



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](#), [Itihasa](#) 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 millennia 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

Part of a series on

Hindu scriptures and texts



Puranas

Brahma puranas
[Brahma](#) · [Brahmānda](#) · [Brahmavaivarta](#) · [Markandeya](#) · [Bhavishya](#)

Vaishnava puranas
[Vishnu](#) · [Bhagavata](#) · [Naradiya](#) · [Garuda](#) · [Padma](#) · [Vamana](#) · [Varaha Purana](#) · [Kurma](#) · [Matsya](#)

Shaiva puranas
[Shiva](#) · [Linga](#) · [Skanda](#) · [Vayu](#) · [Agni](#)

Itihasa
[Ramayana](#) · [Mahabharata](#)

Related Hindu texts

Sutras
[Kamasutra](#) · [Brahma Sutras](#) · [Samkhya Sutras](#) · [Mimamsa Sutras](#) · [Nyāya Sūtras](#) · [Vaiśeṣika Sūtra](#) · [Yoga Sutras](#) · [Pramana Sutras](#) · [Charaka Samhita](#) · [Sushruta Samhita](#) · [Panchatantra](#) · [Divya Prabandha](#) · [Tirumurai](#) · [Ramcharitmanas](#) · [Yoga Vasistha](#) · [Swara yoga](#) · [Shiva Samhita](#) · [Gheranda Samhita](#) · [Panchadasi](#) · [Vedantasara](#) · [Stotra](#)

Timeline
[Chronology of Hindu texts](#)

v · t · e

to later half of the 1st millennium BCE. The *Dharma-shastras* (law books), derivatives of the *Dharma-sūtras*. Other examples were *bhautikashastra* "physics", *rasayanashastra* "chemistry", *jīvashastra* "biology", *vastushastra* "architectural science", *shilpashastra* "science of sculpture", *arthashastra* "economics" and *nītiashastra* "political science".^[15] It also includes *Tantras* and *Agama* literature.^[16]

This genre of texts includes the *Sūtras* and *Shāstras* of the six schools of *Hindu philosophy*.^{[17][18]}

Puranas

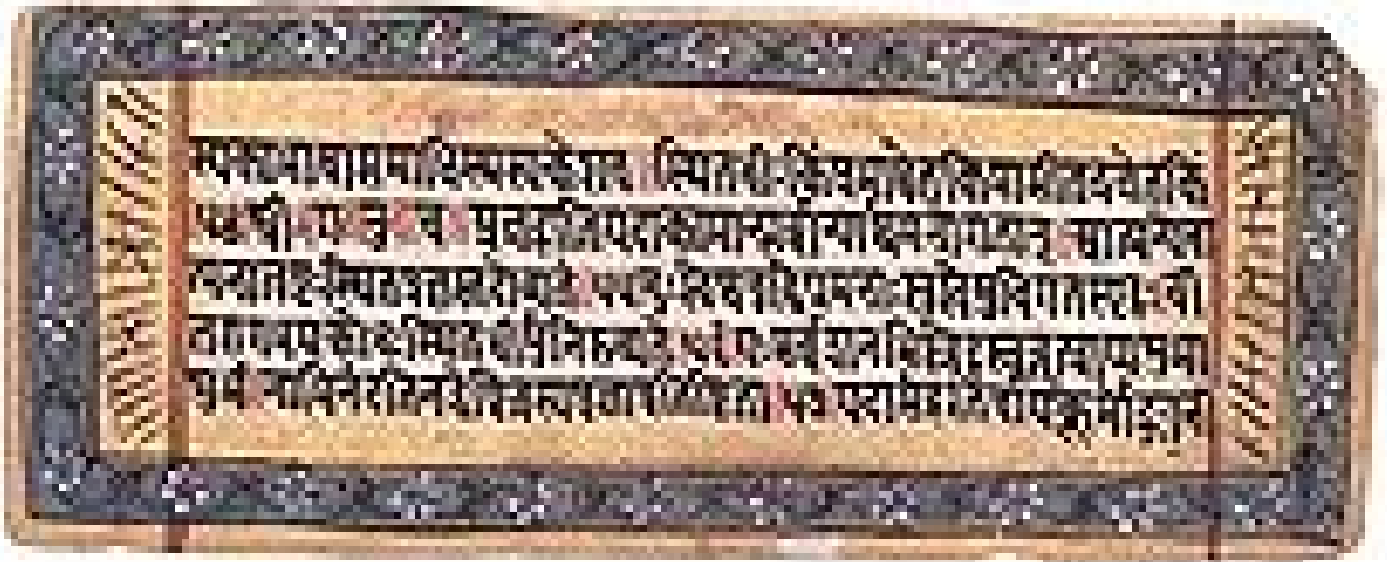
Main article: Puranas

The *Puranas* are a vast genre of Hindu texts that encyclopedically cover a wide range of topics, particularly legends and other traditional lore.^[19] Composed primarily in Sanskrit, but also in regional languages,^{[20][21]} several of these texts are named after major *Hindu* deities such as Lord *Vishnu*, Lord *Shiva* and Goddess *Devi*.^{[22][23]}

The Puranic literature is encyclopedic,^[24] 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.^{[19][21][22]} 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.^[20]

There are 18 *Maha Puranas* (Great Puranas) and 18 *Upa Puranas* (Minor Puranas),^[25] with over 400,000 verses.^[19] The *Puranas* do not enjoy the authority of a scripture in Hinduism,^[25] but are considered a *Smṛiti*.^[26] These Hindu texts have been influential in the *Hindu culture*, inspiring major national and regional annual festivals of Hinduism.^[27] The *Bhagavata Purana* has been among the most celebrated and popular text in the Puranic genre.^{[28][29]}





A 19th century manuscript of the Hindu text [Bhagavad Gita](#)

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 Prabhamdham) 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 Prabandha 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 Panchāpsaras](#), and by [Ravana](#)'s wives who excelling in *nrityageeta* or "singing and dancing" and *nrityavaditra* 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][32]} This performance arts related [Sutra](#) text is mentioned in other late Vedic texts, as are two scholars names Shilalin (*IAST*: Śīlālin) and Krishashva (Kṛśāśva), 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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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 (आरण्यक) : Part of the Vedas, the third layer embedded inside them, treated as śruti. Arthashastra:Book written by Chanakya (Vishnugupta)ancient Hindu economic book. Āryabhaṭṭīya. 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