



1. Sources of History

We studied ancient Indian history last year. This year, we are going to study the medieval period of Indian history. Broadly, the period from the ninth century CE till the end of the eighteenth century CE is considered to be the medieval period of Indian history. In this lesson, we are going to study the sources of medieval history.

History gives us a chronological, scientific and systematic account of past events.

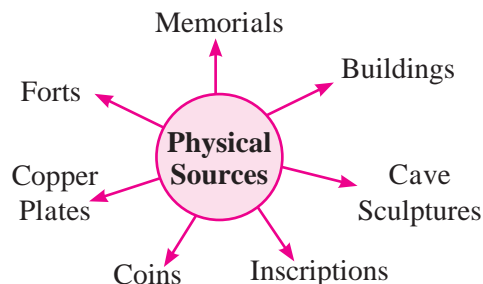
Four factors are very important from the viewpoint of history. They are – Individuals, Society, Place and Time. History must be based on authentic evidence or proofs. These proofs are known as the sources of history.

Let us classify these sources into material sources, written sources and oral sources to learn more about them. Let us also evaluate the sources of history.

We have to consider many factors related to the historical event that we want to study. It is necessary to support our study with historical sources. These sources have to be verified. We have to see whether they are authentic. It is necessary to use these sources judiciously and only after a critical analysis.

Forts have an important place among material sources. Some major types of forts are hill forts, forest forts, sea forts and forts on the plains. Monuments include *samadhis*, graves, *veergala* and buildings include palaces, ministerial mansions, Queen's quarters (*raniwasa*) and also houses of common people. They

Material Sources



all provide insights about that period. Looking at them, we come to know about the development of architecture, the economic conditions, the quality of art, style of the building construction and people's standard of living in that particular period.



Can you tell?

How do coins narrate history?



Let's learn.

Since ancient times, coins like *kavadi*, *damadi*, *dhela*, *pai*, *paisa*, *ana* and *rupee* were used. Some local idioms or proverbs are based on coins. For example;

* 'एक फुटकी कवडी देणार नाही.' Here *phutaki kavadi* means 'the lowest bit of money'.

* सोलह आना सच! means 'Hundred percent true!'

The coins made by different rulers using metals like gold, silver, copper are important sources of history. From these coins we learn about the rulers, their period, governance, religious ideas,



Veergala

personal details, etc. Similarly, we also learn about the financial transactions and economic conditions prevailing at that time. We also see how far metallurgy had advanced in that period. From the images of Ram-Sita on the coins of Emperor Akbar or Shiva Parvati on the coins of Hyder Ali we see the religious co-ordination of those days. The Peshwas used the Arabic or Persian language on their coins. This throws light on the use of language in that period.

An inscription is a carving on a stone, or a wall etc. For example, the inscriptions found in the Brihadishwara temple premises in Tanjavur. Many inscriptions of the period of Chalukya,



A coin of the Peshwa period



A coin of Hyder Ali

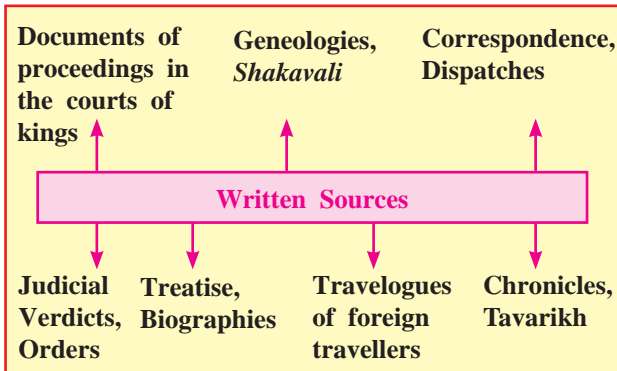
Rashtrakuta, Chola and Yadav kings have been found. An inscription is considered to be a very important and reliable source of history. It helps us to understand features like the language, script, social life of a period. Inscriptions carved on sheets of copper are known as 'copper plates'. Royal edicts, verdicts, etc. are inscribed on copper plates.



Do you know ?

Chaityas, Viharas, temples, churches, mosques, agiaries, durgahs, mukbaras, gurudwaras, monuments, sculptures, wells, minarets, village boundaries and gates, weapons, utensils, ornaments, clothes, decorative articles, toys, implements, musical instruments are all material sources of history.

Written Sources : We learn about significant historical events in the medieval period from sources like the writing styles of scripts like, Devanagari, Arabic, Persian, Modi etc. as also from the varieties of different languages, bhurja-patras, religious manuscripts, treatises, edicts, decrees, biographies, paintings, etc. We can gather information about the food items, attire, conventions and rules of conduct of the people, festivals and about people's life etc. from these sources. Sources of this type are called 'written sources' of history.



During this period, travellers from other countries came to India. They have written travelogues or accounts of their travels. Some of them are Al Biruni, Ibn Batuta, Niccolao Manucci. Babur's biography, 'Shrishivbharat' or the Sanskrit biography of Shivaji Maharaj composed by the poet Paramanand as well as various other biographies of different rulers and their correspondence help us to understand the policies and administrative systems of the rulers and their diplomatic relations with others.

