

# The Early Vedic Civilization

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## 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 Valley where the Aryans settled during the Later Vedic Age was called Aryavarta.
5. **Janas:** were the tribes into which the Aryans were organized.
6. **Gramas:** were the villages of the Aryans.
7. **Gramani:** was the headman of the village.
8. **Rajan:** was the chief of the tribe.
9. **Purohita:** was the priest who performed religious ceremonies and advised the king on important matters.
10. **Senani:** He was the commander in-chief of the warriors and he led the forces during war.
11. **Sabha:** was a small assembly of important members of the tribe who advised and guided the king.
12. **Samiti:** was a large assembly where any member of the tribe could give his/her opinion on important matters concerning the tribe.
13. **Grihapati:** He was the eldest living male member who was the head of the family.
14. **Monogamy:** is the custom of being married to only one person at a particular time.
15. **Swayamwara:** was the ceremony in which the women could choose their own husbands.
16. **Soma** and **sura:** were intoxicating drinks consumed by the Aryans.
17. **Varnas;** were the four classes or castes brahmanas kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras.

## EXERCISES

### A. Fill in the blanks:

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

B. Match the following:

A	B
1. Aryavarta	(a) head of the family
2. Jana	(b) smaller assembly of selected people
3. Gramani	(c) land of the Aryans
4. Sabha	(d) tribe of the Vedic Period
5. Grihapati	(e) headman of the village

Answer:

1. Aryavarta	(c) land of the Aryans
2. Jana	(d) tribe of the Vedic Period
3. Gramani	(e) headman of the village
4. Sabha	(b) smaller assembly of selected people
5. Grihapati	(a) head of the family

C. Choose the correct answer:

1. The Indo-Aryans were people who migrated to India from South Asia/South-east Asia/Central Asia.

**Ans:** The Indo-Aryans were people who migrated to India from **Central Asia**.

2. Each Aryan tribe had a chieftain known as gramani/ rajan/senani.

**Ans:** Each Aryan tribe had a chieftain known as **rajan**.

3. The commander of chief of the Aryan warriors was known as senani/rajan/purohit.

**Ans:** The commander of chief of the Aryan warriors was known as **senani**.

4. Indra/Usha/Varuna was the god of rain and thunder.

**Ans:** **Indra** was the god of rain and thunder.

5. In the Aryan society kshatriyas were the warriors/ priests/traders.

**Ans:**In the Aryan society kshatriyas were the **warriors**.

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

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

**E. Answer the following questions in one or two words/ sentences:**

**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.**

Which region in India was the first settlement of the Indo-Aryans?

**Answer:**

They first settled in the Sapta Sindhu region, i. e., the region of seven rivers.

**Question 3.**

What is our chief source of information about the early Aryans?

**Answer:**

Our chief source of information about the early Aryans is based mainly on the Rig Veda.

**Question 4.**

What role did the sabha play in the political affairs of the Aryan tribes?

**Answer:**

The sabha was a smaller assembly of important members of the tribe. They advised and guided the king. Women also took part in these assemblies.

**Question 5.**

What was a swayamwara?

**Answer:**

Swayamwara was the ceremony in which the women could choose their husbands.

**Question 6.**

How did the class system originate in the Early Vedic society?

**Answer:**

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

**Question 7.**

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

**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 warriors and knew war weapons and their use.

**F. Answer the following questions briefly:**

**Question 1.**

Give an account of the various stages of the Aryan settlement in India.

**Answer:**

The Aryans entered India in mainly two stages and took several centuries to bring India

under their control.

The first settled in Sapta Sindhu. The region named Brahmvarta, 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 2.**

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

#### **Answer:**

**The four vedas are followings:**

1. Rig Veda
2. AtharvaVeda
3. SamaVeda
4. YajurVeda

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

### **Question 3.**

How did the rajan rule his tribe? What features of the political system show that he was not an absolute ruler?

#### **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.

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 4.**

Describe briefly

1. The family life and
2. The position of the women in the Rig Vedic period?

#### **Answer:**

1. The Aryans lived in villages. Each village was composed of a number of joint families. The head of the family was the Grihapati, the eldest living male member. His decision was final and binding on all the other members.
2. 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 5.**

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 fond of outdoor activities. They also like music and dance.

**Question 6.**

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

**Answer:**

Aryans worshipped the different forces of nature as gods and goddesses. They worshiped Indra, Agni, Surya, Varuna, Vayu, Soma, Prithvi, Usha and Yama. The Aryans did not build 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 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.

**G Picture study.**

The picture below is an artist's impression of a ceremony



**Question 1.**

Name the ceremony.

**Answer:**

This is a picture of 'Swayamwara' ceremony.

**Question 2.**

During which period was this practice prevalent?

**Answer:**

This practice was prevalent in Early Vedic Period.

**Question 3.**

What does this tell us about the position of women of the period?

**Answer:**

In this period the position of the women was high and respectable women could choose their husband. There was no child marriage. No religious function could be completed without her presence.

**Question 4.**

Name the two most important gods worshiped during this period?

**Answer:**

In Early Vedic Period 'Indra, the god of rain and thunder. Agni, the god of fire were two most important gods worshiped.

**Question 5.**

Briefly discuss their religious practices. What part did women play in religious matters?

**Answer:**

Aryans worshiped the powers of nature like Surya, Vayu, Indra, Agni, Vanina and Prithvi. But they always kept in mind that 'God is one' They performs 'Yajna' and made offerings of grain, ghee, honey and milk. No religious function could be complete without women. Some women scholars have composed Rig Vedic hymns.

## OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

**Question 1.**

Describe the source of information regarding the life of the Aryans?

**Answer:**

The source of information about the life of the Aryans is based on the evidence of the 'Vedas'. The word 'Veda' means knowledge. The Vedas are a treasure house of knowledge and collective wisdom of the Aryans.

**Question 2.**

Name the religious books of Aryans ?

**Answer:**

The four Vedas Brahamanas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and the epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata) are the other important religious books of the Aryans.

**Question 3.**

What was the significance of the yajnas to the Aryans?

**Answer:**

They performed yajans to please the gods of nature to save them from enemies and make them prosperous and wealthy.

**Question 4.**

How did a 'Samiti' differ from a 'Sabha' ?

**Answer:**

The Sabha could take suggestions from anyone in the village where as Samiti was meant for the elders of the family.

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