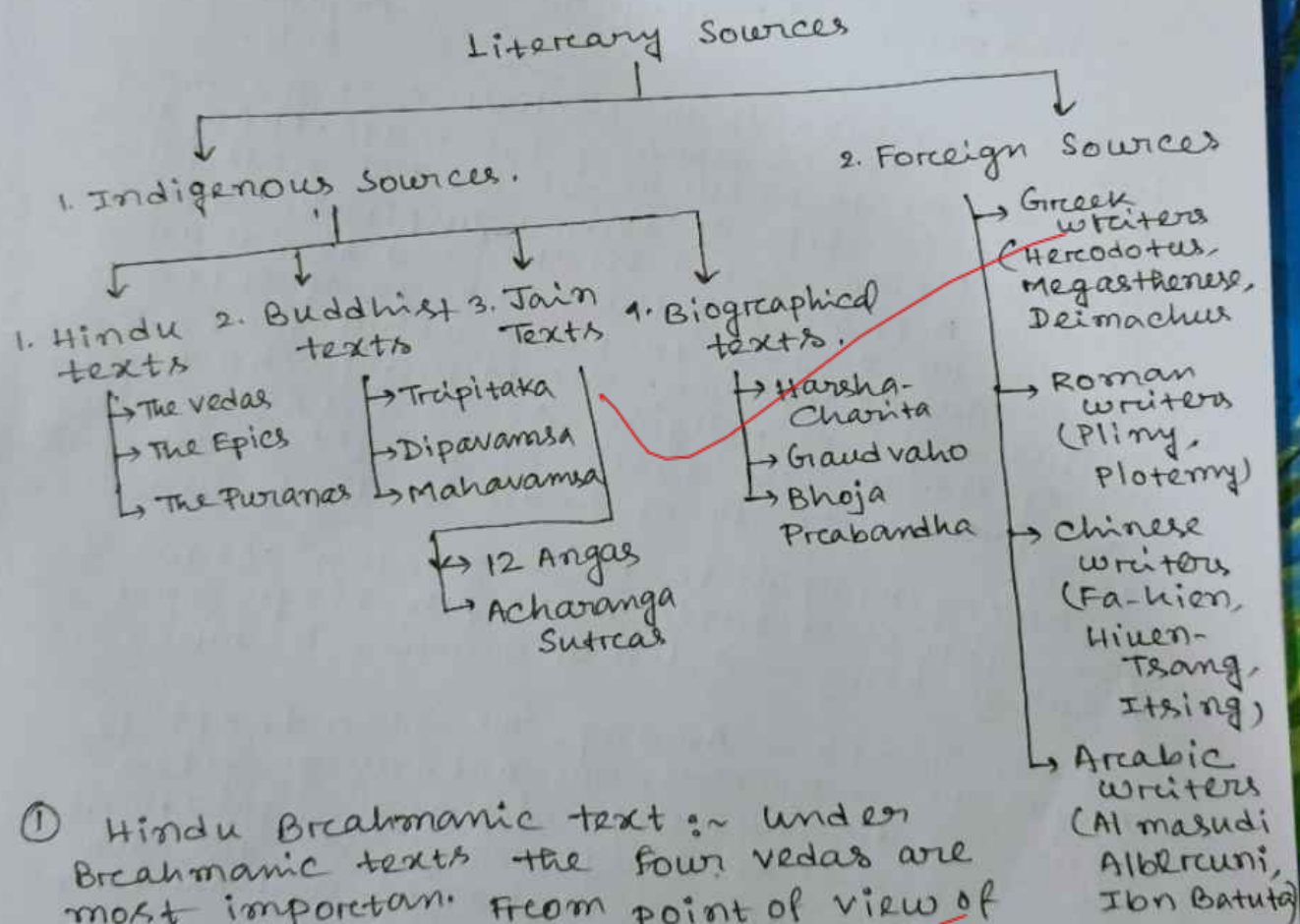


2. Critically analyse the importance of literary sources for the study of ancient India? 20M.

⇒ Although the ancient Indians knew how to write as early as 2500 BC, our most ancient manuscripts are not older than the 4th century and are found in central Asia. In India, they were written on birch bark and palm leaves. These writings are called inscriptions, but they are as good as manuscripts. When printing was not known, manuscripts were highly valued. In Indian subcontinent, the Rig Veda, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Puranas are considered as some of the oldest Hindu religious literature. They throw considerable light on the social and cultural conditions of ancient times, but it is difficult to use them in the context of time and place.

