

Prehistoric cultures in India

Understanding the prehistoric cultures of India lays the foundation for comprehending the evolution of civilization in the subcontinent. While lacking written records, these periods reveal fascinating insights into human development, migration patterns, and societal organization. These notes, focusing on the UPSC syllabus, will guide you through the major prehistoric cultures of India, highlighting key features, archaeological evidence, and their significance.

1. Paleolithic Age (300,000 BCE - 10,000 BCE):

Early Paleolithic (300,000-125,000 BCE):

- Evidence: Chopper tools, handaxes, and cleavers found in Soan Valley (Punjab), Krishna-Godavari Valley, and Narmada Valley.
- Lifestyle: Hunter-gatherers, nomadic, small bands, basic stone tools for hunting and subsistence.
- Significance: First Homo erectus in India, early tool development, adaptation to varied environments.

Middle Paleolithic (125,000-40,000 BCE):

- Evidence: Acheulian handaxes, cleavers, and scrapers from Bhimbetka rock shelters (Madhya Pradesh), Hunsgi Valley (Karnataka).
- Lifestyle: Improved toolmaking, use of fire, increased mobility, early art forms (rock paintings).
- Significance: Advancements in technology and social organization, evidence of symbolic behavior.

Upper Paleolithic (40,000-10,000 BCE):

- Evidence: Blade tools, bone tools, and ornaments from Childegarh (Ganga Valley), Mehrgarh (Baluchistan).

- Lifestyle: Microlithic tools for hunting and fishing, increased use of caves for shelter, rise in artistic expression (rock paintings, figurines).
- Significance: Diversification of tool function, the emergence of symbolic complexity, and the potential emergence of early language.

2. Mesolithic Age (10,000 BCE - 6,000 BCE):

- Evidence: Microlithic tools, bone tools, and bone ornaments from Bagor (Rajasthan), Damdama Sahib (Punjab).
- Lifestyle: Continued emphasis on hunting and gathering, adaptation to changing post-glacial climate, increased sedentism, and the emergence of specialized tools like bone fishhooks.
- Significance: Transition from Paleolithic to Neolithic adaptations, evidence of growing social complexity.

3. Neolithic Age (6,000 BCE - 2,000 BCE):

- Evidence: Earthenware pottery, polished stone tools, bone tools, and house remains from Mehrgarh, Navdatoli (Narmada Valley), and Chirand (Bihar).
- Lifestyle: Shift to settled agriculture and animal husbandry, emergence of villages, pottery for food storage and cooking, diverse tool types, evidence of trade networks.
- Significance: Introduction of agriculture and animal domestication, the rise of village communities, and the foundation for developing complex societies.

4. Chalcolithic Age (2,000 BCE - 1,000 BCE):

- Evidence: Copper artifacts, pottery with painted designs, and terracotta figurines from Ahar (Madhya Pradesh), Kayatha (Rajasthan), and Gilund (Gujarat).
- Lifestyle: Introduction of copper metallurgy, advanced agricultural practices, emergence of social hierarchy, evidence of long-distance trade.

- Significance: Technological innovation with copper, increased social stratification, a precursor to the Harappan Civilization.

5. Significance of Prehistoric Cultures:

- Understands the roots of Indian civilization and the foundation for later developments.
 - Provides insights into human evolution, technology, and adaptation to changing environments.
 - Helps analyze the transition from nomadic hunter-gatherers to settled agricultural societies.
 - Offers context for understanding subsequent historical periods, social organization, and cultural traditions.
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Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) flourished along the Indus River and its tributaries (present-day Pakistan and northwest India) from c. 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE. As one of the four great ancient civilizations along with Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China, understanding the IVC is crucial for UPSC aspirants due to its significant impact on Indian history and culture. This note summarizes key aspects of the IVC for your UPSC preparation.

Cities and Town Planning:

The two largest cities: Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, showcase remarkable urban planning with a grid-like layout, well-developed drainage systems, and impressive brick architecture.

Citadel and Lower Town: Most cities followed a bipartite structure with a fortified citadel (administrative and religious center) and a lower town for residences and workshops.

Granaries: Evidence of meticulously planned granaries suggests efficient agricultural surplus storage and centralized administration.

Society and Culture:

Social Hierarchy: Evidence points to a complex social structure but the existence of rigid class divisions remains debated.

Crafts and Trade: Skilled artisans produced pottery, jewelry, and other goods, indicating thriving trade both within the civilization and with neighboring regions.

Seals and Script: The intricate Indus seals with pictographic script remain largely undeciphered, hindering complete understanding of their language and social interactions.

Art and Religion: A sophisticated artistic culture is evident in sculptures, pottery designs, and terracotta figurines. Religious beliefs likely centered around nature worship, as evidenced by mother goddess figurines and animal motifs.

Economy and Agriculture:

Subsistence Agriculture: Primarily agrarian society with evidence of wheat, barley, and cotton cultivation.

