

MATERIAL CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN THE ATHARVAVEDA

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

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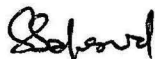
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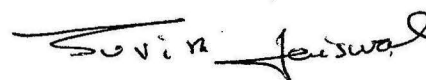
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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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Ranjan Anand

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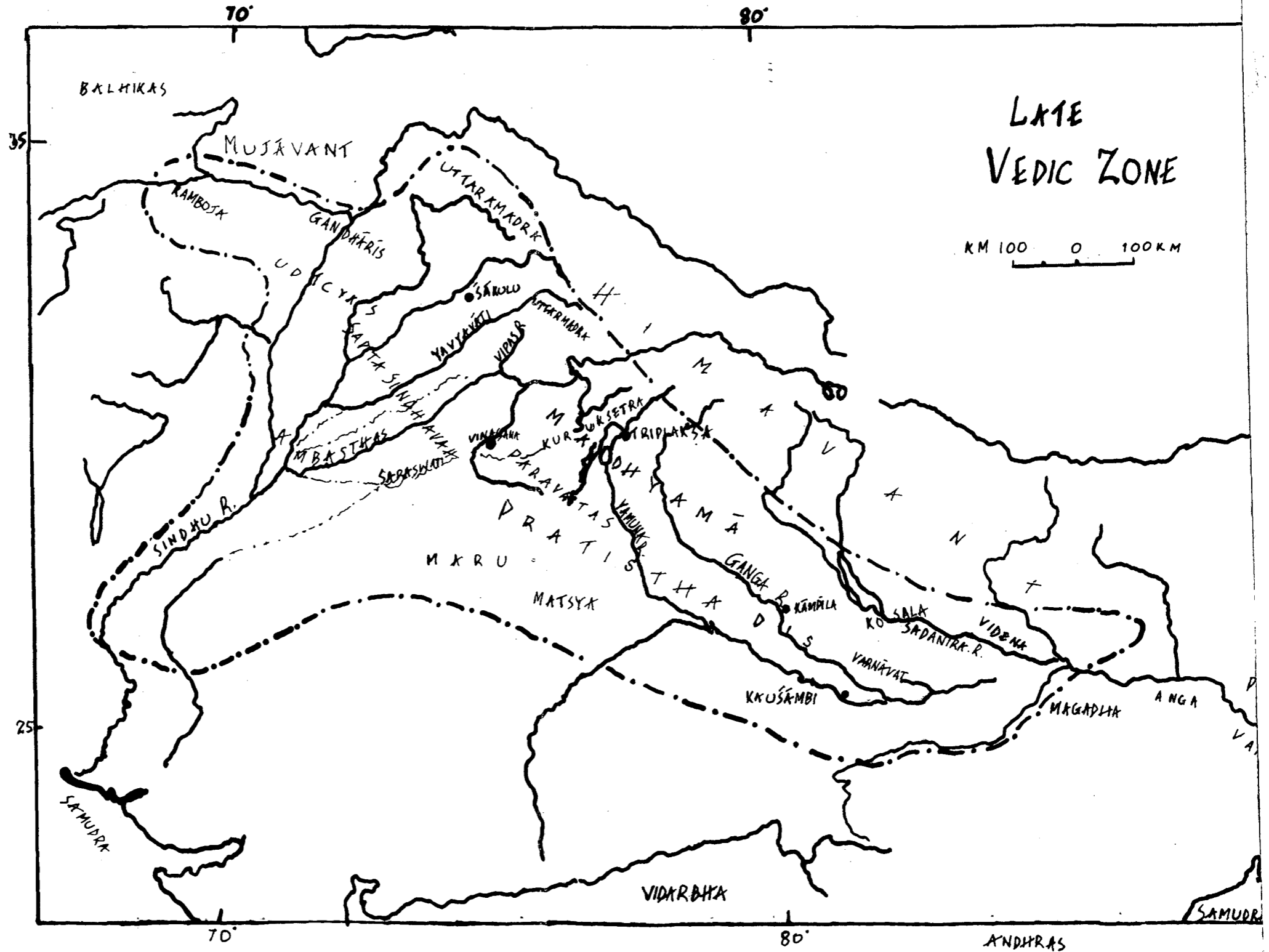
Abbreviations

- ABORI - Annals of the Bhandarkar oriental Research Institute, Poona.
- AIB - Aitareya Brahmana.
- AIOC - All India Oriental conference.
- AJOS - Aligarh Journal of Oriental Studies, Aligarh.
- ALB - Adyar Library Bulletin.
- BV - Bhartiya Vidya.
- CIS - Contributions to Indian Sociology.
- EPW - Economic and Political Weekly.
- HOTA - Hymns of The Atharvaveda.
-
- IA - The Indian Antiquary.
- IHR - Indian Historical Review, Delhi.
- IIJ - Indo-Iranian Journal.
- JBBRAS - Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
- PGW - Painted Grey Ware.
- PIHC - Proceedings of the Indian History Congress.
- QJMS - Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society, Bangalore.
- SP - Summary Paper.
- SSP - Social Science Probings.
- VIJ - Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal, Hoshiyarpur.
- ZDMG - Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft.

Roman Equivalents of Nagari Letters.

अ	ā	क	k	ठ	th
आ	ā	ख	kh	ड	d
इ	i	ग	g	ढ	dh
ई	ī	घ	gh	ण	ṇ
उ	u	ङ	ṅ	त	t
ऊ	ū	च	c	थ	th
ए	e	छ	ch	द	d
ऐ	ai	ज	j	ध	dh
ओ	o	झ	jh	न	n
औ	au	ञ	ñ	प	p
र	r	ट	t	फ	ph
ब	b			व	v
भ	bh			श	ś
म	m			ष	ṣ
य	y			स	s
र	r			ह	h
ल	l			अनुस्वार	ṁ
				स्विकर्त	ḥ

MAP No. I

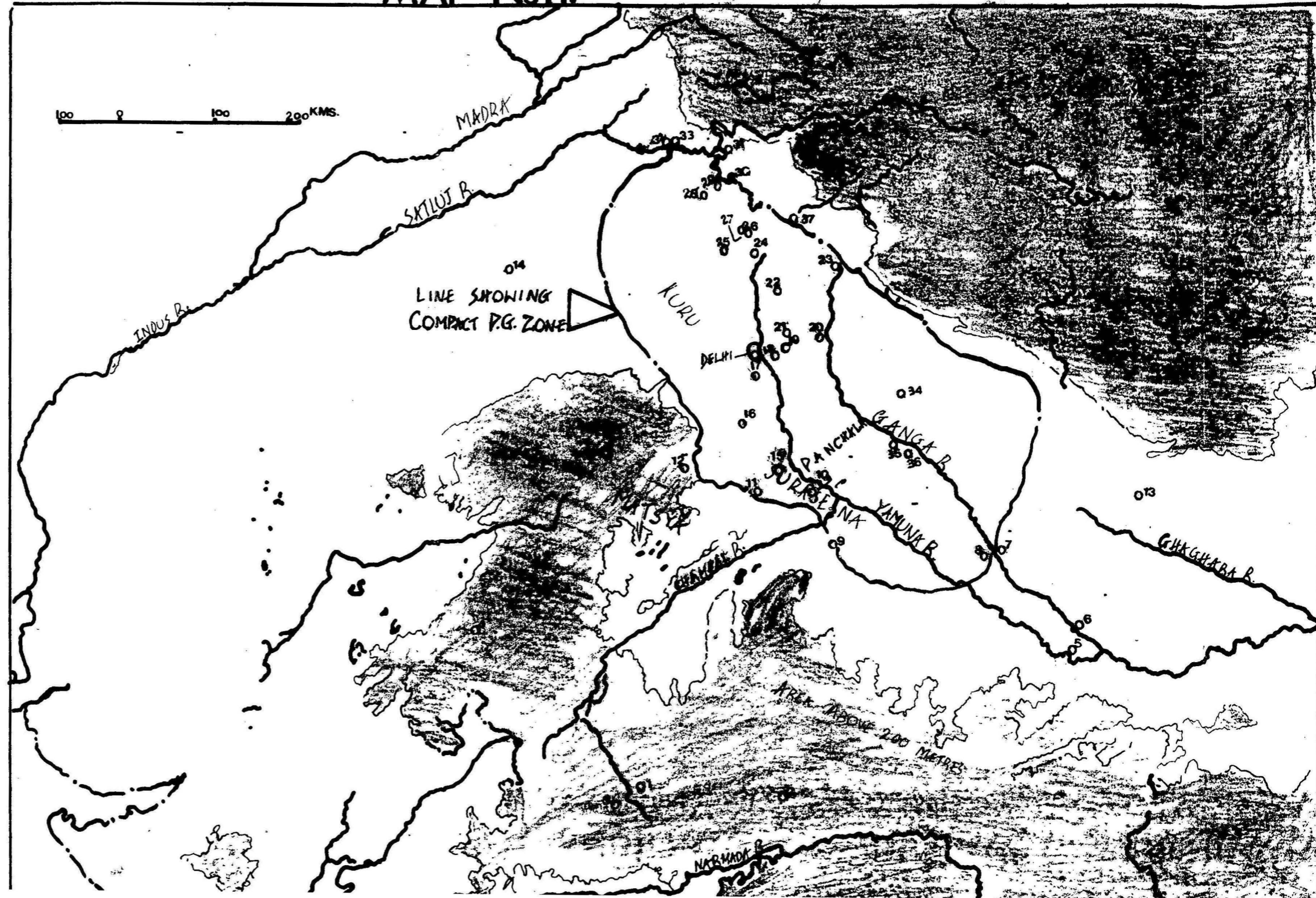


EXCAVATED P.G.W. SITES

MAP No. II.

1. Kaytha
2. Besnagar
3. Ujjain
4. Gilund
5. Kausambi
6. Sringaverpur
7. Pariar
8. Jajnuu
9. Batesvara
10. Khalawa
11. Noh
12. Jodhpura
13. Sravasti
14. Sardargarh
15. Sonkh
16. Autha
17. Tilpat
18. Kaseri
19. Allahapur

20. Hastinapur
21. Alangirpur
22. Hulas
23. Ambakheri
24. Raja Karan Ka Qila
25. Daulatpur
26. Bhagwanpura
27. Kasithal
28. Dadheri
29. Salaura
30. Sanghol
31. Ropar
32. Nagar
33. Kathpalon
34. Ahichchhatra
35. Atranjikheda
36. Jakhera
37. Sugh



INTRODUCTION

Atharvaveda, is an important text from a historian's point of view. It contains a lot of cultural data and helps in the reconstruction of political and kin-structure and indicates its material basis in the vedic period. Although in the last two decades this particular text has been used by eminent historians to substantiate their arguments but a full study of the *Atharvaveda* remains to be done. In the past some efforts have certainly been made but these studies now require a critical assessment and updating. Micro-study of this type may not allow us to build grand theories, nevertheless they may help in classifying and adding to existing historical knowledge. To quote Prof. Suvira Jaiswal,¹ "A growing trend which has perhaps yielded the largest number of monographs and still has potential for this kind of micro-level research is to take up a particular text or texts of one author and to discuss the sociological data contained therein. The merits of such works differ widely, and although most of them run the risk of giving a rather static picture of Indian Society in the absence of a proper historical perspective, they have

¹ Suvira Jaiswal, "Studies in Early Indian History : Trends and Possibilities" in R.S.Sharma (ed.), *Survey of Research in Economic and Social History of India*, Delhi, 1986, p.57.

brought to light many useful details which help to build the base for more analytical studies."

It is a well known fact that history in the Veda can only be suggestive. The Vedic literature gives us only points of information. On those scanty points of information we have to base our arguments aided by a bit of imagination. Historical imagination has to take the help of anthropological and sociological studies in order to decipher the data regarding early societies. The *Atharvaveda Samhitā* is divided into twenty Kāṇḍas, Books or Sections, containing some seven hundred and sixty hymns and about six thousand verses. In Books I-VII, the hymns are arranged according to the number of their verses, without any reference to the nature of their contents. In Books XIV-XVIII the subjects are systematically arranged; XIV, treating of marriage ceremonies; XV of the glorification of the *Vrātya*; XVI and XVII of certain conjurations; XVIII of funeral rites and the offering of obsequial cakes to the Manes or spirits of departed ancestors. Book XIX contains a somewhat miscellaneous collection of supplementary hymns. Book XX consists with the exception of what is called the *Kuntāpa* section, comprising hymns 127-136 of verses addressed to Indra and taken entirely from the *R̥gveda*. These two Books, which are not noticed in the *Atharvaveda Prātiśākhya* - a grammatical treatise on the phonetic changes

of words in the text - are a later addition to the collection. Many of the *Atharvan* hymns, are also found in the *Rgveda*, sometimes unchanged and sometimes with important variations.

Like all other ancient texts, *Atharvaveda* also, faces the problem of interpolations. Its time of composition spans three centuries i.e., from 1000 B.C. to 700 B.C. In these three centuries verses must have been added or have been left out to fit the changing structure of the society. Guided by this and other ideas Whitney has divided the whole text into three 'Grand-Divisions'. To quote him, "It is apparent that, of the twenty books comprising the present text of the *Atharvaveda*, the first eighteen were originally combined together to form a collection. Books XIX and XX are later additions and this is strongly suggested by their character and composition. The first division consists of books which are characterized by miscellaneity of subject and in which the length of the hymns is regarded and second consist of books which the distinguishing characteristic is a general unity of subject and in which the precise length of the hymns is not primarily regarded, although they are prevailing long. Books I-VI are very likely the original nucleus of the whole collection. The first division is in very large measure of popular origin the second is palpably of hieratic origin." Another drawback of the *Atharvaveda*, in

common with other vedic texts is that it was composed mainly by the priestly class and hence we do not get much idea of the lower strata of society. For example the text is silent on the function of the *Vaiśyas*. However like most primitive societies the religious and the secular affairs can hardly be separated in the Atharvavedic society and their prayers and rituals were mainly concerned with their material life. Further, the near absence of the *Śrauta* ritual and growing importance of the institution of family along with the diminishing importance of tribal institutions such as the vedic assemblies, is indicative of a transitional phase leading to the establishment of a patriarchal and predominantly agrarian society.

It is an established fact that the human societies, like all other species, are directly shaped by the ecosystem they live in. And this explains if not wholly, at least partly the varying customs and survival techniques of various societies. It is applicable to the Atharvavedic society too. What is apparent from the Atharvavedic references, is that the area was highly productive and conducive to the paddy cultivation. For the first time we find the term for rice in the *Atharvaveda* (IX.1.22). Abundant rain water was available. The floral reference (Appendix II) in the *Atharvaveda* as well as references to many of the animals indicate that the area covered by the *Ṛgvedic* peoples was

different from the area covered by the Atharvavedic people and the latter comprised the present states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, usually known as the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Doab. Vyāghra i.e., the tiger, is mentioned for the first time in the *Atharvaveda* and is certainly an eastern animal. References to the Conch Shell² called Śāṅkha in the *Atharvaveda* indicate that they were aware of the eastern sea because the Conch Shell is not found in the rivers and is not mentioned in the *Rgveda*. The *Atharvaveda* mentions *Himavaṅta*³ as distant mountains having such important peaks as 'Tr̥kakud' where grows the medicinally potent plant *Añjana* or 'Mujavaṅta'⁴ the known source of Soma plant. The tribes mentioned in the *Atharvaveda* has been listed in the Appendix I. The river *Sindhu*⁵ occurs in the *Atharvaveda*, but 'rarely' afterwards and in such a way as to suggest distance. The term *Sapta-Sindhu* is not mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*. The river *Varaṇvatī* is

² AV. IV.10.1;3;4;2;XIX.22.8-10. Śāṅkha in the *Atharvaveda* with the epithet *Kṛśana*, denotes a pearl-shell used as an amulet. In the later literature it denotes a 'shell' or 'conch' used for blowing as a wind instrument. *Vedic Index*, vol.2, p.350.

³ AV. IV.2.5;9.9;V.4.2;8;24.1;95.3 etc..

⁴ AV. V.22.5;7;8;14.

⁵ AV. I.15.1;IV.3.1;X.4.20 etc.

mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*⁶ on the bank of which probably the later town of Vārāṇasi was situated. The map⁷ shows the possible area of habitation during the Atharvavedic period. This area of habitation is almost the same in which more than seven hundred PGW settlements have been located. The date of PGW culture coincides with the composition of later vedic texts.

A good deal has been written on Vedic literature and in particular on the *Ṛgveda* but comparatively the *Atharvaveda* has received a little less attention. The study of the *Atharvaveda* was started by the western indologists in the 19th century. Rudolf Roth and W.D. Whitney edited the Śaunakīya recension of the *Atharvaveda* and it was first published in A.D. 1856 in Berlin. Tradition says that there are nine schools, or Śākhās of the *Atharvaveda*. But only two recensions are available - Paippālāda and Śaunaka. W.D. Whitney⁸, A. Weber, J. Muer, M. Bloomfield⁹ and R.T. H. Griffith¹⁰ have translated and commented upon

⁶ AV.IV.7.1.

⁷ Irfan Habib, "The Historical Geography of India, B.C.1800-800", PIHC, 1992.

⁸ W.D. Whitney, *Atharvaveda Samhita*, Harvard University, 1905.

⁹ M. Bloomfield, *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*, SBE, vol.42.

¹⁰ R.T.H. Griffith, *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*.

this text. Bloomfield¹¹ claims that he has translated all those hymns which carry the 'original *Atharvan* spirit'. According to him those are the ones which reflect sorcery. With this view he selected the hymns for translation and further studies. He divided the Vedas into two types i.e., hieratic and popular and in doing so he apparently reemphasized the ancient debate over the *Trayī* and the *Atharvan*. This appears again by referring to the concepts of the little and the great tradition by Sukumari Bhattacharji.¹² It is important here to note that a clear-cut dividing line between the hieratic and popular religion in primitive societies is not discernible. After all, the whole population belonged to what may be termed as 'tribals in transition', as far as the period of the *Atharvaveda* is concerned. The *Grhya* rites must have been practised by the families of the so-called upper classes also. Further women have been kept out of the discussion even though they are no less carriers of popular beliefs.

The Study of the religion has dominated since the inception of western interest in Indian history. This interest was the result of the administrative exigencies. To throw a powerful argument in favour of their rule over

¹¹ M. Bloomfield, *op.cit.*.

¹² Sukumari Bhattacharji, "Little Tradition and Great Tradition in the Atharvaveda", *ABORI*, LXII, 1981.

