

# **INTRODUCTION TO EPIGRAPHY**

Author

**Dr. V. MANIKANDA SETHUPATHY,**

Assistant Professor, { T } , Department of History,

Manonmaniam Sundaranar University,,

Tirunelveli – Tamil Nadu



**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY**

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**TIRUNELVELI – TAMIL NADU - 627 012.**

**JANUARY – 2024**

### **Unit - I**

Epigraphy-Definition –Importance of epigraphy for writing history – Format of Inscription - Authenticity

### **Unit - II**

Nature of the material- stone, metal, clay, terra-cota, pottery, wood, papyrus, parchment-Types of inscriptions- monumental- archival- Incidental

### **Unit - III**

Origin of Writing in India – Indus Script and its decipherment – Brahmi and Kharosthi Script

### **Unit - IV**

Origin of Writing in South India – Tamili - Tamil Brahmi – Vattezhuthu – Grantha Script

### **Unit - V**

Inscriptions as historical source material- Inscriptions of Indus civilization- Asokan Pillar inscriptions- inscriptions of Gupta period- Inscriptions in Tamilnadu - -Mangulam - Sittannavasal

## Unit – I

### Learning Objectives

1. To understand the meaning and scope of Epigraphy.
2. To explain the importance of epigraphy in reconstructing history.
3. To identify different types of inscriptions and their features.
4. To understand the standard format of inscriptions.
5. To analyze the language, script, and content of inscriptions.
6. To evaluate the authenticity and reliability of inscriptions.

### Course Outcomes

1. Students will define and explain the concept of epigraphy.
2. Students will assess the historical significance of inscriptions.
3. Students will identify various inscriptional sources.
4. Students will describe the structure and format of inscriptions.
5. Students will interpret inscriptional data for historical study.
6. Students will examine the authenticity of inscriptions critically.
7. Students will apply epigraphical knowledge in historical research.

## Epigraphy - Introduction and Importance

### What is Epigraphy?

The word epigraphy is derived from two Greek words viz., ‘Epi’ meaning on or upon and ‘Graphie’ meaning to write. Epigraphy is the study of writings engraved on different materials like stone, metal, wood, shell, terracotta, etc., known as inscriptions or epigraphs. It is one of the most fascinating and instructive studies. It deals with the art of writing, which distinguishes man from animals and provides us with an instrument for conservation and transmission of historical traditions from generation to generation. When the discipline of such study was established, individual scholars were referred as ‘epigraphers’ or ‘epigraphists’ and the subject itself was titled as ‘Epigraphy’

**History of Epigraphy** The first to practice epigraphy were the ancient Greek scholars, Thucydides and Polybius who took an interest in ancient Egyptian and other inscriptions from older civilizations. Later European scholars during the renaissance took an interest in Latin and Greek inscriptions and started to develop methodologies towards studying epigraphy. In India the systematic research in the epigraphical studies began in the second quarter of 18th century during the British rule. Charles Wilkins, the pioneer Indologist initiated the first publication of an old inscription in Sanskrit in 1781. Sir William Jones was another renowned Indologist who made significant contribution to the study of Indian Epigraphy. As a scholar in Indo-European languages he founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. In the middle of 1830’s Epigraphy

is witnessed the glorified advancement in decipherment of many unknown ancient scripts which were employed in the inscriptions. James Prinsep, (1799-1840) successfully deciphered the early Brahmi script in 1837. Since then epigraphical studies became an important discipline in Archaeology and history.

### **Epigraphy**

Inscriptions are one of the archeological evidences that help us to know about the ancient history of our country. In many places, inscriptions can be seen on the walls of public buildings like temples, on rocks and stone pillars. What is written in this way is called silasana or inscription. Epigraphy is the art of understanding ancient inscriptions and interpreting their meaning. Inscriptions serve as important primary evidence for the historical research of our country. Inscriptions convey the historical knowledge of ancient man. Inscriptions help to understand the civilizations of Greece, Mesopotamia, Nile River, China, Mayan, Aztec, India etc. A large number of inscriptions have been found in India. Not only on stone, but also on clay tablets, metal, ivory, conch, pottery, flint ink, wood and parchment were also written in ancient times.

### **Significance of Inscriptions:**

The inscriptions are Kavinmiku Solvets. Fantasy epics that capture the imagination. Literary themes and dialogue series is the treasury of They are personal evidences of gifts given by kings. They are historical arks that reflect the citizens, their sentiments, principles of gathering, celebrated festivals and customs. The doctrines and treaties of the petty kings were the records of the decrees and documents of the kings. Thus each inscription is the laws and evidences that guide the morals of life. They are also historical treasures. It is also a treasury of arts. Explain the relevance of economic status. Glistening as the beacons of culture. It can be said that they act as a repository of knowledge that explains political ethics and stands as a guide for developmental changes. In inscriptions there is no place for fantasy, fiction, fables, sentimental style, or noble design. There is only room for the truth that perceives what is in them as it is.

### **Inscriptions in India:**

In India, inscriptions are being discovered every day. South Indian inscriptions in particular have been discovered in large numbers. The oldest inscriptions in India are Ashoka's inscriptions written in Brahmi and Kharoshti scripts. From the Brahmi script of Ashoka's time, modern Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, Gujarati, Oriya script/scripts emerged. Karoshti

script was found in western India during the time of Ashoka. This character is written from right to left. North Indian Karoshti, Prakriti as the language of Brahmi script Explained. Brahmic inscriptions in Tamil Nadu are interpreted in Tamil language. In India, the credit goes to Merelanata for studying the inscriptions, making them historical evidences and instructing us on their importance. Prominent among them are James Prinsep, Robert Sival, Dr. Kilhorn, Dr. Pooler, Cunningham, Dr. Burnell, Colin, Dr. Hultz. Without their encouragement and hard work, it is certain that the inscriptions would have perished with time.

### **Apart from them, Gopinathrao, Venkaiah, Subramaniam**

Aiyar, Krishnasastri etc. were also passionate about Indian inscriptions. It is because these scholars were involved in finding inscriptions in India and studying them and compiling historical events that the proper history of India has been available in this period. The Archaeological Survey of India has set up a separate cell in Mysore to study and locate South Indian inscriptions. Arabic and Persian Inscriptions a department has also been set up at Nagpur to conduct research.

### **North Indian Epigraphy**

India's oldest writing system is found in seals found in the ruins of the Indus Valley Civilization. Scholars are engaged in trying to understand these. We can systematically learn about the inscriptions that appeared during the time of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. Inscriptions are generally divided into two categories: inscriptions given by the king, inscriptions given by individuals and corporations. In the inscriptions given by the kings, messages are found in Peru 5. Titles of kings, their ancestors, etc. Their achievements and gifts are marked. The famous North Indian inscriptions are Ashoka's inscriptions and Karavelan's Adhikumba inscription. Sunagad Inscription of Urturadaman, Allahabad Pillar Inscription, Mandasore Pillar Inscription, Aykol Inscription etc.

### **Tamil Nadu Inscriptions:**

Even before the time of Ashoka, when Jain monks came from the north to the south, they carved small inscriptions in Tamil on the cave beds where they stayed in Madurai and Tirunelveli districts. In earlier times Tamil people did not consider writing on stone as normal. For the deceased, especially those who died bravely, they planted a middle stone and wrote the name and honor of the deceased. They wrote on other perishable materials and pottery. So we have the first non-Samin Tamils to write on Nadukal. Temples built to house the Lord and places

where people live are made of iron, wood and lime other than stone. They built it with materials like bricks. The Pallava king Mahendravarman (6th century AD) in his Mandakapattu vernacular inscription describes himself as Vichitrashitha who built the umbrella temple for the three E's in stone that could stand from the above mentioned items. The Pallava kings who followed him built temples with that stone. After the Pallava period, stone temples began to appear regularly in Cholanath and Pandi Nath. In these temples, letters were engraved on the stones. So till the 7th and 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, the entire history of Tamilnadu could not be known through inscriptions. 7<sup>th</sup> century AD of the inscriptions found up to 5 are written in Tamil and in script. This account is based on South Indian inscription blocks, inscripational annals, etc., which were discovered and published during field research across Tamil Nadu in the last century. There are probably thousands of inscriptions and tombstones yet to be discovered.

### **Origin and development of inscription**

Inscriptions are also used to learn about the history, customs, culture, civilization and lifestyle of the ancient Tamils, just as archeology, coins, paintings, sculptures, literature, etc. are used. 5 These inscriptions have been standing in Tamil Nadu since ancient times there is evidence in the famous Tolkapiya and Sangha literature that existed. In ancient times, it was customary to take center stone for the victorious soldiers who did not stand aside in battle. The middle stone was taken as a memorial to the deceased. The sites where the middens were later became temples. Worship was held there. They built a wall and a gate to the tomb. Then they placed swords in front of Akkal and greeted Akkal by ringing bells. There are many Sangha literary evidences that the name and glory of the hero was written on the day when Nadukal was taken. "The middle of the stage of birth where the name and the beed are written and the other thor is lit" Marungul Nunukiya Pozhuthir Nadukal Bayar Bayam Padarath Tharandhu Quilelethu and other songs like Engraved with the name of the team, the Natanare will be stoned. Illadu Kallin Sil Gudich Seerur Budai Nadukallin Nadbaluity' Over four hundred hymns like this also drum up the praise and worship of the name and glory engraved on the middle stone.

### **Beginning of inscription**

Among the epitaphs, the alphabetic epitaphs are the earliest. Writing means painting. So when the first center stone is taken the players draw the figure in lines. In Tamil Nadu, various lines drawn by lines in ancient times have been found on rocks. They perished in the course of time. Its development Gradually they began to carve lines into the stone with sharp chisels.

During the late Sangam period, the practice of carving a warrior's image in stone and inscribing his name and glory developed. This practice of taking a middle stone is the basis of the first system of inscriptions that appeared in Tamil Nadu. Prehistoric inscriptions (Before the third century AD / Jain, Buddhist) monks were spreading their religions in Tamil Nadu. At the places where they lived and where they died, their disciples engraved the merits of those saints in stone. Such primary message inscriptions are found in the rocks, hills and caves. Nellai district is found in Kalgakumalai, Madurai district in Anai hill, Thiruparang hill, Vakramangalam, Trichy district in Pukulur hill and Pudukottai district in Chithanna Vasal. These are prehistoric inscriptions written in Tamil script.

### **Development of Inscription:**

The Pallava kings who ruled Tamil Nadu from the 7th century to the end of the 9th century were the first to build temples in black stone. They made them timeless artworks. The Cholas and Pandyas who ruled later also built stone temples. All these temples were not only symbols of artworks but also centers of religious development. Daily worship, Monday festivals and annual festivals served these temples. The kings gave gifts of gold and material to make these ceremonies auspicious. These messages were engraved on the tablets they gave to the temples. The reason for this engraving is that the charitable works should continue without any hindrance. Many people should know the excellence of the gifts given to the temples and they should also come forward to give such gifts. In my view, they were engraved in such a way that many people could see and know whether the things mentioned in the inscriptions are being done in the temples every day. The liturgical rituals performed daily in the temples, the Nanda lamps lit continuously day and night, the Nanda lamps lit during the worship, the ornaments decorated for the temple tirumani, the red coins given as gifts to the temple tower, hall, perimeter wall, etc. are mentioned in the inscriptions. And not only temple-related news, but also the decrees of kings, government decrees, agreements of small land kings, rights documents of residents, rules of the church, decisions, demarcation of religious lands, methods of land sales, and elements of the life of the common people also began to appear in inscriptions. Thus the inscriptions were developed.

### **Epigraphy**

For the first time in 1837, a foreigner named James Prinsep expressed the opinion that "If we collect and read all the inscriptions in India, we can know the ancient history of India very

clearly." He was the main reason for the initiation of epigraphic research in India. In 1861, the Government of India arranged to transcribe all the inscriptions found in India and to read them and publish them in book form. (Consequently a separate collection entitled 'Inscriptions of the Age of Ashoka' was published by the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, Thanit Thedaruppaindi 1871-1885. Houltts, who was the first epigrapher to the Madras government, published the first collection of South Indian inscriptions in 1903. The main notes of the inscriptions transcribed by the Department of Inscriptions of the Government of Chennai began to be published in the year 1887 under the name 'South Indian Inscription Report'. So far the annual report of 1967-68 has been published. It was written in Brahmi script and Kharoshti script (Foreigners like Prinsep, Pooler, Hoodless and Indian nationals like Mitra, Bhandarkar, V. Venkaiah, Gopinathrao, KV Subramania Iyer, Airavatham Mahadevan are credited with reading Indian inscriptions). Epigraphists from India wrote articles related to inscriptions in some monthly magazines in Indian languages. In Tamil Nadu, Tamil scholars M.Iragavaiyengar, N.M.Venkatasamy Nattar, Sadasiva Bandarathar, Mailai Seeni were published in magazines such as 'Sendhamil', Tamil Bozil'. Venkatasamy, Sundaresa Vandaiyar also wrote articles on inscriptions.

Volumes One to Fourteen of South Indian Inscriptions volumes have been published so far. Later volumes seventeen, nineteen and twenty-three have come out. 'Epigraphia India' has been published continuously from one to thirty-eight volumes of inscriptions. In these volumes, historians and epigraphers have studied some important inscriptions found in India with a research perspective and have written many articles.

