
UNIT 2 PASTORAL NOMADISM

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Domestication of Animals
- 2.3 Pastoral Nomadism
- 2.4 General Survey of Spread of Pastoral Nomadism
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2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last Unit we referred to the use of spears, bows and arrows and microliths toward the upper Palaeolithic period. You must have noticed that these influenced the hunting patterns as well as ways of securing animal food. The microliths were used for fishing as well as arrow heads for hunting. These new tools helped in hunting the small game in the forests rather than hunting herds in steppes. Hunting was also becoming more selective. Groups were becoming smaller with small number of families as smaller amounts of game were available. The patterns of movements or habitations were also influenced. They were determined by the availability of plants, animals and environment. A migratory or seasonal way of life with some base camps emerged. By this time many hunting gathering groups had acquired knowledge about their immediate environment. The pattern of growth of vegetation of different types of plants and use of various plants for their survival, knowledge about animals, their life cycle, breeding patterns, habitat and food consumption was also available to the hunter gatherers. This knowledge helped them in domesticating plants and animals.

Following the upper Palaeolithic phase, in last 12000 years in different regions hunting gathering cultures underwent changes representing different patterns of subsistence and ways of life. Some groups continued with hunting gathering ways of life in isolated groups down to the modern times while others took to pastoralism or moved to settle ways of agriculture at varying points of time in different regions.

In majority of cases the domestication of plants and animals was the crucial element in transition to agriculture and transformation to settled life. This transition was gradual spread over hundreds of years and not a sudden phenomenon. In most of the early cultures both domestication of plants and animals appear almost simultaneously. While in the next Unit we will provide a detailed discussion on the transition to agriculture. In the present Unit we will confine ourselves to the process of the growth of pastoral nomadism.

Domestication of animals was the first step towards the adoption of pastoral nomadic way of life. We will first discuss the domestication of various species of animals. This would be followed by a discussion on the main features of pastoral nomadism and the circumstances under which it developed in the earliest