

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

1. Will it be correct to say that the Vedic literature is the most ancient literature in the world?

Answer- No, it will not be correct to say that the Vedic literature is the most ancient literature in the world because before Vedas there were the literatures of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

2. How would you describe the Vedic hymns?

Answer- Vedic hymns are poetic expression, sung in the praise of God.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

3. To what period do the first two Vedas belong?

Answer- First two Vedas the Rig Veda and the Sama Veda belong to the period when the Aryans were living in the region watered by the Indus and its tributaries.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

4. What is the content of the Atharva Veda?

Answer- The Atharva Veda is the compilation of 6000 Mantras related to magic, sorcery and fighting against diseases and demons.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

5. What proves the Atharva Veda's late origin?

Answer- The mention of the Bengal tigers is found only in the Atharva Veda and not in any other Vedas. It proves the Atharva Veda's late origin.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

6. What was the purpose of the Brahamana Granthas?

Answer- Brahamana Granthas are the rules and regulations for rituals given by the wise Brahamins.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

7. By whom were the Aranyakas composed?

Answer- Aranyakas were composed by the sages who lived and contemplated in the forests.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

8. Explain the meaning of the term “Upanishad”?

Answer- “Upanishad” means sitting down near to the Guru for a sacred discourse.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

9. Which ancillary traditions grew up around the Vedas?

Answer- The ancillary traditions grew up around the Vedas are known as Smrities. Smrities are based on memory and are composed by human beings.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

10. Which works are regarded as the oldest works on Indian Mathematics?

Answer- The Sulva Sutra and the Shruta Sutra are regarded as the oldest works on Indian Mathematics.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

11. Mention five Vedangs?

Answer- Main five Vedangs are: -

1. Kalpa Sutra
2. Shruta Sutra
3. Grihya Sutra
4. Dharm Sutra
5. Sulva Sutra

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

11. Mention five Vedangs?

Answer- The other five Vedangs are: -

1. Phonetics
2. Grammar
3. Etymology
4. Metrics
5. Astronomy

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Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

11. How long was the span of the Vedic Culture?

Answer- The span of the Vedic culture extended upto Indo-Gangetic plains.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

11. What did Buddhism protest against?

Answer- The Buddhist protested against the Vedic rituals.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

11. By what time decline set in the Vedic culture?

Answer- The Vedic culture set to decline with the beginning of Buddhism.

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Que. 1 Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each, as far as possible in your own words: -

11. Mention three sacrificial fires?

Answer- The three sacrificial fires are Hotr fire, Udgatr fire and Adhvaryu fire.

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Que. 3 Provide Synonyms of the following words: -

1. Ancient = Old
2. Basic = Fundamental
3. Custom = ritual
4. Obtain = to get
5. Evolution = natural growth

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Que. 2 Use the following words in sentences of your own:

1. Aphorism = dgkor

2. Mirage = e`xr`.kk

3. Vagary = lud

4. Petrified = iRFkj dk cukuk

5. Myth = dkYifud dFkk

6. Tenable = rdZlaxr

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 2 Use the following words in sentences of your own:

6. Cult =

7. Canonical =

8. Exegetical =

9. Ritualistic =

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The Vedic literature of India has sometimes been claimed to be the most ancient literature in the world. This claim is not tenable $\frac{1}{4}$ rdZIEer $\frac{1}{2}$, for Mesopotamian and Egyptian literatures are definitely prior $\frac{1}{4}$ iWOZ $\frac{1}{2}$, to the Vedas. But the Vedas still remain the oldest literature of all the Indo-European races taken together.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Etymologically, the word Veda means knowledge and in later times came to mean more specifically, sacred knowledge. The basic texts are the four Samhitas or compilations of metrical hymns or Mantras. Mantra means that which is thought out by the mind and the sage or Muni is the person who is capable of that deep absorption of the mind which leads to the formulation of the Mantra.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The four compilations are the Rig Veda, the Sam Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda. Of these, the earliest is the Rig Veda. It consists of over ten thousands stanzas grouped into over thousand hymns collected in ten cycles of Mandalas. The Rig Vedic hymns are a poetic testament of a people's collective reaction to the wonder and awe existence. They are poems of praise to the beauty of the earth and the powers glimpsed behind the radiant veil of nature, rather than ritual hymns, strictly.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