India, the westerners explored ancient Indian religion, manners, customs and history, and came to the conclusion that India was a nation of philosophers and Indian intellect lacked in political or material speculation, and secondly, the Indians never knew the feeling of nationality. Hence their rule over India stood justified. As a reaction to these imperialist or colonialist writings there arose a nationalist ideology in the last three decades of the 19th century which also had its limitations. The nationalists sought to glorify India by pointing out its unique achievements in the spiritual sphere. But they could not rid themselves of certain basic assumptions of colonial writings. Thus, the Aryan non-Aryan racial theory propounded by Max Muller still dominates the indological studies even when this theory was overruled by Max-Muller himself. Thus the *Atharvaveda* was seen as an admixture of Aryan and non-Aryan ideas and practices. During 1950s and 1960s, the *Atharvaveda* was a favourite text of research and many monographs appeared during this period. The monographs of J. Gonda¹³, N.J. Shende¹⁴, V.W. Karambelkar¹⁵,

13 J.Gonda, *The Sava Yajñas*, Amsterdam, 1965.

14 N.J.Shende, *The Foundation of the Atharvavedic Religion*, Poona, 1949; *Religion and Philosophy of the Atharvaveda*, Poona, 1952; *Kavi and Kavya in the Atharvaveda*, Poona, 1967.

Rajchhatra Mishra¹⁶ , B.A. Parab¹⁷ appeared during this phase. Many scholars like A.P. Karmarkar¹⁸, N.K.Venkatesan Pantulu¹⁹, V.C. Srivastava²⁰, P.S. Shastri²¹ etc. published their research papers in different Journals. Most of these studies were the studies of mythico-religious aspects and none of them studied the socio-economic aspects. However, this is done to some extent by Rajchhatra Mishra.

Much has been written about magic and medicine in the *Atharvaveda*. Scholars like D.D.Mehta²², B.A.Pranab and N.J.Shende wrote extensively on the Atharvavedic magic and

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- ¹⁵ V.W.Karambelkar, *The Atharvavedic Civilization*, Nagpur, 1958; *History in the Atharvaveda*, Nagpur, 1974.
- ¹⁶ Rajchhatra Mishra, *Atharvaveda Men Sanskritik Tattva*, Allahabad, 1968.
- ¹⁷ B.A. Parab, *The Miraculous and Mysterious in the Veda*, Bombay, 1952.
- ¹⁸ A.P.Karmarkar, "The Fish in the Indian Folklore and the Age of Atharvaveda", *ABORI*, xxiv, 1944.
- ¹⁹ N.K.Venkatesan Pantulu, "The Atharvaveda and the Mantrashastra", *QJMS*, 1936; "The Place of Atharvaveda in Vedic Literature", *QJMS*, 1939; "The Legend of Vena and the Atharvaveda", *QJMS*, 1939; "Zend Avesta and the Atharvaveda", *QJMS*, 1940.
- ²⁰ V.C.Srivastava, "Rohita in the Atharvaveda", *QJMS*, 1958.
- ²¹ P.S.Shastri, "Atharvavedic Hymns to the Earth", *IHQ*, 30(2).
- ²² D.D.Mehta, *Medicine in the Vedas*, Delhi, 1958.

medicine. In dealing with these aspects, most of the scholars were heavily influenced by James Frazer who separated religion from magic which, as is evidenced from the *Atharvaveda*, coincides during the vedic period. Magic and religious cults both having an identical aim in the beginning, namely, the control of the transcendental world, were a part of the religion of the Āryans also.²³ At the most, it can be said that the Āryan contact with the pre-Āryan indigenous people of India, who had their own worship of spirits and stars, trees and mountains, and had other superstitions, must have further strengthened this aspect of the Āryan culture.

Some of the Studies on the *Atharvaveda* bleed with pseudo-modernity. Kapildeo Dwivedi Acarya,²⁴ takes the expression '*Tisrah Pṛthivi*' as denoting three continents viz., Eurasia, Africa and America. According to Chhand Chakraborty the *Rgveda* is largely a product of the bourgeoisie while the *Atharvaveda* is predominantly proletarian.²⁵

²³ S.R.Goyal, *A Religious History of Ancient India*, vol.I, Meerut, 1984.

²⁴ Acharya Kapildeo Dwivedi, *Atharvaveda Ka Sanskritik Adhyayan*, Varanasi, 1988.

²⁵ Chhand Chkraborty, *Common life in the Atharvaveda and Rigveda*, Calcutta, 1977.

In recent times some scholars like, R.S. Sharma and Romila Thapar, have used the Atharvavedic data in the construction of the material culture, social formation and the political processes of the later vedic period as a whole. But they have used only those data which are important for the substantiation of their arguments. Apart from this, new archaeological excavations are being carried out in the Middle Gangetic Basin, the cradle of Atharvavedic civilization. The findings of these excavations need to be correlated with the literary evidence through cross-checking. "The study of social history, economic history, and the role of technology in Indian history, being comparatively new to the concern of both archeologists and historians, require appropriate emphasis. Furthermore, in these fields, the evidence from archeology can be used more directly. The historian has data on these aspects from literary sources but the data tends to be impressionistic and confined by the context. Archeology can provide the historian with more precise data on the fundamentals of these aspects of history, resulting thereby in a better comprehension of the early forms of socio-economic institutions."²⁶ The social evolution derived from the vedic sources may be compared with that

²⁶ Romila Thapar, "The Historian and Archaeological Data", in D.P. Agarwal and A. Ghosh (eds.), *Radio Carbon and Indian Archaeology*, Bombay, 1973, pp. 378-90.

derived from the Painted Grey Ware culture because there is a coincidence of date, floral references, names of the rivers and places etc. So, untill the recent archaeological data are correlated with the atharvavedic data, the true picture of the Atharvedic people can not be ascertained.

Keeping these ideas in mind, an effort has been made in this dissertation to study the *Atharvaveda*. Although, there is a debate over the objectivity and meanings of the old texts, I have tried to follow the simplest way in deciphering the Atharvavedic terms. I feel that the meaning of words is to be found in their role in a language, in their implications, associations, and contrasts. The first chapter of this dissertation deals with the material culture of the Atharvavedic people and the second deals with the social groups like *grāma*, *jana*, *viś*; kin-structure, family and other social institutions such as the *sabhā*, *samiti* etc. In the concluding chapter, attempts have been made to correlate my findings with the archaeological findings.

CHAPTER I

Material Culture

In order to look at the social structure of the *Atharvavedic* people in its proper historical perspective it is imperative to examine its material context. One of the most important aspects of the material setting of the *Atharvavedic* people is that they had a sedentary life with agriculture as their mainstay. And this was certainly an advantage as against the *Rgvedic* peoples, who were primarily pastoralists constantly moving from one place to another in search of pasture lands. But this is not to suggest that the *Atharvavedic* people had settled permanently at one place. They moved from one place to another in search of good arable land. The nature of agriculture might have forced these people to stay at one place for longer period as is indicated by the large number of Painted Grey Ware sites in the Doab area. They built houses of greater durability and many sacrifices were invented which centred around these houses. The shift to agriculture had wide ranging effects on the development of the society but it does not mean that they had totally given up pastoral activities. In fact, now, they shifted from one place to another keeping in mind the dual purpose, availability of good cultivable land as

well as good pasture where they could graze their stock. The interdependence of the cattle and cultivation is well-known.

The real revolution in agricultural production might have been brought about by the advent of iron. Although, the term *ayas* used in the *R̥gveda* has sometimes been translated¹ as iron, in fact, it meant only bronze or copper and it is only in the *Atharvaveda* where *śyāmayasa* meaning iron is mentioned. There are many references to simply *ayas* without any adjective, in the *Atharvaveda*², but that the use of iron was also known is clear from two references, *śyāmena asinā*³ - 'by the knife of dark metal', and '*śyāmāyo asya māmsam lohitaṁasya lohitaṁ*⁴ - dark metal its flesh, red its blood'. Apart from these, at one place there is a reference to good metal- 'there are knives of good metal in our house.' *karmārāṇ* - smiths have been mentioned once⁵ and the term *dhāmantar* is translated as 'forging' by Whitney and 'smelting' by Griffith. At one place an amulet born of the

¹ G.S.Ghurye, *Vedic India*, Bombay, 1979, pp.312-13.

² AV.VIII.3.2; IX.10.3;V.28.; V.28.5;V.28.9; VII.120.1; IV.37.8; VI.63.3;VI.63.2.

³ AV.IX.5.4.

⁴ AV.IX.3.7.

⁵ AV.III.5.6.

ploughshare made by the smith is mentioned.⁶ Based on these references Dilip Chakraborty⁷ asserts that the metal ploughshare might well have been of iron. It seems that the iron was used mostly in those implements which were meant for cutting large trees necessary for the clearance of thick forests as these could not have been cleared by fire only. So it is not important whether ploughshare was made of iron or not but it is important that iron tools had added advantage over the stone and copper tools in clearing Jungles and turning large tracks of forests into arable lands. It is important here to note that even in 18th century⁸ India in many parts of Bengal and Bihar, the iron share was not used, while in the region below the Western Ghats there were no carts, no drill plough, no rake nor hoe drawn by oxen. This was observed by Buchanan also while moving around Seringapatam. But the yield per acre was very high and most of the times higher than U.S.A. and U.K.

⁶ AV.X.6.2;3.

⁷ D.K.Chakraborty, *The Early Use of Iron in India*, Delhi, 1992, pp.101-102.

⁸ Tapan Raychaudhari, "The Mid 18th Century Background", in (Dharma Kumar (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol.ii, Delhi, 1992)

The /

it was king Pṛthu the son of Vainya who systematized agriculture.⁹ It is quite possible, as has been suggested,¹⁰ that the *Āryans* learnt the practice of plough agriculture from the indigenous peoples. And this conclusion is based on 1) the use of *non-Āryan* loan words like *Lāṅgala*, a proto-Munda loan word in the *Ṛgveda*¹¹ and in the *Atharvaveda*¹² and 2) the statement made in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*¹³ i.e., "Even the foremost of the *Asuras* were still ploughing the fields and sowing seeds, those behind them were engaged in reaping and threshing. Even though fields were not tilled the plants brought forth cereals for them. This now caused anxiety to the gods who realised that owing to that enemy caused damage to them. They decided to

⁹ AV.VIII.13.11, *Tam Prithī vāinyaḥ adhok tam kṛṣim ca adhoka. Te kṛṣim ca manuṣyāḥ up . . . lṅvanti kṛṣtarādhiḥ upjīvniyaḥ bhavati yaḥ evam ved - Prithī the son of Vena was her milker : he milked forth husbandry and grain for sowing. These men depend for life on corn and tillage: he who loose this becomes a meet supporter for sucessful in culture of his corn land.*

¹⁰ Suvira Jaiswal, "Stratification in Ṛgvedic Society : Evidence and Paradigms", *IHR*, vol.17, no.1-2, pp.5.

¹¹ RV. IV. 57.4.

¹² AV. III. 17.4.

¹³ SB. I. 6. 1. 4.

find out means as how to upset the agricultural activities of the *Asuras* that they might be victorious and the *Asuras* might be defeated.¹⁴ But we cannot accept the suggestion that these indigenous peoples were the Indus Valley people. It is because the relationship between the Harappan culture and the post Harappan cultures such as Copper-Hoard cultures has not been established fully as yet. The only point of similarity seems to be that of pottery. The Harappans got copper from Khetri mines of Rajasthan whereas the Copper-Hoard culture peoples got it from Rakha mines of Bihar.¹⁵ The tools found from Copper-Hoard culture sites are distinctly different from the Harappans. The Harappans were literate people who knew the art of writing whereas the *vedic* people were illiterate. If the *Vedic Āryans* learnt agriculture from the Harappans they should have learnt the art of writing also. Many Copper-Hoard culture sites of *Gangā-Yamunā Doab* area were occupied during the Neolithic phase. In Chirand in north Bihar, the first period appears to be a true Neolithic¹⁶ and the earliest evidence of rice

¹⁴ Quoted in B.P.Roy, *The Later Vedic Economy*, Patna, 1984, pp.117.

¹⁵ Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, 1992, pp.254-262.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

comes from a village near Allahabad whose date may well go back to 6000 B.C.¹⁷ So it is possible that when *Āryans* came to India, there existed indigenous agriculturists referred to in the ŚB cited above. The *Āryans* learnt agricultural practices from them and adopted some of the terms used by them.

The *Atharvavedic* people had fully realized the importance of Earth as far as the agriculture and herbal plants were concerned. And hence, they composed an unparalleled piece of literature dedicated to the praise of the earth called *Pr̥thivi Sūkta*.¹⁸ Prayers were offered to the *Kṣetrapati*, the presiding deity over the fields. It is interesting to note that the *Atharvaveda* speaks of the yoking of four, twelve, sixteen or twenty four oxen to the plough. But it doesn't seem plausible that people yoked more than two oxen. It seems that these numbers indicate units of plough i.e., two oxen consisting of one plough. This unit of two oxen is indicated by a *mantra*¹⁹ where

¹⁷ R.S.Sharma, *Ancient India*, Delhi, 1990, pp.32.

¹⁸ AV.XII.1.1-63.

¹⁹ AV.III.11.5. - Breath, Respiration come to him, as two bullocks to their stall.

Prāṇa and *Apāna* of a person is compared with two bullocks entering into the stall together.

It is said that on the banks of the river Sarasvatī the Gods ploughed the fields for the cultivation of barley and here the lord of plough (*Sīrapati*) was Indra and the ploughers were *Maruts*.²⁰ This indicates that the *rājā* (representing Indra) owned the ploughs, and gave it to the peasants (representing *Maruts*) who cultivated the land. These peasants were called *kināśa* (similar to *kisana*) and a hymn²¹ discusses the process of agriculture as well as the terms related to agriculture. *Yunjanti* is a term denoting harnessing plough i.e., *Sīrā* or *Lāṅgala*. Yokes were called *Yuga*, prepared seed was *Bīj*, furrow was *Sītā* and ploughshares were called *Fāl*. Manuring was known and the manure was probably called *karīṣa*²² which consisted mainly of animal excreta. *Sṛṇi*²³ is a term which according to *Sāyaṇa* is used for reaping sickle. But we don't have any idea of the material of which these sickles were made. Those

²⁰ AV.VI.30.1.

²¹ AV.III.17.

²² AV.XIX.31.3.

²³ AV.III.17.2., *Sṛṇim* *Ankuṣam* *Lavanasādhanaṃ*
Dātrādikam.

who were expert in agriculture were probably known as *Annavida*.²⁴ The husk from the grains was separated by *Śūrpa* and the process was called *Sīdata* ²⁵ and this was done with the help of *Musalam* and *Ulūkhalam*.²⁶ *Śūrpa* was made of some kind of reed and is still called *sūpa* in Hindi, and *Musalam* and *Ulūkhalam* were made either of stone or of wood. People in northern India still call it *Ukhala* and *Musala*. This *Ukhala* and *Musala* are of two kinds :- 1. placed vertically and the process of grinding usually involves two persons doing the work alternatively and the *Musala* is operated by hand and the 2nd is placed horizontally. On one side the *Ukhala* is placed inside a pit and on the other side is kept the long wooden *Musala* which is pressed using the legs. The second kind of *Ukhala* and *Musala* is technologically superior, needs less energy and is more efficient. It is now called *Dheñkuli*. Adoption of this method might have made grinding easier.

The *Atharvavedic* people were perhaps the first to use rice i.e., *vr̥hi*. The agricultural ecology of the middle and lower Gangetic Basin is very conducive to the cultivation of

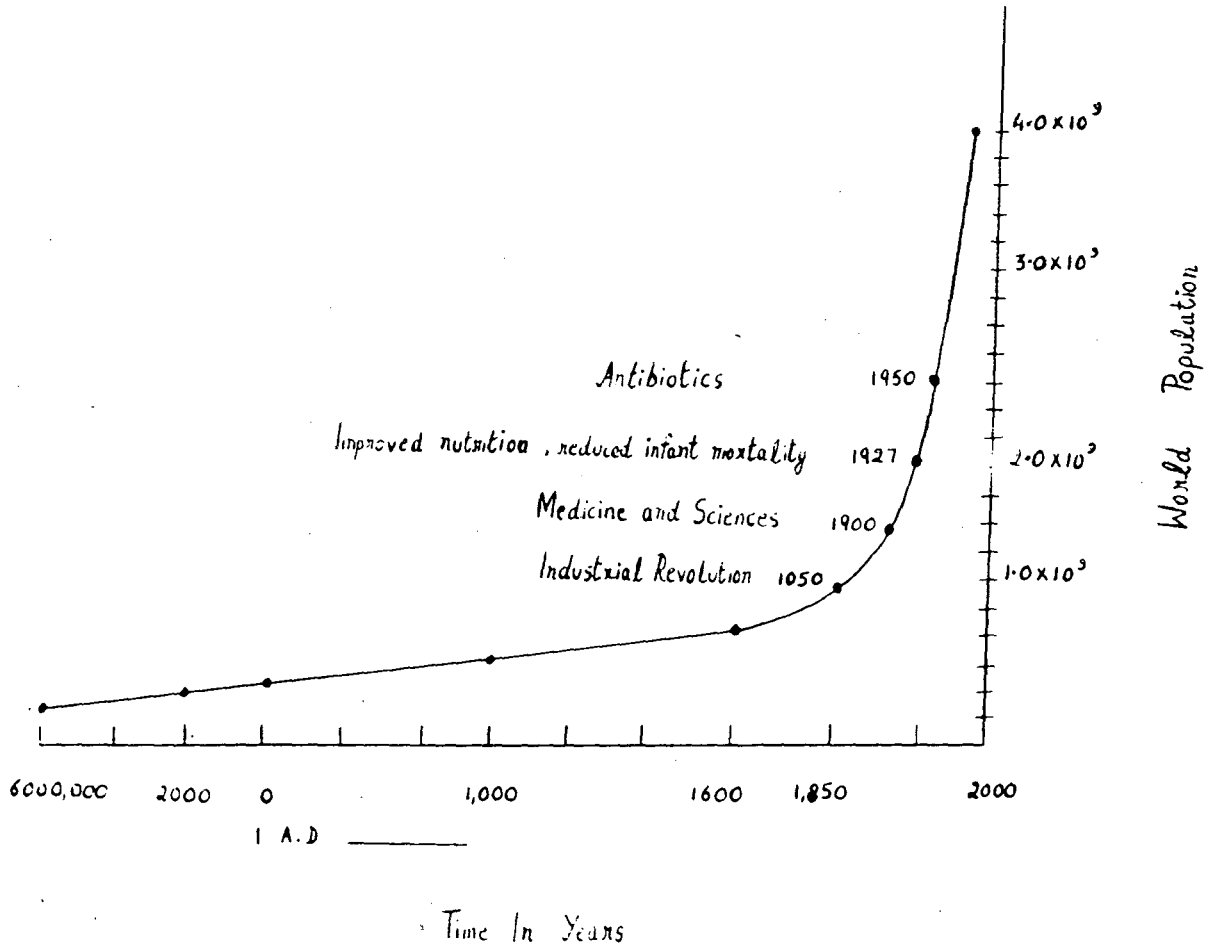
²⁴ AV.VI.116.1.