Tavarikh or Tarikh means the sequence of events. Tavarikhs written by Al Biruni, Ziauddin Barani, Maulana Ahmed, Yahya Bin Ahmed, Mirza Hyder, Bhimsen Saxena, etc. are available.

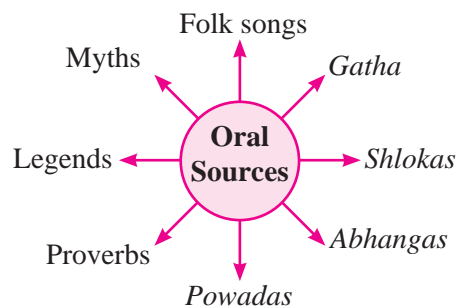
Bakhar is a type of chronicle that originated in Maharashtra. Chronicles help in understanding aspects like the contemporary political happenings, linguistic transactions, cultural life, social conditions, etc. Many of the chronicles in Marathi were written many years after the events had occurred. As a result, they are seen to rely on hearsays. Some of these chronicles are Mahikavatichi Bakhar, Sabhasad Bakhar, Chitnisachi Bakhar, Bhausahabachi Bakhar, etc. The works of contemporary western historians like Robert Arm, M.C.Sprengel and Grant Duff are also important.



Do this.

- Make a collection of *powadas*, tribal songs.
- Present them in the cultural programmes arranged in your school.

Oral sources : We understand various aspects of folk life through folk literature traditionally passed on from generation to



generation. Some examples are – *owis*, folk songs, *powadas*, folk tales, legends, and myths. Such type of sources are called 'oral sources' of history.

History is written with the help of the three types of sources mentioned above. Even after it has been written down, research on it goes on continuously. New sources and information come to light through this research. Then history has to be rewritten accordingly. We can see that our history books and those of our parents and grandparents, differ to a certain extent.



Do you know ?

The Powada of Tanaji : Given below is an extract from a *powada* composed by Tulashidas Shahir. He portrays the Kondhana campaign in it. The *powada* contains beautiful character sketches of Tanaji, Shelarmama, Shivaji Maharaj, Veermata Jijabai, etc.

मामा बोलाया तो लागला । ऐंशी वर्षीचा म्हातारा ॥
 “लगिन राहिले रायबाचे तो मजला सांगावी ॥
 माझ्या तानाजी सुभेदारा । जे गेले सिंहगडाला ॥
 त्याचे पाठिरे पाहिले । नाही पुढारे पाहिले ॥
 ज्याने आंबारे खाईला । बाठा बुजरा लाविला ॥
 त्याचे झाड होउनि आंबे बांधले ।
 किल्ला हाती नाही आला ॥
 सिंहगड किल्ल्याची वार्ता ।
 काढू नको तानाजी सुभेदारा ॥
 जे गेले सिंहगडाला । ते मरूनशानी गेले ॥
 तुमचा सपाटा होईल । असे बोलू नको रे मामा ॥
 आम्ही सूरमर्द क्षत्री । नाही भिणार मरणाला ॥”



Say your say!

Suggest measures for preserving sources of history.

Evaluating the sources of history :

It is necessary to take certain precautions before using these sources of history. We have to examine their authenticity and see which are genuine and which are fake. Their quality can be determined with the help of internal standards. We also have to study the integrity of the writers, their personal interests, the period

in which they live and the political pressures on them. It is also important to see whether they rely on hearsay or give an eyewitness account. We need to consider the exaggerations, metaphors and other literary devices they use. Their information has to be verified with the help of other contemporary sources. The information may be one sided, contradictory or exaggerated. It has to be seen in a proper perspective. The sources have to be subjected to a critical analysis. The author's impartiality and neutrality are very important in writing history.



Exercise

1. Complete the names of the following sources of history.

l _ _ _ _ d
t _ _ _ _ h
b _ _ _ _ r
p _ _ _ _ a
i _ _ _ _ i _ _ i _ n
m _ _ u _ _ _ t

2. Let's write.

- (1) What do monuments include?
- (2) What is a Tarikh?
- (3) What qualities of the author are important in the writing of history?

3. Find the odd man out.

- (1) Material sources, written sources, unwritten sources, oral sources.
- (2) Monuments, coins, cave sculptures, stories

- (3) *Bhurjapatras*, temples, treatises, paintings.
- (4) *Owis*, *tarikhs*, folk tales, myths

4. Explain the following concepts.

- (1) Material sources
- (2) Written sources
- (3) Oral sources

5. Is it necessary to evaluate sources of history? Give your opinion.

6. Write why in your words.

- (1) A stone inscription is considered to be an authentic source of history.
- (2) Oral sources reveal various aspects of people's lives.

Activity

Visit any museum that is nearby. Gather information about the sources of history from the period that you are studying and record it in your activity book.

