Vedic Period

Around 1500 BC, the Indus culture was conquered by the Aryans. The Aryans were a nomadic people who migrated into the Indus Valley from central Asia.

They had a new government system.

They had a simple government, only grouped in clans, that were ruled by warrior chiefs called rajas.

- The Aryan tribes settled in various parts of northwestern India.
- The tribes were known as Gana (meaning “collection” of peoples).
- The post of chief of each tribe was hereditary in nature.
- The chief had the final say on a decision but had to listen to a committee of the people.

2. A new language (Sanskrit/Hindi); and literature.

- The Vedas is known as "Books of Knowledge."
- Veda is the collection of poems & sacred hymns, composed around 1500 BC, that describes the beliefs & daily life of the Aryans.

Vedic Period (1500 BC to 600 BC)

- Early Vedic Period (1500 BC to 1000 BC)
- Later Vedic Period (1000 BC to 600 BC)
- Epic Period (600 BC to 500 BC)
Early Vedic Age:
The Vedic age began in India from 1500 BC to 600 BC, with the coming of the Aryans. The Aryan scattered in the plains of northern India.

Max Muller believes it an anomaly to treat the race as Aryan because scientifically, Aryan connotes nothing but language.

Vedas
- Aryans developed Vedic culture on Vedas.
- The word Veda means "knowledge," and Vedas are considered as the best of all knowledge in the eyes of Hindus.
- Vedas are a collection of hymns, prayers, charms, litanies, and sacrificial formulae.
- The Vedic period is divided into four Veda, namely, Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda.

Content
- Origin of Aryans
- Aryans arrival in India
- Rig Vedic Polity
- Socio-Economic Life in Rig Vedic Period
- Rig Vedic Gods
- Later Vedic Polity and Economy
- Later Vedic Society
- Religion in the Later Vedic Period
- Vedic Literature
- Vedic Doctrine of Hinduism

The Aryans
- It is considered that the Vedic period was started around 1500 BC in India and lasted up to 600 BC.
- The same is said to have started with the arrival of the Aryans inhabiting the plains of Northern India.
- The word Aryan derives from the word Arya, which means high birth, but generally speaking, the term refers to a language, not a race.
• Indo-Aryans are believed to have migrated from Central Asia into the Indian subcontinent through Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in several stages or waves. A community of Aryans had branched off from Iran to travel to India.

• For a long time, those Indo-Aryans and Iranian Aryans inhabited Iran, a portion of this country came to be known as the Araiya or Haraiva.

• Indra was among the leading early Aryans, and possibly the most influential.

• One of its names was Purandara (the forts breaker).

• Everywhere the Aryans succeeded because they owned horses-driven chariots and introduced them to West Asia and India for the first time.

• Aryan soldiers were fitted with mail coats and better weapons, too.

Origin

• Some scholars, such as Max Muller, believed that originally, the Aryans lived somewhere in the eastern part of the Alps, in the area known as Eurasia, near the Caspian Sea and the southern Russian steppes, and eventually split into many tribes who migrated in search of pasture, to Greece and Minor Asia, to Iran and to India.

• They had come to be known as Aryans by that time. This is proven by some Aryan names listed in the Kassite inscriptions of 1600 BC and the Mitanni inscriptions of the 14th century BC, found in Iraq, indicating that a branch of the Aryans migrated west from Iran.

Various theory Original Home of Aryans:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Theorist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>Max Muller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibet</td>
<td>Dayanand Saraswati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctic Region</td>
<td>B.G. Tilak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aryan Migration

• Some believed that Aryans were cattle rearers

• Believed to come from Central Asia
The origins and migrations of the Indo-European peoples are controversial topics among scholars. This map presents one view about where the Indo-Europeans came from and how they migrated. However, it is not the only view. In fact, there are many differing views.

Indo-Aryan Migration into India, c. 1750 B.C.

