



YUVA EXPLORERS

ISSUE 1 | DECEMBER 2025



For many years, history about India was written through a western, colonised way of thinking, which shaped how events were explained and understood, and also affected how we think about our country today. This also meant many stories felt incomplete. Today, we celebrate the chance to share our history in our own words.

We are the Foundation for Indian Historical and Cultural Research (that's FIHCR for short) team. We help discover and appreciate our country's rich history, fascinating traditions and awesome legacy.

A newsletter is meant to share information and important stuff. Every two months, with this newsletter, we let you kids peek into what we have been doing. Are you aware of our YUVA program? If you're between 6 and 18 years old, YUVA is designed for you! Our goal is to promote history among kids. We'll explore exciting, hidden parts of India and learn about lesser-known brave heroes and leaders who helped build our nation.

Get ready to learn and enjoy yourself!

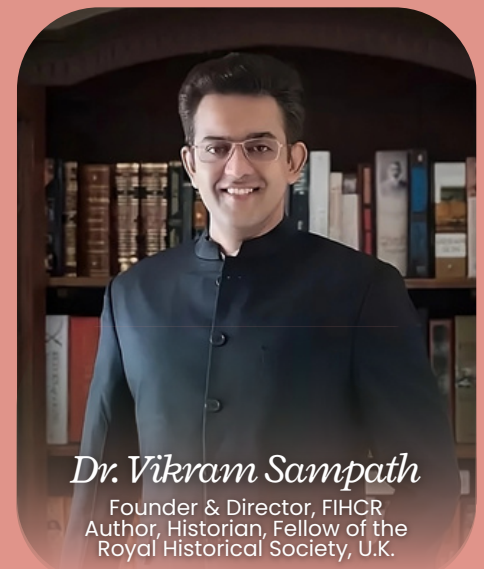


MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

FIHCR was created with a simple purpose: to encourage India to rediscover its own narrative with sincerity and rigour. Our children deserve stories that breathe with life, stories that speak of imagination, courage, scholarship, and heritage. When young minds engage with history through inquiry and wonder, they shape a future rooted in strength and clarity.

YUVA celebrates that spirit. It gives students the chance to explore unfamiliar paths, ask fearless questions, and discover their own relationship with the past. This work carries immense joy because history is never static. There is always something new to discover.

Thank you for being part of this journey of learning and rediscovery.



Dr. Vikram Sampath

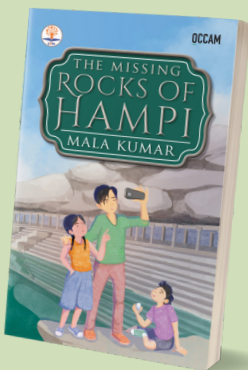
Founder & Director, FIHCR
Author, Historian, Fellow of the
Royal Historical Society, U.K.

YUVA BOOK REVIEW



The Missing Rocks of Hampi (BluOneInk, 2025) by Mala Kumar (Illustrated by Megha Vishwanath) ~ Reviewed by Shaan Kashyap (PhD candidate, Dept. of History, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack)

The charm of *The Missing Rocks of Hampi* lies not only in its storytelling but in how text and illustration work together to open a lightly sealed door into a living past. Mala Kumar sets the stage with a gentle rhythm—stalls, fabrics, the hum of trade—while Megha Vishwanath’s illustrations complete the invitation, turning description into presence, stillness into movement, and the bazaar into a world unfolding before the reader.



Although the book belongs to the YUVA imprint, it is not “merely for children.” It offers multiple levels of reading: for the young, a game of looking, wondering, and asking questions; for adults, a return to attentive seeing. The art of noticing what survives in memory and what slips past standard historical narratives. The illustrations do not accompany the text passively; they co-author the experience. A sweep of light across a temple courtyard, a child playing near stone ruins, a merchant in mid-sale—these details are quietly archival, carrying sensory memory where words pause.