Animal Husbandry: Domestication of cattle, sheep, and goats for food and resources.

Trade Networks: Extensive trade networks with Mesopotamia, Central Asia, and West Asia, facilitated by sophisticated riverine and land transportation systems.

Decline and Theories:

The exact reasons for the decline of the IVC remain debatable. Possibilities include environmental changes, resource depletion, internal conflicts, and the migration of Indo-Aryan people.

Aryan Invasion Theory: Now largely disregarded, it attributed the decline to the arrival of Indo-Aryan speakers, but archaeological evidence suggests a more gradual and complex process.

Legacy and Significance:

Urban Planning: Advanced urban planning principles of the IVC influenced later Indian cities and continue to inspire sustainable city design concepts.

Technology and Infrastructure: Technological advancements, including brick construction, drainage systems, and standardized weights, laid the foundation for future developments.

Art and Culture: Artistic expressions of the IVC, particularly terracotta figurines and Indus seals provide valuable insights into their beliefs and aesthetics.

Exam-oriented Tips:

Interlink various aspects: When answering UPSC questions, connect the IVC's social, economic, and political aspects to demonstrate comprehensive understanding.

Compare and Contrast: Differentiate the IVC from other contemporary civilizations like Mesopotamia and Egypt to highlight its unique features.

Relevance to Modern India: Discuss the IVC's legacy in urban planning, agriculture, and cultural influences on Indian society.

Focus on recent findings and debates: Stay updated on new archaeological discoveries and ongoing debates surrounding the IVC to showcase in-depth knowledge.

The Origin of the Indus Valley Civilization:

In 1921, the archaeologists under the wing of R.B. Daya Ram Sahni unearthed the ruins of the city of Harappa, situated on the bank of the river Ravi in West Punjab, now in Pakistan and as Harappa was the first site to be excavated, the civilization came to be known as the Harappan Civilization. In 1922-23, the excavations under Rachillas Banerjee led to the discovery of the ruins of the city of Mohenjo-Daro, located in the Larkana district of Sindh, now in Pakistan. The ruins of Mohenjo-Daro were designated a World Heritage site in 1980 by UNESCO.

The Extent of the Indus Valley Civilization:

Sustagen Dor, in southwestern Baluchistan province, Pakistan, near the Arabian Sea, about 300 miles west of Karachi; and Ropar (or Rupar), in eastern Punjab state, northwestern India, at the foot of the Shimla Hills, about 1,000 miles northeast of Sustagen Dor. Later exploration confirmed its existence as far south as the Gulf of Khambhat (Cambay), 500 miles southeast of Karachi, and as far east as the Yamuna (Jumna) River basin, 30 miles north of Delhi. Even though Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations began about the same time, it is the most comprehensive of the world's three first civilizations.

Sources to reconstruct the Indus Valley Civilization:

The ruins of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa display a wonderful knowledge of urban planning, drainage, the Great Bath, the Assembly Hall, and several other structures. The Great Bath, which had galleries and apartments as well as a quadrangle in the center, is one of them. Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro each had its citadel which was occupied by the members of the Ruling Class. The citadel is evidence that the Indus Valley civilization was an urban civilization. There were more than 2000 seals that were discovered during the civilization from various sites. The importance of Seals addresses the religious beliefs and physical features of the people. People of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were great craftsmen as the origin of the civilization has seen figures such as the bronze figure of a dancing girl, the terracotta figure of Mother Goddess, and the stone statue of a Bearded Man. The discovery of a dockyard, surrounded by a massive brick wall at Lothal in Gujarat suggests that the people practiced navigation on the coast of the Arabian Sea. The Harappans invented writing like the people of ancient Mesopotamia but the Harappan script has not been deciphered so far. Objects of Sumerian origin found in the Indus cities revealed that there were trade relations between India and Mesopotamia.

Chronology of the Indus Valley Civilization:

Well, there is no written record about the Indus Valley Civilization, many scholars suggested that it belonged to the period between 3250 and 2750 BC. It was nearly the period which witnessed the growth of ancient civilizations in Egypt and Babylonia. Now, the Radiocarbon dates indicate the origin of civilization between 2500-1700 BC, and the World History Encyclopaedia marks its origin from 7000 BC to 600 BC.

