

QUESTION BANK

VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. *Who were the Indo-Aryans?*
Ans. The Aryans who came to India are referred as Indo-Aryans.
2. *What is the general time attributed for the arrival of the Aryans in India?*
Ans. 1500 BCE.
3. *What term was used for the Dravidians by the Aryans?*
Ans. The Aryans referred to Dravidians as dasas or slaves.
4. *What do the Indians regard the Vedas to be?*
Ans. The Indians regard the Vedas to be 'Revealed Wisdom'.
5. *What does the Rig Veda contain?*
Ans. The Rig Veda contains 1028 mantras praising different gods and goddesses which represented nature.
6. *What were treatises on the Vedas called?*
Ans. The Brahmanas
7. *What are the concluding part of the Brahmanas called?*
Ans. The Aranyakas
8. *What do the Griha Sutras contain?*
Ans. Griha Sutras contain the knowledge about various ceremonies or Sanskaras of a person from birth to death.
9. *What is the importance of Panini's Ashtadhyayi?*
Ans. Panini's Ashtadhyayi is a work on grammar that provides meanings of words from Vedic literature. It provides us information about the Vedic Period.
10. *Which two assemblies aided the king in administration?*
Ans. The Sabha and the Samiti
11. *Who were Uppala, Ghosha, and Vishwavara?*
Ans. Uppala, Ghosha and Vishwavara were learned women. They were considered to be rishis and had composed many hymns.
12. *Who were Dasyus?*
Ans. The fair skinned Aryans did not like the dark skinned Dravidians at all. They called them Dasyus or slaves.
13. *What does the word Varna mean?*
Ans. Varna is the Sanskrit word for colour. But in the Vedic times varna had become the basis of the formation of groups of families.

14. Which were the four castes in the Vedic times?
Ans. The four castes of the Vedic times were the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Sudra.
15. Which were the four stages of a man's life laid down by the Aryans?
Ans. Brahmacharya Ashram, Grihastha Ashram, Vanaprastha Ashram and Sanyas Ashram.
16. List some chief deities of the Aryans.
Ans. Usha, Prithivi, Vayu, Agni, Surya, Varuna and Indra.
17. Which Gods became prominent in the Later Vedic period?
Ans. The Gods prominent in the Later Vedic period were Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva.
18. Inclusion of which elements gave Later Vedic religion a philosophical tinge?
Ans. Mukti, Maya, Karma and Moksha.
19. What is the importance of the epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata?
Ans. The two epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata aid us to learn about political, social and economic life of the people in the Later Vedic Age or the Epic Age as it is sometimes called.
20. What is the Bhagvad Gita?
Ans. Bhagvad Gita or the Song Divine is a part of the Mahabharata. It contains the sermon given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna when he refused to fight his own brothers in the battle at Kurukshetra.

STRUCTURED TYPE QUESTIONS

1. (a) Who were the Aryans?
 (b) Many people of the world call themselves descendants of the Aryans. Mention any two.
 (c) What did the Sapt-Sindhu theory say about the original home of the Aryans?
 (d) Briefly describe the religion of the Early Aryans.

Ans. (a) The Aryans were a pastoral people who lived in the Punjab since around 1500 BCE and from there spread out to the areas of modern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, etc.
 (b) The Hindus and the Iranians of today call themselves descendants of the Aryans.
 (c) Some historians tried to prove that the Sapt-Sindhu (modern Punjab) was the original home of the Aryans and from there they spread to other parts of the country.
 (d) The manner in which the Aryans worshipped was very simple. They did not build temples. They worshipped in the open by chanting hymns and offering sacrifices to their gods in which all the members of the family took active part. Their religion was naturalistic, i.e., the forces of nature were represented as gods. For example, Indra was the god of rain and thunder, Agni was the god of fire, Varuna was the god of water, and so on.

2. (a) When did the Aryans come to India?
 (b) Mention the early Aryan settlements.

Ans. (a) The Aryans came to India possibly in 1500 BCE. But they came here in several batches, and at different times. They did not come all at one time.
 (b) The first Aryan settlements were formed in the valley of the Kabul river and in Punjab. This area was called Sapt-Sindhu (seven rivers) or Brahmavarta or the land of Gods.

3. (a) Mention some of the officials of a king in ancient India.
 (b) Which powerful kingdoms rose in the Later Vedic Period?
 (c) What was the position of women in the Aryan society?

Ans. (a) In ancient India, a king had Purohita (priest), Senani (commander), Gramini (village chief) and some other ministers and officials.
 (b) The Kuru, Panchala, Magadha, Kashi, Kosala, Anga, etc., were some of the powerful kingdoms of the Later Vedic Period.
 (c) In the Early Vedic Period, women enjoyed a respectable and equal status in society. They took part in all religious ceremonies and social gatherings along with their husband. They were well-educated. The learned women during Rig Vedic Period were Uppala, Ghosha, etc., who wrote many hymns in the various Vedas. But later they were downgraded and confined to the four walls of the house. They mostly remained illiterate and helpless. Widow marriage was prohibited.

