
UNIT 4 THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION

Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Changes in the Dietary Pattern
- 4.3 Settlement Pattern
- 4.4 Tools
- 4.5 Pottery Making and Weaving
- 4.6 Exchange and Use of Metals
- 4.7 Social Structure
- 4.8 Belief System
- 4.9 Summary
- 4.10 Exercises

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In archaeological terms the Neolithic period followed the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. It covered a span of about six thousand years – from 12 thousand years ago to approximately 6 thousand years ago. The concept of Neolithic was introduced by the archaeologist John Lubbock in 1865 to differentiate it from the Old Stone Age or the Palaeolithic. Etymologically the term ‘Neolithic’ is derived from two Greek words – ‘neo’ meaning new and ‘lithos’ meaning stone. Till the mid twentieth century the term Neolithic was associated with the period represented by new ground and polished tools. That the term implies much more than the use of new tools and encompasses a change in the life of hunter-gatherers has been sufficiently established now. The domestication of plants and animals and near total dependence on farming, increase in population and in the size of settlements, use of pottery and weaving, greater social and cultural interaction among people are some of the features associated with Neolithic. In most societies of the world the Neolithic period preceded the emergence of a complex society and a civilisation.

The term Neolithic Revolution was used by V. Gordon Childe in his book *Man Makes Himself* (1936) to highlight the revolutionary significance of the beginning of agriculture in the world. According to him, the period followed the acute climatic crisis of the early Holocene and made humans active partners with nature instead of parasites on nature. Fresh research has however proved that climatic change was neither sudden nor drastic. Following the last period of glaciation, temperatures rose gradually. In West Asia the climate was neo-thermal i.e. it was neither too cold nor too warm. Now the work of scholars like Ofer Bar-Yosef has shown that the post-glacial warming up was not a smooth progression from cold to warm and from dry to moist phases but that the conditions were fluctuating even when the ice sheets were retreating. It was finally around 10,000 years ago that the climate grew progressively warmer.

Climatic change, which fell short of a crisis, nevertheless had a far-reaching impact on the patterns of existence.

Some scholars have raised objections to the word ‘revolution’ to characterise the change. However, the transition to agriculture and stock-raising were so crucial for the social and economic organisation of human communities that the term revolution has been used to highlight the consequences of beginning of agriculture. For Childe, therefore, food production was the greatest economic revolution in human history after the mastery of fire. Now there was a possibility of a storable surplus for communities to use variously. It could be used during time of crisis, could support a larger population and could be exchanged. It should be remembered that not all early agricultural societies had a food surplus to depend on. Besides, the Neolithic way of life has now come to be associated with a long period of evolution rather than representing rapidity of change. Several parts of the world are now associated with the beginning of agriculture. The process of beginning of agriculture has been explored in the previous chapter; here our focus would be on some of the other aspects of this stage of cultural transition.

4.2 CHANGES IN DIETARY PATTERN

One of the first consequences of the Neolithic way of life was a radical change in human diet. Whereas the Paleolithic diet was mainly meat-based, it became more and more diversified in the Mesolithic. Now, in the Neolithic, it was based primarily on cereals – wheat and corn in western Asia and Europe, rice in southern and eastern Asia, sorghum and millet in Africa, maize in America. The development of the food producing economies took place in two stages. The first saw some farming and herding of animals and bulk of the diet came from game and wild vegetable foods. The next stage came about 8000 years ago when more productive cereal grains and cattle, sheep, goats and pigs were completely domesticated. . This created the fully agricultural and stock-raising economy that persisted into historic times, of course in more elaborate forms. The domestication of animals added an entirely new element in the diet: milk and its derivatives. The replacement of a meat diet with a largely vegetable one necessitated the use of salt which became an item of trade. These radical changes in diet had consequences for human metabolism and diseases – areas of research that are being explored.

