

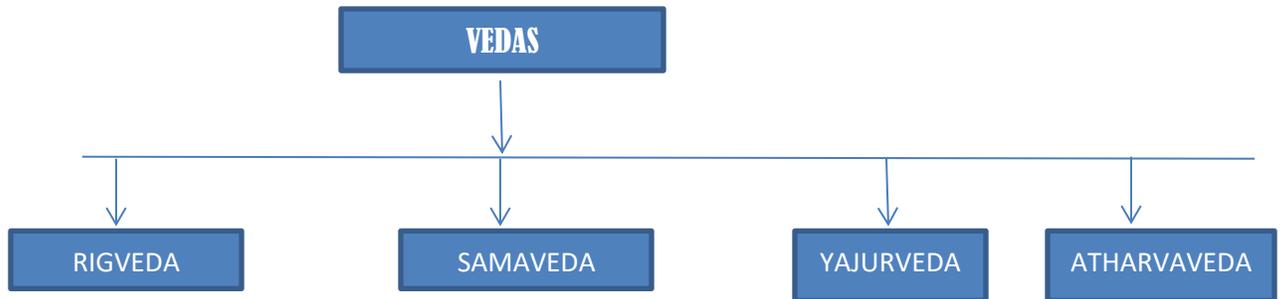


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## CHAPTER 4

### WHAT BOOKS AND BURIALS TELL US

#### NOTES:



There are 4 types of Vedas:

1. The Rigveda
2. The Samaveda
3. The Yajurveda
4. The Atharvaveda

Let's learn about each of them in detail.

#### THE RIGVEDA

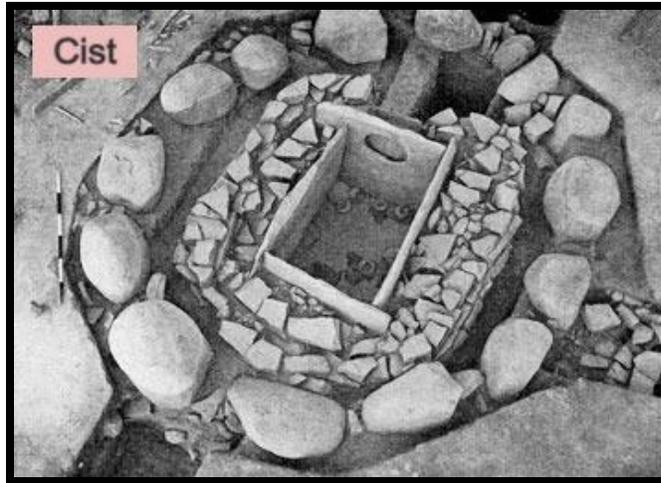
It is the oldest Veda and was composed about 3500 years ago. The Rigveda includes more than a thousand hymns, called **sukta** or “well-said”. These hymns are in praise of various gods and goddesses. Three gods are especially important, which are:

1. **The Agni**, the god of fire
2. **Indra**, a warrior god
3. **Soma**, a plant from which a special drink was prepared

Most of the hymns were composed, taught and learnt by men. A few were composed by women. The Rigveda is in old or Vedic Sanskrit. The Rigveda was recited and heard rather than read. It was written down several centuries after it was first composed and printed less than 200 years ago.

#### HOW HISTORIANS STUDY THE RIGVEDA

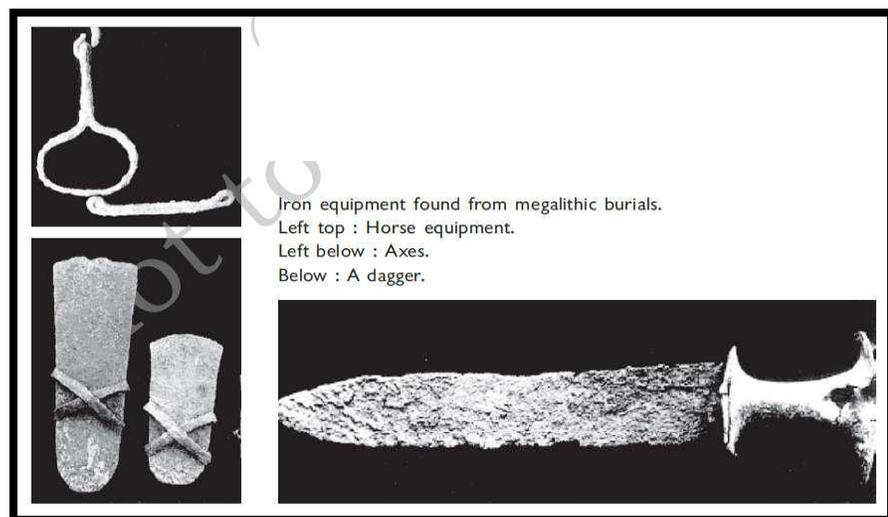
Some of the hymns in the Rigveda are in the form of dialogues. This is part of one such hymn, a dialogue between a sage named Vishvamitra, and two rivers, (Beas and Sutlej) that were worshipped as goddesses.



### CATTLE, HORSES AND CHARIOTS

There are many prayers in the Rigveda for cattle, children (especially sons), and horses.

1. Horses were used in battles.
2. Battles were fought for land, water, and to capture people and cattle. There was no regular army, but there were assemblies where people met and discussed matters of war and peace. Most men took part in wars and also chose leaders.
3. Wealth was kept by the leaders, some were given to the priests and the rest was distributed amongst the people.



### WORDS TO DESCRIBE PEOPLE IN RIGVEDA

Let us see some of the words used to describe people found in the Rigveda.

There are 2 groups who are described in terms of their work –

**The priests:** who were also called brahmins. They used to perform various rituals.

**The rajas:** They did not have capital cities, palaces or armies, nor did they collect taxes. Sons did not automatically succeed fathers as rajas.

Two words were used to describe the people or the community as a whole:

1. One was jana
2. The other was vish

The people who composed the hymns described themselves as **Aryas** and called their opponents Dasas or Dasyus. The term **dasa means slave**. Slaves were women and men who were often captured in war.

### **SILENT SENTINELS – THE STORY OF THE MEGALITHS**

Big stones are known as megaliths, which were arranged by people and were used to mark burial sites. The practice of erecting megaliths began about 3000 years ago and was prevalent throughout the Deccan, south India, in the north-east and Kashmir. All burials have some common features. The dead were buried with distinctive pots, which are called Black and Red Ware.

### **FINDING OUT ABOUT SOCIAL DIFFERENCES**

Objects are found with the skeleton. So, archaeologists think that these objects may have belonged to the dead person. There were differences in status amongst the people who were buried. Rich people were buried with more gold beads, stone beads, copper bangles etc. Whereas poor people were buried with only a few pots.

Were some burial spots meant for certain families?

People belonging to the same family were buried in the same place. Stone circles or boulders placed on the surface served as signposts to find the burial site so that people could return to the same place whenever they wanted to.

### **A SPECIAL BURIAL AT INAMGAON**

It is a site on the river Ghod, a tributary of the Bhima. Here, adults were buried in the ground. They were laid out straight with the head towards the north. Vessels that probably contained food and water were placed with the dead person.

### **OCCUPATIONS AT INAMGAON**

Archaeologists have found seeds of wheat, barley, rice, pulses, millets, peas and sesame. So, these have been cultivated in agriculture. Cuts in the bones of many animals show that they have been used as food. Fruits such as ber, amla, jamun, dates and a variety of berries were used as fruits.