3.0 Objectives

From this unit, we can understand,

- The Vedic people and debates regarding their original home
- Two parts of Vedic period and reasons behind periodization
- Life in Early Vedic Period
- Life in Later Vedic Period
- Position of Women in Vedic Period
3.1 Introduction

In Unit -2, we studied India's development from Prehistory to Protohistory. We studied that India went through the processes of first Urbanization in Harappan period. However, mostly due to the environmental reasons, the affluent Harappan civilization and its architectural prosperity faced a gradual decline. After the decline of Harappan civilization, we find references of a certain kind of culture in the area of Saptasindhu region. Who were those and what was their culture is the matter of this Unit.

3.2 Presentation of Subject Matter

3.2.1 Section I: The Aryans and their Original Home

\section{Who were the Aryans?}

Near about 1500 BC, we find a new culture in the Saptasindhu region, which was of nomadic nature. They were pastoralists who used to speak a different language, i.e. Sanskrit. They believed in nature-worship; and through, sacrifices, i.e. Yadnyas, expressed their faith. For worshiping, they created prayers (richa/shloka), and used to recite these prayers while performing sacrifices. The collection of these prayers was called as 'Veda'. And the language group who spoke Sanskrit (in which the Vedas were created) was called as 'Aryans'. The population of Aryans was of mixed one; however, spoke same language. Whereas, the culture in which the Vedas were created is known as 'Vedic Culture'.

At the outset, the Aryans were wandering in the areas of Saptasindhu region, i.e. northwestern part of India. The region is traversed by seven rivers, viz. Indus, Ravi, Sutlej, Biyas, Zelum, Chinab, Sarasvati; hence the name Saptasindhu. At that stage, they had certain kind of uniform culture. However, after two-three centuries, in search of pasture, they migrated in more internal part of India. At this stage, they met various tribes, communities those were foreign to them. Such new relations influenced their culture; and, in this period, we find Aryans following some different kind of culture. Thus, regarding Vedic culture, we find two stages of its development, termed as 'Early Vedic Period' (Saptasindhu region) and 'Later Vedic Period (more internal part of India). The literature, they had created in these two period indicate the cultural change through which the Vedic Aryans went.
a. **Vedic literature**

The 'Aryans' were followers of 'nature-worship', and through sacrifices, they express their faith. In order to express their faith, they created vast body of literature in Sanskrit. Various Vedic scholars created the prayers. In the beginning, these were not written. However, through the tradition of 'Teacher and Disciple', the prayers or the literatures were passed by from one generation to another through oral tradition. Obviously, the rules of correct pronunciation were strictly followed in this transmission.

To understand the Vedic Culture we have only this 'Vedic literature' at our disposal. These are comprised of **Vedas** (Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sam-Veda, Atharva-Veda) and their appendices (Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads) and some explanatory books of Vedas (Vedanga, Shad-darshanas). Together they are known as 'Vedic literature'. In Unit-1 we have gone through these literature in details; however, following is a brief reminder of them. As follows:

**Vedic literature in Early Vedic Period**

*The Vedas: Rig-Veda (2 to 9 mandalas)*

The Rig-Veda is the earliest of Vedic literature. It was created when Aryans were wandering in the region of Saptasindhu. It had 10 mandalas, however, in this period, i.e. Early Vedic period, 2 to 9 mandalas were part of the Rig-Veda. It is a collection of prayers, credited to specific scholars. The prayers, called as 'Richas', are devoted to various powers in nature, like, rain, fire, wind, sun, dawn etc. Such powers were deified as Indra, Varuna, Agni, Marut, Surya, Usha etc. Some Gods are benevolent whereas some are malevolent.

**Vedic literature in Later Vedic Period**

Before and during this period, Aryans were migrated to more eastern part/internal part of India. Due to relations with foreign lands and communities, they undergone through various changes in their culture. We can understand this 'cultural change' through the literature they have created in this period of transition.
i. The Vedas:

_Rig-Veda (1 and 10th mandalas)_

Remaining mandalas like 1 and 10th were created in this period. The 10th mandals comprised of one 'Purush-sukta'. In this sukta, we find early reference of the division of Vedic society, like, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.

_Yajur-Veda_

As we know, the prayers in Rig-Veda were recited at the time of sacrifices. Yajur-Veda was created to explain the methods of such sacrifices. Hence, most of the prayers in Yajur-Veda were taken from Rig-Veda. The Yajur-Veda has two parts, viz. Shukla and Krishna

_Sam-Veda_

Sam-Veda was created to explain the methods of recitation of prayers in Rigveda. Hence, most of the prayers of Sam-Veda are taken from Rig-Veda. The Sam-Vedas has two parts, viz. Archic and Uttararchik.

_Atharva-Veda_

This is the last of the four Vedas dealing with various types of subjects, like, mysticism, magic and black magic, treachery etc.

ii. Appendices of Vedas (Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads)

The Vedic Aryans created another body of prose literature in order to explain the knowledge in the Vedas. Hence, each Veda has its own Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads, like:

_Rig-Veda_ has its Aiterya and Kaushitaki Brahmanas, Aiterya and Kaushitaki Aranyakas and Aiterya and Kaushitaki Upnishadas

_Yajur-Veda_ has its Taitariya, Shatapath Brahmanas, Taitariya, Brihad Aranyakas and Aitariya, Kaushitaki Upnishadas

_Sam-Veda_ has its Tandya, Jaiminiya Brahmanas and Chandogya, Jaiminiya Upnishadas

_Atharva-Veda_ has its Mundak, Prasha Upanishads
The Brahmanas deal with rules of sacrifices, whereas, Aranyakas and Upanishads discuss philosophical and spiritualistic issues from the Vedas, like, structure of universe, relations between one's soul and god, one's own existence etc.

iii. Explanatory books of Vedas (Vedangas, Shada-darshanas)

**Vedangas**

To understand the knowledge of the Vedas in a proper and systematic manner, the Vedangas were created, like, Shiksha (to pronounce prayers correctly), Kalpa (the rules to perform sacrifice in a proper manner), Vyakaran (grammar), Nirukta (etymology of words in the Vedas), Chanda (to musical rules of recitation), Jyotish (proper time to perform sacrifices).

**Shad-darshanas**

To understand the philosophical content of Vedas, the Shad-darshanas were created, like, Nyaya (of Gautam, explaining logic), Sankhya (of Kapil, explaining the unity of soul with God), Yog (of Patanjali), Vaisheshik (Kanand, regarding atoms), Purva-mimasa (Jaimini, Vedic rituals), Uttar-mimasa (Badaraya, structure of universe, spiritualism) etc.

b. Original Home of Aryans

Until now we are unable to know the original home of the Aryans. Many theories have been put forward regarding this, according to some they have come from out-of India, whereas, some look their roots in India. Here, we would take a brief note on this debate:

**Hangeri:** According to Gails and Macdonald, the flora mentioned in Rig-Veda can be found in the cold area of Hangeri; hence, Aryans might have originated from Hangeri.

