

CLASS VI
CHAPTER FOUR
What Burials And Books Tell Us

THINGS TO ANSWER AFTER READING THE CONTEXT

- a. Do we have similarities as that of the Vedic society today?
- b. What are the four vedas? Which one is the liturgical text?
- c. What makes the Vedas sacred and important?

❖ **Vedas: India's Greatest Treasure**

India, Bharatvarsha, Jambudvipa, Aryavrata and so much more names have been assigned to ancient India. India has always been a great land, for great people were born here who nurtured India with their knowledge, bravery and valor. India is the land of rishis, who wrote one of the greatest texts ever written, the Vedas. The vedas hold an important place in our culture and civilization, and are written in praise of gods and goddesses. Hymns, also known as sukta, which translates into “well said” make up the Vedas. Let’s learn something more about the Vedas.

★ **There are four kinds of Vedas in the Vedic Civilization. The name for the civilization that happened during the time the Vedas were written was named the “Vedic Civilization”.**

★ **FOUR KINDS OF VEDAS ARE:**

- a. **Rig Veda:** Rig Veda is the oldest of the four Vedas, which is said to be written in a Vedic language which later developed into Sanskrit as we know today. It has ten divisions known as mandalas, which has hymns and mantras used in worship and rituals. It has 1028 hymns in total.
 - b. **Sama Veda:** Sama means “song”. The third of Vedas, the Sama Veda is a liturgical text which has hymns in form of chants and melodies. It has 1549 verses.
 - c. **Yajur Veda:** The word “Yajur” means worship. Hymns performed before the yajnas are listed in the Yajur Veda. It has 1975 mantras.
 - d. **Atharva Veda:** Atharva Veda is very different from the above mentioned Vedas, as it is a complete book on the everyday procedures of our life. It has 5977 mantras.
- ★ Can you imagine learning the whole set of your syllabus by just reciting? No, right? The Vedas were however never written or stored, but the rishis passed down the Vedic knowledge to others through oral recitation. It was done very carefully, as they taught every hymn strictly.
- ★ The hymns composed in the Vedas are said to be mostly composed, learnt and even taught by men, and only some women like Lopamudra, Gargi, Sulabha Maitryee and Ghosa were well known in the Vedas.

- ★ The Gods mentioned in the Rig Veda are Indra, the warrior God, Agni, the fire God and Soma, the plant through which the special drink of immortality was prepared.

So, basically everything was orally passed down from generations, and from the huge numbers of mantras and hymns that the Vedas have, you can now guess it took only dedicated and genius minds to literally remember everything of that as such. They were composed in a written form many years later, you may say some 200 years later.

THINGS TO ANSWER AFTER READING THE CONTEXT

- a. What is the language used in the Rig Veda?
- b. Write something about the Early Vedic society.
- c. Find out some more dialogue hymns from the Rig Veda.
- d. Try to think of the words that are similar to the ones mentioned in the text which define different people in the society.

❖ Studying the Rig Veda

Rig Veda is not written in some form of a book, but was rather found in a scattered form written on birch barks, one such picture can be found in your textbook on page number forty five. This manuscript was found in Kashmir, and is now preserved in a library in Maharashtra.

The hymns in the Rig Veda were not actually written in the modern day Sanskrit as we know of today, ancient Vedic Sanskrit which is very much different. Sanskrit is said to be a part of the family of the Indo European languages, a family through which other languages like Assamese, English, Kashmiri, Sindhi and other languages are said to have been born. The hymns in Rig Veda were composed in the form of dialogues, and the manuscript mentioned in the chapter is a dialogue between the renowned sage Vishwamitra and two rivers.

Read the dialogues as mentioned in your textbook very carefully. What do you notice? You will notice that there is a mention of chariots, horses, cows who lick their calves and carts. The most intriguing part is the sage praying to their rivers to bless the lands.

What do you think the mention of all these things tell us?

The mention of the cows and horses in the dialogue tells us that they were considered important animals in the Vedic civilization. We all know how even till date how Hindus worship cows. The mention of chariots and carts tell us about the means used by people for transportation. The importance of rivers and how people personified nature with God is all that we learn from this dialogue.

The most important rivers that have their mention in the Rig Veda are Saraswati, Indus and the names of Ganga and Yamuna come only once.

❖ The Society in Early Vedic Era: Cattle, Horses and Chariots

Society in the Early Vedic era was very different from the Later Vedic Era. People in the Early Vedic Era gave importance to cattle. There were no possessions of land, but more cattle and wars were also fought for the capturing of more cattle, which were known as “gavasthi”. People also practised hunting and gathering in the Early Vedic Era. They had a king, and an assembly would be formed to make major decisions. We will learn elaborately about the Early Vedic Society in Class 7.

