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A Review Paper on Vedic Period

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Abstract - The research paper is designed to review the Vedic period. It shows the comparative analysis of economy, region, religion and polity.

Keywords - Vedic age, Aryans Economy, Polity.

I. Introduction

The word Veda is derived from the origin of the vid which means 'to know'. The word veda refers to the sacred information contained in the texts known as the Vedic text. Two sections of the text are included in the Vedic text encyclopedia. These are Mantra and Brahmana. The Mantra section forms the core of the Vedic texts and has four different collections. These are Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. Brahmans should not be confused with the Brahminical category which are prose texts containing the meanings of words and sacrificial rituals. The four Vedas and their Brahmans are also known as shruti or 'hearing', which scholars have directly heard. The Aranyakas (literally forest texts) and the Upanishads (sitting nearby) are additions to the Brahmanas. These are also known as Vedanta (the end of the Veda) and contain philosophical discourses.

II. Vedic Age (1500BC – 600BC)

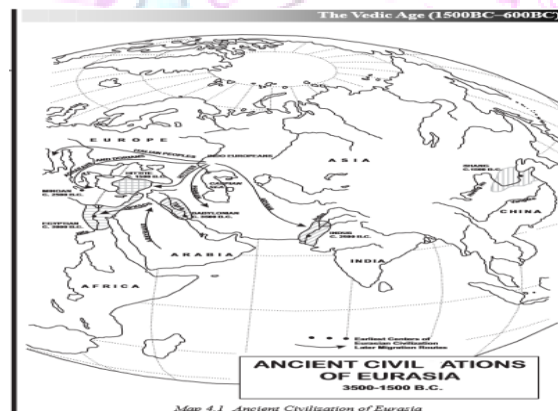
Rigveda is a collection of 1,028 songs divided into 10 mandalas. They are the first songs and reflect the life of the early Vedic peoples of India. Samaveda is a collection of many verses taken from Rigveda but arranged in a poetic style for ease of singing. Yajurveda is available in two revisions, Black and White, and is full of rituals that should be performed in public or in private. Atharvaveda is a collection of spells and charms to ward off evil spirits and diseases. Careful research has shown that the Vedic texts show two stages of literary development and social and cultural revolution. The oldest Vedic's The Rigveda depicts one phase of social and cultural development while the other three Vedas indicate another category. The first phase is known as the Rigvedic period or Early Vedic period and the latter phase is known as the Later Vedic period. The age of the Early Vedic period coincides with the date of the composition of the Rigvedic songs. This date is set between

1500 BC and 1000 BC. The most recent Vedic period is dated between 1000 BC and 600 BC. Recently, Rigveda was added by UNESCO to the World Heritage List.

2.1 Migration of the Aryans

The writers of Vedic hymns were Aryans. But who were the Aryans? By the 19th century, the Aryans were viewed as a race. It is now thought of as an Indo-European language group from which later Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, etc. This is evident in the words of these same languages in sound and meaning. So the words Sanskrit and pitri are like Latin mater and pater. Similarly, the Inar language of the Hitite (Turkey) is similar to the Indra of the Vedas. The Suryyas and Maruttash texts of Kassite (Mesopotamia) are equivalent to the Vedic Surya and Marut.

At first the Aryans seemed to live somewhere in the Steppes from southern Russia to Central Asia. From here, their group moved to north western India and came to be known as Indo-Aryans or just Aryans. Archaeological evidence for the migration comes from the so-called Andronovo Culture found in south eastern Siberia. This custom flourished in the second century BC. From here the people migrated north of Hindukush (an area known as the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex) and from here into India. During the period in between 1900 BC and 1500 BC we get, in these regions, evidence of horses, spoked wheels, fire cult and cremation which formed important parts of Aryan life in India. Apart from these, the artefacts and ceramics also suggest movement of people from Central Asian region to South Asian region. However it may be noted that some scholars still argue that the Aryans were the indigenous people of India and that they did not come from outside. The new people came in several batches spanning several hundred years. All this while interaction between the indigenous inhabitants and the new comers was continued. One of the important results of this process of interaction was that the Vedic form of the Aryan language became predominant in the entire North western India. The texts composed in this language, as mentioned above, are popularly known as the Vedic Texts.



2.2 Geographical Horizons of the Vedic Aryan

The first Vedic Aryans lived in an area known as the sapta-sindhu which means the area of seven rivers. This area mainly covers the north western part of South Asia as far as the Yamuna River. The seven rivers included the Sindhu, Vitasta (Jhelum), Asikni (Chenab), Parushni (Ravi), Vipash (Beas), Shutudri (Sutlej) and Sarasvati. Here the Rigvedic people lived, fought and bred their flocks and herds. Little by little heading east, they arrived and

took east of the U.P. (Kosala) and north of Bihar (Videha) during the recent Vedic period. Here they meet people who speak different languages and live in the area for a long time.

III. Early Vedic Economy

The first Vedic Aryans were clergymen. Breeding cattle was their main occupation. They raised cattle, sheep, goats, and horses for milk, meat, and hides. We come to this conclusion after analyzing the textual evidence in Rigveda. A large number of words are derived from the word go which means cow. The rich man was known as the gomati and the daughter was duhitri which means the one who milked the cow. The word give shana literally means the demand for cattle, but it also means war since many wars were fought over cattle. Cattle were considered the suppliers of everything. Pray for an increase in the number of cattle. All the above references and many others indicate that cattle breeding were the most important economic activity of the Rigvedic Aryans. This does not mean, however, that the early Vedic peoples had no knowledge of agriculture. Evidence of agriculture compared to pastoral care in the early stages is limited and is inserted too late. A few references indicate that they were knowledgeable about agriculture and used it to supplement their food needs. They produced a thorn (modern jow or barley), which was a common term meaning grain. Apart from cattle ranching and small-scale farming, people were busy with many other economic activities. Hunting, carpentry, weaving, weaving, cart making, metal smelting, and so on were just some of the activities. The products of these works were traded commercially. However, cattle were the most popular form of trade. Priests accepted cattle, horses, and gold ornaments as sacrificial money.

3.1 Changes in Vedic

During the later Vedic period, agriculture became a mainstay of Vedic peoples. Many practices were introduced to start the agricultural process. It also mentions plowing with the yoke of six and eight oxen. The buffalo were bred for farming. This animal was very useful for farming in the swampy earth. The god Indra gets a new surname 'King Yajña' at this time. The number and variety of plant foods is increasing. Apart from barley, people now grow wheat, rice, pulses, lentils, sorghum, sugar etc. Dakshina items included cooked rice. So at the beginning of food production agricultural production began to be given to practices. Tila, from which the most widely used vegetable oil was obtained, began to be used in rituals. A major factor in the rise of Aryan culture during the Vedic period was the beginning of the use of iron in about 1000 BC. The Rigvedic people knew of a metal called ayas that was copper or brass. In later Vedic ayas he was aptly referred to as shyama or krishna which means black to mean iron. Archeology has shown that the metal began to be used around 1000 BC which is also the period of the Vedic literature later. The northern and eastern parts of India where the Aryans later migrated they receive more rain than the north western part of India. As a result, the region is covered with dense rain forests that could not be eroded by copper or stone tools used by the Rigvedic people. The use of metal tools now helped people to clear dense rain forests, especially large stumps left after burning, in a more efficient way. Large pieces of forest can be converted into pieces that can be planted in a very short time.

The plow can turn soil in deep places and make it fertile. This process seems to have begun during the latter part of the Rigvedic era but the impact of metal tools and tools is evident only in the late Vedic period. There has been a steady increase in population in the recent Vedic period due to agricultural-based economic growth. The growing number and size of Painted Gray Ware (PGW) in doab settlements reflects this. In time, the Vedic peoples also acquired better knowledge of the seasons, breeding, and watering. All these changes resulted in the expansion of certain settlements such as Hastinapur and Kaushambi toward the

end of the Vedic era. These settlements gradually began to acquire urban characteristics. Such unusual villages inhabited mainly by chiefs, nobles, priests, and artisans were supported by farmers who could donate part of their produce voluntarily or voluntarily.

3.2 Early Vedic Community

The family was an integral part of the Rigvedic community. It was patriarchal by nature. Monogamous marriage was the norm, but kings were sometimes polygamous. Marriages occur after maturity. After the wedding the wife went to her husband's house. The family was part of a larger group called *vis* or family.