Indo-Aryan routes
Brief history

- The Aryans came to India in many waves.
- The earliest wave came when Rig Vedic people appeared in the subcontinent near about 1500 BC.
- They came into conflict with the indigenous people called the Dravidians mentioned as Dasa or dasyus in the Rig Veda.
- The Rig Veda shows the defeat of Sambara by Divodasa.
- Divodasa belonged to the Bharata clan.
- Probably the dasyus in the Rig Veda represent the local inhabitants of India, and an Aryan chief who overpowered the dasyus was called Trasadvasyu.
- The Aryan chief was very soft towards the dasas but very hostile to the dasyus.
- The term dasyuhatya, the slaughter of the dasyus, is mentioned many times in the Rig Veda.
- Some of the major tribes of the era were Yadu, Turvasu, Druhyu, Anu Puru, Bharata, Kuru, Panchalaand Tritsu.
- The name Bharat Varsha is named after the tribe name Bharata.
- Among the inter-tribal conflicts, the most important was the 'Battle of the Ten Kings.'
- The Aryans lived in the land known as “Sapta Sindhu”, i.e. Land of the Seven Rivers:
  - Sindhu (Indus), Vipash (Beas), Vitasta (Jhelum), Parushni (Ravi), Asikni (Chenab), Shutudri (Satluj) and Saraswati.

Sanskrit
Rig Veda

• Collection of hymns
• Oldest of all Vedas
• Associated of 1017 hymns or Suktas
• Rig Veda is compiled in 10 'mandalas' & 8 'Akhtaks'.
• Rig Veda contains the famous Gayatri Mantra
• Oldest mandalas II, III, IV, V, VI & VII
• Latest mandalas I, VIII, IX, X
• The Tenth "Mandalas," which has the "Purushasukta" hymn, was probably added later.
• Mandala IX is fully devoted to Soma
• Grita Samada, Vishwamitra, Vamadeva, Atri, Bharadwaj, Vashistha, created Mandala II to VII.
• VIII Kanwa and Angira, IX Soma

Sama Veda

• It is the rhythmic compilation of hymns of Rigveda
• "Book for Chants" has 1,549 hymns, meant to be sung by a special Brahmana class called Udgatris at the 'soma' sacrifice
• But the Samaveda has very little original value.
• Sama Veda Has only 75 fundamental hymns
  • Karnataka - Jaiminga
  • Gujarat - Kanthun
  • Maharashtra - Ranayaniya
• Sung by Udgatri
Yajur Veda
- Book of sacrificial prayers (prose text)
- Rituals of yajnas are sung by priest "Adhvaryu."
- Its mantras tell us the procedure of the sacrifices and what part the "Adhvaryus"-the Brahmanas who performed the manual work in the arrangement of sacrifice were to play at the time of sacrifice.
- It has been compiled in the "fourth path."
- Yajur Veda has been divided into, Krishna(black) Yajurveda & Shukla(white) Yajurveda.

Atharva Veda
- Mantras for magic spells
- Populate ritualistic system & superstitions
- Associated with "Saunkiya" and "Paiplad" community
- Collection of 711/731/760 hymns
- Atharva Veda has been divided into 20 "Kandas."
- Out of which 18th, 19th & 20th 'Kandas' are later works
- Atharva Veda Provides freedom from evils spirits.
- It has the oldest text on Indian medicine.

Aryan Literature
The vast Aryan literature is divided into two parts - Sruti and Smriti

1. Sruti Literature:
The word Veda was split from the Sanskrit word Ved, meaning 'spiritual knowledge.' There are four Vedas-Rig Veda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. The Rig Veda includes a reference only to the first three Vedas, which indicates at some later date the fourth Veda was written.
- Vedic literature is divided into three periods:
  1) The Mantra period: Samhitas were composed
  2) Brahmana period: Brahmanas, Upanishads and Aranyakas were composed
  3) Sutra period
These three periods overlap each other.
Brahmanas

- Brahmanas are massive prose texts containing speculation of the meaning of the hymns, giving precepts for their application, relating stories of their origin in connection with sacrificial rites, and explaining the secret meaning of the later ones.