²⁵ Śāyana's Commentary on XI.1.12; XI.3.4;5;6.

²⁶ AV.XI.3.3.

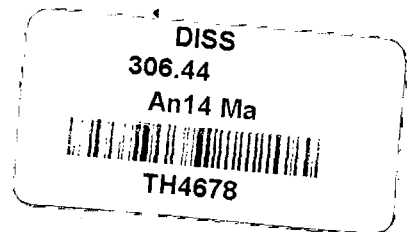
paddy which has an added advantage over the cultivation of barley in terms of total produce. And hence, it might have been a conscious choice of the *Atharvavedic* community to take on the rice cultivation. Because of the limited scope of agricultural technology, the people must have made attempts at horizontal intensification of agriculture as we see demographic increase worldwide (see the graph) during this phase, and the surplus available was not much. Apart from demographic increase we have references to the non-cultivating groups who needed to be fed. Hence it can be said that surplus production was also a conscious choice of the *Atharvavedic* community. But this surplus production was not great and there was no coercion for surplus production. Hence the economy was not an economy of surplus although the change over to agriculture is basically assumed to be a change from meeting mere domestic needs to an economy of surplus.²⁷ It is due to the vertical intensification of agriculture that the actual revolution takes place. Vertical intensification is when intensification is sought through improved technology. This might have happened in the last

²⁷ Marshall D.Sahlins, *Stone Age Economy*, London, 1974.



Graph Showing Population Increase

TH-4678



phase of *later Vedic* period. References to iron that we have in the *Atharvaveda* are possibly of later period.²⁸

However, the importance of rice cultivation is apparent from the three hymns²⁹ and numerous other mantras. The two hymns are intended at glorifying and magnifying the sacrifice called *Vishatārī*, whose chief element is *odana*, a mess or broth of mashed rice cooked with milk. Now the goat was sacrificed along with *Pancaudana*³⁰ i.e., five fold mess of boiled rice cooked with milk. The sacrificial cow was now called '*Śataudana*'³¹ because the sacrificial cow was accompanied with a hundred *Odanas*. *Brahmaudana* was distributed to *brāhmaṇas*, especially to priests who officiated at the sacrifice.³² *Caru*³³ was another term used for the boiled rice. *Purodāśa*³⁴ was a sacrificial cake of ground rice.

²⁸ Renou, *Vedic India*, pp.20-21. Quoted in R.S.Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1903, pp.59-60.

²⁹ AV. IV. 34;35;11.3.

³⁰ AV. IX. 5.8.

³¹ AV. X. 9.3.

³² AV. IV. 35.7.

³³ AV. XI. 3.18.

³⁴ AV. XII. 4.35.

Related to agriculture is the question of ownership of land. Land according to R.S. Sharma³⁵ was not an item of private property which could not be staked away, and the practice of making land gifts to priests did not prevail on any scale during the *Vedic* period. This was because land was available on a large scale, hence the priest claimed a few crops raised on the fields. The *brāhmaṇas* did not participate at all in agricultural production. This is obvious from the *Atharvavedic* injunction³⁶ that stresses the protection of the cattle and wife belonging to the *brāhmaṇa* but leaves out land. There is nothing to show that peasants had to pay for cultivating a piece of land. In the age of the *R̥gveda*³⁷ the *Āryans* had property in women slaves, animals, weapons and ornaments but with the settled agricultural life began property in houses and possibly in land. The *Atharvaveda* contains a hymn in the form of a benediction on the completion of a new house. A blessing has been sought for the firm foundation of a house possessed of horses, kine, gladness, nourishment, milk and fatness. It is wished that the house may contain loftyroofed spacious store

³⁵ R.S.Sharma, *op.cit.*, pp.73.

³⁶ AV.V.17.19.

³⁷ R.S.Sharma, *op.cit.*, pp.73.

full of clean corn.³⁸ Twelve Sava Yajnas were prescribed for all in the *Atharvaveda* mostly for acquiring material benefits, and some for obtaining heaven and the gift of cows, calves, oxen, gold, cooked rice, thatched houses and well prepared and cultivated fields to the *brāhmaṇas* was recommended.³⁹ Cows, horses, *Dhana*, gold and sometimes wives were placed as stakes in a game of dice. Private property in cattle was an established fact and this is quite clear from the fact that the cattle were marked⁴⁰ on their ears.

One important activity other than agriculture and cattle rearing was trade. A hymn⁴¹ has been devoted to the trade. In this hymn Indra has been called a trader.⁴² Indra is a *rājā* also. But its not clear whether the leader of the tribe was a trader himself or he simply was the controller of those who practised trade. It is also not clear whether there existed a separate group of traders. Indra is asked to approach the *vaṇij* and to be their guide

³⁸ AV.III.12.2;3.

³⁹ R.S.Sharma, *op.cit.*, pp.73.

⁴⁰ AV.VI.141.2.

⁴¹ AV.III.15.

⁴² *Indram Aham Vaṇijam codyāmi.*

and leader.⁴³ They wished⁴⁴ to make profits by their purchases. They went to far-away places for sale and purchase. The medium of this exchange must not have been money. It was based on barter system because; - 1. we do not have any reference to coins or anything which would indicate the prevalence of money and, secondly the merchants seek wealth with the wealth they offered.⁴⁵ The goods in which trading might have been done, seem to be prestige goods, different metals like, gold, silver etc, cereals and plants with medicinal values. Honey, fruits and other jungle goods might have been procured from the people living in the forests. In turn, these forestpeople received cereals etc. *Paripañthins*⁴⁶ *Taskars*⁴⁷ were generally highway robbers belonging to the community of forest dwellers, robbed the people carrying the goods. Hence they sought the leadership in Indra i.e., the leader of the tribe. They invoked the mother earth to bestow power on them to subdue all highway robbers. *Anas*⁴⁸ was

43 AV.III.15.1.

44 AV.III.15.2.

45 AV.III.15.5.;6 - *Yen dhanena prapaṇam carāmi dhanena devāh dhanam ichchhamānah.*

46 AV.III.15.1;I.27.1;XII.1.32;XIV.2.11.

47 AV.IV.3.2;21.3;XIX.50.5

48 AV.XII.1.47.

the cart used to carry goods. Perhaps, *vipātha*⁴⁹ was also a kind of cart suited for rough and uneven roads and was perhaps used by *vrātyas*. Boat⁵⁰ was another means of conveyance and possibly could have been used for transporting goods as well as people.⁵¹ In the absence of money, grain or cattle might have been the medium of exchange. The *Atharvaveda* mentions as possible objects of commerce⁵² - "garments (*Dūrśa*), Voverlets (*Pavasta*), goat-skins (*Ajin*) etc. *Vasna* is a term which Griffith takes to mean 'toil of hand' and Whitney translates it as 'purchased by paying'.⁵³

Sometimes *niṣka* has been translated as coin, money or a medium of exchange. Bhandarkar⁵⁴ thinks that it was a metallic coin. "Bind, like a golden chain (*niṣka-iva*), O

⁴⁹ AV. XV.2.6;7.

⁵⁰ AV. XX.46.2; XX.44.6; XIX.29.8.

⁵¹ AV. IV.33.8; II.36.5.

⁵² AV. IV.7.6. - "For covers they bought thee, also for garments, for goat-skins, purchasable (*Prakṛ*) art thou, o herb : spade-dug one thou rackest not."

⁵³ AV. XII.2.36.

⁵⁴ D.R. Bhandarkar, *Lectures on Ancient Indian Numismatics*, Calcutta, 1921, pp.157-159.

God, his witchcraft on the sorcerer".⁵⁶ Let the Scorer of the Gods, the alien mischief maker bind as a gold jewel (*niṣka-iva*), round his neck."⁵⁶ "No steward, golden necklaced, goes before the meat-trays of the man."⁵⁷ "The Hotar's seat is green and golden : these are gold necklets in the place of him who worships".⁵⁸ It is apparent from all these references that *niṣka* was, in any way, not connected with trade and commercial transactions. At the most we can say that possession of *niṣka* might have been a status symbol with social values. So Macdonell and Keith⁵⁹ are right when they say that *niṣka* was not a coin but merely an ornament. *Satamāna* does not occur in the *Atharvaveda* .

Craft production

Craft production formed one of the most important economic activity during the *vedic* period. *Tvaṣṭar* was the celestial artist.⁶⁰ He is supposed to have made Indra's

⁵⁶ AV.V.14.3.

⁵⁶ AV.XIX.57.5.

⁵⁷ AV.V.17.14.

⁵⁸ AV.VII.104.1.

⁵⁹ A.A.Macdonell and A.B.Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, London, 1912, vol.1, pp.197, 455; vol.2;344;504.

⁶⁰ AV.V.25.11.

thunderbolt.⁶¹ All forms and figures are well known to him.⁶² Apart from *Tvaṣṭar* we have references to many real crafts which existed during the period of the composition of the *Atharvaveda*. We have in this text numerous references to the cloth and weaving. A verse says, 'A certain pair of maidens, of diverse form, weave, betaking themselves to it, the six-pegged web : the one draws forth the *tantu* (threads), the other sets them : they wrest not off, they go not to an end.'⁶³ Another verse says, " a man weaves (*vayati*) it, ties it up".⁶⁴ "What garment (*vāśah*) woven by the spouses - may that touch us pleasantly".⁶⁵ All these references show that there were no separate weavers in the society but were worked upon by the members of a household, men and women alike. Interestingly we do not have any reference to cotton in the *Vedic* literature. The first literary reference⁶⁶ to cotton is found in the *Aśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra*. So it seems that the cloth were mostly made

⁶¹ AV.II.5.61. - "He slew the Dragon lying on the mountain : his heavenly bolt of thunder *trashtar* fashioned".

⁶² AV.II.26.1.

⁶³ AV.X.7.42.

⁶⁴ AV.X.7.43.

⁶⁵ AV.XIV.2.51.

⁶⁶ B.P.Roy, *op.cit.*, pp.287.

of the fur of sheep or goat. We have numerous references to tantu ⁶⁷ in the *Atharvaveda* which meant warp of a piece of weaving. The subject of a hymn⁶⁸ is a youth's investiture with a new garment at a ceremony called *godānam*, performed when he attains the age of sixteen or eighteen years.⁶⁹

Dyeing of cloth was known to the *Vedic* people. *Lohitavāsa* was the red cloth.⁷⁰ *Lākṣa* and possibly *haridra* (turmeric) were common dye-stuffs. *Piṣanṅa* ⁷¹ were perhaps brown coloured thread. The cloth was stitched by needle called *suci*. *Rākā* ⁷² has been asked to sew her garment with a never breaking needle.

Chariot making was an important activity during the *vedic* period. Its importance can be gauged from the fact

⁶⁷ AV.XIV.2.51; XV.3.6; X.2.17; XII.1.60; II.1.5; IX.4.1; XII.2.52; XII.1.6; IX.14.6.etc.

⁶⁸ AV.II.13.1-5.

⁶⁹ R.T.H.Griffith, *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*, vol.i, pp.46.

⁷⁰ AV.I.17.1 - "Yon women that go, veins with red garments, like brotherless sisters (*Jāmi*)."

⁷¹ AV.III.9.3.

⁷² AV.VII.49.1.

that in a war winner was called the *rathajit*.⁷³ It gave them immense mobility. While *ratha* has been used more than hundred times in the *Atharvaveda*, *rathkāra* ⁷⁴ i.e., the chariot maker, is referred to only once where he has been called a sagacious person.⁷⁵ *Anas* i.e., the bullock cart was made by the *rathakār*. *Karamāra* ⁷⁶ were smiths who worked in wood and metal. It is possible that they made *Ukhala* and *Musala* and the wooden plough and ploughshares. *Karamārāḥ* might also have worked in the precious metal and beads. *Vapta* ⁷⁷ was the barber who shaved the beard with razor called *kśura*.⁷⁸ The *Karamārāḥ* were the builders of boats also. The women made the cushion by splitting reeds with stone.⁷⁹ *Mṛgayu* ⁸⁰ was the hunter, *takṣan* ⁸¹ was the carpenter, *paktr* ⁸² was the cook and the

⁷³ AV.VI.130.1.

⁷⁴ AV.III.5.6.

⁷⁵ Ye dhī vāno rathakārāḥ.

⁷⁶ AV.III.5.6.

⁷⁷ AV.VIII.2.17.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ AV.VI.138.5.

⁸⁰ AV.X.1.26.

⁸¹ AV.X.6.3.

⁸² AV.X.9.7.

*bhiṣaj*⁸³ were physicians. From the references it is not clear at all whether these craftsmen or occupations formed separate classes in the society. This is quite clear that these were not included in the emerging *varṇa* structure. It seems that these craftsmen were the part of the household and worked according to their knowledge. So in a family, there could be a carpenter, a physician, a *rathakāra* etc. In this context the *Ṛgvedic* ⁸⁴ reference becomes significant where it is said that one member of the family was *kāru*, his father was a *bhiṣaj*, mother was a grinder. It also seems that the situation did not change much although the possibility of some rigidity cannot be denied outright. These craftsmen may have started bartering their products in the last phase. They may also have worked for the chiefs of the tribe and this is alluded to in a verse.⁸⁵ This hymn is addressed by a newly elected chief to an amulet which is to strengthen and confirm his authority.

The mechanism of distribution is dependent on the mechanism of collection of wealth. *Rājā*, *Rājānya*, *Kṣatriya*,

⁸³ AV.V.29.1.

⁸⁴ RV.IX.112.3.

⁸⁵ AV.III.5.6, Sagacious chariot-makers, clever and skilfull artisans - make all round about.

brāhmaṇa, *viśpati* and *grihapati* etc. Were the holders of the wealth in the society. *Rājā*, *Rājānya*, *Kṣatriya* and *viśpati* were the chiefs who accumulated the wealth through their own productions as well as by the tithes called *bali*, *śulka*, *Añśa* and *bhāga*. None of these were taxes in the strict sense of the term. They were voluntary, unstipulated but periodical. In order to make these tithes obligatory, two of them i.e. *Bhāga* and *Añśa* were deified.⁸⁶ The meaning of the term *Añśa* is the distributor. The deity is mentioned only once in the *Atharvaveda* and only twice in the *Ṛgvedic* hymns. *Añśa* and *bhāga* were *Adityas*, Gods of good fortune. *Dāna* is another term which connotes payment and repayment. A verse⁸⁷ says, "For no one may empair the gifts laid up in thee, bring me whatever thing I ask." At one one place *Agni* has been asked to incite people to gift.⁸⁸ At another place *Āryman* has been urged to send gifts.⁸⁹ *Indra* is asked not to withhold the *dāna* of power and wealth in kine⁹⁰ and whatever *Indra* gives in *dāna* is good.⁹¹ The

86 AV.XI.6.2.

87 AV.XX.118.2.

88 AV.III.20.5.

89 AV.III.20.7.

90 AV.XX.78.2.

91 AV.XX.58.2.

booty captured in the wars was redistributed amongst the tribesmen by the chief of the tribe.⁹² *Bhaj* means to divide, to distribute and to share. The elected kings who saw arriving much tribute,⁹³ shared those things with his people.⁹⁴ The king had portion⁹⁵ in village, in horses, in kind. At the nuptial ceremony⁹⁶ the things were to be given to the *brāhmaṇas*. The term *Svadhā* literally means one's own portion, the sacrificial portion due to each god, and lastly food in general. It means that the food was shared by the whole tribe at sacrificial occasions. Institutionalized gift-giving i.e., *Dāna* and *Dakṣiṇa* was an important technique of distributing and redistributing wealth. Kane⁹⁷ defines *Dāna* in the following way, " *Dāna*, i.e., the transfer of property according to śāstric rites so as to reach a receiver who is a fit recipient with the idea that the donor will derive from this act some 'metaphysical' or unseen spiritual result. But from the *Atharvavedic*

⁹² AV.VI.66.3;VII.95.2 : *Atha aiṣāṃ Indra Vedānsi śatsah vi bhajāmahe* - Then will we, o Indra, share among us their possessions hundred fold.

⁹³ AV.III.4.3.

⁹⁴ AV.III.4.2.

⁹⁵ AV.IV.22.2.

⁹⁶ AV.XIV.1.25.

⁹⁷ P.V.Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstras*, ii, pp.842.

references cited above, it is clear that 'śāstric rites' were later developments. Here it must be remembered that among many peoples on a certain cultural level gifts often have a social, religious and economic function which is widely different from our attitude in respect to donation or to the exchange of presents. Hence we should not be deceived by the usual translations of our dictionaries : "donation, gift, liberality", because the modern meanings attached to these words do not coincide with the sense of *dāna* in *vedic* India. *Vedic* Indians expected their great god Indra to be, after his conquests and victories, a liberal bestower of goods and benefits.⁹⁸ These *dānas* were no doubt not solely given in order to pay for services, but also to maintain a profitable alliance. From a verse⁹⁹ it appears that the objects given to the poet who has rendered him a service are not lost to the donor, but on the contrary are a source of benefit and prosperity. The donors are compared to, or even equated with gods, who are also said to stimulate their royal or well-to-do worshippers into a display of generosity.¹⁰⁰ Once it is

⁹⁸ Jan Gonda, "Gifts and Giving in the R̥gveda", *VIJ*, II, 1964, Hoshiyarpur, pp.9 ff.

⁹⁹ AV.IX.5.9.

¹⁰⁰ AV.III.20.5; II.17&18; XIX.42.4.

said¹⁰¹ that "it is important to give and reciprocate Kane's¹⁰² words," the gift of land has been eulogized as the most meritorious of all gifts from ancient times may lead to the misunderstanding that it is also mentioned in the early Vedas. This is however not the case. Reference to land as grant or gift is made in the AiB,¹⁰³ where it is stated that a person when anointed should make gifts of gold, a field and quadrupeds to the *brāhmaṇas*, and in ŚB¹⁰⁴ where it is stated, "to whomsoever the ruler (*Kṣatriya*), with approval of the *viś* grants a settlement, that settlement is properly given. But such references are not found in the RV or AV.

The word *dakṣiṇā* means primarily a good cow, the original sacrificial honorarium given to the officiating priests by the institutor of the sacrifice.¹⁰⁵ *Dakṣiṇā* or sacrificial gift according to

¹⁰¹ AV.111.20.8.

