

BEGINNINGS OF AGRICULTURE



Today we grow our food by cultivating land and rearing animals. But we know that in the beginning people lived only on wild plants and meat. When did agriculture begin? How did everyone in a band of hunters decide to grow crops?



For thousands of years, the hunting-gathering people did not cultivate anything. They collected grain, fruits, vegetables and tubers which grew wild in the forest. These were not planted or tended by anyone. Even today, we eat some things which grow in the wild.

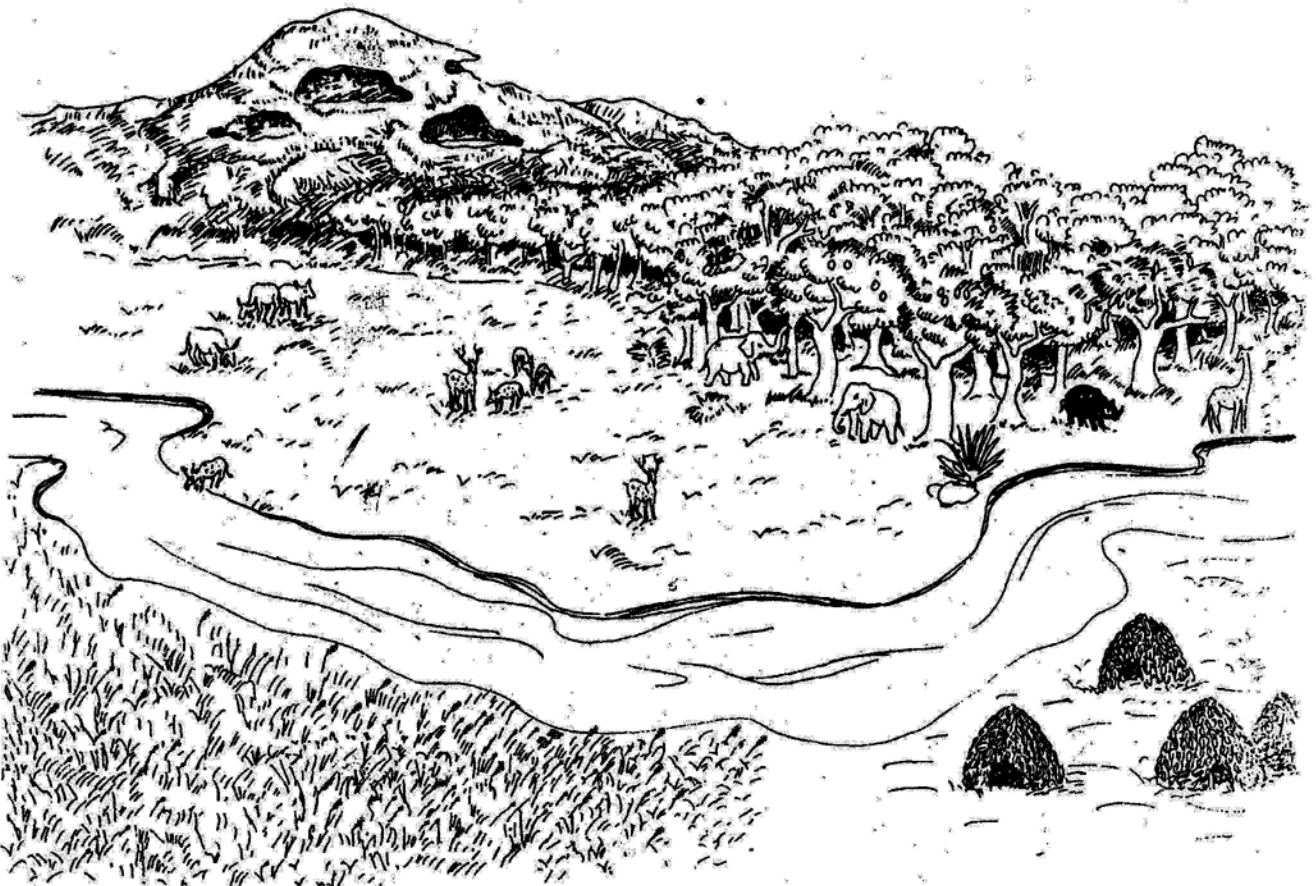
- *We consume several grains, fruits, vegetables, leaves and tubers gathered from the forest. Can you make a list of some of them?*

Having gathered wild grains and fruits from the forests, the hunter-gatherers must have known how a plant grows from a seed.

How did a group of people think of cultivating instead of collecting fruits or hunting? How did all the people in the group accept it? What happened and why did it happen? We cannot know definitely. However, from the few surviving remains of those days, we can guess what might have happened. Here is a story about how it could have happened.

STORY OF THE SUNGA BAND

Imagine that many years ago there was a band. Let us call it 'Sunga band'. Once upon a time, the place where the Sunga band lived looked like the place shown in this picture.



