

The Vedic Civilization

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Introduction

The Vedas are written in Sanskrit and originated in ancient India. There are four Vedas - **Rigveda**, **Samaveda**, **Yajurveda** and **Atharvaveda** ; which make up the collection of Vedic Literature. The Civilization that is based on Vedic Literature is known as '**Vedic Civilization**'. The Vedas are considered to be our earliest literature. the Vedas were composed by many Sages or Rishis. Some Vedic hymns were composed by woman. Vedic literature is very rich and diverse. The Vedic texts are known as '**Samhita**'. The term '**Veda**' originates from the root '**Vid**', The Sanskrit verb "**Vid**" means '**to know**', literally means '**Knowledge**'. The Vedas have been preserved through the oral tradition. The Vedas are also called '**Shruti**'. During this long period, the Vedic civilization underwent many changes.

The Rigveda

The Rigveda is the oldest of all the Vedas. Rigveda is an ancient Indian religious book. It is counted as one of the Four sacred Hindu writings, which are called '**Rigveda**'. It was composed during early Vedic period. It contains hymns dedicated by sages to Gods Such as Agni (fire God) Indra (The lord of heaven), Mitra, Varuna water God), Surya (Sun God) etc. It contains the famous '**Gayatri Mantra**'.

The Samaveda

Sama means 'sweet song or melody'. It is an ancient Vedic Sanskrit text, and part of the scriptures of Hinduism. Samaveda is a liturgical text, whose 1875 verses are primarily derived from the Rigveda.

The Yajurveda

'Yajurveda' is an ancient hindu scriptures devoted to the worship of the Gods. It ideals with rituals and hymns recited during performing Yajnas. The name comes from Sanskrit word 'Yajus' meaning 'worship' or 'sacrifice' and Veda meaning 'knowledge'. Is sung of priest '**Adhavaryu**'. It is one of the four hindu Veda and the main Vedic text Indian priests. It has been divided into two parts - Krishna and shukla Yajurveda

The Atharvaveda

The last of the Veda, this is completely different from the other three Vedas and is next in importance to the Rigveda with regard to history and sociology. It has been divided in 20 'Kandas'. It is associated with 'Saunaka' Paipalad community. It provides freedom from evil spirits. The Atharvaveda consists of spells and charms prevalent at its time, and portrays a clearer picture of the Vedic society.

Important Features of Vedic civilization :

Social & Economic Life

Kingship was the basis of social structure. People gave their primary loyalty to the tribe, which was called jana. Another important term which stands for the tribe in the Rig Veda is vis. Probably the vis was divided into grama or smaller tribal units meant for fighting. When the gramas clashed with one another, it caused samgrama or war. The term for family (kula) is mentioned rarely in the Rig Veda. It seems that family in early Vedic Phase was indicated by term griha. Differentiation in family relationship leading to the setting up of separate households had not proceeded far, and the family was a very large joint unit. It was obviously a patriarchal family headed by the father. Since it was a patriarchal society, the birth was desired again and again.

Occupation

The Aryans now lived a sedentary life, domesticated animal and cultivated on a greater scale than earlier sugar-cane. Cattle still constituted the principal form of movable property. Elephants were tamed. However, the idea of private possession of land gradually began to crystallize. Wheat was also cultivated during this period along with barley. Rice is mentioned in sources but was not an important crop at this time. Beans and Sesame and pulses such as Moong, Urad etc. were also known. New arts, artists and craftsmen also emerged i.e. smelters, ironsmiths, carpenters, weavers, leather workers, jewellers, dyers and potters. Trade was also boosted.

Caste System

The Vedic society came to be divided into four varnas called the Brahmanas, rajanyas or kshatriyas, vaisyas and shudras, each varna was assigned with its duty. Brahmanas conducted rituals and sacrifices for their clients and for themselves, and also officiated at the festivals associated with agricultural operations. They prayed for the success of their patron in war, and in return the king pledged not to do any harm to them. Sometimes, the brahmanas came into conflict with the rajanyas, who represented the order of the warrior-nobles, for position of supremacy. Towards the end of the Vedic period, they began to engage in trade.

Ashramas or four stages of life were not well established in early Vedic times. In the post-Vedic texts, we hear of four ashramas: that of brahmachari or student, grihastha or householder, vanaprastha or partial retirement and sanyasa or complete retirement from the world.

Also many other features

Such as -

- ◆ **Food System**
- ◆ Town Planning
- ◆ Trade etc

Thank you