



6

INDIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE-I

Sagar and Sameer went to Andaman and Nicobar Islands for a holiday. They had a very good time out there playing in the sea and seeing so many small islands. But they faced some problems also. They could not understand the language which the local people were speaking. As a result they missed out on many things the tribals would have told them about themselves. From this you can understand the importance of language. Language is a medium through which we express our thoughts while literature is a mirror that reflects ideas and philosophies which govern our society. Hence, to know any particular culture and its tradition it is very important that we understand the evolution of its language and the various forms of literature like poetry, drama and religious and non-religious writings. This lesson talks about the role played by different languages in creating the composite cultural heritage that characterises our country, India.



OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson you will be able to :

- *examine the rich literary heritage of India;*
- *develop an awareness of the variety of languages and literature in India;*
- *list the different kinds of languages and literature in India;*
- *appreciate the diversity and the underlying unity among the languages and literature of India; and*
- *recognise the important contribution of India to world literature.*



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6.1 INDIAN LANGUAGES: THE ROLE OF SANSKRIT

Ever since human beings have invented scripts, writing has reflected the culture, lifestyle, society and the polity of contemporary society. In the process, each culture evolved its own language and created a huge literary base. This literary base of a civilization tells us about the evolution of each of its languages and culture through the span of centuries.

Sanskrit is the mother of many Indian languages. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and Dharmasutras are all written in Sanskrit. There is also a variety of secular and regional literature. By reading about the languages and literature created in the past, we shall be able to understand our civilization better and appreciate the diversity and richness of our culture. All this was possible because of the language that developed during that time.

Sanskrit is the most ancient language of our country. It is one of the twenty-two languages listed in the Indian Constitution. The literature in Sanskrit is vast, beginning with the most ancient thought embodied in the Rig Veda, the oldest literary heritage of mankind, and the Zend Avesta. It was Sanskrit that gave impetus to the study of linguistics scientifically during the eighteenth century. The great grammarian Panini, analysed Sanskrit and its word formation in his unrivalled descriptive grammar *Ashtadhyayi*. The Buddhist Sanskrit literature includes the rich literature of the Mahayana school and the Hinayana school also. The most important work of the Hinayana school is the Mahavastu which is a storehouse of stories. While the Lalitavistara is the most sacred Mahayana text which supplied literary material for the Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa.

Sanskrit is perhaps the only language that transcended the barriers of regions and boundaries. From the north to the south and the east to the west there is no part of India that has not contributed to or been affected by this language. Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* gives a detailed account of the kings of Kashmir whereas with *Jonaraja* we share the glory of Prithviraj. The writings of Kalidasa have added beauty to the storehouse of Sanskrit writings.

Other great literary works, which marked the golden era of Indian literature include 'Abhijanam Shakuntalam' and 'Meghdoot' by Kalidasa, 'Mricchakatika' by Shudraka, 'Swapna Vasavadattam' by Bhasa, and 'Ratnavali' by Sri Harsha. Some other famous works are Chanakya's 'Arthashastra' and Vatsyayana's 'Kamasutra'.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1

1. Name the most important ancient language of India.



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2. Which is the oldest literary heritage of mankind?
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6.2 THE VEDAS

The Vedas are the earliest known literature in India. The Vedas were written in Sanskrit and were handed down orally from one generation to the other. Do you know that preservation of the Vedas till today is one of our most remarkable achievements. To be able to keep such a literary wealth as the Vedas intact when the art of writing was not there and there was a paucity of writing material is unprecedented in world history.

The word 'Veda' literally means knowledge. In Hindu culture, Vedas are considered as eternal and divine revelations. They treat the whole world as one human family Vasudeva Kutumbakam.

There are four Vedas, namely, the- Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. Each Veda consists of the Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Aranyakas.

The Rig Veda, Sama Veda and the Yajur Veda are collectively known as Traji. In later years the Atharva Veda was incorporated in this group.

Rig Veda

The Rig Veda is the earliest of the Vedas. It is a collection of 1028 hymns in Vedic Sanskrit. Many of these are beautiful descriptions of nature. The prayers are largely for seeking worldly prosperity. It is believed that these recitations are the natural outpouring of Vedic rishis experiencing a mentally transcendental stage. Some of the well-known rishis are Vasistha, Gautama, Gritasamada, Vamadeva, Vishvamitra and Atri. The prominent gods of the Rig Veda are Indra, Agni, Varun, Rudra, Aditya, Vayu, Aditi and the Ashwini twins. Some of the prominent goddesses are Usha - the goddess of dawn, Vak - the goddess of speech and Prithvi - the goddess of earth. Do you know that most of the hymns spoke of universally recognised higher values of life such as truthfulness, honesty, dedication, sacrifice, politeness and culture. The prayers are for seeking worldly prosperity and for the development of a highly cultured society. Along with religion Rig Veda provides us knowledge about social, political and economic condition of ancient India.

Yajur Veda

Yajur means sacrifice or worship. This Veda is concerned mostly with rites and mantras of different sacrifices. It gives directions for the performance of the yajnas. It has both poetic and prose renderings. Being a treatise on rituals, it is the most popular of the four Vedas. There are two major branches of Yajur Veda, namely Shukla and Krishna Yajur Veda i.e. Vajasaneyi Samhita and Taitriya Samhita. This text reflects on the social and religious condition of India at that time.



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Sama Veda

Sama means melody or songs. This Veda consists of 16,000 ragas and raginis or musical notes. Out of total 1875 verses only 75 are original and others are from the Rig Veda. The Sama Veda prescribes the tunes for the recitation of the hymns of the Rig Veda. It may be called the book of Chants (Saman). This book is an evidence of the development of Indian music during this period.

Atharva Veda

The Atharva Veda is also known as the Brahma Veda. It contains treatment for ninety-nine diseases. The source of this Veda is traced to two rishis called Atharvah and Angiras. The Atharva Veda is of immense value as it represents the religious ideas at an early period of civilisation. It has two branches, the Paippalada and the Saunaka. This book gives detailed information about the family, social and political life of later Vedic period.

In order to understand the Vedas, it is necessary to learn the Vedangas or the limbs of the Vedas. These supplements of the Vedas provide education (*siksha*), grammar (*vyakarana*), ritual (*kalpa*), etymology (*nirukta*), metrics (*chhanda*) and astronomy (*Jyotisha*). A good deal of literature grew around these subjects. It was written in the form of precepts in the sutra style. A precept was called sutra because of its brevity. The most famous example of this is Panini's grammar, *Ashtadhyayi*, which illustrates the rules of grammar and also throws light on society, economy and culture of those times.

Brahmanas and Aranyakas

After the four Vedas, a number of works called the Brahmanas were developed. These books gave a detailed explanation of Vedic rituals and instructions and deal with the science of sacrifice. The latter portions of the Brahmanas were called the Aranyakas while the final parts of the Aranyakas are philosophic books named Upanishads which belong to the later stage of the Brahmana literature. Each of the four Vedas have their own Brahmana books. Rig Veda had Kaushitaki and Aitreya. Taittiriya belongs to Krishna Yajur Veda and Shatpath belongs to Shukla Yajur Veda. Tandav, Panchvish and Jaimaniya belongs to Atharva Veda. It is through them that we get a detailed information of the social, political and religious life of the people.

