

Ancient and Medieval History Class 03

27th December, 2023 at 9:00 AM

ADVENT OF ARYAN'S (09:12 AM):

- Around 1500 BC, several tribes from Central Asia started arriving in India.
- These tribes on a linguistic basis were preferred as "Aryan's".
- They were nomadic and pastoralist in nature.
- They were always in search of good pasture land as cattle were their most economic wealth.
- In the initial phase, Aryans were quite successful against indigenous communities due to their use of superior-quality bronze tools and implements like helmets and nail coats.
- They came with horses and horse-driven chariots which provided swiftness to their army.
- After establishing themselves in the North and North Western parts of the Indian subcontinent, Aryans started to compose Veda.
- Rig Veda was the first Veda composed by them.
- Rig Veda provides details about geography, people, polity, economy, society, and religious practices during this period.
- **Rig Veda mentions the following rivers during the early Vedic Age:**
- Indus was mentioned as Sindhu.
- Jhelum was mentioned as Vitasta.
- Chenab was mentioned as Ashkini.
- Ravi was mentioned as Parushani.
- Beas was mentioned as Vipasa.
- Satluj was mentioned as Shutudri.
- Saraswati was mentioned as Naditarana, Matetama.
- Rig Veda further mentions the Himalayan mountain as Himavant and Jamavant parvat.

EARLY VEDIC AGE (1500 - 1000 BC) (09:33 AM):

- **Economy During Early Vedic Age:**

- The most important economic wealth of Aryans was cattle.
- **The importance of cattle was highlighted in many ways with many terms in Rig Veda which is as follows:**
- Gopa - Cow.
- Gopajanya - Master of cow.
- Gavisthi - Search for cow.
- Godhuma - Wheat (which emerges from cow dung).
- Duhitri - Daughter (milcher of the cow).
- Godhuli - Measurement of time-dusk (when cow returns to its stable).
- Aghanya - Not to be killed (refers to cow).
- Goghana - One who eats cow meat (it also refers to the most important guest).
- The most important work of the chieftain of the Aryan community was to protect the cattle.
- Apart from cattle, agricultural commodities like barley referred to as "**Yava**", and wheat referred to as "**Godhuma**" were also important.
- Early Aryans used gold which was referred to as "**Nishka**".
- They also had knowledge of copper smelting and they created very good-quality bronze tools.
- There was no formal system of taxation at this time and people voluntarily contributed to the chieftain of the community and this voluntary contribution was known as "**Bhaga**" and "**Bali**".
- **Polity during the Early Vedic Age:**
- Rajan was the most important person and chieftain of the Aryan community.
- His most important work was to organize a battle to secure a large number of cattle.
- He was also entrusted with the task of protecting the cattle.
- In his political functions, he was assisted by many political assemblies like Sabha, Samiti, and Vidhata.
- **Sabha:**
- It was the most important assembly but exclusive in nature.
- It mainly included both male and female elders of the society.
- **Samiti:**
- It was an inclusive assembly or in other words, it included a large number of people but females were not the members of this assembly.
- Its main work was the appointment of Rajan.
- **Vidhata:**
- It was a limited assembly but included both males and females.
- Its exact function is not known but it was involved in the decisions related to agriculture and religious affairs.

- **Dasrajan War (10:00 AM):**
- Bharath clan of Aryans was the most powerful Aryan community in India.
- One of its very powerful rulers was Divodas.
- After the death of Divodas, his son Sudas was appointed as the next Rajan.
- Sudas has to take a very important decision which is the appointment of the head priest.
- He appointed Vasishta as the head priest and overlooked the claim of Viswamitra, humiliated Viswamitra, and persuaded ten kings to fight with Sudas.
- As such the historic battle was fought on the banks of river Parushani.
- In this battle, Sudas comfortably defeated Dasrajan.
- He annexed their areas and named them after his clan which is **Bharathvarsha**.
- **Society during the Early Vedic Age:**
- Society was organized on the lines of Kula, Vis, Jana (gramma), and Vansha.
- Kula - Family
- Vis - Immediate neighbourhood.
- Vansha - clan.
- Jana or Gramma - Aryan community.
- Kula was the most important unit in the society and it was headed by Kulapa, the eldest male member of the family.
- Though society was patriarchal in nature however women were accorded very high respect in the society.
- They enjoyed political rights as they were members of political assemblies like Sabha and Vidhata.
- Women also enjoyed educational rights and they were allowed to participate in educational discourses.
- One of the best examples was "**Lopamudra**", the wife of Agastya Rishi, she was regarded as one of the renowned intellectuals of this time.