Let's see the chronology based on this :

- Pre-Harappan – c. 7000 – c. 5500 BCE: The Neolithic period is best characterized by sites like Mehrgarh, which reveal evidence of agricultural development, domestication of plants and animals, and creation of tools and ceramics

- Early Harappan – c. 5500-2800 BCE: Egypt, Mesopotamia, and possibly China have established trade relations. Communities living in small villages developed ports, docks, and warehouses near waterways
- Mature Harappan – c. 2800 – c. 1900 BCE: Large-scale urbanization and construction of major cities. Around 2600 BCE, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were both flourishing. Other cities, such as Ganeri Wala, Lothal, and Dholakia, are created using the same ideas, and the land development continues with the creation of hundreds more cities in every direction
- Late Harappan – c. 1900 – c. 1500 BCE: A wave of Aryan migration from the north, most likely the Iranian Plateau, coincided with the decline of civilization. Climate change has been linked to flooding, drought, and famine, according to physical evidence. The loss of economic ties with Egypt and Mesopotamia has also been considered as a factor
- Post Harappan – c. 1500 – c. 600 BCE: The cities have been abandoned, and the population has relocated to the south. By the time Cyrus II invaded India in 530 BCE, the civilization had already fallen.

Indus Valley Civilization Important Sites:

- The Indus Valley script has not yet been deciphered.
- Animals were domesticated like sheep, goats, and pigs.
- Crops were wheat, barley, cotton, ragi, dates, and peas.
- Trade was conducted with the Sumerians.
- Metal products were produced including those with copper, bronze, tin, and lead. Gold and silver were also known. Iron was not known to them.
- Harappan ruins were discovered by Marshall, Rai Bahadur Daya Ram Sahni, and Madho Sarup Vats.
- Mohenjodaro ruins were excavated for the first time by R.D. Banerjee, E. J. H. MacKay, and Marshall.
- The Indus Valley cities show a level of sophistication and advancement not seen in other contemporary civilizations.
- Most cities had similar patterns. There were two parts: a citadel and the lower town.

- Most cities had a Great Bath.
 - There were also granaries, 2-storied houses made of burnt bricks, closed drainage lines, excellent stormwater, and wastewater management systems, weights for measurements, toys, pots, etc.
 - In India: Kalibangan (Rajasthan), Lothal, Dholavira, Rangpur, Surkotda (Gujarat), Banawali (Haryana), Ropar (Punjab). In Pakistan: Harappa (on river Ravi), Mohenjodaro (on the Indus River in Sindh), Chanhudaro (in Sindh).
 - The civilization was first discovered during an excavation campaign under Sir John Hubert Marshall in 1921–22 at Harappa following the discovery of seals by J Fleet.
 - Civilization also was advanced in making artworks. A statuette named 'Dancing Girl' has been found in Mohenjodaro and is believed to be 4000 years old. A figure of a bearded Priest-King has also been found from Mohenjodaro.
 - Lothal was a dockyard.
 - Disposal of the dead was by burial in wooden coffins. Later on, in the H Symmetry culture, bodies were cremated in urns.
 - A large number of seals have been discovered.
 - Agriculture was the most important occupation. The first civilization to cultivate cotton.
 - No structures like temples or palaces have been found.
 - The people worshipped male and female deities. A seal which was named 'Pashupati Seal' has been excavated and it shows an image of a three-eyed figure. Marshall believed this to be an early form of Lord Shiva.
 - Excellent pieces of red pottery designed in black have been excavated. Faience was used to make beads, bangles, earrings, and vessels.
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Geographical distribution and characteristics of pastoral and farming society.

Pastoral societies dedicate their entire life taking care of animals. Although these societies are common they are slowly reducing day by day. Did you know that pastoralism started 5000 years ago? Well, these people emerged when humans had just started exploring the science behind agriculture. In this article, we will tell you the characteristics of pastoral and farming societies in great detail.

What is a Pastoral Society?

A pastoral society is a group of people who primarily perform one task of herding and taking care of agricultural animals. They live a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle. The word 'pastoral' has been derived from the Latin word pastor, meaning 'shepherd'. These people take care of herbivorous animals and use them for food and labor. They usually have animals like cows, sheep, goats, yaks, camels, and horses. Nowadays, pastoral societies are uncommon although they are still present in certain parts of the country.

Pastoral societies originate in the form of tribes. Children of pastoral people continue their parents' work and this is how this society grows. Although there is no compulsion on the children to do pastoral farming. People are constantly moving from one place to another. In this way, they can reunite with their other family members while working at the same time.

Some pastoralists travel with their herds across international borders. Most of the time this happens when the pastoralist is searching for new grazing or trade. Such activities can be a big problem for the government because such activities are informal and beyond the control of the government. Mollisol lands witness pastoral farming on a large scale.

Some examples of pastoral farming are as follows:

- Samburu of East Africa
- Maldhari of Gujarat
- Bharwad in Bengal
- Bhutia in North India
- Rabari of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Punjab

Characteristics of Pastoral and Farming Society:

Pastoralists were focused on taking care of animals and raising livestock. They lived a very simple life rather than having a luxurious life. This is because these people loved having a personal connection with nature. Another reason is that they were not able to earn a lot of money.

Geographical Distribution:

The geographical distribution ranges from the NorthWest Frontier and Kashmir, over the Gangetic fields to the locales in upper east India. Apart from these regions Vindhya, Malwa, and Maharashtra were used by the pastoral societies. The rock shelter of the Ghaligai forms the baseline in Swat–Chitral. More than 30 Neolithic sites have been found in the Kashmir valley.

