

Rigvedic Age

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Introduction

The Rigvedic Age (1500 BCE – 1000 BCE) refers to the early Vedic period of Indian history. It is named after the Rigveda, the oldest of the four Vedas, which provides valuable insights into the social, political, economic, and religious life of the people during this period.

Sources of Information

1. Rigveda – The most important source that contains hymns dedicated to various deities.
2. Later Vedic texts – Other Vedas and Brahmanas provide supplementary details.
3. Archaeological findings – Settlements and material remains also give evidence.

Society

- Society was patriarchal and tribal in nature.
- Families were the basic unit; joint family system existed.
- Varna system in its nascent form (Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra) can be seen.
- Women enjoyed a respectable position and had access to education.

Polity

- Kingship was hereditary but not absolute.
- Kings (Rajan) were assisted by assemblies like Sabha and Samiti.
- There was no elaborate administrative machinery.
- Tribal polity emphasized collective decision-making.

Economy

- Predominantly pastoral economy; cattle was the main wealth.
- Agriculture gradually became important.
- Barter system was prevalent.
- Occupations included carpentry, pottery, weaving, and metalwork.

Religion

- Polytheistic religion with natural forces personified as gods.
- Important deities: Indra (god of rain and war), Agni (fire god), Varuna (god of cosmic order), Surya (sun god), and Ushas (goddess of dawn).
- Sacrifices (Yajnas) were important religious practices.
- No idol worship or temples existed during this period.

Conclusion

The Rigvedic Age was a formative period in Indian history. It laid the foundation of Indian social, political, and religious traditions, which later evolved in the subsequent Vedic and post-Vedic periods.