- **Marriage Rights (10:22 AM):**
- There was no instance of child marriage from the early Vedic age.
- Love marriage was allowed under **Gandharva Vivah** (in the same community).
- Polygamy was practiced in society but in exceptional circumstances, polyandry was also accepted.
- Widow remarriage was allowed under "**Niyoga Vivah**".
- Under this system, widows were allowed to marry the younger brother of their dead husband if she was not blessed with a son.
- Slavery was practiced rampantly in society.
- There were two types of slaves in the society:
- The defeated Aryans were known as **Das**, they were less discriminated and many times they were given favorable positions in the court.
- On the other hand, defeated non-Aryans were referred to as **Dasyu**, they were highly discriminated and many times there was the mass killing of Dasyus which is mentioned as "Dasyu Hatya" in Rig Veda.
- **Religious Practices during the Early Vedic Period:**
- In this phase, the early Aryans personified the elements of nature into God.
- **Indra** was the most important divinity regarded as the "God of rain and thunder".
- In Rig Veda, he was quoted more than 250 times.
- The second important divinity was **Agni**, "God of fire".
- He was regarded as an intermediary god and referred to more than 200 times in Rig Veda.
- **Varun**, "God of water" was the third important divinity followed by **Mitra** or Marut, "God of wind/air".
- **Pushan** was the "God of animals".
- Apart from these gods, worship of the Sun was highly prevalent.
- Female divinities were also worshipped like Aditi, Savitri, Usha, Nisha, and Ila.
- The method of worship was through prayer and recitation of mantras and salms.
- Animal sacrifices were also performed as a part of the Vedic rituals.
- The main objective of the worship was the material growth and development of a highly powerful society and also to get "**Suvirah**" (brave son).
- Spiritual growth was not the objective of the worship in this period.

LATER VEDIC PERIOD (11:13 AM):

- Around 1000 BC, iron was discovered in places like Atranjikheda and Jakhira.
- With iron, they created very good quality and very sharp tools.
- With these tools, the dense forests of the upper Gangetic plain were cleared and Arans started to practice agriculture on much regular basis.
- They further penetrated the Eastern part of India, Central India, and Southern India.
- These areas were referred to as:
 - Eastern Part - Purvakhand.
 - South India - Dakshinapanth.
 - Central India - Madhyadesh.
 - North and North Western Indis - Brahmavarta and Aryavarta.
- Ganga and Yamuna rivers were also mentioned in the later Vedic texts.
- Gandak River was referred to as **Sadanira** and it was often repeated in later Vedic texts.
- **Polity during the Later Vedic Period:**
 - The position of Rajan became much more important at this time.
 - Now he needed to organize a battle for rashtra building (creation of a sovereign State).
 - The Early Vedic political assemblies Sabha and Samiti lost their former relevance and Vidhata completely disappeared.
 - The position of the priestly class also became very important at this time.
 - The priestly class came up with the ritual sacrifice practices to bless the Rajan with strength and power.
 - The important rituals are as follows:
 - **Rajsuiya:**
 - It was the coronation of Rajan with the divine blessings of priestly class.
 - **Vajpeya:**
 - In this ritual sacrifice, chariot races were organized and at the conclusion of the event, a free feast was given to the participants.
 - **Ashwamedha Yajna:**
 - It was the most important ritual sacrifice associated with the Rashtra building.
 - In this ritual, the strongest horse of the kingdom was bruised by chief queen Mahishi and then it was let loose to venture into other kingdoms.
 - If the horse was not captured by the other kings, then it meant they had accepted the supremacy of Ashwamedha king.
 - But if they capture the horse, then they will have to fight with the Ashwamedha king.
 - The ceremony was to be concluded within 40 days and on the last day of the ceremony, the horse was to be sacrificed along with 21 sterile cows and more than 200 bulls.
 - Moreover, a large number of cattle were donated to the priestly class in this ceremony.

- **Economy during the Later Vedic Period:**
- At this point in time, agricultural land became the most important economic wealth and cattle became secondary economic wealth.
- The most important work of Rajan was to annex territory for the Rashtra building.
- Apart from Godhuma and Yava, **Vrihi (rice)** became one of the most important agricultural commodities.
- There was no formal system of taxation at this time and Bhaga and Bali continued.
- **Bhaga:**
- A particular part of agricultural produce was given to Rajan.
- **Bali:**
- The animal wealth was given to Rajan during religious rituals and sacrifices.
- **Note** - The Later Vedic Texts mention **Mujavant Parvat** (Eastern part of the Himalayas).
- This name was given on the basis of a specific variety of grass commonly known as Mooj which was abundantly growing in this area.
- It is also believed one of the most important drinks of the Vedic age, **Somarasa** was created from this plant.

THE TOPIC OF THE NEXT CLASS - LATER VEDIC AGE (TO BE CONTINUED.....).