**Central Asia:** Based on similarity between Rig-Veda and Avesta (sacred book of Iran), Maxmullar said that the both belong to same group, called as 'Indo-Iranian' and hence, originally were resided in Central Asia.

**South Russia** Based on similarity in languages, Ghosh looks the original home of Aryans in South Russia.
North Pole Based on the attraction of Aryans for the dawn and description of long nights and days in Rig-Veda, Tilak claimed that the original home of Aryans lay in arctic region of North Pole.

Scandinavia Based on similarity in language, German scholars that both belong to same group, called as 'Indo-European' and hence, originally were resided in Scandinavian country.

India To some scholars the Aryans were not migratory instead India was their original home. The basis of their opinions are: there was no mention of any other geographical regions other than India in Rig-Veda; there was no mention of 'coming-from-outside' in Rig-Veda, the references of geographical places in Rig-Veda only found in India.

Such was the debate on the original home of Aryans. An inscription found at Boghaj-koi in Asia Minor gives names of Goddess quite similar to the Vedic Gods. It was dated of 1380 BC. Hence, whatever their origin is, it is clear that the Aryans were existed before 1400!

Based on finding of human skeletons at Harappa, Mortimer Wheeler claimed that the Aryans were barbaric and demolished Harappa and entered into India. He took Aryans responsible for the decline of Harappan civilization. However, his theory is no more valid. On one hand, the skeletons were not of the same period and they do not reveal any kind of cut-marks or evidence of massacre. Besides, the decline of Harappans were caused by other ecological factors and, like its rise, the decline was a gradual one. This we have studied in previous Unit.

Check your Progress-1

a. Choose correct alternative

1. ........................were the founder of Vedic culture in India.

2.  The Aryans are those who belong to language group of......................
   a. English       b. Sanskrit   c. French       d. Italian

3.  We find earliest reference of Aryans from.........................region.
4. According to..................the origin home of Vedic Aryans was at the Arctic region in North Pole.
5. .....................discusses the etymology of words in the Vedas.

b. Answer in one sentence
1. Which are the earliest religious scriptures of Vedic Aryans?
2. From which place in Asia Minor, an inscription related to Aryans was found?
3. Which rivers were included in the concept of 'Saptasindhu'?
4. Name the four Vedas of Aryans.
5. Name the six Vedangas.

3.2.2 Section II: Early Vedic period (circa 1500-1200 BC)

Around 1500 BC, we find Vedic Aryans wandering in the region of Sapatasindhu. They were pastoral nomads with basic kind of polity. In this section, we would understand the life in Early Vedic period.

(A) Polity

We find some terms, which denote a certain kind of administrative divisions of Vedic people. The Vedic Aryans were nomads hence; they were grouped in one tribe. We find various such tribes of Vedic Aryans.

Units of Vedic Tribe

Each tribe consisted of group of families. A family was called as 'Kula' (head-Kulap). The group of such 'Kulas' was called as 'Visha' (head-Vishpati). That means, the Visha was total people of that specific tribe; which was called as 'Jana' (Janapati). The larger form was the 'Rashtra' (Raja). The place where the tribe resided was called as 'grama'; and the larger form of grama was called as 'janapada'. Thus, the basic physical structure was the 'Graman' and basic-social structure was the 'Kula'.
Emergence of King and polity

Such tribes (or the 'Janas') were always busy in fighting with each other. As we have seen, the wars/fights were related to the issue of 'cattle-theft' and 'defend from cattle-theft'; in total called as 'Gavishti'. The warrior people of Vedic tribes used to undertake the responsibility to fight such wars. In due course of time, these warrior people got related with each other through matrimonial alliances. Thus, a separate class of 'warriors' was emerged from within the Vedic tribe. Such lineage of warrior was called as 'Rajanya'.

The regular fights/wars created the need of one brave leader who could lead the warriors in the battlefield. Hence, a need of 'king' was felt by the Vedic people. Hence, the 'Sabha' (or the assembly of people-visha) decided to select a king. The king was selected from the lineage of warriors. He was assigned the duty to wage war or defend the tribe from other attacks. As his payment, the people decided to give gifts to him, voluntarily.

Thus, a king was emerged. He was coroneted with ceremony. He had to take oath that he would rule by the laws of canons. His duties comprised of to protect his tribe and capture maximum amount of cattle from other tribes.

He was the leader of his tribe, however, controlled by many constraints, like, Sabha-Samiti (for, he was depended upon them for his selection), People/Vish (for, they gave him gifts or payment), Rajanyas/lineage of warrior class (for, he was selected among them) and mantri (for, they gave him advices). He was also depended upon the priestly class of his tribe. For; the priests used to coronate him and give religious legitimacy to his power. As he was so controlled that, if he deviated from his responsibilities, his post was snatched away from him and then another person was selected as a king.

Administrative System

The king ran his administrative system with the help and control of Ministry and Sabha-Samiti.

Ministry

For the smooth governance, the king was assisted with ministers or mantris. This ministry comprised of Purohit (priest) He was the main minister of the king. He was appointed to give political and religious advices to the king. Besides, he was the
one who give religious legitimacy to the king. Hence, his position was quite powerful. Besides, he was expected to guide people in the areas of religion. Senapati (commander) He was in-charge-of military. He was expected to defend, to wage war, to arrange war-camps etc.

Her/Duta (spy) For smooth flowing of information, the spies were appointed. He was the chief of those spies. As a 'duta', he was in-charge of foreign affairs.

Gramini (village-headman) Considering the limited area under the control of king, the Gramini also appointed in the ministry of King.

It was expected from the king to rule by the consent and advices from these ministers.

**Sabha and Samiti**

The Visha (or the people), to govern their grama, used to gather at some specific place in their grama. The place or the gathering was called as 'Sabha' and 'Samiti'.

The 'Samiti' was an assembly of all the people (visha) of that tribe. There, the people used to gather, discuss various issues and matters of concern, play, eat and drink. The meetings of Samiti took place regularly and discussion was taken openly on the issues of administration. Hence, it can be equated to the legislative assembly of modern days.

Whereas, the 'Sabha' was of limited people and discussed issues of confidential nature. Here, the executing decisions were taken, like, to wage war or to go under treaty; to help king in judicial matters, to create laws regarding weights-measures etc.

The king was selected through Sabha and Samiti, hence, both the assemblies possessed controlling authority over the King.

**Income**

There was no specific taxation system; instead the government (and their salary) was based upon the gifts, given voluntarily by the vish/people. The raids were another source of income. Such income was come in the form of cattle, food-grains, gold, horses etc.
Judiciary

The King used to solve judicial matters with the help of his ministry and Samiti. The source of law was Vedic literature, tradition and experiences of elder people. The crimes included theft, banditry, forgery, cattle-lifting, indebtedness and subjected to severe, capital punishments.