What makes the book stand out is its refusal of both simplification and solemnity. Many children’s heritage books either flatten history into décor or weigh it down with textbook heaviness. This one strike balance: accessible but not thin, playful yet precise. It does not preach a lesson; it opens a landscape. The reader is not instructed so much as invited to wander, but to look closely, to ask why rocks go missing and what stories linger beneath the stones.

In doing so, the book revives a vital truth of historical storytelling: that wonder is a method of learning. It reminds us that history is not a distant chronicle but a textured scene—one we can still walk through with our eyes. The author extends the invitation; the illustrator hands us the key. The rest is discovery.

Are we still waiting for someone to unearth the story itself, the little adventures, the humour, the plot that threads through the stones? The story is waiting to be read, not merely referenced.



BOOK EXCERPT

“At dawn, Lachit struck. His soldiers, hidden in the narrow bends of the Brahmaputra, launched a surprise attack. Small Ahom boats cut off Mughal reinforcements before they could reach the main army. Unfamiliar with the treacherous currents of the river, the Mughals panicked.

As weeks passed, their supplies ran low and their soldiers grew tired and demoralized. Sensing the right moment, Lachit gathered his generals. “The time has come. We will strike with full force! The enemy’s defences are crumbling. Let us reclaim what is ours!”

– Excerpts from *Mega Cool Leaders: Five Rulers Who Rocked India*, YUVA Book



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

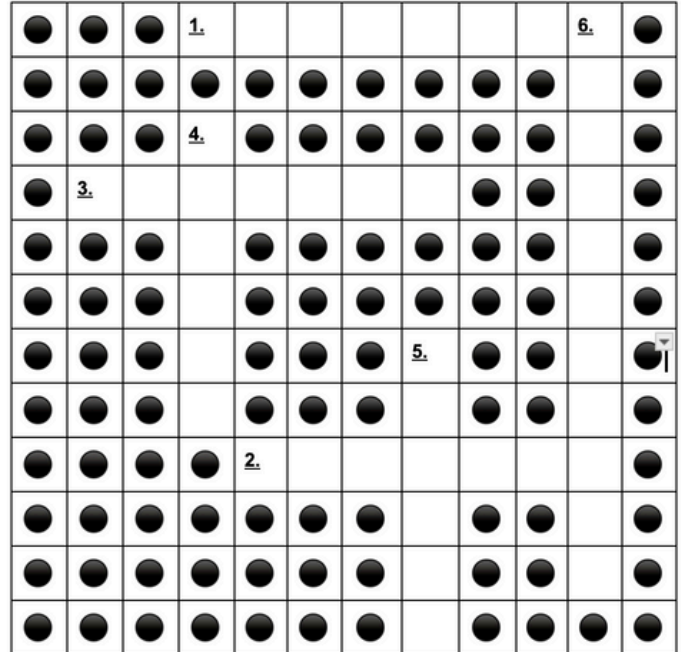


Across

1. Hiuen Tsang visited India to mainly study which religion?
2. Megasthenes presents a vivid description of which ancient Indian empire?
3. The famous 14th-century traveller Ibn Battuta belonged to which country?

Down

4. Al Biruni's Kitab-ul-Hind is written in which language?
5. Abdur Razzaq, the famous traveller who visited India during the Vijayanagara empire, was from which country was Abdur Razzaq, a traveller from?
6. Who authored the famous travelogue 'Indica'?



UNSCRAMBLE

a. ABBAHTNAT

Clue: I was the famous court poet under King Harsha, who is also the author of Harshacharitam.

b. LSIUDATS

Clue: I was a bhakti-poet saint who composed the Ramcharitmanas, and was a contemporary of Akbar.

c. THVUAABIHB

Clue: I was the Sanskrit dramatist who wrote plays like Malatimadhavam and Uttararamacharitam.

d. KATOHORTTAAO

Clue: I was the famous Tamil poet who served three Chola kings including Vikrama Chola, Kulothunga II and Rajaraja Chola II.

e. KASADLAI

Clue: I was one of the "nine gems" in the court of Vikramaditya, and known for my composition Abhijnanashakuntalam.

f. DOMSAEVA

Clue: I served at the court of King Anantadeva of Kashmir, and wrote the famous Kathasaritsagara.



