



Chapter

1

When, Where and How

Precap

In this chapter you will learn about :

- ③ What is history?
- ③ Division of History
- ③ Significance of History
- ③ Chronology of Events
- ③ Time-line
- ③ History and Geographical Factors
- ③ Sources of History



Have you ever thought how people lived in the past? What kind of food did they eat? What kind of clothes did they wear and what were the several things they did throughout the day? The study of history helps us to find the answers to some of these questions.

What is History?

The word 'History' comes from the Greek word 'historia' which means, 'inquiry'. History traces various aspects of the course of human civilisation since the earliest times. It may also be defined as the careful and systematic record of people, places and events of past. A person who studies and records the events of the past is called a **historian**.

Division of History

Historians divided history into three periods :

- Prehistory
- History
- Protohistory

Prehistory

The 'Prehistory' encompasses the entire period from the time when human-like beings appeared till the time when the practice of recording past events began. Invention of the cart and the wheel, the discovery of fire, etc are

some of the most important events of our past. However, we do not know exactly when and where these events took place. The entire period before recorded history is called **prehistory**.

We depend on the material remains of the past such as bones, tools, weapons, pots, coins, jewellery, cave paintings, etc to understand prehistory. These are called **artefacts**.



Cave paintings, utensils, jewels, etc are some of the major artefacts that offer a range of information about the material cultures of the past

History

History essentially signifies the period of time for which written records are available. By studying history, we can know the precise dates of events that took place millennia ago. The reason is that when these events occurred, they were



Materials used for writing before the invention of paper



documented in the writings of historians. These documents are important sources of history from which we can get information regarding our past.

Protohistory

Between prehistory and the historical period, there was a period for which we have no direct written evidence available from contemporary sources. However, the historical texts composed later suggest their existence and even record with a certain degree of precision some of the major events of that period. Such period is called **proto-history**.

Significance of History

History is regarded as the systematic record of past events in the order in which they happened. The motivation for studying history comes from the curiosity to know how our predecessors lived in the past.

Thus, the study of history is significant because :

1. It helps us understand our course of evolution and how our ancestors overcame the problems which they faced in everyday life.
2. When we understand how several cultures and civilisations interacted with each other, we learn the spirit of tolerance.
3. With the help of history, we can understand the way civilisations flourished and certain inventions and discoveries were made.
4. We can analyse past mistakes and apply the best possible methods to correct them.
5. We can observe the nature of present-day problems in the light of history and try to find solutions.

Chronology of Events

The past events are arranged in order of time, i.e. events that happened first are followed by

the events that happened later. This order is known as **chronology**.

However, a chronology without a certain point of reference is not possible.

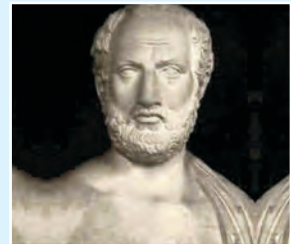


You must know

Greek scholars Herodotus and Thucydides were the first two historians who started the tradition of systematically documenting history as the record of past events.



Herodotus



Thucydides

Historians have unanimously recognised the year of Jesus Christ's birth as the reference point from which dates for all historical events are counted. We refer to the events of the past with BCE and CE. BCE (Before Common Era) means the years before the birth of Jesus Christ. They are counted backwards, e.g., 50 BCE comes before 49 BCE. Similarly, for the years after the birth of Jesus Christ, we use CE (Common Era). These years are counted forwards, e.g., CE 49 comes before CE 50.

CE is also sometimes used for indicating the dates of those historical events that took place after the birth of Jesus Christ. CE stands for 'Anno Domini' meaning 'in the year of the Lord'. So 2019 can be written both as CE 2019 or AD 2019. Similarly, we can also use BCE in place of BC, to indicate dates before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Timeline

Timeline is the graphical representation of historical events in a chronological order. It looks like a long bar and is used to show events along a period of time. It has events on one side of it and their respective dates on the other side.



