

# CHAPTER - 5

## THE VEDIC CIVILISATION

### Exercise

#### I. Fill in the blanks:

1. The Aryans came to India from **Central Asia**.
2. The Aryans settled down first in the region now called the **Punjab**.
3. The two historical sources of the Vedic Age are **Literary** and **Archaeological**.
4. The word Varna means **Fair skin**.
5. The two popular assemblies of the Aryans were called **Sabha, Samiti**.
6. The **Iron** was discovered in the Vedic period which led to development in agriculture and making of implements.
7. The **Rigveda** is the most important Veda.

#### II. Match Column A with Column B:

Column A	Column B
1. <i>Samiti</i>	(a) Highest priest
2. Brahmins	(b) Early Vedic Period
3. The Kshatriyas	(c) Amusement of the Aryans
4. The Vaishyas	(d) Commander of the army
5. The Shudras	(e) Was an assembly made up of all the people of the village
6. Rajan	(f) Traders and cultivators
7. <i>Purohit</i>	(g) King or head of a tribe
8. Senani	(h) Warriors
9. Chariot racing	(i) Priests
10. 1500BC—1000BC	(j) Lowest varna in the Vedic Period

**Answer:**

Column A	Column B
1. Samiti	(e) Was an assembly made up of all the people of the village
2. Brahmans	(i) Priests
3. The Kshatriyas	(h) Warriors
4. The Vaishyas	(f) Traders and cultivators
5. The Shudras	(j) Lowest varna in the Vedic Period
6. Rajan	(g) King or head of a tribe
7. Puro hit	(a) Highest priest
8. Senani	(d) Commander of the army
9. Chariot racing	(c) Amusement of the Aryans
10. 1500BC—1000BC	(b) Early Vedic Period

**III. State whether the following statements are True or False.**

1. The Aryans were the original inhabitants of India.  
**False**
2. The Aryans called their settlements 'Arpavaria'.  
**True**
3. The knowledge of early Vedic society comes from the two Epics.  
**False**
4. The Aryans worshiped nature and believed in  
**True**
5. The Upanishads are philosophic works which lay stress on 'Karma' and 'Moksha'.  
**True**
6. The 'Sabha' was a powerful body which advised the king on all matters.  
**True**
7. The Aryans knew mathematics and about its two branches, algebra and geometry.  
**True**
8. Mahabharata was written by Valmiki.  
**False**

**IV. Answer the following questions**

**Question 1.**

Which theory about the original home of the Aryans is most popular?

**Answer:**

Though there are different theories regarding the origin of the Aryans, the theory provided by Max Mueller is most popular. According to his opinion, the Aryans came from Central Asia in about 1500 BC.

**Question 2.**

Which gods and goddesses were worshiped by the Aryans during the Early Vedic Period? Describe the changes that took place in their religion in the Later Vedic Period.

**Answer:**

During the Early Vedic period, the Aryans worshipped nature and its forces like the sun, earth, sky, wind, rain and fire. Most important gods were Indra (Rain-god, god of storm and war), Varun (water-god), Agni (fire-god), Surya (Sun-god). Early Aryans performed yajnas and offered prayers and chanted hymns. During the Later Vedic period, the mode of worship became complex and complicated. The Early Vedic gods such as Indra, Agni, Varun, etc., lost their importance and were replaced by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Religious rituals and yajnas and sacrifices became complicated and too elaborate.

**Question 3.**

On what basis was the Aryan society divided? Mention the functions of each social group.

**Answer:**

The 'Varna' system was an important feature of the Vedic society. There were four Varnas — Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Brahmanas were teachers and priests. Kshatriyas were rulers and warriors. Farmers and traders formed the Vaishya group. Shudras served all the three classes, did menial jobs and consisted of artisans and labourers. Towards the end of the Later Vedic period, occupations became hereditary and people from the same occupation formed a specific varna. The varna system became very rigid and inflexible. Varna system became hereditary.

**Question 4.**

How did the Aryans amuse themselves?

**Answer:**

Chariot racing, hunting, gambling, Singing, dancing, playing musical instruments were the favorite amusements of the Aryans. They loved to play the game of dice which was very popular. Flute, drum and lute were favorite instruments.

**Question 5.**

Describe the political organisation of the Aryans during the 'Later Vedic Period.

