

## **UGC NET - HISTORY SAMPLE THEORY**

### **PAPER - II**

- Man & Environment
- Begining of Agriculture
- Indus Valley Civilization
- Iron Age
- Vedic Period
- Evolution of Social Institutions
- Evolution of Political Institutions
- Ritual & Practices

# VPM CLASSES

For IIT-JAM, JNU, GATE, NET, NIMCET and Other Entrance Exams

1-C-8, Sheela Chowdhary Road, Talwandi, Kota (Raj.) Tel No. 0744-2429714

Web Site [www.vpmclasses.com](http://www.vpmclasses.com) E-mail-[vpmclasses@yahoo.com](mailto:vpmclasses@yahoo.com)

## MAN AND ENVIRONMENT

### Geographical Factors

India or Bharatvarsa is bounded on north by Himalayas and on the south by ocean. A part of Jambudvipa, the scriptures called it Bharatvarsa or where the descendants of Bharatas live. The name Hindu or India is given by the Persians. They call it Hafta-Hindu or Sapta-Sindhu, a land watered by the river Sindhu. The ancient name Bharatvarsa has its authenticity in ancient literature that refers to Bharat clan that dominated the large area of the country.

On the north the huge range of Himalayas render very strong frontier to this country. The other mountains like Hindukush and Vindhyachal have equally played decisive roles in moulding the history of land. These features are important factors in the study of civilisation. These mountains have several passes that served as routes of movement and invasion in various periods of history. The five passes of Himalayas – Khyber, Bolan, Tochi, Gomal and Kurram served as important ways for invasion and migrations that influenced the formation of the history of the land. Khyber and Bolan passes are the major ones. Rig-Veda refers to Tochi-Kurram pass used by Aryan invaders. The Khyber route also finds its mention in the treatise. The invaders could have come down through the pass to the valley of Kabul river to Peshawar. These five natural routes, known as five fingers, connect Iran and central Asia with India. The passes eased the movement and the invaders used these to conquer the land ultimately changing the entire course of history and moulding the civilisation.

Hindukush range has two passes – Qora-Kotal and Dandan-Shikan that connect Western Afghanistan and Hari Rud valley with Balkh (Bactria). This route facilitates the eastward movement towards Kabul.

Between Kabul and Kandahar, a series of valleys and mountain passes after several ways to Punjab frontiers. These areas have remained historic shelters of warlike races. Once these people settled themselves in those strategic and **difficult** mountain belts it became easier for them to command the Indian plains. Thus, the peaceful tenor of life of Punjab and Western India was recurrently endangered by these strategic factors. The Huns, Persians,

Greeks, Sakas, Turks and Afghans entered the country through these passes. They not only politically dominated the land but also influenced the culture and the society.

The long structured sea coasts in Southern Plateau have also remained powerful source of contact with the world. The vast coastline had activated the maritime activities and led to the establishment of a number of harbours. The trade relations with Rome, China, Malaysia, South-east Asia were developed.

The various races that entered the region as invaders settled down here. In course of time they lost their identity. The Indian society is a mixture of various races like Aryans, Dravidians, Persians, Greeks, Turks, Mughals, Huns, Sakas, Kushans, etc. This led to the formation of a composite culture in India.

The literature of ancient India offers six geographical divisions of the country: 1. Middle region (Madhya Desa), 2. Himalayan region (Himavanta), 3. North-West region (Uttarpatha), 4. Deccan (Dakshinapatha), 5. Eastern India (Purvanta), 6. Western India (Aparanta).

There are references when the groups from outside were called Sudras, but later on they assimilated into the national stream and were called *Kshatriyas*. India is not a land of geographical integration but it is a land of pious ceremonies. The sacred cities and lakes, rivers and mountains are scattered throughout the country. The seven holy cities, seven holy rivers and seven holy mountains give it a spiritual unity. The sacred points like temples are placed either on the sacred mountains, sea-coasts or on the river banks. People from all ethnic groups, religious groups and social groups have quest for unity, peace and immortality. India myth, religion and art introduce into man's life an overtone binding into a greater universe. The principles set since Dravidian culture has been re-moulded through the various stages in history. The peace prayer of the country includes not only men and animals, but all the living creatures in this universe. Through ages the country includes not only men and animals, but all the living creatures in this universe. Through ages the country has experienced vast movements and has gone through many renaissances. All this has contributed to the emergence of a composite culture. Despite diversities in the land due to geographical and other features there is an underlying unity in the country.