QUIZ



1. Marco Polo was a merchant and adventurer from Venice, Italy. During the reign of which female ruler in Southern India did he visit India?
2. Rajgir in Nalanda, Bihar, houses a monastery associated with which foreign traveller?
3. Ibn Battuta's composition 'The Rihla' mentions which two Indian cities which begin with the letter D?
4. Francois Bernier, the French traveller, is famously known for his observations of which country?
5. What is the title of Marco Polo's travelogue?
6. Fa Hien visited India during the reign of which ruler?



DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW that dinosaur bones have been found right here in India?

Think of this. Fossils of at least five dinosaurs that once roamed our country have been discovered!

Three of them were four-legged plant-eaters, named Barapasaurus, Isisaurus, and Kotasaurus. They had tiny heads, very long necks, and really long tails. Rajasaurus and Indosuchus, the meat-eaters, walked on two legs, just like the mighty T. Rex you might know from movies!

Some of these amazing creatures lived 180 million years ago! Others lived 70 million years ago. That's a long time ago, even before your great-grandparents' great-grandparents were born!



KEMPE GOWDA AND THE MAKING OF BANGALORE



Do you know who built the town of Bangalore? *Kempe Gowda.*

Before Bangalore became a town, it first existed as a village and afterwards as a group of villages. Kempe Gowda's ancestors were known as nada gowdas - chieftains of groups of villages. They were called the Yelahanka nada prabhus - lords of the Yelahanka group of villages, which later became part of Bangalore.

Back then, one needed the permission of the emperor to build a fort. So, Kempe Gowda got the permission of Emperor Achuta Raya of Vijayanagar and built the fort of Bangalore in 1537.

Do you know what Kempe Gowda's son was called? Kempe Gowda!

And his son? Kempe Gowda, again!

Yes, that's right. The father, son and grandson were all called Kempe Gowda - Kempe Gowda I, Kempe Gowda II and Kempe Gowda III. So, there were at least three Kempe Gowdas.

While the first Kempe Gowda built the fort of Bangalore, scholars still debate whether it was the first Kempe Gowda or his son the second Kempe Gowda, who built three early tanks (Dharmambudhi, Kempambudhi, and Sampangi) of the town.

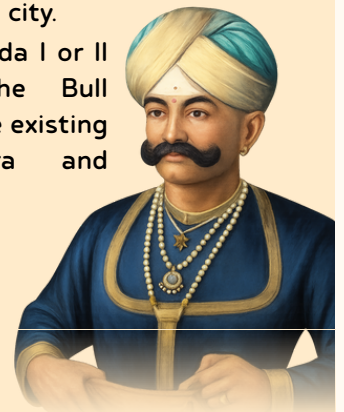
Kempe Gowda I (or his son) built four watchtowers in the cardinal directions; these also served as the boundary posts of the old city.

Again, either Kempe Gowda I or II built Basavanagudi (the Bull Temple) and expanded the existing Gavi Gangadhareshwara and Someshwara temples.

Tanks, or as they were called keres in Kannada, were dug up and used to irrigate fields and as sources of drinking water.

But Kempe Gowda I (or II) didn't build the first tanks in Bangalore. He was following a centuries-old tradition of building tanks, like the Cholas and the Vijayanagar Emperors.

Even before them, the Ganga Rajas of South Karnataka, who ruled from 350 AD to 999 AD, built at least two tanks in Bangalore. After 1004 AD, Bangalore came under Raja Raja I, the Chola emperor. The Cholas also built at least two tanks (Bellandur kere and Pattandur kere) and four temples (Chokkanatha, Aigandapura, Choleshwara and Someshwara) in Bangalore.



