

Chapter 3: Vedic Civilization

Vedic Literature:

- The word '**Veda**' originated from the root '**vid**' which means spiritual knowledge/subject of knowledge/means of acquiring knowledge.
- The four Vedas are: **Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva**.
- Rig Veda was composed during the Early Vedic Age. The other three were written in the Later Vedic Age.**
 - Rig Veda:** this is the oldest religious text in the world. Ayurveda is its upveda
 - Yajur Veda** – this deals with the ways to perform **rituals**. Dhanurveda is its upveda
 - Sama Veda** – deals with **music**. Indian music is said to be originated from Sama Veda. Gandharva veda is its upveda
 - Atharva Veda** – contains spells and **magical formula**. Shilpa veda is its upveda.

Other Vedic literature are:

- Samhitas:** core mantras in Vedas
- Brahmanas** – How to perform vedic rituals
- Aryankas** – why to perform vedic rituals
- Upanishads** – Philosophical texts dealing with soul, mysteries of nature.

Important terms related to Vedic Period:

Vrihi→ Rice ; Godhuma→ Wheat; Yava→ Barley; Aghanya→ Not to be killed, generally Cow was referred as Aghanya ; Bhagadugh→ revenue collector ; Gavishti→ a fight for cows; Kulala→ Potter ; Takshan / Teshtri→ carpenter; Naditarna→name for river Saraswati; Dasyus/Dasas→ pre-Aryan local inhabitants of the region; Purandar→ Indra; Shyama Ayas/Krishna Ayas→ Iron; Bali→ voluntary tribute from Subjects to the King ; Sangrihitri– the officer who collect taxes; Pushan→ God of Shudras who protected cattles; Goghna→ The guest; Karmakar→ Hired labourers; Rajjugahaka→ officer for land survey.

Vedic names of Rivers and mountains:

Vedic Name→ Modern Name

Shutudri→ Sutlej ; Parushini→ Ravi; Askini→ Chenab; Vitasta→ Jhelum; Bipasa→ Beas; Sindhu→ Indus; Himvanta→ Himalaya; Munjavat→ Hindukush; Naditarna→ Saraswati.

Important Facts related to Vedic age :

- Caste:** In the age of the Rig Veda, **differentiation based on occupations** had started but this division was **not very sharp**. In same family people may belong to different castes based on profession.
- Social division:** Rig vedic **society was largely tribal and egalitarian** since economy was pastoral and not food producing, so, the scope for collecting regular tributes from the people was very limited. Thus, tribal elements in the society were stronger.
- Shudras: Tribal society was divided into three groups – warriors, priests and the people. The fourth division called the shudras appeared towards the end of Rig Vedic period. It is mentioned for the first time in the tenth book of the Rig Veda.
- four Ashramas- Brahmachari, grihastha, vanaprastha and sannyasin** were not established in Vedic age.
- The family, called kula, included many other members besides mothers, fathers, sons and daughters, etc. and also **included the slaves** of the household. The families were large joint family units.

- There was a strong **preference for sons** and families prayed for great warrior sons to fight in the various tribal wars.
- The **temple was not a Vedic institution**. The dominant mode of worship was through prayers and there are no evidences of temple building.
- Female deities like Aditi (Sky) and Ushas (Dawn) were worshipped but were less important than male gods.
- **Sacrificial offerings** mainly comprised sacrifice of cattle and the guest was known as Goghana or one who feeds on cattle.
- **The person performing the yajana for domestic or public purpose was called Yajamana**. The success of the yajana depended on the correct pronunciation of the prayers and hymns.
- **Unlike later vedic age, In Rig Vedic Age**, prayers and sacrifices were performed **without any ritualistic or sacrificial formulae**. Magical powers of these practices were not considered important.
- Spiritual upliftment was not the purpose of worship rather it was performed to attain material wealth.
- **people who did not belong to the Vedic tribes were termed as dasa Varna**. They are said to have had an alien language and worshipped different gods.
- **Rig Veda contains about 250 hymns in praise of Indra who is described as a destroyer of cities** and there are 200 hymns in praise of **God Agni**. Agni was considered to be an **intermediary between heaven and earth** i.e., between gods and men.
- The prominent Gods of the early Vedic period like **Indra, Agni and Varuna lost their** prominence and popularity. Their place was taken by a new trinity of Gods where Brahma enjoyed the supreme position, while Vishnu became the preserver and Shiva completed the trinity.
- **Dwarka and Bhargukachchha (Broach/Bharuch/Bergaza)** were active trading ports during the Vedic times.
- Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishyas were called '**Dwij**' (twice born) only they were allowed to study and recite vedas. However, women and Shudras were forbidden from having access to Vedas.
- Only a Dwij was eligible for Upnayana ceremony (sacred thread)
- Iron was not known in EVP, but appeared during LVP (1000 B.C) and called Krishna/shyama Ayas.
- Metallic currency was not used instead Barter was the means of transaction of commodity.
- Bali tax which was voluntary during EVP, became compulsory during LVP.
- Slavery was known to people of EVP.
- Guild/shrenis started getting institutionalized with the rise of T&C during LVP.
- During the later Vedic period collection of taxes and tributes became common. This were deposited with the officer called Sangrihitri.
- 'Vajrapati' was the officer who enjoyed authority over pasture lands.
- 'Matetama', 'Devitama' and 'Naditama' in the Rig Veda is referred for River Saraswati.