

The importance of communication in Ancient India

A Brief History of Indian Culture

India has a 5,000-year-old cultural tradition that is both rich and diversified. The culture of the nation has been influenced by the lengthy and intricate history of the nation, including the influence of numerous religions, languages, and empires.

The Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished in India from about 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE, is the country's oldest known civilization. Advanced agriculture, skilled urban planning, and an unfinished writing were the hallmarks of this society.

India was occupied by numerous dynasties over the years, such as the Mauryan Empire, the Gupta Empire, and the Mughal Empire. Indian culture was greatly influenced by these dynasties, especially in the fields of art, architecture, and religion.

One of India's most significant cultural advancements was the emergence of Hinduism, which became a separate religion approximately 1500 BCE. Hinduism has made a significant contribution to Indian culture, influencing its philosophy, music, literature, and visual arts.

The Buddha established Buddhism, another significant religion, in India in the sixth century BCE. It swept across Asia and had a significant impact on the region's intellectual and cultural landscape.

In the seventh century CE, Islam came in India and rapidly attracted a sizable following. Muslim dominion over India from the 16th to the 19th century resulted in the Mughal Empire, which had a significant influence on Indian culture, especially in the fields of literature, art, and architecture.

Indian history

The term "ancient India" refers to the era in Indian history that spans from the appearance of the Gupta Empire in the 4th century CE to the oldest known human settlements in the area, which date back to roughly 7000 BCE. Many kingdoms and empires, such as the Mauryan Empire, the Gupta Empire, the Harappan civilization, and the Vedic civilization, rose and prospered throughout this period.

A portion of historic civilization

Between 3300 and 1300 BCE, the **Indus Valley Civilization** existed. It was one of the world's first urban civilizations, and it was situated in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent,

It was also known as the Harappan culture. The use of baked brick construction, which was a great technological achievement at the time, was another feature of the cities. The Indus Valley Civilization appears to have been a highly developed and structured society with a well-established system of trade and commerce, according to archaeological data.



Figure 1: Showing Indus Valley Civilization
Source: asi.nic.in

They also had a writing system known as the Indus script, albeit it is still not clear or certain.



Figure 2: Showing the Indus Script Source: ancient-origins.net

Pottery, sculpture, and jewellery were among the arts and crafts produced by the Indus Valley Civilization. A large number of these objects have been found during excavations of ancient towns.

Notwithstanding the complex society and culture of the Indus Valley Civilization, the causes of its decline and eventual collapse are not totally evident. Some academics have hypothesised that external invasions, natural disasters, or climate change may have had an impact.

The Vedic Era (c. 1500 BCE - c. 500 BCE) saw the creation of the earliest Hindu writings, the Vedas, as well as the establishment of the caste system. The Aryans, a group of Indo-European immigrants, settled in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent during the Vedic era. They carried

their language, culture, and religious ideas with them, which had a big impact on how ancient Indian society developed.

Some of the earliest religious writings in the world are found in the Vedas, which were created during the Vedic era. These include songs, prayers, and rituals that were essential to the period's religious activities. The Vedas also offer insightful explanations of the social and cultural customs of the Vedic era, including the social positions of priests, warriors, and farmers.

During the Vedic era, a group of Indo-European immigrants known as the Aryans landed in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent. They brought their language, culture, and religious beliefs with them, which had a significant influence on the evolution of ancient Indian society.

The Maurya Empire, which was ruled by Chandragupta and his successors, ruled over a considerable portion of the Indian subcontinent, encompassing modern-day India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. It was one of the biggest and most powerful empires in ancient India. The Maurya Empire had a highly centralised government with a sizable and effective bureaucracy in charge of tax collection, upholding law and order, and managing foreign affairs. The empire also had a strong military that included a sizable infantry, cavalry, and war elephant force.

There was a lot of cultural and intellectual advancement during the Maurya Empire. The sage Kautilya wrote the renowned Indian work on statecraft known as the Arthashastra at this time.

The Great Stupa at Sanchi, one of the oldest Buddhist buildings in the world, was built under the Maurya Dynasty, which was also a time of notable creative and architectural accomplishments. The Gupta Empire, which lasted from around 320 CE to around 550 CE, is renowned for its advances in literature, art, mathematics, astronomy, and other fields.

The Gupta Empire rose to prominence among the most potent and significant empires in ancient India during the rule of Sri Gupta's ancestors. The administration of the empire was decentralised, with local governors in each province securing support from the central Gupta emperor.

