

Vedic Culture (1500 BC-600 BC)

Original Home of the Aryan

1. The location of the original home of the Aryans still remains a controversial point. Some scholars believe that the Aryans were native to the soil of India and some other scholars believe that the Aryans were migrated from outside [Central Asia (Max Muller)/ Europe / Arctic region (B. G. Tilak)].
2. According to popular belief, the Aryans are supposed to have migrated from Central Asia into the Indian subcontinent in several stages or waves during 2000 BC-1500 BC.
3. Boghazkai Inscription (Asia Minor, Turkey), which mentions 4 Vedic gods Indra, Varuna, Mitra and Nasatyas, proves Central Asian Theory as their homeland
4. The group that came to India first settled in the present Frontier Province and the Punjab - then called Sapta Sindhu i.e. region of seven rivers. They lived here for many centuries and gradually moved into the interior to settle in the valleys of the Ganges and the Yamuna.

Vedic Literature (1500 BC-600 BC)

1. It is presumed that the Rig Veda was composed while the Aryans were still in the Punjab.
2. Vedic Literature comprises of four literary productions : 1. The Samhitas or Vedas 2. The Brahmanas 3. The Aranyakas 4. The Upanishads.
3. Vedic Literature had grown up in course of time and was really handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Hence these are called Shrutis (heard).
4. The most important of Vedic Literature are Vedas. Vedas are called Apaurusheya i.e. not created by man but God-gifted and Nitya i.e. existing in all eternity.
5. There are four Vedas - Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The first three Vedas are jointly called Vedatrayi i.e. trio of Vedas.
6. Of the four Vedas, the Rig Veda (Collection of lyrics) is the oldest text in the world, and therefore, is also known as 'the first testament of mankind'. The Rig Veda contains 1028 hymns, divided into 10 mandalas. Six mandalas (from 2nd to 7th mandalas) are called Gotra/ Vamsha Mandalas (Kula Granth). The 1st and 10th mandalas are said to have been added later. The 10th mandala

contains the famous Purushasukta which explains the 4 Varnas - Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The hymns of Rig Veda were recited by Hotri.

7. The Sama Veda (book of chants) had 1549 hymns. All hymns (excluding 75) were taken from the Rig Veda. The hymns of the Sama Veda were recited by Udgatri. This Veda is important for Indian music.

8. The Yajur Veda (book of sacrificial prayers) is a ritual veda. Its hymns were recited by Adhvaryus. It is divided into two parts - Krishna Yajur Veda and Shukla Yajur Veda. In contrast to the first two which are in verse entirely, this one is in both verse and prose.

9. The Atharva Veda (book of magical formulae), the fourth and the last one, contains charms and spells to ward off evils and diseases. For a very long time it was not included in the category of the Vedas.

10. The Brahmins explain the hymns of the Vedas. They are written in prose and ritualistic in nature. Brahma means 'sacrifice'. The various sacrifices and rituals have been elaborately discussed in the Brahmanas. Every Veda has several Brahmanas attached to it :

- i. **Rig Veda** - Aitareya and Kaushitiki (Sankhyān).
- ii. **Sam Veda** - Panchvisha (Tandana Maha Brahmana), Shadvinsh, Chhandogya and Jaiminaya
- iii. **Yajur Veda** - Shatapatha (the oldest and the largest Brahmana) and Taittiriya.
- iv. **Atharva Veda** - Gopatha.

11. The word Aranya means 'the forest'. The 'forest texts' were called Aranyaka, because they were written mainly for the hermits and the students living in jungles. The Aranyakas are the concluding portions of the Brahmanas.

12. The Upanishads are philosophical texts. They are generally called Vedanta, as they came towards the end of the Veda. There are 108 Upanishads. Vrihadaranyaka is the oldest Upanishada.

Literature of Vedic Tradition (600 BC-600 AD)

1. Literature of Vedic Tradition (Smriti i.e. remembrance literature) comprises of 6 literary works : 1. Vedangas / Sutras 2. Smritis Dharmashastras 3. Mahakavyas (Epics) 4. Puranas 5. Upvedas 6. Shad-Dharshanas.

2. There are six Vedangas :

3. Shiksha (Phonetics) : 'Pratishakhya' - the oldest text on phonetics.

4. Kalpa Sutras (Rituals) : a. Shrauta Sutras / Shulva Sutras -deal with the sacrifices, b. Grihya Sutras - deal with family ceremonies, c. Dharma Sutras - deal with Vamas, Ashramas etc.