Early Agricultural-Pastoral Communities:

The early agricultural–pastoral communities used to reside in the Vindhyan scope of southern Uttar Pradesh. They were also present in Koldihwa and Kunjhun. The community first emerged in the Neolithic period of the Stone Age.

The reason why these pastoral societies were emerging in the Neolithic period is because during that period humans were doing agriculture on a rapid scale.

There was a need for people who could take care of animals and use them for labor. People from the pastoral societies used microliths – small weapons made of flint or chert which are used to hunt smaller birds and animals and stone tomahawks. Although in the start these people were not responsible for pastoral farming. Instead, their main occupation was to yield grains of developed rice.

Pastoral and Farming Communities in the Prehistoric Age

Neolithic Age

In the Neolithic age, the people who were a part of the pastoral society had the primary task of finding food. This is because people didn't have an in-depth idea of how agriculture works and humans back then used to find food instead of producing one. These people used to settle down in the form of ranchers or stock breeders. These Neolithic societies used to reside in the Jhelum Valley, Garo, and North Cachar slopes.

Chalcolithic Age

After the Harappan civilization, the Chalcolithic societies emerged. These societies used to range from the Banas and Berach bowls in the upper east of Udaipur through Malwa. They were also residing in western Maharashtra to the Bhima Valley. These people used chipped stone devices and other tools made from copper.

Early Iron Phase

During this phase, there was a development in settlement, agriculture, and economy. Ironworking started in Malwa around 1100 BC. The pastoral society started using tools made from iron.

Cross-border pastoralism

Cross-border pastoralism is when pastoralists travel with their herds across international borders. Most of the time this happens when the pastoralist is searching for new grazing or trade.

pastoral communities

A pastoral society is a group of people who primarily perform one task of herding and taking care of agricultural animals. They live a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle. The word 'pastoral' has been derived from the Latin word pastor, meaning 'shepherd'.

horticultural and pastoral society

In horticultural societies, simple hand tools like hoes are used to cultivate crops. On the other hand, in pastoral societies, the people use animals like sheep, goats, and camels for food and transportation.

a pastoral society based upon

A pastoral society based upon pastoralism. Their primary task is tending herds.

pastoral societies exist today

Most pastoral societies nowadays live in Mongolia, parts of Central Asia, and East African locations. Unfortunately, they are not growing as before. The reason behind this is the development of technology and low income.

Vedic society-Vedic texts- change from Rigvedic to later Vedic phases.

1. Vedic Society

The Vedic period or Vedic age is the period between 1500 BC and 600 BC. They were the next major civilization after the Indus Valley Civilization. During this period Vedas, the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism, were composed in the northern Indian subcontinent. The Vedas are religious texts which form the basis of Hinduism. The Vedas also explain how the people used to live in that period and how their behavior was.

These documents help in studying the Vedic society and its culture. The Vedic period can be categorized into two parts: The Early Vedic Period or Rig Vedic Period and the Later Vedic Period or Painted Grey Ware Phase. The societies during both these times have different characteristics. In this article, we will tell you more about these two societies in great detail.

The Aryans

- The Aryans are the foreigners who had migrated to the Indus Valley and Ganges Plain
- Now, it is not sure where the Aryans came from. Some believe that their homeland is in the Caspian Sea in Central Asia, others believe they come from the Russian Steppes
- The word 'Aryan' comes from the Sanskrit language which means 'noble people'
- The Indo-Aryans represented the Indo-Iranian tribes
- The Vedic age started with the Aryans. These people spoke Sanskrit and lived semi-nomadic

Early Vedic Period or Rig Vedic Society (1500 BC – 1000 BC):

In the start, the Aryans used to live on the land which is commonly referred to as the 'Sapta Sindhu' which means the Land of the Seven Rivers.

These seven rivers are as follows:

- Sindhu (Indus)
- Vipash (Beas)
- Vitasta (Jhelum)
- Parushni (Ravi)
- Asikni (Chenab)
- Shutudri (Satluj)
- Saraswati

Let's understand their living structure in detail:

Political Structure:

- The government was structured with a King known as Rajan
- Rashtra was the largest political unit
- When multiple families were formed together they were referred to as 'grama' and the leader of this group was called 'grammar'
- Groups of villages that were formed together were called 'visu' and the leader of the group was referred to as 'vishayapati'

Social Structure:

- During this time women were respected and had the authority to become part of major committees in society such as Sabhas and Samitis. Most of the women were poets: Ghosa, Viswavara, Apala and Lopamudra
- Among all the cattle, cows were given more importance

- Monogamy which means having a relationship with one partner at a time was practised
- Although royal people were practising polygamy which means they were getting married to multiple people

Economic Structure:

- The main occupation was agriculture and most of them were pastoral and cattle-rearing people
- Horse chariots and plows were also present
- To make cotton and woolen fabrics spinning was used
- The barter system prevailed at first but, later it was transformed into gold coins called 'Mishka'
- Rivers were used for transportation

Religion:

- People used to worship natural forces like earth, fire, wind, rain, and thunder
- The most prominent god was Indra (Thunder)
- The natural forces were given the name of gods which are as follows: Prithvi (earth), Agni (fire), Varuna (rain), and Vayu (wind), and the female gods were Ushas and Aditi
- There are no temples and idol worship
- Later Vedic Civilization or Painted Grey Ware Phase (1000 BC – 600 BC):
- In this period the Aryans had settled in the western and eastern UP (Kosala) and Bihar.

Political Structure:

- The political committee's Samiti and the Sabha were not present
- The larger kingdoms were given two names: 'Mahajanapadas' and 'Rashers'
- The power of the king had increased and various sacrifices and rituals were performed by him like Rajasuya (consecration ceremony), Asvamedha (horse sacrifice), and Vajpeyi (chariot race)

Social Structure:

- The Varna system became an important part and the society was divided into four divisions: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras
- The Brahmins and Kshatriyas had higher positions and were given more respect
- Women were not given a lot of power and authority and were considered inferior to men. They were also not allowed to attend political assemblies
- Child marriages were common

Economic Structure:

- Forests were cut down to make the land for cultivation
- Agriculture was still the main occupation
- Carpentry, pottery, leatherwork, and metalwork had become significant
- Two gold coins i.e. stamina and Mishka were used for trading
- Silver coins like Krishna had also become a part of trading
- Foreign trading with the regions that were far off like Babylon and Sumeria also started

Religion:

- Prajapathi (the creator), Vishnu (the protector) and Rudra (the destroyer) were worshipped by the people instead of Indra and Agni
- People started praying to God
- The priestly class had more power than others and they started making the rules of the rites and rituals
- People were unhappy with this and started protesting against the priestly class. Due to this Buddhism and Jainism emerged

Vedic Literature:

The four Vedas are as follows:

Rig Veda:

The Rig Veda was composed during the Early Vedic Age and is one of the oldest known Vedic Sanskrit texts. It consists of 1028 hymns and is classified into 10 mandalas

Yajur Veda:

In Yajur Veda there were formulas and mantras written. These rules need to be followed during sacrifices

Sama Veda:

The Sama Veda has a collection of melodies and chants. The words of Rig Veda are converted into music

Atharva Veda:

Atharva Veda consists of spells, prayers, charms, and hymns. The hymns help in curing illness with herbs, gaining a lover or partner, maintaining world peace, and describing the nature of good and evil

Mahabharata and Ramayana were also composed during this period.

2. Vedic Text

Vedic texts are an integral component of the early Vedic period of India. This period began with the formation of many kingdoms in the northwestern parts of India. The Vedic culture is associated with the emerging domains and communities such as Mahajanapadas and the beginning of the Mauryan empire. The Vedic period was the prime period where the sudden growth of literature, especially the influence of Sanskrit literature, began. From this period India never looked back on because of substantial development and cultural advancements in the society. In this article, you can expect to learn everything about the Vedic period, from when the early Vedic period began and the importance of Vedic texts in those days.

What are Vedas?

- The Vedas came into existence during the period of the Indo-Aryan civilization and were given the designation of the highest sacred book of all time in Hinduism
- The Vedas work to provide solutions to the problems faced by ordinary people in solving traditional problems in life with the help of imparting spiritual knowledge
- The Vedas are treated as the language of some God, which serves the purpose of getting a fixed vision in life and getting some wisdom and knowledge to face the test of time with bravery and hope
- The Vedic texts were the proven scriptures ever followed to check the actions based on legal, social, domestic, and religious customs
- The Vedic texts were the first hand-written wisdom book made by a human being
- The early Vedic period began around 1700 BCE

Who Wrote These Vedic Texts?

- The official paperback version and document version of this precious Vedic period literature was proposed by V K. Dwaipayana around the period of 1500 BC. As per the legends, the Vedas have been told to be given to the Indian sages a long time ago by the gods
- The insightful texts were passed down from one generation to another by a regular recitation of the ancient sacred texts
- Going back to the time of origin of the Vedic texts, everything started after the disputed invasion theory of Aryans. It was believed that the actual origin of the Sanskrit language came from the Indo-European dialects

Classification Of The Vedic Texts

- The Vedas comprise four pillars of Indian literature: the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda, and the Atharva Veda
- These four components of Vedas, when combined are called “Chaturvedi,” Each component of the Vedic texts contained four aspects of the literature, the rituals (Brahmans), the philosophies (Upanishads), the theologies (Aranyakas), and the hymns (Samhitas)

There are four categories of Vedas, and each Veda from the Chaturveda has these four aspects.

