

Chapter – 4

What Books and Burials Tell Us

2marks:

1.What kind of evidence from burials do archaeologists use to find out whether there were social differences amongst those who were buried?

Answer:

Archaeologists found that in some burials, skeletons found were buried with pots. The number of pots buried was more if the person had higher social status.

2. In what ways do you think that the life of a raja was different from that of a dasa or dasi?

Answer:

Raja had the highest social status, whereas a dasa or dasi had the lowest social status. The latter were treated like slaves; they were captured from wars.

3.Explain the significance of the Vedas in ancient India.

Answer: The Vedas, comprising the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and

Atharvaveda, are among the oldest literary sources in the world. Composed around 3500 years ago, the Rigveda, for example, consists of over a thousand hymns praising various deities. These texts were crucial in shaping religious and cultural practices in ancient India.

4.How were hymns in the Rigveda transmitted and learned?

Answer:

The hymns in the Rigveda were transmitted orally by sages known as Rishis. Students were taught to recite and memorize each syllable, word, and sentence with great care. The oral tradition played a significant role in preserving and passing down these hymns.

5.Why is Vedic Sanskrit different from the Sanskrit taught in schools today?

Answer:

The language of the Rigveda, Vedic Sanskrit, differs from the classical Sanskrit taught in schools. Vedic Sanskrit is an older form, and linguistic changes over time have led to the development of classical Sanskrit used in later texts and teachings.

6.What were the common themes of prayers in the Rigveda?

Answer:

The Rigveda contains prayers for various aspects, including praises to

gods such as Agni, the god of fire; Indra, a warrior god; and Soma, a plant used to prepare a special drink. Prayers also sought blessings for cattle, children, and success in battles.

7.Why were battles fought in ancient times, as mentioned in the Rigveda?

Answer:

Battles in ancient times, as mentioned in the Rigveda, were often fought for capturing cattle, securing land for pasture and cultivation, obtaining water resources, and occasionally for the capture of people. The battles were essential for acquiring wealth and resources.

8.Describe the significance of megaliths in ancient burial practices.

Answer:

Megaliths, large stones arranged to mark burial sites, were prevalent about 3000 years ago in regions like the Deccan, south India, the north-east, and Kashmir.

4marks:

1.What are the Vedas, and why is the Rigveda considered one of the oldest literary sources in the world?

Answer:

The Vedas are ancient Indian religious texts, and the Rigveda is the oldest among them, composed about 3500 years ago. It comprises over a thousand hymns praising various gods and goddesses, such as Agni, Indra, and Soma. The Rigveda is significant for its antiquity and the insights it provides into early Indian culture and spirituality.

2.Describe the role of priests and rajas in Vedic society based on the Rigveda.

Answer:

In Vedic society, priests, or brahmins, conducted rituals and sacrifices, acting as intermediaries between gods and the community. Rajas, or chiefs, were chosen leaders known for bravery and skill in war. They lacked formal administrative structures and armies, relying on personal qualities for authority. Together, priests and rajas shaped the social structure of ancient India.

3.What is the linguistic significance of the Rigveda, and how does it reflect language diversity in ancient India?

Answer:

The Rigveda is composed in Vedic Sanskrit, distinct from contemporary Sanskrit. It reflects linguistic diversity in ancient India, where languages like Assamese, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, and European languages belonged to the Indo-European family. Linguistic distinctions in the Rigveda contributed to social identities and cultural variations.

4.Explain the significance of megaliths in ancient burial practices. Provide examples of megalithic sites mentioned in the text.

Answer:

Megaliths are large stones used to mark burial sites, prevalent about 3000 years ago. Examples include sites in the Deccan, south India, northeast, and Kashmir. They serve as silent sentinels, indicating burial spots, often containing distinctive pots and tools, reflecting social differences among those buried.

5.Discuss the occupations evident at the Inamgaon site based on archaeological findings.

Answer:

At Inamgaon, archaeological evidence reveals diverse occupations, including agriculture (seeds of wheat, barley, rice, pulses), animal

husbandry (bones of various animals), and collection of fruits. The site indicates a multifaceted economy and lifestyle.

6.Describe the skeletal studies mentioned in the text and their relevance in understanding ancient societies.

