

1: Vedic Literature

The Vedas are among the oldest sacred texts. The Samhitas date to roughly BCE, and the "circum-Vedic" texts, as well as the redaction of the Samhitas, date to c. BCE, resulting in a Vedic period, spanning the mid 2nd to mid 1st millennium BCE, or the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age.

By Stephen Knapp If we are going to understand the essential truths in Vedic literature, then we must get a glimpse of the content and purpose of its many texts and the expansive nature of the knowledge it contains. The Vedic philosophy encompasses the oldest spiritual texts of any religion in the world, and its subjects are broad and numerous. Its more advanced concepts can be difficult for even the greatest scholars to fathom. The Vedic literature discusses many types of philosophical viewpoints, and studying some of them will let us see that many of the concepts that we accept as new today are nothing more than parts of the ancient Vedic knowledge that had been dealt with and thoroughly understood thousands of years ago. Thus, there are not many ideas that are really new at all. The main purpose of the Vedic literature is to establish knowledge of the Absolute Truth and the process for attaining the highest levels of self-realization. To do that it must, and does, contain the elementary as well as most advanced forms of spiritual knowledge. So let us see exactly what kind of information is found within the many volumes of Vedic literature, and if there is any one understanding or direction in particular which it encourages people to take for complete spiritual success. However, this study will provide the knowledge for you to begin to see how vast the Vedic science is and how numerous are these Vedic texts. You will begin to understand that there are few topics that have been left uncovered in the Vedic investigation of reality and the search for Truth, and in its presentation of what is God. You will also understand in the final analysis what direction they most recommend and how to pursue it. The oldest texts are the Rig-veda, Yajur-veda, Sama-veda, and the Atharva-veda. It is said in the Muktikopanishad that these four Vedas had 21, , , and 50 branches respectively, with over , verses. Now, however, we can only find around 20, some say 20, verses in total from these four Vedas. The first eight mostly contain hymns of praise to the various demigods, such as Indra and Agni. The ninth book deals primarily with the soma ritual, which was the extraction and purification of the juice of the soma herb. The tenth book contains suktas or verses of wisdom and mantras that would cause certain magical effects to take place. The Rig-veda hymns were mainly of praise to the gods that were invoked during the Vedic ceremonies for ensuring immediate material needs. These were chanted by the four priests who conducted the Vedic rituals, namely the hota who calls the gods with the mantras from the Rig-veda; the adhvaryu who performs all the rituals of the ceremony according to the Yajur-veda; the udgata who sings the Sama-veda mantras; and the brahmana who supervises the general ceremony. However, it was usually only the brahmana priests who could be sure of chanting the mantras accurately to produce the desired result. If the mantra was chanted incorrectly by someone who was not qualified, the desired result would not take place and often something undesirable or horrible would happen instead. The main gods in the Rig-veda were Indra the god of heaven and rain , Agni the fire god and Surya the sun god. Surya is invoked in the sacred Gayatri mantra. However, Surya is also called Surya-Narayana in the Rig-veda. So the hymns to Surya and his different forms can also be related to Narayana or Vishnu, especially those to Savitur. Vishnu is also known as the Pervader, meaning that all the Vedic gods are absorbed in Him, and thus must also emanate from Him. They would be absorbed in Him during the time of cosmic annihilation, but would also emanate from Him during the time of the creation. There were also verses to three other names and forms of the sun god, namely Savitri, Mitra and Pooshan. Other gods included Dyos a celestial god , Varuna god of the seas , Soma, Marut god of air or wind called Vayu in other places , Rudra a form of Shiva and Vishnu. All of these gods are celestial gods, or demigods, except for Rudra and Vishnu. The Rig-veda is also a mystical text that contains knowledge in its abstract imagery of what the seers had realized. It has information on yoga, the spinal current and the chakras, as well as the planets and their orbits. Many aspects of this mystical knowledge are also contained in the other Vedas. The Rig-veda is said to have had 21 branches, out of which only two are still available. Much of the Shakal branch is still available, along with the Brahmana and Aranyaka of the Shankhayan branch. Although there are some stories in the Rig-veda,