A great period of intellectual, artistic, and cultural advancement occurred during the Gupta Empire. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, two of the most well-known pieces of Indian literature, were written or edited during this time. Significant advancements in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, such as the creation of the decimal numeral system and the notion of zero, were also hallmarks of the Gupta period.

Moreover, there were notable artistic and architectural accomplishments throughout the Gupta Empire. The rock-cut cave temples at Ajanta and Ellora, which are famed for their complex carvings and frescoes, are some of the most well-known examples of Gupta art.

Language's ancestry

A group of people's shared understanding of a set of sounds constitutes a language, which is defined as a system of oral communication. Linguists, anthropologists, and other academics frequently disagree and speculate about the nature of language. There is no clear solution, although a number of theories have been put out to explain how language evolved.

Several linguists have hypothesised that language developed in response to certain environmental or social demands, such as the requirement to plan for obtaining food or hunting, or to create and uphold social bonds within a group. These hypotheses do not, however, explain language's precise origins.

Communication era

Human communication has its roots in our evolutionary past and is a key part of what it is to be human. Our ancestors' early means of communication were probably nonverbal, like gestures, facial expressions, and body language.

The earliest manifestations of human language can be used to trace the history of communication. It is thought that the first written language appeared in ancient Sumer (present-day Iraq) approximately 3500 BCE (Joshua J. Mark, 2022). Cuneiform, often known as wedge-shaped marks formed with a stylus on clay tablets, was the name of Sumerian writing. These tablets were used to keep track of a variety of daily activities, such as business dealings, court cases, and religious rituals.

Writing's invention marked a key turning point in human history because it made it possible to capture and store knowledge for future use. Writing encouraged the transmission of knowledge and ideas and allowed people to communicate across generations and distances.

Writing systems developed over time, becoming more sophisticated as various cultures created their own distinctive scripts and writing styles. The Greek and Roman alphabets, Chinese characters, and Egyptian hieroglyphs are a few of the most well-known ancient writing systems.

The majority of **prehistoric communication** was nonverbal and consisted of body language, facial emotions, gestures, and other nonverbal cues. These modes of communication were used by prehistoric people to express their feelings, share information about their environment, and build social bonds within their communities. Prehistoric humans probably evolved more complex communication methods as human civilizations grew more intricate. For instance, it's possible that early humans utilised drums, horns, and other straightforward musical instruments to transmit messages across long distances or to impart crucial information during religious or ceremonial rituals.

Prehistoric societies frequently used visual communication techniques like rock art. Extensive rock art, including elaborate cave paintings, was produced by numerous prehistoric cultures as a means of storytelling or to express significant cultural or spiritual messages.

Although writing did not yet exist during the prehistoric period, some experts have hypothesised that the emergence of sophisticated languages may have established the foundation for writing's later evolution. It's possible that early humans learned how to transmit meaning through symbols and other abstract representations as they evolved more sophisticated ways of communication.

The Vedic period, which started approximately 1500 BCE, saw tremendous advancements in Indian communication. The Vedas, a body of religious writings that were originally conveyed orally, were eventually recorded in Sanskrit, establishing the country of India's rich literary legacy.

In India, a comprehensive system of oral tradition developed throughout the classical era, with tales and lessons being memorised and recited from generation to generation. The oral tradition system enabled the preservation and long-term transfer of culture and knowledge over great distances. Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism are just a few of the sophisticated philosophical systems that emerged in India during the classical period. Both written works like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas as well as oral tradition were used to transmit these intellectual systems.

From roughly 650 CE to 1757 CE, India experienced the **mediaeval age**, which saw tremendous advancements in communication technology, literature, and culture. Moreover, during the middle Ages, India developed a number of significant literary traditions. The Tirukkural, a compilation of moral precepts, and the writings of the poet-saints known as the Alvars and Nayanars, for instance, were produced during this time in the Tamil language, which also generated a significant corpus of literature.



Note on Brief Communication History

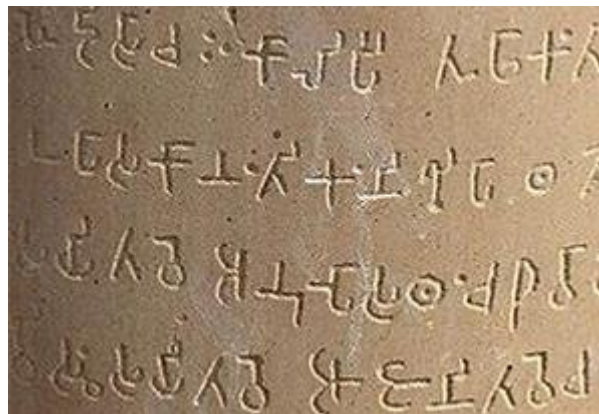
The first life forms on Earth are where communication first began. Animals, plants, and microorganisms employed a variety of communication techniques to live and flourish even before there were humans. Since the dawn of civilisation, communication has been a crucial component of human society.

