

Man took help of expressions, symbols, drawings and sounds to communicate his thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions to other. This led to invention of dialects and scripts. This script contributed to the development of language. Over a period of time, language was being used for expression of thoughts. The constructive use of language led to creation of literature.

From ancient time, Indian literature is known for its diversity and uniqueness. Indian scholars, divided ancient literature into vedic and classical literature. Besides this, some folk literature was also popular.

Language and Literature :

If we quickly look at the history, we can see an emergence of variety of languages since centuries. These languages influenced one another and it resulted in development of literature. As a result, some new languages and literature have developed and flourished. The best example of this is Sanskrit language. Sanskrit language is less in use in present time but religious ceremonies and worshipping rituals are dealt in Sanskrit language.

Generally, language provides opportunity for the humans for better expression and understanding. India's most ancient script is that of Harappan civilization, which has not been deciphered and so we have not obtained much information about their languages.

Maharshi Panini was a great Sanskrit grammarian. The most important book of this time is Maharshi Panini's 'Ashtadhyayi' which is a noteworthy book of Sanskrit grammar of 4th century. Sanskrit is considered the language of 'Aryans', language of sages or language of scholars. It has been accepted by all at the international level that Sanskrit is the best language for the computer use.

Sanskrit was the chief language for knowledge, science, religion and philosophy.

Ancient Indian Literature :

Vedas - Veda means knowledge, they are four.

(1) Rigveda (2) Samveda (3) Yajurveda (4) Atharvaveda

Rigveda : The most ancient book of Indian literature is the Rigveda. It consists of 1028 verses. It is a wonderful work divided into 10 divisions. Most of the verses are prayers of God. They were used during the yagnas. Among the verses those worshipping Usha (The Goddess of dawn) are fascinating. This work describes political, social and religious matters of Aryans who were residing in the region of Saptsindhu.

Samveda : Three other vedas were also composed after Rigveda. Out of them, Samveda was composed to focus on the process of recitation of verses. Hence, it is known as the Gangotri of music.

Yajurveda :

It is called a veda of Yagnas. It is composed in both the forms : prose and verse. This describes the hymns recited at time of Yagyas, the religious practices and rituals.

Atharvaveda :

Atharvaveda describes various types of rituals and sanskaras.

Upanishad :

The upanishadic literature gives us a vivid description and analysis of the beginning of the universe, the mysteries of life and death, materialistic and spiritual world etc. ' Brihदारanya ' and ' Chhandogya ' are the earliest of Upanishad in the dialogue form. They are 108 in all as mentioned in Mukhtiko Upanishad.

Brahmanical Literature :

Many brahmnical epics were composed to understand the meaning of vedic literature. Any critical appreciation based on vedas, composed in the poetic form are included in brahmanical literature. Vedic literature and directive principles regarding behaviour have been explained broadly.

Aranyakas : Aryans used to spend their last phase of life in aranyakas, making their ashrams in aranyakas / forest. They composed literature based on philosophy, which was the result of their deep thinking. It is known as 'Aranyakas'.

Vedangas : The Vedangas literature deals with the religious practices and rituals, grammar, astrology and astronomy.

The 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata' are two great Indian epics. The present form of these epics can be traced back to the second century. The 'Ramayana' has the story of Ramchandra, the king of Ayodhya. The Ramayana is the smaller epic than the Mahabharata. It narrates many attractive stories of adventure. The Mahabharata is the world's largest epic, has one lakh verses. This describes the war between Kauravas and Pandavas. Besides, it also consists of numerous stories. The Bhagwad Gita, a part of Mahabharata, expounds the deep philosophical principles. It conveys the message of achieving 'Moksha' or salvation through 'Gyana', 'Karma' and 'Bhakti'.

Both the epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have been influencing millions of Indian and the literature for a long time. They have implanted motivational seeds of sanskars in the Indians.

During this period of Sanskrit literature was produced, which contained a good combination of religious and worldly aspects of life. The puranas played an important role in explaining initial vedic religion of earlier time. During this period, many scriptures and smruthi granthas were composed. These scriptures dealt with science and philosophy, for example Kautilya's 'Arthshastra' is a book of management as well as books on various topics such as arts, mathematics and other sciences. The smrutigranth as explains the religious teachings, laws and customs.

