

HISTORY: CLASS-6: SUMMARY

CHAPTER 3 - LIFE IN THE VEDIC AGE

Points of Discussion

- Aryan settlements
- Important officials during Vedic period
- Village and agriculture
- Society
- Occupations
- Religion

THE ARYAN SETTLEMENT –

1. The Aryans came from outside India, from north-eastern Iran and the region around the Caspian Sea. Those that came to India are called the Indo-Aryans to distinguish them from others who went to various parts of western Asia and Europe.
2. First, they settled in Punjab then moved into the region just north of Delhi. **Sarasvati river** has been mentioned.
3. Early Aryans were **pastoral nomads**- They kept large herds of cattle, which was their means of livelihood, and wandered from place to place. Later, they settled down in villages.

4. **Literary evidence - Hymns, poems and stories** which they composed and were recited and passed on from generation to generation until they were finally written down are pieces of evidence. But recently digging in **Hastinapura and Atranji-Khera** (in western Uttar Pradesh) has also added further information.



5. Hymns were composed in praise of the gods whom they worshipped. Rules were made about their religious ceremonies, their work and worship.

These can be found in the four Vedas— **Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda**. Also, they wrote long poems about their kings and heroes. The two epics, **the Ramayana and the Mahabharata**, and later the **UPANISHADS** were written.

KINGS AND THE OFFICERS-

1. Aryans were **tribal people**. Each tribe had its king or chief who was generally selected for his strength and bravery. Later, kingship became **hereditary**. The king ruled according to the wishes of the tribe, and he had various officers to assist him.
2. Commander of king's warriors was called **the senani**. There was a **priest or purohita** who performed the religious ceremonies for him and advised him.
3. Headman of the village of his tribe- was called **gramani**
4. The assemblies were called **samiti and sabha**. In the samiti, anyone could speak his mind about the problem, but the sabha was a smaller assembly of selected people.

THE VILLAGE-

1. In the village, the tribe was split into small units called **gramas**. A group of villages was known as a **vish**. The people of the tribe were called **jana**.

2. The village was divided into families and all the members of a family lived together as a joint household. Families were **patriarchal**. The head of the family was the Grandfather.
3. Women were held in respect. Some of the girls were **educated** along with the boys.
4. **Cows** were the most respected entity. A man's life was valued as equal to that of a hundred cows. If a man killed another man, he had to give a hundred cows to the family of the dead man as a punishment.
5. **Barley** was widely grown and later on, wheat and rice were also grown. Hunting of elephants, buffaloes, antelopes and boars was another common occupation. Bulls and oxen were used for ploughing.
6. Aryans brought **horses** with them from **Iran**. The horse was used largely for drawing **chariots**.

SOCIETY- The Aryan society was divided into four groups or castes, i.e., **kshatriyas, brahmans, vaishyas and shudras**. Each group had separate occupations and activities in society.

OCCUPATIONS- Apart from agriculture, cattle-rearing, fishing, metal-work, carpentry and tanning were common occupations in the villages.

- The priests were also the doctors in the village. They knew about herbs and plants and when someone fell ill, the priest was called to give medicine to the sick man.
- Metal-workers now had a new metal with which to work—iron. The use of iron made life easier for the Aryans. Iron, being a hard, tough metal, was better suited than copper or bronze for making tools and weapons.
- The weaving and spinning of cloth continued, with women doing much of it.

CLOTHING- The dress worn by the Aryans was not very different from that of the Harappa people. It consisted of two pieces of cloth —the **uttariya** or upper and the **antariya** or lower. A garment which reached down to the ankles and a turban to tie around the head were also in use. The Aryans were fond of ornaments. These were made of gold or other metals, and the women wore beads in various fashions. The richer people wore cloth which was embroidered with gold thread.

FOOD- Milk, butter and ghee; intoxicating drinks, such as **Sura and Madhu and Soma**, were drunk only during a religious ceremony, as it was difficult to prepare them. The Aryans were fond of life and lived well. They were cheerful people.

RELIGION- The forces of nature- sun, stars, wind, moon, earth, sky, trees, rivers, etc. The gods were supposed to have human form, but they were super-human beings, who were very powerful and to be feared. **Dyauspitar**-sky-god, **Indra**-god of rain, storm and war, **Surya**- sun-god, **Agni**-god of fire, **Usha**-goddess of the dawn are some of the gods. The Aryans believed that the gods would be pleased by the religious sacrifices conducted by the priests. Great preparations were made for such a sacrifice. Altars were built, magical designs were painted on them and animals were sacrificed to the chanting of hymns by the priests. Soma was drunk to celebrate.

The Aryans fought with the people already living in India and defeated them. The Aryans called these people **Dasyus**. The Aryan society was divided into three classes — warriors, priests, and craftsmen and cultivators. The **Dasyus** became **shudras**, an other class.

Conclusion

In this topic, you learned about Aryan settlements, important officials during Vedic period, village and agriculture, society, occupations, religion.