**Answer:**

Small tribal organisations of Early Vedic period expanded and became powerful and turned into large kingdoms. The position of Rajan (king) became stronger. He gained absolute power and his position became hereditary. Powerful kings performed elaborate and complex sacrifices such as Ashwamedh, Vajapeya and Rajasuya sacrifices. The commander-in-chief, 'Senani,' became very important. The 'Sangrihitri' or tax collector

became a very important officer. The two assemblies, Sabha and Samiti lost their importance and their powers were taken away by the king. Nevertheless, these organisations continued to exist and were dominated by the rich and influential people.

### **Question 6.**

Compare the position of women during the Early Vedic Period and the Later Vedic Period.

#### **Answer:**

During the Early Vedic period, women were respected and given a high status in society. They even attended the assemblies and participated in debates. The wife was the husband's partner in all social and religious ceremonies. Girls had the freedom to choose their husbands through the system of 'Swayamvara'. But during the Later Vedic period, society became patriarchal as most prayers contained the desire to have a son. The position of women deteriorated during the period. Women were considered inferior to men and were denied education. Their freedom was curtailed. Polygamy began to be practiced. They were supposed to serve their families and were confined to the four walls of their houses.

### **Question 7.**

What difference do you find in the position of the King of the Early Vedic Age as compared to the King of the Later Vedic Age?

#### **Answer:**

During the Early Vedic period, the Rajan (king) was the head of the tribe. His chief occupation was fighting battles to defend and protect the tribe and its territory. His position was not hereditary and the two tribal assemblies — Sabha and Samiti — checked his power. The king was in most cases selected or chosen by the tribal heads due to his bravery and wisdom. During the Later Vedic period, the position of the king became stronger. He gained absolute power and his position became hereditary. He started claiming himself to be the representative of God. He performed several complex sacrifices (yajnas) to augment his power and prestige — Ashwamedha, Vajapeya and Rajasuya. He also assumed titles of 'Samrat' and 'Mahadhiraj'

## **V. Write short notes on**

1. The Vedas
2. The Epics and
3. Archaeological Sources

#### **Answer:**

##### **1. The Vedas:**

There are four Vedas — the Rigveda, the Samaveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda. They mainly contain hymns in praise of various gods. The Rigveda was the earliest, written around 1500 BC. Other three Vedas were written during 1000 BC — 600 BC. The Atharvaveda contains charms and spells to ward off evils. The Yajurveda also contains sacrificial formulae and rituals. The Samaveda has collection of hymns set

to tunes; it is a modified collection of the Rigveda.

## 2. The Epics:

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata — were written during the Later Vedic period. They give a lot of information about the society and economy of the Later Vedic period. The Ramayana written by Sage Valmiki in Sanskrit tells the story of Rama. It envisages an ideal family and society. The Mahabharata written by sage Ved Vyas in Sanskrit in verses, describes the great battle between the Pandavas and the Kaurvas. The epics are the main source of information about the social, economic and political conditions prevalent in the Epic Age or during the Later Vedic period.

### Picture study:

This is the picture depicting an institution of Vedic Period.



1. Identify and name it.

**Ans.** A Gurukul

2. Describe this system/institution.

**Ans.**

A student (Brahmachari) of 7 years was sent to Gurukul (family of a teacher) where he lived with his Guru. Vedic literature, mathematics, medicines, astronomy, astrology, etc. were the subjects students would learn. They also learnt sword fighting, archery, wrestling etc. to be used in battlefields. Students served their guru and paid gurudakshina after the completion of their education, according to their ability.

3. Which Ashrama did it belong to ?

**Ans.** Brahmacharya.

### Textbook Keywords

1. **Indo-Aryans:** They were Aryans who migrated from Central Asia to India.