The earlier Buddhist literature was written in Pali. As it is divided into three sections, it is known as 'Tripitika'. It consists of Sukta pitika, Vinaya pitika and Abhidhamma pitika. Besides, many other works were also composed in Buddhist literature. Gupta period was known as the golden period for the growth and development of sanskrit poems and dramas. The great writers like Kalidas, Bhavbhuti, Bharvi, Bhartrihari, Banabhatt, Mangha and many others belonged to this period. Of these Kalidas is known all over the world. His works, Kumarsambhava, Raghuvansham, Meghdoot, Abhigyan Shankuntalam and Rutusamhar are renowned for their best poetic and dramatic style. Bana wrote the Kadambari and 'Harsha charit' - a biography of king Harsha. Other works of the period are Bhavbhuti's Uttar Ramcharit, Bharavi's 'Kiratarjuniyam', 'Vishakhadatta's' 'Mudra Raksha', 'Shudrak's' 'Mrichchhkatikam' and Dandi's 'Dashkumarcharita'. The subjects of these work were political events, romance, allegories, comedies and philosophy.

Verses were composed in earlier from of Gujarati language. In the course of time, Gujarati language developed and many literary works were composed in it. The heritage of Gujarati literature was made prosperous by literary contribution of Narsinh Mehta, Mirabai, Dayaram, Akho, Premchand, Pritam and others who composed beautiful verses, songs, garba, narrative poems and chhappas etc. After that the scholars like Narmad, Navalram, Kishorlal Mashruwala, Pannalal Patel, Umashankar Joshi, Mahipatram Ruparam Nilkanth, Goverdhanram Tripathi and others enriched the Gujarati literature through their works.

The four dravidian languages : Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam developed their own scripts and literature. Tamil is the oldest of these with its literature belonging to early centuries of the Christian era.

According to tradition, three literary gatherings and sangams were held at which many sages and poets recited their compositions. They contained many themes like politics, war and love. The famous works of this body of literature includes “Ethutokoi”, (composition of 8 poems), the “Tolkappiyam” (Grammar) and the “Patthuppattu” (The 10 songs). Thiruvalluvar wrote the famous ‘Kurai’ which in verse deals with many aspects of life and religion. The ‘Shilppadikaram’ and the ‘Manimekhalai’ are some of the most famous works of early Tamil literature.

Medieval Literature :

During the beginning of Medieval age in North India the language of literature was Sanskrit. So the great works were composed during this period were in Sanskrit. In this age two great works were written in Kashmir, first was Somdeva’s ‘Kathasaritsagar’ and second was Kalhana’s ‘Rajtarangini’. There are first historical books of India.

Another famous work of this time is the ‘Geetgovind’ by Jaydeva, which is one of the finest poems in Sanskrit literature. As we have said before, this was the period when the Apabhramas languages had started developing into modern Indian languages. One of the earliest works in an early form of Hindi was ‘Prithviraj Raso’ by Chandbardai. The work that marks the beginning of Hindi literature deals with heroic deeds of Prithviraj Chauhan. In this time, Sanskrit literature made great stride in South India. For sometime, Jainism influenced Kannada literature. The poet Pampa composed ‘Adipurana’ and ‘Vikramarjuna vijayanta’. The poet Ponna wrote ‘Shantipurana’ describing the life of 16th Jain tirthankar. The poet Ranna composed two books namely ‘Ajitnathapurana’ and ‘Gada Yuddha’. The poets namely Pampa, Ponna and Ranna are known as the trio of early Kannada literature. Poet Kambar composed ‘Ramayana’ in Tamil language. Apart from this, other famous literary works were written in Tamil language.

The development of Indian languages and composition got a promotion in Delhi sultanate. Two forms of Delhi language : Khadi Boli and Brij Bhasha began to be used for writing literature. Many devotional songs were composed in these languages. Many heroic poems and stories were composed in Rajasthani language, which is similar to Hindi and Gujarati. The heroic works like ‘Alha’, ‘Udal’ and ‘Visaldev Raso’ were popular at that time. A book called ‘Chandrayan’ written by Mulla - Daood is the oldest book in Awadhi language. However, the critical appreciation of the ancient books was still written in Sanskrit language.

Persian was the language of court - of Delhi Sultanate. Consequently, many Persian words are seen in Indian languages. Many historians emerged out during this period. We get proper description of Indian history through Turkish writer in Persian language. Ziauddin Barani wrote the Tarikh-e-Firoz Shahi which gives a detailed account of the region of the Khilji and Tughluq kings. He also wrote a book on political theory called Fatwa-e-Jahangiri.

The most outstanding literary figure of this period was Amir Khusro. He was a poet, historian, mystic saint and composer of music. He was also a disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya. He wrote the ‘Ashiqua’, the ‘Nah’, ‘Sipiher’, the ‘Kiratul sadayan’, the ‘Khazain-ul-Futuh’ and several other works of poetry. He

took great pride of his being an Indian and praised India as the 'Earthly Paradise'. He praised India's flora-fauna, its beauty, its buildings, its knowledge and learning. He strongly believed that in many respects the essence of Hinduism resembled Islam. He considered 'Hindawli' the Hindi spoken around the region of Delhi, his mother tongue and composed many verses in it. He composed verses in many languages. He wrote a number of bilingual quatrains and verses in Hindi and Persian. The healthy tradition started by him continued for centuries after him.