5. Vyakarana (Grammar) : 'Ashtadyayi' (Panini) - the oldest grammar of the word.

6. Nirukta (Etymology) : 'Nirukta' (Yask) based on 'Nighantu' (Kashyap) - a collection of difficult vedic words—('Nighantu' - the oldest word - collection of the world; 'Nirukta' - the oldest dictionary of the world).

7. Chhanda (Metrics) : 'Chhandasutras' (Pingal) - famous text.

Jyotisha (Astronomy) : 'Vedanga Jyotisha' (Lagadh Muni) - the oldest Jyotisha text.

8. There are six famous Smritis : (i) Manu Smriti (Pre - Gupta Period)— the oldest Smriti text; Commentators : Vishwarupa, Meghatit Gobindraj, Kulluk Bhatt. (ii) Yajnvalkyia Smriti (Pre - Gupta Period)— Commentators : Vishwarupa, Vijnyaneshwar, Apararka (a king of Shishhar Dynasty) (iii) Narad Smriti (Gupta period), (iv) Parashara Smriti (Gupta period), (v) Brihaspati Smriti (Gupta period), (vi) Katyayana Smriti (Gupta period).

9. There are mainly two Mahakavyas (Epic) :

The Ramayana (Valmiki) : It is known as 'Adi Kavya' (the oldest epic of the world). At present, it consists of 24,000 shlokas i.e. verses (Originally 6,000, Later - 12,000, Finally - 24,000) in 7 Kandas i.e. sections. 1st and 7th Kandas were the latest additions to the Ramayana.

The Mahabharata (by Vyasa) : The longest epic of the world. At present, it consists of 1,00,000 shlokas i.e. verses (Originally-8,800-Jay Samhita, Later-24,000-Chatuvinshati Sahastr Samhita / Bharata, Finally - 1,00,000-Shatasahasra Samhita / Maha Bharata) in 18 Parvans i.e. chapters, plus the Harivamsa supplement. Bhagavad Gita is extracted from Bhishma Parvan of Mahabharata. Shanti Parvan is the largest parvan (chapter) of the Mahabharata.

10. The Purana means 'the old'. There are 18 famous 'Puranas'. The Matsya Purana is the oldest Puranic text. The other important Puranas are the Bhagavata, The Vishnu, The Vayu and The Brahmnda. They describe genealogies of various royal dynasties.

11. The Upavedas (the auxiliary vedas) were traditionally associated with vedas :

Upavedas	Associated with
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- (i) Ayurveda i.e. Medicine----->Rig Veda
(ii) Gandharvaveda i.e. Music----->Sama Veda
(iii) Dhanurveda i.e. Archery ---->Yajur Veda
(iv) Shilpveda / Arthaveda i.e.---->the science of craft / wealth
(Vishwakarma) Atharva Veda

12. There are 6 schools of Indian philosophy known as Shad-Darshanas.

S. No	Darshana	Founder	Basic Text
1.	Sankhya Darshana	Kapila	Sankhya Sutra
2.	Yoga Darshana	Patanjali	Yoga sutra
3.	Nyaya Darshana	Akshapada Gautama	Nayaya Sutra
4.	Vaishesika Darshana	Uluka Kanada	Vaishesika Sutra
5.	Mimansa / Purva-Mimansa	Jaimini	Purva Mimansa Sutra
6.	Vedant/Uttara-Mimansa	Badarayana	Brahma Sutra / Vedant Sutra

Rig Vedic/Early Vedic Period (1500 BC-1000 BC)

Geographical Area

1. Rig Veda is the only source of knowledge for this period.
2. From the names of rivers & mountains (Himvant i.e. Himalaya, Munjavant i.e. Hindukush) and ocean in Rig Veda we have a clear idea of the geographical area in which Rigvedic people lived.
3. Rig Veda mentions 40 rivers. The Nadisukta hymn of the Rig Veda mentions 21 rivers which include the Ganges in the east and the Kubha (Kabul) in the west.
4. Rigvedic people, who called themselves Aryans, were confined in the area which came to be known as Sapta Sindhu i.e. land of the seven rivers. Sapta Sindhu comprises Sindhu and their five tributaries — Vitasta, Asikani, Vipas, Parushni & Sutudri and Saraswati.
5. According to the Rig Veda, the most mentioned river - Sindhu, the most pious river - Saraswati, mention of the Ganges-1 time, mention of Yamuna-3 times.

6. The Dasrajan War (The Battle of Ten Kings)

According to Rig Veda, the famous Dasrajan war was the internecine war of the Aryans. The Dasrajan war gives names of ten kings who participated in a war against Sudas who was Bharata king of Tritsus family. The ten kings were of the states of Purus, Yadus, Turvasas, Anus and Druhyus along with five others viz. Alinas, Pakhtas, Bhalanas, Sibis and Vishanins. The battle was fought on the bank of Parushni (Ravi) in which Sudas emerged victorious.

