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What is Indian Literary Sources

The ancient Indian literature is mostly religious in nature.

The Puranic and Epic literature are considered as history by Indians, but it contains no definite dates for events and kingdoms.



The effort of history writing was shown by a large number of inscriptions, coins, and local chronicles. The principles of history are preserved in the Puranas and Epics

The Puranas and epics narrate the genealogies of kings and their achievements. But they are not arranged in a

chronological order.

The Vedic literature contains mainly the four Vedas i.e. Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvanaveda.

The Vedic literature is in a different language called as the Vedic language. Its vocabulary contains a wide range of meaning and is different in

grammatical usages. It has a definite mode of pronunciation in which emphasis changes the meaning entirely.

The Vedas give reliable information about the culture and civilization of the Vedic period, but do not reveal the political history.

Six Vedangas are the important limbs

of Vedas. They were evolved for the proper understanding of the Vedas. The Vedangas are –

Siksha (Phonetics)

Kalpa (Rituals)

Vyakarna (Grammar)

Nirukta (Etymology)

Chhanda (Metrics) and

Jyotisha (Astronomy).

Vedanga has been written in the precepts (sutra) form.

This is a very precise and exact form of expression in prose, which was developed by the scholars of ancient India.

Ashtadhyayi (eight chapters), written by Panini, is a book on grammar that gives excellent information on the art of writing in sutra (precepts).

The later

Vedic literature includes the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads.

Brahmanas gives a description of Vedic rituals.

Aranyakas and Upanishads give speeches on different spiritual and philosophical problems.

Puranas, which are 18 in numbers give mainly historical accounts.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are epics of great historical importance.

The Jain and the Buddhist literature had been written in Prakrit and Pali languages.

Early Jain literature is mostly written in

Prakrit language.

Prakrit language was a form of Sanskrit language.

Pali language was a form of Prakrit language which was used in Magadha.

Most of the early Buddhist literature is written in Pali language.

Pali language reached to Sri Lanka through some of the Buddhist

monks where it is a living language.

Ashokan edicts had been written in Pali language.

Mahavira and Buddha are considered as the historical personalities (equivalent to the God). They have created Jain and Buddhist religious ideology respectively.