From 1887 to 1936, a volume titled 'Sequence of Copied Inscriptions' has been published, which contains the details of the cities where the inscriptions were transcribed in Tamil Nadu. Also to publish a compilation of the important parts of which clan kings these inscriptions belong to and some of the important messages found in them has fallen These are of great help to the study of inscriptions. Some of the Malays in Tamil Nadu like Seawell Mackenzie have personally published some inscriptions as a direct reading and note book.= Seawell has published a volume named 'South Indian Historical Inscriptions'. Also, the Tamil Historical Research Institute, Chennai has published two volumes namely Pallavar Seppedu thirty and Pandiyar Seppedu ten." These are very useful for the researcher. T Museum has published a book titled 'Indian Charters and Chennai South Indian Writings'. The Department of Archeology of the

Government of Tamil Nadu has transcribed all the inscriptions found in Tamil Nadu and published several volumes of inscriptions. They are Chennai city inscriptions, Thanjai Peruvudayar temple inscriptions, Kanyakumarkan inscriptions, Sengam stone inscriptions, Dharmapuri district inscriptions and inscriptions, Nannilam inscriptions, Kumbakonam stone inscriptions. These inscriptions are very helpful for those studying the ancient history of Tamil Nadu. Apart from this, it publishes an annual magazine 'Tamilagam' and a quarterly magazine 'Kalvettu'. Research articles on new inscriptions discovered from time to time are written in these journals. Also, it is conducting many seminars and inscription exhibitions in the districts on the basis that the lay people should also know about the inscriptions. An inscription training course is also conducted for teachers in Tamil Nadu every year in May. Many research articles and books have been published based on the inscriptions. Airavatham Mahadevan from Tamil Nadu has compiled Harappan script and published a 'Volume of Harappan Scripts'. It is a basic text for the study of Harappan script. The Department of South Asian History, University of Tokyo, Japan has published three volumes titled 'Names in Chola Inscriptions', which have collected all the names found in Chola inscriptions.

Epigraphy started in 1861 and so far about seventy five thousand inscriptions have been transcribed. But in Tamil Nadu and other parts of India there are still thousands of inscriptions to be deciphered and a few thousand inscriptions to be discovered anew. It is noteworthy that the Government of India and the State Governments, which are working with great interest in inscriptions, are taking steps to find these inscriptions soon and research them. Many research articles and books have been published based on the inscriptions. Airavatham Mahadevan from Tamil Nadu has compiled Harappan script and published a 'Volume of Harappan Scripts'. It is a basic text for the study of Harappan script. The Department of South Asian History, University of Tokyo, Japan has published three volumes titled 'Names in Chola Inscriptions', which have collected all the names found in Chola inscriptions. Epigraphy started in 1861 and so far about seventy five thousand inscriptions have been transcribed. But in Tamil Nadu and other parts of India there are still thousands of inscriptions to be deciphered and a few thousand inscriptions to be discovered anew. It is noteworthy that the Government of India and the State Governments, which are working with great interest in inscriptions, are taking steps to find these inscriptions soon and research them.

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions ( 5 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	Define epigraphy and explain its scope.	CO1	PO1	K1
2	Write a short note on the importance of epigraphy in writing history.	CO2	PO2	K2
3	Describe the basic components of an inscription.	CO4	PO1	K3
4	Explain the role of inscriptions as primary sources.	CO2	PO3	K2
5	What are the common languages and scripts used in inscriptions?	CO3	PO1	K1
6	Write a note on the need for authenticity in epigraphical studies.	CO5	PO4	K2
<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions (8 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	Define epigraphy and discuss its significance in historical reconstruction.	CO1	PO2	K2
2	Examine the importance of inscriptions as reliable sources for writing history.	CO2	PO2	K3
3	Explain in detail the format and structure of inscriptions with examples.	CO4	PO3	K3
4	Analyze the methods used to verify the authenticity of inscriptions.	CO5	PO4	K4
5	Discuss the various types of inscriptions and their historical value.	CO3	PO2	K3
6	Evaluate the role of epigraphy in understanding political, social, and economic history.	CO2	PO5	K5
7	Describe the process of interpreting inscriptions and its challenges.	CO5	PO4	K4
8	Assess the limitations and reliability of epigraphical sources in historical studies.	CO5	PO5	K5

## Unit – II

### Learning Objectives

1. To understand the nature of materials used for inscriptions.
2. To identify different media such as stone, metal, clay, terracotta, pottery, wood, papyrus, and parchment.
3. To classify inscriptions based on their material and usage.
4. To explain the types of inscriptions: monumental, archival, and incidental.
5. To analyze the durability and significance of different inscriptional materials.
6. To evaluate the historical value of various types of inscriptions.

### Course Outcomes

1. Students will identify different materials used for inscriptions.
2. Students will describe the characteristics of inscriptional media.
3. Students will classify inscriptions into monumental, archival, and incidental types.
4. Students will explain the uses and purposes of different types of inscriptions.
5. Students will analyze the relationship between material and preservation.
6. Students will assess the historical importance of inscriptional sources.
7. Students will apply knowledge of materials and types in epigraphical studies.

### Nature of the material (Writing Materials)

When human beings appeared in this world, they did not have the ability to speak in the beginning. Make sounds with the mouth. They used hand gestures to communicate their ideas to others. Over time man began to express his ideas through painting. When he started expressing himself through painting, the art of writing took shape. Many materials were used in ancient times to write their ideas like this. Slabs, stones, mezzanines, rocks, stone pillars, temple walls, sepadas, clay tablets, potsherds, leaves, silk cloth, paper and many other materials were used as writing materials.

#### 1. Cave sites

As seen in many mountain cave paintings, it seems that cave walls were used for writing the first place. There are naturally formed sites in the hills. Generally, these cave sites are located a little outside the town. Most of the cave sites are very difficult to get to. Ancient Buddhist and Jain monks lived in these caves. From time to time, emperors and merchants also provided pashis to Jain monks. That is, the cave floor has been carved to make it suitable for them to lie down and sleep. Inscriptions have been engraved on it to indicate this. The inscriptions are mostly cut into the rock face of the cave. In some places, smooth carvings are also found on the headboards of the beds.

#### 2. Stone

Stone was also used as a writing material in ancient times. The practice of engraving letters on stone has been prevalent in Tamil Nadu since ancient times. From texts like Tolkaappiyam and Purananuru, it seems that the practice of worshipping Nadukal Nadu to soldiers who died in war and inscribing their heroic deeds on those Nadukal has been rooted in Tamil Nadu. The image of a hero is engraved on the center stones. The year of the reign of the king, the name of the fallen hero, the news about him, the battle, the victory of Anirai, the rescue of Anirai and why he fell are engraved on the middle stones. These messages are written above, below and sideways. Thus the middle stones were used as writing material. A number of Mesolithic inscriptions dating back to the Pallava period have been found. Most of these are inscribed in script and a few in Tamil script. Tamil script is found in the Chola period mesoliths. Inscriptions cut on rocks, pillars, temple walls etc. have been found not only in the middle stones. Some of these inscriptions are found as words and some as phrases and many charters. In the inscription which is a charter, there are five parts namely Mangala word, period, message, handwriting and old lady. These messages were carved with chisels and hammers. The kings inscribed their donations, charity, decrees, dharma, war messages, etc. on the stones to make them permanent without destruction. Thus stones were also used as writing material.

### **3. Chests**

In ancient times, like letters were engraved on stones, letters were also engraved on metal plates, although various types of metal plates such as brass, copper, and silver were used, but copper plates were used more, so these are called copper plates. The ancients wrote down a royal decree or an agreement between two parties on tablets. The reason they wrote on the tablets was because they thought it would last a long time. A brass plate inscription found at Sogaura in Uttar Pradesh is said to date back to the third century BC. The text of the book says that three of the sixty sutras of the content of the sage during the Sanga period were written on sepheds and were in the Alavai temple. From this it seems that the habit of writing in seppet originated in very ancient times. A few inscriptions refer to a gift and cut it in copper and in idols'. Thus it seems that the copies of the inscription were also engraved on Seppet. The co-existence of the inscription at Shergam with the stone of Udayaditta confirms this statement. Sepedes are often found in long square shapes in the shape of palm leaves. Added to the copper ring drilled on the left side. Pallan temple copper, Kooram copper etc. were given by the Pallavas. Chinnamanur

Cheppedu, Velvikkudi Cheppedu, Dalwaipurach Cheppedu etc. were given by Pandyas. Leyton Cheppedu, Tiruvalangatuch Cheppedu, Karantich Cheppedu etc. were given by the Cholas.

#### **4. See:**

At that time there was a habit of writing with a pencil on the leaf. Uttaramerur of Paranthagan I, the inscription refers to Gudavolai. This inscription refers to the method of electing members to the parish council by writing the candidate's name on a piece of paper and placing it in a jar. It is clear that the practice of writing on Olai came from that time as there were officials like Tirumandra Olai and Olai Nayagam among the king's officers. In some inscriptions it is said that "We gave 'Olai' so that people would do this and cut on copper and idols", so it is clear that before engraving on copper and idols, it was written on olai. Also, the paintings found on the walls around the sanctum sanctorum of the Tanjore Peruvudayar temple also depict mythological scenes. One of them is holding a leaf in his hand. The sound is marked as 'I will learn like this'. The king's gift of a town called Mangalam to the big Leyton Seppedu indicates that 'we were doing charity. So we can know that the habit of writing on light came from among us. Also, it seems that all the decrees of the king were written on parchment or parchment and then they were cut on stones and tablets.

#### **5. Clay Board:**

The habit of writing on clay tablets also came. Generally ancient seal characters were written on clay tablets. Originally written on wet clay tablets with sharp knife-like weapons. Then they were dried in the sun. They were also restrained by fire. Apart from this, processed clay The board was written with a quiver and a sharp needle. Clay tablets written in this way are found in countries like India, Egypt and Sumeria. A number of clay seals have been found at Mohanjadaro and Harappa in India.

#### **6. Tiles:**

Pottery was also used as stationery. These pots were inscribed with sharp objects before they were made and fired. After writing the pots were fired in the fire. Pictographs, symbols etc. can be seen on potsherds found at Parayur, Arikamedu and other places in Tamil Nadu.

#### **7. Bronze:**

Inscriptions are found on objects made of bronze. These are mostly in sculptures. Many of the Chola period copper thirumenis have inscriptions. For example, the plinth of the Buddha Tirumeni found recently at Nagapattinam has inscriptions.

## **8. Brass :**

Inscriptions are found on the brass plates wrapped around the temple stands, flagpoles, bhava lamps and temple utensils. Airplane caskets also have inscriptions.

## **9.Iron:**

Inscriptions on iron are less common. The inscription of the king 'Chandra' found on an iron pillar at Delhi is the oldest and the only inscription found in iron.

## **10.Gold:**

Gold inlays are generally seen as religious. Most of them are Buddhist. A gold plate inscribed with Kharosthi script and two gold rings found at Dattaseelam in northwestern India and a gold ring inscribed with Tamil Brahmi recently found at Karur are the oldest gold inscriptions.

## **11. Nangi :**

Similar to gold, silver engravings have been found at Daksha Seelam, Pattip Prolu and Karur. The Padovia Seppedu, the first Sepedu of Tanjore Maratha king Edoji, is engraved in silver.

## **12. Ivory, bone:**

Brahmi inscriptions written on ivory and bone have been found at Peeta, Rubar, Kausambi, Beinagar and Tripuri. Inscriptions are found on an ivory cot in the chapel donated by William Carey in 1804 at Bhavani Sangameswarar temple in Erode district.

## **13. Other Items :**

### **a) Papyrus :**

Paper called papyrus was also used as a writing material in ancient times. Egyptians used to write on papyrus paper. They wrote on papyrus with a sharp writing stick.

### **b) Silk:**

Silk was also used for writing. In ancient times, the Chinese used silk for writing. Messages were written on silk cloth with quills rubbed in ink. Mughals and Marathas in India made beautiful paintings on silk.

### **c) Conch:**

Sang were also written in ancient times. They were written on the Sanghi using a sharp tool. In one of the twelfth century Sangu, we are able to know the news that Achangu was donated to the Kavalur Pitari temple through the inscription on the Sangu. A number of relief inscriptions are found in India. Excavations conducted at Saligundam on the banks of the Vamsathara river in Srikakulam district of Andhra state have yielded five conch shells. Two of these conglomerates are inscribed in Brahmi script in 61 Prakrit languages. Two cymbals of the 10th century AD with Tamil inscriptions have been found at Tiruvidaivasal in Thanjavur district. The inscription on the first conch reads 'The conch given by the idol Makon has lost its gold'. The second Sangha also has inscriptions beginning with 'Swaydisree'. A conch found in the Sorna Bureeswarar temple in the town of Ghajinjoor, Vellore district has the inscription 'Conch given to Srikenjoor Lord Neesuramudayar for Nakamudayan'. Also, a conch shell inscribed with the words 'Tiruchirap Palli Wodeyar' has been found in the Tiruvathigai Shiva temple in Cuddalore district, dating back to the 13th century. A conch shell inscribed with a Chola period inscription is in the Shiva temple at Toludur. Apart from these, paper, bark and sticks were also used as writing materials. They wrote their opinions on such items through the letters that were in the case at that time. It is because of these writings that we are able to know the news that happened at that time today.

### **Types of Inscription (Types of Inscriptions)**

Inscriptions are a mine of delicious biographies. It can be said that there are no untold messages in them from the womb to the grave. Government, government, officers, taxation life note, rights of churches and election methods, music, singing, dance, theater arts, all the aspects of my life are engraved in the inscription. All the scholars have analyzed the messages of these inscriptions and classified them according to ethnicity. They are literary inscriptions, political inscriptions, religious inscriptions, memorial inscriptions, sat documentary inscriptions, social welfare inscriptions. They are classified as inscriptions mixed with false imagination.