History and Geographical Factors

Since time immemorial, India has been capturing the attention of the outside world for its unique geographical features. Not surprisingly, people from foreign lands kept coming into India throughout our long history, with their distinct socio-cultural identities.

The northern part of the subcontinent is occupied by the Himalayan mountain range which has acted as a natural barrier separating India from the Central Asian countries. At the same time, however, the passes in the mountains have served as natural gateways for the arrival of people from outside, facilitating the intermingling and merger of different ideas, people, traditions and cultures.

Another salient feature of Indian subcontinent is the vast fertile stretch of the Indo-Gangetic plain in the north, below the Himalayas. It was around this fertile plain that the first human settlements in the region came into existence.

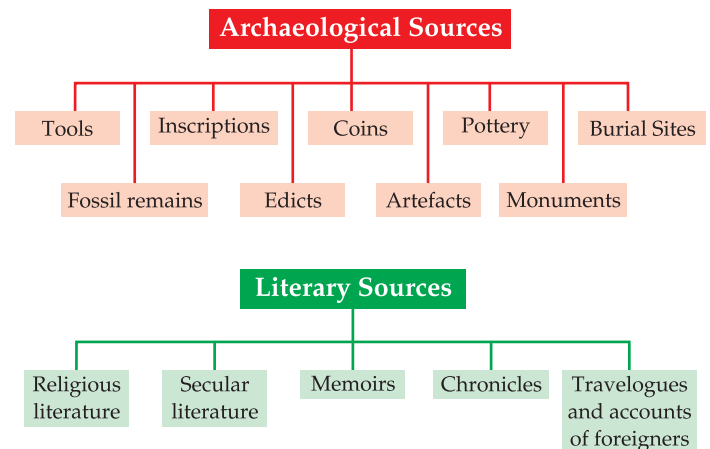
The third major physical feature of the subcontinent is the southern peninsula, separated from the north by the Vindhyan mountain range. The region is full of mountains, river, valleys and plateaus. During the long course of history, this region has evolved its own distinctive identity, lending a great diversity to the cultural configuration of the subcontinent. In ancient times, people used two trade routes to travel across the region. One of these that linked the Hindukush mountain range to the mouth of the River Ganga was called the **Uttarapatha**. The other route, which covered the area between Gujarat in the west and Pataliputra in the east, was called the **Dakshinapatha**. Though these were primarily trade routes, people used them for other purposes as well. For instance, these routes were used by migrants, monarchs and military leaders, the spiritual leaders alike to achieve their respective ends.

Geographical factors also played a significant

part in the way civilisations flourished and declined. The Indus Valley Civilisation is a noteworthy example. Fertile plains on the banks of the River Indus and its tributaries served as natural means for highly productive agricultural practice. Subsequently, surplus in agricultural produce led to the birth of urban centres. This paved the way for the emergence of different classes of craftsmen and traders.

Sources of History

We learn about the events, that occurred thousands of years ago, through the evidences which our ancestors have left behind. Historians and archaeologists come up with pathbreaking information regarding the past, with the help of these evidences. The source material, studied by historians to get relevant information, can be divided into two categories — archaeological and literary.



Archaeological Sources

Archaeological sources are discovered and studied under a separate branch or discipline of historical research called **archaeology**. It is the scientific study of the material remains of the past discovered through excavations conducted at various historical sites. Monuments, coins,



Archaeological artefacts play a major role in enriching our knowledge and understanding of the past.



sculptures, paintings, weapons, pottery, ornaments and all other objects or artefacts unearthed through excavations at historical sites are various sources.

Tools

Many tools and implements used by early people have been found at various archaeological sites. They help in telling us about the kind of life those people lived. They also tell us about their work and society.



