



Agricultural Methods in Vedic age

Whether the Vaidic Aryans came to **INDIA**, from outside, or they are the original natives of this country, may be a point of difference. But, no doubt, they stayed in one place, and were a disciplined, organised Society. The main source of their living was farming and animal - breeding. They are described as Farmers, in **RIGVEDA**. The Aryans, gave a lot of importance to Agriculture. The Vaidic advice is - "Get rid of gambling, and learn the Art of Farming. "**Akshairya Divyaha Krushimit Krushaswaha**". (RIGV. 10/347).

THE FIELD (Kshetra (Khet)

The word '**Kshetra Khet**' in **RIGVEDA**, clearly indicates that different types of Fields, were in existence, (RIG. 10, 33, 6). In some places, it represents 'Agricultural Land' (RIG. 1, 100, 18). Its meaning becomes clear, in **ATHARV - VEDA**, and after that.

The fields were of two types - **AGRICULTURAL (Apnaswati)** (Productive), and **NON-AGRICULTURAL (Artana)** (RIG. 1/127/6) (Non- producing). According to **RIGVEDA**, the fields used to be alertly new. This fact indicates, that there was the personal ownership, of the field for farming. This conclusion is supported by one **SUKTA** of **RUGVEDA** (8/91/5), in which, the ownership of Apala, over the productive field of his father, is considered similar to his personal right on the **HAIRS** of his head. The separation of land (**Urvarajit**) etc., is also, admissible as per that principle. It appears, that the use of the word '**Bhumi Ka Swami**' (RIGV. 8/21/3), in the case of **GOD**, is only the transcription or transfer of the personal adjective, (**Urvarapati**). The conquest of the fields, is referred to in Taitariya Sam. (3;2); Kathak (5;2) Maikayani (4;12;3). The opinion of Pishal (Vaidishe Studiyan - 2.2404 to 207) is, that, the wealth in the form of grass, was available, on all the four sides, of the agricultural land. In **VAIDIC** literature, there is no reference of any personal wealth, or agriculture, in the Lordship of any complete race. (**Beden Pavel - Indian Village Community - 1899**).

The field and house (**Aitanani**), are included, in the examples of wealth, stated in, **Chhandyogya Upanishad (7,24,2)**. In most cases, the family used to keep all the shares of land, in one united form, instead of its division. The rules concerning the Heredity of the land, were not existing, before the '**SUTRAS**' (Gautam Dharm Sutra - 18.5); (Bodha Dharm 2.2.3) (Aap Dharm 2.6.14).

The Vaidic literature, gives much less information, about the Economic System of the Villages. There is no evidence, which proves that people had the '**Collective Right**', over the land. As stated earlier, the personal right over the land, was familiar. But, in practice, it meant that, it was the right of the whole family, and not any single individuals. Even then, the reference of 'persons, having ambition to rule the Village' (Gram-Kam), a

mystic word, (Vyahruti), is found in the later 'Sanhita' (Taitti. 2,1,1,2). (Aitra. 2,1,9) etc. This indicates the system, that, as far as, the question of CROPS (Fasal) was concerned, the KING used to hand over his political special rights, of governing the village, to his beloved persons only. Beden Pavel (Ref. - 'Indian Village Community') thinks, that some time later, the thought prevailed, that the KING was the Lord of the Land. Another thought, parallel to this, came to birth, and the people who seized the land, in the manner quoted above, were known as 'Jamidar' (Land owner). But, in Vaidic Literature, there is no reference, other than the words, 'Gram Kam', which can support and prove, either of these two thoughts.

The opinion of Pishal (REF:- **Videshe Studiyan 2.205**) is that the Vaidic word '**Khil or Khilya**', mean the flat land, which is not divided into different parts, due to the standing crops, in between, and which is used by the cattle of the Society for grazing. **Olden Berg** defines its meaning, as the land, lying in between the agricultural lands, but which is not barren. This is in accordance with the fact, that during the Vaidic period also, the various systems of farming, were prevailing. In Vaidic literature, there is one word '**Aranya**'. It means, the attractive land, outside the village, which is not necessarily barren. Its difference from agricultural land, and 'Ghar' (Ama. RIGV. 6,24,10), is clarified, and, it is far away, from the living locality.

METHOD OF AGRICULTURE: - (Krushi Karm)

The review of the various methods of agriculture, in Vaidic Period, definitely reveals, that farming at that time also, was similar to the present one. No doubt, the Indian Aryans were familiar with the farming methods, even before the separation from **IRANIANS**. This becomes clear from the similarity between the mystic words '**Yavankrush**' and '**Sasya**' from **RIGVEDA**, and '**Hahaya**' and "**Yao Karesh**", from **AVESTA**. The meaning of these words, is "the seeds sown by ploughing" and "the food reaped from that".

But this point is also important, that the mystic words relating to ploughing, are available only in "MANDAL - 1 (first), and 10 (TENTH) only, of RIGVEDA.", and are rarely available in related (Pariwarik) MANDAL (2 to 7). The credit of starting agriculture, is attributed to Pruthvi Vainya, in **ATHARV. 8,10,24**). According to **RIGVEDA RIG. 8/22/6**), Ashwino was the first, to teach the Aryans, the art of sowing (bowing) the seeds, with the help of a plough (Vruk), (Dashashyanta Karvayaha). The later 'Brahman' and 'Sanhita' have repeatedly described the art of Agriculture.

