SOURCES OF ANCIENT INDIAN HISTORY

- **Literary** and **Archaeological** records are the two main categories that give evidences of Ancient Indian History.
- The literary source includes literature of **Vedic**, **Sanskrit**, **Pali**, **Prakrit**, and other literature along with other foreign accounts.
- The archaeological source includes **epigraphic**, **numismatic**, and other architectural remains.
- The archaeological explorations and excavations have opened the great landscapes of new information.

### 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 **Atharvaveda**.
- 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.

### Ancient Books

- The Buddhist books are called as **Jataka** stories. They have been given some historical importance because they are related with the previous births of the Buddha. There are more than 550 such stories.
• The historic information mentioned in Jaina literature also help us in reconstructing the history of different regions of India.
• The Dharmasutras and the Smritis were the rules and regulations for the general public and the rulers. It can be equated with the constitution and the law books of the modern concept of polity and society. For example, Manusmriti.
• Dharmashastras were compiled between 600 and 200 B.C.
• Arthashastra is a book on statecraft written by Kautilya during the Maurya period. The book is divided into 15 parts dealing with different subject matters related to polity, economy, and society.
• The final version of Arthashastra was written in the 4th century B.C.
• Kautilya acknowledges his debt to his predecessors in his book, which shows that there was a tradition of writing on and teaching of statecrafts.
• Mudrarakshasha is a play written by Visakha datta. It describes the society and culture of that period.
• Malavagnimitram written by Kalidas gives information of the reign of Pusyamitra Sunga dynasty.
• Bhasa and Sudraka are other poets who have written plays based on historical events.
• Harshacharita, written by Banabhatta, throws light on many historical facts about which we could not have known otherwise.
• Vakpati wrote Gaudavaho, based on the exploits of Yasovarman of Kanauj.
• Vikramankadevacharita, written by Bilhana, describes the victories of the later Chalukya king Vikramaditya.
• Some of the prominent biographical works, which are based on the lives of the kings are:
  o Kumarapalacharita of Jayasimha,
  o Kumarapalacharita or Dvayashraya Mahakavya of Hemachandra,
  o Hammirakavya of Nayachandra
  o Navasahasankacharita of Padmargupta
  o Bhojaprabandha of Billal
  o Priihvirajacharit of Chandbardai
• Rajatarangini, written by Kalhana, is the best form of history writing valued by modern historians. His critical method of historical research and impartial treatment of the historical facts have earned him a great respect among the modern historians.
• The Sangam literature is in the form of short and long poems consisting 30,000 lines of poetry, which arranged in two main groups i.e. Patinenkilkkanakku and the Pattupattu. It describes many kings and dynasties of South India.
• The Sangam was the poetic compilation by a group of poets of different times mainly supported by chiefs and kings.
• The Sangam literature was composed by a large number of poets in praise of their kings. Some kings and events mentioned are also supported by the inscriptions.
• The Sangam literature generally describes events up to the 4th century A.D.

Foreign Accounts
• Herodotus was dependent upon the Persian sources for his information about India.
• Herodotus in his book Histories (written in many volumes) describes about the Indo-Persian relations.
• A detailed account of the invasion of India by Alexander was written by Arrian.
• The Greek kings send their ambassadors to Pataliputra. Megasthenes, Deimachus, and Dionysius were some of them.
• Megasthenes came in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He had written about the Indian society and culture in his book called as ‘Indica’. Though the original work has been lost, but it had been frequently quoted in the works of later writers.
• A book ‘Periplus of the Erythrean Sea’ written by an anonymous Greek author who settled in Egypt on the basis of his personal voyage of Indian coast in about A. D. 80 gives valuable information about the Indian coasts.
• In the second century A. D., Ptolemy had written a geographical treatise on India.
• The Greek writing about India, however, is based on secondary sources. They were ignorant of the language and the customs of the country and hence their information is full of errors and contradictions.
• Many Chinese travellers visited India as Buddhist pilgrims from time to time; three important pilgrims were:
- **Fa-Hien** (Faxian) – visited India in 5th century A.D.
- **Hiuen-Tsang** (Xuanzang) – visited India in 7th century and
- I-Tsing (Yijing) – visited India in 7th century.
- Hiuen-Tsang had given valuable account about Harshavardhana and some other contemporary kings of Northern India.
- Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang traveled many parts of the country and they have given an exaggerated account of Buddhism during the period of their visit.
- Hiuen-Tsang mentioned Harsha as a follower of Buddhism while in his epigraphic records, Harsha mentions himself as a devotee of Siva. Such contradictions may be considered due to the fact of multi-religious nature of Indian rulers, which might confuse a foreigner.
- **Al-Biruni** gave important information about India. He was Arab scholar and contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni.
- Al-Biruni studied Sanskrit and acquired knowledge of Indian society and culture through literature. Therefore, his observations are based on his knowledge about Indian society and culture, but he did not give any political information of his times.

