

The Later Vedic Age

EXERCISES

Question 1.

Mention any two of the religious texts which serve as sources to reconstruct the later Vedic Age.

Answer:

The Brahmanas and the Aranyakas (forest texts).

Question 2.

Mention any two archaeological sources to reconstruct the later Vedic Age.

Answer:

Iron tools and pottery.

Question 3.

Name any two newer regions occupied by the Aryans during the later Vedic period.

Answer:

During the later Vedic period, the Aryans occupied the region along the course of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna—Bihar, vast regions to the east such as Kosala (east Uttar Pradesh).

Question 4.

Mention the important evidence to suggest that Southern India had also become familiar with Iron in the later Vedic Age.

Answer:

Megalithic Monuments such as dolmens and cromlechs have been found all over South India. The word 'megalith' means large stone (mega + lith). A dolmen or a cromlech is a megalithic tomb with a large flat stone laid on upright ones. Iron tools, arrows and fragments of rice and other grains have been found, besides the skeletons of the persons buried in these graves. This is enough to show the transition from Copper and Bronze Age Culture to the Iron Age.

Question 5.

Mention any two of the Ashrams in the life of a man in Aryan society.

Answer:

The Brahmacharya Ashram and the Grihastha Ashram.

Question 6.

Mention the important subjects included in the courses of Gurukul education.

Answer:

Ethics, Military Science, Astronomy and Astrology were included in the course of study. Mathematics, Law and Grammar were also important subjects of study besides Vedic literature.

Question 7.

Name the sacrifice that was performed by a king at the time of his coronation during the later Vedic age.

Answer:

The Ashvamedha sacrifice was performed by a king at the time of his coronation during the later Vedic age.

Question 8.

Name any two newer crops produced by the later Vedic Aryans.

Answer:

Varhi (rice) and wheat.

Question 9.

Name the important deities of the later Vedic period.

Answer:

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Lord Rama and Lord Krishna became popular deities during the Epic period. Durga, Kali and Parvati emerged as the important female deities.

Question 10.

Name the two Epics and their authors.

Answer:

The two Epics are the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Ramayana was written by the sage Valmiki and the Mahabharata is believed to be the work of Ved Vyasa.

Question 11.

What is the message of the Bhagavad Gita?

Answer:

The Bhagavad Gita lays down stress on keep oneself doing hard work in the long run in respect of seeking any advantage out of it as it is the will of God to bestow his servant

with the reward that he deserves. Also, it teaches; Let you not scare the Death as it is the physical body which dies but the Soul is immortal.

Question 12.

Mention briefly the rituals and sacrifices of the later Vedic Aryans?

Answer:

Sacrifice became the most important part of the religion – of the later Vedic Aryans. The ceremonies could be performed only by professional priests, many superstitious beliefs in spirits, spells and charms became part of their religion. Practice of Tapasya or penance occupied an important place in the religion. They believed in the principles of Karma (action) and Moksha (salvation).

Question 13.

Mention the reasons for the importance of the Brahmins (priestly class) in the later Vedic society.

Answer:

In the later Vedic period, the simple religious practices became complicated and ritualistic which were varied handled by the priests themselves as they had a vast knowledge of enchanting mantras in a meaningful manner to perform the holy rituals for a purpose, wish or some other reason. Hence, the priestly class was always given a prominent position in society in the later Vedic period.

STRUCTURED QUESTIONS

Question 1.

What information do we gather from the later Vedic literature in respect of:

- (a) Spread of Vedic Civilization to many New Regions.
- (b) Role of Iron in later Vedic Economy.