Answer:

Skeletal studies involve examining bones to determine age, gender, and other characteristics. In the text, Charaka's ancient description of the human body contrasts with modern skeletal studies. Such studies provide insights into health, lifestyle, and social structures of ancient societies.

7.Examine the role of linguistic distinctions in the Rigveda in describing people and communities. Provide examples of terms used.

Answer:

The Rigveda uses terms like brahmins, rajas, jana, and vish to describe people based on their work, social status, and community. Linguistic distinctions, such as Aryas and Dasas, highlight differences in language, rituals, and possibly social practices within ancient Indian society.

7marks:

1.Examine the significance of the Vedas in shaping the religious and cultural landscape of ancient India, considering their impact on rituals, moral values, and societal norms.

Answer:

The Vedas, comprising the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda, hold immense significance in ancient India. Beyond being religious texts, they played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural and moral fabric of society. The Rigveda, for instance, provided a foundation for religious rituals, influencing how ceremonies were conducted. The hymns in praise of deities such as Agni and Indra not only fostered a sense of spiritual connectivity but also guided ethical behaviour, emphasizing virtues like truth, righteousness, and social responsibility. The Vedas, therefore, served as a comprehensive guide for individuals and communities, molding their beliefs and practices.

2.Discuss the role of oral tradition in the preservation of the Rigvedic hymns. Elaborate on how the meticulous process of recitation and memorization contributed to the continuity of Vedic knowledge.

Answer:

The Rigvedic hymns were transmitted through a robust oral tradition, a crucial aspect of Vedic culture. Sages, or Rishis, played a central role in passing down the hymns to their disciples through rigorous

recitation and memorization. This oral tradition served as a means of preserving the sacred knowledge of the Vedas when written records were limited. The meticulous process of learning each syllable, word, and sentence ensured the accuracy of the transmission, creating a continuum of Vedic knowledge. The communal nature of this oral tradition fostered a sense of collective responsibility, binding communities through shared rituals and a common cultural heritage.

3. Compare and contrast Vedic Sanskrit with classical Sanskrit. Analyze the linguistic features that distinguish Vedic Sanskrit and explain how linguistic changes reflect the historical evolution of the language.

Answer:

Vedic Sanskrit, as seen in the Rigveda, differs significantly from classical Sanskrit taught in contemporary schools. Linguistically, Vedic Sanskrit is characterized by archaic features, including a more complex phonological system, distinct vocabulary, and unique grammatical structures. These variations can be attributed to the historical evolution of the language. Vedic Sanskrit represents an earlier stage, capturing the linguistic diversity prevalent in ancient India. Classical Sanskrit, on the other hand, underwent standardization and simplification, making it more accessible for literary and scholarly pursuits. The linguistic changes reflect the dynamic nature of language and its adaptation over time.

4.Explore the societal roles and distinctions mentioned in the Rigveda, focusing on the description of priests (brahmins), rulers (rajas), and the general populace.

Answer:

The Rigveda provides insights into the social structure of ancient India, detailing distinct roles and hierarchies. Two primary groups mentioned are the priests, often referred to as brahmins, and the rulers or rajas. Brahmins were responsible for performing various rituals, acting as intermediaries between the divine and the community.

Unlike the later concept of kingship, the rajas in the Rigveda were not monarchs with palaces and armies; they were leaders chosen for their bravery and skills. The text also mentions the broader community, described using terms like jana and vish, highlighting the diversity within the populace. The societal distinctions depicted in the Rigveda offer glimpses into the early formations of social order in ancient India.

5.Explore the representation of social groups, such as Aryas, Dasas, and Dasyus, in the Rigveda. Analyze the cultural and linguistic distinctions associated with these groups and the historical context in which these distinctions emerged.

Answer:

The Rigveda introduces terms like Aryas, Dasas, and Dasyus, reflecting social and cultural distinctions. Aryas, often used by the

composers to describe themselves, were associated with those who performed sacrifices and adhered to Vedic rituals. In contrast, Dasas and Dasyus were perceived as different, possibly due to linguistic and cultural differences. The term "Dasas" later evolved to denote slaves. These distinctions may have arisen from varying cultural practices, languages, or even conflicts, highlighting the early stages of social categorization and cultural diversity in ancient India.

6.Examine the archaeological evidence from megalithic burials, focusing on the social differences revealed through grave goods. Provide examples of items found in megaliths and how these findings contribute to our understanding of social affect in ancient Indian communities.