### Objective Questions

1. **The oldest Brahmanic literature is-**
   - (A) Aranyak
   - (B) Upanishad
   - (C) Smriti
   - (D) Veda
   **Correct Answer:** (D) Veda

2. **Which Veda has 10 Mandal, 1028 Sukta, and 10580 Richas?**
   - (A) Rigveda
   - (B) Yajurveda
   - (C) Samveda
   - (D) Atharveda
   **Correct Answer:** (A) Rigveda

3. **Which work provides detail information about political social and family life in later Vedic period?**
   - (A) Upanishads
   - (B) Brahman
   - (C) Atharveda
   - (D) All the three mentioned
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Atharveda

4. **Which Veda is lyrical composition?**
   - (A) Rigveda
   - (B) Yajurveda
   - (C) Samveda
   - (D) Atharveda
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Samveda

5. **Kathak, Kapisthak, Maitrayani, Taittriya, and Vajsaneyi are the branches of –**
   - (A) Rigveda
   - (B) Yajurveda

6. **Aitreya Brahman is attached to-**
   - (A) Rigveda
   - (B) Yajurveda
   - (C) Samveda
   - (D) Atharveda
   **Correct Answer:** (A) Rigveda

7. **Atharvaveda has as its Brahman book-**
   - (A) Aitereya
   - (B) Satpath
   - (C) Panchvimsh
   - (D) Gopath
   **Correct Answer:** (D) Gopath

8. **Which is the matching pair?**
   - (A) Rigveda-Tandav Brahman
   - (B) Yajurveda-Satpath Brahman
   - (C) Samveda-Gopath Brahman
   - (D) Atharvaveda-Panch Vimsha Brahman
   **Correct Answer:** (B) Yajurveda-Satpath Brahman

9. **When the Tripitakas were written?**
   - (A) Before Gautam Buddha
   - (B) During Buddha’s lifetime
   - (C) After Buddha’s death
   - (D) B and C
   **Correct Answer:** (C) After Buddha’s death

10. **Suttabibhang, Ravandhaka, Parivar are three parts of –**
    - (A) Vinay Pitaka
11. To which of the following Pitaka does Khuddak Nikay belong?
(A) Vinay Pitaka
(B) Sutta Pitaka
(C) Abhidhamma Pitaka
(D) None of the above
Correct Answer: (C) Abhidhamma Pitaka

12. Manu Smriti is a standard work written during which of the following age?
(A) Sunga age
(B) Mauryan age
(C) Gupta age
(D) Later Vedic period
Correct Answer: (A) Sunga age

13. Pushyamitra Sunga performed “Asvamedha yagya” is a fact known through-
(A) Ashtadhyayi
(B) Mahabhasya
(C) Kalika Puran
(D) Indika
Correct Answer: (B) Mahabhasya

14. Which is the rich source of information about Gupta age?
(A) Devalsmriti
(B) Manusmriti
(C) Naradsmriti
(D) Arthashastra
Correct Answer: (C) Naradsmriti

15. An account of Gupta emperors from Buddhist angle is given in-
(A) Nandi Sutra
(B) Mool Sutra
(C) Chhed Sutra
(D) Arya Manjushri Moolkalpa
Correct Answer: (A) Nandi Sutra

16. The Sixteen Mahajanapadas are referred to in-
(A) Anguttar Nikay
(B) Khuddak Nikay
(C) Sanyukta Nikay
(D) Deegh Nikay
Correct Answer: (A) Anguttar Nikay