**Hunting and Gathering Period**

The earth is nearly 4000 million years old and the evolution of its crust shows four stages. The fourth stage is called the Quaternary which is divided into Pleistocene (most recent) and Holocene (present); the former lasted between 1,000,000 and 10,000 years before the present and the latter began about 10,000 years ago. Man is said to have appeared on the earth in the early Pleistocene, but now this events seems to have occurred in Africa about 2.6 million year back. The fossils of the early men have not been found in India. However, recently reported artifacts from Bori in Maharashtra take the appearance of man as early as 1.4 million years to ago. At present it appears that India was settled later than Africa, although the lithic technology of the subcontinent broadly evolved in the same manner as it did in Africa.

Stone Age has been divided into four period, Palaeolithic Age or Early Stone Age (ESA), Middle Stone Age (MSA), Late Stone Age (LSA) or Mesolithic Age and Neolithic Age.

**(a) The Palaeolithic Period**

The term Palaeolithic is derived from two Greek words meaning old stone. This name is applied to the earliest people as the only evidence of their existence is furnished by a number of crude stone implements. Tools of the Early Stone Age (ESA) or Palaeolithic period comprised of hand-axes, cleavers, discoids, etc. The early man in India used these tools of stone roughly dressed by crude chipping, which have been discovered throughout the country except the alluvial plains of Indus, Ganga and Yamuna rivers. They served as weapons for hunting wild animals, and could also be used as hammers or for purposes of cutting and boring. Palaeolithic man barely managed to gather his food and lived on hunting. He had no knowledge of cultivation and house-building. This phase generally continue till 9000 B.C.

The Palaeolithic tools, which could be as old as 1,00,000 B.C. have been found in the Chotanagpur plateau. Such tools belonging to 20,000 B.C. 10,000 B.C. have been found in

kurnool district in Andhra-Pradesh. These tools were made up of a species of hard rock called "quartzite", hence the Palaeolithic men in India are also known as "Quartzite men". In association with these, bone implements and animals remains have been discovered. Animal remains found in the Belan valley in Mirzapur district (U.P.) shows that goats, sheep and cattle were exploited. The old stone age or the Palaeolithic culture of India developed in the Pleistocene period of the Ice Age.

With the end of the Ice Age and the Upper Palaeolithic Age around 9000 B.C., the climate became warm and dry. Climate changes brought about changes in flora and fauna and made it possible for human beings to move to new areas. In 9000 B.C. began an intermediate stage in Stone Age culture, which is called the Mesolithic Age. It intervened as a transitional phase between the Palaeolithic Age and the Neolithic or New Stone Age. The Mesolithic People lived on hunting, fishing and food gathering; at a later stage they also domesticated animals and practised some sort of primitive agriculture.

The characteristic tools of the Mesolithic Age are microliths. A number of Mesolithic sites have been excavated in Western and Central India i.e., Langhanj (Gujarat), Adamgarh (M.P.), Bagor, Tilwara (Rajasthan), southern Uttar Pradesh, eastern India and also south of the river Krishna. The earliest evidence of domestication of animals comes from Adamgarh (M.P.) and Bagor in Rajasthan dated 5500 B.C. and 4500 B.C. respectively. The cultivation of plants around 7000–6000 B.C. is suggested in Rajasthan from a study of the deposits of the former salt lake, Sambhar and Lunkaransar. The Mesolithic culture continued to be important roughly from 9000 B.C. to 4000 B.C.

The people of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic age practised painting. Prehistoric art appears at several places, but Bhimbetka in M.P. is a striking site. Situated in the Vindhyan range, 45 km south of Bhopal, it has more than 500 painted rock shelters. Many birds, animals and human beings are painted. Other sites with Palaeolithic painting are at Singanpur near Raigarh (M.P.) in Kaimur ranges and also in the Mirzapur district (U.P.).

The Mesolithic Age was followed by Neolithic Age and then by the Chalcolithic age.

### **BEGINNING OF AGRICULTURE**

**(a) Neolithic Age (The New Stone Age)**

This state developed about 10,000 years ago. The stone of the tools is refined in this age. The weapons and tools are sharper and refined. These are scattered in north, south, east and western India. By this time the man had control over the supply of food. He cultivated and bred animals. The age was still called barbaric age. The spinning wheel, use of pottery, cotton woven into thread came into being. A large number of flint arrows heads, bone harpoons, blades and sickles are found in large number. The latter settlers of this age are agriculturists. The granaries or store houses for keeping wheat are also found.

