GENERAL AWARENESS

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 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'. 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. The people of Lower Paleolithic age lived in caves near river valleys as seen from evidence in Bhimbetka (M.P). 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 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 :

- The tools became smaller.
- The decrease in the use of hand axes in relation to other tools.
- Use of core preparation techniques in stone tool production.
- 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

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
Heidelbergs	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

Harappa

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

In the 1920s archaeologists began to excavate the cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. They unearthed the remains of these long-forgotten cities. In 1924 the Director General of ASI, Sir John Marshall, found many common features between Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. He concluded that they were part of a large civilisation. Some slight differences are found in the earthenwares of Harappa and of Mohenjo-Daro. This made the researchers conclude that Harappa was older than Mohenjo-Daro.

Sites on Indian borders

Archaeologists found major Harappan sites near Indian borders. They are : Manda, Rakhigarhi, Harappa, Mitathai, Kalibangan, Ganveriwala, Mohenjo-Daro, Kot Diji, Amri, Dholavira, Lothal.

Time Span of Indus Civilisation

Geographical range	South Asia
Period	Bronze Age
Time	3300 to 1900 BCE (determined by using the radiocarbon dating method)
Area	13 lakh sq.km
Cities	6 big cities
Villages	More than 200

Urban Civilisation

Harappan civilisation is said to be urban because of the following reasons.

- ✦ Well-conceived town planning
- ✦ Astonishing masonry and architecture
- ✦ Priority for hygiene and public health
- ✦ Standardised weights and measures
- ✦ Solid agricultural and artisanal base

Streets and Houses

The streets are observed to have a grid pattern. They were straight running from north to south and east to west and intersected each other at right angles. The roads were wide with rounded corners.

Houses were built on both sides of the street. The houses were either one or two storeys. Most of the houses had many rooms, a courtyard and a well. Each house had toilets and bathrooms. The houses were built using baked bricks and mortar. Sun-dried bricks were also used. Most of the bricks were of uniform size. Roofs were flat. There is no conclusive evidence of the presence of palaces or places of worship.

Drainage System

Many of these cities had covered drains. The drains were covered with slabs or bricks. Each drain had a gentle slope so that water could flow. Holes were provided at regular intervals to clear the drains. House drains passed below many lanes before finally emptying into the main drains. Every house had its own soak pit, which collected all the sediments and allowed only the water to flow into the street drain.

The Great Bath

The great bath was a large, rectangular tank in a courtyard. It may be the earliest example of a water-proof structure. The bath was lined with bricks, coated with plaster and made water-tight using layers of natural bitumen. There were steps on the north and south leading into the tank. There were rooms on three sides. Water was drawn from the well located in the courtyard and drained out after use.

The Great Granary

The granary was a massive building with a solid brick foundation. Granaries were used to store food grain. The remains of wheat, barley, millets, sesame and pulses have been found there.

The Assembly Hall

The Assembly Hall was another huge public building at Mohenjo-Daro. It was a multi-pillared hall (20 pillars in 4 rows to support the roof).

Trade and Transport

Harappans were great traders. Standardised weights and measures were used by them. They used sticks with marks to measure length. They used carts with spokeless solid wheels. There is evidence for extensive maritime trade with Mesopotamia. Indus Seals have been found as far as Mesopotamia (Sumer) which are modern-day Iraq, Kuwait and parts of Syria.

Dockyard at Lothal

Lothal is situated on the banks of a tributary of Sabarmati river in Gujarat.

Leader in Mohenjo-Daro : A sculpture of a seated male has been unearthed in a building, with a head band on the forehead and a smaller ornament on the right upper arm.

Iron was unknown to people of Indus.

Indus people used the red quartz stone called Carnelian to design jewellery.

Copper was the first metal discovered and used by humans.

Occupation

The main occupation of the Indus Civilisation people is not known. However, agriculture, handicrafts, pottery making, jewellery making, weaving, carpentry and trading were practiced.

Pottery

Pottery was practiced using the potter's wheel. It was well fired. Potteries were red in colour with beautiful designs in black. The broken pieces of pottery have animal figures and geometric designs on it.

End of Harappans

By 1900 BCE, the Harappan culture had started declining. It is assumed that the civilisation met with repeated floods, ecological changes, invasions, natural calamity, climatic changes, deforestation and epidemic.

Important Indus Valley sites where grain and bones have been found

Sites	Grain and Bones
Mehrgarh (in present day-Pakistan)	Wheat, barley, sheep, goat, cattle
Koldihwa (in present-day Uttar Pradesh)	Rice, fragmentary animal bones
Mahagara (in present-day Uttar Pradesh)	Rice, cattle (hoof marks on clay surface)
Gufkral (in present-day Kashmir)	Wheat and lentil
Burzahom (in present-day Kashmir)	Wheat and lentil, dog, cattle, sheep, goat, buffalo
Chirand (in present-day Bihar)	Wheat, green gram, barley, buffalo, ox
Hallur (in present-day Andhra Pradesh)	Millet, cattle, sheep, goat, pig
Paiyampalli (in present-day Andhra Pradesh)	Black gram, millet, cattle, sheep, pig

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VEDIC CULTURE IN NORTH INDIA AND MEGALITHIC CULTURE IN SOUTH INDIA

Vedic Age

The first phase of urbanisation in India came to an end with the decline of Indus Civilisation. A new era, called Vedic Age began with the arrival of Aryans. It is a period in the History of India between 1500 BC (BCE) – 600 BC (BCE). It gets its name from four 'Vedas'

Aryans

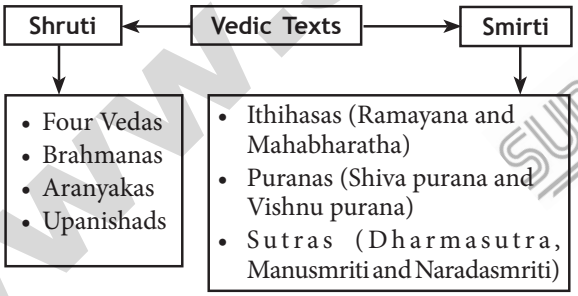
The Aryans were Indo–Aryan language speaking, semi nomadic pastoralists. They came from Central Asia in several waves of migration through Khyber Pass of Hindu Kush Mountains. Though cattle rearing was their main occupation, they also practised slash and burn agriculture.

Time, Spread and Sources	
Geographical range	North India
Period	Iron Age
Time	1500 BC(BCE) – 600 BC (BCE)
Sources	Vedic Literature
Nature of Civilisation	Rural

Around 1000 BC (BCE), Aryans in India moved eastward and settled in Indo-Gangetic Plain. Use of iron axes and ploughs became widespread.

Vedic literature

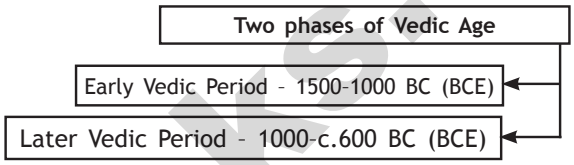
Vedic literature can be classified into two broad categories.



Shrutis - The Shrutis comprise the four Vedas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. They are considered sacred, eternal and an unquestionable truth. 'Shruti' means listening (or unwritten) ones that were transmitted orally through generations.

Smritis - A body of texts containing teachings on religion such as Ithihasas, Puranas, Tantras and Agamas. Smritis are not eternal. They are constantly revised. 'Smriti' means definite and written literature.

Classification of Vedic Age



Vedic Culture

The Rig Vedic polity was kinship - based. Kula (clan) was the basic unit of the polity. It was under a head called Kulapati. Several families joined together to form a Grama (village). Grama was headed by Gramani. A group of villages was called Vis (clan) and was headed by Vishayapati. Rajan was the head of the Jana (tribe) and he was addressed as Janasyagopa (guardian of the people). There were several tribal kingdoms (Rashtras) during Rig Vedic period (Bharatas, Matsyas, Puras).

The main responsibility of the Rajan was to protect his tribe. His powers were limited by tribal assemblies namely Vidhata, Sabha, Samiti and Gana. Of these Vidhata, (the tribal assembly) was the oldest. The king appointed a purohit (chief priest) to assist him. In economic, political and military matters, the king was assisted by the Senani (army chief). Gramani was the leader of the village.

Bali - a tax consisting of 1/6 of the agricultural produce or cattle for a person.

The Vedic family was patriarchal. The fair complexioned Aryans distinguished themselves from dark complexioned non-Aryans whom they called Dasyus and Dasas. Within the early Vedic Society there were three divisions (Treyi) ; the general public were called Vis, the warrior class was called Kshatriyas and the Priestly class was named Brahmanas. At a later stage, when the Aryans had to accommodate non-Aryan skilled

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workers in their social arrangement, a rigid four-fold Varna system was developed, i.e., the priestly Brahmanas, the warrior Kshatriyas, the land owning Vysyas and the skilled workers Sudras. Thus a graded social order emerged. Although the Vedic Age is evidenced by good number of texts, it does not have adequate amount of material evidences. In Rig Vedic society, women relatively enjoyed some freedom. The wife was respected as the mistress of the household. She could perform rituals along with her husband in their house. Child marriage and sati were unknown. There was no bar on the remarriage of widows. Nevertheless, the women were denied right to inherit property from their parents. They played no role in public affairs. In the later Vedic period the role of women in society, as well as their status, even within the family, declined. Women could no longer perform rituals in the family. The rules of marriage became much more complex and rigid. Polygamy became common. Widow remarriage was not encouraged. Education was denied to women. Intercaste marriages were spurned.

Economy in the Vedic period was sustained by a combination of pastoralism and agriculture. Though occupation of Rig Vedic Aryans was cattle rearing, there were carpenters, chariot makers, potters, smiths, weavers, and leather workers.

Use of iron plough and axe helped to put more areas of land under cultivation. Crops of wheat, rice and barley were cultivated. With the growth of agriculture, the idea of private possession of land came into existence. Trade became extensive. Barter system was prevalent (exchange of goods). They used Nishka, Satmana (gold coins) and Krishnala (silver coins) for business transactions.

Metals Known to Rig Vedic People : Gold (Hiranya), Iron (Shyama), Copper/ Bronze (Ayas)

Rig Vedic Aryans worshipped mostly the earthly and celestial gods like Prithvi (Earth), Agni (fire), Vayu (wind), Varuna (rain), Indra (Thunder). There were also lesser female deities like Aditi (goddess of eternity) and Usha (appearance of dawn). Their religion was Yajna centered. The mode of prayer was recitation of Vedic hymns. People prayed for the welfare of Praja (children) Pasu (cattle) and Dhana (wealth). Cow was considered a sacred animal. There were no temples. Idol worship had not yet come into existence. The gurukula system is an ancient learning method. The word Gurukula is a combination of the Sanskrit Word Guru (teacher or master) and Kula (family or home).

Contemporary culture in south India

The early Vedic culture in northern India coincided with Chalcolithic cultures that prevailed in other parts of the sub-continent. Since, people used copper (chalco) and stone (lithic), it was called Chalcolithic period. Though Chalcolithic culture of India was contemporary to the mature phase of Harappan culture, they continued to exist even after the decline of the latter. The later Vedic culture in north India and the Iron Age in south India belongs to the same period. Towards the end of Iron Age, people stepped into what is known as Megalithic Culture (600 BC (BCE) and AD (CE) 100).

GREAT THINKERS AND NEW FAITHS

Intellectual Awakening : The Sixth Century BC (BCE) is regarded as an important period in the history of ancient India. As a land mark period in the intellectual and spiritual development in India, historian Will Durant has rightly called it the "shower of stars".

Origin of Jainism : Jainism is one of the world's oldest living religions. Jainism grounds itself in 24 Tirthankaras. A 'Tirthankara', is the one who revealed religious truth at different times. The first Tirthankara was Rishabha and the last one was Mahavira. Jainism gained prominence under the aegis of Mahavira, during the sixth century BC (BCE).

Mahavira	
Original name	Vardhamana
Place of Birth	Kundhagrama near Vaishali, Bihar
Parents	Siddharth, Trishala
Place of Death	Pavapuri, Bihar

Unique Teachings of Jainism : Jainism denies God as the creator of Universe. Basic philosophy of Jainism is Ahimsa or 'non – Violence'. Ultimate aim of Jainism is attaining moksha or ending the cycle of birth – death – rebirth. Jains reject the belief in Last judgement, where God, a supreme