S. No	Rigvedic Name	Modern Name	Region
1.	Sindhu	Indus	Punjab
2.	Vitasta	Jhelum	Punjab
3.	Asikani	Chenab	Punjab
4.	Vipas	Beas	Punjab
5.	Parushni	Ravi	Punjab
6.	Saraswati	Sarsuti	Raj sthan
7.	Drishadvati	Ghaggar	Rajasthan
8.	Krumu	Kurram	Afghanistan
9.	Gomati	G mal	Afghanistan

Polity

1. The Kula (the family) was the basis of both social and political organisations. Above the Kula were the Grama, the Vis, the Jana and the Rashtra. A group of Kula (families) formed a Grama (the village) and so on.
2. Regarding the form of government it was of patriarchal nature. Monarchy was normal, but non-monarchical polities were also there.
3. The Rashtra was ruled by a King or Rajan and the royal descent was by hereditary based on the law of primogeniture. Probably elective monarchy was also known.
4. Very little is known about ministers of the king. The Purohita or domestic priest was the first ranking official. He was the king's preceptor, friend, philosopher and guide. Other important royal officials were Senani (army chief) and Gramani (head of village).
5. The army consisted of foot-soldiers and charioteers. Wood, stone, bone and metals were used in weapons. Arrows were tipped with points of metal or poisoned horn. References are made to the moving fort (Purcharishnu) and a machine for assaulting strongholds.

6. The king had religious duties also. He was the upholder of the established order and moral rules.

7. Rig Veda speaks of assemblies such as the Sabha, Samiti, Vidath, Cana. Sabha was committee of few privileged and important individuals. Two popular assemblies, Sabha and Samiti, acted as checks on the arbitrary rule of kings. Later Vedas record that the Sabha functioned as a court of justice.

8. Theft, burglary, stealing of cattle and cheating were some of the then prevent crimes.

Society

1. The Rigvedic society comprised four varnas, namely Brahma a Kshat ya, Vaisya and Shudra. This classification of society was bas d on th professions or occupations of the individuals.

2. Teachers and priests were called Brahamanas; ulers nd administrators were called Kshatriyas; farmers, merchants and b nkers we e called Vaishyas; and artisans and labourers were reckoned as Shudras.

3. These vocations were followed by per ons acco ding to their ability and liking, and the occupations had not b come heredi ry as they became later on.

4. Members of the same famil ook to different professions and belonged to different varnas as well lus ated y ahymn of the Rig Veda. In this hymn a person says : ' I am a sing my fath r is a physician, my mother is a grinder of corn. '

5. The unit of soci y was family, primarily monogamous and patriarchal.

6. Chil marri ge was t in vogue.

7. A widow uld mar y the younger brother of her deceased husband (Niyoga

8. The fathe s property was inherited by son.

9. Right to property existed in respect of moveable things like cattle, horse, gold and ornaments and also in respect of immovable property like land and house.

10. The home of the teacher was the school where he taught the particular sacred texts.

11. Milk and its products - curd, butter and ghee - formed an important part of the diet. There is also the mention of grain cooked with milk (Kshira-pakamodanam).

12. The meat of fish, birds and animals was eaten.

13. The cow was already deemed Aghanya i.e. not to be killed.

14. Rig Veda prescribes a penalty of death or expulsion from the kingdom to those who kill or injure cows.

15. Alcoholic drinks, Sura and Soma were also consumed.

16. Aryans were primarily agricultural and pastoral people who reckoned their wealth in terms of cows.

17. Amusements included music, dancing, chariot-racing and dicing. One stanza in the Rig Veda known as the gambler's lament says: 'My wife rejects me and her mother hates me'.

Religion

1. During the Rigvedic time the gods worshipped were generally the personified powers of Nature. It was believed that divine powers were capable of conferring both boons and punishments on man. Fire was sacred as it was regarded to be the intermediary between man and God.

2. There were nearly 33 gods. Later Vedic tradition classified them into 3 categories of terrestrial (prithivisthana), aerial or intermediate (antarikshasthana) and celestial (dyusthana) god.

