

3.2 LATER VEDIC PERIOD

(1000 – 600 B.C)

- ❖ The Aryans further moved towards east in the Later Vedic Period.
- ❖ The period of Sama Veda, Atharva Veda, Yajur Veda.
- ❖ The Satapatha Brahmana refers to the expansion of Aryans to the Eastern genetic plains.

3.2.1 Kingdoms Emerged:

- ❖ Several tribal groups & kingdoms are mentioned in the Later Vedic literature.
- ❖ One important development during this period is the growth of large Kingdoms.
- ❖ Kuru & Panchala kingdoms flourished in the beginning.

Kuru - Parikshat & Janamejaya were the famous rulers of Kuru Kingdom.

Panchalas:

- ❖ Pravahana, Jaivali was a popular King of the Panchalas.
- ❖ He was a patron of learning.
- ❖ After the fall of Kurus & Panchalas, other kingdoms like

Kosala, Kasi, & Videha came into prominence.

Kasi: The famous ruler of Kasi was Ajatasatru.

Videha: Janaka was the King of Videha, with its Capital Mithila.

- ❖ His court was adorned by scholar Yajnavalkya.
- ❖ Magadha, Anga, & Vanga seem to be the easternmost tribal kingdoms.

The later vedic texts also refer to the three divisions of India.

- Aryavarta (Northern India)
- Madhyadesa (Central India)
- Dakshinapatha (Southern India)

3.2.2 Political Organisation:

- ❖ Larger Kingdoms were formed during the Later Vedic Period.
- ❖ Many Jana or Tribes were amalgamated to form Janapadas (or) Rashtras in the later vedic period.



- ❖ We came to know of large kingdoms & some kings were known as Maharaja (or) Samrat.
- ❖ The duty of the King was to defend his country from enemies, to maintain law & order.
- ❖ Hence the royal power had increased along with the increase in the size of kingdoms.

Rituals Performed by king:

- ❖ The King performed various rituals & sacrifices to strengthen his position.
- ❖ Rajasuya (Consecration ceremony)
- ❖ Asvamedha (Horse sacrifice)
- ❖ Vajpeya (Chariot race)

Title of kings:

The Kings also assumed titles like

- ❖ Rajavisvajanan
- ❖ Ahilabhuvanapathi (Lord of all Earth)
- ❖ Ekkrat & Samrat (Sole Ruler)

Officials:

- ❖ In later Vedic period, a large number of new officials were involved in the administration in addition to the existing, Purohita, Senai, & Gramani.

- ❖ They include;
 - The treasury officer
 - Tax collector, &
 - Royal messenger
- ❖ At the lower levels, the administration was carried on by the village assemblies.
- ❖ The importance of the samiti and the sabha had diminished during the Later Vedic period.

3.2.3 Economic condition:

Use of iron:

- ❖ Iron was used extensively in this period & this enabled the people to clear forests & to bring more land under cultivation.

Agriculture:

- ❖ Agriculture became the chief occupation.
- ❖ Improved types of implements were used for cultivation.
- ❖ They grew Paddy, Sugarcane, Barley, Rice & Wheat were grown.

Knowledge of manure - Cow dung was used as manure.

Industrial activity - It became more varied & there was greater specialization.

Other works - Metal work, Leather work, Carpentry & Pottery made great progress.

Trade:

- ❖ In addition to Internal trade, Foreign trade become extensive.
- ❖ The later vedic people were familiar with the sea & they traded with countries like Babylon.

Merchants:

- ❖ A class of hereditary merchants (vaniya) came in to existence.
- ❖ Vaisyas also carried on trade & commerce.
- ❖ They organised themselves into guilds known as Ganas.

Currency:

- ❖ Besides Nishka of the Rig vedic period, gold & silver coins like Satamana & Krishnala were used media of exchange.

3.2.4 Social life:

Caste system:

- ❖ In Later Vedic period, caste system became rigid which was called Varna Dharma.
- ❖ The four divisions of society (or) the Varna system was thoroughly established during the Later Vedic period.
 - i) Brahmins – Those who performed sacrifices & religious ceremonies.
 - ii) Kshatriyas – Those who waged war to protect and rules the country.
 - iii) Vaishyas – were the traders & farmers.
 - iv) Sudras – The people who served the three upper castes & did all the menial works.
- ❖ The two higher classes – Brahmana & Kshatriya enjoyed privileges that were denied to the Vaisya & Sudra.
- ❖ A Brahmin occupied a higher position than a Kshatriya but sometimes Kshatriyas claimed a higher status over the Brahmins.
- ❖ Many sub castes on the basis of their occupation appeared in this period.