#### **1. Literary Inscriptions :**

Literary inscriptions are the inscriptions in which the hymns conform to the grammatical rules with a literary taste. Pandyar's Talavaipura seppeds Cholary Layton seppeds, Arachalur Music Inscription, Nandivarmani Thiruvellarai Hymn Inscription are some of the thenka inscriptions of Parakrapandyan. 16 Hymns of Tirunna Sambandhar are inscribed on the wall inscriptions of the Puniya Natheswara temple in Thiruvaidavil in Thanjavur district. The

Thiruchirappalli inscription of the 19th century inscribed 104 hymns in praise of Lord Shiva 108 Bharata's 'Natiya Shastra', a Sanskrit literature explaining the arts of Nats, Chidambaram Nataraja Temple East and West Gopurangali inscriptions has In the front hall of the Durga shrine in the Kachapbesuvara temple in Kanchipuram, there is an inscription of six lines from the Sanskrit literature 'Arip Sathakam' written by Mayuragavi.

Apart from these, Palamangalam, Nadukal, Nandivarman's Thiruvo Larai song inscription, Aparasidhavarman's Tiruthani Pada inscription, Thirukovilur Kadavarkon Paravaik inscription (Meikirthi of Chola Pandya kings etc. are some of the sweet lyrical inscriptions with literary taste.

## **2. Political Inscriptions: Political Inscriptions**

Inscriptions describing the political activities of the Sa kings belong to the category of political inscriptions dating from the fourth century to the seventeenth century AD Historical Tamil Nadu history has to be written mostly on the basis of inscriptions. Inscriptions are more reliable than other historical sources. Because they often do not undergo any change after the period of engraftment. The Vayalurg inscription stands first in terms of political inscriptions. In this the dynastic lineage of the Pallava kings is clarified The Veerrajendra inscription at Kanyakumari tells the Chola king his lineage in a historical way. Especially Parantaka Veerananarayan's success can be seen through the Talavaipura Seppedus. The center stone of Mahendrarvarman I tells the truth about his reign. An inscription of Rajaraja Chola III at Tiruvendipuram in South Gard district is a good example of a political inscription. The message found in this inscription is as follows: "The third Rajaraja named Gopperungsingan defeated at Senthamangalam and destroyed Cholanath. He desecrated the sanctity of the temples. On hearing this, the Hoysala king Veeranasimhan sent his two generals Appanna and Samudrakopaiah to punish Gopperung Singhan and reinstate the Chola king. These generals defeated Gopperungsingan. The Chola Emperor was reinstated . Next Maratha inscription of King Chapoji II in Thanjavur Pragatheeswarar Temple tells the history of the Bhonsle Vamsa line in Kalaran style. This inscription details the achievements of Chakooji and his son Shivaji I and gives the family history till the time of Shivaji II. On the whole Tanjore gives a detailed account of the political history of the Marathas.

An inscription in Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu at the Kanchipuram Kailasanathar temple belongs to the category of political inscriptions. In this we find the news that Rajarajacholan I

defeated and arrested a Telugu Chola leader named Chattasoda Bhima. Thus many inscriptions convey political messages.

### **3. Period-based inscriptions: Religious Inscriptions**

Religious inscriptions are found in large numbers in our country. Ashoka's inscriptions are the best example of this and most of the inscriptions found in Tamilnadu refer to donations made to temples by the king, his relatives, high officials or some individuals. These donations were given in the form of land, money or cattle. These donations were given for the maintenance of the temples and for the lighting of Nanda Vilak, Santhi lamp etc. for worship. Nandivarman III A Shiva in Thirukkadu School! He built a temple and gave a small village as a gift. Thiruvallam performed many virtues for Lord Shiva. From the Abara Sidhan inscription we can learn about his Shiva temple restoration work. Aparasidhan's wife Mathewadigal gave thirty kalanchis of gold to set up a lamp in the Shiva temple at Thiruvot Riyur. Inscriptions in the temple tell about the donation made by Rajarajan I to the stone temple called Rajarajesuram in Thanjavur. For temple worship, more than fifty villages, more than a thousand cattle, innumerable Lord Thirumenis, forty-eight people to pray for Tirupatiam, two people to wear uduksa and play matthalam, and priceless Rajarajan donated materials and personnel. There is an inscription in the Narasingha Perumal temple at Anaimalai next to Madurai during the Parantaka Chola I period. Through this we can know that the area called Iraniya Mootam under the temple was left as a deity. Narasingha Mangalam is the Brahma Deyam situated in that area. In Thirumal temples, invitations were given to apply 'Thiruvaimozhi'. The Thirupuvana inscription of the thirtieth regnal year of Rajaraja I explains this message. In Tamilnadu, the Jain monks had natural caves as their abodes. Inscriptions at Meenakshipuram near Madurai, Chitthanna Vasal near Pudukottai and Buklur in Trichy district tell the story of making beds for Jain sages. Many inscriptions inscribed in the tenth regnal year of Uttama Chola (AD 980) at Arapalli Eesuvara Kovi in Kollimalai mention the donation of roadside land for performing the Kartika festival in the temple. Also many inscriptions explain the news that puja was performed in the temple by giving twelve villagers one hundred pieces of gold and using its interest income. Thus many inscriptions are inscriptions that give more religious messages.

### **4. Memorial Inscriptions: Memorial Inscriptions.**

These types of inscriptions are Nadukal or Veerakal. The stone planted in memory of the soldiers who died in battle is called Nadukal. It was customary to lure one chieftain to wage war

against another chieftain. When Anira was attracted to him, he fought against it and survived. Stones were taken in memory of the heroes who died and those who lost their lives in Anirai Kavarkai. In these stone inscriptions, information about the reigning king's son, the year of his reign, and the place where the battle took place can be found. These stones are mostly found on the outskirts of the town. Some mesoliths are found on the banks of lakes and rivers. Some of the mid-stones are found in the middle of the town. Tamilnadu Archeology Department has found 60 mid-stones so far. These are mostly found in the districts of North Arcadu, The Arkadu Salem, Chengalpattu and Dharmapuri Coimbatore. The middle stones are called Vedyappam in some districts and Anjaneyar Kallu in some places. The oldest of the Middle Stone inscriptions is found at Ilulapatti in Dharmata district. During this period it is the fifth century. This stone inscription commemorates the death of Vinne Perenathi Vijayamangalam's daughter Vinne Perenathi Vijayamangalam at the hands of the reigning king Panamana and his servant Uzhamuzugan. Chinnaiyan Pettai Nadukal is located in the middle of the temple to commemorate the hero Karipuruman who chased the buffalo Kotor and won the battle. And a tukka tells us that a warrior sacrificed his head by cutting off the head of a skunk to mark the completion of his fast. An inscription at Teldanur in Chittoor in North Arcadu district commemorates the sacrifice of a dog who fought to help a hero who died in battle. The Bo Inscription shows the dog sitting facing the enemy. Apart from these, 'Satikkal' is also a type of inscription.

There are at a place called Ilavanasur in Southern Forest district. An inscription in Lu tells about a woman who committed suicide by committing Sati.

## **5. Legal inscriptions: legal records**

A number of legal notices are found in inscriptions. Several methods of acquisition of private properties are explained. An inscription of the first Parantaka Chola period in Uttaramerur, Chengalpattu district clearly explains the Gudavolai election system. In the second reign of Rajakesarivarman I Adithan, it is recorded in the inscription that the chieftains from the four villages of Kooruthu Brahmadeya in Setur implemented an innovative system of taxation. Taxes were collected daily from the small traders in the market street. The inscription informs. And some inscriptions indicate that the house was sold by auction. The stone carvings show how a house measuring two kolas was put up for sale at an auction, where the auctioneer called the price, and how the trees and wells around the house were sold to get the proceeds. Some of the inscriptions record details of cases, trials and verdicts handed down. In the Pandyan country AD

Three stone carvings at the Soumiya Narayana Perumal temple in Thirukkottiyur, Ramanathapuram district depict the manner in which justice was administered in a murder case in the 13th century. Similarly, the Uttra Merur inscription explains the way in which the councilors regulated the rules for the administration of justice. Thus there are inscriptions containing legal regulations.

## **6. Welfare records: Welfare records**

There are also many types of inscriptions related to public interests. Rainwater was used for irrigation of teak in areas without river irrigation. Many inscriptions suggest that they were often erected by kings or commoners. (When rivers, lakes and ponds were broken and destroyed due to heavy floods, there are messages in the inscriptions about repairing them with paving stones. In this way, the works are called public works. In the fourteenth year of the reign of Kulothunga Chola III, the ruler of Madurai and Eelam, there was heavy rain in the Panchanathivana Chaturvedi Mangalam in Kunradthur country and seven dams were broken. It is known from the inscription that an individual named Kanda Vanavan of Trivegamba Mudiyaan Common undertook the task of enclosing all seven of these shrines. The message of making a public work by digging a hole in Vai 2 Meghathadagam irrigation lake in Uttarmalur and raising the bank of the lake with that soil is engraved in the inscription of Uttarmalur in Chengalpattu district.

In the thirteenth century, the inscription mentions a public work during the reign of the Pallava king Gopperum Singhan. The king built a Ganapati temple on the bank of a lake in a town called Tribhuvanamadevi. The inscription states that he then raised the banks of the broken lake, drained the lake, blocked the broken sluices and the broken mouth. Inscription of the third regnal year of Rajaendra I One is engraved at Bandarawadi, Tanjore district. It conveys the news of setting up a free hospital in Thanjavur by Kundavai. The doctor in that hospital was Savarnan, Arayan Madhuranthagan. An inscription at Tirupukalur in the second regnal year of Vikrama Chola states that Kundavaiyar donated lands to this hospital. It is written that Sathyanath Chaturvedi Mangalath Sabhayar sold the land to Viradarasan and he built a hospital and monastery on that land to help the sick and orphans. An inscription from Rajendra Chola I in Ennairam, a town in Tennarkadu district states that the Sabha of that town fed 270 students and paid 14 teachers. There is an inscription from the third year of Vikrama Chola's reign at Thiru Vaduthurai. It is known from the inscription that there was a medical college. There was also a

canteen called Sankaradevan Arachala. The hospital was operating under the name of Veeracholan and the inscription informs that the hospital had 15 beds and was staffed by many surgeons, nurses and pharmacists. Thus there are various types of inscriptions containing many messages about public works.

#### **7. Inscriptions regarding social status:**

Inscriptions regarding social status. (Inscription at Tiruvaranga mentions several events related to social status in the eleventh regnal year of Kulothunga Chola III. The inscription also mentions incidents of looting and arson between the two communities of Valangai Itangai in the village of Rajamakendra Chaturvedimangalam in the second reign of that king. An inscription in a town called Elavasur in Tennargarh district during the Vijayanagara dynasty tells about some decisions made by the Valangai Itangai ethnic group in a spirit of unity. In the inscriptions of the Chola period, separate townships like Paracherry, Kammancheri Eazacheri, Vannancheri, Dindacheri are marked. In the Karanda inscription there is a series of 'People under the Brahmins'. During the Chola rule, the downtrodden people lived either east or west of the town. Even the small area where they lived was not their right. A sect called Agambadi Mudali was prominent at that time. They were the king's bodyguard. They lived next to the king in the palaces.)

In the Tamil society of those days, the Kaikollars were the main social class. They were strong shouldered infantrymen. This can be known from the series of stone-cuts called 'Thirukkivilur Kaik Gholar Nalloruku Nallan Koothanen'. In the fourteenth regnal year of Rajathiraja II, a decision taken by the Kulothunga Chaturvedi Mangalathu Sabha is found in an inscription at Achalpuram. Akkal mentions potters who made small lamps and pots and sold them. The village council has given the right for Akkuyas to wear a top. An inscription inscribed during the reign of Kulothunga Chola I states that the village committee decided that the people living in the village such as butter, teacher, accountant, carpenter, blacksmith etc should do their respective jobs in the villages. Anuloma and Pratiloma mixed race are also found in stone carvings. Their social duties and morals are defined in the inscriptions. An inscription of the forty-eighth regnal year of the first Kulothunga Chola in a town called Tirukkodikawal reveals the activities of the Anulomars and their social status. The Kudumian Hill Inscription contains messages about the social status of the Mutharayyas. In the Valikandapu Rat inscription, there is a

series of manusati, lower caste, degradation of lower caste. Thus there are many inscriptions that give information about social status.

#### **8) Spurious Inscriptions:**

False and imaginary inscriptions. All the inscriptions found so far are reliable. But a few found inscriptions mixed with lies and imagination have attracted the attention of researchers. But such a mixture of lies and imagination is engraved on the copper plates themselves. Rarely seen in stones. This is because copper plates can be placed in secret places and engraved without anyone knowing. But such inscriptions cannot be engraved on stones in temples without anyone knowing. Commonly, copper deeds inscribed the rights of sale and purchase of property. But some people, even though they had no legal rights over the property, inscribed those rights on copper plates as if they had them. There are many such fake copper swords. That forgery of charters should be punished with death according to Dharmasastra rules It has been said. Some reports of fake inscriptions are found in an inscription dated 1387 on the walls of a Shiva temple at Tiruppathur in Ramanathapuram district. 'A village accountant conspired with a goldsmith and with the help of an epigrapher carved a fake inscription on a temple wall. According to this, it is written that the Sabha of that town has given him right over some property in that town. But when it came to light that the charter was fake, the accountant ran away from the town. The goldsmith and the engraver were destroyed by the blacksmith of Andavoor. The runaway accountant's land rights and properties were confiscated and sold to others. Thus we can know the existence of fake and false stone carvings. Dr James Blitt has published research papers on the discovery of many forged charters. As above the inscriptions are classified into various types.