The regional kings gave a great impetus to regional languages and literature. Bhakti saints preached in the languages of the people. Many of them like Kabir were great poets. Bhojpuri and Awadhi were the major dialects during those days. The works of Kabir are chiefly composed in 'Sadhukhadi'. Among them Kabir's Dohas have become a part of folklore. Malik Muhammad Jayasi wrote 'Padmawat' in Awadhi. There are many other poets of Awadhi in this period.

Moreover, the well-known 'Ramcharit Manas' by Tulsidas was written in Awadhi. There were many other writers of Awadhi language.

Besides Hindi language, literature in other languages also developed. In Bengali the Ramayana by Krittā Vāsā and the hundred of lyrics by the famous poet Chandidas were written under the patronage of the rulers. With saint Chaitanyas, the tradition of writing devotional songs began. Narsinh Mehta wrote devotional songs in Gujarati and Namdev and Saint Eknath in Marathi. There were important developments in Kashmir, under Zainulabidin, under whose patronage many Sanskrit works like the 'Mahabharata' and Rajtarangini were translated into Persian.

In the reign of Kings of Vijaynagar, Sanskrit literature continued to develop. However, this was an important period for the growth of Telugu literature. Raja Krishnadevarai, the great king of Vijaynagar was also a Telugu and Sanskrit writer. He wrote the 'Amukta Malayd'.

As in art and architecture the Mughal period also saw a great development in literature. Babar, the first Mughal ruler was one of the pioneers of Turkish poetry and also the author of a very valuable autobiography 'Tuzuk-e-Babar' in Turkish, which was later translated into Persian entitled as 'Babarnama'. Gulbadan Begum, sister of emperor Humayun, wrote 'Humayun-nama'. Jahangir wrote his great autobiography, the Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri. Aurangzeb also was a prolific writer and the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was a notable Urdu poet.

Hindi literature made significant progress during Akbar's reign. Tulsidas and Surdas wrote in this period. The great poet Keshavdas wrote on love and separation. Rahim's 'dohas' are still popular all over India.

Many noteworthy books were written during this period. Abdul Fazl wrote the 'Ain-e-Akbari' and the 'Akbarnama'. Ain-e-Akbari gives details of Indian customs, manners, religion, philosophy, economic condition and almost every aspect of life. As a historical work it is perhaps unparalleled. Abul Fazl's brother Faizi was great Persian poet and he translated many Sanskrit works into Persian. Akbar had established an independent department for translation of Sanskrit works like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the Atharvaveda, the Bhagwad Gita and the Panchtantra.

One of the most significant developments during the medieval period was the birth of Urdu language. This new language soon developed into one of the richest modern Indian languages. It produced great poets like Wali, Mir Dard, Mir Taqi mir, Nazir Akbarabadi, Abdullahkhan, Galib, Iqbal and others.

Urdu prose also developed in the early 18th century when the translation of most of the historical works from Sanskrit into Urdu began. At the same time original prose work in Urdu was written. Muhammad Hussain Azad's 'Darbar-e-Akbari' is one of the best works of Urdu language.

The Ancient Universities of India

(1) Nalanda : Ancient Nalanda University was situated at Badgaon village of Patna district in Bihar.

The Nalanda gave more importance in Buddhist and Jain traditions. This ancient university also became pilgrimage of Jains as Mahavir Swami had performed fourteen chaturmas here. In the fifth century Kumar Gupta had build a monastary here. Since then fame of Nanlanda had increased. There were thousand of priceless treasures of manuscripts. This was a pious place of Indian culture. Students from various part of the world used to come here for study. The great traveller Heun Tsang also came here. Today only the ruins of the great university. But amidst the ruins, one can visualize the glorious culture of India.



4.1 Nalanda University

A student who passed out from Nalanda was considered the ideal student of India. During fifth to eleventh century, education was best at Nalanda and in India at that time had best libraries of the world were available. Many students of India and abroad used to come for study and research in the library of Takshshila as well as in Nalanda University. Huen Tsang took 657 books from here to China.

Huen-Tsang visited in the 7th century. There were seven huge Halls (rooms/sections) in the university. There were 300 rooms for delivering lectures. Special monastries were built for dwelling of students. Many villages were donated for University sustenance. Food and clothing facilities were provided free of cost from the earnings obtained from those villages. Its book repository (Library) area was known as "Dharmgunj" During 5th to 11th century (BC) Nalanda was a reputed as well an esteemed centre of education.