4.3 SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The domestication of plants and animals seemed to have brought about significant changes in the way people lived. A sedentary way of life was one of the main consequences of food production. Earlier it was felt that a site was permanently settled if it contained artifacts like flint sickles, blades, querns (milling stones) and facilities like storage pits. Research has shown that there have been villages without such tools and without farmers. For instance, during the Upper Paleolithic and the Mesolithic advanced hunter-gatherers who adopted an annual migratory cycle and practiced seasonal nomadism, lived in camp like dwellings. Early Neolithic villages in Mallaha (northern Israel, inhabited around 11,000 BP.), Tell Mureybit (Syria) and Suberde (Turkey) were more dependent on intensive collection of wild food. The pattern of settlement changed over a period of time. The Neolithic way of life had considerable demographic consequences. Even in the absence of reliable figures or statistics it can be said that populations were increasing. In almost all the Neolithic cultures, the number

and size of settlements and the number of cemeteries considerably increased in the Neolithic compared with earlier periods.

Excavations in Cayonu, Jericho and Jarmo and in the Mediterranean islands of Crete and Cyprus have revealed successive levels of occupation at the same sites. This had resulted in mounds and an increase in the circumference of the site. The Neolithic village of Jarmo was occupied more than 7000 years ago and measured approximately three to four acres. It was a cluster of about 24 houses built of baked mud. These were repaired and rebuilt on the same spot, perhaps to economise on land and to guard against floods. As a result of the very frequent reoccupation of the area, the elevated areas created about 12 distinct levels of occupancy. Villages of mud-plastered walls, as in Jarmo and pavements of limestone cobbles and stone walls in Cayonu, hint at a somewhat elaborate village network of about 150 people.

Beidha (Jordan) reveals two types of settlement. It is easy to distinguish between the layers of Natufian open-air settlements which had living floors with post-holes and sunken hearths which suggest a temporary settlement and the substantial semi-subterranean round house up to four meters in diameters and built with stone walls of the subsequent Neolithic period. A terrace wall to retain the sand dunes on which it was built surrounded the village, entered by a few stone steps. When the village was rebuilt, after the fire of 8,650 BP., the houses were freestanding and rounded. They finally became rectangular in shape.

As compared to these, a rectangular plan of houses existed in Jericho from the very beginning of the PPNB phase. A rock-cut ditch more than 9 feet deep and 10 feet wide was bordered by a finely built stone wall with towers. The beehive shaped huts of Jericho were within these defenses. While the Neolithic sites here date from 10,500 years ago, the defense wall was constructed about nine thousand years ago. While the exact reasons for the wall are not clear, the competition for scarce resources and the need for defense was perhaps one of the reasons for it. Some recent geomorphological researches hint that the walls may have been flood control works (Bar-Yosef).

About 8000 to 7000 years ago, the Neolithic settlement of Catal Huyuk covered about 32 acres. Numerous houses of sun-dried bricks of standard sizes were built. The foundation of houses also consisted of mud bricks. The houses were rectangular with a small storeroom attached to them. They were designed to back onto one another, occasionally separated by small courtyards. The insides of the houses show a remarkable consistency of plan with specific areas for resting, cooking and for worship. The entrance to the houses was through the roof, access to which could have been with the help of a moveable ladder. This could have provided protection against outsiders and floods. This system of defense must have been quite successful because the only form of destruction suffered by Catal Huyuk was fire. In Europe, initially Greece or rather the Aegean world, where Neolithic began nine thousand years ago, i.e., about two thousand years later compared with Anatolia, the buildings were mainly made of sun-dried bricks, wood and wattle and daub. The settlements of the Yangshao culture in the Henan province in China go back to c.7100 to 4900 years ago. Life had become sedentary and settlements measured from tens of thousands to a hundred thousand or more square metres. Some of the villages had defensive moats. The houses were either semi-subterranean or surface buildings of wooden constructions. The remains of the houses show that the Yangshao culture had reached a high level of competence in house building.

4.4 TOOLS

Cultivation and all the processes associated with it like clearing of forestland, turning over of the soil, sowing of seeds, harvesting, thrashing and grinding of cereals, required special tools. There had been some attempts in this direction during the Mesolithic. A digging stick and a hoe were some of the early tools used to prepare the ground for cultivation. While a hoe helped in turning over the soil, a digging stick was used to dig furrows in soil for planting seeds. Reaping knife and sickle helped in harvesting ripened plants. Cereals like wheat and barley had to be separated from the husk by threshing and winnowing, and then ground into flour. The grinding and pounding tools like mortars, querns and pestles had to be of tough stone.