The Arayankas deal with soul, birth and death and life beyond it. These were studied and taught by men in Vanprastha i.e. Munis and the inhabitants living inside the forests.

All these works were in Sanskrit. Initially they were handed down orally and were put to writing much later.

It is very difficult to determine the age of the Vedas and also the time they were written. Max Muller says that the Rig Veda was composed before 1000 B.C. While according to Lokmanya Tilak it appeared before 6000 B.C.



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Distinction between Sruti and Smriti

Both sruti and smriti represent categories of texts that are used to establish the rule of law within the Hindu tradition. Sruti is solely of divine origin and contains no specific concepts of law. Because of the divine origin, it is preserved as a whole instead of verse by verse. With sruti, the desire is more towards recitation and preservation of its divine attributes and not necessarily towards understanding and interpreting the oral tradition like that found in smriti.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2**

1. What does the word “Veda” mean?

2. Name the four Vedas.

3. What is the meaning of ‘Yajur’? What information does it give us of those times?

4. How many musical tunes originated from the Sama Veda?

6.3 THE UPANISHADS

The word Upanishad is derived from *upa* (nearby), and *nishad* (to sit-down), that is, “sitting down near”. Groups of pupil sit near the Guru to learn from him in the Guru-shishya parampara or tradition.

The Upanishads mark the culmination of Indian thought and are the final parts of the Vedas. As the Upanishads contain abstract and difficult discussions of ultimate philosophical problems, they were taught to the pupils at the end. That is why they are called the end of Vedas. Vedas start with the worship of the manifest, as that is obvious and then slowly transform to the knowledge of the unmanifest

There are more than 200 known Upanishads, one of which, the Muktika, gives a list of 108 Upanishads – this number corresponds to the holy number of beads on a mala or Hindu rosary.

The Upanishads form an important part of our literary legacy. They deal with questions like the origin of the universe, life and death, the material and spiritual world, nature of

knowledge and many other questions. The earliest Upanishads are the Brihadaranyaka which belongs to the Sukla Yajur Veda and Chand yoga which belongs to the Sama Veda. Some of the other important Upanishads are the Aitareya, Kena, Katha Upanishad. Try and find out some other important Upanishads on your own. Read them and you will find a whole new world of Indian philosophy opening in front of you. There are more books selling on the Upanishads. Start with the small stories. Get interested in them and than go to the whole book of any Upanishad.



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3

1. What is the meaning of Upanishad?

2. Name some important Upanishads.

6.4 THE RAMAYANA AND THE MAHABHARATA

Our two great epics are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Ramayana of Valmiki is the original Ramayana. It is called Adikavya and Maharishi Valmiki is known as Adi Kavi. The Ramayana presents a picture of an ideal society. The other epic, the Mahabharata, was written by Ved Vyas. Originally, it was written in Sanskrit and contained 8800 verses and was called “Jaya” or the collection dealing with victory. These were raised to 24,000 and came to be known as Bharata, named after one of the earliest Vedic tribes. The final compilation brought the verses to 100,000, which came to be known as the Mahabharata or the Satasahasri Samhita. It contains narrative, descriptive and didactic material, relating to conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana have several renderings in different Indian languages. The Mahabharata contains the famous Bhagavad Gita which contains the essence of divine wisdom and is truly a universal gospel. Though it is a very ancient scripture, its fundamental teachings are in use even today.



In the Bhagvad Gita, Krishna explains to Arjuna his duties as a warrior and prince and elaborates on different Yogic and Vedantic philosophies with examples and analogies. This makes Gita a concise guide to Hindu philosophy and a parochial, self-contained guide to life. In modern times Swami Vivekananda, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and many others used the text to help inspire the Indian

independence movement. This was mainly because the Bhagvad Gita spoke of positiveness in human actions. It also spoke of duty towards God and human beings alike forgetting



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about the results. You will appreciate the fact that the Gita has been translated nearly in all the main languages of the world.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.4

1. Name the two ancient epics written in Sanskrit.

2. Who were the authors of the Ramayana and The Mahabharata?

3. In the Bhagvad Gita what does Krishna explain to Arjun?

6.5 PURANAS

The Puranas occupy a unique position in the sacred literature of the Hindus. They are regarded next in importance only to the Vedas and the Epics. There are said to be eighteen Puranas and about the same number of Upapuranas. Some of the well known Puranas are - Brahma, Bhagvat, Padma, Vishnu, Vayu, Agni, Matsya and Garuda. Their origin can be traced as far back as the time when Buddhism was gaining importance and was a major opponent of the Brahmanic culture.

Puranas are mythological works which propagate religious and spiritual messages through parables and fables. They have a potent influence in the development of the religious lives of the people.

The Puranas follow the lines of the epics, and the earliest Puranas were compiled in the Gupta period. They are full of myths, stories, legends and sermons that were meant for the education of the common people. These Puranas contain important geographical information/ histories and deal with the mysteries of creation, re-creation and dynastic genealogies. This period also saw the compilation of various smritis or law books written in verse. The phase of writing commentaries on the smritis begins after the Gupta period. Amarasimha the Sanskrit Lexicographer, states that a Purana should describe five topics; (1) Sarga (Creation) (2) Pratisarga (Secondary creation) (3) Vamsa (Geneology) (4) Manvantara (Manu periods) and (5) Vamsanucarita (dynastic history)



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.5

1. How many Puranas are there?

2. Name a few characteristics of the Puranas.



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6.6 BUDDHIST AND JAIN LITERATURE IN PALI, PRAKRIT AND SANSKRIT

The religious books of the Jains and the Buddhists refer to historical persons or incidents. The earliest Buddhist works were written in Pali, which was spoken in Magadha and South Bihar. The Buddhist works can be divided into the canonical and the non-canonical.

The canonical literature is best represented by the “Tripitakas”, that is, three baskets - Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka. Vinaya Pitaka deals with rules and regulations of daily life. Sutta Pitaka contains dialogues and discourses on morality and deals with Dharma while Abhidhamma Pitaka deals with philosophy and metaphysics. It includes discourses on various subjects such as ethics, psychology, theories of knowledge and metaphysical problems.

The non-canonical literature is best represented by the Jatakas. Jatakas are the most interesting stories on the previous births of the Buddha. It was believed that before he was finally born as Gautama, the Buddha practising Dharma passed through more than 550 births, in many cases even in the form of animals. Each birth story is called a Jataka. The Jatakas throw invaluable light on the social and economic conditions ranging from the sixth century BC to the second century BC. They also make incidental reference to political events in the age of the Buddha.

The Jain texts were written in Prakrit and were finally compiled in the sixth century AD in Valabhi in Gujarat. The important works are known as Angas, Upangas, Prakirnas, Chhedab Sutras and Malasutras. Among the important Jain scholars, reference may be made to Haribhadra Suri, (eighth century AD) and Hemchandra Suri, (twelfth century AD). Jainism helped in the growth of a rich literature comprising poetry, philosophy and grammar. These works contain many passages which help us to reconstruct the political history of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Jain texts refer repeatedly to trade and traders.

Ancient Indian literature can be placed in two categories:

(a) Religious and non religious or secular. Religious literature has the

(a) four Vedas

- Rig Veda- the oldest of the Vedas contains 1028 hymns known as Sukta or “Well said”.
- Sam Veda contains the hymns that are sung by a special class of priests at the time of soma Sacrifice.



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- Yajur Veda-contains hymns that are recited at the time of ordinary sacrifice.
- Atharva Veda-collection of songs, spells, magical charms for the evil spirits, etc.
- (b) The Brahmanas - attached to the Vedas. They explain in detail the value and efficacy of sacrifices.
- (c) Aranyakas- are the concluding portions of the Brahmanas.
- (d) Upanishads - Meant to be learnt sitting near the guru.
- (e) Epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata
- (f) Buddhist literature
- (g) Jain literature



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.6

1. In which languages are the earliest Buddhist and Jain texts written?

2. Name the Tripitakas.

3. What do the Jataka tales tell us about?

4. Name some Jain scholars.

6.7 OTHER SANSKRIT LITERATURE

We also have a large body of books dealing with various sciences, law, medicine and grammar. To this class belong the law books called the Dharmasutras and smritis, together known as Dharmashastras. The Dharmasutras were compiled between 500 and 200 BC. These lay down duties for different *varnas* as well as for the kings and their officials. They prescribed the rules according to which property had to be held, sold and inherited. They also prescribe punishments for persons guilty of assault, murder and adultery. The *Manusmriti* tells us about the role of man and woman in society, their code of conduct and relationship with each other.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is an important treatise of the Mauryan times. It reflects the state of society and economy at that time and provides rich material for the study of ancient Indian polity and economy.

The works of Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidasa and Banabhatta provided us with glimpses of the social and cultural life of northern and central India in times of the Guptas and Harsha. The Gupta period also saw the development of Sanskrit grammar based on the works of Panini and Patanjali.



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Famous Sanskrit Authors of the Gupta Period

The Gupta period was India's golden age of culture and one of the greatest and most glorious times. The Gupta kings patronized the classical Sanskrit literature. They helped liberally the scholars and poets of Sanskrit. This enriched the Sanskrit language. In fact Sanskrit language became the language of cultured and educated people. Many great poets, dramatists and scholars appeared during this period and works in Sanskrit reached great heights.

1. Kalidas: Poet Kalidas wrote many beautiful poems and plays. His works in Sanskrit are considered the gems of Literature. He wrote passionate plays and poems. His wonderful skill is exhibited in his poem Meghaduta, Ritusambara. Kumar Sambhavam and Raghuvamsha. His plays are Abhijan Shakuntalam, Vikramorvashi and Malvikaganimithram.
2. Vishakhadutta: Vishakhadutta was another great play writer of this period. He wrote two great historical plays like- Mudra Rakshas and Dev Chandra Gupta.
3. Shudraka: He wrote an exciting play Mrichchha Katikam or the Toy Cart. It is a great source of socio-cultural conditions of that time.
4. Harisena: Among the great poets and play writers of the Gupta period was Harisena. He wrote poems praising the valour of Samudra Gupta. It is inscribed on Allahabad pillar.
5. Bhasa: He wrote thirteen plays which echo the lifestyle of the era along with its prevalent beliefs and culture.

The Kushana kings patronised Sanskrit scholars. Ashvaghosha wrote the *Buddhacharitra* which is the biography of the Buddha. He also wrote *Saundarananda*, which is a fine example of Sanskrit poetry.

India produced great literary works on subjects like Maths, Astronomy, Astrology, Agriculture and Geography etc.

Books on medicine were written by Charak and on surgery by Sushruta. Madhava wrote a book on pathology. Books written on astronomy by Varahamihira and Aryabhatta and on astrology by Lagdhacharya had all achieved prominence. There is none that can compete with Varahamihira's Bhrihatsamhita, Aryabhatta and Vedanga Jyotisha.



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The post-medieval period in northern India saw the rise of Sanskrit literature in Kashmir. Somadeva's *Katha-sarit-sagar* and Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* are of historical importance. It gives a vivid account of the Kings of Kashmir. The *Geet Govinda* of Jaidev is the finest poem of Sanskrit literature of this period, besides numerous works on different aspects of art and architecture, sculpture, iconography and related fields.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.7

1. What is the subject of the Dharmashastras?

2. Who wrote *Rajatarangini*?

3. Name a famous play by Kalidasa.

4. Name a work by Jaidev.

5. Name the author of the book on medicine.

6.8 TELUGU, KANNADA AND MALAYALAM LITERATURE

The four Dravidian languages Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam developed their own literature. Tamil being the oldest of these languages began writing earlier and produced the sangam literature - the oldest literature in Tamil.

Telugu Literature

The Vijayanagara period was the golden age of Telugu literature. Nachana Somanatha, a court poet of Bukka I, produced a poetical work titled *Uttaraharivamsam*. Krishnadevaraya (1509-1529), the greatest of the Vijayanagara emperors, was a poet of great merit. His work *Amukta Malyada* is regarded as an excellent *prabandha* in Telugu literature. Eight Telugu literary luminaries, popularly known as *ashtadiggajas* adorned his court. Among them, Allasani Peddana, the author of *Manucharitram*, was the greatest. He was known as *Andhra kavitaipitamaha*. The other seven poets of the group were Nandi Timmana, the author of *Parijathapaharanam*, Madayagari Mallana, Dhurjati, Ayyalaraju Ramabhadra Kavi, Pingali Surana, Ramaraja Bhushana and Tenali Ramakrishna.

Dhurjati, a devotee of Shiva, composed two poetical works of great merit known as *Kalahasteswara Mahatmayam* and *Kalahasteswara Satakam*, Pingali Surana



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composed two works *Raghavapandaviyam* and *Kalapuranodayam*. In the former, he attempted a literary feat telling the story of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata simultaneously. Tenali Ramakrishna, the court jester, was an interesting figure of the Krishnadevaraya's court. His practical jokes on high-placed men of the time are recounted with pleasure even today. Ramakrishna was the author of *Panduranga Mahatmayam* which was considered one of the greatest poetical works of Telugu literature. Ramarajabhushana was the author of *Vasucharitram*. He was also known as Bhattumurti. His other works include *Narasabhupaliyam* and *Harishchandra Nalopakhyanam*. It is a poetical work on the model of *Raghavapandaviyam*. One can read in it stories of Nala as well as Harishchandra. Madayagari Mallana's work *Rajashekharacharitra* is a *prabandha* dealing with the wars and loves of Rajashekhar, king of Avanti. Ayyalaraju Ramabhadra was the author of two works *Ramabhyudayam* and *Sakalakathasara Sangraham*.

Kannada Literature

Apart from Telugu, Vijayanagara rulers extended their patronage to Kannada and Sanskrit writers as well. Many Jain scholars contributed to the growth of Kannada literature. Madhava wrote *Dharmathanapurana* on the fifteenth *tirthankara*. Another Jain scholar, Uritta Vilasa, wrote *Dharma Parikshe*. The Sanskrit works of the period include *Yadavabhyudayam* by Vedanatha Desika and *Parasara Smriti Vyakhya* of Madhavacharya.