(2) Takshashila : Ancient university of Takshashila was a located at Rawalpindi of present Pakistan. It was the capital city of ancient Gandhar region. This university imparted education in 64 subjects. Most of the students stayed in the ashram to practice with guru. 'Jivak' the disciple of Lord Buddha learnt the lessons of Ayurveda here. According to a belief, this university was named after the name of Taksha, the son of Bharat, brother of Lord Ram born in Raghukul. It was a renowned education centre of 7th century. Students were free to study the subjects of their interest. Inspite of the limit allotted of 20 students per teacher, they used to teach even more. Students from distant cities like Varanasi, Rajgruha, Mithila and Ujjain overcrowded the university.

Princes of Varansi and Prasenjit, the king of Kaushal, studied here, also the great grammarian Panini and expert Politician Kautilya got education from this university. Takshashila was the best centre for higher education. Normally students used to stay with Guru to practice. Education of vedas, military science, Gajvidhya, archery, grammar, philosophy, warfare, astronomy, astrology was given here. Chanakya the mentor of Chandragupta Maurya also studied here. Chinese scholar Fa-Hien visited this university in the beginning of 5th century.

(3) Varanasi (Kashi) : Varanasi was famous as one of the place of pilgrimages during 7th century. It was also the famous education centre. It grew as the religious centre for the Aryan culture in Upanishadic period. King of Varanasi, Ajatshatru was a great philosopher of upanishadic age and great supporter of education. It is mentioned in Vyaas Samhita that Maharshi Vedvyas had his ashram in Varanasi.

Lord Buddha chose Varanasi a suitable place for the propagation of his preachings. Potent philosopher Adishankaracharya had to move to Kashi to adopt the new principles of Vedantas. Vallabhacharyaji and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu the pioneer of pushtimarg attained prestige for their Vaishnav sects in Kashi. Majority of scholar families of Punjab had to migrate to Kashi while a few families migrated to Kashmir. Many other princes came for education in Varansi. Monestary at Sarnath became a famous education (centre) under the patronage of emperor Ashoka.

(4) Vallabhi : This university of Gujarat was a very famous centre of education in 7th century. There was a significant contribution of contemporary ruler of Vansh Dynasty and its people to make Vallabhi a well renowned and a huge centre of education. (Vidhyadham) Vallabhi was the centre of Hinayana cult of Buddhist religion. In the middle of seventh century Buddhist scholars like Sthirmati & Gunmati were the leading principals of Vallabhi. The students from the distant areas of Ganga-Yamuna used to come here for higher studies Chinese traveller It sing noted that vallabhi completed with the famous education centre Nalanda which was located at eastern part of India.

Vallabhi was a capital and an international port (from 480 AD to 775 AD). The ruler of vallabhi belonged to Maitrak Dynasty and he patronized education and university as well. It is also notable that royal people of Maitrak Dynasty were not Buddhist. However, they were helping the institution

In 775 AD, Arabians attacked, Maitraks were defeated and university was closed down. The name of famous scholars were written on the gate. Scholars by showing their erudition were getting higher rights in Rajsabha.

Knowledge, worship and particular system of education made the university famous not only in India but also in the world of that time. Students from India and abroad used to come for education in this university.

It was an international university in the real sense. Almost all the branches of knowledge were taught here. The maintenance of the university was done through the charity given by the kings and landlords. Actually, it showed the loyalty of the people towards the University.

It was world renowned university of Indian education (Vidhya) for the knowledge of arts and science.

Exercise

1. Answer the following questions in details :

- (1) How many Vedas are there in India and which are they ?
- (2) Write a note on Takshashila Vidhyapith.
- (3) Describe Medieval literature.

2. Answer the following questions pointwise :

- (1) Give information about Vallabhi Vidhyapith.
- (2) Give information about Nalanda Vidhyapith.

3. Answer the following in short :

- (1) Write a note on Yajurveda.
- (2) What information is given in Yajurveda ?
- (3) Which philosophical principles have been explained in Shrimad Bhagwad Geeta ?

4. Answer the following questions selecting the correct option from those given below :

- (1) is the most ancient book of Indian literature.
(A) Rigveda (B) Yajurveda (C) Samveda (D) Atharvaveda
- (2) In which language is Buddhist literature written ?
(A) Pali (B) Hindi (C) Brahmi (D) Gujarati
- (3) Which is the oldest language of Dravidians ?
(A) Tamil (B) Telugu (C) Kannada (D) Malyalam
- (4) Which is the first literary composition of poet Chandarbardai in the Hindi literature ?
(A) Prithviraj Raso (B) Vikramankdev charit
(C) Kaviraj Marg (D) Chandrayan
- (5) Which is the literary composition of Maharshi Panini ?
(A) Ashtadhyayi (B) Prithviraj Raso (C) Vikramandev charit (D) Chandrayan

Activity

- Prepare a short note on the modern literary works of India.
- Prepare the list of main universities of Gujarat.
- Collect information about the ancient universities of Nalanda, Takshshila, Vallabhi and Vikramshila.
- Know more details about renowned women Apala, Lopmudra Gargi using your school library.