- The Brahmanas have to deal with the teaching about the perception and respective religious responsibilities and duties that everyone should do
- The Aranyakas are also called forest texts that serve the purpose of providing meditation to the ascetics, the people who deal with mysticism in the forest
- The Upanishads are the end portions of each Vedas. It has to do with providing wisdom and lessons every common man should learn to face the test of life wisely

Four Pillars Of Early Vedic Period

Although Vedas are not very common nowadays, you'll rarely see people infatuated or interested in reading these historical Vedic texts. But, there is no doubt in stating the fact that the original foundation of Hinduism that is "Sanatan Dharma" which means a universal religion, is the product of these Vedic texts

Rig Veda: The Rig Veda is a collection of inspired hymns and information on the deities of Gods from the Aryans community. The Rig Veda is the oldest book that contains details of the Vedic period in the Sanskrit language. The Rig Veda comprises 1028 hymns, which it has 10,600 paragraphs, the hymns are written in the form of eight 'astakas, that has eight chapters or "adahyays". In total, Rig Veda has 10 books (mandalas).

Sama Veda: Some of the verses present in the Sama Veda have been derived from the Rig Veda itself. The Sama Veda is a book that has a collection of musical notes and melodies (samans). The difference in all the teaching and wisdom from the texts of Rig Veda has been given a form of mantras for making it easier to recite in prayers and the application of the Sama Veda comes while chanting the mantras.

Yajur Veda: The word "Yajur" has been derived from the original word "Yajus" which means sacrificial texts. The Yajur Veda has to serve its purpose by being a guidebook or helpbook for the priests or sages by imparting them practical knowledge based on demands in the ceremonial religion. The priests are involved in sacrificial acts while muttering the sacrificial poems and sacrificial Vedic texts.

Atharva Veda: The Atharva Veda is also known as the book of spells. The Atharva Veda holds the second most importance of these four Vedas after the Rig Vedas when it comes to sociology and history. The Atharva Veda has hymns and poems just like the Rig Veda but in a more sophisticated manner. The hymns of the Atharva Veda have major portions of magic incantations and charms written in the form of more diverse characters and easy language.

Vedic society Religion- Upanishads thought political and social organization

The Vedic period began between the end of the Indus Valley Civilisation and the writing of the Vedas in the northern Indian subcontinent. The people who developed Vedic culture were known as Aryans. The Vedic period saw the emergence of a hierarchy of social classes and a change in the political life of the Vedic period. The Vedas provide aspects of life during this period that have served as the main sources for comprehending the Vedic period. The Vedas were remembered verbally, but by the end of the Bronze Age, the Vedas had been written down in manuscripts.

The Vedic Period

Vedic age is divided into two parts:

1. Early Vedic age (1500 BC- 1000 BC).
2. Later Vedic Age (1000 BC-600 BC).

The Political Life of the early Vedic Period

The political life of the Early Vedic period was essentially a tribal polity, with the tribal head at its center. Jana was the name of the tribe, while Rajana was the name of the tribal chief. With the support of other tribal members and two tribal assemblies, Sabha and Samiti, Rajana managed the tribe's affairs. The Sabha was made up of the tribe's elders, whilst the Samiti was responsible for policy decisions and political business. Women were authorized to participate in Sabha and Vidhata proceedings. The two types of Purohita, Vasishtha, and Vishwamitra aided the King in day-to-day administration. Because there was no such thing as a Kingdom, the King did not have a regular army. In reality, the Rig Vedic King ruled over a tribe rather than a monarchy.

Let us know about the political life of the later Vedic age:**Political Organisation:**

Janapadas merged to become Mahajanapadas, which were larger kingdoms. Kings, who possessed greater power, began executing numerous rites and sacrifices (horse sacrifice, for example) to strengthen their positions. Many titles were bestowed upon kings, including Samrat, rajavisajanan, and others. During the rig Vedic period, bodies such as Sabha and Samiti perished.

Caste System:

During the political life of the later Vedic age, the caste system was established. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras were the four varnas of society. Brahmins and Kshatriyas were given higher status than the Shudras, who were forced to serve them.

Economic Situation:

Forests were being removed, and areas were being cultivated at an increasing rate. Leatherwork, metalwork, and other industrial operations became specialized. Internal and external trade became more extensive as well. Vaishyas were interested in trade and commerce. Coins were used as a medium of exchange.

Religious Belief:

Worshipping nature has lost its significance. It became important to worship the creator, protector, and destroyer. Prayer's importance waned, and sacrifices and ceremonies took their place. The priesthood became a hereditary profession, and its regulations governed the sacrifices and ceremonies. The conclusion of this time saw a lot of opposition to priestly dominance.