However, only certain artifacts used for cutting like axes or adzes were polished. Moreover the technique of polishing was only a minor innovation for it involved application to stone of an earlier technique for working bone that had been in use since the Upper Palaeolithic or perhaps even earlier. New technology was being devised for the manipulation and exploitation of plants and other sources of food. A specialised tool like a sickle was made by attaching short blades of flint on to a wooden handle. The sickle blades of Jarmo (Zagros Mountains) were made of chipped flint. When used for harvesting grain they could be mounted on a piece of wood or bone. For the first time the farmers of this region began using tools of obsidian – a volcanic glass which provided a cutting edge sharper and harder than stone. Tools like axes were polished by rubbing the edges on stones because people must have realised that they could fell trees more effectively with a polished axe than with an axe-head made simply by flaking the material roughly into shape. This was achieved by removing very small flakes from the surface by pressure-flaking, i.e., by pressing against the edge of a flint or obsidian with a pointed bone or hardened wood, rather than by striking flakes with the stone. It had been known earlier, but it came to be widely used now.

4.5 POTTERY MAKING AND WEAVING

People had now begun using the material naturally available quite ingeniously. Clay was one such material. It was used for laying down floors and for making toys and other artifacts. It has been suggested that small geometric objects such as spheres, cones and disks made from clay were used in recording information pertaining to the changing seasons, harvests etc. In the absence of writing, stray methods as these could have served the purpose of storing basic information. Clay was hardened by firing and shaped into bowls and other pots. The hunters and foragers had used organic material as hide and wood and vegetables like gourds and pumpkin to make containers. But these had a limited utility. They could not be used for cooking purposes. Pots are particularly useful for groups who collect or cultivate durable foods such as nuts, grass-seeds and grain.

Gradually Neolithic pottery became more sophisticated than the plain earthenware of the Mesolithic. It is important to note that clay was mixed with other materials such as sand or even organic materials to prevent excess shrinkage during drying to prevent the clay from breaking when it was fired. The early farmers seem to have been quite careful about the quality of the finished product.

To facilitate the retention of liquids the potters of West Asia may have been the first ones to glaze the surface of the vessel or to burnish it with a stone. The method of burnishing had earlier been practiced to polish the floors and the wall of the early houses. A question frequently asked is how did the early agriculturists shape the vessel in the absence of the wheel? Perhaps this was done by initially making the base of the pot over some hemispherical object and then they must have added rings of clay to provide the vessel a structure and height. The early pottery could have been either sun dried or fired in domestic hearth or a bonfire. We have no evidence of a furnace or a kiln specifically for this purpose at this early date.

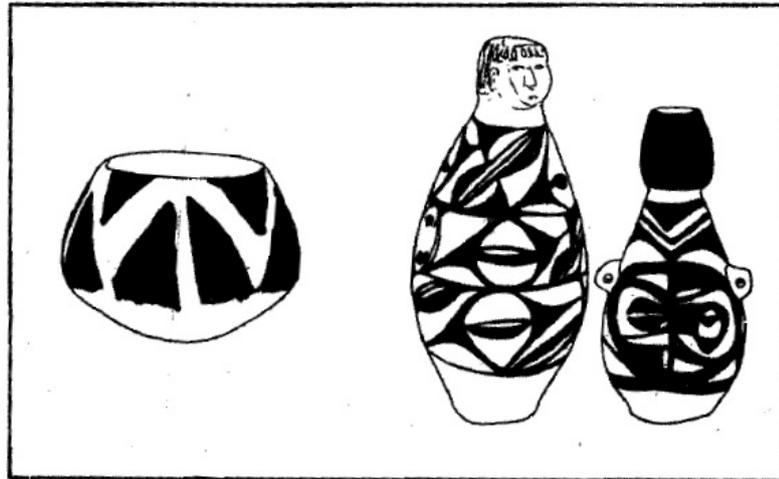
In most Neolithic societies pottery and weaving came to be associated with agriculture. These activities involved creating or making new substances that did not occur ready-made in nature. The vessels cut out of wood or soft stone or shaped from vegetables like gourds and used by hunter-foragers continued to be used but were not useful if food had to be cooked or stored for a long time. Some groups of hunter-gatherers of the Upper Palaeolithic already knew that clay hardens on contact with fire. This is evidenced by the terracotta figures of animals of this period from some parts of the world like Moravia. It was, however, far more difficult to make a ceramic vessel. It is necessary to purify the clay, mix it with straw or small fragments of stones or shell in order to temper it and prevent it from cracking during firing, mould the vessel and fire it at a high temperature in a pit or primitive kiln. Thus pottery made primarily with clay came into prominence. However this was not true of all the food producing economies. In some parts of the world like Anatolia, West Asia, Greece and South America the early phase of Neolithic was marked by aceramic cultures.