4. With reference to the Vedic literature briefly describe :

- (a) The names of the two Epics and their content.
- (b) The Bhagvad Gita and its author.
- (c) Ashtadhyayi and its author.
- (d) Write briefly about :
 - (i) The number of Puranas and one of their important aspects,
 - (ii) The Brahmanas and one of their important characteristics,
 - (iii) The Upanishads and one of their important characteristics,
 - (iv) The Aranyakas and one of their important characteristics.

Ans. (a) The Valmiki Ramayana and The Mahabharata of Ved Vyas are two important Epics of India. The first describes the life of Lord Rama and his war with Ravana. The second describes the great war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

(b) The Bhagvad Gita (Song of God) forms part of The Mahabharata. This is the sermon which Lord Krishna gave to Arjuna just before the great Mahabharata war began. Lord Krishna is the author of this very small book.

(c) Ashtadhyayi is a book of Sanskrit grammar that was written in the 6th century BCE. Its author was Panini.

(d) (i) Puranas are said to be 18 in number. They are basically mythological texts of the Later Vedic Period. Each Purana is devoted to a particular god like Shiva Purana, Vishnu Purana, etc.

(ii) The Brahmanas are the treatises on the Vedas. Each Veda contains several Brahmanas. They explain the Vedic hymns and deal with the rituals connected with sacrifice.

(iii) The Upanishads too form part of the Vedas. They are in fact the end part of the Vedas and are therefore called Vedanta. They deal with abstract philosophical questions like the creation, soul, karma, moksha, maya, etc.

(iv) The Aranyakas are the concluding parts of the Brahmanas, and therefore, come between the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. They were written for the hermits living in forests, and deal with mysticism and philosophy.

5. (a) What is the Later Vedic Period?
- (b) What was Aryavarta? Define its extent.
- (c) Who occupied the Brahmavarta?
- (d) Describe the food and drink of the Aryans.

Ans. (a) The period since the Aryans settled in the Gangetic valley, is called the Later Vedic Period.

(b) The area from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas was called the Aryavarta. It comprised of the modern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and other parts of Northern India.

(c) Initially five Aryan Tribes occupied the Brahmavarta. They were the Anus, the Purus, the Bharatas, the Yadus and the Tuvasas.

(d) Barley, milk and milk products, vegetables and fruit formed the main diet of the Aryans. The early Aryans also ate meat. They used to drink Soma and Sura which were intoxicating liquids.

6. (a) What subjects were taught in a Gurukula?
- (b) What were the four Ashrams? How were they determined?
- (c) What is meant by a Gurukul? Mention any two of its main features.

Ans. (a) In the Gurukuls, education was imparted in various arts and crafts. It was not limited to the knowledge of religion alone. Subjects like astrology and palmistry, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, military arts, statecrafts, etc., were also taught in a Gurukula.

(b) Brahmacharya, Grihasthya, Vanaprastha and Sanyas were the four Ashrams (stages) of man's life. The first continued till the age of 25, the second from 25 to 50, the third from 50 to 75 and the fourth 75 to 100. This was based on the assumption that a man's life would be of 100 years.

(c) A Gurukula was a learned man's Ashrama where students from various places used to come to receive education. Gurukulas were often supported by heavy gifts from the kings. In a Gurukula, students used to live with the teacher and serve him. Secondly, though no fee was charged from the students, they had to do work in the teacher's field to carry-out household chores. In the end, they also paid Guru-Dakshina to the teacher according to their capacity.

7. (a) *How many Vedas are there? Which is the oldest Veda?*
 (b) *Which is the latest Veda? What does it contain?*
 (c) *In context of Vedic literature briefly describe :*

- (i) *Smritis and their contents,*
 (ii) *Sutras and their divisions.*

- Ans. (a) The Vedas are four in number. They are the Rig Veda, the Samaveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda. The oldest Veda is the Rig Veda. It contains 1028 mantras or hymns in praise of various Gods and Goddesses representing various aspects of nature, like Agni, Indra, Varuna, etc.
 (b) The latest Veda is Atharvaveda. It does not find mention in Buddhist and Jain literature which talk only of three Vedas. It means this Veda did not exist in Buddha's time. The Atharvaveda contains mainly hymns dealing with charms and spells for subduing evil spirits and to control diseases, magical chants and methods of sorcery.
 (c) (i) Smritis (also called Dharma Shastras) are later day works which present a code of laws and social customs for all castes to follow. Manusmriti, Yajyavalkya Smriti, Narada Smriti and Vishnu Smriti are the most important among them.
 (ii) Sutra are the works that do not form part of the Vedas but deal with the customs that grew later. They are divided into the Srauta Sutras, the Griha Sutras and the Dharma Sutras. The first deal with rituals, religious ideas, etc. Ceremonies, etc., in a family are the subject of the Griha Sutras. The Dharma Sutras deal with social customs, cultural norms, civil and criminal laws, etc.