Parsimonious Life:

According to all accounts, in the political life of the late Vedic period, the later Vedic Aryans developed the concept of a parsimonious perfect life because rituals and functions were not the only means of earning success in this world of bliss in paradise. As a result, the concepts of Tapas and Brahmacharya (chastity) developed, resulting in the same or significantly more important outcomes. Tapa connotes introspection, which is accompanied by bodily agony. A self-denying individual renounced common life and surrendered to isolation, practicing all self-denying rehearses in the belief that they would gain heaven and produce “spiritualist, additional standard, and superhuman resources.” During the Epic period, religious austerity was widely practiced.

The Status of Women in the Vedic Period

1. Women were treated with respect during the political life of the later Vedic period. There was no gender discrimination, and men and women were treated equally.
2. Vedic society was a libertarian society. Females had the same level of freedom as their male counterparts. Boys and girls had equal access to education. They had unlimited independence in the family.
3. Women were regarded as dominant in the home and had complete autonomy. The place of manufacturing was at home. Clothing spinning and weaving were done at home. Women also assisted their husbands in agricultural endeavors. On financial concerns, the husband used to consult his wife.
4. Daughters who were not married had a share of their father's property. In the absence of a boy, the daughter held complete legal rights to her father's possessions. Mother's estate was split evenly among her sons and unmarried daughters following her death.
5. The woman was regarded as having an equal role in social and religious life.

In the political life of the Vedic period, Brahmavadini is a woman who studies Vedas after upanayana and then marries, while sad vadhu is a woman who marries immediately after upanayana and then studies Vedas.

Political Organisation of the Vedic Period

Initially, the Indo-Aryans of the Vedic Period were inhabited to live on the land named Sapta Sindhu. It was the land of the holy seven rivers of India that have a distinct past and how people here lived in the tribes, instead of kingdoms.

Role of Sabha and Samiti

Knowing that the individuals were divided into different tribes. The tribes were being led by Rajan, who was considered the chief of the tribe. However, the sovereignty of the chief was restricted by the tribal councils, known as sabha and samiti. It was in the hands of the sabha and samiti to provide good and promising governance to the people of the tribes. Rajan being restricted, couldn't accede to the throne without having it initially approved by the tribal councils.

Role of Rajan

Having the responsibility of protecting the tribal people of their tribes, Rajan along with purohit, senna, splash, and duties helped in maintaining prosperity and peace within the tribe. Initially, the chief didn't have unlimited rights, however, in the later Vedic period the tribes formed kingdoms in place of living as individual tribes. It was the duty of the Rajan to maintain social order and protect his kingdom from foes.

Influence of Kings

As society moved toward the side of development, the kingdoms were headed by Kings. Sabha and samiti still existed but the dominance of the kings increased in the latter part of the Vedic Period. It was here that the act of hereditary kingship started and people would see the kings as the Samrat or the supreme ruler of the kingdom. The worthiest king was selected through competitions like games of dice, chariot races, and cattle raids.

New Wave of State Formation

The final stage of the Vedic period, the period of the Upanishads, marked the onset of the new wave of state formation. Thus, the process of urbanization started in the final stage of the Vedic Period. This was characterized by the growth of population, social changes, trade networks, and economic changes.

Social Organisation of the Vedic Period

In terms of social organization, the Indo-Aryans have majorly focused on the system of social differentiation.

Varna System

It was the Indo-Aryans of the Vedic Period that introduced the system of Varnas into the social structure. The Vedic society came to be divided into four social groups, namely Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudra. Among the four social groups, the lead position was dominated by the Warriors and the Brahmanas. Initially, the class of Brahmanas was one of the sixteen priestly classes of the society. However, with time, the rest were removed from society and the society was overshadowed by the domination of warriors and Brahmanas.

Supremacy of Brahmanas

It should be noted that it was only Vedic society in India that was characterized by the supremacy of the Brahmanas among the four social groups. This peculiar development didn't occur in the other Aryan societies located outside India. Brahmanas would conduct various rituals and sacrifices for themselves and their clients. The words of the King and the Brahmanas would go hand in hand, where the Brahmanas would pray for the king to win the war and the king in return would not do anything to harm or hurt the sentiments of the Brahmanas.

The difference between Warrior nobles with the Brahmanas

There would be many times when the Kshatriyas and the Brahmanas would come into conflict with each other. Kshatriyas were part of the four social groups, who belonged to the sect of the warrior nobles of the society. The conflict would solely be based on gaining the supreme position among the four social groups. Nonetheless, there would be times when both these may collude to deal with supremacy with the people belonging to the lower category. Thus, the domination of warriors and Brahmanas over the lower orders would adhere to social differentiation.

Formation of the State and urbanization, from the Mahajanapadas to the Nanda's

In Indian history, the three centuries between 600 and 300 BCE are significant because they saw several profound shifts. These shifts are discernible in political, material, and cultural spheres at the same time.

Several geographical political formations, referred to as mahajanapadas in ancient textual sources and primarily located in north India, developed for the first time in Indian history.