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions ( 5 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	List the different materials used for inscriptions and briefly explain any two.	CO1	PO1	K1
2	Write a short note on stone and metal as inscripational materials.	CO2	PO2	K2
3	What are the characteristics of clay and terracotta inscriptions?	CO2	PO1	K2
4	Define monumental inscriptions with examples.	CO3	PO3	K2
5	Distinguish between archival and incidental inscriptions.	CO4	PO2	K2
6	Explain the importance of papyrus and parchment in writing inscriptions.	CO2	PO3	K3
<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions (8 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	Explain in detail the various materials used for inscriptions and their significance.	CO2	PO1	K2
2	Analyze the advantages and limitations of stone, metal, and clay as inscripational materials.	CO2	PO2	K5
3	Discuss the role of organic materials like wood, papyrus, and parchment in epigraphy.	CO2	PO3	K3
4	Describe the different types of inscriptions with special reference to monumental inscriptions.	CO3	PO2	K3
5	Examine the features and importance of archival inscriptions.	CO3	PO4	K4
6	Explain incidental inscriptions and their historical value.	CO3	PO2	K3
7	Compare and contrast monumental, archival, and incidental inscriptions.	CO4	PO4	K4
8	Evaluate how the nature of material influences the preservation and interpretation of inscriptions.	CO4	PO4	K5

## Unit – III

### Learning Objectives

1. To understand the origin and development of writing in India.
2. To study the features of the Indus script.
3. To examine the attempts made for the decipherment of the Indus script.
4. To understand the structure and characteristics of the Brahmi script.
5. To analyze the features of the Kharosthi script.
6. To compare early Indian scripts and their historical significance.

### Course Outcomes

1. Students will explain the origin of writing in India.
2. Students will describe the features of the Indus script.
3. Students will evaluate the issues related to the decipherment of the Indus script.
4. Students will identify the characteristics of Brahmi script.
5. Students will explain the features of Kharosthi script.
6. Students will compare different early Indian scripts.
7. Students will apply knowledge of scripts in historical and epigraphical analysis.

### Brahmi Script

Closely connected with the term epigraphy is the study of old scripts or palaeographs in which all the inscriptions are written. Since traditional India was much less oriented towards written records, so was the case of scripts as well, although there are several stereotyped textual lists of ‘sixty-four’ or ‘eighteen’ scripts of which only two early historical systems of writing datable to the third century BCE, viz. Brahmi and Kharosthi—have been so far identified on actual records. Of late, claims have been made to the identification of some other problematic scripts, for e.g. the shell (Sankha) or the mixed (Avimistra) scripts, though many aspects of their palaeographic systemic have so far remained unravelled. Compared to the early systems of writing, names of a number of early mediaeval scripts are known to the epigraphists on the basis of the itinerary of Abu Raihan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al Biruni, the famous Arab traveller who came to India in the eleventh century CE. Among more prominent names of scripts mentioned by Biruni and identified on epigraphic documents are Siddhamatrka (Nagari, Gaudi and Bhaiksuki, besides such scripts as Sarada of Kashmir and Grantha of far south, known from other internal sources. With the discovery of the Harappa civilization in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the history of writing in the subcontinent was pushed back to the third millennium BCE, although the ‘pictographic logographic’ script of Harappa is yet to be properly deciphered.

Antiquity of Historical writing The issue of antiquity of historical writing in India is a major debate in the realm of Indian epigraphy. One group of scholars is of opining that the structure of

the script as we find in the Asokan inscriptions must have an antecedent phase of development. While some scholars trace this antecedent phase to the time of composition of the Vedas, others argue that the script was essentially a result of Mauryan sponsorship under Asoka. Scholars like Richard Salomon believe that if there was an issue of sponsorship under Asoka, its origin might be hidden in an inspiration from the Old Persian Cuneiform, understandably as a result of continued cultural contacts between the South Asian and Persian polities. Some scholars have also put forward some archaeological evidence to argue that the earliest Brahmi had connections with the script of the Harappan inscriptions. B.B. Lal, for instance,

Origin of Brahmi In spite of nearly two centuries of research on the history of writing in India, the precise origin of the Brahmi script, the principal script of early India, from which all the later South Asian and Southeast Asian scripts developed, has still remained improperly known. The origin of the Brahmi script has been a major debate in the realm of Indian epigraphy ever since its decipherment in the first half of the nineteenth century. Like most of the 'origin theories' scholarly world dealing with the origin of the Brahmi script is also divided into two 'camps', one advocating for an essentially Indian origin of the script, while the other providing evidence in support of an extraneous influence and/or derivation. Although systematic attempts at reconsidering the origin of the Brahmi script was initiated by scholars like Georg Buhler and G.H. Ojha, attempts were made at explaining the possible roots of this script well predate the researches of these two scholars. Recently Richard Salomon has made a comprehensive review of the literature dealing with the problem of the origin of this script. Here we may summarize the discussion on the issue in the light of the thorough review made by Salomon. Theories of Foreign Origin Compared to the school of Indian origin, the group supporting a non-Indian origin of the script has more supporting evidence. This school, however, is again subdivided into a number of sub-schools. James Prinsep believed that Brahmi had evolved from the Greek script, obviously on the basis of the long-drawn cultural and political contacts of India with the Macedonian world. But Prinsep was only able to explain the palaeography of a few Brahmi letters as direct derivatives of Greek. A more refined theory of Greek derivation was later proposed by J. Halevy. However, the theory gained importance recently when Harry Falk accepted partially the proposal of Halevy and suggested a modified argument, explaining the derivation of the earliest version of Brahmi from a mixed Kharosthi and Greek progenitor. But here again, the problem was that none of these latter scholars could explain the systemic on which their theories of derivation rest.

Scholars debating on the origin of Brahmi from a probable Semitic origin are, likewise, divided into two subgroups: those supporting a likely South Semitic origin and the others favouring the North Semitic derivation. Supporters of the South Semitic derivation have based their argument more on the direction of writing than the actual palaeographic features, as Salomon has rightly pointed out. Different branches of the North Semitic have been proposed by different authorities to have been the precursor of the early Brahmi script. The first scholar to have underlined a probable connection between Phoenician and Indian scripts was Ulrich Friedrich Kopp who as early as 1821 had prepared comparative tables in the light of forms of modern Indian scripts and their link with Phoenician. The most systematic and authentic study of the theme was undertaken by Albrecht Weber who made a thorough comparison of the Phoenician and early Brahmi. The theory was later presented in a more articulated and categorical frame by Buhler. An Aramaic origin of Brahmi was first suggested by A.C. Burnell in the year 1874. In terms of palaeographic development, a connection between early Brahmi and Aramaic is more favoured than that of Phoenician., Richard Salomon has rightly observed that instead of looking into the problem of origin of the Brahmi script in terms of the patterns of derivation of individual letter forms, it is important to consider the systemic that govern the ‘The system of postconsonantal diacritic vowel indicators looks like a natural adaptation of the Semitic consonant-syllabic script for use in Indian languages. Similarly, the evident development of the retroflex consonants as modified forms of the corresponding dentals suggests an adaptation of a non-Indie prototype, since in an originally Indian system one would have expected independent signs for the two classes from the very beginning.’

### **Characteristics of Indian Writing System**

Some of the major palaeographic characteristics of the Brahmi script are:

- The Indian writing system, as we see in the Asokan inscriptions, is a ‘diacritically modified syllabic type’, according to Richard Salomon.
- The script is written, in general from left to right. There are instances where the script is written as a. Boustrophedon is a term used for scripts that are written in both directions: left to right and right to left. Therefore semiboustrophedon should designate where the script is occasionally written in the reverse direction. The most prominent occurrence of Boustrophedon in Indian Brahmi is the Early Brahmi script found on the Erragudi Minor Rock Edict of Asoka. Here, most of the lines of the inscription are in the regular

direction, i.e. from left to right, but occasionally there are cases when it follows the reverse direction.

- The Indian Brahmi script is composed primarily of initial vowels and consonants; the consonants are further composed of with aspirated, unaspirated, nasal, semi vowel and sibilant sounds.
- The alphabet consists of six full (initial) vowel signs, thirty-two consonants, eight medial vowel diacritic signs and the anusvara sign. The length of the vowels can be modified by diacritically modifying the body of an aksara.
- The script, as reflected in the edict of Asoka and also in the other inscriptions of the Maurya and post-Maurya periods, shows a uniform and systematized pattern. Although some early scholars had taken some palaeographic features of this script to indicate that there were elements of regional variation in the early Brahmi script, comparatively recent works by A.H. Dani and others have discarded this theory of supposed regionalism in the historical script of South Asia.
- It is interesting to note that that process of formation of medial vowels in the Brahmi script, particularly in Early Brahmi, has a certain set of formulae. Although several regional styles developed in the script from the first century BCE onwards, the fundamental structure of the formation of medial vowels remains more or less the same—by making diacritical modification of the principal aksara.
- Conjuncts and ligatures in Brahmi are formed by joining two or more aksaras, the latter being subjoined to the first element of the ligature. A.H. Dani has suggested that on the basis of the number of ‘second elements’ involved in forming ligatures, ten different classes of ligatures and consonantal conjuncts can be found in Asokan inscriptions.
- The Orthography is not properly developed or standardized in the Indian system of writing. A large number of orthographic peculiarities continue to characterize the script even at a later date, in inscriptions of eastern India and Deccan

## **Kharosthi Script**

### **Introduction**

Kharosthi was one of the major scripts of the Indian subcontinent in the early period. In the list of 64 scripts occurring in the Lalitavistara (3rd century CE), a text in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Kharosthi comes second after Brahmi. Thus both of them were considered to be two

major scripts of the Indian subcontinent. Both Kharosthi and Brahmi are first encountered in the edicts of Asoka in the 3rd century BCE.

### **Discovery of the script and its Decipherment**

The script was first discovered on one side of a large number of coins bearing Greek legends on the other side from the north western part of the Indian subcontinent in the first quarter of the 19th century. Later in 1830 to 1834 two full inscriptions of the time of Kanishka bearing the same script were found at Manikiyala in Pakistan. After this discovery James Prinsep named the script as 'Bactrian Pehelevi' since it occurred on a number of so called 'Bactrian' coins. To James Prinsep the characters first looked similar to Pahlavi (Semitic) characters. Later he realised that the script occurring on one side of the Indo-Greek, ScythoParthian and Kushana coins are similar. Moreover this script was also found in the Shahbazgarhi version of the Major Rock edicts of Asoka. So he named the script 'Arian Pali' to distinguish it from 'Indian Pali' which later came to be known as the Brahmi script. Ariana is the term used in the Classical sources for the territories of Paropanisadai, Arachosia and Gedrosia (Kabul, Kandahar and Baluchistan). Since the content of the Greek legend on the obverse of the coins was likely to have occurred in the reverse side in the 'Bactrian Pehelevi' characters, Prinsep was able to read a number of letters by comparing them to the Greek letters, e.g., if the Greek legend was Basileos Soteris Apollodotou, the reverse legend could be read as Maharajasa tratarasa Apaladatas. Prinsep thus recognised 11/12 letters. The rest were deciphered by C. Lassen, A. Cunningham and E. Norris by the middle of the nineteenth century. Kharosthi as the name of the script was first suggested by T.de Lacouperie in 1886-87, on the basis of its mention in the Lalitavistara and the Chinese encyclopedia Fa yuan chu lin (668 C.E). Thus in the last decade of the nineteenth century 'Arian Pali' was identified as 'Kharosthi' scripts.

### **Geographical Distribution of the script**

The principal area of the use of the Kharosthi script was the territory along and around the Indus, Swat and Kabul river valleys forming parts of the ancient Gandhara kingdom and nearby areas. The western/ northwestern limit is Wardak or Khawat, about 30 miles west of Kabul. At a later period Kharosthi inscriptions were discovered in Qunduz in north Afghanistan and also in several places of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Graffiti in Kharosthi have been found at various sites around Chilas along the upper Indus. Stray finds of Kharosthi inscriptions in Kumrahar (Patna) and Bharhut (a famous stupa site in Madhya Pradesh) are believed to have

been either import from the north west or written by people coming from the north west. In the Minor Rock Edicts I and II of Asoka engraved on a rock at Jatinga-Rameswara in Karnataka, the name of the scribe Chapada has been written in Kharosthi script at the end. This indicates that the scribe hailed from the North West. Apart from the inscriptions and coins Kharosthi was also used for epigraphic and literary purposes in some kingdoms of Central Asia like the Shan-shan kingdom on the Tarim basin, in the birch-bark manuscript of Dhammapada in Khotan etc. Kharosthi inscriptions have been found in China also. Patronage to Buddhism by Kushana rulers was an important factor for the spread of Kharosthi outside its core area in Gandhara. The Gandhari speaking monks probably used this script in the monasteries of such areas. Period The earliest specimens of the Kharosthi script are found in the Shahbazgarhi and Manshera versions of the Major rock edicts of Asoka. All the major powers in the Northwest like the Indo-Greeks, Indo-Parthians, Scytho-Parthians, Kushanas used Kharosthi script in between the first century BCE to the third century CE . In the western coastal region the script was used by early western Ksatrapa kings like Nahapana and Castana. In their tri-scriptual coins Kharosthi is a script along with Greek and Brahmi. Again some of the tribes like Audumbaras, Kunindas and others who settled in Punjab issued coins in Kharosthi script. When they moved eastwards to present Haryana or southwards to Gujarat, they issued coins in Brahmi script. Kharosthi documents from Niya and Tarim basin in Central Asia are approximately datable to the third and early fourth centuries. The use of Kharosthi declined around third century A.D. when after the downfall of the Kushanas, the political centre shifted to north and north eastern India. The limited area of its use helped Kharosthi to maintain its unitary style of writing. There was little scope of its branching of into any provincial school like the Brahmi script.