Tools of the Palaeolithic Age

Fossil Remains

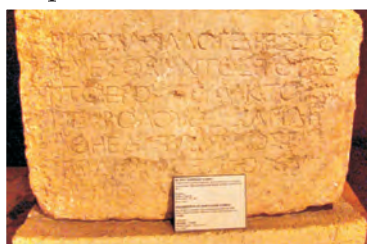
The imprints of plants, animals or humans preserved in rocks are called **fossils**. They have been found buried for millions of years. They are normally formed by the remains of the hard body parts, such as bones or skulls which leave a permanent mark on the rock over the years. Sometimes, remains of plants and animals are also found. These are also fossils.



Fossil remains

Inscriptions

Writing on pillars, rocks, cave walls, walls of forts, clay tablets, metal plates, houses, tombs, etc are called **inscriptions**. These inscriptions provide political and social information of the past. We learn the names of the kings, the religious and cultural practices of the people and so on.



Inscriptions engraved on stone tablets and other structures give us invaluable information regarding many ancient kings and kingdoms.



You must know

James Prinsep, an official of the Kolkata Mint and Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, was the first to interpret the Brahmi Script and was thus able to read



the edicts of the Mauryan ruler Ashoka which were inscribed in that language.

The Allahabad inscriptions tell us about Samudragupta's military conquests. The Thiruvallangadu and Uthiramerur inscriptions give us a lot of information about the Chola region.

Edicts

The inscriptions of the Mauryan king, Ashoka are the earliest inscriptions in India. They are known as **edicts**. They were used to spread Buddhist law and teachings throughout the Mauryan empire.

Monuments

Old buildings such as forts, palaces, temples, mosques, cemeteries, etc which were built for some special purposes are called **monuments**. The study of old monuments shows the artistic skills of that time, the social life, their religious beliefs, their culture, etc. The Sanchi Stupa, the University at Nalanda, the Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram, etc are some examples of ancient Indian monuments.



Monuments such as stupas tell us a lot about the condition of the times when they were built.

Monuments of identical character excavated in India and abroad establish a link between various areas of the globe, suggesting that people from ancient India reached foreign lands. The temple of Angkor Vat in Cambodia is an outstanding example. Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain monuments help us to know the history of different religious systems in ancient times.

Coins

In ancient India, the coins were made of different



materials, such as bronze, lead, copper, silver and gold. They provide us information about the periods, when they were issued as well as about the rulers who issued them. Coins inform us that many kingdoms of ancient India had commercial relations with other countries.



Metals used in the coins inform us about the financial status of the kings who issued them.



You must know

- Numismatics is the study of coins.
- The study of inscriptions is called epigraphy.

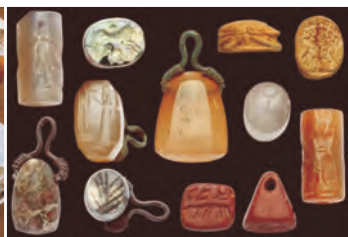
Coins give us chronological information about a particular ruler, his or her domain of influence and his/her relation with other rulers. Roman coins discovered in India suggest that many ancient kingdoms of India had contact with the Roman empire.

Other Objects and Artefacts

Other archaeological sources include numerous objects and artefacts found during excavations such as tools, pieces of pottery, sculptures, paintings, ornaments, etc. They are used as valuable supplementary sources for additional information of the people who created them and the times in which they were made. Numerous terracotta figurines, bronze statuettes and steatite seals help in our understanding of the past.



Animal bones



Seals

Pottery

During excavations, many pots have also been unearthed. They are basically utensils made of clay or, in



Styles of pottery

later times, of metal. They tell us about the culture, civilisation and level of development reached by the people of a certain era.

Burial Sites

Archaeologists get a lot of material evidences from burial sites.



Archaeologists at work

Case Study

Adichchanallur, in Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu, is located on the bank of the Thamirabarani River. In 1876, Dr Jagor of Berlin Museum first discovered an extensive urn burial site here. Many objects made of gold, bronze and iron were excavated during the 1910s. The process of excavation was resumed during 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. Within the area of 600 square metres, more than 160 urns were unearthed.