there are few historical records of the early Vedic kings. This has been a mistake amongst various linguists and researchers who study the Rig-veda to try to get an historical understanding of the early Vedic kingdom and Aryans. These contain different levels of knowledge and wisdom. The Yajur-veda once had branches of knowledge, but now only parts of seven branches are found, of which the Vajasaneyi is prominent. The Yajur-veda, however, has two samhitas, or collections of verses, known as the White Yajur-veda or Vajasaneyi-samhita with the hymns and rituals, and the Black Yajur-veda or Taittiriya-samhita with their interpretations. These were primarily for the priests to use as a guide in performing sacred rituals, such as the ashvamedha or rajasuya, since they also contain directions or formulas that the priests use along with the verses that are sung during the ceremony. Most of them are taken from the Rig-veda and arranged according to their use as utilized in particular rituals. From the original branches of the Sama-veda, three are still available, of which the Kauthumiya and Jaiminiya are prominent. It is a book of verses in 20 chapters containing prayers, spells, and incantations which in some respects resemble magical instructions found in the Tantras and even various magical incantations found in Europe. The Atharva-veda contains a small section of verses of instruction, wisdom, descriptions of the soul and God, but the majority of it consists of rules for worshiping the planets, rules for oblations and sacrifices, prayers for averting evil and disease, incantations for the destruction of foes, for fulfilling personal desires, etc. The four primary Vedas represent the accomplishment of a highly developed religious system and encourage satisfaction of material desires through worship of the demigods. Some people ask why there seems to be so many gods within Hinduism or Vedic culture. Yet, if we properly analyze the situation, we will understand that there is but one Supreme Being who has many agents or demigods who assist in managing the creation and the natural forces within. And, like anyone else, if they are properly approached with prayer or worship, they may help facilitate the person by granting certain wishes that may be within the jurisdiction of that demigod. In some places in the Vedic literature it is explained that there are 33 Vedic gods, or even as many as thirty-three million. Then there are also other positions that are considered major or minor devas. According to the Vedas, the devas are not imaginary or mythological beings, but are agents of the Supreme Will to administer different aspects of the universal affairs. They also represent and control various powers of nature. Thus, they manifest in the physical, subtle or psychic levels of our existence both from within and without. In this way, a transcendentalist sees that behind every aspect of nature is a personality. The names of these gods are considered offices or positions, rather than the actual name of the demigod. For example, we may call the president of the country by his personal name, or simply Mr. In the case of the devas, it is only after accumulating much pious credit that a living being can earn the position of being a particular demigod. Then a person may become an Indra, or Vayu, or attain some other position to assume specific powers, or to control various aspects of material energy. Another example is that when you walk into a big factory, you see so many workers and all that they are doing. You may initially think that these workers are the reason for whatever goes on in the factory. However, more important than the workers are the foremen, the managers, and then the executives. Amongst these you will find people of varying degrees of authority. Someone will be in charge of designing the products. Another may be the Chief Financial Officer or main accountant. Another may be in charge of personnel, while someone else may be in charge of maintenance in the factory itself. Finally, a chief executive officer or president of the company is the most important of all. Without him there may not even be a company. You may not see the president right away, but his influence is everywhere since all the workers are engaging in projects according to his decisions. The managers and foremen act as his authorized agents to keep things moving accordingly. The numerous demigods act in the same way concerning the functions of nature, all of whom represent some aspect or power of the Supreme Will. Actually, there may be many forms, avataras, or aspects of God, but there is only one God, or one Absolute Truth. This is often a confusing issue to people new to Vedic philosophy. We often hear the question among Westerners that if Hinduism has so many gods, how do you know which ones to worship? The point is that the devas affect all levels of universal activities, including the weather, or who is bestowed with particular opulences such as riches, beautiful wife or husband, large family, good health, etc. For example, one could worship Agni for getting power, Durgadevi for good fortune, Indra for good sex life or plenty of rain, or the Vasus for getting money. Such instruction is in the karma-kanda section of the Vedas

which many people considered to be the most important part of Vedic knowledge. This is for helping people acquire the facilities for living a basic material existence. There are, of course, various actions, or karmas, prompted by our desires to achieve certain results, but this is not the complete understanding of the karma-kanda section of the Vedas. Such purification can then bring one to a higher level of spiritual activity. This was the higher purpose of the karma-kanda rituals. Without this understanding, one misses the point and remains attached to rituals in the pursuit of material desires, which will drag one further into material existence. The reciprocation between the demigods and society is explained in Bhagavad-gita 3. It is stated that in the beginning the Lord of all beings created men and demigods along with the sacrifices to Lord Vishnu that were to be performed. The Lord blessed them saying that these sacrifices will enable men to prosper and attain all desirable things. By these sacrificial duties the demigods will be pleased and the demigods will also please you with all the necessities of life, and prosperity will spread to all. But he who enjoys what is given by the demigods without offering them in return is a thief. In this way, it was recommended that people could perform sacrificial rituals to obtain their desires. However, by the performance of such acts they should understand their dependent position, not only on the demigods, but ultimately on the Supreme Being. As further explained in Bhagavad-gita 3. These prescribed duties are described in the Vedic literature, which is manifest from the Supreme Being. Therefore, the Supreme is eternally established in acts of sacrifice. Although the demigods may accept worship from the human beings and bless them with particular benedictions according to the sacrifices that are performed, they are still not on the level of the Supreme Lord Vishnu who is an incarnation of Lord Krishna. They were uttered by brahmanas while chanting the Vedic hymns and during sacrifices, for the satisfaction of the Supreme. The four Vedas mainly deal with material elevation and since Lord Vishnu is the Lord of material liberation, most sacrifices were directed toward the demigods. In Bhagavad-gita, however, Lord Krishna points out that men of small knowledge, who are given to worldly desires, take delight in the flowery words of the Vedas that prescribe rituals for attaining power, riches, or rebirth in heaven. With their goal of enjoyment they say there is nothing else than this. However, Krishna goes on to explain in Bhagavad-gita 7. But all the benefits given by any demigod actually are given by Krishna alone, for without whom no one has any power.

2: DEVELOPMENT OF VEDIC ARCHITECTURE by Ananya Pasupuleti on Prezi

The Vedas are a collection of hymns and other ancient religious texts written in India between about 1500 and 500 BCE. It includes elements such as liturgical material as well as mythological accounts, poems, prayers, and formulas considered to be sacred by the Vedic religion.

