

The Vedic Age

F. Long-answer questions:

1. Discuss the political organization during the Early Vedic Age.
2. Compare the status of women in the Early and Later Vedic Age.
3. How did the caste system develop? Explain in detail.
4. Write a short note on burials in mungaon.
5. Discuss Megalithic burials in detail.
6. Compare religion in the Early and the Later Vedic Age.

Solutions

F. Long-answer questions:

1. The kingdom was tribal in character. The tribal chief was called rajan. He ruled over the people (jana) and-not over any specific area of land. His position was not hereditary. He did not live in any palace and did not collect regular taxes. His main function was to protect the people and lead the army to victory in battle. Battles were fought for land which was essential for agriculture and for pastures for the cattle. He received a large part of the booty collected in battle. He was also called gopati (Lord of Cattle) indicating that protecting and increasing the cattle was his other major role. He received from the people a voluntary offering called ball. The king did not maintain a standing army. The king's power was kept in check by assemblies such as sabha and samiti. The king dispensed his duties with the help of the purohita (religious advisor) and senani (army chief).
2. In the Early Vedic Age, women were treated equally and were allowed some choice in the selection of their husbands. They received education also. Child marriage and sati did not exist and widows were not treated badly. Women participated in the sabha, rituals and even chariot races. In the Later Vedic age, they were not educated or allowed to read the Vedas. They no longer participated in the sabha. Child marriage and sati came into existence and widow remarriage was strongly opposed. The women were supposed to be under the control of her father and later her husband.
3. The caste system developed gradually in the Later Vedic age. The Aryans made the defeated dasas do unpleasant work. Division was created between the dasas and the fair-skinned Aryans. The dasas were given the name shudras and were not allowed to take part in any Aryan ceremony. Hence the caste system consisting of the four castes came into being- the Brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and the shudras.
4. The adult dead bodies were mostly buried away from the habitation site. Sometimes the burials were in the houses. The dead body was laid out straight, head towards the north. A number of burial goods including pots, ornaments and tools were also buried with the dead person. Multiple burials have also been found. In some graves, more than one skeleton and the absence of burial goods indicate that there was probably a large scale killing because of which burial goods were

not enough for all the graves. In one large house which had a granary, one man was found buried in a cross legged position in a clay jar.

- 5.** In a megalithic burial, the bones of a dead person were placed in an urn. This urn was buried and surrounded by a circle of large vertical stones. A large horizontal stone formed the capstone. Megalithic burials were away from the occupation area. Grave goods like pottery, ornaments and weapons were also found. Pottery was of black and red variety. Weapons consisted of iron axes, spades and daggers. Ornaments were made of carnelian and gold. Some copper objects were also put in the grave. Sometimes horse skeletons and equipment were also found. The number of grave goods probably depended on the status of the person. The presence of these goods is indicative of their belief in afterlife. Some graves have skeletons of more than one person. This is suggestive that probably people from the same family were buried in the same place. The people who died later were got in through portholes.
- 6.** In the Early Vedic age, the people worshipped the forces of nature. Much of the Rig veda is full of prayers for these deities. The important gods were Indra , Varun, Surya, Vishnu, Vayu and Yama. Some goddesses were Usha, Savitri and Prithvi. Their favour could be won by sacrifices. They did not make temples or idols. They worshipped through prayers and chanting Vedic mantras. In the Later Vedic age, new gods were worshipped. Prajapati, the creator, was most important. He was later called Brahma. Shiva and Vishnu were also worshipped. Idol worship also began. Sacrifices were performed to please the gods who then blessed the people.