

## 6<sup>th</sup> – What Books and Burial Tell Us II



**Megalithic burials:** Some burial sites of the late chalcolithic age and early Iron Age were found marked with megaliths. Certain communities adopted this system of burying the dead. In this, the dead were buried in large stone graves called megalithe. It has been found in tekkalakola and brahmagiri in the Deccan and in Nagarjunkonda in Andhra Pradesh and Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu.

There are various types of megalithic burials. Some are marked with a single stone while some have a number of stones arranged in a pattern. In one form of burial, a burial chamber made of rectangular stone slabs was built inside the pit. A chamber could be used for many burials that is why, we often find several skeletons in a single big chamber. Several object including expensive gold jewels, pottery, tools and weapons have been found as grave good. The quality of good exhibit the financial status of the person buried.

### **NEW GROUPS OF PEOPLE, NEW PATTERNS OF LIVING**

With the decline of the Indus civilization around 1900 BC, the first phase of urbanisation in the Indian sub continent came to an end. People went back to living in villages.

**The Coming of The Aryans** Around the time the Indus civilization declined, new groups of people came into the Indian subcontinent from the north-west. Historians call these people the Aryans. This period of Indian history is also known as the Vedic Period.

**Where Did They Come From?** The Aryans are thought to have originated in the areas surrounding the Caspian Sea in southern Russia. They were basically pastoralists (people who kept cattle). Some groups went westwards towards Europe and some moved through Persia and Afghanistan to India. The Aryans spoke a language which is believed to be the root of Greek, Persian, Sanskrit and German. They are also believed to have brought the use of iron into India. Hence, their arrival marks the beginning of the Iron Age in northern India.

### **What Is the Evidence for the Coming Of**

**The Aryans?** Archaeologists identify two types of pottery that are associated with the Aryan settlers. One is black-and-red ware (BPW), found in the Indo-Gangetic divide and the upper Ganga-Yamuna doab. The second is painted grey ware (PGW), which has been dated to 1000, to 600 BCE. It has been found in the middle and eastern Gangetic Plain.

**Where Did They Live?** The Rig Veda, the first book of the Vedas, tells us that after crossing the Himalayas around 1700 to 1500 BCE, the Aryans first settled down in the region surrounding the Indus. They called this land the Sapta Sindhu. From 1000 BCE to around 600 BCE, the Aryans spread from the Sapta Sindhu region into the Gangetic plains.

**How Was Society Categorized?** Aryan society was also classified on the basis of occupation or profession into four varnas or classes. The Brahmins were the priests, The Kshatriyas were the rulers and warriors, and the vaishyas were the traders, cultivators and skilled workers. The shudras served the other three groups. However, over a period of time, it became difficult for people to move out of the Varna they were born into. At the top were the Brahmins, or the priests. Next in importance were the Kshatriyas or the Warriors. The vaishyas were next at the bottom were the shudras.



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### CHALCOLITHIC SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST OF INDIA

More than a thousand Neolithic and Chalcolithic sites that flourished between 2000 BCE and 500 BCE have been discovered in various parts of the country. The Chalcolithic Age, , was a period when copper was used, along with stone, for the production of tools, weapons and ornaments. Thus, along with copper tools, the Chalcolithic settlements also used microliths, flakes and blades, stone and terracotta sling balls.

#### INAMGAON

Inamgaon, on the banks of the river Ghod in Maharashtra, is one of the largest Chalcolithic settlements in India. The people of Inamgaon were mainly farmers. Archaeologists have found the remains of at least 134 mud houses at Inamgaon. The walls of the houses were probably built of mud and branches of trees, while the roofs were thatched with grass. A few tools and ornaments made out of copper have been found at Inamgaon. We also find the use of domestic stone tools like grinding stones and pestles to grind or crush grains. They grew barley, wheat, peas, gram and beans. They also

cultivated rice, jowar and ragi. They domesticated animals like cattle, sheep, goats, dogs and pigs, as can be seen from the animal bones found here.

A large number of human burial sites have been found at Inamgaon.

**Cattle, horses and chariots :** There are many prayers in the Rigveda for cattle, children (especially sons), and horses. Horses were yoked to chariots that were used in battles, which were fought to capture cattle. Battles were also fought for land, which was important for pasture, and for growing hardy crops. Some battles were fought for water, and to capture people. Some of the wealth that was obtained was kept by the leaders, some was given to the priests and the rest was distributed amongst the people. Some wealth was used for the performance of yajnas or sacrifices in which offerings were made into the fire. These were meant for gods and goddesses.

**Words to describe people:** There are two groups who are described in terms of their work – the priests, sometimes called Brahmins, who performed various rituals and the rajas. They did not have capital cities, palaces or armies, nor did they collect taxes. Generally, sons did not automatically succeed fathers as rajas.

Two words were used to describe the people or the community as a whole. One was the word Jana, which we still use in Hindi and other languages. The other was vish. The word vaishya comes from vish.

#### Do Any Of These Names Sound Familiar?

The people who composed the hymns described themselves as Aryas and called their opponents Dasas or Dasyus. These were people who did not perform sacrifices, and probably spoke different languages. Later, the term dasa. Came to mean slave. Slaves were women and men who were often captured in war. They were treated as the property of their owners, who could make them do whatever work they wanted.