### **Nature of Kharosthi**

Documents There are almost hundreds of inscriptions in Kharosthi script engraved on stone & metal. Asoka used Kharosthi script on rocks to engrave his Edicts. Apart from this the majority of them are Buddhist donations or record foundation of structures. Kharosthi also occur on coin legends of foreign and indigenous rulers, normally with other scripts. In Central Asia it occurs in the administrative documents from Niya; in the Dharmapada manuscripts and in Chinese Buddhist texts.

### **The language Kharosthi**

script was used to write the north western Prakrit language which was also known as the Gandhari Prakrit. It is a Middle Indo-Aryan dialect. The vocabulary of the language consists mostly of Indian words with a few numbers of Greek and Iranian words. Gandhari is a distinctly separate language from the other members of the Middle Indo-Aryan family. That is why a separate script was required to write it.

### **The Meaning of the name of the script**

The name of the script appears in different spellings in various sources like Kharoṣṭī, Khaloṣṭī etc. in the Lalitavistara, Kharostī and Kharāstrī in the Mahavastu etc. In the Chinese encyclopedia Fa yuan Chu Lin the name is K'(i)a-lu-she-t'o. B.N. Mukherjee thinks that the term occurring in the Lalitavistara should be read as Kharoṣṭī and not Kharoṣṭhī. Richard Salomon observes that since the name is not Indic, variation in spelling could have been resulted from different Sanskritizations of the name. As regards its meaning, Sylvain Levi first suggested that Kharoṣṭra might be a toponym for the Kasgarh area. In the Chinese encyclopedia Fa yuan Chu Lin the name K'(i)a-lu-she-t'o means ass-lip and it is the name of a sage. Levi later modified his view and said that the Kharoṣṭra country refers to the entire region between China and India. Donkeys and camels that frequent the region can be connected to the term Kharoṣṭrī (Sanskrit Kharoṣṭra).

### **Writing Technique**

Kharosthi is a pen style of writing, in which one type of pen remained in use throughout. In Asokan inscriptions it leaves behind a foot-mark in the form of an upward slant at the lower end of the verticals on the left. This foot-mark is to be attributed to the style of the writer. In the Kushana inscriptions the verticals gradually thin out into curves as is natural to a pen. The medial u assumes the form of a loop. In stone engravings this loop becomes a triangle. In coins and medals many other superfluous lines or dots are seen in the forms of ma, ha, ja, rarely in ga, da, na and sa. Percy Gardner while studying the coins of the Greek and Scythic kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum took these lines and dots for lengthened vowels and hence read māhārāja for mahārāja and menadrāsa for menadrasa. Thus it can be understood that the letter forms have not gradually evolved from original Aramaic to Kharosthi. But the whole system follows the pattern of Aramaic. Difference in the grammar and phonology of the local languages stood in the way of adopting Aramaic forms wholesale.

### **Test letters of Kharosthi**

The letters dental sa, da, ya and palatal sa have been regarded as test letters of Kharosthi script since it is the easiest way to determine the period of the inscription with the help of these letters. Among them again the dental sa is the most reliable. It is fully closed-mouthed in the Asokan edicts where from it gradually opens its mouth through the following centuries. In the inscriptions of the Kushanas that encompasses the latest development of the script the letter is fully open-mouthed. However, often the three types of dental sa, i.e., closedmouthed, slightly open-mouthed and fully open-mouthed overlap in inscriptions. In such cases the oldest form needs to be recognized to determine the period of the inscription.

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions ( 5 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	Explain the origin of writing in India.	CO1	PO1	K1
2	Write a short note on the features of the Indus script.	CO2	PO2	K2
3	What are the main problems in the decipherment of the Indus script?	CO3	PO4	K2
4	Describe the characteristics of the Brahmi script.	CO4	PO1	K2
5	Write a note on the Kharosthi script.	CO5	PO2	K2
6	Distinguish between Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts.	CO5	PO3	K2
<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions (8 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	Discuss the origin and development of writing in India.	CO1	PO1	K2
2	Explain the features of the Indus script and examine the attempts at its decipherment.	CO3	PO2	K3
3	Analyze the major challenges involved in deciphering the Indus script.	CO3	PO4	K5
4	Describe in detail the origin, structure, and significance of the Brahmi script.	CO4	PO1	K3
5	Examine the origin and features of the Kharosthi script.	CO5	PO2	K3
6	Compare and contrast Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts in terms of origin, direction, and usage.	CO5	PO3	K4
7	Evaluate the importance of early Indian scripts in the study of history and epigraphy.	CO5	PO5	K5
8	Assess the contribution of scripts to the development of administration and culture in ancient India.	CO5	PO5	K5

## Unit – IV

### Learning Objectives

1. To understand the origin and development of writing in South India.
2. To study the features of Tamil (Tamil-Brahmi) script.
3. To examine the evolution of Tamil-Brahmi script.
4. To understand the characteristics of Vattezhuthu script.
5. To analyze the features and usage of Grantha script.
6. To compare different South Indian scripts and their significance.

### Course Outcomes

1. Students will explain the origin of writing in South India.
2. Students will describe the features of Tamil (Tamil-Brahmi) script.
3. Students will trace the evolution of Tamil-Brahmi.
4. Students will identify the characteristics of Vattezhuthu script.
5. Students will explain the features and uses of Grantha script.
6. Students will compare various South Indian scripts.
7. Students will apply knowledge of scripts in epigraphical and historical studies.

### Origin of Writing in South India

The earliest known script in India is Asōkan Brāhmī. Since Asōka, the Great widely used this script in the Indian sub continent in his edicts around 3rd Century B.C.E. it is called so. This script is traditionally considered to be the mother of all Indian scripts which are prevalent in India at present. The inscriptions of Asoka found from North western part of India to the South up to Maski. No Asōkan Brāhmī inscriptions so far were found in Tamil nadu and Kerala. We do come across a similar kind of Brāhmī script which have some basic letters and special letters found on the natural caverns, potteries, coins, rings and seals in Tamil Nadu to suit the Tamil Language. It is known as Tamil- Brāhmī or Damili. According to Iravatham Mahadevan an eminent scholar in the field, opined that the Tamil- Brāhmī script is evolved from Asōkan Brāhmī around 2nd century B.C.E. On the basis of its rudimentary nature and other paleographical features of the Tamil- Brāhmī scripts, scholars like T.N.Subramanyan K.V.Ramesh, M.D.Sampath, P.R.Srinivasan, Natana Kasinathan. Professor K.Rajan have the opinion that the Tamil-Brāhmī script is the indigenous script used by the Tamil speaking people around 5th or 6th century B.C.E. i.e., prior to Asōkan Brāhmī. The Stratigraphical and scientific dates derived from Koḍumaṇal and Porunthal excavations by Rajan suggest that the Tamil-Brāhmī script was prevalent amidst the people of Tamil nadu at least from 6th or 5th century B.C.E.

Tamil- Brāhmī Script The Tamil Brāhmī script is found in the natural caverns as well as on the Hero Stones and Potteries from various excavations in Tamil nadu and Kerala. As stated earlier, the above scholars hold their theories on the basis of the following facts.

(i) The rudimentary nature of the Tamil-Brāhmī script where as the Asōkan Brāhmī is a systematic and well developed form.

(ii) The absent of varga system in Tamil- Brāhmī which was prevalent in Asōkan Brāhmī script – The absent of aspirate and soft sound in Tamil Brāhmī is the special feature of that script. In other words only the Hard consonants ka,ca,ṭa,ta,pa are being used as first or primary letters. Though the Tamil language needs the soft and aspirate sounds. (varga- tritayas) the people used only the basic letters for the soft and aspirate sounds. The use of these varga letters was already prevalent in Asōkan Brāhmī. If the Tamils borrowed the basic letters from Asōkan Brāhmī of North India, there is no need to reject all other soft and aspirate sound symbols to suit their language Tamil.

(iii) In the early Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions the consonants and Vowel consonants are similar form. They are indicated in the same symbols: In Asōkan Brāhmī the combined letters are shown jointly either side by side or top to bottom. The combination of two consonants or joint components the syllables are generally placed one upon another to indicate combination of Consonant and Vowel Consonant. This practice is not vogue in Tamil-Brāhmī in the early stage. The consonant and the vowel consonant are shown in a similar form. Unless the language is known it is not possible to read the words correctly in the Tamil Inscriptions. Hence the Tamil people introduced a dot (pulli) mark to denote consonants on the vowel consonant signs around 1st century C.E.

(iv) The absence of pulli (dot marks) to denote consonant in the early stage in Tamil Brāhmī also attested the fact that they are in rudimentary stage. In Asōkan Brāhmī, the consonants were clearly indicated by the use of conjuncts, which are basic system for all Indian scripts except Tamil.

(v) The pastoral community as well as the ordinary people used Tamil- Brāhmī script. The Hero stone inscriptions recently discovered at Pulimān Kōmpai, Tādappattī and Porpaṇaikkōṭṭai and large number of graffiti with Brāhmī scripts in the excavations of Tamil nadu especially at Kodumanal, Porunthal, Korkai, Aḷagaṅkuḷam, Uṛaiyūr, Arikkamēḍu Kīḷaḍi attested that the Tamil- Brāhmī was prevalent amidst the people of rural folk and merchant community. But, the

Asōkan Brāhmī was employed only by the emperor Asōka in his royal Edicts. Thus shows that the Tamils were more literate around 5th or 6th century B.C.E

(vi) In the early stage, the vowels of Tamil- Brāhmī are 8 in number later on two more letters were introduced by marking the dots in short e and o sounds. The Consonants are 18 in number. Asōkan Brāhmī have 33 symbols for consonants which include the soft and aspirate sound symbols.

(vii) Besides the common identical letters for both Tamil- Brāhmī and Asōkan Brāhmī, the Tamil- Brāhmī has four special symbols. They are l, l, r, n. The development of the Tamil- Brāhmī script has been seen by introducing the dot ( pulli) to denote consonants as well as the short vowels e and o in a later stage around 1st or 2nd century B.C.E. The addition of dots is the pioneer invention which recalls the sutra of the grammatical treatise Tolkāppiyam. It says that all the consonants including the short vowels e and o and also their respective short e and o of vowel consonants have indicated by a dot (pulli). The Tamil- Brāhmī inscriptions at Tirupparaṅkuṅṅam, Muttuppaṭṭi, Āṅaimalai, Pugalūr, Toṅḍūr are fine examples of this kind having dot (pulli) prior to 2nd century C.E. The evolution of curvature form in some of the Tamil- Brāhmī inscriptions of later stage clearly suggests that the early rudimentary Tamil- Brāhmī script attained its final stage around 2nd century C.E. to fulfill the need of writing system of the Tamil language. Except the Chennai District in Tamil nadu the Tamil- Brāhmī script have been discovered in places of all the Districts. Madurai Districts is spotted maximum number of these inscriptions. Kerala the script is found in the neighboring state of Kerala at a place called Eḍakkal in Sultan Pattery region. Nearly 35 natural cavern sites in Tamil nadu yielded around 110 inscriptions. They are all in label inscriptions ranging from single line to 6 lines.

### **Important Tamil- Brāhmī sites in Tamil Nadu**

#### **Māṅgulam**

Māṅgulam is a tiny village situated in Melur Taluk of Madurai District of Tamil nadu. There is a range of hills known as Kalugumalai and Uvāmalai in the village. On the eastern side of the hill, there are five caverns with a rock beds. The Tamil- Brāhmī inscriptions have been found on the eye brow of the caverns. The inscriptions refer to the donation of abode to Kaniyaan by a Pandya katalan vazuthi. Scholars identified the Kadalan vazuthi is Pandya king. On palaeographical grounds and its rudimentary nature the inscriptions belonged to 5th century B.C.E. Iravatham Mahadevan fixes the date of inscriptions to 2nd century B.C.E.

### **Sittannavāsal-**

The village Sittannavāsal is associated with Jaina pantheon. It is situated in Pudukkottai District of Tamil nadu. There is a rock cut temple in the hill; the walls and ceilings of the rock cut chamber has beautiful fresco paintings of Jaina association. At an inaccessible height of the hill on the other part of the hill there is a natural cavern formed a cleft which divides the overhanging roof and the floor having smooth stone beds. It is locally called as Ēḷaḍipāṭṭam. One of the beds bears the Tamil- Brāhmī inscription which mentions certain Ilaiyan of Sirupocil gave a bed to Kāviti of Erumi nādu. It belongs to 3rd century B.C.E.

### **Jambai inscription**

The village Jambai is situated in Tirukkivilur Taluk of Villupruam District of Tamil Nadu. On the outskirts of the village there is a small hillock bearing the Tamil- Brāhmī inscription records the gift of abode by Adiyamān Neḍumān Anji of Satyapoto. The word Satyapoto denotes to a dynasty referred to by Asokan in his inscriptions. They were one of the dynasties of Tamil Country. Nilakanda Sastry identified the word Satyaputo with Adiyamān of Tagaḍūr, who were often mentioned in the Sangam literature.