Kannada language developed fully after the tenth century AD. The earliest known literary work in Kannada is *Kavirajamang* written by the Rashtrakuta King, Nripatunga Amoghavarsha I. Pampa, known as the father of Kannada wrote his great poetic works *Adi Purana* and *Vikramarjiva Vijaya* in the tenth century AD. Pampa lived in the court of Chalukya Arikesari. In his poetic skill, beauty of description, delineation of character and development of *rasa*, Pampa is unrivalled. Ponna and Ranna were two other poets who lived during the reign of Rashtrakuta Krishna III. Ponna wrote an epic named *Shanti Purana* and Ranna wrote *Ajitanatha Purano*. Together Pampa, Ponna and Ranna earned the title *ratnatraya* (the three gems).

In the thirteenth century new feats were achieved in Kannada literature. Harishvara wrote *Harishchandra Kavya* and *Somanatha Charita* whereas Bandhuvarma wrote *Harivamshabhyudaya* and *Jiva Sambodhana*. Under the patronage of later Hoysala rulers, several literary works were produced. Rudra Bhata wrote *Jagannathavijaya*. Andayya's *Madana Vijaya* or *Kabbigara Kava* is a work of special interest in pure Kannada without the mixture of Sanskrit words. Mallikarjuna's *Suktisudharnava*, the first anthology in Kannada and Kesirja's *Shabdamanidarpana* on grammar are two other standard works in the Kannada language.

Kannada literature flourished considerably between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries under the patronage of the Vijayanagara kings. Poets of all religious groups made important contribution to it. Kunura Vyasa wrote *Bharata* and Narahari wrote *Tarave Ramayana*.



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This is the first Rama Katha in Kannada composed on the basis of Valmiki's Ramayana. Lakshamisha who lived in the seventeenth century wrote *Jaimini Bharata* and earned the title of *Kamata-Karicutavana-Chaitra* (the spring of the Karnataka mango grove).

The other eminent poet of this period was the great Sarvajna, popularly known as the people's poet. His aphoristic *tripadi* (three-lined) compositions serve as a source of wisdom and ethics. A special mention may be made of Honnamma, perhaps the first outstanding poetess in Kannada. Her *Hadibadeya Dharma* (Duty of a Devout Wife) is a compendium of ethics.

Malayalam Literature

Malayalam is spoken in Kerala and the adjoining areas. The language of Malayalam emerged around the eleventh century AD. By fifteenth century Malayalam was recognised as an independent language.

Bhasha Kautilya, a commentary on *Arthashastra* and *Kokasandisan* are two great works. Rama Panikkar and Ramanuj an Ezhuthachan are well known authors of Malayalam literature. Though it developed much later compared to other South Indian languages, Malayalam has made a mark as a powerful medium of expression. Now a large number of journals, newspapers and magazines are published in Malayalam. When people read and write in their own language, they enjoy it more. This is because language is a part of their culture. It is so well interwoven in their social life that they can express and feel their emotions as well in their own language. This, must also be the case with you and your language also.

6.9 TAMIL OR SANGAMA LITERATURE

Tamil as a written language was known since the beginning of the Christian era. It is, therefore, no wonder that considerable Sangama literature was produced in the early four centuries of the Christian era, although it was finally compiled by 600 AD. Poets who in these assemblies were patronised by kings and chieftains produced the Sangama literature over a period of three to four centuries. Poets, bards and writers, authors came from various parts of South India to Madurai. Such assemblies were called "Sangamas", and the literature produced in these assemblies was called "Sangama literature". The contributions of Tamil saints like Thiruvalluvar who wrote 'Kural' which has been translated into many languages are noteworthy. The Sangama literature is a collection of long and short poems composed by various poets in praise of numerous heroes and heroines. They are secular in nature and of a very high quality. Three such sangams were held. The poems collected in the first sangam have been lost. In the second Sangam about 2000 poems have been collected.

There are about 30,000 lines of poetry, which are arranged in eight anthologies called *Ettuttokoi*. There are two main groups – the *Patinenkil Kanakku* (the eighteen lower

collections) and *Pattupattu* (the ten songs). The former is generally assumed to be older than the latter, and considered to be of more historical importance. Thiruvallurar's work 'Kural' is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the epics, the second part with polity and government and the third part with love.

Besides the Sangama texts, we have a text called *Tolkappiyam*, which deals with grammar and poetry. In addition, we have the twin epics of *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai*. These two were composed around the sixth century AD. The first is considered as the brightest gem of Tamil literature and deals with a love story. The second epic was written by a grain merchant of Madurai. These epics throw light on the socio-economic life of Tamils from second century to sixth century AD.

From the 6th to 12th century AD, the Tamil devotional poems written by Nayanmars (saints who sang in praise of Shaivism) and Alvars herald the great Bhakti movement which engulfed the entire Indian sub-continent. During this period, Kambaramayanam and Periya Puranam were two Tamil literary classic writers.

**Notes****WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- Heritage is the sum total of intellectual treasure that is passed on from one generation to the other.
- Sanskrit is the most ancient language of India.
- Rig Veda is the oldest and the richest literary heritage of mankind.
- The Upanishads have influenced the greatest philosophers of the world.
- Our epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata still dominate the social ethos of our country.
- The Puranas provide the guiding light to the masses.
- Jainism laid emphasis on good conduct and morality and preaches ahimsa, truthfulness and austerity. Jataka tales are an invaluable source of knowing the thoughts and lives of the people during that period. Buddhist *sanghas* became centres of great learning.
- There are invaluable ancient treatises on law, political science, medicine, surgery, biology, chemistry, and architecture.
- Tamil literature is famous as Sangama literature.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. "Sanskrit is the root of many Indian languages". Explain.

**Notes**

2. Discuss the importance of the Upanishads.
3. Make a list of two Buddhist and Jain literatures and then write about two of their works which you find interesting.
4. Write a short note on the following:
 - (i) Sangama literature
 - (ii) The Vedas
5. What is the story behind the twin epics of Silappadikaram and Manimekalai?
6. What is the unique feature of Tarave's Ramayana?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****6.1**

1. Sanskrit
2. Rig Veda

6.2

1. Knowledge
2. Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda
3. It means sacrifice and worship. Social and religious condition of India at that time.
4. Sixteen thousand

6.3

1. Upanishad means to sit near the Guru.
2. Aitareya, Kena, Katha, Brihadaranyaka and Chhandogya
3. Krishna tells Arjun about his duties as a warrior and elaborates on different philosophies with examples and analogies.

6.4

1. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata
2. Valmiki and Ved Vyas

6.5

1. There are 18 Puranas and 18 Upapuranas.
2. The Puranas deal with the mysteries of creation, recreation dynastic genealogies.



Notes

6.6

1. Pali and Prakrit
2. Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka
3. Previous births of Lord Buddha wherein he practiced Dharma.
4. Two important Jain scholars are Haribhadra Suri (eighth century AD) and Hemchandra Suri (twelfth century AD)

6.7

1. Law
2. Kalhan
3. *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*
4. *Geet Govinda*
5. Charak

**7**

INDIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE-II

Richness of any culture can be seen and appreciated but when it comes to language and literature it is to be read and heard. We have to appreciate and take pride in this particular aspect of our culture. We must make it a point to read as many books written during those times as it will help us to understand so many things that happened in those times. It will help us to read more books and become familiar with so many things that are happening around us today. In this lesson we will learn about the development of modern Indian languages and their literature. We will also read about the role played by the Christian missionaries in producing the earliest dictionaries and grammar of modern Indian languages and the manner in which these have helped in the growth of modern Indian literature. Besides these, we shall also get to know the role of the Bhakti movement and nationalism in the development of modern Indian literature.



OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- *trace the development of modern Indian languages;*
- *examine the relationship between socio-cultural changes in the Indian society and the literature in different Indian languages;*
- *illustrate the unity and the underlying diversity in the Indian languages and their literature; and*
- *examine the contribution of Indian languages and their literature in the renaissance of Indian society.*



Notes

7.1 NORTHERN INDIAN LANGUAGES & LITERATURE

We have already seen how languages evolved in India right upto the early medieval period. The old *apabhramsha* had taken new forms in some areas or was in the process of evolving into other forms. These languages were evolving at two levels: the spoken and the written language. The old Brahmi script of the Ashoka days had undergone a great change. The alphabets during Ashoka's period were uneven in size but by the time of Harsha, the letters had become of the same size and were regular, presenting the picture of a cultivated hand.

The studies have indicated that all the scripts of present northern Indian languages, except that of Urdu, have had their origin in old Brahmi. A long and slow process had given them this shape. If we compare the scripts of Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi, we can easily understand this change. As for the spoken word, there are over 200 languages or dialects spoken in India at present. Some are widely used while others are limited to a particular area. Out of all these, only twenty-two have found their way into our Constitution.

A large number of people speak Hindi in its different forms that include Braj Bhasha, and Avadhi (spoken in Oudh region), Bhojpuri, Magadhi, and Maithili (spoken around Mithila), and Rajasthani and Khadi Boli (spoken around Delhi). Rajasthani is another variant or dialect of Hindi. This classification has been made on the basis of literature produced by great poets over a length of time. Thus, the language used by Surdas and Bihari has been given the name of Braj Bhasha; that used by Tulsidas in the *Ramacharitamanasa* is called Avadhi and the one used by Vidyapati has been termed as Maithili. But Hindi, as we know it today is the one called Khadi Boli. Though Khusrau has used Khadi Boli in his compositions in the thirteenth century its extensive use in literature began only in the nineteenth century. It even shows some influence of Urdu.

7.2 PERSIAN AND URDU

Urdu emerged as an independent language towards the end of the 4th century AD. Arabic and Persian were introduced in India with the coming of the Turks and the Mongols. Persian remained the court language for many centuries. Urdu as a language was born out of the interaction between Hindi and Persian.

After the conquest of Delhi (1192), the Turkish people settled in this region. Urdu was born out of the interaction of these settlers and soldiers in the barracks with the common people. Originally it was a dialect but slowly it acquired all the features of a formal language when the authors started using Persian script. It was further given an impetus by its use in Bahamani states of Ahmadnagar, Golkunda, Bijapur and Berar. Here it was even called *dakshini* or *daccani* (southern). As time passed, it became popular with the masses of Delhi.



Notes

Urdu became more popular in the early eighteenth century. People even wrote accounts of later Mughals in Urdu. Gradually it achieved a status where literature-both poetry and prose-started being composed in it. The last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar wrote poetry in it. Some of his couplets have become quite well known in the Hindi and Urdu speaking areas.

Urdu was given its pride of place by a large number of poets who have left inimitable poetry for posterity. The earliest Urdu poet is supposed to be Khusrau (1253-1325). He started writing as a poet in the reign of Sultan Balban and was a follower of Nizam ud-din Auliya. He is said to have composed ninety-nine works on separate themes and numerous verses of poetry. Among the important works composed by him are *Laila Majnun* and *Ayina-I-Sikandari* dedicated to Alau-din-Khalji. Among other well-known poets are Ghalib, Zauq, and Iqbal. Iqbal's Urdu poetry is available in his collection called *Bang-i-dara*. His *Sarejahan se achcha Hindostan hamara* is sung and played at many of the national celebrations in India. No army parade is considered complete without the army band playing this tune. In big Indian cities like Delhi these are many programmes in which famous singers are invited to sing nazams or Ghazals written by famous poets like Ghalib, Maum, Bulley Shah, Waris Shah besides many others. So you can imagine how rich our language and literary culture must have been to continue till today. It has enriched our lives and is central to people meeting and intermingling with each other.

Among the best prose writers were people like Pandit Ratan Nath Sarshar, who wrote the famous *Fasanah-i-Azad*. Even in the early days, Munshi Prem Chand, who is supposed to be a doyen of Hindi literature, wrote in Urdu. Urdu has given us a new form of poem that is called a *nazm*. Urdu was patronised by the Nawabs of Lucknow, who held symposiums in this language. Slowly it became quite popular. Pakistan has adopted Urdu as the state language.

Development of Literature during the Mughal Period

There was a tremendous development in the field of literature during the Mughal times. Babar and Humayun were lovers of literature. Babar was himself a great scholar of Persian. He wrote a book known as *Tuzek-e-Babari* which is highly esteemed by the Turkish Literature. Humayun got the treatise translated into Arabic. He too was a lover of learning and had established a big Library. Humayun Nama, tops the books written in his times.

Akbar was very fond of learning. 'Akbar Nama', *Sur Sagar*, *Ram Charitamanas* are prominent among the books written during his time. Malik Muhammad Jayasis *Padmavat* and Keshav's *Ram Chandrika* were also written during the same period. Jahangir greatly patronized literature. Many scholars adorned his court. He too was a scholar of a high caliber and wrote his life story. During Shah Jahan's time there was a well known scholar named Abdul Hameed Lahori. He wrote *Badshah Nama*. The literary activities suffered during Aurangzeb's time.



Notes

Urdu literature started developing during the last days of the Mughal emperor. This credit goes to Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan and Mirza Galib. The language of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan was very simple and impressive. His compositions inspired the other Urdu writer Mirza Galib, who was a famous poet of his time. He made an important contribution to uplift Urdu poetry. There were some other writers also who took interest in Urdu poetry and enriched the Urdu literature. Maulvi Altab Hussain Ali, Akbar Allahabadi and Dr. Mohammed Iqbal are some famous names.

As Persian was the language of the court, much of the literature produced in this period was written in Persian. Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan Dehelvi wrote superb poetry in Persian. Historians like Minhass-us-Siraj and Zia Barani and Ibn Batuta who came to India during those days wrote accounts of rulers, important political events and incidents in this language. In the medieval period, Persian was adopted as the court language. Several historical accounts, administrative manuals and allied literature in this language have come down to us. The Mughal rulers were great patrons of learning and literature. Babar wrote his *tuzuk* (autobiography) in Turkish language, but his grandson Akbar got it translated into Persian. Akbar patronized many scholars. He got Mahabharata translated into Persian. Jahangir's autobiography (*Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*) is in Persian and is a unique piece of literature. It is said that Noorjahan was an accomplished Persian poetess. Quite a fair amount of Persian literature has been produced by the courtiers of the Mughals. Abul Fazl's *Akbarnamah* and *Ain-e-Akbari* is a fine piece of literature. From there we get a good deal of information about Akbar and his times. Faizi wrote beautiful Persian poetry. Several collections of letters of the Mughal period (*insha*) have come down to us. Besides shedding light on Mughal history, they indicate different styles of letter writing. Another name in prose and history writing is that of Chandra Bhan, a writer of Shahjahan's days. Similarly, we have a work named *Tabqat-i-Alamgiri*, shedding light on Aurangzeb. Badauni was another writer who belonged during Akbar's time. In the twentieth century, Iqbal wrote good Persian poetry. All this has now become a part of Indian heritage and culture.

