

Ancient Indian Scripts: A Comprehensive Overview

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Abstract: Ancient Indian scripts have been a cornerstone of the country's linguistic and cultural heritage. This paper aims to provide an in-depth exploration of these scripts, their evolution, and significance, with a focus on South Indian scripts. We will examine the Brahmi script, its descendants, and other prominent ancient Indian scripts, highlighting their characteristics, usage, and impact on Indian languages and culture.

Introduction - India's rich cultural landscape is reflected in its diverse array of ancient scripts. These scripts not only facilitated communication but also played a pivotal role in preserving the country's history, mythology, and cultural narratives. The evolution of ancient Indian scripts is a testament to the country's linguistic diversity and cultural exchange.

Based on the ancient Indian scripts topic, here are some facts:

Ancient Indian Scripts:

1. Indus Script: Used by the Indus Valley Civilization (2700-1900 BCE) and remains undeciphered.
2. Brahmi Script: Emerged in the 3rd century BCE, is an abugida, and gave rise to many modern Indian scripts like Devanagari, Odia, and Gujarati.
3. Kharosthi Script: Used in the northwest region (3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE) and was deciphered by James Prinsep.
4. Gupta Script: Developed from Brahmi and gave rise to scripts like Nāgarī, U̠aradā, and SiddhaC.

Script Origins:

1. Brahmi's origin is debated, with most scholars believing it was derived from or influenced by Semitic scripts, such as Aramaic.
2. The Indus script's connection to Brahmi remains unproven.
3. Other Scripts:
4. Tibetan Script: Derived from Brahmi and used to write Tibetan languages.
5. Sharada Script: An abugida writing system used in the northwestern Indian subcontinent (8th-12th centuries).
6. Devanagari Script: Used to write languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, and Marathi.

Types of Ancient Indian Scripts:

Brahmi Script: The Brahmi script is one of the most influential writing systems in India, giving rise to numerous

scripts used across the country and beyond. Decoded by James Prinsep in 1837, Brahmi is an abugida writing system, where each consonant has an inherent vowel sound.

South Indian Scripts:

1. Tamil Script: Emerged from the Tamil-Brahmi script, the Tamil script is used to write the Tamil language, which is spoken in southern India and northeastern Sri Lanka.
2. Grantha Script: Originating from Brahmi, Grantha was used to write Sanskrit and Manipravalam in South India. It played a significant role in the development of Malayalam and other South Indian scripts.
3. Malayalam Script: Developed from the Grantha script, the Malayalam script is used to write the Malayalam language, which is spoken in Kerala, India.
4. Telugu-Kannada Script: This script gave rise to the Telugu and Kannada scripts, which are used to write the Telugu and Kannada languages, respectively.
5. Telugu Script: Used to write the Telugu language, which is spoken in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
6. Kannada Script: Used to write the Kannada language, which is spoken in the state of Karnataka.
7. Vatteluttu Script: An ancient script used in South India, particularly in the Tamil region, Vatteluttu is believed to have originated from the Brahmi script.
8. Tigalari Script: Used to write the Tulu language, which is spoken in the coastal regions of Karnataka and Kerala.
9. Kadamba Script: An ancient script used in South India, the Kadamba script is believed to have given rise to several other scripts, including the Kannada and Telugu scripts.

Characteristics of Brahmic Scripts: Brahmic scripts share certain characteristics, including :

1. Abugida System: Each consonant has an inherent vowel sound, with other vowels indicated by diacritical marks.
2. Ligatures: Consonants can be combined in ligatures, with special marks denoting the combination of 'r' with another consonant.
3. Alphabetical Order: The order of letters follows a specific pattern, with vowels, velar consonants, palatal consonants, and so on.

Conclusion: Ancient Indian scripts have played a vital role in shaping the country's linguistic and cultural identity. Understanding these scripts is essential for appreciating India's rich cultural heritage and the evolution of its languages. This paper has provided an overview of the prominent ancient Indian scripts, including South Indian scripts, their characteristics, and significance, highlighting the importance of preserving and promoting India's linguistic

diversity.

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