

New Terms

- ❑ **Jana** : Castes of Rig Vedic Aryans
- ❑ **Bali** : Voluntary gift to the king
- ❑ **Yagna** : A religious ritual
- ❑ **Rashtra** : Empire of the kings

Before the discovery of the Indus Valley civilization in 1921-22 AD, Vedic Age was considered to be the beginning of Indian history and civilization. Our past was inaugurated by European scholars such as William Jones and Max Mueller who were very impressed with the richness of Sanskrit and its literature. Observing the similarity between many words of Sanskrit and European languages, these scholars concluded that the ancestors of Indians and Europeans had the same birthplace, most probably, central Asia. These were called Aryans.

According to some historians, one branch of Aryans migrated to Europe while the other branch, the Indo-Aryans, moved towards India and Iran in the second or the third millennium BC. Indo-Aryans were cattle-herders. Militarily, they were better than the original inhabitants of India. They entered India through the mountain passes in the north-west and continued it for a long time. They interacted culturally with the local population and settled down here only. These interactions gave rise to a new, mixed and homogenous culture, which is mentioned in the Rigveda as Aryan.

Vedic Age

Vedic Age is very important in Indian history as in this age, great changes took place in the life of nomadic cattle-herders, who eventually became pastoralists. Development also took place in society, religion and political system. This age began around 2,000 BC. It is called Vedic Age because our complete information about this age is based on the Vedas

which were written in this age.

Aryans did not conquer the whole of north India completely but this process continued for many centuries. First of all, they settled in Sapta Sindhu region which was the region of seven rivers—Indus, Ravi, Beas, Chenab, Jhelum, Sutlej and Saraswati (extinct now). Aryans named it as Brahmavart. This period is called Early Vedic Age or Rig Vedic Age. The first Veda, i.e. Rig Veda, was compiled in this region only.

Vedic Literature

Our knowledge about early Aryans is based on religious literature called Vedic literature. Vedas are the main books of the Aryans. The word 'Veda' is derived from 'Vid' which means 'To know.' Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads comprise of the early Vedic literature.

Vedas are considered as the oldest literature of the world, and are four in number : Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. Vedas were created orally and they were transferred from generation to generation by way of mouth only. These are also

Know This

- Rigveda contains 1028 shlokas in praise of nature. Here, we get a glimpse of Aryan life.
- Samaveda is considered the Book of Music. It tells of the way to sing shlokas.
- Yajurveda is the Book of Bali in which are described how to sing bhajans and how to perform rituals.
- Atharvaveda is the Book of Magic in which are bhajans to ward off illnesses and evil spells.

known as Shrutis. It is believed that these shrutis were revealed to the ancient sages by God himself. Brahmanas are explanatory notes of the sacred Verses of the Vedas. These are written in simple prose form, which can be easily understood by a layman. Aranyakas were created in the forests and these explain the philosophy of life and nature. Upanishads are the last section of the Brahmanas and are the source of Indian philosophy. This way, the Vedic literature is a great source of knowledge about Vedic Age and faith, life, beliefs and traditions of the Aryans.

Early Vedic Age

Domicile of Aryans : The original domicile of the Indian Aryans were the Indus and its tributaries, Saraswati and Drishdruti, which were mainly confined to Punjab. Some Aryan tribes still lived to the west of Indus on the banks of Kabul, Swat, Kurram and Gomal rivers.

Later, the Aryans gave up their nomadic lifestyle and started living in permanent houses, made up of wood and bamboo.

Political Situation : It is believed that in the beginning, there were many small kingdoms and the names of these kingdoms, kings and people are mentioned in the Rigveda. Some of these kingdoms were Yadu, Bharata, Puru, etc. which are mentioned in other books also. It is believed that our country is named 'Bharat' after king Bharata, mentioned in Rigveda.

In the beginning, the Aryans lived in groups of small tribes, which were known as **Janas**. In the period of Rigveda, they were divided into five tribes which were called **Panch Jana**. Many families used to make a clan called '**Vish**' and many '**Vish**' together made a '**Jana**'. The smallest unit of the Jana was '**Gram**', which was headed by a **Gramani**.

The head of the tribe was called '**Rajan**'. He was responsible for establishing power and law and to ensure the victory of his tribe in case of war. In exchange for his service, he got '**Bali**' from the people. Though the post of the king was hereditary but his powers were not unlimited.