Vedas

1. Rigveda: Aitereya and Kaushitaki Brahmanas
2. Samaveda: Tandya and Jaiminiya Brahmanas
3. Yajurveda: Tattiriya and Satpatha Brahmanas
4. Atharvaveda: Gopatha bharamanas

Aranyakas

- The Aranyakas are the final or concluding parts of the Brahmanas. It does not place a lot of emphasis on ceremonies, rituals, and sacrifices, but includes only philosophy and mysticism. The lead with the questions of the universe's existence, origin and elements, and universe formation.

- Aranyakas in literal terms means 'Jungle.'
- Aranyakas provides a description of Moral Science and Philosophy.
- Aranyakas provides details of hermits and saints who lived in Jungles.
- Aranyakas give stress on meditation.
- Protests the system of 'Yajnas.'
Upanishads

The literary meaning of Upanishad is 'Satra' (to sit near master's feet) in which Guru offers a band of knowledge to their disciples

- It would be appropriate to describe Upanishads as mystic writings. There is a total of 108 Upanishads
- The most prominent Upanishads are *Ish, Prasana, Aitareya, Chhandogaya, Kathoupanishad, Taittiriya (Source of 'Atithi Devo Bhava'), Ishopanishad, Brehadaranyaka*, etc.
- Upanishads are a combination of Tatva-mimansa and philosophy
- Upanishads are also called "Vedanta."
- The Primitive upanishadas are "Brahadaranyaka" and "Chandogya"
- Later, Upanishads, like "Katha" and "Swetaswatar," were written in poetic forms.
- Brahma is the summary of philosophy, which is the only 'truth' in the world.
- Upanishads says Knowledge awards salvation
- Oldest possibility Narsinghpurvatapani
- Latest possibility Allopanishada in Akbar's reign

Smriti Literature

- Smriti means traditional knowledge and designates almost the entire body of post-Vedic classical Sanskrit literature.
- Smriti literature is divided into various subjects: -

The Vedangas:

- Vedangas refer to certain branches of post-Vedic studies regarded as auxiliary to the Vedas.
- The Vedangas are conventionally divided into six headings, namely: -
  1. *Jyotisha* means astronomy
  2. *Kalpa* or the ritual canon, including the *dharma shastras* or legal codes,
  3. *Chhanda* means metre
  4. *Siksha* means phonetics,
  5. *Nirukta* means etymology
  6. *Vyakarana* means (Grammar)
- The *Shad-Darsana:*
It means six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy:


Itihasa: Legendary or semi-legendary works, specifically the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and often extended to the Puranas.

Puranas: They are heavily colored with the superstitions. The Puranas represent the most corrupt form of Hinduism. Puranas are 18 in number

The Eighteen Puranas
1. Brahma Purana
2. Vishnu Purana
3. Shiva Purana
4. Padma Purana
5. Shrimad Bhagwat Purana
6. Agni Purana
7. Narad Purana
8. Markandey Purana
9. Bhavishya Purana
10. Ling Purana
11. Surya Purana
12. Varah Purana
13. Brahmanvidyaya Purana
14. Shanda Purana
15. Vaman Purana
16. Matsya Purana
17. Garuda Purana
18. Brahmand Purana

Upaveda:

- It is also known as the auxiliary Vedas,
- Upaveda deal with medicine, architecture, erotics, archery and various arts and crafts.
Upvedas were partly derived from original Vedic texts.

Upvedas were generally associated with one or more than one Vedas.

**Tantras:** It is the writings of Shakta or Shaivite sects and also of certain antinomian Buddhist scholars.

**Agamas:** Agamas are scriptures of sectarian Hindus like Vaishnavites, Shaivites, and Shaktas.

**Upangas:** Upangas is a generic name for any collection of treatises although traditionally confined to the philosophical systems of 'Nyaya' and 'Mimansa' - the 'Dharma Sutras' the 'Puranas' and the 'Tantras'

**Administration**

In the Rig Vedic period, the Aryans' administrative machinery operated with the tribal chief at the centre.

