

Difference Between Early Vedic Period and Later Vedic Period

The difference between early Vedic period and later Vedic period can be made on various basis such as the life of people during that era, the status of women in society, profession, etc. The Vedic age is an era in India of paramount importance to its culture and heritage. It is a long period in the timeline of Ancient Indian History between the conclusion of the Indus Valley Civilization and the beginning of a second urbanization period in the Indo-Gangetic Plain around 600 BCE. In the Indian context, the Vedic Age spans from the Late Bronze age to the Early Iron Age. During the Kuru Reign, the Brahmanical philosophy expanded and gave rise to the eminence of Vedic Literature.

The following table shows the difference between early and later Vedic period:

Early Vedic Period	Later Vedic Period
During this age, the caste system was flexible. A hierarchy was based on profession rather than birth.	During the Later Vedic Period, the caste system was very rigid. Here, birth was seen as a determining factor on the basis of which society was divided. A Brahmin was placed at the top of the hierarchy with paramount privileges, while a Shudra was placed at the bottom of the hierarchy.
Women enjoyed basic freedom and human rights. They were not deprived of their respect and honour. They could read the Vedas and participate in important political decisions.	The rigid society severely curtailed the freedom of women. Women were exempted from reading the Vedas and society's decision-making powers. They were subjugated to domicile tasks and were not allowed to go anywhere without their husbands' permission.
This was a pastoralist economy and a semi-nomadic one. There were early settlers present here who followed agriculture and practiced animal husbandry. Along with this, hunter-gatherers were also functioning in society.	Society was more settled during this period. People settled down in units and pursued agriculture as a means of life. They had lands on which they grew crops and sustained their hunger on these.

A Samiti, a local assembly, ran its course in a society that elected the kings for a specific fixed tenure. This is why kinship was not rigid in society.	A system of dynasties based on a rigid kinship system was established. Here, an indefinite rule of a king and his heirs came into existence.
There was no concept of Shudras or untouchables in the Early Vedic Period, and people were treated with respect.	Shudras and untouchables became central to the rigid caste hierarchy established in society through the concept of 'purity and pollution.'
The monetary transaction was not yet established in society, so the barter system was considered a primary mode of exchange.	While the barter system was prevalent in society, it was mostly replaced by Krishna, the exchange of gold and silver coins used to determine the value of a product.
The main text from this period is the Rig Veda, which is the earliest text of the Vedas.	The later Vedic texts were written during this time. These included Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda.

Early and Later Vedic Period

The early Vedic age is the era from 1500 BCE to 1000 BCE when the main literary text was Rigveda which described the conflicts between the Aryans and the Dasas and Dasyus. The main characteristics of this period are as follows:

- The society was pastoralist and semi-nomadic in nature, where people used to raise cattle which was also a symbol of wealth.
- In the Early Vedic period, kings used to rule. They were elected by the local assembly for a fixed time period.
- Child marriage was non-existent in society.
- Women enjoyed more freedom and rights as compared to the later Vedic period. They were allowed to attend assemblies and gatherings.
- People used to have horse carriages.
- Barter system was prevalent in this era, but later, coins called Nishka came into use.

Similarly, the characteristics of the later Vedic period are as follows:

- The caste system was the prominent feature of the later Vedic age which was hereditary and rigid.
- The four major castes in which the society was divided were Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudras, where Brahmanas were considered the upper caste people and the Sudras were considered the lowest caste.
- Women lost their freedom and prestige in this period. One of the reasons for this was the practice of Polygamy, which allowed men to have multiple wives.
- Social evils like child marriage, the dowry system, etc., were prevalent during this age.