**(b) Chalcolithic Age (The Bronze Age)**

About 5,000 years ago the man started using bronze along with the stone. Now the man had developed to a great extent. The population was mainly urban including the priests, writers and clerks during this stage. Though the tools available suggest that there was over-lapping in use of stone and the metal, the similarity in the shape and types of stone and bronze tools shows simultaneous use of the bronze and stone. Tin mixed with the copper was the major material used. That is why; the period is called Bronze Age. The specialists were needed to manufacture goods with the metal, like smiths, miners and the smelters. During this period, the discovery of wheel revolutionised the whole system. The transportation was improved which eventually brought about the complexities in life of the man. The commerce was developed. The production in all fields was surplus i.e. he could sell it away for luxuries. This gave rise to capitalism. The person with more resources was able to control the power. The status of rich and poor developed and along with this came the exploitation. This stage is witnessed in Indus Valley Civilisation that spread to long belt along the western India.

**(c) Iron Age**

In India the Iron Age commenced around 1000 B.C. The use of weapons with iron heads is found in western Uttar Pradesh. Iron is a common element easily available as compared to copper. But in the beginning it has remained a rare element. It was not possible to clear iron from its ore. It needs more heat for the process. It is believed that its production must have been guarded by the tribals who first discovered. The metal became common only later on.

It was cheaper after when it became easily available. Later on iron revolutionised the techniques like agriculture, industry and also weapons. Its easy availability brought about great changes in the society.

### **INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION**

The Indus or Harappan culture arose in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. It is called Harappan civilisation because this was discovered first in 1921 at the modern site of Harappa, situated in the province of west Punjab in Pakistan. It is also called as Indus civilisation because it refers to precisely the same cultural, chronological and geographic entity confined to the geographic bounds of the Indus valley. Sir John Marshall was the first person to use the term '*Indus civilisation*'. The Indus or the Harappan civilisation belongs to the Chalcolithic or Bronze Age since the objects of copper and stone were found at the various sites of this civilisation, nearly, 1400 Harappan sites are known so far in the subcontinent. They belong to early, mature and late phases of the Harappan culture. But the number of the sites belongs to the mature phase is limited, and of them only half a dozen can be regarded as cities. Some of the noteworthy sites which have been excavated are Harappa (1921) By Daya Ram Sahni, Mohenjodaro (1922) by R.D. Banerjee, Dholavira (1967-68) by J.P. Joshi and (1990-91) By R.S. Bisht, Kalibangan by Dr. A. Ghosh, Lothal (1955-63), Chanhu-daro, Banawali (1975-77) etc.

#### **Date and Extent**

The Harappan culture existed between 2500 BC. and 1800 BC. Its mature phase lay between 2200 BC and 2000 BC. The advent of radiocarbon dating has provided a new source of information in fixing the Harappan chronology. Indus civilization was the largest cultural zone of the period-the area covered by it (about 1.3 million sq. km) being much greater than that of other contemporary civilisation. Over 1000 sites have discovered so far. It extends from Ropar, almost impinging upon the sub-Himalayan foot-hills in the North to Daimabad in the Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra in the south, and from Sutkagendor

(on the sea-coast of south Baluchistan) in the west to Alamgirpur (in the upper Ganga-Yamuna Doab, U.P.) in the east.

### **Characteristics of Indus Valley Civilisation**

#### **1. Indus Valley Cities**

The excavated Indus cities may be classified into the following groups (i) Nucleus cities (ii) coastal towns (iii) other cities and townships.

##### **I. Nucleus Cities**

- (a) Harappa:** It was the first Indus site to be discovered and excavated in 1921 by Daya Ram Sahnii. The site has two large and imposing ruined mounds located some 25 kms. South-west of Montgomery district of Punjab (Pakistan) on the left bank of river Ravi.
- (b) Mohenjodaro :** The site of Mohenjodaro (or the Mound of the Dead) situated in the Larkana district of Sindh (Pakistan) and 540 km. south of Harappa is situated on the right bank of the river Indus. It also has two mounds, the western being the citadel or acropolis and the eastern extensive mound was enshrining the relics of the buried lower city.
- (c) Dholavira :** Situated in Kutch district of Gujarat, Dholavira is the latest and one of the two largest Harappan settlements in India, the other being Rakhigarhi in Haryana. The ancient mounds of Dholavira were first noticed by Dr. J.P. Joshi but extensive excavation work at the site was conducted by R.S. Bisht and his team in 1990-91.
- (d) Kalibangan:** Situated in Ganganagar district of Rajasthan on the southern bank of the Ghaggar river this site was excavated by B.B. Lal and B.K. Thapar (1961-69).

