

## 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
  - Indra – warrior god
  - 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 –
  - Requests rivers to come down from mountains
  - Compares them to 2 swift horses
  - Worships them by comparing them to chariots of God Indra
- Rivers –
  - Tell him they move on the path Gods decided for them
  - Ask him why he prays to them
- Vishvamitra –
  - Tells them he is a singer who came from a long distance
  - Asks them to keep their water low so that he can cross the river
- Rivers –
  - 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
  - Places they belong to
  - Family, communities and cultural practices
- Rigveda – 2 types of people based on work –
  - Priests – performed rituals – *brahmins*
  - *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
  - 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 deer, blackbuck, antelope, hare, mongoose, birds, crocodile, turtle, crab, fish
- Many fruits – ber, amla, jamun, dates – also found