But, as ritualistic religion developed, the need for a hymn which could be sung, besides the purely poetic poem, was felt. This was the origin of the second compilation, the Sama Veda. Saman means song or melody. All but seventy-five of its 1875 verses are borrowed from the Rig Veda, chiefly from the eighth and ninth Mandalas. The recited poem becomes here a hymn sung.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The third compilation, the Yajur Veda, arose later than the Rig Veda and the Sama Veda. These two belong to the period when the Aryans were living in the region watered by the Indus and its tributaries. But all the geographical references in the Yajur Veda suggest an eastern shift. The Kurukshetra region, lying between the Sutlej and the Jamuna, and the Panchala region from Meerut to Allahabad, lying between the Jamuna and the Ganges, were the background of that growth of the Brahmanical ritual religion, one of the most important products of which was the Yajur Veda. The Yajus means a sacrificial formula. Most of its approximately 2,000 Mantras are in prose. These formulas have not, as a rule, the form of prayers addressed to the gods, but on the whole and characteristically consist of statements about the result of employing particular rites and Mantras.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

In the tribal phase of all Indo-European races, the chieftain also officiated as the priest at civic ceremonies and rituals. It is conjectured that this was the practice among the Aryans also in the beginning. The later nomination of another individual for the priestly function was the historical first step which ended up in the development of a ritualistic religion and the emergence of a priestly class for officiating at these rituals. As first, there was only one sacrificial fire, in front of which the Hotr priest recited the hymns of the Rig Veda. Later a second fire was added, officiated by the Udgatr priest who sang the Saman chant. Later still, a third fire was added, officiated by the Adhvaryu priest who recited the formulas of the Yajur Veda.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The fourth compilation, the Atharva Veda, was not originally recognized as having the canonical status of the other three Vedas. It grew up when the Adhvaryu priest began to cater to the masses and produce spells of magic and sorcery directed against diseases, enemies, demons. There are about 6000 such Mantras in this Veda. Its late origin is shown by the fact that the tiger, a native of marshy Bengal and unknown to the other Vedas, is frequently referred to as the terrible beast of prey that endangers human life.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The Mantras of all four compilations were handed down first in the oral tradition. A discipline, probably unique in the history of literature, arose very early, by which priests had to memorise the Mantras in correct diction and pronunciation through several methods of recitation which dealt with the words separately linked each word with the preceding or following word and stabilised a faultless sequence by difficult but through practices of memorising. But the compilations themselves took place after the hymns had been in existence for several centuries. Therefore, we should not be surprised if we frequently come across a typical material in any compilation. Thus, the Rig Veda contains magical spells that we usually associate with the Atharva Veda which likewise, has some glorious hymns to Varuna and Bhumi (Earth) that are untainted by any suggestion of sorcery and recover the pure poetry of Rig Veda.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

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5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The sacred stratum of Vedic literature includes the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads in addition to the hymns, formulae and spells. The word Brahmana means the explanation of the Brahmin or learned priest upon a point of ritual. The Brahmanas are prose works interspersed with metrical pieces which give the rule or precept for rituals and explanations, whether exegetical, mythological or polemical, of the rules. They contain cosmogonic myths, legends and narratives that have reference to the sacrificial cult. Though the land of the Kurus and the Panchalas is still the center of Brahmanical religion, it is clear that, during the period of the Brahmanas, it had spread to the countries to the east of Madhya Pradesh to Kosala with its capital, Ayodhya (Oudh) and Videha (Northern Bihar) with its capital, Mithila.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The Brahmanas thus are later than the Rig Veda and the Sama Veda but Contemporaneous with the Yajur Veda. This is to be expected because like the Yajur Veda, they also have ritual as their main theme. Brahmanas are attached to all the four Vedas, but this grouping and allocation have not much significance and could be an accident of later compilation. In the Yajur Veda, the Brahmanas are found mixed up with the ritual formulae. Only one section of that Veda, the Vajasaneyi Samhita, is free from this mixture and therefore that section has been called the Shukla (well-arranged) Yajur Veda, while the remaining sections of the compilation are grouped together as Krishna (unarranged) Yajur Veda.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

In the form in which we have obtained them, the Aranyakas and Upanishads are not easily distinguishable from the Brahmanas, for they have been presented as the concluding portions of some of the Brahmanas. For instance, the concluding section of the Taittiriya Brahmana is the Taittiriya Aranyaka. This Aranyaka has ten chapters of which only the first six form the Aranyaka proper. Chapters seven, eight and nine form the Taittiriya Upanishad and chapter ten forms the Yajnika (or Mahanarayana) Upanishad. The Isa Upanishad, likewise, is really then fortieth chapter of the Yajur Veda. The Mandukya Upanishad is a very short prose work. There is an extraordinary philosophical treatise, the Karika of Gaudapada, which has four parts, the first of which is a metrical rendering of the entire Mandukya Upanishad. The

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

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5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

