NEXT IAS

INDIAN HISTORY

Ancient India

Medieval India
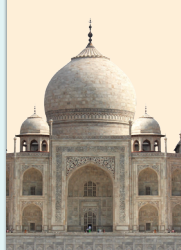
Modern India

FIRST STEP

NCERT Based Course for **CSE**
after **class 11**

INDIAN HISTORY

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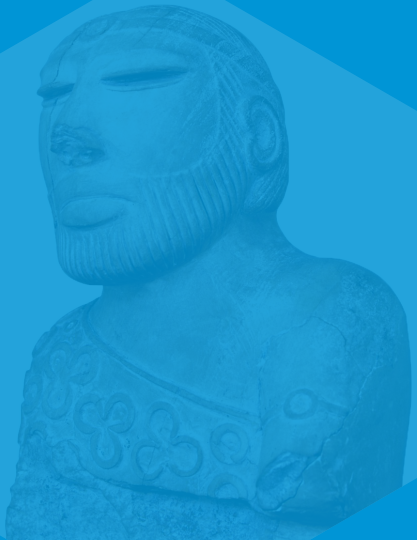
Ancient India

Ideas About Early Indian Past

The historiography (the scholarly activity of constructing and writing history) of ancient and early medieval India reveals many significant changes over time.

Historical analysis involves carefully examining the available sources of information, searching for fresh evidence, and devising creative, innovative ways of interpreting historical data.

All historical interpretations are ultimately based on evidence derived from the sources of history, conventionally divided into two categories—literary and archaeological.

1.1 Introduction

History

The term History, which comes from the Greek word '*Historia*', refers about not only the ancient events occurred in the past but also discovery, collection and proper interpretation about these events.

The study of past events can be divided into: Pre-history, Proto-history and documented history.

- *Pre-history* includes the events that occurred before the invention of writing.

- *Proto-history* includes the period between Pre-history and documented History. During this period there was no significant cultural and organizational development but have been mentioned in the written records of contemporary civilizations. Example: The Indus Valley Civilization comes under this category.

- *Documented history* is the study of past based on written records and archeological sources.

1.2 About Indian History

History is not one but many stories, only a few of which have as yet been written. The challenges to build on the advances that have already been achieved so far are many.

One of the major challenge is periodisation of history, the dividing lines may vary, but the ancient period can be considered as stretching roughly from the earliest times to the 6th century CE; the early medieval from the 6th to the 13th centuries; the medieval from the 13th to the 18th centuries; and the modern from the 18th century to the present.

Currently, there are two parallel images of ancient Indian history —one based on literary sources, the other on archaeology. Texts and archaeology generate different sorts of historical narratives and suggest different rhythms of cultural continuity, transition, and change. Correlations between literature and archaeology lead towards a more nuanced image of ancient India.

1.3   Sources of Ancient Indian History

For reconstruction of ancient Indian history, there are two main sources:

1. *Non-literary sources* (Coins, archeological remains, inscriptions, foreign accounts, etc.)
2. *Literary sources* (Vedas, Puranas, Buddhist and Jaina religious texts, Sangam literature, etc.)

Non-Literary Sources

- **Coins:**
  - The earliest coins found in India contained certain symbols, which were called punch-marked coins. These coins were made of silver and copper.
  - The first coins to bear the images and names of rulers were issued by the Indo-Greek rulers who established control over the north-western part of Ancient India.

Indo-Greek Coins

> **NOTE**
>
> The study of coins is called Numismatics

- **Inscriptions:**
  - The inscriptions engraved on stone and metals like copper give an idea about achievements of kings, royal orders and decisions which help to understand religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism, and administrative policies of that time.

- **Accounts of Foreign travellers:**
  - In ancient India, the Greek, Chinese and Roman visitors came either as ambassadors or travellers or to seek religious knowledge, and left behind a rich account of our historical past.

Hsuan-Tsang

- Some of the notable visitors were Greek Ambassador *Megasthenes* who wrote "**Indica**", Chinese travellers *Fa-Hein* and *Hsuan-Tsang*.

- **Archaeological remains:**
  - The archaeological remains recovered as a result of excavation and exploration provide great help to understand the living and customs of that era.

Harappa

  - The excavated sites belonging to the Harappan period show the layout of the settlements, the type of pottery, seals, tool and even the type of cereals they consumed.

