



STUDY MATERIAL

History



SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY



Dr. Muzaffar Hussain

Department of History
J. S. (P.G) College – Sikandrabad

Introduction

The source is an important part of history especially for ancient Indian history because it has a paucity of historical material, conflicting evidence of ancient records, and lack of definite chronology, inter-mixture of facts and fiction and difficulty in deciphering old scripts. But the study of three evidences in the form of excavation, texts and foreign travellers account have reflected the scientific study of past as through excavation in which an archeologist studies the remains in scientific way that clears the aspect somehow in originality and other hand the literature has also reflected the past unbiased in complete form that enable us to construct the history of ancient India.

Having all these in mind and to understand the ancient Indian sources the sources can be classified into three main parts and all parts have sub parts that require explanation:

A. Archaeological Sources:

Under this heading an archaeologist studies the past remains in scientific manner. A number of sites are excavated in India by different scholars who have put forward his opinion about civilization by using the method of carbon dating, ring counting using to analyze the dates as for example Harappa civilization is best one example.

The different types of archaeological sources are:

- a. Ancient monuments or ancient cities or forts.
- b. Sculpture
- c. Inscription
- d. Numismatics



Fig:- Forts



fig:- Numismatics (scientific study of coins)

B. Literary Sources:

The different literature of ancient India reflects the history of ancient people and their culture by using the different types of texts like religious, mythological, non-religious and political books. The literary sources can be classified as:

i. Religious Literature

- a. Hindu
- b. Jain
- c. Tamil
- d. Buddhist

ii. Mythological Literature

- a. Puranas
- b. Deepvansha
- c. Mahavansha

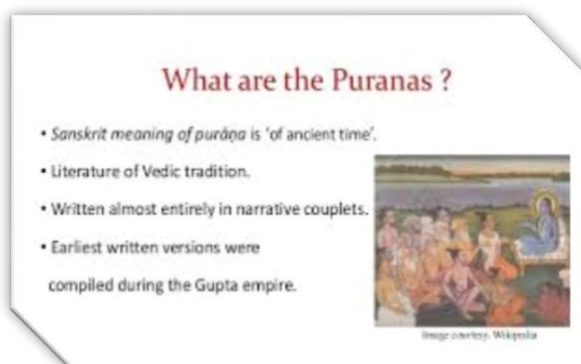


Fig :- Puranas

iii. Historical Literature

- a. Kautiliya
- b. Kalhana
- c. Banbhatta
- d. Kalidas



Fig :- Kalidas

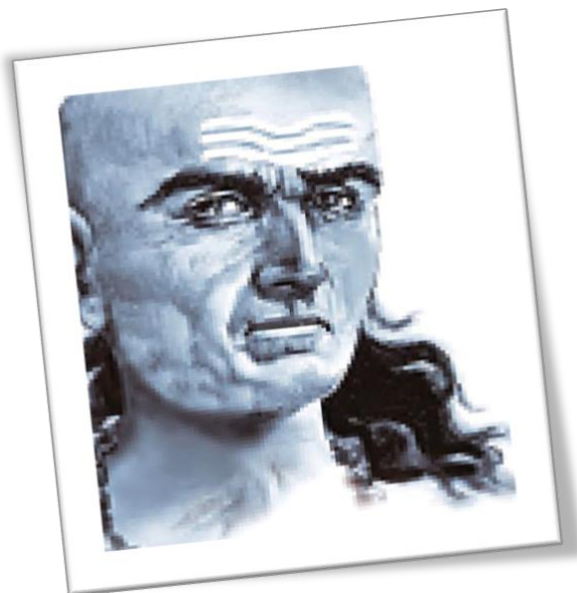


Fig:- Kautiliya

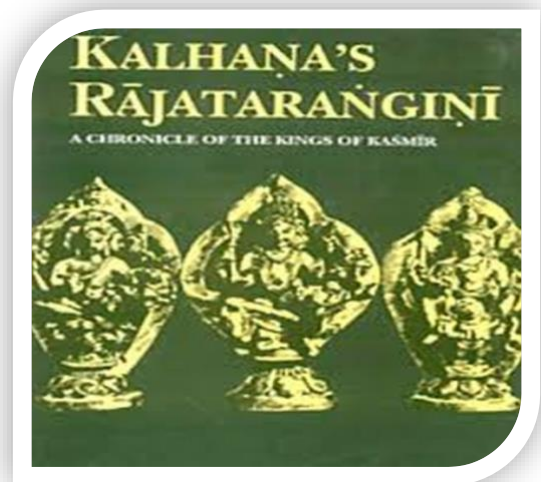


Fig:- Kalhana

As like modern times the visitors have also been visited India in early times. Many foreign travellers came to India to visit places of pilgrimage and also for trade and cultural and political purposes and they have left a lot of significant account of contemporary India that provide us a very important source about ancient Indian people.

The main foreign traveller's accounts are:

- a. Greek accounts - (Megesthene, Herodotus, Plutarch, Arian and Strabo etc.).
- b. Chinese accounts - (Fahien, HuenTsang and Itsing)
- c. Arab writers - (Alberuni, Ibn Batuta and Minhajuddin)
- d. Tibetan accounts