Military System

Besides, there are references of military, comprising infantry, cavalry, war-chariots however, they were not of permanent nature and not properly systemized. The weapons comprised of, mainly the bow and arrow, swords, mace, spears, swing-ball etc. We also get references of armors, however, they may be of leather.

(B) Economy

Pastoralism

The Early Vedic people were of pastoral community. For milk-products, wools, leather, agriculture, drawing chariots, the animals were raised. They were resorted to cattle Pastoralism; hence, 'cattle' was the wealth for them. Their total culture was revolved around the wealth in the form of cattle. Hence, the unit of family was called as 'Gotra' (lit.=cattle pen). That means, the families were identified on the name of their specific cattle pen, e.g. Vasisthta Gotra, Bharadvaj Gotra. The time of returning of cattle from pastures was perceived as auspicious time. Thus, ceremonies were performed at this time, called as 'Goraja Muhurta'. The wars were mainly fought for cattle-lifting or defending-the-cattle lift'. Hence, the word for war was 'Gavishti'. The basic food-content of Aryans was milk-products. To identify cattle, their ears were cut in specific manner. They had special pastureland, owned by community.

Agriculture

We find reference of some areas brought under cultivation. The land was owned by families. The farming was undertaken with the help of bulls. The Vedic Aryans knew basic agricultural techniques, like, to add fertilizers, to cut crops with the help of sickles, to arrange water-sources etc. The main crops consisted of Wheat and Barely, whereas, the cultivation of Rice/paddy was in early stage. However, it should be noted the cultivation of this stage was only of subsistence-type.
Craft-industry

We find reference of various crafts in the Early Vedic period; however quite of limited nature. These comprised of,

Carpentry  i.e. to make agricultural equipments, chariots, bullock carts, boats, homes, toys etc

Weaving  Vedic Aryans used to wear colorful cloths of cotton and wool. The colours were added by dyers. Such colorful cloths were then embriodared by women, known as 'Peshaskari'. The weaver is called as 'Vaya'; whereas the Charakha is called as 'Tasar'.

Smithy  the smithy was related to copper only. Iron was not entirely unknown (krishna-ayas), however, the metallurgy was not known.

Gold-smithy  The Goldsmith was called as 'Hiranyakar'. He used to make jwellery of gold, both for human and horses.

Cobbler  Cobbler used to make water bags, shoes, bridle, whips, thread for bows etc.

Pot-making

There was no social division at this early stage; hence, anybody could take up any occupation. Fishing was also part of the occupation.

Trade

The trade was on the levels of exchanges only and that was of 'barter-system'. Generally, cloths and leathers were items of such exchanges. It was undertaken with the help of bullock-carts, pack-bulls; sometimes boats were also used. The people involved in trade were called as 'Pani'.

The unit of exchange was cattle; however, we find reference of incipient currency like Nishka, which was of Gold. It was used for both coins and ornaments.

(C) Society

Family life

The Vedic family was joint and patriarchal, i.e. organized under the headship of the eldest person (grihapati) in the family. The head of the family looked after the religious duties, economical duties and hospitality of the guests. It is expected that all
the members should follow obedience towards the family-head. The family strictly followed moral of the society. The prestige of the family held first above all any persons in the family.

**Education**

The learning conducted at teachers' houses and funded by rulers. The doors were open for both the boys and girls, a separate women-teacher also provided in the case of later. In such *gurukulas*, the students received vocational education, as also of learning in moral values. There were no evidences of writing; however, the knowledge was preserved through oral tradition.

**The Social Division or Varna system**

During their stay in the area of seven-rivers, we do not find any kind of division in their society. However, when they entered into more internal part of India they came into contact with the indigenous people Hence, we find the earliest evidence of social division, mentioned in the *purush-sukta* (of 10th *mandala*) of Rig-Veda. In this *sukta* we witness a clear division of society in four *Varnas*, like, *Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra*. However, it should be noted that this *mandala* is actually belonged to the later Vedic period, for except this *mandala*, we never met with the later two *Varnas* in any other *mandala* of Rig-Veda. It seems that in the early period, there was no clear-cut discrimination in the society. Initially, the entire community called as visha. Then, based on occupation, two powerful categories emerged out of *visha*, viz. the *Brahmans* and *Rajanyas* (Kshatriya). Besides, references are scattered mentioning various occupation groups in the society, like, weavers, ironsmiths, cobbler, chariot-makers etc.

**Diet**

As the early Vedic people followed pastoralism, naturally, their main diet comprised of various milk produces and meat. They also used various items in their diets, viz. oilseed, barley, wheat, vegetables, fruits etc. Generally, the non-vegetarian feast organized at the time of ceremonies, festivals, marriages etc. They also regularly consumed intoxicated liquids. However, the Vedic literature condemns such type of intoxication.
Houses

Originally, the early Vedic people were pastoralists and always travel in search of fresh pasture. For the search of pastures, they settled in the area of seven rivers in northwest India. They were living in wattle-and-daub huts. Some affluent families live in wooden houses. Such houses comprised of rooms for various purposes, like, hall, bedroom for women, room for worship (where yajnyabhumi located) and a spacious courtyard.

Dress & Hairstyle

Vedic people wore cloths made from cotton, wool and animal hide. The cloths were called as ‘nivi’, ‘vasam’, ‘adhivasam’, ‘drapi’ etc. They colored with natural colours. They wore upper (a long piece of cloth=uparane) and lower garments (dhoti) and a headgear (of soft cloth). We find various types of hairstyles in this period. The men regularly cut the hair, whereas some tied their hair in a single knot. Some kept beards some removed. Women made different hair styles by using combs. They tied their hair with a specific ornament called as ‘Kurir’.

Ornaments

Generally, both women and men were fond of various types of ornaments. The ornaments made of bronze, ivory, gold and jewels. Women wore bangles, earrings, rings, armlet etc.

Entertainment

Generally, Vedic people enjoyed themselves with race and fights of animals. They also went for hunting for amusement. They were fond of music. We find reference of various musical instruments, like, string-instruments, percussion instruments, made of animal hide. They also like community-dance. Both men and women participated in common-dance during the period of festivals. Besides, gambling was the favorite pass-time. Hence, we find reference of gambling in any kind of gathering.

(D) Religion

The Early Vedic people were worshipper of nature. They personified and deified the benevolent and malevolent powers of nature and offered prayers to them.
Indra  Indra was perceived as God of wars. Being pastoralist, cattle was considered as wealth among Vedic people. Hence, we find frequent incidence of cattle-raids and cattle-protection in this period. Naturally, 'wars-on-cattle' was a point of concern; hence, Indra grew in importance among all other Gods.