Literary Sources

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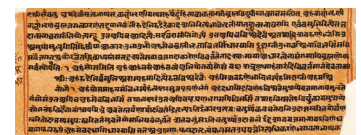
Rigveda

  - **The Vedas** (Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda) give us a clear picture of the political, social and economic life of the Aryans, and conflicts between the Aryans and the non-Aryans.

  - **The Puranas** which are 18 in number provide historical information of various dynasties, including Magadha.

  - **The Upanishad**, which speculates about the ontological connection between humanity and the cosmos constitute the concluding portions of the Vedas, they are also called as *Vedanta* ("the conclusion of the Vedas"), they serve as the foundational texts in the theological discourses of many religious texts.

Do you Know? The 'national motto' of India inscribed below the Emblem of india is taken from Mundaka Upanishad.

- **The epics of Mahabharta and Ramayana** contain various accounts of social life and religious thinking of the people of ancient India.

- **The Buddhist religious texts** - such as Tripitaka, Nikaya, Jataka and Dvipavamsa gives us an impression of the time of Buddha and Mahajanpadas.

- **The Jain religious works** - such as Angas and Bhagavatisutra are important religious works and serves as sources of Ancient Indian History.

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

  - **Sangam literature:** This is the earliest south Indian literature, produced by poets who assembled together (Sangam), and provides valuable information about the social, economic and political life. These literature include Silappadikaram, Manimekalai, among others.

- The 'Mahabhashya' of Patanjali, the 'Ashtadhyayi' of Panini and the 'Arthashastra' of Kautilya contain valuable information of ancient Indian history.

- **Literary work of Kalidasa:** The works of the poet Kalidasa which include Abhijnanasakuntalam, Kumarasambhava, Vikramarvasiyam, etc. give an insight into the social and cultural life of northern and central India in the age of the Guptas.

- Kalhana composed Rajatarangini on history of Kashmir. He presents continuous details of the political events of Kashmir from ancient times down to the twelfth century A.D.
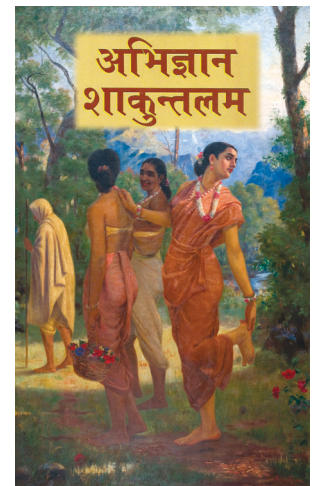
- Banabhatta, the poet laureate of Harshavardhan, composed the Harshacharita The book gives us a report on the early reign of Harshavardhana.

CHRONOLOGY OF SOME IMPORTANT ANCIENT INDIA TEXTS

?	Vedic Texts
	Vedanga texts
	Mahabharata
	Ramayana
?	Puranas
	Dharmasutras
	Smritis
	Tipitaka
?	Jaina canon
	Sangam texts
	Tirukkural
	Tamil epics (Silappadikaram and Manimekalai)

| 2000 | 1500 | 600 | 500 | 400 | 300 | 200 | 100 | 0 | 100 | 200 | 300 | 400 | 500 | 600 | 700 | 800 | 900 |