If the texts of the Aranyakas and the Upanishads are contiguous with the Brahmanas, their spirit is not. In the Rig Veda there were sublime poetic homages to the powers intuited behind natural phenomena as well as philosophical speculations on the nature of the universe and the meaning of life. The poetic homages later crystallised into ritual worship and were elaborated by the priests into a complex sacerdotal religion. The Brahmanas show this trend. The philosophical enquiry developed, in the main with an anti-ritualistic bias and yielded the profound speculations that we find in the Aranyakas and Upanishads.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Aranyakas mean forest texts, because these thinkers retired from the ritual-dominated society to the peace of forests where they were free to pursue their adventure of thought. The term, Upanishad, likewise, means the sitting down (of the pupil) near (the teacher, for a confidential communication) and the progressive evolution of the meaning made the Upanishad a sacred session or sacred doctrine. But here again, the vagaries of compilation should be kept in mind. Some Upanishads commit themselves to ritualism while some Brahmanas contain exalted philosophical speculation.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Orthodox tradition groups the Vedic Mantras, Brahamanas and Aranyakas as revelation of Sruti. This sacred knowledge is not supposed to be the creation of any human mind. It exists in its complete form from eternity and dawns in the mind of the sage at the height of his contemplation. A theory of the Vedas existing eternally as subtle sound was elaborated which has remarkable affinities with the concept of the Logos in Greek philosophy and in the early Christian philosophy influenced by Neo-Platonism.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

We may also recall that the Hebrew and Islamic traditions show similar beliefs about the Old Testament and the Koran. As far as the Vedas are concerned, we may note that the name of the sage who composed it is given with every hymn. The hymns thus are the fruits of the inspiration of individuals. About the transcendental source from which all inspiration wings its flight to seek expression through the minds of particular, gifted individuals, no definitive comment need be expected in a work of this type.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

All the ancillary traditions, which grew up around the Vedas, have been grouped as Smriti, (literally, tradition or memory) composed by human authors as contrasted with the Srutis with their transcendental origin. The Smriti texts are broadly classified into six Vedangas, limbs or auxiliary sciences of the Vedas. Special manuals giving Sutras or extremely condensed aphorisms emerged in course of time for each specialised discipline. It is clear that the style and manner of the Sruti literature developed out of Brahamanas. The Vedanga which is closest to ritualistic religion is represented by the Kalpa Sutras, the whole body of aphorisms giving instructions regarding ritual and religious morality.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The part of the Kalpa Sutra which deals with the rituals, like the establishment of the three sacred fires, mentioned in the Vedas or Sruti, is called Srauta Sutras. The second part of the Kalpa Sutras is the Grihya Sutras. It deals with domestic rituals and is of later origin, as domestic rituals are not mentioned in the Brahmanas. It gives the rules for numerous ceremonies and rituals that confer a higher sanctity on the domestic life of man and his family from birth to death and is a mine of information on popular customs.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

The third branch of the Kalpa Sutras is one of still later evolution and is represented by the Dharma Sutras which deal with secular as well as religious law. The .

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 3 Choose the answer correct according to the text: -

1. The most ancient specimens of literature in the world are found in-

- a. The Chinese literature.
- b. The Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature.**
- c. The Vedas.
- d. The Avesta.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 3 Choose the answer correct according to the text: -

2. The Rig Veda contains -

- a. songs in praise of God.
- b. guidance regarding way of life.
- c. homage to the beauty and power of natural forces.**
- d. instructions for sacrifice.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 3 Choose the answer correct according to the text: -

3. Most of the verses of the Sama Veda are -

- a. original compositions.
- b. borrowings from the Rig Veda.
- c. written in prose.
- d. ritualistic instructions.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 3 Choose the answer correct according to the text: -

4. The Yajur Veda was -

- a. a product of the Brahmanical religion.
- b. a praise of natural forces.
- c. a criticism of ritual practices.
- d. related to magic and sorcery.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 3 Choose the answer correct according to the text: -

5. The Vedas are regarded as -

- a. created by Lord Vishnu.
- b. composed by a group of ancient scholars.**
- c. given to the sages by the goddess Saraswati.
- d. intuitively perceived by the sages.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Que. 3 Choose the answer correct according to the text: -

6. Domestic rituals are dealt with in -

- a. the Kalpa Sutras.
- b. the Grihya Sutras.**
- c. the Dharma Sutras.
- d. the Sulva Sutras.

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Vocabulary

1 Match the words given in column 'A' with their meanings in column 'B': -

A	B
radiant	practice of magic
Conjecture	energetic
sorcery	tribute
homage	dominated by priests
sacerdotal	bright
vigorous	guess

5. Life in Vedic Literature – Krishna Chaitanya

Vocabulary

1 Match the words given in column 'A' with their meanings in column 'B': -

A

B

radiant

bright

Conjecture

guess

sorcery

practice of magic

homage

tribute

sacerdotal

dominated by priests

vigorous

energetic

Preposition

in - esa

2. month, year

In January

In 1994

In 2021

In accident

Preposition

in - esa

1.