¹⁰² Kane, *op.cit.*, p.858.

¹⁰³ AiB., 8.20.

¹⁰⁴ ŚB., 7.1.1.4.

¹⁰⁵ Griffith, *op.cit.*, vol.i, pp.117.

Heesterman¹⁰⁶ can not, at least in its original sense, be considered a salary or remuneration, rather, it formed a part of the bigger share of gift exchange. Like the gift in general, the *dakṣiṇā* establishes, or is expressive of, a bond between the giver and the recipient and it produce rich returns for the giver.¹⁰⁷ An illustration of the *dakṣiṇā* as sealing a bond can be found in the *Atharvaveda*.¹⁰⁸ In a *brahmodaya* - like contest between *varuṇa* and the *Atharvan* which has been occasioned by *varuṇa*'s reclaiming a *dakṣiṇā* cow given to the *Atharvan*, the *Atharvana* shows his superiority and exhorts his opponent to be liberal; they then conclude a new pact which is sealed by a new gift from *Varuṇa*.¹⁰⁹ There is a difference between a *dāna* and the *dakṣiṇā*. Generally speaking, the gift occasions a return gift while the returns of a *dakṣiṇā* are result of a purely impersonal, mechanical process.¹¹⁰ This redistribution was limited to the two social identities, the *kṣatriya* or

¹⁰⁶ J.C.Heesterman, "Reflections on the Significance of *Dakṣiṇā*", *IJ*, vol.iii, 1959, pp.241-258; *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, 'S Gravenhague, 1957, pp.164.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ AV.V.11.

¹⁰⁹ Heesterman, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

rājānya and the *brāhmaṇas*." Thus tribal wealth acquired through the labour of the *viś*, whether in war or in peace, was channelled via the king to the priests either through *dāna* or through *dakṣiṇā* at the *yajna*.¹¹¹

At the time of scarcity or need people lent or borrowed goods. And in this way *ṛṇa* functioned as mechanism of distribution in which objects moved from one person to another i.e., from those who had excess of a particular object to those who needed. Three hymns of the *Atharvaveda*¹¹² mention *ṛṇa*. *Ṛṇa* need not mean only borrowings but any kind of obligation which were to be repaid, material or spiritual. People were in debt because of gambling.¹¹³ A verse¹¹⁴ says, "As a sixteenth, as an eighth, as a whole debt bring together, so do we bring together all evil-dreaming for him who hates us." Here it is apparent that debt was repaid in instalments and that it was not the interest paid on the debt as V.W. Karambelkar¹¹⁵ thinks.

¹¹¹ Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History : Some Interpretations*, Delhi, 1978, pp.111.

¹¹² AV.VI.117;118;119.

¹¹³ AV.VI.118.1;2.

¹¹⁴ AV.VI.46.3.

¹¹⁵ V.W.Karambelkar, *History in the Atharvaveda*, Nagpur, 1974, pp.219.

Dyūta i.e., gambling was also of redistributory nature and it might have resulted in accumulation of wealth in the winner's hands.¹¹⁶ Dyūta was an accepted practice in the vedic period and hence a legal form of accumulation and distribution. The dice used in the Atharvaveda is called rāṣṭrabhr̥ta¹¹⁷ i.e., bearer of the kingdom.

¹¹⁶ AV.VII.50.1;109.3.

¹¹⁷ AV.VII.109.6.

CHAPTER II
SOCIAL GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS

Kin-Structure and Family Organization

Many sociologists have traced the origin and development of different social institutions from the vedic age in sociological frames.¹ Although they have been able to project that kinship usages and the institutions of family among the vedic people have undergone significant changes in the course of time, they failed to take into account the role of socio-economic factors in bringing about the change in these institutions.²

It is clear from the comparative study of *Rgvedic* references and *Atharvavedic* references that in the *Atharvaveda*, differentiation was made between different generations.³ Thus while in the *Rgveda* we do not have

¹ G.S.Ghurye, *Family and Kin in Indo-European Culture*, Bombay, 1962 (2nd. ed.). S.V.Karandikar, *Hindu Exogamy*, Bombay, 1929. Iravati Karve, "Kinship terminology and kinship usages in Rgveda and Atharvaveda", *ABORI*, XX(1938-39), pp.69-96; 109-144; 213-234. K.M.Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, Bombay, 1947.

² Suvira Jaiswal, "Studies in Early Indian Social History : Trends and Possibilities." in R.S. Sharma(ed.), *Survey of Research in Economic and Social History of India*, Delhi, 1986, pp.83.

³ Iravati Karve, *op.cit.*, pp.218.

references to the living male ego beyond father, in the *Atharvaveda* we have clear reference to the living male ego beyond grandfather. A passage⁴ in the *AV* says, "self, father, son, grandson, grandfather, wife, generatrix, mother, those who are dear I call upon ". Here are enumerated five male generations living together, i.e., *Asmākaṁ, Pitaraṁ, Putraṁ, Pautraṁ* and *Pitāmahaṁ*. *Pitrḥ* is a term which has got different meanings according to the context and according to their different forms. V.24.16-17- says *Pitaraḥ pare te ma avantu, tatā avare te ma avantu*, "The upper fathers - let them favour us. The lower fathers- let them favour us." The word *pitrḥ* and *tatā* are used here to denote the departed ancestors. The word *pitrḥ* was used not only for all the males of the father's generation but also for those belonging to generation beyond father.⁵ In a similar way initially the word for son and grandson was the same i.e., *Putra*. But in the *Atharvaveda* we have separate words coined for both grandson and grandfather, i.e., *Pautra* and *Pitāmaha*. The term *Prapitāmaha* is used once in the *AV* to denote ancestors in general. So in *R̥gveda* there is only one term to denote a male in the ascending order i.e., *pitrḥ*. In the *Atharvaveda* we have four terms i.e., *pitrḥ*,

⁴ AV. IX.5.30.

⁵ Iravati Karve, *op.cit.*, pp.69-96.

and *tatāḥ*: *pitāmaha* and *tatāmaha*, *prapitāmaha* and *pratātāmaha*.⁶ The word *Mātṛ* is used for mother and seems to have been used in a classificatory sense. In the *AV* the word *matṛ* has not been further developed like the word *pitṛ*. There are many words used for offspring in general. The root $\sqrt{Jā}$ is invariably related to birth.⁷ So compound words of the $\sqrt{Jā}$ also, are related to birth. Hence *Upajāḥ*⁸ means descendants in general and *prajāḥ* means progeny. *Upajāḥ* has been used only once⁹ in the *AV* whereas *AV* is replete with the use of the term *prajāḥ* and in most of the cases it means progeny. "Let me not having accepted, be parted with breath; , not with self nor with *prajāḥ*."¹⁰ "Grant us protection, what is prosperous for our progeny."¹¹ "Make him abundant with *prajāḥ*."¹² "Having injured the progeny of the *Brāhmaṇas*".¹³ Even the offsprings of cattle are

⁶ AV. XVIII.4.75;76;77.

⁷ AV. V.11.10.

⁸ AV. XI.1.19.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ AV. III.29.8.

¹¹ AV. V.3.7.

¹² AV. VI.5.1.

¹³ AV. V.18.12.

called *prajā*. "Be that numerous by progeny."¹⁴ "Sharing together with *prajā*, assign wealth to the sacrificer"¹⁵ Certainly *brāhmaṇas* did not use non-kin labour and sacrificers would not have made prayers for wealth for non-kin. A passage says, "I make thee barren without *prajā*."¹⁶ Dr. R.N. Nandi¹⁷ has taken the word *prajā* to mean non-kin which is certainly not correct in most of the cases in the *Atharvaveda*. Although this is possible in some cases that this meaning might have been applied by extension to the word. It is also possible because the subjugated groups had become part and parcel of the production processes and the term *prajā* might have been extended to include those groups also. Other terms denoting progeny or offspring was *toka*,¹⁸ *tana*,¹⁹ *Apatya* ²⁰ etc. All these words mean

14 AV. VI.141.2.

15 AV. VII.36.3.

16 *ibid.*

17 R.N. Nandi, "Anthropology and the Study of the Rgveda", Review Article (Romila Thapar's *From Lineage to State : Social Formation in the Mid-First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley*, Delhi, 1984), *IHR*, vol.13(1-2), 1986-87, pp.153-165.

18 A V . 1 . 2 8 . 3 ; I V . 1 7 . 3 ;
XX.71.2;V.19.2;XX.141.1;1.13.2;1.26.4. etc.

19 AV.VIII.4.11.

20 AV.XII.4.1.

offspring in general whereas terms like *Vīr*,²¹ *Putra*²² or *Sūnu*²³ mean "a son". There are, however, a few places in which the meaning seems to be child and not male child²⁴. *Naptr*,²⁵ is a term in the *AV* where it clearly denotes grand child. The feminine for *Naptrī*²⁶ can be said to mean "female descendants" in general. There are other words used occasionally to denote "a child". These are *Vatsa*, *Arbh*, *Arbhag* and *Kakutsal* and according to Karve²⁷ these words emphasize the age of the child. The word *Kanīna*,²⁸ the child of a *Kanā*, an unmarried girl, occurs in the *AV*.

The words for female descendants are very few as compared to the numerous words for a male child. *Kanyā*²⁹

21 AV.III.5.8.

22 AV.I.25.3;III.23.2;30.2 etc.

23 AV.VI.1.2;VII.1.2.

24 AV.III.23.3.

25 AV.XIV.1.22.

26 AV.1.28.4.

27 Iravati Karve, *op.cit.*, pp.109-144, AV.VII.56.3; XI.2.29; XVIII.4.66.

28 AV.V.5.8.

29 AV.1.14.2;X.4.24;X.7.18;XIV.2.22.etc.

and *Kanya* 30 all mean a young maiden. While *Kanā* or *Kanyā* is a general word for a maid, only *Duhitr* 31 is a word which seems to be a kinship term and means daughter. After a detailed study Iravati Karve 32 came to this conclusion, "Though both the books revealed a common pattern, there is a greater differentiation in terminology and a more modern ethical orientation towards sex relations in the *Atharvaveda*." Following this Prof. Suvira Jaiswal 33 says, "The conclusion is inescapable that the earlier system reflects communal functioning, whereas the latter indicates the emergence of the joint family in which three or four generations related to the male ego stayed together." This is proved by the references from the *Atharvaveda*.

A term which is really new to the Vedic people is *bhrātr̥vya* and it is rather difficult to ascertain the meaning of the term. The term *bhrātr̥vya* is not attested in

30 AV.V.53;XIV.2.52. etc.

31 AV.X.1.25;IX.10.12. etc.

32 Iravati Karve, *op.cit.*, pp.213-234.

33 Suvira Jaiswal, "Studies in Early Social History : Trends and Possibilities" in R.S. Sharma (ed.), *Survey of Research in Economic and Social History of India*, Delhi, 1986, pp.83.

the *R̥gveda*, but we do come across a negative form *bhr̥ātr̥vya* ³⁴ and it is repeated in the *Atharvaveda*³⁵ which indicates that this mantra was added later to the *R̥gveda* as it does not occur in the family book. K.M. Kapadia³⁶ and A.C. Banerjee,³⁷ think that *bhr̥ātr̥vya* denotes some kinship term. In the *Atharvaveda* the term *bhr̥ātr̥vya* refers to both an enemy and to some kinship relation. But the hostile meaning might have been added to it because of the possibility of the hostility among the cousins. In a verse³⁸ *bhr̥ātr̥vya* is mentioned with brother and sister and hence seems to be denoting cousins. *Bhr̥ātr̥vyas* are termed as *sabandhavaḥ*.³⁹ Whitney and Bloomfield⁴⁰ render the term as enemies whereas the *Vedic Index*⁴¹ takes it to mean cousins due to its association with *sabandhavaḥ*. According

³⁴ RV.VIII.21.13.

³⁵ AV.XX.114.1.

³⁶ K.M.Kapadia, *Hindu Kinship*, Bombay, 1947. pp.124 fn.103.

³⁷ A.C.Banerjee, *Studies in the Br̥āhmaṇas*, Delhi, 1963, pp.52-53.

³⁸ AV.V.22.12.

³⁹ AV.X.39.

⁴⁰ Maurice bloomfield, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol.42, pp.82.

⁴¹ Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, vol.II, pp.59, 426.

to Hukum Chand Patyal⁴² sabandhavah here may refer to rival kins who are adversaries. Bhrātr̥vya⁴³ definitely denotes a cousin who is arāṭiyu (niggardly) and is the subject of hatred (Arāṭiyobhrātr̥vyasya). He is a cousin who is rich and again subject of hatred.⁴⁴ Here the man is offering a goat with five rice dishes for their fortune to vanish.⁴⁵ A verse⁴⁶ uses the term *Apriyam' Bhrātr̥vyam* i.e., hostile cousin. In another verse,⁴⁷ prayer is made to cut off the *bhrātr̥vya* and poison is poured out after the unfriendly foe i.e., *bhrātr̥vya*.⁴⁸ The *Yajamāna* i.e., the sacrificer, kills the *bhrātr̥vya* with the help of Indra's *vajra*.⁴⁹ Prayers⁵⁰ are made for the destruction of the *bhrātr̥vya* (*bhrātr̥vyacātanam*). In the same hymn prayers are made for the destruction and expulsion of *sapatna*, i.e.,

⁴² Hukum Chand Patyal, "Bhrātr̥vya As a Term of kinship", AJOS, vol.II, no., 1-2, 1985, pp.95-100.

⁴³ AV.X.6.1.

⁴⁴ AV.X.5.31.

⁴⁵ *Bhrātr̥vyasya śṛyam dahati.*

⁴⁶ AV.XV.1.8.

⁴⁷ AV.VIII.12.2.

⁴⁸ AV.VIII.15.4.

⁴⁹ AV.X.9.1; *bhrātr̥vyaghni.*

⁵⁰ AV.XI.18.1.

rivals, *aris*, *piśāc* and *sadānvā*. Because of the nature of the *bhrāṭṛvya* he has been grouped with all these demons and foes. Hocart⁵¹ is of the opinion that the *bhrāṭṛvya* is a cross-cousin term meaning mother's brother's son. But from the Atharvavedic references quoted above we don't find such an exclusive meaning.

The fact, that *bhrāṭṛvya* has been included in the kinship structure of the Atharvavedic people, shows that the family had become large and the *bhrāṭṛvya* becoming synonymous with rivalry also shows that there was conflict in the joint families. These conflicts might have been over the question of distribution of wealth⁵² or over the question of becoming the *gṛhapati* ⁵³ or may be even over the possession of women folk of the tribe.

Another term, somehow related to the kinship, is *sarjāta*. according to the writers of Vedic Index⁵⁴ this word "must clearly mean a 'relative' and then more widely a

⁵¹ A.M. Hocart, "The cousin in vedic Ritual". *IA*, 54, 1925 pp.16-18.

⁵² AV.X.5.31.

⁵³ AV.XIX.31.13.

⁵⁴ Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*. London, 1912, vol.II, pp.418.

man of the same position or rank, but the senses cannot be distinguished, so much do they merge into each other." It seems that in the family, for a person, other member were *sajāta* (excluding the women coming from other families). The term *sajāta* is derived from the √Ja⁵⁵ which means born, produced etc. So *sajāta* is certainly related to the members of a particular family i.e., *kula* and all those who were born in a particular family were *sajāta* for each other including *bhrātr̥vya*. Like *bhrātr̥vya*, the *sajātas* were also sources of dispute in the family.⁵⁶ The *rājā* was selected by the *viś* and finally was established as *rājā* by his *sajātas*.⁵⁷ But the *sajātas* of *rājā* were strong contenders for the post.⁵⁸ But after being elected all the *sajāta* of the *rājā* were to see in him their own well-being.⁵⁹ At the time of a man's death his *sajātas* were to be present while

⁵⁵ M.M. Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, pp. 416.

⁵⁶ AV.I.19.3 - *Sajāta* or outsider whoso assails us....; III.3.6 - whatever *sajāta*, disputes thy call...; XIII.1.31 - stagger the truculent *sajāta*...

⁵⁷ AV.III.4.3 - unto thee thy *sajātas* came calling thee ...

⁵⁸ AV.III.3.4 - settle together about this man, ye his *sajātāh* ...

⁵⁹ AV.VI.73.2 - in me, o *sajātāh*, be your satisfaction.

last rites were to be offered.⁶⁰ It is clear that *sajātāh* brought tribute for the chiefs.⁶¹ But it is not clear from the reference whether they brought *bali* after collecting it from the *viś* or they themselves paid to the chief. Most probably, they collected *bali* from the *viś* and then brought that to the *rājā*. It is also clear from the references that there was some sort of conflict amongst the *sajātāh* over the question of the supremacy.⁶²

One term which has got some sense of generalized kinship connotations is *bandhu*. As for the meaning of this term Monier Williams following the Petrograd Dictionary writes that it means 1. connection, relation, association, respect, reverence; 2. relative kindred cognate kinsmen. J.Gonda is of the view that *bandhu* as used in the vedic literature is, so to say, analogous to *bandhu* - 'connection

⁶⁰ AV.XVIII.4.37 - come, ye his *sajātāh*, look down at it, this mortal goeth to immortality.

⁶¹ AV.XI.1.6 - make thy *sajātāh* tribute - bringers to thee.

⁶² AV.I.9.3 - set in supremacy over his fellows;
 III.8.2 - that I may be midmost man of my *sajātāh*;
 VI.5.2 - may he be controller of his *sajātāh*;
 XIX.46.7.

in blood rather than a semantic development from it.⁶³ The word *bandhu* also occurs in a 'non-literal sense' in connection with unseen powers. This term occurs also to indicate relations between powers, phenomena, divine or human beings. In a passage⁶⁴ father Atharvan is called a *bandhu* of the gods. That, knowledge of a *bandhu*, also in case it is the 'relation' of an evil-being⁶⁵ enables an officiant to wield power over it appears from a verse.⁶⁶ A *mantra*⁶⁷ dealing with the barren sacrificial cow which is extolled as the primeval being and stating that she has been brought into the world by *varuṇa*, say, that is her *bandhu*, - her origin with which she remains mysteriously connected. The literal meaning of the term *bandhu* as blood relatives is also clear from many verses. It is said, "*śudrakṛta, rājakṛta, strīkṛta, brahmabhikṛta*, like a wife (*Jāyā*) expelled by her husband (*Patyā*), let her go to her maker (*kartār*), as *bandhu*."⁶⁸ A passage says, "He of us as the

⁶³ J. Gonda, "Bandhu in the Brāhmaṇas", *ALB*, 29(1965) pp. 1-29. or *Selected studies*, vol.2, Leiden, 1975, pp.400-428.