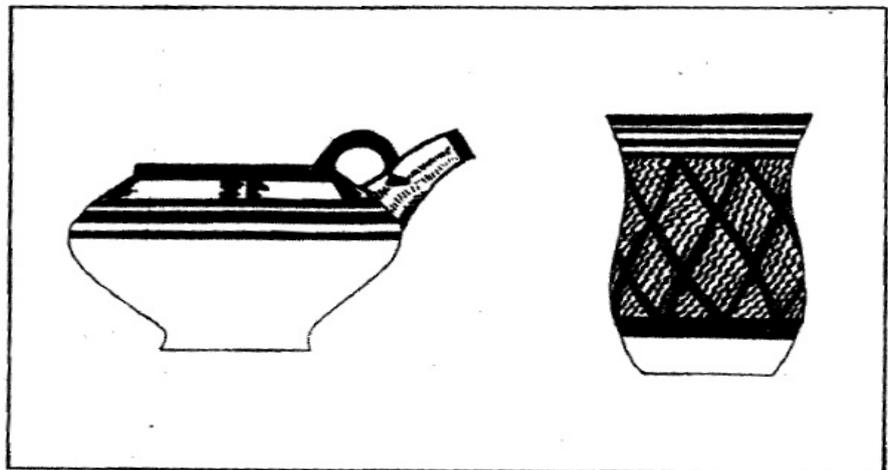
Jar from Iran around 4th millennium BC (After Wenke, OUP, 1984, p. 248)

Initially clay pottery was hand made, but with the introduction of the wheel in the sixth millennium BC, fine wheel made pottery became common in places like West Asia. Over a period of time, Neolithic communities began decorating their pottery. The styles and the designs chosen changed very slowly. Pottery has thus emerged as one of the best indicators for the identification of particular cultures and for determining the period of these cultures. The ceramic products of the earliest inhabitants of Catal Huyuk in Anatolia (modern Turkey) for instance, consist of many shapes – oval bowls, handled jars, and flat based vessels. By the time of the Halaf culture (7500-6700 BP, northwestern Iraq)

the motifs on the ceramics had become distinctive, indicating the presence of regional centres in the manufacture of pottery. In Merimde and Fayum in North Africa and in the Danubian Neolithic sites in Europe, ceramic pots seem to imitate leather vessels. In the Yangshao culture in the Henan province of China, dating back to c.7,100 to 4,900 years ago, kilns found near the settlements show that they were capable of firing pottery at a very high temperature to produce a red ware and hand-made pottery like bowls, jars and tripods.(See figure below of Painted Pottery, Yangshao Culture [China])



Painted Pottery, Yangshao culture China, (After *History of Humanity*, I., p. 485)



Ceramic Vessels of Ubaid type, Saudi Arabia (After *History of Humanity*, I, p.444)

However, there is no simple co-relation between the beginning of agriculture and pottery-making. This and other kinds of craft production are dependent on factors like environment and social and economic needs and pressures. There are hunter-gatherers who make pottery and who grind and polish stone tools. There are farmers who do neither. Certain tools like flint sickles and adzes and axes were used around 11,000 BP. in Wadi-en- Natuf and other places in Southwest Asia by groups who were selectively hunting and herding and harvesting wild wheat and barley. In the Tehuacan Valley of Meso-America, the earliest cultigens are found around 7,000 BP. pottery 4,300 BP. and polished

stone axes much later around 3,200 BP. Granaries were dug to store the crop. In Fayum (Egypt), dating back to about 6300 BP, straw-lined pits were found filled with grains of domesticated emmer wheat and barley.