- The tribal chief was known as *Rajan*. While the post of Rajan was hereditary, we do have some traces of tribal assembly voting, called the Samiti.
- The King was known as the protector of its tribe. He protected its animals, fought its wars, and offered prayers to gods on behalf of the tribe.
- Several tribal assemblies, such as *Sabha, Samiti, Vidhata*, and *Gana*, listed in the *Rig Veda*, had deliberative, military, and religious functions.
- In Rig Vedic times, women, along with men, participated in the *sabha* and *vidhata*. But Sabha and Samiti were political.
- A few functionaries assisted the King in the day-to-day administration.
- It appears the most important functionary was the *Purohita*.
- Vasishtha and Visvamitra were the two priests who played an important role in the *Rigvedic* era.
- The next significant functionary obviously is the senani.
- Princes received volunteer offerings called *Bali* from people.
- There have been robbery and burglary cases. We hear of cow robbery in particular. They hired spies to keep an eye on this unsocial behavior. The officer who enjoyed authority over the pasture ground was called *Vrajapati*.
- He led to the heads of the families called *Kulapas*. Or the heads of the fighting hordes called *gramanis* to battle.
- The King did not maintain any regular or standing army, but in times of war, the King mustered a militia whose military function was performed by different tribal groups called *vrata, gana, grama, sardha*. 
Social and Economic life

Tribal Organization:

- Kinship became the pillar of social organization. People gave the tribe their primary allegiance, which had been called *jana*. Another significant term that stands for the Rig Veda tribe is *vis*.
- The *vis* was presumably split into *grama* or smaller tribal units intended for war. It triggered a samgrama or battle when the gramas clashed with each other. When the gramas clashed with one another, it caused a *samgrama* or war.
- The term used for family (**kula**) is rarely mentioned in the Rig Veda.
- It appears that the family was indicated by term *griha* in the early Vedic Period.
- Family partnership separation leading to the establishment of separate households had not gone far, and the family was a very large joint entity.
- The society was patriarchal, and the birth of a son was desired again and again

Marriage and Status of Women:

- The status of women was equal to men.
- Women received an education, studied Vedas, and some of them even rose to the higher rank of seers composing Vedic hymns.
- Monogamy was established in society.
- Polygamy and polyandry were also known.

Varna System:

- Varna was mainly used for color, and the Aryans appeared to be white and the indigenous people dark in complexion.
- The dasas and dasyus which the Aryans captured were regarded as slaves and Sudras. The tribal society was slowly divided into three groups-warriors, the priests and the people.
- Towards the end of the Rig Veda era, the fourth division called the Shudras emerged.
- In the age of Rig Veda, divisions based on occupations had started. But the division was not very sharp.

Occupation

- The earliest life seems mainly of pastor and agriculture being a secondary occupation.
- The Aryans did not lead a settled life.
- They used several animals, but horses played the most significant role in their life.
• The Rig Vedic people had better knowledge of agriculture.

• Ploughshare found a place in the earliest part of the Rig Veda, though some consider it an interpolation.

• The term used for war in the Rig Veda is **gavisthi** or 'search for cows.'

• The Rig Veda mentions artisans as the carpenter, the chariot-maker, the weaver, the leatherworker, the potter, etc.

• It indicates that the people of rig Veda practiced all these crafts.

• The term, **ayos** were used for copper or bronze shows that metalworking was known.

• Metals Known to Rig Vedic People:
  - Gold - Hiranya
  - Iron - Shyama
  - Copper - Ayas

**Diet:**

• The Indo-Aryans, while sharing the ancient Iranian veneration for the cow, felt no scruple about sacrificing both bulls and cows at weddings or on other important occasions.

• Those persons who took part in the sacrifice ate the flesh of the victim, whether it is bull, cow, or horse.

• But the meat was eaten only as an exception.

• Milk was an important food article, and milk was supplemented by cakes of barley or wheat (**yava**), vegetables, and fruit.

**Strong Drinks:** The people consume two kinds of intoxicating drink, called **Soma** and **sura**.

• Sura probably was a type of beer.