⁶⁴ AV.V.11.11.

⁶⁵ AV.V.22.8.

⁶⁶ AV.V.13.7.

⁶⁷ AV.X.10.23.

⁶⁸ AV.X.1.3.

father, the generator, and he the *bandhus* knoweth the abodes, the being all..." etc.⁶⁹ But it is clear from the references that the term *bandhu* unlike the words *bhrātr̥vya* and *sajāta* has never been used in a negative sense.

Now, after kin-structure let us come to the family organization and other related aspects like status of women and their role in the changing structure, marriage institutions, taboos etc., as well as how all these institutions reflected the nature of the society as a whole. We know that family was extended in nature and four generations lived together. The head of the family was called *gr̥hapati* and some times *kulapā*.⁷⁰ The family was generally called *kula* and at times *gr̥ha* also. The mistress of the family is called *gr̥hapatni*. The status and function of *gr̥hapati* and *gr̥hapatni* are very confusing. Nagendranath Ghosh⁷¹ considers *gr̥hapati* to be a synonym for *sthapati*. But this does not seem to be valid in the light of the references from the *Atharvaveda*. *Gr̥hapati* has been used five times and *gr̥hapatni* three times. All five references to

⁶⁹ AV.XI.1.3.

⁷⁰ AV.VII.75.2.

⁷¹ Nagendranath Ghosh, *Indo-Aryan Literature and Culture (Origins)*, Vārāṇasi, 1965, pp.234.

gr̥hapati are in singular, whereas *gr̥hapatni* has been used once in plural. Though this is probable that only those were to become a *sthapati* who were the master of a household, but in any case they were not synonymous. Even if the joint family was the norm of the time each and every household cannot be a three or four generation unit and hence *gr̥hapati* was not used in its literal sense of 'household head' for the head of any and every household. It seems that the word was used for the head of the household having a large number of married members, a substantial amount of land holding allotted or other wealth and considerable power and prestige.⁷² A *mantra* says, "She(viraj) ascended, she descended in the householder's fire; house-scrificing *gr̥hapati* becometh he who knoweth thus." Apart from this, at two places⁷³ Agni has been praised as *gr̥hapati*. All these references show the religious function and nature of *gr̥hapati*. At another place⁷⁴ an amulet called *udumbarā* is asked to make the house-sacrificer a *gr̥hapati*. From this particular *mantra* it is clear that the *gr̥hapati* was wealthy

⁷² A.M. Shah, "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Ancient India", Review Article (Romila Thapar's *From Lineage to state ; Social Formations in the Mid-First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley*, Delhi, 1984.), CIS, (n.s.)20, 1(1986), pp.121.

⁷³ AV.XIX.55.3;4.

⁷⁴ AV.XIX.31.13.

and possessed of warrior sons⁷⁵ and hence had greater power in the society. It is also clear from the reference that only after marriage one could become a *gṛhapati*. In the marriage hymn the bridegroom says to the bride: "Thou art my spouse by ordinance, I thy *gṛhapati*"⁷⁶ The place of *gṛhapatni* was also very important in the family. Dr. Rajchhatra Mishra⁷⁷ citing III.24.6 says that *gṛhapatni* was very important because after her a goddess was named and was worshipped with a part of the new grain.

The chief functions of a *gṛhapati* was to organize production processes, to represent the family in the different councils and to establish marriage alliances for the young males and females of the family. The marriage was, in most cases, decided by the head of the families. Although the young maidens were allowed to attend the tribal fairs like *samana*,⁷⁸ where there might have been possibilities that the maidens found their suitable husbands, the final say must have been reserved for the elderly male members of

⁷⁵ *Asmāsu dhehi rayim ca nah sarvavīram.*

⁷⁶ AV.XIV.1.51.

⁷⁷ Dr. Rajchhatra Mishra, *Atharvveda Men Sanskritik Tattva*, Allahabad, 1968, pp.59.

⁷⁸ AV.VI.92.2; II.36.1.

the family. The indirect references show that the marriageable age was still quite high. We have references to unmarried girls who grow old in the house of their parents and who adorn themselves in desire of marriage, as well as to the "paraphernalia of spells and potions used in the Atharvavedic traditions to compel the love of a man or woman."⁷⁹

The dialogue of Yama and Yami in the *Rgveda* seems clearly to point to a prohibition of the marriage of brother and sister and its repetition in the *Atharvaveda* ⁸⁰ clearly indicates that this taboo was well established when the Atharvavedic hymns were being composed. The *Rgvedic* reference comes from the *Xth mandala* which is of somewhat later date. Exogamous institutions like gotra are not in existence. The term occurs four times⁸¹ in the *Atharvaveda* and in all these references it has no connection with lineage or family. At the most it could mean a stable in general and plundering or raiding the stables owned by the enemy tribes was one of the major aspects of the warfare. It

⁷⁹ AV. II.36.1; XIV.2.59; III.2.5; VI.8.9 etc. Macdonnell and Keith, *Vedic Index*, vol. ii, pp.474.

⁸⁰ AV. XVIII.1.14 - They call it a sin when one comes near a sister.

⁸¹ AV. V.2.8; XX.107.11.; XX.77.8; XIX.13.7

was only in the later periods that *gotra* came to mean a lineage which is an exogamous institution i.e., descendants of a common patriarchal ancestor. Even endogamous institutions are not clearly visible because the *Āryans* freely married *dāsīs* or the other non-Aryan women. Though it is doubtful if those *dāsī* women ever had the status of legally wedded wife. I don't think there was any restriction on marriage outside the *varṇa*. Hypergamy was allowed even by the *Dharmasūtras*.

The remarriage of a widow was permitted and we have references to it in the *Atharvaveda*. A passage⁸² says, "Go up, o woman, to the world of the living: thou liest by this one who is deceased : come ! to him who grasps thy hand, thy second spouse (*didhiṣu*), thou hast now entered into the relation of wife to husband". The next verse declares, "I looked and saw the youthful dame escorted, the living to the dead: I saw them, bear her. When she with blinding darkness was enveloped, then did I turn her back and lead her homeward." Shakuntala Rao Shastri⁸³ traces the evidence of sati in these passages and says, "In the above passages

⁸² AV.XVIII.3.2.

⁸³ Shakuntala Rao Shastri, *Women in Vedic Age*, Bombay, 1952, pp.54.

it is clear that burning of wives along with their dead husbands was a practice of the Atharvavedic cult." But practice she is pointing to, is a symbolic one in which widowed woman is made to lie on the pyre of her dead husband before being lit and then she is taken back to home. only widow remarriage but also the second marriage of woman was possible. Two verses are worth quoting, "who having gained a former husband, then gains another later one";⁸⁴ and "Her later husband comes to have the world with his remarried spouse."⁸⁵

Polyandry is a problem which has been a matter of debate amongst the scholars. The authors of the vedic index declare that Polyandry is not vedic.⁸⁶ Contrary to this Sarvadaman Singh⁸⁷ postulates that polyandry is known to the vedic people. Macdonell and Keith say that it is difficult to ascertain the correct explanation of the verses where husbands are mentioned in relation to a sin

⁸⁴ AV. IX. 5. 27.

⁸⁵ AV. IX. 5. 28.

⁸⁶ Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, vol. I, pp. 479.

⁸⁷ Sarvadaman Singh, *Polyandry in Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1978.

wife. It is true that in most of the passages the plural of husband or father-in-law are generic.

Sarvadman Singh confuses traces of promiscuity with polyandry. He writes, "Patent proof of polyandry is provided by other passages in the *Atharvaveda*. AV V. 17 takes up the theme of a brahman's wife who was returned to her husband by king somâ. The 8th verse of this hymn makes a preposterous claim for the *brāhmaṇa*: "and if, there are ten former husbands, a *brāhmaṇa* is indeed her husband," what, however, these verses clearly show is that a woman may have as many as many as ten husbands at a time." Here it is important to note that King soma didn't marry the *brāhmaṇa*'s wife and secondly in the case of a woman having ten husbands, the verse doesn't say if she had all at a time. May be this verse was composed by the *brāhmaṇas* just to emphasize their greater right of access sexually or otherwise to the women folk of the society. King Soma's case certainly indicates the growing unrest between the priestly class and the ruling class.

Related to kin structure and family organization is the problem of the status of woman. The Atharvavedic society was

certainly made up of joint patriarchal families.⁸⁸ After marriage the son was to stay along with his wife in his father's house. The girl, after marriage, goes from her *pitriloka* to her *patiloka*.⁸⁹ Women's exclusion from the assemblies seems to be complete in the *Atharvaveda* where a maiden says,⁹⁰ "Thou shalt speak in the *sabhā* and at present I am speaking". Consequently women folk were relegated to the boundaries of the family where kitchen work and progeny production became their main function.⁹¹ In the Atharvavedic society only male ancestors were cared for and given oblation. The name of the *vamśa* was known by the name of the male ancestors.⁹² Daughter-in-law was not to see her father-in-law meaning, thereby that the daughter-in-law's mobility was now severely restricted.⁹³ This tradition is still followed in the Hindu family. It seems that now the reason behind the desire for sons shifted from

⁸⁸ Prof. Suvira Jaiswal, "Women in Early India : Problems and Perspectives", *PIHC*, 1981, pp.54-60.

⁸⁹ AV.XIV.2.52.

⁹⁰ AV.VII.39.4.

⁹¹ AV.II.36.3.;VI.81.3.

⁹² *Vaiśāleya* - VIII.10.29; *Vāitahavya* - VI.137.1; V.18.10; *Āirāvata* - VIII.10.29; *Nārṣad* - IV.19.2; *Āṅgiras* - XVIII.4.8.

⁹³ AV.VIII.6.24.

its need for war to its need in the agricultural processes when large numbers of male progeny were to provide kin labour.

Social Groupings

Beyond family organization we have references to two institutions which have been a matter of intense debate among the scholars. These two institutions are *Jana* and *Viś*. " *Jana*, besides meaning 'man' as an individual also has a collective sense, denoting a 'people or tribe' in the *Rgveda* and later.⁹⁴ Heesterman believes it to be some kind of kinship, something similar to *Sapatna* and *bhrātr, vya*.⁹⁵ This is not at all clear in the *Atharvaveda*. Dr. R.N. Nandi⁹⁶ says, "though the *Jana*, *Viś*, *grāma* etc. were kin-based units, whether these constituted a hierarchy of larger and smaller groups is doubtful." But the use of the term *Jana-rājan*,⁹⁷ *Viśpati*,⁹⁸ and

⁹⁴ Macdonell and Keith, *op.cit.*, pp.269.

⁹⁵ J.C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration : The Rājsūya Described According to Yajus Texts and Annotated*, 'S-Gravenhage, 1957, pp.118, fn.24.

⁹⁶ R.N. Nandi, "Anthropology and the Study of the *Rgveda*", *IHR*, vol.13(1-2), 1986-87, pp.153-165.

⁹⁷ AV. XX.21.9.

⁹⁸ AV. IV.5.6; IV.22.3; IX.14.1; XX.101.2; XX.6.3.

Grāmaṇī⁷⁷ certainly gives us a sense of hierarchy of larger and smaller groups. Amongst these three, except for grāma no other term seems to be denoting an area covered by population. They simply denoted a sort of social grouping. There are references to another term rāṣṭra which conveys the meaning of territory, but jana certainly means population as a whole.¹⁰⁰ It was only in the later period when pada was added to jana that it came to mean both territory and population.¹⁰¹ There are several hymns in which it clearly denotes a large social group.¹⁰² It appears to me that Jana may not have been a kin-based unit but meant simply 'population'. It may have included even the brāhmaṇas who may have formed a separate class and, all

⁷⁷ AV.XIX.31.12; III.5.7.etc.

¹⁰⁰ R.S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1991 (3rd. ed.), pp.34-35.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² AV.V.4.8; V.8.7; V.22.12 - go to yon foreign jana; XII.1.4.45. - bearing in many places jana of different speech, of diverse customs; III.5.6 - make the whole jana round about; XII.1.57 - As a horse the dust, she has shaken apart those jana who dwell up on the earth since she was born; IV.22.5 - who shall make thee the sole chief of jana; VI.98..2 - Thou (Indra) art the overcomer of jana : do thou rule over these viśaś of the gods; XVIII.1.40 - praise thou the famed sitter on the hollow of jana, the terrible king, formidable assailants.

those subjugated indigenous peoples whereas *viś* was certainly a kin-based unit which elected *rājā* from amongst themselves¹⁰³ and looked backward for their descent to Manu.¹⁰⁴ In a *Jana* there could have been many *Viśas*. This is alluded to in a hymn¹⁰⁵ when *Agni* is offered prayer. It says, "I reverence first the forethoughtful *Agni*, him of the five-peoples, whom men kindle in many places: we pray to him who hath entered into clans after clans." Two clans (*Viś*) fought for superiority is also alluded to.¹⁰⁶ The chief of the *viś* was *Viśpati*¹⁰⁷ and his wife *viśpatni*.¹⁰⁸ In most of the references *viśpati* seems to be a synonym for *rājā*. All these clans in a particular area are often called *rāṣṭra*.¹⁰⁹ In a passage, belongings of a

¹⁰³ AV. III.4.1;2.

¹⁰⁴ AV. IV.32.2.

¹⁰⁵ AV. IV.23.1.

¹⁰⁶ AV. IV.31.4.

¹⁰⁷ AV. IV.5.6; III.4.1; IV.22.3; IX.14.1.

¹⁰⁸ AV. VII.48.2; VII.48.3.

¹⁰⁹ AV. V.19.8. - it leaks verily into thy kingdom as water into a split boat, where they injure a *brāhmaṇa*, that kingdom misfortune-smites; VI.87.1 - let the *viś* want thee, let not the kingdom fall away from thee; X.10.8 - the waters thou yieldest first, the cultivable fields after, o cow: thou yieldest *rāṣṭra* third, food, milk, o cow; XIX.30.3 - thou defendest *rāṣṭra*.

kṣatriya have been discussed. Their belongings are - the glory, the heroism, energy, vigour, power, speech, duty, devotion, princely sway (*kṣatram*), kingship (*rāṣṭra*), and people (*viś*), brilliance and honour, splendour and wealth (*drava*), long life and goodly form, name and fame, inbreathing and expiration, sight and hearing, milk and flavour, food and nourishment, right and truth, action and fulfillment, children and cattle.¹¹⁰ Here also it seems that the *Kṣatriya* exercised his authority (*kṣatra*) over the *rāṣṭra* where the *viś* lived.

Grāma seems to be a demarcated area¹¹¹, inhabited by people owning horses and cattle¹¹². When two tribes fought the villages were first to be won¹¹³ and hence the king has been called a *grāmajit*.¹¹⁴ Sometimes *grāma* is equal to a fighting troop¹¹⁵ but the meaning of the word *grāma* was changing because of the advent of settled

¹¹⁰ AV.XII.6.3;4;5.

¹¹¹ AV.IV.37.7;8 - The *piśācas* disappear from the village which I enter.

¹¹² AV.IV.22.2;VIII.7.11.

¹¹³ AV.VI.40.2.

¹¹⁴ AV.VI.97.3;XIX.13.6.

¹¹⁵ AV.IV.7.5.

agricultural life. When the *grāma* became too big because of the growth of population, some families moved from their original *grāma* and settled in a nearby place but did not disconnect themselves from their parent *grāma*. They kept their relationship through common ancestor.

Social differentiation

The chief of all these tribal institutions was usually called *rājā* which is generally derived from $\sqrt{rāj}$ (to shine) or $\sqrt{rañj}$ /*rāj* (to grow red, to paint, to decorate to charm etc.) Whether we derive the term *rājā* from $\sqrt{rāj}$ or $\sqrt{rañj}$, in our understanding, originally, it meant a tribal leader and not a prince or king as is generally believed.¹¹⁶ That the *rājā* or *rājan* was a tribal chief is also supported by the terms *gopati*,¹¹⁷ *Janarājana*,¹¹⁸ *Adhipati*,¹¹⁹ *Viśpati* ¹²⁰ and *Vasospati* ¹²¹ which have variously been used for the chief. From the Atharvavedic references it

¹¹⁶ K.P.Jayaswal, *The Hindu Polity*, Calcutta, 1924, pp.107.

¹¹⁷ AV.IV.21.3;XII.4.27.etc.

¹¹⁸ AV.XX.21.9.

¹¹⁹ AV.V.24.6;VI.10.1 - 3 etc.

¹²⁰ AV.I.21.1;III.4.1.etc.

¹²¹ AV.I.1.2.

becomes clear that *rājā* was the chief of the agricultural tribal groups. For the first time we hear of wealthy people being called 'Annapati'¹²² and 'Annawān'.¹²³ A *rājā* was to offer rice-dishes at the rituals. There is a prayer for the *rājā* to become 'Dhanapati'¹²⁴ Hence the *rājā* must have been the wealthy person among the people. The Atharvavedic *rājā* was elected¹²⁵ by the *viś* in concordance with *varuṇa* (from \sqrt{vr}) the elector¹²⁶ assembled in the *samiti*.¹²⁷ He was supposed to be superior to all his opponents¹²⁸ who might have been contenders to the chiefship. The *rājā* was supposed to act according to the established rule¹²⁹ which means that some sort of tradition was there which the leader was to follow. At one place¹³⁰ it is said the way the sky, the earth and the living beings are fixed likewise the king of

122 AV.XIX.55.5;XIII.3.7.

123 AV.XVIII.4.21.

124 AV.IV.22.3.

125 AV.III.4.2.

126 AV.III.4.6.

127 AV.VI.88.3.

128 AV.IV.22.5.

129 AV.I.10.3.

130 AV.VI.88.1.

the people is also fixed". And at another place¹³¹ it is said that the king becomes a king because of his greatness . He was to lead the war fought against the other enemy tribes.¹³² Though the chiefship was not divine ordained but once elected the *rājā* was to become the force of the gods.¹³³ The office of the *rājā* was also not hereditary.

