

Welcome students in this session, we're going to start with Semester 2, Unit 2. Model name is later vedic age: expansion of agriculture, trade, society and this model number is 9.

The outline of this module will be introduction to later Vedic age, expansion of agriculture during the later Vedic age. Trading activities of the later Vedic People Society during later Vedic age and conclusion.

By the end of this session, the learners will learn about the expansion of agriculture. They will know the trading activities and also be familiar with the Society of the later Vedic age.

Let us start this module.

The period between 1000 to 500 BC when Aryans developed and started using iron and other materials is called as the later Vedic period. The age of Brahmanas and the Upanishads may be regarded as the later Vedic period. The later Vedic period commenced with the emergence of agriculture as the principal economic activity.

Let us have a look at the expansion of agriculture.

Agriculture replaced pastoral activities as chief mode of production. Agriculture was primary occupation and domestication of animals became the secondary occupation. Land was the important source of wealth. More land was put under cultivation by clearing forests. Knowledge of manure saw development in this period. Hence agriculture became the chief occupation of people growing barley, rice and wheat. We have references of heavy ploughs pulled by six, eight, twelve and twenty-four oxen. The plough used had smooth handle. More varieties of grains were now known to the people. Wheat, rice and barley were the crops cultivated.

When it comes to trade, we have the clear evidence of seaborne trade practiced during this time. We also have the reference to Samudra, which is sea. Internal trade as well as foreign trade also became extensive as they traded with Babylon through sea. Hymns of God Pushan gives us the reference of plenty of trading activities undertaken by the people of later Vedic age. Traders of this time would set out for distant lands with their stock of goods after offering sacrifices to various deities. They traveled in carts, Chariots, or boats. Horse riding was also popular. The exchange of goods was done through barter. The average cow was used as the standard unit of value, which estimated how many articles would be required as an exchange for an average cow. Later on, piece of gold called as nishkas were used as medium of exchange. Several other coins such as Satamanas, Subarnas, Padas, Krishnalas etc were also in use. Money Lending was very common. Ships were used for navigation. Hereditary merchants called as Vaniya came into existence as a different class. Vaisyas indulged in trade and Commerce, organized themselves into guilds known as Ganas. Traders guilds had formed and with the use of coins and better transport facility, which led to the growth in trade and Commerce. Guilds were found which control the prices and insured quality of goods.

Let us have a look at the Society of the later Vedic age. The most important change at this time in the society was the evolution of caste system.

Various subcaste evolved in addition to the traditional four castes, the Brahmanas, and Kshatriyas emerged as the two leading cast out of the general mass of population known as Vaishyas.

Caste system

The vaishyas were superior to the Shudras as certain privileges were enjoyed by the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas which were denied to the Vaishyas and the Shudras. Priestly class enjoyed predominant position. Prayers became longer rituals and sacrifices became more complicated. Performance of ceremonies became very burdensome. All these Brahmanas alone could perform. Besides full and rigid four castes there developed a fifth class called as Panchala that is untouchables. Every occupation became specialized, which led to the emergence of distinct sub caste subcaste such as Potters, Tanners, weavers, carpenters, fishermen etc emerged.

Let us have a look at the position of women. The women lost their high position, which they had in the Rigvedic age. They were deprived of their right to the upanayana ceremony and all their sacraments, excluding marriage, were performed without recitation of Vedic mantras. Polygamy prevailed in this society. Many of the religious ceremonies which were formerly practiced by the wife were now performed by the priest. She was not allowed to attend the political assemblies. Birth of a daughter became undesirable as she was regarded as a source of misery. The custom of child marriage and dowry crept in. In the later Vedic age, Rice became the staple food of the people. Gradually, the practice of eating meat was declined. Killing of cow was looked as disfavour wool was used in addition to the cotton. Three garments that is the garment proper called vasas, undergarment that is Nevil and the cloak adhi- vashas were the garments used by the later Vedic people. References to the turbans worn by men and women is being found.

To conclude, we can say that the later Vedic period commenced with the emergence of agriculture as the principal economic activity. Along with that a declining trend was experienced as far as the importance of cattle rearing was concerned. Land and its protection started gaining significance. Caste system became rigid and position of women declined.

Here are some of the references.

Thank you.