Varuna  According the belief of Vedic people, the whole universe runs with some kind of rules, called as 'Rita'. Varuna was perceived as a controller of that 'Rita'. Hence, to maintain the order in the Universe, Varuna worshiped by the Vedic people.

Agni (fiore)  It is perceived that 'yajnya' is a medium through which food can reach to the Gods. Hence, to satisfy the Gods Vedic people used to give oblation into yajnyas. Naturally, yajnya held inevitable part in the daily/occasional religious rites/rituals of Vedic people. Domestic as well as communal activities perceived as incomplete without the performance of yajnya. Hence, Agni (fire), perceived as a connecting link between people and God hence it was venerated by the Vedic people. They called it as the replica of Sun on the earth.

Surya (Sun)  Sun is worshipped as 'Mitra' (friend) by Vedic people. It is perceived as source of energy. In later period, the 'Surya' became prominent God and merged with the 'Vishnu'.

Usha (dawn)  Usha is perceived by the Vedic people as the source of enthusiasm and inspiration. Many verses in Rig-Veda are devoted to the 'Usha'.

Prithvi (earth)  Prithvi was worshipped, as she is the mother of all living being.

Yama  Yama is a god of death. He was worshipped not for his favor but to avoid him.

Rudra  Rudra was a god of storms. Similar to Yama, he was worshiped to avoid his wrath.

These deities help us to reconstruct the religious concepts of Vedic people, as follows:

- Vedic people were simple, nomadic pastoralists. They could not comprehend the 'causation' behind natural favors/calamities. They personified these
calamities/favors into Gods. They either feared of them or expected regular favor from them. For this purpose, they worshipped these Gods.

- Again, as they were simple people they thought the Gods might reside in the sky or above the earth. We know that smoke from fire goes above to the sky. Hence, the Vedic people took 'smoke' as a connection link between earth and sky i.e. Gods. Thus, we find the importance of fire/Agni in their religious life.

- Connecting to that, Vedic people thought that if they submit food in the fire/Agni, it, in the form of smoke, would reach to the Gods. It would satisfy the Gods and, either they favor them or stop troubling them.

- Thus, Agni became a medium between Gods and people. Hence, it became an inevitable part in the religious life of Vedic people. Thus, the Fire/Agni became 'sacrifice/yajnya' and entire religious rites (and prayers) accompanied these yajnyas.

- Similar to Agni, Surya (Sun) is also important, as it is a symbol of yajnya in the sky. Hence, after some centuries, another minor God like 'Vishnu' merged with the Sun and became a prominent God among the others.

The main corpus of Rig-Veda is the collection of prayers to these Gods. These prayers recited at the sacrificial priers. The sacrifices or yajna perceived as the medium for the manifestation of one's faith upon his God. Generally, it performed to get success in wars and to acquire cattle and sons. Every Vedic family or kula performed those scarifies at their home.

It should be noted that these prayers and sacrifices were not performed for gaining spiritual bliss or satisfying ones philosophical thirst. It was performed clearly to achieve simple material benefits from those who were perceived as powerful and uncontrollable.

Check Your Progress-2

A. Choose correct alternative

1. ............were the founder of Vedic society.

2. In the Early Vedic period, the family life was ....................
3. In..............the mandala of Rig-Veda we find earliest mention of Varna-system.
   a. 7  b. 8  c. 9  d. 10
4. In Early Vedic period.....................was the lineage of warriors.
5. .......................were the people, involved in trade.

B. Answer in one sentence
1. What is the term of Early Vedic period for the family?
2. What is the term of Early Vedic period for wars-for-cattle?
3. What are the terms for public assemblies in Early Vedic period?
4. What was the basis of economy of the Aryans in Early Vedic period?
5. What was the term for gold coin in Early Vedic period?

3.2.3 Section III: Later Vedic period (circa 1200-600 c. BC)

(A) Polity

In the later Vedic period, the Aryans were migrated more internal lands of India. Thus, they had near about control over vast and extensive areas. During their migration, they exposed to various types of communities, tribes and polities. In short, now the situation got wider and complex; and, increased both in quality and quantity.

Emergence of King as an autocrat and kingship, divine

The wars also became wider in scope and dangerous in nature. Hence, the need of king became very crucial regarding the changed scenario. The king drew benefits of such situation. He, to keep power in his hands, along with the priests, devised a system of polity.

He started performing large-scale sacrifices like Rajasuya, Ashvamedha and making heavy donations to priests. The performing priests (as they were benefited
from such sacrifices through large donations) gave divine status to the king. Thus the king was equated with the Gods; or perceived as embodying elements of heavenly Gods. Thus, there emerged the concept of 'Divine Kingship'. Thus, the king and his own lineage became a powerful class in the Vedic society. The Aiterya Brahmana describes King of Later Vedic period as Adhiraja, Rajadhiraja, Samrat, Ekrat, Virat etc. His tribe was started identified with the name of king and his lineages, like, Kuru, Puru, Turvashu etc. And, as the legitimacy of the king was depended upon the priestly class, the later became powerful.

To keep power in the hands of King/ruling class and the priests, they devised a system of Varna, which was based on the birth. Thus, the children of ruling class and of priestly class automatically became king or priests, respectively. Thus, the political, economical and religious powers were rested with these two classes. By same rules, the Vishas were compelled to remain Vishas and pay taxes to the king. The children of Visha, automatically became Visha and subjected to pay taxes. Whereas; the children of Shudras automatically became Shudras. Thus, through Varna System, the power was rested with two classes (ruling and priestly) and a due care was taken of the permanent supply of tax (from Vishas) and manual labor (from Shudras). Such system was again got fixed with the theory of 'Rebirth'; in which, no chance of freedom was attributed to the class of Visha and Shudras.

Administrative System

Ministry

The king was assisted by advisors in the administration. The early ministers were remained there but some new ministers were included, like,

Mahishi Main Queen of King
Purohit (priest)
Senani (commander) Duty of earlier Senapati
Sangrahit (treasurer) To look after income & expenditure of the kingdom
Bhagdut (tax-collector)
Gramini (Village-headman)

Suta (Chariot-driver) This minister had a special place in the ministry. He was a driver of King's chariot. He used to accompany the king in the travels for every
purpose, like, hunting, rides, wars etc. Thus, he was quite close to the king. As he
was personally attached to the king and witnessed many incidents, he was full of
stories of King and his related matters. Hence, he was invited to tell the story of his
masters. These stories, later, became main corpus of epics like Mahabharata and
Ramayana.

Thus, we find a systematic ministry of king of later Vedic period. However, it
should be noted that, as he was responsible solely to the Gods, there was no need to
pay attention to such advices. The advices were not remained compulsory to follow.
Thus, the previous control of ‘Mantris' was no more found.

