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Development of Script Writing in Ancient Indian Civilization

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Abstract: *In ancient civilizations, language and scripts were essential for communication, helping to convey ideas and emotions. Scripts, as distinct writing styles, played a crucial role in creating significant literary works and depicting human experiences. Along with vocabulary and grammar, scripts formed the foundation for language development and connected people across cultures. Despite ancient India's diverse scripts, many questions remain regarding their relationships, requiring further research. Various research methods, including historical, formative, observational, open-ended, and qualitative approaches, have been used to explore this topic. The study of ancient Indian scripts as a primary communication tool continues to fascinate scholars, with many works in this field worth examining.*

Keywords: *Script, Language, Civilization, India, Writing, Knowledge, Symbols.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In ancient civilizations, language and scripts were key for communication and understanding society. A strong vocabulary, grammar, and script facilitated language development and connected cultures. The Indus Valley Civilization, known for its undeciphered inscriptions, is an example of a prehistoric society. All Indian scripts trace back to Brahmi, which dates to the third century BCE. Grantha, Dravidian, and Devanagari are three primary script families. Sanskrit, Pali, and Hindi, among others, evolved from Brahmi, one of South Asia's oldest scripts. Sanskrit and Prakrit were the dominant languages in Northern India during this time.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research explores the historical context and origins of ancient Indian scripts, testing current studies in both theoretical and factual settings. Various historical research methods, including formative, observational, and qualitative approaches, are employed. The project involves a comparative analysis of different scripts, examining how human relationships, societal needs, and development stages influence their evolution. An interdisciplinary approach is used to study a script's intertextuality, incorporating semantic insights where necessary.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ancient India's use of writing as a primary communication tool has intrigued many, with numerous works worth reviewing. Today, several previously unwritten languages are being written in existing scripts rather than creating new ones.

These scripts, native and developed over thousands of years, are not in English and date back to around 3300-3200 years ago. The Sumerians of Mesopotamia are believed to have created primitive writing around 3100 BC.

The sites of Kot Diji and Harappa, two crucial locations of the Indus Valley Civilization, are where the Harappan Script was found. It is challenging to ascertain whether these symbols were utilized to symbolize the writing system of the era in which they were initially observed due to their incredibly short appearance in inscriptions [1].

Despite several attempts, the "script" has not yet been fully translated. Work on it is still ongoing, though. It was widely used between 2700 and 1900 BCE [2]. Numerous methods exist for deciphering the Indus script, which has been the focus of numerous studies and is typically regarded as the most significant obstacle still present in the decipherment of ancient inscriptions worldwide [3].

These simple symbols on pottery may be up to 5,000 years older than any other known writing system. Rudimentary language was found on clay tablets found in the tomb of a king named Scorpion in southern Egypt [4].

The author argues that a closer examination of non-Indo-Aryan linguistic evidence in Sanskrit literature is crucial, as it has been a key argument for Aryan invasions and migrations. The central issue is whether languages spoken in India before the Indo-Aryans arrived are reflected in Vedic literature. Despite its importance, Indigenous Aryanists have largely ignored this aspect in the ongoing discussion.

According to a number of academics, the language is not related to Sumerians, Hurrians, or Elamite, nor does it fall into the Indo-European family. Furthermore, it cannot be compared to the structure of contemporary Munda languages in India. It most likely originated from rock art, which is present throughout India [5]. Lastly, the idea that Dravidians invaded an Indo-Aryan area, first put out by Bloch, is examined [6].

There are over 400 basic signs that have been identified as being a part of the Indus Script. Of these signs, only 31 were used more than 100 times, while the rest were not regularly used. Researchers have shown that a sizable amount of the Indus Script was inscribed on ephemeral materials that were later destroyed over time. The way that particular numerical values should be expressed has been decided. A single unit was represented by a downward stroke, whereas units of ten or more were represented by semicircles. This has also been difficult because all of the inscriptions that have been found so far are rather short, with fewer than 30 signs per line. Consequently, repetitive sign patterns cannot be properly investigated, which is another method of determining the meaning of a writing system for the Indus Script [7].

It is possible to use a structural approach, paying close attention to the language and syntax. Among other things, they have exploited themes like their historical context, scripts, and sociolinguistic components [8].

The Indus Script remains untranslated as the language it represents is still undiscovered. Several alternative language families, such as Austroasiatic and Sino-Tibetan, have been proposed instead of Indo-European or Dravidian. Many scholars argue that the Indus Valley Civilization's material culture suggests it was not Indo-European. Some experts link the Brahmi script to the Indus system, while others associate it with Dravidian languages. The debate over whether the Aryans or Dravidians were India's original inhabitants has further fueled this controversy.