From a reference it is clear that the office of the *rājā* had redistributive¹³⁴ powers also. It says, "Thee let the people (*viś*) choose unto kingship, thee these five directions: rest at the summit of royalty, at the pinnacle : from hence formidable, share out good things to us." In the *Atharvaveda* we find the proto-type of 'Ratnin offering' also. Here the people and the directions of space¹³⁵, the relatives, wives and sons¹³⁶ the gods¹³⁷ are conjured to gather round the king. The objects of the gatherings

131 AV.IV.2.2.

132 AV.X.3.11.

133 AV.XIX.33.4.

134 AV.III.4.2.

135 *ibid.*

136 AV.III.4.3.

137 AV.III.4.4.

seems to be the presentation of tribute¹³⁸ and its counterpart distribution of gifts.¹³⁹ The above mentioned hymn further shows a marked resemblance to the circumstances of the *ratnin* ceremony where it mentions *Agni* going along as a speedy messenger, and the "wealthy (divinities) of the roads" which make room for the king. In the *Ratnin* offerings too, *Agni* goes along accompanying the king on his tour of the *ratnin* houses, while the divinity of the road is honoured in one of the offerings.¹⁴⁰ Although the *Atharvavedic* people knew about the *Śrauta* rituals like *Rājsuya*,¹⁴¹ *Aśvamedha*, *Agnistoma*, *Vājpeya* ¹⁴² etc., but it seems they did not give much importance to them.

The close relatives of the *rājā* were called *rājanya*, also called the *sajāta* of *rājā* or the *samānajanmā* of *rājā*.¹⁴³ They were strong contenders for the office of the *rājā*. From the *Atharvavedic* references it seems probable that the terms *rājanya* and *kṣatriya* were

¹³⁸ AV. III. 4. 3; 7.

¹³⁹ AV. III. 4. 2; 4.

¹⁴⁰ J.C. Heesterman, *op.cit.*, pp. 55.

¹⁴¹ AV. IV. 8. 1; XI. 9. 7; XIX. 33. 1.

¹⁴² AV. XI. 7. 7.

¹⁴³ AV. VIII. 9. 22.

interchangeable and not that *rājanya* was replaced by the *kṣatriya* at least in the *Atharvaveda*.¹⁴⁴ *Rājanya* has been used ten times and *kṣatriya* has also been used ten times in the *Atharvaveda*. "increase, o indra this *kṣatriya* for me : make thou this man sole chief of the *viś*"¹⁴⁵, and " so is made safe the kingdom of the *kṣatriya*"¹⁴⁶ All these references show that *kṣatriya rājā* and *rājanya* belonged to the same to the same category. In one verse *rajanya* is called a *nṛpati*.¹⁴⁷ It is said that the cow is the mother of the *rājanya*.¹⁴⁸ This proves its pastoral origin who came to be known as *kṣatriya* also when *varṇa* division became distinctly visual in the society.

The *varṇa* division in the vedic society as a whole marks a phase which is supposed to have made the vedic society, largely egalitarian in the *rgvedic* period, a society based on differentiation where the *kṣatriya* claimed more rights of appropriation and the *viś* was reduced to

¹⁴⁴ Prof. Romila Thapar says that during the later vedic phase *rājanya* was replaced by *kṣatriya* - *From Lineage....* pp.32.

¹⁴⁵ AV. IV. 22.1.

¹⁴⁶ AV. V. 17.3.

¹⁴⁷ AV. V. 18.1.

¹⁴⁸ AV. XII. 4. 33; X. 10. 18.

subordination during the later vedic period.¹⁴⁹ As far as the term *varṇa* is concerned out of nine references, only once it has been used for the *Āryan* to differentiate them from *dasyu*.¹⁵⁰ Here also, it seems, *varṇa* has been used to denote, as in the *Ṛgveda*,¹⁵¹ ethnic identity and not a matter of social hierarchy differentiating between the possessors and non-possessors. And this was the case despite the fact that the process of acculturation was going on. The term *vaiśya*¹⁵² has been used only twice. Once it has been used in opposition to *rājanya*.¹⁵³ But the whole text is silent on the function of the *vaiśya*. Hence it is very difficult to imagine its role in the society. *rājanya* or *kṣatriya* and *viś* differentiation is distinctly apparent and no doubt the *viś* was reduced to subordination.

A social group which really represents the differentiated class of people is *dāsa* and *śūdra*. *Dāsa* has been used eight times including *dāsī*, and *śūdra* six times in

¹⁴⁹ Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, pp.32.

¹⁵⁰ AV.XX.11.9 - *Āryam varṇam*.

¹⁵¹ Suvira Jaiswal, "Stratification in the *Ṛgvedic* Society : Evidence and Paradigms". *IHR*, vol.17, no. 1-2, 1992, pp.14.

¹⁵² AV.XIX.6.6;V.17.9.

¹⁵³ AV.V.17.9.

the *Atharvaveda*. In R.S. Sharma's view¹⁵⁴ the conflict between *Ārya* and *dāsa* appear to be the one within the fold of the vedic tribes. This is more true to the *Atharvaveda* because there is not a single reference when a *dāsa* is killed. If conclusion can be drawn from the relative occurrences of the terms *dāsa* and *dasyu* in the *Rgveda* and *Atharvaveda* it would appear that the *dasyus* who are mentioned eighty four times, were obviously numerically stronger than the *dāsas* who are mentioned sixty one times, whereas in the *Atharvaveda* their numbers fell drastically which shows that the *Āryan* conquest was on the verge of completion. Instead the number of *śūdra* increased slightly. It seems that the subjugated *dāsas* were given a different identity of *śūdra*. But the subjugated or captured women were still called *dāsīs* who were mainly engaged in domestic works or were used for begetting children. In one case *dāsi* is shown throwing the cow dung.¹⁵⁵

However, in the *Atharvaveda* there are some passages, which seem to refer to the existence of four *varṇas*. In one

¹⁵⁴ R.S.Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1990, (3rd.ed.), pp.10-11.

¹⁵⁵ AV.XII.4.9.

of them prayer¹⁵⁶ is made to the *darbha* to make the worshipper dear to *brāhmana*, *kṣatriya*, *śūdra* and *ārya*. Here *ārya* probably stands for *vaiśya*. In other passage there is expressed a desire to become dear to gods (*devas*) to kings and to both *śūdra* and *ārya*. It appears that here gods have been equated with *brāhmaṇas* and *āryas* with *vaiśyas*. We have to bear in mind that all these passages occur in the nineteenth book, which along with the twentieth, forms a supplement to the main collection of the *Atharvaveda*. An earlier passage¹⁵⁷ mentions a charm made by *brāhmana*, *rājanya* or *śūdra* and includes a spell that it may recoil on the maker. This belongs to the second grand division of the *Atharvaveda* which, according to Whitney, is 'palpably of hieratic origin.' This suggests that the ideology of the *varṇa* system developed under priestly influence. The only other reference¹⁵⁸ relevant to our purpose, which on the basis of Whitney, can be assigned to the early period of the *Atharvaveda* mentions *brāhmana*, *rājanya* and *vaiśya* but leaves out the *śūdra*. It is evident then that the *śūdras* appear as a social class only towards the end of the period of the *Atharvaveda*, when the *Puruṣasūkta* version of their origin

6 AV.XIX.62.1.

7 AV.X.1.3.

8 AV.V.17.9.

may have been inserted into the tenth book of the *R̥gveda*.¹⁵⁹ It is worth noticing at this juncture that these references do not give any idea of the social distance or disabilities which are implicit in the conception of *varṇa*. A passage¹⁶⁰ mentions a wanton *śūdra* woman along with *Mujavañts*, *Bālhiks* and *Mahāvṛṣas*. And hence the word *śūdra* here probably means a woman of *śūdra* tribe and not of *varṇa*.¹⁶¹ Prof. Thapar¹⁶² has applied the concept of 'householding economy', borrowed from Karl Polanyi to the later vedic period. This idea of householding economy presupposes the employment of labour outside the extended family circle, for which we have little evidence in the *Atharvaveda*. But it is doubtful whether the *śūdras* which do appear as the most inferior group functioned as labour force for the production purposes.¹⁶³ It seems that in the production processes kin-labour was used.

159 R.S.Sharma, *Śūdaras*....pp.34.

160 AV.V.22.7.

161 R.S.Sharma, *Śūdras*....pp.36.

162 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, pp.17 & 32.

163 R.S.Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, Delhi 1993, pp.74.

Social Gatherings

The vedic people decided their affairs in different kinds of assemblies viz, *Vidatha*, *Sabhā*, *Samiti*, *Gaṇa* and *Pariṣad*. Most scholars agree that *vidatha* was a multi functional assembly. K.P. Jayaswal¹⁶⁴ considers *vidatha* to be the 'parent folk assembly' while R.S. Sharma¹⁶⁵ calls it the 'earliest folk assembly and prof. Thapar¹⁶⁶ calls it a ritual institution through which the distribution and sharing of wealth took place. Prof. Sharma draws our attention to the fact that the *vidatha*'s importance diminished during the period of later *samhitas* because in the *R̥gveda* *vidatha* occurs 122 times whereas in the *Atharvaveda* it occurs only 22 times. Certain changes in the functioning of the *vidatha* can be imagined from the *Atharvavedic* references. It was the only assembly in which women could participate. But now the importance of *vidatha* diminished considerably and hence the women's participation in the vedic political and social life also diminished. In the early vedic period, *yoṣā* (unmarried girl) could participate in the deliberations of the *vidatha* but now only married ones that too along with their husband could

¹⁶⁴ K.P. Jayaswal, *op.cit.*, pp.21.

¹⁶⁵ R.S. Sharma, *Aspects....* pp.87.104.

¹⁶⁶ Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, pp.55.

participate.¹⁶⁷ "Mingle thyself with thy husband, then shalt thou in advanced age speak to the *vidatha*." As for the deliberations of the *vidatha* we are informed¹⁶⁸ that people aspired for talking big there. The householder prayed¹⁶⁹ for warding off death so that living he could speak to the *vidatha*. During inter-tribal wars decisions on the leadership¹⁷⁰ were taken in the *vidatha*. The redistributive functions¹⁷¹ of *vidatha* disappeared later but the religious function was retained from the early vedic period. The *Aśvins* are called the maintainers¹⁷² of the *vidatha*, Gods, along with the fathers are invoked at the *vidatha* followed by dancing and laughter.¹⁷³ In one passage¹⁷⁴ *vidatha* is regarded as heaven gaining

¹⁶⁷ AV.XIV.1.20;XIV.1.21.

¹⁶⁸ AV.XVIII.3.24.

¹⁶⁹ AV.XII.2.30;VII.1.6.

¹⁷⁰ AV.V.20.12 - going in front, unsubduable, made safe by Indra, noting counsels, burning the hearts of our adversaris, go thou quickly.

¹⁷¹ R.S.Sharma, *Aspects*....pp.91-92.

¹⁷² AV.VII.77.4.

¹⁷³ AV.XVIII.3.19.

¹⁷⁴ AV.VII.1.15

instrument and in another *Agni* is supposed to act as its priest.¹⁷⁵

Sabhā appears eighteen times in the *Atharvaveda* including its compounds like *sabhāgayati*, *sabhāṣad* and *sabhya*. Sāyaṇa takes it to mean the gathering of the learned people.¹⁷⁶ Griffith¹⁷⁷ translates it as the meeting of the people of a village. From the Atharvavedic references it is clear that only men¹⁷⁸ attended it. In a charm¹⁷⁹ meant for the purpose of winning and fixing a man's love the woman says, "I am speaking here not thou, in the *sabhā* verily thou speak". *Sabhāṣads* invoked¹⁸⁰ *Indra* in the *sabhā*. This tribal 'long house'¹⁸¹ was the scene of a favourite activity, gambling.¹⁸² Dicing was so important

¹⁷⁵ AV.XVIII.1.20.

¹⁷⁶ *Viduṣām samājah*.

¹⁷⁷ R.T.H.Griffith, *Hymns of the Atharvaveda*, Delhi, 1985, (1895-96), vol.i, pp.275.

¹⁷⁸ AV.VIII.10.8;9 - Men go to his *Sabhā*, *sabhya* becometh he who knoweth thus.

¹⁷⁹ AV.VII.39.4.

¹⁸⁰ AV.XIX.55.5.

¹⁸¹ D.D.Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Delhi, 1970, pp.81.

¹⁸² AV.V.31.6.

that at one place instead of *sabhā*, dice has been used. Pastoral affairs were also discussed¹⁸³ in the *sabhā*.

It is very difficult to make a distinction between the *sabhā* and the other vedic assembly the *śamiti*. Hillebrandt holds that *śamiti* and *sabhā* are much the same, the one being the assembly the other primarily the place of worship. But in that case they would not have been called two daughters of Prajāpati¹⁸⁴ giving them almost equal status. There are many places where both these institutions occur simultaneously.¹⁸⁵ The most prominent function of *śamiti* seems to be religious in nature. One passage¹⁸⁶ says, "That, o Agni, this *śamiti* may take place, divine, among the gods, worshipful, thou revered one, and that thou mayest share out treasure, o self ruling one, do thou enjoy here our portion filled with good things." This passage clearly brings out the redistributive function of *śamiti*. The gifts received at the *śamiti* were redistributed.¹⁸⁷

183 AV.IV.21.6; R.S.Sharma, *Aspects.....*, pp.108.

184 AV.VII.13.1.

185 AV.VIII.10.5;6;XV.9.2;3.

186 AV.XVIII.1.26.

187 *ibid.*

Gaṇa is an institution which is obscure in its meaning and origin. In vedic texts Maruts are repeatedly described as *gaṇa*.¹⁸⁸ The *Ṛk.* and *Atharvan* collections repeatedly mention the strong and vigorous *gaṇas* of Maruts in the sense of army and troop, at times under the command of the *Sun* or *Indra* ¹⁸⁹ but we have a total absence of the reference to the leader of the *gaṇa* i.e., *gaṇasyarājā* or *gaṇapati*. According to prof. R.S. Sharma,¹⁹⁰ it was a sort of gentile organization and in most cases this term is used in the sense of a tribal or class solidarity. The reference to *pariṣad* is found in the funeral verses. "Brightening Agni, increasing indra, they have made for us a wide *pariṣad*,¹⁹¹ rich in kine". This indicates that the *Pariṣad* might have been the association of the pastoralists and later it became obsolete after those people left pastoral activities as their main occupation and took to agriculture.

¹⁸⁸ AV.XIII.4.8; IV.13.4.

¹⁸⁹ AV.XIII.4.8.

¹⁹⁰ R.S.Sharma, *Aspects.....*, pp.120.

¹⁹¹ AV.XVIII.3.22.

Vrātyas and Other Social Categories

The other social groups alluded to in the *Atharvaveda* are *vrātyas paṇis* and *ṛṣi*, *muni* and *brahmacāris*. The problem of identification of *vrātyas* is one of the most perplexing problems. The interpretations of the kanda XV of the *Atharvaveda* which is also called *Vrātyakānda* have widely differed some regarding it as largely non-*Āryan* and others as a purely *Āryan* document. Most of the discussion has taken place with reference to later brahmanical literature like the *pancaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, *Bṛhaddevatā*, *Kātyāyana-Śrautasūtra*, *Lātyāyana-Śrautsūtra* etc. This amounts to backward projection of the later texts. The history of *vrātyas* gives us two extremes i.e., from complete adoration to complete abhorration so much so that they needed either conversion or purification through different *vrātyastomas*.¹⁹² But as far as the *Atharvaveda* is concerned there is absolutely no evidence of any of the *vrātyastomas* or of the *vrātya* being outside the *Āryan* fold. What I can gather from Atharvavedic references is that they represented a social category which wandered from place to place and in this capacity helped the *Āryans* in their migration towards the eastern region. They

¹⁹² Radha Krishna Chaudhary, *Vratyas in Ancient India*, Varanasi, 1964. N.N.Ghosh, *op.cit.*; J.C.Heesterman, "Vratya and Sacrifice", *IJJ*, vi, 1962-63; W.M.Bollee, "The Indo-European Sodalities in Ancient India", *ZDMG*, Wiesbaden, 1981, p.174-75."

moved in bands and there is no reference based on which we can say that they had any separate kinship structure of their own. The only kinship terminology used in the *vrātyakanda* are father and grandfather. But these two do not necessarily imply that they had their own distinctive kin-structure. *Vrātyas* had ascendants but no descendants. It might have happened that a few male members of a tribe chose to remain bachelors, went to the forest, wandered all over but depended on their parent tribes for their subsistence and led them through proper ways in their movement eastward (they might have known the right path leading to good pasture and cultivable land during their staying in the forests.) And hence they were offered food when they went to the houses of the chiefs of the tribes¹⁹³ This also indicates that these groups helped the tribal chiefs or *rājās* in the inter or intra-tribal warfares and hence important. In this regard these *vrātyas* might have acted like power-brokers. These forest wanderers must have been militant by nature because of their vigorous life in the forests. Even the *ṛṣis* and *munis* were well versed in warfare.

¹⁹³ AV.XV.10.1;2 - So then, to the houses of whatever *rājā* a thus knowing *vrātya* may come as guest. He should esteem him better than himself : so does he not offend against *kṣatra* : so does he not offend against the *rāṣṭra*.

The terms which occur in the *vrātyakanda* and are indicative of social institutions and relations are like *bhrātr̥vya*,¹⁹⁴ *yajmāna*,¹⁹⁵ *pitṛ*, and *pitāmaha*,¹⁹⁶ *rājanya*, *sabandhu*, *viś*, *sabhā*, and *samiti* etc. Rajaram Ramkrishna Bhagvat¹⁹⁷ tried to prove that the *vrātyas* were non-*Āryans*. But the problem remains unresolved because there were other non-*Āryan* groups who never got this exaltation from the *Āryan* people. Those who say that the *vrātyastoma* was the process by which the *vrātyas* were converted to the brahmanism fail to say to which *varṇa* they were inducted. They were militant by nature and according to FB they took to agriculture also.

The *vrātyas* had organized themselves in a sort of military band and the chief was called *Ekavrātya*.¹⁹⁸ *Ekavrātya* was the leader of the troop and the bow which he held was the emblem of chiefship because that was indra's bow.¹⁹⁹ Possibly there was some rivalry over the

194 AV.XV.1.8.

195 AV.XV.2.12.

196 AV.XV.8.1;XV.6.26;XV.7.2.

197 R.R.Bhagvat, *JBBRAS*, vol.xix, pp.357-364.

198 AV.XV.1.3.

199 AV.XV.1.6..

chiefship amongst the members of the band. At one place *vrātya* is hailed with *Sūryas, Prajāpati, Visāsahi, Māṅgalika* and *Brāhmaṇa*. In *Ṛgvedic* times as well as in Patanjali's time *vrāta* seems to have meant tribes living by the use of weapons, implements, or guild craft, but retaining their tribal chief and structure.²⁰⁰

In the *Atharvaveda* as in the *Ṛgveda* we do not have any reference pertaining to merchants or intermediaries playing a role in the circulation and production of wealth. The word *vaṇik* occurs just once as merchant in the *Ṛgveda*²⁰¹ and once in the *Atharvaveda*.²⁰² But Prof. Suvira Jaiswal²⁰³ says that in the *Ṛgveda*, *vaṇik* has been used twice and in both the passages the term *vaṇik* is applied to the sons of *Uśij* who was certainly not a merchant. M.V. Deshpande and D.D. Kosambi both think that the sanskrit *vaṇij* is related to vedic '*paṇi*' which in Deshpande's view was the name of a non-*Āryan* trading tribe and in Kosambi's view were pre-*Āryan* Indus people.²⁰⁴ But the *Ṛgveda* and

²⁰⁰ D.D. Kosambi, *op.cit.*, pp.143, fn.16.