**Sabha and Samiti**

As the king was divine, naturally, the power became hereditary and remained in
his family. Thus, no need was remained for him to get sanctions from Sabha-Samiti.
Now there was no selection per se. Hence, the importance of Sabha and Samiti
dwindled. Due to the vastness of the ruled area, it was also not possible to take
meetings of the assembly as regularly as before. Hence, within some years, the Sabha
and Samiti were no longer heard.

**Income**

Due to hereditary status and divine kingship, now King became responsible
solely to the Gods. Now he could compel the vish to give him gifts. Thus, the gifts
became no-more voluntarily, they transformed into 'tax'. He introduced a systematic
taxation system. Thus, the previous control of Vish on the King was dissolved.
However, there was still need of support of people. Hence, the king, started
redistributing whatever gifts he had received on the occasion of sacrifices.

Such taxes became main source of income for the kingdom. Along with it raids,
loots were other sources.

**Judiciary**

He also became supreme of the people; hence, all the powers were rested into
him. Thus, he could prepare laws, execute them and punish the criminals.

**Military System**

The frequency of wars forced King to systemize his military system. Thus, in
this period, a proper military system was introduced. A hierarchy was created and
rules were formed. His military comprised of sections like infantry, cavalry, archers, elephants and war-chariots.

A concept of 'Dharmayudha' was developed meantime. Death of battlefield became heroic whereas running away from the battle-field became point of disgust and great humiliation. The attacks on women, children and un-armed were seen as unethical. Besides, to fight before Sunrise and after Sunset was perceived as unlawful.

(B) Economy

Although Pastoralism was the main occupation of Vedic people; however, most of them were oriented towards agriculture.

Agriculture

Now the agricultural technology was developed. All the stages were undertaken thoroughly and systematically like, plowing, seeding, cutting, thrashing etc. The farmers started plowing lands with the help of 6 to 24 bulls. Rivers and streams were bunded and water were preserved for the entire year. Due to development in agro-irrigation technology, now a farmer could take crops of various varieties, like, Wheat, Barley, Rice/paddy, cotton, vegetables, pulses, oil-seeds, fruits etc. Now Vedic Aryans started producing considerable surplus. Hence, now, they had to think about its investment. Thus, the growth in agricultural surplus paved way for the development of crafts and trade.

Craft/industry

The earlier crafts were continued in addition more specialization can be seen in this stage. However, the nature of such crafts was mostly of cottage type.

The weaving and dying industry was flourished. So like the leatherwork. By using cane and grass the mats and carpets were made. Besides, we came across to some other artisans like musicians, astrologers, cooks, drivers, messengers, etc. However, due to rigid varna/caste system, we find hereditary occupation and its compartmentalization/specialization in relation to castes.

Trade

The growth of agricultural produce and consequent development of crafts led the trade to progress. Now, the Vedic Aryans controlled extensive region than earlier.
Hence, with regions, the markets were also expanded. Now, the exchange of pervious period developed into proper trade in goods, like, goats, leather, cloths, ornaments etc. The development of trade compelled traders to unite. Hence, we find the beginning of early trading-organization or proto-guilds in this period. Against the backdrop of increased trade, we find introduction of early coins, like Nishka & Karshapana in India; however, limited to smaller transaction. The tool of measuring was called as 'Krishnal'. The trade was carried out with the help of bullock carts; now, the waterways were also being utilized. We find the sea-trade through 100 ships.

The barter system was not altogether finished in this period.

To manage such situation and for the sake of convenience, we find the rise of central places in vast areas. These centres, basically, were craft and trade centres. However, this development in later Vedic period was of an early stage, hence, necessary modalities were waiting. Nevertheless, in this period, an infrastructure was laid on which the second urbanization of sixth c. BC was made possible.

(C) Society

In later Vedic period, the people dispersed in various parts of India. New contacts were made with different types of cultures. This affected social structures of Vedic people and made it more complex. Against this background, the Vedic jurist felt a need to bind the society with some concert and strict rules and regulations. They created various types of social systems for this purpose, like, Varna-system, ashram-system, marriage-system, samskara etc.

Patriarchal Family System

Similar to previous period, the Vedic people followed patriarchal family system. The eldest of male members of the family, perceived as the head of family, called as 'grihapati'. He holds total control over the family. Based on this system at micro level like family, the idea of Kingship developed on more macro level like state.

Concept of Purushartha

It was expected from every man to follow four main duties in his life, viz. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

Dharma He was expected to follow religious rules/regulations, prescribed by Vedic canons. Besides, he should perform sacrifices, regularly in his
life. Thus by following 'Dharma' he could become free from the 'Rina' (lit.=loan; the responsibility) of Gods.

**Artha**
He was also expected to follow some kind of occupation and earned money in his life.

**Kama**
He was expected to marry and generated progeny. It is perceived that by the marriage and giving birth to children he could become free from the 'Rina' of his parents.

**Moksha**
After 'kama' and 'artha', he also expected to strive for *Moksha* or salvation. While performing his duties, he should always keep his eye on his ultimate goal, i.e. freedom from illusions of mundane life and uniting himself to the Gods. This is *moksha*.

In short, it was expected from Vedic people to follow domestic duties honestly. At the same time, he had the responsibility of the society hence he had to follow his duties in the society. Besides, he should also perform religious duties in order to maintain Vedic system.

**Concept of Varna**

Due to the cultural cohesion, the spiritual authority codified the social-discrimination and came up with a clear-cut division of the society, termed as *Varna*. In the 10th mandala, in *Purushsukta* of *Rig-Veda* we can witness the earliest mention of social division.

According to this system various duties assigned to each *Varna*, like,

**Brahman**
Teaching, learning, performance and hosting of sacrifice. Hence, they became the sole authority on the religion of this period. As their authorization was necessary for the rulers to rule, the rulers also gave large sum donations to the Brahmans for the religious legitimization to their power.

**Kshatriya**
Learning, hosting sacrifice and protection of people and land. Mostly the rulers and war-lords/warriors belong to this *Varna*. To maintain this power into their hands, the Kshatriya, legalized their status with the help of Brahmans. The real political power lies with this *Varna*. 
Vaishya  Trade and agriculture; the agriculturists, traders and artisans belonged to this Varna. As the economical power rested with this Varna, they were prominent Varna in the Vedic society. They were the taxpayers in the society. However, the traders and artisans, although economically powerful, never received cent percent respect in Vedic religious system. Hence, they resorted to non-Vedic religions in later centuries.

Shudra  submission of service to upper three classes; this was the lowest of the Varna-ladder and had no powers and no rights in the society. They had no hold on any kind of mode of production and subsequent production. According to some historians the people belonged to this Varna were native people of the land.

Following are the highlights of Varna-system of later Vedic period:

- The Varna-System, in few centuries, became or made hereditary that means, the membership of Varna based on birth in specific Varna. Thus Varna transformed into Jati (group based on birth) i.e. caste. Thus, we find the emergence of castes in this period.
- The Varna system was hierarchical. As there was no mobility or flexibility in such system, in this period, it became rigid and remained favorable only to the first three Varnas.
- In this period, the sacrifices became important, hence the Brahmans, who possessed the sole authority on the religion, received higher status in the society.
- The emergence of pre-State situation (although on a level of lineages) in this period made Kshatriya powerful in the society.
- The taxpayers, agriculturist and trader class, i.e. Vaishya, also became powerful.
- The three (Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya) in combination perceived as men of higher Varnas i.e. traivarnikas.
- However, the Shudras remained powerless and required to provide labour to the traivarnikas.
- Along with these four Varnas, a class of untouchables started emerging from the concept of purity.
Concept of Ashrama

To curb the rebellious nature of some people and strengthen the family-institution and one's social commitment, the system of ashrama provided to the society. In this system, a person's life divided into four parts and he was assigned some duties with respect to his age. Like,

Brahmacharya-ashrama:

During this ashrama, the importance of education was stressed. In this ashrama, he was expected to spend his childhood at his teacher's hermitage. The entrance in this ashrama sanctified with the religious sacrament (samskara) of 'upanayana' when he was 8 years old. After upanayana he was expected to remain in the teachers' hermitage up to 12 to 14 years. Here, he learned various knowledge-systems of this period, viz. the Vedas, literature, warfare, political science, trade etc. Here, the singular method of instruction was followed i.e. learn-by-heart. He should learn, at the same time, provide manual labour to his teacher. Thus after his education now he was ready for the second phase of his life, 'Grihasta-ashrama'.

Grihasta-ashrama:

During this ashram, he was expected to follow his duty in family and commitment towards society. He was expected to marry and became father of sons. Besides, he should perform those duties, which assigned to him by the scriptures. Four purushararhtas or duties assigned to him, like, dharma (socio-religious duties), artha (occupation), kama (marital life), moksha (to strive for union with God). He was expected to perform first three duties during this ashrama; whereas, in the next two ashramas he was required to thirst for moksha, the fourth one. He should take care of his parents and committed to the society.

In addition, through Vanaprastha-ashrama and Sanyasa-ashrama a space provided for his rebellious nature.

Vana-prastha-ashrama:

During this ashrama, he was expected to relieve himself from all household tasks and assign his duty to his son. He could live in his house, but should spend more time in the seclusion, remembering God.
Sanaysa-arshram:

This is the last phase of his life. During this period, he was expected to leave his home and spent rest of his life in forests or at the feet of God.

This system of ashrama helped a lot in the maintenance of social order in this period, like:

- All the needs of human being were honored and properly timed which made his life healthy and satisfactory
- Through grihasta ashrama, the family institution was maintained and strengthened. It also took care of the aged people in the family. It became a support for the society. Hence, society also maintained through this ashrama. Thus with the completion by domestic and social duties, the entire Vedic society was maintained and sustained in this period.
- Through last two ashrama, the tensions emerged among different generations resolved and the issue of generation gaps regularized.

The system of Marriage

Marriage was considered as main duty of Vedic people and hence it became a point of religious importance. After brahmacharyashrama, a person entered into grihastashrama. He is expected by the canons to get married in this ashrama. We know that It is perceived that through marriage and giving birth to children one could became free from the 'rina' (lit. loan=responsibility) of his parents.

It was one of the 16 important religious sacraments (samskar) of Vedic religion. In this period, 'inter-Varna' marriages were disliked, whereas 'similar-gotra/family marriages' were forbidden. Hence, they had to marry in the own Varna but in other families than theirs.

However, we find instances of 'inter-Varna' marriages in this period. The majority of such instanced pressed Vedic jurists to devise some alternative system to accommodate and legalized such 'inter-Varna' marriages. Hence, they came forward with two types of legalized structures of marriages, viz. Anuloma marriage (between bridegroom from higher Varna and bride from lower Varna) and Pratiloma marriage (between bridegroom from lower Varna and bride from higher Varna)
Besides, as we know, in this period, the Vedic people encountered other cultures in India. The Vedic society deeply influenced by the customs and institutions of these people within some years. It shook the fundamental structure of Vedic society. Hence, to assimilate these communities or their influences in their fold, they had to allow and accommodate the institutions of these people. Thus, we see eight types of marriages, which were prevalent in the society. These types clearly reflect contacts of Vedic people with different kinds of cultures. Like

- **Brahma-vivaha**: Father gives his daughters hand to the knowledgeable and well-behaved bridegroom with proper rites and rituals
- **Daiva-vivaha**: Father gives the bride's hand to the priest, engaged in sacrifice
- **Prajapatyā-vivaha**: Father greets bridegroom and appeal the couple to follow religious duties
- **Arsha-vivaha**: After receiving a pair of cattle from the Groom, father gives the bride's hand to the bridegroom
- **Gandharva-vivaha**: marriage-at-will i.e. through the consent of bridegroom and bride only
- **Asur-vivaha**: Bridegroom gives money to the father and relatives of bride and purchases her for marriage
- **Rakshasa-vivaha**: Forceful abduction of a crying girl and marring her
- **Paishacha-vivah**: With force making the girl unconscious and violet her chastity

The Vedic jurists only recommended the first four types of marriage. However to make the patriarchal system strict, the marriages-at-will disrespected by the jurists. Besides, there were references of inter-caste marriages like *Anuloma* (son of higher *Varna* with daughter of lower *Varna*) and *Pratiloma* (son of lower *Varna* with daughter of higher *Varna*) vivaha.

The marriages in this period now controlled by the patriarchal head of the family and the religion. Hence, 'marriage-at-will' of early period disliked in this period. At the same time, the age of marriages decreased. Besides, the polygamy became prominent feature of this period.
Thus, the marriage system of Later Vedic people shows radical changes in erstwhile simpler society of early period. The 'self-willed' 'domestic' marriages of early period, now controlled by many systems like patriarchy, society and religion. Thus, it became an important 'institution' of the society, prevailed until today.

The Concept of Samskaras
To provide socio-religious sanctions to every phases of physical & psychological development of a person and need of his social commitment, the jurists provided the system of samskara to the society. Every walk of his life, from his embryo status up to his death, sanctified with such samskara, which, by tradition are 16. Some of them can be classified as follows:

**Embryo stage** (to give support to the pregnant woman)
- **garbhadan** to pray for good child
- **simantonnayana** to make the mind of pregnant woman peaceful and fresh

**After birth**
- **jat karma** immediately after the birth of child, it is fed with honey and butter. After this samskara, it is allowed to fed by mother.
- **namkarana** On the 13 days after the birth, the child is named.
- **nishkramana** After four years, child is allowed to take outside the home.
- **karnavedha** The ears of child pierced.
- **annaprasashana** First bite of food by the child
- **vapan** Child's first hair were removed

**Brhamcharyashrama**
- **upanayana** Before going to teacher's hermitage for learning, child should go through this sacrament.
- **keshanta** Removal of hair before entering into education system
- **samavartana** End of his education and **brahmacharyashrama**.