Weaving is also more likely to develop under more sedentary conditions. It requires a steady supply of fibers, wool, flax or cotton. The domestication of goat and sheep in West Asia and of the llama and other animals like guanaco and vicuna in the Andes (South America) led to the beginning of weaving only when the fleece of these animals grew suitable for spinning and weaving. This happened when certain mutations had occurred due to domestication. Thus, since the earliest domesticated sheep had hairy coats, woollen textiles developed long after the beginning of sheep herding. This further establishes the point raised earlier in the context of domestication of animals that the herders could not have knowingly selected sheep for 'woolliness'. As far as the tools are concerned, the early settlers made bone needles, including net making needles, awls and fishhooks as in Nea Nikomedeia in Greece around late 7th millennium BC.

4.6 EXCHANGE AND USE OF METALS

The advances made in creative abilities did not take place in isolation. The advanced hunter-gatherers and early farmers depended on each other for the exchange of products and the movement of flocks between seasonal pastures. Some of the stone tools could not have been used without some kind of an exchange mechanism. Rare stones were exchanged for surplus seeds or other non-perishable items. To cite an example, tools made from obsidian have been found all over southwest Asia. It is a hard volcanic glass which produces an extremely sharp cutting edge. It was used for making scrapers and knives as early as 30,000 years ago. Tools made from obsidian have been found in Shanidar (Iran) around 10,000BC. And in other Natufian sites like Jarmo in the Levant. In the Neolithic settlement of Catal Huyuk both obsidian and flint were used for making daggers, scrapers, firestones (for striking fire) and knives. The major source of obsidian were regions of recent volcanic activity, for instance, places around Italy, some islands in the Aegean Sea, Taurus (the mountain region around modern Turkey) and Armenia. The presence of the material thousands of miles away from its source indicates an active exchange in it.

Around 10,000 years ago obsidian was traded in the form of glass lumps or cores. The extent of use of this material depended largely on the distance from the sources of supply. While Jericho, which was about 500 miles away from Anatolia (an important supplier of obsidian), used more flint than obsidian, farmers of Jarmo were almost completely dependent on it. They acquired it from across the Zagros Mountains. It could have been transported largely on foot or by boat from across the mountains down the Tigris River. The farmers of West Asia and the Mediterranean region exchanged flint and *Spondylus* shells (a Mediterranean mussel used for ornamentation) and precious stones as jadeite and greenstone. Apart from representing growth of economic contact between geographically separated areas, exchange of such materials also encouraged and strengthened social ties among people. Thus none of the Neolithic communities were completely self-sufficient. Both essential items like grains, game and jungle products and luxury articles were bartered and exchanged. Evidence for these shows that interaction of Neolithic communities with other

groups was more frequent and extensive than among Palaeolithic food gatherers. In Gordon Childe's words, "the pooling of human experience had to that extent been accelerated by the Neolithic revolution".

It is now believed that the widespread exchange of raw materials accelerated the diffusion of a whole range of innovations far and wide, among them, the introduction of pottery and eventually copper and bronze metallurgy. Metalworking was one of the major inventions at the very beginning of the Neolithic period. Metals like copper began to be used in sites in western Asia around 10,000 years ago. However, copper was not a substitute for stone or obsidian. Colourful stones like the native copper could have initially aroused the artistic sensibilities of the early settlers. This was found on the ground and was not mined. Copper was quite abundant in West Asia. At first, only native copper was used by hammering it with a stone hammer on an anvil of stone. The ductility of copper and its tendency to brighten as blows were struck on its surface encouraged toolmakers to use them for making simple decorative items, trinkets like rings and small tools. The next stage was reached around eight thousand years ago when it was realised that copper could not only be hammered but also heated to a very high temperature, melted and poured into moulds to make large objects with complicated shapes. Still later people learned how to extract copper from less pure ores like cuprites, metaconite, azurite and malachite by means of successive smelting to remove dross and impurities. Other metals such as gold, silver, lead and tin began to be used around the same time.

The first evidence of trinkets made from copper comes from the Shanidar caves in the Zagros Mountains where a perforated pendant dating back to 11th millennium BP. was found. They are more abundant between 8500 and 7200 BP. The earliest habitation levels at Catal Huyuk have yielded a necklace made from copper tubes and carnelian beads. Copper trinkets have been found in Yarim Tepe (northeastern Iran) and copper beads have been found in Ali Kosh and the late agricultural site of Hacilar in Turkey dating to 7000 BP. Through new methods of dating and other researches it has been amply demonstrated now that copper-working methods were discovered indigenously in the Balkans around seven thousand years ago and, about a thousand years later in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula. Significantly, copper was not indigenous to all the sites where the artifacts were made. For instance, there is no copper within hundreds of mile of Ali Kosh (southwestern Iran) where a copper tube, hammered into shape and dating back to 8500 BP has been discovered – a fact that clearly establishes the case for an active exchange during the transition to agriculture.