2. **Sapta Sindhu:** means the region of seven rivers. This was the region in which the Aryans first settled when they came to India.
3. **Brahmavarta:** means the land of the Gods. The region where the Aryans lived during the Earth Vedic Age was called Brahmavarta.
4. **Aryavarta:** means the land of Aryans. The Gangetic Plain where the Aryans settled during the Later Vedic Age was called Aryavarta.
5. **Janas:** They were the tribes into which the Aryans were organized.
6. **Gramas:** were the villages of the Aryans.
7. **Gramaniwas:** The headman of the village.
8. **Rajan:** was the chief of the tribe.
9. **Purohita:** He was the priest who performed religious ceremonies and advised the king on important matters. Senani He was the commander in-chief of the warriors and he led the forces during war.
10. **Sabha:** It was a small assembly of important members of the tribe who advised and guided the king.
11. **Samiti:** It was a large assembly where any member of the tribe could give his opinion on important matters concerning the tribe.
12. **Grihapati:** He was the eldest living male member who was the head of the family.
13. **Monogamy:** It is the custom of being married to only one person at a particular time.
14. **Swayamwara :** It was the ceremony in which the women could choose their own husbands.
15. **Soma and Sura:** were intoxicating drinks consumed by the Aryans.
16. **Varnas:** were the four classes or castes brahmanas kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras.
17. **Hereditary:** What is passed from one generation to another. from previous generation to new generation.
18. **Rajasuya Yagna:** It was performed when a king ascended the throne to confer supreme power on him.
19. **Ashvamedha Yagna:** The horse sacrifice was performed to establish undisputed authority of the king over the territory through which the horse moved unchallenged.
20. **Brahmacharya:** It was the first stage of a man's life during which he lived with his guru or teacher and received education. Grihastha It was the second stage of a person's life during which he got married and led a family life as a house holder.
21. **Vanaprastha:** It was the third stage of a person's life when he gave up his worldly life and went to the forests to meditate.
22. **Sanyasa:** It was the last stage of a person's life when he renounced all worldly ties and became an ascetic spreading the principles of religion and truth.
23. **Gurukul:** It was the house of the guru or teacher where the young boys were sent to get education.
24. **Guru dakshina:** It was paid to the guru after a student completed his education. It was paid according to the student's capacity.
25. **Dharma:** It means that every person has a moral duty to do what is right and lead a pious life.

26. **Karma:** It means that people must face the consequences of their actions, i.e.. good deeds must be rewarded and evil deeds must be punished.
27. **Transmigration of the soul:** It means the passing of a person's soul, after death, into another body.

### Questions Based on Early Vedic Civilization

#### A. Fill in the blanks.

1. The Aryans who settled in India were called **Indo-Aryans**.
2. Labourers who served people and did menial jobs were the **Shudras**.
3. The region of seven river is called the **Sapta Sindhu**.
4. The four Vedas are **Rig Veda, Atharva Veda, Sama Veda, and Yajur Veda**.
5. The two councils, the **Sabha** and the **Samiti** exercised control over the king.
6. The most important god of the early Aryans was **Indra**.

#### B. Match the following.

- |              |                                     |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Aryavarta | commander-in-chief                  |
| 2. Senani    | god of rain and thunder             |
| 3. Jana      | land of the Aryans                  |
| 4. Gramani   | tribe of the Vedic Period           |
| 5. Sabha     | headman of the village              |
| 6. Indra     | smaller assembly of selected people |

#### Answer:

- |              |                                     |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Aryavarta | land of the Aryans                  |
| 2. Senani    | commander-in-chief                  |
| 3. Jana      | tribe of the Vedic Period           |
| 4. Gramani   | headman of the village              |
| 5. Sabha     | smaller assembly of selected people |
| 6. Indra     | god of rain and thunder             |

#### C. Answer the following questions.

##### Question 1.

When did the Aryans arrive in India?

#### Answer:

The Aryans arrived in India, the period between 1,500 BCE and 1,000 BCE.

### Question 2.

Describe the various stages in which the Aryans entered India.

#### Answer:

The Aryans entered India in main two stages and took several centuries to bring India under their control. The first settled in Sapta Sindhu. The region named Brahmavarta, which means the land of the gods. The period between 1,500 BCE and 1,000 BCE, during which they lived here, is known as the Early Vedic Period. Then Aryans moved ahead and settled in Gangetic Valley, the region named Aryavarta, the period between 1,000 BCE and 600 BCE, this period known as Later Vedic Period.

### Question 3.

Name the four Vedas. How have they come down to us?

#### Answer:

**The four vedas are followings**

1. Rig Veda
2. Atharva Veda
3. Sama Veda
4. Yajur Veda

Veda have come down orally handed down form generation to generation and were finally recorded in books.

