



0614C181

Rasheeda's question

Rasheeda sat reading the newspaper. Suddenly, her eyes fell on a small headline: "One Hundred Years Ago." How, she wondered, could anyone know what had happened so many years ago?



Finding out what happened

Yesterday: you could listen to the radio, watch television, read a newspaper.

Last year: ask somebody who remembers.

But what about long, long ago? Let us see how it can be done.

What can we know about the past?

There are several things we can find out — what people ate, the kinds of clothes they wore, the houses in which they lived. We can find out about the lives of hunters, herders, farmers, rulers, merchants, priests, crafts persons, artists, musicians, and scientists. We can also find out about the games children played, the stories they heard, the plays they saw, the songs they sang.

Where did people live?

Find the river Narmada on Map 1 (page 2). People have lived along the banks of this river for several hundred thousand years. Some of the earliest people who lived here were skilled *gatherers*, — that is, people who gathered their food. They knew about the vast wealth of plants in the surrounding forests, and collected roots, fruits and other forest produce for their food. They also *hunted* animals.

These movements of people enriched our cultural traditions. People have shared new ways of carving stone, composing music, and even cooking food over several hundreds of years.

Names of the land

Two of the words we often use for our country are India and Bharat. The word India comes from the Indus, called Sindhu in Sanskrit. Find Iran and Greece in your atlas. The Iranians and the Greeks who came through the northwest about 2500 years ago and were familiar with the Indus, called it the Hindos or the Indos, and the land to the east of the river was called India. The name Bharata was used for a group of people who lived in the northwest, and who are mentioned in the Rigveda, the earliest composition in Sanskrit (dated to about 3500 years ago). Later it was used for the country.

Manuscript

A page from a palm leaf manuscript.

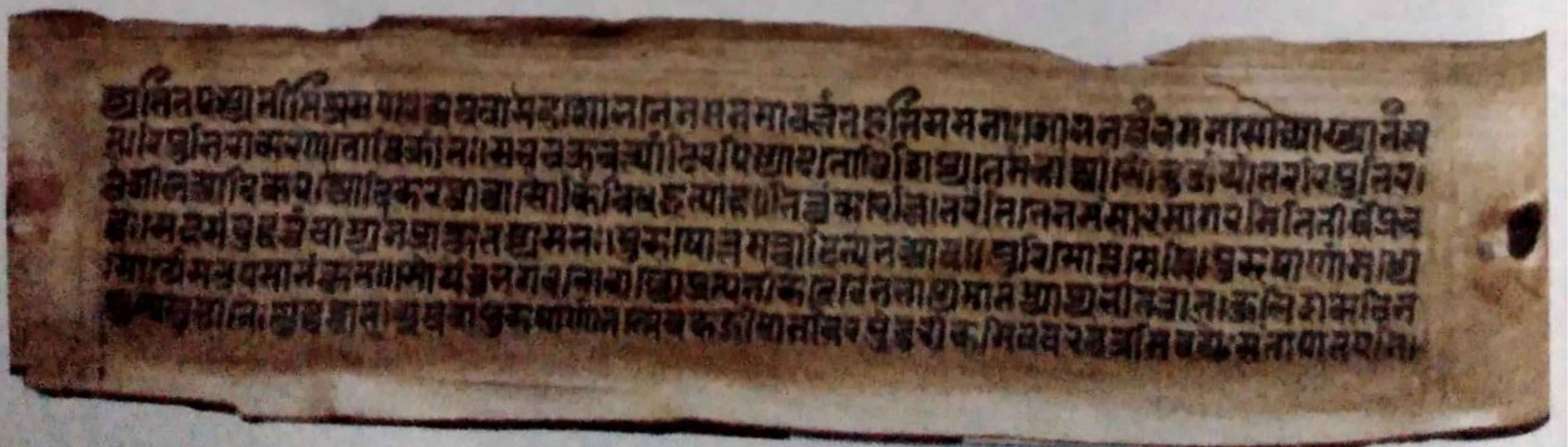
This manuscript was written about a thousand years ago. The palm leaves were cut into pages and tied together to make books. To see a birch bark manuscript, turn to page 37.

Finding out about the past

2 Ans - 2

There are several ways of finding out about the past. One is to search for and read books that were written long ago. These are called *manuscripts*, because they were written by hand (this comes from the Latin word 'manu', meaning hand). These were usually written on palm leaf, or on the specially prepared bark of a tree known as the birch, which grows in the Himalayas.

