammad Jayasi also composed his **Padmavat** in this period.
- Other major writers of this period include **Badauni**, who wrote on ethics of political rule and **Faizi** who was considered a master of Persian poetry.
- Several texts were produced in the period of **Shah Jahan**, especially about the emperor like the **Shah Jahan-nama** of Inayat Khan.

- In **Aurangzeb's** period, several satirists like **Mir Jafar Zatalli** wrote their **Kulliyat** (collection of verses).
- Texts like **Tabqat-i-Alamgiri** give us a good idea about the period of eighteenth century.
- **Padshahnama** was written by Abdul Hamid Lahori. It is about **Shah Jahan**.

URDU SCRIPT

- The Urdu alphabet is the **right-to-left** alphabet used for the Urdu language.
- It is a modification of the Persian alphabet, which is itself a **derivative of the Arabic alphabet** and has its origins in **13th century**.
- It is closely related to the development of the Nastaliq style of Perso-Arabic script.
- Urdu script in its extended form is known as **Shahmukhi script** and is used for writing other Indo-Aryan languages of North Indian subcontinent like Punjabi and Saraiki as well.

URDU LITERATURE

- The linguists have debated that Urdu developed through the interaction of Persian and Hindi, especially in the barracks of the Turkish army.
- Amir Khusrau also wrote several texts in Urdu, which was in its nascent stage in this period.
- The language mostly follows the grammar of Hindi and the form and script of Persian.
- As it was used by the Bahamani state of Ahmedabad, Golconda, Bijapur and Berar, it was initially also called **Dakkani (southern)**.
- One of the greatest Urdu poets is **Mirza Ghalib** who composed **Diwan** (collection of poetry) in Urdu.
- Several other Urdu poets were Sauda, Dard and Mir Taqi Mir.
- In the twentieth century, a major figure in Urdu literary writing was **Iqbal** who wrote **Bang-i-Dara**.
- He is famous for writing '**Saare jahan se achcha**', which has become a celebrated nationalistic song.
- Apart from the last emperors of the Mughal empire like Bahadur Shah Zafar, who also wrote in Urdu; the Nawabs of Awadh patronised several scholars who composed in Urdu.
- In the twentieth century, it was given uplift by the modernizer Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan who wrote several didactic and nationalist texts in Urdu and English.

HINDI AND ITS DIALECTS

- Hindi as we know it today, evolved between 7th and 14th century from **Apabhramsa**, which was evolved from Prakrit.
- The language got its biggest boost with the **Bhakti movement**, which shunned the use of Sanskrit as it was the language of the Brahmins and common people did not use it.
- Hence, they started writing in the language of the people and the twelfth century onwards we see a sharp rise in regional languages like Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, etc.
- For a long time, Hindi literature was in the shadow of its Sanskrit antecedents, but **Prithviraj Raso** was the **first Hindi book** and it documents the life and challenges faced by Prithviraj Chauhan.
- The bulk of the work is poetry by Bhakti writers like **Kabir** who is famous for his **dohas** (couplets) that are used by the common people of India even today.

- **Tulsidas** produced couplets in Braj and was peppered by Persian. He became immortal by writing ***Ramcharitmanas***, one the most revered Hindu texts.
- Lord Krishna's life also became the subject of various medieval poets like **Surdas** who wrote ***Sur Sagar*** about Krishna's infancy and adolescent affairs with the *gopis*.
- Rahim, Bhushan and Raskhan also wrote about the devotion to Lord Krishna.
- **Mirabai** is also famous as the woman who renounced the world for Lord Krishna and wrote *Bhakti* poetry for him.
- **Bihari's Satsai** is also famous in this regard.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we see that Indian literary styles have undergone considerable changes over a long period of time. Spread of Buddhism from India to various countries has influenced their scripts also, especially Sri Lanka, Tibet and South-East Asia. And, Indian writing tradition has also been changed due to advent of Islam in India. However, it remains to be seen how the scripts and languages of the country survive and evolve in the era of globalization where English is the lingua franca.