During Vaidic Age, the fields (Urvar Kshetra) were made proper for sowing seeds, by the use of a plough. The plough was commonly known as 'Lagal' or 'Sir', and its front sharp part, was known as 'Fal'. The handle of the plough, used to be very smooth (Sumatitsakh, **ATHARV. 3/17/3**). One long Bamboo (Isha) was tied to the plough, over which, one YOKE (Yug), was being placed. The oxen were tied to this yoke, using the ropes around their necks. The plough was pulled and drawn by 6,8 or 12 bullocks, and from this number, we can imagine the heavy weight, and big size of the plough.

The ploughman (Kina) used to drive the bullocks, with the help of, the pointed iron stick, (Toya). Generally, the **VAISHYAS** (Vaishya) used to carry out the farming, in Vaidic Age. The fields were rich crop - producing. If they were not capable of producing good crops, the **MANURES** (crop-nourishing agents), were used. The cow -

dung (Karish), was used for this purpose. The natural Waste - products of the animals, was considered as important fertiliser, for the fields, as stated in ATHARV. 4/2/9.

The different actions concerning Agriculture, are clearly stated in Shatpath Brahman (1,6,1,3), as follows :- ploughing (Krushantaha); sowing (Vapantaha); harvesting (Lunantaha); crushing (Mrunantaha). The ripe crop was cut with a hack - saw (Datra, Sruni), tied in different bundles (Parn); and was dumped in godowns (Khal). After that, it was sieved through sieves (Titad) or jerked (Shubh), for separating corn, from the husk, and grassy portion, (RIG. 10/71/2). The person who used to jerk it, was known as 'Dhanyakrut' (RIGV. 10/24/13). The food crop was measured, by filling it, in a measuring - vessel, called 'Udar'

The varieties of acquired food - products, are not distinctly described in **RIGVEDA**, and hence keep us, in darkness. For instance, the meaning of the word 'Yav' is obscure, and that of 'Dhana' also, is not clear. The situation is different in the later '**Sanhita (Baj Sanhita)**'. In that, there is the word (Breehi) (RICE), and the word 'Yav', which means 'Jo' (Satu; Barley), and the name of one of its varieties, is (Upawak). The substances 'Mudrag', 'Mash', 'Tila' and other varieties of food, like Anu, Khalva, Godham, Niwar, Piyadg, Masur, Shyamak are also stated, and 'Urvaru', 'Urvaruk' were also known. It is not certainly known, whether, the Fruit trees were planted, or they were growing naturally, in the forests. (There is reference of plucking ripe fruits, in RIG. 3/45/4). But the reference of 'Karkandh', 'Kuval', 'Vadar' is available, very often.

THE SEASONS (Rutu)

The seasons of Farming, are described in short, in Taitiriya Sanhita (7,2,10,2) - "It gets ripe, in Summer, and, no doubt, it was sown, during WINTER season, as is the practice, in modern INDIA. RICE gets ripe in AUTUMN Season, and is sown, in the beginning of Rainy Season (Varsha) 'Mash' (Udid) and 'Til' (sesamum) are sown during the Rain in Summer, and get ripe in Winter Season." According to Taitiriya Sanhita (5,1,7,3), the crop (Sasya) was cut, twice during the year. As state in Kaushitaki Brahman (19.2), the seeds sown during Winter, get ripe upto the month 'CHAITRA' (Chaitra).

The farmers had to face, a number of calamities. The animals living in the holes of the ground (e.g. Rats, Chhachhudar), used to spoil the seeds. The birds, and serpent - like other animals (Upakwas, Jamya, Tard, Patang) damage the new buds, and the excess Rain - fall, as well as, the drought, hamper the crops. The ATHARV - VEDA describes the auspicious Chants, for the protection from such calamities. As stated in Chhandogya, the insects called 'Matchi', also destroy crops to a large extent. Sometimes, they destroy the crops completely. There is a reference, of one incident, that the whole, 'Kuru Janpad' was destroyed by 'Matchi' insects, in Chhandogya 1/10/1 ("Matchi Hateshu Kurushu").

IRRIGATION (Sinchai)

During that Era, the method of Irrigation was prevailing. In one chant, two types of water, are described - **Khanitrima** (produced by digging), and Swayam Ja (Naturally prevailing - river water etc. - (RIGV. 7/49/2). References of 'Kup' (Well), 'Avat' (ditches created by digging) are available in many places, in **RIGVEDA**. The water of these wells, never diminished. The water from the well, was drawn out, with the wheels, created

from stones. (**Ashmachakra**), to which, the pots that can hold water, were tied, by the Ropes (**Barwa**) (RIGV. 11/25/4). After drawing the water from the well, it was poured into the wooden receptacle (**Aahav**). The wells were used, not only for drawing water for the people and animals, but also, for Irrigation of the fields, some times. The well - water would reach the fields, by flowing through, wide lanes prepared (RIGV. 8/69/12) and make them fertile. This method of drawing water from wells, still prevails in some areas around Punjab and Delhi. The word '**Kusya**' is also available in Rigveda. Mueer is of the opinion, that, this probably indicates the artificial water-flows, that fall into the well.

DEVATA (Kshetrapati)

The agriculture was so important and useful, for the living of Aryans, that they believed in the might of one GOD named 'Kshetrapati' and have prayed to him for making their Lands fertile with crops. The description of 'Kshetrapati' is available in RIG. Mandal 4/57 sutra, and one of the chants, is as follows :- "**Shunam Naha Fala Datt**".

MEANING :- "Our Phal should happily dig out the earth, from ground. The plough-men (Kinash) should pleasantly, plough the fields, with the help of bullocks. He should bestow happiness, by pouring water, sweet like Honey (Mahamadhu), and Shunasir should create happiness in our minds."

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