We can classify the literary sources as follows

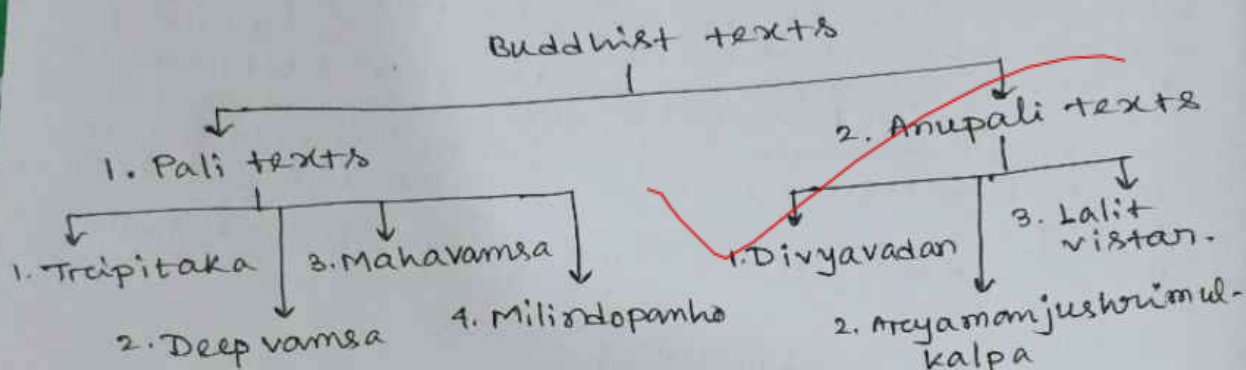


① Hindu Brahmanic text :- Under Brahmanic texts the four Vedas are most important. From point of view of history Rig Veda and Atharva Veda have more importance than Yajur Veda and Sama Veda. Vedas throw more light on religious, social & economic life and less light on political life of the Aryans.

From 'Shatapatha Brahmana' we get to know about Gandhara, Shakya, Kekaya etc. of North-West region as well as Kurukshetra, Kosala, Videha states of eastern region of India.

From the Ramayana, Provides information about the Origin & development of Janapadas. Besides this, it mentions Yavanas (Greeks) & Sakas. The Mahabharata informs us that the Panchab state was in existence from the time of Mahabharata, and it throws light on political, social and religious conditions of India of that time.

2. Buddhist texts :-



The Tripitaka is the earliest and the most important texts among Pali texts. From this book we get to know about the religious, political and social life of India. Tripitaka comprises Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka. From Anguttara Nikaya of Sutta Pitaka, we came to know about the existence of 16 Mahajanapadas. The Milindopanho throws suffice light on religious, social and economic life of North-west India of 1st - 2nd century AD. The foreign trade of India is lively described in it.

Among Anupali texts, 'Divyavadan' contains the stories of later Mauryan kings, and Shunga king and life of Gautam Buddha.

3. Jain Texts ⇒ Among the Jain texts 12 Angas are important. The Acharanga Sutra contains disciplinary rules and regulations for Jain monks. Bhagavati Sutra throws light on the life of Mahavirca and contains the list of 16 Mahajanapadas.

4. Biographical Texts ⇒ Biographical writers took lives of their royal patrons as the theme of their literary works. So, the biographical texts cannot be regarded as genuine history although they contain some valuable historical information. Banabhatta's 'Harsha Charita' based on the life of his patron king Harshavardhana

is the earliest available biographical text in India. Though highly exaggerated, it gives us excellent idea of court life under Harshavardhana and the social and religious life in his time. Besides this, Vakpatiraja's Gaudvaho, Ballal's 'Bhoja Prabandha' are some of important biographical texts.

5. Foreign Writers $\Rightarrow$ Indigenous sources can be supplemented by foreign sources.

Foreign Sources

- ↓
1. Greek-Roman
 2. Chinese
 3. Tibetan
 4. Arabian

a. Greek-Roman $\rightarrow$ It is remarkable that Alexander's invasions find no mention in Indian sources and it is totally on the basis of the Greek sources that we have to reconstruct the history of his Indian invasions.

Herodotus in his famous texts 'Histories' gives us suffice information about Persian and Greek invasion and Indo-Persian relation. Among other Greek writers Megasthenes and his book 'Indica' gives us valuable information about India during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya.

b. Chinese writers $\Rightarrow$ Among Chinese writers Fa-hien and his book Fo-kyuo-ki, throws light on history, civilization & culture of Gupta period. Hiuen Tsang vividly describe the life and activities of Harshavardhana the ruler of Vardhana dynasty.

c. Tibetan writers $\Rightarrow$ Taranatha was a popular Tibetan historian, he wrote Kangyur & Tangyur. These texts give us information about ancient period of India.

d. Arabic writers $\Rightarrow$ Sulaiman was an Arab merchant, his book namely "Silsila-ut-Tawarikh" described the conditions of earlier half of 9th century. He gives an interesting account of Pala empire. Among other Arabic writers Al Masudi, Al Beruni, Ibn Batuta are significant.

Though coins, inscriptions, and archaeology are considered more important than mythologies found in the epics and Puranas. Mythologies may support dominant norms, and justify the privileges and disabilities of people organized in castes and other social groups, but the events described in them cannot be taken to be true. A comparative view may give more importance to archaeological sources rather than literary sources, but it is also very significant literary part in constructing ancient historical life of India.

- 1) Biographical text or Historical text-ଅ
ମାତ୍ର - ଏହା ଏକ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ଅଟେ ।
- 2) କିନ୍ତୁ ଚିନ୍ତା ଶକ୍ତିମୟ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳା, ଏହା
ନାହିଁ ।
- 3) କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହା ଏକ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ଅଟେ ।