BHIE-144 TRADITIONS OF HISTORY WRITING IN INDIA
TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Course code: BHIE-144
Assignment Code: BHIE-144/ASST/TMA/2026-27
Marks: 100

Note: There are three Sections in the Assignment. You have to answer all questions in the Sections.

Assignment - I

Answer the following in about 500 words each.

1. Elaborate on the Buddhist constructions of the past with reference to the pali Chronicles from Shri Lanka. 20
2. How do 'Bakhars' help in understanding the past? Explain with examples. 20

Assignment - II

Answer the following questions in about 250 words each.

3. What is your understanding of Ashokan edicts? 10
4. Discuss the account of Vijaynagar city provided by Domingo paes. 10
5. Do you agree that on some very important matters Baruni has almost misled later historians? 10

Assignment - III

Answer the following questions in about 100 words each.

6. The role of genealogies in the making of a historical tradition 6
7. Firishta 6
8. Mangosteens' Indica 6
9. Understanding Nationalist writings 6
10. Environmental History. 6

1. Elaborate on the Buddhist constructions of the past with reference to the pali Chronicles from Shri Lanka. (20)

Answer

Buddhist traditions did not regard the past merely as a succession of rulers and battles. Remembering earlier events helped the community explain how the Buddha's teaching was preserved, how the monastic order developed, and why particular places and rulers acquired religious importance. The Pali chronicles of Sri Lanka are especially useful for understanding this way of constructing history. They place the island within a long story beginning with the Buddha and link the arrival of Buddhism to the political history of kingship. Their narratives combine historical memories, monastic records, legends, moral arguments and ideas about religious legitimacy.

The best-known chronicles are the Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa, followed by the Culavamsa, which continues the historical account into later periods. The Dipavamsa, generally placed around the fourth century CE, is the earlier Pali chronicle. The Mahavamsa was composed in the early sixth century and is traditionally associated with the monk Mahanama. These works emerged in the intellectual world of the Mahavihara monastery at Anuradhapura. Their chronology and emphases reflect the needs of this monastic institution, not the perspective of a modern state archive. Nevertheless, they preserve information that historians can compare with inscriptions, archaeology and other literary traditions.

Remembering the arrival and establishment of Buddhism

A major theme is the transmission of Buddhism from India to Sri Lanka. The chronicles describe the conversion of King Devanampiya Tissa through the mission of Mahinda, traditionally identified as a son of Emperor Ashoka. Sanghamitta's arrival with a branch of the sacred Bodhi tree similarly marks the establishment of the community of nuns and a continuing religious connection with Bodh Gaya. The stories are significant because they provide a narrative of origin: the island becomes a place especially entrusted with the protection of the Buddha's teaching. The planting of the Bodhi tree and the establishment of sacred relics make religious institutions visible in the landscape and give the community a shared memory.

The chronicles also connect kingship with the protection of the Sangha. An ideal king provides monasteries with land, buildings and resources, honours relics and maintains conditions in which monks can observe discipline. Religious patronage becomes a standard for judging political action. The