• *What kind of food could they have found here? Where would they have got wild grains? Could they have got some food from the river too? Where would they have got wild fruits? Where would they lie in wait for wild animals?*

The Sunga band knew every corner of this place. They knew where to find fruits, roots, wild grasses, rabbits and deer, and when to go to the river to catch fish and crabs. Throughout the year, they gathered food from some part or the other. Now they did not wander from place to place in search of food and made huts to stay in. Only during floods did they go up the mountain, and after a while they came down again.

The ancestors of the Sunga band did not know as much about the forest. They had to wander a lot from place to place in search of food. Now the Sunga band knew so much about the forest that they gathered food for the whole year from around the same place.

Choose the correct answer :

• *The Sunga band was able to stay in one place because -*

1. *They grew crops.*
2. *They hunted only big animals.*
3. *They managed to collect many things to eat from the jungle.*
4. *They had begun to make houses to live in.*

• *What are the similarities and differences between Karmi's band and the Sunga band?*

Boma and Goma's Discovery

There were two children in the band called Boma and Goma. Both liked to eat sprouted



grain. One day, they were sitting and eating it beside the river when a wild dog came along. Frightened, both of them ran away.

After a few days, when they went to the river bank, they saw new shoots of plants. Goma said, "The grain that we were eating had fallen here. Has the sparrow taken them?" Boma answered, "No, I think these shoots have come



out of those grains. Just the way mango trees come out from the seeds in the rainy season." Goma said, "Shall we throw some grain again and see?" So both of them went to their mother and asked for more grains. She refused saying, "This grain has been collected with so much effort. Now we have to make do with it for long." But the next day, Boma and Goma quietly picked up some grains and threw them at the back of the hut.

Everyday they went to see whether the shoots had come out. But it was summer. The seeds remained in the dry soil. Birds and insects ate them up. Boma and Goma started thinking. Then they found an answer. Goma said, "Let's cover the seeds with soil. Then the birds will not eat them." Boma said, "Yes, and let's pour some water on them. Maybe shoots sprout only when they get water."

So they planted the seeds and watered them with water from the river. Within a few days, the shoots came out. Goma and Boma's happiness knew no bounds. They watched the plants growing everyday.

All these facts about cultivation may seem very simple and plain to us now. But at one time, people must have taken quiet long to discover and understand them.

After some time there were grains on Boma and Goma's plants. Yes, because now the people of the Sunga band lived at one place, the children could watch the grain grow on

their plants. Seeing the grains, they said, "Look, the grains have really come." They collected the grains and ran home. "We have grown grains! We have grown grains!", they shouted happily.

"Wild Grains are Enough"

The people in their band began to laugh. They said, "There are so many grain-bearing plants around. Just cut them and eat. Why do you need to grow them?" But Boma and Goma did not lose their interest. They saved different types of seeds whenever possible. Many days passed in this way.



- **How strange ! The people of the band now knew how to grow crops, yet they did not want to cultivate the land. Can you figure out why?**

Let us see what happened next...

Difficulties of a New Place

One day a large band of hunters came to the place where the Sunga band lived and started fighting with them. The Sunga band could not face them. They ran away to a distant place. Here they faced many hardships. There was only a tiny river. There were neither animals nor fruits around. The grains of the grass that grew beside the river were too few and were soon finished. The Sunga band was forced to live on fishes and crabs.

- **Complete the sentences -**

1. The Sunga band had to move from their old place because _____.
2. In the new place, there were no _____ to eat, only _____ were available.



Boma and Goma's Effort

One day Boma and Goma said to their mother, "Why are you worrying? We know how to grow grains ! From one single grain seed you can get so many grains. Come, let's sow some grain." Their mother said, "As it is only very few grains are left. They shouldn't be thrown away." But Boma and Goma didn't give up. They too, had saved some grain. They put them into the soil and watered them. After a few days, shoots started coming out. But what happened next? The plants had just come out but they were withering already. Boma and Goma became very sad.

Their grandmother had been watching their activities for some time. Seeing Boma and Goma so troubled, she came out of her hut. She looked at the plants for some time and started thinking. She said , "Could it be that the grass around is not letting the plants grow? Come, let us dig it out." With a pointed stick they dug up some of the grass around. Then they sowed the seeds again on the cleared soil and watered them.

- **What other uses did the pointed stick have in those days?**



The Sunga Band Begins Cultivation

This time the plants grew easily. The whole band watched them grow. When they were ripe everybody cut them. The grandmother said, "Some plants have many good seeds. Cut them separately. We will plant them, so that we get good grains next time." In this way by sowing just a handful of seeds Boma and Goma got a basketfull of grains.



Everybody praised Boma and Goma. Now they all said, "Next time we will sow ten handfuls of seeds. Let us see how much grain grows. This place did not have grains. But now we will sow seeds and grow grains." And this is how the Sunga band started cultivation.

- **With what did the Sunga band harvest the grains?**

- **Complete the sentence :**

The Sunga band started cultivation at the new place because _____.

AGRICULTURE : WHO STARTED IT, WHERE AND WHEN

We read a story, how agriculture could have begun. But actually who started cultivation, when and where ?