17. ‘Acharang Sutra’ describes-
(A) Sermons of Gautam Buddha
(B) Code of conduct for Buddhist monks
(C) Sermons of Lord Mahavir
(D) Code of conduct for Jain monks
Correct Answer: (D) Code of conduct for Jain monks

18. The book ‘Bhadrabahucharit’ described the events of which of the following regime?
(A) Bimbisaar
(B) Chandragupta Maurya
(C) Bindusaar
(D) Ashoka
Correct Answer: (B) Chandragupta Maurya

19. Which of the following book described The Greek invasion of North India?
(A) Milindapanho
(B) Gargisamhita
(C) Gaudvaho
(D) Harshacharit
Correct Answer: (B) Gargisamhita

20. Who is the author of ‘History of the War’?
(A) Niarchus
(B) Arrian
(C) Plutarch
(D) Aristobulous
Correct Answer: (D) Aristobulous

21. Who has written the famous work ‘Historica’?
(A) Herodotus
(B) Arrian
(C) Skyla
(D) Justin
Correct Answer: (A) Herodotus

22. Who is the Author of ‘Natural History’?
(A) Herodotus
(B) Aristobulous
(C) Arrian
(D) Pliny the Elder
Correct Answer: (D) Pliny the Elder

23. Which author has written about Alexander’s invasion of India?
(A) Arrian
(B) Pliny
(C) Strabo
24. Indica is a reliable source for the history of Chandragupta Maurya. It was written by?
   (A) Skylax  
   (B) Selyukes  
   (C) Megasthenes  
   (D) Plutarch  
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Megasthenes

25. Who compiled and published Extracts from Indica in 1846 as ‘Megasthenese Indica’?
   (A) Cunningham  
   (B) Prinsep  
   (C) Swanbeck  
   (D) Plutarch  
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Swanbeck

26. Of the following Chinese travelers who did not visit India in the 7th century A.D.?
   (A) Fa-Hien  
   (B) Yuan-Chwang  
   (C) Itsing  
   (D) None of the above  
   **Correct Answer:** (A) Fa-Hien

27. Which is not a work on the history of Ceylon?
   (A) Deepvansh  
   (B) Mahavansh  
   (C) Raghuvansh  
   (D) None of above  
   **Correct Answer:** (A) Deepvansh

28. Which of the following works of Kalidas gives information about the history of Sunga dynasty?
   (A) Meghdoot  
   (B) Abhigyanshakuntalam  
   (C) Kumarsambhav  
   (D) Malvikagnimitram  
   **Correct Answer:** (D) Malvikagnimitram

29. Who has written about India at the time of Mahmud’s invasion?
   (A) Taranath  
   (B) Sulaiman  
   (C) Alberuni  
   (D) Ibnbatuta  
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Alberuni

30. Which of the following pair is matching one?
   (A) Taranath-Mahavamsh  
   (B) Fa-Hien-Relhla  
   (C) Alberuni-Kitab-ul-Hind  
   (D) Bilhan-Rajtarangini  
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Alberuni-Kitab-ul-Hind

31. Who is the author of ‘Rajtarangini’ the famous history of Kashmir?
   (A) Bilhan  
   (B) Kalhan  
   (C) Kalhan  
   (D) Jaganik  
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Kalhan

32. Which Chinese traveler has wrote his travelogue, which tells us about Harsha?
   (A) Fa-Hien  
   (B) Yuan Chwang  
   (C) Itsing  
   (D) None of the above  
   **Correct Answer:** (B) Yuan Chwang

33. When was Manusmriti written?
   (A) Sunga age  
   (B) Huns Age  
   (C) Mauryan Age  
   (D) Gupta Age  
   **Correct Answer:** (A) Sunga age

34. The last 11 hymns, which are considered as the oldest part of Rig Veda are known as-
   (A) Purusha Sukta  
   (B) Trayee  
   (C) Aryankas  
   (D) Balakhilya  
   **Correct Answer:** (D) Balakhilya

35. Who was the greatest author on Chhanda Shastra
   (A) Panini  
   (B) Valmiki  
   (C) Pingal  
   (D) Yaska  
   **Correct Answer:** (C) Pingal