Early Vedic period In addition to the archaeological legacy discussed above, there remains from this period the earliest literary record of Indian culture , the Vedas. Composed in archaic , or Vedic, Sanskrit, generally dated between 1500 and 500 BCE, and transmitted orally, the Vedas comprise four major texts—the Rig-, the Sama-, the Yajur-, and the Atharvaveda. Of these, the Rigveda is believed to be the earliest. Theories concerning the origins of the Aryans, whose language is also called Aryan , relate to the question of what has been called the Indo-European homeland. In the 17th and 18th centuries CE, European scholars who first studied Sanskrit were struck by the similarity in its syntax and vocabulary to Greek and Latin. This resulted in the theory that there had been a common ancestry for these and other related languages, which came to be called the Indo-European group of languages. This in turn resulted in the notion that Indo-European -speaking peoples had a common homeland from which they migrated to various parts of Asia and Europe. The theory stirred intense speculation, which continues to the present day, regarding the original homeland and the period or periods of the dispersal from it. That there was a migration of Indo-European speakers, possibly in waves, dating from the 2nd millennium BCE, is clear from archaeological and epigraphic evidence in western Asia. Mesopotamia witnessed the arrival about 1200 BCE of the Kassites, who introduced the horse and the chariot and bore Indo-European names. A treaty from about 1250 BCE between the Hittites, who had arrived in Anatolia about the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, and the Mitanni empire invoked several deities—Indara, Uruvna, Mitira, and the Nasatyas names that occur in the Rigveda as Indra, Varuna, Mitra, and the Ashvins. Clay tablets dating to about 1300 BCE, written at Tell el-Amarna in Upper Egypt in Akkadian cuneiform, mention names of princes that are also Indo-European. Nearer India, the Iranian plateau was subject to a similar migration. Comparison of Iranian Aryan literature with the Vedas reveals striking correspondences. The Sarasvati, the sacred river at the time, is thought to have dried up during the later Vedic period. Conceived as a goddess see Sarasvati , it was personified in later Hinduism as the inventor of spoken and written Sanskrit and the consort of Brahma, promulgator of the Vedas. It was in the Sapta Sindhu region that the majority of the hymns of the Rigveda were composed. The Rigveda is divided into 10 mandalas books , of which the 10th is believed to be somewhat later than the others. Each mandala consists of a number of hymns, and most mandalas are ascribed to priestly families. The texts include invocations to the gods, ritual hymns, battle hymns, and narrative dialogues. The 9th mandala is a collection of all the hymns dedicated to soma , the unidentified hallucinogenic juice that was drunk on ritual occasions. Few events of political importance are related in the hymns. Perhaps the most impressive is a description of the battle of the 10 chiefs or kings: The Bharatas survived and continued to play an important role in historical tradition. If such a distinction is recognized, the entire corpus of Vedic literature can be interpreted as recording the gradual evolution of the concept of kingship from earlier clan organization. Among the clans there is little distinction between Aryan and non-Aryan, but the hymns refer to a people, called the dasyu s, who are said to have had an alien language and a dark complexion and to worship strange gods. Some dasyus were rich in cattle and lived in fortified places puras that were often attacked by the god Indra. In addition to the dasyus, there were the wealthy Panis, who were hostile and stole cattle. The early Vedic was the period of transition from nomadic pastoralism to settled village communities intermixing pastoral and agrarian economies. A community of families constituted a grama. Various categories of assemblies are mentioned, such as vidatha, samiti, and sabha , although the precise distinctions between these categories are not clear. The clan also gathered for the yajna , the Vedic sacrifice conducted by the priest, whose ritual actions ensured prosperity and imbued the chief with valour. Punishment was exacted according to a principle resembling the wergild of ancient Germanic law , whereby the social rank of a wronged or slain man determined the compensation due him or his survivors. Later Vedic period c. 500 BCE. Associated with the corpus are the sutra texts, largely explanatory aids to the other works, comprising manuals on

sacrifices and ceremonies, domestic observances, and social and legal relations. Because the texts were continually revised, they cannot be dated accurately to the early period. The Dharma-sutra texts of this period became the nuclei of the socio-legal Dharma-shastras of later centuries. Historians formerly assigned the two major Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, to this period, but subsequent scholarship has rendered these dates less certain. Both works are mixtures of the historical and the legendary, both were rewritten and edited, both suffered from frequent interpolations even as late as the early centuries ce, and both were later converted into sacred literature with the deification of their heroes. Consequently, important as they are to the literary and religious tradition, they are not easily identified with a historical period. The central event of the Mahabharata, whose geographic setting is the upper Ganges-Yamuna Doab and adjoining areas, is a war between two groups of cousins—the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Though the traditional date for the war is about bce, most historians would prefer a later one. The events of the Ramayana relate to the middle Ganges valley and central India, with later interpolations extending the area southward. The geographic focus of the later Vedic corpus moves from the Sapta Sindhu region into the Ganges-Yamuna Doab and the territories on its fringe. The areas within this land of the arya, called Aryavarta, were named for the ruling clans, and the area encompassed within Aryavarta gradually expanded eastward. By the end of the period, clan identity had changed gradually to territorial identity, and the areas of settlement came eventually to form states. The people beyond the Aryavarta were termed the mlecchas or mlechhas, the impure barbarians unfamiliar with the speech and customs of the arya. The literature is replete with the names of clans. The most powerful among them, commanding the greatest respect, was the Kuru-Pancala, which incorporated the two families of Kuru and Puru and the earlier Bharatas and of which the Pancala was a confederation of lesser-known tribes. They occupied the upper Ganges-Yamuna Doab and the Kurukshetra region. In the north the Kamboja, Gandhara, and Madra groups predominated. In the middle Ganges valley the neighbours and rivals of the Kuru-Pancalas were the Kashi, Koshala, and Videha, who worked in close cooperation with each other. The Magadha, Anga, and Vanga peoples in the lower Ganges valley and delta were in that period still outside the Aryan pale and regarded as mlecchas. Magadha Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar is also associated with the vratyas, who occupied an ambiguous position between the arya and mlecchas. Other mleccha tribes frequently mentioned include the Satvats of the Chambal River valley and, in the Vindhyan and northern Deccan region, the Andhra, Vidarbha, Nishadha, Pulinda, and Shabara. The location of all these tribes is of considerable historical interest, because they gave their names to enduring geographic regions. By the 5th century bce, clan identity had changed to territorial identity, and the areas of settlement changed from chiefdoms to kingdoms in some cases. The state was emerging as a new feature. Assemblies such as the sabha and parishad continued as political institutions into later periods. The larger assemblies declined. A major transformation occurred in the notion of kingship, which ceased to be merely an office of a war leader; territorial identity provided it with power and status, symbolized by a series of lengthy and elaborate ceremonies—the abhisheka, generally followed by major sacrificial rituals, such as the ashvamedha. This ceremony was a famous horse sacrifice, in which a specially selected horse was permitted to wander at will, tracked by a body of soldiers; the area through which the horse wandered unchallenged was claimed by the chief or king conducting the sacrifice. Thus, theoretically at least, only those with considerable power could perform this sacrifice. Such major sacrificial rituals involved a large amount of wealth and a hierarchy of priests. The ceremonies lasted many days and involved a reciprocal economy of gift exchange between the chief and the priest, by which the latter received wealth in kind and the former established status, prosperity, and proximity to the gods. The conspicuous display and consumption of these ceremonies have elicited comparison with the potlatch of the Kwakiutl and related North American indigenous peoples. The assumption of such sacrifices was that the clan had settled in a particular area, marking the end of nomadism. The new trends emphasized the importance of the priests and the aristocracy Brahmans and Kshatriyas, who were the mainstay of kingship. The introduction, through royal sacrifices, of notions of divinity in kingship further strengthened the role of the priests. This was also the period in which kingship became hereditary. Some of these settlements along the rivers evolved into towns, essentially as administrative and craft centres. By the mid-1st millennium bce the second urbanization—this time in the Ganges valley—was under way.