Social Life : The basic unit of society was the family. The eldest male member of the family or the '**Kula**' was its head and was called '**Kulapa**'. Women had a respectable status and position in the society and child-marriage was not practiced. Young men and women could marry as per their choice. The wife used

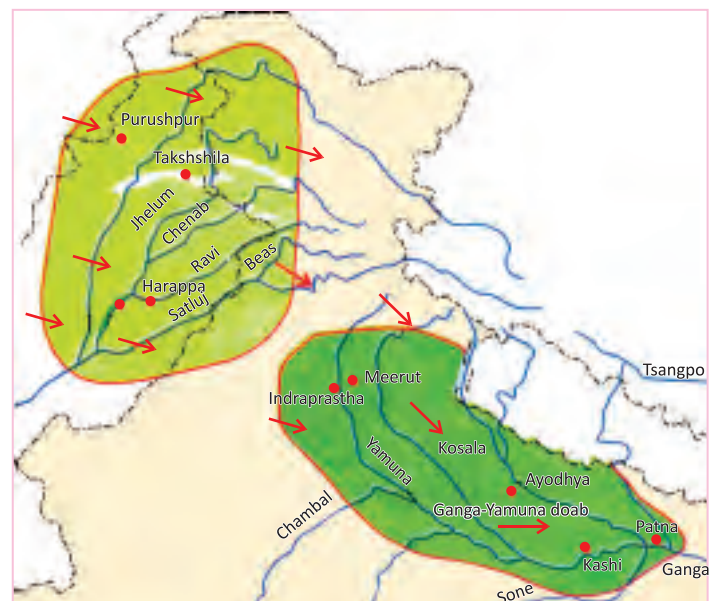
to be an equal partner of her husband on all religious and social occasions. All the children had equal share in the paternal property. Generally, the society was the owner of land, forests, rivers and ponds, which meant that anyone could use them.

Religion and Philosophy : Aryans were nature worshipers, and they worshiped earth, fire, Vayu (air), Indra (rains), Sun, Varun (water), sky, trees, etc. Rigvedic Aryans did not worship idols but performed '**Yagnas**'. They also recited '**Mantras**' while performing '**Stuti**' of gods.

Food Habits : People used to eat dishes made up of grains, rice, flour and pulses. Use of milk, butter and ghee was common. Food also comprised of fruits, vegetables, pulses and meat. They used to drink honey and intoxicating 'Sura' as well. On religious festivals, '**Somrasa**' was consumed.

Life-style : The main sources of entertainment of Early the Vedic Period were singing, dance, racing, gambling, etc. Primary education was provided by teachers at home or ashramas. These were called **gurukulas**. Women were not allowed to go outside home for education and were educated at home only.

Economic Life : The economy of Vedic Aryans was agriculture based. They also earned livelihood from art, craft, business and trade. Though Aryans were basically cattle-rearers, they adopted agriculture too. Oxen were used in fields and to pull carts. Cows were treated as the most important and holy creature among all the animals. They grew wheat, oats, rice, oilseeds, cotton and vegetables.



Migration and expansion of Aryans

In other occupations, textile business was the most important as it provided clothes to the people. Later, they also learnt dyeing and embroidery. It was followed by wood-work which helped to make houses, furniture, chariots, vehicles, boats and ships.

Later Vedic Period

The structure of the tribes was breaking up in the Vedic society. The living places of the Aryans were now named after the reigning tribes. Some such states were Kamboj, Kuru, Panchala, Kashi, Koshala, Videha, Magadha, Anga, etc. and were called **Janapadas**. Political life became more intense and different states started clashing for supremacy. This period is known as Later Vedic Period.

Political Life : The king was the '**Pramukh Senapati**' of his state and was also its Chief Justice. The welfare of his subjects was foremost of his priorities. He used the title of '**Maharajadhiraja**'. Different states were expanding slowly and the word '**Rashtra**' was started being used for a fixed region.

The main weapons of the Aryans were bow, arrow, spears, swords and mace. The rules of the battlefield and war were fixed.

Social Life : By the end of the Later Vedic Period, the Varna system transformed into caste system. This system, instead of the profession, became based on one's birth.

Condition of Women : Women held a high status in the society. Woman of higher castes got educated too and they had a right to choose their husbands. They also took part in social and religious ceremonies but their status was low as compared to men.

Ashram System : According to religious books, the average life of man was considered to be of 100 years. It was divided into four '**Ashramas**' of 25 years each. The four ashramas were Brahmcharya, Grihastha, Vaanprastha and Sanyasa.

Religion : The importance of the gods worshipped in the Early Vedic Period such as Indra, Varuna and Agni got reduced and they were replaced by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The form of the Hindu religion started taking shape in the Later Vedic Period only. People's belief in **Karma** and **Moksha** also increased in this period. They believed that **sanskaras** such as 'Bali'



Gurukula

helped to release one from the cycle of rebirth and moksha was achieved.

Economic Life : The main means of livelihood of people in the Later Vedic Period was agriculture which improved due to the development of new means of irrigation. Wooden ploughs began to be used to plough the fields and animal dung began to be used as manure to make the land fertile. Aryans accorded huge importance to animal rearing. The cow was treated as sacred and unfit for slaughter.