36. Which is known as Sat Saharsi Samhita?
   (A) Manu Smriti  
   (B) Yajnalkya Smriti  
   (C) Parashar Smriti  
   (D) Mahabharat  
   **Correct Answer:** (D) Mahabharat
37. Which is the earliest Smriti?
   (A) Yajnovalkya Smriti
   (B) Manu Smriti
   (C) Narad Smriti
   (D) Parashar Smriti
   Correct Answer: (B) Manu Smriti

38. Which Smriti describes the classes of Brahmanas who were against accepting alms.
   (A) Narad Smriti
   (B) Yajnalkya Smriti
   (C) Parashar Smriti
   (D) Manu Smriti
   Correct Answer: (C) Parashar Smriti

39. Who wrote Asva Chikitsa?
   (A) Palkappya
   (B) Charka
   (C) Dhanvantri
   (D) Salihanna
   Correct Answer: (D) Salihanna

40. Which of the following is correct.
   (i) Rig means Hymns.
   (ii) The third Mandal of Rigveda is composed by Viswamitra.
   (iii) The tenth Mandal is dedicated to Soma.
   (iv) Philosophy about the unity of Atma & Parmatma has been described in Upanishads.
   (A) All of the above
   (B) iii only
   (C) i, ii & iv
   (D) None of the above
   Correct Answer: (B) iii only

41. Which of the following Greek Explorers is considered to have left the earliest account of India?
   (A) Herodotus
   (B) Ctesias
   (C) Sylax
   (D) Hippalus
   Correct Answer: (C) Sylax

42. The earliest evidence of rice cultivation comes from which among the following valleys?
   (A) Central Ganga Valley
   (B) Belan Valley
   (C) Gomal Valley
   (D) Bolan Valley
   Correct Answer: (B) Belan Valley

43. The oldest evidence in human history for the drilling of teeth in a living person was found in which of the following cultures?
   (A) Ahar banas
   (B) Mehgarh
   (C) Sohn Valley
   (D) Malwa
   Correct Answer: (B) Mehgarh

44. The earliest evidence of domestication of animals has been provided by Adamgarh. In which of the following states is located Adamgarh?
   (A) Rajasthan
   (B) Madhya Pradesh
   (C) Gujarat
   (D) Maharashtra
   Correct Answer: (B) Madhya Pradesh

45. At which among the following sites the where first evidence of cultivation of cotton has been found?
   (A) Piklihal
   (B) Hathonora
   (C) Nal
   (D) Ghaligai
   Correct Answer: (C) Nal

46. Which among the following is the correct location of an ancient site Deh Morsai Ghundai?
   (A) Northern Pakistan
   (B) Eastern Persia
   (C) Modern Turkey
   (D) Afghanistan
   Correct Answer: (D) Afghanistan

47. World’s first oil paintings been found in which of the following countries?
   (A) India
   (B) Pakistan
   (C) Afghanistan
   (D) Iran
   Correct Answer: (C) Afghanistan

48. Which among the following places has given the earliest evidence of agriculture in Indian Subcontinent?
   (A) Brahmagiri
   (B) Chirand
   (C) Mehrgarh
   (D) Burzahom
   Correct Answer: (C) Mehrgarh

49. Which among the following have been proved the best source of info regarding ancient India?
   (A) Religious literature
   (B) Inscriptions
50. The Aihole inscription was written by?
(A) Kautilya
(B) Horisena
(C) Rovikirti
(D) Nayanika
Correct Answer: (C) Rovikirti

51. Who was issued the Khalimpur copper plate?
(A) Devapala
(B) Ramapala
(C) Dharmapala
(D) Mohipala I
Correct Answer: (C) Dharmapala

52. Achievement of Samudra Gupta was written in Allahabad inscription. It was written by?
(A) Kalhon
(B) Bilhann
(C) Banabhatta
(D) Harisena
Correct Answer: (D) Harisena

53. Which books mentioned the varna system for the first time?
(A) Manusanhati
(B) Rig Veda
(C) Atharva Veda
(D) Satapath Brahmin
Correct Answer: (B) Rig Veda

54. Tripitaka was the religious text of Buddhist. It was written in?
(A) Prakritik
(B) Sanskrit
(C) Pali
(D) Ardh-Magadhi
Correct Answer: (C) Pali