One or more families made up of one person or another. The *jana* was the largest social unit. All family members were blood relatives. National membership was based on birth and not on living in a particular place. The members of the *Baratata* tribe are therefore known as the *Baratas*. It didn't mean anywhere. The Rigvedic community was a simple society and especially an equal society. There was no segmentation. The work was not based on birth. Family members can accept a variety of tasks. However, some differences were evident during that time. *Varna* or color was the basis for the first distinction between Vedic and non-Vedic peoples. The Vedas were good while the non-Vedic people were black in color and spoke a different language. So Rigveda speaks of *arya varna* and *dasa varna*. This is *Dasa's* place used in the sense of a separate group for the Rigvedic people. Later, *dasa* means slave. Besides, certain practices during this period, such as the accumulation of large part of the spoils of war at the hands of kings and priests, resulted in the creation of other ethnic divisions during the latter part of the Vedic period. Heroes, priests, and the common people were three classes of Rigvedic tribes. The *sudra* class only existed in the late Rigvedic period. This means that social divisions in the early Vedic period were not sharp. This is indicated by the following verse in the Rigveda: "I am a poet, my father is a physician and my mother grinds grain. Struggling for wealth, in various forms plans, we follow our desires like cattle." Women in the community enjoyed a privileged position. She got married at the right age and could choose her own husband. He can also participate in the holding of international conventions called sabbaticals and summits.

3.4 Internal Changes in The Latest Vedic Period

The family remains the basic unit of the Vedic community. However, its structure has undergone a change. The later Vedic family became large enough to be called a united family of three or four generations living together. The centre lines found in *Atranjikhera* and *Ahichchhtra* (both west of Uttar Pradesh) indicate that these were designed to serve the community or to cook food for large families. *Gotra Center* was upgraded at this time. This means that people with common *gotra* are descended from a single ancestor and no marriage between members of the same group can occur. Monogamy was popular even though polygamy was common. Other restrictions on women emerged during this period. In the women's text listed as *lazy with dice and wine*. In one text it says that the daughter is the cause of all the misery. Women were required to stay with her husband in his place after the wedding. Women's participation in public meetings was prohibited. However, the most important change was the rise and fall of social isolation in the form of the *varna* system. The four *varna* from which society was divided were *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas* and *shudras*. The growing number of sacrifices and rituals during this period makes the *brahmanas* even more powerful. They have performed various rituals, including those that correspond to the different stages of agricultural activity. This made them very important. The *Kshatriyas*, who followed in social positions, were rulers. They and the *brahmanas* controlled every aspect of life. *Vaishya*, a large number of *varna* were involved in agriculture and trade and

handicrafts. Brahmans and kshatriyas relied on the payment (gifts and taxes) from which the vaishya were paid. Shudras, the fourth varna was below the social class. They were anointed to serve three divine palaces. They were not entitled to the upanayana samskara (an investment in the sacred cord needed to get an education-).

The other three varna were entitled to such an event and that is why they are known as asdvija. This can be interpreted as the beginning of the imposition of paralysis in the shudras and the beginning of the concept of cultural depravity. Another important institution that started doing was ashrama or different categories of life. Brahmacharya (student life), grihastha (homeowner), and vanaprastha (hermitage) categories are mentioned in the text. Later, sanyasa, a fourth category was added. Along with varna, it is known as varna-ashrama dharma.

IV. Early Vedic Religion

Prayers for the gods to protect them physically and materially were the main concerns of the Rigvedic people. Rigvedic deities were often elements of natural forces such as rain, storm, sun, and so on. The attributes of these deities also reflect the personality of the nations and their ancestors as we do not find many goddesses mentioned in the text. Indra, Agni, Varuna, Mitra, Dyaus, Pushana, Yama, Soma, etc. they are all male gods. By comparison, we have only a few goddesses like Ushas, Sarasvati, Prithvi, etc. who take second place in the pantheon. The works of different gods reflect their needs in society. Therefore, as the Rigvedic people engaged in warfare alone they worshiped Indra as god. He is the most talked about deity in Rigveda. He had thunder and was revered as a rain god who brought rain. Maruts the storm god helped Indra in battles the way the tribesmen helped their national leader.