##### **II. Coastal towns**

- (a) Lothal:** It was an important trading centre of the Indus civilisation and situated near the bed of the Bhogavo river at the head of the Gulf of Cambay in Gujarat. Lothal was excavated by S.R. Rao which brought to light five period sequence of cultures.
- (b) Sutkagendor**  
Situated at a distance of 98 km. to the north west of Karachi this coastal settlement at a distance of 40 kms to the east of Karachi. This coastal city have yielded the remains of mud-brick structures.



### III. Other cities and township

- (a) Surkotada
- (b) Banawali
- (c) Chanhudaro
- (d) Kot Diji

### 2. Polity and Society

There is no clear idea about the political organization of the Harappans. If the Harappan cultural zone is considered identical with the political zone, the sub-continent did not witness such a large political unit until the rise of the Maurya empire. The Harappans made the first ever experiment to bring about political unity of the divergent geographical units of the civilisation without the use of force. The total absence of internecine wars, religious or political, speaks volumes about the peaceful administration of the Indus state. It would be wrong to think that priests ruled in Harappa, as they did in the cities of lower Mesopotamia for we have no religious structures of any kind except the Great Bath. There are some indications of the practise of fire cult at Lothal in the later phase, but no temples were used for the purpose. Perhaps the Harappan rulers were more concerned with commerce than the conquests, and it was possibly ruled by a class of merchants.

### 3. Social set-up

An important characteristic of the Indus civilisation was its urban life. The rural areas not only supported but often contributed to the socio-cultural development. The social stratification is reflected in the dwellings and disposition of the dead bodies in the graves.

### 4. Dress, Hair styles and Ornaments

The Harappan men wore robes which left one shoulder bare, and the garments of the upper classes were often richly patterned. Beards were worn, and men and women alike had long hair. The elaborate head-dresses of the Mother Goddess probably had their counter-parts in the festive attire of the richer women. The women wore a short skirt that reached up to the

knee; and it was held by a girdle—a string of beads. The coiffures of the women were often elaborate, and pigtailed were also popular, as in present-day India. Women loved jewellery and wore heavy bangles in profusion, large necklaces, and earrings. Mirrors of bronze were very common. It appears that the ladies at Mohenjodaro knew the use of collyrium, face-paint and other cosmetics. Chanhu-daro finds indicate the use of lipsticks. Bronze razors of various types served for the toilet of the male.

## 5. Amusements

Kids played with terracotta toys such as rattles, birds shaped whistle, bulls with movable heads, monkeys with movable arms, figures which ran down strings, the favourite being the baked clay cart. Dice was used in gambling, marbles of jasper and chert were played by rich children. Music and dance were secular. Hunting and fishing was in vogue. On a few wheels, hunting of wild rhino and antelope are shown.

## 6. Religious Practices

Except for the discovery of fire altars at Kalibangan, we have not found any cult objects, temples at any of the Harappan sites. On the basis of the material remains discovered at various Harappan sites we can say that the Harappan people had many features of the later Hinduism, such as worship of the Mother Goddess, Pashupati Siva, animal worship, tree-worship, etc.

## 7. Burial Practices

Cemeteries excavated at several Indus sites like Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal and Ropar throw light on the burial practices of the Harappans. Three forms of burials have been found at Mohenjodaro, viz., complete burials, (means the burial of the whole body along with the grave goods) fractional burials, (burial of some bones after the exposure of the body to wild beasts and birds) and post-cremation burials. From the Lothal cemetery comes evidence of another burial type with several examples of pairs of skeletons, one male and one female in each case, buried in a single grave. Bodies were always placed in the north-south direction with the head in the north.

## 8. Economy

The Harappan economy was based on irrigated surplus agriculture, cattle rearing, proficiency in various crafts and brisk trade both internal and external.