The development with the most far-reaching consequences for Indian culture is the structure of society that has come to be called caste. This is clearly a mythologized attempt to describe the origin of the four varnas, which came to be regarded as the four major classes in Indian society. The etymology of each is of interest: The derivation of the term Sudra, however, denoting a member of the group born to serve the upper three varnas, is not clear, which may suggest that it is a non-Aryan word. In addition to varna there are references to jati birth, which gradually came to acquire a close association with caste and appears to mean the endogamous kinship group. In the course of time the Brahmans became the preeminent priestly group, the intermediaries with the gods at the sacrificial rituals, and the recipients of large donations for priestly functions; in the process they acquired a number of privileges, such as exemption from taxes and inviolability. The Kshatriyas, who were to become the landowning families, assumed the role of military leaders and of the natural aristocracy having connections with royalty. The Vaishyas were more subservient, and, although their status was not as inferior as that of the Sudras, they appear to have been crucial to the economy. The traditional view of the Sudras is that they were non-Aryan cultivators who came under the domination of the Aryans and in many cases were enslaved and therefore had to serve the upper three groups. But not all references to the Sudras are to slaves. Sometimes wealthy Sudras are mentioned, and in later centuries some of them even became kings. The traditional view that varna reflects the organization of Indian society has recently been questioned; it has been suggested that the rules of varna conform to a normative or presumptive model, and that the concept of jati is more central to caste functioning. This view is strengthened by the fact that the non-Brahmanical literature of later periods does not always conform to the picture of caste society depicted in the Dharma-shastras. The beginning of the historical period, c. The Buddhist canon, pertaining to the period of the Buddha c. This also is true, though to a more limited extent, of Jain sources. In the 4th century bce there are secular writings on political economy and accounts of foreign travelers. The most important sources, however, are inscriptions of the 3rd century bce. See Buddhism ; Jainism. Pre-Mauryan states Buddhist writings and other sources from the beginning of this period mention 16 major states mahajanapada dominating the northern part of the subcontinent. A few of these, such as Gandhara, Kamboja, Kuru-Pancala, Matsya, Kashi, and Koshala, continued from the earlier period and are mentioned in Vedic literature. The rest were new states, either freshly created from declining older ones or new areas coming into importance, such as Avanti, Ashvaka, Shurasena, Vatsa, Cedi, Malla, Vriji, Magadha, and Anga. The mention of so many new states in the eastern Ganges valley is attributable in part to the eastern focus of the sources and is partly the antecedent to the increasing preeminence of the eastern regions. For a while its independence was terminated by its inclusion as one of the 22 satrapies of the Achaemenian Empire of Persia c. Its major role as the channel of communication with Iran and Central Asia continued, as did its trade in woolen goods. Kamboja adjoined Gandhara in the northwest. Originally regarded as a land of Aryan speakers, Kamboja soon lost its important status, ostensibly because its people did not follow the sacred Brahmanic rites—a situation that was to occur extensively in the north as the result of the intermixing of peoples and cultures through migration and trade.

3: Vedic Sanskrit - Wikipedia

The Vedic period, or Vedic age (c. - c. BCE), is the period in the history of the northwestern Indian subcontinent between the end of the urban Indus Valley Civilisation and a second urbanisation in the central Gangetic Plain which began in c. BCE.