• Soma juice was deemed particularly appropriate to the gods and was provided with elaborate ceremonial.

• The Sama Veda provides the chants appropriate for the ceremonies.

**Amusements:** Amusements in Vedas included dancing, music, chariot-racing, and dicing.

• Gambling with dice is mentioned frequently in both the Rig Veda and the later documents that the prevalence of gambling is beyond doubt.

**Rig Vedic Gods**
• There were neither temples nor idols. So, the early Vedic religion was naturalistic.
• The mode of prayer was mantras recitation.
• Sacrifice was offered for *Pasu* (cattle), *Praja* (children), and *Dhana* (wealth) and not for spiritual upliftment.

**Early Vedic Religion**

• Believed in one Supreme God
• They did not believe in idol worship
• The Rig Vedic people worshipped the forces of nature as the manifestation of one Supreme God
• Vedic Gods were classified into three categories - Terrestrial Gods, Atmospheric Gods, and Celestial Gods
• Indra, Soma, Marut, Dyaus, Vayu, and Prajanaya. Prithvi, Saraswati, Usha, Aditi were female deities.
• Female deities were not given the same position as male deities.
• People in Rig Veda worshipped for the welfare of *Praja & Pashu*, not for spiritual reasons
• Recitation of prayers, sacrifices, or yajnas, chanting of Vedic hymns, were an important part of the worship.

**Rig Vedic Gods**

• **Indra**: He was the most important divinity.
  - Indra played an important role of a warlord, leading the Aryan soldiers towards the victory against the demons
  - 250 hymns are devoted to Indra in the Rig Veda.
  - Indra was associated with thunder and storm and is addressed by various names such as *Ratheshtha, Purandra, Jitendra Somapa, Varitrahan and Maghayam*
• **Agni**: Agni was the second important divinity. He was an intermediary between Gods and men.
  - Nearly 200 hymns of the Rig Veda are devoted to Agni.
• **Varuna**: Varuna was the upholder of Rita or cosmic order or natural order. He personified water.
• **Soma**: Soma was considered as the god of plants. An intoxicant drink was also called Soma.
• **Yama**: Yama was known as the guardian of the world of the dead.
• **Surya**: Surya is considered similar to that of the Greek God Helios
• **Savitri**: The famous Gayatri mantra is addressed to Savitri
• **Rudra**: An archer of god, whose anger brought disease
• **Pusan**: Pusan is known as the lord of the jungle path. The main function of Pusan was to guard the roads, herdsman, and cattle.
• **Vishnu**: Vishnu was a relatively minor God at that time.
• **Vayu**: Vayu is known as the Wind God
• **Dyaus**: Dyaus is known as the Father of Heaven
• **Aditi**: Aditi is known as the goddess of Eternity
• **Usha**: Goddess of Dawn
• **Vishvadeva**: Intermediate Deities
• **Maruts**: Storm Spirits
• **Gandharvas**: Divine Musicians
• **Ashvins**: Ashvins were the Healers of diseases and experts in the surgical art
• **Ribhus**: Gnomes
• **Apsaras**: Mistresses of Gods
• **Aranyani**: Goddess of Forest
• **Prithvi**: Prithvi was known as Goddess of Earth.

**Later Vedic Age (1000 B.C. – 600 B.C.)**

• The Aryans further moved towards the east in the upper Gangetic basin in the Later Vedic period.
• They succeeded in the second phase of their expansion because they used iron weapons and horse-drawn chariots.
• During this time, the Aryans moved eastwards and occupied western and eastern UP (Kosala) and Bihar.

**Political Structure**

• The *vidatha* disappeared altogether in later Vedic times.
• The *sabha* and the Samiti held on holding the land, but their character changed.
• Women were no longer allowed to sit on the *sabha*, and nobles and Brahmanas now dominated it.
• The emergence of larger kingdoms made the King more powerful. Tribal jurisdiction tended to be hierarchical in nature.

• First appears in this era the word Rashtra, which indicates territory.