**Grihashta-ashrama**
- **vivaha** Marriage
Aginiparigrhaana  Placing sacrificial-fire at home and worship it regularly
anteysthi           Funeral

**Education**

Later Vedic people understood the importance of education in the development of personality and society. The hermitage of learned sages became the center of education in this period. It is called as 'Gurukul'. The rulers and affluent people provided generous donations and patronage to these centres. A child was expected to take education by residing with the teacher at the teacher's place. He was provided food and shelter in the teachers' place only.

With the sacrament of 'Upanayana' the child enters in to 'Gurukul'. Such centres inclined to developed the overall personality of a child. Here he was expected not only to learn but also to do manual work. Thus, he could cherish the respect for physical labour in the society. The day at these centres started with cleaning the campus of hermitage, milking the cows, carrying wood, filling up water-tanks etc. Then, the whole day went into learning. In the evenings, he had to serve his teachers and then went to sleep.

The knowledge was imparted through oral-method i.e. learn by heart. Besides, discussions, debates, practical are the education aids of these centers. The subjects comprised of Vedas and their appendices, Ware-fare, administration, political science, logic, trade, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, medicines, medical science, moral values etc. The teachers were of four types, viz. Acharya, Pravakta, Shrotiya and Adhyapak.

**Dress**

People of this period wore colored cloths of cotton, woolen, silk etc. The soft cotton cloth was weaved in gold and provided with beautiful embroidery. The dressing style remained similar to previous period.

**Dietary Habits**

The dietary habits in early period continued in this period, too. However, the proportion of non-vegetarian food increased in this period. This was the period of large and time-consuming Vedic sacrifices. Hence, considerable amount of animals sacrificed during such occasion. Thus, no festival could complete without the meat of animals. Rather, it became a part of religious rituals.
Entertainment

Similar to the previous period, the Vedic people amused themselves with various kinds of items and activities. This was the period of big rulers and time-consuming festivals. Subsequently, in this period, the proportion of entertainment increased bigger and hence, race, hunting, gambling became part of every gathering of people. Besides, during long sacrifices, the bards invited to present eulogies on the exploits of rulers. Crowds of people gathered to listen this poetry, which subsequently legalized rulers' position/status. It should be noted that from the collection of such bardic eulogies, the epics were emerged in this period.

(D) Religion

As we know, Vedic people faced changes in the Later Vedic period. The religion became very complex in this period.

Changes in Deities and ways of worships

The prominent deities in Early period witnessed unimportance in this period. The Gods like Indra, Varuna and Surya became unpopular. Whereas there emerged new Gods like Vishnu, Rudra, Shiva. The people started worshipping such Gods in devotional way. Hence, we found the emergence of 'Devotional worship' or Bhakti in this period; however at primary stage.

Due to social contacts with various types of cultures, new deities and rites found place in Vedic pantheon and rituals. This gave birth to various types of idol-worship, animism, magic, superstitions etc. in Vedic culture. Besides, magic, superstitions, concepts of women and blind faith became part of religious life. Besides, to provide social sanctions to various changes in person's life, the concept of 16 samskara emerged. Whereas, to regulate the person's life in society, similar to the ashrams, the concept of four purusharthas was put forth, viz. dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

Prominence of Sacrifices

The sacrifices varied and codified with various types of rules and regulations, i.e. karmakanda. Earlier the sacrifices perceived as a mere medium between person and God. In this period, the sacrifices and their complicated rules became prominent. The people were told that if they follow the rules of scarifies, the Gods would be compelled to bestow their favour on the performers. Obviously, the sacrifices took place of God in the religion of Later Vedic period. Hence, the religion was
concentrated in the correct performances of those sacrifices. Subsequently, the priest class became prominent who possessed the sole authority to perform the sacrifices in a systematic manner. The right of performance of sacrifices was snatched off from kulapati and it became the monopoly of the priest class. Consequently, the sacrifices became varied, so as the types of priests. Obviously, large amount of wealth-time-violence was involved in these sacrifices. Thus, the system of accommodating increasing numbers of priestly class institutionalized in this way.

However, the religious rigidity and complexity of this period witnessed, some sort of reactions within the Vedic society itself. The Upanishads condemned waste of money, time and violence, engaged in sacrifices. They searched the truth of religion in introspecting one's self and meditating on the relationship of one's soul with the supreme-soul, the God. They tried to replace the material base of religion with spiritual one.

To sum up, it seems that, the Vedic people, the resident of land of seven rivers, in the later period, migrated to other parts of India. They met various types of cultures, societies, economies and belief systems. This led to social cohesion and complexity in Vedic society. On one hand, the economy diversified and developed through agriculture, crafts and trade, on the other, to keep its identity intact, the jurists made social and religious laws tight and rigid. For monopolizing powers, the Kshatriya and Brahman made the Varna-system birth-based and rigid. To legitimize this process, the religion took prominent place in society. It manifested into various types of rites and rituals, involving large amount of wealth and sacrifices therein. However, the taxpayer Vaishya Varna and labourer Shudra Varna, who provided labour and service, thrown away from various types of rights and socio-religious sanctions.

Against this background, India stepped into Early Historic period. The mixed economy of agriculture, trade and craft of Vedic period evolved into large amount of activities in the Early Historic period. That gave birth to the second urbanization of India. At the same time, to protest the sacrificial nature of Vedic religion, based on prominence of Brahmans and involving large amount of wealth and violence; the heterodox religions like Jain, Buddhist, Ajivakas were emerged. These cults provided legitimization to the Vaishya and Shudra Varna, who earlier discarded by Vedic religion.
3.2.4 Section IV: Position of Women

Early Vedic Period:

The position of women was reasonably well in this period. They received respects both in the family and in society. They participated in all the domestic works including religious rites/rituals along with men on equal footing. As they were educated, they could perform vedic rites in perfect manner. Hence we find examples of their performance of vedic sacrifices. It is informed that the richas in Samveda performed especially by women. Some sacrifices were prescribed only for the women, like, sita yajnya, rudrabali yajnya, rudrayag yajnya, svasti yajnya etc. These were meant to acquire good crops and children, to marry, for husband to win the wars etc. Women could perform all religious and domestic duties in the absence of their husbands. Similar to men, women, too, participated in education, social activities and politics, too. They had right to education. Women were allowed to go through the mandatory rite of upanayana (i.e. entrance rite for education) before entering into education. We find evidences of women who remained un-married for the sake of learning and received great respect in the society, viz. Ghosha, Apala, Vishvavara, Lopamudra, Sikata, Nivavari, Godha, Aditi etc. The marriages of women took place only after their maturity. Besides, their consent perceived as important in the decision regarding their marriage. There were provisions of adult-marriages, marriage-at-will, and widow-remarriages in the early Vedic society.

