

Later Vedic Period (1000–600 BCE)

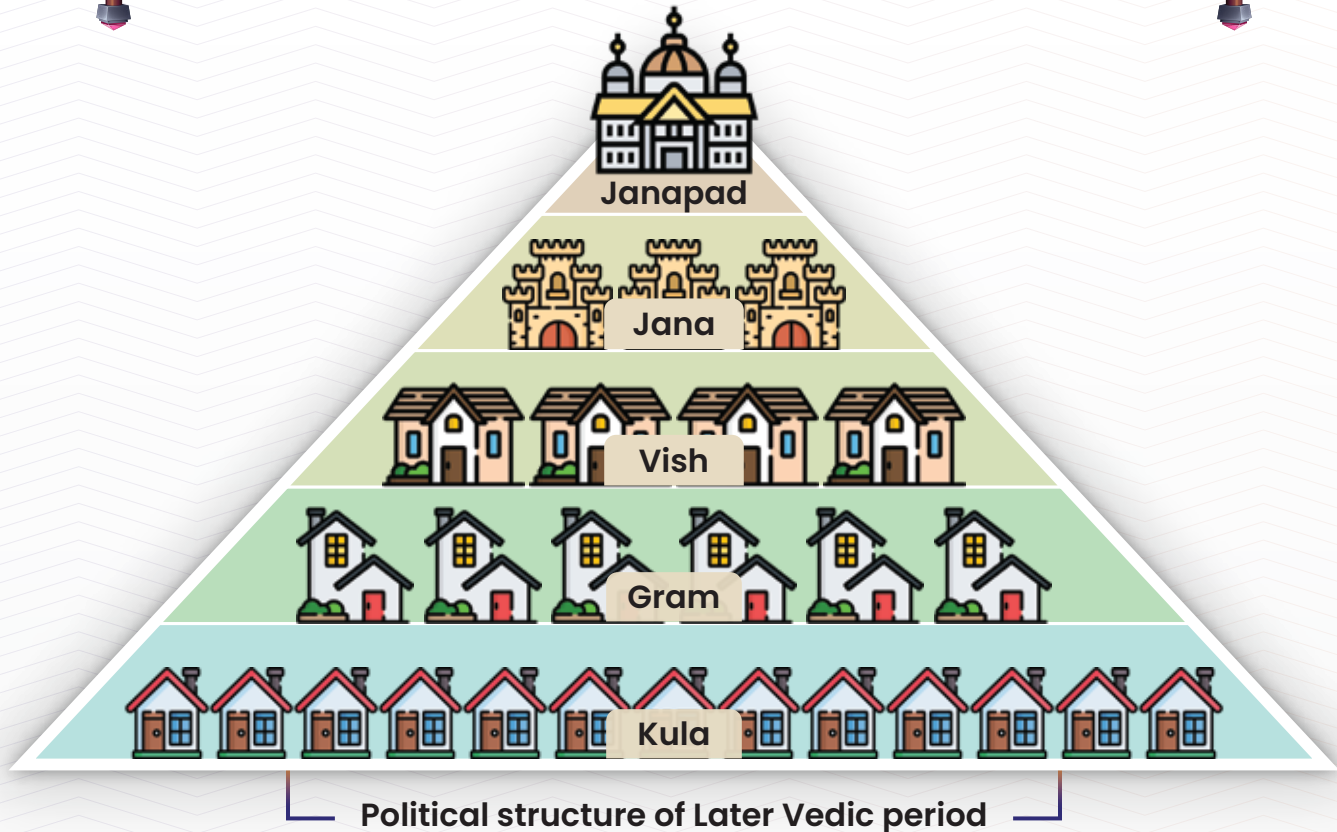
The Later Vedic period, which followed the Rig Vedic era, is primarily understood through texts compiled during this time. This era corresponds with the **Iron Age** and is associated with the **Painted Grey Ware (PGW) Culture**.

Geographical Expansion and Settlements

The Later Vedic period reflects a significant shift in the political, social, and economic structures of the Aryan civilization, as well as increased migration and territorial expansion. **Aryans expanded further east, reaching the Gangetic plains, as described in the Satapatha Brahmana.** This period also saw the rise of larger kingdoms, with prominent states such as **Kuru, Panchala, Kosala, Kasi, and Videha.**

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Rise of Kingdoms and Centralized Power



- ◆ **Several Jana (tribes)** merged to form **Janapadas or Rashtras**, giving rise to the term "**Janapada**" for kingdom.
- ◆ The **Kula** is the lowest political unit, while the **Janapada** is the higher political unit.
- ◆ Aryans began **forming settled societies**, with the king at the head of each tribe.
- ◆ **Kingship became hereditary**, but **traces of elected chiefs** are also found in the literature.
- ◆ **Warfare shifted from raids for cattle to territorial conquests**, which resulted in the consolidation of royal power.

Role and Power of the King

- ◆ The king, usually a **Kshatriya**, became central to the social and political order.

- ◆ Monarchs were addressed differently across regions:
 - **Virat** (North)
 - **Samrat** (East)
 - **Svarat** (West)
 - **Bhoja** (South)
- ◆ The king's authority was often legitimized by conducting specific royal rituals:
 - **Rajasuya: Bestowed supreme authority** upon the king.
 - **Asvamedha: Symbolized control** over the land.
 - **Vajapeya: A chariot race** that demonstrated royal power.

Administrative Officials in the Later Vedic Period

- ◆ The Later Vedic period saw the emergence of a **structured administrative system**, with royal officials called **Ratnins (jewels)**, who were key members of the king's council and handled **various administrative functions**.



Official	Role & Function
Kulapati	Head of the family.
Gramani	Village headman, responsible for local administration.
Senani	Commander of the army; organized the military and managed civil duties during peace.
Madhyamasi	Mediator of disputes.
Purohita	Chief priest and advisor; performed key sacrifices (Abhiseka, Rajsurya, Asvamedha) to reinforce royal authority.
Spasas	Spies and messengers.
Vrajapati	Officer in charge of pastures.

Bhagadugha	Revenue collector; responsible for taxes like Bali and Bhaga.
Jivagribha	Police officer.
Mahishi	Chief queen, with a role in governance.
Akshavapa	Accountant.
Suta	Charioteer.
Athapati	Chief judge.
Sangrihitri	Treasurer; managed state finances and collected revenues.
Kshatri	Takshan
Chamberlain	Palagala
Carpenter	Messenger.
Govinkartana	Keeper of forests and royal game

Decline of Popular Assemblies

- Assemblies such as the **Sabha** and **Samiti** continued to exist, but their roles diminished, and they became **controlled by the nobility and Brahmanas**.
- Vidhata (popular assemblies) **lost relevance**.



Military Structure

- The Later Vedic kings **did not maintain standing armies**. Instead, **tribal units** were mobilized during times of conflict.
- Kings were expected to share meals with their subjects to foster unity and support in battle.



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