### (i) Agriculture

The Harappan villages, mostly situated near the flood plains, produced sufficient foodgrains not only to feed themselves but also the town people. No hoe or ploughshare has been discovered, but the furrows discovered in the pre-Harappan phase at Kalibangan show that the fields were ploughed in Rajasthan in the Harappan period. The Harappans probably used the wooden ploughshare. We do not know whether the plough was drawn by men or oxen. Stone sickles may have been used for harvesting the crops. Gabarbands or nalas enclosed by dams for storing water were a feature in parts of Baluchistan and Afghanistan, but channel or canal irrigation seems to have been absent.

The Indus people were the earliest people to produce cotton. Because cotton was first produced in this area the Greeks called it *Sindon*, which is derived from Sindh.

### (ii) Domestication of Animals

Although the Harappans practised agriculture, animals were kept on a large scale. Oxen, buffaloes, goats, sheeps and pigs were domesticated. The humped bulls were favoured by the Harappans. From the very beginning dogs were regarded as pets. Cats were also domesticated. Asses and camels were used as beasts of burden. Camel bones are reported at Kalibangan. Evidence of horse are also reported from Mohenjodaro, Lothal and Surkotada. Elephants and rhinoceros were well known to the Harappans.

### (iii) Technology and Crafts

The Harappan culture belongs to the Bronze age. The people of Harappa used many tools and implements of stone, but they were very well acquainted with the manufacture and use of bronze. Bronze was made by the smiths by mixing tin with copper.

Lead, arsenic, antimony and nickel were also used by the Harappan people. The axes, chisels, knives, spearheads, etc., were made of bronze and stone.

Stone sculptures and terracotta figurines have been reported from various sites. Figurines made of fire-baked clay, commonly called terracotta which were either used as toys or objects of worship. It was used mainly by the common people and it represented sophisticated artistic works.

## 9. Trade

The importance of trade in the life of the Indus people is attested not only by granaries found at Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Lothal but also by the presence of numerous seals, uniform script and regulated weights and measures in a wide area. They did not use metal money.

The Harappan cities did not possess the necessary raw material for the commodities they produced and hence depended upon the products imported from distant places. Main imports consisted of precious metals like gold (from North Karnataka), silver (probably from Afghanistan or Iran), Copper (from Khetri copper mines of Rajasthan, Baluchistan and Arabia), lead (East and South India), tin (Afghanistan and Hazaribagh in Bihar), and several semi-precious stones like lapis lazuli (Badakshan in North-East Afghanistan), turquoise (central Asia and Iran), amethyst (Maharashtra), agate (Saurashtra), jade (central Asia), and chalcedonies and carnelians (from Saurashtra and west India). Main exports were several agricultural products and a variety of finished products such as cotton goods, carnelian beads, pottery, shell and bone inlays etc.

### Problems of Decline

In the absence of any written material or historical evidence, scholars have made various speculations regarding the causes for the decline of the Harappan culture. Cities like Mohenjodaro, Harappa and Kalibangan saw a gradual decline in urban planning. Later on some of the settlements like Mohenjodaro, Harappa etc. were abandoned. However, in most other sites people continued to live. Some important features associated with the Harappan civilization, writing, uniform weights, pottery and architectural style disappeared. Wheeler believed that the Indus civilization was destroyed by the Aryan invaders. It has been pointed out that in the late phases of Mohenjodaro there are evidences of a massacre. However, it has been pointed out that Mohenjodaro was abandoned by about 1800 B.C. Aryans on the

other hand are said to have come to India around 1500 B.C. Thus, this theory of sudden death cannot explain the decline. The gradual death theory is supported by several scholars.

## **IRON AGE (SECOND URBANIZATION)**

The period of second urbanisation (6th century B.C. to 3rd century B.C.) noticed large-scale beginning of town life in the middle Gangetic basin. The widespread use of iron tools and weapons helped the formation large of territorial states. The towns became good markets and both artisans and merchants were organised into guilds under their respective headmen.

## **VEDIC PERIOD**

### **Migrations and Settlement**

India, as is well known, derives its name from the *Sindhu* (Indus) and the earliest civilisation of this country which was predominantly urban had its cradle in the valley of the same river, called the Indus civilisation (described in chapter 2). Far different is the picture of another civilisation which had its principal home higher up in the Indus valley called the Vedic or Rig Vedic culture. The people who evolved this culture called themselves *Aryas* or *Aryans* and were probably an invading or immigrant people, whose first arrival in India is dated a little earlier than 1500 B.C.