BCE   CE
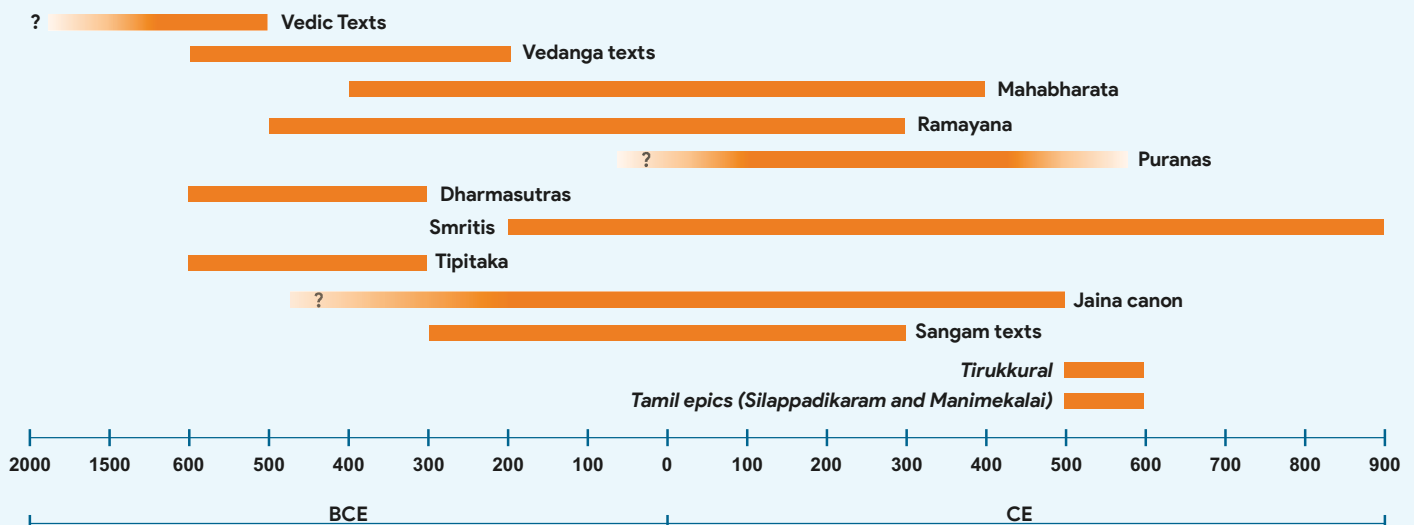
Prehistoric Age in India

> "The term 'Prehistory' refers as the time 'before history', i.e. the time when there was no documentation of events.

The available knowledge of Pre-historical period is based on some archaeological evidences like ancient coins, inscriptions, pottery, stone tools, and metal implements that have been found at many places.

It mainly consists of four periods, namely: Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Chalcolithic period .

2.1 Introduction

Since the 19th century, hundreds of prehistoric sites have been identified in the Indian subcontinent and new methodologies and perspectives have enhanced our understanding of the stone age—the longest part of the human past.

The sources of information include structural remains, burials, plant remains, bones of humans and animals, and rock art. However, the most prolific and important sources are the tools, mostly of stone, made and used by prehistoric humans. The craft skills represented by these tools must have been developed through experimentation over centuries and carefully transmitted from one generation to the next.

2.2 Prehistoric Periods in India

Ancient history can be divided into different periods according to the tools used by people then.

Age	Period	Remarks
Paleolithic Age	500,000 BCE – 10,000 BCE	• People in Paleolithic age were dependent on hunting for their livelihood and used to travel from one place to another depending on the availability of natural resources for survival. They developed sharp weapons of stone for hunting purpose.
Mesolithic Age	10,000 BCE – 6000 BCE	• During Mesolithic age, people were still hunter-gatherers, but were possibly starting to stay in one place. • Domestication of animals can be seen in this age.
Neolithic Age	6000 BCE – 1000 BCE	• During Neolithic age, stone tools and weapons were also further modified and were sharpened by fine shedding of the stones. • It also contributed greatly in the field of transportation by an important invention of the wheel.
Chalcolithic Age	3000 BCE – 500 BCE	• The people of Chalcolithic age practiced agriculture. They used tools made up of copper and stone. • Painted pottery was the most distinguishing feature of all Chalcolithic cultures.

Do you Know? Robert Bruce Foote who was a British geologist and archaeologist, is considered as the father of Indian Pre-History.

Stone Age

On the basis of geological age, the type and technology of stone tools, and subsistence base, the Indian stone age is classified primarily into three types:

Palaeolithic Age (Old Stone Age)

- The term 'Palaeolithic' is derived from the Greek word 'palaeo' which means old and 'lithic' meaning stone.

- The palaeolithic culture of India started to develop in the Pleistocene period or the Ice Age, when the earth was covered with ice and weather was so cold that human or plant life could not survive.

- The main characteristics of the Palaeolithic age in India show that:

  - People were food gatherers, ate wild fruits and vegetables, and lived on hunting.

  - They had no knowledge of houses, pottery, agriculture. It was only in later stages they discovered fire.

  - They used unpolished, rough stones like hand axes, choppers, blades, burins and scrapers.

- The Major sites of Palaeolithic age: Soan valley (in present Pakistan), Sites in the Thar Desert, Kashmir, Mewar plains, Saurashtra, etc.