Among the noted Hindu poets of this period were Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas and Rahim. Kabir's dohas are still so popular today while Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* has become the most sacred book of the Hindus. Behari's *Satsai* written during Akbar's reign is very famous. *Alankarashekhara* by Keshav Mishra was produced in Akbar's court. It was a great Sanskrit work on the styles of writing. Akbar also got many Sanskrit books like *Bhagwad Gita* and *Upanishads* translated into Persian.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.1

1. What are the various forms of Hindi language?



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2. Which language is used by Tulsidas for Ramcharitmanas?

3. How did Urdu language came into use in India?

4. Which country has Urdu as a state language?

5. What is Urdu language called in Deccan?

7.3 HINDI LITERATURE

There was a tremendous growth of regional languages like Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Marathi and Gujarati during this time. In the South, Malayalam emerged as an independent language in the 14th century. The emergence of all these languages resulted in the decline of Sanskrit as they came to be used as the medium through which the administrative machinery functioned. The rise of the Bhakti movement and the use of these regional languages by the various saints helped in their growth and development. We have already noted the various dialects that developed in northern and western India. *Prithviraj Raso* is supposed to be the first book in the Hindi language. It is an account of exploits of Prithviraj Chauhan. In its imitation several other *rasos* were written. The language went on changing as the area where it was used expanded. New words to express new situations were either coined or taken from areas coming under its influence. Hindi literature looked to Sanskrit classics for guidance and Bharata's *Natyashastra* was kept in mind by Hindi writers. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there started a movement in southern India that was called the Bhakti movement. As its influence reached the north, it started affecting the prose and poetry that were being composed in Hindi. Poetry now became largely devotional in nature. Some of the poets like Tulsidas wrote poetry in a language which was of that region only, while others like Kabir, who moved from place to place added Persian and Urdu words as well. Though it is said that Tulsidas wrote *Ramcharit Manas* based on Valmiki's Ramayana, he also alters situations and adds quite a few new scenes and situations based on folklore. For example, Sita's exile is mentioned in Valmiki's version but it is not mentioned in Tulsidas's account. Tulsidas has deified his hero while the hero of Valmiki is a human being.

Hindi evolved during the Apabhramsa stage between the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. and the 14th C. It was characterized as Veergatha Kala i.e. the age of heroic poetry or the Adi Kala (early period). It was patronised by the Rajput rulers as it glorified chivalry and poetry. The most famous figures from this period were Kabir and Tulsidas. In modern



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times, the Khadi dialect became more prominent and a variety of literature was produced in Sanskrit.

Similarly, Surdas wrote his *Sur Sagar* in which he talks of Krishna as an infant, a young lad indulging in pranks and a young man engaged in dalliance with the *gopis*. These poets made a deep impression on the minds of the listeners. If the festivals associated with Rama and Krishna have become so very popular, the credit goes to these poets. Their versions became the source of inspiration not only for other poets but also for painters in the medieval ages. They inspired Mirabai, who sang in Rajasthani language, and Raskhan, who, though a Muslim, sang in praise of Krishna. Nandadasa was an important Bhakti poet. Rahim and Bhushan were a class apart. Their subject was not devotion, but spiritual. Bihari wrote his *Satsai* in the seventeenth century; it gives us a glimpse of *shringar* (love) and other *rasas*.

All the above mentioned Hindi poets, except Kabir, expressed their sentiments essentially to satisfy their own devotional instincts. Kabir did not believe in institutionalised religion. He was a devotee of a formless God. Chanting His name was the be-all and end-all for him. All these poets influenced the north Indian society in a manner that had never happened earlier. As it is easier to remember poetry than prose, they became immensely popular.

During the last 150 years, many writers have contributed to the development of modern India literature, written in a number of regional languages as well as in English. One of the greatest Bengali writers, Rabindranath Tagore became the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize for literature (*Geetanjali*) in 1913.

However, it is only with the beginning of nineteenth century that-Hindi prose came into its own. Bharatendu Harishchandra was one of the earliest to produce dramas in Hindi which were basically translations of texts written in Sanskrit and other languages. But he set the trend. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi was another author who wrote translations or made adaptations from Sanskrit. Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-94) wrote novels originally in Bangla. They came to be translated into Hindi and became very popular. *Vande Mataram*, our national song, is an excerpt from his novel, *Anand Math*. Swami Dayanand's contribution to Hindi cannot be ignored. Originally a Gujarati and a scholar of Sanskrit, he advocated Hindi as a common language for the whole of India. He started writing in Hindi and contributed articles to journals essentially engaged in religious and social reforms. *Satyartha Prakash* was his most important work in Hindi. Among other names who have enriched Hindi literature, is that of Munshi Prem Chand, who switched over from Urdu to Hindi. Surya Kant Tripathi, 'Nirala', achieves recognition because he questioned the orthodoxies in society. Mahadevi Verma is the first woman writer in Hindi to highlight issues related to women. Maithili Sharan Gupt is another important name. Jaishankar Prasad wrote beautiful dramas.



Notes

Hindi Language Makes Progress in Modern Period

Hindi Language: The development of modern language started at the end of the 18th century. The main writers of this period were Sadasukh Lal and Enshallah Khan. Bhartendu Harishchandra also strengthened Hindi language. Similarly Raja Lakshman Singh translated Shakuntala into Hindi. Hindi continued to develop in adverse circumstances as the office work was done in Urdu.

Hindi Literature: Bhartendu Harish Chandra, Mahavira Prasad Dwivedi, Ramchandra Shukla and Shyam Sunder Das were the main among the prose writers of Hindi literature. Jai Shanker Prasad, Maithalisharan Gupta, Sumitranandan Pant, Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', Mahadevi Verma, Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar' and Haribans Rai 'Bacchan' made great contribution to the development of Hindi poetry. Similarly Prem Chand, Vrindavan lal Verma and Ellachandra Joshi wrote novels and enriched Hindi literature.

If we look at the above writers, we find that they all wrote with a purpose. Swami Dayanand wrote in order to reform the Hindu society and rid it of false beliefs and social evils. Munshi Prem Chand tried to draw the attention of the society to the miserable existence of the poor and Mahadevi Verma recipient of Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award highlighted the conditions of women in the society. 'Nirala' became the pioneer of awakening of Modern India.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.2**

1. Who is the author of Natya Shashtra?

2. What is the difference between the character of Rama in Valmiki and Tulsidas?

3. How was Krishna's role in Sur Sagar different?

4. Our national song Vandemataram is taken from which book?

5. Why do we feel that Hindi writers wrote with a purpose?

7.4 BENGALI, ASSAMESE AND ORTYA LITERATURE

After Hindi, the next significant literature was the one that developed in Bengal. The Baptist Mission Press was established in Serampore near Calcutta in 1800. East India Company

founded the Fort William College in the same year. It provided training to civil servants of the Company in law, customs, religions, languages and literatures of India to enable them to work more efficiently.