4.7 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

It should be evident from the discussion so far that the shift from hunting gathering to more scheduled food collecting techniques was backed by subtle changes in the social structure. A family as a unit of residence or working groups of men and women could have occupied the villages that emerged with early farming practices. As compared with hunter-gatherers, early agriculturists needed a more corporate social structure. There had been an increase in economic activities pursued in the Neolithic villages. In the Upper Palaeolithic there was but one specialist, the sorcerer-shaman, while all other members of the community shared the same activities: the making of tools and other artifacts, hunting, fishing and so on. In the Neolithic villages, on the other hand, a variety

of activities like farming, stock-breeding, pottery-making, weaving, stone and metal work, carpentry etc. demanded a more rigorous division of labour among sexes and among different sections of people.

In Gordon Child's estimate, discovery of suitable plants and appropriate methods for their cultivation were tasks accomplished by women. In fact according to him, pottery-making and spinning and weaving and almost all the major inventions and discoveries were works of women. Recent studies show that question of whether men or women should get 'credit' for the innovation of agriculture in any particular region is rather irrelevant. First, it ignores the fact that plant and animal reproductive biology was well known to people even in the Pleistocene. Second, the successful commitment to agriculture is something that the entire society has to accept. However, it is clear that the transition to agriculture was accompanied by dramatic changes in the economic and social roles of men and women. Working on the fields with a hoe (before the introduction of the plough), pottery-making, weaving, tending to the animals, collecting ripened seeds, grinding flour and cooking, besides other kinds of household activities, came to be performed by women. In farming societies, the desire for more children to fuel the agricultural workforce, further added to the responsibilities shared by women. Clark Larsen's (1984) study has shown that men carried on hunting and fishing after the adoption of agriculture, perhaps at a more leisurely rate, whereas women took on the taxing field and household chores.

The possibility of a storable surplus as in Jericho and Catal Huyuk must have gradually necessitated distribution and redistribution of land among individual families within the larger kinship organisation of the Neolithic societies. These families now sought facilities that were held jointly earlier. These developments encouraged competitiveness and a feeling of economic insecurity. As mentioned earlier, a stone wall surrounded the closely clustered houses in Jericho. A stone tower of some 8 meters in height was built outside the wall. This is considered world's first monumental architecture. A ditch was also cut into the bedrock outside the wall. None of these building activities would have been possible without supervision and control by a cohesive group. Besides Jericho in the PPNA stage, defensive walls came around villages in late Samarran phase (6th millennium BC.) in Iraq and in early Meso-America. In Merimde (Egypt) huts were arranged in regular rows along streets. Architectural traits such as these point towards some kind of an ordered community existence. In Catal Huyuk some of the structures were found to be larger and more elaborately equipped than others. This has given the impression that it had religious cult centres or shrines for the performance of ritual functions.

The structure of the houses is in fact an indication of the social organisation of the individuals inhabiting these. The circular huts of the early period were small and could hardly be seen in the archaeological record between 11,000 and 8,500 BP. These houses built with thatched roof could be easily carried along. However, more rooms could be added to the rectangular houses of the later Neolithic period, for instance, in early Meso-America and West Asia between 9,000 and 7,500 BC. These houses could accommodate more members. They had wattle and daub (mud plastered) walls, which are a sign of permanence. The presence of individual storage-bins as compared with common granaries or storage-pits seen in villages with circular huts indicates the importance of families as social units. The multi-room rectangular residences of Jarmo for the

period 6,750 to 6,000 BC. show that some herding and farming families had opted for large families that could assist in several different activities associated with agriculture.