The group that won wars captured everything from the one that lost. Possessions were divided where a portion was kept by the leader, some of it was given to the priests and the rest was given to the people of the group. Performing Yajnas was an important part, where offerings of ghee, grains and also animals were made.

❖ Terms used to define people in the Vedic Society

There were different terms or should we say names, used to describe a group of people in the Vedic Society. We will just learn about some names like the men who were considered in the highest regard, the priests were called the ***Brahmins***, as they had the knowledge of the Vedas, performed Yajnas and were advisors to the king. The ***Rajas*** who was the ruler, who fought and directed warriors in the wars. The ***Rajas*** in the Early Vedic Era were not subjected to big palaces and wealth, but they led wandering communities who fought for cattle, and there was no hereditary succession then, the skilled ones succeeded to the throne. ***Jana*** was the word used for the general public and the word ***Vish***, too was used for the same, but this word gave birth to another word called “vaishya” a community about which you will learn in the coming classes. They are referred in the Vedas as Pura Jan or Vish, Bharat Jan or Vish and also Yadu Jan or Vish.

Words like “***Aryans***” or “***Aryas***” are defined as “wise people” and were the ones who composed the Vedic hymns. The word “***Dasi***” (*female*) and “***Dyasa***” (*male*) were used for people who were captured in wars. They were generally made slaves.

THINGS TO ANSWER AFTER READING THE CONTEXT

- a. Do you think the practise of burial was the same all around the world?
- b. Find out about some unusual burial practises in the world.
- c. Write a short paragraph on the history of megaliths.

❖ Societies In Other Parts Of India: The Story Of Megaliths

The Vedic Society happened in and around the north western Indian subcontinent, but there were many other interesting things going around in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. We will learn about one such thing, that is the Megaliths, which tell us a lot about the society at that time.

Do you remember the meaning of the word “Lithos” that was taught you in chapter one? The word “lithos” means “stone”. Megaliths means “big stones”. These stones were used to mark burial sites, and this was practised some 3,000 years ago in the Deccan, South India, in the North-East and Kashmir.

This was a huge practise because it involved a lot of labour. Imagine moving a big stone without any advanced technology as we have today. Not all megaliths were made on the ground, some were also discovered underground. The question is, how did they mark burials through these big stones?

The dead were buried and then suitable stones were found, transported and kept in the place where the dead had been buried, to mark the place. Do you know, that just like the Egyptian mummies, who were buried with essentials, the dead bodies under the Megaliths were buried with some pottery, called the Red and Black Ware, with tools and weapons made of iron, gold ornaments and also there were skeletons of animals like horses were found buried inside. ***Do you think they believed in the afterlife too?***

- ★ According to archeologists, we can also find the social differences that existed in the society with the help of these burials. You see, some burials have more objects in them like more jewellery, more animal skeletons, and more weapons as compared to other graves. ***Do you think social status existed in society at that point of time?***
- ★ One more interesting finding suggests that the burial grounds for some families were the same. The boulders on the burial ground of a particular person were used as signposts and more members of the family were added to the same grave by burying the dead bodies through potholes. ***Do you think these were the family members or servants?***
- ★ Inamgaon is said to be a famous megalith site where there are lots of burials found. Situated on River Ghod, which is said to be a tributary of Bhima, there were settlements between 3600 to 2700 years ago. What is special about the place is burials are even found in the houses of the people. Also, they laid the dead bodies in a straight position with the head facing the north direction. Just like burials mentioned above, they too had essentials like food and water packed in vessels buried with the dead.

One of the most important burials in the place was found to be buried in a four legged clay jar, the largest house of the settlement which had a granary. The body was in a cross legged position. ***Why do you think the body was buried in such a position?***

- ★ Inamgaon people did farming as seeds like wheat, barley, rice, pulses, millets, peas and sesame have been discovered. They also practised hunting and gathering as there were animal bones like that of pig, goats, cow etc have been found. There might have been a practise of cattle herding.

❖ **Case Study For Your Better Understanding:**

★ **What can we learn from the burials and skeletons of the people?**

Even the slightest of the evidence can lead the archeologists in discovering a lot of things about the past. We have already learnt that burials had things buried along with them. The structure of the skeletons tell us whether it belonged to a man or woman. The hip or the pelvic area of a woman is different and larger than a man to enable child birth. Also, the kinds of things buried with them told us about their status in the society.

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