**Hindu texts** are manuscripts and voluminous historical literature related to any of the diverse traditions within Hinduism. A few texts are shared resources across these traditions and broadly considered as Hindu scriptures.[1][2] These include the Puranas, Itihasas and Vedas. Scholars hesitate in defining the term “Hindu scriptures” given the diverse nature of Hinduism,[2][3] but many list the Bhagavad Gita and the Agamas as Hindu scriptures,[2][3][4] and Dominic Goodall includes Bhagavata Purana and Yajnavalkya Smriti in the list of Hindu scriptures as well.[2]

### History

There are two historic classifications of Hindu texts: Shruti – that which is heard,[5] and Smriti – that which is remembered.[6] The Shruti refers to the body of most authoritative, ancient religious texts, believed to be eternal knowledge authored neither by human nor divine agent but transmitted by sages (rishis). These comprise the central canon of Hinduism.[5][7] Of the Shrutis (Vedic corpus), the Upanishads alone are widely influential among Hindus, considered scriptures par excellence of Hinduism, and their central ideas have continued to influence its thoughts and traditions.[8][9]

The Smriti texts are a specific body of Hindu texts attributed to an author,[10] as a derivative work they are considered less authoritative than Shruti in Hinduism.[6] The Smriti literature is a vast corpus of diverse texts, and includes but is not limited to the Puranas, the Hindu epics, the Sutras, the texts of Hindu philosophies, the Kāvya or poetical literature, the Bhasyas, and numerous Nibandhas (digests) covering politics, ethics, culture, arts and society.[11][12]

Many ancient and medieval Hindu texts were composed in Sanskrit, many others in regional Indian languages. In modern times, most ancient texts have been translated into other Indian languages and some in non-Indian languages.[2] Prior to the start of the common era, the Hindu texts were composed orally, then memorized and transmitted orally, from one generation to next, for more than a millennium before they were written down into manuscripts.[13][14] This verbal tradition of preserving and transmitting Hindu texts, from one generation to next, continued into the modern era.

### Smriti

The texts that appeared afterwards were called smriti. Smriti is a literature which includes various Shastras and Itihasas (epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata), Harivamsa Puranas, Agamas and Darshanas.

The Sutras and Shastras texts were compilations of technical or specialized knowledge in a defined area. The earliest are dated to later half of the 1st millennium BCE. The Dharma-shastras (law books), derivatives of the Dharma-sutras. Other examples include the Agamas (sects), Panchatantra, Divya Prabandha, Tirumurai, Ramcharitmanas, Yoga Vasistha, Swara yoga, Shiva Samhita, Gheranda Samhita, Panchadasi, Vedantasara, and Stotra.
to later half of the 1st millennium BCE. The Dharma-shastras (law books), derivatives of the Dharma-sutras. Other examples were bhautikashastra "physics", rasayanashastra "chemistry", jivashastra "biology", vastushastra "architectural science", shilpashastra "science of sculpture", arthashastra "economics" and nītishastra "political science". It also includes Tantras and Agama literature.

This genre of texts includes the Sutras and Shastras of the six schools of Hindu philosophy.

Puranas

Main article: Puranas

The Puranas are a vast genre of Hindu texts that encyclopedically cover a wide range of topics, particularly legends and other traditional lore. Composed primarily in Sanskrit, but also in regional languages, several of these texts are named after major Hindu deities such as Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva and Goddess Devi.

The Puranic literature is encyclopedic and it includes diverse topics such as cosmogony, cosmology, genealogies of gods, goddesses, kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, folk tales, pilgrimages, temples, medicine, astronomy, grammar, mineralogy, humor, love stories, as well as theology and philosophy. The content is diverse across the Puranas, and each Purana has survived in numerous manuscripts which are themselves voluminous and comprehensive. The Hindu Puranas are anonymous texts and likely the work of many authors over the centuries; in contrast, most Jaina Puranas can be dated and their authors assigned.

There are 18 Maha Puranas (Great Puranas) and 18 Upa Puranas (Minor Puranas), with over 400,000 verses. The Puranas do not enjoy the authority of a scripture in Hinduism but are considered a Smriti. These Hindu texts have been influential in the Hindu culture, inspiring major national and regional annual festivals of Hinduism. The Bhagavata Purana has been among the most celebrated and popular text in the Puranic genre.
The Tevaram Saivite hymns

The Tevaram is a body of remarkable hymns exuding Bhakti composed more than 1400–1200 years ago in the classical Tamil language by three Saivite composers. They are credited with igniting the Bhakti movement in the whole of India.