4.1 Changes in The Later Vedic Phase

We have already noted that in the later Vedic period agriculture had become an important activity of the people. Changes in the material life naturally resulted in a change in their attitude towards gods and goddesses too. Continuous interactions with the local non-Aryan population also contributed to these changes. Thus, Vishnu and Rudra which were smaller deities in the Rigveda became extremely important. However, we do not have any reference to different incarnations or avatars of Vishnu, we are so familiar with, in any of the Later Vedic texts. Another important feature was the increase in the frequency and number of the yajna which generally ended with the sacrifices of a large number of animals. This was probably the result of the growing importance of a class of brahmanas and their efforts to maintain their supremacy in the changing society. These yajnas brought to them a large amount of wealth in form of dana and dakshina. Some of the important yajnas were - ashvamedha, vajapeya, rajasuya etc. In these yajnas which continued for many days a large part of gifts went to the brahmanas. The purpose of these yajnas was twofold. Firstly, it established the authority of the chiefs over the people, and secondly, it reinforced the territorial aspect of the polity since people from all over the kingdom were invited to these sacrifices. A large number of cattle and other animals which were sacrificed at the end of each yajna must have hampered the growth of economy. Therefore, a path of good conduct and self-sacrifice was recommended for happiness and welfare in the last sections of the Vedas, called the Upanishads.

The Upanishads contain two basic principles of Indian philosophy viz., karma and the transmigration of soul, i.e., rebirth based on past deeds. According to these texts real happiness lies in getting moksha i.e. freedom from this cycle of birth and re-birth.

V. The Early Vedic Polity

Out of these sabha and samiti were the most important assemblies. All aspects of life were discussed in these assemblies. These may include wars, distribution of the spoils of wars, judicial and religious activities etc. Thus, these assemblies in a way limited the powers of the chiefs. Interestingly, women were also allowed to participate in the deliberations of the sabha and samiti. The post of the chief was not hereditary. The tribe generally elected him. Though the succession in one family was known but that was not based on the rule of primogeniture (i.e., the eldest son acquiring the position). The purohita assisted and advised the chief on various matters. Other than the purohita, there were a limited number of other officials who assisted the chief in the day-to-day tribal affairs. Senani, kulapa, gramani, etc. are some of the functionaries which find mention in the Rigveda. The sena or army was not a permanent fighting group and consisted of able bodied tribesmen who were mobilized at the time of the wars. Takshan, the carpenter and rathakara, the chariot maker were responsible for making chariots. There is no official mentioned as a collector of taxes. The people offered to the chief what is called bali. It was just a voluntary contribution made by the ordinary tribesmen on special occasions. All this shows that the early Vedic polity was an uncomplicated system based on the support and active participation of all the tribesmen. This situation, however, changed during the later Vedic phase.

VI. Conclusion

After the decline of Harappan urbanism, we are witnessing the arrival of a new species of people in the north western part of India. These people were herdsmen and spread out in groups from South Russia to various parts of the world. Many such groups reached India via Afghanistan at different times. Their vernacular, known as Indo-Aryan or Sanskrit, became extinct local languages. Their first songs were known as Rigveda and many other songs that followed. We get to know the culture of these people in these collections known as the Vedas. The Aryans originally settled in the region bordered by the seven rivers Septa Sindhu, which includes most of the modern-day Punjab, and Harayana. They later settled in the region bordered by Ganga, Yamuna, Sarayu, Ghaghra, and Gandaka, which included the eastern states of eastern Uttar Pradesh and west of Bihar.

The Aryans, especially former cattle herdsmen, later became farmers, and with the help of metal technology were able to establish larger settlements in the Ganga-Yamuna doab region. This is illustrated by the archeology of PGW and the content of the latest Vedic literature. This change accelerated a series of changes in some areas of life. From the estimates, the social and political structures established during the Early Vedic period were transformed into a geographically divided varna based on the end of the Vedic period. The position of tribal chiefs became hereditary and the emerging princes seized the role of popular conventions. A growing number of yajna indicate the importance of the king and the brahmins. Similarly, the gods that were once important lost their value and replaced them with new gods. All these changes eventually led to the proliferation of janapadas and mahajanapadas which means large areas in the sixth century BC.

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