Urbanization also occurred in larger regions of northern India. The subcontinent's first phase of urban development began with the demise of the Harappan civilization, which gave rise to cities and city life once more. The Ganga Valley, located in the northern region of India, has witnessed firsthand the intricacies of urban socio-economic and cultural life.

Approximately 600–300 BCE is when the second urbanization occurred in Indian history. The political history of northern India begins to take shape about the sixth century BCE, and historical references to rulers and religious leaders found in various literary traditions can be verified.

In an area spanning from Gandhara in the northwest to Anga in eastern India, as well as the Malwa region, state polities, and societies began to take shape in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Sixteen strong states (solasa-mahajanapada) that flourished in the early 6th century BCE are listed in Buddhist and Jaina writings. There have to have been other chiefdoms, lesser states, and tribal principalities in addition to these.

Sixteen large territorial polities (solace Mahajan padas) are identified in the Anuttara Nikaya:

MAHAJANAPADA	CAPITAL
1. KASHI	VARANASI
2. KOSALA	SRAVASTI
3. ANGA	CHAMPA
4. MAGADHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAJAGRIHA-GIRIVRAJA (First Capital) • PATALIPUTRA (Later Capital)
5. VRIJI	VAISHALI
6. MALLA	PAVA
7. CHEDI	SUKTIMATI
8. VATSA	KAUSAMBI
9. MATSAYA	VAIRAT
10. SURASENA	MATHURA
11. KURU	HASTINAPURA
12. PANCHALA	i. AHICHHATRA ii. KAMPILYA
13. ASMAKA	GOVARDHANA
14. AVANTI	i. UJJAYINI ii. MAHISMATI
15. GANDHARA	TAKSHASHILA
16. KHAMBOJA	-

1. Kashi

Kashi was a powerful Mahajan pada located in the eastern Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Varanasi, which is still a major religious and cultural center in India today. Kashi was known for its wealth, its fertile land, and its strong commercial ties with other parts of India and the world. The city was also a major center of learning and religion, and it was home to many important Buddhist and Hindu monasteries and temples.

2. Kosala

Kosala was another powerful mahajanapada located in the eastern Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Sravanti, which is also an important religious center in India today. Kosala was known for its fertile land, its strong military, and its vibrant culture. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Prasenjit, who was a contemporary of the Buddha.

3. Anga

Anga was a mahajanapada located in the eastern Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Champa, which is now a part of Bangladesh. Anga was known for its fertile land, its strong commercial ties with other parts of India, and its production of fine textiles. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Brahmadatta, who was a contemporary of the Buddha.

4. Magadha

Magadha was a mahajanapada located in the eastern Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Rajgir, which is now a part of Bihar. Magadha was known for its fertile land, its strong military, and its ambitious rulers. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Bimbisara, Ajatasatru, and Chandragupta Maurya, who went on to establish the Maurya Empire.

5. Vriji

Vriji was a mahajanapada located in the eastern Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Vaishali, which is now a part of Bihar. Vriji was known for its democratic government, which was based on a system of assemblies and councils. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Mahavira, the founder of Jainism.

6. Malla

Malla was a mahajanapada located in the eastern Gangetic Plain. Its capitals were Pava and Kusinara, which are now a part of Uttar Pradesh. Malla was known for its strong military, its vibrant culture, and its production of fine textiles. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Siddhodana, the father of the Buddha.

7. Chedi

Chedi was a mahajanapada located in the western Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Suktimati, which is now a part of Madhya Pradesh. Chedi was known for its fertile land, its strong military, and its production of fine horses. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Shishunaga, who founded the Shishunaga dynasty.

8. Vatsa

Vatsa was a mahajanapada located in the western Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Kaushambi, which is now a part of Uttar Pradesh. Vatsa was known for its fertile land, its strong commercial ties with other parts of India, and its production of fine textiles. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Udayana, who was a contemporary of the Buddha.

9. Matsya

Matsya was a mahajanapada located in the western Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Viratanagara, which is now a part of Rajasthan. Matsya was known for its fertile land, its strong military, and its production of fine horses. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Virata, who was a contemporary of the Pandavas and Kauravas.

10. Surasena

Surasena was a mahajanapada located in the western Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Mathura, which is now a major city in Uttar Pradesh. Surasena was known for its fertile land, its strong commercial ties with other parts of India, and its production of fine textiles. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Krishna, the legendary hero of the Mahabharata.

11. Kuru

Kuru was a mahajanapada located in the western Gangetic Plain. Its capital was Hastinapura, which is now a part of Uttar Pradesh. Kuru was known for its fertile land, its strong military, and its production of fine horses. The kingdom was ruled by a series of powerful kings, including Pandu and Dhritarashtra, the fathers of the Pandavas and Kauravas.

12. Panchala

Panchala was a mahajanapada located in the western Gangetic Plain. Its capitals were Ahichatra and Kampilya, which are now a part of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab respectively

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