IV. ANALYSIS

However, the majority of the populace spoke Prakrit, a dialect of Sanskrit, while the elite had been speaking Sanskrit since at least 2000 BCE. The Brahmi script was used for both Prakrit and Sanskrit, and it was written in the same manner. The Brahmi script progressively evolved over several decades to become known as the Nagari script in the world's northern hemisphere. Before the Pallavas made Sanskrit their official court language in the thirteenth century, the language was not

widely spoken in the southern hemisphere. The name of the location where it was discovered is inscribed in Sanskrit in the Nagari inscription on the right. The earliest Nagari inscription discovered in Tamil Nadu is thought to be this one, which was written in the fifteenth century.

The great majority of Indian scripts, including Devanagari, which encompasses Bengali and other languages, are often credited to Brahmi. The vast majority of languages, including Telugu Devanagari, Odia, Bengali, and others, are written in scripts derived from Brahmi, with the exception of Urdu and Santhali.

It is believed that the Indus Script was the first script used by Indian civilization [9]. Known as the Indus Script, this script was often written from right to left and is believed to be the oldest script employed by Indian civilization. The manner in which specific numerical values should be expressed has been specified. The writing system that gave rise to the great majority of the current Indian scripts, which are divided into two main varieties in Northern and Southern India, is called the Brahmi script. The Kharosthi Script was created as a result of the practice of writing from right to left. Since the 6th century BCE, numerous mints in the region spanning from Gandhara (Afghanistan) to Anuradhapura (Srilanka) have produced punch-marked coins using hundreds of hieroglyphics of Indus script [10]. The Indus scripts are typically linked to diverse patterns and can be discovered on a variety of objects that have been excavated from multiple locations of the Indus valley civilization [11].

During the Gupta period, Sanskrit was written using the Grantha script, which is used in western and northern India. As a result, this Grantha script gradually gave rise to the most important Indian scripts, including Bengali and Devanagari. Moreover, it served as the impetus behind the development of global scripts. The Sarada script, which originated in India and expanded throughout the region, was a modified version of the Gupta script. It developed into the Gurmukhi and Kashmiri scripts, which are currently used to write Punjabi.

The Gupta script, used in ancient India, evolved into the Nagari script, which influenced Eastern regions. This script led to the development of Devanagari, along with Bengali and Tibetan scripts. Devanagari was used for writing Prakrit, Sanskrit, Arabic, and other languages, and is still used for languages like Nepali, Marathi, Konkani, and Hindi. The Oriya language, historically known as Odia, was written in the Kalinga script, named after Odisha, which shares artistic similarities with Brahmi. Today, Oriya is written in a script derived from the Bengali alphabet.

Grantha script, known since the 15th century, is one of the earliest Southern scripts to evolve from Brahmi. It gave rise to the Malayalam and Tamil scripts, still in use today. Grantha is also considered the ancestor of the Sinhala script in Sri Lanka. A variant called Pallava was brought to Southeast Asia by Indian traders and influenced many regional scripts. Grantha was initially used for poetry-like writings in Tamil Nadu, and its name derives from the writing utensil used.

The Vatteluttu script, originating in Southern India from Brahmi, evolved into various scripts, including Tamil and Malayalam. As a result, unnecessary Brahmi markings were dropped. The Kadamba script, a Brahmi descendant, influenced the development of Kannada and Telugu scripts. Indian scripts have evolved over time, adapting to regional, political, and religious needs.

Brahmi, one of the world's oldest writing systems, gave rise to many scripts, including Devanagari, Bengali, and Tamil. Ashoka's edicts (250–232 BCE) are considered early Brahmi inscriptions. Some believe Brahmi originated from Aramaic or the Indus script.

Originally intended to be used mainly for writing Prakrit, the Brahmi script—which is based on the rhythmic writing system—was later employed for various uses. At the time of its creation, the vast majority of people adopted it. Originally used primarily for writing Prakrit, the language spoken by the majority of people at the time of its inception, the Brahmi script confirms the syllabic writing system. Over time, Sanskrit was also written using this alphabet. The epigraphers claim that the

Brahmi script is the ancestor of all Indian scripts [12]. This script, which is still in use in several regions of Asia today, was later used to write the Sanskrit language as well.

Brahmi developed into a wide variety of derivative scripts over time. The so-called "Brahmic family of scripts" comprises the Sinhalese script, all of the contemporary indigenous scripts of South Asia, and other significant scripts from Central and Southeast Asia, including Tibetan, Khmer, Thai, Lao, and Burmese [13].

Another popular type of script is the Santali script. Among the languages of the Munda subfamily, which also includes the Austroasiatic languages Ho and Mundari, is the Austroasiatic language Santali. The fact that Santali was still being spoken in the seventeenth century suggests that it was an oral language.