The growth of the Bhakti movement and the composition of various hymns associated with Chaitanya provided a stimulus to the development and growth of Bengali. Narrative poems called the Mangal Kavyas also grew popular during this period. They propagated the worship of local deities like Chandi and transformed Puranic Gods like Siva and Vishnu into household deities.



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In this regard, a very important landmark was achieved by William Carey, who wrote a grammar of Bengali and published an English-Bengali dictionary and also wrote books on dialogues and stories. It may be noted that the grammar and dictionaries are important in the development of a literature. They guide the writers as to the correctness of a sentence and also help them in finding suitable words for a particular situation and idea. Although the aim of the press run by the missionaries was mainly to propagate Christian faith but other presses run by local people helped in the flourishing of non-Christian literature. Scores of pamphlets, small and big books and journals were produced. In the meantime education spread, although at a very slow pace. But after 1835, when Macaulay won the battle against Orientalists, it spread at a faster pace. In 1854 came Sir Charles Wood's *Despatch* and in 1857 the three universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were established. Besides textbooks for schools and colleges, other literature were also produced. However it was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who wrote in Bengali besides English that gave impetus to Bengali literature. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) and Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820-86) were two other writers of this early period. In addition to these, Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1834-94), Sharat Chandra Chatterji (1876-1938), and R.C. Dutta, a noted historian and a prose writer, all contributed to the making of Bengali literature. But the most important name that influenced the whole of India was that of Rabindra Nath Tagore (1861-1941). Novels, dramas, short stories, criticism, music and essays, all flowed from his pen. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his *Geetanjali*.

However, a few things need to be noted about the influence of Western ideas which permeated Bengal and later on other parts of India. Upto 1800, most of the literature produced was limited to religion or courtly literature. The Western influence brought the writers closer to the man in the street. The subjects were mundane. Some religious literature was also produced but it hardly said anything new.

The final years of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century saw a new subject, nationalism, being taken up. Two things were seen in this new trend. The first was the love for old history and culture and an awareness of the facts of British exploitation. The second was a clarion call for arousing the Indians to drive out the foreigners, both by persuasion and force. This new trend was expressed by Subrahmanyam Bharti in Tamil and Qazi Nazrul Islam in Bengali. The contributions of these two writers in arousing the



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nationalistic sentiments in the readers was tremendous. Their poetry was translated into other Indian languages.

Assamese - Like Bengali, Assamese also developed in response to the Bhakti movement. Shankardeva who introduced Vaishnavism in Assam helped in the growth of Assamese poetry. Even the Puranas were translated in Assamese.

The earliest Assamese literature consisted of *buranjis* (court chronicles). Shankardev has left several devotional poems, which people song with rapturous pleasure, but it was only after 1827 that more interest was shown in producing Assamese literature. Two names, Lakshmi Nath Bezbarua and Padmanaba Gohain Barua cannot be forgotten. From Orissa, a couple of names are worth mentioning and these are Fakirmohan Senapati and Radha Nath Ray, whose writings deserve considerable attention in the history of Oriya literature.

The works of Upendra Bhanja (1670 - 1720) were important as they ushered a new period of Oriya literature. In Orissa the works of Saraladasa are regarded as the first works of Oriya literature.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.3

1. When and where was Baptist Press established?

2. When did Wood's Derpatch come to India?

3. When and where were three universities opened?

4. Which work of Sh. R.N. Tagore won him Noble Prize in 1913?

5. How did Shan Karadwa help in the growth of Assamese poetry.?

7.5 PUNJABI AND RAJASTHANI LITERATURE

Punjabi is a language with several shades. It is being written in two scripts, Gurmukhi and Persian. The Gurmukhi script till the end of the nineteenth century was almost limited to the *Adi Granth*, the holy book of the Sikhs. Only a small number of people tried to learn the script except the *granthis*, who recited the holy Granth in the gurdwaras. However, the



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language did not lack literature. Guru Nanak was the first poet in Punjabi. Some other contemporary poets, mostly Sufi saints, used to sing in this language. These Sufis or their followers used the Persian script if they wanted to commit their poetry to writing. In this list, the first name is that of Farid. His poetry has found a place in the *Adi Granth*. The *Adi Granth* also contains poetry of the next four gurus. All this literature belongs to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Amongst the later gurus, the poetry of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur has also contributed to the *Adi Granth*. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru, was educated in Patna (Bihar), where he learnt Persian and Sanskrit. He has composed two *savaiyyas* in Punjabi but these are not a part of the *Adi Granth*.

But it was the love stories of Heer and Ranjha, Sasi and Punnu and Sohni and Mahiwal, which gave this language its theme in the early days. Even the story of Puran Bhagat found favour with some poets. Beautiful poems written by some known and some unknown poets have come down to us. These are being sung by local singers for the last two or three hundred years. There are several other poetic stories which have been composed by the locals. This folklore has been preserved. The most important of these is Heer of Waris Shah. It is the most popular of the early works. It is a landmark in Punjabi poetry. Similar is the popularity of Bulley Shah who was a Sufi saint. He has left a large number of songs. One of his popular forms of compositions was called *kafi*; it was sung in a classical musical form. *Kafis* are sung by people with great fervour.

In the twentieth century, Punjabi had come into its own. Bhai Vir Singh composed an epic, named *Rana Surat Singh*. Puran Singh and Dr. Mohan Singh are among the best known writers. Essays, short stories, poetry, novels, criticism and all other forms of writing have adorned the Punjabi literary scene.

Rajasthani, a dialect of Hindi, had its own part to play. The bards (itinerant singers) moved from place to place, providing entertainment and keeping the stories of heroes alive. It was from these ballads that Colonel Todd collected the heroic stories of Rajasthan and put them in the *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*. But the devotional songs of Mira Bai have a place of pride in the history of language as well as devotional music. Mira Bai's love for her lord (Lord Krishna) is sometimes so intense that it transcends this mundane world and transports one to the land of this singer.

The development of the Bhakti movement led to the rise of the different regional languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu.

7.6 GUJARATI LITERATURE

Early Gujarati literature is available in the form of Bhakti songs of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It still follows the old tradition which is popular in Gujarat. Narsi Mehta's name is the foremost in this respect. The people of Gujarat wove these devotional songs in their folk dances and their religious forms often find expressions in their celebrations.



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Narmad's poetry gave a fillip to the Gujarati literature. *Saraswati Chandra*, a novel by Govardhan Ram, has become a classic and has given great impetus to other writers. But probably a name that cannot be forgotten is that of Dr. K.M. Munshi. He was a novelist, an essayist and a historian, and has left a plethora of historical novels. In these books he exhibits his ability to mix fact with fiction. *Prithvi Vallabha* is one of his finest novels. A special mention must be made of Narsi Mehta whose songs in praise of Krishna not only made him a very popular figure but also made Gujarati language popular.