### **Pulimāṅkōmpai Hero stone Inscriptions.**

Three Hero stone inscriptions were discovered by the students of Tamil University, Thanjavur at a place called Pulimāṅkōmpai in Teni District of Tamil Nadu in the explorations. These hero stone inscriptions are the earliest known hero stones so far found in India bearing Tamil- Brāhmī script. They refer to the death of Heroes who fought while rescuing the cattle from the enemies. For their valour they stones were erected. One of the Hero stone on the basis of Palaeography belongs to 5th century B.C.E. In Tamil Nadu, Many Early Historic sites have been excavated. Nearly 25 sites yielded potsherds bearing the legends in Tamil- Brāhmī script and occasional with Northern Brāhmī influences. At Koḍumaṅal, the potteries with graffiti marks in the bottom most level of the stratum are recorded and this was followed by graffiti with Tamil- Brāhmī script. Above them, the layers contains of Pure Tamil-Brāhmī script and followed by mixed variety of TamilBrāhmī script and few letters of Prākṛit influence. It shows the Development of the TamilBrāhmī script in Chronological Sequence. Nearly 650 potsherds bear this early script. It shows the people were widely knew the art of learning around 5th century B.C.E. Near Palani, there is a place called Poruntal. The excavation work carried out by the Central University Pondicherry under Professor K. Rajan reported the date of Tamil- Brāhmī

script is 5 th century B.C.E. on the basis of OSL date. All these show that the Tamil- Brāhmī script was utilized by the common people around 5th century B.C.E. and the Prākṛit form of languages and some specific symbols were known at Kodumanal suggest that the traders came to South India and utilized the Prākṛit form of writing around 4th century B.C.E.

### **Vaṭṭezhuttu script**

In the beginning of the 2nd century C.E. , Asōkan Brāhmī the earliest script in India underwent many changes in its forms. Its writing styles have been changed due to swift and speedy flow of handwriting, which resulted in a gradual evolution of many regional scripts with cursive, floral or stylistic forms. Similarly, the Tamil- Brāhmī or Dāmili script, which was an indigenous script, used especially by the Tamil-speaking people got changed into cursive form as well as into a developed angularised form. The cursive form is called Vaṭṭezhuttu and the angularised variety is known as Tamil Script. However, both the forms in the early stage of evolution can be seen simultaneously in a few inscriptions of transition period that is prior to 5th century C.E. However, when compared to the development of both the scripts, the Vaṭṭezhuttu came in to prevalence earlier than the Tamil Script in this region. The name of the cursive letters in itself is an interesting one. Since most of the letters are in curvature form, it was called so. An inscription from Kurrālam in Tirunelveli district belonging to the period of the Chōḷa king Rājarāja –I dated in 987 C.E. (A.R.Ep.No.B 454/1917) states that the script engraved on the temple wall is vaṭṭam. Hence, the cursive form of letters in Tamil nadu during the days of Rajaraja I was referred to as vaṭṭam i.e., Vaṭṭezhuttu.

### **Vaṭṭezhuttu Inscriptions**

The prevalence and its continuous usage for a long time in the various parts of South India is a remarkable one. The early Vaṭṭezhuttu inscriptions ranging from 3rd century C.E. to 5th century C.E. are found in the remote villages of the north; northwestern part, and in the Pudukōṭṭai, Karur regions of Southern part of Tamil nadu. It gives the clue that this script was more prevalent among the common folk. Around 8th century C.E. this script became the royal script of the Pāṇḍyas. During this time it disappeared in the northern part of Tamil nadu and was never in usage in the Kāveri delta region. In Kerala, this script was used till recently up to 19th century. There, this script is known as Nāna mōna or Tekhan Malayālam. The present Malayālam script is the admixture of Vaṭṭezhuttu and Grantha script. The Syrian Christ of Malabar region issued several inscriptions and documents in the script. Though an early form of

Vaṭṭezhuttu inscription is found in a Hero stone at Tamatakkallu in Karnataka, there is no other evidence to trace out the continuous existence of this script in this region. Due to the abundance of Vaṭṭezhuttu inscriptions in the Dharmapuri region, the neighboring Kolar region witnessed a few Hero stone inscriptions of 9th century C.E. The script was used along with Grantha, Malayalam and Tamil scripts in the Malayalam inscriptions of 14th Century in the Coorg region of western Karnataka (Two Malayalam inscriptions from Coorg K.G. Krishnan IJDL vol.IV. No. 1. Jan 1975).

Palaeography of Early Vaṭṭezhuttu Inscriptions Iravatham Mahadevan has given a list of Early Vaṭṭezhuttu inscription from 5th century C.E., on wards. He includes Arachalūr, Ammaṅkōyil Paṭṭi and Nekanūr paṭṭi inscriptions in the Late Brāhmī period and fixes the date to the 4th century C.E. He traces the origin of Tamil-Brāhmī script from the Asōkan-Brāhmī of 3rd century B.C. Thus, it is inevitable for him to fix the date of Tamil-Brāhmī script in to 2nd century B.C. Due to this fact the date of Early Vaṭṭezhuttu script has also been fixed further to 5th century C.E. But these three inscriptions can be datable on paleographical grounds to the transition period of Vaṭṭezhuttu of 2nd-3rd century C.E. From the close study of Tamil Brāhmī inscriptions and early Vaṭṭezhuttu inscriptions, it is observed that the evolution of cursive form has commenced from the cave inscriptions of late period. The cursive form of vowel a is frequently found in the inscriptions of Pugaḷūr and Tirupparankuṅṅam. Besides, some of the pottery from Arikamēḍu bearing the letter a is very similar to Pugaḷūr inscriptions. Again in the bilingual coin of Sātavāhanas the cursive form is seen almost in all the letters. Vowel a is more cursive on these coins. The next stage of vowel a's evolution can be seen from the inscription. From the evidences of Tamil- Brāhmī potsherds and from the coin legend, we can fix the date of the evolution of cursive form safely to 1st and 2nd century C.E. It is also interesting to note here that the early form of Vowel a (Mangulam Brāhmī vowel form a is never met with in the Asōkan Edicts except Errakuḍi. However, Buhler pointed out nearly ten forms of vowel a of Asōkan Brāhmī, they are all similar to the vowel a form of Late Tamil-Brāhmī. The cursive form of a is one among them. The Vowel a in Early TamilBrāhmī has angularised form which has two arms turned away from each other attached to the right of the vertical line with a perfect gap in the middle. As stated earlier this angular form of a is found only in Erraguḍi version of Asoka. The two arms in the late period inscriptions attached in the middle of the vertical line is often met with in the Asōkan Brāhmī. If we consider the Paleographical grounds for the date on this Vowel

letter, some of the Later Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions can be fixed to the Parallel period of Asōka. For instance, the Jambai inscription of Adiyamān of Satyaputra, have similar type of a vowel a of Asōkan Edicts. The Vowel a of the late Brāhmī existed in its form in the Pulāṅkuṛichchi inscriptions too. It gradually got into a cursive form in Irulappaṭṭi and Tirunātharkuṅṅu.

### Grantha script

The Pallavas occupied the Tondaimandalam region and made Kanchipuram as their capital city. Since their original home was Andhra, they faced the language problem in the newly occupied area. Hence they introduced a new type of Script known as Grantha. Since it was first employed by the Pallavas in Tamil Country it is also known as Pallava Grantha. The Pallava Grantha is originated from Sothern variety of Brāhmī which was prevalent in the Andhra region during Sāthavāhanas, Sālaṅkayānas and Vishnukuṅṅins periods.

S.N.	Questions ( 5 Marks)	LOCF Mapping		
1	Explain the origin of writing in South India.	CO1	PO1	K1
2	Write a short note on Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) script.	CO2	PO2	K2
3	Describe the evolution of Tamil-Brahmi script.	CO3	PO2	K2
4	What are the main features of Vattezhuthu script?	CO4	PO1	K2
5	Write a note on the Grantha script.	CO5	PO2	K2
6	Distinguish between Tamil-Brahmi and Vattezhuthu scripts.	CO5	PO3	K2
S.N.	Questions (8 Marks)	LOCF Mapping		
1	Discuss the origin and development of writing in South India.	CO1	PO1	K3
2	Explain the features and significance of Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) script.	CO2	PO2	K3
3	Analyze the evolution of Tamil-Brahmi into later South Indian scripts.	CO3	PO4	K4
4	Describe in detail the characteristics and usage of Vattezhuthu script.	CO4	PO2	K3
5	Examine the origin and importance of the Grantha script.	CO5	PO2	K3
6	Compare and contrast Tamil-Brahmi, Vattezhuthu, and Grantha scripts.	CO5	PO3	K4
7	Evaluate the role of South Indian scripts in the development of Tamil language and literature.	CO5	PO5	K5
8	Assess the historical significance of early South Indian writing systems in epigraphy.	CO5	PO5	K5

## Unit – V

### Learning Objectives

1. To understand inscriptions as sources of historical information.
2. To study the significance of Indus civilization inscriptions.
3. To examine the features of Asokan pillar inscriptions.
4. To analyze the importance of Gupta period inscriptions.
5. To explore inscriptional evidence in Tamil Nadu.
6. To understand specific sites like Mangulam and Sittannavasal inscriptions.

### Course Outcomes

1. Students will explain the role of inscriptions as historical sources.
2. Students will describe the features of Indus inscriptions.
3. Students will analyze the significance of Asokan pillar inscriptions.
4. Students will assess the importance of Gupta inscriptions.
5. Students will identify key inscriptional sites in Tamil Nadu.
6. Students will examine inscriptions from Mangulam and Sittannavasal.
7. Students will apply inscriptional evidence in historical interpretation.

### Introduction

The Indus Valley Civilization also called the Harappan civilization was the first major urban Culture of South Asia. It reached its peak from 2600 BC to 1900 BC roughly; a period called By some archaeologists “Mature Harappan” as distinguished from the earlier Neolithic “Early Harappan” regional cultures. Spatially, it is huge, comprising of about 1000 settlements of Varying sizes, and geographically extended from the Afghan border in the West to Uttar Pradesh in the east and from Manda (Jammu) in the north to Bhagatrav (Gujarat) in the South. The civilization is known for its clean and well-planned cities such as Harappa and Mohenjodaro (Pakistan), and Lothal and Kalibangam (India). The Harappans administered Their cities and provinces efficiently and provided all the civic amenities known to the age. Houses were built on terraced platforms to save them from recurring floods in the Indus, Sabarmati and Saraswati rivers. The Harappas standardized goods and services throughout The empire. They introduced the decimal system for linear measurement. Their overseas Trade passed through Lothal, a port-city situated at the head of the Gulf of Cambay where Berthing facilities for ships were provided in a scientifically designed dock. The Lothal dock is The earliest of its kind in the world. A miniature model of a ship found here .The exports Consisted of cotton goods, stone beads, ivory, etc., and the imports included wool. The Material progress of the Harappans was well matched by their spiritual progress. Such a highly advanced civilization as the Harappan was gradually eclipsed owing natural Calamities. The generally held theory that the invading Aryan tribes

destroyed the Indus Cities is now discarded in favour of the more concrete evidence of flood at Indus cities. In Circa 1900 B.C., the Harappans left the flood-ravaged towns and moved into the Indo- Gangatic divide and Gujarat

### **Indus Script:.**

As a highly literate people the Harappans have left for posterity around 4,000 seals bearing symbols popularly called Indus script. Square stamp seals are the dominant form of Indus writing media; they are normally an inch square (2.54 cm) displaying the pictographic script on the top. The seals were pressed on a pliable surface (e.g. clay) in order to replicate its image. The recent evidence from the excavation at Lothal shows that the seals were used for sealing cargo and not used as amulets. The Indus script is made up of partially pictographic signs and human and animal motifs including a puzzling 'unicorn'. These are inscribed on miniature steatite (soapstone) seal stones, terracotta tablets and occasionally on metal. The designs are "little masterpieces of controlled realism, with a monumental strength in one sense out of all proportion to their size and in another entirely related to it" The script is the writing system developed by the Indus Valley Civilization and it is the earliest form of writing known in the Indian subcontinent. During the early Harappan phase (c. 3500-2700 BCE), we find the earliest known examples of the Indus script signs, attested on Ravi and KotDiji pottery excavated at Harappa. Its full development was reached during the Urban period (c. 2600-1900 BCE), when longer inscriptions are recorded. The inscriptions are known from some 60 excavation sites: most of them are short, the average length is five signs and none of them is longer than 26 signs. It is needless to say that the decoding of the writing on these seals is most essential for understanding the Harappan culture to a greater extent. Several attempts have been made to decipher the Indus script. However, the script still remains to be deciphered to the satisfaction of all the scholars but efforts are ongoing. In this lesson let us try to learn about the attempts so far made to decipher the Indus script by different scholars both foreign and Indian.

### **Attempts of decipherment**

The Indus script has long challenged epigraphists because of the difficulty in reading and classifying text and symbols on the artefacts. More than 100 attempts of decipherment have been published by professional scholars and others since the 1920s. The first publication of the seal with Harappan symbols dates to 1875, in a drawing by Alexander Cunningham. Since nearly 4,000 inscribed objects have been discovered. In 1932, Flinders Petrie — the most celebrated

Egyptologist of his day - proposed an Indus Decipherment on the basis of the supposed similarity of its pictographic principles to those of Egyptian hieroglyphs. In early 1970 Iravatham Mahadevan published a Corpus and concordance of 3,700 seals And 417 different signs in specific pattern. He also found that an average inscription Contained five symbols and longest inscription contained only 14 symbols in single line. He Also established the direction of writing was right to left. In 1982, archaeologist Shikaripura Ranganatha Rao (S R Rao)published a Sanskrit-based Decipherment. According to him, the Indus writing underwent gradual changes from a Picture-cum-linear scripts to a purely linear one dropping in the process pictures of birds, Insects, plants and the non-living beings like hills, fields etc., After making, thorough analysis of the Indus script Rao arrived at the conclusion that there Were only 22 basic signs in the Late Harappan script and 40 linear and 22 pictorial basic Signs in the Harappan script. So, he affirms that with a few as 62 basic signs the Indus script Cannot be pictographic or ideographic and it could only be phonetic, that is, syllabic or Alphabetic with occasional rebus use of pictures and numerals.

