

Early Vedic Period (1500BC-1000BC)

Rig Veda is the only source of knowledge of this period. Rig Veda is the oldest text in the world. The Veda consists of 1028 hymns divided into 10 mandalas. The Vedic literature was composed in Sanskrit. To begin with, the Vedas were recited and not written. They were taught by the oral method. Hence they were called as Sruti (heard) and Smriti (memorized). But later on, they were reduced to writing after the invention of scripts.

- **Original home and identity and Geographical area**

1. Aryans are distinguished by their common Indo-European Language family which is widely disseminated in the Eurasian Region
2. Max Muller opines that they've lived in the Central Asia/Steppes region who then invaded into Indian Subcontinent. Names of certain animals and plants common to Indo-European languages are cited as proofs.
3. Their main occupation being Pastoral while Agriculture remained as a Secondary Horse played a significant role in the Pastoralist life, which was domesticated near the Black Sea.
4. The term *Arya* appears in Rig Veda for 36 times indicating Aryans as a Cultural community
5. Aryans appeared in India around 1500 BC and settled near Eastern Afghanistan, NWFP, Punjab and fringes of western Uttar Pradesh. The whole region is called as the Land of Seven Rivers.
6. The Aryans came into conflict with the indigenous inhabitants Dasyus and the Aryan chief who overpowered them is called as Tarsadasu.
7. Sapta Sindhu mentioned in the Rig Veda. Sindu is the river of *Par Excellence* while The Saraswati or *Naditarana* is the best of rivers in the Rig Veda

Rig Vedic name

Modern Name

Sindu	Indus
Vitasta	Jhelum
Asikani	Chenab
Parushni	Ravi
Vipas	Beas
Sutudri	Sutlej

- **Tribal Conflicts**

1. The Aryans introduced Chariots driven by horses for the first time in West Asia and India. They were better equipped with arms and varman. These led to their successes of conquests everywhere.
2. The Aryans were divided into 5 tribes called Panchajana who fought among themselves.
3. **The battle of Ten Kings** or the Dasrajan War was fought between 5 Aryan and 5 non-Aryan tribes against Bharata King Sudas in which the Bharata won. They later joined with the Purus and established a new tribe called Kurus who ruled the upper Gangetic Plains

- **Material life and Economy**

1. Their success is attributed to the use of Chariots, horses and better arms made of bronze. They also introduced the Spoked Wheel.
2. They had better knowledge of Agriculture which was used mainly to produce fodder. Ploughshare made of wood was mentioned in Rig Veda.
3. Wars were fought for the sake of a cow. Gavishthi is called the search for cows. The land was not important in their life.
4. Aryans never lived or settled in cities.

- **Tribal polity**

1. Assemblies of the period – Sabha, Samiti, Vidatha and Gana
2. The two most important assemblies were sabha and the samiti. Women attended the Sabha and Vidatha.
3. Bali – voluntary contributions made by people
4. The king did *not* maintain a regular standing army. There was a tribal system of government in which military element was a string. Military functions were performed by different tribal groups called Vrata, Gana, Grama, Sardha
5. Important Positions
 - (a) Tribal Chief – Rajan – king's post had become hereditary. Election of the king through Samitis
 - (b) Purohit – High Priest – Vishvamitra and Vasishtha. Vishwamitra composed the Gayatri Mantra.
 - (c) The Senani – army chief - who used spears, axes and swords
 - (d) Information on officer collecting taxes and officers administering justice is not found.
 - (e) Vrajapati – the officer who enjoyed authority over large land. He led the heads of families called Kulapas and heads of fighting hordes called Gramanis to battle.

- **Tribe and Family**

1. Kinship was the basis of social structure
2. Primary loyalty was given to Jana or the Tribe. Jana occurs for about 275 times in Rig Veda. Vis is another term for the tribe which is mentioned 170 times in Rig Veda. Grama is smaller tribal units. Samgrama is the clash between gramas
3. Kula, the term for the family is rarely mentioned. The family is represented by Griha.
4. Patriarchal societies and the birth of a son was desired to fight wars
5. Women could attend assemblies, offer sacrifices and compose hymns
6. Practices of polyandry, women remarriage and levirate were found but child marriage was not in vogue.

- **Social divisions**

1. Varna was the term used for colour
2. The dasas and the dasyus were treated as slaves and shudras. Arya varna and Dasa varna was mentioned in the Rig Veda
3. Four-fold differentiation on the basis of occupation viz. Warriors, priests, people and shudras were found but this division was not very sharp.
4. Social inequalities had started to appear but the society was still tribal and largely egalitarian

- **Rig Vedic Gods**

1. Nature worship was found
2. Attributes of various gods
 - a. Indira – Purandara – 250 hymns
 - b. Agni – fire god – 200 hymns
 - c. Varuna – upholding the natural order
 - d. Soma – God of plants
 - e. Maruts – the personification of storms
 - f. Aditi and Usha – female divinities – represented the appearance of dawn
3. The dominant mode of worship – prayer and sacrifice.
4. But the worship was not accompanied by rituals or sacrificial formula.
Their worship was towards fulfilling their material life and wellbeing.