Aryans lived is called by the name of Sapta-Sindhu or the 'land of the seven rivers' which included the Indus or Sindhu with its principal tributaries on the west and the river Sarasvati on the east.

### **Dating The Vedic**

As regards the age of the Vedas, Jacobi's view was that the Vedic civilization flourished between 4500 and 2500 B.C. According to Dr. Wintemitz. "The available evidence merely proves that the Vedic period extends from an unknown past say X to 500 B.C., none of the dates 1200-500 B.C., 1500-500 B.C. and 2000 - 500 B.C., which are usually assumed, being justified by facts. Only it may be added, as a result of recent researches, that 800 B.C.

should be substituted for 500 BC. and that the unknown date more probably falls in the third rather than in second millennium before Christ.”

### Literary Evidences

The word ‘Veda’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘Vid’ (to know) which means knowledge.

The term vedic literature means the four vedas and their Samhitas and the allied literature based on or derived from the vedas. The vedic literature can be classified into the following categories.

1. The Four Vedas - *The Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda* and *Arthva Veda* and their Samhitas;
2. The Brahmanas attached to each Samhita;
3. The Aranyakas and
4. The *Upahnishadas*.

### The Samhitas

Of the four vedas, the *Rigveda* is the oldest religious text in the world. The *Rigveda* consists of 1017 hymns (*Suktas*) and supplemented by 11 others called *valakhilyas*.

With the exception of 75 hymn the rest of have been taken from the *Rigveda* and are meant to be sung at the time of the Soma sacrifice by a special class of Brahmanas called Udgatris.

The YajurVeda or ‘The Book of Sacrificial Prayers’ is a ritual text as it consists of various mantras (hymns) for the purpose of recitation and rules to be observed at the time of sacrifice. In contrast to the first two (*Rigveda* and *Sama Veda*) which are in verse entirely, this one is in both verse and prose.

The Atharva Veda is entirely different from the other three Vedas and is the latest of all. It contains charms and spells in verse to ward off evils and diseases.

The Brahmanas of *Sama Veda* were composed by Udgatri priests. The two important Brahmanas appended to the *Yajur Veda* are *Taittiriya* and *Satapatha*. The *Satapatha* Brahmana is the most exhaustive and important of all the Brahmanas it points out the progress of cultures from Kuru Panchals to Videha. It provides us information about not only

sacrifices and ceremonies but also theology, philosophy, manners and customs of the later vedic period. The Gopatha Brahmana is attached to the Atharva Veda.

### **The Aranyakas**

The Aranyakas are generally called the 'Forest books' and are the concluding portions of the Brahmanas. The philosophical portions of the Brahmanas have been separated for the use and guidance of the hermits living in the jungles.

### **The Upanishads**

The term Upanishad literally implies "sitting near". Hence its original meaning is the sitting down of the initiated pupil near the teacher or Guru for the purpose of a confidential communication of the secret doctrine.

### **Vedangas and Sutra Literature**

In contrast to the Vedic literature proper, which is considered sruti or divine revelation, the Vedangas are called smriti or literature handed down by tradition because they are of human origin.

1. Sruta Sutras (deals with the rituals of the great sacrifices of Agni, Soma and animal.
2. Grihya Sutras (deals with domestic ceremonies and sacrifices to be performed by the house-holder) and
3. Dharma Sutras (deals with the laws, manners and customs of people in general).

### **Darshans**

The six schools of Indian philosophy form an important part of Vedic literature known as *Shad-Darshana*. These developed by the beginning of the Christian era and are (1) Nyaya (2) Vaisheshika (3) Sankhya (4) Yoga (5) Mimamsa and (6) Vedanta.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL AREA KNOWN TO VEDIC TEXTS**

#### **1. Rig Vedic or Early Vedic Period (1500 - 1000 B.C.)**

The RigVeda is the only source to give us an idea of the geographical expanse of the early vedic period. When the early Rig Vedic hymns were written, the focus of Aryan culture was

the region between the Yamuna and Sutudri (Sutlej) and along the upper course of the river Sarasvati.