Later Vedic Period

The social interaction with newer communities forced Vedic jurists to impose restriction on the women. The rigid patriarchal family system also snatched off various rights of women in this period. The religion sanctified these newer restrictions on women. Thus, we find the negation of the rights of women of 'marriage-at-will'. Her age of marriage decreased. As she was married in her early age, her right of education cancelled. She was considered as a tool of regeneration only. Besides, to maintain the patriarchal family-structure, cent percent chastity was expected from women (but there was no such compulsion on male). Restrictions also imposed on her social mobility, which jailed her in her house. She was compelled to remain at home and work as homemaker. Her remarriages also prohibited and hence forced to live the life of widow unto her death. In the home, she was forced to follow domestic duty and help husband in generating progeny. Her erstwhile status of
accompanying husband in rituals was also finished. The negation of her right to education, disallowed her rite to perform Vedic rites. Thus, we can see the position of women deteriorated in this period.

Check your progress-3

A. Choose correct alternative

1. ......................devoted to free one from the rina of parents
   a) Sanyasa   b) Vanaprastha   c) Brahmacharya   d) Grihastha

2. .....................emerged as an important God in the last stage of later Vedic period.
   a) Vishnu   b) Indra   c) Varuna   d) Surya

3. ......................was the chariot-driver of king.
   a) Purohit   b) Suta   c) Bhagdut   d) Sangrahit

4. ......................was the tax collector of king.
   a) Senani   b) Suta   c) Bhagdut   d) Gramini

5. ......................was the coin that was used in later Vedic period.
   a) Rupaya   b) Dam   c) Dinar   d) Nishka

B. Answer in one sentence

1. What does Anuloma marriage mean?
2. What was the system of ashrama?
3. What was the nature of kingship in later Vedic period?
4. Which were the large-scale sacrifices, prevalent in later Vedic period?
5. What was the term for tool of measure in Later Vedic period?

3.3 Summary

After the decline of Harappan civilization, the northwestern part of India witnessed an existence of a different culture. What was their origin is still a vague matter; and whatever bits of information we gather that is from the vast body of literature they have created and preserved through oral tradition. What we know is that they were nature-worshippers and used to perform sacrifice and pray to the
Gods. The prayers, collectively known as 'Vedas' were in Sanskrit and the people who spoke that language were called as Aryans. The Aryans believed in Vedas hence called as 'Vedic Aryans'. The people were of nomadic-pastoral tribe. They had specific kind of administrative system and a king. However, the people-assemblies possessed the basic control of their tribe. They were pastoralists; hence, their main occupation was 'Cattle-Pastoralism'. They also followed subsistence agriculture and some crafts and exchanges on quite a small scale. Initially it was a stock of pastoral people with social divisions on occupational basis and space for women in the society. They were nature-worshippers and through sacrifices and reciting suktas they expressed their religious faith. *Rig-Veda*, the earliest of four Vedas, documents this early phase of Aryans.

When, the Vedic Aryans entered into more internal part of India, they were exposed to other communities, language-groups and belief-systems foreign for them. However, their contacts and relations changed their way of life. The growth of ruled land made King powerful than earlier. Along with priests and through sacrifices, he became supreme and divine. In this age, the earlier controls on the kings were diminished and thus emerged the hereditary kingship. All the other administrative bodies were systemized and properly structured. The Pastoralism remained basic form of economy; however, we witness larger orientation towards agriculture and growth in craft and trade. We also find the emergence of central-places in this period. when they moved out to internal parts of India, after contacts with various other cultures, Vedic culture came up with rigid ideas regarding society and religion. They laid the foundation of various institutions, which remained untill today, like, the *Varna*-system, *Ashramas*, *Samskaras*, *Purusharthas* etc. Besides, to maintain authority and monopoly on religion and power, the classes of Priests and Warriors came forth, putting labourer class out of the Vedic institutions. In such condition, women also faced the same fate as the labourers. This information can be known from vast body of literature in Sanskrit.

3.4. Terms to Remember

- **Pastoralism**: A social and economic system based on the raising and herding of livestock.

- **Yadnya**: is the sacrificial fire - the divine *Agni* - into which oblations are poured, as everything that is offered into the fire is believed to reach the gods.
• **Purush-Sukta**: It is a hymn of creation/genesis, lies in the 10th mandala of Rig-Veda. It tells us about a sacrifice from which a cosmic being or Purusha emerged. The entire world was born from the Purusha, like, the Brahmins (Learned men) were made from Purusha's mouth, the Kshatriyas (Men with strength) from his arms, the Vaishyas (Men with business acumen) from his thighs, and the Shudras (Men who Work) from his feet.

• **Ashvamedha Sacrifice**: Lit. Horse-sacrifice. The most important royal ritual of Vedic religion. It could only be conducted by a king with an object to acquire sovereignty over neighboring provinces.

• **Gotra**: A group of family closely related with each other through blood

• **Gurukula**: Ancient learning centre at the residence of teacher or his hermitage

• **Kulapati**: Head of the family (kula)

• **Saptasindhu**: The region of NW India (WE Punjab) through which seven rivers flow, like, Ravi, Biyas, Sutlej, Chinab, Zelum, Indus, Sarasvati

• **Varna**: Lit. Colour; an ancient social division of Vedic people

### 3.5 Answers to check your progress

**Check your progress-1**


b. 1. The Vedas; 2. Boghaz Koi; 3. Indus, Ravi, Chinab, Zelum, Biyas, Sutlej, Sarasvati; 4. Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda; 5. Shiksha, Kalpa, Vyakaran, Nirukta, Chanda, Jyotish,

**Check your progress-2**

a. 1. Aryan; 2. Patriarchal; 3. 10; 4. Rajanya; 5. Pani


**Check your progress-3**

b. 1. Marriage between bridegroom from higher Varna and bride from lower Varna;
   2. In the system of Ashrama a person's life divided into four parts and he was assigned some duties with respect to his age.
   3. Divine; 4. Ashvamedha and Rajsuya; 5. Krishnal

3.6 Exercise

A) Broad Questions
   1. Describe the socio and religious condition in Vedic period.
   2. Describe the political and economical condition in Vedic period
   3. Give information on Vedic literature

B) Short Notes
   a. Original home of Vedic people/Aryans
   b. Position of Women in Vedic period
   c. The Varna System
   d. The Ashrama system
   e. The Samskaras

3.7 References for Further Study

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