Mesolithic Age (Middle Stone Age)

- The term Mesolithic is derived from two Greek words - 'meso' and 'lithic'. In Greek 'meso' means middle and 'lithic' means stone. Hence, the Mesolithic stage of prehistory is also known as the '*Middle Stone Age*'.

- The main characteristics of the Mesolithic Age in India show that:

  - The first animal to be domesticated was the wild ancestor of the dog. Sheep and goats were the most common domesticated animals.

  - The Mesolithic people lived in semi-permanent settlements along with occupying caves and open grounds.

  - The Mesolithic men started to wear clothes made of animal skin.

  - The first human colonization of the Ganga Plains happened during this period.

- The main important Mesolithic Sites in India : Bagor (Rajasthan), Adamgarh (Madhya Pradesh), Bhimbetka caves, Langhnaj (Gujarat), Biharanpur (West Bengal), Langhnaj (Gujarat) and Kaimur region of Mirzapur (U.P).

Neolithic Period (New Stone Age)

- The term Neolithic is derived from the Greek word 'neo' which means new and 'lithic' meaning stone. Thus, the term Neolithic Age refers to the 'New Stone Age'.

- The Neolithic age saw man turning into a food producer from food gatherer.

- The main characteristics of the Neolithic Age in India show that:

  - The people used microlithic blades in addition to tools made of polished stones. They also used tools and weapons made of bones - such as needles, scrapers, borers, arrowheads, etc. The use of new polished tools made it easier for humans to cultivate, hunt and perform other activities in a better manner.

- With the advent of agriculture, people were required to store their food grains as well as to cook, eat the product, etc. In the initial stages of the Neolithic age, handmade pottery was made but later on, foot wheels were used to make pots.

- The people of Neolithic age lived in rectangular or circular houses which were made of mud and reeds. Neolithic men also knew how to make boats and could spin cotton, wool and weave cloth. The people of the Neolithic age led a more settled life and paved the way for the beginning of civilization.

- The people of the Neolithic age cultivated land and grew fruits and corn like ragi and horse gram (kulati). They also domesticated cattle, sheep and goats.

- **The main important Neolithic Sites in India :** Koldihwa (UP) and Mahagara (UP), Mehrgarh (Balochistan, Pakistan), Burzahom (Kashmir), Chirand (Bihar), Belan Valley, Gufkral (Kashmir), Piklihal, Brahmagiri, Maski, Takkalakota and Hallur (Karnataka).

Chalcolithic Age (Stone Copper Age)

- The Chalcolithic Age marked the emergence of the use of metal along with stone tools. The first metal to be used was copper. The chalcolithic age largely applied to the pre-Harappan phase.

- The main characteristics of the Chalcolithic Age in India show that:

  - The people domesticated animals and cultivated food grains.

  - They domesticated cows, sheep, goats, pig and buffaloes and hunted deer. The people of the Chalcolithic phase produced wheat and rice, they also cultivated bajra. They also produced several pulses such as lentil (masur), black gram, green gram, and grass pea.

  - The people of the stone-copper phase used different types of pottery, one of which is called black and red pottery and seems to have been widely prevalent in that era. The ochre-coloured pottery was also popular.

- **The main important Chalcolithic Sites in India :** Ahar (Banas valley, South Eastern Rajasthan), Gilund (Banas valley, Rajasthan), Daimabad (Maharashtra), Malwa (Madhya Pradesh), Kayatha (Madhya Pradesh), Chirand, Senuar, Sonpur (Bihar), Mahishdal (West Bengal), Songaon, Inamgaon and Nasik (Maharashtra), Navdatoli (on Narmada), Nevasa (Jorwe, Maharashtra) and Eran (Madhya Pradesh).

Q.1 What were the crops raised by the Harappans?
1. Cotton   2. Wheat
3. Barley   4. Peas

Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
(a) 1, 2, 3 and 4   (b) 2, 3 and 4
(c) 1, 2 and 3   (d) 2 and 3

Q.2 Which of the following statements about the Harappan people is incorrect?
(a) The Harappans were phallus worshippers.
(b) They worshipped gods in the form of human beings.
(c) They placed their gods in temples.
(d) They looked upon the earth as a fertility goddess.

Q.3 Which of the following statements about the Rigvedic Aryans is incorrect?
(a) We do not find any trace of widow remarriage in the Rigvedic period.
(b) We have some indications of polyandry in this period.
(c) There are no examples of child marriage in this period.
(d) The practice of levirate was known.

