

Revision Notes
Chapter – 12
Books, Buildings and Paintings

The Indian civilisation is the oldest civilisation in the world. It has ancient work of literature, art and architecture.

Literature: World of Books:

(i) In the field of language and literature Indian heritage is unparalleled. Some of the best known epics were written in this period.

(ii) It is not easy to find such a literature in any other civilisation to match with the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Bhagavadgita.

(iii) Further there were the Jatakas, the Tripitakas along with Dipvamsa and Mahavamsa of the Buddhists, Angas texts of the Jains and the Sangam literature of the Tamils.

The Puranas:

(i) The Puranas were ancient Hindu texts written as early as the period between 3rd and 10th century,

(ii) The Puranas are eighteen in number and have five divisions.

(iii) They are accounts about the creation of the world and about kings .

(iv) The fifth division is historically important as it contains the traditions about the dynasties of rulers of ancient India. It is an influential Purana and is important in Indian religious literature.

(v) The other important Puranas are the Vayu, Vishnu and the Matsya Purana. They give us valuable information about the gods and goddesses, such as Vishnu, Shiva, Durga or Parvati. They also include details on how they were worshipped.

The Epics:

(i) The two epics - the Ramayana and the Mahabharata - give account of the social, political

and religious features of the people of the Epic Age. Both had been popular for a very long time and till date too.

(ii) Mahabharata talks about the war between Kaurvas and Pandavas. It was written by a sage, Vyas. The story of the Mahabharata was an old one, it was written 1500 years ago. The Bhagavad Gita, an important source of knowledge is a part of Mahabharata.

(iii) The Ramayana written by Valmiki is about Rama who had to fight against Ravana to get his wife back

(iv) The Mahabharata and Ramayana, both have several versions. These epics are very popular amongst people in different regions of the sub-continent..

The Buddhist and Jain Text:

(i) Tripitakas and Jatakas of Buddhism as well as Angas of Jainism give us vital information.

(ii) They help in reconstructing the history of ancient India. The texts of the two religions were written mainly in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages.

(iii) The stories from Jatakas were mostly shown on the railings of stupas and in paintings in places such as Ajanta.

Sanskrit Works:

(i) Good quality of Sanskrit literature was produced from the second century AD to fifth century AD, especially under the Gupta rulers.

(ii) Kalidasa, the greatest poet and dramatist enriched the Sanskrit language. His plays Abhijnana Shakuntalam and Vikramorvasi are gems of Sanskrit literature.

(iii) Some other major authors were Vishkhadatta who wrote Mudra Rakshasa, Amar Singh who wrote Amarkosha and Shudraka who wrote Mrichhakatikam. Panchatantra, was also written during this period. Panchatantra is a collection of stories for children with useful moral conclusions on lessons.

Tamil Works:

(i) Tamil is the oldest language among the spoken literary languages of South India.

(ii) The earliest trace of Tamil literature is found in Sangam literature.

(iii) The famous Tamil epic, the Silappadikaram was composed by Ilango about 1,800 years ago. It is the story of a merchant named Kovlan, who lived in Puhar and fell in love with a courtesan named Madhavi, neglecting his wife Kannagi. The king sentenced Kovlan to death. Kannagi, who still loved him, was full of grief and anger at this injustice, and destroyed the entire city of Madurai.

(iv) Another Tamil epic, the Manimekalai was written by Sattanar about 1,400 years ago. This describes the story of the daughter of Kovlan and Madhavi.

Art and Architecture:

(i) Ancient India achieved wonderful heights in fine arts.

(ii) In the field of architecture, the Pradakshina Path and Sanchi Stupa, in the field of sculpture Ashoka pillars and the iron pillar at Mehrauli are a noticeable example of metallurgy.

(iii) The buildings built thousands of years ago were made of brick and stone. Their durability is proved by the fact that they still stand tall.

(iv) Kings and queens very likely spent money from their treasury to pay the crafts persons who worked to build these impressive structures. When devotees came to visit the temple or the stupa, they mostly brought gifts with them.

Paintings and Science:

(i) The paintings of this era are found in the caves of Ajanta and Allora.

(ii) They were made of colours derived from plants and minerals and were vivid in description.

(iii) Aryabhata, a mathematician and astronomer, wrote a book in Sanskrit known as the Aryabhatiyam in this period. He claimed that day and night were caused by the rotation of the earth on its own axis. He also developed a scientific explanation for eclipses and found a way of calculating the circumference of a circle..