Answer:

Megalithic burials, marked by stone structures, offer archaeological insights into social differences in ancient India. Grave goods, such as gold beads, copper bangles, distinctive pots, and tools found in these burials, indicate variations in social status. For instance, the presence of elaborate items in some graves, like at Brahmagiri, suggests a higher social standing, possibly indicating chiefs or leaders. On the contrary, simpler burials with fewer possessions might signify individuals of lower status. These archaeological findings contribute significantly to understanding the socio-economic disparities and hierarchical structures within communities during the megalithic period.

Fill in the blanks:

1.The Rigveda, one of the oldest literary sources, includes more than a thousand _____ in praise of various gods and goddesses.

Answer:

hymns

2.The Vedas, including the Rigveda, were composed about _____ years ago.

Answer:

3500

3.Sanskrit is part of the family of languages known as _____ - _____.

Answer:

Indo-European

4.Megaliths, known as big stones, were used to mark _____ sites.

Answer:

burial

5.Iron equipment, including axes and daggers, was found in

megalithic _____.

Answer:

burials

6.The human body, according to Charaka, the famous physician, has _____ bones.

Answer:

360

7.In the Rigveda, battles were fought for capturing cattle, land, and _____.

Answer:

water

8.The term "Dasa" in the Rigveda later came to mean _____.

Answer:

slave

9.The Rigveda was recited and heard, and it was written down several centuries after it was first _____.

Answer:

composed

10.Inamgaon, an archaeological site, was occupied between

_____ and _____ years ago.

Answer:

3600, 2700

Multiple choice:

1.What is the primary focus of the Rigveda?

- A) Astronomy**
- B) Medicine**
- C) Hymns in praise of gods and goddesses**
- D) Epic tales**

Answer:

C) Hymns in praise of gods and goddesses

2.Which of the following is NOT one of the Vedas?

- A) Rigveda**
- B) Upanishad**
- C) Samaveda**
- D) Atharvaveda**

Answer:

B) Upanishad

3.Sanskrit belongs to which family of languages?

- A) Dravidian**
- B) Indo-European**
- C) Sino-Tibetan**
- D) Austro-Asiatic**

Answer:

- B) Indo-European

4.What were megaliths used for in ancient times?

- A) Agricultural purposes**
- B) Marking burial sites**
- C) Religious ceremonies**
- D) Housing construction**

Answer:

- B) Marking burial sites

5.What metal was commonly found in megalithic burials?

- A) Gold**
- B) Silver**
- C) Iron**

D) Copper

Answer:

C) Iron

6.How many bones did Charaka, the ancient physician, claim the human body has?

A) 206

B) 360

C) 100

D) 500

Answer:

B) 360

7.What was a common motivation for battles mentioned in the Rigveda?

A) Religious supremacy

B) Capture of water sources

C) Artistic achievements

D) Establishing trade routes

Answer:

B) Capture of water sources

8. In the context of the Rigveda, who were Dasas?

- A) Warriors**
- B) Priests**
- C) Slaves**
- D) Merchants**

Answer:

- C) Slaves**

9. How were hymns in the Rigveda transmitted in ancient times?

- A) Written on paper**
- B) Printed in books**
- C) Recited and memorized**
- D) Sung in choirs**

Answer:

- C) Recited and memorized**

10. What was the primary occupation of the people at Inamgaon?

- A) Trading**
- B) Farming**
- C) Metalworking**

D) Fishing

Answer:

B) Farming

Summary:

The Rigveda, composed around 3500 years ago, is one of the oldest literary sources in the world, consisting of hymns in praise of various gods and goddesses. The Vedas, including the Rigveda, were transmitted through oral traditions, with priests teaching students to recite and memorize each syllable meticulously. Sanskrit, the language of the Rigveda, belongs to the Indo-European language family, which includes various Indian, Asian, and European languages. The Rigveda provides insights into ancient Indian society, where battles were fought for resources such as cattle, land, and water. Horses, chariots, and sacrifices played significant roles in these battles.

Social distinctions existed, with priests (brahmins) and chiefs (rajas) mentioned in the hymns. The terms Aryas and Dasas were used to describe different groups, and slaves (Dasyus) were often captured in wars. The Rigveda also reflects the importance of family and community identity, referring to various janas or vish.