55. Tahkik-i-hind was written by?
(A) Alberuni
(B) Al-Baradari
(C) Suleman
(D) Al-Masud
Correct Answer: (A) Alberuni

56. Nashik inscription was written about?
(A) Gautamiputa Satkarni
(B) Samudra Gupta
(C) Harshavaradhana
(D) Dhram Pala
Correct Answer: (A) Gautamiputa Satkarni

57. Ibn Battuta came to India during?
(A) Akbar
(B) Muhammed Bin Tughlak
(C) Iltutmis
(D) Alauddin Khalji
Correct Answer: (B) Muhammed Bin Tughlak

58. The oldest book in the world?
(A) Iliyad
(B) Odici
(C) Rig Vedas
(D) Zend Avesta
Correct Answer: (C) Rig Vedas

59. What is the meaning of Vedas?
(A) Knowledge
(B) Truth
(C) Religion
(D) Unchanging
Correct Answer: (A) Knowledge

60. Who among the following was the first Surveyor General of the Archaeological Survey of India?
(A) James Burgess
(B) Alexander Cunningham
(C) James Prinsep
(D) James Fergusson
Correct Answer: (B) Alexander Cunningham

61. When was Manusmriti written down?
(A) Suna age
(B) Huns Age
(C) Mauryan Age
(D) Gupta Age
Correct Answer: (A) Suna age

62. Which of the following history book deals with the history of Kashmir?
(A) Rajtrangini
(B) Devalsmrti
(C) Jatak
(D) Yajurveda
Correct Answer: (A) Rajtrangini

63. Which of the following Sutra deals with the code of conduct for Jain monks?
(A) Acharang Sutra
(B) Panch Pratikraman Sutra
(C) Tattvartha Sutra
(D) Samayik sutra
Correct Answer: (A) Acharang Sutra
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Era</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vikram Era (56 BC)</td>
<td>Founded by King Vikramaditya who drove the Sakas out of Ujjain. Hence Era celebrated as the symbol of Victory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sake Era (78 AD)</td>
<td>It was founded by the Sake King who occupied Ujjain 137 years after Vikramaditya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gupta Era (320 AD)</td>
<td>It was founded by the Chandra Gupta I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsha Era (606 AD)</td>
<td>It was founded Harshavardhana of Kannauj and was popular in North India for a century after his death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalachuri Era (248 AD)</td>
<td>Traikutakas was small dynasty founded this era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakshmana Era of Bengal</td>
<td>Some of the sources quotes that it was founded by the King Lakshmana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Era of Kaliyuga (3102 BC)</td>
<td>It was after used for religious dates and rarely for political.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha Era (544 BC)</td>
<td>It was in use in Ceylon from an uncertain date. Often use for religious purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Era of Mahavir (528 BC)</td>
<td>The Jainas use it for religious purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saptarsi or Laukika Era</td>
<td>It was used in Kashmir region during middle ages and recorded in cycle of one hundred years, each cycle commencing 76 years after each Christian century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevar Era of Nepal (878 AD)</td>
<td>It is used in Nepal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kollam Era of Kerala (825 AD)</td>
<td>It was used in Kerala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Era of Vikramaditya VI Chalukyas (1075 AD)</td>
<td>It was used early in medieval period.</td>
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### Time Line of Ancient Indian History

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palaeolithic Age</td>
<td>Up to 10000 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesolithic Age</td>
<td>10000 to 4000 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neolithic Age</td>
<td>5000 to 1800 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chalcolithic Age</td>
<td>1800 to 1000 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron Age</td>
<td>1000 BC onward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indus Valley Civilisation</td>
<td>2900 to 1700 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vedic Period</td>
<td>1500 to 600 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Mauryan Age</td>
<td>6th Century to 4th Century BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mauryan Age</td>
<td>321 to 184 BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Mauryan Age</td>
<td>200 BC to 300 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gupta Period</td>
<td>4th Century to 6th Century AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Harsha</td>
<td>606 to 647 AD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chalukyas of Badami</td>
<td>543 to 755 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pallavas of Kanchipuram</td>
<td>560 to 903 AD</td>
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