- i. Terrestrial (Prithivisthaniya) : Prithivi, Agni, Soma, Brihaspati and rivers.
- ii. Aerial / Intermediate (Antarikshasthaniya) : Indra, Rudra, Vayu - Vata, Paany
- iii. Celestial (Dyusthaniya) : Daus, Surya (In 5 forms : Surya, Savitri, Mitra, Pushan, Vishnu), Varuna, Aditi, Usha and Asvin -

3. Indra, Agni and Varuna were the most popular deities of Rigvedic Aryans.

- i. Indra or Purandara (destroyer of fort) : The most important god (250 Rigvedic hymns are devoted to him); who played the role of warlord and was considered to be the rain god.
- ii. Agni : The second most important god (200 Rigvedic hymns are devoted to him); fire god was considered to be the intermediary between the gods and the people.
- iii. Varuna : Personified water; was supposed to uphold 'Rita' or the natural order ('Ritasyagopa').

4. Surya (Sun) was worshiped in 5 forms : Surya, Savitri, Mitra, Pushan and Vishnu•

Surya (Sun) : God who used to drive daily across the sky in his chariot driven by seven horses.

Savitri (the god of light) : The famous Gayatri Mantra is addressed to her.

Mitra: A solar god.

Pushan : The god of marriage; main function-guarding of roads, herdsmen and straying cattle.

Vishnu : A god which covered earth in three steps (Upakrama).

5. Soma : Originally a plant producing a potent drink during courses of Agnishtoma sacrifice, could be hemp / bhang called king of plants; identified later with the moon. The 9th mandala of Rig Veda, which contains 14 hymns, is attributed to the Soma That's why it is called 'the Soma mandala'.

6. Other Gods / Goddesses : Rudra (the god of animals), Dyau (the oldest god and the father of the world), Yama (the god of death) Ashwin / Nasya (the god of health, youth and immortality); Aditi (the great mother of gods), Sindhu (river goddess).

7. Sometimes gods were visualised as animals but there was no animal worship.

8. The nature of Rigvedic religion was Henotheism i.e. a belief in many gods but each god standing out in turn as the highest.

9. Their religion primarily consisted of the worship of gods with a simple ceremonial known as Yajna sacrifice. Sacrifices consisted of offerings of milk, ghee, grain, flesh and soma.

Economy

1. The Aryans crossed the nomadic stage. Yet, great importance was attached to herds of cattle. Various animals were domesticated.

2. The vedic people were probably not familiar with cat and camel. Tiger was not known, but the wild animals like lion, elephant and boar were known to them.

3. In all probability, very little of trade was there.

4. Money and markets were known but they were not extensively used. Cows and gold ornaments of fixed value were the media of exchange. Coins were not known.

5. Complexity in producing goods made its appearance. Men of various professions like carpenters, smiths, tanners, weavers, potters and grinders of corn were there.

6. The art of healing wounds and curing diseases were in existence. There were experts in surgery. Along with herbs and drugs charms and spells were regard as equally potential in healing diseases.

7. OCP (Ochre Coloured Pottery) Culture : 1500 BC-1000 BC.

Later Vedic Period : 1000 BC - 600 BC

Geographical Area

1. During the later Vedic Period, the Aryan settlements covered virtually the whole of Northern India (Aryavarta).

2. The centre of culture now shifted from Saraswati to Ganges (Madhya desa).

3. There was mention of more rivers such as Narmada, Sadanira (modern Gandak), Chambal etc.

4. The expansion of people towards the east is indicated in a legend of Satapatha Brahmana - how Videha Madhava migrated from the Saraswati region, crossed Sadanira and came to the land of Videha (modern Tirhut).

5. Emergence of Janapada —Kurukshetra (Combination of Purus and Bharatas), Panchala (Combination of Turvasha and Krivis), Kashi etc. in Doab region.

6. Later Vedic literatures mention Vindhya mountain (Southern mountain).

7. Reference to the territorial divisions the later Vedas gives three broad divisions of India, viz. Aryavarta (Northern India), Madhya desa (Central India) and Dakshinapatha (Southern India).

Polity

1. Large kingdoms and stately cities made their appearance in the later Vedic Period.

2. In Taittiriya Brahmana we notice the theory of the divine origin of kingship.

3. The governmental machinery became more elaborate than before, as a sequel to the growth of the power of the king. New civil functionaries, besides the only civil functionary of the Rigvedic period the purohita came into existence. These were : the Bhagadudha (Collector of taxes), the Suta /

Sarathi (the Royal herald or Charioteer), the Khasttri (Chamberlain), the Akshavapa (Courier).

4. The military officials of the Rigvedic times, the Senani (the general) and the Gramani (the head of the vilalge) continued to function.

5. The period also saw the beginning of a regular system of provincial government. Thus, we find Sthapati being entrusted with the duty of administering outlying areas ocupied by the aboriginals and Satapati being put over a group of one hundred villeges. Adhikrita was the villege official. Ugras, mentioned in the Upanishada, was probably a police official.