It is also the formative period when the basic foundations of Indian civilization were laid down. They brought with them into India a religion based on the worship of many gods and goddesses. These were composed at around the time of the Aryan entry into India and in the centuries following. An early 19th-century manuscript of Rigveda padapatha in Devanagari Aryan beliefs The Aryan belief-system that the Vedas reflect was distantly-related to those held by other Indo-European peoples of the ancient world, such as the Greeks and the Germans. Another leading god was Indra, the High God. Violent times The Aryans came into north-west India as pastoral, semi-nomadic tribes led by warrior chieftains. Once in India, they settled down as rulers over the native Dravidian populations they found there, and formed tribal kingdoms. Originally, these were included in the Vedas, to which they formed commentaries; however, they were gradually separated out and assumed an identity of their own. The sections of prose and poetry of which they are composed explore concepts only dimly perceived, if at all, in the earlier Vedas. These include the idea that the material world is unreal “indeed, it is an illusion. So too are Earthly emotions such as desire and suffering. To break the weary cycle of reincarnation which all souls have to go through, therefore, involves renouncing desire and other human feelings which bind the soul to the material world. These ideas helped to give the religious thought of ancient India a very distinctive flavour. They have influenced Indian civilization throughout its long history, right up to the present day. Read more on ancient Indian literature , including from the Vedic age. A great religion takes shape The Vedas, the Mahabharata and the Upanishads formed the foundational writings of the Hindu religion, which was gradually taking shape in the Vedic Age. They show that the ancient Vedic religion was evolving into something different. This was probably to a large extent the result of influences from the older Dravidian populations over whom the Aryans ruled. During the course of centuries the Aryan nature deities lost much of their importance, and three new gods took their place: Vishnu, the preserver; Shiva, the destroyer; and Brahma, the creator. An image of Vishni Author: Ramanarayanadatta astri The ideas associated with the Upanishads became important, and these had a profound effect on social life. With it came a respect for all living things. The caste system It was during this period of history that ancient India developed its distinctive caste system. The tendencies towards social division had been present ever since the coming of Aryans into India. As happened at many different times and places in world history, the conquerors set themselves up as a ruling class. However, unlike in other parts of the world, where the differences between the conquerors and the conquered gradually disappeared over time, in India they solidified in the form of divisions between the castes, between whom intermarriage was forbidden. The priestly caste “the Brahmins” were at the top of the social ladder, as being closest to Brahma. Below them came the warrior caste, the Kshatriyas. Then came the Vaishyas, the ordinary Aryan tribesmen, farmers, craftsmen and traders. Finally came the Shudras, menial workers, the labourers, servants and those performing services which are ritually unclean. There were also many people outside the caste system altogether, excluded from Aryan-dominated society. They were not really regarded as human beings, and performed the most degrading tasks of all, such as dealing with human waste. Group of Brahmanas, The rebirth of urban civilization As the Vedic Age drew to a close, the tribal society of the early Aryans gave way to a more complex social organization. This made agriculture more productive, and populations grew. Trade expanded, both within India and with the lands to the west. From the Middle East came the use of writing, and the great oral traditions of Aryan society began to be written down. Organized kingdoms with centralised authority emanating out from the royal palaces arose in place of the looser, clan-based tribal states. This makes ancient India the only place as far as we know in which the republican form of government flourished in the ancient world apart from in the Classical world of the ancient Mediterranean. Together, these religions claim the allegiance of billions of people in the world today.

4: The Vedic Period (video) | Ancient India | Khan Academy

The term Vedic Literature means the four Vedas in their Samhita and the allied literature based on or derived from the Vedas. The word Veda comes from the word Vid, means to know or knowledge. The Vedic literature was composed in Sanskrit.

In various examinations which have a section of general studies, often ask a question or two about the Vedic civilization. It should be noted here that after the decline of Indus Valley civilization by BCE, the next wave of civilization began to take shape in form of Aryan occupation of Indo-Gangetic plain. Typically, the age of Aryans is known as the Vedic age because the four major Vedas were created in this time. They arrived from Russian steppes, as is believed and agreed to by majority historians. But various scholars voice different opinion about their origin. Bal Gangadhar Tilak argued that Aryans came from the Arctic region following their astronomical calculations. It is generally agreed that they spoke Indo-Aryan Language, Sanskrit. They were semi-nomadic, pastoral people, who led a rural life as compared to the urban Harappans. Four major Vedas constitute the Vedic literature. Rig Veda – Earliest Veda. Has hymns in praise of Gods. Yajur Veda – Has details of rules to be followed during sacrifices. Sam Veda – Has a collection of songs. The origins of Indian music are traced to it. Atharva Veda – has a collection of spells and charms. Brahmanas – Prose about Vedic hymns, rituals and philosophies. Aranyakas – Deal with mysticism, rites and rituals. Upanishads – Philosophical texts dealing with soul, mysteries of nature. Ramayana was authored by Valmiki. Mahabharata was written by Ved Vyasa. Classification of Vedic Period: Later Vedic Period BC. We will study the following features of the Vedic Civilization under these two periods. Political Organisation in Vedic Age: In Early Vedic Age: There were several such tribal kingdoms – Bharatas, Matsyas, Yadus and Purus. The Rig Vedic polity was hereditary monarchy normally. There were two bodies- Sabha council of elders and Samiti general assembly of people. In Later Vedic Age: Society in Vedic Civilization: The Rig Vedic society was basically patriarchal. Monogamy was practiced while polygamy among royal and noble families was observed. Women could attend the popular assemblies. Social divisions were not rigid. The Varna system became prevalent- four divisions of society: A Brahmin and Kshatriyas occupied a higher position than others. Various sub-castes on the basis of occupation emerged. Women were considered inferior and subordinate to men now and also lost their political rights of attending assemblies. Economic Conditions in Vedic Civilization: The Rig Vedic Aryans were pastoral, cattle rearing people. Carpenters produced chariots and ploughs. The potters made different kinds of vessels for domestic use. Rivers acted as means of transport. More land was put under cultivation by clearing forests. Knowledge of manure saw development. Industrial activity became specialized with metal work, leather work, carpentry and pottery advancement. Internal trade as well as foreign trade also became extensive they traded with Babylon through sea. Religion in Vedic Period: Prayers were offered to gods for rewards. Sacrifices and the rituals became more elaborate. But the importance of prayers declined. Priesthood became a hereditary profession. They dictated the rules for these rituals and sacrifices. This led to the rise of Buddhism and Jainism.

Sanskrit literature: The Vedic Period The first part of the Vedic period (cc BC), that of the Veda, was a poetic and creative age, but afterward (cc BC) the priestly class transferred its energies to sacrificial ceremonial.

Scholars from the period of British colonial rule postulated that this branch of a related group of nomadic and seminomadic tribal peoples, originally inhabiting the steppe country of southern Russia and Central Asia, brought with them the Vedic texts. The only extant Vedic materials are the texts known as the Vedas, which were composed and handed down orally over a period of about 10 centuries, from about the 15th to the 5th century bce. The Vedic corpus is composed in an archaic Sanskrit. The most important texts are also the oldest ones. They are the four collections Samhitas that are called the Veda, or Vedas. Finally, the Atharvaveda is a later compilation that includes incantations and magic spells. To each Veda is attached a body of prose writings of later date called Brahmanas c. Further appendices, the Aranyakas c. When Vedic religion gradually evolved into Hinduism between the 6th and 2nd centuries bce, the texts, taken collectively, became the most sacred literature of Hinduism. But in modern Hinduism the Shruti, with the exception of the Upanishads and a few hymns of the Rigveda, is now little known, while some of the Smriti texts remain extremely influential.