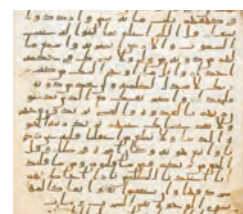
The burials have been classified into three stages. Stage I contains primary burials, while in Stages II and III, both the primary and secondary burials have been found.



Adichchanallur

Literary Sources

Literary sources include both the written and non-written (oral) records of the past. Most of the literary sources are handwritten, that are called are manuscripts. Manuscripts contain invaluable information



Ancient Manuscript

about our past and tell us about the social customs, institutions, classes, professions, religious beliefs, practices, etc that prevailed in ancient times. Some of them describe economic, scientific and political developments, thus offering fresh insight into the past that no other



source does. These texts have been written in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit or Tamil.

During the course of time, many of the manuscripts got destroyed. Some of them are still preserved in temples, monasteries, libraries and archives.

The literary sources can be divided into the following categories :

- (a) Religious Literature
- (b) Secular Literature
- (c) Travelogues or Accounts of Foreigners
- (d) Chronicles
- (e) Memoirs

Religious Literature

Literary text on religious subjects is called **religious literature**. The Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Gita, the Puranas and Jataka Tales are important sources of ancient Indian history.

Secular Literature

Literature that has no connection with religion is called **secular literature**. It includes poetry, drama, plays, travelogues or accounts of foreign travellers, and texts on science, grammar and politics. The **Arthashastra** of **Kautilya** on the theory of administration, **Vishakhadutta's Mudrarakshasa**, the literary masterpieces of Kalidasa, **Banabhatta's Harshacharita**, etc are the examples of some secular literary texts of ancient India. Through these pieces of literature, we get glimpses into our rich and glorious past.

The South Indian **Silappadikaram** and **Manimekalai** are not only delightful to read but also tell us about the society of that period.



You must know

Kalhan's Rajatarangini (The River of Kings), composed several centuries later, was a fact-based account of the kings of Kashmir from the earliest times. Written in Sanskrit, the book is the first historical text by an Indian.

Travelogues and Accounts of Foreigners

As we know, many foreign visitors came to India at different points of time. They closely observed the Indian way of living, traditions, practices and people, and recorded their experiences in the form of **travelogues**, memoirs and



Megasthenes

accounts. Special mention can be made of the **Indica** by **Megasthenes**, who was a Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. It provides important information about the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, the Mauryan capital city of Pataliputra and the society at that time. **Periplus of the Erythraean Sea** by an unknown sailor and **The Geography of India** by **Ptolemy** are also well-known examples of ancient Greek writings on India. Other notable examples are the accounts of Chinese travellers **Fa-Hien**, **Hiuen-tsang** and **I-tsing**, who visited India in different periods. These accounts are collectively called **foreign literature**. On the other hand, we have a bulk of literary texts written by Indians, which we call **indigenous literature**.

Chronicles

A **chronicle** is an account of events in their order of occurrence. These were kept by certain rulers in their courts. For example, an eminent historian in Akbar's court, Abul Fazal, wrote two important and well-known **chronicles**, **Ain-i-Akbari** and **Akbarnama**.

Memoirs

Memoirs are biographical and historical accounts written from the personal knowledge about a certain ruler by the author who was close to him. **Banabhatta** was a writer in the court of Harshavaradhana who wrote **Harshacharita**. **Bilhana's Vikramankdevacharita** and **Chand Bardai's Prithviraj Raso** are the other useful and important sources of written history.





You must know

Brahmi, the script of the Ashokan Edicts, was deciphered in 1837 by James Prinsep, an archaeologist, philologist and official of the British East India Company.

Literary Sources with Unknown Script

There are some ancient literary sources where script has not been deciphered so far. The Harappan script, which continues to be historical riddle, can be cited as the most striking instance.

The peculiarity of the script is that, one line is written left to right while the next line is written right to left. Such a script is called **Boustrophedon**.