• During this time, the collection of taxes and tributes was done by an officer called sangrihitri.

• Even the King did not possess a standing army in later Vedic times.

• Tribal units were assembled in times of war, and the King had to eat from the same plate along with his subjects according to one ritual for success in battle.

**Economic structure**

• Agriculture was the chief occupation.

• Industrial work like metalwork, pottery, and carpentry work also was there.

• There was foreign trade also with Babylon.

**Regions and Kings**

• Eastern: King Samrat

• Western: King Suvrat

• Northern: King Virat

• Southern: King Bhoja

• King of the middle country: Raja

**Imp Posts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Priest, in also sometimes referred to as Rashtragopa</td>
<td>Purohita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Commander of army</td>
<td>Senani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer-in-Charge of pastureland</td>
<td>Vrajapati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>Jivagribha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spies who also sometimes worked as messengers</td>
<td>Spasas/Dutas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of the village</td>
<td>Gramani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of the family</td>
<td>Kulapati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator on disputes</td>
<td>Madhyamasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue collector</td>
<td>Bhagadugha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Sangrihitri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Queen</td>
<td>Mahishi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charioteer and court minstrel</td>
<td>Suta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeper of games and forests</td>
<td>Govikartana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Palagala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamberlain</td>
<td>Kshatri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Akshavapa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Occupation

- Now the Aryans lived a sedentary life, domesticated animals, and cultivation on a greater scale than earlier sugarcane.
- Cattle were still the primary type of movable property. They tamed the elephants.
- Gradually, however, the notion of private land ownership started to crystallize.
- Wheat was also cultivated along with barley during this period. Rice is mentioned in sources, but at this time, it was not a significant crop.
- Beans and Sesame were also known, and pulses such as Moong, Urad, etc.
- Also emerging were new trades, artists, and craftsmen, i.e., smelters, ironworks, carpenters, weavers, leather makers, jewelers, dyers, and potters.
- Trade was also increased.

Pottery

- Four types of pottery-Black and Red Ware, Black Slipped Ware, Painted Grey Ware (PGW), and Red Ware were used by the later Vedic Aryans.
- The Koshala people used the black and red earthen pots at around 600 BC.
- The Aryans were familiar with copper or bronze, and with Iron.
- In northern India, they introduced PGW.
- It consisted of bowls and dishes that were either used for rituals, or feeding, or both.
- These were found mainly in the upper Gangetic Basin.

Currency

- In Sathapatha-Brahmana, a gold piece of specific weight called Satamana is mentioned.
- The common currency was Nishka.
- Two other types of circulating coins were Suvarna and Krishnala.
- Barter system was there in spite of the presence of metallic coins.
- Moneylending was a lucrative practice, and interest on loans was moderately charged.
- The usurer was known as Kusidin.

Social Organization
The later Vedic society was divided into four varnas known as the Brahmanas, rajanyas, or kshatriyas, vaisyas, and Shudras, each varnas being assigned with their duties.

Brahmanas performed rituals and sacrifices for their customers and for themselves, as well as in the festivals associated with farm operations.

They begged for their patron's success in battle, and the King promised no harm to hem in exchange.

Sometimes, for the position of supremacy, the Brahmanas broke into conflict with the rajanyas, who represented the order of the warrior-nobles.

They began engaging in commerce towards the end of the Vedic period.

All the higher three varnas shared one common feature. They were known as Dvijas (twice born), i.e. they were entitled, according to the Vedic mantras, to upanayana or investiture with the sacred thread.

The fourth varna was stripped of the ritual of the sacred thread, and the imposition of disabilities on the Shudras began with it.

Two significant bodies of men stood outside the caste-system, namely Vrtyas and Nishadas.

According to the Aitareya Brahmana, the brahmana is defined in relation to the prince as a seeker of livelihood and an accepter of gifts but removable at will.

A vaishya is called tribute-paying and is intended to be abused and exploited at will.

The worst position is given to the Shudras. They were called the servant of another.