Mythology Vedism was a polytheistic sacrificial religion involving the worship of numerous male divinities and a few goddesses, most of whom were connected with the sky and natural phenomena. The priests who officiated at that worship were drawn from the Brahman social class. The complex Vedic ceremonies, for which the hymns of the Rigveda were composed, centred on the ritual sacrifice of animals and the drinking of a sacred, mind-altering liquor pressed from a plant called soma. The basic Vedic rite was performed by offering those to a sacred fire, which was itself deified as Agni and which carried the oblations to the gods of the Vedic pantheon. Agni and Soma were at the same time material elements of the ritual offering: Agni was the fire of the sun, of lightning, and of burning wood; Soma was the deified aspect of the liquid poured in the oblation. The god of highest rank, however, was Indra, a warlike god who conquered innumerable human and demon enemies and brought back the sun after it had been stolen, among other feats. Another great deity was Varuna, who was the upholder of the cosmic and moral laws. Vedism had many other lesser deities, among whom were gods, goddesses, demigods, and demons.

Ritual The ancient Vedic worshippers offered sacrifices to those gods in the hope that they in return would grant abundant numbers of cattle, good fortune, good health, long life, and male progeny, among other material benefits. Thus originated the rites described in the Vedas. The rites of Vedic sacrifice were relatively simple in the early period, when the Rigveda was composed. They required neither temples nor images. The ceremonies took place in an open space that was consecrated afresh for every important occasion. The altar vedi was a quadrangle marked out by hollowing or slightly raising the ground. The sacrifices themselves were of two major types—domestic grihya and public srauta, or vaitanika. The domestic rites were observed by the householder himself or with the help of a single priest and were performed over the domestic hearth fire. The grand rites performed in public, by contrast, lasted several days or months and could usually be undertaken only by wealthy men or kings. They required the services of many priests and were usually performed at three fire-altars. Most characteristic of the public ceremonies was the soma sacrifice, which ensured the prosperity and well-being of both human beings and gods. In that basic ritual, a lay sacrificer was first consecrated, after which juice was pressed three times from the soma plant, part being offered to the fire and part consumed by the priests. Each of the three occasions was preceded and followed by recitations and chants. Edibles such as meat, butter, milk, and barley cake could also be offered to a sacred fire. Animal sacrifice—the killing of a ram or goat—existed either independently or as an integral part of the sacrifice of soma. Human sacrifice purushamedha is described and alluded to as a former practice but probably was merely symbolic. The sacrifice of the mythical giant Purusha, from whose dismembered limbs sprang up the four major social classes varnas, probably served as a model for the conjectured human sacrifices. Other ceremonies marked fixed dates of the lunar calendar, such as the full or new moon or the change of seasons.

Development and decline Over the centuries, the Vedic rites became increasingly complex and governed by innumerable rules, which were embodied, together with the hymns and

prayer formulas used, in the Vedas. During the late Vedic period the complexities of ritual were emphasized to such an extent that only highly trained Brahmins could carry them out correctly, and it was maintained that improperly or incorrectly performed rites could, unless rectified, bring about disaster or death. In reaction against this excessive emphasis on ritual as well as the growing power of the Brahmins, Vedic thought in its late period became more speculative and philosophical in approach. Much speculation was directed toward the search for harmony and for correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, with the ultimate goal being a reduction of reality to an all-embracing unity by way of successive equations. In the Aranyakas, Vedic ritual is interpreted in a symbolic rather than literal manner, and the Upanishads question the very assumptions on which Vedism rested. The crucial idea that emerged from that period of intense questioning was that of brahman, the ultimate reality and also a sort of guiding principle. The central theme of the Upanishads is that the atman, the unchanging core of a human being, is a part of brahman. The equation of atman with brahman became the basis of Hindu metaphysics. The spread in the 6th century bce of the related concepts of reincarnation, of karma, and of the attainment of release moksha from this cycle samsara by meditation rather than through sacrifice marked the end of the Vedic period. The legacy of Vedic worship is apparent in several aspects of modern Hinduism. The basic stratification of Vedic society into four varnas—the Brahmins priests, Kshatriyas warriors or rulers, Vaishyas traders, and Shudras servants—by and large persisted in later Hinduism. Sacrifices performed according to Vedic rites continue to be performed in India occasionally, and the offering of oblations to a sacred fire homa is an important element of much modern Hindu worship see yajna. The Hindu rite of initiation upanayama is another direct survival of Vedic tradition. Vishnu and Shiva, the major deities of classical Hinduism, are briefly mentioned in Vedic mythology, and Indra remains the king of the gods in narratives, although he is no longer worshipped. Learn More in these related Britannica articles:

6: Indian History - Vedic literature - TNPSC Study Portal

India - Early Vedic period: In addition to the archaeological legacy discussed above, there remains from this period the earliest literary record of Indian culture, the Vedas. Composed in archaic, or Vedic, Sanskrit, generally dated between 1500 and 500 bce, and transmitted orally, the Vedas comprise four major texts—the Rig-, the Sama-, the