²⁰¹ *ibid*, pp.91.

²⁰² AV. III.15.1. - here Indra has been called a *vaṇij*.

²⁰³ Suvira Jaiswal, "Stratification....", *IHR*, pp.7.

²⁰⁴ D.D. Kosambi, *op.cit.*, pp.80.

the *Atharvaveda* both have *vaṇij* and *paṇi* without linking the two in any way. In the *Atharvaveda* we do have reference to *vaṇij* as trader but we do not know the nature of the transaction. A.P. Karmarkar ²⁰⁵ calls the *paṇis* as the "most heroic and cultured race in the history of India" and identifies them with *grathins* who knew the art of composition and writing. But from the *Atharvavedic* references *paṇis* seem to be merely cattle-lifters and the tribal chief's one of the most important function was to save the tribe from the raids of *paṇis*.²⁰⁶

The category of *ṛṣi*, *muni*, *kavi*, *vipra* and *brāhmaṇa* used in masculine are connected with the function of composing or singing of the hymns or prayers. The term "*brāhmaṇa*" is of rare occurrence in the *Ṛgveda* and with the rare exception of the *Puruṣasūkta* hymn it doesn't seem to have been used anywhere else to denote a member of the priestly class.²⁰⁷ A semantic study, done by Padma Mishra of the four key words, *vipra*, *ṛṣi purohita* and *brāhmaṇa* comes to the conclusion that the professional class of

²⁰⁵ A.A.Karmarkar, *The Religions of India*, vol.1, Poona, 1950, pp.13-14.

²⁰⁶ AV.XIX.46.2;V.11.7.

²⁰⁷ Padma Mishra, *Evolution of the Brahmana Class*, Benaras Hindu University, 1978, pp.141.

priests evolved gradually in the *Ṛgvedic* period and only towards the end of this period it became a closed order known as the *brāhmaṇa varṇa*. This process seems to be complete in the *Atharvavedic* period. The *brāhmaṇa* as a class had become very powerful. They claim that they are the source of the *kṣātra*.²⁰⁸ There are many references²⁰⁹ in the *Atharvaveda* where the *kṣātriya* and the king have been asked not to harm the *brāhmaṇas* in any way. All these references show some kind of struggle between the priestly class and the chiefly class. The huge amount of fees paid in the form of *dakṣiṇā* might have made *brāhmaṇas* powerful enough to demand more than what they received. And this might have sparked off the struggle between the *brāhmaṇas* and the *rājā*, *rājanya* or *kṣātriya* and hence the *brāhmaṇas*' shield against any possible threat to their property by the ruling chiefs. Another conflict which can be envisioned from the passages is between the *viś* and the chiefly power. A *maṅtra* ²¹⁰ says, "let the fury of the kings fall on elsewhere". The reason of the fury of the kings is not clear but the conflict is clear. This is also clear by the fact

²⁰⁸ AV.X.2.23.

²⁰⁹ AV.XII.9.6;5.5;6;V.17.3;XII.6.2;11.etc.

²¹⁰ AV.VI.68.3.

that repeatedly prayers have been offered for the well-willing *prajā*.²¹¹

Kin-Conflict and Social Tension

The later vedic rituals also show several types of conflict in the society. One is between the tribal chief and the dispersed clan chiefs. This is apparent from the sham fight between the *rājā* and the *rājanyas* during the *Rājsūya* ritual.²¹² The chief was to win this fight symbolically. We have in the *Atharvaveda* repeated references to the rivals and rival destroying agents.²¹³ We have many charms intended to secure harmony, influence among fellow-men. We have two types of conciliatory hymns in the *Atharvaveda* :- one is those that aim at success, prominence or superiority²¹⁴ and second is those, used to assuage wrath, discord and violence.²¹⁵ A passage²¹⁶ says,

²¹¹ AV.III.4.3.etc.

²¹² R.S.Sharma, *Origin of State in Ancient India*, Bombay, 1989, pp.14.

²¹³ AV.I.29.4;6.etc. - Superior thou, inferior thy rivals, whosoever o king are thine opposing foes; II.29.3

²¹⁴ AV.II.27;VI.15;44;VII.12.etc.

²¹⁵ AV.VI.42;43;64;73;74;VII.52.etc.

²¹⁶ AV.III.5.7.

"They are kings, king-makers, that are charioteers and troop-leaders - subject to me thou, o Parṇa make all people round about." Perhaps these people were refusing to obey the chief hence this request to Parṇa to make them helpful. Several vedic passages suggest that the vaiśyas or viś were far more numerous than the other two groups.²¹⁷ But in spite of the small numbers the rājanya dominated because of their military strength and ritualistic support that they enjoyed in lieu of which the brāhmaṇas claims many privileges.

The chief reason for establishing the authority over the viś was to collect periodical tithes from them.²¹⁸ "Thou formidable shall see arrive much tribute". This prayer shows that the chiefs lived upon the labour of the viś. The beginning of tax collection according to prof. R.S. Sharma are found in the later vedic period. But the Atharvavedic references show that it was still a voluntary tribute and the amount to be paid was not stipulated. It must have been paid according to the custom or one's capacity. Śulka is a term other than bali which is used for tribute. It is

²¹⁷ P.V.Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstras*, vol.ii, pt.i, pp.41.

²¹⁸ R.S.Sharma, *Origin...*, pp.16.

stated²¹⁹ that in heaven the *Śulka* is not paid by a weak man for a stronger person. This also means voluntary payment by the well off people to the chief. At one place,²²⁰ near kinsmen of the king are described as bringing *bali* to the chief which means that the near kinsmen or *rājanya* had to present to the *rājā* a part of the *bali* or *Śulka* received from the *viś*. The only reference which according to Romila Thapar²²¹ suggests some sort of fixed amount of tribute is III.29.1. But this distribution of the offering was made at a ritual and the rituals were not the only occasions when tributes were collected because at one place²²² it is said, " O Indra, please come forward : the sun hath gone to the mid point of his way : thy companions wait upon thee with treasures, as head of families (*vrājapati*) goes about. This means that while roaming around the settlements the head of the families used to pay *bali* or *Śulka* to the chiefs. This distribution is made of the ritual offering and *bali* and *Śulka* don't seem to be ritual ones.

219 AV.III.29.3.

220 AV.XI.1.6.

221 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, pp.35.

222 AV.VII.75.2.

All the available evidences from the *Atharvaveda* make it clear that only the members of the *viś* were meant to pay tributes. No administrative units are mentioned neither any authority except the *sthapati* ²²³ and *balihṛta* ²²⁴, the meaning and function of which are obscure. At this stage the territorial basis of the tribal administrative organization was missing. The prayers are offered to make the *rājā* rich in progeny and wealth and not in territory, although he was supposed to protect the *rāṣṭra*. At one place ²²⁵ Indra is asked to give the king a share in village in cattle and horses and to deny the same to his enemy. This gives an impression of the collection following a war. Any piece of land or any territory as a fiscal unit did not exist. It was the *viś* or the people who were to pay. *Senā* used in the *Atharvaveda* doesn't refer to a kind of standing army in any sense. After the wars were over the *senā* or *bala* returned to their own villages with their share of booty and engaged themselves in the occupation they were versed in.

²²³ AV. II. 32.4; V. 23.11.

²²⁴ AV. XI. 1.6.

²²⁵ AV. IV. 22.2.

CHAPTER III

COLLATING WITH ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Now we shall make an effort to collate the present literary evidence derived from the *Atharvaveda* with archeological finds. This corroboration becomes important in the light of the fact that the PGW archaeology has been claimed to form the material background of social developments in later vedic times. It is now an established fact that the later Vedic texts belong to the same area as PGW archaeology. Till now, over 700 PGW sites have been excavated. Carbon 14 dates for several PGW sites suggest that the PGW sites have been excavated. Carbon 14 dates for several PGW sites suggest that the PGW archaeology roughly covered the period circa 1000-500 B.C., which coincides with the period of later Vedic texts comprising the collection of the *Yajus* and the *Atharvan*, the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*.

A striking feature of the later Vedic literature is the eastward expansion of its horizons. The focus of the *Ṛgveda* was the Punjab; now it shifts to the Doab of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers and the kingdom of the *Kuru* and *Pañcāla* tribes. The Punjab seems to fade gradually into the background. We hear more of eastern chiefdoms, as far as the *Magadha* and *Aṅga* in Southern Bihar. If we look at the map

showing the Painted Gray Ware sites we find that the largest number of PGW sites (258) appears in Haryana, the second largest (218) in U.P., and in Punjab only 101.

"Most of the excavations of these sites have been exploratory and have not investigated the Iron Age occupation to any great extent as yet. Moreover, reports on only Hastinapur has so far been fully published. Hence, when one comes to consider broader aspects of the culture, confirmation is sadly lacking." Another reason for this is that at almost every one of the sites there was subsequent continuity of settlement so that the early levels are now buried under many metres of later deposits".¹ Comparatively little can be said of house-types. At Bhagwanpura the houses of the early phase are circular huts of wood and wattle and daub, those of the later phase are more substantial houses with earth walls. At Atranjikheda Pd. III, post-holes over thick mud floor have been discovered which prove that thatched roofing on wooden posts was prevalent.² The Atharvaveda [IX.3] informs us that the houses were made of wood and reeds. These were constructed with 2,4,6,8 and 10

¹ Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan*, CUP, 1982, pp. 315-324.

² D.P. Agarwal, *Copper-Bronze Age in India*, Delhi, 1971, p.48.

side posts depending upon the size of the houses³. The explorations and excavations indicate the transformation of the Vedic people from a pastoral and semi-nomadic community into a sedentary and agricultural community. But by and large structures are poor and do not suggest social differentiation. However, the use of fine PGW and a few glass objects might indicate the emergence of an upper crust in society.⁴ This is very true of the Atharvavedic society where the social differentiation was not very sharp. The term *Varṇa* indicates the ethnic differentiation in this text rather than social differentiation. Though in the *Atharvaveda* we have a fairly large number of crafts and occupations mentioned, we cannot be sure if they formed distinct separate social groups. According to a field study⁵ of 43 major PGW culture sites, 48.84% of the sites measure below 10,000 sq.m., and had a population below 200

³ "The bands of pillars and of stays, the ties of beams that form the roof; we loose the bands of thy bamboos, of bolts, of fastening, of thatch, we loose the ties of thy side-posts; we loosen here the ties and bands of straw in bundles, and of clamps; the diadem, securely tied and laid upon the central beam; within the house constructed with two side-posts, or with four or six, built with eight side-posts, or with ten, lies Agni like a babe unborn.

⁴ R.S.Sharma, *Sūdras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1991 (3rd ed.), p.34.

⁵ Quoted in R.S.Sharma, *Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1983, p.172.

persons; in one case the population numbered around 30. The population of 30.23% of the sites varied between 200-500, of 13.95% of the sites between 500-1000, of 4.65% sites between 1000-1500, and of 2.33% between 1500-2000 persons. In this situation we cannot assume that all the craftsmen lived in all settlements. It is possible that most of craftsmen practised craftsmanship of leisure while their main occupation continued to be cultivation. The category of area with largest population remained between 75,000-1,00,000 sq.m which was only 2.33% of the 43 sites studied. These settlements also do not confirm the urban hypothesis. The 'Pur' referred to in the Vedic literature only means a fort and not a town or urban centre. Even sites like Hastinapur and Atranjikheda where iron objects have been found, failed to provide any evidence of urban living in *Gaṅgā-Yamunā* region in the later Vedic phase. Knives, daggers, arrowheads and spearheads, meant mainly for hunting, are found at Hastinapur, Alamgirpur, Atranjikheda and Kausambi in the levels dated to the 7th C.B.C. And we have references to knives made of iron in the Atharaveda.

There are many plants which occur in the area of PGW sites like *Khadira* (*khair*), *Śiṃśapā* (*sissoo*), *Udumbarā*, *Pīlu*, *Karkaṇḍu*, *Pūtudru*, *Plākṣa*, *Varaṇa* etc. mentioned in

the *Atharvaveda*. The Ṛgvedic people solely depended on *Yava* or barley which ripens quickly and does not require much rain. But in the *Atharvaveda* we have reference to rice (*vr̥īhi*), bean pulse (*māṣa*), and sesamum (*tila*) etc. People had a sedentary life and it is proved by the fact that the PGW-iron phase deposits are three to four metres deep at several places, leaving no doubt that these settlements lasted for at least three or four centuries. At Atranjikheda in the PGW levels rows of hearths have been discovered. A hearth showing one mouth and three openings was found in Atranjikheda besides another hearth on a kitchen floor belonging to the period of the overlapping of the Painted Grey and NBP wares. These hearths, it seems, were meant for feeding large families which was the leading form of family organization among the Atharvavedic people.

APPENDIX - I

The People

In the *Atharvaveda* unlike the *Ṛgveda*, we find not many references to specific peoples or tribes. The concept of *Pañca-Janāḥi* remains vague even now. It is not clear whether it meant five tribes' or five peoples or five human races. Apart from this we have clear cut references to the peoples like *Maḡadha*², *Aṅga*³, *Mujvaṅta*⁴, *Gāndhāri*⁵, *Mahāvṛṣa*⁶, *Kuru*⁷, *Sṛñjaya*⁸ *Vāitahavyas*⁹, *Bhṛgu*¹⁰, *Ruśāmi*¹¹, *Kirāt*¹², *Bālhika*¹³, *Himavaṅta*¹⁴ etc. Strangely, most of the *Ṛgvedic*¹⁵ tribes do not find any

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- 1 AV. XII. 1. 5; IV. 23. 1; XVIII. 4. 55.
2 AV. V. 22. 14.
3 *ibid.*
4 *ibid.*
5 *ibid.*
6 AV. V. 22. 4; 8.
7 AV. V. 4. 6; XI.
8 AV. V. 19. 1.
9 *ibid.*
10 AV. V. 19. 1; II. 5. 3; XX. 49. 6.
11 AV. XX. 127. 1.
12 AV. X. 4. 14.
13 AV. V. 22. 5.
14 AV. IV. 2. 5; 9. 9; V. 4. 2; 8; 24. 1; 95. 3; XII. 1. 11.
15 Anu, Yadu, Druhyu, Turvasa, Puru, Trutsu, Bharatas, Usinaras, Chedis, Matsyas etc..

mention in the *Atharvaveda*. It is possible that with the emergence of the territorial concept the area inhabited by a particular tribe came to be known by the name of its chiefly clan. Earlier the names of the peoples did not imply territory. At one place¹⁶ the *Gandhāris*, *Mujavañts*, *Añgas* and *Magadhas* mentioned together are shown clearly hostile to the Atharvavedic people. The *Mahāvṛṣas* and the *Mujavañts* were also hostile people who are supposed to be the *bandhus* of the *Takman*. *Kuntāpa* hymn¹⁷ enlogises the *Kaurvya* king *Parīkṣita* whose son *Janamejaya* is mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*¹⁸ as one of the greatest performers of the *Aśvamedha Yajña*. A *Kaurvya* was one of *Parīkṣita*'s subjects. The *Atharvaveda* informs that the *Srinjayas* and the *vāitahavyas* perished because they had injured the *Bṛḡus*. *Vāitahavyas* were certainly the non-brāhmaṇa chiefs (or those tribals who opposed brāhamin domination) who deliberately ate a *Brāhmaṇa*'s cow as well as ten goats of *Kesaraprabandha*.¹⁹ The *Kirātāḥ* were a friendly non-Aryan people, who provided domestic labour force (mostly women) to the Atharvavedic *Āryans*.²⁰ *Bālhika* was another tribe which supposedly produced *Takman*²¹. Lastly, it is very difficult to identify *Pārāvalā* which according to

¹⁶ AV.V.22.14.

¹⁷ AV.XX.127.1-14.

¹⁸ SB.XIII.5.4.

¹⁹ *Kesaraprabandha*'s identity is unknown and is not referred to in any other text. Perhaps she was the wife of a prominent brahmana.

²⁰ AV.X.4.14-The young maid of Kirata race, a little dōmsel, digs the drug, digs it with shovels wrought of gold on the high ridges of the hills.

²¹ AV.V.22.5;7.9.

Karambelkar was a region somewhere along the Yamunā.²² Ikṣvāku, Turvāsā, Ānava, Matsya²³ are also mentioned. Sudās the king of the Tr̥tsu, Puru, Kutsa and Trasadaśyu are also mentioned though this hymn²⁴ is a reproduction of the Ṛgvedic hymn.²⁵

22 AV.XX.135.14; V.W. Karambelkar, *History in the Atharvaved*, Poona, 1974.

23 AV.XIX.39.9.

24 AV.XX.37.2-3.

25 AV.VII.19.

APPENDIX - II

Atharvavedic Flora

Atharvaveda is full of reference to the flora. It refers to two hundred and eighty eight varieties of plants¹ most of the plants have been mentioned once or twice and only a few have been mentioned more than three times. Obviously the latter plants were more important to the Atharvavedic people. Here is a list of main plants of the *Atharvaveda* with their scientific names, their distribution, uses and references. The scientific names have been taken from Griffith's translation of the *Atharvaveda* and from B.P. Roy's *Later Vedic Economy*.

1. **Muñja**² - Identified as *Saccharum Munja* or *Saccharam Sara*. This plant is found in the whole of northern India, but it is a speciality of western India. It is a sort of rush or grass which grows to the height of about ten feet. It is used in the basketwork, and the *Mekhalā* or girdle worn by brāhmaṇas is made from it. In the *Atharvaveda* it has been used as a medicine.
2. **Pūtudru**³ - The *Khadira* (*Acacia Catechu*) or, the *Devadāru* (*Pinus Deodar*). Muir and Zimmer write *Pūtadru*, which is said to be a name of the *Palāśa* (*Butea Frondosa*). *Devadāru* is found mostly in the Himalayan foothills.

¹ B.P. Roy, *The Later Vedic Economy*, Patna, 1984, p. 288.

² AV. I. 2.

³ AV. VIII. 2. 28.