The Rigveda mentions the following rivers : Kubha (modern Kabul), the Suvastu (Swat), The Krumu (Kurram), the Gomati (Gumal), the Sindhu (Indus) and its five tributaries viz., Vitasta (Jhelum), Askini (Chenab) Parushni (Ravi) Sutudri (Sutlej) and Vipasa (Beas), the Sushoma (Sohan), the Marudvridha (Marwardwan), the Sarasvati, the Drishadvati (the Rakshi or Chitang), the Yamuna, the Ganga and the Sarayu.

## 2. The Vedic Tribes

The whole of the territory known to the Vedic Aryans was divided into a number of tribal principalities ruled normally by the leaders of the various tribes or kings.

The Bharatas were in the Rigvedic age, settled in the region between the Sarasvati and Yamuna.

## 3. Later Vedic Period (1000 - 600 B.C.)

This period was marked by further expansion of the Aryans to parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh, northern Bihar and parts of eastern Rajasthan. The *Sathapatha Brahmana* throws light on this expansion to the eastern Gangetic plains. It reports the founding of a realm called 'Videha' by a Prince, Videgha Madhava.

The later three Vedas give three broad divisions of India, viz. Aryavarta (Northern India), Madhyadesa (Central India), and Dakshinpatha (Southern India).

## EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

### Early Vedic Period

The basic social units were probably the patriarchal family. Kinship was the basis of social structure, and a man was identified by the clan to which he belonged. People gave their primary loyalty to the tribe, which was called jana. The term Jana occurs at about 275 places in the Rig-Veda and the term janapada or territory is not used even once. The jana was split into Vish (clan) and is mentioned 170 times in the Rigveda.

### Position of Women



Women would seem to have enjoyed equal status with men. Upanayana (initiation) was performed for girls also and they received education and observed brahmacharya like boys. Women studied the Vedas, and we hear of several women 'seers' composing Vedic hymns such as Visvavara, Ghosha and Apala. The institution of marriage was established, although symbols of primitive practices survived.

Custom of sati were unknown. The wife occupied an honoured place and participated with her husband in religious ceremonies.

### **Social Life**

The Aryans in India had ceased to be nomads and had taken to settled life, so that families resided in fixed dwelling houses of a primitive type, made of wood and bamboo. Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods were taken. Wheat and barley were probably the principal food grains, rice was introduced later.

### **Social Divisions**

The Vedic kulas or families were grouped into larger units in the formation of which Varna (colour) and the Sajatyas (kinship) played an important part. Varna was the term used for colour, and it seems that the Aryans were fair, the indigenous inhabitants dark in complexion.

In the Purusha Sukta of Rigveda, (X 90, 12), it is stated that Brahmanas, Rajanya or Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra sprang respectively from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of the cosmic man (Purusa) and these names later signified the four castes.

The society was still tribal and largely egalitarian.

### **Later Vedic Period**

In the family one notices the increasing power of the father, who could even disinherit his son.

There was deterioration in the position of women. A daughter came to be regarded as "a source of misery."

The rulers of marriage underwent at royal courts. Maitreyi and Gargi were gifted woman scholars.

### **Varna System**

The later Vedic society came to be divided into four varnas called the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. The growing cult of sacrifices enormously added to the power of the brahmanas. In the beginning the Brahmins were only one of the sixteen classes of priests, but they gradually overshadowed the other priestly groups and emerged as the most important class.

### **Social Life**

There was little change in other aspects of social life. While the previous style of dress continued, clothes were also made of silk and were dyed with saffron. The tendency of meat-eating was gradually gaining ground under the influence of the theory of karma and transmigration.

### **Ashramas or Stages of life**

Ashramas or four stages of life were not well established in vedic times. The earliest-clear reference to the four Ashramas - that of Brahmachari or student, Grihastha or householder, vanaprastha or hermit and Sanyasi or ascetic, is found in the Jabala Upanishad. The Chandogya Upanishad clearly refers to the first three Ashramas. Full recognition of the fourth stage was done only in the post-vedic period.

The later Samhitas refer to the Upanayana, and its description in the Satapatha Brahmana shows that it possessed all essential features of the sacrament (samskara) elaborately treated in the Grihya Sutras.

## **EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

### **Early Vedic Period**

Early Vedic political institutions, which are referred to in the Rigveda, were characterised by elements commonly associated with a tribal polity. The family or kulu was the basic unit of

political organisation headed by the Kulapa or grihapati. The next unit, grama or village was headed by the gramani. The vis or a group of villages was headed by the Vispati. The highest unit, jana or tribe consisted of a group of vis headed by the tribal chief. The administrative machinery of the Aryans in this period worked with the tribal chief in the centre, because of his successful leadership in war. He was called *rajan*. It seems that in the Rig Vedic period the king's post had become hereditary.