### **Features of the Indus Script**

The main corpus of writing dated from the Indus Civilization is in the form of inscribed seals In good, legible conditions. Since 1875 more than 4,000 objects inscribed with this script Have been found. The script consists of about 400 signs which can be divided into basic Signs, approximately 250, and various additional auxiliary marks which do not stand alone But which are used in combinations with the basic signs. These combinatory marks are Variously interpreted as determinatives, vowel marks, punctuation or other indications of Gradation. In addition to these signs, there occur many compound signs which are made up Of the basic signs combined with each other, or basic and auxiliary signs combined. However, it may be noted that scholars are of different views even with regard to the number Of these signs due to different manners one regards the auxiliary and compound signs. Although these seals and samples of Indus writing have been floating around the scholastic World for close to 100 years, little progress has been made on deciphering this elegant Script. However, the majority of the scholars who have studied it agree on a number of Points:

- The Indus script was generally written from right to left.
- The Indus script was generally written from right to left.
- The Indus script combined both word signs and symbols with phonetic value.

- However, there are number of factors preventing scholars from unlocking the mystery of the Indus script.

Very short and brief texts.

- The average number of symbols on the seals is 5, and the longest is only 26.
- The language underneath is unknown.
- Lack of bilingual texts.

### **Different Theories about the Origin of the Indus Script :**

Some scholars opined that the script was of a foreign origin while another set of scholars Considered it as indigenous. Their opinions are as follows :

### **Sources of the Indus Script :**

- Sumerian
- Egyptian Hieroglyphs
- Script of Eastern Islands
- Partly from Egypt and partly from Mesopotamia

Those who advocated Indigenous origin suggested the relation of the Indus script with the Following

### **Proto-Vedic & Brahmi Prakrit and Sanskrit**

#### **Ashokan Inscriptions (Rock Edicts)**

James Prinsep, a British antiquary and colonial administrator was the first person to decipher Ashoka's edicts. These Ashoka's inscriptions are the first tangible evidence of Buddhism. They were kept in public places and along trade routes so that the maximum number of people would read them. More than religious discourses, they talk about the moral duties of the people, how to conduct life, Ashoka's desire to be a good and benevolent ruler, and Ashoka's work towards this end.

There are 33 inscriptions in total and primarily classified into the following:

There are 33 inscriptions in total and primarily classified into the following:

- Major rock edicts
- Minor rock edicts
- Separate rock edicts

- Major pillar edicts
- Minor pillar edicts

In the earlier half of his reign, the edicts were inscribed on conveniently located rock surfaces and were distributed in the areas of public settlement, where people could easily read them and are referred to as major and minor rock edicts. In the later part of his reign, the inscriptions were on well polished monolithic pillars (from the sites of Chunar, near Varanasi), each edict surmounted with a finely sculpted animal capital involving great technological expertise in cutting and engraving and were mainly confined to the Ganges plain. The inscriptions were composed in the Prakrit language (in Magadhi, the dialect of Prakrit in Magadha) and written in Brahmi script throughout the greater part of the empire. But in the north-western part, they appear in Kharosthi script and in Kandahar in Afghanistan, they were written in Aramaic, in Greek script and Greek language. Most of the inscriptions are about dhamma (Prakrit form of dharma, literally means the universal law or righteousness or social and religious order) and it was inspired by the Buddhist Upasaka Dhamma (i.e., the Buddhist teaching for the laity). Ashoka's dhamma emphasised non-violence, mutual respect and understanding between people of different sects and beliefs. It included the state's concern for the welfare of its people. The basic attributes of dhamma included compassion, charity, truthfulness, purity and gentleness. He asked the people to extend respect, consideration, compassion and tolerance towards slaves and servants, obedience to parents, generosity towards friends and relatives, regard and donations to Brahmanas and Shramanas, a concern for all living beings and to abstain oneself from destroying life.

## **Inscription Of Gupta Period**

### **Introduction**

The Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta is one of the important epigraphic sources for the study of the political history of the Imperial Guptas. Written in excellent Sanskrit it is in the form of a panegyric. It is therefore popularly called as Allahabad prasasti in the academic circles. It eulogizes the virtues and achievements of the patron by the court poet. The military exploits of the king have been narrated in a graphic manner. The names of the kings and kingdoms mentioned in the record offer a glimpse of the geopolitical situation of the country in the 4th Century CE. The political ideologies followed by the ruler in matters of war and peace forms a subject of absorbing interest in the context of early India.

## **The Inscription**

The Allahabad prasasti was originally engraved on the Asokan pillar instituted at Kausambi Near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. It was later removed to the Allahabad Fort where it is now Located. According to Alexander Cunningham, the pillar was shifted to Allahabad by Firuz Shah Tughlaq. But J.F. Fleet inclines to believe that it was Akbar who was instrumental in removing it To Allahabad. It was re-erected by the Mughal emperor Jahangir in 1605. In 1838 it was again Set up by Captain Edward Smith with a new lion capital.

The inscription was first brought to notice in the year 1834 in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Captain A. Troyer, Secretary of Sanskrit College, Calcutta . Troyer was First to publish the text and translation of the inscription. In the same year Rev. W.H. Mill, Principal of Bishop's College and Vice President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal published a Revised text and translation of the inscription. An improved version of the inscription together With a fresh lithograph was given by James Prinsep in the year 1837 in the same journal. But Credit goes to J.F. Fleet for making an accurate decipherment of the inscription and presenting The standard text and translation of the inscription. Fleet's transcript and rendering have been Accepted as most authentic by scholars like G. Buhler, D.R. Bhandarakar and D.C. Sircar. Like other Asokan pillars, the round monolithic column of Allahabad was built in fine Sandstone. The tapering column is 35 ft high and its diameter at the bottom is 35 inches and at The top is 26 inches. There are three sets of inscriptions on the column belonging to three Important emperors, namely Asoka Maurya (3rd century BCE), Samudragupta (4th century CE) And Jahangir (early 17th century CE). However, due to long exposure to rain and sun, the Inscription is damaged at places making it difficult for decipherment and translation. The Allahabad prasasti of Samudragupta was composed by Harisena who was a poet and Minister in the royal court of the king. He assumed the official titles sandhivigrahika (minister of War and peace), kumaramatyā (minister attached to the king and the crown prince) and Mahadandanayaka (officer in charge of military and judicial matters). He was the son of Mahadandanayaka Dhruvabhuti and a resident of Khadyatapākika. In spite of assuming Important positions in the administrative hierarchy of the Guptas, Harisena called himself as a Servant or *dasa* of the enlightened king. From the official designations of both the father and the Son, it is apparent that they were serving under the king indifferent administrative capacities. The inscription was executed by another important officer

named Tilabhataka. He is also Described as a mahadandanayaka, who meditated on the feet of the paramabhataraka, which is undoubtedly referring to the sovereign.

### **Language and script**

The inscription is written in chaste Sanskrit language. It is in the form of a poem or kavya. It is Written both in verse and prose. There are nine verses of different metres; eight in the Introductory portion and one at the end. The rest of the inscription is in prose. It is interesting to Note that the verses of this inscription are consecutively numbered. Perhaps this is the earliest Inscription where the verses are numbered serially. There are thirty-three lines in total. The Characters of the record are later Brahmi script. Some scholars prefer to call it as Gupta script While others suggest it as the eastern variety northern script. From the extant portion of the Inscription it is suggested that the record is not dated. The introductory portion of the record Much damaged and the first two verses are completely illegible. The rest of the verses in this Portion up to line 15 are also not in a good state of preservation.

### **5. Ancestry of the king**

The inscription mentions the ancestors of the king and their titles. He was born to Chandragupta And MahadeviKumaradevi. Kumaradevi is called in the inscription as a princess of the Lichchhavis and therefore, Samudragupta is referred to as Lichchhavi-dauhitra or grandson of The Lichchhavis. Chandragupta (I) was the first ruler of the dynasty to assume the high sounding Imperial title of maharajadhiraja and he was also the first Gupta ruler to issue coins. The Inscription further tells us that there were two more rulers who ruled over the Gupta kingdom Prior to Chandragupta (I). They were Srigupta and Ghatotkachagupta. Very likely there were Respectively the grandfather and great grandfather of Samudragupta. Both the rulers wielded Having the humble title of maharaja. Thus, Srigupta was the progenitor of the Gupta dynasty And he was followed by Ghatotkachagupta, Chandragupta (I) and Samudragupta. Chandragupta (I) had started a new era popularly known as Gupta era the initial year of which Has been fixed at 319-20 CE. Scholars working on the history of the Imperial Guptas have the Consensus of opinion on the chronology of the early Gupta rulers and they fix the reigning Period of the first four rulers of the dynasty as follows; Srigupta from 275 to 300 CE, Ghatotkacha from 300 to 319-20 CE, Chandragupta (I) from 320 to 335 CE and Samudragupta From 335 to 375 CE. The Gupta capital was located at a place called Purusha or Purushapura Which has been equated with Kusumapura and identified with Pataliputra.

## **Samudragupta as an ideal king**

The Allahabad inscription projects King Samudragupta as an exceptional individual and an ideal King. Because of his versatility and all the good qualities he was chosen by his father Chandragupta I to climb to the throne of the Guptas. His consecration to the throne was looked up with sad faces by others of equal birth while the courtiers rejoiced cheerfully. He assumed the imperial titles like maharajadhiraja and paramabharraka. He was also called as kaviraja or King among poets. He was a relentless conqueror, an able and compassionate ruler with Supreme commitment for the welfare of his subjects, a ruler with sharp and polished intellect, and an expert in music and art. He was a warrior of hundred battles. He assumed the epithet of Parakrama or valour. By dint of his own prowess and might of his arms, he subdued the lords of many kingdoms. His body was most charming and it was covered with plentiful beauty of the marks of hundreds of promiscuous scars caused by many weapons. In lines 24-26, Harisena praised his patron in the following words, "He was without an antagonist on earth; he, by the overflowing of the multitude of his many good qualities adorned by hundreds of good actions, has wiped off the fame of other kings with the sole of his feet...". He is extolled as a Purusha or Supreme Being. He was a protector of the good and destroyer of the evil. He was a giver of hundred thousand cows. He was equaled with the gods like Dhanada or Kubera, Varuna, Indra and Yama. He had put to shame Brihaspati (the preceptor of gods) by his sharp and polished intellect and also Tumburu and Narada by the graces of his musical performances. He had the royal emblem of Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu. Thus, in extolling the qualities of his sovereign and patron, the poet had an open heart and applied all his poetic skills. Therefore, as a Panegyric, the Allahabad prasasti stands apart in epigraphic literature of India.

## **Conquests**

The inscription is non-sectarian. The major portion of the eulogy is devoted to the glory and military achievements of the king. Its great value lies in the abundant information given about the divisions of early India and the kings and tribes of the 4th century CE. The contents of the inscription are indispensable for the study of the historical geography of India and the extent of the Gupta empire. It further reveals the system of political organization that had developed in at that time. In the following paragraphs the major conquests of Samudragupta have been narrated. The sequence in which they are recorded in the inscription is maintained without any alteration and this offers an idea about the army mobilization in a chronological frame.

## **First Aryavarta War**

As the capital of the empire of Samudragupta was located at Pataliputra, it seems that the ruler had inherited an empire that roughly comprised of Magadha or the areas adjoining Uttar Pradesh and Bihar together with territories in the foothills of the Himalayas. His initial military extent of empire Samudragupta had launched a career of conquests. He mobilized his troops in all directions and subjugated many kingdoms. By his military exploits he carved out a vast empire. It comprised the whole of north India with the exclusion of Kashmir, western Punjab, western Rajputana, Sind and Gujarat, together with the highlands of Chhatisgarh and coastal Odisha. The confederacy of the north Indian rulers was shattered twice and their territories were annexed to the dominion of the king. The forest and tribal kingdoms of western and central India were annexed to his Empire. The rulers of the frontier kingdoms acknowledged his suzerainty and paid tribute to the Emperor. The foreign powers and the all the Island dwellers established cordial relationship with him. The rulers of the southern states were defeated and liberated by the king. Realizing the difficulty of administering the far-flung empire, the emperor adopted a diplomatic policy of not annexing their territories rather reinstating them in their respective kingdoms. Thus, within a short span of forty years the Gupta empire under Samudragupta extended from the Himalayas in the north to the river Narmada in the south and from the Brahmaputra in the east to the Chambal in the west. By his military exploits and diplomatic tactics, the emperor could create a concentric structure of the emerging Gupta empire with its dynastic core area, extended by annexed neighbouring kingdoms and surrounded by a circle of tributary vassals and powerful allies at the periphery.