3. **Dūrvā**⁴ - *Cynodon dactylon*, a grass which grows throughout the subcontinent. Griffith identifies it with *Panicum Dactylon* which is a creeping grass with flower-bearing branches erect. By far the most common and useful grass in India, it grows everywhere abundantly, and flowers all the year. In Hindustani it is called *dub*. It is supposed to be very auspicious.
4. **Plākṣa** or **Plāxa**⁵ - The waved leaf fig tree. *Ficus infectoria*, a large and beautiful tree with small white fruit. This tree is found throughout the subcontinent. The wood is used as fuel, the shoots are used as food and the leaves are used as fodder.
5. **Apāmārga**⁶ - *Achyranthes Aspera*, a biennial plant frequently used in incantations, in medicine, in washing linen, and in sacrifices, and still believed to have the power of making men proof against the sting of scorpions. It is also called *Parakpuṣpī*, *Pratyakpuṣpī* and *Pratyakparṇī* from the reverted direction of the growth of its leaves, flowers and fruit. Found mostly in the drier parts of the sub-continent. Because of its properties *Apāmārga* has been used as an appellative in IV.XIX.4. called *ciracirā* in Hindi.

⁴ AV.VI.106.1.

⁵ AV.V.5.5.

⁶ AV.IV,17,6;7;18.8;VII.67.1;2;3 etc..

6. Balbuja⁷ - A common coarse species of grass (*Eleusine Indica*) found growing in large tufts on pasture ground, road sides etc.
7. Arka⁸ Sāyana takes arka as an amulet of arka tree, *Calotropis Gigantea*, of which various medicinal use is made. It is found throughout the subcontinent.
8. Pippal⁹ - "The *Pippal*, *Peepal*, or sacred fig-tree is venerated by Hindus, and according to *Atharvaveda* V.4.3 the Gods sit under its shades in the third heaven. Its seeds germinate in the hollows of other trees, and the new growth, which eventually destroys its foster mother, is endowed with magical powers somewhat similar to those ascribed to the parasite mistletoe in Europe, especially when it grows on trees, such as the the *Oak* and the *hazel* which do not usually bear it. The *Aśvattha* generally grows on the *Śāmi* (*Prosopis Spicigera*), in the present instance it springs from the *Khadīra* (*Acacia Catechu*), and, what is still more surprising is that masculine springs from masculine i.e., the names of both trees are words of that gender. This tree is the same as *Aśvattha* in III.6.1.¹⁰ The fruit of the *Aśvattha*, *Pippal* or *peepul* is called *pippalī*.¹¹

7 AV.XIV.2.23.

8 AV.VI.72.1.

9 AV.IX.14.20;21.

¹⁰ R.T.H. Griffith, *Myms of the Atharvaveda*, Delhi, 1985 (1895-96), p.72.

¹¹ AV.VI.109.1;2.

9. Alābu¹² *Lagenaria Vulgaris*, the Kaddu, pumpkin or bottle-gourd cultivated throughout the subcontinent. The fruit is cooked as vegetable and the shell is used for storing water and making the Sitār.
10. Amūla¹³ - The *Methonica Superba*, a species of Lily
11. Narāchī¹⁴ - Some unidentified plant.
12. Sāmsapa¹⁵ - *Dalbergia Sisu*: Commonly spelt *sissoo* : a stately timber tree common in Northern India. For rapid growth, beauty and usefulness few trees can be compared with it.
13. Pātā¹⁶ - Probably identical with *Pāṭhā* (*Clypea Hernandi-folia*) Like the scottish rowen, or like St. John's wort, it was potent against fiends.
14. Varāṇa¹⁷ - A plant or small tree (*Crataeva Roxburghii*), used in medicine and supposed to possess magical virtues. *Varṇāvati* appears to be the name of some river or lake on whose banks the *Varāṇa* plant grows abundantly. The poisonous plant was, it seems, washed in the water of the river and then boiled. It is found in all parts of India.

12 AV.VIII.14.14.

13 AV.V.31.4.

14 AV.V.31.4.

15 AV.VI.129.1.

16 AV.VI.27.4.

17 AV.X.3.1;16;IV.7.1;VI.85.1.

15. **Kyāmbu**¹⁸ - Some kind of aquaetic plant, perhaps water Lily.
16. **Sāṅdadūrvā**¹⁹ Tender grass : probably the same as *Pākadūrvā* of the *R̥gveda*, a variety of *dūrvā* grass (*Panicum Dactylon*)
17. **Pīlu**²⁰ - In the *Atharvaveda* it is found as *Pīlumati* which Griffith takes to mean blossoming with the *Pīlu* tree (The *Careya Arborea*, or according to others, the *Salvadora Persica*) Kumkum Roy²¹ takes it to mean *sanseviera roxburghiana*.
18. **Vamśa**²² *Bombusa Arundinacia*. This plant is found throughout the plains.
19. **Nyagrodha**²³ The *Nyagrodha* is the Indian Fig tree, *Ficus Indica*.
20. **Sāmi**²⁴ - *Prosopis Spicigera* or *Acacia suma*, regarded as a holy tree as its wood was used to form part of the drill by which the sacrificial fire was kindled. Abundant in dry arid zone of Punjab, Rajastan and Sind.

18 AV.XVIII.3.6.

19 AV.XVIII.3.6.

20 AV.XVIII.2.48.

21 Kumkum Roy, "In Which Part of South Asia Did the Early Brahmanical Tradition (1st m.B.C.) Takes Its Form?" *Studies in History*, n.s., 1993, p.21.

22 AV.III.12.6; IX.3.4.

23 AV.IV.37.4; V.5.5.

24 AV.VI.11.1.

21. *Aśvattha*²⁵ - *Ficus Religiosa*. Discussed above in *Pippal*.
22. *Khadira*²⁶ - *Acacia catechu*. A tree with very hard wood from which the *Sruva* or sacrificial laddle and axle-pins are made. The *Khadira* is mentioned together with *Aśvattha* a sacred fig Tree in III.6.1 and V.5.5
23. *Guggulū, Pīlā, Naladī, Auṣṣagandhi, Pramandini*²⁷ - These names are derived from fragrant plants or sweet scents, *Guggulū* meaning, 'Bdellium-Scented; 'Naladī' smelling of spikenard; the plants connected with the rest of the names have not been identified.
24. *Parṇa*²⁸ - *Parṇa* (meaning originally 'feather; feather like leaf'), in later times generally called *Palāśa* is the *Butea Frondosa*, a beautiful sacred tree with large leaves and fine red flowers, The great ladle with which clarified butter is poured into the fire, and other sacrificial utensils are made of its wood to which, in the shape of amulets, also the greatest efficacy was ascribed
25. *Arundhati* ²⁹ : a creeping plant used in medicine: called also *Sipātcī*[IV.12.1; V.5; VI.59.1]. Probably a variety of *convolvulus* or bindweed

25 AV. III. 5. 6; VIII. 8. 3.

26 AV. VIII. 8. 3; X. 6. 6-10.

27 AV. IV. 37. 3.

28 AV. III. 5. 6; XVIII. 4. 53.

29 AV. IV. 12. 1; VI. 59. 1.

which is to bind fast the injured limbs as it binds the tree round which it grows.

26. Avakās³⁰ - *Blyxa Octandra*, a grassy plant growing in marshy land, called *Saivāla* in later times.
27. Āndīka³¹ - A plant with egg-shaped fruit or bulbs.
28. Kumud³² Either the white esculent water-lily or the red lotus whose fruit is also edible
29. Śālūka, Śaphaka and Muḥali³³ - Seems to be unidentifiable aquatic plants.
30. Rajanī³⁴ - *Rajanī* is the name of the *Curcuma Longa* which may have been one of the plants used in the treatment of leprosy.
31. Madugha³⁵ - An unspecified shrub or plant that yields a sweet juice
32. Kuśa³⁶ - Not referred to directly but identified by Griffith *Kuś* (*Poa Cynosuroides*) is much used in sacrificial ceremonies and endowed with various sanctifying qualities. Its a kind of grass with sharp ending. It is found throughout north India.

³⁰ AV.VIII.7.9;IV.37.8.

³¹ AV.IV.34.5.

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ AV.I.23.1.

³⁵ AV.I.34..4.

³⁶ AV.II.7.1.

33. **Prāṣṇiparṇī**³⁷ - *Hemionitis cordifolia*, a medicinal plant, a decoration of which is recommended by susruta to be taken as a preventive for abortion. (Griffith - HOTA. pp 52 vol.1)
34. **Vakaṅta**³⁸ - A thorny tree, *Flacourtia Sapida*, used as a fuel at sacrifices and as the material of the great ladle called *dhruva*, and saucers for *soma* juice.
35. **Tārshṭāgha Wood**³⁹ - The tree probably called *Triṣṭāgha* which supplied the fuel, cannot be identified.
36. **Talāṣa**⁴⁰ - An unidentified shrub or tree.
37. **Ābayu**⁴¹ - An unidentified plant. It seems to have been poisonous in its natural condition, but medicinal when cooked and properly prepared.
38. **Vihalha and Madavati**⁴² - Unidentified plants.
39. **Alasālā, Silanjālā, Nilagalasālā**⁴³ - Unidentified weeds.

37 AV. II. 25. 1.

38 AV. V. 8. 1.

39 AV. V. 29. 15.

40 AV. VI. 15. 3.

41 AV. VI. 16. 1.

42 AV. VI. 16. 2.

43 AV. VI. 16. 4.

40. **Tauvilika**⁴⁴ - Unidentified plant.
41. **Viṣāṇakā**⁴⁵ - An unidentified plant or tree.
42. **Trāyamānā**⁴⁶ - An ambiguous medicinal plant.
43. **Kalyānī**⁴⁷ - The name of a leguminous shrub, *Glycine Debilis*.
44. **Nitatnī**⁴⁸ - An unidentified plant with deep roots, and therefore supposed to strengthen the roots of the hair.
45. **Vishātaki**⁴⁹ - Unknown herb.
46. **Srāktya**⁵⁰ - One of the Śānta or holy trees mentioned in a list given in the *Kauśika-Sūtra*, VIII, 15, and identified by *Dārīl* with the *Tilaka* which is a tree bearing beautiful flower. The Amulet which is to ward off witchcraft is made of the wood of this tree.
47. **Baja**⁵¹ - Some strong-smelling herb.

44 AV.VI.16.3.

45 AV.VI.44.3.

46 AV.VI.107.1;2.

47 AV.VI.107.3.

48 AV.VI.136.1.

49 AV.VII.113.2.

50 AV.II.11.2;VIII.5.4.

51 AV.VIII.6.3.

48. Piṅga⁵² - Unidentified herb.
49. Putirajju⁵³ - Some unidentifiable malodorous plant.
According to Ludwig, a species of serpent.
50. Paruṣāhva⁵⁴ - A kind of reed or rush.
51. Bhāṅga⁵⁵ - *Cannabis Sativa*, from which the
intoxicating drug is produced.
52. Udumbarā⁵⁶ - The Glomerous Fig tree: *Ficus Glomerata*,
Hindi-Dumbar, a large tree, generally found in and
around villages, and on the banks of rivers and
water-courses where the soil is rich and moist.
Besides amulets, sacrificial posts and ladles
were sometimes made of the wood of this tree.
53. Jangidā⁵⁷ - A plant frequently mentioned in the
Atharvaveda as a charm against demons and a
specific for various diseases. It appears to have
been cultivated, but no discription of it has
been given and it cannot now be identified.
54. Kuṣṭha⁵⁸ - A medicinal aromatic plant, said to be
the *Costus Speciosus* or *Arabicus*.

52 AV.VIII.6.19

53 AV.VIII.8.2.

54 AV.VIII.8.4

55 AV.XI.6.15.

56 AV.XIX.31.1.

57 AV.II.4.1;XIX.35.1-5.

58 AV.XIX.39.1;V.4.1;VI.95.1.

55. Śīpāla⁵⁹ - According to Sayana the same as *saivala*, the *Vallisneria Octandra*, a common aquatic plant.
56. Dhava⁶⁰ - A beautiful flowering shrub or small tree (*Grislea Tomentosa*). It is mentioned together with the *Asvattha* and *Khadira* in V.5.5.
57. Araṭu⁶¹ - A tree (*Calosanthes Indica*) with hard wood of which the axles of *chariot* and carts are made.
58. Añjana⁶² - A plant with scented wood. It grew wild on the *Triakuda* mountain and on the banks of the *Yamuna*. It had medicinal value.
60. Āsuri⁶³ - A herbal plant difficult to identify.
61. Haridra⁶⁴ - Identified with *haldi*, *Adina cordifolia*. It grew wild but was also cultivated. Its roots were the most useful objects which yielded yellow ingredients for dyeing clothes and preventing greying of hair.
62. Jangida⁶⁵ - *Hibiscus rosa Sinensis* is identified with *vaca*. The *Atharvaveda* considers it as the most excellent herb. Sayana says that it grew abundantly specially in the area of *Vārāṇasi*.

59 AV. XX. 16. 5.

60 AV. XX. 131. 17; 18.

61 AV. XX. 131. 18.

62 AV. IV. 9. 8-10.

63 AV. IV. 9. 1-10.

64 AV. I. 24. 1.

65 AV. II. 4. 1.; XIX. 34-35.

63. Jivanti⁶⁶ - An unidentified plant possessing power to regenerate life.
64. Kṣetriyanāśini⁶⁷ - An unidentified herbal plant.
65. Pramandini⁶⁸ - An unidentified plant mentioned with *gulḡuluḡ* and *aukṣaḡandhi*.
66. Rāmā⁶⁹. - An unidentified plant but Sāyaṇa identifies it with *Bhr̥ṇṭīgarāja* a variety of grass with green leaves and juicy stems.
67. Rohiṇi⁷⁰ *Soyimida febritenga A juss.* A plant with medicinal value.
68. Śafaka⁷¹ - A plant growing in water. It has been identified with *Trapa Bispinosa*.
69. Śana⁷² - *Crotalaria Juncea*. Śana or Sanai in Hindi. Macdonell and Keith identify it with hemp (vedic Index. Vol.II, p.356)
70. Śatavāra⁷³ - *Asparagus Racemosus*, satvara in Hindi, a herbal plant.

66 AV. III. 14. 6; VIII. 2. 6.

67 AV. II. 8. 1-5.

68 AV. IV. 37. 3.

69 AV. I. 23. 4.

70 AV. IV. 12. 1-7.

71 AV. IV. 34. 5.

72 AV. II. 4. 5.

73 AV. XIX. 36. 4.

71. **Sraktya** or **Tilaka**⁷⁴ - A herbal plant, unidentified.
72. **Śītika**⁷⁵ - A medicinal herb - unidentified.
73. **Sadampuṣpa**⁷⁶ - An unidentified plant.
74. **Tarakā** and **Vaiṣṇavā**⁷⁷ - Unidentified herbal plant.
75. **Trāyamāṇa**⁷⁸ - *Gentiana Kirroo royal* - medicinal herb.
76. **Viśānaka**⁷⁹ - Unidentified medicinal herb.
77. **Ajaśṛṅgi**⁸⁰ - *Gynandropsis Pentayhylla*. Also called *Arataki* Medicinal tree.
78. **Auksagandhi**⁸¹ - A fragrant plant.
79. **Kampitika**⁸² - Plant of hard wood. Its leaves were used in sacrifices.

74 AV. II. 11. 1-5; VIII. 5. 1-22.

75 AV. XVIII. 3. 60.

76 AV. IV. 20. 1-9.

77 AV. II. 8. 3; 5.

78 AV. VI. 44. 3.

79 AV. IX. 8. 20; VII. 113. 1-2

80 AV. IV. 37. 1.

81 AV. IV. 37. 3.

82 AV. II. 10. 1.; 2.

80. Kapitthaka⁸³ - Unidentified wild plant with medicinal values.
81. Karañja⁸⁴ - A wild plant.
82. Kimśuka⁸⁵ - A plant with bright and beautiful flowers.
83. Madāvati⁸⁶ - An intoxicating plant
84. Madhula⁸⁷ - A plant with medicinal value.
85. Pramanda⁸⁸ - A sweet scented plant.
86. Śikhañdi⁸⁹ - An unidentified large tree.
87. Vilva⁹⁰ - *Aegle marmelos* corr, *Bel* in Hindi, leaves and fruits used as medicine. Not found in *R̥gveda*.
88. IKṢU⁹¹ - For the first time mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*. Perhaps sugar-cane.

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- 83 AV. IV. 1-8.
- 84 AV. XX. 21. 8.
- 85 AV. XIV. 1. 61.
- 86 AV. V. 12. 2.
- 87 AV. V. 15. 1; 7; V. 6. 2.
- 88 AV. IV. 37. 3.
- 89 AV. XIII. 4. 7-9.
- 90 AV. III. 6. 6.
- 91 AV. I. 34. 1-5.

89. **Alsālā** ⁹² - A kind of creeper.
90. **Bhumipāśa** ⁹³ - An unidentified creeper which spread on the earth like a net and held it firmly.
91. **Nilāgālasālā** ⁹⁴ - A grain creeper
92. **Puṣkara** ⁹⁵ - Blue lotus.

Crops

1. **Vrīhi** ⁹⁶ - Apart from many separate references *Vrīhi* has been mentioned four times ⁹⁷ with *Yava* i.e. barley, the staple diet of India as a whole. Had medicinal value in the Atharvaveda. Its cultivation needs fair amount of water. Average produce is more than any other crop. Rice straw used as fodder. Husks used in making walls mixed with mud and it is used as fuel also. It can be stored for a long period.
2. **Yava** ⁹⁸ - Barley produced in U.P., Bihar, Orissa and Punjab. Must have been a staple diet in early vedic times.

⁹² AV.V.31.4.

⁹³ AV.XIII.31.4.

⁹⁴ AV.VI.16.4.

⁹⁵ AV.XI.3.8.

⁹⁶ AV.I.6.14;VIII.7.20;IX.1.22;XI.6.13;VI.140.2 etc.

⁹⁷ AV.X.6.24;VIII.2.18;XI.6.13;XII.1.42.

⁹⁸ AV.VI.142.1;VIII.7.20;IX.1.22;2.13;XI.8.15 etc..

3. **Tila⁹⁹** - Sesamum. A source of edible oil.
4. **Māṣa¹⁰⁰** - Bean pulse.
5. **Syāmaka¹⁰¹** - Panicum Fumertaceum, Millet
6. **Madugha¹⁰²** - Probably Sugar-cane.

⁹⁹ AV. XVIII. 4. 32; VI. 140. 2; II. 8. 3; XVIII. 4. 26 etc..

¹⁰⁰ AV. II. 140. 2; XII. 2. 53.

¹⁰¹ AV. XX. 135. 12; XIX. 50. 4.

¹⁰² AV. VI. 102. 3.

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