Over the years, many manuscripts were eaten away by insects, some were destroyed, but many



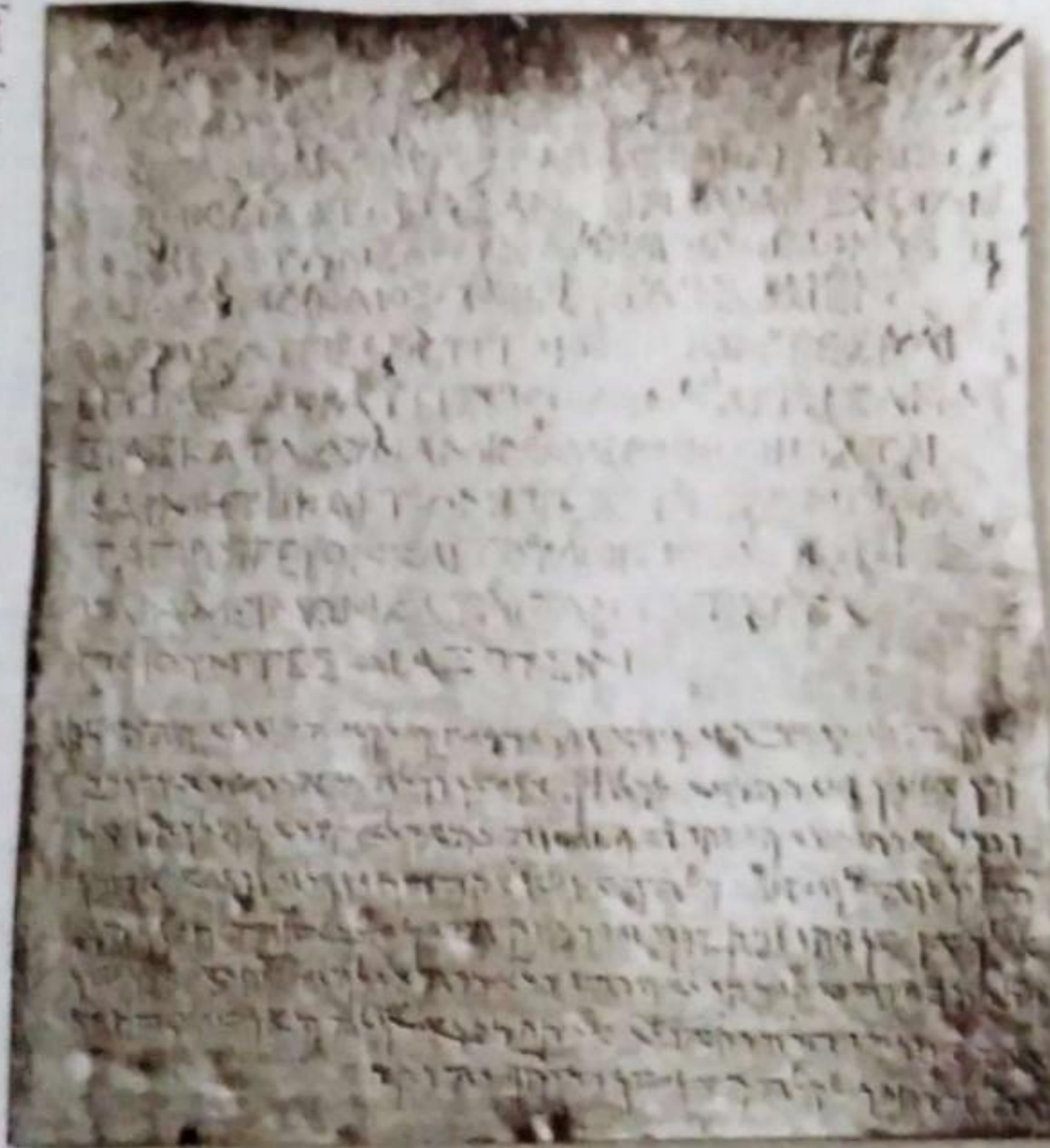
have survived, often preserved in temples and monasteries. These books dealt with all kinds of subjects: religious beliefs and practices, the lives of kings, medicine and science. Besides, there were epics, poems, plays. Many of these were written in Sanskrit, others were in Prakrit (languages used by ordinary people) and Tamil.