7.7 SINDHI LITERATURE

Sindh was one of the important centres of Sufis, who established *khanqahs* at various places. The Sufi singers with their devotional music made the language popular. The credit for creating literature in Sindhi goes to Mirza Kalish Beg and Dewan Kauramal

7.8 MARATHI LITERATURE

Maharashtra is situated on a plateau where a large number of local dialects were in use. Marathi grew out of these these local dialects. The Portuguese missionaries started using Marathi for preaching their gospel.

The earliest Marathi poetry and prose is by Saint Jnaneshwar (Gyaneshwar) who lived in the thirteenth century. He wrote a long commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. He was the one who started the *kirtan* tradition in Maharashtra. He was followed by Namdev (1270-1350), Gora, Sena and Janabai. All these sang and popularised the Marathi language. Their songs are sung even today by the Verkari pilgrims on their way to Pandharpur pilgrimage. Almost two centuries later, Eknath (1533-99) came on the scene. He wrote the commentaries on the Ramayana and the Bhagawat Purana. His songs are very popular all over Maharashtra.

Then came Tukarama (1598-1650). He is supposed to be the greatest Bhakti poet of them all. Ramdas (1608-81), who was the guru of Shivaji, is the last of these hymn writers. He was the devotee of Rama. He inspired Shivaji. The closing years of the nineteenth century saw an upsurge in the Marathi literature. It was a nationalist movement that made Marathi prose popular and prominent. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1857-1920) started his Journal *Kesari* in Marathi. This helped the growth of Marathi literature. But the role of Keshav Sut and V.S. Chiplunkar was no less. Hari Narayan Apte and Agarkar wrote novels which became very popular. All these prose writers made great contribution to the development of Marathi literature. The name of H.G Salgaokar is remembered for writing inspirational poetry. Besides, the names of M.G. Ranade, K.T. Telang, G.T. Madhokar (poet and novelist) are no less important.

7.9 KASHMIRI LITERATURE

Kashmir shot into literary prominence, when Kalhana wrote *Rajatarangini* in Sanskrit. But this was in the language of the elite. For locals, Kashmiri was the popular dialect. Here

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also the Bhakti movement played its role. One Lal Ded, who lived in the fourteenth century, was probably the first to sing in the Kashmiri language. She was a Shaivite mystic. After Islam spread in this area, the Sufi influence also came to be visible. Haba Khatoon, Mahjoor, Zinda Kaul, Noor Din also known as Nund Rishi, Akhtar Mohiuddin, Sufi Ghulam Mohammad and Dina Nath Nadim wrote devotional poetry in Kashmiri. These people contributed to the growth of Kashmiri literature.

The Western influence did not reach Kashmir till the end of the nineteenth century. In 1846, after the first Sikh War, the Dogras of Jammu became the rulers there. The Dogras were more interested in Dogri language than in Kashmiri. There were hardly any schools or education. There was widespread poverty and economic backwardness. All these led to a lack of good literature in Kashmir.

Though the list of Modern Indian languages can have many languages, the constitution of India has originally about 15 languages as national languages i.e. Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam. Three more languages i.e. Nepali, Manipuri and Konkani have been added now to the list.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 7.4**

1. Which Indian language was written in two scripts Gurumukhi and Persian?

2. Name at least two love stories of Punjab?

3. Which was the popular forms of compositions of Bulley Shah?

4. Name the novel of Govardhan Ram?

5. Who started Kirtan tradition in Maharashtra in the 13th century AD?

6. What reasons led to a lack of good literature in Kashmiri?



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7.10 ROLE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

With the coming of the Europeans to India various foreign languages like English, French, Dutch and Portuguese were introduced here which greatly enriched Indian languages as they added many new words to their vocabulary.

The contribution of the Christian missionaries in the development of Indian literature was no less significant. First of all, they published dictionaries and grammar in several local languages. The books written by them were meant for the newly arrived clergymen from Europe. These books helped these missionaries as much as they helped the writers in the local languages. They could easily turn to the dictionaries to find a suitable word or see if the word was grammatically correct.

The second fact is the role of lithographic printing press, which was introduced in India in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The foreigners had established these presses for printing literature in local languages for the benefit of the new, or would-be converts. Therefore, the role of printing press in the development of literature cannot be ignored. The third important fact is the establishment of schools and colleges by the missionaries. Here, besides English, the missionaries also taught the local languages. Perhaps their aim was to spread Christianity but they also produced a newly educated class, who had a desire to read their literature. Thus, the role of missionaries cannot be ignored while writing the history of Indian languages and literature.

Main Writers of English Literature in India

In India there were many writers of the English literature. The Indians started writing work in English after 1835, when English was made the medium of instruction. Many Indian writers composed their literature in English. Some of them showed their interest in the field of poetry, while some others showed their keen interest in prose writing. Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Taradutta, Sarojini Naidu and Ravindranath Tagore made important contribution in the field of English Poetry. Surendra Nath Banerjee, Firoze Shah Mehta and Jawahar Lal Nehru showed interest in English prose.

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- Hindi was spoken by a large number of people.
- Urdu and Persian became popular in the Mughal era. Urdu was born out of the interaction between Turkish settlers and the local people. Abul Fazl, Chandra Bhan and Badayuni were famous writers of the Mughal era.
- Hindi literature looked to Sanskrit classics for guidance. Bhakti poetry is a milestone in Hindi literature. Kabir, Tulsidas and Surdas were the guiding light of Hindi literature.

**Notes**

- In the beginning of the nineteenth century Hindi prose came into existence.
- Next to Hindi, the richest literature is that of Bengali. Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Sharat Chandra Chatterji contributed to the making of Bengali literature. Assamese literature consisted of *buranjis*. Similar is the case with Oriya.
- Till the end of the nineteenth century, Gurmukhi was limited to *Adi Granth*; it was the love stories of Heer Ranjha which gave this language a theme. The devotional song of Meera Bai gave a place of honour to Rajasthani language and literature.
- Gujarati, Sindhi, Marathi and Kashmiri also developed their literature in due course of time.
- Many Indian writers composed their writings in English.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What was the role of the Christian missionaries in India?
2. Briefly describe the development of Hindi language?
3. Explain the role of Persian language in medieval India?
4. Identify the contributions of Indian languages and literature in shaping of Indian society?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****7.1**

1. Braj Bhasha, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Rajasthani, Khadi Boli.
2. Avadhi
3. Urdu language was born out of the interaction of Turkish settler with locals.
4. Pakistan
5. Dakshini or Daccani (southern)

7.2

1. Bharata
2. Tulsidas' Rama is portrait as God while in Valmiki's He is portrait as Human being.
3. Krishna as a young lad indulging in pranks and a young man engaged in dalliance with the goppies.

**Notes**

4. Anand Math

5. Swami Dayanand wrote in order to reform Hindu society. Munshi Premchand wrote about the miserable existence of the poor. Mahadevi Verma wrote about the plight of women.

7.3

- I. 1. In 1800 at Seerampur near Calcutta.
2. 1854
3. In 1857, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay
4. Geetanjali
5. He introduced Vaishnavism in Assam.

7.4

- I. 1. Punjabi
2. Heer/Ranjha, Sohni/Mahiwal, Sasi/Punnu
3. Kafi
4. Saraswati Chandra
5. Saint Jnaneshwar
6. Poverty, economic backwardness and the use of Dogri.