



Chapter: The Vedic Age Question and Answer

1. Who were the Indo-Aryans? Where did they come from?

The Indo-Aryans were a group of nomadic people who spoke Indo-European languages such as Sanskrit. They originally lived in the Steppes, stretching from southern Russia to Central Asia. From here, they migrated to north-west India.

2. Describe the four Ashramas.

According to religious texts, life was divided into four stages of ashramas. Different duties were assigned to each of these. The four ashramas were

- Brahmacharya or student life
- Grihastha or life of a householder,
- Vanaprastha or life as a hermit and
- Sanyasa or renunciation of the worldly life.

3. In which two ways do you think life of a rajan was different from that of *dasa*?

The rajan was the ruler of a tribe. He was known for his bravery and ability to lead his tribe in war and raids. He was free to make decisions on behalf of his tribe. A **dasa**, on the other hand, was a **slave or servant**. He was not free even to take any decision regarding his own life.

4. Discuss the political life of the people during the Early Vedic period.

- The Early Vedic society consisted of many different tribes called janas. Each tribe had its own ruler known as rajan.
- He was usually elected as rajan because of his bravery and ability to lead his tribe in war and raids.
- Sons did not automatically become rajans after the death of their fathers. So, the position of the rajan was not hereditary.
- Rig Vedic rajans did not collect taxes. They managed with voluntary contributions (bali) made by members of the tribe.
- The rajan took decisions in consultation with the sabha and samiti which were tribal assemblies. Women could also attend the sabha.
- In addition to the rajans, priests or purohitas were regarded more important than the rest of the tribe or jana.
- They helped the rajan and the common people of the tribe in all ritual matters. The senani helped the rajan in his military campaigns and wars.

5. Discuss the religious life of the people during the later Vedic period.

- In the Later Vedic period, many changes took place in the religious practices.
- Prajapati, the Creator,
- Vishnu, the Preserver, and
- Rudra or Shiva the Destroyer emerged as all powerful deities.
- Though prayers continued to be recited, they became less important, and sacrifices and rituals became more expensive and complex.

- Some of the important public sacrifices were the Ashvamedha and the Rajasuya sacrifices.

IV. Answer the following questions in detail.

1. Write a note on Vedas.

The term "Veda" is derived from the Sanskrit word vid, meaning wisdom' or knowledge. The Vedas are collections of poems, hymns and short compositions that were initially composed orally.

There are four Vedas-the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda.

- The **Rig Veda** is the oldest Veda containing about 1,028 hymns called sukta, meaning well-said.
- The **Sama Veda** contains hymns sung by a special class of priests during important religious ceremonies and sacrifices.
- The **Yajur Veda** contains rules that are meant to be followed in religious ceremonies, sacrifices, and rituals.
- The **Atharva Veda** is a collection of songs, spells, magical charms to ward off evil spirits.

2. Compare and contrast the life in the Early and Later Vedic Periods.

Early Vedic Period

- The Early Vedic society consisted of many different tribes called janas.
- The Early Vedic people kept herds of domesticated cows, bulls, oxen, horses, sheep, goats, and dogs.
- The cow was considered precious and the main form of wealth.
- The basis of the Early Vedic society was family, which was patriarchal.
- The dominant mode of worshipping the gods was through recitation of prayers and hymns, and the performance of sacrifices or yajna.

Later Vedic period

- In the Later Vedic period, the position of the king became more powerful.
- His office became hereditary.
- The main occupation of people was agriculture.
- This period is also marked by the discovery of iron.
- Iron tools and implements began to be increasingly used.
- By the Later Vedic period, the occupations performed by different groups had become fixed.
- The social groups became rigid.

3. Discuss Megalithic cultures of India.

- Megalithic cultures flourished in Rajasthan, Deccan, Kashmir, and south India.
- We gather information about these cultures from the megaliths.
- Megaliths are large stone structures or groups of standing stones that are believed to have some religious significance.
- Sometimes, they were erected on burial sites or were used to commemorate heroic deeds. The term megalith means 'large stone'.
- It is derived from the Greek words megas (great) and lithos (stone).
- Megalithic monuments of large stones have been found throughout India, from Kashmir in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south.