There are **cave paintings** all around the world, including India. Yet, India's cave paintings are mostly from the prehistoric age, which came before the ancient and mediaeval eras. There have been numerous areas in India where cave paintings have been found, including Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu. These Indian cave paintings are among the oldest known instances of prehistoric art and are thought to be around

30,000 years old. These Indian cave paintings are said to have been made for a variety of reasons, including religious or ceremonial ones, as a way to record hunting and other events, and as an artistic expression. Its exact purpose is unknown.

Regarding communication, it is thought that these Indian cave paintings may have acted as a means of exchanging vital knowledge about the natural world, hunting methods, and other facets of daily life within a group. Important religious or spiritual views that community members might share and comprehend may have also been represented by them. The ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia created the cuneiform writing system circa 3500 BCE. It is one of the earliest writing systems that have been discovered, and it was used to record a variety of data, including religious writings, historical accounts, and financial transactions.

It is significant to note that the **cuneiform script** was not utilised in India; rather, it was largely employed in Mesopotamia, which is modern-day Iraq. Yet, **during the ancient and mediaeval times, India did have its own writing systems, including the Indus script and the Brahmi script.**



Source : [Brahmi script - Wikipedia](#)

On the other hand, India used the **Brahmi script**, a writing system, from the third century BCE through the fourth century CE. It was employed to preserve a wide range of information, including literary works, historical documents, and religious writings. Many of the writing systems still in use in India today, such as Tamil and Devanagari, have their roots in the Brahmi script.

As humans progressed, they created increasingly sophisticated communication methods. The earliest humans communicated with one another by simple vocalisations and gestures, but with time, a language evolved and became more complex. Humans were able to work more successfully, share knowledge and ideas, and create sophisticated communities because to their capacity to communicate through language.

It is challenging to comprehend the language that the Indus script represents or the type of information it records as there are still just a few hundred specimens of the script. Over 400 signs

make up the writing, many of which are extremely stylised and intricate and hence challenging to understand.

The **Indus script** has been broken down several times, but none of them have been widely accepted. A kind of proto-Dravidian, which is thought to be a forerunner to the Dravidian languages currently spoken in South India, may be represented by the script, according to some academics who think it represents a Dravidian language. Some people think the writing is an early form of Sanskrit or an Indo-European language.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in understanding the writing, it is obvious that the Indus Valley Civilization was very advanced and had an excellent communication system. Research and study on the Indus script are ongoing because it is a significant component of India's cultural history.

One of the first writing systems employed in ancient India was the Brahmi script. It was created in the third century BCE and utilised up until the fourth. The Brahmi dynasty, which is thought to have been responsible for the script's creation, was named after it. Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Pali were among the numerous languages written in the Brahmi script. It was employed to preserve a variety of information, including literary works, historical documents, and religious writings.

Many of the writing systems still in use in India today, such as Tamil and Devanagari, have their roots in the Brahmi script. It was 49 letters long and featured a clean, sophisticated look. The script was typically etched on palm leaves or paper produced from tree bark, and the letters were written from left to right.

The **Gupta script**, which was used during the Gupta Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, and the **Kharosthi script**, which was used in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, are two examples of variations of the Brahmi script that have developed over time.

The Brahmi script had a big impact on how Indian literature and culture evolved. It cleared the way for the rich heritage of literature and scholarship that has distinguished India for millennia and enabled for the recording and dissemination of thoughts and knowledge.

An ancient writing system known as the Kharosthi script was employed in the northwest Indian subcontinent, particularly in what are now the modern countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Gandhari were among the many languages written in the Kharosthi script. King Kharosthi, who ruled in the region where the alphabet was created, is thought to be the inspiration for its name. The 28 letters in the script were written from right to left. Consonants made up the majority of the letters, with diacritical markings used to denote vowels. A vast variety of literature, including Buddhist scriptures, legal papers, and administrative records, were written in this script.

The Gurmukhi and Sharada scripts, as well as other contemporary writing systems used in the area, have their roots in the Kharosthi script. Also, it is noteworthy because it offers crucial details on

the history and culture of the area, particularly the dissemination of Buddhism and the influences of Greek and Central Asian cultures.