CASE STUDY

Ahar in south-eastern Rajasthan provides the best example of a Copper-Stone Age settlement. The culture prevalent here is also called **Ahar culture**. The Ahar mound is spread over an area of 1500×800 feet. The normal houses here were made of mud and stones. Stones were used to make the foundations while the walls were made up of pieces of bamboo or stones and the roofs were sloping. The floors were made of yellow or black soil and covered with sand from the river. Though no specific design of a house is available, but still a house was nearly 33 feet long and it was divided into two parts by a mud wall. Some houses also had 'tandoors' or kilns to cook food just as in present days. Copper was used extensively. The residents brought copper from the mines, melted it at home and made implements of it, probably selling them in Madhya Pradesh and Deccan. Among the implements excavated are rings, bangles, lead needles, knives, axes, etc. Idols, pearls and seals made of clay have also been found. Rice and oats were grown in the fields. Bones of fish, hen,

cow, sheep, buffalo, deer and pig have been found. It has been found by radio carbon dating that this settlement began around 2000 BC. It is worth mentioning that Rajasthan was the most important center of melting copper. Today also, copper is mined from Khetdi mines.

The speciality of Ahar people were the black and red **bhaand** (utensils) which were embellished with white designs. They also made copper implements and had trade relations with neighbouring communities of Malwa and Gujarat.

The people of Copper-Stone Age worshipped mother earth while people of Ahar worshipped oxen.

Deccan

Many places of Copper-Stone Age are found in Maharashtra. Some such excavated places are Nasik, Jorve, Nevasa, Daimabad, Chandoli and Inamgaon.

Daimabad is important because it is the basis of the history of the primitive human life-style in Maharashtra. As opposed to this, Jorve symbolizes Jorve culture which is the speciality of the Maharashtra culture. It is dated from 1400-1000 BC. The houses of this culture were square, rectangular and circular in shape. The mud walls were supported

on wooden and bamboo poles. The roofs were made of grass and hay while the floors were coated with wet clay. The average size of the houses in Nevasa was 3 × 7 metre whereas the largest house was 45 × 20 metre in size. Utensils were made on potter's wheel and then coloured with black and red colours. The pottery had geometrical designs. The small stone implement making industry was developed enough. The copper things included pearls, bangles, needles, axes, knives and small utensils. Many copper idols such as charioteer, ox, hippopotamus, elephant, etc. have been found.

Jorve people grew oats, wheat, masoor, kulth, rice, peas, etc. Jute also has been found in Nevasa. The domestic animals were cow, buffalo, ox, sheep, goat, pig and horse. Fire worship was also prevalent among Jorve people. They worshipped Mother Earth too. As per some historians, Jorve people worshipped a god who resembled Shiva-Pashupati. Many grave-vessels have been found which prove that Jorve people believed in afterlife. They were also experts in making gold jewellery in the opinion of the historians.

Thus, it may be said that Copper-Stone Age culture was a rural culture which was completely different from the urban Harappan culture.

To Recapitulate

- Initial Vedic Period is also called Rigvedic Period.
- Aryans were basically nomadic pastoralists who later became agriculturists.
- Vedic literature provides us information about the Aryans.
- Aryans lived in tribes whose head was called 'Rajan'.
- The varna system of Aryans changed into caste system with the passage of time.
- Aryans were nature worshippers and performed 'yagnas.'
- Women occupied a high status in the society. Ashram system was also prevalent.
- Aryans were both vegetarians and non-vegetarians.



Exercise

A. Tick the correct answer :

1. The number of Vedas is :

- (a) Two
(c) Three

- (b) Four
(d) Five

2. The head of the early Aryan tribes was called :

(a) Adhyaksha <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Badshah <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Rajan <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) Mantri <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Aryans worshipped :

(a) Nature <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Gods <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Yakshas <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) All of these <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Main source of livelihood of people of Later Vedic Period was :

(a) Business <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Animal rearing <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) All of these <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Varnashrama system developed in which Age?

(a) Rigvedic Age <input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Later Vedic Age <input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Mahakavya Age <input type="checkbox"/>	(d) Early Vedic Age <input type="checkbox"/>

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. First Veda is called _____.
2. Vedas were created in _____ form.
3. Cow was considered _____ in Later Vedic Period.
4. Copper-Stone Age people worshipped _____.
5. The average size of a house in Nevasa was _____ metre.

C. Write whether true or false :

1. The purohita was the king in the Vedic Age. _____
2. Aryans entered India from the north-east. _____
3. Yajurveda was the first Veda. _____
4. The Aranyakas were created in the forests. _____
5. In Rig-Vedic period, five tribes together were called Panchayat. _____

D. Short Answer Questions :

1. What were the main professions of early Aryans?
2. What were the main entertainments of early Aryans?
3. Which gods were considered important in Later Vedic Period?
4. How was the condition of women in Later Vedic Period?
5. What was the speciality of the Ahar people?

E. Long Answer Questions :

1. What are the main sources of information about the Aryans? Explain in detail.
2. Highlight the economic life of the Aryans in the Early Vedic Age.
3. Comment on Vedic literature.
4. Comment on Vedic Age.
5. Highlight on the political conditions of the Aryans in the Early Vedic Age.

Project/Activity

- ▲ ‘Are boarding schools the modern Gurukulas?’ Organize a debate on this topic in the class.