

3. VEDIC AGE

- The Vedic texts may be divided into two broad chronological strata - The early Vedic (1500-1000 BC) when most of the hymns of the Rig-Veda were composed, and the Later Vedic (1000-600 BC) when the remaining these Vedas and their branches were composed.

THE ARYANS

- The word “Aryan” literally means of “high birth”, but generally refers to language, though some use it as race.
- Many historians have given various theories regarding the original place of the Aryans. However, the Central Asian theory given by Max Muller is most accepted one. It states that the Aryans were semi-nomadic pastoral group around the Caspian Sea in central Asia.
- Entered India probably through the Khyber Pass (in Hindukush Mountain) around 1500 BC.
- The holy book of Iran “Zend Avesta” indicates entry of Aryans to India via Iran.

EARLY VEDIC AGE (1500-1000)

- The early Aryans settled in the Eastern Afghanistan modern Pakistan, Punjab and parts of western UP. The whole region in which the Aryans first settled in India is called the “land of seven Rivers or Sapta Sindhu” (The Indus and its five tributaries and the Saraswati).

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

- The Aryans came in conflict with Dasas and Dasyus.
- The Rig-Veda mentions the defeat of sambara (dasyus) by a chief called Divodasa of Bharata clan (Dasas).
- The tribal chief called Rajan was the center of administrative machinery. The king position was hereditary.
- Rajan was protection of tribe and cattle and not the ruler of any specific territory.
- Several tribal assemblies called Vidhata, Sabha, Samiti and Gana are mentioned in Rig-Veda. Women attended Vidhata and Sabha.
- Important officers: Purohita, sevnai, Kulpati (head of family), Vishpati, Brajpati, Grahini, Sparsa (Spy), Duffac (Messenger).

- There was no regular revenue system and the kingdom was maintained by the voluntary tribute (Bali) of his subjects and the booty won in battle.
- The term varua was used for color, the Aryans being fair, the dasas dark.

ECONOMY

- Aryans followed a mixed economy – pastoral and agricultural – in which cattle played a predominant part.
- Most of their wars were fought for cow (most important form of wealth). Cattle were in fact a sort of currency, and values were reckoned in heads of cattle (man’s life was equivalent to that of 100 cows), but they were not held sacred at this time. The horse was almost as important as the cow.
- Standard unit of exchange was cow. At the same time coins were also their (gold coins like Nishka, Krishal and Satwana). Gavyuti was used as a measure of distance and Goghuli as a measure of time.
- Lived in fortified settlements.
- Physicians were there called ‘Bhishakas’.
- The staple crop was ‘yava’, which meant barley.

RELIGION

- The Aryans personified the natural forces and looked upon them as living beings.
- The most important divinity was Indra who played the role of warlord (breaker of forts Purandar, also associated wife, storms and thunder.)
- The second position was held by Agni (fire-god). He considered as an intermediary between gods and men.
- Varuna occupied the third position he personified water and was supposed to uphold the natural the natural order (Rita). He was ethically the highest of all Rig-Vedic gods.
- Soma was considered to be the God of plants. Maruti personified the storms. Some female deities are also mentioned, like Aditi and Usha, who represented the appearance of dawn.
- Didn’t believe in erecting temples or idol worship. Worshipped in open air through yajnas.

Other Vedic Gods

Diti	Mother of Daityas, who were native tribes opposed to Vedic religion.
Aranyani	Goddess of forests and wild creature.
Lia	Mother of the cattle herds.
Asuniti	Personification of the world of spirits.
Pushan	Protector of cattle, also the god of marriages.
Aditi	Goddess of eternity.
Savitri	Stimulator or god of liguf.
Yama	God of death.
Dyans	Gods of weaver and father of surya
Tyastri	Vedic Vulcan
Dishana	Goddess of vegetables
Ashvins	Healer of diseases and exports in surgical arts.