8. *In context with a Rig Vedic Age :*

- (a) *Write briefly about life in non-iron using phase or Rig Vedic phase of Vedic history.*
 (b) *Write about the Sapta Sindhu area.*
 (c) *Briefly discuss the Aryan tribes that had settled in the Sapta Sindhu area.*

- Ans. (a) The society was based on pastoral economy. Cattle were the main source of wealth and 'city' per se had no significance for them. Copper and bronze were the metals most used.
 (b) The Aryans in the Rig Vedic Age lived in the Sapt Sindhu area. According to some historians the Sapt Sindhu ('seven seas' area) was actually the area with seven rivers Vitasta (Jhelum), Asikni (Chenab), Parusni (Ravi), Vipas (Beas), Satadru (Satluj), Sindhu (Indus) and Sarasvati. This area had formed the first settlement of permanent nature for the Aryans.
 (c) The Sapt Sindhu area was then called *Brahmavarta* or Land of Gods. This first settlement by Aryans comprised five prominent Aryan tribes. They were the Anus, the Purus, the Bharatas, the Yadus and the Tuvasas. When they arrived they had to fight Dasyus or Dasas.

9. (a) *In context of Early Vedic Age briefly discuss :*

- (i) *Sabha and Samiti*
 (ii) *Social structure*

(b) *In context of Early Aryans discuss :*

- (i) *One feature of economic activity*
 (ii) *One feature of political organisation*

- Ans. (a) (i) In the Early Vedic Period, a king was assisted as well as controlled by two types of assemblies. One was the council of elders and was called the Sabha. The other was the assembly of the whole people, called the Samiti.
 (ii) Family was the basic unit of the Early Vedic Society. Several families made a village, and several villages made a Vish or Clan. Several clans made a Jana or tribe, the largest unit of the social structure.
 (b) (i) The economic activity of the early Aryans was centered on agriculture and domestication of animals. The animals gave the early Aryans milk and milk products as well as meat, carried their burdens, etc. They were also used in warfare, and were bartered in exchange. There was very little diversity of occupations; this diversity emerged only in the Later Vedic Period.
 (ii) Unlike the Later Vedic Period, the early Aryans had a very simple political organisation in which the king was only the head of the tribe and ruled by the consent of the tribe's elders who constituted the Sabha. At that time, often the king himself was the commander as well, and led his tribe in a war. In other words, his authority rested on his own prowess and the quality of his military leadership.

10. With reference to the Aryan religion, write about the following :

(a) Some Early Vedic gods, goddesses and some Later Vedic gods and goddesses and the importance of Yajnas.

(b) Why did the Brahmins become important?

Ans. (a) In the Early Vedic Period, Indra, Varuna, Agni, Mitra and Surya were some of the main Aryan gods. Indra was undoubtedly the most important among them. Among the goddesses, Usha was the most important. Vishnu was the most important God of the later Aryans. Other important Gods were Brahma and Shiva. Yajna (ritual sacrifice) was the main form of worship of the early Aryans, when they made offerings to their Gods. This was performed in the open. No temples were built as in the later days. Later Yajnas turned into a costly proposition and only the kings or other wealthy people could perform them. Animal and human sacrifice also became common in later days.

(b) Earlier, Yajnas were performed by the whole tribe under the leadership of a priest. But the office of the Purohit (priest) had not become hereditary. Anybody was selected by the tribe to preside over the Yajna. Later, however, this office became hereditary and only the Brahmanas could supervise the performance of a yajna for a king or some other wealthy person. It also came to be believed that only the Brahmanas knew the secrets of Yajna.

11. With reference to the Life of the Aryans :

(a) Write about the four ashramas and their aim.

(b) Discuss the Varnas and their gradation.

Ans. (a) The Aryan culture divided a man's life into four stages, each of which was called an Ashram. The Brahmacharya Ashram ranged from childhood to 25 years of age when a man was engaged in receiving education. Then he married and entered the Grihasthya Ashram, which continued to the age of 50. In the Vanaprastha Ashram, he himself retired from active life and departed to forest. The stage continued up to the age of 75. Finally, in Sanyas Ashram, a man retired from society and went to the hills, forests or hermitages in order to attain salvation.

(b) The Aryan society was divided into four Varnas which were considered to be unequal. In their gradation, the Brahmanas were considered to be the purest and the highest, while the Shudras were considered to be impure, polluting and the lowest. The Kshatriyas came after the Brahmanas in order of superiority, followed by the Vaishyas.

In this gradation, performance of religious ceremonies and education was given under the charge of Brahmanas. The Kshatriyas had the job of ruling, fighting and defending their kingdoms. The Vaishyas were engaged in trade, commerce, agriculture and handicrafts, etc., while the worst and menial jobs were reserved for the Shudras.

The non-Aryans were not included in this organisation. Sometimes they were referred to as Pancham Varna or the fifth Varna.

SA-15 → The sacrifices were performed by Aryans to propitiate gods who in turn would bless their people with peace and prosperity.

16) Rise of New gods the Nature of gods, of the Rig Vedic Age like Indra, Varuna, Surya, Purohit, Agni, were now explained with the new gods Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva.