

SOURCES

A. LITERARY SOURCES

The Vedic texts may be divided **into two** broad chronological groups:

The Early Vedic texts (1500-1000 BC) when most of the hymns **of the Rig Veda were composed**; and

The Later Vedic texts (1000-500 BC) to which belong the **remaining Vedas** and their branches (Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, etc.)

It is believed that the **Shruti** was known to sages by God and they passed on that knowledge orally from generation to generation.

1. THE VEDAS

(i) The Rig Veda: It is the oldest religious text in the world and is, therefore, known as the first testament of mankind. It is divided into 10 mandalas. It is said to have been composed during the early Vedic Period. They were passed on orally from teachers to their disciples. The Rig Vedic hymns are the authentic sources of knowledge of the life of people of the time.

(ii) The Sama Veda: The term, 'Sama' means 'Sweet Song' or 'the melody'. The hymns in Sama Veda were meant to be sung at the time of the **sacrifice** by the priests.

(iii) The Yajur Veda: It deals with hymns recited during the performance of Yajnas.

(iv) The Atharva Veda: The hymns contained in this Veda deal with magic and charm. The powers of spirits, the hymns deal with gyan (knowledge), karma (action) and upasana (invocation). Some hymns also deal with medicines for the treatment of various diseases.

THE BRAHMANAS

Written after the Vedas as their **simple commentary**, the Brahmanas are in prose. They explain the social and religious importance of rituals as well as the value of sacrifices. The Brahmanas are of great historical value. Each Veda has several Brahmanas.

The Aranyakas

They are known as **forest books** written for the guidance of the hermits and the students living in forests. They form the end part of the Brahmanas. Their main themes are mysticism and philosophy.

The Upanishads

They are **philosophical commentaries on the Vedas**. The doctrines such as Karma, Moksha and Maya are explained in detail. The Upanishads form the basic source of Indian philosophy.

ALLIED VEDIC LITERATURE

(i) The Vedangas: They deal with the ways in which the Vedas should to be chanted; and are thus important in the understanding of the Vedas. The six Vedangas deal with pronunciation, grammar, etymology, metrics and astronomy.

(ii) The Sutras: They are divided into three groups: the **Srautasutras**, which deal with yajna and sacrifices; the **Grihyasutras** which deal with the ceremonies connected with family life; and the **Dharmasutras**, which provide rules of conduct for the various classes of people and the various stages in their life.

(iii) The Upavedas: They are subsidiary Vedas. They are four in number. **Ayurveda** deals with Indian system of medicine; **Dhanurveda**, describes the art of warfare; **Gandharvaveda** describes the art of music and **Shilpaveda** deals with art and architecture.

(iv) Darshanas: There are six schools of Indian philosophy known as Shad-Darshanas. They include - Nyaya Darshana, Vaishesika, Sankhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Uttar Mimamsa. They all spread the virtues of life and are opposed to external rituals.

(v) The Dharmashastras: The *law-books* called the Dharmasutras and the Smritis together with their commentaries, are called Dharmashastras. They *lay down the duties for different classes of people as well as for kings and their officials.*

(vi) The Ashtadhyayi: It is a **essay on Sanskrit grammar** by **Panini**. Information is given about the roots of the words and the context in which they were used in Vedic literature.

The Importance of the Vedas

(i) Vedas are the *storehouse of knowledge* about the Vedic Age. The social, economic, political and religious aspects of the life of the people is reflected in the Vedic literature.

(ii) Although religious in nature, the *Vedas are a valuable source of information* on various subjects like music, medicine, history, philosophy, grammar, metrics, astronomy, art and architecture.

The Epics

Ramayana- Composed in Sanskrit by Maharshi Valmiki.

Mahabharata- Composed in Sanskrit by sage Vyasa. The Bhagwat Gita is part of it.

The Importance of the Epics

1. It main source of Information of epic Age.
2. Provide information of Aryan kingdom, their armies, and weapons.
3. Show high ideals of family life.

Archaeological Sources

Iron Artifacts- In India Iron Age began in 1000 BC. Iron was harder than copper and bronze. Uses

Agriculture : It was used for Agriculture for making tools and implements. It resulted in increased output in farm products and improvement in standard of living.

Occupation : It gave rise to new trades like weaving, spinning, carpentry, tanning and tool making.

Defence : Used for making weapons as it was strong and durable.

Pottery :

The Grey Ware and the Painted Grey Ware belong to Rig Vedic Period discovered in Punjab and Haryana. The PGW is very fine, smooth and even coloured pottery made of high quality clay. It had geometrical designs on it in black.



Society

The family was the fundamental unit of the society. Oldest male in the family is Grahapati. Several families lived in a village headed by Gramini. Several villages formed a Visha headed by Vishapati. Several Visha formed a Jana headed by Rajan.

The King was supported by council of ministers. Senani - Commander of the Army. Purohita-religious duties.

Sabha- Council of Elders-Advisory and judicial function

Samiti-Assembly of People- session on special occasion

Position Of Women

During Rig Vedic Period women were respected. Daughters were given freedom to choose husbands. Marriage age was 16 - 17 years. In later vedic period status of women declined.

Class Division

Caste system is not mentioned in Rig Veda. Due to social inequalities and tribal society got divided into warriors, priests, and the people. Later Shudra is given in Tenth Mandala of Rig Veda. During Later Vedic Age caste system emerged and became rigid.

The Four Ashramas

Life of Aryan was divided into four periods of 25 years called ashramas.

Brahmacharya- Upto 25 years. The pupil stayed at Gurukul

Grihastha- 25 – 50 years. Married and raised a family

Vanaprastha- 50 – 75 years Retired from worldly life.

Sanyasa- 75- 100 years- left everything to attain moksha.

Food, Dress and Amusements

Barley is the main Crop and **rice** was not known to them in Early Vedic Age. Cows were domesticated and milk products were used. Cloth such as dhoti and vasa/ shirt and adhivasa were used.

Chariot race, Horse races, dancing, singing and hunting were main amusements.

Religious Beliefs

The people worshipped force of nature. Indra was most important God. Agni (The fire), Varuna (Water or Clouds), Surya (Sun) etc were some gods In later Vedic age Prajapati(Brahma) became the Supreme God. Vishnu(Preserver) and Shiva (Destroyer).