Types of Marriage

Brahma	Marriage of a duly dowried girl to a man of the same class.
Daiva	Marriage in which a father gave his daughter to a sacrificial priests as part of his fees.
Arsa	Marriage in which a bride-price of a cow is taken and a bull was paid to the daughter's father.
Prajapatya	Marriage in which the father gave the girl without dowry and without demanding bride price.
Gandharva	Marriage, often clandestine by the consent of the two parties.
Asura	Marriage by purchase.
Rakshasa	Marriage by capture.
Paishacha	When a maiden is seduced into marriage.
Anuloma	Was the marriage of higher caste man with a lower caste woman.
Marriage Pratiloma Marriage	Was the marriage of lower caste man with a higher caste woman.

Rivers in Rig Veda

Indus – Sindhu
Jhelum – Vitasa
Chenab – Askini
Ravi – Purushni
Beas – Vipasa
Satluj – Satudari
Gomati – Gomul
Kurram – Krumu
Ghaggar - Drishshadvati

LATER VEDIC PERIOD REGION

- Aryans expanded from Punjab over the whole of western UP covered by the Ganga-Yamuna doab.
- In the beginning, they cleared the land by burning later with the use of iron tools which became common by 1000-800 BC.

Important Terms associated with the Vedic Age

Aghanya	Not to be killed, referring to cow.
Akahavapa	Accountant
Charmana	Blacksmith
Datra	Sickle
Duhitri	Daughter
Gavisti	Fight/search for cows
Goghana	Guest
Hiranyakara	Goldsmith
Karmara	Blacksmith
Mahishi	Chief Queen
Narishta	Sabha
Rathakara	Chariot-maker
Sira	Plough
Sita	Furrows
Suta	Court minstrel
Ustra	Camel
Vapta	Carpenter/Barber
Vrihi	Rice

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Powers of the king, who was called Samrat increased. Importance of assemblies declined. Women were no longer permitted to attend assemblies. The term 'rashtra' indicating territory first appeared in this period.

- References of Priest (Purohita), Commander in chief (Senapati), Charioteer (Suta), treasurer (Sangrhit), game companion (Aksavaba).

SOCIAL LIFE

- The four fold division of society became clear-initially based on occupation, which later becomes hereditary. Brahmins (Priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (agriculturists, cattle-rearers, traders and Shudras servers of the upper three).

POTTERY

- The later Vedic people used four types of pottery black and red ware, black-slipped ware, painted grey ware and red ware.
- Red ware was most popular with them, and has been found almost all over western UP. However, the most distinctive pottery of the period is known as painted Grey ware, which comprised bowls and dishes, used either for rituals or for eating by the upper classes.

Religion

- Indra and Agni lost their importance. Prajapati (the creator) became supreme. Vishnu came to be conceived as the preserver and protector of the people.

THE VEDIC LITERATURE

The Veda

- The word 'Veda' comes from the root 'Vidi', signifying knowledge.
- Vedas are also known as 'Shruti' (to hear) as they were passed from generation to generation through verbal transmission.
- They are four in all Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda.
- The first three vedas are collectively known as 'Tyari' of 'Trio'. Each Veda is further divided into Samhitas.

Rig Veda

- Oldest religious text in the world.
- Must have been composed around 1500 BC.

Sama Veda

- Derived from the root 'Saman', i.e., 'melody'. It is a collection of melodies.
- It has 1603 verses but except 99 all the rest have been borrowed from Rig Veda.
- Contains 'Dhrupada Raga'.

Yajur Veda

- Deals with the procedure for the performance of sacrifices.
- There are two main texts of Yajur Veda. White Yajur veda (or Shukla Yajur Veda) and Black Yajur Veda (or Krishna Yajur Veda). The former contains mantras and the latter has commentary in prose.

Atharva Veda

- Entirely different from other 3 vedas.
- Divided into 20 Kandas (books) and has 711 hymns – mostly dealing with magic (along with personal problems of people).