Vedic literature glorifies Vedic India. It is the traditional faith that Vedas are "apuruseya" not composed by human beings - it was direct revelation of God, hence named shruti. Scholars believed that Vedic Literature originates long before the literary tradition started in India. However the oldest text, Rig-Veda has been traced back to the 11th century. As far as the researches are concerned the, Vedic Literatures are composed in B. C, over a period of years. Vedic Literature saw its crest after the composition of the mantra texts, frequently called Samhita texts. With the composition of the mantra texts, shakas literally called "arms" were established all over northern India. Usually Shakas are the theological schools that focused the learning of the Vedic Mantras. The Vedas can be classified into categories of texts, traditionally- the Samhitas mantras , Brahmanas, Aranyak and Upanishads. The Vedas, as often termed as the Sutra literature can also be classified into Shrautasutras and Grahya sutras. Sometimes the term "Vedas" is used to signify those Samhitas. The Samhitas are the oldest stratum of Vedic texts. As "Vedic Concordance" of Bloomfield, an eminent scholar, records, Vedas have padas, of which are in Samhitas. It is oldest existing Indian text is an anthology of hymns and 10, verses devoted to the Rig Vedic deities is compiled in ten mandalas books. According to the different opinions forwarded by the historians, saints composed Rig Veda for a period of years in the Sapta - Sindhu present Punjab region of Indian Subcontinent. The name "Sama" derived from the word "saman" means the "song of praise". The Sama Veda is the "Veda of chants" or "Knowledge of melodies". Sama Veda is a compilation of verses, some of which are the repetitive imitations of the Rig Veda. It serves as a song book for the priests who take part in public worship. A priest singing in the rituals is commonly called "udgati" or "cantor". A fixed style was followed by the priests while enchanting. Two major shakas are associated with this Veda- Ranayaniya and Jainimiya. It consists of cryptic prose mantras, some parts are borrowed from the Rig Veda. Each of the mantras in the Yajur Veda are associated with specific sacrificial rites, not merely Soma offering. The "White" discusses only those verses required for the sacrifices but do not explain the implication of those verses but the "black" Yajurveda contain specific explanation s of the work to be performed. As it has been pointed by Apte, the scholarly historian, "atharvan" is a priest who worships fire and Soma. It is a collection of hymns and about one-sixth hymns are the imitation of Rig Veda. The Atharva Veda has least connection with the sacrifices and rituals but involves the incantations required for prevention of demons and disasters. The Brahmanas are the prose literature, codified in a procedural fashion, which depicts the sacrificial rituals, their meanings and a complete commentary on the usage, implication and their significant effect of those rituals. Brahmanas are considered to be the heart of Indian Philosophy, describing the concepts of Karma and Samsara and the significance of the four stages of the life of a Hindu Brahmin , namely- Brahmacharya, Garhasthya and Vanprastha and Sanyas. It also provides a perception of the spirituality and supernaturalism of the Vedanta philosophy. Each of the Brahmanas is associated with one of the Samhitas and according to that one of the shakas or school. The Brahmanas may also include the Aranyakas or the Upanishads. The " Aryanakas " or the "wilderness texts" composed the concluding part of the Brahmanas. These are the religious Scriptures or the treatise about the saints living in the forests. The Aryanaks offers a profound implication and interpretation of the philosophy in the Vedas as contrasted to the Brahmans, which only offers a systematic procedure of the rituals. The Aryanaks are further classified into several parts and named after the specific shakas they are associated with. Aryanakas are addressed as "Rahasya Brahmanas" by Durgacharya in Nirukta because the Aryanakas offers cryptic meaning to the ritualistic dealings as described in the Brahmanas. Aryanakas confirms the fact in spite of the multiplicity of the Vedic Literature a continuous thread of "Absolute Reality" that runs through all. The language of the Aryanakas is more akin to the earliest version of Sanskrit language. The Upanishads are the philosophical works in a conversational form. They have been acknowledged as the concluding part of the Vedas, which form the Vedanta. The Sanskrit term implies "sitting down beside" The

FIRST PERIOD: VEDIC LITERATURE. pdf

Upanishads are summarized in one phrase "Tat Tvam Asi" That thou art by Advaita Vedanta, which believes in the ultimate truth "Brahma". The Upanishads open with the word "aum", considered to be a divine word that underlies the philosophy of existence of being in one self. The Older Upanishads are traced back to have some connection with Vedic Charanas. Shakta Upanishads upheld the interpretive difference between two principal sects of Srividay Upasana.

7: A Brief History Of Yoga: From Ancient Hindu Scriptures To The Modern, Westernized Practice

The Vedic literature consists of Vedas, Upanishads, Vedangas, Sutras, Upavedas, Shastras and Puranas. The Vedic period lasted for a millennium encompassing the late bronze & Iron Age. As far as the researches are concerned the, Vedic Literatures are composed in B.C, over a period of years.

Vedic period is one of the most important time for Hindu Religion. Many Hindu religious texts were composed during this time. This period is called Vedic because the four Vedas were composed during this period. Vedic Age began with the arrival of Aryans. There are many conflicts among the historians regarding the origin of Aryans. Though it is believed that Aryans were semi nomadic pastoral people and originated from the area of Caspian Sea in central Asia. They entered India through the Khyber Pass of the Hindukush mountain. Mainly in the land of seven rivers. In the beginning, Aryans had many conflicts with the native Dravidians. But when the Dravidians were unable to meet the challenge, they gradually moved southwards. During this time there were no big kingdoms. People lived in the tribes or small kingdoms. There were families or kulas headed by kulapati, villages or grama headed by grammi. Women had a respectable place in the society. They had the right for education and to participate in religious ceremonies. Four Vedas -rig, sama, yajur, atharva were written during this time. Rig Veda is the oldest religious text. It contains the prayers of God and gayatri mantra. Sama Veda deals with the music. Yajur Veda has the procedures for the performance of sacrifices. Atharva Veda deals with medicines. The Vedas are further sub classified into four section " Samhitas, Aranyakas, Brahmanas, Upanishads At that time cattle were used as currency. Gold and silver were used to make jewellery. Agriculture and cattle rearing were the main profession at that time. During this time four fold caste system brahmin, kshatriyas, vaishyas, shudras was existed. Brahmins were priest, teachers. Later or post Vedic Period Aryans expanded their area and they entered in the gangatic plains also. During this time small kingdoms became large. Large kingdoms like Kosala, Kuru, Magadha, Kasi etc came into existence. Several wars were fought during this time. Women lost their social status and dignity in the society. They were not allowed to participate in the public affairs. Kings became very powerful. The gap between Kshatriyas and vaishyas increased. External trading was also started in this time. Several royal ceremonies - rajasuya, vajapeya, ashvamedha yagna were performed at that time by the kings. Two Great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata were also written during the late vedic period.