Several tribal or the clan-based assemblies such as the Sabha, Samiti, Vidatha, Gana are mentioned in the Rigveda. They exercised deliberative, military and religious functions. The Vidatha seems to be a more popular assembly than either Sabha or Samiti in the Rig Vedic period. The Vidatha was an assembly in which both men and women participated.

The Sabha was the 'Body of the Elders' and constituted mainly of the Brahmanas and the elite. The speaker of Sabha was called Sabhapati and its members, Sabhya. The Samiti was more in the nature of a folk assembly in which the entire population could participate. The members of the Samiti were called Vishah.

Gana, the technical word for the republic, is found at forty-six places in the Rigveda.

### Later Vedic Period

The later Vedic period witnessed certain significant changes in the political structure which were closely related to the growing importance of settled agriculture and the consequent social differentiation. Later Vedic literature contains, probably for the first time, discussions on the origins of kingship which is quaintly stated in the Aitareya Brahmana. Various possibilities are explored. These include a suggestion that kingship originated out of the need for a leader in welfare. Other theories emphasized the divine origin of kingship. Certain other theories emphasized contractual elements, suggesting that the raja was chosen by his people who hoped for specific material gains in return.

The Vidatha completely disappeared. The Sabha and Samiti continued to hold the ground, but their character changed. They came to be dominated by chiefs and rich nobles. Women were no longer permitted to sit on the Sabha. The Sabha was gradually converted into the King's court, becoming an even more exclusive body than earlier.

## RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS

### Rigvedic Period

The Aryans were deeply impressed by the great phenomena of nature which they conceived as alive and usually represented in anthropomorphic form.

Prithvi, Agni, Soma, Brihaspati and the rivers belong to the first order. Indra, Rudra, Vayu, Vata, Parjanya and Matarisvan belong to the second order and Dyus, Surya, Pushan, Vishnu, Mitra the Adityas, Ushas and Asvins to the third order.

### Important Rigvedic Gods

**Indra** : The most important divinity in the Rigveda, he is called Purandara (breaker of forts),

**Agni** : The second position is held by Agni (fire god) to whom 200 hymns are devoted. Agni acted as a kind of intermediary between the gods on the one hand, and the people on the other.

**Varuna** : The third important position is occupied by Varuna who personified water and was supposed to uphold the Rta or natural order.

**Soma** : Soma was considered to be the god of plants, and an intoxicating drink is named after him. The Rigveda has a large number of hymns, which explain the methods for preparation of this drink.

**Sun God** : Several deities were associated with the Sun. Surya (the common word for Sun) drive across the sky in a flaming chariot, like the Greek god Helios. Savitri, the Stimulator or God of light, was another solar god.

### Female Divinities

The vedic religion has predominantly male god, the female divinities were very few. The most important female divinity were Ushas (the goddess of dawn) and Aditi (the great mother of gods.). Prithvi, Ratri, Aranyani, Ila

### Mode of Worship

The Rig Vedic people did not worship gods for their spiritual uplift or for ending the miseries of existence. They asked mainly for Praja (children), Pashu (cattle), food, wealth, health, etc. The Rigvedic Aynas believed in the life after death. The dead were either buried or cremated, and according to some passage, dwelt in the realm of Yama, the king of the dead.

The two outstanding Rig Vedic gods, Indra and Agni, lost their former importance and Prajapati, the creator, came to occupy the supreme position. Rudra, the god of animals and Vishnu (came to be conceived as the preserver) rose to eminence.

The earlier element of communal participation was gradually lost. The guest was known as *goghna* or one who was fed on cattle.

## RITUALS AND PRACTICES

### 1. **Worship of the Nature-Gods**

The Ancient Aryans were highly religious but their religion was simple. They were impressed by the forces of nature such as the Sun, the Fire, the Wind, the Dawn, the Water, the Rain God Indra and Earth whom they worshipped as Gods,.

### 2. **Singing of Hymns**

The Aryan way of worship was very simple. They had not built any temples as is done these days nor did they worship idols.

### 3. **Yajnas and Sacrifice**

Yajna or Havana (burning incense) was the major part of their religious duty. The daily Yajnas were very simple and were performed by the family members themselves.