A specific section of artisans such as rathakaras (chariot-makers) enjoyed a higher status and was entitled to the sacred thread ceremony.

For the first time, the term Nagara appears to show the beginning of city life.

In general, women were given a lower role.

While some woman theologians were involved in theological debates, and some queens were involved in coronation ceremonies, the woman was generally considered to be inferior and subordinate to men.

**Types of Marriages in the Later Vedic Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brahma Marriage</th>
<th>Brahma Marriage of a duly dowered girl to a man of the same varna with Vedic rites and rituals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daiva Marriage</td>
<td>Father gives the daughter to the sacrificial priest as part of fee or dakshina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arsa Marriage</td>
<td>A token bride-price of a cow and a bull is given. Prajapati Marriage without dowry and bride-price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandharva Marriage</td>
<td>Marriage by the consent of two parties, often clandestine. A special form of it was swayamvara or self-choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asura Marriage</td>
<td>Marriage by purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paisachca Marriage</td>
<td>It is seduction of a girl while asleep, mentally deranged or drunk, hence it can hardly be called a marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakshasa Marriage</td>
<td>Marriage by capture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Marriage**

- In the later Vedic era, eight forms of marriage were prevalent. Of these, four were generally approved (Brahman, Daiva, Arsa, and Prajapati) and were permissible to Brahmans.
- **Anuloma Marriage**: It was the marriage of a man below his varna. The sacred texts approved that.
- **Pratiloma Marriage**: Pratiloma marriage was a girl or woman's marriage to one below her own varna. The sacred texts didn't sanction this type of marriage.

**Gotra system**: In later Vedic times, the gotra institution emerged.

- It means, literally, the cow-pen, or the place where cattle belonging to the entire clan are kept.
- The gotra has been seen as a tool for expanding the socio-political links, as new relationships have been formed between unrelated people hitherto.
- People began to practice exogamy at gotra.
- There could be no marriage between people belonging to the same gotra or having the same ancestor.

**Ashrama System**: In early Vedic times, ashrams or four stages of life were not well known.

- We hear about four ashrams in the post-Vedic texts: that of Brahmachari or student, grihastha or householder, vanaprastha or partial retirement, and sanyasa or full retirement from the earth.
- But, in later Vedic texts, only three are mentioned.
- In later Vedic times, the last or fourth stage had not been well known.
- 4th Ashrama mentioned only in the Upanishad Jabala.
**Food and Drinks:** The staple diet was milk, ghee, potatoes, fruit, and scarcely anything. Rarely did they eat wheat.

- On ceremonial occasions at a religious feast or a guest's arrival, a more elaborate meal that usually included the flesh of ox, goat, sheep, and birds washed with *sura* was taken.
- Fish and other creatures on the river were also enjoyed.
- Vegetarian food was never served to the guests, or at least one non-vegetarian food was mandatory.

**Dress:** The clothes had been plain.

- Normally two-piece clothes were worn: *uttariya* or the upper garment and *antariya* or lower garment.
- There was no difference between male and female clothing.
- Both the sexes used ornaments and the bangles were worn by fortunate few. Shoes were used. It was known to use soap, comb, mirror razors, hair ointment, and a range of cosmetics.

**Amusements:** The major source of amusements was music, both vocal and instrumental, and also to dance.

- It was more common to play the veena, drum flute, harp, and cymbals
- Many forms of entertainment were chariot-racing and gambling.

**Education:** Education is available to a few privileged.

- Only Brahmans and Kshatriyas got an education.
- Also, female education was discouraged, and women were forbidden to study Vedic literature despite the fact that there were a few talented women scholars at the time, and there were also female teachers. The topics were *Veda, itihasa, grammar, ethics in mathematics, dialectics, astronomy, military science, fine arts, music,* and medical sciences

**Religion in the Later Vedic Period**

- The two exceptional Rig Vedic gods, Indra and Agni, have lost their former significance.
- On the other hand, the creator Prajapati came in later Vedic pantheon to occupy the supreme position.
- *Rudra*, the god of animals, became important, and Vishnu came to be known as the preserver and protector of the men.
- On top of that, some symbolic objects started to be worshipped, and we notice signs of idolatry.
• **Pushan**, who was meant to look after the animals, came to the Sudras to be known as the lord.