6. The popular control over the affairs of the kingdom was exer sed through Sabha and Samiti, as in the Rigvedic period. Vidatha had comp te y disappeared by now.

7. Even during the later vedic times, kings did not po ss a standing army.

8. Judiciary also grew. The king played a great ro in admi stering criminal law. The killing of an embryo, homicide, the murder f a Brahmana, in particular, stealing of gold and drinking su a wer rega ded as serious crimes. Treason was a capital offence.

Society

1. As the time passed by Yajñ became elaborate and complicated ceremonial leading to th e emergen e of l arned men known as Brahmanas.

2. And as the Aryans expand d to the east and south, group of people known as Kshatriyas emerged to conq er territories and administer them. The remaining Aryans rmed a eparate class known as Varishyas, a word derived from V s meaning 'p ople'. The non - Aryan formed the fourth class known s Shudras.

3. Neverthle , these divisons of society were not rigid.

4. The ins itution of Gotra i.e. the clan appeared in later Vedic Period.

5. The higher c stes could marry with the lower ones, but marriage with shudras was n t permitted. The idea of pollution appeared in society.

6. The earliest reference to the 4 Ashramas (the stages of life)— Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha and Sanyasa-is found in the Jabala Upanishad. The Ashrama system was formed to attain 4 Purusharthas (Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha).

7. The status of women declined. According to Aitareya Brahamana a daughter is the source of misery but a son is the protector of family.
8. According to Maitrayani Samhita there are three evils—liquor, woman and dice.
9. Though monogamy (a man having one wife) was the ideal but polygamy (a man having more than one wife) was frequent.
10. Women were prohibited to attend the political assemblies.
9. Yajnavalkya-Gargi dialogue (Vrihadarnyaka Upanishada) indicates that some women had got higher education.

Types of Hindu Marriage (Vivaha.)

1. Brahma Vivaha Giving the girl to a man with dower.
2. Daiva Vivaha Giving the girl to the priest himself in lieu of his fees.
3. Arsha Vivaha Giving the girl to a man after accepting a bride-price.
4. Prajapatya Vivaha Giving the girl to a man without demanding a bride-price.
5. Gandharva Vivaha Love marriage.
6. Asura Vivaha Marriage with a purchased girl.
7. Rakshasa Vivaha Marriage with the daughter of a defeated king or with a kidnapped girl.
8. Paishacha Vivaha Marriage to a girl after seducing or raping her.
 - i. Anuloma Vivaha : marriage between a bridegroom from an upper caste and a bride from a lower caste; Pratiloma Vivaha-the reverse of Anuloma Vivaha.
 - ii. 16 Sam karas
 - iii. 1. Garbh dhana 2. Pumsavana 3. Simantonnayan 4. Jatakarma 5. Namakaran 6. Nishkramana 7. Annaprashana 8. Chudakarma 9. Karnachhedana 10. Vidyambha 11. Upanayana 12. Vedarambha 13. Samavaratana 14. Vivaha 15. Vanprastha 16. Antyesti.

Religion

1. The earlier divinities Indra and Agni were relegated into the background while Prajapati (creator of the Universe, later known as Brahma), Vishnu (Patron god of Aryans) and Rudra (God of animals, later identified with Shiva / Mahesha) rose in prominence. Now Prajapati became supreme God.
2. Pushana, who protected cattle in the early Vedic Period now became the god of Shudras.
3. Brihadaranyaka Upanishada was first the work to give the doctrine of transmigration (Punarjanma / Samsara - chakra) and deeds (Karma).
4. The early simple ceremonial of Rigvedic Period gave place to elaborate sacrifices requiring the services of as many as 17 priests. In the later Vedas and Brahmanas sacrifices (Yajnas) came into prominence.
5. Towards the end of the Vedic Period, there was the emergence of a strong reaction against cults, rituals and priestly domination. Reflection of this mood is found in the Upanishadas.

Economy

1. Agriculture began to replace rearing of cattle. The plough was at times drawn by 24 oxen. Manure was known.
2. Rice, barley, beans, sesame and wheat were cultivated.
3. Production of goods advanced as indicated by new occupations like fisherman, washerman, dyers, door-keepers and footmen.
4. Indicating specialisation distinction was drawn between the chariot-maker and the carpenter and the tanner and the hide-dresser.
5. Considerable advance was made in the knowledge of metals. Mention of tin, silver and iron was made apart from gold and ayas (either copper or iron) in the Rig Veda.
6. Evidence was there regarding organisation of merchants into guilds because of reference to corporations (Ganas) and aldermen (Sreshtins).
7. PGW (Painted Grey Ware) Culture : 1100 BC — 600 BC.