This also meant that there was now a need to evolve a few social mechanisms to prevent tension and control strife. The hunter-gatherers, among whom the kinship ties are far more flexible, perhaps coped with interpersonal conflicts and competition by moving in smaller bands. It is quite possible that the early Neolithic villages dealt with the social problems generated by a more sedentary life by seeking the intervention of a few individuals or a set of people who began functioning as arbiters in disputes. Let us visualise the relatively new set of living conditions and problems associated with village life. There was now a greater need for group effort to build shelters and storage facilities; to guard the community against threat of diseases related to crops and stagnant water, threat of loss of food through rotting or rodents and due to the threat of expropriation of the surplus produced. Individuals who helped the community to overcome these threats could have emerged as 'leaders'. The presence of 'precious goods' of the Neolithic period like obsidian (volcanic glass) and certain kind of shells in the graves of a few in Abu Hureyra and Catal Huyuk is at times cited as an indication of their high status in society.

4.8 BELIEF SYSTEM

In a Neolithic set-up, agriculture and the social network that supported it had to have commonly accepted customs to ensure smooth relations among the inhabitants. The unwritten legislation contains the roots of the laws of the historic period. Responsibility for ensuring that these rules were respected fell either on village chief or the priest. A common religion and a common language perhaps bound the Neolithic villagers together. The physical environment they lived in found a reflection in the world-view or the belief system of the early farmers. Similar to the inter-relationship between the hunting-gathering economy of the Paleolithic and the symbolic representation of animals in the cave art of the Upper Paleolithic period, there was now during the transition to agriculture a renewed interest in the reproductive/procreative abilities of plants, animals and human beings.

A persisting concern with fertility and procreation is natural to agricultural societies. The religions of the Neolithic were clearly fertility cults with dual male (sky, sun, rain) and female (earth, moon) principles. Female figurines, moulded in clay or carved in stone or bone, have been found in almost all the Neolithic societies. These are ancestors of the 'Mother Goddess' cults of the subsequent period. It is inferred in these practices that the earth from whose bosom the grain sprouts is a woman who would be influenced by prayers, sacrifices and rites and incantations. The male partner in fertilization is depicted through phallic representations as phalli of clay and the like. In the opinion of some scholars, when the development of agricultural techniques like tilling with a plough, drainage and irrigation made it too hard for women to work in the fields and when domestication of animals like aurochs made stock-raising too dangerous for them, the male principal in the religion of the agriculturists gradually became more important. The plaster reliefs of monumental size, bull-heads projecting from the walls and wall paintings found in some of the buildings in Catal Huyuk are an evidence of religious observance, art and symbolism that was growing elaborate and complex.

Magic and ritual became an essential part of these societies. Burial of the dead came to be performed with greater pomp compared with the Paleolithic cultures. At Jericho and Ain Ghazal in Jordan, the dead were buried with their heads severed, sometimes under the floors of the houses. At both the sites plaster figurines modeled after the features of the deceased have been found, indicating some form of an ancestor cult. The archaeological remains show that the early farmers believed in some form of survival after death. The cult of the dead played an important part in their communities. Neolithic burials were characterised by both, single graves and collective tombs. As Neolithic societies came to be differentiated on the basis of prestige and power, the pattern of burial for different groups in society changed likewise. In Europe a very elaborate form of burial is represented by the megalithic tombs, perhaps meant for a small number of privileged people who enjoyed great prestige in their societies. Similarly, at the beginning of the Neolithic, grave goods i.e. the goods that accompanied the dead were simple. But as social differences grew, the resulting stratification of society was reflected in the grave goods. Exceptionally lavish tombs for certain sections of society have been found in the Varna necropolis in Bulgaria and in Catal Huyuk in Anatolia.

4.9 SUMMARY

The term Neolithic Revolution has thus come to mean much more than a cataclysmic event that introduced the use of new kind of tools. It needs to be stressed that 'Neolithic' deals with a long and evolutionary process that started about 15,700 years ago, gathered momentum about 12,750 years ago and emerged fully, based on domestication of plants and animals as in parts of western Asia around 11,000 years ago. Thus Neolithic has come to represent a period of profound social change when human communities developed new mechanisms of control over land, labour and capital which resulted in social differentiation. Further social, economic and political complexities for instance in the form of civilizations would not have emerged without the existence of agriculture and animal husbandry.

4.10 EXERCISES

- 1) In what ways did the settled agriculture affected food habits and habitats of humans during Neolithic period.
- 2) How are Neolithic tools different from late Paleolithic?
- 3) Write a short note on pottery making during Neolithic period.
- 4) How did Neolithic society influenced their belief system?
- 5) How was Neolithic society more complex than the Paleolithic?