Answer:

(a)

Aryas-expansion during the later Vedic age: As the population increased, the Aryans moved along the course of the river Ganga and Yamuna. The scene shifted from Punjab to the land of the Kurus which was the region round delhi. Further, they occupied vast regions to the east, such as Kosala (east Uttar Pradesh), Kashi (Varanasi), Videha (north Bihar) and Magadha (south Bihar). The name 'Vangas' occurs in one of the Aranyakas (forest texts), which refers to the people of Eastern Bengal. The Aitareya Brahmana mentioned the Andhra, who in modern times are the Telugu-speaking people of the southern India. Thus, the territories occupied by the later Vedic Aryans, comprised the whole of India to the north of the Narmada and some regions even to the south of that river.

(b)

In context of the use of Iron extensively during the later Vedic Age, the given headlines are described as under: The regions in which the use of Iron was fairly widespread during the later Vedic Age, they were the modern States of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, parts of Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Iron weapons such as arrowheads and spearheads and tools like— knives, axes and plough shares have been discovered from various painted Grey Ware sites. But in some parts of the country, the Red Ware (pottery) were more common than the Polished Grey Ware.

Question 2.

Describe the social changes evident in the later Vedic period with reference to:|

(a) Position of Women (b) Caste System

Answer:

With reference to the given heads the social changes evident in the later Vedic period are described as under:

(a) Position of Women: The honor or respect that the women of the Rig Vedic age had enjoyed had been lessened towards the later Vedic age. Although they continued to be associated with all religious rites, the rules of marriage underwent a change. If monogamy was the ideal, polygamy was practiced, at least in higher sections of society. Widow-marriage, which was fairly common in the Rig Vedic age, was now regarded with disfavor. But the education which some women received, was of high order. The discourses of women philosophers are preserved in the

(b) Caste System: The Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed powers and privileges denied to the Vaisyas and the By this time, besides the four major Varnas, many other caste groups had come into being like — the merchants, the chariot-makers, the smiths, the carpenters, the tanners, the fishermen etc. Membership of a caste had become hereditary' and there was also a fixation of occupation on the basis of one's caste-grouping. The so-called untouchables were forced to live in separate settlements outside the village or the town boundaries.

Question 3.

In the later Vedic Age there was a marked change in the economic life of the Aryans. In this context describe :

- (a) The growing importance of Agriculture
- (b) Variety of Crafts
- (c) Changes in the field of Trade and Commerce

Answer:

In context of the marked change in the economic life of the Aryans, the given headlines are described as follows:

(a) The growing importance of Agriculture:

Rearing of cattle and other domestic animals continued, but it was now less important than agriculture. In addition to Yava or barley, a new crop Vrihi or rice, had assumed

greater significance. Fragments of both barley and rice have been found at Hastinapur and other place. The later Vedic Aryans produced many other crops such as wheat millet and sugarcane.

(b) Variety of Crafts:

Different kinds of crafts had been introduced. The main reason behind it, could be the use of iron in large quantities. Iron weapons and tools have been recovered from various Painted Grey Ware or Black and Red Ware Sites. Crafts, such as pottery, leather working, carpentry, making of jewelry and the manufacture of glass also flourished. Crafts specialization had now become more common than, in early Vedic period. Thus, chariot-making developed as an occupation different from that of carpentry.

(c) Change in the field of Trade and Commerce:

Important changes can be noticed in the field of trade and commerce. Commerce was made easier by the use of such units of value as nishka and satmana. The reference to ships, indicates a flourishing in land maritime trade. A class of hereditary merchants (Vanija) existed now. Many of the professions were organised into guilds, which in later ages, controlled prices and ensured the quantity of the goods.

Question 4.

Explain the religious beliefs and forms of worship during the later Vedic Age with reference to : Spiritual Philosophy of the Upanishads

Answer:

Spiritual Philosophy of the Upanishads:

Towards the end of the later Vedic phase, a new trend is visible. The Upanishads do not deal with rituals or sacrifices. They deal with the higher knowledge and explain the relationship between Jeeva (individual soul) and Brahma (Supreme Soul or God). A major concept of the Upanishads is "the essential unity of all religions, of all spiritual paths." The Truth is One, the wise call it by many names.