Agriculture first started in the foothills of the Zagros mountains of Iran and Iraq, about 8,000 - 10,000 years ago. Slowly hunters in different parts of the world took to cultivation. In our subcontinent, agriculture began 5-6 thousand years ago in Baluchistan.

Like the Sunga band there were other bands too. Perhaps they knew about growing crops. Specially the women of the bands knew a lot

about trees and plants, because it were they who usually collected fruits, grains and roots. They must have come to know a lot about plants after seeing them so closely. When it was needed, this knowledge was applied to grow crops.

Did All Hunters Take To Cultivation?

Different bands started growing crops according to their needs. Not all bands did so at the same time.

- **A new band had driven away the Sunga band from its old place and had begun to live there. Do you think the new group too would have begun to grow crops?**

- **You must have seen that everyone does not take up a new thing at once. When the tractor came, did all the peasants buy a tractor?**

- **When the motorcycle came, did people stop using bullock carts and cycles?**

- **What are the reasons for this?**

Some people started growing barley, and some grew maize, since only wild maize was found in their region. Some grew sweet potato, and some grew wheat. Some other bands still lived on hunting and collecting wild fruits. They did not feel the need to grow crops. Even today, there are several such bands in the world. Factories have come up around them, agriculture and trade have begun. But they continue to survive by hunting and gathering food.

These are pictures of wild varieties of wheat and maize shown along with modern varieties




EXERCISES


1. Explain how some people could carry on hunting and gathering and yet live in one place?
2. What did Boma and Goma learn about growing grains?
3. Why did the Sunga band refuse to grow grain in the old place? Why did they become ready to do so in the new place?
4. a) According to the information gained from the remains of those times, where did cultivation first start?
 b) What were your ideas about the beginnings of agriculture before you read this lesson? What new ideas have you found in the chapter? If you have any questions about this, write to 'Sawaliram' for an answer.
 c) Complete this piece on the 'The Beginning of Agriculture.'
 "In the beginning, people used to hunt and collect fruit from the jungles. They also used to collect wild grains growing in the jungle. As long as the band got enough to eat like this, it could survive. But if"
5. True or False :
 - a. All other bands in the world learnt cultivation from the Sunga band.
 - b. In every band children like Boma and Goma discovered cultivation.
 - c. In discovering agriculture, the women of the band must have been in the forefront.
 - d. Different bands started cultivation at different times.
 - e. In the beginning all the bands grew wheat.

PLOUGHING, SOWING, HARVESTING THEN AND NOW :

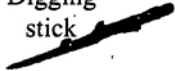
Here are some pictures of old and new tools used in agriculture. Select from these pictures and draw them in the table given below, showing the oldest, the comparatively new and the latest tools of agriculture.



Sowing with a tractor




Seed-drill




Digging stick

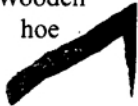
	Ploughing tools	Sowing tools	Harvesting tools
Most ancient			
Old			
Recent			



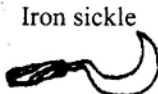
Sowing by hand




Harvester



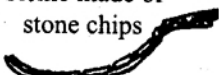
Wooden hoe




Iron sickle



Plough



Sickle made of stone chips



Tractor

BEGINNINGS OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

People started rearing animals just the way they had started cultivating land. Somewhere one tribe tamed wild cows, another tamed horses, while some other tribe at a different time tamed sheep and goats. We can imagine how people may have started taming animals, just the way we can imagine with the help of Boma and Goma's story, how cultivation began.

Perhaps after a hunt, the hunters took home the live young ones of the animal they had killed. They may have thought they could kill them later when they could not get a wild animal to hunt. After a while, they may have realised that instead of killing them right away, it would be more useful to tame these young animals.

However, we can be sure that peoples' lives changed a lot when they started rearing animals. They now got many new things. However, for tending these animals, people now had to do many new kinds of work too.

- *Which of these tasks would have started only when people began to rear animals? Put a tick mark on them.*

Collecting fodder for animals, encircling animals to kill them, arranging drinking water for the animals, carrying dead animals, treating sick animals, bathing animals, skinning animals, making shelters for animals, giving rest to tired animals, attacking tired animals, protecting animals from other animals, preventing theft of animals, removing the horns of dead animals, cutting the flesh of animals, milking animals, helping animals in delivering their young ones.

Benefits of Animal Husbandry

You must be knowing the benefits we get from domestic animals.

- *Pick out from the list given below, the things people obtained only after they tamed animals -*
- *ghee, meat, fat, curd, skin, wool, things made of bones and horns, carts pulled by animals, help in load-bearing, animal-driven ploughs.*

People started getting different kinds of benefits from animals. Besides, the strength of some animals like bulls, camels, horses and mules was also used to carry or pull load.

- *Do you think these animals have more strength than human beings?*

Without the help of these animals people found it difficult to travel and carry things from one place to another. Travel became easier with the help of animals.

- *Animals were also useful in agriculture. Can you say how?*

As a result of all these developments, peoples' lives changed a lot. Read about it in the next chapter.