Despite its significance, only a few inscriptions have been translated, and the Kharosthi script is still entirely unintelligible. Yet as fresh studies and research are conducted, we are learning more about this intriguing writing system and its significance to the rich history of the Indian subcontinent.

The purpose of communication

The Latin word "commnicre," which meaning "to share," is where the word "communication" originates. Different species—including humans, animals, plants, and occasionally even inanimate objects—display varying degrees of communication or signaling capabilities.

"The process of transferring intended meanings from one entity or group to another via the use of mutually understood signs and regulations," according to the definition of communication.

Indian communication techniques in ancient times

In ancient India, **oral communication** predominated. It was utilised to transmit knowledge, concepts, and information orally. These featured narratives, readings from sacred texts, and speeches by kings and other influential people.

Written communication: When writing systems evolved, including the Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts, information could be recorded and shared through written texts. These comprised literary works, historical documents, and religious writings.

Artistic expression: In ancient India, thoughts and beliefs were expressed through artistic expression, such as cave paintings, sculptures, and architecture. These featured representations of deities as well as commonplace scenes.

Symbolic communication: In ancient India, meaning was communicated through the use of gestures and symbols. These included symbols utilised in religious rites as well as hand gestures used in dance and yoga.

The importance of communication in ancient India

Since the beginning of time, communication has been a crucial component of human existence. Communication was essential for **forming society, disseminating knowledge, and promoting trade and commerce, education system, artistic expression in ancient India.**

Communication was crucial for **trade and commerce** since ancient India served as a major trading hub where people from all over the world came to purchase and sell products. Communication networks, including trade guilds and market towns, were developed to aid trade.

Sharing Knowledge: The rich legacy of study and wisdom in ancient India was well-known. The dissemination of this knowledge to citizens all around the nation was greatly aided by communication. In order to transmit the knowledge found in the Vedas, Upanishads, and other sacred scriptures to succeeding generations, sages, intellectuals, and philosophers relied on oral traditions.

Education system: Ancient India had a strong educational system that gave people from all backgrounds access to knowledge. This included the gurukul system, in which pupils lived with their teachers and studied a range of subjects, including as physics, literature, and philosophy.

Artistic expression: In ancient India, thoughts and beliefs were expressed through artistic expression, such as cave paintings, sculptures, and architecture. These comprised representations of deities as well as scenes from daily life, which aided in the dissemination of knowledge and concepts regarding religion, culture, and social mores.

Religious and Social Customs: The spread of religious and social norms depended in large part on communication. Oral traditions were employed by priests and other religious authorities to instruct followers in religious rites and customs. Oral traditions also served as a means of transmitting stories and myths, which helped people, form their religious and cultural beliefs. Ancient India's religious and social norms were greatly influenced by communication

Art and architecture: In ancient India, communication was essential to the growth of both art and building. Communication was utilised by artisans, artists, and architects to communicate concepts, methods, and supplies. The dissemination of creative and architectural styles and traditions among many tribes and locations was also made possible via communication.

The dissemination of religious and philosophical teachings: The dissemination of religious and philosophical teachings relied heavily on communication. The veracity of religious books like the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas was transmitted orally from generation to generation and depended on efficient communication.

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Note: The history of India covers thousands of years of human civilization on the subcontinent, including the Indus Valley Civilization, numerous empires, kingdoms, and dynasties, and colonization by the British East India Company.

<https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/countries-alongside-silk-road-routes/india>

<https://www.science.smith.edu/climatelit/decline-of-the-indus-river-valley-civilization-c-3300-1300-bce/>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/India/The-development-of-Indian-civilization-from-c-1500-bce-to-c-1200-ce>

<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/15895/the-mauryan-empire-c-321---185-bce/>

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_communication#:~:text=The%20history%20of%20communication%20itself,%2C%20petroglyphs%2C%20pictograms%20and%20ideograms.

[Lecture 1 By R.S.Bisht « Archaeological Survey of India \(asi.nic.in\)](#)

Note: In this lecture by R.S. Bisht, he discusses the history and significance of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which was founded in 1861. He highlights some of the key archaeological discoveries made by the ASI over the years and the organization's ongoing efforts to preserve India's cultural heritage.