We can also study *inscriptions*. (These are writings on relatively hard surfaces such as stone or metal.) Sometimes, kings got their orders inscribed so that people could see, read and obey them. There are other kinds of inscriptions as well, where men and women (including kings and queens) recorded what they did. For example, kings often kept records of victories in battle.

Can you think of the advantages of writing on a hard surface? And what could have been the difficulties?

There were many other things that were made and used in the past. Those who study these objects are called *archaeologists*.

(They study the remains of buildings made of stone and brick, paintings and sculpture. They also explore and *excavate* (dig under the surface of the earth) to find tools, weapons, pots, pans, ornaments and coins. Some of these objects may be made of stone, others of bone, baked clay or metal.) Objects that are made of hard, imperishable substances usually survive for a long time.



An old inscription. This inscription dates to about 2250 years ago, and was found in Kandahar, present-day Afghanistan. It was inscribed on the orders of a ruler named Ashoka. You will read about him in Chapter 8. When we write anything, we use a script. Scripts consist of letters or signs. When we read what is written, or speak, we use a language. This inscription was inscribed in two different scripts and languages, Greek (top) and Aramaic (below), which were used in this area.

Ans-4.

5 ■

WHAT, WHERE, HOW, AND WHEN?

2. Inscriptions -
Ans 2

of the country. For example, today most people living in the Andaman Islands get their own food by fishing, hunting, and collecting forest produce. By contrast, most people living in cities depend on others for supplies of food. Differences such as these existed in the past as well.

Besides, there is another kind of difference. We know a great deal about ~~kings and the battles they fought because they~~ kept records of their victories. Generally, ordinary people such as hunters, fishing folk, gatherers, farmers or herders did not keep records of what they did. While archaeology helps us to find out about their lives, there is much that remains unknown.

Ans-5

because it was not an easy task for them.)

What do dates mean?

If somebody asks you the date, you will probably mention the day, month and year, 2000 and something. These years are counted from the date generally assigned to the birth of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity. So, 2000 means 2000 years after the birth of Christ. All dates before the birth of Christ are counted backwards and usually have the letters BC (Before Christ) added on. In this book, we will refer to dates going back from the present, using 2000 as our starting point.

Ans-6. i. Kings had absolute power over all his subjects, irrespective of their profession, farmers had no such powers.

(ii) Kings lived in palaces, farmers had no such opportunities.

One of the most famous stories of decipherment comes from Egypt, a country in north Africa where there were kings and queens about 5000 years ago.

Rosetta is a town on the north coast of Egypt, and here an inscribed stone was found, which contained inscriptions in three different languages and scripts (Greek, and two forms of Egyptian). Scholars who could read Greek figured out that the names of kings and queens were enclosed in a little frame, called a cartouche. They then placed the Greek and the Egyptian signs side by side, and identified the sounds for which the Egyptian letters stood. As you can see, a lion stood for L, and a bird for A. Once they knew what the letters stood for, they could read other inscriptions as well.

Imagine

You have to interview an archaeologist. Prepare a list of five questions that you would like to ask her/him.

Let's recall



1. Match the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Narmada Valley | The first big kingdom |
| Magadha | Hunting and gathering |
| Garro hills | Cities about 2500 years ago |
| Indus and its tributaries | Early agriculture |
| Ganga Valley | The first cities |

KEYWORDS

travelling
manuscript
inscription
archaeology
historian
source
decipherment

2. List one major difference between manuscripts and inscriptions. *is -*

Let's discuss



3. Return to Rasheeda's question. Can you think of some answers to it?

SOME IMPORTANT DATES

- ▶ the beginning of agriculture (8000 years ago)
- ▶ the first cities on the Indus (4700 years ago)
- ▶ cities in the Ganga valley, a big kingdom in Magadha (2500 years ago)
- ▶ the present (about 2000 AD/CE)

4. Make a list of all the objects that archaeologists find. Which of these could be made of stone?
5. Why do you think ordinary men and women did not generally keep records of what they did?
6. Describe at least two ways in which you think the lives of kings would have been different from those of farmers.

Let's do

7. Find the word *crafts persons* on page 1. List at least five different crafts that you know about today. List the crafts persons — (a) men (b) women (c) both men and women?
8. What were the subjects on which books were written in the past? Which of these would you like to read?