### Question 4.

Who was a rajan? What were his duties?

#### Answer:

Rajan was the chief of the tribe. He was ablest and the strongest man. His duties were to protect people from enemies and looked after their welfare.

### Question 5.

The rajan did not have absolute power. Explain.

#### Answer:

The Rajan did not have absolute power because the members of two councils (samiti and sabha) exercised control over the king. They advised and guided the king. The member.of the tribe could give his opinion on important matters. In this way Rajan did not have absolute power.

### Question 6.

How did the caste system start in Early Vedic society?

#### Answer:

The Aryans grouped themselves according to their skills in performing certain jobs. In this way the caste system start and let to development of four classes in Early Vedic society.

### Question 7.

Name the four classes in the Rig Vedic Period. Who were the members of each of these classes?

#### Answer:

The four classes in the Rig Vedic period are following.

1. **Brahmanas**— They were educated priests and scholars who performed religious rites and imparted education.
2. **Kshatriyas**— They were the soldiers and protect the tribe from outside attacks.
3. **Vaishyas**— They were the farmers, traders and craftsmen. They had to shoulder the entire responsibility of the society.
4. **Shudras**— They formed the lowest order of society and served the other three groups and did menial jobs.

### Question 8.

What were the main occupations of the Aryans?

#### Answer:

Agriculture and farming was their main occupations. The cow was considered very valuable and was mark of wealth. The trade was done by land and sea route. Barter system was in practice. The main industries were of goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, potters, leathers and physicians.

### Question 9.

What were the main forms of recreation of the Aryans?

#### Answer:

The main forms of recreations of the Aryans were horse racing, chariot racing, and hunting. They also did the gambling with dice. They were found of outdoor activities. They also like music and dance.

### Question 10.

Name the gods worshiped by the Rig Vedic Aryans. How did they worship their gods?

#### Answer:

Aryans worshiped the different forces of nature as gods and goddesses. They worshiped Indra, Agni, Surya, Varuna, Vayu, Soma, Prithvi, Usha and Yama. The Aryans did built temples for worship. They worshipped in open air by recited prayers in praise of these gods and making offerings (grain, ghee and milk) to them. The entire family took part in yagnas and other religious ceremonies.

### Question 11.

What was the position of the women in the Rig Vedic Period?

#### Answer:

In the Rig Vedic period the position of the women was high and respectable. They were given opportunities for education. Women could choose their husbands. There was no child marriage and widows were allowed to remarry. No religious function could be

completed without her presence. Some women composed verses, which is included in Rig Veda.

### Question 12.

Mention two important differences between the Aryans and the people of the Indus Valley.

#### Answer:

**Differences between the Aryans and the people of Indus Valley are following**

#### Indus Valley

1. They were idol worshippers
2. Indus Valley civilization was urban in character.
3. They were peace loving people and not knowing swords and other war weapons

#### Aryans

1. They worshiped different objects of nature. Aryan civilization was rural in character.
2. They were warrior and
3. know war weapons and their use.

#### D. State whether the following are true or false.

1. Rice was the staple diet of the Aryans.  
**False**
2. The Aryans drank intoxicating drinks like soma and sura.  
**True**
3. The dress of the Aryans consisted of a three-piece garment.  
**False**
4. Both men and women wore jewellery.  
**True**
5. The Aryans believed in one supreme God.  
**True**

#### Questions Based on Early Vedic Civilization

##### A. Fill in blanks.

1. The Later Vedic Period is also known as the **Epic Age**.
2. The two Indian epics of this period are **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata**.
3. In ancient times, Varanasi was known as **Kashi** and Awadh was known as **Kosala**
4. When a king ascended the throne, the purohita performed the **Rajasuya**
5. During the **first** stage of his life an Aryan stayed in a gurukul and received education from a guru.

