

Revision Notes
Chapter – 5
What Books and Burials tell us

- The oldest book known all over the world is supposed to be that of the Vedas.
- They were written about 3,000 years back and are the earliest literary source available.

The Vedas:

- (i) The word, Veda means Knowledge. There are four Vedas: Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda.
- (ii) The Rigveda is the oldest Veda. It was composed about 3,500 years ago.
- (iii) The hymns have been composed by sages. These hymns were recited and passed from one generation to another until they were written down.
- (iv) These hymns are in praise of different gods such as Indra (the god of warrior), Agni (the god of fire), Soma, a plant from which the special drink somarasa was made.
- (v) Rigveda was printed less than 200 hundred years ago.

How do Historians study the Rigveda:

- (i) While studying about the past, historians examined written sources.
- (ii) They studied the Rigveda. Most of the hymns in Rigveda were in the form of dialogues.
- (iii) Historians studied these dialogues to arrive at conclusions.

Rigveda: What does it tell us about Prayers and Battles:

- (i) Most prayers in the Rigveda are for cattle, children and horses.
- (ii) Horses were yoked to chariots and used in battles.
- (iii) Battles aimed to capture cattle, land, pasture, water and people.

(iv) The wealth captured in the battles was distributed among the priests and people.

(iv) A portion of the wealth was used for performing Yajnas or sacrifices in which offerings were put into fire, for gods including ghee, grains and in some cases animals too. But the major part remained with the leaders.

Political Life:

(i) The Vedas even tell us about political life of this age.

(ii) There were two groups who were described in terms of their work-the priests, sometimes called brahmins, who performed various rituals, and the rajas.

(iii) The Raja had no capital, palaces or armies. Taxes were not collected and there was no hereditary monarchy.

Occupations:

Agriculture, cattle-rearing, chariot-making, pottery, jewellery-making tanning and metal-work were the main occupations.

Jana and Vish

(i) To describe the people or the community as a whole, two words were used viz *jana* and *vish*.

(ii) Several vish or jana are mentioned by name.

(iii) So, we find Puru jana or vish, the Bharata jana or vish, the Yadu jana etc.

Dasas/Dasyus

(i) The people who composed hymns described themselves as Aryas and the group of people who opposed them were called Dasyus. Dasyus were the people who did not perform sacrifices and probably spoke different languages.

(ii) They were later called Dasas or Dasyus or slaves.

Silent Sentinels:

(i) The big stones or the stone boulders are known as megaliths, which were carefully arranged by people and were used to mark burial sites.

(ii) Archaeologists often find a circle of stone boulders or a single large stone standing on the ground, which are the indications that there are burials beneath.

Social Differences: Burials

(i) Archaeologists assume that objects discovered with a skeleton, probably belonged to the dead person.

(ii) In Brahmagiri, a skeleton was buried with 33 gold beads, 2 stone beads, and one conch shell whereas other skeleton only had a pot.

(iii) This shows the difference in status, amongst the people who were buried. Some were rich while other were poor.

(iv) Sometimes, megaliths have more than one skeleton. It indicates that people belonging to the same family were buried at same place though at different times.

(v) Special burials took place at Inamgaon. The site of Inamgaon is located on the bank of river Ghod, a tributary of the Bhima which was occupied between 3600 and 2700 years ago.

(v) Bones of a number of animals, many bearing cut marks that show they may have been used as food, have also been found.

(vii) Skeletal studies tell us about better way of identifying dead bodies.