SRI AUROBINDO NATIONAL HISTORY ESSAY COMPETITION

SUPPORTED BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

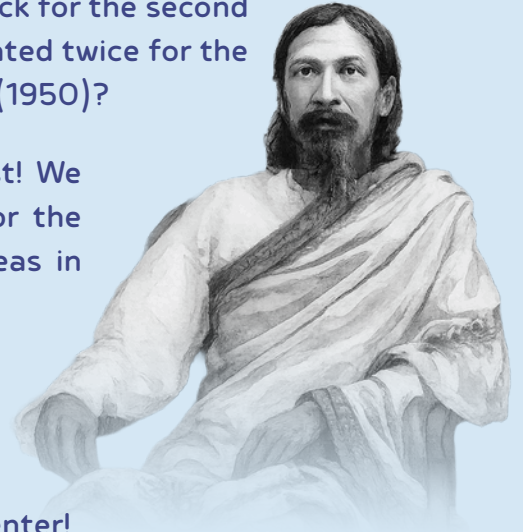
The Sri Aurobindo National History Essay Competition is back for the second time! Were you aware that Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was nominated twice for the Nobel Prize – once for literature (1943) and once for peace (1950)?

Last year, we had our first competition, and it was a blast! We gave out first prizes, second prizes, and special prizes for the best research, most creative stories, and most unique ideas in each grade.

This year, here are some important things to remember:

Who Can Join?

If you are in Grades 7, 8, or 9 at any school in India, you can enter!



GRADE **7**

A lesser-known freedom fighter from your state. How do you think they should be celebrated today?

A day in the life of a Foreign Traveller coming to Ancient India.

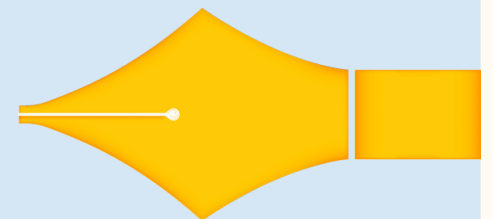
GRADE **8**

GRADE **9**

Why is it important to preserve old monuments? What can we learn from them?



Submissions open
15 December, 2025



Want to know more?

Head over to our website:

<https://fihcr.com/sri-aurobindo-national-history-essay-competition-25-26/>

YUVA EVENTS

SRI AUROBINDO ANNUAL HISTORY ESSAY COMPETITION PRIZE DISTRIBUTION CEREMONY



The Sri Aurobindo Annual History Essay Competition Prize Distribution Ceremony took place on 24th April 2025 at Hotel Greenpark, Bengaluru, with Shri Tejasvi Surya, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, as the Chief Guest. The event welcomed over 180 attendees, including students, parents, and educators. Smt. Rajalakshmi Aggarwal and Shri Devesh Varma from the OLA Foundation were among the distinguished guests.



The conference was brought to a close with a Virtual Reality showcase by Who VR, giving visitors an immersive experience of India's journey through history.



YUVA BOOKS SERIES LAUNCH



FIHCR, in collaboration with the OLA Foundation, NAAV AI, and BluOne Ink, successfully launched the YUVA Books Series on 12th July 2025 at Hotel Courtyard by Marriott, Bengaluru Hebbal. The event brought together educators, students, cultural enthusiasts, and dignitaries to celebrate a new wave of storytelling that makes Indian history engaging and accessible for young minds.

The event marked a landmark moment in children's publishing in India, where a set of history-themed children's books was launched in seven languages (Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, and Hindi) simultaneously. Authored by Smt. Mala Kumar, Dr. Pradeep Chakravarthy, Shri Vijender Sharma, and Smt. Harini Srinivasan, the books explore ancient civilisations, legendary rulers, and cultural milestones through vibrant illustrations and compelling narratives.