Despite its discovery long ago, the Harappan script has not been decoded so far.



Terminology

historian	:	a person who studies and writes about the past
artefacts	:	an object of archaeological interest made by a human
chronology	:	a list of events in an order
archaeology	:	a branch of historical research
monument	:	a building of historical importance
inscription	:	words that have been carved into something
fossil	:	naturally preserved remains of an animal or a plant
edict	:	an official order issued by somebody in position
excavation	:	an action of unearthing something
chronicle	:	a record of things in the order of their happening
memoir	:	an account of one's personal experience of life
travelogue	:	a work written while travelling
manuscript	:	a handwritten text of the past



Recap

- ❖ History is the study of past events in a systematic way.
- ❖ History is divided into three periods : Prehistory, History and Protohistory.
- ❖ The study of history is important as it helps to know our past.
- ❖ History is studied in a chronological order.
- ❖ The timeline of history enables us to know the events with their time and dates.
- ❖ We can study history through two kinds of sources—archaeological and literary.
- ❖ The archaeological sources are—tools, fossil remains, inscriptions, edicts, coins, artefacts, monuments and burial sites.
- ❖ The literary sources include religious literature, secular literature, travelogues, foreigners, accounts, chronicles and memoirs.



 Objective Type Questions

A. Tick (✓) the correct option :

- The period between prehistory and history is :
 (a) artefacts (b) protohistory (c) millennia (d) none of these
- BCE stands for :
 (a) Between Common Era (b) Before Christ Era
 (c) Between Christ Era (d) Before Common Era
- The graphical representation of historical events in a chronological order is :
 (a) chronology (b) timeline (c) time era (d) none of these
- The study of coins is called :
 (a) epigraphy (b) cartography (c) archaeology (d) numismatics
- Who wrote 'Indica' :
 (a) I-tsing (b) Kalidasa (c) Magasthenes (d) Hiuen-tsang

B. Fill in the blanks :

- We can analyse past _____ and apply best possible _____ to correct them.
- The imprints of plants and animals or humans preserved in rocks are called _____.
- Coins, monuments, ornaments, weapons, paintings, etc are _____ sources.
- The handwritten sources are called _____.
- The Ashoka Edicts were written in _____ script.

C. State true or false :

- We refer to the events of the past with BCE and CE.
- The northern part of the subcontinent is occupied by the northern plains.
- Coins give us chronological information about a ruler, his domain of influence, etc.
- Manuscripts contain information about social customs, classes, professions, religious beliefs, etc.
- The literature that is written by Indians is called indigenous literature.

D. Match the following :

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Ptolemy | (a) religions literature |
| 2. Kautilya | (b) Chinese traveller |
| 3. The Gita | (c) the geography of India |
| 4. Mudrarakhshasa | (d) Arthashastra |
| 5. Rajatarangini | (e) Kalhan |
| 6. Hiuen-tsang | (f) Vishakhadutta |



Subjective Type Questions

E. Very short answer type questions :

1. What is history?
2. What are the sources of history? Name them.
3. What do the Allahabad inscriptions tell us?
4. What is secular literature?
5. Name some memoirs.
6. Name some foreigners who travelled India.

F. Short answer type questions :

1. Define prehistory and protohistory.
2. Write a short note on chronology.
3. Differentiate between archaeological and literary sources.
4. Describe the religious literature.
5. What are artefacts? Explain in brief.

G. Long answer type questions :

1. What is the significance of history?
2. What is the role of the Indian geographical feature in history?
3. Give an account of archaeological source of history.
4. What do monuments tell us about our past?
5. Explain travelogues and foreigner's accounts.



To Do Hour

Prepare a catalogue or a collage using all the sources of history.



Net Check

Browse the internet and search the monuments of historical value.

<http://www.thanagain.info/classes/basics/using/sources.html>



Think and Answer

Why do historians in the king's court write praises of their kings in their memoirs?

