

Competition Cosmos

List of Ancient Indian Scripts

1. Indus Script

It refers to the script used by the people belonging to the Indus valley civilisation. It has not been deciphered yet. Some people have argued that this script was the predecessor of the Brahmi script. This script is an example of **Boustrophedon style** as in one line it is written from left to right while in others it is written from right to left.

2. Brahmi Script

Brahmi is the originator of most of the present Indian scripts, including **Devanagari, Bengali, Tamil, and Malayalam** etc. It developed into two broad types in Northern and Southern India, in the Northern one being more angular and the Southern one being more circular. **It was deciphered in 1937 by James Princep.** Its best examples are found in the **rock-cut edicts of Asoka.**

3. Kharosthi Script

It is the sister script and contemporary of Brahmi. It was written from right to left. It was used in the Gandhara culture of North-Western India and is sometimes also called the Gandhari Script. Its inscriptions have been found in the form of Buddhist Texts from present day Afghanistan and Pakistan.

4. Gupta Script

It is also known as the Late Brahmi script. It was used for writing Sanskrit in the Gupta period. It gave rise to the **Nagari, Sarada and Siddham scripts** which in turn gave rise to the most important scripts of India such as Devanagari, Bengali etc.

5. Sarada Script

It was a Western variant of the Gupta script. It evolved into Kashmiri and Gurmukhi (now used for writing Punjabi) scripts. It was also used for writing Sanskrit. It is now rarely used.

6. Nagari Script

It was an Eastern variant of the Gupta script. It is an early form of the Devanagari script. It branched off into many other scripts such as Devanagari, Bengali, and Tibetan etc. It was used to write both Prakrit and Sanskrit.

7. Devanagari Script

It is the main script at present to write standard Hindi, Marathi and Nepali as well as Santhali, Konkani and many other Indian languages. It is also used presently to write Sanskrit and is one of the most used writing systems in the world. It is composed of Deva meaning, (God) and Nagari meaning, (city), which meant that it, was both religious and urbane or sophisticated.

8. Kalinga Script

Kalinga was the ancient name of Odisha and this script was used to write an ancient form of Oriya. It is visually close to the original Brahmi. Oriya language presently uses a different script, which has been derived from Bengali script.

9. Grantha Script

It is one of the earliest Southern scripts to originate from Brahmi. It branched off into Tamil and Malayalam scripts, which are still used to write those languages, It is also the predecessor of the Sinhala script used in Sri Lanka. A variant of Grantha called Pallava was taken by Indian merchants in Indonesia, where it led to the development of many South-East Asian scripts. It was used in Tamil Nadu to write the Sanskrit Granthas and hence, was named Grantha.

10. Vatteluttu Script

It was a script derived from the Brahmi and was used in the Southern part of India. **It was used to write Tamil and Malayalam.** It removed those signs from Brahmi, which were not needed for writing the Southern languages. Presently, both Tamil and Malayalam have moved on to their own Grantha derived scripts.

11. Kadamba Script

It is a descendant of Brahmi and marks the birth of the dedicated Kannada script. It led to the development of modern Kannada and Telugu scripts. It was used to write Sanskrit, Konkani, Kannada and Marathi.

12. Tamil Script

It is the script used to write the Tamil language in India and Sri Lanka. It evolved from Grantha, the Southern form of Brahmi. It is a syllabic language and not alphabetic. It is written from left to right.

According to the epigraphers- All Indian scripts are derived from Brahmi. There are three main families of scripts:

1. Devanagari, which is the basis of the languages of northern and western India: Hindi, Gujarati, Bengali, Marathi, Dogri, Panjabi, etc.
2. Dravidian which is the basis of Telugu, Kannada
3. Grantha is a subsection of the Dravidian languages such as Tamil and Malayalam, but is not as important as the other two.