The Brahmins

- They explain the hymns of the Vedas in an orthodox manner.
- Each Veda has several Brahmins attached to it
 1. **Rig Veda** : Kaushetaki and Aitreyas
 2. **Yajur Veda** : Taittiriya and Shatapatha
 3. **Sam Veda** : Panchvish and Jaiminiya
 4. **Atharva Veda** : Gopatha
- The most important is 'Shatapatha Brahmana' attached to Yajur Veda, which is most exhaustive and important of all. It recommends one hundred sacred paths'.

The Aranyakas

- Called 'forest books', written mainly by the hermits living in the jungles for their pupils.
- These are the concluding portions of the Brahmanas.
- Deals with mysticism and philosophy opposed to sacrifice and emphasize 'meditation'.
- Form a bridge between 'way of work' (Karma Marg) which was the sole concern of the Upanishads and the way of knowledge' (Gyan Marg) which the Brahmanas advocated.

The Upanishads

- The word means 'to sit down near someone' and denotes a student sitting near his guru to learn.
- Called Vedanta (the end of the Vedas) firstly because they denote the last phase of the Vedic period and secondly, because they reveal the final aim of the Vedas.
- They are the main source of Indian Philosophy.
- There are 108 Upanishads.

- They also condemn the ceremonies and the sacrifices.
- They discuss the various theories of creation of the universe and define the doctrine of action (Karma).

Smritis

- Explains rules and regulations in the Vedic life.
- Main are Manusmriti, Naradsmriti, Yagyavalkyasmriti and Parasharsmriti.

Vedangas (Six Vedangas)

Shiksha deals with Pronunciation

Kalpa – Rituals

Vyakarana – Grammar

Nirukta – Etymology

Chhanda – Meter

Jyotisha – Astronomy

Darshan

There are 6 schools of Indian Philosophy known as Shad-Darshana.

Given by 6 philosophers of Ancient India.

Nyaya Darshan – Gautama

Vaishesika Darshana – Kanada Rishi

Sankhyaya Darshana – kapila

Yoga Darshan – Patanjali

Purva Mimansa – Jaimini

Uttara Mimansa – Badaryana or Vyasa

Upavedas

There are four Upvedas

Reg veda – Ayurveda (Medicine)

Sam veda – Gandhrav (Dancing)

Yajur Veda – Dhanurveda (Dhanus Art)

Athrav veda – Shilap-veda (Architecture)

EPICS

- Though the two epics – The Mahabharata and Ramayana were compiled later, they reflect the state of affairs of the later Vedic period.

- The Mahabharata attribute to Vyasa, is considered older than the Ramayana and describes the period from the tenth century BC to 4th century AD. It is also called Jaisamhita and Satasahasri Samhita and has 1, 00,000 verses.

- The Ramayana attributed to Valmiki has 24,000 verses. Its composition started in the fifth century BC and passes through 5 stages.

Other Facts

- Reg-veda divided into 10 mandals. First of all 2 to 7 Mandal was written after that only 8th and then 1, 9 & 10 were written.
- “Om” was used in Reg-veda 108 times and “Jan” was used 275 times.
- Gaytri Mantra in 3rd mandal which is addressed to sun.
- Saraswati River was the deity river in Reg-veda and most mentioned river in Reg-veda and most mentioned river was Indus.
- There are 4 Vedas, 18 Puran, 108 Upnishad (Mundukya was important because here we got “Satyamev Jayte”).
- Upnishad are main source of Indian Philosophy.
- Kulapa – Basic social unit.
- Kula – Head of family.
- Gavyuti was used as a measure of distance.
- Godhuli as a measure of time.
- Physician were there called Bhishakas.
- The staple crop was “Yava” which meant barley.
- In Early Vedic Age Tax was known as Bali. Bali was voluntary taxation.
- Tax was known as Bhag in later Vedic period.
- Oldest Grammar is Panini’s Asth Adhyay and 2nd oldest is Patyanjali’s Mahabhashya.
- Mahabharat attributed to Vyas, is considered older than Ramayana.