The History of Sanskrit Literature falls into two main periods(1) The Vedic Period & (2) The Classical Period. The Vedic Period which perhaps began as early as or B.C. The Classical Period which had its beginning.

The commonly accepted period of earlier Vedic age is dated back to the second millennium BCE. The dominant view is that the Indo-Aryans came to the subcontinent as immigrants. Another view, advocated mainly by some Indian scholars, is that they were indigenous to the subcontinent. Rigvedic tribes Cremation urn of the Gandhara grave culture c. It describes Dasas and Dasyus as people who do not perform sacrifices akratu or obey the commandments of gods avrata. Their speech is described as mridhra which could variously mean soft, uncouth, hostile, scornful or abusive. Other adjectives which describe their physical appearance are subject to many interpretations. However, some modern scholars such as Asko Parpola connect the Dasas and Dasyus to Iranian tribes Dahae and Dahyu and believe that Dasas and Dasyus were early Indo-Aryan immigrants who arrived into the subcontinent before the Vedic Aryans. Most notable of such conflicts was the Battle of Ten Kings , which took place on the banks of the river Parushni modern day Ravi. The other tribes dwelt north-west of the Bharatas in the region of Punjab. After BCE, the use of iron axes and ploughs became widespread and the jungles could be cleared with ease. This enabled the Vedic Aryans to extent their settlements into the western area of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. The Vedic period estates were four: Brahmin priests and warrior nobility stood on top, free peasants and traders were the third, and slaves, labourers and artisans, many belonging to the indigenous people, were the fourth. The Kuru Kingdom , the earliest Vedic "state", was formed by a "super-tribe" which joined several tribes in a new unit. The horse was followed by a chosen band of warriors. The kingdoms and chiefdoms in which the horse wandered had to pay homage or prepare to battle the king to whom the horse belonged. This sacrifice put considerable pressure on inter-state relations in this era. The process of urbanisation had begun in these kingdoms, commerce and travel flourished, even regions separated by large distances became easy to access. To the south of their kingdom was Vatsa which was governed from its capital Kausambi. In this culture, kshatriyas were placed higher than Brahmins, and it rejected Vedic authority and rituals.

9: Sangam period - Wikipedia

The Hindu Sutra literature was composed much later than the Vedas and belong to a later period. They are manuals of instructions for people to follow in their social, religious, economic and political affairs.

Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. Who can here proclaim it? Whence, whence this creation sprang? Gods came later, after the creation of this universe. Who then knows whence it has arisen? Finally, the meter too is systematically arranged from jagati and tristubh to anustubh and gayatri as the text progresses. Samaveda The Samaveda Samhita [86] consists of stanzas, taken almost entirely except for 75 mantras from the Rigveda. Just as in the Rigveda, the early sections of Samaveda typically begin with hymns to Agni and Indra but shift to the abstract. Their meters shift also in a descending order. The songs in the later sections of the Samaveda have the least deviation from the hymns derived from the Rigveda. Yajurveda The Yajurveda Samhita consists of prose mantras. The term "black" implies "the un-arranged, motley collection" of verses in Yajurveda, in contrast to the "white" well arranged Yajurveda. It has about hymns, and about of the hymns are in common with the Rigveda. The text also includes hymns dealing with the two major rituals of passage – marriage and cremation. The Atharva Veda also dedicates significant portion of the text asking the meaning of a ritual. Grantha script Tamil Nadu , Below: Brahmanas The Brahmanas are commentaries, explanation of proper methods and meaning of Vedic Samhita rituals in the four Vedas. For example, the first chapter of the Chandogya Brahmana, one of the oldest Brahmanas, includes eight ritual suktas hymns for the ceremony of marriage and rituals at the birth of a child. The sixth through last hymns of the first chapter in Chandogya Brahmana are ritual celebrations on the birth of a child and wishes for health, wealth, and prosperity with a profusion of cows and artha. Vedanta , Upanishads , and Aranyakas The Aranyakas layer of the Vedas include rituals, discussion of symbolic meta-rituals, as well as philosophical speculations. Two theories have been proposed on the origin of the word Aranyakas. One theory holds that these texts were meant to be studied in a forest, while the other holds that the name came from these being the manuals of allegorical interpretation of sacrifices, for those in Vanaprastha retired, forest-dwelling stage of their life, according to the historic age-based Ashrama system of human life. Vedanga The Vedangas developed towards the end of the vedic period, around or after the middle of the 1st millennium BCE. These auxiliary fields of Vedic studies emerged because the language of the Vedas, composed centuries earlier, became too archaic to the people of that time. Naturally classified with the Veda to which each pertains, Parisista works exist for each of the four Vedas. However, only the literature associated with the Atharvaveda is extensive. The Charanavyuha mentions four Upavedas: Combined with an epic story, tending to virtue, wealth, joy and spiritual freedom, it must contain the significance of every scripture, and forward every art. The Bhakti movement , and Gaudiya Vaishnavism in particular extended the term veda to include the Sanskrit Epics and Vaishnavite devotional texts such as the Pancaratra. Puranas The Puranas is a vast genre of encyclopedic Indian literature about a wide range of topics particularly myths, legends and other traditional lore. Sanskrit in the West The study of Sanskrit in the West began in the 17th century. In the early 19th century, Arthur Schopenhauer drew attention to Vedic texts, specifically the Upanishads. The importance of Vedic Sanskrit for Indo-European studies was also recognized in the early 19th century.

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