

# GENERAL AWARENESS

★ **History and Culture of India**

(Indus Valley Civilisation, Vedic Culture, Emergence of New Kingdoms, Medieval India, Advent of Europeans and Indian National Movement)

★ **Indian Polity**

(The Constitution of India and its Salient Features, Executive, Legislature, Constitutional & Non-Constitutional Bodies and National Symbols)

★ **Indian Geography**

(India-Location, Relief and Drainage, Climate and Natural Vegetation, Resources and Industries)

★ **Indian Economy**

(National Income, Rural Economy, Banking, Fiscal and Monetary Policies)

★ **General Science**

(Physics – Measurement, Force & Motion, Light, Heat & Temperature and Electricity)

(Chemistry – Matter Around Us, Atomic Structure and Chemistry in Everyday Life)

(Biology – Plant and Animal Kingdom, Micro-organisms, Organ Systems and Nutrition & Health)

## HISTORY AND CULTURE OF INDIA

### EARLY INDIA : FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO THE INDUS CIVILISATION

- ◆ Human life can be traced in India to Stone Age.
- ◆ The sources for the history of this period are archaeological sites, geological sediments, animal bones and fossils, stone tools, bone tools, rock paintings and artefacts. There is no written evidence for this period. Although the Harappans used a script, it is yet to be deciphered.
- ◆ The pre-historic period witnessed no development of scripts. It is referred to as Stone Age.
- ◆ It is believed that human ancestors might have first evolved in Africa and later migrated to different parts of the world. The migrants were known as 'Homo erectus'.
- ◆ Recent researches have revealed that humans lived in India between 2 million and 1 million years ago.
- ◆ The period before invention of script is divided into Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. The names have been assigned depending upon the metals they used.
- ◆ The earliest age in history is called old Stone Age or Paleolithic. This period is divided into (1) Lower Paleolithic Culture (2) Middle Paleolithic Culture and (3) Upper Paleolithic Culture.
- ◆ The period after Stone Age is Mesolithic Age next is Neolithic Age. In the Neolithic Age only, animal and plant domestication developed leading to food production.
- ◆ During the Lower Paleolithic Period, human ancestor species of Homo erectus is believed to have lived in India. The first Palaeolithic tools were identified at the site of Pallavaram near Chennai by Robert Bruce Foote in 1863.
- ◆ Pre-historic study mainly depends on tools they used. They used the tools mainly for hunting, butchering and skinning the animals.
- ◆ The industries of Palaeolithic cultures are divided into the Early, Middle and Late Acheulian Industries. The early Acheulian tools include polyhedrons, spheroids, hand axes, cleavers and flake tools. The Acheulian tradition is absent in the Western Ghats, coastal areas and north-eastern India. Heavy rainfall is attributed to its absence.
- ◆ Lower paleolithic tools are found in Athirampakkam, Pallavaram and Gudiyam caves near Chennai, Hunsgi valley and Isampur in Karnataka, and Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh are some important Palaeolithic sites where the Acheulian tools are found.
- ◆ Researchers have concluded that Paleolithic age was around two million years ago. This culture continued upto 60,000 years ago.
- ◆ Evidence of hominin (immediate ancestors of Homo Sapiens) fossil is rare in India. The only rare hominin fossil was found in Hoshangabad in M.P. A fossil was discovered in Athirampakkam. But now not available.
- ◆ A hominid Skull cap was found in a basal conglomerate deposit in 1982. It is considered to represent the Archaic Homo Sapiens.
- ◆ In Narmada Valley, animal fossils of pre-historic elephant skull was discovered. Skulls of wild cattle and of great horse-like animal were also found. The teeth of horses or asses and of water buffalo were found. 17 animal hoof-prints have been uncovered at Athirampakkam.
- ◆ The people of Lower Paleolithic age lived in caves near river valleys as seen from evidence in Bhimbetka (M.P).
- ◆ They belonged to the species of 'homo erectus' who had no complex languages. They expressed a few sounds and signs. They were intelligent enough to use stone tools.

#### Acheulian and Sohanian :

Based on research, two independent cultural traditions of hand axe (Acheulian) and pebble-flake (Sohanian) industries were confirmed in India. Acheulian industry mainly had hand axes and cleavers. The Sohan industry is considered to have used only chopper and chopping tools. The Sohan industry gets its name from the Sohan river valley of Pakistan. These two cultural traditions are not considered distinct any longer. Recent studies argue that there was no independent Sohan tradition as Acheulian tools are found in the Sohan industry as well.

- ◆ About 4,00,000 years from now, changes took place in lithic technology and the species of human ancestors diverged. Anatomically, modern humans are said to have emerged around 3,00,000 years ago. The middle Paleolithic period of Athirampakkam is dated to be around 3.85 to 1.72 lakh years from now.
- ◆ The tool types of the Middle Palaeolithic period are hand axes, cleavers, choppers, chopping tools, scrapers, borers and points, projectile points or shouldered points and knives on flakes. Flake industry was predominant in the Middle Palaeolithic period and tools such as scrapers, points and borers were made. Scrapers were used for wood and skin working. The middle Paleolithic culture in India is dated between 3,85,000 and 40,000 BCE.
- ◆ The Middle Palaeolithic sites are found in Narmada, Godavari, Krishna, Yamuna and other river valleys.
- ◆ The main features of the Indian Middle Palaeolithic period include the following :
  1. The tools became smaller.
  2. The decrease in the use of hand axes in relation to other tools.
  3. Use of core preparation techniques in stone tool production.
  4. Use of chert, jasper, chalcedony and quartz as raw materials.
- ◆ The period of upper Paleolithic culture is marked by innovation in tool technology and increased cognitive capability of humans.
- ◆ The modern humans evolved first in Sub-Saharan region about 3,00,000 years ago. They migrated and occupied various areas of Asia around 60,000 years ago. Their tool technology improved to blades and bone tools. Many tools made of Silica - rich raw materials were used.
- ◆ Bone tools and faunal remains are found in Kurnool caves of Andhra Pradesh.
- ◆ The upper Paleolithic culture is represented in India between 40,000 and 10,000 years from now.
- ◆ The people of this period used caves as well as the open air space for living. Meralbhavi in Karnataka, Kurnool caves and Godavarikhani in Telangana, Baghor I and Baghor III of Son Valley in Madhya Pradesh and Patne

in Maharashtra are some of the Upper Palaeolithic sites of India.

- ◆ Sri Lanka has evidence of microliths and hominin fossils. Incised ostrich eggshell, and shell and stone beads have been found at Jwalapuram in Andhra Pradesh, Patne in Maharashtra and Batadomba-Lena and Fa Hien Cave in Sri Lanka.
- ◆ Evidences of art in the forms of paintings, beads and ornaments of this period have been found.
- ◆ Some of the green colour paintings of Bhimbetka belong to this period according to archaeological evidence.

Equus refers to the genus of animals including horses, asses and zebras.

### Mesolithic Culture

Mesolithic culture can be found along the length and breadth of India. In the following places, the Mesolithic sites have been discovered.

Mesolithic sites in India are found in Paisra (Bihar), Langhnaj (Gujarat), Baghor II, Chopani Mando, Sarai Nahar Rai, Mahadaha and Damdama (all in Uttar Pradesh), Sankanakallu and Kibbanahalli (Karnataka). Rock shelter sites are found in Lekhakia, Baghai Khor, Adamgarh and Bhimbetka.

Coastal sites are seen at Mumbai,teri sites of Thoothukudy in Tamil Nadu and Vishakapatnam, which have microlithic evidence.

The change of climate triggered migration of people to various eco-zones. Monsoon pattern had also developed.

Even in today's deserts of Rajasthan also, there were fresh water lakes between 10,000 and 3500 B.P.

The date of Mesolithic culture differs from place to place.

In eastern Mediterranean (Levant) it dated between 20,000 and 9500 BCE, In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it continued upto 1000 BCE. In Srilanka, microlithics appeared about 28,500 years BP.

**Ostrich Egg Shells :** Evidence of ostrich has been found in some pre-historic sites of India. The egg shell of this bird had been used as beads and those from Patne have been dated to 25,000 BP. They are found in Bhimbetka and Patne.

**Teri** : A coastal landscape caused by sand dunes. These soils may have originated in the Pleistocene epoch of the Quaternary period.

### Economy

- ◆ Hunting was the main Occupation, Agriculture was not practised. Domestication of animals paved the way for neo-lithic age. The rock paintings of central India depict hunting, trapping, fishing etc.
- ◆ The faunal evidence from this period shows that people belonging to this period hunted cattle, gaur, buffalo, barasingha, porcupines, sambar, chital, gazelle, hog deer, nilgai, jackal, turtle, fish, wild hare, lizard, fox and monitor lizard. Bones of rhinoceros and elephant have also been found. They used spears, bow and arrow and traps. The paintings of Bhimbetka show that various animals were hunted and for this men and women went together.
- ◆ The people used fire and perhaps roasted food. Domestic animal bones of cattle, sheep, goats, pig and dog have been found at Kanewal, Loteshwar and Ratanpur, and from Adamgarh and Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh sites. Camel bones have been found from Kanewal.
- ◆ The Mesolithic people were highly mobile. They made temporary hunts with perishable materials. They moved mainly in search of food.
- ◆ Oval and circular huts and possible wattle daub are found in Chopani Mando and Damdama in Uttar Pradesh and Bagor and Tilwara in Rajasthan.

### Burials

The Mesolithic people buried the dead, which suggests their beliefs and humane relationships. Human skeletons have been found in Mahadaha, Damdama and Sarai Nahar Rai in Uttar Pradesh. At Mahadaha, a man and a woman were buried together. One burial had an ivory pendant as the grave good.

### Art

- ◆ Art was an integral part of mankind. The hunters and gatherers have not vanished with Mesolithic age. They continued as a marginalised class even in pre-historic period and today also.
- ◆ A chert stone used as a core had geometric engravings from Chandravati in Rajasthan,

bone objects from Bhimbetka and human tooth engraved with geometric design and Rock paintings are found in the rock shelters of Madhya Pradesh and Central India. They show people hunting, trapping animals and fishing and dancing. Bhimbetka near Bhopal, Raisen and Pachmarhi in Madhya Pradesh and South Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh are some of the sites. Even today, we witness such groups, tribals in Andaman and Nicobar islands.

- ◆ These people might have decorated themselves with flowers and leaves.

### Hunters and gatherers of the Historical Period

Many such groups lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, as recorded in the Edgar Thurston's Castes and Tribes of Southern India.

### Characteristics of the Mesolithic Cultures

- ◆ The Mesolithic people lived in semipermanent and temporary settlements.
- ◆ They occupied caves and open grounds.
- ◆ They buried the dead.
- ◆ They had artistic skill.
- ◆ They were spread over wider geographical regions.
- ◆ Cultural continuity is noticed in many parts of India from this period.
- ◆ Their microlithic tools enabled them to hunt smaller animals and birds.

### Early Neolithic Age

The Neolithic period witnessed Agriculture and domestication of animals. The people started settling in fertile areas such as Nile region of Egypt and Mesopotamia of West Asia the Indus and Gangetic regions of India and also in China. Between 10,000 BCE and 5000 BCE, agriculture emerged in these regions. The production in agriculture and domestication of animals resulted in permanent settlements. Pottery developed. Cultural developments accompanied.

The neolithic cultures came to be regionalised. The earliest culture flourished in North west India, then in north India. Eastern Zone witnessed later.

The Neolithic culture of north-western India is the earliest to have evidence of plant and animal domestication in India. Mehrgarh, Rana Ghundai, Sarai Kala and Jalilpur are some of the Neolithic sites. These sites are now situated in Pakistan.

It dates back to 7000 BCE. Wheat and barley were cultivated. Sheep, Goat and Cattle were domesticated. It was precedent to Indus Valley civilization.

The first cultural period of Neolithic age of Mehrgarh dating between 7000 BCE and 5500 BCE witnessed cultivation of barley, emmer and einkorn wheat, jujube, ilanthai and dates, and also domesticated sheep, goat and cattle. They were semi-nomadic, pastoral groups.

The II period of Mehrgarh between 5500 and 4800 BCE witnessed pottery. Terracotta and glass were in use. Long distance trade was there, as Lapez Lazuli used by them were available only in Badakshan.

Neolithic culture in Kashmir region was contemporary to the Harappan civilisation. Burzahom, an important site of this culture, provides evidence for the Megalithic and Early Historic Periods. In this place, people lived in pit houses (about four metres in depth) in order to escape the cold weather.

There was a trade link between the people of Burzahom and Harappan cities.

Two phases of Neolithic culture were aceramic and ceramic phases. Pottery and hunting were in full form.

The development of human dentistry shows the advancement of culture from eating raw meat and grains to cooked meat and cooked grains. Dentistry had also developed.

The Neolithic sites are found at many places in Bihar and West Bengal. Birbhanpur and Chirand are some of the prominent Neolithic sites in this region along with Kuchai, Golbaisasan and Sankarjang. These cultures show similarities with

the Neolithic complexes of east and Southeast Asia. The Neolithic cultures of South India have been found mainly in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and the north-western part of Tamil Nadu.

Paiyyampalli in Tamil Nadu is the major Neolithic site in South India. Some early Neolithic sites have ash mounds. Utnur and Palvoy in Andhra Pradesh and Kodekal, Kupgal and Budihal in Karnataka feature ash mound sites. Soft ash and decomposed cow dung layers are also found at this site. The evidence of habitation in the form of houses and burials are found around the ash mounds.

In Eastern India, the remains of the neolithic periods dating between 2500 BCE and 1500 BCE, are found in Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

Daojali Hading and Sarutaru are the Neolithic sites in the Assam region. This region bears evidence for shifting cultivation.

Austro Asiatic language used by them shows cultural similarities with South East Asia.

#### People and their Habitat

People	Region
Australopithecus	East Africa
Homohabilis	South Africa
Homoerectus	Africa and Asia
Neanderthal	Eurasia (Europe and Asia)
Cro-Magnons	France
Peking	China
Homo sapiens	Africa
Heidelbergers	London

## INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

#### Ancient World Civilisations

- Mesopotamia – 3500 to 2000 BCE
- Indus Valley – 3300 to 1900 BCE
- Egyptian – 3100 to 1100 BCE
- Chinese – 1700 to 1122 BCE

#### Settlement of people

- ◆ Initially, people lived in groups. Then they formed communities out of these groups. Then evolved the societies which in due course became civilisations.

People preferred to settle near the rivers because :

- ◆ The soil is fertile.
- ◆ Fresh water is available for drinking, watering livestock and irrigation.
- ◆ Easy movement of people and goods is possible.

#### Harappa

The ruins of Harappa were first described by the British East India Company soldier and explorer Charles Masson in his book.