YUVA UPDATES

SURVEY

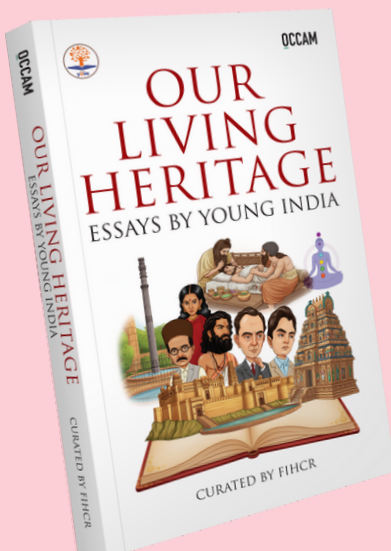
FIHCR is conducting a comprehensive survey across schools in Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai to assess the current state of history education for students in Grades 6 to 9.

The study examines gaps in pedagogy and alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 by analysing the balance of regional, Indian, and world history in textbooks, and by gathering teachers' and students' perspectives on what engages them and where challenges persist.

This detailed review of classroom practices, content representation, and learner interests will generate valuable insights to guide FIHCR's future initiatives. The survey is currently underway, and a full report will be published soon.



ANTHOLOGY



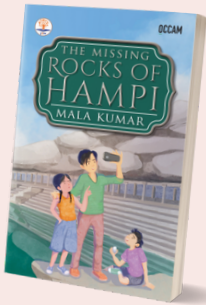
FIHCR is proud to present the 'Our Living Heritage, Essays by Young India', an anthology of selected essays from the Sri Aurobindo Annual History Essay Competition 2024-25. Chosen from over 1500 entries representing 320+ cities, it features exceptional work from school students across India. These essays showcase original research, fresh perspectives, and a deep engagement with India's historical and cultural legacy.

This collection reflects Sri Aurobindo's vision of nurturing inquiry, critical thinking, and a meaningful understanding of our civilisational journey, offering readers insightful and inspiring voices from the next generation.

To purchase the anthology, [click here](#).



YUVA BOOKSHELF



The Missing Rocks of Hampi BY MALA KUMAR

In this gripping tale, Devyani and her friends uncover secrets in Hampi, India, while a young girl from 14th-century Vijayanagara fights to save an important dam. Mala Kumar is a children's book author who blends history, culture, and environmental awareness for young readers. To purchase the book, head to [this link](#).

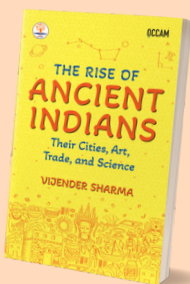
Mega-Cool Leaders: Five Rulers who Rocked India BY DR. PRADEEP CHAKRAVARTHY

This book, written by historian and storyteller Dr. Pradeep Chakravarthy, tells the inspirational stories of five Indian rulers: Ahilyabai Holkar, Krishnadevaraya, Lachit Borphukan, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and Lalitaditya Muktapida. It provides young readers with both inspiration and education. To purchase the book, head to [this link](#).



The Rise of Ancient Indians: Their Cities, Art, Trade, and Science BY VIJENDER SHARMA

In this gripping tale, Devyani and her friends uncover secrets in Hampi, India, while a young girl from 14th-century Vijayanagara fights to save an important dam. Mala Kumar is a children's book author who blends history, culture, and environmental awareness for young readers. To purchase the book, head to [this link](#).



The Merchant of Nagapattinam BY HARINI SRINIVASAN

Author and editor Harini Srinivasan blends adventure, ambition, and political twists in her historical fiction work. Her book is about the son of a temple manager in Thanjavur in the eleventh century, Uttaman, who gains access to trade guilds and learns secrets. The novel combines history, intrigue, and adventure to vividly depict the Chola period. To purchase the book, head to [this link](#).



ANSWERS

CROSSWORD PUZZLE (Page 4)

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●	●	●	I	●	●	●	5.P	●	●	H	●
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UNSCRAMBLE (PAGE 4)

- a. Banabhatta, b. Tulsidas, c. Bhavabhuti, d. Ottakoothar, e. Kalidasa, f. Somadeva

QUIZ (Page 5)

- a. Rani Rudramadevi
 b. Hiuen Tsang
 c. Daulatabad and Delhi
 d. India
 e. The Travels of Marco Polo
 f. Chandragupta II (Vikramaditya)

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