• Significant female deities during the Later Vedic Period were **Usha** (Dawn goddess), **Aditi** (Mother of Gods), **Prithvi** (Goddess of the Earth), **Aryani** (Goddess of the Forest) and **Saraswati** (Deity of the River).

• The way of worship changed significantly. Prayers continued to be recited, but the dominant mode of placating the gods ceased to be.

• Sacrifices became far more important, and both public and domestic character was assumed.

• The guest was known as **goghna**, or one that had been fed on cattle. The priests who were offering sacrifices were generously looked upon and given *dakshinas* or gifts.

• The chief priests involved in the execution of the sacrifices were:
  - **Hotri**: the invoker, he recited Rig Veda
  - **Adhvaryu** hymns: the executor, he recited Yajur Veda hymns.
  - **Udgatri**: The poet, he recited Sama Veda hymns.

• The Chief Priests received a voluntary offering from the people called *Bali*.

### Important Vedic Rituals

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<tr>
<th>The King’s influence was reinforced by rituals. He made this sacrifice, which should give him supreme power.</th>
<th>Rajasuya</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A King performed the <strong>Asvamedha</strong>, which meant unquestioned control over the area in which the royal horse ran uninterrupted. The ceremony lasted for three days at the end of which horse sacrifice was performed.</td>
<td>Asvamedha</td>
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<tr>
<td>A king performed the <strong>Vajpeya</strong> or the chariot race, in which the royal chariot was made to win the race against his kinsmen. The ritual lasted for seventeen days and was believed not only to restore the strength of the middle-aged King but also to elevate him from the position to <em>raja</em> of that of <em>samrat</em></td>
<td>Vajapeya</td>
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<tr>
<td>A ceremony which is performed to promote conception in women</td>
<td>Garbhadhana</td>
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<tr>
<td>This ritual is performed to procure a male child</td>
<td>Pumsayam</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is a ritual performed to ensure the safety of the child in the womb</td>
<td>Semontonayam</td>
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<td>It is a birth ceremony performed before the cutting of the umbilical cord.</td>
<td>Jatkarma</td>
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It is a ritual, also known as tonsure, performed for boys in their third year

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<th>Culakarma:</th>
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<td>It is an initiation ceremony to confer dvija (twice horn) status of boys of the higher varnas in their eight-year.</td>
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<th>Upanayana</th>
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<td>Epic Period</td>
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<td>• Some historians regard the Later Vedic Period as the Period of Epics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Mahabharata and</td>
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<td>• The Ramayana</td>
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**Ramayana**

- The sage, Valmiki, is said to have written this.
- The related event in it precedes the *Mahabharata* by around one hundred and fifty years.
- Ramayana's story is of indigenous origin and had existed in Prakrit in ballad form, in more than one version.
- In Sanskrit, it was rewritten and increased with several 'Shlokas.'
- The epic was given a Brahmanic character that was unseen in the original work.
- It is also called *Adi Kavya*.
- Evidence puts the Ramayana's oldest portion before 350 BC.
- The reference in the epic to the mixed hordes of Yavanas and Shakas indicates accretions during the Graeco-Scythian period and may have acquired its final form by approximately AD 250.

**Mahabharata**

- The Mahabharata is the bulkiest epic of 100,000 lines and is divided into 18 paravas (books).
- This book is generally assigned to Rishi Ved Vyas, but scholars have expressed doubts whether one single person could have accomplished such a great work.
- The story itself only occupies around one-fourth of the poem.
- It is a story of the Aryans-Kaurava & Pandava war.
- The rest are episodic, consisting of cosmology, theogony, state crafts, war science, ethics, legendary history, mythology, fairy tales, and several digressive and philosophical interludes, the best known of which is the *Bhagavad Gita*.