Comprehensive overview of the literature that is referred and cited in the study: The importance of communication in Ancient India

Lecture 1 By R.S.Bisht « Archaeological Survey of India. (n.d.-a). Retrieved from <https://asi.nic.in/asi-lecture-series/lecture-1-by-r-s-bisht/>

About the reference: The Indus Valley Civilization, the Vedic era, the Mauryan and Gupta dynasties, and other ancient Indian historical and archaeological issues are all covered in this lecture. The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the earliest and most developed civilizations in antiquity, according to Bisht, who starts the lecture by addressing the beginnings of Indian culture. The presentation offers a thorough review of ancient Indian civilisation and its artefacts, emphasising the significance of this complicated past in influencing modern Indian society and culture.

Decline of the Indus River Valley Civilization (c. 3300-1300 BCE) - Climate in Arts and History. (2021, June 30). Retrieved from <https://www.science.smith.edu/climatelit/decline-of-the-indus-river-valley-civilization-c-3300-1300-bce/>

About the reference: The article on this website explains the circumstances that led to its downfall and explores some of the hypotheses that have been put forward to do so. Despite its demise, the Indus River Valley Civilization left behind a rich legacy of artistic and technological accomplishments, such as remarkable city design, cutting-edge drainage systems, and a writing system that hasn't yet been fully translated.

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About the reference: webpage from Britannica article gives a broad summary of the significant historical and cultural changes that took place during this time, which saw the rise and fall of a number of important empires and the formation of some of India's most enduring religious and cultural practices.

L. (2021, March 9). 6.10: Gupta Period (320 CE – 550 CE). Retrieved from [https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Art/A_World_Perspective_of_Art_Appreciation_\(Gustlin_and_Gustlin\)/06%3A_The_Sophisticated_Art_of_Cultures_\(200_CE_1400_CE\)/6.10%3A_Gupta_Period_\(320_CE_550_CE\)](https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Art/A_World_Perspective_of_Art_Appreciation_(Gustlin_and_Gustlin)/06%3A_The_Sophisticated_Art_of_Cultures_(200_CE_1400_CE)/6.10%3A_Gupta_Period_(320_CE_550_CE))

About the reference: LibreTexts website that discusses the Gupta period of Indian history, which lasted from around 320 CE to 550 CE. The Gupta period is known for its achievements in science, mathematics, literature, and the arts, and is often considered a golden age of Indian civilization. This period saw the creation of many important works of sculpture, painting, and architecture, including the famous Ajanta Caves, which are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The legacy of this period continues to be felt in India and around the world today, and its cultural and intellectual achievements continue to inspire and inform contemporary Indian society and culture.

An Historical Overview of Communication since the Prehistoric World. (2022, May 1). Retrieved from <https://brewminate.com/an-historical-overview-of-communication-since-the-prehistoric-world/>

About the reference: The article on the Brewminate website gives a brief history of communication from ancient times to the present. Communication has always been an essential component of human society. The development of writing was a significant turning point in the history of communication, enabling the growth of complex civilizations and the preservation of knowledge over time. Prehistoric humans communicated through various forms of non-verbal communication, such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures.

The article also explores the role of communication in many historical periods, including the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, the mediaeval period, and the contemporary age. It observes that throughout history, communication has been vital in forming political and social movements.

An Historical Overview of Communication since the Prehistoric World. (2022, May 1). Retrieved from <https://brewminate.com/an-historical-overview-of-communication-since-the-prehistoric-world/>

About the reference: In ancient India, communication skills advanced alongside the advancement of science and technology. Certain old theories about how the physical world works, such as those concerning space and time, have persisted in donning metaphysical and occasionally even religious-philosophical attire along various intellectual lines.

The "Natyashastra" of Bharat Muni is regarded as the treatise full of ideas on better communication, according to a study on the Indian philosophy of communication. Here, communication is referred to as "Sadharanikaran," or simplification, including "Sahridayas," or those with a shared sympathetic heart. It produces the aesthetic pleasures of "Ras Utpathi" and "Ras Aswadan"

Wikipedia contributors. (2023, February 12). History of communication. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_communication#:~:text=The%20history%20of%20communication%20itself,%2C%20petroglyphs%2C%20pictograms%20and%20ideograms.

About the reference: The Wikipedia page on the history of communication offers a thorough overview of the evolution of communication throughout human history, from prehistoric times to the modern era. Through gradual evolution, these early writing systems gave way to the alphabetic writing systems that are still in use today.

Wikipedia contributors. (2023b, March 15). History of India. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_India

About the reference: The significant occurrences and developments in India's history from ancient times to the present are summarised on the "History of India" Wikipedia article. The information on this page is presented in chronological order, starting with the prehistoric period and moving on to the Indus Valley Civilization, the Vedic period, the Maurya Empire, the Gupta Empire, the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Empire, British colonial rule, the Indian independence movement, and the modern era.