

HISTORY

CHAPTER-1

SOURCES



After studying this chapter you learn :

- About the sources required to study history.
- The different types of sources of history.
- The importance of archaeological sources
- To understand the importance of Halmidi inscription.
- The oral sources also support the study of history.

Why are sources necessary for writing of history?

What are sources? Sources are the basic materials necessary for the construction of history. They give details of a particular period.

Sources are the essential ingredients for the construction of history. They are very important for understanding the past events. History can be compared to a human body. Sources are like the skeleton of the human body. It follows that without sources, there can be no construction of history. The kind of source used determines the kind of view we get about the history. This is the reason why there is no universal history. It is well known that there should be definite sources for all facts and events described in history. Sources can be classified into two groups.

1. Literary sources
2. Archaeological sources.

Literary sources are of two kinds.

1. Native Literature
2. Foreign Literature.

Archaeological sources are of three kinds

1. Inscriptions
2. Coins
3. Monuments



Huien Tsang

Literature produced by Indians is called native literature, and the sources comprising such literature are called native literary sources. Vishakadatta's 'Mudrarakshasa', Kalhana's 'Rajatarangini', Ashwagosha's 'Buddha Charita', Kautilya's 'Arthashastra', the 'Tripitikas' of Buddhist literature, Srivijaya's 'Kavirajamarga' are some of the literary productions worth mentioning.

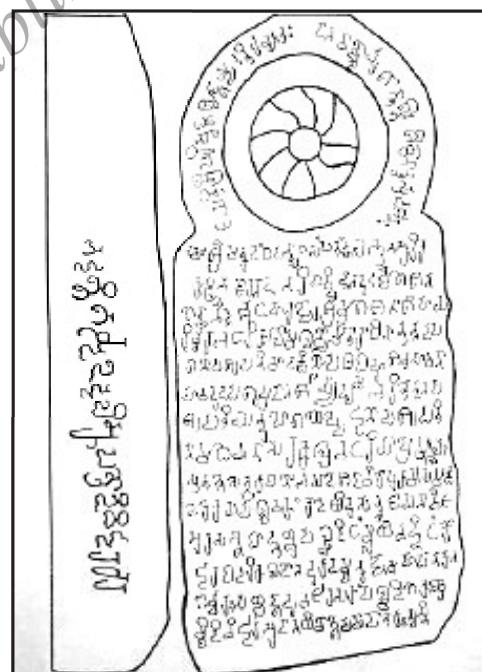
The writings of foreign visitors, explorers and scholars comprise of foreign literature and such writings are called foreign literary sources. Megasthanes' Indica, HuienTsang's 'Si-yu-ki', Fa-hien's 'Gho-kho-ki', Ceylon's 'Deepavamsha' and 'Mahavamsha', the writings of Furneo Nuniz and the writings of Barbosa and Nicolo Conti who visited the Vijayanagar Empire are some examples of this kind of source.

What are archaeological sources? Do you know about them? Archaeological sources are the inscriptions, coins, monuments, pottery, and other artefacts that have been obtained during archaeological excavations.

Study of Inscriptions

Inscriptions are the living fact-bearers of a particular period. They provide us information about religion, culture, economy, administration and other aspects of that period. The earliest inscription obtained in our country has been the inscription written by the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. He got the inscription engraved on rocks and stone pillars. Such inscriptions are found in many places in India. These are mostly in Bramhi script of Prakrit language. Some inscriptions have been found in Greek, Armic and Kharoshthi script too.

Ashoka's inscriptions have been found in Maski and Bramhagiri in Karnataka. The first inscription available in the Kannada language is the Halmidi inscription. This was written during the reign of King Kakutsavarma of the Kadamba dynasty.



Halmidi Inscription

Study of Coins

Numismatics is the study of the evolution, nature and development of coins. Coins have been minted by using a variety of metals. These play a significant role in re-constructing history. They are valuable sources of information regarding the religion, culture, administration, social and economic aspects of the periods to which they belong.



Coins

Study of Monuments and Ruins

Stupas, basadis (Jain temples), temples, palaces, forts and ruins are the kinds of monuments which exist today. These monuments enable us to know about the civilization, technology, social and economic conditions of that period. They reflect the achievements of kings and administrators. Ashoka pillars, Ajanta and Ellora caves, the Elephanta caves, Badami, Aihole and Pattadakallu of Karnataka are evidences of India's glorious heritage.

Indian architecture is unique. Innumerable stupas, basadis, chaityas

and thousands of temples have emerged throughout India over the centuries. A study of these help us to know indirectly about the religious, political, social and economic life of that period.

Oral Sources

Today, many oral sources are being used to understand the diverse Indian heritage. From time immemorial, human society has preserved its experiences and memories in the form of lyrics, poems and songs, they are passed on from generation to generation through oral communication. This tradition existed before the advent of writing. Indian history begins with this oral tradition. The



Sage Shuka narrating mahabharatha to Parikshit and the sages

Vedas survived as oral tradition for many generations after which they were recorded in written form.

Legends

There are many legends related to individuals, events and customs in many parts of India. Legends are also referred to as Sthala-Puranas. Usually they do not provide direct information for the study of history. They reflect social beliefs. They also highlight the glory of certain individuals or the significance of a particular place. Generally we come across stala-puranas related to religious places.

EXERCISES

I Fill in the blanks with suitable words :

1. The two kinds of literary sources are _____ and _____.
2. The literary source of Aswaghosha's is _____.
3. The first inscription found in the Kannada language is _____.

II Answer the following questions in brief :

4. What are sources?
5. Give two examples for native and foreign literature each.
6. What are archaeological sources? Explain with examples.

III Activities :

7. Discuss with your teacher how one event in history leads to another and forms a chain of events.
8. Visit a monument and collect information about it.
9. Collect antique coins.
10. Visit Archaeological Museum.

IV Project :

11. Collect information about coins and prepare a small project report on it.

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