

LATER VEDIC AGE

Estimated from 1000 BCE to 600 BCE

❖ GEOGRAPHY & SETTLEMENTS

- Continuation of Indo-Aryan settlements in the Indian subcontinent
- Expansion towards the Gangetic plains and eastern regions
- Major regions:- Gangetic plains (Panchala, Kuru, Kosala, Videha), Eastern regions (Anga, Magadha)
- Settlements along the banks of rivers like the Ganges, Yamuna, and Sarayu

❖ SOCIETY & SOCIAL STRUCTURE

- Evolution of complex social structure and varna system
- Varna system:- Brahmins (priestly class), Kshatriyas (warrior/administrative class), Vaishyas (merchant/agricultural class), Shudras (labourer/servant class)
- Emergence of new social groups, including skilled artisans and traders (shreshthi)
- Development of urban centres and fortified cities
- Presence of powerful monarchies and ruling dynasties

❖ RELIGION & RITUALS

- Continuation of polytheistic religion

- Vedic deities revered, but new deities introduced
- **Prajapati** (creator god), **Rudra** (destructive god), **Vishnu** (preserving god), and **others worshipped**; Rigvedic gods lost their prominence
- Rituals and sacrifices (**yajnas**) held with increased complexity
- **Emergence of ritual manuals (Brahmanas)** to guide religious practices
- Role of Brahmins as custodians of rituals and religious knowledge

❖ LITERATURE & SCHOLARSHIP

- Compilation and preservation of **Vedic texts**
- **Brahmanas**: Prose texts explaining rituals and symbolic interpretations
- **Aranyakas**: Forest treatises with philosophical and meditative content
- **Upanishads**: Philosophical texts exploring concepts of the self, reality, and liberation (moksha)
- Emergence of early philosophical and speculative thought

❖ ECONOMY & LIVELIHOOD

- Transition to settled **agricultural communities**
- Expansion of agricultural practices, including **rice cultivation**
- **Cattle wealth** and **agriculture** continued to be important
- Increased trade and commerce, with organised guilds (srenis)
- **Barter system continued**, with the introduction of coins (**punch-marked coins**) in later phase

❖ POLITICAL SYSTEM & GOVERNANCE

- Emergence of powerful monarchies (**Mahajanapadas**)
- **Kingship** based on **hereditary** succession
- **Sabha** (**council of elders**) and **Samiti** (**assembly of people**) for decision-making
- Sabha becoming more **aristocratic** in nature
- Rise of powerful monarchies like **Magadha** under the **Nandas** and **Mauryas**

❖ SETTLEMENTS & URBANIZATION

- Development of **fortified cities** and **urban centres**
- Planning and construction of cities with well-defined roads and public spaces
- Presence of **royal palaces**, **administrative buildings**, and **public marketplaces**
- Increased specialisation in **crafts and trade**
- Shift towards urban lifestyle and growth of urban populations

❖ TECHNOLOGY & SKILLS

- Advancements in **iron** technology, leading to **the Iron Age**
- **Iron tools and weapons** used in **agriculture and warfare**
- Continued expertise in **metalworking**, including **bronze** and **copper**
- Development of urban infrastructure like water reservoirs and canals
- **Skill** in **pottery**, **weaving**, **carpentry**, and other crafts

❖ LITERARY WORKS & PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

- Compilation and preservation of the **Vedic texts**

- Emergence of **early philosophical** and speculative thought
- Upanishads exploring concepts of **Brahman, Atman, and liberation (moksha)**
- Early seeds of philosophical systems like **Vedanta and Sankhya**

❖ DECLINE & TRANSITION

- Gradual transition to the **post-Vedic** period and the **rise of new religions and philosophies**
- **Decline of Vedic** rituals and the emergence of alternative religious practices
- **Rise of Jainism and Buddhism** challenging traditional Vedic beliefs
- Emergence of regional states and new dynasties
- Transformation of the **political, social, and religious landscape**