Q.4 Who among the following occupied the supreme position in the Later Vedic pantheon?
(a) Indra   (b) Prajapati
(c) Agni   (d) Varuna

Q.5 Which type of pottery was most popular with the Later Vedic people?
(a) Black-slipped Ware
(b) Black and Red Ware
(c) Painted Grey Ware
(d) Red Ware

Q.6 Which of the doctrines of Jainism was added by Mahavira?
(a) Do not speak a lie.
(b) Observe continence.
(c) Do no commit violence.
(d) Do not steal.

Q.7 Who is said to be responsible for the spread of Jainism in Karnataka?
(a) Ajatashatru   (b) Chandragupta Maurya
(c) Bimbisara   (d) Mahapadma Nanda

Q.8 In what respect did Jainism differ from Buddhism?
(a) In its stress on the doctrine of ahimsa
(b) In denying the authority of the Vedas
(c) In opposing animal sacrifice
(d) In its attitude towards trade

Q.9 The Pitaka that contains pronouncements attributed to the Buddha, laying down numerous rules for the conduct of the order is
(a) Vinaya Pitaka
(b) Sutta Pitaka
(c) Abhidhamma Pitaka
(d) All the three Pitakas

Q.10 The Veda that contains charms and spells to ward off evils and diseases is
(a) Rigveda   (b) Atharvaveda
(c) Samaveda   (d) Yajurveda

Q.11 In Jainism, 'Perfect Knowledge' is referred to as
(a) Nirvana   (b) Ratna
(c) Kaivalya   (d) Jina

Q.73 Bhimbetka caves which is famous for prehistoric paintings, is located is:
(a) Madhya Pradesh
(b) Kerala
(c) Jharkhand
(d) Uttar Pradesh

Q.74 Banas valley is located in:
(a) Rajasthan
(b) Uttar Pradesh
(c) Afghanistan
(d) Kashmir

Q.75 With reference to the invaders in ancient India which one of the following is the correct chronological order?
(a) Greeks–Sakas–Kushanas
(b) Greeks–Kushanas–Sakas
(c) Sakas–Greeks–Kushanas
(d) Sakas–Kushanas–Greeks

Q.76 The system of philosophy with which the name of Kapila is prominently associated is
(a) Purva Mimamsa
(b) Sankhya
(c) Nyaya
(d) Uttara Mimamsa

Q.77 Among the four works mentioned below which one is encyclopaedic in nature?
(a) Amarakosha
(b) Siddhanta Shiromani
(c) Brihat Samhita
(d) Astanga Hridaya

Q.78 The famous dialogue between Nachiketa and Yama is mentioned in the
(a) Chhandogyopanishad
(b) Mundakopanishad
(c) Kathopanishad
(d) Kenopanishad

Q.79 The Harappan civilization does not have homogeneity or uniformity in
(a) weights and measures
(b) cereal crops
(c) burial practices
(d) both (b) and (c)

Q.80 Sangam literature is related to
(a) Vedic Age
(b) Indus Valley Civilization
(c) South India
(d) None of the above

Ancient India
ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (c)	3. (a)	4. (b)	5. (d)	6. (b)	7. (b)	8. (a)
9. (a)	10. (b)	11. (c)	12. (b)	13. (b)	14. (c)	15. (c)	16. (b)
17. (c)	18. (c)	19. (a)	20. (b)	21. (d)	22. (b)	23. (d)	24. (b)
25. (c)	26. (b)	27. (c)	28. (a)	29. (d)	30. (c)	31. (a)	32. (a)
33. (d)	34. (c)	35. (a)	36. (a)	37. (d)	38. (d)	39. (a)	40. (d)
41. (c)	42. (c)	43. (c)	44. (b)	45. (c)	46. (c)	47. (c)	48. (a)
49. (b)	50. (a)	51. (b)	52. (d)	53. (c)	54. (b)	55. (a)	56. (a)
57. (c)	58. (b)	59. (c)	60. (a)	61. (d)	62. (b)	63. (b)	64. (b)
65. (a)	66. (d)	67. (a)	68. (d)	69. (c)	70. (a)	71. (d)	72. (a)
73. (a)	74. (a)	75. (a)	76. (b)	77. (c)	78. (c)	79. (b)	80. (c)