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Describe the indigenous and foreign literary sources available to the study of Indian History?

Ans

Literary sources are classified into indigenous and foreign literary sources.

Indigenous Literature.

It is found in language like Brahmi, Kharosthi, Pali, Sanskrit and in Dravidian including Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam. These writings provide different sources for the writing of history and

further classified as religious, non-religious, secular literature.

Religious Literary Sources.

Vedic Literature:

The word 'veda' comes from this root 'vid' [Literally 'to know'] which means knowledge. There are four vedas. The Rigveda contains the world's oldest surviving poetry. Each veda has four parts,

A major problem in using the vedas as a source of history is the problem of dating the Rigveda.

The Epics

The two Sanskrit epics the Mahabharata and Ramayana are Smritis as well as 'Itihasa' or traditional history. But sometimes Ramayana is classified as Kavya or poetry.

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- The Mahabharata refers to Valmiki and Ramayana and outlines the Rama story in a section called the Ramopakhyana. The two epics were clearly aware of each other in their later stages of development.
- The epics are magnificent texts with powerful stories that have captured the imagination of millions of people over the centuries.

The Puranas

- The word 'purana' means 'old'. According to tradition, the puranas were composed by Vyasa, but it is clear that in the form in which they have come down to us, they were not the work of one person nor of one age.
- The puranas are supposed to have five characteristics of pancharakshana, i.e. they are supposed to discuss five topics.
- The puranas have accounts of mountains, rivers and places which are useful for the study of historical geography.

THE DHARMA SHASTRAS

- The Sanskrit word 'dharma' meaning support or sustain. It is very rich meaning but difficult to translate.
- A special group of Sanskrit texts dealing specifically with dharma are collectively known as the

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'Dharma Shashtra'

- The Dharma sutras are part of Vedanga literature as well as Dharmasastras corpus.
- Dharmasastras also deal with social behaviour and other personal issues like personal, civil and criminal law.

Buddhist literature

- Early Buddhist literature is generally divided into canonical and non-canonical text.
- There are Pali, Chinese, and Tibetan versions of the Tripitaka. The Tripitaka consists of three books: the Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma.
- The Jataka stories of the previous births of Buddha are one of the 15 books of the Khuddaka Nikaya between the 3rd century BCE and 2nd century CE.
- Buddhist texts are important sources for the history of Buddhism.

JAIN LITERATURE

- The sacred books of the Jain are collectively known as Siddhanta or Agama. The language of the earliest texts is Prakrit.
- Jain literature offers information regarding the history and doctrines of Jainism.

SANGAM LITERATURE

- The earliest literature of South India is represented by a group of texts in old Tamil, often collectively

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referred to as Sangam literature.
- The Sangam literature includes six of the eight anthologies of poems included in the "Ettutokai".

SECULAR LITERATURE

- The availability of secular literature in ancient India disproves Alberuni and Max Muller's view that Indians lacked historical sense.

RAJATARANGINI

- Kalhana's Rajatarangini is regarded as a historical writing. It describes the history of Kashmir about fifty-two dynasties.

ARTHASHASTRA OF KAUTILYA

- It brings out the history of Maurya. Arthashastra describes, political life, society and the economic life under Maurya.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

- Harshacharita written by Banabhatta explains the early life of Harshavardhan.

- Sandhyakalanandi's autobiography "Samachar" is about the kings of Bengal.

"Prithviraj Raso" has written by Chand Bardai gives information of Rajput king Prithviraj Chauhan.

- Bilhana's "Vikramaditya Charita" brings out the life of Vikramaditya.

- "Buddhacharita" written by Ashvaghosha is about life and teachings of Buddha.

- "Rasmala" Someshvara's "Keerthi Kavya"

"Rajashataka" "Prabandha Kosha"

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Balachandrar's "varantha vilasa" Nanjunda
"Kumara Ramana Sangathya" etc

Non-historical documents

Historian mean the recovery of
knowledge of the past in an area
where no written records

MEDICINAL AND SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

- Atharvaveda is a testimony for
Indian knowledge in medicine.

Buddhist religion texts and patanjali's
reference about medical practice

- Charaka the most famous practitioner
of Indian medicine. he wrote Charaka

Samhita and Sushruta Samhita was
written by Sushruta. During the

time of Gupta, Vagbhata wrote

"Ashtanga Sanghata" and "Ashtanga Hrudaya"

Nagarjuna II - is considered the father
of Indian Chemistry - who wrote

"Rasavidya Shastra"

- Ancient Indians had many scientific
texts. Famous scientist including Gupta's

was near Varahamihira. he wrote

"Brahmasphuta" and "pancha Siddhantika"

- The famous astronomer of Gupta

period was Aryabhata. His work

Aryabhatiyam

- Brahmagupta was a famous mathematician
who wrote "Surya Siddhanta"

Foreign Literary sources

- Many travellers and scholars

visited ancient India and wrote

about their experience in India

GREECO-ROMAN WRITINGS

- Arrian and Ptolemy's writings explain the victorious expeditions of Alexander.
- Strabo writings explain South Indian trade and commercial contacts with Greece, Rome & Egypt
- Pliny wrote "Natural History" in 70AD
- "Periplus of the Eritrean Sea" an anonymous work is about the Indian ports
- Megasthenes "Indica" gives information about city administration of Pataliputra.

WRITINGS OF THE CHINESE TRAVELLERS

- Chinese writings are an invaluable source in writing Indian history.
- Fa Hien:- his work "Eh-si-kho-k", which is about the social, political, economic & religious life of Gupta period
- Hsuen Tsang:- He travelled India for eight years and recorded the major details of Harsha's empire in "Si-yu-ki". He also wrote about Nalanda University.
- I-t-sing:- another Chinese traveller. He wrote about religious, social & cultural life of the period
- Taranath:- Tibetan historian wrote Ashoka and rise, development and decline of Buddhism.

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Arabic writings

- Al Baruni his book "Kitab al Hind"
- Ibn Suleiman: He came from Persia his work Sindbad-ul-Tawarikh is about South India.

These foreign writings provide useful information