## **Mangulam**

Mangulam or Mankulam is a village in Madurai district, Tamil Nadu, India. It is located 25 kilometres (16 mi) from Madurai.[1] The inscriptions discovered in the region are the earliest Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions. A hill in the region which is known as Mangulam hill or Kalugumalai[4] (eagle hill) or Ovamalai,[1] is where Tamil Jain monks lived in the caves during when their religion flourished in the ancient Tamil country. They converted the caves into their Palli (monastery) and lived here from 3 BCE to the 9th century CE.

Mangulam inscriptions were discovered by Robert Sewell in the caves of the hill in 1882. This was the earliest finding of such kind of inscriptions. In 1906, Indian epigraphist V. Venkayya tried to read the inscriptions and found that it similar to the Brahmi script in Ashokan

edicts, he thought that the inscriptions were in Pali language. In 1919, epigraphist H. Krishna Sastri identified few Tamil words in the inscriptions.[8] In 1924, K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyar discovered that inscriptions are in Tamil with some Prakrit loan words in the Brahmi script and concluded that script is Tamil-Brahmi. In 1965, Iravatham Mahadevan recorded the inscriptions in the caves and dated it to the late 3rd century BCE. There are five caves in the hill of which six inscriptions are found in four caves. These were inscribed during Sangam period, hence it is considered one of the important inscriptions in Tamil Nadu. Archeologists found sherds, sling stones and an ancient burial site during the excavation in the region. In 2007, Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department excavated the ruins of the Jain prayer halls of Sangam period. The inscriptions are among the protected monuments in Tamil Nadu by the Archaeological Survey of India. The inscriptions mention that workers of Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ I, a Pandyan king of Sangam period, (c. 270 BCE) made stone beds for Jain monks. It further details the name of worker for whom he made stone bed. For example, an Inscription shows that Kaṭalaṅ Vaḷuti, a worker (accountant; he was also related family) of Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ, made a stone bed for the Jain monk Nanta-siriKuvaṅ

### **Sittanavasal Cave**

Sittanavasal Cave (also, Arivar Koil) is a 2nd-century Tamil Śramaṇa complex of caves in Sittanavasal village in Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu, India. Its name is a distorted form of Sit-tan-na-va-yil, a Tamil word which means "the abode of great saints" (Tamil: சித்தன்னவாசல்).

The monument is a rock-cut monastery or temple. Created by Tamil Śramaṇa, it is called the Arivar Koil, and is a rock cut cave temple of the Arihants. It contains remnants of notable frescoes from the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The murals have been painted with vegetable and mineral dyes in black, green, yellow, orange, blue, and white. Paintings have been created by applying colours over a thin wet surface of lime plaster. Ancient structures such as Gol Gumbaz, Talagirisvara temple and this one are claimed to be relatively unappreciated.[6] Archaeological Survey of India has listed Sittanavasal Cave in the list of "Must See" Indian Heritage. The Sittanavasal Cave are listed as one of the Adarsh Smarak Monument by Archaeological Survey of India.

While the Sittanavasal village is dated from 1st century BC to 10th century AD when Jainism flourished here, the Temple-cave was initially dated to Pallava King Mahendravarman I (580–630 AD) prior to his conversion from Jainism to Hinduism as a Shaivite. However, an

inscription attributes its renovation to a Pandyan king probably Maran Sendan (654–670 AD) or Arikesari Maravarman (670–700 AD). The Śramaṇa beds on the hill top is attributed to the Jain era pilgrimage centre which lasted till the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. However, in the Pudukkottai region, where the monuments are located, there are many archaeological finds of the megalithic burial sites from much earlier Seventh-century painting in Sittanavasal Cave.

There are two publications in the 20<sup>th</sup> century which brought to light these monuments in particular: one in 1916, in the book "General History of the Pudukkottai State" by S. Radhakrishna Iyer, a historian, but only known regionally; and the other by Jouveau-Dubreuil and Gopinatha Rao, iconographers who worked together and brought out a "Monograph on Sittannavasal", in 1920, which brought it to limelight among archaeologists worldwide. The cleaning of the painting was undertaken in 1942 by Dr. S. Paramasivan and K. R. Srinivasan when they observed a patch of old painting of conventional carpet design superimposed by a new layer of painting. The superimposed layer of painting has been surmised as that done Ilan-Gautaman, whose name is also inscribed. The temple is maintained and administered by the Archaeological Survey of India as a ticketed monument .

### **Architectural features**

Sittanavasal is a rock-cut cave, situated on the western side of central part of a hill, which runs in a north–south direction. The hill measures approximately 70 metres (230 ft) in height, and sits above the surrounding plain which has some archaeological monuments. The Jain natural caverns, called Ezhadippattam are approached from the foothills. The cave is approached by climbing a few 100 steps.

The architectural features of the Sittanavasal Cave include the painting and sculptures found within its precincts. Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for the maintenance of the cave and the Jain beds.

The paintings have been painted in fresco-secco technique with many mineral colours. The painting depict beautiful lotus pond with lotus flowers, people collecting lotuses from the pond, two dancing figures, lilies, fish, geese, buffaloes and elephants. Mulk Raj Anand said of the paintings, "Pallava craftsmen used greens and browns and puqiles, with a genuine ability and a lyrical flow of line. Lotuses spring up from imaginary ponds amid variegated greenery, under a bluish sheen." In addition, inscriptions of the 9th and 10th century are also seen. The ceiling of the Ardhamandapam is decorated with murals from the 7th century. The cave temple has simple

pillars and sculptures of Jain Tirthankaras. However, most of the frescoes which were covered fully in plaster have been severely defaced or not clearly visible due to inadequate security and maintenance resulting in vandalism in the past five or six decades. Originally, the entire cave temple, including the sculptures, was covered with plaster and painted. The paintings are with theme of Jain Samavasarana, the "most attractive heavenly pavilion" (it means the attainment of nirvana), and Khatika bhumi.

The layout of the west facing cave is the same as adopted in other rock-cut cave temples in the country during the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. As originally built, it had only a garbha-griha (sanctum sanctorum) and an ardhamandapam (semi hall). However, the mukha-mandapa (front hall) was an addition made in the frontage built during the Pandya Rule, which collapsed. Subsequently, a pillared veranda with a facade was added in front of the cave during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the Maharaja of Pudukkottai added this part of structure at the suggestion of Tottenham, the British administrator. It has two pillars and two pilasters and a square base entrance to a hexagonal portico, which were brought from the ruins of mantapas at Kudimiyanmalai.

The Ardhamantapam, after the front entrance, is rectangular in plan of 20.5 metres (67 ft) long, 2.28 metres (7 ft 6 in) wide and 2.5 metres (8 ft 2 in) high, and the cubical cell of 2.89 metres (9 ft 6 in) width, (a little higher than the garbha-griha) with a facade which has two pillars and two pilasters at both ends. The pillars as well as pilasters are hexagonal in shape in the middle section while the top and bottom sections are square. Rock beam is sculpted above them as if supporting them; provided with large corbels (potikai in Tamil) with ornamentation or fluting, with an intervening plain band. The pillars which support this mandapam are typical of Mahendra

The Ardhamantapam, after the front entrance, is rectangular in plan of 20.5 metres (67 ft) long, 2.28 metres (7 ft 6 in) wide and 2.5 metres (8 ft 2 in) high, and the cubical cell of 2.89 metres (9 ft 6 in) width, (a little higher than the garbha-griha) with a facade which has two pillars and two pilasters at both ends. The pillars as well as pilasters are hexagonal in shape in the middle section while the top and bottom sections are square. Rock beam is sculpted above them as if supporting them; provided with large corbels (potikai in Tamil) with ornamentation or fluting, with an intervening plain band. The pillars which support this mandapam are typical of Mahendra

A door way of 5.5 feet (1.7 m) height and 2.5 feet (0.76 m) width from the ardhamantapa leads to the sanctum sanctorum (through a flight of steps), which has three bas-relief sculptures.

The entrance has surul-vyalis (balustrades sculptured with the mythical form of vyalis with twisted trunks). The sanctum sanctorum has a square plan of 2.89 feet (0.88 m) wide and height of 7.5 feet (2.3 m), and at the back wall there are three bas-reliefs, two are of Jain Tirthankaras (as evidenced by the triple umbrellas (chattris) over them) and the third relief is of an acharya (teacher).

The ceiling of the garbha-griha which is painted shows a carved wheel with hub and axle that denotes the Dharma-chakra ("Wheel-of-the-Law"). Above the three images in Lotus position (seated posture), paintings are also seen which are surmised to represent a canopy which is carved with carpet designs with striped borders and squares and circles of different sizes with louts flower designs inscribed within the squares. The circles depict crosses with bulbous ends; the horizontal arm of the cross has depictions of human and lion figures. In the other areas, the ceiling has similar paintings as the lotus pond in the ardhmantapam. Plastered walls of the Sittanaval Cave have varying thickness of 1–8 millimetres (0.039–0.315 in). The pigmentation used for the paintings is over 1000 years old. Echo effect is clearly heard, if "om" is recited, only if inaudibly, in the small shrine.

The decorative paintings in the ceiling of the sanctum and ardh- mandapam of Aravirkovil though compared to the classical cave painting styles used in the Ajanta Caves but have minor variations in use of the materials for creating the paintings and also reported to provide a link between the Ajanta paintings (4th–6th century AD) and the Chola paintings of 11<sup>th</sup> century at Thanjavur. The ceilings have depiction of a lotus tank with natural looking images of men, animals, flowers, birds and fishes representing the Samavasarana faith of Jainism. The pillars are also carved with dancing girl and the king and the queen.

Paintings in the roof of the Ardhamnatapa are the mural paintings with Samavasarana theme. The mural exhibits a water tank or khatika-bhumi which is shown with the tank made of tiles filled with lotus flowers and surrounded by bhavyas ("the faithful"), elephants, fishes, one fish shown as jumping out of water, pillars with figurines of Pandya king Srimara Srivallabha (9<sup>th</sup> century AD) and his queen offering reverence to Ilam Gautaman, an acharya of Madura who created these paintings. While cleaning the paintings, one more layer of Samavasarana themed painting was revealed in the ceiling of the Garbha-griha, but in a carpet-design.

The study done by an artist on the depictions of the roof painting panel reveals: 3 birds, a man in loin cloth plucking flowers and the man is shown with a lily on right hand and lotuses on left hand, an elephant and fishes swimming, bird's eye on the top left corner.

Though severely damaged due to vandalism, remaining Frescoes have been preserved on the top parts of columns and ceilings inside the temple. Many of them are typical of the 9<sup>th</sup> century Pandyan period and include detailed pictures of elephants, buffaloes, fish, geese, Jains gathering lotuses from a pond and dancing girls. These frescoes are considered to be some of the best frescoes of medieval India next to frescoes of Ajanta Caves and Bagh Caves. Not so well planned is the arrangement of panels of the Sittanvassal cave temple; the idea of an ensemble has not been adopted but arranged in a haphazard way.

Painting of the Sittanvasal Caves were analysed to establish the technique and the material used to make the. Analysing a painting of a lotus pond in the ardhmantpam, it has been inferred that they are made with Fresco-secco, techniques made over rough stone using rough plaster of 2.5 millimetres (0.098 in) thickness made of lime mortar and sand with minor impurities, applying 0.5 millimetres (0.020 in) thick lime wash of fine lime water when the rough lime plaster is still rough. The pigments used are composed of white made from lime, black made from wood charcoal or lamp black, yellow from yellow ochre, red from red ochre, blue from ultramarine\lapis lazuli, and green from terre verte. Pigments of permanent mineral colours (not vegetable colours as reported on the display plaque at the site by ASI) were applied over dry plaster surfaces without any adhesive grove; the process involved a chemical reaction of lime water which absorbed oxygen in the air and getting converted by a carbonization process into insoluble calcium carbonate, which enabled the pigments to adhere to the surface. At the initiative of Pudukkottai State, during 1937–39, the paintings were cleaned, and then given a preservative coating. Also, the damaged portions of the plastering were injected with cementing material and the paintings were also retouched.

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions ( 5 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	Explain the importance of inscriptions as historical source material.	CO1	PO1	K1
2	Write a short note on the inscriptions of the Indus civilization.	CO2	PO2	K2
3	Describe the main features of Asokan pillar inscriptions.	CO3	PO2	K2
4	Write a note on Gupta period inscriptions.	CO4	PO2	K2
5	Explain the significance of Mangulam inscriptions in Tamil Nadu.	CO5	PO3	K3
6	What are the features of Sittannavasal inscriptions?	CO5	PO2	K2
<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Questions (8 Marks)</b>	<b>LOCF Mapping</b>		
1	Discuss the role of inscriptions as reliable sources for writing history.	CO1	PO1	K4
2	Explain the characteristics and importance of Indus civilization inscriptions.	CO2	PO2	K3
3	Analyze the content and significance of Asokan pillar inscriptions.	CO3	PO4	K4
4	Examine the importance of Gupta inscriptions in understanding ancient Indian history.	CO4	PO2	K3
5	Describe the development of inscripational tradition in Tamil Nadu.	CO5	PO2	K3
6	Discuss the historical importance of Mangulam inscriptions.	CO5	PO3	K4
7	Explain the features and significance of Sittannavasal inscriptions.	CO5	PO2	K3
8	Evaluate the contribution of inscriptions from different periods in reconstructing Indian history.	CO5	PO5	K5

## **LEARNING RESOURCES**

### **Recommended Books**

1. Buhler, George, Indian Paleography, Indian Studies Past and Present; Calcutta; 1959.
2. Dani. A.H, Indian Paleography, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers; 3 edition, 2011.
3. Sivaramamurthy. C., Indian Epigraphy and South Indian Scripts, Bulletin of the Madras
4. Government Museum,1952