6. A guru treated his students like his **own children** and the students regarded the guru as their **spiritual father**
7. **Maitreyi** and **Gargi** were two highly educated women of the Early Vedic Period.
8. In the Later Vedic Age, the classification of society into four varnas became **rigid** and **hereditary**

**B. Match the following.**

- |                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <b>Magadha</b>          | <b>creator</b>         |
| 2. <b>Ashvamedha yagna</b> | <b>destroyer</b>       |
| 3. <b>Grihastha</b>        | <b>householder</b>     |
| 4. <b>Shiva</b>            | <b>Patna and Gaya</b>  |
| 5. <b>Brahma</b>           | <b>horse sacrifice</b> |

**Answer:**

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Magadha          | Patna and Gaya  |
| 2. Ashvamedha yagna | horse sacrifice |
| 3. Grihastha        | householder     |
| 4. Shiva            | destroyer       |
| 5. Brahma           | creator         |

**C. Answer the following questions.**

**Question 1.**

Name the four kingdoms that developed from small tribal organizations.

**Answer:**

The four kingdoms were

1. Kuru (near modern Delhi),
2. Kosala (Awadh),
3. Magadha (Patna and Gaya) and
4. Kashi (Varanasi) that developed from small tribal organizations.

**Question 2.**

How did the king become more powerful during this period?

**Answer:**

The king became more powerful during this period because kingship became hereditary. The sabha and samiti lost much of their control over the king. Many new officials assistants like treasurers, collector, chamberlain had come into prominence. The king was elevated to the position of God's representative on earth.

**Question 3.**

How did the society get sharply divided during the Later Vedic Period?

**Answer:**

During the later vedic period society get sharply divided. Caste was decided by birth and not by occupations. The brahmans and kshatriyas formed the ruling class. The vaishyas were the artisans, traders and farmers. The shudras were the uneducated workers who served the other three classes.

**Question 4.**

Briefly describe the four ashramas.

**Answer:**

The life of an Aryans was divided into following four ashramas.

1. **Brahmacharya** — It was the first stage of man's life when he lived with his guru and received education.
2. **Grihastha**— It was the second stage of man's life during which he got married and led a family life as a householder.
3. **Yanaprastha**— It was the third stage of man's life when he gave up his worldly life and went into the forest to meditate.
4. **Sanayasa**— It was the last stage of a man's life when he renounced all worldly ties and became an ascetic spreading the principles of religion and truth.

**Question 5.**

What was the position of women during the Later Vedic Period?

**Answer:**

The position of women declined in Later Vedic period. She was not allowed to take part in political life. Swayamvaras were no more allowed. She was not given much respect and importance at social and religious gatherings. Women were not allowed to study Vedic literature. The birth of girl was not welcomed.

**Question 6.**

At what age was a boy sent to gurukul? What was the relationship between the guru and his students?

**Answer:**

When a boy was 7 years old. He was sent to gurukul. He stayed there till he was 25 years old. The teacher (guru) treated his students like his own children and the children regarded the teacher as their spiritual father.

**Question 7.**

What did the students do during their stay in the gurukul?

**Answer:**

The students led simple and highly disciplined lives in gurukul. They helped their guru in many ways like to cleaned house, drew water from the well, gathered wood and worked in the fields. Students had to memorize lessons which were taught orally.

**Question 8.**

What was the method of teaching in a gurukul?

**Answer:**

In a gurukul students had to memorize lesson, which were taught orally. After completing their education, the students paid guru dakshina according to their means.

**Question 9.**

What were the main occupations of the people of the Later Vedic Period?

**Answer:**

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people of the Later Vedic period. The use of iron and improved farming implements brought about increased prosperity. The people also used painted grey vessels. This Period saw the growth of towns and cities as well as the development of trade by barter system.

**Question 10.**

Mention the important features of the religion of the Later Vedic Period.

**Answer:**

New ceremonies and rituals were gaining importance day by day in the religion of Later Vedic period. The mode of worship became complex. Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva the destroyer, became the most important gods. The status of the brahmins rose up because they made rituals complicated.

**Question 11.**

What is the impact of the Aryan civilization on India?

**Answer:**

The Aryans civilization is the cradle of India culture. The Hinduism of today is based on the Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Vedic literature binds the vast majority of Indians into one nation.

**State whether the following are true or false.**

1. The Upanishads were composed during the Later Vedic Period.  
**False.**
2. Excavations indicate the use of iron during this period.  
**True.**
3. The sabha and samiti became very powerful during this period.  
**False**
4. The caste system became flexible in the Later Vedic Period.  
**False.**
5. Education in a gurukul was very expensive.  
**False.**