The Sarada script, invented in the ninth century, was used to write languages like Sanskrit and Kashmiri. While once widely used, it is now mostly confined to ceremonial settings within the Kashmiri Pandit community. The script, which predates the Gaudi script, was in use across eastern India by the sixth century AD. Over time, it evolved into the Landa script, which was used for writing Punjabi dialects and languages like Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Hindi. Guru Angad later developed the Gurmukhi script based on the Landa system, specifically for the Punjabi language.

The Punjabi language was written using this script throughout the Guru Granth Sahib. Additionally, it is the script used by Hindus and Sikhs. The Modi script is used in Maharashtra to write the Marathi language. It is the most populous state in India and is located in the western region. The language spoken there is Marathi, and it is written in the Modi script.

The Balbodh version of the Devanagari script became the primary writing system for Marathi only in the 20th century. The Modi script, though mainly used for Marathi, was also employed to write languages like Hindi and Urdu. The Gujarati script, an alphabet like other Nagari scripts, is used to write Gujarati, Kutchi, and other languages in the Nagari system.

The Bengali script is distinct from Devanagari because it lacks the horizontal line above the letters. The Gujarati script is used for Gujarati, Sanskrit, and Hindi. The Grantha script, an early Southern Brahmi script, evolved into Tamil and Malayalam scripts and influenced the Sinhala script in Sri Lanka. The Pallava script, used in Tamil Nadu for Sanskrit texts, also spread to Southeast Asia, influencing scripts in Indonesia and beyond.

The Vatteluttu script, derived from Brahmi, was used to write Tamil and Malayalam and is one of the three main scripts for Proto-Tamil, alongside the Tamil script and Pallava. The Kadamba script, also a Brahmi descendant, gave rise to the Kannada and Telugu scripts, used for languages like Kannada, Marathi, and Konkani. The Telugu script evolved from the Bhattiprolu script around the 5th century CE. The Malayalam script, or Kairali script, is primarily used in Kerala for Malayalam, including Sanskrit manuscripts and acrostic poetry.

The Vatteluttu alphabet, a Tamil script that dates back thousands of years, was used to write Malayalam at first. The Malayalam script is being used to write Malayalam. In contrast, the Grantha alphabet was first used to write Sanskrit before being assimilated by the Malayalam language, which led to the creation of the current Malayalam script. Both Vatteluttu and Grantha are descended from the Brahmi script, but they evolved independently of one other. The basic roots and beginnings of Indian scripts that go back to the subcontinent's historical periods are the Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts [14]. Despite the fact that the idea that the Sanskrit languages are the "mother of all languages" has been studied, the assertion that the Brahmi letters are the "father of all important Indian scripts" has not been questioned. Another factor contributing to script's popularity was the Puranic Tradition [15]. More than 780 languages and more than 66 distinct scripts were recognized throughout India during the organization's statewide census, which it says is the largest linguistics study ever conducted in India, according to its research. Pakistan and India employ the Urdu alphabet, a modified version of the Perso-Arabic script, which dates back to the 13th century and originated in Iran. between it and the Perso-Arabic Script's evolution. The relationship is obvious. The Urdu and

Punjabi scripts and the Indo-Aryan languages of North India are clearly related. Investigation, hypothesis, and a probabilistic approach should all be a part of scientific study and studies into the origin of a script. Seldom are scripts written arbitrarily or without thought. Rather, they change due to their ability to adjust to the scripts of their environment and real socioeconomic materialistic desires [16].

V. CONCLUSION

Indian scripts are diverse and historically region- and group-specific, with merchants and scribes using their own distinct scripts for religious, political, and economic purposes. Many languages now use recognized scripts that have evolved over thousands of years. Carbon dating places these scripts between 3300 and 3200 years old, with the Sumerians creating early writing around 3100 BCE.

Today, scripts are integral to digital applications and communication. All modern Indian scripts, along with many Southeast and East Asian scripts, trace their origins to Brahmi. They are used to write languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, and others. Despite their complexity, these scripts are vital for understanding important historical texts.

Although many languages are now written in established scripts, the extinction of some regional scripts has occurred due to the widespread use of standardized ones, especially for digital communication. Modern languages that were once unwritten are now being written in these recognized scripts.

With increased literacy and access to the internet, India's scripts are thriving in more standardized forms. This growth offers potential for future research on ancient Indian scripts, their role in non-religious contexts, and their connection to popular culture and social movements.

Research on several facets of Ancient Indian letters still has more room. Future study has a lot of potential because of the usage of scripts in nonreligious discourses, initiatives to promote their use, connections between scripts and popular culture, and the responsiveness of scripts and learning among the non-elite.

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