

HISTORY

WHAT, WHERE, HOW AND WHEN?

Importance of Studying History

History is the systematic study of past events. It is constructed on the basis of the study of the available material remains and records. People who study the past are known as **historians**. Historians study the past with the help of many written and unwritten sources.

Importance of Studying History

We study history for the following reasons:

1. History helps us to find out the ways in which people lived in the past. For example, it tells us about the food people ate and the clothes they wore.
2. It also throws light on the places where people lived and the various activities in which they were engaged.
3. History tells us the story of the development of human kind and the progress of various civilisations.

The Places Where People Lived in India

Some of the places where people in the past lived are:

River Indus and its tributaries: About 4,700 years ago, some of the earliest cities flourished alongside the River Indus and its tributaries.

River Ganga and its tributaries: In ancient times many kingdoms developed on the banks of the River Ganga and its tributaries. Magadha was the most powerful kingdom among these.

River Narmada: The River Narmada was the home of some of the earliest people. These people were basically hunters and gatherers who hunted animals and gathered fruits and forest produce. They had vast knowledge about the plant and animal world.

Sulaiman and Kirthar hills: It is in these hills, in the north west of the country about 8,000 years ago, that men and women first began to cultivate crops such as wheat and barley.

Garro Hills in the North-East and the Vindhyas in Central India: Agriculture developed rapidly in these areas. Rice was cultivated for the first time in the areas to the north of the Vindhyas.



Map showing the places where people lived in Palaeolithic Age.

Reasons Why People Travelled in the Past

- In the past, people travelled across mountains, rivers, deserts and countries in the Indian subcontinent due to the following reasons:
- To search for better sources of livelihood
- To escape from natural disasters such as floods, droughts etc.

- To conquer otherlands
- Merchants and travellers travelled for trading purposes
- Religious teachers travelled in order to spread their religion
- To discover new lands and places

India and Bharat

India derived its name from the River Indus which is called Sindhu in Sanskrit. The Iranians and the Greeks who came to the Indian subcontinent, called the River Indus Hindos or Indos, and subsequently the land to the east of the river came to be known as India.

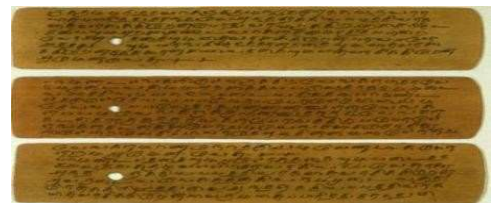
India is also known as Bharat. Earlier, Bharat was a tribe (a group of people) who lived in the north west. This tribe is mentioned in the Rigveda- the oldest written text in Sanskrit. It was from this tribe that India also came to be known as Bharat.

Sources of the Past

Sources of the past can be broadly divided into two categories- written and archaeological sources. They are:

Written Sources

1. **Manuscripts:** Manuscripts are hand written books. Earlier, accounts were generally written on a palm leaf and on the prepared bark of the birch trees, which are commonly found in the Himalayan regions. Some of these accounts have survived and have been preserved in temples and monasteries. Manuscripts give us information about the religion, medicines, science, kings etc. of the earlier era.
2. **Inscriptions:** Inscriptions are a piece of writing which are written on hard surfaces such as stone or metal. Inscriptions were generally written on the orders of the king. They tell us about the policies which were followed by the king. The process of reading unknown written languages is known as decipherment.



Manuscripts written on a palm leaf



Inscription written on the surface of a rock

Unwritten Sources

Archaeological sources

The remains of the materials which were used by the people in the past are called archaeological sources. Remains of pottery, tools, weapons, ornaments, buildings and sculpture are some examples of archaeological sources. People who study these sources are known as archaeologists. Archaeologists excavate (dig up) the earth in order to find archaeological remains. Archaeological sources tell us about the way people lived in the past. For example, excavated bones of animals tell us about the food people ate in the past.

All People were not Equal in the Past

People were not equal in the past. They were engaged in different occupations. While few were kings, some were slaves, some were farmers and some others were merchants. They all lived differently. The

kings and queens lived a life of luxuries, while farmers faced many hardships. The merchants travelled from place to place with the purpose of trading. Many people were hunters and gatherers. Today, many people in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands still hunt animals and collect forest produce to survive. Therefore, we can say that human history does not have just one past but many pasts.

How do we Study Dates?

Dates have been constructed on the basis of some events and terminologies. Dates or time in history is generally indicated by B.C. and A.D.

- **B.C.** stands for 'Before Christ'. It refers to the period before the birth of Christ. Thus when we say 700 B.C., it would mean 700 years before the birth of Christ. Years in B.C. are counted backwards. Hence 700 B.C. comes earlier than 600B.C.
- **A.D.** stands for 'Anno Domini' which means 'in the year of our Lord'. Thus 800 A.D. means 800 years after the birth of Christ.
- Sometimes B.C.E. is written instead of B.C., which means 'before the common era' and in the place of A.D., sometimes, C.E. is written, which means 'common era'.
- The term **circa** is used when the date of an event is not surely known and is assumed on the basis of existing records and events.