Chapter – 4: What Books and Burials Tell Us?

One of the Oldest Literary Sources in the World

- Vedas 4 of them Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda
- Oldest Rigveda composed 3500 years ago includes more than a 1000 hymns *sukta*
- These hymns praise gods and goddesses 3 very imp.
 - Agni god of fire
 - o Indra warrior god
 - o Soma plant from which a drink is made
- Hymns composed by sages (*rishis*) recited and memorized completely by students with great care taught by priests
- Most hymns composed, taught, learnt by men few composed by women
- Rigveda composed in old or Vedic Sanskrit very different
- Rigveda recited and heard rather than read written down centuries after 1st composed printed 200 years ago

Sanskrit and other languages

- Sanskrit part of family of languages Indo-European
- Indian languages (Assamese, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Sindhi) Asian languages (Persian) European languages (English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Spanish) part of this family
- Matr (Sanskrit), ma (Hindi), mother (English) similar words with same meaning
- North-east languages Tibeto-Burman
- Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam Dravidian
- Languages in Jharkhand, central India Austro-Asiatic

How Historians Study the Rigveda

- Historians, archeologists study past addition to material remains written sources are examined too
- Hymns in Rigveda conversational form conversation between Vishvamitra and 2 rivers (Beas and Sutlej) worshipped as goddesses
- Vishvamitra
 - o Requests rivers to come down from mountains
 - o Compares them to 2 swift horses
 - o Worships them by comparing them to chariots of God Indra
- Rivers
 - o Tell him they move on the path Gods decided for them
 - o Ask him why he prays to them
- Vishvamitra
 - o Tells them he is a singer who came from a long distance
 - o Asks them to keep their water low so that he can cross the river
- Rivers
 - o Tell him that they will let him cross the river

• These hymns – composed in areas – these rivers flew – horses considered imp. – compared to rivers

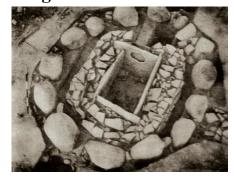
Cattle, Horses and Chariots

- Rigveda prayers for cattle, horses, children
- Horses joined to chariots used in battles fought to capture cattles
- Battles also fought for land imp. for pasture
- Some battles fought for water, and to capture people
- Wealth thus obtained some kept by leaders, some given to priests, rest distributed to people
- Some wealth used in *yajnas* (sacrifices) offerings were made meant for gods and goddesses
- Offerings ghee, grains, animals
- Men took part in wars no regular army BUT assemblies people met discussed matters of war
- Also chose leaders brave and skillful warriors

Words to Describe People

- Several ways to describe people
 - Work they do
 - Language they speak
 - o Places they belong to
 - o Family, communities and cultural practices
- Rigveda 2 types of people based on work
 - Priests performed rituals *brahmins*
 - o Rajas not like other kings no capital city, palace or armies did not collect tax their sons did not succeed as rajas
- 2 types of people based on community as a whole
 - Jana still in use
 - *Vish Vaishya* comes from it
 - o Several vish or jana mentioned by name Puru, Bharata, Yadu
- People who composed hymn called themselves Aryas their opponents Dasas or Dasyus
- Dasa earlier did not perform sacrifices, spoke different languages later meant slaves
- Slaves men / women captured in war property of owners
- Rigveda composed in north-west other developments elsewhere

Silent Sentinels – the Story of Megaliths



Megalith – big stone – carefully arranged – marked burial sites

- Started 3000 years ago most common Deccan, south India, north-east, Kashmir
- Some megaliths on surface other megaliths buried deep inside
- Archaeologists find circles of stone builders or a single large stone indicate burial site
- Some common features dead buried with pots, tools and weapons of *iron*
- Sometimes skeletons of horses, horse equipment and ornaments of stone and gold also found

Finding out About Social Differences

- Archaeologists feel objects with skeletons belonged to dead person
- Sometimes more objects with 1 grave than other
- Brahmagiri
 - One skeleton 33 gold beads, 2 stone beads, 4 copper bangles, 1 conch shell
 - Other skeletons few pots only
- Difference in status of buried some rich or chief others poor or followers

Were some burial spots meant for certain families?

- Some megaliths more than 1 skeleton
- People of same family buried at same place different time
- Those who died later brought in through portholes
- Stone circles / boulders serve as signpost people can return to these

A Special Burial at Inamgaon

- Inamgaon site on river Ghod tributary of Bhima between 3600 and 2700 years ago
- Adults buried with head towards north
- Sometimes burials inside houses vessels filled with food and water kept with them
- One man buried in large, four-legged clay jar courtyard of five-roomed house largest in the area in the centre also had granary grain store
- Body placed in cross-legged position

What skeletal studies tell us?

- Skeleton of child smaller different from adults no difference in adult men or women skeleton
- Sometimes people decide based on objects placed with them
- Ornaments (jewellery) found considered a woman's skeleton BUT man also wore ornaments
- Better way look at bone structure hip or pelvic section of woman larger than man
- 2000 years ago physician Charaka wrote a book on medicine Charaka Samhita
- He states 360 bones counted bones, teeth, joints, cartilage modern anatomy 206 bones

Occupations at Inamgaon

- Archaeologists found seeds of wheat, barley, rice, pulses, millets, peas, sesame
- Bones of animals many cut marks may be used as food cattle, buffalo, goat, sheep, dog, horse, ass, pig, sambhar, spotted dear, blackbuck, antelope, hare, mongoose, birds, crocodile, turtle, crab, fish
- Many fruits ber, amla, jamun, dates also found