Divya Prabandha Vaishnavite hymns

The Nalayira Divya Prabandha (or Nalayira (4000) Divya Prabandham) is a divine collection of 4,000 verses (Naalayira in Tamil means ‘four thousand’) composed before 8th century AD [1], by the 12 Alvars, and was compiled in its present form by Nathamuni during the 9th – 10th centuries. The Alvars sung these songs at various sacred shrines. These shrines are known as the Divya Desams [citation needed]

In South India, especially in Tamil Nadu, the Divya Prabhandha is considered as equal to the Vedas, hence the epithet Dravida
Veda. In many temples, Srirangam, for example, the chanting of the Divya Prabhandham forms a major part of the daily service. Prominent among the 4,000 verses are the 1,100+ verses known as the Thiru Vaaymozhi, composed by Nammalvar (Kaaril Maaran Sadagopan) of Thiruk Kurugoor.\[citation needed\]

Other Hindu texts

Hindu texts for specific fields, in Sanskrit and other regional languages, have been reviewed as follows,

Origin of arts and sciences in India

The Hindu scriptures provide the early documented history and origin of arts and sciences forms in India such as music, dance, sculptures, architecture, astronomy, science, mathematics, medicine and wellness. Valmiki’s Ramayana (500 BCE to 100 BCE) mentions music and singing by Gandharvas, dance by Apsaras such as Urvashi, Rambha, Menaka, Tilottama Panchapsaras, and by Ravana’s wives who excelling in nrityageeta or "singing and dancing" and nrutavaditra or "playing musical instruments").\[30\] The evidence of earliest dance related texts are in Natasutras, which are mentioned in the text of Panini, the sage who wrote the classic on Sanskrit grammar, and who is dated to about 500 BCE.\[31\] This performance arts related Sutra text is mentioned in other late Vedic texts, as are two scholars names Shilalin (IAST: Śilālin) and Krishashva (Kṛśaśva), credited to be pioneers in the studies of ancient drama, singing, dance and Sanskrit compositions for these arts.\[31\]\[33\] Richmond et al. estimate the Natasutras to have been composed around 600 BCE, whose complete manuscript has not survived into the modern age.\[32\]\[31\]

See also

- Hindu Epics
- Hindu eschatology
- List of Hindu scriptures
- List of historic Indian texts
- List of sutras
- Prasthanatrayi
- Sanskrit literature
- Timeline of Hindu texts

Notes

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8. Patrick Olivelle (2014), The Early Upanisads, Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0-19-535242-9, page 3; Quote: "Even though theoretically the whole of vedic corpus is accepted as revealed truth [shruti], in reality it is the Upanishads that have continued to influence the life and thought of the various religious traditions that we have come to call Hindu. Upanishads are the scriptures par excellence of Hinduism".
9. Wendy Doniger (1990), Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism, 1st Edition, University of Chicago Press, ISBN 978-0-226-61847-0, pages 2–3; Quote: "The Upanishads supply the basis of later Hindu philosophy; they alone of the Vedic corpus are widely known and quoted by most well-educated Hindus, and their central ideas have also become a part of the spiritual arsenal of rank-and-file Hindus."
10. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1988), Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism, Manchester University Press, ISBN 0-7190-1867-6, pages 2–3; Quote: "The Upanishads supply the basis of later Hindu philosophy; they alone of the Vedic corpus are widely known and quoted by most well-educated Hindus, and their central ideas have also become a part of the spiritual arsenal of rank-and-file Hindus."
11. Wendy Doniger (1990), Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism, 1st Edition, University of Chicago Press, ISBN 978-0-226-61847-0, pages 2–3; Quote: "The Upanishads supply the basis of later Hindu philosophy; they alone of the Vedic corpus are widely known and quoted by most well-educated Hindus, and their central ideas have also become a part of the spiritual arsenal of rank-and-file Hindus."
13. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1988), Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism, Manchester University Press, ISBN 0-7190-1867-6, pages 2–3; Quote: "The Upanishads supply the basis of later Hindu philosophy; they alone of the Vedic corpus are widely known and quoted by most well-educated Hindus, and their central ideas have also become a part of the spiritual arsenal of rank-and-file Hindus."
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 Sacred Texts of Hinduism; complete translation of the Rig-Veda, transcribed Sanskrit Rig-Veda, Max Mullers’ translation of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and other Hinduism texts. Hinduism. Vedas Upanishads Puranas Other Primary Texts Epics Mahabharata Ramayana Bhagavad Gita Vedanta Later texts Modern books. The Vedas. There are four Vedas, the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The Vedas are the primary texts of Hinduism. Hinduism is an ancient religion with diverse traditions such as Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism and others. Each tradition has a long list of Hindu texts Amrutanubhav. Aranyaka (आरयक) : Part of the Vedas, the third layer embedded inside them, treated as Śruti. Arthashastra:Book written by chanakya (vishnugupta)ancient Hindu economic book. Āryabhatīya. Arya-siddhanta. Atharva Veda: one of the four Vedas; the last one. Hindus, in general, have not been minded to seek out ‘definitive’ versions of post-Vedic sacred texts. In fact, the interpretation of sacred texts in Hinduism, whether these have been categorised as śruti or smṛti, has always been a matter for earnest discussion and debate for Hindu thinkers down the ages. What are the Purāṇas? We must also mention two other types of sacred text which act as radiating supports for multiple centres of the Hindu banyan: the

Further reading